The Unsung Flavours of Sheffield

By Bradfield & Dungworth Heritage Group

Compiled by Neil Anderson

Introduction:
The Unsung Flavours of Sheffield

When people hear the words 'Made in Sheffield', certain images come immediately to mind. Towering chimneys. Blazing furnaces. The ring of a hammer on an anvil. For more than two centuries, Sheffield's reputation as a world leader in steel, cutlery and craftsmanship has been carved into Britain's history.

It was Sheffield steel that built railways, bridges, and ships. It was Sheffield engineering that helped power Britain through two World Wars — from the tanks of the Western Front to the Spitfires of the Battle of Britain, with crankshafts forged in the heart of the city itself. It was Sheffield that produced the finest tableware in the world, gracing the dining rooms of royalty and working households alike.

Even outside of heavy industry, Sheffield's name has long been tied to innovation and excellence. The city helped shape Britain's modern music scene, launching the careers of Joe Cocker, Def Leppard, ABC, The Human League and Pulp. In sport, it boasts the oldest football club in the world, and in the arts, a proud tradition of poets, painters and playwrights.

Yet for all this — for everything Sheffield has given the world — there is one area where its contribution remains strangely unsung: food.

Since the Victorian era, Sheffield has been a fertile ground for food innovation. Brands born here have graced the shelves of pantries, sweet shops and supermarkets across the country — and in many cases, across the globe. But unlike the city's steel or its music, these achievements have often been overlooked, written out of the wider narrative, or wrongly attributed to other places altogether.

Take Bassett's, founded in Sheffield in the 1840s, whose Liquorice Allsorts became one of Britain's best-loved sweets. Or Batchelor's, which revolutionised convenient eating with their range of soups and instant foods, all starting life here in the heart of industrial Sheffield. Or Thorntons, the famous chocolatiers, who opened their very first shop on Sheffield's High Street before growing into a national institution.

Sheffield's flavours — much like its steel, its football, and its music — have always been forged in pride

And then there's Henderson's Relish — fiercely beloved by Sheffielders for over a century — a tangy, spicy staple that has become almost as important to the city's identity as its steel.

Sheffield's food scene was never just about satisfying hunger. It was about creativity, perseverance, and the spirit of a city that knew how to take simple ingredients and craft something extraordinary. A city where resilience wasn't just hammered into steel, but baked into bread, bottled into sauce, and spun into sweets.

Yet despite all this, Sheffield's culinary achievements have rarely been given their due. They have been eclipsed by louder, shinier stories from other parts of the country. Yorkshire's food heritage is often celebrated — and rightly so — but it's places like Leeds, York and Harrogate that tend to steal the spotlight. Sheffield's role has too often been left in the shadows, reduced to a footnote, if mentioned at all.

Even as the city's identity shifted in the late 20th century — from grimy industrial powerhouse to green city of parks, music, and culture — its food innovators continued to work quietly, building businesses, creating flavours, influencing British eating habits, but seldom receiving the recognition they deserved.

Today, Sheffield's food scene is as vibrant as it has ever been. Independent restaurants, vegan eateries like Church, award-winning cafés like Nonna's, craft bakeries, microbreweries — all flourishing against the odds. They stand on the shoulders of those who came before: the sweet-makers, the chocolatiers, the sauce blenders, the coffee houses, the brewers, the food visionaries who helped lay the foundations.

This book is a tribute to them.

Drawing from archive materials, first-hand accounts, and the memories of those who remember the old brands as vividly as yesterday, this book will trace the journey of Sheffield's food story. From the heights of Victorian ambition to the tough years of post-industrial decline, from the boom of post-war manufacturing to the new wave of independent makers, we'll explore how Sheffield helped feed — and sweeten — Britain.

Some of the names you'll recognise instantly. Others will spark half-forgotten memories. Some will be completely new, surprising even lifelong Sheffielders with the sheer breadth of what the city achieved.

With the help of a dedicated band of volunteers and the rich oral history of Sheffield's people, we aim to fill a long-overdue gap — giving Sheffield's food industry the credit it richly deserves.

It's a story of ambition and invention. Of small beginnings and hard graft. Of a city where a humble sweet shop could grow into an international brand, where a fiery table sauce could become a badge of local identity, and where dreams were kneaded, boiled, brewed and bottled in every corner of the community.

It's also a story of losses — of names that once proudly adorned shopfronts and factory walls but have since faded from memory, casualties of changing tastes, economic downturns, and corporate takeovers. Yet even in the face of these shifts, Sheffield's spirit has endured — and so too has its quiet culinary influence.

In the pages ahead, we'll bring these stories back to life. We'll meet the people behind the brands, explore the factories and kitchens where history was made, and celebrate the enduring relationship between Sheffielders and the food they hold dear.

Because Sheffield's flavours — much like its steel, its football, and its music — have always been forged in pride, resilience and a good measure of plain-speaking honesty. And just like everything else this city has given to the world, they deserve to be remembered, celebrated, and savoured.

Welcome to the unsung world of Sheffield food.

SIMPKINS
EST. 1921
BUY ONLINE

Contents page

Chapter 1: The Enduring Legacy of Bassetts and the Iconic Liquorice Allsorts

Chapter 2: Bread on Wheels: The Fletchers Legacy

Chapter 3: Spicing Up Sheffield: The Story of Henderson's Relish

Chapter 4: Steeped in Tradition: The Global Journey of Ingram's Tea

Chapter 5: Cream of the Crop: The Our Cow Molly Story

Chapter 6: From Battlefields to Sweet Success: The Simpkins Confectionery Saga

Chapter 7: The Journey of Thorntons from Sheffield Beginnings to Confectionery Icon

Chapter 8: Soup, Smash and Sheffield Spirit: The Story of Batchelor's

Chapter 9: Cunningham's Pickles: A Sheffield Legacy in a Jar

Chapter 10: From Budapest to Breadcakes: The Béres Story

Chapter 11: Yorkshire Gold: The Story of Sutherlands

Chapter 12: A Pinch of Sheffield: The Story of Burdall's Gravy Salts

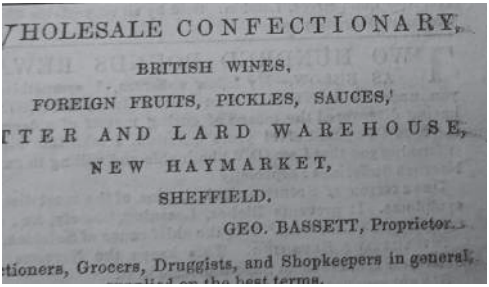
Chapter 13: The taste of SADACCA

The enduring Bertie Bassett

Chapter 1:

The Enduring Legacy of Bassetts and the Iconic Liquorice Allsorts

The story of Bassetts is a tale of resilience, innovation, and the enduring popularity of their iconic 'liquorice allsorts'. The company's roots can be traced right back to the middle of the 19th century.


WHOLESALE CONFECTIONARY,
BRITISH WINES,
FOREIGN FRUITS, PICKLES, SAUCES,
TTER AND LARD WAREHOUSE,
NEW HAYMARKET,
SHEFFIELD.
GEO. BASSETT, Proprietor.
tioners, Grocers, Druggists, and Shopkeepers in general.

Old advert

The Bassetts confectionery journey began in 1842 when George Bassett, the son of a Derbyshire farmer, opened a small sweet shop on Broad Lane in Sheffield. The original offerings were a modest selection of candies and toffees, reflecting the typical confectionery of the time.

George Bassett was from a Wesleyan Methodist background and stayed strongly committed to the church. He was viewed as a shrewd man with dogged determination – something borne out by the success of his business ventures.

A trade directory of the time described him as 'a wholesale confectioner, lozenge maker and British wine trader'.

He went on to open further shops at Market Hall and West Bar. Another followed at Snig Hill.

In 1859 he sold the retail business and moved into sugar confectionery manufacturing. He found the retail industry too slow. He took on a partner, William Lodge, but they only last two years.

In 1864 he entered into a partnership with Samuel Meggitt Johnson who'd previously worked as an apprentice. This was far more successful and lasted the rest of his life.

By 1876 George Bassett & Co's Portland Street steam-powered factory was cited as the largest confectionery works in the world. They employed 36 men, 30 boys and 12 girls – George Bassett was

regarded as a kindly employer. He also became the mayor of Sheffield the same year.

The former United States president, Ulysses S. Grant, even stayed at his house when he visited the country in 1877.

George Bassett suffered a paralytic stroke in 1878 and was forced to resign from the business and public life. His business partner, Samuel Meggitt Johnson, took full control of Bassett & Co.

George Bassett died in 1886 after building one of the world's largest confectionery manufacturing businesses.

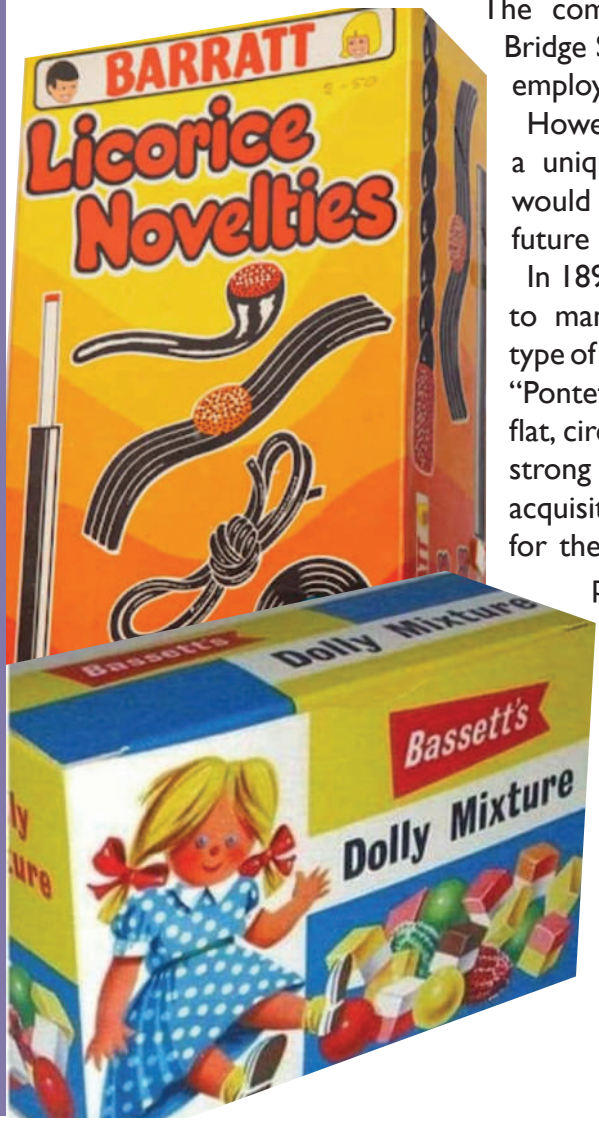
The company's Don Works factory, Bridge Street, was opened in 1890. It employed 300 people.

However, it was the acquisition of a unique recipe for liquorice that would set the stage for Bassetts' future success.

In 1899, Bassetts secured the rights to manufacture and sell a distinct type of liquorice confection known as "Pontefract cakes". These cakes were flat, circular discs of liquorice with a strong and distinctive flavour. This acquisition marked a turning point for the company, as it introduced a product that would become synonymous with Bassetts.

A new factory was opened at Owlerton in 1900.

The real breakthrough, however, came in the 1920s when Bassetts unveiled their now-famous 'liquorice allsorts'. Apparently created



Left: Classic images of their popular sweets

Bertie Bassett on the building exterior

by accident when a salesman knocked over a tray of assorted sweets, the random arrangement of different shapes and colours inspired the company to package them as a mixed assortment. The unique and playful appearance of 'liquorice allsorts' captured the public's imagination, turning them into an instant hit.

The success of 'liquorice allsorts' catapulted Bassetts into confectionery stardom. The colourful, sugary treats became a beloved classic, cherished by generations of candy enthusiasts. The company's commitment to quality and consistency further solidified its reputation, establishing Bassetts as a reliable and trusted confectionery brand.

The company's iconic mascot, Bertie Bassett, was created around 1929. The 'Michelin Man' mascot was growing in popularity at the time and they decided they needed something similar.

By 1939 the company employed a staggering 1,500 people.

Bertie Bassett's career really took off in post-war Britain. In 1948 he was subject of a London Underground campaign and in 1953 he even embarked on a public spirited road safety campaign to highlight the Highway Code.

The factory in action in bygone years

He even took to the stage in the mid-1950s as he starred in panto at the London Palladium!

The company's iconic mascot, Bertie Bassett, was created around 1929

The company's 'liquorice allsorts' were at their peak sales in this period. The company sold 20,000 tons of confectionery in 1959 – their staff had risen to 2,500. Other hit products with Jelly Babies and Dolly Mixture.

'Liquorice allsorts' were back in the limelight again in the mid-1980s following the hit 'Turning Bertie' TV commercial.

During the mid-20th century, Bassetts underwent various changes in ownership and structure. In 1989, the company was bought for £91m by Cadbury. Despite changes in ownership, the essence of Bassetts, particularly its commitment to crafting high-quality sweets, remained intact.

Over the years, Bassetts continued to innovate, introducing new variations of their 'liquorice allsorts' and expanding their product line to include a range of other confections. The firm adapted to changing consumer preferences while staying true to its roots, ensuring that the Bassetts name remained synonymous with indulgent, high-quality sweets.

