



Project Title:  
Two Cocks Brewery

Category:  
Packaging

Sub Category:  
4.2 Branded - Drink

Client Company:  
Two Cocks Brewery

Design Consultancy:  
Brandhouse

Date:  
23.06.2013

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## Executive Summary

In October 2011 gay farmers Phil & Michael launched Two Cocks Brewery as a farm diversification project.

The brewery focuses on cask sales, but has always recognised the crucial input bottle sales would have in communicating the brand story and getting the name recognised – and of course the financial contribution it would make.

Yet the brewery launched into a marketplace that was more dynamic, diverse and crowded than it had been in over 100 years with over 2300 bottled competitors. So any design solution not only had to excite – it had to captivate.

And the solution delivered by Brandhouse with a meagre budget for both concept and production has done that in bucket loads. The concept is a copy focussed label with a real chicken feather stuck behind. The labels were designed to enable office printer and short run production.

With absolutely NO other supporting marketing activity either above or below the line, bottle sales have leapt from none in September 2012 to an average of 58 cases per month within 10 months – more than doubling the sales target and representing a 10% rather than targeted 5% sales value contribution.

The design concept is a stunning example of how design can help a small and cash strapped fledgling overcome huge constraints to achieve not only stunning sales success but also generate the buzz that is crucial to sustaining a brand in the longer term.

With so many quirky, handmade brands in the category it's also a testament to the power of lateral design thinking. It would have been easy to design yet another quirky label representing yet another quirky beer. But a more lateral approach to branding, that has deep roots in the brand story – using real feathers – has really helped the brand get noticed.

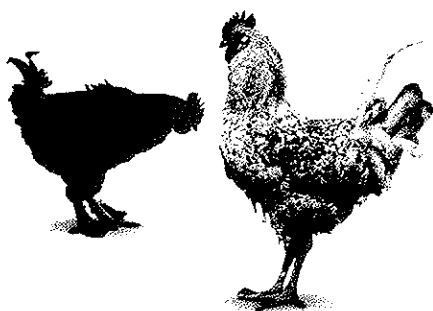
## Project overview

### Getting to the brief

Michael Butcher & Phil Palmer bought a small 40 acre farm in rural Berkshire in January 2009. Following two extraordinarily hot summers that saw water restrictions imposed they had a borehole sunk 180 feet into the West Berkshire chalk in early 2011 to ensure they could adequately irrigate their fields and water their herds of rare breed sheep, cows and pigs in the future. One morning by sheer coincidence Michael found wild hops in the hedgerows directly opposite the borehole and the germ of an idea to launch a micro-brewery as a farm diversification project was formed.

By November 2011, Michael, the master brewer, had been fully trained, the brew room had been constructed and its initial, small 2.5 barrel brew kit installed (this was upsized to a 10 barrel kit in October 2012) – and the brewery launched its first beer brands (1643 Roundhead and 1643 Cavalier) in cask, to a very receptive and supportive local pub trade.

The brand name, Two Cocks Brewery, had its origins in the original graphic identity for the farm of two cockerels – and had the added benefit of a tongue-in-cheek implication that the owners were 2 (gay) men.



The farm itself is on the site of the Roundhead encampment the night before the 1643 Civil War Battle of Newbury and this historic legacy provided both a solid grounding for the provenance of the brand and the inspiration for the brand names adopted (1643 Roundhead, 1643 Cavalier, 1643 Leveller, 1643 Puritan etc).

The core focus from both a sales volume and value point of view for the brewery was, and continues to be, cask ales sold through pubs. But bottle sales were always recognised as being important - not only financially, but also as a way of more effectively communicating the brand story than was possible on a pump clip and of building brand awareness and a buzz around the brand - all crucial to driving in-pub pint sales.

Importantly though, the ambitions for the brewery are modest. The owners have made a calculated and conscious decision to limit production to 2 x 10 barrel brews per week, which equates to approximately 3,200 litres/week (this figure includes brews destined for both cask and bottle) - a level they are rapidly approaching and hope to get to by October 2013. The decision has been made to ensure the owners have 100% autonomy, 100% involvement and still manage to enjoy what they are doing whilst making a decent profit. If demand exceeds supply after that point, price will increase. It is, and will remain, a true micro brewery.

