

SAMUEL BURSTON AND HIS MALTINGS AT NORTH PETHERTON, SOMERSET

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Overview

In the Somerset Heritage Centre is the account book of Samuel Burston, maltster, of North Petherton (ref. DD\X/BRS4). The book was deposited by Whitbread Archives, as part of the Starkey Knight and Ford records, so had been acquired by the latter through Thomas Starkey's purchase of the malthouse in 1859. It covers records for sales of malt and associated items from 1833 to 1858, (see later for discussion of these dates) amounting to just short of 2,900 entries, with additional notes such as undated details of lands rented and cattle breeding records from 1883–1886. Inserted amongst the pages are some 32 loose sheets, some of which are brief notes of occasional small sales (noted on scraps of paper torn from larger sheets and clearly intended to be written up later), a few are letters received by Samuel relating to malt and hops, some are notes of acreages (perhaps rented by him), a few monetary calculations, and six blanks.

The aim of this article was to reproduce the detail in the book in a usable form, and to ascertain what could be discovered about the business of a small, rural maltings.

Malting process at the time

Malt was made in the cooler months between October and May. (After the 1831 Beer Act demand for beer grew and some maltsters resorted to summer malting, but it was generally considered to be of poor quality).¹ The traditional design of a malthouse was a long building with a kiln at one end. The long building consisted of two or three floors; the uppermost used for the stor-

age of barley prior to use and also the finished malt, and the lower as 'growing' floors. The usual process was to firstly clean the grain to remove grit and debris such as loose husks. It was then soaked in water in a steeping cistern for 40 hours or more to swell the grain and help it begin to germinate. After this the liquid was drained off and it was heaped up onto a wooden frame (known as a 'couch') for at least 26 hours, after which the Excise Officer measured the increase in volume and could determine the relevant Malt Tax. (This stage was not required after the repeal of the Malt Tax in 1880.) It was then spread out on the growing floor, at the opposite end to the kiln entrance. In a smaller malting, such as the one in question, it would have been put in a low, flat square shape known as a 'piece', leaving the edges clear for the maltster to walk around. In the largest malthouses the malt would be spread right across the floor. As the grain began to shoot, the maltster would turn it with wooden shovels and forks (later malt ploughs), moving it along the floor towards the kiln entrance. His skill now became vital. He had to ensure that the 'piece' had uniform growth, with no mould and minimal tangling and matting from the delicate growing shoot. Control of temperature and ventilation was important, and for that reason many malthouses had a series of small windows (for air, not light) along the growing floors for ventilation.

At a point at which the maltster determined the growth was optimal, the green malt was placed in the kiln for firing to arrest growth. It was usual to have two or three pieces on the floor at the same time, arranged in age sequence along the length of the floor towards the kiln entrance, with the oldest nearest to the kiln. As each piece was removed into the kiln, so the next oldest

would be moved along the floor to take its place. The time the grain spent on the floor in the piece varied according to the barley, the weather conditions and the temperature, but was usually around 8 to 15 days. It was important for the maltster to gauge exactly when was the best time to kiln (i.e. when the enzymes had modified the starch into soluble carbohydrates and proteins), as if he left it too long, the grain would start to use up the sugar, making it less acceptable to the brewer.

The method of drying in the kiln determined the type of malt produced. For pale malt it was kept at a low temperature over a longer time. This type of malt was used for the paler ales such as IPA. Higher temperatures for a shorter period were used to produce the darker malts for stout and mild. At the time in question, clay tiles pierced with tiny holes were used for the kiln floor. (The nearby port of Bridgwater was well-known for its bricks and tiles, which travelled across the seas as ballast, turning up as far away as Africa. Malt kiln tiles were among the products.) In the 18th century and before, large hamstone tiles had been used in Somerset, with much larger holes inserted. These had a horsehair cloth stretched out on a frame above them, with the malt laid on top of the cloth. This method seems to have died out locally around the turn of the 18/19th century, though at one site in Halse it continued in use until well into the 20th century.^{2 & 3}

The kilning process took about three days. During this time the malt had to be turned at least once to ensure evenness of colour and drying. The malt was then screened to remove the rootlets, cooled and bagged up. It would be kept for at least a month before being used for brewing. The screenings could be sold off for animal fodder.

In the West Country, sprinkling was common. This was a way of boosting growth while the grain was in the piece. It was banned as the Excise felt they were being cheated of some Malt Tax by maltsters understeeping in the cistern and then adding moisture after the measurements had been taken. In 1814 two local maltsters had been fined for sprinkling, one for £200, and the other £50 with costs of £40. However, in 1826 Thomas Hutchings of Blagdon was reported in the Taunton Courier to have been convicted of watering grain, earning a fine of only £30. The reason the magistrates may have been somewhat more lenient was that there was a

big movement by maltsters and brewers, both nationally and locally, against the proscription on sprinkling. They complained that it prevented maltsters from ‘making the best and most of the goods and most economic use of the premises.’⁴ Knowledge of its use continued, and, when it was employed in more recent years to rescue a batch in a traditional Devon floor maltings, the customer asked what had been done to it, as he reckoned it was much superior!

The book

Samuel seems originally to have organised his book with pages devoted to certain customers. However, with so many small sales of an irregular nature, some pages are simply organised date-wise. In addition, some pages are devoted to the farming aspects of Samuel’s living. This means that the book is not chronological in any sense. Some of the earliest entries are near the back of the book, and later ones are near the front. (There are a few duplicate entries - hardly surprising given the haphazard way the book is organised.) There are numbers of blank pages, particularly in the middle of the book. There must have been a previous book, as in a few cases a brought forward figure is mentioned - e.g. William Loscombe in 1837 - no other entries in his name in the book, and before his purchase is noted ‘Bill £9.7.2.’ In addition, one of the loose slips of paper relating to a sale appears to have come out of a book that is wider than the present one (though this may not have been a sales book). Samuel was listed in *Pigot & Co.’s Directory* for 1830, so he must have been malting on the site soon after his purchase of it in 1827, and most likely, immediately afterwards. Any previous book(s) would therefore have covered the period from 1827 - 1833.

Samuel seems to have kept track of payments in several ways. In some instances he noted in a separate line in the book when a payment had been made. For some individual purchases he simply crossed through the entry. For some customer-organised groups of purchases he occasionally totalled and wrote at the side ‘Delivered a Bill’ (e.g. 23 March 1840 to William Temlett, and 16 November 1842, to Charles Luckes), so he clearly did send paper bills to some customers. These seem to have been returned to him when the customer paid, as an entry for Charles Godfrey for 19

August 1840 is duplicated by one of the loose sheets of paper used as bookmark - a bill for 'Charles Godfrey (deceased)' dated 7 April 1841 (so the date the bill was presented to his executors). Sometimes the customer-grouped paid entries have been carefully crossed out with a large cross through the whole section. For a few he simply crossed out the single figure in the 'cost' column; this appears to have been for customers who paid each time a purchase was made, as they were not totalled as bills. He offset bills he owed to some of his customers, for example the entry against Mr Dicks; 'My bill £24.4.3., Mr Dicks bill £14.12.5.' (3 June 1834 - Charles Dicks seems to have been a publican at West Hatch near North Curry), and possibly implicated where bill totals are sizably less than the entries show. In some instances he seems to have insisted on part payments, e.g. John Gillingham ran up a debt of £27.0.0. between 1846 and 1847, before Samuel 'Delivered a Bill'. John paid Samuel £6 before putting in another order worth £4, and then spent the next year paying off small amounts of between one and two pounds at a time.

In a small number of cases duplicate entries have been made in different places, for instance an entry at the end of a group for George Cole has been duplicated at the beginning of the next group of entries for him. In these cases I have ignored one of the entries for calculations, though it is possible that Samuel charged both times, if his customer did not notice the discrepancy!

The dates covered by the book mainly run from 1834 to 1855. However, there is one single entry in 1833, that of a sale of both malt and hops to 'Old Mr Robert Bell', on 6 August 1833. This may have been a 'brought forward' figure from a previous book, as, given that the time before Christmas and the New Year was usually his best sales time, it would be surprising if sales were not made between August 1833 and February 1834. So it seems likely that the book was commenced in earnest in February 1834. Likewise, there are just three entries after September 1855; one for 3½ bags of apples in 1857, and one small sale of malt and another of hops in the first half of 1858. These three sales were all recorded against Robert Farthing. It would seem unlikely that there had been no sales at all between 1855 and 1857, and that these were the only sales. A possible explanation might be that Samuel had started a new book for some reason, despite the fact that there were plenty of blank sheets to use (perhaps as the haphazard organisa-

tion of this book had made it difficult for him to trace what was still owing to him). So it could be that Samuel simply continued to record against Robert in his old book, or that he had picked up the wrong book when recording what Robert Farthing owed him. However, a more likely explanation is that the 1858 dates were wrong; perhaps 1853 was meant, but written badly. The evidence suggests that 1855 was his last trading year (see below, final section, for discussion).

