

## 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.

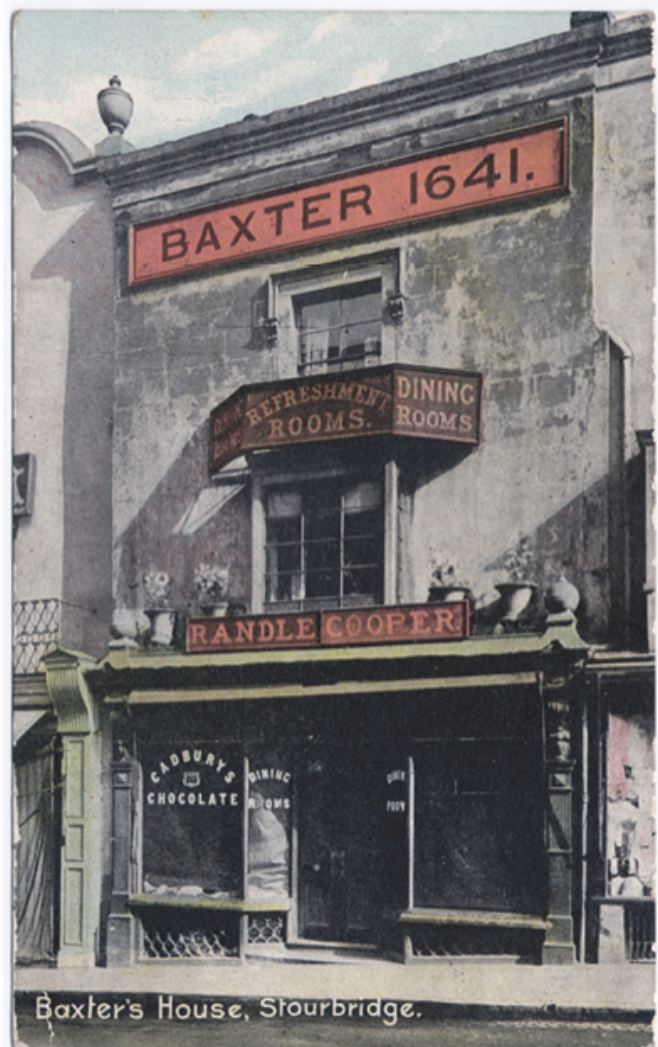
Next we come to George Southall's boot shop, where you could always see a row of "Wellingtons" in the window. A cheery old soul was George Southall. He carried on business here for many years, in fact a family was reared in High-street till they were almost of middle-age. At a later period the Misses 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

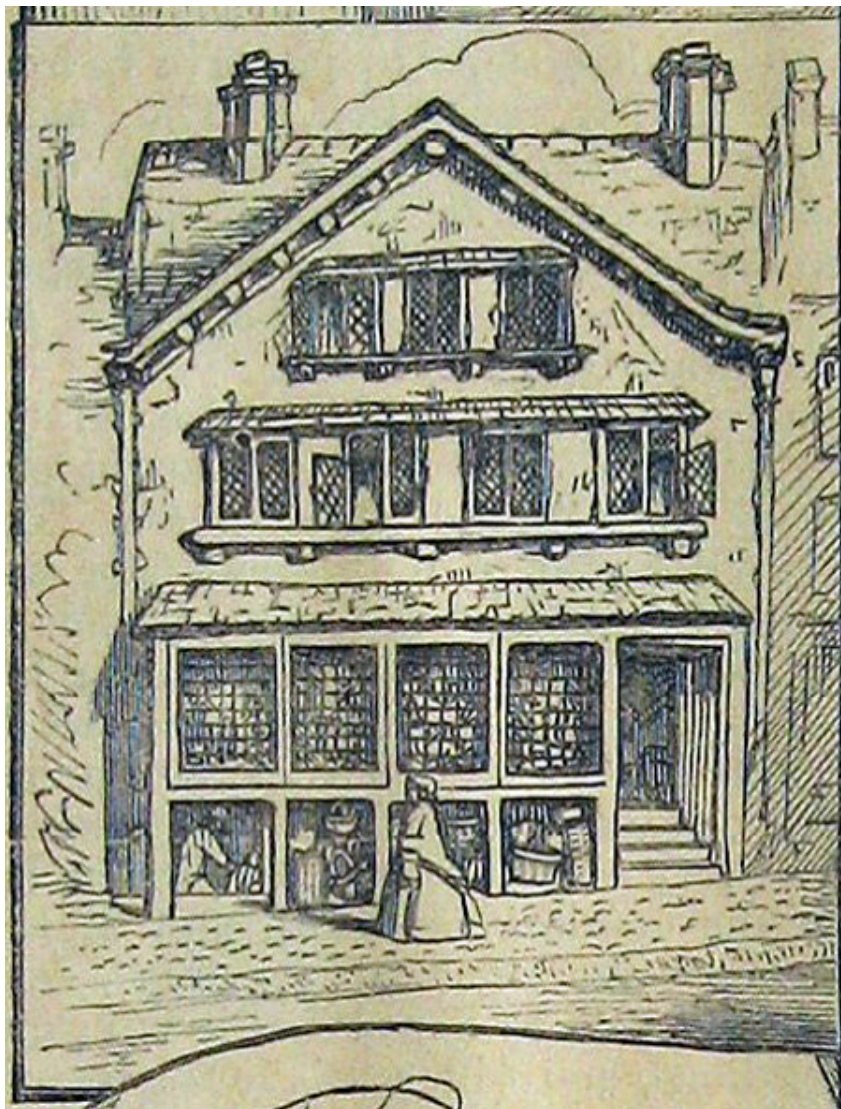
should like to see it reproduced by the photo process as we see in the newspapers; it would be worth having. The celebrities of Kidderminster are easily recognised as they stand in front of the *Lion*. There is Butler Best and his wife just coming out of the hotel. He is readily known by the way he always 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.

**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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 an 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 2013)