Trench MF28 narrative

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Introduction

Trench 28 was opened in 2006 to locate and investigate the south-eastern corner of the *temenos* wall. This trench, guided by geophysics was sited approximately 5m south of Trench 27 which was located to investigate the central part of the *temenos* wall between the entrance into the temple precinct (located through Trenches 15 and 32) and the southeastern corner of the *temenos* wall. In both trenches, as elsewhere, the *temenos* wall had been extensively robbed. Also as elsewhere, a cobbled surface was found to run alongside the wall on the outside of the *temenos.*

The excavated section of the *temenos* wall [28005] and [28018] (the southern corner of the wall) was approximately 6m in length and with an irregular shape and variable width of between 0.5m to 1.2m. The irregularity possibly caused by robbing. The average depth of the wall trench was 0.5m. This section of wall trench was set on a south to north/northeast axis. The turn forming the south-east corner of the wall was less well defined than in Trench 16 to the north, showing as a slight rounded turn heading west and measuring about 0.75m. Directly alongside this corner turn a large section of the wall and the cobbling set against it had been dug out in antiquity down to bedrock (28001) which probably occurred when this corner of the wall was robbed.

From approximately the mid-point of the trench a section of mortared floor (28006) that ran south for 1.5m was excavated. Continuing south to the southern baulk of the trench an extensive area of cobbling was exposed (28015) measuring 2.5m deep x 2m wide. Both surfaces were on the east side of the *temenos* wall. It is possible that the mortared floor area had been cobbled and later robbed leaving the mortared gravelly substrate that the cobbles were laid on. Within the cobbled area was the exposed area of bedrock (28001) and close to it a small pit (28022). In the southwest corner of the trench a small area of brown soil (28012) was uncovered that contained two 4th century Roman coins. During excavation of the cobbled area a layer of mortar and fine stones (28015) overlay the cobbles which was thought to represent a later phase in the cobbling or possibly debris from robbing.

The fill (28004) of the *temenos* wall foundation trench was generally made up of loose sandy gravel with pieces of limestone and mortar, excavation showed that the wall had been completely robbed out. The fill of the southeastern corner (28007) was slightly different consisting of small angular pieces of limestone together with some limestone blocks and mortar. A small linear arrangement of larger cobbles (28020) that ran alongside the southern edge of the exposed bedrock was interpreted as a possible revetment to the cobbling against the wall. However, given that the line of cobbles were only 0.16m in length this is inconclusive.

Two slot trenches either side of the main trench were opened late in the 2006 season to investigate the consecutive layers from subsoil down to bedrock and to consider these areas of the trench in section. Each trench was 0.5m in width and 5.5m in length set on a north/south axis from the southern baulk of the main trench.

There were a number of deposits of fallen wall material (28008) and (28009) that consisted of limestone blocks, some with adhering mortar and lumps of loose mortar that was possible evidence of the robbing of the wall and material that had been dumped.

A small amount of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery was recovered, perhaps less than most trenches of this size. Nevertheless, the Roman pottery comprised of a wide range of pottery types. There were 18 small finds 12 of which were 3rd to 4th century Copper-alloy Roman coins.

Cuts, structures and layers

(28002) Layer. This layer sat on the east side of the *temenos* wall cut with a small area over the southeastern wall corner. Excavations beneath this layer identified the cobbled area that ran from the mid-point of the trench. Excavations from the mid-point north proved featureless.

(28003) Layer. This layer was on the west side of the *temenos* wall trench inside the temple precinct and also proved featureless. This layer consisted of coarse sandy loam.

[28005] Wall. Cut of the robbed out *temenos* wall trench. This feature was 6m in length and varied in width from 0.5m to 1.2m with an average depth of 0.3m. The wall trench was set on a south to north/northeast axis. At the southern end of the trench the southeast corner of the wall was less well defined being only 0.75m in length but indicated a positive turn. Throughout the trench the process of robbing the wall left considerable damage to the wall trench structure hence the variability in width.

(28004) Fill. Single fill of *temenos* wall trench. A combination of loose gravel and sandy loam with limestones pieces and lumps of mortar. Excavation showed that the trench had been completely robbed out.

[28018] Wall. Cut for the southeastern return of the *temenos* corner heading west. This corner section of the wall trench was 0.85m long x 0.9m wide and 0.28m deep.

(28007) Fill. Single fill of the southeast corner of the wall trench. Small angular pieces of limestone together with large blocks of limestone and loose mortar.

(28006) Layer. Recorded as a mortared floor layer and interpreted as a later phase of flooring. This layer sat between the cobbled surface (28015) and the featureless (28002) in the mid to north part of the trench and on the eastern side of the *temenos* trench. An area of approximately 1.6m north/south and 1.5m at its widest point.

