

*Excavations at the Old Vicarage, Mellor,  
Stockport. An Interim Report on the 2007  
Season.*



A report by Peter Noble, Ruth Garratt and Adam Thompson  
University of Manchester Archaeological Unit  
University of Manchester Field Archaeology Centre  
Oxford Road, Manchester  
M13 9PL  
Tel 0161 275 2314  
Fax 0161 275 2315  
[www.art.man.ac.uk/fieldarchaeologycentre](http://www.art.man.ac.uk/fieldarchaeologycentre)  
e-mail: [peter.noble@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:peter.noble@manchester.ac.uk)  
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# Summary

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The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit (UMAU) and the Mellor Archaeological Trust (MAT) conducted a six week community excavation of land at the Old Vicarage and Mellor hilltop, Mellor, Stockport (centred on the National Grid Reference of SJ 9818 8890). The 2007 season of excavations followed previous yearly excavations on the hilltop by UMAU and MAT which first began in 1998. A total of ten trenches were excavated during the works (Trenches 51-60) which took place from 30<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2007. This report is an interim assessment of the results and interpretations of those works.

The excavations have been centred on a high promontory (222m AOD) that projects westwards from the Pennine uplands and overlooks the River Goyt and the low lying and comparatively flat lands of Greater Manchester and the Cheshire plain. To date the excavations have revealed evidence for a large and multi-phased site first utilised during the Mesolithic period with peaks of settlement activity during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods and another during the late eleventh to late fourteenth/early fifteenth centuries A.D (Roberts, J., Noble, P., and Thompson, A. 2003-2006). During the Iron Age the site was occupied by a series of roundhouses and was enclosed with the cutting of two ditches. The first, the so-called 'outer enclosure', is a relatively shallow and narrow ditch which on-going geophysical surveys and test trenches suggest encloses an area of c. 20 hectares. The second, 'inner ditch', is both wider and deeper with an interior palisade slot and appears to enclose an area c. 80m east-west by 60m north-south. It is unclear at present, due to the key intersections' inaccessibility, how, if at all, these two ditches relate to each other. In 2005 substantial post holes relating to a medieval hall were discovered within the Old Vicarage garden. Historical records suggest that this was the abode of Foresters of the Peak Forest.

Trenches 51, 59 and 60 were designed to further our understandings of the large ('inner') Iron Age enclosure ditch [203] which appears to enclose the Old Vicarage and St. Thomas's Church (an area of approximately 80m by 60m), as well as to investigate any associated internal features. Excavation of the ditch in Trench 51 proceeded southwards from a previously excavated section (Trench 18) which had produced frequent Romano-British artefacts dating from the late first-late fourth centuries A.D. Prior to work beginning, it was anticipated that [203] would continue southwards from Trench 18 maintaining its dimensions and yielding more artefacts which would enable us to form ideas on the nature of trade, settlement, etc during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Instead, excavation revealed marked differences in both the dimensions of the ditch and the nature of its infilling.

The ditch both narrowed and shallowed to the south of Trench 18 before increasing in depth and width again at the southern edge of excavation. From an original width of 5.60m and a depth of 1.9m in Trench 18 the ditch narrowed to 3.50m wide with a depth of 0.9m towards the centre of the excavated section of Trench 51 before increasing to 5.00m wide and 1.2m deep at the southern section. Taken together, the sharp decreases in both the depth and width of [203] over a c. 4m long area and the suggestion that they both begin to increase again to the south denote a change in [203]'s design and function which has not been seen in other excavated sections of the ditch. The nearest parallel to this change is the c. 3m wide entranceway found in Trench 43 to the west during the 2006 excavations (Noble, and Thompson, 2006). It is possible therefore, that these changes in [203]'s design imply another entranceway within the inner enclosure which was dug-out at a later point. This possibility is greatly strengthened by the association of two palisades and two parallel linear gullies which align to, and seemingly respect, an original entranceway here. A further palisade was discovered which would have blocked the entrance and this feature probably relates to the closure event. Based on radiocarbon results, it would appear that the entranceway was dug-

away and that additional measures were taken to restrict access at this point either during the very late Iron Age or the Romano-British period. Furthermore, it is possible that the dug-out entranceway was reinstated at a later point and re-filled with a stone-rich deposit.

The two parallel gullies referred to above have been found in several previous excavations and preliminary observations would suggest that together they served as foundation slots for two rows of posts which created a formal demarked route/avenue from the postulated eastern entrance to an unknown point within the enclosure. To date, these features extend for a known length of 44m east-west. The gullies do appear to align with the western entrance discovered within Trench 43 but have not been observed in trenches to the south and west of the Old Vicarage and therefore this route (at least in this form) does not link the western to the proposed eastern entrance.

A large, approximately 21m diameter, curvilinear gully was also discovered within Trench 51. This feature stratigraphically post-dated the linear gullies and produced a radiocarbon date of between 370-100 BC. Similar circular/curvilinear features to this have been discovered before in the area and have provisionally been identified as roundhouse 'drip' gullies, though none has previously been found on a similar scale to this.

Trenches 52, 53, and 55-57 were designed to complete the excavations in the west of the Old Vicarage gardens and aimed to link with previous trenches in this area. In Trench 52 a total of 88 features were excavated, many of which were post holes. The reasons/designs for the posts are unclear, but based on similar discoveries in other trenches it may be assumed that they represent a mix of stock enclosures, and/or houses, and/or workshops, stores, etc. The lack of diagnostic artefacts and the intense utilisation of the area, presumably over a long period of time, have made the interpretation of associated features difficult. Two curvilinear gullies were discovered, which extended beyond the trench, as well as two clay spreads which may represent collapsed (or a collection of such) clay-packed features, walls or floors.

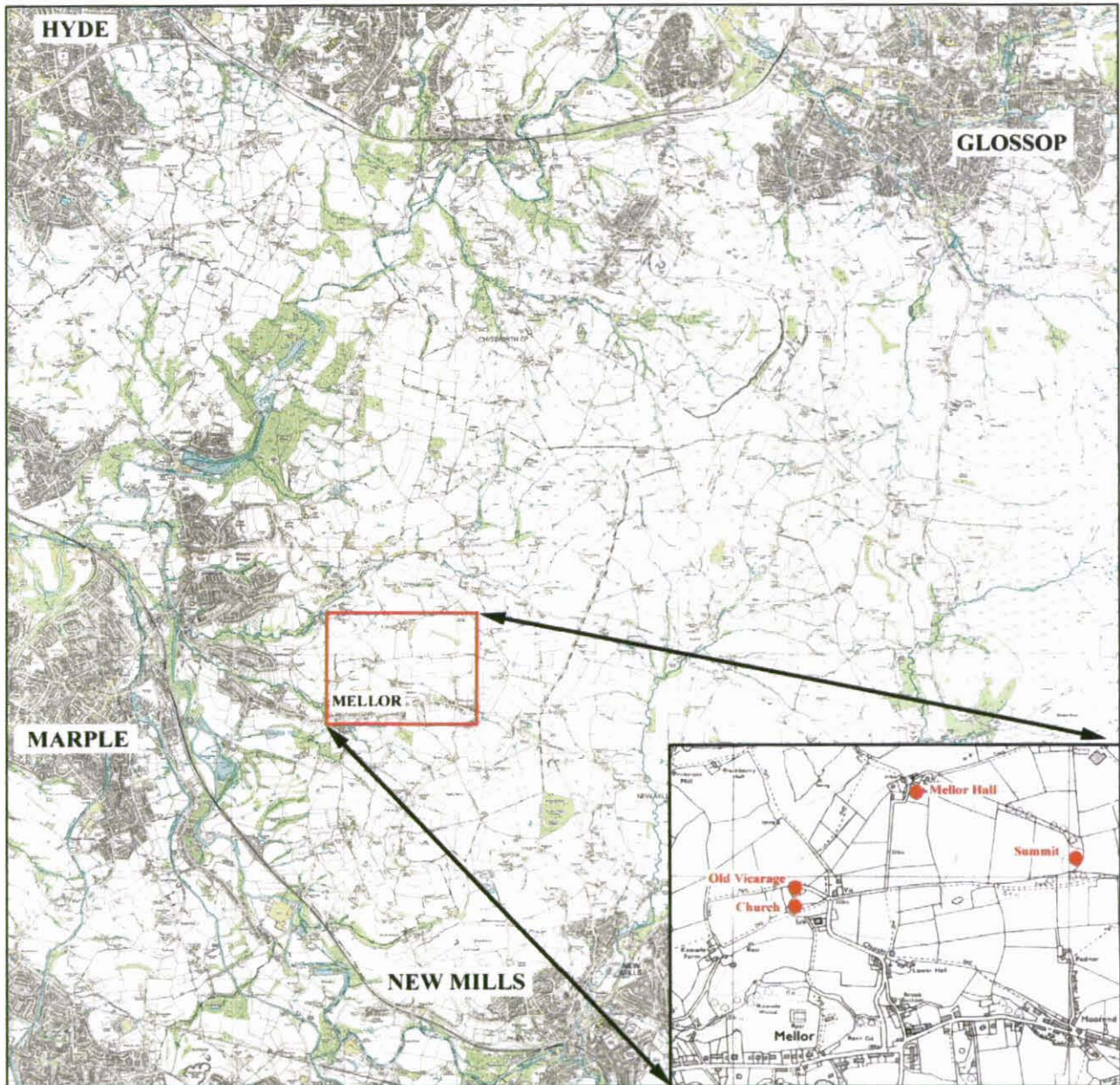
A further post-pit to the medieval hall was discovered in Trench 55 which formed the penultimate post-pit in the eastern arcade of the building.

Trench 54 continued a long-standing research strategy, utilising both excavation and geophysics, which seeks to establish both the nature and extent of the outer enclosure ditch. Previous works have located the ditch to the north, as it approaches Mellor Hall, and to the east, as it nears the summit of the hilltop. This year access for further investigations to the east was unfortunately unavailable and Trench 54 was consequently designed to establish the line of the ditch as it approaches St. Thomas's Church to the south of the car park. The trench successfully located the ditch which measured 2.1m wide with a maximum depth of 0.73m.



# 1. Introduction

The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit (UMAU) and Mellor Archaeological Trust (MAT) carried out an archaeological excavation of land at the Old Vicarage, Mellor and environs (centred on the National Grid Reference of SJ 9818 8890) for six weeks during August and September 2007 (**Figure 1**). This work was carried out as part of the on-going archaeological evaluation of land on the Mellor hilltop which first began in 1998.



**Figure 1:** Site location map. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Crown Office @ Crown copyright. All rights reserved; Licence number 100019571.

The project design for the excavation was approved by the County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester, Norman Redhead. The excavation was monitored by Norman Redhead.

Funding for the 2007 excavation was provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Stockport MBC.

## ***2. Background***

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### **2.1 Setting**

The site is situated on an unnamed hilltop within the parish of Mellor, approximately six miles to the south-east of the centre of Stockport (centred on the National Grid Reference of SJ 9818 8890). It lies on a 900m long promontory of land which drops in height from 278m AOD at its eastern summit to 220m AOD in the west and measures approximately 1 km east-west by 0.5 km north-south. The area covers 14 or more fields belonging to three separate farms, as well as a number of private dwellings. From the promontory crest the land height falls sharply to the north, south and west.

### **2.2 Geology**

#### **2.2.1 Solid**

The site is located upon a solid deposit of sandstone known locally as Woodhead Hill Rock, the lowest sandstone development in the Westphalian A succession, laid during the late Carboniferous Period.

#### **2.2.2 Drift**

In some areas of the hilltop a drift deposit of boulder clay overlies the bedrock below. This clay is typically a light reddish/brown compact deposit which would have originally covered the entire hilltop before being gradually eroded over time and found now only in areas of natural depressions in the bedrock.

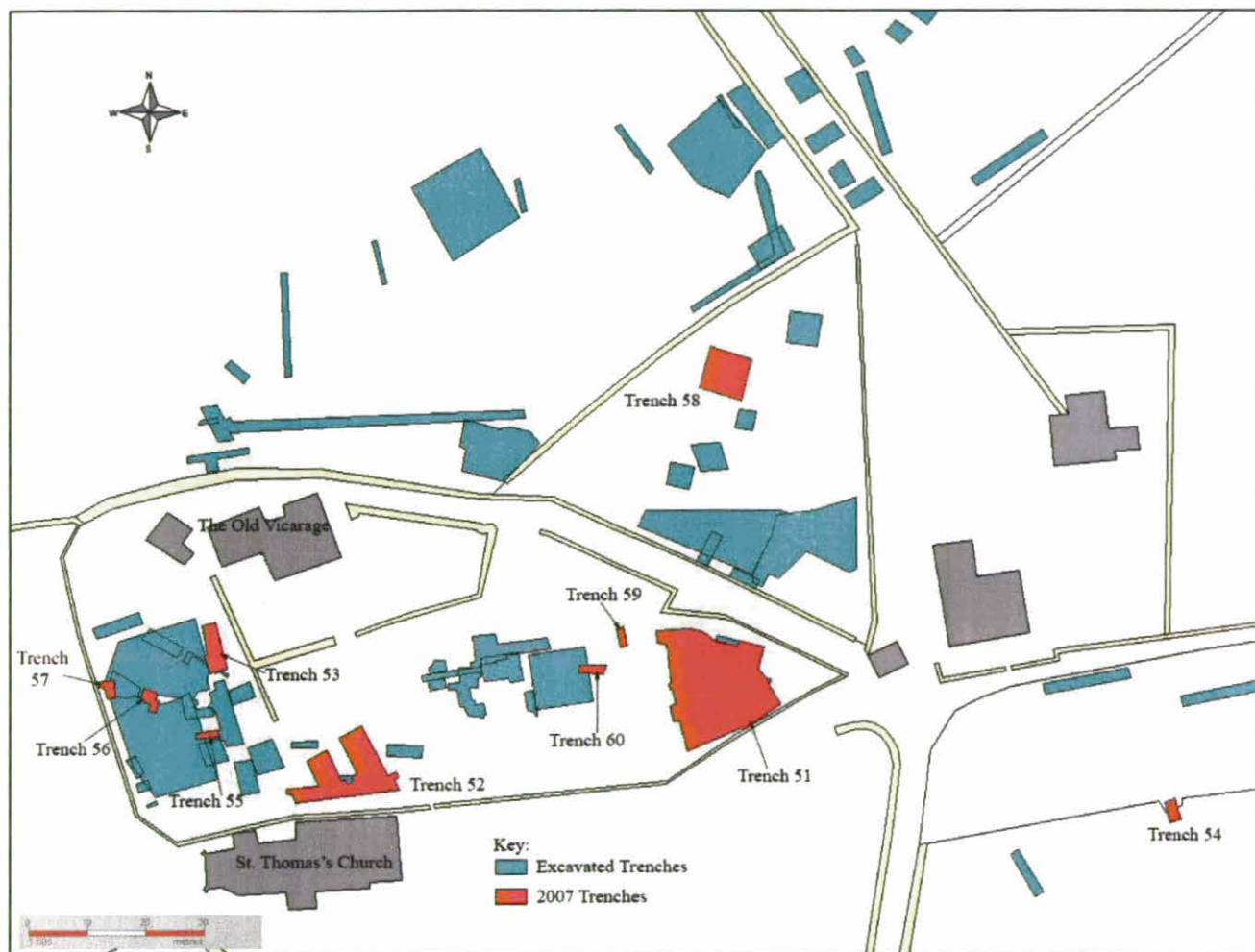
### **2.3 Land-use**

The land excavated during 2007 within the Old Vicarage property is utilised for gardens and small wood copses. Trench 54 is on land owned by local farmer Peter Hodgson and is used for pasture.



### 3. Methodology

Since 1998 a planned strategy of archaeological investigation has aimed to build on the results of previous years' excavations whilst expanding the area of potential study through an extensive and varied geophysical survey of the hilltop.



**Figure 2:** Trench location plan for the 2007 excavations (red) with previous trenches marked in blue.

All trenches were hand-excavated other than Trenches 51, 52 and 53 which were initially opened by a machine excavator. This removed the overlying topsoil until the first *in-situ* archaeology was reached at which point excavation proceeded by hand. All spoil was stored at a safe working distance from the excavations.

After machine stripping had taken place, all excavation proceeded by hand to UMAU and best practice professional standards. All archaeological works, including excavation and recording were undertaken by volunteers under the supervision of professional archaeologists from UMAU. Areas of excavation were recorded in measured plan at 1:20 or 1:40 scale and section drawings at 1:10 scale. Drawings were annotated with context numbers which were individually recorded on pro-forma UMAU context record sheets, along with surveyed level information. A metal-detector was utilised in all phases of the excavation.

All archaeological remains were photographed in digital and slide format. Any finds recovered were bagged, recorded and processed according to standard archaeological practice.



## 4. Results of the Excavation

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### 4.1 Result Typology

In this report all fills and layers are represented in rounded brackets (\*\*\*) and features/cuts are in square brackets [\*\*\*]. Features will be named and denoted by their principal cut number. All recorded measurements given for contexts/features are the maximum dimensions unless otherwise specified.

Due to the interim nature of this report, descriptions of features will be limited and no fill or relationship descriptions will be given unless stated.

### 4.2 Trench 51

Trench 51 (**Plate 1**) was sub-square in plan measuring approximately 22m north-south by 16.5m east-west, and was situated within the Old Vicarage Garden, bounded by the driveway wall to the north, the visitor viewing area to the east and the church wall to the south.

A total of 49 features were excavated within Trench 51 consisting of 1 ditch, 3 palisade slots, 1 curvilinear gully, 3 linear gullies, 17 pits and 24 post holes.

#### 4.2.1 The Inner Enclosure Ditch [203] (Figures 4 and 5)

Excavation of the inner enclosure ditch [203] (**Plate 2**) continued south from the north facing section originally excavated in Trench 18 and continued for the full length of the trench in a southerly direction. The ditch had a width of c.5.00m at the southern section, c.3.50m wide towards the centre and c.5.60m wide at the northern section and was cut through sandstone bedrock. The natural cracks and fissures in the bedrock had been utilised during construction of the ditch, following the bedding-lines to make removal of the stone easier. The ditch was steep sided in profile with stepped sides, signs of weathering were observed on the upper outer edges of the feature where the natural bedrock had become fractured. The base, as measured at the northern section was identified at a level of 219.97m Absolute Ordnance Datum, rising to a summit of 220.94m AOD, located c.2.00m north of the southern section, before falling away to a height of 220.59m AOD at the intersection of the southern section. It is anticipated that as the ditch continues to the south the base will continue to descend to a similar level as identified in the northern section. The basal width at the northern section was 2.20m, as the ditch moves to the south the base narrows to c. 1.00m wide for a length of 4.40m before widening again to 2.60m (**Plate 3**). At a point located 1.60m to the north of the southern section, the base became more regular and evenly worked, beginning to deepen in a semicircular cut, suggesting a rounded terminal end (**Plate 4**).

Ditch [203] effectively had three discrete fill depositions proceeding from north-south. The first lay to the north, immediately south of the 2003 Trench 18 section and extending southwards for c. 0.7m. Here the fills were as Trench 18 and contained all the artefacts recovered during [203]'s excavation. The central portion measured approximately 4m north-south and was a humic-sterile light brown silt sand containing very frequent small-large sandstone in varying degrees of degradation (411). The southernmost section was similarly sterile (though with smaller sized sandstone) other than the upper fills (409) and (410) which retained some of their humic content. Unfortunately, no north-south section was placed through the ditch due to a provisional

interpretation that this difference in the nature of deposition represented a single in-filling event using different fill material. This error was only realised when it became apparent that the differences in the depositions corresponded directly with features of the ditch which were only observable once complete excavation had taken place.

