



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Springfield Brewery, Cambridge Street,
Wolverhampton, WV10 OJP

NGR: SO 91941 99374

Sue Henderson



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Cambridge Street, Wolverhampton, WV10 OJP**

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**Sue Henderson
October 2015**

Client: Thomas Vale Construction

Planning application Ref. 15/00290/FUL

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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) during groundworks associated with the conversion and extension of part of Springfield Brewery to create a technical college at Cambridge Street, Wolverhampton, WV10 OJP (NGR: SO 91941 99374). The work was carried out on behalf of Thomas Vale Construction and involved archaeological attendance for inspection and recording during these groundworks. The brief was for archaeological observation of the ground disturbance, there being a possibility that structures and deposits relating to the early phases and subsequent development of the brewery may survive on the site, as well as deposits that pre-dated the brewery itself. Any structural or archaeological remains of significance were to be identified and recorded. The site, particularly within the footprint of the proposed building, proved to be very disturbed. The site had been subject to substantial groundworks for a building project initiated in 2006 and later abandoned. No archaeological deposits were identified.

*The archive will be deposited with Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies under the event number **EBL936** and a copy of this report will be uploaded to the ADS OASIS database.*

1. Introduction.

This document constitutes a report on an archaeological watching brief carried out at Springfield Brewery, Cambridge Street, Wolverhampton (SO 91941 99374). The work was carried out on behalf of Thomas Vale Construction by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) with the initial visit being on the 25th of August 2015.

Planning permission has been granted for the conversion of part of Springfield Brewery and a three storey extension in order to create a technical college with external hard surfaced sports, play and teaching spaces and parking (ref. 15/00290/FUL). The former Springfield Brewery lies to the north east of Wolverhampton city centre (Fig. 1). The whole brewery site covers approximately 5.17 acres and is bordered by Cambridge Street to the east, Grimstone Street to the south, the railway line and Birmingham Canal to the west and Cannock Road to the north. The part of the site to be redeveloped, and the focus of this watching brief, lies predominantly along the eastern edge parallel to Cambridge Street (Figs 2 and 3).

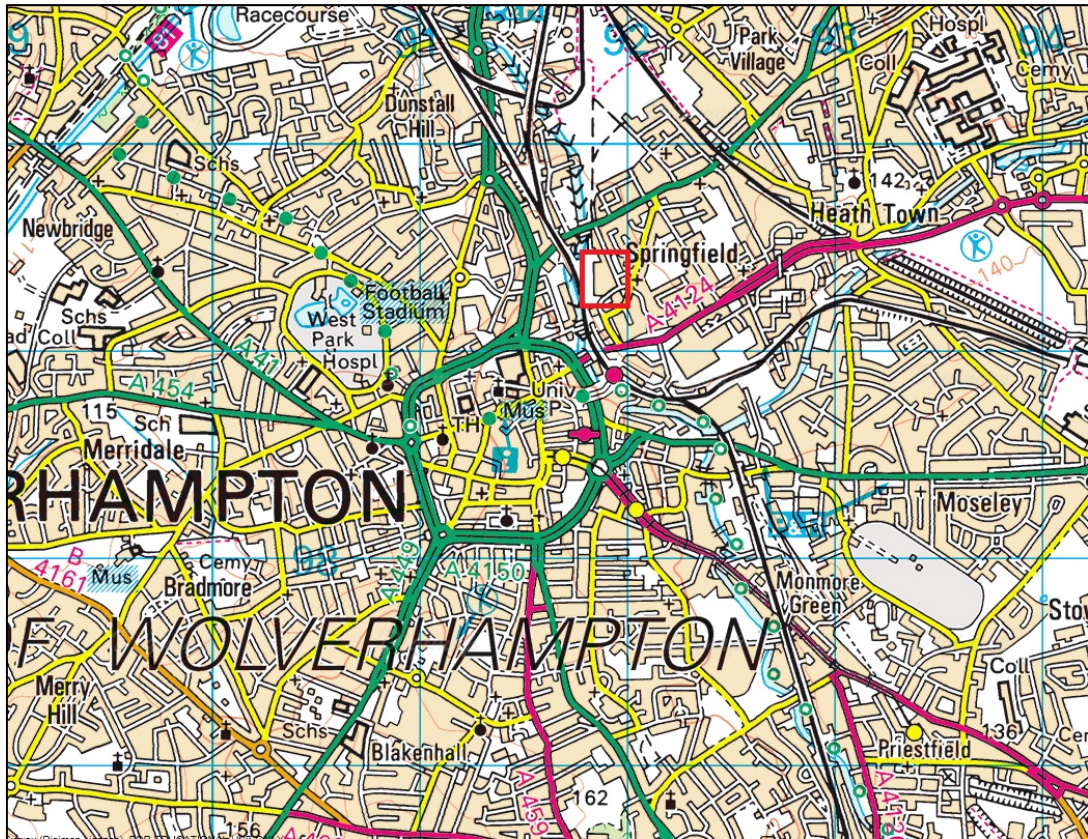


Figure 1: Site location

Reproduced from Landranger 139 Birmingham and Wolverhampton 1:50,000 OS map by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright 2010. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 100029495.

