

Site name: Bridge Street

Site Ref: IAS 6202 HER ref: IPS 378 CIMS Accession No: IPSMG:R.2009.52

NGR: TM16294406 Extent: 365 sq m

Circumstances of excavation

The 'Stoke Bridge and approaches' road scheme in 1981 involved the construction of a new bridge across the River Orwell, adjacent to Stoke Bridge, and two new roundabouts, north of the bridge and west of Bridge Street. The scheme also included a storm water relief drain under the new carriageway.

Suffolk County Council's Highways Department gave the Suffolk Archaeological Unit permission to excavate five trenches prior to highway works.

The two northern trenches were recorded as Greyfriars Road (IAS5201) and Greyfriars Road/St Peters Street (IAS5202). The southern three were recorded as Bridge Street (IAS6202, trenches 0001, 0550, and 0620).

Site constraints

The County Surveyor would not agree to excavation on the new carriageway lines other than on the route of the storm drain. Consequently, the main area of excavation (trench 0001) was located on what was to be a traffic island between Bridge Street and the replacement carriageway to the west.

The timbers were analysed for species (Murphy 1983) and 79 timbers were submitted for tree ring dating. The majority were unsuitable and only two structures could be dated (Hillam 1985).

Funding Bodies

Suffolk County Council, Department of the Environment (Ancient Monuments Branch) and Manpower Services Commission (Youth Opportunities Scheme).

TRENCH IAS 6202 0001

This was located west of the Bridge Street frontage with the north edge against the cellar of the Crown Inn which had stood on the corner of Greyfriars Road and Bridge Street. Shallow deposits were excavated over an area 27m north-south, by 13m east-west. Following this, the waterlogged layers below were investigated in a trench, 26m north-south by 3m wide, which required continuous trench sheeting and the pumping of groundwater.

See scan SC003.tif for the sequence of timber structures in section/plan.

Stratigraphic sequence (by period)

Early Middle Saxon, c.600-700(EMS)

Two timber structures (0448, 0404) belonged to this period associated with 6 handmade pottery sherds, 1 Romano-British sherd and no Ipswich ware.

Phase 1

Structure 0448

This revetment, set into layer *0447*, comprised a row of stakes running parallel with the bank. As there was no difference between the layers on either side of the row of stakes, it had either been heavily eroded through time or had never acted as an impervious revetment.

Phase 2

Revetment 0404

This comprised tree roots (*0430, 0431, 0435*) and cut timbers, secured by a series of vertical posts (*0437, 0495, 0433, 0432, 0436*), many of which leaned towards the river, indicating dilapidation prior to replacement. The timbers were set into a layer of reddish-grey organic clay (*0459/0489*), and covered with a layer of fine organic matter (*0487*) overlaid by a grey gritty sand and gravel layer (*0445*). The cut timbers included round posts (*0427, 0428, 0493, 0494*) and planks (*0429, 0434*).

Middle Saxon, c.700-850(MS)

Two revetments (*0386, 0439*) belonged to this period, associated with Ipswich ware.

Phase 1

Revetment 0386

This consisted of vertical posts (*0391-0396, 0408-0413, 0420-0427, 0438*) interlaced with horizontally hazel withies. The posts were driven deep into silt layer *0447* with reclamation layers *0414* and *0401* behind, containing 1 Ipswich ware sherd, 1 MS imported sherd and 2 handmade EMS sherds. The lower edge of the withies corresponded to the base of layer *0414*.

0386 does not appear to have collapsed, but was replaced by revetment *0439*, 3m to the south.

Phase 2

Revetment 0439

This was a similar structure to its predecessor (*0386*). Deep vertical posts (*0440-0444, 0449-0454*) were driven into the silt and gravel layer (*0447*) and interlaced withies started above this level. Two layers of backfill reclamation lay behind: a layer of organic greyish brown clay (*0446*), overlain by finer organic clay, containing much matted grass and shell (*0403*), which contained 23 Ipswich ware sherds and 5 MS imported sherds.

Early Late Saxon, c.850-900 (ELS)

Layer *0400/0402*, an organic clay with much shell, lay over the top of revetment *0439*, and it is possible that another timber revetment, not reached in excavation, was constructed further into the river to consolidate this layer. The pottery associated included 25 Thetford ware sherds, 17 Ipswich ware sherds and 2 probable MS imports.

Middle Late Saxon, c.900-1000(MLS)

Structure 0384

A series of small stakes and withies (*0387-0390*) were set through layer *0400/0402* and surrounded and covered by MLS layers *0385/0398/0399*.

Early Medieval, c.1000-1200(EMED)

Phase 1

Two linear timber structures (*0500, 0258*) were set through layer *0385/0398/0399* and surrounded and covered by EMED layer *0259/0383*. The area between *0500* and *0258* was a hollow presumably the result of tidal scouring or an inter-tidal oyster pit. Layer *0261*, on the riverside of *0258*, was composed of organic clay, containing a prolific quantity of oyster shell.

