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The Windsor miracles of Henry VI, religion and the history of football

David Lewis

It might seem improbable to think that any link could exist between the late medieval devotion to 'saint' Henry VI – a king popularly thought to have been unjustly put to death – and the evolution of the 'beautiful game', but that is exactly what a late-fifteenth century account of a pilgrim visiting his shrine in St George's Chapel, Windsor, indicates.

The history of football goes back a long way, probably having its roots in some of the earliest communities. And, although the form of the game as first played is unknown, it probably included some elements of the modern game; two opposing teams passing an object of some description between players, perhaps a ball, with the aim of moving this token into the opponents' defended space, registering a score. One of the first documented accounts of such a game in England comes in FizStephen's late-twelfth century description of London life in which mention is made of 'the famous game of foot-ball', which was reported played in the suburbs between teams of scholars.[1] No mention is made in this account of the rules governing the game, but its name implies that nonetheless some did exist, not least about moving the ball with the aid of the feet alone. No doubt other rules applied, but these were of inconsistent application, resulting in a game with distinct regional variations.

It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that greater consistency became important, with the rules of the game, as we know it today, being codified formally. These rules recognised two versions of the sport, as it had evolved in the English public school system: the 'dribbling game' played by Eton, and the 'throwing game', favoured by Rugby, and thus Association football and Rugby football. While both versions had marked similarities owing to their shared heritage: a defined area of play, goal posts and rules for passing the ball between players. They also had distinct differences, the chief concerning handling of the ball, prohibited in one version and fundamental in the other. Although we might reasonably assume that the growing popularity of public schools made uniform rules a necessity, not least to govern inter-school matches, the accounts of the miracles associated with a pious English fifteenth century king-saint might suggest that, in fact, many of these rules had a considerably earlier heritage.

Undoubtedly the miracles of Henry VI are an obscure source for the history of football.[2] Nonetheless, they provide some interesting information about the game as played in the late Middle Ages, and about religious

practice, particularly that which found expression at Henry's Windsor shrine. The reference to the beautiful game comes in just one testimony in a series of accounts recorded at random from pilgrims (seemingly verbatim) as they visited the tomb of King Henry, probably in the closing years of the fifteenth century, although no precise date is provided. In all cases the visiting pilgrims were seeking Henry's assistance in making a recovery from injury, sickness or misfortune or giving thanks for such assistance. Henry was widely considered a 'helper saint', and although not formally canonised, was believed capable of soliciting miraculous cures, particularly for the young, mariners and those with ailments of the head.

It is difficult to exaggerate Henry's exceptional popularity in the late Middle Ages, but some measure can be gauged from his widespread representation in church stained glass, books of hours, hymns and the painting of his image on chancel screens. It is not uncommon to find fragmentary evidence of his popularity in churches from Cornwall to the Scottish border, but, as an uncanonised saint, representation of his image became the particular focus for the desecrations of the Reformation, resulting in the near complete blotting out of his memory in some places and his removal from popular religion. In opposition to this, the crowds attesting his miraculous powers in late-fifteenth-century Windsor came from every part of the country and the near Continent, including Canterbury, the shrine of the best remembered medieval English saint, St Thomas Becket. Indeed, evidence exists that might indicate Henry VI was a more popular saint at this time than St Thomas.[3]

Henry was controversially murdered in 1471, and at first his body was laid to rest in Chertsey Abbey, but very rapidly this place started to attract pilgrims. Accounts of miracles arose, potentially forming a focus for Lancastrian opposition to the new Yorkist king, Edward IV. Despite attempts to ban pilgrimages, and specifically those to Chertsey in 1485, to better control the political dimensions of Henry's burgeoning popularity, Richard III moved his tomb within the castle walls at Windsor, to St George's Chapel.[4] In short order Henry's popularity sky-rocketed, with his Windsor tomb developing into one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in all England. It was especially popular with wealthy Londoners, owing to its proximity to the capital and the convenient all-weather transport connections between London and Windsor via the river Thames.

Although today it is difficult to understand the intensity of devotion attached to holy shrines and pilgrimage, in the late Middle Ages the assistance provided by saints formed a central and indispensable part of everyday life. Pilgrimage was essential not only for penance and a demonstration of faith, but also for those seeking to invoke miraculous saintly intervention, where an injury or illness had no cure other than by

means of divine assistance. In the age before modern medicine, if a serious injury had been sustained, then it was common practice to make a vow of pilgrimage (in some accounts referred to as 'bending a penny') in the hope of prompting the attention of Heaven. And to extend the period over which this intervention might take place, once prayers had been offered, it was common practice to leave a votive offering at the shrine, such as a miniature wax token representing the object of the prayers, a broken leg or arm, perhaps, to continue to collect 'holy radiation' from the tomb, eventually accumulating to a miracle in due course.

The huge number of pilgrims visiting St George's Chapel in the closing years of the fifteenth century generated unparalleled local employment opportunities and proved a decisive turning point in Windsor's local history. The economy of this famous but small east Berkshire town was transformed from one indistinguishable from many other medieval towns, centred on its market place, to one almost exclusively based on the provision of services to visitors and tourists. Windsor innkeepers, brewers, bakers, souvenir makers, carters, river men and other service providers amassed considerable wealth, expressed in enhancements to both the parish church of St John the Baptist and the expansion of the town's influential civic fraternity dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Windsor's economy has never looked back. But because the town had no Chaucer to record its late medieval fame, this transformation has largely passed from common memory.

At the time, however, Henry garnered such popular appeal that in 1495 it was decided that his position in the pantheon of saints should be formalised and application made to Rome for his canonisation. It was as part of this endeavour that the accounts of miracles associated with his name were collected from visiting Windsor pilgrims, with the intention, where possible, of corroborating the claims made through third-party testimony. That the miracles claimed in his name were confirmed by three independent witnesses and could be proved beyond doubt, was a necessary step in the process of saint-making. In the event, Henry VIII's break from Rome in 1534 put paid to his great, great-grandfather's elevation to the sainthood, but the raw accounts of Henry's miracles, some attested by witnesses, others unproven or unprovable, have survived and provide fascinating insight into popular religion and social history in the closing years of the Middle Ages.

The account of a miracle-making reference to the game of football concerned a boy called William Barton, from Caunton in Nottinghamshire, a small village six miles north west of Newark-on-Trent. The account (in Latin) reads:

> William Bartram was kicked during a game and suffered long and scarce endurable pain, but suddenly recovered the blessing of health when he had seen the glorious King Henry in a dream. Bartram made a vow, in King Henry's honour, to observe abstinence on all Tuesdays.
>
> The game at which they had met for common recreation is called by some the foot-ball-game. It is one in which young men, in country sport (*adolescentes rustici*), propel a huge ball not by throwing it into the air but by striking and rolling it along the ground, and that not with their hands but their feet. A game, I say, abominable enough, and, in my judgement at least, more common, undignified and worthless than any other game, rarely ending but with some loss, accident, or disadvantage to the players themselves. What then? The boundaries had been marked and the game started; and, when they were striving manfully to kick in the opposite direction, and our hero had thrown himself into the midst of the fray, one of his fellows, whose name I know not, came up against him from the front and kicked him by misadventure, missing his aim at the ball.[5]

