Trench MF35 narrative

Trevor Greer

Introduction

Trench MF35 was a long strip trench opened in 2007 to evaluate the density of archaeology in the northern part of the Trendles field. This trench measured 2m wide x 45m in length and was situated in a north central area between the *temenos* wall and the arena and 5m north of Trench MF2. The northern end of this trench crossed the perceived path of the arena western entrance and provided an opportunity to track its western extent although excavations showed no sign of the continuation of the path. Some patches of rubble were observed, but they had no clear form or function, so if the path did exist, it has now been ploughed out. To the southern end of the trench an Iron Age pit [35037] was located, which may have been associated with the other Iron Age pits found in Trench MF2 to the south. In total seven possible small pits or postholes were recorded although a number of these may be natural features. There were also a number of patches or groups of stones that all seem to be either natural or random deposits. See Cuts and Fills below.

There was some evidence of burning within the trench with burnt stones and considerable amounts of charcoal being found, particularly in context (35000) top soil, and context (35008) which is the fill of a small pit [35009]. There was no evidence for a hearth in the trench and the piece of Copper-Alloy slag found in context (35007) would appear to be a random deposit.

The extremely high levels of Iron Age pottery found in this trench might indicate that this was a predominantly Iron Age occupation level. The pottery count showed that Iron Age pottery accounted for 75.6% of the pottery found, an unusually high level.

Ground soil depth to bedrock averaged 0.7 m with evidence of ploughing.

Cuts and Fills

[35007] Stones. [35011]	Line of mixed size stones (blocks and rubble) 0.6m wide and 2m long. Although recorded as a possible wall no foundation cut was found and no evidence of mortar therefore these stones have been regarded as random deposit.
[35009] Pit.	Possible pit. V-shaped, 0.3m deep x 0.6m diameter with a large flat stone pressed against one side that extended from the top to the bottom of the pit (35013).
(35008) Top Fill.	Dark Grey soil overlying sandy yellow silt with small stones and 2 very large stones, 1 embedded at an angle the other brick shaped with a large piece of charcoal sitting on the stones. Inclusions of Iron Age pottery, burnt stone and charcoal.
(35012) Base Fill	Possible evidence of a post pipe i.e., the shape of post that has rotted away leaving a ghost space that is then filled with material that marks position of the post. The fill of this post pipe was a charcoal rich sandy silt

(35013). Stone. Stone packing in the pit.

[35014] Stones. Linear group of stones with some burnt stones.

[35016] Stones. Two large limestone blocks set together with white mortar. Purpose unclear. Possibly a random deposit.

[35018] Stones. A random deposit of stones.

[35019] Pit. Pit or possible posthole 0.30m diameter x 0.25m deep. Straight sided and with an uneven base.

(35020) Fill. Stone packing of pit

(35021) Fill Mid brown silty loam.

[35024] Pit. Pit, 0.11m deep x 0.42m wide, large piece of pot in the base.

(35023) Fill. Organic loam and sand with pieces of pottery and charcoal.

[35028] Pit. Circular 0.3m diameter x 0.2m deep. Concave sides sloping down to a flat base.

(35027) Fill. Mid brown silty loam.

[35029] Cluster. A cluster of stones together with a large piece of Iron Age pottery with a lug handle and the foreleg bone of a pig. The immediate surrounding area shows evidence of burning with dark sooty soil and pieces of charcoal.

[35032] Pit. Oval in plan with concave sides down to flat base. Only half of this pit was excavated as it was situated on the east baulk of the trench. Observations indicated that the pit was 0.25m wide x 0 17m deep

(35031) Fill. Single fill. Dark brown loam.

[35033] Pit. Circular, 0.35m diameter x 0.33m deep with concave sides cut into orange sand and limestones. Top possibly truncated by ploughing.

(35006) Fill. Top fill. Black sandy silt, very organic and charcoal rich. (35006) was a general layer over much of this part of the trench. Within this fill were inclusions of pottery, animal bone, flint, charcoal and a single Copper-Alloy brooch pin.

(35034) Fill. Top fill. Very dark brown/black silt with pot and animal bone inclusions.

