

HISTORIC BREWERY EXCAVATIONS AT THE FORMER ROYAL CLARENCE NAVAL VICTUALLING YARD IN GOSPORT

HELEN MOORE, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY CHRIS PHILPOTT

Introduction

During 2007 an archaeological excavation was undertaken by Gifford (now Ramboll) and Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. in two areas of the former Royal Clarence Naval Victualling Yard in Gosport, Hampshire, (Figs. 1 and 2) in advance of their re-development by Berkeley Homes Southern Ltd. It had been anticipated that excavation in these areas was likely to locate the remains of two of the former 17th and 18th century breweries that once existed on the site, supplying beer in large quantities to the Navy.

In the area of the site where a new building known as D1 was to be constructed (see Fig. 2), it was hoped that the remains of the earliest 17th century brewery would be found. Later buildings in this area included a 19th century office building (bombed during the Second World War), and an office block constructed in 1961 but now demolished. An adjacent area where buildings D2 and D3 were to be constructed was known to contain the well-preserved remains of Samuel Wyatt's 18th century brewery; it also contained a pumphouse designed by John Smeaton, a structure that had been located during the preliminary investigations on site using ground penetrating radar and evaluation trenching. The remains of this brewery were extremely well preserved less than 0.50 metres below the tarmac and offered an exciting opportunity to increase our understanding of the workings of one of the largest 18th century naval breweries.

Berkeley Homes Southern Ltd. commissioned Ramboll to prepare a historical study of the site of Royal Clarence Yard in 1998, assessing the significance of its

buildings and archaeological remains. This was produced by Dr Chris Phillpotts who built on the earlier documentary research undertaken by David Evans for Gosport Borough Council, Hampshire County Council and Berkeley Homes. These studies have been used in this article to provide the short history of brewing on the site from the 17th century onwards.

This article is structured so that the history of each brewhouse is then followed by the results of the excavation to locate their remains.

The 17th century Weevil Brewery

Until the beginning of the 18th century, the area that later became known as Royal Clarence Yard was known as Weevil, first appearing with this name on a 1665 map by John Bursdon. Documentary records held by the Public Record Office show that during the 17th century the land in this area was owned by John Player who left the six-acre estate at Weevil to his kinsman Captain Henry Player when he died in 1685. The family were involved with the brewing industry, and Henry Player also inherited brewhouses and malthouses in Gosport from John Player. Henry Player founded a brewery on his land at Weevil outside the Gosport Ramparts during the later part of the 17th century to supply beer to the Navy. In c.1704 Player added a three-storey mansion house with a cupola known as Weevil House with extensive formal gardens and orchards, a servants' quarters and laundry, a coach house and stables and a Master Brewer's House and stables. The site of these buildings is now occupied by the Ceremonial Gate entrance and Flagstaff Green.

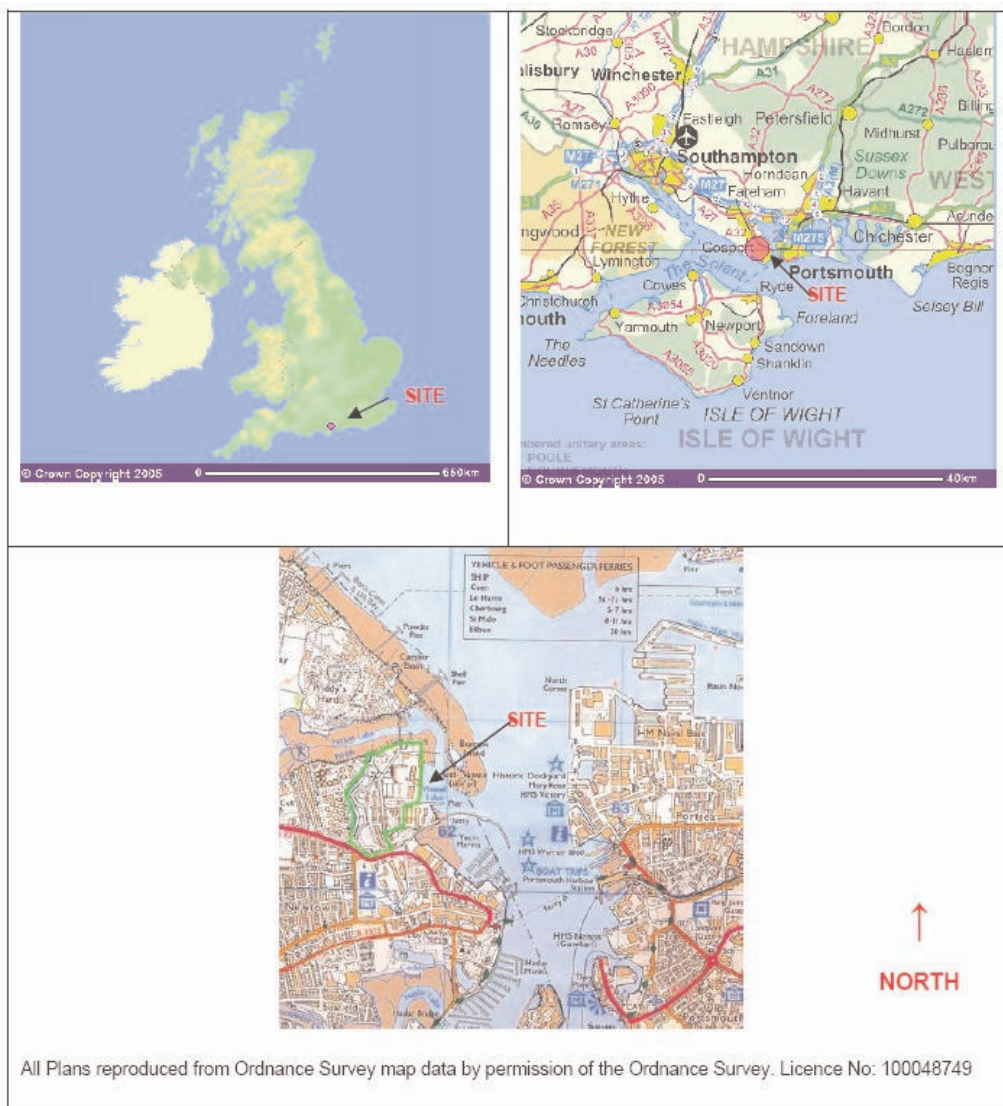


Figure 1. All plans reproduced from Ordnance Survey map data by permission of the Ordnance Survey. Licence No. 100048749 (Colour online)

The brewery and its associated buildings were located immediately to the east of Flagstaff Green. The buildings are shown for the first time on the 1716 4" to 1 mile map by Lempriere (not illustrated) where they are labelled as 'Players Brewhous'. On this map ten separate buildings can be identified. The brewery complex is also described in a survey of 1716 held by the Bodleian Library (Figs. 3-6), with beautiful colour plans and elevations of the buildings and vignettes (Bod Lib MS Gough Antiq 2 Misc: hist/65). It comprised a brew-

house, malt lofts, screening rooms for malt, a cooperage, a cooper's house, a coal yard, stables and beer store houses in the brewery, with a large barn, a cattle shed, a cart shed and some small outhouses in the grounds. There were also two wells, a wind pump and a horse-driven pump.¹

Figure 7 illustrates the approximate locations of Players Brewery buildings based on historic mapping overlaid on to modern Ordnance Survey mapping. The numbers



Figure 2. Map showing the D1 and D2/3 excavation areas outlined by a dark line (red online).

