

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

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Kingerlee Limited**

by Graham Hull

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Site Code LBO99/73b

December 1999

Summary

Site name: Lion Brewery and Yard, St Thomas' Street, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 50840 06100

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and Duration of Project: 25th November–2nd December 1999

Area of Site: (two sites) 0.4 and 0.05 hectares

Summary of Results: Five evaluation trenches were excavated. Archaeological deposits were encountered in trenches close to the street frontage and showed deeply stratified contexts representing cut features, floor deposits, dumps and a revetment for a water course. One trench to the rear was sterile and another revealed a probable laneside ditch backfilled in the early post-Medieval and Victorian times.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is at present held by Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Lion Brewery and Yard, St Thomas' Street, Oxford (SP 50840 06100) (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Tony Woodward of Kingerlee Ltd, Thomas House, Langford Locks, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 1HR.

A planning application is to be made to Oxford City Council for the construction of housing on the site. Following discussions with Mr Brian Durham of Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service (OAAS), who advise the City on archaeology, a desk-based assessment (Ford 1999) was carried out as an initial stage in the consideration of archaeology within the planning process. This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Policy and Planning Guidance Note, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and the archaeology policies of the City of Oxford. The desktop assessment recommended a field evaluation to provide further detailed information on the archaeological potential of the site so that an appropriate strategy could be drawn up to mitigate the effects of the development on any archaeology present. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Brian Durham of OAAS. The fieldwork was supervised by Graham Hull, assisted by Kate Taylor and took place between 25th November–2nd December 1999. The site code is LBO99/73.

Location, Topography and Geology

The site is located on two parcels of land on either side of St Thomas Street, Oxford (Fig. 1). The northern site comprises a triangular area of c. 0.5ha occupied by an upstanding building on the eastern side and a carparking area. The southern site is rectangular in plan, 0.4ha in extent and is occupied by various brewery buildings and a U-shaped yard with two entrances off St Thomas' Street. The site lies at a height of 57m above OD.

According to the British Geological Survey (1982) the underlying geology of the site is gravel adjacent to an area of alluvium infilling a narrow channel. In general the site lies on low-lying ground originally prone to flooding, and several streams were present. One stream (Wareham Stream) forms the eastern boundary of the sites and another stream shown on historic maps is now culverted and lies beneath both sites.

Archaeological Background

The desk-based assessment carried out in November this year (Ford 1999) included a cartographic study and search of the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record. This revealed that the proposal site was located within an area of high archaeological potential as it was located within the St Thomas' suburbs of the Medieval city. Several excavations and watching briefs have taken place in the vicinity to document the history of development.

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. This was to be accomplished by excavating five trenches 2–6.4m long and 1.7m wide. Three of the trenches (1–3) were located to target the St Thomas' Street frontage. Trench 2 was limited in size due to the constraints of live services nearby. One trench (5) was located towards the rear of the southern site to provide a spatial coverage of the area and trench 4 was located to search for traces of any extensions to Osney Lane.

The trenches were excavated using a JCB fitted with a toothless ditching bucket following breaking of concrete. This was employed under direct and continuous archaeological supervision to remove made ground and overburden until the correct archaeological levels were reached. All possible archaeological features were hand cleaned and a selection investigated, and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds. A context index is given as Appendix 1.

Results (Figs 3–6 and Plates 1–4)

All trenches were 1.7m wide with the exception of Trench 2 which was 1.2m wide.

Trench 1

The trench was 5.9m long and orientated east–west, adjacent to the north side of St Thomas' Street. Below 0.15–0.2m of tarmac and concrete was a layer of crushed limestone (96/151). This layer was 0.2–0.3m thick and was cut by a 19th century drain (21). At the eastern end of the trench and crossing from north to south was a limestone block wall (19) c. 0.7m wide and c. 0.8m high. The wall seemed to be dressed on the western face only and it is likely that it was a revetment adjacent to a former watercourse to the west. The fine silts (95) may represent a silted stream. A single pottery sherd recovered from 95 was dated to the late 11th century. Stratigraphically preceding 95 were two postholes (16 and 17). A single pottery sherd from the surface of 17 was

dated to the 13th century. The apparent chronological discrepancy can be explained by the very small quantity of pottery from the two deposits and one or the other may be residual or intrusive.

