

## CORRESPONDENCE SERIES

The CORRESPONDENCE SERIES is an investigation into the background of recipients of British pre-stamped postal stationery. The "collection" was purchased in South Africa in 1999 as a job lot, the which took me six months to sort and mount, creating a collection spanning 140 years. I have no idea of the provenance.

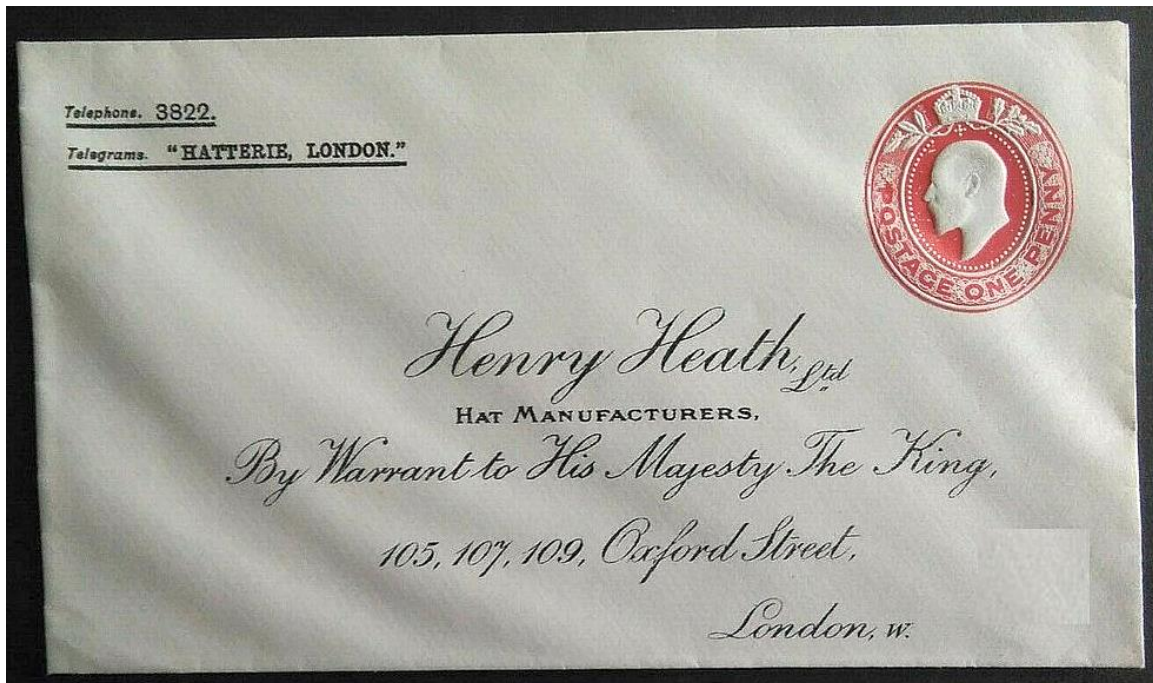
The Reference work is British Postal Stationery, A K Huggins.1970. The first date with catalogue number refers to the year when the pre-stamped envelope was first issued; the second, the year when the envelope was actually used.

### Philatelic Description of the item of Postal Stationery:

February 1902-1903 (ES31)\_ EVII 1d Embossed Envelope Stamped to Order (scarce), addressed to Henry Heath Ltd, Oxford Street, London

### Brief Comment:

Operating out of the circa 1880 Beaver Building on London's 105-109 Oxford St, 16-18 Hollen St, W1, the Henry Heath Hat Factory produced handmade headwear of such fine quality it earned warrants to EVII (\* 1841 – † 1910), GV (\* 1865 – † 1936) GVI (\* 1895 – † 1952) and King Alphonso XIII (\* 1886 – † 1941) and the Royal Courts of United Kingdom and Spain.



