

**Lion Brewery and Yard,  
St Thomas Street,  
Oxford**

**Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment  
for Kingerlee Limited**

by Steve Ford  
Thames Valley Archaeological  
Services

Site Code LBO99/73

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### **Introduction**

This desk-based study, commissioned by Kingerlee Ltd, is an assessment of the archaeological potential of two plots of land occupied by the former Morrell's Brewery which lies on either side of St Thomas Street, on the west side of the city centre of Oxford, (SP5084 0610) (Fig 1). The report comprises the first stage of a process to determine the presence/absence, extent, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains which may be affected by the redevelopment of the area.

The study has followed the guidelines set out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Guidelines for desk-based assessments* and those required by English Heritage Guidance Papers.

### **The Sites**

The southern section comprises an L-shaped plot (c. 0.4ha) at a height of 57m above OD, with Wareham Stream to the east, the rear of terraced properties and a car park to the west, St Thomas Street to the north, and open yards/access routes to the south. The northern site is triangular (c. 500sq m) with Wareham Stream to the east, a car factors to the west, and St Thomas Street to the south (Fig 2).

A visit on 22nd October 1999 revealed that the southern site contained several buildings. These occupied much of the site, together with a U-shaped yard with two entrances off St Thomas Street. The central buildings are used as offices and a store, with various sheds and workshops on the western and southern margins. The eastern side is occupied by a brewhouse. Details of the usage of the buildings in relatively recent times has been published by Allen (1994) and is reproduced in Figure 10. The northern site comprises a range of buildings along the eastern side with a shed to the north and an open area to the west. Several of the buildings on the southern site contain below-ground structures such as vehicle inspection pits.

The British Geological Survey (BGS 1982) indicates that the site lies on a gravel terrace adjacent to an area of alluvium infilling a narrow channel. However, more detailed information is presented in a geotechnical study carried out by EAG Environ. Five boreholes were successfully completed and are detailed in Appendix 3. Two boreholes (PA1 and PA2) record 1.5m of made ground, beneath which 1.5m of gravelly clay overlies gravel. For

boreholes PA3 and PA6, the base of the gravelly clay was not reached at 3.1m and 4m respectively, whereas in PA4 gravel was encountered immediately beneath the made ground. These descriptions appear to reflect the position of the gravel island formed by two streams shown on early maps (Figs 4 and 5). On a site such as this, within the historic core of a major urban settlement, it cannot be assumed that the term 'made ground' does not represent, largely or wholly, deposits of archaeological significance rather than dumping in late post-Medieval and modern times.

## **Planning Background and Development Proposals**

Planning permission is to be sought for the demolition of the existing structures on the site and redevelopment for residential use. The facade and gates fronting St Thomas Street on the southern site are to be retained. A provisional ground plan is for the building of three units on the smaller northern site, and 28 units on the southern site (Fig 3). For the latter, the majority of the units would be arranged around the perimeter of the site, with six units occupying a central block. This ground plan would be similar to that of the currently upstanding buildings. There are no proposals for basements. There are as yet no detailed foundation designs.

The treatment of the archaeological and historic landscape in the planning process is covered in three areas of guidance. *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) points out that where a desktop study has shown that there is a strong possibility of the presence of significant archaeological deposits in a development area, it is reasonable to provide more detailed information from a field evaluation so that an appropriate strategy to mitigate the effects of development on archaeology can be drawn up:

Paragraph 21 states:

'Where early discussions with local planning authorities or the developer's own research indicate that important archaeological remains may exist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out.....'

Should the presence of archaeological deposits be confirmed, further guidance is provided. *Archaeology and Planning* stresses preservation *in situ* of archaeological deposits as a first consideration, as in paragraphs 8 and 18.

Paragraph 8 states:

‘Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation....’

Paragraph 18 states:

‘The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled...’

However, for archaeological deposits that are not of such significance it is appropriate for them to be ‘preserved by record’ (ie fully excavated and recorded by a competent archaeological contractor) prior to their destruction or damage.

