

# Reaching new heights...

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**Submission title:** Wainwright golden beer

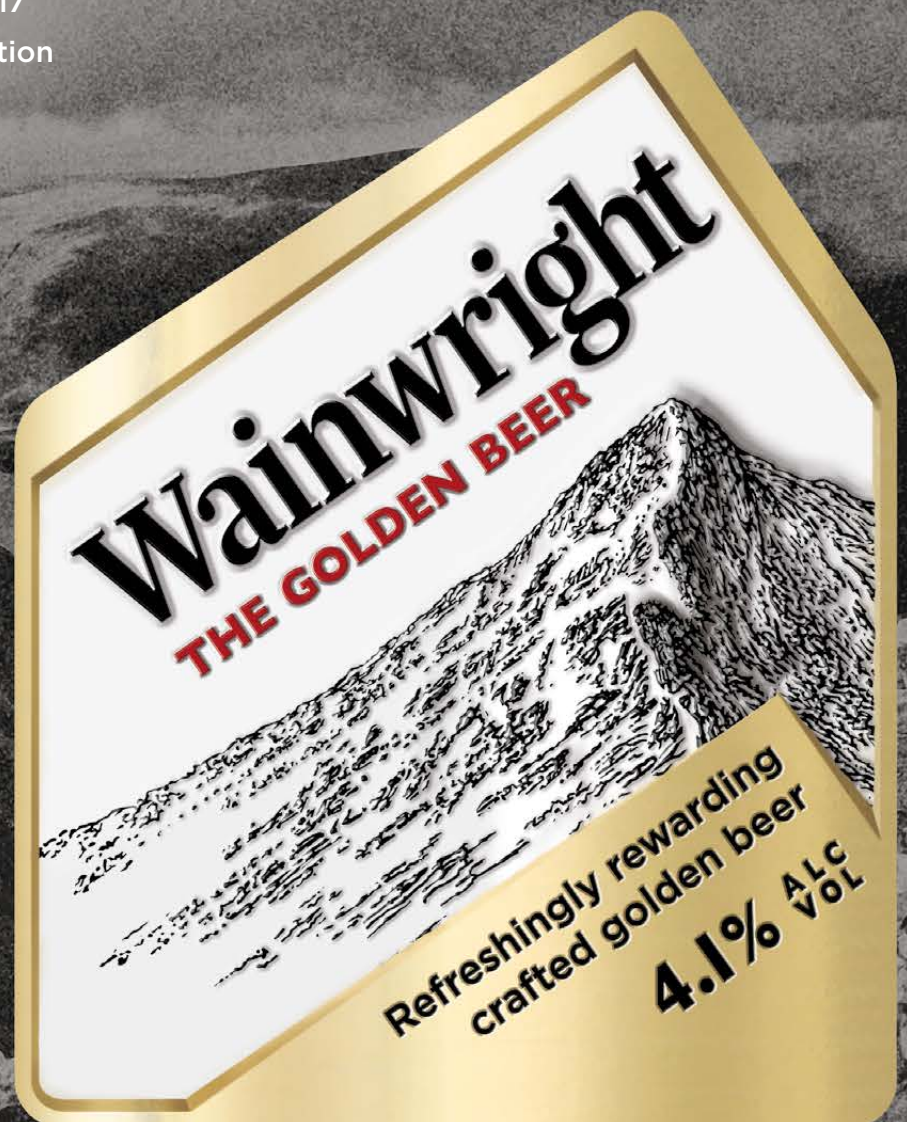
**Industry sector:** Beverages

**Client company:** Marston's PLC

**Design consultancy:** Butcher & Gundersen

**Submission date:** 30 June 2017

**Publication type:** For publication



# Executive summary

Having acquired the Wainwright brand from Thwaites Brewery, Marston's wanted to turn this award winning Lancashire ale into an iconic national beer.

Inspired by famous local author and fell walker Alfred Wainwright, the beer had a strong local following, but its potential mass appeal beyond the county was unknown.

To complicate matters, the ale market was evolving significantly and new entrants to the category were changing people's expectations and appetites for the types of beers they wanted to drink. Both Marston's traditional ale drinkers and the new young drinkers entering the category, and driving growth, were being seduced by a new contemporary aesthetic and a more compelling communication of the key purchase drivers – refreshment and liquid colour.

Wainwright's position in the market and its national ambitions were under threat.