Samuel and the Burston family

The Burston family appear to have been farmers, originating around the Brompton Ralph area of the Quantocks. As far as can be ascertained, Samuel was the second son of Samuel and Joan Burston and was baptised in Luxborough parish on 26 August 1792. His parents had married in Luxborough on 19 November 1788 (when both had been able to sign their own names, so had been literate). Samuel's siblings born in the same parish were John (1789), Mary (1795) and Thomas (1799). The family may have moved to Brompton Regis shortly afterwards, as a James, the son of 'Samuel Burston of Kings Brompton' was buried in Luxborough in 1803.

William Burston, appears to have been Samuel's brother, as a slip of paper in the book has monetary workings out beside his name, and noted beside it that it is his 'brother's money'. He is also mentioned in a letter from George Joyce of Bristol in 1844, where he appeared to be acting on Samuel's behalf. Perhaps William's business took him to Bristol frequently, and he then acted for Samuel - someone he could trust to do the best he could for him. William did buy a couple of times from Samuel in the 1840's, and noted beside his name was 'at Caulton', perhaps Colton Farm, between Williton and Brompton Ralph. By 1851 he seems to have settled in North Petherton, where he was recorded on the census as a pig dealer at Tuckerton. This census gave William as aged 46 and born in North Petherton, but his baptism is not recorded in the registers there. However, there is a William, the son of Samuel and Ann Burston shown in Brompton Regis baptism registers for 5 January 1803. While this would seem to be the most likely record of William's baptism, there is a problem as his mother is given as Ann not Joan. (The apparent place of birth anomaly may be explained by the fact that occasionally

children were taken back to a previously lived-in parish, or the mother's birthplace for baptism.) William is, however, shown in the burial register for North Petherton as dying in 1874, aged 76 (though in fact he would appear to have been younger than this).

The mortgage of the malthouse in 1845 to a David Burston of Brompton Ralph is an odd co-incidence and would seem to indicate some sort of family relationship, as well as being an investment for David. (There were several Burston's mentioned in burial and baptism registers at Brompton Ralph from 1730 onwards.) John and Charles Burston are mentioned as pig dealers in North Petherton in the 1889 Somerset and Bristol directory, and must be relatives, perhaps nephews, of Samuel.

In addition to his malting business, Samuel held lands in the parish, and seems to have run a smallholding with pigs. It may be that this was his main business before his purchase of the malthouse in 1827, when he would have been aged 35. On the 1841 census he is shown as a maltster, with just a 14 year old female servant, Elizabeth Day. (The name Eliza Day appears twice on the back of a slip of paper inserted into the book, and it is tempting to wonder if he was teaching her to write.) In 1851 he appears again with another female servant, C. Day, aged 18, who may be from the same family as his previous servant. (The Days were customers of his.) Samuel does not appear to have married - he is listed as single on both census returns. His burial is recorded in North Petherton on 5 March 1860, aged 67.

Samuel's spelling throughout the book is varied. He tended to spell how he spoke, so it is possible to 'hear' his voice in his Somerset dialect. Sometimes the same family name is rendered in different ways, e.g. Brayant/Bryant (in the same way that locals call Brean Down 'Bre-an' rather than 'Breen', and 'Ste-art' for Steart rather than 'Steert'), Caviell/Cavil, Colls/Cools/ Cols/Coles, Hael/Heal (possibly also a rendition of 'Hill' in dialect), Janes/Jeanes, Hoseyear for Hosier. He mentions 'bens' for beans, (e.g. 19 June 1837 and 29 September 1837) 'a par of laggins' for a pair of leggings (27 October 1838), 'Plow shars' for plough shares (28 July 1838) 'Bigs of appels' or potatoes instead of bags, 'sweds' for swedes, 'pars' for pears, 'creemens'/ 'screenins' for screenings, 'owen' for owing. 'Broat over' (e.g. 2 August 1842, so a pronunciation of brought over as 'bro-at') and 'Brot over leef' (4 August 1838),

occasionally 'paied' for paid (pay-ed as in 'Bre-an' above, e.g. 27 November 1846), 'Baley' for barley (21 February 1838) 'Hogses of cyder' for hogsheads of cider (27 October 1837), 'Sovering' for sovereign (i.e. £1.1.0., or £1.05, on 24 June 1835), 'And allso Balnsed and is due to me' (1 March 1837), and a receipt of £5 written as '5 lbs' (1 April 1844). Received is frequently spelt 'receved', and sheaves of reed are always referred to as 'sheevs'. Also, although he dealt mainly in bushels, a few of his smaller customers purchased pecks of malt, and these he almost always recorded as 'packs', (a very few are referred to as a 'pick') but never a peck.

As might be expected with a businessman, calculations seem to have not been a problem. Whilst some totals in the book do not add up, it is possible that in some instances there may have been items set against the bill which he has not recorded. (He did note against Phillip Mulford's bill on 25 March 1850 that he owed Mulford £1.1.4. (£1.07) for new boots and the repair of slippers). On 28 February 1835 he records 'Balanced with Mr William Shears and is due to me £28.5.0.' against a bill totalling £40.0.0., so either an unrecorded payment was made by Shears, or Samuel may have owed Shears some money. He may simply have been hurried when he put a figure in the wrong column; for instance, malt cost entered in the wrong column as £15 when it should have been 15s (9 June 1838), and on 5 September 1846, 16s entered as £16. He did total up the figures correctly, so he must have been aware of what he had done. There are occasions where the quantity and rate shown do not match up with the cost he entered. (In these cases I have adjusted to keep the cost the same as he recorded, as this is what he did charge his customer; e.g. 27 June 1834 and 12 August 1834, when he showed a rate of 7s.0d. per bushel of malt, but the cost shown, along with the quantity of malt purchased is clearly at a rate of 6s.6d.) As a businessman, Samuel needed to be sure of charging accurate bills, so, whilst the spelling in his book may not have been perfect, his maths needed to be in order to ensure he got what was owed him, and that he did not upset valuable customers by overcharging.

The extent of the farming side of his business is shown through customers purchases recorded alongside those for malt; pears, cider, bacon sold by lb weight and as a whole side (e.g. October 1838), cloverseed (1844), hay, wheat (1 November 1840, 550.25 bushels); in addition he purchased pigs (five noted 1 July 1843 from John

Webber) which he evidently fattened up and later sold as bacon. Pigs in particular would have fitted in well with his malting business, as he could have part-fed them on the screenings. He may also have owned or rented land at Wembdon near Bridgwater as he sold straw from there in 1841. He evidently had land at Creech St. Michael near Taunton (an adjoining parish), since he mentions selling the ‘grounds’ there to James Savidge in 1839. 1844 seems to have been a good year for clover seed as he sold quite a large quantity of it to various customers. He sold plough shares 28 July 1838), and leggings (27 October 1838), and recorded ‘keeping beast 20 weeks £3’ (23 March 1838) for John Burston, along with a sale of potatoes and cloverseed. No cows or hens are recorded, other than the cow he looked after for John Burston (probably his older brother). He must have had land at Wembdon as he notes a sale ‘Straw at Wemdon’ (27 April 1841); Wembdon was near Bridgwater and is now part of its sprawl. Although there is an extensive list of lands rented from William Gatcombe, Lord Portman, Colonel Tynte, ‘Coombs’ and ‘Mogg’ (over 200 acres in total), there is no date, so the list may refer to that rented by a later owner of the book, perhaps of the 1880’s when the cattle breeding records were made in it. (This may be John and Charles Burston, listed as pig dealers in the 1889 *Somerset and Bristol Directory*.)

The site

North Petherton is a large parish lying to the east of the Quantock Hills in Somerset, and only a few miles from what was then the busy port of Bridgwater. In addition to North Petherton itself, the parish includes the villages of North Newton and Moorland (also known as Northmoor Green), and about 14 hamlets including Huntworth, Woolmersdon, and King’s Cliff where quarrying had taken place, along with scattered odd farms and cottages. In 1831 the population was 3,566, rising to almost 4,000 in 1871. The main employment was agricultural, though there was plenty of opportunity for other businesses in Petherton itself.

