

# BRADBURY RESEARCH

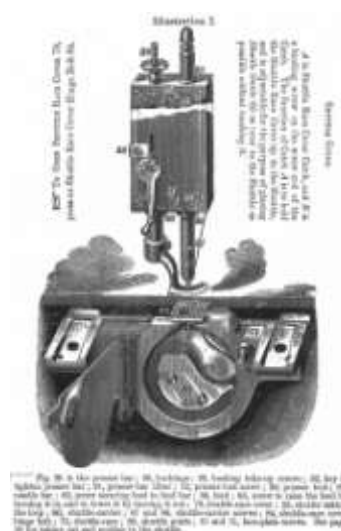
It's been a good year for the Bradbury Register both in terms of machines registered and new information obtained about the Company. The last couple of months have been absolutely stupendous! It started with the purchase of a Bradbury Family V.S., not that we needed another example of this model, but it is what came with it that was so very, very interesting. Firstly it had its manual, now from Bradbury motor cycle literature we knew that the Bradbury Company may have changed it's telephone number BUT we couldn't be 100% certain that it simply hadn't had another line installed to serve the motor cycle department. The manual however confirmed that yes the factory phone number had been changed. Quite when we're still not certain but if you have a Bradbury machine with original manual that has the telephone number 1602 on its cover then we'd like to hear from you!

The second bit of paperwork was a supplementary insert detailing how to use various Bradbury attachments, at first we didn't get it but then the light dawned. Bradbury's had changed the design of its attachments to low shank versions each engraved with a small B, this was a modification we'd been completely unaware of.

It is however the third bit of paperwork which came with this machine that is the most important and I'll explain why. Before any Bradbury sewing machine left the factory its adjustment was carefully checked and the worker responsible initialled and dated a card. This was sent with the machine to the selling Agent and before delivery to the customer the Agent checked the machine again. If the machine was satisfactory the card was removed and disposed of, if the machine was found to be improperly adjusted the card was returned to the factory. Either way the card should not have reached the customer. In this case it did and it is effectively the machines Birth Certificate, this particular one dates to late 1922 which gives us another a fixed dating point for Family V.S. machines what is really pleasing is that it matches exactly with our preliminary dating chart for this model.



**Inspection Card**



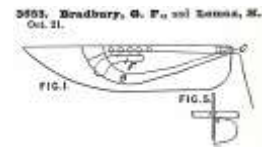
**Oscillator Shuttle**

The next item came completely out of the blue. We received an email asking if we bought Bradbury Manuals and what we'd pay. We replied it depended on the model it was for. It turned out the manual was for Bradbury's Oscillating Shuttle machine which the Company produced between c1880 and c1884. This machine was, we believe, made under licence from W. G. Wilson, Chicago who produced Oscillator machines under four U. S. patents dated 22nd January & 6th August 1878 and 11th March & 13th May 1879. In England the patents were dated 3rd November 1878 & 30th August 1879. Three versions of the machine were produced but only actually varied in the style of cabinet work. Although we'd come across illustrations of the machine it was unclear how it differed from Bradbury's Rotary Shuttle machines. The manual cleared it all up, now we've just got to find a machine to go with the manual!

Ever heard of the Bradbury & Lomax's Patent Act 1884? This short piece of legislation was passed by Parliament on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1884 to give validity to Letters of Patent granted to George F.

Bradbury & Henry Lomax for improvements in sewing machines on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1875. The patent specification was filed in “The Great Seal Patent Office” but the patentees failed to pay the necessary stamp duty to extend the life of the patent. George Bradbury apparently left the country “on or about September 1879” (presumably heading for Christchurch, New Zealand) and the Agent acting for Henry Lomax sent his notification to the wrong address!

So Parliament passed an Act allowing Henry to pay the “prolongation fee” late as he had “expended considerable capital and ingenuity is very valuable but he has not received any remuneration in respect thereof and he will lose all benefit from...” I wonder how many Members of Parliament or the House of Lords actually took the time to look at what George and Henry had patented?



**Illustration taken from the Patent Abridgement**

It apparently related to two parts, one covering the under thread in, the other work supports. The following is taken from the Patent Abridgement.

“The guard B terminates in a hook C which enters a hole of slot in the shuttle..... The thread slot F is curved and extends under the guard B, so that the thread may be passed through the slot and under the guard in one operation !

The hole in the needle-plate is made in an oblique direction as shown in figure 5, so that although the needle enters the hole at the centre, it emerges close to the shuttle”.

In other words they patented a slot & an angled hole!

Our thanks to The House of Lord Records Office for supplying a copy of the Act.

