

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 93 – Speight's: Rivals. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons. If you want to support HANZ go to [patreon.com/historyaotearoa](https://patreon.com/historyaotearoa). Last time, Speight's went through a bit of a scientific revolution as new innovations in brewing were discovered, in particular continuous fermentation, or CF, which was developed in a collaboration between New Zealand Breweries and Dominion Breweries. These advancements helped Speight's come out of the dark years of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and have now laid the foundations for their recovery. Today we will see the flashy new bottling house be completed, the rivalry between NZB and DB heat up and see the beginning of a new era of Speight's management.

In July 1968 a point of pride and rather impressive record at Speight's was broken. There had always been a good relationship between the management of the brewery and the staff. Most employees did belong to a union, the largest being the Brewery Workers' Union as well as a couple of others. Union representatives would regularly meet with Speight's management, about once a year or so, discussing issues and making requests which were usually pretty reasonable and it was rare that those requests weren't granted. As such, Hugh Speight was very proud that in the 92 years since Speight's was founded, its workers had never gone on strike. This was broken when brewery drivers in Auckland went on strike to get a 7.6% wage increase and drivers in other breweries throughout the country did the same in a show of solidarity. Despite this action, the situation at Speight's was fairly tame, the drivers made sure that all hotels they serviced were fully stocked before the strike began at 5pm on a Friday. This would make sure they didn't need refilling for wee while, as at this point it was unknown how long the strike would last. Thankfully for the drivers and the pubs, the strike was broken five days later when the Federation of Labour and the Employers' Federation gave in to their demands. So although this technically was the first strike in the brewery's history, it wasn't explicitly directed at Speight's and the drivers don't seem to have harboured any specific ill will towards their bosses.

While this was going on, progress on the bottling house was slow and steady, Hugh Speight eager to see the plant up and running as it had been a dream of his for a while now. Unfortunately, he wouldn't be able to see that happen. In 1968 Hugh was diagnosed with cancer and rapidly deteriorated, passing away on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1969. He was 64. At the time of his death he had been a director for New Zealand Breweries for 40 years, 28 of those also being the manager of Speight's. He was seen as a rather autocratic but otherwise benevolent manager who showed concern for his staff even after they retired. In one such case, retired carpenter Tom Rodger had his wife pass away. Hugh went to go see Tom, asking what he was going to do with himself. Tom replied 'Probably sit in the Octagon with the other old men', the Octagon being the main square in town. 'You'd better come back to work,' is what Hugh replied back with and Tom did, going back to Speight's until his death at 74 at which point he had spent 52 years at the brewery. It sounds kinda dystopian to work until you die but I'm hoping that Hugh genuinely wanted to help Tom by having him come back to work to take his mind off of things.

There was a large amount of outside tradesmen that worked at the brewery pretty much on permanent contract and they even worked on Hugh's house and holiday home at Aramoana. Hugh was always grateful for their work and rewarded them generously for their efforts with gifts. In some cases, they never really earned them such as one worker who went up to Hugh, eyed him up and down and said "You would be about my size. What do you do with your old suits?" Apparently, Hugh's reply was, "You're a cheeky bugger but I like you." A couple days later the worker was given a parcel containing a newly pressed suit. As with his father and grandfather, Hugh was a big philanthropist, being a big donator to the Crippled Children's society, of which he was national vice

president, even giving them old laminated casks that had been cut and painted fun colours to turn them into tunnels for the kids. These were also given to some to kindies throughout Otago Southland. In 1956 he was awarded Officer of the Order of the British Empire, was a prominent member of the Dunedin Rotary Club as well as being a director of a few other companies outside of Speight's but the brewery was always his main focus. Hugh was known for this attention to detail, his concern for the appearance and cleanliness of the buildings and the outside reputation of the staff. To this end, he didn't like the staff to be seen drinking on site and even in the winter, when it got real dark after 5pm, he still insisted that any staff drinking at the brewery do so with the lights off. Funnily enough I was actually contacted by Hugh Speight's Great granddaughter who informed me that his only child, Deirdre, has been unable to read books recently and so was potentially getting into podcasts! I'm not sure if Deirdre is listening to this now but if you are, I hope portrayed your dad in a fair manner.

