

Site name: Old Foundry Road

Site ref: IAS 1501 HER ref: IPS 178 CIMS Accession No: IPSMG: R.2009.36

NGR: TM16664465 Extent: 10.9 sq m

Circumstances of excavation

The site was overgrown, waste land which lay on the assumed line of the town defences on the north side of the town. The site, between St Margaret's Street, to the north-east, and Old Foundry Road, to the south-west was owned by Ipswich Borough Council, which gave permission to the Suffolk Archaeological Unit for this opportunistic research excavation in 1974.

Site Constraints

Although the site was flanked by standing buildings, it was possible to cut a 1.5m wide trench, down the centre of the plot on a north-east to south-west alignment, but the depth of excavation (up to 3m) raised health and safety issues. As a result, the lower levels were machine excavated.

Funding bodies

Suffolk County Council and DoE Ancient Monuments Branch.

Stratigraphic sequence (by period)

Although the excavation cut across the inner edge of the medieval town ditch, the only features recorded related to its later development and no medieval deposits were encountered.

Late Medieval Transitional: c.1450-1600 (LMT)

Layers 0046, 0048, 0049 and 0050 which filled the inner edge of the town ditch (0033), found in the northern end of the trench, were associated with 16th century pottery. On the south side of the ditch, there were three roughly circular 0.9m diameter pits (0022, 0032, and 0042). Pit 0022 was certainly a post pit as ghost post (0031) was clearly visible. It is likely, therefore, that all three are postholes for very large posts and represent a palisade on the inner edge of the ditch. 0042 was also 16th century on the basis of the associated pottery. If 0042 is another post pit, then a double line of posts is implied (0022 and 0032 being part of the inner line, and 0042 the outer one). However, it is possible that 0042 is simply a pit dug on the inner edge of the ditch, in front of the palisade. Its fill was overlapped by ditch layer 0046 which also seems to be 16th century on the basis of the associated pottery.

Pits 0032 and 0042 were overlain by pit 0024, presumably cut after the demolition of the palisade.

Post Medieval: c.1600-1900 (PMED)

Phase 1 (17th century)

On the basis of the pottery associated with pit 0024, the slighting of the LMT palisade occurred in the 17th century and a further small pit (0044) was then dug in the edge of the ditch, to the north of, and probably cut pit 0024.

The town records provide useful background evidence. During the Civil War, the ramparts were repaired for the last time. A letter from William Cage to the Bailiffs, dated 13 July 1643, states that 'the ditches about the town are much decayed and trodden down, and horse ways made to ride up and down where men have private yards against them' (*Ipswich Borough Records: Town Correspondence Acc.2781/28*). Apparently, the repairs that followed were extensive (Charman 1964, 303).

At Old Foundry Road, the only observable improvements could be a raising of the town bank with layers 0015, 0005, 0039, 0021, 0023 representing the lower layers of such a raising in the middle of the 17th century.

Phase 2 (18th/19th century)

Two pits belong to the 18th century on the basis of the associated pottery: pit 0038 was cut into the ditch fill and pit 0008 on the Old Foundry Road street front.

A series of brick walls (0009, 0010, 0011, 0012) were the foundations of houses and a small square outbuilding (0041) built along the Old Foundry Road street frontage in the late 18th or 19th century. A robber trench (0007) presumably indicates a robbed-out wall of the same date and layers 0002 and 0003 indicate a levelling of the site in the 20th century.

Scope for future research

The post medieval pottery from all Ipswich sites (1974-1990) has not been studied. The dating in this summary is based on spot dating alone.

Keith Wade 2013