

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

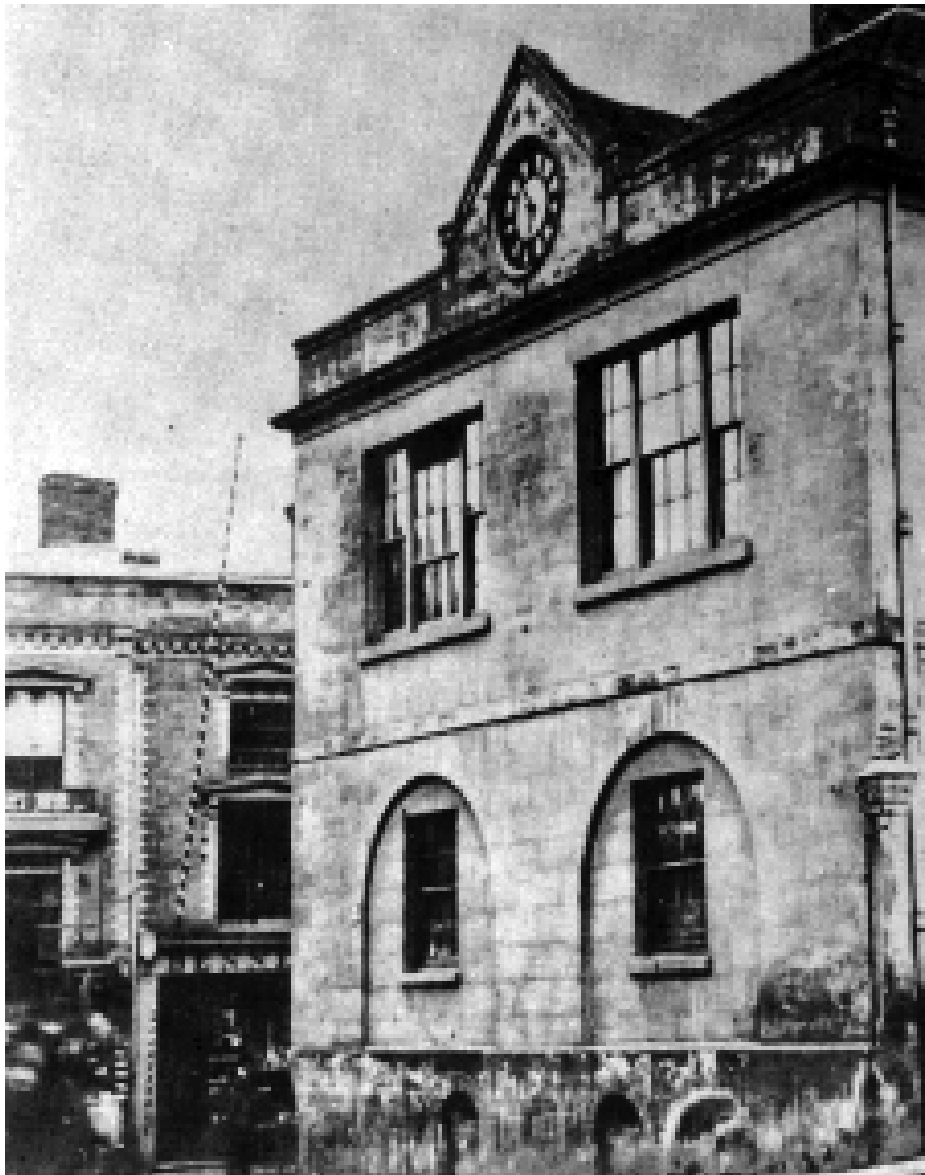
by Henry Bennett

Introduction

Articles entitled 'Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster ' by Henry Bennett appeared in the Kidderminster Shuttle between 11th December 1909 and the 16th April 1910. The last article on 16th April 1910 promised further contributions but none seem to have appeared. Henry Bennett was born in Kidderminster in 1832 and lived for many years in Cherry Orchard. He was a hairdresser and did his apprenticeship in Ludlow. Returning to Kidderminster he had hairdressing establishments in Mill St and Coventry St before finally settling in Swan St. He was also a Town Councillor representing St George's Ward.

Transcriptions of the nine articles in the collection, together with some additional notes, will be reproduced below as they are completed. Two successive articles were given the same number: 'VI'. These have been renumbered VIa & VIb.

Below Bennet's Barber shop and pole is shown in Swan St partly obscured by the old Guildhall.



Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 11 December 1909)

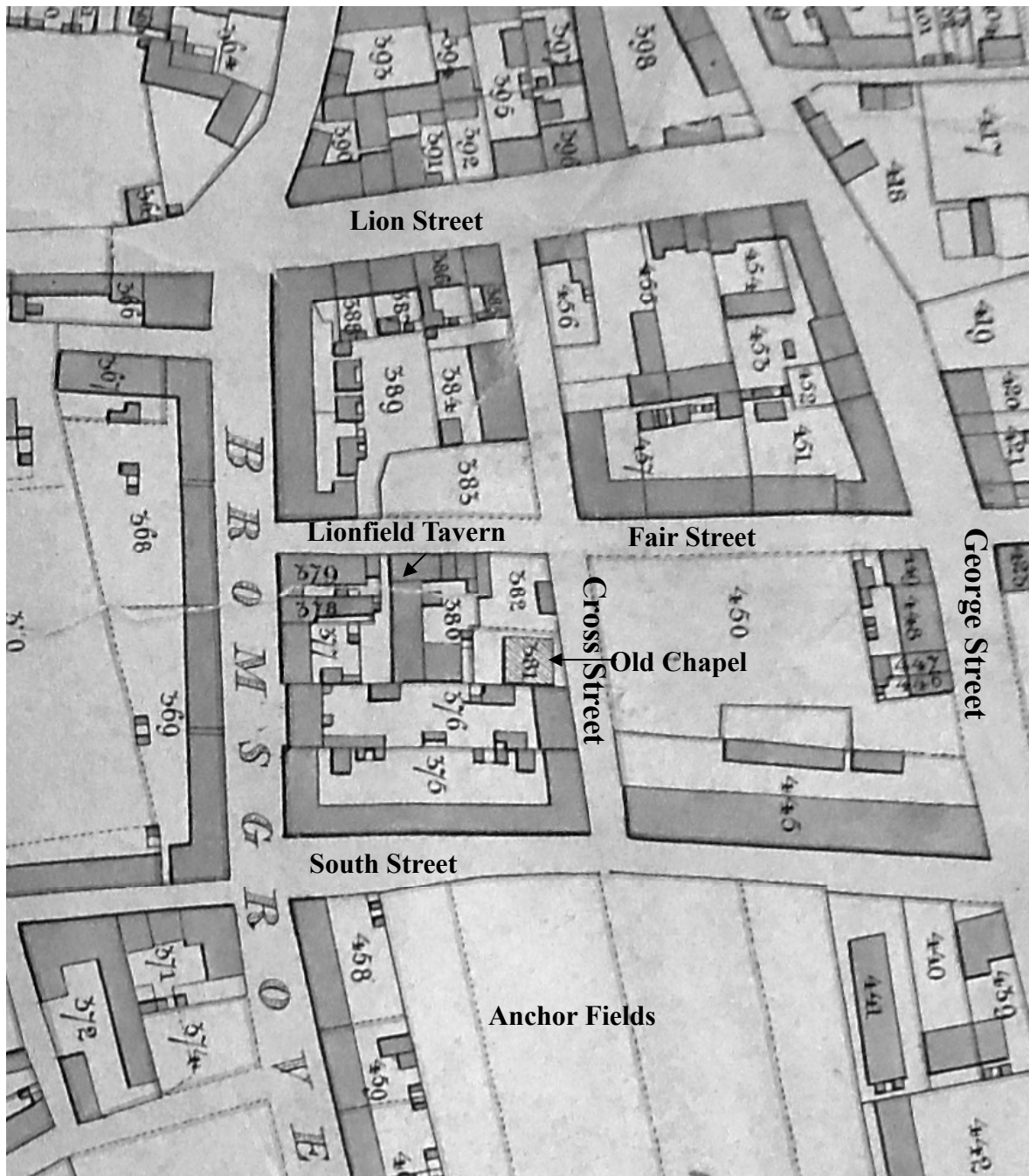
by Henry Bennett

I.

Sir,- A large number of old friends have repeatedly asked me to tell them what I remember about old Kidderminster. I cannot tell them anything before the year 1832, as that was the year of my birth. I was born at the *Paul Pry*, in Bromsgrove-street, which is now a pawnshop. I afterwards moved into Cross-street, into the house near the Old Primitive Methodist Chapel, where the bakehouse, the property of Alderman Taylor, now stands. I well remember the late Richard Godson's election, in 1837, he being carried shoulder high after he had beaten John Bagshaw. This was on July 25th, 1837. In the crowd was a noted character, called "Tommy Oliver," riding a donkey with a lady covered with Godson's colours. From that time up to the present I have always known something about electioneering. Where the iron church now stands, and all in Anchor Fields, were allotment gardens. Opposite the old chapel was a field used as pleasure grounds and for fairs. Opposite, at the *Lionfield Tavern*, lived High Constable Law. He wore a cocked hat. Bennett and Patch used to pitch their tents and stay there for weeks. Just about this time they were moving the turnpike gates from the Round House to Hoobrook. My father and mother went to live at the old "Round House", to take charge of the weighing machine, until the house was taken down, on the site of the Brinton Fountain. The "*Worcester Cross*" was at this time kept by a man named Jasper. This was a grandfather to the present Richard Jasper. On the Cross side of the road there were only three houses until you got to Hill Grove. Up Comberton-lane, as it was then called, there were only three lamps. The bottom one was opposite old Beck Swan's house, the old letter writer. The boys used to tease her, as they played by the lamp near her house. The Cherry Orchard was a very pretty sight in the spring, when the apple and plum trees were in full bloom. I and Miller Corbet with others helped to cut the trees down to make a way between Comberton-road to George-street, and George Holloway was the first to go across from Comberton-road to George-street. This road has proved a great boon to that side of the town. I remember when there were no houses from the *Railway Bell* all the way to Lower Comberton. The picturesque old gothic cottage, which stood in the middle of the Cherry Orchard, was the admiration of all—visitors and residents alike. Some of the old cherry trees are still at the rear of the houses in Lea-street. The cottage was burnt down just about the time that the land was taken over in building allotments. A William Snell (a sadler of Coventry-street) was the man who had the lot with the cottage on it, and he used it for workmen to make horse collars in, which were stuffed with straw, and by some accident a lot of straw took fire, which completely destroyed the cottage. Before the present road across the valley of the Cherry Orchard to George Street was made "a tip" was in existence for many years, to fill it up as it is to-day.

