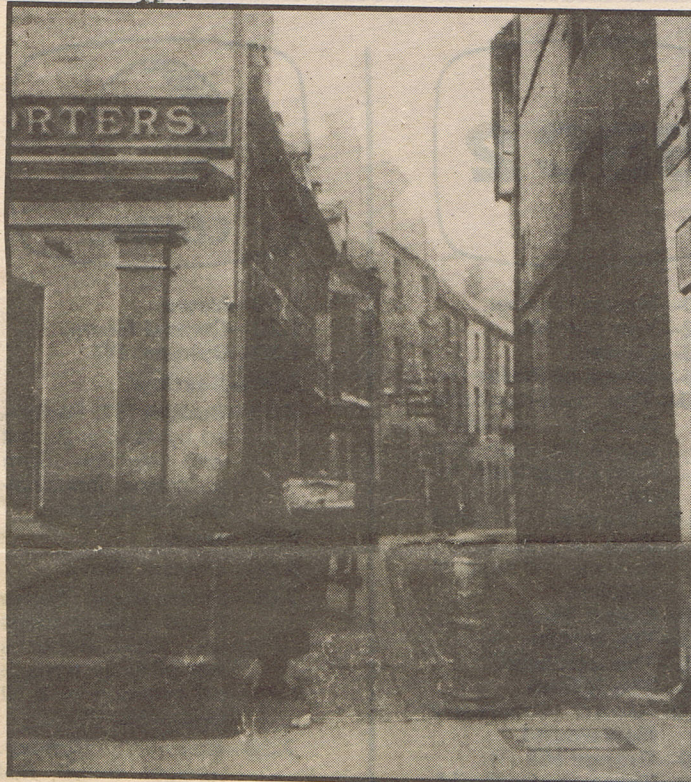


MEMORY LANE

Series compiled by Michael Grundy



Little Angel Street before its 1912 widening to become Angel Place.



The Bell Hotel in this vintage photograph of Broad Street has a distinctive bell sign at second floor level. Little Angel Street used to run alongside it — note building at the entrance. (Photo courtesy of Hereford — Worcester Record Office).



A Berrow's Journal archive photograph of the 1912 demolition of the Bell Hotel in Broad Street.

Making way for the wagon trail!

BACK in 1912, Little Angel Street at Worcester became "Large" Angel Place.

It's hard to believe now, but the forerunner of the wide thoroughfare which serves as the city's main bus terminal was a very narrow historic alleyway.

The city fathers decided 75 years ago that this tiny byway had to be sacrificed to a drastic widening scheme to "relieve congested traffic in the upper part of Broad Street and The Cross".

Berrow's Journal at the time explained: "Little Angel Street has a width of only 9ft in parts, but is to be widened to a carriageway of 36ft.

"This will enable all carts and vehicles coming up Broad Street to find immediate access to the Sheep Market without crowding the Cross. Similarly, it will provide a readier and quicker route for a great deal of traffic from the west to Shrub Hill and to Bourne — and vice versa.

It will also facilitate the quick departure of the Norwich Union Fire Engine to the west parts of the city and county, and the speedier arrival of the farmers' wagons at the Hopmarket."

But Worcester paid a big price to create Angel Place. The widening was only possible by pulling down the Bell Hotel — a gracious Georgian inn of similar appearance and proportions to the Crown, just up the street from it.

It had been a thriving part of city life since 1750 and was said by Berrow's to be "one of the musical, social and market rendezvous of Worcester".

The city council bought the Bell for just £5,000 for a piece of civic vandalism which would not have been permitted today.

While the 1960s saw redevelopment "madness", it sounds as though the first part of the century witnessed a blitz on Worcester's tiny, narrow streets. Berrow's reported in 1912 that Pump Street, St Swithins Street and St Nicholas Street had been "broadened" from narrow thoroughfares, while High Street and Foregate Street had been dramatically widened.

"This has been with universal approval because it has resulted in such a vast improvement to the appearance of our chief business streets. We have all profited in comfort and convenience and the saving of time, which is money."

It's still the same old argument today as the motor car continues to carve great swathes through our historic towns and cities.



COMMONPLACE though they may be to us today, it seems the annual arrival of bananas was big news in Worcestershire back in the early part of this century.

Banana bonanza!

Presumably they were just starting to find their way into this country in bulk aboard banana boats from the Caribbean and were an instant delight.

Our vintage photographs here are from the Berrow's Worcester Journal weekly pictorial supplements. From March 30, 1912 comes the photograph of the banana bonanza at Beard's Store, a famous feature of Broad Street, Worcester until only a few years ago.

The original caption reads: "The supply of green bananas

being unloaded at the stores of Mr Beard who is a direct importer of this delicious fruit which is ripened in special heating rooms on the premises." And according to the signs, they sold at 6d, 8d and 10d a bunch depending on size.

The other photograph appeared in the Berrow's supplement of June 8, 1929 and shows a load of bananas arriving at the old riverside railway siding at North Quay, Worcester for delivery to Worcestershire Farmers Limited.