A new design to modernise and reinvigorate Wainwright was required, in order to appeal to the changing wants of the consumer and equip Wainwright with the tools needed to drive sales beyond its native Lancashire.

To resonate with the aspirations of ale drinkers, the new branding focused less on Alfred Wainwright and more on the values that inspired him most – the challenge and journey of reaching that highest peak. By championing Wainwright's ownable brand assets and reinterpreting the brand in a fresh and dynamic way, the beer significantly increased its reach across the UK, attracting traditional Marston's ale drinkers and the younger consumers alike.

The rebranding and repositioning of Wainwright Golden Ale as "The Golden Beer", transformed its fortunes from local hero into a category icon.

Word count: 257

Wainwright's significant growth played an important role in helping Marston's increase their market share of the premium ale category by **+9%**, extending Marston's position as the No.1 premium ale brewery for a third successive year.

**+15.4**  
INCREASE IN MAT\*  
SALES VOLUME /

**5.5x**  
FASTER GROWTH  
THAN CATEGORY /

**45%**  
INCREASE IN OFF-  
TRADE RATE OF SALE /

**8 weeks**  
PROJECT  
PAYBACK /



# Project overview

## Outline of the brief

In 2007, Blackburn-based brewery Thwaites created a new golden ale inspired by Alfred Wainwright, a local fell walking hero, famous for his guidebooks and illustrations.

In March 2014, the brewing of Wainwright was transferred to Marston's Brewery, who later acquired the beer along with the rest of the Thwaites brewing business.

Wainwright had enjoyed incredible success in its own backyard, accounting for one in every 19 pints of cask ale sold in Lancashire. It had also won critical acclaim, winning several brewing awards, including a Gold at the Brewing Industry International Awards 2011 and Best Pale Golden Beer at the prestigious World Beer Awards in 2012.

The taste was a success, but its appeal was largely local.

Keen to capitalise on the local popularity of the beer, Marston's carried out focus groups to get a better insight into how consumers felt about the current Wainwright product, as well as its presentation. Feedback indicated that, although the liquid was loved, consumers thought that the design was old fashioned and failed to communicate the quality of the beer, or its light and refreshing taste.

Research also highlighted that existing consumers recognised and valued the Thwaites brewery branding, which had continued to be used on pack under license following the acquisition. With the relationship between Wainwright and Thwaites coming to an end, Marston's needed to establish the beer under their own banner.

Butcher & Gundersen were briefed to create a new identity and packaging, building on the heritage of the brand, but evolving it into a design that would deliver growth across the whole of the UK. The new identity would be applied across all the existing pack formats.

## Key business objectives:

- >> BECOME A TRUE NATIONAL BRAND
- >> GROW VOLUME WITH THE 35-44 YEAR OLD CONSUMERS (THE TRADITIONAL WAINWRIGHT DRINKER WAS 55+)
- >> CREATE A STRONG IDENTITY THAT WOULD ALLOW THE BRAND TO SHED THE 'COMFORT BLANKET' OF THE THWAITES BREWERY LOGO
- >> GROW DEMAND IN THE OFF-TRADE AS CONSUMERS CONTINUE TO MOVE AWAY FROM OUT OF HOME DRINKING



Previous design

# Project overview *(continued)*

## Overview of the market

The UK beer industry, including lager, ale and stout, was worth £22bn in 2015, with ale accounting for 20% of the category. Whilst much smaller than lager, the ale market was slowly stealing share, growing at +3.3% in 2015, as consumers sought beers with more flavour.

Marston's Brewery has a broad portfolio of beers from five different breweries and were the leading ale brewery in the UK, with a combined market share of 22% of all bottled ales and 18% of cask ales.

Whilst the growing desire for beer with a more complex range of flavours and aromas than lager was a key driver in the rise of the ale market, there were three key trends that impacted the project:

### Golden ale was driving growth

Premium ale is best split by colour – dark, amber and gold. Golden ale, although only comprising 30% of the ale mix, was one of the most competitive areas of the beer category, with new entrants from big breweries like Guinness, as well as independent craft breweries, as they each tried to capitalise on this growth.

### Premium ale drinkers are getting younger

Wainwright's typical ale consumer was 55+ years old. However, the habits of younger drinkers were changing as they chose to drink less and spend more time pursuing experiences and chasing achievements. Whilst drinking less, they were also spending more on premium brands. In 2016, drinkers under 45 years old increased their spend on premium ales by 16% YOY, representing a significant growth opportunity.