According to Speight's archivist, the brewery was never quite the same after Hugh died, especially since he was the last of the Speight family to be directly associated with the brewery. Once again, the issue of succession was up for debate and it was decided that Ron Harrison, the former manager of NZB Wellington would take over as manager for Speights. A Christchurch lad, it is said that he joined NZB "while still wearing short pants" in reference to the shorts high school students would wear as their uniform. He worked in a couple of NZB offices for about 25 years before joining the army in WWII and was transferred to NZB Wellington upon his return to the country. Not long before he headed down to Dunedin, Harrison was presented with a gold watch, as were a few Speight's employees and anyone else in NZB who had been with them for 25 years or more.

Despite this changing of the guard, time marches on and in January 1969 construction of the bottling house had begun in earnest. Just before that started though, in true Speight's fashion, a bore hole was sunk to try increase the water supply. Unfortunately, the water they did find was filled with sand so it was unusable and the well abandoned. They did manage to rediscover an old well they could use a few months later though which helped. At the same time, the Continuous Fermentation plant was getting an upgrade, one of the fermenters being moved out and eventually making its way into the new bottling plant. The area with the garden and large map of NZB breweries was taken over to accommodate the new 136,000- and 86,000-litre fermenters. These were so big that the trolleybus wires outside the brewery had to be raised to accommodate them. Other equipment that was added was a vertical tank to mix yeast and wort, a yeast separator and a cool new control panel to manage it all. The much-loved Perspex mural was removed from the rear wall and attached to the front area of the plant where it could be seen from the street through a glass wall. Every night it would light up it entertain people walking by, at least until the lights failed. For the first time in a long while, Speight's also bought up some new land next to the western side of Rattray Street. This was the Broadway Hotel and was bought as part of a longer-term plan to establish a new tanker filling station, which would see the Broadway demolished and the new station completed in June 1975. Interestingly, part of the purchase also included the site of the original Dunedin Club, established in the 1850s to be social rooms and lodgings for the rich folks visiting town.

The bottling house was now starting to look like an actual building with the L shaped bottling hall taking up the area that the old cellars were in. This was no small feat and in fact the largest crane in the South Island had to be employed to get the building erected. In May 1970 the building was pretty much done except for a couple of coldstores which were waiting for some equipment to arrive from Christchurch. Big Bert was the one in charge of seeing the operation was completed and the installation of the bottling plant itself was given to one David Dick. Dick was similar to Bert in that he was one of the newer generation of brewers having a background in science, specifically a

Masters degree and had worked as an analytical chemist. He ran his own business until the Great Depression forced him to close and join the staff of Wilson's Malt Extract Company, becoming head brewer for the Wilson Dunedin Brewery in 1940. If you recall, this was bought by Powley's in 1950 and so Dick became head brewer for both the Wilson Brewery and McGavin's during the period when Powley's owned both. Since 1958, the year Powley's sold McGavin's back to NZB, Dick had been in charge of bottling at McGavin's and it was said that his knowledge of engineering was unsurpassed, which is probably why he was given the job of setting up Speight's new bottling operation. We haven't covered it much but the whole construction and installation was a monumental job of planning, logistics and even cost. The plant was brought into operation in November 1970 and when all was said and done the cost was \$3 million, which adjusted for inflation is in the vicinity of \$45 million today. Oh and New Zealand had switched to decimal currency three years prior so no more pounds from now on. The top floor of the building was about 1,700 square metres and was capable of holding two million bottles in storage. Conveyer belts would carry those bottles from the top floor to the one below where the bottling actually took place along with the cold stores. This floor had a mezzanine above it which allowed access to the cold stores and had the packaging managers office. Under this was a laboratory and a fitters' workshop which had a tunnel that led to a well under the floor between them. Also included in the building were some top-of-the-line staff facilities including two halls for eating, social activities and sports as well as a projector room and even a theatre for showing movies! There was also the usual amenities like a kitchen, toilets, lockers and showers, plus a first aid room for injuries.

