

A History of Ruddle's Langham Brewery JOHN W. MITCHELL



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Rutland is a particularly rural part of England with its hedged, meandering roads and its fields of grain and pasture. Travelling along the main road between the market towns of Melton Mowbray and Oakham the 'dog-leg' bends at Langham are soon passed and the village almost totally avoided. Perhaps at one end of the village, if you happen to glance up a side road leading to Ashwell and Cottesmore, you might catch a glimpse of an old red brick tower standing out amongst the huge beech trees which flank the minor road. A local would not give it a second thought but a stranger might wonder why the lorry pulling out onto the main road had the same name and emblem as the beer he bought at the supermarket the other day. For there, in rural tranquility, lies the firm of G. Ruddle and Co., the small brewery with a national reputation.

The Langham Brewery has existed here since 1858 and came into the hands of the Ruddle family in 1911. This brief study traces the history of the brewery and its owners in an attempt to discover why, in the face of severe competition and the decline of similar small breweries, Ruddles has weathered the storm and gone from strength to strength.

The 1841 Census

The Census Returns for 1841 give a comprehensive breakdown of occupations in the village. It must have been very typical of many agricultural villages at this time. There were 591 inhabitants (301 males and 290 females) in Langham, of which, surprisingly enough, 249 were either 15 years of age or under. These people lived in 130 houses in the village, most of whom, if not born in Langham, were natives of Rutland. There were only 68 people living in the village who had been born outside Rutland; 10 of these belonged to the Snodin family, a fairly well-to-do farmer, and 11 more were accounted for by two other family groups. Among the names given in the Census there is no mention of any of the future owners of Langham Brewery, though future employees, or their fathers, are to be found. John Munday, for instance, was to become brewer to H.H. Parry but in 1841 he was only six years old, the son of a tailor. There were also two maltsters in Langham, Richard Thorpe and William Towell, who probably supplied the local inns and farmers. The Langham Brewery was not to be built for another 17 years but, as in most Victorian villages where barley was available, ale would be brewed

for home and local consumption (as J. Donnelly shows above (Fig.1) the monks of Westminster Abbey brewed ale at their Langham Grange in 1275).

The full list of occupations, omitting farmers, graziers and agricultural labourers, is given below:

1841 Census — Occupations in Langham

omitting farmers, graziers, independents, paupers and agricultural labourers:

Schoolmaster	Gardener
Masons (2 plus an apprentice)	Washerwomen (2)
Dressmakers (2)	Carpenter (2)
Shepherd	Joiner
Shoemakers (3)	Mop Spinner (!)
Bakers (4)	Miller (plus 2 apprentices)
Grocer (2)	Seamstress (4)
Draper (3)	Publican (2)
Weaver	Plasterer
Higgler	Blacksmith (plus 2 sons)
Butchers (2)	Cutlers (2)
Maltsters (2)	Brickmakers (5 or 6)
	Nurse

There was no need to travel to Oakham for basic requirements though carriers would be available to take people to town, especially on market days. A Directory entry for 1863 tells us also that the Post Office had arrived in Langham to facilitate distant communications. Among the 24 individual 'farmers and graziers' listed in this Directory we also have a mention of a 'brewer', E.G. Baker and a 'brewery agent', James Edward Harris, who worked for the Langham Brewery. There is also mention of two other brewery agents who probably did not work for E.G. Baker and two village maltsters (who apparently were also farmers). We know that the Langham Brewery was built by E.G. Baker's father, Richard Westbrook Baker, in 1858. Edward G. Baker inherited this in 1861.

The 1861 Census

From the 1861 Census, some of the names of the brewery workers can be discovered. E.G. Baker, we are told, employed 15 men, plus three boys, in brewing or farming, unfortunately the Census does not tell us how many of these were solely involved in the brewery. By comparison with other Langham farmers of similar acreage we can reasonably assume that most of these 18 employees were involved in the brewery.

If this is so then it was of considerable importance to the occupational structure of the village; only E.G. Baker employed this many people.

E.G. Baker	113 acres	15 men	3 boys
Thomas Swingler	126 acres	4, men	2 boys
Samuel Laxton	118 acres	2 men	2 boys
John Hubbard	72 acres	3 men	3 boys
Henry Rudkin	310 acres	8 men	1 boy

The Census does not always differentiate between 'farmer' and 'grazier'. All of the above men are called 'farmers' but we cannot assume that their acreage was not under pasture. Pasture would obviously need fewer workers to look after it, but even Henry Rudkin's 310 acres (roughly three times the size of E.G. Baker's farm) required only nine people to tend it. It could be argued that E.G. Bakers deliberately concentrated on arable farming to provide barley for his brewery but this is not likely. Like any other farmer in the area he would put his land to whatever was most profitable and agriculturally sensible. At this time in England, growing one crop exclusively year after year would have been damaging to the soil. Most of Baker's profits would have come from agriculture, the brewery even though it was a viable economic unit, was just a sideline.