#### **4.2.2 Palisades**

Three internal linear palisade slots (**Plates 1 and 6**) were identified during the excavations which all respected the alignment of ditch [203].

##### **Palisade [309]**

In 2003 an internal linear palisade slot associated with the inner ditch [203] had been identified within the excavation of Trench 18. This feature was also discovered within Trench 51 orientated parallel to the outer enclosure ditch and located between 1.50m and 2.00m to the west. Measuring 0.42m in width and 0.35m in depth, with vertical sides and a flat base, the feature was observed for a distance of 20.10m running into both the northern and southern trench limits. A charcoal sample was taken from [309] which unfortunately proved erratic (see Appendix 4).

##### **Palisade [320]**

Feature [320] was a linear gully orientated north northwest-south southeast running from the southern trench edge for a length of 5.20m, and concluding with a rounded terminal, the end of which had been cut by the later palisade [309]. Feature [320] measured 0.30m wide and 0.15m deep, with near vertical edges and a flat base. A C14 radiocarbon date was recovered from this feature which dated the charcoal to the Late Iron Age (see Appendix 4). Feature [320] appears to be associated with palisade [276] and may be related.

##### **Palisade [276]**

Feature [276] was orientated north-south and ran 7.40m from the northern trench edge before terminating with a rounded end. [276] measured approximately 0.55m wide and 0.25m deep and had near vertical edges with a flat base.

#### **4.2.3 Linear Features**

##### **Linear [306]**

[306] was a thin linear orientated north-south and at a right angle to linear [246]. Unfortunately, no relationship with [246] was observed due to turbation, though it is possible that they are related. [306] had a length of c.4.50m measuring 0.19m wide at its maximum and 0.14m deep.

##### **Linear [246]**

Linear [246] (**Plate 7**) was orientated east-west and measured 0.23m wide and 0.24m deep and was identified within Trench 51 for a distance of 4.15m, protruding from the western trench edge, and continuing under the western edge of one of the central baulks. No continuation of the linear was identified on the other side of the baulk, c.1.00m to the east, indicating a terminal for the linear lay either beneath the baulk or had been cut by [243]. [246] therefore, terminates c. 4m west of ditch [203].

## Linear [327]

[327] (**Plate 7**) measured 0.45m wide and 0.20m deep and was orientated east-west and continued from the western trench edge for a distance of 8.92m, terminating 4m before reaching the inner enclosure ditch. Features [327] and [246] share very many similarities in terms of their form and orientation and also in their respect to the ditch [203] and it is probable that they are associated.

### 4.2.4 Curvilinear Gully [243]

A curvilinear (circular?) gully (**Plate 6**) was identified within the eastern half of the trench. Originally running into the eastern trench edge, two new trench extensions were added at either point and two new trenches were excavated (see Trenches 59 and 60), all of which were initiated in an attempt to identify if the gully continued in a complete circle and to check its relationships with linears [246] and [327]. Overall six sections were excavated across the feature within Trench 51. [243] had a diameter within Trench 51 of 16m (with the results from Trenches 59 and 60 giving a total diameter of 21m), a width of 0.42m and was 0.25m deep with steep near vertical sides and a flat base. A single (intrusive? see Trench 59 feature [360] below) sherd of Nene Valley Ware pottery dating from the 3-4<sup>th</sup> century AD was recovered from this fill. This feature also provided a C14 date from Trench 59 (below).

### 4.2.5 Pits

A total of 17 pits were excavated (**Plate 7**), with the majority being sub-oval in plan and averaging c. 0.8m by 0.7m by 0.2m deep, though the largest example measured 1.56m long, 0.71m wide and 0.45m deep. Seven of the pits contained regular flecks of charcoal and two contained very small fragments of calcined bone. It is possible therefore, that these pits are associated with either the production or deposition of industrial or domestic refuse. Only six of the pits were discrete, with the rest having stratigraphic relationships with other features. The description below is given as a general reference to the majority of these features.

#### Pit [387]

Feature [387] was an oval pit cut into the fractured bedrock with near vertical sides and a flat base. [387] measured 0.85m long, 0.70m wide and 0.28m deep and contained a single fill. (388) was a friable mid brown sandy silt with inclusions of large angular bedrock fragments >0.20m and occasional >0.02m sub-angular and sub-rounded stone. Although no dateable material was recovered from this feature, stratigraphically it was found to be later than pit [389] located to the east.

### 4.2.6 Post Holes

Twenty four post holes were excavated within Trench 51 (**Plate 7**) with the majority being sub-circular in plan and averaging c. 0.4m by 0.4m by 0.2m deep. Due to the density of archaeological impact in the trench it is very difficult to assign relationships between features generally, but especially with post holes. It is probable however, that relationships exist and there do appear to be several distinct groupings within the series. One such grouping is an irregular east-west alignment which appears to correspond with linear feature [327]'s alignment and consists of post holes {206, 254, 263, 237, 253 and 268}, with another potential alignment being formed by features [215, 392, 220, 218 and 341]. These possible east-west alignments may denote a different phase and expression of [327]'s design.



Another grouping appears to be formed by two north-south alignments of some of the larger postholes to the west. Features [372, 333 and 391] appear to form the eastern side to a twin pair of post holes [233, 374 and 366] to the west. The two lines of three have regular spacing of 2-2.5m between the individual post holes. This arrangement may continue to the north and be seen in postholes [261 and 271]. Excavation in 2008 will endeavour to reveal more of this potential arrangement to the west.

The description below is given as a general reference to the majority of these features.

#### **Posthole [254]**

Posthole [254] was a circular feature, cut into natural bedrock, measuring 0.45m wide, 0.51m long and 0.24m deep containing fills (258), (259) and (260). The primary deposition (259) was 0.18m deep and consisted of a friable light brown silt sand containing frequent inclusions of >0.03m sub-angular stone. The secondary fill (260) was a 0.12m deep mid brown silt sand containing frequent inclusions of >0.05m sub-angular stone. The upper fill (258) was a loose dark brown silt sand 0.14m in depth, and containing frequent inclusions of >0.10 sub-angular stone. Although no dateable material was recovered from this feature, stratigraphically it was found to be later than posthole [253] located to the west.

### **4.3 Trench 52**

#### **4.3.1 Research and Excavation Aims**

Previous excavations to the north and west of Trench 52 had identified evidence for the presence of a medieval aisled hall, aligned on a north-south axis. Trench 52 was designed to evaluate the potential for ancillary structures associated with this phase of occupation in the form of possible stables and outbuildings relating to habitation evidence such as kitchens, hearths and archaeological deposits associated with a yard or courtyard.

Equally, the location of the trench would inevitably link an area of known Iron Age settlement activity in the centre of the garden where previous excavations had revealed a series of gullies and postholes as part of a complex of roundhouses. Trench 52 was situated approximately 18m due west of Trench 16 excavated in 2002 which contained evidence of Iron Age occupation activity in the form of several superimposed roundhouse drip gullies.

The main excavation area, Trench 52 (**Plate 8**) was opened primarily to investigate the possible continuation of the outer-enclosure ditch running through this central area, although it soon became apparent that this was not the case. The trench was an irregular 'F' shape in plan, measuring approximately 18.20m east-west, and with a 12.20m long L-shaped arm (Area A) in the eastern corner extending roughly due north-west and a parallel projecting arm (Area B) (**Plate 9**), measuring 9.60m, located 9.50m along the east-west axis (Area C). Both 'arms' were approximately 4.0m wide, set at right angles to the main trench.

#### **4.3.2 Excavation**

The solid geology in the main trench comprised fractured and laminated deposits of sandstone known locally as Woodhead Hill Rock. These strata were interspersed with heavily eroded and degraded gritty sandstone with localised patches of discreet grey-yellow boulder clays.

Initial machining and cleaning of the trench identified an area littered with evidence for intense occupation and settlement activity. Un-phased occupational evidence, in the form of pits, postholes, stakeholes and linear features were exposed and have helped to establish the potential frequency/intensity of settlement and parameters for occupational activity on the hilltop. The trench produced evidence for settlement and occupation in the form of ceramic and other artefactual finds. Unfortunately these were largely recovered from unstratified contexts associated with the topsoil and subsoil deposits.

The topsoil deposit (001), covering the Old Vicarage garden comprised a dark-brown friable humic loam, extending here to a depth of 0.30m. The underlying subsoil deposit (002); a light-mid brown friable silt-sandy clay, extended to a depth of 0.15m with regular small- to medium-sized natural sub-angular inclusions of sandstone.

Subsoil context (002) in Trench 52 produced fragments of briquetage, Romano-British pottery (Cheshire Plains ware), samian (South Gaulish, late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD) and medieval pottery (fine Redware and Stamford ware, c 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century).

For the purposes of this report the results will be divided into separate feature groups.

#### 4.3.3 Postholes

Although a potential total of 80 postholes (**Figure 9**) were identified during the excavations within this trench (41 in Area A, and 39 Area B) it has been possible to tentatively date only two of these through their association with pottery fragments recovered from the fills.

The description below is given as a general reference to the majority of these features.

##### Post hole [140]

Post hole [140] was sub-circular in plan, measuring 0.4m north-south by 0.5m east-west, with a depth of 0.30m, filled by (141), a friable dark brown clay silt with frequent large (0.10m – 0.30m) sandstone inclusions as packing stone. The profile of the cut was sharp with near-vertical sides and a flat base. Feature [140] cut posthole [090] to the north.

#### 4.3.4 Pits

A total of three (possibly five) pits were discovered within Trench 52. All contained small amounts of charcoal and it is possible that they represent features associated with the deposition of domestic waste.

The description below is given as a general reference to the majority of these features.

##### Pit [435]

Pit [435] was irregular in plan, measuring 1.10m north-south by 0.90m east-west, with a maximum depth of 0.20m. This feature was filled by upper fill (437) to a depth of 0.09m comprising mid-grey brown silt clay containing a large fragment of plated sandstone bedrock and lower fill (436), mid red-brown soft sandy silt with occasional charcoal inclusions. The profile was shallow and with a u-shaped base. Pit [435] cut curvilinear feature [066].

#### **4.3.5 Linear [034]**

Context [034] was the cut for a twentieth-century water pipe trench which was situated in the south-east corner of area A/C in trench 52. This linear feature was visible for a length of 2.65m continuing along a north/north-east by south/south-west axis, 0.3m wide with a maximum depth of 0.3m. An Elizabethan silver coin was discovered within [034] which had obviously been disturbed from its original deposition.

#### **4.3.6 Curvilinear**

##### **Curvilinear [066]**

Context [066] is the cut for a curvilinear feature running roughly north-south approximately 5.7m along Area C of trench 52. The full extent of the feature was not visible as it ran under the baulk section to the north and south and the visible portion had been heavily truncated by later posthole activity. The visible extent of [066] measured approximately 2.5m in plan, with a maximum width of 0.25m and depth of 0.10m, filled by (067) a fine mid grey-brown sandy silt. Linear [066] was cut by pit [435] and a series of intersecting postholes [061]/[063]/[068] to the south, extending under the baulk section at this point.

##### **Curvilinear [468]**

Context [468] represents a narrow ephemeral linear running south/south-east to north/north-west, roughly parallel with linear [066]. A length of the linear approximately 4.4m long was visible, measuring only 0.2m wide with a maximum depth of 0.1m. [468] was filled by (469) a mid grey-brown compacted sandy silt. Linear [468] was cut by inter-cutting postholes [197], [199], and [201].

#### **4.3.7 Clay Spreads**

##### **Clay Spread (458)**

(458) represents a large spread of compact clay located towards the west-facing section of Area A in Trench 52, possibly within a cut [457], though this is uncertain. (458) therefore has been assigned a deposit context number rather than a cut designation. This irregular and amorphous spread of mottled light grey/mid brown clay measured 1.7m east-west by 2.3m north-south, continuing under the baulk to the east. This deposit was excavated to a depth of 0.3m and clearly masked underlying discreet features. (458) contained calcined material including burnt bone, charcoal, reddened clay and scorched fragments of sandstone as well as degraded white clay, indicative of structural collapse and occupational debris. Two discreet features were identified underlying the spread, both were interpreted as postholes, contexts [461] and [463]. The suggestion of a linear gully [459], approximately 0.7m long and 0.6m wide, extending from the west-facing section in the trench baulk and continuing west as part of [438], was visible in the initial cleaning of the trench but adverse weather conditions rendered this feature ultimately indistinguishable from the clay spread and was not excavated in this instance.

##### **Clay Spread [438]**

Clay spread [438] was sub-circular in plan, measuring 1.4 east-west and 1.60m north-south, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m. This feature was only partially excavated and evidence of areas of scorched clay and calcined material such as burnt bone, charcoal, scorched red sandstone suggested the area had been exposed to heat. The edges of the feature were difficult



to distinguish due to severe bioturbation action in this area but the profile exhibited a shallow bowl-shape with a u-shaped base. This feature was filled by (439), a sticky mid brown-grey silt-sandy clay with abundant inclusions of charcoal, burnt bone and surface finds which have been identified as late Iron Age/ Romano-British briquetage fragments.

#### **4.4 Trench 53**

##### **4.4.1 Research and Excavation Aims**

Trench 53 (**Figure 10, Plate 10**) was sited in order to further investigate the extent and environs of the medieval building and ascertain its relationship and stratigraphic association with the Iron-age features in this area, namely the inner enclosure ditch and palisade.

Trench 53 was rectangular in plan, measuring 8.5m north-south, and 2.4m east-west (with a maximum extension of 3.3m over post-pit [092]). The natural solid geology of the trench comprised a mixture of plated sandstone bedrock and fractured sandstone. The topsoil deposit (001), extended to a depth of 0.30m and the underlying subsoil deposit (002) extended to a depth of 0.15m below this.

##### **4.4.2 Inner Enclosure Ditch [015]**

Initial machining and cleaning of the trench located the continuation of the inner edge of the large ditch feature identified in Trench 43 excavated to the west during 2006. The excavation of Trench 53 identified a section of the internal edge of the enclosure ditch measuring approximately 2.40m long, extending under the trench section to the north and continuing along an east-west axis beyond the trench.

Feature [015] represents the southern edge of the cut for the inner enclosure ditch. Only limited excavation of this feature was viable within the parameters of trench 53 and at its widest section the descending ditch profile measured 0.44m (in the east facing section of the trench) and 0.10m (in the west facing section). A flint blade was recovered from an upper fill of [015] which was datable to the Neolithic/Bronze Age probably representing a stray residual find.

##### **4.4.3 Palisade Slot [149]**

Palisade [149] truncates the trench aligned east/north-east by west/south-west across the trench. The feature appears as a linear gully 0.2m to 0.34m wide, and 0.05m to 0.2m deep. The feature is irregular in form, though typically steep sided with a flat base. The cut for palisade [149] appears to stop upon reaching a pocket of solid bedrock to the east and then continues again at a depth of 0.2m for a length of 0.7m to the east. At this point it has been cut by posthole [196]. It is also cut by post-pit [092] and stakehole [445] to the west of the trench. It is possible that stakehole [445] is contemporary with feature [149] or that posthole [196] and [445] denote later modifications of the structures in this area of the site.

##### **4.4.4 Post-Pit [092]**

Post-hole [092] (**Plate 11**) is a large sub-circular cut feature measuring 1.14m east-west and 1.05metres north-south, having a maximum depth of 0.4m from the natural surface. [092] was filled by upper fill (093), a friable mid grey-brown silt sand with abundant large fragments of laminated bedrock utilized as packing stone (up to 0.5m in size) set on edge visible in section. The lower fill (094) comprised a sticky light orange-brown sandy-clay with frequent small fragments

of sandstone (0.01m to 0.05cm) and larger edge-set sandstone as packing stones. This fill also produced a well-sealed fragment of Black-burnished pottery, dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

The profile of the cut is near vertical on the south and eastern edges of the feature with a flat base. The feature has been cut through the hard-standing bedrock comprising the natural in this part of the site. The fills contained large packing stones set on vertical edge. Feature [092] has cut the inner palisade [149] on its northern limit.

#### **4.4.5 Postholes**

Although a total of 7 postholes were identified during the excavations within this trench it has not been possible to securely date any of these features due to an absence of finds. All postholes were initially half-sectioned, a drawn and photographic record taken, and then fully excavated in order to recover a sample of material for further analysis.

### **4.5 Trench 54**

#### **4.5.1 Research and Excavation Aims**

Trench 54 (**Figure 11**) continues a long-standing research strategy, utilising both excavation and geophysics, which seeks to establish both the nature and extent of the outer enclosure ditch. Previous works have located the ditch to the north, as it approaches Mellor Hall, and to the east, as it nears the summit of the hilltop. This year access for further investigations to the east was unfortunately unavailable and Trench 54 was consequently designed to establish the line of the ditch as it approaches St. Thomas's Church to the south of the car park. The trench successfully located the ditch.

Trench 54 was hand-excavated and measured 3m north-south by 2m east-west. The topsoil had a depth of 0.17m and the subsoil's depth was 0.14m. The natural comprised solid geology of sandstone bedrock.

#### **4.5.2 Ditch [226]**

Feature [226] was a linear cut aligned east-west, measuring 2.1m wide by 2.0m long with a maximum depth of 0.73m. This feature was cut into the natural bedrock and had stepped sides with a flat base. In common with other sections excavated through this feature, the majority of the fills were sterile and comprised small-medium sub-angular fragments of sandstone within a light brown silt sand matrix.

### **4.6 Trench 55**

#### **4.6.1 Research and Excavation Aims**

Trench 55 (**Figure 12**) was designed to further evaluate the sequence of medieval post-pits associated with the timber arcade posts for the medieval aisled hall in the garden. Previous trenches during excavations in 2005/6 identified a parallel alignment of large sub-circular post-pits designed to take earth-fast posts aligned on a north-south axis. Trench 55 aimed to identify another of these features, sited over the potential location of the penultimate post-pit in the eastern arcade.

The trench was rectangular in shape, measuring 3.8m east-west by 1.2m north-south. The topsoil deposit (001) extended to a depth of 0.39m, with the underlying subsoil deposit (002) extending to a depth of 0.07m. The natural solid geology comprised sandstone bedrock.

Context (001) produced a single fragmentary sherd of medieval Gritty ware dated to the late 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **4.6.2 Post-pit [184]**

Feature [184] represents the cut of a large post-pit feature which was only partially exposed in the trench, the extent of the excavation being limited by the presence of an established tree. The feature appeared to continue under the trench section to the north. The excavated portion of this feature measured 1.0m wide east-west by >0.4m north-south. It had a maximum depth of 0.52m in the excavated section (possibly deeper under the trench edge).

The feature appears to be sub-circular in plan. It comprised two fills; upper fill (185) a friable mid-grey brown clay silt sand with abundant/frequent small to medium sub-angular natural sandstone inclusions and occasional flecks of charcoal and coarse sandstone inclusions, extending to a depth of 0.44m in section and the lower or primary fill (186), a compact but friable light to mid brown silt-sand with frequent small angular natural sandstone inclusions and frequent inclusions of medium-sized sandstone chocking or inverted packing stone. This fill extended to a further depth of 0.15m below (185). The profile of this feature had steep concave sides and a flat base. No post-pipe was evident in section. Post-pit [184] cut feature [187] on its western profile, visible in section.

