United Biscuits and pladis: the company behind McVitie's, Jacob's and Carr's, from 1948 to today

From the crackers.biz wiki

United Biscuits was formed in 1948 by the merger of two Scottish family bakers, McVitie and Price and Macfarlane Lang. It went on to buy Crawford's, Macdonald's, Carr's of Carlisle and, in 2004, the Jacob's biscuit business. Turkey's Y?ld?z Holding bought it in 2014, and since 2016 it has been part of pladis, whose brands include McVitie's, Jacob's, Carr's and Ülker.

The company behind the biscuits

Look at the small print on a packet of McVitie's digestives, Jacob's cream crackers or Carr's water biscuits and you will find the same family of companies behind them. For more than seventy years, that family was United Biscuits, one of the biggest names in British baking, and today it is part of a global business called pladis. Here is how United Biscuits was formed, the brands it gathered, the deals that shaped it, and who owns it now.

Two Scottish bakers, 1948

Wikipedia says United Biscuits was created in 1948 by a merger of two Scottish family businesses, McVitie and Price and Macfarlane, Lang and Co. McVitie's began in Edinburgh, and its first great biscuit was the digestive of 1892; see McVitie's. Macfarlane Lang was a Glasgow baker, and Wikipedia notes that McVitie's products are still made at a former Macfarlane Lang factory in Glasgow, the Victoria Biscuit Works.

Buying the great names

United Biscuits grew by buying other famous bakers. Wikipedia lists William Crawford and Sons in 1962, the Edinburgh firm behind the first pink wafers, see Crawford's biscuits; William MacDonald and Sons in 1965; and Carr's of Carlisle in 1972, the maker of table water biscuits, see Carr's.

It also looked abroad. In 1974, Wikipedia says, it bought the American Keebler Company for 53 million dollars, and it sold Keebler in 1995 for 500 million dollars.

Jacob's joins the family

In 2004 United Biscuits bought the Jacob's Biscuit Group from Danone for £240 million, bringing Jacob's cream crackers and other savoury brands under the same roof as McVitie's; see Jacob's crackers. Wikipedia

lists McVitie's biscuits, Jacob's cream crackers and Twiglets among the brands the company produces; see Twiglets.

Private equity and Y?ld?z

In December 2006, Wikipedia says, the Blackstone Group and PAI Partners bought United Biscuits. In November 2014 it was bought by Y?ld?z Holding, the Turkish group that owns Ülker, one of Turkey's best known biscuit makers; see Turkish biscuits.

pladis

In January 2016, Y?ld?z Holding formed pladis, bringing together United Biscuits, Ülker, the chocolatier Godiva and the American DeMet's Candy Company. Wikipedia says the name was inspired by the Pleiades, a group of seven stars visible from anywhere on Earth. pladis is based in London and, on Wikipedia's figures, operates 27 bakeries in 11 countries with more than 17,000 employees, and its brands include McVitie's, Hobnobs, Jaffa Cakes, Jacob's crackers and Carr's water biscuits.

United Biscuits itself still exists as a company within pladis. Wikipedia gives its 2022 revenue as £857.1 million with 3,948 employees, and its headquarters at Chiswick Business Park in west London. It has factories across Europe and in India.

What happened to United Biscuits?

People often ask whether United Biscuits still exists, or whether they can still buy it. United Biscuits was always a company rather than a biscuit, and it is now part of pladis. Two of its cracker brands are on our shelf: Jacob's cream crackers and Carr's table water crackers.

Famous biscuits from the family

Many of Britain's best known biscuits came from companies that became part of United Biscuits. McVitie's digestive recipe dates from 1892, the chocolate digestive from 1925 and Jaffa Cakes from 1927; see digestive biscuits, chocolate digestives and Jaffa Cakes. The Penguin was created by William Macdonald's Glasgow company and launched in 1932, and United Biscuits took over Macdonald in 1965, which is why McVitie's makes Penguins today; see Penguin biscuits. McVitie's launched Hobnobs in 1985; see Hobnobs. Carr's was founded in Carlisle in 1831 by Jonathan Dodgson Carr, and Twiglets, launched by Peek Freans in 1932, are made today by Jacob's in Aintree.

A United Biscuits timeline

- **1948:** McVitie and Price and Macfarlane Lang merge to form United Biscuits
- **1962:** buys William Crawford and Sons
- **1965:** buys William MacDonald and Sons, the maker of the Penguin
- **1972:** buys Carr's of Carlisle
- **1974:** buys Keebler in the United States, selling it in 1995
- **2004:** buys the Jacob's Biscuit Group from Danone

- **2006:** bought by Blackstone and PAI Partners
- **2014:** bought by Y?ld?z Holding of Turkey
- **2016:** becomes part of pladis

Jacob's and Club

The Jacob's side of the family has its own long history. W. and R. Jacob began as a Waterford bakery, opened a Dublin steam biscuit factory in 1853, and made the first cream crackers around 1885. Its Club Milk biscuit came just before the First World War, and after United Biscuits bought Jacob's in 2004, Club has been sold in the UK under the McVitie's name since 2013; see Club biscuits and the Jacob's story.

pladis beyond biscuits

pladis is bigger than Britain's biscuits. Wikipedia lists Godiva chocolates and the American sweets Flipz and Turtles among its brands alongside McVitie's and Ülker, and says its products reach around four billion people in 110 countries across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Who owns which biscuits

Britain's biscuit brands now belong to a handful of big groups. pladis has McVitie's, Jacob's and Carr's; Ferrero owns Fox's and Burton's; Mondel?z has Cadbury, Oreo and belVita; and Nestlé makes KitKat. For the full map, see who owns Britain's biscuit brands.

Quick facts

Formed	1948, McVitie and Price with Macfarlane Lang
Bought Keebler	1974, sold 1995
Bought Jacob's biscuits	2004, from Danone
Owner since 2014	Y?ld?z Holding
Part of	pladis, formed in 2016
Revenue, 2022	£857.1 million

Questions people ask

Who owns United Biscuits?

Turkey's Y?ld?z Holding, which bought it in 2014. Since 2016 it has been part of pladis, Y?ld?z's global biscuit and confectionery business.

What does United Biscuits make?

Brands including McVitie's biscuits, Jacob's cream crackers, Carr's water biscuits and Twiglets.

When was United Biscuits formed?

In 1948, by the merger of two Scottish family businesses, McVitie and Price and Macfarlane Lang.

What is pladis?

A company formed in January 2016 by Y?ld?z Holding, bringing together United Biscuits, Ülker, Godiva Chocolatier and DeMet's Candy Company.

What does the name pladis mean?

Wikipedia says the name was inspired by the Pleiades, a group of seven stars visible from anywhere on Earth.

Can you still buy United Biscuits?

United Biscuits is a company, not a biscuit, but its brands, such as McVitie's, Jacob's and Carr's, are on every biscuit aisle.

Sources

1. United Biscuits, Wikipedia
2. Pladis, Wikipedia
3. McVitie's, Wikipedia

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