

The Farsons Experience

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2012 was a significant year in the history of Farsons as it witnessed the inauguration of a 12.5-million euro, state-of-the-art brewhouse on its premises in Mrieħel. This was the third brewhouse to be commissioned by Farsons since it started brewing in 1928, when it launched the first local beer during the feast of St. George in Qormi.

The first local brew was an English style 'Farsons Pale Ale' which was specially crafted to meet both the tastes of the British garrison stationed in Malta as well as the increasing local demand for beer. The Pale Ale label was designed by none other than the artist Edward Caruana Dingli and featured the statue of Neptune, which is located today in the Grand Master's Palace in Valletta. It was not long before this symbolic association translated into local custom and usage, as Farsons beers became commonly known as 'il-birra tal-Ġgant'.

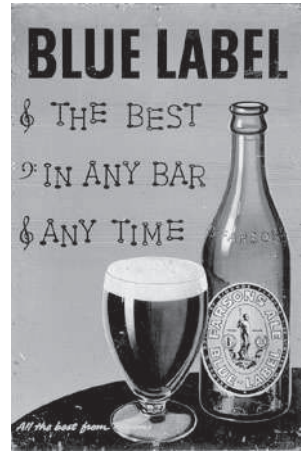
Steeped in history and heritage, the Farsons' story not only captures the local history of beer and brewing but also cuts across the social, economic and industrial developments of Malta during the course of the 20th century. It is telling that the Sette Giugno riots of 1919, which were a watershed in Malta's march to independence, were also the main instigator for the Farrugia family to venture into brewing after the family flourmills in Strada Pastificio, Hamrun, were burnt down during the riots.

On the back of the family interests in the production and distribution of gas and the buoyant market for beer, it was Lewis V Farrugia, the youngest of the five children, who convinced the family to move into brewing, purchasing second hand machinery from a disused plant in Ancona, Italy. An architect and engineer by profession, Lewis V Farrugia, designed and built Malta's first brewery on the site of the burnt down family flourmill, which still stands today, in what is now known as Farsons Street.

Not far up the road, another brewery was also in the process of making history as the Malta Export Brewery launched the first local lager, under the brand name 'Cisk Munchener'. This brewery had been acquired by the Marquis John Scicluna, one of Malta's foremost bankers of the time, who had introduced the 'cheque' into local circulation and from which the name 'Cisk' would emerge. The Malta Export Brewery had the licence to brew 'Lagers', while Farsons had the license to brew 'Ales'. Competition between the two local breweries was to remain intense over the next 20 years, as both breweries attempted to venture into each other's territories with such beers as 'Cisk Red Label' or 'Farsons Lager'.



1. The first Farsons brewery in Hamrun, built on the same site of the Farrugia family flour mills.
2. The Malta Export Brewery – today the Umberto Calosso Technical Institute in Santa Venera.
3. The opening ceremony of the Mrieħel brewery, June 1950.
4. Portrait of Mr Lewis V Farrugia.
5. Aerial shot of the newly built Mrieħel brewery.



Old adverts of Farsons' iconic brands.

It was within this new climate of local competition that discussions of cooperation between the renowned Simonds Brewery of Reading and Farsons took place. Having set up its own agency in Malta in the late 1800s, Simonds was concerned with the changing market scenario and following a market visit, its representative reported how pleasantly surprised he was by the warm welcome he had received from Lewis V Farrugia. In 1929, within less than a year, a merger was signed between Farsons and Simonds, whereupon Simonds Farsons Ltd was formed. In 1948, as construction on the new brewery in Mrieħel was underway, another milestone was reached when Simonds Farsons and the Malta Export Brewery aligned forces to become Simonds Farsons Cisk Ltd.

Almost 65 years later, Farsons is now in the process of planning and preparing for the transformation of its iconic 1950s brewhouse into a unique visitor experience that celebrates its heritage, while projecting a fresh and contemporary vision of the future. Over the last couple of years, local and international consultants and stakeholders have been engaged in a complex study of ways in which the brewhouse and the adjacent Art Deco façade, a Grade Two listed building, can be feasibly and sustainably redeveloped into a multi-purpose commercial centre that adds value to the Farsons brand and product Malta.

Inaugurated in 1950, the Mrieħel brewery was designed on an unparalleled scale by Lewis V Farrugia in collaboration with the British architect William Binnie, whose major works include the Arsenal Football Club's East Stand at Highbury, as well as the Hotel Phoenicia in Valletta. One of the first and finest examples of a

concrete reinforced building, the Mrieħel brewery's iconic Art Deco design remains as striking as ever and one can only imagine the impression it must have left on the local population, built at a time when only fields and rubble walls surrounded it. Its construction took almost four years to complete and with some 1,500 people involved in its development, the opening of the brewery was a grand event, which marked an important point in the industrialisation of the island economy in post-war Malta.

As the only remaining brewery on the island, Farsons is uniquely placed to offer an experience that captures the art of brewing and the industrial processes that continue to sustain the art. By opening up its doors to the public, Farsons will be able to interact with its consumer base in new and exciting, interactive ways while celebrating the people and iconic brands that have helped shape the business. Brewing is, after all, one of the oldest industries known to man that continues to play a major role in people's lives. Ultimately, the experience will serve to not only highlight the legacy of the Farsons story but also to create a deeper appreciation for one of the world's most enjoyed beverages.



The state-of-the-art new brewhouse, inaugurated in September 2012.