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Figure 3. 1716 plan by Gough of Weevil House and brewery. (Colour online)
 Source: Bod. Lib. MS Gough Antiq. 2 Misc: hist/65. Copyright Bodleian Library.



Figure 4. 1716 view by Gough of Weevil and Brewery looking towards Portsmouth. (Colour online)

Source: Bod. Lib. MS Gough Antiq. 2 Misc: hist/65. Copyright Bodleian Library.

in brackets throughout the text refer to the building numbers illustrated on Figures 7 to 9. The grand brewhouse (4.22) (Figs. 5 and 7) was situated on the site of the later early 19th century main offices building (4.7) (Fig. 9), which was bombed during World War II in area D1. According to the 1716 survey (Fig. 5), the brewhouse was a substantial brick and rubble aisled building 39m (128 feet) in length. Inside there was a huge brewing vat (d) and copper (c) which was connected to a stoke room (b), while in the roof space above were cisterns 'to hold liquor when flung up by the windmill which is fixt in the Cooper Yard'. The coach-house was located on the ground floor under the cisterns. A malt mill existed on the north-western edge of the building, and a liquor back on the western side. A map showing the building from 1780 illustrates some changes in design with the liquor back as a larger tank in the south-west corner of the building. There was also a short wharf with two cranes in front of the complex.

Weevil brewery was extended in 1752-3 and again in 1756-7.² It was served by a well on its southern side, the water being raised by a windmill (Fig. 6). The well was later replaced by one on the northern side of the brewhouse, pumped by a horse-mill. It was left standing until 1786 when high winds caused damage to it, leading to its demolition.

A 'T'-shaped building (5.15) on the site of the later Salt Meat Store comprised a beer store house, a stable, a malt loft and a malt screening room (Fig. 7). By 1758 this building had been extended northwards with a long frontage running along the quay (5.16). Lying to the north of the beer store was a square pond (5.17), shown on a plan of 1758. To the south of the Brewhouse, the Cooperage (4.24) (Fig 6) was shown as an insubstantial L-shaped building, consisting of west and south ranges, grouped around a yard with the well in the centre; it was described as in bad condition in 1750, and had lost one range by 1751. A beer store lay on the east side of the Cooperage yard (4.25) surviving until at least 1758.

The land around the brewery was purchased by the Board of Ordnance in 1710 in preparation for the extension of the Gosport lines; however, work was delayed until the 1750s. Captain Henry Player died in March 1711, but the brewery stayed in the family and was managed by the husbands of two of Henry's daughters. Both had contracts with the Victualling Board to supply

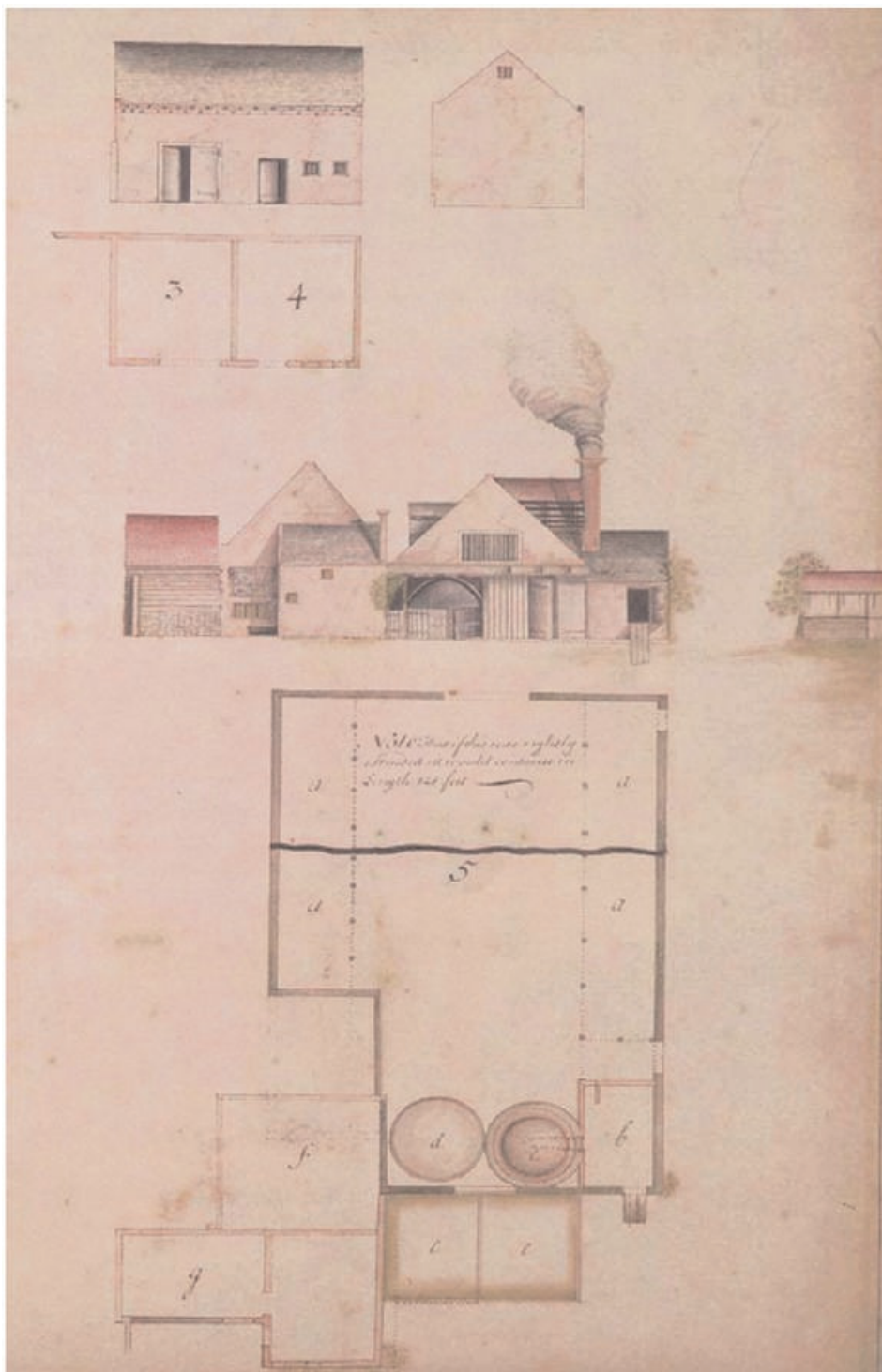


Figure 5. 1716 plan and elevation by Gough of the Weevil Brewhouse. (Colour online)

Source. Bod. Lib. MS Gough Antiq. 2 Misc: hist/65. Copyright Bodleian Library.

