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Beaufoy's of Lambeth

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Introduction

Travellers by train on the viaduct south west of Vauxhall who look east can see, albeit briefly, a white wooden clock turret (Figure 1). This marks the centrepiece of Beaufoy's vinegar works, established here in 1812–13 and redeveloped as housing over 20 years ago.

This article first outlines the firm's history, touching on the variety of products. This is incomplete since a bomb in May 1941 caused a fire that destroyed the main offices. It then describes what was seen on GLIAS visits to the works at 87 South Lambeth Road, SW8, in 1982 and 1983, shortly before closure. By then it was part of Nestlé Holdings (UK) Ltd. Vinegar brewing on the site had long finished but the works had been adapted to package and despatch vinegar produced mainly at the Sarson's brewery in Tower Bridge Road. ¹

The history of the London vinegar brewing industry and the brewing process have been described in a recent GLIAS journal, so only brief reference is made here to these aspects. ² As the name of the firm changed over the years, 'Beaufoy's' is used throughout as a convenient shorthand with 'Beaufoy' for a relevant individual. ³

From the initial years until establishment at South Lambeth

Beaufoy's publicity claimed that the firm was founded in 1730. However, the founder, Mark Beaufoy, was then only age 13. In 1734 he entered into an apprenticeship with Joseph James, gin distiller, later becoming a partner in that firm. 1730 is the date of establishment of a London vinegar works that Mark Beaufoy acquired in about 1743 to start his own business. ⁴

The precise site of the vinegar works that Beaufoy acquired is unclear. It was probably near his three storey house at Cupers Bridge, Lambeth, as a letter of 1756 is from 'Vinegar Yard, Cupers Gardens'. ⁵ He was definitely leasing some three acres of nearby Cupers Gardens from Jesus College, Oxford, in the early 1760s. He built (or rebuilt) a vinegar works there, having entered into partnership in 1761 with his nephew, William Biddle.

A horse wheel powered mill stones to crush the malted barley used in vinegar production and the works also produced 'sweets' or 'mimicked' wines from raisins and added sugar. ⁶ A visitor in the 1780s recorded two large vats, one containing 56,799 gallons (1,774 barrels) of vinegar, the other 58,109 gallons (1,815 barrels) of sweet wine, plus other smaller vats, but without specifying their content. ⁷ Documents also refer to tuns, hogsheads, half hogsheads, kilderkin, firkin, and

casks. 'Barrels' is used for simplicity in this article.

The site was acquired for the approach to the new Strand (Waterloo) Bridge, with a requirement to quit within three years of the Act being passed, i.e., by June 1812. Initially Beaufoy purchased a parcel of land off Walnut Tree Walk. [8](#) Then a larger site of 3 to 5 acres (sources differ) at South Lambeth, part of the former Caron estate, became available and was purchased to become the site of a new family home and vinegar works. Access to this area was about to be improved following an Act, 1810, for a new Thames bridge at Vauxhall.

Beaufoy listed items for which he sought recompense from The Strand Bridge Company. These included: the cost of the move, a speculated negative effect on trade, anticipated additional cartage costs, and leasing a riverside wharf. [9](#) Presumably claims were contested, as a jury decided on compensation of over £35,000, which included buying out the remaining part of the lease on Cupers Gardens.

Some plant was moved from Cupers Gardens, but most at South Lambeth was new. The move was phased, with vinegar production (including stock in hand) moving first. [10](#) It appears that the deadline slipped, as unwanted plant and materials left at Cupers Gardens were not auctioned until 1813 and a stone seen within the brewhouse, dated June 1812, indicated that building work was still in progress at that time. [11](#)

By mid-1813 the new site was complete. From gates at South Lambeth (later Road), a short tree-lined driveway through gardens and between two facing lodges led to the house. Behind, a two floor building housed a ballroom and library above. And clearly visible, a few yards further on, was the main brewhouse building. Over the years the site was adapted and altered many times, although in 1982 several original buildings remained, including the brewhouse, often now called the Vat House (Figure 2).

South Lambeth Road until 1899

The initial development left a large space for vinegar to mature in rows of barrels in a vinegar field. Adjacent land, also formerly part of the Caron estate, was soon acquired to become additional gardens and orchards, making a total of about 8 acres. The premises and gardens are depicted in several sketches drawn in about 1850. [12](#) In 1893-6 all of this additional land, plus a small part of the original site, was developed, mostly for housing. [13](#)

Dodd described a visit to the site in his book *Days at the Factories*. [14](#) One building which did not survive until 1982, a wooden vat (or 'stoving') house, to the east of the brewhouse, was captured in sketches. [12](#) Over time several other buildings also held vats. Some replaced those in the stoving house and others, reflecting changes in technology, replaced the use of barrels in the open 'vinegar field'. In 1847 Carty (vat makers) were paid £78 to erect vats 29 and 30. [15](#) Pipework, drains and ground preparation cost an additional £60. A cooperage made and repaired barrels, for both vinegar and wines, and this function continued into the era of plastic barrels. Dodd mentions three steam engines: for pumping from wells, for pumping liquids around the site, and for powering milling machinery. [14](#) It appears that only one was in use in 1831 as a surviving contract shows the engineer was paid 35/- per week to be in charge of 'it' (not 'them'). [16](#)

Another of the sketches of about 1850 is of 'the gas house', so gas was produced on site. ¹² The first large scale OS map, 1871, shows a small eight sided gas holder. It is still there on the 1893 edition, just before that area became part of Rita Road. No record has been seen to show when it was erected or to tie it explicitly to the 'gas house'.