## Appendix 1:

### The Henry Heath Hat Factory, 105-109 Oxford St, 16-18 Hollen St, W1

The Henry Heath hat making business was established in 1822 at a site adjacent to the present building. When the firm first started, beaver hats were worn by all respectable people, but as the beaver became hunted to near extinction, thus pushing up the price.



Henry Heath (HH) made all types of hats for men and women including the Duke of Wellington's Field Marshall's hat and straw hats for Queen Victoria's grandchildren (she plaited the straw herself). The Hatterie was to become most famous for silk (or top) hats. Animal fur eventually was superseded by creating cheaper roughly napped hats, being introduced initially for the army and navy. However, by the silk plush hat, which became standard for a century, was their pièce de resistance; and when it fell out of favour and the market for top hats disappeared after decades of success, so did the business<sup>i, ii</sup>. Indeed, from the 1880s HH was exporting all over the world and continued to do so until the late 1930s when WWII intervened. HH left the premises in the early 1950s, remaining as a wholesale business in Brewer Street, Soho, until this too closed in 1958<sup>iii</sup>.

Ser. No. 646,214. **Henry Heath** (Wholesale) Limited,  
London, England. Filed Apr. 30, 1953.



No claim is made to the exclusive use of "Established In The Reign Of King George IV," "Hat Makers Since 1822," "London." The name "Henry Heath" is the name of a predecessor, now deceased. Applicant claims ownership of British Reg. No. 605,079, dated July 3, 1939.  
For Men's and Women's **Hats**.

iv

It is thought that (Sir) Robert Palmer Harding (\*1821– † 1893) had originally operated HH until later it ran into difficulties. Legend has it that a court official advised him to embark on a career in accountancy which he did establishing a practice in 1847 resigning therefrom in 1883 <sup>v</sup>.

William Herbert Peto's (\* 1849 – † 1927) was originally commissioned to create new premises for HH. When he retired in 1887, his brother Basil Edward (\* 1862 – † 1945) was joined by Stanley Glenville Harding (\* 1857– † 1978 ), a brother-in-law and son of Sir Robert, and they rebuilt the factory, extending onto the site of the Mitre public house and brewery (the vaults of which remain under Oxford Street) which had been built by Allen Hollen in 1715 <sup>vi, vii</sup>.

Designed by John Thomas Christopher (\* 1829 – † 1910) in August 1887, the interiors are thought to have been devised by Harold Ainsworth Peto (\* 1854 – † 1933). The building is of typical construction for the period — cast iron columns, wrought iron beams, timber board and joist floors, loadbearing brick external walls. Its main architectural glory is the unglazed buff terracotta facade to Oxford Street in a free 'Flemish' style, the ornamental work of which was designed and made by Benjamin Creswick (\* 1853 – † 1946) of A H Mackmurdo's Century Guild, pioneers of the Arts and Crafts Movement. On the gables are four large ferocious beavers, lower down are portraits of George IV and Victoria, elsewhere are lions' heads and originally there was frieze illustrating the various processes of hat making, which was described when new as 'a unique treatment of a shop fascia and a fine work of art'. This was destroyed in the 1950s and now only the head of a beaver trapper exists, discovered during restoration works.



The complex consists of a four-storey rear building, a five-storey building on Oxford Street, a single-storey link block and a basement under all the site. The Hollen Street building was the factory with the boilers and raw material storage in the basement. Goods were brought in and out through the large double doors and weighed on the small weighbridge on the ground floor. A hoist took the materials up to the manufacturing floors and brought the finished hats down into the back of the shop or down to the warehouse in the basement of the front building. The ground floor of the Oxford Street building and the link block were the main showroom, the first floor was the fitting room, with a mezzanine in the link block adjacent for final trimming and adjustment. The second floor “was the residence of Mr. Heath, with the bedrooms for his family and servants on the third floor”. The fourth floor was a dormitory for the workers. St Patrick's school, adjacent, provided apprentices.

