

3. Archaeological Background

- 3.1 Prior to the 1998 evaluation, there has been no previous evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity at the site. The closest prehistoric sites are the recently excavated Bronze Age cairn situated at Cobden Edge (GMSMR 421) and the Bronze Age barrows at Brown Low(5) and Ludworth Intakes(6). Evidence for the Iron Age/Romano-British period in the Stockport Borough is virtually nonexistent, with only scant poorly recorded remains coming from the Bramhall area. In fact excavation has identified very few native settlement sites in the Greater Manchester area. Two of the best known being Castle Steads, Bury(78) and Great Woolden Hall Farm, Salford(1907), both of which are fortified enclosures. It has been suggested that there could be an early enclosure site on the hill known as Werneth Low, just a few miles to the north however recent excavations have failed to gather any evidence to support this.
- 3.2 Roman evidence in the area has been restricted to the site of the fort and vicus at Melandra Castle near Glossop, approximately five miles from the site at Mellor. It has not been confirmed whether the Roman presence at Mellor was civilian or military, however considering the strategic location of the site and the period of occupation, it is likely to have been military.
- 3.3 The place name of Mellor (meaning bare hill) is of pre-English origin as is Werneth and Cheadle and all three may have had a long history of settlement. Apart from these names there is little evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity in the area. Features and artifacts from this period are also sporadic with an Anglo-Saxon cross at Cheadle and the twin cylindrical shafts, known as Robin Hoods Picking Rods, on Ludworth Moor which are very similar to the Bow Stones located in Lyme Park. It has been suggested that the font within Mellor Church is of Anglo-Saxon origin; however this is yet to be confirmed.
- 3.4 It was recorded by the Reverend Marriot in the early 19th century that ‘some years ago’ digging in the churchyard for the construction of a vault revealed what appears to have been the remains of an infilled ditch. He also reports that ‘many years before’ the same feature was found during the sinking of the foundations of the extension to the house now known as the Old Vicarage. *“A deep fosse was constructed originally, for the inclosure of the position. In subsequent ages it had the fate to be filled up, and the name and place of it passed into oblivion”* (Marriot, 1810, *The Antiquities of Lyme and its Vicinity*).