
Norwich 1945 to 1960

A Journey from Austerity to Prosperity



Pond's flower stall, Norwich Market, 1951

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Published by Norwich Heritage Projects

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Front cover: A montage. Background image: the Haymarket c.1955. Figures: little girls playing, Stephanie Brooks and friend; girl in Sunday best, Lynn Palmer; teenage couple, Sylvia and Colin Buxton.

Back cover: Montage of the Samson & Hercules Ballroom (page 177)

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Philip Armes: vi, vii, 1,2, 4 (Raven), 6, 18 (Curls), 30, 35 (Queen), 49, 69, 73 (colour), 77 (WS), 108, 109, 110, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 125, 127, 128, 129, 137, 139, 145 (SS), 146, 147, 149 (VS), 153, 164, 170, 176, 194.

Compton Verney: Selection of 1950s dresses from the collection of Liz Tregenza displayed in the exhibition Britain in the Fifties: Design and Aspiration, Compton Verney. Photos © Jamie Woodley, 133.

Mike Dixon: 134, 150 (train), 182, 183, 184 (Firs), 185, 186.

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Simon GP Geoghegan: 142, 143.

Peter Lange: 102, 131.

Charles Nigrelli and the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library Collection: 190.

Norfolk County Council Library and Information Service: cover background image, i, 5, 7, 9 (Norfolks), 10 (Norfolk Show), 11, 15, 18 (Norfolk Show), 19 (Assembly Rooms), 23 (Walcott), 27, 31 (NU), 36, 42, 48, 54 (WP), 59, 74, 75, 77 (MT), 86, 87, 88, 91, 95, 102, 104 (FP), 107, 111, 126, 131, 132, 138 (EP), 139 (CS), 140 (ESH), 149 (CS), 160 (O), 161, 165, 167 (MT), 168, 169, 171 (Trafford), 173 (BA), 174, 175, 177 (dancers), 187, 190.

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Norfolk & Norwich Association for the Blind: 18 (Norfolk Show).

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John Seymour: 139 (CS)

Tony Skipper: 155

Start-rite: 34.

Contents

Contributors	iv
Foreword	vi
Introduction	vii
1945 to 1960: Austerity to Prosperity	1
1945 – 1949: Hard Times	2
1950 – 1954: Recovery and Growth	14
1955 – 1960: We'd 'Never Had It So Good'	27
The National Health Service.	39
Growing Up.	45
Children	46
Teenagers	55
Education	57
National Service	64
Housing and Homes	69
Housing	70
Homes	78
A Manufacturing City	85
Manufacturing	86
The World of Work	98
The Consumer Society.	107
Shops and Shopping	108
Food, Glorious Food	123
Fashion	130
Transport and Holidays	141
Transport: The Rise of the Motor Car	142
Transport: Trains	148
Holidays and Days Out	151
Entertainment and Sport	155
Television	156
Radio	158
The Cinemas	159
The Norwich Theatres	164
The Circus	169
Norwich Pubs	170
Music and Dancing	174
Sports	181
Different Times.	187
Epilogue.	195
Additional Information	196
Bibliography	196
Index	198
Acknowledgements	200

Contributors

Many thanks to the following who shared their memories with us.

Andy Anderson: In 1947, when just 19 years old, Andy was serving with the Royal Norfolk Regiment in India, the year of independence. In 1948, after leaving the Norfolks he joined the police force. He left in 1973 to be a social worker, eventually retiring in 1991. He is a renowned local historian, and is a former Chairman and current Vice-President of the Norwich Society.

Philip Armes: Philip spent his life in Norwich. Born in 1923 he witnessed numerous changes which he recorded during the many years he worked as a photographer in the planning department at Norwich City Council.

Rodney Barker: Born during the war, Rodney recalls his family being delighted to be allocated a prefab on Miller's Lane, before moving to the new South Park Avenue Estate. In 1957, at the age of 15, he joined his father at the Jarrolds print works. Both he and his wife Linda enjoy volunteering at the John Jarrold Printing Museum.

Pauline Bell: Born in 1941, Pauline's parents ran several Norwich pubs, including the Red Lion on Bishopgate from 1946 to 1959. After taking a secretarial course at City College Pauline became a PA to the Jarrold family at their print works. She later worked as a PA to Bernard Matthews.

