

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS IN SUFFOLK, 1979

contributed by Edward A. Martin

Barham (TM 1351; S.A.U. BRH 015): The site lies on the top of a hill, overlooking the Gipping Valley, and is adjacent to a gravel quarry. In November 1978 a pit, which had been revealed by quarrying operations, was excavated by C. J. Balkwill. The pit was found to contain a furnace or oven which incorporated fragments of a large Early Iron Age jar of West Harling type. A charcoal sample from this feature has been sent for radiocarbon dating. Further work was undertaken on the site in April and again in May-June 1979, when an area of approximately 720 sq.m was examined. This revealed a second, smaller, furnace or oven and a roughly circular, post-built house approximately 11m in diameter. The house site seems to be associated with Darmsden style Iron Age pottery. A shallow pit, cut into a patch of clay in the sub-soil, which was possibly used to collect rain-water, contained pottery of 3rd-1st century B.C. date.
(E. A. Martin, for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit and C. J. Balkwill for Ipswich Museum)

Barnham, East Farm (TL 8789): A trial section, 3m wide, was cut in the south face of the much overgrown brickpit at East Farm, by kind permission of the Euston Estate and Mr A. Heading, in July 1979. The work was conducted by J. J. Wymer as part of his research on East Anglian Palaeolithic sites, with voluntary assistance from E. M. Wymer, F. Marshall, G. Kendall and J. Rose. The purpose was to check the stratigraphy and context of the Clactonian Industry as recorded by T. T. Paterson (*Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 3 (1937), 87-135). The section revealed conformed in general detail with that described by Paterson, with 3m of 'brickearth' overlying a coarse, fluviatile gravel. The 'brickearth' is a silty deposit varying in clay and sand content throughout and probably of colluvial origin (hillwash). Some bands of darker, stained sediment were suggestive of buried paleosols, but samples examined by the Quaternary Research Department at Cambridge University were found to be devoid of pollen. Paterson records sparse Acheulian material in association with such dark bands, but nothing was found to substantiate this.

At the base of the brickearth, beneath a few cms of fluviatile silt and on top of the coarse gravel were several flint flakes and a large core, all in mint condition save for a brown, chemical staining. Some of the flakes can be replaced on the core, or on to each other, demonstrating that they are in primary context: the products of knapping at that spot. This confirms Paterson's observation that this was a buried land surface. Flakes and cores were also found in the upper metre of the coarse gravel beneath, in a rolled condition and thus not in primary context but derived by natural agencies from a nearby source.

All the artifacts found conform to those described by Paterson and to those examined in the museums at Ipswich and Cambridge. The gravel is apparently a re-worked glacial outwash deposit and the context is very suggestive of a Late Anglian or Early Hoxnian date, but this cannot be proved.

(J. J. Wymer)

Brandon (TL 7786; S.A.U. BRD 018): Seven trial trenches were opened in July 1979 in an unploughed meadow to investigate an area due to be landscaped as a playing field. In 1847 human burials and possible building remains were found in the area, more recently Ipswich ware, a coin of Trajan, a silver penny of Burgred of Mercia (A.D. 852-874) and a gold plaque inscribed with the sign and name of St John the Evangelist (8th century ?) have also been found.

The meadow contains a sand ridge running east-west, parallel to the river and rising c. 3m above the surrounding peat. The ridge has several man-made features, notably a rectangular ditch enclosing an area of c. 60 x 40m and a causeway to the higher land to the south. The trial trenches were placed on this ridge and all except one produced some evidence of structures and pottery of Middle Saxon date, suggesting that the whole sand island was occupied or utilised within the period A.D. 650-850. The probable building in Trench I with its broadly associated burials is likely to be a religious building, but with a strong possibility that it is the successor to an earlier building. The kiln type structure in Trench II could well indicate some sort of industrial activity. Further work will be carried out on the site in 1980.

(R. D. Carr for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

Bury St Edmunds, the Abbey (TL 8564): In 1979 a second season of excavation took place within and around the upstanding, ruinous, flint-cored northern three bays of the dorter range. A second cellar was found; unlike the first, it was not integral to the building but wholly inside the walls and wholly robbed of cladding. More evidence of intense occupation before the stone phases and further structural evidence of timber buildings was identified. This potentially significant data will be analysed in the third season.

(A. J. Fleming for the Department of the Environment)

Exning (TL 6363; S.A.U. EXG 027): In August 1979 building operations at 5 Edinburgh Road, Newmarket revealed human remains. With the kind permission of the landowner, Mr R. Bolton, a salvage excavation was carried out. This revealed that a foundation trench had cut through a large grave containing seven inhumations (probably one adult male, five children and one baby), all of whom appear to have been buried at the same time. The adult male lay on his back, with his head to the north and bent to the left, as were his legs. The children were arranged around him. Approximately ½m away a second grave was discovered which contained an adult female lying crouched on her right side with her head to the south. On the edge of her grave a sherd of possible Beaker pottery was found. No grave goods were found in either grave. It is hoped to obtain a radiocarbon date from some of the bones after they have been analysed.