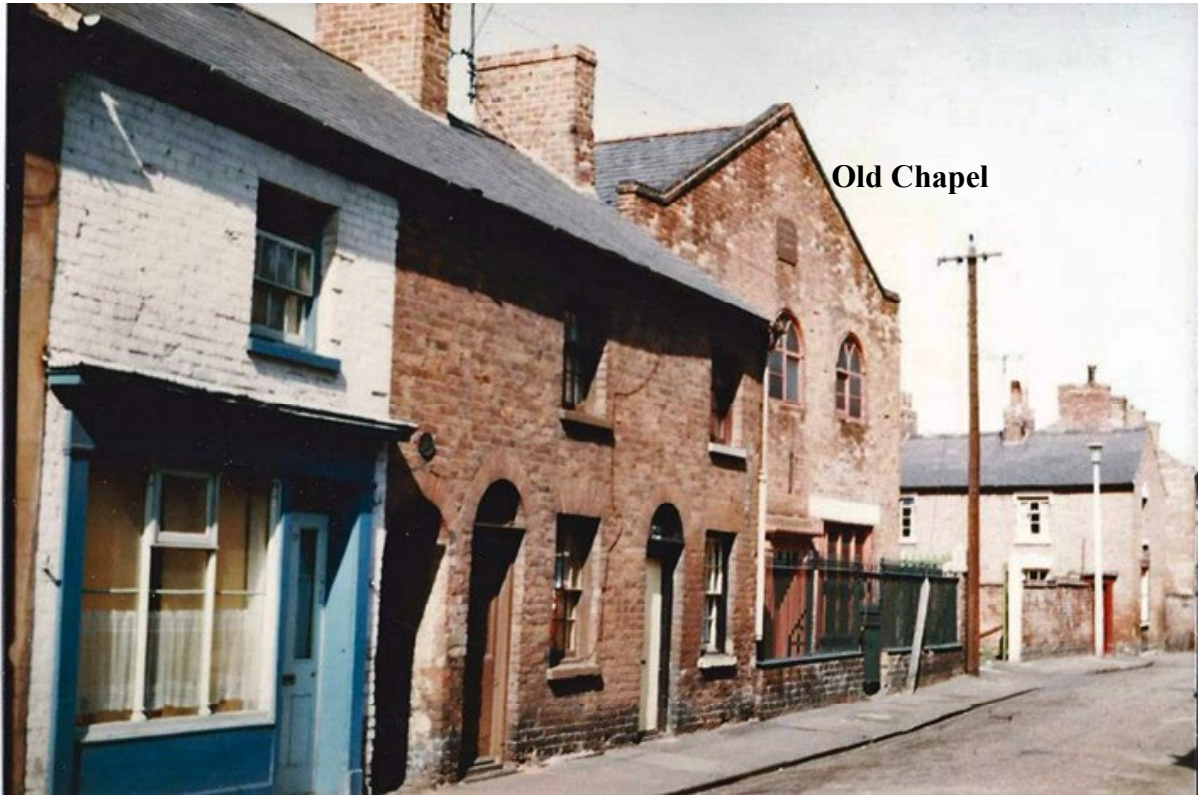
(To be continued)

Notes: The 1835 Jeremiah Mathews Borough map below helps to put some of Henry Bennett's comments into perspective. The Anchor Fields garden allotments are shown and also the field (450) opposite to the old Primitive Methodist Chapel where the fairs were held. The Lionfield Tavern is also marked. Street names have been added. Perhaps the name Fair Street arose from its proximity to the fair ground.



Jeremiah Mathews Map of the Borough 1835

It is interesting to compare the photograph below (probably 1950s to 1960s) with the 1835 map above. The photograph shows the old Chapel in Cross Street and the houses next door which were clearly in place when the area was surveyed for the Mathews map. In the distance a row of terraced houses have been built on plot 383 which is shown empty in 1835. (Bob Millward March 2013)



Cross Street photograph, courtesy Goff Jones

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 25 December 1909)

by Henry Bennett

II.

ST. GEORGE'S WARD.--There were only three houses in St. George's Ward worth naming when I first knew it. There was Leswell House, where Mr. Henry Woodward, the carpet manufacturer, lived for many years. Then High Bank, in Leswell Lane, where that very old mulberry tree stands on the lawn. This tree was as large seventy years ago as it is to-day. I have had lots of mulberries off it when young. The third house has not been altered very much except the Drill Hall at the back. Then the few houses in Leswell Lane were very old ones. At one time there was a little old man to be seen round Land Oak named Jacky Bromadge, who was said to be "not quite right," and there was a lot of truth in it; for some of the upper ten often got this poor simple fellow to walk to Birmingham, and take letters for sixpence and bring the answers back; because they could get it done quicker this way at that time than by posting. I do not say that Jacky Bromadge did not get a good feed at each end of his journey. This poor fellow got drowned in one of the Hurcott pools. Even this poor simple man could be trusted to do what was right—walk to Birmingham and back—for sixpence.

OFFMORE ROAD.--What a change in Offmore road. Lately I have been having a look round at the old cottages that were there when I first remember it. There are about thirty very old dissipated looking houses still standing; but there are not many of them occupied, as they are unfit for habitation. St. George's Ward, as it was seventy years ago, had about one hundred houses, so with that exception I have seen all the ward built as it is today. This speaks well for the Land Clubs and other agencies which commenced to take up the land about thirty-five or forty years ago. A good number of tradesmen, but the majority were working men, have been responsible for the developing of the Ward. The same may be said of the other wards of the town. When I say St George's Ward, I take the old ward as it starts at the corner of George-street straight up Coventry-street, and right round Chester-road and down Comberton-hill, along George-street to the corner of Coventry-street, which takes in the whole ward. So I have seen a great change in that part of Kidderminster.

ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOLS.—When I first remember St. George's Schools a man named Green kept the Infant School, and when he left he went to Worcester. About ten years ago I met his son in a railway train going to London, and we both enjoyed the chat about his father. A man named Hodges kept the big school for many years. He had a son an auctioneer, and his office was over the Market Hall, in High-street. And many of your readers will remember the auctioneer.

(To be continued).

Notes: The map below is taken from the Borough Plan produced by Jeremiah Mathews. It shows the layout of part of the St George's Parish as it was in 1835 and is very much how Henry Bennett would have known it in his very early years.

Note that George St, Cherry Orchard and St George's Terrace are incomplete roads in 1835, and only later were extended to meet Comberton Hill, George St and George St, respectively.

Bennett refers specifically to Leswell House [see Historic Kidderminster Project (HKP) report 451], High Bank (probably better known as Spring Bank House, [HKP report 457]) and, indirectly to The Shrubbery (the Drill Hall is in its grounds). It is strange that he overlooked another fine house 'Elderfield' [see HKP report 460]. All these houses are still extant to some degree or other. The Shrubbery has lost its top floor and Spring Bank House is now an undistinguished looking block of flats with most of its original features hidden or removed – but still there.

Two of the houses shown in the 1835 map of Leswell Lane (known then as Back Lane) can still be identified: they are presently numbered 8 and 18 and shown by arrows on the map.

(Bob Millward June 2013)



Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 1 January 1910)

by Henry Bennett

III.

COMBERTON HILL.—All the land past the *Railway Bell* was tillage land, and a Mr. Thomas Pitt, a butcher, of Mill-street, farmed it. The barn stood on the railway cutting. Mr. T. Pitt was the father of the late Mr. Pitt, whose farm was on the Stourbridge-road. There was a very old cottage in Yew Tree-road that belonged to the Gardener family. The O.W.W. Railway Company tried to buy the land for a very long time, but the Gardener family would not sell it because they had 'buses running to Worcester and Birmingham, and it still belongs to the Gardener family, some of whom still live in the little cottage, and it is a very good landmark. The road which led up to it was called Gardener's Lane. Mr. H. Herring's father built a house near, and then the road was made much better, and it is now called Yew Tree-road. There was no Lea-street or Lorne-street until about forty years ago. Farfield, as it is now called, was called Bigfield before the railway was made. The cricket field was in a meadow down the New-road, where Morton's factory now stands. At this time a Mr. Yeates rented it, who kept the *Black Horse Hotel*,—before he kept the *Black Horse* he was at the *Pheasant*, and before him a Mr. Cole was at the *Black Horse*—and afterwards he went to live at Gorst Hall. Shortheath, as it is now named, was called the "three-cornered piece," and past there was called Comberton Common, Gipsies used to camp on the left-hand side.

CHESTER LANE (OR CHESTER ROAD).—Chester Road was called Chester-lane. There was not a house on either side till we got to the Old Land Oak Toll House. An uncle of mine kept it. He was killed by the horses from the Oaklands, and his name was Jones. There was a toll bar at the top of Hurcott-road, which was thrown open at night. Linden Avenue was occupied as allotment grounds as far back as 73 years. My father had a part of it.

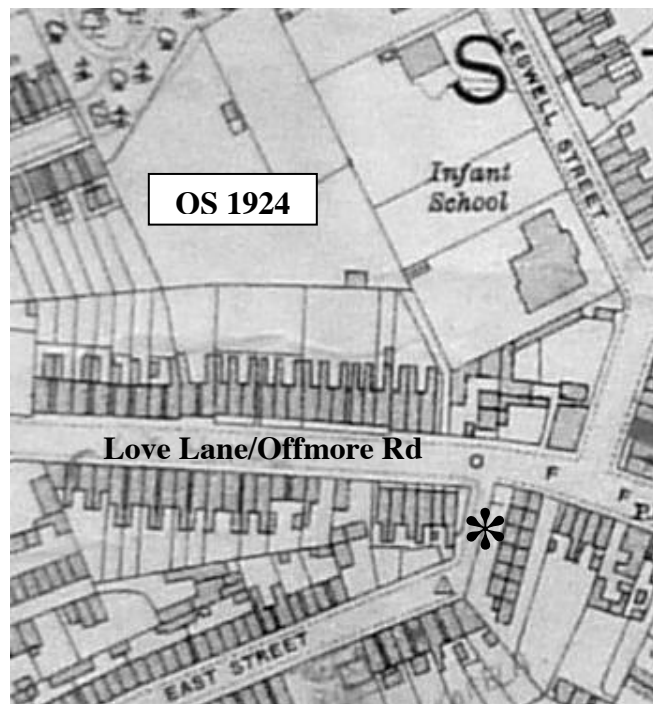
LOVE LANE.—Love Lane as it was called, was very narrow, and the "*Golden Fleece*" was a great calling-place for wool-sorters and combers. The *Railway Train* was built by a man named Kirkham. He worked at the dyeworks and kept the inn as well. This house seemed to take all the trade off the *Golden Fleece*, which soon closed. The name can still be seen on the gable-end. The first cottages that were built in Chester-road were built by two brothers named Hodges. They both went abroad, and never came back again. They worked at Lea's Mill, in Mill-street, and one of their sons still owns the property.

(To be continued).

Notes:

1. Historic Kidderminster Project report (number 493) discusses the history of Yew Tree House including the development of Yew Tree Road. The report can be seen on Kidderminster Civic Society website or as hard copy in Kidderminster Library.
2. Short Heath is the three sided area bounded by Chester Road North, Comberton Road and Chaddesley Road. The latter was called Spirit Lane until 1917 ('Kidderminster since 1800' by Tomkinson and Hall).
3. Chester Road became Chester Lane sometime between 1855 and 1860 (Trade Directories).

4. Love Land was the original name for Offmore Road the change occurring between 1881 and 1891. Census records for 1901 and 1911 provide information that tells us where the '*Golden Fleece*' was situated. In 1901 'Fleece Buildings' were numbered 27 to 38 Offmore Road. In 1911 'Golden Fleece Row' was at 27a to 32 Offmore Road. This places the site of the building on the corner of Offmore Road and East Street marked by * on the 1924 OS map. These are clearly a row of 'back to back' houses so the public house would have been, in essence, a 'beer house' occupying only part of the premises; presumably bordering Love Lane. The houses had been demolished by 1938 (OS map) leaving the ground vacant. It became a children's playground in the 1960s but returned to residential use with housing constructed in 2011.



In the 1851 census Robert Old is a 'Publican and Dealer' in Love Lane. In the Slater Trade Directory of the same year he is a Beer retailer of Tipper's Oak. Earlier in 1841 he had been a Wool comber in Tipper's Oak, Love Lane. Tipper's Oak was an earlier name for East St before it was extended through to George St. It seems likely, then, that it was Robert Old who ran the '*Golden Fleece*' as described by Bennett. In 1861 Robert Old was running the '*Railway Tavern*' (as distinct from the '*Railway Train*') as Bootmaker and Beerhouse keeper. Had he responded to the opening of the '*Railway Train*' by changing the name of the '*Golden Fleece*'? If so the '*Golden Fleece*' (as the '*Railway Tavern*') had a longer life than suggested by Bennett because George Dyer is licensee there in 1871. Or had Robert Old moved to new premises called '*Railway Tavern*' by 1861?

5. According to 'Kidderminster since 1800 by Tomkinson and Hall', the '*Railway Train*' was open by 1855. In that year the licensee was Mary Kirkham but she is also listed as being in Love Lane as a beer seller in the 1851 Slater Trade Directory, and Victualler there in the 1851 census (the previous entry on the census record was St George's Fields). So it seems that the '*Railway Train*' came into existence shortly before the railway through Kidderminster was opened in 1852.