### Off-trade sales overtake the on-trade

Beer sales from pubs, clubs and restaurants had been in free-fall for a number of years, supermarkets and convenience stores had just become the dominant sales channels.

Sales of premium ale have historically had a low share of the off-trade, accounting for only 13% of sales (compared to 29% in the on-trade). But, with drinking habits changing, the off-trade represented a huge opportunity for growth and a vital requirement for long-term sustainability.

The growth in golden ale meant that it was of strategic importance for Marston's to establish a golden ale within the portfolio. But the changing retail landscape and new entrants to the category, who were proving better at communicating the key drivers for golden ale (refreshment and colour), meant that Wainwright was in danger of being left behind.

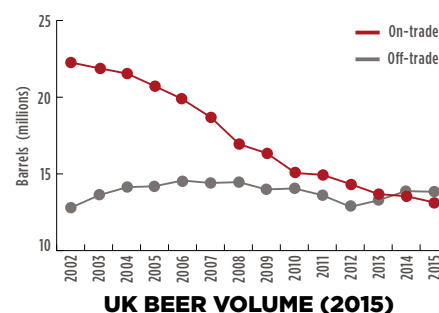
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**PROJECT LAUNCH DATE:**  
**JUNE 2016**

**SIZE OF DESIGN BUDGET:**  
**£33,002**

**PRODUCTION COSTS:**  
**£41,998**

*Off-trade has  
overtaken on-trade  
beer volumes*



**13.8** **13.5**  
**MILLION** **MILLION**  
**BARRELS** **BARRELS**  
**(ON-TRADE)\*** **(OFF-TRADE)\***

# Outline of design solution

Despite being a relatively new beer, the previous Wainwright branding focused on Alfred Wainwright himself, invoking nostalgic and sedentary cues.

Alfred Wainwright was a potentially polarising champion for the brand. An anti-social man who enjoyed the isolation of the moors and often preferred his own company to that of others, he held little relevance to the broad audience we wanted to reach or the highly social occasions where beer is typically enjoyed. Wainwright himself was never interested in growing his own fame or stature; rather, his ambition was to celebrate the great outdoors that consumed his passion and attention. In response, our design moved the focus away from the man himself and onto the aspirational values he championed – the challenge of summiting the highest peak and the rewarding satisfaction that this brings.

After auditing the competition, we identified the simple colour palette (white, black, red and gold) and the unique Wainwright illustrative style as the creative assets, which differentiated Wainwright beer and made it recognisable in the sector. These core assets, combined with the angular positioning of the brand to follow the new label shape, reflected the refreshing character of the product, in a fresh, bold and dynamic way.



# Outline of design solution

## (continued)

### Key features of the design

**Iconic peak shape** – an ownable shape was created to add energy and movement to the brand. Attention was specifically given to creating a unique and striking shape for the label, which would demand attention and stand out on-shelf.

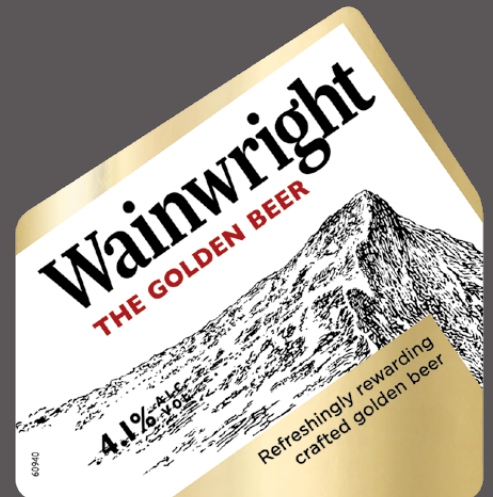
**Mountain illustration** – encapsulating Wainwright's love of the mountains, we recreated one of his original illustrations of a masterful mountain peak, to echo the form of the bespoke label shape. The illustration evokes the Wainwright legend, whilst removing the man himself from the label. The drinker is left with only the peak to conquer – a personal adventure following directly in the footsteps of the great fell walker.

**Topographical collar** – Alfred Wainwright was also famed for creating topographical maps of the lakes. We chose to use a small, but significant, section of topographical drawing on the neck label, placing a red dot to correspond with the peak shown in the illustration on the front label. In doing so, we were able to tie together two artefacts of Alfred's work and create a more authentic sense of provenance.

