

MARSTON, THOMPSON & EVERSLED: THE EARLY YEARS

ERIC FOWER

John Marston and Son

The first record of a Marston brewer was Edward Marston, a cork cutter from Nottingham who married Ann Hackett of Burton-on-Trent. His son John was baptised in Burton parish church on 25 September 1785. The family moved some time later to Uttoxeter where Edward took over The Cock Inn, a public house with a brewery adjoining. The first Marston venture into the brewing industry was not successful; by 1805 Edward Marston was bankrupt and the Uttoxeter premises were sold by auction.

John was more successful. By 1818 he was in business in Anderstaff Lane, Burton (the modern Wetmore Road) as a grocer, tea dealer and rag, horsehair and skin merchant: a diversity of enterprises was characteristic of small brewers in those days. John prospered sufficiently to enter into malting and in 1823 he took over a site on the corner of Horninglow Road and Patch Lane (the modern Dover Road) which had been previously occupied by Coats Brewery and of which the malthouse remained. Coats, a miller as well as a brewer, had operated a steam mill on the site, but of this nothing remained. Coats was bankrupt by 1806. The list of his equipment auctioned in that year is typical of a small scale brewery

... two brewing coppers , 160 gallons and 140 gallons with underwork complete , a large copper pump, a valuable lead water pump , two 30 strike mash tuns , seventeen 160 gallon tunning casks , 3 large deal coolers, 5 working tubs, ten 80 gallon casks, upwards of 300 casks of various sizes , some of them never used; cooper's tools, water spouts, pails two excellent malt rolling mills. 1016 gallons of old ale , 229 gallons of mild ale, 400 gallons of capital strong ale, 300

gallons of table beer, 300 strikes of excellent malt, a large quantity of new hops, 80 sack bags, one draught horse one draught mare, two hackney mares, waggons , carts, gearing, saddles, bridles, household furniture and other valuable effects ...¹

It was a shrewd move. The property lay on the turnpike road to Uttoxeter and close to the Horninglow wharf of the Trent and Mersey Canal and soon business prospects



Figure 1. John Marston.

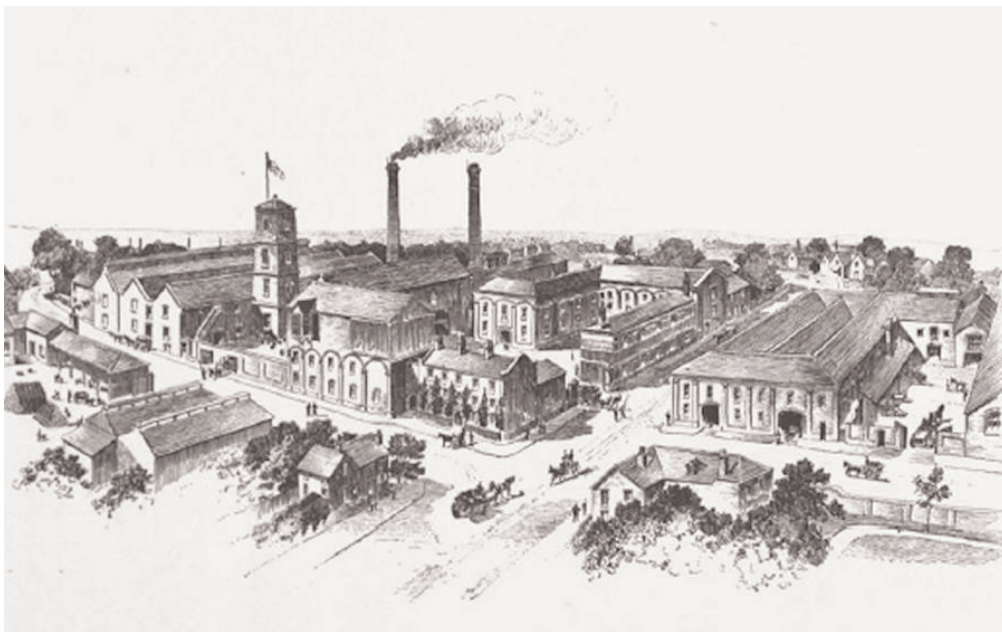


Figure 2. Marstons Horninglow brewery.

brightened. In 1830 the government removed the duty on beer although retaining the duty on malt and hops, The Duke of Wellington's Beer House Act of 1830 allowed virtually any household to obtain a licence to sell beer. In 1834 John Marston was brewing as well as malting. Then in 1839 the railway came to Burton and the town began its modern development as a brewing metropolis. When he died, aged 62, in 1846, John Marston had expanded his business considerably; besides the brewery he owned other property in Burton and also Uttoxeter, Derby, Hartshorne and Overseal. He was buried in the churchyard of the parish church (St. Modwens); by coincidence his large tomb is close to that of John Yeomans, with whose brewery Marstons was later to merge.

