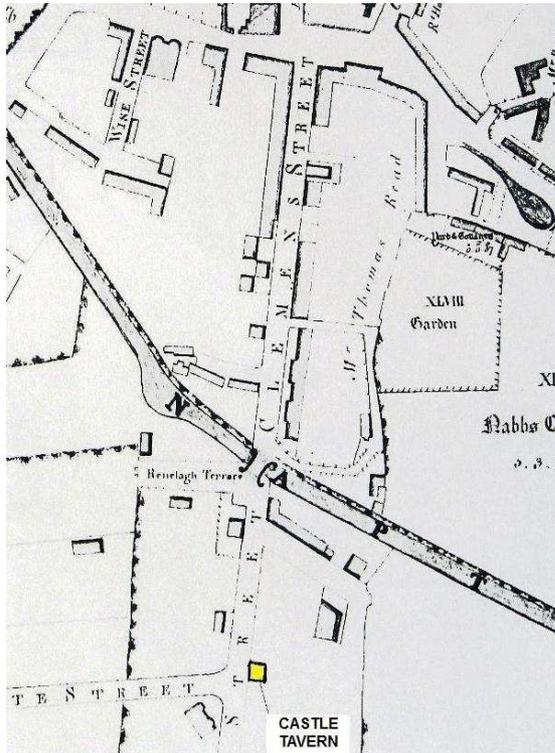


Castle Brewery

Circa 1820 – Courtesy of Allan Jennings



In his account of the ‘History of Royal Leamington Spa’ compiled for the Leamington Spa Courier [1887-89], George Morley wrote, “About 1820 a bridge was built across the Napton Canal, and passing across the visitor would come to the *Castle Tavern* on the left, which stood at the bottom of Charlotte Street” [later addressed as 85, Brunswick Street]. The remoteness of the *Castle Tavern*, visible on this 1820 map, is explained by J. C. Manning in his book ‘Glimpses of Our Local Past’ – “Charlotte Street and Brunswick Street were not completed until 1828”.

The licensed victuallers’ records show that Joseph Baker was the first licensee of these premises in 1816 – then known as the *Castle Inn* – and that he had been licensee of the *Swan* in Birmingham [suburb not known] until 1815; it is also likely that he was briefly at the *Swan* in Leamington Priors [Clemens Street] during the interim. Thereafter, these premises were listed as the *Castle Hotel* and, much later, the *Castle Hotel & Brewery*. Joseph Baker was superseded as licensee by William Herbert in 1822. Although it has not been established what Baker’s involvement was for the 10 years after 1822 – he was evidently the lessee of the premises – when William Herbert retired in 1832 Joseph Baker reverted to being the licensee and proprietor. As it was Joseph Baker that

would also be the first proprietor of the *Castle Brewery* – operating it on the same premises as, and in parallel with, the *Castle Hotel* – this break in his tenure indicates that the brewery was yet to commence wholesale operations.

Before continuing, herewith some background information that will help put the status of the *Castle Tavern/Hotel* into perspective during its first 16 years. In 1816 there were only 7 pubs in Leamington, with 3 south of the river [and one of those attached to the Leamington Spa Ale & Porter Brewery in Wise Street]; by 1825 just 11 [4]; in 1829 still only 16 [5] and most of these – and the town’s major hotels – were capable of brewing their own ales. However, following the 1830 Beer Act approximately 50 ‘beer houses’ opened in the town during the period 1830-35 and by 1840 the cumulative total had passed 75, with 30% being south of the River Leam. Although many of these ‘beer houses’ also brewed their own ales the quality was often questionable. Furthermore, until the latter part of the 19th century most pubs were still ‘free-houses’ – so called because they were not owned by, or ‘tied’ to, a particular brewery – and consequently could source their products from wherever they chose. It therefore follows that 1830 was the start of a new era in local brewing and theoretically an opportune time for an entrepreneurial brewer to capitalise on the fast growing market.

The following advertisement – dated May, 1832 – provides an insight to the subject premises at this time: -

“CASTLE HOTEL, TO BE LET ON LEASE, with immediate possession, the present proprietor retiring from business. The house is pleasantly situated in Brunswick Street; has been established about twelve years and contains three parlours, two drawing rooms, thirteen bedrooms, bar, tap room, kitchen, brew house, and good cellaring; stable-yard with four lock-up coach houses and stabling for eleven horses, with servant’s bedrooms over.”

