

5. Conclusions

The excavations during 2002 revealed clear evidence of several phases of occupation at Mellor. In trench 16 the re-cutting of the curvi-linear ditches suggests a sustained period of occupation possibly relating to round houses. The difference in character between these ditches and the stone lined gully [94] and post hole trench [203] which cut them suggest a change in function for this part of the hilltop. The radiocarbon dates obtained from samples of fills from [94] and [203] are relatively close which suggests that the change was part of a continuous process rather than representing a break in occupation. This seems to be supported by the manner in which the latest phase curvi linear ditches have filled up which would seem to indicate a deliberate in-filling as part of an organised effort required to change the role of this part of the hilltop. Trench 17 showed that there had been post medieval activity on the site which has impacted on the prehistoric archaeology of the hilltop. While the quarrying has had a detrimental effect the discovery of a cinder track way on the line of a modern footpath opens the possibility that this may itself follow the line of an earlier route. As it runs immediately below the wall of the Old Vicarage another possibility is that it may provide evidence of earlier property or land use boundaries.

Excavation of trench 20 confirmed the indications of the test pits that the occupation of the hilltop extended into Area C. The high level of survival of the archaeological features cut into the boulder clay promises to produce good information on the nature and date of this occupation. The most likely interpretation of the feature found in trench 18 seems to be that it is part of a substantial ditch. It is hoped that an extension of this trench in 2003 will reveal the full width and depth of this feature. It is also hoped that excavation will be able to establish whether it represents evidence of a continuation of Iron Age occupation into the Roman period or of Roman occupation super-imposed onto an abandoned native Iron Age site.

The role of Mellor as a community archaeology project continues to grow. Each season of excavation has seen an increase in the number of volunteers. At the same time there has been a growing appreciation of the important contribution the archaeological discoveries at Mellor are making towards our understanding of the prehistoric culture of the region. This year the Mellor Archaeological Trust was successful in its bid for a Heritage Lottery grant under the "Your Heritage" scheme. Part of this grant will be used to help fund the archaeological excavations over the next three years. In addition UMAU continues to receive generous financial support for the excavations through the Community Services Department of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. These grants will allow the excavation to maintain its commitment to public involvement in this community project and ensure that an appropriate level of professional archaeological supervision is available during the excavations. It also the current post excavation programme of specialist analysis and reporting can be maintained.

The Mellor Archaeological Trust continues to organise a series of events, lectures and publications throughout the year. The purpose of these is to disseminate information and results from the excavations and raise additional funds. This year the Trust held a Study Day at the Mellor Parish Centre on the Iron Age and Romano-British period in the region. The 'sell out' attendance for this event reflects the popularity and interest in the excavations at Mellor while the papers delivered by some of the leading archaeologists in the region highlights the level of professional and academic interest in the site.