

Malthouse Upper Holt Street



A **malt house, malt barn, or maltings**, is a building where [cereal grain](#) is converted into [malt](#) by soaking it in water, allowing it to sprout and then drying it to stop further growth. The malt is used in brewing [beer](#), [whisky](#) and in certain foods. The traditional malt house was largely phased out during the twentieth century in favour of more mechanised production.

The Maltings on Upper Holt Street were in existence from at least 1836 (Commutation map of 1836) to at least 1923 (Newspaper report on Fire at dwellings). 1836 documents seem to indicate the Maltings were part of Chandlers (yard and stabling area) owned by RH Solly. By the time the building was gutted by fire the owner was Mr Francis from Wales, who sublet it to Mr J A Parish and Sons seed merchants.

As can be seen from the photos, the thickness of the maltings walls were 16 to 18 inches thick

The building was partially demolished with only Nos 16 and 26 Upper Holt Street remaining. The upper floors and roofs being rebuilt. (No. 16 has the roof rotated 90 degrees). The dwellings of Nos 18, 20 and 22 were built behind the malthouse, possibly utilising the old buildings foundations as new foundations.

The access to Dovers is between 22 and 26 Upper Holt Street. Part of the land, known as Dovers is formally the yard and stabling area of Chandlers. You can see part of the blackboarded barns on the 1910 Photo from the Church tower.



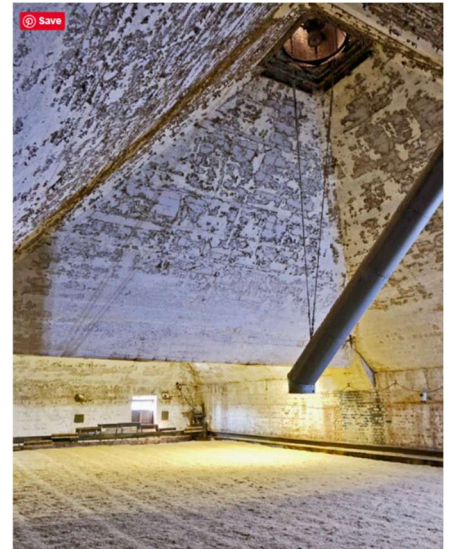
Production Process.

Floor malting

The grain was first soaked in a steeping pit or cistern for a day or more. This was constructed of brick or stone, and was sometimes lined with lead. It was rectangular and no more than 40 inches (100 cm) deep. Soon after being covered with water, the grain began to swell and increase its bulk by 25 percent



Lower malting floor, after water is drained out. Note the raised cistern. The maltster would turn grain to encourage growth. Louvered window panes would provide air circulation.



Oast chimney situated above second floor.

The cistern was then drained and the grain transferred to another vessel called a couch, either a permanent construction, or temporarily formed with wooden boards, on which a haircloth was laid to help warm air circulate under the turned grain. . Here it was piled 12–16 inches (30–41 cm) deep, and began to generate heat and start to germinate. It spent a day or two here, according to the season and the maltster's practice

It was then spread out on the growing floor, the depth dictated by the temperature, but sufficiently deep to encourage vegetation. It was turned at intervals to achieve even growth and over the next fourteen days or so it is turned and moved towards the [kiln](#). The temperature was also controlled by ventilation. A day or two after the grain was turned out on to the floor, an agreeable smell was given off, and roots soon began to appear. A day or so later the future stem began to swell, and the kernel became friable and sweet-tasting. As the germination proceeded the grain was spread thinner on the floor. The process was halted before the stem burst the husk. At this stage much of the starch in the grain had been converted to maltose and the grain was left on the floor to dry. (a base layer of haircloth again was used to aid the drying process.) The art of malting depends on the proper regulation of these changes in the grain. Maltsters varied in their manner of working, and adapted to changes in climatic conditions

The grain was then moved into the kiln area, 4–6 inches (10–15 cm), for between two and four days, depending on whether a light or dark malt was required. A slow fire was used to start, and then gradually raised to suit the purpose of the malt and the desired colour. The barley was then sieved to remove the shoots and stored for a few months to develop flavour.



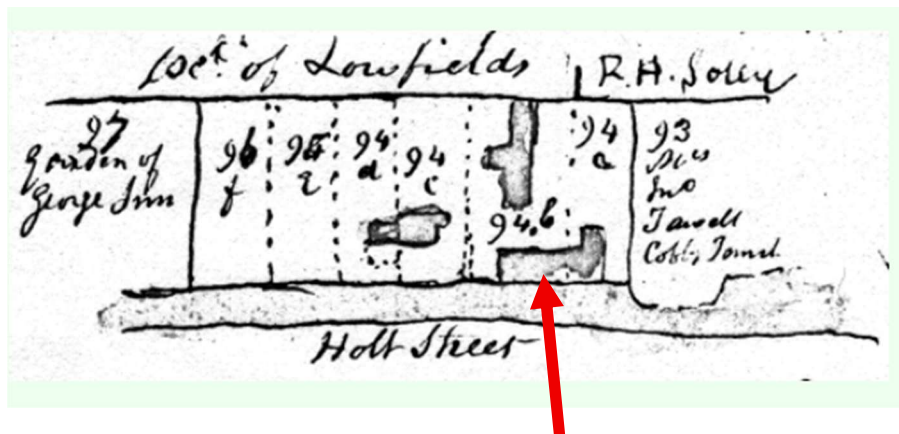
An example of a kiln fire on lower level, that provides heat for 1st floor drying room. Louvered panelled windows provide cooler air to give circulation throughout chamber.