This advert reveals that the *Castle Hotel* had a brew house but there is still no evidence to suggest that its brewing volume exceeded its in-house requirements, plus maybe a ‘bottle and jug’ trade. Furthermore, in 1832, only a short distance away over the aforementioned canal bridge – at the top of Wise Street [also accessible from Clemens Street] – stood the *Regent Brewery*, a larger operation dating from 1812. Any satisfaction Baker may have derived from the closure of his nearby competitor in 1838-39 would’ve been short lived, as it corresponded with the 1839 opening of the *Leamington Brewery* [Lillington] which would exercise far more competitive muscle.

On the 27th June, 1840, the 'Courier' listed the following 'death notice': - "Yesterday, deeply regretted, Mr. Joseph Baker, the *Castle Hotel*, Leamington"; the premises licence was transferred to Sarah Baker – wife and executrix of the deceased's will – until Joseph's son, John William Baker, took over in March 1844, announcing his 'arrival' thus: -

CASTLE HOTEL, COMMERCIAL INN & BOARDING HOUSE, Brunswick Street, Royal Leamington Spa.
J. W. Baker, having entered upon the above old-established hotel – which has lately been conducted by the executrix and executor of his deceased father [the executor being Joseph's brother, Mark Baker] – begs to thank those kind friends who have favoured the establishment with their patronage, and to observe that neither exertions nor expense shall be spared to give satisfaction to all who may honour him with their support. This house has long been known to visitors for its moderate charges and the beauty of its situation, which is such as cannot be exceeded in this fashionable Spa. It has at its front a fine view of Charlotte Street, with the picturesque trees and gardens which adorn its paths; on one side are the beautiful detached villas and gardens which adorn the upper part of Brunswick Street; and the back commands a view extending to the villages Radford and Whitnash, with the beautiful hills of Newbold Comyn. Commercial gentlemen will here find economy combined with comfort and receive every attention; cars, phaetons, post horses, &c; good stabling and lock-up coach houses attached; importer of foreign wines; brewer of ale, beer, and pale India ale. Noblemen's and gentlemen's cellars supplied as usual.

The above press release is the earliest [sighted] evidence that the *Castle Hotel/Inn* was supplying its *Ales* and *Porter* to external customers and not just its own patrons, but there is no evidence of any *Castle Brewery* advertising prior to December 1845.

In February 1846 the 'Courier' listed the following employment opportunity: - "Wanted at the *Castle Hotel & Brewery*, a strong active man [to lodge and board on the premises] who can groom horses well, and make himself generally useful. His chief employment will be to attend a horse and cart and deliver beer in casks. To save trouble, no person need apply who cannot read writing and figures, or who is afraid of hard work". It is likely that this appointment was to replace Mark Baker, who had died the previous July, and provide much needed support to James who was now quite possibly ill himself.

A little more than 3 years after announcing his arrival, John W. Baker died on 15th May, 1847 – he was just 28 years of age and was survived by his wife Charlotte and five young children. A week later the following advertisement was posted in the 'Courier': -

"THE CASTLE HOTEL, Leamington Spa, TO BE LET: -

In Consequence of the Death of the Late Occupier, Mr. Baker, who, in addition to the business of the hotel, has, for some years past, carried on an extensive trade as a wholesale brewer. The furniture, stock-in-trade, &c. of the hotel, with or without the plant, casks, utensils, &c. of the brewery, may be taken at a valuation. The premises may be entered on immediately. For particulars, apply to Mr. George Carter, Auctioneer, &c, Leamington Spa."

And, on the same day, the 'Courier' listed the following 'Public Notice': -

"All persons to whom the late J. W. Baker, of the Castle Hotel, stood indebted at the time of his decease, are requested to send a statement of their accounts to Mr. James Smith, at the Castle Hotel, Leamington, for the inspection of the Trustees. Leamington, May 28th, 1847."

Also in June 1847, the executors ordered the auction of a freehold property, "occupying the greater part of Spa Street, leading from Wise Street, adjoining the Warwick & Napton Canal" [now the Grand Union Canal].

1846 Advert – Courtesy of Allan Jennings

J. W. BAKER,
ALE & PORTER BREWER,
Castle Brewery, Leamington.

Continues to supply his much esteemed ALES and PORTER, at the undermentioned prices:—viz.

ALE		PORTER	
X.	1 0 per Gallon.	XP.	1 0 per Gallon.
XX.	1 4 " "	XXP.	1 4 " "
XXX.	1 8 " "	XXXP.	1 8 " "

FINE OLD ALE
 1s. 5d. and 1s. 9d. per Gallon.