In the 21st century, the Bassetts brand underwent another transition. In 2010, Cadbury was acquired by Kraft Foods, and subsequently, Bassetts became part of the Mondelez International family. This change in ownership did not diminish the legacy of Bassetts; rather, it brought the brand under the umbrella of a global confectionery giant.

Today, Bassetts continues to be a key player in the confectionery market, offering a wide array of sweets beyond their signature 'liquorice allsorts'. The company's commitment to quality, coupled with its rich history and iconic products, ensures that the Bassetts brand remains a cherished part of Sheffield's cultural and industrial heritage.

The story of Bassetts is not merely one of confectionery success; it is a narrative that reflects the ability of a small sweet shop in Sheffield to create enduring classics and contribute to the cultural fabric of the nation.

The enduring image of Fletchers Bakers' vans which were a familiar sight on the streets of the city for years

Chapter 2:

Bread on Wheels: The Fletchers Legacy

In years gone by, it seemed you couldn't go far in Sheffield without spotting something Fletchers. Their loaves were stacked in every corner shop, their vans rolled down almost every street, and their name was woven into the very fabric of the city's daily life.

Generations of Sheffielders grew up with Fletchers. Their maroon and cream vans — an iconic fleet of burgundy and tan Bedford vehicles — acted as mobile shops, bringing bread, buns, and groceries right to your doorstep. For many children, catching sight of a Fletchers van was a moment of pure excitement — a sign that a delicious treat like a custard tart, an apple charlotte, or the legendary elephant's foot might soon be theirs.

The elephant's foot was a true Sheffield delicacy: a massive choux bun, slathered in chocolate, filled with a generous dollop of fresh cream

— something like a giant, round éclair, but even more indulgent. It wasn't the only favourite, either. Fletchers' custard tarts were a firm hit across the city, enjoyed on park benches, at bus stops, and on countless kitchen tables.

Fletchers wasn't just about bread and buns — their vans sold the basics too. By the later years of their mobile shops, you could pick up milk, eggs, potatoes, sweets, pet food, and more — all legitimately "off the back of a lorry" without a hint of dodginess!

Of course, while the treats were universally loved, Fletchers' bread occasionally found itself on the wrong side of playground humour. Many a Sheffield child chanted: "Fletchers' bread, tastes like lead — if you eat it, you'll drop dead!" – much to the amusement of the city's youth, but doing little to dent the popularity of their loaves among everyone else.

Fletchers Bakery even found its way into Sheffield's cultural life. Local artist Pete McKee immortalised the brand in his 2009 book 22 Views of Sheffield, with a nostalgic sketch showing a Fletchers van and the familiar sight of a man standing behind the flap-down wooden counter at the back. "I recall the van pulling up on our road during the school holidays," McKee reminisced. "It was always the same order — a loaf and an apple charlotte for me. Though sometimes, I'd have an elephant's foot."

Fletchers' factory and clock

The company's advertising was just as memorable. Sheffielders will still fondly recall the catchy jingle from the local Radio Hallam airwaves: "Better fetch a Fletchers' loaf!"

Fletchers Bakery was founded in 1895 by George Henry Fletcher, a man as passionate about social justice as he was about baking. George began his working life as a baker's apprentice at just 12 years old, following in his father's floury footsteps. By 22, he had started his own baking business, determined to combine quality craftsmanship with a sense of community responsibility.

He wasn't just a baker, though. George Henry Fletcher was also a political firebrand — a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and a tireless campaigner for workers' rights. It's often said that the burgundy and tan colours of the Fletchers vans were chosen to reflect his left-leaning political affiliations. Although his activism occasionally landed him in hot water, it never dulled his commitment to his business or to Sheffield's people.

In 1930, Fletchers Bakeries Limited was formally opened by George senior. As the decades rolled on, the company became one of the great Sheffield institutions, its vans and products as familiar as the local pubs and the corner shops themselves. Following years of growth, the company hit a major milestone in 1950 when it opened its impressive "super bakery" on Claywheels Lane, Wadsley Bridge. The site became

a hive of production, offering not just traditional loaves, but an ever-expanding range of buns, rolls, doughnuts, and muffins to meet the changing tastes of post-war Britain.

The Fletchers business stayed in family hands for three generations. However, in the year 2000, Paul Fletcher — the third generation of Fletchers bakers — sold the company to Northern Foods for £40 million. In 2007, ownership changed again, this time passing to Vision Capital. Then, in 2014, it found a permanent home as part of Finsbury Food Group — one of the UK's largest speciality bakery and foodservice suppliers. Today, even as part of a larger group, the Fletchers name and legacy live on.

The bakery at Claywheels Lane is still a vital part of Sheffield's industrial landscape. Covering 40,000 square metres and employing over 400 staff members, the factory now runs ten automatic bakery lines, churning out an incredible 120 million bakery products each year. Alongside fresh and frozen sliced bread, Fletchers also produces a range of muffins, doughnuts, rolls, and speciality items — many under licensed brands including Disney and Thorntons.

Fletchers' resilience was tested severely in 2006, when a major fire ripped through the Wadsley Bridge factory, destroying nearly half of the production capacity. Yet, in true Sheffield fashion, the company bounced back — investing £7 million in rebuilding and modernising the site, ensuring it remained at the forefront of the baking industry.

Today, Fletchers Bakery might not operate the beloved vans anymore, but the company remains an essential part of Sheffield's story. Its products are found in homes, schools, and cafés across the country. The spirit of George Henry Fletcher — the hard-working baker, the idealist, the entrepreneur — lives on in every loaf, bun, and elephant's foot that traces its roots back to this city.

Fletchers Bakery is more than a brand — it's part of Sheffield's soul. So next time you see a slice of white bread or bite into a bun, think back to those maroon vans, those sticky elephant's feet, and that old Radio Hallam jingle. Because no matter how much the world changes, some things — like a good loaf and a great story — are worth fetching.

Fun facts about Fletcher's:

1. A baker and a revolutionary:
Founder George Henry Fletcher wasn't just a master baker — he was a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.
2. A fleet to remember:
In their heyday, Fletchers' maroon and cream Bedford vans were a familiar sight on streets all across Sheffield, serving as mobile bakeries.
3. Political colours:
It's said the distinctive burgundy and tan colours of the vans were chosen to reflect George Fletcher's communist sympathies.
4. Childhood favourites:
Fletchers' elephant's foot buns — huge choux pastries covered in chocolate and cream — became legendary treats for Sheffield kids.
5. Bread with a jingle:
Their slogan, "Better fetch a Fletchers' loaf," was made famous on Sheffield's own Radio Hallam.
6. Sheffield through and through:
Artist Pete McKee immortalised the Fletchers van in his nostalgic book 22 Views of Sheffield.
7. Fire and resilience:
A devastating fire in 2006 destroyed much of the Claywheels Lane factory — but the bakery rebuilt and came back stronger.
8. From local to national:
While still rooted in Sheffield, Fletchers now supplies millions of bakery products each year to customers across the UK.
9. Part of a bigger family:
Since 2014, Fletchers has been part of the Finsbury Food Group, one of Britain's leading bakery companies.
10. 120 million reasons to be proud:
Today, the Claywheels Lane site produces around 120 million bakery products a year — a lasting legacy of Sheffield's baking prowess.

The staple that is Hendersons

Chapter 3:

Spicing Up Sheffield: The Story of Henderson's Relish

It would be impossible — frankly, unthinkable — to write a book about Sheffield's food history without mentioning Henderson's.

More than just a condiment, Henderson's Relish is woven into the very DNA of the city. It's a badge of identity, a source of fierce local pride, and a flavour that, for many Sheffielders, tastes like home itself.

The devotion to Henderson's is unlike anything you'll find elsewhere. It's on menus in the city's finest restaurants and splashed liberally over pie and chips. It's worn proudly on T-shirts, immortalised in songs, stitched into artwork, and fiercely debated in pubs.

A few years ago, a battered bottle was even unearthed from the battlefields of the Somme — a vivid reminder that Sheffielders have carried their beloved relish with them even into the darkest corners of history.

Henderson's Relish first went on sale in 1885. Its creator, Henry Henderson, started modestly enough, selling it from his home at 44 Green Lane. It was a humble beginning — a few barrels, a loyal local customer base, and no hint yet that the name would one day become legend.

By 1890, Henry had set up a grocer's store at 35 Broad Lane, where the relish was initially just a sideline. The early operation was simple: the relish was kept in a barrel, and customers would bring their own bottles to fill — long before the days of standard packaging or health and safety checks.

It was, in every sense, a product made by and for the local community.

Originally, Henderson's was designed to do what Sheffielders have always done best: make the best of what you've got.

The typical working man's meat and potato pie, a staple diet of the industrial classes, was often far more potato than meat — and sometimes a little lacking in excitement. Henderson's Relish, with

The full recipe is a closely guarded secret, known only to three people

its deep, spicy tang, was the perfect answer: an affordable way to add flavour, warmth, and a touch of luxury to everyday fare.

In 1910, Henry Henderson sold the business to a pickle manufacturer from Huddersfield. Despite this, the heart and soul of Henderson's remained firmly in Sheffield, embraced by generation after generation of local families.

The Freeman family took the reins in 1940 and have held on ever since, guarding the secret recipe and steering the company through decades of change.

Dr Kenneth Freeman, who led the business for many years, became a quiet legend himself — a man so synonymous with the brand that even in his nineties, locals would stop him in the street to talk about the relish. When he passed away in 2013 at the age of 93, the city mourned him as it would one of its own.

Today, the operation remains wonderfully small, producing around 1 million bottles of Henderson's a year from their new factory on Sheffield Parkway.

Everything is done with a reassuring lack of fuss. Ingredients are mixed cold in large stainless-steel vats. The base ingredients are no great secret — cloves, cayenne pepper, vinegar, tamarind, a special garlic mix, and water.

But the full recipe is a closely guarded secret, known only to three people. Three secret ingredients are known to exist, but their identities are a matter of whispered legend.

What makes Henderson's so special? In part, it's that wonderful, hard-to-define sharpness — sweet, spicy, and vinegary, but entirely its own creation. And, crucially, Henderson's is vegan and anchovy-free — a crucial difference from that other famous sauce, Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce.

This has led to a long-standing — and entirely good-natured — rivalry between the two. Sheffielders will fiercely defend Henderson's against any suggestion that it is simply "our version of Worcestershire Sauce."

The original Henderson's building

It isn't. It is entirely its own beast — lighter, sharper, and somehow infinitely more versatile.

"Worcester's for the soft South; Hendo's is for the true North," as one proud Sheffielder once put it.

In truth, it is not a sauce that can easily be explained. Like all things Sheffield, it must be experienced — whether splashed on chips, stirred into stew, drizzled over cheese on toast, or blended into posh restaurant dishes.

In recent years, Henderson's has found itself embraced not just by nostalgic locals, but by a new generation of chefs looking for bold, authentic flavours.

You'll find it starring in haute cuisine recipes, spicy marinades, vegan masterpieces, and even craft cocktails.

“It’s always been a loved product but I think it’s become a cult product more recently...”

Its appeal is simple: it packs a punch without pretension. It adds depth without drowning the dish. And it wears its heritage on its sleeve.

Over the years, Henderson’s has also embraced its cultural cachet.

There have been dozens of limited editions: bottles designed for Sheffield Wednesday and Sheffield United; special labels for Tramlines music festival; charity partnerships with Sheffield Children’s Hospital and Weston Park Cancer Charity; collaborations with local bands and artists.

As Pat Byrne, Henderson’s general manager, explains:

“It’s always been a loved product but I think it’s become a cult product more recently because of people like Richard Hawley. In Sheffield, the music and arts scene is so important. Henderson’s has been there since 1885, but it’s because of word of mouth — passed on over factories and fences, or passed on down the pubs. The cultural bit — the art and the music — that’s been more recent, so I put that down to it.”

Indeed, artists, musicians, footballers, and everyday punters have embraced Henderson’s as a symbol of Sheffield’s stubborn, spirited, no-nonsense heart.

It is not slick, not corporate, not mass-produced in some anonymous factory in the Midlands. It is proudly Sheffield, from first splash to last.

In a world increasingly dominated by global brands and corporate takeovers, Henderson’s stands tall as a shining example of something different:

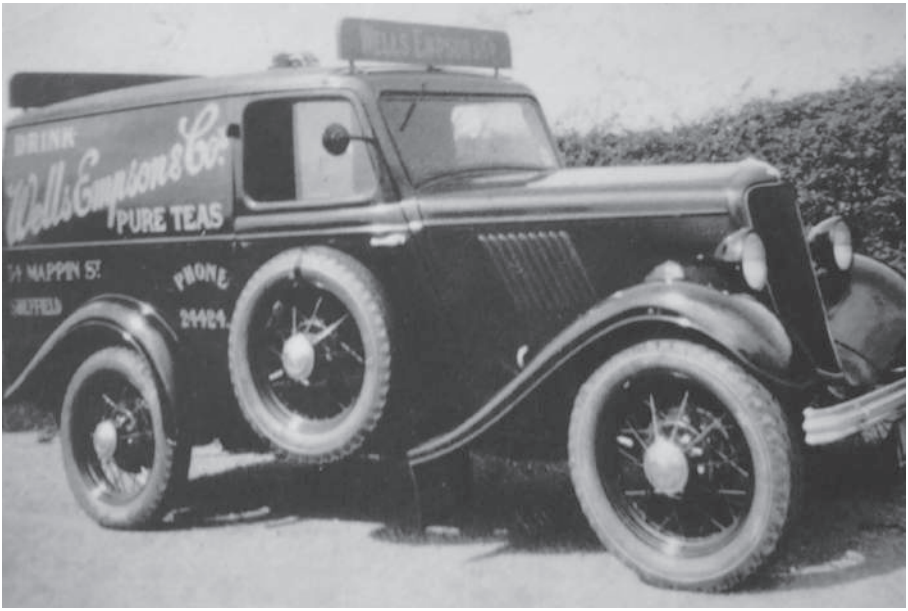
- A product rooted in community.
- A flavour forged in resilience.
- A bottle full of Sheffield spirit.

