Contents

Summary

The excavations conducted over the past two years at Mellor, Stockport (SJ 9818 8890) have produced a great wealth of information which will advance our knowledge of the archaeology of the site and it's placement within the region. The site was established as an Iron Age hillfort (GM SMR11249.1.1) following the 1999 season. The two seasons of work documented in this report were targeted to expand upon this.

The objectives have been; to gain a fuller understanding of the internal features encountered during the excavation of a trench located in the near centre of the site, to further investigate the defensive system of the fort, to assess the character of anomalies present on geophysical surveys and to evaluate the possibility of the origins of the site being earlier that previously thought.

In 2000, work continued on a trench opened in 1999 which had previously revealed a complex area of archaeology. Intersecting features had been identified from the Mesolithic Period, through to the Romano-British Period and all within just a shallow depth of stratigraphy.

The 2001 season concentrated on an area of open excavation straddling the ditch to the north of the site, over a feature believed to be a hut circle from the geophysical survey results. Although this was not found, postholes cut into the bedrock were discovered outside of the ditch. This confirms the presence of structures extending beyond the enclosure, however the lack of dating evidence means they cannot be tied down to any period.

The excavations have yielded a number of finds including Mesolithic flints, Iron Age pottery and Roman pottery of the late-1st century to the 3rd century. The Iron Age pottery found proves difficult to date as there are so few comparable assemblages in the North West and Pennine regions. Many of those identified as Iron Age, have come from contexts within the defensive ditch, below a layer of charcoal radiocarbon dated to 430bc +/-140.

It must be said that as more is discovered about the site, twice the number of questions arise from those answered. The knowledge of the Iron Age in the North West is limited, mainly due to a paucity of sites, compared with other parts of Britain. Mellor has quickly become a potential key to unlock a previously sparse archaeological landscape. As the only prehistoric settlement known in Stockport, it fills a huge void in the history of the Borough alone.

The excavations are run by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit together with the Mellor Archaeological Trust and staffed by students and local volunteers. The quality of the archaeology and its importance, has sparked a great interest in the community. Over the past four years the project has evolved from a small scale excavation, undertaken by a handful of students and volunteers, to one involving individuals from the age of ten to over seventy, local schools, groups and societies. The Open Weekends held over the last three years, have become an attraction drawing over four thousand visitors in just five days.

December2001

Acknowledgements

This report was written, illustrated and compiled by Stuart Holden with additional material from the following people; Dr Richard Gregory, Dr Steven Openshaw, Dr Chris Cumberpatch, Dr Andrew Myres, Ruth Leary, Dr David Dungworth, Fred Broadhurst and Morven Simpson, Norman Redhead. The project has been managed by Graham Eyre-Morgan (2000)and David Power (2001), UMAU.

The excavation phase has been funded for the past three years by Stockport Borough Council and without their continuing support the project would not have been able to become such a success.

The following people must be thanked, for without their input the project would not continue; Peter Hodgson for allowing access to his land and also to his son John for their hard work preparing for the excavations and Open Days (maybe next year we'll find the gold torc for you Peter!), Paul Hudson Civil Engineering for the kind donation of machinery to backfill the 2001 trench. John and Ann Hearle for allowing the ruination of their pristine gardens, year after year, for the use of facilities and their dedication to the project. The late Jeff Bowden and his son Charlie, Leslie Arrandale, Stan and Anne Bannister for access to their lands and support. The Jenner family for kindly offering showers to scruffy diggers especially to Alex for his keenness and help (but not always for his jokes). Norman Redhead, Assistant County Archaeologist for monitoring the excavations and for the time and effort he has invested. The Trustees for giving up many evenings in order to keep the project rolling (I know you don't only do it for Ann's cheese scones).

Special thanks must go to all the people who have worked on the site over the last few years in particular to Don Reid for his devotion despite a busy retirement, Peter Noble for his supervisory assistance in 2001 and Graham Mottershead for taking his holidays to help out (the mad fool).

2000
Ben Buckley, Joan Chandler, Cookie, Sarah Craig, John Crowther, Andy Dicken, Ken Denham, Emma Graham, Bryony Marsh, John Marsland, Ben Meeks, Graham Mottershead, Fay McNamara, Dawn McReadie, Adam Parsons, Francis Pearson, Martin Sowerby, John Trippier.

2001
Stan Banister, David Barker, Laura Broughton, Susan Colley, Cookie, Judy Cooper, Sarah Craig, John Crossland, John Crowther, Jennifer Derbyshire, Andy Dicken, Jenna Durkin, Richard Dutton, Ruth Garratt, Hazel Goodwin, Shirley-Anne Hadley, Patrick Harris, Mike Higgins, Galina Kenny, Fay Kenworthy, Vicki Kolodij Harvey, David Law, Bryony Marsh, John Marsland, Nils Mason, Beth Mills, Graham Mottershead, Frances McHugh, Sarah Newton, Peter Noble, Ann O'Mara, Brian Sacre, Adele Shaw, Adam Thompson, John

Trippier, Eleanor Vincent, Friends of the Trust and Tameside Archaeological Society.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report gives an account of the third and fourth years of archaeological investigation on the site located around the Old Vicarage, Mellor, Stockport.

1.2 The work was conducted in response to the findings of the 1998 and 1999 seasons of evaluation which suggest the site to be that of an Iron Age hillfort which subsequently had Roman occupation and previously was used in the Mesolithic Period.

1.3 Section 3 outlines the previous two season's work and that of the Mellor Archaeological Trust, including the successful Local Heritage Initiative grant.

1.4 Section 9 gives an overview of the periods, in particular in the North West. It also looks at how the site at Mellor fits into the surrounding archaeological landscape, outlining sites both within the close vicinity and towards the outreaches of the region.

2. The Physical Setting

2.1 The site of Mellor Church and the Old Vicarage is centred around the National Grid Reference SJ 9818 8890 (Figure 1), in the parish of Mellor, approximately six miles southeast from the centre of Stockport.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area according to the Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 98 is Westphalian A Sandstones from the Late Carboniferous Period. This is overlaid in places by Boulder Clay. (For a more detailed account of the localised geology, please see Appendices 5 and 6).

2.3 The site lies on a promontory of land c.220m AOD that descends quite sharply to the south, west and north. To the east the land shallows slightly before gently rising up to an unnamed summit at 278m AOD.

2.4 Within the perimeter of the site lies the Parish Church and associated graveyard; the Old Vicarage, outbuildings and gardens; the new Vicarage and gardens and Glebe Cottage and gardens. Part of the access road to these dwellings and the Church also lies within the site, as does the field belonging to Knowle Farm which is presently under pasture.

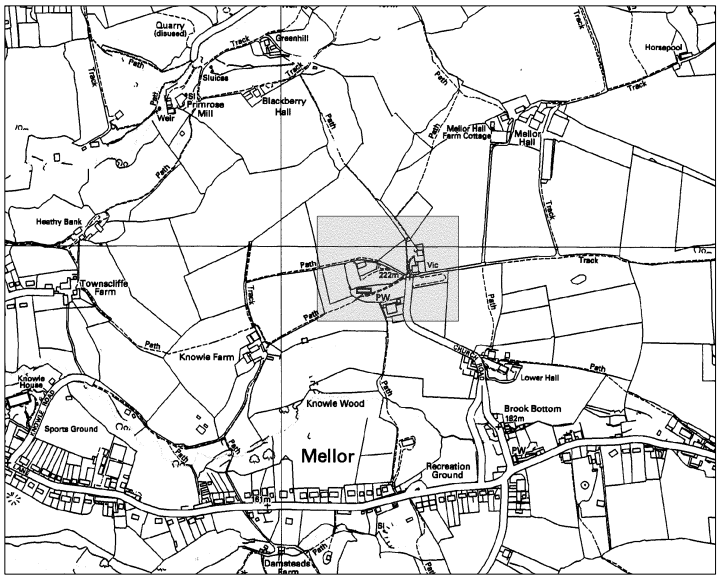

Figure 1: Location of the site. Based on Ordnance Survey 1:10,000. Crown Copyright Reserved.

3. Excavation Background

3.1 Preview

3.1.1 In 1995 it was noticed by Ann Hearle that the summer sun had parched the grass in the gardens of the Old Vicarage and in the field to the north. It was left brown, however in some places it remained lush. Of particular note was a band arcing through the field. She believed that these marks could possibly relate to Medieval origins of the church and of Mellor.

3.1.2 In 1997 Dr Peter Arrowsmith of UMAU visited Mrs Hearle for advice on the local history to include in his book, *Stockport: A History*. She showed him the photographs that had been taken two years previously and he suspected that the features could be earlier than first imagined. The site was then visited by Graham Eyre-Morgan, at the time the Field Division manager at UMAU, who also believed them to be early.

3.2 1998 Season Summary (Figure 2)

3.2.1 During the Easter vacation, three students from the University of Manchester Department of Archaeology conducted a geophysical survey using resistivity across parts of the field and gardens. The results of the field survey reciprocated what could be seen in the photographs of 1995. The gardens also showed features, these however were not quite so distinct. The students returned in July to conduct an evaluation of the features, in total six trenches were excavated.

3.2.2 Trenches A and B were located to the south of the gardens, close to the church over what appeared to be linear features (considered at the time to be possible grave sites). Trench A revealed three postholes cut into the bedrock, however Trench B was devoid of features.

3.2.3 Trenches C and D were excavated in the northwest of the garden and within them the edges of a feature were picked up. The feature was found to be that of a substantial ditch, cut through the bedrock. It was excavated to a depth of 1.2m yet not bottomed. The trenches were left open during the winter.

3.2.4 Trench E was excavated across the feature in the field and again the rock cut ditch was found, although its dimensions were substantially less than in the garden. A further trench was excavated outside of the enclosure, however no features were found within this.

3.2.5 The evaluation results concluded that the ditch was Iron Age in origin and that the site either had been continuously occupied until the late 1st / early 2nd century, or had been re-occupied at that time after an earlier abandonment. It was envisaged that the

site encompassed an area of 5.5 acres and that it could be the remains of an Iron Age hillfort also occupied during the Roman period.

3.3 **1999 Season Summary** (Figure 2)

3.3.1 Trenches C and D were renumbered as Trench 1 and extended to give a complete section across the ditch. At it's largest size the ditch measured 4m wide and 2.1m deep. More Roman and Iron Age pottery was found, as well as industrial waste, possible Late Bronze Age flints and a conical bronze boss, possibly a piece of horse furniture.

3.3.2 Trench 2 was excavated in the southwestern corner of the Old Vicarage gardens to trace the alignment of the ditch. The inside edge was found although the centre would have been positioned almost directly under the boundary wall. 3m behind the ditch and running parallel with it, a narrow slot was found. It was thought that this was either part of an internal building or, more likely, a part of the reinforcement to a rampart or palisade.

3.3.3 Trench 3 was positioned in the centre of the gardens over an anomaly that showed up on the 1998 geophysics, believed to be a ditch. On excavation however it was found that the anomaly was geological. In the western end of the trench, a cluster of five flint waste flakes were recovered. By the end of the excavation 39 worked flints were recovered including blades, flakes, scrapers and cores, all Mesolithic in date. 3m from the western end of the trench a post-hole was found, cut into the natural bedrock. As excavation continued towards the east, the geology changed to a stiff boulder clay. The eastern end of the trench was expanded to reveal a very complex area of archaeology with features found ranging in date from the Mesolithic period through to the Romano-British period, all within a shallow depth of stratigraphy. So complicated was the archaeology in this area that it was backfilled at the close of excavation and left to be re-opened in 2000.

3.3.4 Trench 4 was excavated in the southeastern corner of the field to the north of the Old Vicarage, across the suspected ditch alignment. No evidence for the ditch or any other features was discovered in this trench, although two pieces of white lead and a lead spindle whorl (possibly Roman) were recovered along with several fire cracked pebbles.

3.3.5 Trench 5 was excavated along the grassed area on the north side of the car park, in front of the Vicarage, however no archaeological features were identified.

3.3.6 A further five trenches were excavated across the ditch in the field to the north. Trenches 6-9 revealed essentially the same, steep sided 'v'-shaped ditch profile cut through the natural sandstone bedrock. The dimensions of the ditch within each trench varies between 0.9m deep and 1.6m deep and between 1.5m and 2.4m wide. Trench 10 proved to be an exception, for here the ditch was cut through natural boulder clay, this reflects a localised change in the geology of the area. In this trench the ditch was

2.3m wide and 1.40m deep.