John Marston married twice and with his first wife Frances had three daughters Elizabeth, Mary Ann and Harriet. After the death of his wife in 1815, he married Matilda and they had four sons, William, John Hackett, Henry and Henry Edward. They also had five daughters Frances, Ann Matilda, Winifred, Maria and Caroline.

The second son, John Hackett Marston, was running the brewery in 1851 with the help of his brothers William and Henry. John became a prominent and much respect-

ed member of the community being a good churchman. When St. John's Church was erected in Horninglow, just opposite his brewery, in 1866 his name was included in the list of seven gentlemen who had contributed the greater part towards the expense of its construction. His brother-in-law, William Loverock, a local farmer was also a contributor and another brother-in-law, William Coxon, of Birmingham, 'munificently offered, on behalf of Mrs Coxon and himself, to provide a suitable organ for the church at his own cost'. John later served the church in the capacity of churchwarden.

He was described as a 'common brewer' and in the early days his brewery was small by modern standards: even in 1861 he employed only ten men and produced just approximately 3,000 barrels of beer a year. Like many other small brewers John Hackett Marston was also a farmer making use of the spent grains and hops of the brewing process. Nothing is known of the wages he paid, but his employees enjoyed the usual fringe benefits of the period; he gave a dinner to his workmen on Tuesday 10 March 1863 to celebrate the Prince of Wales' marriage to Princess Alexandra. They were joined for the occasion by Mr Loverock's men (two of John's daughters had married two local farmers, the Loverock brothers) and it was reported that 'the

evening was spent in a manner which gave spirit to all who were present'. Works outings were not confined to the larger breweries: on 18 July 1881 John Marston took his men to the agricultural show at Derby. They had a substantial lunch at the Pear Tree Inn, Normanton, en route, two shillings and six pence (in addition to their wages) to spend and dinner on the way back. There was also an annual dinner and gifts at Christmas - poultry and money to the clerical staff and beef to other employees.

William Marston had left Burton in 1861 and had become a tea merchant in Birmingham and John Hackett's younger brother, Henry, died prematurely aged only 31 on 7 October 1865 at Scarborough.

With business continuing to expand John Hackett Marston needed partners. By 1878 he was in partnership with William Wayte of Horninglow when they leased the Roebuck Inn in Draycott in the Clay. A year later when the firm acquired the Brown Bull in Ashbourne and the Dusty Miller in Paget Street, Burton there was a third partner, Mr Richard Adrian Eddie. This partnership was still in existence in 1880 when they leased the Dog and Partridge in Tutbury.

Even in the halcyon days of the 19th century, when the market was generally growing, brewing was a cut-throat business. John Hackett Marston was an astute businessman however and the firm prospered. The Horninglow property expanded physically; the small site of 1834 was added to by purchase or lease in 1858, 1864, 1876 and 1879. When Alfred Barnard wrote his books *The Noted Breweries of Great Britain & Ireland* in 1889 in Volume 2 he included a full description of the Horninglow brewery. According to Barnard the premises occupied nearly four acres of ground and had five valuable wells of the Burton type.²

John Hackett Marston retired in 1888 to live at Hilton Lodge in Derbyshire where he died in 1893. He had never married and on his retirement sold the brewery to Henry Emmanuel Sugden who was the sole proprietor when Alfred Barnard paid his visit. Sugden had been the managing partner of J. Nunneley and Company brewers of Bridge Street, Burton. When it was decided to turn Nunneleys into a limited company Sugden bought Marstons business, withdrew from Nunneleys and eventually transferred the public houses which he

owned to his new firm. Then came the merger with Yeomans.

