

= Webster 's Brewery =

Webster 's Brewery ( Samuel Webster & Sons Ltd ) , was founded in 1838 by Samuel Webster and operated at the Fountain Head Brewery in Halifax , West Riding of Yorkshire , England . Webster 's Green Label , a light mild , and Yorkshire Bitter gained national distribution after the company was taken over by Watney Mann in 1972 . Throughout the 1970s it was known for the advertising slogan : " Drives out the northern thirst " .

The brewery was closed with the loss of 400 jobs in 1996 . The brand had suffered lower sales after marketing support was withdrawn following its acquisition by Courage Brewery in 1990 . After the brewery 's closure , Webster 's beers were initially brewed at the John Smith 's Brewery in Tadcaster before moving to the Thomas Hardy Brewery at Burtonwood in 2004 . Silvan Brands have owned the company since 2003 when they acquired it from Scottish & Newcastle .

= = History = =

= = = Origins : 1838 ? 1900 = = =

Samuel Webster ( 1813 ? 1872 ) was born in Ovenden , a small village about 2 miles from Halifax town centre . He was the eldest of seven brothers born into a Congregationalist family of the 10 acre @-@ owning farmer James Webster . Webster acquired the small Fountain Head Brewery in Ovenden Wood in 1838 when he was 25 and opened an office in Union Cross Yard , Halifax . The company bought its first public house in 1845 . In 1860 he was joined in partnership by his three sons Isaac , George Henry and Samuel Green , and the firm began trading as Samuel Webster & Sons . Samuel Webster died in 1872 , leaving his sons to continue the business . The firm also imported and sold wines and cigars , in addition to its brewing concerns .

By 1880 the company had 100 tied houses . In March 1890 Samuel Webster & Sons became a registered company with £ 175 @,@ 000 ( £ 17 @.@ 5 million in 2010 ) of capital and Isaac Webster , Samuel 's eldest son , its first chairman . In 1892 net profit was £ 20 @,@ 000 ( £ 2 million in 2010 ) . In 1896 the company took over H & T T Ormerod of Brighouse , West Yorkshire which could trace its origins back to 1760 . Isaac Webster died in 1899 , leaving an estate of £ 87 @,@ 454 ( £ 9 million ) . By 1900 the company 's office had moved to 57 Northgate , Halifax .

= = = 20th @-@ century consolidation = = =

The temperance movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century , and emergency laws aimed at restricting drinking during the First World War created difficult trading conditions for brewers . In 1919 net profit was reported at £ 22 @,@ 325 ( £ 900 @,@ 000 at 2010 prices ) . Samuel Wentworth Webster , a director of the company and grandson of the founder , died in 1928 with a personalty of £ 45 @,@ 000 ( £ 2 @.@ 2 million in 2010 ) . In 1928 , one of the brewery 's most successful beers was launched ; Webster 's Green Label , a light mild ale . In 1929 the company 's entire stock of properties , land and brewery buildings was valued at £ 468 @,@ 833 ( £ 23 @.@ 2 million in 2010 ) . The company took over Joseph Stocks of Halifax in December 1932 , which could trace its origins back to 1790 . In 1957 , Webster 's took over the brewer , John Ainley & Sons of Huddersfield and Woodhead Brothers of Elland , near Halifax , a mineral water manufacturer . The company dray horses , used for local beer deliveries , were retired by the end of the 1950s . In 1961 Webster 's bought Daniel Fielding & Sons of Halifax , which added 19 public houses to their tied estate . The same year the company sought out partnership with the national brewer Watney Mann in order to benefit from the technical knowledge of the much larger company . In return Webster 's brewed and sold the brewery conditioned Watney 's Red Barrel ale throughout their tied estate . In 1962 , a reciprocal trading agreement was reached with Ind Coope 's North East division which saw Webster 's houses stock lager for the first time . That same year the group won the contract to bottle Tuborg for West Yorkshire .