It could be possible that the brewery required as many as 11 people to run it. This would leave seven people to concentrate on Baker's agricultural work, a figure which seems to be generously in keeping with the number employed by other farmers. Unfortunately the Census does not always indicate occupations accurately. The '3 boys' employed by Baker may not be given an occupation at all and the term 'labourer' was used for people who could have been brewery workers. However, the estimate of 11 brewery workers has support from the 1861 Census, where 10 people are directly attributed to brewery work. The missing man, James Edward Harris, is stated as being a 'brewery agent for E.G. Baker' in a Directory entry for 1861. For convenience the names, ages and occupations are given below:

	E.G. Baker	25	owner
1	Francis Clarke	47	brewer's drayman
2	William Birditt	40	brewer's drayman
3	Francis Clarke Jun.	13	brewer's labourer
4	William Clarke	23	brewer's labourer
5	Thomas Clarke	14	brewer's labourer
6	George Fowler (blacksmith's son)	14	brewer's labourer
7	Amos Healey	30	brewer's labourer
8	James Wells	24	Cooper
9	William Jones	30	brewer both from
10	Robert Such	19	brewer's clerk}Stratford. on-Avon
11	James Edward Harris*	?	brewery agent

* 1861 Directory entry - not in the Census of 1861

Richard Westbrook Baker

In the County Record Office, Leicester, filed under Cottesmore is the Will of R.W. Baker. From this we can see he was a very wealthy landowner: he not only gave all his lands in Glaston, Exton, Oakham to his eldest son William but he left Richard Thompson, 'a friend', a farm at Newborough, in the Fens. It was considered right and proper that the eldest son should inherit the main part of the father's estate but it is interesting to consider just how Edward G. Baker felt when, through accident of being the second son, he inherited the 'Plate, furniture, and pictures' plus two acres of land in Langham with a brewery on it! It would seem, however, that Edward was inheriting a considerable estate at Langham as well as these other sundries. The will also mentions that the land upon which the Brewery was built was bought from the Reverend Henry Barfoot. (Would he have approved of a Brewery?) Finally, after giving sums of money away to sisters, son-in-laws, clerks, servants and bailiffs, Richard Westbrook Baker gave £16 to be distributed among the 'poor Tenants of the Manor of Cottesmore and Barrow.' So in 1861 like a true Victorian gentle-man, he departed from this life.

Early Owners

Edward G. Baker — In the entry for *White's Directory* 1863, Baker is listed as a brewer at Langham Brewery. We know that he was born at Cottesmore and inherited land in 1861 from his father, the man who began the brewery in 1858, a date often referred to by the Directories as a starting point for the Langham Brewery. However, this was not his principal occupation; he was a very substantial landowner in the area owning 113 acres and employing 18 people plus a cook and housemaid. The same Directory sees fit to mention him separately as one of the largest landowners in Langham and he appears to have lived at a residence with the auspicious name of 'Manor House', in 1861 he had lived in 'Langham Hall' opposite the brewery.

In a Directory for 1861, **James Edward Harris** is listed as a specific 'brewery agent to E.G. Baker'. The same man, Harris is called 'manager' in *Kelly's Directory* for 1864. Whether this meant a change of occupation for Harris is not certain but it is more likely that the designation changed while the work remained the same. One can see that a man of Baker's agricultural standing would require a man to supervise the brewing side of his interests.

Oddly enough competition must have been strong even in 1863 because we find two more 'brewery agents' in Langham; **Thomas Nettleship** and **Joseph Powell**. These we assume were not employed by Baker because the Directory entry specifies only James Edward Harris as the agent for Baker. The small scale of Langham Brewery is therefore evident: there was plenty of trade to divide between the three 'brewery agents' as well as the 'home-brew' which inns were making on their own premises. Gradually the brewing of individual inns would fade away and the industry would concentrate more on actual breweries supplying the inns.

It is likely that at this time Baker would obtain his malt locally. There were two maltsters in Langham in 1863, **John Hubbard** and **Harry John Rudkin**. Here again we can see a dual-occupation in an agricultural setting: both of these men are listed as 'farmers and maltsters'. Interestingly enough both of these men are listed in the 1855 Kelly's Directory, at a time before the brewery existed. At this time both of the men were still maltsters, probably providing the malt for individual farmers and inn-keepers to produce ale. E.G. Baker would obviously have been one of their customers. One wonders what was so special about his brew that prompted him to begin brewing as a separate industry. Perhaps the Ruddle secret was known even then!

By 1864 the competition within Langham itself had died off. Thomas Nettleship may have been 'grazier, tea dealer and seedsman, collector of rates and taxes and agent for British Equitable Life' but he was no longer listed as a brewery agent. And Joseph Powell had faded away completely. Baker's brewing concern had cornered the Langham market!

