

Recollections of Old and New Kidderminster

(Kidderminster Shuttle 29 January 1910)

by Henry Bennett

V.

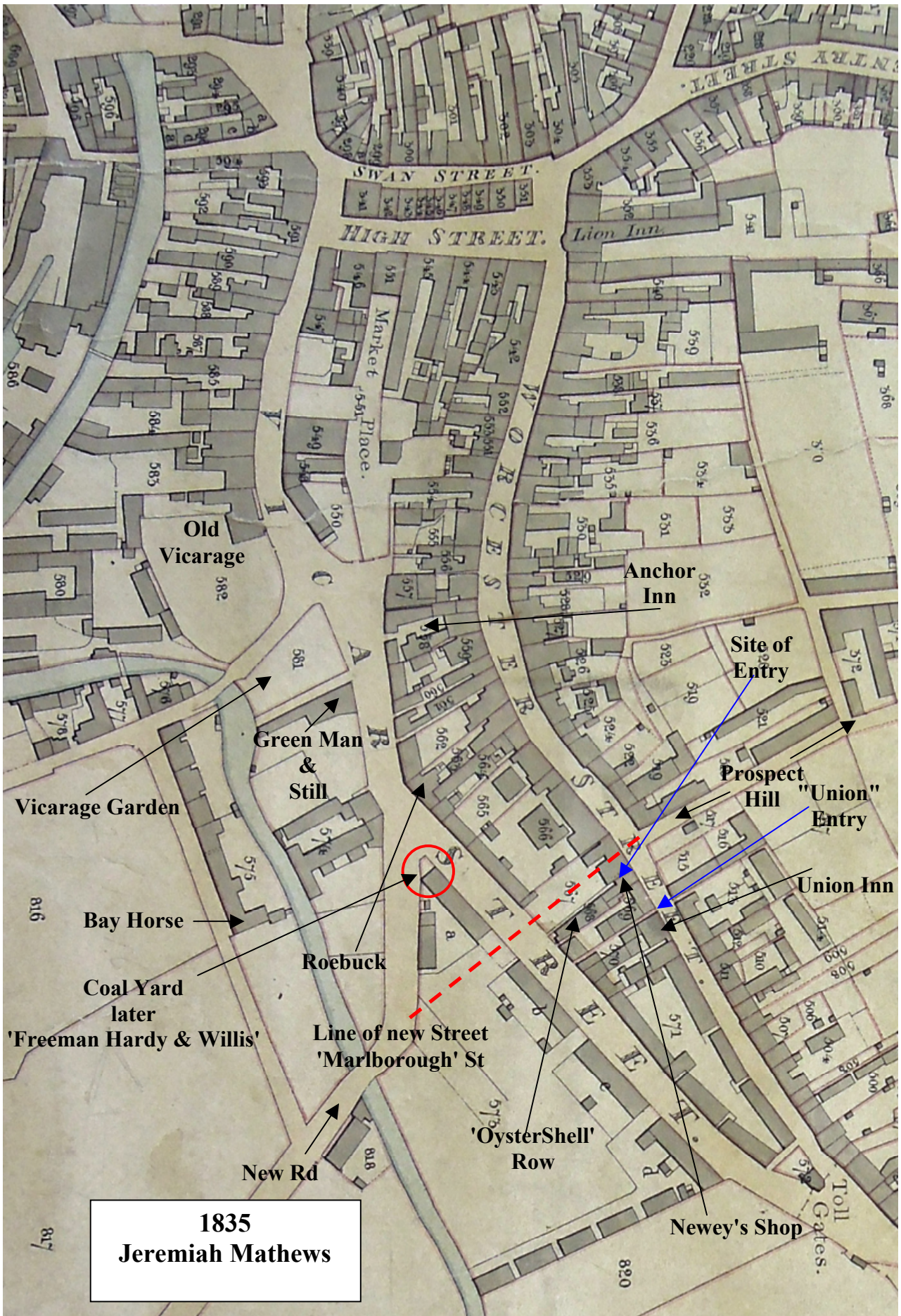
THE CUTTING THROUGH WORCESTER STREET.— About sixty-nine or seventy years ago I remember the houses being pulled down in Worcester-street to make the road through to Oxford-street, so that the coaches and 'buses could more readily get on to the Worcester and Stourport-road. Before that was done they had 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-looms. 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.

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)