

**Site name: Key Street**

Site ref: IAS 5901      HER ref: IPS 369      CIMS Accession No: IPSMG:R.2009.51

NGR: TM16694413      Extent: 468 sq m

**Circumstances of excavation**

The site was excavated by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit in advance of a new road (Slade Street), forming part of a new gyratory road system.

The site was excavated by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit in 1982.

**Site Constraints**

An area up to roughly 30m back from Key Street was excavated apart from a central access route from the street, 4-5m wide and 11m long, and a rectangular area, 7m by 13m, on the west side, 20m back from the street. The area to north was sampled with a trench, 20m long and 2m wide.

The graves at the Key Street end of the site were very shallow and damaged by later activity.

**Funding bodies**

Suffolk County Council, DoE Ancient Monuments Branch and Manpower Services Commission (Youth Opportunities Programme).

**Stratigraphic sequence (by period):**

***Bronze Age: 2700-700 BC (PREH)***

A 1.3m length of ditch (0078), 80cm wide, ran east from the excavation edge and was cut away on its east side by ELS pit (0079). It contained five sherds of a mid-late Bronze Age bucket urn of Ardleigh type. A further large sherd (430g) was a residual find within pit 0079. An undated ditch (0117), 60cm wide, ran NNE from ELS pit 0087 (which was cut by pit 0079). After 80cm it was cut by MS pit 0092. It is likely to be a continuation of the same ditch, in which case it curves and was possibly the south-east portion of a ring ditch of which no other traces were found.

***Middle Saxon: c. 700-850 (MS)***

Four pits (0058, 0092, 0288, 0320) and a linear feature (0306) belonged to this period. A single sceatta (0011/5901N), lost c.740-60, was found in grave 0174 at the south end of the site. 500 sherds of Ipswich ware were recovered from the site, mainly residual in later features.

**Linear Feature 0306**

This east-west ditch was 1m wide with a 'V'-shaped ditch profile and was a minimum of 6m long. It was cut away at both ends by later pits (0288, 0279). No trace of the ditch was found on the other sides of these pits.

**Pits**

Pits were dispersed across the site and showed no obvious concentration.

Pit 0288 contained 85 sherds of Ipswich ware, 2 grass tempered and 4 imported sherds. Linear feature 0306 was cut by pit 0288 and contained 32 Ipswich ware sherds, 1 grass tempered and a large quantity (13 sherds) of imported wares.

**Cemetery**

There is evidence for an unknown number of Anglo-Saxon burials. Human skulls were found in ELS pits 0087, at 60cm down, and 0079, at 1m down, indicating MS or earlier burials which have been removed by later pits.

Pit 0087 is recorded as cutting grave 0112 but the overlap must have been minimal as the skull in grave 0112 was *in situ* and the pit was clearly excavated prior to the grave and no actual relationship was recorded by section.

Three burials did have no pottery other than Ipswich ware (0071, 0116, 0210) but this can only be used as a *terminus post quem* for the date of burial, and 0210 cut EMED ditch 0073. Grave 0116 did not have any burial recorded from it on excavation and was either not a grave or a grave in which the skeleton had decayed.

Grave 0206 was recorded as being cut by EMED pit 0194 and grave 0209 by EMED pit 0203. However, both pits were excavated prior to the burials and it is possible that the graves cut the pits but were not seen during excavation of the pits. The shallow pit 0207, with one Thetford ware sherd was recorded as a possible grave, cutting grave 0206, but it is clearly a small pit containing only the left and right feet from the skeleton 0206 which it cuts.

Burials 0019 and 0039 appear to be orientated markedly NE/SW – but 0019 was associated with medieval pottery and cut a LMED floor (0028).

The sum of this evidence is that an unknown number of the burials on the site may have been Anglo-Saxon.

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

Twenty two pits belong to this period (0060, 0079, 0087, 0113, 0162, 0225, 0227, 0238, 0246, 0263, 0291, 0292, 0293, 0297, 0298, 0299, 0309, 0313, 0318, 0341, 0348).

They were all in the northern half of the site and concentrated in a line running from east-west (0291, 0313, 0293, 0292, 0299, 0297, 0341, 0238, 0246), 25m back from the Key Street frontage, with a north-south line at right angles (0227, 0087, 0162).

Pit 0295 contained a MS pottery group but cut ELS pit 0293 and contained PMED brick.

Pit 0238 contained four round headed pins and a nail cleaner in a decorated antler or bone container (0044/5901Cu).

Pits 0079 and 0087 contained human skulls (see above).

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

Only one pit (0312) and a linear feature (0270) belonged to this period. Linear feature 0270 was 4.5m long and 1.2m wide.

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

Eleven pits (0077, 0194, 0203, 0226, 0243, 0279, 0280, 0289, 0301, 0305, 0338) and a hearth (0339) belonged to this period. Pit 0279 contained an ELS pottery assemblage but cut EMED pit 0280 and was cut by EMED pit 0305.