Springfield Brewery was built in 1873 for William Butler and Company Limited. The main brewery complex is a Grade II Listed Building (**WOHER2594; LB Ref. 1201790**). The entrance canopy, lodges and gates to the Brewery on the east side, have separate Grade II listings. An historic building survey of these eastern buildings has been undertaken (Hayman 2014). White and Wade (1997) and Morriss and White (1998) in assessments of the site, identified Springfield Brewery as a large, multiphase, single use industrial complex and a major industry in Wolverhampton. The brewery lasted for over one hundred years and became the town's largest brewery.

The proposed development site lies within an area of archaeological potential and there is the possibility that structures and deposits relating to the early phases and subsequent development of the brewery may survive on the site, as well as deposits that pre-date the brewery itself. Of particular interest, the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map 1889 shows a large circular tank, originally situated in the courtyard and so within the footprint of the proposed building (Fig. 3). In addition, there is some possibility of the survival of earlier deposits with local references to early 17th century stone quarries and the 'Cul Well', a reliable source of water.

Following National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (DCLG 2012), the Archaeology and Historic Environment Office for Wolverhampton City Council, as archaeological advisor to the planning authority, has requested archaeological observation of ground disturbance (watching brief) to identify and record any structural or archaeological remains of significance. The event number for this watching brief investigation is **EBL936**.