3.3.7 The excavations concluded that not only is the site of significance in the Iron Age and Roman Period, but also had origins in the Mesolithic Period, and possibly in the Later Bronze Age. The limits of fortification to the north were confirmed yet to the east they proved to be elusive.

3.4 The Mellor Archaeological Trust

3.4.1 The Mellor Archaeological Trust was established as a registered charity (No. 1081602) in 1999. This was in response to the overwhelming support and enthusiasm of the locals and land owners.

3.4.2 The aims of the Trust are twofold;

> (1) To promote the investigation, interpretation, and preservation of the archaeology of the area surrounding Mellor Church and of other parts of Mellor, Stockport, in the County of Greater Manchester,
>
> and
>
> (2) to organise displays, educational activities, or other means of bringing information on the history and archaeology to the notice of the public.

3.4.3 Such was the interest from the local public in 1999, that an Open Day was held to allow viewing of the excavations and finds. More than one thousand people attended the event and in 2000 it was extended to cover a full weekend resulting in a similar number of visitors. The attendance of the Open Days in 2001 broke the records with almost one and a half thousand people coming to the site, reflecting its popularity and increase in public awareness.

3.4.4 Funds raised by the Mellor Archaeological Trust are used to pay for a variety of services. Amongst these are specialist analyses on finds and geophysical survey work.

3.4.5 Over the winter of 2000, the Trust put together an application for a grant from the Local Heritage Initiative. The scheme is run by the Countryside Agency with financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Nationwide. In April 2001 the Trust were informed that a grant of up to £13,525 had been awarded.

3.4.6 The LHI cannot be used to fund excavation, but is intended to foster involvement in the local heritage by other means. The purpose of the grant is to:

> *To involve the local community in the Mellor site investigations, survey work and education and community outreach by means of topographical and geophysical survey of the site, computer modelling to produce 3-D models interpreting the site, a booklet, a web-site, open days, site tours, demonstrations of archaeological techniques and*

interpretation panels. All aspects of the project will provide opportunities for direct involvement by local groups, schools or members of the community.

3.4.7 The topographical survey was conducted between July and September and supervised by Graham Mottershead of UMAU. This involved a detailed contour survey around the hilltop using Total Station Theodolites, which use electromagnetic pulses to take readings of the position and relative heights of points around the area. This data was saved to a palmtop computer and then downloaded onto a PC. Specialist software, purchased through the grant, was then used to produce a three dimensional model. This data can then be used to create visual representations of the site throughout the periods.

3.4.8 During the summer of 2001 members of the Marple Active Volunteer Initiative Squad, together with professional Firefighters from Marple Fire Station and headed by Peter Clarke, endeavoured to establish the origins of the well in the triangular field to the north of the Old Vicarage gardens. After lowering the depth of water and removing the stone debris, the silts were dredged out and sieved.

3.4.9 Numerous artefacts were recovered however most dated back only to the last century. These included a plastic comb-complete with case, a penny whistle, a pocket watch and around three hundred rounds of ammunition-most still live. This complimented the 'Tommy' gun retrieved from there some years before by Professor and Mrs Hearle. During the Second World War the well was used to stockpile weapons in order to fight a guerilla war, should England be invaded. As they were retrieved, some fell down into the water below.

3.4.10 With the in-fill and water removed it was possible to see that there were scars on the walls, made by chisels and drills. The presence of these proves that the well, as it stands today, was certainly only dug within the last 200 years. It is however, possible that it was enlarged and deepened from an earlier one in the same location.

4. Aims and Methodology

4.1 2000

4.1.1 The excavations of 2000 where aimed to complete and expand upon the work started in 1999.

4.1.2 The first task conducted in Tr. 1 was the removal of a small pine tree, then stratigraphic reduction of the remaining quadrant, leaving a 2m wide section across the ditch. Further test pits were excavated around Tr. 2 in order to trace the possible palisade slot found behind the ditch. As the archaeology encountered in Trench 3 was so complex, this trench was re-opened in order to complete the excavation and recording work. Two test pits were opened up either side of the posthole located in the western end.

4.1.3 An extensive geophysical survey was conducted by Dr. Richard Gregory. The primary purpose being to locate the enclosure ditch to the northeast and east and to assess the possibility of internal features.

4.2 2001

4.2.1 The 2001 excavations were based on the results of the geophysical survey conducted by Dr. Richard Gregory (Appendix 2). The image maps showed the ditch running through the field to the north of the site together with a rectangular feature and between 5 and 7 circular features which were interpreted to be hut circles. The majority of these were positioned within the limits of the ditch, however one lay to the north of the ditch and appeared to intersect with it. If it could be proved that this feature pre-dated the ditch it would support the suggestion that the origins of the site stemmed from the Late Bronze Age as an open settlement that was later fortified with earthworks during the Iron Age. It is currently thought that this is how the site at Mam Tor developed.

4.2.2 A large open area excavation was planned to encompass the circle and the point at which it met the ditch. It was known through trenching in previous years that the upper soils were only very shallow and therefore the bedrock is close to the surface. It is common practice to use mechanical excavators in archaeology to speed up the process of removing unproductive layers but with such a shallow stratigraphy it was decided that all excavation would be done by hand. A mechanical cutter was used to remove the turf after employing a garden lawnmower to remove the excess grass. A $13m^2$ trench was opened (Tr.15) and the upper levels reduced in spits of 100mm in order to allow identification of features cut into the sub-soils.

4.2.3 In 1999 a slot was excavated behind Tr. 1 looking for signs of the possible palisade foundation, found in Tr. 2. It was questioned whether the lack of evidence for the

feature was due to it being beyond the limit of excavation. In order to clarify the situation, another slot was excavated by members of MAT prior to the start of the main excavation.

4.2.4 Further geophysical survey was undertaken by Dr Richard Gregory, in the field to the north of the Old Vicarage, in the triangular field to the northeast of the Old Vicarage and in the field to the east of the Car Park (Appendix 3).

4.4.5 Survey using Ground Penetrating Radar was also conducted by Dr Steven Openshaw of Testconsult Ltd. This was used to locate the ditch in previously unsuccessful areas and also in places were other methods are unsuitable. Lines were placed in the field to the north of the Old Vicarage where the ditch is known (as a control), in the field to the northeast of Glebe Cottage and along the roads and car park to the south of the Vicarage (Appendix 4).

4.3 General

4.3.1 The features identified were excavated and recorded. Sections were drawn at a scale of either 1:10 or 1:20 where appropriate and plans at 1:20. Contexts were assigned and compiled and a photographic record was made in both colour print and slide in a 35mm format. In 2001, a digital camera was also used to take working shots. The position of the excavations were located using a Total Station Theodolite and processed using AutoCAD and Terramodel programs.

4.3.2 Where context numbers are referred to in this report, cuts are represented in square brackets, [ ], and deposits in round brackets ( ).

4.3.3 All finds were bagged according to the context from which they came and where considered necessary, plotted three dimensionally. All artefacts were retained for analysis and subsequent deposition with Mellor Archaeological Trust.

4.3.4 The work was monitored by the Assistant County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester.

4.3.5 Throughout the excavations, all the current Health and Safety requirements were upheld.

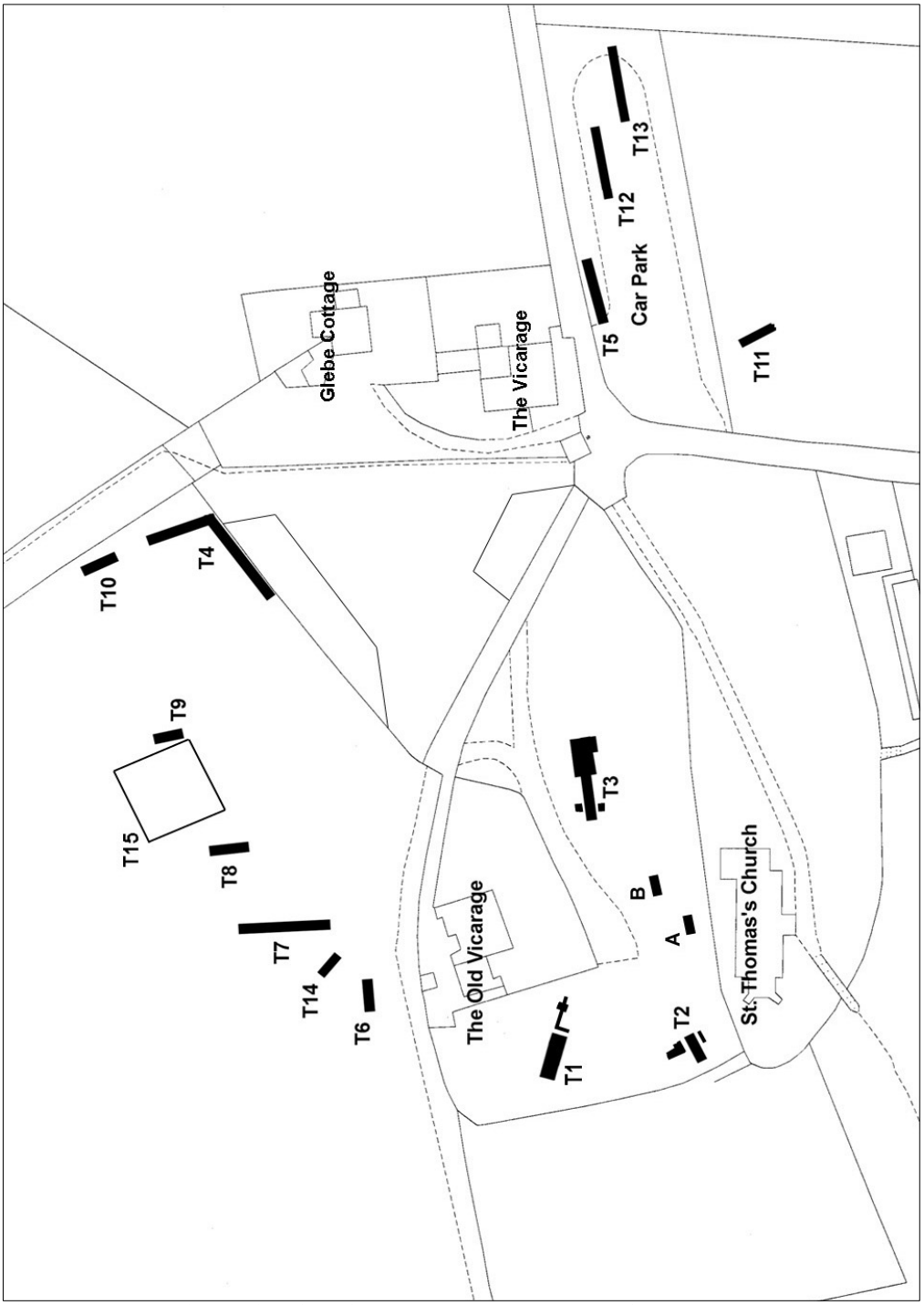

Figure 2: Plan showing the location of all the trenches excavated so far. Not to scale.

5. 2000 Excavation Results

5.1 Trench 1

5.1.1 The remaining quadrant was removed stratigraphically leaving a 2m wide section across the ditch which is permanently left open. (Plates 1 and 2).

5.1.2 A number of finds were retrieved from the fills. Of particular note was a sherd of prehistoric pottery (SF 3), found within (1028). On inspection it was noted to look similar in style and fabric to that of a piece found in 1999, so similar in fact that when compared, the two sherds fitted together! (See front cover) Also from this context, found during the clearing of a minor collapse over the winter of 2000/2001 were a nugget of slag and a piece of crucible fragment, both of which have been analysed (see Appendix 11) and date to the Middle Iron Age.

