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Medieval malt house at 24–25 Mennicza Street in Wrocław

Abstract

The study concerns excavations carried out in the courtyard of the “Lord’s Malt House” located at 24–25 Mennicza Street in the Old Town of Wrocław, within the Malt House Quarter. They covered an undeveloped space measuring 24 m × 20 m. They were interpreted as the location of an earlier, medieval malt house. Archaeological investigations were carried out to determine the function and chronology of the uncovered objects. Some of them were related to the Renaissance “Lord’s Malt House”: a ceramic water pipe, an end casting, four negatives of pillars placed at the entrance to the malt house, presumably used to fix a crane intended for transporting building materials and grain and malt. The last structure, a well, functioned until the construction of the waterworks (first half of the 17th century). The other cavities were associated with the medieval malt house. It consisted of two production runs terminating in malt vats.

Key words: Silesia, Wrocław, Middle Ages, archaeology, malt house

Introduction

In February 2007, the company “Akme” Zdzisław Wiśniewski conducted archaeological and architectural research in the undeveloped area of plots No. 70/2 and 70/3, Old Town precinct AM-37, located at 24–25 Mennicza Street in Wrocław. The excavations were carried out in connection with the planned adaptation of the back of a former industrial building for public utility purposes – an underground car park. The research was led by Dr. Roland Mruczek. Consultations during the archaeological work were provided by Prof. Jerzy Rozpędowski and Dr. Czesław Lasota. They were largely based on the results of earlier architectural research carried out by the Institute of the History of Architecture, Art and Technology at Wrocław University of Science and Technology. In the 1980s, a study was published on early modern malt houses in the Old Town of Wrocław [1]. The authors devoted particular attention to the “Lord’s Malt House” located at 24–25 Mennicza Street, based on an analysis of

the city plans, taking into account the course of the Malt House Quarter, located south of the run of the first moat, between Ruska and Wierzbowa Streets (Fig. 1).

The surviving “Lord’s Malt House” was purchased by the municipal authorities in 1565 from Count Rozdrażewski, who had previously inherited it [1]. The authors assume that it was probably built in the middle of the 16th century, on the site of an older, medieval malt house that was demolished during the construction of the Renaissance one. As the paper contains an extensive description of the preserved architectural structures, we will not cite them, but we will make an orderly description of the archaeological objects excavated during the earthworks leading to the construction of the underground garage, remaining outside the malt house in an area of 24 m × 20 m.

Excavation results

Seventeen archaeological objects were identified during the excavations, in relation to which the original function was sought to be established. In most cases, artefacts were recovered from the objects explored, which made it possible to carry out their dating and to separate two or three phases of use in general (Fig. 2).

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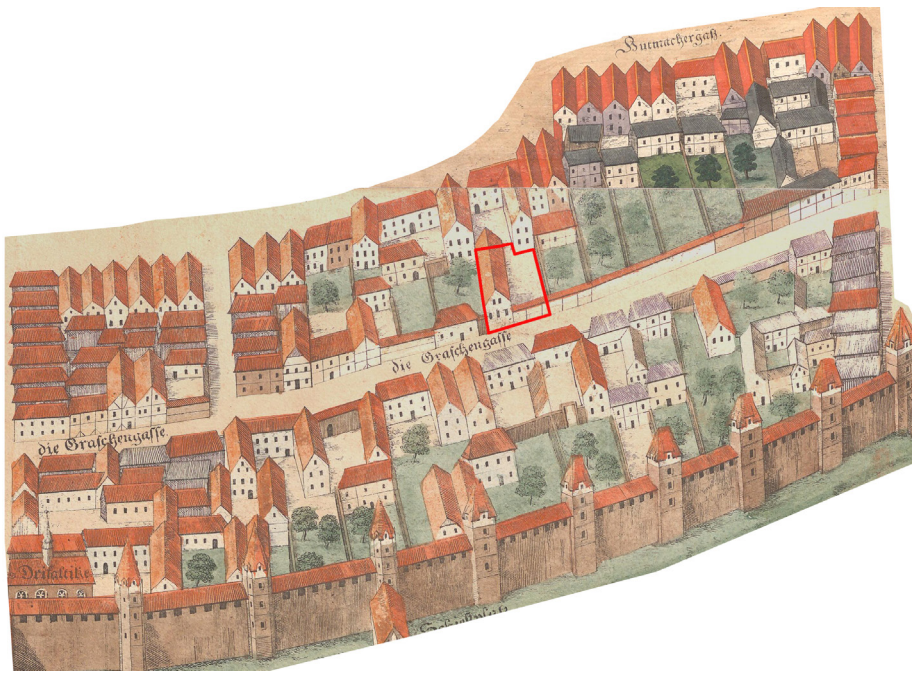


