

2005 Excavation Results

5.5 Trench 37

In March 2005 the Mellor Archaeological Trust excavated a trial trench against the boundary wall between Area A and the churchyard of St Thomas's at the east end of the Old Vicarage garden. The purpose of the trench was to confirm the line of the large inner ditch south from trenches 18 and 32 and identify the point at which it left Area A. The trial trench revealed the distinctive fill of the ditch with the fractured bedrock on either side. It also showed what appeared to be the fill of a smaller linear feature cutting through the ditch fill. In order to fully examine this relationship and also to see if the palisade slot could also be detected the trench was extended and re-examined as Trench 37 during the summer excavation.

Trench 37 ran north to south and measured 7.50m long by 1.50m wide. On excavation the later feature was seen to be the fill and cut of the water pipe supplying the church. The extension of the trench to the south revealed the 'tell tale' line of on edge stones that in Trenches 18 and 31 and 32 had marked the line of the palisade slot. These again appeared to run parallel to the ditch. The extension also revealed what appears to be a posthole cut into the bedrock between the palisade slot and the ditch. A lozenge shaped patch of dark grey soil was visible in the south half of the trench. This was within the fill of the ditch. It is possible that it simply represents a discrete area of infilling of the ditch; however, the possibility also exists that it is the fill of a later feature cutting into the ditch fills. As it is planned to make an extension of Trench 37 the focus of one of the forthcoming summer seasons as these features were not excavated.

Discussion

Trench 37 successfully proved the continuation of the inner enclosure ditch from Trench 18 in a south-westerly direction towards the churchyard perimeter. The identification of the ditch and its associated palisade slot, still parallel to each other, further enhanced understanding regarding direction and extent of the ditch. It also shows that at present, that between Trench 37 and 2, there are no further areas within the vicarage garden available to track the inner enclosure ditch and that further identification of its exact alignment would require excavation within the graveyard perimeter. Unlikely to happen, due to the consecrated ground.