

Former Lion Brewery, St Thomas' Street, Oxford

An Archaeological Evaluation (Phase 2)

for Kingerlee Limited

by Jo Pine

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code LBO99/73

July 2002

Summary

Site name: Former Lion Brewery, St Thomas' Street, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 50840 06100

Site activity: 2nd phase evaluation

Date and Duration of Project: 2nd May–14th June 2002

Area of Site: 0.42 hectares

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisors: Jo Pine and Sarah Coles

Site code: LBO99/73

Summary of results: Late post-medieval activity in the form of demolition and levelling layers. 18th century re-facing of an earlier, undated wall. A possible 16th century wall and timber posts within alluvium whose build up is dated to the 13th-16th centuries

Monuments identified: Walls/foundations, pits, layers and timber posts

Location and reference of archive: The site archive is presently held by Thames Valley Archaeology Services Ltd, 47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course (accession no OXCMS 2000.40).

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Former Lions Brewery, St Thomas' Street, Oxford Archaeological Evaluation Phase 2

by Jo Pine

Report 99/73c

Introduction

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

Planning consent (00/900/NFZ) has been granted by Oxford City Council for the construction of housing and conversion of existing buildings on the site. The planning permission includes a condition for a second phase of field evaluation to complement earlier work which consisted of a desk-based assessment (Ford 1999) and a first stage evaluation (Hull 1999). This first phase of evaluation was undertaken prior to demolition of the existing buildings on the site. This revealed, within Trenches 1-3, close to the street frontage, deeply stratified contexts representing cut features, floor deposits, dumps and a revetment for a water course. Trench 5 to the rear was sterile and Trench 4 revealed a probable lane-side ditch backfilled in the early post-medieval and Victorian times (Hull 1999). Parts of the site, however, were inaccessible at this time.

In light of these results, a second phase of field evaluation was requested to provide further information and clarify the nature of the deposits present and to assess the areas not investigated in the first phase. This work was required in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) and policies EN40-43 of the City of Oxford Local Plan.

This second phase of investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Brian Durham of Oxford City Council. Trenches 6-9 were excavated during May 2002, under the supervision of Jo Pine who was assisted in the field by Lisa-Marie Hardy. The excavation of Trench 10 was undertaken by Sarah Coles with the assistance of Pam Jenkins, Andy Mundin and Danielle Colls during June 2002. The site code is LBO99/73

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the south side of St Thomas' Street, Oxford (Fig. 1). An earlier version of the development proposals included a triangular area of c. 0.05ha to the north of St Thomas' Street which was investigated during the first phase of fieldwork. The southern site is rectangular in plan, 0.42ha in extent and was 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. At the time of the second evaluation those buildings which were not to be retained had been demolished.

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 (Wareham Stream) forms the eastern boundary of the site and another stream shown on historic maps is now culverted and lies beneath the site.

Archaeological background

The desk-based assessment carried out prior to evaluation (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 that were previously inaccessible. The second phase of the evaluation was concerned with the area adjacent to Wareham Stream on the east side of the site which is an important zone, as it was possible that mill structures would be present, along with a bridging point for a former extension of Osney Lane. The work was designed to place trenches in areas of the site which were inaccessible during the first phase. It was necessarily delayed until demolition had taken place.

This evaluation was designed to be accomplished by excavating three trenches between 5m and 20m long and 1.6m wide. However after consultation with Mr. Brian Durham, Oxford City Archaeological Officer, the position of the trenches was altered and an additional two trenches were excavated. Trench 6 was located to search for a continuation of Osney Lane. Trenches 7 and 9 were intended to clarify the nature of the deposits in Trench 6. Trench 8 was excavated to search for the continuation of Osney Lane and to locate any bridging point across Wareham stream. Trench 10 was located to search for a mill or other water-side structures.

The trenches were excavated using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.. This was employed under direct and continuous archaeological supervision to remove made ground and overburden until the relevant archaeological levels were reached. All possible archaeological features were hand cleaned and a selection investigated, and all spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

Trench 6 (Figs 3 and 5)

This was aligned north-south, was 11.5m long and 2.05m deep (maximum). Modern demolition rubble sealed numerous possible archaeological deposits. At the north end of the trench a thin layer (173) had survived. This contained pottery of 19th-century date. This sealed a mortared block (26) which was 1.40m by 1.70m and may have been the remains of a foundation for the old boiler house which was located in this area. This structure appeared to truncate layer (181) which was only partially investigated and contained one sherd of pottery dating from (perhaps) the late 15th century.