Many villages had a malt house in the eighteenth century, supplying the needs of local publicans, estates and home brewers. Malt houses are typically long, low buildings, no more than two storeys high. The germination of barley is hindered by high temperatures, so many malt houses only operated in the winter. This provided employment for agricultural workers whose labour was not much in demand during the winter months.

During the nineteenth century many small breweries disappeared. Improved techniques allowed larger breweries and specialist maltsters to build their own maltings and operate year-round. These were often housed in multi-storey buildings. It was also more efficient to transport malt than barley to the brewery, so many large breweries set up their own maltings near railways in the barley growing districts of eastern England.

There were also numerous regulations in place regarding the malting process. The cistern and the couch-frame had to be constructed in a particular manner, to permit the excise officer to gauge the grain. The maltster had to give notice before wetting any grain; 24 hours in the city or market-town, 48 hours elsewhere. The grain had to be kept covered with water for 48 hours, excepting one hour for changing the water. Grain could only be put in the cistern between 8am and 2pm, and taken out between 7am and 4pm. It had to remain in the couch frame for at least 26 hours. Once thrown out of the cistern, it could not be sprinkled for 12 days. A survey book or ledger had to be kept to record the process and the gauging of the grain in the cistern, the couch, and on the floor.^[1] The volume of the grain was carefully measured, based upon the mean width, length and height. The duty to be charged was based upon the largest gauge of either the cistern, couch or floor after a multiplying factor of 1.6 was applied to the larger of the cistern or couch gauges.



Red arrow shows position of Malthouse.

Commutation map 1836
 94 (94) (94a) (94b) (94c) (94d) (94e) homestead, yard etc. *R.H. Solly* 1a2r30p
 94a (94a) *Cobbs Croft* 20p free deed of Priory and annual rent of 2d long since laid to *Chandlers* farm yard
 94b (94b) 94c (94c) *Chandlers Mansion* and part of farm yard containing 1r5p free deed of Priory rent 1s6d
 94d (94d) parcel of *The Middle House* sometime stabling and now offices and part of garden to *Chandlers* - copyhold of priory quitrent apportioned 1s6d (lot xii)
 95 (95) parcel of the *The Middle House* - which remained as a double tenement and garden till after sale in 1809 (lot xvi) - copyhold of Priory quitrent apportioned 1s2d