George Harrison - We know that Baker was still in Langham in 1875, seventeen years after he set up the brewery. His occupation is not given in *Barker's Trade Directory* of 1875, perhaps he was retired from active life. A new name appears as owner of Langham Brewery in 1876, George Harrison, a man with considerable expertise in brewing and malting as well as interests in the Groby Granite Co and the Elastic Web Co of Brunswick Street, Leicester. He also owned several malting and brewing establishments in the city of Leicester (9 Wanlip Street, 82a Syston Street, Gresham Street, 59 Corn Exchange and 2 Haymarket). Perhaps he saw this as a chance to enter farming as well as remain in brewing. Wanlip Street was later to come into the hands of H.H. Parry and then Everards and Co.

It seems that Harrison made a rapid rise within Leicester. In 1863 he is apparently only malting at 2 Haymarket but he seems to have become a man of property within a decade. Perhaps he came to the city with his capital already made, he certainly did not relinquish his business interests there when he took over Langham Brewery.

In 1876 he employed **Tom R. Rudkin** as his manager. Obviously this man was of the same family as the Harry John Rudkin who provided the malt for E.G. Baker in the 1860s. It is likely that Tom Rudkin did not suddenly become manager when Harrison took over but more likely that Tom was working for the previous owner too.

The local competition at this time can be seen from the 1876 Directory which lists Adcock and Fast as brewers at Whissendine, Morris's brewery at New Street, Oakham and Adcock Pacey and Co. at Melton. One wonders why they died out and the Langham Brewery continued. One reason given is that Langham water was similar to that of Burton-on-Trent, then as now, the great centre of brewing. Hubbards, incidentally, are still listed as maltsters in the village of Langham but the Rudkin interest in malting seems to have come to a close as Tom Rudkin became manager for Harrison. The Langham Brewery could have obtained their malt from other local places such as Oakham and Stamford via the railway. A field and buildings off Well Street was called the Maltings, now developed as Orchard Road.

Boys and Style - It would appear that Harrison sold up his interests in Langham Brewery to these Leicester brewers. Harrison continued to work in Leicester at Brunswick Brewery, Christow Street, and 99 Humberstone Road, but *Kelly's Directory* for 1881 tells us that Boys and Style ran the Langham Brewery. Although the Hubbards and Rudkins still existed in Langham, it would seem that there were no maltings in the village. The Directory refers to the 'large brewery' at Langham. Obviously all things are relative and the same Kelly's for 1895 calls it a 'small brewery'! It is difficult to believe that it had shrunk, perhaps the compilers of the 1895 Directory were a little more knowledgeable about the size of breweries.

Henry Harrison Parry - From at least 1895 to 1911, Parry was the owner of Langham Brewery. Parry had also been a maltster at Wanlip Street, Leicester as shown by the 1895 Directory. Here is a curious link to a former owner of Langham Brewery: George Harrison had owned the maltings at Wanlip Street and from Harrison's will we know that H.H. Parry was his nephew. Was it for sentimental reasons that H.H. Parry bought back the Langham Brewery or were Boys and Style merely managers working for Harrison?



An early photograph of Langham Brewery. Note the name H.H. Parry

Family links seem to be appearing all the time but in such a small community this is perhaps to be expected. In 1895 we have the first mention of John Munday who was listed as 'brewer' to H.H. Parry'. (John Munday was in fact the great uncle of Eric Munday who worked for Ruddles from 1919 to 1969 as traveller, head brewer, and later as a Director). The Munday family were in Langham for some time previously, in 1855 there is a reference to Tom Munday who was a 'butcher and tailor', and in 1895 another Tom Munday was listed as 'butcher and farmer'. This particular man was the father of Eric Munday.

There is no mention of the name Ruddle in Langham in the 1895 Directory but we know that in 1896 George Ruddle was manager to H.H. Parry. It seems that Parry continued to have brewing interests in Leicester at 19 Cank Street but in 1900 the Wanlip Street maltings had been bought by Showell's Brewery Co. Ltd. It seems that even the Cank Street business had been sold before Parry's death in 1910 because the Directory for 1911 tells us that 19 Cank Street housed a solicitor called Buckby, two travelling drapers called Kinton and Sharpe, and the headquarters of the Melton Division Liberal Association. With no sons to inherit the Langham Brewery, the premises came up for sale, and on the 20th of June 1911 George Ruddle purchased the brewery for £19,500.

The Brewery in 1910

Henry Harrison Parry's demise from this earthly toil at least provides the historian with a useful balance sheet drawn up by the executors of his will in 1910. It is a document specific to The Langham Brewery, Oakham and so the figures are not distorted by any other business interests run by H.H. Parry.

