

Non Technical Summary

The excavations conducted over the past six years around the Old Vicarage at Mellor, Stockport (SJ9818 8890) have revealed the presence of extensive multi-period settlement. Previous excavation seasons have identified the site as an Iron Age settlement (GM SMR11249.1.1). In addition the recovery of flint fragments dated to the Mesolithic period suggest the presence of a seasonal hunter-gatherer camp while the presence of sherds of Roman pottery have hinted at Romano-British settlement.

Excavation in 2003 revealed a large ditch cut into the natural sandstone bedrock. The ditch appears to run roughly south west to north east and was between 4m and 5.50m wide and on average 2.00m deep. This ditch may represent elements of an inner, defensive ditch surrounding the west end of the hilltop at Mellor. In total a 5m stretch of ditch was excavated which produced an abundance of finds including fragments of quern stones, 5 Roman brooches and over 200 sherds of Romano British pottery. Running parallel to the west side of the ditch was a narrow stone lined gully. This may represent a slot cut to take a wooden palisade which along with the ditch would have presented a formidable defensive arrangement. Two trial trenches excavated immediately opposite 10m north of the ditch did not reveal any definite evidence of the ditch continuing in this direction. However it was clear that archaeological features were present in both trenches.

Also revealed in 2003 was the eastern half of the curving gullies found in previous years excavations. Together these now form an almost complete circle some 11m in diameter. It now seems fairly certain that these gullies represent the drainage system around an Iron Age roundhouse.

An area of highly eroded sandstone to the south of the gullies in Tr21 produced a large number of flint flakes dating from the Mesolithic period. The location where they were found is very close to the area of Tr3 which produced flints from the same period during the 1999 excavations. This is further indication that the hilltop at Mellor was a favoured site for the seasonal hunter gatherers of the Mesolithic period.

To the north of the Old Vicarage the excavation of two trenches extended the known line of the enclosure ditch 15m to the east. Beyond this topsoil stripping of 8 trial trenches has raised the possibility that the enclosure ditch is far more extensive than was originally thought.

In November a trench was excavated at the west end of the Old Vicarage garden. It revealed that the flat hill top in this area is the result of extensive landscaping. It would seem that the ditch found in this area in previous years which now sits amid the flat lawn was originally cut on the natural break of slope on this side of the hill top. This would have meant that the ditch and any associated bank or palisade would have been a highly visible part of the landscape.