

# **Berkshire Old and New**

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# **Berkshire Local History Association**

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The Association would like to express its thanks to all those who helped by assisting with the various stages of producing this issue of the journal.

## *Cover illustrations*

Front: Philbrick's tannery by the Kennet and County Lock, c. 1895.

Back: Inside an early nineteenth-century maltkiln.

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# Philbrick's Tannery on Katesgrove Lane, Reading

**Evelyn Williams**

## **Introduction**

Philbrick's Tannery on the south bank of the Kennet in Katesgrove Lane operated for over a hundred years from the 1830s to the 1930s and was run by four generations of the Philbrick family.

During this period the area of Katesgrove along the Kennet developed as an industrial area of Reading with housing built to meet the needs of an expanding local population.

This history of the tannery and its industrial operations will also describe the participation of the family in the civic and social life of the town.



*The Kennet and County Lock, Philbrick's Tannery on the right with louvred windows, c. 1895. Image courtesy of Reading Borough Libraries.*

## **Tanning in Reading in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries**

New business opportunities for the leather trade opened up with legislative changes 1830.<sup>1</sup> These made it possible for the trades of tanner and currier to combine. Before this a tanner was responsible for tanning the leather after which the currier stretched and finished it for use. The Act also repealed taxes and duties on leather.

Reading may not have had an important tannery when Mavor carried out his survey of the agriculture of Berkshire at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Wantage, he highlighted that Sylvester's tannery was 'the largest tanyard in the kingdom'. For Reading, malting, brewing and light fabrics were important industries and he then went on to say that sailcloth and sacking were more important and employed 500 people.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside eloquent descriptions of selected Reading businesses in 1861, the iron foundry, brewery and biscuit factory, Measom mentions the trade in timber and oak bark, the latter being an essential input to the tanning process at that time.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from Philbrick's tanyard on Katesgrove Lane there were other tanneries east along the Kennet in the mid-nineteenth century but from the 1870s onwards C. & G. Philbrick were the only tannery operating in Reading.

### **Philbrick's tanyard**

Unfortunately business records have not survived. Directories, census records, notices in the local press and news reports of events give context and in some cases evidence of the operation of the business during its life.

### **The business**

The first mention of a tannery in Katesgrove discovered so far is in a 1716 counterpart lease between Edward Plumer and Samuel Bellchamber. This mentions a messuage and dwelling house in 'Kattsgrove Lane' and also 'Tannyard, Tannpitts, Barnes, Stables and all manner of outhouses....'<sup>4</sup> On dates either side of this there are other deeds that mention tanners in the same area. Possibly the same Samuel Bellchamber, described as a tanner, and his wife leased land and buildings in 'Cattlesgrove or Cattesgrove' in 1700.<sup>5</sup> By 1722 the tanner on 'Katsgrove Lane' was Samuel Wheat the older who leased land from Mr Thomas Terrell, gentleman, for 11 years.<sup>6</sup>

The Victoria County History says that Philbrick's tanyard was purchased from Mr George Higgs who carried on the business there before 1832.<sup>7</sup> A 'Mr Higgs of Reading' purchased the tanning equipment of Whitfield Tanyard at Wantage, sometime after 1825.<sup>8</sup> George Higgs also leased 61 St Mary's Butts, which was used in the leather trade, and leased property in Katesgrove Lane.<sup>9</sup>

Possibly the first mention of Philbricks as curriers in Reading is in a 'DOG LOST' notice in the *Berkshire Chronicle* on 5 November 1825. Anyone who found the terrier going by the name of 'Flora' was asked to 'bring the dog to the Town Crier or Messrs Philbrick's curriers and leather cutters, London Street, Reading'. A reward of half a guinea (55p) was offered for its return.

Although Reading had several curriers and leather sellers in 1827, including Samuel and Thomas Philbrook (sic) at 4 & 5 London Street, no tanners are listed.<sup>10</sup> A few years later in 1837 J(ohn) & T(homas) Philbrick appear listed as tanners at 1 Horn Street (now Southampton Street).<sup>11</sup> In the 1850s John Philbrick is listed as a tanner in Katesgrove<sup>12</sup> and, as the Katesgrove area developed, the business address entries on Katesgrove Lane become more specific. The distance from 1 Horn Street to the tanyard on Katesgrove Lane was insignificant and the properties were probably connected.



*Annotated extract from 1853 Board of Health Map Ref R/AS2/4/15.  
Image courtesy of Berkshire Record Office*

Brothers Samuel and Thomas Philbrick, the eldest sons of Samuel Philbrick, came to Reading from Dunmow, Essex. Samuel Philbrick junior

died in Reading in 1830 and Thomas was joined by another brother, John. At some point after that they were joined by Charles, a third brother, but the partnership as tanners and curriers between the three brothers was dissolved by mutual consent on 24 June 1847, with John taking on the business.<sup>13</sup> Charles Philbrick moved to Nottingham but Thomas continued to live in Reading at Katesgrove House until his death in 1854.

## The premises

Some of the earliest descriptions of the premises are in press reports of the two devastating fires suffered by the tanyard in the nineteenth century. The first was on the night of 16 October 1839 and was particularly noteworthy because it was dark and the fire could be seen as far as Woolhampton about 10 miles west along the Kennet.

'The oldest inhabitant of the borough never witnessed so extensive a conflagration here, the reflection of which was seen at Newbury, and was distinctly visible at Woolhampton and other places at a distance.'<sup>14</sup>

The premises are described in the press report as 'Messrs Philbrick, extensive curriers'. Three fire engines were called into action from the Protector and the County insurance companies and St Giles' parish. Fighting the fire proved difficult as the yard was too far away from the source of water on the western side of the premises. Chaotic scenes are described as efforts were made to save the stock and records of the business.

'Most respectable and well dressed individuals were to be seen covered in grease from the undressed skins, and dyed with tan from head to foot—often falling into the tan pits, some of which were six feet deep—the avoidance of which, in the confusion which prevailed, being a matter of no slight difficulty: the books, papers and accounts &c, were removed from the counting house and deposited in a place of safety.'

Eventually the fire engines were brought into use by knocking down a wall but burning materials fell into a back stream of the Kennet and were carried down to St Giles' Mill. The conflagration was brought under control about 4am.

Buildings around the tannery were put at risk of the fire spreading. Mud was put on the roofs of houses in Katesgrove Lane to stop them burning and Perry and Barrett, which later became Barrett, Exall and Andrewes, was saved by pulling down communicating roofs and walls.

The value of property destroyed was estimated at £5,000, almost £470,000 in 2015 money, although the business was only partially insured.<sup>15</sup> The damage and destruction of buildings and stock mentioned were: curriers' shops, store rooms, granaries, ware-rooms for bark, leather and hides.<sup>16</sup>

This fire seems to have been started by boys playing with a turnip lantern. The three boys, Isaac Low, William Benham and Edmund Egg, were

brought before the magistrates but as charges were not pressed they were admonished and discharged.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the damage, trade continued. T., J. and C. Philbrick placed a notice in the local press thanking the 'Gentlemen, Inhabitants of Reading, who so kindly assisted at the late Calamitous Fire'. The notice goes on to say that as a result, they were 'enabled without delay to resume our business in all its branches.'<sup>18</sup>

The fire in 1851 took place on a Sunday during the day and, although not such a great visual spectacle, may have done more damage than the earlier fire.

'In an incredible short space of time, the whole of the warehouses and shops, containing an immense quantity of leather, finished and in various stages of manufacture, were completely gutted, the fire being confined chiefly to the bark barn which contained between 500 to 600 tons of bark, a great proportion of which was "hatched" or prepared for the mill, and consequently very expensive.'<sup>19</sup>

The alarm was raised around 7.15 am on Sunday 3 August and by 12 noon the fire was thought to be under control, only to revive in the late evening. Four fire engines attended the blaze, from the County Fire office, the Phoenix insurance company and two Borough fire engines. The four engines continued to pour water from the Kennet on the site until Tuesday morning. Both Borough fire engines remained until Wednesday evening after which only one remained.

Buildings mentioned within the report are: currying shops, bark barn, engine house, shed, leather warehouses and stable. Attempts were made to save the manufactured and unmanufactured stock of hides and leather. Bark, oil and tallow were also stored on the premises.

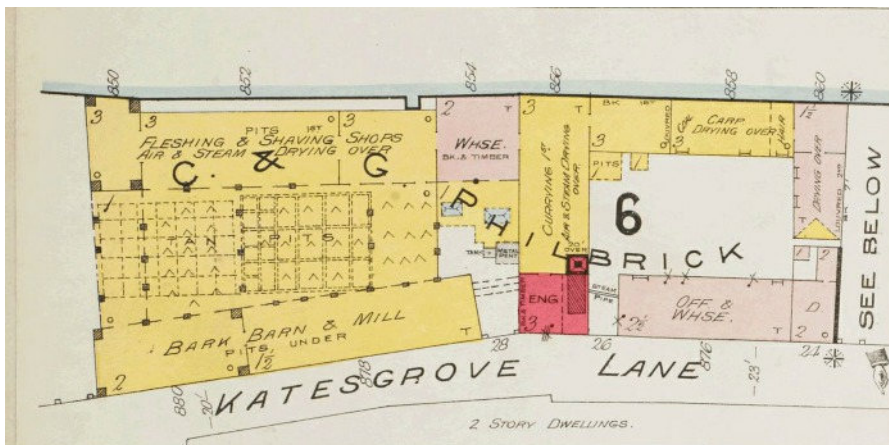
As in 1839, local homes and other businesses were endangered by the fire. Nearby residents feared that their cottages would be burnt down and some had put their furniture in the street away from the fire. There was a danger that the fire would spread to Barrett, Exall and Andrewes' yard next door, which was averted by their own fire engine and a human chain of buckets of water from the Kennet organised by the Mayor. Simonds' timber yard on the opposite bank of the Kennet was briefly on fire too.