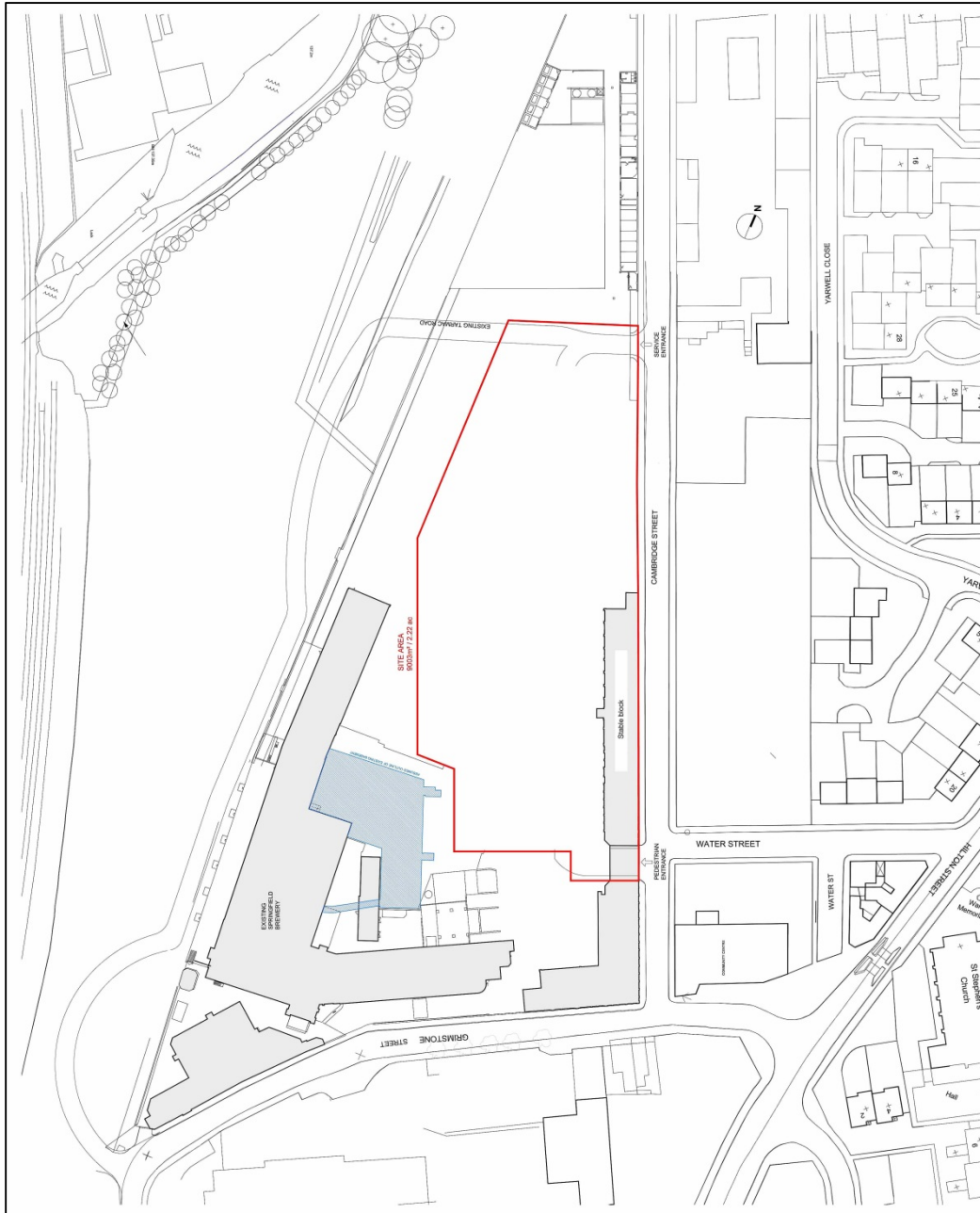


Figure 2: Detail of site location, provided by the developer, the development area outlined in red.

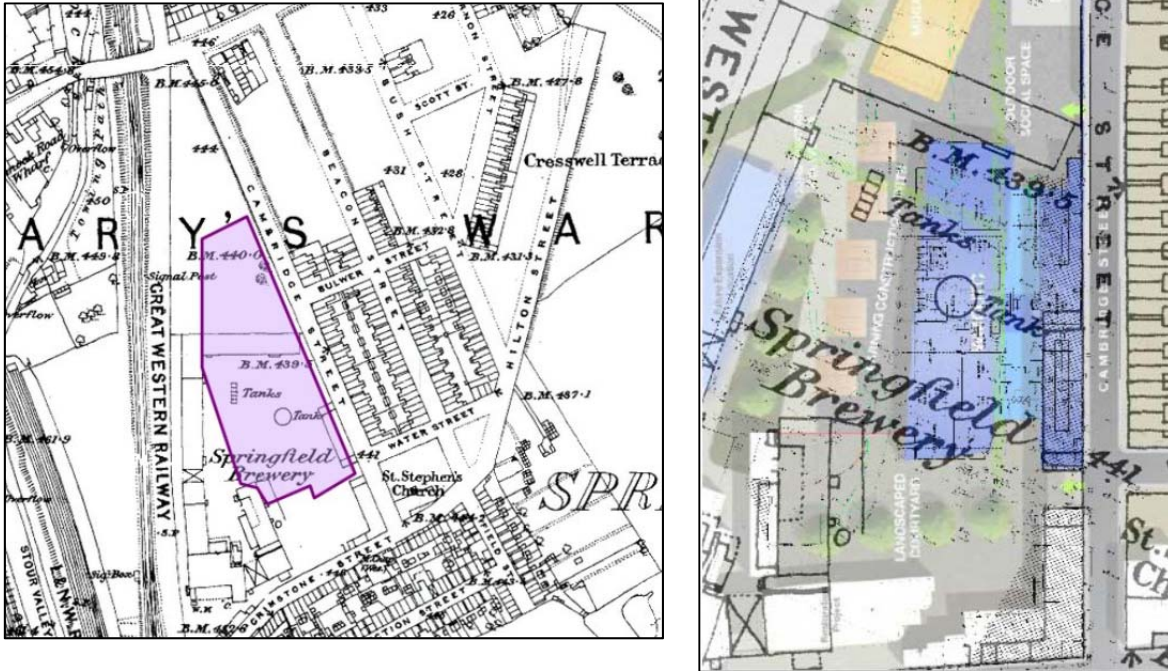


Figure 3: The 1889 OS Map with the development area and building footprint superimposed.

2. Geology and Topography

The British Geological Survey of Great Britain indicates that the underlying geology is likely to consist of Clent Formation and Enville Formation Mudstone and Sandstone, overlain with Diamicton Till (BGS online Geology of Britain viewer). The site lies between 132m and 139m above Ordnance Datum (OD), rising to the southern corner of the site. There is a marked step in height between the development area and the core of the remaining brewery buildings. The development area covers approximately 8287m² or 2.05 acres at 135m OD and is situated on a relatively flat part of the site (Fig.4).



Figure 4: Photograph showing site topography with location of development footprint in foreground, looking south south east.

