



**Bristol and Region
Archaeological
Services**

Archaeological Watching Brief
**OAKHILL MALTINGS, HIGH STREET,
OAKHILL, SOMERSET.**

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FAME
Federation of Archaeological Managers & Employers



Archaeological Watching Brief
at
**OAKHILL MALTINGS,
HIGH STREET, OAKHILL, SOMERSET.**

Centred on NGR ST 63205 47250

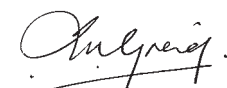
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Adopted Chronology

Prehistoric	Before AD43
Roman	AD43-410
Anglo Saxon/Early Medieval	AD410-1066
Medieval	AD1066-1540
Post-medieval	AD1540-present

Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	HER	Historic Environment Record
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	Km	Kilometre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	m	Metre
BC	Before Christ	NGR	National Grid Reference
c	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
EHA	English Heritage Archive		

NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

January, 2014

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SUMMARY

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Coxley Developments to undertake a watching brief on the groundworks carried out at the former Maltings buildings in the village of Oakhill. The buildings are Listed Grade II and are located in the centre of Oakhill village (NGR ST 63205 47250), c 5km north of Shepton Mallet, within the Oakhill Conservation Area.

The watching brief revealed a number of features associated with the principal building itself. These included a series of earlier floor surfaces, the earliest of which, a mortar and stone floor, probably dates to the original construction of the building in the 1860s. Beneath the floor surfaces only two features were observed, the first a small section of brickwork which while the ash mortar suggested it was contemporary with the main structure, the slightly different alignment may indicate it is not part of it, and a dump of rubble overlain by redeposited natural that may indicate the backfilling of an earlier feature. No other features or finds were uncovered, either contemporary with or predating the maltings and it is possible that construction of the maltings in the mid-19th century resulted in the removal of any earlier deposits or features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is proposed to redevelop the former Oakhill Maltings buildings in the village of Oakhill (planning application 2010/2064). The proposal is to convert the Grade II listed buildings into 25 residential units with ancillary parking and leisure facilities. This will result in extensive alteration of the existing structures. Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Coxley Developments to undertake a watching brief on the groundworks carried out while the conversion takes place.
- 1.2 The fieldwork was undertaken between the 9th April and 24th October 2013 under the supervision of Cai Mason and Simon Roper who also compiled this report. This was in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS 2013) and approved by the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council.
- 1.3 The project archive will be deposited with the Somerset's Museums Service under the Accession Number TTNCM 26/2013. The OASIS number for this project is bristola1-167591 and the project is recorded on the Somerset HER under number 32396.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site is located in the centre of Oakhill village (NGR ST 63205 47250), c. 5 km north of Shepton Mallet (**Fig. 1**). It comprises the principal maltings building, and the malthouse located to the south. To the south and east is a modern housing estate built upon land that once formed part of Oakhill Brewery along with the maltings. The side of the principal building sits on the main road through the village (**Fig. 2**).
- 2.2 According to the British Geological Survey the solid geology of the site comprises Black Rock Limestone Subgroup of the Carboniferous Period, with no superficial deposits (BGS 2013). The site rises gently to the south and sits at about 210m aOD.
- 2.3 The site lies within the Oakhill Conservation Area, and the maltings buildings are Grade II listed. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the site or nearby.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 No desk-based assessment has been carried out on the history of the site, therefore a short summary of historical research carried out by other groups is produced below. A number of historic maps were also examined.
- 3.2 The Oakhill Brewery was founded in 1767 by James Jordan and John Billingsley (Hobhouse, 23-24). Mr Jordan left at an unknown date, however Mr Billingsley died in 1811 and Mr W. P. Jillard then ran the business until 1835 when Mr John Spencer joined as junior partner, at which time the business was known as Jillard, Spencer and Co. The earliest map examined was an early Ordnance Survey drawing produced by E. Crocker in 1808. This depicts three structures in the approximate location of the principal building along the main road through the village. To the east of these is a larger building, presumably the main brewery site.
- 3.3 In about 1864 the Jillards left the business, and in the November issue of the same year the Shepton Mallet Journal recorded the building of a new malthouse on the site (Ashwick Parish Website). This is probably the existing principal building that lies alongside the main road through the village. The Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan of 1886 shows this building on the site with no other buildings near to it. An old insurance document of 1899 refers to this building as 'old but in good repair' (Miles 1987, 13).
- 3.4 In 1889 the company went public, and the following year a second malthouse block was built to the south of the first, as can be seen on the 1903 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan. The company was at its height in the early 20th century, when it was producing 2000-2500 barrels per week, with depots in Bath, Bristol, Cardiff, Devonport, Manchester and London. Some time after 1904 a 3-foot gauge railway was constructed to transport the beer to Binegar main line station (Miles 1987, 13).
- 3.5 Following a fire in 1915 at the brewery site and the impact of the First World War, the company was taken over first by Bristol United Breweries, then Georges and then Courages. In 1924 another fire occurred, this time at the maltings site causing huge damage, however the maltings were rebuilt along traditional lines. Brewing ceased at Oakhill in 1938, although the maltings continued in use (Ashwick Parish Website). In 1961 the site was modernized with the introduction of Saladin box kilns at the west end of the principal building. This greatly increased the efficiency of the malting process (Miles 1987, 13-15), however by the 1980s the restrictions of the 19th-century buildings and size of the site meant it could not compete with modern developments, and the site closed at the end of 1986.
- 3.6 In 1997 New Oakhill Brewery moved its operation to the maltings site in order to expand, having been brewing at the original brewery buildings since 1984. The brewery closed in 2004 with the retirement of the owner and the malthouse buildings have been unused since this time (Ashwick Parish Website).