The damage was estimated as between £8,000 and £10,000 (approximately £1 - £1.25 million in 2015 money) about twice the value of damage in the 1839 fire.<sup>20</sup> Philbrick's were insured by Norwich Union Fire Office, but the *Chronicle* commented that it 'would not nearly cover their loss'. After this fire the tanyard was completely rebuilt.<sup>21</sup>

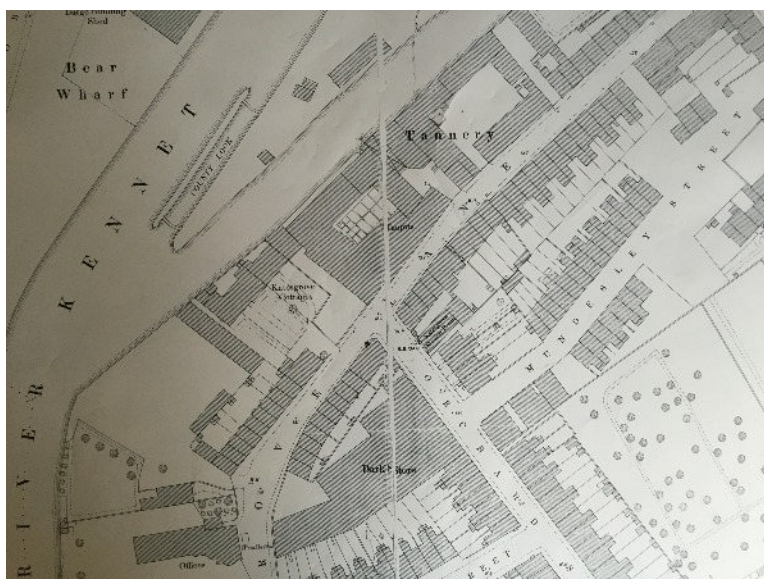
The layout of the tannery in 1895 is known from Goad insurance maps (next page).<sup>22</sup>

The plan shows: fleshing and shaving shops with drying over, tan pits, bark barn and mill with pits under, a warehouse for bark and timber, a building for currying on the first floor and air and steam drying above, a

# Phibrick's Tannery



Extract from Goad Insurance Map © British Library Board



Extract from 1879 OS Map showing Tannery and Bark Store



building marked 'carp', with a coal and hair store with drying over, a drying room, an office and warehouse and an engine room.

By this time there was a separate bark store on Orchard Street. Although the insurance maps do not cover this area, it is marked in the 1879 OS map.

The bark store is last mentioned in directories in 1935.<sup>23</sup> In 1936 these premises were occupied by the Dock & General Transport Co Ltd.<sup>24</sup>

It is likely that the extent of the tannery reduced over time, although the numbering of properties might not be an accurate guide to the size of the premises, because of renumbering and other development in the street. With this in mind, in 1939, the last year that C. & G. Philbrick is mentioned, it occupied only 26 Katesgrove Lane. In 1895, the same year as the Goad map, it occupied nos. 18, 20, 22 and 24 Katesgrove Lane<sup>25</sup> and in 1897 26-28 Katesgrove Lane.<sup>26</sup>

After Philbrick's departure part of the site may have been used by Lewis H. Hobday Ltd, paper stock merchants. By 1949, 26 Katesgrove Lane was occupied by Converters (Reading) Ltd textiles and Lewis H. Hobday was a neighbour.<sup>27</sup>

The tannery site is now under the Inner Distribution Road, next to County Lock.



*Extract from 1931 OS map showing the tannery on Katesgrove Lane.*

## Work at the tannery

In 1860, William Nelson<sup>28</sup> the nephew of John Philbrick worked at the tannery for a couple of months.<sup>29</sup> A description of his time working there survives in his diary entries:

1860

1 January. Chapel morning and evening. Went to tea at Katesgrove with Mont.

2 January. Tan yard. Tea'd at Katesgrove. Doing odd things all day. Mont went to work at Buckersbury first.

3 January. Carrying. Ragging skins all day.

4 January. Carrying. Finishing welts and ragging.

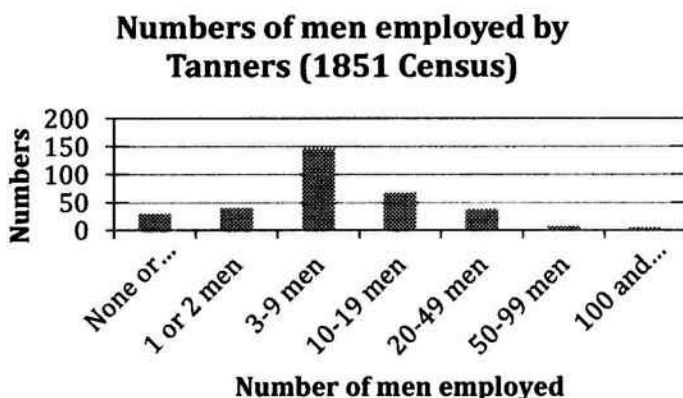
5 January. Carrying. Finishing welts. Ragging horse hides. Writing in the evening.

7 January. Carrying legs all day. Making bacon toaster. Later: Cleaned clock at night. Oiled clock

February. Greasing and hanging up kipps. Stuffing and scouring horse hides. Slicking off and bruising legs.

Family and trade connections facilitated this experience for William Nelson as his mother Sarah Philbrick was John Philbrick's sister. In 1830 she married George Nelson who later founded Nelson's Gelatine of Warwick, a trade which has some similarities to that of a tanner.<sup>30</sup>

Around this time, the census gives some information about Britain's industrial workforce. Nationally, an analysis of the 1851 census showed that 328,776 people worked in the leather trades. The largest group among them were 274,000 shoemakers. There were 25,276 men and women employed as tanners.<sup>31</sup> Of 7,331 employers (masters) making returns, 339, just under



*Source: Peter Mathias, The First Industrial Nation. The Economic History of Britain, 1969.*

5 per cent, were tanners. Among these, 31 either had no employees or did not state the number, and 5 employed over 100.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, the census record for John Philbrick does not show how many employees there were in the tannery in 1851 or 1861. By the time of the 1871 census John had died and two of his sons, Charles and George Philbrick, had taken over the business and it was known as C. & G. Philbrick. Both lived at Katesgrove House and were described as 'Tanners and Brickmakers'. George was the head of the household and employed 43 hands, which would have been in brickmaking as well as the tannery.

By 1881, Katesgrove House had been sold and the brothers lived in separate households with their wives and families. At this time Charles Philbrick was a tanner and currier employing 22 men and a boy. The census entry for George is less clear and appears to describe him as a Farmer and ?(smudge or deletion).

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the tannery employed about thirty people and was an oak bark tannery producing dressing hides and calf skins.<sup>33</sup>

Later censuses do not give information about the numbers of employees, but George and Charles continued to describe themselves as tanners. In 1911, the last census for which full information has been published, Charles was a retired tanner but George was still working as a tanner. Charles A. Philbrick, George Philbrick's son, who was a 'tanners assistant' in 1891, continued the family trade as a tanner and fellmonger. It has not been possible to establish when or whether there was a handover of the business from father to son.

In 1916, during the First World War, 27 employees were in the forces. The tannery claimed exemption for A. C. S. Warrell, as a man engaged in a certified occupation; the application was deferred.<sup>34</sup>

C. & G. Philbrick still existed until around 1939, the date at which it disappears from local directories. Charles A. Philbrick died in 1932 and his son Leslie Philbrick was listed in directories as a Reading resident until 1939. At the time of the census in 1939 he was in Esher and was described as manager of a tannery. It may be safe to conclude that he managed the Reading tannery until its closure, the fourth generation to do so.

## **The Wokingham tannery**

John Philbrick leased a tannery in Wokingham from James Twycross in April 1858<sup>35</sup> and adapted it for fellmongering.<sup>36</sup> A fellmonger is a sheepskin dealer who separates the wool from pelts. In a notice in the *Mercury*, James Twycross announced the transfer and that he would no longer be purchasing 'English Bark and English Hides'. In the 1851 census Mr Twycross was a tanner and woolstapler master and employed 43 people. He had operated at the Tanhouse on Barkham Lane for about thirty years.

John Philbrick's eldest son John moved to Wokingham and ran the business. Census information for the number of employees at these premises is more continuous than for Reading. In 1861 there was at least one employee, in 1871, 6 men and one boy, and in 1881, 2 fellmongers and 5 general labourers.

There were strong links between the Reading and Wokingham businesses. In 1866 Charles Philbrick was fined 6s 6d (32p) for transporting sheepskins from Reading to Wokingham, which contravened the Cattle Plague Regulations.<sup>37</sup>

In 1883 John Philbrick junior died and after this it is unclear who managed the tannery on a day-to-day basis although it was probably George Philbrick.<sup>38</sup>

An employees' dinner to celebrate the silver wedding of George Philbrick and his wife was held in 1894. A newspaper report of the event mentions that an illuminated address was presented on behalf of the employees of the Wokingham Yard and Mr H. Lovelock presented a marble clock on behalf of Reading employees. Over fifty people attended the dinner which was held next door to the tannery at Pilgrim's furniture store.<sup>39</sup>

In 1899 there was another dinner for employees. This time it was to celebrate the marriage of George Philbrick's daughter, Harriet, to Rev C. G. Stokoe which took place at the George Hotel. Again Mr H. Lovelock made the presentation of a silver salver from the workmen at Katesgrove. Wokingham employees also attended and there were about 50 at the dinner.<sup>40</sup>

George Philbrick moved from Reading to Wokingham during 1911 and this became the family home. His wife Catherine died at Embrook (or Emmbrook) House in 1915.

The Wokingham tannery closed around 1920.

## **The tanning process**

The process of tanning is one by which the hides of dead beasts are transformed in a malodourous and noxious underworld into leather. Traditional tanning is a process that takes place over many months as hides are moved from tank to tank.<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately there are no records of production at the tanyard or accounting records which might provide some concrete data on costs, quantities and profitability. Only one original record remains, and that is in relation to one season's bark purchase which survives in the records of the Wellington Estate.<sup>42</sup> Some isolated and detailed information is also available from newspaper reports.

## **Inputs to the tanning process: hides**

Hides were the primary input to the process. As no records survive it is impossible to know the value of the unprocessed commodity and how many were processed.

## **Bark**

Clarkson states that between 1680 and 1830 around 90 per cent of leather was tanned with oak bark and that between 4lb (1.8kg) and 5lb (2.3kg) of bark was needed for each 1lb (0.45kg) of leather.<sup>43</sup>

Tanners held large stocks of this material: 500–600 tons, a great proportion of which was 'hatched', had been destroyed in the fire at Philbrick's tanyard in 1851.