3. Background

William Butler and Company Limited began building Springfield Brewery in 1873 having been attracted to the site by the quantity and quality of the spring water. There were reputedly five springs in a marshy undeveloped area (Parker n.d). The brewery complex was designed to house as many processes as possible within the one site including its own maltings and stables all within a secure, enclosed courtyard (Fig. 5).

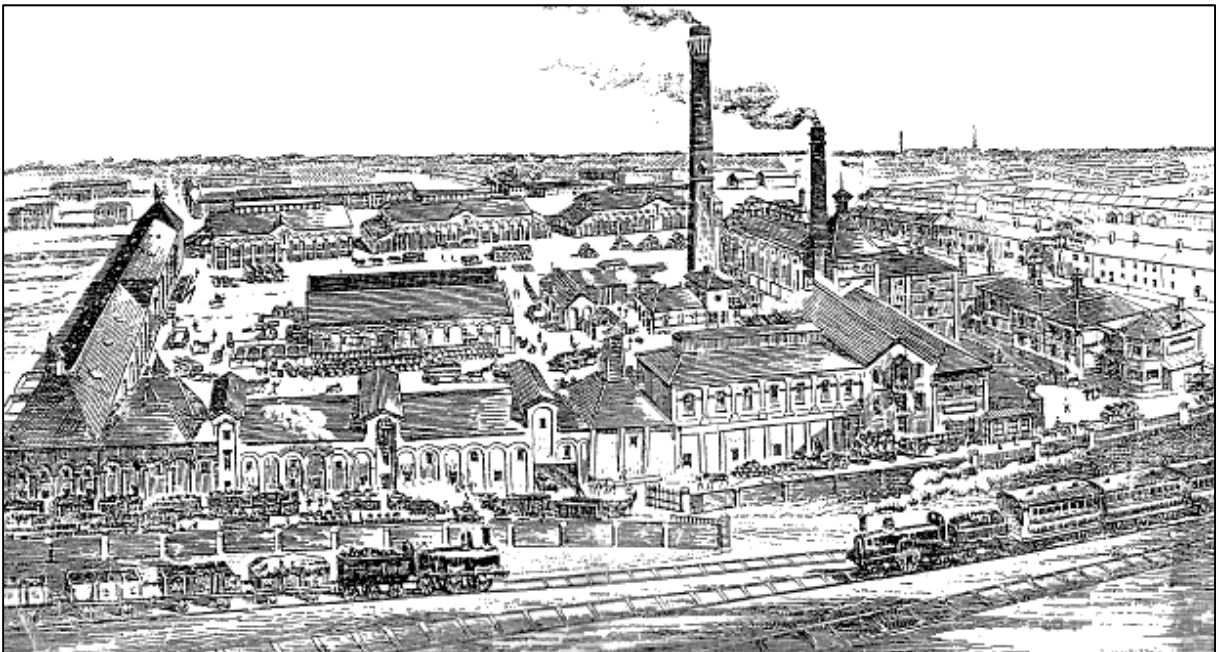


Figure 5: An engraving of the brewery from 1889 shown from beyond the railway, looking east.

The earliest available Ordnance Survey map of the area is from the same date as the engraving (Fig 6). This map shows the brewery complex with two tanks labelled. The main pump house was situated in the south west corner of the site and there are no other pumps or wells marked on the map. Presumably these tanks were for water storage and were perhaps also on a spring site or spring line.