The building was much altered in the subsequent years. From 1982-5 the building was completely restored in phases for the Crown Estate Commissioners (who have owned the site since 1536 and to whom the building had just reverted), by Jon Wallsgrove, whilst working for Frederick Gibberd Coombes & Partners (architects) and the work being carried out by Bell & Co. (Westminster) Ltd.

*Jon Wallsgrove, 9th July 1985* with redactions, supplementation and editing by R M Pelteret 2020

<http://www.glias.org.uk/news/099news.html>



## References:

<https://cabbieblog.com/2013/10/15/beavering-away/>  
<https://darkestlondon.com/tag/henry-heath-hat-factory/>  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1066036>  
<https://weburbanist.com/2014/11/09/blocked-out-10-closed-abandoned-hat-making-factories/2/>  
<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/advertisement-for-henry-heaths-ladies-hats>  
<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols33-4/pp288-296>  
[https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/239/1/uk\\_bl\\_ethos\\_353444\\_VOL1.pdf](https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/239/1/uk_bl_ethos_353444_VOL1.pdf)  
<http://www.glias.org.uk/news/099news.html>  
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<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09585200701609588?needAccess=true>  
<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/32180/page/54/data.pdf>  
[https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/architecture/sites/bartlett/files/sol\\_oxfordst\\_chapter15.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/architecture/sites/bartlett/files/sol_oxfordst_chapter15.pdf)

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<sup>i</sup> [HTTPS://DARKESTLONDON.COM](https://darkestlondon.com): Henry Heath's primary product was top hats, which were made using felted fur from "Beaver Otter, Rabbits, Hares and Musk Rats."

<sup>ii</sup> [HTTPS://CABBIEBLOG.COM](https://cabbieblog.com): During Victoria's reign most gentlemen wore a hat for occupational use, or as a fashion accessory, and the top hat was literally at the top end of the titter market. Replacing the tricorne, they were known as a toppers, chimney pots and stove pipes.

Henry Heath's hat factory once employed upwards of 70 people. An advertisement at the time asked: Why Wear an Ill-Fitting hat? They could be assured of solving this annoying sartorial problem with a visit to Henry Heath's subjecting their craniums to a 'successful system of Head Measurements ensure the luxury of a well-fitting Hat adapted to the form of the Wearer's head'.



To separate fur from the pelts, factory workers soaked the skins in a compound of mercury. Unfortunately, fumes from the chemical had the unpleasant side-effect of poisoning their nervous systems. This made them drool, tremble, talk gibberish and have bouts of severe paranoia, giving rise to the expression "mad as a hatter". Heath ensured these unfortunate souls were kept well away from customers.

<sup>iii</sup> THE LONDON GAZETTE, 1968 and 1980. Registrar of Companies : NOTICE is hereby given, pursuant to section 353(3) of the Companies Act, 1948, that at the expiration of three months from the

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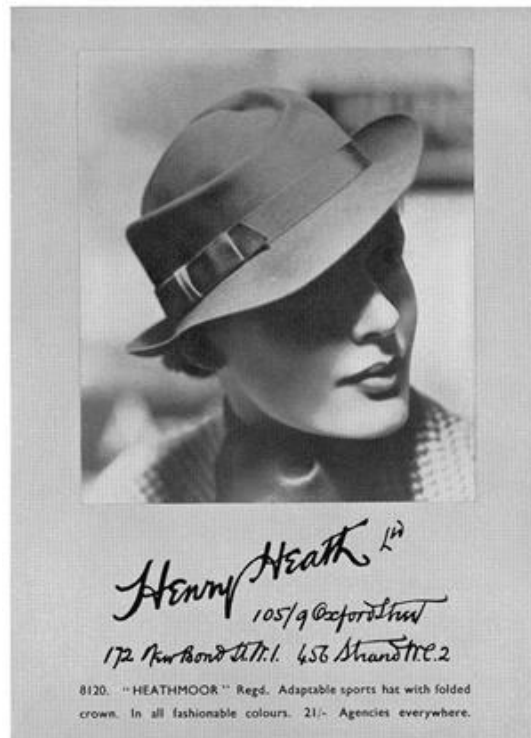
date of the publication of this notice, the names of the Companies mentioned in the list hereunder will, unless cause is shown to the contrary, be struck off the Register, and the Companies will be dissolved.