At the time the plant was the most advanced of its kind in Aotearoa. The bottles would be picked up by a de-crater machine which put them into another machine to wash and sterilise them. This process took about half an hour and could handle approximately 7,000 bottles each cycle. The bottles were then checked by another machine which rejected bottles that weren't perfectly cleaned. The beer to be put in the bottles was kept in what was called bright beer tanks in the coldstore. As it was pumped to the bottles it would undergo a flash pasteurisation by being heated to 74 degrees Celsius for 20 seconds and then cooled again back to 0 degrees. The next machine would slowly fill the bottles with it's 80 filling heads before the bottle was given a tap by an automatic hammer to make it foam and expel any excess air. The bottles would then be labelled and packed by other machines that could sort them into dozens and put them into the crates or cartons as required. A final machine would glue the carton shut, making them ready for transport and sale. Bottling that had previously occurred on the site of the Speight's brewery had been rather small scale in comparison to this. This new building and the system it housed was a full commercial operation that fulfilled most if not all their needs, in light of rising sales. The building was opened with a bit of fanfare, the Deputy Mayor of Dunedin coming out to do the honours. He even wore a blue shirt to be in keeping with the traditional Speight's colours, which was apparently a bit scandalous. The entire board of directors of NZB were also in attendance along with a rather special guest, 90 year old Lily Haggitt, the daughter of William Dawson, one of the three original founders of Speight's.

Like with any process there were teething issues that meant that the bottling plant wasn't operating at full capacity straight away so McGavin's still continued to bottle Speight's for a while yet, but the old brewery turned bottling house was now running on borrowed time. That time ran out in March 1971 when it was decided that McGavin's would close its doors for the final time. Ron Harrison assured everyone that there would be no redundancies and by in large that seems to have been the case. However, this didn't seem to apply to the drivers, who lost a few of their own due to some of their work being contracted out to another company. For everyone else, they seem to have been given jobs at Speight's. A few years later in 1978 the tanker drivers would no longer be employees of

Speight's but instead become independent owner-driver contractors. This was supposedly so that the drivers could make more money while for the company it meant that the drivers no longer belonged to a union and as such could no longer go on strike.

The year before, in 1970, Speight's discovered something rather startling. Dominion Breweries, their main competition, had been slowly and rather quietly buying up hotels to the point where they owned half the hotels in Otago and Southland. Which of course was a bit of a problem since those hotels now only sold DB's beers, such as Tui which it had acquired in 1969, and not NZB beers like Speight's. In response Harrison negotiated for NZB to purchase two major Dunedin based alcohol companies, Meenans and our old mate Powley's. Both of these companies owned various hotels in Otago and Southland, all the way to Bluff so this gave NZB a much better foothold in the south. Even better was in 1971 they also purchased the Victoria, one of the biggest sellers of draught beer in Dunedin. For those keeping track at home, this now means that all the major breweries and adjacent businesses we have talked about in this story, Powley's, McGavin's, Wilson's Brewery, Strachans and the Water of Leith, to name a few, were now either out of business because of, or had been bought by, Speight's or NZB. The titan of brewing had so far been operating in the South Island mostly unchallenged and now DB had decided to march into Speight's territory to present the first credible threat from a rival group of breweries.

As usual, more changes were being made to the Speight's brewery, the basement of the Ale House building was converted into an engineers' shop as well as a lunch room, showers, offices, store rooms and other stuff of that nature. They also employed a full-time store man, Davy Corbett, who was said to be unafraid of anyone despite being a bit small in stature. As such when he spotted a stranger poking around the brewery a few days after he started, he told the guy to bugger off and not come back. It was later revealed, much to Corbett's embarrassment, that the person he kicked off site was none other than RCB Greenslade, a director of New Zealand Breweries and of course grandson of one of the three founders of Speight's. Woops! Greenslade would later be given his own office at Speight's built especially for him. As a side note, the board of NZB got another notable Dunedin addition, Ted Barringer, the managing director of Cadbury NZ.

