

## **MILLS & MAYHEM AT THE HOLE IN T' WALL**

By the early 20th century much of Hebden Bridge was involved in the manufacturing of clothing, namely trousers, hence the town being given the nickname 'Trousers Town' by traders. Trousers, were 'made through' in Hebden Bridge from the weaving of fustian (a hardy corduroy cloth well suited to the industrial working classes who abounded here at that time, and particularly the Irish and Scottish navvies who camped rough in the Nutclough Woods and in their makeshift sheds of Dawson City, Heptonstall ) to the pattern and fabric cutting and stitching. With Astin Brothers, Cheethams Ltd, Greenwood and Pickles Ltd and Shaw, Thomas & Co all within spitting distance of the town centre and a dozen other mills within a half mile radius it's no wonder that there were always balls of fluff floating around St George's Square! Machine rooms were reputed to be so noisy that men and women learned to lip read.

Accordingly, gossip abounded here at The Hole in the Wall Pub of a weekend, which now stands a few feet further back off the road than the original building of 1899 which was aligned to the bridge and the pack horse trail up to Heptonstall. Stories spread of the forty orphans who'd been brought over from York to work in The Acre Mill up at Old Town which was riddled with asbestos and so likely to send them all to an early grave - which it did, of a child, Gladys Sheard of 5 Chisley Terrace, Old Town who'd knitted socks for a soldier in France and had actually received a personal letter of thanks back from him and of William Sutcliffe's adopted son who'd inherited all of the industrial entrepreneurs fortunes but who'd been killed in a horse and carriage accident and since then haunted Slack Top.....

Other gossip continued to circulate as to how the pub got its name. One theory suggests it came from the damage caused to the original building by the Roundheads during the Civil War but a far more interesting theory is that this is where the navvies who first worked on the Rochdale Canal and Manchester to Leeds Railway were paid every Friday evening. Apparently they were paid so poorly that protest fights often broke out, so eventually canal and railway representatives took to paying them through a hole in the pub wall! In 1911 'Prize Fights' were still held outside the pub, which, much to the Temperance Society's disdain, locals placed bets on!