

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 91 – Speight's: The Dark Times. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons, such as Vaughan. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. Last time, we saw the prohibitionists gain ground on the brewers, with the industry responding by banding together under the new national conglomerate, New Zealand Breweries Limited. Today we will see how the new dynamic played out along with how Speight's dealt with multiple tragedies and a world war.

After a couple of years of not making any bold moves after the NZB merger, in 1925 more land was bought by Speight's which contained a building that was meant to be a food packaging plant but that never eventuated. Instead, it became a mechanic, car painter and coach building business. The building was also used to store casks of beer on the second floor, aided by the use of a hydraulic elevator that was powered by the town's water supply. This was a big year for Dunedin in general as they were to have another world's fair, the New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition, of which Charles Speight was chairman of the finance committee and vice chairman of the board. Later he took over the chairman position of the board when the original bloke got sick. Apparently, Charles did a pretty bloody good job as over 3 million tickets were sold and he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire due to the part he played in its success. Naturally Speight's had a stand at the exhibition showcasing not just their beer but lots of other aspects of the craft of brewing as well, such as the work of the cooper sanding and polishing casks from 22L kegs to a large 245L hogsheads. It wasn't all business though, Charles took a particular interest in a Scottish band that had been brought over to play daily music for Exhibition. Their stay was marred with a few issues as they were to go on tour after this but a coal miners' strike back in Britain caused complications resulting in their immediate return home. Some of them must have taken a liking to it though, cause a few would return to live in Dunedin with one, Danny Wilton joining Speight's as a night shift maltster. He apparently loved Speight's so much he would drink it every night on his break, his workmates lining up ten glasses for him to down each night. Interestingly, Danny served in both world wars, being called up for the second one at the age of 41. Thankfully he returned home and spent the next 40 years working for Speight's allegedly without even one sick day off during that period.

In 1927 more land was bought, this time with a soft drink company on it. Speight's had no need for that so it was demolished and replaced with barley storage. They also bought another building that had a bunch of stuff in it like a social hall, library, billiard and reading rooms, offices, a bar and restaurant, a mechanic and even a lift, which was rare in those days. Since Speight's didn't have any immediate use for the building it was rented free of charge to the Dunedin Philharmonic Society to use as rehearsal rooms. Interestingly enough, around this time it was decided that Speight's should take a slightly new direction and start dealing in loans, investments, shares, securities and all sorts of other financial stuff as a new business venture. No idea why but it can't have done that well cause that side of the business went into voluntary liquidation 10 years later.

Now reaching retirement age, Charles Speight still performed the basic duties of brewing that he started out doing when he was apprenticed under Dawson all those years ago. Usually this was done outside of normal working hours and I doubt the brewery really needed one of the elderly directors to work overtime to meet demand so it kinda feels like he was doing cause he just really enjoyed the craft. On the morning of 19th February 1928, it was no different. Charles was walking to work as he often did, when a feeling of dizziness came over him. He found a phone and called his son Hugh, who picked him up in the family car and took him home. Once he was back, Charles decided to rest in bed with a book and have a nap for the rest of the day. A few hours later, Charles Speight died in his sleep. He was 62. Although his father James was the one who had put the name on the beer, it

could be argued that really Charles was the Speight who the brand name was referring to. Speight's sales had quadrupled under his 30 year leadership, it was now a household name and Charles himself had risen to unequivocally be the leading brewer in Aotearoa. His renown and recognition in the industry was unparalleled but that isn't what most people remembered him for, at least not at the time. He was known as a philanthropist and widely admired public citizen, resulting in a full column obituary in the Otago Daily Times and even a full article being published raving about him and his abilities saying they "practically amounted to genius". Charles' funeral also extremely large, one of the biggest in Dunedin history. It was done at his home, as was his wish, with five ministers officiating. Supposedly every Speight's employee attended, as well as many people from the organisations that Charles was a part of. Also attending were many business and professional associates he had made, many of whom were leaders in their own areas, and even the mayor, councillors and MPs were in attendance. Hotels and pubs closed their doors for the day as a sign of respect. A giant had fallen, the forest momentarily silent. But the gap in the canopy needed to be filled.