There are three sections to this document: a balance sheet of liabilities and capital, a profit and loss account, and a trading account. These refer directly to the period June 1st 1909 to May 31st 1910, although there appear to be figures for 1908 to 1909 written in red ink alongside the authorised figures. From the Trading Account we discover that £1342.15.0d was spent on Malt, £320.12.3d on Sugar and £308.0.1d on Hops. Parry was also buying beer from other brewers (£610.14.6d) and wines and spirits, a 'comparatively recent addition' according item of expense on the Trading Account seems to be the Beer Duty of £1354.14.0d. These were all considerable amounts of money in 1910 but, when all things were taken into account, the sales of beer, wine and spirits which totalled £9,588.6.9d. for the year, left a profit of £4,545.1.7d. This in turn was augmented by commissions and rents which appear on The Profit and Loss Account:

	£	s	d
Gross Profit	4545	1	7
Commission	18	5	6
Rents	683	4	9
	£5246	11	10d

This might seem like a princely sum but there were running costs to the brewery which are conveniently listed in the Profit and Loss Account. The largest of the running costs was in 'Salaries, Wages and Commission' which totalled £1383.18.5d, a sum which is comparable to the Beer Duty and the price of the year's malt. We are not sure how many workers were in the brewery at this time but an interesting figure of £400 appears to be allocated for 'Manager's Salary'. This figure is in a pencilled postscript to the Executors Balance Sheet and is obviously the sort of controlled graffiti which historians love to find but hate to draw conclusions from. The Manager was of course George Ruddle and his salary of £400 left only just under £1000 for the wages of the other workers who, at say £200 p.a., could only number five persons. Pure speculation! but it gives some idea of the scale of enterprise which George Ruddle decided to purchase.

The full list of running costs is given below not in the order as they appear on the Profit and Loss Account but in the order of financial importance:

Salaries Wages Commissions	1383.	18.	5
Rates Taxes Licences Insurance	516.	8.	10
Rents payable	200.	3.	4
Repairs to Houses	185.	2.	11

(Parry owned 10 cottages as well as 16 Public Houses and six off-licences, all attached to 'The Brewery Estate', according to the 1911 Conditions of Sale).

Sundry Expenses	177.	5.	2
Repairs to Brewery	175.	3.	6
Coals and Fuels	135.	13.	8
Horse Feed	134.	13.	4
Travelling Expenses	102.	9.	1
Professional Charges	96.	14.	2
Bad Debts	93.	19.	4
Gifts & Subscriptions etc.	80.	16.	7
Compensation Fund	80.	7.	11
Carriage	78.	16.	5
Corks, Labels etc.	75.	15.	11
Repairs and Fuel for Steam Wagon	44.	2.	6
Printing and Office Expenses	28.	17.	8
Repairs to Plant	20.	0.	1

The Net Profit on the Langham Brewery in 1910 worked out at £1156. 5. 10d. This was what could be made in one year but how much was the whole affair worth to a potential buyer? The same document drawn up by the Executors of Parry's will provides the answer as £28,635. 6. 6d. Most of this sum was attributable to 'Estates Freehold and Copyhold' which was worth £22,640. 5. 4d, the 'Estates Lease-hold' was worth £498. 1.4d., while much of the remainder was directly connected to the everyday workings of the brewery. Their estimated worth is listed as follows, again in order of financial importance:

Stock on Hand	923.	14.	10
Plant & Utensils	693.	16.	6
Casks	567.	10.	1
Steam Wagon	422.	3.	2
Bottles and Cases	286.	0.	3
Horses, Harness, Wheelers Work	200.	0.	0
Miscellaneous Articles	43.	17.	2
Fixtures at House	43.	5.	4

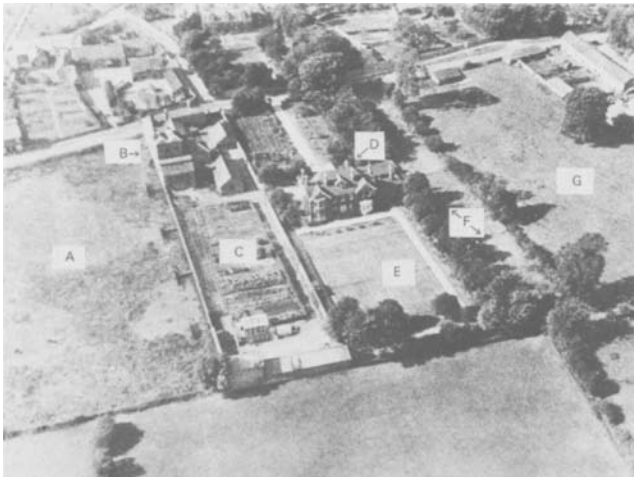
Parry also left £509. 0. 11d in cash at the bank and £32. 14. lid as cash in hand. This then was the Brewery which George Ruddle decided to buy. Considering its viability and its estimated worth of over £28,000, it was a shrewd bargain which George Ruddle made on the 20th June 1911 when he signed the contract and agreed to pay £19,500. The details of the contract meant that George was to pay £1,950 within seven days, the traditional 10% deposit. It is this fact that makes the historian realise that George Ruddle was something more than just a manager of a small brewery, not everybody could put down a deposit of nearly £2,000 in 1911. George also agreed to pay £750 off the principal each year. A brave decision considering the working profit (net) for 1909-1910 had only been £1156. 5. 10d. but if anybody knew the potential of the Brewery then surely the man who had managed it since 1896 would know. According to Eric Munday who began work at Ruddles in 1919, George 'increased the trade considerably' and eventually cleared off his debts in 1920.

