



Quorn It's all in the name!

One question that local historian, Sue Templeman, is often asked, is whether there is a connection between the name of the popular Quorn vegetarian protein product and the



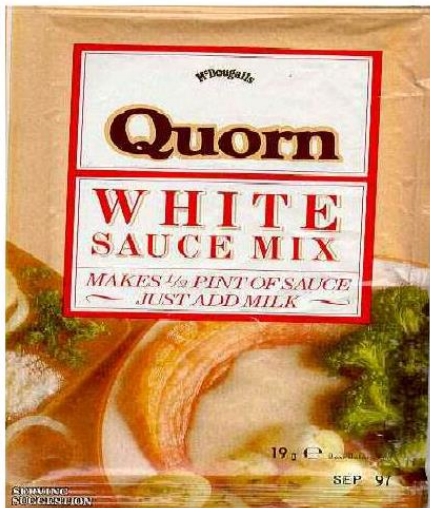
village of Quorn. The answer has always been believed and given as “no”, but after reading

conflicting opinions, Sue decided to carry out some in-depth research to try to determine the answer once and for all.

This proved to be surprisingly difficult, and after many months, chasing leads and digging back into records, the answer is Well, let's read on and follow Sue's researches to see where they took her and the conclusion she reached!

What is Quorn meat substitute?

Quorn is a fungus/mushroom based vegetarian protein, which is derived from the *Fusarium Venenatum* fungus, which is then grown by fermentation using a process similar to that used to make beer or yogurt. It was first produced in 1985, and distributed in the UK for sale in 1993 by Marlow Foods, who were then a partnership between RHM (Rank Hovis McDougall) and ICI.



Origin of Quorn as a Brand Name

According to Marlow Foods today, their product that we now call Quorn was definitely NOT named after Quorn (our village). Marlow's explained in an email that when a brand name was being sought for the product in the mid 1980s, something was wanted that was neutral sounding and monosyllabic. At that time a white sauce-mix product called 'Quorn', was marketed regionally, but not nationally, under the McDougalls brand. Marlow Foods liked the name, and as both companies were owned by the same parent company (ie RHM – Rank Hovis McDougall), the name was transferred over.

But

If you look at the internet on Wikipedia under 'Quorn' (as a meat substitute), it clearly states:

“Quorn as a retail product (it derives its name from the Leicestershire village of Quorn), was first produced... etc”

This directly contradicts the information from Marlow Foods, the actual manufacturer of the product. As many people know, Wikipedia is not always accurate, so the Wikipedia source was checked – which turned out to be the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) - not a publication you would expect to be wrong! The full detail of the OED is only available on subscription, so trip a to Quorn Community Library followed. This revealed the following origin for the word 'Quorn':

“Quorn – The proprietary name of a range of meat-free food products. The word Quorn was first registered as a trademark (for certain edible products other than meat substitutes) by the Quorn Specialties Company of Leicester, in 1914. The mark consists of the words 'The Quorn' in a figure showing a foxhound, an allusion to the Quorn Hunt. Leicester is only a few miles from the village of Quorndon, from which the hunt took its name. The meat substitute was subsequently developed by the successors of the company.”

Curiouser and curiouser!

Interim Conclusions

So Marlow Foods explained the final part of the naming process very convincingly - but this still left the question as to whether there could be a connection between McDougalls Quorn White Sauce Mix and our village of Quorn. The phrase from OED "The meat substitute was subsequently developed by the successors of the company", seemed to be stated with confidence, but where was the evidence?

Starting at the other end – Quorn Specialties Ltd

Let's rewind 80 or more years. From the early 1900s to about 1963 there was a firm based at Knighton Junction, off Welford Road in Leicester, called Quorn Specialties Ltd. They employed between sixty and seventy people, manufacturing a range of food products including custard powder, flour, baking powder, blancmange and lemonade crystals. The company was named after the Quorn Hunt who were based in Quorn until 1906, and the firm was renowned for their very colourful vans and custard tins depicting hunting scenes. According to the Oxford English Dictionary they first registered 'The Quorn' as their trademark in 1914.

The 'Register of Defunct Companies' revealed that Quorn Specialties Ltd were bought out in 1963 by F W Hampshire and Co Ltd, who were based in Sinfin near Derby. Hampshires were best known for their household and pharmaceutical products, but they also produced foodstuffs, and carried on making sauces, jams, stuffings, jellies and custard powder under the 'Quorn' brand.



A Quorn Specialties van taking part in a parade in Leicester

Speculation!

Could the sauce mix use of 'Quorn' by McDougalls have any connection with 'Quorn Specialties', as the OED implied, but was not evident from research? The product areas in which McDougalls and Quorn Specialties were operating, seemed to be so similar, both including flour, cake mixes, sauce mixes etc. Surely this couldn't just be a coincidence?

F W Hampshire continued to make products under the Quorn trademark – so could

Hampshires have resold the Quorn brand at some point? Did Hampshires ever have dealings with McDougalls? Contact was made with Jerry Hampshire, who is the grandson of Frederick W Hampshire, the founder of F W Hampshire Ltd.

408 QUORN SPECIALITIES (HOLDINGS) LD.
VOL. FOR
Quorn Specialities (Holdings) Ltd. Regd. 1950. All
capital was owned by F. W. Hampshire & Co. Ltd.
Vol. liq. (members') 29 Oct. 1964. Final meeting
Entry from 'Register of Defunct Companies'

Jerry still lives in Derbyshire and despite being very young at the time, he remembered their family firm taking over Quorn Specialties. He very kindly made enquiries with older family members, but no other information came to light.