In the end, Henderson’s Relish is not just a condiment — it’s a story. A story of a city that has always known how to take a little and make a lot.

And Sheffield would not be Sheffield without it.

Fun Facts About Henderson's:

1. Henderson's predates the Titanic.
The first bottles of Henderson's Relish were sold in Sheffield in 1885 — a full 27 years before the Titanic set sail.
2. Secret recipe, secret keepers.
Only three people in the world know the full Henderson's recipe — and none of them are talking.
3. Six people, 660,000 bottles.
The entire operation today is run by just six employees, who produce over half a million bottles a year from their small Sheffield factory.
4. A battlefield discovery.
A bottle of Henderson's Relish was dug up from the trenches of the Somme — proof that Sheffield soldiers took a taste of home with them to the front line.
5. No anchovies here.
Unlike Worcestershire Sauce, Henderson's is completely vegan — no anchovies, no animal products, just pure Sheffield punch.
6. A sauce for every occasion.
Over the years, Henderson's has released dozens of limited-edition labels — from football club tributes to music festival specials and charity editions.
7. Endorsed by Sheffield royalty.
Local legends like Richard Hawley, Alex Turner, Jarvis Cocker, and Jessica Ennis-Hill have all publicly professed their love for Henderson's Relish.
8. Never call it Worcestershire.
Comparing Henderson's to Worcestershire Sauce in Sheffield is fighting talk — they are completely different sauces, and the locals will tell you so in no uncertain terms.
9. Sheffield's 'secret handshake'.
In Sheffield, asking if someone likes Henderson's Relish is less about food and more about loyalty — a quiet nod that says, "You're one of us".



Ingram's was a familiar sight on the streets of Sheffield in days gone by

Chapter 4:

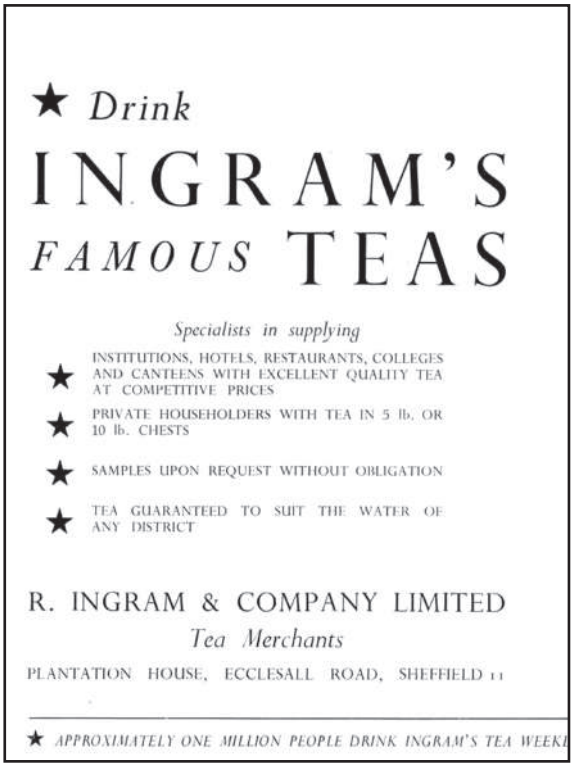
Steeped in Tradition: The Global Journey of Ingram's Tea

Ingrams Tea grew to become a familiar brand right across Sheffield and much of the country in years gone by.

Ian Ramsey, a man deeply intertwined with the history of the tea industry through his family's legacy, shared fascinating insights into the intricate journey of his grandfather, Robert Ingram.

He'd previously sold and repaired bicycles.

"My grandfather Robert was a visionary. He had this knack for identifying opportunities, and tea was one of them", he said.



Robert Ingram's approach to sourcing tea went on to become truly global, encompassing regions like China, India, and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Robert Ingram went on to navigate the complexities of international trade, ensuring a diverse and high-quality selection of teas for their clientele.

Ian Ramsey said: "The business originally started from a little two up, two down house on Sharrow Lane. His family would sit around the table and pack the tea and it would be sold to local householders via a big wicker basket."

The business quickly snowballed and Robert Ingram brought in "a couple more guys" to help with deliveries.

Deliveries soon transitioned to horse and cart and as the popularity of the business grew.

In 1900 the business moved to Ecclesall Road. Robert Ingram ended up bringing his two sons and four daughters to help staff the booming business. Three of them ended up working there full time.

Robert Ingram had the first motorised van in the city and was the holder of the very first driving licence in Sheffield.

The business struggled through the First World War – staff went to fight in France and things were tough. It was the same for many businesses as workers were conscripted into the army. Though World War One was tough – World War Two was another thing entirely.

Robert Ingram's knack at spotting opportunities propelled the business through the conflict.

From the Ingram's family archive

From the Ingram's family archive

He started stockpiling tea in the 1930s as quickly realised another war might be on the horizon with Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

Ian Ramsey said: "Tea does not deteriorate if it's kept at the right temperature. You can keep it for years. In fact the longer you keep it the stronger it becomes. Like a fine wine, it matures."

Tea was cheap and in plentiful supply for someone like Robert Ingram. But it became scarce and expensive as World War Two dragged on. It was a commodity and became a staple of rationing.

Its price became fixed and Robert Ingram had the stock to supply it.

Ian Ramsey said: "He came out of the war a reasonably wealthy man and he decided to commission a new building at Ecclesall Road, 259-261. It was an unusual building because it was built to withstand bombing – he wanted to be prepared in case there was another war.

"He had four columns at each corner and the floors were implemented into these columns in such a way that if all four walls were blown out, the floors still stood.

"It was one of the last projects that my father – Allan Ramsey - built. And it was a very hard build because the cement had to be made on site and it had to be poured all the time, you couldn't stop.

"He had men working 24 hours a day on this site. Unfortunately he didn't live very long after that."

From the Ingram's family archive

Ingram's vans were once omni-present on the streets of Sheffield

In the 1960s, the tea industry witnessed a technological revolution with the introduction of packaging machines. Mr. Ramsey described the impact of this innovation on their operations. "It was revolutionary. Suddenly, we could efficiently package different blends, reaching a wider audience without compromising on quality".

The advancement propelled the business into new heights.

As the business expanded, Mr. Ramsey joined Ingram's in 1960, becoming an integral part of the family legacy. His journey within the company was a multifaceted experience, from sweeping floors to actively participating in tea tasting sessions. "I learned the business from the ground up. It wasn't just about the sales; it was about understanding every aspect, from production to distribution.

"I always wanted to do the tea tasting. My aunt did the tea tasting, Aunt Winifred. She was a heavy smoker, about 40 a day, but it never affected her with the tea. She'd gone to Mincing Lane in London to learn. I also went there. They slurp and never drink. You'd spit it out into a spittoon.

“Tea tasting is an art. It’s about understanding the nuances of different teas and blending them...”

“There’s a real knack to it. They don’t just taste a few – there might be 20 or 30 different ones to try. “Tea tasting is an art. It’s about understanding the nuances of different teas and blending them to create the perfect flavour profile.

“At Ingram’s we used to have the top floor for tasting. Samples would come in of different teas from the suppliers. In those days there’d be loads of suppliers - there’s less today. Basically, you’d weigh it out into mugs. You’d be boiling kettles and pouring boiling water in. You’d leave it for a minute or two, and then you’d go and have a look at them see what the colour was like. Once they’d cooled enough you could see the ones that looked nice. You’d give them a taste first, and if they tasted as nice as they looked, then you would put all these mugs were in a row and you knew which to consider further. You’d originally taste it without milk. Then you’d add a little bit of milk to it to see what it looks like with the milk in. The milk could make the colour change totally and it can make it look very insipid. So you’ve got all these things to check and you would quite possibly get two, three, four different teas that had different components to them. And then you’d say, that will make a nice blend. So then you go about, you look at the price and if the price is right, then orders go in and then eventually, sometime later, a lorry would pull-up outside and chests of tea that we’d ordered would be delivered.

“They’d then be taken up to the very top floor by lift and be put into a blending machine. It was a big drum that spun round and blended all the teas together.

“When they were finished there was a chute going down to below to the next floor where it would go into our packaging machine. Now, this packaging machine was sort of way before its time.

“It opened up bags for quarter pound and half a pound of tea and whichever the machine was on.

“And the bags would go through and it would open the bag up, sit it upright, it would go under a chute and automatically half a pound of tea would go in it.

"It then went round the machine where it was sealed, all the top was bent over and then a seal went on it. This was in 1960.It was revolutionary.

"And it was a brilliant machine and it was going strong when I left in 1970.

"We had agents as far as Crewe selling them tea. We were supplying all the works canteens and offices with tea. Not just Sheffield, but much further afield as well. We supplied Thomas Wards and all the big steel firms."

Ingram's tea became a household name, not only supplying retail outlets but also catering to works canteens and offices.

"We supplied major steel firms in Sheffield and beyond. Tea was a fundamental part of people's lives, and we were proud to be a part of that daily ritual,"

Ian Ramsey went on to play a pivotal role in the company's sales, overseeing the distribution of three-pound bags of tea to households. "We wanted to make quality tea accessible to everyone. Selling in bulk was a way to offer a good product at an affordable price," he explained.

However, despite the successes, family dynamics and changes in leadership led Mr. Ramsey to leave the business in 1970. "It was a difficult decision. I had invested so much of myself into the business, but sometimes you have to make choices for the sake of family harmony."

The business was later sold to Boisman's, a coffee company based in Cheshire. The transition proved challenging, and the tea business lost its former glory under new ownership. "It's always tough to see something you poured your heart into undergo changes that aren't for the better," Mr. Ramsey said.

The tea business, once a thriving entity in Sheffield, gradually faded away in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "It's unfortunate how things turned out. The tea industry, which was once a vibrant part of Sheffield's identity, slowly lost its prominence."

Our Cow Molly is an iconic brand across the city

St Joseph's schoolchildren visit Our Cow Molly as part of our project

Chapter 5:

Cream of the Crop: The Our Cow Molly Story

High on a hillside, overlooking the lush sweep of the Loxley Valley at Dungworth, sit a few fields of rich pasture that haven't seen a plough for years. It's a timeless, pastoral scene — and it's here, in this little corner of Sheffield, that a remarkable food story was born.

Two years after the end of World War Two, a farmer named Hector Andrew decided to set up a small dairy farm. Armed with just ten cows, a horse, and a cart, he began delivering crates of fresh milk into Sheffield and its surrounding villages.

It was simple, honest work — early mornings, hard graft, and a fierce commitment to quality — and it laid the foundations for a family tradition that would span generations.

Three generations later, the Andrew family are still keeping cows on the same land. The farm remains proudly independent, but they've upped their game considerably.

In 2007, faced with surplus cream (previously sold to a cosmetics company) and looking for a way to add value to their milk, the family decided to branch out into ice cream.

And not just any ice cream. They invested in the best equipment, sourced high-quality flavourings direct from Italy, and — most importantly — used their own superb milk from their herd of Friesians.

The result was a rich, silky product with a freshness that you simply can't fake — and Sheffield soon fell in love with it.

The business was renamed Our Cow Molly, in honour of one of their favourite cows, and they created a bright, family-friendly logo to match their friendly, local ethos.

Before long, the name Our Cow Molly seemed almost omnipresent across Sheffield.

Whether it was a hot summer's day queue at the farm's ice cream parlour, a local café proudly advertising they served "Our Cow Molly

milk", or students at the University of Sheffield sipping coffee made with milk from the farm, the brand had woven itself into the fabric of city life.

Today, Our Cow Molly produces a dizzying variety of ice cream flavours, which change week by week depending on the season and inspiration.

From classic favourites like strawberry and vanilla to creative specials like lemon meringue pie and rhubarb crumble, their range celebrates freshness, quality, and a spirit of good-humoured invention.

Yet despite its success, Our Cow Molly remains deeply committed to its roots. Milk from the farm is bottled on site, ensuring that from cow to customer is often less than 24 hours — a freshness you can genuinely taste.

The farm also maintains a traditional doorstep delivery service, supplying over 1,000 Sheffield homes with milk the old-fashioned way — clinking bottles, friendly faces, and a real sense of community.

Sustainability is at the heart of everything they do. Solar panels now help to power farm operations, and plans are afoot for an anaerobic digestion system to convert cow slurry into energy — aiming one day to power not just the farm, but their entire delivery fleet too.

Their efforts even drew royal attention, with HRH The Princess Royal visiting to learn about their innovative approach to on-farm energy production.

But amid all the green energy and diversification, the heart of the story remains unchanged.