The site of the malthouse can be ascertained accurately from the 1841 Tithe Map and Apportionment (see Fig. 1), which shows that it lay to the west of the church, on the opposite side of the brook, in what is now a car parking area between the Community Hall and Hammet St.

(The Church School Rooms, only few yards away, have the remains of a kiln tile built into an end wall. The tile is of hamstone, with large holes inserted as for use with a horsehair cloth.⁵ (Other hamstone kiln tiles seem to be inserted in the back wall of this building, but the holes are not visible.) This two-storey building was already in existence by 1837. However, the tiles may not have come from Samuel’s malthouse, since Thomas Starkey’s malthouse was also in the immediate vicinity).

Samuel’s house in Hammet St. has gone and a modern house now stands on the site, though the space where the entrance opened for access to the malthouse at the rear is still there. The only remains of the malthouse itself is part of the back wall which runs along the back of the present car parking area for the Community Hall, south of the brook.

The site was mentioned as being subject to a residue of a term of 2,000 years which commenced on 11 June 1698, but the malthouse does not necessarily date from then. It was certainly already there by 1816, when it was sold by Richard Horseman to George Coombe, along with the house on Hammet St. it stands behind. George Coombe’s heirs sold it to Samuel Burston in 1827 for £445. This price may have been slightly cheap, as Samuel undertook to pay James Batten a yearly annuity of £5 to which he was entitled by the will of George Coombe. (James was described in the will as George’s servant, and though called a labourer on the assignment, may have been employed in the malting).⁶

In 1845 Samuel evidently needed some cash, and mortgaged the whole property to David Burston, a farmer at Brompton Ralph who may have been a relative. The mortgage raised £350, for which Samuel had to pay £4.10.0. (£4.50) per cent per annum. This he did until 1856, when the premises were assigned to David Burston as it was said that Samuel was unable to redeem it. It does not seem as if Samuel left immediately, since the book does list the odd few sales in 1857 and 1858 (though see below for discussion of these anomalies), but he had left by the end of 1858. David Burston died early in 1859, and his widow, Sarah, put the site up for auction in April of that year. It was described in the local paper as being a dwelling house, cottage, stable and out-house/gig house, with no mention of a malthouse. The purchaser was Thomas Starkey, already a maltster in North Petherton, and whose business was later to

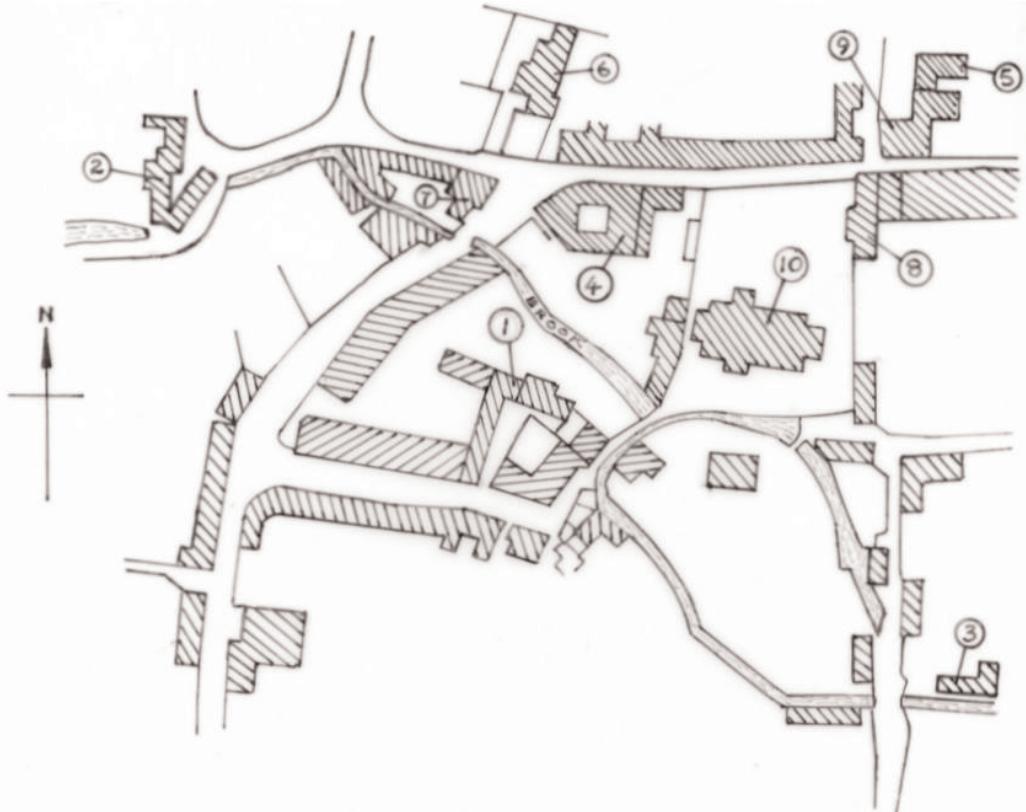


Figure 1. Based on the Tithe map of 1841, this view shows the centre of the village, with the main road forming an arc around the church (10). It curves round from Taunton to the South, and heads towards Bridgwater just a few miles to the right, Samuel Burston's malthouse, (1), is at the rear of his house on Hammet St. Also indicated are the other malthouses and main public houses. The mill and malthouse complex run by John Tucker is at (2). Other malthouses were run by: - Richard Cock (3), John Allen (4, but owned by William Colthurst) and Robert Mulford (5). The brewery of Thomas Starkey is shown at 6. The main public houses are at 7, 8 and 9.

Simplified drawing by Iain Miles.

become part of the Starkey, Knight & Ford empire. The assignment of the property does mention the malthouse, and it is undoubtedly that which drew Thomas Starkey's interest. The site was described as formerly in the occupation of Samuel Burston, and at the date of the auction was occupied by Albert Bellringer, so Samuel had moved elsewhere. Thomas Starkey purchased the site for £250, - quite a bargain for him in view of the original cost to Samuel.

In the 1830s, most maltings steeped between 25 and 35 quarters at a time; though since this appears to have been a 'one-man' house (i.e. the maltster did everything

from receipt of barley through to dispatch of the finished malt), it may have only steeped 10 - 15 quarters at a time. It has been estimated that in the malting season there would be an average of 42 - 45 steepings, so a 15 quarter malting would have an annual capacity of 630-675 quarters, while a 100 quarter malting would produce 4,200 - 4,500 quarters.⁷ Given that he had a maximum sale of 3,716 bushels in 1843, and the next highest was 3,002 in 1841, (whilst some of these may have been held over from the previous year, some may equally well have been sold in the following, so it may more or less balance out), an absolute maximum potential might be thought to be around 4,000 bushels. With 8 bushels



Figure 2. Postcard of Hammett St, North Petherton, postmarked January 1911. The maltsters house is on the left of the large white gates. It appears to be in use as a public house - the Masons Arms. It has subsequently been demolished and a modern house built on the site. The house in the centre of the view advertises Thomas Channing, a beer retailer of the time.

to the quarter, this would give 500 quarters, pointing to a 15 quarter malting or less.

An interesting entry in the book is that of a credit allowed against the bill for Phillip Mulford (25 March 1850), a shoemaker in North Petherton. 'To 30.08.1852 bill from Mulford to Burston for repair and new boots and repair slippers total bill £1.1.4.' (The bill itself was one of the slips of paper inserted into the book.) The slippers were used by maltsters to allow them to walk on the piece on the growing floor. They were usually lace-up canvas boots with rope soles. (An example of these may be seen at the Millgate Museum, Newark.)⁸

Something that was not mentioned was the fuel that Samuel must have used to fire the kilns. Both anthracite and wood were commonly in use at the time (ordinary coal was already suspect). Wood gave a distinct aroma to the malt, which might be attractive, depending on the type of wood used. It may be that Samuel was using wood, perhaps mainly from his land holdings, and sup-

plemented by some from other farmers which he then credited against their accounts with him.

Apart from the large sales which were sent out by ship, Samuel seems to have delivered to at least some of his customers. A letter from William Lock of 1843 tells him where to deliver his barley in Taunton. As Samuel had farming interests, and probably provided all his own barley, he must have had a horse and cart available for such occasions. The very small malt and hop purchases made by some customers may well have been picked up and carried by the purchaser, and it is likely that some of his farming customers would have picked up their supplies while in North Petherton on other business.