The Particulars and Conditions of Sale refer to the Brewery as a 'Flourishing and Old-established Freehold Trading Concern'. It was put up for auction at Tokenhouse Yard, London on Wednesday 5th April at 2.00pm. It was obviously designed to attract the established brewers and gentlemen farmers: the particulars of sale saw fit to mention 'the Quorn, Cottesmore, Duke of Rutland's and other famous packs being within easy reach, arid Uppingham with its well-known Public School only a few miles distant'. A brief breakdown of sales is given for the calendar year of 1910 to attract buyers, it is interesting

that they chose not to use the Trading Account figures drawn up by Parry's executors for the year June 1st 1909 to May 31st 1910. These would not have been so flattering! The Conditions of Sale quote the following annual sales for the brewery:

Beer	£9,706	5	0
Wines and Spirits	£1,781	17	8
Yeast, Grains, Sundries	£154	9	9
	£11,642	12	5

The brewery in 1910 was very much the same as it had been earlier. The Ordnance Survey Maps of 1885 and 1930 show little development. Both of the new building areas were close to the main gates but their size is overshadowed by the large house which Parry had built on the adjacent plot of land in 1904. It is therefore highly likely that the configuration of buildings shown on the 1930s O.S. map were the same shape and size of those in 1911 when George Ruddle took over the ownership.



A: Ruddle's Brewery, Langham
A. Field. Council houses built here in the late 1950s
B. Brewery
C. Kitchen Garden
D. Harewood House
E. Tennis Courts
F. Paddock, sold in 1965
G. Field, developed for housing 1970/71

The Conditions of Sale are very specific about what the brewery contained and the position of each particular section of the brewery. The brewery was enclosed by buildings and walls of red brick. Gates allowed access from the road on to the northern edge of the plot to a stone paved front yard which was partly covered with a toughened glass roof supported on iron framing. It must have seemed very modern to the local landworkers: red brick, glass and iron instead of the traditional limestone building material.

The brewhouse was a tall tower with different floors and is still in use today. Attached to this was the Copper House, Cooling, Fermenting and Racking Rooms. The long building on the west side of the yard was a two storey affair containing cask and bottle washing bays which opened out onto the yard with storage space above for malt, hops and other goods. Along the road edge to the north were the Wine and Spirit Stores and Clerks Offices on the ground floor and Private Offices above. On the eastern side of the yard was a Coopers Shop, a Men's Convenience, and a Cart Lodge. Underneath all of the main buildings and under part of the Yard itself was a range of stores and a bottling cellar. Both hand and steam hoists were used to raise the goods to ground level and to a loading-out platform' where, no doubt, the Foden steam wagon and the carts would take the beer for sale.

The stabling was on the length of the southern boundary of the plot where the warehouse now stands and included, 'Two Loose Boxes and three stone-paved stalls, large lock-up Coach House, flagged Saddle Room, and two Stall Nag Stable with loft over'. Between the stables and the brewery itself was the kitchen gardens for the Family Residence on the adjacent plot.

It is a remarkable fact that this same configuration of buildings and gardens is to be found in 1957 as photo 'A' shows. It indicates the 'static' nature of the company between 1911 and 1957 during which time its outlook remained local to a 26 mile radius. The water supply in 1911 was from a deep dug well actually on the premises and from a spring a short distance away which fed a small reservoir the other side of the village. The site of this reservoir can still be seen covered in alders and nettles and as it lies on higher ground to the north of the village it was a simple matter to conduct the water to the brewery.

On a 1904 Ordnance Survey Map in Leicestershire Record Office, there is a very interesting piece of pencilled graffiti, which runs a line from the Reservoir towards the chapel just off Wells Street. The pencilled line then takes some right angled turns to avoid the Chapel's burial ground, it crosses the local brook and Church Street before becoming indistinct on the opposite side of the road to the brewery in a plot of land which in 1930 has only a shed and a well on it. Could this pencilled line be the course of the conduit which carried the brewery's water?

