

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

ROAD WIDENING ELM ST. IPSWICH

Suffolk County SMR site code IPS 411

Ipswich SMR site code IAS AT01

Grid Ref: TM 15949 44533

SCCAS Report No. 2002/104

Visit made 14th May 2002

Jezz Meredith, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, March 2003

SCCAS Report Number: 2002/104

Summary

Monitoring of the widening of Elm Street revealed an inhumation of Middle Saxon date and a large ditch, presumed to be part of the town defences.

The Grave (see figure 1)

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services were informed of the recovery of human remains during the widening of Elm Street. Initially the police were informed, but it was quickly realised that the burial was of some antiquity and Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service was contacted.

When the site was visited it was observed that the bones had been recovered from a small block of undisturbed subsoil, c.2.8m x 0.65m. Service trenches cut this soil block to the north, east and west, and the area to the south was unexcavated. Although the majority of the bones had already been removed it was clear after subsequent cleaning that they had come from a north-east to south-west orientated grave cut.

The contractors had reported that the skull and other fragments had been only 200mm below the slabs for the pavement. The skull had been positioned at the south-west end and the contractors had followed the skeleton, removing all the bones they could find. A small part of the grave fill remained at the north-east end and a small collection of bone recovered.

The cut for the grave, 0002, was 1.8m in length and 650mm wide (where it had not been disturbed by recent services). The cut for the grave could be distinguished at a depth of 400mm from the surface of the pavement and dropped a further 200mm to the base of the grave. The fill of the grave, 0005, was a mid orange brown silty sand clay. This was indistinguishable from 0006 above the grave that extended upwards to the make-up for the pavement.

The Ditch

A large ditch, 0008, was also recognised in the base of the road widening trench. This was observed *c.*7m to the south-west of the grave and could be seen in the north-facing section. The fill of the ditch, 0009, consisted of a dark grey brown sandy clay. The ditch at this point was at least 4m wide, but could have been much wider as it was cut to the west by a large modern disturbance.

This large ditch could have had an upcast bank along its eastern side and it is possible that deposit 0006, that seals the grave to the east, is the truncated remains of the bank.

The Finds by Sue Anderson

Introduction

Unstratified finds consisted of one sherd of pottery (16g) and two animal bones (31g). Finds collected as 0003 and 0004 were all part of a single human skeleton.

Pottery

One sherd of pottery was collected as an unstratified find, a piece of a Thetford-type ware strap handle in a fine micaceous fabric.

Human bone

An incomplete and fragmented human skeleton in fair condition was largely excavated by contractors. The individual was represented by the skull, partial mandible, a few fragments of torso (including scapula, ribs, pelvis and vertebrae), both arms, parts of both femora and the proximal end of the right tibia (more details are with the archive).

The bones were large and fairly robust, and the skull had large brow ridges and mastoid processes and was generally of robust appearance. This suggested that the individual was male. Unfortunately little of the pelvis survived. All epiphyses were fused, although the medial clavicles were not present, and tooth wear indicated that the individual was a mature/middle-aged adult. No degeneration was seen on the bones apart from a small area of slight osteophytosis on the anterior of the ?third lumbar vertebra.

The skull was partially reconstructable and was broad and short, but had clearly been slightly deformed by soil pressure post-mortem. It measured approximately 143mm wide by 172mm long, providing a cranial index of 83.1 (brachycranial). Few other measurements could be taken, but the humerus head diameter was 49mm, well within the male range. Stature could not be calculated.

The teeth were recorded as follows:

		CA	CA														
U	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	/	2	3	4	5	6	/	-		
-	7	6	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	6	7	8		
		C	C														

key: 1 2 3 adult teeth present; U unerupted; / lost post-mortem; - missing area; C caries; A abscess

The crowns of both upper first molars had been lost, probably due to caries, and the teeth were represented by root stumps only. Caries was present cervically on the adjacent premolars. The lower right first molar had a large interstitial cervical cavity, and a smaller area of decay was present on the neighbouring premolar. The degree of decay had resulted in open pulp cavities and periapical abscesses were present as a result. A moderate degree of calculus (tartar) was present on most surviving teeth, and there was low level enamel hypoplasia of the canines.

Non-metric traits were recorded on a present-absent basis, but nothing unusual was seen. A very small ossicle at the lambda, lambdoid wormian bones, and parietal foramina were present on the skull.

No pathological changes were seen, other than the slight osteophytosis mentioned above.

Animal bone

Two fragments of animal bone were found. One was the proximal end of a ?deer radius, and the other was a small fragment of burnt long bone from an unidentified medium or large mammal.

Discussion

The skeleton recovered from this site was that of a middle-aged male. The burial has been dated to the c.9th Century by Radiocarbon dating. The degree of tooth decay seen in this individual, in relation to his approximate age at death — mid 30s? — is quite high and would be unusual, though not impossible, in a Middle Saxon population.

