

## **4.5 Trench 21**

This trench was opened with the specific intention of discovering if the features found in Tr3 and Tr16 continued to curve north and east as part of a roundhouse gully. Initially a 13m long by 2m wide trench was excavated parallel and adjacent to the north edges of Tr3 and Tr16. The topsoil and much of the subsoil were stripped from this part of Tr21 using a mechanical excavator. This excavation formed the north arm of Tr21. Excavation revealed a band of dark brown clay silt, (358) which entered the trench from the south edge, 5.0m from the east end of the trench. (358) showed up clearly against the orange brown natural boulder clay, (364), present in this part of the trench (Fig 12). Initially only the northern portion of (358) could be seen so this arm of Tr21 was widened slightly to reveal the full width of (358). From this point it could be seen that (358) ran west along the trench describing a shallow arc before curving to run south west into the corner of the trench.

At this point it was decided to extend the trench to the south in order to follow (358). By a series of stepped hand dug trenches, 9.0m long, it was possible to trace the line of (358), first as it curved west and south, and then as it curved again to run south east towards Tr23. These steps formed the west arm of Tr21. As (358) ran south along this arm the most obvious difference was the change in natural from boulder clay, to sandstone bedrock, and then as (358) turned south east, back to boulder clay. The south end of this arm of Tr21 finished at the edge of the rhododendron bush 7.0m to the west of Tr23 (Fig 13).

A series of sections were excavated through (358) (Fig 11). These showed that (358) filled cut [365]. Within the north arm of Tr21 sections J and B revealed [365] to be c0.20m deep and c 0.40m wide. One side of each of these sections was near vertical while the other sloped at around 45 degrees. Both sides had a sharp break of slope at the bottom and in these two sections [365] had a flat base. Sections A and B showed that [365] was the latest of a series of re-cuts, apparently of various sizes. In Section's A and B the south edge of [370], one of the earlier gullies, was cut through context (366). This context was similar to the natural boulder clay but did seem to contain several moderate sized patches of charcoal. It is possible that (366) represents the fill of an earlier archaeological feature, perhaps an earlier phase of gully or a series of post holes. At the north apex of the curve a narrower, shallow, gully diverged from the line of cut [365]. This gully, cut [360] ran in a curve for 4.0m before running into the west section of Tr21. Cut [360] contained fill (359) a brown clay silt very similar to (358). Section B revealed that (358) was cut by [365].

In the northern half of the west arm of Tr21 there was no covering of boulder clay and [365] was cut directly through the sandstone bedrock, (367). In this part of the trench cut [365] was generally wider and shallower than seen in the sections excavated through it to the north and south. It would seem that the excavation of the cut in this area would simply require levering out the plates of sandstone to form a channel. As would be expected with this technique the edges of the cut are stepped and the base flat. In section's E and F there is also an indication that cut [365] was re-aligned. This is based on the presence of a central line in the sections where the bedrock is at a higher level.

As cut [365] curves to run south east the boulder clay re appears. In section's C and I the cut was excavated to a depth of c 0.20m without any sign of the sandstone bedrock. Section I was particularly interesting as even before excavation it was clear that (358) was cut by a linear feature, [378], which ran east to west against the south edge of Tr21.

Although the aim of Tr21 was to follow the line of the round-house gullies found in earlier trenches inevitably other archaeological features were observed and investigated. Cut's [360]

and [378] have already been mentioned, however there were other archaeological features discovered in previous years trenches which ran into Tr21. There were also some features from previous years, which, based on alignment, were expected to appear in Tr21, but did not (Fig 14).

Towards the centre of the north arm of Tr21 a linear gully, cut [389], emerged from the south section. It ran north for 2.0m before terminating. Excavation showed that [389] cut (358) the latest fill of the possible roundhouse gullies. Comparison with the plan of Tr3 showed that this feature had been detected within this trench.

At the very east end of the north arm an 'old friend' put in an appearance. This was ditch cut [353] which had first been recorded in Tr3 in 1999 and had appeared again in the very north west corner of Tr16 in 2002. In Tr3 this feature was observed as the latest archaeological feature in the trench. In Tr21 it continued to run on the same south west to north east alignment as seen in the other trenches. This is a shallow cut with near vertical sides and a flat base. Although this feature has now been recorded for a length of 10m there is still no real indication of it's function. However it is worth noting that cut [353] did not appear in the west arm of Tr21. This would suggest that somewhere in the 4.0m gap between the south west corner of Tr3 and the west arm of Tr21 cut [353] either terminates or turns. Given the shape of Tr21 and the position of Tr16 it would seem that the only line [353] could change direction to and remain undetected, would be south east towards the un-excavated area of the rhododendron bush.

