



### **LATE MEDIEVAL POTTERY KILNS**

Two kilns were discovered in 1976 under the vegetable garden of Mr. Willie Offord in Nethergate Street. In the kilns have been found kitchen utensils and many pieces of pottery (sherds). Incredibly the kilns are between an electricity pole and a manhole and under a piece of land cultivated for many years and yet almost undamaged. The find followed a sequence of events date back many years to when Mr. Wally Shickle, who used to cultivate the garden, first drew the attention of the Bury Museum to the many sherds on the garden surface. At the time it was thought a kiln was likely but no digging was done and interest waned.

As a result of a renewed interest in local history Mr. Shickle drew my attention to the pottery and pieces of pottery were taken to the Suffolk Archaeological Unit. Mr. Stanley West (County Archaeologist) examined the site and advised that an exploratory trench should be dug. After digging across the garden the first kiln was discovered. The first indication was brick coloured clay twelve inches deep followed by kiln wall and kiln debris. Further digging was done and the excitement was increased at the find amongst the kiln debris and encrusted sherds of three almost completely whole pots. These were in the position in which they had been fired; upside down and perfectly clean inside. Encouraged by this find further digging was done and after excavating what is now known to be the stoke hole a further kiln was found. This kiln is slightly larger than the first, being approximately seven feet long by two feet deep and appears not to have been abandoned in the same way as the first as there was little pottery left inside it. Over the whole area of the kilns many hundreds of pieces of pottery have been found and these are being examined and pieced together to give further information regarding the type of pottery and the workings of the kiln. Most of the pottery is unglazed but there are many glazed pieces of various kinds, either glazed inside the pot, outside or on both sides and of varying colours probably due to the firing temperature as they are mostly lead based (no doubt the cause of many stomach upsets years ago). Other sherds found indicate plate type designs and small bowls.

Further investigation is being carried out to find the exact date, at the moment thought to be sixteenth century, by looking at old records and comparing with similar finds elsewhere. To date no record had been found excepting that the lane from Fen St. to Knettishall used to be known as Potters Way. Was Nethergate Street also Potters Way?

Those who helped uncover the kilns include Deborah Thomas, Michael Frost, Paul Stamper, Robert and Sarah Gadsby. Mrs. V. Stanper was present at the find of the whole pots.

R.D. Gadsby