

Trench FF/G description

This trench was excavated in 1992 and 1993 and uncovered the vaulted undercroft of the eastworks built over several phases of kiln activity.

Phase 3b

The tile kiln structure which represents the earliest phase is the continuation of the tile kiln uncovered in FF/H, in this trench the ends of the flues were found cut into the clays as in FF/H. The flue walls are 5624, 5625 and 5627, which relate to 5500, 5501 and 5770 respectively in FF/H. The demolished remains of the kiln (which are filled by a number of mortar layers 5626, 5645 - with tile frags and charcoal and no other significant finds) are covered by layer 5586 a pink-brown clay and mortar layer with frequent tile and brick inclusions. An almost complete pot was recovered from this layer which was 0.6m deep. Also 112g of fired clay, 42g tile and a little crucible was found. 5586 was covered by 5584 - a hard white mortar, 10 cm deep (547.64-547.92 asl) and above this lay 5580, a yellow quartz mortar which was cut by the small bronze-working hearth 5581. The t-shaped hearth, which was u-shaped in profile and 20 cm. deep, contained a 10cm. layer of brown clay with a small amount of glass 2 frags and 1 glass tesserae. Above the clay was a 10cm. layer of grey-black ash containing charcoal, 2 glass frags and 39g of Cu slag.

Phase 4a

The small bronze-working hearth (enamels?) was covered by 5578, a layer of red-brown clay, 0.10m deep (547.95). The clay contained a significant assemblage of finds including 149g of pottery, 12g bone, 12 glass frags, 31 crucible frags, 16 pieces of Cu and Fe waste and lumps, and 5 pieces (56g) of bell-mould. To the east end of the trench, 5578 clay was covered by 5579, a grey-brown clay 0.25m deep and containing a few fragments of pottery and glass, 162g crucible, 24g of Cu slag, 10g Fe, a flint blade and 981g of bell-mould. The western two thirds of the trench were then covered by 5577, a yellow-brown mortary loam containing mortar, charcoal and a little glass (?). A rather complex mixture of deposits follows with the following stratigraphic sequence: 5552, a grey-brown clay loam with charcoal, soapstone, 556g pot; 43g bone; 40g glass; 300g crucible, 9g Cu/Ag slag and 1250g of bell-mould. The deposit was described as having a distinctive surface in which the pieces of bell-mould were visible. A number of small finds also recovered include a lead came sf 1370; an iron nail sf.1423; and a carnelian gemstone, probably a Roman ring setting, inscribed with medieval initials in the form of MA which is well

known from a number of 9th-century inscribed tiles at San Vincenzo (refs.). Three postholes 5570, 5571 and 5563, were cut into surface 5552, some three metres apart. A deposit or dump of yellow mortar lay to the south of these. The majority of the trench area was then covered by 5553, a light brown clay 0.10m deep (548.12-548.34) which contained a few fragments of pot, bone, glass, slag and 1 of bell-mould. In addition, 5553 contained a bronze coin(?), a flint flake and a fragment of daub containing leaf impressions. The hard clay was probably deposited to level off the bronze/bell-working area (is this same as clay leveller 5738 in FF/F which was deposited immediately after the construction of the foundations of wall 4610 (5831) (level 548.20-548-60).

These deposits can be tied quite securely to the bronze workshop and levelling layers in the adjacent corridor FF/F. In particular, the presence of bell-mould which is found in abundance in FF/G (post-tile and bronze) is also present in the last stages of bronze-working in the corridor (0.35 kg of mould which looks different on examination: different casting episode?) Bronze-working terminates in both areas by the construction of the foundations of wall 4610 and the levelling of the workshop using a layer of brown compact clay, onto which, are constructed the glass kilns. It should also be possible to relate the same activity to the bell tower or FF/c-2 and consequently, give a secure date for the casting of the bells. The present evidence from FF/g shows that the foundations of west wall 4610 were constructed immediately above the small bronze hearth. This was followed by the bell-working activity evident from bell-mould, which was then cut by the foundations of east wall 4976 (5955/6). We know that the wall dividing ff/g and ff/c-2 was constructed after 4976 - therefore the two areas must have been open until later (the glass workshop was constructed separately because 4610 separated it.) Was bell cast with 4610 in situ?

Phase 4b

A short stretch of wall, 5263, which was probably related to the kiln phases of this area was levelled over and masked with several layers of clay, most likely during the general build of the main church and the construction of wall 4610. It seems that wall 4610 along with walls 4712 on the south side and 5391 on the north side were the first walls of the atrium of San Vincenzo Maggiore, part of the initial construction plan perhaps. Rough floor layers were laid; 4851 in this trench, 5791 in Trench K and 5588 in FF/F, these seem to be a builders' yard surface related to the building of the church.

Phase 5a

The builders' yard surface was cut by the foundation cut for the construction of the main eastworks wall 4976, a series of arches; 5251, 5249 and 5248 were built against this wall while their matching partners; 5160, 5161 and 5162 were built against wall 4610 creating a vaulted undercroft. 2 end walls; 5136 at the south end and 5244 at the north end, were built dividing off this undercroft with a doorway in the northern most wall. This division enabled the towers of the eastwork to be built probably using existing earlier walls as foundations from the kiln phases creating FF/H and FF/C-2. The layer 4810, which covers the fills of the arches construction cuts, possibly represents a make-up layer for a stone floor surface in this undercroft.

There doesn't appear to be any later occupation of this area in the forms of kilns and a series of tip deposits, clays and rubble deposits fill the area after the final abandonment of the area.