Of course, whether it be a kingdom or a company, after the death of a leader there always comes the question of succession. Charles' seat as a director of NZB was taken by his third son, Hugh. Hugh had joined Speight's a couple years earlier in 1926 after initially starting with the Loan and Mercantile Co., which is pretty much exactly what it sounds like. Although we don't know his exact role in the company at this time, noting his previous employment and the timing of his joining makes it possible that he was brought on as part of the new loans and investments side of the business. Charles' position on the Dunedin local board of NZB was filled in two parts by Speight's head brewer Reg Dawson being brought on as a member and Bob Greenslade becoming chairman. Bob also took on the role of manager for the Speight's brewery and he got off to a flying start. New cask washing sheds were erected on the roof of the Speight's Ale House building. Smaller casks were hoisted up into these buildings, washed and then lowered again while larger casks were still washed in the courtyard. He also saw an extension to the cold liquor vats as well as the Britannia building being demolished and a new building being erected in its place to hold lunchrooms, storerooms and an extension to the coopers and carpenters.

The rest of Bob's leadership of Speight's was all within the next major crisis the world faced, the Great Depression. Despite what you may think that people drink lots during times of hardship to escape their woes, this wasn't the case. Speight's didn't see any sharp rise in sales during this period, in fact, they saw a decline, probably cause people needed their money for purchases that were more critical to life. Naturally, land purchases, construction and expansion of the brewery was put on hold but there was an emphasis put on the welfare of the staff. In 1930 the New Zealand Breweries' Employees' Provident Fund was started. The fund was run by a board of eight trustees, four of those would represent the company (one of which was Hugh Speight) and the other four would represent the employees (one of which was Hugh Adam). Any NZB employee who wanted to join the fund would contribute just under 4% of their pay and NZB would match that if the employee was under 35, giving increasing amounts based on age to a maximum of 15% of the employees pay if they were over 65. Upon retirement, the employee would get all the money back that they and the company contributed plus the interest it had accrued. It was a good program but not everyone retired. It was rare for accidents to happen but in March 1932, John Ainge who you may remember as one of the local Dunedin board members and manager of McGavins Brewery, was found with a cut throat near Jacob's Ladder, a set of steps in St Clair. He was 43.

Later in 1932 a staff photo was taken, as they did on occasion. This showed Alf Walker, a cellarman who was in charge of his particular cellar for so long that it became known as 'Alf Walker's Cellar'.

The picture also showed a Joe Keogh who had an amazing moustache, large and long. He was a carter and carried coal for the boilers. Apparently one day he dozed off and as a prank someone shaved off half of his stash. Joe was livid, even more so when he gained the nick name 'Half a Mo Joe'. The picture also showed a variety of the motor vehicles that Speight's now used. Most had solid tyres but one did have rare pneumatic tyres. This truck, known as the chain lorry, was meant to carry the empty casks back to the brewery. The way it got its name was that the casks were stacked up on the back and secured down with chains. The guy who drove the chain lorry was usually Jack McCartney, nicknamed Flat Out. This was both in reference to his driving style but also the answer he gave when asked how busy he was. As of the 1990s, this lorry was meant to be owned by a guy in Gore but after that I'm not sure what happened to it.

A couple years later in early 1934 Bob Greenslade had a rather serious stroke, so serious that he was now unable to work. He would last another year until on 16th July 1935 another stroke would result in his death. He was 61. Once again, the question of succession came up for the various seats that he occupied. Hugh Adam took his place as an NZB director as well as becoming the manager of the Speight's brewery. Hugh Speight became the assistant manager with Bob's son taking his father's place on the local board. Adam at this point was 77 so he was no spring chicken himself and his way of doing things seen as a bit archaic, in particular, the way he did his accounting was not seen as terribly modern. He was also atypical in that he didn't use the manager's office on the top floor. Managers for Speight's before and after Adam used the office on the top floor but the accountant preferred to use the office he always had on the bottom floor. Thankfully though, Adam's leadership of Speight's saw a return to form as the expansions and construction got underway again.

