



18. Norman Winsdale: Life in King Street, Sunday school, school, work, sport, Synagogue St, outings, having a bath,

My family moved to 14 Synagogue Street in 1953, a hall-entrance terraced house owned by Morgan's Brewery. I later worked briefly at Morgan's in the conditioning cellars off St. Anne's Lane. My father worked in the newer part of the brewery on the other side of Thorn Lane; he cleaned out the yeast tanks and my job was cleaning out the conditioning tanks. My father stayed with Watney's until he retired. The family moved out of Synagogue Street in 1964 when the houses were demolished as part of the redevelopment of the brewery.

As boys we were able to play football and so on in the street. In school holidays we would go up Mousehold or walk down Whittingham Lane and play down there in the woods. We'd climb in the window of the old pump house; there was also a ruined chapel down there. We used to go to Lakenham swimming baths. There was a bullace tree in a field on the corner of Martineau Lane and we'd eat them and come home with bellyache!

I used to go to Sunday School at St. Julian's and pump the organ (That was classed as a privilege.) I was also in the choir at St. Peter Parmentergate, during Fr. Sear's time.

I went to Horns Lane School; we had a Mr. Abel who used to teach everything, you sat in the classroom and that was your teacher for the day. A couple of times a week, he would make up a story and we would all take part and make suggestions. Not one child wanted to miss that period. The school building is still there and so is the playground. St. Julian's Church is behind it. We used to play cricket and football and if the ball went over the church wall you would have to run around past the back of the convent, over the wall in the alley and fetch it.

I remember watching fire drills at the Co-op Shoe Factory, when they left off at night. There would be two teams, they would put a standpipe in, somebody would run the hose down; they had to have their own fire-fighting team, as an insurance requirement.

There was very little traffic around then. I can remember sitting on Prince of Wales Road taking car numbers, waiting for cars to come past.

There was a grocery shop called Freemans on John Street. Old gentleman, white hair, always had a white or brown smock. He always kept his empties near the door, so if you ever wanted a quick tuppence you'd go in and take a couple of bottles and take them back later, to him or a different one.

I left school (Lakenham Secondary) at 15 and my first job was at Delecta Table Waters, stacking Coca-Cola cases

as they came off the production line. On my first day the foreman told me off because they were all crooked, and I cried. You could drink as much as you liked while you were working. The hours were long, 7.30 to 5.30. You'd get dinner and tea breaks. After a while I was put in charge of a bottle-washing machine, which needed cleaning out regularly because straws and all sorts of things came back in the empties. I was the youngest in the works and I got teased, but the atmosphere was good, everybody pitched in. We'd have some laughs and jokes. When I was new I remember a girl got me down on the rollers, pulled my trousers down and christened me with Coca-Cola. That was factory life then, like when you joined the Army, you were initiated.

I lived in Synagogue Street until I was in my twenties. When I was of age I had my first half pint of mild, which cost sevenpence halfpenny (old pennies) in the St. Faith's Tavern on the corner of Synagogue Street and Mountergate. Floorboards, sawdust, dart board, shove ha'penny board on the bar, just an ordinary small corner pub. Further down King Street, near where the Rainbow pub used to be, was a tap house, with half doors like a stable door, where they'd get a small barrel from the brewery then sell it on to the locals by the jug.

After I left school I stopped going to church and Sunday school. Sunday mornings I used to go for walks with a friend, David Harwood, either Thorpe way or Whitlingham Junction, worked

up a lovely appetite for Sunday dinner. On holidays the family would get a train to Cromer or Yarmouth for a day out. St. Julian's Sunday school always used to give us an outing by bus, one year it was to Lowestoft and we had a lovely meal at a hotel called the Scotsman; for us as children that was really posh. We went on a boat trip and I was seasick, although I managed my tea later.

King Street is spoilt now. I know they were terraced houses and they might have seemed like hovels, but they were homes. It was as nice as you wanted to make it. If you were scruffy and dirty and wanted your place to go to ruin, it would go there. If you were an ordinary person you'd make it tidy. And they looked nice. They could be warm - they could be cold - but they were communities. I only knew the schoolchildren but my mum and dad had workmates around here, so I used to go to the cricket matches with Watney's, or if my dad played for somebody else on a Sunday we'd go out to Eaton Park and watch the cricket. That was a good day, because you got an ice-cream.

King Street was a good place to live. Norwich was nice then. All the terraced houses, and now they've got these flats and a big wide road from nowhere to nowhere. Despite all the pubs there were not a lot of people drinking in the street; pubs closed at half past ten or eleven, there were very few off-licences. You had your drunks but I don't think it was half as bad as it is now, but then

again things weren't reported on the news as much as they are now.

Our house didn't have a bathroom when we first moved; we had a long tin bath that hung on the wall outside. I used to get lampreys from the river and try to keep them alive in the bath; they'd die of course and have to go in the bin or get flushed away. We'd drag the bath in and have our bath in front of the living room fire; my brother first, then me, then we'd go to bed and more water would be boiled up, mum would have her bath and dad would have his last. Then it would be emptied as much as you could by saucepan and they'd drag it out and tip the rest in the back garden. The side of our house was against the wall of Delecta Table Waters, I used to be able to climb over the wall to get to work sometimes. I went home for dinner. Mum also worked as a cleaner at Howard House, which was the brewery offices. Dad was a night watchman and sometimes he would take us with him; we'd go up on the roof and down into the cellars, which terrified me because it was all dark, with cases stacked up.

There was one school teacher who lived in Synagogue Street who used to give piano lessons but basically they were houses for people who had something to do with the brewery. I remember George Stone, Donny Gibson, Kenny Osman. The synagogue had gone by then although there was one section of pillar remaining. We used to play football on the empty ground. There was an old lady, Mrs. Wells, whose son

worked at the brewery and her house wall was the goal. Of course that echoed and she would come out and say, "Do you mind, stop kicking balls against my wall, you nearly knocked my clock off the mantelpiece." Between Rose Lane, St. John's Street and Mountergate Street were allotments but that was where they put the brick rubble from all the bombed out buildings so there we were, all these small piles of bricks and tins and oil drums, and we'd make a den and that would be our meeting place. We used to make bows and arrows and toy guns.

On Thorn Lane there were prefabs where houses had been bombed and behind that was Paradise Place. That was like an auditorium because there were terrace houses in a half circle, so it was like a crescent, steps going up the back and at the top of the steps was another bombed area.

I liked living here then. I wouldn't like to move here now. Then, it was totally different. They've spoilt Norwich, I think. Progress has spoilt the look of Norwich. Where all these nightclubs are now, you used to walk round the river on the towpath and there were engineering works on the other side of the road.