

Trench 33 8.1.2 Palisade slot

During the summer of 1999, the excavation of Trench 2 and its subsequent extensions a, b, and c in 2000, identified the remains of a vertical sided and flat based linear feature [2005]. Interpretations at the time included a palisade/rampart slot or a beam slot for a possible building foundation. The Trench 1 extension was designed to identify the presence of a palisade slot associated with the ditch, this could be for two reasons, it does not exist at this point of the ditch, or that due to the small width of the trench and the bedrock infill of the palisade slot, identification of this feature would have been very difficult. The positioning of Trench 33 over and around Trench 2 and its extensions allowed for a re-assessment as to the extent of this feature.

In 2005, the earlier excavated slots across the palisade slot were re-excavated and analysed. The feature was identified running from the southern trench edge in a northerly direction for 7.10m. It was approximately 0.60m wide and 0.20-0.30m deep. The palisade was found to consist of near vertical edges and a flat base and filled with large 0-0.30m angular stone packing material.

The northern extent of the palisade slot [055] was characterised by a circular terminus. Projecting this line further to the north the remains of a small rock cut gully [097], parallel to the ditch, was identified protruding from the northern trench edge and running under the unexcavated area surrounding the small tree, where it did not emerge from the other side. The dimensions of this feature are 0.10m wide, 0.15m deep and 1.15m long.

Discussion

It is tempting to see these two linear features as related and forming parts of the same palisade slot, with a possible gap in between. If this were the case then it may explain the reason for why the western alignment of postholes occurs in this area. With the group of post holes arching slightly offset from the terminal end of the palisade slot. The gap in the palisade would allow for access into the ditch, possibly for cleaning and maintenance. This could not be the main entrance into the inner enclosure ditch because it is known to continue uninterrupted in this immediate area. This leaves the only possibility of an entrance way as a bridge over an uninterrupted ditch. There is a possibility that the palisade slot does continue, but due to the more solid bedrock natural that is encountered within this area the slot was shallower and therefore is not archaeologically visible. The continuation of the palisade slot indicates that the absence of any such feature continuing parallel to the ditch within the Trench 1 excavations could be due to the small 0.30m wide slot and as a result the subtle differences between the fractured bedrock and the cut for the palisade slot would not be overwhelmingly obvious in such a small section.