Structure 0500

This was a line of posts (*0397, 0415-0419*), roughly N-S, of unknown use.

Revetment 0258

This line of small and medium sized, closely spaced wooden posts, tied together, lay 6.6m south of structure *0500*.

Phase 2

Revetment 0275

This series of small stakes (*0270-74, 0276-0339, 0344-45, 0347, 0349-71*) was set into layer *0259/0383* and surrounded and covered by layer *0255/0257/0372*. Layer *0257* produced a brass ingot (*0020/6202Cu*) (Hook 1988).

Phase 3

Revetment 0254

This sturdy revetment comprised a continuous row of vertical planks (*0256, 0264, 0265, 0268, 0269*) held in place by large vertical posts (*0263, 0266, 0343, 0346, 0348*) against their outer surface. This effectively allowed the ground level behind the revetment to be raised by at least 40cm, with layers of black organic material (*0252*) and dark brown shelly clay loam (*0380*).

Phase 4

A 4.6m strip of the channel, on the riverside of revetment *0254*, was raised by 70-80cm with the tipping of successive layers in front of it (*0248-0251*).

Phase 5

Structure 0204

This structure comprised a series of horizontally laid round branches (*0206-0210*), resting one above the other, secured by long vertical pegs set into a square sill beam (*0205*). The whole structure had fallen over backwards towards the bank, indicating that it was a free-standing structure rather than a revetment with reclamation behind it.

Late Medieval, c.1200-1450 (LMED)

Phase 1

Post Group 0499

A group (0499) of vertical posts (0198, 0201, 0211-0213, 0340-0342) lay on the river side of reclamations layers 0226 and 0247, containing pottery of the later 12th/early 13th century. It was not possible to excavate them to their bases and determine their date of origin but they could have been mooring posts, dating to an earlier period.

Phase 2

Post group 0499 was sealed by reclamation layers 0202, 0192, 0177 and 0216, which was a layer of gritty sand and gravel, containing a number of large blocks of septaria.

Phase 3

Revetment 0175

Layer 0216 was used as the foundation for this timber revetment, composed of vertical planking, with reclamation layer 0176 behind. The vertical planks (0178-0189, 0193-0196, 0229-0245) were pegged into a horizontal beam (0197) behind them. The structure finally collapsed with layer 0176 spilling over the collapsed planks and burying them below. Tree ring dating of the timbers from this revetment indicated that it was constructed sometime after 1232 AD (Hillam 1985).

Phase 4

Post Group 0498

This group of posts was set into and surrounded by layer 0145, which included Rouen Glazed Ware in its pottery assemblage, indicating a mid 13th century date. There were 16 timbers (0133-0144, 0167, 0190-0191, 0215) mainly squared and vertical but four were horizontal (0133-0136). They did not appear to be structural and could be mooring posts.

Phase 5

Stone Wall 0169

Only the north side of this septaria and mortar wall could be excavated as permission to excavate further south was not granted.

The wall had been constructed within a timber framework (0170). A large squared oak beam (0224) lay below the wall and at right angles to it. A similarly large horizontal oak timber (0223), had been lap-jointed into the top of this, running parallel with the inside face of the wall and a vertical post (0222) morticed into it. Four overlapping horizontal planks (0217, 0218, 0219, 0220) had been attached to the outer face of the post.

This timber frame, inserted into the construction trench for the wall, acted as shuttering against the reclamation layers behind (0216, 0176, 0145), during the construction of the wall.

Tree ring dating of the timbers suggests that the timber framework had been constructed later than 1303 AD (Hillam 1985)

The stone wall was 2m high and 90cm thick at its base, narrowing to 60cm at the top. Only the top 45cm of stonework was faced, showing that the area behind the wall had been raised level with the base of the dressed stonework, at c.2m OD.

Phase 6

The area behind wall 0169 was raised with a series of layers (0132, 0123, 0057, 0058) up to c.2m OD allowing development of the reclaimed area fronting Bridge Street.

Building 0075

This building lay 14m north of wall 0169. Only the west end lay within the excavated area and it presumably continued eastward to Bridge Street. The west end had been removed by pipe trench 0063.

The south wall comprised a footing of septaria and some flint (0075), set into a craggy clay matrix, the southern edge of which had been robbed (0100) and backfilled with clayey loam. The north wall was represented by robbing trench 0085, backfilled with some septaria blocks, flint and chalk rubble.

A clay floor (0116), 15-20cm thick, incorporating many large cobbles, and burnt over much of its area, lay between the walls. A thinner band of clay (0084), also burnt in parts, overlay layer 0116, and was the only remnant of a re-flooring.

