

Atkins, P.J. (1985) Leonard Maggs (1890-1959) dairy company chairman, pp 81-82 in Jeremy, D.J. (Ed.) *Dictionary of Business Biography* vol. 4 London: Butterworths

Leonard Maggs was born at Melksham, Wiltshire, on 27 May 1890, the youngest of the eleven children of Charles Maggs, a hemp manufacturer and his wife Charlotte Elizabeth Stratton. Charles Maggs started a butter factory there in 1889, and Leonard, with his brother Joseph (qv), followed their father into the dairy trade.

Leonard was educated at Wycliffe College, Stonehouse in Gloucestershire, and went on to the British Dairy Institute at University College, Reading. Afterwards he spent a year in Normandy learning French and French cheesemaking, and on his return joined a retail milk business at Willesden in North West London. After some time as an employee, 'LM', as he became known, decided to practise in his own right, and started a retail milk business at Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. In 1912, however, he sold out and joined his brother Joseph at the London premises of Wilts United Dairies, acting as a representative for this wholesale firm which his father had helped to create in 1896.

During the First World War Leonard Maggs acted as a lorry driver with the Army Service Corps, and on his return from France became an inspector in Dorset of the farms that supplied milk to the new combine, United Dairies Ltd, which had been formed in 1915 during his war service. With the purchase of the Salisbury, Semley and Gillingham dairies in 1920, he was given responsibility for the Salisbury area, and soon afterwards became an assistant to Percy Butler, the then managing director of Wilts United Dairies at Trowbridge, whom he succeeded in 1923. In 1925 Leonard was elected to the board of United Dairies Ltd and succeeded his brother Joseph as its chairman in 1942.

During the early years of his chairmanship, there was a fall in the number of retail outlets. By 1950 there were about 60 shops, still mainly in London and the suburbs, and 40 creameries and condenseries in England, Scotland and Wales were being operated. In 1959 negotiations took place with Cow & Gate Ltd, another large firm with complementary interests in the dairy trade. Cow & Gate were stronger in processed milk products, such as powdered milk. In March that year United Dairies (authorised capital £12 million) acquired Cow & Gate (authorised capital £5 million) and Unigate Ltd was registered with an authorised capital of £30 million. Leonard Maggs became the first chairman of Unigate Ltd and died in office in the same year. The company has since become one of the largest food corporations in the world.

Leonard Maggs was modest and unassuming with a humane personality that endeared him both to his employees and his customers. He was a patriarch who had a gift for friendly relations and the ability to remember the Christian names and faces of staff he had not seen for years. He was also a sportsman and a practical farmer who was willing to roll up his sleeves and help with the haymaking. His keen business sense was based upon a vast experience of the dairy trade in all aspects of its operations and a close attention to detail.

Leonard Maggs died on 23 August 1959, leaving £288,129.

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