The addition of the bottling plant and its increased production was causing some issues with the boilers. The plant's new machine that washed the bottles used a heap of steam which the boilers were unable to keep up with. This was in part due to them using coal, which was far less efficient than using oil so all three boilers were converted over to keep up with demand. Change inside the bottling plant itself was also on the way despite how new it was. David Dick wasn't a big fan of the fact that they pasteurised the beer before it was bottled as after the bottles themselves were washed, they were open to the air and at risk of contamination. He was interested in switching over to a method that would mean pasteurisation occurred in the bottle, reducing the risk of contaminants getting in. It only helped his case when the Auckland brewery, which used the same pre-bottle method, had pretty much this exact problem. Having concrete proof that this change would be a good idea, he set about to get the tunnel installed for the new in-bottle method.

Something fun that happened around this time in 1972 was that the University of Otago's physical education department wanted to hold something special for their open day, underwater chess. How this relates to PE I have no idea but all the same they discovered that the water from the town supply was too murky for it to be of any real spectacle. That was when Speight's jumped to the rescue offering not only the use of one of their tanks but for it to be filled up with the crystal-clear water from their private aquifer!

At the end of 1973 there was a bit of a shake up in the hierarchy of NZB. After four years as Speight's manager, Ron Harrison was promoted to the newly created position of South Island Area Manager. There seems to have been an assumption that he would move out of town, probably to the island's largest city, Christchurch, but he said not only would he be remaining in Dunedin, he was making Speight's the South Island headquarters of New Zealand Breweries. To this end he added a new room on the top floor of the brewery that was designated the area managers office. Of course, this meant that Harrison was no longer manager of Speight's itself and that title was passed on to Jack Langford, an accountant who joined the brewery in 1955 and worked his way up to commercial manager. He was described as "a pleasant, gentlemanly type who liked to stick to his desk." This turned out to be quite true as much later after Langford was given the position, Scottish brewhouse worker Bob McDonald was inside the mash tun giving it a clean when he saw someone he didn't recognise peering down at him, "Are ye havin' a luke roond the brewery?" McDonald asked "Yes, I thought it was about time," came the reply.

"And where are ye from?"

"I'm from here"

"Ye're from Dunedin and ye've never had a luke roond the brewery?"

"That's right"

"And who d'ye work for?"

"I work here, at Speight's"

"I've never seen ye before. Hoo lang hae ye worked here?"

"Ten years"

And so it was that in the first ten years that Langford worked as manager for Speight's he hadn't even been into the guts of the operation where they made the product that paid his salary. Apparently, McDonald wasn't the only one who didn't recognise him too as Langford's position didn't have the same responsibility it had done in the past with only the office and marketing staff reporting to him. Major decisions were now being made higher up the chain, probably by Harrison and others.

In April 1974 NZB entered in a joint venture with the Invercargill and Maitua Licensing Trusts. They formed the Southland Distributing Company and their goal was to build a bottling plant in Invercargill. At the time they gave three main reasons why they wanted to do this, "A) the need for industrial development in Southland and the replacement, in part, of the brewing industry which was lost when Southland Breweries Ltd was closed in 1954 and Gore Brewery in 1959. The new plant was to employ about 30 workers and utilise local trade and services. B) The need to provide a buffer for the consumer against increased production costs, particularly in the transport field, by packing beer locally rather than in Dunedin. C) The need to conserve fuel in the current energy crisis. The collection and use of bottles in Invercargill would obviate the need for their return in Dunedin." All good and valid reasons that or may not have been part of the whole concept but there was a couple of other things going on here too. For one, you can probably read between the lines and see that NZB were trying to get back into the good graces of Southland beer drinkers. Since the closure of the two breweries just mentioned, which was NZB's fault, people were none too happy at the loss of jobs and so Southland had an informal boycott of NZB drinks. Which is kinda wild to think about given how nowadays no woolshed party would be worth going to unless the Speight's was flowing freely. The other aspect was that this whole idea was actually far riskier than they made it sound because it was more to do with the trying to take out DB's dominance in the region, especially since the rival company were looking at joining forces with seven licensing trusts in the South Island to set up a new brewery in Timaru.

