



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about BREWERIES

One of the main products of the rich agricultural area covered by The Hundred Parishes is barley, the main ingredient of traditional ales and beer. Much of the barley was malted locally (see the introductory article about Maltings) before being taken to a local brewery to be combined with water, hops and yeast for fermenting into ale. Brewing was a significant activity in several villages and market towns across the Hundred Parishes. Evidence of breweries is visible on several walks whose routes can be downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk – some are noted below.

Process

The principal ingredients of beer are:

- **Malt** – malted barley being the most common cereal used, providing starch (converted to sugar), colour and flavour
- **Water** – known as 'liquor', with local sources, such as wells and springs, providing particular mineral properties and, therefore, character
- **Hops** – providing flavour and aroma, also sterilising the brew
- **Yeast** – for converting the sugar to alcohol and influencing the flavour.

The following is a brief summary of what is a much more complex process:

The process begins with the milling of the malted barley to form the grist, the husks of the barley being cracked open only by being roughly ground. The grist is then mixed with the water/liquor at about 65°C and this mixture is fed into the mash tun where the starch is converted to sugar which dissolves in the liquor forming the wort. The wort is drawn off through the perforated base of the mash tun into the underback and is then transferred to the copper for boiling, hops being added at this point along with any extra ingredients which may be needed for that particular ale/beer. This boiling extracts flavour and aroma from the hops and sterilises the brew. The wort is cooled prior to being passed into the fermentation vessel and the yeast is pitched in, the whole being controlled at about 20°C to allow the yeast to convert the sugar into alcohol.

Development of the industry

Brewing was traditionally a domestic activity to produce a safe drink and took place in a small room which was part of the inhabited building or a separate adjacent building. Ale, and then beer (hopped ale), especially 'small beer' (weak beer) was the staple drink up until the 19th century as the alternatives of water and milk were of poor quality. It was not until the 1800s that a safe public water supply and alternative drinks such

as tea became available. The ale was produced at home for private family consumption; on farms and estates for the landowner's family and workers; and in various institutions (religious communities, colleges and hospitals) for those who lived in and visited them. Brewing also developed on a commercial basis, initially in the inns and alehouses which grew up in settlements and along travel routes. The publican brewer would have had a designated room or a separate on-site brewhouse. The next development was the rise of the common, commercial brewer who brewed in the public house brewhouse for sale there and elsewhere, including to other public houses, or increasingly in an especially designed brewhouse on its own site.

The process described above would have been very familiar to the private brewer of a great house, farm, cottage or institution, and to the publican. All would have worked in a brewhouse which would contain all the necessary equipment and in which most of the processes took place. Thus brewhouses contained the mash tun, copper, fermentation vessel, cooler, barrels and various other vessels, plus equipment for transferring the liquid from one vessel to another. The movement of the ingredients from one stage and vessel to another would have been mainly achieved by human handling and pumping, with some help from gravity.

Through the 18th and 19th centuries common brewers became more numerous in large towns and cities, responding to the increases in demand for beer from the rising populations of these industrial, urban areas in which the quality of the drinking water was declining due to human and industrial pollution. They had at their disposal the new technologies of the industrial revolution – mechanisation, steam power and quantities of building materials such as cast-iron – and were thus able to move away from domestic scale, human-powered brewing to industrial scale production of large quantities of beer to meet the increasing demands.

Although the process remained essentially the same, this increased scale of production impacted not only on the technology used but also the structures in which the process took place. Malt and hops were usually taken in via a lucam – a projecting, covered-in hoisting mechanism to an upper storey – to the malt store prior to being stored in hoppers. After cold water had been pumped up to the storage tank and dry ingredients hoisted to the top storey stores, they could descend from one process and vessel to the next by gravity. This resulted in the traditional tower brewhouse, the top of which was used as storage and also for coolers, with successive processes taking place on subsequent lower floors, until racking and bottling took place on the ground floor or even in a cellar.

The increasing scale of production and use of new technologies resulted in the brewery being more than just a brewhouse, but rather a complex of a number of structures with different purposes which were now on such a scale in themselves that they required these separate buildings – storage, malt mills and mashing in the brewing tower; fermentation and racking in a fermenting house; and a power house

containing the boiler, steam engine, and pumps with its chimney stack and often a water tower. Stables would always have been required for those horses which provided power and those which pulled the drays distributing the beer, while garages would have been required when lorries were introduced. Other component buildings would have included malthouses, racking and bottling plants, cooperages, storage, and offices, often all arranged around a central yard. Adjacent might have been a brewery tap (a bar where the brewery's output could be drunk), the brewer's house and even workers' housing,

Architecture

Most of the public houses and their brewhouses traditionally reflected the local vernacular architecture - timber-framed, weather-boarding and a clay tiled roof. Brick gradually became the building material of choice for both the single brewhouses and the larger brewery complexes, and slate became the more common roofing material. The early brewhouses were generally designed and built by the brewers themselves and brewery engineers. It was they who were most familiar with the process and the most efficient configuration of the structure and the technology in order to deliver the process within. Thus, even during the 19th century when breweries were becoming larger and more complex, brewers' engineers were still the principal designers of the whole complex.