#### **4.6.3 Post-hole [187]**

Context [187] represents a sub-circular post-hole measuring 0.35m east-west, 0.18m north-south, with a maximum depth of 0.16m. This rock-cut feature had vertical sides and a flat base but was only partially exposed in the trench, apparently continuing to the north, under the section edge. Post-hole [187] was cut by post-pit [184].

### **4.7 Trench 56**

#### **4.7.1 Research and Excavation Aims**

Trench 56 was designed to evaluate a previously unexcavated portion of Area A, in the southern garden area which lay between trenches 33 and 43 excavated in 2005/6. It was hoped that by linking all excavated areas in this part of the site, the full extent of negative cut features could be plotted on the post-excavation plan and the relationship between the Iron Age internal palisade slot, the Romano-British modifications to the inner enclosure entrance and the extent of the medieval structural evidence could be ascertained.

Trench 56 was hand-excavated and L-shaped in plan, measuring 2.2m by 3.5m north-south and 1.1m by 3m east-west. The solid geology comprised natural plated sandstone bedrock. The topsoil deposit (001) extended to a depth of 0.35m, with the underlying subsoil deposit (002) at a depth of 0.12m.

Context (001) produced two sherds of possible medieval glazed pottery which showed signs of scorching or burning.



#### **4.7.2 Posthole [427]**

Feature [427] represents a sub-circular posthole measuring 0.56m by 0.50m in plan which had a depth of 0.18m. This feature remains un-phased in lieu of any datable material or stratigraphic evidence.

#### **4.7.3 Inner Enclosure Ditch**

Within the parameters of this trench a previously excavated section of the inner enclosure ditch was identified which helped to locate trench 56 within the known areas of archaeological investigation in Area A. The inner edge or eastern profile of the inner enclosure ditch extended across the trench and under the southern baulk of the trench. No recording of this feature was undertaken other than on plan drawing.

### **4.8 Trench 57**

#### **4.8.1 Research and Excavation Aims**

The 57 was situated within the Old Vicarage garden (Area A), adjacent to and overlapping the southern extent of Trench 43, excavated in 2006. The trench was hand-excavated and sub-square/rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 2m north/north-east by 2.5m south/south-west. The irregular shape of the trench was a direct result of utilizing the remaining area which was available for archaeological excavation within the garden. The purpose for the opening of Trench 57 was to establish the continuation of the outer palisade slot.

The natural geology comprised soft mid yellow-brown degraded sandstone with occasional sub-angular and sub-rounded natural sandstone inclusions. The area had suffered high levels of bioturbation and as a result of being located within an established shrubbery, and was extremely parched.

No firm evidence for a continuation of the palisade was found within the trench. Evidence from Trench 43 however, suggests that the palisade is often difficult to establish and lengths of it are hardly discernable. Trench 57's small size therefore, may not have been sufficient to reveal any such deviations and conclusions as to the palisades' presence here must remain limited.

### **4.9 Trench 58**

Trench 58 was square in plan and measured 5m by 5m. This trench was excavated prior to the Open Weekend to enable a reconstruction of prehistoric cooking practices to take place in an area which had been archaeologically investigated prior to the demonstration. This area, and Area C as a whole, is ideally suited to this purpose due to the water retaining nature of the boulder clay natural geology.

No archaeological features were uncovered within the trench, though the top and subsoil were particularly rich in post-medieval pottery and 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century clay pipes. Two flint blades were also recovered from the subsoil, both of which are provisionally dated to the Bronze Age.

The turf and friable, dark brown grey humic silt clay topsoil (483) and mid brown silt clay subsoil (484) had a total depth of 40cm. Immediately beneath the subsoil was a layer of wet light-mid grey clay sand silt (485) with c.50% small-medium sandstone inclusions. This layer varied in depth

between 5-25cm, effectively sealing the natural deposits below and seems to be an interface layer between the natural clay geology and the more humic soils above.

#### **4.10 Trench 59**

Trench 59 (**Figure 13**) was excavated as an additional extension to the planned trenches as a direct result of identifying a curvilinear gully located within Trench 51 [243] and was designed in order to establish the continuation, extent and diameter of this gully. Trench 59 was hand excavated and measured 3.50m long by 1.00m wide and identified archaeology at a depth of 0.40m. Three features were identified within this trench [360], [364] and [380]

##### **Gully [360]**

Gully [360] appears to be a continuation of curvilinear gully [243] and was orientated north-east to south-west. Measuring 0.62m wide and 0.47m deep, the gully protruded from both the eastern and western trench extents. Gully [360] was cut by posthole [380]. A C14 radiocarbon date was obtained from charcoal sampled from within [360] which provided a date range of between 370-100 BC.

##### **Posthole [364]**

Located towards the southern extent of the trench this feature measured 0.52m long by 0.27m wide and was 0.09m deep.

##### **Posthole [380]**

Located towards the northern extent of the trench post hole [380] was stratigraphically later than gully [360] cutting into its northern extent. The posthole measured 0.60m wide, 0.57m long and 0.42m deep. No dateable material was recovered from this feature.

#### **4.11 Trench 60**

Trench 60 (**Figure 14, Plate 12**) was the second additional trench added within the eastern extent of Area A and was designed to reaffirm the relationship witnessed within Trench 51, between curvilinear gully [243] and east-west linear gully [246]. The trench was hand-dug and measured 3.7m long and 1.6-2.2m wide, orientated in an east-west orientation and identified five separate features.

##### **4.11.1 Gully [243]**

Feature [243] is a continuation of the curvilinear gully uncovered in both Trenches 51 and 59 and had a similar form and deposition to that found in Trench 59. [243] cut linear [246] and had been cut by pit [376].

##### **Linear [246]**

Feature [246] appears to be a continuation of linear [246] within Trench 51 and is similar in form though somewhat deeper at 0.32m.

### **Pit [376]**

Feature [376] was a large sub-circular pit measuring 0.98m by 0.84m with a depth of 0.4m. The pit had steep sides and a flat base and cut [243].

Three post holes were also uncovered within the trench [325,486 and 487]. These features appear to respect the east-west alignment of linear [246] and may be either be associated or represent a different phase.

### **4.12 Adendum**

Between October 2007 and April 2008 three further excavations (Trenches 61-64) have taken place within the Old Vicarage grounds. These works have not been illustrated on the site plan and will not be incorporated within this (2007) report but will instead be included within the 2008 seasons' findings.

## 5. *Interpretation/Conclusions*

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Due to the interim nature of this report, full interpretations will be limited and will focus on Trenches 51 and 52. A complete summary of the findings from all trenches will be given in the 2008 report.

### 5.1 Trench 51

#### 5.1.1 Ditch [203], Palisades [276, 309 and 320]

The excavation of ditch [203] in Trench 51 is a salutary lesson in expecting the unexpected. Prior to work beginning, it was anticipated that [203] would continue southwards from Trench 18 maintaining its dimensions and yielding more artefacts which would enable us to form ideas on the nature of trade, settlement, etc during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Instead, excavation revealed marked differences in both the dimensions of the ditch and the nature of its infilling.

Taken together, the sharp decreases in both the depth and width of [203] over a c. 4m long area and the suggestion that they both begin to increase again to the south (**Figure 4, Plates 3 and 4**) denote a change in [203]'s design and function which has not been seen in other excavated sections of the ditch. The nearest parallel to this change is the c. 3m wide entranceway found in Trench 43 to the west during the 2006 excavations. It is possible therefore, that these changes in [203]'s design imply another entranceway within the inner enclosure. This possibility is greatly strengthened by the association of palisade [276/320] and linear gullies [246/327] which seemingly respect an entranceway here (**Figures 2 and 6**).

There are three significant problems with this interpretation- why is the suggested dug-out entrance c. half the depth of the ditch as seen in Trench 18; why, if it was an entranceway, has the entrance been negated by the palisade [309] which would bar access to and from the enclosure, and why has the entranceway been excavated-out and therefore closed? All of these potential difficulties may be inter-linked.

Excavations of the inner ditch in other trenches (notably Trench 18) have discovered that the ditch was partly in-filled during the Iron Age and no Romano-British artefact has ever been found below 1.2m within this c. 2m deep ditch. If therefore, the decision to excavate and close the entranceway was taken after the Iron Age infilling had already partly filled the ditch, the depth to which the entrance was dug-out would correspond to the depth of the rest of the ditch which as we know was already half-full of Iron Age infill. The closing of the entranceway would have made any associated features (such as the palisades [276] and [320]) redundant and therefore new internal defences, in the form of palisade [309], were instituted. Based on this interpretation, it would appear that the entranceway was dug-away and that additional measures were taken to restrict access at this point (palisade [309]) either during the very late Iron Age or the Romano-British period (a date range supported by the radiocarbon dates, see Appendix 4 below).

One can only speculate on the reasons for the closure of the entranceway but it is interesting to note that an entranceway here has advantages over the one discovered in Trench 43 to the west (topographically easier access in and out and also quicker routes to the finer soils of the hilltop to the east) and it would seem that strictly practical reasons would not necessitate this dramatic change in design. The proposed re-establishment of the entrance (below) would support this view,

and it is possible that the decision to close the entranceway here was taken to counter a short-term emergency.

There exists a possibility that the closure of the entrance was temporary and that it was reinstated at a later point. The strange nature of infilling within this section of the ditch has already been noted (see 4.2.1 above). Taken together with the above interpretation that an entranceway once existed here, the stone-rich and artefact-free infilling may denote that the entrance was re-filled post its late Iron Age/Romano-British closure with a stone rich infill (411). As commented on above (4.2.1), no Romano-British finds were made within [203] other than in fills which extended south from Trench 18 for less than 1m. The rest of [203] contained no artefacts whatsoever. Interestingly, the artefact rich deposits from [203] within Trench 18 (and elsewhere) have been interpreted (Roberts et al 2004) as a single clearance event some time in the late Fourth or early Fifth centuries A.D, where a mix of date-ranged material was deposited within the ditch. As all other excavated sections of the ditch have contained this event-deposit it would seem plausible to expect the dug-out entranceway to have also been infilled in a similar manner. The fact that it wasn't, together with the unusual stone rich deposit (411), strongly suggests that the entrance had been re-established to ground level and that there was no corresponding ditch to be infilled by the time of the clearance event.

Palisades [276] and [320] are similar in both form and alignment and it is likely that they are associated and co-existent. Together they form an internal palisade with a c. 8.20m gap between the two terminal ends which correspond to the possible entrance way identified during the excavation of the inner enclosure ditch [203]. Interestingly, both the palisades and the linears described below align just to the north of the suspected entrance rather than being directly in-line. It is possible that this denotes that the entrance lies to the north of where it has been postulated in this report, or that the entrance was originally wider than suspected and had been narrowed by the excavation of further bedrock. This oddity may also denote an inherent design in the entranceway wherein access within the enclosure was partially slighted by the palisade and entailed a further c. 2m north-west approach before entrance was gained. This arrangement may be defensive in purpose and represent an attempt by the designers to hamper direct access.

The radio-carbon date from Palisade [320] of B.C 50-20 A.D corresponds closely with dates obtained from features associated with the internal defences/arrangement of the ditch discovered in Trench 43 (Noble and Thompson, 2006). Together, these could suggest that a re-design of the ditches' associated features took place within the very late Iron Age/Conquest period and it is possible that the palisade was first instituted during this time. It is tempting to associate this possible late development with the nature of the ditch's deposition. As discussed above, the ditch had been partly in-filled during the Iron Age with a sterile mix of degraded sandstone. It is uncertain where these fills originated from, but it seems highly unlikely to represent weathering alone due to both the depth of the deposit and the stable nature of the bedrock. It would appear therefore, to denote previously excavated bedrock which has broken down into smaller constituent parts and then been deposited within the ditch. The likeliest explanation for this extremely large deposit (approximately 2.2m wide by 0.8m deep by 270m long) is that it represents the originally excavated bedrock from the construction of the ditch which had been re-deposited within the ditch at a later point. As the transportation of such a vast amount of material over any meaningful distance would require a great deal of labour it seems unlikely that this material was removed from the area of the ditch during the original construction and then returned to in-fill it at a later point. It would seem therefore, that this deposit lay close to the ditch after its original excavation. The obvious interpretation of such a deposit is that it formed an internal bank/rampart of which no trace remains today. The development of the internal palisade system would appear to suggest that this bank/rampart was de-commissioned, or had fallen-out of use, by the late Iron Age.



### **Linears [246 and 327]**

The similarities in their form, orientation and associations would strongly suggest that linears [246] and [327] are associated and represent a pair of parallel east-west orientated gullies aligned from the entranceway in Trench 51 to an unknown point within the enclosure. The seeming continuation of [246] into Trench 60 would appear to denote that this is the same feature identified in previous excavations within Trenches 3, 16 and 21 further to the west (**Figures 7 and 8**). If this is correct, [246] extends for a total of 37m and could potentially extend further. Feature [327] may also have been identified in previous excavations within Trench 23 to the south of Trench 21, which would give a known length of 44m for this linear. Clearly, these gullies represent a major feature of the enclosure and could potentially allow significant interpretations to be made as to the form and design of the enclosure during their operational lifetime. Unfortunately, no dating evidence is available (though these features will be sampled in 2008) but stratigraphic relationships were noted, in particular with the large curvilinear gully [243] found in Trenches 51, 59 and 60. This feature was carbon-dated to between B.C 350-170 and was found to cut linear [246] and so post-dates it. The linears [246] and [327] therefore, would appear to date from the middle Iron Age at the latest.

It is unclear at this stage what the function/s of these features was. It would appear however, that they formed gullies which served as foundation trenches for the setting of wooden posts. Post holes were found within the gullies in Trench 51, though the often disturbed nature of the infill and natural geology made identification difficult. In Trench 16 however, where a 9-10m long section of [246] was uncovered, a total of 10 circular post holes were discovered within the gully during excavation. These post holes were actually the reason for the discovery of [246] within this trench as it was only during their excavation that the gully became visible due to its fills closely resembling the natural boulder clay. It was interpreted at the time that this deposition denoted that the gully had been backfilled with its original material once the posts had been established. In this way, the post holes would be more visible than the gully due to their fills containing a more humic, and therefore darker, infill than the gully itself.

It is hoped that the 2008 excavations will further establish the extent of these features and allow a greater understanding of their function. Preliminary observations would suggest that together they formed a parallel row of posts which created a formal demarked route/avenue from the eastern entrance to an unknown point within the enclosure. The gullies do appear to align with the western entrance discovered within Trench 43 but have not been observed in trenches to the south and west of the Old Vicarage and therefore this route (at least in this form) does not link the western to the eastern entrance.

### **Curvilinear Gully [243]**

It seems highly likely that the gully identified in Trenches 51, 59 and 60 is the same feature with a total diameter of c. 21m (**Figure 7**). Similar circular/curvilinear features to this which have been discovered in Trenches 16, 21, 26 and 36 have provisionally been identified as roundhouse 'drip' gullies, though none has previously been found on a similar scale to [243]. This variance in size makes its identification as a roundhouse gully uncertain therefore, and this interpretation should be viewed with caution until further works in 2008 establish both its extent and any potential associations with other features.

## Trench 52

As was stated in the results for Trench 51, the repeated and intense archaeological impact upon the site has made interpreting and associating features difficult. This proved especially relevant in Trench 52 where the vast majority of features contained no dateable evidence and it was therefore unclear what phase or phases the plethora of postholes related to. Many of the features are inter-cut and this may suggest repeated phasing, though this is uncertain due to the sheer density of features. This problem in interpretation however, does reveal the intense nature of settlement/usage within the locale and should be taken as further evidence for the site's perceived suitability over long periods of time. The quantity of post holes should also serve as a reminder of some of the practical requirements as well as ancillary occupations/livelihoods for the people living here, as each post hole obviously required a wooden upright. Each wooden upright needed to be gathered/cut (and further wooden superstructures would almost certainly have been associated with the post holes), which would require some management of local woodland, possibly some transport, as well as the tools required to cut and shape the wood.

The reasons/designs for the posts are unclear, but based on similar discoveries in other trenches it may be assumed that they represent a mix of stock enclosures, and/or houses, and/or workshops, stores, etc. One group of small post holes in the north of Area A do appear to be associated and form a semi-circular (or possibly a sub-square) arrangement which possibly continues to the north of the trench. Post holes [466, 101, 103, 105, 107, 127, 129 and 431] are a closely packed series of features which run in a line from north-northwest with a regular 0.3m spacing between each post hole.

Short lengths of two seemingly curvilinear gullies were discovered within the trench though it is unclear what these features represent. Further lengths of these features may run under the established baulk sections and these gullies may extend beyond the trench limits. Their extent and plan therefore is uncertain.

The two clay deposits [438] and (438) are unusual and similar deposits have not been seen elsewhere on the site. Their mixed and burnt nature may suggest that they represent a collapsed (or a collection of such) clay-packed feature, wall or floor. The 2008 excavations will seek to expose more of these features and reveal their full extents.

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## ***8. Archive***

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The records are archived by UMAU under the site code OVM 07 at their offices at Room 4.10, Mansfield Cooper Building, University of Manchester. It is the aim of UMAU and MAT to have digitised copies of all yearly reports available for viewing and download on the Mellor Archaeology home web site.

The finds from the 2007 season will be held at Stockport Story Museum.

Copies of this report will be sent to all concerned parties. Further copies are available upon request at the UMAU offices.



## ***Appendix 3: Specialist Pottery Reports***

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### **3.1 Later prehistoric pottery from excavations on the Mellor Hillfort, 2007**

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD. Freelance Archaeologist

#### **Introduction**

The pottery assemblage from excavations on the Mellor hillfort carried out in 2007 was examined by the author in April and May 2008. The details of the assemblage are summarised in Table 1 and expanded in the catalogue below.

#### **Later prehistoric pottery: a catalogue**

##### *Trench 51 Ditch Fill [203] (204)*

Trench 51 produced the rim of small globular vessel with a small, sharply everted rim in a bright orange sandy fabric with sparse to moderate diverse inclusions including sandstone or fine gritstone rock fragments (up to 0.7 cm), quartz and occasional non-crystalline black grit. This fabric appears to be similar to Fabric 4 as defined on the basis of earlier finds from the site (Cumberpatch *et al.* 2005).

##### *Trench 52 [199] (200)*

The pottery from Trench 52 consisted of two undiagnostic body sherds in a dull orange fabric with a grey core and a very distinctive angular or 'blocky' texture, both containing abundant angular rock fragments but apparently no quartz grains. Although the sherds do not join they are so similar that it is very likely that they came from the same vessel.

##### *Trench 63 [41] (42)*

The sherd from Trench 63 was the base of a jar-shaped vessel in a black reduced fabric with prominent and abundant sandstone inclusions which are visible both at the surface and in cross-section. Abundant fine angular quartz grit can also be seen in cross-section.

#### ***Briquetage***

Ten small fragments of briquetage were identified in the pottery assemblage. This distinctive type of pottery which was used to transport salt, has been found in earlier seasons of excavation on the site and a report on the sherds identified from the 199, 2000 and 2001 seasons has been published as part of the review of ceramics from the site (Morris in Cumberpatch *et al.* 2005). The characteristics of the sherds from the 2007 excavation closely resembled those from earlier seasons and the broad date range attributed to this material (from the early Iron Age to the early Roman period) is also appropriate for the material from the 2007 excavations.