EAST INDIA PALE ALE
 One and Fourpence per Gallon.
 In Casks, containing 4½, 9, 18, or 36 Gallons each.

Parties requiring TABLE BEER, are requested to order it at least, ten days before required for use, as no Beer is kept in store at a lower price than One Shilling per Gallon.

BOTTLED ALE OR PORTER,

IN QUART BOTTLES.		IN PINT BOTTLES.	
	s. d.		s. d.
XX.	5 0 per dozen	XX.	3 9 per dozen.
XXX.	6 0 " "	XXX.	4 6 " "

In quantities not less than two dozen Quarts or four dozen Pints.

The usual discount allowed to Hotel and Innkeepers.

John W. Baker had purchased the premises with the intention of erecting a brewery and relocating his brewing operations from the *Castle Hotel*, the lease of which was due to expire; the full advertisement read as follows: -

“TO CAPITALISTS AND OTHERS – TO BE SOLD BY PRIVATE TREATY – In consequence of the decease of the late Mr. J. W. BAKER – All those freehold dwelling houses, land and premises, situated and occupying the greater part of Spa Street, leading from Wise Street, adjoining the Warwick and Napton Canal, Leamington, and near to the intended stations of the Rugby and Leamington, and Oxford and Birmingham, junction railways.

The premises were purchased by the late proprietor, with the intention of erecting a brewery thereon, the situation being admirably adapted for that purpose, and the plans and specifications were all ready for the commencement of the building, at the time the proprietor's decease. The lease of the Castle Hotel, where the brewery business had been established and carried on for some time past and is in full operation, being about to expire, it was his intention then to remove that branch of the business the aforesaid premises; and such intention may still be carried out to advantage any person with moderate capital.

The purchasers will be required to take the horses, carts and about 800 well seasoned casks, brewing utensils, &c, at a valuation. Such an eligible opportunity to enter into an established business seldom occurs as, in addition to the regular trade, a very considerable increase in business may be expected from the great consumption of ale and porter, by the workmen employed on the construction of the abovementioned railway lines in the immediate neighbourhood of Leamington.”

In December 1847 the household furniture, effects, brewing and stabling equipment were auctioned on the instructions of the deceased's executors; the sale notice in the 'Courier' on 11th December reads: -

“TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, by Mr. Geo. Carter, On Monday, the 13th day of December, 1847 and following days in that week, by order of the executors of the late Mr. J. W. Baker, deceased – All the good and substantial household furniture, and other effects, AT THE CASTLE HOTEL, Royal Leamington Spa, comprising: - Furniture for 13 bedrooms, 4 dining room and sitting rooms, bar, housekeeper's room, a large assortment of kitchen requisites, china, glass earthenware, plate and linen, capital brewing utensils, sweet iron bound casks, from 500 gallons down to 4½ gallons, stillion troughs, working vats, 2 brewers, capital strong spring carts, a pony phaeton, a useful hackney, several sets of capital cart and other harness, a large quantity of quart and pint porter bottles. The remaining part of the stock of wines, liquors and ale, malt hops and various other articles, particulars of which will appear in catalogues, to be had of the auctioneer, 48, Warwick Street, or at the place of sale.”

As the June 1847 advert states that the lease of the *Castle Hotel* was about to expire, it is likely that the above auction was triggered by its expiration. It is also assumed that the [unnamed] freeholder retained ownership of the premises in the long term – as I haven't been able to uncover any record of its sale within the next 20 years – but there is little doubt that the decease of John William Baker, in May 1847, signalled the end of brewing at the *Castle Hotel & Brewery*. It was previously understood that James' widow Charlotte had vacated the premises, and possibly the area, at this time but the 1851 Census lists her as 'lodging/boarding house keeper' on Brunswick Street, and it is believed that she remained as such until 1853-54, when she relocated to Edgbaston, Birmingham.

Although the 1852 Board of Health map no longer shows 85, Brunswick Street as being the *Castle Hotel*, the reporting of the 1854 licensing sessions state that the licence of the *Castle Hotel* was renewed – thereby implying that it was also licensed in 1853 – and that the licence holders were Elizabeth and Ann Herbert [likely relations of William Herbert, the hotel's licensee 1822-32]. Assuming that John Baker's licence lapsed, pending the appointment of a new lessee, there should be a record of a new licence being granted to the Missus Herbert between 1848 and 1853, but I have not been able to trace it. It is of course possible that the Missus Herbert operated the hotel as unlicensed premises for a time pre-1853 and/or post-1854, in which case there would be no licensing record for those periods.

