

8. SHEILA HALL: Swatman's butchers; King St reputation; Colman's

We moved to King Street in 1961 when my father came to manage the butchers shop owned by Mr. Swatman. I was 20 and didn't want to move from our home at Sprowston, even though the new house had a bathroom and it was nearer for me to get to work at Colmans. Our front door was on St. Anne Lane. We lived behind the shop and over the front upstairs where there were two rooms, one my mum and dad's bedroom and the other our front room. Mr and Mrs. Swatman didn't have wallpaper upstairs, so there were all the beams in the front part but we put wallpaper all in between the beams. The floors were at different levels then so the two big windows on to St Anne Lane were in the attic part. You could see the sky through parts of the roof. I wouldn't go up there - I don't like spiders!

My dad had worked there all his life so he knew everybody living around the area because they used to come into the shop and he used to go round delivering the meat. Fr. Sear was living in the rectory then - he was lovely, a very nice man - and there was the pub on the end but as Dad didn't drink we never went in there. When we first came there was the brewery opposite

Dragon Hall, then down St. Anne Lane there was Synagogue Street and rows of terrace houses along there. The building next to Dragon Hall was Tom Watts the furniture shop. Rouen Road was built through and they pulled a lot of those houses down in the 1960s. A lot of people moved out and probably the butcher's shop did go down then. The building was owned by the brewery, and later the brewery wanted the building back. That wasn't a very good time. They didn't really give any warning. They said they wanted it for their social club like that was yesterday, and then that was empty for years and years after that. Luckily my Dad had put his name on the council list and they got a nice new flat at the top of Kett's Hill.

King Street had a bad reputation then but I used to go out with friends in the city to the Samson & Hercules and when they said, "How can you walk down there on your own?" I just used to say, "Well if I didn't, I wouldn't go out!". It was a bit of a notorious area all round this way - Ber Street, King St - but it didn't deter me - maybe it would if I had thought about it a bit more.

When I was at school you used to have careers people come round asking what you wanted to do and my mum didn't want me to go in a factory so I went into the office at Colmans. An uncle of mine worked here and I think it was through him that I got a job

when there was a vacancy. Then, you more or less left school, had a fortnight's holiday and went into work. Colmans were good employers. They used to have a shop which sold goods cheaply to their workers. There was a big canteen where you had your dinner, which you didn't have to pay for, and a sports & social club at Lakenham.

They keep saying they are going to do different things but nothing gets done - they pulled all that site down next to St. Anne Lane but apart from building the bridge, nothing has been done there. That is just a waste. All right, they have built all the flats and houses opposite, which is a lot better, but somebody needs to start building something.

Sheila Hall

My grandparents lived in a horrible little house in Gladstone Place, off Mariner's Lane. It was pretty awful - they had two rooms downstairs, two bedrooms, and then you had a yard and they shared the toilet and the wash house with the house next door, so of course if you needed to go to the toilet you had to check that no-one else from the house next door was there! They were on mains water and strangely enough they did have electricity. They moved away from there in about 1958.

Catherine Taylor