There is some information about bark purchased by the business. A set of six letters survive, sent from C. & G. Philbrick, the Tanyard, Reading to G. F. North, the Wellington estate agent, during 1905. The letters concerned bark supplies from Stratfield Saye and Wolverton.<sup>44</sup>

The first letter sent in May 1905 offered £9 a load 'hatched' and £3 per ton 'in the rough' less 2½ per cent for cash on delivery.

The next letter, dated 10 May 1905, appears to be in reply to a letter from the estate asking for £10 a load. £10 was regarded as too expensive – it was the price of bark going up to London, including carriage. Philbricks compared this to equivalent bark bought from R. Mulford & Sons from the Wellington estate, saying that they would pay the same.

The final four letters were sent later in the year, when bark had begun to arrive at the tanyard. On 28 July they wrote complaining about the poor quality, 'we can only describe it as chopped rough'. The letter on 13 September complained that the quality from Stratfield Saye is still poor, but that from Wolverton was acceptable, and suggested a 10 shilling (50p) allowance per ton. It would appear that an allowance of 5 shillings (25p) a ton was proposed by the estate manager in a letter which does not survive. Philbrick's made a counter offer of £9 per load from Wolverton and £8 for Stratfield Saye.

The final letter of 28 September 1905 set out the account of £128 19 shillings (£128.95) and closed with the comments, 'May we suggest that another season should you be felling any very old dead lopped trees it would be better not to have them stripped.'

If the prices agreed were £9 a load and £8 a load as set out in the letter of 18 September, then the quantity purchased would have been about 6 loads from Wolverton and 9 loads from Stratfield Saye of hatched bark.

Using these statistics to inform an estimate of leather production from the tannery is not possible. Philbrick's, as the above correspondence states, purchased from more than one bark supplier; the quality of bark affected the amount required; the stocks of bark held at the yard from year to year are unknown; and the validity of Clarkson's estimates of bark required in the process up to 1830 may not hold for the early twentieth century.

For the period about which Clarkson was writing, the quantity of bark in a load varied regionally and over time. A load of bark was a variable measure of the volume of bark in yards. By the late eighteenth century he says that a load of 50 yards of bark had been standardised at 45 cwt or 2.5 tons (2.3 metric tonnes). Applying this to the 15 loads of bark purchased from the Wellington estates equates to 675 cwt or 33.75 tons (34 metric tonnes). If 4.5lb of bark was required for each lb of leather, the bark purchased was enough to tan 1,120 lbs (508 kilos) of leather.

### **Lime**

Lime is needed to soak the hides to remove the hair from them. Parrott quotes the quantity required as 2 per cent of the weight of the hide, an average of 1lb (0.45 kg) per hide.<sup>45</sup>

### **Water**

Tanneries need water at all stages of processing. The River Kennet and its channels were also used to dispose of waste from the process, and pollution of the local water supply was a nuisance.

### **Pollution and nuisance**

Operations at a tannery produce waste products which can cause a local nuisance. The problem on the Kennet and onwards to the Thames took many years to resolve. Unlike some other tanneries in Reading, Philbrick's tanyard was situated upstream of the Mill Lane pumping station. The pumping station supplied Reading's domestic water supply until 1852 when the Bath Road reservoir came into operation taking water from Southcote Mill.

Action was taken or attempted under the available legislation. In 1843 the Water Works Company charged Mr Philbrick with fouling the water but because of a difference of opinion about the Act of Parliament the case was deferred.<sup>46</sup>

In February and March 1847 a court of enquiry was held into the Reading Improvement Bill. On Monday 15 February James Burgess, a servant employed by Mr Exall, was asked by Mr Warren, counsel against the bill, and cross examined by Mr Rogers, counsel for the bill, and Mr Keating, about waste from the tannery, as well as privies and the ironworks, which passed down the Kennet to the waterworks at Mill Lane.<sup>47</sup>

Q: Have you seen Messrs Filbrick's (sic) tan-pits flowing into it?

A: I have seen it in the yard.

Q: From the lime-works?

A: From the tan-yards.

Q: Messrs Filbrick's are tanners are they not?

A: Yes.

Q: In a large way?

A: Yes.

Q: Where are their tan-yards?

A: Down Catsgrove-lane.

Q: How far is that from the waterworks?

A: I do not know, about 200 yards.

The proposals in the bill were not implemented but it had created divisions on the Town Council.<sup>48</sup>

In 1865 Commissioners were appointed to study the state of the Thames and were in Reading from Tuesday 14 November after which they moved on to Windsor.

On Thursday 16 November they examined Mr H. A. Simonds and he is quoted in the *Mercury* as saying: 'Our brewery is situated on the River Kennet. We use Thames Springs situated in the very centre of our yard. There is a great deal of sewage passed into the river below us, and above us lime is passed from a tannery, and it is a common thing to see the water white for more than an hour together. That lime killed the delicate fish.'<sup>49</sup>

The impact on fish is contradicted in the *Berkshire Chronicle* report which quotes:

'The pollution of the Kennet has never been sufficient to interfere with the fish, with one exception. There is a deposit of gas tar in the river, arising from the way in which the Gas Company used to conduct their operations, which prevents the fish coming up here. But there are more fish now than there were.'<sup>50</sup>

Philbrick's gave evidence too about how the Kennet was affected by waste from the tanning process, and was reported in the *Reading Mercury* as saying:

'The materials used were lime and bark. Lime was used to separate the hair from the hides, and the hair was sold; none of it went into the river. It was washed in the river to free it from lime. He estimated that 200 gallons of water a week would be required for this purpose. There would be no difficulty of doing this in a tank, but the tank must be emptied somewhere ultimately. The lime water – certainly not more than 100 gallons a week – was discharged into the river, but all sediment was allowed to settle first, as it was sold to the farmers. The water so discharged was, in his opinion, nearly pure, all the scrapings were preserved, and sold for making sise. He had frequently seen tar water in the river, which he believed came from the Iron Works.'<sup>51</sup>

The *Berkshire Chronicle* report, in which Charles Philbrick is named as the representative of the tannery, states that about 700 gallons of water were used a week.<sup>52</sup>

The Borough of Reading's 'Byelaws as to Offensive Trades' of 1887 set out what is expected from blood boilers, blood driers, bone boilers, fellmongers, tanners, leather dressers, soap boilers, tallow melters, fat melters or fat extractors, trip boilers, glue makers, size makers and gut

scrapers under the Public Health Act 1875. The byelaws were still in force in 1910. Waste including hair, fleshings and refuse fragments which were not being processed further were to be removed from the premises, as was waste lime.

## Output

The principal output from the process was leather but other by-products and waste products, as suggested in the evidence given to the 1865 enquiry, were also valuable.

## Leather

The theft of leather from the Katesgrove Lane tannery in 1857 ran as a story in the local press for six months, as those who had stolen the leather and the receivers of leather were charged and brought to trial. The receivers of stolen goods were shoemakers and one of those charged with the theft had previously worked at the tanyard. Through the newspaper reports it is possible to learn the prices of some leather products at this time.

A Coley Street shoemaker, Edward Collier, was charged with receiving stolen leather and appeared before the Borough Magistrates on 11 November 1857. The theft of three butts of leather, two foreign and one English, had been noticed by John Philbrick junior.<sup>53</sup> A butt was valued at about £3 10 shillings (£3.50).<sup>54</sup> Although he knew that some of the leather that had been found at the suspect's house was Philbrick's he was unable to say if it was the stolen leather. Mr Collier said that he had bought £5 of leather from Mr Gilligan, although Mr Gilligan denied this. Also mentioned in the case was leather from Mr May of Hungerford.

This case continued into the next year. George Smith, a shoemaker from Castle Street, gave evidence that Collier had offered him six soles for a shilling (5p) a pair, 6 shillings (30p) in total. He had paid 5s 6d (27p) for them. When the police sergeant came to his house he had handed them over. Edward Lovegrove, an employee at the tannery, said that the soles should have been worth about 11 shillings (55p). The jury found the prisoner guilty of receiving stolen goods and he was imprisoned in Reading Gaol for a year with hard labour.<sup>55</sup>

Two men, Brown and Appleton, were suspected of carrying out the theft by crossing the Kennet in a punt. Appleton had in the past worked at the tanyard. Brown was acquitted in April 1858. The Deputy Recorder told the jury that they needed to take into account whether the evidence of Collier who had received stolen leather, was sufficient. After the not guilty verdict he said: 'It was solely owing to the fact that the evidence of the accomplice was not corroborated that he (the prisoner) had not met with the punishment he so richly deserved.'<sup>56</sup>



Appleton had left the area and was working in Shepton Mallet when he was taken into custody. Appleton was convicted in May 1858, and sentenced to two years imprisonment, but because of a previous conviction, this was converted to two years penal servitude.<sup>57</sup>

### **Spent tan bark**

The sale of spent tan bark for 'horticultural and stable purposes' was advertised in 1865. The price was 2s (10p) per cart load, 5s (25p) per wagon load in the yard; 3s (15p) per cart load, 7s 6d (38p) per wagon load delivered within a mile.<sup>58</sup>

### **Hair**

In evidence to the Thames enquiry in 1865 Charles Philbrick said that hair was sold. Gilligan's tannery advertised it as 'plasterers' hair', but the sale price was not quoted.<sup>59</sup>

### **Lime**

As a witness to the Thames enquiry in 1865 Charles Philbrick said that lime which had been used to separate the hair from skins was sold to farmers, but the price was not given.

