

## THE TALE OF THE BLACK AND WHITE COTTAGES

Once upon a time a pair of timber-framed houses stood on the south side of Goring High Street, almost opposite what is now Thames Court. They appear on old postcards of the village and seem to typify the romantic country cottages of days gone by. Always referred to as the 'black and white cottages' no-one seems to know how old they were, but there were houses of this type on both sides of the High Street. Alas the only surviving building of this type in the street now is 'Nappers' on the north side, a village shop for many years but currently occupied by a beauty parlour.



*The black and white cottages [GGLHS]*

No serious research has been done into the early history of the houses, but a building on the same footprint appears on the Survey of Goring carried out for the Duchess of Marlborough in 1727. The properties were not subject to the Enclosure Awards of 1787 and 1819 but a pair of houses on the site is shown on the Allnut Charity map of 1829 and on all subsequent maps.

The first identifiable description of the dwellings appears in the records of the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey of 1910 when each property in a place was assigned a number on a large scale OS map. The number may then be found in the appropriate field book which gives information about the property that was collected for a proposed new tax (never actually implemented). Both cottages were owned by Ann Gundry, proprietor of the brewery across the road. The cottage on the east side was occupied by Henry Hindes. The field book entry describes it as an old brick rubble tiled cottage containing two rooms upstairs and two down, with a scullery and closet. Along with its garden the

property occupied 7 perches of land. An F. Mace was living in the second house at a weekly rent of 1s 6d. It appears to have been smaller than the other one, with one living room downstairs plus a scullery and two bedrooms upstairs and a 'small garden' on a plot 5 perches in area. This cottage is described as 'in poor order'. In the 1911 census Frank Mace was a brewer's carter. An Edward (not Henry) Hindes was living in the other house at this date, but he was a butcher and probably worked in Napper's shop across the road (also owned by Mrs Gundry).

The Valuation Survey map shows that the land at the back of the cottages and to the west side, right up to the path between the High Street and Station Road, was part of the brewery complex. Having ascertained that all of this site, including the cottages, belonged to the brewery, it was then possible to look at other records of the business for information about the pair of houses.



*1910 Valuation Survey map, circled plots 194 and 199 are the cottages; plot 202 shows the brewery land on either side of the High Street [National Archives]*

The brewery was founded in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by John Curtis and by the 1850s belonged to local farmer William Pittman. It was a highly successful business that on his death in 1869 passed to his son John. Unfortunately John died at the age of 38 in 1887 and the brewery was put up for sale that year when it comprised 37 licensed houses,

14 cottages, 2 houses and shops and enclosures of meadow and orchard land. The sale catalogue makes clear the use of the area of land on the south side of the High Street and also provides an earlier description of the black and white cottages.

*On the opposite side of the High Street [to the main brewery] is a long yard with the following buildings:- timber built carpenter's shop with saw pit adjacent, brick built stabling for six horses with chaff bin, harness room and hay loft over, and near is a rain-water tank and horse trough. A timber built and slated lean-to cart shed adjoins the stable and adjacent is a long open shed. There are also two granaries with cart sheds under, the one at the end of the yard being newly and substantially constructed. At the entrance to these premises fronting the High Street are two cottages with gardens.*

A description of the cottages follows. They are built of brick and flint. One which contains six rooms and two cellars being in the occupation of Mr Hinde [*sic*] the brewer, the other containing four rooms, coal cellar etc., being let to G. Fisher at the low rent of 1s 6d per week, and adjoining is a small shop, let to Mr Woodbridge at £4 per annum. The larger cottage seems to be more substantial in this description and it needed to be for in 1901 Henry Hinde and his wife Ann were living there with 10 children aged from 3 to 23.

Quite what happened when the business was put up for auction is not clear, but in the 1891 census John Pittman's widowed mother Kezia was head of the brewery household, living with her two daughters, the younger of whom, Ann, was described as the brewer. In 1895 Ann married a London brewer Thomas Gundry and he became the manager of Goring Brewery. It became known as Gundry's.

The widowed Ann Gundry died in the late 1930s and, having no children, her large estate was put up for sale on 19 November 1940. It comprised the brewery, nine fully licensed public houses, 16 licensed beerhouses and four off-licences, plus a whole range of cottages, shops and land in the local area. The subject of this article, the pair of cottages in Goring High Street, was included in Lot 1, which was the brewery house and all associated buildings. These still included the site on the south side of the High Street adjacent to the cottages, but by this time garages and motor houses predominated over stables.

### *A Gundry's lorry in the 1930s [Hedley West]*



The descriptions in the sale catalogue confirm those given in the previous sale and the Valuation Survey. The cottages are 'brick and flint built with tiled roofs'. The larger cottage has two bedrooms on the first floor, but downstairs there is a living room, sitting room, another room used as a bedroom, a scullery with copper and cellar in basement. The smaller cottage has two bedrooms, a

living room, sitting room, another room used as a bedroom, a scullery with copper and cellar in basement. The smaller cottage has two bedrooms, a living room with range, scullery with copper, larder and coal house. Each has a garden, a timber shed and a brick and tiled earth closet. There was no mains drainage in Goring until 1955. There is a note that 'some drains from these premises discharge into cesspools on [adjacent] Lot 45. The purchaser of Lot 1 will be required in his conveyance to enter into a covenant with the vendors to cut off such drains and discontinue such drainage into the said cesspools'. Lot 45 was the Wheel Orchard, now the public car park. The dwellings were let to Mr John Henry Blake and Mr Harry Harrison at 4s and 2s per week rent respectively. The landlord paid the annual rates of £6 7s 10d. Adjoining was a harness-maker's shop, brick built with slated roof and a fireplace. 'At present unoccupied, but may be used by ARP authorities'. This building had acquired a rather different function in wartime.

