



Edition 3

21st March 2016

## **FRIENDS** *of* WARMINSTER MALTINGS

### **OLD STORE, NEW ROOF**

Our contractors have finished our new roof, which is looking great.



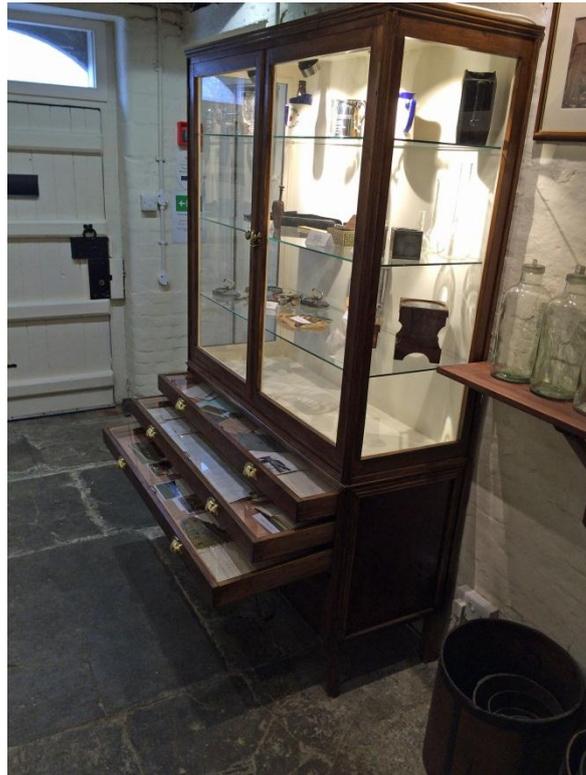
Our next roofing project, which will not be this year, will, we hope, be the restoration of the original (1865) pyramid style roofs to kilns 3 and 4. Historic England have expressed their support for this work, but we also have to gain the permission from Wiltshire Council. So we have engaged St Anne's Gate Architects in Salisbury to help us drive this project forward, albeit we are under no illusion that we will get any sort of 'go ahead' for a year or two! Which is why we are starting now.

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## **MORE VISIBLE HERITAGE...**

A brief history of our maltings always features as a part of the introduction to our Maltings Tour, supported by a limited display of tools, items and pictures which attempt to illustrate the malting process at Pound Street before 20<sup>th</sup> century engineering and modern technology intervened.

We are currently attempting to upgrade our display, beginning with the magnificent new cabinet (see below) made by our own Mark Young. Mark has incorporated a particular and unusual feature, one we could never hope to acquire within a similar purchased unit, namely map drawers. This now enables us to show off a whole assortment of old documents, special to Warminster Maltings, which up to now have always had to reside safely tucked away, and out of view.



They include some documents in Dr. Beaven's own handwriting, including his visual description cards for his groundbreaking barley variety Plumage Archer. Also there is a very fragile copy of the petition drawn up at Weyhill Fair in 1845 by the 'Maltsters of Wessex', protesting against the infamous Malt Tax. There is also a price list published by Morgan's Warminster Brewery in 1883, advertising a beer that was apparently "recommended by the medical profession for all the family"! And a number of other fascinating insights into the history of our iconic maltings.

Be sure to ask to see these next time you visit.

## **...LESS VISIBLE MANAGEMENT**

The old adage that "Dogs have owners, cats have staff" has more than a ring of truth when it comes to "Ginge", our long serving maltings cat. Ginge's relationship with his staff is one that would be more than worthy of inclusion in T.S.Eliot's famous collection of whimsical poems "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats", but that was published back in 1939. Instead, Eliot included a not dissimilar character – Skimbleshanks, the Railway Cat. I will give you flavour of this poem, with its opening lines:

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## Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat

There's a whisper down the line at 11.39  
When the Night Mail's ready to depart,  
Saying 'Skimble where is Skimble has he gone to hunt the thimble?  
We must find him or the train can't start.  
Etc.

So, you will forgive me, one afternoon back in January, while I was waiting at home for a man to come and fix the central heating boiler, I substituted my own verse into Eliot's poem, and came up with...

