



Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi

Interim report on excavations in 2010



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Abstract

The Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi (AGEN) carried out excavations in the Samegrelo region of western Georgia for the tenth consecutive season at the site of Nokalakevi (Archaeopolis). The excavation season took place between the 19th July 2010 and the 13th August 2010 and was carried out by a team of British and Georgian professionals with the assistance of student volunteers from Britain and Georgia.

During this season, work continued in Trench A, located next to the eastern fortification wall, in which further inhumation burials of Hellenistic date were uncovered as well as further limestone foundations relating to a series of previously unexposed Hellenistic structures.

This season also saw the reopening of the whole of Trench B located some 60m to the west of Trench A. A sondage was excavated in the southern part of the trench to expose and record further archaeological remains with a view to completing and backfilling this area. Three early Christian period inhumations were revealed and recorded during these excavations.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This document is an interim report of the results of the excavation undertaken at Nokalakevi in the 2010 season. A comprehensive report covering all the work undertaken since 2001 will be produced in the near future.
- 1.1.2 The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with Georgian state legislation regarding excavation within ancient monuments and the relevant permissions were sought from and granted by the Georgian Ministry of Culture.
- 1.1.3 All aspects of the fieldwork complied with the Standards and Guidance, and Codes of Conduct of the UK 'Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA 2001).

1.2 Site Background and Location

- 1.2.1 Nokalakevi (which translates roughly as 'ruins where once a town was') is located in the west of Georgia in the province of Samegrelo, 15.5km northeast of Senaki (Figure 1). It sits in a loop of the River Tekhuri at the edge of the Colchian plain with hills on its northern and western perimeters. The site consists of an upper citadel atop a high hill and a lower town on the river terrace below, linked by strongly fortified walls.

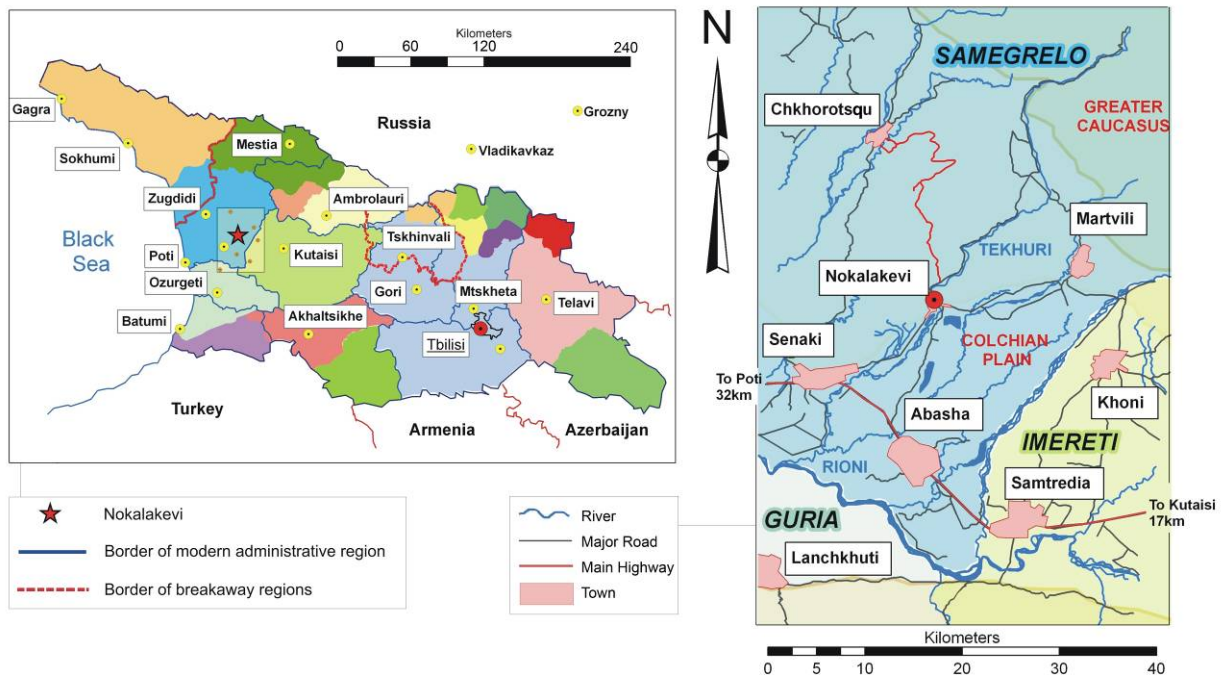


Figure 1: The location of Nokalakevi (Everill et al 2010)

- 1.2.2 Since the turn of the millennium, AGEN has focused on two areas within the walls, Trenches A and B. Trench A lies adjacent to the eastern fortification wall of the lower town, just north of the east gate. Work has been ongoing in this trench since 2001 and it was expanded to its current size (10m east-west by 13m north-south) in 2004. Since successfully bringing all parts of Trench A

back into phase in 2006 a series of multi-phased structural foundations and burials were uncovered within a rich Hellenistic layer.

- 1.2.3 Trench B, located some 60m to the west of Trench A, was opened in 2002 and measures 7.5m east-west by 20m north-south. Excavation in Trench B was suspended during the 2006 to 2008 field seasons in order to concentrate resources on Trench A, but in 2009 it was re-opened with a view to reaching new cultural layers.

1.3 2010 Field Season

- 1.3.1 The staff and volunteers arrived in Nokalakevi on Saturday 17th July 2010. Work began on Monday 19th July with the reopening of both Trench A and B for the season's excavation. Protective layers of plastic and backfill from the end of the 2009 season were removed from the base of the trench. Excavation took place between Monday 19th July and Friday 13th August 2010.
- 1.3.2 The expedition staff, led by Professor David Lomitashvili (Head of the Expedition) and Ian Colvin, consisted of twelve specialists in total. The Georgian team was composed of Dr Besik Lortkipanidze (Historian), Dr Nino Kebuladze (Finds Conservator), Nikoloz Murghulia and Ano Tvaradze (Site Supervisor). The British team consisted of Dr Paul Everill and Ben Neil (Co-Directors of AGEN), Adam Slater and Laura James (Site Supervisors) and Dr Jane Timby (Pottery Specialist). The team were joined this year by Belgian Zooarchaeologist Ben Gruwier.
- 1.3.3 Our Georgian participants were: Giorgi Lomitashvili, Salome Jamburia, Nino Chkhartishvili, Shorena Khetsuriani, Ani Mgeladze, Beka Lomitashvili and Qetalia Tamazashvili.
- 1.3.4 Our British volunteers were: Clara Dickinson, Naomi Humphreys, Richard Scurr (University of Winchester); Becky Griffiths, Clara Schonfeld (University of Southampton); Jessica Bennett, Lydia Critchley, Alice De Jong, Kimberly Dowding, Zofia Matyjaskiewicz, Lisa Morris, Lonia Shepherd and Ellen Wright (University of Bradford)
- 1.3.5 Although the entire field team were involved in the initial opening of both Trench A and Trench B at the beginning of the season, it was necessary to distribute the field staff and volunteers between the two trenches once they were both fully operational. Trench A supervision was undertaken by Nikoloz Murghulia and Adam Slater with a team of between 5 and 10 student volunteers, while Trench B was supervised by Laura James and Ano Tvaradze with between 7 and 11 students. Lydia Critchley acted as Project Assistant.

