

A Brief History of The Maltings, Station Road, Alne

The Maltings sits at the junction of Station Road and Forest Lane, three quarters of a mile north of Alne village, in the area known as Alne Station.

There is no evidence of the building on an Ordnance Survey map of the area from 1852 but it does appear on the next map of 1892.



The Maltings marked in **Blue** on map dated 1892

As well as the malthouse itself, the development consisted of Milnthorpe House, a large residence attached at the south end; a number of outbuildings including a stable block; and a cottage at the rear, Malt Kiln Cottage.

Photo taken in 1967



People Associated with The Maltings

Alfred Milnthorpe was a master maltster who was born in Harrogate in 1840. He worked in several towns over a forty year period but was known to have been living in Tollerton in 1867. It is likely that he set up the Alne malthouse sometime during the 1860s and his name remains listed, as an Alne maltster, in both the 1890 Bulmer's Trade Directory and the 1913 Kelly's Directory. It is presumed that the Milnthorpe family continued to own Alne malthouse until 1933, when a Thomas Hudson is then listed as maltster.

In the 1881 Census, a Henry Barker, labourer in a malt kiln, is recorded as living in Alne with his wife and six children. However, by the 1891 Census he is being employed as a maltster.

Also mentioned in the 1881 Census is a Richard Smith, a maltster foreman living at Malt Kiln Cottage with his five children. He is still listed as a foreman in the 1891 Census but died in 1892.

His uncle, John Smith, is listed in the 1890 Bulmer's Trade Directory as a malt manager, resident at Milnthorpe cottage. Yet, by the 1891 Census, records indicate that he was a farmer living on Station Road, who employed labourers to work his land. But it is possible that he managed the malthouse as well.

The Malting Process

Yorkshire has long been an important malting and brewing county, and the ever-increasing demand for beer from industrial and agricultural workers in the nineteenth century gave rise to the creation of malthouses in many towns and cities in this region.

It is likely that the location for The Maltings was chosen due to its proximity to the railway and plentiful supply of good malting barley.

The malthouse at Alne was a typical example of a floor malting, with its long elevation and windows regularly spaced. There were two levels, with the upper floor supported by cast iron columns.

The ground floor was the germinating area, and the upper floor was for the storage of barley and malt. Also in the building were steeping tanks, storage bins and two kilns. Six chimney pots sat atop a Welsh slate roof.



A similar malthouse still in use in Warminster. This shows the cast iron columns on the ground floor and a malt plough.

To begin the malting process, the barley grain is steeped (soaked) in water sufficiently long enough to start the germination process and is then spread out on large floor areas in the malthouse. The depth of grain is thickened or thinned to control the temperature - germinating grain produces heat, so this has to be dissipated by gradually turning or raking the grain along the length of the floor. Traditionally this was done by hand using malt ploughs or shovels.

The grain is allowed to germinate for a few days to make the first required changes, or 'modification', within the barleycorn – the conversion of starch into sugar.

When sufficiently modified, the malt, as it is now called, is loaded into the kiln and dried.

The variety of flavours and colours in malt have always been attributed to the maltsters' skills and are mainly linked to the amount of heat used during the kilning process, as well as the time intervals for the different kilning phases.

The longer the grain is roasted, the darker the malt becomes. A pale ale, for example needs a light malt, whereas a stout, like Guinness, requires a dark one.

Up to the Present Day

It is not known when malt production ceased at this location, but it is not mentioned in a 1950 study of Alne which listed local businesses. However, the malthouse building was used for grain storage during the 1960's and possibly 1970's.

At some point Milnthorpe House and Malt Kiln Cottage became separate dwellings and were no longer part of the overall development.

On 24th January 1994 the remaining buildings, now known as The Maltings, were Grade II listed. Various plans were submitted for development of the site and in 2002 an application for alterations to create five dwellings from the malthouse and one from the stable block was successful and planning permission granted.

Finally, in 2003, the malthouse and a stable were converted into six new residential dwellings.



The malthouse before conversion



The Maltings, as it stands in 2021

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Rosemary Kitchman

rkitchman@btinternet.com

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If anybody has any further information or is aware of any inaccuracies in this article, then please get in touch.