

Bowles and Son Tobacconists of Cardiff ¹

Bowles and Son Ltd. was established in 1888. The company was a wholesale and retail tobacconist. During the 1950s it was run by Reginald Bowles and his brother Ivor. Its head office was at 9 James Street, Butetown, Cardiff, on the corner of James Street and Louisa Street. The company owned shops across Cardiff, in St. Mary's Street, Castle Street, Queen Street and High Street, along with a shop in Station Approach, Pontypridd. At one time, the company owned a total of 11 shops, some of which had been taken over from Percy Cadle.

The firm's stock was held in a warehouse in the basement of 9 James Street, which also included a cigar curing room. The stock was transferred from the basement warehouse to the first floor shop by dumb waiter. The second floor was used as office space.

The firm stocked a wide range of tobacco, including a number of foreign brands for the large proportion of regular customers from Cardiff's Somali community and for the seamen who came in to the docks. The firm also stocked a vast range of pipes, which were popular during the first part of the 20th century; cigarette lighters and ashtrays which, as they were not disposable at that time, were often seen as accessories and decorative pieces in their own right; matches; spills and pipe cleaners. As a wholesaler, the company supplied pubs, clubs and other shops across south east Wales.

All the shops were of a similar appearance. Most carried the same sort of stock, with some variations. One shop stocked sweets and two others, on High Street and St. Mary's Street, had a barber's shop at the rear.

The company was sold by its owners, Tom and William (Bill) Bowles, sons of Reginald and Ivor Bowles respectively, in 1979.

¹ GLAMORGAN Record Office, (2006), Report for the period 1 June – 31 August 2006