

## **2005 Excavation Results**

### **8.1.3 Post pits**

A total of three post pits were identified, [001], [011] and [032]. All were found located towards the central eastern portion of the trench. [001] was an irregular sub circular post pit, half sectioned and cut into bedrock to the eastern edge of the feature, and towards the west cut into fractured bedrock, sloping steeply onto a flat circular, base. Measuring 1.35m in diameter and 0.52m deep, a 0.60m wide central post pipe was identified, surrounded by dark brown silty sand fills containing a number of large <0.35m solid angular packing stones. A single sherd of a sandy ware pottery was recovered from the upper portion of the post pipe, in the form of hollow ware and dating to the medieval period.

To the south [032] was a similar irregular sub-circular post pit, 0.13m wide and 0.45m deep. A 0.30m wide vertical post pipe within the central to western portion of the pit was half sectioned to reveal a significant deposit of <0.20m angular stone packing placed around the post. Fully excavated to show the full extent of the pipe, the post pit was then half sectioned to reveal irregular sloping sides cut from the fractured bedrock onto a flat circular base. No dateable archaeological artefacts were recovered from this feature.

To the east of [032], post pit [011] was constructed in a similar form to that of [032] and measured 1.40m in diameter and 0.61m deep. Containing a 0.40m wide post pipe, the pit appears to have been predominantly filled with re-deposited natural material similar to that surrounding the pit. From the lower portion of this fill a small fragment of a fine gritty ware was recovered, in a hollow ware form and dating from the late 11<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Close by but located within an unstratified deposit, a single sherd of a buff gritty ware jar / cooking pot was recovered, dating from the same period.

## **Discussion**

The presence of these three post pits indicates a possible relationship with those identified that found in the Trench1 extension and those identified within trench 35. It is entirely possible that they all relate to one larger structure, the extent of which is currently unknown, or that they relate to a separate structure, possibly a small four post structure standing independently of those in trench 35. However it would appear that the dating of two fragments of pottery recovered from [001] and [011] and the unstratified fragment, would indicate a similar date in origin to those identified within trench 35.

If they do relate, then the expected alignment would be a north east, south west alignment, taking into account the average spacing between them this would allow for a postulation of a further post pit to be located in the far north eastern corner of the trench. However only a single posthole was present, and raises the possibility that there may have been no need for a pit. It is certain, due to the solid bedrock that there are no post pits to the immediate south, and raises the possibility that this is the furthest extent of the building.

There were flat areas of apparently shaped bedrock, but containing no relevant depth, near the post pits in Trench 33. There is the possibility that such features could provide support for post which may have been present, these would have been very low load bearing posts. Similar features identified within Trench 35 such as [035] are very shallow, is the requirement for these that they need a flat solid base? Throughout the excavations in the garden it has proved difficult

to identify the smaller features, one reason for this, other than the mixed and complicated undulating angular stone natural is that these features may have only needed to have been relatively small, and therefore as soon as bedrock was reached, excavation stopped, providing little if no evidence of their presence within the archaeological record.

#### **8.1.4 Post hole alignments**

Within the north eastern extent of the trench lies an alignment of four post holes in a north north west and south south east direction. The four [080], [041], [089] and [018] are all slightly different in form. The most northerly [080] was very shallow, 0.03m, 0.35m in diameter and cut into a plate of bedrock with vertical sides and a flat base. The second [041] was oval in shape, 0.58m long, 0.38m wide and 0.15m deep, cut into the bedrock. This had vertical sides and large angular vertical packing stones surrounding a central fill. The third and fourth, [089] and [018] were identical in nature; circular, c.0.35m in diameter with undulating steep sides forming rounded bases at a depth of c. 0.20m.

Within the western portion of the trench, in between the inner enclosure ditch and the palisade slot, a group of six post holes are aligned roughly parallel to the inner edge of the ditch: [099], [047], [053], [061], [064] and [060]. They are all very similar in nature, only varying in diameter from 0.37m to 0.47m and in depth from 0.13m to 0.19m. All were sub-circular with irregular undulating sides gently sloping into rounded bases.

#### **Discussion**

Due to their relative alignments with each other, it is assumed that the first four post holes described above are part of the same structure. It is not clear if the alignment of posts would have been anything other than just four posts in a line, however it is more likely that the other associated post holes remain to be discovered. The alignment is not parallel or at right angles to any other group of features identified within the immediate area of the garden, therefore the interpretation as to the use and potential date of the alignment must be independent of surrounding features. No dating can be implied from these post holes due to the absence of dateable material recovered during excavation.

It can be inferred that all six of these postholes within the second alignment relate to each other to form part of a larger feature. Possible interpretations for this structure must include a reference to the similarity in the orientation of the post holes in relation to that of the ditch. It is possible that such a series of posts are associated with a possible bank on the inner side of the ditch, holding that bank in place, or due to the apparent abrupt end to the palisade slot, be evidence for a small overlapping gap in the bank or palisade to allow for access into the ditch. A further possibility is that they do not relate to the Iron Age ditch and subsequent periods at all and that, as the alignment does follow the same orientation as the possible medieval post pits identified within Trench 35, it is entirely feasible that they are associated with the medieval building or be part of an entirely separate structure. Similar to the other posthole alignment in this trench, no dating evidence was recovered from any of these post holes.

The original construction of these rock cut features is primarily concerned with the identification of a fracture within the bedrock, the bedrock is then smashed with a hand held rock at this point of least resistance. The area is then expanded by removing the bedrock plates as they fracture off to the required shape. It is expected that the post pits remain a particular shape and size, not only to fit the post but as an accessible size to dig in a circular motion from within.