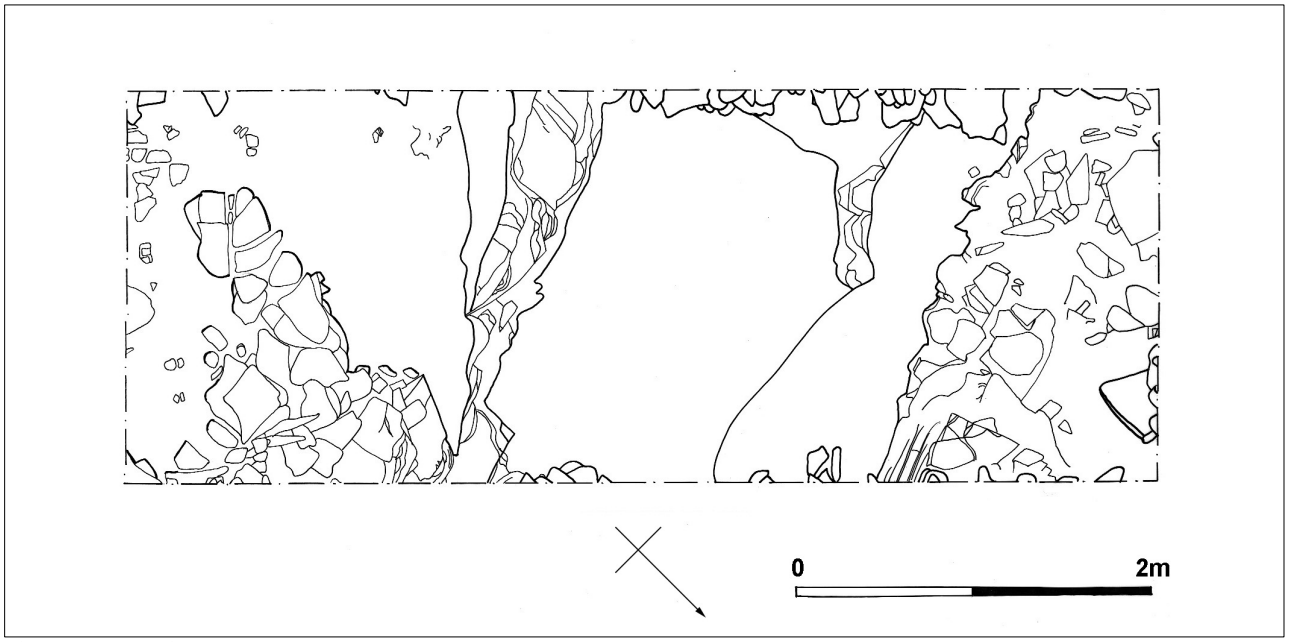

Figure 3: Plan of Trench 1. Scale 1:40

5.2 Trench 2

5.2.1 Three small trenches were excavated close to Tr.2 of 1999 and were positioned to try and follow the possible palisade/rampart slot or building foundation. The first, 2a was excavated 0.5m to the south of Tr.2 and measured 1m by 0.5m and was aligned east-west. This showed signs of the feature but the trench was too narrow to be certain and widening it was not possible.

5.2.2 The second, 2b measured 1m by 1m and was excavated to the north of Tr.2 and the cut [2004] could be clearly identified within it (Plate 3). The cut was 0.43m wide and 0.19m deep with vertical sides and a flat base and contained an orange brown silt with moderate angular sandstone fragments up to 0.4m diameter. No datable material was recovered from the fill.

5.2.3 2c was excavated a further 1m to the north and measured 1m by 1m. However the slot was not visible, suggesting that it turned, perhaps by ninety degrees such as would be expected as the corner of a building. The baulk between 2b and 2c was removed yet it was found that the cut simply petered out between the two (Plate 4).

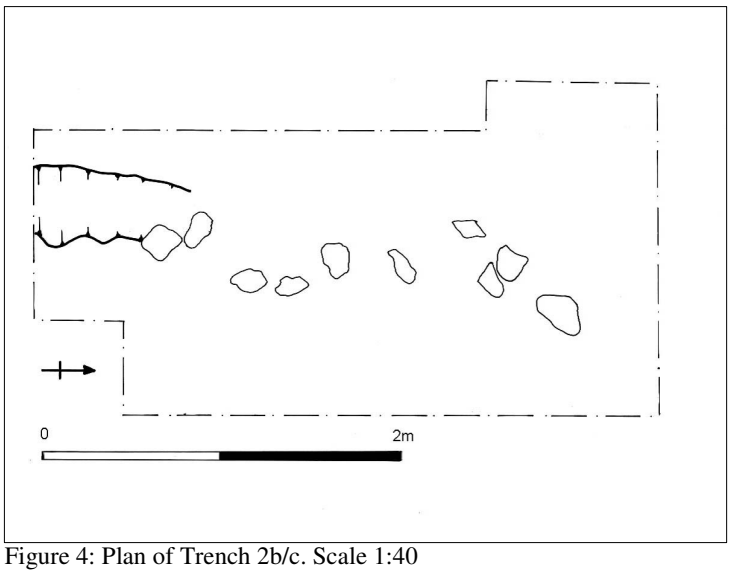

Figure 4: Plan of Trench 2b/c. Scale 1:40

5.3 Trench 3

5.3.1 Tr.3 was re-opened in order to complete the excavation and recording of the complex archaeology encountered (Figure 5 and Plate 5). Many of the features had been partially excavated during the previous season and some only became apparent this year.

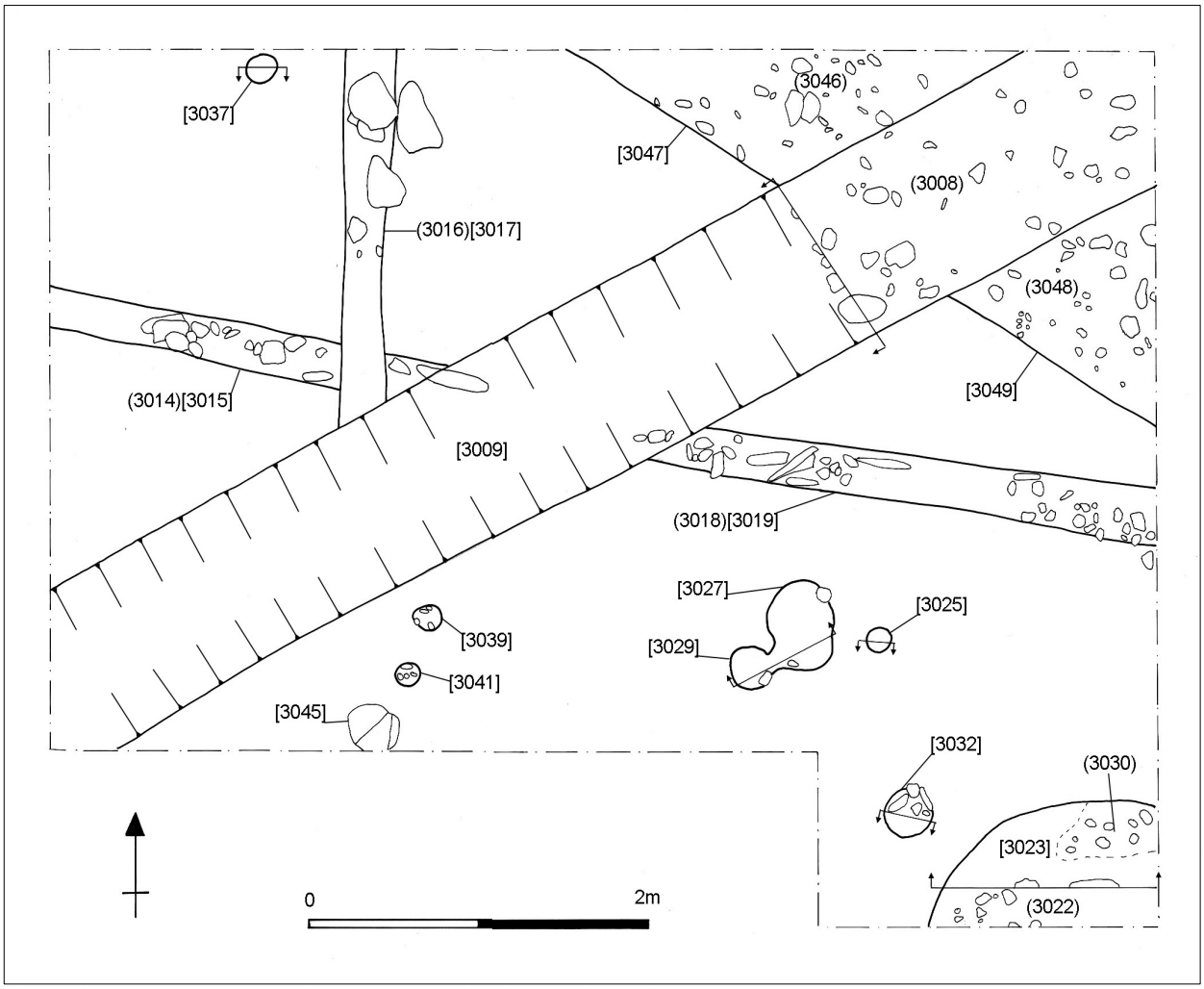

Figure 5: Part excavated plan of Trench 3, showing features identified. Scale 1:40.

5.3.2 Aligned southwest to northeast, diagonally across the trench a shallow ditch was found [3009]. This measured 1.1m wide and 0.25m deep and contained a mid brown clayey silt with occasional pebbles up to 80mm in diameter and moderate angular fragments of sandstone up to 0.4m in diameter. The sides were steeply sloped and the base slightly concave (Figure 6). From within the fill a piece of Romano-British Derbyshire ware was recovered, dating to the second century as well as four sherds of Late Iron Age pottery. This feature was found to cut a number of others along it's length.

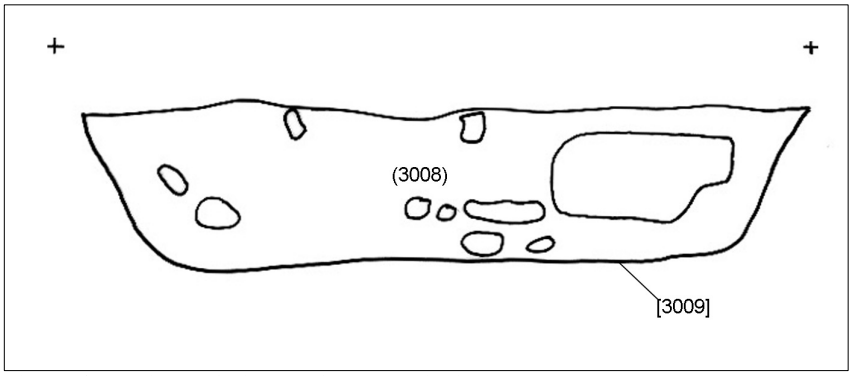

Figure 6: Southwest facing section through ditch [3009]. Scale 1:10 RL 221.97mAOD

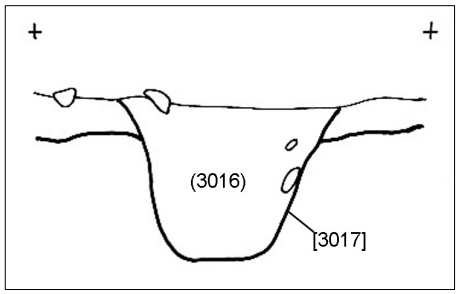

Figure 7: South facing section through gully [3017]. Scale 1:10 RL 222.00 AOD

5.3.3 In the northeast corner of the trench, [3009] cut a second ditch of similar proportions, [3045]/[3047]. This was orientated northwest to southeast and measured 1.1m wide and 0.37m deep. The sides sloped gentle to a flat base and the cut was filled with a dark grey brown clayey silt with occasional angular sandstone fragments up to 80mm in diameter. No dating evidence was found within the fill.

5.3.4 1.8m from the western edge of the trench a narrow gully orientated north to south was found [3017]. This measured 0.3m wide and 0.2m deep. The sides were straight and 'v'-shaped with a flat base (Figure 7). The fill was a brown silt and contained occasional pebbles up to 30mm diameter and occasional angular sandstone fragments

up to 0.15m in diameter. To the south the feature cut [3015]/[3019] and was cut to the south of this by ditch [3009]. To the north the feature extended beyond the limit of excavation. One sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the fill of this.

