

# The Lancashire Sewing Machine Company.

In an earlier in Ismacs News I mentioned I would like to obtain a copy of an article on the Lancashire Sewing Machine Co. published in the London Illustrated Gazette in 1854.

Unfortunately no one was able to provide a copy and I put the name to the back of my mind to be researched when I had more time. Then by pure chance I came across some information on the Company which sheds a little light on its activities.

The Lancashire Sewing Machine Company was formed shortly after the Great Exhibition in 1851 to market a production version of the sewing machine shown at the Great Exhibition by our old friend Charles Tiot Judkins.

The production machine (Fig 1.) was subsequently exhibited on behalf of the Lancashire Sewing Machine Company by Mr

Spackman of Belfast at the Irish Industrial Exhibition which opened in May 1853. Mr Spackman is credited with being the first to introduce the machine into Ireland. According to a report of the time the introduction of the machine at his premises was apparently not without initial resistance from his work force, it was said he was “assaulted and placarded and his life placed in danger”. However he persevered and from employing seventeen hands he was able to employ 150 after purchasing just five of the Lancashire machines.

The design and operation of the machine at the Irish Industrial Exhibition was described as:

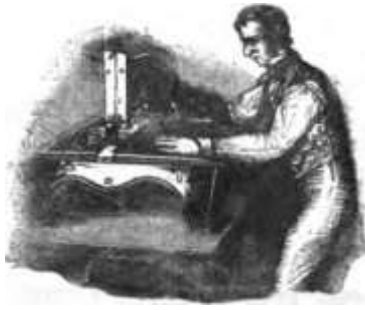
“The cloth is placed in a moveable clamp under the needle, and is moved forward as the seam progresses..... The needle is fixed in a portion of the machine which moves up and down to make the stitched, and it is provided with a groove on each side which the thread occupies, the eye being removed but a small distance from the point..... The portion of the thread passed through the cloth is only sufficient to make the stitch. There is a small shuttle working horizontally below the cloth, in connexion with the upright needle and thread; and after the needle passes through the cloth it rises sufficiently to allow the shuttle to pass through the loop thus formed, and made above the eye, after which the needle is withdrawn, catching the thread from the shuttle and drawing it into the cloth.”

The machine required a little over two feet square to stand on, and could produce between 500 and 1000 stitches per minute depending on whether it was driven by hand or power.

The Irish exhibit was based on some of the 13 patents that been taken out on behalf of the Lancashire Sewing Machine Co. since 1851, one of those patents in the name of Judkins and was dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 1852. It was stated as being:

“a new invention as to the combination and arrangement of various parts of machinery for

sewing or stitching with the use of a needle and shuttle”.



**Figure 1: The Shuttle Lancashire Machine as shown at the 1853 Irish Exhibition. Note the size of the table which was about two feet square.**

It was also claimed that it had never been known to have been used by another person in the realm!

Judkins later mortgaged this patent and after he was made bankrupt the National & Provincial Bank sold it to Daniel Foxwell in 1859 for £50 who subsequently issued proceedings against no less than seventy seven British sewing machine manufacturers for 134 infringements of the patent.

Despite holding the 1852 patent the shuttle machine sold by the Lancashire Sewing Machine Co. was (not surprisingly) said to be an infringement of Elias Howe’s 1846 patent “in so much as the machine consisted in the application of a shuttle in combination with a needle for the purpose of sewing and stitching”. Judkins was advised that to avoid litigation the machine should not be sold until Howe’s Patent expired.

Undeterred Judkins sought a totally different system which did away with the shuttle entirely. He mentions that he was aided in his endeavours by eight or nine “American Gentlemen” and in order to avoid opposition on patent grounds he brought the machine over to England. This machine was undeniably a Grover & Baker machine which uses two needles to form a stitch. The new machine was hurriedly put into production and became available during 1853 (the same year as the Irish Exhibition.) so

Judkins must have moved extremely swiftly to replace his earlier shuttle machine.

