

Ted King's reminiscences of Fore Street, Ipswich in the 1920s

The recording was made in about 1990 at the behest of Ken Windsor's mother, Marjorie. The interviewee with the remarkable powers of recall is Ted King who was ten years old in 1920, living in a very different Fore Street to that which we see today. The female voice which can be heard from time to time is that of Ted's relative Dinah. Ken Windsor has kindly donated the recordings to the Fore Street Facelift 1961 project.

[> indicates new shop(s) or premises on this mental tour of Fore Street.]

"Right, from the Earl Grey to Orwell Place...

>We had **The Steam Packet public house**, that was on the corner of Duke Street and Fore Street. Next to that there was **a sweet shop**: half of it was sweet shop, half of it was **greengrocery**. You went down a steep step into a low, timbered shop.

>Next to that was **a butcher's**, but on the same lines. They all had sagging roofs and timbers and overhangs. There were about four shops like that. The next shop would be **a shoemaker**: and he made shoes and he repaired them.

>Almost next door there was a yard with big, iron barred gates. That was **Meux's Brewery**, spelt M-E-U-X. That was a tall, concrete building and it was supposed to have brewed good beer. It was in brown bottles – light brown bottles – with an elliptical label and a red star on it, that was the sign. Next to that were offices; they were the offices of the brewery.

>Next to that was a big timbered gateway, but the gate wasn't there. The gateposts and the lintel over the top were there. The posts were about a foot square, oak; they were about twelve or more foot high. Over the top of that was a wooden arch; that was about a foot square – I take it that was oak as well. Inside there were **Parker's Cottages**. There were either three or four, I can't remember which. That was on the left of the entrance inside. That had a wicket gate which led to the docks. Entering that gate on the right, was a big, open, cobbled yard with two or three stables around – I can't remember the number – well, that went behind two or three shops. But a little further on, it went behind the Neptune public house, which was dated somewhere around 1650. That was a courtyard for receiving the stagecoaches and the stables for stabling the horses and a pump from which they got their water.

>Coming out of that yard into Fore Street again, the first shop was a greengrocer's and a small grocery shop. That's two... Next to that was **Hagger, the pork butcher**. You went up two steps to that.

>Next to that was **The Neptune Inn**. So altogether, with those shops and the overall frontage of the Neptune Inn (possibly a bit beyond at the back) was in excess of about forty feet. The Neptune Inn was no different when I was a boy, other than the fact that you didn't get the stagecoaches there. But people put up there and 'course they had their cars, which didn't take up a lot of room. That was a public house, pure and simple, but it did take visitors.

>Next to that, was a large, double-fronted shop: a very smart wine shop, where they sold rum, ruby port and things like that.

>Next to that was another gateway which had still got big, square, wooden doorposts and that had a beam across the top. I would say that that doorway was fifteen feet, maybe more, high. That led into a large, cobbled yard where a man dealt in horse food, bales of hay, straw and things of that sort. He also had a little chicken food.

>Next to that was a row of offices [**Isaac Lord**]. That was an old-fashioned building with timbers outside, overhanging upper floor, diamond windows. And in the middle of this office block – which

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would be, I should say, thirty feet long – that had a real, oak gatepost and a square lintel over the top, which was horizontal and not curved. That had two heavy oak doors with square-headed nails driven in; they were not ornaments, they held the door together. That double door was about ten or eleven foot high. That led into a courtyard. In the courtyard on the right was the entrance to an office. I don't know what was stored in there; I never went in that place. The other side of that office were three, if not four, cottages. They had no gardens, only a narrow strip of soil about two feet wide, where the occupants planted brightly coloured flowers and they had brightly coloured flowers climbing up the wall. This courtyard also was cobbled and at the bottom of it, I suppose it would be a mill, where they processed barley and malt and dried hops. Well, entering the gateway on the right was another door (which faced the opposite door). But that one – you went up two steps to it – and that was an office. It had a rough, wooden floor with a moth-eaten piece of carpet on it, it was a coloured thing. And it had a tall wooden desk; I would say it was about four-foot-six high. Two clerks sat there and they faced a diamond mullioned window onto Fore Street. They sat on high stools with backs on, something like Charles Dickens' day.