In September 1966 , a friendly takeover of the Bradford brewers J. Hey & Company Ltd added 73 public houses to their estate . Webster 's had a market value of £ 3 @. @ 3 million , and J. Hey had a value of £ 1 million . The combined group had assets of over £ 4 @. @ 5 million ( £ 65 million in 2010 prices ) . Webster 's continued to bottle Guinness under their Hey & Humphries subsidiary label into the late 1980s . Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s , consolidation , a good product and successful marketing made the company successful , according to The Times , with the social club trade accounted for around half of turnover . By 1967 Watney Mann owned 18 @. @ 4 per cent of the company , and Webster 's had a market capitalisation of £ 6 million ( £ 85 million in 2010 prices ) and owned 320 public houses and 12 off licences . Watney Mann had gradually increased their share to 27 @. @ 1 per cent by 1972 when it initiated a takeover of the rest of the company . Samuel Webster & Sons was offered £ 18 million for the 73 per cent of the company that Watney did not already own . The Watney Mann offer valued the entire company at almost £ 250 million in 2010 prices . The takeover was a friendly one , and dependent upon the agreement of the Webster family , who owned 20 per cent of the company . Watney Mann was motivated by an increase to their tied estate . Following the takeover , Webster 's continued as a regional subsidiary of the Watney Mann brewing empire , responsible for Yorkshire , Humberside , north Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire . The takeover saw heavy investment in the brewery and the Webster 's brands enjoyed increased distribution nationally . That same year , Watney Mann itself was taken over by Grand Metropolitan .

In 1979 , Webster 's employed a total of 1 @, @ 500 people across production , distribution and retailing . The early 1980s saw the " gradual transformation " of Webster 's into a national brand . In 1985 , Grand Met merged the Wilson Brewery of Manchester ( which Watney Mann had bought in 1960 ) with Webster 's to form Samuel Webster and Wilsons Ltd . In 1986 , Wilsons Brewery was closed down and production of Wilsons Original Bitter and Wilsons Mild was moved to Halifax . By 1988 Webster 's was supplying around 1000 pubs in the North of England , and as far afield as North Wales .

Moving out of the brewing industry , Grand Met sold Webster 's to Courage in 1990 . By that year Webster 's had an annual revenue of around £ 100 million and claimed 7 per cent of the national bitter market . However Courage owned the higher selling John Smith 's ale brand , and Webster 's was deprioritised . The brands suffered further after the Scottish & Newcastle takeover of Courage , as S & N , with their own Theakstons brand , now owned three major bitter brands from Yorkshire alone . By 1996 Scotland on Sunday described the brand as " staid " and argued that it " never caught on outside its Yorkshire heartland . " By this time John Smith 's was outselling Webster 's three to one .

Following the closure of the Fountain Head Brewery in 1996 , Webster 's beers were initially brewed at Scottish Courage 's John Smith 's Brewery in Tadcaster , but were subsequently moved to the Thomas Hardy Brewery at Burtonwood in 2004 . Scottish & Newcastle sold the Webster 's brands to Silvan Brands in 2003 . The chairman Brian Stewart defended the sale , claiming : " Webster 's was a brand that did not have a strong brand franchise . What has happened is that brands [ which ] consumers demand are still here " . In 2011 , H B Clark took over the distribution rights for the Webster 's brands in the north of England . The bitter is now simply known as Webster 's Bitter . In 2015 , Silvan Brands Ltd dissolved and the brand is believed no longer to be sold .

= = Fountain Head Brewery = =

The brewery site was chosen for its Pennine spring which provided the ready water supply necessary for brewing . The water was rich in magnesium sulphate which added bitterness to the beer and provided it with a dry finish . In 1873 the brewery was extended and redeveloped . In 1890 the brewery was linked to the Halifax High Level Railway network , which facilitated the brewery 's distribution . In 1900 the Château @- @ influenced maltings building was built as part of a £ 10 @, @ 000 ( £ 1 million in 2010 ) development project . By 1958 the company 's existing offices in Northgate , Halifax , were proving too small for the expanding company , and new offices were custom built on the Ovenden Wood site . The landmark maltings building was closed in 1960 as its

12 @, @ 000 stone ( 76 @, @ 000 kg ) per annum capacity proved insufficient for the brewery 's increasing needs , and the building was used for storage .

In 1973 , Watney Mann commissioned a new brewhouse . In 1979 a new £ 6 million lager plant was started , initially brewing Holsten . By the early 1980s the brewery had beer production volumes of around 400 @, @ 000 barrels per annum and employed around 600 people . At this time , the brewery was described as " wonderfully traditional " by Roger Protz and had open fermentation vessels , mash tuns and copper brewing vessels . Production of Budweiser began in 1984 . Having previously been used for storage , in 1986 the historic Long Can Hall was converted to function as the brewery 's visitor 's centre .