(Bob Millward April 2013)

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 22 January 1910)

by Henry Bennett

IV.

THE VICARAGE.—There is not much change in the Hoo-road since the Vicarage (now St George's) was built. I well remember it being built. I also assisted a cousin of mine named John Jones to plant some trees on the bank of the Vicarage boundary of the road before the wall was built. Thousands of the bricks that were used in the building of the house came out of Broome's big stack at the old mill in Mill-street. They were rented by the well-known firm of "Donkey Dutton" and Ben Reynolds, with their tandem of three donkeys. When they had unloaded they came down the hill with the animals hooked three abreast at a motor speed.

About seventy years ago Mr. James Hooman lived at The Copse (Hoo-road), until he left the town. Then his partner, Mr. James Pardoe followed in occupation, and remained there after the great failure of the firm known as "Pardoe and Hooman."

THE WORCESTER CROSS.—The old weighing machine for a very many years used to stand, or was fixed, in the road at the corner of Green-street, and was a noted land-mark. On the beam of the machine there was the face of the brilliant sun, and the old machine can be seen to-day at the Tannery in Orchard-street. It was sold to Isaiah Moore before the Round House was pulled down. The meadow where Green-street is now, and where Lord Ward (afterwards the Earl of Dudley) built the power-loom sheds (now known as the Stour Vale Mills, and in the occupation of Messrs. Woodward, Grosvenor and Co. Ltd.), was rented by Mr. Dovey, the butcher of High-street (Lipton's shop), and afterwards by his son, Thomas Dovey. My father rented the land from Mr. W. H. Chellingworth, of Park Attwood, where the Worcester Cross factory (formerly H. R. Willis's) now stands, until it was sold for the present building.

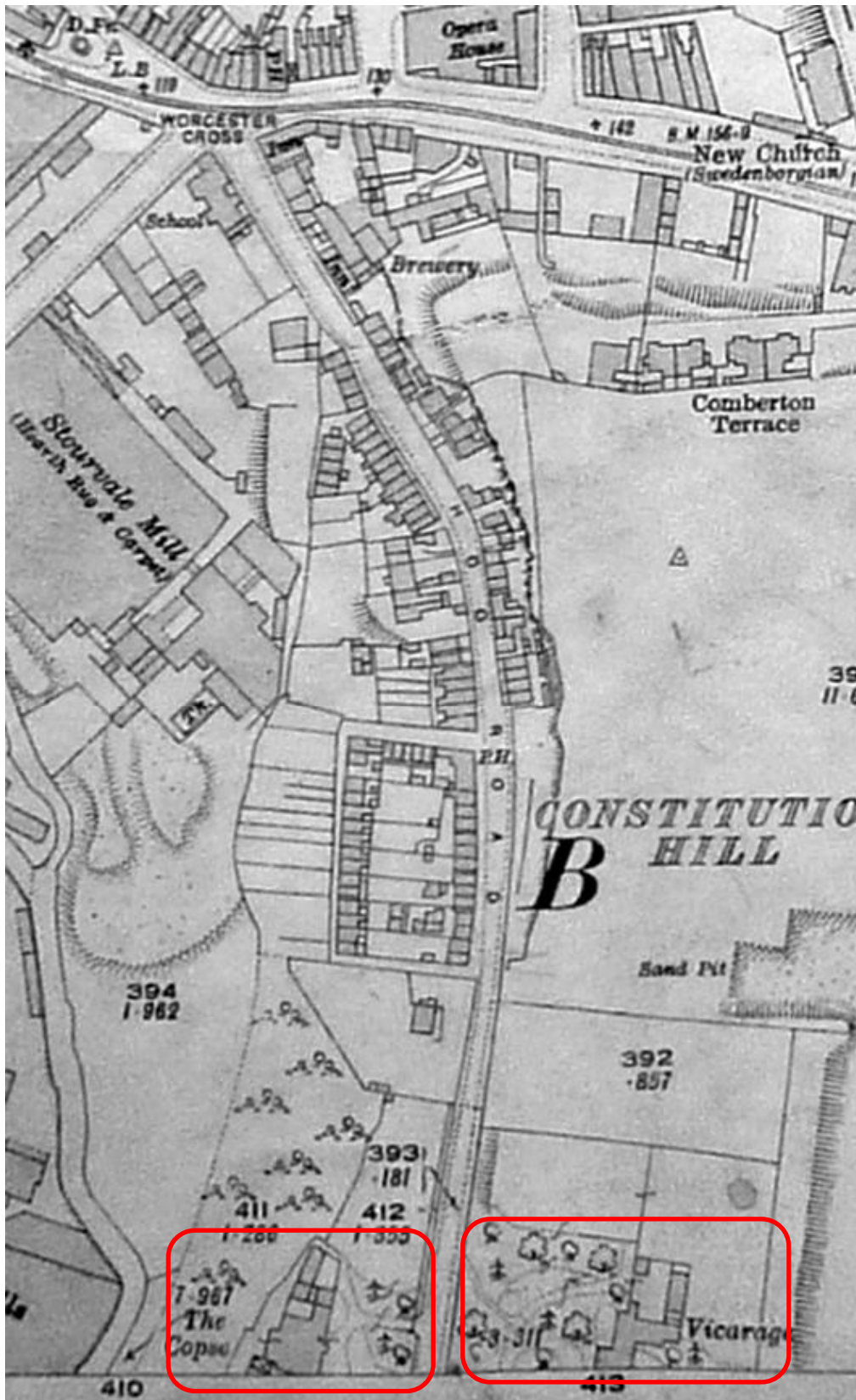
The year 1853 was the year of the great strike of the hand-loom weavers. They held their meetings in the "*Shakespeare*" yard in Coventry-street; the landlord was a man named Harry Barber. It was said at the time that the weavers put him in the "*Shakespeare*" to look after their interests, and after one of the meetings—it was a Tuesday night—they decided to carry a board round the town with the printed words on it: "A penny a yard and no surrender." This strike lasted eight weeks. and there are many who were children at that time who have vivid recollections of the hardships which many families passed through during the struggle. The "*Shakespeare*" did well while the poor weavers and their wives and families were starving. Many of the men left the town and their families, and never came back. Thus out of evil came good, for no sooner had the strike ended than the manufacturers commenced to build for the steam power loom. As I have previously mentioned, Lord Ward was the first to come to the assistance of Kidderminster by erecting the sheds, which were let to some eight or ten manufacturers, whose names were painted up over the entrances. The firm of H. J. Dixon and Sons came into existence in my recollection. William Green followed by erecting the works now occupied by the Victoria Carpet Co. Then Watson & Naylor's spinning mill was built, and it is pleasing to note that the sons of the old firm are still in Green-street employing a lot of labour; not forgetting that the works of Messrs. Morton & Sons is on the one side of Green-street with the New-road frontage. I wish also, to note that this piece of level land from Worcester Cross to the Corporation pumping Station has some of the finest works erected upon it in the old Carpet Borough.

I well remember all the meadows on the Green-street side of the Stourport-road being flooded and two men named George Colsey and Bill Lench jumping off the bridge in the New-road near the Castle, and swimming all over the meadows; and came back to the starting place, and then jumping into the water off the flood gates, and came through the gates with the rush of water. The man, George Colsey, is living to-day and is nearly 90 years of age, is hearty and full of vigour, and relates the exploit as if he could do it again.

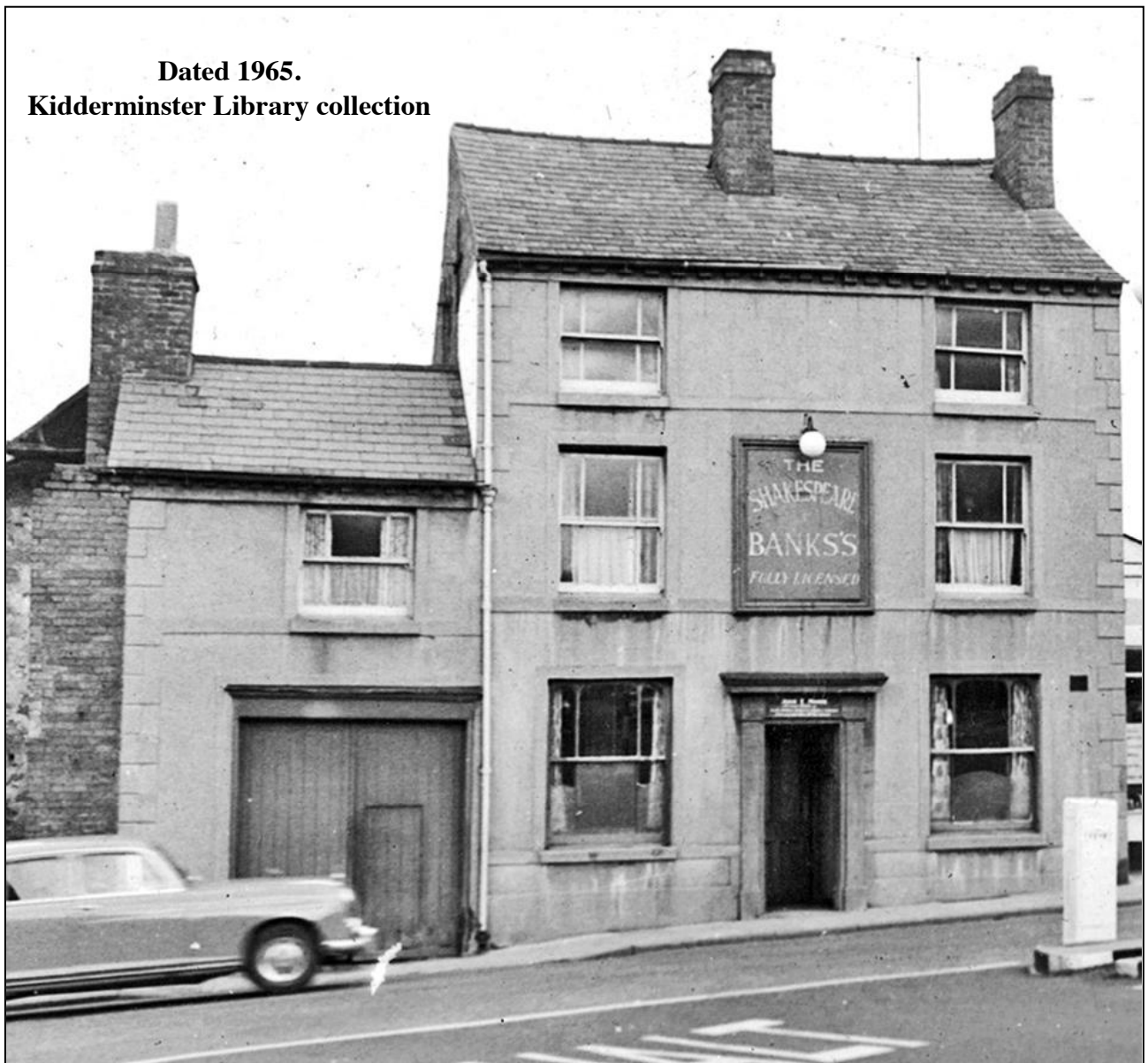
(To be continued).

Notes:

1. 'The Copse' and the 'Vicarage', mentioned above, are outlined in red in the 1924 OS map below. They were just at the top of the hill going up Hoo Road just before the football ground. The Vicarage building still survives.