Well, that property was owned by a couple of elderly men – they were once young, 'cause they'd been there years: known as Mr Sizer and Mr Lord. I never did meet Mr Lord, but I met Mr Sizer many times. He was a tall man with a dark suit, tight pipe-leg trousers and he wore a long black coat with a waistcoat almost up to his adam's apple and he wore a deep, white, starched collar. That looked uncomfortable and most probably it was. He was a white-haired man with a white beard. He had an office somewhere which was through the other office. But he was Mr Sizer and also, come to mind, he had a coal-yard in the property at the back of the office. He supplied coal and, of course, he had stables. He supplied bushels of malt and pounds of hops and yeast that the country people used to come for – I've been there myself – to make their beer.

He also delivered coal. If I remember rightly, there were three men lived in those cottages: one was a man who looked after the malt and things like that and did the odd jobs and two men went out on the cart. They always went out loaded with coal; they used to pass the house where I lived – well, when I was not at school – every day of the week, including Saturdays.

>Well, we came out of there and the next shop was **Mr Potter, the greengrocer**. He had pomegranates and pineapples: he was a little more than the ordinary potato, cabbage and carrot shop. He had the different sorts of fruit. That was a very smart shop and they did good business – a big shop, too, double-fronted.

>Next to that was **Mr Fuller, the musical instrument man**. He had, to my knowledge, nearly every instrument you can find, from a tin whistle to a bass drum or a 'cello. The brass and silver bugles were in the window, piano accordions and concertinas. He was busy, it seemed.

>Next to that was **a sweet shop**. Mind you, all these shops had overhanging first floors and were all timber-framed, although Mr Potter broke the rule and had a modern shop front put in, so that stood out unfortunately. But never mind...

>Then there was **Blowers**. You went down a step there. He was a little, short, fat man: a nice, pleasant man. And he had two daughters. They were both built like miniature barrels, but they were clean and pleasant, always wore white aprons. On the left of the shop going in, there was a separate place that was divided up with **children's clothes** – I think that there were some women's clothes as well, but I can't remember that. Little frocks and dresses and knickers for the children. And long black stockings. On the other side they kept the sweets: the gob-stoppers, the honeycomb bars. I suppose that was every sweet you could think of. And the thing he always kept a good stock of was ship's chocolate. That was like chocolate, made in long bars like tunnels. And the seamen used to come and buy that. We used to buy it; it wasn't sweet, but you could suck that and it lasted a long while. If you wanted to, you did what the seamen did and scraped it into powder to make nice, thick cocoa. They used to have about a dozen of these fingers in one row and a dozen in the other.

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After that, the next one – and the last one before the corner – was a **public house** of the corner called **The Brewers**. There was no need to say it was a public house, because we knew that. By that time, we'd reached **Salthouse Street**.

>Well, the other side of that was a nice old fellow. You went up three steps. He had a window either side on the corner – it was a round pavement – and he kept sou'westers, oilskins: a **ship's chandlers** sort of thing, but he never kept ropes or anything like that. And he kept duffle-coats and everything that a seaman needs. But at the same time, you could always buy a good pair of boots, whether you were a child at school – and they were heavy, of course – and, I suppose, for a pair of boys boots they were half-a-crown, with hob-nails and toe-plates in. The other thing he used to get a stock of was linen plimsolls wit rope soles. My mother used to buy our rope soled plimsolls and they were thruppence a pair. If I remember rightly, a man would buy a pair and they'd cost one-and-six. Well a lot of women used to buy them and they'd be about a shilling a pair for a woman. but for a boy of ten or eleven like me they'd be thruppence a pair. They'd last a good while. You never played football in them, because your toes got no protection. Some of 'em had lace eyelets in with a stringy sort of lace, but some of 'em didn't have eyelets, they had a slit in the front, properly machined, and they had a cord go right through opposite eyelets and they tied round your ankles. But mostly the girls wore them, cause girls wore them as well.

>Next to that was Porky **Wells, the pork butcher**; beautifully clean shop and that smelled beautiful. He made his own lard, his own sausages. His wife was a big, fat woman; she must have weighed about fourteen stone. He was just a little bigger than her and his son was the same. He went to school with me and he was called Porky Wells. He used to sell tripe, things like that.