In 1872 Beaufoys were advertising cordials and non-alcoholic drinks. This side of the business boomed and in the 1890s the range was expanded to include mineral water. An additional artesian well was sunk (or one of the two existing 200 ft. wells deepened), eventually to 400 ft., to supply the water. The well 'delivers its precious fluid direct to the silver-lined tubes of the bottling machines, without the intervention of tanks, thereby obviating any possible contamination by exposure to the atmosphere'. ¹⁷ A new mineral water factory was erected (P on site plan, Figure 3) and surrounding buildings adapted. A booklet of 1898 notes 'erection of new buildings of such dimensions as would suffice for all present requirements and future expansion'. ¹⁷ Within the mineral water factory a gas engine powered, via line shafting, '10 of the latest pattern of Messrs Riley's screw-stopper filling machines'. ¹⁸ At the same time, female labour was introduced. ¹⁹

In March 1897 it was reported that 'the loading shed of the mineral water department is now completed'. ²⁰ In 1905 the Victoria County History for Surrey mentions use of steam cranes in 'the loading shed', at the time located near building F and since demolished; there is no record of when they were installed.

A dozen dedicated horse-drawn 'vans' were employed on mineral water delivery. Although new stables were erected in 1894, Beaufoys did not use their own horses, possibly because this trade was seasonal. Supply of horses was contracted out to Pickfords in 1896 and then from 1899 to (cheaper) Tuff of Woolwich. ²¹ Beaufoys' bottles were embossed with their name and roundsmen's commission was based on returns, not deliveries. Along with others who had embossed bottles, Beaufoys were part of a London bottle exchange.

From 1833 until 1877 Beaufoys were describe in directories as millers (once expanded to flour millers and once to corn millers) implying a commercial trade as well as milling for their own use. Indeed, an advertisement associated with a short term bread business (1834-8) stressed that the flour came from 'Beaufoy's Flour Mills, South Lambeth'. This might have been at a Vauxhall riverside site, which closed in 1862. ¹³ In about 1850 a five floor brick building (J), part topped by a cast iron water tank, was erected to the east of the brewhouse. ¹² A drainage plan, probably c.1890, labels it as 'mill, ground & 4 floors'. This is corroborated by a passing mention in 1894 'to ascertain whether the mill with its alterations and increased mineral water plant is now properly insured'. ²⁰ No record has been seen to show the building was purpose-built as a mill, rather than just a support for the water tank, nor how long milling took place in it. The first Goad plan, 1897, does not mention milling, recording that the top two floors contained stills and that the rest was a warehouse. ²² Tantalising mention is made in a site description, also 1897, which says: 'near [the brewhouse] are buildings connected with one or two other branches of manufacture carried out by the same firm, which we shall not here notice further than to say Beaufoys are also millers and drug grinders'. ²³

The wine trade appears to have flourished, and by the 1890s buildings D, E, F, S, T and U were allocated to it. The main lines were orange and ginger wines. Other flavours included both Koka and Kola wines and, intriguingly, quinine wines. In 1862 some stills producing 'flavouring for British wines (sweets)' were transferred

from their Pays Bas site to South Lambeth Road. [13](#), [24](#)

For much of the mid and late 19th century the firm portrayed itself as a vinegar brewer and wine manufacturer, later adding mineral water, foreign wines and spirits. However, directories also advertised what was a considerable trade in chlorides of lime and soda, acetic acid and, after a while, disinfecting powder. This was a gradual development. In July 1818 a letter between Beaufoys mentions acetic acid: 'I forgot to ask you whether you have made any calculation relative to the Acetic Acid apparatus and whether ... it would be preferable to the erection of another stove'. [25](#) Two years later acetic acid is shown as a product, in addition to vinegar, in Kelly's Directory. There is a gap of a few years before a directory (1825) places the acetic acid at Vauxhall. Then, from about 1828, it and the chlorides were made at a separate manufactory at Pays Bas, Battersea. [13](#) Beaufoys' regional representatives ('travellers') sold these products along with (brewed) vinegar. Chemically produced acetic acid can be used as a cheap substitute for brewed vinegar. [2](#)

In 1896 the Beaufoy family moved their London home from South Lambeth Road to 8 Park Crescent. The residence was then lived in by the site manager. Mark Beaufoy retained a small part as an office, plus a bedroom where he could stay when the family were 'in the country' at their substantial Coombe House, built 1886, near Shaftesbury. [26](#) The ballroom was used as offices by 1897. [27](#)

The 1890s appear to have been a time of buoyant growth. After success with foreign wines, the range of products was enlarged when a Spirits Department was set up. In 1897 an opportunity was taken to promote their own 'Royal Diamond Jubilee' Scotch whisky. [28](#) At the same time an expanded range of non-alcoholic beverages included Gingeragne, Brasine (a non-alcoholic beer) and syrups. Outside London, there were rented offices in a number of locations and depots in Newcastle (1887) and Liverpool (1893), joined in 1899 by Birmingham. [29](#) These depots were used to dilute concentrated vinegar to strength for local delivery, thus saving transport costs and improving competitiveness against local brewers.

