

Fig. 156. Area B: from the south-west; the early ditch runs from right to left. The northern pit (Phase BF) is at the top.

nantly the humeri and femora of horse (Figs 150-54).

PHASE AM: 19TH- OR 20TH-CENTURY MOLE DRAINS □ ■ Summary

During the 19th or 20th centuries further attempts were made to improve the drainage of the field. This involved the deep ploughing of widely spaced, narrow, linear channels, orientated approximately north-east to south-west (Fig. 155) and draining into the stream.

AREA B

PHASE BA: c. 10 BC-AD 25? - EARLY LINEAR DITCH Summary

Area B (for position see Fig. 7) was excavated for two very specific reasons:

- To test whether the northern flanking or boundary wall from Building 3 came this far north;
- To test whether the very straight east—west ditch located by Alec Down under the A27 (figs 8, 270) came this far west;

Indeed, the hypothesis before the excavation of this

trench was that the very straight east—west ditch under the A27 might not have been a ditch to supply piped water, as Down had very tentatively surmised (Cunliffe *et al.* 1996, 42), but rather the robber trench for the putative northern side of a masonry enclosure that surrounded Building 3. In the event this hypothesis was disproved. Down had, however, correctly demonstrated that this large ditch was an early feature in the Roman landscape at Fishbourne.

Description

The ditch went straight across the trench, from east to west, and disappeared under the western side of the trench. It measured c. 3.5 m north–south, by about 1.5 metres deep at its deepest point. It was essentially V-shaped in profile with a possible 'cleaning slot' at the bottom. The ditch fill was very distinctive with a light grey silt (C919) in the 'cleaning slot' and adhering to the south side of the ditch, a charcoal spread (C919.2); the latter had been observed also on the south side by Alec Down (Cunliffe et al. 1996, 42), and then a deliberate fill of red clay

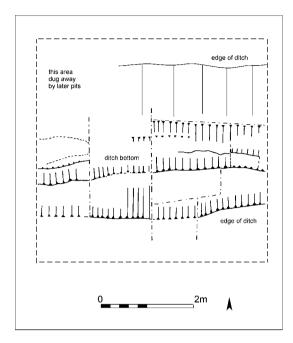


Fig. 157. Phase BA, BB: general plan; an outline plan of the excavated ditch.

(C913).

Context 919, a grey, very silty clay in the bottom of the ditch was stone-free apart from one large rounded flint which was 200 mm in length. At points along the bottom of the ditch the grey silt appeared to fill a slot about 200 mm wide. Context number C919.3 was allocated to the grey silt in the western half of the trench. Context 919.2 was a thin skim of charcoal which adhered to the south side of the ditch; it did not appear just at the bottom of the ditch, but covered about two-thirds of the slope of the southern side.

FINDS

The bulk finds from the ditch included a small quantity of animal bone. The small finds comprised some 13 objects, including seven sherds of Arretine ware and a gaming counter.

How the features were formed

The ditch was excavated into the underlying Reading Beds clay. The clay is particularly heavy and homogeneous at this point and digging by hand would have been a laborious activity. It was noticeable how unstable the clay sides were, and summer contrasts of sun and scattered showers indicated

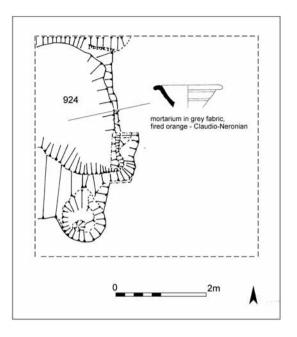


Fig. 158. Phase BC: the western pits, probably representing successive episodes of dumping in the top of the infilled ditch.

how easily the sides would have slumped into the ditch bottom. The ditch, when open, must therefore have demanded quite regular maintenance.

Overall date

The quantity of pottery from the bottom silts of the ditch (Assemblage 1) have allowed us to speculate on the date for the digging of the ditch. The silt contexts produced 106 sherds of Atrebatic overlap pottery (72 sherds) and early imports (34 sherds). Unfortunately, this key assemblage is unsuitable for any kind of meaningful quantification, as it is largely made up of a number of fresh sherds from just a handful of vessels. The imported vessels included an Arretine cup which is stamped MENA. AVILI and dated to c. 10 BC—AD 10. There was no sign of wear on the fragments from this cup. None of the Arretine sherds show any trace of abrasion in their breaks. The digging of this ditch is likely to have taken place in the pre-Claudian period.

