

Poll reveals public's most iconic trade marks as register turns 150

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From chocolate bars to famous cars, and the mark where it all began - Britain crowns its best loved trade marks.

Highlights include:

- the Intellectual Property Office reveals the public's most iconic trade marks to celebrate the 150 year anniversary of trade mark registration in the UK
- Rolls-Royce tops a list spanning generations of everyday life
- the Bass & Co red triangle label became UK Trade Mark No. 1 on 1 January 1876 - the very first day registrations opened
- more than 400 trade marks registered in the Victorian era remain active on today's register - including Bovril, Kodak, Lyle's Sugar, Andrew's Liver Salt and Anusol
- from the brewery to holograms and virtual worlds, the register has kept pace with 150 years of British innovation - today the register protects more than 2.5 million marks

What do Cadbury, Rolls-Royce and a 3am dose of Calpol have in common? They're found among the trade marks Britons say have shaped their lives in the results of a poll by the UK's Intellectual Property Office (IPO).

The brands behind them are among the thousands of businesses whose identity, reputation, and commercial value have been safeguarded by the UK's trade mark register.

This year, that system celebrates its 150th anniversary and today protects more than 2.5 million marks. These 2.5 million come after the Bass & Co red triangle label became the UK's first registered trade mark on 1 January 1876.

To mark this milestone anniversary, the IPO asked the public to nominate their favourite iconic trade marks. The results highlight brands woven into our national identity - names so familiar they feel like old friends.

The list spans generations, industries and the quiet corners of everyday life. From the timeless prestige of Rolls-Royce to a comforting cup of Twinings tea. The crackle of Radio Caroline to the reassuring weight of a Calpol bottle. Together, these trade marks tell a story of Britain itself.

The public's top 10 iconic British trade marks:

1. Rolls-Royce

2. Radio Caroline
3. Twinings
4. Cadbury
5. Bass
6. Burberry
7. Transport for London (TfL) roundel
8. Calpol
9. Mini
10. BBC

The brands behind the votes

Rolls-Royce captures more than a century of British engineering excellence and craftsmanship. “An iconic British brand name which over time has become a world wide metaphor for the best of the best” noted one respondent, with another describing it simply as “the mark of quality”.

Radio Caroline, the pioneering radio station that began broadcasting from the North Sea in 1964, gave a generation its soundtrack - and a taste of rebellion. For many, it represents a moment when British youth culture found its voice. “It helped shape the radio we have today. It continues to embrace new technology but stays true to real people playing real music” observed one respondent. Another told the IPO: “I heard their first broadcast and still listen to them now”, with another recalling “I passed my O-Levels listening to the station”. Radio Caroline was registered as a trade mark in 1992.

Twinings, whose tea has been blended and sold from the same London address on the Strand since 1706, even predates the register itself by over 150 years. Few brands can claim quite so long an unbroken relationship with the British public. “It was the first tea I had with my grandmother” noted one respondent. Another added “Their trade mark signals trust - whenever I see it, I know I’m choosing a product that has been refined and perfected over centuries”. It was first registered as a trade mark in 1908.

Cadbury first traded in 1824 and was registered as a trade mark in 1886. It evokes childhood treats, advent calendars, and the comforting sweetness that has made it a staple of British life for more than 150 years. One respondent summed this up: “It’s universally recognised by all types of audiences regardless of gender, age, ethnicity. Cadbury features in some of life’s most poignant milestones - from birthdays and celebrations, to experiencing heartbreak and enduring illness”. Another remarked “It’s the first (and most important) one children learn and can spot yards away!!!”

Bass’s & Co’s red triangle label became the first trade mark ever registered in Britain on 1 January 1876. This secured its place on beer bottles and in the history of British commerce. It remains on the IPO’s register to this day - and as one respondent put it, that’s “because it’s still good beer”.

Burberry, with its distinctive check, and its trench coats born on the battlefields of the First World War, has become one of Britain’s most recognised luxury exports. One respondent explains “To me, the Burberry Check is special because it mixes timeless British luxury with a fresh, modern attitude. More than a design, it tells a story of heritage, artistry, and national identity.”. Another adds “It’s the equivalent of the Coca-Cola bottle but for Brits.”