Vinegar production was 517,328 gallons in 1895 and 790,076 gallons in 1898. This 50% increase was achieved after some changes had been made, such as covering the mash tuns to avoid loss of heat and malt dust and fitting them with spargers (rotating tun-top hot water sprays). Two new boilers were ordered from the Oldham Boiler Co Ltd to meet increased demand for steam and installed early in 1898. At about the same time a new steam pump, able to supply over 1,000 gallons an hour, was installed in the brewhouse, extracting water from an artesian well there. Approval was given in 1897 for a new vat of 20,000 gallons capacity, although in July 1898 it was noted that the two new vats were being erected. [30](#)

In 1899 the firm's chemist submitted a report, suggesting further measures which could vastly increase production potential, from 2–3 to 10 mashes a week. [31](#) He proposed:

- Replacement of the two old wooden mash tuns which 'now leak very badly' by 'a modern cast iron tun' (the overall text implies two replacement vessels, not just one)
- Preparing the ingredients by grinding the malt in a separate place, rather than directly above, and feeding into, the mash tun
- Replacement of the malt grinding rolls as '... [they] have repeatedly been refaced, but in spite of continual tinkering, they still allow a certain

proportion of the malt to pass through uncrushed' and were 'so slow and troublesome as to entail considerable expense with overtime wages'

- Introduction of a new screen to catch foreign substances
- A larger and higher placed hot liquid tank
- Pre-mixing the malt (now to be ground away from the mash tun, rather than above, and falling into, it) and hot liquid before these passed to the mash tun; the mash tun could thus be used far more effectively instead of having an idle time in each cycle while the malt was ground
- Increasing the size of the refrigerator used to cool the 6,000–7,000 gallons of vinegar from each mash, obviating a 'bottleneck' at the underback, which could then be reduced in size.

This report was accepted, together with an estimate for £1,500 from the nearby Riley Manufacturing Company, but it is not known how far it was implemented. [18](#)

South Lambeth Road 1900 to 1932

The bubble appears to have burst almost immediately after the buoyant 1890s. In 1900 several vinegar manufacturers revived an Association of Vinegar Brewers with the explicit aim of protection by fixing prices. It was only partly successful as it was limited to bottled vinegar and several key players, including Sarsons, did not join. Moreover, existing customers' contractual discounts were honoured. Some regional representatives were criticised for clinching contracts in the 12 days between announcing a price agreement and its implementation on 1 January 1901. Twenty months later, on 31 August 1902, R & N Potts, a large firm that did join the Association, was absorbed into Beaufoys.

At the same time groups of mineral water and cordial makers similarly, though less formally, agreed prices. Beaufoy wrote sternly to a firm in Brighton in April 1903: 'An effort has been made by the London Cordial Makers to raise the price to a more remunerative figure ... I hope you may see your way to fall into line'. [32](#)

Meanwhile, in 1900 Beaufoys closed their Pays Bas works. Directories continued to show the firm as makers of chlorides of lime and soda until 1909 and as manufacturers of acetic acid until 1915. It is not known if this actually happened, perhaps using premises elsewhere, or by using other manufacturers as contractors.

Mineral water was last described in 1915. In 1916 Beaufoys advertised jam and pickle products, but it is not known where these were produced. At this time the firm was also an agent for other grocery foods, such as egg powder and sardines. Some other vinegar manufacturers similarly diversified. Jam ceased to feature in directory entries after 1928, while pickle continued until 1939. A fire in 1916 affected the brewhouse, destroying most of the roof. A photograph of the damage showed small copper stills amid the debris. [33](#) A replacement for part of the roof, of corrugated iron sheets, possibly intended to be temporary, was unchanged in 1982. It, or a new one of similar appearance, remains to this day.

By the late 1920s the vinegar trade again was seeking to improve its economic situation. In 1929 Beaufoys combined with the rival firm, Grimble (estd.1840), to become Beaufoy, Grimble & Co Ltd, initially run jointly by the two former managers. Other firms did similarly, and in 1932 key players formed British Vinegars Limited (BVL), with Beaufoy, Grimble forming 20% of the nominal value. [34](#)

From 1932 to closure and redevelopment

George Maurice Beaufoy was the first Chairman of BVL and the names Beaufoy and Sarson remained amongst BVL Directors. For example, letters show that G M Beaufoy was Chair in 1937 and Henry Sarson was Technical Director in 1947. Still keeping trading names of many of the constituent companies, the collective BVL head office function was located at South Lambeth Road, using the former ballroom and library. BVL continued to incorporate (and rationalise) other firms, so by 1964 a further 33 formerly separate firms were included, although many kept their trading names for some time. ³⁵ Wine production at South Lambeth Road appears to have ceased some time before 1939 and for wines the Beaufoy name became associated with others in what later became the Showering Group.³

A bomb in October 1940 destroyed the south lodge. A second bomb, in May 1941, killed Maurice Beaufoy, the last of the family to be involved in the business, and demolished part of the house. It started a fire which destroyed the former ballroom and library and left the HQ offices of BVL and constituents a roofless ruin. While part of the former manager's house could be used, other temporary office locations had to be found. It was only in 1957, when a new office block was completed, that BVL fully came back to the site. ³⁶

We have no date for when vinegar brewing ended at South Lambeth Road, except that it was before 1956, when 'the premises are now ... [used] for blending and bottling and cooperage work'. ³⁷ Vinegar was brewed in the former Sarson's brewery at Tower Bridge Road, also part of BVL, and sent to South Lambeth Road for bottling (and filling larger containers). The name Beaufoy was not used after about 1961. By then own-brand bottles were labelled as Sarsons and carried in similarly branded lorries. Although some buildings were redundant, little was demolished after the war. The only significant structural change was erecting a steel frame building on the footprint of the ruined office. Some spare warehouse space was used for products from other parts of BVL.