1.4 2010 Aims and Objectives

- 1.4.1 The broad aims and objectives for the 2010 field season, based on previous work within each trench, were outlined in last year's report (Grant et al 2010). For Trench A these were as follows:

- To clean layer **217** in the northwest corner of the trench to the immediate south of **232** in order to clarify whether further burials are in fact present.
- To continue excavation around the cobbled area in the southern part of the trench in an attempt to clarify its function and to ascertain whether it is a continuation of **232** or is in fact isolated.
- To ensure that any incomplete records as a result of the bad weather and premature finish of *[the 2009]* season are brought up to date.
- To further explore the relationship between the structures and surrounding burials.
- To provide improved covering over the Byzantine cobbled pathway that is present along the southern extent of the trench. This feature was revealed and recorded in 2006/2007, but is to remain preserved *in situ* and as a result, it will be necessary to discuss an improved procedure for ensuring the feature is effectively preserved throughout future excavations.

1.4.2 The broad aims and objectives for the 2010 field season for Trench B were outlined as follows

- Remove the burials **416** and **419** and remove the deposit **401** to determine whether it caps a continuation of the rubble layer, **413**.
- To continue the sondage through the cemetery layers whilst maintaining the baulks supporting the walls. This to be done with a view to reaching and recording earlier cultural layers and enabling the unstable southern portion of trench B to be backfilled.

1.4.3 General Aims and Objectives for 2010:

- To add further information to the stratigraphic matrices for both trenches.
- As this was the 10th season of excavations carried out by the Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi, plans to undertake a synthesis publication of the Expedition's work at the site so far are underway

1.5 Scope of Report

1.5.1 This report documents the findings from the 2010 archaeological field season. It contains the results of the excavations undertaken in Trenches A and B

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A Brief History of Excavations at Nokalakevi

- 2.1.1 For a fuller discussion of the history and study of Nokalakevi please see Everill et al (2010). Key developments can be summarised as follows:
- 2.1.2 Modern study of Nokalakevi can be traced back to 1833 when the Swiss philologist Frédéric Dubois Du Montpéreux proposed the site as Aia, the capital of Homeric Colchis in the Argonautic myths, and Archaeopolis, the capital of late antique Lazika mentioned in the *Novels* of the Emperor Justinian, and by Byzantine historians and chroniclers.
- 2.1.3 In the winter of 1930-31, a joint German-Georgian expedition led by Dr A.-M. Schneider of the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul undertook the first archaeological excavations at the site. Schneider's results were published in the German periodical *Forschungen und Fortschritte* in September 1931 and confirmed the identification of the site with Archaeopolis.
- 2.1.4 In 1973 the S. Janashia Museum of History established a large and well-equipped expedition to excavate and conserve the historical monument at Nokalakevi. This continued until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 when large scale works at Nokalakevi temporarily ceased. Three volumes of results were edited by Parmen Zakaraia (1981; 1989; 1993).
- 2.1.5 The current excavations at the site began in 2001 with the establishment of the joint Anglo-Georgian expedition to Nokalakevi (AGEN).

2.2 Summary of Previous Results for Trench A

- 2.2.1 Comprehensive accounts of previous seasons' excavation results were provided in the relevant reports (Armour and Colvin 2004; Everill and Ginns 2005; Neil 2006; Everill 2007; Grant and Everill 2009; Grant et al 2010). The following summarised points are pertinent to this year's results:
- 2.2.2 A total of 25 burials dating from the Hellenistic period were excavated between 2001 and 2009, plus three late Roman burials. Of the Hellenistic period burials, four were contained with ceramic vessels; three were cremations. A further five had been buried with jewellery, including bead necklaces, rings and bracelets.
- 2.2.3 First exposed in 2003 and more thoroughly in 2006 and 2007, a line of unbonded limestone boulders (context **187**) was uncovered measuring approximately 6m from east to west with a return to the north (at the western end) that extends for 1m. At the northern end of this return a large tapered post-pit [**219**] was revealed and directly east of this a further post-pit [**224**] was also uncovered. It seems likely that [**219**] once held a door post for the entrance to the building. These separate contexts were recorded together as parts of **Structure 1**.
- 2.2.4 After this area was fully revealed and investigated in 2007, subsequent lines of walls were exposed, confirming that these archaeological remains represented a complex sequence of Hellenistic structures.

- 2.2.5 Further excavation of the area in 2007 and 2008 made it possible to formulate ideas about the types of structure and the building materials used. The walls appear to have been constructed on top of a foundation of large limestone blocks, which was perhaps laid onto the ground surface as there is no evidence for a foundation cut. These blocks were overlain by a horizontal wooden sill consisting of one or more beams, into which were fixed upright posts measuring c.100mm in diameter. Evidence for these posts was recovered as charcoal both in Trench A and within a comparable structure in nearby Trench B in 2005. Impressions of wattle within pieces of burnt daub in both trenches give further, clear indications that these walls were predominantly of a clay and timber construction.
- 2.2.6 No archaeological evidence for roofing material was found in these Hellenistic period contexts (in contrast with the great number of tiles excavated from the later Roman contexts), however buildings of a wattle and daub/ clay and timber construction are more likely to have been thatched.
- 2.2.7 **Structure 2** was made up of a line of unbonded limestone boulders (context **212**) on an east-west alignment (4.5m long) with a return at the western end extending for 1m to the south. The east-west element of this structure is almost parallel to the east-west section of **Structure 1**.
- 2.2.8 Prior to the 2010 season the earliest structure excavated (**Structure 3**) was a roughly square structure consisting of a line of unbonded limestone boulders. It was approximately 2.5m square, with the suggestion that there may have been an entrance at the northwest corner. It lay underneath **Structure 2** and about half a metre south of **Structure 1** on the same orientation as the other buildings. **Structure 3** was sealed by a substantial deposit of burnt material (**216**) – predominantly daub.

2.3 Environmental evidence from Trench A

- 2.3.1 The burnt deposit (**216**) was excavated in 2007 and has provided a valuable insight into life during the Hellenistic period at Nokalakevi-Tsikhegoji. The sieving and flotation of soil samples by Dr Marine Bokeria in that year produced a wide range of carbonised seeds, including wild and domesticated grape (*vitis vinifera*, *vitis sylvestris*), wheat (*triticum sp.*), pea (*pisum sativum*), rowan (*sorbus sp.*) and black walnut (*juglans regia*) (Bokeria 2009).
- 2.3.2 Palynological study in 2009 by Dr Eliso Kvavadze (2010) of samples from grave fill **260**, around the skull of skeleton **261**, also produced very interesting results. These further illustrate the environmental character of Nokalakevi in the Hellenistic period, as well as details of local burial practice.
- 2.3.3 The sample taken from the region of the forehead produced residues of human hair and textile fibres that probably represent the remains of a shroud or head covering. These fibres were predominantly of grey and yellow flax, with a smaller number of cotton fibres that had been dyed black. A single sheep hair was found. Microscopic cells of tree wood were thought to represent evidence for some kind of wooden construction, perhaps a coffin. Plant pollen was dominated by pine and cereals, including wheat, but evidence was also found of hazel, alder, lime, nettle and hoary plantain. The

microscopic remains of a large number of grass plants were also found, which was interpreted as evidence for the burial being lain onto, or covered by, a layer of grass.