The interest in this account is that a clear distinction is made between the 'dribbling game' of football – of which this testimony is an example – and the 'throwing game', with the participants in the game being predominantly energetic young men, and the pastime often being the cause of injury. The account goes on to explain that boundaries had been marked out to define the area of play, and that the two opposing teams occupied their respective ends of this 'pitch'. The injury to Bartram occurred when an un-named player from the opposing team – possibly someone from a nearby village, since Bartram would presumably have known the name of his fellow villagers – tried to kick the ball, but missed, connecting unfortunately with Bartram's shin. Although no mention is made of the exact damage sustained, it must have consisted of some type of strain or bruising, since there is no mention in the account of blood, and a broken leg could not have recovered in the way described in the text. Even so, the injury, it seems, was sufficiently painful for Bartram to make a vow of pilgrimage to Windsor, although this is not specifically mentioned in his account. It is notable that many of the accounts collected in Windsor in connection with Henry VI's canonisation make no reference to such a vow, but in most cases presumably one had been made, since this would explain why the pilgrims could be interviewed. A typical account of one such pilgrim is that of Thomas Onion, an eighteen-year-old boy:

> (He) fell from a marvellous high tree onto a stone wall, whereupon being shattered to death, he came to life again and quickly recovered his health when the blessed King Henry was invoked.[6]

Evidently both Bartram and Onion, being of a similar young age, knew that the Windsor saint was most able to provide specific assistance in the circumstance of their injury. In Bartram's case, however, and once at Windsor, he attributed his miraculous cure not to the explicit invocation of the saint as noted in Onion's case, but to the appearance of Henry in a dream, a claim he must have known to be incapable of verification by a third party. If this was the calculation, then it seems that Bartram wanted to avoid the possibility of the religious authorities staging an investigation into his game of football, or indeed, visit his village to question fellow players about the injury, assuming such witnesses could be found. But Bartram's account, on reflection, is curious, not only because the involvement of King Henry is so tenuous, but because his injury was so superficial and his recovery so swift. One might question why he made the long and costly journey from the Midlands to Windsor if the period of his incapacity had been brief and his recovery complete. This might suggest that his vow of pilgrimage had been made in haste, in the immediate aftermath of the incident, as a type of knee-jerk reaction, but a promise that was an over-reaction? If so, his account tells us not only something about the rapidity of spread and depth of knowledge about helper saints in the fifteenth century, but also about the seriousness of such oaths. Once made, presumably in front of potential witnesses, in Bartram's case his fellow players, the oath-maker was bound to make the journey, no matter how trivial the apparent injury or the rapidity of healing.

Of course, there are other possible explanations for Bartram's presence in Windsor, his account of the football game and his resulting vow of abstinence on Tuesdays. One explanation is the considerable indulgences granted by the Pope to Windsor pilgrims. These were equal to the indulgences available at the venerated church of Santa Maria Scala Coeli, north of Rome, a church built on the site of St Paul the Apostle's prison.[7] A reflection, certainly, of the importance of the Windsor shrine to the Roman church more widely. A further possibility, perhaps applicable in Bartram's case, is Henry's fast growing fame as a rare home-grown saint, with a particularly powerful ability to intervene when invoked. If indeed this was the true motivation for Bartram's visit to Windsor, then his account starts to acquire a very modern feel: Bartram's journey, at least in part, concerned the cult of celebrity. And although we might imagine that medieval religion was some type of fixed and immovable monolith, in reality it was subject to the swings of fashion, adjustment of emphasis and fads of popular appeal.

People were keenly aware of the latest developments in religious practice, and wanted to participate in, and have personal experience of, the latest saint and the miracles they could perform. It is notable that even Henry VII claimed great devotion to his saintly forebear and that it was his intention for Henry VI's shrine to be moved next to his own magnificent tomb in Westminster Abbey, both to bask in the reflection of his grandfather's sainthood and to ensure in perpetuity a stream of visiting pilgrims, complete with their prayers and money.[8] In short, Henry's shrine in Windsor became a go-to place, a resort of religious fashion, patronised in particular by the newly wealthy from the City; a place that starts to have very modern parallels.

As an aside, but a further interesting aspect of Bartram's account, the disdain the commentator shows for the game of football is remarkable: 'common, undignified and worthless' – a game played by rustic (presumably, uneducated) youth; again, surely, a sentiment that might chime with some sections of modern-day society. But why the game should be described in such negative terms when it encouraged team-play, physical exercise and adherence to a set of rules is indeed curious. Might it be that it was not the on-field activities that were thought objectionable, but the after-game expression of emotions, team jealousies or perhaps even drunkenness, that resulted in the damage and destruction of property? If so, then this also has a very modern echo.

Although it is too easy to dismiss the accounts of late medieval miracles as superstitious and of no continuing value, the evidence found in the Windsor miracles attributed to Henry VI provides evidence of human motivation to which one can readily relate today. They also provide substantial evidence of the cult of Henry VI, and his exceptional late medieval national appeal, despite his lack of formal canonisation. This is a king who today very often is dismissed as excessively pious and unsuitable, and while this may be true in part, it is to forget that he had a profound impact well after his violent death, on a par with the distantly memorable late Saxon king of the eleventh century, Edward the Confessor. In local terms as well, Windsor was changed by his cult, not only in its morphology with the replacement of the castle's thirteenth-century barbican and adjustment of its market place, but also the reorientation of its economy. This is a king who arguably had as much, if not more, impact on the town than Queen Victoria, but one who is now largely overlooked, which can hardly be thought fair play. It is high time for his memory to be attached as much to the town of Windsor as it is to his college in Eton.

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Patye v Griffyn – a written curse in Reading 1626?

Witchcraft accusations and keeping the peace

Ian Miller

On Saturday 26 August 1626, Elizabeth Griffyn was accused in Reading Borough Court of making a charm against Hugh Patye and his wife. Both Hugh and Elizabeth were fined.[1] What does this case show about the belief in magic, and how accusations of witchcraft were dealt with at this time in Reading?

In 1626 Reading was a medium-sized town, well positioned for trade, with good water and road transport links. It was not too far from London and had good agricultural land to the west and north west. Woollen cloth production employed over 30 per cent of the town in the early seventeenth century, and some members of related trades were very wealthy.[2] There was a decline in the woollen cloth trade over the century with trade depressions in the 1620s.[3] During an outbreak of plague in 1625 Reading effectively implemented measures to control the spread of plague, and support families affected. Several charities in the town used to help the poor and these were generally well managed. In December 1624 John Kendrick, a wealthy clothier and merchant adventurer died leaving a large amount of money to help poor clothworkers in the town.[4] Later it was found that this legacy was badly managed, and neither the town's cloth trade workers nor the town's poor benefited much from it.[5] However in 1626 there was a lot of discussion around the money, and this must have given hope that the poor would be helped. The people of Reading petitioned the Borough Council and appeared at council meetings to ask for help that they needed and thought they were entitled to.[6] The town population was growing rapidly from the late sixteenth century, and the housing was crowded.[7] The new charter of 1638 specifically bans the further subdivision of housing and multiple families sharing one house; this indicates that this practice had been taking place, and was enough of a concern to the Borough to have it added to the new charter.[8] At this time Reading had problems but the Borough local government were trying to manage them.

Hugh Patye gave a statement to the Mayor, Roger Knight.[9] This said that, about a year ago he was in William Griffyn's house on Friar Street and saw William's wife Elizabeth 'laye a piece of white waxe and paper into the chimney, under the bricks, but to what purpose he knoweth not; neither doth he knowe whoe made or wrote the charme, or where the woman had

it.’ Other witnesses then gave statements about more recent events. On the previous Tuesday, Hugh Patye visited Ellyn Beale’s house in Friar Street at around 8pm with his wife and others, and had asked to go through her house to the house William Griffyn used to live in. According to Ellyn Beale, Hugh Patye said that he would show the ‘wickednes of Griffyn's wief, and the witchery she intended against his wief and her husband’. Hugh had then asked Mathew Beale to pull certain bricks from the chimney but nothing was found.[10] Hugh Patye complained some more, and then left. William Griffyn said that on the same Tuesday and on the following day, Hugh Patye visited William Griffyn at his house. During these visits, Hugh had kicked William and threatened him, saying he knew about the item hidden in the chimney. Hugh also said Elizabeth had intended to poison him during the last year.