As it so happened, the two new leaders of Speight's were among the first in Dunedin to make regular use of travelling via airplane which was slowly becoming a more regular thing around this time. They mostly used it for the trips to Wellington they had to do each month for NZB board meetings. The flights were run by Union Airways, a subsidiary of the Union Steamship Company. By 1935 cars and trucks had pretty much entirely replaced horse drawn carriages and interestingly, truck drivers were more well paid than their carriage driver predecessors, only being beat by the coopers. Even by 1930 only three of the 12 total drivers were sticking with horses, one of those being Half A Mo' Joe. As need for the stables diminished, it was decided to convert them into more cellar space. Extensions were also made to the 1904 malthouse/cellar during this time too. At the end of 1935 the local board for NZB Dunedin, the one meant to oversee the operation of Speight's, Strachan's and McGavin's, was disbanded, though why that is remains a bit of a mystery.

Something fun that was set up in the Speight's Ale House building was a laboratory on the top floor. This was run by Bert Edwards, a senior brewer and had been established so that he could produce a strong brew for the staff to drink during the Christmas party. As a result, the lab was named the 'Pig and Whistle'. Despite the area being locked when Edwards wasn't in there, a junior brewer and selector for the company cricket team, Ted Walden, managed to find a way in by shimmying across the ledge outside and climbing through the window. The goal? To take a couple of bottles of Edwards' beer to drink and replace it with normal beer so he wouldn't notice.

More excitement was to come in 1935 when it was decided that Speight's would begin its most ambitious project yet. Not just to expand or convert a building but to rebuild the entirety of the brewery. At the end of the year a British consultant was brought out to give it a look and do a feasibility check on, well, how feasible of a plan this was. This resulted in some great diagrams of how the brewery was set up at the time, which we still have today. In January 1936 the board of NZB held a meeting in Dunedin to consider whether the project would be given the green light, as it would come at great expense. Everything was approved and a year later work began. The new

brewery would chiefly occupy the corner of the property on Rattray Street and Dowling Street, the same part of the section that was the original site of the Well Park malthouse and James Speight's first home. Those were no longer there but what was there was demolished. Most of the buildings in that area weren't really used anymore except for the coopers and carpenters so they had to be moved which wasn't too bad as it meant they got to be closer to the cask washing areas, which was obviously part of their job. Unfortunately, though, the building they were put in had some rather bad acoustics to the point where the deafening sound of sawing, hammering and other such activities resulted in some hearing loss. Weirdly, the upper floors of the same building held a billiards room while the basement had been converted for the use of the Speight's miniature rifle club. As time went on the rest of the buildings on the section were torn down with the last thing to go being the rather tall chimney that had been erected in 1898. It was brought down with some fanfare at 6am in late 1937, with viewers, reporters and cameras on site to see the spectacle of very big thing falling over. Part of the interest was around how it was brought down as it was rather unusual, they replaced some of the lower bricks with blocks of wood and set them on fire which then lost integrity and caused the whole thing to topple. The newspaper the Evening Star gave a rather dramatic account of it titled A Colossus Falls. "A shudder like the death agonies of a living thing, a sickening lurch as it raced madly to the earth, a crashing roar that silenced the quietness of the early morning, and all that remained today of a landmark that pointed 100ft (30m) to the sky in Rattray Street for 39 years was an untidy line of bricks..." Within a year of the old colossus being brought down, a new even bigger chimney was built for the new boiler house, at nearly 50m. This time though it had a bit of artistic flourish with the top of the chimney being made to resemble a cask. This chimney still stands and you can see it at the current brewery, though you might need to go round the back on Dowling Street to get a good view.