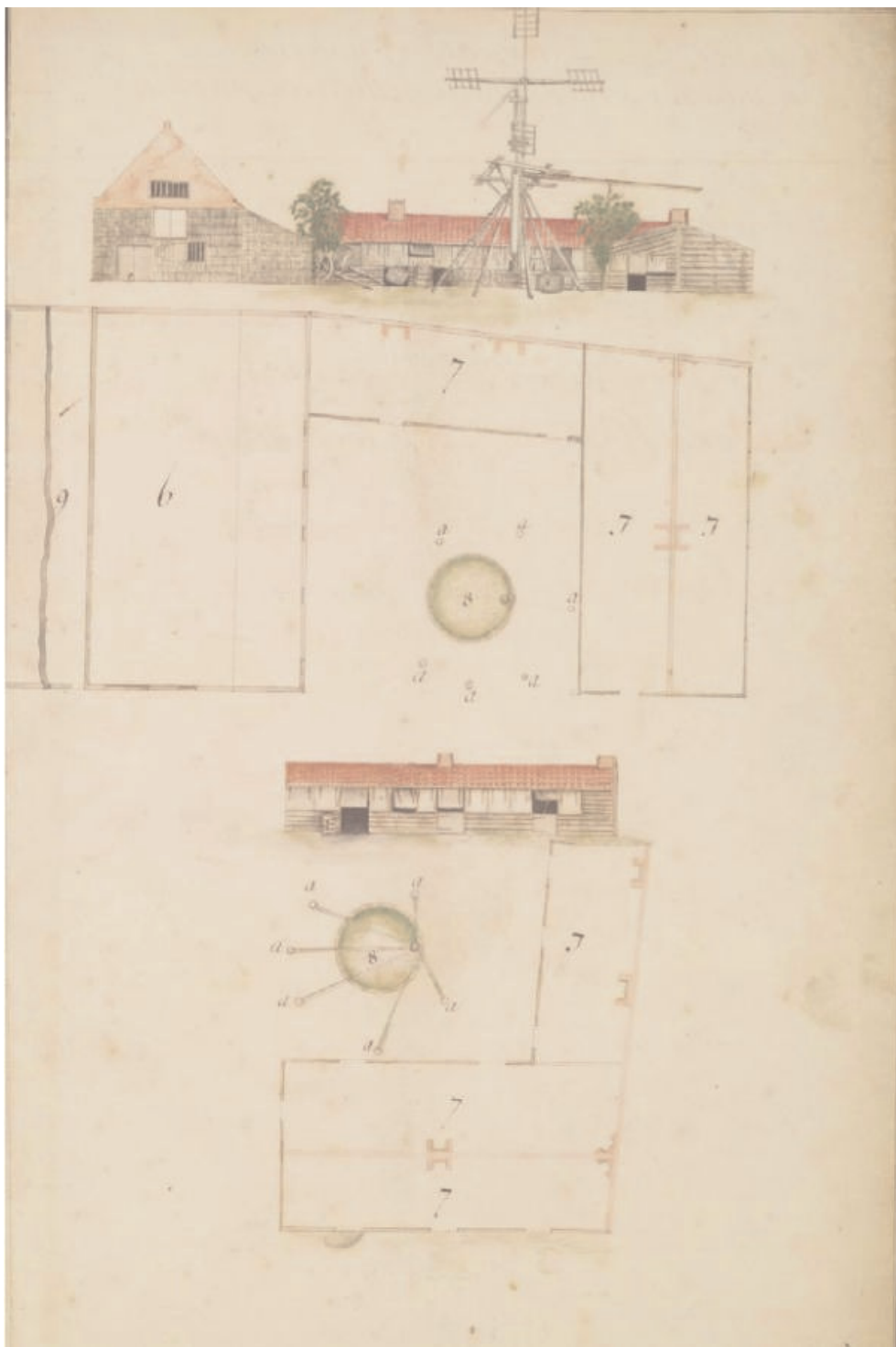


Figure 6. 1716 plan and elevation by Gough of the Weevil Cooperage with the well in the centre. (Colour online)

Source. Bod. Lib. Antiq. 2 Misc: hist/65. Copyright Bodleian Library.

beer to the Navy. The second of Henry's daughters, Joanna, was the wife of the second Lord Clancarty, and in October 1751 after a period of negotiation, the Admiralty purchased Weevil Brewery (excluding Weevil House, its outhouses, formal gardens and orchard) from Lady Clancarty for an annuity of £300. The buildings were described as being in a very bad condition and the brewing equipment as 'much worn' (PRO ADM110/16:ADM111/38).

The Admiralty purchased the Weevil estate in 1751 with the aim of consolidating the Portsmouth and Gosport Victualling yards into one main yard at Gosport where they could focus their brewing and cooperage activities. This was an important acquisition as there was plenty of room on the site for buildings and stores should wartime expansion be required.

Ownership of the brewery by the Victualling Board from 1751

When the Victualling Board took over, malting at the Brewery was discontinued, and the malting kiln was demolished to make more storage space. In June 1756 an increase in the Navy's demand for beer due to the start of the Seven Years War with France led the Admiralty to order the construction of an additional brewhouse (5.11) (Fig. 8), six storehouses, a wharf and a rolling way. This brewhouse operated at the same time as the first brewhouse (4.11) to produce large quantities of beer. The new brewhouse (5.11, later called the old brewhouse) was built in 1757 on the site of the old beerstore (5.15), and completed and paved in Spring 1758 (PRO MPH 1/293 (6 & 7)). The new brewhouse and cooperage were favourably remarked upon by the Board of Admiralty during its 1771 inspection tour.



Figure 7. Phase I, 1690 - 1766.