Interpretation and comment

Since the width of the ditch nearly filled the whole of the trench, there was no indication of whether the ditch was associated with any bank. The current interpretation of this ditch is that it represents a feature excavated for reasons of demarcation, if not defence. As such, it represents the first definitive Late Iron Age earthworks from the pre-Palace landscape. Clearly much work needs to be done to answer some of the basic questions regarding this feature — such as whether it was associated with a bank, where the feature went (both to the east and west), whether there were any buildings north or south of it that can be stratigraphically linked to it and, crucially, whether the feature turned a corner at any point and therefore formed part of an enclosure.

In addition, since the flanking wall or boundary wall running northwards from Building 3 did not appear in Area B, the question of where the flanking wall terminated or turned remains unanswered. It is possible that the flanking wall turned to the east before it reached the ditch and ran eastwards, parallel with and to the south of the ditch. This begs questions of the relationship, functionally and chronologically, between ditch and wall. Such questions might well form the research focus of another campaign of excavations at Fishbourne.³¹

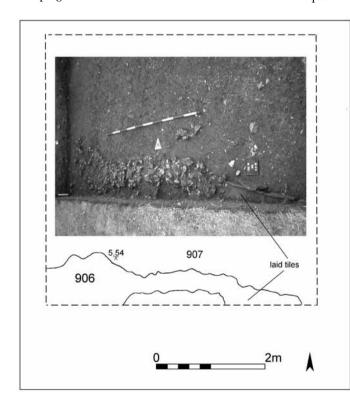


Fig. 159. Phase BD: the line of smashed pottery.

PHASE BB: c. AD 25? – RED CLAY CAPPING IN EARLY DITCH

Summary

There is no doubt that when it was no longer required, the ditch was deliberately backfilled with material resembling redeposited natural (C913) possibly from a demolished bank (Figs 156, 157, 166).

Description

Context 913 comprised a mottled buff-to-red clay deposit, measuring some 2.3 m north to south, and about 0.65 m deep. It was relatively stone-free, but the mottles of different coloured clays, distributed throughout the deposit, indicated that it was only moderately sorted. At first this deposit was presumed to represent the top of the natural undisturbed Reading Beds clay, but test excavation revealed that it had been deliberately placed by human agency. It was excavated in four spits of roughly 150 mm depth: contexts 913, 913.2, 913.3, 913.4.

Finds

The bulk finds from the capping included small quantities of ceramic building material, imported

and local sherds, animal bones and shells. The small finds from the capping included three sherds of imported ware and a copper-alloy brooch.

How the features were formed

There is little doubt how the red-clay capping was formed. It looked like material that had initially been dug out of the ditch and may have once formed the core of material in a bank associated with the ditch. After the ditch was no longer required, the remains of the bank were presumably shovelled back into the ditch to fill it up flush with the extant ground surface.

Overall date

One piece of Arretine ware from the capping is a sherd from an Augustan or Tiberian dish (SF 11794). A total of 141 sherds comprising a mixture of imported and local wares came from the red clay. The dating evidence suggests that the red clay was dumped back into the ditch sometime before AD 43, and given that the ceramics and animal bones do not show signs of excessive deterioration through

weathering, an early date of c. AD 25 or 30 is suggested.

Interpretation and comment

The current interpretation of this ditch is that it represents a feature excavated for demarcation, if not defence. The deliberate slighting, represented by the red clay capping, suggests that the need for a such a boundary was not felt after *c*. AD 30.

PHASE BC: c. AD 50-80? - WESTERN PITS Summary

Two pits, one on top of the other, seem to have been excavated through the red clay capping of the ditch, on the western side of Area B (Fig. 158). The earlier pit had grey silt (C928) towards its bottom, capped by redeposited brickearth (C927). The later pit had a charcoal-rich layer (C918) at the bottom, again capped by a sealing of clay (C917).