On Thursday morning, Ellyn Beale said she had gone to the same house, pulled one more brick and found ‘a small paper with a rusty pyn in it, and upon the paper was written the word Elizabeth 4 tymes, and the word Patye once, and with all a peicc of browne paper waxed or pasted and almost consumed’. She gave this to Robert Harbert to give to the constables. William and Elizabeth Griffyn denied knowing anything about the item found in the chimney. Hugh Patye agreed with this description of events but said he was not himself. Hugh Patye was fined £40 (the primary source says ‘accepted that he owed the King £40’[11]) to be paid at the next assizes and he had keep to the peace until then. Thomas Barnes and William Paise promised that Hugh Patye would pay the fine and keep the peace, or they would have to pay £20 each. William Griffyn was fined £20 to be paid at the next assizes with gaol delivery. William Green and Richard Sparks agreed to bail of £10 each on behalf of Elizabeth Griffyn. The records of the relevant accounts for the Borough have not survived so it is not known if the fines were paid.

What was found in the chimney? It consisted of waxy paper with words written on it, a rusty pin in the paper, and was now partially burned. It could have been a form of sympathetic magic intended to do harm: the names on the paper to direct the magic to the target, and the act of piercing the paper showing the intent to do harm. The pin was said to be rusty and therefore made of iron which has associations with magic. Wax can be formed into a shape (which can be shaped like a person although that was not described here), and wax evaporates away with heat in the chimney taking the health of the target away with it. This form of magic is very old, and examples are known from Roman times through to the twentieth century.[12]

There may have been other words or symbols on the paper which were obscured due to the burning, or Ellyn Beale did not recognise them so did not mention them. A similar item consisting of an iron nail wrapped in paper found hidden in a chimney is described by Patricia Winzar in ‘Witchcraft counter spells in Charing’.[13] The item found in Charing was

thought to be a protective charm. This suggests an alternative interpretation of the item found by Ellyn Beale. The item could have been a charm made by, or for, Elizabeth Griffyn during the summer of 1625 to protect against a visitation of the plague which was threatening Reading at that time. The repeating of 'Elizabeth' four times could be because the charm was mainly intended to protect her. The first suspicion of plague in Reading was on 1 July 1625 and the Borough made various arrangements to prevent its spread, and further orders were made on 8 and 30 August.[14] The threat of plague would have been a serious concern to people in Reading in the summer of 1625.

The charm was hidden in the chimney, as chimneys are always open and thought to be a point at which evil could enter the house.[15] It was hidden in the chimney of the house where the Griffyn family used to live, which suggests it was intended to protect the Griffyn family rather than cause Hugh Patye harm. If it was intended to harm Hugh Patye then it would more likely to have been placed nearer to Hugh Patye. Hugh Patye could have seen Elizabeth hide the charm in the chimney at that time but had no reason to mention it until a year later when he had some argument with the Griffyn family. Making charms to harm people was illegal under the 1604 Witchcraft Act.[16] Hugh Patye may have known this, and brought the existence of the charm to the attention of the Mayor to cause trouble for William and Elizabeth Griffyn. Physical items such as pieces of wax or paper were considered to be definitive evidence of witchcraft by common people, but courts were more sceptical and only accepted such evidence as part of a witchcraft narrative, and then only as circumstantial not definitive evidence.[17] There is no record in this case of scepticism about magic. The item found in the chimney was physical evidence of belief in magic although the original intent of the magic is unclear.

Both Hugh Patye and Elizabeth Griffyn had community support shown by each having two people willing to risk significant money on their behalf. Hugh Patye was supported by William Paise and Thomas Barnes. Thomas Barnes was appointed Bellman for the Borough in May 1625.[18] The Bellman was a local official who cleared vagrants from the streets and administered whippings, so Thomas Barnes was a person of above ordinary status in the Borough.[19] Hugh Patye was also able to gather a group of people to witness his search of the chimney. Elizabeth Griffyn was supported by William Green and Richard Sparks. William Green had been made a constable in October 1625, which was also a position of status within the community.[20] William Griffyn was appointed Aletaster for the Borough in 1630 and reappointed in that role another three times up to 1637.[21] He also was listed as a Juror in 1640; this accusation against his wife does not seem to have harmed his social standing.[22]

Both Hugh Patye and William Griffyn were liable for large fines of £40 and £20 pounds respectively. William Griffyn was held responsible for his wife's actions. These were very large sums of money. The Churchwarden's Accounts for St Mary's in 1626 show a house could be rented for one year for £1, and the Clerk's wages for a whole year was £3 and 10 shillings.[23] The National Archives Currency Converter web site estimates that £20 in 1620 could have bought two horses, and in 1630 three horses.[24] Similar large amounts had been imposed earlier in 1626 for threats of violence; Joan Noble complained that Agnes Alloway had made violent threats against her. The Borough Court imposed a fine of £20 for Agnes Alloway (she had no husband to pay on her behalf) and two people agreed to bail of £10 each for Agnes.[25] These large fines show that Reading Borough wished to keep the peace, and punished any disturbance with punitive fines, even for people with community support.

The judge in this case was Roger Knight, a local gentleman and mercer.[26] He became a secondary burgess in Reading in 1603 when he was a churchwarden at St Laurence Church.[27] From 1607 onwards he paid 8 pence for his third-row pew in the middle aisle in that church, which was one level below the top price.[28] St Laurence Church was the church that the elite of Reading attended. He was a Constable in 1606, Borough Treasurer 1608-9, in 1613 was managing the money for an expansion of Reading Market Place, and in 1614 was one of the governors of the house of correction.[29] He became a Justice of the Peace on 3 March 1615.[30] In May 1616 he was promoted to a Capital Burgess and elected Mayor in September the same year.[31] He was elected as Mayor for the second time in September 1625.[32] When he heard this case in 1626 he was a long-established and trusted member of the ruling elite in Reading who had been a local justice for over ten years. He had shown no sign of strong religious belief. He would be more inclined to keep the peace than persecute witches.

Although the description of what was found is open to many interpretations, this accusation shows that the belief that magic could do harm was generally held; there was no indication that people doubted the power of magic. Reading Borough took the accusation seriously but dealt with it as a breach of the peace. Hugh Patye was fined and bound to keep the peace presumably because of his violence and the disruption he had caused. William Griffyn was also fined on behalf of his wife Elizabeth which shows the Justice of the Peace, Roger Knight, thought Elizabeth Griffyn was guilty, but what was she guilty of? If Roger Knight wished to treat this accusation as the use of magic to harm then the accusation would have been passed on to the next Assize Court. Making a charm to make someone ill was a felony according to the Witchcraft Act of 1604; even if the target was not ill, someone found guilty of this felony would be sentenced to one year in prison with four appearances in the pillory.[33] In this case, Roger Knight appears to

have imposed a fine which implies he was treating this not as a felony under the Witchcraft Act but as a breach of the peace. Hugh Patye was fined twice as much as Elizabeth Griffyn. Breaches of the peace were seen as more important than punishing the use of magic, and Reading Borough wanted to deal with these locally to maintain the appearance of being in control.

