

United Glass Bottle Manufacturers, Ltd.

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Histories

United Glass Bottle Manufacturers, Ltd., England (1913-1959)

United Glass, Ltd., England (1959-1968)

U.G. Glass Containers, Ltd. (1968-present)

Cannington, Shaw & Co., Nuttal & Co., Alfred Alexander & Co., and Robert Candlish & Son, Ltd. combined in 1913 to form the United Glass Bottle Manufacturers, Ltd. The purpose of the merger was to gain sufficient capital and leverage to capture the license for the Owens Automatic Bottle Machine. Edgar Breffit & Co., Ltd. joined the combine later that year, although that factory closed in 1926 (along with other small plants in the group). Soon, the St. Helens factory (formerly Cannington, Shaw & Co.) had seven Owens machines. The combine built a new factory at Charlton, near London, during 1920-1921, which became a main center for the group (Competition Commission [1978]:24; Toulouse 1971:510). The company began with a capital of £550,000.

Another group of bottle makers (Wood's Bottle Works, Ltd., North British Bottle Mfg. Co., Ltd., Kinghorn Bottle Co., Ltd., and John Lumb & Co.) joined together in 1934 to make bottles for Distillers Co., Ltd. (DCL). This firm also joined United Glass in 1937, and United produced most of the bottles used by DCL from that point on. The Alloa Glass Works became a subsidiary of the group in 1955, and the firm began producing plastic bottles through United Glass (Thermoplastics), another subsidiary. The firm reorganized as United Glass, Ltd., in 1959. Key Glass, Ltd., (also as a subsidiary) joined in 1962 (Competition Commission [1978]:24-25; Toulouse 1971:510-511). By 1966, Owens-Illinois owned 50% of the firm, while Distillers Co., Ltd. owned the other half. In another shift, the firm became a holding company for the glass container division of U.G. Glass Containers, Ltd., in 1977. Owens-Illinois purchased the firm in 1987, closing Peasely in 1999 and renaming the firm OI-Europe ca. 2006, when it closed all but the Harlow and Alloa factories. The firm remained in business until at least 2017 (Grace's Guide 2017; Watts 2013).

Containers and Marks

In 1927, United Glass Bottle advertised screw-top beer bottles, noting “Perfect Process by Automatic Production.” The ad bragged about “Meeting Specification of London Brewer’s Council” and claimed “*Another notable record in U.G.B. achievement* (emphasis in ad). The illustration appeared to show a bottle with internal threads (Figure 1).

UGB (1913-1968)

Toulouse (1971:377) attributed the UGB mark also to the United Glass Bottle Manufacturers, Ltd., from 1913 to 1968. Ring (1980:363) noted a mark of A456A U.G.B. on the base of a Pale Orange Bitters bottle. Unfortunately, she provided no other information.



Figure 1 – 1927 ad (eBay)



Figure 2 – UGB + codes (eBay)

had the factory letter above the logo – usually close to a model number – e.g., “13149 (slight arch) / S 40 1 (horizontal) / UGB (slight inverted arch)” or “2284 / S 6 / UGB.” Some, however, lacked the factory initial, and these *may* have been the earliest ones made by the firm (Figures 2 & 3).

Gugler (2005:28, 153) created a list of the factories of United Glass Bottle and their codes used with the UGB mark based on information from Toulouse (1971:513-514). According to Toulouse, these letters were embossed below the UGB logo, e.g., “UGB / A” for the Aloa plant (see Table 1). However, the bases in our sample



Figure 3 – UGB (eBay)

Table 1 – Factory Initials and Beginning Dates

Initial	Location	Start Date
A	Alloa, Scotland	1956
C	Charlton, London	1921
K	Kinghorn, Scotland	1938
L	Castleford, Yorkshire	1937
N	Shettleston, Scotland	1937
R	Ravenhead, St. Helens	1913
S	Sherdley, St. Helens	1913
W	Portobello, Scotland	1913

Berge (1980:84) reprinted a 1964 Owens-Illinois table of marks from foreign glass houses, and United Glass Bottle still used the UGB logo at that time. By 1982, the firm had adopted the hexagonal mark (see below – Emhart 1982:29-30). Unfortunately, we have little confirmation for the Toulouse end date (see the Discussion and Conclusions section below).