>Next to that was **the barber**; he was a nice old boy. He was there when we first went there and I was about four when we went to live in Fore Street. He used to do the barbering, but his sight gradually faded. If he'd been alive today, that woud've been put right. But anyhow, he was getting on and his sight faded. He used to clear up the shop the best as he could and he used to go outside and clean the windows, do all the odd jobs. When he'd done all his jobs, he used to sit in the barber's shop and talk to the customers who he knew.

>Next to him was another big shop [**medical supplies**]; I should say that was about twenty feet long. That had surgical boots, crutches, stretchers, trusses, incontinence [products] and these big, white, weighed-half-a-ton, Doulton bed-pans.

>Next to him was a gateway about ten feet wide. Going in that, there was a **garage** at the bottom. There were not many cars about, but that earned that **Mr Chapman** his living. He had a son; I went to school with him, we were the same age. And in the evenings, he used to help his father repair the old-fashioned motor-bikes they had... and the cars.

>Next to that was another big shop with a glass frontage about twelve feet long and a door next to Chapman's entrance. And that was either the **Tower Mill Laundry** or the Sunlight Laundry. They were always busy, doing aprons – stiff collars, they specialised in.

>Next to that was **Mr Daldry, the leather merchant**. Well, his shop window was about ten or fifteen feet long, as near as I can say. And he used to have a big tray of leather off-cuttings in the window. He used to have a good array of merchandise: needles, threads, sewing machines, polishes, everything. He was a nice, pleasant man: a short, stocky man, always wore his white apron. He was always doing a repair job, either stitching something up or knocking studs in boots: he was always busy. I went to school with his son.

Next door to them was **Welsh the baker**. Welsh used to get up early in the morning, he'd make his bread and he'd make wonderful cream cakes with all the designs on in different colours. By the time it was half-past eight he used to come in the shop with his tall hat on and his white suit on and apron and bring all the cakes in on trays and put them in the window and the bread. That smelled nice in there. He used to make milk rolls. His wife was a tall woman; she used to look after shop.

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Then he'd go and have his breakfast and he'd disappear – you wouldn't see him until about half-past twelve. When he came out he was totally different. He had a light waistcoat on and a sports jacket, cream trousers with a crease like a knife-edge and smart shoes. But he was still the same man.

>Next to them was a door which led up to a flat over a sweet shop. Well that **little sweet shop**, I don't suppose, was more than ten feet wide. They had a good array of sweets, everything you could think about. Oh, and cigarettes and tobacco and pipes. That was Mrs Tricker kept that.

> Next to that was **Bales the greengrocer**. Well, he worked somewhere and his wife stayed at the shop and they had two sons: I went to school with them. But at some time or other – whether that was early morning or what – he used to disappear with his wooden cart on two wheels, box cart, and he'd come back with the greengrocery: cabbages, potatoes, everything. He used to keep that well-stocked. I somehow think that he worked at Ransomes Sims & Jefferies but, being young, I didn't bother much about that.

Then... **I lived in the next house**. Between Bales [green]grocery shop and the house I lived in there was a passageway. That was called Cook's Court. At the end of this narrow passage there was about three cottages. Three pairs of elderly people lived there. They were nice people and we used to speak to them when they came out. I lived in the big house with my family. That house was haunted – oh yes, that was haunted alright. And no-one will tell me otherwise, because I've heard it.

>The next to that was **Tollemache's entrance to their bottling department**. That stretched right through to Lower Orwell Street. That was about thirty feet wide. That was one big single gate and it took two men to open and shut it.

>Next to that was a **second-hand shop**. That was kept by a Mrs Spurgeon. She had a son and a daughter. They were older than me, so I didn't know anything about them. That was a second-hand shop; I think they did a reasonable trade.

>Then next to that was another little shop kept by an elderly man. I never knew if he had a wife; if he did, I never saw her. That had a window about six feet wide and about five feet high. That was **an antique shop** where you could buy things for sixpence and some of 'em tuppence. In those days, if you had five pound – which we very rarely saw – you could have bought all his stock in his window. But if that had been today, five thousand pound couldn't have bought that. Anyhow...

>Next to that was a **pork shop**. That man sold pork and he sold milk. That had Spurrage's [?] on the overhang of the next floor. The little antique shop had a shallow overhang over the window, but the pork butcher's shop – I can't think of his name – had a good overhang so that if that rained you could shelter under that. Well, you went down a step to that and he had a little gate made up of square timbers that was painted brown; that was beautifully clean, so was he. He would sell pork, pork cheeses, sausage rolls, sausages. And milk, and eggs.