## **The Philbrick family in civic life**

### **Local politics**

Thomas Philbrick stood in the municipal election in Church Ward in 1847. The election was caused by the elevation of Councillor Allaway to an alderman. As it is described in the *Berkshire Chronicle*, the nomination of a 'Tory' candidate appeared very last minute and unexpected. The candidacy had first been offered to his brother John and then transferred to him. In the event Thomas Harris won the ward by 170 to 150 votes. The report described Thomas Philbrick as '... a gentleman unable to attend to public business from a debilitated state of health.'<sup>60</sup>

In 1886 George Philbrick was elected as councillor for Church Ward.<sup>61</sup> In 1887 as a result of the extension of Reading's boundaries the number of councillors increased from 18 to 30 and the number of wards from 3 to 10 and George Philbrick was allocated to Katesgrove ward by the Commissioner appointed under the Reading Corporation Act.<sup>62</sup> In 1895 he was challenged in the municipal elections by a 'Socialist' candidate G. H. Wilson who received 144 of the 601 votes cast.<sup>63</sup>

In 1899 he was the most senior councillor who had not yet served as Mayor, but he declined and William Poulton was selected for nomination.<sup>64</sup> He was made alderman in 1904 and he retired from the council in 1919. By this time his son Charles A. Philbrick was following in his father's footsteps

not only in his profession but also in public life. During the First World War he had been seconded onto the council. In his speech looking back over his term the outgoing Mayor, Leonard Goodhart Sutton, mentioned three new councillors including 'Mr C. A. Philbrick, who establishes I believe an altogether new precedent in the council of a father and son sitting at the same time. I congratulate our friend Mr Alderman Philbrick most heartily in seeing his son commence to take up the good work he has himself done for so many years.'<sup>65</sup>



*Charles A. Philbrick pictured as a candidate in the 1920 municipal elections from the Reading Observer, 24 October 1920*

In the 1920 municipal elections, Charles A Philbrick stood in West Ward. He placed a notice in the local press in advance of the forthcoming elections. He quotes his record on the council since being co-opted in 1916:

'During my four years' service my efforts have been chiefly devoted to the health of the borough, and in 1917 I was elected Vice-Chairman of the Health Committee, and while the Mayor was busy with war work was acting Chairman for nearly two years. I have been Chairman of the Maternity and Child Welfare

Committee since its inception in 1918, and have also served on the following Committees: Medical Services; Tuberculosis Advisory; Waterworks, Sewage Disposal and Farm; Public Libraries, Governor of Reading School.'<sup>66</sup>

Charles A. Philbrick's wife, Ethel, was also active in local politics and served as the President of Reading Women's Conservative and Unionist Association for 13 years until 1919.<sup>67</sup>

### **Charities and public service**

In 1839 John Philbrick was elected as one of the five members of the Board of Guardians for St Giles's parish.

In 1877 the subscription promised for C. & G. Philbrick to the erection of the new Town Hall, library, reading room and museum was £100. Fellow

tanner, George Gilligan and Son promised £250. The town's MP Sir Francis Goldsmid gave £5,000 as did Huntley & Palmers.

The Reading Dispensary celebrated its centenary in 1902. Donations to the Centenary Fund were recorded on a board in the Museum of Reading Collection. Those giving over 10 guineas (£10.50) towards the total of £811 1 shilling (£811.05) are recorded individually. Among the distinguished donors are C. & G. Philbrick who gave 10 guineas; George May gave £100, as did Reading's MP G. W. Palmer.

### **Social standing**

If social standing can be measured in column inches, the 1899 marriage of George Philbrick's eldest daughter Harriet Louise to Rev. Cecil George Stokoe, son of the former headmaster of Reading School, was a prestigious and important local event. The ceremony took place at St Mary's parish church. The report of the wedding, including a list of guests and wedding presents, occupied a full column of the newspaper.<sup>68</sup> Miss Abrams and Mr Pendon lent their house, Ascham House, now Yeomanry House, on Castle Hill for the reception for 200 guests.

At the end of 1899 it made the 'Weddings of the Year' article in the *Mercury*. Among other weddings of the year was the marriage of another tanner's daughter, Beatrice Gilligan, daughter of George Gilligan, to P. Hedworth Foulkes a couple of weeks earlier at the same church. Members of the Philbrick family attended the reception.

Tragically, George Philbrick's daughter died in India, where Rev. Stokoe was a chaplain in Calcutta, and the news reached Reading on 25 September 1900.<sup>69</sup>

### **Philbrick family**

Although this is a history of the tannery in Reading, it was a family business and consequently some biographical information about the members of family is relevant to the story.

Four generations of the family ran the business in Reading.

### **The first generation**

The eldest sons of Samuel Philbrick, a currier of Dunmow, Essex, Samuel (junior) and Thomas, came to Reading and worked as curriers. Samuel died in Reading in 1830 and Thomas was joined by his brother John and briefly later a younger brother Charles. Thomas married Judith Collis, the daughter of a brewer from Great Dunmow in 1833. He retired from the business in 1847 and lived at Katesgrove House until he died in 1854.

John also married in 1833 Eliza Hooper of Reading. Three of their sons, John, Charles and George, continued the family trade in Reading (C. & G Philbrick) and Wokingham. John lived at 1 Horn Street and later at

Katesgrove House until his death in 1865. John and Eliza Philbrick are buried in London Road cemetery.

### **The second generation**

John Philbrick junior moved to Wokingham to run the fellmongering business. In 1862 he married Rhoda Frederica Crewe, daughter of a Wokingham draper. In Reading the third and fourth sons Charles and George ran the business. Charles Philbrick was the third son of John Philbrick. He married Euphemia Webster in 1877. In 1889 he began the process of buying seven acres of land at Prospect Park, from the trustees of Captain Liebenrood. The plot was at the corner of Bath Road and a new road which became Southcote Road. The sale was completed in September 1889 at a price of £1,700.<sup>70</sup> The architect for 'Summerfield' was Dudley Newman. Charles Philbrick lived there with his family from around 1890 until his death in 1921. His widow continued to live there until her death in 1942. His eldest son Arthur Philbrick was discharged from the Royal Fusiliers in 1916 on medical grounds and died in 1918. None of Charles' sons continued in the business.<sup>71</sup>

George Philbrick was the fourth son. He married Catherine Louisa Welch in 1869. His eldest son, George Hooper Philbrick, became headmaster at a school in Beckenham, Kent, and his second son Charles A. Philbrick continued the tanning business. George Philbrick's many homes included 21-23 Coley Hill in Reading. He later moved to Embrook or Emmbrook House in Wokingham. In 1920 he moved to 1 Charnham Close in Newbury. Intriguingly, this was part of a former tannery operated by Gilligan and Son that had closed by 1886.<sup>72</sup> Although the Gilligans and Philbricks knew one another, it has not been possible to find any other links that might explain the move. George Philbrick died in 1922.

John and Eliza Philbrick's second son Henry went to Australia in 1857. He appears to have spent eight years digging for gold north west of Melbourne before establishing a tannery at Broadford in 1865. The tannery was put up for auction in 1871 and, at that time, the property comprised 27 tan pits, a drying shed and a bark mill shed as well as two and a half acres of land and cottages.<sup>73</sup>

In 1872 the Broadford Tannery was run by David McKenzie and the Lloyd brothers. They expanded it considerably and new opportunities opened up with the coming of the railway. In 1914 the tannery, by then owned by Lloyd Bros and McGinnis, was destroyed by fire. The damage was estimated as £17,000. At the time it employed about 60 men.<sup>74</sup> It closed in 1915 and operations were transferred to Melbourne.<sup>75</sup>

Whether by accident or design, in 1888 Henry Philbrick was running a tannery in Rosedale, Victoria, which had been established by Paul Cansick also from a family of Reading tanners.<sup>76</sup> The business was described as tanning 60 to 70 hides a week, employing four hands as well as himself and his son.<sup>77</sup>

Paul Cansick was an early settler in Rosedale and the tannery was its first major industry. He had arrived in Rosedale in 1858 and established a tannery there.<sup>78</sup> In 1870 he devised an apparently novel cage, called the Aquarium, to soak hides in the Latrobe River which was reported in the local press.<sup>79</sup> In 1887 he was still living in Rosedale and applied to be discharged from bankruptcy.<sup>80</sup> He and his wife are both buried in Rosedale cemetery.

At the end of the nineteenth century Henry Philbrick managed a tannery in Melbourne. He died in 1909 and was buried in Coburg cemetery.<sup>81</sup>

### **The third and fourth generations**

Charles A. Philbrick married Ethel Bazett in 1900. He died in 1932. Their son Leslie continued the business until it closed around 1939.



*The grave of Henry and Mary Philbrick and their daughter Mary, Coburg Cemetery, Melbourne*

### **Acknowledgements**

In 2014 as a volunteer for Reading Museum I researched a group of photographs of Reading pubs taken around 1910, including the Tanners Arms (now Hook & Tackle). The project involved a small community group. As the pub was in my local area, I continued to accumulate knowledge about the pub and the tannery. In November 2015 I gave a talk at the Hook & Tackle about the pub and the tannery, on behalf of Katesgrove Community Association. I produced two articles for the Whitley Pump, 'Happy Birthday – Hook & Tackle', and 'Smells of Katesgrove – Philbrick's Tannery' in December 2015; the latter is the original version of this more extensive account.

I am grateful to David Cliffe who suggested that I should expand my research and produce this article.

I should also like to thank the following organisations and individuals: Reading Museum, Reading Libraries, Berkshire Record Office, Anthony Leahy (Emscote Mills), Hungerford, Virtual History Museum and Rosedale Historical Society. I had already planned a holiday to Australia when I discovered that Henry Philbrick had emigrated and established a tannery in Broadford, Victoria. I am very grateful to Syd Allen and Brooke Elliot for driving me round the Victorian countryside, visiting cemeteries and helping me track down graves as I sought out links with the Philbricks of Reading. I must also thank my husband who has accompanied me along the highways and byways of this journey.

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Ordnance Survey map 1879, extract showing the tannery.  
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Ordnance Survey map 1931, extract showing the tannery.