A £ 10 million expansion project was embarked upon at the brewery in 1988 . Construction of a new plant increased brewing capacity from 1 million to 1 @. @ 3 million barrels a year . In 1989 , the derelict former maltings building was converted into brewery offices in a £ 4 million project . Also , a new distribution depot was constructed in Elland .

In 1990 , the Old Maltings was categorised as a Grade II listed building . By 1990 , most of the Fountain Head Brewery was dedicated to brewing Webster 's and Wilsons ales . The brewery 's bottling line was closed in 1991 , resulting in the loss of 54 jobs .

At the time of the brewery 's closure in November 1996 , it employed 184 people on a ten hectare site . As well as Webster 's and Wilson 's beers , the brewery had been producing the lager brands Foster 's and Molson . The brewery had been running at " well below " 50 per cent of its 1 @. @ 3 million barrel capacity which was deemed " unsustainable " according to Scottish & Newcastle management . Although productivity per employee had been the highest of any of Scottish & Newcastle 's brewing plants it was claimed that it would have required substantial investment if it was to remain competitive .

In 2004 , housing was built on the former brewery site . After a period of dormancy , the Old Maltings reopened as a children 's day nursery in 2007 , and a school and community centre was opened alongside the nursery in 2011 . The Maltings College sixth form opened at the site in 2013 .

= = Webster 's Yorkshire Bitter = =

Webster 's Yorkshire Bitter was launched in the summer of 1982 . Largely a cask product , by 1984 Grand Metropolitan had transformed Yorkshire Bitter into a " massive " national brand , available in the company 's 5 @, @ 000 tied houses and 15 @, @ 000 free houses . It was marketed as their response to the growing popularity of Yorkshire bitter in the south of England , particularly John Smith 's . Yorkshire Bitter was the highest selling off trade bitter by 1985 with 18 per cent of the market . It had become the fifth best selling bitter nationally by 1989 , helped by a competitive pricing policy , and was the highest selling bitter in London . The beer was not without its critics , with the 1990 Good Beer Guide describing it as " weak flavour [ ed ] , reminiscent of a poor quality home brew ? worty , bland , cloying , with a dirty finish on the tongue " . In 1993 , Yorkshire Bitter was reduced from 3 @. @ 8 per cent to 3 @. @ 5 per cent ABV in order to save money on duty .

When Scottish & Newcastle acquired the John Smith 's and Webster 's bitter brands as part of their takeover of Courage in 1995 , the lower selling Webster 's brands were deprioritised , and virtually all marketing support ceased . Roger Protz has described the brand as " almost redundant " and production of cask conditioned Webster 's beer was ended in 2010 .

= = Advertising = =

Webster 's Pennine Bitter was known for its slogan : " Drives out the northern thirst " , first used in 1970 and supported throughout the 1970s by a local television campaign featuring Yorkshire cricketer Fred Trueman . In the advertisements , Trueman would breathe fire after drinking his pint of Pennine Bitter and say " We like things right in Yorkshire ? like our beer . Webster 's Pennine Bitter . Drives out the northern thirst " .

The comedian Charlie Williams appeared in television advertisements for Yorkshire Bitter in 1984 ? 85 . One of the Williams advertisements featured a cameo from Yorkshire cricketers Fred Trueman

and Ray Illingworth . The Webster 's Yorkshire Bitter " Talking horses " campaign ran from 1986 until 1992 with the slogan " It 's right tasty is Webster 's " . Dray horses were used in the 1980s , but replaced by animatronic puppets in the 1990s .

= = = Sponsorship = = =

The company sponsored The Hallé orchestra to appear in Halifax to sell out audiences in 1966 and 1967 . In the summer of 1984 , Webster 's Yorkshire Bitter invested £ 100 @, @ 000 into English cricket , with the aim of finding six fast bowlers by winter . From 1986 to 1992 , Webster 's sponsored Bradford Northern RLFC rugby league team , and Halifax RLFC from 1992 to 1993 , Dinnington Colliery Band from 1987 to 1990 , the UK Open darts championship in 1989 and 1990 , and the World Matchplay darts tournament in 1995 and 1996 .