

**Site name: Foundation Street (Cranfield's car park)**

Site ref: IAS 5801            HER ref: IPS 745            CIMS Accession No: IPSMG:R.2009.47

NGR: TM16504411            Extent: 177 sq m

**Circumstances of excavation**

An area of 177 square metres was excavated in 1979, to the immediate north of St. Mary Quay Church, following the granting of planning permission for a redevelopment of the site which was never implemented.

**Site constraints**

Excavation was restricted by the finance available to a sample of the western half of the site adjacent to the Foundation Street frontage.

**Funding bodies**

The work was funded by the Department of the Environment (Ancient Monuments Branch), Manpower Services Commission YOP Scheme), and Suffolk County Council.

**Stratigraphic sequence (by period)**

The site was stripped to the top of the first recognisable level, which was generally the surface of the natural subsoil, sloping from 2.7m OD at the south to 2.3m OD at the north.

***Iron Age: (PREH)***

No features of Iron Age date were identified, but 179 sherds of Iron Age pottery were found in later features.

***Romano-British: (ROM)***

No features of Roman date were identified but there were 153 RB sherds from later contexts and nine residual Roman bronze coins (*0001/5801N – 0006/5801N, 0008/5801N, 0010/5801N, 0011/5801N*) ranging from late 1st (Domitian) to late 4th century (Valentinian) in date.

***Early Middle Saxon: c.600-700 (EMS)***

No features of EMS date were identified but there were 14 sherds of handmade pottery in later features.

***Middle Saxon: c. 650 – c. 850 (MS)***

Five pits (*0019, 0028, 0035, 0059* and probably *0056*) belonged to this period. There is some doubt as to whether *0056* is MS or ELS as two Thetford ware sherds from the overlap with EMED foundation trench *0016* could have come from either feature. Pit *0035* contained the only sceatta (*0009/5801N*) from the site.

Although a fairly low density of features was recorded, the site produced 1117 sherds of Ipswich ware and 168 imported sherds of probably MS date. As almost 80% of the MS pottery was residual in later features, it may suggest the deliberate dumping of soil on the site from elsewhere in the town at this period.

***Early Late Saxon: c.850-900 (ELS)***

Only one pit (0090) can be assigned to this period with any certainty. A further two pits (0061, 0081) and four structural features at the south end of the site, with small amounts of Thetford ware, are also likely to belong to this period.

Context 0040 was a 1.2m long length of foundation trench, 70cm wide and only 10cm deep with a post impression at its south end. Posthole 0037, with 2 Ipswich ware and 1 Thetford ware, lay at its south end. Two other post holes (0015, 0026), at right angles to the others, could also be associated. The lack of pottery in 0040, 0015 and 0026 and the fact that 0040 is almost certainly cut by EMED pit 0017 lends weight to an ELS date. Although speculation, these features could be the heavily truncated remains of a sunken featured building.

#### ***Middle Late Saxon: c.900-1000 (MLS)***

There were no features of this period and only seven sherds of St Neots ware from the whole site confirming this notable absence of occupation. Of the 969 sherds of Thetford ware from the site, 60% was in association with EMED contexts.

#### ***Early Medieval: c.1000 – c.1200 (EMED)***

This period was represented by a total of twelve pits (0017, 0018, 0021, 0029, 0030, 0041, 0042, 0049, 0054, 0066, 0074, 0075), a well (0092) and two foundation trenches (0016, 0080).

Well 0092 was 1.65m deep (base at 1.25m O.D). It had dried out but a central shaft (0065), 65cm in diameter, was clearly in evidence. The shaft was fully excavated to the southern limit of the excavated site, but excavation of the well pit was incomplete.

Foundation trench 0080 was 30cm wide, 5-20cm deep, and ran for 3.5m, north-south, along the western edge of the site, parallel with Foundation Street. It appeared to contain an integral post hole (not numbered separately) at the south end and was probably cut at its north end by EMED pit 0075.

A similar foundation trench (0016), 26cm wide and only 6cm deep, was parallel to and 40cm east of 0080. It was traced for only c. 2.5m being cut to the north by pit 0074 (EMED) and lost to the south where it met pit 0056 and no stratigraphic relationship was recorded. The stretch north of 0056 produced two Ipswich sherds only but pottery from the overlap with 0056 included 2 Thetford ware and 2 EMED sherds almost certainly derived from 0016 as the rest of the sizeable assemblage (32 sherds of Ipswich ware) could only have come from pit 0056.

Two postholes (0072, 0073), to the north, are likely to be a continuation of 0016.

Posthole 0072 had no pottery but 0073 had two EMED sherds.

Foundation trenches 0016 and 0080 presumably represent the rear walls of buildings fronting Foundation Street or fence lines.

#### ***Late Medieval: c. 1200 – c. 1450 (LMED)***

Four pits (0024, 0031, 0045, 0064) certainly belonged to this period.

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

A brick-lined cellar 0004, with LMT fill, and a flint and mortar base (0003) for a possible light well in its south-east corner, belong to this period.

#### ***Post Medieval: c.1600-1900 (PMED)***

Sewer trenches (0002 and 0009), two cellar bases (0005, 0010) and four pits (0011, 0027, 0039, 0086) belonged to this period.

**Undated**

There are three contexts, with uncertain dates, which have not been not mentioned above: Pit 0083, which is cut by probably EMED pit 0084, pit 0091, which is probably cut by EMED pit 0041, and posthole 0063, which is probably cut by MS pit 0059.

**Environmental samples**

Columns for flotation analysis were taken from eight pits (0017, 0018, 0019, 0035, 0041, 0049, 0056, 0064).

*Keith Wade 2014*