

Our History

You see things a bit differently after a few beers.

And we've made a few in our time. Here's a look at the beers and some of the events that have shaped our history.

1929

The Waitemata Brewery Co, founded by W Joseph Couotts and his three sons, begins production on the corner of Great South Road and Bairds Rd, Otahuhu (where it is still in operation).

While the official opening takes place inside the brewery, around 100 prohibitionists and members

of the Women's Temperance Union kneel outside in Great South Road and pray that the building be turned into a flour mill, a woollen mill, a dairy factory or a church.

Opposition came not only from prohibitionists, but also from existing liquor interests who refused to allow the new brewery's product to be sold through existing outlets.

Couotts joins forces with Levers and Co (an Auckland wholesale wine and spirit firm and distributors of beer), ensuring the Waitemata Brewery a continuous supply of bottles.

1930

Waitemata Sparkling Ale – a new type of clear sparkling lager, and a revolutionary departure from standard beers on the market – is produced at the brewery. It quickly becomes popular with university students who loudly demand this beer at opposition outlets, and refuse to drink any substitute.

Dominion Breweries is created and floated on the New Zealand Stock Exchange with a capital of £75,000. Henry Kelliher is the managing director and Morton Couotts is the Head Brewer. Dominion Breweries purchase Levers and Co. and the Waitemata Brewery Co, and begins the process of acquiring hotels in the Auckland district and in Hamilton.

1931

Morton Couotts installs a system of laboratory examination and control throughout the entire brewing process.

1932

The Great Depression leads to the government imposing a 50% increase in beer duty.

1933

Mr Leonard Stevens is appointed as the chairman of Dominion Breweries, a position he would hold until his death in 1972.

1935

During the depression workers' wages had been cut by 10%, a decision that the company had been critical of. Dominion Breweries takes the lead by restoring full salary to all workers on £800 a year or less, a move soon followed by other companies and local bodies.

1937

A new brewhouse building commences before war breaks out, housing beautiful Ziemann copper vessels still in use today.

Morton Couotts devises 'a scientific system for the storing and serving of draught beer which '... is the most hygienic ever applied in the trade.' Specifically, the beer does not come into contact with the atmosphere at any time during the brewing process. Dominion Breweries becomes the first company in New Zealand to introduce an annual bonus based on profits.

1938

The late 1930s sees the virtual ending of the long-established custom of "shouting" by the publican who provided every third or fourth drink free. This is as a result of another Government increase in sales tax lifting the price of a handle to 5 pence to 6 pence. The investment service of the Australian Stock Exchange issues a review of Dominion Breweries, which describes it as one of the major enterprises of New Zealand. DB develops a temperature controlled system enabling draught beer in hotels to be kept at an even temperature at all times.



1939 – 1945

During the war years many DB employees joined the forces. For the duration of the war the company made up the full wages of any of its

staff who volunteered. Their positions in the company were also assured when they returned from service. It also brewed beer for the troops overseas, at one stage sending in a single order of 22,000 dozen quart bottles to the three services in the Middle East. The beer weighed 440 tons and occupied an entire goods train with 80 trucks.

1946

After the death of Joseph Coutts, his son Morton takes his father's place as a director of Dominion Breweries.

1947

A report from the Royal Commission on Licensing recommends nationalisation of the licensed trade. The report's recommendation is not accepted by Parliament.



1948

Statistics show that one in five pints of beer drunk throughout New Zealand has come from the Waitemata Brewery. The brewery, although working to full capacity throughout the year, struggles to keep up with demand.

1950

Morton Coutts commences research into Continuous Fermentation.

1951

The waterfront strikes affects the company's sales and production, through difficulties and high costs in getting barley malt up from the South Island.

The capital of the company is increased to £700,000.

Dominion Breweries changes the face of hotels in New Zealand by introducing carpet into public bars in place of the sawdust which was previously there. It also introduces seating in public bars, and original paintings in its hotel reception areas and bedrooms.

1952

Dominion Breweries wins seven prizes at the Commonwealth Brewer's Exhibition in London – two of them firsts. The Riverina Hotel opens in Hamilton – New Zealand's first international standard hotel.

1953

Demand of the company's products again overtakes supply. To improve quality, Morton Coutts installs seven large fermenting gyles at the brewery with electronic temperature control equipment and maturing vessels, giving more than a million gallons of storage.