To the east of the revetment wall were a series of charcoal and ash deposits (153) butted against a post-ghost (154). These ashy deposits were overlain by a knuckle-bone floor (18) constructed of vertically placed sheep lower limb bones and probably post-Medieval in date. These later deposits overlay a series of trampled floors and gravel consolidation layers (155–161). These layers were sealed by deposit 90, which contained 13th century pottery.

It would seem that Trench 1 has located a Medieval building adjacent to a former watercourse and the north side of St Thomas' Street.

Trench 2

The trench was 1.4m long and was located immediately to the south of St Thomas' Street. Beneath 0.2m of tarmac and concrete was a deposit 0.25m thick that included some brick and tile fragments (167). This overlay a band of limestone blocks 0.3m thick (166) which may have been either a wall or a surface. This could not be determined given the deliberately minimal intrusiveness of this trench. Below the limestone were at least four bands of trampled floors interspersed with gravel consolidation layers (162–165). The stratigraphically earliest layer (162) produced a piece of 11th century pottery.

Trench 2 has provided evidence that Medieval deposits, probably pertaining to a structure, survive adjacent to St Thomas' Street.

Trench 3

The trench was 6.4m long and orientated north–south on the southern side of St Thomas' Street. Below 0.3–0.35m of tarmac, concrete and brick rubble was a ubiquitous layer containing 15th/16th century pottery (52/54/88). This deposit was 0.25–0.3m thick and is best interpreted as a make-up/levelling layer. Cutting this deposit was a feature 1.8m wide and up to 0.8m deep (10) filled with limestone rubble. It is best be interpreted as a wall running from east to west. Two features stratigraphically predated the 15th/16th century make-up layer: linear feature 11 and possible pit 9. Feature 11 was 2.5m wide and 0.6m deep and is likely to be a ditch. No dating evidence was recovered from either feature but they must be 16th century or earlier and later than the 13th century.

At the southern end of the trench were five intercutting pits (3, 7–9 and 12). Pottery from the surfaces of these pits is dated to the 13th century. Pit 3 was half-sectioned and a considerable quantity of mussel shells came

from its fill, which also contained waterlogged wood. As pit 3 also seemed to be lined with clay it may have been used to store live shell fish and perhaps had a timber lid.

At the northern end of the trench was a silty clay deposit 80, 0.5m thick, sealing a series of trampled floor surfaces and gravel consolidation layers (76–79 and 81–84). Deposit 80 contained no pottery later than the 13th century and the upper laminated deposits similarly produced 13th century material. Layer 83 and the stratigraphically earlier deposits 85 and 86 were dated by pottery to the late 11th century. The floor layers were bounded to the west by vestiges of a stone wall (15) which may have continued southward, as seen in the east–west Section 6. The limestone rubble filling cut 13 may be a surviving element of this wall. The pits to the rear of the trench seem to fall into two groups on the east and west side of the trench and it may be that Trench 3 has located a tenement boundary running north–south from St Thomas’ Street.

Trench 4

The trench was 6.2m long and orientated north–south at the south-west portion of the site. Below 0.15m of concrete were a series of laminated bands of ash and coal dust 0.35m thick. These very probably relate to the later 19th/early 20th century operation of the brewery. A furnace with a date plaque of 1909 stood within 20m of the trench at the time of the evaluation. Beneath the ashy layers was a deposit up to 0.4m thick containing frogged brick rubble. This layer is not likely to be earlier than the mid 19th century. Stratigraphically predating this deposit was a sandy silty clay that contained a considerable quantity of post-Medieval pottery and clay tobacco pipe. A George III penny, dated 1807, provided a *terminus post quem* for the stratigraphically later deposits and a *terminus ante quem* for deposits earlier in the stratigraphic sequence.