The form of the breweries very much followed the function within. Thus the tower brewery became common allowing the storage of raw materials at the top and the flow of those materials by gravity through the various processes involved in producing the beer. Typical of breweries would be such features as the lucam for taking in the raw materials to an upper storey and ridge ventilators or louvred windows which allowed the cooling of the wort prior to fermentation. In the second half of the 19th century the brewers' architect, an architect specialising in breweries, became established as it became acceptable for them to be involved in industrial building design. With them came the ornamental brewery which was not just a functional industrial building but one which also became a significant structure within the townscape reflecting the size, influence, wealth, pride and standing of the brewer and also as an advertisement for the product.

Evidence

Evidence of all these different types of breweries is to be found within The Hundred Parishes, partly in the form of place names such as *Brewery Lane* and *Brewery House* in Stansted; *Little Brewers*, a cottage in Matching Green; *Brewery Cottage* in Swards End; and *Brewers House* in Dunmow. However there are also surviving examples of breweries from each of the various phases of the development of the industry as described above.



At **Audley End House** the estate's brewhouse was built in 1763 by Robert Adam. It survives and is accessible, although the internal features have now been lost. (Hundred Parishes Walks 21 & 101 go past Audley End House).

Pictured on the left is the Audley End House brewhouse. (Photo by Ian P. Peaty)

Two examples of public house breweries survive, in Radwinter and Little Hadham.

Brewing was taking place in **Radwinter** by the mid-1800s, associated with the village store, which eventually became *The Brewery Tavern*. Brewing ceased but the public house became one of Rayments of Furneux Pelham houses. It closed in 1988 and is now a private house, shown on the right. (Walk 138)



The Nag's Head in **Little Hadham** has the date 1595 above the door, but records of it operating only date from 1735. In the early 1860s a small four-storey brewery was built behind; it contained a malt crusher, 3 iron liquor tanks, a mash-tun, copper, underback, 2 wooden coolers and 4 fermentation vessels. There were various other ancillary buildings. Various brewers owned the brewery before it was acquired by Rayments in 1912. *The Nag's Head* public house is Listed Grade II. Photo: Ken McDonald. (Walk 115).





The stand-alone brewery at **Hatfield Heath** (shown on the left) was built in the early 1800s and brewing ceased in 1900. It was converted to a steam powered corn mill in 1902 (hence its current name), but milling ceased after WW2. Following a period of dereliction and various uses, it is now in commercial use. (Walk 152)



All that survives of the small brewery in **Stansted Mountfitchet** is Brewery House (pictured here). Bottling by hand took place in the cellars. The Brewhouse was located behind Brewery House in what is now Brewery Lane. Built in the 1870s, brewing ceased in 1925. Now a private residence, it is listed Grade II. (Walk 3)

Four examples of industrial brewery complexes survive and can be seen on Hundred Parishes walks, these being in Furneux Pelham, Great Dunmow, Felsted and Wethersfield. All four have been renovated and converted to private residential use.

The brewhouse in **Furneux Pelham** (shown on the right) was built in the early 1860s by William Rayment and the site was gradually developed with the malthouse being added in 1869. Although Greene King bought the brewery in 1889 they continued to run Rayment & Co as a separate entity.



Malting ceased on site at Furneux Pelham in the 1950s and the malthouse was then used as a bottled beer store. Brewing stopped in 1987 although the site was used as a depot for a further 10 years. The site which consists of the brewhouse, malthouse, brewer's house and office, is listed at Grade II and has been redeveloped as private housing. The Brewery Tap, also listed Grade II, survives as a thriving public house. (Walk 112)

The Dunmow Brewery was founded in 1803 and when in full operation had a number of component buildings including the brewhouse, counting house, cooper's shop, stable and a water tower. Over time it had a number of owners, the last being Charrington's who bought it in 1965 and very soon closed it down. Most of the site was demolished in 1987 for residential development, although the Brewer's House, tap house – the King's Head



– and a store survive, all now private residences. Brewers House, pictured above, stands on the corner of North Street and The Maltings, opposite Doctor's Pond. (Walk 126).

In the parish of **Felsted**, Ridley's brewery at **Hartford End** (below) was built in 1842 by Thomas Ridley and was greatly developed by the time of his death in 1882.

It passed down through the family and became the last working independent traditional brewery in Essex until it was bought by Greene King who closed it in 2005, ending over 160 years of continuous operation by one family. The company also built four cottages on the site in Mill Lane for the staff of the brewery. The brewery buildings including the staff houses were recommended for statutory protection prior to redevelopment, but they were never listed, and have been converted to residential use although retaining some classic brewery features such as the brewery tower, the sack hoist

housing
(lucam)
and
chimney.
(Walk 102)



The **Wethersfield** Brewery was established in 1855, a complex of a number of buildings, four of which survive, although none are listed buildings. The founding Raven family sold the brewery to Greene King in 1901 and they continued brewing until just after WW2. The brewhouse, now a private residence and shown below, has recently been renovated; the brewer's house, now called 'Hillfoot House' and the former brewery tap house, 'Brewery Tavern', are also private residences. The former malthouse is now much altered and is the village hall and shop.



This photo shows Wethersfield's former brewer's house 'Hillfoot House' (left) and the brewery's malthouse (right). (Walk 179)

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