The **Transport for London (TfL) roundel**, first protected in 1917, has guided millions through the capital and become a globally recognised symbol of the UK’s capital itself. “Glowing in the dark on a wet winter evening, it represents the way home” notes one respondent. “An absolutely iconic mark known the world over”. “Simple, Adaptable, Timeless”, notes another.

And then there's **Calpol**, the small bottle that has soothed generations of feverish children and exhausted parents alike. "It's the first thing you reach for at 3am," noted one respondent. "Every parent knows that relief when it finally kicks in." Another associated the trade mark with "childhood nostalgia" - possibly because, as another added, "It's the only medicine I liked the taste of".

Mini, the small car that changed British motoring, launched in 1959. It became a cultural icon as much as an automotive one, from 'The Italian Job' to city streets today. The name conjures a particular kind of cheerful, plucky Britishness that no amount of reinvention has diminished. "The MINI brand is timeless, innovative, and open to everyone. Anyone who encounters the brand and its products can't help but smile and feels positively engaged" said one respondent. "It is famous and iconic, really everyone knows the trade mark" observes another.

The **BBC** is a trade mark instantly familiar to audiences across the globe. As one respondent put it: "It is so distinctive, evocative, and has been with me my whole life and been with the nation for decades. It's hard to even look at it and see the graphics separated from its meaning and memories". Another summed it up as evoking "Reliability and continuity".

British brands have influenced how the world eats, travels, heals and plays. These nominations reveal how trade marks thread through life's moments - from childhood comfort to daily commutes, from celebration to quiet reassurance. There are now more than 2.5 million trade marks protected in the UK. With around 200,000 applications received during the last year alone, demand for protection has never been higher.

Still going strong

More than 400 trade marks filed before 1900 remain active on the IPO's register today - brands old enough to have witnessed three centuries.

In addition to Bass beer's lasting presence are other names that still line our shelves and fill our glasses: **Bovril** (1886), **Drambuie** (1893), and **Lyle's Sugar** (1887). You'll also find **Woodward's Gripe Water** (1876), **Bird's Custard Powder** (1891), and **Rose's Lime Juice Cordial** (1876) - household favourites that have been passed down through generations.

Some tell a particular story. The gloriously worded **Out of the Strong Came Forth Sweetness**, first registered in 1884, takes its name from the biblical story of **Samson**. Although the packaging has changed, it continues to protect Lyle's Golden Syrup to this day.

Others reflect their era in possibly unexpected ways. Marks protecting **Aertex** and **Pears Soap** sit alongside **Anusol** and **Andrew's Liver Salt**. Proof that some brands really do endure, even when addressing matters some would prefer not to discuss at dinner! And a few Victorian marks prove surprisingly prescient. These include **Millennium** - registered over a century before the year 2000 in January 1892. **Kodak**, arrived in 1888, as the era of mass photography was dawning.

IPO Chief Executive Adam Williams said:

Trade marks are the foundation of brand trust. For 150 years, they've helped British businesses - from corner shops and market stalls to app stores and global online retailers - build lasting relationships with consumers and stand behind the quality of their products. This anniversary marks not just a legal milestone, but the enduring role that brands play in connecting businesses with the public.

That's still why businesses come to us today. The tens of thousands who register a trade mark each year are making a statement: we've built something good, and we're putting our name to it. Whether they're selling a favourite ale, an iconic motor vehicle or a blockbuster online game, our job is to help them protect it. We're proud to be custodians of a system that has supported British enterprise and innovation for generations, and we're ready for the next 150 years.

British Brands Group CEO Tom Reynolds said:

Great brands make a significant difference to our lives and behind every brand you love, there's a trade mark making it possible. That name, that logo, that instantly familiar sound or symbol is a legal promise. A trade mark tells you who made something and means that the trust you've placed in a brand is theirs to own and yours to rely on.

Some trade marks have become so embedded in our lives that they've become shorthand for the thing itself. Think of a tick, a swoosh, or even a silver lady on a car bonnet. Instantly, you know exactly what you're getting. That's the power of a trade mark, and it's the foundation every iconic brand is built on.

Dr Hayleigh Bosher, Associate Professor of Intellectual Property Law at Brunel University London said:

As the UK's trade mark register turns 150, it's a great time to reflect on the evolution and importance of trade marks. We've seen how brands can grow their marks to become culturally significant and we've witnessed the meaning of what constitutes a mark grow in scope in line with developments in technology and new ways of marketing products. Trade marks are an accessible form of protection for small businesses as well as a vital tool for larger brands. We also know from research that public interest in and awareness of trade marks is growing, reflecting just how central they have become to the way we live, shop and consume.