In the late 18th century George Yeomans was a maltster and brewing victualler owning a brewhouse and licensed premises known as the Blue Posts in the High Street, Burton. His son, John Yeomans, was a common brewer and was listed in the 1834 directory. When he died in 1846 his widow, Mary, carried on the business with her son, John, as manager. By 1861 the firm had acquired extra malting premises on the south side of Station Street. John Yeomans died in 1885 and his eldest son, also called John, soon after. Alfred Henry Yeomans, the younger son, had been trained as a maltster with L. & G. Meakin of Burton, but the brewery and its properties were put up for sale in 1890 together with a smaller 12 quarter malthouse in Station Street.

The attempt to sell the business was unsuccessful: the first lot was withdrawn at £8,000 and the second at £780. Alfred Yeomans decided to continue in the business of brewing and the merger with Henry Sugden of Marstons brewery followed, as a result of which brewing operations were centred at Horninglow. At the same time the two public houses and the one off licence of Hugh Wilson, Ale and Porter Dealer of Kegworth, Leicestershire, were acquired. The enlarged firm was registered as a limited liability company in 1890 under the title of J. Marston & Son Limited.

In 1891 the new company bought the Anchor Inn and Brewery in New Street, Burton; the brewery at the rear had been founded by Joseph Bowler about 1854. With the growth in the size of the company it was decided to open for a short time the Yeomans brewery in the High Street because of the high quality of the well water on the premises. In the first phase of expansion the brewery had made a bid for the brewery and houses of J. Nunneley & Co. Ltd., but there was a snag; William Pegg, a former senior partner of Henry Sugden in Nunneleys, intervened as a trustee of the debenture holders. The issue was taken to court and eventually the Burton Brewery Co. Ltd. was declared the purchaser at £11,300. It was a disappointment, but it did not hold up the company's progress; at the annual general meeting a dividend of 6% was declared and the dividend had risen to 10% by 1896.

The company was re-registered on 9 June 1896 in the same name in order to consolidate the debenture and