Fig. 1. Wrocław, Old Town, Malt House Quarter (according to the Weihners' plan)

Il. 1. Wrocław, Stare Miasto, Kwartal Słodowników (według planu Weihnerów)

We will begin our discussion of the exposed cavities with objects directly related to the “Lord’s Malt House”, whose chronology exceeds the mid-16th century. We have included objects No. 1 and No. 2. The first is a ceramic water-pipe running from north to south, along the eastern wall of the building, in its northern section. The water supply trench cut the course of the building layer and was supported by brick offsets, clearly indicating that it had already been laid after the construction of the early Renaissance malt house. We also notice that the pipeline was laid more than 1 m higher than the ordinates of most clay water mains discovered to date. We presume that this occurred after Hans Schneider von Lindau built another water main in 1596, supplying water from a reservoir located in the water tower by means of a water pump [2]. Based mainly on ceramic fragments from the backfill of the excavation, the retrieved ceramic pipes and the dandelion tiles covering them were also dated to the 14th to 15th century [3]. In our opinion, the waterworks were constructed after 1565, but not earlier than the first half of the 17th century, in the period immediately following the construction of Hans Schneider von Lindau’s rumus. Fragments of vessels excavated from the backfill of object No. 2 date to this period. This was the final lagoon to which the ceramic water supply discussed earlier was fed.

The next objects – cavities Nos. 7–9 and No. 12 – are the negatives of the pillars, concentrated near the descent to the malt house. A wooden platform serving the communication of the first floor and above could rest on them. They may also be the negatives of pillars on which a crane for lifting grain sacks or a structure associated with the construction of the “Lord’s Malt House” could have been mounted.

The overview of structures from the younger phase of the development closes with object No. 13, a dredge well. It was not manually excavated to foundation level for safety reasons. Fragments of vessels dating from the

15th to the 19th century were recovered from the backfill. It was established after the abandonment of an older well (object No. 3) and served an older, medieval malt house. By the time the waterworks were built (objects Nos. 1 and 2) it was probably already serving employed workers and local residents. It is possible that it was in use for some time after the construction of an outbuilding in the mid-19th century, where the water intake point was located in the basement. The tap well had two phases of use. The older one, dating from the 14th to 15th century, was characterised by its large dimensions of 2.5 m and 2.8 m. It was five times larger than the sumps of other wells unearthed in Wrocław and twice as large as well 7 from Gdańsk [4]. Repairs to the sump were carried out between the 16th and 17th centuries. It was most likely covered by a roof in both these phases to limit the entry of debris. It was not until the introduction of a single line of ceramic water supply terminating in a spout (objects Nos. 1 and 2) in the 16th/17th century that the basin was further rebuilt and halved in size. In its youngest phase of use, it was equipped with a brick sump, dating from the 18th to 19th centuries, with an internal diameter of 1.2 m. We therefore presume that the well of the oldest phase served the early modern malt house before the construction of the ceramic waterworks (objects Nos. 1 and 2).

The older phase of the development of the plot is dated to the 13th to 14th century. Object No. 3 (a bore well) belongs to it. A large brick pillar was built near it in the later period (mid-19th century), which threatened to collapse during the exploration of the well and therefore its foundation was not reached. The ceramic material retrieved was from the upper parts of the backfill. Therefore, we can only determine the time of its abandonment and backfilling to the 14th century. Similarly, the time horizon for the use of object No. 4, a set of vats, within which at least six phases of use have been identified, has been



Rys. 2. Wrocław, ul. Mennicza 24. Rzut i kondygnacji stodoły „Pańskiej” z chronologicznym rozważaniem murów: 1 – 1365 r., 2 – wnętrza po 1365 r., 3 – 1796 r., 4 – XIX w., 5 – reliktury ostatniego pieca

Fig. 2. Wrocław, Stare Miasto, 24–25 Mennicza St., projection of the “Lord’s Malt House” and archaeological objects (according to [1], digital compilation by A. Limisiewicz)

II. 2. Wrocław, Stare Miasto, ulica Mennicza 24–25, rzut „Stodoły Pańskiej” oraz obiekty archeologiczne (według [1], oprac. cyfrowe A. Limisiewicz)

established. There is no doubt that the ceiling parts of the object were destroyed, but it would be difficult to move the time of their use beyond the 14th century. Object No. 5, interpreted as an outbuilding, set in the immediate vicinity of the vat complex described above, is similarly dated. It appears to have been constructed during the final period of use of this phase, as indicated by the repeated ceramic assemblages dating only to the 14th century.