It’s interesting to read Judkins own description of this “new” Lancashire machine:

“It is composed of a flat iron surface, about twelve inches square, resting upon four legs of substantial make and form. From one side of this surface an arm rises erect to the height of about 10 inches, and then passes over to the opposite side. From the extremity of the arm descends a moveable bar, to the bottom of which is fixed a needle, the eye being about half an inch from the point, and on top of the arm is fixed a reel or bobbin filled with silk or other thread. Fixed to the main shaft is a wheel turned by a handle, which can also be worked by treadle, or steam engine, that gives motion to a lever within the arm, and which moves the vertical needle up and down. Beneath the visible surface or base, is a second reel of thread supplying another needle, which instead of being straight is circular and works horizontally and consequently at right angles to its stitching companion, which descends from the arm.

Supposing the thread to be passed through the eye of each needle, and the apparatus set to work, the process is thus performed: The vertical needle descends and passes through the two pieces of cloth to be united, carrying with it the thread to perhaps half an inch below the underside of the cloth;

As the needle rises the thread is left behind in the form of a noose, or loop, through which the horizontal needle passes; the horizontal needle instantly reversing its motion, leaves a loop into which the vertical needle descends. Both needles thus progress making a series of stitches, each stitch being quite fast, even should its neighbour be severed. More than five hundred stitches can be made in this manner in one minute. The closeness and tightness of the threads are regulated by a screw, and as each stitch is of equal tension a great advantage is secured in the regular appearance of the work. The length of the stitch, by turning a small nut, can be increased or diminished to any degree of fineness, and perfect uniformity secured. The cloth to be worked upon

is adjusted by an attendant, who with one hand turns the wheel, and with the other guides the cloth forward after each stitch.”

Judkins goes on to praise the infinite variety of work the machine can carry out and suggests numerous uses. He freely admitted that he did not claim credit for the originality of the machine itself but rather that he had improved on the ideas of others.

The descriptions used at the time may, to our ears, sound somewhat stilted but we should remember not only was the written English language far more formal but that this was the dawn of the sewing machine industry in Great Britain very few people understood machines for stitching and fewer still had actually seen such a machine.

Messer’s H. J. & D. Nicholl, Regent Street, London were credited as “chief introducers” of the sewing machine for practical use into England. They were apparently directed to exhibit one of the Lancashire Company’s machines and examples of its work to the Royal Family of Belgium who were at the time staying at Windsor Castle. “One or two machines were used to produce more stitched work in less than four hours than a tailor could in three weeks”.

Scotland was also covered with Mr Darling of Glasgow giving an interview to the Glasgow Chronicle on the introduction of the Lancashire machine from America, where it was said the invention had passed its probation and was in extensive operation including in Sing Sing prison New York where it was successfully and economically used by convicts.

In his article Martin (Ismacs News 87) mentioned that Judkins had castigated the Times over a claim that Mr Darling had introduced the sewing machine into this country. From Mr Darlings interview with the Glasgow Chronicle it is clear the machine in question is the one being sold by the Lancashire Sewing Machine Co. so why Judkins was so upset is not clear but perhaps

the article did not present the machine in quite the right light or maybe Judkins felt he was being upstaged by Mr Darling.



**Figure 2: The Circular Needle Lancashire Machine. This was about a foot square in size.**

The advertisement (Fig 2) which dates to October 1853 gives the addresses of four company depots in Manchester, London, Glasgow and Dublin but does not give any details of where the machines were made. The woodcut of the Lancashire machine used in this advert is exactly the same as the one in Martins article. Note it appears to show a three legged machine despite Judkins description.

Bradbury’s always claimed to have produced the first Lancashire machines in 1852. If this is the case then those first machines would have been made by the Sugdens’ and Bradbury partnership and would have been shuttle machines, with three legs as the later two needle version is clearly described by Judkins himself as “four legged”.