#### ***Other material***

A small number of other items were included with the prehistoric pottery. These included a rounded pebble from Trench 52, context 2 and a fragment of burnt material from the same context.

#### **Discussion**

The later prehistoric pottery assemblage from the 2007 excavations confirms an earlier observation that one of the characteristics of the pre-Roman pottery from Mellor is its diversity (Cumberpatch 2007). Apart from the briquetage, only one of the three sherds resembled an example from an earlier season and this, together with the evidence from the pottery recovered during the 2006 season (Cumberpatch 2007) which was also diverse in character suggests that this diversity was not a matter of chance but rather a distinctive characteristic of pottery procurement and use at Mellor. Clearly a programme of petrological

and chemical analysis would be of value in determining the sources of the pottery found on the site but given that the project has several years to run and with the expectation that further work will produce more prehistoric pottery it would be premature to embark on a programme of analysis at the present time. Such a project should await the completion of the excavations on the site and a full review of the pottery including a revision of the preliminary type series published in 2005 (Cumberpatch 2005).

The question of the date of the pottery is a difficult one. The small size of the assemblage, the lack of comparative material from the immediate area and the general difficulty of dating later prehistoric pottery from Yorkshire and Derbyshire as a whole combine to make even the ascription of a general date a problem for which there is no ready solution. In addition it is unclear from the information available at the time of writing, the extent to which issues of residuality and even intrusion may have compromised the contexts from which the pottery was recovered. While a date in the pre-Roman Iron Age is probable, there is clear evidence from elsewhere that the local traditions of pottery manufacture continued into the Roman period (see Cumberpatch 2006 for a discussion of a particular case with references) with all that this implies for the dating of individual sherds from a site such as Mellor. At the present time the dating of individual pottery sherds is largely dependent on the dating of the context from which it was recovered by other means, rather than the pottery being a useful medium for dating in its own right.

Trench	Cut	Context	SFN	Type	No	Wt	ENV	Part	Form	Decoration	Date range	Notes
51	203	204		Pottery	1	9	1	Rim	Hollow ware	U/Dec	Late prehistoric	Oxidised globular vessel with small everted rim; coarse quartz and rock temper
52		2	6	Briquetage	1	2	1	Fragment	Salt container	N/A	Late PreH/Early Roman	Coarse, crumbly oxidised fabric with large angular rock fragments
52	{166} [168]	(167) (169)		Briquetage	7	8	7	Fragments	Salt container	N/A	Late PreH/Early Roman	Coarse, crumbly oxidised fabric with large angular rock fragments
52		2		Briquetage	2	3	2	Fragments	Salt container	N/A	Late PreH/Early Roman	Coarse, crumbly oxidised fabric with large angular rock fragments
52		2		Stone	1	5	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Stone
52		2		Burnt material	1	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Unidentified material
52	199	200		Pottery	2	23	2	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	Late prehistoric	Thick walled coarse tempered vessel
52	193	190	5	CBM	1	41	1	Fragment	U/ID	U/Dec	Undated	Large rounded abraded lump of fired clay
63	41	42		Pottery	1	26	1	Base	Hollow ware	U/Dec	Late prehistoric	Coarse rock tempered, black reduced base

**Table 1.** Pottery, briquetage and other items recovered from excavations at Mellor in 2007

## **Bibliography:**

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Cumberpatch, C.G. 2006 **Hand-made pottery of later prehistoric and Roman date from excavations on the A165 Reighton by-pass, North Yorkshire** Unpublished archive report for Archaeological Services WYAS

Cumberpatch, C.G. 2007 **Pottery from excavations at the Mellor hillfort 2006 (OVM06)** Unpublished archive report for the Mellor Archaeological Trust

### 3.2 The Romano-British pottery from excavations at Mellor 2007

R.S. Leary

An archive catalogue was compiled for all the pottery according to the standard laid down by the Study Group for Romano-British Pottery (Darling 2004). Pottery was recorded detailing specific fabrics and forms, decorative treatment, condition, cross-joins/same vessel and was quantified by sherd count, weight and rim percentage values, giving estimated vessel equivalents. All the pottery from the site was catalogued in the archive and the stratified pottery was examined in order to date the features. Key groups are illustrated and catalogued below and unillustrated material is summarised. National fabric collection codes (Tomber and Dore 1998) are included where possible.

#### **Fabric descriptions:**

Colour: narrative description only

Hardness: after Peacock 1977  
soft - can be scratched by finger nail  
hard - can be scratched with penknife blade  
very hard - cannot be scratched

Feel: tactile qualities  
smooth - no irregularities  
rough - irregularities can be felt  
sandy - grains can be felt across the surface  
leathery - smoothed surface like polished leather  
soapy - smooth feel like soap

Fracture: visual texture of fresh break, after Orton 1980.  
smooth - flat or slightly curved with no visible irregularities  
irregular - medium, fairly widely spaced irregularities  
finely irregular - small, fairly closely spaced irregularities  
laminar - stepped effect  
hackly - large and generally angular irregularities

#### **Inclusions:**

Type: after Peacock 1977

Frequency: indicated on a 4-point scale - abundant, moderate, sparse and rare where abundant is a break packed with an inclusion and rare is a break with only one or two of an inclusion.

Sorting: after Orton 1980

Shape: angular - convex shape, sharp corners  
subangular - convex shape, rounded corners  
rounded - convex shape no corners  
platey - flat



Size: subvisible - only just visible at x30 and too small to measure  
fine - 0.1-0.25mm  
medium - 0.25-0.5  
coarse - 0.5-1mm  
very coarse - over 1mm

### **The Fabrics:**

#### *BB: Black-burnished ware*

BB1 black or dark grey. Hard with smooth feel and granular fracture. Abundant, well-sorted, medium-sized, subangular quartz. Black burnished ware category 1 (Tomber and Dore 1997 BB1 DOR).

#### *C: shell-tempered ware*

CTA4 shell-tempered ware possibly from kilns at Harrold, Bedfordshire or Bourne, south Lincolnshire. Tomber and Dore 1998 HAR SH or BOG SH.

#### *F: fine wares*

NV NV Nene Valley colour coated ware Tomber and Dore 1990 LNV CC. NV1 = white/cream paste, NV2= orange/brown paste

#### *M: mortaria*

MH Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium. Fine-textured, cream fabric, varying from softish to very hard, sometimes with pink core; self-coloured or with a self-coloured slip. Inclusions usually moderate, smallish, transparent and translucent white and pinkish quartz with sparse opaque orange-brown and rarely blackish fragments; rarely white clay pellets (or re-fired pottery). The range in fabric is, in fact, quite wide, from that with virtually no inclusions to fabrics with a fair quantity and fabrics with hard, ill-sorted black inclusions. The trituration grit after AD130-140 consisted of hard red-brown and/or hard blackish material (probably re-fired pottery fragments), with only very rare quartz fragments (MH2). Earlier mortaria (MH1) usually have a mixed trituration grit in which quartz and sandstone are normal components and some early second-century mortaria probably have entirely quartz trituration grit. Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria of AD130/140 onwards are usually easy to recognize, but Mancetter-Hartshill fabrics of AD100-130 are more variable. It is at this period when there can be difficulty in distinguishing Mancetter-Hartshill, Little Chester and Wroxeter fabrics. Tomber and Dore 1998 MAH WH

#### *R: reduced coarse wares*

GRA1 Dark grey/black. Very fine, hard, smooth with smooth fracture. Sparse, fine subrounded quartz.

GRA12 Grey with white core. Hard, smooth feel and fracture. Subvisible quartz. Rare medium subangular quartz and black/dark grey inclusions. Very similar to Middlewich King St.

GRA6 but finer (Leary 2008).

GRB1 Hard, smooth grey ware with irregular fracture. Moderate, medium, subrounded quartz, sparse, medium, rounded, brown inclusions

*O: oxidised wares*

OAA2 Medium orange to pale orange/buff. Soft with powdery/sandy feel and irregular fracture. Common, well-sorted, fine quartz and sparse ill-sorted fine to medium, rounded red brown inclusions. As fabric OAA2 at Manchester and Middlewich (Leary 2007 and 2008)

OAB4 As OBB3 but orange

OAB5 Soft, orange/pink ware with smooth feel and irregular fracture. Moderate, well-sorted rounded quartz. c.0.5mm, rare fine white inclusions

OAC1 Pale orange. Hard, rough with irregular fracture. Moderate, coarse, ill-sorted, subangular quartz, often crystalline appearance; moderate, coarse, ill-sorted, rounded, black or brown inclusions, probably iron oxides. Pre-Derbyshire ware (Leary 2003, 74 OBC1)

OBB3 Buff with grey core, fairly soft and smooth with irregular fracture. Sparse, rounded quartz, 0.3-0.5mm, sparse, ill-sorted, coarse to fine rounded ferrous inclusions.

DBY Orange, yellowish cream, dark red or grey, very hard, with a hackly fracture, conchoidal in the hardest fired examples, with ill-sorted, common, quartz (0.3-0.6mm and a few 2mm), common black to red-brown, iron-rich grains (0.1-0.5mm) and common grey, iron-rich inclusions (0.3-0.2mm) and sparse red-brown clay pellets (2-4mm) and sparse feldspar (1mm). The author has also seen plentiful, soft cream-buff inclusions in some Derbyshire ware sherds, identified as clay pellets. Tomber and Dore 1998 DER CO.

*Q: white slipped wares*

FLB1 Orange, quite pale with white slip. Soft with smooth or sandy/powdery feel and slightly irregular fracture. Sparse well-sorted subangular quartz and rare rounded grey inclusions.

*W: white wares*

FLA2 White hard, smooth with irregular fracture. Common, well-sorted fine, subrounded quartz and sparse, ill-sorted medium to fine red/brown inclusions.

Ware	Fabric Code	Nos	Weight	EVES	Rel % Nos	Rel % Weight	Rel % EVES
<b>BB1 Total</b>		12	79	26	16.9	17.9	23.4
Fine grey	GRA1	3	37		4.2	8.4	
Fine grey	GRA12	7	20	9	9.9	4.5	8.1
<b>Fine grey Total</b>		10	57	9	14.1	12.9	8.1
<b>Medium grey Total</b>	GRB1	2	4		2.8	0.9	
Fine oxidised	OAA2	4	6		5.6	1.4	
<b>Fine oxidised Total</b>		4	6		5.6	1.4	
Cheshire Plains	OAB4	1	7		1.4	1.6	
Cheshire Plains	OAB5	4	34		5.6	7.7	
Cheshire Plains	OBB3	14	42	6	19.7	9.5	5.4
<b>Cheshire Plains Total</b>		19	83	6	26.8	18.8	5.4
<b>Derbyshire oxidised? Total</b>	OAB1/OAC1	1	1	1	1.4	0.2	0.9
<b>Pre-Derbyshire Total</b>	OAC1/DBY	1	16		1.4	3.6	
<b>DBY Total</b>	DBY	9	44	1	12.7	10.0	0.9
<b>Shell-g Total</b>	CTA2	3	31	26	4.2	7.0	23.4
<b>Nene Valley colour-coat</b>	NV2	2	57	14	2.8	12.9	12.6
<b>White ware Total</b>	FLA2	1	1		1.4	0.2	
<b>White-slipped Total</b>	FLB1	3	17	25	4.2	3.8	22.5
Mancetter-Hartshill	MH?	1	22		1.4	5.0	
Mancetter-Hartshill	MH1	1	11	3	1.4	2.5	2.7
Mancetter-Hartshill	MH2	2	13		2.8	2.9	
<b>Mancetter-Hartshill Total</b>		4	46	3	5.6	10.4	2.7
<b>Grand Total</b>		71	442	111	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1: Quantification of wares and fabrics and relative quantities

### *Vessel types*

Where identifiable the largest vessel group was jars (c60% of the estimated vessel equivalents). Two neckless jars with short everted rims in GRA12 and OAB/C1 were present. These date to the late first to early second century. Neither fabric compared well to fabrics at Manchester although GRA12 is similar but finer than the rare fabric GRA6 (Leary 2007). The OAB/C1 fabric is very similar to medium sandy oxidised wares from Derby Racecourse kilns and this form is made there raising the possibility of exchange with Derby at this early period. The nearly white-cored grey ware GRA12 is also similar to a fine, light cored ware from there and could come from there. However this is not certain. At least three BB1 jars were present, two dating to the second century (Gillam 1976 no 1, early second century, Gillam 1976 nos 2 or 3, mid- to late second century) and one body sherd appeared to have lattice decoration intersecting nearly at right angles – a feature of the third century. Fragments of other BB1 jars with lattice burnish may belong with these or other jars. One everted GRB1 rim sherd was present and is likely to be from a jar but was so badly abraded that detailed identification was not possible. Several Derbyshire ware and pre-Derbyshire ware sherds were present and these are all likely to be from jars. One rim fragment came from a Derbyshire ware cupped-rim jar. These come from the Derbyshire ware industry based around Belper. Three fragments from the rim of a necked jar with rolled over bead rim, slightly undercut in a shell-tempered fabric compares with jars from the Bourne and Greatham kilns in south Lincolnshire or possibly the Bedfordshire kiln group at Harrold. Other bodysherds, including the oxidised wares, could be from jars but abrasion and breakage had rendered them indeterminate.

Three bowl/dish fragments were identified – two from BB1 bowls or dishes, one of which had acute lattice decoration and one from a bead and flange bowl in Nene Valley colour-coated ware. Three misfired white-slipped sherds, FLB1, came from a flagon. It is likely that these belonged to the same vessel, a flagon with a cupped rim, probably ring-necked. The outer surfaces had fired to a narrow grey margin with traces of white slip on top. The oxidised ware sherds were nearly all undiagnostic in form.

### *The pottery groups*

Most of the pottery came from the upper fill, 204, of the large enclosure ditch as in previous years of excavation. This group was of a similar date range to previously excavated material from this context. The earliest vessel was a fine grey ware jar (GRA12) of Flavian-Trajanic type. The fabric of this is unlike the dominant fine grey ware at Manchester although it shares some characteristics, particularly the white core, with one fabric there, GRA6 (Leary 2007). It is similar to some of the fine grey wares made at Derby Racecourse kilns and certainly this form was made there. It contrasts with the generally sandy texture of the local clays. On the other hand, a local source cannot be totally ruled out since in the Flavian-Trajanic period potters working for the military often prepared their clays to a high standard and achieved fine results. Potters such as those working at Holt were able to produce such a fine vessel. A small rim sherd in a quartz-tempered oxidised ware came from a similar neckless jar with short everted rim. This fabric is again unlike the local Manchester wares and the more angular quartz compares better with the oxidised wares from the Derby kilns. The other fine grey ware sherd from this group is likely to be of similar date but would fit happily into the range of fine grey wares found at Manchester. A small amount of medium sandy grey ware sherds were present, including part of an everted-rim jar but most of the reduced wares were of BB1 ware from Dorset. These were used to make cooking pots and bowls/dishes. The jars included vessels dated typologically to the Hadrianic period and the mid to late second century. Base and bodysherds from bowls and/or dishes were also present in this ware and one bore traces of acute lattice burnish suggesting a date range in the second century. Six Derbyshire ware sherds and one pre-Derbyshire ware sherd was identified. The Derbyshire ware included part of a cupped-rim jar, one of two characteristic jar forms made in this ware. Derbyshire ware dates from the early Antonine period, cAD140, to the mid-fourth century. It is not common in this area but has been found in surprising quantities at Mellor and may relate to pre-Roman links between Derbyshire and the

Mellor settlement (Leary 2005, 48). Three sherds in a dark grey/black shell-gritted ware came from a necked jar with undercut, bead rim. Shell-gritted wares have been recovered previously at Mellor. These included Dales ware and also a South Midlands shelly ware jar probably from the kilns at Harrold Bedfordshire. This jar is unlike most of the Harrold types, although a similar vessel can be found amongst the illustrated sherds (Brown 1994, no. 178 in a late third century phase). Jars with rims very similar to this were made in the south Lincolnshire kilns at Bourne and Greetham. At Empingham jars from this source are dated by Cooper to the late second century (2000, 76-80), nos 48-51) A very similar vessel was present at Ockbrook, Derbyshire where a date in the late second to third century is suggested (Leary 2001, 120 no 48). Sherds in a white-slipped fabric probably all came from one vessel, a rebated-rim flagon. The rim sherds came from the subsoil but are almost certainly the same vessel as a lower neck/shoulder fragment from this group. Although the neck is missing, this is likely to be a developed ring-necked flagon dating from the Hadrianic period to the early third century (as Gillam 1970 type 7). Several oxidised ware sherd were present and these belong to the Cheshire Plain group. The mortaria sherds were all Mancetter-Hartshill types and included examples with the re-fired clay trituration grits typical of this industry after cAD140. The identifiable pieces were from flanged mortaria but both were incomplete rim forms. One is likely to come from a vessel with a rising bead rim and down sloping flange of the late second or early third century whereas the other could only be given a broad second century date. None were diagnostic in terms of date or vessel type. The date range of this group, therefore, runs from the late first/early second century to the third century.



Trench	No in circle	No in square	Fabric Code	Sherd nos	Sherd weight	Rim %
51	subsoil		DBY	1	22	
51	subsoil		OBB3	6	13	
	<b>subsoil Total</b>			7	35	
51	02		FLB1	2	10	25
	<b>02 Total</b>			2	10	25
51	204	203	BB1	11	75	26
51	204	203	CTA2	3	31	26
51	204	203	DBY	6	20	1
51	204	203	FLB1	1	7	
51	204	203	GRA12	7	20	9
51	204	203	GRB1	2	4	
51	204	203	MH?	1	22	
51	204	203	MH1	1	11	3
51	204	203	MH2	2	13	
51	204	203	OAB1/OAC1	1	1	1
51	204	203	OAB5	4	34	
51	204	203	OAC1/DBY	1	16	
51	204	203	OBB3	8	29	6
	<b>204 Total</b>			48	283	72
51	272	271	NV2	2	57	14
	<b>272 Total</b>			2	57	14
51	266	265	DBY	2	2	
	<b>266 Total</b>			2	2	0
52	02		OAB4	1	7	
	<b>02 Total</b>			1	7	0
53	094	092	BB1	1	4	
	<b>094 Total</b>			1	4	0
61			GRA1	2	9	
61			OAA2	4	6	
61	204	203	FLA2	1	1	
61	204	203	GRA1	1	28	
	<b>204 Total</b>			2	29	
	<b>Grand Total</b>			71	442	111

Table 2: Quantification of pottery from contexts

Six sherds came from trench 61 and these comprised two GRA1 sherds and four OAA2 sherds. Both these fabrics are more likely to belong to the late first to early second century and the OAA2 sherds had faint traces of rouletting suggesting they came from one of the rouletted beakers/small jars of that period.

Ten sherds from trench 51 subsoil comprised one Derbyshire ware base, the FLB1 flagon rim mentioned above, an OAB4 sherd and six OBB3 bodysherds.

Context 271 contained two sherds from a Nene Valley colour-coated bead and flange bowl. Such bowls belong to the late third or fourth century.