A ditch (6), 2.8m wide and 0.4m deep, lay below the early 19th century deposits. It crossed from east to west and cut a fine silt overlying the natural gravel. Pottery from the fill of the ditch is 16th century. A single piece of clay pipe, though not datable in itself, indicates that the backfilling of the ditch could not have occurred before the middle of the 16th century, when clay pipes were first manufactured in England.

Trench 5

The trench was 6.3m long, orientated from north to south, and located in the south-east portion of the site. Below 0.2m of concrete was a brick rubble make-up/levelling layer between 0.5m and 0.7m thick and almost certainly of 19th or 20th century date. Immediately below this deposit was an alluvial clay 1.4–1.6m thick. This sterile deposit overlay natural gravel. No archaeological deposits were recorded in the trench.

It would seem that Trench 5 has located the course of a former stream that ran across the site from north to south and was also seen in Trench 1.

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 311 sherds with a total weight of 6633g. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. The wares are all types which are well-known in Oxford. Where appropriate, the 'OX' prefixed coding system and chronology of the Oxford type-series (Mellor 1984; Mellor 1994) has been used, as follows:

OXAC: *Cotswolds-type ware*, c. AD 975–1150
OXY: *Oxford ware*, c. late 11th – 14th century
OXBF: *South-West Oxfordshire Ware*, c. 1075 – early 13th century
OXAM: *Brill/Boarstall ware*, AD 1200–1600
OXST: *Frechen Stoneware*, AD 1550–1700
OXFH: *Border wares*, 1550–1700
OXDR: *Red Earthenwares*, 1550+
OXCE: *Tin-glazed Earthenware*, 1613–1800

The following were also noted:

Cistercian Ware: c. AD 1470–1550. Hard, smooth fabric, usually brick-red, but can be paler or browner. Few visible inclusions, except for occasional quartz grains. Range of vessel forms somewhat specialized, and usually very thin-walled (c. 2mm). Rare white slip decoration.

Miscellaneous 19th-century wares: This covers a range of the pottery of the period, including Ironstone China and English Stonewares, as well as Staffordshire Yellow and Mocha wares.

Discussion

The pottery from this evaluation suggests that there was activity in the vicinity from the early Medieval period onwards. As can be seen from the data in Table 1, none of the pottery appears to pre-date the foundation of Oxford Castle, but there are assemblages which date from around the time of its construction (c. 1070), up to virtually the present day. There appears to be something of a lacuna during the later 14th–15th centuries, although this period is usually identified in Oxford by the presence of 'Tudor Green' wares and developed Brill/Boarstall vessels (e.g. bottles). These are relatively rare finds, and thus the small assemblage sizes may be causing a chronological distortion. This is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that a single, largely complete Brill/Boarstall jug from trench 3, context 53 may be of 14th–15th century type, but only one other context, layer

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Tr	Str	Cont	OXAC		OXBF		OXY		OXAM		Cisterc		OXST		OXCE		OXDR		OXFH		19thC		Date
			No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1		90							2	27													13thC?
1		91					1	24															L11thC?
1	16	92							1	2													13thC?
1		94							2	20													13thC?
1		95					1	2															L11thC?
2		162					1	8															L11thC?
3		U/S	4	30			1	9	22	498			1	9			1	30					U/S
3		52	1	10			2	15	15	152	1	8	3	144			1	389					16thC
3		53							6	999													14/15thC?
3		54											1	27									15/16thC?
3		57	2	5			2	9	5	16													13thC
3	4	58					1	4	2	13													13thC
3		59	1	5	1	10			17	81													14/15thC?
3		60			1	7	1	14															L11thC?
3		61															1	63					16thC
3	7	64							4	34													13thC
3	8	65							3	88													13thC
3	8	66							1	6													13thC
3	12	72					4	15	5	75													13thC
3		76			5	30			11	62													13thC
3		77			1	34	4	23	13	97													13thC
3		77/89	5	28	3	28			5	27													13thC
3		78							1	3													13thC
3		80							1	18													13thC
3		82							1	2													13thC
3		83					2	12															L11thC?
3		85			2	7																	L11thC?
3		86					2	26															L11thC?
3		89					2	23															L11thC?
4		U/S					1	4					3	63			1	27					U/S
4		50							4	91			9	179	1	10	29	632	7	210	64	1831	19thC
4	5	62							1	2							1	36					16thC
4	6	63							3	30			3	34			4	90	3	121			16thC
		Total	13	78	13	116	25	188	125	2343	1	8	20	456	1	10	38	1267	10	331	64	1831	