It's a story of a Sheffield family who decided that if they were going to do something, they were going to do it properly: no half measures, no compromise, just the best milk, the best ingredients, and a lot of pride in the land they've farmed for over seventy years.

On a sunny day, there are few better Sheffield experiences than sitting with a tub of Our Cow Molly ice cream, looking out across the green valleys that birthed it.

It's a reminder that sometimes, the simplest stories — family, hard work, and a passion for doing things right — are the sweetest of all.

Fun facts about 'Our Cow Molly':

1. The name 'Our Cow Molly' comes from a real cow.
The farm's beloved cow Molly inspired the friendly name and logo — and she became the face of Sheffield's favourite ice cream.
2. Milk fresh from cow to customer in under 24 hours.
Our Cow Molly milk is bottled on site and delivered to homes and cafés across Sheffield often on the very same day.
3. From cosmetics to cones.
Before making ice cream, the farm used to sell surplus cream to a cosmetics company — until they decided they could do better by making something tastier.
4. Sheffield's solar-powered ice cream.
The farm uses solar panels to help power production and plans to turn cow slurry into green energy for the entire farm and fleet.
5. It all started with a horse and cart.
Founder Hector Andrew delivered his first crates of milk into Sheffield by horse and cart in the late 1940s.
6. Flavours change every week.
Our Cow Molly offers a rotating selection of creative ice cream flavours — including everything from classic vanilla to adventurous rhubarb crumble.
7. A royal seal of approval.
HRH The Princess Royal visited the farm to see how it's leading the way with sustainable farming and green energy.
8. Sheffield cafés love it.
The University of Sheffield's coffee shops proudly serve Our Cow Molly milk, helping cut down single-use plastic bottle waste on campus.
9. Queues down the lane.
On sunny weekends, the queue for Our Cow Molly ice cream often spills out of the parlour and right across the farmyard.
10. Still a true family farm.
Three generations of the Andrew family have kept the cows, bottled the milk, and churned the ice cream — keeping it 100% Sheffield from start to scoop.

The factory

SIMPKINS
EST. 1921
BUY ONLINE
WWW.TRADITIONALSWEETS
SIMPKINS
SWEETS

Chapter 6:

From Battlefields to Sweet Success: The Simpkins Confectionery Saga

"We've lived through world wars, recessions, and the recent pandemic - and we are still here," says Adrian Simpkin of his family's traditional British confectionery business that recently successfully completed a century of trading.

The Hillsborough based sweet manufacturer was originally set up in 1921 by Albert Leslie Simpkin following his return from fighting in World War One.

His concept was the manufacture of high quality glucose confectionery using, wherever possible, only natural flavours and colours. He proceeded to aim sales through chemist/pharmacy shops, as this enabled him to build up a niche market and avoid being in competition with the large confectionery manufacturers like Sheffield's own Bassetts. Within three years he had an 80% coverage throughout the UK and a staggering 12,000 accounts.

Adrian Simpkin said: "He left the army after being badly injured in the war. He earned the Military Cross for attacking a gun post in the Battle of the Somme. He had regular visits to the hospital to get shrapnel removed. And after every treatment, they gave him liquid glucose for energy replacement. He realised it was "messy affair" and asked if they could supply the glucose in hard-boiled form.

"The surgeon said, no, we can't get anything like that, it's all liquid glucose. So my grandfather went away and thought about it for a bit. And that led him to set up as confectionery wholesaler. He started selling a range of

food but concentrated on sugared confectionery. At that point, there was another shop round the corner from him that had two sugar boilers in the back room, and it was up for sale. The old chap was retiring so my grandfather bought it and started manufacturing. And he was able to fulfil his dream of finally being able to manufacture glucose drops – something his own surgeon had said wasn't available. Within three years he'd built up a massive distribution into pharmacies."

Business continued to flourish and he later bought a burnt down refrigeration factory in Hillsborough. He turned the shell into a purpose made factory of 40,000sq ft and employed 180 people. It was at this time he got the idea of extending the range from bulk barley sugars in jars to powdered sweets in 8oz tins.

Adrian Simpkin said: "The range was predominantly twist-wrap sweets, glucose sweets, glucose barley sugar sticks, which all the pharmacists used to stock. And then he started developing the more pharmaceutical side of it, which was lozenges with halibut, cod liver, cod liver oil in, halibut liver oil etc as well as other sugar-free products.

"Due to the fact that we had a very high concentration of fruit juice in the confection, they had to be put into an airtight tin or container. That's how the whole travel tin started. Barley sugar was renowned for alleviating travel sickness and morning sickness at the time and that was a key ingredient."

The outbreak of the Second World War changed everything for Albert Leslie Simpkin – in a positive way.

Sweets were rationed and the company was zoned as to where sales could be made. Simpkins were confined to North of Birmingham and their competitors South.

The company was making good money.

After the war they started distributing further and moved into the London area with their reps for the first time. It was mostly travel tins

– something that appealed to the more affluent southern market.

"We'd also started exporting abroad in the 1930s. We still export today to about 40 different countries."

They've attracted fans for decades with their array of flavours

Simpkins have achieved many things of note over the years – things not always known to the wider world.

Adrian Simpkin said: "We supplied all the bomber pilots during World War II. We also supplied Hillary and Tenzing going up Everest and I think we had a bicycle team in the Tour De France."

They've attracted fans for decades with their array of flavours of glucose sweets which have spanned everything from summer fruits and botanical editions chocolate series and manuka honey varieties, through to its specialist Nipits throat lozenges once favoured by former Conservative Prime Minister, the late Baroness Margaret Thatcher.

As well as Simpkins branded products, there is also a substantial proportion of the business dedicated to own label and corporate brands.

"I started with the company around 1990 at the age of 30", said Adrian Simpkin. "I started as a commission only rep, looking after Scotland and Cornwall. At that point we had about 15 reps on the road.

"I did that for a few years and then I started taking over the exports and looked after prime accounts like Harrods and Fortnum & Mason."

They've also been a hit in the States.

"The Americans like the Britishness of our brand", said Adrian Simpkin.

"It's now a retro brand for some. Everyone remembers the grandparents having them in the car and trying to get the icing sugar at the bottom."

It's an early start for the worker. The sugar boilers start around 4am as they get the machines up to pressure.

"There's a bank of three cookers at the beginning of the line where they actually physically pour the sugar, glucose, water into the cookers. Then put the colours in and flavours. Things finish around 3pm each day."

Simpkins are always on the look out for innovative new ideas to try.

Simpkins have been exporting for over 60 years, originally to the old Commonwealth countries with Vita Glucose tablets and then moving on to Travel Tins in the early 1940s. Thanks to John Simpkin's determined approach to export, today Simpkins export to over 40 countries throughout the world.

Because of the unique taste and texture of the sweets in tins they became very popular throughout Europe, not through pharmacy but sales areas that were connected with Travel.

One of the first major markets in the Far East was Japan and after "Quality Street" Simpkins was among the first English confectionery sold in that country. This was aided by the fact that the product already used natural colours and flavours, thus conforming to the strict Japanese regulations.

Another selling feature in Japan was the presentation that appealed to the consumer, in fact the tins became a status symbol at a low cost. They were given as gifts particularly by the younger generation. Within a short period of time the sales spread through the Far East and as countries like Korea and Taiwan developed sales expanded in those areas.

In a bid to diversify, the company has broadened its offering over the years, venturing into chocolate bars, gin and tonic flavoured candies, biscuits and lollipops in its ranges.

As Adrian explains, the company was in fact one of the first to adopt no sugar varieties, as well as offering gluten, dairy and nut free product ranges amidst its ever-adapting series. "We're proud and honoured to be custodians of our famous family brand," notes Adrian, who says it's been quite some adventure in steering it through the decades.

There was even a tongue-in-cheek design dedicated to the thorny subject of Brexit, with the renowned tins becoming increasingly popular within private label fields, making their way to garage forecourts and are even being stocked by luxury car brands in more recent years.

Tastes may have changed over the decades, but, interestingly, the pandemic is reaffirming consumers interest in nostalgic, familiar brands, and Simpkins has its part to play in that evolving trend.

Today, Simpkins is managed by joint directors Adrian and Karen Simpkin.

Adrian believes his grandfather Leslie would have approved of the work of being continued by himself and his sister Karen, who manages production operations for their global business exporting to dozens of countries.

Simpkins is determined to remain as one of the few family-owned British confectionery firms left.

Entertaining royalty in 1983

Thorntons grew to become a household name

Chapter 7:

The Journey of Thorntons from Sheffield Beginnings to Confectionery Icon

Thorntons, the renowned toffee and chocolate makers, has a storied history rooted in the heart of Sheffield. The tale begins in 1911 when Joseph William Thornton and his father, Joseph, opened a small confectionery shop on Sheffield's High Street. Little did they know that this modest beginning would grow into one of the most famous and iconic confectionery brands in the United Kingdom.

From the outset, Thorntons set itself apart by focusing on quality and craftsmanship

From the outset, Thorntons set itself apart by focusing on quality and craftsmanship. Joseph William Thornton, a former traveling confectionery salesman, was passionate about creating exceptional sweets. In the early years, the company's signature product was its special toffee, a delectable treat that quickly gained popularity for its rich flavor and satisfying texture.

The Thorntons' commitment to quality extended beyond their products to their storefronts. In 1927, the company opened a new shop in Sheffield's Norfolk Street, featuring an elegant art deco design. This move not only showcased their dedication to creating a luxurious and inviting environment but also marked the beginning of Thorntons' expansion beyond its humble beginnings.

The 1930s saw Thorntons diversify its product range by introducing continental-style chocolates. This innovation resonated with customers, establishing Thorntons as a brand synonymous with both traditional British confectionery and sophisticated chocolate creations. The company's reputation for using high-quality ingredients and crafting chocolates with precision further solidified its standing in the confectionery market.

Working in the factory in the 1930s.

The iconic Thorntons Continental selection, featuring an array of luxurious chocolates inspired by European flavours, became a hallmark of the brand's commitment to innovation and indulgence

Thorntons weathered the challenges of World War II, and in the post-war years, the company continued to flourish. The 1960s marked a significant period of expansion as Thorntons opened new stores and introduced a broader range of chocolates and toffees. The iconic Thorntons Continental selection, featuring an array of luxurious chocolates inspired by European flavours, became a hallmark of the brand's commitment to innovation and indulgence.

Thorntons has been a familiar sight in the city for decades

The 1980s brought about further changes for Thorntons as the company went public in 1988. This move allowed Thorntons to attract investment and facilitated its expansion across the UK. The brand became a fixture in shopping centres and high streets, maintaining its reputation for high-quality confections and impeccable customer service.

Today, Thorntons remains a beloved brand, and its chocolates continue to be enjoyed by people across the UK and beyond

The late 20th century and early 21st century saw Thorntons adapt to changing consumer preferences. The brand continued to innovate with new product lines, including personalised chocolates and seasonal treats. The introduction of Thorntons Café in 2015 provided customers with a unique and immersive experience, allowing them to enjoy Thorntons' sweets in a cozy and inviting setting.

In 2015, Thorntons faced a significant development when it was acquired by Ferrero, the Italian multinational confectionery company known for brands like Ferrero Rocher and Nutella. The acquisition marked the end of Thorntons' time as a publicly traded company, but it opened new opportunities for the brand to thrive under the umbrella of a global confectionery powerhouse.

Thorntons' Sheffield roots remain an integral part of its identity. The company's commitment to quality, craftsmanship, and the art of creating delicious chocolates and toffees continues to resonate with customers. While Thorntons has undergone changes in ownership and evolved its product offerings to meet contemporary tastes, its Sheffield-born legacy endures as a testament to the enduring appeal of fine British confectionery.

Today, Thorntons remains a beloved brand, and its chocolates continue to be enjoyed by people across the UK and beyond. The company's rich history is a testament to the enduring power of craftsmanship, innovation, and a commitment to creating moments of sweetness and joy for generations of chocolate enthusiasts.

Interview with Helen Debes (née Cope) on 20 February 2023 about her tenure at Thorntons

Early Days at Thorntons:

"I began my journey with Thorntons in the packing room located on Derwent Street, Belper. My initial role involved placing chocolates into plastic formers that fit within the boxes. I was assigned to work on

Line 3, rotating through various tasks on the packing line."

Progression to Trainer and Team Leader:

"After some time, I advanced to the role of a trainer, educating new staff on their duties and ensuring the smooth operation of production. The packing room was eventually relocated to a newly constructed facility in Somercotes, Alfreton. During the bustling Christmas period from September to December, I conducted inductions for new starters to manage the increased workload. Subsequently, I was promoted to team leader and took charge of Line 1, the largest line in the packing hall. Here, we often managed to operate at a capacity of 56 boxes per minute, with up to 120 personnel working simultaneously."

"After some time, I advanced to to the role of a trainer, educating new staff on their duties and ensuring the smooth operation of production..."

Daily Routine and Breaks:

"Our workday started at 7:30 am. We had a structured breakfast break staggered between 8:30 am and 10 am to accommodate everyone in the canteen, which lasted for 31 minutes. This included 25 minutes for eating or smoking and an additional 6 minutes for walking and hygiene routines. Mid-morning, we had a brief 5-minute water break. Lunch breaks were similar in structure, totalling 30 minutes with an allotted 6 minutes for walking. The break times were meticulously timed; any delay in returning to the line could result in a docked pay, termed as 'getting quartered.'"