Posthole 094 in trench 53 contained a sherd from a BB1 jar with lattice decoration. The lattice decoration visible was almost right angled suggesting a date in the first half of the third century. However only a small amount of the lattice was present and it is possible that the angle is misleading and this vessel belongs to the second century (AD120-200).

#### *Functional aspects of the assemblage*

The assemblage had a high proportion of jars but included a flagon, a bowl and samian ware suggesting romanised dining habits were being practised. The jars were all medium-necked jars and the narrow-mouthed and wide-mouthed jars present in past years were not represented. Several of the BB1 jars had burnt accretions and were scorched, no doubt resulting from their use on a fire on in an oven. Some BB1 bowls and dishes were represented by body and basal sherds although no rims were present. No evidence of repair was noted.

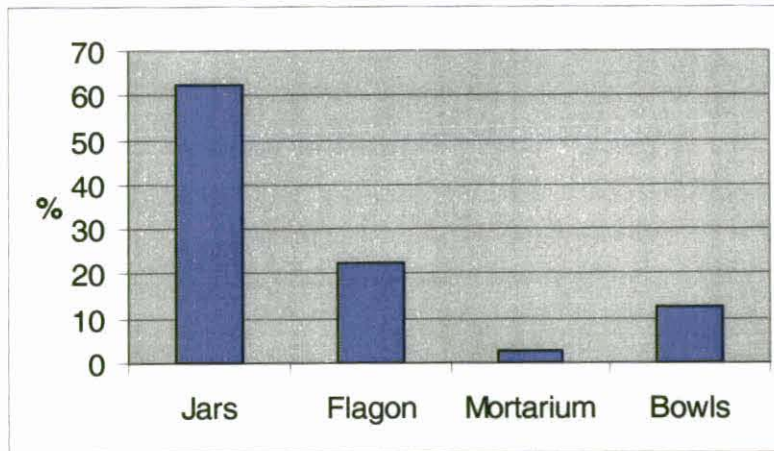


Figure 1: Relative quantities of coarse ware vessel types using estimated vessel equivalents

#### *Trade and exchange*

Compared with the ceramics from previous years (Figure 2, Leary 2005), this assemblage had a greater proportion of BB1, oxidised wares and Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria but no Severn Valley ware or Dales ware. This is likely to reflect difference in the date range of the pottery deposited in this part of the site since the groups from previous years included later material such as the late coarse grey and shelly wares, Dales ware and Severn Valley wares. Wares such as the white-slipped flagon wares as well as the early grey and oxidised jars from Derby Racecourse have not been previously identified, although the white-slipped sherds may have been lost amongst the oxidised ware due to the complete loss of their slips. Only one scrap of colour-coated ware has previously been identified so the late Nene Valley bowl extends our evidence for trade with that industry.

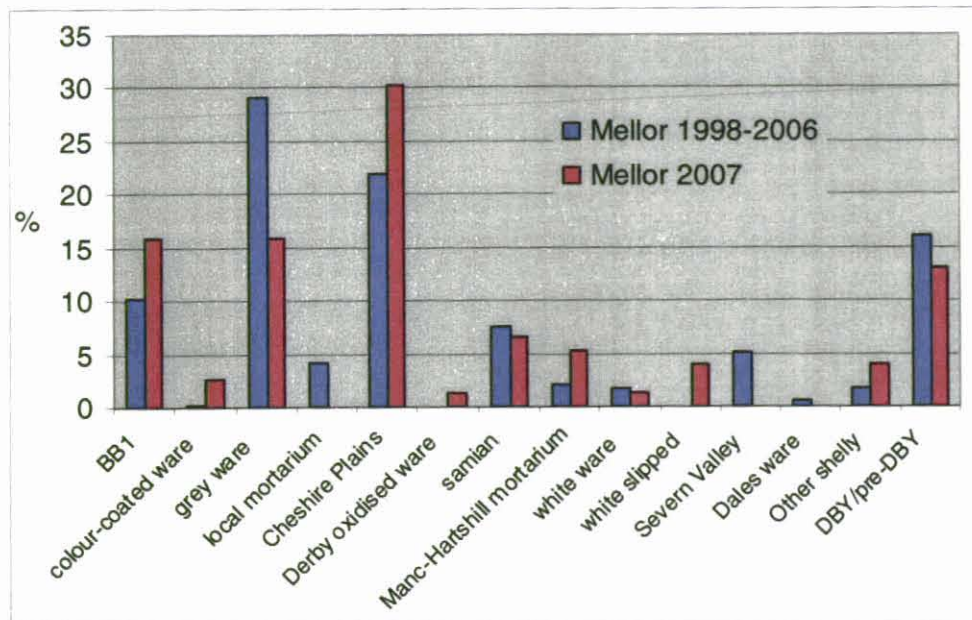


Figure 2: Relative quantities of wares from excavations in 2007 and previous years (using sherd count)

### *Recommendations*

The assemblage should be integrated with the groups from previous years when a report on the entire site is produced. Nine sherds are suitable for illustration. These are indicated by an asterisk in the catalogue.

e	140+										
	140+										
	RB										
d h i	E2-E3	7	25							Traces of white slip. Outer surface fired distinct grey layer, 1mm thick all over. Unusual	248?
	120+										
	120+							SL BR			
r, l	E2	12	16								
nr	120-200			BNH	ALT	OSB	BNH		ISB	BR	
r, 2 d	E-M2	16	10	BNH		ISR				BM OSR	
	120-200			BNH	ALT	OSB				BM OSB	
nr	120+			BNH		AO O					
	120+			BNH		AO O					



	140+								
ir rt 1	L1-E2	14	1						angular/subangul ar quartz suggests this is a Derby Racecourse m3dium oxidised ware
	RB								
	RB								
e	RB								
	RB								
	2+								
	RB	14	6						
	RB								
	RB								
	140+								
d /l	L3-4	24	14						
	RB								
	First half 3 <sup>rd</sup> ? or 2nd			BNH	RAL	OSB			
	L1-e2 optimu m								



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### **3.3 The samian ware from excavations at the Old Vicarage, Mellor, 2007**

Felicity C. Wild

The 2007 excavations produced four small sherds of samian ware weighing 10.5g in all. None were certainly identifiable by form.

Three came from the top fill [203] (204) of the ditch in Trench 51. The first came from the base of a cup, possibly form 27. The fabric is burnt, but may be South Gaulish. If so, it is likely to be late first century in date. The other two were scraps of uncertain form: one, weighing 0.5g, may also be South Gaulish and late first century, the other was Central Gaulish and of second century date.

The fourth scrap, badly degraded and with almost all the surface missing, came from the subsoil in Trench 52. The form and fabric are uncertain, but this, too, could possibly be South Gaulish and late first century AD.

### 3.4 Medieval and later pottery from excavations on the Mellor Hillfort, 2007

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD. Freelance Archaeologist

#### Introduction

The medieval pottery assemblage from excavations on the Mellor hillfort carried out in 2007 was examined by the author on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The details of the assemblage are summarised in Table 1 and expanded in the discussion below.

#### Discussion

The earliest pottery in the medieval and later pottery assemblage were the sherds of *Stamford ware* from context 2, the *Buff Gritty ware* from Trench 51, context 2 and the *Gritty ware* from Trench 55 context 1. In both latter cases the sherds resembled examples from West Yorkshire and are thought to be contemporary with the Hiliam type wares which have been identified from elsewhere on the site (Cumberpatch 2006). The presence of these sherds indicates activity on the site in the post-Conquest period, between the later 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The *Stamford wares* are of particular interest in view of the fact that there is, as yet, no evidence for the manufacture of Stamford wares outside the towns of Stamford in Lincolnshire (Kilmurry 1908) and Pontefract in West Yorkshire (Roberts and Cumberpatch in press). The three sherds from Mellor consist of the rim of a dish or bowl, part of a strap handle from a jug or pitcher and a small body sherd.

The rim sherd was glazed internally and externally and had been subject to a high degree of secondary heating, leaving the glaze crazed and discoloured and the fabric a grey colour, varying within the sherd from light to dark grey. This makes direct comparison with examples from elsewhere difficult, given the very fine nature of the Stamford ware fabrics. The vessel form was also less than immediately apparent but it appeared to be closest to Kilmurry's Forms 10 and 15 (1980: 141, Fig. 58; 24-26, Fig. 61 15-7, 9). The date range of Form 15 is unknown but Kilmurry suggests that drinking cups of form 10 were in production from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, predating 1250 (Kilmurry 1980: 141).

The handle and body sherd, also from context 2, were not burnt and had a yellowish buff fabric, quite distinct from the white to pale grey fabrics typical of the Stamford products. Whether this suggests that the sherds originated from Pontefract is unclear; the assemblage from the site has yet to be the subject of a comprehensive report and it was not possible to compare the examples from Mellor with anything more than a haphazard sample of three sherds from two contexts. It is to be hoped that further work on the Pontefract assemblage will result in a comprehensive description of the range of fabrics from the site and will allow comparison with material from sites such as Mellor.

The fabric has a yellowish buff colour and at a magnification of X10 contains sparse, non-crystalline rounded red (iron-rich) grit up to 1mm long and slightly commoner rounded vesicles. On the surface there were small patches of clear glaze and patches of a thin buff-coloured slip-like coating. A definite date cannot be ascribed to these sherds but like the glazed sherd they should probably be attributed to the period between the 10<sup>th</sup> and mid 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Two sherds were identified as being of medieval date but could not be ascribed to any closer period. In one case (Trench 56, context 1) this was because the sherds had been very severely burnt, to the extent that they were not attributable to a specific type. In the other case (Trench 51, context 2) the sherd, while clearly of medieval date, was insufficiently distinctive for it to be attributed to a specific ware type or for a closer date than 'medieval' to be ascribed to it.

Identifiable later medieval pottery was not represented amongst the finds from the 2007 season (as was also the case with the material from the 2006 season) although the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century date attributed to the *Cistercian ware* means that this type of pottery spans the end of the medieval and the start of the post-medieval period, if these periods are considered in conventional terms. Only two sherds of Cistercian ware were identified, both from Trench 51, context 2, but this is in addition to the sherds from earlier seasons and suggests activity on the site at the end of the medieval period and in the immediate post-medieval period.

Broadly contemporary with the Cistercian wares were the sherds of *Midlands Purple type wares* from Trench 59, context 2, subsoil and Trench 60, context 404. As with the Cistercian ware, Midlands Purple ware has been identified on the site in earlier seasons and the term can be taken to encompass the Purple Glazed wares discussed in relation to the 2006 season (Cumberpatch 2007). The two sherds differed slightly and on these grounds have been ascribed slightly different date ranges. The Midlands Purple ware group is a diverse one and the name covers a variety of sub-types which span much of the post-medieval period although they do not seem to have survived into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Seventeenth century pottery appears to be represented only by a sherd of *Slipware* from Trench 59, context 2 subsoil. This was a fragment from a 17<sup>th</sup> century dish or bowl and although it was rather small and had suffered from a degree of abrasion, it was clearly not an 18<sup>th</sup> century Slipware.

Later 17<sup>th</sup> to early or mid 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery was represented by a sherd of *Brown Glazed Fineware* (Trench 51, context 2), similar to the sherds described in the previous report (Cumberpatch 2007). The example in question appeared to be part of the spout of a jug, a typical vessel for this ware type.

Eighteenth century wares were represented by a sherd of *Creamware* (very heavily burnt) from Trench 59 context 2 Subsoil and a small sherd of *Brown Salt Glazed Stoneware*, also heavily burnt, from Trench 51, context 203 (the fill of cut 204). Wares of a comparable date have been found in earlier seasons work on the site and appear to be connected with the presence of an inn on the site. A full report on these early modern wares might provide an interesting view of the adoption of formal tablewares and their use during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a period which saw a number of important changes in the range of wares available. Although much is known of the history of production and the technology employed, the details of the uptake of new types of pottery during the 18<sup>th</sup> century are far less clear, particularly outside the upper and middle class contexts which are the subject of the best historical documentation.

## **Conclusion**

As in previous years, the excavations on the site of the Mellor hillfort have produced a mixed assemblage of medieval and later pottery, an indication of the very long history of occupation on the hilltop. The range of material reflects this history and the variations from year to year in the quantities of pottery of different types presumably relates to the different areas under excavation and the varying location of settlement on the hilltop over time. While year-by-year interim reports on the pottery from the site are a useful means of maintaining an overview of the range of material from the site as a whole, it would be useful at some stage to consider the pottery as a single assemblage and to look at it from alternative perspectives, particularly in groups by period and phase in order to get a better overview of the character of activity on the site at different times in history. This would also allow the investigation of aspects of the assemblages which might otherwise be overlooked, including the possibility of cross-context joining sherds which might cast light on questions related to deposit formation and taphonomic aspects of the assemblages. To be most effective, such work should be scheduled for the latter stages of the project, but there may be advantages in looking at some groups in this way in order to explore the potential that it offers for accounts of the pottery that are not solely related to chronology and typology.

Trench	Context	Cut	Type	No	Wt	ENV	Part	Form	Decoration	Date range	Notes
51	2		Brown Glazed Fineware	1	2	1	Spout	Jug	Brown glaze int & ext	LC17th - C18th	Subsoil
51	2		Buff Gritty ware	1	6	1	BS	Hollow ware	Patchy pale green glaze ext, sparse pale yellow glaze int	LC11th - C13th	Pitted and abraded; quartz and occasional round red grit
51	2		Cistercian ware	1	4	1	Handle & BS	Cup/tyg	Dark glaze int & ext	c.1450 - c.1600	Very heavily burnt; blistered and discoloured
51	2		Cistercian ware	1	4	1	BS	Hollow ware	Dark glaze int & ext	c.1450 - c.1600	Very heavily burnt; blistered and discoloured
51	2		Oxidised Sandy ware	1	1	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	Medieval	Abundant fine rounded quartz in an oxidised body
51	203	204	Brown Salt Glazed Stoneware	1	2	1	BS	Hollow ware	Impressed line ext	C18th	Burnt
52	2 Subsoil		Fine Redware	1	1	1	Rim	?Hollow ware	U/Dec	Late Medieval/post-Medieval	Small, thin walled sherd, unidentified form and fabric
52	2 Subsoil		Stamford ware	1	8	1	Rim	Hollow ware	All-over green glaze int & ext	C10th - C13th	Cf. Kilmurry Forms 10 and 15; Secondarily burnt with crazed & discoloured green glaze
55	1		Gritty ware	1	2	1	BS	Hollow ware	Rilled profile with patchy green glaze ext	LC11th - C13th	Thin walled, quartz tempered oxidised fabric
56	1		Unidentified	2	1	1	BS	Hollow ware	?Glazed int & ext	Medieval	Very heavily burnt
59	2 Subsoil		Ceramic Building material	1	3	1	Fragment	?Brick	N/A	Undated	Rounded fragment, no surfaces surviving
59	2 Subsoil		Creamware	1	3	1	Rim	Plate	Wavy edged rim	c.1740 - c.1820	Burnt
59	2 Subsoil		Midlands Purple type ware	1	10	1	Base	Hollow ware	Spots of glaze int	C16th - C17th	Hard, dense quartz tempered fabric
59	2 Subsoil		Slipware	1	2	1	BS	Dish/bowl	White slip int	C17th	Heavily abraded
60	404		Midlands Purple type ware	2	11	2	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	C15th - C16th	Very hard, dense semi-vitrified purple to blue-grey fabric
59	2 Subsoil		Stamford ware	1	10	1	Strap handle	Jug/pitcher	Spots of clear glaze ext	C10th - C13th	See text for description of the fabric
59	2 Subsoil		Stamford ware	1	1	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	C10th - C13th	See text for description of the fabric
				19	71	18					

Table 2. Medieval and later pottery from the excavations at Mellor in 2007

**Bibliography:**

Cumberpatch, C.G. 2007 **Pottery from excavations at the Mellor hillfort 2006 (OVM06)**  
Unpublished archive report for the Mellor Archaeological Trust

Kilmurray, K., 1980 **The pottery industry of Stamford, Lincolnshire, c.850-1250** British  
Archaeological Reports, British Series 84

Roberts, I. and Cumberpatch, C.G. in press *A medieval Stamford ware pottery kiln in Pontefract*  
**Medieval Archaeology**

# Appendix 4: Radiocarbon Dating Results

Beta Analytic Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory

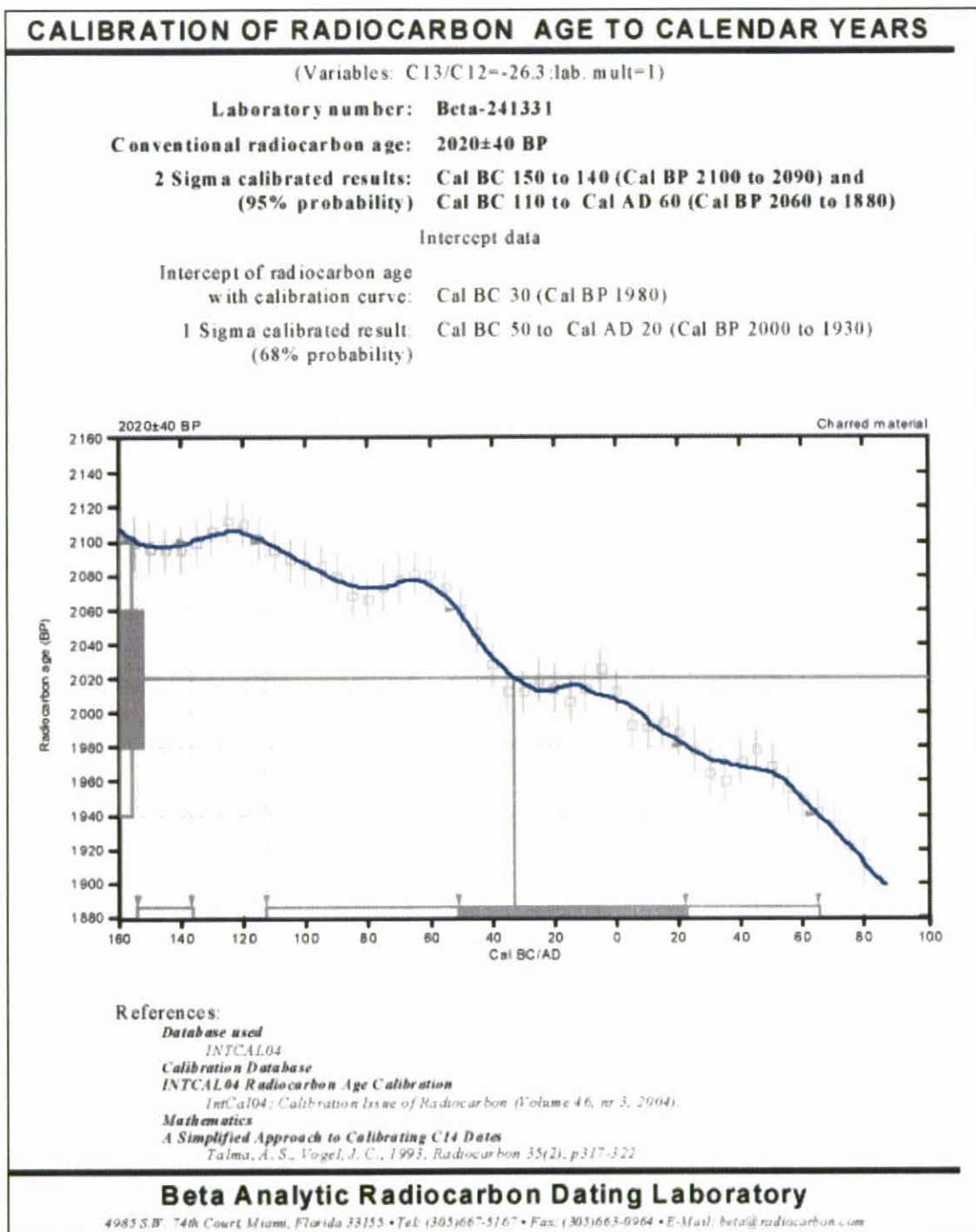


Table 1: Results from Palisade [320] within Trench 51.