iv OFFICIAL GAZETTE of the United States Patent Office 8 June 1954

v THE LONDON GAZETTE, JANUARY 4, 1884.93 NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, Robert Palmer Harding, Frederick Whinney, William Hurlbatt, John Smith, and Stanley Grenville Harding, carrying on business as Accountants, at No. 8, Old Jewry, in the city of London, under the style or firm of Harding, Whinney, and Company, has this day been dissolved, by mutual consent, so far as concerns the said Robert Palmer Harding, who retires from the said firm; and the partnership business will in future be carried on by the said Frederick Whinney, William Hurlbatt, John Smith, and Stanley Grenville Harding, under the same style or firm, at the same address as aforesaid. All debts due to the late firm and all liabilities will be received and paid by the continuing partners. Dated this 31st day of December 1883. R.P. Harding. John Smith. Fredk. Whinney. Stanley G. Harding .Wm. Hurlbat

vi THE LONDON GAZETTE, DECEMBER 28, 1888.7430 NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, William Herbert Peto, Basil Edward Peto, and Stanley Grenville Harding, carrying on business as Builders and Contractors, at 29, Gillingham-street, Pimlico, in the county of Middlesex, under the style or firm of Peto Brothers, has been this day dissolved, by mutual consent, so far as regards the said William Herbert Peto, who retires from the said business; and that the said business will in future be carried on by the said Basil Edward Peto and Stanley Grenville Harding, at 29, Gillingham-street aforesaid, under the said style or firm of Peto Brothers. As witness the hands of the said parties this 17th day of December 1888. W. Herbt. Peto. Basil E. Peto. Stanley G. Harding.

vii NATIONAL ARCHIVES : Henry Heath (Wholesale) Ltd, hat manufacturers: records 1898 – 1966



## Appendix 2 : the lineage of Henry Heath Hat Manufacturer, by Appointment

It is curious that, given the large number of articles that refer to Henry Heath Ltd of Oxford Street London, none, to my knowledge, have sought to contextualise the founding father and his descendants. I, for one, began to wonder whether there had ever been a Henry Heath or was the company name but an exercise in marketing alliteration.

That which follows is an attempt to clarify the genealogy of the Heath family.

**1 WILLIAM HEATH**<sup>1</sup> (\* c. 1766 – bapt. 25 September 1766 – † unknown). Parents: John and Margaret = Mary (England Births and Deaths 1538-1975 [M21])

**2 HENRY HEATH**<sup>2 3 4</sup> (\* 1798 – bapt. 29 April 1798 Lambeth – † 25 March 1877) = (first) Apr/Jun 1842 Susannah Davis **OR** Jan/Mar 1839 Marylebone Henry Heath / Susannah Hay [M11]

2.1 Sarah Elizabeth Heath<sup>5</sup> (\* 1 July 1831– bapt. 24 July 1831 – † unknown). Parents Henry and Susannah

2.2 William Frances Heath<sup>6</sup> (\* 28 October 1832 – bapt. 17 February 1833 St Leonards, Shoreditch – † 25 March 1877). Parents Henry and Susannah

2.3 Elizabeth Ann Heath<sup>7</sup> (\* 4 August 1834 – bapt. 21 June 1837 St Leonards, Shoreditch – † ). Parents Henry and Susannah

**2.4 GEORGE HEATH**<sup>8 9</sup> (\* 1838 – bapt. 1 April 1838 St Leonards, Shoreditch – † unknown). Parents Henry and Susannah. England and Wales Death Registration Index 1837 – 2007. George Heath (age 47) Death Westminster St. Margaret, London [M1]

