



## H & G SIMONDS LIMITED

### A summary of the mergers and acquisitions that made up the H & G Simonds Group and some subsequent key events.

William Blackall Simonds inherited a brewery in Broad Street, Reading (founded in 1768) from his Father in 1782. Because of its small size a new brewery in Bridge Street, Reading, designed by Architect Sir John Soane, was completed in 1785 at a cost of £6,400 and the Broad Street Brewery was closed.

The business continued to grow under the management of the Simonds family and on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1885 H & G Simonds Limited (H&GS) was incorporated (No 21825).

The attached notes written for The Hop Leaf Gazette at the time of the Bi-centenary in 1985 summarise the company's development.

On 21<sup>st</sup> May 1960 H&GS was acquired by Courage & Barclay Ltd (No 546912) forming a new Group, Courage Barclay & Simonds Ltd.

In 1979, under the then ownership of Imperial Tobacco, a new brewery was built at Worton Grange, a greenfield site to the South of Reading known as The Berkshire Brewery. Brewing ceased at the Bridge Street premises and the first brew at the new brewery was on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1979.

The Bridge Street site was demolished in 1983 and the new Oracle Shopping Centre was built with adjoining brewery land being redeveloped as offices and residential housing.

Two early acquisitions thought to have been made by the Simonds family were Chapel Street Brewery in Brighton in 1874 and premises in Woolwich owned by Baker & Davidson in 1890. Neither acquisitions have been substantiated by the Brewery History Society.

The Victoria Brewery, Chain Street, Reading, owned by Robert Hewitt was acquired by H&GS in 1900.

The Fisherton Street Brewery, Salisbury, owned by William Henry Stanley was acquired by H&GS in 1906.

The Tamar Brewery, Devonport, Plymouth, (founded c1820) was acquired by H&GS from George Crake in 1919 together with some 28 public houses. It was previously owned by Robert Lavers Liscombe until 1880. Brewing ceased in 1975 and some of the brewing equipment was acquired by Blackawton Brewery.

The Fordingbridge Brewery, Hampshire, was acquired by H&GS from Charles Absalom in 1920 with 2 public houses. The brewery had previously been owned by the Jefferies family from 1784 until 1891. It was badly damaged by fire in 1906. The buildings were demolished in the 1960s.

The Plough Brewery, Wandsworth Road, Lambeth, (founded 1801) was acquired by H&GS from Thomas Woodward & Son in 1924. Brewing ceased and the premises used as London offices.

Mackeson & Co Ltd, owners of the Hythe Brewery, Kent, was taken over by H&GS in 1920. The brewery had been founded by James Pashley in 1669 and acquired by the Mackeson family in 1801. The brewery was sold on to Jude Hanbury & Co Ltd in 1929 (ultimately part of the Whitbread Group). Brewing ceased in 1968 and the premises demolished for residential housing.

The South Berkshire Brewery Co Ltd (incorporated 1897) was taken over by H&GS in October 1920 comprising 2 breweries and some 150/200 public houses. This company had been formed following the merger of the Atlas Brewery and the West Mills Brewery, both of Newbury, Berkshire. This company, previously known as Hawkins & Parfitt Ltd, ran the Atlas Brewery and under the control of Edmund Parfitt a merger was agreed with Thomas Edward Hawkins & Co, who ran the West Mills Brewery, in 1913 when the company name was changed. The West Mills Brewery closed in 1920 and the Atlas Brewery on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1930.

The Manor Brewery, Hungerford was acquired by Hawkins & Parfitt Ltd from John Platt & Son in 1898. It had previously been run by Platt & Farmer c1877. Brewing ceased in October 1920.

The Diamond Brewery, Cheap Street, Newbury, was acquired by Hawkins & Parfitt Ltd from J Emery in 1900. It had previously traded as Flint's Brewery under the control of Mrs Ellen Flint until 1895 and then Charles Emery until 1898. Brewing ceased soon after acquisition.

The St. Nicholas Brewery, Bartholomew Street, Newbury, was acquired by Hawkins & Parfitt Ltd from Westcombe & Son in 1902. It was previously owned by Mrs Sarah Westcombe until 1877.

The Castle Brewery, Castle Street, Reading, was acquired by Hawkins & Parfitt Ltd from Blandy, Hawkins & Co. in 1910. Brewing ceased in 1920.

The Bedford/Tavistock Brewery, Devon, (founded c1877) was acquired by H&GS from Johnstone & Johnstone in 1927 with 7 public houses. It had previously traded as The Tavistock Brewery Co Ltd (incorporated in 1897)

N P Hunt & Co, cider makers and pub owners, of Paignton, Devon, were acquired by H&GS in 1929. The business was sold on but the pubs were retained.

Newbury Brewery Co Ltd (incorporated 1890) was taken over by H&GS in 1930. The company operated the Castle Brewery, Northbrook Street, Newbury, (founded 1608). The previous owner was Francis Flowers Somerset.

Ashby's Staines Brewery Ltd (incorporated in 1887 as Charles Ashby & Co Ltd) was taken over by H&GS in 1930 together with 333 public houses. The brewery in Church Street, Staines was founded by Thomas Ashby in 1796. Brewing ceased in 1931 and the site was used as depot premises until 1981. The premises were then redeveloped to form the new Head offices of the Courage Group.

