

2005 Excavation Results

8.3 Trench 35

Figures: 39, 40, 41, 42, 42, 43 and 44.

Trench 35 was positioned 4.34m to the west of Trench 33 and c1.00m immediately south of post pit [035], identified within the extension of Trench 1 excavated in 2000. The trench was specifically placed in order to evaluate the potential presence of further archaeological features within the surrounding area that would relate to and assist in the interpretation of post pit [035] and identify the archaeological period which the feature belongs and if this relates to part of a larger more significant structure, as yet undefined. The trench itself had to be expanded on several occasions to expose the entirety of certain features and concluded approximately 10.7m in length by 3.20m wide.

Geological levels were encountered at a depth of 0.42m below ground level in Trench 35. It was very similar to that located in Trench 33, with fractured bedrock towards the south and solid plates of bedrock in the northern half.

The trench identified four large post pits, three postholes and a possible beam slot, together with a previous test pit. The pits form a north north east to south south west alignment, of which [035] forms the northern most and [079] the southern most identified excavated limits of the structure.

8.3.1 Post pits

Post pit [013] was a sub-circular in shape and measured 0.96m by 1.00m by 0.36m deep. It had steep sides cut into the natural bedrock and a plated base and containing a c.0.41m wide post pipe. The post pipe was made up of loose dark silty loams containing occasional fragments of charcoal and angular fragments of stone whilst the remaining packing fills predominantly consisted of large angular inclusions of re-deposited smashed bedrock. Originally half sectioned and later fully excavated, the pit is cut by a smaller sub-circular posthole [109] located to the southwest extent of the post pit. A single large square headed iron nail, possibly medieval in origin was identified within the lower fill of the post pit and no other archaeological artefacts were recovered from the posthole.

Post pit [033] was a sub-circular post-pit cut out of the plated bedrock, 0.90m by 0.80m by 0.15m deep onto a flat bedrock base, and containing evidence for a 0.37m wide post pipe towards the western edge. The northern-most edge was formed from a natural east-west running fissure in the plated bedrock. The post pipe contained a dark organic fill with occasional charcoal fragments and packed with large angular fragments of broken plated sandstone. Two sherds of 13th -15th century medieval pottery were recovered from the lower fill within the pit, initially half sectioned and lastly fully excavated.

Post pit [065] was an irregular semi-circular post pit cut out of plated bedrock, 1.30m by 1.22m by 0.30m deep onto a flat bedrock base and containing the remains of a 0.32m wide post pipe within the centre of the pit. Originally half sectioned, then quarter sectioned and then totally excavated to reveal a small circular rock cut 0.38m wide and 0.14m deep [078], cut into the base of the post pit. Within (066), the upper fill of [065] a 74 mm long iron socketed arrowhead was recovered. A charcoal sample taken from the surrounding fill produced a date of 1000 to 1250 cal AD (Beta-209508, 2 sigmas).

Post pit [079] was a sub-circular post pit cut out of the plated bedrock, 1.21m by 1.22m by 0.47m deep with steep regular sloping sides onto a flat bedrock base, and containing the remains of a 0.32m wide post pipe within the centre of the pit. The post pipe consisted of greyish brown silty sand and was surrounded by a single fill consisting of very frequent angular and sub angular 0-0.20m sandstone plates within a compact greyish yellow silt. Within the post pit three fragments of pottery were uncovered, the first was a fine gritty ware sherd dated to the late 11th to early 13th centuries, the second was an unidentified fragment of fired clay. Within the post pipe itself a base fragment of an oxidised sandy ware piece of pottery in a hollow ware form and dated to the later medieval period was recovered.

8.3.2 Post holes

Post hole [035], 0.30m in diameter and 0.13m deep was circular in nature and cut into the natural plated bedrock, similar to the surrounding features, with sloping sides and a flat circular base. Filled with a loose dark brown silty loam the post hole possessed no archaeological artefact or dateable evidence.

8.3.3 Gullies

Feature [057] ran in an NE-SW direction, between 0.60m and 0.90m in width, 0.27m deep and excavated to a length of 2.75m. The full extent of the feature is unknown as the southern limit runs into the section, beneath a large tree within the garden. Originally cut through the plated bedrock to a flat base, 221.03m AOD, in a similar fashion to the surrounding features, [057] is defined by the presence of three postholes located at 0.30m intervals, c.0.60m in diameter. The lower fill contained two objects, one a small hoped metal clasp 41mm long and another flat unidentifiable object 56mm long with a small 5mm hole in one end.

Discussion

Taking all post pits identified within Trench 35 into account, one of the most intriguing aspects is the difference in absolute levels of the bases of the post pits. Three are very similar in level, however one [033] is substantially shallower by 0.25-0.30m and [035] is deeper by a similar amount. This raises the possibility that these post pits did not have to be constructed at the same levels. Leaving the possibility that the requirement for the pits was that they were adequately formed in order to provide a small depth and a flat, solid base. When looking at the overall form of the post pits they appear to be slightly bowed, a comparable medieval building has been identified at Tatton Park. However when the position of the post pipes within the post pits is taken into account then they form an absolute straight line, suggesting that the size of the pits in relation to the post themselves is not the

The dateable evidence recovered from this trench and that in the surrounding trenches points towards an occupational structure being present on the site from the medieval period and possibly standing until the later medieval period. Taking the later dated pottery that came from the post pipe itself it is possible to state that the post had either rotted or been removed at this point, therefore the structure could possibly be no longer in use by the late medieval period. The remaining fragment of burnt clay could be a multitude of items, ranging from pottery, to a possible clay walling of the structure, or a fragment associated with a hearth.

As to the type and use of the structure it is impossible to accurately conduct a full assessment without knowing the potential layout of the whole structure. However early indications would point towards

Within Trench 35 was an early test pit, and also a long section of 0.20m wide fracture within the bedrock, which although looking like a beam slot is only natural. The beam slot within Trench 35 is puzzling as the finds are probably contemporary with the post pit structure, although the angle is offset with the post pits and it does not protrude into Trench 33.

Further excavation around the remaining unexcavated areas within the Old Vicarage garden would assist in providing an adequate ground plan of the structure and therefore greatly assist in the interpretation of the buildings function and the size and type of the structure.