Later Bradbury advertisements show a circular needle machine with three legs and the surviving example in Glasgow is of that design so it’s possible Bradbury’s never produced the four legged Lancashire machine. Perhaps after Judkins found he couldn’t retail the Lancashire shuttle machines he, the Sugdens’ and Bradbury went their own ways, intriguingly there is a later documented reference to

Bradbury's ceasing to produce a shuttle machine due to "patent problems".

I don't know whether the Lancashire Sewing Machine Co. was simply a trading name used by Judkins or whether it was some form of formal partnership nor when the name stopped being used but the last mention we have come across for the company's existence is 1855. In June of that year Judkins was petitioned for bankruptcy

which could well have spelled the demise of the Lancashire Sewing Machine Co.

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bradbury1852@lineone.net

[www.bradbury1852.co.uk](http://www.bradbury1852.co.uk)

[www.sewmuse.co.uk](http://www.sewmuse.co.uk)

# Bradbury Update

The dawn of the British sewing machine industry is a mysterious place, full of legends and theories, firm information is hard to come by and one of the thrills in researching sewing machine companies is being able to share new information.

While writing the article on the Lancashire Sewing Machine Co. I also came across some early information about the Bradbury Company.

Shown in Figure 1 is an advertisement from early 1855. This is the earliest known advertisement I have come across for the fledgling company that was to become Bradbury & Co. Not only does it give the accurate early name for the firm - Sugdens' Bradbury & Firth (note the apostrophe) but more importantly it shows that the business had moved from its humble Primrose Bank premises where it had started in 1852 to the Rhodes Bank Foundry seven years earlier than has previously been recorded.

It's interesting to note the extensive range of products the firm was making within three years of its founding. At this early date the firm was already involved in industrial machine and tool manufacture an aspect of the business that would continue throughout the company's

**SUGDENS', BRADBURY & FIRTH,**



**MACHINE & TOOL MAKERS,  
RHODES BANK FOUNDRY,**

**OLDHAM,**

**IRON AND WOOD PLANING MACHINES,  
HAND AND SLIDE LATHES,**

**Patent Sewing Machines, Patent Gas Regulators,**

**BRICK PRESSES, COPYING PRESSES, EMBOSsing PRESSES, &c.**

**WHEEL CUTTING, SCREW CUTTING, PLANING,**

**And General Repairers of all kinds of Machinery.**

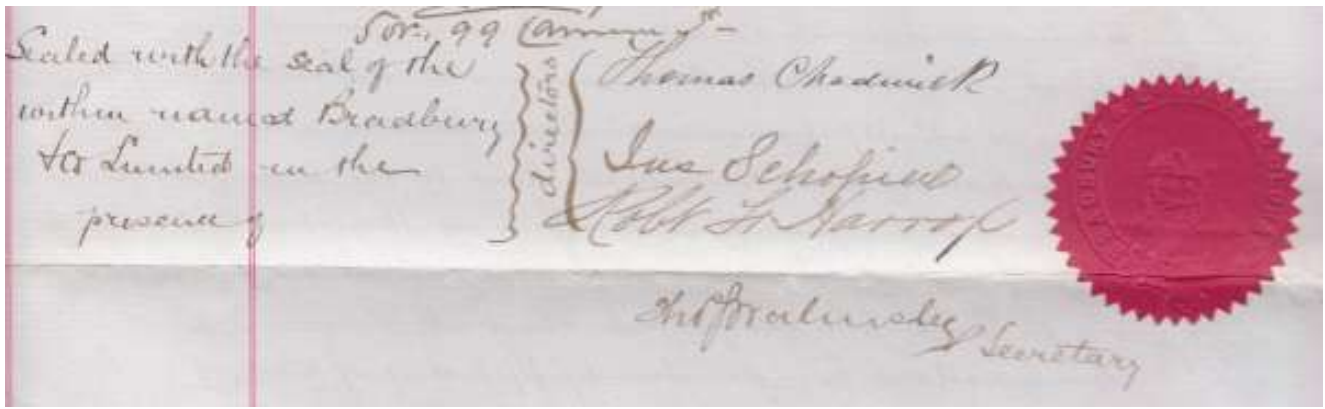
**PLAIN AND ORNAMENTAL JAPANNERS.**

Figure 1: Advertisement from early 1855.

history, yet sewing machines seem almost to be mentioned a side line.