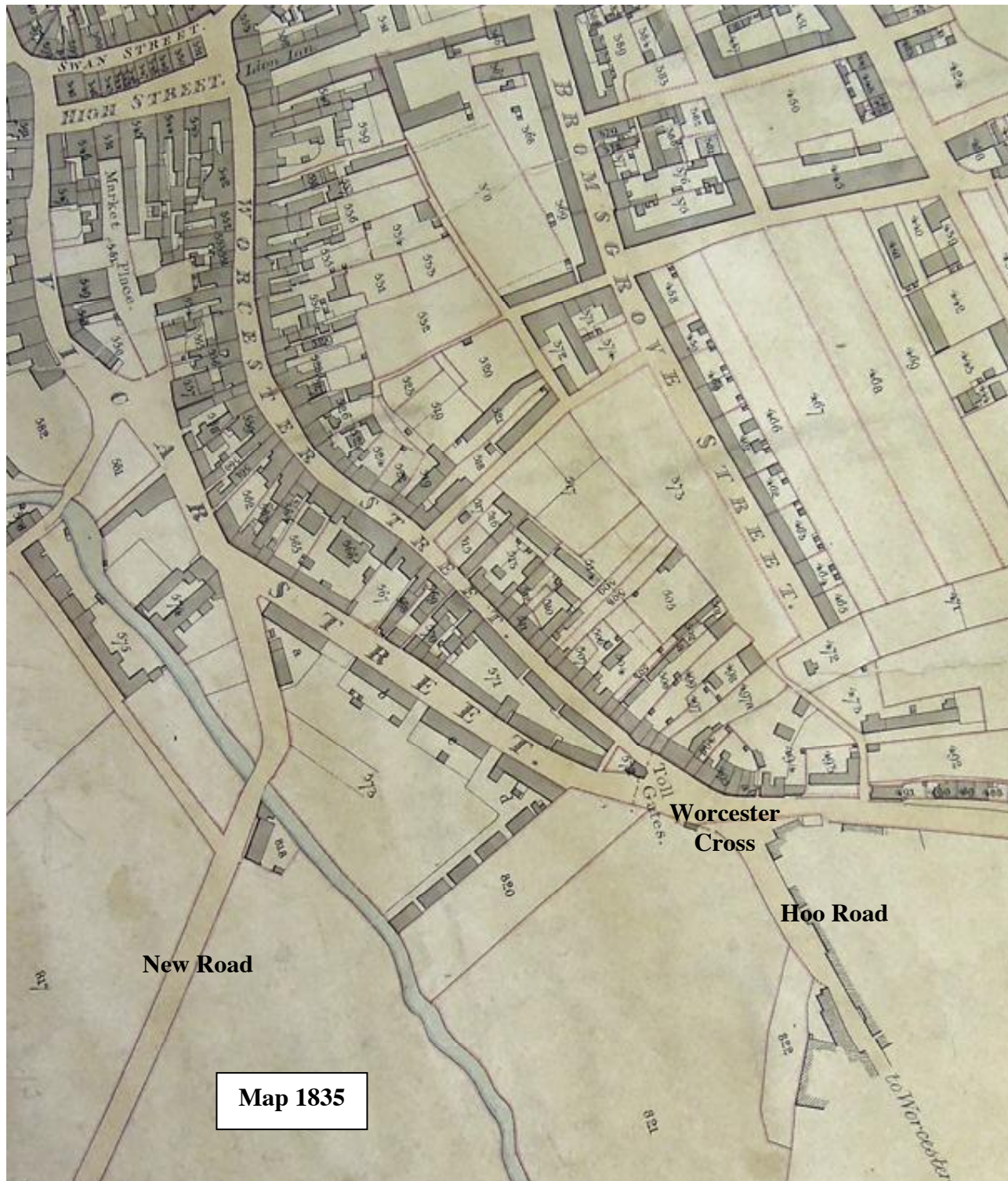


2. The Shakespeare Public House, Coventry Street. Demolished when the Ring Road was built.



The first known reference to the Shakespeare is in the 1828 Pigot Trade Directory. It was also sometimes known as the Dudley Arms and is marked as such on the 1883 OS map of Kidderminster.

3. The section of Jeremiah Mathews Map given below dates from 1835. It shows the Toll Gates at Worcester Cross. The weighing machine referred to by Bennett would have been situated close by. At the time this map was produced Green Street had not been constructed but the road to Worcester along via Aggborough along Hoo Road (once known as Hoo Lane) is shown.



(Bob Millward April 2013)

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 29 January 1910)

by Henry Bennett

V.

THE CUTTING THROUGH WORCESTER STREET.— About sixty-nine or seventy years ago I remember the houses being pulled down in Worcester-street to make the road through to Oxford-street, so that the coaches and 'buses could more readily get on to the Worcester and Stourport-road. Before that was done they had to go round the Worcester Cross. There used to be an entry, which came out of Worcester-Street, through the shop where Mr. Newey (the barber) now lives, for the use of the residents of "Oyster-shell Row" (Marlborough-street). You can see the door frame left in the wall at the back of Newey's shop, in a line with the brick footpath in front of the old cottages, to the present day. There was also the "Union" entry as a passage from one street to the other, and, I should think, will always remain. The late Mr. George Holloway's father, who was a policeman, used to live at the bottom house next to Oxford-street. He kept a coal-yard where the boot shop (Freeman, Hardy & Willis) is now. After he died a man named William Pitt, a butcher, had the house and shop. He married a Miss Cooksey from the Roebuck. It was a butcher's shop for many years. In Oxford-street, at that time, there was a Mr. Herbert Willis (father of Mr. Willis, chemist, of Comberton Hill), who was lessee or owner of all that side of Oxford-street from the *Green Man* up to the premises of Messrs. Cooke Bros. (formerly H. R. Willis's). The Herbert Willis mentioned was a maltster, and he died very suddenly about fifty years since. The shops next to the Roebuck (Mrs. Fred Taylor's and others) were made out of the three-storied factory, which in the old time were full of Brussels hand-loom. I remember a man named Green keeping the *Green Man and Still*. He always wore a green coat. Next came the Vicarage garden, where the Bank and all the offices are now. It was afterwards a kitchen garden, and my father rented it and opened it as a coal yard, and sold best coal from the Brockmoor pits at 6d. per cwt. It was a coal yard for many years. Then a Mr. Jasper, late of the *Worcester Cross Hotel*, bought it and let it to Mr. Jordan, who kept the *Anchor* opposite, and it was then used as a market yard. This piece of land has undergone many changes—it used to be the home of travelling theatre companies, Bennett and Patch, and others. The stage in front of the canvas erection was made level with the top of the wall, and the "artistes" paraded the stage before commencing their performance within the "theatre." Mr. Jordan, of the *Anchor*, was a very stout man, and always wore breeches and leggings. On market days it was his custom to come out from his house and shout "dinner! dinner!" at the top of his voice. Many will remember his son, usually called "Joe," who was accustomed to ride as a jockey at the steeplechases over the meadows near Hoobrook. The Jordans afterwards went to the *Bay Horse*. The old man was very proud of his three daughters, who were very smart business women. I wish to mention that there was a footpath next to the *Green Man*, on the side next the present Bank in Oxford-street, which was used by the public to fetch water from the Stour for washing purposes. This path should never have been closed. There are some doors across this passage next the Bank now.

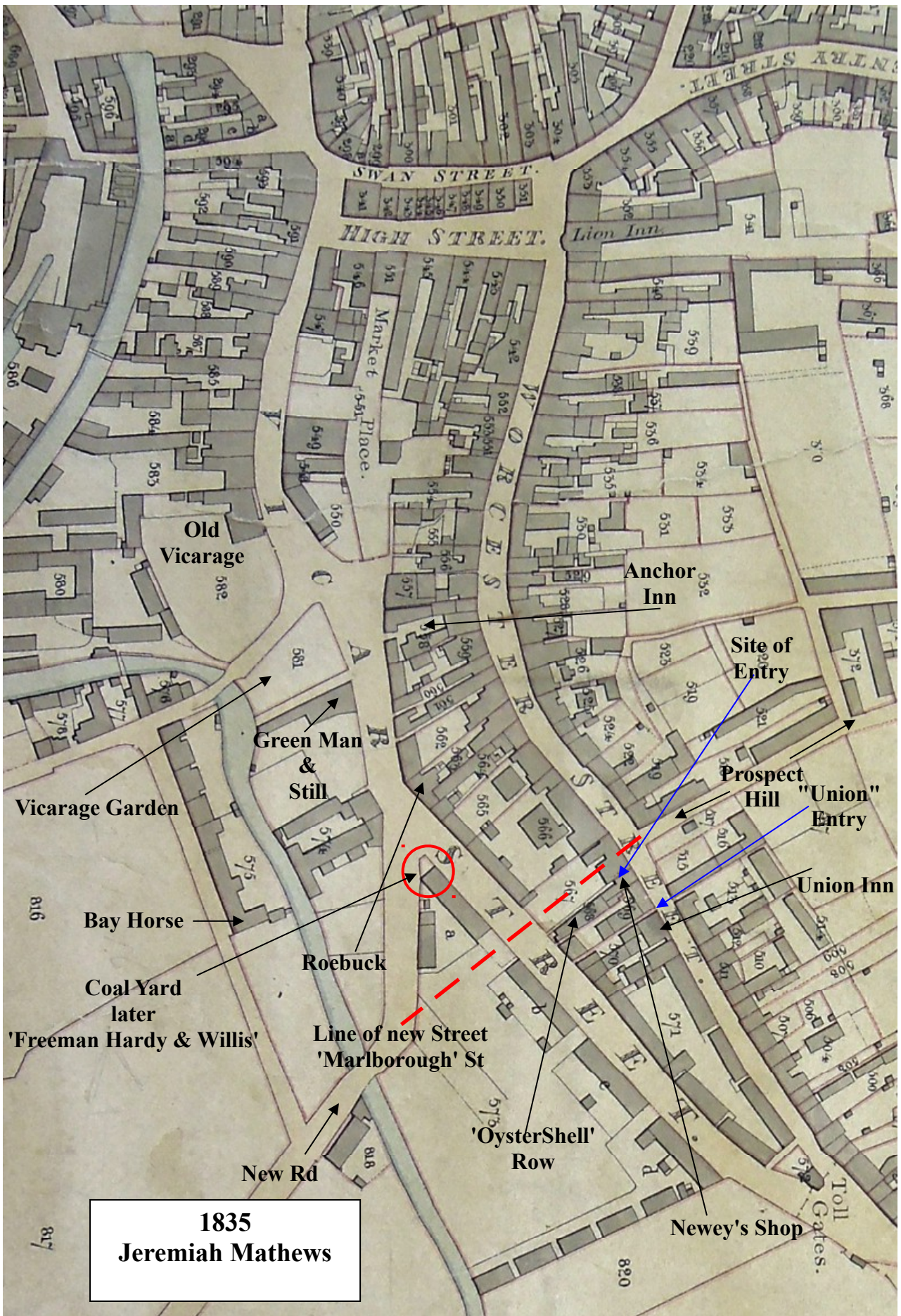
H.B.

H.B.

Notes:

The extract from the 1835 Mathews map of Kidderminster given below shows many features and places described here by Henry Bennett. Where possible these have been identified and annotated.

Note that in this map Vicar Street goes from the bottom of High Street to the Toll Gates at Worcester Cross. The latter part of this route is, of course, now known as Oxford Street.



The red dashed line indicates the line taken by the road that was constructed c 1840 (Marlborough Street) to connect Worcester Street to Oxford Street. The buildings in this vicinity, from The *Union* PH and round the corner to 'Oyster Shell Row', would seem to be still largely intact (with perhaps one possible exception) but with added/different outer skins. The back section of Newey's shop, which once exhibited the 'door frame that led to an entry from Worcester St to Oyster Shell Row', can still presently be seen as a step miss-alignment of the buildings along Marlborough Street (see also the 1835 map). The passage next to the *Union*, as Bennett predicted, remains to this day.

The Coal Yard later Freeman Hardy and Willis, shown by the red circle in the map, is presently the Estate Agents: Allan Morris & Jones.

The pathway to the Stour between the Vicarage Garden and The *Green Man & Still* can be seen clearly on the map. Barclay's Bank now occupies the site of the 'Vicarage Garden'. The Theatre that was held on the latter site was almost certainly the 'Oxford Amphitheatre' mentioned on page 232 of Tomkinson & Hall's book 'Kidderminster since 1800', 2nd Edition.

Trade Directories show that Joseph Jordan, the 'very stout man from the Anchor', was at the *Green Man & Still* in 1850, the Anchor in 1851, 1855 and The Bay Horse New Rd in 1860.