## CALIBRATION OF RADIOCARBON AGE TO CALENDAR YEARS

(Variables: C13/C12=-23.5;lab. mult=1)

Laboratory number: **Beta-241332**

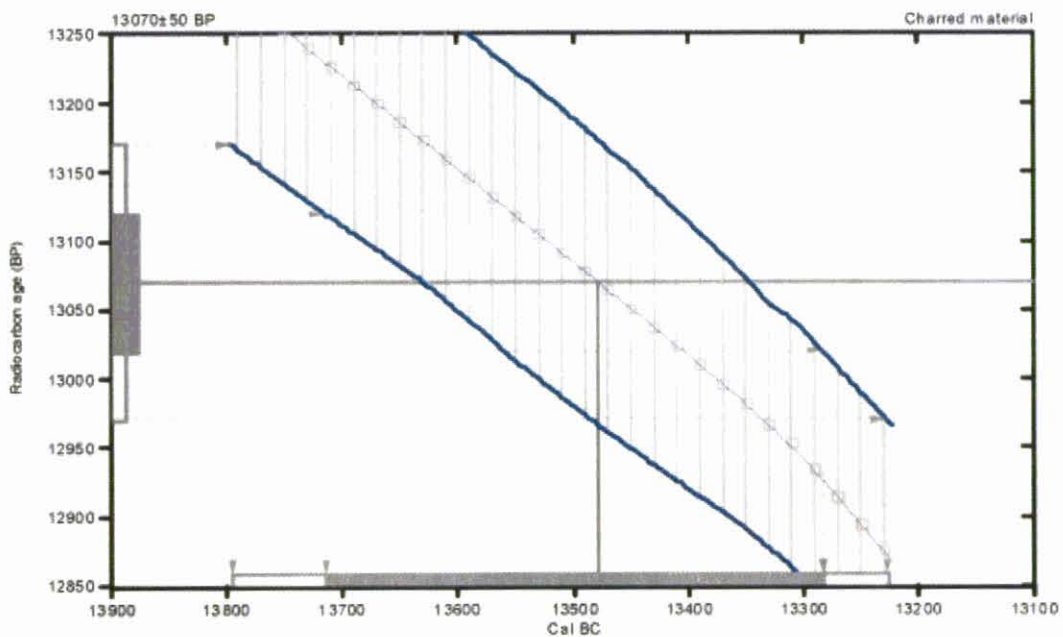
Conventional radiocarbon age: **13070±50 BP**

**2 Sigma calibrated result: Cal BC 13800 to 13230 (Cal BP 15750 to 15180)**  
(95% probability)

Intercept data

Intercept of radiocarbon age  
with calibration curve: Cal BC 13480 (Cal BP 15430)

**1 Sigma calibrated result: Cal BC 13720 to 13280 (Cal BP 15660 to 15230)**  
(68% probability)



### References:

*Database used*

INTCAL04

*Calibration Database*

INTCAL04 Radiocarbon Age Calibration

IntCal04: Calibration Issue of Radiocarbon (Volume 46, nr 3, 2004)

*Mathematics*

A Simplified Approach to Calibrating C14 Dates

Talma, A. S., Vogel, J. C., 1993, Radiocarbon 35(2), p317-322

## Beta Analytic Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory

4985 S.W. 74th Court, Miami, Florida 33155 • Tel: (305)667-5167 • Fax: (305)663-0964 • E-Mail: beta@radiocarbon.com

**Table 2:** Results from Palisade [309] within Trench 51. Unfortunately these proved erratic.



## CALIBRATION OF RADIOCARBON AGE TO CALENDAR YEARS

(Variables: C13/C12=-27.4;lab\_mult=1)

Laboratory number: **Beta-241333**

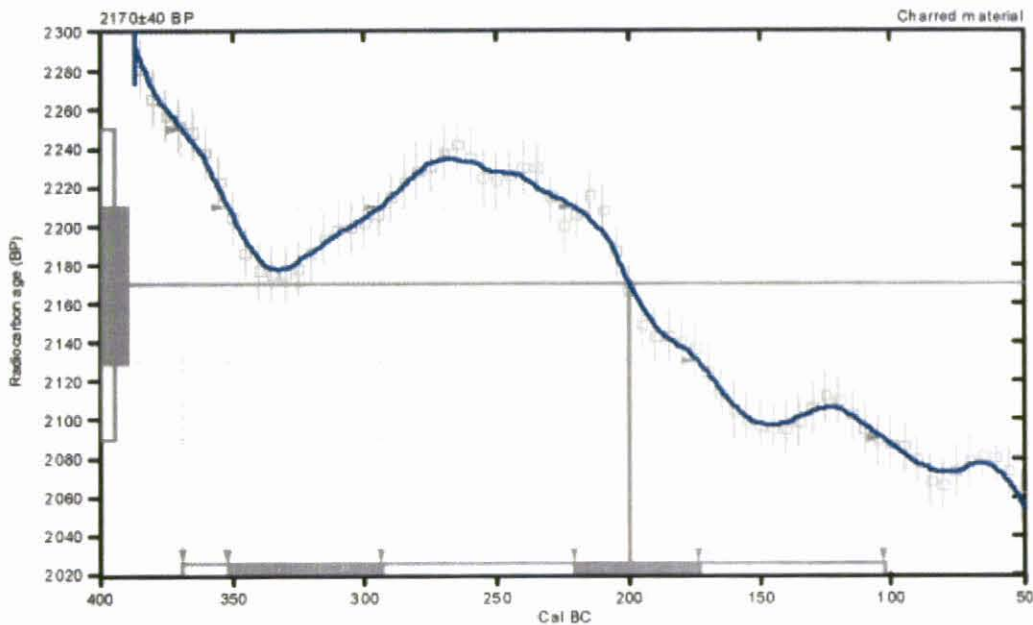
Conventional radiocarbon age: **2170±40 BP**

**2 Sigma calibrated result: Cal BC 370 to 100 (Cal BP 2320 to 2050)**  
(95% probability)

Intercept data

Intercept of radiocarbon age  
with calibration curve: Cal BC 200 (Cal BP 2150)

**1 Sigma calibrated results: Cal BC 350 to 290 (Cal BP 2300 to 2240) and**  
(68% probability) **Cal BC 220 to 170 (Cal BP 2170 to 2120)**



### References:

*Database used*

*INTCAL04*

*Calibration Database*

*INTCAL04 Radiocarbon Age Calibration*

*IntCal04: Calibration Issue of Radiocarbon (Volume 46, nr 3, 2004)*

*Mathematics*

*A Simplified Approach to Calibrating C14 Dates*

*Talma, A. S., Vogel, J. C., 1993, Radiocarbon 35(2), p317-322*

## Beta Analytic Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory

4985 S.W. 74th Court, Miami, Florida 33155 • Tel: (305)667-5167 • Fax: (305)663-0964 • E-Mail: beta@radiocarbon.com

**Table 3:** Results from possible roundhouse gully [360] within Trench 59.



# *Appendix 5: Environmental Report*

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**Mellor, Stockport, 2007 excavations**

**Plant macrofossil assessment and charcoal retrieval**

Report 1795

December 2007

**Archaeological Services Durham University**

on behalf of

University of Manchester Archaeological Unit

University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

## Contents

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3. Methods . . . . .	3
4. Results . . . . .	3
5. Discussion . . . . .	4
6. Recommendations . . . . .	4
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## **1. Summary**

### **1.1 The project**

This report presents the results of environmental assessment and charcoal retrieval from three samples, taken during the 2007 excavations of a prehistoric settlement at Mellor, Greater Manchester.

### **1.2 Results**

Charred seeds were absent in all of the contexts, but charcoal suitable for radiocarbon dating was retrieved. This included a fragment of hazel from context (310), and a fragment of alder / hazel from each of contexts (266) and (360).

### **1.3 Recommendations**

No further plant macrofossil analysis is recommended on the contexts, due to the absence of charred plant remains.

## **2. Project background**

### **2.1 Location and background**

A series of archaeological works have been carried out by Manchester University Archaeological Unit at Mellor since 1998, and have confirmed the presence of an Iron Age Hillfort. In August 2003, trench 22 was excavated over the line of the enclosure ditch which surrounds the hilltop. Plant macrofossil and pollen work was undertaken on samples from this trench by Archaeological Services Durham University (Archaeological Services 2003; 2004a; 2004b). Plant macrofossils were poorly preserved and only charred remains of hazelnuts occurred. Pollen analysis indicated that a mixture of arable and pastoral farming was being carried out.

### **2.2**

Trench 36 was excavated during August 2005 in a field to the north of the Old Vicarage at Mellor, near Stockport (NGR SJ 9818 8890). Two environmental samples were collected. Context (285) is the fill of a post hole from which, what is believed to be Bronze Age pottery was recovered. Context (343) is the fill of a pit thought by the excavators to represent Iron Age or Romano British activity. Plant macrofossil and pollen work was undertaken on these contexts by Archaeological Services Durham University (Archaeological Services 2005a; 2005b), and a sample from context (285) was sent for AMS radiocarbon dating (Archaeological Services 2006). Similarly, plant macrofossils were poorly preserved and only charred remains of hazelnuts occurred. Pollen analysis indicated local mixed deciduous woodland dominated by hazel with a nearby wet meadow and possible alder carr. The cereal-type pollen and associated weeds indicated a mixed farming economy. The AMS radiocarbon analysis for context (285) indicated a date range of 2150 to 1960 Cal BP.

### **2.3**

Following excavations in 2006, sample (71) context (47) was assessed for plant macrofossils and pollen (Archaeological Services 2007). The sample was taken from a waterlogged deposit within the enclosure ditch associated with trench 22. There was no preservation of charred plant macrofossil remains, and a very low diversity of pollen taxa was encountered.

### **2.4**

Three environmental samples were collected during the 2007 excavations. Sample (5) context (361) was taken from a potential Iron Age or Romano-British roundhouse gully. Sample (3) context (266) was from one of a pair of linear gullies which may have framed an entranceway into the hillfort. Sample (2) context (310) came from a Romano-British defensive palisade slot. This report presents the results of environmental assessment and charcoal retrieval from these samples.

### **2.5 Objective**

The objective was to assess the plant macrofossil evidence within the samples, and to retrieve charcoal for radiocarbon dating.

### **2.6 Dates**

The samples were submitted to Archaeological Services on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2007. Assessment and charcoal retrieval were undertaken between November – December 2007.

### **2.7 Personnel**

Sample processing was by Ms Janet Beveridge and Mr Bryan Atkinson. Plant macrofossil assessment, charcoal retrieval and report preparation were by Dr Charlotte O'Brien.

## **2.8 Archive**

The site code is OVM07. The flots, charcoal and small finds will be returned to University of Manchester Archaeological Unit with this report.

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1**

In each case the entire bulk sample was manually floated and sieved through a 500 µm mesh. The residues were scanned using a magnet for ferrous fragments. The flots were dried slowly and scanned at x 40 magnification for waterlogged and charred botanical remains. Identification of these was undertaken by comparison with modern reference material held in the Environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University. Plant taxonomic nomenclature follows Stace (1997).

### **3.2**

Charcoal fragments > 4 mm were collected from the residues and flots. The largest piece of charcoal from a short-lived tree species was separated from each context, cleaned of adhering roots and other organic material and labelled in preparation for radiocarbon dating. Species identification involved examining the transverse, radial and tangential sections at up to x 600 magnification using a Leica DMLM microscope. Identifications were assisted by the descriptions of Hather (2000), and modern reference material held in the Environmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1**

The samples contained small to moderate amounts of calcined bone, charcoal, coal and clinker. Metal dust occurred throughout, and small metal spheres resembling hammerscale were present in context (360). A piece of clay pipe was found in context (266) and a very small sherd of what appeared to be glazed pottery, occurred in context (310). Charred seeds were absent from the flots and, given the non-waterlogged nature of the samples, the few uncharred plant remains are likely to be recent introductions. The flot matrices were dominated by modern roots.

### **4.2**

Charcoal suitable for radiocarbon dating was present in all of the contexts. The contents of the flots and residues are listed in Table 1.

Feature	309	265	360
Sample	2	3	5
Context	310	266	361
Volume processed (ml)	30000	20000	30000
Volume of flot (ml)	900	500	400
Volume of flot assessed (ml)	900	500	400
Residue contents (relative abundance)			
Calcined bone	1	1	1
Charcoal	-	1	1
Clay pipe	-	1	-
Coal	1	1	-
Metal dust / hammerscale	1	1	2
Possible pottery sherd	1	-	-
Flot matrix (relative abundance)			
Buds	1	-	-
Calcined bone	-	-	1
Charcoal	2	1	3
Clinker	2	1	-
Coal	2	2	-
Modern roots	5	4	2
Wood	-	2	-
Waterlogged remains (relative abundance)			
(r) Polygonum sp (Knotgrass) nutlet	1	-	-
(t) Betula pendula (Silver birch) fruit	1	-	-
(t) Betula sp (Birch) bract	-	-	1
(t) Rubus fruticosus agg. (Bramble) fruitstone	-	1	-
Charcoal (weight of fragment selected for C14 date)			
Alnus glutinosa / Corylus avellana (Alder / hazel)	-	140 mg	98
Corylus avellana (Hazel)	63 mg	-	-

Table 1: Residue and flot contents from OVM07

[r-ruderal; t: woodland; x-wide niche]. Relative abundance is based on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1

The assessment provides little information about the site or features due to the absence of charred plant remains, but charcoal suitable for radiocarbon dating was retrieved from all three contexts. This includes a fragment of hazel from context (310), and a fragment of alder / hazel from each of contexts (266) and (360). Oak charcoal was noted in all of the contexts, but is not recommended for dating. The occurrence of clay pipe and possible glazed pottery suggests the intrusion of later material, which may also be the case for the charcoal.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1

No further plant macrofossil analysis is recommended due to the absence of charred plant remains. Charcoal suitable for radiocarbon dating is present in all of the contexts, but there is evidence for later intrusive material.

## 7. Sources

Archaeological Services 2003 Mellor, near Stockport, Greater Manchester; plant macrofossil assessment, unpublished report 1059, for University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2004a Mellor, near Stockport, Greater Manchester; pollen analysis, unpublished report 1090, for University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2004b Mellor, near Stockport, Greater Manchester; pollen assessment, unpublished report 1073, for University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2005a Old Vicarage Mellor, near Stockport, Greater Manchester; pollen analysis, unpublished report 1361, for University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2005b Old Vicarage Mellor, near Stockport, Greater Manchester; plant macrofossil and pollen assessment, unpublished report 1349, for University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2006 Old Vicarage Mellor, near Stockport, Greater Manchester; radiocarbon dating, unpublished report 1389, for University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, Archaeological Services Durham University

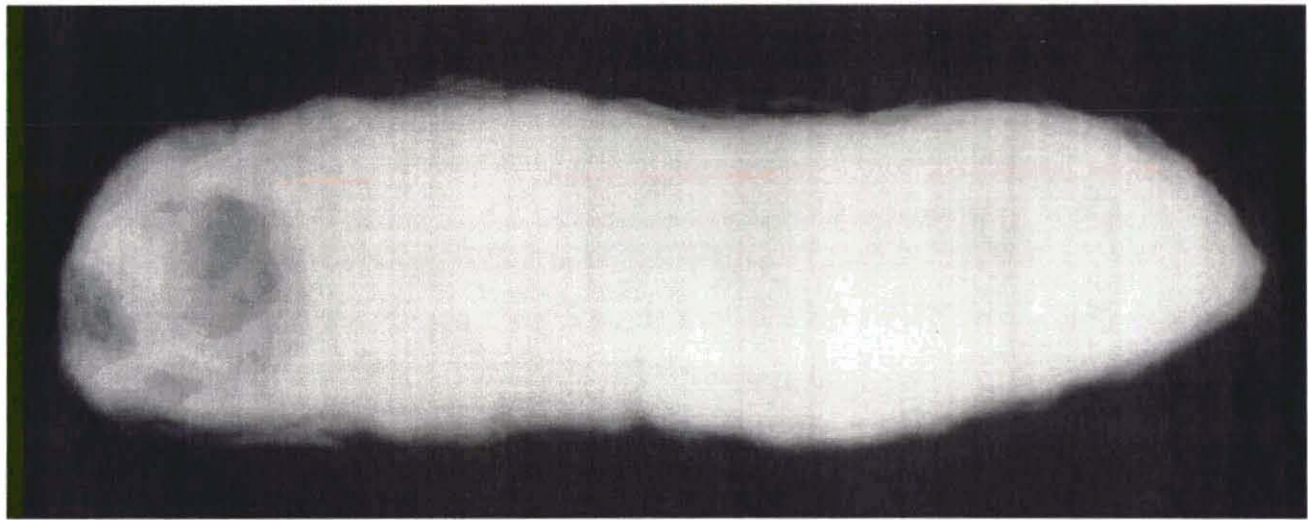
Archaeological Services 2007 Mellor, Greater Manchester; plant macrofossil and pollen assessment, unpublished report 1673, for University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, Archaeological Services Durham University

Hather, JG, 2000 *The identification of the Northern European Woods: a guide for archaeologists and conservators*, London

Stace, C, 1997 *New Flora of the British Isles*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge

## Appendix 6: Conservation Report

Bradford Conservation & Research			
<u>Conservation Record</u>			
Client	Peter Noble, University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, University of Manchester, Mansfield Cooper Building, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.		
Object	Metal working waste?		
Site	Mellor OVM 07		
Context no	T 51[203] (204)	Small find no	Δ
Main material	Copper-alloy		
Other materials			
Dimensions	c 27 mm long, c 8 mm diam.		
X-ray nos.	BCR 558	Photo neg.	
Description and Condition:			
<p>Sub-circular cross-section cylinder, tapering at both ends. It is very heavy for its size suggesting that the alloy had a high lead content. There is a hole towards one end that seems to have been a bubble. The exterior is very corroded, light green and powdery with only very small areas of surviving 'original' surface in a darker green, compact corrosion lightly covered with sediment. These areas of surface suggest that the object was rough and uneven. In the radiograph there are small dark patches in the object that may be due to very deep corrosion pits or, more likely, other bubbles within the metal. Together the evidence suggests that this objects was formed from a molten dribble and is metal working waste rather than a deliberately fabricated object. Dr Gerry McDonnell shares this view.</p>			
Work required: Radiograph, stabilise and reveal any surviving detail			Dates March 2008
Drawings/Pictures			



radiograph as captured

Conservation details:

Sediment removed from possible 'original surface' areas using a glass bristle brush. It was possible that the light green, powdery corrosion was 'bronze disease' so the object was immersed in a 5% solution of benzotriazole (BTA) in IMS, rinsed in IMS, dried and impregnated with a 5% solution of Paraloid B72 in acetone.