>The next to that was **Mr Janes' shop**, Arthur Janes. Well, he was a nice old boy with a red face. In fact, he was one of the men that I met when I started at Rapier's, that taught me the beginnings of using a lathe. He had this shop and they specialised in high-class chocolates, but they sold the usual dolly mixtures and liquorice strips and sherbet suckers and sherbet dabs. They also sold, later on, a drink called Tizer. His wife dressed like an hour-glass; she was nearly divided in the middle. She wore a dark blouse and a white frill round the top of the neck and a frill down the front with buttons and they were black buttons. Then she had a black shiny belt around her waist, then she bulged out again to a long black skirt. But usually on top of that skirt and about half-way up her chest, she had a little white apron. I never saw her with her hat off – she might have slept in it for all I know – but she had a black hat. I suppose they called it rouche-work[?]all round; that was about half as big as a top hat in height. That used to have two hat-pins stuck in, one either side

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with jet knobs on. She was a very nice woman. A very pleasant woman. She treated us like grown-ups instead of rough little herbets.

> Next to that was a public house called the **Wheatsheaf**. You went up two steps into that and there was a sort of foyer at the top of the steps. That was all timbered with chevron brickwork in panels. Then you turned, looked right and there was a big door there. When we passed that door – we never went in – but it was the bar. It was the Wheatsheaf public house. Then we come outside, down the steps into the street and there were windows about five foot from the height of the path; mullioned windows with all diamonds of glass. And all surrounded by a timber frame. Mind you, the woodwork was old and that was split and ridged, but it wasn't rotten. Then above that was another large window – mullioned windows you'd call them with diamond windows also, and the heavy timber – there was a beam with carving just above this window which ran the length of the public house. The wall above that carved timber went up to a point and that, if I remember rightly, was a plaster facing with pargetting on it: that's the different shapes and patterns. And they had some sort of medallion standing out in the centre of it.

>Going further from that you came down to another house which had six large mullioned windows in it, which had diamonds also with a heavy door in the middle. So there was three one side and three the other. It was timber-framed at the front and it had an overhang also. But the overhang had a rounded shape of the front and that also had carving in it. I can't remember what was carved on it; I think they were birds and elongated crocodiles, sort of things. Well, above that rounded section was more plasterwork and four windows up there. First there was white plaster, then there was the window, then there was a gap and there was pargetting there with simple designs on. Then there was another window with more designs, another window and more designs, another window and clear space. Above that, of course, was another horizontal beam, carved – I couldn't see what it represented – but above that there were three tapers going up to the peak of the roof. And that was finished off with this light plasterwork. That now is occupied, that was a large house – my mother and father had the choice of that, but my mother didn't like it the diamond windows. But she regretted that afterwards... but never mind. That's now commercial offices.

[I think that Ted has doubled the Wheatsheaf building and the passage above also refers to that ancient pub.]

>Next to that, the road recessed. Well, there was a shop there – it was shop once. It had a big glass front, a steel-barred gate and a door. That window was painted over with a brown paint with a gap of about a foot of plain glass. That belonged to **Tollemache's bottling stores**. The women, and there were many, who worked in that bottling stores: that was their **restroom** and the room where they had their meals. There were no canteens in those days, so they had a gas ring and a kettle, table – or bench, I should say – and forms and they ate their packed meals there. That had a back entrance into the bottling stores. It wasn't a stores actually, it was a huge place where machines were and bottled the beers and whatever. But that was called a stores. So, they went right to their work.

>Coming out of there, next door, was another **antique shop**, but he specialised in wonderful, old, carved tables, chairs, whatnots, sideboards and things like that. He did a good business there and he stayed there for as long as I can remember.

>Next to that was **Mr English the baker**. He didn't specialise in cakes, as Mr Welsh did down the road. He made all different types of bread: cottage loaves, rolls, twists, tin loaves, Devonshire loaves. But he also made milk rolls; they were nice. He used to make loaves of bread which were all plaited. He did make doughnuts and bakewell tarts and he made some cakes that I can't remember: they were square, they were golden brown and there was a different sort of cake inside them, sandwiched, with plums and currants.