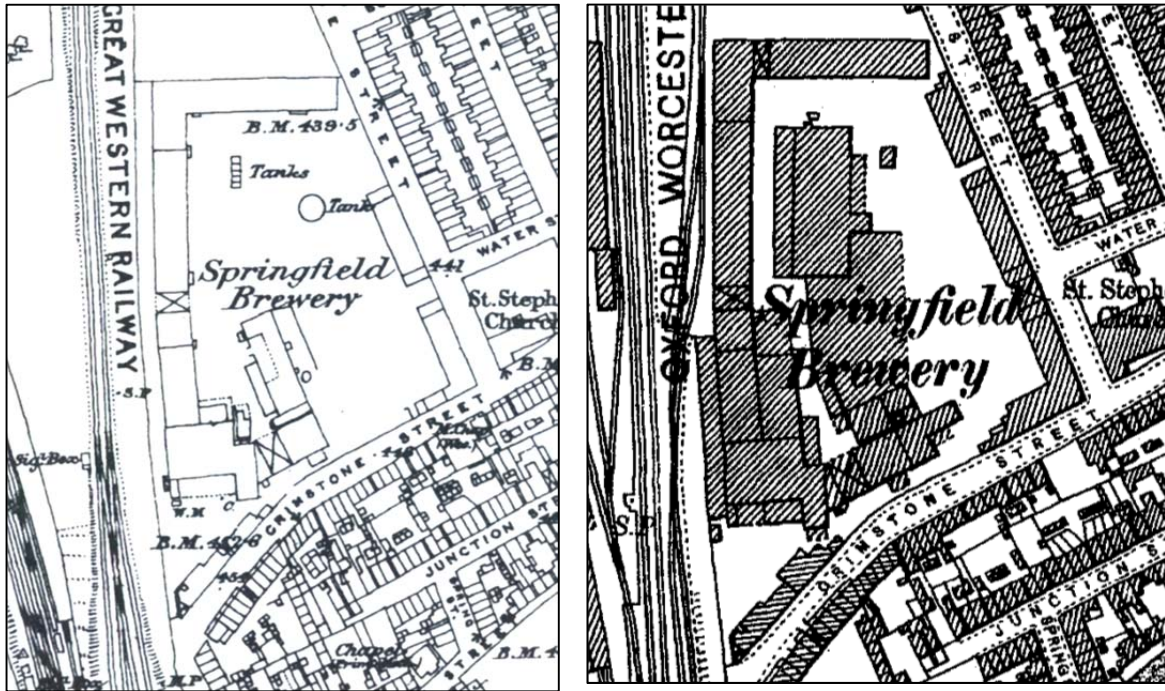


Figure 6: Ordnance Survey maps of the brewery site; 1889 to the left and 1902 to the right.

On the 1902 map, there are additional buildings in the courtyard area and there is a small building in vicinity of the circular tank, but perhaps not in the exact same location. Photographs of the courtyard shed more light on the location of buildings and features (Fig 7). A photograph taken in 1899 is perhaps looking too far east to show the tank or building. A structure is, however, visible in the photograph taken in the 1920's and pictorially visible in an aerial view from 1924 and these both suggest a hexagonal building. Pin pointing the exact location is difficult, but the photograph depicts the building roughly opposite the lift shaft and 20 metres to the west. The hexagonal building is still evident on the 1959 Ordnance Survey map.

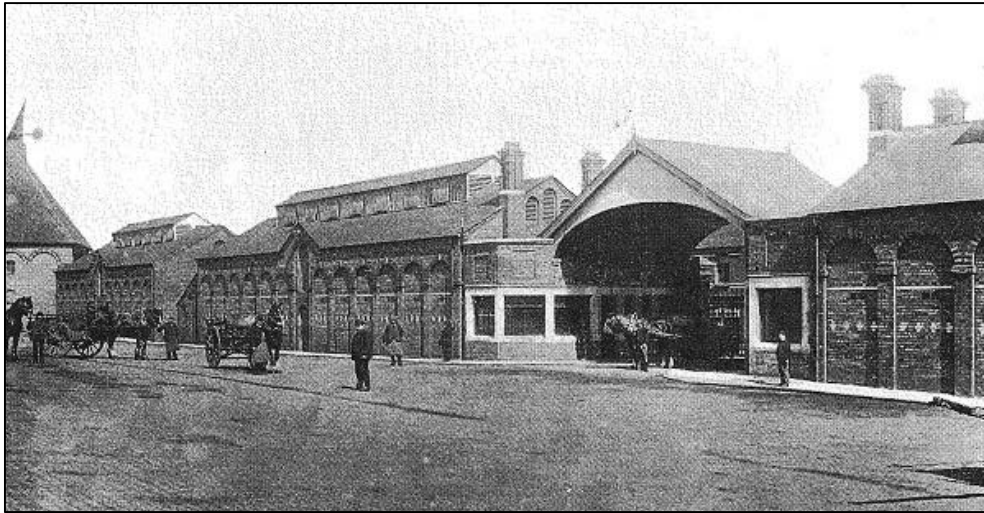


Figure 7: Photographs of the courtyard area in 1899 (top) and c.1920 (centre) and pictorial representation 1924 (bottom)

In 1960 the brewery was acquired by Mitchells and Butlers of Cape Hill, Smethwick. Although production ceased in 1991, the site remained in use as a distribution depot. A draft development brief for the site was prepared by Wolverhampton City Council in March 2004, but two fires, one in August 2004 and another in August 2005 badly damaged the block of buildings around the brewhouse.

In 2005 plans were submitted by Simon Developments in conjunction with Taylor Wimpey for a mixed use scheme of new build and change of use for the Listed Buildings (Alexander 2007). The scheme included 299 dwellings, office space and retail. The north end of the site was to be mostly new housing. By 2008, with some work completed, the scheme ran in to financial difficulties and work was abandoned (Appendix 1).