Dates

Technology Notes

Further recommendations:  
Handle this object with gloves.

Date in: March 2008

Date out April 2008

Conservator: Sonia O'Connor FIIC ACR



# Appendix 1: Figures

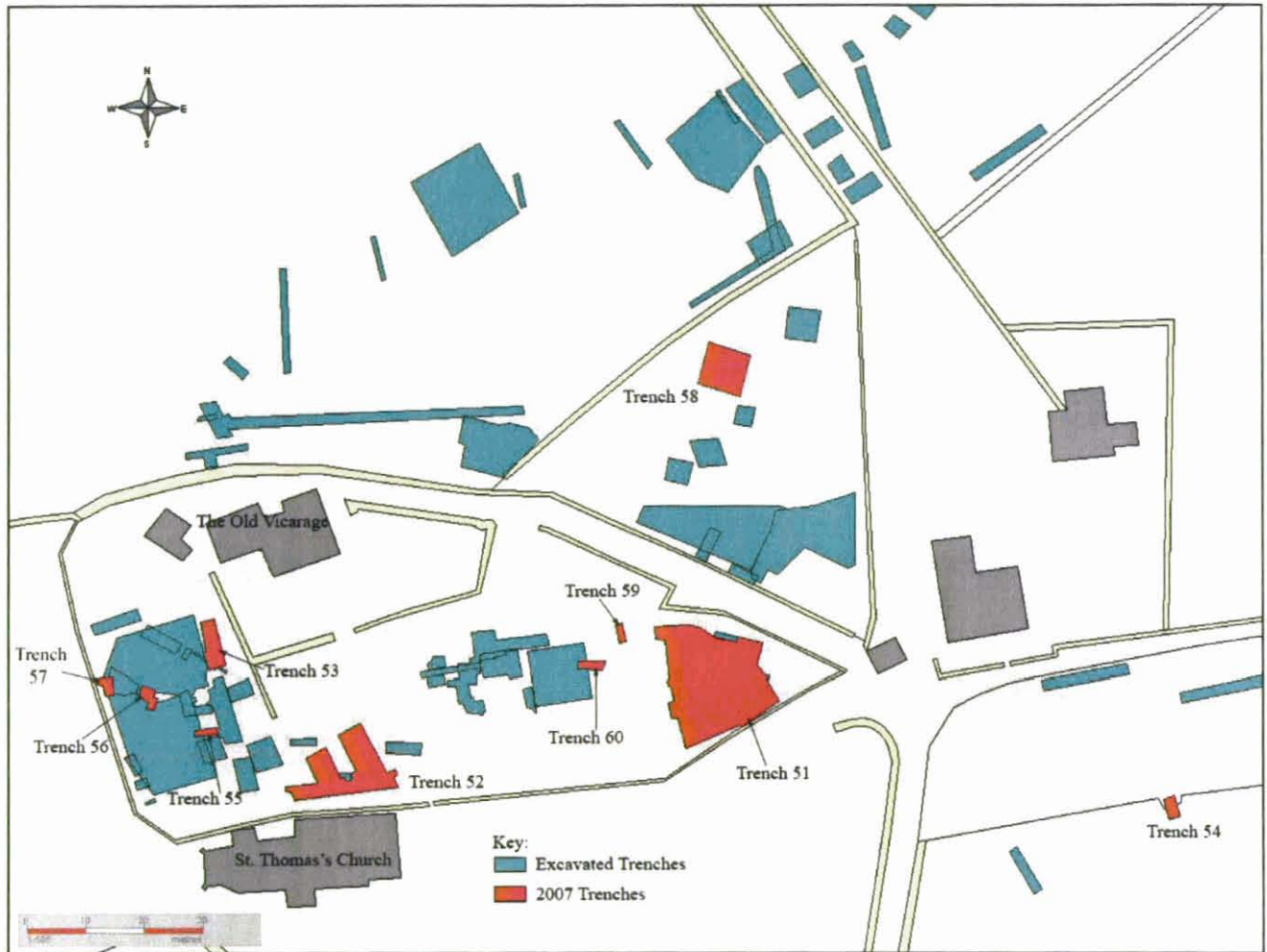
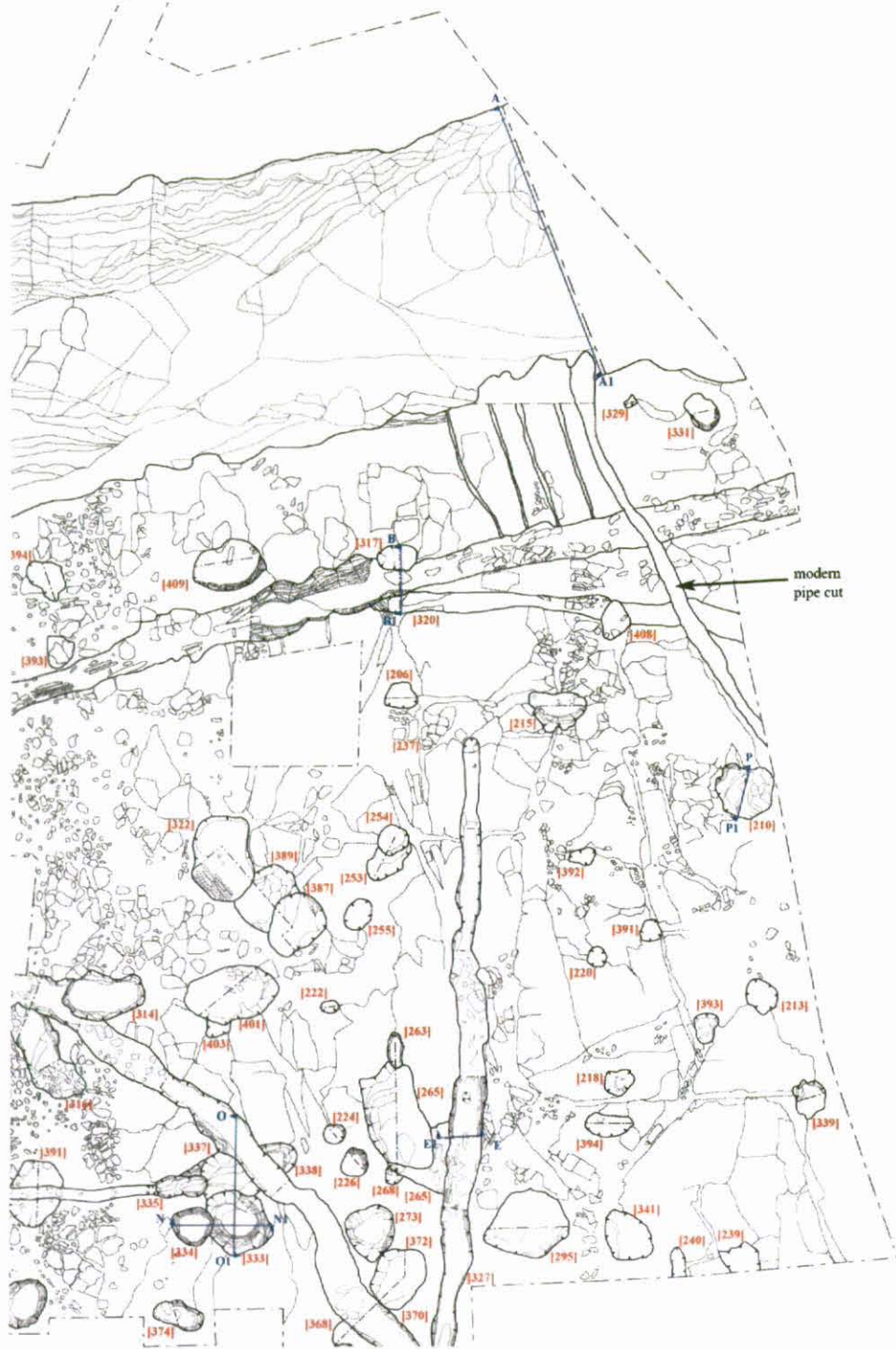
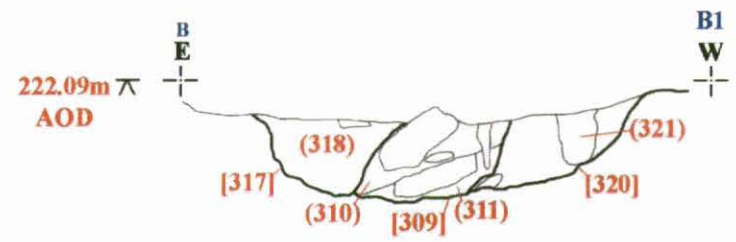
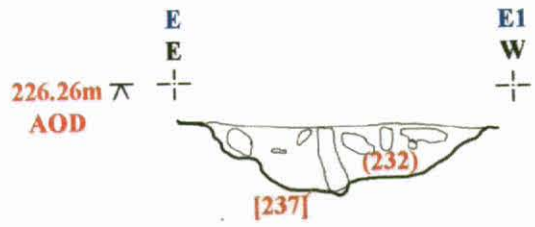
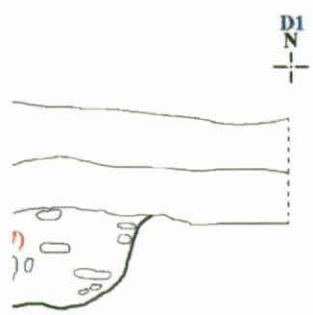
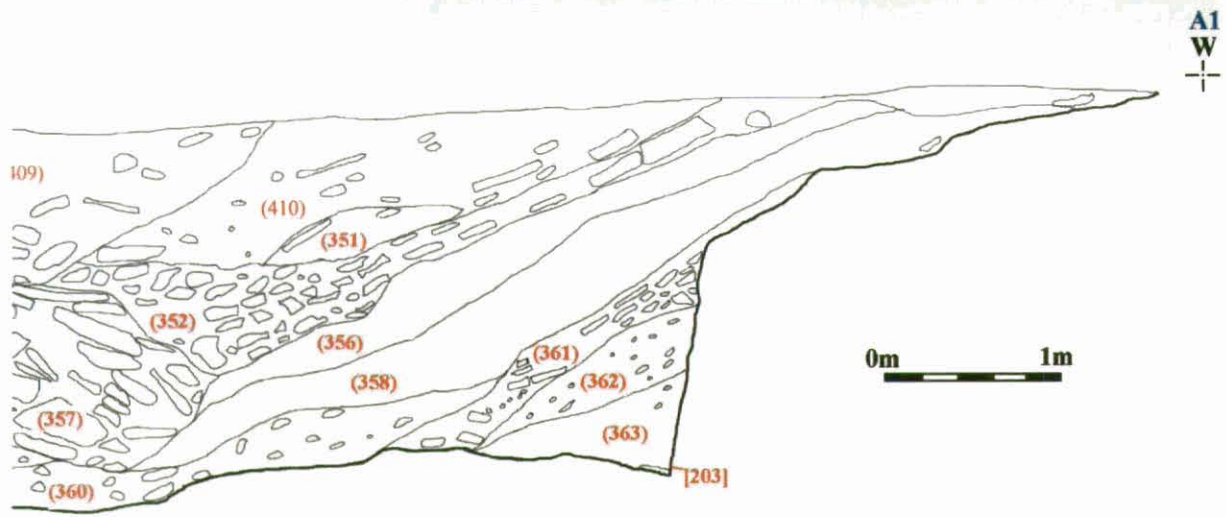


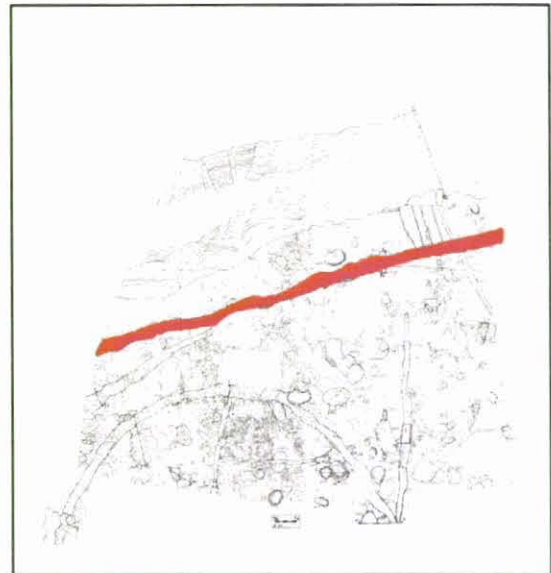
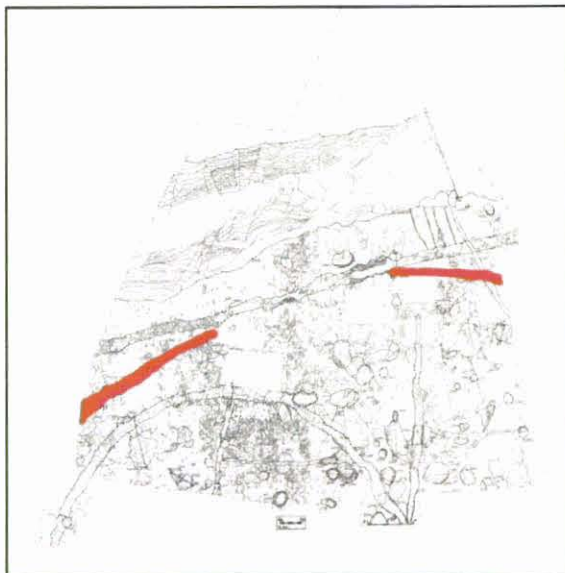
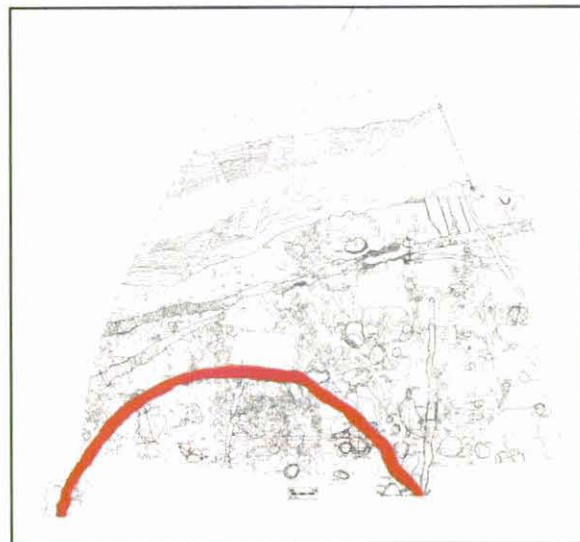
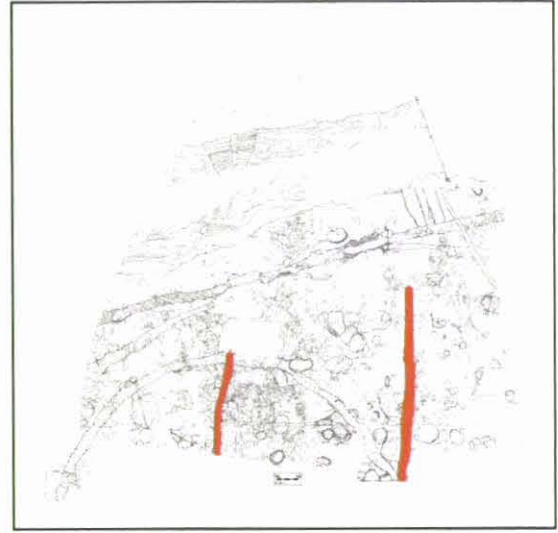
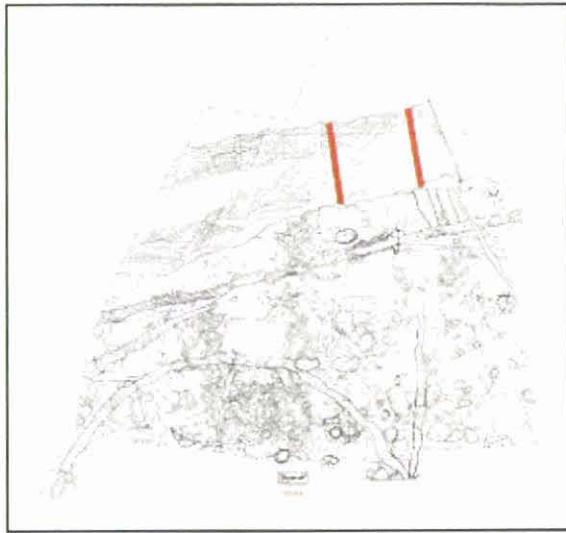
Figure 3: Trench location plan.