Description

The uppermost fill of the later pit may have been formed by context 908. This was a dark brown, well-sorted silty clay with 5% stone content of flint and gravel fragments up to 50 mm in size. It smelt at times. It lay in a rectangular area on the western side of the excavation and measured some 1.5 m north–south by 1 m east–west and was about 300 mm in depth. It contained quantities of pottery and bone, and contrasted sharply with the

sealing of clay beneath (C917). This latter context was a brownish-yellow mottled clay, moderately sorted, with 10% rounded flint nodules up to 80mm in length. The clay appeared initially as a band around the east side of the pit, but it did slope down to the west and was approximately 100mm deep. The bottom of the upper pit was represented by a dark greyish brown sandy clay (C918), containing up to 5% stones. The latter comprised some exotic stones, such as two fragments of Mixon limestone, and some fire-cracked flint nodules. The maximum thickness of this deposit was 250 mm, but it thinned towards the upper, southern edge of the pit. The



Fig. 160. The line of pottery, from the east: phase BD.

deposit was rich in charcoal, fragments of bone and pottery sherds.

The top of the lower pit was formed by redeposited brickearth (C927). This context comprised a yellowish-brown sandy clay loam with up to 10% rounded flint and gravel. Within the matrix were occasional lumps of red clay and some oyster shells. The lower fill (928) comprised a dark, yellowish brown well-sorted silty clay; it was stone-free and about 100mm thick. Underneath this lower fill lay the bottom deposit of the pit (C938). This was a poorly-sorted, grey silty clay with 10% stones comprising flint and gravel nodules up to 10 mm in

length. The deposit measured some 0.95 m northsouth by 500 mm deep and was roughly circular in shape. The top of the capping layer (C919) for the east-west ditch lay partly underneath the lower fill (928), while the deepest part of the pit was cut into natural red clay.

Finds

The bulk finds from the earlier pit included ceramic building material, shell and animal bones. The 19 small finds included samian sherds, fragments of glass and a gaming counter. The bulk finds from the later pit included quantities of ceramic building material, pottery, animal bones and fragments of iron; the small finds numbered 109 items. Represented as Minimum Number of Individuals the animal bones from C918 were as follows:

Table 4. Animal bones from context 918.									
918	cattle	horse	sheep	pig	deer				
	3	1	2	3	-				

How the features were formed

The problem with these two pits is determining whether they had been actually dug as pits, or whether the layers of infill were simply layers that were dumped into the linear ditch as part of the levelling process. If the former, and certainly the earlier pit seemed to possess a circular and well-dug bottom, then the original function of the pit(s) is unknown. The infilling layers were seemingly rubbish thrown into these pits to fill them up after they were no longer needed. The later pit certainly seems to fit this process better than representing a purpose-dug pit.

Overall date

The dark, greyish-brown sandy clay (C918) produced a substantial collection of 489 sherds (Assemblage 6) of pre-Flavian pottery, including Arretine wares and pre-Flavian samian For the earlier pit the latest samian sherds suggest a Neronian date for the infilling of the pit. From the later pit the samian sherds again suggest a Neronian date for its infilling. The later pit also produced a fragment of leaded bronze from a pre-Flavian seal box (SF11816 context 918). It would appear from the above that the two pits were not separated by many years, and, indeed, could have been part of the same levelling process.

Interpretation and comment

On balance, it is suggested here that these contexts

represent rapidly dumped infills of depressions in the top of the linear ditch; both, in theory, could have been dumped in a time as short as one year. The most significant evidence from these contexts, at present, is that they are well-dated, to no later than the Neronian period.

PHASE BD: LATE 1ST CENTURY/EARLY 2ND **CENTURY - LINE OF SMASHED TILE AND POT**

Up against the southern section of Area B was a slightly curved line of smashed tile and pottery (C906), about 100 mm in depth and 400 mm wide. At the eastern end of this line were two roof tiles laid face-up. A keyed box-tile from a hypocaust was found directly under the flat tiles. The line of debris lay on top of a buried ground surface (C914), and the lowest level of the midden deposits, C907, was probably forming at the same time (Figs 159, 160).

Description

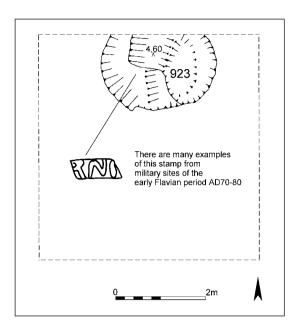
The matrix which contained the smashed artefacts was a dark-brown silty clay. It contained about 3% stones, consisting of one piece of Mixon limestone and two pieces of angular flint up to 150mm in length. Up to 80% of the context was formed by the broken pottery, with occasional broken tile and brick fragments, and infrequent fragments of animal bone. To the immediate west of the rooftiles was a small cache of large flint and greensand blocks. Context 914 consisted of soft, sandy clay, about 100 mm in thickness, which lay directly on top of the natural brickearth.