The Knowle Green Brewery, Kingston Road, Staines was acquired by Ashby's Staines Brewery Ltd from Thomas Fladgate Harris in July 1903 together with 94 public houses half of which were sold on to Watney Combe Reid & Co Ltd. The brewery (founded 1877) ceased brewing in 1904.

The Wellington Brewery, Wokingham, was acquired by Ashby's Staines Brewery Ltd from Headington & Son in June 1920 together with 5 public houses. It was previously owned by Thomas W T Dunning until 1877 and Headington & Webster until 1887. Brewing ceased soon after acquisition.

Wheeler's Wycombe Breweries Ltd (incorporated in July 1898) was taken over by Ashby's Staines Brewery Ltd in October 1929 together with 148 public houses. The brewery in Eastern Street, High Wycombe, was founded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and originally owned by the Wells family and also traded as Biddle & King. It was run by Thomas Wheeler until 1884 and George Wheeler until July 1898 when he merged with Leadbetter & Bird.

The Frogmore Brewery, Priory Road, High Wycombe, was founded c1823 by William Huntley It traded as Thomas & Benjamin Lucas until 1877 then Lucas & Leadbetter until 1887 then as Leadbetter & Bird until 1898 when they merged with George Wheeler to form Wheeler's Wycombe Breweries Ltd. Brewing ceased on this site soon after the merger.

The Teign Brewery, Teignmouth, Devon was acquired by H&GS from Brown & Bishop in 1931. It had previously been operated by William John Banbury until 1887, then Curtis Brothers until 1895, then Arthur Roberts until 1900 and Roberts & Co until 1923. Brewing ceased soon after acquisition.

The Royal Standard, Kenwyn Street, Truro, Cornwall, was acquired by H&GS from Oakham Tops in 1939. It was the last home-brew pub in Truro. It had been previously traded by Thomas Venton until 1902, then William Venton until 1926 and William John Thomas until 1935.

The Eagle Brewery, Broadway, Speenhamland, Newbury, (founded 1809) was acquired by H&GS from J Adnams & Son in 1936 together with 3 public houses. Brewing ceased on acquisition.

The Cirencester Brewery Ltd (incorporated in 1887) was taken over by H&GS in June 1937. The brewery in Cricklade Street, Cirencester, was previously operated by Cripps & Co until 1887. Brewing ceased soon after acquisition but there were subsequent attempts to restart brewing on the site by other independent brewers, namely- Cellar Brewery 1983-1987 and The Cotswold Brewing Co. 1988-89. The buildings were ultimately converted into residential housing.

The Cotswold Brewery, Watermoor Road, Cirencester (founded 1832) was acquired by Cripps & Co from Edward Bowley in 1882 together with 16 public houses. The buildings were converted into residential housing.

The Bridgend Brewery, Glamorgan, was acquired by H&GS from Robert Henry Stiles in 1938. The brewery had ceased to operate before that date and the 27 public houses acquired in the sale had been supplied by Rogers of Bristol. The town rugby club plays on land adjoining the old brewery.

J L Marsh & Sons Ltd (incorporated in 1912) was taken over by H&GS in 1939 together with 8 public houses. Their Town Brewery, Bryanston Street, Blandford Forum, Dorset was founded in 1735. It was previously owned by John Lewis Marsh c1910. The premises were sold on to Brutton, Mitchell & Toms Ltd in 1950 and used as a depot. They have since been converted into flats.

R B Bowly & Co Ltd (incorporated in 1899) was taken over by H&GS in 1945 together with 41 public houses. Their North Wiltshire Brewery, High Street, Swindon had been owned by Richard Bowly pre 1892 and RB & CL Bowly until 1898. Brewing ceased soon after acquisition.

John May & Co Ltd (incorporated in 1894) was taken over by H&GS in 1947 together with some 90/100 public houses. Their Brook Street Brewery, Basingstoke, Hampshire (founded 1750) had been run by John May & Co until 1894. The brewery was demolished in 1967/68 to make way for a new road.

The Duke Street Brewery, Kingsclere, Hampshire (founded 1790) was acquired by John May & Co Ltd from William Ingram Drake in 1921. It had previously been owned by Edward Drake but there is no information available on previous owners. The brewery buildings are still standing.

South Devon Brewery Ltd (incorporated in 1935 and previously known as W H Prowse & Sons Ltd) was taken over by H&GS in 1951 together with 25 public houses. Their South Devon Steam Brewery,

Union Road, Kingsbridge, Devon, was previously owned by William Heath Prowse until 1892. Brewing had ceased on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1948 and H&GS had been supplying the public houses from their Tamar Brewery, Plymouth.

The South Pool Brewery, Kingsbridge, Devon had been owned by William Heath Prowse until 1892 and closed soon after.