(Bob Millward May 2013)

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 5 February 1910)

by Henry Bennett

Via.

The Old Vicarage pleasure gardens were where the Town Hall and Corn Exchange now stand. There was a wall all round the front, about nine or ten feet high. There was a beautiful lot of trees hanging over the wall that made a very nice shelter when a storm was on, and it kept the sun off in very hot weather. The wall came out a lot further than where it now stands. It was a very nice picturesque looking neighbourhood till you got round the back, near where the old factories used to stand. They were then used by the Brinton firm. At that time we could go all the way up by the old factories to the weir, on the Stour. I saw the other day some of the old hand-loom factories are still in use on the firm, just inside the big gates. Now we come to the old bridge. This was very narrow, and on the right hand side there were two cottages. I well remember our old friend Richard Grove living with his father there. They had a piece of garden with the house. Mr. Grove's father was a foreman at Hoomans and Pardoes, which was next to the *Anchor Hotel*. When we got over the bridge there was a narrow road by the side of the meadow that led to Mrs. Broadrick's wharf. She lived on the wharf and kept it for many years. She had two lime kilns, and burnt lime and sold it with other things, such as tiles, slates, bricks, and timber. We used to go across the wharf to the canal side, and then over Caldwell Bridge, that stands there now. I will say here that Mrs. Broadrick married a man named Bagnall, who kept the lock on the old wharf for very many years. He had but one arm, and was a man well respected by all who knew him. The Music Hall and Corn Exchange was built about the year 1854, and were opened at Easter, 1855. Now we come back to Vicar-street, to the old Vicarage, but I must say I never remember a vicar or a curate living there. It was used as offices for lawyers—as Day, Ivens & Morton; and Tovey & Guest, auctioneers. But our old friend David Lane was the last tenant. I believe I am right in saying that Mr. David Lane is the very oldest tradesman about that was in business when I started in 1853. He was then in High-street, where Ferenbach's is now. He had a part of Welch, the Ironmonger's, shop. When they dissolved partnership, Wood went down to the very shop that Tranter now occupies. This shop was a very old ironmonger's shop, and a man named Sherman kept it—John Wood's father succeeded him. John R Wood was a town councillor, about thirty-five years since he went abroad.

Next to the Old Vicarage was a small factory that very often changed hands. At one time Messrs. Morton & Sons and then Mr. S. B. Palmer carried it on.

Next we come to one of the oldest business premises, which has never changed its calling in my time, although it has several times changed names. I will tell you all the names I can remember; Messrs. Lea & Perrin, Hodgkinson, C. Julian, Morgan & Lawley, and now Maurice Smith—all chemists. Now these ancient buildings have never undergone any change but once, and that was very many years ago, as you can see now by the shop windows. They have put one extra pane of glass on the top, and had to raise the cornice so that it hides part of the room windows upstairs. There is no doubt that this house was first built for some gentleman and not for a shop. The old cornices in the house are well worth seeing. Oak panelled wainscoting all over the house—made by superior workmen.

Now we come to Crane & Barton's. Most of this property was occupied by Hooman & Pardoe, as a dye-house and yard. The foreman's name was Walker. He lived at the Bridge House near the flood-gates. It was his duty to serve out yarn and bobbing, jute and size—every morning. The top end, next to Cheshire's, was Henry Ankritt's builder's yard. Then a man named Fisher occupied it as a builder's yard. Then John Turton had a foundry for some time: afterwards he moved to Pitt's Lane and started the foundry now carried on by Herbert Bale.

Now we come to the old-fashioned stationer's shop—next to the *Three Tuns*. This was two shops at one time; one was a flour and corn shop. I would suggest to those of my readers who are interested to take a look at the studded-nail door, down the side passage at Cheshire's shop, which is

dated "1674, D.W.I." and I should think there is some history to it. The *Three Tuns* was kept by a Mr. Hooper who was a member of the Town Council and Board of Guardians for many years.

Notes:

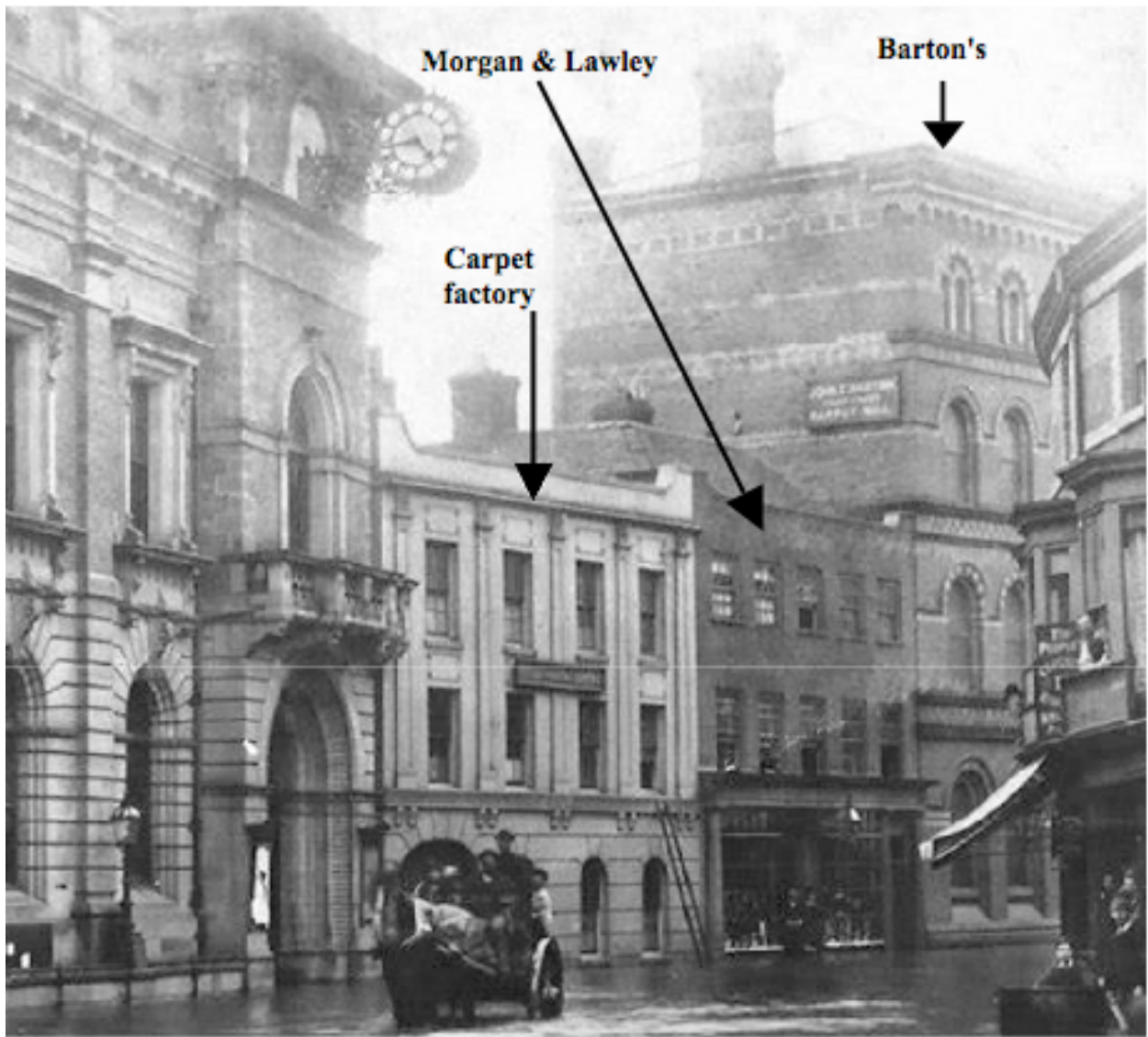


Extract from 1835 map of Kidderminster Borough by Jeremiah Mathews

V marks the location of the old Vicarage and gardens. The Anchor Hotel, Caldwell Bridge and the probable location of Mrs Broadrick's wharf are also indicated. The position of Ferenbach's tea shop in High St is signified by a red circle and the blue rectangle indicates the Three Tuns (left) and Cheshires (right).

The small factory next to the old Vicarage later in 1896 became the Excelsior Works/Kidderminster Cycle Company, Simpson's Fish, Game and Poultry shop and Mac Fisheries. There have since been two successive redevelopments on the site.

Next door were the premises of various chemists as described by Bennett. Lea, Perrins & Co. were shown there in directories between 1828 to 1841, William Hodgkinson in 1851 and Morgan & Lawley from 1876. These premises and Crane & Barton's (later John E Barton & Sons) are shown in the photograph below.



Vicar Street 1886 before the carpet factory became Kidderminster Cycle Company

(Bob Millward May 2013)

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 26 February 1910)

by Henry Bennett

VIb.

I think that Oxford-street, at the time of my earliest recollections, would be of interest, as it would show the many changes that have been made during the last fifty years. Before the Market Hall was rebuilt there was fixed against the wall, at the bottom of the steps, next the *Junction*—now the *Swan Hotel*—a relic of bygone days in the shape of a "whipping post." I never saw justice administered to a culprit, but I have no doubt that it was fixed in the old thoroughfare for more public witness when the lash or the birch was used. The oak post was about 5ft. high and a foot thick, with two bars fixed at the top, with a big staple (one for each side of the post)—they had the holes in for the wrists, and used to hang down against the post. Many a time I have taken hold of the bars and let them fall against the old post, and they would ring like a large bell.

There was in existence at the same time the old stocks in Church-street, at the foot of Church-hill. I just mention the stocks, as the one instrument of justice was a twin to the other. These relics of the past never ought to have been lost sight of, and I think they are in existence, if one only knew where to look for them. The buildings all up the side of the street have changed since I can remember. Where the Co-operative Stores now stands was a coach-house and stables belonging to Messrs. Hooman & Pardoe. Mr. James Hooman used to ride from the Copse to church on a donkey on Sundays, and the animal was stabled there while Divine service was attended, under the care of an old servant of the firm named Grove. The old *Junction Inn*—now the *Swan*—was the house where the 'buses used to start from, in the stage coach days, to Worcester and Birmingham. Mr. Gardiner was the proprietor of the *Junction* and also the *Whip*. This property came into the hands of the late Mr. Philpott, and then the present front was built, also the shops adjoining, on which site were the stables and hay and straw lofts over, opposite the Town Hall. Where the Coffee Tavern now stands, there were two or three cottages. One was occupied by a man named Ayres. This old cabman was a celebrity in his day—and a man with a "steed-fast" faith that it is "the pace that kills."

We now come to the butchers' shambles which were part of the Market Hall. Mr. David Lane has occupied one-half for a quarter of a century, and Messrs. Brooks, the fruiterers, now carry on business in the other portion. I have seen the old Shambles full of butchers' stalls on Saturday night, and a great quantity of meat was sold in the open market. The public were not waited on so much in those days. I wish to mention that Mr. Lane is the oldest tradesman still in business that there is in Kidderminster to-day. He has never been out of business since he started about the year 1853, and is as keen on his business as a man half his age.

The next property is that of old Farley Turner's Bank—now Lloyds' Bank. Mr. Turner resided at Moor Hall. I well recollect the Saturday morning that the Bank did not open. There was great trouble in the town that day as there were many poor people who had a "fiver" or two which they never got full value for. After the failure Lloyds' Banking Company came and took the business, and erected the present buildings, the frontage of which is set back very much from the old line of High-street. I may have a few words to say about this when I come to the old High-street.