(E. A. Martin for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

Hadleigh (TM 0243; S.A.U. HAD 015): A small excavation was carried out in August 1979 to investigate a large rectangular cropmark enclosure partially threatened by the proposed Hadleigh By Pass route. Two sections were cut across the line of the cropmark ditch and an area within the enclosure with a surface scatter of Roman tile and pottery was examined. The main enclosure ditch was 1.60m wide and c.0.85m deep with an almost U-shaped profile; it contained Roman pottery dating up to the late 3rd century as well as earlier wares including one fragment of Iron Age pottery. Outside this to the west was a second, much smaller ditch (c.0.30m deep) running roughly parallel to the first; this contained a high proportion of 1st-century Belgic style pottery. The area outside the enclosure contained a rectangular corn drying kiln of baked clay with a single central flue and the partial remains of six supports made of tegulae for the upper 'floor'. Collapsed clay and tile debris in the filling of the flue contained 4th-century colour coated and shell gritted wares and an antler tool. Further excavation is likely in 1980.

(J. Plouviez for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

Herringfleet, St Olave's Priory (TM 4599): The eastern half of the eastern bay of the frater undercroft, not cleared with the rest of the undercroft in 1911, was cleared of the rubble that was dumped there to raise the floor level in the 18th century. The medieval flooring was found to have been removed but the east wall of the frater was found surviving to a height of 4ft. It was built of brick with a central and corner piers to support the vaulting. On its outer face it had two triangular buttresses and was plastered. A narrow row of floor-tiles, alternately black and yellow glazed, surviving against this face of the wall and some 2ft above the floor-level inside, indicated the level of the former passage outside the frater.
(D. Sherlock for the Department of the Environment)

Ipswich, School Street (S.A.U. IAS 4801): An area of 80 sq.m, surrounded on all sides by a Second World War air-raid shelter, was excavated. Below the foundations of Victorian houses was a robber trench, dating to the year 1849, which had removed the walls of the Blackfriars' north-east claustral range, but the substantial foundation trenches of the range survived (of late 13th- or early 14th-century date). Below these was 11th-12th-century occupation including a clay-lined, sunken-featured structure with an entrance at one end into an attached circular pit. These features cut a small inhumation cemetery, which in turn lay on top of a late Saxon occupation which included a second clay-lined, sunken-featured structure. Middle Saxon local and imported pottery was present, residual in later contexts, but only one feature of that date, a pit, was revealed.
(K. Wade for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

Ipswich, Foundation Street (S.A.U. IAS 5801): An area of 100 sq.m was excavated fronting Foundation Street, to the north of St Mary Quay Church. Romano-British coins and pottery were found residual in later features but no features of that date. Fronting the street were the foundation trenches of the back wall of a late Saxon building and cellars of a 17th-18th-century building. Behind these was a series of pits ranging in date from Middle Saxon to 19th century. The majority of pits were Middle Saxon or 9th-century in date and contained a large variety of imported pottery. There was no evidence of any activity other than residential occupation. All the pitfills were sieved and a sample of each was passed through a flotation tank retrieving plant seeds and fish bones.
(K. Wade for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

Ipswich, 6-10 Arcade Street (S.A.U. IAS 1804): An area of 50 sq.m was excavated prior to redevelopment. A series of inter-cutting pits ranging in date from the 10th to the 16th century covered the site, and there were traces of a building of slot and posthole construction and some flint and mortar walls of medieval date. There was some Middle Saxon pottery, residual in later pits, but no features of that date.
(K. Wade for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

Ipswich, Tower Ramparts School site (S.A.U. IAS 0802): An area is under excavation prior to redevelopment. Features excavated to date include a Middle Saxon pit dated by a coin of Coenwulf of Mercia and an 11th/12th-century ditch, some 3m wide by 1.5m deep, running north to south.
(K. Wade for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

Tattingstone, Tattingstone Hall (TM 1437; S.A.U. TAT 002): The moat and standing building were surveyed before demolition and flooding for the Alton reservoir. The standing building was L shaped, the N-S wing being 16th- and 17th-century, the E-W wing late 18th- and 19th-century in date. Limited excavation after the demolition revealed that the site had been occupied by a brick building of two cells with a partially tiled floor (overall dimensions c. 14 x 8.5m). No secure dating evidence was recovered, but brick size suggests a 16th-century date and stone architectural fragments from the moat, while not directly associated, confirm the presence of an important building in the early-mid 16th century. Two walls of this 16th-century building had been incorporated into the standing building.

The moat island had been raised and levelled with crag sands before construction work, and a single medieval potsherd (? 13th-14th-century) from below the crag suggests that the moat may be medieval. There were however no signs of a pre-11th-century building within the limited area of excavation.

(R. D. Carr & T. A. Loader for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

West Stow (TL 7971; S.A.U. WSW 030): Excavation was carried out in advance of gravel extraction during December 1978 and January 1979. This covered an area of approximately 2,200 sq.m and was some 500m west of the Anglo Saxon village of West Stow. A complex of ditches, pits and postholes was uncovered, producing pottery spanning the Iron Age to the Saxon periods. Soil samples taken from the features produced a large amount of cereal seeds and plant remains. Two sunken featured buildings, one of which had two postholes, and a corner of a posthole structure were also found.

(L. Elmhirst for the Suffolk Archaeological Unit)

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