

Wall Foundation 1

This wall foundation was made up of rounded flints (up to 180mm, but average around 100mm) in a lime mortar. The wall is 570-600mm wide and was revealed to a length of 14m in trench G. It was excavated to a depth of 320mm, the bottom not being reached. This feature was also present in trench H, where it forms the eastern wall of the main villa complex, is 60cm wide and was excavated to a depth of 38cm, again the bottom not being reached.

This section of wall foundation lined up with sections excavated previously and forms the western wall of the main villa complex (see figure 1). It is well made, bonded with mortar to a depth of at least 200mm, and extending to a depth of 850mm. The sides of the wall are vertical. It returns to the east, where it forms at least part of the northern wall of the villa.

An internal wall foundation extends from the western wall 6m from the northern wall. Initially this was thought to be the southern wall of Room V. However, comparison with previous years' plans show that it is 2-3m further north than previously encountered. One possibility is that the rooms were resized (see the 'double' wall between rooms I and II, and rooms II and III), but this will require further investigation.

A thin layer of mortar was observed within the baulk of trench G (see figures 12 & 13). This also contained small fragments of chalk, CBM and flint and is currently interpreted as the remains of the sub-floor layer. A similar spread was observed in plan in the southwest corner of trench J at exactly the same level.

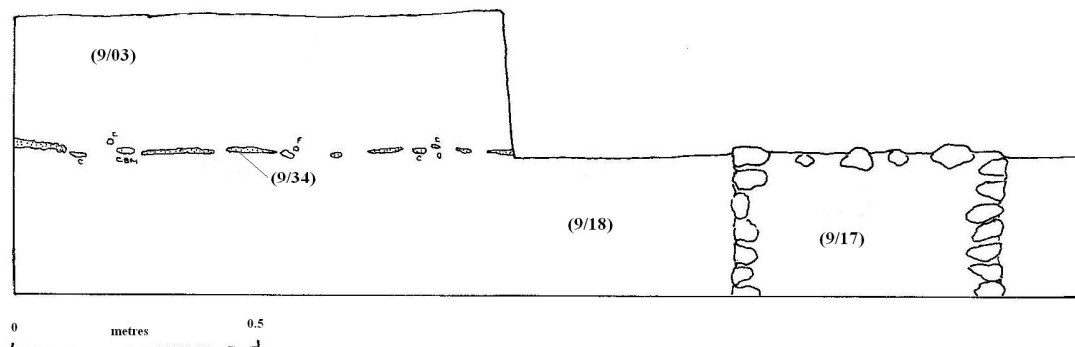


Figure 12 Section through baulk of Trench G showing sub-floor level.

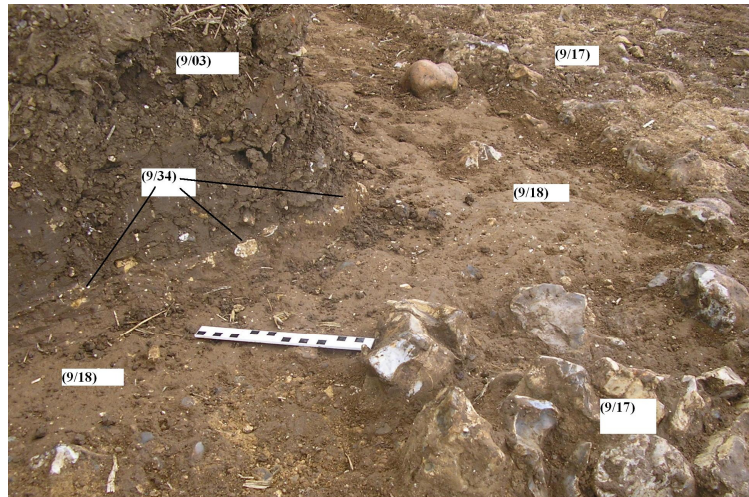


Figure 13 Photograph showing the sub-floor level in Trench G

Within Room V there was a small area (c.50 by 40cm) of burnt clay (context 9/25, see Figure 7). This could represent the position of a heat source within the room such as a brazier, or even an oven. Given the 'kitchen debris' in ditch A, it is likely that during at least one phase Room V was a kitchen.



