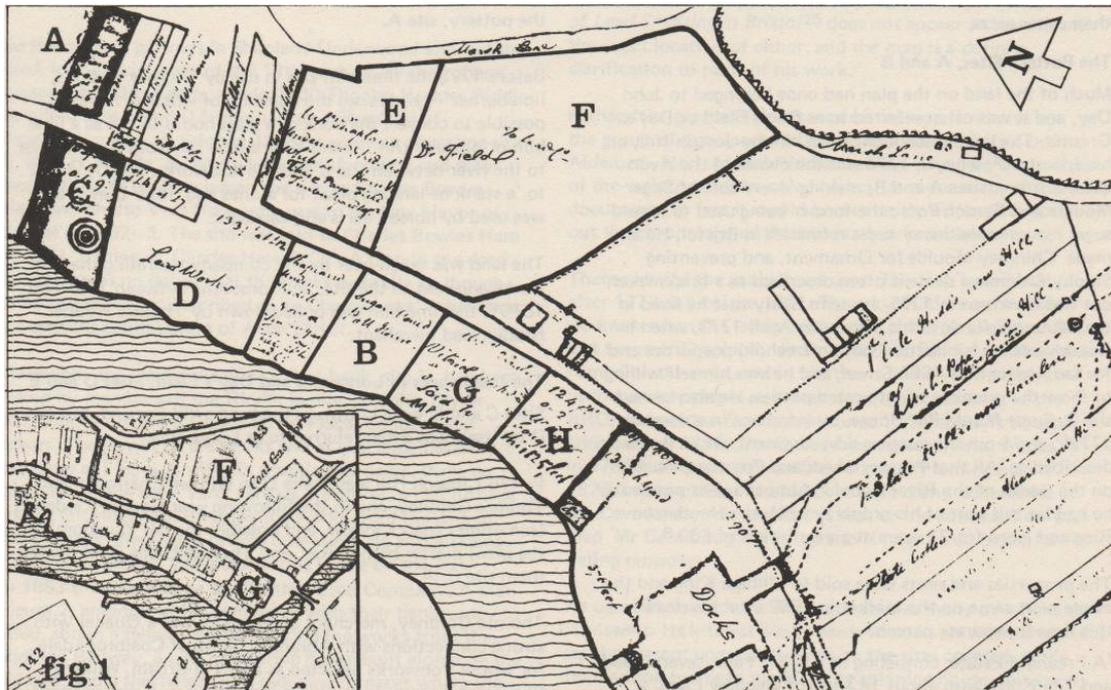


A BRISTOL PLAN IDENTIFIED

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There is in the Bristol Reference Library an old manuscript plan of part of the north bank of the river Avon.¹ When I first saw it there seemed no doubt that it was of particular interest to industrial archaeologists. There was a pottery, a lime kiln, a leadworks, a white lead house, a sugar mould pot house, a vitriol works, a salt work, a ropewalk, a tan house, a spinning house, a dock, and part of a canal, all in less than three-quarters of a mile, with several brickfields beyond. At the time, however, I had no idea of its true significance. There was no date on the plan and little to indicate its location.

The clue lay in the compass bearing. If the plan depicted an area in Bristol there were few places where the north bank of the river would be aligned approximately NNW. Looking for a square dock, one of the most distinguishing features of the manuscript plan, on 18th and early 19th century maps by Matthews and Donne produced no result, neither was there any sign of a Marsh Lane. There was nowhere where the alignment of the River Avon, with its bulging curve to the south east, seemed to correspond to the manuscript, except perhaps the eastern edge of Matthews 1794 map.

I then remembered having seen a vitriol works marked on the map, completed in 1828, by John Plumley and George Ashmead; a lane, Kilbon's, remained as Kilbon Street running towards Marsh Lane, which had become Cook's Lane; immediately the rather odd shape of the northern boundary of the white lead works identified the site, and the vitriol works were still shown in their original position. The improvements to the harbour, begun in 1804 and completed five years later, which made a new course for the River Avon, and turned the former arms of the Rivers Frome and Avon into a Floating Harbour, had completely altered the appearance of the river in this area. The Feeder coming in from the east, south of the vitriol works, as seen in Ashmead's map, Figure 1, further confused the picture. While looking at this map it is worth noticing that the works of the Bristol Gas Company were later built on Day's Field, site F. No doubt they were marked Coal Gas Works because of the rival company, started in 1822, making gas from oil.²

Having established the position of the plan it seemed necessary to find out as much as possible about the firms established on the site, in an effort to find evidence on which to date the map. Much of the information recorded here is taken from documents relating to the Riddle family in the Bristol Record Office.³

The purpose for which the plan was made is not clear, at least to me. Measurements are shown on most of the sites, which has been of assistance in identifying them in deeds.