Paragraph 25 states:

‘Where planning authorities decide that the physical preservation *in situ* of archaeological remains is not justified in the circumstances of the development and that development resulting in the destruction of the archaeological remains should proceed, it would be entirely reasonable for the planning authority to satisfy itself ... that the developer has made appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of remains.’

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan to 2011 (adopted August 1998) also outlines policy regarding the archaeological potential of development sites. Policy EN10 states:

‘There will be a presumption in favour of physically preserving nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings. Where development affecting other archaeological remains is allowed it should include appropriate measures to secure their preservation *in situ* or where this is not feasible, recording of archaeological features before development.’

Further guidance is provided by the Oxford Local Plan adopted in February 1998:

EN 40: Where there are known archaeological remains or a desk assessment has shown that there are likely to be such remains, and they are considered to be important, the Council will normally require applicants to submit sufficient information, including where necessary the results of an evaluation by fieldwork, to define the character and extent of the remains and enable an assessment of the impact of the proposals upon the remains to be carried out before deciding upon an application.

EN 42: The council will not normally grant planning permission for development that would have a serious adverse effect that cannot be mitigated on important archaeological remains or their setting.

EN 43: Where a proposed development would affect important archaeological deposits or remains and the Council is satisfied the development can proceed:

- a. The Council will normally seek the preservation of the deposits or remains and the modification of designs, including siting and foundations, to mitigate the adverse effects.
- b. Where the preservation of important deposits or remains is not possible or justified the Council will normally want to be satisfied, before granting planning permission for development affecting the deposits or remains, that appropriate and satisfactory provision for the excavation

and recording of the deposits or remains and publication of the results has been made and may seek to enter into an agreement to this effect.

- c. Where less important deposits or remains are involved, or where otherwise appropriate, the Council may require that a watching brief only is provided for.

The site lies within Oxford's City Centre Archaeological Area.

## **Cartographic Study**

A range of Ordnance Survey and historical maps, as listed in Appendix 1, were examined at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies in order to ascertain what activity had been taking place throughout the site's later history and to determine whether this may have affected any possible archaeological deposits within the proposal area.

The earliest map consulted was that by Agas in 1578 (Fig 4). The location of the sites can be readily located relative to St Thomas Street and the two streams (Castle Mill Stream and Wareham Stream). The sites appear to mostly lie on an island between Wareham Stream and another, now culverted, stream which lay to the east of The Hamel. Four structures are shown on the island fronting St Thomas Street (on the southern site) with possible alleyways to access other structures to the rear. The rear garden areas are subdivided into two plots. Two properties are shown between the west side of the (now culverted) stream and The Hamel. On the northern site, a single structure is shown fronting the street.

The next map examined is by Loggan and dated 1675 (Fig 5). Again, the site can be readily located relative to the street and streams. Five properties are shown on the southern side of St Thomas Street, between the two streams, and a further four properties to the west between the stream and The Hamel. A further three properties fronting the northern side of the street may lie within the northern site area. Several structures forming courtyards are shown to the rear of the south site, whereas hedged(?) yards are present for the northern area. The structures on the southern site are thought to be brewhouses belonging to Robert Linke, dating from the 16th century, with a 17th century brewhouse on part of the northern site (Allen 1994, xiv and below).

Williams' map of 1773 (not illustrated) shows the sites at a usable scale and they can again be located by reference to the streams. However, the plan of the buildings seems stylised. The map shows that the street frontages were occupied and that there may have been courtyard areas to the rear, but detail of individual properties is lacking.

The Davis map of 1794 (Fig 6) shows the whole of the street frontage of the northern site as occupied, but without detail. The southern site, east of the stream, shows the centre occupied by a courtyard accessed from the

street with additional buildings and yards to the rear. The Pearson map of 1817 (not illustrated) is identical to the Davis map and appears to be a copy.