Figure 14 Burnt area in Trench G

Wall Foundation 2

Wall foundation 2 is adjacent to wall foundation 1, and inside the villa. It consists of 2 courses of large (up to 270mm, average c.200mm) rounded flints, two or three flints wide (context 9/57). The width of the wall is 400mm and it extends to a depth of

260mm. The flints do not appear to be water worn and the flint itself is fresh and black beneath a thin patina. There is no mortar; the flints were well laid and packed with clay.



Figure 15 Photograph showing the relationship between contexts (9/17) & (9/57)

Immediately adjacent to this context and within the villa was a neo-natal burial (see figures 16 & 17). The skeleton was in an excellent state of preservation. Though the skull was crushed, most of the skeleton was recovered with the exception of the feet, in the area of which there was evidence of small mammal disturbance. It was not possible to establish a grave cut, neither did there appear to be any evidence of a coffin/receptacle. However, the body had been carefully placed and was in the foetal position. Immediately below the skeleton was a ridge of a 'ridge' of small flints (up to 8cm diameter, rounded and with an orangey patina, context 9/58). These align with a possible ditch feature, Ditch B, outside of wall 1, a feature that requires further investigation. The skeleton is currently undergoing analysis by Jackie McKinley of Wessex Archaeology.



Figure 16 Photograph of the neo-natal burial prior to lifting

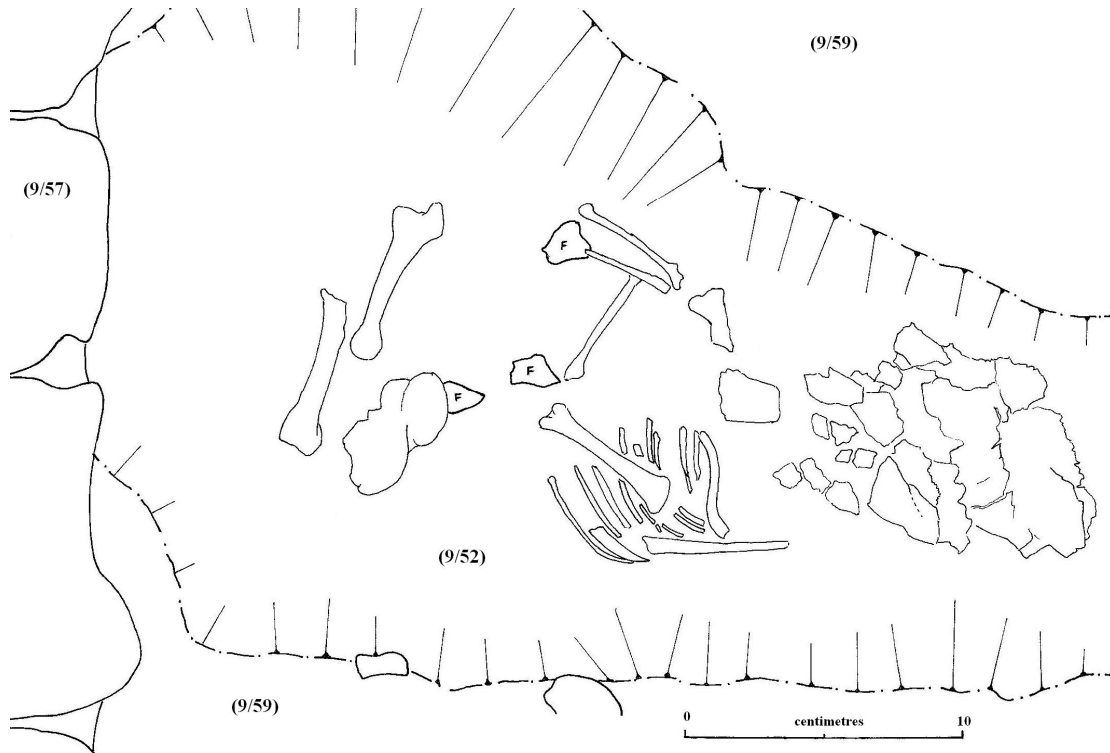


Figure 17 Plan of the neo-natal burial

Wall Foundation 3

This feature is a new feature uncovered in 2009, being seen in trenches H, J, L and M (see figure 8 and 18). It consists of rounded flints (up to 220mm diameter, the majority being in the range 100 to 150mm) packed together within a clay matrix. Finds from between the flints were sparse, but included chalk, sandstone, CBM and small pottery sherds. The width of the feature varies considerably from 870 to 480mm, and its depth (seen in several sondages) was in the range 200 to 290mm. The sides were never vertical; indeed, in one of the sondages it sloped inwards at 16° from the vertical. This features enclosed two areas, Rooms VI and VII. Each was

small comparative to the main range of rooms, Room VI being 4.3 by 3m, Room VII 4.3 by 2.1m.



Figure 18 Photograph looking east towards Trenches H (centre), J (left) and M (right).

This wall foundation is clearly a separate build to wall foundation 1. It is shallower by about 50cm and poorly constructed. The sides are not vertical and there is no mortaring. Its relationship with wall foundation 1 was seen in two places. In the northwest corner of trench H wall foundation 2 appears to overlie wall foundation 1. In trench M, the section of wall foundation 2 that forms the southern limit of Room VI does not reach wall foundation 1, there is a gap of 7cm between them (see figure 19).



