

## THE RISE AND FALL OF HENRY DAY & SONS LTD SHODDY BUSINESS

The first recorded person with the name Day who was connected to the textile industry was Joseph, who was born in 1729. In the records Joseph was called a Farmer cum Clothier, which meant he probably had sheep and made some cloth besides looking after a small farm. Charles Day (b 1945) is the sixth and last generation of the family to be in the textile industry. Manufacturing at Savile Bridge Mills ceased in 2000.

In 1820 Joseph's son George who was "a real worker and maker blankets broad and narrow or yard-wide woollen cloth" had a licence to expose for sale and to sell. He had to carry this around with him all the time and it was issued by Joseph Howgate who was the Bailiff. The original is in the hands of Charles Day and is rather dog-eared, due to been regularly handled.

George's son Henry obviously worked with his father because in 1844 he started his own company and then expanded into an area in Hanging Heaton, which is now called Day's Yard. It is where he and his wife used to sort and sell rags. In Day's Yard Henry built Quarry Cottage and then Quarry House, which was built of stone costing £10 from an old Methodist School and bricks from James Bray of Shaw Cross. As he grew his company he then started to dye and dry rags and then he also bought a rag machine. He had crude brick dye vats built, where the water was heated by a fire underneath the bottom plate and when they had been dyed the rags were dried in the field at the bottom of the yard. A basic rag machine was invented in about 1813 but not quite refined enough to use on a commercial basis until about 1820 and the same principle of that original machine is used to the present day. It is believed that Henry had a rag machine down at Albion Mill, Bradford Road, Dewsbury; because there would not have been enough room in Day's Yard, as he also introduced hand weaving there. It can be seen today in the cottages of Day's Yard that there were doors on the top floor, which would have been where the yarn was taken for the hand looms.

In Henry's sales day book some of the names are well known in the Dewsbury area. Frank Fearnside of Ossett, Joseph Hemingway, Abraham Day, Mark Oldroyd, William Sykes, Mark Day, Christopher Nathaniel Wilson, John Greenwood, Mark and Edward Day, Joseph Newsome, George Ward, Isaac Wilson, Day Nephew and Co, Jonathan Porritt, Nathan Wilby, George Mitchel and Isaac Clay to name a few. To see the ledger, from 1849 to 1863, the writing becomes better and the orders slowly become larger. Some of the weights seemed to be in pounds weight, others in stones and pounds and also in cwt, quarters and pounds. Also the rags were sold net weight; as on every invoice price was calculated on the net weight sold; this did change as rags were usually sold gross weight in the 1900s. The prices were also changing from old pence per pound to pounds sterling per ton. Unfortunately it was difficult to decide what he

was selling as most of the sales were for rags e.g. grey rags and blue rags; occasionally the word stockings and blankets were used. He obviously kept his cards close to his chest.

In November 1866 there were heavy floods and a serious loss of life in Dewsbury and Mirfield. Henry must have had a pulling machine as in 1866 he bought five casks of olive oil costing £157 and then the freight was payable at 47 shillings and 6 pence and it was shipped from Naples and delivered to the docks in Hull for Henry Day of Hanging Heaton. In June 1871 two men were charged with stealing a cask of olive oil from the docks in Hull and were sentenced to 7 years' penal servitude each; the 38 gallons of the oil was recovered and was delivered to Henry Day's. The solicitor from Lambert and Smiths in Hull said in his letter that he hoped this example would put an end to such stealing from the dock quays. In 1864 Henry was buying rags from John O'Neill of Philadelphia; he bought 6 tons of new cloth and cut cloth which cost £218, including insurance. Also in 1864 he bought 252 pounds of new clippings from Mr G. P Birkinshaw of Newcastle and he paid 5 old pence per pound for them.

As the company grew Henry kept moving to bigger premises and became involved with other people in the textile industry and both helping financially and working with them. When Henry died in 1889 in his will he left money for some stained-glass windows to be put into St Mark's Church, Halifax Road, Dewsbury. When the church was closed it is believed that one or two went to Dewsbury Parish Church, but most of them are still in St Marks Church.

A lot of people, called tatters, were buying and sorting rags, some of them took the sorted rags to Rag Auctions; there were 4 in Dewsbury in the busiest times. Rag auctions were started in about 1848 and the last rag auction house closed in 1970s. Unfortunately during World War II there were maximum prices for sorted and mix grades of wool rags and a price was set for each quality (nearly 200 qualities of new and used rags) and this price could not be improved on. In 1892 there was a cholera scare in France and people were concerned about buying rags and getting infected from the rags, but the local Chamber of Commerce said that the rags had been treated with hydrochloric acid, which is the dry carbonising process.

