

**Site name: St. Nicholas Street**

Site ref: IAS 4201      HER ref: IPS 744      CIMS Accession No: IPSMG:R.2009.59

NGR: TM16244438    Extent: 60 sq m

**Circumstances of excavation**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century Congregational Chapel, on the east side of St. Nicholas Street, was demolished in late 1982 as a part of a redevelopment programme for the site. The chapel, 36m long by 14m wide, lay 5m back from the street edge and there was an associated graveyard to the rear. The Suffolk Archaeological Unit was given permission to excavate the site in 1983.

**Site Constraints**

The removal of the Victorian inhumations for reburial, by a specialist company (Necropolis), was observed by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit as a watching brief. The use of an open-cast mining technique with a mechanical excavator caused such extensive destruction to the underlying archaeological deposits that the archaeological excavation of this area was pointless.

Excavation was confined to the footprint of the demolished chapel but was constrained by the proximity of the highway (St Nicholas Street) and adjacent buildings and the depth of deposits (over 3m). The battering required resulted in a trench measuring some 13m by 13m at the surface, reducing to an area of excavation less than 60m<sup>2</sup>.

The site had been so heavily disturbed by rubbish pits that surviving traces of the natural plateau were only found in isolated places on the west and east sides of the trench.

**Funding bodies**

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

**Stratigraphic Sequence (by period)**

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

Two pits (0040 and 0077) almost certainly belong to this period. Pit 0077 (cut by ELS pit 0003) was filled with re-deposited natural and no pottery. 0040 (cut by four EMED pits) contained 72 sherds of Ipswich ware, one MS import and one EMED sherd. The dominance of Ipswich ware implies that the single EMED sherd is contamination from the cutting EMED pits. Two sceattas were recovered, one (0001/4201N) was residual in the probable MLS pit 0027 and the second (0002/4201N) in LMT pit 0056 (layer 0058).

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

Five pits certainly belong to this period (0003, 0033, 0048, 0052, 0073). In addition, pit 0077, with no pottery may be ELS or MS. Pit 0033 was a large flat bottomed feature, 3.8m wide by over 5m long and 90cm deep, with almost vertical sides. Because so little of its edge survived, there was little indication of its true shape. It was filled with distinct layers of sand, clay, charcoal and loam.

The shape might indicate a sunken-featured building but it was so heavily truncated that any post holes along the edges would have been removed.

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

Five pits (0008, 0011, 0026, 0036, 0042) certainly belong to this period, with pit 0042 cutting the backfilling of 0008. In addition, pit 0027, although containing an ELS pottery assemblage, is most likely MLS in date as it cuts MLS pits 0026, and is cut by EMED pit 0019.

Sections through the pits suggest the possibility of a further shallow MLS pit (0084) cut by MLS pits 0008 and 0042.

Pit 0042, 1.4m deep, had evidence of a timber lining but appears too shallow to have functioned as a well. A circle of vertical stakes was clearly visible surrounding the inner fill.

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

Seven pits certainly belong to this period (0013, 0016, 0019, 0030, 0043, 0054, 0061). In addition pit 0060 may be ELS, MLS or EMED. No finds are recorded from it but it is cut by three EMED pits (0043, 0054, 0061) and cuts pit 0040, which it is argued could be MS.

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

Two pits (0004, 0056), one well (0002) and one probable well (0031) belong to this period.

The pit of well 0002, c. 1.5m in diameter, contained a flint, mortar and pin tile lined well shaft with a diameter of c. 80cm, the top 70cm of which had been demolished during the back-filling of the shaft. The shaft was not fully excavated and no record of the height of the local water-table recorded. Pit 0031 was clay-filled which appeared to be the plugging of a shaft on abandonment.

***Undated***

Two post holes (0063, 0067) remain undated. Posthole 0067 lay on the western edge of ELS pit 0003, but no relationship between the two features could be ascertained.

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