Facility Layout

"In our Somercotes location, the only windows were in the canteen, which also featured large panels overlooking the factory floor, particularly Line 5. The factory itself had multiple lines; the main floor housed Lines 1 to 5, with additional lines upstairs where more complex and unusual products were packaged. The workspace was divided by a central wall with doors and windows, with the belt running through these windows and incorporating a 'U' turn."

Support Roles and Factory Layout:
"Our support staff were integral, managing the logistics of chocolates and packaging materials and ensuring a steady supply to the packing lines. Across the road was the manufacturing site for the chocolates, although my role did not involve work in that building."

Operations and Products
"The conveyor belts operated at three primary speeds correlating to the number of chocolates per box – the fastest being 56 boxes per minute, with each person packing one chocolate per box. Our tasks varied from making and folding boxes to adding description slips, formers, cushions, lids, stickers, bows, and gift wrapping. The workload peaked seasonally, especially from August to December for Christmas preparations, followed by other holidays like Easter and Halloween."

Working Hours and Annual Schedule
"Our standard workweek was Monday to Thursday from 7:30 am to 4:45 pm, and Friday from 7:30 am to 12:00 pm. Trainers and team leaders often did an extra 30 minutes daily to prepare for the arrival of staff. We operated on annualised hours, which included enforced holidays in spring, compensated by additional shifts on Friday afternoons and Saturdays starting from August."

Reflections and Products
"Despite originally joining Thorntons as a temporary measure, I ended up staying for about five years, from 2003 to 2008. Among the products we packed, 'Continentals' was particularly popular, and we also produced specialty boxes for Marks & Spencer."

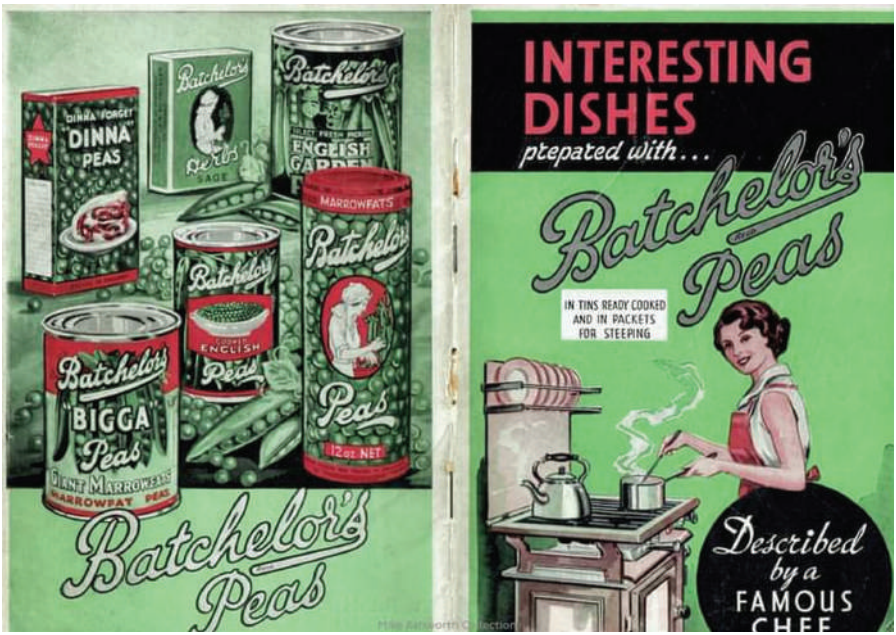
Chapter 8:

Soup, Smash, and Sheffield Spirit: The Story of Batchelor's

His early focus was on peas- not just any peas, but the finest quality dried peas

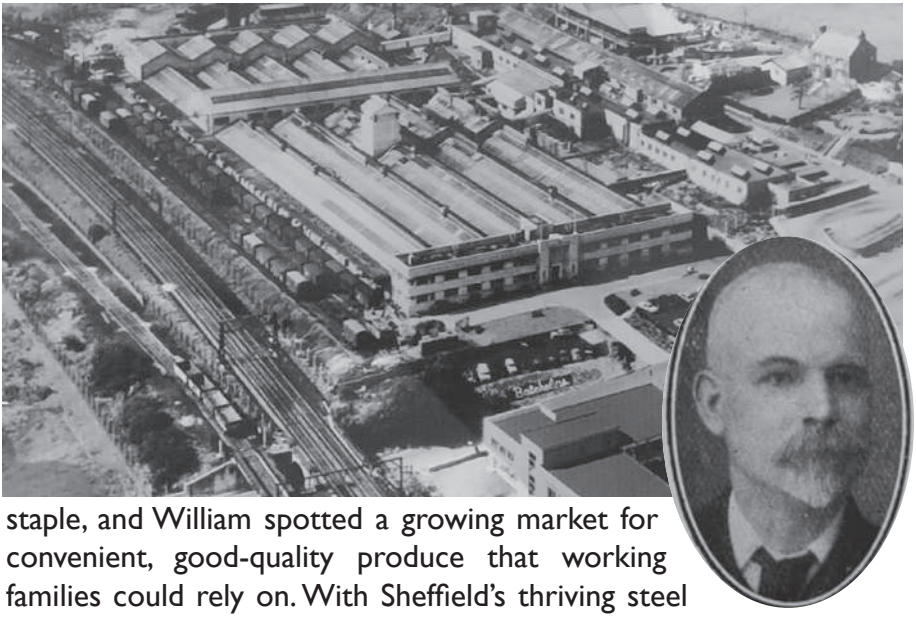
In the world of British food, few names are as instantly familiar as Batchelor's. Whether it's a comforting bowl of Cup a Soup on a cold afternoon, a pile of buttery Smash mashed potatoes, or one of their hearty tinned stews, the brand has been a constant companion across kitchen tables for generations. But what's often forgotten is that Batchelor's — this household name — started life right here in Sheffield.

The story begins in 1895, when William Batchelor founded a small food business in the city. His early focus was on peas — not just any peas, but the finest quality dried peas. In an age before freezers and ready meals, dried and preserved foods were an absolute



From Batchelor's archive

Family farm that grew peas near Immingham



William Batchelor started the company that became Batchelor's Peas in 1895 after discovering a way to can vegetables

staple, and William spotted a growing market for convenient, good-quality produce that working families could rely on. With Sheffield's thriving steel and manufacturing industries providing a hungry customer base, Batchelor's peas quickly became a success.

It wasn't long before the company expanded into canning, and by the early 20th century, Batchelor's had become synonymous with tinned vegetables — peas, beans, and later, hearty soups. Their emphasis was always on making everyday meals easier, quicker, and just a little more satisfying — a philosophy that would carry them through decades of growth and change.

The company grew steadily, becoming a major employer in Sheffield. In 1937, Batchelor's opened a vast, state-of-the-art factory on Claywheels Lane, Wadsley Bridge — at the time, the largest canning factory in Britain. The scale of the operation was staggering: producing millions of tins of peas, soups, and vegetables that would help feed the nation through good times and bad. During the Second World War, Batchelors played a crucial role in food production, supplying vast quantities of tinned goods to both the home front and the military.

Post-war, as rationing eased and Britain embraced a new age of

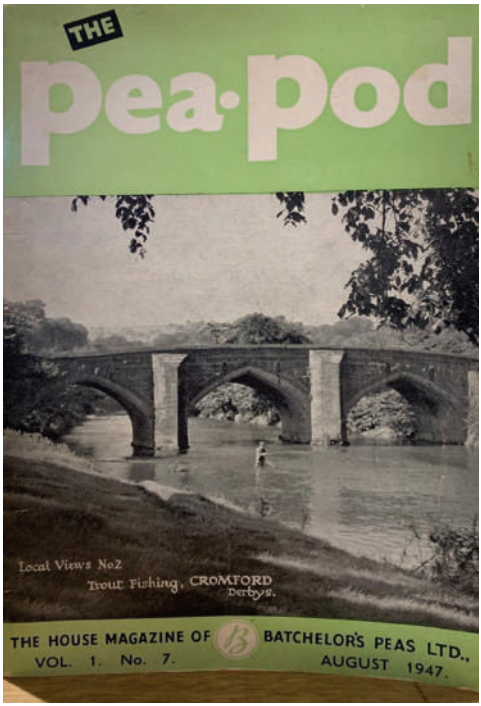
What brings Dick home so eagerly these days?
Husbandly and fatherly devotion of course. But if it hadn't been for Claudia telling me about tasty Batchelors Peas, it might have been a very different story . . .
The Eternal Triangle
They're always nicer!
That's why 4 out of 6 women* prefer BATCHELORS PEAS
The very wonderful thing about Batchelors wonderful peas is their consistent high quality. They are always plump, tender, tasty. The reason is this. Batchelors do more than buy the best peas. They test the best peas. When, and only when, the peas have passed many searching tests are they canned. Now do you see why only the best peas get into Batchelors cans?
So buy Batchelors when you like. Buy them where you like. They are always the same. Wonderful to eat. Wonderful to look at. And always nicer!
Baby Tom was a great success — good as gold and never cried. But oh . . . he was exhausting! I simply couldn't cope with elaborate meals. Poor Dick suffered in silence — until, "I know it's not your fault, darling," he said one evening, "but I must have a square meal — look, I'll go to the place round the corner."
I rang Claudia, distraught. "Silly old thing!" she said. "Not learnt to manage a man yet? Filling meals needn't take long to prepare — not with Batchelors Peas about. Just try them tomorrow."
Claudia was right! I gave Dick the meal of his life. Croquettes, tomatoes, chips and tender Batchelors Peas. All prepared in a flash — Dick was ecstatic. Order some delicious Batchelors Peas for yourself today — you can get them in all sorts of can sizes.
Batchelors
WONDERFUL PEAS . . . they're always nicer

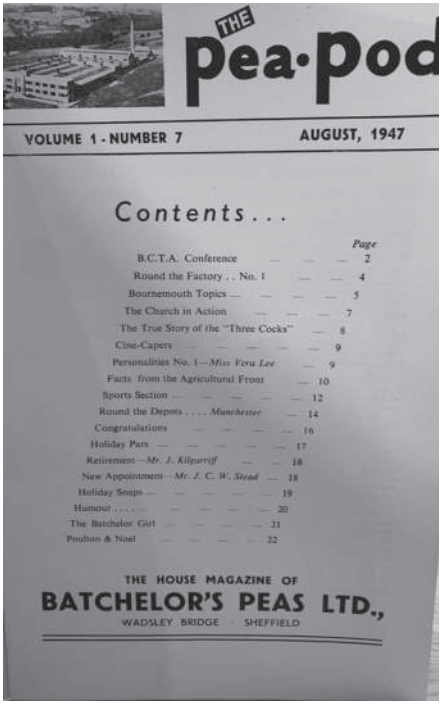
consumerism, Batchelor's continued to innovate. In 1943, following the death of William Batchelor, the company was sold to the Unilever group, although it remained firmly rooted in Sheffield. The brand went from strength to strength, its products appearing in ever more homes, shops, and canteens.

Ella Gasking, daughter of William Batchelor who took over the reins of the company after his death in 1913

Perhaps the most famous chapter in the Batchelor's story arrived in the 1960s, with the launch of Smash — their instant mashed potato product. Though Smash was initially slow to take off, a stroke of advertising genius changed everything. In the 1970s, Batchelor's created the now legendary Smash Martians TV adverts — depicting alien robots laughing at humans for the time-consuming way they prepared real potatoes. "For mash get Smash!" became one of the most beloved advertising slogans in British history, catapulting sales and cementing Smash's place in popular culture. To this day, the Smash Martians are fondly remembered, and the adverts are regularly voted among the greatest ever made.

At the same time, Batchelor's continued to expand its Cup a Soup range, providing quick, no-fuss meals that fitted perfectly into the busy lifestyles of modern Britain. From traditional flavours like tomato and chicken to more adventurous varieties, Cup a Soup offered something that still resonates today: speed, convenience, and a comforting sense of familiarity.





THE pea·pod

VOLUME 1 - NUMBER 7 AUGUST, 1947

Contents . . .

	Page
B.C.T.A. Conference	2
Round the Factory . . No. 1	4
Bournemouth Topics	5
The Church in Action	7
The True Story of the "Three Cocks"	8
Cine-Capers	9
Personalities No. 1—*Miss Vera Lee*	9
Facts from the Agricultural Front	10
Sports Section	12
Round the Depots . . . . *Manchester*	14
Congratulations	16
Holiday Pars	17
Retirement—*Mr. J. Kilgarriff*	18
New Appointment—*Mr. J. C. W. Stead*	18
Holiday Snaps	19
Humour	20
The Batchelor Girl	21
Poulton & Noel	22

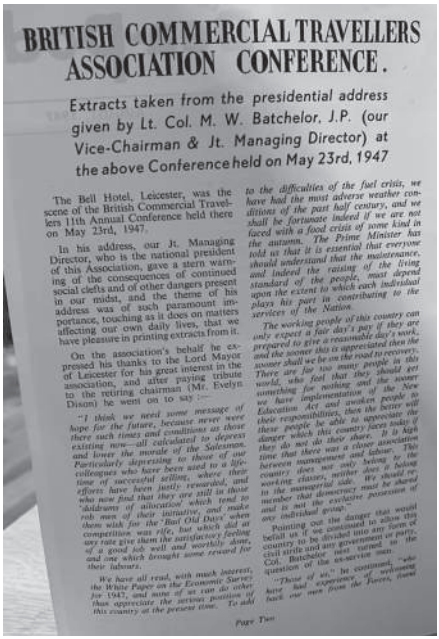
THE HOUSE MAGAZINE OF
BATCHELOR'S PEAS LTD.,
WADSLEY BRIDGE SHEFFIELD

Round the Factory . . . . . No. 1

THE SOUP KITCHEN

1. General view of the Soup Kitchen. Operators in foreground are in act of pouring soup (taken from boiling pans, seen clearly on left) into the receiving pan prior to it being pumped into the homogeniser (partly shown at bottom left hand corner).