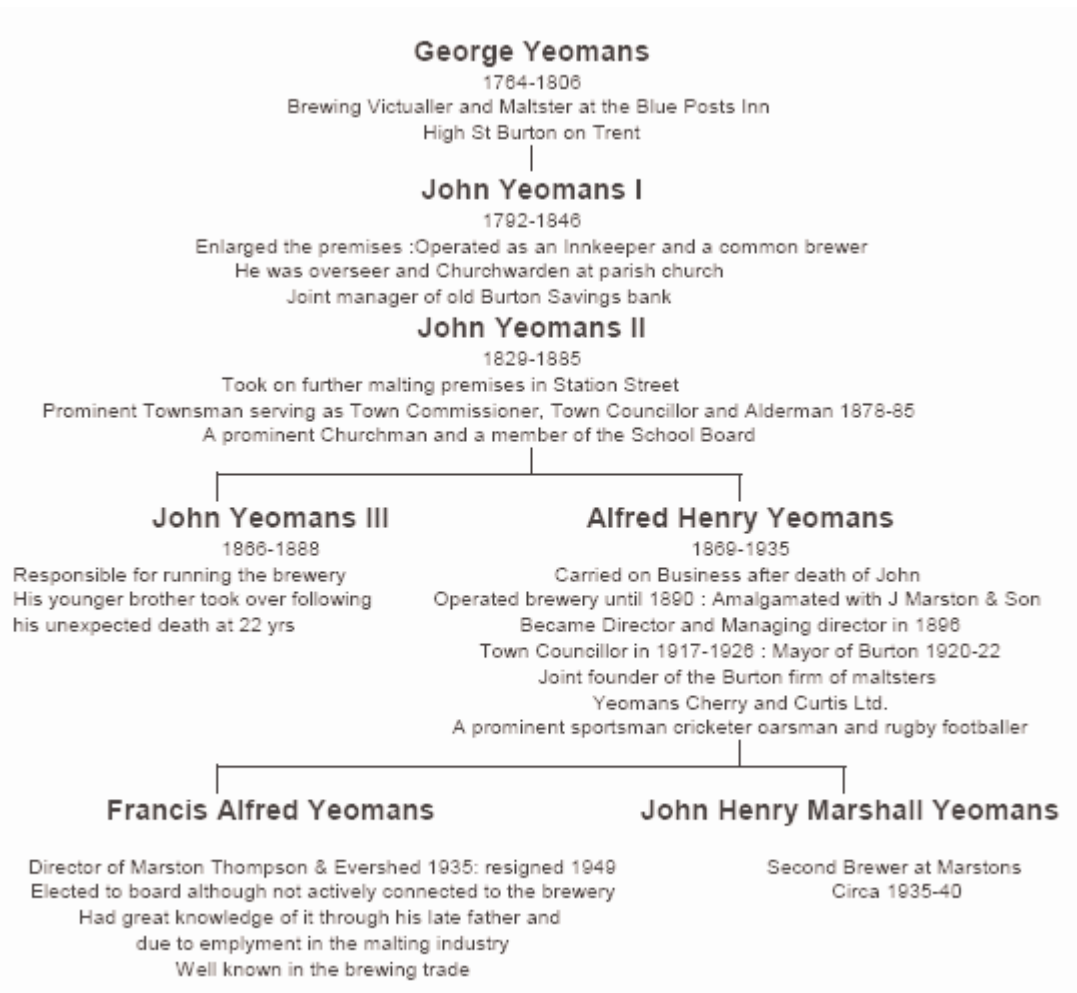
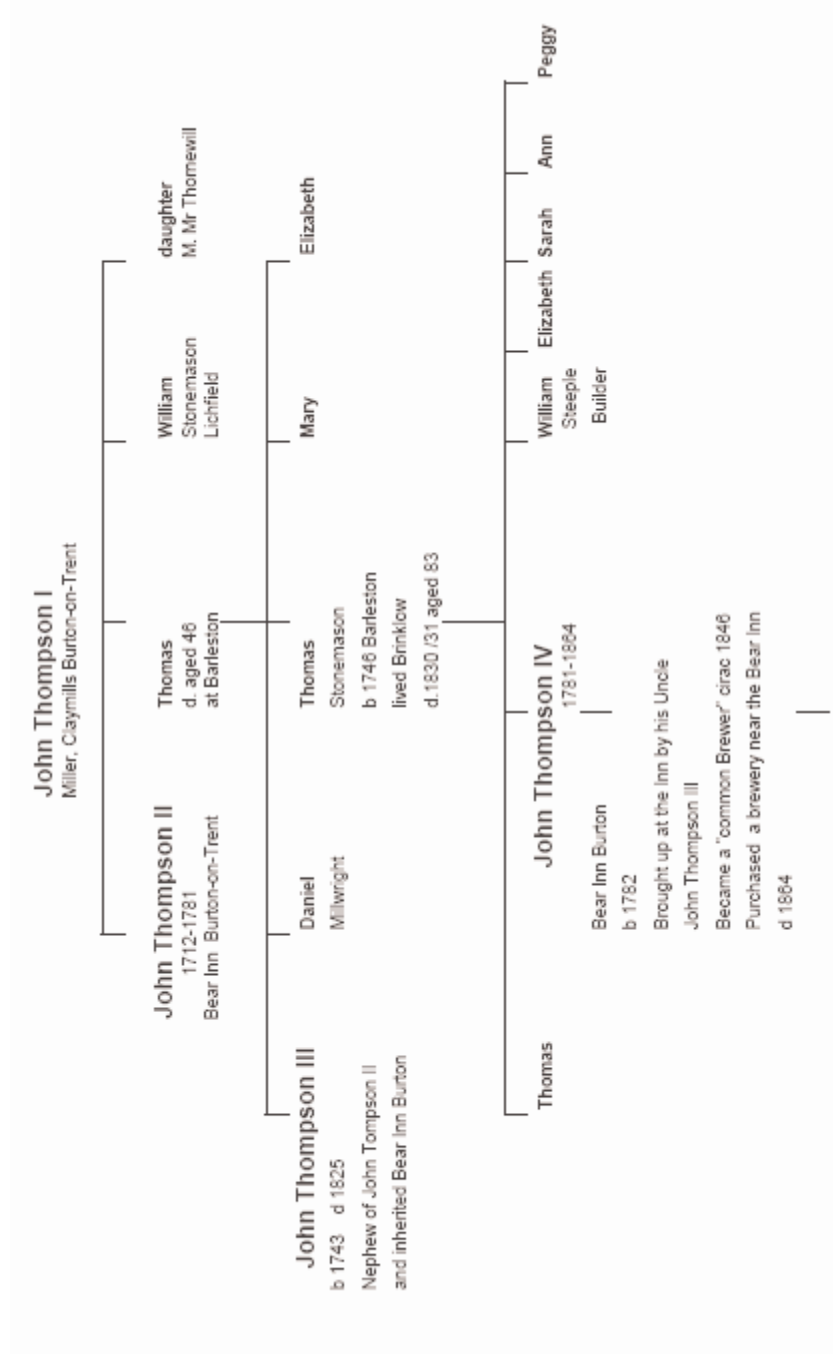


