

Family History Case Studies - 22 Horsefair The Harden/Harding family

The Harden/Harding family were the longest term residents at 22, Horsefair, from 1817 until after 1881, spanning three generations. The patriarch of the family was Thomas, who first appeared on a lease in 1817. By the time of the 1841 census he was still living in the Horsefair with his wife Ann and three of their four sons, Thomas junior, born 1816, Robert, born 1819 and John, aged at least 20. The census enumerator, however, gives the address for this part of the Horsefair as Stourbridge. As was usual for the 1841 census, their ages had all been rounded down to the nearest 0 or 5. A fourth son, Charles, was born in 1825 and he was not shown on the 1841 census. Thomas senior and all three sons were tailors.

By 1851, only two sons were still living with their parents, Thomas junior and Robert. For the first time the exact birthplace of each person is given. Thomas senior was born in Droitwich but his wife Ann was born far away in Wiltshire. Without knowing what her maiden name was, it is almost impossible to find where the couple were married. All of the sons were born in Kidderminster. John Harding, the missing son, was not living at the family home but he had married Mary With at St Mary's Church on 30th August 1842 and they had a son, Samuel, who was born in Kidderminster on 16th December 1844.

On the 1861 census, Thomas senior was living with Robert, his son, and Samuel, his son by John. Thomas senior was a journeyman tailor, which indicates that he did not employ apprentices. Both Robert and Samuel were tailors. There is no sign of Ann but Thomas senior stated that he was married and not widowed, suggesting that she was still alive but staying away from home at the time of the census.

By 1871 Thomas senior must have died. His son Robert was the head of the household, living with his widowed sister-in-law, Hannah, who was keeping house for him, and his nephew John W. Harden. On the 1881 census, only Robert and Hannah were still living at 22, Horsefair and by 1891 the house was empty, suggesting that they had either moved away or had died. More research will be needed to answer these, and more, questions.

Gay Hill 2017