

Site name: Vernon Street

Site ref: IAS 7402 HER ref: IPS 141 CIMS Accession No: IPSMG:R.2009.42

NGR: TM16414384 Extent 457 sq m

Circumstances of excavation

This was an opportunistic excavation by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit in 1975 on waste land owned by Ipswich Borough Council and earmarked for development. Initially an area of 165 sq m was excavated at the far north of the site, nearest Stoke Bridge, but this was devoid of Anglo-Saxon occupation and a further area of 292 sq m was opened to the south. In both areas the 40-50cm of Victorian foundations and garden soil were stripped by machine and the features revealed excavated by hand.

Site constraints

The only constraints were the basements of Victorian housing, which had destroyed archaeological levels along the Vernon Street frontage.

Funding bodies

The excavation was funded by Suffolk County Council and the Department of the Environment (Ancient Monuments Branch).

Stratigraphic Sequence (by period)

Middle Saxon: c.700-850 (MS)

A ditch, six pits, postholes, and a linear foundation trench belonged to this period. The site produced one sceatta (*0001/7402N*) and 1,364 sherds of Ipswich ware of which 916 came from ditch *0090*. At least three phases of MS activity were represented as pit *0155* was cut by ditch *0090* which is cut by three pits (*0237, 0307, 0317*). However, pit *0317*, which was only partially excavated, had only two Ipswich ware sherds and its dating must be uncertain as it cuts ditch *0090*, with abundant Ipswich ware, and could be PMED like nearby pits dated by small numbers of PMED sherds.

Ditch 0090

A large ditch, 4m wide and 1.6-1.8m deep, ran north-south across the site. The lower 60cm was silted with sands and gravels but the upper metre, especially at the south end, included a thick layer of rubbish (oyster shell, animal bone, pottery, charcoal, metal objects, the single sceatta (*0001/7402N*), etc). Below this it was difficult to establish the precise base of the ditch, at one point, as a disturbance of unknown depth was found.

Pits

Six pits (*0138, 0155, 0237, 0281, 0307, 0317*) contained Ipswich ware and a further three were aceramic, but of similar character (*0260, 0131, 0136*). Pit *0136* was cut by *0138*, a

definite MS pit. They were all medium-sized, shallow, and fairly unproductive of finds, except for *0281*.

?Structure

A north-south foundation trench (*0145*), c.10m long, 60cm wide and 20-50cm deep, on the east side of ditch *0090*, was cut into two sections (*0145*, *0149*) by PMED pit *0148*.

The trench had an irregular base and contained many pieces of septaria, which appeared to be the packing for vertical posts set into it in two places (*0153*, *0154*). The south end comprised two separated irregular parts (*0152*, *0242*).

Just south of trench *0145* was a group of 12 postholes (*0097*, *0147*, *0176*, *0201*, *0202*, *0208*, *0213*, *0217*, *0230*, *0231*, *0238*, *0239*). Postholes *0230* and *0231*, adjacent to the south end of trench *0145*, look like a return eastward of that trench and *0231* also had septaria in its fill. The postholes south of this form a rectangular structure, roughly 3m by 2m. It is quite possible that foundation trench *0145* is the east side of a building with the postholes forming a porch at the mid-point of its south end. The postholes contained no datable finds which is suggestive of an early (MS) date and trench *0145* had one Ipswich ware sherd.

?Structure

An east-west line of undated short slots (*0192*, *0197*, *0198*) lay west of ditch *0090* and its east end was probably cut by it. Slot (*0226*), 3m north of this line, was also probably cut by ditch *0090* and contained one Ipswich ware sherd. To the west of *0226* there were three undated postholes (*0207*, *0209*, *0236*).

Late Saxon/Early Medieval: c.850-1200 (ELS, MLS, EMED)

Occupation during these periods was absent. There were only 19 Thetford ware sherds and 6 EMED sherds from the whole site. One posthole (*0141*) and one pit (*0074*) contained one Thetford ware sherd each which is far from secure as dating evidence. Similarly, slot *0199*, with 1 EMED sherd was only partially excavated and there were no certain EMED contexts.

Late Medieval: c.1200-1450 (LMED)

Two pits (*0012*, *0280*) belonged to this period and there were only 52 LMED sherds from the site.

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

Three pits (*0015*, *0048*, *0178*) belong to this period and possibly one posthole (*0196*) and one short slot (*0206*). Pit *0178*, 7.5m wide and 2.5m deep, was presumably a sand extraction pit.

Post Medieval: c.1600-1900 (PMED)

Two parallel field drains (0010, 0073), 2.5m apart, with interlocking fired clay pipes, running north-south at the north end of the site and five pits belonged to the 17th/18th century.

The remaining features were 19th or 20th century. Three large pits (0148, 0215, 0216) were dug in the early 19th century and probably provided ballast for the construction of Vernon Street, adjacent to the site, which took place sometime between 1778 (Pennington) and 1867 (White).

The second half of the 19th century saw the development of the eastern frontage of Vernon Street with terraced housing. Three houses were built by 1867 and presumably the rest by 1884 (Ordnance Survey).

The area excavated was for the most part 'backyards' and consequently contained the square brick floors of outside toilets (0137, 0142, 0143, 0222), circular wells/soakaways (0060, 0135, 0218, 0224, 0292) and pits, together with the foundations of the rear ranges of the actual houses (0027) in the north-west corner of the site.

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