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## Outline of the project brief

The key Marketing objectives for bottles were defined as:

- To help raise awareness and understanding of the brand amongst both trade and consumers
- To generate a buzz around the brand amongst both trade and consumers
- To easily accommodate the addition of new beers . . . initial launch would be with three, the potential long term range could extend to 10-12

The key Business objectives for the bottles were defined as:

- To generate bottle sales of at least 20 cases of 12 x 500ml bottles per month by June 2013, rising to 40 per month by December 2013
- To minimise labelling costs
- To allow both small batch runs and in-house production

## Overview of the market

The micro-brewery marketplace has seen a huge explosion over recent years, and competition is increasingly fierce.

The following statistics give a flavour of the seeming gold rush that Two Cocks Brewery launched into in late 2011:

- By mid 1972 the brewing industry in Britain and the Channel Islands consisted of 7 national brewers, 88 independent brewers and 5 home brewers' ( source Frank Baille 'The Beer Drinker's Companion')
- The 2013 CAMRA Good Beer Guide now lists over 1000 breweries in the UK
- The vast majority of new breweries have launched since 2002 (SIBA Local Beer Report 2013)
- The total volume of beer produced by SIBA members has leapt from 1,653,330 hl in 2008 to 2,234,489 hl in 2011, representing a whopping 135% increase in just 4 years. The year on year increase for 2011-12 of 6.8% was predicted with production forecasts for 2013 showing a further +5.6% growth (SIBA Local Beer Report 2013)
- SIBA estimates that there are now around 2,300 bottled real ale beers available in the UK, with bottled home breweries for 12% of production (SIBA Local Beer Report 2013).
- In West Berkshire alone the number of breweries has gone from 3, 5 years ago, to around 10 today . . . with reports of a further 2 local launches being planned imminently

Obviously with such a dynamic and increasingly competitive marketplace it would be vital that any design solution not only caught consumer attention on shelf, but positively encouraged pick up. "A customer that looks at your beer for more than 3 seconds are 63% more likely to buy. A customer that picks up your beer is 96% more likely to purchase" (Faraday Centre for Retail Excellence, Leeds Metropolitan University, SIBA Conference paper 2013)

The key obstacles facing Two Cocks Brewery with its bottle range would be:

- Gaining listings when the number of competitors at both a national and local level were rapidly increasing, meaning brands and packs had to really excite both store managers and consumers
- Gaining listings when the 2 founders had no previous commercial sales experience or contacts. (it has proven a VERY steep learning curve!)
- Developing a bottle design concept that was both cheap to design and cheap to execute. There was no budget available to develop above or below the line advertising to support the bottles either at launch or on-going – the bottles would have to stand on their own two feet.

## Project launch date

Bottles needed to be in-place in time for a primary consumer launch in mid-September 2012 at the locally important Royal Berkshire Show where the brewery was to have a trade stand selling bottle beers. With 70,000 visitors from the local area visiting the show over its 2 day duration it was to be a major tool in the brewery's armoury for getting the brand name out there and talked about - with bottles being the communication vehicle

Launch was to be with 3 core beers:

1643 Roundhead  
a 4.2% bitter,

1643 Cavalier a 3.8%  
golden ale and

1643 Puritan a  
4.5% stout.

The launch would be followed by targeted selling-in to local farm shops and bars.

## Size of design budget

Not to put too fine a point on it, at the start of the client:agency relationship there was effectively no budget available for design – just an understanding that it would be vital to the brand's success. But the owners recognised that that wasn't a very realistic starting point, so through some creative marketing of their rare breed livestock and meat products (including home cured Serrano Ham) they cobbled together a nominal budget of £7,500 + 'free beer for life' for the designers – an offer the agency felt it couldn't refuse (can't think why?!)

## Outline of design solution

The design solution was for a single 3/4 wrap label positioned low-down on the bottle with a real chicken feather stuck behind. The labels only included copy: brand, variant name, variant descriptor and legal information front face with the brand story, individual variant tasting notes, use by, lot number and bar code on the 'rear' portion.

Due to the feather inclusion, the labels needed to be hand applied by the brewery team - though given the small volumes produced with each batch

this was not expected to cause any issues.