Brakspears, the Henley brewers, bought Lot 1 for £29,550 as well as most of the pubs and beerhouses. They kept the pubs but did not need the brewery and sold it along with all the other premises in Lot 1. Thus beer-making ceased in Goring, ending a tradition that had lasted for well over a century.

Nothing is known of who purchased the property to the south of the High Street from Brakspears but from 1955 to 1963 a Miss LK Cunard was listed in the telephone directory as living at Black and White Cottage, High Street, Goring. Did she give the cottages their name?

Miss Laura Kathleen Cunard was a member of the famous shipping company family. She was second cousin to Nancy Cunard, the well-known socialite. They were both about the same age, Laura being born in 1898 and Nancy in 1896. Laura's father was Cyril Grant Cunard and their family home was at Notgrove in the Cotswolds. However the family seems to have had local connections as he was a JP for Berkshire. Laura was one of six sisters who moved in artistic circles in London society. Cyril's father was William Cunard, younger brother of Edward Cunard, 2nd Baronet, whose son Bache Cunard was Nancy's father. William and Edward Cunard were the sons of Samuel Cunard, the Canadian founder of the shipping line.

How often she came here is unknown, although people remember seeing her. Her principal residence was a flat in Chelsea and perhaps the black and white cottages were intended to be a country retreat. Nancy Cunard's mother had a house in Pangbourne, so there was another family member in the area. As the cottages were a pair perhaps one was rented out and the other was kept for Laura's own use. No-one today seems to know. Despite their chocolate box appearance, by the 1960s the buildings were in severe need of refurbishment. A local resident and her husband rented the cottages from Miss Cunard for three months in early 1962, although they never met her, the arrangement being made through an agent. She recalls that the houses were miserably cold, damp and dark and the front door opened straight on to the road. 'With two small children it was a bit of a nightmare.' She thinks they were the last people to live in the cottages.



Today these dwellings would have been lovingly restored and be worth at least a million pounds, but in 1965 they were knocked down and replaced with a shopping precinct of little architectural merit. Today this detracts from the appearance of Goring High Street although the units all still house thriving businesses which is more than can be said for the services in many villages.

It is possible to delve deep into the South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) website and find old planning applications. This source threw up a series of documents that reveal the story of how the cottages came to be replaced by a development imaginatively named 'The Arcade'. In 1963 Miss Cunard put the houses up for sale through Harrods' estate agency. By 1964 CNB (Devon) Ltd, with an address in Newton Abbott, as owners had submitted a planning application dated 17 March to demolish numbers 1 and 2 Black and White Cottages and replace them with a bank and two shops with maisonettes over. (What is now the TSB Bank and the bike shop on the adjacent plot to the west of the cottages had already been built according to a 1962 set of plans.) The Director of CNB Ltd was E G Brown-Poole of Pincents, Pincents Hill, Theale, Berkshire and he worked through Reading architects.

*Plans for three shops with flats over 1964 [SODC]*



Planning permission was granted but the proposed development did not take place and on 2 February 1965, the architects submitted a further proposal to

the planning authority, this time for the erection of a shopping precinct with 9 or 10 lock-up units. Planning permission was granted in April and the development went ahead. It is not clear when the cottages were knocked down, but they had stood empty for several

years and must have been very dilapidated.



*The Arcade in the 1960s, soon after erection.*

*The Brewery House is visible across the High Street. [GGLHS]*

The Arcade was built at a time when large housing developments were taking place all over Goring, and with a rapidly growing population, mainly of young families, the wide variety of businesses that opened in the units was well placed to succeed. The Arcade was a part of a whole new era in the history of the village. Sixty years later, it is still here, serving the inhabitants of a thriving community, although the units have changed hands many times and the types of business have been diverse.

As for Miss Cunard, she did not die until 1989 in London. Did she ever return to Goring and see the nondescript buildings that replaced the centuries old cottages that she had once owned?

On reflection, were the cottages originally a small farmhouse, as old maps show orchards all around the property? Did it even become a beerhouse for a while when the brewery was built? Perhaps more information may yet be discovered about this timber-framed construction and its various owners.

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### **Sources**

Census returns, Goring parish registers [[www.Ancestry.co.uk](http://www.Ancestry.co.uk)]

*Goring & Streatley Local History Society Journal* (2015), No.16, pp 4-12

Inland Revenue Valuation Survey map and field books for Goring [National Archives]

Planning applications [South Oxfordshire District Council]

Sale catalogue Pittman's Brewery 13 December 1887 [GGLHS archives]

Sale catalogue Goring Brewery 19 November 1940 [GGLHS archives]