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Stanley Spencer and the Cowls of Cookham

Keith Parry

Introduction

Stanley Spencer, the noted early twentieth century British painter, was born and grew up in Cookham, a village in north-east Berkshire. Many of his paintings featured people and places within Cookham. He was particularly inspired by the cowls of the local malthouses visible from his nursery window which he captured in an early painting, 'Mending Cowls' (1915).[1]

He endowed them with a spiritual significance.

Fig 1. Mending Cowls (1915)

'They always seemed to be looking at something above our own nursery window, and when they turned away to be looking down. The earth by the base of these malthouses was never visited by us, so that they were a presence in the midst of the maze of Cookham. From wherever seen, they were somehow benign. With their white wooden heads, they served as reminder of religious presence.'[2]

The malthouses with their cowls were part of the complex owned by Neville Reid and John Deacon. From 1838 to 1906, the Cookham site provided malt for their Windsor Brewery. Half of the malting complex remains today as residential housing, but the kilns with their characteristic pyramidal roofs and rotating cowls in Spencer's picture were removed in the 1920 and 30s. The three kilns on the site were photographed by Henry Taunt in 1883, their roofs and cowls clearly visible above the village (Fig 2).[3] Deeds from the sale of the site in 1916 confirm the presence of three malthouses.[4]

Fig 2. Photograph taken by Henry Taunt in 1883

This paper integrates the works of Stanley Spencer, pictorial and literary, with other historical sources, maps, documents and images as well as a study of the current buildings to create a 3D model in SketchUp to locate the original three kilns and their cowls.[5]

Cookham and Stanley Spencer

Cookham Village lies in the north-east corner of Berkshire. The River Thames lies to the north and east. On the south, the village is separated from the borough town of Maidenhead by Widbrook Common, whilst on the west, the main exit road crosses Cookham Moor on a raised track, 'The Causeway',

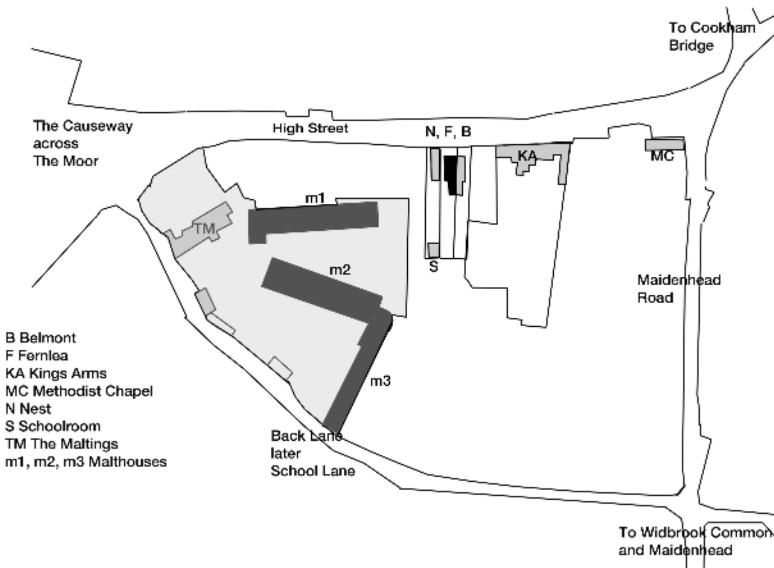


Fig 3. Map of Cookham, based on the 1875 OS 25" to the mile[7]

before reaching Cookham Rise and the railway station connecting to Maidenhead.

The three main streets of Cookham village both in 1875 and 2019 form the sides of a right-angled triangle (Fig 3). The main street, High Street, runs in an east-west direction. At its western end, High Street crosses The Moor via the raised Causeway, whilst at its eastern end it meets at right angles the north-south road from Widbrook Common and Maidenhead to the church, river and Cookham Bridge over the River Thames. A further road, Back Lane, later School Lane, runs in a south-easterly direction from the western end of the High Street back to the Maidenhead Road. High Street, Maidenhead Road and Back Lane form the right-angled triangle. Even in 1840, this triangle of roads occurs on the earliest large-scale map of Cookham.[6]

The brewery complex (in pale grey in Fig 3) lay in the corner of the triangle between High Street and Back Lane. In 1875-1920 it contained the three malthouses (m1, m2, m3), residential buildings – The Maltings, (TM), and several ancillary buildings, barns, stables etc. In the rest of this article this location is termed the Back Lane Brewery site or complex.

Stanley Spencer was born in Cookham in 1891. He was the eighth of nine surviving children of William Spencer and Annie Slack. Stanley's grandfather, Julius Snr, had moved from Wooburn and was a successful builder. He built two semi-detached villas on Cookham High Street, Fernlea and Belmont, for his sons, William and Julius Jnr. (marked F and B on Fig 3). Stanley Spencer grew up in Fernlea where the view at the back was dominated by the malthouses, The roofs and cowls were very visible from the rear windows of Stanleys's home including the nursery as captured in his painting 'Mending Cowls' (Fig 1).

The Spencer household had strong interests in music and reading. William, Stanley's father, was choirmaster at a local parish church in Hedsor, while his mother attended the local Wesleyan Chapel at the end of the High Street (MC, Fig 3).[8] Bible reading formed an essential part of home life, so it is not surprising that stories from the Bible provided a main source of inspiration for many of Stanley's paintings. Formal education was more limited as William, Stanley's father, did not allow his children to attend the local village school, and instead encouraged home tuition initially by himself and later by Stanley's elder sisters, Annie and Florence. School was a tin shed in the adjacent garden of The Nest, home to Stanley's grandmother (marked S and N on fig 3). Stanley attributed to this basic education his having enough time to develop drawing skills from about the age of 13, with some weekly lessons in drawing from a Cookham friend, Dorothy Bailey.

His artistic talent was spotted by Lady Boston of Hedsor, wife of the patron of his father's church, and she encouraged him to take it further. He

developed his skills with training, initially at Maidenhead Technical College and later at the prestigious Slade art school in London, where he won several prizes. During this period he commuted daily, earning himself the nickname of 'Cookham' from his fellow students. After his period at The Slade, he returned to paint in Cookham. The second main theme of his paintings is the use of local scenes for backgrounds.[9] His eye for detail and precision enables many of the scenes used in his paintings to be identified in their setting.

Apart from 'Mending Cowls', a number of Spencer's other early paintings show the malthouse roofs, e.g. 'The Flight into Egypt' (c1913) and the Milk Cart half of 'The Design for a Decoration, Fernlea and the Milk Cart' (1921).[10] The former shows three pyramidal roofs and a couple of cowls, whilst the latter shows two roofs with cowls highlighted in white.

As a young child, the malthouses were off limits, but by 1915 Stanley writes about a visit to the malthouses he made with Gil, his younger brother Gilbert, also an artist, Slade student and RA: 'Lately Gil and I have been wandering about in the ghostly malthouses on top of which are the cowls.'[11]

He further comments 'that his ventures into the malthouse had surprised him with the vastness of the malting floor and the strange ritual of spreading the malt'.[12]

What was the 'ritual of spreading the malt'? How were these buildings used?

Malting and malthouses

Malting is the first step in the manufacture of beer. A grain, usually barley, is allowed to germinate in a controlled way to convert the seed starches to sugars, and is then stopped by drying/roasting in a kiln. The kiln-roasting partially browns the sugars, which influences both the taste and the final colour of the beer. In the second stage, brewing, the malt sugars are extracted using hot water, flavoured with, for example, hops, cooled, and allowed to ferment using yeast. After further filtration and maturation, the liquid, now beer, is ready to drink

Between 1840 and 1906, only malting was done in Cookham. Fig 4 shows a typical arrangement of a malthouse in this period.