Assuming that the building was orientated east-west, it was 4.15m wide, by an undetermined length, and of timber framed construction on dwarf stone walls. The residue of a post hole (0503), in layer 0083, lying directly above footing 0075, appeared to be a rotted out post, filled with material derived from the later overburden.

Layer 0083, a dark brown clay loam with much charcoal, probably represented the residue of material associated with the building's demolition.

A linear trench (0105) cut the floor (0084) of the building. This, in turn, was cut by a pipe trench (0063), suggesting that the building had already fallen out of use by the time of its construction.

Phase 7

Pipe trench 0063

A linear trench, 40cm wide, containing a lead pipe, ran north-south across the site, just east of and parallel to LMT wall 0070. The trench deepened progressively from north to south and the pipe dropped by a metre over a distance of fifteen metres. At its south end, the pipe was at a level of only 0.87m OD. The pipe was surrounded with clay (0103) and was certainly a conduit for water. The fill of the pipe trench was partially covered by the clay base of an oven (0043).

This pipe must be the one which carried water from the 'fountain' in Stoke, across the river and millpond, south of the site, to the Priory of St Peter and St Paul, 75m north-east of the site. In 1491, when the town bailiffs acquired control of the mill, the Prior reserved access for repairing the aqueduct (Malster 2000, 75).

Phase 8

At least three ovens were located from 3-8m north of wall 0169. Although there was no evidence of their function, bread making seems most likely.

Oven 0043

This oven was c.2m long by 80cm wide. The bottom 30cm of the oven walls and the floor were cut out of a solid block of clay, the west edge of which lay over pipe trench 0063. Carbonized wood branches (0157) were recorded on the floor of the oven, sealed by a covering of clay, probably derived from the collapse of the dome.

Oven 0067

This oven, which lay south-east of and back to back with 0043, had been badly damaged by later disturbance (0062), which left only a small portion of the floor (0088) and west wall (0067) intact.

To the south-east of 0067, a number of patches of fired clay (0091) appeared to link this oven complex to the remains of a further oven (0158) in the eastern section.

Oven 0158

The remnants of this oven were recorded in section, above layer 0058, 3m north of wall 0169. The section records horizontal bands of fired clay, interspersed with charcoal spreads, above which a layer of loamy sand was deposited. A final spread of burnt clay, above the general clay fill of layer 0058, was probably the remains of the partially collapsed roof.

Cess Pit 0092

5m north of building 0075, a square cess pit, built of septaria, had been substantially cut away by PMED well 0002. The construction pit (0111) cut the lead pipe trench (0063) and contained LMED pottery only in its filling. Pit 0004, which was thought to be a later cutting feature during excavation, may represent the upper levels of the construction pit.

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

A series of layers (0005), predominantly composed of gravel, were laid above the demolished building (0083) and ovens (0043, 0067, 0158), raising the ground surface by c.30cm. A building or buildings were constructed on layer 0005 but floor surfaces did not survive and the wall footing remains were very shallow and difficult to interpret.

Buildings

A septaria and mortar wall footing (0070), 40cm wide and 20cm high, ran for a length of 9m, from north to south. At its northern end was a doorway (0017), floored with brick. Whether the wall and associated door related to a building fronting Bridge Street is unclear, as no flooring was recorded. The residue of a parallel wall footing (0007), 4.1m to the west, could either be the west wall of the same structure or a courtyard boundary wall. Traces of a brick and cobble surface (0147), suggests a pathway or courtyard west of wall 0007.

Cess pit 0021

This septaria and mortar lined cess pit, 1.2m square, was inserted through wall 0070 and was cut by PMED brick wall 0019. It was excavated to a depth 1.7m but not bottomed. The pit had been backfilled with pin tile rubble, charcoal and mortar lying in a matrix mainly composed of clay. The associated pottery in this final filling was late LMT/early PMED.

Drain 0014

This drain ran from north-west to south-east across the area between walls 0007 and 0070 before continuing the line of wall 0070 southwards. Along the latter, a rubble cap above the drain may imply a continuation of wall 0070 southwards above the drain. The base of the

drain was lined with brick and the side walls constructed of flint and mortar. It was sloping north to south and, at its south end, it cut through revetment wall 0169, providing outfall to the river.

Drain 0024

This drain ran west-east, dipping steeply to a level well below that of 0014, before disappearing, presumably into a sump which was not located. The remnant of a door jamb on its north side, at the point where the drain crossed the line of wall 0007, suggests that the two features may be contemporary, with the drain lying below the threshold of a door in the wall.

Well 0003

This well, east of wall 0017, was constructed in a 1.5m wide pit (0253). The shaft had been sunk to a depth of -0.56m OD and the lower 1m had a timber lining (0379). There were three horizontal layers of willow planking (0468-0479, 0483, 0485-0486), arranged to form a pentagonal shaft. The planks, c.30cm wide, had been mortised together and nailed into vertical posts behind (0480-0482, 0484).