# Wallingford's Malting Industry

**David E Pedgley**

Industries that grew up within market towns usually involved the processing of agricultural produce from the surrounding countryside; they were typically weaving, tanning and malting. In the town of Wallingford, formerly in Berkshire but now Oxfordshire, there is evidence for all three, but malting became increasingly important during the late seventeenth century to be the principal trade by the mid-eighteenth century. This trend is illustrated by the following examples of writing from topographical works:

1691 'it makes shift to support itself by its trade of maulting, and its commodiousness for transporting corn and other commodities to London'.<sup>1</sup>

1695 'the mault-trade and the convenience of sending corn and other commodities by water to London do still support it so that of late years 'tis very much increased both in buildings and number of inhabitants'.<sup>2</sup>

1768 'its chief support is the malt trade, for the conveniency of sending to London'.<sup>3</sup>

1779 'the trade of this town ... consists chiefly of malt, which is sent in barges to London'.<sup>4</sup>

1801 '[the malt] trade is in a very flourishing state, the demand amounting to upwards of 120,000 bushels annually'.<sup>5</sup>

1813 'about 16 or 17 malthouses are established here, the owners of which chiefly trade with London, in about 30 hours'.<sup>6</sup>

1830 'the malt trade at one period used to flourish here to a very great extent, but it is much declined; yet there are still some respectable establishments in that business'.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, it is notable that Leland, when describing his tour of England in the mid-sixteenth century, made no reference to malting in his account of Wallingford, in contrast to other towns where he drew attention to the importance of the trade.<sup>8</sup> However, it is clear from the above examples that, despite a similarity of words suggesting an element of plagiarism, the malting industry had expanded greatly from the seventeenth into the mid-eighteenth centuries to become the principal trade, with exports by barge to London. Malting had come to make a significant contribution to improving the prosperity of Wallingford but its decline had started in the early

nineteenth century. The aim of this article is to quantify this growth and decline of the industry (using documentary records of malthouses and maltsters, mainly town rentals, deeds and wills) and to examine the driving forces. No attempt is made to substantiate the assertion in the above quotations that malting was the backbone of Wallingford's recovered prosperity after the Civil War.

## Wallingford's malthouses

Malt is barley that has been allowed to germinate for a few days in a malthouse before being dried, usually in a kiln. Some of the natural starches become converted by enzymes into sugars which, on being dissolved during subsequent steeping, can then be fermented by adding yeast. Beer brewing requires the best barley, which is grown on the light soils of a swathe of England stretching from East Anglia across the southern Midlands to the West Country. Wallingford lies in this zone so it is not surprising that it developed a malting industry. However, a walk around the town today reveals few indications of the industry. There are two recognisable malthouses: long, two-storey buildings used by specialists to produce the malt needed by beer brewers, both domestic and commercial.<sup>9</sup> One is a noteworthy 7-bay survival from the seventeenth century, built of clunch (hard chalk) and rubble, attached to 'St Lucians', a Tudor house in Lower Wharf (Fig. 1); the other is from the eighteenth century in Thames Street, near 'Castle Priory' (the one-time home of Sir William Blackstone), brick built with its characteristic ventilator on the roof ridge (Fig. 2) and now the Wallingford Rowing Club. There are also the remains of other malthouses



*1. The seventeenth-century malthouse attached to 'St Lucians', a Tudor house in Lower Wharf, Wallingford. This seems to be an example of an early type of two-storey malthouse: the upper storey for storage of barley, and the lower for spreading the malt before drying in an adjoining kiln. Photo. D. E. Pedgley*



2. The eighteenth-century former malthouse in Thames Street, now the boathouse of Wallingford Rowing Club.  
Photo. D. E. Pedgley

Owner	Occupier	Location	Map ref.
Robert Baker	self & [Edward] Wells	Thames Street	A
Benjamin Bennett	self	St Peter's Street	B
Henry Blackstone	[Job] Lovelock	Thames Street (Castle Priory)	C
Richard Burgess	[self]	Goldsmiths Lane	D
Richard Cripps	[?] Hornblow	St Leonard's Square (Green Tree)	E
[John] Greenwood	[Richard] Lockey	High Street (Flint Cottage)	F
Thomas Harvard	Peter Spokes	St Martin's Street	G
Robert Hucks	[John] Pickman	High Street	H
Robert Hucks	[Charles] Leaver	High Street	I
Robert Hucks	[Robert Leaver]	Wallingford Castle (Priests' Lodging)	J
Jonathan Mayne	self	St Mary's Street	K
Charles Morrell	[self]	Thames Street	L
James Parker	[self & John] Saunders	Lower Wharf (St Lucians)	M
John Pickman	self	Castle Street	N
John Sheen	[Edward] Wells	High Street (St Albans)	O
Sir Francis Sykes	[?] Harper	St Mary's Street	P
Edward Wells	??	Wood Street	Q

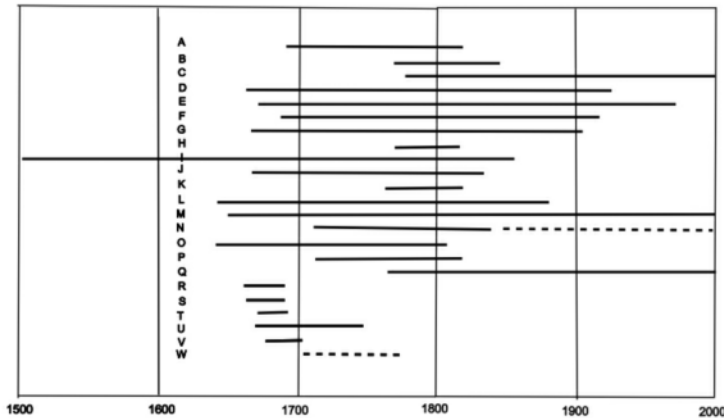
### 3 Wallingford malthouses in 1798

Source: *Land Tax Redemption, TNA IR23/3*. Names in square brackets, and locations, have been derived from other records.

that have been adapted for alternative uses: one in Wood Street became the Comrades Club in 1927.<sup>10</sup> Part of another has doubtfully survived in Castle Street after partial demolition in the 1830s.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast with today, back in 1798 a visitor to the town would have been able to see as many as 17 malthouses, according to a Land Tax Redemption list (Fig. 3).<sup>12</sup> This neatly confirms Mavor's 1813 assessment. Comparison with numerous other records has not revealed any other malthouses around

that year, so the list is almost certainly comprehensive. Some of these malthouses were not pulled down until the twentieth century when they had long been unused. One was in the High Street behind 'Flint Cottage', another in St Martin's Street, and yet another in Goldsmiths Lane where the houses of Goldsmiths Terrace now stand. All six of the above mentioned recognisable malthouses are marked as such on the 1878 edition of the

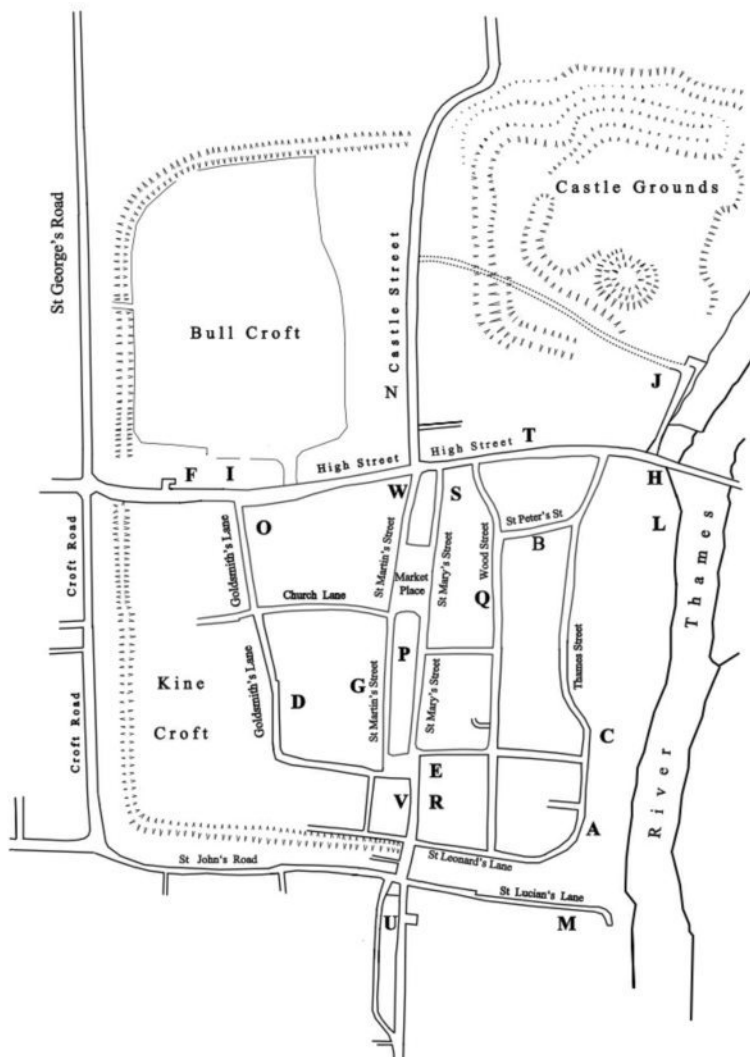


*4. Durations of known malthouses in Wallingford 1500-1950. Dates of extremities are based on available records and are probably correct to within 5 or 10 years. Some had become inactive long before the end of their existence. C, M, Q, and possibly part of N, are standing today. Malthouse W is doubtful.*

25-inch OS map, but only the last one on the 1912 map. Of the 17 owners of the malthouses in 1798, only four were maltsters; nine were gentry who had presumably bought or inherited their properties as investments, and employed others to make their malt. Of the 17 occupiers, ten were maltsters and three others had unknown occupations but were probably maltsters.

## **Duration and positions of malthouses**

The 1798 record lists those malthouses active in one particular year. By using other records, notably deeds, wills and town rentals, it is possible to trace the existence of earlier and later malthouses. Fig. 4 shows the durations of known malthouses, and their locations are shown in Fig. 5. The relative sizes of these malthouses are unknown but most are likely to have



*5. Locations of known malthouses in Wallingford. The precise position of K in St Mary's Street is unknown. There may have been other, but very short-lived, malthouses.*

been small, certainly in comparison with those subsequently owned by common brewers, those who catered for the general public rather than specific outlets.

