6. IVY SALLOWS: Growing Up in King St, Breweries & Pubs, Ferry Boat pub, Games, Churchgoing, School, Cinema etc.

I was born at Earlham Hall in 1947. When I was two years old my parents moved to the Buff Coat public house on Cattle Market Street and ten years later to the Builders Arms on the corner of Rose Lane and King Street. The Buff Coat - a 16th century coaching inn - was demolished after the war. The Builders Arms building is still there, it was most recently a bookshop. My grandmother, Motty Warminger, ran the Ferry Boat Inn in King Street from 1945 to the 1970s, when she was quite elderly. I went to Horns Lane Infant School and Junior School, then to Lakenham Girls School. As well as school I went to the Mission which was run by the nuns.

My grandmother, my parents, and other relatives, were all involved in the pub trade. In fact it was a family tradition that went back a couple of hundred years. But I think they saw different opportunities for the young people. My cousin was the first in the family to go to university; my grandmother helped him and bought him a car. He went to Loughborough. As his mother was a widow with two other children, I don't think he would have managed it without his grandmother's help.

I remember the breweries in King Street as noisy places, with the bottling and so on. The women working there used to wear heavy overalls and turbans they tucked their hair into, and heavy boots that you'd hear clattering on the road as they walked along. I remember the smell of beer brewing and when I go to Southwold now and they are brewing, straight away I am brought back in my mind to King Street. I still love that brewing smell.

We played conkers, five stones, marbles, hopscotch, and skipping ropes were a big thing for the girls, while for the boys it was mostly chasing balls around. We were very active in the playground. We played more traditional, uncomplicated games with things we bought for a few pennies. It was nice that we all lived around our schools and knew each other's families. I wasn't so keen on going to Lakenham Secondary Modern because I was mixing with people I didn't really know. There were about 500 girls, which seemed enormous to me after Horns Lane, which were small Victorian-built schools. They mostly lived on the new council estates, so you didn't have that closeness.

The Builders Arms was similar to all the pubs in those days, you had the bar, which was where the men went, and a side room called the Smoke Room or the Snug where ladies went. Ladies who went and stood up at the bar were not considered quite respectable. Similarly, boys and girls were kept separate at secondary school and in other places it wasn't seen quite right for them to mix.

We lived above the pub. Usually you had a small room behind the bar - we had a payphone in ours, which people would to use because they didn't have one at home, so that was an important amenity

provided in the public houses. Our accommodation at the Buff Coat was large because it had been a coaching inn and we had a yard and stables. You would still have people coming into the city by pony and trap on Saturdays and they would put them up in the stables. We even had a circus elephant there one time, and the Shetland ponies which pulled Cinderella's coach in the pantomime at the Theatre Royal. I remember seeing the trainer sleeping in the stable with this enormous elephant, laid with his head on it, both sound asleep!

I do remember a lot of drunkenness, which I didn't like, people shouting and fighting in the streets. Some of my friends had a father who used to drink and didn't behave very nicely, they would be crying when they told you about it, and I realised the children were probably going without because father was spending money in the pubs. There were some quite sad people who relied on drink. One old chap called Sweeney helped my grandmother sometimes at the Ferry Boat, she sent him down the cellar to tap a barrel on and he was gone a long time and they found him passed out in the cellar dead drunk because he'd been drinking all the beer down there. My mother continued running the Builders Arms for about a year after my father died in 1961 but pubs could be quite rough in those days and you really did need a man to back you up if someone was being difficult and you wanted them to leave.

The Ferry Boat was always a busy pub, very lively with locals and also the river life. A lot of the boats that came up the river were Dutch, bringing timber and so on, and the Dutch sailors would row across to the back of the Ferry Boat. Everyone seemed to know my grandmother.She was interviewed once by Bob Wellings from the BBC. As you went in to the front door of the Ferry Boat there was a small bar on the right, and the snug was opposite, with a lovely old fireplace and a door to some tiny winding stairs to the first floor. There was a corridor leading to an open yard at the back of the pub. On the left a door led to the skittle alley and on the right was the door to Nanny's private sitting room and kitchen at the back of the bar. Beyond the yard you would go down to a green area where there was a boathouse, on to the river, and a garden area. It was mainly the men who played skittles, although we would get in there as children, we didn't really know how to play the game but we thought it was fun. They had a darts team who won lots of cups. The "Win a Fag" machine was popular, which took a penny and a little ball would run down and if it went in a certain place, you would win a fag. There was always music playing: I remember Vera Lynn with her wartime songs, but later grandmother had a jukebox, then you would get the rock'n'roll songs, and when they weren't playing there was always someone who could play an instrument, piano accordion or piano, there'd be people prepared to sing. Sonny Howes was well known for playing the piano accordion in pubs. There also was a lady known as "Fag Ash Lil" who played piano. Sometimes it was just an ordinary customer who would burst into song after a drink or two. That wasn't

