

2.6 The Roman canal in trenches 2 and 4

Catalogue

F874 Tr2 D240185-D210375 Channel Phase: Roman

Rels: c.b. F944; b. (507), (522), (542); c. Nat; cnt. (540), (543)

Length: 13 m Width: top: 4.3 m; base: 3.9 m Depth: 1.0–1.18 m

Description: Wide linear feature, aligned NNE–SSW, with a flat base and sloping sides, which only survived for the basal 0.15–0.2 m. The upper edges had been completely truncated by the later field lynchet F944. The base had a few irregularities in the northern cutting 1. [Deliberately cut channel with water-worn base.]

Fill: 2/(540) Flint gravel *c.*25 mm, plus a moderate density of abraded flint nodules 60–120 mm in a matrix of yellowish-grey chalk and flint grit and sand. [High energy water-lain sediment in base of channel.]

1/(543) Yellowish-brown flint gravel, grit and sand. [Water-lain sediments in base of channel.] Not fully ex.; see (540) for detailed description.

Small Finds: 2577 Fe frag., 2738 Fe bent flat bar, 2737 Fe nails; 2711, 2713 Pb disc and obj.

Samples: Sediment, snails

Artefacts: Pottery, clay tile, bone, stone, flint, oyster shell

F940 Tr2 D264183-D284172 Channel: subsidiary Phase: Roman

Rels: b. (507); c. Nat; eq. F874

Length: 2.5 m Width: top: 1.25 m; base: 0.34–0.62 m Depth: 1.18–1.27 m

Description: The west end only of this feature was exposed in excavation. At its west end it formed a junction with F874, with which it appeared to be contemporary. It was aligned WNW–ESE set at right angles to F874. It had a U-shaped profile with a curving dished base and sloping sides at an angle of *c.*55–60 degrees to the base at its west end, but the sides became much steeper and near vertical barely 2 m to the east. In the base were several rounded hollows varying from 0.18–0.35 m in diameter and *c.*0.04–0.12 m deep. These probably represent wear on the base from the flow of water. However two close to the junction were more in the character of stake-holes being 0.1–0.12 m in diameter and 0.2–0.3 m deep. Also a slot cut into the south side 0.25 x 0.2 m and 0.27 m deep appears to have been a deliberately cut feature. These features probably held a simple wooden structure, which could be used to control the flow of water down this side channel. Undercutting along the north side of the channel suggests fast-flowing water may have been directed past a sluice gate set diagonally across the channel from the slot in the south side.

Fill: (544) = (1) Mottled grey clayey silty sediment was mixed with a high density of sand and grit, which appeared to be predominantly fine chalk where pale grey mottles occurred, but otherwise was largely flint-derived. Occasional flint gravel and pebbles 15–20 mm also occurred. At the junction with the main channel two very large flint nodules 350–420 mm lay flat on the surface of this layer. These may have been used to dam the side channel at a late stage in its use after a lot of fine sediment had accumulated in it. [Water-lain sediment.]

(2) Large angular broken flint nodules 70–200 mm tightly packed with the voids between filled by angular flint grit and small gravel and pebbles up to 40 mm. The matrix around the stones was a light grey clayey silt. [The large flints appear to be a deliberate tip into the channel from the north side with fine water-borne sediment subsequently settled around them.]

(3) Grey silty clay containing a low density of flint grit and sand. This coarse material appears to have resulted largely from post-depositional translocation down root/worm channels indicating that the original deposit was almost exclusively fine material. This layer

was thickest at the west end of the channel infilling the worn hollow at the junction with F874 and thinned eastwards. [Water-lain sediment deposited in low energy environment.]

Samples: 3839 sediment

Artefacts: Pottery, clay tile, bone

F936 Tr4 D560705 Channel Phase: Roman

Rels: b. (496); c.b. F934; cnt. (528)–(535); c. Nat.

Length: 9.0 m Width: >1.6 m Depth: 1.1 m

Description: The channel base was flat and fairly smooth apart from some larger flints protruding through the eroded combe rock. The side was sloping and smooth with a rounded basal angle.

Fill: (535) The primary fill was a very loosely packed light yellowish-brown grit and sand mixed with a high density of angular–subangular flint gravel and rounded pebbles 10–50 mm and containing a scatter of larger angular flint nodules 100–120 mm, plus occasional clay tile grit. [This appeared to have been a water-lain deposit deriving from the combe rock and with the fine sediment eroded and washed away.]

(534) Against the west side in the basal angle overlying the primary gravels was a fine grey clayey silt, organic/humic, containing a low density of chalk grit and several angular flints 50–140 mm. A thin lens of charcoal fragments subdivided the layer horizontally and scattered charcoal fragments and soily smears appeared to divide the channel gravels (533, 535) across its whole width. [Tip of soil and trample during construction of F941.]

(533) A secondary deposit of water-lain gravels accumulated following the construction of F941. This was a loose, friable uncompacted layer of very pale brown silt and sand mixed with a high density of flint grit and angular–subangular gravel, rounded pebbles and some rounded lumps of combe rock, all up to *c.*40 mm with a scatter of larger blocks of flint and chalk up to 100 mm. [Natural accumulation of water-borne detritus eroded largely from combe rock.]

Artefacts: Pottery