**HENRY HEATH** = (second)<sup>10</sup> HARRIOTT WILLIAMS (\* 27 March 1800 – bapt. 13 April 1800 St Sepulchre Newgate, London – † unknown, by 1871) (M 14) (M15) Parents John and Elizabeth Williams

2.4 George Heath<sup>11 12</sup> (\* 1838 – bapt. 1 April 1838 St Leonards, Shoreditch – † unknown). Parents Henry and Susannah = Francis Ann

2.4.1 Emily Francis Heath<sup>13</sup> (\* 1862 – † unknown)

**2.4.2 GEORGE HEATH (JNR)**<sup>14 15 16 17</sup> (\* 1864 – † 2 February 1910) = **ROSE EDITH HEATH**<sup>18 19</sup> (\* 1871 – † 21 May 1929 [58 yrs] )

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<sup>1</sup> England Births and Christenings 1538-1975 WILLIAM HEATH [M21]

<sup>2</sup> England and Wales Census 1871. HENRY HEATH (age 73) Birthplace Lambeth, Surrey. Widower. Accommodation St Anne Soho, Westminster, Middlesex. Occupation Hat Manufacturer. Occupants. [M10]

<sup>3</sup> England and Wales Death Registration Index 1837-2007. HENRY HEATH (age 79) Death, Westminster St. Margaret [M11]

<sup>4</sup> People found in Shared Family Tree : HENRY HEATH \* 1798 Lambeth, Surrey; bapt 29 April 1798 St Mary the Less, Lambeth; † 25 March 1877 Middlesex. Spouse Harriott Williams. Parents: William Heath and Mary unknown.[M11] [M12]

<sup>5</sup> England Births and Christenings, 1538 – 1975. SARAH ELIZABETH HEATH \* 1 July 1831 bapt. 24 July 1831 St Leonards, Shoreditch. Parents: Henry and Susannah [M19]

<sup>6</sup> England Births and Christenings, 1538 – 1975. WILLIAM FRANCIS HEATH \* 28 October b1832 bapt. 17 February 1833 St Leonards, Shoreditch. Parents: Henry and Susannah [M18]

<sup>7</sup> England Births and Christenings, 1538 – 1975. ELIZABETH ANN HEATH \* 4 August 1834 bapt. 21 June 1837 St Leonards, Shoreditch. Parents: Henry and Susannah [M20]

<sup>8</sup> England and Wales Census 1881. GEORGE HEATH JNR (age 17) Birthplace St George, Middlesex Civil Parish Westminster. Residence Oxford St / St Anne Soho, Middlesex. Occupation Hat Manufacturer. Occupants George Heath (father; age 43; \* 1838) Emily Francis Heath (sister, age 19, \* 1862) [M8]

<sup>9</sup> England Births and Christenings, 1538 – 1975. GEORGE HEATH bapt. 1 April 1838 St Leonards, Shoreditch. Parents: Henry and Susannah [M16] [M17] England and Wales Death Registration Index 1837 – 2007. GEORGE HEATH (age 47) Death Westminster St. Margaret, London [M1]

<sup>10</sup> England, Surrey Parish Registers, 1536 – 1992. HARRIOTT WILLIAMS marriage to Henry Heath (widower) 10 April 1825 Parish Church, Newington St Mary, Surrey [M14]

<sup>11</sup> England and Wales Census 1881. GEORGE HEATH JNR (age 17) Birthplace St George, Middlesex Civil Parish Westminster. Residence Oxford St / St Anne Soho, Middlesex. Occupation Hat Manufacturer. Occupants George Heath (father; age 43; \* 1838) Emily Francis Heath (sister, age 19, \* 1862) [M8]