Nestlé Holdings (UK) Ltd. bought BVL in 1979. ³³ Two years earlier, in 1977, BVL had unsuccessfully sought permission for partial redevelopment of the site, and Nestlé lost no time in making a further proposal. By then key buildings had been 'listed', and again the planning application was refused. ³⁸ In spring 1982 the South London Press (SLP) announced that the site would close within a year, with loss of 120 jobs. Head office staff would move to Nestlé's offices in Croydon and bottling to other breweries. ³⁹ The Tower Bridge Road site was altered at about this time, although it in turn closed in 1992. ²

In 1985 outline planning permission, and thus listed building consent, was given for residential accommodation. This involved a mix of conversion, extension, demolition and new build, to produce 89 properties in a 'gated community' that includes a communal swimming pool and gym. Properties of a similar appearance were soon built at 2a Rita Road, adjacent to the electric gate that is now the sole access to most of the site. From this point there is a view of the former brewhouse and the former mill, still with the cast iron roof tank (Figure 18). There is no longer an entrance from Heyford Avenue and there is little to see from that location. The office block (Figure 17) was not included in the site redevelopment. It was initially used as offices by L B Lambeth (Paul Robeson House) before being separately converted and extended to become the 94 bed Comfort Inn Hotel.

The Site

Three brief recording visits were made to 87 South Lambeth Road in late 1982 and

early 1983 by a group of GLIAS members including John Mitchell, Hugh Marks and David Thomas, arranged through the site manager, Mr Grace. Production activities ceased at midday on Fridays, allowing maintenance during the afternoon; the visits were restricted to these times. The site closed in Spring 1983.

Two vehicle entrances were used. One, from Heyford Avenue, giving access to the offices, was mainly for cars, pedestrians and small vehicles. The second, at the rear, from Rita Road, was used by tankers delivering bulk 'rough' vinegar and lorries carrying finished product. Visually and operationally the site was a hotchpotch. Some parts were underutilised or already disused. Several buildings from the period to 1850 had survived, but none remained in its original use.

The general flow of vinegar

Vinegar was moved around mostly by electric pumps, sometimes gravity-assisted. The sequence, with storage as needed between stages, was:

1. Tanker delivery from Tower Bridge Road via Rita Road entrance (occasionally from another brewery in the group)
2. Vinegar pumped into a holding vat/tank
3. First filtration in vat, using rockwool
4. Second filtration, through Johnson filter
5. Storage vat
6. Final filtration, through Carlson filter
7. Header tank/vat
8. Making-up vat; strength reduced (water) and caramel colouring added
9. Pasteuriser
10. Bottling plant (or filling for larger containers)
11. Warehouse
12. Loading and despatch.

The buildings

A. Brewhouse

This 1812/3 four floor brick building, with a western façade trimmed with white stone and topped by a clock turret, was the centrepiece of the site. The upper part of the façade and the clock turret were altered to their present appearance in 1843.

The top floor was in two sections, part surrounded by a flat area that formed the roof of the storey below, this reflecting partial rebuilding after a fire in 1916. The wooden clock turret stood on this flat area behind the main façade. The west clock face, dating from 1887, was glass and illuminated, while the east one was simply painted black (Figure 4). The space behind gave foot access to the main part of the top storey. The only way up was via an external metal staircase, carrying the name Reilly Engineering Company. ¹⁸ The roof and sides of this section were of corrugated metal sheet covering on steel trusses. A ventilating louvre ran along the ridge. Perhaps this construction, erected after the fire in 1916, used the only materials readily available during wartime and was intended to be temporary. Whilst the side sheets met the top of the brick wall on the south side, they were a few feet short of the wall on the north side, the flat open area extending around to the north. Behind that (to its east), there was a top floor section with a slated roof to full width supported on the brick side walls. This roof, lower than that of the metal section was presumably pre-1916. A circular brick chimney for the boiler

house protruded through on the north side, its position being the same as one in an 1890s 'bird's eye' sketch.

Along the south side of the brewhouse was a single storey building (C) and on the north a two floor extension structure (B). The rear was joined to, and shared party walls with, the single floor boiler house (H) and a taller former mill (J).

Dodd described the brewhouse in 1843. ¹⁴ From the top down, the roof space (top floor) had storage bins holding malted barley for the vinegar and sugar and fruit for wines; the next floor had millstones (for the malted barley) and crushing machines for the fruit; below that were coppers and mash tuns and on the ground floor underbacks and jackbacks, plus some fermenting vessels. Dodd did not mention specific equipment for wine production, nor the number of mash tuns, but there were only two 'old' ones in use some 50 years later, in 1897 — by which time the malted barley was milled by rollers. ²¹

In 1982, with the original walls, the interior was a mix of a reinforced concrete frame and floors and sections of wooden floors supported on circular cast iron columns (Figure 5). The top floor contained 11 vats used as header tanks, holding vinegar ready to go to one of the making up vats (in F) and then a bottling line. Six were wood (possibly by then disused), the one nearest the door being labelled: Carty & Sons Ltd., vat makers, SE15, 1966. Four were stainless steel (three small, one large) and one was fibreglass.

Also here were three filters, made by Carlson, used for a third and final filtration. One was smaller and more modern than the other two (Figure 6). A plate on the filters read 'Carlson, Ashton under Lyme and Great Eastern Street London EC2'. Each had a number of frames clamped together. Within each frame was a mat-like filter with gauze placed over it. These filters 'polished' and sterilised. Filters were cleaned when they started to clog. A pressure drop across the filter unit indicated this was needed — about once a week at peak periods.

The second floor was empty, all equipment having been removed. It had most recently contained a bottling plant. We saw bottling plant in three separate locations. The first floor was used mainly to store cardboard cartons. Our guide said that there had been chutes to deliver crates to the ground floor, below. On the north east side, about 2'6" above floor level, was a circular brick base about 8 ft. across with a top skim of cement. Built into the side of the base, facing into the room, and with a rectangular brick chimney rising from it, was a fire hole arch, the top being about 18' above floor level. A stone dated June 20 1812 was set into the chimney. This could be a 'commissioning' date or one signifying an important stage in building. Either way, it suggested that the move from Cupers Gardens was completed later than the June 1812 deadline. This structure was the top of a brick plinth built up from ground level. Our initial assumption was that the structure had been the base for a mash tun, but these, initially wooden, vessels were filled with liquid heated elsewhere, so did not need a fire. A fire might have been used to maintain the heat in a tun, but a steam element could do that (and definitely did in the 1890s). Alternatively, the base could have supported a vessel connected with wine manufacture or a tank to heat water. It appeared ideal as a base for a 'copper', but holding what? In short, its purpose was a mystery.