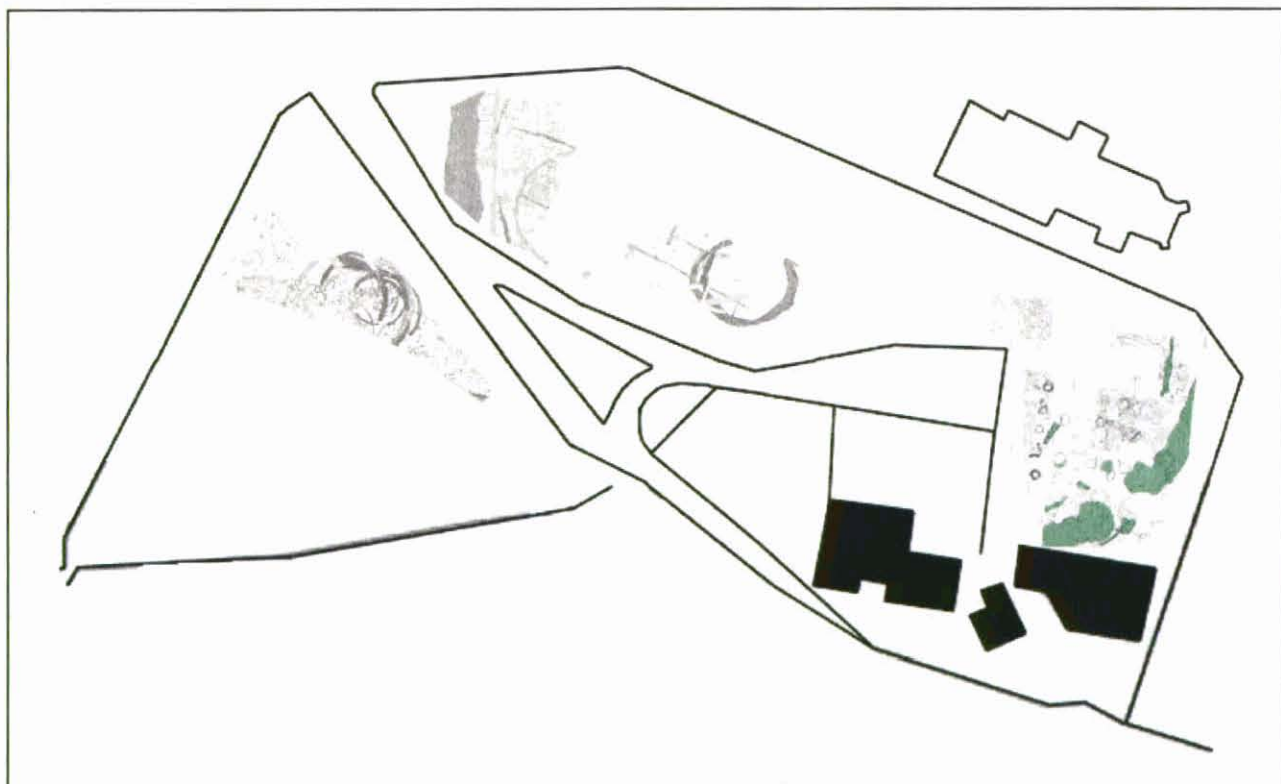
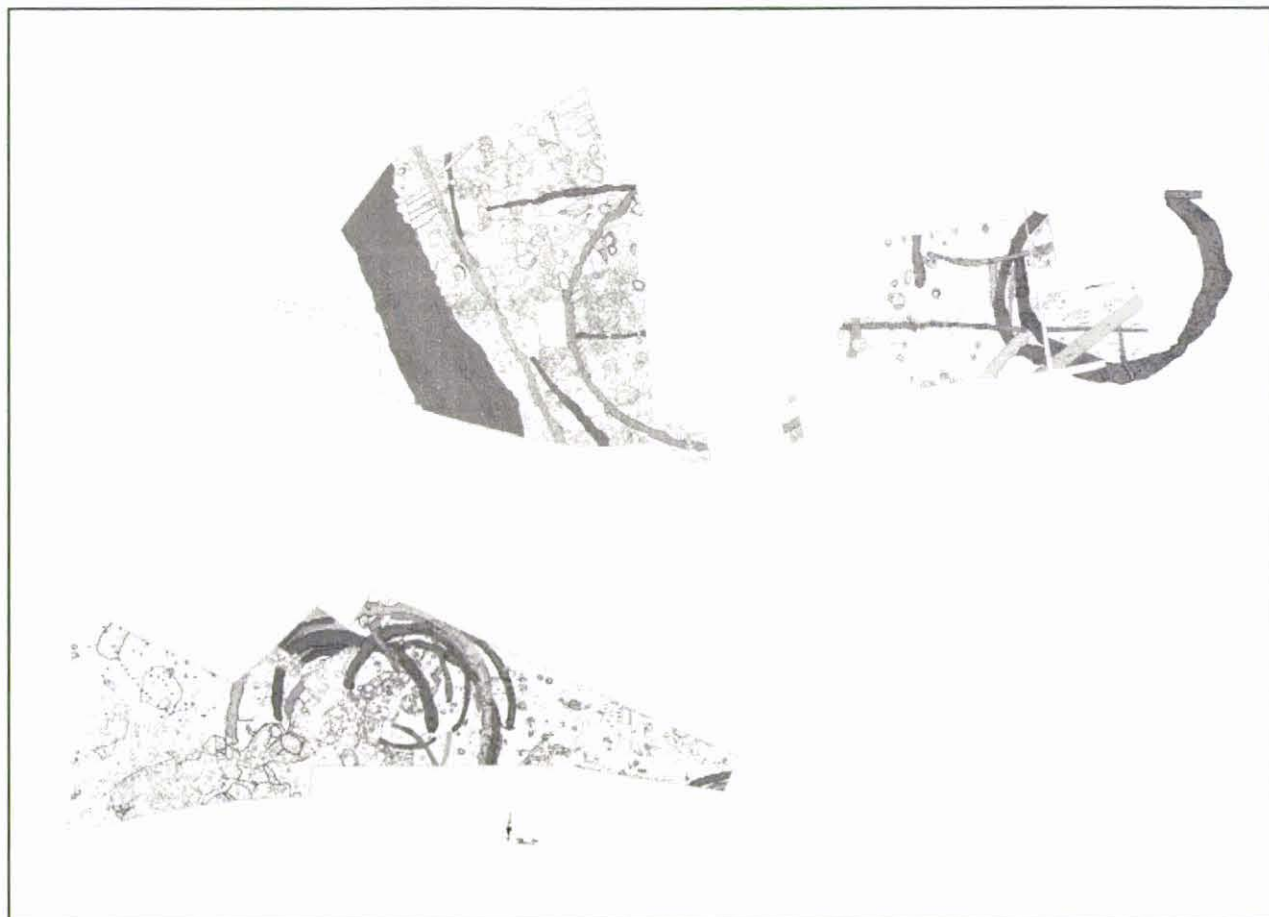
modern  
pipe cut



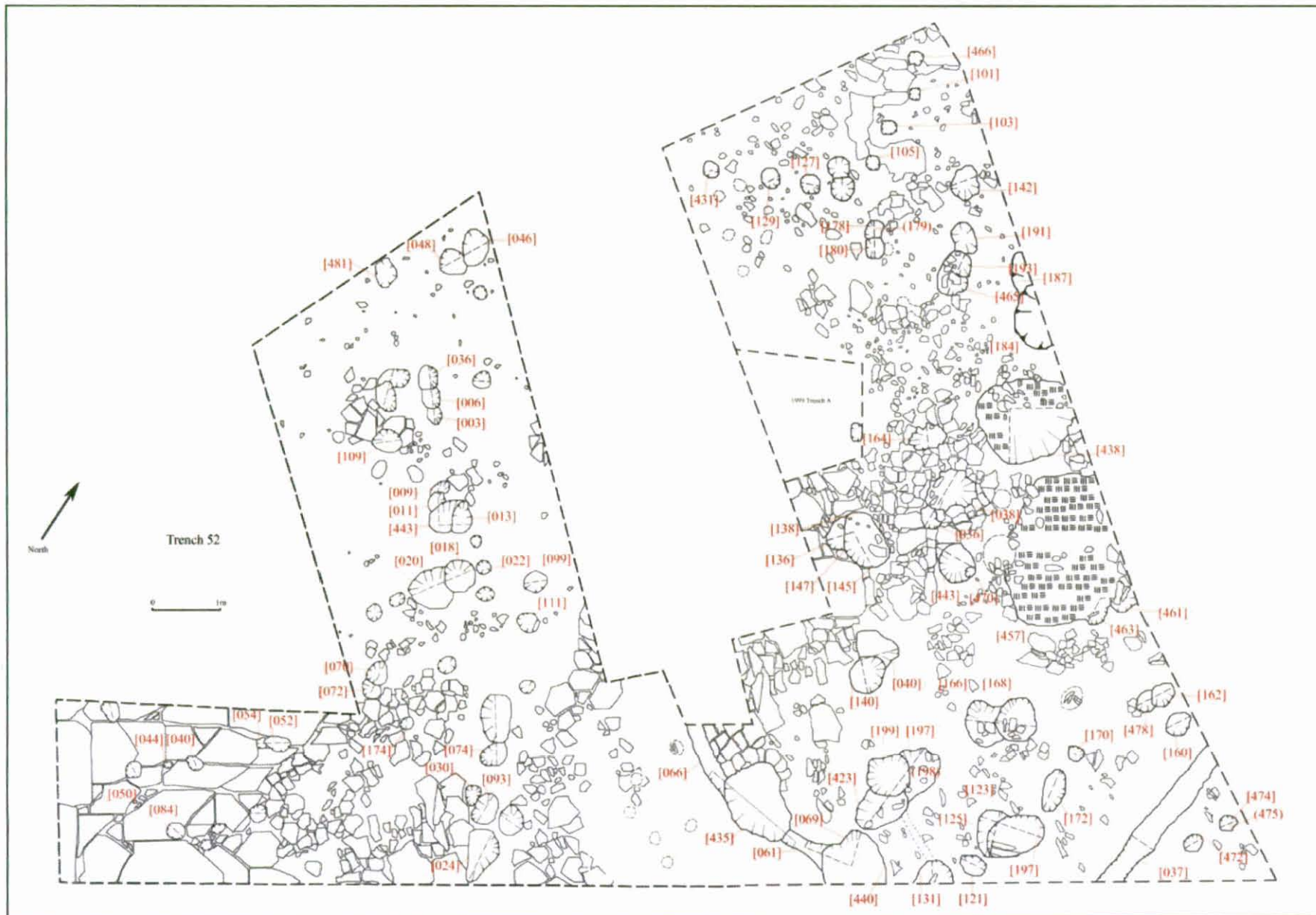




**Figure 6:** Trench 51 showing (from clockwise top left) Ditch [203]'s prospective entranceway, linear gullies [271/327], gully [243], palisade [276/320], and palisade [329].



**Figures 7 and 8:** Showing combined plans of Trenches 3, 16, 21, 26, 36, 51, 59 and 60 (top), with Trenches 1, 2, 33-35, 43-45 and 48 (below). Note probable development of linear features [271/327] eastwards from Trench 51.

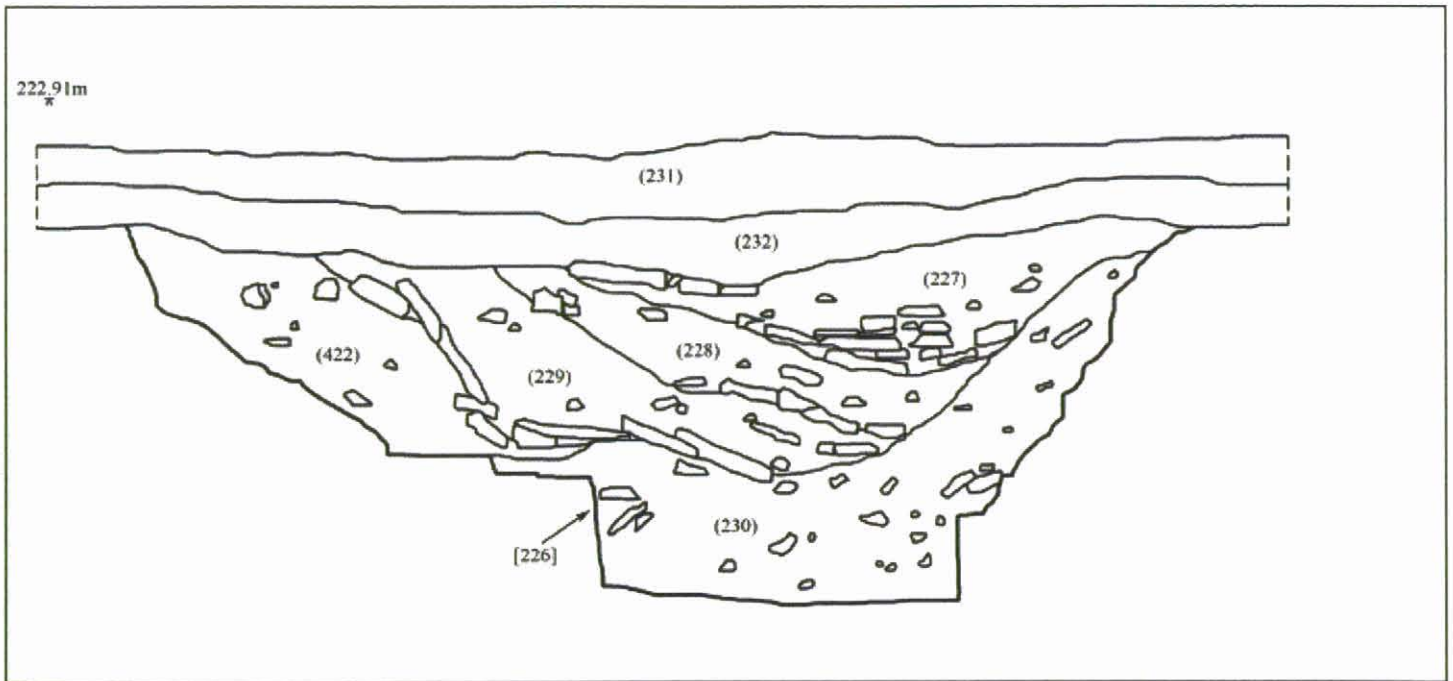


**Figure 9:** Trench 52 plan

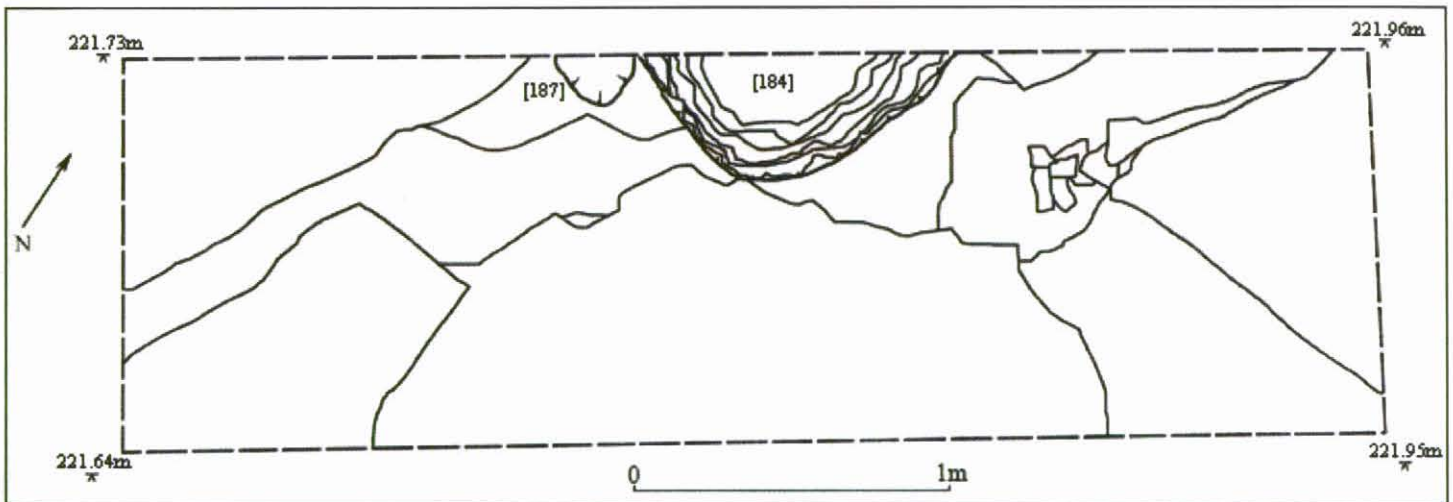




**Figure 10:** Trench 53 plan



**Figure 11:** Trench 54 section



**Figure 12:** Trench 55 plan



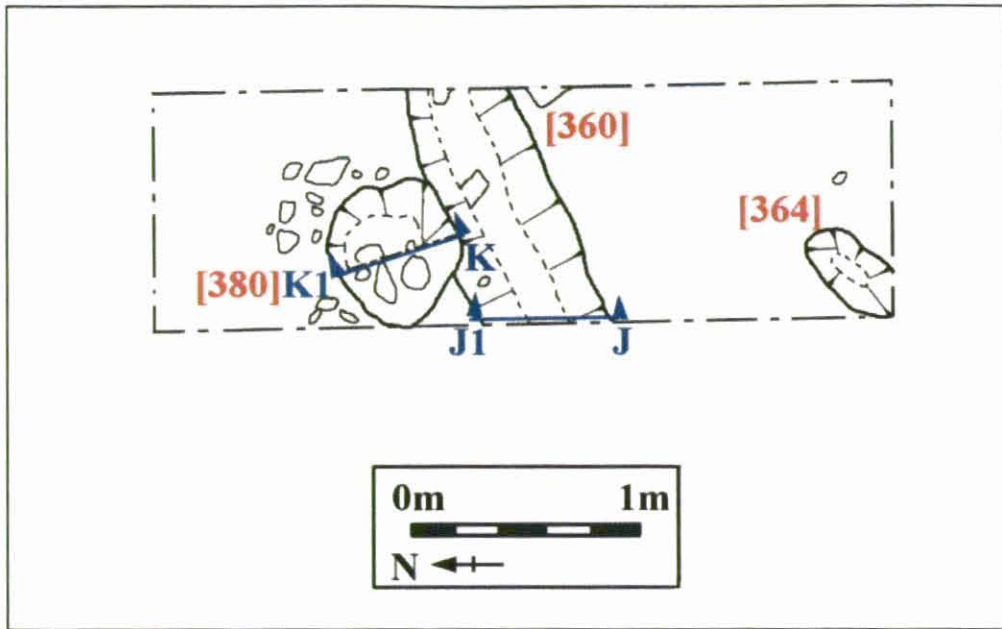


Figure 13: Trench 59 plan

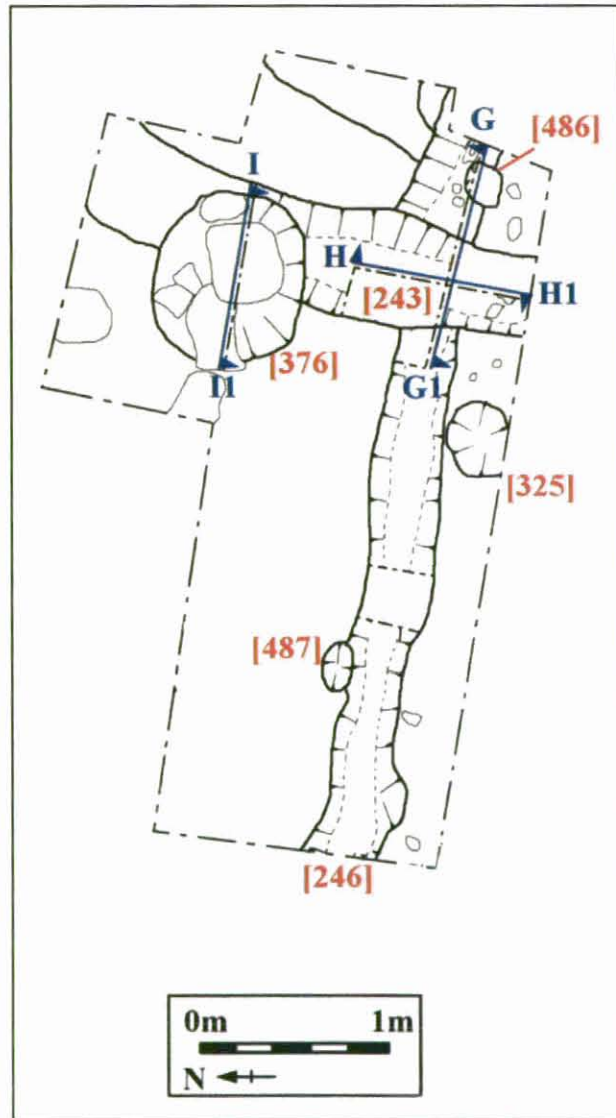


Figure 14: Trench 60 plan



## *Appendix 2: Plates*

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**Plate 1:** Trench 51 viewed from the north. Showing ditch [203], and palisades [276], [309] and [320].





**Plate 2:** North facing section of ditch [203]



**Plate 3:** Ditch [203] viewed from the south, showing possible 'closed' entranceway as it narrows in both depth and width. Scales 1m (top) and 2m (below).





**Plate 4:** Ditch [203]'s base at the southern section. Note working of bedrock and suggested increase in depth.



**Plate 5:** Showing deposit (411) within ditch [203]



Plate 6: Trench 51 viewed from the northwest. Showing gully [243]







**Plate 7:** Trench 51 viewed from the west. Showing linears [246] and [327]





**Plate 8:** Trench 52 viewed from the southeast





**Plates 9, 10 and 11:** (Clockwise from top left) Trench 52 (Area B) viewed from the north, Trench 53 viewed from the south, and post-pit [092] part-excavated Trench 53





**Plate 12:** Trench 60 viewed from the east. Note linear [246] continuing to the west