



22. Swan Yard & King Street life

Swan Yard began when David Potter, an artist and a marvellous man who is very keen on young people making music, had these buildings in Swan Yard and built it as it is now. Right up top is a beautiful room where there is a painter who paints very expensive paintings; down below is a potter. Next to me there are two very good musicians, a pianist and a singer, who will no doubt make professional status very soon. It is lovely to hear them singing and playing. I used to teach music at the Hewett School and when I came here I began teaching music appreciation at Wensum Lodge. It was marvellous, I could talk about whatever I wanted and the room was always full, certainly about 50 people. There would then be a two-hour piano class for about ten people and they used to come down here too and have their own concert in my music room - I have a Steinway piano up there, it is a gorgeous room. Dr. Roy and I had taken the Hewett School choir to Vienna and when I came to Wensum Lodge I decided that some of them might like to go to Vienna too; some of them were quite elderly but we went and people still have wonderful memories of that visit.

Eileen Last

In 2004 I was studying at the Art School and living in Thorpe St. Andrew when I moved into the courtyard and loved it ever since. Swan Yard is a terrific place to live, nice little community in the city

centre; I've lived in plenty of places where I don't know my neighbours but we do here, everybody is good friends, it's the kind of place you could knock at the door and ask for a cup of sugar if you needed to. I've seen a lot of comings and goings, people moving in and out, lots of creative types tend to live here and we have lots of studios here; we've got a photographer, a potter, a portrait painter, a pianist, singing teachers and operatic singers, myself [artist and puppeteer], a lady who works for Anglia Television, so quite an eclectic bunch of folks, but all very nice. We've got outside benches in the courtyard so often we go out and have a cup of tea and catch up with each other. It's very handy having a house and studio in the city centre; I don't drive a car, so I take public transport everywhere or if I am working out of Norwich, I am five minutes' walk from the train station or the buses on Castle Meadow.

Living in King Street comes with its own trials and tribulations. Weekend evenings can tend to be quite disruptive, it's a through route for people to go to the Riverside nightclubs and the Waterfront. That traffic can be quite late, 3 or 4 in the morning sometimes, which if I am working on a project and I'm still up at that time doesn't bother me too much but when I'm not, and I'm dozing in bed, it can be quite disruptive to have somebody walking down King Street and shouting "Oi! Oi!" to their mates, I think "Shut up for goodness sake!". I don't have double glazing because it's an old building and when people are

underneath your window screaming and shouting you can't really escape from it. I've seen my fair share of interesting goings-on, arrests, drug deals, people getting carted off in ambulances - only last week there was a poor old chap in his 70s, I think he had just come out of the football match and somebody had thrown something at the back of his head and he was bleeding profusely all over the pavement. Thankfully the St. John's Ambulance came out and sorted him out until the ambulance turned up.

I've seen couples arguing, guys having punch-ups on the street, and with a net curtain you can obviously stand behind it and get a front seat view, nobody knows you're there, not that I am a Peeping Tom but you can't help but notice if there is something raucous going on. I've seen quite a few big names and heavy metal bands walk past my window when they play the Waterfront. I don't use my front door; there's a bookshelf behind it and every so often I pull it away and see what's been put through my door - I think the most bizarre was a trainer inner sole, I've had lolly sticks, the usual pizza takeaway things, I've had somebody shout through my front door at 2 in the morning "You got the time mate?" just because they see a light on inside. You get nasty stuff too, people's rubbish as they are walking past. My biggest fear is that one day somebody's going to urinate through my letterbox. I shouldn't talk it up but it's only a matter of time - I've had people weeing against my door and through the gate in the path so I've had to shout at them

out the window - but not through my letterbox yet!

Matt Reeve

My grandmother and aunt lived in a house on the corner of Horns Lane and Garden Street. Nanny was one of those classic Edwardian ladies, wearing long black coats - you just don't see elderly women now dressed like elderly women, do you? My aunt worshipped in the churches here, as quite a lot of people tended to, and the people around all knew each other. Even now when I go to church locally and they have the year's Mind List - parishioners who have died and are remembered in prayers every year - it's like All My Yesterdays, all these people who lived in Horns Lane and Garden Street and St. Julian's Alley. The churches were a community focus. There were also the Anglican Nuns from All Hallows - five sisters in those days - and they were seen in their very exotic black Victorian habits up and down these roads all the time, caring for people. There was a real sense that part of the community building was the local church communities. The history of this area is of a sort of Anglo-Catholic, Tractarian, background, with St. Julian's, St. Peters, St. Etheldreda and the churches at the top of the hill. So you had all these rather well-to-do priests who felt called to go and work in slum areas.

It was rough - Ber Street wasn't called Blood-and-Guts Street for nothing. One of my memories is being brought down to Mass at St. Peter Parmentergate from where we lived in the north of the city; there were lots of Americans

around at the end of the war and I think they may have used a club somewhere near the church and as you walked down on a Sunday morning around 8 o'clock, you would see lots of blood in the gutters where the Yanks had been fighting the night before. So the idea that this was a kind of idyllic community is nonsense. I think there was a lot of suffering and quite a lot of violence. The police did that walking around thing that police don't do now, so you tended to know who the local coppers were and they worked you out a bit. The sense I got was that it was not a quiet area - throwing out time at the pubs would have been a fairly lively time. So the present day drunkenness up and down Prince of Wales Road is not a new phenomenon - just a different one. It was a lot of middle aged men and women whose entertainment was to go to the pub on a Friday or Saturday night and spend lots of money, or what money they had. And when you think of the number of pubs up and down King Street ...There was a little shop or a pub on practically every corner.

In Horns Lane a couple of women lived with a range of coloured children, and they were on the game, definitely, and clearly had been on the game with the Yanks. They were actually very friendly and my aunt and grandmother would have whispered conversations about them and it wasn't until I was about 13 or 14 when I suddenly worked out that they were prostitutes! But what you did see in Mountergate, Ber Street, Rose Lane - the main thoroughfares rather than the streets up and down

the hill - was a lot of girls on the game, standing on corners. I can remember us occasionally being brought to things in the church in the evenings and you'd kind of walk past these women, hovering there. Rather sad, really.

Reverend Frank Nichols