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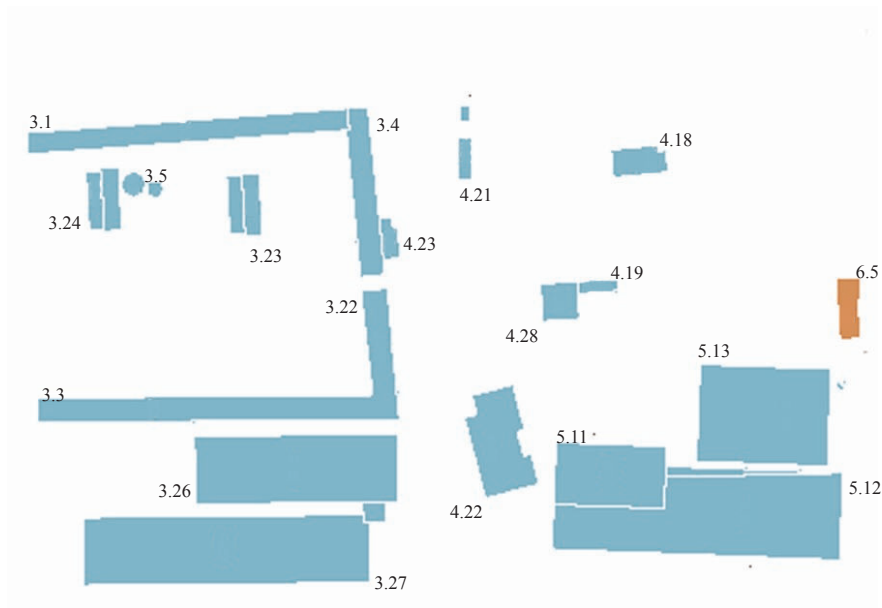


Figure 8. Phase II, 1766 - 1828.

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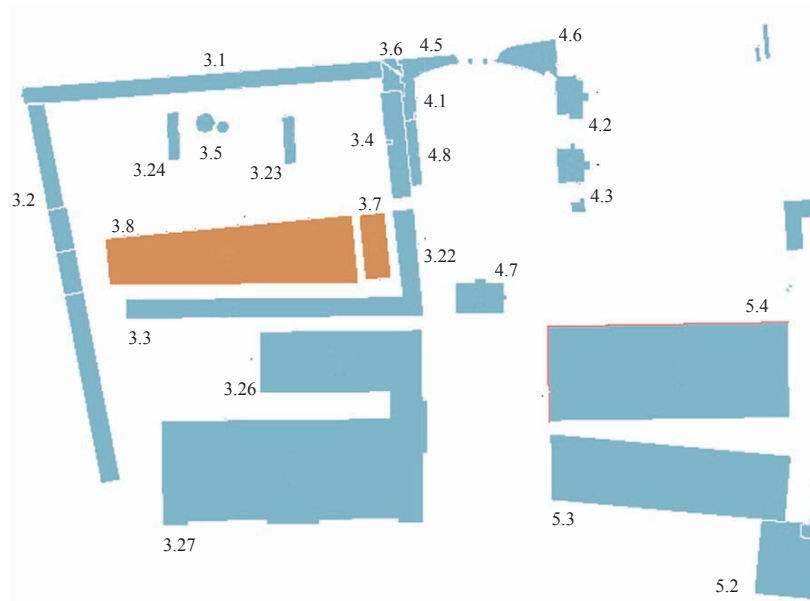


Figure 9. Phase III, 1828 - 1857.

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Lady Clancarty died in 1758, and in 1760 the Admiralty bought Weevil House and its gardens from her trustees for £1500.³ The house was stripped of its marble fireplaces and wainscoting, which were divided into lots for sale; however, no buyer was found for them and they remained until the demolition of the house in 1772.

In 1765 the trapezoidal group of four ranges that formed the cooperage buildings (Fig. 8) was ordered to be built in the south-west corner of the Weevil Estate, and was constructed in 1766 (PRO ADM110/22 & 23). This extant complex consists of ranges of coopers' sheds grouped around a rectangular yard, and is a larger version of the previous two-range cooperage of Player's brewhouse.

Results of the excavation of the D1 Area (Fig. 10 and Plate 1)

The archaeological excavation of the footprint of the D1 building and of two smaller adjacent areas (excavated for the remediation of contamination) revealed a complex series of building remains (Fig. 10). The historic map regression had shown that following the demolition of the original brewhouse, this area had been part of Brewhouse Square, an open space in front of the 1782 brewery designed by Samuel Wyatt. When the Yard was redesigned in 1828 by George Ledwell Taylor the Civil Architect to the Navy Board, a naval office building (4.7) (Fig. 9) was constructed in a central position facing westwards towards the Ceremonial entrance gate where the former brewhouse had stood. This two-storeyed building had a cupola on the roof, and was completed in January 1830; unfortunately it was damaged during the Second World War Luftwaffe bombing campaigns, and was subsequently demolished. This building was replaced by an L-shaped office building in 1961 which had piled foundations.

It became clear once the excavation area had been stripped that despite the existence of the piled foundations of the 1961 office building, the foundations of the 1830 office building had survived remarkably well (see Plate 1). The construction of this building and 19th century culverts however had largely removed any remains of Captain Henry Player's brewhouse. What survived of the 17th century brewhouse were the partial remains of a basement or cellar consisting of three walls construct-



Plate 1 Photograph of the D1 Excavation showing the 1830 office building; in the foreground where the archaeologist is standing are the three surviving limestone walls of the basement which was part of Captain Henry Player's Brewhouse. Looking north. (Colour online)

ed of limestone blocks that can be seen at the bottom of Plate 1 (north is towards the top of the picture). It is hard to tell which part of the brewhouse this might be although the historic mapping suggests that it is likely to be the south-western corner of the brewhouse where the stoke-room was located. Other fragmentary pieces of wall, floor layers and a drain survived in the contamination remediation areas which are likely to be associated with the brewhouse and the beer storehouse, but it was clear that later building work had unfortunately truncated and largely removed the foundations of Captain Henry Player's brewhouse.

Samuel Wyatt's Brewery of 1782

By 1780 the brewhouses and storehouses of the early to mid-18th century were considered inadequate to meet

