

**Historical Background:**

The Company owed its existence to Frederick Needler, who was born at Arnold, Skirlaugh, near Hull, on 12 December 1864. The family name appears to have been mis-spelt, as Frederick was the son of George Needley, a paint factory employee, who died from typhoid in September 1872 aged 37. Frederick attended St John's School, Newland, in Hull. His first job in about 1878 at the age of 14 was in a tea and coffee warehouse in High Street. In the 1881 Census he is described as a grocer's apprentice. At the age of 18 he became a bookkeeper to Edward Buckton, who had a small manufacturing confectionery business near Paragon Station in Hull. In about 1886, using money from his mother, he bought this business for £100. He moved the premises to Anne Street, where he is known to have had two staff - a sugar boiler and a boy named Watson. They had a horse and cart for making deliveries.

There were many firms of this type in Hull at the time, usually operating within a geographical range determined by the stamina of their horses. Frederick Needler soon moved into wholesaling, occupying various premises to the north of Paragon Station until he bought 9 and 11 Spring Street in 1898, which is when company records started to be produced.

In 1899-1900 there was a turnover of about £15000 and profit of £781 (about 5%). Production had reached about 10 tons per week. There were 10 female and 23 male employees producing over 200 different products, chiefly boiled sweets and toffees. The company also acted as wholesalers for other brands, such as Cadburys, Frys and Rowntrees. In marketing terms, growth was greatly helped by the switch from green to clear glass jars, thereby improving the appearance.

The Company was incorporated on 27 October 1902 as Fred Needler Ltd., when the directors were Fred Needler (at £250 per annum), Alfred Thorpe (£160), and Joseph Cooper Wilson (£140). There were 6000 shares, of which 5416 were owned by Frederick Needler, and 1 by his wife. The first minute books also date from this time.

In 1906 new larger premises were built on Bournemouth Street off Sculcoates Lane in Hull. The move was accompanied by a change in name to Needlers Ltd. An increasing demand for sweets led to a decline in the wholesale operation, which ceased by 1912. By this time the product range included 576 lines, including 74 in chocolate. A new chocolate plant began operations on the same site in August 1916. Turnover, which was £95,000 in 1913/14, peaked at £664,000 in 1920.

By the early 1920s average turnover was £570,000, representing 650 tons of chocolate and 1500 tons of sweets, with a range now including Christmas boxes and Easter eggs. There were 1700 employees, mainly female, with many more employed on a seasonal (especially pre-Christmas and pre-Easter) basis. However, although the Company was large, it was not a truly national firm, and never had more than about 1% of the market. In 1927 the factory packing areas were air-conditioned, enabling sweet packing to continue in all weathers. Sweet wrappers were introduced in the early 1920s, but this process was undertaken by hand until the first wrapping machines were introduced in 1928.

Until 1918 goods were delivered locally by horse and cart or van, and nationally by rail. Increased volume necessitated a fleet of delivery vans working from Hull, and from rail

## Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

depots in London, Manchester, Nottingham and Grimsby. There were 40 vehicles by 1927, each with a chocolate brown livery for advertising purposes. In 1950 rail distribution was abandoned in favour of road following the decision by British Railways to move into lump shunting (which resulted in large-scale breakages of chocolates). In 1965 there were still 50 vans and drivers.

Needlers were badly hit by the depression, the worst year being 1931 when turnover was £328,000 and profits just £5000. This coincided with Frederick Needler's deterioration in health with Parkinson's Disease, from which he died on 30 September 1932 aged 67. He had become well known as a strong supporter of the Liberal cause, and as a local benefactor - including the gift of a house in Cottingham to be used as a student hall of residence (Needler Hall) for the newly-established Hull University College. He was succeeded as Managing Director by his son Percival.

In 1938 the Company's chemists found a way of producing clear or Glace fruit drops - an area in which Needlers were to have little or no competition until the mid-1960s. Consequently, the emphasis of production shifted away from chocolate (where Cadburys, Rowntrees and Mars dominated) towards sweets. Sweets (and their raw materials) were rationed between 1941 and February 1953. Thereafter demand, particularly for Glace fruit drops, shot up.