Some monetary amounts are shown, which in some cases, are the same as known fee-farm rents. On the south side of the map, a large vacant space has been filled by a list of land owners and their mere-stone marks. One could suppose it might be a possible survey made when alterations to the river were in contemplation, but if this were the case there would seem little reason for some areas, including sites A and C, to be bordered in green, as if of more importance than other areas.

The Pottery Sites, A and B

Much of the land on the plan had once belonged to John Day, and it was often referred to as Day's Field or Day's Ground. The land was bought from him by Joseph Hill, or his ancestors⁴, who, in 1770 was the owner of the Avon Bank Pottery, sites A and B, making 'every sort of Sugar Moulds and Garden Pots'; the former being used to mould sugar loaves in the many sugar refineries in Bristol. He also made 'Chimney Moulds for Ornament, and preventing Smoky Chimneys'.⁵ He is often described as a brickmaker, but was bankrupt in 1775. It seems likely that he lived in the house on site A, as his address in April 1773, when he was advertising for auction various freehold properties and fee farm rents, was Avon Street, and he was himself willing to show the premises to interested parties. He also owned site B, Sugar Mould Pot House, by inference in a deed of 1772⁶, and from the auction advertisement, when it was described as 'All that Pottery Sheds and Premises, situate on the Banks of the River Avon'. Almost a year previously he had let this part of his property to Messrs Henderson Rice and Keen for 21 years at a yearly rent of £30.⁸

The properties and rents were sold to William King and the estate next came on the market in 1782 after his death; this time in separate parcels -

'A Freehold Estate; consisting of a Brick Yard, several sheds and Tile Kilns, with about 14 acres of Meadow Land, a complete Vitriol Works, a Lime Kiln and Wharf, and a POTTERY upon the Bank of the River Avon, in the Parish of St. Philip and Jacob adjoining the City of Bristol, now in the several occupations of Messrs Rawlins, Cave, Kendon and Pearce.'

The Pearce mentioned here would be the same as the Pierce on site A. A potter with the Christian name of Earl, he was apprenticed to William Maynard in 1761, when he would have been about fourteen years old. Two years later he was badly affected by what was thought to be rheumatism. Four months in the Bristol infirmary had no beneficial effect, but he claimed to have been cured by Dr. George of Bath, practising at 'The Naked Boy' in Broad Street, Bristol, where 'He through God's assistance made a perfect cure of me in three weeks.'⁹

Earl Pearce himself was taking apprentices by 1772, and had five, the last in 1794.⁸ In 1848 the pottery site and 'a hauling way' were in the occupation of William Henry Purdoe.¹⁰ There was still . pottery 'on Day's Ground' when various premises were conveyed in 1875.¹¹

Cuckold's Pill Ground, Site C, the Lime Kiln

Cuckold's Pill Ground, or Cuckold's Piece seems always to have been a fairly rough piece of ground. It had at one time been leased by John Dalton and Joseph Hill to Israel Rogers, a glass maker. ¹² Matthews in his map of 1794 shows a glasshouse where the lime kiln stood, but there is no evidence in the deeds that it was so used at that time. In fact this glass house site is something of a mystery, A C Powell, who listed most of the Bristol glasshouses in 'Glassmaking in Bristol'¹³ has nothing to say of the site beyond observing that, in Millerd's map of 1710, the glass cone was shown on the opposite side of the street, presumably in or near the area of the pottery, site A.

Before 1772 the lime kiln was in use by Thomas Watkins, limeburner¹⁴, and raises the question of whether it was possible to convert the cone of a glass house to use as a lime kiln or pottery kiln. At this time a lane ran from Avon Street to the river between site C and the leadworks, site D, 'down to 'a stank or landing place for stones and other things' and was used by horses, carts and carriages.