The partnership of Thomas & Frederick Sugden, George Bradbury and Joseph Firth (yes I eventually tracked down Firths' fore name!) was dissolved on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1855 with all debts owing to and by the partnership being received and paid by the partnerships late book keeper George Ferriman. So can it be presumed that at that point it simply became Bradbury & Co? - certainly the firm was using the name Bradbury & Co by 1859 as evidenced by a patent application.

As for the former partners; Thomas & Frederick Sugden had by 1857 started their own business as machinists and makers of patent sewing machines at Rhodes Bank, Oldham. However we know that didn't last long as Frederick was adjudged bankrupt in 1861 by which time he'd already set up in another business with Thomas Lister as Frederick Sugden & Company. Thomas Sugden on the other hand went on to become a foreman at Bradbury & Co and his name appears on several patents.



**Figure 2: 1882 Bradbury Company Indenture**

I have yet to find anything more about Joseph Firth and of course George Bradbury went on to become very successful. This was not however without help, as it would appear that the previously mentioned George Ferriman had aspirations beyond book keeping and at some point he went into partnership with George Bradbury, with the partnership being dissolved on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1862.

In January 1864 George went into partnership with Thomas Chadwick who had, until March 1863, been in partnership with William Jones manufacturing sewing machines at Ashton under Lyne. When Bradbury & Co became incorporated in 1874 Thomas Chadwick was made Managing Director a position he held until his death in 1886 aged just 56.

Original documentation relating to the company is very hard to come by, rarer still is any legal document signed and sealed on behalf of the company so I was very fortunate to come across an Indenture made on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1882. (Fig 2)

The document relates to the assignment of the lease of 317 Commercial Road, Stepney, Middlesex to Bradbury & Co. Ltd. These premises subsequently became one of the firm's principal depots, second only in London to its premises at 14 Newgate Street.

The Indenture bears the Bradbury company seal which although difficult to make out appears to be an impression of a Belgravia sewing machine.

However the real thrill for me is that the document is signed by non other than Thomas Chadwick,

Other signatories for Bradbury & Co. Ltd are:

J. Schofield and Robert Harrop both as directors of the company and Thomas S. Walmsley who was the Company Secretary for many years.

I'm not sure how to describe my next find (Fig 3) it is after all rather tatty, dirty, somewhat misshapen and the back is completely missing it's the wording which is important. It reads: "Oldham Agricultural Society awarded to Bradbury & Co. Sewing Machine 1874"



**Figure 3: Bradbury Prize Medal 1874**

I don't know if this is actually the original medal presented to the Company or if it is a replica produced by the Company but of over 300 prize medals that were awarded to the Company I know of two others that have survived.

Three more Bradbury Sewing Machine price lists have turned up, one from 1898 which has added another industrial type machine to the seemingly ever increasing list of Bradbury machines. This one was the Bradbury Oscillator which was suitable for, "Tailors, Wholesale Clothiers, Mantle makers, and all kinds of Boot and Shoe Manufacturing".

The second price list is sadly incomplete and is undated but it must have been published c1904 as it has an advertisement for the electrically powered No. 6 machine which was available in January 1904 but which does not appear in the 1905 price list.