59, appears to be of this date. However, the fills of pit 8 contained only 13th century pottery, despite the fact that the feature cut layer 59.

Generally, the stratified pottery is in good condition, is relatively unabraded and the mean sherd size (21.3g) reasonably large. This indicates that the material has suffered little post-depositional disturbance, and that there was Medieval activity within the vicinity of the evaluation trenches. Certainly, there is very little redeposited Medieval pottery in the post-Medieval deposits, indicating that the Medieval levels are largely undisturbed.

Clay Tobacco Pipes by Paul Cannon

A total of 105 pipe fragments weighing 556gm were recovered. All but three were found in a single layer in Trench 4 and form what is a fairly substantial group.

The earliest is a small heel pipe of London Type 4, c. 1610–1640 (Atkinson and Oswald 1969, 177, fig 1.4). Neat and regular rouletting is present around the whole rim. Its tiny capacity reflecting the very high price of tobacco at this time. Twelve bowls within the deposit are of the period c. 1650–1680, all but one being of the spur variety. A number have the angular profile identified by Oswald as a local Oxford style, Type B (Oswald 1985, 253, fig 51, B). There are three or possibly four of his Oxford Type C pipes, c. 1690–1720 (ibid., 253, fig 51, C), two of which are nicely polished. The latest bowl from this layer is a single mid 19th century pipe with ribbing and a long almost pointed spur with maker's initials. In common with some other Oxford sites (Hull forthcoming), a significant proportion of the pipe assemblage is polished (see site archive for details).

Three maker's marks were recovered. The most interesting was a stem deeply impressed twice with the upper case initials 'TI' and of the period c. 1700–1720. Both letters are 3mm tall and have serifs. At this time the letter 'I' could also represent 'J' hence the initials could stand for 'TI' or 'TJ'. Unfortunately, there are no known pipemakers from anywhere in Oxfordshire or Berkshire to match them with. The 19th century bowl referred to above was mould-impressed either side of its pointed spur 'J/A' This is possibly the work of the pipemaker Joseph Austin of Oxford, c. 1850–1871. In the latter part of his working life he was living in St Thomas' Parish. The final mark also occurs on another mid 19th century bowl and consists of a raised dot mould impressed either side of a pointed spur, c. 1840–1880. It is not possible to attribute such marks to any particular maker.

Table 2: Clay tobacco pipe summary information

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Stems</i>	<i>Bowls</i>	<i>Marks</i>	<i>Dates</i>
3	U/S	-	1	./.	c. 1840–1880
3	54	1	-	-	
4	50	83	19	TI; J/A	c. 1610–1870
4	6 (63)	1	-	-	

Glass by Graham Hull

Nine pieces of glass were recovered from stratified contexts. All were bottle glass. They would all seem to be post-Medieval or modern in date.

Table 3: Glass summary information

<i>Context</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt. (gm)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
52	2	24	Bottle-body sherds
50	3	240	Bottle-base, neck and body sherds
2 (51)	1	282	19th century soft drink bottle
5 (62)	2	116	Bottle-body and base sherds
55	1	8	Bottle- neck sherds

Stone by Graham Hull

One piece of stone was recovered, a marble bottle mould/former in the 19th century deposit 50, Trench 4. This probably relates to bottle manufacture for the brewery.

