

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY

A NORMAN STONE CROSS FROM THETFORD

by Andy Shelley and Stephen Heywood

During the course of recent archaeological work behind Bridge Street in Thetford (TL 867 830) a stone cross (Plate 1) was discovered in the wall of an adjacent building. This was probably set into the flint rubble walls when the structure, an outbuilding to Beech House, was constructed in the early 19th century. In recent years it has been partially obscured by an outshut which was recently removed. The building, a slightly curious structure reportedly with a full-length cellar, is not shown on Burrell's map of 1807. The alignment of this building is at odds with other nearby landscape features, although coincidentally it matches that predicted for the former Dominican friary, the church of which lay c. 65m to the north (Bellamy 1998, fig. 7).

The cross is fashioned from a fossil-rich limestone, probably Barnack, and measures 0.30m in diameter by 0.56m in height. An originally unrelated stone fragment, probably of Caen, now sits at the base of the shaft, which appears to have been sheared off. The roundel is decorated in the *alisée patée* style (Dirsztay 1993), that is with splayed arms rounded off to form a circle. In the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* (CASSS, www.dur.ac.uk) it most closely resembles cross-head type E8, although this type lacks the ring that borders the Thetford cross. The centre is marked by a second cross, sunken, which may once have been inlaid. Suggestions for the material which may once have filled the inset include metal or niello.

The lack of piercing indicates that the object was probably a grave marker rather than the top of a cross shaft. The style and quality of the workmanship suggests a Norman date, and is reminiscent of the numerous Northumbrian crosses with patée arms. It seems likely that it was



Plate 1 Norman stone cross found at Bridge Street, Thetford

unearthed when the cellars to the building were dug, although its origin is inevitably obscure. It may not be coincidence that the cross lies close to the former grounds of the Dominican friary. These are thought to have originally housed the church of St Mary the Great, which may have been a minster in the Late Saxon period (Davison 1993, 213). By the late 11th century this had developed into the Cathedral of the diocese, although this was short-lived, the See moving to Norwich in 1094 (*ibid.*, 213). The block was thereafter used briefly by the Cluniac monastery in the town before again being abandoned c. 1114 (*ibid.*, 216).

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SEGEFORD HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT: INTERIM REPORT 2004

by Gabriel Moshenska

This report summarises the results of the eighth season of work by SHARP. For further information on our work, including the 2004 season Weblog, please visit www.sharp.org.uk.

Fieldwalking

During the Easter season two fields in the south of the parish were fieldwalked. Despite poor weather, we recovered artefacts dating from the Neolithic to the present, including fragments of Beaker, samian ware and carved masonry. The most spectacular find was the missing terminal of the Sedgeford Torc, a large piece of electrum (gold/silver alloy) with La Tène decoration, which is now reunited with the rest of the torc in the British Museum.

Boneyard Old Trench

A large portion of the southern and northern ends of the trench were excavated down to the level of natural deposits. This showed an area in the western side that was respected by the burials, suggesting the presence of a boundary of some kind. Two ditches appear to mark this boundary, containing large quantities of animal bone and other Saxon era household refuse. Other Saxon features included two east-west aligned linear features, four pits and two small sub-circular cut features.

Further work took place in the area where an Iron Age hoard was recovered in 2003, revealing a small ditched enclosure in the northern end of the trench, while in the southern end a pit was excavated containing Gallo-Belgic pottery; archaeo-environmental work revealed charred grain of various types.

A substantial ditch running E-W across the trench yielded a sizeable assemblage of Roman fineware along with imitation Gallo-Belgic wares. The Roman material comprised around eleven vessels of various types, dating to c. AD 70–80, and appears to have been deliberately deposited in the ditch. The majority of the vessels are of a drinking or dining type, rather than cooking or storage.