5.3.5 Running east to west across the centre of the trench and bisected by [3009], a line of large, flat fragments of sandstone were held vertically within a narrow slot [3015]/[3019]. The cut was a maximum of 0.3m wide and 0.14m deep with steep sides. Contained within was a matrix of grey clay and occasional pebbles up to 0.1m in diameter around the frequent angular sandstone fragments up to 0.4m in diameter. Occasional flint artefacts were recovered from the fill around these stones.

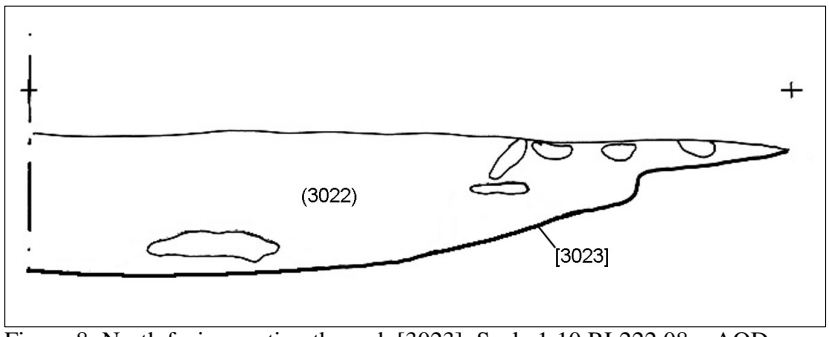

Figure 8: North facing section through [3023]. Scale 1:10 RL222.08m AOD

5.3.6 In the southeast corner of the trench a cut was identified whose limits were beyond that of the excavation. It appeared to be sub-circular in shape and measured 0.95m east to west and 0.7m north to south within the trench. It's shape was that of a shallow even scoop, however towards the east and south the cut had not begun to rise again, suggesting that the centre of the feature had not been uncovered (Figure 8). The upper fill (3022) was a mid-grey silty clay with occasional pebbles and sub-angular sandstone fragments up to 0.1m in diameter. This overlaid a cluster of pebbles up to 70mm in diameter which seemed almost fused together, possibly by heat (3030).

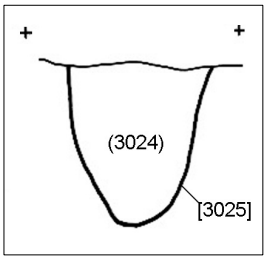

Figure 9: North facing section through posthole [3025]. Scale 1:10 RL 221.98m AOD

5.3.7 Prior to their excavation it appeared that there were two postholes 2.7m to the northwest of the southeastern corner of excavation[3027] [3029]. However on excavation they were found to be natural depressions.

5.3.8 Sub-circular cut [3025] was located 2.3m to the northwest from the southeastern corner of excavation. This measured 0.14m in diameter and 0.18m deep with steep, near vertical sides and a concave base (Figure 9). The fill was a mid-grey clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks. Although identified as a posthole the structure to which it relates is unknown.

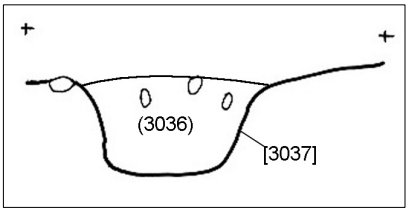

Figure 10: South facing section through [3037]. Scale 1:10 RL 221.90m AOD

5.3.9 Sub-circular cut [3032]was located 0.9m to the northeast of the southwest corner of the southeastern extension to the trench. This measured 0.25m in diameter and 0.12m deep with near vertical sides and a concave base. It was filled with a dark grey silty clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and packing stones of angular sandstone fragments up to 0.1m in diameter around the southern, northwestern and northeastern sides, possibly relates to the same structure as [3025].

5.3.10 1.9m from the southwestern corner and tight against the southern limit of excavation lay a large, flat fragment of sandstone, 0.45m by 0.3 and roughly oval. Two cracks had been identified running through the stone and it was suspected that the stone may have formed a post-pad. On removal it was found to be c.40mm thick and underlaid by a second of the same shape but slightly smaller with a 10mm sandwich of clay between the two. The corresponding cracks were also present through this stone. Both lay in a shallow cut 80mm deep [3045].

5.3.11 Prior to their excavation it appeared that there were two postholes [3039]and [3041], 0.4m and 0.8m respectively, to the north of the southern limit of excavation, just east of [3045]. However on excavation they were found to be natural depressions in the natural.

5.3.12 1.2m to the east of the northeastern corner and close to the northern limit of excavation posthole [3037] was identified. This contained a mid-brown silt loam with occasional pebbles up to 50mm in diameter within a sub-circular cut, 0.27m in diameter and 0.17m deep with near vertical sides and a flat base (Figure 10). Three flint flakes were found within the fill.

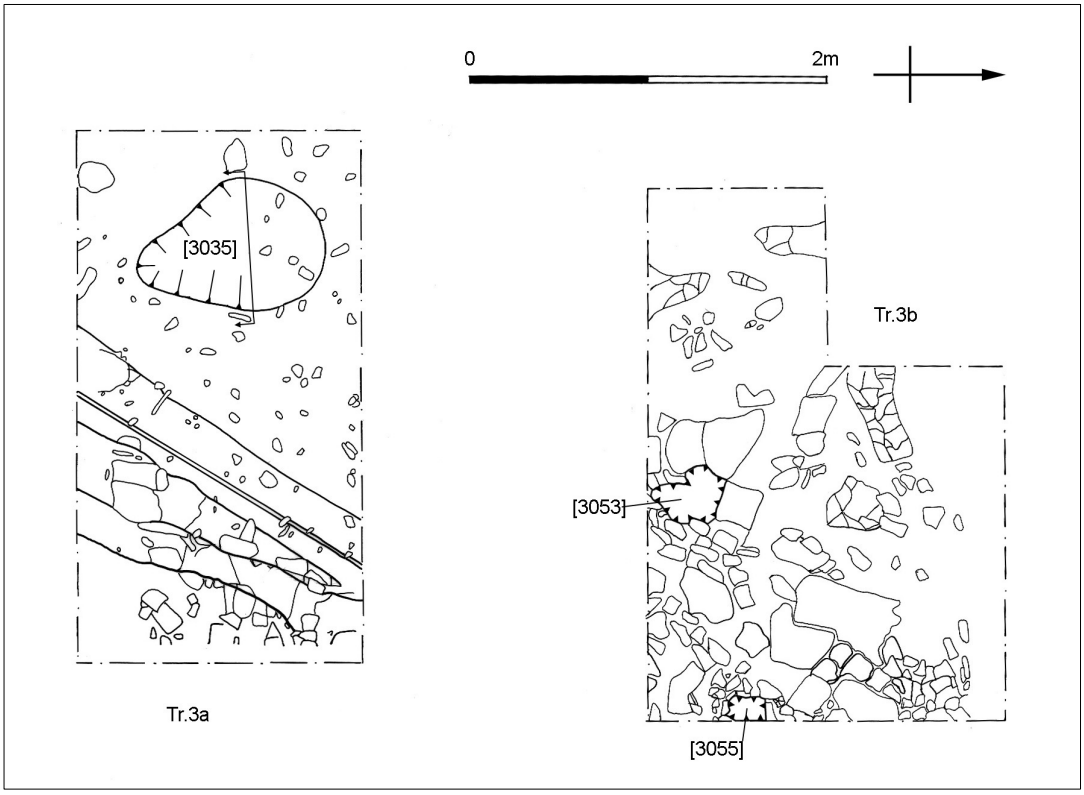

Figure 11: Plan of Trenches 3a and 3b. Scale 1:40

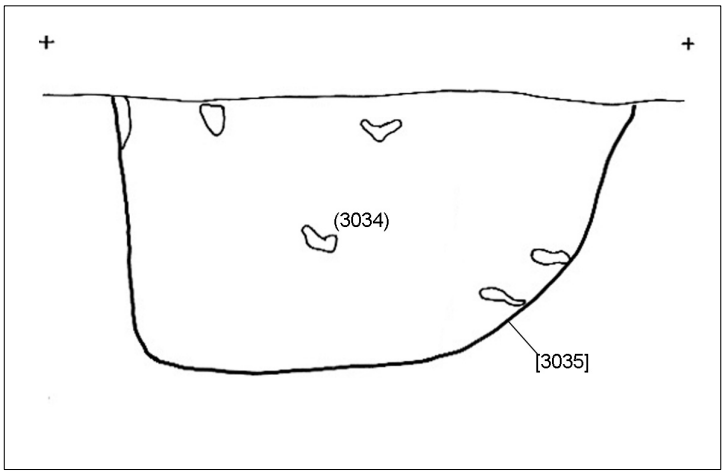

Figure 12: South facing section through pit [3035]. Scale 1:10 RL 222.16m AOD

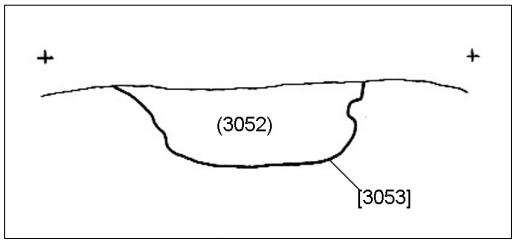

Figure 13: North facing section through [3053].
Scale 1:10 RL 222.07m AOD

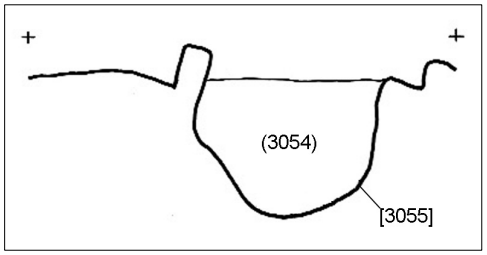

Figure 14: West facing section through [3055].
Scale 1:10 RL 222.22m AOD

5.3.13 Two small trenches were excavated either side of the original trench, close to where the first posthole was found in 1999.

5.3.14 The first, Tr.3a, revealed a sub-ovoid pit and the old water main to the church (Plate 6). The pit [3035] was filled with a mid-brown silt with occasional angular sandstone fragments up to 60mm in diameter and occasional pebbles up to 20mm diameter. The cut measured 0.94m by 0.74m and was orientated north to south. It was 0.3m deep with vertical sides to the west and had exponentially curved sides to the east, leading down to a flat base (Figure 12). No datable material was recovered from the fill.

5.3.15 In Tr.3b two more possible postholes were found cut into the bedrock (Plate 7). The first [3053] was sub-circular in shape, 0.28m in diameter and located 1.6m from the southwestern corner and tight against the southern limit of excavation (approximately 1.4m to the northeast of the posthole discovered in 1999). The sides were vertical 0.13m deep and the base flat (Figure 13), filled with a light to mid brown silty loam with occasional angular sandstone fragments up to 60mm in diameter.

5.3.16 The second [3055], also sub-circular in shape, was located 0.6m from the southeastern corner and close against the eastern limit of excavation. It was 0.23m in diameter and 0.21m in depth, with vertical sides which stepped slightly halfway down and a flat base. The fill was a dark brown silty loam with occasional sandstone fragments up to 80mm and one sherd of Iron Age pottery was found within it.

5.4 Trenches 11, 12, 13 and 14

5.4.1 Tr.11 was excavated in the field to the south of the church car park, over an anomaly located in the geophysics survey by Dr Gregory, believed to be the ditch. The trench measured 1.5m by 10m and aligned north to south The topsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator down to the natural bedrock and it appeared that a cut of ditch-like proportions was present. Inspection by retired lecturers in geology at the University of Manchester, Fred Broadhurst and Morven Simpson, concluded however, that it was geological.

5.4.2 Tr.12 and Tr.13 were excavated by machine through the grassed areas to the eastern end of the Church car park. The intention was to evaluate the area for the presence of the ditch which may have swung out further than originally expected. No evidence of this was found, which strongly suggests that it arcs sharply to the south, east of the track leading to Mill Brow and under the Vicarage and Glebe Cottage.

5.4.3 Tr.14 was excavated across the ditch in the field to the north of the Old Vicarage, between Trenches 6 and 7. A posthole was found, cut into the bedrock at the top of the ditch on the inside edge (Plate 8). The profile of the ditch was identical to that found during the trenching of 1999 (Figure 15). From within the fills a few highly abraded sherds of pottery Roman were found.