Despite the increased pressure from DB, sales were still on the rise in the early 70s and production was rising to meet it with 788 brews being recorded in 1970, compared to the record 937 brews in 1941. Keeping in mind though that Speight's had been brewing in double strength batches so it's possible that those 788 brews could actually be twice that size! Additionally, a lot of these brews weren't being sold in Otago and Southland, a good portion of it was selling in other parts of the country, though not as Speight's branded products. Back in 1968 NZB wanted to launch another national brand using the lessons they took from the Lucky debacle. That is to say, not to launch a brand new product whilst also removing established and well loved ones. To this end they decided to make the already established Lion Brown the new nationally available product from NZB and just like they did with Lucky, all their breweries were required to make it so as to sell into their local areas. By 1970 the breweries in the North Island weren't able to keep up with the demand of Lion Brown, mostly because a lot of those sales were for bottles and they had rather outdated bottling plants. So, Speight's gave them a helping hand with their fangdangly new state of the art plant so a lot of the Lion Brown Speight's was producing at the time was being sent up north. The bottling plant was becoming even more fangdangly too with the old machine packer being replaced since it would often tear the labels on the bottles or break them entirely. The hammer used to foam the bottles was also replaced with a water jet that did the same but better job. In 1975 the old flash pastueriser, which hadn't been in use since David Dick decided to swap it out, was sent back over the road to become a paraflow to cool the wort. It was also in 1975 in which Speight's began producing NZB's major export beer, Steinlager. The story behind Steinlager is actually pretty interesting too, it was born out of the Black Budget and the Minister of Finance at the time challenged brewers to get over the increased tax in beer by coming up with a lager of international quality. Originally called Steinecker, NZB was apparently taken to court by the Dutch brewer Heineken over the name similarity so it was changed to the Steinlager we know today. By this point most other breweries under NZB were making Steinlager so presumably sales were going pretty well to have one of the larger breweries in the country start making it. We also see in '75 that the oil-fired kilns didn't last long as they were converted to coal tar. Coal tar was a by-product of the Dunedin Gasworks and was already being used in the boilers of Moana Pool, Dunedin's aquatic centre. So, after a three-week trial, a contract was signed with the government Gas Department for half a million litres of coal tar a year.

In early 1976 Ron Harrison again saw his career take an upward jump when he was sent to NZB head office to be made manager of external relations and investments. Normally this would bring about a succession of his seat as South Island area manager but for whatever reason, NZB decided to not appoint a replacement. In the same month the bottling plant in Invercargill began production, with some of the managing talent being supplied by Speight's. After a survey it was discovered that Southlanders preferred sweet, lightly hopped beers so Speight's decided to fill that niche by producing a beer called Southland Bitter, which is the same name used for the beer they made after the closure of the two southern breweries, so I'm unsure if it was the same beer relaunched or a different one with the same name. Either way, the label sported the distinct maroon and gold colours that the area is known for. The Invercargill plant also bottled Speight's and Lion Brown, arriving from Dunedin in 22,000L super tankers.

One of the most important events for Speight's was on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1976 as this marked 100 years since James Speight, Charles Greenslade and William Dawson founded the brewery as this was the day that their lease of the site started from James Wilson of Well Park. Well, I say 1<sup>st</sup> May but the actual celebration was done on 28<sup>th</sup> July to coincide with the NZB annual general meeting which was going to be in Dunedin for the occasion. To mark the milestone, the chairman of the NZB board announced a \$10,000 gift, about \$95,000 adjusting for inflation, to the Dunedin City Council "to be used for an

appropriate civic project to be mutually agreed upon by the company and the city council." The mutually agreed upon project was the furnishing of the Dunningham Room in the public library which now has a plaque acknowledging their donation. Also to mark the occasion, Speight's did what a brewery does best, make beer. A special brew was made called Brew 100 which had a full colour label of the painting of the brewery in 1905, the same one that was used in the anti-prohibition pamphlet 'With Speight's & Co's Compliments'. Noel Davenport, also set up a replica of a goldrush era pub called the Roaring Meg. It was complete with sawdust floor, old newspapers on the walls, old bottles, a wooden keg and a few rabbit pelts. This was the main attraction for a small museum that ran for a bit in what is now the visitor's centre. Hundreds of people went through this little display and it also hosted invite only social events with many of the guests being descendants of the original founding trio. Newspapers picked up on the whole thing too, as you might expect, going over Speights' first century across six pages. A lot of those pages were dedicated to cooperage, which was interesting since it was a bit of a dying art and that Speight's now only had one cooper on staff. New tankers were also outfitted with the words '100 years of brewing excellence' on the side.

