



The History of Matt Wade – The Banana King

Matthew Wade rose from humble beginnings to become one of Preston Market's biggest traders. His empire included an entertainment hall, social club, bus fleet and several billiard saloons.

He started work in his fathers poultry shop on North Road before emigrating to Canada. After three years undertaking a variety of occupations he returned to Preston where he opened a small fruit shop on Adelphi Street. He soon expanded his business opening further shops on North Road, Grimshaw Street and Lancaster Road the latter of which he sold in 1934. He also opened the 'Banana Stall' on the market which became his trademark.

In the mid twenties he built the Majestic Hall in Starchouse Square close to the market. He used the huge hall's basement as ripening rooms for the vast quantities of green bananas he imported. The remaining floors of the hall were concurrently used for a variety of entertainments, which included dancing, boxing, wrestling, roller-skating and billiards.

Matthew believed in maintaining strong social ties amongst the stallholders and to this end he opened the Fruiterers Club in nearby High Street and organised the annual Fruiterer's Ball at the Public Hall.

In 1921, Matthew was elected an independent councillor for Park Ward. He told his election audience that he was standing for council to help the poor and said he was motivated to stand after a recent incident at court, when a mother was summoned for not sending her child to school the reason being because the child had no clogs. Matthew served the ward unopposed for 15 years and each year he organised Christmas treats for poor children at the Public Hall. He was a trustee of Shepherd Street Childrens' Home and Preston Poor Childrens Convalescent Home at Lytham.

In 1940, Matthew, aged 66 died suddenly at his home in Watling Street Road, Fuwood. He was given a civic funeral.

He was succeeded by his wife Annie, daughter Ellen and son Matthew Junior. During the second world war Matthew junior operated the stall one day a month due to the restrictions of the banana allocation and after the war he took over the Market stall in order to continue the family tradition.

In the 1970's Ellen and husband Norman Young took over the business, expanded the lines to include other fruits and vegetables, flowers and fresh fish and opened shops in Penwortham, Kirkham, Goosnargh and Ashton.

Norman Young was pivotal in the Market's charity fund raising activities and was also Secretary of the Tenants Association. Sadly Norman died in 2001 after a short illness.

He was succeeded by his wife Ellen, son Norman junior and daughters Siran and Diane who continue to run the business. It is their intention that the name of "Matt Wade - The Banana King" will continue to be synonymous with Preston and the Market tradition.