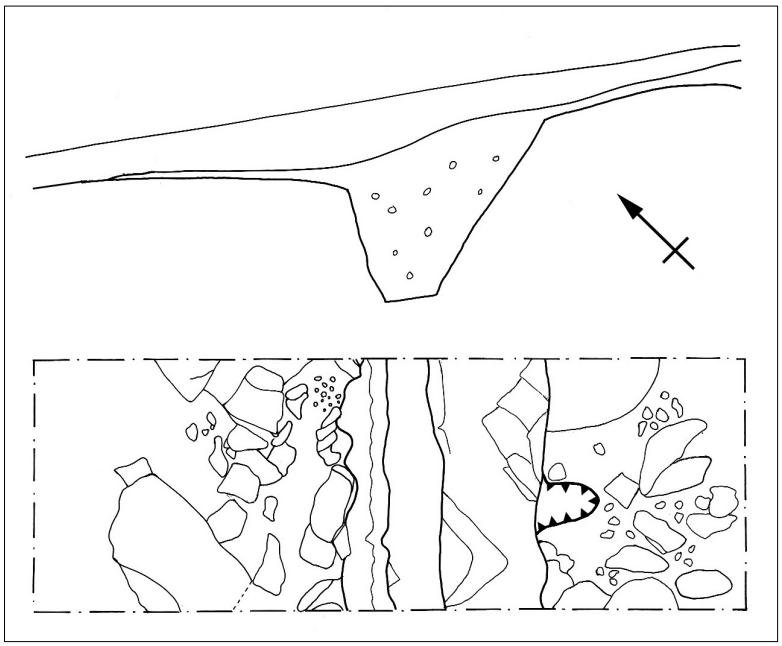

Figure 15: Trench 14 plan and southwest facing section. Scale 1:40.

6. 2001 Excavation Results

6.1 Trench 1

6.1.1 The slot excavated from Tr.1 towards the southeast measured 8m long and 0.5m wide. Bedrock was encountered at c.0.5m from the present ground surface. The majority of artefacts found throughout the topsoil were Post-Medieval in date.

6.1.2 c.5m from the inside edge of the ditch a cut was identified [035], running across the slot and appeared to be curving. The slot was expanded to the south and north by 0.5m each way. This revealed the feature to be sub-circular in shape and c.1.2m in diameter. The feature was half sectioned and a darker fill could clearly be seen running vertically through the centre, this was interpreted as a post pipe (Plate 9).

6.1.3 The fill running through the centre (034) was a mid-brown grey sandy silt with occasional angular sandstone fragments up to 0.1m diameter and moderate charcoal flecking. It was 0.4m wide and 0.7m deep (Figure 16).

6.1.4 The packing (033) was a mid yellow brown silty sand matrix containing frequent angular sandstone fragments up to 0.12m diameter and occasional charcoal flecking. No dating evidence was found within the fills, however one (?)Roman pottery sherd was found in subsoil directly above bedrock in the vicinity.

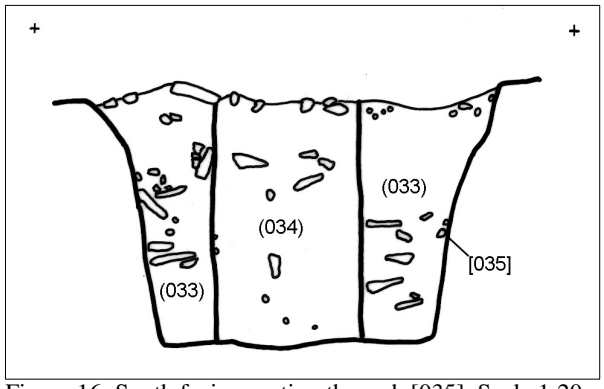

Figure 16: South facing section through [035]. Scale 1:20
RL 221.45m AOD.

6.1.5 [035] was fully excavated (Figure 17) revealing the southwest edge to be quite smoothly sub-circular in shape whereas the northeast side was less regular and more jagged, due to a geological break running southwest to northeast (Plate 10). The sides were near vertical with a sharp top break of slope and sharp bottom break of slope onto a flat base which slopes gently from north to south.

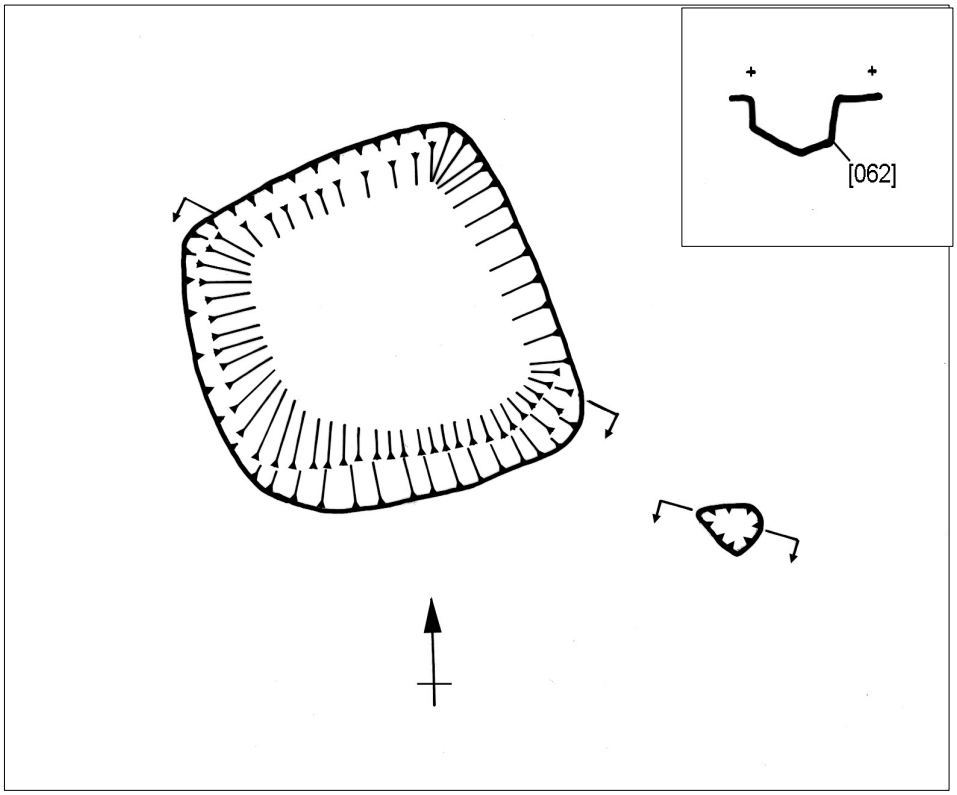

Figure 17: Plan of postholes [035] and [062] behind Tr.1. Scale 1:20. Inset: Profile of [062] facing south. Scale 1:10.

6.1.6 The post would have been around 0.4m in diameter, from quite a substantial tree. Immediately to the southeast of this feature, a sub-oval cut was identified [062]. It measured 0.35m by 0.28m orientated southeast to northwest and 0.15mdeep. It's sides were vertical with an irregular base. It is possible that this could have accommodated a smaller post offering support for the main one.

6.2 Trench 15

6.2.1 An average of 0.29m of topsoils were removed down onto the natural sandstone bedrock without trace of any features cut into them. An abundance of Post-Medieval artefacts were recovered along with occasional abraded sherds of Roman and Iron Age pottery and occasional flakes of flint debitage and one retouched flint blade.

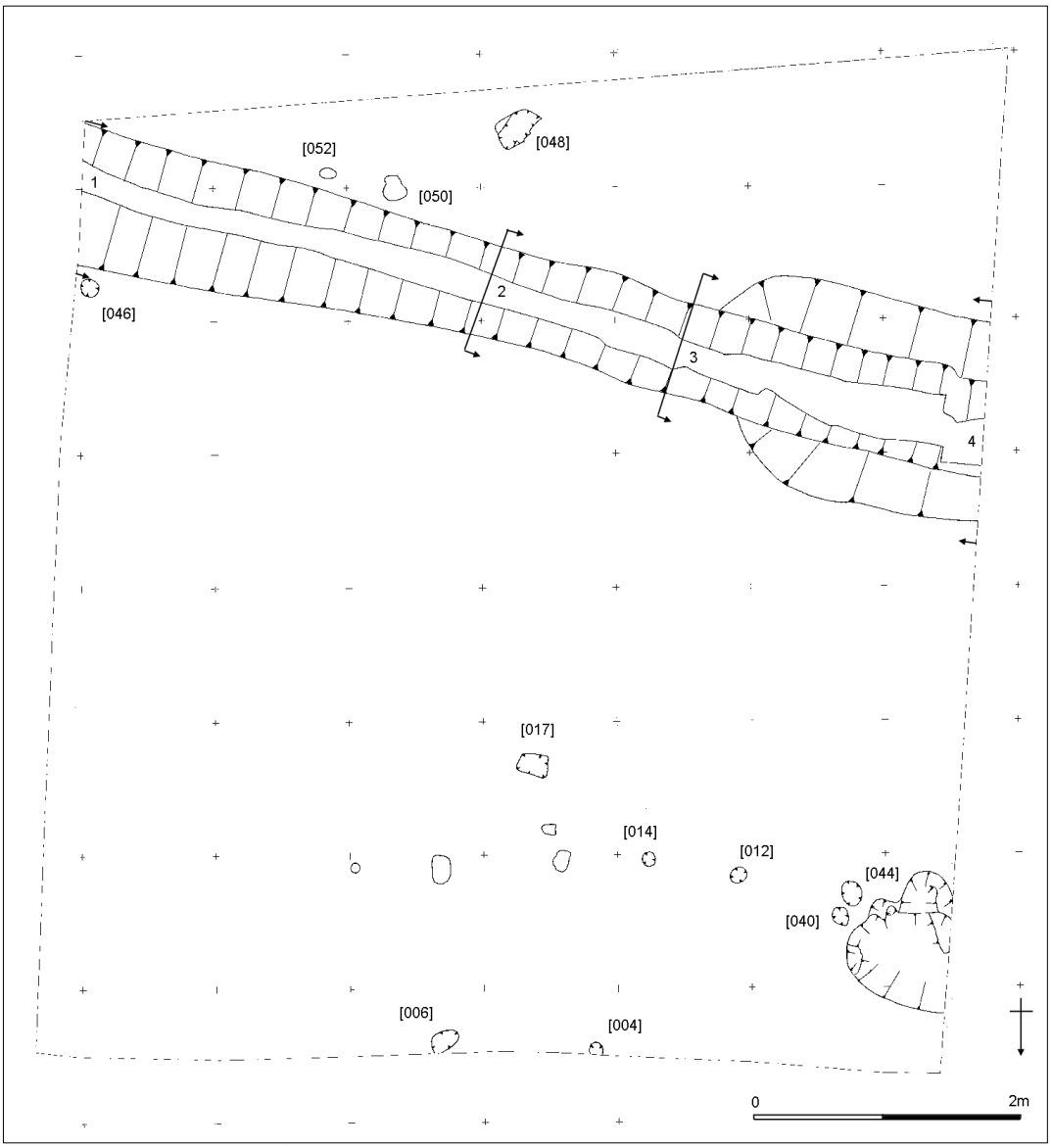

Figure 18: Excavated plan of Trench15.

6.2.2 The ditch could be clearly seen cut into the natural (Plate 11), running east to west across the trench and it was envisaged that the hut circles would be too, however this was not the case. The fragmentary nature of the surface induced difficulties in identifying features. The action of glacial movement and biopeturbation had produced mixed soils with fragments of sandstone which, when lying within depressions in the bedrock, created the illusion of features. Despite careful excavation it was not always possible to distinguish genuine features from these natural occurrences.