>We leave him and we start on **Sneezums**. That occupied about 100 feet of Fore Street. After leaving Mr English's baker's shop, they had a shop that specialised in **new clothing**: overcoats, suits, waistcoats, breeches, things like that. He was also a **pawnbroker**. In the same shop, but

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separate, was the unpledged clothing that had never been claimed. Obviously they'd been worn and obviously they were cheaper. So you took your pick and paid the price.

Next was a **boot and shoe shop**. They didn't have rubber boots in those days, that I'm talking about. You had what we called clod-hopper boots that farmers used: big heavy ones, reasonably waterproof. There was leggings, raincoats, oilies (which were black oil coats) and again sou'westers (they were hats that fitted the head and had a peak on the front and a tail-piece at the back. They were heavily stitched. That allowed the water, with the man's collar up, to run down the small of his back. Fishermen had them. Then he'd have a variety of walking sticks and shooting sticks.

Next was the **gun store**. He'd sell four-tens and any sort of gun you could think about: large and small... punt guns (I've seen a punt gun in there, one of the long ones), revolvers, everything like that. Next you had **watches, clocks**, new ones for sale. Then you'd get **necklaces, rings**: the sort of thing women wore. Then there was a door – there were three or four doors in their business – and another door and a window that went right to the end of the shop and it was a round window. In there were the **unredeemed pledges** which were for sale. They were in good order; you didn't buy a watch with no insides in it, or one that was no use, because they looked after their watches. You bought things at a cheaper price. But some of them were valuable and, naturally enough, there were people around who picked the valuable ones out.

That was Sneezums; they had a huge stock there because that was a three storey building. That terminated in the peak of a triangle, because at the back of Sneezums was another road [**Lower Orwell Street**].

>You crossed the road and you came to **three cottages**; Mrs Lloyd lived in one of 'em. They were nice cottages with their usual geraniums in the window and all their pot-plants. Then you had a yard which belonged to the wholesale fruiterer – he kept his carts up there. Then, next that yard was a **store place** where he kept, I suppose, his potatoes and cabbages and things. He kept that for a while.

>Next to that window was **Martin & Newby's**. They sold nails, garden tools, carpenter's tools, engineer's tools; everything: nails, screws, hatchets, hinges. Well, they expanded; that, incidentally, was a tall shop. That was built in 1808 – the date is on the top of the building [actually dated 1897; the business established in 1873]. That had three peaks on the roof. That had big glass windows on the second floor. Well they expanded and bought the property that Mr Ellis had for the stores. They had big gas-lamps hanging outside and Sneezum's did also.

>Next to Martin & Newby's was a **newsagent's shop**. We were well-known round there; I went to school with two of the boys. Next to that was a wooden fence: that was the yard of **the Bull's Head public house** [on the corner with Orwell Place].

>Now we have been the length of that side of Fore Street. We are now crossing over to the other side of Fore Street, but we're starting where we began at **the Earl Grey public house**. That was a big building, that was a big public house with a big lamp in the middle of the road. That faced Fore Street. Now we go opposite to the shops we've been talking about (namely near the Steam Packet public house) and we come to a shop on the corner of **Long Street**. That was a **little general shop**, sold everything: sweets, laces, firewood, coal, coke, things like that.

> Next to that shop were **six nice, little cottages**. You went up to them on two stone steps. They had little windows; bedroom window as well and a window down below, next to the path: that was the light into a cellar and invariably the coal was shot down there.

>Next to that was a big building, built on the Dutch architecture, with big round stonework on the top of the second floor, 'cause they had a big second floor there. And they had tapered finials on the top of this round stonework. That was a **Social Settlement**: a solidly-built brick building. They

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had a number of windows in it, opening out on a latch – no sash windows – and that had a big door in the middle. The other side of that door was another set of windows. The whole building would be about fort-five feet long. That was built by a benefactor of the town, namely Daniel Ford Goddard. He built one or two buildings in the town.

The Social Settlement, which anyone could join, if they cared to pay tuppence a week. If you were a pensioner receiving about five shillings a week, then you got in free. No-one questioned your age, you just went in. They used to have cinematographs in there, where we boys, on a Saturday afternoon, would pay a penny and we'd go in. We made no noise because we daren't. There were men in there who would soon turf you out. We'd watch the cinema; it was only about ten minutes walk from where I lived. So, we used to go there Saturday afternoons, particularly if that was raining or cold.

