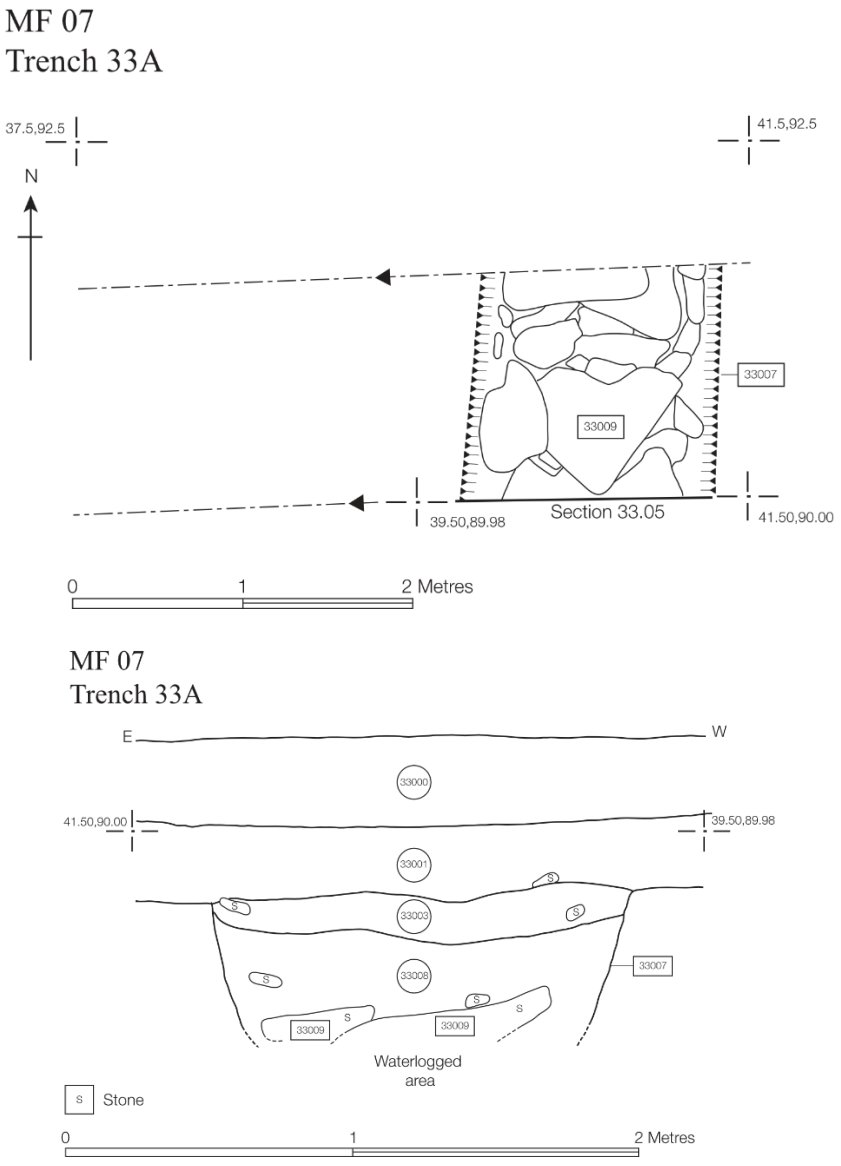
Trench MF40 (and trench 33) narrative

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Trench 33

Introduction.

Trench 33 consisted of a series of trial trenches opened in 2007 (33a, b, c and d) and in 2008 (33e and f) with the aim of tracing the direction of the main drain from the arena and to check for possible wash down as it travelled south toward the river Ock. In total six small trenches each measuring 2m x 1m and set east-west across the anticipated line of the drain were opened. These trenches were assisted through a series of probe readings to determine the depth of soil over bedrock which gave an average of about 0.5m. Very little was found in most of these requiring little recording. There are only context records for trenches 33a, b, e and f. Trenches 33e and 33f were within trench 40 and so incorporated into the trench 40 recording, with trench 33e at the northern end of trench 40 and 33f at the south closest to the river Ock.