2.3.4 The sample taken from the region of the eyes of skeleton **261** produced similar evidence for tree wood, flax and cotton, but with the additional discovery of yellow wool fibres and evidence of ticks. In addition to the plant pollen described above, evidence was also found of beech, spruce, fir, oak, chestnut, hornbeam and celery.

2.3.5 A third sample, taken from around the neck vertebrae of skeleton **261**, produced evidence of bird feathers/ down. This was interpreted as the remains of a down pillow which had been placed under the head. There was further evidence of flax and cotton fibres, and ticks or mites. Tree pollen included, in addition to those described above, caucasian wingnut and caucasian elm. Grains of domesticated grape vine and walnut were also found. Grass pollen was dominated by what Kvavadze refers to as yard and garden weeds, including knot grass, chicory, fragrant wormwood and hoary plantain. There was also evidence of emmer wheat and two-rowed barley.

2.4 Summary of Previous Results for Trench B

2.4.1 Comprehensive accounts of previous seasons' excavation results were provided in the relevant reports (Everill 2003; Everill 2005a; Everill 2005b; Grant et al 2010). The following summarised points are pertinent to this year's results:

2.4.2 Thirty four human burials were excavated within Trench B from 2002 to 2009, the vast majority of which were located within the small area of the northeastern corner of the Byzantine/ Medieval cemetery exposed in the southwest corner of the trench. While the possibility of further burials remains high, the deposit underlying the cemetery soil was first exposed in 2009, suggesting that work is nearly complete on that phase.

2.4.3 The remains of a Hellenistic period clay and timber building were first exposed in 2004, and further examined in 2005. This building was characterised by a line of substantial, though undressed, limestone blocks which ran the full width of the far north of the trench. This wall base was orientated roughly east-west, and in places there were remains of the beam that would once have rested upon them. This beam survived in fragmentary form as charcoal, and the fire which apparently consumed the building also resulted in a large quantity of burnt daub which sealed related surfaces south of the building. Impressions of wattle within the daub, and fragmentary remains of narrow posts (which were presumably set upright into the beam) gave clear indications of the likely form of the building. Ceramic material sealed between the burnt daub and the underlying yard surface was identified as belonging to the Hellenistic period.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Excavation Methodology

- 3.1.1 During this season excavation continued in Trenches A and B. Hand-excavation was carried out using picks, shovels and trowels in order to remove flood deposits resulting from unseasonably wet weather in 2009; and then to clean and reduce the level of the trench, define new layers and uncover archaeological features. All removed soil was scanned for the presence of any stray, unstratified artefacts, which were recovered and bagged for dating and analysis. An initial cleaning layer context number was assigned at the beginning of the season to ensure that any unstratified finds were kept separate from the underlying layer.
- 3.1.2 Local workmen were employed to help with spoil removal and spoil heap management.
- 3.1.3 A digital photographic record was maintained throughout the excavation of the trench, features and finds. A day-to-day written record of all photographs taken was kept for the archive. In addition, a blackboard, north arrow and scales were included within the photographs to ensure that the details of the feature/artefact/structure were better illustrated.
- 3.1.4 Levels of deposits, layers, features and small finds were taken throughout the excavation. In addition, spot heights were taken across the trench at the end of the season.
- 3.1.5 Individual features, sections and graves were planned at 1:10 and the trench itself was planned at 1:20.
- 3.1.6 Since the full depth and fuller extent of the stone surface (203) was exposed during this season within Trench A, it was deemed pertinent to re-draw the southern section again. It will be useful to make amendments and to add on any newly defined layers to this illustration and others recorded previously in subsequent seasons to ensure stratigraphic continuity.
- 3.1.7 Following the introduction of a palynological specialist from the Georgian National Museum to the expedition in 2009, a series of smaller samples were taken from sealed contexts within the graves for pollen analysis; and soil samples were collected from secure contexts within graves (e.g. from under long bones/within pot vessels) during the course of the excavations.
- 3.1.8 As graves were uncovered small tools were used to fully expose and clean the skeleton and associated artefacts for planning and photographs. On the completion of a 1:10 plan the skeleton was lifted and bagged by separate elements (e.g. left arm, right leg).
- 3.1.9 At the end of the season both trenches were re-covered using plastic sheeting to protect them until next season.

3.2 Post-excavation Methodology

- 3.2.1 Finds washing took place at the end of each day's excavation. All finds were cleaned, dried and bagged according to context and type to ease quantification and assessment.
- 3.2.2 Ceramic material recovered from each context was sorted by fabric, form and style. These results were then catalogued to produce a separate pottery report.
- 3.2.3 Selected small finds and interesting pottery sherds were photographed and illustrated for the archive.
- 3.2.4 Osteological assessment, comprising the analysis of both human and animal skeletal material, was undertaken once skeletons/disarticulated bones were lifted. Human skeletal assessment consisted of, where possible, the determination of an individual's sex, age and stature, and the noting of any unusual/pathological traits.
- 3.2.5 Work continued on expanding the site matrices using the newly gathered information from this season.

3.3 The Site Archives

- 3.3.1 Two separate site archives were maintained (one for each trench) during the course of the excavations. The context register for this season continues on from past seasons' excavations within each trench and therefore begins at **267** for Trench A and **398** for Trench B. The contexts have been tabulated below.
- 3.3.2 Since the expedition is an international collaboration the archive is completed on site in both English and Georgian. This means that there are two copies of the site archive for each trench. The Georgian archive is stored at the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi, and the British one in Cambridge, with security copies in Winchester. The site illustrations, such as feature and trench plans, are also copied to ensure that the archive is fully maintained in both the UK and Georgia.
- 3.3.3 Quantification of site archives for NOK 10 (*Table 1*):

TRENCH	A	B
Number of Contexts	15	15
Plan and section drawings	10	17
Photographs	191	111
Soil Samples (for Palynological Assessment)	9	23
Small finds	14	9

3.4 Training

- 3.4.1 A formal proactive training programme was conceived and first implemented in 2007. Details can be found in the relevant interim report (Everill 2007) and in an analysis of the results of that training programme (Everill Forthcoming).