The other finds from the site are not significant, as Thetford-type ware is a common find in Ipswich, and the animal bones are not datable.

Radiocarbon Dating (see appendix 1)

A sample of bone from the human femur was submitted to the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre for radiocarbon dating. A date of 800 A.D. +/- 50 years was proposed, suggesting a Middle Saxon date.

Conclusions

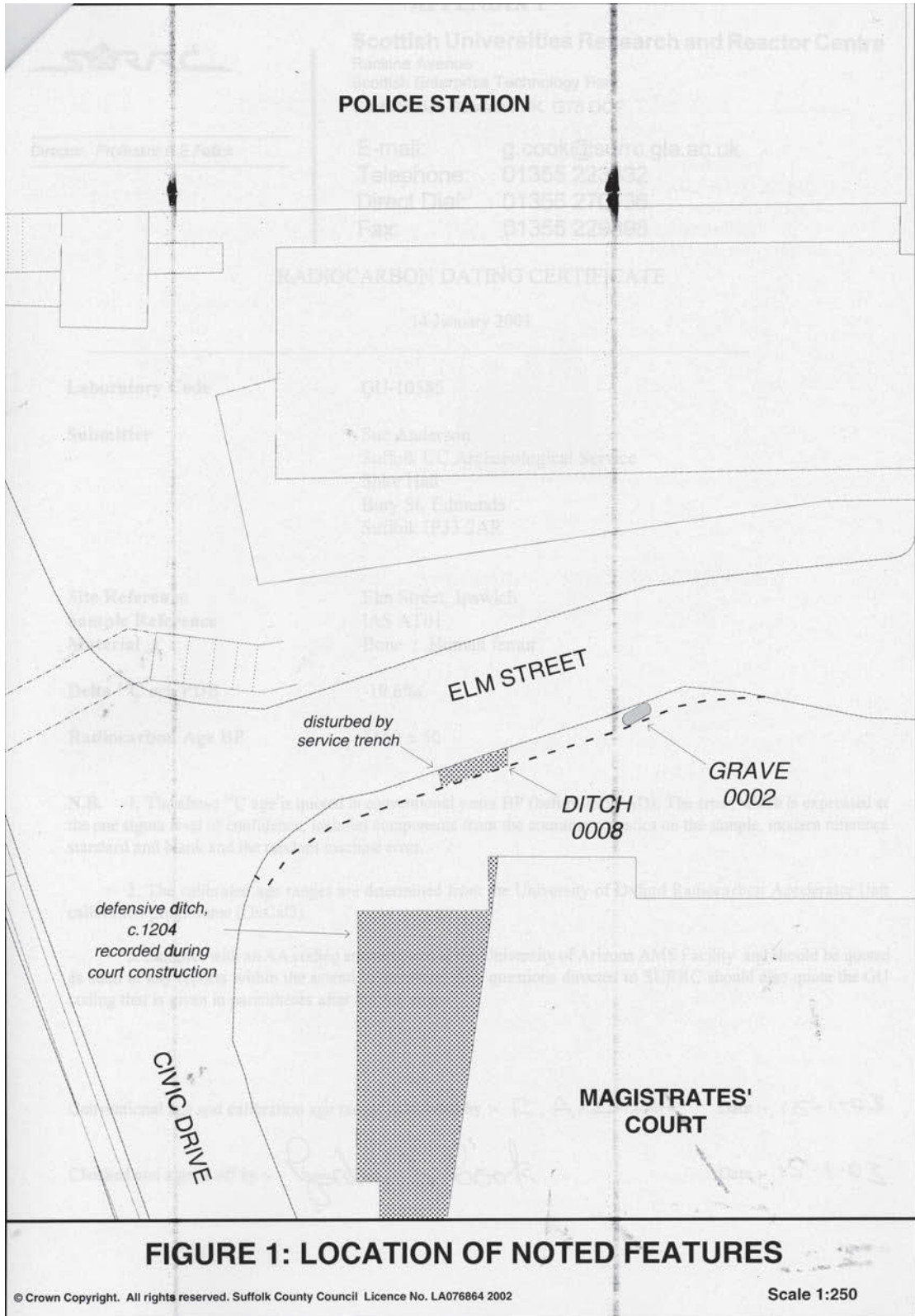
The burial was probably of a male, of mature/middle-aged years. Radiocarbon dating has suggested a date of 800 A.D +/- 50. Another possible burial was recovered from the excavation of the nearby Magistrates' Court (Dunmore, Loader and Wade 1976), although an earlier date was suggested for this.