unusual. It was quite a jolly place. I was told by an old lady who'd grown up in Synagogue Street that her mother and a friend were regulars at the Ferry Boat every Sunday and they would get a bit the worse for drink and come home singing up the road. The favourite song was, "Dear old pals, jolly old pals" and my poor friend Dinah would die a thousand deaths because she knew next day at school all the children were going to laugh at her because of her mother. That was a bit of a disgrace for women; it was more men who would get the worse for wear from drink.

I started at Horn Lane school at age 4. I loved going to school, in fact I took myself down the back lanes, introduced myself to the head and the teachers and asked when I could start coming to school. In the nursery class we would play, and have a little rest on a camp bed in the afternoons. We started to learn to read and write and count in the next class up; they concentrated on the basics but nature study was also very important. Polly Armes was the headmistress. She was a bit unusual; she wore tweed tailored suits with brogues and dressed "mannish", not like the other ladies we knew. In morning assembly she would hike up her skirt and she had these big bloomers on, which of course made all the children start to giggle, and on these bloomers was sewn a little pocket and she would get a big handkerchief out and say, "Now children, get your handkerchief, put it to your nose, one big blow, wipe your nose, handkerchief away again" but basically I suppose she was just telling that keeping our noses clean was one of those things you did in the morning. Having these pockets sewn into little secret places was just normal to her generation, but of course we had been taught not to show our knickers, so we thought she was quite funny. She was very authoritarian and she used to smack us, for doing things like whispering to each other in class. I remember one boy, Malcolm, a very poor sort of boy, no socks on, no coat in the winter, she used to smack him quite a lot although even as children we thought he didn't deserve it. He wasn't naughty, he was just not quite with it. We felt sorry for that boy. I was once smacked by a male teacher at junior school for trying to help Malcolm do his coat up; I thought he was a boy who needed help but the teacher didn't seem to realise, he said he was just lazy. Another teacher would throw the wooden board rubber at the boys. But that was the way it was, those were the rules and we didn't question it. Not all the teachers were like that. We had some very kind, good ones. I particularly remember one young and sweet teacher in my nursery class and the headmistress of the junior school, Mrs. Thompson, was very kind, she would listen to what the children told her and she made us feel we mattered.

King Street was very tight-knit, in fact a lot of people called it the village in the city. We used to refer to it as "going up the city" like we were going quite a long way away from our village and to me as a child that did seem quite a long way to have to walk up the hill to get to the city.

There were a lot of shops and pubs on

King Street. Of my school friends, Jane Manning's mother ran a small cafe at the Rose Lane end and on the corner of Mountergate was a grocery shop, where Lesley Pond lived. Susan Johnson lived close by and her mother worked in the bottling plant at the brewery. I remember the Custance family - Karen and her brother Richard. My Aunt Emily ran the Jolly Farmers pub on Farmers Avenue (which is no longer there) and I had three cousins there. Of course pubs were strictly off limits to us children. When we went to the Ferry Boat we had to go down the corridor and into Nanny's sitting room at the back of the bar, where we could talk to her as she was serving. We were not allowed into the licensed part. She'd give us a bag of crisps and a Vimto, but we always had to do a little job for our pocket money, like making the bed or washing up. We'd spend it in sweet shops or Stribbens Joke Shop on Ber Street. There were little corner sweet shops on King Street - all those street corners have gone now - and they were often kept by elderly ladies.

At Scoles Green was a funny little shop run by a Mrs. Ames, who was the only person I saw in a wheelchair when I was growing up. She made sweets and wonderful toffee apples. She also knitted dolls clothes, so sometimes I would save up for them. The shops normally had a bell on a spring over the door, but some naughty boys worked out that they could gently open the door, hold the bell, squeeze in and take some sweets - but that sort of dishonesty was quite frowned on and one boy was put on probation and we were told by our parents not to mix with him because he would teach us to do the wrong things as well. This was the usual attitude from parents - anti-social behavior was really looked down upon.

