

4.2 Trial Trenches 6 and 7

Time and staff levels during the summer excavation meant that it was possible to open two trial trenches (6 and 7) immediately opposite TR18. They were located c5m away, on the opposite side of the Old Vicarage drive, in Area C. The purpose of trial trenches 6 and 7 was twofold; one was to evaluate the archaeological potential of this area with a view to possible further excavation in forthcoming seasons; the other was to ascertain whether the ditch in Tr18 continued into this area and if so did it continue north, turn west towards Tr1 or perhaps terminate as part of an entrance. The removal of topsoil and subsoil revealed that the natural soil in this part of Area C was boulder clay.

Trial trench 6 was the more easterly of the two trial trenches located directly opposite Tr18 and designed to pick up a northerly continuation of the ditch in Tr18. It was orientated east to west and measured 2.0m by 5.0m. Within trial trench 6 several spreads of stones of various sizes were visible including some which were set on edge in a similar fashion to those seen in cut [302] in Tr18. However on excavation it became clear that there was no evidence of the ditch in this trial trench. Excavation did reveal a curvilinear gully with near vertical sides and a flat base running east to north west across the trial trench. This feature appeared to cut through other archaeological contexts within the trial trench.

Trial trench 7 was located 5.0m to the west of trial trench 6. It was orientated north to south with the intention of picking up the ditch if it turned to the west towards Tr1. Trial trench 7 measured 2.0m by 6.5m. After the removal of topsoil and subsoil it was clear that as with trial trench 6 there were a number of inter-cutting archaeological features present within this trial trench. A spread of medium and large sandstone fragments running east to west across the north end of the trial trench stood out in particular. Due to the potential complexity of the archaeology and the timescale of the excavation it was not felt appropriate to carry out any excavation within trial trench 7. Therefore any interpretation of the stone spread in trial trench 7 as a westward continuation of the ditch is highly tentative.

Discussion

Neither of the trial trenches produced any definitive evidence relating to the ditch found in Tr18. It might be that the ditch does indeed terminate just beyond the north section of Tr18. Another possibility is that any westward change in direction of the ditch is much sharper and that its western arm runs beneath the drive of the Old Vicarage. Despite this the excavation of the two trial trenches was a very useful exercise. It confirmed the impression from Tr20 excavated in Area C in 2002 that this area contains good archaeological survival cut into the natural boulder clay and it is intended that they form the basis for the main excavation trench in 2004. In particular the fact that some of the features observed appear to have direct stratigraphic relationship may help us to gain a better understanding of the phaseology of the site. It will also give us an insight into what sort of activity took place in the area between the two ditches.