

H&G Simonds - Cone Top Can history

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H&G Simonds were very early adopters of the cone top can, first introduced for S.B. Pale Ale in 1936. The first to introduce it was the Felinfoel Brewery in Llanelli, Wales in 1935. The last cone tops were made for beer in the UK in about 1960.



On July 28, 1935 a law was introduced in the United States that each container had to bear the initials IRTP, standing for Internal Revenue Tax Paid. This imprint lasted until March 1, 1950 when it was abolished. Any cans bearing these initials can therefore be identified to that 15 year period.

CanCo [American Can] devised and the Gottfried Krueger Brewing Company in Newark, New Jersey first tested the flat top can in 1933-4 by giving 4 cans to 100's of local households to try. It was an instant success. The problem with the steel flat top can was that the brewer had to install new equipment. This meant heavy capital expense which few smaller Brewers had the resources to contemplate. Continental Can developed a package that had the advantage of the flat top, but was easier to market. It looked like a metal bottle, with a round body and a conical top sealed with a crown cork just like that on a bottle. Because of the conical top it was dubbed 'cone top' or 'spout top' and had several advantages. Firstly the can looked like a bottle, thus perhaps helping to breakdown consumer resistance to drinking beer from a metal container, also it was filled like a bottle and could be sealed with a bottle top, so brewers needed far less new equipment. In September 1935 Schlitz became the first to use a new style of can, the cone top, produced by the Continental Can Company.

The first cans used outside the United States were all cone tops. For the consumer, there was an advantage and a disadvantage. The can was easier to open than the new flat top, as most drinkers already possessed bottle openers. But the cone top simply looked unattractive, partly as it rather resembled a well-known tin of metal polish. In any event these cans looked so unusual that they stayed in the memory more easily than the flat tops which were actually launched before them in the USA and to this day many people think that cone tops were the forerunners in can design.

It soon became obvious around the world that the Americans were onto a good thing and it was not long before the first European cone top can was issued, in 1935 by The Felinfoel Brewery in Wales.

H & G Simonds were also very early adopters of the flat top can in the UK, which I believe was supplied initially by Alcan who were based in Park Royal at the time. In the early years they arrived in the Brewery as a flat sheet of steel so the brewery invested in assembly machines located close to the canning line. Then filled and sealed the tops of the cans.

The first 'tab pull' cans were introduced in 1963 by the Pittsburgh Brewing Company, but the tabs pulled off and were soon recognised as dangerous. So in 1975 the first 'stay tab' pull was introduced, also in the USA by the Falls City Brewing Company. Aluminium cans were not introduced till about 1959.

Other H&G Simonds brews in the cone top included:

1937 Coronation Brew



1949 HMS Vanguard Cruise, Pale Ale



1936 Simonds Beer



1937 Coronation can



1950's Tavern Flat top can



Simonds can opener
for a flat top can.

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