4. Archaeological Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological work may be summarised as follows:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits or earlier building remains.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits/ structural evidence to be affected by the proposed works.
- To record any archaeological deposits/ structural evidence to be affected by the works.
- To advance understanding of the heritage assets
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation is to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development.

All work will be considered in light of the West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology (Watt ed. 2011) along with targeting national research aims. There is potential for archaeological deposits relating to the origins and the development of the brewery. As well as information on the buildings themselves, investigation could provide information on the growth, continuity and development of industrial activity. Artefactual evidence can assist in the development of a type series within the region and provide evidence for craft, industry and exchange both at a site level and across broad landscape areas.

5. Methodology

The monitoring of groundworks included the observation of ground preparation, surface stripping and excavation of the footprint of the proposed building. A mechanical excavator was used with a toothless ditching bucket where possible. All exposed areas, sections and spoil heaps were visually inspected for features and finds any areas of possible archaeological deposits cleaned with a view to excavation and recording as appropriate.

All work was undertaken in line with Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014) and adhered to their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (2014).

6. Results

There were three visits to site. The initial visit on 25th August 2015 found work in the very early stages of clearing undergrowth and establishing site boundaries. It was evident at this point that considerable groundworks had taken place in the recent past and a concrete plinth with piling to a depth of several metres dominated the northern end of the site (Figs 8 and 11). This northern area is to be laid with sports pitches and surfaces for parking. With the existence of the concrete plinth and established tarmacked road, disturbance here would already be to a greater depth than proposed excavations.



Figure 8: Photograph of the north east corner of the site looking south, with the concrete plinth and piling in the foreground.

At a second visit on the 1st of September attention was focussed further south within the footprint of the proposed building. Stripping of the undergrowth and clearance of large quantities of rubble exposed a compacted rubble surface. The area has been reduced sometime earlier and the granite setts removed, reduction being 0.4m to the east and c. 1m to the west. The degree of rubble compaction was difficult to gauge. A modern drain was visible cutting through the rubble slightly to the west of the area of the suggested tank. The drain was to a depth of two to three metres (Figs 9 and 10). The surface generally was too disturbed to identify the foundations of any features and ground reduction was scheduled to take place at a later date.



Figure 9: Modern drain running south-east to north-west and lying to the west of the proposed footprint.

Also on this second visit, vegetation was stripped around the boundaries of the concrete plinth to the south and east. Stripping revealed the foundations of the west to east cooperage range, seen with a pyramidal tower on the 1920's photograph. Although not visible on the photograph, the foundations appear to step back slightly at this point, possibly at the junction with the tower. The foundations were on average 0.8m wide and visible for approximately 20m before turning north west for a further 30m, at which point they turned a further right angle in to the concrete plinth (Figs 10 and 11). The foundations were composed of brick and tile fragments, stone and gravelled mortar, all tightly bonded.