Figure 19 Photograph of Trench M showing the gap between contexts (9/72) and (9/74).

The wall foundation separating Rooms VI and VII is on the same alignment as the eastern veranda wall seen in previous years. However, it is clearly a different phase of construction as the veranda wall showed mortaring with few large flints, and a very shallow depth (up to 150mm)

Objective 2 Interpretation

There appears to have been at least three phases of construction present in the northern part of the villa.

Phase 1 was the building of the five room corridor villa with an eastern and southern veranda. This was well built with foundations 800-850mm below the floor level. These foundations were mortared to a depth of c250mm, the flints held together by clay below this depth.

Phase 2 At some point, perhaps during phase 1 construction, there was instability of the wall bounding Room V. It is also possible that this instability happened post the construction of the corridor villa, with wall foundation 2 being built contemporaneously with phase 3. Either way, to redress the instability, wall foundation 2 was inserted inside the building. This would suggest that the original wall was subsiding inwards. It is interesting to note that there is a possible ditch cutting below the western wall of Room V and that this coincides with the positioning of the neo-natal burial. If the ditch was the cause of the instability, it could be that the burial was dedicatory in order to prevent further bad luck. It is hoped that this will be further investigated in future years.

Phase 3 was the addition of a small two room wing to the eastern side of the villa. From the poor quality of wall foundation 3, it is most likely that this addition was primarily a wood framed construction as the foundations would be unlikely to support a large load.

It is still difficult to identify the relationship between Ditch A and the villa. The ditch is certainly early, possibly even late Iron Age. There appears to have been an attempt to fill it with flints. Why this was done is unclear. One possibility is that if it was originally intended to build over the area occupied by the ditch, the flint fill would have provided more stable foundations. The problem with this is that the villa bears a strong resemblance, in design and construction to other 2nd-3rd century villas in the area. However, the contents in the top of Ditch A suggest a 1st/2nd century fill. That being the case, the ditch was filled well before the villa was constructed. More work is needed before we can interpret the function of Ditch A and its history.

Objective 3 How much survives of the villa complex survives?