Michael Brett: Michael's family owned Loose's china and glass specialist store on Magdalen Street which was destroyed during WWII and subsequently rebuilt.

Stephanie Brooks: Stephanie was born in Portsmouth in 1951, the following year the family moved back to Norwich. At first they lived with her aunt on King Street, before moving to a brand-new council house on the Heartsease Estate. Stephanie soon found that having a dad who had played for Norwich City (Terry Ryder) made her very popular with the boys.

Avis Brown: Avis was brought up on the Catton Grove Estate. As a teenager she enjoyed wearing the fashions of the day and dancing the night away at the Samson & Hercules. In 1957, when 15 years old, she started her career in the shoe trade which lasted until 2003 when the Start-rite factory closed. In 2015 she returned to the trade, as a tour guide at the Van-Dal (Florida) factory.

Colin Buxton: Colin and his family were bombed out in 1942, when he was just two years old. After the war he lived in a prefab, and as a teenager dressed in the latest fashions.

Sylvia Buxton: Sylvia had a wonderful time growing up on Mariners Lane, where the surrounding bomb sites were her playground. After leaving school in 1956, she worked at the Bally shoe factory until 1967, when she left to start a family.

John Chilvers: Born in 1951, John is a lifelong supporter of NCFC and still vividly remembers the 1959 cup run. After graduating from university, John became a teacher. For the last 16 years of his career he was head at Stalham High before retiring in 2008.

Muriel Chilvers: Muriel was born in 1925. After leaving the Blyth Grammar School she worked for the Norfolk Health Insurance Committee. She left after marrying Leslie.

Albert Cooper: Albert is well known in the City as a musician. In the 1950s he shared a legendary partnership with Black Anna, the landlady of the Jolly Butchers' pub on Ber Street. Fewer people are aware of his time serving in the RAF or of his 'apprenticeship' at the '50 Bob Tailors'.

Roy Cracknell: Roy joined the Norwich Union in 1942 when he was 16 years old. At the age of 18 he was called up to serve in the RAF. Roy spent all his working life at the NU, where he was involved in the installation of the company's early computers.

Pat Gyte: Pat's father worked in the prison service. She spent the 1950s living in prison accommodation on Knox Road.

Stephen Hinde: Stephen was just four years old in 1951 when his father was Lord Mayor. His family owned Bonds and he has many memories of the much-loved department store.

Arthur Holmes: Arthur was born in Norwich in 1921. During WWII he served in the RAF as an aero-engine mechanic. After the war he returned to the City and married Audrey. Arthur spent most of his working life as a cost accountant at Start-rite.

Janice Middleton: Janice was brought up on Marshall Road. She recalls visiting Sandringham on the day of the Coronation, and that school discipline was somewhat different to today.

Barbara Miller: For more than 50 years Barbara has acted as a Blue Badge Guide. Her extensive local knowledge is legendary and resulted in her being a very popular speaker on a range of topics. Born in 1929, as a young lady she enjoyed amateur dramatics and performed at the Maddermarket Theatre under the direction of Nugent Monck.

Martin Miller: In 1944, at the age of 18, Martin was called-up to serve as a 'Bevin Boy' in the Yorkshire coal mines. After returning to Norwich he had a successful management career at the Norvic Shoe Company. He subsequently held the position of Chief Executive at Broadland Housing.

Maurice Morson: Maurice joined the City Police in 1956, when he was 20 years old. He started working the beats as a PC. He was in the force until 1987 when he retired as Detective Chief Superintendent and Head of Norfolk CID. For the next 11 years he worked as Head of Security at UEA. Since retiring he has written a number of books, including *Norwich Murders* and *A Force Remembered*.

Christine Perfect: Christine spent her early life living in a close-knit community on William Street. In 1956, when she was seven years old, she moved with her family to a brand-new council flat on Vauxhall Street.

Lynn Preston: Lynn was born in Norwich in 1948. After leaving the Blyth Grammar School she worked for many years at UEA, during which time she took a break to study for her PhD.

John Rumball: On leaving school in 1952, at the age of 15, John briefly joined the Norwich Union, before embarking in a long career in the print industry. He now works as a volunteer at the John Jarrold Print Museum.

Jude Sayer: In the late 1950s Jude appeared in Crackerjack singing with her heart throb Dickie Valentine. Today, Jude is well known in the City for her work as a Blue Badge Guide and as the Queen of the Norfolk Broads Chapter of the Red Hat Society.

