

THE WAY WE WERE



MEMORIES: Havelock Street, where the Terry family lived

Love, seduction, and Victorian gothic buildings

Way We Were



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LET me introduce you to the Terry family. In the late 1860s Thomas Terry, a bricklayer, lived in Havelock Street in Canterbury with his wife Jane and four children.

A fifth child, their 18-year-old daughter Jane, lived in Deal where she had found work as a milliner in George Wakeham's drapers shop.

Jane formed a close friendship with another girl working in the shop, who introduced her to the Deal social scene, which included army officers from the local barracks.

Jane was described later in court as 'a young lady of considerable personal attractions'. You can perhaps see the direction in which this story is moving.

Anthony Hutchinson, a 27-year-old Lieutenant in the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers, took a liking to Jane and began escorting her to concerts and other events.

He mentioned to her that he stood to inherit a fortune from his elderly father, that he loved her, and that he intended to marry her. George Wakeham, her boss (a congregationalist), discovered her evening activities and promptly fired her.



LOOKING BACK: Norman Road was built in the Jubilee year of 1887



TIMES CHANGE: East Lynne villas in Whitstable Road

The seduction case was held at Westminster Queen's Bench in May 1868, by which time Jane had returned to her family home

Jane's father won and was paid £150 damages (over £9,000 in today's money).

For many years the case of Terry v Hutchinson was quoted in courts and in legal texts as it had established that a plaintiff had a general right to damages, regardless of whether the girl lived at home at the time of the debauchery.

So where does the Victorian gothic architecture fit in to all this? Thomas built houses that represent the best Canterbury examples of this style of architecture, one in Norman Road and the other on Whitstable Road.

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As she returned to Canterbury by train, she spotted Anthony in another carriage. At Minster, Anthony invited Jane to join him in his otherwise empty first class compartment. Between Minster and Canterbury, in the words of the court, 'the defendant affected his purpose'. In legal terms of the day, Jane was debauched.



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The seduction case was held at Westminster Queen's Bench in May 1888, by which time Jane had returned to her family home and produced a baby girl, Ellen Terry.

Meanwhile, Anthony was insisting that he had never promised or intended to marry her. The case was brought by Jane's father, as damages were payable to him for loss of Jane's services - her availability to clean his house, cook his meals, and the likes.

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Architectural historians admire the use of coloured brick, the pointed brick arches over the doorways, and the carved head above the Norman Road villas. As for baby Ellen, she thrived and, living in Alma Road, became headmistress of the Wesleyan Elementary School. She died in 1945 in Minehead worth nearly £6,850.