(35035) Fill. Bottom fill. Mid brown silt with pottery and animal bone inclusions.

[35037] Pit. A shallow slightly scooped pit with straight sides down to a flat base. Probably a natural feature. No dimensions recorded.

(35036) Fill. Stone packing in the pit.

Pottery Analysis

In total 894 pottery sherds were recovered from Trench 35. This group was made up predominantly of Iron Age pottery, with 676 sherds, accounting for 75.6% of the group with Romano-British pottery at 218 sherds, 24.4%. This very high level of Iron Age pottery does indicate that Trench 35 might represent an Iron Age occupation level. However, 178 sherds of Iron Age pottery and 123 sherds of Romano British pottery came from topsoil (35000) and have little archaeological value and will therefore be disregarded in this analysis. Given that the soil depth over bedrock was only 0.7m there was evidence of plough damage throughout the area of Trench 35.

Iron Age Pottery

The following table shows the types of Iron Age pottery recovered.

1.	PCW.	Prehistoric Coarse Ware.	464 sherds	93.1%
2.	PFW.	Prehistoric Fine Ware.	20 sherds	4.0%
3.	PFWBL.	Prehistoric Fine Ware	7 sherds	1.4%
4.	PFWRE.	Prehistoric Fine Ware	2 sherds	0.4%
5.	Decorated Ware.		5 sherds	1.0%

Important Contexts.

Context (35003) a sub soil layer situated toward the southern end of the trench yielded 123 sherds with 85 PCW, 7 PFW and 2 PFWRE. Context (35004) a sub soil layer that extended from the mid-point of the trench to the northern extent of the trench, yielded 51 sherds of PCW, 2 PFWBL and 2 sherds of decorated pottery. Context (35005) was a small area situated close to (35003) toward the mid-point of the trench within which considerable activity was recorded. There were several groups of stones [35014], [35016], [35029] and a small pit [35024] (see Cuts and Fills above). Within this context were 198 sherds of PCW, 6 PFW and 2 pieces of Decorated ware. Context (35006) was the top fill of pit [35033] positioned in the southern end of the trench. Potentially this was a large pit but only half excavated as it sat on the west baulk of the trench. This context yielded 99 sherds of PCW, 6 PFW and 2 PFWBL. The final context [35023] was the single fill of a small pit [35024] situated within context layer (35005) and within the groups of stones discussed above. This fill yielded 16 sherds of PCW including one large piece of Iron Age pottery at the base of the pit.

Roman Pottery

There was a broad range of Roman pottery types recovered from Trench 35 and this assemblage very much reflected the types and range of pottery found across the site. 56% of the pottery finds were from topsoil context (35000) and therefore have been disregarded in this analysis. There were two contexts that yielded large amounts of pottery, context (35004) with 123 sherds, a general layer from the mid-point of the trench to the north, and context (35005) with 54 sherds, a layer in the centre of the trench with groups of stones and a small pit.

Roman Pottery Types

There were 4 pottery types that made up the bulk of this assemblage, which are listed in order of magnitude. This includes all contexts.

1. RCWR. Roman Coarse Ware Reduced. 69 sherds 31.6%
2. RFWR. Roman Fine Ware Reduced. 54 sherds 24 7%
3. RFWOX. Roman Fine Ware Oxidised. 37 sherds 16.9%
4. RCWO. Roman Coarse Ware Oxidised. 15 sherds 6.8%

Small Finds

Only 7 small finds were recovered from this trench, these are shown below by context.

Context (35000) topsoil. A Copper-Alloy nail cleaner.
Context (35004) sub soil layer covering much of the trench. A piece of Copper-Alloy slag and an animal bone hair pin.
Context (35005) A small area in the centre of the trench associated with groups of stones and small pit. A large fragment of Iron Age pottery with a lug handle found together with 2 large stones and a pigs foreleg bone. This was recorded as cluster [35029]. A smoothed pebble was also recorded.
Context (35006) Fill of pit [35033]. A Copper-Alloy brooch.
Context (35010) A small area south of context (35003). A Copper-Alloy finger Ring.