On the ground floor were two bottling lines, named No.1 bottling shop. One line was for ordinary vinegar and the second for special vinegars — red wine, white wine, tarragon and cider. The second line had been removed before our final visit.

The operation of these bottling lines was similar to those in building D, described below.

On the ground floor we noted two ways of moving non-liquid items to and from higher floors, both disused. The first, only to the first floor, was a lattice-gated electric goods lift. The second was an electric hoist similar to a paternoster, to the first and second floors (Figure 7). An electric motor drove a continuous chain carried over top and bottom wheels. The chain itself had locators to take metal prongs of a device which at the other end had a number of extended 'fingers'. Loads were placed on a platform with slots so the 'fingers' could pass through to the underside of the load to be lifted. Having gone around the top of the paternoster, the load landed on a second slotted platform. Goad in 1959 shows a conveyor running from A (floor level unspecified) across the yard to building N, the despatch dock, but this had been removed. There was still at the time a need to get items to the top floor, so we must have missed a still-functioning lift or hoist.

B. Brewhouse addition to north

To the north of the brewhouse, this two floor 20th century structure, partly steel, with concrete floors and with a steel truss roof, was essentially a sideways extension. It covered what had once been an open part of the yard. The upper floor, treated as part of the first floor of the brewhouse, was empty. The north side of the ground floor had a disused bottling line, but was not explored.

C. Addition to south

Alongside the south of the former brewhouse, this single storey building (Figure 8) was made of wooden boarding on a steel frame and probably post-war. In 1982 it contained a number of disused wooden holding vats which had stored spirit vinegar before bottling.

D. Bottling lines in use

The north wall of D had a white stone string course and recessed arches for doors and windows, a feature of early buildings on the site. A sketch of about 1850 labelled it as the 'vinegar house and wine vaults'. ¹² The pitched roof, running east-west, had steel trusses, covered in corrugated iron with clear plastic 'windows', as did the parallel roof of Building E. Goad in 1897 shows a division along the line of the then slate roofs, separating D from E. At that time the whole of buildings D, E, F, S, T and U were marked 'British wine factory & stores'.

By 1963 D contained a vinegar bottling plant, which remained in 1982 (Figure 9). It had three parallel lines going the length of the building, one for each size of bottle being filled. They were operated automatically by compressed air. Each had a capacity of about 180 bottles per minute. Vinegar was pumped to D from the making-up vats in F. Once in D, it passed at 140°F through a flash pasteuriser (Alfa-Laval of Switzerland), situated in the SE corner of the building, before reaching the bottling lines. There was a pasteuriser for each 'line' (Figure 10).

Open bottles (sometimes plastic, not glass), supplied clean and thus not requiring washing, were fed from a 'standing patch' onto a carousel and were filled as they went round before moving on a conveyor to a topping/capping machine by Metal Closures Ltd, West Bromwich. This machine also applied labels, either own brand (Sarsons) or carrying a retailer's branding. On two lines bottles were automatically marshalled into dozens on a flat cardboard base which was folded around them

before the whole carton was covered loosely by plastic film. For the third line, placing of bottles on the cardboard base was done manually before it was folded and also covered loosely by plastic film. This line could be adapted if needed for 5 or 20 litre containers. In all cases the cartons were moved along a roller conveyor to enter a shrink wrap tunnel machine. They continued via a wall aperture to a cooler tunnel in the northern part of building F.

There was no dedicated line for the various sorts of flavoured or wine vinegars. Pipework was washed through when a different sort of vinegar was to be bottled.

E. Vats for holding vinegar and for initial filtration

In 1982 E contained 17 vats, used for either holding/storage or the first filtration of vinegar. Three were metal and used for wine vinegar and the other 14, of wood, for holding or the first stage filtering of malt vinegar, using rockwool. These were in two rows with an overhead wooden walkway along the centre of each row. Vat 7 was chalked 'spice' (Figure 11).

In the SE corner was a filter made by Carlson, probably used solely for wine vinegars, similar to those in building A. On the south wall was an electric pump for mixing — though exactly what was not ascertained.

F. Making-up vats

Structurally this was the westernmost bay of building G, made into a separate area by a wall built some time before 1897. A substantial wooden column supporting the roof appeared too pristine to be more than 30 years old, implying post-war alterations (Figure 12).

In 1982 the north part of F was functionally a continuation of the bottling plant in D, described above. The shrink-wrapped cartons of vinegar bottles were stacked on pallets for removal by a hand operated 'Jo-loader', or by a full size fork lift truck, for despatch or storage. We did not see how larger (5 and 20 litre) vinegar containers were handled. We noted elsewhere that stacks of up to 5 cartons, and larger complete pallet loads, had been shrink wrapped into a single unit, but we did not see where that shrink wrapping took place.

The south part of F had six wooden making-up vats. In these, concentrated vinegar, fed by gravity from one of the stainless steel tanks in the brewhouse (A), via pipes across the yard, was diluted to strength. Vinegar went from the making up vats to the pasteuriser and bottling plant in D.

G. Warehouse, vats, second filtration

G was a seven bay timber frame building, with a slate roof, of which one bay had been divided off to form F (above). The north wall had glazing with a lower level of non-load-bearing brick infill. Perhaps this had originally been an open sided structure. The south wall, alongside the site boundary and with no openings, was of brick throughout.