Trench 33a

Trench 33e located a post medieval boundary ditch [33030] [40003] and the cut for the Romano British drain [33038] [40008]. Approximately 25m to the south trench 33f showed what may have been the continuation of the drain gully [33056] which was in a swampy area where it ran into the river Ock. However, because the nature of the soil conditions in what had been and continues to be an area of regular flooding, with attendant soil movement and silty deposits, it has proved extremely difficult to determine the context layers with any certainty. The course of the Ock in the Roman period is not known, and it may have run further to the north than its current route. The stone lined drain may have terminated in an open ditch, or onto an open area of ground somewhere in the centre of the trench.

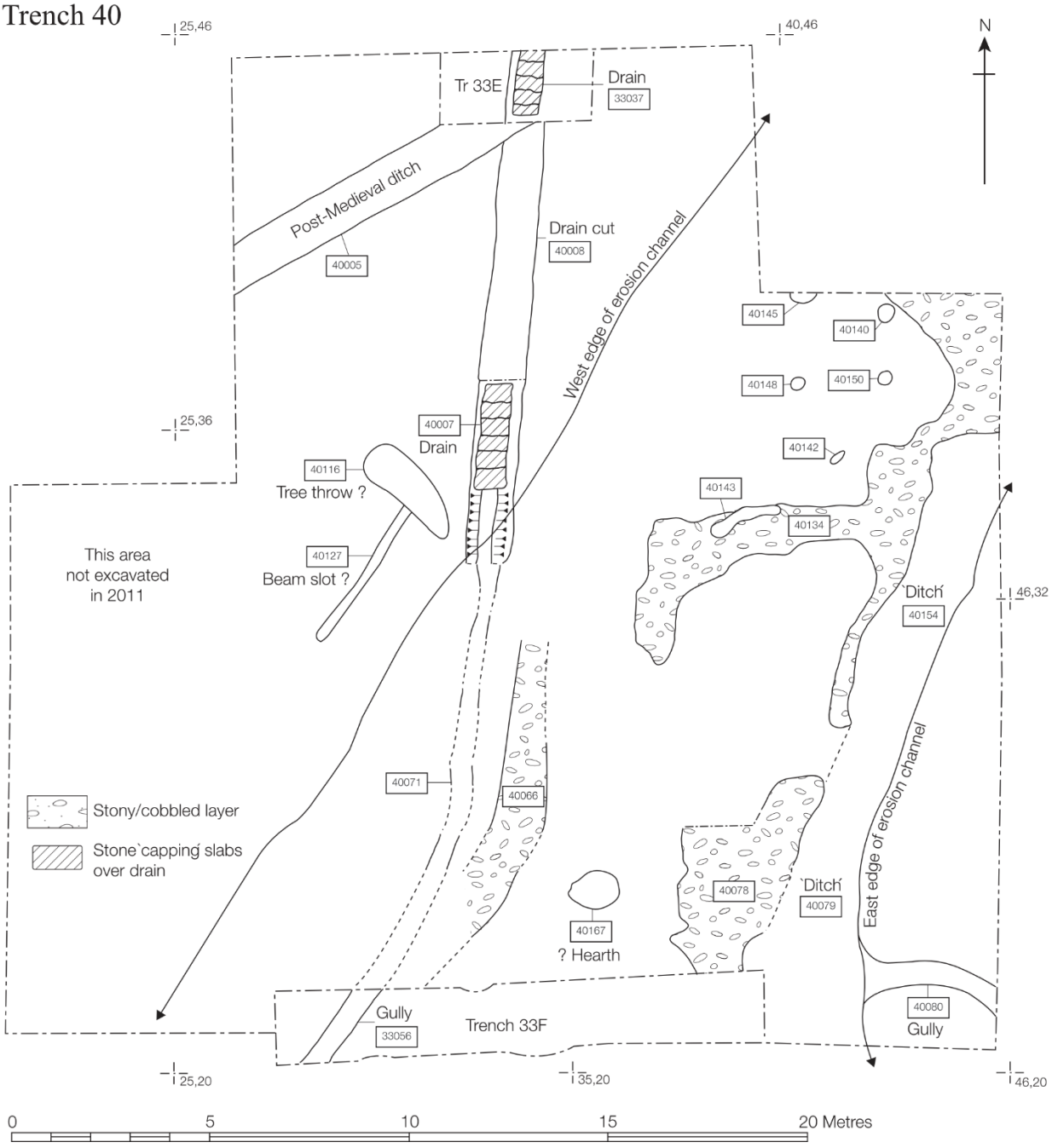
Trench 40
Introduction.
Trench 40 was opened in 2009 following the work to identify the drain through the various trenches of MF33. The position of trench 40 was due south of the Roman arena on the north bank of the river Ock. The trench measured approximately 25m north-south and 25m east-west. At this time trenches 33e and f became part of trench 40.