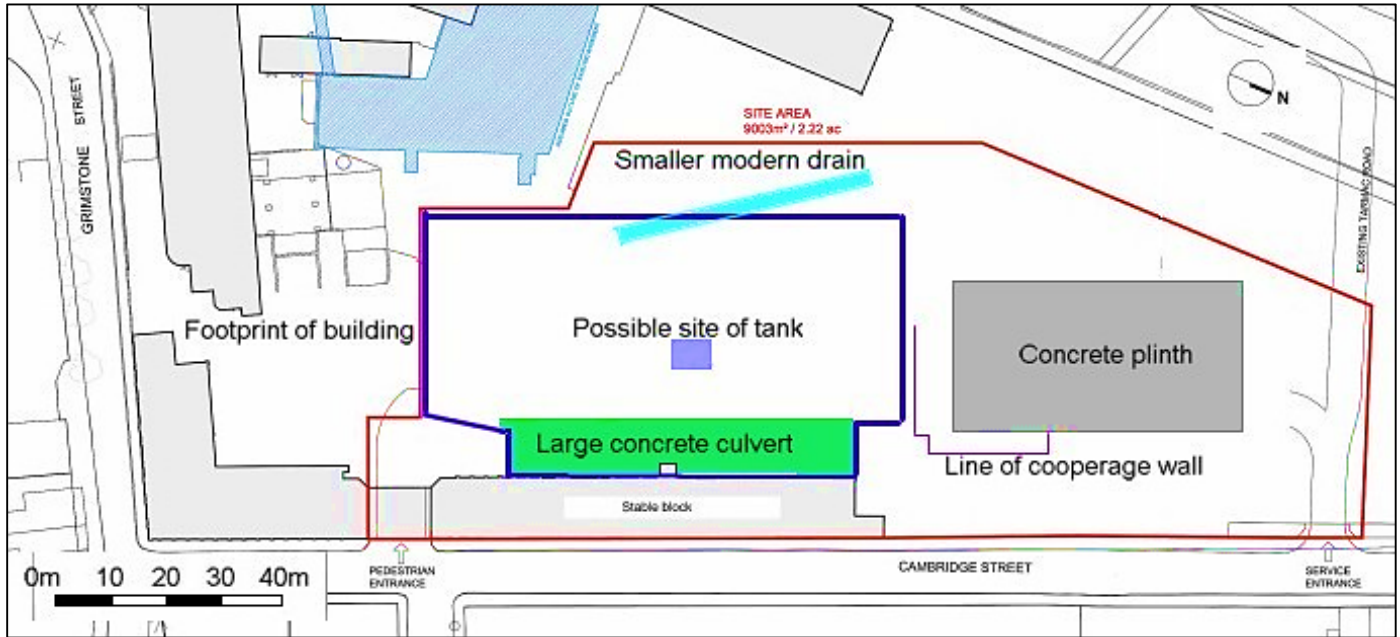


Figure 10: Features mentioned in the text, displayed on the site plan.



Figure 11: Foundations of the east to west range built in 1881- 1883 looking east, north east

A third and final visit was made on the 17th of September 2015 to observe ground reduction within the footprint of the building. Work had already taken place to remove a very large reinforced concrete culvert which ran parallel to the stable buildings and so within the eastern edge of the footprint. A space 6.5m wide and 3m deep had been excavated to allow for the culvert and the space backfilled with loose rubble (Fig 12).



Figure 12: Large culvert running length of building footprint, looking south then north

The remainder of the footprint was excavated to varying depths from 0.6m on the north east side to 1.47m on the south west side, to accommodate the difference in ground level height. The vast majority of the ground was loosely backfilled to a considerable depth. At the southern end there were some layers of demolition material possibly as make-up layers to a surface or subsequent surfaces (Fig 13). There were layers of compacted brick fragments and layers of cinder. No natural substratum was identified.