Then they'd have the Women's Circle there. The women in the surrounding places would go there and there'd be sewing machine available. There'd be the old Tortoise fire – or a pot-bellied stove as that was called. It looked like a barrel, but it was stoked up with coal and wood and that was always near a wall because the pipe was hot and that was put through the wall so that the smoke and fumes went outside. That was nice and warm. There was no carpeting on the floor; it was swept. When that was swept, you needed a mask because that was so dusty.

Anyhow, there were all forms in there and the women used to sit round in their little squares with their four forms making a square. Perhaps someone would do knitting, someone would do sewing, but they got merrily on with it. Someone would be at the trestle table and they would hand out cups of tea; if they were in the Social Settlement Club, they subscribed each week. Somebody would bring in home-made cakes, or if they'd got a little money to spare, they go across the road to the baker's. Invariably, the baker, as in those days, would donate a lot of cakes to these people. 'Cos some of them couldn't afford cakes, that was hard enough to buy the bread.

If there was a political meeting on, if that was Conservative it would be decorated with blue ribbon, But if it was Labour that would be decorated outside with red. There was no squabbles, no shouting, no fighting. They went in, they had their meetings and they had their discussions.

>Next to that was **a garage**. Well, you could call it a garage. That was a one-story place with two talkers, about twelve feet tall with glass in them and glass windows either side. Now, if they'd got a car for sale, they'd push that in there and place it to one side: that was a car for sale. At the back there'd be someone in the dim and distant back end repairing a car, or perhaps doing an odd job for somebody.

>Next to that was **another row of cottages**, much the same as we first had, but they were a little bit bigger. There were four of those.

>Next to that was **a gate** and that led to a public house called **The Sorrell Horse**. That also was cobbled; well, in there used to go the country carrier. Well, the country carrier in those days not only delivered the goods to the people in the country (in this case, Levington and Nacton area) – Fred Baldwin used to do that. There used to be sufficient seating in his horse-drawn cart with a canvass hood on, to take about four to six villagers who had been shopping in the town. If people from Levington and Nacton wanted some goods from Ipswich, they used to tell him what they wanted, wrote on a piece of paper, and he used to do their shopping for 'em – and paid for 'em – and he asked the shopkeeper to send their errand-boy down to the Sorrell Horse and they were left in a stable. He'd gather all this stuff up, load them onto his cart and deliver them to the people that wanted them.

>Next to that was the big **Barnards shop** on the corner. They were a well-known forage merchant, as they were called, in the town. They kept bales of straw, hay, dog biscuits, chicken food – everything. Then you came to **Church Street** [now Grimwade Street].

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>You crossed over and you'd come to a big, old building there. That was a **doctor's house**. Then there was **some small cottages** again: three or four.

>And then you came to **Jackson's the chemist**. Well, that was kept by two brothers, both smartly-dressed men; they always had a flower in their buttonhole. One wore a dark suit and one wore a grey suit – very smart they were. You went in there, that was a double-fronted shop. Again, that was old-fashioned with old-fashioned timbers round the windows. They had four big glass bottles; they were about three foot high, filled with different colours: red, yellow, green and blue. That had a rough wooden floor, but there was some lino that was at the counter on the left as you went in. That smelled of perfumes and disinfectant.

They were both liked and they were both well-known in that area. Incidentally, they faced the Neptune public house that we've just spoken about. If we got a splinter in our finger – we often did – we were sent to Mr Jackson and he took it out for us. I'd say: 'Mr Jackson, I've got a splinter in my finger,' and he'd say 'Alright, my lad, sit down.' And he'd get his tweezers and he'd squeeze my finger and he'd take it out. Perhaps there'd be a big one, p'haps there'd be little one. He used to charge us a penny for taking that out. Sometime it would be: 'I've got a piece of dirt in my eye, Mr Jackson'. 'Alright, lad, take a seat.' He had some wonderful old chairs in there we sat on, beautiful shaped things. I suppose they'd cost him about ten shillings each – but I don't think you'd buy one now under four or five hundred pounds. I don't think you would. So, I used to sit on the chair; 'Which eye?' and it was all watering like billy-oh. 'We'll have a look.' So he'd get a matchstick and he'd twist a piece of cotton-wool round it and he'd wipe your eyelid inside. 'There you are, my lad.' And you'd see a bit of black dirt or whatever it was. 'Thank you, Mr Jackson, how much is that?' He'd say: 'Well, that's a ha'penny; that's for the cotton-wool'. And he knew us all; he knew our names.