Finds

The small finds from contexts 906 and 914 comprised approximately 20 objects, including sherds of samian, nails and one tessera. The bulk finds included ceramic building material, animal bones and iron objects.

How the features were formed

It is difficult to be certain about how this feature was formed. Some elements looked deliberately placed, such as the two contiguous tiles face-up. Presumably these tiles were being used in a secondary context, and had originally been used on a roof. Is it possible that originally this feature comprised a complete line of contiguous tiles forming the base of a drain? If so, it is conceivable that, after the drain went out of use, most of the tiles were removed and a line of broken tile and pottery was used to fill the void.



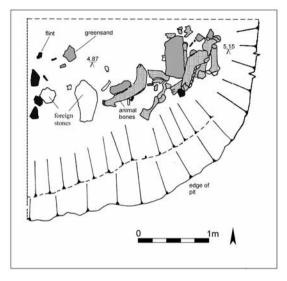


Fig. 163. Phase BF: animal bones filling part of the northern pit.

Fig. 161. Phase BF: plan of the northern pit.



Fig. 162. Animal bones and stones in the northern pit; from the west.

Overall date

The fine and coarse wares comprised 222 sherds of late-1st- and early- 2nd century pottery. Nine sherds of late-1st-century pottery came from the old ground surface (C914). The samian sherds are all of pre-Flavian date.

Interpretation and comment

The dating suggests that this feature was filled in during the early 2nd century. If it functioned as a drain, it may well have been operational in the latter half of the 1st century, and probably after the

Palace was constructed. Given that only a 5-metre length of the feature was uncovered in the trench, its origin and ultimate destination are unknown. However, the stream lies only some 20 metres to the west and a drain here would have discharged into it.

PHASE BE: ROMAN MIDDEN – LATE 1ST TO LATE 3RD CENTURIES

Summary

A thick deposit of silty soil containing numerous finds and also large lumps of flint and greensand lay mostly on top of the line of smashed pottery

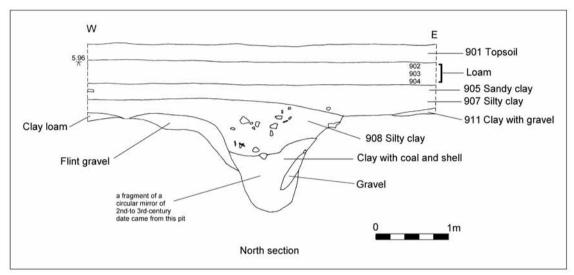


Fig. 164. Area B: north section, providing a section through the northern pit.

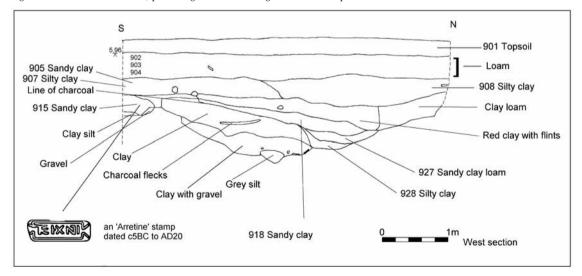


Fig. 165. Area B: west section, providing a section across the ditch and western pits.

(C906) and the filled-in western pits. This deposit was divided into three contexts (from the uppermost: 904; 905; 907) and covered the entire extent

of the trench. It is possible that the lowest of the three (C907) was accumulating at the same time as the deposition of C906.

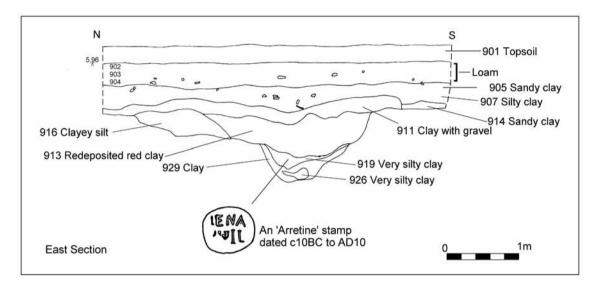


Fig. 166. Area B: east section, providing a section across the ditch.