**Bold typography** – a bold serif font, set at an upward angle to match the gradient of the mountain, was used to communicate the determination and stamina required to reach the highest peak, and moved the branding away from the quirky playfulness of the old type.

**Rich and crisp colours** – to further premiumise the brand and accentuate the beer's crisp flavour, the colour palette was subtly changed. Whilst the red was an ownable and distinct accent colour, we chose a richer red to underline the quality of the beer and to move away from the old 'Thwaites red'. We also removed the yellowness from the gold to make it feel less dirty and evoke more of the crisp and refreshing taste.

Word count: 498



# Summary of results

From relative obscurity, Wainwright has been successfully transformed from a local hero to the category defining golden beer brand. Every goal outlined at the beginning of the rebrand has been exceeded and sustained since the re-launch a year ago.

The significant growth, despite the mounting competition in the category, has also played an important role in extending Marston's No.1 position in the ale category, with an **increase in market share of +9%**.

## >> BECOME A TRUE NATIONAL BRAND - RESULTS:

Wainwright saw an **increase in sales volume of +15.4% MAT** (Moving Annual Target) and **growth that was 5.5x faster** than the average growth (2.8%) in the premium ale category.

Wainwright has also been the **fastest growing brand in Marston's portfolio** of 42 beers, becoming their 3rd largest beer by volume. And, as national sales have increased, Wainwright has become **less dependent on sales from its Lancashire heartland**, (now only accounting for 26% of sales, down from 45% pre-rebrand).

# +15.4

INCREASE IN MAT SALES VOLUME



# 5.5x

FASTER GROWTH THAN CATEGORY\*



\*Premium ale category growing at 2.8%

## >> GROW VOLUME WITH THE 35-44 YEAR OLD CONSUMERS - RESULTS:

A more dynamic identity and packaging design has led to **huge sales increases with the 35-44 year old consumer** (in the off-trade [on-trade figures not available]).

# 45%

INCREASE IN VOLUME OF SALES



# 73%

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF BUYERS



As a result of the re-branding and new positioning of the Wainwright brand we have energised sales through engagement with a wider trade and consumer audience

Chris Keating, Director of Marketing, Marston's

# Summary of results *(continued)*

## >> CREATE A STRONG IDENTITY THAT WOULD ALLOW THE BRAND TO SHED THE 'COMFORT BLANKET' OF THE THWAITES BREWERY LOGO - RESULTS:

Importantly, following the removal of the Thwaites branding, sales in Wainwright's heartland of Lancashire remained stable and no negative feedback was captured from the customer sales teams.

With the potential future acquisition of beers, Marston's has also unlocked an insight into the role and significance of the brewery in customers' purchase behaviour. They now have knowledge and confidence as to how best to present future acquisitions within the Marston's beer portfolio.

## >> GROW DEMAND IN THE OFF-TRADE AS CONSUMERS CONTINUE TO MOVE AWAY FROM OUT OF HOME DRINKING - RESULTS:

The rate of sale for Wainwright increased by +45%, as it was not only purchased more frequently, but also in larger quantities.

Wainwright is now the 20th biggest premium ale in the UK, moving up 5 places.

££££££££  
**45%** INCREASE  
IN RATE  
OF SALE

**20<sup>th</sup>** UP  
5  
PLACES  
BIGGEST PREMIUM ALE IN THE UK

## >> SUSTAINABILITY - RESULTS:

In conjunction with the rebrand, Marston's implemented a 'lightweight glass' project as part of an overall reduction plan across the full bottle range.

This led to significant environmental benefits, including a reduction in the energy required to produce each bottle. In addition, there was also a significant reduction in transport costs and emissions, as new bottles led to a more efficient bottle configuration on pallets.



*Significant  
environmental  
benefits*

# Other influencing factors

## Did market spend increase?

Two trade ads ran to support the relaunch of Wainwright. Whilst there was an initial increase in marketing spend for the launch, budgets were then significantly reduced by 37%, four months later. Any increased spend at launch was more than offset by the subsequent reduction in marketing spend across the remainder of the year.

## Did distribution increase?

Wainwright was already available across the Marston's pub estate prior to the relaunch. There was an increase in distribution following the rebrand as desirability was increased.

# Research resources

Wainwright internal research

Kantar WPO Jan 2016

Marston's PLC Annual Report and Accounts 2016

2016 Premium Bottled Ale (PBA) Market Report, Marston's Beer Company