In a similar situation to [353] two other features, whose projected line would put them within the west arm of Tr21, failed to 'show up'. One of these was the stone lined gully found in Tr16 and possibly seen continuing west this year in Tr23 as context (390). However the gap between the west arm of Tr21 and Tr23 is larger than that between it and Tr3. This provides more room for (390) to stop or deviate from a projected straight line. The other feature is a stone lined gully observed running east to west across Tr3. The gap between the west section of Tr3 and Tr21 is only 2.0m suggesting that this feature should appear in Tr21. The description of this feature is very similar to cut [94], the stone lined gully found in Tr16 and which was seen to terminate in the south east corner of that trench. It is possible that these gullies were excavated in relatively short stretches and that the one seen in Tr3 does in fact terminate between the two trenches. In Tr16 the stone lined gully was seen to cut the possible drainage gullies. However if the feature found in Tr3 was earlier than the gullies, and given that the projected line would have the feature run through one of the narrowest points of Tr21 were cut [365] occupies almost the entire width of the trench, it is possible that no remains of this feature survived in Tr21.

Within the north arm of Tr21 was an area of light grey sandy silt. This context, (394), contained a high percentage of medium to large sandstone fragments. Context (394) measured 4.0m east to west and 1.0m north to south although it's full extent could not be gauged as it ran into the north section of the trench. A north to south section showed that it was the fill of a cut [395]. Only the south side of this cut was revealed in the section and this revealed that [395] was 0.32m deep, it's south side sloped steeply to a curved break of slope and flat base. As only part of the feature was exposed it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions as to it's function. On the surface (394) appeared rectangular in shape but this might be a false impression as a result of this context spreading out over the surrounding natural.

It is tempting to think that [395] might be associated with layer (373) just 1.0m to the west. When the north arm of Tr21 was excavated space was available which allowed the topsoil and some of the subsoil to be removed by machine from a 2.0m by 4.0m northern extension at the west end of this part of Tr21. During the machining a number of unstratified flint flakes were recovered. When the remaining subsoil was excavated by hand further flakes were recovered

and their exact location and height recorded. After the removal of the subsoil layer (373) was revealed. This layer was defined by the edge of cut [360] in the south and ran into the north, west and east sections of the north arm of Tr21. Layer (373) was a distinctive light orange brown in colour and was identified as representing a layer of highly weathered natural sandstone. It's texture was somewhere between the plated natural sandstone bedrock and the occasional bands of natural sand which are sometimes found within it. Layer (373) contained frequent small fragments of sandstone and very occasional large fragments, some of which were on edge. Trowel cleaning of (373) resulted in 43 flint flakes being recovered which when added to the 27 located during the excavation of subsoil and the 23 found within the fills of cuts [360] and [365] gave a total of 93. In addition layer (373) lies close to the part of Tr3 where a number of flint flakes were found in 1999. Analysis of the flint shows that they are all Mesolithic in date (Appendix 5). The scatter patterns produced from plotting the located flint are not specifically revealing, however along with those from Tr3 they confirm that this particular part of Area A was the site of a hunter gatherer camp. A 0.20m slot was excavated through (373) across an area of large sandstone fragments but this gave no indication that they represented elements of a structure.

## **Discussion**

Even without linking Tr21 and Tr23 by taking the records of trenches 3, 16, 21 and 23 together it is now clear that the part of Area A covered by these excavations was the site of at least one Iron Age Roundhouse. It is likely that as well as re-cutting of the roundhouse gullies to keep them functioning there was at least one re-positioning of these gullies suggesting a major alteration or re-building of the roundhouse. The curvature and alignment of cut [365] seems to correlate well with gully cuts [114] and [111] from Tr16. These are the more westerly cuts in that trench. If they are associated it would give a diameter of c 11.0m for the drainage gullies of this roundhouse. The curvature of the easterly gully cuts, [96], [233] and [235] in Tr16 suggests that their continuation might lie slightly to the east of the west arm of Tr21. It might be that context (366), seen between the gully cut and the south section in the north arm of Tr21, represents the continuation of these cuts. It is also possible that the smaller curving gullies, cuts [91] and [99], found in Tr16, are associated with cut [360] found in Tr21. These too may once have formed a circle which given the difference in size between them and cut [365] would suggest a third early phase of construction.

Even though, on the surface, all the sections in the north arm were cut through boulder clay, this proved to be quite shallow and their bases were all formed of the natural sandstone bedrock. Section G (Fig 11) was the closest excavated section of [365] to the gullies excavated in Tr16 in 2002. These gullies had been excavated to a depth of 0.40m without any indication of sandstone bedrock. This information along with evidence from other trenches is allowing us to define the extent of this band of boulder clay. This in turn will allow us to assess whether or not the different types of geology had any bearing on the use to which those areas were put.

The shallow nature of the gully in the west arm of Tr21 indicates that depth was not an issue when it came to excavating the drainage gully for the round house. Perhaps as for the enclosure ditch it was enough to ensure that there was sufficient gradient for the gullies to work efficiently. In the case of the north arm of Tr21 it was necessary to excavate down to the sandstone bedrock while in the west arm all that was required was to create a shallow channel by levering away a few plates of the sandstone.