To date WAS's activity on the site has focused on the building itself. Three evaluation trenches (G, H & K, see Figure 20) were machine dug to investigate the immediate surrounding of the villa prior to future work.

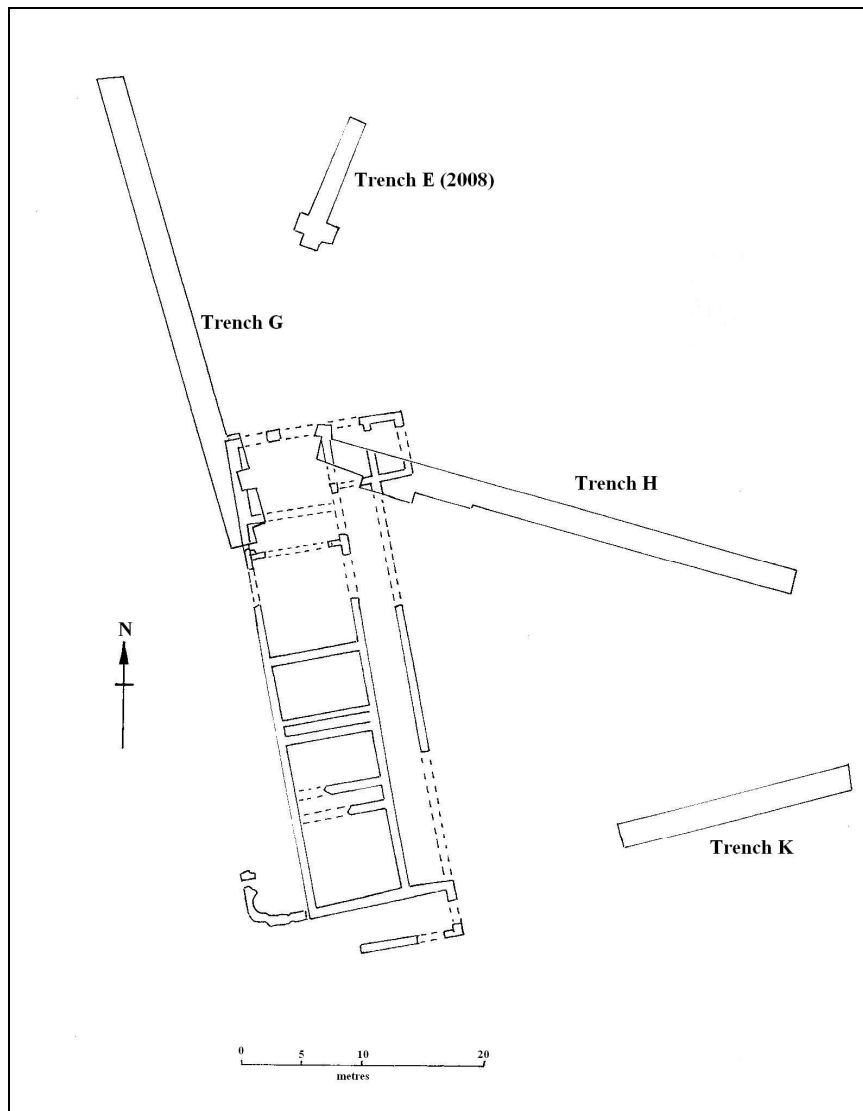


Figure 20 Plan of site showing Trenches G, H & K

Trench G

This was a 40m long trench extending from the North West corner of the villa. It was positioned to establish the North West corner of the building, cut the ditch seen in 2008 (see earlier for both these) and evaluate the archaeology to the north of the villa. The only feature of note was a spread of flints (see figure) approximately 5m wide and having an east-west orientation. There was insufficient time to investigate further, though it was noted that a similar spread was seen in Trench E in 2008. This could be a road/track way associated with the villa.

Trench H

Another 40m long, machine dug trench, positioned to establish the north east corner of the villa (see earlier) and evaluate the archaeology on the eastern side of the villa. Only two features were noted.