The earliest layers encountered beyond trench 33e were (40040) and overlying it (40032), two layers of clean natural sand which possibly underlie everything in the area. As excavation moved southward the complexity of the layers through the movement of soil through flooding and other mechanical interventions became more complex. The upper of these (40032) was cut by the Romano British drain [40008] which was filled by the drain structure [40007] the capping stones. A post medieval ditch [40003] ran from the base of trench 33e diagonally westward to the edge of the trench. The drain structure was positively identified as far as the centre of the trench.

During the 2009 season a large area of dark brown-black boggy material was encountered that ran diagonally across the trench from the north-east broadening as it progressed southward. At its northern point its width was approximately 8m wide and broadened to 20m on the trench's southern boundary. This area of dark material marked the position a large paleo-channel or erosion channel.

This widespread, dark blackish grey deposit of 'swampy' layers overlay the fill of the drain in the centre of the trench and extended to the southern end of the trench, and it was from this point on that the continuation of the drain was difficult to locate. Numerous soil samples were taken at regular intervals of these layers to understand them further. Contained within these layers were numerous large sherds of pottery, coins and glass vessel fragments. These pottery sherds appeared too large to have passed through the comparatively small drain channel, so it seems possible that these, along with other items were deliberately placed in this boggy deposit. This gave rise to the possibility that some form of votive activity may have taken place. The remaining contexts are all either natural limestone spreads, areas of cobbling or post-medieval, for example the ditch [40006] and land drain [40002].

MF 11
Trench 40



Trench MF40

The paleo-channel's western boundary ran from the north-east corner of the trench southward to the far west southern boundary of the trench and was marked at intervals with wide areas of stony/cobbled deposits (40024), (40023) which sat alongside the known end of the drain in the centre of the trench. Further south a very large area of stony deposit resembling cobbling (40051) was recorded. The eastern boundary of this channel was similarly marked by an area of stony deposit in the south-eastern corner of the trench.

Where the Romano British drain [40008] was evident it was shown to be constructed in much the same way as seen in excavations further north. Within a cut with vertical sides were side

walls of laid horizontal stones over which large cap stones [40007] were placed. As the drain progressed south into the boggy area it was much more difficult to determine its structure with clarity. At this point the drain was reassigned with the structure number [40071]. Also, at this point the drain fill (40009) was directly overlain by (40035) the lower fill of the swampy material. The upper fill of the paleo-channel (40030) was overlain by (40004) a general layer across much of the upper area of the paleo-channel.

In 2010 excavations continued in the area of the putative end of the drain. The destination of the drain [40008] continued to evade detection, although the continuation of the drain into the centre of the trench remained a stone-built structure. At this point the stone drain ended although it continued as a gully seemingly to take the water further south.

The contexts within the swampy area were recorded as two groups consisting of contexts (40004), (40029) (40030) and (40043) that made up the dark brown-black fill of the upper layers of the paleo-channel, below which contexts (40031), (40033), (40035) and (40041) were made up of dark grey silty clay as the lower fills. Beneath this a general layer (40027) of light yellow-brown alluvial material marked the base of the paleo-channel. These deposits were of variable character, often with ill-defined lateral transitions which made the accurate identification of contexts difficult.