The land was taken over by the company operating the lead works adjacent to the site, and sometime between 1830 and 1875¹⁵ the lime kiln was pulled down by Thomas Hooper Riddle, lead merchant.

The Leadworks in Longhams and Day's Field. Sites D and E

Sites C and D were known as Cuckold's Pill Ground, but site D by itself was often referred to as Longhams.

In 1763 Joseph Hill leased site D to William Champion and Thomas Goldney, and in the following year George Kindon, (sometimes spelt Kindow, and possibly the 'Mr Kingdom' on the plan) master brickmaker, and Thomas Evans Gent; leased them site C.¹⁶

Thomas Goldney, merchant and banker, was a Quaker with strong connections with Abraham Darby of Coalbrookdale, for whose ironworks he acted as agent in Bristol. William Champion's career in the brass industry is well documented¹⁷, but I have found no reference to Champions in the lead trade, at this time apart from the firm of 'Champion, Simons and Co.' who in 1766-68 were purchasing the greater part of the mendip lead output.¹⁸

By 1772 the site was described as Lead works, workhouses, smelting houses, yards, pens, furnaces, and horse and clay mills, and together with implements and tools for carrying, on a leadwork smelting business, was leased to Alexander Edgar, Moses Underwood, and Jacob Riddle, lead smelter, who had recently entered into partnership, and Thomas Shapland, Soapmaker and Robert Shute, merchant. The group traded as A. Edgar and Co.¹⁹

Site E, part of Day's Field, had been purchased, as we have seen, by Joseph Hill, but by the end of December 1772 Edgar, Shapland, Underwood and Riddle had taken over the site on which to manufacture white lead. They had erected a dwelling house, vinegar room, brewhouse, stable, and rooms for corroding lead, a smelting room, a stamp room and a chalk room,²⁰ and were also in the process of building a drying loft, but this was not 'perfectly completed'. The buildings had cost them upwards of £4000.

In 1785 there was a lease and conveyance of shares in the whole concern, which included both lead works, sites D and E, to John Flower, Isaac Elton, and Robert Bush, pewterer.

Matthews Directory in 1793-4 lists 'Shapland, Underwood and Riddle' as lead merchants, and speaking of the St Phillips area says, 'In the same parish are considerable lead works, where lead is smelted from the ore, and rolled, or cast into sheets, pipes and other articles for the use of Plumbers. Near to this the proprietors of the last mentioned have erected an extensive house for preparing white and red lead'.

As the original partners in Shapland Underwood and Riddle, died, in the early years of the 19th century, so their shares passed into other hands, and in 1830 Thomas Hooper Riddle acquired sites C and D from the Rev J Shapland of Tewkesbury Park.²¹ Prior to 1848 he was also operating site E, with H Riddle, as 'White lead manufacturers and sheet lead rollers'.²² He then leased the site to Charles Bowies Hare and Sholto Vere Hare, who was to become Mayor of Bristol in 1862-3. The site was sold to Charles Bowies Hare in 1871, trading as 'Charles Hare & Co'. A plan in the deed deed²³ leaves no doubt that the works were site E, though unaccountably it is described as 'in Cheese Lane', which was a westward continuation of Avon Street.

Meanwhile the leadworks on the river bank, site D, had been leased by members of the Riddle family, to John Taylor, civil engineer of No 6 Queen Street Place, London, and others. The layout of the works was at that time basically the same as Figure 2, with six smelting furnaces, three on each-side of the main yard, various ore stores, a test furnace and an engine house. Entering the works from the gate in Avon Street, there were offices over weighing and assaying rooms on the right, and a desilvering house on the left. In 1883 the site became the Panther Lead Company. A plan Figure 2, amongst deeds connected with their bankruptcy in 1896, shows a railway siding entering the works from the Midland Railway, a new desilvering house built alongside the old one, and a slag hearth and reducing furnaces where the old counting house had been situated. The Panther Lead Company went into liquidation to R E C Kettle and S C Kettle.²⁴