The house which Parry built was an Edwardian gentleman's residence. It is now used for the administration of the firm but at one time it must have been a haven of peace and quiet on the southern edge of the village with no buildings to the left or right and only the large

private house known as Langham Hall (or in later years Old Hall) opposite the front gates. A wide swing gate gave you access to the road and a long straight drive flanked by a paddock on the right and an orchard on the left led you to the house. The photograph shows the nine bedroomed house (six for the household and three for the servants who, incidentally, were on the second floor) which in 1911 had a hot and cold water supply and a double tennis lawn. George Ruddle in 1911, even before he bought the brewery, lived in this house as manager at the rent of £60 per annum. The Conditions of Sale also included three cottages in Langham itself, seven other cottages, three beer houses, 13 public houses, and six off-licences. Each of these establishments are described in the Conditions of Sale together with the rents due per annum and the name of the present occupier. The summary of this information is given as follows:

Freeholds:	1. King's Head	Oakham
	2. Crown Hotel	Uppingham
	3. Exeter Arms	Uppingham
	4. George & Dragon	Seaton
	5. Old Greyhound	Billesdon
	6. Queen's Head	Billesdon
	7. Fox & Goose	Illston on the Hill
	8. Duke of Northumberland	Leicester
	9. Cheney Arms	Gaddesby
	10. Golden Fleece	South Croxton
	11. Three Crowns Hotel	Somerby
	12. White Lion	Whissendine
	13. Black Bull	Market Overton
Off-Licences	14. 46 Roslyn Street	Leicester
	15. 46 Earl Howe Street	Leicester
	16. 97 Dorset Street	Leicester
	17. Hildyard Rd,	Leicester
	18. The Beer Off-Licence	Queniborough
Leasehold:	19. Cross Keys	Oakham
	20. Noel Arms	Ridlington
	21. Carrington Arms	Ashby Folville
	22. 24 Ross Walk, The Off Licence	Leicester

We are even told about a dispute over the Hildyard Road Off-Licence in Leicester. The estate adjoining this property seems to have been in a developing residential neighbourhood. The owners of the Building Estate were trying to make future purchasers agree to ban the sale of 'wine, ale, beer, or spirituous liquors' on their estate. Such mummings gave George Ruddle no sleepless nights.

The brewery we know had been profitable on a modest scale. The Executors of Parry's will had taken the trouble to list the profits from 1901 to 1910. George Ruddle would have seen these gradual changes as Manager and have assessed the viability of the Langham Brewery. From 1901 to 1906 the profits rose from £612 to £1,546. This figure was not to be improved upon in Parry's time because from 1907 a brief decline set in and by 1908

profits were only the same as they had been five years previously. In 1909 they rose to £1185 when apparently because of 'heavy depreciation of horses', they dropped back in 1910 to £1156.

1901	£612	1906	£1546
1902	£878	1907	£1376
1903	£1032	1908	£1095
1904	£1218	1909	£1185
1905	£1358	1910	£1156

The advent of Ruddles

George Ruddle bought the brewing concern that he had been nurturing for the past 15 years as Manager to Parry. Parry's head brewer in 1896 was John Munday (the great-uncle of Eric Munday who himself became head brewer under Sir Kenneth Ruddle) later replaced by E. Bryant. While George would have been ultimately responsible for this work as well, his main concerns were with the smooth running of the brewery as an economic unit looking after the orders, the sales, the staff, the public houses and off-licences and the financial bookwork.

The Ruddle family farmed on Salisbury Plain, at Nether Avon and owned a small brewery in Bradford-on-Avon. This was run by E.A. (Ted) Ruddle. George Ruddle, his brother, was sent to learn brewing at Fordham's Brewery, Ashwell, Hertfordshire. He married Nora Fordham and came as manager for H.H. Parry when he bought Langham Brewery. Parry had been a friend of the Ruddles since living at Harewood Park, Ross-on-Wye.

There were no dramatic changes to the brewery now that George Ruddle was the owner. Indeed, why should there be? George had run it as a business venture for the past 15 years. An indication of how little the changes were can be seen from two advertisements for The Langham Brewery in Directories before and after Parry's death. The format and copy of the advertisements are exactly the same, the only change being the disappearance of Parry's name and the insertion of Ruddle's.

As a personality George was a well-loved and respected individual. Eric Munday referred to him as 'one of the most popular men that's ever been in the county'. George, Eric tells us 'increased the trade considerably' but was limited by water and transport. George adapted the business from the large private trade to the huge public house demand which sprang up after World War I. What George was running was a very small business, employing about a dozen men who brewed good traditional beers for a purely local market. It was the normal size for a brewing

concern — the brewers for national markets were the exception rather than the rule.

George began the family tradition of links with local politics at which Sir Kenneth later excelled, George was a local councillor, chairman of the Village Institute and a Captain of Oakham Cricket Club. He was, it seems, as popular with the gentry and hunting fraternity as he was with the ordinary village people. Having accepted Langham as his home he was determined to be of use to the community.