Pit 2 was found close to the south east corner of Room VII. It was oval in plan, the long axis measuring 1.1m, the short axis 0.8m (see figures 21). It appeared to have been sealed by a covering including much wall plaster and chalk, beneath which was a dark, finer context that smelt of burning when uncovered.

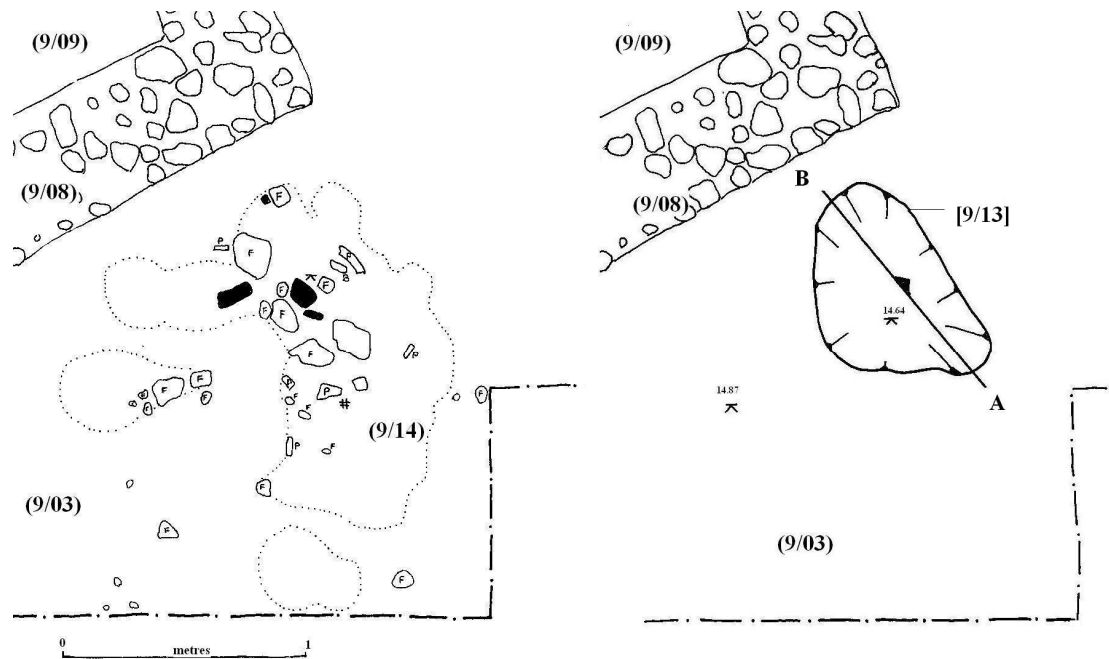


Figure 21 Pit 2, left prior to excavation, right post excavation

At the eastern end of trench H was a small spread of what appears to be late Iron Age pottery. However, there were no discernable features associated with this.

Trench K

Trench K was opened on an east west orientation in line with the southern wall of the villa. The trench was located to examine a possible anomaly picked up on the geophysics undertaken in 2006.

Due to time constraints, the trench was not fully investigated, but two main areas of interest were recorded.

