

Nostalgia

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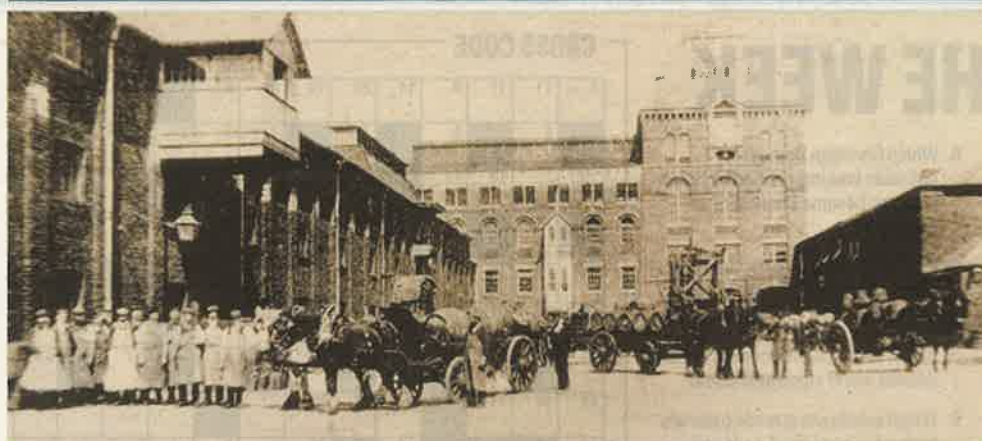


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Above: The Leamington Brewery about 1900. Left: The Maltings.

Town's brewery story goes online

Residents of The Maltings in Lillington Avenue are setting up their own website which will include the history of the Leamington Brewery, which was set up there in 1840.

The brewery started as a small business attached to the Golden Lion pub in Regent Street (now a branch of RBS).

But in August 1839, a merchant from London, Stephen Lewis, and some local businessmen acquired a site in Lillington Avenue. The first brewery on the site was constructed to a design by John Tone of Stoneleigh in 1840 and brewing commenced in 1841.

The brewery buildings, as we know them today, were designed by the architect Robert Davison and built in 1861. He went on to build much larger structures in London and Burton on Trent and has been called the father of brewery architecture.

John Haddon, a Warwick solicitor, took over the company. Upon Lewis' death in 1871, Haddon was joined by Lewis's son, Arthur, and William

Wells Ridley and the brewery became known as Lewis and Ridley. This group sold the brewery in 1885 together with 34 pubs in Warwickshire.

The brewery initially became known as Lucas and Company, then Lucas, Blackwell and Arkwright.

The buildings were considerably altered and the main brewery was re-erected in 1896. The brewery was acquired by Ansells of Birmingham, in November 1928 who, in turn, sold the buildings in 1934 to the Borough of Leamington Spa, after removing all the equipment. The sale was conditional on it not being used as a brewery, although Ansells continued to lease part of the building from the new owners for a period of 21 years. Lucas and Co went into liquidation in 1966.

Lucas & Co were one of the biggest of Warwickshire breweries, but this was no protection from the takeovers of Ansells and Mitchells and Butlers, who in the 20s and 30s were engaged in a major battle to secure the Midlands

brewing trade.

After the Ansells' lease expired, the buildings were used as a highways depot and store by the local authority.

In 1974, the site passed to Warwick District Council, who later sold the buildings for conversion into houses and apartments, with further new properties being built on other parts of the site.

This development opened in 1989 and is now known as The Maltings.

There are still two of the original buildings and a number of features of the 1861 brewery remaining. The main malt house and beer store building has been retained but converted into townhouses. Also retained is the brewmaster's house and office building at the front of the site, as well as the front railings and gates. The main brew house was demolished by the developer.

If anyone has any old photos or stories about the brewery that they would like to share for the website, they can contact: Meg Lewis: on meg.lewis@themaltings.plus.com