Eric Munday recalls an incident which illustrates George's paternalistic generosity: Eric was an amateur footballer who played for Oakham but because of his work at the brewery could not play on Thursdays. George questioned him about this and said that Eric should take the time off and play for the town. Eric agreed but was a little worried about what would happen to his pay for Thursday. He need not have worried, his wages were paid in full and so Eric Munday became one of the first sponsored football players in England! Looking back on the incident Eric now sees that it was a good piece of publicity for Ruddles Ales.

Sir Kenneth Ruddle

Kenneth Ruddle was still at school at Repton when his father died in 1923 at the age of 48. The brewery was guided through the change from father to son by the Executors of his will; Sidney Fordham and Ted Ruddle. Kenneth went to the Leicester Brewing and Malting Company to gain some experience after Repton and he also went to London for some training in brewing chemistry. So, in 1924, at the age of 21, Kenneth Ruddle took over the Langham Brewery.

Sir Kenneth continued to expand the brewery along local lines but he seems to have been more a County politician than a business man. He allowed the brewery to go under its own steam, entrusting the workings of the plant and the administration to a few people, notably David Payne and Eric Munday. Changes came about as much through necessity as forward planning. In the mid-30s, chilling, filtration, and pasteurisation produced a convenient and foolproof bottle of ale. Bottled Ruddle's beer came from 54 gallon casks or hogshead barrels and had been hand-syphoned, corked and labelled by hand. In the mid 30s these were 'mechanised' and the corks were superseded by metal crown corks. It was, however, not until 1957 that the large bottling hall was erected, thanks to borrowed money from Whitbreads, on the vegetable garden behind the brewery. It illustrates just how static development was until this date.



B: Ruddle's Brewery, 1970

A. Bottling Shed erected 1956/57

B. Loading Bay erected 1967

C. Warehouse

D. Private house built in Paddock

E. Council houses

Ruddles became a Limited Company in 1946 and successfully adapted to the changes and competition of the post war years. It is interesting to note that their famous County Ale was a mild beer before the war then it faded away to reappear in the 50s as an award winning bitter beer. The change of taste in the nation's palate from sweeter mild beer to bitter was foreseen by Ruddles who even tried to introduce a lager beer in the 50s, a venture which they are now repeating in the 80s.

Sir Kenneth's fame rests in his services to local politics rather than his interests in brewing. He was well-known and well-respected, the list of his local interests are very impressive* but one wonders how much this affected the brewery. It was certainly a good advertisement for the product though this was incidental to Sir Kenneth. But would an owner who was more business minded have altered the complexion of the brewery completely? The question is rhetorical and perhaps Sir Kenneth's concentration on quality rather than quantity is something we should all be grateful for.

The link between Rutland County and Ruddles Brewery was forged by Sir Kenneth and symbolically he adopted the county motto of *Multum in parvo* (Much in Little) and the county's famous horseshoe emblem for the company. It was in 1970 that Sir Kenneth gave up being Managing Director and Chairman. In 1973 he became the first President of the Company; after a half-century of looking after the brewery, he now became its figurehead.

* 1938 onwards	Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Rutland
1958-1970	Chairman of Rutland C.C.
1951-1957	East Midlands Area of National Union of Conservative & Unionist Association (Chairman)
1957-1967	National Union Executive Committee
1957	Knighted for Political and Public Services in the East Midlands

Recent developments

The family links continue with Sir Kenneth's son, Tony Ruddell, taking over as Managing Director and Chairman. It is under Tony Ruddell that the Company has expanded. He joined the firm in 1959 after a two-year training with Whitbreads and made himself conversant with all aspects of the firm before taking on management responsibilities. In 1968 he was Joint Managing Director with Sir Kenneth. It is at this time that the inflatable warehouse was erected and served as useful storage space between 1969 and 1977 before a permanent warehouse replaced it. The house that Parry built became the main offices in 1969. By 1973 Tony Ruddell found himself sole managing director and chairman and it was soon realised that the company must either expand or fade out completely. The company did not have the resources to expand its free-trade market and develop its tied house estate, so it decided to sell off the latter. In 1978 all but one of its 37 tied houses were sold to generate capital for reinvestment in modern plant and equipment. The decision to remain at Langham was to ensure that the quality of the award winning beer would not be affected by a change of location. In 1980 Ruddell's County won the award for the best cask beer in the country, the only brewery to have won this prize twice. The quality has therefore been maintained and the sale of the tied houses completely justified.

Ruddell concentrates now on providing for public houses which are capable of making it economically viable for Ruddell to do so. This minimizes delivery and servicing costs. Ruddell also ensure that the publicans are trained to look after the beer and so maintain the reputation of the Brewery. The greatest outlet for the company, however, must be through the national off-licence and supermarket chains. This is a deliberate and financially necessary policy pursued since the sale of the tied estate in 1978. Even here, careful thought has gone into which particular supermarkets would be the most economically sensible to deal with.