A cereal, usually barley kept in the store, is dropped under gravity to be soaked in water in a vessel called the steep for a period of time where with frequent water changes, germination is induced. After removal of the water, the partially germinated grain is moved to a calibrated area, the couch, to warm up naturally where germination continues. It is here, too, that the malt is assessed for tax. The grain is next moved to the large malting floor where, under controlled conditions of temperature, humidity and light, germination continues. It is essential that germination is uniform across the whole batch of grain. This is achieved by layering and regular turning of the

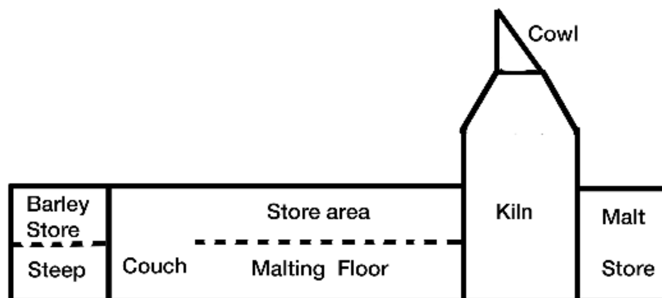


Fig 4. Malthouse structure mid nineteenth century

germinating grain on the large growing floor. This is the strange ritual referred to by Spencer. Finally, at the right stage, the germinated seed is dried and roasted in a kiln, then ground and stored for transfer to the brewer. Malting generally took place at the cooler times of the year, so malthouses were operational for five to six months.

The malting floor usually at ground level has a low floor to ceiling height with small square windows set regularly along its length, fitted with shutters or louvres to help control air flow, light and temperature. The malting floor has a markedly rectilinear shape. For example, a contemporary one in Maidenhead was 35yds by 6yds.[13] It is these features that identify a historic malthouse.

The structure of a malthouse in Fig 4 illustrates the basic layout of a nineteenth-century malthouse. In it the kiln and the barley stores are at opposing ends of the building separated by the malting floor. Sometimes the malt store is absent, as the malt is stored on the floor above the malting floor.

The kilns were large buildings with characteristic roof shapes. From Spencer's paintings, Cookham's kilns had a steep pyramidal roof, surmounted by a cowl with a vane that rotated in the wind to encourage ventilation through the kiln. The large cowls were unusual; louvred roofs were more common.

Whilst the cowls dominated Stanley's thoughts, he comments on the size of the buildings: 'These Cookham buildings must have been about 50ft high and the wooden hoods about 15ft.'[14]

This is roughly a five-storey building today with an extra one and half storeys for the cowl. No wonder they dominated the Cookham skyline, as seen in the Taunt photograph (Fig 2).

The development of the Cookham brewing and malting business

While much of the surrounding land was used for agriculture, Cookham had some local industry. In the nineteenth century, it had an extensive boot and shoe industry employing 338 people in 1851. It was run by the Burrows family from 1828 to the 1880s, when it succumbed to larger industrialised factory production in Leicester and Northampton.[15] On the river at the eastern end of the village there was a paper mill, one of eight other mills, owned by the Venables family from c1800 to 1893, employing 42 men in 1851. Their popular product was a high quality whitey-brown wrapping paper.

The other major business was the production and selling of beer. In any village community beer was routinely consumed as a drink and a source of nutrition in the mid-nineteenth century. Before the introduction of technical developments for better control of beer production in the mid to late nineteenth century, beer did not keep or travel well. Local production was essential and villages and towns had their own breweries, some large, some in back rooms. As early as the fourteenth century Cookham Manor Court was fining publicans for overcharging and production of poor quality beer.[16] Cookham produced enough malt to export some to London in the late sixteenth century.[17]

The earliest mention of a brewhouse is in the mid seventeenth century of one owned by Mr Gibbons near Cookham church.[18] This brewhouse transferred through several maltsters till by 1723 it was owned by William Poulton. His young son inherited, but the executors sold it in 1750.[19] In about 1700, Giles Ray had purchased the Back Lane brewing site (marked in light grey in Fig 3) from Noah Barnard, a maltster.[20] The site was adjacent to Noah Barnard's residence on the High Street. and may have been part of a marriage settlement. As Noah Barnard was a maltster, brewing and/or malting on the Back Lane site might predate this transfer of ownership. At death, in 1702, Giles Ray left a copper etc and a number of other items associated with brewing as well as the Back Lane site to his second son Robert.[21] Robert and, more actively, Robert's son Richard, grew the business. Richard was an active businessman, developed his own hop-growing facilities in Cookham, acquired outlets such as the King's Arms in Cookham High Street with William Poulton,[22] the Harrow on Maidenhead Road,[23] the Ship, a beer house at the east end of Cookham village with a malthouse,[24] two further outlets, the Gardener's Arms and The George in Maidenhead,[25] and a further malthouse, now the site of the Royal Bank of Scotland on Maidenhead High Street.[26] In the 1770s, Richard Ray sold the business to Abraham Darby and Zachery Allnutt, later to be inherited by Abraham's two sons, James and Stephen.[27] They continued to expand the

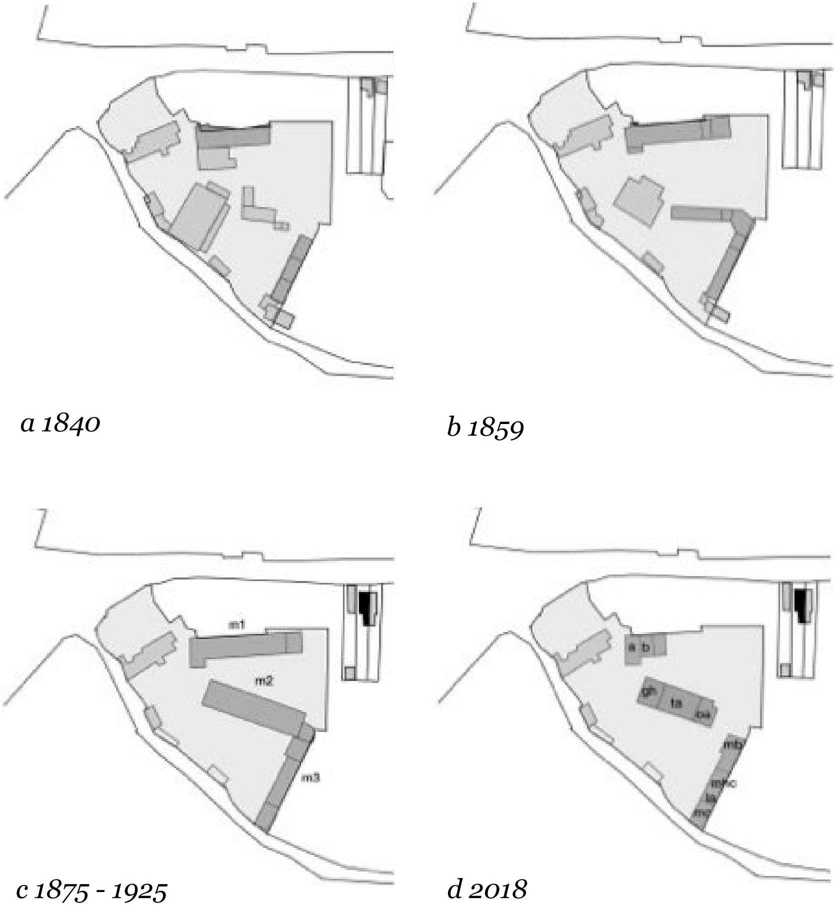


Fig 5. Cookham Brewery Site on Back Lane from 1840, 1859, 1875 and 2018

outlets to twenty-two including the Bel and Dragon on Cookham High Street.[28] In 1837, the Darby brothers decided to sell the business on the Back Lane site by auction including two residences, a brewhouse, a malthouse capable of wetting 30 quarters, three malt stores with lofts over, and many other buildings including stables, a piggery and carpenter's workshop etc.[29] An outline map of the site in 1840, shows the layout (Fig 5a). The site was purchased by Neville Reid and John Deacon who owned Windsor Brewery on the north side of Windsor Castle walls. Neville Reid was an experienced brewer, and John Deacon a retired banker from Barings who funded the purchase.