President of the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA) Kelly Saliger said:

Iconic brands and registered trade marks undoubtedly go hand in hand. It's been 150 years since the famous Bass red triangle label was registered in the UK, and since that time registrations have been filed for everything from artisan bread to craft gin and luxury cars. Brand recognition is a powerful asset, and a registered trade mark protects it - acting as a marker in the sand that warns other businesses to steer clear, and giving the owner the means to take action against those who come too close.

With the number of trade mark applications breaking all records, it's clear that UK trade marks are going from strength to strength, and that the UK will continue to be a hotspot for innovation, business and brand.

What the brands are saying

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars' Director of Sales and Brand, Julian Jenkins said:

We're delighted that the British public have chosen Rolls-Royce as their favourite trade mark of all time. Our name has been synonymous with excellence for well over 100 years: the Silver Ghost was officially dubbed 'the best car in the world' in 1913, and we proudly retain that crown with the motor cars we hand-build at the Home of Rolls-Royce at Goodwood today. We enjoy the rare privilege of a trade mark that transcends not only our own company, but our entire industry, with 'the Rolls-Royce of...' a global shorthand for the best of the best in any field. And for us as a team, it's highly gratifying that our world-class engineering, craftsmanship and creativity resonate far beyond those who actually own and drive our motor cars.

Budweiser Brewing Group UK/Ireland's Legal and Corporate Affairs Director Ewa Chappell said:

In 1876, as the UK launched its trade mark register, Bass stepped forward to secure Trade Mark No. 1. The red triangle had already become a favourite among drinkers, copied so often that it proved just how powerful the demand for Bass truly was. Protecting it wasn't just a legal step - it was a response to the loyalty of consumers who wanted the authentic red triangle beer. A century and a half later, we're proud that the very first trade mark in the UK still represents a beer people like to taste and trust.

Rolls-Royce plc's Head of Intellectual Property, Matthew Hill said:

Rolls-Royce has been at the forefront of advanced engineering and high value manufacturing for over a century. Being voted as having the IPO's most iconic British trade mark recognises that history and our continuing commitment to powering, protecting and connecting people everywhere. We're extremely proud to play our part in the UK's trademark story and look forward to continuing to lead the way in the future.

Radio Caroline Station Manager Peter Moore said:

We are delighted our trade mark has been recognised as one of the nation's most iconic to be recognised as one of the nation's most iconic brands, as the Intellectual Property Office celebrates such a significant milestone. Radio Caroline has always been about bringing great music to the widest possible audience - playing a crucial role in introducing pop music to the masses during the 1960s and helping to shape the soundtrack of a generation.

What makes this especially meaningful is the enduring relationship we have with our listeners. Many have been with us since our pirate radio days, and their loyalty has been the foundation of everything we've achieved. At the same time, we're proud to have welcomed new audiences over the years as the station continues to evolve.

Today, Radio Caroline is stronger than ever - embracing new technologies while staying true to the spirit that made it so special in the first place. This recognition is a testament to our past, present and future, and we're incredibly grateful to everyone who has been part of the journey.

Twinings' Chief Brand Officer Heather Hartridge said:

We are delighted to see our logo recognised as one of the UK's most iconic trade marks. The same Twinings logo has stood above the door of our flagship store on the Strand for more than 300 years. For us, it's more than just a logo, it is a symbol of the craftsmanship, expertise and care that goes into every blend we make. Above all, it's a reflection of our people, our heritage and our constant drive to evolve and innovate to better meet the needs of customers, all of which make Twinings what it is.

Cadbury Equity Marketing Director Phil Warfield said:

When you see the iconic glass and a half, you know it's Cadbury. It's one of the most recognised trade marks in the world, and for good reason. The symbol has been a promise to our customers for generations and speaks to our heritage, commitment to quality and the generosity at the heart of our brand. Every bar we've made carries this commitment, and we see our trade mark as short hand for everything we stand for.

Transport for London (TfL) Customer Director Emma Strain, said:

The roundel is one of Britain's most iconic symbols. Simple, bold, and instantly recognisable, it has become familiar to millions of people around the world. What started on London's Underground network has grown over the years to include a wide range of transport modes including buses, trams, rail and even a half mile cable car spanning the Thames.