Next to the *Three Tuns* there is another old property, which was formerly an old-established printing and stationery business carried on by a Miss Fowler and afterwards by a Mr. Condy. There was a fire here before the property, which included the *Three Tuns*, was purchased by Mr. Reuben Rogers, who built the present front for a butcher's shop and the shop next to it. I believe the Corporation paid £14 a yard for the setting of the frontage, and it was worth the money. Now I come to a very important piece of property, viz., Messrs. Attwood & Isaacs. This part of High-street came to my notice when I was very young. I can recollect one of the proprietors, Mr. Joseph Boycott, and have seen him at one of the front doors many a time. The business was carried on in the name of Boycott & Belcher for many years. Mr. Boycott was a fine old-English gentleman; he was a magistrate of the Borough, and a good one. He could always be found at his shop opposite

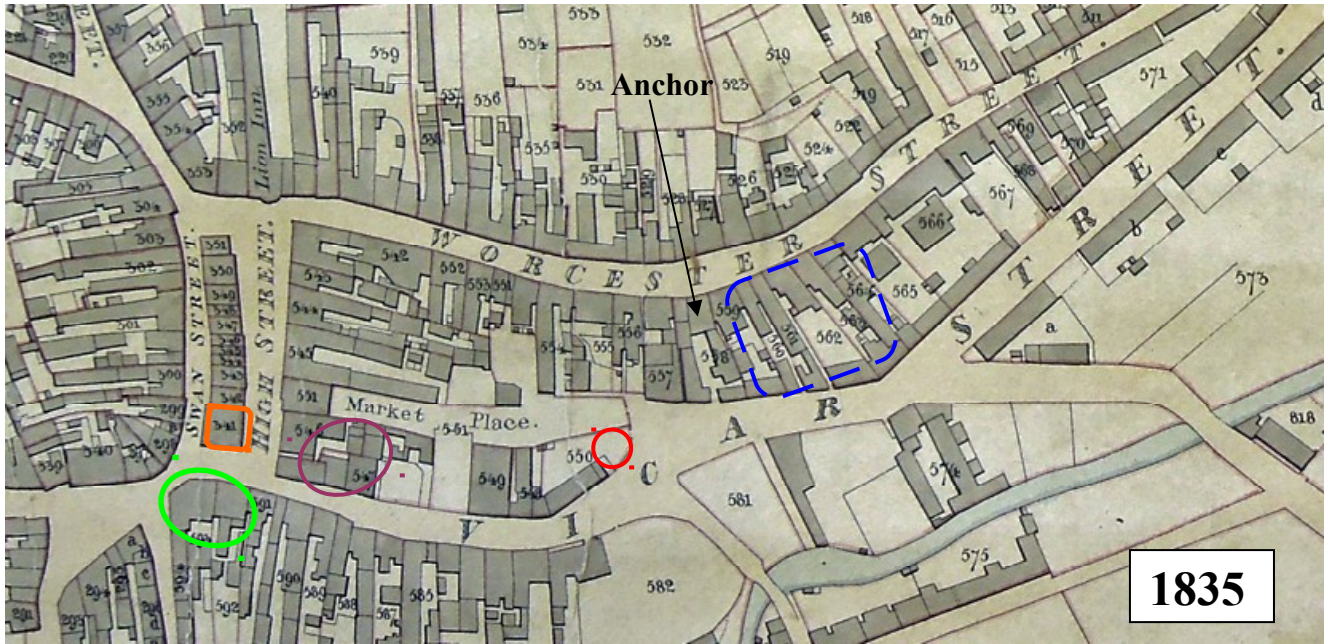
the Old Town Hall. I well remember part of the Regent House frontage being set back at the end next the Bull Ring. What it was then the present inhabitants cannot realise—it is called a "neck" today. It was taken back eight or nine feet opposite Wheeler's fish shop. About twenty-four years ago I saw some men belonging to the Gas Company laying a new main, and they came upon an old foundation. I was in business then at the bottom of Swan-street, and I happened to see it and called Messrs. Isaacs' attention to it. Anyone that will stand at the farthest door they can see the original line of the frontage. Before it was altered it was impossible for a wagon load of hay to get through. I remember when the alteration was completed the then road surveyor—Mr. Buchan, who resided at Aggboro' and farmed it, and had the name for being a good farmer—objected to the owners being paid, as he considered that they had encroached over the footpath by the over-hanging cornices and the over-hanging balcony in front of the second storey windows. There was a large meeting of the ratepayers held at the Old Town Hall. My father was one of the meeting, and he came home and told us that it was unanimously agreed to pay, also that a vote of thanks was passed to the owner for making such a good job of it, and that a wish was expressed that others would do likewise. I well remember two young men who were shopmen in Boycott's shop—the late Councillor Hassell and Mr. Grainger, the latter, of the Bull Ring. Hassell was in the tailoring department, and Grainger in the gent's outfitting department. After Boycott & Belcher a Mr. Ransome came and took over the business, carrying it on for many years. About forty-four years since there was another change to Messrs. Isaacs, and the name is still in the firm as Attwood & Isaac, who are both young business men, and I hope that they will live to see many improvements in the old town and trade of Kidderminster.

The Post Office building will be in the recollection of many of the inhabitants, and I need not say much about it now that we have the handsome Municipal Buildings adjoining the Music Hall (as it was called for years) in Oxford-street. I knew Mr. Merrifield (the superintendent of police) very well. There was a very old man in the force at that time named Lloyd, who lived in a house opposite St. George's gates in Coventry-street. He was always at the station when the Chief was out, and that was very often. When the dog days were on I have seen on more than one occasion half a dozen dogs down on the steps which led to the cells under the Town Hall facing Attwood & Isaac's shop. There are still in town a good number of people whose ancestors were members of the old brigade of police, and their names are as "familiar as household words"—Footman, Edwards, Russell, Harry Beach, and, later, George Haigh.

In my next contribution I shall try and recall some of the old tradespeople in High-street.

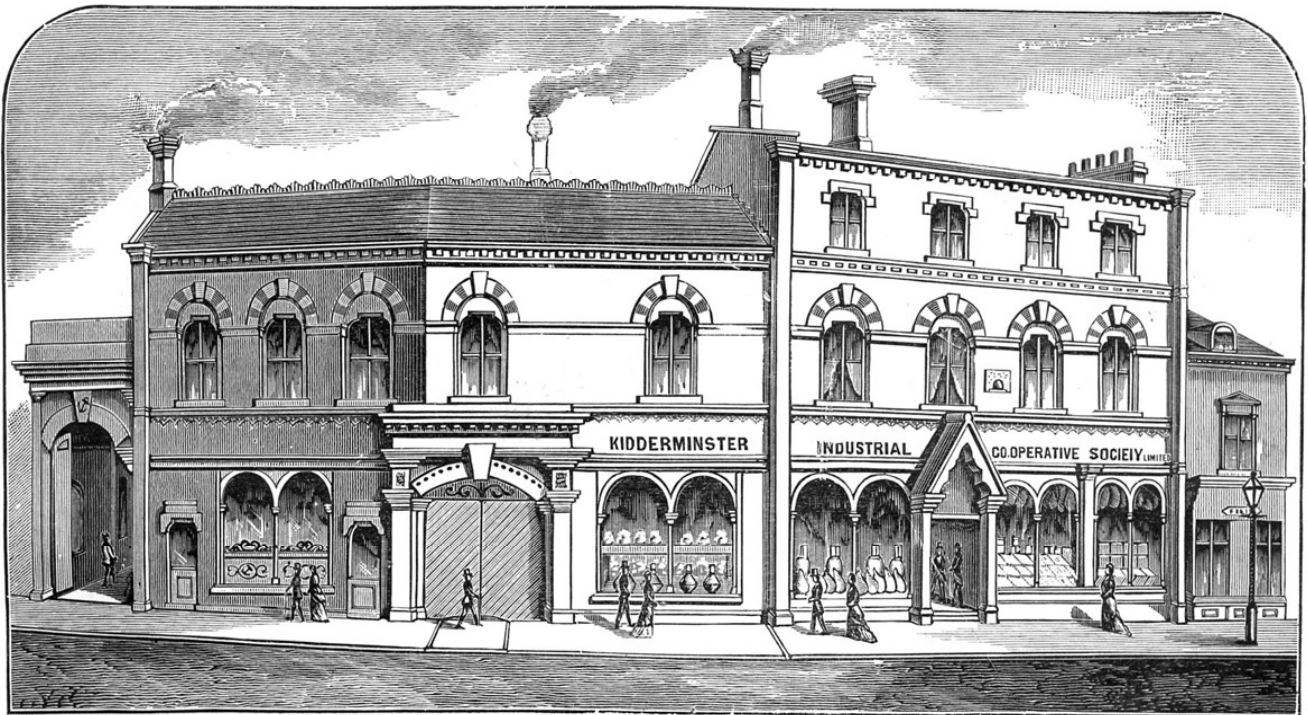
H.B.

Notes:



Jeremiah Mathews Map of Kidderminster Borough

In the 1835 map above the site where the Junction/Swan Hotel was later situated is shown by a **red circle**. The approximate position of where the Coop stores were later built is located by a **blue dashed** rectangle and Lloyds Bank by the **purple oval**. The site of Attwood & Isaacs and its forbears is marked **green** and the Guildhall **orange**. The present building on the Attwoods site is the now defunct T J Hughes.

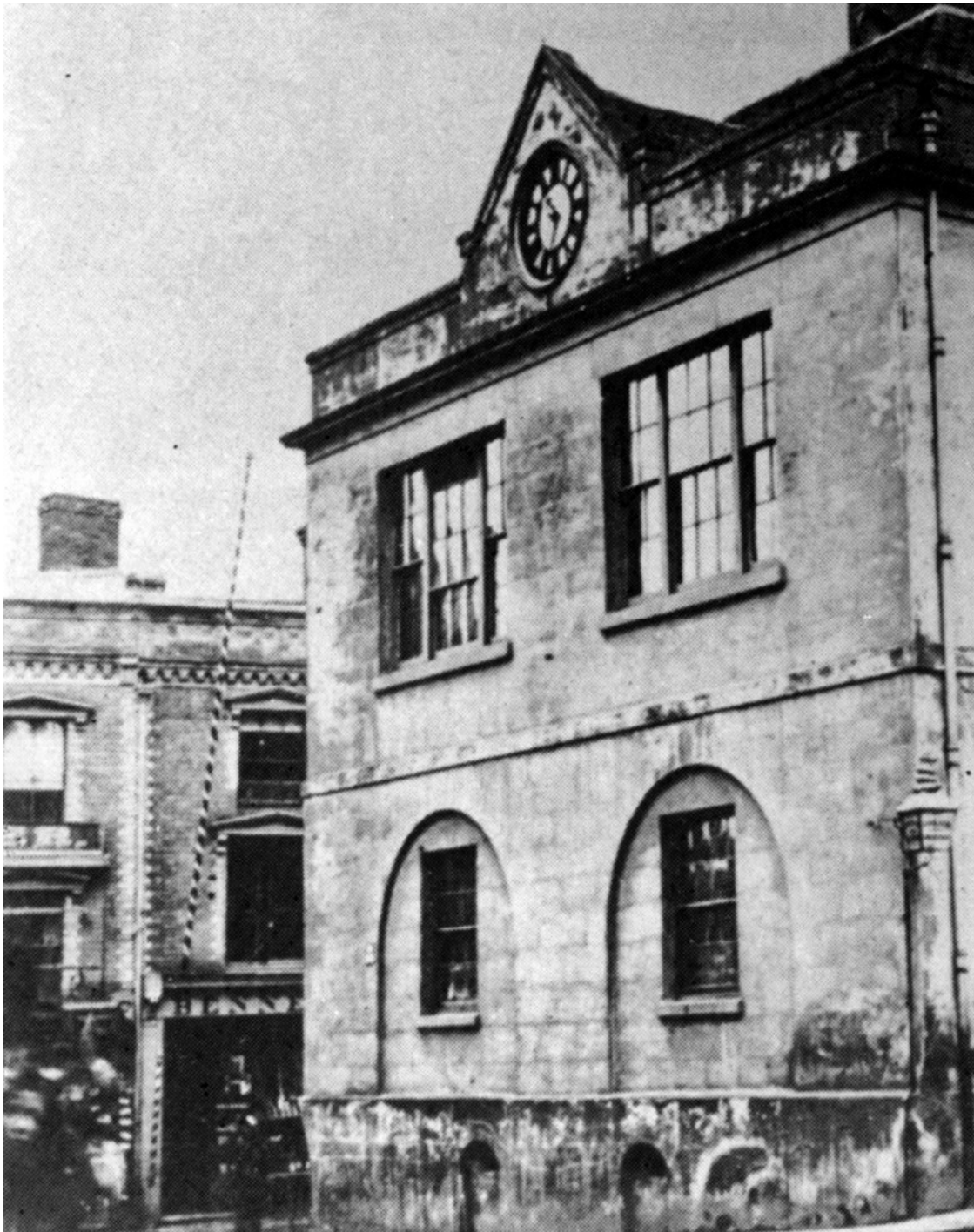


The Coop store in Oxford Street c 1896



To the right of the Three Tuns was the double fronted property the front of which was rebuilt by Reuben Rogers after a fire. He was listed at the Three Tuns in Kelly's Directory of 1888.