Glenna St Quintin: Born in 1936, Glenna was a teenager in the 1950s. She enjoyed rock 'n' roll and learnt to dance at Eileen Page's school. One of her favourite dance halls was the Lido on Aylsham Road. In 1957 she married John.

John St Quintin: In 1948, straight after leaving school, John started work in the shoe industry, where he worked as a shoe designer until 1981. His family always had cars and as a young man he completed his national service at Horsham St Faith's where he was a MT (Motor Transport) Driver.

Heather Trower: In 1955 Heather started work in the display department at Caley-Mackintosh. Whilst there she posed as Miss Sweetly standing next to Major Quality – the couple that featured on Quality Street advertising and packaging.

Paul Warr: Paul's family moved onto the brand-new Heartsease Estate in 1955, when he was just six years old. As a boy, he enjoyed the freedom of playing with his pals and recalls carefree days. In 2015 he set up a social group called the 'Heartsease Originals' which brings together early residents from the estate.

Peter Watson: Peter's early years were spent living in a Nissen hut on the former Rackheath airbase, he later moved to a new council house on Middleton's Lane, Hellesdon. When he was six, he very much enjoyed taking part in a fancy-dress competition to celebrate the Coronation. After leaving school he worked at Laurence, Scott & Electromotors.



Foreword

In 2015 we published 'The Old Courts and Yards of Norwich' and were amazed at the interest it generated. This left us with the pleasant task of deciding what to do next.

Whilst researching our previous books we came to realise the significance of what happened in Norwich after the war and through the 1950s, and so we decided to tell the story of Norwich from 1945 to 1960.

We soon realised that we faced very different challenges to those presented in our earlier projects. In the past, we have dealt with relatively narrow subjects over a long period, but here we are covering a very wide topic over a short timescale. Knowing the impossibility of covering every aspect in detail, we have aimed to illustrate what was happening by giving the essence of the age. As in our previous books, we have spoken to people who recall the era, combining their memories with newspaper reports, photographs and contemporary records. Additionally, although this is a book primarily about Norwich, the City was also affected by national events, and so we have included these both as background, and to show the impact they had on local people.

In the bibliography we have included sources of information. We must particularly thank Archant for giving us access to their newspaper archive which is full of wonderful stories and pictures, and also to Philip Armes' family for allowing us to reproduce his many superb photos. We would also draw attention to: the marvellous images contained on the George Plunkett and Picture Norfolk websites; the 1950s memorabilia on display at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse; and the extensive archive held at the Norfolk Record Office.

Finally, as always, we are very grateful to all who shared their memories and stories with us.

Frances and Michael Holmes



Orford Place, 1952

Introduction

On Tuesday 8 May peace was declared in Europe. In Norwich thousands were drawn to the Market Place to celebrate. Amongst their number was Andy Anderson, then 16, he recalls dancing and singing, because 'war was over and there was hope for the future'. Barbara Miller sat with friends on the Castle Mound watching the festivities, she shared Andy's joy and optimism for a world that had been very dark but now seemed bright.

Over the next 15 years Andy and Barbara would be amongst the many who witnessed significant international events, alongside social, technical and cultural changes which still affect us today. This was the era when our longest serving monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, came to the throne. It was also the time when Elvis Presley began his reign as the 'King of Rock and Roll'. These were the years when the teenager came of age and both mass consumerism and the National Health Service were born. As more families benefitted from improved healthcare, the welfare state and a better education system, children from working-class families were increasingly given the opportunity to study at college and university. It was a time of growing affluence, when having a television became the norm, but also one when establishment values were questioned more and more.