The original intention was to use feathers from chickens raised on the farm, but following guidance from Environmental Health the feathers are sourced from one of the suppliers to the UK military and are delivered on long 'feather boa-esque' strings. The 'donating' chicken breed type, feather colour and variant name typography colour change by variant.

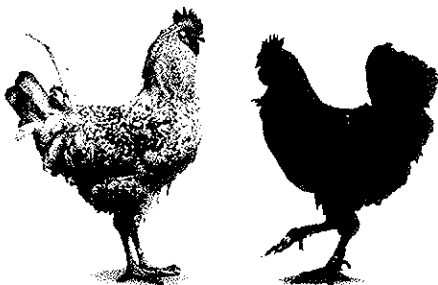
The design solution was focussed on

Gaining stand-out in an ever more crowded market place

Encouraging bottle pick-up through the feather having inherent touchability / play value

Visually communicating the brand name meaning

Being cheap to produce ... labels can be printed from an office printer



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## Summary of results

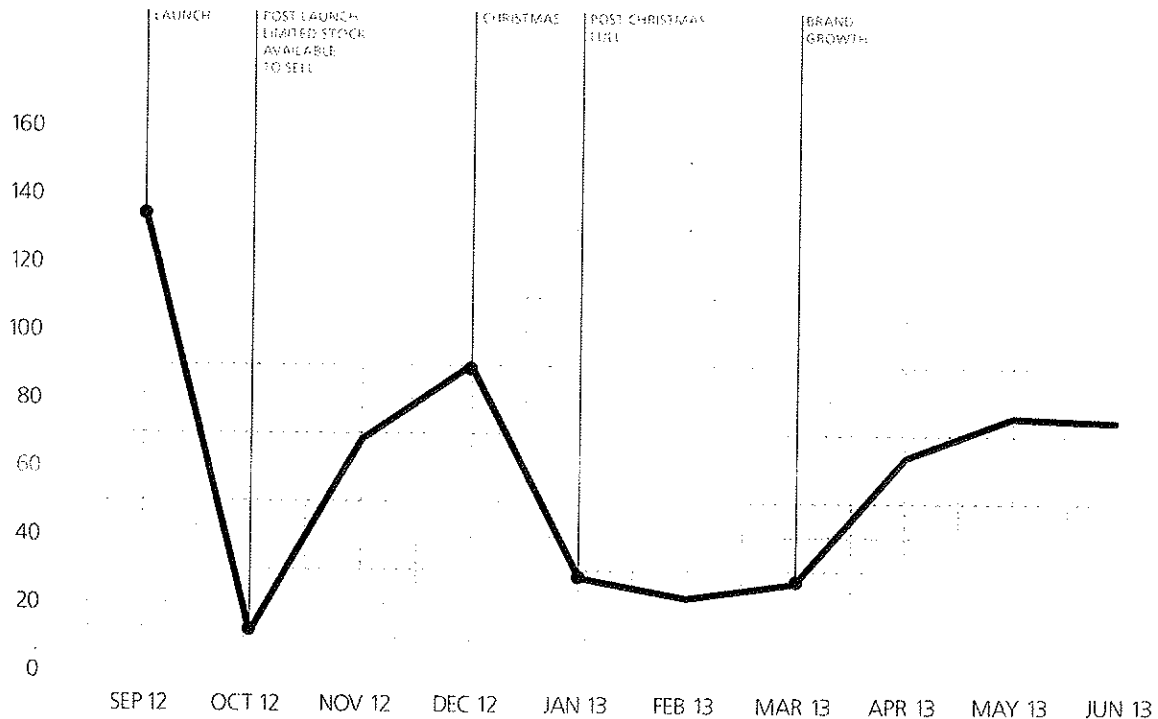
### Increase in sales

From a standing start, sales have moved from 0 cases per month in August 2012 to the brewery now selling an average of 58 cases per month - more than doubling the original targets

At the county show where the bottles were launched, the in-going hope was for sales of around 50 cases, with break-even for the event being 38 cases. Actual sales somewhat smashed expectations with 101 cases being sold in 2 days

A similarly surprising sales level was achieved 1 week later at the Hungerford Food Festival - a 4 hour event on what turned out to be a very cold and rainy day with low foot-fall expectations -with the brewery selling 22 cases