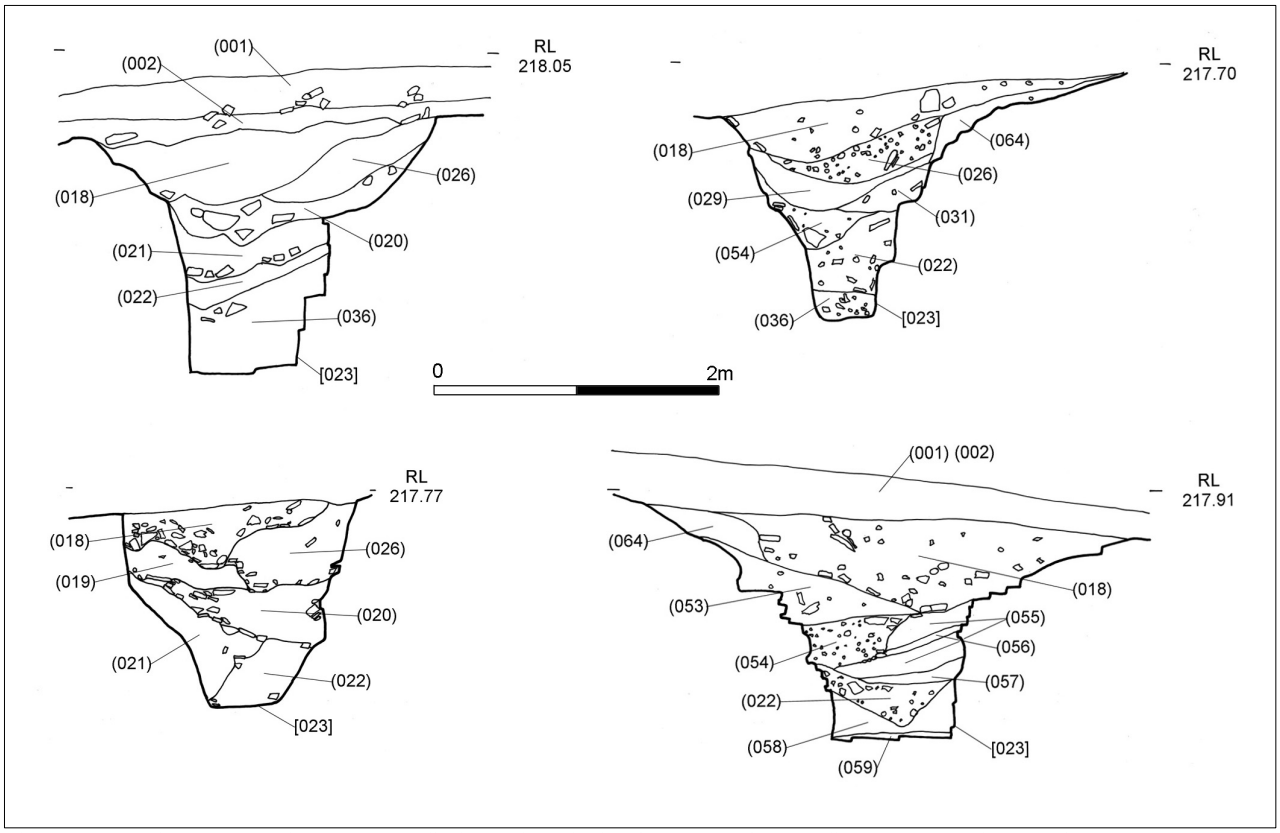

Figure 19: Sections recorded through the ditch. Anticlockwise from top left according to numeration on Figure 18; 1 west facing, 2 west facing, 3 east facing, 4 west facing. Scale 1:40.

6.2.3 Three slots were excavated through the ditch [023] and their sections recorded. By the end of the excavation, all of the fill had been removed, allowing 14m of the ditch to be studied, the longest excavated stretch so far (Plate 12). It was found to vary in width from 1.5 to 2.2m wide and to average1.6m deep from the current ground surface. In general it has steep sloping sides towards the upper 0.4m before breaking to near vertical with a sharp break to a flat base. Along the western 5m it bottoms to a sandstone base, further to the east the base is cut through a micaceous orange sandy layer of natural. It appears to have been cut following natural breaks in the bedrock, giving the ditch it's linear characteristic along this section.

6.2.4 From the sections recorded along the length of the ditch, it was possible to identify a pattern amongst the fills. Those towards the base of the cut, the primary fills, were similar across the length of the ditch,(022) and (036), suggesting that they occurred at a similar time, possibly from deliberate backfilling. The middle fills within the ditch varied across it's length, suggesting silting up or slumping over a period of time. The uppermost fill, (018), then occurs in all sections, possibly from levelling.

6.2.5 Fill (018) contained a substantial quantity of highly abraded pottery sherds and a plethora of fire cracked pebbles. The middle fills of the ditch yielded occasional sherds of Iron Age pottery and more fire-cracked pebbles, some of which were substantial in size. From the bottom of (021), towards the eastern part of the trench, a number of pottery sherds from the same vessel were found.

6.2.6 1.8m to the south of the ditch and 6.4m from the western limit of excavation a sub-rectangular cut was identified [048] (Plate 13). This measured 0.63m by 0.42m orientated northeast to southwest and was 0.3m deep. The natural to the northeast and northwest was fractured and angled up which may be geological but could be caused by a post falling and kicking up. The form of the feature did not however suggest this as a function. No datable material was recovered from within the fill.

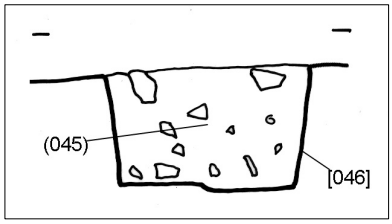

Figure 20: West facing section through [046]. Scale 1:20 RL 217.64m AOD

6.2.7 0.3m to the south of the ditch and 4.8m and 3.8m were two ephemeral features [050] and [052] respectively. These measured c.0.4m in diameter and 30mm deep. It is possible that these were postholes however their shallow depth tends to suggest natural depressions in the bedrock as being more likely.

6.2.8 Immediately to the north of the ditch, tight against the eastern limit of excavation a sub-circular cut was identified [046](Figure 20 and Plate 14). This was 0.29m in diameter and 0.14m deep. It's sides were vertical and the base was flat. No datable material was recovered from the fill. This feature was interpreted as a posthole and possibly formed part of a pre-ditch structure or defensive system contemporary with the ditch.

6.2.9 In the northwestern corner of the trench, partially obscured by the western limit of excavation, a sub-oval feature was identified. This was filled with an orange brown mottled sand and it was thought that this may represent a tree bole as the fill was quite clean, yet had occasional silty deposits throughout from root disturbance. On excavation the feature was found to be c.0.3m deep with the sand lying on the sandstone bedrock (Plate 15) .

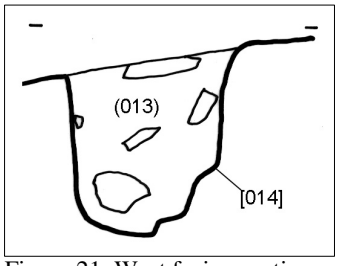

Figure 21: West facing section through [014]. Scale 1:10 RL 216.88m AOD

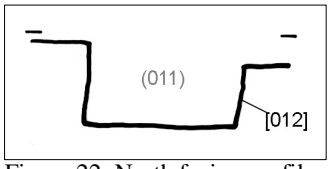

Figure 22: North facing profile of [012]. Scale 1:10 RL 216.70m AOD

6.2.10 0.3m to the southeast of the edge this feature two possible postholes were identified, [040])and [044] (Plate 16). These were sub-circular in shape and ranged from 0.24m to 0.5m in diameter and 0.16m to 0.25m in depth. Their location within the point bar (see Appendix 6, 3.) tends to suggest that they were a natural occurrence and not purpose cut, however they do align with postholes [012] and [014].

6.2.11 4.2m to the southeast of the northwest corner of the excavation sub-circular posthole [014] (Plate 17) was identified cut into the bedrock. This was 0.24m in diameter and 0.24m deep. It's sides were vertical and the base concave. No datable material was recovered from the fill.

6.2.12 1.3m to the east of [014], a second sub-circular posthole [012] (Plate 18) was identified cut into the bedrock. This was 0.19m in diameter and 0.13m deep. The sides were vertical and the base flat. No datable material was recovered from the fill.

6.2.13 2.3m to the southeast of this a sub-rectangular cut was identified as a posthole[017](Plate 19). This measured 0.42m by 0.3m and was orientated east to west. It was 0.33m deep with near vertical sides, stepped to the north with a concave base. The step may have been purposely cut to aid the erection of a large post or may have occurred due to the lie of the bedrock. The upper fill (016) lay above the possible packing (015) at a steep sloping angle suggesting the possibility of the post falling or being pulled down to the west.

6.2.14 To the north and east of [017] a number of possible postholes were identified however they were ephemeral and are likely to be geological depressions.

6.2.15 5.1m from the northwestern corner of the trench, partially under the limit of excavation a sub-circular cut measuring 0.22m by 0.18m and 55mm deep was identified [004]. This had vertical sides and a flat base and may have been a posthole. No datable material was recovered from the fill.

6.2.16 2.3m to the east of [004] a second sub-circular cut was identified [006] measuring 0.4m by 0.32m with irregular sloping sides 0.1m deep with a concave base. This feature possibly could be interpreted as a posthole but is likely to be a depression in the bedrock.

7. Conclusions

The Defences

Of those features excavated over the past four years features the most substantial is the ditch. From the geological report conducted by Fred Broadhurst it was possible to deduce from looking at the ditch that it is likely to have been excavated using a tool similar to a mattock with the digger standing facing to the east. From this position it would have been simple to lever off plates of bedrock. It was noticed that the section of ditch unearthed ran particularly straight, this is because it follows between two joints in the bedrock (Appendix 6), making it even easier to be dug (Plate 20). Although, as of yet, the shape of the enclosure to the east has not been proved, this may suggest a straight section along the northern side where it is easier, then a turn sharp to the south through Glebe Cottage.

It must be questioned where all the material removed in the construction of the ditch has gone to. At 1.2m deep and one metre wide, there would have been approximately 15 tonnes of material from the portion revealed in this years excavation alone. Much may have been cleared from the land and used in the construction of the field boundaries. Most other hillforts have been identified for many years, either through remaining earthworks or aerial photographs. The reason Mellor had not been discovered earlier is that there are no visible earthworks standing, the rampart and ditch have been ploughed flat leaving no positive evidence behind.

Without the presence of a visible rampart it will very difficult to establish the location(s) of an entrance, or entrances. The apparent absence of the ditch by the car park could indicate one point, however at the least naturally defended part of the site, it seems unlikely to have been positioned here. It is possible that the large posthole [035] found within Tr.1 in 2001may have formed part of either a gateway system. Hillforts often had complicated and highly elaborate entrance ways, using various ditch arrangements and superterranean defences. The Roman defences of the site may also have included a gate system.

One other possibility is that it formed part of a Roman signal tower. These are quite common and are usually built with either four or six posts. An example of a four poster was found at the western Stanegate fort, Burgh I (Shotter, 1993 pl.22 p.34).

The Occupational Features

The sheer size of posthole [035] lead to the conjecture that it may have originally been used as a storage pit and then re-used as a posthole later. Trial pollen sampling was undertaken by Dr Barbara Bradshaw, however it was found that the conditions of the fill were not conducive to preservation.

Although no evidence of hut circles was found it Tr.15, postholes cut into the bedrock were discovered outside of the ditch. This confirms the presence of structures extending beyond the enclosure and may still indicate a pre-ditch use of the site. However, the paucity of dating

evidence or definitive arrangement leading to identification of purpose, neither proves, nor disproves this. Excavation has so farm not indicated whether the site was inhabited during the Iron Age. It is widely thought that hillforts were not used primarily as settlement areas but as a tribal focal point.

Few deductions can be made from the series of ditches and gullies found in Tr.3. Their function cannot be ascertained without further definition of their extent and spatial relationship. The areas within the enclosure studied so far only represent a small percentage of the total. If each trench opened is likened to a jigsaw piece, then it can be appreciated that the full picture will not be seen from a few oddments.

The absence of later material from within the stone filled slot in Tr.3 [3015]/[3019], suggests the possibility that this feature is Mesolithic in date. It's form suggests that it is part of a temporary structure, made of a light timber frame, draped with skins that were held down in the slot with the rocks. A similar structure was found at Deepcar, Yorkshire (Radley and Mellars, 1964).

The Pottery

Much of the problem in associating Mellor with other such sites in the region is due to the dearth of material culture found. This is not a problem specific to Mellor but to the whole of the North West. Mathews (1994) outlines the situation in Cheshire and the ethos can be applies regionally.
When discussing the regional grouping in the north and west of Britain, Cunliffe writes 'the material culture was poor, and pottery was very little used over the area except in the extreme north-west of Scotland.'