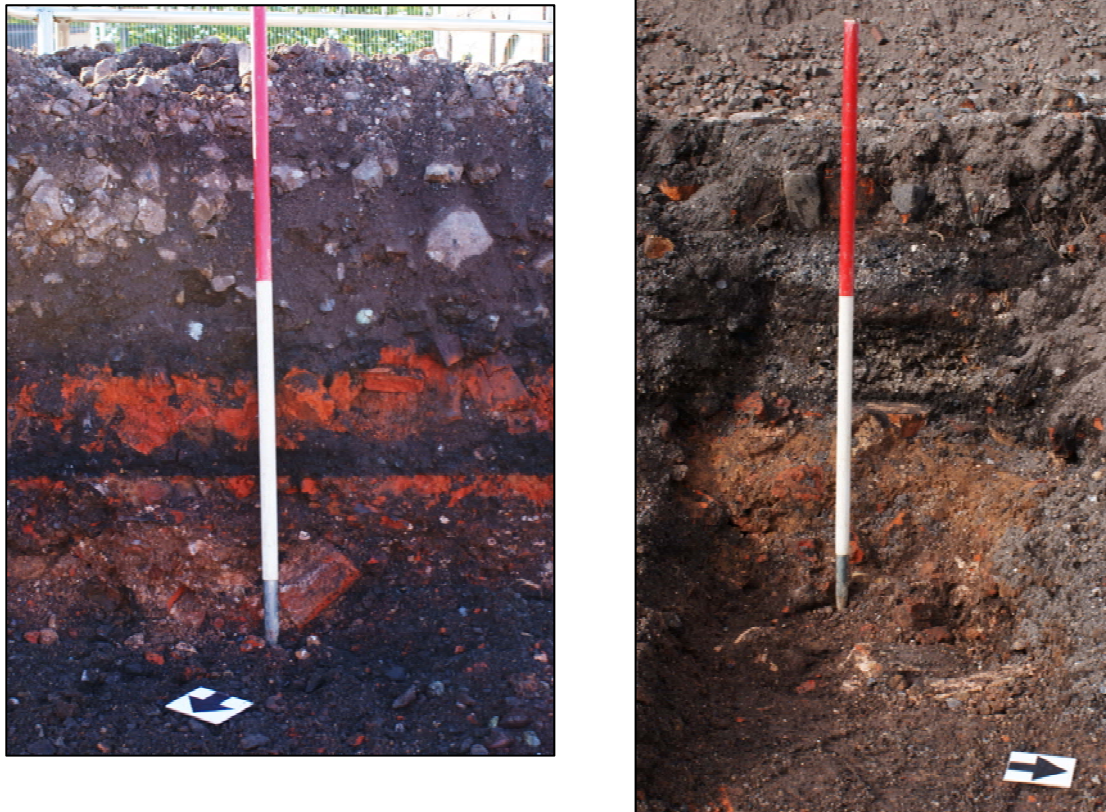


Figure 13: Layers of surface or surface make-up identified at the southern (left) and south western ends of the footprint.

The northern end of the building footprint was very disturbed and completely made up of rubble backfill. This rubble continued to the depths of the ground reduction. The figure in the photograph is standing in the approximate position of the tank marked on the 1889 map (Fig 14). At this point, the potential for identifying and recording archaeology was considered negligible, both within the footprint of the building and the remainder of the site; and following discussion with the Planning Archaeologist for Wolverhampton, further observation was deemed unnecessary.

7. Finds

There were no finds from earthfast features or deposits. Examination of the spoil revealed occasional sherds of Modern pottery, often stoneware and much fragmented bottle glass although none of these unstratified finds were retained.



Figure 14: Ground reduction at the northern end of the footprint in the area of the tank.

8. Conclusion

The site of Springfield Brewery proved to have been much disturbed in recent years. The abandoned development in 2006 involved fairly intrusive ground preparations. Notably, the concrete plinth to the north and the culvert to the east caused much disturbance as well as the establishment of site roads. The granite setts had been removed from much of the courtyard, the ground disturbed and backfilled with building rubble. Consequently, the monitoring of ground clearance and ground reduction within the boundaries of the development site revealed very little. The foundation of a wall of the cooperage, since demolished, was identified on the northern edge of the building footprint. The area of particular interest, however, proved to be one of the most disturbed areas. We have little evidence of whether

the tank identified on the early map was above or below ground or linked to any water source. It is possible that the function of the tank was replaced by the hexagonal structure seen in later photographs. As this structure appeared in the 1959 Ordnance Survey map, it may be possible to trace a reference to this feature through oral history projects.

9. Archive

This archive consists of 3 watching brief form notes, 1 sheet of drawings with notes, 67 digital photographs and 4 sheets of thumbnail prints. The archive will be held by Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies. The event number is **EBL936**.

10. Publication

Since 2004 ULAS has reported the results of all archaeological work to the *Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations* (OASIS) database held by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) at the University of York.

11. Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to Thomas Vale Construction for their assistance in the completion of the project, particularly to Pat Mellis, site manager.

Fieldwork was undertaken by the author Sue Henderson and the project was managed for ULAS by Vicki Score and Patrick Clay.

12. References

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Appendix 1

Springfield Brewery site in doubt

The transformation of Wolverhampton's former Springfield Brewery with 300 homes is in doubt after a housebuilder revealed it is to sell its part of the site.

The transformation of Wolverhampton's former Springfield Brewery with 300 homes is in doubt after a housebuilder revealed it is to sell its part of the site.

News of the sell-off has raised fears the site off Cannock Road could remain derelict for years to come. Bryant Homes, part of the Taylor Wimpey group, has blamed falling demand for flats and townhouses for the decision to offload its seven-acre share.

Building work was due to get under way earlier this year but bosses put the start date back until next April due to the economic downturn.

They have now admitted the project was no longer viable.

Taylor Wimpey spokesman Adrian Regan said: "We are reviewing our position on the site and will be putting it on the market as part of this exercise."

He added the firm would consider other uses for the site other than homes.

In May, Taylor Wimpey, which has a Bryant Homes base on Pendeford Business Park, announced it would close 13 of its 39 regional offices and shed 900 jobs.

Work on the brewery, which dates back to 1874 and employed hundreds of people its heyday before shutting in 1991, has hit a string of setbacks in recent years, the biggest being an arson attack in 2004.

City-based Simon Developments has been restoring some of the brewery's old buildings and is still ploughing forward with plans for the remaining four acres of the site, which already has permission for 140 apartments and 30,000sqft of office and retail space.

Company boss Simon Hill said: "We are now looking at the feasibility of reducing some of the houses and increasing the commercial side of the project."

Wolverhampton planning chief Councillor Malcolm Gwinnett fears the site could now lie empty for years.

MIDLANDS NEWS - EXPRESS AND STAR - PUBLISHED: September 9, 2008 11:53 am

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