William Merrifield became the 1st chief of police in 1835 when borough police force established. He retired in 1857 ('Kidderminster since 1800' by Tomkinson & Hall).



**The old Guildhall at the bottom of High Street.
In the background to the left can be seen Henry Bennett's hairdressing
establishment including the barber's pole.**

(Bob Millward May 2013)

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 12 March 1910)

by Henry Bennett

VII.

Before I give my recollections of the old High-street and its tradesmen of more than fifty years ago, I think, perhaps some of our fellow townsmen and women across the seas would like a brief reminder of the Old Town Hall. They would also like to see the new Municipal Buildings in Vicar-street, adjoining the Music Hall. Whatever the faults our old town ever had, her sons and daughters in all quarters of the globe are ever ready to testify that they still cling to many cherished memories of their native town. The old Town Hall, with its over-hanging clock on the High-street side, and flat-face one opposite Regent House; the iron bars to the windows and its steps to the Police office, stood out rather prominently in the old days from its position at the bottom of High-street. It was the first home of Municipal government that I can remember, also the "hall of justice," the police office, and the casual abode of criminals in the cells beneath. I can call to mind when one portion of the underground cellars (next to the draper's shop) were occupied by an old tradesman named Wall, making baskets. The entrance was down some steps on the High-street side; there was also another door in Swan-street, where you could see the men at work at all times. This Mr. Wall removed (to get more space) into Blackwell-street, and there carried on the same trade for years. When I pass by the site, now the cab-stand, I feel inclined to remark "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Before many years we may see a motor garage erected thereon.

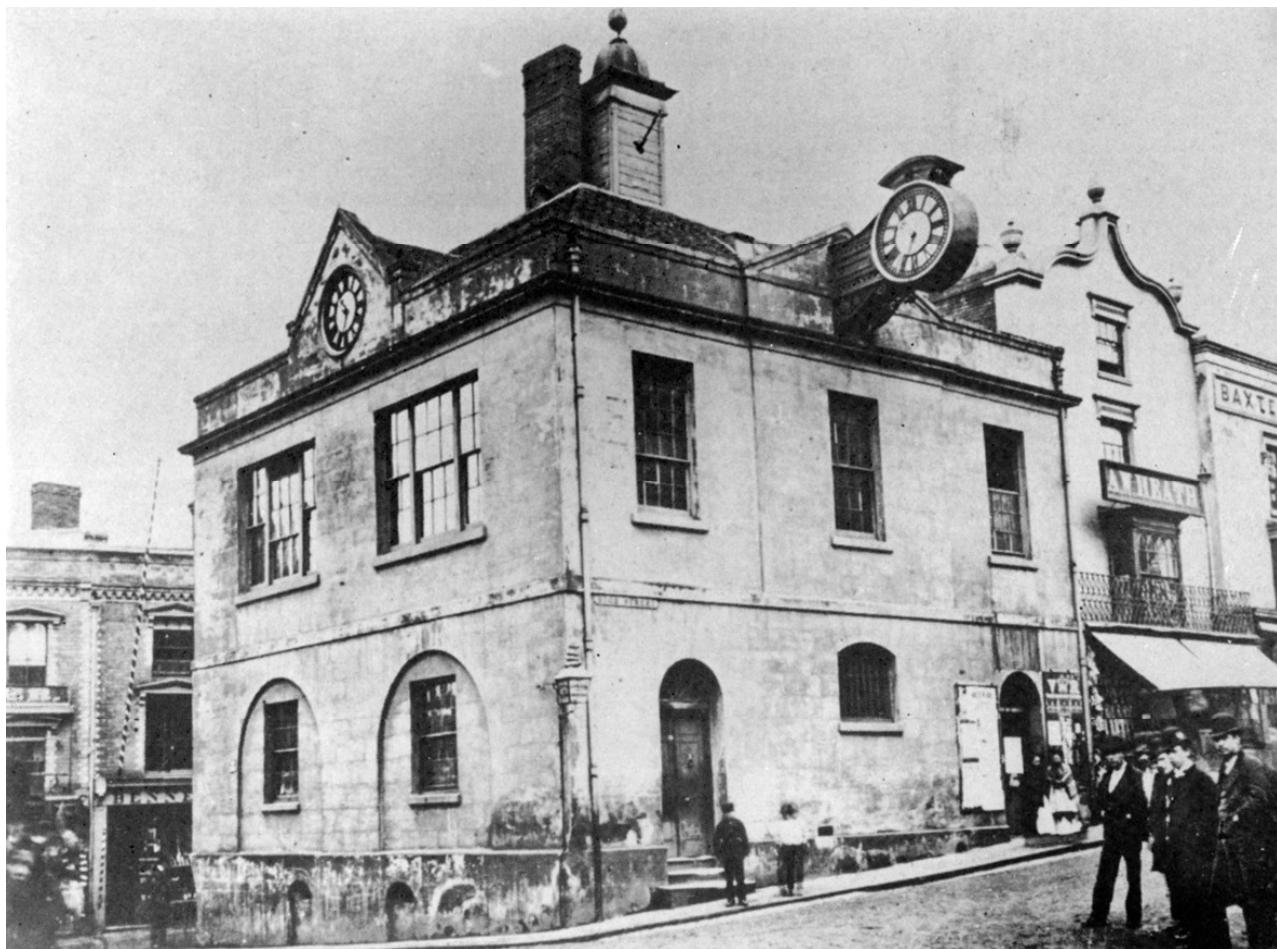
It is of the scenes in and around the old Town Hall that I have many remembrances. Mayor's Sunday in the old days was a great institution, and was eagerly looked forward to. Superintendent Merrifield, with the assistance of his deputy Lloyd, had a good name for making mulled port, which was served round after the Mayor and burgesses returned from the church—it was good on a cold frosty morning. I must not forget to mention that the church did not accommodate all who accompanied the Chief Magistrate, as I have seen, year after year, many supplied with a little refreshment while the sermon was on, by the proprietors of the *Boat Inn*, at the top of Clensmore-lane, whose back premises reached the boundary wall of the churchyard. I think it would be worth relating a humorous incident which I remember taking place the year Mr. Charles Edward Jefferies was made Mayor. His old employer, Mr. Thomas Lloyd, was present in the Council Chamber, and after the election was made, exclaimed, in an audible voice, addressing himself to the new Chief Magistrate, "That now that he, Mr. Jefferies, was Mayor he ought to have a crest."

The first of November Municipal Elections were generally marked as "red-letter days." Before the Borough was divided into six wards, as at present, the political parties were more evenly balanced by North and South Ward elections—three Councillors for each ward. It was characteristic of the South to return three Liberals and the North three Conservatives. When a candidate for Municipal honours thought he could capture a seat and break the tradition of either ward, he did not meet with success, although there were some surprises at times at the "Municipal races," as they were called. An instance occurs to me of the South Ward, when Mr. Reuben Rogers (butcher), defeated Mr. Henry Dixon; and in the North Ward Mr. John Brinton was defeated by Mr. James Binnian (builder), by 70 votes. I well remember the year that John Perry (of the *George and Dragon*), and Mr. Ayres (Broad-street). were returned for the North Ward. The late Mr. William Green could not help showing that their election did not meet with his approval."

If there had been written, while the old Town Hall was standing, a history of all it had stood witness to, the record would have been of great interest. It is the "fashion" now for great men to write their own history while they are alive—thus is said what they would like to be remembered after they are dead—so could it have been with the old Town Hall. It was in the old Council Chamber where it was decided to build the new Town Hall; also the important scheme—the Sewage and Waterworks—(what a blessing a good supply of water is). Then followed other great improvements of our town. Such a record would be of interest as part of the past history of the

Borough, more so that the biography of an individual. I am afraid that I shall have to hold over till my next contribution my recollections of the old tradespeople in the High-street.

Added Notes:



The Old Town Hall (Guildhall) described by Henry Bennett.

The new Town Hall opened on 19th January 1877 and the old Guildhall above was soon demolished early in 1878. The water supply and sewage disposal schemes in Kidderminster were installed between 1870 and 1874 ('Kidderminster since 1800', Tomkinson & Hall).

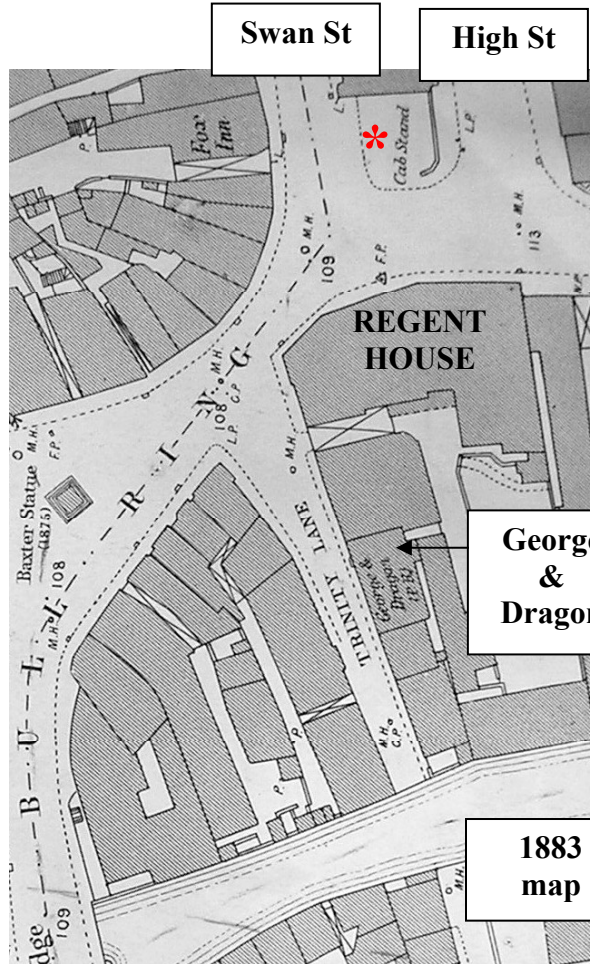
The basket maker, referred to by Bennett as once carrying his trade underneath the Guildhall, was John Wall, a cooper & basket maker. Census records and Trade Directories enable us to follow Wall's movements. He was in Coventry St in 1841 but in 1851 he was at Leswell Bank as a Beer seller and living at the Lion & Lamb (see Historic Kidderminster Project 462 on the Kidderminster Civic Society website) as well as having premises as basket maker in Blackwell St. He was a basket maker in Blackwell St in 1861 & 1871 but not at Leswell. Alfred Heath's Draper's shop can be seen next door to the Guildhall where Wall once had his workshop.

Bennett also mentions the Cab Stand that once stood on the site of the demolished Guildhall. It was donated by John Brinton and erected in 1878. On the maps below, the symbol * shows the position of the Guildhall (1835 Mathews map) and the Cab Stand (1883 OS map). A photograph of this shelter is given below after it had been removed to Brinton Park. Its history can be read in Robert Barber's Historic Kidderminster Project report number 7.

(Bob Millward May 2013)



1835 map



George & Dragon

1883 map



The Cabby's shelter ended its days in Brinton Park

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 16 April 1910)

by Henry Bennett

VIII.