Figure 4: No.2 Elastic machine -note the size of the Arm

There is very little change in the range of machines being sold but there is a machine called the No. 2 Elastic. (Fig 4) This was a variation of the A1 Repairing machine but instead of all round feed the feed was only half

a circle. The most visible difference was the size of the arm the end of which had a 2 inch diameter. All wearing parts were made of hardened steel and the shuttle held 50% more thread than the A1 machine. The No. 2 Elastic was suitable for general boot making and repairing. According to the company it was "well known in the Eastern states".

The third price list dates to January 1880 and is just for Bradbury's industrial machines - two further variations on the A1 Repairing machine are mentioned, one with a smaller arm which had a shuttle box the size of a sixpence (the standard A1 had a shuttle box the size of a shilling) as well another version with a larger arm and a shuttle that held "30 yards of No. 50 Linen thread making it a useful machine for Cloggers, Harness Makers, Coach Trimmers and the like". The Howe principle machine is also mentioned but is referred to as the Letter 'H' and the three well known versions are included. By this date these machines were being fitted with Bradbury's patent bobbin winder.

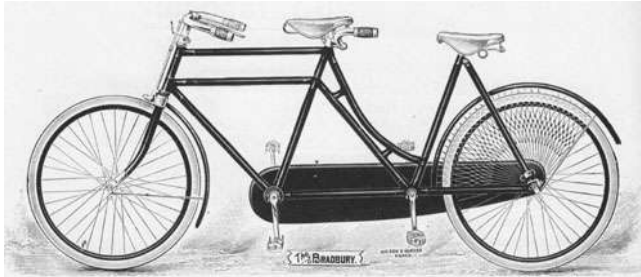
Two original illustrated Bradbury Cycle price lists have been obtained, these date to 1900 and 1902 and are fascinating in themselves and a couple of the wonderfully detailed illustrations are shown.

Believe it or not in 1895 a Bradbury cycle was ridden over the Alps by Walter Addy the Company's Macclesfield agent - so far this is the earliest mention I have of the availability of Bradbury cycles - could it also be claimed it was the first mountain bike!!



Figure 5: Path Racer 1902

The company used “The Bradbury” as a generic name for its cycles but they were produced in a number of different designs such as the Path Racer (Fig 5), Popular Light Roadster, Road Racer, Lady's Safety and two versions of a Tandem (Fig 6).



**Figure 6: Bradbury Gents & Ladies Tandem 1900**

It would appear from the price lists that the machines were made to order through many of the company's sewing machine Depots and Agencies. The machines could be fitted with a variety of extras including a choice of handle bars, gear cases, detachable mudguards and a brake!

I've added several Bradbury machines to the collection, including two Rotary machines which I admit is quite a common machine however these two examples are rather special but for different reasons.

The first is a Rotary No. 2 dating to about 1900 (Fig 7) this one is unusual in that it's mounted on a Ward's Patent Treadle stand. This form of stand was first introduced around 1884 and although it was made for many years only a few examples are known to have survived. It could be supplied to fit most Bradbury machines but it appears to have been predominantly used on the Rotary Shuttle.

It was designed to use a cycle type action which was advertised as being “An Easy, Graceful, and Natural Motion. The usual speed of all Sewing Machines greatly increased with less expenditure of physical force.”

The stand was patented by Ward's Rotary Sewing Machine Treadle Co. 37 West 14<sup>th</sup>

Street, New York and Bradbury & Co. were the company's agents in Great Britain. Can any American members shed more light on the Ward company?



**Figure 7: Rotary No. with Ward's Stand**

The second machine dates to around 1894 and is an outstanding example of just how beautiful Bradbury machines could be.

I have never seen another Rotary B2 decorated in this way and I have only come across a couple of other Bradbury's which included birds as part of the design both of which were Family Low Arm machines. As these designs seem to have been produced in limited numbers is it possible they were made to order or perhaps for special events?



**Figure 7: Highly Decorated Rotary Shuttle B2**





**Figure 8: Centre decal**

Do we have any ornithologists amongst our members? - I think the bird could be a Green Finch but I would like to know for certain.