Block (26) was also butted by layer (174) which contained four sherds of 16th-century pottery. However, this layer is probably the same as dump/levelling layers (182) and (176). These contained large quantities of 19th-century pottery, glass, clay pipe and brick and tile. After consultation with the Oxford City Archaeological Officer, a representative sample of this material was collected in order to date these layers. It is highly probable these had been cut by a red brick lined drain (25) which crossed the trench ENE–WSW. The fill of this (172) also contained 19th century material and it was sealed by levelling layer (177), also dated to the 19th century.

Stratigraphically below layer (176) were layers of ‘dirty’ gravel (180 and 184). Both were dated to the 19th century and layer (180) appears to seal natural gravel.

Both layers (184) and (176) appear to respect (and therefore post-date) both a stone wall or refaced wall (27) to the south, and a layer of humic brown silty clay (178). This layer contains three sherds of late 18th century pottery. Wall/reface (27) consisted of roughly hewn blocks whose bonding material was not discernible. This was aligned ENE–WSW and appeared to reface the northern face of an earlier wall/foundation (28). Wall/foundation (28) consisted of large rough limestone blocks set in a yellow sand mortar which traversed the trench and was 0.80m wide.

To the south of wall (28) the strata are markedly different with sterile orange/brown layer (192) overlying an orange clay (193) which in turn overlay a grey organic clay to a depth of 2.00m below the present ground surface.

Trench 7 (Fig. 3)

This was aligned north–south, was 2.1m long and 2.40m deep. Demolition rubble 1.50m deep overlay orange clay 0.80m deep onto a thin band of alluvium 0.10m deep onto gravel. This was similar stratigraphy to that found to the south of wall/foundation (28) in Trench 6.

Trench 8 (Figs 4 and 5)

This was located in the south-western part of the site, 3m long and 2.65m deep, aligned east-west. Demolition rubble (169) 1.50m deep overlay a light grey silty clay (alluvial) deposit (168) which was 1.10m deep. A small lens of peat was encountered below this in the west end of the trench.

A vertical timber post was recorded protruding from the south side of the trench within the alluvium. Its full length was not discerned and it was left *in situ*. Three pieces of wood were also recovered from the alluvium layer (168) during machining. These did not appear to be *in situ* but may have been disturbed during demolition. These appear to have been planks and slight tool marks were visible. Their location close to the vertical timber is probably more than coincidence and they may have formed part of a revetment. One sherd of 13th century pottery was recorded from the alluvium layer close to where the timbers were retrieved.

Trench 9 (Figs 3 and 5)

This was aligned north-south and was positioned in order to see if wall/foundations (27) and (28) continued further to the east. The trench was 3.70m long and 1.10m deep. Demolition rubble overlay a redundant service. The cut for this overlay a levelling layer (189) which contained 18 pottery sherds dated to the 19th century. This in turn sealed a series of levelling layers. Thin layer (188), which contained four sherds of ?16th century pottery, overlay layer (187). This in turn overlay layer (186) which sealed a thin layer (185) dated by one sherd of pottery to the ?16th century. However, dating of a similar, perhaps the same layer (178) in Trench 6 is later and the sherd found here may be residual.

This layer sealed a wall/reface (29). This was of similar material and construction to wall (27) in Trench 6 and appeared to be a continuation. As with the sequence in Trench 6 wall (27) appeared to butt an earlier wall/foundation (30). This was also a continuation of the wall/foundation (28) in Trench 6. Again, the stratification to the south of this wall (30) was different than to the north with sterile sands and clay present (190 and 191).

Trench 10 (Figs 4 and 6, Plate 1)

This trench was aligned north-south, was 18.50m long and between 1.50m and 1.80m deep. Demolition rubble 0.80m deep overlay silty clay alluvium (351) which was 1.10m deep. This in turn overlay natural gravel. The alluvial layer (351/353) contained 22 sherds of pottery. The latest sherd recovered was from the highest part of this deposit and was dated to the 16th century. Deeper into the deposit were found both 13th-century and 15th-century sherds. The alluvium had been cut by the construction cut (222) of a limestone wall/foundation (350). Wall/foundation (350) consisted of large rough limestone blocks set in a yellow sand mortar. It was 0.75m wide and exposed to a depth of 54.80m above Ordnance Datum. This wall appeared to be slightly curving and did not continue across the whole width of the trench. A pit (221) also cut the alluvium. This was observed in section and was 1.30m by 0.70m and 0.52m deep. One sherd of late 15th century was recovered from its silty clay fill (352) but from its stratigraphic position, it must date to at least the 16th century. A possible timber pile (354) was also recorded in this trench in the alluvium (353). It was tapered to a point, 320mm x 180mm x 600mm and appeared to be chamfered down one side.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 319 sherds with a total weight of 9.649kg. The majority of the assemblage (267 sherds, 6,848g) was of late 18th or 19th century date. The rest of the material was medieval or early post-medieval. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 4.