Every year there were the things that followed each other and marked the different times of the year for us. In the spring at school we'd always dance round the maypole, with music and singing, which I loved. For Harvest Festival we'd take things like tins of food, sugar and tea to school and the teachers would help us make up boxes to distribute to the elderly and people we thought were in need. Always on a Sunday you had to wear your better clothes. We paid a visit to grandmother at the Ferry Boat every Sunday morning, looking smart and wearing our best clothes. I'd go to St. Johns Timberhill for Harvest Festival, Palm Sunday and things like that. It was a very popular church.

My mother used to go to St. Peter Parmentergate. Mother relied on the church at times when she needed support and especially the sisters, who were quite wonderful with the work they did for the poorer people in King Street. They lived amongst us in a close way and that made all the difference. The sisters were sharing in your everyday life. Nowadays you have to go out of your way to meet a vicar or a nun. Everyone seems to particularly remember Sister Dorothea, who was a very kind, gentle person and really listened to the children, unlike most adults in those days who told us we should be seen and not heard. They also looked after the

churches and as a girl I sometimes went to St. Johns on a Wednesday night and helped them clean the silver. They still have the Mission, near the St. Julian Chapel, and there was one down Rose Lane run by another order, possibly the Little Sisters of Mercy, and a Railway Mission on Prince of Wales Road. We'd go there and they would have a picture show where they would teach you Bible stories and hand out sweets and orange squash. That was all woven into our everyday lives. There would be tea parties, especially at Christmas. I also remember the Coronation, when I first started school; we were given a tin with a chocolate coin inside and a book about the new queen. That was a very special day, we were all really excited, union jacks everywhere, although we didn't really know what was going on in London because nobody I knew had a television to watch it on; you would see it at the newsreels when you went to the pictures.

I started going to the cinema with my mother when I was about two. The nearest was on All Saints Green (now Mecca Bingo). Hollywood movies were wonderful, music and singing and dancing, they took you out of yourself and the drab life we led. I especially liked the special Saturday morning picture club for the children. You got on the stage if it was your birthday and everyone sang Happy Birthday to you. There would be a serial like Batman or the Lone Ranger, then a main feature suitable for children. I liked the Bowery Boys, from a poor area of New York, who seemed to live similar to the way we did, not much money, and their church organised a youth club to keep them off the streets, so we could identify with that because of the Lads Club. America seemed very exotic to us. I wanted to grow up to be Doris Day, she just seemed perfect and she was always happy. That was the type of thing we wanted to see. There were several movie houses in Norwich. They were very glamorous inside. The one in Prince of Wales Road had gold lacquered walls and lights like Chinese lanterns and a little waterfall in the foyer, and a lovely restaurant upstairs. Movies were very popular in the 1950s, it was taken for granted that you would have to queue outside and if it was too crowded you'd go on to another one that was showing something different.

The things I disliked about living in King Street were drunkenness and poverty. Even as a child I could see how difficult that made life for other children. And we had all the bomb sites round here so you would walk amongst the streets and there was the actual evidence of the war, even if you had not experienced it, and you could see people's houses had been smashed to bits. We played on the bombsites. You would have one house left standing and then all the other houses were missing. My friend Susan lived in a house like that. The toilet was - as usual - outside in the yard and it had no roof because that had been knocked off by the bombs and inside they had all cracks down the walls, in fact her brother's bedroom had a crack in the wall with a weed growing inside!

The thing I notice now is how the vibrancy has gone completely from King

Street. That's what really makes me sad. We have Dragon Hall which people come and enjoy and the Kings Centre is a lovely place for families - though it is very sad that the Lads Club has gone - but it seems to me the heart has gone out of the street. We had shops, people always walking in and out of the city; you met people in the street all the time and they would say good morning to each other. Men in particular often used to whistle or sing in the street. You weren't seen as a crazy person - you were happy! I think in a lot of ways people were happier, they made the most of what they had, they weren't greedy. What I missed very much when I left was being amongst people you'd grown up with, who you'd known a long time. When they demolished these places, my friends were scattered. My friend Susan moved to the Plumstead Road estate. People went out to Tuckswood, Heartsease, Earlham - new council houses, where they had bathrooms and that, but they didn't have the community we had in King Street.

Ivy Sallows