1955

The company celebrates its Silver Jubilee with a net profit of £208,407.

1956

The company charter reads, in part: "it is the constant purpose of this Brewery, regardless of immediate profit, to develop the art of beer-making to the greatest degree of perfection, in order that this brewery and its products will always stand out, as a model of high and conscientious art in brewing the national drink."

Continuous fermentation, described by the London Star as 'a brewer's dream and yours too', is introduced and the bulk of draught beer is produced under this process with spectacular success. Despite an increased production of 67% the brewery cannot keep up with demand.

1957

Funds received from selling rights to the Continuous Fermentation Process, allow the company to embark on an expansion programme that quickly develops into a contest for outlets. The company successfully expands from its Auckland provincial base into a national operation. Building controls on hotels are lifted and the company undertakes major modifications to its existing hotels and the building of new hotels.

1959

Labour introduces the infamous 'Black Budget', which doubles the excise duty on beer. Hotel development continues, with the Commercial in Shortland Street being extensively remodelled and reopened as De Bretts, the first hotel in Auckland designed to meet international standards.

1960

The quality of beer has improved markedly (85 percent of all beer produced in New Zealand is made using the Coutts method), and New Zealanders became the third highest beer consuming population in the world. DB Export Beer is born in response to the 'Black Budget' two years earlier. This special beer goes on to win gold at the International Brewing Awards.



1963

Henry Kelliher is knighted by the Queen during her visit to New Zealand.

1967

During World War I drinking hours had been restricted and licenced premises were forced to close at six o'clock. This legislation is repealed,

allowing pubs to stay open until 10pm. This sees draught beer sales expand at the expense of packaged beers.

The Waitemata Brewery completes its £2 million makeover and the company's tanker fleet is expanded to deliver draught beer to Gisborne, Hastings, Taihape, Wellington, and New Plymouth.

1968

Morton Couatts dream is realised when his beloved DB Export Beer wins the International Brewing Awards' Brewers Championship Challenge Cup for 'Best Beer in the World in any class'.

1969

Dominion Breweries acquires the Taranaki Brewery at New Plymouth and the Tui Brewery at Mangatainoka in the lower North Island, giving increased production and more economical supply of draught beer to the lower half of the North Island.

1970

Dominion Breweries takes over Nelson Breweries and Westland Breweries (which will become Monteith's Brewing Company) allowing the company to adequately meet the demand for Dominion Breweries beer in the South Island.

1972

Mr Leonard Stevens, the company chairman for 40 years, dies on 31 March 1972. Sir Henry Kelliher becomes chairman as well as managing director.

1974

Sir Henry announces plans for a new brewery in Timaru.



1977

The \$11.4 million Mainland Brewery (now named DB Draught Brewery) opens at Washdyke near Timaru. The company now has control of 254 hotels, 53 of them operated by the company and 201 by leasees.

1981

Brierley Investment (BIL) acquires an interest in Dominion Breweries.

1982

Sir Henry Kelliher retires after 52 years as managing director of the company and is replaced by Jim Fletcher.

1983

Morton Couatts retires from Dominion Breweries and is awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE).

1986

Dominion Breweries introduces Special Draught – New Zealand's first low alcohol beer at 2%.

1987

Magnum Corporation (a company controlled by BIL) takes all the shares in Dominion Breweries and DB shareholders receive Magnum shares: the group assumes the Magnum name. DB Export Gold is born and starts a golden streak of medal winning.

1991

Asia Pacific Breweries takes a 54% interest in Magnum Corporation.

1992

Magnum Corporation changes its name to DB Group, and the brewing division becomes DB Breweries (instead of Dominion Breweries).

1993

Brian Blake appointed chief executive of DB Breweries; Erik Korthals Altes from Heineken becomes the Group Managing Director.

1994

DB Group enters into a Management Service Agreement with Asia Pacific Breweries. DB Breweries takes over the New Zealand distribution of imported Heineken and the company invests \$12 million in new technology to meet Heineken brewing requirements to brew the beer in New Zealand. DB Export Dry stuns the world by being judged 'Best Beer in the World' just as DB Export Beer did 26 years earlier.

1996

Morton Couatts is recognised for his lifelong work in the brewing industry with the New Zealand Distinguished Biotechnologist Award. More specifically this award recognises his pioneering Continuous Fermentation process.