West end

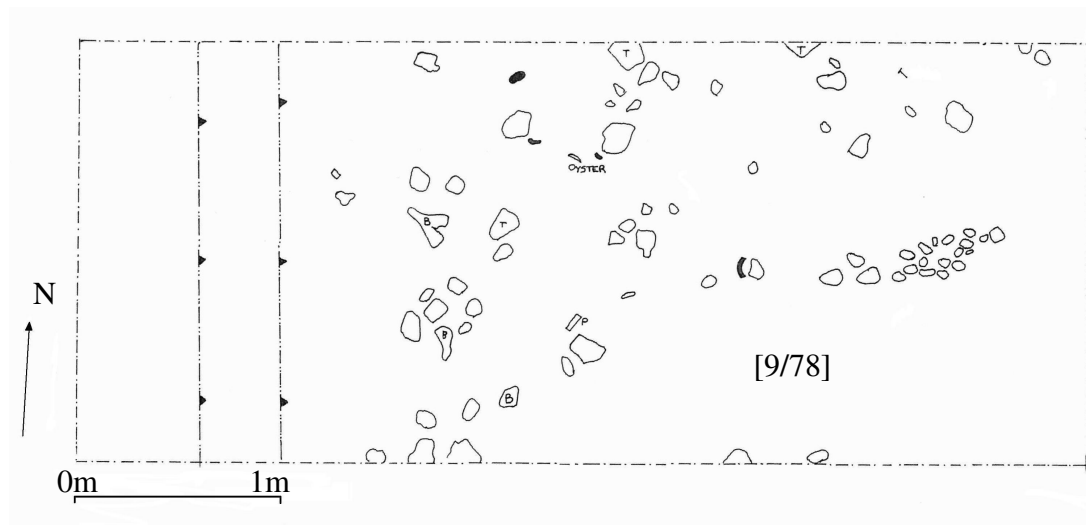


Figure 22 Trench K West End

The west end of the trench was only cleaned up, but there was a distinct spread of flint, chalk, CBM, bone (including a horse jaw), pot, oyster and metal work. Although there were no immediately definable features located, the spread of material has been recorded, and will be a target for future year's investigation.