Machine on left and Double ... The operator on right ... for the



BRITISH COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE.

Extracts taken from the presidential address given by Lt. Col. M. W. Batchelor, J.P. (our Vice-Chairman & Jt. Managing Director) at the above Conference held on May 23rd, 1947

The Bell Hotel, Leicester, was the scene of the British Commercial Travellers 11th Annual Conference held there on May 23rd, 1947.

In his address, our Jt. Managing Director, who is the national president of this Association, gave a stern warning of the consequences of continued social clefts and of other dangers present in our midst, and the theme of his address was of such paramount importance, touching as it does on matters affecting our own daily lives, that we have pleasure in printing extracts from it.

On the association's behalf he expressed his thanks to the Lord Mayor of Leicester for his great interest in the association, and after paying tribute to the retiring chairman (Mr. Evelyn Dison) he went on to say :—

"I think we need some message of hope for the future, because never were there such times and conditions as those existing now—all calculated to depress and lower the morale of the Salesman. Particularly depressing to those of our colleagues who have been used to a life-time of successful selling, where their efforts have been justly rewarded, and who now find that they are still in those "doldrums of allocation" which tend to rob men of their initiative, and make them wish for the "Bad Old Days" when competition was rife, but which did at any rate give them the satisfactory feeling of a good job well and worthily done, and one which brought some reward for their labours.

We have all read, with much interest, the White Paper on the Economic Survey for 1947, and none of us can do other than appreciate the serious position of this country at the present time. To add to the difficulties of the fuel crisis, we have had the most adverse weather conditions of the past half century, and we shall be fortunate indeed if we are not faced with a food crisis of some kind in the autumn. The Prime Minister has told us that it is essential that everyone should understand that the maintenance, and indeed the raising of the living standard of the people, must depend upon the extent to which each individual plays his part in contributing to the services of the Nation.

The working people of this country can only expect a fair day's pay if they are prepared to give a reasonable day's work, and the sooner this is appreciated then the sooner shall we be on the road to recovery. There are far too many people in this world, who feel that they should get something for nothing and the sooner we have implementation of the New Education Act and awaken people to their responsibilities, then the better will these people be able to appreciate the danger which this country faces today if they do not do their share. It is high time that there was a closer association between management and labour. The country does not only belong to the working classes, neither does it belong to the managerial side. We should remember that democracy must be shared and is not the exclusive possession of any individual group.

Pointing out the danger that would befall us if we continued to allow this country to be divided into any form of civil strife and any government or party, Col. Batchelor next turned to the question of the ex-service man.

"Those of us," he continued, "who have had experience of welcoming back our men from the Forces, found

Page Two

Though the company changed ownership again in later years — moving from Unilever to Premier Foods — Batchelors' historic ties to Sheffield remain a source of quiet pride. The Claywheels Lane factory was eventually sold off, and production moved elsewhere, but for decades, the brand and the city were inseparable. Many Sheffield families had relatives who worked for Batchelor's, and countless more relied on their tins and packets to stretch the family budget just that little bit further.

...for decades, the brand and the city were inseparable

Among those who spent time working at the Batchelors factory was Martin Fry, who would later rise to fame as the lead singer of the iconic Sheffield band ABC. In the late 1970s, Fry worked the night shift at the factory, hydrating beans on the production line. It was during this period that he met Stephen Singleton, a fellow music enthusiast working the day shift. Their shared passion for music led to the formation of ABC, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, Batchelor's continues to hold a special place in Britain's culinary story. Its instantly recognisable logo — those bold, simple letters — still carries with it a little bit of Sheffield spirit: a commitment to honest, practical food, served without fuss or frills. In a world full of trends and fads, Batchelor's has quietly endured — a small Sheffield success story that grew to become a household name.

And somewhere in the background, you can still hear those Martians laughing.

Chapter 9:

Cunningham's Pickles: A Sheffield Legacy in a Jar

In the annals of Sheffield's rich culinary history, few names evoke as much nostalgia as Cunningham's Pickles. Established in the early 20th century, this family-run enterprise became synonymous with the city's industrial spirit and gastronomic traditions.

"You could smell the pickles two streets away on a warm day."

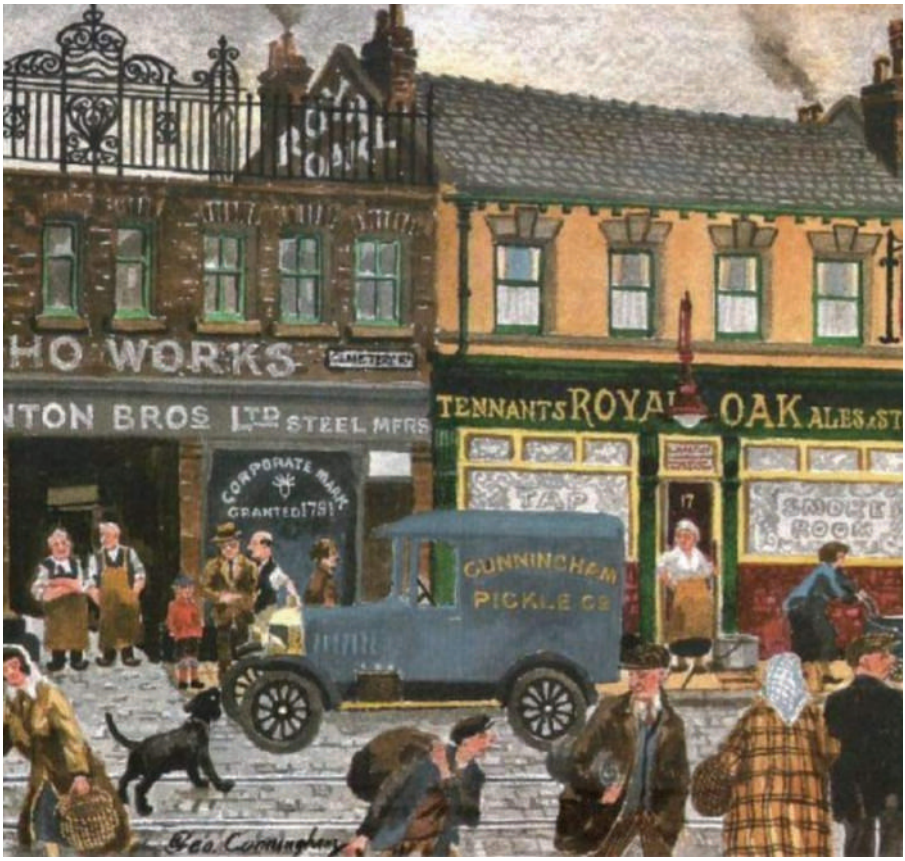
The Cunningham family's foray into pickling began modestly. George Cunningham, whose early years were spent amidst the aromatic environs of the family's pickle factory on Queen Street, recalled his childhood playground as being among the large wooden tubs of onions bobbing in brine.

"You could smell the pickles two streets away on a warm day," George once wrote. "We used to hide among the vats when we were kids — my mam would go mad if she caught us splashing brine everywhere!"

As the business grew, so did its reputation. The pungent aromas wafting from their Queens Road factory became a familiar scent for Sheffield residents, a sharp, vinegary tang that seemed to cling to the air. Their range of products — piccalilli, pickled onions, pickled cabbage — found their way into households across the city and beyond. Cunningham's was a staple of working-class tea tables, served alongside ham sandwiches, pork pies, and slices of strong cheddar.

"When you opened a jar of Cunningham's, it was like opening a bit of Sheffield itself," said one former worker, Elsie Parker, who packed jars in the late 1950s. "It didn't matter how cold or grim the weather was — you'd get that sharp hit of vinegar and it made everything feel a bit warmer."

Working at Cunningham's was tough but proud work. The job was physical, often chilly in winter, and the brine could leave your hands red raw if you weren't careful.



Celebrated artist George Cunningham used to spend his early years at the family's city-based pickle factory – no surprise that the brand used to appear on some of his iconic paintings

"We were always soaked through by the end of a shift," recalled Brian Hargreaves, who worked on the onion line in the early 1970s. "Your clothes would stink of vinegar for days afterwards — you couldn't get it out no matter how many times you washed them. But it paid your way, and you had a laugh. That's what mattered."

However, like many traditional enterprises, Cunningham's faced challenges as the economic landscape shifted in the late 20th century. Mass production, changing food habits, and

"Your clothes would stink of vinegar for days afterwards..."

...a familiar scent for Sheffield residents, a sharp, vinegary tang that seemed to cling to the air

consolidation of big food brands all played their part.

Eventually, the Cunningham family sold the business, and operations moved away from Sheffield. Today, Cunningham's Pickles continue to be produced under the stewardship of Seasoners Fine Foods Ltd, based in Manchester. Although no longer made in Sheffield, the brand still strives to maintain the quality and flavour that made it a household name.

Yet for many in Sheffield, the name Cunningham's will always be entwined with personal memories — of kitchen cupboards stacked with jars, of sandwiches perked up with a spoonful of piccalilli, and of the unforgettable smell drifting across Queen's Road.

"It wasn't just pickle," said Elsie. "It was part of everyday life. Part of Sheffield."

The legacy of Cunningham's Pickles is not just preserved in jars, but also in the rich tapestry of Sheffield's food history. Initiatives like the Dungworth Bradfield Heritage Group's project aim to capture and celebrate stories of the city's industrial past, ensuring brands like Cunningham's are never forgotten — because sometimes, it's the small, everyday things that best tell the story of a place and its people.

Chapter 10:

From Budapest to Breadcakes: The Béres Story

In the tapestry of Sheffield's culinary heritage, few threads are as richly woven as that of Béres. What began as a humble butcher's shop has, over six decades, become an institution synonymous with the city's identity.

The story starts in 1956, amidst the turmoil of the Hungarian Uprising. Sandor Béres, a young man from Budapest, fled his homeland after the communist regime seized his family's chain of butcher shops. Arriving in the UK as a political refugee, Sandor sought a new beginning in Sheffield. Despite lacking formal butchery experience, he secured a position at a butcher's in Rotherham, quickly mastering the trade.

In 1960, Sandor met Eileen Lovell at a dance in Barnsley. Their shared aspirations led them to open their first butcher's shop in Wadsley Bridge in 1961. The location was strategic—situated near Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough Stadium, it attracted football fans seeking hearty fare on match days.

An early setback turned into an opportunity. After losing a significant wholesale order, Sandor found himself with an excess of pork. Drawing on his culinary instincts, he began crafting pork sandwiches, layering succulent slices of roast pork onto fresh breadcakes, complemented by stuffing, crackling, and a touch of apple sauce. The sandwiches were an instant hit, laying the foundation for Béres's future.

The business expanded steadily. By the late 1980s, Sandor and Eileen had opened multiple shops across Sheffield. In 1988, their son Richard joined the enterprise, bringing fresh energy and vision. Under his leadership, Béres embraced modernization while preserving its traditional values. A significant milestone was the establishment of a 5,000-square-foot production facility on Rawson Spring Road in Hillsborough, enabling the company to bake its own bread and streamline operations.

Today, Béres boasts 14 shops across Sheffield, employing around 120 staff members. The company sells approximately one million pork

sandwiches annually, along with 150,000 pork pies and an equal number of sausage rolls. Each sandwich is a testament to the family's commitment to quality—pork is boned out and roasted in-house, bread is freshly baked, and even the stuffing is made from returned bread, seasoned to perfection.

Each sandwich is a testament to the family's commitment to quality

The legacy of Béres is not just in its products but in its people. Long-serving employees, like Ethel, who retired after 36 years of service, exemplify the company's familial ethos. Customers, too, share in this legacy, with many considering a Béres sandwich an integral part of their Sheffield experience.

As Richard Béres reflects on the journey, he attributes the company's success to his parents' dedication and the enduring appeal of their signature sandwich. With the next generation showing interest in the family business, the future of Béres looks promising, ensuring that this Sheffield staple continues to delight for years to come.

Béres
THE PORK SANDWICH SHOP
Béres
Béres
Béres
Roast Pork Sandwiches
20
ZONE

Chapter 11:

Yorkshire Gold: The Story of Sutherlands

In a city famed for steel, cutlery, and the fierce industry of its working men, it was in the backstreets of Sheffield that another, altogether more savoury legacy was quietly taking shape.

Sutherlands – the makers of that humble but mighty potted meat – would go on to become a household name, not just in the Steel City but across Britain.

The story began in the 1920s with Eddie and Mary Sutherland. Life was hard, money was scarce, and ambition was forged out of sheer necessity. Eddie worked long hours delivering Lyons Tea across Sheffield, but the wages weren't enough to keep a growing family clothed and fed. So, from the cramped cellar of their terraced home on Tavistock Road, Mary Sutherland began making potted beef by hand.