We are proud that the roundel remains as relevant today as it did when it was first used in 1908 - meaning that, for more than a century, it has guided Londoners and visitors safely through the capital as a trusted and globally renowned emblem.

Head of MINI Jean-Philippe Parain said:

We're delighted that MINI has been recognised by the public as one of the UK's top 10 iconic trade marks. Since 1959, MINI has captured the nation's imagination, rooted in popular culture with millions of journeys made on UK roads. More than six decades on, the British icon continues to stand for timeless design, go-kart handling, and distinctive personality.

From inkwells to edible insects

When the Trade Marks Registration Act 1875 came into force, applications arrived by post, were recorded by hand, and were limited to marks used on physical goods. A century and a half later, the system has transformed beyond recognition.

Trade mark law has expanded to cover services as well as goods, and what can be registered as a trade mark has grown more flexible. Today's register includes not just words and logos, but motion marks, multimedia marks, holograms, and even patterns of light. Recent years have seen entirely new categories - virtual goods, digital services, and AI-assisted products - emerge and find their place on the register.

Today, trade marks protect goods and services that would have been completely unrecognisable in 1875, from snack products made from insects to wearable smartphones and humanoid robots.

It is a reminder that the purpose of the trade mark system has never really changed, even as the world around it has. What began in a Victorian registry office now underpins a dynamic, global economy. After 150 years, it shows no sign of standing still.

Businesses of all sizes can find out more about how to register a trade mark.

Additional information:

1. The Bass & Co red triangle label was registered as UK Trade Mark No. 1 on 1 January 1876, following the passage of the Trade Marks Registration Act 1875.
2. A trade mark protects your brand and helps customers to identify who goods or services are provided by, distinguishing them from competitors. Registering a trade enables you to take action to prevent others from using it. Trade mark protection lasts for 10 years from the registration date and can be renewed indefinitely for successive 10-year periods. The ® 'registered trade mark' symbol can be used once a trade mark is officially registered.
3. The UK's trade mark system now protects everything from snack products made from insects to wearable smartphones and humanoid robots. Marks span 45 different classes of goods and services. Some of the more unusual classifications allow applicants to specify trade mark protection for goods and services including:
 - humanoid robots with communication and learning functions for assisting humans
 - artificial snow for Christmas trees
 - wearable smartphones
 - snack products derived from insects
 - moxibustion therapy
 - downloadable virtual handbags
 - perfumes for use online and in virtual worlds
 - edible ant larvae
 - canine massage services
 - artificial fishing worms
 - toys for birds
 - fish sausages

- braille mobile phones

4. The IPO also asked people what in general makes any trade mark iconic. What emerged was a picture of trade marks not just as commercial tools, but as markers of quality, memory, and meaning - and for reasons you might not always expect!

Trust: "When I see certain brands, I know exactly what I'm getting. There's no guesswork - just reliability." (VAUXHALL)

Memory: "Some brands are tied to moments. Sunday mornings, childhood holidays, people who aren't here anymore. They become part of your story." (BOVRIL)

Staying power: "An iconic brand doesn't chase every trend. It knows what it stands for and sticks to it, decade after decade." (ROLLS ROYCE)

The jingle test: "If I can still hum the advert from 1980, it's definitely iconic. Some brands just get stuck in your head and stay there." ('SHAKE 'N' VAC')

The gran test: "My nan used it, my mum used it, I use it. If three generations can agree on something, that says it all in our family." ('FAIRY LIQUID')

The pronunciation debate: "If people argue about how to say it properly, it's iconic. Primark, IKEA, Nike. Controversy means you've arrived." ('PRIMARK')

Feline foibles: "I let my cat Ginger be the judge. If she reliably devours that brand whenever it's time to be fed, then that's good enough for me - it's iconic." ('WHISKAS')

5. The poll was conducted by the Intellectual Property Office and promoted across its public channels. It invited people to nominate and share their most iconic UK trade marks, why they think that mark is iconic, and what in general makes a trade mark iconic. The poll received around 2,000 nominations which were open to any trade mark, past or present, registered in the UK.

6. The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is the official UK government body responsible for intellectual property (IP) rights including patents, designs, trade marks and copyright. We help people get the right type of protection for their creation or invention.

7. For more information about registering a trade mark.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/poll-reveals-publics-most-iconic-trade-marks-as-register-turns-150>