### Month on month sales since launch have been as follows:



## Consumer awareness and image

Reactions to the bottles from end consumers have been phenomenal. In-store observation research conducted by the brewery revealed that the feathers have significantly increased brand standout vs the competition and have acted as a strong attractor to bottle pick up and investigation and, as noted earlier 'a customer that picks up your beer is 96% more likely to purchase'

## Both solicited and unsolicited comments relating to the bottle design have been hugely positive, for example:

- *'OMG is that a real feather? Is that on every bottle? ... that is so cool!'*
- *'They're so beautiful - it's such a lovely touch'*
- *'Great beer and a free feather too, what more could you want!'*
- *'I love your packaging. It's so distinctive. So clever'*
- *'Where can I get hold of your beautiful beers, the ones with the feathers on them?'*
- *'He's collecting the feathers. He'll have enough for a feather bed soon!'*

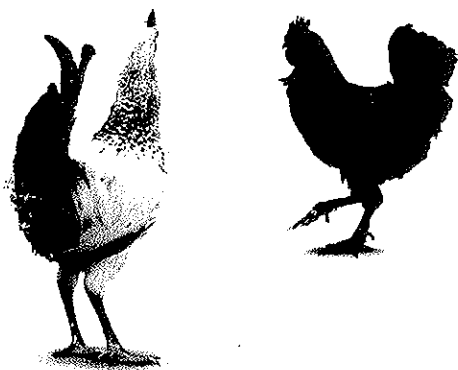
## Increase in market distribution

Undeniably the initial local shows attended with the bottled products generated significant interest in the brand from both a trade and end consumer point of view, with the bottle design being a primary contributor (along with having great tasting ales with solid provenance)

From only being available from the brewery or markets until November 2012, and with no dedicated selling push from the brewery's owners, the brand's bottles are now available in 8 retailers and 8 bars/restaurants, including Budgens, with discussions underway with Raymond Blanc, Marco Pierre-White, Mark Hix and Waitrose with the label design playing a significant role in the stocking decision. Importantly, the brewery doesn't have the budgets available to offer the financial stocking incentives or promotional support material that their larger competitors can and do supply. What's more, the wholesale price is at the very top end of the range paid by many retailers. Getting a listing is therefore an extra effort by the retailer. This is due to the strength of the brand and anticipated appeal of the pack on shelf.



With the plethora of new breweries opening at a similar time to Two Cocks, and all clamouring for a share of the same sized shelf, and despite the recessionary economic pressures affecting all sectors, the level of positivity to the brand and packaging from retailers is quite remarkable:



*"The customers love the design, we all think at Market Cafe that it is one of the most glamorous bottles of beer on the market. The feather is such a nice touch and shows the care and attention behind the making of the beer".*

Eve Ricard, The Market Cafe, London E8

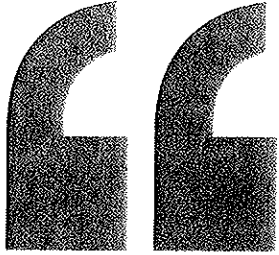
*"What I like about Two Cocks is that it appeals to both lovers of real ale, and those drinkers who are enjoying the new wave of craft beers. Two Cocks offers a traditional approach in the types of beers it produces (no trendy IPAs here) combined with clean, modern and striking packaging. The feathers are a talking point when people come into the shop, and it gives us an opportunity to explain the story behind them. This in turn does help sell the beer - and we have many return customers, especially for the Cavalier Golden Ale"*

Paola Tich, Park & Bridge, London W3

*"Apart from the fact that Two Cocks Brewery is our local brewery, we were struck by the innovative design of the bottle - particularly the real feather on each bottle. This design feature is carried through onto the beer glasses as well. Also, the varying names of the different beers reflect the historic local connections the brewery site has with the civil war, which adds to the interesting nature of the brand. Two Cocks Brewery products are top sellers for us and I am sure that the unique design features contribute greatly to this success"*