By the time the new chimney was completed, construction on the new eight storey brewery was well underway, with the architects being the same guys who designed the Dunedin Town Hall in the Octagon. According to the Evening Star, this was "one of the largest industrial constructions built in Dunedin for several years." They also commented how the light and dark brick that was used to construct the exterior of the building was a modern technique used for decorative effect. The northern part of the building, containing the brew plant, which had some swanky new cast iron tanks as opposed to wooden vats that had been used previously, was up and running in October 1939, with the southern half being completed in early 1940. Because of this time lag of getting the whole building constructed, there was a short period of time where workers would shout instructions to each other whilst holding onto the framework of the still being finished building. With the new brewery all done and just needing the machinery brought in, Speight's made sure that the most important thing was quickly put inside, the staff bar. This actually wasn't the first bar currently in operation in the brewery, in fact it wasn't even the second or the third or the fourth, fifth, sixth or seventh, it was the eighth! The bars were scattered all over the brewery to make sure that all workers could get their fix of beer without having to walk too far from their department. The new brewery was a grand structure, one that still makes up a large portion of the site today and it is rather imposing. The new larger floor space that the building allowed would be a great boon to the ever-growing brewery, however, they wouldn't be able to use a good portion of it for some time due to the reduction of imported goods. You probably know why, it's 1940 but in case you don't, the year before Adolf Hitler, fascist leader of Nazi Germany, invaded Poland which more or less formally kicked off World War 2.

Obviously, the war never fully made it to New Zealand's shores, at least not in the sense that we were fighting on the beaches with Bob Semple's against the Japanese but this war would impact Speight's so much more than the first one and it all started when the Great Fire occurred. It's not

known what started the fire at roughly 5am on 25th June 1940 but we do know that by 5:15am the local fire station had gotten the call and were on their way. When they arrived the malthouse, which was on the opposite side of Rattray Street to the new brewery, was well engulfed in flames and it became pretty quickly apparent that any chance to save the building was gone already. However, there were still other buildings adjacent that could go up and the malthouse was filled with its namesake which was extremely flammable, so an emergency call was put out to other stations in South Dunedin, Roslyn and Green Island for more men and engines. The ODT said of the blaze “despite a tremendous amount of pressure of water from numerous leads of hose directed from Maclaggan, Dowling and Rattray Streets and Canongate, it was impossible to make any real impression on the blaze for at least two hours. The flames mounted skywards to an inestimable height and clouds of yellowy-green smoke, acrid and dense, rolled out across the city, borne on the gusty wind as far as the Railway Station and Knox Church.”

The fire did manage to catch on a neighbouring furniture warehouse when a wall collapsed but the firefighters were able to react quickly and stop that from going much further. The ODT credits the quality of the firebreak wall in the malthouse as the reason that the fire didn't threaten other buildings as much as it could have but there was still a danger. The grain in the lower floors was burning big and burning hot with the wind carrying little bits of glowing sacking up into the air to god knows where. Lucky there was some rain that was spitting on and off which helped mitigate the issue. Despite the danger to the neighbouring properties being fairly minimal due to the work of the firefighters and some luck, the malthouse itself however, was fucked. The roof was caving in, probably multiple floors too with dust and debris going all over, “Roofing iron was shed in all directions when the huge concave roofs fell in and there were dull ominous rumblings every few minutes as heavy beams and girders crashed to the floor.” After three hours of brigades fighting the fire, the centre of the inferno was still raging. At this stage the fire had mostly been contained and the largest hose that they had access too was moved around to stop the fire from spreading. The best was still yet to come though, “three and a half hours after the fire broke spectators were treated to one of the most vivid spectacles of the morning – the roaring furnace in the last kiln and final collapses of the tower into its own shell.” The whole building was destroyed but the ODT commended the efforts of the fire service as they had done as much as they could, saving the buildings around it and cutting off power to the area in case any of the 600V powerlines fell as well.

The ODT article that reported this makes no mention of any lives lost so it's fairly likely that no one died in the fire, which would make sense given it was pretty early in the morning. There was obviously a huge financial loss though. The immediate and most obvious one was the 50,000 pounds, or \$5 million, worth of machinery lost within. The other major loss was that of the malt and barley that was stored in there which would halt production for the next few days, if not weeks, while they sourced new grain. That was easier said than done though. You see, New Zealand was currently having a barley shortage due to the war so it couldn't be sourced locally instead it had to be ordered from Australia and was of a lesser quality than their usual supply. Additionally, much of the malt that was destroyed represented the reserve stocks Speight's had in case of emergency supply chain shortages, placing the brewery in an even more precarious position. Somehow though, enough grain and malt was obtained to keep Speight's trucking with the old cellars underneath the burnt building not being damaged too much so they were quickly brought back online. It took several weeks before embers of the fire were fully quenched though and during that time members of the fire brigade were onsite at all times.