Very quickly, Neville Reid decided to develop the Cookham site exclusively for malting. He closed the brewing activities on the Cookham site, selling off the brewing equipment.[30] Over the period 1848-53 Neville Reid paid on average £4400 per annum in malt tax, which at 31d/bushel equates to 4260 quarters over a five or six-month period.[31] Malthouse production for Cookham is cited elsewhere as 30 qtrs every four days, giving some 1200-1400 qtrs per malthouse over a five-six month period, consistent with the presence of three equivalent malthouses (m1, m2 and m3, on site as shown on the maps, Fig 5).

In an outline from a map of 1859, three malthouses are apparent, identified by their rectilinear footprint (Fig 5b).[32] Two were rebuilt by 1875, to give the layout as shown in the early OS maps from 1875 to 1925 (Fig 5c).[33] This must have been the site photographed by Taunt in 1883 (Fig 2). Malting ceased in 1906, but the buildings remained until the early 1920s, and would have been the ones so much in Stanley Spencer's mind.

It is these three malthouses, existing from 1875 to c1920 shown in the Taunt photo, that left an impression on Stanley Spencer and are the subject of the rest of this paper. Their impression upon Spencer is vividly described in a letter after his demobilisation in December 1918 and return home to Cookham:

'However I felt assured when walking from the station, I arrived at the west end of Cookham Moor. There in the distance were the cowls of the malthouse glistening in the evening sun. Only a few weeks ago, I was saying to myself I would have to go three thousand miles if I wanted to see them. So far removed, the cowls looked like the huge white moths settled on some twig or wall with wings closed in the midst of the trees of Cliveden Woods and house and chimney smoke of the hamlet.'[34]

For each of the three malthouses extant in 1875-1925 (m1, m2 and m3 in Fig 5c), the most likely location of the kiln with its cowl can be identified. Linking this information with measurements of the remaining buildings (Fig 5d) enables a 3D model of the Back Lane site to be constructed. This model is compared with the paintings of Stanley Spencer and other images to decide the positions of the kilns with their cowls.

The Northern malthouse (Fig 5c, m1)

Today, the building has two parts at right angles (Fig 5d), one running north-south at the western end with gables at each end (a), and the part at right angles running east-west with a double-hipped roof (b).

The building is currently used as a barn and storage space with some residential accommodation. In the north-south part (a), there is evidence of a grain store with separator channels for the grain storage bays, and downstairs a residual drain for removing the water run-off from the steep. The east-west portion (b) has two small square windows with sliding sashes that would be characteristic of a malting floor.

In 1875, the malthouse had an extension to the wing (b) with a separate room at the eastern end (Fig 5c). It seems likely that this separated space is the location of the kiln/cowl. It was demolished some time in the 1920-30s, so no residue of the kiln is visible today.[35] This arrangement would be typical of a malthouse where grain storage and the kiln are located at opposite ends of the building (Fig 4), maybe with the malt store being above the malting floor.

The photograph (Fig 6), taken a short distance along The Causeway across The Moor, is dated post 1919, as it shows the war memorial built in that year. In the background the kiln building with its roof, minus its cowl, is clearly visible. The gable end of the north-south grain store (a) is just visible behind the cedar tree on the right.[36]

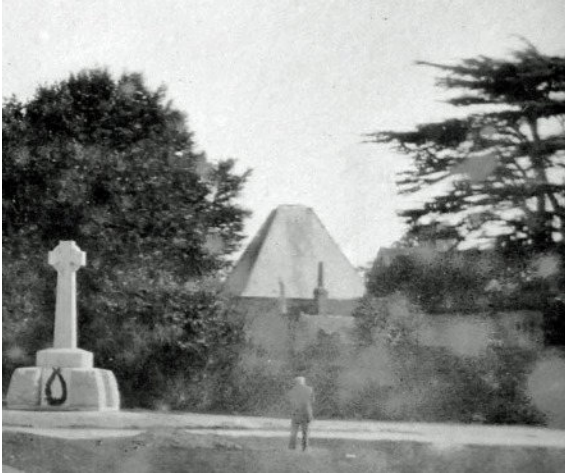


Fig 6. War Memorial and Northern malthouse m1, post 1919

This view mirrors Stanley's recollections of Cookham while on duty in Salonika, March 1917. He recalled walking across the Causeway toward the Village and seeing the impressive cowls:

'Appearing above the elms and part way between them and a Ceda tree which rises from the garden enclosure formed by the wall are Mr Waller's malthouses with their slate roofs and heavenly white wooden cowls.'[37]

The South Eastern malthouse (Fig 5c m3; Fig 5d, mb, mhc, la, mc)

Today, this building is divided into four dwellings in order from north to south, as shown on Fig 5d: The Malt Barn (mb), Malt House Cottage (mhc), Lanterns (la) and Malt Cottage (mc). On the 1875 map (Fig 5c), the most southerly house, Malt Cottage, shows no change. In contrast, Lanterns, Malthouse Cottage and the southern half of The Malt Barn are one area, and the northern half of The Malt Barn a separate square space. At the northern end is a semi-circular building of which there is no sign in the modern map. Three pieces of evidence suggest strongly that the square space is the location of the kiln with the roof and cowl over.

The first is a sketch by Spencer of the garden at Fernlea (Fig 7) where he has drawn the kiln attached to the semi-circular end, i.e. at the northern end of the malthouse.[38]

There is some foreshortening in this sketch, but, even allowing for this, the link between the kiln/cowl and the semi-circular end is very clear. Note also 'Our School' and in the centre the 'walnut tree'

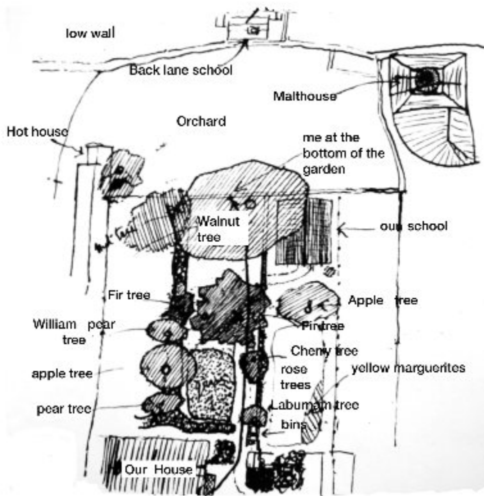


Fig 7. Drawing by Stanley Spencer of back garden at Fernlea

Second, Amy Haggerty Spencer describes one of her sketches (Fig 8) drawn after 1925 from the garden of The King's Arms: 'The long low portion on the left is now a row of small houses. The roofs and cowls were removed from the two malthouses shown in the sketch and the one on the left is now a house. The rounded-ended part of the building abutting on the "square" was pulled down.'[39]

Lastly, Spencer illustrates the complex from the bottom of the garden at Fernlea (F in Fig 3) in both his versions of The Betrayal. In both versions, the semi-circular building attached at the northern end of the kiln is clearly visible with the pyramidal roof of the kiln immediately behind. The first version is illustrated (Fig 9).