Despite the welcome reprieve for a bit of celebration, the enemy was on the move. In August 1976 the DB South Island brewery roared into life in Timaru and since they owned a majority of the outlets in the region, Speight's was suddenly up shit creek without a paddle. In addition to this, a lot of their old guard who had been leading the charge up until this point were handing over the reins. Noel Davenport retired, Big Bert was transferred to Auckland after his six-month turned 17-year stint and people were even jumping ship directly to their rival with the sales supervisor at Speight's becoming the Otago manager for DB. Advice from manager Langford was "don't panic." Maybe they should have panicked just a little though cause ever since the new DB brewery opened up the bottling plant in Invercargill had been running at a loss. This became too great in August 1977 and the plant was shut down after almost exactly one year of operation.

Also in 1977, Speight's began a new form of advertising, sport sponsorship. Initially this came in the form of sponsoring a rugby competition in Dunedin which became known as The Speight's Championship. It then evolved into newspaper advertising where they would make an ad about what they called a 'Speight's Great' basically telling the story of a particularly skilled sportsman. Both of these garnered a fair amount of criticism from the public, with letters to the Southland Times and Otago Daily Times complaining about how this was insidious advertising by using sporting heroes to get young people if not addicted at least comfortable with the idea of drinking beer. Another sporting related event of note that happened that year was the inter-brewery cricket tournament. This was held twice a year and in the summer tournament held in Hamilton, Speights' team was undefeated. This was mostly on account of sales team member Graeme Powell, who was a somewhat professional bowler in a local team. However, to keep things fair, they had him bat instead of bowl but he still proved to be a dominating force. None of that is really all that important though, the most significant aspect of that cricket tournament was the uniforms. They included the triple gold star logo that most people would be familiar with when thinking of Speight's but they also had the addition of the slogan 'Pride of the South', the first recorded instance of that showing up. For those who don't drink Speight's, that won't mean much but I'll explain it in a bit.

At the end of '77 came a rather interesting change to NZB. Instead of being called New Zealand Breweries like it had done for the last 55 years or so, it would instead now be called Lion Breweries. Lion wasn't a name that was picked at random, it was the name of a brewery that was located in Auckland, in part previously known as the Great Northern Brewery. As you might expect, this didn't go down too well with the Otago guys as it looked to them like a bloody Jafa brewery was trying to take control of the whole company. Unfortunately I was unable to find any other info as to how or

why this occurred so if any one has any sources or insight, I'd love to hear from you. The next year, RCB Greenslade, now having hit the age of 70, retired from the board of the now Lion Breweries. He had been a director of the company for 38 years but despite this resignation he still made use of his specially built office at Speight's.

Another kinda weird and interesting thing that happened at this time was a change in the way that beer was delivered to Rakiura Stewart Island. Naturally, it's pretty hard to get beer to the southernmost part of the New Zealand mainland with Te Ara a Kiwa, Foveaux Strait being known to be rather treacherous at times. Until 1976 beer was transported to the island in casks. They had tried to use a small tanker in the past but that plan was quickly abandoned when it suffered too much damage being unloaded onto the wharf. This plan was revisited and improved on in 1978 when a portable tank in a wooden jacket was filled in Bluff and transported over with much success. This method had also been used to get beer to Milford Sound with the tank being filled in Te Anau. In Rakiura, Speight's was sold at the South Sea Hotel and for a time was under its own local label, Stewart Island Crack-A-Jack beer, on account of the owner's name being George Crack. Another similar situation happened in 1978 with a company called Wilson Neil selling Speight's Gold Medal Ale under the name Double Green, however because it had no brand recognition it quickly faded into obscurity.