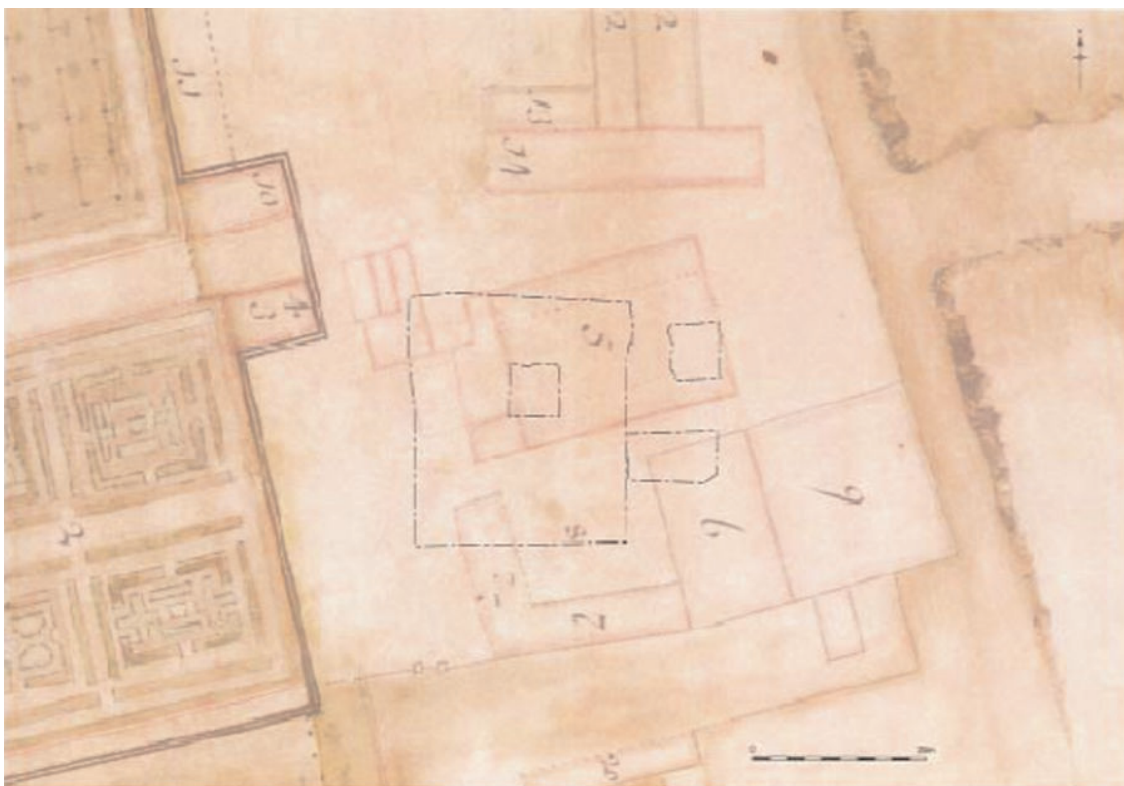


Figure 10. Showing the location of the D1 excavation footprint and the contamination remediation excavation areas overlaid on to the 1716 Gough Plan. This illustrates the approximate location of the brewery buildings within the excavation trench. (Colour online)

Source. Bod. Lib. MS Gough Antiq. 2 Misc: hist/65. Copyright Bodleian Library.

the increasing demands of the Navy with its role in the American War of Independence, and consequently in 1781-2 a decision was taken to build another brewhouse with associated storehouses to the designs of Samuel Wyatt (Figs. 8, 11 & 12) (PRO ADM110/33; ADM111/86, 89 & 94).

The building designs of Samuel Wyatt and the hydraulic engineering works of John Smeaton in the 1780s marked a new stage in the development of the Victualling Yard which endeavoured to achieve an architectural and functional unity at the site. Not all of their plans were realised, but some of the unexecuted ideas were revived and adapted when George Ledwell Taylor designed his more extensive and monumental victualling complex in the next phase of work (1828-1857) when the site was re-named as Royal Clarence

Yard. As well as his involvement in the polite architecture of the time, Wyatt was also a pioneer of industrial design and was involved in the contemporary development of Deptford Victualling Yard.

By 1780, difficulties were being experienced both in the water supply, and the process of brewing itself. No less a figure than Samuel Whitbread was brought in to act as consultant. Samuel Wyatt's aim was to build a state-of-the-art brewhouse, and he claimed after the building was completed that it would be approved by such a judge as Whitbread himself.⁴ The Victualling Board in a document dated 6 March 1782 (PRO ADM 110/30) believed that in building a new brewhouse to replace the first Weevil brewhouse (4.11) that '... the Brewings will be increased 20 Tons a day, which we presume will be equal to the greatest emergency'.



Figure 11. Plan of 1873-4 Showing Samuel Wyatt's Proposed Buildings in blue, and the Buildings to be demolished in pink. (Colour online)

Source. MPI/154/3 Copyright Public Record Office Kew.

