

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:

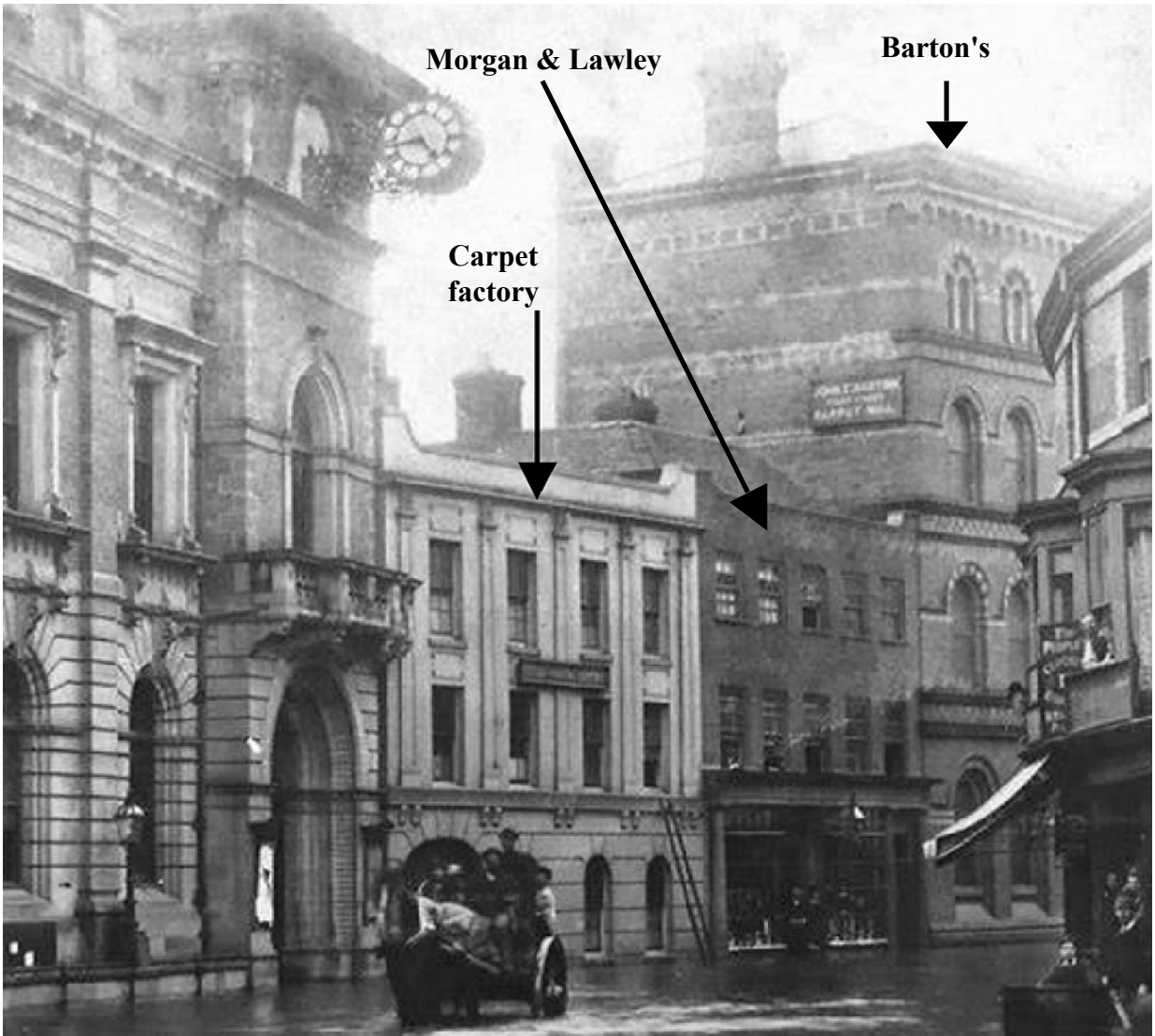


Extract from 1835 map of Kidderminster Borough by Jeremiah Mathews

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)