Context (40004) is of particular interest as it lay as a broad band of material that formed the top layer across much of the paleo-channel. This context was a layer directly below sub-soil that demarcated the area of the paleo-channel within which the contexts as discussed above made up the area of ponding.

Within context (40004) finds of pot and bone were recovered, whereas context (40035) had none and overlay the downward slope of the drain. Context (40054) however formed a thick layer of firm or slightly friable dark grey loam with extensive evidence of burning. It contained friable lumps of pinkish/orange burnt soil, ashy material and charcoal. This layer was rich in finds including much late Roman pottery and many eroded 4th century Roman coins. This appeared to be a late Roman accumulation of material representing a mixed deposit of rubbish and fine debris that were dumped in a boggy hollow. Notably much of the pottery comprises large sherds many of which refit. For contexts (40055) and (40058) it was not clear how they related to context (40054) as they did not clearly overlie or underlie it. It seems probable that these two were formed as a single unit with the dumping of burnt material in (40054). Northwards (40054) merges with (40035).

At the southern end of the area of 40004 close to the boundary of the trench an area of modern mole drains was encountered as an attempt to help drainage in this area in the modern period. However, these drains were not given a context number and were only recorded as a sketch on a context sheet together with written summary of their location.

Context (40058) containing sarsen stone.
During 2011 it was noticed that pieces of Sarsen stone were present in the trench in small but inexplicable quantities. The stone is alien to Marcham and many of the pieces were too large to be plausible as fluvially transported debris. Pieces of sarsen were recovered and retained as finds from contexts (40134), (40049) and (40147). A small burnt stone from context (40166) was identified as coral rag and discarded, but in retrospect could have been another sarsen fragment. It is possible that these pieces of sarsen stone were humanly imported, perhaps representing waste fragments from a megalith.

Cuts and Structures.

[40002]. Drain. Cut of post-medieval drain.
(40005) Fill. Upper fill of 40002.
(40046). Fill. Bottom fill of 40002

[40003]. Ditch. Cut of post-medieval ditch. Same as [33030] trench 33E.
(40006). Fill. Fill of 40003.

[40007]. Capping stones. Part of a Roman drain running out of the arena. This section of the drain is capped by several large slabs of limestone as seen in the upper sections of the drain in the arena. The Roman drain is truncated by the modern land drain [40046].
(40086). Fill. Single fill.

[40046]. Pipe. Ceramic pipe that made up the modern land drain.

[40008]. Roman Drain. Cut of Roman drain
(40009). Fill. Top fill. Sandy clay
(40074). Fill. Mid fill.
(40086). Fill. Mid fill.
(40147). Fill. Mid fill.
(40182). Fill. Mid fill.
(40183). Fill. Bottom fill.

[40069]. Drain. Cut of the Roman drain gully as it runs from the end of the capped
[40071]. Roman drain where it finishes in the centre of the trench. This part of the drain is cut through the ponding area of the trench and it was therefore difficult to be certain of the cut. This part of the drain appears to form an arc north to south-west as it leaves the positively identified Roman drain in the centre of the trench. Up to this point the drain was on a strait north – south alignment. This feature then connects with the drain ending previously identified in trench 33f.

(40057). Fill. Top fill.
(40070). Fill. Mid fills of drain [40069]. This is the same ditch encountered at the base
(40084). Fill. of trench 33f.
(40094). Fill. Mid fill
(40095). Fill. Mid fill
(40105). Fill. Bottom Fill

[40071]. Gully. Cut of an open gully.
(40072). Fill. Top fill.
(40073). Fill. Mid fill sequence.
(40076). Fill. Mid fill.
(40094). Fill. Mid fill.
(40095). Fill. Mid fill.
(40105). Fill. Bottom fill.