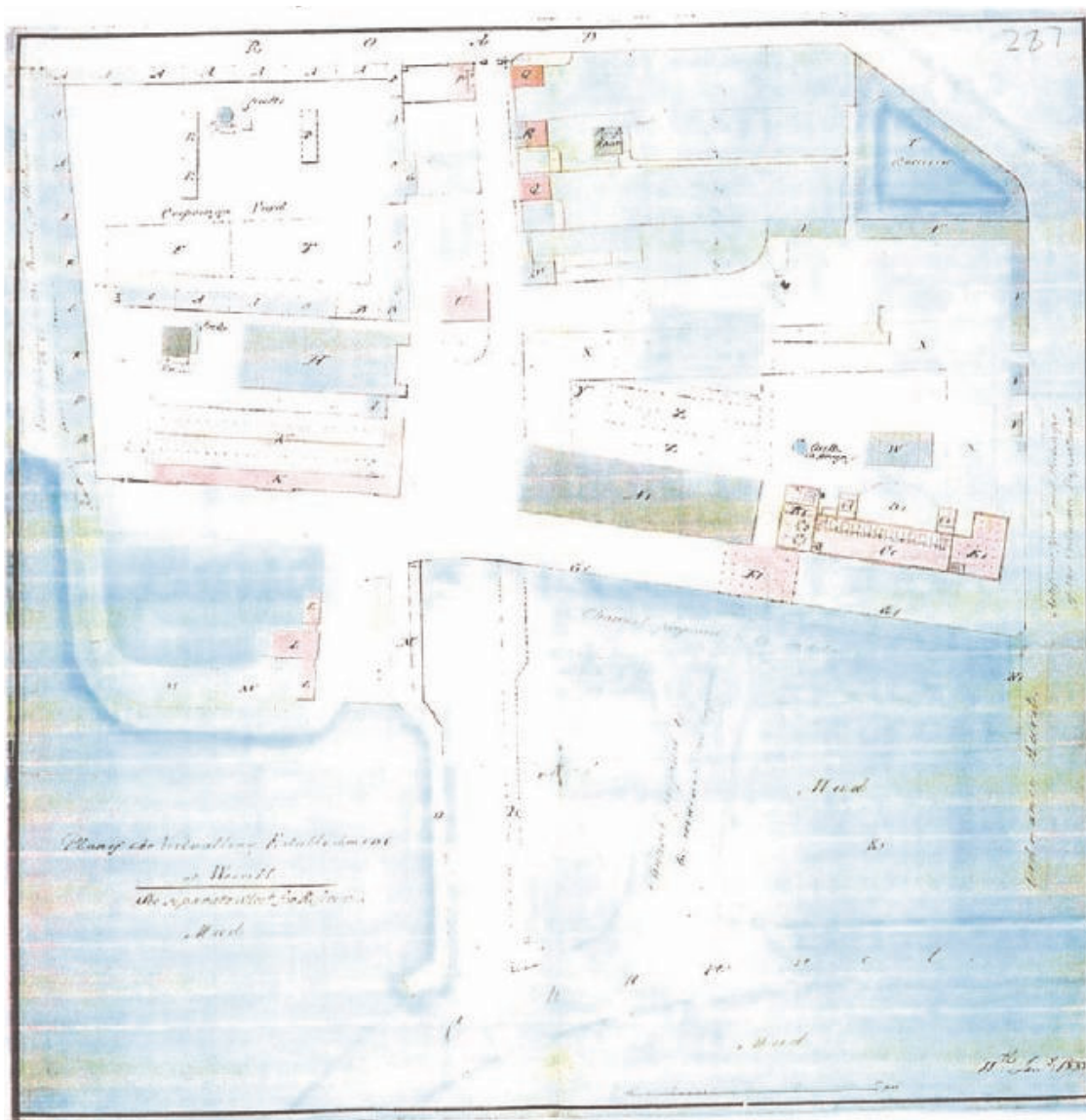


Figure 12. Map of Royal Clarence Yard in 1830 Showing Samuel Wyatt's Brewery (marked with an H on the left hand side of the image) and the 1788 pumphouse to the south of it. (Colour online)

Source. PRO ADM 1/3790 Copyright Public Record Office Kew.

This third Brewhouse (3.26, Fig. 8) was built by Wyatt in 1782-3 to the south of Brewhouse Square, to the east of the East Range of Cooperage Green (3.3) and to the west of the south storehouse (3.27); this was the area formerly occupied by the formal gardens and orchards of Weevil House arranged along the historic harbour front, with the original shoreline running parallel to the eastern side of the area.

Wyatt's brewhouse had a colonnaded north façade along Brewhouse Square and a slated roof, and measured 214 feet by 80 feet (65.2m x 24.4m). It could produce 60 tuns of beer a day, which is equivalent to 15,120 gallons. A malt mill connected it at the north end with the south storehouse.

An estimate of the cost of the new brewhouse dated 30 March 1782 by Wyatt and Surveyors came to £8,800 (listed within the historic document PRO ADM 110/ dated 6 June 1785). This document lists all of the brewing equipment to be purchased, and is extremely important and helpful in the interpretation of the surviving archaeological remains of the Wyatt brewery and in understanding how the brewing process was carried out within this building.

The list includes:

Two coppers to boil 30 Tons each
 One Mash ton equal to 60 Quarters will contain 250 barrels
 One Underback of 30 tons or 200 barrels
 Coolers the area of which will contain 9000 feet, and will hold a whole brewing of 60 Tons for the wort to lie only 2 inches thick
 Two Guile Tons to contain 70 tons of 420 barrels each
 Stillions 1500 feet in length to contain 600 butts, which is more than equal to four Brewings of 60 Tons each
 Suitable ground Tons for the yeast, and Wells for the drainings from the stillions ... etc

There are two surviving plans (Figs. 13 and 14) of the brewery dated to 1860 when Wyatt's brewery was referred to as the Old Brewery and was due to be converted to a clothing store. The plan of the building at this time still shows the layout of the various areas of the brewery, and it is possible to see how the brewing process was carried out. The underback is not illustrated but presumably stood behind the coppers on the western side of the brewery's first floor (see Fig. 14). The majority of the first floor was taken up by large cooling vessels or tanks where the wort was transferred

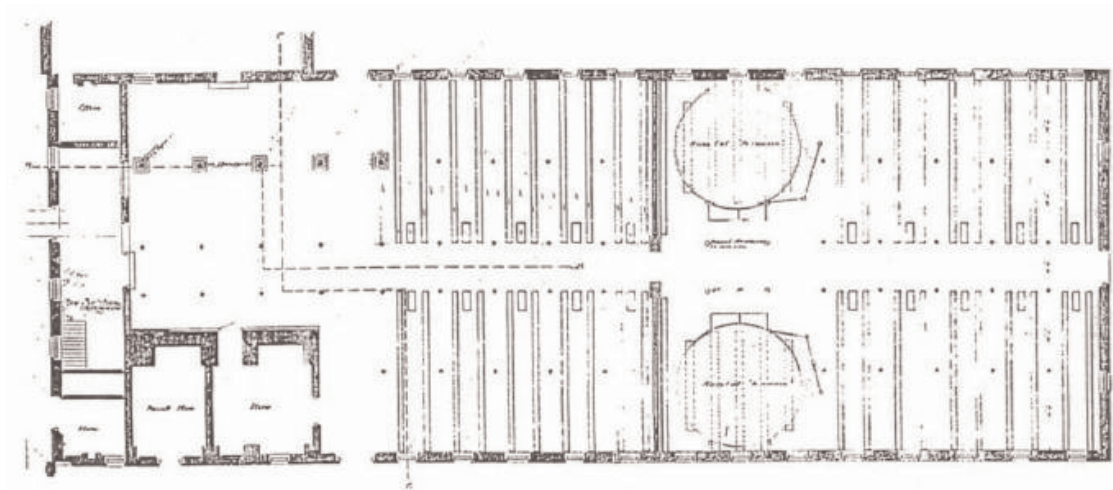


Figure 13. 1860 plan of the ground floor of the Samuel Wyatt 1782 Brewery before it was altered to become a clothing store.

Source. PRO M/60 Copyright Public Record Office Kew.

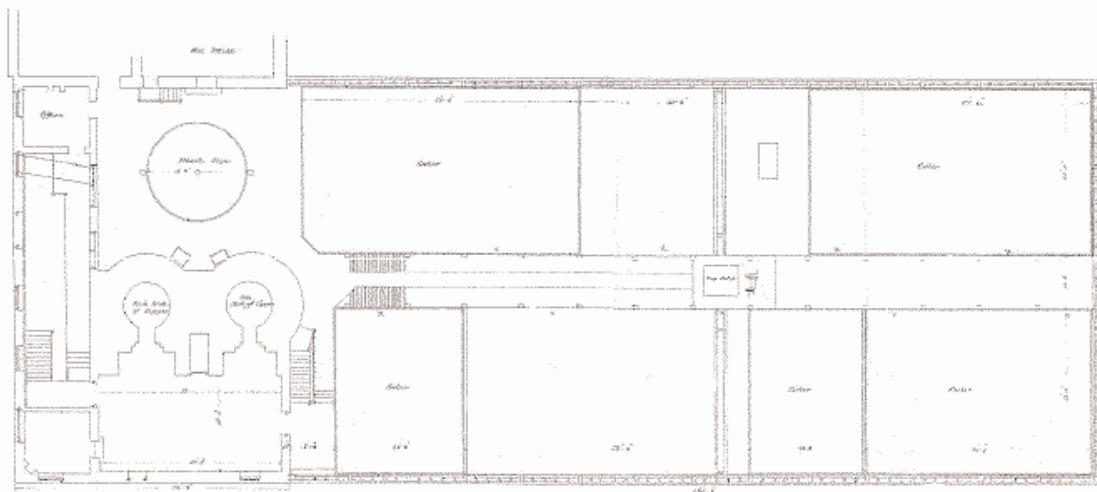


Figure 14. 1860 First Floor Plan of the Samuel Wyatt 1782 Brewery before it was altered to become a clothing store.