The customers

It is difficult to identify all of his customers. Checking local trade directories, the Tithe Apportionment and the census for the periods covered by the book, has allowed

identification of some, though in the odd case there are two or three possibilities. A few Samuel helpfully identified, such as Mary Searle at the Swan Inn, and John Pulsford of Bath - a beer retailer at Morford Street. In addition, some people ran several different types of business at the same time, such as John Searle who described himself as a plumber, painter and baker, but also owned property which he rented out (including a malthouse to Richard Cock), and was shown on the Tithe as occupying some land with Samuel, so was clearly farming as well. (In these cases I have taken the main occupation given nearest the date of the purchases from Samuel.) Those identified varied from local widows and agricultural labourers at the lowest end, to ship's biscuit makers and large breweries supplied by corn factors and dealers at the highest. Discounting the very largest customers, a total of 272 small customers are named in the book (two are unreadable and counted as a single 'unknown'). Of these customers 160 occupations can be definitely identified, and 27 given a 'probable'. 147 can be identified as living within the parish, one of these is through the Tithe Apportionment by virtue of living in a cottage in the parish, but the occupation is unknown.

Taking the definite occupations, 29 of these are directly connected with the trade, such as innkeepers and beerhouse keepers (two others have been included in this as they ran inns along with their other, main, occupation), and a further five have a looser connection in some way i.e. hop merchant, beer retailer (a grocer and a shoemaker also had beer retailer as a secondary occupation) and maltster. In the 1820's about 2/3rd of the families in the parish were estimated as being employed in agriculture and this is reflected here. 72 were farmers, and although only 1 was a smallholder, a further six ran some sort of smallholding along with other trades such as smith or tailor but purchasing barley and cloverseed from Samuel too as well as renting land from others. Only three seem to have been at the lowest level of agricultural work - the agricultural labourer; however, one of these twice purchased ten bushels of malt, as well as potatoes. A possible explanation might be that he was brewing to sell from his own house as a beerhouse keeper, but that this was not recorded in directories or on the census. He also was a close neighbour of Samuel's, and, given the size of Samuel's farming interests, may have been one of his workers. The rest of Samuel's local customers were tradesmen (such as blacksmiths, millers, bakers, saddlers, a coal merchant and ship owner, grocers, plumbers), a

Vicar, a surgeon, a solicitor, a school owner, and those of independent means including local gentry.

By adding in the probable identities, the ratio barely changes. The main customers were still farmers and others connected to the land, followed by tradesmen as a group, innkeepers and those connected with the trade in some way, people with some financial independence such as local gentry, and finally professional men. A caution to all this must be that there are still 73 people (a sizable number) who cannot be identified in any way, so that a full picture cannot be ascertained for certain. However, it seems most likely that they would fit in along similar lines (with the proviso that only four of them made malt purchases large enough to be possible innkeepers). (See Table 1)

The spread of the sales outside the parish was surprisingly quite varied. As might be expected, given a site on the main road from Bridgwater to Taunton, Samuel had some customers in both towns, and in the surrounding parishes, such as Creech St. Michael. Family ties may have influenced the sales to other Bursts; David (Brompton Ralph), Edward (Lydeard St. Lawrence), Thomas (Goathurst), William, and John - the latter possibly his brothers. However, he sold to John Pulsford in Bath, and was attempting to sell to a brewer in Bristol. It may well be that many of the unidentified customers lived some distance from the malthouse.

A factor which may have influenced the type of customers Samuel had was the 1830 Beer Act. In this, any householder assessed for poor rate had the right to open his house as a beershop without needing to obtain a magistrate's licence. He could sell beer and cider, on payment of a two guinea licence from the Excise. Intended to encourage consumers to turn from gin to beer, the Act resulted in an upsurge of beershops (in Liverpool it has been estimated that as many as 50 per day opened for several weeks after the Act was introduced), and craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, bought the right so that their customers could have some refreshment while waiting. The Act may well have affected Samuel's customer base, and it may well be that some of his tradesmen customers were purchasing larger amounts than for their sole consumption.

A few customers stand out. One character was referred to simply as 'Tilsley'. This was unusual, in that Samuel

Main occupation	Positive	Possible	Total
Agricultural Labourer	3	3	6
Baker	3	2	5
Beer Retailer	3	0	3
Beerhouse Keeper	2	0	2
Blacksmith/Smith	5	2	7
Brick & Tile maker	1	1	2
Butcher	3	1	4
Carpenter & Wheelwright	2	0	2
Coal Merchant & Ship Owner	1	0	1
Doctor/Surgeon & Surgeon's wife	1	1	2
Farmer	72	15	87
Gentry/Independent/Private Means	16	1	17
Grocer	2	1	3
Hop Merchant	1	0	1
Innkeeper	25	4	29
Maltster	1	1	2
Miller	2	2	4
Pig Dealer	2	0	2
Plumber/Painter	2	0	2
Post Office	1	0	1
Sadler	1	0	1
School Owner	1	1	2
Ship's Captain	0	1	1
Shoemaker	2	0	2
Shopkeeper	1	0	1
Smallholder	1	0	1
Solicitor/Attorney	1	1	2
Tailor	4	1	5
Vicar	1	0	1
Waterboatman	0	1	1
Unknown	0	73	73
Total	160	112	272
Within the Parish	120	27	147

Table 1. Occupations of small customers.

usually gave a Christian name, and often referred to 'Mr ...' The local directories gave the identity - Horatio Nelson Tilsley was a surgeon in North Petherton, and Samuel must have preferred not to have to spell his Christian name! Tilsley described himself on the 1851 census as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, a member ('Alienate?') of the Apothecaries' Company and a G.P. - he comes over as someone who wanted others to be aware of his standing. His only purchase was a half a pound of hops, and one is left

wondering if this was for medical reasons, rather than brewing, since hops have a soporific effect and could have been used to aid sleeping.

Another interesting customer was Andrew Crosse of Fyne Court at Broomfield on the nearby Quantock Hills. He was a pioneer electrician, who had a laboratory set up at his home and had conducted some rather hairy experiments with lightening, by hanging copper conductors in the trees around his house, feeding by wire

into his lab. He would conduct the experiments with the static on his lab bench. He caused a major stir when he claimed to have made insects when trying to form crystals of silica. Another scientist repeated the experiment and confirmed the same results. Crosse spoke to the Electrical Society in London in 1814, and in the audience was Mary Shelley. It is believed that it was this talk which planted the seed for her to create the ‘Frankenstein’ story. Crosse himself became notorious and was given the nicknames of ‘the Wizard of the Quantocks’ and ‘the Thunder and Lightening Man’. A measure of the misunderstanding of his work can be gauged by the fact that the vicar of Bridgwater performed exorcism over the Quantocks!

Among Samuel’s ‘gentry’ customers were Richard King Mead King (just 9 sales averaging 8 bushels and 5lb of hops), Sir John Slade, bart. of Maunsel House near

North Newton in the parish (a single sale of just 3lb of hops), and Mrs Anna Gatcombe. She was the widow of Joseph Gatcombe who had died in 1820, and she lived in Shovel House, which became known as Gatcombe House. She had extensive lands in the parish and purchased malt, hops and barley from Samuel. Her malt purchases were fairly regular, usually one purchase per month, with an average of 1.75 bushels and 0.75lb of hops each time. However, around November/December time, she purchased 9 bushels, so was either having an extra large brew for Christmas for her family, or to entertain her farm workers.

Lower down the scale was Mistress Susan Coombs, who ran a ‘Ladies Boarding and Day School’ at the nearby port of Bridgwater. She made 50 purchases averaging 2½ bushels at a time, and fairly regularly 3 to 4 times per annum. Her business must have been reason-

	Brown & Bryant Spiller	Chard	Drinkwater	Evans, Evan	Evans, John	Greenslader	Liverpool	Mogg	Woodward	Total	
1834				100	600	300		100		1100	
1835						1100				1100	
1836			300			300		200		800	
1837						600				600	
1838		200				200		200		600	
1839										0	
1840										0	
1841				700		800		200		1700	
1842			500		200					700	
1843						1800		1000		2800	
1844	1505							400		1905	
1845	650				700					1350	
1846	1570									1570	
1847	565						400			965	
1848	300						800			1100	
1849	500									500	
1850						300				300	
1851										0	
1852										0	
1853							150			150	
1854										0	
1855							182.75			182.75	
Totals	5090	200	500	300	900	100	2100	4300	632.75	3300	17422.75

Table 2. Large Malt Sales in bushels.

ably good as she was able to purchase land in North Petherton which she rented out to a local farmer.