Nevell (1997) attempts to establish a sequence of pottery types from the Mersey Basin. However only one of the five types is represented by more than one vessel. As the sample size is so small it is difficult to demonstrate the distribution of these wares. Most other comparative pottery is found on sites to the south and east of the Pennines and it is possible that the Mellor assemblage may bridge this gap.

Mellor has produced pottery from several Iron Age contexts, with a number of vessels being represented. Thin section analysis allows petrological analysis of the clays used in the production of the pottery and can determine their origins. A slice of the pottery is examined under microscope allowing the makeup of the fabric to be compared to known sources. Following the 2001 season , thin section analysis began on pottery sherds identified as Iron Age (Appendix 8) and found within the ditch, although at the time of writing the results were not available.

The Metalworking

The discovery of crucible fragments and metalworking slag from the ditch early in the 2001 season has shed new light onto the utilisation of the site. The number of iron-smelting furnaces excavated is limited, only about twenty (Cunliffe, 1995 p.453). As the slag found is

likely to be from ironworking, rather than smelting, it is implied that the raw material was gained through the trade of currency bars. These have been found in numerous locations to the south of England, but are less common in the northern parts (*ibid.* p.455).

The crucible fragments show the continued use of bronze into the Iron Age, not often for everyday tools which iron had replaced, but for smaller more intricate items. The scale of production is less than during the Bronze Age and likely to be done by specialists in regional centres (*ibid.* p.456). Fragments of crucible, used in bronze casting, have been found on a number of sites, however it is not common (*ibid.* p.456). This indicates an element of prestige at the Mellor settlement and will hopefully enable ties to be made to neighbouring sites through bronze artefacts. It is entirely conceivable that the bronze boss found in Tr. 1 in 1999 was made on site.

8. Mellor Within The Region

Settlement on the hilltop of Mellor spans nearly10,000 years yet even in the present, during the temperate summertime it can become quite unhospitable. The outstanding view across the Cheshire Plains and its dominantly visible position from them is likely to be a key factor that attracted people here throughout the periods.

This section provides some background relating to the different periods and discusses some of the sites close to Mellor and how they may be related.

Mesolithic Period

During the Mesolithic period, the lifestyle was based around a 'hunter-gatherer' system. Nomadic groups would move across the landscape according to the season and the availability of food. During the winters, the climate of the upland regions was too harsh to survive and the people would eat fish and plants from the valley areas. As the warmer times of spring approached, they would migrate towards higher ground and hunt game such as red deer.

The period is dominated by the use of microliths; small fragments of flaked stone, often used in groupings to form composite tools and weapons. Finds spots of these artefacts are quite common in the region. However campsites are more sparse, those with structures even more so.

A general pattern to many of the known sites is that they are found on spurs of land overlooking the valleys below(Hart, 1984,1990) and Mellor fits into this model. Three sites within the locality identified in the North Derbyshire Archaeological Survey(Hart, 1984,1990 p.33) are at Small Clough, overlooking Charlesworth, along the Torside reservoir, Tintwistle and at Harry Hut (SK045 907).

The flint artefacts found at Mellor have been classified as Later Mesolithic (Myers, 2000) and those from Shaw Cairn (see below) from the Earlier Mesolithic (Myers, 2000). This shows a continuous use of the area, being returned to time and time again.

Neolithic Period

The Neolithic period is characterised by a transition from nomadic to settlement and the introduction of farming. At the beginning of the Neolithic period much of Britain below c.600m was covered in forest. At around 4000BC the clearance of trees and the growing of crops begins to have an affect on the environment (Longley,1987 p.41)

Tool technology progresses from the microliths used throughout the Mesolithic Period. Leaf-shaped arrowheads and polished stone axes become more widely used. Many such axes were produced in the Lake District in a factory-like fashion and distributed across Britain.

Death becomes an important event amongst the communities and great effort is spent constructing long barrows, large chambered tombs in which the deceased were placed. The estimated time spent in building one of these is 10,000 man hours, so it would take a team of 20 a couple of months to complete one (ParkerPearson,1993 p.41). Towards the Early Bronze Age, Britain is introduced to the Beaker Culture from the continent, named after the vessels commonly found in the graves, often individual crouched inhumations.

Although, as yet, there has been no evidence of the Neolithic Period found on the site, there is activity in the locale. To the south, on Mellor Moor, lie the remains of a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age funerary cairn (GM SMR 421.1.0). This was excavated in the 70's and 80's by a group of local , however no report was ever compiled by them on the results. Following the death of one of the last remaining leaders of the group, the archive was saved from deposition within a skip and a report based on the limited archive was written in 2000 by Victoria Mellor, a Bradford student on placement with GMAU. This report was written to provide a review of the fieldwork at Shaw Cairn, together with information on the construction and layout of the site (Mellor 2000 p. 9).

The site is a stone-built funerary cairn, enclosed by a stone kerb c.15m in diameter. 12-15 cremation burials were discovered some of which were within stone cists or settings. There are indications by way of charcoal, burnt flint and lenticular pottery fragments of a possible pyre site. However the recording of the excavations was of too poor a standard to confirm this. Within Britain there are only 100 or so known pyre sites

Some of the cremations had associated finds of flint and pottery, including a near complete Food Vessel and a particularly fine plano-convex knife. The Food Vessel is almost identical to one found in Tissington and the knife is comparable to ones found at Harland Edge (Myers in Mellor, 2000 p.93). A radiocarbon date for the site there was 1490+/-150bc, c.1670BC. Food Vessels begin to come into burial rites after 2000BC when funerary pottery and cremations become more widely used (Longley, 1987 p.65).

A large proportion of the flint assemblage found does not however relate to the cairn. It is Mesolithic in date and is likely to have been debitage from an earlier temporary settlement. Indicating a preference for knapping in a quiet spot with an excellent view (Mellor 2000, p.104).

The cairn lay towards the south-southeast of a raised oval enclosure, approximately 80m east-west by 60m north to south. In the Later Neolithic, from c.3000BC, the construction of bank-and-ditch ‘henges’ and stone circles begins and continues into the Early Bronze Age (Longley,1987 p.58). The topography of the site at Shaw Cairn suggests that this could be a possibility, together with that of it being a settlement.

GMAU have begun a programme of archaeological evaluation to better define the character of this potentially very significant prehistoric site. A small scale evaluation by resistivity survey and trial trenching in November 2001 demonstrated that there was no defensive ditch. Further work is planned for 2002 to examine the oval platform.

Bronze Age

It is possible that in the North West, up until the end of the Early Bronze Age, the social and economic organisation still revolved around a system of mobility. The number of finds spots are concentrated towards the river estuaries suggesting the positions of the settlements. Towards the Middle Bronze Age, there was a climatic decline and the lowlands (Nevell,1997) became more waterlogged, probably forcing the people to the middle and upper reaches of the river systems (Cowell 2001, p.170).

The local area contains no known sites of Bronze Age settlement however barrows and finds spots are more common. Immediately to the north on Ludworth Intakes are two barrows, both investigated by Rev W Marriott in 1809. The first, known as Brown Low (GM SMR 5.1.0) is located at SJ 988 909 and the second, known as Intakes Farm Cairn (GM SMR 6.1.0) at SJ 989 913, both c.290mAOD.

Unfortunately his interest into the mounds sparked fascination into other members of the community who took it upon themselves to undertake an excavation of that by the farm. Although Marriott's techniques of archaeological excavation were very crude compared to those used at present, he did at least try to be methodical and make some records of his findings (Marriott, 1810), more so than the *'mass of people, said to be from fifty to one hundred'* who *'burst into the sepulchre'* .

Marriott excavated a slot across Brown Low and found '*spelts'* of bone, along with '*streaks of red*' and stones '*black with fire*', suggesting the possibility of a funerary pyre on the site. The only other find from his excavation here was of an acorn, partly germinated with a stem and stalk extending from either end to a total of ten to twelve inches. Marriott was unsure wether this had been buried together with remains or if it had become there by accident, either way it does imply that the area was wooded with oak trees (*ibid*.).

The more easterly barrow near the farm is written to have appeared similar to Brown Low prior to it's ransacking. From a verbal account of one of the perpetrators and what was left of the cairn, Marriott was able to gain some information as to it's construction and contents. The barrow was formed of three concentric stone walls, about two feet high and 6 inches wide. Ash, bone and other burnt materials were found amongst the fills. Above the central vault, an urn was uncovered yet wether but the process of time or by the heavy hand of the excavators this broke apart on lifting. Marriot tries to reconstruct the vessel in the account and he describes it as having a narrow neck widening out to a large concave body, a curved pedestal then down to a flat base. It was decorated with two sets of two incised bands circumnavigating it. The whereabouts of the finds from either barrow is not known (*ibid*.).

Both barrows are now Scheduled Ancient Monuments and although they have been partially destroyed, could yield important information were they to be excavated in the future.

Marriot also refers to '*a very ancient urn*' being discovered during the construction of All Saints Church on Marple Ridge during 1808. It was either smashed by the workmen or broke

on lifting, either way it's whereabouts is unknown (ibid.). It was also postulated by Marriot that a barrow once stood on Werneth Low and that it was destroyed during the construction of a roadway close-by to where the Hare and Hounds public house stands to day (SJ958 956)(Nevell pers comm).

The barrows of Shaw Cairn, Marple Ridge and Brown Low/Intakes are positioned almost exactly to the south, west and north of the site at the Old Vicarage, all in very imposing positions.

A one day evaluation was conducted late in the 2000 Season on a possible cist burial at Hilltop farm to the east of the hillfort(GM SMR 11186.1.0). During the construction of a new barn within the farm, a flat terrace was cut into an earth mound, revealing two stone chambers in the section. These were built of flags of sandstone and continued into the mound some three to four metres. 18th and 19th century pottery sherds were found and it is likely that the feature is related to the industrial activity in the area rather than prehistoric. A seam of coal runs south to north across the farm and through the mound which may have been created by spoil.

72% of all burials in Cheshire are positioned in the higher altitudes. There are a number between 60 and 120m AOD, along the eastern side of the mid-Cheshire Ridge and on the Western slopes of the Pennines-areas where agriculture would be more sustainable. The high density of burials between 240 and 425m would be agriculturally more marginal during the later part of the 2nd millennium BC(Longley, 1987 p.61).

During the Early Bronze Age, copper and later tin mining for metalworking begins. The copper deposits at Alderley Edge are known to have been exploited since the Early Bronze Age. A wooden shovel found in the mines in1875 and rediscovered in 1953 was carbon dated to 1780 +/-100bc(Selkirk,1994 p.172-5). If indeed the metalworking on the Old Vicarage site could be traced back to this date, it is possible that the source for the copper may have been Alderley.

Iron Age

The Iron Age spans from the later eighth century BC through to the time of the Roman invasion of Britain, although, like the transition between many periods, there is no definitive occurrence which separates this from the Late Bronze Age. Many of the characteristics, originally thought to exemplify the period, can now be associated with the Late Bronze Age. These include the construction of hillforts (Haselgrove, 1999 p.113).

Unlike during the earlier periods, the people of the Iron Age did not construct monuments to demarcate the burial of their dead. There are, however, examples of specialised interments, such as those of the *Arras Culture* of Eastern Yorkshire. This community was quite contained and shows strong interaction with the continent through chariot burials. An example of these were found at Dane's Graves (Cunliffe, 1991 p.77)

The inhabitants of Britain were socially grouped and occupied loose territories. These groups

are likely to have stemmed from extended families. The settlements range from small homesteads to massive earthwork enclosures. These are often found on higher and the larger of these are referred to as hillforts. The dispersion of hillforts is largely weighted towards the south and southeast, the region of the Welsh Marches and the western coast of Scotland (Cunliffe, 1995, Fig.3 p.15). It has been questioned whether these fortified enclosures were primarily constructed for defensive use, as a display of power or as a focal point for a wider spread community.
One of the most documented explanations for the sparse settlement of the North West region is that of it's agricultural marginality (Cunliffe, 1991 p.247 Nevell, 1999 p.14). As already mentioned above, the cooler air currents coming in from the Atlantic, bringing with them a higher precipitation rate, combined with the higher altitudes, affecting temperature, greatly reduced the ability to grow crop and therefore support large communities.