In 1958 Needlers became a publicly quoted company, although the Needler family retained a controlling interest. Percival Needler retired in 1970, aged 70, and was succeeded by his son Raymond as Managing Director. He immediately bought the London-based toffee manufacturers Batgers, known for their 'Jersey' brand, and for producing Sainsbury's own brands. Chocolate production, which was heavily loss-making, was ended in 1976, when production was concentrated on Glace fruits and toffees. In 1980 Dickson Orde and Co., a small confectionery manufacturer based at Farnham in Surrey, was purchased. In the early 1980s export markets (particularly the United States and the Middle East) were opened up for the first time.

The Company was well known for its fair treatment of employees. Profit sharing was introduced as early as 1911, there were good social and sports facilities and a mixed voiced choir, Needlers Music Society, was established in 1925.

In 1986 the Company was bought by Hillsdown Holdings, a large meat company diversifying into other products, including the purchase of Bluebird Toffee. Raymond Needler retired in 1987. Needlers was soon sold to NORA SA, the largest food group in Norway. They continued operations on the Sculcoates Lane site, making boiled sweets under the Needler brand name, together with supermarket own brands.

### **Custodial history:**

U DNE donated by Raymond F Needler, December 1993 and January 1994. U DNE2 donated by C Ketchell, Local History Unit, Hull College, 20 November 1994.

### **Description:**

The surviving collection of records is quite small. Most of the older records had been stored in the Company loft and were unfortunately destroyed in late 1939 to prevent them being a fire hazard during enemy air raids. U DNE comprises modern corporate records, minute books (1902 - 1972), accounts (1896 - 1986), product details (1899 - 1993) including good

## Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

examples of sales catalogues from the 1920s and 1930s, and several hundred photographs (1900 - 1993), principally of products and production lines, along with a film of the visit made by the then prince of Wales to the Hull factory in 1926. There is also a small amount of modern financial information relating to the subsidiary firms Batgers & Co., and Dickson Orde & Co.

U DNE2 includes two early account books - a cash book, dating from Apr 1866 to Dec 1888, and a wages book covering the period Oct 1863 to Jun 1876, as well as items relating to the Needler's Musical Society and newspaper cuttings collated by Arthur Percival Needler. The account books may relate to the business affairs of Edward Buckton, who owned the firm before Fred Needler.

### **Arrangement:**

U DNE	First Instalment
U DNE2	Second Instalment

**Extent:** 119 items (2 linear metres)

**Access conditions:** Access will be granted to any accredited reader

**Copyright:** Raymond Needler

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

<b>U DNE</b>	<b>First Instalment</b>	<b>1899-1993</b>
	<b>U DNE/1 - 4 Corporate records, 1958 - 1986</b>	
	<b>U DNE/5 - 8 Minutes, 1902 - 1980</b>	
	<b>U DNE/9 - 49 Accounts, 1899 - 1986</b>	
	<b>U DNE/50 - 55 Product details, 1899 - 1993</b>	
	<b>U DNE/56 - 64 Photographs, 1900 - 1993</b>	
	<b>U DNE/65 - 72 Miscellaneous, 1922 - 1993</b>	
	<b>U DNE/73 - 80 Published works, 1930 - 1968</b>	
	<b>U DNE/81 Batgers and Co., 1936</b>	
	<b>U DNE/82 - 103 Dickson Orde and Co., 1980 – 1987</b>	
	<b>103 items</b>	
U DNE/1	Needlers Ltd. Memorandum and New Articles of Association. 2 items	1958
U DNE/2	Needlers plc. New Memorandum and Articles of Association 1 item	1981
U DNE/3	Prospectus for share placing by Hillsdown Holdings 1 item	Feb 1985
U DNE/4	Formal published offer to Needlers plc shareholders on behalf of Hillsdown Holdings plc 1 item	Jan 1986
U DNE/5	Needlers Ltd. Minute Book. Board of Directors 1 volume	Dec 1902- Jul 1920
U DNE/6	Needlers Ltd. Minute Book. Board of Directors 1 volume	Jul 1920- Apr 1941
U DNE/7	Needlers Ltd. Minute Book. Board of Directors 1 volume	Oct 1941- Mar 1972
U DNE/8	Needlers plc. Minutes and associated papers. Board of Directors Includes: Report and accounts, 1979 1 bundle	1980
U DNE/9	Needlers Ltd. Private ledger 1 volume	1914-1920
U DNE/10	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1951
U DNE/11	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1953