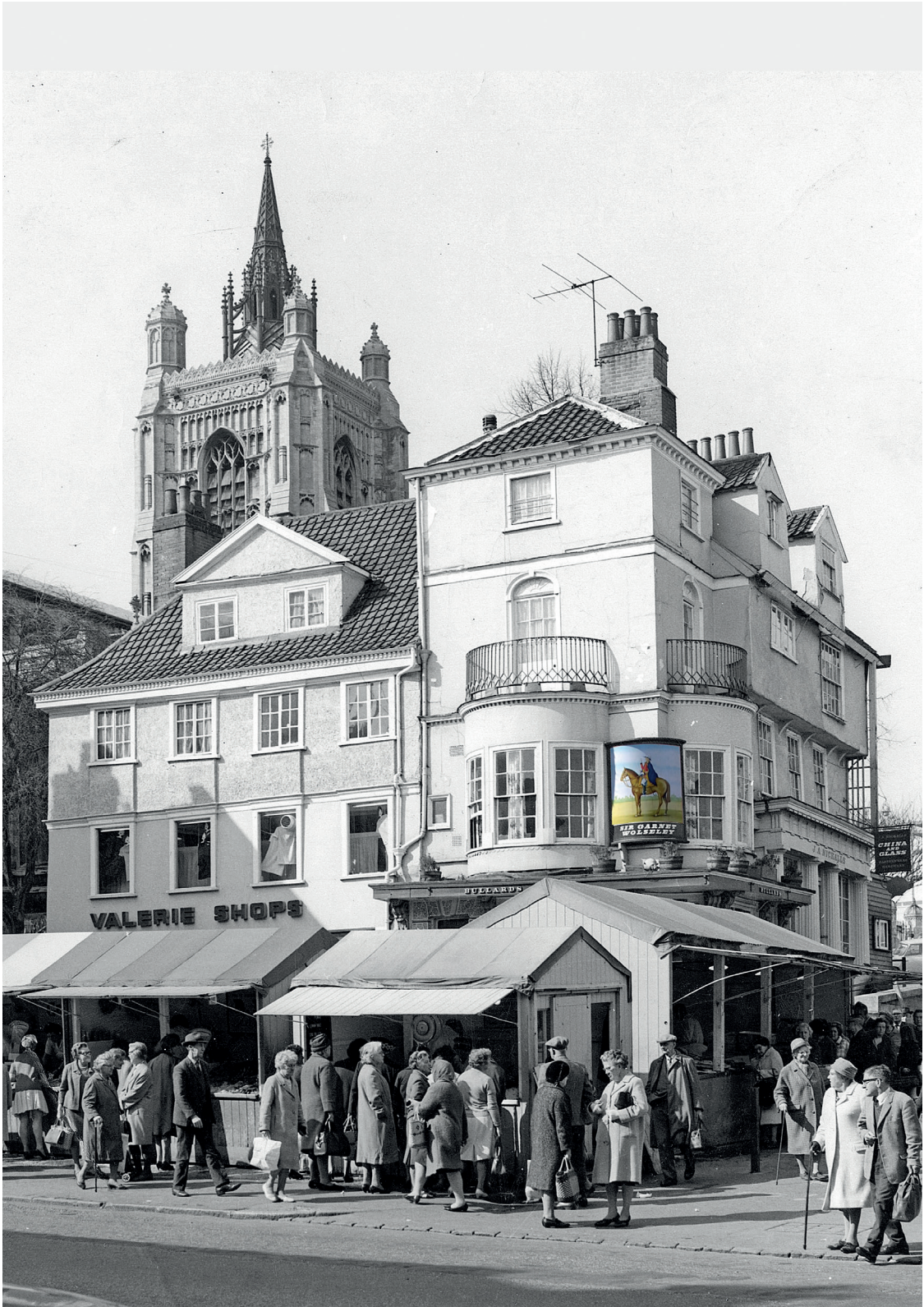
Those who lived in Britain during these years were on a journey which saw them travel from the rationing of the post-war years to a time when many 'never had it so good'. It was a roller-coaster trip full of wondrous happenings, people and inventions, but also one of discontent, racism and tragedy.

But what was happening in Norwich? Those who can still recall this eventful period have memories that range from prefabs to Teddy boys, from dancing at the Samson & Hercules to seeing the Canaries' FA Cup run of 1959. They recall a manufacturing city where workers made shoes, chocolates and mustard. It was a time when roads were dominated by bicycles rather than cars and war-damaged buildings were being repaired. Jobs were plentiful, new schools were opened and new-fangled electrical goods were freeing women from the drudgery of housework.

But the story of the City is about more than events, it is also about the individuals who lived through a remarkable time. It is about young men who went to war, children who played on bomb sites and teenagers who witnessed the birth of rock 'n' roll. Ordinary people who saw a city rebuild itself: citizens who were on a journey that took them from austerity to prosperity.



Rampant Horse Street, May 1952



Fish stalls on the Norwich Market, c.1955