

The History of Langham Brewery

- 1858 Richard Westbrook Baker built the brewery on two acres of land purchased from Reverend Henry Barfoot. R.W. Baker was a wealthy landowner but seemed not to have much to do with the brewing business. He died in 1861.
- 1861 Edward George Baker inherited the brewery and the land around it as the second son of R.W. Baker. Brewing was not his principal occupation, he was also a substantial landowner. George Baker lived at the Old Hall and later at the Manor. He employed an agent, James Harris, to manage the brewery, apparently successfully because, by 1864, Baker's brewing concern had eliminated two other brewery agents in Langham. George Baker retired in 1875.
- 1876 George Harrison purchased the brewery. A man with considerable expertise in the trade, Harrison owned several brewing and malting establishments in Leicester. He employed Tom Rudkin as his brewery manager at Langham. (Tom being from the same family as Harry Rudkin who provided malt for E.G. Baker in the 1860s.)
- 1881 Boys and Style, Leicester brewers, bought Langham Brewery and the combined breweries enhanced the size and value of the brewery group.
- 1895 Henry Harrison Parry, nephew of George Harrison, bought Langham Brewery. John Munday was employed as his brewer and in 1896 George Ruddle was engaged as manager. Henry Parry died in 1910.
- 1911 George Ruddle purchased Langham Brewery. The Ruddle family owned a small brewery at Bradford-on-Avon run by George's brother Ted Ruddle. George went to Fordham Brewery in Hertfordshire to learn about brewing and in the process married Norah Fordham. George Ruddle increased the brewery trade considerably but was limited by shortage of water and transport. He adapted the business from a large private trade to the huge public house demand which sprang up after World War I. His brewer was Arthur Bryant.
- 1919 Eric Munday joined the brewery as a traveller. He became head brewer and a director of the company, retiring in 1969.
- 1924 Kenneth Ruddle, aged 21 years, took over Langham Brewery. Kenneth had been still at school when his father died and the brewery was guided by Ted Ruddle and Sidney Fordham through the transition. Kenneth Ruddle continued to expand and modernise the brewery, the day to day running and administration being in the hands of Eric Munday and David Payne.
- 1947 Ruddles became a Limited Company.
- 1957 The same year that the large bottling plant was opened, Kenneth was knighted. Sir Kenneth's love of Rutland must surely have influenced his use of the Rutland motto "Multum in Parvo" and the horseshoe emblem.
- 1968 Tony Ruddle became joint Managing Director having trained with Whitbreads and joined the company in 1959.
- 1973 Sir Kenneth became the company's first president. Tony Ruddle, as sole managing director, embarked upon a period of major change.
- 1978 All but one of the 37 "tied houses" were sold to generate capital for reinvestment in modern plant and equipment.
- 1986 A take-over by Grand Metropolitan was announced with Watney Mann controlling Langham brewery. Successive owners were: Courage, Grolsch, Moorlands and Greene King.
- 1999 Closure of Langham Brewery.

Rita Duffin (Daughter of Arthur Bryant)

The closing of Langham Brewery came as the biggest shock to me, in all my 93 years. Some people have objected to the smell of brewing days, but I loved it! At 4 years old I would run to meet my Daddy coming out of the brewery gates at dinner time. He was Ruddle's brewer. He would lift me up to look in the big vats to see the beer working, and I would put my fingers into the yeast, fermenting on top of the brew, and lick them; my Dad said the yeast was very good for my health. I spent many happy hours down in the cellars, running round the big barrels...

My father (Arthur Bryant) brewed the beer for Mr George Ruddle who bought the brewery from H.H. Parry. Mrs George Ruddle's father owned Fordham's Brewery at Odsey in Hertfordshire, and she brought with her to Langham, my father and Mr Conder, a cooper. Later George Ruddle's son Kenneth, took over when his father died, and my father taught him to brew. Together, they won the coveted medal at the 1925 Exhibition in London, for their famous bitter beer. More were to come.

In recent years the Brewery has been sold to various owners and now it has gone. No more!!



Herbert Conder

Pearl Johnson

It is so sad that this once thriving business has now come to an end. My father, Mr Herbert Conder, was a cooper at the Brewery for many years. As a small girl living in Well Street, I spent many happy hours watching my father making barrels in his workshop. Often I was taken around the brewery to see the beer fermenting in the vats. The smell of hops is something I will never forget.

Margaret Catchpole

Ruddles' brewing days had a lovely smell of malt - we could smell it all over Langham. My father, Tom Hubbard, delivered beer by horse and cart.

Water

The water for Langham brewery came originally from a well above Manor Lane. One of the reasons for the success of the beers produced was the similarity of the water to that of Burton on Trent. There are, however, records and analysts reports that suggest the quality of the water sometimes gave cause for concern.

Waste Products

The disposal of waste products from the brewery as it expanded during the 1990s, gave rise to problems within the village. Unpleasant smells emanating from the Water Treatment Works prompted an outcry from local residents and resulted in major expenditure by Severn Trent Water and Ruddles in an endeavour to resolve the problem.