Along with loss of life, the other question you probably have on your mind is whether anyone lost their job because of this, in particular the maltsters since their place of work was now gone.

Thankfully I am pleased to report that no one lost their job as a result of the fire, well, except one guy. What I should say is, no one from Speight's lost their job, one fire fighter was sacked because he was caught with a stolen keg of beer in his car. The malt workers did a lot of the clean-up of the building in the immediate aftermath and when it was all over they were given new jobs either within Speight's or at NZB's other two Dunedin breweries, McGavin's and Strachans. A year after the fire it was announced the malthouses would be rebuilt however due to wartime restrictions, it would be a few years before a permit was issued allowing them to obtain the necessary materials.

Unfortunately, this wasn't the end of Speight's woes. Naturally when the fire broke out, the manager of the brewery was awoken to inform him of the news. That was of course none other than our hardass accountant, Hugh Adam. Upon hearing the news, he ran all the way from his house in Heriot Row to the brewery, about 1.5km. Which isn't much for me as a 28-year-old but it certainly was for old Adam in his early 80s. Presumably the exertion from his run and the stress of the days following took a major toll on his body. About a week after the fire, he failed to return home after working late. He was found dead in the one other place he could be regularly seen in for the last 43 years, his accounts office on the bottom floor of Speight's. He was 82. Hugh Adam had dedicated most of his waking hours in the last four odd decades to helping keep Speight's not only surviving but thriving. This was aided by the fact he spent most of his life without any family, except for a brief stint with a wife who died in 1918 and that his only major hobby outside of work was his garden so he had lots of time to put into the brewery. With no other family and only a housekeeper to help around the home, his expenses were minimal while his income as first accountant of Speight's and then manager, was substantial. As such most of his rather large estate was donated to the Otago Medical School for cancer research. Adam was an absolute juggernaut for Speight's, joining in 1896, he helped bring the finances back into the black, stopping insane spending from the bosses who used the company as their private purse, made sure that all their paperwork was in order, workers were paid on time, worked on various boards for NZB and then took up the managerial reins when Bob Greenslade passed away. Charles got all the glory as being the face of Speight's during its years of tremendous growth but I'd hazard a guess that some of the power was behind the throne, the one who made all of Charles' great work possible was the man next to him keeping all of the books in check. The day Adam died, Hugh Speight, currently assistant manager, took up the mantle of manager of the brewery, coincidentally on his 36th birthday. Adam also occupied a seat on the NZB board and this was filled by RCB Greenslade, Bob's son. You might remember that Bob's seat on the board had been taken by Adam so the passing on to Bob's son was perhaps seen as the right thing to do. RCB also became the assistant manager of Speight's as well. Finally, Adam seems to have kept most of the accounting and secretary jobs for himself, even when he became manager so that role needed to be filled as well. For this they chose a man by the name of George Dunn, who had previously worked in a similar position at another brewery in town, so he was a pretty good fit. Though, by this time his job was mostly to write strongly worded letters to pubs that didn't pay on time. Between the fire and the war, the loss of Adam couldn't have come at a worse time.

At least there was one good thing still going cause the war didn't seem to affect the extremely popular annual company picnic, which always seemed to go off with a bang. Even despite the fact that rubber and sweets were pretty much impossible to get at the time, Speight's always managed to get a large number of balloons and chocolate as prizes for the kids. In 1942 the two lower floors of the new building were converted into a public air raid shelter. The entrance to the shelter was through two double doors from Rattray Street, the same two doors now used to enter the visitor centre of the brewery. Despite being finished a couple years earlier, it wasn't until November 1942 that the brew plant was finally installed into the new building and the first brew made. This plant was bigger than any Speight's previously had with 12 concrete silos that could store over 2.2 million

litres of malt. There was even an upgrade in the materials used for some of the equipment. Up until this point the mashtuns and kettles had been made of wood but these new ones were made of copper. They aren't in use in the modern brewery but you can see them on display during the tour. The system was pretty state of the art with the brew being pumped up and down through the floors as it made its way through the brewing process and various machinery. What we all want to know, of course, is how many hogsheads the new kettles could hold. This time they could hold a whopping 200 each, doubling their brewing capacity and it was desperately needed. In 1941, despite the war, supply chain issues, barley quality issues and everything else going on, demand was so high that they made a record number of 937 brews.