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2013) approved by the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council. The fieldwork also complied with the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (IfA 2008). The archaeological work involved monitoring the excavation of foundation and service trenches within the principal building. The aim of the archaeological work was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of construction work.
- 4.2 Recording was carried out using Bristol & Region Archaeological Services' single context recording system and in accordance with the BaRAS Site Manual (2009). The photographic record was created using a conventional SLR camera with monochrome film, supplemented by colour images produced with a digital camera with a resolution of 16 mega-pixels. All details of the photographs taken were recorded on a standard BaRAS photographic record sheet. The drawn record comprised a series of annotations made to existing floor plans provided by Pointcloud Ltd. and archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:20.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 The excavation of two trial pits within the principal building were the first groundworks monitored. Trial pit 1 revealed a series of earlier floor surfaces laid on top of each other (**Plate 1**). The earliest of these was composed of pale off-white mortar with stone inclusions, 30mm thick and 260mm below the then current floor surface. Beneath was a reddish brown silty-sand bedding layer with stone inclusions, while above was another bedding layer composed of charcoal, heat affected stone and coal fragments. An off-white mortar floor sat above, with three subsequent concrete floors laid directly on top of it and each other.
- 5.2 Trial pit 2 was located against the east wall of the principal building and contained the remains of only one earlier floor, with a flagstone set in a mortar bed visible in the east facing section. The footings of the east wall of the building step out by c 70mm at approximately the same height as the mortar bedding, 150mm below the modern concrete, and a trace of mortar was visible on the wall above the step (**Plate 2**).
- 5.3 The concrete and earlier floor surfaces were subsequently removed exposing the silty-sand, gravel and rubble bedding layer (100) recorded in trial pit 1, which extended across the whole of the building, much of it disturbed by modern drainage. One fragment of an early structure was exposed at the east end of the building within the new footings (**Plate 3**), a section of brickwork (101) 0.63m wide by 0.35m long and 0.15m deep. This was bonded with a hard pale grey ashy lime mortar, very similar to that which was used for the principal building, but on a slightly different alignment from the larger structure. The brickwork sat within a cut (104) in the natural sandy clay and gravel (102). No other remnants of earlier structures were found.
- 5.4 At the west end of the building a layer of redeposited natural clay (105) was found overlying a dump of stone rubble (106) in the base of the new foundation trench (**Plate 4**). These deposits are probably the backfill of a feature such as a pit or quarry, however the extent of this was not exposed and no dateable material was recovered.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The watching brief of the groundworks at the Oakhill Maltings site revealed a number of features associated with the principal building itself. These included a series of earlier floor surfaces, the earliest of which, a mortar and stone floor, probably dates to the original construction of the building in the 1860's. Above this was a bedding layer containing a lot of charcoal and heat affected stone, which may be an indication that the mortar floor bedded on it post-dates the fire of 1924. The later concrete floors all probably date to the second half of the 20th century.
- 6.2 Beneath the floor surfaces only two features were observed, the first a small section of brickwork which while the ash mortar suggested it was contemporary with the main structure, the slightly different alignment may indicate it is not part of it, possibly instead some sort of base for industrial equipment. A dump of rubble overlain by re-deposited natural may indicate the backfilling of an earlier feature such as a quarry prior to the construction of the maltings, however not enough of these deposits was exposed to allow an accurate interpretation. No other features or finds were uncovered, either contemporary with or predating the maltings. It is possible that construction of the maltings in the mid-19th century resulted in the removal of any earlier deposits or features.