Jonathan Bastable, Bastable Brothers, Kintbury RG17

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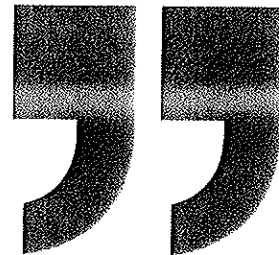
*Pick up a bottle of beer from Two Cocks Brewery and give yourself a moment to think about it before the contents are poured; a challenge, I accept. The bottle is beautiful and unique. It is a stunning example of creativity and thoughtfulness; consideration for the person who will drink it. We all know that for centuries beer has been a symbol of British gastronomy. In its own mighty way, this little bottle celebrates the magnificence of gastronomy in Great Britain today. The label is confident, sleek and easy to read. The weight of the bottle tells you that this beer (and the boys who make it) mean business.*

*But there is something else that is truly clever. You see, frequently it is the first taste of good beer that puts the smile upon the face; but with Two Cocks beer I find myself smiling upon first sight of the bottles. It is the feathers, of course. They are placed like colourful, elegant trophies on a dark background. They bring a touch of elegance to what is regarded as 'a man's drink'. They are a subject to discuss with your friends. 'What colour is yours?' They simultaneously provide a link to the farm where the brewery sits, and are also a subliminal connection to food and nature and Great Britain.*