Fabric

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1989; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 1 sherd, 19g.
OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 1 sherd, 20g.
OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 2 sherds, 7g
OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 10 sherds, 124g.
OXCL: Cistercian ware, 1475-1700. 4 sherds. 22g.
OXST: Frechen Stoneware, AD1550 – 1700. 10 sherds, 319g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 24 sherds, 2,290g.
NOTTS: Nottingham stonewares. c. 1690-1800. 3 sherds, 324g.
WHEW: mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 188 sherds, 2,986g.

The following wares, not covered by the Oxfordshire type-series, were also noted. The numerical codes refer to the column headings in Appendix 4.

F438: Later English Stoneware. Hard, grey fabric with a ferruginous wash. Commonly used for ink-pots, seltzer bottles etc. c 1750+. 21 sherds, 1,810g.

F442: Mocha/Yellow wares. White, slightly sandy earthenware. Yellow wares have a thick, glossy lemon glaze, Mocha wares the same with a brown, fern-like transfer decoration. Yellow wares 1785-1830, Yellow wares 1815-1830. 49 sherds, 1,236g.

F449: Black Basalt ware. c. 1770-1850. A dry-bodied Staffordshire black stoneware used mainly for coffee and tea pots. 1 sherd, 58g.

HE: Mass-produced horticultural earthenwares. 19th – 20th Century. Plant-pots, etc. 4 sherds, 432g.

The medieval assemblage was very fragmentary, making it largely impossible to identify the range of vessel types present. The late medieval material, particularly the German Stonewares and Cistercian ware, consisted mainly of mugs and cups, with a few sherds of red earthenware. The early modern material (WHEW, etc) comprised almost entirely tablewares, such as plates, dishes and teapots, with more utilitarian preparation and storage vessels very rare.

Animal Bone

Thirty four fragments of bone weighing 451gms was recovered from nine contexts, all from Trench 6 and all from probable 19th century contexts. Further, a worked bone domino was also retrieved from layer 171 which had a 19th century date.

Clay Pipe

Thirteen clay pipe stems and one bowl were recovered from eight contexts from Trenches 6 and 9. All appear to be from 19th century contexts.

Metalwork

Ten items of metalwork were recovered during the evaluation all from 19th century layers. This included nails, and window frame pieces.

Glass

Twenty four fragments of glass were recovered from seven contexts in Trench 6. All came from 19th century contexts and the assemblage included bottle and window glass.

Brick and Tile

Twenty fragments of tile were recovered weighing 1.2kg from late post-medieval or 19th century layers.

Stone

A fragment of whetstone was recovered from layer (171) in Trench 6

Shell

Seven fragments of oyster shell were recovered from late post-medieval layers in Trench 6.

Conclusion

Deposits of possible archaeological interest were recorded in four of the second phase evaluation trenches and illuminate use of the site, mainly in post-medieval times. Trenches 6 and 9 recorded late post-medieval activity in the form of layers and a mortared block (26) which may be the remains of a foundation for the old boiler house which once stood on this part of the site. Also recorded in these trenches was a substantial limestone wall/foundation (28 and 30). This was undated but was earlier than the late 18th century, as was its reface (27 and 29). In Trenches 8 and 10 alluvial deposits were encountered. The earliest pottery from this material was 13th century, and the latest 16th century. Two wooden posts/piles were recorded in these trenches together with remains of planking in Trench 8. It is plausible to suggest they may be the remains of revetments. Their chronology is uncertain, however, and it was not possible to discern from the stratigraphic evidence whether they were late medieval or post-medieval. The location of Trenches 6 and 8 suggests that they are within/on the side of the western bank of an earlier course of the Wareham stream which has shifted to the east through time rather than the culverted stream shown on historic maps. A wall foundation (222) was also recorded, which appears to be at least as early as the 16th century.

Appendix 2 summarizes elevation details for the uppermost levels of the deposits encountered. In general the archaeologically interesting levels (pre-19th century) are relatively deeply buried and are to be found at a depth of greater than 1m, beneath made ground.

References

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Mellor, M, 1989, 'A summary of the key assemblages. A study of pottery, clay pipes, glass and other finds from fourteen pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century', in T G Hassall, C E Halpin and M Mellor, 'Excavations at St Ebbe's' *Oxoniensia* **49**, 181–219.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S or W end