G was in the same location as a building on the earliest site plan seen, 1826 (albeit hardly a scale drawing), and this, together with the heavy wooden construction, led us to conclude that it was built before then. The fenestration was arranged so that there was a horizontal section in each bay that corresponded visually to the white stone string course in adjacent D. During the mid-19th century the east end was

modified and an extension added into the area which in 1982 was partly occupied by the later building N. The earliest Goad, 1897, showed the eastern part of G, plus the extension, as a barrel store. The rest was shown as a wash house, but not specifying if this was for barrels or bottles, or both.

In 1982 some two thirds of the space in G was used to store pallets of bottled vinegar, placed on racks by fork lift truck. Alongside the north wall, near the yard door, was a compressor made by Ingersoll-Rand that supplied air at about 120 psi to the bottling plant in D. There were two further compressors, behind stored pallets. The south side of G held seven vats. Of these, four were wood, on short brick piers, the other three being stainless steel — one large and two small. The two small ones, used for wine vinegars, were on steel frames at the eastern end of the building. At the south western end of the building were two filters made by Johnson, used for the second stage filtration, one being in use at a time (Figure 13). Both filters consisted of 29 metal plate frames with a continuous cloth of cotton and linen backed by a paper sheet. This was run up and down between the plates, which were then clamped together. Centrally behind the filters was a wooden tub of Perlite powder, a filter aid. This was constantly mixed with the vinegar before it was passed through a filter to ensure a fine clear liquid. The vinegar with Perlite flowed in at the top and out the bottom of the frame filter. Each frame had taps so it could be isolated if the filter material disintegrated. The filters were cleaned every day by first rolling up the paper sheet, which 'caught' matter retained by the Perlite, and then washing the cloth for re-use.

H. Boiler house

The boiler house, initially the engine house before the adjacent mill (J) was built, was a single storey brick structure to the north east of the brewhouse. It had a roof of metal sheeting carried on cast or wrought iron trusses (Figure 14). There were two coal fired boilers, one being in use at any time. They supplied steam at 140°F for pasteurisation and hot water to heat the factory. It would also have been used to clean barrels, but that activity had ceased. Flues from the boilers combined to run to the circular chimney through the brewhouse roof.

The boiler normally in use was a Danks Chain Grate model of 1958, with an automatic hopper feeding fuel — in 1982 Charrington Rawdons Singles. The other, an older hand-fired Lancashire boiler, from Thompson of Wolverhampton, 1925 (Figure 15), was usually lit up for only a few weeks a year (in 1982 fired with Welsh Cables) whilst the Danks was shut down for maintenance. The working boiler was kept in steam over the weekend. In 1977 an adjacent building (Z) had been used as a coal store, but this had been demolished by 1982 and fuel was stored in the open.

Correspondence shows that previously two replacement Lancashire boilers had been supplied in 1898 by the Oldham Boiler Co Ltd costing £275 each. At that time, as in 1982, one was generally in steam and one cold.⁴⁰ In 1898 it was remarked that following changes in the arrangement of line shafting just one of the two auxiliary steam engines could provide the required power. [20](#)

J. Former mill

The tallest building on the site, this five storey brick structure had a cast iron water tank, sitting on fish-belly beams, which formed part of the roof. The remainder of the roof was conventionally pitched, with slates (Figure 16). The tank would have

provided a head of water and a small reserve supply if a well pump became inoperable. The date of building is unknown, but it was probably about 1850, as it appeared in sketches made at that time, ¹² but is not mentioned by Dodd in 1843.

Plans show an engine room on the ground floor, next to the boiler house. In 1894 some tentative trials were undertaken regarding the use of electricity, but we have no date when steam ceased to power the machinery. Goad in 1949 shows the ground floor former engine room as divided into a 'power house' and a 'pulp house'; 10 years later this space was marked as toilets and a carpenters' shop. There were no signs of any power source or line shafting in 1982.

In 1949 the floors above were occupied, in ascending sequence, by fitters, plumbers and electricians, and two floors for storage. In 1982 this building was empty. It, including the water tank, was retained in the site redevelopment (Figure 17).

Goad plans of 1897 and 1959 both show a small area between the boiler room and the mill as a 'pump room'. This might have been the location of the artesian well steam pump, but, again, in 1982 no evidence was seen.

K. Site of library & ballroom

By 1897 the ballroom was used as the Counting House, although the library remained, for employee use, on the upper floor. After 1932 the building became BVL's HQ. It was gutted by fire in May 1941; the 1953 OS map shows an outline marked 'ruin'. In the 1950s a single floor steel frame structure with asbestos sheet cladding was erected on the footprint of the ruin. Goad in 1959 labels it as jar washing and filling. In 1982 it appeared to be disused and we did not see inside. Our guide said it had latterly been where catering size (20 litre) vinegar containers had been filled. In the site redevelopment a new two floor brick building, resembling the original, has been erected.

L, M, N and P. Warehousing and despatch

These four adjoining single storey buildings filled an irregularly shaped piece of land to the south east. Its shape was partly explained by the way part of Beaufoys' land was used for houses in Rita Road.

In 1982 they were used as covered space for warehousing and (N) despatch (Figure 18), so were of no process interest. In the late 1890s much of this area had been a mineral water factory, having previously and afterwards been generally part of the cooperage, a designation which continued until plastic 'barrels' replaced wooden ones. The *Survey of London*, 1956, mentions that part of the cooperage had a floor made of former millstones, but none were visible.