The very largest of Samuel's sales went to just a few customers (see Table 2). Nine of these are named, but some were sent simply to 'Liverpool'. As he sent malt to both a Mr Drinkwater and a Mr Woodward in Liverpool, it is not known if it was one of these customers, or a different one - perhaps another corn factor. Looking the customers in turn alphabetically, Brown and Spiller, later referred to as Spiller, Brown & Pain, were at West Bute Docks in Cardiff. They appear in the Slater's Commercial Directory for 1858-9 as corn and flour merchants, and ship's biscuit manufacturers. It may well be that, rather than selling on the malt them-

selves, they were using it in the manufacture of ship's biscuits. The biscuits would be mixed with water to prepare 'gruel' on long sea voyages, and something with a high nutritional value would have made an ideal additive. Some of the payments made to Samuel were from Mr Brown, so he may have dealt directly with one of the owners.

James Bryant is a bit of a mystery. He only makes a single purchase of 200 bushels of malt in 1838, and the entry was mixed in with a list of Samuel's smaller customers. In fact, he did sell to a James Bryant who seems to have been a farmer or smallholder since he purchased screenings and a half bushel of barley as well. However, the latter made 12 purchases between 1835 and 1839,

	Highest rate for malt	Lowest rate for malt	Highest rate for hops	Lowest rate for hops
1834	7s.0d.	6s.6d.	+3s.0d.	2s.6d.
1835	7s.0d.	6s.6d.	2s.6d.	2s.6d.
1836	8s.6d.	6s.6d.	2s.6d.	2s.6d.
1837	8s.6d.	7s.0d.	2s.6d.	2s.4d.
1838	7s.9d.	*7s.0d.	2s.6d.	2s.4d.
1839	10s.0d.	7s.6d.	2s.6d.	2s.0d.
1840	9s.6d.	7s.6d.	5s.0d.	2s.0d.
1841	9s.0d.	7s.0d.	5s.0d.	3s.0d.
1842	7s.6d.	6s.6d.	3s.0d.	2s.4d.
1843	7s.6d.	6s.6d.	2s.8d.	2s.0d.
1844	8s.6d.	7s.0d.	2s.8d.	2s.0d.
1845	8s.6d.	7s.6d.	3s.8d.	2s.8d.
1846	9s.0d.	7s.6d.	3s.0d.	1s.6d.
1847	10s.0d.	8s.0d.	3s.0d.	1s.6d.
1848	8s.7d.	6s.6d.	2s.0d.	1s.6d.
1849	8s.0d.	7s.0d.	2s.0d.	1s.6d.
1850	7s.0d.	6s.6d.	2s.0d.	2s.0d.
1851	7s.0d.	6s.0d.	2s.0d.	2s.0d.
1852	8s.6d.	6s.6d.	2s.6d.	2s.0d.
1853	8s.6d.	7s.6d.	2s.6d.	2s.0d.
1854	10s.6d.	9s.6d.	3s.0d.	3s.0d.

Table 3. Highest and lowest rates for malt and hops charged to smaller customers.

+ The highest rate was a single entry of 5s 0d against Susannah Crowells, but it is likely that 3s 0d was meant as no other is above 3s 0d.

* The lowest rate was 5s 10d and 6s 10d charged once each only to publican brewer Charles Leaker, perhaps a discount for quantity. The figure quoted above is the more normal charge.

and these averaged only 2 bushels (with an average 1lb of hops) at a time. The 200 bushel purchase is correctly priced at £68.6.8., which would have been an enormous amount for a small farmer to afford, or use. It would seem that this was a different person to the one making the small purchases, but nothing is certain, since another identity has not been forthcoming. Nothing is known of James Chard, again, he may have been a corn factor.

Mr Drinkwater of Liverpool may be John Drinkwater, who lived from 1784 to 1869. He was a member of a family of merchants in Liverpool at the time of Samuel's sales (one of his brothers, George, was knighted in 1830). Even Evans (Evens in the book), must surely have been someone in Wales, but it is difficult to identify, since it was such a common name there. John Evans (again spelt as Evens) was helpfully identified as at Cardiff, but again is difficult to identify. It may be that Even was not in Cardiff, and so Samuel added Cardiff to John's entry to make it clear it was not the same person. Equally, since they are at different dates (John's purchase was in 1834 and Even's were in 1841 and 1842), it may be that they are members of the same family.

Mr Greenslade (sometimes rendered as 'Grinslade') is annotated in the book as a corn factor in Bristol. The 1830 *Pigot Directory* for the area shows Greenslade, Bartlett & James as corn and hop factors at 6 Bridge Parade in Bristol, and Cook James & Co. as corn factors at the Quay, Bristol. In the same directory there is a Wm. James & Co., brewers, of Jacob St., St. Philip. Some entries do note James & Co. beside Greenslade's name, so it may be that Samuel knew he was supplying to James & Co. It is possible that it was just the corn factors being referred to and that Samuel had simply missed out the name Bartlett or Cook, or that they had left the company by the time Samuel was dealing with them; however, since after the final sales in 1846 Samuel notes that he received the final two payments from Mr Greenslade and James & Co., it would appear that he was referring to two separate entities. The most likely explanation is that he started by sending malt to corn factor Mr Greenslade, and later knew that his malt was going to the brewery at St. Philip.

There are three sales to a Mr Mogg between 1850 and 1855. This would seem to be most likely a maltster in Bridgwater, by the name of Cary Bailey Mogg, who is known to have been malting at the Quay, between 1830

and 1840. Since these purchases were made afterwards, and the last is an odd precise amount (182 $\frac{3}{4}$ bushels) it may be that Mogg was running his business down and needed to source some extra quantities to satisfy a demand. However, if Samuel was running his own business down, the last, odd, amount of 182 $\frac{3}{4}$ bushels may represent the last of Samuel's production being dispensed. (See Table 4 and discussion of the reasons for the decline in trade below.) He had sold Mr Mogg 158 bushels of wheat in 1844 for £59.5.0. (£59.25), and Mogg was mentioned as a landowner on the undated list of lands mentioned above.

Finally, Mr Woodward (later R. & T. Woodward) of Liverpool, may be H. Woodward, who owned the Seel Distillery in the city, so some malt may have been going for spirits rather than beer. (Distilling malt was usually made from inferior, steely barley, and it was preferred to have it with the shoot protruding. If the barley was grown on heavier, wetter soil, sprinkling became vital to ensure full germination.) However, it may also refer to Thomas Woodward who was a corn merchant of Sea View Road, Bootle, in 1827.

What has been of great interest is the fact that a maltster in what was essentially a large village was sending such quantities of malt so far. Those being sent to Liverpool total almost 8,000 bushels, a sizable portion of his production, even though it is spread between 1834 and 1848. Similarly, over 6,000 bushels was sent to Cardiff/Wales, mainly in the period 1841-9. 2,100 were sent to Bristol between 1834 and 1845. How had he won this market? The answer may lie in the use of corn factors. Peter Mathias notes the use of corn factors, who had become important in the malt trade at the beginning of the 19th century. They acted as intermediaries between maltster and brewer, and took a commission for the sale of the malt. Their control over the trade rose as the malt duty rose, since the duty had to be paid in advance, before the sale of the malt could take place, a problem for smaller maltsters without a strong financial base. Corn factors began to offer to pay the duty up front providing the maltster sold to him, so gaining a credit hold over the maltster. Liverpool was hungry for malt. In 1832 total production there was just 38,500 bushels of malt, whilst the brewers were using 781,900. (Similarly Manchester in the same year only produced 9,300 bushels, yet its brewers were using 1,160,400.) Much of Liverpool's shortfall was met by shipping in