Source. PRO M/60 Copyright Public Record Office Kew.

from the underback to begin the process of cooling. These would have been oblong shallow vessels raised at one end to allow the wort to run off free of sediment.

A 'trap Hatch' is illustrated in the corridor centrally placed between the cooling vessels, and at the ground floor level below this trap hatch were two huge vessels that are likely to have been the fermentation tanks or Guile Tuns. Pipework would have carried the cooled wort from the first floor to the ground floor where the yeast was added in the large fermentation tanks.

The fermentation process is presumed to have taken place on the ground floor, and the Public Record Office plan from 1860 illustrates the two large circular areas for the Guile Tuns (labelled as Rum Vats at this stage). This plan also shows the existence on both sides of the brewery a series of regularly spaced, long, paired structures, each separated by a square 'tank'. These structures were known to have survived extremely well as they had shown up clearly on the ground penetrating radar survey undertaken prior to the excavation, and on excavation these were found to be granite troughs. The troughs were used to catch the overflowing beer from the fermenting vats and barrels and are known as Stillions; they were usually wooden although it is likely that Wyatt (perhaps advised by Samuel Whitbread) used

granite Stillions for durability and longevity. A central corridor ran the length of the building, and the northern end contained offices and storerooms.

John Smeatons Horse-Engine Pumphouse of 1788 (Figs. 12 & 15)

The ground penetrating radar survey had also highlighted the survival of the foundations of a horse-engine pumphouse dating from 1788 located at the southern end of the brewery. John Smeaton had designed an earlier horse engine in 1780 for the Yard, located to the north-west of the brewery, and the plan of the 1788 engine house was an exact copy of this earlier structure (see Fig. 15). It was built to supply the Wyatt brewhouse along with other areas of the site and was originally horse powered, remaining in use in this form until the end of the 1850s. The horse-powered pumps supplied an elevated reservoir which in turn supplied the Cooperage offices and Officers' Houses, and was also the only means for supplying the fire mains for this part of the yard. During the late 1850s the Captain Superintendent was keen to replace the horses with modern steam-driven equipment. Drawings for a new engine shed were produced in December 1860, and the building was constructed and working by July 1861. The pumping

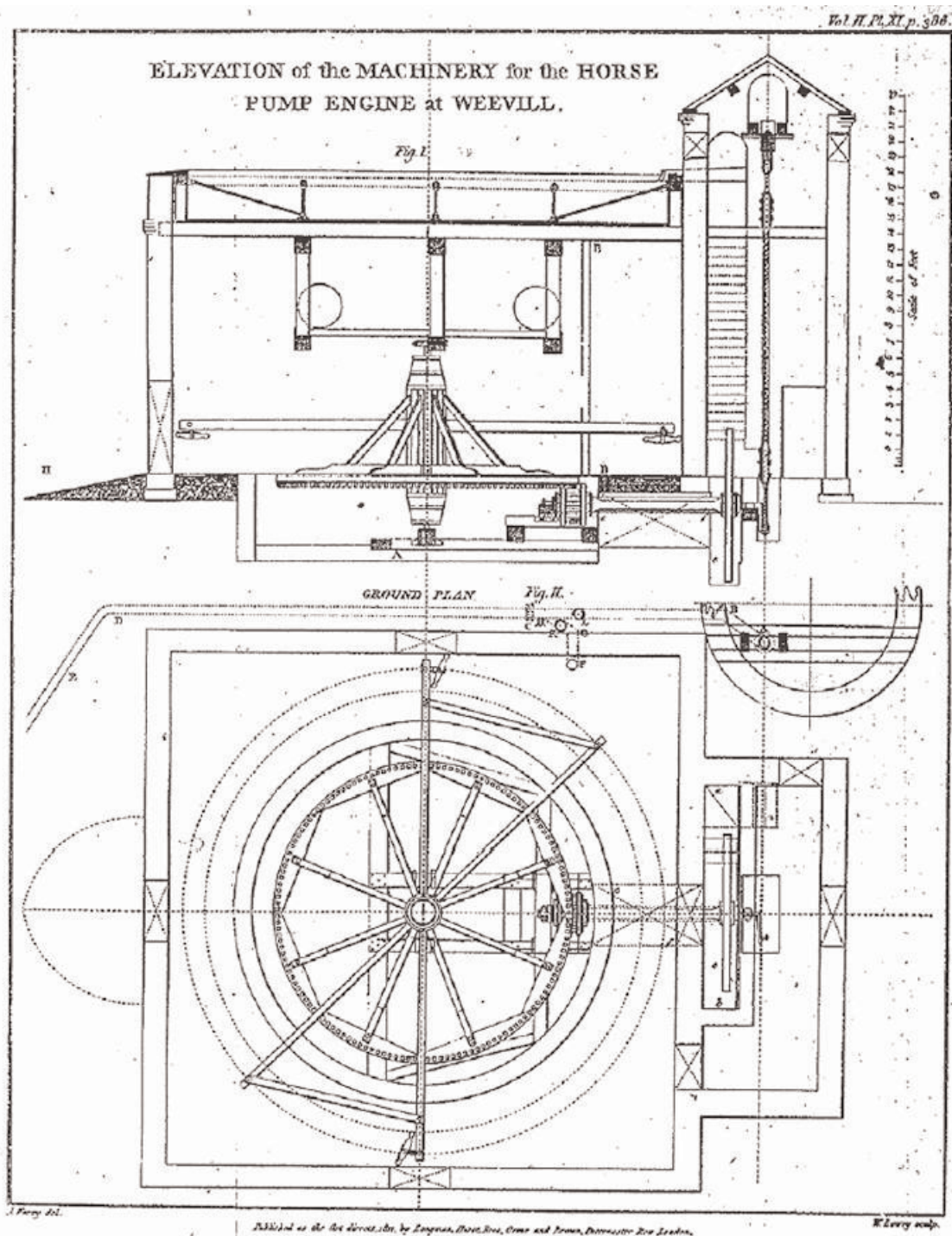


Figure 15. 1780 Plan and Cross Section of the John Smeaton Pumphouse. The plans were used again in 1788 to construct the second horse engine pumphouse behind the Samuel Wyatt brewery

Source. JS/2/149 Printed Reports II page 386 (Copyright Royal Society).

machinery was powered by a Manning and Wardle high-pressure engine with two locomotive type boilers.⁵ This building survived the bombing of the brewhouse and was illustrated on the 1972 Ordnance Survey map after which time it was demolished. The well still survives and contains pumping machinery dating to the mid to late 19th century (see Plates 9 & 10).