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Maps and Plans

1808 Ordnance Survey drawing, E. Crocker

1886 Ordnance Survey plan (1:2500).

1903 Ordnance Survey plan (1:2500).

1970 Ordnance Survey plan (1:2500).

Websites

Ashwick Parish website – Oakhill Brewery section, accessed on 18/04/13

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British Geological Survey Geology of Britain Viewer, accessed on 18/04/13

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

British Library Online Gallery

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/f/zoomify82457.html>

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<http://www.old-maps.co.uk/maps.html>

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services wish to thank the following for their help and advice: Lee Wright of Pointcloud Limited, Glen Graham of Graham Construction Ltd., Steve Membury of Somerset County Council and Kevin Newton of Coxley Developments for commissioning the project. BaRAS would also like to thank Geoff Fitton of the Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society, for providing BaRAS with a copy of an article from their bulletin. The fieldwork was undertaken by Cai Mason, Simon Roper and Tracey Smith, with Simon Roper also producing this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge. The archive was compiled and prepared for deposition by Simon Roper. The project was managed by John Bryant.

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local-authority policies.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) for England published by the UK Government in March 2012 states that the historic environment, which includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, is an irreplaceable resource and, as such, should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when considering and determining planning applications. This is taken to form part of a positive strategy set out in the respective Local Plan (i.e. *Bristol Core Strategy*) to ensure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The assigned significance of heritage assets will be key factor in terms of their conservation.

Given their irreplaceable nature, any harm to, or loss of, a heritage asset, or heritage assets, should be clearly and convincingly justified as part of a planning application. As part of this, applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. Where a heritage asset, or assets, are to be harmed or lost as the result of a proposal, the applicant will be required to record and advance the understanding of the significance of that asset or assets, to include making the evidence arising publicly accessible, but this will be in proportion to the significance of the asset/assets in question.

While the NPPF takes into account the historic environment as a whole, additional protection is afforded to designated heritage assets under current English Law. Any proposal that would result in harm or loss of a designated heritage asset is also required to be justified by the applicant in meeting strict criteria set out in the NPPF.

LOCAL POLICY

Policy EN12 - Sites of Local Importance

Development which is likely to damage archaeological remains of local importance, including sites recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record, will only be permitted where the importance of the development outweighs the intrinsic importance of the remains.

Where development is proposed which may affect a site of local importance, planning permission will not be granted unless a field evaluation has been carried out to determine the affect of the proposal on the archaeological value of the site.

Where permission is granted, a mitigation strategy will be required for the remains. Wherever possible, remains should be preserved in situ. Where this is not possible, preservation of the remains by record prior to development will be required.

Policy EN20 - Alterations to a Building in a Conservation Area

Alterations to an unlisted building in a Conservation Area will only be permitted where:

- 1) the proposed alteration is sympathetic in design, scale, materials, colour, detailing and landscaping to the rest of the building;
- 2) the alteration will help keep the building in use and will not prevent the use of any floors; and
- 3) the alteration will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Policy EN21 - Change of Use of a Building in a Conservation Area

Changes of use of a building in a Conservation Area will be permitted where it would secure the retention of a building which contributes towards the character or appearance of the area provided that:

- 1) the new use will not require any changes in the appearance or setting of the building other than those which will preserve or enhance its contribution towards the character or appearance of the area;
- 2) the new use will not cause any harm to the surrounding area due to vehicle parking; and
- 3) the new use will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Policy EN23 - Alterations to a Listed Building

Alterations or extensions to a Listed Building will not be permitted where the historic form of the building, or any feature of special architectural or historic interest, would be damaged or lost.