Figure 3. Yeomans family tree.

mortgage debt of the old company and to raise additional capital. The initial issue was 7,500 preference shares of £10 and 3,800 ordinary shares of £10, plus £100,000 debenture stock. By now, in addition to the brewery, shops dwelling houses and land, the company owned 55 freehold or long leasehold public houses and had an interest in 44 short leasehold public houses. Further expansion came in 1896 when the seven public houses of Thomas Beardsmore of Hinckley Leicestershire and the 13 public houses of Henry Wilford of Coventry were acquired. This early phase of development then culminated in the merger on 1898 with John Thompson and Son Ltd.

John Thompson and Son Ltd.

The Thompson family had brewed in Burton for at least four generations as brewing victuallers and bakers at the Bear Inn Horninglow Street, Burton. John IV inherited the business and was described in 1848 as innholder, brewer and baker. In the following year John bought the brewery of Mason and Gilbertson adjoining the Bear Inn for £2,000. In 1851 he was employing 14 men and in that year he handed the running of the business to his son, Francis, who was equally successful for in 1861 he was employing 35 men. Increasing trade prompted Francis to expand further and in 1869 he leased another



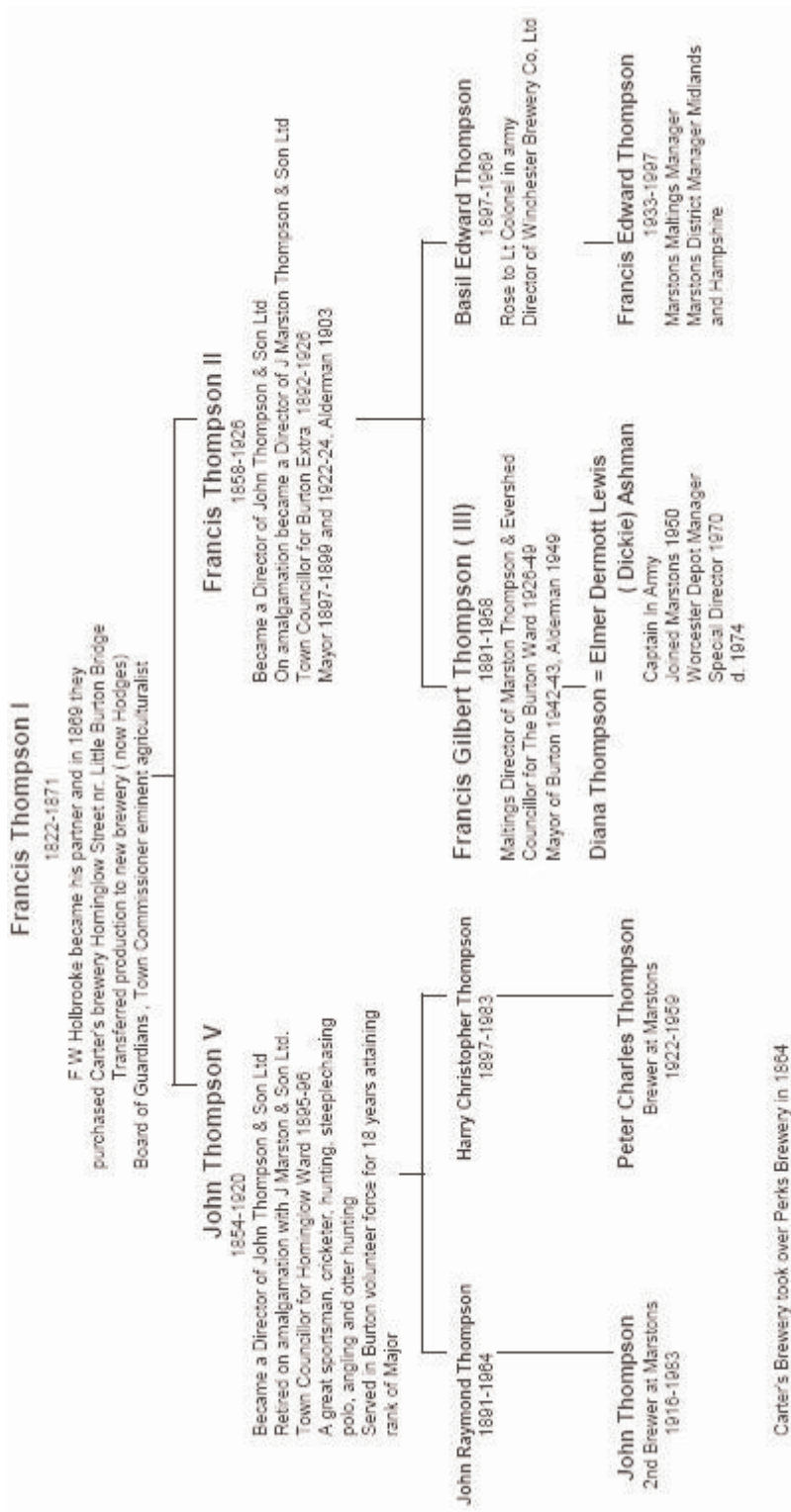


Figure 4. Thompson family tree.

main brewery previously occupied by Carter and Sons and also situated in Horninglow Street, near Little Burton Bridge. Francis also had maltings in Horninglow Street, Bond Street and Brook Street. Francis Thompson had formed a partnership with Francis William Holbrook prior to 1869. When Francis Thompson died at Drakelow Park farm near Burton in 1871, Holbrooke became manager of the business. He was also a trustee under Francis Thompson's will for the two boys, John and Francis. John was sent to Derby to learn the art of malting and when, in 1887, the firm became a limited liability company he was its first chairman. Thompson was one of the earliest breweries in Burton to introduce modern kilns into the maltings in place of the open fires. Francis also came into the brewery and worked in every department until he too became a director in 1887. The son of the manager, Francis George Seymour Holbrooke, came into the business and also eventually became a director.

The company continued to prosper and in 1898, when the amalgamation with Marstons took place, had built up a large trade and owned a considerable number of public houses in the Midlands.

The merger was to the advantage of both companies; the peak rate of expansion in the brewing industry had been passed and outlets were increasingly difficult and costly to obtain. Some Burton breweries had already been in financial trouble. The merger of two successful but small breweries was obviously a wise move. A personal family connection helped to effect the amalgamation, Alfred Henry Yeomans married Catherine Ellen, a niece of Francis Thompson and the daughter of James Sadler, who was Head Brewer of Thompsons.

J. Marston Thompson & Son Ltd.

The amalgamation doubled the size of the company which now had a capital of £208,000 in 9,100 ordinary shares and 11,700 preference shares of £10 each plus a debenture stock of £260,000. The first Chairman was Frederick Hurdle. He had joined the board of Marstons in 1897 and became company chairman of J. Marston Thompson Ltd. on the basis of his knowledge of the brewery business and his contacts, particularly in the London area trade. He previously owned, with a Mr Wileman, the Abridge Brewery, Abridge, Essex, but the

partnership was dissolved in 1897 and the brewery was sold to Whitbread & Co. Ltd. in 1900. Alfred Henry Yeomans was managing director and there were three other directors, H.E. Sugden, F. Thompson and F.G.S. Holbrooke. The company flourished under their direction.

The expansion of trade produced a need for larger premises where production could be centralised. In 1898 an opportunity arose to move to a new site in Shobnall Road, the Albion Brewery.

The London firm of Mann, Crossman and Paulin had built the Albion brewery between 1872 and 1875, having been attracted to Burton by the quality of its water. Alexander Crossman, one of the partners, came to Burton to supervise the building of the brewery which was based on designs by W. & S.J. Martin of Nottingham and cost about £77,000. In addition to the brewery itself, which had a 30 quarter plant, there was a cooperage, ale stores, stables and wells. The site, in pleasant rural surroundings including a farm, was 82 acres in extent and included a 'model village' in keeping with progressive ideas of the time. There was a small church, St. Aidan's, built under the supervision of Mr Alexander Crossman himself at a cost of circa £3,000, twelve cottages for employees, some of whom were brought from London, four villas for departmental foremen and a head brewer's house. George Cowell, the manager, lived at Shobnall Grange, an old house said to have belonged to the monks of Burton Abbey. Some years later the firm built a hotel, The Albion Hotel, close to the brewery premises. Brewing began in the brewery in April 1875.