	Large malt sales in bushels	Small malt sales in bushels	Total in bushels	Number of large sales	Number of small sales	Total	Hop sales in lbs	Number of hop sales
1833		3.00	3.00	0	1	1	2.000	1
1834	1100.00	750.50	1850.50	6	105	111	125.750	67
1835	1100.00	1008.75	2108.75	5	136	141	142.125	84
1836	800.00	1395.50	2195.50	4	183	187	274.500	122
1837	600.00	1076.25	1676.25	2	155	157	219.250	115
1838	600.00	1536.75	2136.75	3	186	189	266.000	126
1839		2286.75	2286.75	0	279	279	405.000	189
1840		1278.87	1278.87	0	209	209	273.000	147
1841	1700.00	1302.75	3002.75	5	147	152	199.750	91
1842	700.00	1310.25	2010.25	3	176	179	294.500	124
1843	2800.00	916.25	3716.25	5	131	136	283.250	101
1844	1905.00	818.75	2723.75	11	148	159	246.750	104
1845	1350.00	728.75	2078.75	5	138	143	306.500	113
1846	1570.00	722.00	2292.00	10	147	157	275.000	108
1847	965.00	685044	1650.44	6	111	117	177.750	93
1848	1100.00	278.00	1378.00	3	57	60	101.750	43
1849	500.00	325.00	825.00	2	67	69	95.000	45
1850	300.00	249075	549.75	1	49	50	51.500	24
1851		215.50	215.50	0	50	50	88.000	32
1852		65.00	65.00	0	19	19	26.750	11
1853	150.00	74.00	224.00	1	23	24	21.250	11
1854		20.50	20.50	0	5	5	2.000	1
1855	182.75	0.00	182.75	1	0	1	0.000	0
1856		0.00	0.00	0	0	0	0.000	0
1857		0.00	0.00	0	0	0	0.000	0
1858		0.50	0.50	0	1	1	0.500	1
Total	17422.75	17048.81	34471.56	73	2523	2596	3877.885	1753

Table 4. Sales of malt and hops per year, numbers and quantities.

supplies, a large proportion of which came from East Anglia (Yarmouth port was claimed to be the biggest exporter of grain in the world in 1834), so a sea voyage from Bridgwater to Liverpool does not seem so out of the way.⁹ By the mid 1840's the railway system had developed to such an extent that Liverpool could more easily get economic and reliable supplies by rail. The

shipping trade continued, but was badly affected. Cardiff, meanwhile, was not so easy to reach by rail until the Severn Tunnel was built. It may be no coincidence that, after a peak of 2,800 bushels in 1843, Samuel's last sales to Liverpool took place in 1848 and to Cardiff in 1849. His final two last large sales both went to the nearby town of Bridgwater.

The sales

For the purposes of this article, only the items relating to the business of the maltster will be considered, that is, sales and purchases of malt, hops, and screenings. Sales of barley have been noted, but not included in costings. Although bacon was being sold, (so clearly pigs were being reared on some other part of his estate, as his purchase of pigs suggests), this was a small sideline of the farming side of his business. The sales can be split into two main categories, small, and large (with the small being further sub-divided into small and medium), and these will be considered in turn.

The small sales were mainly to local customers, drawn mainly from the parish and neighbouring villages. The smallest sales were in 1847, when he sold just a quarter of a peck of malt to Thomas Mullins on 29 March 1847 (who, over the period of the book, made 148 purchases of malt with an average purchase of 3½ bushels), and a half a peck to Leonard Trump on 8 July 1847 (only three purchases averaging 1¾ bushels). Since Trump purchased hops as well (½lb), he must have been brewing a small amount. In the vast majority of cases the smaller customers purchased hops from Samuel as well as malt, most frequently in the ratio of 1 bushel of malt to 1lb, or slightly less, of hops. Some of these customers were very regular. Ann Gatcombe purchased once per month, her purchases recorded as being pecks of malt. As noted above, her usual purchase was just 5 pecks (1¼ bushels) of malt, along with ¾lb of hops, but on two occasions she purchased much larger quantities, 9 bushels of malt with 6½ /7lbs of hops. As these purchases were made in November 1836, and December the next year, it would seem that she was preparing for a jolly Christmas and New Year, either for herself or her farming workers! Similarly, John Gatcombe usually purchased between 2½ / 3 bushels of malt at a time, but between September and the end of December 1839 he purchased 39 bushels of malt, mainly in the ratio of 6 bushels of malt to 3lb of hops. There must have been a special reason for this; perhaps, as he was a farmer, he was brewing for a Harvest Supper for his employees, and a Christmas celebration for himself and his family.

The medium size sales (over 10 bushels of malt at a time) seem to fall into two categories; those to the wealthier of his farming customers, who still purchased malt and hops from him, and innkeepers. The majority

of the latter did not purchase their hops from him, so must have had other sources for the quantities they would have needed. Some examples follow. James Brice at the Rose and Crown in Bridgwater twice purchased 100 bushels of malt from him, and averaged over 49 bushels at a time (a total of 23 purchases). James Dare of the Bull and Butcher in the same town purchased 20 bushels every time, but only bought spasmodically so must have been sourcing his usual purchases elsewhere. William Davey of the Ring of Bells in North Petherton, purchased quite frequently from Samuel, as might be expected. He tended to purchase about once a month, reaching a peak in 1842 when he made one purchase of 30 bushels, and bought 117 bushels in total over the year. Over the 13 years period recorded he made 120 purchases of malt, but only purchased small amounts of hops 5 times, so was certainly getting them from elsewhere. Charlotte Davey made a single purchase of malt in 1846, worth £2. 2. 6. (£2.25) but settled a bill of over £10 in the following year, so may be William's widow settling his debt. Robert Heal (spelt as Hael by Samuel) of the New Inn in Petherton, only purchased malt in 1836. He made six purchases amounting to 77 bushels in total; again, no hops were bought. Charles Leaker of the Golden Ball in the High Street, Bridgwater, who was also a maltster, made eight purchases averaging 50 bushels a time. His largest purchase was 100 bushels in 1847, and his record is peculiar in that he only made purchases in 1838 and 1847. He is not recorded as a maltster until 1839, which may explain the gap after 1838. Also, a James Leaker is noted by 1852 as the maltster, so it may be Charles's 1847 purchases are related to passing on the malting side of his business, perhaps to a son. Hannah Oaten of the Three Mariners in the High Street, Taunton, made 62 purchases between 1843 and 1849, averaging 9 bushels at a time. Of these, 24 were between 10 and 18 bushels. While she did not purchase hops from Samuel, she did buy some potatoes and hay. William Shears of the Three Tuns at the Cattle Market in Bridgwater made 49 purchases between 1834 and 1842, mostly of 30 bushels at a time. He purchased about every two months or so, and his largest were six purchases of 50 bushels each in 1841.

Examples of his larger farming customers were William Jenkins (spelt as Jeankins), John Wills and Samuel Brewer. Jenkins, who lived outside the parish, purchased between 1834 and 1845, averaging 6¾ lbs at a

	Large Malt Sales *	Small Malt Sales	Total Malt Sales	Hops	Screenings /Dust	Total Business Sales	Barley	Total
1833		1.05	1.05	0.30	0.00	1.35	0.00	1.35
1834	368.75	245.79	614.54	16.85	0.00	631.39	0.81	632.20
1835	357.50	330.21	687.71	17.78	0.00	705.49	9.14	714.63
1836	260.00	503.62	763.62	34.30	0.12	798.04	2.31	800.35
1837	195.00	410.37	605.37	27.22	0.32	632.91	0.51	633.42
1838	205.00	547.34	752034	32.24	0.11	784.69	5.19	789.88
1839		955.24	955.24	49.39	0.07	1004.70	3.68	1008.38
1840		567.36	567.36	38.76	0.02	606.14	9.11	615.25
1841	623.33	466.98	1090.31	37.73	1.39	1129.43	0.90	1130.33
1842	240.00	458.31	698.31	39.53	0.07	737.91	7.74	745.65
1843	980.00	305.96	1285.96	35.31	0.00	1321.27	3.66	1324.93
1844	738.19	308.09	1046.28	32.43	0.78	1079.49	39.49	1118.98
1845	472.50	297.05	769.55	41.50	0.04	811.09	2.01	813.10
1846	514.50	287.29	801.79	29.49	0.25	831.53	7.65	839.18
1847	405.92	314.79	720.71	18.37	0.39	739.47	4.10	743.57
1848	355.40	106.76	462.16	9.63	0.20	471.99	4.71	476.70
1849	163.75	119.96	283.71	8.16	0.00	291.87	0.19	292.06
1850	90.00	84.09	174.09	8.15	0.04	182.28	0.00	182.28
1851		73.16	73.16	17.35	0.05	90.56	0.35	90.91
1852		24.11	24.11	3.27	3.27	30.65	0.00	30.65
1853	60.00	29.06	89.06	5.27	0.00	94.33	0.00	94.33
1854		10.20	10.20	0.30	0.00	10.50	1.45	11.95
1855	73.10	0.00	73.10	0.00	0.00	73.10	0.00	73.10
1856		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1857		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
1858		0.20	0.20	0.06	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.26
Total	6102.94	6446.99	12549.93	503.39	7.12	13060.44	103.00	13163.44

Table 5. Values of sales (in £ decimal).