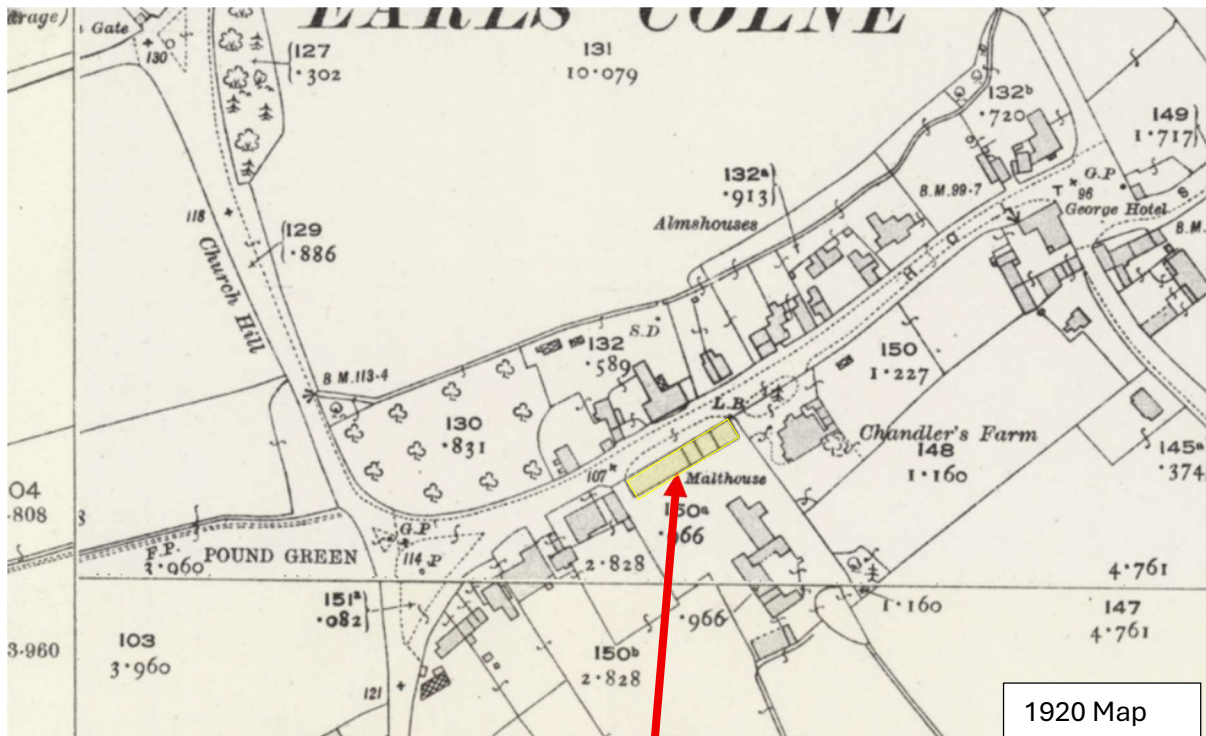


1876 map



1901 map

Red arrow shows position of Malthouse.

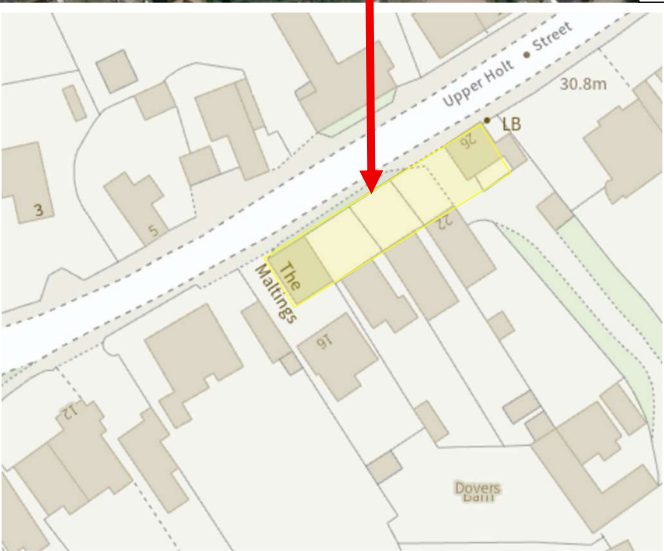


1920 Map

Red arrow shows position of Malthouse.



2025 Sat map



Fire at Earls Colne.

The malting situate in Holt Street, Earls Colne, was the scene of a conflagration on Wednesday evening. The building, the property of Mr. Francis, who lives in Wales, was hired by Messrs. Parish and Sons, seedgrowers, Coggeshall, who used it as a seed warehouse. At the time of the fire somewhere about 20 tons of beet seed were in the building, and it had been the practice for a number of seasons past to utilise the kiln for the purpose of drying seeds.

This process had been in progress for the past six weeks and on Wednesday when Mr. Hall, who was in charge, left the malting at 5 o'clock everything appeared safe as usual. A number of persons later observed that smoke was issuing somewhat freely from the cowl but no particular notice was at first taken of this fact as it was known that the kiln was in use, so that by the time danger was realised the fire had got a good hold.

The Earls Colne Fire Brigade was quickly on the scene under the Captain, Mr. J. Eves, and Mr. W. Poulter, who lives near the Malting, telephoned to the Halstead Police. The hose was fixed to the water main at Pound Corner and an ample supply of water was thus obtained. Really excellent service was rendered by the local brigade who, with many willing helpers, put in some excellent work and prevented the fire spreading. The roof collapsed after the Brigade had been at work some time. The stables adjoining were saved although the partition was slightly caught and the roof somewhat scorched. Only the outside walls of the malting remain standing.

The Halstead Brigade arrived about 9.15 and by this time the local men had the fire well under control, although not actually extinguished. With the help of the Halstead Brigade, who obtained water from a pond situate on Chandlers Farm, at the rear of the malting, the fire was eventually extinguished, but is still smouldering.

The police present included P.-s. Brown and P.-c. Johnson (Earls Colne), P.-s. Havers (Halstead), P.-c. Aves (Pebmarsh), P.-c. Goddard (Chappel).

Mr. J. A. Parish, of Tile Kiln Farm, was proceeding home from London at the time and arrived about 8.20. The Halstead Brigade departed about 11.30, but the Colne Brigade remained until the early hours of the morning to see if there was any further need for their services. Some faggots, a quantity of coke, and a bundle of straw lying close to the furnace remained untouched by the fire. The building was a mixture of brick and wood, the roof being of slate and lined wood. The contents of the malting were covered by insurance. The origin of the fire is not definitely known.



View of Maltings, Upper Holt Street from Pound Green



View of Maltings, Upper Holt Street from Middle of road outside Alms Houses



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Jan 10th 1923 Halstead Gazette