David G Best

email: [bradbury1852@lineone.net](mailto:bradbury1852@lineone.net)

[www.bradbury1852.co.uk](http://www.bradbury1852.co.uk)

# Agenoria a Roman Odyssey

The Victorians had a love of the ancient world; its myths and legends so no wonder some sewing machine manufacturers were tempted to name their machines after the ancient gods.

None though are more mysterious than Agenoria, - not the Roman goddess for we know she was the goddess of industry and silence, rather the Agenoria sewing machine which was produced in Birmingham by several different firms. All the machines bear that mystical name and all have almost identical face plates depicting the Goddess Agenoria with a prone lion.

So what was going on? Perhaps we should start at the beginning but where or who was that - Maxfield, Franklin, Harris, Imperial or Royal? This is a question I thought I had found the answer to several years ago but further recent research has made me revise some of my original thoughts.

In fact we need to start with a company I have been able to find little about but which none the

sets us on the road to solving the puzzle.

The firm was a partnership between Richard Wood, Isaac Cole and Arthur Maxfield, when the company was founded I haven't been able to determine, but on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1867 this partnership which had been manufacturing sewing machines under the name Cole, Maxfield & Co., at the Franklin Works, Park Road, Birmingham was dissolved.

The firm's debts were paid off by Isaac Cole and Arthur Maxfield who had agreed to continue to manufacture sewing machines under the name the Franklin Company at the Franklin Works in this new venture they were joined by one Charles Fowke.



Very early Franklin machines appear to have had a fast & loose balance wheel (fast meaning fixed) this meant that the balance wheel could be disengaged for bobbin winding. This feature was discontinued on later machines however the undrilled casting is left on one of the spokes of the balance wheel.

The Franklin Co partnership was time limited and was dissolved on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1872 through effluxion of time. It would seem likely however that the partners would have started preparations for their futures well in advance of that.

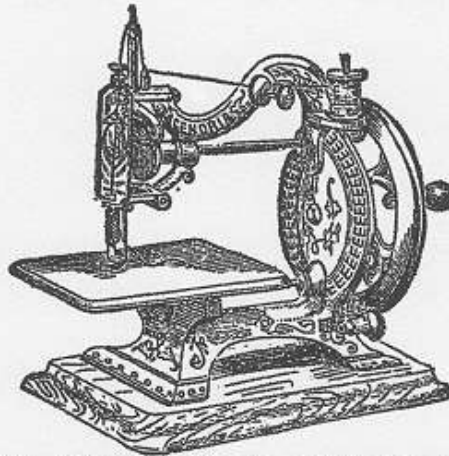
Arthur Maxfield had by 1873 moved to new premises - The New Street Works, 71 & 72 Spencer St, Birmingham, which were also referred to as the Agenoria Sewing Machine Works. There trading as A. Maxfield & Co., he set about producing his loose wheel Agenoria which also used a different shuttle mechanism to earlier Agenoria machines.

Early machines have Agenoria on the arm but this was soon changed to Maxfield.

By Appointment to H.R.H. the PRINCESS OF WALES.

## MAXFIELD'S PATENT LOOSE WHEEL "AGENORIA."

£4. 4s. 0d.



**P**RONOUNCED to be the best and most durable **HAND AND TREADLE LOCK-STITCH SHUTTLE SEWING MACHINE** yet produced.—12,000 Machines already in the hands of the Public, all doing their work well.

INVENTORS, PATENTEES, AND SOLE MANUFACTURERS,

# A. MAXFIELD AND CO.

AGENORIA SEWING MACHINE WORKS, 71 & 72, SPENCER ST., BIRMINGHAM.

TABLES at £1. 1s. 0d., £1. 6d. 0d., £1. 10s. 0d., £1. 14s. 0d., & £2. 2s. 0d., on an entirely New and Improved principle. The Best yet produced.