Fig 8. Sketch by Amy Haggerty Spencer

All three descriptions agree that the malthouse kiln with its cowl is at the northern end of this malthouse m3, and is directly attached to the semi-circular addition which is clearly defined on the contemporary 25-inch OS maps.

Fig 9. The Betrayal version 1 (1914) by Stanley Spencer[40]

The Central malthouse (Fig 5c, m2; Fig 5d, gh, ta, oa)

Today, this building (Fig 5d) is made up of three units, from west to east, The Gantry House (gh) The Tannery (ta), and Oast Cottage (oa).[41] The

names are very suggestive. The Gantry House has a lucam or gantry, a hooded hoist used to raise grain to the first floor store. Oast Cottage has a roughly square footprint, which could be typical for a malt kiln location, and is comparable in size to the malthouse kiln square described for the south eastern malthouse above. Oast house kilns are very similar structurally to malthouse kilns and terms can get interchanged. This location for the kiln at the opposite end of the building from the lucam/grain store, with the current Tannery House as the location for the malting floor, would be consistent with a mid-nineteenth century malthouse.

In 1875, the building (Fig 5c) had a further eastern extension that was removed later with the semi-circular building. This eastern extension could be the malt store for both malthouses, with the semi-circular building as a link.

Unfortunately, for this malthouse the sketch by Amy Haggarty Spencer (Fig 8) and 'The Betrayal 1' (Fig 9) by Stanley Spencer may not be completely consistent with each other. For instance, Amy Haggerty Spencer describes her sketch continuing from the quote above:

'The middle part is now a house called "High Chimneys" (though there were no chimneys in the old Maltings), they must have been added by an owner. The second malthouse (right) is now called "Gantry House" and the present owners of "High Chimneys" now call it "Tannery".'[42]

It is unclear from this image whether the pyramidal kiln is located at the western end of the malthouse close to the lucam, or on the footprint of Oast Cottage as suggested previously.

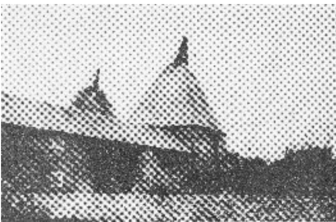


Fig 10. Oasthouses of Cookham.

On the other hand, Stanley Spencer's painting (Fig 9) shows the pyramidal kiln roof peaking out of the twin-hipped roof close to the eastern end of the building, placing it where the Oast Cottage is located. His depiction of the roof as twin-hipped as opposed to Amy's single hip is more plausible, as the Lanterns, the remains of the old malthouse floor, has a twin-hipped structure today, which would have followed through to the eastern extension.

There is some extra photographic evidence, entitled the Oasthouses of Cookham (Fig 10).[43] It shows an angled shot of one malthouse with the kiln and cowl of the second clearly visible behind. Unfortunately, nothing more is known about the provenance of this photograph.

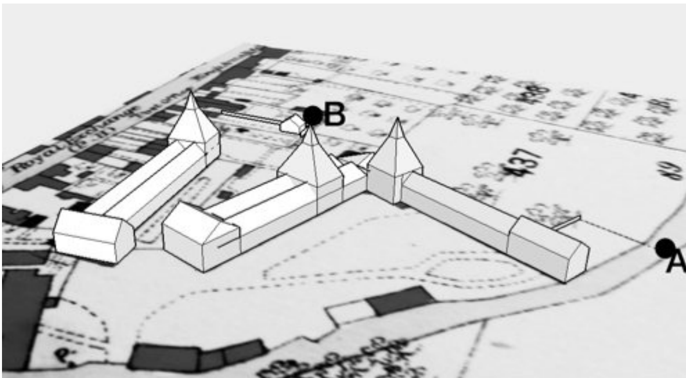
The malthouse to the front is almost certainly the south eastern malthouse (m3). The photograph shows a barely visible glasshouse type structure on the roof abutting the kiln and cowl building; this is clearly illustrated in the sketch by Amy Haggerty Spencer (Fig 8) on top of the south-eastern malthouse. It may have been a top end of a hoist to bring the

malted grain up from the malting floor to the top of the kiln. The small building at the right hand end of the front malthouse could be the semi-circular extension.

Additionally, all other places except one, where a photograph of a malthouse at this angle could be taken, are blocked by another building and/or cannot show a second kiln and cowl. A 3D model of the site is discussed below to show that this photograph can be rationalised when taken of the south-eastern malthouse from a point to the south east so that a view of another kiln is visible.

Modelling the site with SketchUp

In the model one kiln has been located at the Oast Cottage site and the other at the northern end of the south eastern malthouse. The computer modelling programme, SketchUp, allows a view of the model to be seen from specific locations to compare the model output with the photograph, Fig 10 (see Appendix for details).



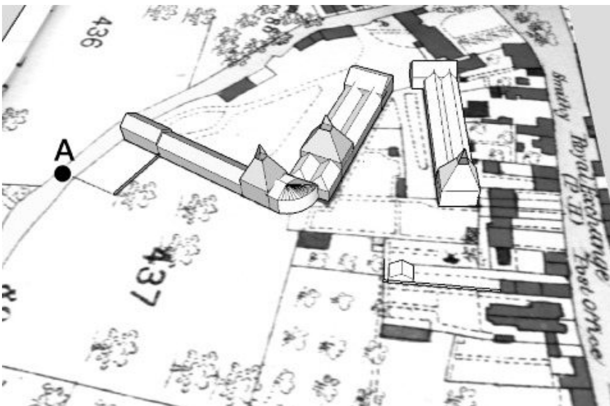


Fig 11. The model of the malthouses: a (above) view from the south west. b (below) view from the east

The model is illustrated in Figs 11a and 11b.

In Fig 11a, the model can be viewed from point A on Back Lane looking towards the south-east malthouse. This view is shown in Fig 12, which shows a striking similarity to the photograph of Fig 10, above. That provides

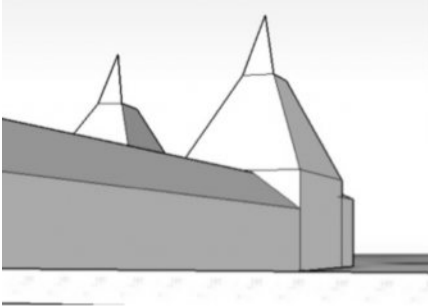


Fig 12. View in model from point A in Fig 11.

support for the location of the middle malthouse kiln at the Oast Cottage site.

In Fig 13 a view is taken from point B, Stanley Spencer's viewpoint at the bottom of Fernlea garden of the malthouses used as a backdrop for 'The Betrayal' version 1.

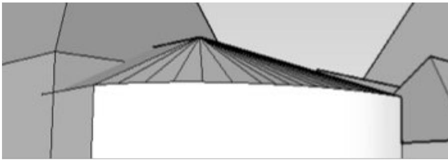


Fig. 13 View of the model from point B in Fig. 11. It compares fairly well with version 1 of 'The Betrayal'.

In both cases there are significant similarities, though not as marked as the photographic comparison Figs 10 and 12.