1997

DB Group's managing director, Erik Korthals Altes, returns to Holland to assume the position of general manager of Heineken Netherlands. He is replaced by DB Breweries chief executive Brian Blake.

1999

DB Group announces it is leaving the spirit market and closes Allied Liquor Merchants.

2000

Asia Pacific Breweries make its first offer to buy out shareholders in DB Group, with a \$2.80 buy-out offer. Its shareholding is raised to 77%. DB Group sells NZ Liquor to a management buyout team. DB Group sells Corbans Wines to Montana Wines.

2002

The company, now renamed DB Breweries, completes a redevelopment of its largest site, the Waitemata brewery in Otahuhu, Auckland. The redevelopment includes a state-of-the-art packaging hall, a new office building and a realigned road improving access and safety around the 40-acre site, and allows all Auckland based staff to work together on the same site.

2004

Morton Coutts turns 100 but sadly later passes away in June. After more than 70 years as a public company, DB Breweries leaves the New Zealand Stock Exchange, as Asia Pacific Breweries finally succeeds in buying out shareholders.

2005

DB Breweries celebrates its 75th birthday by 'shouting the nation' to a free beer.

2007

DB Breweries establishes Drinkworks on 1st October 2007 which is operated by DB's 100% owned Australian subsidiary DBG (Australia) Pty Limited in Sydney.

2008

DB launches its first low-carb beer. DB Export 33 is brewed 33% longer (hence the name) than standard beers to remove unwanted sugars and reduce the beer's level of carbohydrates - without compromising taste. Meanwhile, Tui gets 'on the sauce' launching Tuimato Sauce nationally through supermarkets. Tui also refreshes 1000 drought-hit farmers from the southern North Island with a Drought Shout at Tui Brewery on April 9. The reason for the low-key festivities being, "Because you buggers deserve a break" after an ongoing drought causes hardship for farmers.

On the hospitality front, DB Breweries established Barworks Group Limited with effect from 1 April 2008. The business, which rapidly expanded, is 60% owned by DB and 40% by JAG Hospitality.

2009

DB Export 33 strikes gold after a year in the market winning 'Best Reduced Carbohydrate Beer Award' at Brew NZ 2009.

Tui has its biggest beer launch since 1889 with the arrival of Tui Blond Lager. Monteith's revolutionises the cider market by launching first Monteith's Crushed Apple Cider then Pear Cider a year later.

2010

Tui kick starts the New Year with a Super 14 pre-season match between the Hurricanes and Blues under the tower of Tui Brewery at Mangatainoka. The inaugural match attracted almost 10,000 heartland rugby fans from all over New Zealand. During winter Tui shouts Southland farmers a beer and a barbeque after heavy rain and snow killed hundreds of thousands of lambs and caused a minor civil disaster. DB Breweries and Pernod Ricard New Zealand formalise a strategic relationship for on-premise service and collaboration in the New Zealand market.

In August, DB Breweries launched the Classic Pub Network of New Zealand to help traditional pubs attract and impress new patrons, making them more financially viable and sustainable. The inaugural member was Parua Bay Tavern in the Far North followed by Riverhead Tavern near Kumeu a year later.

At Christmas DB celebrated its 80th year by recreating Waitemata Sparkling Ale as its special Christmas brew.

2011

DB opens a new state-of-the-art, multi-million dollar brewhouse at Waitemata Brewery.

Heineken successfully activates its worldwide partner and official beer status during Rugby World Cup 2011. Delegate member of the Heineken board, and Heineken family member Mrs. Charlene L. De Carvahlo visits Waitemata Brewery with her husband and member of Heineken's supervisory board Mr. Michel R. De Carvahlo. It's their first trip to New Zealand, coinciding with Rugby World Cup 2011.



Tui wins Gold and Silver at the BrewNZ awards plus the trophy for New Zealand's Best Draught Category for a third year in a row, cementing Tui's position as New Zealand's most popular beer brand.

2012

DB's Mainland Brewery at Timaru is renamed 'DB Draught Brewery' in honour of the home of this popular mainland drop. Monteith's celebrates the opening of its new-look brewery and home in Greymouth after a multi-million dollar redevelopment ahead of the 15th annual Monteith's Wild Food Challenge.