

Site name: Cecilia Street

Site ref: IAS 5001 HER ref. IPS 264 CIMS Accession No. IPSMG:R.2009.37

NGR TM16064420 Extent: 184 sq m

Circumstances of Excavation

The site was open space within and to the rear of the Greyfriars' development of commercial and residential units erected in c.1968. It was known to lie within the precinct of the medieval friary of the Greyfriars and adjacent to the known course of the River Gipping, which ran south to join the river Orwell at Stoke Bridge and was piped under Cecilia Street to the south in the late 19th century. The excavation was a pro-active evaluation prior to landscaping in 1974.

Site Constraints

The only constraints were financial and the likelihood of excavation below the water table being required. Three NE - SW orientated trenches were cut at regular intervals across the site (*0001, 0031, 0152*). Trench *0152* was abandoned after machining, on health and safety grounds, with minimal recording.

Funding bodies

The excavations were conducted by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit and funded by DoE Ancient Monuments Branch and Suffolk County Council.

Stratigraphic Sequence (by period)

Trenches *0001* and *0031* were machine dug down to medieval levels and then excavated by hand. An extension to trench *0001* was, cut in a south-easterly direction, to provide additional evidence.

Natural sand and gravel was encountered 1.4m below present ground surface in Trench *0031* but, in trench *0001*, it was a stiff marsh clay found at a depth of around 2.2m (0.4m OD).

The breakdown of context type was:

Layers: 82

Timber structures: 6

Boundaries: 1

Pits: 1

Slots: 2

No pre medieval contexts were encountered. One sherd of Ipswich ware and 15 sherds of Thetford ware were found residual in later contexts and indicate sparse activity on the river bank during the Anglo-Saxon period.

Late Medieval: c.1200-1450 (LMED)

Phase1: pre 1300?

Revetment 0157

At the south end of trench *0001*, a short length of timber revetment (*0157*) was found at right angles to the river channel. It comprised a row of vertical planks (*0081, 0082*) and wooden stakes (*0083, 0085*) supporting a horizontal plank (*0084*). The vertical timbers survived to a height of some 0.35m, and appeared to

have been driven into the underlying alluvial deposits, and the horizontal plank placed behind.

The revetment appears to define the edge of a pre-existing inlet and suggests use as a mooring area. It was truncated at the south end by the construction trench (0154) for the phase 2 precinct wall (0017). There was no evidence of it south of wall 0017, but it continued beyond the edge of the excavation to the north-east. The inlet had been open water for some time as some 0.4m of silt (layers 0047, 0046) had built up against the revetment. Preserved textile (0073) was associated with the timbers and a sherd of Thetford ware was recovered from layer 0047 where it must be residual. The lack of any intervening activity prior to phase 2 implies that 0157 immediately precedes it.

As marsh clay underlay the whole of trench 0001, but not trench 0031, and further alluvial deposition layers were recorded at the far north-eastern end of trench 0001 (0006, 0007, 0008, 0009) the inlet presumably represents either a meander of the River Gipping on the edge of the flood plain or a tributary running into the river from the north-east.

Phase2: c.1300-1450?

The Greyfriars' Precinct Wall (0017, 0074)

A substantial stone wall (0017, 0074) was found, running NW - SE at the south end of all three trenches on the line of the precinct boundary of the Greyfriars. In Trench 0031, the wall's foundation trench (0153), 2.5-3m wide and over 1m deep, had been cut through alluvial deposits at the junction between the old river bank and the marsh and the base filled with sand and gravel (0099, 0123, 0150). The trench had been supported on both its outer and inner edges with timber revetments (0155, 0156). The south revetment (0155) comprised four posts (0096, 0097, 0098, 0130) holding a horizontal plank (0095) and the northern one (0156) comprised three posts (0113, 0114, 0118) and four horizontal planks (0111, 0115, 0116, 0117). Four planks (0091-0094) lay between the *in situ* revetment -0156 and stone wall 0074, where they had fallen during the backfill of the trench.

In Trench 0001, the foundation trench 0154 was lined with woven wickerwork on the south side (0087), and on the north side with a sill beam with mortice holes (0086) suggesting that vertical planks had been inserted to retain the footing fill. As with Trench 0031, it had been backfilled with layers of gravel and sand (0015, 0016, 0139, 0140, 0141, 0142, 0144) as a firm base for the stone wall. A septaria and mortar wall (0017, 0074), some 0.90m wide was built on top of the gravel footing, with backfilled material being deposited in layers to fill the gap between the river bank and the inner face of the wall (layers 0012 in trench 0001 and 0036, 0037, 0038 in trench 0031). The construction trenches for the walls contained no pottery later than 14th century. Once the wall was built, ground levels behind were raised but when, is uncertain, as the fill was of homogeneous loam (0004 and 0106).