>Then next that shop was **E.J. Conder's the leather merchants**. They were not only leather merchants; they made buskins, as we called them. They were leggings shaped like the man's calf and his ankle and they went down to the lower part of his leg and clipped up over his boots. Some 'em were either laced or clipped, wore them with breeches. They not only made those, they cut out leather for horses' collars, for horses' reins and they also cut out sides of leather from the cattle which had a hole drilled in the shoulder end of it with a cord through it and the hung up on hooks in their shop. It smelled of nothing but leather.

>Now next to that, we had a **lino shop**: all coloured lino. Well, we called it canvass, because what it was a hard substance which rolled up alright and it was stuck onto a hessian, which is like a sacking. Well, once that was laid down, you kept it down. If you attempted to get it up, it cracked and split everywhere. They sold carpets and rugs, not for fitted rooms, you just bought rugs and door-mats and carpets there.

>Well next to that, you had **The Lord Nelson**. That's an old public house, not as old as the Neptune, but I would say even now, that's about two hundred years old. At the back of that stood St Clement's Church.

>We leave the Lord Nelson – which faced Salthouse Street and the pork butcher's – and, well, it had many uses. First it was a **ladies' hairdressers**, next it was furniture shop, next it was a dress shop. So that was a nondescript shop.

>Next to that was the Baths, the **Fore Street Baths** or Slipper Baths, they called that. 'Cause when people went in that they just paddled, hence 'the slipper baths'. But after a while that was upgraded and that was a public baths. That had a wide frontage. Think that was built around 1908. From the front of the baths to the edge of the path to the road, that was all paved.

Wednesdays, but particularly Saturdays, the fishermen in Ipswich – and there was some, proper fishermen – take their nets down to Pin Mill or down to the mouth of the Orwell. At night they'd go trawling and they'd bring back flat, skate, eels, all the different kinds of fish. A trestle would be set

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up outside the baths and all their fish was tipped out on these trestles. The palace would be full of trestles, apart from a place where people could walk, and they'd do a roaring trade there. You could get a dozen eels for sixpence and you could get a dozen flounders for sixpence also. The fishermen used to fish off Harwich and they'd bring their shrimps up in front of the baths. The man who was selling the shrimps, he had a glass pint beermug. You asked for a pint of shrimps and he scooped them up with his hand, filled the mug right up to the top and they cost you tuppence. For people who hadn't got many ha'pennies to spare, what was left over, that was sold to them cheaply. They then cleared up the site, so that was nice and clean and Sunday morning you'd see all the trestles piled up against the baths wall, neat and tidy.

Beyond that was **St Clements Church Lane**. That had a nice peal of bells in the church and, living close by, we always used to look forward to hearing them play Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. The church used to get crowded. Moving further on there was a short, narrow lane – it was really narrow. They had old-fashioned houses with overhangs on either side. If a man held a broomstick out of the window one side, reached over and the other person at the other window could hold the other end of that broomstick, so that tell you how narrow it was.

>Now, the baths was one side of **Angel Lane/Church Lane** on the corner and the other side was a public house called the **Lion & the Lamb**. I was too young to realise what that was, to me that was just a timbered shop; heavily timbered with oak beams all round it. You'd have never driven an ordinary nail into it because it was too hard, that was the thing. Anyhow, for a while that was empty. What then happened, a man came along who worked on one of the big yachts as a cook and he opened a fish shop; his name was Powell. I went to school with his three sons and my sister went to school with his daughter. He did a thriving business and stayed there as long as ever I can remember.

>Next to that, there was a **flower shop**. Next to that was **Mr Rudd, the picture framer**. He did a bit of painting himself. I also went to school with his son.

>Next that was Mrs Mappely and her daughter. They kept **the post office**. Again, we used to take our pennies there and buy a penny stamp and each folder, when we'd filled it up was worth half-a-crown. So, if we felt rich enough, we'd get another book and that half-crown would be transferred into another book with a half-crown stamp and we'd start again. They were there for many years and end of 1991, I learned that the old lady had died and her daughter, who never married, emigrated to Australia.