4.0 EXCAVATION RESULTS

4.1 Trench A: Results Summary

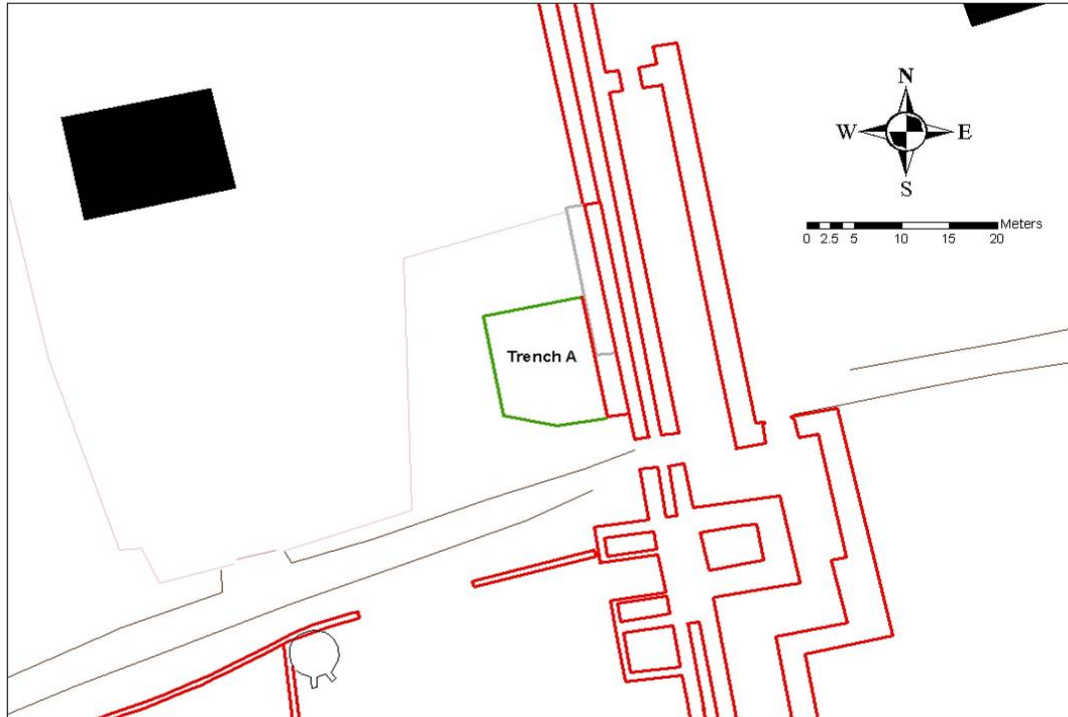


Figure 2: Location of Trench A from the 2009 RTK GPS survey (Everill and Marter Forthcoming)

- 4.1.1 The results of this season's fieldwork in Trench A have been presented below. Fifteen new context numbers were given (**267, 268, 270, 271-282**) although several were given to unexcavated deposits and structural elements and several of the excavated contexts were continuations of those begun in earlier seasons.
- 4.1.2 It should be noted that while only 15 context numbers were issued this season, the excavation of some contexts that had previously been assigned numbers (e.g. thick cultural layers across the trench) were still ongoing. It is important, therefore, to cross-reference finds information with that contained within previous reports for those contexts.
- 4.1.3 A list of this year's small finds can be seen in Table 4 in the Appendix.

4.1.4 Table 2: Recorded contexts from NOK 10/A (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions/ Details	Max. Depth/ Thick.	Max. Height/ Level
203	Layer	Surface comprised of rounded, flat river cobbles. No bonding material present. Apparently truncated at the northern edge.	Exposed area 5.3m (E-W) by 1.6m (N-S). Individual stones vary in diameter between 0.2 and 0.28m.	n/a	-3.48
235	Layer	Silty clay overlying (268). Partially excavated 2009.	Deposit apparently contained within Structure 1		
267	Deposits (See below)	Agglomeration of deposits overlying 203/213 within S-W corner of excavated area. Area too small to identify separate contextual units. Upper deposits truncated by modern service cut.	Triangular area within S-W corner of excavated area, maximum of 4.65m (E-W) by 1.6m (N-S).	1.6m	-1.64
268	Layer	Silty clay underlying deposit 235 and Structures 1, 2 and 3	Located throughout entire excavated area.	Not fully exc.	-2.84
270	Fill	Clayey silt fill of neonate inhumation (271). Contained two copper alloy bracelets.	Unclear boundaries with deposits 235/ 268, no cut identified. Maximum area of deposit 0.5m by 0.3m.	Max depth 0.18m.	-2.9
271	Skeleton	Incomplete and disarticulated neonatal inhumation.	Within extent of (270).	n/a	-2.9
272	Layer	Mixed deposit of rubble within a matrix of clayey-silt partially underlying (235) and (268).	1.6m (N-S) by 1m (E-W)	0.6m	-2.94
273	Layer	Burned clay and daub deposit. Heat affected deposit physically underlying (216).		n/a	N/A
274	Layer	Burned clay and daub deposit underlying (235) and (268).	2.3m (N-S) by 0.7m (E-W)	Un-exc.	-3.76
275	Fill	Four irregular stones in tight square forming small void. Probable post-packing contemporary with [219]	0.5m diameter, individual stones between 0.1 and 0.3m in length. Central void 0.21m in diameter.	Still in situ.	-3.93
276	Fill	Clayey-silt fill of burial (278), contained copper alloy bracelet, ear-ring and necklace.	0.42m (N-S) by 0.38mm (E-W).	Depth 0.26m	-3.63
277	Fill	Dergi/ pithos for burial of (278), placed into cut [279] within stones (232).	0.45m (N-S) by 0.42 (E-W).	0.29m	-3.63
278	Skeleton	Incomplete disarticulated juvenile inhumation within (277)	0.42m (N-S) by 0.38m (E-W)	0.24m	-3.68
279	Cut	Sub-oval cut into stone deposit	0.48m (N-S) by 0.43m	0.29m	-3.63

		(232) for dergi/ pithos burial (277/ 278).	(E-W).		
280	Masonry	Series of six, large, unworked boulders underlying stones (281); forming potential east west aligned wall.	Not fully exposed	Not fully exc.	-3.88
281	Layer	Deposit of angular stones overlying masonry (280). Previously recorded as (232).	Not fully exposed	Not fully exc.	-3.85
282	Layer	Compacted sandy clay overlying cobbled surface (203).	Largely truncated, only recorded in section and void within (203).	0.05m	-3.54

4.2 Trench A: Context Summary

- 4.2.1 As a result of the premature cessation of excavation during the 2009 season due to heavy rain and subsequent flooding, the initial aim of the 2010 season was to remove the considerable quantity of silt and vegetation to have been deposited within Area A, and to clean and plan the exposed deposits and structures.
- 4.2.2 The lack of a clear termination of the 2009 excavation season meant that the first archaeological task was to undertake the recording of deposits, structures and features not completed: a task that somewhat merged the results of the previous and current excavation season. In total, fifteen new contextual numbers were assigned during the 2010 excavation season (see Table 2): It should be noted, however, that some contexts excavated during this season had previously been attributed numbers (thick cultural deposits for example) which were either merged with others this season or were through necessity re-numbered. This of course emphasises the importance of cross-referencing reports from previous seasons (most notably Grant et al 2009).
- 4.2.3 The replacement and rerouting of an electrical service cable over the preceding winter made it possible to excavate the south-western corner of Area A. It was decided to assign a single context number (267) to the deposits excavated on account of the small area of this extension and the consequent likely difficulties of associating deposits with those excavated during earlier seasons. All material culture was retained and the locations and levels of any finds of special interest were recorded in order to aid identification with previously excavated contexts (Table 4).
- 4.2.4 The small, square masonry forming structure 3 (230) and the remnants of structure 1 (wall 242 and wall 243) were all removed. These were stratigraphically much later in the sequence than the surrounding deposits and had been fully recorded in previous seasons.