Bank 0159

The layers (0018-0020) form a bank (0159) to the north of the foundation trench (0154) in trench 0001. It could be up-cast from its excavation, some of which was then backfilled into the trench on completion of the wall, but it is mainly gravel and not silt which would have been excavated. Alternatively, it could

predate the cutting of the foundation trench and represent up-cast from the construction of the phase 1 revetment (0157) but this too was cut into silt. It is most likely to be the unused remnants of the pile of gravel brought in to fill the base of the construction trench 0154.

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

A number of layers, spreading out towards the river from the base of the precinct wall are present in both trenches and all seem to be associated with Cologne stoneware (16th century).

In trench 0001, layers 0029, 0039 and 0041, cut across the top of the wicker lining, and represent alluvial clay deposition. Finds included leather fragments (0027, 0030) from layer 0029. A number of later layers (0137, 0028, 0136) appear to be associated with the deposition of building rubble (mortar, building stone, floor tile and roof tile) onto the riverbank from over the wall.

In trench 0031, there were similar layers of building rubble (0042, 0043, 0044, 0075, 0089, 0101, 0102, 0122, 0148), including a lead window kame and glass fragments (0050) from layer 0043. The deeper silt deposits (0049, 0068, 0076, 0079), where sampled, included finds of LMT stoneware and leatherwork (0052, 0070, 0077, 0080).

It is assumed that this demolition material was associated with the dissolution of the Ipswich Greyfriars in 1538, but it is unclear when the precinct wall was demolished to ground level. It is still clearly evident on the Smart Memorial, dated to 1600, while, as late as 1674 (Ogilby's map of Ipswich) the church and many of the peripheral buildings were still standing.

Timber Structure 0158

A timber structure (0158), driven into the top of the river silts (0049, 0068, 0076, 0079) in trench 0031, comprised two parallel and north-south post and plank walls, 1.1m apart, with a line of east-west posts, 1.5m to the south-west. The north 'wall' was made up of two planks (0062, 0063) sloping at 45 degrees, four vertical posts (0058, 0060, 0061, 0109) with a horizontal plank (0059). The south 'wall' had three vertical posts (0066, 0072, 0127) and one plank (0065). A layer of sand (0064) lay between the two 'walls'. The line of rounded posts due west (0054, 0055, 0056, 0057) was surrounded by sand (0053).

There is no direct evidence of function. It could be a small jetty allowing access to the river channel across the mud but the planking would imply that it was more like a container and, in freshwater, this might suggest oyster farming or eel catching.

The dating of finds from around the posts suggests that the structure is no later than 16th century in date. Timbers were submitted to the DOE dendrochronology laboratory at Sheffield for tree-ring analysis but unfortunately no dating was possible. A copy of the report on this analysis is lodged in the digital archive (R016).

Post medieval: c.1600-1900 (PMED)

By the late 18th century all the monastic buildings had gone (Pennington 1778) and the area appears to have been a bowling green and gardens. During the 19th century the river was channelled underground and the Wolsey Street frontage was developed with terraced housing (White 1867 and Ordnance Survey 1884).

Ipswich Archive Site Summaries

The top levels of the site in trench 0001 (0002, 0003), 0.3-1.0m deep, was topsoil with predominantly 19th century finds, and footings of buildings that had occupied the site prior to clearance for the construction of the Greyfriars complex. The foundation (0011) in trench 0001 is probably the base of a garden wall relating to the terraced houses which fronted Wolsey Street and the tarmac surface (0107), 20-50cm below ground surface in trench 0031, relates to the 20th century timber yard behind.

Undated

A number of features (0032-0035), cutting the natural subsoil surface, in trench 0031, are undated apart from pit 0032 which is described as 'large modern pit cut from the modern surface'.

Finds

The leather fragments included the sole of a shoe (0080) in layer 0079. The lead kame and glass fragments (0050 from layer 0043) presumably derive from the demolition of the Greyfriars in 1538.

Research Potential

The evidence needs to be combined with that from other sites to analyse the water management of the Town Marsh to the south-west, the Gipping channel and Stour Navigation to the north of the marsh, the suggested tributary running north-east of the site, and the operation of the mills at Horswade, to the north-west of the site and Stoke Mill to the south-east.

Keith Wade 2013