Not long after the new plant was installed, the world must have decided to kick Speight's while she was down. Through the introduction of new legislation, the government wanted to reduce the strength of beer by reducing the gravity of the wort used to make it. Right, so I can hear you saying 'what the fuck does that mean?' Well, buckle up, for some science kids cause this is gonna be dense and that joke won't make sense for another few minutes. As quick refresher of episode 86, we have talked a lot about malthouses which contain malt. The malt is grains, in this case barley, that has been soaked in water, allowed to germinated and then dried to stop the germination when it's just right. This malt is then mashed in a mash tun, meaning it is covered in water and then heated. This process makes wort, a liquid full of sugars and some other stuff that can then be fermented into alcohol. So, the gravity of the wort, known technically as the specific gravity, is a calculation of the density of wort relative to the density of water. If for some reason you have come across specific gravity in your day-to-day life you may have heard it called relative density instead, cause that's exactly what it is, the density of the wort relative to water. Water is used as a reference point in brewing so it has a relative density of 1 with anything above that being more dense and anything under being less dense than water. To get even more into the weeds, relative density is the measurement of solids within the wort which is what increases its gravity, since the solids is the stuff making it more dense than water which generally doesn't have any solid bits in it, so making that number greater than 1. These solids are mostly sugars which will help the fermentation process later down the line. With all that explained, hopefully you are still with me, what this legislation meant was that the specific gravity of wort was reduced by the government from 1.047 to 1.036. To explain that a bit more, the wort was getting less dense, more like water. Essentially, the government were saying the wort needed to have less sugar in it meaning the beer would have less sugar to ferment and thus have less alcohol in the final product. But that's not what the real problem was for Speight's.

Part of the brewing process was to achieve a balanced flavour, you didn't want the beer too hoppy or too sweet. Part of the way Speight's did this balancing was to add a proportional amount of hops to the brew but it also had another affect that Speight's heavily relied on. The hops had preservative properties which helped the beer keep its quality and flavour on long voyages, say to Australia. So to bring this all together, reducing the gravity of the wort would mean that it would have less sugar in it, as such it would be less sweet, therefore less hops would be added for flavour balance which also meant that the beer didn't have as much preservative in it so it wouldn't keep as well as it previously had when being sent overseas, ultimately possibly resulting in the beer being a lesser product by the time it reached foreign shores. This was obviously really fucking bad cause it meant that Speight's could no longer have faith in the quality of its product by the time it was unloaded overseas. Combining this calamitous blow with the heavy restrictions on shipping due to there being a war on, Speight's went from being New Zealand's top brewery, a position they had held for the last 50 years, with nationwide and international sales, to being almost an entirely local supplier, that is to say that the majority of their beer was sold in Otago. I mentioned before that in 1941, Speight's did a record

937 brews. Well, in 1943 this went down to 236, a reduction of 75% in two years. All from a seemingly small drop in the density of wort by 0.011. Around about the same time, Speight's dropped the slogan they had been using for advertising, 'Purity, Body and Strength'. This is alleged to be because the Strength part of the slogan didn't apply any more but it could just as easily be a coincidence.

Throughout the war, Speight's always intended to rebuild the burnt maltings and as we mentioned earlier, they finally received the permit to do so in 1944, a few years after the fire. The hillside below Canongate was excavated and a retaining wall put up but that is as far as they got. Sales were so abysmal there wasn't room in the budget to complete the works. Problems kept mounting on top of other problems as the war made it harder to get a hold of essential materials, such as the oak used to make casks and the isinglass used in the clarification stage of brewing. As such, Speight's looked for local alternatives, such as using Southland beech trees for the casks whereas an alternative for isinglass, which is made from the swim bladders of fish, was found in locally caught ling. An additional problem they faced was that currently they had a lack of manpower. Many men had been conscripted into the military to help in various capacities during the war, a task undertaken by the National Service Department which was headed by Bob Semple. One of the men from Speight's that was called into service was another of Bob Greenslade's sons, the brother of RCB. Mel Greenslade was a junior brewer and apparently showed a fair amount of aptitude for the trade when he was called up for service. He became an officer in the newly established Royal New Zealand Air Force but unfortunately, he never returned, having been shot down in Papua New Guinea in 1944.