The area of L corresponded to buildings shown in the very first available small site plan (1826) and a later one of 1853. In 1982 it was treated as a sub-section of adjacent M and P, being partitioned off by a secure wire mesh cage to act as a secure store. Along the rear wall were two decayed brick hearths. These appear on old site plans as 'firing place', but with nothing specific as to their use. An 1890s bird's eye site sketch shows smoke rising from the related chimneys. There were remains of a third hearth further east. Building M was simply a roofed space with vinegar on pallets waiting despatch.

Building N contained a loading bay, identified as such in 1929, with a platform at

tailgate height. The building had wooden upright columns and wooden beams supporting the roof, and appeared to contain parts of a former structure with wooden arches large enough to pass loaded carts. This is quite possible, as plans show that an extension of G previously covered this area. A canopy covered the yard adjacent to the loading bay. The space in front, to the east of J, the one-time location of the 'stoving house' was used to manoeuvre lorries.

Tanker lorries delivering concentrated 'rough' vinegar discharged in the yard near here, using flexible hoses. Vinegar was pumped into holding vats, or to rockwool vats in building G (for first filtration).

Building P had a roof supported by metal columns of triangular section in grid pattern, except where meeting the walls, with the bottom two thirds encased in protective concrete. The columns supported wood roof beams and stood within a concrete floor.

Q. Former stables

This oblong single storey building had two raised ventilators at the ridge of the slate roof. It was erected in 1893–4 as stables, supplementing those in R. ⁴¹ The floor retained glazed deep purple bricks, each with four raised studs to facilitate draining. In 1982 it had no particular use.

R

In 1897 (Goad), the area east of the North Lodge, R, had five separate buildings along the site's north wall. The scene was much altered by 1982. First, behind the lodge, was a building used as a store, formerly an excise office. Adjacent was an open space, the site of a modest two storey house, which in 1900 was used as the laboratory and was still standing in 1950. The next section had been built as stables containing 20 boxes, with a hay loft above. By 1982 these had been demolished and the space occupied by a basic open sided shelter, storing empty pallets. In 1897 this was followed by a building containing vats, possibly a temporary expedient to cope with rapidly expanding production, which in 1982 was empty. The final building shown in 1897 had been demolished and was just an open space. Open ground east again had further 'draining bricks'; it once fronted a coach house, long demolished.

S, T and U

The history of these three adjoining slate-roofed brick buildings is unknown. U was two storeys with a mansard roof. The wall facing the yard had a patch of newer brick, indicating a partial rebuild which incorporated doors wide enough to take fork-lift trucks (Figure 19).

S and T were single storey with different rooflines. In 1897 Goad shows all three, along with the buildings D, E, and F as part of the 'British Wine Factory and Stores'. At some time a basement was dug under the three buildings and covered by a concrete floor; presumably a cool place for wine storage. Most recently the basement had been a works canteen. In 1982 these buildings were disused.

V. Engineers shop

This oblong brick building, first appearing on maps around 1850, once had a further wing to the west. It had a white string course and round-headed window

and doorway, a feature noted elsewhere. The roof was slated. When built, and complete, it would have faced a garden in front of the Beaufoy residence, so could have been associated with that, rather than the manufactory. Goad shows it as a spirit store in 1897, then part of the wine vault (1939) and finally a games room (1959). In 1982 it was an engineers' shop. This building has been retained in the site redevelopment.

W. Family house

The three floor brick built family house of 1812/3 was immediately east of the two lodges and west of the two floor ballroom and library. In front, to the south of the drive, was a formal garden.

A bomb in October 1940 destroyed the adjacent south lodge (not rebuilt) and a second in May 1941 damaged part of the house; a photograph shows an exposed interior wall. ⁴² It was patched up and used as an office until a new BVL office block (Y) was opened in 1957. By 1982 the ground floor was used for storage. The interior was not visited. The house was made good and retained in the site's redevelopment.

X. North lodge

When built in 1812/3 this faced another across the top of the driveway. Both had four columns forming a loggia and a 'coat of arms'. A photograph, perhaps posed, of about 1970 shows a man standing outside it and checking lorries in and out of the site. ⁴³ In 1982 the north lodge remained apparently as built, but had no particular use and some windows were bricked up. It has been retained as part of the site redevelopment.

Y. Office block

BVL's HQ office block, which included laboratories on the ground floor, opened in 1957 (Figure 20). It closed at the same time as the rest of the site and in 1983 and was let as offices. It remains today, with alterations, as the Comfort Inn Hotel.

Z. Coal store

This single storey building, seen in 1977 (Figure 17) was demolished before 1982.

Acknowledgements

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Photographs, unless otherwise noted, by David Thomas in 1982 or 1983.

References

1. Smith T.R. 2012 London's Industrial Archaeology No. 10 p.23–42
2. Adams M.R. and Smith T.R. 2012 London's Industrial Archaeology No.10 p.15–21
3. These included (dates are approximate): 1761 Beaufoy & Biddle; 1775 Beaufoy, Biddle & James; 1809 John Hanbury Beaufoy & Co.; 1818 Beaufoy & Co (generally

used from 1836 until 1929); 1833 J H & H Beaufoy; 1834 Henry Beaufoy & Co; 1835 J Beaufoy & Co. Although part of British Vinegars Ltd from 1932, the Beaufoy name continued to be associated with vinegar until at least 1961. Beaufoy, Grimble & Co. may have continued as a trading name in Scotland until what had been Grimble's premises in Edinburgh closed in 1983. The wines business, outside of BVL, remained Beaufoy's Wines Ltd until at least 1960 and in 1973 was within Woolley, Duval and Beaufoys Ltd. The 1967 issue of Who Owns Whom showed the name Beaufoy's Wines & Spirits Ltd, as 'dormant', and Jules Duval & Beaufoys Ltd as part of Showerings, Vine Products & Whiteways Ltd. In 2012 Beaufoy was not part of any trading name