East End

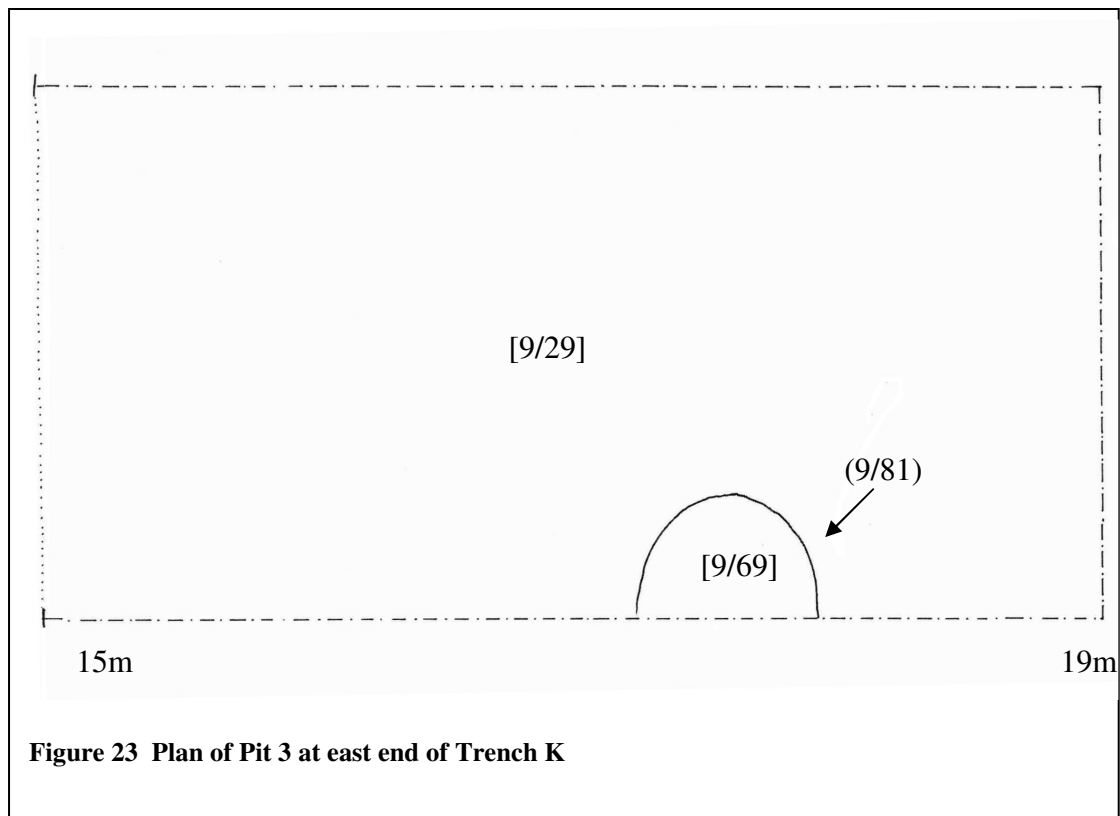


Figure 23 Plan of Pit 3 at east end of Trench K

At the east end of the trench, in the southern section, in the southern section, a small partial shallow pit-like feature was uncovered. The pit its self was filled with a quantity of pottery, which on initial analysis appears to be late Iron Age or very early Roman in date.

Although this pit may give us a tantalising glimpse of the possibility of discovering more about the origins of the occupation of the site, there was not a large enough area opened to put the feature in context this year. Again, the further exploration of this feature and its surrounds will be part of the planning for future work.

Conclusion

The 2009 excavations provided more data concerning the history of the villa and enabled the identification of various phases of building. However, it has not been possible to establish a complete chronology for these phases.

The first phase was the construction of a five room, corridor villa with verandas to the east and south (see figure 25). This structure was well designed and built, having deep, flint and mortar foundations.

Subsequent to this, three phases of construction are identifiable, though it has not been possible to set them into a relative chronology. They have therefore been identified as Phase 2a (South), Phase 2b (North) and Phase 2c (North).

Phase 2a (South) started with the planned addition of a bathhouse to the southwest corner of the structure. It would appear that it was decided to take advantage of the bathhouse furnace to heat room I. To facilitate this, a hole was cut in the foundations of the west wall of phase I adjacent to the furnace. The architect erred on the calculations, the hole meeting the dividing wall between rooms I and II. In order to solve this problem, the dividing wall was removed, which required the construction of a new one 1.5m further north. This shortened room II and necessitated the removal of the partition wall between rooms II and III, a new one being positioned 1m to the north. It may be that there was further adjustment of the dividing walls between rooms III and IV, and rooms IV and V.

Phase 2b (North) occurred when there was a problem of stability with the northwest corner of the phase 1 build and buttressing was added within room V.

Phase 2c (North) involved the addition of two rooms (VI and VII) to the northeast corner of the phase 1 build, these forming an insipient wing. New foundations were laid for these rooms, the foundations being of poor construction being shallow and with no mortar between the flints. It is likely that the structure above these foundations would have been timber framed at the least and probably completely built of timber.

The relationship between ditch 1 and the villa remains enigmatic. The ditch was originally V-shaped until it was partially filled with flints. Subsequently it was filled with what appears to be kitchen waste. This latter contained a large quantity of pottery, and initial analysis suggests a late first, early 2nd century AD date for this fill. It also suggests relatively high status.

The phase I villa bears close comparison, in terms of design and construction, with other others in Sussex, such as Chilgrove 1, Bignor (phase II), Littlehampton and Goring. These structures at these sites date to the 3rd and early 4th centuries AD. This date is also supported for the Walberton villa by the coin evidence, which indicates a focus of economic activity in the late 3rd, early 4th century AD.