With this group of objects, dating from the first phase of settlement, another cavity, marked No. 10, of small size, containing single fragments of vessels also dating from the second half of the 13th and 14th centuries, can be associated. The function of this object has not been clearly defined and during the description the possibility of its connection with communication with the upper floors of the medieval malt house (object No. 17) was considered.

Also associated with the production complex of objects Nos. 3–6 is cavity No. 11. This was a small dugout with a skeletal structure above ground and an earthen part enclosed by log walls. Its chronology, based on the dating of pottery fragments, dates to the second half of the 13th to the 14th century.

Similarly dated buildings make up a complex of three structures (Nos. 14–16), covering a total of six settlement phases, most likely diachronic, free-standing cellars designed to store means of production (tools, non-mass raw

materials). They may also have been used as a shelter or resting place for workers, but rather to the exclusion of a residential function. The single pottery fragments recovered from the stratigraphically oldest levels date generally from the 13th century and are characterised by the absence or small number of specimens of steel-grey pottery. Most of the fragments, however, are dated to the period between the second half of the 13th century and the 14th century. A small collection, mainly from the upper layers (1–0) of object No. 15, is also dated to the 15th–16th centuries. We believe that the youngest phases of this building were still in place during the construction of the “Lord’s Malt House” or the building that preceded it, but after the transformation of the plot.

The overview of sites containing single fragments of 13th–14th century pottery closes with building No. 17. It was discovered to a small extent, based on the documented profile and single fragments of pottery. Its size was reconstructed on the basis of the extent of the east wall. The western wall should not exceed the reconstructed western boundary of the plot. If we place all the objects of 13th and 14th century metrics within the 18.8 m × 37.6 m rectangle, we obtain the hypothetical course of the original parcel (Fig. 1), most likely before subsequent adjustments.

The next site, an assemblage of overlapping vats marked No. 6, contained a repeated set of vessels, framed by dates to the second half of the 13th century and the 14th century. As at least thirteen phases of redevelopment associated with a new vat setting were distinguished within it, we believe that it was active throughout the production period. Within the site, a small pit containing pottery from the 14th to 17th centuries stands out, most likely created during the period of use of the Renaissance “Lord’s Malt House”.

The structures from the older phase of the development, dating from the 13th to the 16th century, represent two production lines, running from south to north. The first of these, located at the eastern edge of the site, consisted of four cavities (Nos. 3–5 and No. 11). Structures No. 5 and No. 11 were identified as outbuildings with a quadrangular outline and measuring 2 × 2 m, most likely connected to each other and leading to a large structure (No. 4) with a figure-of-eight shape. It was originally formed by two large barrels (vats) 2 m and 2.5 m in diameter. Both were directly adjacent to each other. It is possible that another barrel was adjacent on the north–west side, but this may have been destroyed during the setting of the brick pillar in the mid-19th century. Adjacent to these three structures on the east side was a fourth (No. 3). It connected to a vat dug into the ground. This was a well with a square-shaped projection and measuring 0.8 m × 0.9 m. In this case we would probably be dealing with a separate production line.

The second line was a single object (No. 6), located to the west of the first line, defined by objects Nos. 3–5 and No. 11. In plan it was pear-shaped, oval on the north side and narrowing on the south side. The narrower part was over 2 m long and the extended northern part reached over 3 m long and 2.8 m wide. This part of the site was located 6 m west of the older phase of the younger well (object No. 13). Our guess is that water was transferred