[40079]. Ditch. Cut of a ditch situated on the east side of the trench. This cut was sealed by layer (40054) which suggests that this feature cannot be later than

4th century. Finds sparse especially in lower levels. This may point to an early date.

(40096). Fill. Top fill
(40097). Fill. Mid fill sequence
(40098). Fill. Mid fill.
(40099). Fill. Mid fill.
(40100). Fill. Mid fill.
(40101). Fill. Mid fill.
(40118). Fill. Bottom fill.

[40080]. Channel. Cut of small channel or gully running into the main drain, leading from ditch [40079] at the southeast corner of the trench
(40081). Fill. Single fill of colluvial material.

[40082]. Scoop. Originally recorded as a feature cut but later interpreted as a natural pre-existing scoop.
(40081). Fill. Single fill

[40091]. Cut. Not understood. Suspected cut.
(40092). Fill. Top fill.
(40110). Fill. Bottom fill.

[40108]. Cut. Feature measuring 95cm x 20cm but only recognised in section. Possible posthole or pit.
(40109). Fill. Single fill.

[40116]. Hollow. Later interpreted as a possible tree throw.
(40117). Fill. Top fill.
(40125). Fill. Bottom fill.

[40127]. Beam Slot. Possible beam slot. Late to post Roman in date. Not an exact cut but a hollow caused by compression of a wooden plank or beam.
(40128). Fill. Single fill of [40127].

[40131]. Pit. Unconvincing pit or posthole. Probably a natural feature.
(40132). Fill. Single fill of feature [40131].

[40148]. Pit. Small pit or scoop.
(40149). Fill. Single fill.

[40150]. Posthole. Originally thought to be a posthole but it is very shallow at 14cm deep therefore, possibly a natural feature, close to [40148].
(40151). Fill. Single fill.

[40154]. Ditch. Presumed ditch. Same as [40079]. Suspected (but not proven) that this ditch may be enclosing an island of dryer ground in the Ock flood plain.
(40156). Fill. Top fill.
(40157). Fill. Mid fill of dark soil.
(40161). Fill. Mid fill of stony material.

(40162). Fill. Mid fill.
(40178). Fill. Bottom fill.

[40160]. Pit. An intrusive feature dug into the side of the fill of ditch [40079]. A small pit 50cm in diameter.
(40159). Fill. Single fill.

[40164]. Posthole. Possible posthole.
(40165). Fill. Top fill.
(40170). Fill. Bottom fill.

[40167]. Structure. A layer of burnt limestone pieces that may have been a hearth.

[40168]. Pit. Small pit, 80cm wide x 20cm deep. The only find was a flint blade that suggests an early date.
(40169). Fill. Single fill.

[40173]. **Pit**. Possible posthole or pit.
(40174). Fill. Single fill of [40173].

[40175]. Structure. Originally recorded as a structure but later interpreted as dump of stone.

[40176]. Posthole Possible posthole. 40cm in diameter x 20cm deep containing one large stone and a piece of flint possibly packing.
(40177). Fill. Single fill

[40191]. Cut. Posthole.
(40192). Fill. Single fill.

[40193]. Cut. Possible pit. Like [40164]. 75cm - 80cm in diameter x 35cm with vertical sides. Contained stone filling, possibly packing
(40194). Fill. Top fill. Stone packing.
(40195). Fill. Bottom fill. Clay/loam.

[40198]. Cut. Void.

[40201]. Posthole. Possible posthole. 40cm round x 14cm deep. Contained large angular pieces of limestone 4cm lie either side of the hole.
(40202). Fill. Top fill of sandy clay with pebble inclusions.
(40204). Fill. Bottom fill of stone packing. Although recorded as fill this probably represents the limestone pieces surrounding the hole and regarded as post packing.

Contexts that form the natural features of the trench.
(40026). An area immediately west of the end of the Roman drain consisting of silty material with stone over bedrock.

(**40032)**. Layer of natural sandy limestone, present across the whole trench.