*But my God, above all, they are witty and fun – they make you happy. You can sense the designer's character; someone who is warm and full of good humour and probably enjoys a drink or two. Importantly, the triumphant design equals business success. Can you resist picking up the bottle? Voilà! Enough talk about the design. I will open a bottle and prove to myself – once again – that the beer is absolutely heavenly.*

**Raymond Blanc, OBE.**

Chef-patron of Le Manoir Aux Quat's Saisons,  
Great Milton, Oxfordshire



While the actual numbers show that Two Cocks Brewery is still a relatively small beer brand in the grand scheme of things, very strong growth has nonetheless been achieved against very tough market conditions.

The bottles are also used as support material to help gain pub listings – they functionally provide a product taster and also describe and bring to life the brand story, and have clearly aided brand name retention and interest. The following Tweet gives but one example of a potential customer response to the sample ‘package’ – the pub has since become a regular customer for the brewery.



**The Red Lion at Britwell Salome**

Now THAT'S what you call a sample. @TwoCocksBrewery Love these guys already!



Aurelia Malkin and Kelly Franklin Potter like this.



**Jon Brydges** I've had that before. The bottles have feathers on. The Puritan Stout is the nuts.

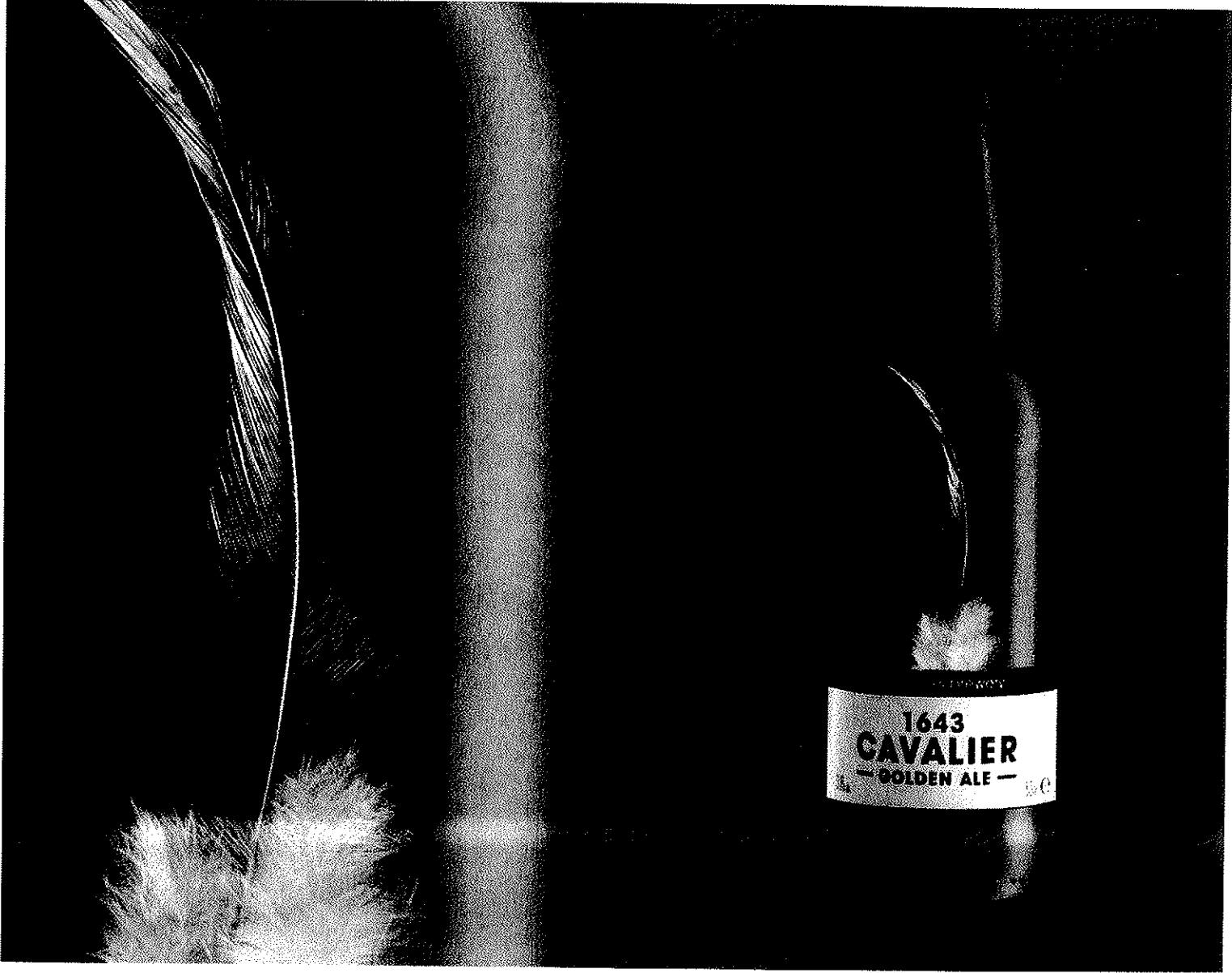
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1643  
**CAVALIER**  
— GOLDEN ALE —