## Ginge: The Maltings Cat



There's a whisper across the floor, at 5.54,  
As a day's malting is about to begin,  
Saying "Ginge, where is Ginge? Has he wandered beyond the fringe?  
We must find him before we start shovelin'."  
All the floormen and the baggers, including the lorry drivers,  
Search all the dark corners, here and there,  
Saying "Ginge, where is Ginge? Has he been out on a binge?  
We cannot start!" Not one of them would dare!  
It's now 6.22, and the kiln is overdue,  
And the foreman's voice is turning to a roar,  
When in Ginge will creep, and jump up on the steep,  
He's been busy in the garden shed next door.  
    He gives one flash of his glass green eyes,  
    And the foreman says "Let's go"  
    The conveyors whirr, and the shovels stir,  
    As the green malt begins to flow.

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You may say that by and large, it is Ginge who is in charge,  
Of the extensive Pound Street maltings address,  
From the men across the floors, to the clerks who are sat indoors,  
He will supervise them all, more or less.  
Throughout the malthouse he paces, and examines all the spaces,  
Whether full of barley or of malt, he gets along,  
He establishes control, by a regular patrol,  
And he'd know at once if anything is wrong.  
He will watch you without winking, and he sees what you are thinking,  
And it is quite certain he does not approve  
Of hilarity and riot, so the maltsters are very quiet  
When Ginge is about and on the move.

No-one dares winge within earshot of Ginge,  
He's a cat you cannot ignore,  
So nothing's adrift on this Wednesday's shift,  
Everyone's firmly "under the paw".

It is so satisfying when, and this applies to all the men,  
When a batch of malt turns out particularly well,  
And when it is safely in a bin, and they switch off all the din,  
They can reflect on their very special skill.  
For there are times, you must regard, when it is especially hard,  
To achieve a malt with just the perfect spec',  
So maltsters come back at night, to make sure they get it right,  
Their reputation, they can ill afford to wreck.  
As well as brewers they have to please, there's one other ill at ease  
If he suspects that all is not what it should be,  
For Ginge can well recall that pride precedes a fall,  
Not on his watch, to that he'll always see.

So when you sip your next glass of beer,  
Please take the time to reflect  
Sit back and savour that lingering flavour,  
It's the malt to which you're in debt.

Ginge is very vigilant at night, when he's extremely fresh and bright,  
And he is always first for breakfast in the morn,  
He likes his bacon lean, which he follows with a clean,  
And then a leisurely stroll across his lawn.  
You see while checking out the malt, and any other fault,  
He's caught a mouse or two which pays his keep.  
Satisfied his job's well done, he'll find a patch of sun,  
And curl up and catch up on his sleep.  
So next time you are passing by, and an open door you spy,  
Note how tidy everything is you are looking at.  
Yes, the management aspire, and the maltsters never tire,  
But in truth it's down to Ginge, the Maltings Cat!

## **Perhaps...**

One day, perhaps, this could be part of a whole presentation of malt and maltings related recitals and anecdotes which I am slowly compiling. As well as stories from our own archives, we already have three other poems contributed by both brewers and farmers, and a wonderful 19<sup>th</sup> century Harvest Festival dissertation from Dorset. That is before we start exploring Thomas Hardy's 'Drummonds

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Malthouse' ("Far from the Madding Crowd") and adapting the humour of Messrs Flanders and Swan ("A Song of Weather"). We even have a story in our archive which would be the perfect introduction to Gerard Hofnung's hugely funny "Bricklayers Lament". Add in some food and beer, and it could all add up to a fun evening of entertainment, but I would need some help to stage this.

So a question to our Friends, are you someone or do you know anyone who could help me to stage this? Perhaps an Amateur Drama Group or Play Reading Group?

**Do please let me know if you can help or steer me in the right direction.**

E-mail: [Robin.Appel@robin-appel.com](mailto:Robin.Appel@robin-appel.com)

### **FINALLY, THE BUDGET**

Never mind the rumpus surrounding this, with no increase in the duty on beer, but an increase in small business rate relief which will help hundreds of smaller pubs, we count this as a good result. With more Spring sunshine and the Easter holiday to come, there will be plenty of opportunity for us all to raise a glass to the health and future of our national drink. May I encourage you all to join in.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin Appel." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a period at the end.

Robin Appel