4.3 Trench A: Layers and Deposits

- 4.3.1 The removal of the south-western corner of the trench (267), exposed a larger area of the cobbled surface 203, previously exposed and recorded in 2007. This was shown to extend beyond the south-western corner of the site. A deposit of yellowy brown, compacted silty, sandy-clay 282 was shown to

overlie this surface within the newly exposed south-eastern corner, also filling a large void within the stone surface itself. The compacted nature of **282** suggests it to be an accumulative deposit related to a road or yard surface, and was stratigraphically the latest deposit encountered during the 2010 excavation season.

- 4.3.2 Following the removal of the previously recorded structural elements, the cleaning of the underlying deposits across Trench A allowed a reassessment of the deposits that had been numbered but unrecorded in previous seasons. Similarities between deposits **213**, within the southern half of Trench A, and **217**, within the far west of the area, led to them being agglomerated into a single stratigraphic unit, **268**. Deposits **235**, within the far north of the site and stratigraphically overlying **217**, and **268** were shown to be sufficiently distinct from these deposits to remain as a separate contextual block.
- 4.3.3 Examination of **235** – a mid grey, moderately compacted clay silt, located within the northern area of Trench A, which was first identified during 2008 and partially excavated in 2009 – demonstrated it to be a thin veneer of material, a maximum of 20mm in thickness. It overlay **268** and the northern end of **217**, and represented the very base of the thicker deposit excavated in previous seasons. **235** was completely removed during the 2010 excavation.
- 4.3.4 Following the removal of deposit **235**, the full extent of underlying deposit **268**, itself an amalgamation of several previously numbered deposits (see above) could be seen. **268** was a materially rich colluvial silty-clay which extended across the entirety of the site. High quantities of largely unabraded ceramics, as well as animal bone that demonstrated rodent damage and root damage, were recovered from the deposit. This suggests it represents an accumulative occupation horizon. By the end of the 2010 excavation season, small patches of **268** were still present within the centre, east and southeast of the excavated area, highlighting the irregularities of the underlying deposits.
- 4.3.5 The removal of **235** and **268** exposed the full extent of **232** – an underlying deposit containing small angular limestone fragments – identified during earlier seasons and initially thought to extend across the whole western side of the trench. A dense and discrete deposit of larger limestone and riverstone rubble towards the southwest of the trench was subsequently assigned its own context number, **281**. **281** sealed the masonry of newly exposed wall **280** (see below).
- 4.3.6 The reduction of **268** within the north-eastern corner of Trench A exposed a deposit of rubble (**272**), the coarse components of which varied in size from large unworked limestone blocks to small angular stones, within a matrix of silty clay. The base of **272** contained the fragmented remains of a ceramic figurine, although it was not clear at the time of excavation whether this was in-situ, residual or intrusive.
- 4.3.7 Underlying **268** within the northern and central part of Trench A was the upper horizon of a context that appeared to represent an occupational layer. Within this, so far unnumbered deposit, were patches of orangey brown heat affected clay (**273** and **274**) likely associated with occupation. These were not excavated but demonstrate the base of the **268/ 235** colluvial episodes.

4.4 Trench A: Burials

- 4.4.1 This section contains information on the graves uncovered this season as they were assessed in the field, including descriptions of the grave type, cut, backfill, orientation and grave goods. Detailed analysis of the human and faunal remains can be found in the specialist reports (Neil in prep.; Gruwier in prep.):
- 4.4.2 Two burials were identified, excavated and recorded during the 2010 season. A third, **265**, was re-exposed and removed, having been fully recorded in 2009. It lay within grave cut **266** at the northern extent of the site.
- 4.4.3 The first identified burial, **271**, was located immediately east of the southern end of wall **242**. **271** was comprised of an incomplete, largely disarticulated, neonate. No clear grave cut into **235** could be identified and it is likely that this deposit marked the base of the grave itself, the top of the cut not having been seen during previous excavation seasons. The fill of the grave, **270**, was a mid to dark grey, moderately compacted, clayey-silt almost identical to the surrounding **235**. It contained two copper alloy bracelets (Small Finds 1 and 3, see Table 4). This burial as well as surrounding fill was block lifted for off site excavation (Sample No. 1).
- 4.4.4 A second burial, **278**, was identified within a sub-circular cut, **279**, truncating the apex of stones, **232**, and located immediately to the west of wall **242**. A coffin comprising of the base of a large dergi/ pithos vessel, with a second base as a lid, **277**, was contained in this cut. Within the vessel was an incomplete, partially disarticulated juvenile, **278**; a fragmented and incomplete skull was contained within the base of the vessel, overlain by broken long-bones, and a complete set of ribs, adjacent to a fragmented pelvis and vertebrae. A high concentration of incomplete and fragmentary bones was located throughout the burial with a notable absence of smaller bones such as tarsals. The fill of the burial, **276**, was a mid to dark grey-brown, firmly compacted, silty-clay, containing infrequent charcoal mottling. A copper alloy bracelet and earring as well as beads likely associated with a necklace were within this fill, immediately on top of the burial (Small Finds 9, 10 and 13) and an unidentified ferrous object (possibly a nail) was recovered from the very base of the ceramic vessel (Small Find 12).

4.5 Trench A: Walls, Masonry and Structures

- 4.5.1 After the initial cleaning of Trench A at the beginning of the 2010 excavation season, the already recorded walls that were stratigraphically much later in the sequence than surrounding deposits were removed (**230**, **242** and **243**), as already described. This allowed the reduction of deposits **235** and **268** to be carried out. This removal of colluvial deposits partially exposed masonry walls within both the northern and southern parts of the excavated area. The full extent of the structure(s) was not fully exposed and therefore full recording was not carried out. Walls which showed significant stratigraphic relationships were, however, given context numbers (as described below) to allow a rudimentary sequence to be developed; no new structure numbers will be given until the extent of the structural elements are known.

- 4.5.2 In the southern half of Trench A the reduction of **268** began to expose a sequence of masonry walls representing at least two previously unrecorded structures: **280** was a series of four large, apparently unworked boulders aligned east-west with a suggestion of a north-south return at the western end. The eastern end was comprised of a narrower, north-south aligned wall of smaller, roughly shaped stones (as yet unnumbered). **280** appeared to be partially covered by rubble deposit **281**.
- 4.5.2 A second structure was partially exposed, which comprised an east-west aligned wall with a north-south aligned return that extended beyond the eastern limit of excavation. Because their full extent and nature is not yet revealed, these walls were not numbered.
- 4.5.3 Also revealed by the removal of **268** was a small cluster of four irregular stones creating a shallow void, **275**, which are believed to represent packing at the base of a posthole. No cut through **268** was identified, although **275** is likely to be contemporary with posthole **219** to the north, the base of which also corresponded with the lower horizon of **268**.

