

### **3. Aims and Methodology**

The main archaeological aim of the 2002 excavations was to try and develop our understanding of the character of the archaeology within the enclosed area. In particular to try and identify whether evidence survives for domestic structures. The main excavations took place over an eight week period in August and September following a one week programme of test pitting carried out in April.

#### **3.1 Test Pits**

The test pits measured 1m x 1m and 17 were excavated in a 10m grid pattern in a triangular shaped field (area C) to the east of the Old Vicarage. The purpose of the test pits was to try and ascertain the extent of the orange-brown coloured boulder clay layer encountered during the excavation of trench 3 in 1999 and 2000 in the garden of the Old Vicarage. Excavation of this trench suggested that in areas where this clay was present the archaeological features survived to a greater degree than those in which the bedrock was close to the surface. If the boulder clay was present and if archaeological features were found cutting into it then the intention was to open a large trench in the field as part of the main excavations in the summer.

Although the boulder clay was found in all of the test pits at an average depth of 0.50m below the surface. Despite this only one test pit (24) contained a definite archaeological feature. This was a stone lined post hole cut into the boulder clay and filled with a light grey clay silt. Patches of this clay silt were present in several of the other test pits but it was not clear whether these patches represented the in fill of archaeological features or were the product of geological processes. Test pit 24 was also the only test pit to produce pottery from before the post medieval period. The pottery all came from the sub soil layer and included two sherds of glazed medieval ware. Four sherds of early to mid Iron Age pottery were found three of which appear to belong to the same vessel. Four sherds of Roman pottery were recovered, three of these were not diagnostic but the other probably dates from the 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. All the test pits were backfilled after they had been recorded.

#### **3.2 Trenches.**

With the extent of archaeology in Area C uncertain it was decided to focus the 2002 excavation in the garden of the Old Vicarage by opening a 10m x 10m area, trench 16, immediately to the east of trench 3. In Area C a smaller trench, trench 20, would be opened up to the south of test pit 24 with the purpose of determining if the patches of clay silt represented the in fill of man made features such as ditches, pits and post holes.

Trench 16 was designed to extend our understanding of the archaeology discovered in trench 3. Trench 16 was a 10m x 10m area sited immediately to the east of trench 3 with the northern half of the west side of trench 16 overlapping the east end of trench 3 (Fig 17). By opening a larger area it was hoped to gain a clearer view of the extent and alignments of any archaeological features than would be possible with a narrow trench. In particular it was hoped to gain an indication of the character of the occupation within the enclosure in the Iron Age. It was also hoped that it would be possible to locate and excavate the linear features found running beyond the east section of trench 3. In January of 2002 a geophysical survey was carried out by Geoquest Associates. This was a magnetometer survey which took in the garden of the Old Vicarage. The location of trench 16 was also designed to cover part of an area which on the geophysical survey of 2002 contained an anomaly interpreted by Geoquest Associates as an area of brick, iron or burnt material (Fig 4).

Around 0.50m of topsoil was hand excavated to reveal a layer of light orange grey silt clay (layer 67). Excavation revealed this layer to be on average 0.15m thick and that it lay above the layer (76), the undisturbed orange brown natural boulder clay. It was clear that there were a considerable number of archaeological features cut into layer 67.

Trench 17 was 12m long by 1m wide and was hand excavated in Area B alongside the north wall of the Old Vicarage. It was excavated to look for evidence of a track way which it is believed ran alongside the wall in Area B. Although no track appears on any Ordnance Survey maps a foot path does run along this line and a 'dog leg' in the drive of the Old Vicarage does suggest that at sometime a track ran off it into Area B. While trench 17 was positioned to try and intercept the line of the Iron Age enclosure ditch its primary role was to look for archaeological evidence of later occupation and activity around the hilltop.

The Geoquest survey detected another anomaly running north to south across the east end of the garden. This was tentatively interpreted as a ditch. It was decided to examine the geophysical results by hand digging a 4m x 2m trench, trench 18, over the line of the anomaly.

Although the line of the enclosure ditch through Area B has been well established there are still important questions which remain to be answered. Trench 19 was excavated to see if any evidence of a rampart or palisade could be found and also to provide more information about the methods used to excavate the ditch. Trench 19 measured 10m x 4m and was positioned so that it overlapped with the west end of trench 15 which was excavated in 2001. As was discovered in 2001 only a thin layer of topsoil covered the bedrock in this part of Area B. This was removed by mechanical excavator to reveal the fill of the ditch which was then excavated by hand. As in previous years all the trenches were backfilled with the exception of trench 18. It is hoped to return and expand this trench in 2003.

### ***3.3 Community Involvement.***

It has always been the aim of the Mellor Archaeological Trust and UMAU to run the excavations at Mellor as a community archaeological project. This year 53 people volunteered varying amounts of their time to work on the site. Over the eight weeks of excavation there were on average 15 people working each day in the various trenches. On a sunny weekend in 2002 the open days attracted 1,639 visitors. During July students from the Ridge Danyers College in Marple built a reconstruction of an Iron Age roundhouse in Area C. The project was part of the wider European Community Culture Programme, the Mnesonyme Project. A variety of specialists including thatchers and coppicers guided the students during the work. This reconstruction is a major attraction for visitors to the site and acts as a valuable illustrative model during the excavations. This year also saw the Trust commission a film record of the excavations. The video of the 2002 excavation is now available and it is hoped to add to this each year.