

2005 Excavation Results

8.1 Trench 33

Figures: 26,27,28,29,30,31,32, 33, 34, 35 and 36

During the 1998, 1999 and 2000 seasons, excavation was conducted over a geophysical anomaly identified at the western end of Area A. The subsequent excavation of Trench 1 identified a large rock-cut enclosure ditch measuring 4.00m at its widest point and 2.10m deep from the present ground surface.

Trench 2, located in the south western corner of the garden, identified the continuation of the inner enclosure ditch and the presence of a possible associated palisade slot.

Trench 33 was specifically designed to clarify whether or not this ditch could be identified in between Trenches 1 and 2. By excavating a greater area within the garden than previously attempted, it was anticipated that not only would the nature and extent of the ditch be revealed, but that any surrounding archaeological features which could possibly relate to the ditch, such as the continuation of the palisade slot, and any internal features indicative of an entranceway and associated structures would be identified.

The trench was machine excavated to a height immediately above the archaeological layers and the remainder hand excavated. Measuring approximately 19.6m by 12.0m, the irregular outline and shape of the trench was determined by the need to protect as much of the garden and accompanying trees as possible. The geology of the trench varies across its entirety. An area of solid sandstone bedrock was identified within the central and eastern segments of the trench, overlain in the majority of the remainder of the trench by fractured bedrock and mottled natural sand, the remainder was a silty sand extending to the western and southern portions of the trench. The material represents the remains of an ancient river delta and therefore differs over the area as the processes upon the river altered.

The fractured nature of the bedrock made identification of the smaller features problematic, as it was to establish if a feature was man made and shallow, heavily truncated or just a naturally occurring undulation within the make up of the fractured geology (see appendix 5). The natural solid geology is a sandstone known locally as Woodhead Hill Rock, the lowest sandstone development in the Westphalian A succession, laid during the late Carboniferous Period.

Within Trench 33, many archaeological features were identified, dominated by the ditch to the west, the continuation of the palisade slot, two separate rows of post holes, three post pits to the east and four horticultural trenches to the south, and a number of unassociated separate features.