

OLD MILL and ST JAMES TERRACE DUDLEY

First of all I should set the scene. Old Mill, as an address doesn't seem to exist. There was an unused windmill, called Shavers End Mill, that was located not far from the top end of St James Terrace, as it was then in the 1800's. (see map) A 1909 photo of the mill shows a flue built up the side of the mill that was obviously an addition to the mill after it ceased to operate.



There are buildings associated with the mill and the early map shows a collection of buildings on the site. It was also part on an Ironstone quarry marked as Millfield Pit.

I am of the opinion that the brick flue was added to act as a chimney for a forge inside the tower. It was not uncommon for nail makers to share a forge in order to save money. The various census from 1841, and 1851 show several families at an address entered as Old Mill. Working as nail makers.



This is where it gets complicated and to some extent speculation on my part.

In the 1841 Census My Great Great Grandfather. Samuel Houlston was shown to be living at Old Mill Dudley with his wife Elizabeth (Faulkner) with his son Thomas (my Great Grandfather) and, their other children Mary, Elizabeth, Eliza, William and Rebecca.

He was a Cordwainer or Shoemaker. Originally from Shropshire. His wife was also from Shropshire. Why they moved to Dudley will remain a mystery, and why to what seems to be an old mill just as much a mystery.

In 1841 Mary would have been 8 and may have already been making nails as in a later census she is listed as a nail maker. It was common for children as young as 7 or 8 to be making nails.

In 1851. Mary. As nail maker married Isaac Collins who was also shown as living at Old Mill and also a nail maker. He would have been around 20 and she about 18.

1856 Thomas who was listed as a coal miner, married Emma Winifred (Jones) A nail maker who is shown as living at Old Mill with her Parents Thomas Jones (ironstone miner) His wife Sarah and her siblings, three of which were also nail makers. They were both shown as age 21 when they married.

I have no way of establishing if all three families were living in the buildings associated with the old mill. However the census returns show them all as at Old Mill. So I can only speculate that the Old Mill tower was a nail making workshop and possibly shared by these families, who lived in the associated buildings.

Its worth noting that the land adjacent to the old mill is shown as Millfield Pit (Ironstone) Thomas Jones was an ironstone miner.

By 1861 Samuel and Elizabeth were living in St James Terrace. Probably number 45. Both Mary and Thomas had moved out by then.

Thomas and Emma were living in 21 St James Terrace. By 1871 Mary and Isaac Collins were living in 65 St James Terrace

In 1861 and 71 Mary and Rebecca were shown as being nail makers. Rebecca married George Troth in 1862 and they had 8 children. She died aged 50.

Thomas and Emma continued to live at 21 St James Terrace and had 9 children. One of which Samuel Houlston, (My Grandad) He was born in 1865, and went on to be a coal miner. According to the census. None of them went into nail making. One daughter Leah died aged 13. Cause unknown

Emma died in 1919. Thomas in 1923. As late as 1911 he was still working a coal miner. (hewer)

My Grandad Samuel, moved to Nottinghamshire in 1898 and worked in the coal mines in the Kirkby in Ashfield area until he died in 1936. He was a Clog Dancer and used to dance to earn beer money. He also operated a Clog Dancing Doll. This is now in the possession of the Black Country Museum. The clothes were not original so it was handed over without any. It is crudely carved from bits of scrap wood



That is where my relationship with Dudley ends. I have no contact with any descendants of Thomas and Emma. I know there are people with the name Houlston still living in the Dudley area. But they would at best be distant cousins. One of my Uncles used to visit relatives in Dudley. He died in 1979.

I am proud of my ancestors who worked through what was a terrible time in the 1800's in The Black Country. It shows they were made of stern stuff for most of them to have survived into their 70's and 80's

John Benfield