The earliest known malthouse can be inferred to have been in the Priory of Holy Trinity (I in Fig. 5). Medieval monasteries typically had a brewhouse and malthouse.<sup>13</sup> In 1482 there is a reference in the prior's accounts to a brewhouse, which implies the likely presence of a malthouse. This had probably persisted through medieval times, as suggested by a debt owing for 8 quarters of malt sold in the year 1391-2<sup>14</sup> and for 26 quarters remaining in store in the year 1484-5.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in October 1501 Prior John Thornton and the convent engaged to deliver 100 quarters of malt to William Adeane senior by May 1503.<sup>16</sup> The supply of so much malt by the prior over an 18-month period is consistent with William Adeane senior (along with his brother William Adeane junior) being keepers of the 'Bell Inn', one of the 30 or so properties in Wallingford belonging to the priory. It stood on the opposite side of the High Street from the priory, near the cross roads, and may well have functioned as the guest house or hospitium for priory visitors. The next reference to the priory malthouse is in a 1606 survey of Wallingford.<sup>17</sup>

A few wills from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries reveal the presence of malthouses or malt lofts but they were almost certainly small-scale, short-lived and associated with private houses.<sup>18</sup> However, several less transient malthouses appeared and disappeared between the end of the Civil War and the year of the tax redemption list. The Inn known as the 'Elephant' (later the 'Bear'), built around 1600 as town property and part of the Bridge Estate, once had a malthouse (T in Fig. 5). During the time that John Smith was landlord (1720-1740) he converted part of it into a stable.<sup>19</sup> It had existed from the time when William Elliott was landlord (around 1625 to 1678), being mentioned in his will.<sup>20</sup> Another malthouse had already gone from the back of a property bought by Richard Forty in 1698.<sup>21</sup> This was on the site of present-day Champions, ironmongers (not shown in Fig. 5) at the north end of St Mary's Street and had belonged to Bernard Day maltster, but probably later pulled down by his son, another Bernard Day. There was also a long-gone malthouse on the south side of St John's Green (U in Fig. 5), just outside Wallingford's South Gate in the Saxon ramparts. It belonged to the parish of St Leonard in 1678, when it was named in a church terrier as going with a house that constituted one of three parts of a property (the other two parts belonging to the town and the Bridge Estate).<sup>22</sup> By 1710 the house and malthouse had become town property, leased to Edward Middleton according to his will, and the house was used as the Grammar School that had been founded by Walter Bigg in 1659.<sup>23</sup> When in 1746 the Corporation ordered repairs to the schoolhouse the malthouse was to be pulled down.<sup>24</sup> One more malthouse was, in 1683, at

the rear of where the Corn Exchange now stands (not shown in Fig. 5) on the east side of Market Place, but it seems to have been demolished soon after.<sup>25</sup> As for later formations, there is no clear evidence for any new malthouses after 1770, despite the introduction of the Beer Act in 1830 that encouraged new breweries.

Fig. 5 shows a fairly uniform distribution of malthouse sites across the town. Their positions were affected by three principal influences: (a) availability of raw materials, most prominently barley; (b) demand for malt from brewers; (c) ability to reach the brewers. All the malthouses were close to roads and were therefore accessible to carts coming from the surrounding countryside. Six of the malthouses were close to the Thames and therefore to barges that could call at the wharfs situated, at various times, near J, L, A and M. These would have been sailed to London breweries by local as well as more distant barge-masters. The Thames and its tributary the Lea were the principal routes for river-borne malt into London. Malthouses in the towns distant from the Thames are more likely to have served with relative ease the local breweries, both private and common.

### Number of malthouses

Variation with time in the number of malthouses is shown in Fig. 6, which gives totals at 25-year intervals derived from Fig. 4. The main features are: (a) a sharp rise after the mid-seventeenth century, following the Civil War, (b) little change until mid-eighteenth century, (c) a further rise in late eighteenth century, and (d) a progressive fall throughout much of the nineteenth century to only three by its end. These changes are reflected in the quotations at the start of this article. Increased activity during the later seventeenth century seems to have led to some evasion in payment of local taxes due. In 1686 the Corporation made an order to those maltsters wishing to receive barley into their malthouses or granaries that it should be laid out in the Market Place for an hour (presumably for inspection and assessment) or else the accustomed toll should be paid, on pain of payment of two shillings to the Corporation for default.<sup>26</sup> The later rise in the eighteenth century is reflected in an increase in malt production, as recorded in the following figures noted by Clitheroe.<sup>27</sup>

5-year averages of malt made ending midsummer

1754 49,172 bushels

1759 58,626

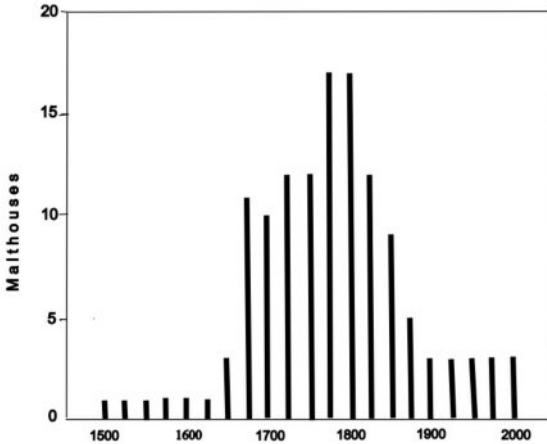
1764 97,370

1769 101,086

1774 113,135

1779 107,254





*6. Number of Wallingford malthouses at 25-year intervals 1500-1950, derived from Fig. 4.*

Clitheroe attributed this doubling of production to the influence of Sir William Blackstone MP (his brother-in-law) in the establishment of two turnpike roads through Wallingford. The north-south road, between Oxford and Reading, included a new bridge over the Thames at Shillingford, a few kilometres north of Wallingford.<sup>28</sup> But this bridge opened in 1767, after the increase in malt production had started.<sup>29</sup> It therefore seems unlikely the turnpike would have had much effect on that production, although it may have aided the carting of barley from the Oxfordshire side of the Thames into the malthouses of Wallingford.

The subsequent decline is mirrored in the 1830 quotation above and is confirmed by reference to only nine malthouses in a survey of town inhabitants in 1846.<sup>30</sup> However, the apparent earlier stability in numbers for around a hundred years after the Civil War does not reflect the failure within decades of four early malthouses accompanied by the long-term success of four others, all in the second half of the seventeenth century (Fig. 6). Enthusiasm then, coupled with ignorance and inexperience, may account for the early failures; and perhaps the fire that severely damaged two malthouses in 1685 induced some re-thinking.<sup>31</sup>

What caused these great changes over time in Wallingford's malting industry? Two principal influences can be examined: the demand for malt from London and the ability to satisfy that demand through delivery using the Thames. Much of the malt arriving in London would have been for common brewers, particularly the large ones that had developed by the end of the eighteenth century. During the Civil War brewing continued but the coming of the Commonwealth, with its Puritan attitudes, saw vigorous controls. Nevertheless, at least some breweries survived. For example, Walter Bigg, of St Giles in the Fields, a native of Wallingford, bequeathed to

his son David, by his will dated 1659, a brewhouse among several properties in the parish of St Giles.<sup>32</sup> With the ending of the Commonwealth, brewing in London was renewed but was soon severely cut back by the Great Fire of 1666 in the city, when 16 breweries were destroyed, although Bigg's brewery would have survived because the parish of St Giles was outside the city.<sup>33</sup>

Other connections between London brewers and Wallingford are further illustrated by Michael Knight, brewer of Clerkenwell, who had property in Wallingford and bequeathed in 1672 a legacy of £70 a year to William Cook, a maltster of Wallingford.<sup>34</sup> Cook sold malt to Knight as revealed by Cook's will, dated 1672, in which he records £60 owing from Knight 'for malt and other reckonings.'<sup>35</sup> Knight may have had links with Wallingford other than commercial for he bequeathed £400 to purchase land, half of the rents from which were to be for the use of the master of the free school. This was the school that had been founded by Walter Bigg, so it is tempting to wonder if Knight and Bigg were well acquainted as fellow brewers in London. Another connection was William Burley, maltster of Wallingford and later Goring, who was an employee and agent of Henry Cross of Clerkenwell, brewer and maltster, according to a 1672 case in Chancery.<sup>36</sup> One more example of a Wallingford connection is provided by William Hucks of St Giles in the Fields, a leading London brewer (later official brewer to the royal household), whose mother came from Abingdon and who had married a sister of John Leaver, mercer of Wallingford. Hucks was MP for the borough from 1715 to 1740 and leased the castle from the Crown, including a part of the former College of St Nicholas known as the Priest's Lodging that, when it had been leased in 1669 to a maltster, was 'now made a competent dwelling house and large malthouse'.<sup>37</sup> Presumably Hucks made use of this malthouse but it is not known to what extent his brewery traded with other Wallingford maltsters. This malthouse is the earliest known to have been on the site of the demolished castle, but it seems highly likely that brewing, if not malting, took place when the castle had been very active during medieval times, supplying the needs of not only the garrison but also royal retinues during their many visits. Indeed, in the Earldom of Cornwall accounts for 1296-1297 there is reference to storage of malt in the castle;<sup>38</sup> and in a survey of 1327, among the buildings listed in the inner bailey was a brewhouse, but no malthouse.<sup>39</sup> It seems from these two sources that malt was brought in from outside the castle (from the priory?) and stored there for use in brewing on site.

### **Wallingford maltsters**

Where did those recorded as maltsters in the town have their malthouses? Almost all can be associated with the known malthouses A to W. Apart from one or two examples where their malthouse seems to have stood elsewhere, most of the remainder are probably similarly associated, but the evidence is

lacking to make the connections. Some may have been employees rather than owners, and this is more likely to be true for the second half of the nineteenth century when there were far fewer malthouses. These were probably the largest ones to survive until then, each employing several workers, whereas some at least of those in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may well have been 'one-man' malthouses worked by un-named employees rather than the owners.

Who were these maltsters? Of 60 men described as maltsters at least once in the records before 1800, 31 left wills, among which 19 called themselves 'maltster'; six were gentry and the remainder of the 31 were substantial traders (corn dealer, draper, grocer).<sup>40</sup> Of these 60 maltsters, many were sometimes described as 'gentleman', seven served as mayor and three others as alderman. It is clear that maltsters were often prominent inhabitants of the town.