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/12	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1954
U DNE/13	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1955
U DNE/14	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1956
U DNE/15	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1957
U DNE/16	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1959
U DNE/17	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1960
U DNE/18	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1961
U DNE/19	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1962
U DNE/20	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1963
U DNE/21	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1971
U DNE/22	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1972
U DNE/23	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1973
U DNE/24	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1974
U DNE/25	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1975
U DNE/26	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1976
U DNE/27	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1977
U DNE/28	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1978

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/29	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1979
U DNE/30	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1980
U DNE/31	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1981
U DNE/32	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1982
U DNE/33	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1983
U DNE/34	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1984
U DNE/35	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1985
U DNE/36	Needlers Ltd. Report and accounts 1 bundle	1986
U DNE/37	Needlers Ltd. Detailed trading and profit and loss account 1 item	1979
U DNE/38	Needlers Ltd. Detailed trading and profit and loss account 1 item	1980
U DNE/39	Needlers Ltd. Detailed trading and profit and loss account 1 item	1981
U DNE/40	Needlers Ltd. Detailed trading and profit and loss account 1 item	1982
U DNE/41	Needlers Ltd. Financial statements 1 bundle	1983
U DNE/42	Needlers Ltd. Financial statements 1 bundle	1984
U DNE/43	Needlers Ltd. Annual Report and accounts 1 item	1985
U DNE/44	Volume. 'Mr R.F. Needler's book listing various sales figures 1959-1965, and costing breakdown for 1964 & 1961. Also summary management accounts for 1959-1966' 1 volume	1959-1966

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/45	Accounts of Frederick Needler (Photocopy) 1 item	1899-1900
U DNE/46	File. 'Sur Tax query'. Papers regarding disputed claim for surtax With explanatory note by Raymond Needler 1 file	1961-1970
U DNE/47	Needlers Ltd. Memorandum concerning quotation on the Stock exchange, London, by Capel-Cure-Cure, stockbrokers 1 bundle	Aug 1958
U DNE/48	Needlers Ltd. Report by Thomson McLintock & Company prior to Stock Exchange listing 1 item	31 Oct 1958
U DNE/49	Report on Batger & Company Limited by Touche Ross, prior to acquisition by Needlers 1 item	24 Jun 1970
U DNE/50	Needlers Ltd. Scrap book. Contains advertising specimens, plus photographs (window displays, premises, workers, events) 1 volume	1920-1925
U DNE/51	File. 'Various catalogues'. Contains product catalogues of Needlers and Needler/Batger 28 items	1957-1975
U DNE/52	Box file. 'Needlers Ltd 1920-1940. Various photographs, price lists, programmes etc.' Contents: a) Photographs (including products, personnel, production lines, vehicles, Fred Needler), 1899 - 1940. (52) b) Catalogues/price lists, 1920s - 1930s. (44) c) Needlers coupons (19) d) Minutes. Departmental Conference at Withernsea, 29-30 Oct 1927 e) Souvenir and other programmes, 1922 - 1938. (9) f) 'Needlers' slogan . . .' (from Confectionery Journal), Aug 1934 g) Press cutting. Ballet Rambert visit Needlers. 'Hull Times', 10 Dec. 1976 h) Letters to Raymond Needler regarding Needler Company history from A.S. Pike (1) and Ian C. Gibbs (4), Jul 1984 - Apr 1991 1 file	1899-1940

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/53	Box file. [Photographs, catalogues, price lists and advertising] Contents: a) Photographs:-people, events, products, production lines, c.1900 - 1980s.(35) b) Catalogues/price lists, 1899 - 1939.(8) c) Scrap book. Needler's advertising campaign for coupon offer, c. 1920s d) Souvenir programme. Visit of Manchester & District Retail Confectioners Association, 6 Jun 1934 1 file	1899-1939
U DNE/54	File. 'Boiling Room, Glace Fruit drops etc., patents'. Papers regarding enforcement of relevant patents 1 file	1957-1962
U DNE/55	'Hull Daily Mail' Needler's Advertising supplement 1 item	3 Dec 1993
U DNE/56	File. Contains original photographs and captions as used for the book 'Needlers of Hull', by Raymond Needler (Cherry Burton: Hutton Press, 1993) Volume 1 1 file	1993
U DNE/57	File. Contains original photographs and captions as used for the book 'Needlers of Hull', by Raymond Needler (Cherry Burton: Hutton Press, 1993) Volume 2 1 file	1993
U DNE/58	File. Contains original photographs and captions as used for the book 'Needlers of Hull', by Raymond Needler (Cherry Burton: Hutton Press, 1993) Volume 3. Includes photographs of the Prince of Wales (1926) 1 file	1993
U DNE/59	File. Colour plates and captions of Needler's catalogues (1926 - 1939) Taken from 'Needlers of Hull', by Raymond Needler (Cherry Burton: Hutton Press, 1993) 1 file	1993
U DNE/60	Miscellaneous black and white photographs: staff, plant, sporting events, outings, events 35 photographs	1900s-1950s
U DNE/61	File of photographs: events, staff, products, visits 16 photographs	1920s



Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/62	Glass plate negatives: Needler delivery vans and shop displays 5 items	1920s
	<b>Item cannot be produced in the searchroom, however, a surrogate image can be provided on request.</b>	
U DNE/63	Photograph album. Construction of a water borehole Seven photographs 1 volume	[1935]
U DNE/64	Film. Visit of Prince of Wales to the factory of Needler & Co., Hull. 1 item	14 Oct 1926
U DNE/65	Programme. 'Unveiling of memorial Clock to Frederick Needler' 1 item	14 Apr 1934
U DNE/66	File. 'Needler's plc. Notes on the company history, to be used with the archive material', by Raymond Needler 1 file	1993
U DNE/67	File. 'Printed documents' Contents: a) Order of service for unveiling of Needler's War memorial, 10 Apr 1922 b) Programme. Unveiling of Memorial Clock to Frederick Needler, 14 Apr 1934 c) Notes on Co-operation with Employment & Health Dept., Jan 1928 d) Cutting. Article in Hull Times regarding transfer of Batgers operation to Hull, 19 Feb 1971 e) Press cuttings. Long Service Association Dinner, 15 Mar 1935 1 file	1922-1984
U DNE/68	Correspondence between Raymond Needler and Mr D.A. Buckton Regarding the beginning of Frederick Needler's business in 1886 3 items	Oct 1984
U DNE/69	Prosperity sharing scheme 1 item	[1924]
U DNE/70	Company handbook 1 volume	Dec 1978
U DNE/71	Company handbook 1 volume	1987

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/72	Retirement benefits plan Two parts, with 1980 amendments 1 item	1976
U DNE/73	'The Chocolate Box: the monthly leaflet of the Chocolate Packing Rooms of Messrs Needlers Ltd of Hull', No.19, Oct-Nov 1930 1 item	Oct 1930
U DNE/74	'Quality: the 'Needler' journal'. Nov 1932 ('Frederick Needler memorial Number') Apr, Jul 1935 Christmas 1950 Summer 1951 Summer 1958 Christmas 1965 7 items	Nov 1932- Dec 1965
U DNE/75	Pamphlet. 'Fifty years progress: Needler's Ltd 1886-1936' 1 item	1936
U DNE/76	Pamphlet. 'Air raid precautions for Government contractors' (London: HMSO, 1939) 1 item	1939
U DNE/77	Industrial record 1919-1939: a review of the inter-war years (Bournville: Cadbury Brothers) Review of the confectionery trade in general and Cadburys in particular 1 item	[1940]
U DNE/78	'Bulletin [of the] Food Manufacturers' Federation', Vol. XXX, No. 368 1 item	1 May 1943
U DNE/79	Pamphlet. National Board for Prices and Incomes, 'Costs and prices of the chocolate and sugar confectionery industry' (Cmnd 3694) (London: HMSO) 1 item	1968
U DNE/80	Pamphlet. 'History of Geo. Bassett & Co. Ltd' by D.G. Johnson. 1 item	Jan 1968
U DNE/81	Batger & Co. List of products and prices 1 item	Sep 1936
U DNE/82	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Report and accounts 1 item	1980

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/83	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Report and accounts 1 item	1981
U DNE/84	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Report and accounts 1 item	1982
U DNE/85	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Report and accounts 1 item	1983
U DNE/86	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Report and accounts 1 item	1984
U DNE/87	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	27 Jun 1981
U DNE/88	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	19 Sep 1981
U DNE/89	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	2 Jan 1982
U DNE/90	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	13 Mar 1982
U DNE/91	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	26 Jun 1982
U DNE/92	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	18 Sep 1982
U DNE/93	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	12 Mar 1983
U DNE/94	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	25 Jun 1983
U DNE/95	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	17 Sep 1983
U DNE/96	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	31 Dec 1983