For the last couple of years, it was hoped that DB's dominance of the South Island beer scene with its new brewery would only be a passing fad. By now Lion was starting to realise that DB was here to stay and Speights' survival in particular would depend on how they decided to counter them. Cost cutting measures were taken, such as closing some buildings and selling them off but reducing overhead wasn't going to cut the mustard. Speight's needed to try sell more product and to that end, they decided to hold a competition in 1980. This was run among the staff and the idea was to come up with a new slogan for Speight's which they would naturally use in upcoming marketing campaigns. The winner was Jackie Peperkoorn who had come up with the slogan, 'Follow the Stars' referencing the three stars on each bottle of Speight's. Nobody remembers that one though, unfortunately for Jackie. Instead, it is the second place winner that has had the most long lasting impact. That slogan was put forth by painter Malcolm Campbell who had been on the cricket team in 1977, which is probably where he got the idea from, namely 'Pride of the South'. This can still be seen on Speight's logos and advertising pretty much everywhere to this day.

In 1980, Ted Barringer, director of Lion and managing director of Cadbury resigned from the latter so that he could fully focus on the brewing industry. Obviously, he would need an office and it just so happened that he wanted to be based out of Dunedin, which would mean moving into the Speight's building. This left manager Langford with a decision on where to put the new arrival and he landed on removing Greenslade from the office that was specially built for him. The elderly Greenslade had been involved with Speight's for pretty much his whole life and indeed his family had been deeply involved with the brewery for three generations, his grandfather Charles being one of the three original founders. This must have felt like quite an unjust removal for him given the history him and his family had with the brewery and it is said that he shed some tears when Langford broke the news. Thing is though, Langford was none too keen to have Barringer setting up shop on his doorstep either, apparently the two didn't get on as Langford was "embarrassed by some of the director's outspoken utterances". Langford even referred to the move in date of Barringer as B-Day. Thankfully for everyone though the whole thing wasn't really that bad and in fact Barringer had much business experience to offer and gave some good advice.

DB wasn't done making Speight's bleed though and in 1981 a number of staff were let go. In particular the Beer Systems department, formally the Hotel Department, carpenters, brewhouse and

bottling staff all lost people, some of whom may have only joined the brewery in the last year or two. In contrast, the sales staff were given a boost in people. It was pretty clear what Speight's was trying to do, cut costs by reducing staff overall and increase revenue by giving the sales department more resources. One of these new sales staff was Geoff Williamson, a schoolteacher before he came to Speight's. Williamson was known for organising a lot of social events for the boys in the brewery, such as his end of year awards ceremony where he poked some light fun at members of staff for various quirks of personality or things they had done over the years. This was so popular that it became a bit of a regular thing. Williamson was also known for his Mini Olympics in the Lion Room of the brewery, where he would commentate such events as the nut pushing race.

Another likely push for more sales was the introduction of a new beer, McGavin's. It was a dark beer with a rich flavour stemming from the crystal malt that was used. Which is basically just malt that has been re-steeped and put back in the kiln while still moist to caramelise it a bit. The name was of course meant to evoke the idea of the old McGavin's brewery that was shut down in '71 and perhaps earn a few brownie points with nostalgic customers. However, the label didn't do it any favours since it said "Bottled in New Zealand by New Zealand Breweries Limited, Wellington" giving the impression that it wasn't a local beer but was in fact brewed up north, which wasn't the case. The advertising in general was actually a bit odd as it tried to imply that the beer was over 100 years old and had bottles covered in cobwebs to help with that aesthetic, which is certainly a.... choice. The slogan to go with it also said "It will put years on you" cause every drinker wants to be reminded that having a beer will probably shorten your life. Surprisingly, despite this, sales were pretty good at first but it all kinda tapered off when a few months later Lion handed down the mandate for a new national beer brand with the inspired name of '10'. To probably no one's surprise, this ended up being a stinker so the name was changed to McGavin's Light which was very confusing since it had no relation to the other McGavin's beer produced by Speight's.

Given that DB had put them on the backfoot with their Timaru brewery, these were costly decisions for Speight's but thankfully someone was about to step forth that could lead the Southern Men against the tyranny of the northern menace.

Next time, we will see a new manager of Speight's take the reigns to try and not only keep their foothold in the south but try to take back some territory from DB.

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](http://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!