Animal Bone by Graham Hull

Fifty-nine pieces of animal bone were recovered from stratified contexts. The bone weighed 894gm and would seem to be domestic waste. The exception would be the pieces recovered from the knuckle bone floor in Trench 1 which were used as building material and may have been sourced from nearby animal processing. A worked piece from context 59 in Trench 3 may date to the 14th/15th century.

Table 4: Animal bone summary information

<i>Context</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Wt. (gm)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
16 (92)	1	<1	
18	9	68	Knuckle-bone floor
94	3	38	
95	4	4	
53	3	148	
3 (57)	6	50	
59	3	12	Incl. 1 worked piece-?knife handle
76	3	14	
77/89	2	26	
83	2	<1	
85	2	24	
50	19	430	

Metalwork by Graham Hull

Three iron nails, weighing in total 14gm were recovered from contexts 50 and 57. A George III penny dated 1807 was recovered from context 50.

Tile by Graham Hull

Fourteen pieces of tile, including glazed pieces and pieces with peg holes, were recovered. Some would seem to date from the 13th century.

Table 5: Tile summary information

<i>Context</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt. (gm)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
52	1	54	
3 (53)	5	750	1 x peg hole
3 (57)	3	76	
8 (65)	1	70	Green glazed
50	2	92	1 x glazed
6 (63)	2	88	

Shell by Graham Hull

The lower fill, 57, of pit 3 in Trench 3 was rich in shell, mostly mussel with a few pieces of oyster. Of these, 20 pieces weighing 98g were collected as a sample.

Conclusion

This evaluation of Lion Brewery and Yard, St Thomas' Street, Oxford, has established that a number of significant archaeological deposits survive on the site, as anticipated following the desk-based assessment (Ford 1999). Evidence has been provided to indicate that Medieval deposits comprising cut features, contexts which can be interpreted as the floors of structures and subsequent dumping episodes of early post-Medieval date were present immediately adjacent to St Thomas' Street on both the north and south side of the road. A stone structure in Trench 1 in the northern part of the site is thought to be the revetment of a former stream and was also located in Trench 5 to the south.

A ditch located in Trench 4 may correspond to the projected course of Osney Lane, which crossed the site in pre-Dissolution times, and bordered the road from Osney Abbey to the Castle.

Levels of archaeological and natural deposits

Trench 1

Top of early post-Medieval deposits 56.70m AOD (0.35m below modern ground surface)

Top of natural gravel 55.95m AOD

Trench 2

Top of post-Medieval 0.4m below modern ground surface

Trench 3

Top of 16th century deposits 56.64m AOD (0.35m below modern ground surface)

Top of natural gravel 55.54m AOD

Trench 4

Top of 16th century deposits 55.82m AOD (1.4m below modern ground surface)

Top of natural gravel 55.42m AOD

Trench 5

Top of alluvium 55.35m AOD (0.7–0.9m below modern ground surface)

Top of natural gravel 53.85m AOD

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Appendix 1: Context index with provisional dates from pottery