As far as its ongoing utilisation is concerned, it is evident that during the period 1848-56 the premises were used as an auction house; possibly the last auction conducted at 85, Brunswick Street was on 12th June, 1856 when – what would appear to be – the remaining hotel and brewery related items were disposed of: -

“TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, upon the premises of the CASTLE HOTEL, Brunswick Street, Leamington, this day at two o'clock, by William Russell: - Two large copper furnaces, lead and copper piping; three-pull beer machine, brewing utensils, ale casks, &c. London built chariot, in excellent condition, with patent axles; double-bodied

phaeton, on patent axles, painted green and lined, with moveable head; strong well-built phaeton with turn-over seat; covered spring cart, suitable for country carrier ; also a few articles of household furniture.”

N.B. – As nine years seems an excessive period of time to retain the previously unsold items, it is possible that the sale items originated from another hotel, or a retail brewer.

From 1857 until 1860+ the Courier’s ‘Weekly Register of Arrivals & Departures – Town Directory’ includes names of persons staying at 85, Brunswick Street, indicating that the premises was either operating as a boarding house or private hotel during that period. From the end of May to mid December 1866 the Courier’s weekly listing of ‘Resident Nobility, Clergy & Gentry’ shows that the Rev. J. M. Blackie [and wife] were resident at 85, Brunswick Street, but that they had vacated before December’s end – likely due to the upcoming auction. On the 17th January, 1867, household furniture and effects were auctioned on the premises: -

“85, BRUNSWICK STREET, Leamington – TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY MESSRS. WILDIGG & BROWN – On Thursday, January 17th, 1867 [by direction of the Proprietor]. The whole of the very substantial HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE and effects, upon the above premises, comprising, In the DRAWING ROOM: - Six and two elbow mahogany chairs, with hair seats; easy chair, with spring seat, in American cloth; Spanish mahogany sofa, with spring seat, in hair; pair of superior Spanish mahogany card tables, loo table, chiffonier, chimney glass; Kidderminster carpet and hearth rug, nearly new; two suites of Damask window curtains, &c. In the DINING and BREAKFAST ROOMS: - Mahogany chairs, with hair seats; easy chair; mahogany couch, in hair; two mahogany chiffoniers, sideboards, dining and loo tables; chimney glasses, in gilt frames; Kidderminster carpets, nearly new; hearth rugs, crimson cloth curtains, &c. BEDROOM furniture comprises: - Mahogany chest of drawers; ditto, with secretaire over; washing and dressing tables; mahogany 4-post bedsteads, in chintz and dimity; prime goose feather beds, hair and wool mattresses, blankets, quilts, &c; Venetian stair carpet, nearly new; capital eight-day clock, in mahogany case; oilcloth; glass, china, dinner service and culinary effects. On view Wednesday, January 16th – from 10 am until 4.00 pm – Sale to commence at 11.00 am. N.B. – The HOUSE TO BE LET [Unfurnished], or SOLD – APPLY TO THE AUCTIONEERS.



1852 Board of Health Map – Courtesy of Leamington Library – Updated by Allan Jennings



Although it has yet to be established when the *Castle Hotel* was demolished, the site upon which it stood is now the 'left hand half' of Kilby Court [29 Brunswick Street] – as viewed from the bottom of Charlotte Street.

*Kilby Court,
29 Brunswick Street
© Allan Jennings
[July 2016]*

Although the research on these premises has not delivered the anticipated outcome, it has clearly established that the *Castle Brewery* operated as a wholesaler for a relatively short time between Joseph Baker taking on the *Castle Inn* in 1816, and the untimely decease of John William Baker, proprietor of the *Castle Hotel & Brewery*, in 1847. In summary, that which set out to be the history of a wholesaling brewery morphed into the history of premises that briefly housed a brewery!

Martin Ellis, July 2016 [updated, June 2017]

Acknowledgements:

Leamington Spa Courier [1828-70]

British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)

Annual directories: 1816-47 [Moncrieff, Pigot and Fairfax]

Thanks also to Karen Sobiecki – great, great, granddaughter of John William Baker – who corrected the given names of the aforementioned and provided additional personal information on the Baker family.