



Three oyster shells and two broken knives from the Burrow Hill midden.

the knives themselves and also broken-off knife tips among the shells. Bill was shown the cylindrical lead weights the team had excavated and suggested they could have been used to weight the line used to dredge the oysters.



Lead weights and iron fish hook 3/4 inches long from Burrow Hill.

The Middle Saxon people there had lived very well, discarding unbroken bones of cod, eel, cattle, sheep, goats and numerous young pigs. In contrast the rubbish pits of earlier, Iron Age, residents contained animal bones, all of which had been smashed to extract marrow – and not a single oyster shell. However, it is pretty certain that once the taste for them had been acquired, oysters became an important source of winter nourishment for Butley people, particularly the residents of the Priory, who were forbidden meat on many days of the year. They were a valuable commodity; Leiston Abbey's accounts for 1303 show that 900 oysters cost 12½d.

When a large bomb landed inside the Priory precinct in February 1944, forming a crater, 30ft deep, the explosion covered even

the Priory gatehouse roof with soil, and oyster shells were widely scattered. These may have derived from a monastic rubbish-dump, or possibly from the Elizabethan mansion-house belonging to the Forth family.

### *The ferryman's tale*

There have been several wharves and jetties on the Butley river over the centuries, with Boyton Dock and Butley Mills being the most recently used for barge freight. Old maps show two separate docks on the Butley bank between these two, and the title map marks Old Dock Drift leading from Butley Corner to a point on the river where the channel comes close to the river wall (Map p.123). This is where stone to build the Priory will have been landed.

The earliest recorded ferry crossed not from Butley but from Boyton, a little further downstream. Boyton's main roadway ran, as it still does, along the ridge. In the old days it was known as the Portway and at the end of the ridge made a sharp turn to run down to Boyton's 'port' and its ferry and ferry-house situated near the present brick-built dock. On the Gedgrave side the ferry met a road which ran in a straight line to Orford.

In 1365 Butley Priory acquired Boyton Manor, and some time afterwards the prior relocated the ferry more conveniently for himself at the foot of Burrow Hill on his side of the Tang tributary. The disadvantages were that, firstly, it no longer connected directly with the Gedgrave road and, secondly, Boyton folk now had to cross the Tang in order to use it. In 1512 Henry Baret paid for a new bridge 'apud Ly Ferry', and in 1538 five men appear on the Priory *Household List* as responsible for the fishing boats, ferry and weirs. Unfortunately we do not know which of them was in charge of the ferry boat.

Seven years after the Dissolution, which had dispersed the monastic estates, the ferry on the Boyton side seems to have been operational, because Anne of Cleve's steward granted a 30-year lease, at 20s per annum, to Edward Cleydon of Boyton for the fishing 'between the Gull and the Barrs' at the Ferry-house in Boyton. However, with William Forth's purchases the two manors were

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