4.6 Trench B: Results Summary

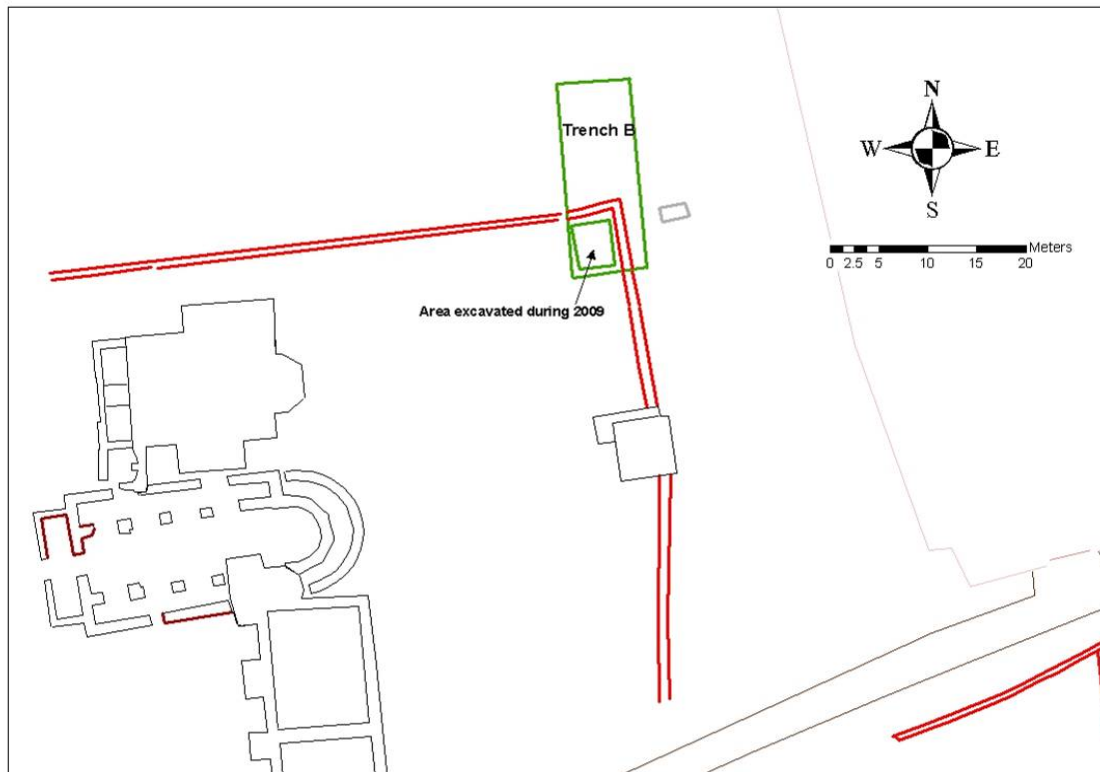


Figure 3: Location of Trench B from the RTK GPS survey results (Everill and Marter Forthcoming)

4.6.1 A summary of results from this season’s fieldwork in Trench B have been presented in the table below. Fifteen new contexts were assigned this year (**420-434**), and excavation continued in some contexts assigned in 2009 (**401; 413-419**).

4.6.2 A list of this year’s small finds can be seen in Table 5 in the Appendix.

4.6.3 *Table 3: Recorded contexts from NOK 10/B (All levels refer to the zero established in the 1980s)*

Context	Type	Description	Dimensions/ Details	Max Depth/ Thick.	Max Height/ Level
397	Layer	A metallated surface of highly compacted small cobbles and stones within a greyish brown matrix, associated with Hellenistic building (380 and 381)	>7.5m E-W by 4.25m N-S	Max depth 0.57m	
401	Layer	Dark brown silty sand, medium compaction with frequent limestone and daub and moderate clay patches. Layer is situated near the north wall of the cemetery and found under (340)	n/a		-2.21
413	Layer	Brownish grey sandy silt matrix of rubble layer with moderate fragments of daub.	n/a		-2.24

414	Fill	Dark brown silty clay, firm and friable with daub and limestone found within this grave fill.	1.9m by 0.55m	Observed thickness of 0.11m	-2.29
415	Skeleton	E-W aligned skeleton, sub-adult with head facing north, extended supine position, truncated mid thoracic with missing radius, ulna, lumbar, pelvis and lower appendicular elements. Bone in a moderate/poor condition, friable in the sun. No associated artefacts but daub found in place of missing elements. Situated in east central part of the cemetery sondage. Early Christian period grave?	n/a		-2.29
416	Cut	No cut was found around burial. Estimated 0.55m wide by 0.90m long, with a depth of 0.11m. Contained fill (414) and SK (415).	0.9m by 0.55m	Observed depth of 0.11m	-2.28
417	Fill	Mid dark greyish brown sandy clay, firm and friable compaction, with small stones and limestone fragments; depth of approximately 0.10m; includes fragments of daub.	1.85m by 0.52m	Observed thickness of 0.1m	-2.29
418	Skeleton	E-W aligned skeleton, adult, head facing north, arms flexed across pelvis, extended supine, nearly complete skeleton, hand bones mixed and closely together, legs extended straight not close. Bone in a moderate condition but friable in the sun. Early Christian period grave?	n/a		-2.29
419	Cut	Oval in Plan with rounded corners and a flat base. Estimated 0.52m wide by 1.85m long, with a depth of 0.11m, contained fill (417) and SK (418). Surrounded by rubble layer (413) on north side.	1.85m by 0.52m	Observed depth of 0.1m	-2.22
420	Layer	Modern deposit formed over five years of the trench not being active. Unstratified cleaning deposit from northern part of Trench B.	n/a		n/a
421	Layer	Modern deposit formed over five years of the trench not being active. Unstratified cleaning deposit from southern part of Trench B.	n/a		n/a
422	Layer	Layer of larger cobbles angular to rounded within a matrix of mid to light greyish brown silty clay with moderate charcoal and chalk flecks and frequent burnt clay and daub patches. The extent of this layer was uncovered but it remains unexcavated.	not yet excavated		0.545
423	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent stones (mainly limestone with some flint) with frequent chalk flecks and rare burnt clay flecks. Max depth of 0.20m. Colluvial deposit from north	n/a		-0.66
424	Layer	Brownish grey sandy silt layer with moderate fragments of limestone and large quantities of daub found. This layer was found in south part of trench with two	2.55m by 2.77m		-2.20

		burials.			
425	Layer	Layer of large, angular to sub-rounded rubble within a matrix of mid to light greyish brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks. This colluvial layer is possibly filling small terrace and probably sitting over (422). Unexcavated but revealed underneath (397).	n/a		0.135
426	Fill	Dark greyish brown clay with limestone and daub inclusions. Fill of grave containing 427.	1.2m by 0.5m	Observed thickness of 0.8m	-2.13
427	Skeleton	E/W aligned skeleton, extended supine in moderate preservation and full articulation. Most of the skull is missing; the left leg and right lower leg missing. Both arms are in extreme flexed positions with hands over the shoulders. A copper bracelet was found around the right wrist and three beads from the fill were near the right clavicle and thoracic vertebrae.	n/a		-2.13
428	Cut	Oval in plan with rounded corners and a flat base. Estimated 0.5m wide by 1.20m long. Contained fill (426) and SK (427). Cut into (424) and had three large rocks on south and north sides.	1.2m by 0.5m	Observed depth of 0.8m	-2.03
429	Layer	Layer of larger cobbles, angular to rounded within a matrix of mid brownish grey silty clay with moderate charcoal and chalk flecks and frequent burnt clay and daub patches. The extent of this layer was uncovered but remains unexcavated. Very similar to (422); colour difference only noted when deposits had dried out.	not yet excavated		-0.255
430	Fill	Unexcavated	Unexcavated	Unexc.	Unexc.
431	Fill	Unexcavated	Unexcavated	Unexc.	Unexc.
432	Skeleton	Unexcavated	Unexcavated	Unexc.	Unexc.
433	Cut	Unexcavated	Unexcavated	Unexc.	Unexc.
434	Layer	Unexcavated	Unexcavated	Unexc.	Unexc.