The company's Trade Mark of St. George slaying a dragon is stamped on the stitch plate along with the patent date 20<sup>th</sup> August 1870.

A. Maxfield & Co. went out of business in November 1877.

Isaac Cole on the other hand gave up making sewing machines and started retailing them. He established a business in Edinburgh trading in sewing machines as Cole & Co. from premises at South Charlotte Street. Some late Franklin Company machines bear the stamp Cole & Co. so presumably Isaac Cole had purchased a stock of machines before the partnership was dissolved.

In 1873 Maxfield entered into an agreement with Cole to supply him with Agenoria sewing machines. In some of his advertisements Cole actually claimed to manufacture the machine at a factory in Birmingham. In 1874 he was advertising the Agenoria as "the oldest hand shuttle machine, none genuine unless stamped

Cole & Co. Edinburgh".

Isaac Coles' assets both personal and business were sequestrated in December 1876 at which time his business address was given as 104 Princess Street, Edinburgh.

Charles Fowke remained at the Franklin Works and in 1873 he was producing Agenoria sewing machines using the Franklin Trade Mark but under the name Charles Fowke & Co.

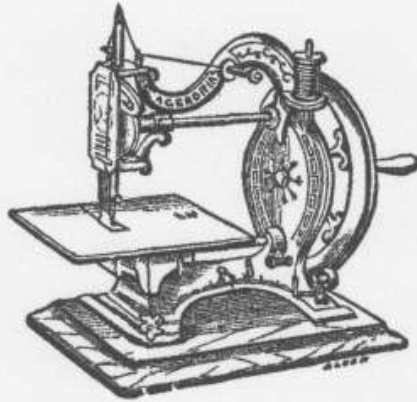
The machines Fowke produced had a loose wheel and what was referred to as the "Patent Combination of Winders". One bobbin winder was as found on the original Agenoria machine but there was a second bobbin winder driven using a loose wheel.

In his advertisement Fowke claimed that 10,000 machines had been made at the Franklin Works however I suspect this figure includes those made by the earlier companies.

# C. FOWKE & CO.

The Franklin Works,

Patentees  
and  
Manufacturers  
of



The  
Genuine  
and  
Celebrated

## AGENORIA SEWING MACHINE,

*With Improved Loose Wheel for Winding the Reel, without Removing  
the Work or Unthreading the Needle ;*

**AND SOLE MANUFACTURERS OF THE PATENTED COMBINATION OF WINDERS, LOOSE AND FIXED.**

The Combination of Winders, loose and fixed, will be found a great improvement and convenience to operators, as with loose Winder only rubber rings often wear out, Winder at times gets broken, and in hot climates the rubber rings are liable to become useless ; but with combination of Winders this is obviated, as fixed Winder can be used until rubber rings are replaced or repairs made to loose Winder.

MERCHANTS, FACTORS, and SHIPPERS' attention is particularly called to above remarks, as the **AGENORIA MACHINE**, with **COMBINATION OF WINDERS**, manufactured by C. FOWKE & CO., at THE FRANKLIN WORKS, is the Best and most Perfect Machine for the Colonies and abroad.

10,000 Machines have been Manufactured at *The Franklin Works*, and are already in the hands of the Public.

**MEDALS** Awarded at the Working Men's Exhibition, London ; Ayr and Cupar ; Agricultural Show, &c.

*Patronised by Royalty, the Nawab Nazam of Bengal, and Nobility and Gentry ; and used in  
New Zealand, India, and the Colonies.*

