

THE MALTINGS

The Maltings now belong to Miss Payne Gallwey and are situated in Nethergate Street. They were probably built in 1775 (this date is inscribed in the brickwork together with the name H. Baker and several other initials).

As in other places during the eighteenth century people drank a lot of beer or ale and the maltings probably served the households as well as the many inns.

The maltings in Hopton are intact and would not take much restoring to working order. Who knows we may be returning to the age of village independence and it could be a possibility. Certainly home brewing is increasing and beer still retains its popularity. In the building can be seen the steeping tank where the barley was first plunged and soaked before being spread over the floor in an even layer to germinate. The grain heated itself after soaking and required ventilating and turning before being placed in the kiln on a fluted floor over a fire. The honeycomb tiles are still in position over the fire area.

This process was done to change the starch in the grain into sugar and took about a fortnight. After treatment in the kiln the grain was allowed to cool and the small shoots knocked off then left until it had softened. The result being malt which was then stored in the side rooms of the building. These are nicely numbered now in a way that modern man would not have bothered to do; the formation of the lettering being so precise.

In connection with the production of malt it is interesting to note how the inns of Hopton have come and gone and some have changed names. The best recorded are:

<i>The Commercial</i>	recorded in 1790
<i>The Bell</i>	where <i>The Vine</i> now is, recorded in 1710
The Vine	recorded in 1820
The Greyhound	the name predates the use of the present building, recorded in 1737, closed
<i>The Cherry Tree or The Cherry Tree and Fen</i>	recorded in 1761; used to be in the building now known as <i>The Greyhound</i> . <i>The Greyhound</i> was elsewhere
The Chequers	in Fen Street recorded in 1737, closed

The recorded date does not relate to any particular incident such as opening or closing but only to a date found on documents used for letting of tenancies or for selling the property.

R. D. Gadsby