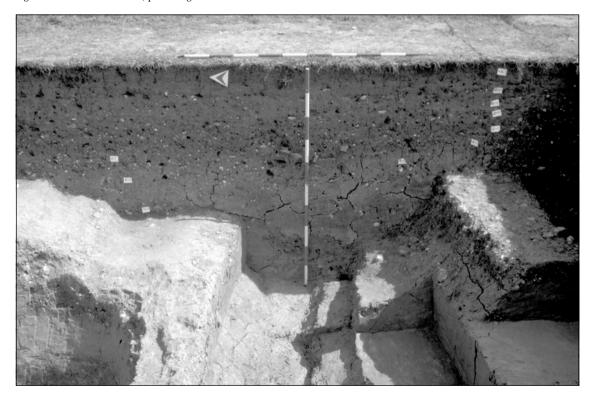


Fig. 167. Ditch: east section.

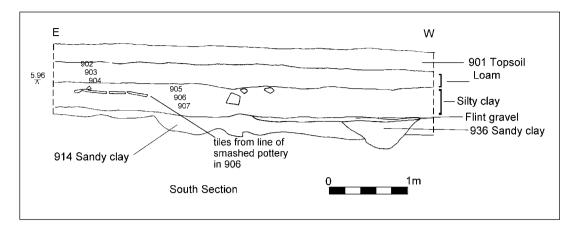


Fig. 168. Area B: south section.

Description

Contexts 904 and 905 consisted of a dark yellowish-brown silty clay which had a distinctive smooth and silty feel to it. They were not very well-sorted and were 5% stony, consisting of large pieces of greensand, tile and angular flint up to 200 mm in size. Some of the tile fragments were on edge. The deposits were about 200 mm in thickness. Underneath was C907, which was largely similar in composition, except that the tile, flint and greensand fragments were fewer in frequency and only up to 60 mm in length. It was noticeable that it was only when C904 was being excavated that a large quantity of Roman brick and tile was recovered, in relation to the deposits below.

Finds

The small finds from these three contexts comprised over 500 objects including sherds of samian, nails, patterned tiles and tesserae. The bulk finds from these three contexts included ceramic building material, pottery, iron fragments, shell and animal bone. Represented as Minimum Number of Individuals the animal bones from the contexts were as follows:

Table 5. Animal bones from contexts 905, 907.								
	cattle	horse	sheep	pig	deer			
905	5	1	3	3	2			
907	3	1	4	5	1			

How the features were formed

The uniformity of this deposit, with its very silty and greasy feel, suggests that this may have been a dumping area for domestic rubbish and organic waste during the Roman period.

Overall date

The coarse wares from the three contexts indicate that rubbish deposition may have ceased in the later 3rd century, while it may have begun during the second half of the 1st century. The presence of some sherds of 4th century pottery from the lowest level (907) of this midden (and a possible 4th century coin: SF11089) suggests that there was a good degree of mixing of material during the formation of this deposit. The great number of samian sherds from the three contexts reveal that the samian from the lowest level of the midden (907) is, not surprisingly, the earliest in date, being all largely pre-Flavian. From the upper levels of the midden the sherds are later 1st and 2nd century in date. As remarked below, this may suggest that the samian sherds were deposited some considerable time after the date of manufacture of the vessels.

Interpretation and comment

The uniformity of these deposits and their smooth, silty feel suggests that the whole of Area B, after the linear ditch had been capped, was reserved for deliberate dumping of broken pottery, tile and organic waste, including probably food debris. It is more than likely that such refuse came from the adjacent Palace.

PHASE BF: LATE 1ST TO 4TH CENTURIES - NORTHERN PIT

Summary

Part of a large pit of unknown size lay in the northern half of the excavation. The section of pit excavated was approximately semicircular and had a variety of fills including silts at the very bottom (C935), greensand rubble and large animal bones (Figs 161, 162, 163).