4. Leaves from a Beech Tree, Gwendolyn Beaufoy, 1930, mentions taking over an existing firm. The book has a drawing, dated 1848, of the 3 storey house at Cupers Bridge, just outside Cupers Gardens and by then overlooked by the approach to Waterloo Bridge. Mark Beaufoy lived there from 1743 until his death in 1782

5. *ibid.*

6. Adams & Smith 2012 *op cit.*

7. C A Mitchell, Vinegar, 1926, quoting Pennant, London, 1792. Mitchell was Beaufoys' chemist

8. LMA B/BFY/13. Document, 1810, re sale of land to Beaufoy; Part of Cotmans Field, it was less than 3 acres

9. LMA B/BFY/20 (2). Draft or copy of a letter listing items for compensation and sequence for moving

10. *ibid.*

11. LMA B/BFY/21. Printed auction catalogue, 1813 (item missing in 8/2012)

12. LMA SC/PZ/LA/02, 133 to 178. Folder of drawings

13. Notes on Beaufoys' sites at Vauxhall, Pays Bas and Nine Elms and on the development of land for housing are deposited at the London Borough of Lambeth's Minet Library. See also, 'The Beaufoys of Battersea' by Diana Gunasena. Wandsworth Historian, issues 61, 64 and 68; copies at Wandsworth Heritage Service, Lavender Hill Library

14. Dodd, G. 1843 Days at the Factories. Charles Knight & Co. London

15. LMA B/BFY/32 (7). This firm's name also appeared on vats at Tower Bridge Road

16. LMA B/BFY/38 (4). 1831 document signed by 'Benjamin Smith (engineer)'

17. LMA B/BFY/74. Booklet, Some account of Beaufoy & Co., 1898

18. *ibid.*; Full name: Riley Manufacturing Co Ltd, 256 South Lambeth Rd. Shown in directories as Soda Water Engineers, they installed a number of other items of plant at Beaufoys. The firm, founded in 1878, later became part of The British Syphon Company Ltd, Eastbourne (Article in Sussex Industrial History 36, 2006)

19. LMA B/BFY/58. Introduction of female labour mentioned in letter 22/12/1897

providing a reference for a former mineral water factory manager

20. LMA B/BFY/58. Letters book from 1877 to 1899. In 1897–9 it included reports by the site manager

21. *ibid*; Reports 10/1898 & 29/3/1899

22. Goad Plan sheet K8

23. LMA B/BFY/107. Grocers Review 10/1897. In book of newspaper cuttings

24. LMA B/BFY/34 (1). Copy of letter 1860 to Inland Revenue

25. LMA B/BFY26. Letter 7/1818 from J H Beaufoy, Upton Gray, to Henry Beaufoy, South Lambeth

26. Built in 1886 for Mark Hanbury Beaufoy. There were 16 indoor servants and a similar number 'outdoors' on the surrounding 2,000 acre estate. After M H Beaufoy's death there in 1922 most of the estate was sold, the house following in 1930. It became a hotel and is now part of St Mary's Boarding School

27. LMA B/BFY73. Photo inside the former ballroom, 'The Counting House', 1897

28. LMA B/BFY107. The Grocer 4/10/1898. In book of newspaper cuttings

29. LMA B/BFY58. Correspondence re premises: Newcastle 1887, Liverpool 1892–3, and Birmingham 1899. Additionally, local representatives had offices in Bristol, Leeds, Glasgow, Dundee and Manchester

30. *ibid*; Several reports to Trustees

31. *ibid*; Report by C A Mitchell, Beaufoys' chemist, 8/4/1899

32. LMA B/BFY59. Letter 3/4/1903 to Messrs Shelvey & Co. Ltd., Kemp Town

33. LMA B/BFY113. Photo 17/6/1916

34. BVL share capital of £430,000 was 42% Crosse & Blackwell Ltd, 38% Distillers Co Ltd, 20% Beaufoy Grimble Holdings Ltd. In 1982 Mr Grace at South Lambeth Road said a Beaufoy family trust retained 10% until about 1980

35. 1961 Kellys Directory lists 'British Vinegar Makers and associated companies: Sarsons Ltd, Champion & Slee Ltd, Beaufoy, Grimble & Co Ltd, Dufrais & Co Ltd, W C Spitty & Co Ltd, Holbrooks Ltd, also sauce manufacturers and exporters', all at 87 South Lambeth Road. But in 1963 only BVL is shown at this address

36. LMA B/BFY/110 Newspaper cuttings, The Grocer 1/8/1957. 'with the exception of the export office at 5 Fenchurch St., the company's London offices are being integrated ... from Tower Bridge Rd June 7, from 100 York Rd, Battersea June 14, from Parnell House, Wilton Rd, SW1, June 15'

37. Survey of London, Vol 26, St Marys Parish part 2, 1956

38. Planning applications published in SLP on 23/9/1977 and 2/10/1979. The Vauxhall Society's Newsletters had short articles describing the proposals

39. SLP 2/3/1982 clip: 'The Vinegar bottling plant ... will close next January with the loss of 120 jobs', with a longer article on 5/3/1982 saying bottling would be

transferred to breweries in Stourport on Severn and Middleton, Manchester

40. LMA B/BFY/58. Reports 7/1897, 11/1987, 1/1898

41. *ibid*; 'Insurance of the new stables' mentioned, 9/2/1894

42. LMA AC.77.207. Photograph is one of 17, probably all taken on the same day, showing damage

43. Photograph in booklet British Vinegar Limited — a manufacturer explains

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