U.G. (1968-ca. 1980s?)

According to Toulouse (1971:209), United Glass used the U.G. mark “since 1968.” We have not found an example of this logo. Unfortunately, we have no source for world glass logos from this period (see Discussion and Conclusions section below).

UG in an elongated hexagon (ca. 1980s-at least 2017)

At the California State Parks collection, we recorded a bottle embossed on the base with “UG” in a hexagon (Figure 4). The “points” in the hexagon were vertical (rather than horizontal). The mark was on a bottle with an early Dacro finish (like a large crown soda finish) and a machine scar on the base. Giarde (1981:125) claimed the mark was used by United Glass Bottle of England, and we concur. The bottle we found identified Aberdeen Dairies at Balgownie, in New South Wales, Australia. Giarde’s only comment about dating was “recent.”

Our earliest source for the hexagonal logo was Emhart (1982:29-30), so we know that the mark was in use by the early 1980s. By this time, United Glass Bottle used new codes for its factories (see Table 2). The same logo appeared in the 1996 Emhart brochure (1996:18), but it only listed three factories – Alloa, Scotland (U8); Harlow, Essex (U0); Peasley, St. Helens, Merseyside (U9). By 2000, Essex had disappeared, leaving only Alloa and Harlow (Emhart 2000:26).



Figure 4 – Hexagon-UG (Cal. State Parks)

Table 2 – Factory Numbers – after Watts (2013) and Emhart (1982:29-30)

Factory	Number (1970s)	Number (1982)
Harlow, Essex	0	U0
New Cross, London	1	U1
Sherdley, St. Helens	2	
Ravenhead	3	
Castleford, Yorkshire	4	U4
Shettleston, Scotland	5	U5
Brimsgate	6	
Kinghorn, Scotland	7	U7
Alloa, Scotland	8	U8
Peasley, St. Helens	9	U9

UNITED GLASS BOTTLE (1913-ca. 1920s)

A few Codd-stoppered bottles were embossed “UNITED GLASS BOTTLE (slight arch) / MANUFACTURERS, L^D / ENGLAND (both horizontal)” just above the reverse heel (Figures 5 & 6). Although the mark was not listed in any of the sources, its maker is



Figure 5 – United Glass Bottle (eBay)

obvious. The logo could have been used anytime between 1913 and the early 1920s, when Codd stoppers declined in popularity.

Discussion and Conclusions

Aside from the full company name – embossed only on the reverse side above the heels of Codd-stoppered soda bottles, United Glass Bottle appears to have gone through a series of logos. The first consisted of the initials “UGB” embossed primarily on bottle bases from 1913 to 1968, the latter date derived from Toulouse (1971:209) who did not explain his reasons for the non-intuitive designation. Owens-Illinois owned 50% of the firm by 1966, so the influence from the powerful US firm may have contributed to the shift. However, the end date should be taken with caution. United Glass Bottle rarely included date codes, and our sample is too small to be certain that the two two-digit codes we have seen (40 and 51) actually refer to dates. If so, the most recent one is 1951 – of no help with establishing an end date. Berge (1980:84) showed that the mark was in use until 1964, but it no longer appeared in the 1982 Emhart pamphlet. The Toulouse date, therefore, has *some* credence.

Again, according to Toulouse (1971:209), the company adopted the slightly simpler “U.G.” logo in 1968. Although we have not seen an example of this mark, more recent bottles do not turn up as frequently in our sources as older ones – so he may (or may not) be correct. This entire identification should be taken with caution. With no confirmation, the Toulouse claim is weak. If we knew where he found this specific information

The Hexagon-UG logo was certainly in use by 1982 – although we have a real gap in our knowledge from 1964 to 1982. The hexagonal mark was almost certainly in use from ca. 1980 to at least 2017 – although it may have been used earlier.



Figure 6 – Codd (eBay)

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