Heggaw's map of 1850 (Fig 7) shows that the southern site was now occupied by Morrell's Brewery. The western stream has been culverted but its position can be inferred from other landscape features and it forms the western boundary of the brewery. The brewery comprises two areas of buildings on either side of a yard accessed off [High Street] St Thomas Street. This phase of brewery activity extended to the south of the current site area (ie to the south of a line projected from Osney Lane). Four properties fronting St Thomas Street, with gardens and outbuildings to the rear, are shown to the west of the culverted stream, all of which probably lie within the current site boundary. The northern site comprises two blocks of buildings on either side of a yard accessed off St Thomas Street. Heywood's map of 1870 (not illustrated) provides no further detail for these sites.

The First Edition of the Ordnance Survey dated 1876 (Fig 8) shows in greater detail that most of the features on Heggaw's map of 1850 were still present. For example, the brewery comprises at least five buildings and the properties to the west may consist of several properties in rows at right-angles to St Thomas Street and accessed from yards. A similar level of detail is given for the northern site.

The 1889 map by Kelly and Co (not illustrated) does not show the sites in great detail but the drawing suggests that the brewery had expanded to the west.

By 1898 (Fig 9), the Ordnance Survey map indicates that a major refurbishment of the brewery has taken place, with the footprint of the currently existing buildings being shown. The subsequent Ordnance Survey maps of 1921, 1939, 1958, 1969 and 1992 (not illustrated) show only small changes to this overall pattern.

## **Historical Background**

The town of Oxford is first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle in AD 912, by which time it was an administrative centre for the district and was probably fortified (Ashdown and Hassall 1975, 133). The town had become well-settled by early Medieval times and the main roads into the town became a focus for suburban settlement. New suburban churches were built and St Thomas' was constructed in c. 1190. The proposal sites lie in one of these suburbs and the impetus for the development of this particular area was probably from Osney Abbey, which is located to the south-west of the site (Hardy, 1996).

In more recent times, the site has particular historic significance for Oxford as Morrell's Brewery is the oldest surviving family-run business in the city and is the longest established of the commercial breweries (Allen

1994, vii). Allen's (1994) book of the history of the family provides much detail and includes a summary plan of the development and use of the southern site (Fig 10) (ibid., xxii). The earliest use of the site for brewing appears to be that of Robert Linke sometime after 1563 and the buildings of his brewhouse may be those depicted on Loggan's map of 1675 (Fig 4). The Morrell family's interest in the site occurred by way of the partnership between Richard Tawney and Mark and James Morrell in 1797.

## **Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record**

A search was made of the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Records on the 22nd October 1999 in order to obtain any archaeological and historical information relating to the vicinity of the development area. The search revealed entries for both finds and sites dating from the prehistoric to the post-Medieval period, but no entries were located on the site itself. The entries are summarised in Appendix 2 and located on Figure 1.

Prehistoric finds in the vicinity of the site are restricted to an early Bronze Age beaker burial on a preserved old land surface during excavations at The Hamel, immediately to the west of the site [Fig 1, 2]. This find was an important addition to the corpus of sites which were able to demonstrate earlier prehistoric use of low-lying settings in the Thames Valley for occupation, arable farming and, in this instance, burial. These sites show that the alluviation and flooding processes now typical of these locations were prevalent in the historic period rather than in prehistory. Finds of Roman date are restricted to a single coin [3] and for the late Saxon period a single iron spearhead [5].

There have been several important archaeological investigations in the St Thomas Street area which have documented the Medieval and post-Medieval development of the suburb. Of the published reports, the nearest excavation took place at The Hamel [2] (Palmer 1980) with the smaller of the two trenches located immediately to the west of the site. Other excavations took place on St Thomas Street at numbers 54–55 [9] (Hardy 1996), numbers 47–50 [12] (Roberts 1996), numbers 64–66 [13], and a watching brief at number ?53 [4] (Rigold 1951). These excavations have shown that much building activity took place in the 12th to 13th centuries and that prior to this the land was damp meadow, as evidenced at number 54–55 [9]. At number 47–50 [12] the first activity on the site was dump deposits, which could be interpreted as efforts to reclaim the area.