It was no easy operation. Working by the flickering light of an oil lamp, Mary boiled cuts of beef on a gas ring, minced them by hand using a borrowed grinder, seasoned the mixture carefully, and packed the meat into pots. From these modest beginnings came a taste that Sheffielders would come to know and love.

Eddie, ever the entrepreneur, began quietly offering the potted beef to his tea customers. By carefully slipping a few pots in with his rounds, he was able to supplement the family's income without drawing too much attention from his main employer.

"There was no great plan in those days," Eddie would later say. "You just did what you had to do to survive."

The venture grew. By the 1930s, the family had moved production into a garage on Huntsman Road in Darnall. They upgraded from the tiny

gas ring to a bigger boiler and began experimenting with improving the texture and profitability of their potted meat.

A golden-coloured cereal rusk and Sheffield's finest tap water were added to the traditional recipe, making the product even more spreadable and economical.

Eddie affectionately dubbed this enhanced version "Yorkshire Gold" – a nod both to its golden colour and to its value for hardworking Yorkshire families.

Although "Yorkshire Gold" was never used as an official brand name on packaging, the phrase became an internal badge of honour — a reminder of the quality they prided themselves on.

Through the 1930s and 40s, Sutherlands' reputation spread steadily. The business was built on hard graft: long hours, heavy lifting, and a commitment to quality that could not be faked. Eddie's sons, Keith and Peter, joined the firm as young men, learning the trade from the bottom up.

Like so many family businesses, it was a mixture of affection and tough love. Employees, including family members, soon discovered Eddie's sharp tongue if they didn't meet his standards. "You didn't get praise in them days," one worker recalled. "If you didn't get a bollocking, you were doing alright."

Sutherlands vans used to be a familiar sight in Sheffield

After the Second World War, business boomed. With Britain hungry for affordable, filling food, Sutherlands potted meat became a staple in lunchboxes, canteens, and corner shops.

Young lads like John Parkinson, a trained chef, helped drive innovation, suggesting tweaks to recipes and methods that improved shelf life and flavour. Though Eddie wasn't always keen on 'new-fangled' ideas, he recognised talent and loyalty when he saw it.

By the early 1950s, demand was so high that the business could no longer operate from garages and cellars alone. New premises were found, production expanded, and Eddie reluctantly agreed to Peter's plan to sell the potted meat in glass jars.

The old man thought it was a waste of time — but it opened a new chapter for the brand.

In 1965, a major milestone was reached with the opening of the Waleswood Food Factory at Kiveton Park. It was a proud moment: a state-of-the-art facility capable of mass production, ensuring that Sutherlands' famous spreads could reach supermarkets and customers nationwide.

There was a seriousness of purpose at Waleswood. Hygiene was paramount, and quality control was strict. Yet there was still time for

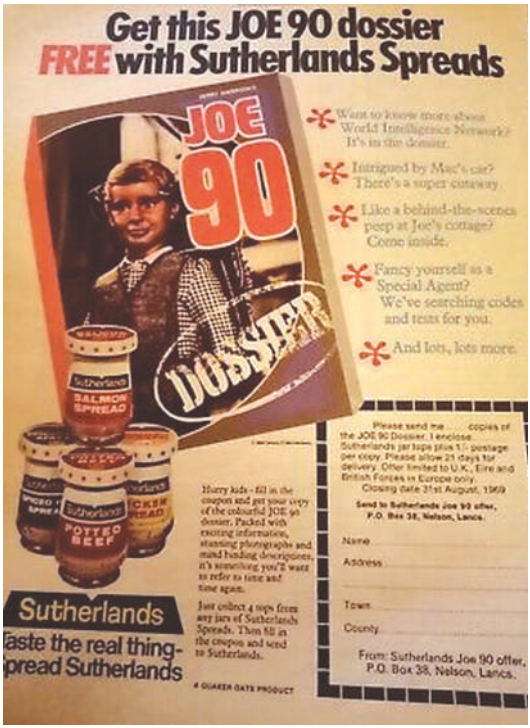
...most risks paid dividends and the company remained fiercely proud of its Sheffield roots

humour. Workers recalled racing each other down the long tiled corridors on trolleys and being scolded by Peter Sutherland if the precious tap water wasn't drawn from the correct 'tasting tap' to make the perfect rusk mix.

By the 1970s, Sutherlands was producing millions of jars a year. The brand's reputation for honesty, flavour and value remained intact even as competitors cut corners.

Not every gamble paid off — attempts to sell potted meat sandwiches on British Rail, for example, fell flat. But most risks paid dividends, and the company remained fiercely proud of its Sheffield roots.

Sutherlands' resilience showed in other ways too. During a post-war meat shortage, the company famously salvaged a consignment of tinned beef from a torpedoed Russian freighter, ensuring production could continue. It was a typical Sheffield solution: pragmatic, bold, and a little bit cheeky.

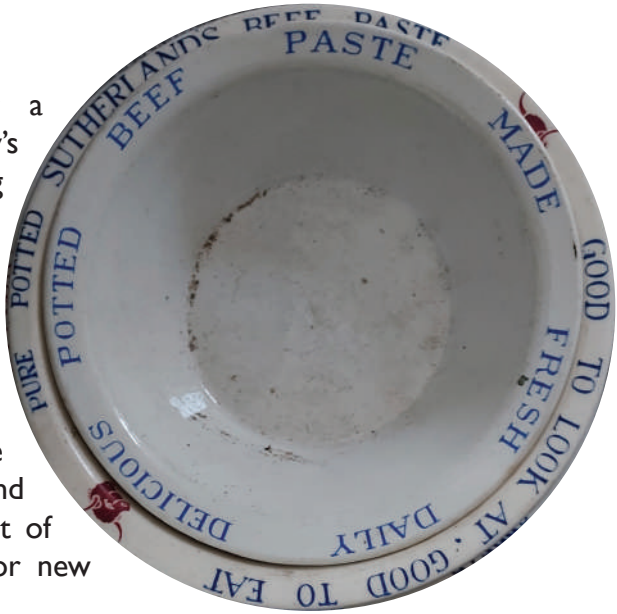


The business eventually passed down the generations, with Peter Sutherland and his team steering it into the modern era. Larger contracts, new distribution deals, and shrewd negotiation kept Sutherlands thriving well into the late 20th century.

Although the original company and rights to the Sutherlands name were eventually sold, the family spirit endured.

In more recent years, members of the Sutherland family revived their food-

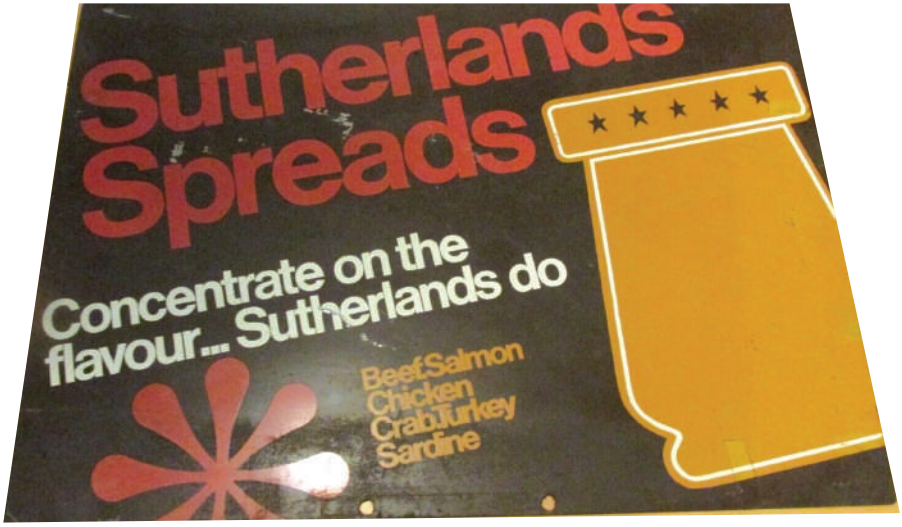
making tradition under a new name: Granny Mary's Original Recipes, honouring Mary Sutherland, whose homemade potted beef had started it all.



Unable to use the Sutherlands name due to the earlier sale, they chose instead to celebrate the real roots of the brand — and to keep the spirit of "Yorkshire Gold" alive for new generations.

Today, even though Sutherlands' famous pots may no longer dominate the shelves, their story lives on. A story of grit, graft, good humour — and a belief that sometimes the best things come out of the most modest beginnings.

Sutherlands may have started in a tiny cellar, but they fed a city, built a legacy, and added a hearty, homespun chapter to Sheffield's proud food history.



Fast Facts About Potted Meat and Sutherlands:

1. Born in a Cellar:
Sutherlands' potted meat started life in the 1920s in the cellar of a terraced house on Tavistock Road, Darnall, Sheffield.
2. A Family Effort:
Mary Sutherland made the first batches by hand, while Eddie Sutherland quietly sold them alongside his rounds delivering Lyons Tea.
3. Yorkshire Gold:
The term "Yorkshire Gold" was affectionately coined by Eddie Sutherland to describe their enhanced recipe – adding golden rusk to improve spreadability and value.
4. Never a Formal Brand:
Although "Yorkshire Gold" was a beloved nickname within the business, it was never used officially on jars or packaging.
5. A Taste Built to Last:
Thanks to the traditional method of slow-cooking and sealing meat under fat, potted meat could last for days without refrigeration — ideal for Sheffield's working families.
6. Factory Powerhouse:
In 1965, Sutherlands opened the Waleswood Food Factory at Kiveton Park — a state-of-the-art plant producing millions of jars a year.
7. War Time Ingenuity:
During World War Two, Sutherlands famously salvaged tinned beef from a torpedoed Russian freighter to keep production running.
8. New Chapter – Granny Mary's:
In more recent years, the Sutherland family revived their food-making tradition under the brand Granny Mary's Original Recipes, honouring the matriarch who started it all.
9. A Real Sheffield Staple:
At its height, Sutherlands wasn't just a company — it was a part of Sheffield life, filling lunchboxes, butties, and bellies across the city.

Chapter 12:

A Pinch of Sheffield: The Story of Burdall's Gravy Salts

In Sheffield, where the winters were long, the work was hard, and the meals were hearty, there was one kitchen staple that quietly earned legendary status: Burdall's Gravy Salts.

If you grew up in Sheffield or its surrounding villages any time from the 1920s onwards, chances are you remember the reassuring sight of a tin of Burdall's sitting proudly on the sideboard.

A small scoop stirred into boiling water could instantly turn even the plainest tea into a rich, steaming plateful of comfort.

Meat and potato pie, roast beef dinners, even a humble pile of chips – everything was better when drowned in a glistening coat of Burdall's brown gravy.

The story of Burdall's Gravy Salt began with Herbert Moses Burdall and his son Herbert Alonza Burdall, who founded Burdall's Manufacturing Chemists in Sheffield in the early 1900s.

Their original Gibraltar Street premises produced a range of household products — from soapless shampoo powders to hair creams — but it

“You could have a plate of nothing but mashed potatoes and gravy and still feel like a king.”

was their distinctive gravy salt, a simple blend of salt and caramel, that captured Sheffield’s tastebuds.

In 1935, after a fire at the Gibraltar Street works, the company relocated to Hillsborough Barracks.

There, within the imposing stone walls of the former military site, Burdall’s production line thrived.

The factory became something of a local landmark – not just for its impressive setting, but for the comforting, mouth-watering aroma that often drifted out onto Langsett Road.

The magic of Burdall’s Gravy Salt lay in its unique flavour profile.

Unlike many modern gravies that rely heavily on artificial flavourings, Burdall’s achieved its rich, satisfying taste through a careful balance of saltiness and deep caramel tones.

It wasn’t just an accompaniment — it was a meal-saver.

“You could have a plate of nothing but mashed potatoes and gravy and still feel like a king,” one Sheffield granddad once joked.

Burdalls - a blast from the past

And it wasn't far from the truth.

Throughout the mid-20th century, Burdall's tins became a familiar sight not only in Sheffield homes but across Yorkshire and beyond.

Burdall's found its way into countless chip shops and factory canteens across the city

The design was practical and instantly recognisable: sturdy, no-nonsense, and built to last, much like the gravy itself.

Burdall's succeeded on reputation alone — passed down through generations, recommended by mums, grandads, and corner shopkeepers, without the need for glitzy advertising.

During the post-war years, when rationing still pinched and every scrap of food had to be stretched, Burdall's was an essential part of the kitchen.

Even today, vintage tins of Burdall's Gravy Salt are prized collectors' items

A small amount went a long way — rescuing thin stews, brightening up yesterday's leftovers, and adding richness to otherwise plain meals.

It wasn't just for home kitchens either: Burdall's found its way into countless chip shops and factory canteens across the city.

However, like many traditional food brands, Burdall's faced changing times.

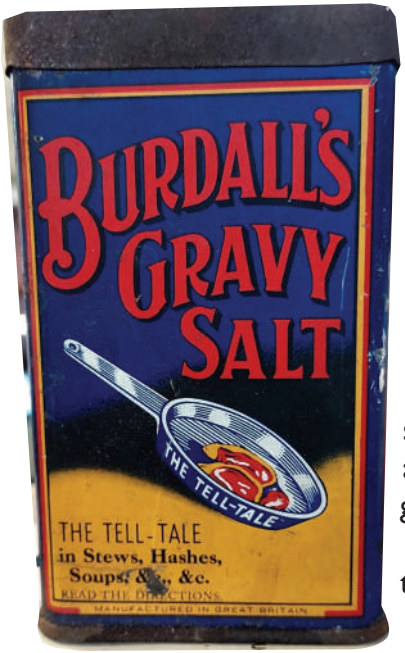
In 1976, the company was sold, and eventually the production of Burdall's Gravy Salts ceased.