Results of the excavation of the D2/3 Area

The excavation for the footprint of the new D2/3 building did not encompass the entire footprint of the Samuel Wyatt brewery, although the majority of the foundations of the brewhouse and all those of the John Smeaton pumphouse were exposed. The foundations of both buildings survived remarkably well and revealed the same layout as illustrated on historic plans.

The northern part of the brewhouse contained the offices, with the stone flags of the floor and the bases of the columns surviving in most of the area (see Plate 2). The central corridor had been robbed of its stone flags. The front of the brewhouse had been damaged by later services so there was no surviving archaeological evidence of the colonnaded façade.

The majority of the excavation area of the brewhouse contained the remains of what have been interpreted as the Stillions. The archaeological remains consist of a large number of long u-shaped granite troughs in pairs forming a channel and separated by a deeper rectangular basin at one end where they met the central corridor (see Plates 3 & 4). They were typically 1.80m long, 0.70m wide and 0.56m deep, and the basins were 1.20m long by 0.80m wide and c.0.80m deep. These features were set into the floor on both sides of the central corridor and were aligned east-west across the brewhouse. A piece of lead pipe connected the channels to the deeper rectangular basin, presumably so that the beer overflowing from the barrels during the fermentation process could be collected in these basins.

In the central part of the building on both eastern and western sides and separated by the central corridor were five short lengths of brick wall foundations which are illustrated on the 1860 ground floor plan of the brewery and described as where the Rum vats stood (see Plates 5 & 6). It is presumed that this is also where the Guile Tuns

or fermenting vessels were once located, the brickwork providing a solid and stable foundation for the great weight of these vessels once they were filled with fermenting beer. On the eastern side of the brewery abutting these walls was a large granite basin divided into two, with indentations on the rim of the trough suggesting a wooden lid or covering of wooden beams (see Plate 5). This may well have been where the fermenting beer was transferred into barrels, with any overflow being collected. The basin on the western side of the brewery is illustrated on the ground plan, but had been removed in this area probably during the conversion of the building to a clothing store in 1860.

Smeaton Pumphouse

The foundations of the John Smeaton horse-engine pumphouse were extremely impressive and survived just beneath the tarmac surface (see Plates 7 & 8). This pumphouse was constructed in 1788, slightly later than the brewery due to the need for a backup well should the more north-westerly Smeaton pumphouse fail, particularly in time of war. The entire plan of the square building with its central circular horse engine was recorded. It had a brick floor, although the floor where the horses would have walked lay above this and would probably have been constructed of timber which did not survive in the archaeological record. The transmission from the gin to the pump would have been located on the northern side of the pumphouse; no remains of this pumping mechanism survived and the upper parts of the original pumphouse had been removed during the 1970s when the structure was demolished.

The mid 19th century steam-driven phase of the pumphouse survived extremely well, and the engine house (without the steam engine) and driveshaft were extant, as well as ancillary structures such as the coalhouse and corridors for the driveshaft leading to the well. These would have connected to the pumping gear that survives in-situ within the well (see Plate 10), and documentary evidence tells us that the pumping machinery was powered by a Manning and Wardle high-pressure engine with two locomotive-type boilers.⁶

The well lay immediately to the west of the pumphouse, and had a domed top which was probably a later 19th century addition (see Plate 9).



Plate 2. View of Samuel Wyatt's brewery from Brewhouse Square looking south. (Colour online)



Plate 3. View of the granite Stillions on the ground floor of Samuel Wyatt's brewery. (Colour online)



*Plate 4. Close-up view of the granite Stillions and basin on the ground floor of Samuel Wyatt's brewery.
(Colour online)*



Plate 5. View of the brick foundations for the fermenting Tuns and the granite basins showing the slots for timbers. (Colour online)



Plate 6. View of the brick foundations for the fermenting Tuns. (Colour online)



Plate 7. View of the excavation of Smeaton's pumphouse and Samuel Wyatt's brewery looking north. (Colour online)



Plate 8. View of the excavation of Smeaton's pumphouse showing the early horse engine house and later additions for the steam driven phase. (Colour online)



Plate 9. View of the well sunk in 1788 with its domed roof. (Colour online)



Plate 10. View looking down the well showing the surviving pumping machinery. (Colour online)



Plate 11. View of the granite Stillions used as planters in landscaping of the site. (Colour online)



Plate 12. View of the new building D1, constructed in a style similar to the former 1830s office building which once stood in this location, looking west. (Colour online)

The end of brewing at Royal Clarence Yard

The Samuel Wyatt brewery building survived the George Ledwell Taylor expansion of 1828 and continued brewing beer for the fleet until 1831 when the official daily ration of beer ended, largely for reasons of economy. Beer, like water, occupied a lot of space on-board ship and did not keep easily, souring quickly especially in hot weather. Rum kept far better and was much preferred by seamen, and had been an official allowance on board since 1740. However, the brew-house continued to brew beer in smaller quantities for the sick, both on board and in naval hospitals until the 1850s.

The historic plans show that some of the brewery equipment was still present in 1860 when it was referred to as the 'Old Brewery'. The plan of the brewery from this date shows its layout at this time, and also proposed alterations. Two large rum vats were to remain in situ, and indicate the buildings change of use after 1831, and by 1898 the building had been converted to the Porter Store which complemented the Rum Store to the east.

The building stood until the Second World War when bombing destroyed large parts of the brewery and store-house complexes, and by the 1952 Ordnance Survey map it had been demolished.

Preservation in-situ, new building and re-use of historic features in the landscaping works

It was not possible to preserve the whole of the brewery building in-situ below the new D2/3 building, although careful consultation allowed Berkeley Homes Southern Ltd. to re-design the piling layout to avoid where possible the granite Stillions and to leave them beneath the new D2/3 building. Where they could not be avoided they were carefully removed and stored to be re-used within the landscaping of the site, and some of them have been used as planters (Plate 11).

The pumphouse and well were preserved beneath the new D2/3 building with the piles carefully placed to avoid the walls. The pumping machinery was left in-situ within the well. English Heritage may add the pumphouse to their list of Heritage Assets in due course.

Berkeley Homes have designed their new D1 building in a similar style to the 1830 office building that once stood in this location (see Plate 12) linking the past design to the present. This is a good example of how the understanding and appreciation of the history of a site can influence its sympathetic re-development.

The archaeological and historic building recording works undertaken at Royal Clarence Yard by Ramboll archaeologists and their archaeological sub-contractors during the re-development of the site by Berkeley Homes Southern Ltd. will be published by Ramboll in due course.

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