These factors may have pushed the economy of the people to favour animal husbandry as opposed to agriculture. This, together with the isolated and inhospitable terrain, may have reduced the need for defended community centres, dividing the people into smaller groups (Cunliffe 1995, p.278). This may also explain why the territory known as Brigantia, which occupied much of northern England, is generally accepted as not being one tribe, but a confederation of smaller ones.

Of those few hillforts in the region two notable ones are Almondbury, Yorkshire(c.20 miles to the northeast of Mellor) and Mam Tor, Derbyshire(c.12miles to the southeast of Mellor).

Almondbury underwent at least six phases of development during the prehistoric times. It began as an open settlement at the end of the third millennium, and gradually gained defences. Firstly by a single ditch, followed by successive ditches and ramparts. The first ditch was 3m wide and two metres deep, encompassing an area of 2.2hectares (5.5acres)-the same as Mellor. Its final stage was of slighting by burning in 431bc +/-180 (Varley, 1976 p.127)

Much of the lands east of the Pennines show abandonment of fortified enclosures during the early part of the mid first millennium BC, a trend which had spread throughout the Pennine regions by around 450BC (Higham, 1987 p.1). The radiocarbon date of 430bc +/-140 from the charcoal layer within the ditch in Tr. 1 may be indicative of the time of abandonment at Mellor.

Mam Tor is one of the largest hillforts in the north of England at 6.4 hectares (16 acres). It is essentially univallated (single ditch), however there are indications of a smaller, inner ditch to some parts of the enclosure (Coombs, 1976 p.147). The limited excavations of the site during the later half of the 1960's, revealed a series of hut circles and posthole structures, as well as pits. Sections were also cut through the ditch and rampart. Evidence was found to suggest that the rampart was preceded by a timber palisade and that the settlement stemmed from the Late Bronze Age. There were no indications as to when the fort went out of use although the apparent lack of Roman artefacts suggests that the site was never occupied during this period and had been abandoned by the first century AD.

Roman Period

Following campaigns by Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 BC, the Roman invasion proper occurred in AD 43 under Claudius. The southeastern tribes were quickly overpowered and under the future emperor Vespasian, the southwest was targeted. Caractacus led resistance in South Wales with the Silures and during the winter of AD 47-48 attacked a tribe allied to Rome, probably the Dobunni. Then governor, Ostorius Scapula, began more aggressive policies occupying the West Midlands and cutting off the Welsh from the Brigantes occupying the central northern parts of the country. Sites at Chester, Walton-le-Dale, Whitchurch and Wroxeter were probably established at this time, if only on a semi-permanent basis (Walker, 1987 p.5)

A revolt in Icenian territory, now East Anglia, in AD 47 was quickly resolved and the armies returned to Wales where Caractacus had moved to the North in lands occupied by the Ordovicies. Guerrilla tactics were abandoned and Caractacus made a stand from a fortified hilltop. The battle was lost and he fled to seek refuge from the Brigantes under Queen Cartimandua who, having already established ties with Rome, handed him over in AD 52. This decision would have jeopardised the already tentative internal situation within the confederacy of the Brigantes. which had recently seen troubles over their allying with Rome. A few years later intervention from Roman troops was required to deal with the fracas between Cartimandua and her husband, Venutius with control falling to him. The forts at Templeborough, Chesterfield and probably Littlechester had already been established under Nero by the governor at that time, Didius Gallus (Walker, 1987 p.5). It is likely that these were positioned to enable swift movement into the territories of the Brigantes and may have been so as a request from Cartimandua (Hartley, 1987 p.16).

Resistance continued in Wales and in AD 51 the Silures defeated a Legion but during the late 50s were worn down by the continuing campaigns of Didius Gallus. The Roman presence was not to conquer but to remove the threat from the frontier, however policy changed in AD 58 and Veranias was ordered to conquer Britain. A single campaign finished off the Silures in AD 59
followed by moves towards the Ordivices by Suetonius Paulinus.

In AD 60 Queen Boudicca led a rebellion, again in East Anglia, destroying the Roman towns of Colchester, Verulamium and London. The Brigantes played no part in this, such as would be expected under Venutius, so it is believed that Cartimandua had regain control. However by AD 69 the problems had returned and Cartimandua divorced Venutius and shacked up with his armour bearer, Vellocatus. The control of the kingdom was seized by Venutius, however it was some years before the Roman troops entered the battle to rescue Cartimandua.

Petillus Cerialis's campaigns along the eastern side of the Pennines flushed out Venutius by AD 72 but with considerable casualties to the Roman armies. York was established during this period as a legionary fortress and housed the *Legio IX* . The Brigantes continued to war against Rome probably employing guerilla tactics from the hills (Hartley and Fitts, 1988 p.19).
Cerialis's campaigns are also likely to have spread from the western side of the Pennines

although evidence is more sparse. There is evidence of sites of this period at Ribchester (Walker, 1987 p.7), together with those sites already established by Scapula.

In AD 74, Cerialis was removed from Britain and replaced by Julius Frontinus, probably brought in due to his proven record in mountain warfare (Walker, 1987 p.7), who campaigned across Wales and subdued the area despite suffering losses. This redirection of the Roman advance may have given the Brigantian rebels hope, however succession by Agricola and his sweep across the territories would have quelled their aspirations (Hartley and Fitts, 1988 p.19). Between AD 77-83 his campaigns possibly reached as far north as Inverness (Gregory forthcoming, 2002).

Separation of Brigantia into smaller, more manageable tracts was necessary to protect the rear of the advancing forces. A network of roads and military establishments across the northern territories of England was created. It is possible that much of the labour for these engineering tasks was undertaken by natives under the supervision of the Roman armies(Hartley and Fitts, 1988 p.22). A major road crossing the Pennines from the legionary fortress being constructed at Chester to that at York was essential, with strongholds positioned along it's route, separated by a days march(Redhead, 1989 p.14). Two of these were the nearby forts at Manchester and Castleshaw.

Manchester's first fort was also established c.AD 79 and was a standard auxiliary cohort turf and timber fort. In the AD 90's it was enlarged and was redeveloped again in the latter half of the second century to contain stone buildings. The fort was finally defended by stone walls from the beginning of the 3rd century before abandonment in the early-5th century (Walker, 1987 p.141-143).

The fort at Castleshaw was also built in c.AD 79 and seems to have been slighted and abandoned in the AD 90s. It was subsequently overlain by a smaller fortlet built around AD 105 and eventually abandoned in the AD 120s.

Melandra Castle, the Roman fort four and a half miles to the northeast of Mellor was built prior to AD 78 and lay en-route from Manchester to Brough-on-Noe. The first turf and timber fort was reinforced in the early-2nd century with stone walling and a second ditch before abandonment in c. AD 140. Outside of the fort, lay a *vicus*, military bathhouse, *mansio* and cemetery (Hart, 1984,1990 p.87-90).

At 140m AOD it lies on a rise of land within the Vale of Glossop with good views to the east and west , out of view from Mellor. A near direct, yet feasible passage from Mellor to Melandra was walked in part during the course of the excavation. The route headed down into the valley to the east of Mill Brow where the stream is narrower and not in a steep gorge. From here Gird Lane, the old road to Glossop, takes a reasonably straight course towards the top, along a footpath past the cairns on the summit (if the cairns on Ludworth Intakes are associated with settlement at Mellor it is possible that the route followed an earlier Bronze Age trackway , an idea postulated by Peter Noble during the excavations of 2001). From here the path follows down into the vale.

Approximately 10 years ago a small lead figurine in the shape of an owl was found by metal detector from the area of Mill Brow (Plate 21). The Roman Goddess, Minerva was often portrayed with an owl and as the goddess of warfare, wisdom and craft, it is possible that this object was carried by a Roman soldier as a tribute to her (Eyre-Morgan, pers comm.). A number of similar objects, many of birds have been found. An owl cast in bronze was found at Chester(Green, 1978).

Locally, possible Roman sites have been identified at Highstones, Tintwistle and Mottram Church. The former is visible as an undated rectangular earthwork consisting ditch, rampart and causewayed entrance, overlooking the Torside reservoir (Hart, 1984, 1990). The latter lies along the route from Melandra to Manchester and was noticed as crop marks on aerial photographs. This underwent testpitting during research by UMAU and although two sherds of late-1st century pottery were found, the existence of a suggested signal station was not confirmed (Roberts, 1998).

In the field to the south of the church, a silver *dinarius*, was found by Mr Peter Hodgson, dating to the Emperor Vespasian, AD 69-79.

There are a number of sites dating from the late-1st century through to the 2nd century, west of the Pennines which although not auxiliary forts, are likely to have been run by the military. These include supply bases and works depots at Wigan, Walton-le-Dale, Holt and Wilderspool (Walker, 1987 p.7). These would have been essential for the construction and maintenance of the forts in the region.

The Roman pottery found at Mellor dates from the late-1st century, through to the 3rd century (Leary, this report). This illustrates that the site was occupied from the launch of the campaigns into Brigantia and continued for some time, beyond that of some nearby sites from the Roman period. The discovery of tile fragments implies that buildings must have been erected during this period. Where precisely these stood and their function are two questions yet to be answered. Without these, and other such answers, it is impossible to establish the purpose of the Roman occupation of Mellor. Although speculative it may have served as a sentry post, making the most of the views out towards Manchester; an industrial works to supply the garrisons although civilian settlements outside of Melandra and Manchester could also have served these

9. Recommendations For The Future

Dig loads of holes and find some stuff.

The enclosure

One of the primary concerns should be to firmly establish the limits of the enclosure. The geophysical survey undertaken by Dr Gregory and Dr Openshaw have given indications of the ditch to the east. However, excavation must be conducted to clarify these suggestions.

Using the suspected alignment of the ditch, the enclosure encompasses 2.2hectares (5.5 acres). At least 50 percent of this area unavailable for excavation as it is occupied by either the churchyard, dwellings, roads and paths.

The Internal Features

Of the land within the enclosure available for excavation, about 80m^2 has been excavated to date, less than 1 percent. It is clear from this that more work must be done within the enclosure to identify the nature of the internal features.

It is possible that if there are more postholes relating to a structure formed with that found in 2001, [035], that these may show on geophysical area surveys. Such a survey on the lawn areas in the locale may indicate their positions. However, as the areas involved are small, it may be difficult to identify them.

The presence of crucible fragments and metalworking slag, likely to be Iron Age in date, indicate that industrial processes were being performed on site. Kilns and furnaces can be picked up well using magnetometry and should be employed within the Old Vicarage gardens to try and locate these.

The Clay Deposits

The excavations within the Old Vicarage Gardens during 2000 showed that the archaeology on the site is preserved more favourably within the clay deposits. In those areas where the upper soils lie directly on the bedrock the only features surviving are negative, ie cuts. There are no floor surfaces or structures present. Finding the extents of these deposits will enable a better strategy to be formulated in targeting specific questions and maximising the outcome of future excavations

The Artefacts

The information gathered from the thin section analysis will enable greater understanding of the distribution of wares and also give an insight into the economic system of the inhabitants at Mellor during this period. If the pottery is produced from local clays and such wares are

not represented in the region, then this suggests an isolated community. Should the clay source be from further afield, then this would support a system of trade between settlement groups. Further such work should be conducted on the diagnostic sherds found over the previous seasons. When more is know about the make up or the assemblage, it should be encouraged to publicise the material as a type series.

Trench 1

Following a minor collapse of the edges of Trench 1, it is strongly recommended that some reinforcement work is undertaken to prevent subsequent occurrences. This should be done primarily to ensure the safety of visitors, but also as finds recovered from the fallen material cannot be assigned to a particular context, results in less information regarding the site being to be gathered from them. The southeastern edge of excavation has been reinforced by Professor Hearle with a dry-stone wall and a similar function could be employed to the northwestern edge The edges through the ditch are more problematical as it is hoped that the sections will remain visible.

The Peripheries

Outside of the enclosure, an extensive geophysical survey should be conducted. There are a number of areas which have, as of yet, not been investigated but may contain archaeological features. These include;

areas beyond the ditch on all side, where additional defences may be positioned

the plateau to the west, north of Knowle Farm

the high point of the hill to the east

the lawns of the dwellings on site

the southern part of the field to the northeast

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