* Missing values based on those recorded at similar dates for large malt sales.

time. His largest purchases were 20 bushels a time in October 1839 and May 1840, but he made seven other purchases of 10 or more bushels. Out of 56 purchases, only five times were hops bought, so he too was clearly sourcing elsewhere. In contrast, John Wills who lived and farmed inside the parish, made 27 purchases between 1836 and 1850, averaging just three bushels at a time. He usually bought hops as well (only one with-

out hops), and he purchased barley from Samuel. The Tithe shows that he was renting a ciderhouse and orchards, so he was making cider as well as beer, which may explain the relatively low number of purchases of malt. (Cider is an aspect which must be remembered - it was a feature of this area of Somerset, spreading roughly across the Somerset Levels to Street. Beer was not the only beverage available. A study of the local Tithe

Apportionments shows many orchards and ciderhouses; Samuel himself made and sold cider as part of his farming business.) A further contrast was Samuel Brewer who farmed 118 acres in the parish at Willstock. In 1844 he purchased neither malt nor hops, but 42 bushels of barley, evidently as seed.

The large sales rated over 100 bushels of malt at a time. These were always to customers some distance away, and, as noted earlier, surprisingly covered an area from Bristol and Cardiff to Liverpool. These larger quantities were shipped, most likely from the nearby port at Bridgwater, and in several instances Samuel noted the name of the ship (see below). All of these entries show the amounts sent, some of them show the rate and cost, so it is possible to make a stab at those which are missing either or both of these elements. He seems to have charged his other customers a slightly higher rate than his large customers, a 'discount' for taking such a large amount, and also an incentive to purchase his malt over other maltsters. However, it is not clear how much his factor took, so it may be that he provided the quantities at this rate and cost, which the factor then sold on with an additional fee. He notes 'Received of Mr Brown' against some receipts; this must be one of the owners of Brown and Spiller (mentioned in his sales, and later Spiller and Brown/Spiller, Brown and Pain) who were corn and flour merchants and ship's biscuit manufacturers in Cardiff, so he may have dealt directly with this customer. Whilst Bristol and Cardiff were within easy reach by ship, it would seem most likely that he used a corn factor for his sales to Liverpool. (See above)

Ships

The name of the ship used is noted against some of the large sales. These are noted below with the details mentioned in the book in brackets, followed by other information ascertained.

Somerset (1834 -6 to Liverpool)

?*Swallow* (1835-6) Possibly Swallow, a sloop wrecked at Aversoch in 1863

?*Sorpters* (1836) Difficult to read the name, no known ship similar.

British Queen (1836)

?*Zevnffid of Pwelli* (1838) Perhaps the Cewn Amlwch, 80 tons, built in 1838 at Nefyn, owned by Jones & Co.

Halswell (1841) Named after a grand house at Goathurst near Bridgwater, and one of the properties of the wealthy Tynte family. The ship was a schooner, launched at Bridgwater in May 1841.¹⁰

Jane Eliza of Portmadoc (1841 to Liverpool) The Jane & Eliza, schooner rig, was built in 1845 at Pwelheli, and owned by Robert Evans, Captain D Evans was master of her at one stage. Perhaps this was an earlier ship owned by the same person?

Active (1845 to Bristol)

Comet (1845 to Bristol)

Rapid (1848 to Liverpool) Possibly a schooner, 61 tons, built 1832, at Pwelheli. (The Rapid was also used for a Temperance excursion organised by Ralph Neville Grenville of Butleigh Court in 1855, when she left the new quay at Highbridge with a party of 50, for what sounded like a rather choppy voyage!)

The products sold

There is no mention of Samuel purchasing barley, although there is a letter advising costings for hops. Since he had farming land, it would seem that he was producing most, if not all, of his barley needs. He was obviously selling some barley to farmers, so the implication would be that this was an excess he could not cope with in particular years, or that he was doing some customers a favour when it was hard to come by.

He appears to have been making different grades of malt, since sometimes he records different charges to the same customer on same day. An example of this is William Jenkins on 26 November 1836, 6 bushels at 8s a bushel, and 12 at 7s.6d, as well as 6lb of hops. (Jenkins didn't often purchase his hops from Samuel, obviously having another source.)

Samuel was one of four maltsters in North Petherton listed in the 1830 *Pigot & Co. Directory*. The others were Thomas Starkey, Richard Cook (probably Cock) and George Danger. In 1840 only three maltsters are listed, Samuel, Richard Cock and Anthony Starkey. Samuel, Thomas Starkey, and William Colthurst were listed in 1842 (*Pigot*). He does seem to have occasionally supplied other maltsters, such as the large quantities sent to Cary Mogg in Bridgwater between 1850 and 1855. One of his customers, Robert Mulford, described in 1840 as a grocer, builder, chandler and corn factor,

seems to have changed his occupation by becoming a maltster by an 1852 Directory (*Slater's*). (In 1851 Robert had a retraction printed in a local paper from local carpenter John Chick who had been spreading rumours that he was bankrupt or insolvent as a maltster.) He had only purchased small amounts from Samuel between 1835 and 1846, in just four sales, so it would appear that he became a maltster between 1846 and 1851.

Regarding hops, two items inserted into the book shed some light. The first letter was from Robert Marke of Blagdon (near Taunton), and dated 26 October 1846. Robert was a farmer at Blagdon, who seems to have been acting as a hop merchant. He died in 1852, aged 65, and was buried at Pitminster. In the letter he offered Samuel 'Best Farnhams No. 8' and 'fine East Kents No 11', and suggested that the East Kents will be suitable for strong beer. He quoted for a 'packet' (pocket) of Farnhams, weighing just over 2 cwt, at £7.10.0. (£7.50) per cwt, and another of East Kents weighing 1cwt 1quarter and 20lbs at £6 per cwt, the total being £28. 18. 0. (£28.90). The Farnhams commanded a higher price. Marke also noted that he had bought 52 pockets in total, and that nearly all of these had been sold, so he clearly had a good market for them (unless this was salesman's 'puff' to push a sale!). The quote works out at roughly 1s.4d. (£0.06) for a lb of the Farnhams, and 1s.1d. (£0.05) per lb for the East Kents. At this date Samuel was selling hops to his customers at 1s.6d. (7½p), or 2s.0d. (10p) per lb. (An exception was a sale for 3s.0d. per lb to Charles Shaddock on 8 May 1847.) So this represents a reasonably good mark-up for the service he was providing for his smaller customers.

A further slip of paper in the book is a note of more hops purchased from Robert Marke in October 1848. Samuel bought a pocket of over 2 cwt of 'Batts Best Farnhams No 43' and over a further cwt of 'Fine Kents' (No 1), at a total cost of £21.1.6. (£21.075). The Farnhams are at a rate of £7. 10. 0. (£7.50) per cwt, and the Kents at £4.10.0. (£4.50). This translates into a rate of roughly 1s.4d. (£0.06) per lb for the Farnhams, and 9½d (£0.04) for the Kents. In the year following this (and so the one most likely to include the new hops), Samuel was charging a maximum of 2s.0d. (£0.10), some at 1s.8d. (£0.085), and the lowest at 1s.6d. (£0.075). In both 1850 and 1851 he was charging a single rate of 2s.0d. (£0.10). The publican-brewers clearly could get their supplies cheaper elsewhere, and perhaps some of

them came direct to Robert Marke for their hops, or to some other hop merchant.

The only sale Samuel made which specified Farnhams was to John Ridge on 28 September 1839, when he charged 2s.6d. per lb (12½d), which seems to have been his usual charge at the time. Ridge was a publican brewer in North Petherton, keeping the George Inn - a substantial business offering accommodation near the church. This purchase of 22lbs was his only recorded purchase of hops from Samuel - the other 65 purchases were only for malt. However, (5 May 1846) on selling to him 14 bushels of malt, Samuel notes in the side 'Received 27 lbs of hops' with no charge against it. It may be that Samuel was offering a Ridge a free sample to try, or that it was a 'return' - though, since he had only 22lbs purchased so long ago, unless Samuel was not recording sales of some hops, this would seem unlikely. Equally, it seems unlikely that Samuel was buying in some hops from Ridge, he sold 275lbs (over 2 cwt) in total in 1846.

