

Non Technical Summary

During April 2002 17 test pits were excavated in the triangular shaped field (Area C) to the east of the Old Vicarage at Mellor. The purpose of the test pits was to see if the layer of boulder clay found in the Old Vicarage Garden during previous excavations extended into this field. It was found that the boulder clay survived to varying degrees in all the test pits. In addition one definite post hole was found and patches of a grey silt clay suggested the presence of archaeological features in some of the other test pits.

Trench 16 was located in the Old Vicarage garden (Area A). It was positioned next to trench 3 which was excavated and back filled in 2000. The excavation of trench 16 revealed a series of curvi-linear ditches which may represent drainage ditches surrounding an Iron Age round house. These ditches appear to be the earliest phase of a series of linear features found within trench 16. Some of these ditches were cut by two other linear features running east to west. One was a stone lined gully very similar to a feature excavated in trench 3 during the 2000 season. The other appeared to be a gully designed to have a line of posts set in it rather than in individual post holes. In the eastern half of trench 16 a number of post holes stake holes and pits were excavated. Many of the post holes were easily distinguished by a dark grey fill and the use of local sandstone as a packing material.

Due to the paucity of finds from the excavated features in trench 16 it was decided to obtain Radio carbon dates for samples taken from two of the linear features. A sample from one of the curvi linear ditches produced a date of between 380 BC and 520 BC. A second sample, taken from the stone lined gully which cut the curvi linear ditch gave two date ranges of equal probability one between 360 BC and 410 BC and the other between 240 BC and 280 BC.

Trench 17 was excavated in the field immediately to the north of the Old Vicarage. The trench was located adjacent to foot of the wall separating the field from the garden. The purpose of this trench was to excavate a section across the enclosure ditch in the field (Area B) and to see if any evidence survived of a track way running into the field from the Old Vicarage drive. While the surface of a c19th century cinder track was uncovered it was found that quarrying had removed any evidence of the enclosure ditch at this location.

In January 2002 a geophysical survey was carried out at Mellor by Geoquest Associates. Trench 18 was an evaluation trench located over a linear anomaly detected by the survey at the east end of the Old Vicarage garden. Trench 18 confirmed the indications of the survey as it revealed the west side of a large cut feature. The fills of this feature produced a quantity of Roman pottery. The styles of the diagnostic sherds of pottery recovered from trench 18 predominated in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The size of trench 18 in relation to the feature found within it made it impossible to interpret with any certainty. Trench 19 was excavated in the same field as trench 17. It was located immediately to the west of trench 15 and was designed to expand on the area of the enclosure ditch which was revealed in that trench.

Trench 19 was excavated to see if any evidence of a rampart could be found in association

with the ditch. Also it was hoped to learn more about the method in which the ditch was originally excavated. As with all the other trenches across the enclosure ditch no evidence of a rampart was found. Trench 19 did reveal the point at which the enclosure ditch changes alignment and turns south west to head towards the Old Vicarage. It also seemed to confirm the hypothesis suggested by trench 15 that the daunting task of cutting the enclosure ditch through the bedrock was made easier by following natural bedding planes.

Trench 20 was a 3m by 3m trench designed to expand on the programme of test pitting. It was located immediately to the south of test pit 24 which contained the post hole. The idea behind it was to try to reveal a large enough area to discern the nature of the patches of grey silt clay identified in some of the test pits. The trench revealed the limits of 5 patches of grey silt clay. When excavated three of these proved to be stone packed post holes very similar to the one found in test pit 24. There was also a larger circular feature which again had stones arranged around its sides and one laid flat in the centre of its base. This may represent the position of a larger timber upright, part of a circular structure with a circle of spaced smaller posts arranged around it. The fifth feature was a shallow linear cut running north west to south east. It is too soon to attempt any detailed interpretation of these features. However trench 20 was successful in proving that the archaeology of the hilltop extends into this field. It is hoped that further excavation will provide evidence as to the nature and date of the occupation in this area.

In November 2002 a further geophysical survey was carried out in the south west quarter of the field to the east of Area B. The purpose of this was to see if there was any indication of the enclosure ditch continuing beyond Area B. The results of this survey together with the identification of anomalies interpreted as possible ditch alignments from previous magnetometer and ground penetrating radar surveys led to two trial trenches being excavated in this field. Neither trench produced any evidence for the existence of the enclosure ditch instead the geophysical anomalies appear to have been caused by changes in the geology.