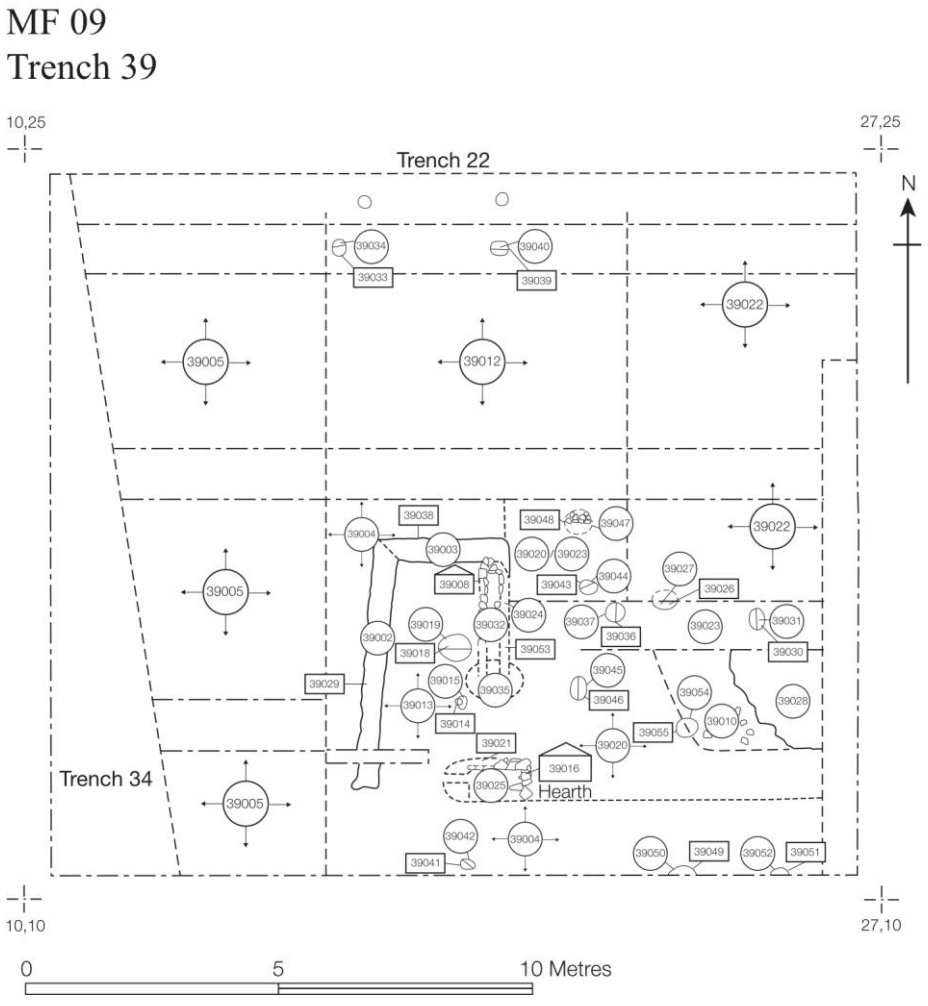
Trench MF39 narrative

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Introduction.

Trench 39 was located in the centre of the site and positioned strategically to link with the southern edge of Trench 22, the eastern edge of Trench 34 and the western edge of trench 2. The intention was to discover any relationships between the large late Roman building in Trench 22 and the smithing hearths found in Trench 34, while investigating several geophysical anomalies within the new area.

The archaeology in Trench 39 was concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the trench and provided a useful phasing for activity in this area.



Trench MF39

Two of the geophysical anomalies were caused by smithing hearths, [39016] aligned east-west and [39008] aligned north-south which were similar to those in trench 34. The southern fan of raked out material from the open end of [39008] ran so close to [39016] that it is unlikely that the two hearths were used at the same time. Both had been partially dismantled before the area was levelled using a spread of oyster shells (39001).

Hearth [39008] was constructed of squared stones laid to form a three-sided oblong structure approximately 2.5m in length and 0.9m wide that provided an internal space of 0.3m. Most of the stones on the eastern side of the hearth had been removed. These stones were bonded with yellow clay which in some places had been burnt hard and therefore turned red. The internal part of the structure had been lined with clay. The fill (39032) of the hearth was charcoal rich and lay directly above bedrock. This fill became very much thicker and blacker in the raked-out entrance of the hearth (39035).