(40050). Paleo-channel eastern ridge. Layer of sandy material along the eastern edge of the paleo-channel. This is possibly colluvium with flecks of charcoal within it.

(40058). This context represents a group of contexts including (40004), (40035), (40054) and (40055) which form part of the dark late/post Roman colluvial deposits present as a band across trench 40. These deposits were variable in character, often with ill-defined lateral transitions which made the accurate identification of contexts difficult to define.

(40078) and (40134). Paleo-channel western ridge. Part of a natural ridge that formed the western side of the paleo-channel. This ridge ran from the top northeast corner of the trench to the centre with a south pointing branch. (40078) formed a dense stony surface on parts of the brow of the ridge. (40134) an extensive, sinuous and branching spread of stone and gravel in a matrix of grey, iron mottled sandy silt forming a natural ridge. Excavation evidence showed that whilst most of the ridge sat on natural sand some areas sat on prehistoric sediment, suggesting movement of parts of the feature possibly through flooding activity. It was on this ridge that small pieces of Sarson stone were found.

Other important layers

(40023). A rubble spread. Possibly an area of rough cobbling.

(40054). An area of burnt material. This layer was rich in finds including much late Roman pottery and many corroded late Roman coins.

(40055) and (40056). An area of burnt material.

(40060). A deposit of limestone pieces.

(40064). Peri-glacial deposit.

(40065). Finds concentration consisting of Roman pottery, animal bone, burnt stone and charcoal. Possibly a random concentration.

(40066). Stone lens.

(40075). Discrete dump of material. Many of the inclusions appear crushed and abraded perhaps suggesting trampling. Most of the coins from this deposit are radiates of the late 3rd century.

(40078). Part of a natural ridge.

(40103). Stones over drain backfill.

(40126). Finds cluster. Fragments of a single pot that was broken in situ within (40004).

(40144). Finds cluster of pieces of charcoal and burnt limestone.

(40145). Cluster of stones and pot sherds.

(40146). Cluster of pot sherds in loamy soil.

Pottery analysis.
Iron Age Pottery.
In total 72 sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from Trench 40, and all were found in archaeological contexts. All the pottery sherds were of one type P.C.W. (Prehistoric Coarse Ware). Two contexts yielded significant numbers of pottery sherds with context (40054) 13 sherds and context (40057) 45 sherds.

Roman Pottery.
In total 10,086 Roman pottery sherds were recovered from Trench 40, and of this number more than half came from topsoil and immediate subsoil contexts, as follows:

Context (40000) topsoil. 632 sherds.
Context (40001) subsoil. 414 sherds. Total 5,694 sherds.
Context (40004) subsoil. 3,964 sherds.
Context (40123) subsoil. 684 sherds.

Other pottery rich contexts, some of which may be votive deposition layers.

Context (40158) associated with context (40004) 677 sherds.
Context (40033) paleo-channel fill 444 sherds.
Context (40049) 133 sherds.
Context (40054) burnt area, 1,472 sherds.
Context (40075) discrete dump of material 132 sherds
Context (40158) an ashy layer 677 sherds

Context (40004) and (40123) represent a general layer across much of the trench that formed a diagonal area from the north-east down to the south-west of the trench with an approximate area of 250 square metres.

These topsoil and subsoil sherds have therefore been disregarded in this analysis. There is good evidence to show that over time these upper soil levels were significantly impacted by continuous periods of soil movement caused by flooding of the river Ock and consequent silting of this area.

It is interesting that as there are no buildings within or near trench 40 that would perhaps explain why there is such an abundance of pottery in this area. A few possibilities have been considered:

1. Possible deliberate deposits of broken pottery material were used to provide a walking surface in what would have been a wet/boggy area at times.
2. It is possible that some form of ritual activity was practiced close to the river at this point. An activity that may have used pottery vessels which became broken.
3. Possibly a single dump of material from elsewhere on the site that has become moved around by the river and flooding.

In the position that the pottery was found fluvial transportation (i.e. carried by the main drain from the arena) of the pottery has been ruled out.