Not many Bradbury illustrated price lists appear to have survived the years but for us they are an invaluable source of information. We are fortunate to have been sent photocopies of two price lists for the early C20th and one dating to the 1880's. We've now added another this time dating to February 1897 beautifully illustrated it lists four machines which we were not aware of and furnished additional details on two others.

For years we'd been puzzled by references to a Willcox & Gibbs chain stitch machine which we knew had been produced from c1877 to the 1890's. Initially we thought this was a reference to the Bradbury Magic but had reservations - after all apart from making a chain stitch they are hardly alike. The new price list has confirmed not only did Bradbury's make a Willcox & Gibbs look-alike they also made an industrial version.



Another machine Bradbury's made was a twin needle double shuttle machine based on the same principle as the No. 2 Rotary but it had two needles and two shuttles. Designed for manufacturers of hosiery, stays, corsets, it could also be adapted for a variety of other trades. Depending on the use special feet were provided which were designed to order.

The machine produced two parallel rows of lock stitch sewing in one operation thus saving 50 per cent in time.

The needles could be adjusted from 3/32 of an inch to 3/8 of an inch.

So similar was the machine to the Rotary Shuttle the Company used the same illustration as that for the No. 4 Rotary machine!

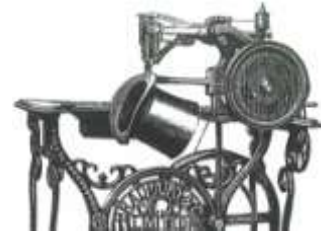
The four “new” machines are all for industrial purposes, my favourite is the Practical Hatter - now why do I think of Alice in Wonderland when I mention that one?

This machine was designed for hat binding and it was claimed to cut costs by three-quarters when compared with hand binding. It could be used to bind curled and framed hats, pull-overs and hard hats using silks, felts, straw or any other material.

The stand appears to be the same as that for the A1 Repairer. We know this machine was in production from c1880 – 1897.

The others are the No. 9 designed for “tailoring, fustian work, and all manufacturing purposes requiring, great penetrating power, high speed and a high arm”. The No. 10 designed for boot manufacturers and could be used for boot closing and flowering. The machine produced a "beautiful, bold, pearly lock stitch on all sorts of leather".

Finally there was the Cylinder Golosh machine which was for boot manufacturers, used a wheel feed and was intended for whole Golosh work and Vamping. It was available with or without a stand. The following description for this machine is taken directly from sales literature.



**Practical Hatter**

".....the operator can sew all round the work without stopping to place it, and by so doing it makes it impossible to take the draft out of the upper, therefore the Laster has not half the trouble lasting his work."

Glad they cleared that up.

We were recently given an original Bradbury manual for a High Arm Family machine, this came complete with most of its soft card covers. On the back as usual is an illustration of the Wellington Works, lists of Company Depots, medals awarded and items manufactured by the Company. The list of products is quite interesting, not only were sewing machines produced but also high grade cycles, bassinettes, lathes, milling machines, machine tools, motor cars ..... er motor cars?? That has got to be a miss print, maybe they meant motor cycles but then this manual dates to 1897, a full five years before the first motor cycle came off the production line. I then recalled a story I'd been told by the former curator of Oldham museum. The story went that Bradbury & Co. did produce a prototype motor car, but it was unreliable, the prototype made it onto Saddleworth Moor where it expired and unable to move it, it was buried there. It's a myth right? Well maybe not because the production of motor cars is also mentioned in the previously mentioned 1897 price list. Could it be sheer coincidence that around 1897 the Eclipse Machine Co. also based in Oldham made parts for the infamous Pennington Raft-Victoria motor car? Were Bradbury's trying to get one over on their local rivals?.....hmm..... I wonder.....can anyone lend me a metal detector and direct me to Saddleworth Moor?!

Just out of interest Bradbury's did make what were known as Tri-vans in 1905. These were motorised three wheelers used for commercial deliveries, the driver sat over the single rear wheel and there was a small box body between the twin front wheels. The Westminster Gazette newspaper had at least five of these machines.

Bradbury's also produced what was known as a Fore-car c1908. Powered by a 4.5 h.p. engine it was similar in design to the Tri-van but instead of a box body, a passenger was carried in an upholstered seat. It's perhaps best described as a motorised armchair!

Finally two bits of trivia: Bradbury's pay day was the third Wednesday of the month (1895) and the factory was fitted with a Witter sprinkler system pre 1891.

If anyone can add any further information about anything relating to Bradbury & Co. please email me - David G. Best [bradbury1852@lineone.net](mailto:bradbury1852@lineone.net)

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