Hearth [39016] was positioned approximately 1m south of hearth [39008] and similarly constructed of small blocks of limestone although many pieces of stone were missing. This hearth was 1.25m in length and 0.8m wide forming a horse-shoe shape. There were two fills in this hearth the bottom fill (39025) over bedrock consisted dark black burnt soil that extended from the apex of the hearth for about 1.5m, the top fill comprised of red sandy silt with charcoal and oyster shell inclusions.

Gravelly traces were found of foundation trenches for a three-sided building. This structure was unlike other three-sided buildings that were found on the site that were of uniform construction with three walls of equal length. The building in trench 39 was of very irregular construction with the west wall [39029] at 5m in length and the north wall [39038] at 2.75m in length. The east wall is more difficult to define as this wall appears to have been replaced with a long rectangular hearth [39008] which is 3m in length. It would seem probable that this building was constructed for utilitarian purposes, perhaps to screen or protect the activity carried out within it and perhaps supported a simple roof. The remains of these gravel lined trenches just scooped the top of an oyster shell layer and made use of the western side of the hearth [39008] as part of the foundations, suggesting that the shell layer had been part of the site preparation for this building. Any other remains of this later construction, apart from a spread of debris related to the gravel foundations has been lost to ploughing. Within the three walled structure further evidence of burning was found with a large area being (39019).

In the southeast corner of the trench an extensive area of cobbling (39028) was excavated that may be associated with the building in Trench 2 or the activity around it. Extensive cobbling was found in Trench 24 on the eastern side of the trench 2 building that appeared to form a pedestrian precinct.

The oyster shell layer (39001) mentioned above is of interest as it covered an area in the southern half of the trench of approximately 5m x 3m and was several oyster shells thick which had become compacted. This oyster shell layer appears to have provided a bedding upon which the cobbled area (39028) was laid whilst sealing the two decommissioned hearths.

Six postholes and three post pads were recorded most of which appear to be random as they do not appear to be in any form of alignment that might suggest a structural support, except for two postholes at the top of the trench. These are postholes [39033] and [39039] which are approximately 3m apart and in line and 1m from the boundary of Trench 22. Therefore, these postholes could be associated with structures in Trench 22.

Trench dimensions
Trench 39 was 17m long north-south and 15m wide east-west.

Cuts, structures

Hearth. Structure [39008]. North-south aligned rectangular structure 76cm wide and 250cm in length. Made of dressed stone bonded with yellow clay. Single fill (39035).

Hearth? Cut [39014]. Probable animal burrow consisting of a scoop in the ground 25cm wide and 3cm deep. In the centre of which was another small hole 6cm wide and 10cm deep.

Hearth. Structure [39016]. Possible metal smelting hearth resting on or cut into bedrock (39032). The external dimensions of the hearth were 140cm x 75cm and the internal dimensions within the stone construction were 125cm x 35cm.

Scoop. Cut [39018]. A circular scoop 40cm wide and 10cm deep. With a single fill (39019**)** of heavily burned material.

Posthole. Cut [39026]. Cut of possible posthole. No dimensions recorded. Single fill (39027) comprised of silty sand and charcoal. The charcoal made up about 50% of the fill.

Wall. Structure [39029]. Cut of robber trench that formed the western wall of the three-sided building. Single fill (39002) of gravelly material. Cut [39038] demarks the gravel line of the wall foundation.

Pit. Cut [39030]. Cut of possible pit or posthole. 40cm wide x 14cm deep with gently sloping sides. Single fill (39031) made up of sandy silt containing pieces of charcoal together with pieces of bone, pot and stone.

Posthole. Cut [39033]. Posthole related to posthole [39039] and postholes in the southern end of Trench 22. Other pits, postholes and post pads in the south of trench 39 are thought to be related to metal working activity. Single fill (39034) consisting of red/brown soil and sand with charcoal flecks and seven medium sized packing stones.

Pit. Cut [39036]. Small pit 45cm in diameter 18cm deep with steep sides. Single fill (39037) of silty brown sand with concentrations of charcoal particularly in the lower level. Also, several stones 8–10cm in diameter plus bone and pottery fragments.

Posthole. Cut [39039]. Possible posthole, 20cm in diameter x 15cm deep. Single fill (39040) that included soil, charcoal and pottery fragments.

Posthole. Cut [39041]. Possible post hole 30cm in diameter x 12cm deep. Single fill (39042) that included soil, stone, shale and pottery fragments.

Posthole. Cut [39043]. Posthole, oval 26cm wide and 29cm long x 29cm deep. Single fill (39044) made up of orange-brown sandy soil including pottery fragments.