4.7 Trench B: Context Summary

4.7.1 The area of the cemetery sondage, towards the south of Trench B (see Figure 3 above), had accumulated a lot of silt and vegetation since the 2009 season. Furthermore the northern part of the trench, beyond the cemetery wall, had not been actively excavated since 2005 and consequently was dominated by vegetation and a large quantity of silt and colluvial material.

4.7.2 Initial work was undertaken to prepare the trench for excavation. This took several days and context numbers were assigned to the unstratified finds

produced by this preparation in the south (**421**) and north (**420**) of the trench.

- 4.7.3 This year it was possible to remove the Hellenistic period metalled surface (**397**) found in 2005, uncovering layers underneath. However, the previously discovered Hellenistic period wall base (**381**) remains unexcavated, with plans to excavate this structure in its entirety in the future.

4.8 Trench B: Layers and Deposits

- 4.8.1 Layer numbers **401** and **413** were assigned in previous seasons. Layer **401** contained daub and limestone inclusions within a silty sand matrix, and was found underneath the previously excavated layer **340** within the cemetery enclosure. Rubble layer **413**, also in this part of the trench, was excavated this year. It included frequent limestone fragments and occasional daub deposits within a matrix of brownish grey silty sand.
- 4.8.2 At the start of this season **420** and **421** were used to describe unstratified cleaning deposits from the reopening of the trench. **420** was assigned to the northern two thirds of the trench, outside the cemetery wall, and **421** was assigned to the area within the cemetery enclosure in the south part of Trench B.
- 4.8.3 Within the cemetery enclosure two new layers were identified. **424** was a dark brownish grey deposit of silty sand containing frequent inclusions of limestone and daub. This layer was found towards the southern extent of the cemetery sondage. It was overlain by **434** which was identified but not excavated. **434** contained large amounts of burnt daub, and seemed to be circular in shape. It may represent the upper fill of a cut feature and will be examined fully in 2011.
- 4.8.4 Layer **397** – a metalled surface of highly compacted small cobbles and stones within a greyish brown matrix – was first exposed in 2005 and was interpreted as a yard surface associated with a Hellenistic period building to the immediate north of the layer. This building was represented by a wall base of unbonded limestone blocks (**381**) and a beaten clay floor (**380**), both located at the northern extent of the trench. The structure of the building will not be excavated until it can be fully exposed in the future, but the recording and removal of **397** this year revealed the full extent of layers **425** and **423**.
- 4.8.5 Layer **425** consisted of large limestone rubble within a light greyish brown silty clay. Given its location immediately adjacent to the Hellenistic wall (**381**) it was interpreted as a structural ‘make-up’ deposit which may have provided support for an external walkway/ surface attached to the southern aspect of the building.
- 4.8.6 Layer **423** was a colluvial deposit consisting of a dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent limestone inclusions and chalk flecks. It was 0.2m thick and sealed deposit **430** - a circular area of densely packed small cobbles. This is likely to be an upper fill of a cut feature and will be fully excavated in 2011.
- 4.8.6 The removal of **425** and **423** revealed two very similar layers – **422** and **429**. Layer **422**, towards the north of the trench, consisted of large angular cobbles within a matrix of silty clay. It contained frequent inclusions of charcoal and burnt clay/ daub. Further south, towards the cemetery wall, was found **429**.

This layer seemed initially identical to **422**, and was not assigned its own number until both deposits had dried and a colour difference became apparent: **422** was mid to light greyish brown, whereas **429** was mid brownish grey. There appears to be a clear demarcation between the two deposits that runs east-west across the trench. Neither layer was fully excavated in 2010.

4.9 Trench B: Burials

- 4.9.1 Cut **416** was situated in the east central part of the cemetery sondage and contained a burial previously identified in 2009. On excavation the skeleton (**415**) was found to be an east-west aligned, sub adult skeleton with head facing north at the western end of the grave. It lay in an extended supine position, was truncated in the mid-thoracic region, and was missing radius, ulna, lumbar, pelvis and lower appendicular elements. Daub was found in the place of the missing elements. There were no associated artefacts. The grave cut (**416**) was hard to identify given the similarity between the grave fill **414** and the surrounding cemetery layer (**401**) although it was probably sub-rectangular in plan. It was 0.55m wide by 0.90m long and approximately 0.11m deep. The fill (**414**) consisted of a mid grey brown fine clay silt with rare daub fragments and frequent angular limestone fragments.
- 4.9.2 Cut **419** was assigned to a discrete burial consisting of an east west aligned adult skeleton (**418**), with its skull found in the western end of the grave facing north. Its arms were flexed across pelvis. This skeleton was laid in an extended supine position and was almost complete. The cut of the shallow grave (**419**) was sub-rectangular in plan and was orientated east-west with steep sides and a flat base. It was 0.52m wide by 0.85m long with a depth of 0.10m. The fill (**417**) was made up of dark brown grey fine clay silt with daub and limestone fragments and was noted for its similarity to the cemetery soil surrounding it (**401**).
- 4.9.3 Skeleton **427** was also aligned east-west in an extended supine position; however most of the skull, the left leg and right lower leg were missing. Both arms were in extreme flexed positions with the hands resting on the shoulders. A copper bracelet was found around the right wrist and three beads were found near the right clavicle and thoracic vertebrae. The cut (**428**) was sub-rectangular with rounded corners. It was 0.50m wide by 1.20m long and approximately 0.10m deep. The fill of the grave (**426**) was dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent inclusions of limestone and daub. Part of a bronze earring was recovered from the fill.
- 4.9.4 One further burial was revealed towards the end of the season in the northeast of the cemetery sondage. It was assigned the numbers **431**, **432** and **433**. Due to time constraints at the end of the 2010 season this burial will be revisited in 2011 when it can be excavated with an appropriate degree of care.

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Trench A: General Discussion of Results

5.1.1 *Layers and Deposits*

The 2010 season could be seen as marking a transition in the excavation, with the removal of structural remains that had been investigated over several seasons, and the partial exposure of older occupation deposits and structures that will be fully excavated in future seasons. The removal of the structures recorded in previous seasons allowed the underlying colluvial deposits to be removed and previous phases of structures and probable occupation layers to be revealed. The presence of a relatively high quantity of ceramic and animal bone from within the colluvial layer **268** suggests that, while the settlement in the area of Trench A was abandoned, occupation probably continued nearby. One possibility is that the focus of settlement temporarily shifted to the nearby hill early in the Hellenistic period, before returning and then shifting once again. Wherever the centre of occupation moved to it appears that it was after this second shift, later in the Hellenistic period, that the area around Trench A was utilised as a necropolis. The removal of the colluvium further emphasised the discrepancy between the underlying physical topography, which is becoming more apparent, and that created by many centuries of occupational and colluvial deposition.