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE/97	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	10 Mar 1984
U DNE/98	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	23 Jun 1984
U DNE/99	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	15 Sep 1984
U DNE/100	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	29 Dec 1984
U DNE/101	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	28 Mar 1987
U DNE/102	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	27 Jun 1987
U DNE/103	Dickson Orde and Co. Ltd. Management accounts, to year ending 1 item	26 Sep 1987
<b>U DNE2</b>	<b>Second Instalment Contains miscellaneous records of Fred Needler and Fred Needler Limited. 16 items</b>	<b>1863-1971</b>
U DNE2/1	Fred Needler. Cash book 1 volume	Apr 1866- Dec 1888
U DNE2/2	Fred Needler. Accounts book. Wages paid 1 volume	Oct 1863-Jun 1876
U DNE2/3	Fred Needler Ltd. Minute book. Office Committee 1 volume	Feb 1918- Oct 1920
U DNE2/4	Photograph album. 'The Visit of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales to Needler's Ltd chocolate factory, Hull, October 14th, 1926' 1 volume	14 Oct 1926

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE2/5	Offprints of photograph of Frederick Needler, other Directors and guests, following the visit of The Prince of Wales to Needler's Ltd. 2 photographs	14 Oct 1926
U DNE2/6	Photograph album. 'Staff Conference. Cober Hill [Scarborough]. Held October 15th 1927' Includes page of signatures of those attending the Conference 1 volume	15 Oct 1927
U DNE2/7	Photograph album. Sports field views [annual sports day] 1 volume	1920s
U DNE2/8	'Quality': the 'Needler' journal Oct 1933 Apr 1934 Aug 1937 Spring 1940 Autumn 1940 Christmas 1940 (incomplete) Christmas 1942 Summer 1943 Christmas 1943 Summer 1944 Christmas 1944 Christmas 1945 Christmas 1946 Christmas 1947 Summer 1948 Christmas 1948 Summer 1949 Christmas 1950 Summer 1951 Christmas 1951 Summer 1952 Christmas 1952 Summer 1953 Summer 1956 Christmas 1956 Christmas 1957 Summer 1958 Summer 1959 Christmas 1959 Summer 1962 Summer 1963 Christmas 1963 Summer 1965 Christmas 1965 Summer 1966 Also: Printer's oddments, c. 1938-1964 (23) 1 bundle	1933-1966

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE2/9	File. Needler's Choral and Musical Society Programmes Includes programmes for Needler's Musical Society Grand 21st Birthday Concert (19 Jan 1933); Needler's Choral Society Concert (25 Mar 1934), and Needler's Musical Society Annual Concert (22 Mar 1934). 1 file	1933-1934
U DNE2/10	File. Needler's Musical Society Certificates Includes certificates of long service as choristers in the Needler's Musical Society issued to Edith and Stanley Ritchie. 1 item	Jan 1946
U DNE2/11	File. Needler's Musical Society Competition Certificates Includes competition certificates awarded to Needler's Musical Society from the Wharfedale Musical Festival (1937) and the Hull Competitive Musical Festival Society Annual Competitions (1937-1939). 1 file	1937-1939
U DNE2/12	File. Christmas Lists: Complete Costings Includes lists of products lines for sale at Christmas with product name, weight, type of contents, retail price, [wholesale price] and cost. 1 file	1933-1939
U DNE2/13	File. Photographs and postcards Includes a group portrait postcard entitled 'Some of Our Girl Workers'; a postcard showing the Needler's factory floor entitled 'Sweet Making'; a black and white negative of a Needler van; a black and white photograph of the Frederick Needler Memorial Clock, and a black and white photograph of a [shop window] featuring products by Needler's. 1 file	early 20th cent.
U DNE2/14	Volume. Newspaper cuttings Volume of newspaper cuttings relating to publications and articles by Arthur Percival Needler published in various Yorkshire newspapers. 1 file	1919-1953
U DNE2/15	Volume. Newspaper cuttings Volume of newspaper cuttings relating to publications and articles by Arthur Percival Needler published in various Yorkshire newspapers. 1 file	1958-1971

Hull History Centre: Records of Needlers Ltd.

U DNE2/16

Volume. Newspaper cuttings

n.d.

Volume of newspaper cuttings compiled by [Arthur Percival  
Needler] relating to various subjects including local history;  
antiquities; folklore; music and philosophy.

1 file