Pit. Cut [39046]. Possible pit or post pad, oval 65cm wide x 90cm long and 20cm deep. Single fill (39045) of sandy soil with several large stones including oyster shell and pottery and bone fragments.

Post pad. Cut [39048]. Possible post pad. 50cm E/W x 65cm N/S x 13cm deep. Single fill (39047) of brown silty clay with pieces of limestone and pottery and bone fragments.

Posthole. Cut [39049]. Possible posthole. 50cm in diameter, no depth recorded. Single fill (39050) of sandy silty with small stones and clay at the base.

Post pad. Cut [39051]. Possible post pad. 45cm in diameter x 21cm deep. Single fill (39052) of red-brown silty clay with several limestone pieces that formed a level layer consistent with a post pad. Within this fill were found pottery fragments and a Roman nail.

Post pad. Cut [39055]. Possible post pad. 30cm in diameter. No depth recorded. Single fill (39054) consisting of stone packing within reddish-brown sandy silt.

Layers

(39001). Layer of oyster shells. Covering an area approximately 5m x 3m.

(39009) and (39010). Destruction layer with stones showing evidence of burning plus a patch of oyster shells.

(39028). Possible cobbled surface associated with building and layout in trench 2.

Pottery analysis

In total 3,728 sherds of pottery were recovered and were made up of 1,109 sherds of Iron Age pottery and 2,619 sherds of Roman pottery.

Iron Age pottery 1,109 sherds.

Within this group, 35 sherds were from topsoil (39000) deposits and 48 sherds from sub soil deposits (39009). These have been subjected to considerable movement from ploughing and are therefore considered to have little archaeological significance. All these sherds are of one type (PCW) being coarse wares.

The following layers produced significantly high levels of Iron Age pottery:

Layer 39004. 50 sherds.
Layer 39005. 57 sherds.
Layer 39006. 104 sherds.
Layer 39012. 101 sherds. All Iron Age Coarse Wares.
Layer 39022. 114 sherds.
Layer 39035. 392 sherds.
Layer 39020. 67 sherds.

Roman pottery 2,619 sherds.

Within this group, 364 sherds were from topsoil (39000) and 65 sherds from subsoil (39007). Total 439 sherds.

The remaining 2,180 sherds were made up of a broad spectrum of Roman pottery types. These are listed by pottery type and in order of abundance.

1. Roman coarse ware reduced. 809 sherds
2. Roman coarse ware oxidised. 327 sherds.
3. Roman fine ware reduced. 304 sherds.
4. Roman white ware. 275 sherds.
5. Roman fine white ware. 166 sherds.

6. Roman fine ware oxidised. 145 sherds.
7. Roman Samian. 138 sherds.
8. Roman Oxford wfws. 125 sherds.
9. Roman Decorated wares. 106 sherds.
10. Roman Dorchester wares. 82 sherds.
11. Roman Oxford fine wares 60 sherds.
12. Non-Roman 37 sherds.
13. Roman BWW. 25 sherds.
14. Roman ROB. 21 sherds.
15. Roman GR. 19 sherds.

Significant layers yielding high levels of Roman pottery.

(39005) 460 sherds. (39006) 370 sherds. (39007) 256 sherds. (39010) 230 sherds. (39009) 151 sherds. (39011) 113 sherds. (39002) 108 sherds. (39013) 105 sherds. (39023) 103 sherds.

Small finds
Compared to neighbouring trenches Trench 39 had few small finds, in total 74 of which 22 were from topsoil and subsoil levels (i.e. plough soil) and therefore have been disregarded as having little archaeological significance.

Finds from topsoil (39000) are 18 finds and subsoil (39002) four finds. This group consisted of nine coins, four iron objects, three Copper-Alloy objects, three pieces of flint, one pottery gaming counter, one Copper-Alloy brooch and one Copper-Alloy spatula.

Finds from the archaeological contexts yielded 52 objects consisting of:

11 Cu-Alloy 3rd to 4th century Roman coins, largely made up of Minims.
23 iron objects. These ranged from an iron bar, sheet/plate fragments, fittings, pins and odd pieces and two nails. There was nothing that would relate to smelting or forging.
Ten pieces made up of seven glass vessel fragments, two pieces of glass and one glass bead.
Three pieces of flint. Two flint blades and one arrowhead.
12 Copper-Alloy objects. Largely made up of odd pieces such as sheet, tube and wire fragments. There were two pieces associated with smelting, one casting fragment and one piece of slag.
Two pieces of lead.
Two animal bone hair pins.