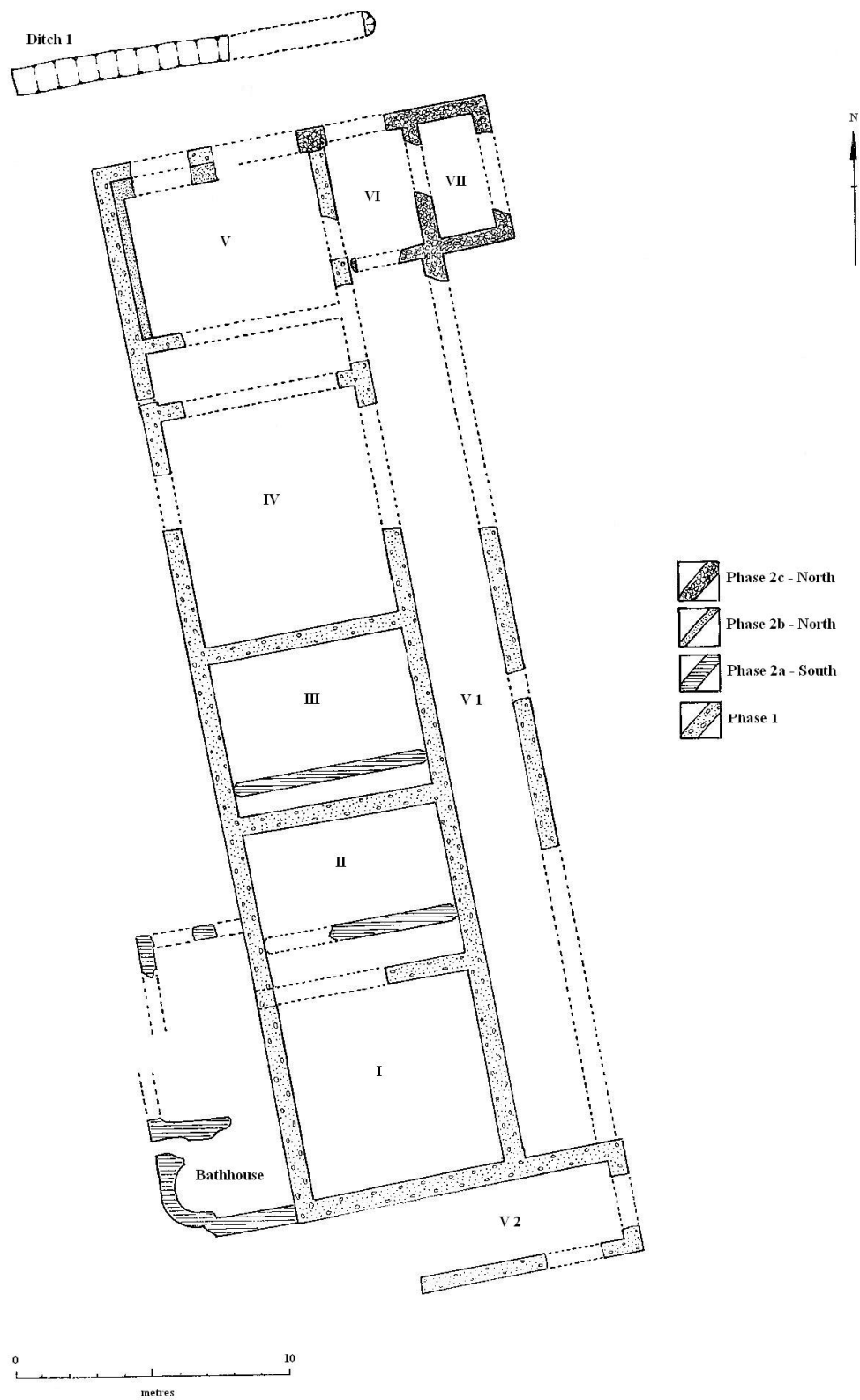


Figure 24 Phasing of the Villa

If this dating is accepted, there is a disparity of dates between the fill of ditch 1 and the construction of the villa, and a lacuna in the archaeological record covering the late 2nd, early 3rd century AD. More work on the finds may help to resolve this, but it is likely that further excavation will be necessary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would also like to thank May Gurney for their generous sponsorship by providing the digger and operator that greatly speeded the removal of the top soil.

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We would also like to express our thanks to John Mills (County Archaeologist) for his interest and guidance in the excavations.