The next year, in 1945, peace was declared and much of the work that Speight's had been putting off due to the war could begin or be resumed with the carpenters getting some new equipment to allow them to build what was needed. Despite this flurry of activity, the reconstruction of the maltings was still shelved and instead the building behind the burnt husk was converted from being a beer store into a malting in the meantime.

After a long, stressful and grief stricken half decade, finally something kinda good happened. The Speight's Social Club was established by Hugh Speight, calling a full staff meeting to announce it. This was pretty much what you would expect from even a social club at a workplace. Each employee would have the choice of joining the club and if they did a small amount of their pay would be deducted each pay cycle. This money would be put towards buying equipment for the various Speight's sports teams and help pay for social functions for the crew. Some was also set aside to help pay for gifts for staff who would leave or retire or if they were getting married or found themselves in hospital. Membership was also offered to staff at McGavins and Strachan's as well. During the first meeting of the club in October 1947, they needed to elect some leadership for it such as a president, vice president and treasurer. The problem was, when Hugh did a head count, they were one person off reaching a quorum. Thankfully though, there was a 'plaster Indian' standing just outside. So, it was brought in and upon a second headcount, they had enough to get going. Initially there were 167 people who signed on to pay one shilling a week. The club soon came to be well known in Dunedin for putting on pretty successful events such as dances, children's Christmas parties, staff picnics and sporting events. The club was also quite interesting in that its secretaries/treasurers tended to stay for a long time, 20 years in a couple of cases.

Near the end of 1947, shit kinda hit the fan again as Speight's was dragged into an industrial dispute. Well, I say dragged, they were briefly threatened. The dispute was located in West Coast where a ten-ounce glass of beer cost a sixpence, which was slightly lower than the rest of the country. What happened was that the pubs and hotels all raised the price of a glass of beer to 7 pence all at the

same time. This pissed off a lot of people in the West Coast, in particular the unions who held a lot of sway in the area given it was essentially the birthplace of the New Zealand labour movement. This led to a boycott of what they called sevenpenny hotels, any pub or hotel that was selling beer for 7 pence. One Paddy Keating decided to go against his peers. Keating owned the Central Hotel in Greymouth and decided to keep his prices at six pence and made a killing from it. In response local breweries refused to supply him. It's a great story that I'll tell another time but for our purposes here, although most of Speights' beer was being sold in Otago, some was still being sent to the West Coast. A rumour started to go around that Speight's weren't supplying Keating because they supported the increase in prices. This came to a bit of a head when the Transport Workers' Federation told Speight's that unless the brewery ensured that Keating had a regular supply of beer, the union drivers would no longer transport their product out of Dunedin. This could have turned into a really bad situation but Speight's response was, "We are treating the Greymouth district as a whole no differently from any other part of New Zealand. The difficulties of supply we have experienced over recent years, and the shortage of casks, obviously make it very difficult for us to give any definite assurance to any customers, but our policy has always been to supply each district on a fair and equitable basis according to the supplies which we can get away, and we hope to continue this policy." So, it was a bit of corporate speak saying that they weren't sending beer to the West Coast not because of politics but rather that a lack of materials meant there was less supply. We don't know if this was the reason but it did make sense, as we know issues obtaining materials of all kinds to make beer had been occurring since the war so it's certainly plausible. It doesn't have to convince us though, just the Transport Workers' Federation, which it did and they withdrew their threat.

Next time, Speight's try to get back on their feet after everything that had happened over the last couple of decades. We'll meet a few more interesting characters and a new innovation in how beer is made.

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can find my email and social media on historyaotearoa.com. You can also find helpful resources there like transcripts, sources and translations for some of the Te Reo Māori we have used. You can help support HANZ through Patreon, buying merch or giving us a review, it means a lot and helps spread the story of Aotearoa New Zealand. As always, haere tū atu, hoki tū mai. See you next time!