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit/fill</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
2	51	4	Drain cut	Modern
3	53, 57	3	Pit	14th/15th century?
4	58	3	Pit/wall?	13th century?
5	62	4	?Drain cut	19th century +
6	63	4	?Ditch	16th century
7	64	3	Pit	14th/15th century?
8	65, 66	3	Pit	14th/15th century?
9	67, 68	3	Pit	14th/15th century?
10	69	3	Pit	TPQ 16th century
11	70	3	Pit/ditch	14th/15th – 16th century
12	72	3	Pit	13th century
13	74	3	Pit/gully/cut for wall	13th – 14th/15th century
14	87	3	?Construction cut for wall 15	13th century
15		3	Wall	13th century
16	92	1	Posthole	L11th/13th century?
17	93	1	Posthole	TAQ L11th/13th century
18		1	Knuckle-bone floor	TPQ 13th century
19		1	Wall	13th century?
20		1	Wall	TPQ 13th century
21	152	1	Drain	19th/20th century
22	154	1	Posthole	TPQ 13th century
23		1	Wall	TPQ 13th century
24		1	Construction cut for 19	TPQ 13th century
	50	4	Layer, grey brown silty clay with charcoal and brick flecks	19th century (TPQ 1807)
	52	3	Layer, green-grey silty clay with charcoal and brick fragments	16th century
	54	3	Layer, reddish brown gravelly clay with brick and charcoal fragments	TPQ 16th century
	55	5	Post-Medieval makeup layer	19th/20th century
	56	5	Alluvial clay	–
	59	3	Deposit, green-grey silty clay with charcoal flecks	14th/15th century?
	60	3	Deposit, greeny-grey sandy, gravelly, clay	L11th century?
	61	3	Same as 73	14th/15th century or 16th?
	71	3	Deposit, yellow clay thin band with some charcoal	13th–14th/15th century
	73	3	Deposit, green-grey silty clay with charcoal and brick flecks	14th/15th century?
	75	3	Deposit, brownish green sandy gravelly clay with small amount of charcoal	TAQ 13th century
	76	3	Deposit, ashy	13th century
	77	3	Deposit, green-grey silty clay with some charcoal	13th century
	78	3	?Hearth floor, red/black fired clay surface	13th century
	79	3	Deposit, yellow clay	13th century
	80	3	Deposit, greeny-grey silty clay with some charcoal	13th century
	81	3	Deposit, yellow/green clay	13th century
	82	3	Deposit, green-grey silty clay with some charcoal	13th century
	83	3	Deposit, green-grey silty clay	L11th century?
	84	3	Deposit, yellow sandy gravel	L11th century?
	85	3	Deposit, yellowy-brown sandy gravel	L11th century?
	86	3	Deposit, brownny-yellow sandy gravel	L11th century?
	88	3	Deposit, grey silty clay with some gravel	TPQ 13th century
	89	3	Deposit, gravelly silty clay, grey/brown	L11th century?
	90	1	Deposit, light brown silty clay	13th century?
	91	1	Deposit, brown silty clay	13th century?
	94	1	Deposit, brown silty clay	13th century?
	95	1	Deposit, grey-brown silt	L11th/13th century?
	96	1	Deposit, limestone rubble	TPQ 13th century
	97	1	Charcoal band	TPQ 13th century
	98	1	Deposit, orange brown sandy gravel	TPQ 13th century
	99	1	Charcoal band	TPQ 13th century

	150	1	Deposit, grey ashy silt	TPQ 13th century
	151	1	Deposit, crushed limestone rubble	TPQ 13th century

Appendix 1: Context index with provisional dates from pottery continued

Cut	Deposit/fill	Trench	Description	Date
	153	1	Charcoal and ash deposit	TPQ 13th century
	155	1	Structural surface, orange gravel	13th century
	156	1	Structural surface, light brown silty clay	13th century
	157	1	Structural surface, brown silty clay	13th century
	158	1	Structural surface, brown silty clay	13th century
	159	1	Structural surface, charcoal	13th century
	160	1	Structural surface, brown silty clay	13th century
	161	1	Structural surface	13th century
	162	2	Deposit, greyish brown silt with frequent charcoal fragments, humic	L11th century?
	163	2	Deposit, compacted orange gravel	TPQ L11th century
	164	2	Deposit, brown soil with frequent charcoal and brick specks	TPQ L11th century
	165	2	Deposit, grey silty makeup with brick and tile fragments	TPQ L11th century
	166	2	Limestone blocks, possible wall or surface	TPQ L11th century
	167	2	Deposit, grey silty makeup with brick and tile fragments	TPQ L11th century