In 1888 there was a split in the Hainsworth family in Farsley and A. W Hainsworth was formed and Henry had his shoddy in the first blend A.W.H made. John Hainsworth of Cape Mills was the other company, who were famous for their outdoor hiking and walking cloths, which were used on occasions by the teams trying to conquer Everest. By 1906 these two mills were Henry Day's best customers; full loads were being delivered to Farsley and to get out of Dewsbury they used to take a spare horse to help pull the heavy load up Leeds Cut. Besides selling to woollen mills Day's were buying the wastes from the woollen cloth mills for reprocessing and putting back into Day's blends.

The shoddy and the woollen industry were prosperous during wartimes, and when there were no wars there was a recession in the trade. The first Crimean War in 1853/6 and then the Franco-Prussian War in 1870/1 were both very profitable but there was a gap in 1857 where the History of Batley recalls a great panic or slump, possibly due to the Indian Mutiny. The Russian Japan War was started in 1904 and there were 1,400,000 blankets and millions of yards of Army cloth ordered from the Heavy Woollen District of Yorkshire. There were no other countries able to make this type of cloth, which had a considerable amount of shoddy in it and 100% shoddy blends were used for the multi-coloured Army Grey Blankets which were sold all over the world.

There is a large costing Ledger which starts at 1917 and goes through to 1922 where it seems to be discontinued. The same ledger book restarts in January 1943 and seems to have the blends that were made each day entered into the ledger and finishes at the end of January 1946; the later entries did not include full costings and not exactly what materials were in the blend. The blends in the ledger seemed to be all for the military cloths but that was what the mill was doing for the war effort and working 24 hours a day. Could this ledger be part of the war effort where the company would have to produce figures of what had been produced by the company without telling the inspectors the exact blends. These thoughts are a possibility, as keeping recipes for blends was very important, and the blend book was always locked up at night; also looking after customers was important. The story has been told many times that one Ossett shoddy manufacturer used to follow Henry Day's wagon, on a regular basis, to see who they were selling to and what they were selling. During the Second World War the company had two visits from the Royal Family. (see: The Day Family History).

There was so much demand for rags that trains of rags were bought in Europe and then shipped into the UK. Fortunately there was a large railway goods yard behind Dewsbury Town Hall with large warehouses to store many tons of rags. Barges were used to bring rags, which had been delivered to Hull, by canal to Dewsbury. On Mill Street East there were warehouses at the canal Cut End, where the barges could unload and the bales stored in the wooden warehouses. The barges could carry up to 80 tons and it would take one man and a horse to deliver the barge to Dewsbury. The canal was never used to take shoddy and mungo from the area as this material was always delivered to the woollen manufacturers in the area to turn into cloth. Henry Day's imported a lot of wool dyed blue rags and edges from the USA which came into Liverpool and then were brought by road to Dewsbury.

Old uniforms were sold by tender by large companies or government departments; the companies included Bus Companies, Hospitals, Fire Brigades and the Police which included the RUC. The Armed Forces had enormous tenders for all the different types of textiles that they were disposing of. Most of the above garments had shoddy or mungo in them and so the heavy woollen district has been "green" for nearly 200 years. Synthetic fibres had not been invented and there were two fibres which did cause considerable problems. One was horsehair cloth which was regularly used to stiffen the front of military uniforms. The horsehair was coarse and strong and if it got into a shoddy blend it would cause problems in carding and spinning and so had to be removed from the garment by hand, before carbonising. The other fibre which caused considerable problems was cotton and again this did affect the carding of shoddy. One invention that helps with this was the Peralta roller at the end of the breast end of the card. It consisted of two heavy rollers which were put under pressure and that would crush the cotton fibre but not the wool as the fibre web passed through the rollers. Carbonising the garments using hydrochloric acid was a way of "killing" the cotton sewing threads, pockets etc. and turning it into dust, thus leaving the rags as 100% animal fibre.

The shoddy trade did not make any waste and it did not need skips as everything that came into the Mills was turned into an end product, except the dust from carbonising. Wastes which could not be used into standard blends were kept on one side and stored to make cheap Army grey blankets, under felt and mattress waddings. When an order came in for Army grey blankets it was usually a big order and all the cheap wastes were used. The packing materials which were bales made of hemp, jute and sisal were sold to be pulled up by specialist jute pullers. There was also the famous shoddy manure which was the dust and short fibre from the fibre processing, which was put into bags and sold. A lot of it went to the potato growers in East Anglia because the wool fibre dust would hold moisture round the potatoes and the yields were better.