In my last contribution I promised to give my recollections of old High-street close upon seventy years ago. Every shop front has been altered since I first remember it. There are still to be seen the second floor bay windows in two instances at Mr. Copeland's, the jeweller's, and the next premises, formerly Miss Tattersall's and now Miss Smith's. I will take the Town Hall side first, then the top of High-street, and come down the Market Hall side.

There was a well-known tradesman and a personal friend of his neighbours in the person of Alfred William Heath, the draper, who was in business at these premises for many years. Next is the house where Richard Baxter once lived; now called Baxter House. When I first knew it Mr. Hawkes was occupier, as a confectioner, and it is a confectioners to-day in the hands of our esteemed townsman, Mr. Joseph Ray. Some few years since I accidentally met a son of the Hawkes family, and we had quite an interesting talk about his father's shop in High-street. We now come to Dudley's provision shop; noted for quality even in those days. Mr. Dudley, senr., had an established business in Backwell-street just above the *Waterloo Tavern*, formerly called the *Ragman's Arms*, and the business in High-street was carried on by his two sons, William and Samuel. If ever a business had a living advertisement it was so in this instance. Mr. Samuel was one of the celebrities of High-street more than half a century ago: he was "a man of great weight"; and Dudley's bacon shop is now occupied by the Maypole Butter Company. There was an old-established stay-making business which carried on when I first knew it by Mr. Purcer, and afterwards by Mrs. Lacey. Many a time I have been sent to this shop for a twopenny whalebone "busk" to replace a broken one. I must say a few words about the next shop, where the emblem of a clockmaker is still on the front of the house. Mr. Wood carried on the business of a watch and clockmaker and jeweller for many years here. Afterwards Mr. Wood's widow was in business in Church-street next the Medical Hall premises, now Mr. Weston's offices. One feature of her trade was that people with small means could hire perambulators (single or double) at 1d. and 2d. per hour.

Next we come to George Southall's boot shop, where you could always see a row of "Wellingtons" in the window. A cheery old soul was George Southall. He carried on business here for many years, in fact a family was reared in High-street till they were almost of middle-age. At a later period the Misses Stone had the next premises, which was a fruit and vegetable shop. Now we come to Southan's, the draper's, one of the oldest businesses in High-street, and it has been said that women folk used to make this shop their meeting place by appointment. The principals of Southan's were men of great business ability. Messrs. Chas. Hill, Nicholls, Bate, and Donaldson will be remembered by some of the old residents in the town. At that time there was a large trade done at Southan's. Boycott's and Southan's used to supply a lot of men that were called packmen, whose trade was done among country people under the instalment system. They had to pay extra, as these packmen got a good living out of their business. About thirty years since Southan's changed hands to Turley & Strange, who were the last proprietors as a draper's shop. At present a portion of the premises are used as offices and Hilton's boot shop. I now come to the last tradesman on that side of the street, and that was my old friend William Larr, and there was a grocer's which adjoined the *Lion Hotel*, kept by Mr. Nicholls, who was a magistrate. There is an engraving of the top of High-street showing what is now the boot shop as Hill's hat manufactory. Here you could see the making of silk hats any day of the week, taking the fur off one and putting it on another being the work of a few minutes.

Now I come to the *Lion Hotel*. The first proprietor I remember, and whose name is also shown over the door on the engraving which I have mentioned, was Mr. Brooks. The date of the picture is given as nearly seventy years ago. It is well worth seeing, as it shows what change there has been since it was engraved. I do not possess a copy, and there are only about half a dozen in existence. I

should like to see it reproduced by the photo process as we see in the newspapers; it would be worth having. The celebrities of Kidderminster are easily recognised as they stand in front of the *Lion*. There is Butler Best and his wife just coming out of the hotel. He is readily known by the way he always wore his top hat—all on one side. Mr. Hill, of (Southan's), Mason, the barber, of Worcester-street, with his apron on; he was a great politician in his day. Mr. Fawkner, the cab proprietor of three generations since, is standing right in front of the door of the Hotel. Another well-known man is shown in Mr. Jordan, a butcher, of Mill-street, who ended his days at the Bay Horse. Old "Lampy" Herbert, as he was called, is very conspicuous with his ten-foot ladder. He was one of the best-known figures in the town, and was always on the run—morn, noon, and night. This man and his son had to light all the lamps in the Borough. The old man was the lamplighter and his son the lamplighter who "douted" them. That was how they made a distinction when they presented their compliments at Christmas-time.

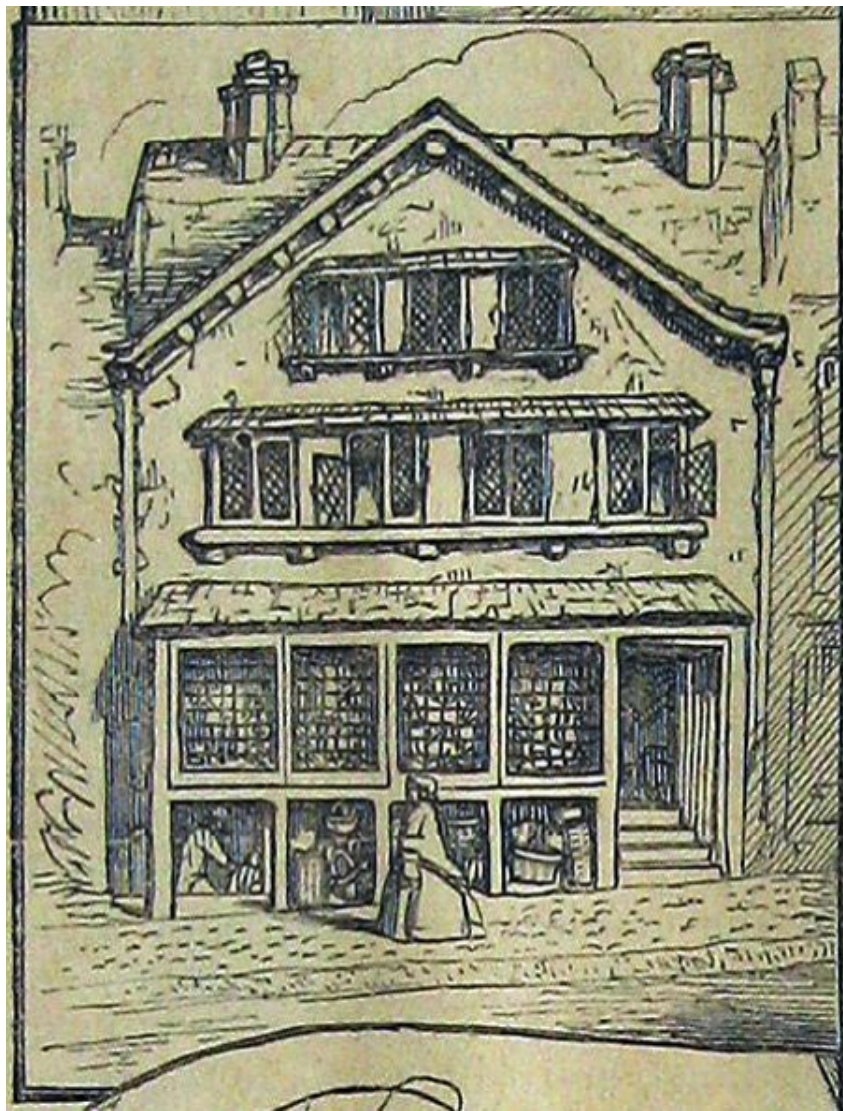
I shall have to leave over till my next the Market Hall side of High-street.

H.B.

Added Notes:



Henry Bennett starts his 'tour' from Alfred Heath's drapery (at 2 High St) next to the old Town Hall. Just beyond, a small section of Baxter's House creeps in to the right hand side of the left hand photograph. The right hand picture is from a Postcard posted on the 3rd Jan 1913. Note the incorrect attribution to Stourbridge! Randle Cooper is given in Kelly's directory for 1900 at 3 High St as a confectioner. James Swain Hawkes is listed there between 1828 to 1855.



The above wood-block drawing by Cuthbert Bede (Edward Bradley) is by courtesy of Geoffrey Weale and Bewdley Museum. It shows Baxter's house before extensive renovation and rebuilding. Edward Bradley wrote in a note attached to this drawing: "Exterior of Baxter's House, High St, from a sketch that I made in 1845, believed to be the only sketch known. The ground floor, approached by four steps, was a Shoemaker's shop. The cellar, approached from the St by steps, was a basket maker's shop. The house was greatly altered, & partially rebuilt in 1848-9."

George Roberts wrote in 1853 in 'A walk round Kidderminster with notes by the way' : "The house of Baxter has likewise disappeared, though only in 1849 did it cease to be among us. It stood in the High St. on the spot now occupied by Mr. David Baker.". David Baker was a shoemaker. In 1860 and 1861 Directory and Census records show that Edward Rea, a shoemaker, was at 3 High St.

A short historical comment in the Shuttle dated 17 Aug 1872 reveals: "... I have traced the ownership of the (*Baxter's*) Kidderminster house up to 1769, when it was purchased from Nicholas Harbeck and Mary his wife by a Mr Powell, who bequeathed it to his wife's nephew, Mr Percy, from whom it came to his granddaughter, the wife of the Rev. R. Tomes, vicar of Coughton, near Bromsgrove. It passed out of her hands in 1847, but was repurchased by her (after the alterations) in 1858, and sold by her to Mr. Hancocks in 1862.

"Trade Directory information provides us with information about the periods when other characters described by Bennett were in business in High St. William Dudley, cheese factor and grocer, was at 4 High St between 1850 and 1884. The stay making business was being run by Mrs Susannah & James Purser in 1850 and 1855 but Mrs Lacey is not listed. Mr Wood the clock maker was listed in High St from 1840 to 1850 and his wife until 1855 as jeweller, and toy, tea & tobacco dealer. By 1860 she was in Church St. Later William Copeland was a watchmaker and jeweller at the same premises, 6 High St, from at least 1900 to

1932. George Southall the bootmaker make his first appearance in High St in 1840 and is still there in 1876 as well as in Swan St. Miss Charlotte Stone, fruiterer, is in the street from 1870 to 1888 to be succeeded by the Misses E & M Stone in 1892 at the same premises. John Southan & Co were in High St as early as 1820. There is no mention of them after 1873 but Turley & Strange are recorded between 1876 and 1892. William Larr was running variously a fancy repository, news agent, tobacconist & hairdressing establishment in High Street between 1840 and 1870. His 'barber's pole' can be seen in the engraving below. William Nicholls was listed in High St between 1820 and 1850 variously as Grocer & tea dealer and Chymist & Druggist. Samuel Brooks was proprietor of the *Lion Hotel* between 1840 and 1851.

The engraving shown below (Copied from that hanging in the Corn Exchange courtesy Geoff Weale) features some of the businesses mentioned by Bennett. This engraving contains features almost exactly as in the engraving described by Bennett. From Trade Directories the date of the picture can be given as between 1850 and 1855. There is a couple leaving the *Lion Hotel* and the man is wearing his top hat at a rakish angle. However, there is no Mr Fawkner in front of the main door nor is "Lampy" Herbert and his 10 foot ladder to be seen. William Butler Best (1792-1865) was a corn miller in Park Butts. He was the first Mayor of the borough of Kidderminster in 1835 and Mayor again in 1844 and 1846.

Hill's hat manufactory is shown under the name of 'Mander'. Until 1841 this business was listed in Trade directories as William Hill, hatter but by 1851 business was attributed to Thomas Mander. The boot shop referred to at this position when Bennett was writing would have been 'Freeman, Hardy & Willis'. The annotated names linked to premises are those that can be deciphered from the picture.

Not all the business people and the number associated with their premises match exactly the details given in the Trade Directories and the evidence to be derived from the engraving and Bennett's script. This may be due to some mis-remembering on the part of Henry Bennett but expansion or sharing of premises at different periods might also provide an explanation of discrepancies.

Wood Southall Southan Larr Mander Brooks



Henry Bennett asserts an intention to continue his writings about the other side of the High St, but further articles do not seem to appear in later editions of the *Shuttle*. (Bob Millward June 2103)