F W Hampshire Ltd was eventually bought out by Reckitt and Colman in the late 1960s or early 1970s, but there seemed to be no link between the two firms of McDougalls and Colman, despite the similarity of their products. In fact both McDougalls and Colman seem to be firmly set apart in terms of the large corporations that own them now and have done in the past, ie McDougalls is part of RHM (Rank Hovis McDougall), and Colmans was originally part of Reckitt and Colman, the Colman arm of which was subsequently sold to Unilever in 1995.

Climbing over the brick wall!

It felt like the research had hit a brick wall, so a rethink and new approach was needed. Trademarks! Back to basics and pursue the history of the 'Quorn' trademark!

The Quorn Trademark

Trademarks come under the control of the Intellectual Property Office, and their website contains a certain amount of historical data. At first it appeared that there was plenty of information about the Quorn trademark, with some registrations going back to 1953 and 1977, which could have provided the breakthrough, but the on-line files didn't contain the names of all of the owners of the brand. Frustration! Protracted email correspondence followed with various sections of the Intellectual Property Office. Trademarks and intellectual property is an incredibly complex area, and as a result a trademark can be registered and reregistered many times, depending on various factors, including change of classification and/or ownership. Many of the oldest registrations had lapsed, resulting in old files having been destroyed, but one of each of the registrations dating from 1953 and 1977 were still live, and for a fee it was possible to obtain copies of paper files.

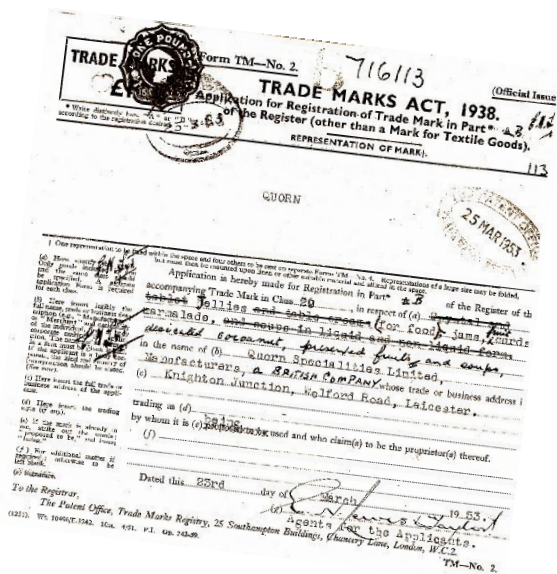
It was a very tense time waiting for the post every day! When the large envelope arrived, it transpired that many of the relevant papers had been weeded out over the years, which was even more frustrating! However, two very significant facts were revealed:

- Registration of the 'Quorn' trademark ref 716115 has run continuously from 1953, meaning that it must have been renewed without a break, every seven years. The original registration was by Quorn Specialties Ltd, and the most recent owner is Marlow Foods Ltd, the producers of Quorn meat substitute. This confirms that the Quorn trademark as used by Quorn Specialties Ltd, has indeed been continually registered and (through whatever route) has been transferred to Marlow Foods without any lapses.
- The 1977 registration was by Rank Hovis McDougal. This provided the earliest known date that RHM were known to have owned the 'Quorn' trademark.

Conclusion

There was continuous registration of the trademark 'Quorn' from at least 1953, and it would seem that as the 'Quorn' trademark was no longer required by either F W Hampshires or Reckitt and Colman in the late 1960s/early 1970s, it must have been either sold or transferred before 1977, to McDougalls (RHM), who produced very similar products.

The continuity of the registration of 'Quorn', DOES prove unbroken ownership and formal transfers between Quorn Specialties Ltd (named after Quorn Hunt and Quorn), and Marlow Foods, the producers of the Quorn meat substitute that we now know so well. So the albeit tenuous connection is proven!



It would have been somewhat more satisfying to know more about the period between 1965 (approx) and 1977, but it had to be accepted that the road had come to an end.

Irony!

There was a court case in 2004 where Marlow Foods opposed the registration of the trademarks 'Quorn Hunt' and 'The Quorn Hunt' to a range of non-food products. Very broadly, the basis of the opposition was that people would connect the two, and because of the fact that many people (especially vegetarians) disagree with hunting, their Quorn meat substitute brand would be adversely affected. There is a certain irony that the above research reveals that a connection already existed, even though it was buried away and through a very convoluted route!

So nearly not Quorn!

During the investigations another interesting little piece of information came to light from the 'LinkedIn' profile of a marketing consultant who had worked on the launch of the meat substitute product in the 1980s. He said:

"And the name? Well, myco-protein was going to be called Origen, but because of pressing trademark registration issues, an RHM 'off the shelf' name became a convenient solution and Quorn was a packet sauce brand with limited distribution in the Midlands."

This is not a major revelation, but two items of interest come out of it:

- 'Quorn' was not the number one choice of name, it was actually chosen partly for convenience as it was already owned by RHM.
- Whilst I knew the McDougalls sauce was only marketed regionally, this confirmed that the region was the Midlands - ie keeping to its Leicester/Derby roots – circumstantial evidence to support the case?

Sue's Postscript

*Now I know I said that I had accepted that I had come to the end of the road, but it would have been nice to know **exactly** when any Quorn trademark transfers took place between 1965 and 1977. So..... since I wrote this article I have been in correspondence with 'The British Library, Business & Intellectual Property Reference Service'. They have confirmed that transfers of trademarks are reported in the weekly publication 'Trade Mark Journal', but have also confirmed that as the journals are not digitised or indexed in any way, and are also kept off site (so would have to be requested a batch at a time), it would be a mammoth task to go through them all! Perhaps one day.....!!!*

This article was produced by Sue Templeman on behalf of www.quornmuseum.com. If you have any photographs of old Quorn and would allow them to be copied, or have stories you would be happy to share, Sue would love to talk to you! Please contact sue@quorndon.com or 01509 412112 or pass a message through the Parish Office.