Trench No.	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
6	11.5	1.8-2.00	2.05	Demolition rubble onto various 19th c layers onto wall/reface (27) earlier wall (28). To south of this wall are clays and alluvium on gravel.
7	2.1	1.6	2.40	Demolition rubble 1.50m deep overlay orange clay 0.80m deep on thin band of alluvium 0.10m deep onto gravel.
8	3.00	1.5	2.65	Demolition rubble (169) 1.50m deep overlay a light grey silty clay alluvial deposit (168) which was 1.10m deep. A small lens of peat encountered below this in the western end of the trench. A vertical timber post was recorded protruding from the southern side of trench within the alluvium. Below the alluvium gravel was encountered
9	3.7	1.6	1.10	Demolition rubble overlay various 19th c layers onto wall/reface (2 and earlier wall (30))To south of this wall were clays and alluvium.
10	18.50	1.6	1.50-1.80	Demolition rubble 0.80m deep overlay silty sandy clay alluvium in turn overlay natural gravel. The alluvium had been cut by the possible construction cut (222) of a limestone foundation (350). Pit (221) also cut the alluvium A possible timber pile (354) was also recorded cut into the alluvium

APPENDIX 2: Levels of archaeological and natural deposits

Trench 6

Top of late post-Medieval deposits 55.90m AOD (1.00m below demolition debris)
Top of natural gravel 54.89m AOD

Trench 7

Top of alluvium 54.93m AOD (1.50m below demolition debris)

Trench 8

Top of alluvium 55.09m AOD (1.50m below demolition debris)
Top of gravel 54.09m AOD

Trench 9

Top of 19th century 56.40m AOD (1.00m below demolition debris)

Trench 10

Top of 16th century alluvium 54.80m AOD (1.50m below demolition debris)

Appendix 3 : Context index

Cut	Deposit/fill	Trench	Description	Date
26	-	6	Foundation	19th?
25	172	6	Drain	19th
27	-	6	Wall	Late 18th?
28	-	6	Wall/foundation	Pre late 18th
29	-	9	Wall	Late 18th?
30	-	9	Wall/foundation	Pre late 18th
221	352	10	Pit	Late 16th+ century?
222	350	10	Wall	16th century+
	168	8	Alluvium	13th?
	169	8	Demolition rubble	Modern
	171	6	Layer	19th
	172	6	Layer	19th
	173	6	Layer	19th
	174	6	Layer	19th
	175	6	Layer	19th
	176	6	Layer	19th
	177	6	Layer	19th
	178	6	Layer	19th
	179	6	Layer	19th
	180	6	Layer	19th
	181	6	Layer	Late 15th?
	182	6	Layer	19th?
	183	6	Layer	19th
	184	6	Layer	19th
	185	9	Layer	16th?
	186	9	Layer	19th?
	187	9	Layer	16th?
	188	9	Layer	16th?
	190	9	Layer	Pre late 18th
	191	9	Layer	Pre late 18th
	192	6	Layer	Pre late 18th
	193	6	Layer	Pre late 18th
	194	6	Layer	Pre late 18th
	351	10	Alluvial layer	13th-16th
	353	10	Alluvial layer	13th-16th
	354	10	Timber	13th-16th?
	355	8	Timber	13th-16th?

Appendix 4: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Tr	Cntxt	OXAC		OXBF		OXY		OXAM		OXCL		OXST		OXDR		438		442		NOTTS		WHEW		449		HE		Comments
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
6	171													8	1691	12	1010	20	452	1	30	90	1662					
6	172													2	191	2	131	10	252			20	248					
6	173																					3	99					
6	174					1	2	1	7					2	67													
6	175																					2	26					
6	176													3	100	3	495	14	249			27	405			2	62	
6	177															1	52	2	77									
6	178													2	31									1	58			
6	180													1	40	1	22					11	116					
6	181							1	17																			
6	182													1	33							6	66					
6	183												1	44														
6	184													1	52	2	100					13	70					
8	168							1	8																			
9	185													1	29													
9	188													1	8			1	7			2	103					
9	189																					1	11					
9	189																2	199	2	294	13	180				2	370	
10	351	1	19																									55.25, 7.6m N of W section
10	351			1	20																							55.19, 7.2m N, centre of trench
10	351					1	5																					55.19, 8m N oE section
10	351							1	3																			cleaning
10	351							1	21																			55.07
10	351							1	26																			55.32, 7.8m N of E section
10	351							1	12																			55.17, 7.2m N, 0.5m from E section
10	351							1	6																			55.52, 7.9m N o f E section
10	351									1	2																	
10	351											1	32															55.23, 7.2m N, 0.3m from E section
10	351											1	15															55.27, 7.2m N, 0.3m from E section
10	351											1	12															55.07, 8.2m ,N 0.5m from W section
10	351											1	6															55.22, 9.6m N of E section
10	351											1	96															cleaning
10	351											4	114															
10	351													1	20													55.78, 7.9m N of E section
10	351													1	28													
10	352									3	20																	55.23, 7.4m N of W section
10	353							2	24																			near timber
	Total	1	19	1	20	2	7	10	124	4	22	10	319	24	2290	21	1810	49	1236	3	324	188	2986	1	58	4	432	