

Boddingtons Breweries

The Museum holds a collection of objects and archives taken from Boddingtons Brewery at Strangeways. Items include a variety of advertising material and product samples, as well as barrels and a beer pump. The Museum also acquired equipment from the brewery's sample room, where each batch of Boddingtons was tested for quality and clarity. Production at the historic brewery came to a close in February 2005. The museum visited the site to photograph and record the last days of brewing.

Strangeways Brewery is believed to have been founded in 1778. It was set up by grain merchants called Thomas Caister and Thomas Fray. They built the brewery just outside the boundaries of Manchester in order to avoid paying a tax to the Manchester Grammar School, which had a monopoly on the grinding of grain within the town. The brewery was established on the eve of the Industrial Revolution, when the growth in population and industry created a ready market for locally brewed beer.



Henry Boddington arrived at the brewery in 1832 to work as a traveller for the company. In 1848, when Henry was only 34 years old, he was made a partner in the business. Within five years he had become sole proprietor of the company. Boddingtons became a family business, as three of Henry's sons joined their father in the management of the brewery.

The 1870s and 1880s was a time of expansion for Boddingtons. The company acquired several other breweries and extended the works at Strangeways. By 1877, Boddingtons had become the biggest brewery in Manchester. It was one of only 30 companies in the country to brew more than 100,000 barrels a year and already owned 71 public houses. Henry Boddington delighted in innovation and progress. In 1877, the local and national press reported that his company had become the first business in Manchester to install a telephone link between two of its sites. In 1887, Boddingtons Breweries Ltd became a publicly registered company. In the following years, despite trade fluctuations caused by the First World War and the Great Depression, the company consolidated its position as one of the leading breweries in North West England.

On the 22 December 1940, the brewery was struck when Manchester was hit by a massive air raid. The site was very badly damaged and brewing was forced to stop for seven months whilst repairs were made. After the war, the Boddingtons took the opportunity to modernise the brewery, embarking on a major construction programme. The Strangeways Brewery was once again expanded and state-of-the-art brewing equipment was installed. In the post-war period, Boddingtons fought off several attempts to take over the brewery. Members of the family continued to run the business until 1989. In October of that year, the brewing section of the business was purchased by the Whitbread Beer Company.

Under Whitbread, large-scale investment in the Strangeways site allowed Boddingtons to increase production from 200,000 to 600,000 barrels in 1994. The connection with Whitbread gave Boddingtons access to a national distribution network that included 7,000 pubs. This was also supported by the famous 'Cream of Manchester' advertising campaign, which helped to catapult Boddingtons into the national arena as an instantly recognisable and well-loved brand.



The brewing section of Whitbread's business was bought out by InterBrew UK (now InBev) in 2000. Two years later, the company was forced to put off plans to close the Strangeways Brewery following a concerted campaign by local people. However, in 2005, the decision was finally taken to close the Strangeways site after 227 years. Production of keg beer was switched to InBev's other sites in Salmesbury, near Preston, and Magor, South Wales. Boddingtons cask beer is now brewed under licence at Hyde's Brewery in Moss Side, Manchester.

For more information:

Visit The Collections Centre

Hydes Brewery, 46 Moss Lane West, Moss Side, Manchester. Brewery Tours can be booked in advance.

Read Jacobson, Michael. *200 Years of Beer: The Story of Boddingtons Strangeways Brewery, 1778-1978*. Manchester, UK: Boddingtons Breweries, 1978.

Redman, N.B. 'The history of the Boddingtons Brewery at Strangeways, Manchester'. *The Brewer* 81/969 (July 1995): 288-295.