Conclusion

The evidence from the maps, photographs, modelling and paintings would suggest that Cookham had three typical nineteenth-century type malthouses with the kilns located as shown in Fig 14 where the kiln and grain store are separated by the malting floor.

Or, paraphrasing some of Stanley Spencer's observations:

'The ghostly presence of the malthouses in the maze of Cookham' has been brought to earth and given a firm location.

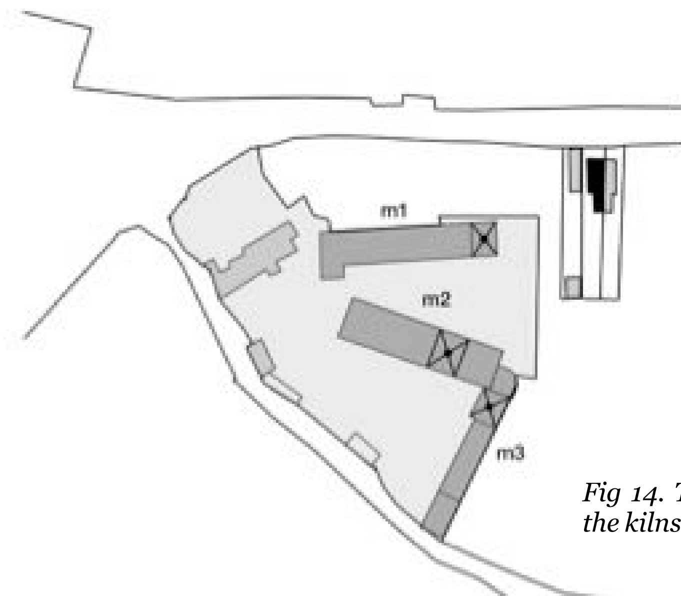


Fig 14. The locations of the kilns and their cowls

Appendix: Details of model preparation

The footprints and heights to the gutter of the existing buildings were measured using a rule, laser and tape. Where possible, roof heights were measured using a laser tape, and/or calculated by counting the number of brick courses between a known height and a required roof height. This data was plotted on the 1875 OS map and the latter used where no footprint remained today. Spencer's estimates of height of the kiln buildings, foundation to bottom of cowl at 50ft and height of cowl as 15ft were used for the three kiln buildings. Additional and complementary information was obtained via Google Earth and planning documents lodged on the Planning Portal of Windsor and Maidenhead.[44]

Acknowledgements

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Many thanks are due to The Estate of Stanley Spencer/Bridgeman Images for permission to reproduce the works of Stanley Spencer used to illustrate this article.

I would also like to thank the current residents of the malthouses for their interest, support and permission to view the buildings.

Lastly my thanks to my wife, Judith, for her continued encouragement and understanding at all stages of the project.

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30 *Berkshire Chronicle* 28 July 1838, p2. Also, *Windsor and Eton Express* 28/7/1838, *Reading Mercury* Sat 28/7/1838, and the *Morning Advertiser* Monday 29 August 1837.
31 BRO D/ECG B4 vol 2.
32 James Bateman, Map of Cookham, 1859; BRO D/P43 28/3.
33 National Library of Scotland, OS map archive. https://maps.nls.uk/ Berkshire XXIV.7 Revised 1897, published 1899 and 1923 revision published 1925.
34 Notes concerning Spencer's return to Cookham from Macedonia with discussion of his activities and paintings c1919-21, including list of figure paintings 1920-21, pp.41-2. Tate Archive TGA 733/2/128. Kenneth Pople, *Stanley Spencer, A Biography* (1991) p. 178.
35 Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society, *The Scroll,* v. 2,(4) Dec 1973.
36 Photograph provided by Ann Danks and Mr Riccardo. There is also a similar photograph by Francis Frith at a slightly different angle not showing the full roof of the malthouse at https://www.francisfrith.com/cookham/cookham-the-war-memorial-1925_77585x.
37 The cedar tree was located in the front garden of The Maltings and remained a feature of the garden till it was removed in 1982. It is visible in the Taunt photograph to the right of the left hand malthouse kiln. See also Valerie and Robin Bootle, *The Story of Cookham* (Privately published by Church of Holy Trinity, Cookham, 1990) p116. Letter from Stanley Spencer to Desmond Chute, written from Salonika possibly March 1917. Stanley Spencer Gallery Archives. © Estate of Stanley Spencer/Bridgeman Images.
38 Letter from Stanley Spencer to Desmond Chute, June 1916 (from Twelsedown Camp, Surrey), Stanley Spencer Archives. Note where unambiguous, Stanley's notes attached to the picture have been typed in for clarity. © Estate of Stanley Spencer/Bridgeman Images.
39 Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society, *The Scroll*; v. 2 (4) Dec 1973.
40 For a colour version of The Betrayal 1, see Stanley Spencer Archive, www.stanleyspencer.org.uk. © . The Betrayal Version 2, which shows a similar scene is at https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-betrayal-117826.
41 Oast House and The Tannery are now one property.
42 Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society; *The Scroll*: v. 2 (4) Dec 1973.
43 Valerie and Robin Bootle, *The Story of Cookham* (Privately published by Church of Holy Trinity, Cookham, 1990) p. 116.
44 Keith Bell, Stanley Spencer, *A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings* (1992) pp. 409-10. Kitty Hauser, *Stanley Spencer* (2001) p. 39.
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Berkshire Bibliography 2019

Katie Amos

A selection of publications recently acquired or noticed by Reading Central Library.

Kate Behrens, *Penumbra*. Two Rivers Press, 2019

David Bilton, *Reading in the Great War 1917-1919*. Pen and Sword, 2016

Sue Clifford, ed, *Berkshire Schools in the Eighteenth Century*. Berkshire Record Society, 2019

Alan Croft, *There's Always Risk in Movement: tales from old Reading town*. Xlibris, 2018

Ken Delve, *The Military Airfields of Britain, Northern Home Counties*. 2007

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Marion Field, *Reading: unique images from the archives of Historic England*. Historic England, 2018

Jack Fuller, *Huntley & Palmers, beyond cakes and biscuits*. 2019

Ian Hamblin, *This Sun of Reading*. c2011. Available as on-line publication.

Christina Hart-Davies, *The Greenwood Trees, history, folklore and uses of Britain's trees* (2018)

Jeremy Harte, *Reading Lore*. 2018

Jason Hawkes, *Berkshire from the Air*. Halsgrove, 2010

Peter Higginbotham, *Workhouses of London and the South East*. History Press, 2019

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Martin McIntyre, *Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire*). History Press, 2007

Dave Richards, *Global Reading: Reading in the world 7th-21st centuries*. 2000

Babita Sharma, *The Corner Shop: shopkeepers, the Sharmas and the making of modern Britain*. Two Roads, 2019

J. M. Shorney, *Country Hauntings*. Lulu Press, 2018

Kathy Tytler, *The Ballad of the Forbury Lion*. 2012

Jean Watkins, *Precarious Lives*. Two Rivers Press, 2018

David Wilkinson, *The Death of a Hero: the quest for First World War poet Richard Aldington's Berkshire retreat*. Pen and Sword, 2016

Other accessions

Katie Amos, *Welcome to the magical world of pantomime at the Hexagon*. 2018

A. Clarke and M. Fulford, *Silchester Roman Town – the Insula IX 'Town Life' Project –Interim reports 1997-2000*

The Jewish Community in Reading (a collection of press cuttings) 2019

Shrivenham Post (a bound collection of newspapers from 1945 by the Shrivenham American University)

West Berkshire Heritage, *Donnington Castle. Heritage guide no. 2*. West Berkshire Museum, 2016