<sup>12</sup> England Births and Christenings, 1538 – 1975. GEORGE HEATH bapt. 1 April 1838 St Leonards, Shoreditch. Parents: Henry and Susannah [M16] [M17]

<sup>13</sup> England and Wales Census 1881. EMILY FRANCES HEATH (age 19) Expansion of Footnotes 10. Emily Francis Heath (sister, age 19, Birthplace Marylebone \* 1862 Occupation Hat Manufacturer) [M9]

<sup>14</sup> British Newspaper Archives / GEORGE HEATH [JNR]4 February 1910. # Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser; # London Daily News, London England; # London Standard; # Yorkshire Evening Post. [M2];

<sup>15</sup> England and Wales, National Index of Wills and Administrations, 1858 – 1957. GEORGE HEATH [JNR Probate 1 March 1910. Beneficiary Rose Edith Heath [M6]

<sup>16</sup> England and Wales Census 1891. GEORGE HEATH [JNR (age 27) Civil Parish Kensington. Ecclesiastical Parish St. Peter. Occupation Hat Manufacturer. [M7]



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<sup>17</sup> England and Wales Census 1881. GEORGE HEATH [JNR (age 17) Birthplace St George, Middlesex Civil Parish Westminster. Residence Oxford St / St Anne Soho, Middlesex. Occupation Hat Manufacturer. Occupants George Heath (father) Emily Francis Heath (sister) [M8]

<sup>18</sup> England and Wales Census 1901. ROSE EDITH HEATH (age 30) Civil Parish Kensington. Ecclesiastical Parish St. John Notting Hill. Husband George Heath (age 37) born Bloomsbury, London. Occupants. [M4]

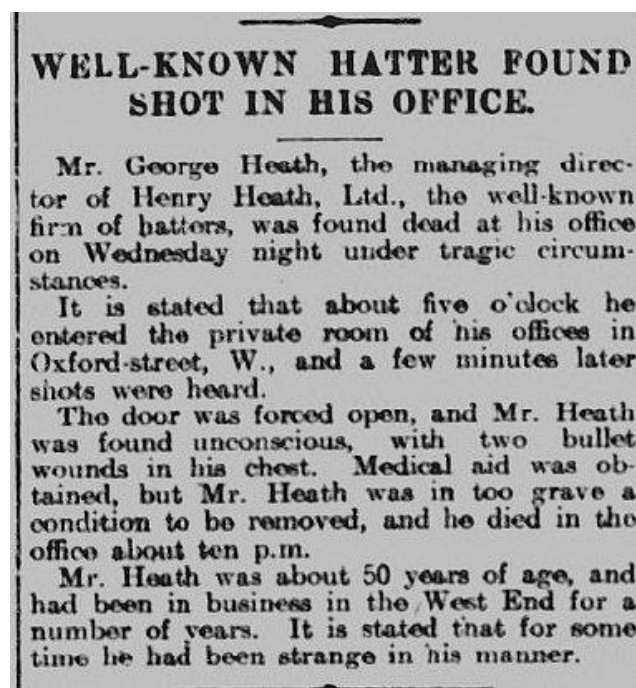
<sup>19</sup> England and Wales, National Index of Wills and Administrations, 1858 – 1957. ROSE EDITH HEATH. Death 21 May 1929. Probate 12 July 1929. Beneficiary Reginald Muzio Williams MD (\* 1860 – † 1943) , Arthur Elliot Rhodes (\* 1869 – † 29 May 1932) [M13]

### Appendix 3: The Last Word

Headgear is more than just clothing; it's an acknowledgment of Heritage; it's an expression of Self-worth; it's a Social statement, it's an appreciation of an Art form within the Arts and Crafts movement.



George Heath committed suicide on 2 February 1910. Death Notices were published in several English newspapers on 4 February 1910, but no mention was made as to reason. What is known is that soon there was a profound change in fashion taking place and this impacted adversely on the hatters' trade.