Samuel seems to have had a good relationship with some of his fellow maltsters. Early in the book he records some borrowing and lending between himself and Richard Cock, another maltster in North Petherton. On 24 April 1834 he records that he received 77lbs of hops at a cost of £6.4.4. (so a rate of 1s.7d. (8p) per lb. This is a discount on what Samuel was charging his small customers (2s.6d. and 3s.0d.) and may represent the cost price to Richard being passed on. Perhaps Richard had over-ordered and needed to get rid of old stock and that Samuel's business had a higher turnover, so that he could pass it on quickly? Maybe Richard needed the money quickly? Perhaps Samuel had previously supplied Richard with a larger quantity and this was a 'return' to be credited? On both 4 August and 7 October he records small lending of hops to Richard Cock (5lbs of ale hops and 6lbs of Farnhams respectively), with no cost against them. This seems odd, since they are such small amounts, and were clearly repaid, as no cost is set against them.

On 20 October 1846, Samuel records a sale of 42½lbs of hops to Thomas Starkey, with no cost or rate given. Thomas was a brewer and maltster in the town and undoubtedly all of his malt production went into his brewing business. It would seem that this was some sort of loan to help him out, perhaps of a 'specialist' hop which he had been talking to Thomas about, and which Thomas wanted to try out in a brew.

Reason for closing

One reason for Samuel being unable to redeem his mortgage may have been poor payment on the part of a few of his customers. ‘Not paid’ is noted against Isaac Day for 20 July 1836, and there are no further purchases for Isaac recorded. Whilst this was a small amount, and clearly Samuel refused to let him have any more credit, it may show a problem he had. There are a number of entries not crossed out throughout the book, so the bills were possibly not paid. Samuel must have been well enough off to ride out a few poor payers; also he must have been seen as someone with spare cash, since he records some lendings in the first few pages. 1834 £2 to Mrs Barnard, 1835 12s (60p) to Henry Townsing (he appears to have rented land from both Henry and Mrs Townsing), and six small sums of 2s (10p) per time to Betty Sanders when settling a bill with her. Only the first of the latter and the sum lent to Henry Townsing have been crossed out as paid. However, it is clear that he himself borrowed. Quite apart from the mortgage to David Burston of his malthouse in 1845, the slip of paper noting ‘Brothers money’ records a loan of £20 from William Burston on 16 December 1843 and a further £118 from him on what appears to be 5 April 1845, along with calculations of interest for one and three years. Of course, these may not have been taken out, but simply a calculation to see what sort of payment he would have to make in interest if such a loan were to be made, but it is clear that he was at least thinking about it. 1845 was the year following his best recorded sales, and he still sold over 2,000 bushels of malt in that year, so there is a question mark over why he needed cash. Most likely was that he needed to pay excise tax, but it could equally be that he wished to purchase further land to add to his farming interests. He would have been seen as a good investment by potential lenders after such successful years. However, the decline in his sales in the early 1850’s made it difficult for him to repay the mortgage to David Burston.

Another factor may have been the rise in the malt excise. At the start of the sales book the excise was 2s. 7d. per bushel (13p), and it rose to 2s. 8½d. (13.5p) in 1840. In 1855 it rose sharply to 4s. 0d. (20p), which must have had a huge impact on maltster’s sales, initially, at least (and co-inciding with the last date for his sales - see below). By 1857 it fell back to 2s. 8½d. (13.5p).¹¹ Samuel’s charging rate for malt had reached a

peak of 10s. 0d. (50p) per bushel at the end of 1839, dropped as low as 6s. 6d. (32.5p) in 1843, and slowly rose to reach 10s. 0d. again in early 1847. It then dropped slightly to reach a low of 6s. 0d. (30p) in 1851, then rose up again to reach his highest ever price of 10s. 6d. (52.5p) in mid 1854. (Since we are not sure which qualities of malt these relate to, it should be assumed that the highest is for the premium, and lowest for the cheaper - however, taking this into account, the price fluctuation is still apparent. In 1854 the lowest price was 9s 6d, compared to the high of 10s. 6d., while in 1843 the highest was 7s. 6d. compared to the low of 6s. 6d.)

The 1835 Parliamentary Inquiry seems to indicate that there was widespread evasion of the tax, with as much as 20% quoted by an Irish maltster. Two-fifths of malt-houses were situated in very rural areas, making it hard for the excise officers to travel to carry out the checks. The West Country was among those areas suspected of evasion.¹² Since there is no reference to the tax in the book, it is not possible to know if Samuel was evading the tax or not, but, given that the malthouse was sited so close to several others and just a short ride from the busy town of Bridgwater where there were many others, it would seem most likely that he could not avoid it. Also, he had to pay the excise ‘up-front’ before he sold his malt, so he would have had times when cash-flow might have been a problem.

Another reason may have been Samuel’s age. He was born in 1792, so was 35 when he first bought the malthouse. He died in 1860, his burial record showing him as aged 67. It may be that, given his other farming interests, he felt that it was time to withdraw from the malting business. What is surprising, though, is that he did not redeem the mortgage. Over the years he had made quite substantial sums from it. The malthouse was a valuable asset; even if he did not want to continue working it himself, he could have put in a paid employee to run it for him. The answer may lie in the value of it when sold by Mrs Sarah Burston in 1859, which was a lot less than he had paid for it. Perhaps it needed extensive repairs and was somewhat run down.

One thing that is noticeable from a study of the size and frequency of the sales of malt is that a decline seems to have set in around 1850. If the large sales are discounted, this shows up even earlier. Assuming that there were no large sales unrecorded in 1839 and 1840, he survived

these two years by an increase in small sales in 1839. However, these began dropping in 1843, and declined to be negligible after 1851. Perhaps he began to rely too heavily on his large sales, and when these declined, had lost his bedrock of local sales. Perhaps the coming of the railway gradually affected his sales (the Bristol and Exeter Railway came to Bridgwater in 1840, and to Taunton in 1841). However, the most likely explanation would seem to be that he stopped producing malt in serious quantities after 1850. He must have produced a little each year afterwards, when there was sufficient barley and demand, since he was billed for repairs to a pair of malting slippers by Philip Mulford. (The exact date of this is not sure, since the bill starts at 25 March 1850, and ends at 30 August 1852. The slippers are added to the bill below a total at this date, so may have been a later addition, or simply forgotten when the bill was first totalled. Samuel credited it in the book against Mulford's bill, but dates the entry as 25 March 1850 - which is the start date of the bill, and then correctly states the bill as 30 August 1852.) Hops could be stored for some time before selling, but, even allowing for a couple of years, again the end year looks like 1853 or just after. Farthing's two small purchases of malt and hops in 1858 seem very much at odds with the rest of the evidence, and I wonder if Samuel meant the date to be 1853 or 1855, rather than 1858. It is unlikely that he would have kept malt and hops unsold for three or more years, the deterioration in quality would have been noticeable. He would have been more likely to have passed it on before this happened, and this may explain the odd amount sold to Cary Mogg in 1855 (182 $\frac{3}{4}$ bushels).

Perhaps there is another, more subtle reason that can be inferred for the decline in sales. The letter of 28 September 1844 from George Joyce, a brewer in Bristol, suggests that the quality of the malt may not have been of the highest. ('Very Ordinary and Very much Stained. Not Fit for Brewing Strong Beer ... I Shall Think Nothing of Such a Sample.') Whilst Samuel clearly sold plenty of malt for the majority of the time, maybe the quality declined, and, given the ease with which customers could get other, better supplies, his trade fell accordingly.

Whilst it is not possible to state a single reason for the closure of the business, it would seem likely that several things conspired together. With a decline in business,

perhaps hit by the rise in malt excise which had to be paid before the sales were made - causing a cash-flow crisis, an aging maltster - perhaps beginning to be hit by infirmity, an over-reliance on large customers, a question mark over the quality of his produce - meaning that he was less likely to make those large sales and having already lost his original small customer base, hit by the coming of the railways and customers having access to better and more reliable sources, and a malthouse which may have been run-down and needed repairs, there were compelling reasons for Samuel to leave the trade. Interestingly, many of these problems are still relevant in business today.

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