

## WARMINSTER MALTINGS, POUND STREET, WARMINSTER

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### Introduction

Robin Appel, grain merchant and co-owner of Maris Otter barley, purchased Warminster Maltings in 2001. In 2010, he published a book telling the story of the survival of the maltings despite the vagaries of the beer market and the decision in 1994, by the then owner, Guinness, to close the plant. The book, entitled *The Malt-Stars of Warminster: The Remarkable Survival of Britain's Oldest Working Maltings*, has one important omission, a construction date for the maltings. The following article attempts to answer this question.

### How Old?

The maltings was listed Grade 2\* in 1952 and in summary stated

- Reputed to be 18<sup>th</sup> C
- Altered and rebuilt in 1879 for the Morgan family
- Second door from the left is late 19<sup>th</sup> C
- There is a door lintel painted in mid 19<sup>th</sup> C lettering 'William Frank Morgan Licensed Maltster'.

William Frank Morgan was the son of William Morgan who founded the business and who died in 1875. A Blue Plaque, erected by the Warminster Civic Trust & Town Council, reiterates the 18<sup>th</sup> C origins and date of rebuilding

The maltings is of the 'Ware' design. There are four steps, each serving one set of upper and lower floors, which in turn would have fed their own kiln, although there is now only one operational kiln in use. The floors are arranged in pairs in the northern and southern build-

ings. Barley storage is to the rear and the malt storage would originally have been confined to the buildings fronting the road.

From the outside, it is obvious that construction of the frontage took place in two phases, with double quoins at the junction between the sections.

Internally, the roofs to the northern pair of malting floors are of king post construction whilst those for southern pair are queen post. The northern and southern malting floors are also of different construction; cast iron columns support a wooden floor in the northern block whilst the upper floors of the southern block are on concrete arches.

There is a courtyard between the two pairs of malting floors, and the construction of the walls differs on the two sides. The wall of the northern building is of stone with regular courses whereas that of the southern building is more random, is of brick and stone, and with much of the material apparently reused from elsewhere. Although now enclosed, the open space between the northern and southern buildings previously extended to the road frontage. This is evidenced by the existence of windows that now overlook the enclosed area, and the design of the flanking walls that match the external wall at the front of the building.

By 1886 the building is on its current footprint as shown on the Ordnance Survey map [Fig. 1].

In addition to that prepared for the Grade 2\* listing, various surveys of the buildings had been carried out; one being found in the company's own files.<sup>1</sup> Although the report had a comprehensive description of the buildings,



Figure 1. 1886 OS Map. Courtesy of Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre.

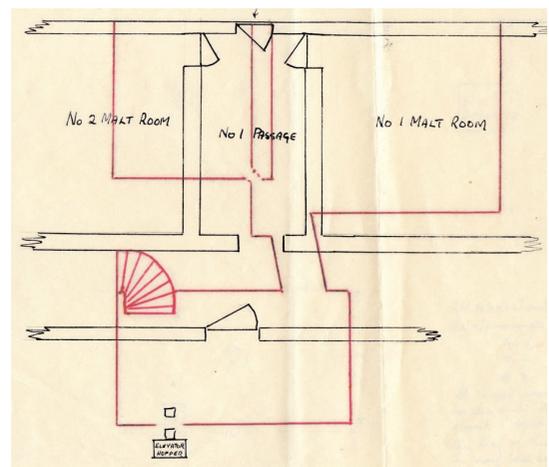
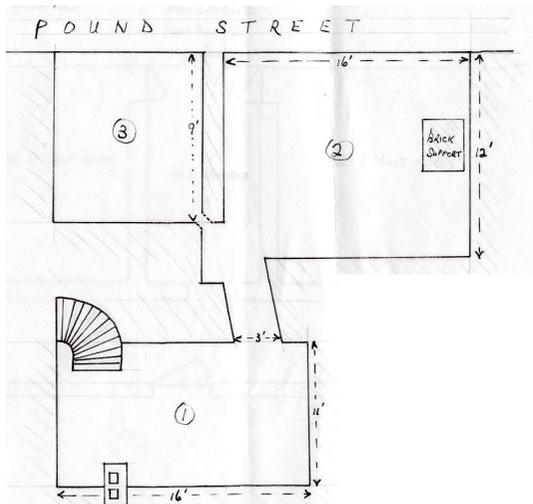
it did not provide any definitive evidence for date of construction and stated that, ‘the maltings could not have been present in 1853, that it was in existence by 1879 and part could have been built as early as 1860’. There were no citations or references in the report as it was written for the company’s information rather than as an academic article. The dates were derived from a document ‘in Warminster Museum’ and from the 1879

date on the blue plaque; the museum document has yet to be identified. The suggestion in the report that the northern building may have been built as early as 1860 relied on evidence that the family, who had lived in the house in 1852, were not residing there in 1859.