## **Wallingford brewers**

In addition to the records of malthouses and maltsters, further evidence for the size of the trade is suggested by records of beer brewers, for malting and brewing are mutually dependent. The extent of brewing in Wallingford, ranging from small-scale domestic brewhouses to common breweries, should therefore cast further light on the extent of malting in the town. Who were the beer brewers in Wallingford? This is a big subject that can only be touched upon in this article. From medieval times there were alehouse keepers or tipplers; many are named in the town records that start in the early thirteenth century.<sup>41</sup> They were often brewers as well, so in-house brewing seems to have been widespread in the absence of any common brewer. The source of much of their malt may well have been the priory, which had the only known malthouse at that time. It was noted above that the priory had agreed in 1503 to provide the Adeanes, who were keepers of the 'Bell' inn, with 100 quarters of malt. William Adeane junior was described as being a brewer as well as an innkeeper.<sup>42</sup>

Who possessed a brewhouse? Using some hundreds of Wallingford probate records from the late fifteenth century onwards it is possible to get a picture of at least some of those who had individual brewhouses. Inventories accompanying wills are the main source but they become scarce after the mid-eighteenth century, when wills themselves must be relied upon. These brewhouses were almost wholly confined to post-war years until the coming of a common brewer (in the mid-eighteenth century). Notable among those with brewhouses were innkeepers but there were also traders and craftsmen as well as some prominent householders. These would have acquired their malt from local maltsters, a few of whom also had their own brewhouses.

The following details may be used to suggest the size of demand for malt by Wallingford innkeepers, who can be expected to have been very busy on regular market and fair days, as well as on special occasions. In contrast to the many alehouses in the early sixteenth century, the 'Bell' seems to have been the only inn. However, by the time of the 1548 survey, the 'King's Head' had appeared on the corner of the cross-roads opposite the 'Bell', but it had become re-named (perhaps more appropriately, following the death of king Henry VIII in 1547) as the 'New Inn' in 1551 and 1554. A little to the east along the High Street stood the 'George' inn, mentioned in a 1561 amendment to the 1548 survey and therefore presumably built between those two years. It was at the 'George', in 1637, that the landlord Francis Smith rejected an order from the Commissioners for Brewing and Malting to stop brewing there and not 'carry it forth at his gate', which implies perhaps that he was trying to be a common brewer.<sup>43</sup> Was this order an attempt to enforce the Maltsters' Articles promulgated by Charles I to reform the malting trade?<sup>44</sup> Lastly, still further east, was the already-mentioned 'Elephant' inn, first recorded in the town survey of 1606, when it was 'late built'.<sup>45</sup> All four inns were conveniently placed for travellers using the bridge over the Thames at the east end of the High Street.

A big change took place immediately after the Civil War. Only the 'George' had survived as an inn: by 1650 the fate of the 'New Inn' is unknown but it had probably become a private house, and the 'Bell' and the 'Elephant' had become simple alehouses. They had joined 30 others, but these were considered by the Corporation to be too many and 20 were suppressed with the remainder largely clustered in or near the Market Place.<sup>46</sup> Some of these developed into inns during the later seventeenth century.<sup>47</sup> But inns then were not large establishments. The 'Bell', for example, had 2 parlours and 3 chambers over;<sup>48</sup> the 'Mermaid' had 2 parlours, a hall, a buttery and 4 chambers;<sup>49</sup> whereas the 'George' had 2 parlours, a hall, a buttery, a dining room and 5 chambers.<sup>50</sup> All three had their own brewhouses and kitchens, of course. Five inns continued to flourish into the twentieth century. Together, inns and alehouses would have encouraged an increase in malt production for in-house brewing, but the extent cannot be quantified.

### **The Wells brewery**

Edward Wells became the first common brewer in Wallingford: around 1760, when his brewhouse had been newly erected at the north end of Goldsmiths Lane.<sup>51</sup> The establishment of this common brewery can perhaps be related to the appearance of excise officers in Wallingford – first recorded in 1773. In the 1798 land tax redemption list, an Edward Wells was the only brewer that owned a malthouse and he also occupied two others. He was the third of five generations of brewers with that name. Mavor stated

in 1813: 'the brewery belonging to Mr Wells is reckoned the largest in the county'. He then owned eight inns and public houses in Wallingford alone; and on his death, in 1826, he owned more elsewhere in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, so it is not surprising that he needed three malthouses.<sup>52</sup> These three (D, E and F) were still in use (by the Wallingford Brewery Company<sup>53</sup>) at the time of the 1910 national valuation.<sup>54</sup> Two were owned by the Brewery and the other by Wilders, agricultural engineers, who also had the St Lucians malthouse (M), although that was then out of use and occupied by the Miniature Rifle Club. Two other malthouses existed, C and F, but were also unused. These records help to illustrate the reasons for decline in the malting industry.

From its founding around 1760 the Wells common brewery continued to have a monopoly until the 1820s, after which a few other breweries came and went. One that lasted 60 years was set up by John Coles at the south end of Goldsmiths Lane, around 1827 as can be inferred from the highways rates for the parish of St Leonard.<sup>55</sup> He was followed there in 1830 by William Baker, but in 1832 William Spencer acquired the brewery<sup>56</sup> and had it for 30 years until he was bankrupt in 1862.<sup>57</sup> However, Spencer was a tenant, for John Coles still had the brewery at his death in 1841,<sup>58</sup> when it passed to his son John Robert Coles. Following William Spencer's bankruptcy, the Hilliards acquired the brewery by 1863<sup>59</sup> until it was sold in 1888.<sup>60</sup> In addition to this relatively long-lived competitor to Wells, there were a couple of other small breweries. John Child had been landlord of the 'Queen's Head' since 1812 and was described as a brewer in 1823.<sup>61</sup> In the 1850s Frederick Francis had a small brewery with his beer-shop in the former 'Globe' on the High Street, but he may well have had problems in managing this brewery for in 1860 a boy accidentally fell into a boiling copper, though fortunately he was able to draw himself out;<sup>62</sup> and in 1862 fire threatened his brewery and house.<sup>63</sup> He soon moved to become managing clerk at Hilliard's brewery. No new breweries appeared in Wallingford afterwards, reflecting a county-wide trend.<sup>64</sup> However, for a few years, 1877 to 1887, John Smith Bartholomew was described as a brewer when living in Wallingford but his business must have been elsewhere, perhaps in Devizes where he later went to join the Wadworth Brewery. These common brewers, large or small, would have provided beer not only for home consumption but also for beer-houses (following the Beer Act of 1830, and which were sometimes attached to the breweries) and particularly for inns.

It is worth mentioning in this context that at least one substantial maltster appears not to have wished to become a brewer. Jeremiah Morrell came from Guildford to Wallingford in 1740; he and his descendants occupied Bridge House with its malthouse for over a hundred years. However, his grandson Mark Morrell was apprenticed to a Southwark

brewer in 1786 and, along with his brother James, in 1797 he joined the Lion Brewery of Oxford.<sup>65</sup> With financial assistance from their uncle Robert Morrell, a successful Oxford solicitor, the brothers acquired the business and greatly expanded it into the Morrell Brewery. Presumably they thought this a more profitable venture rather than opening a new brewery in Wallingford in competition with Wells.

### **Malting and the Thames**

In contrast to the relative ease of maltsters supplying local breweries, for malt to reach the big common brewers in London the only efficient way before the mid-nineteenth century was by water – sea or river. Barges from the north used the Lea; those from the west used the Thames. Wallingford maltsters interested in London trade were therefore dependent on Thames barge-masters, but the proportion of Wallingford malt that went to London breweries rather than local ones cannot be assessed.

Upstream navigation of the Thames from London by late medieval times had become effectively limited to Henley as a result of the construction of weirs, particularly for servicing water mills, but later introduction of flash locks improved navigation.<sup>66</sup> Examples of weirs from 1576 are provided by John Bishop in a list (quoted by Thacker<sup>67</sup>) that includes one just upstream from Wallingford bridge associated with a mill of Ralph Pollington.<sup>68</sup> However, by then barges had been able to progress upstream, even if only as far as Culham,<sup>69</sup> for in 1571 a grant of ‘pontage’ permitted a toll of 6d to be charged for each barge passing to or from Wallingford bridge;<sup>70</sup> and by 1699 this had become 12d. Even the bridge itself was considered by the navy to be an obstruction in 1633 because barges wider than 16ft 4in could not pass beneath it (quoted by Thacker<sup>71</sup>). Following the introduction of pound locks near Oxford in 1632, the first barge to reach there was in 1635, so it was probably about then that navigability had improved sufficiently for barges to be taken from Oxford to London calling at Wallingford, although the Civil War would have brought navigation almost to a standstill.<sup>72</sup>

A sixteenth-century reference to trading out of Wallingford is provided by the 1573 probate accounts of Thomas West, who had a half share in a barge and traded as far as London, but malt formed only a small part of his cargoes.<sup>73</sup> Some barge-masters (or boat-masters) appear in records from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries but they seem to have been in a small way of business. For example, Richard Morgan described himself in his will of 1672 as a boat-master of Wallingford but nothing more is known about him;<sup>74</sup> and Richard Norton had a boat that broke loose in a flood of 1687 and drifted downstream to damage Cleeve Lock (at Goring), according to a 1688 Chancery case.<sup>75</sup> John Smith was a boat-master from 1704 to 1720 at least, but he then transferred to become landlord of the ‘Elephant’ Inn. Christopher Morgan was described as a barge-master of

Wallingford at the administration of his goods in 1709, but again nothing more is known about him.<sup>76</sup>

However, a much more substantial barge-master appears by 1750, Greenaway Jaques, perhaps at a time when navigability had improved sufficiently to allow more reliable trips to and from London. Although in 1758 he seems to have wanted to give up his business despite having acquired seven barges (according to a newspaper advertisement for their sale along with tackle and goods)<sup>77</sup> he nevertheless continued. In 1767 he was the owner of a 128ft barge and two other barges of 106ft and 85ft,<sup>78</sup> but he soon retired as a gentlemen until his death in 1799.<sup>79</sup> In the meantime, his son, another Greenaway Jaques, had also gone into the business but perhaps not so successfully: he had to pay a £5 penalty in 1772 for overloading his barge such that it exceeded the regulatory 3ft draft of water.<sup>80</sup> He died, before his father, in 1782, having just put his business up for sale, the advertisement giving details of his barges and tackle.<sup>81</sup> During this time, three other barge-masters may be noted: firstly, William Webb from 1765, who was summonsed in 1773 for damaging Boulter's Lock (Maidenhead) and refusing to pay tolls at Marlow Lock, and who gave up his business in 1778 when he owned a large barge;<sup>82</sup> secondly, Jonathan Hoar from 1771, who also had the 'Blue Boar' (later the 'Row Barge') near the house and malthouse already mentioned and later known as 'St Lucians';<sup>83</sup> and thirdly Thomas Palmer, who had the malthouse in St Peter's Street from 1783, then became a barge-master but was bankrupt by 1794 when his three barges and tackle were to be sold.<sup>84</sup>

These references to individual barge-masters suggest that not all were successful like Greenaway Jaques senior, but they increased in numbers and tended to combine with, or change to, other occupations. Some resented paying tolls at weirs and bridges, as reported in 1750 by Jonathan Parker, lessee of Wallingford Bridge tolls, who complained about boatmen refusing to pay the toll when passing beneath the bridge.<sup>85</sup> Robert Rivers went as far as to force his way through Sonning Lock in 1789.<sup>86</sup> Some, like Greenaway Jaques junior, were penalised by the Thames Navigation Commissioners for overloading.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, problems were not necessarily all of their own making; they could suffer great loss if their vessels sank.<sup>88</sup> It is when these involved malt, leading to recovery of excise duty paid, that we hear again of it being carried by barge. It is notable that only one of these barge-masters was also a brewer.