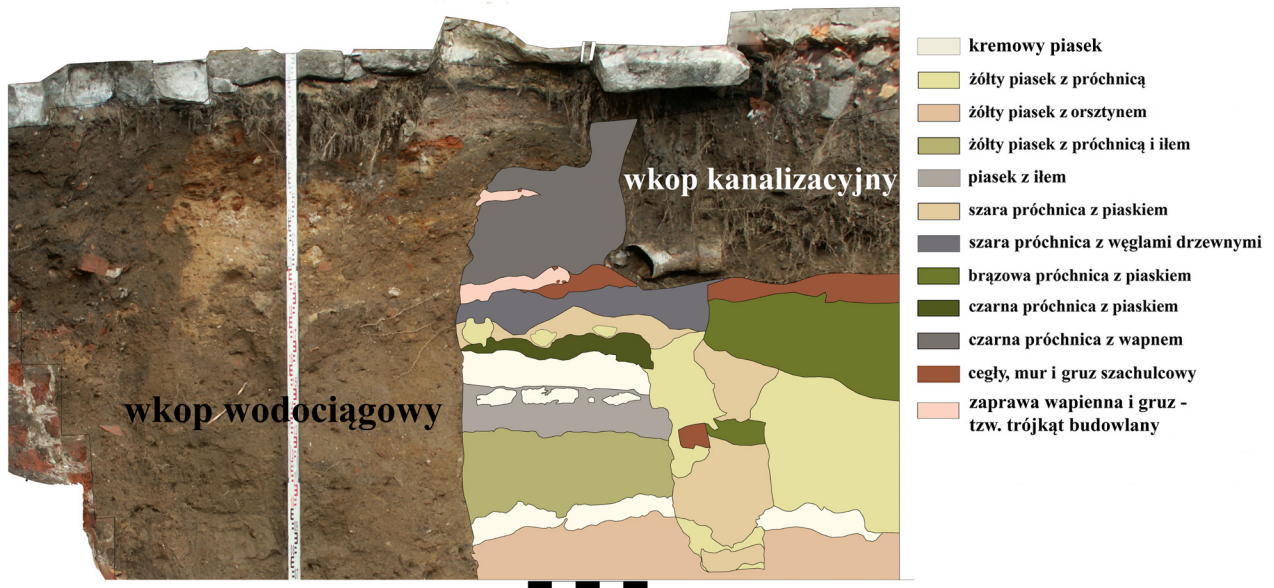


Fig. 3. Wrocław, Stare Miasto, 24–25 Mennicza St., object no. 17, profile (drawing by A. Limisiewicz)

Il. 3. Wrocław, Stare Miasto, ulica Mennicza 24–25, obiekt nr 17, profil (rys. A. Limisiewicz)

directly from the well to object No. 6, where a stave vat, dug into the ground, was placed within the extended lot. A small dugout was located between the older phase of the well and the vat (object No. 11). The malting process was described by Dobieslaw Karst [5]. We conjecture that it was demolished and the basin associated with the facility was backfilled to facilitate communication and water transfer. It is most likely that the two production lines were diachronic or used synchronously after the destruction of object No. 11 and the commissioning of the large well (object No. 13).

A discussion of the presence of six overlapping cellars needs to be completed. They were located in the southern part of the courtyard, in its eastern part. They have been identified as structures 14–16. Originally, this was probably a narrow and long building measuring at least 4 m × 10 m. It consisted of three sections. Only their ground-floor, dug-in parts – the cellars – have survived (objects No. 14–16). After a period of use, they underwent far-reaching transformations. These consisted first of a gradual filling in of the cellar cavities, and later of a complete backfilling of the cellars. In the next stage, the outline of the building was enlarged, at least on the west side, and a further three cellar cavities were excavated. Unlike the previous ones, these were oriented with the longer axis from south–east to north–west. They were marked with the same numbers, but with the letter “a” added. This allows us to assume that, within the courtyard, we are most likely dealing with two phases of timber-framed buildings, which not only formed two diachronic lines of production, but also basement complexes over which one- and two-storey above-ground buildings were placed. Insofar as our guesses are correct, the older phase of the development was formed by buildings Nos. 3–4, No. 11 and Nos. 14–16, in which case the second phase of the development would have been formed by buildings No. 6, No. 13, No. 14a, No. 15a and No. 16a.

A separate issue is the possible presence of a large building occupying the western part of the courtyard of the “Lord’s Malt House”. In the course of the research carried out, its presence was not found in the plane. The reason for this may have been the earthworks carried out earlier leading to the foundation of a large Renaissance building. The only indication is the presence of negatives of the structure within the northern profile.

At a depth of 1.2 m, a sequence of layers almost 0.8 m thick and over 1 m wide was captured. These were formed by horizontal deposits of grey and brown humus, interspersed with insets of grey, yellow or cream coloured sand. The bottom parts of the exploratory excavation were filled with yellow sand with levels of hardpan. These indicate strong hydration of the sandy subsoil. Above this was a layer of brown humus mixed with sand, over twenty centimetres thick. This rested on two separate beds of creamy sand about 30 cm long and 8 cm thick. We presume that the fine cream-coloured sand percolated below the large drainpipes, which, once the void had been silted up, were taken up and reused for the same purpose after re-laying. Our guess is that the operation was repeated several times, resulting in the bedded layer described above.