Little is published about the intervening years (1910 – 1950), though I suspect there remains a wealth of relevant and unexplored material in the National Archives. The Christie Papers refer to Articles of Association for Henry Heath Ltd that were registered in 1944 but the details remain obscure.


As the old civic order gave way post WW I, there was a gradual decline in hat wearing, and consolidation in the hat industry was inevitable. This commenced in the 1950s, with Christys' seemingly leading the field. The company went on to acquire through amalgamation *inter alia* the famous hat brands of Henry Heath (1822 – c.1956), Tress & Co (1846 – 1953/54), and Lincoln Bennett (1863 – c.1966), Melton & Co Ltd (1890 – c.1951), Battersby & Co (1895 – c.1966), gained invaluable internationally-registered intellectual property, and added numerous commercial alliances, such as various members of The Worshipful Company of Feltmakers of London, to that list.

**“Ye Felt Hatterie”**  
in the Exhibition of '84.

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**F**ELTING is a process by which animal furs are made to cohere and form a kind of cloth, without the aid of weaving, or any similar process.

The finest Felt Hats are manufactured from the Skin of such animals as the Beaver, Otter, Rabbit, Hares, and Musk Rats.




**Rabbits' Fur, Magnified.**

Shewing the serrated structure of the fibres which cause them to interlace in the process of felting.

The principle of Felting was not understood until the microscope was applied to the examination of animal fibres. It was then found that the fibre, whether of wool or fur, is surrounded by a vast number of minute teeth, projecting obliquely from the central stem.

As these teeth are very sharp and are turned in one direction, they present an obstacle to the motion of the fibre in that direction, but enable it to glide easily on the opposite one; just as an ear of barley, when placed stalk uppermost within the cuff of the coat sleeve, will soon work its way up to the shoulder by the motion of the arm.



**Beaver Fur, Magnified.**

Shewing the teeth-like projections of the fibre.

When a quantity of such fibres of fur are rubbed and pressed, and the fibres made to curl slightly by the action of warmth and moisture, they twist around each other, and the teeth interlace so tightly as not to separate.

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Only Address:

**HENRY HEATH,**  
“Ye Hatterie,”  
**105-107-109, OXFORD STREET,**  
City End.

Established in the reign of King George the Fourth.

Almost two centuries has passed since the creation of Henry Heath Hatters. Though we live in a dispirited, cynical era marked by social dislocation, poor leadership, fragmented institutions, in certain societies there is a heightened individualism and yearning to embrace beauty and creativity. Concurrently, there is a revival underway led by investor-collectors who pursue dormant, largely forgotten “heritage” fashion brands. Companies such as De Lumen and Compagnie Fin Richemont, organisations such as The World Crafts Council Europe and Michelangelo Foundation and on-line shopping sites such as eBay and MR PORTER are catalysing this renewed interest in long lost aesthetic brands and European crafts ... and restored Henry Heath period pieces frequently are appearing on the market, once again recognised as being amongst the best there is.

## References and Additional Reading :

1. British Newspaper Archives 4 February 1910. # Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser; # London Daily News, London England; # London Standard; # Yorkshire Evening Post.
2. Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office, Publ: United States. Patent Office Volume 6; 29 September 1874
3. <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/N13921860> (including the Christy Collection Volumes 1 & 2 [1863 – 1966] and a synopsis of family genealogy 1776 onward )
4. <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C10889866> (Records of British Business and Industry 1760-1914: Textiles and Leather; etc.)
5. <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/c/F161300> (Henry Heath (Wholesale) Ltd, hat manufacturers (1898-1948) (1944-1966)
6. <https://www.christys-hats.com>
7. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/intelligence/sleeping-beauty-brands-myth-magic-formula>
8. <https://www.thefield.co.uk/country-house/history-top-hats-topper-tricks-33245>
9. <https://fashion-history.lovetoknow.com/fashion-accessories/history-mens-hats>

R M Pelteret 7 October 2020