> Next to that was what we used to call a '**cheap jack grocer's**'. They were called **Kay's**. After a while they improved and they sold a lot of good stuff cheap. They had big windows and on a Monday morning the manager used to come outside with a pot of whitening and a brush and he'd paint all over those windows the cost of broken biscuits, coconut, sugar, anything in the grocer's shop. They used to do a good trade there. They expanded and had a shop there and had one or two shops in the town; they stayed in the town a long while.

> Next to that was **George Gardener**. He was a high class **sweet manufacturer**. He specialised in boiled sweets – a lot of exotic sweets. His office was in Fore Street and at the back was where all his sugar was boiled and where all his products were sent round Ipswich. The entrance to the back shop came at the end of Angel Lane. That was a tall building, three storey building and the family themselves lived over [the shop]. That was Gardener's, they existed for a long while. But then the family died out; so did the business.

> Next to that we had a, as he was termed, 'oil and colour man': Mensmith's (we used to call them 'Mincemeats'. You went there for pegs, linen lines, props, linen baskets – woven linen baskets, paint, scrub brushes: everything household. Oh, and buy soda and yellow soap. Then you could buy something that don't exist now: blue peas. They were little, tiny, shrivelled-up peas – ever so small, they were – and you bought a pound o' them and it cost you tuppence. You had split peas, you had lentils, all sorts of peas. But the blue peas, if you had them for dinner the next day, you

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had to soak them at night. You put them in a basin, filled that with water with half the basinful of peas. When you came down the next morning, the water had gone. The peas had soaked it all up and they were four times the size of what they were when you bought 'em. Well, as I said, you got everything there: paint, paraffin, the lot.

>Well next door to him was a man named **Adcock**. His shop was again about forty feet long. They had one large window about eight foot square and the window-sill was about eighteen inches from the path – they were low down. They had a double-door and they had another window, ooh... which was another twenty-odd feet long. And he had all antique furniture and curios. He had some wonderful furniture. There were the sofas which, in my day, they were the modern things but now they'd be old-fashioned. Now they'd be valuable. They were all stuffed with horse hair and they were as hard as a palm. But everybody liked them. You had brassware, copper ware – they were modern in those days, but old-fashioned today. If you could get those products again, they'd be worth thousands. He was a tall man, a nice old man. We often used to talk to him on our way to school. We never knew if he wore a collar and tie because he had a big, white beard. That was about ten inches beneath his chin. Always wore a trilby hat and always dressed like a countryman with tweeds and big brown boots.

>Next to him was **Semmens the butcher**[?]. I went to school with his son. They left Fore Street after a great number of years, long after I'd left Fore Street and they moved to a farm and a butcher's shop in Coddendam.

>Next to him was Mr Honeybull [**Hunnaball**?]. He specialised in suites, such as bedroom suites, dining-room suites and sitting-room suites, settees, cushions. You went in there and he showed you catalogues and pictures and you choose what you want and he made it.

>Next to him was a little **tailor's shop**. You had to bend down to get in the door and that had a steep step. That was only a little shop, but that was all oak-timbered and it had an overhang and the bedroom over the top. A tall man, [like] my father, could have stretched his arm up and touched the bedroom window-sill. The man there was a tailor, a little man. We often used to talk to him when we went to school. And we went to school with his son: Percy Edwards, the bird man. He had another son, Jack Edwards, who was an insurance man.

>At the side of Mr Edwards' shop there was a passageway: that was called Dedham Place. You walked up the little passageway, about ten or twelve feet long, and there was an open space with about four cottages forming a circle inside there, with their tap up against a wall for their domestic water.

>You came out of there and **Mr Hazell's shop** was there. He was **shop-fitter**. He pulled the shop-fronts out – and they were good shops – and he modernised them... Which was wrong, but anyhow, that was his business and he did it.

>Next to him was another little shop; that was a **greengrocer's shop**. That did good business. In fact, Fore Street could supply all you needed without going into the town, without any problem.

>Next to him was another shop and that was about 25 feet long. That had a double door in the middle, but there were two big-paned window glasses there. Young fellows started out – when **radio** began to come in, they were cat's whiskers and things like that – this young couple of fellows started this business and they got on well. They expanded and they come into a company called **Avis Cook**. They've since just retired, I suppose – and this is '92. