

THE STUDLEY BREWERY COMPANY

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Introduction

Studley is a large village between Alcester and Redditch, just on the Warwickshire side of the border with Worcestershire. In the late 19th century it had two commercial breweries. The second of these, John Thompson's Bell Brewery, survived until it was taken over by M&B in 1960 and subsequently closed. This article describes the short and chequered history of the first, and the brief overlap and connection between the two.

The Barley Mow is probably Studley's oldest inn (though now much rebuilt). The earliest photograph of it in the Alcester & District Local History Society (ADLHS) archives clearly shows the words 'Studley Brewery Co.' painted on the right of the front elevation of the building. Almost nothing has been written to date on the history of the Studley Brewery, and much of what does exist is inaccurate.¹ In defence of those authors, today's internet resources make research far easier, and some confusion is understandable because three unrelated families named Thompson, plus a Thomas, had a part in the story.

John Fletcher and John Baker, brewers

The Official Receiver's report on the bankruptcy of John Fletcher, lately of the Fox & Goose, Redditch, but then in lodgings at the Barley Mow, gives basic details of the Studley Brewery's early years and was covered by several papers including the *Alcester Chronicle* (24 April 1886). Fletcher started as tenant of the Barley Mow in 1864.² In 1871 he sold the business to his brother Horatio and moved to the Golden Cross, Bromsgrove. Three years later he repurchased the business at the Barley Mow from his brother, installing him instead as manager of the Fighting Cocks in Moseley, which he also leased.

According to the report, the history of the Studley Brewery begins in 1877, when John Fletcher bought the freehold of

the Barley Mow and built a brewery there at a cost of £2,000. It is not clear from the newspaper whether this was just the cost of the brewery, or included the freehold purchase as well.

Unfortunately for Fletcher, '... the undertaking proved unsuccessful ...' and by 1879 he was in financial difficulties, although for the moment this didn't get as far as bankruptcy. He was able to agree a private settlement with his creditors and continue in business, henceforth with a partner, John Baker. The Receiver's report says that the partnership continued until 1881 when Baker agreed to buy Fletcher out, paying him £1,000 for his share of the business.³ In fact the partnership was not formally dissolved until 31 March 1882.⁴ Fletcher took the Fox & Goose in 1883, and one report states that after the sale he acted as a traveller for Baker.⁵ He had no further part in managing the brewery, but we will meet him again a few years later, back at the Barley Mow.

John Baker got things badly wrong. It appears from a later report that he had borrowed the £1,000 he used to buy Fletcher out of the partnership – and on top of that a further £1,000 to keep the business going.⁶ Before 1882 was over, on 15 November, he had filed for bankruptcy with total liabilities estimated at £5,500⁷ of which £3,496 9s 7d was unsecured. His assets were said to be only £249 18s 10d.⁸

It must have been a very trying period for Baker. In January 1883 he was sued for unpaid wages by Thomas Rogers, a 'journeyman brewer' who had worked for him, and was ordered to pay despite explaining to the court that his affairs were in liquidation.⁹ Even his domestic help got in on the act; in December 1882 he had been successfully sued for a month's wages by his servant Ellen Davis, when she left after having an argument with his wife!¹⁰

These stages can be followed in the *Needle District Almanack and Trades Directory*, published annually in Redditch. In 1876 John Fletcher was the publican at the Barley Mow.



Figure 1. The Barley Mow (and two adjoining cottages to the left), dated circa 1900 in the ADLHS archive, but more likely to be c.1882-1890. The brick extension on the right with the large chimney is part of the brewery, as probably is the very large chimney behind the pub. 'Studley Brewery Co.' is painted on the front wall above the entrance arch of the extension (ADLHS 992).

For 1877-80 he had become 'brewer' (no address), and Mary Whitehead was the licensee at the Barley Mow. The 1877 date is interesting because the directory was compiled and published at the end of the previous year (the preface to the 1877 edition is dated December 1876), so either the Receiver's report is a year out, or the entry was made in anticipation of opening the brewery in 1877.

The relevant entry in Redditch Library's copy of the 1881 edition is missing because the page is torn, but in the census that year Fletcher is recorded as a licensed victualler and brewer at the Barley Mow. The 1882 listing reads 'Fletcher & Baker, brewers and innkeepers, Barley Mow Inn', and is the last time the directory mentions John Fletcher in connection with the brewery, whilst Baker never appears again. However, Spennell's directory for the same year, presumably compiled after the agreement to end the partnership, has Baker alone as a brewer, and Fletcher as wine merchant (and, separately, as licensee of the Barley Mow).¹¹

There is no mention of the brewery in *Kelly's Directory of Warwickshire* for 1880, the earliest in which it could have

appeared, where Fletcher is listed as a wine and spirit merchant in an entry that had not been updated since the previous edition of 1876.

There is almost nothing to give any idea of how the brewery operated in these early years. I have found no advertisements in the *Alcester Chronicle* or anywhere else. Its only mention in the *Chronicle* during this period is an unpleasant one: on 4 December 1880 it reported a fatal accident inquest on Mr Johnson Jowett, an engineer with Bomford Bros. of Alcester, who had been carrying out maintenance at the brewery. He was working on some pipework when a temporary fixing gave way and he fell backwards into an open brewing vessel full of liquid, which was then at a temperature of about 190°F (88°C). Dr Hiron of Studley was summoned as quickly as possible, but the patient was severely scalded and he could do little. Jowett insisted on being taken home, rather than to the hospital at the Alcester workhouse as the doctor wanted, and was dead by the following morning. The verdict was accidental death, but there was some criticism of the jury for not recommending a protective cover over the vessel.



Figure 2. The brewery as shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map surveyed in 1885 (but not published until 1897). It occupied the extension on the right of the pub with the arched entrance (and the large chimney on the right of the photo) along with, as far as is known, the larger buildings along the Birmingham Road frontage (the rest were probably stables, etc.). The other large chimney in the photo suggests that the outbuilding below the 'y' of the word 'brewery' was also part of it. The brewery is named for the last time on the Second Edition map, revised in 1903 and published in 1905.

The name Studley Brewery Company does not appear to have been in use at this time. It is not in the directories, and the newspaper report on Jowett's death refers only to 'Mr Fletcher's brewery at Studley'. The *London Gazette* notice of the partnership dissolution gives the firm's trading name as Fletcher & Baker. The first use of it that I have seen was in the newspapers when Rogers sued Baker, who was said to be 'of the Studley Brewery'. It's possible he used it after buying Fletcher out, though the Spennell's listing suggests not. As the hearing and report were after his bankruptcy, it is more likely to have been adopted by his successors and used out of context in the papers. (Or they could just have meant the brewery at Studley, but wrongly capitalised the 'B' as a name.)

Samuel Thompson & Sons take over

At this point things start to get rather strange. On 31 October 1882, shortly before he filed his insolvency petition, Baker had executed two Bills of Sale covering most of his assets, for the stated purpose of securing past debts. One was to his mother.

The second, much larger one, was to Samuel Thompson & Sons, a firm of maltsters in Smethwick, whom he treated as

a secured creditor. The newspaper reports do not say what was to be sold under the Bill, but it appears to have been the brewery and the Barley Mow. Thompson's took possession of their new assets on 2 November, before Baker filed his petition on 15 November. This of course meant that Thompson's came out of it well but the other creditors were left with very little, which seems at best unfair. Even so, the settlement resolutions were approved by a majority at the creditors meetings, despite some opposition, but the Registrar refused to accept them as he felt they were clearly against the interests of many of the creditors. Baker appealed against his decision but was unsuccessful, the judge deciding that it was a matter for the Chief Judge in Bankruptcy, not him.¹²

I have been unable to find any later report or other evidence to confirm how the matter ended, but there is no doubt Samuel Thompson & Sons became owners of the brewery and the Barley Mow, and there can be little if any doubt that it was as a result of Baker's bankruptcy even if the original Bill of Sale was questioned or set aside by a subsequent court. Although John Baker was still listed by Spennell's as a brewer at Studley in 1883, in September that year he took the tenancy of a brewery at Upper Gornal in Staffordshire

ADVERTISEMENT.

STRONG, MILD, & BITTER ALES.

PRIVATE FAMILY PRICES.

DELIVERED CARRIAGE PAID

STRONG MILD ALES.

XXXX Strong,	54/- 36 Gals.,	27/- 18 Gals.,	13/6 9 Gals.,	6/9 4½ Gals.
XXX	48/- "	24/- "	12/- "	6/- "
XX	42/- "	21/- "	10/6 "	5/3 "

PALE INDIA ALE.

A 1	54/- 36 Gals.,	27/- 18 Gals.,	13/6 9 Gals.,	6/9 4½ Gals.
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THE SPECIALITIES.

PALE GUINEA	42/- 36 Gals.,	21/- 18 Gals.,	10/6 9 Gals.,	5/8 4½ Gals.
ALE	"	"	"	"
XA MILD ALE,	36/- "	18/- "	9/- "	4/6 "
X Do. Do.,	30/- "	15/- "	7/6 "	3/3 "

STOUTS.

D S	48/- 36 Gals.,	24/- 18 Gals.,	12/- 9 Gals.,	6/- 4½ Gals.
S S	42/- "	21/- "	10/6 "	5/3 "

The above Prices are subject to a discount of 5 per cent. for Cash payment.

ALL ORDERS SENT DIRECT TO THE

STUDLEY BREWERY CO.

WILL RECEIVE PROMPT ATTENTION.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE STUDLEY BREWERY CO.

DESIRE to call special attention of consumers to the great excellence and moderate prices of the **Ales** and **Stouts** produced at their Brewery.

They have reason to believe that the peculiarly good qualities of these Beers are not sufficiently known in this neighbourhood, and that the public generally are not aware that **THE STUDLEY BREWERY CO.** supply their Beers to private families direct from the Brewery.

THE STRONG MILD ALES

Have a rich malty flavour and delicious Aroms, and are specially celebrated for their nourishing qualities.

THE PALE INDIA ALE

Of delicate pale colour, and beautiful flavour, brewed from the finest Pale Malt and East Kent Hops, will be appreciated and admired by the most discriminating palate.

THE SPECIALITIES

Which **THE STUDLEY BREWERY CO.** have prepared for Private Family Consumption are their "**Pale Guinea Ale**," at 21/- per 18 gallons, and their "**XX Mild Ale**," at 18/- per 18 gallons, also their "**X Mild Ale**," at 15/- per 18 gallons. For a delightful tonic, delicate in colour, delicious in flavour, absolute purity and cleanliness in drinking, "**The Pale Guinea Ale**" is unsurpassed, while the **XX** and **X "Mild Ales"** will be found most perfectly to meet the want of the day, namely, a sound, pure, pleasant malty-flavoured Ale.

Those who require a cheap, wholesome beverage, for daily use are asked to make a trial of **The Specialities** in their own Household. After the experience of their regular customers for some months, **The Specialities** are acknowledged to be the most useful Household Beers ever Brewed.

THE STUDLEY BREWERY CO.

Further beg to state that these Ales and Stouts are Brewed under the Superintendence of **MR. JOHN THOMPSON**, whose services have been engaged as Brewer and Manager. Mr. Thompson is a well-known Brewer, having had considerable experience in Brewing in England, Wales, and Scotland, and obtained First Prize Medals for his production of Ales.

Figure 3. Advert for the Studley Brewery from the Needle District Almanack and Trades Directory for 1887.

(where, sadly for him, history was to repeat itself and by 1884 he was again insolvent). He had been advised of the opportunity by 'Mr Thompson of Smethwick',¹³ which does suggest that Thompson & Sons' ownership dated from late 1882 or '83.

They certainly owned it by 1883, because in a court action brought in 1884 relating to beer supplied the previous year, John Fletcher said that in 1883 he was working for Messrs Thompson & Sons 'of Studley and Smethwick' who had bought the debts of John Baker.¹⁴ This was presumably between Baker's sale to them and his own move to the Fox & Goose.

Samuel Thompson & Sons was an interesting company. Founded in 1805 they operated as a family partnership until 1928, when they became a limited company and merged with four others as Associated British Maltsters, though each constituent kept its own identity. Unusually for maltsters they also owned breweries.¹⁵ I have inspected their surviving archives, which are in the Ipswich branch of the Suffolk Record Office (ref. HC461/13/11), but unfortunately there is

nothing earlier than the formation of the limited company, and therefore no records relating to the Studley Brewery which had already been disposed of.

It is likely that Thompson's had to spend time getting to grips with their new acquisition, the affairs of which were probably in a bit of a mess as a result of Baker's failure. In June 1883, the Studley Brewery Co. was advertising for the return of any casks '... branded "Fletcher, Studley" ...' supplied through the agency of the late Chas. Lilley of Belbroughton.¹⁶ (The branding is another bit of evidence that the term Studley Brewery Company was not used in the early years.)

John Thompson makes his mark

Samuel Thompson & Sons appear, initially at least, to have been keen to turn round the fortunes of their newly-acquired brewery, and appointed the young John Robb Thompson as manager. He was not related to the Smethwick Thompsons,

CHRISTMAS ALES.
THE STUDLEY BREWERY CO.
 Have now in stock Special Brewings of Christmas Ales, in splendid condition.

LIST OF PRICES:—
MILD ALES

XXXX Strong	54s.	36 Galls.,	27s.	18 Galls.,	13s. 6d.	9 Galls.,	6s. 9d.	4½ Galls.
XXX	48s.	" "	24s.	" "	12s.	" "	6s.	" "
XX	42s.	" "	21s.	" "	10s. 6d.	" "	5s. 3d.	" "
XA	36s.	" "	18s.	" "	9s.	" "	4s. 6d.	" "
X	30s.	" "	15s. 6d.	" "	7s. 6d.	" "	3s. 9d.	" "

INDIA PALE ALES.

A 1	54s.	36 Galls.,	27s.	18 Galls.,	13s. 6d.	9 Galls.,	6s. 9d.	4½ Galls.
A 2	48s.	" "	24s.	" "	12s.	" "	6s.	" "
G A (Guinea Ale)	42s.	" "	21s.	" "	10s. 6d.	" "	5s. 3d.	" "

The MILD ALES have a rich malty flavour and delicious aroma, are specially prepared for Christmas. The INDIA PALE ALES of delicate pale colour and beautiful flavour, brewed from the finest Pale Malt and East Kent Hops, will be appreciated and admired by the most discriminating palate. Orders sent direct to the STUDLEY BREWERY CO., will receive prompt attention.

Figure 4. Xmas Ales advert 1885-6, Alcester Chronicle © British Library Board.

having been born in Bannockburn, Scotland, in 1854. Information from Ray Lamb of Studley, who is related to John Thompson's family, is that after an apprenticeship at Mac-Nicol's Brewery, Stirling, he later became chief brewer at the Wrexham Brewery, winning prizes for his ales, before coming to Studley in 1882 (in which case it must have been at the very end of the year).¹⁷

There is no mention of the brewery or anyone connected with it in the 1883 and '84 Needle District directories, but the Studley Brewery Company does appear in both the 1884 Warwickshire Kelly's and their *Directory of the Wine, Spirit & Brewing Trades* for the same year (the earliest use of the company name in a directory) with John Thompson as manager. The latter notes it as brewing ale, porter and stout. Spennell's South Warwickshire directory for 1885 includes the Studley Brewery Company '... proprietors, Thompson & Son (*sic*), Smethwick', which is the first unequivocal reference to Samuel Thompson & Sons as owners. The 1885 and '86 Needle District directories list the Studley Brewery Company at the Barley Mow, but it doesn't usually give managers' names in a company entry so John Thompson isn't mentioned.

It looks as though the Studley Brewery Co. name was probably adopted around this time, which would tie in with the acquisition by Thompson's; if it had always previously traded under Fletcher's and/or Baker's names, a new title would obviously be needed. I can find no record of it being a registered company, and Studley Brewery Co. seems to be simply a trading name for this part of Thompson & Sons' operations.¹⁸

After a quiet start under John Thompson's management, in 1885-6 the brewery adopted a much higher profile, advertising in local and other papers. The first in the *Alcester Chronicle* was on 12 December 1885, when their Christmas Ales were featured; similar adverts appeared each week until the first week in January 1886. From 27 February the *Chronicle* had an advert for the full range of Studley Brewery beers, which appeared regularly until June and is notable for announcing that Mr John Thompson '...has been engaged as brewer and manager'. He had, of course, already been in post for some time before the advert appeared, despite its implication that he was newly-arrived. On 29 June this was replaced by one for Harvest Ales, which ran until December.

Also indicative of new and greater ambition is this advert in the *Western Mail*, on 8 March 1886:

AGENT – Studley Brewery Company, who have excellent Stout and Bitter Beer, require an agent to work Cardiff and the district. – Apply Studley Brewery Company, Studley, near Redditch.

John Thompson was obviously trying to expand the operation by a significant extent; whether the initiative was his or came from Samuel Thompson and Sons the parent company is unclear. It certainly shows a change in outlook from the previous regime. Perhaps he was hoping to capitalise on contacts he made during his period in Wales. Another possibility is that it may have been related to Samuel Thompson's acquisition of a brewery in nearby Newport, though I've been unable to discover which that was, and when they owned it.

However, in what with hindsight looks like a portent, the adverts for Christmas Ale that might be expected in December 1886 are absent, and the *Chronicle* had none at all for the company's beers in 1887. There was one in that year's Needle District directory, using similar wording to the February-June 1886 *Chronicle* advert, but this was actually prepared and published in late 1886. There was one Studley Brewery advertisement in 1887 though. Whilst its beers were not promoted, on 30 July and 13 August the brewery did advertise in the *Chronicle* for an agent to cover Alcester and the surrounding area, applications to be sent to J. Thompson, Manager.

Amongst routine business in this period, in 1886 the Studley Brewery successfully sued both Eliza Treadgold (of the Nag's Head, Studley), and her son William Treadgold (beerhouse keeper at Bunker's Hill, Alcester) for payment, John Thompson appearing as a witness for the company.¹⁹ The brewery was itself sued in Ledbury County Court for the value of cider supplied. The defence was that the cider had been returned to the railway station because it was of very inferior quality and arrived unfit for sale, but this was not accepted by the judge.²⁰

John Thompson departs

Along with the advertisement for its ales, the 1887 Needle District directory again has an entry for the Studley Brewery Co. at the Barley Mow. It also names John Thompson for the first time – but as proprietor of the Bell Inn. Indeed, 1887 is said to be the start of 'the long association of the Bell with [his] family'.²¹ In fact he probably took it in 1886 because the '87 directory was compiled at the end of that year. Later newspaper reports show he did not run the pub himself, but employed managers.

For a while Thompson continued as manager of the brewery after taking the Bell. In a *Chronicle* report on 1 January 1887, about the Bell Sick & Benefit Society dinner, he is described as 'of the Studley Brewery', and the Alcester agent advert confirms he was still there in August. He is listed as its manager in Kelly's *Directory of the Wine & Spirit Trades ... Brewers & Maltsters* 1887 edition, published in October '87, although a separate entry in his own name in the 'small brewers who brew the beer they sell' category (no addresses given) suggests he may already have started brewing at the Bell.

However, he must have left later that year or early '88, as Kelly's Warwickshire directory for 1888 gives a new manager for the Studley Brewery, Richard Thomas Schofield. The surname is undoubtedly an error. In subsequent news-

paper reports the manager's name is given as Richard S. Thomas or Mr Thomas; I suspect someone at Kelly's decided Schofield was an unlikely forename and assumed that it had been transposed with Thomas by mistake. (Followers of Yorkshire cricket will know that Schofield Haigh was a fine bowler who also played 11 matches for England, but as his debut wasn't until 1895 it would be unfair to criticise Kelly's man for not being aware of him and the use of the name!)

We can't be sure of John Thompson's motives for leaving the Studley Brewery, but he soon set up a new brewery at the Bell, only about 150 yards away from the Barley Mow. (I wonder if the lack of Studley Brewery advertisements for 1886 Christmas Ale in the *Chronicle*, and their complete absence in 1887, was an early sign of his future plans?) Brewing appears to have started c.1887-90.²² In the *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 August 1891, he advertised wanting a small gas engine: '... apply J. Thompson, Bell Brewery, Studley', so his new brewery was clearly in existence by then. Two years later, he had 'Wanted' adverts on 17 and 18 April 1893 in the same newspaper seeking '... a copper or iron brewing furnace...size 300 gallons...', which looks as though he was expanding the brewery.

The end of the Studley Brewery Company

While John Thompson was setting up in opposition at the Bell, the 1888-90 Needle District directories still have the Studley Brewery Co. at the Barley Mow, and as previously mentioned it is also in the 1888 Kelly's. In August of that year Charles James, licensee of the Barley Mow, was fined £10 for selling beer from the Studley Brewery adulterated to the equivalent of 25% water, as tested by the Inland Revenue at Somerset House. Although James was licensee, John Fletcher was back after his bankruptcy, as manager of the pub, and said that as soon as the cask was tapped he had complained to the brewery about it. Mr Thomas, the brewery manager, admitted that complaints about the beer had been made on other occasions, but this time the brewery was exonerated. Fletcher denied watering the beer, and in a strongly-worded letter to the *Chronicle* criticised the sampling by the local Revenue officer.²³

In May 1889, Richard S. Thomas was still described as manager of the Studley Brewery when fined for permitting drunkenness in the Golden Cross, Redditch, of which he was also the owner and licensee.²⁴ However, the 1890 entry is the last I have found for the Studley Brewery Co. in any directory, although the actual date of its demise is unclear.

It cannot have helped that the brewery manager's attention was split between the brewery and his public house in Red-

176	362	Ross Sarah	S. Thompson & Sons		Priny Square
	363	Cooper Henry	Midland Milling Smethwick		"
177	364	Lovelock Chas?		Barley Mow Inn	"
178	365	Void		Old Brewery	"

Figure 5. The entry recording the Barley Mow and the old brewery (and adjoining cottages) in the 1910 rating book. (WCRO CR 1978/1/49).

ditch. In contrast to the 1885-6 publicity campaign under John Thompson there appears to have been no more advertising after he left, and when the adulteration case and other complaints are taken into account it looks as though problems were developing at the Studley Brewery. But what were the owners, Samuel Thompson & Sons, doing about it?

There is evidence indicating that they sent a family member to Studley, but for the fate of the brewery it was too little, too late. An article about the history of the company in the *Smethwick Telephone* on 31 December 1949 states that Alexander, the third son in that generation of Thompsons, was never taken into the family partnership (although his two elder brothers, Samuel Nock and George Edward, were), but that he managed the Studley brewery.²⁵

Also, the 1891 census includes one Alexander Thompson, aged 25, born Smethwick, address Studley Common and described as a brewer; this must be the same man. Did he replace Thomas? Had he been sent down as a senior manager over Thomas? The census records him as not employed. Was he drawing money direct from the family and therefore not technically an employee? Or does this indicate that the brewery was by then defunct? Even more intriguing is that recorded as a visitor staying with him on census day (5 April) was Richard S. Thomas, also described as a brewer, who *was* employed (where is not stated) – surely the person we know as manager of the Studley Brewery?

This evidence is too fragmentary to explain properly, but the overall impression is of a brewery in serious decline. I have found nothing to confirm a closure date, but the absence of directory entries after 1890 and, possibly, Alexander Thompson's lack of employment in April 1891 suggest about then. My best guess is 1890, because if it was '91 you would still expect an entry in that year's Needle District directory (published late 1890). Also, John Thompson started brewing at the Bell *circa* 1887-90, and it is tempting to link that with the closure although I have no proof. But if it was 1890, why Alexander Thompson was still in Studley in '91, with Thomas visiting, is a mystery.²⁶

I know of only one later newspaper reference to the brewery. It was mentioned, though not by name, on 8 May 1897 when the *Chronicle* reported the trial of two men accused of theft from the Barley Mow while they were working there in January that year. The job is not described in detail, but they were 'taking down a brewery plant', which looks much more like the removal of redundant equipment than renewal or maintenance. The Studley Brewery Company was already fading from memory.

The last traces

Ironically, it is only after this that the first evidence in an official record of Samuel Thompson & Sons' ownership of the Studley Brewery and the Barley Mow emerges – everything so far is secondary or circumstantial. The magistrates reviewed the Barley Mow in the 1906 licensing sessions, when it was stated to be owned by Mr Samuel Thompson and tenanted by John Edward Thompson, (not related to Samuel or the John Thompson who formerly managed the brewery).²⁷ The 1910 rating assessment register is in Warwickshire County Record Office, and records the Barley Mow and the 'Old Brewery' as being owned by S. Thompson & Sons, with the pub tenanted by Charles Lovelock and the former brewery described as 'Void' (i.e. unoccupied).

There was not much point in a large firm of maltsters owing a single pub and disused brewery isolated from the rest of their operations. John Thompson was meanwhile making a success of his Bell Brewery, and was looking to acquire tied houses. He bought the Barley Mow, including the former brewery, on 28 March 1911 (details provided by Ray Lamb from the sale particulars). The Licensing Register (WCRO CR2923/1/32) confirms that the Barley Mow was still owned by Samuel Thompson & Sons on 6 February 1911, but in February 1912 its owner was John Thompson, Brewer, Studley.

From 1911 the former brewery buildings were used by the Studley Garage & Engineering Works, which later expanded



Figure 6. The Barley Mow, 1964, showing the former Studley Brewery buildings on the right. (WCRO PH449/508)

to the other side of the road before moving across completely after the Second World War.²⁸ Photos show them still standing in 1964, but most were demolished soon after and are not on later 1960s photos²⁹ or the 1971 OS map. The arch structure is still recognisable, and appears to contain older brickwork though now filled in and incorporated in the pub. It is probably the earliest substantial part of the current building, which was almost totally rebuilt in the later 1960s or '70s by Mitchells & Butlers, who had taken over Thompson's Brewery in 1960.

So where did it all go wrong?

John Fletcher seems to have been a good publican. There are many reports in the *Alcester Chronicle* of successful events at the Barley Mow from the time he took it in 1864, and he had obviously accumulated a reasonable amount of capital by 1877.

His problems started with the building of the brewery, when he appears to have overstretched himself both finan-

cially and – although I hesitate to say this when he's not here to defend himself – probably in business management ability. The lack of publicity for the brewery is telling; a pub can develop a good trade just by word of mouth, but a commercial brewery needs much more effort and this one was too big to be economic as a home-brew operation for the Barley Mow alone.³⁰ Some of the later court cases he was involved in demonstrate a lack of organisation if nothing else. It looks as though his finances never got back to a firm footing even though he took on a partner, John Baker, and then sold his share of the brewery and the Barley Mow to him.

John Baker is a more enigmatic figure, and apart from what is mentioned here I have found nothing else about him. It is possible that Fletcher realised the way things were heading, even after going into partnership with Baker, and took the opportunity to sell out to him before the inevitable happened. Whatever the circumstances, with bankruptcy shortly afterwards, and a second bankruptcy at Gornal so closely after the first, Baker showed a serious lack of judgement and was clearly out of his depth.

Samuel Thompson & Sons probably didn't plan to acquire the brewery, but appear to have taken it in an arrangement which settled John Baker's debts to them and must have given him some extra capital as well – it is inconceivable that he could run up a debt for malt supplies to the value of the premises. They appointed a good manager, John Thompson, but when he left and set up in competition his replacements were not in the same class, and it wasn't long before they lost interest in such a small part of their business.

You can't help thinking that if the Studley Brewery had any chance of prospering, it was with John Thompson in charge. He was undoubtedly a competent brewer and manager, who could probably have gained a senior management position with a large brewing company had he wanted. He may have taken the job in Studley as a step on that road, but then decided that running his own, smaller, business was preferable – hence the move to the Bell – but I don't know. He built up Thompson's Brewery and the Bell Ales brand to have a tied estate of five pubs, and on his death in 1937 aged 84 was described as one of Studley's oldest and most respected inhabitants.³¹

And finally ...

Don't confuse the 19th-century Studley Brewery Co. with the even shorter-lived Studley Brewery of 1978-1982! That was set up at Washford Mill early in the micro-brewery boom created by the success of the Campaign for Real Ale. Its demise was apparently due to wild yeast infections affecting the beer – see ref. 1 (ii). And if you can fill the gaps in this account of the Studley Brewery Company, or correct any errors, do please let me know.

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Notes and references

1. (i) The ADLHS (1979) *Gazetteer of the Industrial Archaeology of the Lower Arrow Valley* states: 'E of Barley Mow was Studley Brewery, run by Samuel Thompson, maltster of Smethwick, up to the 1870s', and that John Thompson had worked at Studley Brewery before he owned the Bell brewery, which was built c.1880. (ii) In Lockett, F., Flint, K. and Lee, P. (eds.) (1983) *A History of Brewing in Warwickshire*. Coventry: Coventry and Mid Warwickshire CAMRA, Coventry, p.38) the Barley Mow had a brewery in its outbuildings until the late 1870s, and that John Thompson bought the Bell in 1880. (iii) Barber, N. (1996) *A Century of British Brewing*. Longfield: Brewery History Society omits the Studley Brewery Co., but says John Thompson's Bell Brewery was founded in 1880. (iv) McKenna, J. (2006) *Warwickshire Breweries*. Stroud: Tempus 2006) states the 'Barley Mow, Studley Brewery' was a home-brew house that ceased brewing c.1875, and has a separate entry for the Studley Brewery Co. (no location given) which he says was set up by John Thompson in 1880 with Richard Thomas Scholefield (*sic*) its manager in 1888, and another for Thompson's Brewery Ltd (at the Bell) said to have been registered in 1892 to acquire the Studley Brewery Co.
2. Confirmed by the *Alcester Chronicle* (26 November 1864) which reported Fletcher's 'house-warming dinner' introducing himself as the new host .
3. Baker must have acquired the Barley Mow at this time as well as the brewery, given the wording of the 1882 Directory entry, and that both were later owned by Samuel Thompson & Sons – these are discussed later in the main text.
4. *London Gazette* 13 June 1882.
5. *Worcestershire Chronicle* 5 June 1886 says he was a traveller for Baker after selling to him (presumably before taking the Fox & Goose, which was in 1883), but no other papers mention this. When he returned to Studley after bankruptcy, he was again involved in running the Barley Mow, as was his brother Horatio, shown by a licence case reported in several papers (e.g. *Alcester Chronicle*, 12 March 1887, which wrongly calls his brother Horatia).
6. *London Gazette* 28 Aug 1884; *Dudley & District News*, 20 September 1884. Having gone bankrupt in Studley, Baker moved to a brewery owned by Mr W.H. Anderson in Gornal. The *News* report on his second insolvency refers to the Studley one, about which it says that he had borrowed the £2,000 to buy out his partner and continue the business. It also says this was *after* his failure, which must be a mistake. He had bought Fletcher out in 1881 or early '82 before filing the petition in November 1882.
7. *Alcester Chronicle* and *Leamington Spa Courier*, 18 November 1882.
8. *Birmingham Post* 11 January 1883; *Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser*, 13 January 1883. (No similar detailed report in *Alcester Chronicle*)
9. *Alcester Chronicle*, 6 January 1883.
10. *Alcester Chronicle*, 2 December 1882.

11. (i) Redditch Library has bound Needle District Directories (1890 and earlier lacking pages containing only adverts). Karen Cording has most years, but not 1881. (ii) Spennell's Directory was first issued in 1880, and had slightly varying names and coverage over the years, Studley being included from 1882 to 1885.

12. As ref 8.

13. *Dudley & District News* as ref 6, plus 15 November 1884, 10 January 1985.

14. *Alcester Chronicle* 15 March and 17 May 1884.

15. (i) Clark, C. (1998) *The British Malting Industry since 1830*. London: Hambledon, p.57. (ii) An article in the *Smethwick Telephone* of 31 December 1949, one of a series entitled 'Old Smethwick' (copy in Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich branch, ref. HC461/13/11/3/1), lists the breweries, which were at Wolverhampton, Uttoxeter, Newport (S. Wales), Studley, Oldbury and Smethwick.

16. *Worcester Journal* 9 June 1883.

17. (i) Churchley, R. (2012) *Having a drink round Studley. A short history of the pubs of Studley, Warwickshire and surrounding villages before 1940*. Astwood: Astwood Publications, p.5; (ii) Ray Lamb emails, June 2016; (iii) Thompson's grave (shared with his wife and son) is in the old churchyard at Studley, and gives his date of birth as 1/8/1854.

18. I have checked the *Brewers Journal*, the *Brewers Guardian* and the *Country Brewers Gazette* for the 1870s-'90s in the National Brewing Library (NBL) at Oxford Brookes University, and there is nothing relevant in the indexes or the 'new companies' sections, or in the 'Odd Items' section of the *Journal* for 1880-3 and 1890-3. Duncan, W.W. (1889) *Manual of British & Foreign Brewing Companies*. London: Effingham Wilson & Company includes the Stoudley (*sic*) Brewery Co., Studley, Warks in the full list of all breweries, but not in the registered company list; subsequent editions do not mention it. I have also checked the registered company index (1856-1920) in the National Archives, Kew, and Studley Brewery Co. does not appear.

19. *Alcester Chronicle* 22 May 1886.

20. *Worcestershire Chronicle* 16 October 1886.

21. As ref 17 (i) which also says later, in 1895, he took a 95 year lease on the Bell.

22. Ref 17 (i) says brewing is thought to have started about 1890;

author advises this date is from R. Lamb, but see also previous mention of 1887 Kelly's *Wine etc* entry.

23. (i) *Alcester Chronicle* 3 November 1888; (ii) *Birmingham Daily Post* 30 Oct 1888. The *Chronicle* gives the brewery manager's name as Richard Thompson, but it should undoubtedly be Richard Thomas. John Fletcher's first name isn't in these reports, but a licensing report in the *Chronicle* on 27 Aug 1887, and his letter to the *Chronicle* on 10 November 1888 make it clear he was James's manager at the time.

24. *Alcester Chronicle* 11 May 1889.

25. See ref 15(ii) for details of the *Smethwick Telephone* article.

26. The Studley Brewery is in Kelly's *Wine, Spirits & Brewing Trades* directory for 1884 and '87, but not '92 or '95. (N.B. the directory's name varied over time.) I checked '84 in the NBL and '95 in the Guildhall Library, London, and the other two at the Bodleian Library once I found that it has a full set. I can find no confirmation for McKenna's statement (see ref. 1) that Thompson's Brewery Ltd was registered in 1892 to acquire the Studley Brewery Co. As noted above, the latter was never a separate company; it was privately owned at the start, and later just a small part of Samuel Thompson & Sons' business. John Thompson did not acquire the premises until 1911. It is possible he may have purchased the 'goodwill' associated with the brewery (i.e. the trade accounts, etc.) in 1892, but I have seen no evidence of it. There is no entry for Thompson's Brewery Ltd in the sources listed in ref. 18, nor the 1930 & 1937 indexes at Kew or early issues of the *Brewers Almanack* (earliest in the NBL is 1894). Mid 20th-century editions of the latter and the *Brewery Manual* (in NBL) list it simply as Thompson's Brewery, with John Thompson [junior] as proprietor, until 1955; both first list it as a registered limited company, with Thompson as a director, in 1956.

27. *Alcester Chronicle* 17 March 1906.

28. Lamb, R.C. (2014) 'A Brief Glimpse at the History of Studley Garage', *The Studley Historian*, Issue 33, August quotes an advert confirming the start date and has interesting photos of the garage / former brewery in the 1920s.

29. WCRO PH449/506-9, PH599/800.

30. In ref. 23 (i) the brewery manager said it had 3 fermenting vessels.

31. *Alcester Chronicle*, 9 October 1937.