The first cycle of stratification closes with an eight-centimetre-thick deposit of a horizontal layer of brown humus with sand and chert. Above this was a 15–18 cm thick mixture of fine sand and grey clay. Three insets of creamy sand, 18–23 cm long and 5–6 cm thick, were observed in its roof. These are most likely to be the backfill of laths removed from the subsoil. They rested stacked along a north-south line. Above the pile of dismantled laths was a horizontal layer 11–16 cm thick, also filled with cream-coloured sand. On top of this, a layer of brown humus 5–10 cm thick mixed with sand was recorded. In its ceiling were three semi-circular impressions filled with yellow sand with humus. The diameter of the impressions



Fig. 4. Wrocław, Old Town, 17 Mennicza St., medieval malt house (according to the Weihners' plan)

Il. 4. Wrocław, Stare Miasto, ulica Mennicza 17, słodownia średniowieczna (według planu Weihnerów)

was 11–13 cm. These are most likely to be areas of removed or rotten joists and silted with sand.

In our opinion, the described layering system is a remnant of a wooden structure dug into the ground to a depth of about 1 m. It seems that the hollow was conducive to the germination of the grain accumulated here, this was also pointed out by the authors of a previous study [5]. From the second half of the 13th to the first half of the 16th century, at least three phases were observed to fill the originally dug-in building. We conjecture, the ground also built up outside the building, constantly leaving the bottom of its interior below the level of its courtyard.

The captured remains of the structure also require clarification. Probably these were the wide draperies covering the bottom of the object (F1 and D2) and the joists (C1). These were most likely laid crosswise and created voids below the floor drapes into which water dripped, silting up the voids. This is an arrangement typical of rostrums, where grains were germinated after being soaked in a vat. A similar structure was exposed within Trench IIIF at Ostrów Tumski in Wrocław [7] or in the Cistercian malt house exposed in Świdnica [6].

It has been assumed that the alleged roasting plant continued in a southerly direction and was part of the malt house occupying the plot of land at 24–25 Mennicza Street, although it can be assumed that it may have been the southern edge of the roasting plant built in Słodowa Street (now Kazimierza Wielkiego Street).

On the basis of the surviving remains of timber structures uncovered by the excavations, we can conclude with some probability that they formed two building axes. One was the surviving relics of cellars, arranged along a south-north line at the eastern edge of the plot. The accompanying two production lines were most likely diachronic. The second axis of development may have been the rostrum (object No. 17), located on the west side of the plot. Connecting the two axes of development to the north may have been covered production lines. In this case it would have been a saturated development of a separate part of the plot. Together they would have surrounded the maltings courtyard. We can guess that there may have been a front building on the south side, enclosing the circumferentially described workshop. However, we do not know from which side the hearth was adjacent to the roasting house. It was most likely located directly adjacent to its outer contour [5].

We find similarly shaped buildings on the Weihner plan at the junction of Mennicza and Wierzbowa Streets, on the north side (former Wehner barracks, 19 Mennicza Street).

We assume that the authors of the study of the Renaissance “Lord’s Malt House” had this particular development in mind when writing about medieval malt houses (Fig. 4). If we trace the character of the buildings in the maltings quarter, we can find more solutions of the kind not found in other quarters of Wrocław. Particularly noteworthy are the large rostrum buildings.

Complementing our considerations is an analysis of the discovered pit 6, which represents the remains of a second, younger line dating to the 14th–15th/16th century. A description was included in the study of the results of the research carried out at 24–25 Mint Street, as well as of the other sites [8].

Within the profile of the site, layers Nos. 1–38 were identified, mostly in a horizontal arrangement, being the backfills of ramps leading from the south towards the north, and successive relics of wooden vats used for steeping malt (Nos. 1–2, No. 16, Nos. 21–22, No. 26, No. 29, No. 32, No. 37). In plan, the building had an oval outline, tapering on both sides on the south side, giving it a flask or bowling pin shape. Its longitudinal axis was oriented from south to north. Its overall length was 5.2 m and its width was 2.8 m. The length of the oval part was 3.8 m. In its floor, concentric sandy layers of brown or grey colour were observed, resulting from the presence of added humus, decomposed wood or clay. In the central part, an oval outline measuring 1.8 m × 1.9 m and filled with yellow sand was observed. On the north-eastern side, its course was partially eroded by a later trench.