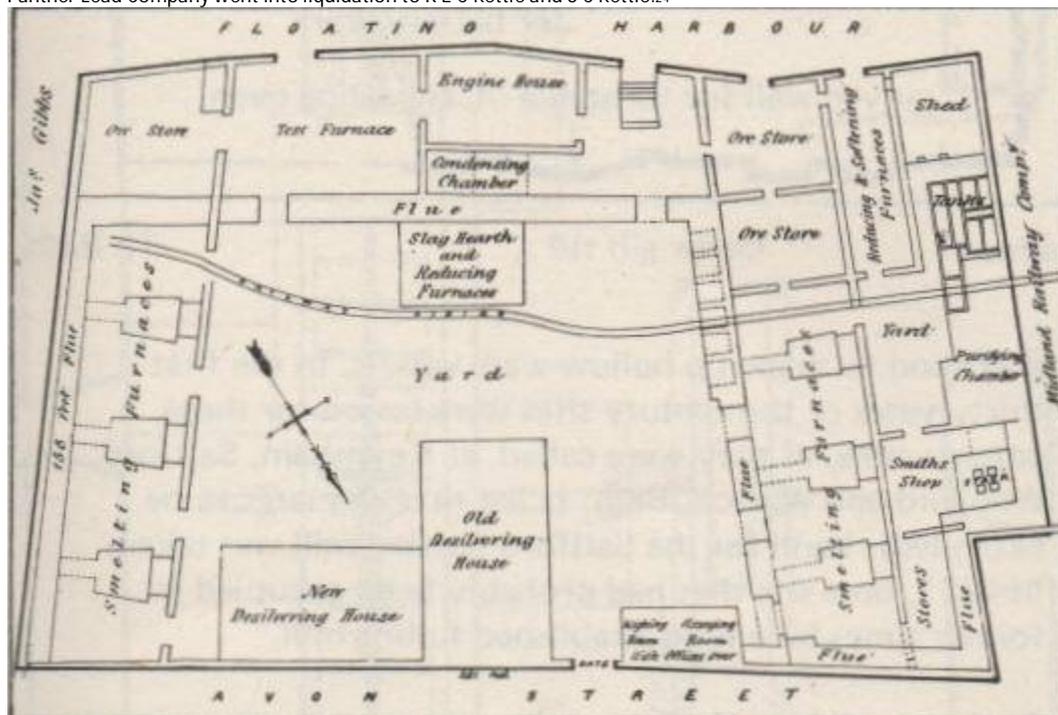


fig 2

Conclusions

The importance of the MS map would seem to be that it exactly locates the sites of several Bristol firms whose positions do not appear to have been previously known. It establishes the position of the Avon Bank Pottery, St. Phillips, unknown to W J Pountney in 1920, when he wrote

Old Bristol Potteries.. He includes particulars of sale of some of the sites on the map, saying, 'I give the advertisement in full, as the tenants names and positions of the other lots may lead to the identification of their site'. It is a gratification, more than fifty years later, to know that his foresight was justified. The map also establishes the position of the two leadworks and the various companys who worked them at different periods. R A Steedman in his thesis *A History of Lead Smelting in Bristol*²⁵ does not appear to have known the exact location of either, and the map is a definite clarification to parts of his work.

Perhaps the greatest importance of the map is relative to the group of documents in the Bristol Record Office on the Aldworth, Harford and Riddle families. Knowing the position of the various lands involved makes far more sense of the documents, in fact it would be extremely difficult to sort out the chronology of the two leadworks without it.

There remains the problem of date. The map is definitely after 1772 and before 1804. The gap could be narrowed if we knew when the leadworks ceased trading as A Edgar & Co., and became 'Shapland, Underwood and Riddle', as they are named on the map, and in Matthews 1793-4 directory, but unfortunately this is not clear from the documents in the BRO, and neither firm is mentioned in Sketchley's Bristol Directory of 1775. Site G was a 'complete Vitriol Works' in 178226 as it was still on the Ashmead/Plumley map of 1828. I have not so far been able to find any documents of the Cave family relating to this site, or the comment on the map 'Mr Cave bought this' on site H might well be useful for dating purposes.

As usual in research the MS map raises as many questions as it answers. Its interest would seem to be in no way exhausted by the present comments, even on the sites covered, while no mention has been made of the spinning house, salt work, rope walk, dock, canal and brickfields.

Acknowledgements

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