

# Bradbury's Labelled Machines

One of our lines of research has been identifying when and where Bradbury & Co. operated its sewing machine depots and agencies. These were located in most major cities and towns in Great Britain however Cardiff is not listed on any Bradbury Manuals that we have. Yet for Swansea, just down the road, we can trace the history of the Bradbury depot from 1880 when it was located at Island House, Wind Street through at least six changes of address to Alexandra Road in 1906 when the firm closed all its depots and sold machines exclusively through agents.

So were the residents of Cardiff deprived of Bradbury machines? Some years ago we were sent details of a Bradbury Family No. 1 machine which carried a decal with the name Henry Thomas, Cardiff, we presumed this to be the retailers name and on its own this information took us no further so was filed away. Then we were fortunate enough to be sent a copy of a Bradbury Price List by David Stirling. This price list was issued by Henry Thomas with an address of St Johns Church Square, Cardiff as well as the addresses of two other outlets apparently run by Henry Thomas. Unfortunately the list isn't dated but from the Prize Medals awarded it would appear to date to c1883. It carries details of many of the Bradbury machines available at that time from Family & Medium machines through the Wellington, various Rotary models, even the Lancashire machine gets a mention as of course does the A1 Repairer.



**Figure 1:**  
**Henry Thomas decal c1891**



**Figure 3: Original**

Since then we've gathered other odd pieces of information about Henry Thomas. The earliest entry we have found in Trade Directories was for 1863 when a Henry Thomas operated from 1 St John's Street as a draper, a few years later the address is given as Corner House, St John's Street and the trade as Linen Draper. 1875 is the first mention we have of Mr Thomas selling sewing machines from The New Sewing Machine Depot, Working Street, Cardiff. But quite when he became an agent for Bradbury & Co. we have yet to establish, the previously mentioned price list is the earliest evidence at the moment. We do have adverts for the Agency from 1887 (Fig 2) and 1891 but by 1895 he disappears from the Trade Directories.

A while ago we purchased a pair of poor condition Bradbury Family transverse shuttle machines as one bore a Henry Thomas

decal and was complete with its original 1891 receipt (Fig 3) and manual. The other we'd best not mention as it's hardly fit for spares!

What we find odd is the prominence of Henry Thomas compared with other Bradbury agents and retailers whom we know existed but we have yet to find documentation for. We know for example the Co-operative Wholesale Society London Branch were selling The Wellington with the name Progress in the 1890's.



**Figure 2: Henry Thomas**

SOLE AGENT FOR CARDIFF AND DISTRICT—  
**HENRY THOMAS, ST. JOHN'S CHURCH SQUARE, CARDIFF.**  
Washing, Wringing, Mangling Machines, and Perambulators by the Best Makers.  
CASH, OR ON EASY TERMS OF PAYMENT.

Charles Todd a London sewing machine distributor sold Bradbury machines probably in the 1890's operating from 10 Elm Park, Fulham Road. We have an example of such a machine his name appears on top of the arm but interestingly the Bradbury Trade Mark on the pillar (Fig 4) has been over painted, most has worn off, what is left has a gold background with black writing edged red and we can make out ?LM, ??RK, N°1. We believe this would originally read Elm Park N°1 probably Todd's designation for the Model.



**Figure 4:**  
Charles Todd, London,  
c1890's

William Jones of Bridgnorth (Hopefully no relation to that **OTHER** W. Jones!!) also sold Bradbury machines with his own Trade Mark on the bed. One of the latest additions to our collection is another Family No.1. this dates to late



**Figure 5: Leeds City Council  
Coat of Arms on a Family  
No.1 machine. c1890's**

1890 or early 1891, as such it would be a relatively mundane machine but its centre decal probably makes it unique as it is in the form of the Coat of Arms for Leeds City Council. (Fig 5) We have, as yet, been unable to establish why this appears on the machine nor have we discounted the possibility of it being a later addition.

A Medium V.S. and a Soeze have turned up which are labelled Westarian Premier and Westarian respectively but we have still been unable to identify by who or where these machines were retailed. A Soeze made in 1905 features a decal for

J & J Sanders, Hull. Then there's Family V.S sold through the iron monger Samson Speed & Co., Wareham, Dorset (the firm changed name prior to 1915) and another Family V. S. c1912 carries the name Munro Cobb, Margate House, Margate.

It has been reported that if an Agent or retailer purchased 100 machines then the manufacturer would label the machines for them. We have always assumed that in these cases the manufacturer would take the machines off the production line one after the other, so the serial numbers would be sequential.



**Figure 6: Family V.S. E Hancock, Derby**

However we have a Family V.S. (Fig 6) which carries the retailers name - E. Hancock, 15 Curzon Street, Derby, and has the name "Victoria" on the arm. The Bradbury Trade Mark does not appear anywhere on the machine. The Serial Number is Q34205. From the Bradbury Register we know machine Q34202 has Bradbury's standard decals with Trade Mark as does machine Q34290 so it appears Bradbury either required fewer machines to be ordered or took machines to be labelled from the production line at random.

If you have any information on any of the retailers we've mentioned or can add other examples of labelled Bradbury's to the list we'd like to hear from you. Email: [bradbury1852@lineone.net](mailto:bradbury1852@lineone.net)