The sale of the tied houses must symbolically herald the end of the 'old' Ruddell. The decision was taken, not without considerable opposition, by Tony Ruddell and his

Financial Director. There was obvious economic sense in this, though the patriarchal nature of the Company meant that it would be an unpopular change with many. In 1978 Ruddell owned 38 tied houses which were only accounting for 15% of the annual barrelage. The sale of these properties allowed debts to be paid off and more important allowed Ruddell to concentrate on other markets. As it turned out, the barrelage lost by the sale of the tied houses had been totally replaced in free trade outlets by Christmas of the same year!



C: Ruddell's Brewery in the 1980s

A. Car Park

B. Harewood House (admin)

C. Silos D. New Warehouse

E. Land for Expansion

The recent growth of Ruddell seems almost entirely due to the hard work and business sense of the present Managing Director. The product and the workforce are excellent but they have always been among the best. The one single factor seems to be Tony Ruddell's drive and desire to expand. He sees it as economically essential: as he says, it was feasible to run a static business before 1960 but with inflation and rising costs a company has to keep on increasing its production and profit in order to survive.

The local market has been replaced in seven years by a national market. In 1973, the Company's free trade was within a 40 mile radius of the brewery but now it includes London and Birmingham. The association with high quality supermarkets and off-licence groups such as Sainsburys and Waitrose ensures that Ruddell can be bought almost anywhere in the Midlands and South. About 60% of Ruddell's production now goes to supplying this take-home trade. Even more recent markets have been found on British Rail catering trains and through a mutual exchange with a small brewery in Normandy.

What makes Ruddles so special as a firm? The Chairman, Tony Ruddle, specified four things.

- 1) Labour relations are very smooth. There is a formal discussion system with staff and a wage structure that is negotiable. There has never been any industrial disputes in the Company and national strikes do not seem to affect the firm. Indeed, they had to ask their lorry drivers to join a union so that they could deliver to places like Sainsburys. The communications with the work-force, both formal and informal are seen as vital to the success of the Company.
- 2) Ruddles is a 'caring' company. However trite that may sound it is still absolutely true, they care about their workforce, their product, and their customers. The pages of their scrapbook are littered with photographs of formal dinners given to workers, of presentations to people who have given their life's work to the firm, and with letters of thanks and praise. And it is not all a big public-relations exercise as perhaps the cynics of our time would suggest. The scrapbook is not available to the public but in it can be seen genuine concern for workers as people and for the idea of Ruddles as a 'team' if not almost a 'family'.
- 3) The quality of the product - 'we're all wrapped up in how wonderful it is,' said Tony Ruddle with enthusiasm. The awards they have won are important as a sales weapon but moreover it makes the staff morale very high. People are proud to be part of the workforce that produces such high quality beer. Workers strive to maintain the perfection and are rewarded for it by bonuses.
- 4) Finally, size is very important. By this Tony Ruddle meant two things: the actual site where the work was done and the actual number of people employed. Currently they employ 120 people but he feels that it can only expand to about 150 before it changes its nature completely. He feels that the Senior Management should know the names of all employees to ensure the personal touch:

"There is a definite ceiling before the Company changes. The whole animal will change if we had more than around 150 people and, almost more important, if we operated our production, warehousing, transport etc. from two sites or more. We now operate from one site, therefore we can see everything, we can actually talk to everyone. I wander through the whole brewery on most days. Once we've got bottling on a different site and transport on yet another site then I'm not going to see these people except on rather formal

occasions... I've got enormous reservations (about size). We are trying to find the level of growth that is the slowest speed; the slowest speed to grow at rather than the fastest... because we are concerned we are getting too big to stay as we are."

This study has purposely focused on the impact of personalities on the evolution of a rural industry. The evidence exists for much more to be written on raw materials, workforce, transport, markets and changes in output over time. Indeed, this study serves to illustrate the historical riches available, often in the repositories of small local firms rather than in County Record Offices. Before it is too late we should make a concerted effort to reconstruct the history and evolution of our rural industries, not only in Rutland but in other parts of Britain.

References

1. Census Enumerators Returns, 1841, 1861, Leicestershire Record Office
2. Trade Directories, 1855 to 1941. LRO Collection.
3. Ruddles Archives. Collection of newspaper cuttings and memorabilia; photographs; an inventory of H.H. Parry's Brewery in 1910; Particulars & Conditions of Sale of Langham Brewery, 1911; Bill for building Harewood House, 1903; 1945 Articles of Association; Mr K.A. Ruddle's planning appeal notes; output figures 1960-80.
4. The wills of R.W. Baker and George Harrison in LRO also O.S. maps for 1885 and 1930.
5. There is an interesting report on the Rutland Brewery, Westgate, Oakham, operational between 1842 and 1927 in the Melton Journal, 7th January, 1983. See also Leicestershire Industrial History Society Bulletin, no.6, 1983, for an article by Michael Bone.

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