Alfred Barnard described the Albion Brewery as it was when he visited it at the end of the 1880s. He stated that the brewhouse was four storeys high, built of red brick and cement, and each floor reached by a lofty staircase. Sacks of malt were lifted from railway trucks to the malt store by steam hoist. There were two 30 quarter mash tuns, three coppers holding 90 barrels each and 20 fermentation squares, the largest of which held 70 barrels. The ale stores, detached from the brewery, held 5,000 barrels. Nearly 70 people were employed in the brewery.

Although Mann, Crossman and Paulin were conducting their business in Burton successfully in 1896 they decided to withdraw from the town and concentrate on



Figure 5. Hurdle family tree.

their London brewery. The Shobnall premises were taken over by the Burton and Lincoln Breweries Ltd. who leased them to the Albion (Burton-on-Trent) Brewery Ltd. The latter company ran into financial difficulties and leased its trade to Thomas Salt & Co. Ltd., although they retained the brewery. Then, in 1898, J. Marston Thompson & Son Ltd obtained an under-lease of the brewery and immediate surroundings for 79 years at an annual rent of £1,336.15s.0d.

The move to Shobnall gave them a compact site, provided with its own railway sidings and an adequate water supply. They enlarged the brewing plant by the addition of two squares to make the capacity 100,000 barrels a year. A water main with pump was built between the Shobnall brewery and the Horninglow Street premises.

Malting was still carried out at Marstons Derby Road maltings and at Thompson's Horninglow Street maltings. Migrant Suffolk and Norfolk maltsters were amongst those employed in this seasonal work.

Further commercial expansion was now possible. In 1900 the company bought the 20 licensed houses, the 35 cottages, and the brewery maltings and aerated water works of D. Pettifor and Sons of Anstey, Leicestershire.

In the following year the brewery of Beard Hill and Company of Lichfield Street, Burton came on the market. This brewery had originated in 1750 as Hill and Sherratt brewers of Abbey Street, Burton. Financial troubles beset the firm and eventually the bankrupted business was acquired by John Beard of Beard Brothers,

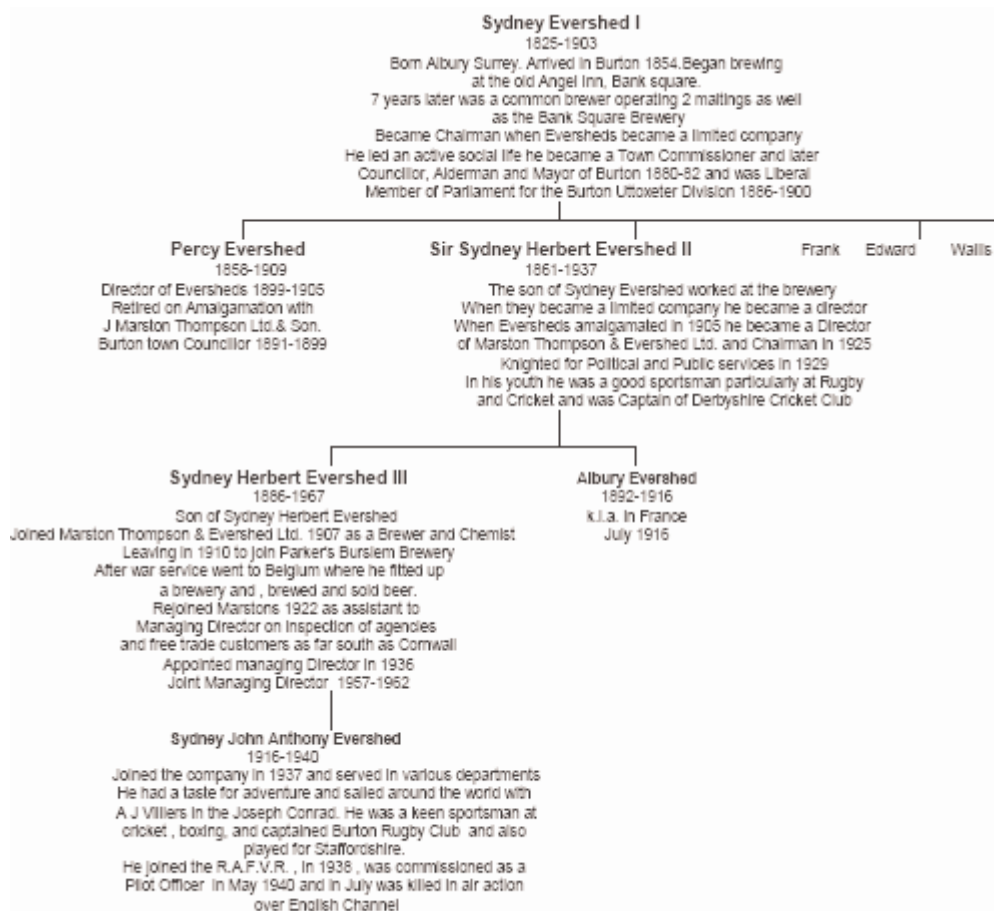


Figure 6. Evershed family tree.