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

A cemetery, two or three buildings, two ditches (0073, 0074), five pits (0036, 0038, 0047, 0193, 0287) and a slot (0146) clearly belonged to this period.

Context		MS	THET	EMW	LMED COARSE	LMED GLAZE	STONE WARE
0005	wall	2	1		1		
0021	floor				11		

0028	floor	3			118	10	1
0036	pit					3	
0130	floor	1	6	2			
0073	ditch				9		
0074	ditch	1	4		5		
0038	pit	3	6	1	5	10	
0047	pit				6		
0146	slot			1		1	
0193	pit					2	
0287	pit	1	6	1		3	
0018	grave					9	
0033	grave		1			1	
0002 (0019)	burial			2	15		
0046 (0051)	grave	1	2		9		

The above table lists those contexts which appear to be LMED, on the basis of the associated pottery, and indicates that the site was used for both burial and domestic occupation during this period. The two uses are unlikely to be contemporary and, using the limited stratigraphic evidence, three phases are suggested to reconcile this: Phase 1 (late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> century): roadside ditches (0073, 0074) and ?cemetery. Phase 2 (late 13<sup>th</sup>/early 14<sup>th</sup> century): buildings (clay floors 0021, 0028, 0130), pits (0036, 0038, 0047, , 0193, 0287) and slot (0146) Phase 3 (later 14<sup>th</sup> century/early 15<sup>th</sup> century): cemetery (graves 0018, 0019, 0033, 0046).

Wall 0005 is more likely to be later (LMT).

### Phase 1 ditches

A double ditch (0073, 0074), running alongside the edge of Key Street represents a road side ditch, and may have defined the south edge of the earliest phase of the cemetery, or pre-dated it. It certainly provides the earliest evidence for the date of Key Street. The latest pottery in the ditches was late 12<sup>th</sup> century/early 13<sup>th</sup> century coarse-wares, and at least one burial (0210) was cut into it after it had gone out of use.

### Phase 2 Building(s)

There were three areas of a clay layer (0021, 0028, 0130), 30cm thick, across the south end of the site, sealing some underlying burials. The pottery associated was almost exclusively LMED coarse and glazed wares of late 13/early 14<sup>th</sup> century date, apart from one LMT stoneware sherd in 0028, which is likely to be intrusive.

Clay floor 0021 was on the west side of the site and 8m back from Key Street It was rectangular, 3.5m wide and over 3m long. Adjacent and west of 0021 was a cobbled surface (0067), recessed into the clay, possibly indicating a doorway.

Clay floors 0028, 0130 were to the south and south-east of floor 0021 and adjacent to Key Street. Floor 0028 was 4m by 2m but truncated on its south side by the PMED building 0010 and ran into the unexcavated area to the east.

Floor 0130 was over 4m long and 3m wide and was truncated by PMED walls at its east end (0150) and west end (0102). It is possible that floors 0028 and 0130 were the same floor but this must remain unresolved as the area between them was not excavated). It is also possible floor 0028 was the south end of a north-south range including floor 0021.

An east-west row of three postholes (0068, 0069, 0070) 1.5m west of and in line with the north side of floor 0028, could relate to these structures.

A second area of cobbled surface (0007), on the west edge of the site, may indicate a yard surface or entrance lane from Key Street.

### **Phase 1 and 3 Cemetery**

A total of 53 graves produced skeletal remains of 61 separate individuals (Birkett 1984). They were restricted to the south-east corner of the site with none found north-west of a diagonal line extending from the south-west corner of the site to a point 20m northward along the east edge of excavation, but with no trace of any physical boundary. The cemetery continued eastwards, outside of the excavation area. The bodies were all supine, in shallow graves mainly orientated east-west. In some instances the depth of the grave was too shallow to cut the surface of the natural, making grave edges difficult to define and increasing the potential for damage after burial. The general condition of most of the bodies was poor with the bones often being fragmented or eroded.

How many of these burials are LMED in date as opposed to Anglo-Saxon cannot be determined without radiocarbon dating. Only six graves produced pottery from their fills, with only four (0018, 0019, 0033, 0046) containing LMED wares, all lying at the far western edge of the cemetery.

The main cemetery clearly lay to the east of the site and it would appear that the western edge was not clearly defined. Some of the burials underlying the 14<sup>th</sup> century buildings could be 13<sup>th</sup> century (and/or Anglo-Saxon) and some of the burials also cut the buildings and are later. The only three burials with LMED pottery do lie between floors 0021 and 0028 and contain identical wares to those associated with the floors implying that that they were later and had been cut through floor areas of which no trace survives.