The excavations do not show a uniformity of development. At number 47–50 [12] rapid but short-lived occupation in the 14th to 15th century was followed by abandonment until the 19th century, whereas at The

Hamel [2], 12th century ditches followed by 13th century buildings show a sequence of development, albeit with some stagnation, through to the present day.

## **Listed Buildings**

There are no listed buildings on the site. Six listed structures are present in the vicinity of St Thomas Street, all Grade II. Four are located towards the western end of the street: the Church of St Thomas the Martyr; Coombe House (Corner House); and The Lodge and its front wall, fence gate, and piers on the north side of the street adjacent to Hollybush Row. Two buildings, The Brewers House and Tawney's Almshouses are located to the north of the proposal sites.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is clear both from the cartographic evidence and that from the Sites and Monuments Record, which detail the excavations which have taken place along St Thomas Street, that the site lies within the historic core of Oxford and, more specifically, within the suburbs which developed in Medieval times. There is no evidence to suggest that deep and extensive truncation of archaeologically relevant levels has taken place and, given the generally low-lying setting of the area, there would have been a strong tendency to build-up levels by dumping prior to redevelopment.

The impact of development on below-ground archaeological deposits should be assessed by means of a field evaluation. This will, in the first instance, confirm or refute the archaeological potential of the site as identified by this document and provide information with which to draw up a scheme to mitigate the effects of redevelopment if required. This field evaluation would be most easily achieved following demolition of the existing structures but a more limited study could be carried out within the yard areas or within the open sheds. A scheme for the evaluation will need to be drawn up and approved by the archaeological advisor to Oxford City Council (Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service) and implemented by a competent archaeological contractor, such as an Institute of Field Archaeologists Registered Organisation.

It is beyond the remit of this archaeological study to comment in detail on the merits of demolition of the unlisted but historically interesting brewery buildings within a Conservation Area. However, should demolition in full or in part take place, it may be appropriate to record the structures photographically, to RCHME Level 1 standard.

## References

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## Appendix 1: Cartographic sources consulted at the Centre for Oxford Fire Studies

1578	Agas (Fig 4)
1675	Loggan (Fig 5)
1733	Williams
1794	Davis' Map of Oxfordshire (Fig 6)
1817	Pearson
1850	Heggaw (Fig 7)
1870	Heywood
1876	First Edition Ordnance Survey Sheet XXXIII.15 (Fig 8)
1889	Kelly and Co
1898	Second Edition Ordnance Survey XXXIII.15 (Fig 9)
1921	Revised Second Edition Ordnance Survey XXXIII.15
1939	Revision Ordnance Survey XXXIII.15
1958	Ordnance Survey SP 5006 1:2500
1969	Ordnance Survey SP 5006 1:2500
1992	Ordnance Survey SP 5006SE 1:1250

## Appendix 2: Extradts from the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record

No.	SMR Ref.	Grid Ref.(SP)	Date	Description
1	940	5090 0610	PostMedieval	Swan Brewery
2	3247	5077 0614	Early Bronze Age Medieval (12th16th C)	Beaker burial Tenements and houses (Palmer 1980)
3	3580	5077 0615	Roman	Coin, Constantine II
4	6006	5075 0615	Medieval (13th C)	House (Rigold 1951)
5	6210	5088 0605	Saxon (10th11th C)	Iron spearhead
6	6318	5084 0610	PostMedieval (late 19th C)	Morrell's Lion Brewery
7	6384	5076 0613	PostMedieval	Chapel
8	6513	5105 0604	Medieval and PostMedieval	Stone culvert and cobbled road surface
9	16073	5076 0617	Medieval and PostMedieval (12th17th C)	Tenements and houses (Hardy 1996)
10	13605	5088 0616	PostMedieval (late 18th C)	The Brewers House (Listed Gde II)
11	13606	5088 0617	PostMedieval	Tawney's almshouses (Listed Gde II)
12	-	5071 0617	Medieval (14th5th C)	Dumps and houses (Roberts 1996)
13	-	5079 0615	Medieval?	Houses?

Appendix 3: Extracts from Geotechnical Investigation carried out by EAG Enviro