From the archaeologically significant contexts 4,393 pottery sherds were recovered. Four contexts yielded high levels of pottery.

Context (40033). 444 sherds. Fill of a possible paleo-channel situated on the southeast of the trench. Spot dated to mid to late 4th century.
Context (40054). 1,472 sherds. A mid layer to the east of the southern most section of the drain. Spot dates from mid 3rd century to 4th century
Context (40158). 677 sherds. A small area at the south-central end of the trench and Immediately to the east of the Roman drain.
Spot dates from mid to late 4th century.

Other pottery spot dates from context (40009) yielded 2nd century AD. From context (40049) pottery from the mid to late 4th century. Pottery from context (40074) was dated from the 2nd century and pottery from context (40123) was dated to the mid to late 4th century. Overall the majority of pottery in trench 40 was from the mid 3rd to late 4th century.

Roman Pottery Types. (In order of the number of pieces of pottery found)
1 RCWO. 987. **2** RCWR. 784. **3** RFWOX. 530. **4** RFWR. 443. **5** GR. 433. **6** D. 403
7 OXFRS. 313. **8** ROBSH. 222. **9** RWW. 138. **10** DOR. 124. **11** RFWW. 51 **12** O. 24
13 BWW. 13. **14** RFWDS. 11. **15** OXFWS. 11. **16** SM. 9. **17** IMPCC. 3.

Trench 33 Pottery analysis (all trenches A to F)
In total 217 sherds of pottery were recovered which was made up of 11 sherds of Iron Age pottery primarily of PCW type, representing 5% of the sample and 206 sherds of Roman pottery making up 95% of the sample.

30% of the Roman pottery came from topsoil and subsoil contexts (33000) and (33001) with one context (33051) accounting for a further 30%. The predominant types of Roman pottery found were RCWR at 23%, OXFRS at 23 %, RFWOX at 10%, RFWR at 9.7% and RCWO at 9.7%.

Small Finds analysis
In total 604 small finds were recovered from trench 40, 212 of which came from topsoil deposits (40000) 159 and (40001) 53. In normal circumstances these small finds would be disregarded as not being archaeologically relevant as they would be within disturbed soil perhaps through ploughing and certainly through water activity considering the large areas of ponding of the site. However, given the nature of the soil conditions throughout trench 40 where there is strong evidence for considerable soil movement through centuries of flooding and redeposit of soil it is perhaps reasonable to regard all small finds as valid occupation evidence.
Significant layers for small finds.
(40004) 167 small finds. This was a general layer in the central, eastern and southern part of trench 40. Covering approximately two thirds of the trench.
(40030) 22 small finds. The ponding area/paleo-channel.
(40040) 9 small finds.
(40033) 22 small finds. The ponding area/paleo-channel.
(40054) 30 small finds.
(40075) 10 small finds.
(40158) 20 small finds.
(40166) 14 small finds.

Range of small finds by type.

Flint fragments.	236. Mostly in the form of flakes but with some worked items, such as burins and blades.
Roman coins.	202. Copper-Alloy 3rd and 4th century.
Glass vessel fragments.	62.
Iron miscellaneous.	44.
Lead miscellaneous.	24.
Jewellery.	19.
Cu-Alloy miscellaneous.	9.
Shale.	2.
Bone.	2.
Stone.	2.

Personal items in the form of jewellery of which there were 22 items (including two shale bracelets and a bone pin) present an intriguing challenge to understand why such items were in trench 40, essentially the end of drain. Overall, this range of small finds with the high level of personal items together with the glass vessel fragments and the high level of pottery (with large fragments that can be refitted and a whole single pot broken in situ) suggest that there may have been some form of ritual deposition. Given the location of trench 40 alongside water, the River Ock and there is a possibility the a small lake may have existed at this point then some form of religious rite associated with water must be considered.

The jewellery items included eight Copper-Alloy bracelets, two shale bracelets, two iron brooches, six beads, two earrings, one finger ring and one bone pin.