In cross-section, the pit was approximately trough-shaped, plunging stepwise towards the north (Fig. 5). Its length was 5.2 m, and the total documented depth reached 1 m. The fill of the site consisted of successive horizontally arranged layers, composed of sand, sand mixed with humus and humus. Some of these contained decomposed or burnt wood fragments and a small clay component. Nine cardinal structural layers were distinguished during the exploration. During the stratigraphic analysis carried out, additional structural relics were further distinguished. As the reconstructed building structures not only lay on top of each other, but were also displaced within the cavity, the analysed fill was divided into sectors, comprising packages of layers related to the individual phases of use of the cavity and ordered in a cycle of chronological succession. A simplified “realistic” profile will be used for the description, comprising layers forming successive settlement phases (Fig. 5). The strata will be numbered, possibly in chronological sequence from the stratigraphically oldest to the youngest. However, this is not the classic Edward C. Harris diagram [9], as the remains of impermanent and demolished structures are described here. Hence the impossibility of establishing multiple layers, but more importantly of establishing the nature of the contacts occurring between them. A continuous numbering of layers in the reconstructed chronological sequence has been adopted, realising that this perhaps includes hiatuses resulting from existing unrecorded destruction surfaces.

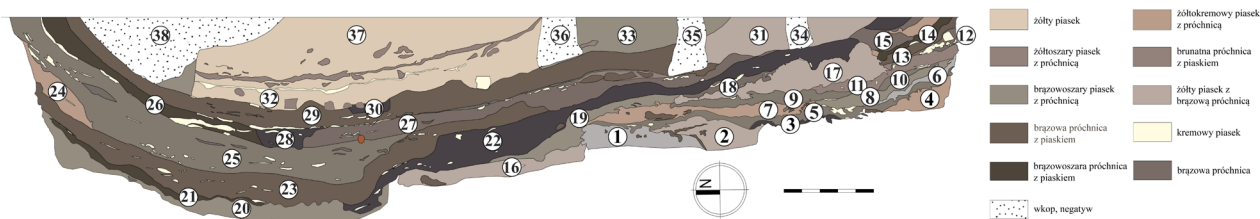


Fig. 5. Wrocław Old Town, 24–25 Mennicza St., structure no. 6, profile (digital processing by A. Limisiewicz)

II. 5. Wrocław, Stare Miasto, ulica Mennicza 24–25, obiekt nr 6, profil (rys. A. Limisiewicz)

Summary

The medieval malt houses, which existed for about four hundred years (1250–1650), were subject to renovations and alterations, which protected them from expected destruction. In our opinion, in the first phase (mid-13th century and 14th century) they were formed by the first production line (objects Nos. 4–5 and No. 11) and the associated wooden well (object No. 3). To the south of these were the pits (objects Nos. 14–16). These were the cellars of what was probably a long above-ground building. We

presume that the eastern edge of the development, marked the original extent of the plot.

The malt house was rebuilt in the 15th century to the first half of the 16th century. Its course was marked by a second production line (pit No. 7) and younger phases of cellar pits (objects No. 14a, No. 15a and No. 16a) and a newly constructed well (object No. 13). The presence of a second rostrum along the western edge of the plot was not confirmed. It is likely that its extent was shorter on the north side than in the first phase of development or remained unchanged.

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Streszczenie

Średniowieczna słodownia przy ulicy Mennicznej 24–25 we Wrocławiu

Opracowanie dotyczy prac wykopaliskowych przeprowadzonych na dziedzińcu „Słodowni Pańskiej” znajdującej się przy ulicy Mennicznej 24–25 na Starym Mieście we Wrocławiu, w obrębie Kwartału Słodowników. Obejmowały one niezabudowaną przestrzeń o wymiarach 24 m × 20 m. Interpretowano je jako miejsce usytuowania wcześniejszej, średniowiecznej słodowni. Prowadzone badania archeologiczne miały na celu określenie funkcji i chronologii odkrywanych obiektów. Część z nich była związana z renesansową „Słodownią Pańską”: ceramiczny wodociąg, rzap końcowy, cztery negatywy słupów umieszczone przy wejściu do słodowni, przypuszczalnie służące do umocowania dźwigu przeznaczanego do transportu materiałów budowlanych oraz ziarna i siodu. Ostatni z obiektów, studnia, funkcjonował do czasu wybudowania wodociągu (pierwsza połowa XVII wieku). Pozostałe jamy były związane ze średniowieczną słodownią. Tworzyły ją dwa ciągi produkcyjne zakończone kadziami słodowymi.

Słowa kluczowe: Śląsk, Wrocław, średniowiecze, archeologia, słodownia