

5. Trench by Trench Results

5.1 Trench 1 was aligned east-west and measured approximately 3m long by 2m wide and was excavated down to the natural bedrock at a depth of 0.47m. This trench was aligned over an area which revealed a grave-like features during the geophysical survey. However, excavation proved that no grave was present but three post-holes were. Each post-hole was approximately 20-30mm in diameter by 10mm in depth and cut into the bedrock. No artifacts or dateable materials were discovered in the fill of the post-holes. In the topsoil and lower plough soil several 17th and 18th century clay pipe fragments were discovered along with occasional sherds of 18th to 20th century pottery.

5.2 Trench 2 was excavated on a north-south alignment again over a possible feature identified during the geophysical survey. This trench was 3m long by 1m wide and excavated down to the natural bedrock, 0.45m deep. Within this trench there was 0.3m of topsoil that overlaid what appeared to be a redeposited natural fill of orange brown sand/degraded sandstone and upright pieces of fragmented sandstones within a bowl shaped cut, the edges of which were not established. The only dateable material or artifacts discovered were 18th to 20th century pipe fragments, pot sherds and glass fragments in the topsoil.

5.3 Trench 3 was aligned over a linear feature that appeared to be a possible continuation of the curving ditch-like feature in the adjacent field, identified from photographs taken during the 1996 drought by Mrs Hearle. The trench was aligned on a north west- south east axis at right angles to the possible feature. The trench was 4m long by 1m wide. Within this trench the inside edge of what appeared to be a substantial ditch was discovered at a depth of between 0.25m and 0.35m from the present ground surface, and beneath the topsoil and lower plough soil. The fills of this ditch were excavated down to the recognised safe working depth of 1.2m. The ditch was not bottomed and appeared to be cut at a steep angle. Within the ditch six distinct fills were observed overlying what appeared to be a possible buried turf layer that in turn overlaid a sandy clay lining that sealed the rock-cut natural. Artifacts discovered within these fills included nine sherds of Roman orange ware that belonged to the late first/early second century. This pottery represented at least three vessels. A piece of Roman tile (tegula) was also found in association with pottery. These Roman pottery sherds were discovered in the upper fills of the ditch between 0.2 and 0.4m in depth into these fills. In addition to the Roman pottery occasional pieces of cremated bone were discovered, an abundance of charcoal flecks, occasional pieces of lead, some of which had been formed, and a single piece of copper ore. Beneath the fills that had revealed the Roman artifacts, evidence for earlier occupation began to materialise with an abundance of fire cracked pebbles, charcoal and charcoal flecks, a moderate amount of cremated bone and a single sherd of probable iron age pottery. A small excavation in the corner of the ditch proved that it was continuing at the same steep angle to an undefined depth.

5.4 Trench 4 was 3m long by 1m wide and was offset on the same alignment as trench 3. This was in order to locate the opposite edge of the ditch to the one revealed in trench 3 and possibly to ascertain the size and overall shape of the ditch. The ditch was again located within the trench at a similar depth as in trench 3. This established that the width of the ditch at the top of the natural was 4.5m. The fills on the outer side of the ditch were excavated to the safe working depth of 1.2m. A corresponding number of fills to those in trench 3 were revealed, but this side of the ditch also displayed an abundance of large flat pieces of sandstone that appeared to have been pushed into the

ditch. These stones occurred at a depth of 0.4m below the top of the ditch. The angle at which they were lying suggested that they had once been part of a rampart that had sat inside the ditched area, possibly as stone revetting. It was proven in this side of the ditch that its depth was over 1.6m but the total depth was not confirmed. The ditch itself was cut through the bedrock and lower shales with an acute upper edge that shelved before inclining at a steep angle again. Fewer artifacts were discovered in this side of the ditch although two sherds of Roman pottery and a single piece of Roman tile (tegula) were found in its upper fills. The lower fills were largely sealed by the concentration of stone, although occasional fire cracked pebbles, pieces of cremated bone and a moderate amount of charcoal were discovered.

5.5 Trench 5 was excavated in the field adjacent to the Old Vicarage and aligned over the cropmark that had been photographed in 1996. The trench was approximately 15m long by 1.5m wide. The topsoil which proved to be no deeper than 0.15m was removed by mechanical excavator to reveal a rock-cut ditch was located with near vertical sides. The ditch was 1.5m wide by 1.2m deep, bottoming on uneven plates of bedrock. Unlike the ditch in the garden of the Old Vicarage where the ditch was cut through fragmented bedrock here the rock was solid. From cut marks within the ditch it appeared as if it was originally intended to be bigger. On the interior side of the ditch stepping or terracing was noticeable, also on the exterior side of the ditch vertical and fragmented pieces of sandstone suggested that a second ditch may have been planned. The fills within the ditch revealed occasional fragments of iron slag, fire cracked pebbles, lead waste, a moderate amount of charcoal and a single sherd of Roman pottery.

5.6 Trench 6 was excavated outside and away from the perimeter of the ditched enclosure. No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench.