



The Acropolis & the Parthenon

Plan drawings

NARRATOR:

During this video you'll be asked to look at a variety of plans of different types of building.

This video is designed to help you to understand some of the conventions used to draw up those plans and to begin to visualise the three dimensional structures which the plans represent.

This plan, drawn by a modern archaeologist, shows the early fifth century Temple of Themis from Rhamnous in Attica.

This is all that remains of the temple today.

You can see that the plan is composed of lines of different thicknesses: these indicate two different things.

The thin lines represent a number of steps which form the raised base or stylobate on which the temple stands.

The thick lines indicate walls. Notice how these walls form an enclosed space.

This is called the naos, and would have housed the statue of the deity who was worshipped here.

The room had a single doorway with a spur wall on each side.

The area in front of the door was enclosed by side walls. But as you can see, there is no end wall indicated on the plan and so this area would have been open.

The two circles on the open side represent columns.

We can deduce that this area was roofed with the columns supporting some of the weight.

So the plan tells us that this temple consisted of an enclosed room with a columned front porch, sitting on a raised base and approached via a flight of steps.

This basic temple design is reflected elsewhere, such as in the well-preserved remains of the Athenian Treasury at Delphi.

This is the plan of the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion.

What similarities and differences can you see between this plan and the one we've just looked at?

When the plans are drawn to scale, you can see that the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion is much larger.

You can see that it, too, is approached via three steps with an interior step leading to the central area.

It also has a walled naos, which has a porch at the front. Here, though, there is also a second porch at the rear. Unlike the front porch, this one has a solid back wall and wouldn't have provided access to the naos itself.

As well as columns supporting the roof on the open side of each porch this temple also has a line of columns around the top of the stylobate.

These would have supported the eaves of the roof.

A plan though can't reveal everything about an excavated structure.

For example, it offers no indication of the Temple of Poseidon's dramatic situation.

But it does give a good impression of the basic features: steps, stylobate and number of columns.

And working with plans does enable you to make comparisons between structures and to draw some useful conclusions.

When you come to look at a new temple plan, for instance, you should be able to identify distinctive features.

By comparing the plan of the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion with that of the second Temple of Hera at Paestum, we can see immediately see that the temple at Paestum is unusual.

It has a double inner wall at the front porch, and two rows of columns inside the naos.

Drawing the plans of the two temples to scale allows us to speculate as to why these extra walls and columns were necessary: a larger temple needs to be able to support the weight of a larger roof.

The plan should also give you an idea of what the Temple of Poseidon looked like, but once again tells you nothing about the temple's setting or state of preservation.

When you come to look at the Athenian Acropolis, your skills in plan reading will be vital in helping you understand the site.

They will allow you get to grips with the shapes, and unusual features, not just of buildings, which have been preserved and restored, but also buildings which have not.