Plans of the cellars from the 1950s [Figs. 2 and 3], found amongst archive material in Warminster Museum, show that the dividing walls of the cellars do not align with the ground floor walls and that an extra wall has been constructed in the cellar blocking off access to one section.<sup>2</sup> The wall was presumably built to help support the load above; a large brick pillar also provides support for the ground floor. The surveyor noted that he was unable to measure cellar 3 as the access was only one foot wide.

Two blocked windows are present in cellar 1 and inspection by the author has confirmed that these are now below ground level

Dorothy Treasure, of the Wiltshire Buildings Record, carried out an examination of the cellars in 2011, and concluded that the cellars were late 18<sup>th</sup> C., in common with most of the housing in Pound Street.<sup>3</sup> This would indicate that they formed part of the original house. At first floor level, two timber-framed walls complete with brick infill, form part of one of the redundant kilns, these walls may be another legacy of the house.



Figures 2 and 3. 1950s cellar and ground floor plan. Source: Dewey Museum, Warminster, Beaven Archive, Box 69.

The *Victoria County History* (V.C.H.) for Warminster is uninformative with the exception of a simple statement and footnote relating to the rebuilding of the maltings in 1879.<sup>4</sup> The footnote misleadingly refers to the *Urban District Council Local Board Minute Book*, the correct source being a *Commissioners Book*, the Commissioners being the predecessors of the Urban District Council. The minutes stated that on 1 August 1879, the plans for the proposed new malthouses in Pound Street for Mr William Morgan ‘were produced and approved’.

The Enclosure [Fig. 4]<sup>5</sup> and Tithe<sup>6</sup> Maps of 1784 and 1840 respectively both show an ‘L’ shaped building on the maltings site; however, the building was coloured pinkish-orange on the enclosure map and solid black on the tithe, both formats indicating that it was residential. A crooked field and property boundary seen on the 1886 OS map is also visible on the Enclosure and Tithe maps and provides a datum point when comparing maps and plans.

Estate Maps and Leases used the numbers from the Enclosure and Tithe Maps in order to identify the prop-



Figure 4. Enclosure map. Courtesy of Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre.

erties and land involved and the house-numbering scheme of the mid-1880s cross referenced the property numbers against the Tithe Numbers. Property numbers are included on an 1887 sewerage, gas, and water plan,<sup>7</sup> which also show where some buildings had been demolished.

A lease of 1828 gave ‘permission to erect cottages on the yard and hereditaments currently in the occupation of John Stent’,<sup>8</sup> the land being owned by Sir J.D. Astley. This was land in Pound Street close to the current maltings site. A further lease of 1834 refers to the cottages and to a messuage with buildings, numbers 166, 167, 168, in the occupation of John Bleeck. These are the old Enclosure Award numbers; number 168 corresponds with the tithe award number 2432 cross-referenced in the Land Tax records. An estate map of 1835 confirmed Stent and Bleeck as occupiers.<sup>9</sup>

Land Tax records of 1845 listed John Bleeck at 2432 to 2434 (these are Tithe Map numbers),<sup>10</sup> and the 1841 census showed him as a wool broker, in Pound Street. Next to him was a property under construction, this was to be a Wesleyan Chapel.

A conveyance of 1854 to Chapman referred to cottages ‘formerly holden by Stent’ and a ‘messuage late in the tenure of John Bleeck, deceased and now void, numbers 166, 167, 168’.<sup>11</sup>

The reverse of the 1854 conveyance carries an additional note

30 September 1854 Property described as late in the tenure or occupancy of John Bleeck (deceased), now void was conveyed by indenture to WILLIAM MORGAN, Common Brewer.

After the purchase, Chapman had immediately sold the Bleeck property to William Morgan.

Although census enumerators were supposed to include only residential buildings, the Warminster enumerators frequently ignored the instruction and in some years listed chapels and non-residential buildings - including the maltings. It was apparent that many of the Pound Street residents had remained in the same houses over the course of several censuses and by plotting names, schedule numbers, house numbers and other information it is possible to slot the maltings into the street even



Figure 5. Carved and painted lintel to the door of the southern building. Copyright, the author.

when not specifically noted on the return. The Wesleyan Chapel mentioned above provides a reference point.