5.1.2 *Burials*

The two burials excavated during the 2010 season were stratigraphically contemporary with those excavated during 2009. The similarity of the fills of the graves to the surrounding deposits made the top of the grave cuts impossible to determine, and consequently graves were often only located when the burials at the bottom were revealed. However, like a number of other Hellenistic period burials excavated in Trench A since 2003, **271** and **278** had been placed in graves that respected the alignment of the, probably by then ruinous, Hellenistic structures removed during the 2010 season: in this case wall **242**. The 2010 burials, that of a child and a neonate both with grave goods of copper alloy jewellery, offer insights into the population demographics of nearby settlement when considered alongside the existing evidence from adult, sub-adult, child and infant burials found since 2003. The incomplete and disarticulated nature of both the burials from 2010 suggests an extended post-mortem period before the inhumation took place; this is particularly true of dergi burial **278**.

5.1.3 *Walls and Structures*

Evidence is accumulating for a significant settlement predating the Hellenistic period structures removed in 2010, however no firm date can be attributed to the earlier buildings, nor conclusions drawn on their likely form, until further excavation has taken place and datable material has been recovered and analysed. The new structures may, however, have an association with similar structures identified during excavations which took place to the east, between the 4th and 5th century AD defensive walls (Lomitashvili pers. comm.). This demonstrates the potential for a much larger settlement to be identified, as well as highlighting the need to consolidate all previous excavation records of the area.

5.1.4 *Overall Conclusions for Trench A*

The broad aims and objectives for Trench A, as outlined in last year's report

(Grant et al 2010) and summarised above, were addressed as follows:

- Any incomplete records as a result of the bad weather and premature finish of the 2009 digging season were brought up to date.
- Previously excavated and fully recorded structural elements were removed to allow access to the underlying deposits.
- Layers **217 (268)** and **235** were fully removed and the presence of two more burials, contemporary with those excavated in 2009 were identified and excavated. Both further demonstrated, by the respecting of wall alignments, that the Hellenistic period 'necropolis' post-dated Structures 1, 2 and 3.
- It was finally possible to make the trench square following the removal of an electrical service cable in the southwest corner of the trench.

5.2 Trench B: General Discussion of Results

5.2.1 *Layers and Deposits*

The continued removal of cemetery deposits – including cemetery soil **401**, which was formed over a prolonged period of grave excavation and backfill and makes it very difficult to see the tops of features cut through it – is beginning to reveal the underlying colluvial layers. **413** may indeed represent a continuation of **429**, which was a colluvial deposit found to the north of the cemetery wall. Further excavation is needed to determine the precise relationship. While further burials are entirely possible within the cemetery sondage, the revealing of underlying colluvial deposits in some places suggests that the late Roman phase has now been almost entirely removed, and that the focus will shortly shift to the underlying Hellenistic period deposits in this area.

5.2.2 The area to the north of the cemetery enclosure was reopened for the first time since 2005. The Hellenistic building first noted in 2004 was uncovered, although no further excavation took place. The associated metallised surface **397** was removed, revealing underlying colluvial material. This may indicate a similar interpretation to the one proposed for Trench A, i.e. that the focus of settlement shifted several times during the Hellenistic period.

5.2.3 The demarcation between contexts **422** and **429**, aligned roughly east-west and apparently following a contour, may indicate underlying topography. It is possible that excavation of these deposits will reveal evidence for terracing on the lower slopes of the hillside.

5.2.4 *Burials*

All of the four skeletons excavated during the 2010 season were aligned east-west and were supine. All of the inhumations had been disturbed by cemetery activity to some extent, with **415** being the most disturbed. It is interesting to note that there were items of jewellery associated with **427** which may indicate a very early Christian burial.

5.3 Trench A: Proposed Aims and Objectives for 2011

- To fully remove the remainder of colluvial layer **268**, and to investigate the topography of underlying deposits.
- To investigate the stratigraphic relationship between cobbled surface **203** and underlying structural elements
- To continue to identify new structures, their form and their inter-relationship, and to retrieve dating evidence from associated cultural material
- To produce a phase plan for the whole trench showing all related structures and deposits once exposed.
- To update section drawings of all sides of the trench.

5.4 Trench B: Proposed Aims and Objectives for 2011

- Excavate, record and remove the extant burial **432**
- To continue the sondage through the cemetery layers whilst maintaining the baulks supporting the walls. This to be done with a view to reaching early cultural layers and enabling the unstable cemetery area of Trench B to be backfilled.
- Produce or update representative section drawings to show the sequence of colluvial and occupational deposits to the north of the trench.
- Excavate layers **425**, **422** and **429** revealed this year, while continuing to preserve the Hellenistic building at the far north of the trench.

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APPENDIX

Table 4: Trench A Small Finds Register

Small Find No.	Context No.	Description	Trench Coordinates	Level
1	270	Copper Alloy Bracelet	98.0/ 208.96	-3.8
2	267	Ceramic crucible fragment	96.48/ 200.15	-3.35
3	270	Copper Alloy bracelet	98.0/ 208.79	-3.81
4	268	Fragment of Beadworking stone	100.9/ 205.3	-3.86
5	268	Unidentified object	105.08/ 200.92	-3.92
6	268	Unidentified object	100.42/ 202.4	-3.86
7	232	Copper Alloy Bracelet (fragmented)	97.75/ 210.02	-3.83
8	268	Copper Alloy plate (perforated)	96.20/ 209. 94	-3.87
9	276	Copper Alloy Earring	97.38/ 210.63	-3.84
10	276	Copper Alloy Bracelet	97.37/ 210.27	-3.85
11	267	Broken millstone	99.7/ 200	-3.18
12	276	Unidentified ferrous object	97.55/ 210.65	-3.9
13	276	Beads	97.37/ 210.27	-3.85
14	272	Fragmented ceramic figurine	104.55/ 211.72	-3.72

Table 5: Trench B Small Finds Register

Small Find No.	Context No.	Description	Trench Coordinates	Level
1	423	dump of pot	103.80/212.14	-0.66
2	423	dump of pot	104.52/209.66	-0.65
3	426	yellow bead in grave	101.18/201.31	-2.13
4	426	blue spiral bead in grave	101.08/201.12	-2.06
5	426	blue circle bead in grave	101.08/201.12	-2.06
6	427	Cu bracelet around right arm of SK	101.04/200.99	-2.03
7	431	bronze brooch possible shroud pin	102.86/204.18	-2.21
8	426	bronze earring fragment	100.96/201.18	-2.20
9	424	fragment of bronze pin	102.52/202.29	-2.13

Table 6: Quantification of the Pottery from NOK 10

Trench	Context No.	Count	Weight (gms)
A	213	23	385
A	216	98	2321
A	217	184	3132
A	231	20	264
A	232	211	6484
A	235	217	3304
A	242	1	449
A	263	41	1456
A	264	24	185
A	267	1254	37789
A	268	3893	70233
A	270	48	371
A	272	255	2054
A	273	9	141
A	274	2	514
A	277	166	5546
A	282	10	279
A	397	802	13876
B	401	4	81
B	414	12	178
B	417	89	725
B	420	1095	30572
B	421	1	97
B	423	585	13423
B	424	78	3106
B	426	10	125
B	427	16	189
B	471	1	7
TOTAL		9149	197286