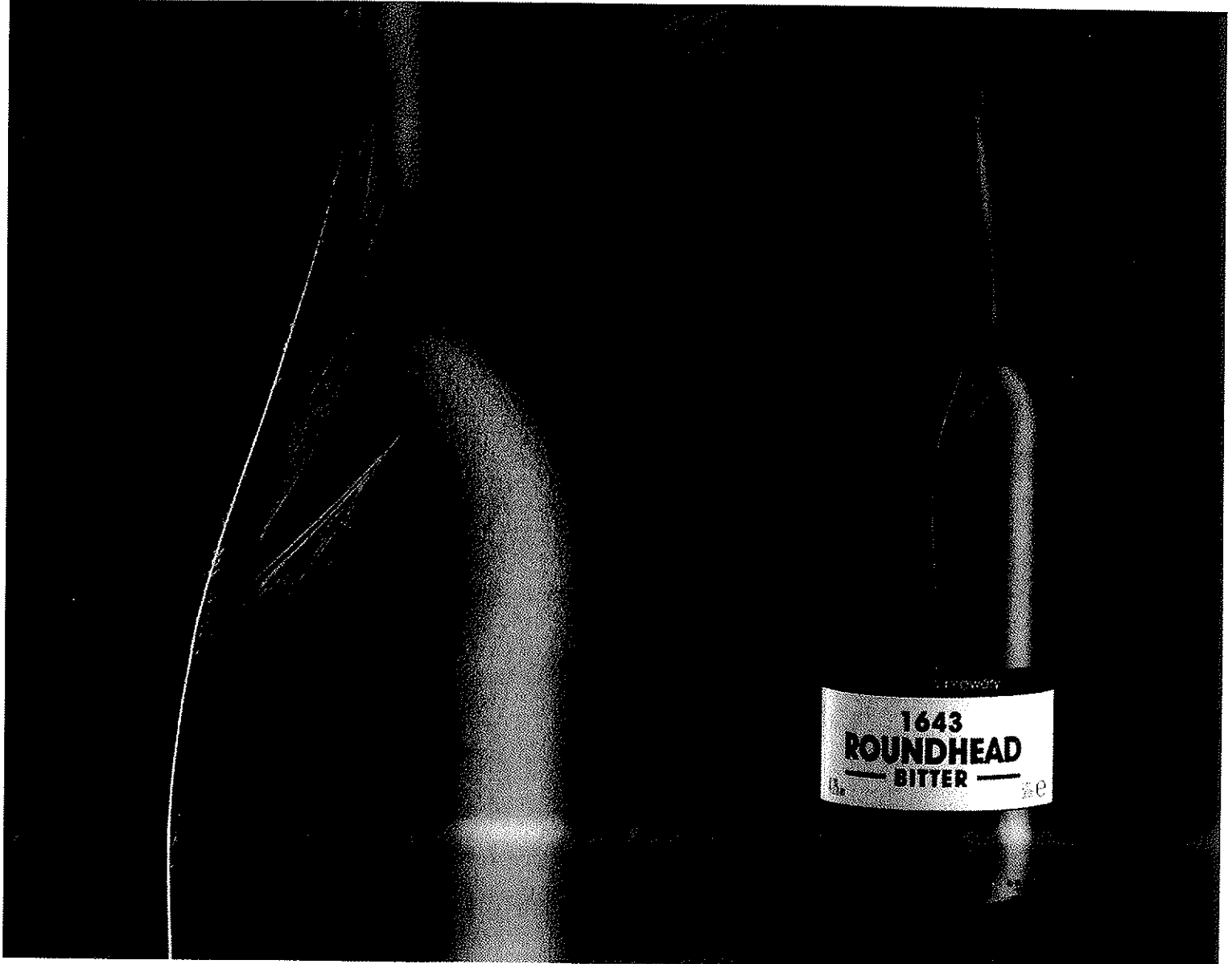
1643  
**ROUNDHEAD**  
— BITTER —

1643  
**PURITAN**  
— STOUT —

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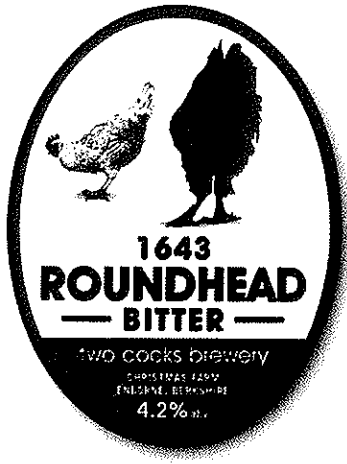
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## Achievement of 'soft' objectives

As the above discussion, and especially quotations demonstrate, the bottles have certainly achieved their goals of creating a buzz around the brand and building awareness.

And in terms of extendability? Since launch the brewery has added 4 new variants - 1643 Viscount, Gibbet Ale, Cannonball and Diamond Lil - all typically with next to no notice, and requiring labels pretty much immediately. The only factor that is likely to cause problems long term is the number of different chicken breed feathers that can be obtained in the volumes required!



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## Other influencing factors

There are a number of other factors that may have contributed to the level of sales success experienced, namely

- Simply being new news in an exciting and currently topical, almost trendy, marketplace
- Being local
- Having great, consistent, award winning, product delivery

Importantly though, these factors are no more or less important than they would have been for any of the brewery's competitors ... and given the plethora of new news that has flooded the market over the last few years these factors have arguably been of limited significance – just being new and local is no longer enough, a brand has to have substance and physically stand out to get attention

Significantly, the high investment levels required to set up the brewery meant that there was no budget available for above or below the line activity (either directly or through payment in kind alternatives!). Specifically:

- there has been NO advertising
- there has been NO PR campaign
- there has been NO direct mail campaign
- there has been NO in-store merchandising or promotional support material
- there have been NO price incentives

Sales into pubs/restaurants/bars/shops are achieved solely through either the relevant establishment contacting the brewery directly (usually having seen the bottles at shows or farmer's markets) or through Michael/Phil contacting them directly and meeting them in person providing samples of product and packs to try.

## Research resources

Brewery sales data  
Brewery customer research, September 2012  
In Store observation research by brewery, April 2013  
Continual customer feedback analysis SIBA  
Local Beer Report 2013  
Faraday Centre for Retail Excellence, Leeds  
Metropolitan University, SIBA Conference paper 2013  
Frank Baille: The Beer Drinker's Companion  
2013 CAMRA Good Beer Guide