A collar (0373), comprising five pieces of shaped planking (0407, 0463, 0464, 0465, 0466), rested on the five corners of the planked lining, acting as the foundation for the 20cm thick flint, septaria and tile lining (0148) of the upper shaft.

The base of the shaft had been deliberately filled, during construction, with a layer of chalk lumps (0376), presumably been deposited to "sweeten" the water as it rose up from below. Below the chalk lumps, in the base layer (0375), a penny of Elizabeth I suggests a late 16th century construction date and the pottery in its backfill suggests that it been abandoned by 1600.

Post Medieval: C.1600-1900 (PMED)

There was little evidence of early PMED occupation surviving on the site apart from one well. Well 0002 was circular, 1m in diameter, and flint and mortar lined, sitting within a construction pit (0069). The well had cut two earlier features (0055, 0061) that in turn cut LMED cess pit 0092.

Evidence of the later PMED buildings, that had fronted Bridge Street, had been almost entirely removed by the demolition contractors. The only remnants were two brick cellars (0149, 0502), brick wall 0019, and the edge of a brick soak-away (0094), only seen in section.

TRENCH IAS 6202 0550

This was excavated within the shoring inserted for the storm relief drain, 40m west of trench 0001.

Stratigraphic sequence (by period)

Early Middle Saxon, c.600-700(EMS)

Phase 1

Revetment 0604

The earliest layer at the base of the river profile was a 25cm thick layer of brownish grey sand and gravel (0597). Structure 0604, within this layer, comprised three vertical posts (0598, 0599, 0600), with horizontal withies (0601) woven against them. As no significant change in the composition of layer 0597 was detected on either side of the structure, it would seem unlikely that it had achieved any significant consolidation of the river bank. Although no artefacts were recovered, apart from a small fragment of leather, the evidence from trench 0001, to the east, implies that the earliest activity along the river bank is pre Ipswich ware (Early Middle Saxon) and this is the most likely date for 0604.

Phase 2

Revetment 0557

This driftwood revetment, above layer 0597, was very similar to structure 0404 in trench 0001, implying an Early Middle Saxon date. As with 0404, it would seem unlikely to have acted as a major consolidation of the bank, although a layer of oyster shell, behind the structure, indicated that some retention of dumped material had occurred.

Early Late Saxon, c.850-900 (ELS)

Revetment 0605

This comprised a vertical post (0575) with the lower layers of interwoven withies (0578), set well into and surrounded by ELS layer 0559.

Revetment 0602

This structure, 60cm to the south of structure 0605, comprised a series of vertical timbers, interwoven with withies. The posts (0591-0595) had been pushed forwards by the weight of accumulated fill (0582) behind. This had then spilled over the top of the structure, to bury it.

Structure 0603

Five posts (0585- 0588, 0596), 1.8m further south from 0602, had no associated withies and the ELS fill (0582) either side of the post line was the same. This structure is more likely to represent a line of mooring posts.

Pits 0554 and 0555

These pits, on the bank above the edge of the river, both belong to this period.

Early Medieval, c.1000-1200 (EMED)

Successive layers of reclamation (0551, 0553, 0583, 0589, 0565, 0568) were deposited above layer 0559 during this period sealing the earlier revetments.

Revetment 0566

Horizontally laid timbers (0573-0574) were held in place by a number of vertical posts (0567, 0569-0571) driven into the underlying EMED layer 0583/0589, with reclamation layer 0568 behind it. Six wooden chocks (0572, 0579-0581, 0584, 0590) were also associated.

Late Medieval, c.1200-1450 (LMED)

There were no LMED deposits in this trench in direct contrast to trench 0001. This implies that stone wall 0169 in trench 0001, if it continued westward, must run north of trench 0550.

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

LMT layers of fill (0552, 0560-0563) were deposited directly onto the EMED reclamation layers with no associated structures.

Modern(MOD)

0556 was a modern borehole.

TRENCH IAS 6202 0620

This lay 5m north of trench 0550, within the line of the storm water relief channel, on rising ground.

Stratigraphic sequence (by period)

Early Late Saxon, c.850-900(ELS)

One pit (0622) belonged to this period.

Early Medieval, c.1000-1200 (EMED)

One pit (0624) belonged to this period.

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

Phase 1

A shallow ditch (0623) ran north-south and with a butt end (0625) at the north.

Phase 2

Ditch 0621 was a recut of ditch 0623, along its west edge. Unlike ditch 0623 it continued north of the excavated area

A single post hole (0626) was of unknown date.

References

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| Murphy, P., 1983 | <i>Bridge Street, Ipswich (IAS6202) wood</i> |

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