Rag and waste sorting gave a lot of employment in the area and the sorting was thorough. For example, blacks would be sorted into black and faded black and in both lambswool and shetland quality, followed by the labels being cut off the garments. The sorters were mainly women and most of them had ancestors in Ireland. Some sorting was very precise, especially the wool dyed blues, and the more experienced sorters were given the difficult jobs, for which their pay was higher.

In 1915 Henry Day's became sophisticated and had a telephone installed with the number Dewsbury 95. In 1919 they bought their first wagon a Vulcan costing £600 which was ex WD vehicle. Unfortunately not everybody was doing well Fenton Textiles of Batley went into liquidation with liabilities of over £1 million. When James Banks of Pudsey failed and the liquidator allowed Henry Day's to remove raw materials from their warehouse to offset their losses, which would not happen today.

One of the biggest influences in the demise of the woollen textile industry was the invention of synthetic fibres. Initially they did not cause a problem as their use was not very high but after a time synthetic fibres were being added to wool and shoddy blends to both help the strength and reduce the price. Another reason for the down turn of the woollen industry was the public were not buying wool cloth due to central heating and car heaters. A lot of Gannex and sheep skin coats were being purchase instead of wool coats made from wool and shoddy. Even the police used Gannex coats for a time, instead of their traditional capes which were made out of wool and shoddy. Then there was the use of synthetic threads, usually polyester to sew garments together, these polyester threads could not be carbonised and the labour cost to remove these seams was too high.

Looking back it is interesting to see that Parliament was looking after the woollen trade in the UK, as in 1666 an Act was passed for burying the dead in wool. It was enacted for the encouragement of the woollen trade and against the importation of linen in which the corpse was usually wrapped. In 1678 a more stringent Act was passed, which obliged the clergy to make an entry in the register that the law had been complied with.

In 1956 Mark Day Ltd, the woollen cloth manufacturers in Savile Town, was closed down by Uncle John Day. He closed the mill because he didn't like the way the Italians were putting the names of Yorkshire towns on the selvages of their cloth. He could also envisage that this type of competition would increase round the world and he did not want to be part of this. How right he was.

The last war to benefit the shoddy and mungo industry was the Middle East war in 1967 / 73 where Henry Day's made hundreds of tons of shoddy for the uniforms and blankets for both sides of the war. The company was supplying A W Hainsworth and others with the shoddy to make the various cloths required and they were selling via agents to both sides.

The public were becoming very price conscious, if you made a thinner cloth then the price will be less but the garment would not last as long and this was fine as fashions were changing more frequently and wool clothes were being worn less. A thinner cloth meant less shoddy was being used in the yarn as the yarn had to be stronger, sometimes with the addition of nylon or polyester. The Armed Forces were beginning not wear wool uniforms such as the serge

battledress, bellbottoms in the Navy and the greatcoats; also their “number ones”, which were all wool worsted were turned into wool polyester worsted, with polyester sewing threads.

The cotton uniform was coming into fashion for the armed forces as it was more comfortable to wear and easier to clean. Imports of cotton, polyester, nylon and wool cloth were pouring in from all over the world where child or very cheap labour was being used.

Henry Day started to directly export, mainly into Europe and America textile markets but in hindsight it did not solve our problems as those countries were being affected the same as the UK. The company started the deskinning of New Zealand sheep skin waste pieces, which is the process of destroying the skin chemically and leaving good quality wool. Unfortunately this product could only be sold when the wool prices were high. The use of sulphuric acid in this process did cause pollution problems as well.

Other areas that the Company became involved in were geotextiles some containing grass for use on motorway bankings. We also set up a plant for processing the waste from viscose products in the medical industry for reselling back as cotton buds etc. Processing of Kevlar from waste tyre cord was used into prison blankets, which made them harder to cut and stronger. We worked on wool insulation using the cheaper coarser wools. We also set up a plant on an East Yorkshire farm to process hemp fibre to make insulation for houses and cars. The hemp was being grown for the oil from the seed; unfortunately the company went out of business.

Ultimately when profits had gone the manufacturing by Henry Day & Sons Ltd ceased in 2000. The company is still in business and letting out the property at Savile Bridge Mills for rental income.