Lastly, when the old malthouses had long been disused, a huge new building was opened in 1961 by Associated British Maltsters. It became part of Pauls Malt and took up to 60,000 tons of barley a year. Malt was exported by rail across Britain and Ireland. But this business was closed in 2000 and in the following year the building was dramatically demolished.<sup>89</sup>

## Conclusions

Malthouse records provide us with clear evidence for the rise and fall of the malting industry in Wallingford, peaking at the end of the eighteenth century (Fig. 6). These records are broadly supported by the quoted contemporary published descriptions of the importance of the industry. From at least the early sixteenth century there had been many alehouse keepers with implied extensive in-house brewing. Their malt would have come partly, if not largely, from the one known malthouse – in the priory of Holy Trinity, perhaps being prepared for brewing by using the malt mill at South Gate, which existed from at least 1548, according to the detailed town survey of that year,<sup>90</sup> and continuing to function as late as 1770.<sup>91</sup> The priory is not known to have had a malt mill.

Then suddenly, in mid-seventeenth century, immediately after the Civil War, many malthouses appeared, presumably as an accompaniment to the expansion in the number of alehouses. This would have reflected a growing confidence in trade. Although some malthouses were short-lived, probably small-scale, and eventually converted to different uses or pulled down, others were more durable. They responded to a growing demand that would have been largely local at first, although there is some evidence for exports to London to supply brewers with known connections with Wallingford and perhaps also to the large common breweries that were developing there. This state of affairs continued until the mid-eighteenth century when evidence from an increase in malthouse numbers and the appearance of Wallingford-based barge-masters suggests an upsurge in trade to London. It may be suspected that capital then became invested in malthouses and barges. Demand had grown so much that towns upstream from Henley, including Wallingford, had become important sources of malt for London.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, some of Wallingford's malt may have been taken downstream to Thames-side breweries in towns nearer than London, but what proportion is unknown.

The nineteenth century saw a progressive decline in the number of malthouses, but not necessarily their combined output. No doubt several influences were at work. Some malthouses almost certainly became uneconomic or were poorly managed and failed in the face of competition. The brewery and malthouses of the Wells family became dominant, reflecting the national increase in importance not only of combined maltsters-brewers compared with specialist maltsters but also of common brewers compared with licensed victuallers and alehouse keepers, fewer of whom became willing to brew in-house.<sup>93</sup> This dominance of the Wells brewery is indicated by the increasing number of its tied premises. At the time of the land tax redemption, 1798, the Wells brewery owned or leased eight houses in Wallingford; by 1843 this had increased to ten;<sup>94</sup> by 1880 to 16 (of the 34 licenced premises in the town)<sup>95</sup> and by 1900 to 23. In



contrast, Hilliard's brewery had only three houses (and one malthouse, Fig. 1, and M in Fig. 3) in 1878, at its sale following liquidation.<sup>96</sup> It seems that Wallingford was too small a town to maintain more than one successful common brewer. Another influence was the decline in use of Thames barges once the advantages of railways became apparent from the 1840s – their speed, reliability and lower charges, all enabling ready access to more distant sources – although Wallingford's station was 'Wallingford Road', five kilometres from the town, before a branch line was opened in 1866. The decline in malting continued into the start of the twentieth century, when only three malthouses were active, and all used by the one remaining brewery. By the mid-twentieth century, the once vigorous malting industry had gone. The rise and fall of Wallingford's malting industry examined here reflected national trends in production and distribution.<sup>97</sup> No doubt similar trends could be found in other market towns where records are available comparable to those from Wallingford.

I thank members of the Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society who have been assiduous in seeking records that shed light on the history of the town. They and anonymous referees have improved an earlier draft of this article.

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15 Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS: Z/2/1/1.

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20 BRO: D/A1/66/27.

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31 The positions of these two malthouses have not been located; possibly U, at St John's Green.

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33 I. S. Hornsey, *A History of Beer and Brewing* (2003).

34 TNA: PROB11/339/84.

35 BRO: D/A1/56/146.

36 TNA: C5/628/93.

37 Christ Church, Oxford, Book of evidences, p. 906; probate inventory of Edward Cowslade (1684), TNA: C6/273/38.

38 M. L. Midgley, *Ministers' Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall 1296-1297*, Vol. II. Camden Society 3rd series 67 (1942).

39 For a translation of the 1327 survey (TNA: E143/10/2) see page 69 of K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, "Most securely fortified": Wallingford Castle 1071-1540', in K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, Neil Christie and David Roffe (eds.), *Wallingford: the Castle and the Town in Context*, British Archaeological Reports British Series 621 (2015) pp. 34-115.

40 Some of the references to 'brewer' in the records are probably best interpreted not as brewery owner but as 'brewery servant/foreman/clerk/etc', as some others were in fact shown to be.

41 N. M. Herbert, 'The Borough of Wallingford 1155-1400', PhD thesis, University of Reading (1971).

42 BRO: W/JBc/7.

43 *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1636-1637, p. 525.

- 44 Bodleian Library: Rawlinson MSS. D.399, f. 153; (see *Victoria County History of Berkshire*, v. 1, p. 404).
- 45 See note 17.
- 46 BRO: WA/Ac1/1/2, f. 6r.
- 47 'Bell', 'Black Boy', 'Elephant', 'Feathers', 'Mermaid' and 'White Hart'.
- 48 BRO: D/A1/184/16. 1679 probate inventory of Benjamin Coles junior.
- 49 BRO: D/A1/138/96. 1684 probate inventory of Richard White.
- 50 BRO: D/A1/37/62. 1673 probate inventory of James Anslow.
- 51 Bodleian Library: MS Top Berks.b10, p. 47. The founding of this common brewery has been widely but erroneously given as 1720 (e.g., *Victoria County History of Berkshire*, v. 1, p. 409) and attributed to the father of this Edward Wells (another Edward), but he was a fellmonger not a brewer (TNA: PROB11/784/407).
- 52 TNA: PROB11/1716/127.
- 53 Wallingford Brewery had bought the property from the Wells family in 1896. *The Times*, 20 March 1896, 16A.
- 54 Oxfordshire Record Office: DV X1/3.
- 55 BRO: D/P137/20/1.
- 56 See note 37.
- 57 *London Gazette*, 8 August 1862.
- 58 TNA: PROB11/1960/320.
- 59 See note 79.
- 60 See note 79. They erected the Sanitary Steam Laundry on the site.
- 61 Pigot & Co. Directory (1823).
- 62 *Oxford Chronicle*, 8 September 1860, 8D.
- 63 *Oxford Chronicle*, 22 February 1862, 7D.
- 64 T. A. B. Corley, 'The old breweries of Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* v. 71 (1980-81) pp. 79-88.
- 65 B. Allen, *Morrells of Oxford* (1994).
- 66 R. H. C. Davis, 'The ford, the river and the city', *Oxoniensia*, v. 38 (1973) pp. 258-67.
- 67 F. S. Thacker, *The Thames Highway* (new edition 1968) p. 50.
- 68 Ralph Pollington had erected fulling mills on Crown land near the Bridge leased to him in 1549 (TNA: E112/2/9).
- 69 R. B. Perbady, 'Navigation on the River Thames between London and Oxford in the Late Middle Ages: A Reconsideration', *Oxoniensia*, v. 61 (1996) pp. 311-40.
- 70 BRO: W/IC3.
- 71 See note 67, p. 191.
- 72 I. G. Philip, 'River navigation at Oxford during the Civil War and Commonwealth', *Oxoniensia*, v. 2 (1937) pp. 152-65.
- 73 M. Prior, 'The accounts of Thomas West of Wallingford, a Sixteenth-Century Trader on the Thames', *Oxoniensia*, v. 46 (1981) pp. 73-93.
- 74 TNA: PROB11/342/61.
- 75 TNA: C6/261/74 His boat's name was 'Royal Oak'.
- 76 BRO: D/A1/205/25.
- 77 *Oxford Journal*, 17 June 1758.
- 78 J. Burton, *The present state of navigation on the Thames considered* (1767) p. 45.
- 79 BRO: D/EH B13/492.

- 80 BRO: D/TC1. See *Thames Navigation Commission Minutes 1771-1790*. Berkshire Record Society, v. 11 (2008).
- 81 *Oxford Journal*, 31 August 1782.
- 82 *Oxford Journal*, 4 July 1774.
- 83 See note 69.
- 84 *Oxford Journal*, 20 December 1794.
- 85 BRO: WA/AC1/1/2, f. 341r.
- 86 See note 69.
- 87 See note 69.
- 88 For example, BRO: Q/SMO2, Easter 1754; Q/SMO3, Midsummer 1760; Q/SMO6 Midsummer 1765; Q/SO6, July 1788.
- 89 *Oxford Mail*, 16 July 2014. The site has since been filled with housing.
- 90 See note 16.
- 91 BRO: D/EX6 T2.
- 92 See note 69.
- 93 C. Clark, *The British Malting Industry since 1830* (1998).
- 94 TNA: PROB11/2018/440. Will of Edward Wells, dated 21 January 1843.
- 95 BRO: PS/W1/4. Registers of alehouse licences.
- 96 *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 6 July 1878.
- 97 P. Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England 1700-1830* (1959); T. R. Gourvish and R. G. Wilson, *The British Brewing Industry 1830-1980* (1994).

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## Katie Amos

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