

George Bassett, the liquorice allsorts man

From the sweeties.net wiki

Liquorice Allsorts come from Sheffield. The firm that made them was founded by George Bassett, though the allsorts themselves did not arrive until after his death.

A lozenge maker in Sheffield

George Bassett was born around 1818 in Ashover, Derbyshire. He founded his firm in 1842, the year the Sheffield directory recorded him as a wholesale confectioner, lozenge maker and British wine trader. In 1851 he took on an apprentice, Samuel Meggitt Johnson, who later married into the family: Johnson became Bassett's son in law, and his descendants ran the company until the 1970s. In 1852 Bassett's opened a factory in Broad Street, Sheffield.

Mayor, and an American guest

George Bassett became Mayor of Sheffield in 1876. While he was mayor he had Ulysses S. Grant, the American Civil War general and president, to stay as his house guest. He married twice and had six daughters and two sons. He died in 1886 and is buried in Sheffield General Cemetery.

The tray that made allsorts

Liquorice Allsorts arrived in 1899, thirteen years after George Bassett died. The story goes that a Bassett's salesman, Charlie Thompson, tripped and dropped a tray of samples while showing them to a client in Leicester, mixing all the different sweets together. As he scrambled to sort them out, the client took a liking to the jumble, and the company began making the sweets as a mixed assortment. The samples Thompson dropped are said to have been chips, rocks, buttons, nuggets, plugs and twists.

It is a good story, and the sources call it supposed rather than proven. Either way, allsorts are now made all over the world, and are especially popular in the Netherlands, where they are called Engelse drop, English liquorice. See [Liquorice Allsorts](#).

Bertie Bassett

In 1926 Bassett's created its mascot, Bertie Bassett, a little man made of liquorice allsorts. The first Bertie was put together by an advertising copywriter, Frank Regan, from the sweets and some pipe cleaners. Today one of the sweets in the bag is a liquorice Bertie.

Bertie once had a brush with the BBC. The Doctor Who story The Happiness Patrol featured a villain called the Kandy Man, made from liquorice allsorts and thought by some to look like Bertie. An internal inquiry found the programme had not infringed Bassett's trademark, but the BBC promised Bassett's that the Kandy

Man would not appear again. In 2009, as a publicity stunt, Bassett's held a mock wedding for Bertie and Betty Bassett at its Sheffield factory.

Jelly Babies

Bassett's is also the name behind Jelly Babies. Baby shaped jelly sweets were first made in Lancashire in the 19th century, and by 1918 Bassett's was making its own, called Peace Babies, to mark the end of the First World War. Production stopped during the Second World War because of shortages, and they came back in 1953 as Jelly Babies. In October 1963, as Beatlemania broke out, fans pelted the Beatles with Jelly Babies after it was reported that George Harrison liked them.

From family firm to Mondelez

Bassett's moved to a new site at Owlerton, Sheffield, in 1933, and the site is still there. In 1966 it took over Barratt, the London sweet maker behind Sherbet Fountains and Black Jacks. In 1989 the combined business was bought by Cadbury Schweppes for £91 million, and in 2016 its owner, Mondelez International, merged the brand with Maynards to make Maynards Bassetts. The Bassett's name still appears on Liquorice Allsorts, Jelly Babies, Sports Mixture, Dolly Mixtures and Murray Mints.

Earn rewards on [sweeties.net](https://www.sweeties.net)

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



[sweeties.net](https://www.sweeties.net) · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@sweeties.net · 3-click cancel at [sweeties.net/cancel/](https://www.sweeties.net/cancel/)