The 1851 census reports that the property on the site subsequently occupied by the maltings was 'Void' (John Bleack had died in 1846), whilst in 1861 the occupancy is unclear and suggests that there were two families living in the property - there is no mention of any malthouses. In 1871, 'malthouses' are listed separately at the end of the schedule.

In the 1881 return, property numbers 20, 21, and 22 are listed as uninhabited but are not given schedule numbers indicating that they were not residential. The 1883 street numbering index showed number 20 to be the chapel, with 21 & 22 as the maltings.<sup>12</sup> The maltings have three doors fronting Pound Street and this may have caused the numbering error on the census - the enumerator may not have been aware of the Chapel / Mission Hall (number 20) hidden behind number 19 and in consequence allocated a number to each of the three entrances. The maltings and the chapel are not listed in the 1891 and 1901 returns, but they can be inferred from the gap in the number sequence. Conversely, in 1911 they and the Wesleyan Mission Hall were listed but not numbered

Gas supply plans of 1852 showing the renumbering of gas lamps have the accepted colour coding of pink and grey for residential and non residential buildings and show Stent's Cottages and the house that had been occupied by John Bleack.<sup>13</sup> The plans, however, are those of 1837 drawn when the lamps were first erected and had been re-used, but not necessarily updated, when the lamps were renumbered and their revised locations noted.

An 1865 map 'Roads under The Board's Jurisdiction' shows that the construction of both sections of the maltings was complete by this date.<sup>14</sup> The double-width building is coloured grey for non residential, and the join between the two halves of the building is indicated on the plan, albeit rather faintly.

Trade Directories contain no entries for William Morgan or William Frank Morgan at maltings in Pound Street, or at the other known locations of Market Place and Church Street, although their Silver Street and East Street businesses are included. It can be concluded that the Morgan's managed their businesses from Silver Street and East Street with the other sites being purely operational.

In March 1941, the *Warminster Journal* published a letter from Margaret Beaven with her memories of the old house. Margaret was born in about 1848, the daughter of William Morgan the founder of the maltings.

I well remember what a handsome house it was when my father bought it. It had beautiful oak floors, doors and handsome staircase, fine flower, fruit and vegetable gardens. Pears from the old walls of the garden we still enjoy.

## Conclusion

There was a house extant on the site in 1854, the house, and adjoining land being sold to William Morgan in the same year. Margaret Beaven, who would have been about six years old in 1854, had memories of the house, suggesting that it may have survived for a period after

her father purchased it. A local plan shows that both parts of the maltings had been constructed by 1865, and in 1879 a planning application was submitted for a 'New' malthouse

### Note

This is the revised text of a talk given to the Wiltshire Family History Society in June 2013 and published in the Wiltshire Local History Forum Newsletter, Autumn 2013.

### Appendix

#### *Proposed Timeline*

1854 - William Morgan purchases the house and builds on the adjoining land, a 'green-field' site. This would enable him to be in production quickly, possibly as early as the 1855 harvest, much faster than if he had to demolish the house first.

1861 - The house appears to be still standing and occupied by two families

1865 - The house has been demolished and phase two (Northern) is now complete.

1875 - Death of William Morgan

1879 - William's son William Frank applies to build a new malthouse. Was this to be remodelling or a

complete rebuild of phase one using reclaimed materials from the earlier building and from redundant maltings in the town?

To date there is no documentary evidence to prove that he carried out his plans; however, he was obviously proud enough of his building to erect a carved door lintel [Fig. 5] with his name when a simple wooden sign would have sufficed!

### References

1. Warminster Maltings Ltd - internal document.
2. Dewey Museum, Warminster, Beaven Archive, Box 69.
3. Personal communication.
4. *Victoria County History, Wiltshire, Volume 8, Warminster Industry & Trade.* (1965) pp.110 - 114.
5. Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre (W&SHC). G16/995/15, G16/995/28 MS.
6. W&SHC. G16/995/1, G16/995/5, H15/130/2, X6/75, H15/130/2, TA Warminster.
7. W&SHC. G16/1/41 L.
8. W&SHC. 628/31/5.
9. W&SHC. 3330/2 L.
10. W&SHC. 2144/145.
11. W&SHC. 628/31/5.
12. W&SHC. G16/1/31.
13. W&SHC. G16/1/44 L.
14. W&SHC. G16/1/42 L.