Policy EN24 - Changes of Use of a Listed Building

Changes of use of part or the whole of a Listed Building will only be permitted where the use will not damage the form of the building, any features of special architectural or historic interest, or the setting of the building, either in the course of the use or because of alterations which are required by the change of use.

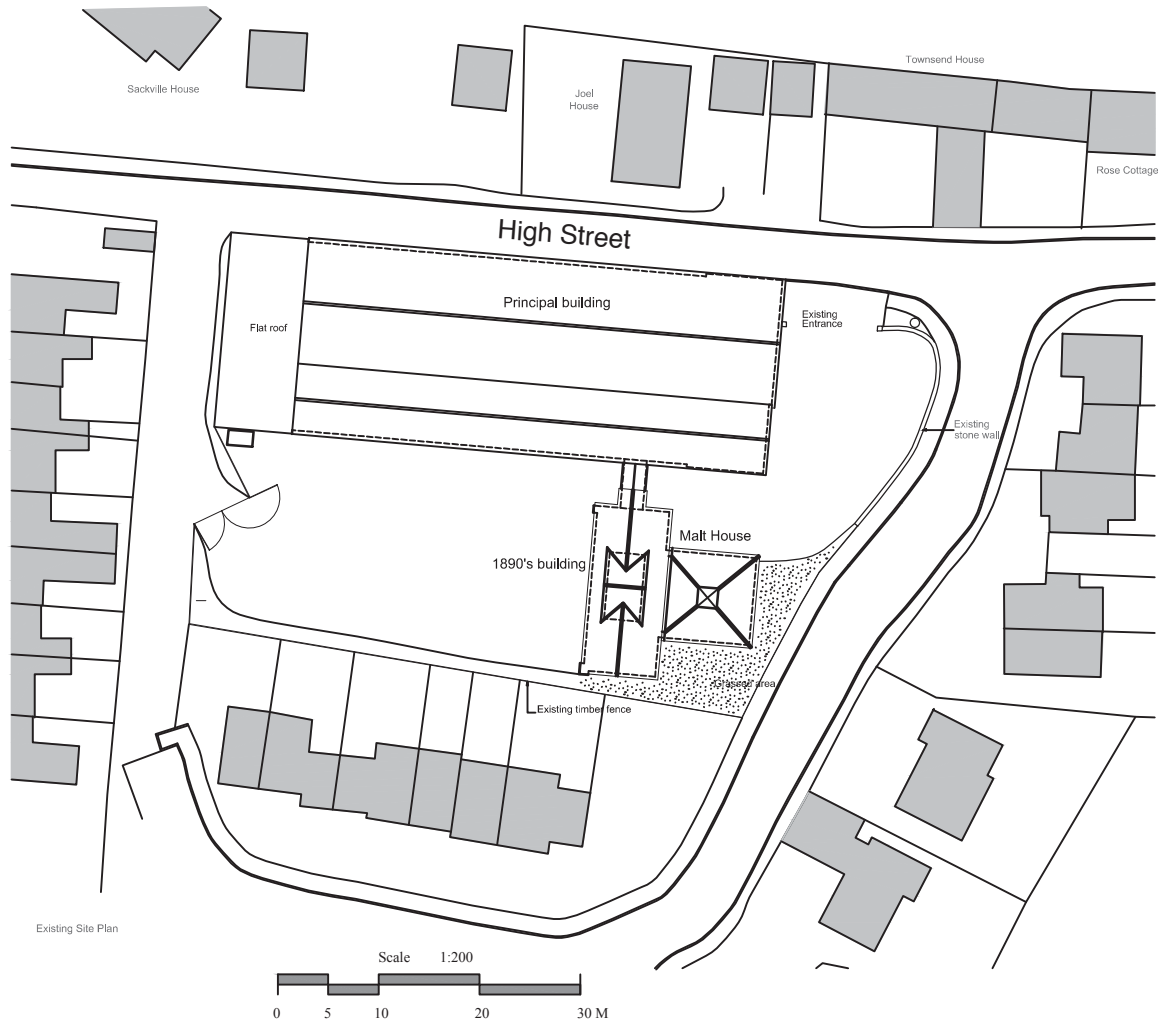
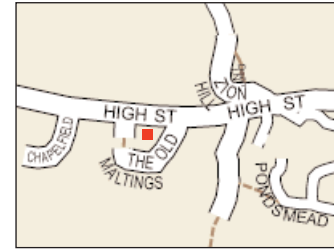
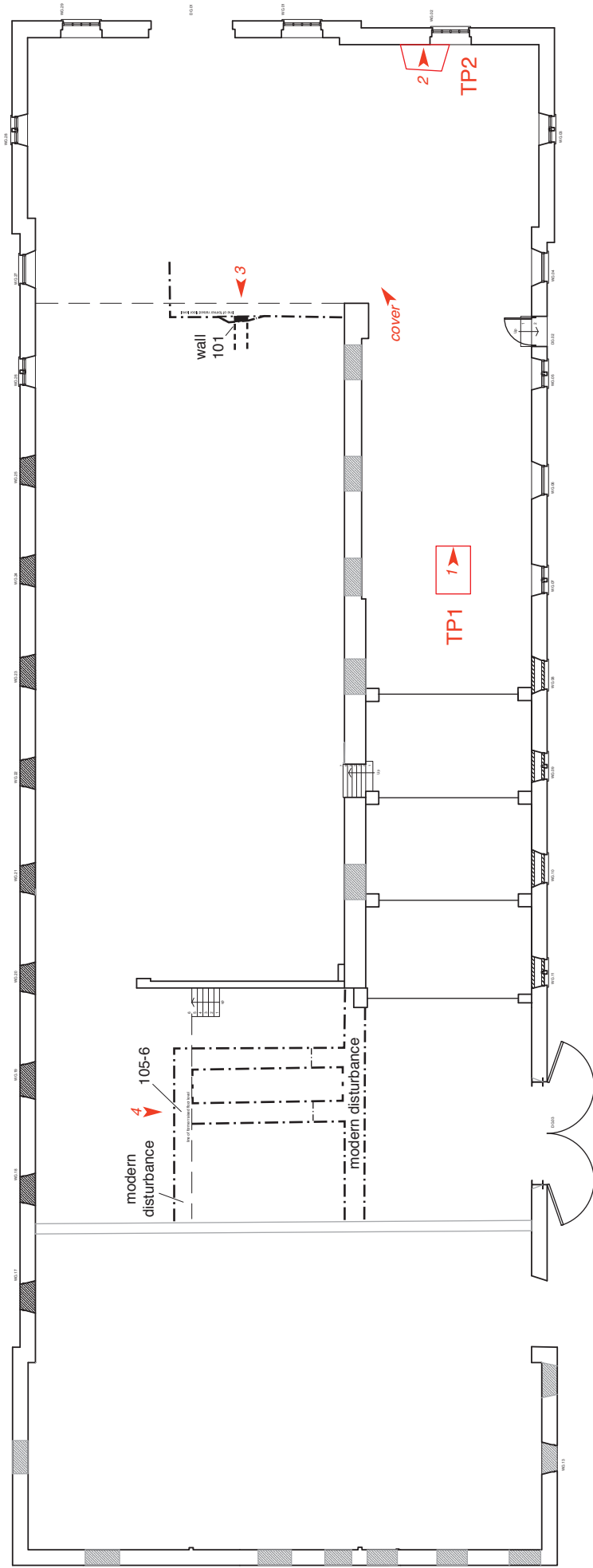


Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:750



Ground Floor Plan

Principal Building

Fig.2 Ground floor plan of the principal building showing location of trial pits. Plate directions in red



Plate 1 Trial pit 1 west-facing section, former floor surfaces visible, looking east



Plate 2 Trial pit 2 west-facing section, foundations and remnant of an earlier floor visible, looking east



Plate 3 Fragment of early structure (101), looking west



Plate 4 Redeposited clay (105) and stone rubble (106), looking south