(28008) Layer. This is possibly a dump of material the result of robbing. This deposit consisted of a pile of loose limestone blocks with mortar. This material dump was located in the southeastern corner of the main trench above the cobbles (28015).

(28009) Layer. Similar to and close to (28008) in the south of the main trench. This large

dump of wall material covered an area 1.5m x 3m consisting of large limestone blocks. Many of the blocks were dressed and had mortar adhering. There were also many pieces of loose mortar. This represents material dumped outside the *temenos* wall during the robber phase. Like (28008) this dump of material overlay the cobbles.

(28010) Cut. Probably a plough furrow, 0.96m long east-west x 0.1m wide and 3-5cm deep. Overlain by (28002).

(28011) Layer. A linear arrangement of stones in loose soil and mortar matrix. These stones lie alongside the eastern side of the *temenos* wall trench. This however could be a random group of stones after the robbing phase.

(**28012)** Layer. A thin layer of mid brown soil between the cobbles (28015) and bedrock (28001) in which two 4th century Copper-alloy coins were found. This layer was situated at the bottom southwestern corner of the main trench.

(28015) Layer. Cobbled floor surface that shows signs of having been repaired in places. This cobbled area covered the lower part of the main trench from the bottom of the base of the *temenos* wall trench to the southern main trench boundary, measuring 2m wide x 2.5m deep.

(28019) Layer. A layer of light brown/yellow friable loamy soil with mortar and limestone. This layer was a small section directly below the wall return on the west side of the trench measuring 1.2m x 0.4m wide and 0.15m deep. This was part of the robbed-out wall return in the northwestern corner of the cobbled area. Within this layer were pieces of pottery, animal bone, stone, CBM and oyster shell.

(28020) Structure. Linear arrangement of large cobbles interpreted as a possible revetment to the edge of the cobbling and overlies the cobbled surface (28015). This line of stones was only 16cm in length and therefore its purpose as a revetment is inconclusive.

(**28021)** Cut. A shallow 'U' shaped cut into natural approximately 0.6m wide extending into section but gets increasingly shallow towards the turn in the *temenos* wall. This has been interpreted as a robber trench for the western return of the *temenos* wall.

(28022) Cut. A pit cut through the cobbles (28015) down to bedrock, approximately 0.5m in diameter. Possibly the result of robbing.

(28017) Fill. Single fill of sandy loam, mortar and small stones. Structure [28020] the linear arrangement of large cobbles appears to cut through and collapse into the pit.

Pottery Analysis

In total 275 sherds of pottery were recovered the group being made up of 12 sherds of Iron Age pottery and 263 sherds of Roman pottery.

Iron Age Pottery
The Iron Age pottery consisted of 11 sherds of Iron Age Coarse Ware and a sherd of decorated ware.

Roman Pottery
There were 263 sherds of Roman pottery representing 14 types. The main types were:

Roman Coarse Ware Reduced.(grey to black)	85 sherds.	32.3%
Roman Fine Ware Reduced. (grey to black)	46 sherds.	17.4%
Roman Coarse Ware Oxidised (orange/red)	30 sherds.	11.4%
Oxford Red-Slipped Ware (orange, red to brown colour coat)	24 sherds.	9.1%
Roman Fine Ware White.	18 sherds.	6.8%
Roman Decorated Ware	17 sherds.	6.4%
Roman Coarse Ware Oxidised (orange/red)	9 sherds.	3.4%
Oxford White Slipped Ware (grey/grey/orange fabric)	9 sherds.	3.4%

The main contexts from which the pottery was recovered were:

(28000) top soil with 56 sherds.
(28002) Sub soil layer that lay over much of the trench from the base of the *temenos* wall cut northward. 13 sherds
(28004) The single fill of the *temenos* wall [28005]. 40 sherds
(28006) Possible later phase of flooring over the cobbled area (28015). 12 sherds.
(28008) A possible dump of wall material during the robbing phase. 10 sherds.
(28009) A possible dump of wall material during the robber phase. 46 sherds.
(28011) Linear group of stones on eastern side of *temenos* wall. 13 sherds.
(28016) A layer of fine sandy gravel the lay over the wall corner. 27 sherds.
(28019) An area to the south of the wall corner possibly robber trench. 18 sherds.

Small Finds
As pointed out in the introduction there were only 18 small finds being made up of 12 3rd/4th century Copper-alloy Roman coins (within the coin group a Radiate and two minims were identified) together with three iron fragments and three Copper-alloy fragments.