brewers of Church Gresley who registered it in the name of Beard Hill and Co. Ltd. They too fell into bankruptcy in 1900 and J. Marston Thompson & Son. Ltd. acquired at least the Burton brewery and houses of the business in the following year. Other acquisitions of the early 20th century were; Ealands of Southwell, Nottinghamshire, consisting of a brewery, maltings and ten public houses, Wright's Crown brewery of Market Drayton, Shropshire, with a brewery and six public houses and finally the larger local concern of Sydney Evershed Ltd. of Bank Square, Burton.

Sydney Evershed Ltd.

The Evershed's roots were set deep in the countryside. Sydney Evershed came from a family of yeoman farmers who had prospered in Surrey. His father, John Evershed, was a farmer and maltster at Albury, near Guildford, and here Sydney was born in 1825. He was trained a brewer at Stansfeld's Brewery in London and in 1854 came to Burton to set up in business on his own account. He acquired the Angel Inn, Bank Square where the Burton Town Commissioners had formerly met, added to the premises and began brewing. How long he continued to use the Angel Inn as a public house is not

certain, but eventually it was incorporated into the brewery premises. At first he was in partnership with Mr Malleson, but this was short-lived and thereafter he was in sole control. In 1861 he was described as a common brewer employing two clerks, two travellers and 14 labourers. By 1869 he was operating maltings in Park Street and Fleet Street. He lived first at 58 Branstone Road, Burton, then, by 1871, had moved across the River Trent to the growing suburb of Stapenhill where he built Albury House in Stapenhill Road.

The business continued to grow and the premises gradually expanded. In 1889 large alterations included the erection of a new beer stores and cooperage by Hodges contractor at a cost of £3,000. In the same year the firm became a limited liability company with a share capital of £200,000 and an offer to the public of £100,000 worth of debenture stock at 4 ³/₄%. The directors were Sydney Evershed and two of his sons, Percy and Sydney Herbert. The firm controlled 53 licensed houses of which 38 were in freehold occupation; the brewery had a capacity of 35,000 barrels a year. The acquisition of Acresford Brewery, Acresford, Derbyshire in 1901 brought a further 15 licensed houses plus a brewery and other property. When the business was acquired by J. Marston Thompson & Son Limited in 1905 Eversheds had a total of 70 tied houses and 16 leasehold public houses. Sydney Evershed pursued an active political life, both locally and nationally, and was a Member of Parliament for Burton - Uttoxeter division from 1886 to 1900 representing the Liberal party. When he died in 1903 his sons continued to run the business for two years, but the development of the company was restricted by the cramped site in Bank Square. In 1905 a slight decrease in sales added an extra incentive to the idea of amalgamation as a solution to the company's problems. The business was sold for £206,000, a figure slightly less than the original asking price. Sydney Herbert Evershed joined the board of the new company now registered as Marston, Thompson & Evershed Limited. The directors were:

Frederick Hurdle, Chairman
H.E. Sugden
F. Thompson
A.H. Yeomans
F.G.S. Holbrooke
S.H. Evershed
F.O.N. Hurdle

Acknowledgement

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Sources

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Probate records
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Company reports
Parish records
Marston Thompson & Evershed plc. Company Papers

References

1. *The Staffordshire Advertiser*. 28 December 1805.
2. Since this brewery was on the fringe of hills to the north-west of the town and was the only brewery not actually on the bottom of the Trent valley this is an oversimplification and William Molyneux, in his 1869 book, *Burton-on-Trent, Its History and its Breweries*, stated 'The wells at Mr Marston's Brewery, Horninglow occupy a different position to any other wells used for brewing purposes in the neighbourhood being sunk through 3 feet of terrace gravels into 27 feet of shaley blue and gypseus marls, the water of which appeared to come from a basement band of hard blue skerry marls at fifteen feet below the level of the Trent valley gravels in which the old wells of Burton are generally sunk.'