

THE GHOSTS OF GARDEN STREET

It is not only the mills themselves which have disappeared over the last century. Hebden Bridge also boasts a number of ghost streets, one of which was just over there beside Jules Pottery. Garden St once ran alongside Commercial St and below, but for the last fifty years has been a public car park. There were shops above the houses which were accessed from Commercial St but these too were all demolished in the 1960's. In 1911 Jane McDermott lived with her 9 children at number 10 Commercial St and like many single women who were responsible for being the sole breadwinner whilst raising a large family she ran an unregistered tailoring business from her home along with her five eldest daughters. (Records reveal there was another such business in the Utley household at number 10 Sackville St.) As if this wasn't enough, to make ends meet Jane also took in lodgers, including a number of travelling actors who couldn't be boarded with the rest of their troupe at number 19!

Directly below her, Kate and Harry Thompson lived at number 23 Garden St along with their 9 children. Harry was an Iron Dresser and Kate, a full time housewife (exhausting enough but compared to poor Jane McDermott, somewhat privileged.) In 1911 their eldest son Thomas was registered as being a Fustian Presser, though he was also known locally as being a keen rugby player and a bantam weight boxer. Like so many other young men in 1914 Thomas was called to join the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. He died four years later and was buried in St Server Cemetery in France. Mysteriously, Thomas was never commemorated on any of the Hebden Bridge War Memorials. One can only suppose that at some point he had made an attempt of desertion and so along with the 306 other British Soldiers too horrified to cope with all the carnage they'd witnessed at War had been 'Shot at Dawn,' rejected by his own military.

Records from 1911 also show that the Thompson's eldest daughter Elsie was supporting the family at twelve years old by working as a part time sewer ticker on in the Thomas Sutcliffe Trousers Factory on Regent St. Child labour was still quite common in Hebden Bridge in the early 20th century, though most did not go full time until they were fourteen years old. All at the Sutcliffe factory were first given a medical examination by Dr G.G. Lawson of Holme House, New Rd though whether this happened in other factories remains to be seen. Harriet Moore, Senior Nurse lived at 10 New Rd and seems to have lodged one or two other Nurses but they'd have been hard pressed to make it round to every mill as there were so many of them, and certainly not up as far as the dreaded Acre Mill at Old Town! Some of the orphans who died there are now commemorated at Wainsgate Chapel.