C. FOWKE & CO., THE FRANKLIN WORKS,

PARK ROAD, SOHO,



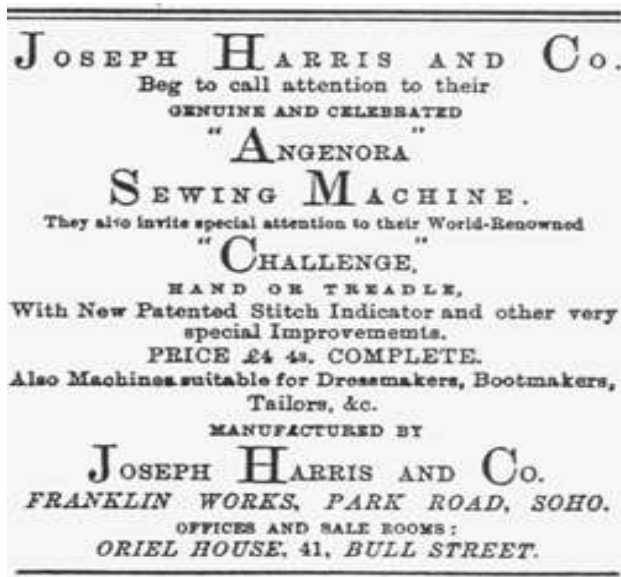
TRADE MARK

BIRMINGHAM.

The firm of C. Fowke & Co. was short lived. It would seem that Fowke sold out to Joseph Harris and John Judson who in 1873 had formed a partnership to manufacture sewing machines trading as the Imperial Sewing Machine Co.

In March 1874 Harris & Judson had patented an improved shuttle mechanism and by May 1874 Harris & Judson were advertising as the Imperial Sewing Machine Co. Park Road, this was the same premises previously occupied by both the Franklin and Fowke companies.

From what I can gather the Imperial Sewing Machine Co. only undertook the manufacturing of the sewing machines with the sale and distribution apparently being undertaken by Joseph Harris & Co.



The partnership between Harris & Judson was dissolved on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1877.

The Agenoria machines produced by the Imperial Sewing Machine Co have "The Original Franklin Sewing Machine Co." embossed on the faceplate.

As for Fowke's "Patent Combination of Winders" the feature must have had some merit as it was used on some Agenoria machines

produced by both the Imperial Sewing Machine Co. and later the Royal Sewing Machine Co. It also features on some Challenge machines.

How many machines were produced by the Imperial Sewing Machine Co. is not known but an instruction book refers to 17,000 machines being produced at the Franklin works again I suspect this would included the 10,000 machines referred to in Fowkes' advertisement.

By April 1878 The Royal Sewing Machine Company Ltd was advertising that it had purchased the sewing machine business of J. Harris & Co. and that it would continue to make and take orders for the Agenoria and Challenge machines. The company ran the same advertisement until at least January 1880.

In its price lists the company states that "Every (Agenoria) Machine bears the Imperial Coat of Arms, as a Trade Mark, without which none are genuine".

In 1882 the Royal Sewing Machine Co. Ltd changed its name to the Royal Machine Manufacturing Co. Ltd and the last reference I have come across to the Agenoria sewing machine being produced by the company is 1883. The Royal Machine Manufacturing Co. Ltd was in liquidation by 1888.

There are still some loose ends to tie up but I think that explains the links between the companies and gives an approximate time frame in which to place the various different Agenoria machines and their makers.

I have been collating serial number data from Agenoria machines but so far I have too little information to draw any detailed conclusions (not ones I'd want to publish anyway!).

I'd be interested to receive details from anyone who has an Agenoria machine. I need to know the serial number, manufacturer and details of any retailers stamps, trademarks, patentee names or the like stamped on the cloth plate.

My email is: [bradbury1852@lineone.net](mailto:bradbury1852@lineone.net)

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

That Arthur Maxfield applied for a patent for improvements to sewing machines in June 1867 along with Henry Willis and George Rice?

Willis & Rice had earlier patented the bobbin winder which is found on Busy Bee machines.

**Or**

That Arthur Maxfield once worked for Newton Wilson?

This came to light during a court case in 1875 Arthur Maxfield was using St. George slaying a Dragon as his trade mark and Newton Wilson wanted to stop him as he was using a similar image on his England's Queen machine - Wilson lost.