The tins slowly disappeared from the shelves, replaced by modern gravy granules and instant mixes.

It marked the end of an era for Sheffield's kitchens.

Yet the affection for Burdall's never quite went away.

Even today, vintage tins of Burdall's Gravy Salt are prized collectors' items, and the distinct taste — that perfect balance of salt and caramel — is fondly remembered.



The brand's enduring legacy has even inspired a resurgence of interest, with modern companies like Old Jake's Gravy Saviour offering tribute products that aim to recreate that original, unbeatable flavour using traditional methods and natural ingredients.

In many ways, Burdall's Gravy Salts are a perfect symbol of Sheffield's food story: unfussy, hardworking, practical, and deeply satisfying. Proof that sometimes it's the simplest things – a good meal, a warm plate, a bit of proper brown gravy – that bring the greatest comfort.

And somewhere in the kitchens of memory, that old tin still sits, ready to work its magic once again.

10 Fun Facts About Burdall's Gravy Salts

1. Sheffield Born and Bred:
Burdall's Manufacturing Chemists was founded in Sheffield in the early 1900s by Herbert Moses Burdall and his son Herbert Alonza Burdall.
2. More Than Just Gravy:
Alongside their famous gravy salts, Burdall's also produced soapless shampoo powders, hair creams, and other household essentials.
3. A Barracks Business:
After a fire destroyed their original Gibraltar Street works in 1935, Burdall's moved production to Hillsborough Barracks — a Sheffield landmark.
4. The Secret Flavour:
Burdall's gravy salts achieved their unique taste with a simple but clever blend of salt and caramel — no artificial flavourings needed.
5. Wartime Staple:
During the Second World War and post-war rationing, Burdall's gravy helped stretch small portions into hearty meals for Sheffield families.
6. Kitchen Essential:
A tin of Burdall's was found in almost every Sheffield home, school kitchen, and chip shop throughout the 1940s, 50s, and 60s.
7. No Flash, All Flavour:
Unlike many brands today, Burdall's succeeded without flashy advertising — it thrived purely by word of mouth and local loyalty.
8. End of an Era:
The company was sold in 1976, and eventually production ceased — but the memories and the taste have never been forgotten.
9. Modern Tributes:
Brands like Old Jake's Gravy Saviour have tried to recreate the magic of Burdall's, sparking a mini-revival of traditional gravy salts.
10. A True Sheffield Legend:
Ask any older Sheffielder about Burdall's, and you'll likely get a smile — and a fond story of "proper gravy" done right.

Chapter 13:

The taste of SADACCA A taste of Caribbean food to try at home!

This project has worked closely with the city's SADACCA centre. Thanks to Rob Cotterell for providing these delicious recipes for you to try at home. Many traditional recipes given a new Sheffield twist since the first Caribbean residents first came to live here in the 1950's.

Ackee and Callaloo!

Ackee is the national fruit of Jamaica. Its fruit, when fully ripe, is suitable for cooking when the pods are bright red and they split open easily to expose the edible fruit inside.
Callaloo is a leafy, green vegetable, full of vitamins C, K; calcium and iron.

Ingredients:

1 tin of each of ackee and callaloo will make 8-10 pies!

1 chopped onion

2 cloves of garlic, chopped

1/4 scotch bonnet pepper, seeded and chopped.

Dry veg seasoning

0.5 tbs fresh cracked pepper

2 spring onions, chopped

2 sprigs of thyme

Cooking oil of choice

Method:

- Add 2 tbs of oil to a pan , heat up. Add garlic to soften but don't burn.
- Add onions,
- Soften then add a little of the cracked pepper and veg seasoning

(they usually have sodium added so may not need salt?). Add scotch bonnet.

- Rinse the tops of the tins before opening, you never know where they've been stored?
- Open the tins and add the callaloo to the onion/garlic mix without draining.
- Simmer the mixture until all ingredients and flavours have fused, add the thyme and mix in.
- Add the rest of the cracked pepper.
- If the mixture is really wet add a small amount of cornflour mix to thicken it up.
- Lastly add the ackee alongside the spring onion which does not need further cooking really. Plus, it will cook whilst baking.
- Gently stir all the mix until all infused but not too fast or harsh,
- Simply repeat your pastry procedure and pie construction process!
- Don't use egg, then they are truly vegetarian and/or vegan!!!
- Enjoy with sweet potato wedges or sweet potato, pumpkin and butternut squash smash. Finish off with freshly minted mushy peas or garden or marrow fat pea smash!

Curry Mutton Pie

Ingredients:

1kg boneless mutton = 8-10 pies
2tbs Hot madras curry powder
1tbs garam masala powder
1tbs cumin powder
2tsp fresh cracked pepper
1 onion chopped
1qtr to half scotch bonnet pepper
(depending on how hot you prefer?) seeded and chopped
2 cloves garlic chopped
3 spring onions, chopped
4 sprigs of Fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
Cooking oil. I prefer coconut oil.
Salt to taste

Method:

- Wash mutton in water vinegar and lime or lemon juice.
- Drain and place into your saucepan.
- Add all the ingredients EXCEPT the thyme, bay leaf and spring onions.
- Use disposable gloves and massage all the ingredients into the mutton until all the meat is coated with all the dry ingredients.
- Cover with pan lid and seal with cling film.
- Leave for 24 hours in fridge or cold storage/cellar.

Next day:

- Remove from storage for 30 minutes before cooking.
- Then add 200ml of water and the oil to the mutton.
- Stir whilst cold to get the water to the bottom of the pan.
- Place on stove on full heat.
- When it starts to boil stir thoroughly then leave on full for another 5 minutes before stirring again.

- Turn down the heat to a simmer but still bubbling.
- Occasionally stir to ensure meat cooks evenly and does not stick to bottom of the pan.
- It will need to simmer for at least 90 minutes!

Pastry for 6-8 pies.

Ingredients:

275grms plain flour
175grms veg butter block
2grms salt

Method:

- Weigh flour and add salt
- Chop butter block into 8-10 cubes, add to flour.
- Add everything into food blender/ or crumble by hand.
- When everything is combined place into a bowl, add half a tbs of water and form into a ball.
- Flour work surface.
- Knead pastry with the heel of your hand incorporating enough flour so the pastry does not stick.
- The pastry should start to form into a nice smooth soft sheen ball. Stop kneading.
- Place pastry in fridge for 30 minutes.
- Check mutton, stir then taste the gravy. Is it missing anything? More salt? Is it too hot, pepper wise?
If so add a little more water, let it reduce and add more water if needed.
- Grease your mutton tin, set aside.

Ready to roll?

- Flour your worktop. Get your rolling pin, 2 pastry cutters (1 to line the tin, another smaller for the lids!) and palate knife and egg wash brush!
- Flour your rolling pin. Place the pastry in the flour and splash some flour on top of the pastry.

- Roll pastry and keep turning to ensure you roll the whole ball evenly down to 2/3mm.
- Use your large cutter to produce 6 rounds. Line your mutton tin.
- Place the rest of the pastry back into the food blender and pulse chop it back to the pastry mix.
- Add a little water, form another ball, roll out.
- Now make your tops.
- Set aside for now.
- Beat an egg in a bowl and get a small bowl of water to 'stick' the tops on!
- Preheat oven to 180 degrees.
- How's the mutton doing? Add spring onion and bay leaf, stir in.

If you're over 90 minutes later, how tender is the mutton? Should be softer and easy to break away? When it does breakaway place a tbs of the mutton into each pastry cup, add some gravy and top up with mutton but don't over fill.

■ Dip each pastry lid, edge only, into the water. Place on top of filling and tamp it down to meet/seal the cup. Egg wash and snip a hole in the lid for the steam to be released.
■ Place in oven on where your oven cooks most evenly.
■ Leave for 20 minutes then look!
If cooking evenly turn the heat down to 150 or another 10 minutes. If not cooking evenly then spin the tray back to front and still turn down to 150.
■ Keep an eye on them. When golden brown and even? They're done!!!
■ Take out of oven and place on top of the hob for 30 minutes. Then move tray to a cooling rack. After 90 minutes they can go in the fridge if you're not going to eat straightaway?
■ They can be frozen after 2 hours in the fridge.

'A Taste of Sheffield'

BASSETT'S

First premises were Broad Street in 1852. Moved to Portland Street in 1859. Sheffield S2 then Sheffield S6

BERES

First shop was in Wadsley Bridge in 1961. Sheffield S6

BURDALLS

Started around 1930 first in Gibraltar Street. Then at the former Hillsborough Barracks. Sheffield S3 and S6

DORA WEBSTER

Shop on Middlewood Road. Sheffield S6

FLETCHERS

Started in 1895, the bakery was located off Clay Wheels Lane. Sheffield S6

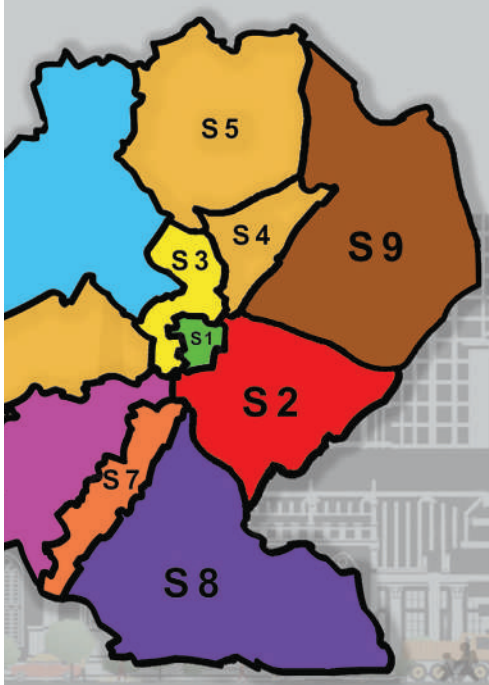
SIMPKINS

Established in 1921 on Hunter Road where it still operates from. Sheffield S6

SUTHERLANDS

Started in 1920s from the family home in Tavistock Road. Moved to Handsworth Road, Darnall. Sheffield S7 S9

A food heritage trail



CUNNINGHAMS

Started in Queens Road in the early 1900s. Sheffield S2

BATCHELORS

Started in 1895 in Stanley Street. Sheffield S3

HENDERSON'S

Started in the family home in 1885 on Green Lane then moved to Leavy Greave Road then Sheffield Parkway, the current premises. Sheffield S3 S1 S9

SADACCA

Sheffield and District African Caribbean Community Association began in 1986 having merged with the West Indies Association (started in 1955). Sheffield S3

SADACCA

MAXONS

Still in production today. Sheffield S8

THORNTONS

Established in 1911, located first in Norfolk Street, then Stalker Lees Road before moving to Archer Road. Sheffield S1 S11 S8

INGRAM'S

Business located on Ecclesall Road. Sheffield S11

Dora Webster's bakery, on Middlewood Road, Sheffield, in 2006. Another local institution

This book is dedicated to the memory of **Linda Lambert** – the much missed lady behind the once popular pies served at Dungworth's Royal Hotel

Food heritage timeline

1842

George **Bassett** established himself as a retail confectioner. The company became a brand of Cadbury Schweppes in 1989. The brand's final owner was Mondelez International, which merged the brand with Maynards to create Maynards Bassett's in 2016

1885

Henry **Henderson** began the business at his home on Green Lane. The business is now located on Sheffield Parkway.

Maxons - Henry Dixon began making sweets and toffees. In 1927 the MacDonald family started making sweets in Bents Green under the name Maxons (Mac and sons). Ralph Pitchfork was a wholesale confectioner. All three came together in the 1950s.

1895

William **Batchelor** started the business in Stanley Street. Sheffield factory closed in 1982. Relocated to Worksop.

George Henry **Fletcher** began the business in Clay Wheels Lane (?). The company is now part of Finsbury Food Group since 2014.

1900

Cunninghams started in Queens Road, Sheffield but was bought by Seasoners Foods, Manchester in 2015.

1911

Ingram's Tea was located on Ecclesall Road.

Thorntons started in Sheffield then relocated to Belper and currently in Alfreton, Derbyshire. Although their shops closed in 2021, the company sells online and in major retail stores.

1920

Sutherlands was started by Eddie Sutherland from the family home in Tavistock Road. As the business grew, he relocated to a factory on Handsworth Road, Darnall.

1921

Simpkins is still located in its original premises in Hillsborough.

1955

SADACCA (Sheffield and District African Caribbean Community Association) emerged from the West Indies Association started in 1955. In 1986, SADACCA became constituted by first generation African and Caribbean members of the community, who saw a need to meet the socially, family and community needs of the African and Caribbean community.

1961

Sandor **Beres** fled the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 and came to Britain. His first shop was in Wadsley Bridge. There are now 14 shops in Sheffield.

1930 **1976**

Burdalls continued as a brand of gravy salts after 1976 but manufactured by Space Foods in Leicestershire until 2000 when the factory closed.

1950 **2008**

Dora Webster's bakery was located at 311 Middlewood Road.