Lakeman's Brewery, Brixham, Devon was acquired by H&GS from N P Hunt (Cider makers in Paignton –see above) in November 1937 together with 50 public Houses. It had previously been owned by Thomas Lakeman until 1900, then Bernard Astley until 1923 and Astley & Harvey until 1930 when it was acquired by N P Hunt. Brewing ceased in 1950 and the brewery demolished. A bus station now occupies the site.

W J Rogers Ltd (incorporated in July 1894) was taken over by H&GS in 1935 together with 25 public houses. Their Jacob Street Brewery, Bristol (founded 1845) had previously been owned by William John Rogers. Brewing ceased in 1952 and the buildings were converted into offices.

Maesteg Brewery Co Ltd (incorporated 18<sup>th</sup> December 1897) was taken over by W J Rogers Ltd in 1898 together with 42 public houses. The previous owners were John and Valentine Pegg. The Tywith Maesteg Brewery was closed soon after acquisition.

J & T Usher Ltd (incorporated June 1896) was taken over by W J Rogers Ltd in 1922 together with some 40 public houses. James and Thomas Usher had originally traded from the Horfield Brewery, Bristol before moving to the New City Brewery, River Road, Bristol in 1901. Brewing ceased on this site soon after acquisition.

The Lamb Brewery, Stall Street, Bath was acquired by J & T Usher Ltd from George Morris in 1896. It was previously owned by William Harding until 1877 and Mrs Selina Nash until 1884.

Phillips & Sons Ltd (incorporated March 1892) was taken over by H&GS in 1949 together with 125 public houses. Their Dock Road Brewery, Newport, Gwent (founded 1874) had previously been owned by Thomas Floyde Lewis and it was purchased by Thomas Phillips (previously of the Northampton Brewery) in 1892. Brewing ceased in 1968 but the premises continued to be operated as a depot and offices.

Eastern Valleys Brewery Co Ltd (incorporated 1910) under the control of Percy Jones was taken over by Phillips & Sons Ltd in 1912. The company had been formed following the merger of the Eastern Valleys Steam Brewery, Osborne Road, Pontnewydd, Gwent with John Sherwood of Caerleon. The brewery had previously been owned by William Walters until 1884 and Levi and Thomas Jones until 1902 when Percy Jones took control.

The Hanbury Arms, High Street, Caerleon, Gwent run by John Sherwood, merged with Percy Jones in 1910. This Brew-pub was sold on to William Hancock of Cardiff in 1914.

Clytha Brewery Ltd (incorporated 1889) was taken over by Phillips & Sons Ltd in 1936. Their brewery in Cannon Street/Dean Street was owned by Richard Williams until 1887 and by Frederick Cross until 1890. It ceased trading in 1894 but brewing was resumed by James Gorman c1902. Brewing ceased in 1936.

Pool & Son Ltd of Penzance, Cornwall was acquired by H&GS in 1953. No information is available on this company but it is not thought to have been a brewery. It could have been acquired for depot purposes or possibly a public house.

Octagon Brewery Ltd (incorporated 1899) was taken over by H&GS in 1954 together with 48 public houses. Their brewery in Martin Street, Plymouth was founded in 1861 by Joseph Godfrey. Brewing ceased in 1970.

H&GS overseas interests included a 26.5% share in Simonds, Farsons, Cisk Ltd of Malta. This interest was sold to L Farrugia & Sons Ltd, Malta on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1986. A substantial share holding in East African Breweries Ltd of Kenya was also held but this too was subsequently sold.

The Beers of H&GS were famously known by the Hop Leaf Trade Mark, the exception being the strong Bulldog Pale Ale represented by the Bulldog Trade Mark.

### Subsequent Events

21.05.1960. Following the merger of H&GS with Courage & Barclay Ltd the Group was renamed Courage Barclay & Simonds Ltd. Subsequent name changes of this company were to Courage Ltd on 30.10.1970, Imperial Brewing & Leisure Ltd on 01.01.1983, Courage Group Ltd on 19.12.1986 and to Brewman Group Ltd on 23.08.1986.

11.10.1972. The Courage Group is taken over by Imperial Group plc (then known as Imperial Tobacco Group Ltd).

25.04.1986. Imperial Group plc is taken over by Hanson plc (then known as Hanson Trust Ltd) in a hostile take-over bid.

19.11.1986. The Brewing business of Hanson is sold to Fosters Ltd (then known as Elders IXL Ltd

28.03.1991. All the public houses of Fosters/Courage and those of Grand Metropolitan plc are merged into the Intreprenuer Pub Group of companies, a 50/50 joint venture between the two groups. At the same time all the brewing interests of Grand Metropolitan plc are transferred to the Courage Group.

16.08.1995. All the brewing assets of Fosters Ltd (not the companies) are sold to Scottish & Newcastle plc.

28.04.2008. Scottish & Newcastle plc is acquired jointly by Heineken (Holland) and Carlsberg (Denmark) for £7,8 billion with the UK business being taken over by Heineken UK Ltd.

2010. Notice has been given of the intended closure of the Berkshire Brewery leaving the town of Reading without a major brewing business after nearly 4 centuries.

Author: Peter C G Goodson, FCIS,  
Former Director/Company Secretary of the Fosters/Courage UK companies.

11<sup>th</sup> February 2009.