The Magistrates' Court excavation (IAS 3902) revealed an extensive north to south running ditch. This was dated to the medieval period and is thought to be the 'King John Defences' of c.1204. Ditch 0008 probably represents a truncated fragment of this feature.

The medieval ditch superseded the earlier Saxon defences that had been backfilled by this date. The Magistrates' Court investigation identified the Saxon ditch to the east of the 1970s excavation area, suggesting that Grave 0002 was probably outside the Saxon ditch line.

References

Dunmore, S., Loader, T. and Wade, K., 1976. *Ipswich Archaeological Survey: Second Interim Report* in: 'East Anglian Archaeology, Report 3: Suffolk'. East Anglian Archaeology 3



APPENDIX 1



Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre

Rankine Avenue
Scottish Enterprise Technology Park
East Kilbride Scotland UK G75 0QF

Director: Professor A E Fallick

E-mail: g.cook@surre.gla.ac.uk
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RADIOCARBON DATING CERTIFICATE

14 January 2003

Laboratory Code	GU-10585
Submitter	Sue Anderson Suffolk CC Archaeological Service Shire Hall Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP33 2AR
Site Reference	Elm Street, Ipswich
Sample Reference	IAS AT01
Material	Bone : Human femur
Delta ¹³ C rel. PDB	-19.6‰
Radiocarbon Age BP	1150 ± 50

N.B. 1. The above ¹⁴C age is quoted in conventional years BP (before 1950 AD). The error, which is expressed at the one sigma level of confidence, includes components from the counting statistics on the sample, modern reference standard and blank and the random machine error.

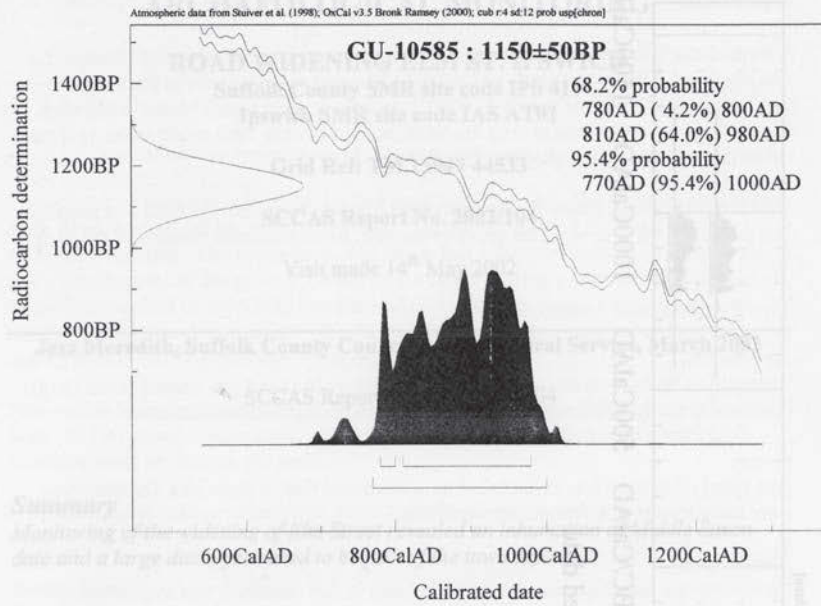
2. The calibrated age ranges are determined from the University of Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit calibration programme (OxCal3).

3. Samples with an AA coding are measured at the University of Arizona AMS Facility and should be quoted as such in any reports within the scientific literature. Any questions directed to SURRC should also quote the GU coding that is given in parentheses after the AA code.

Conventional age and calibration age ranges calculated by :- *R. Anderson* Date :- 15-1-03

Checked and signed off by :- *Gordon S Book* Date :- 15-1-03

Calibration Plot



The Grave (see figure 1)

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services were informed of the discovery of human remains during the widening of Elm Street. Initially the position was believed to be a grave but it was quickly established that the burial was of some antiquity as Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services was contacted.

When the site was visited it was observed that the bones had been recovered from a small block of undisturbed subsoil, c.2.5m x 0.55m. Service trenches cut this soil block to the north, east and west, and the area to the south was unexcavated. Although the majority of the bones had already been removed it was clear after subsequent clearing that they had come from a north-east to south-west oriented grave cut.

The contractor had reported that the skull and other fragments had been found below the slabs for the pavement. The skull had been positioned at the north-east end and the contractor had followed the skeleton, removing all the bones and fragments. A small part of the grave fill remained at the north-east end and a small amount of bone was recovered.

The cut for the grave, 0902, was 1.3m in length and 450mm wide (the width had been disturbed by recent services). The cut for the grave could be 200mm deep to a depth of 400mm from the surface of the pavement and dropped sharply to the base of the grave. The fill of the grave, 0903, was a mid orange-brown clay. This was indistinguishable from 0904 above the grave that contained the make-up for the pavement.