It seems possible that the western edge of the cemetery was encroached upon for domestic occupation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but that the area was reclaimed for burial after the abandonment of the buildings in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The medieval cemetery is obscure in the documentary records but there is one reference, in the Ipswich Recognition Rolls for the year 1347-8, which refers to a message of John Hered being east of 'the cemetery of the former church of Osterbolt' (SRO C5/5). This is clearly not a dedication but a geographic description. Osterbolt appears to mean east gate and refers to the location near the town's east gate 75m due north. 'Oster' is from the Old Norse *austr* (east).

### **Pits**

Only five pits belong to this period (0036, 0038, 0047, 0193, 0287) all but one of which (0287) lay at the far south of the site, within the area of the cemetery. The LMED glazed pottery associated with the pits is identical to that associated with the clay floors 0021 and 0028.

Pit 0036 was filled with clay identical to the clay layers 0021, 0028, 0130. It was 2.3m long, 1.2m wide and 30cm deep and cut the area of human bone 0035. It seems likely that pit 0036 was a disinterment of a grave of which the bones (0035) are the only remnants and that it was cut and filled as part of the laying of clay floor 0021. Pit 0038 was sealed by floor 0021 and pit 0047 was cut by the LMT wall 0005.

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

One possible building, two walls, and four pits (0219, 0276, 0319, 0326) belonged to this period.

### **Building 0310**

An 'L'-shaped footing trench (0310), at the north end of the site, appears to define the north-eastern corner of a building. The trench was 1.1m wide and 55cm deep and produced ten sherds of LMT pottery.

### **Wall 0005**

This north-south flint, mortar and clay wall, on the west side of the site, was over 5m long and 30cm wide. It was truncated at its south end by PMED building 0010 and its north end ran into the unexcavated area. Although there is one medieval coarse sherd associated, it cuts LMED pits 0036 and 0047 and the LMED cobbled area 0067. It is likely to be the west wall of a north-south building range. As no evidence of an east wall was revealed, the building would have exceeded 5.5m in width (and the east wall lay in the unexcavated area).

### **Wall 0180**

On the east of the site, sections of a north-south stone wall (0180, 0232, 0258) were found resting on a footing trench (0081), 27m long. This appears to be the west wall of a building which lay east of the excavated area or a tenement boundary. What appear to be traces of a stone yard or flooring (0259) were found east of wall 0258 at the north end of the site. The wall survived best at the south end (0180) where it was 35cm wide and well-built out of septaria and flint with a covered brick drain on its outer edge.

John Ogilby's map of Ipswich, dated 1674, shows the site occupied by buildings on all four sides of a quadrangular courtyard with a gap for an entrance from Key Street and the buildings suggested by walls 0005 and 0180 undoubtedly represent the west and east ranges of this complex. The south range was removed by the construction of PMED building 0010.

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

A layer of rubble (0013), overlying the LMED clay floors (0021, 0028) and cemetery, contained six 17th century tokens (0002/5901N - 0006/5901N, 0008/5901N), a worn silver shilling of James I and an 1862 halfpenny, which was intrusive. This implies that the courtyard building shown in 1674 was demolished, ground levels raised and the site developed at the very end of the 17th century. The LMT wall 0005 was, however, retained as a tenement boundary as it appears on the 1884 OS map of the town.

### Phase 1 (17<sup>th</sup> century)

#### **Polygonal structure 0093**

A polygonal brick structure (0093), 2m by 2.3m, with an entrance on its west side lay along the east boundary of the site, 11m north of Key Street. It appears to cut the LMT wall 0180 and was filled in the late 17th century. The base of the structure was below ground with access via a sloping pit outside the doorway, implying that it was built prior to the ground surface raising (0013).

### Phase 2 (late 17<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century)

#### **Buildings**

The west and north walls (0010, 0014, 0015, 0020) of a brick building (0010) were recorded fronting Key Street, with a chimney stack in the north wall (0034). The floor, laid directly over the LMED clay floor 0028, was well defined in the area adjacent to the north wall and comprised an area of stone slabs (0004), edged with floor bricks and a single row of floor tiles (0006).

There were three north-south walls brick walls (0102, 0150, 0224), in the south-east of the site and a north-south wall (0321), set in foundation trench 0322, at the north end of the site. All the recorded walls can all be related to the buildings shown on the 1884 OS map of the town.

A number of other shallow rectangular structures (0080, 0261, 0268, 0286) indicate the existence of further outbuildings to the rear of the Key Street frontage and a drain was recorded in the south-east corner of the site, comprising a brick base, brick walls and a brick capping (0151). In addition, some surface water drained into a brick-lined soak-away (0025).

***Modern: c.1900 onwards (MOD)***

All the buildings on the site were probably destroyed during a Zeppelin raid in 1916 (Smith, Wylie, Malster and Kindred 2002, 75-76).

The site was then cleared and a light structure erected to be used as William Brown's timber yard. This structure was demolished prior to the excavation and road scheme. Two north-south piped drain runs (0082, 0282) were associated with this structure.

**References**

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