Description

The fill of the northern pit was excavated in spits of 100 mm to 150 mm (contexts 909 to 909.6). However, the character of the spits in some cases was quite different. The upper fills consisted of a very dark, grevish brown silty clay, which was well-sorted and seemingly water-lain. The deposit smelt at this stage before it dried out. Contained within the deposit were pieces of greensand, flint and Purbeck marble, up to 150 mm in size. There were also other finds including fragments of bone, large pieces of tile, pottery sherds and oyster shells. One of the pieces of greensand looked as though it had been worked. The overall dimensions of the deposit were 1.4 m north-south, by 2.15 m east-west by approximately 0.75 m deep. Large animal bones were uncovered in layer 909.2. The bones comprised the following Minimum Number of Individuals: pig (6); cattle (6); horse (4); sheep (2). At the bottom of this sequence (909.6) was seemingly a dump of large greensand blocks, many of them worked, and tile, bricks and flint, which appeared to be demolition debris. From this deposit also came large flecks of charcoal, some tesserae and fragments of Horsham stone.

There were a number of contexts which seemed either to line the southern edge of the pit, or to have slumped into and over the southern edge of the pit. These were as follows: context 912 was a curving strip of reddish clay, containing rounded flint up to 50mm in size. It seemed to form an edging to the pit on the south-eastern side. Context 925 was similarly a deposit of yellowish brown sandy clay, well-sorted, clinging to the south edge of the pit. It was 5% stony containing angular and rounded flint up to 50mm in size. Context 933 consisted of a deposit of oyster shells in a silty clay matrix against the southern edge of the pit. 934 comprised a buff clay, well-sorted and stone-free, lining the outer edges of the pit and covering the bottom silts (935) of the pit.

The bottom of the pit was filled by a brown silty clay (C935), moderately-sorted and almost stone-free. It was excavated in three spits: contexts 935; 935.2 and 935.3. The deposit contained charcoal flecks, chalk flecks and pottery. In particular a quantity of oyster shells were found in the lowest spit of C935, which contained a deposit of dark sand. Only a part of the northern pit (and the western pits) were in the excavated area. The excavated part of the northern pit measured c. 1.42 m north–south, by 1.73 m east–west by about 1 m in overall depth. It had an irregular bottom and quite steep sides.

Finds

The bulk finds from the pit included substantial quantities of pottery, ceramic building material, stone, shell and animal bone. The small finds from the pit included over 200 objects, mostly sherds of samian, but also some patterned tile, tesserae, a nail and a gaming counter.

How the features were formed

The pit was originally excavated by hand for an unknown purpose. It is unlikely that it was excavated in order to deposit building rubble and animal waste. After its original use was over (or during it), some silts collected in the bottom of the pit before a deliberate in-filling of building rubble and animal bones was thrown into it.

Overall date

The fine and coarse wares suggest that the primary silts at the bottom of the pit (C935) were being deposited around the end of the 1st century AD. The bulk of the infilling (C909), however, may have occurred in the 3rd and 4th centuries. A different picture is provided by the date of the samian pottery. Most of the samian sherds from the upper fills of the pit are 1st century in date, suggesting that all of the samian vessels were probably at least a century old before they were broken and deposited in the pit. A coin of Vespasian, was recovered from a deposit down the south-eastern side of the pit (C933).

Interpretation and comment

The original use of the pit remains uncertain. It is possible that further information on its function could be obtained by excavating to the north of Area B to determine the overall size of the feature. The dating is reasonably secure, since the pitfills contained abundant finds. It is noteworthy, however,

that the samian sherds from the upper fills are of a much earlier date than the coarse pottery. The large blocks of worked and unworked greensand from the upper fills suggest that the pit was finally filled during a major phase of demolition of nearby buildings. This could, of course, have coincided with the final abandonment of the Palace. It is likely, therefore, that as the midden formed to the south of it, the pit remained a visible feature until the close of the 3rd century. It should be noted that during the excavation of the northern pit there was much debate, ultimately unresolved, about whether the animal bones had been deliberately and meaningfully placed in the pit, rather than casually discarded.

These bones represented the biggest single 'cache' of animal bones in the five seasons of excavation.

PHASE BG: MEDIEVAL ☐ Summary

A naturally formed topsoil (C903) developed on top of the organically rich Roman midden. Almost certainly, earthworm and animal activity had resulted in a considerable mixing of the finds between C903 and the underlying Roman midden.

PHASE BH: POST-MEDIEVAL ☐ Summary

This phase is represented by a topsoil which was forming during the post-medieval period.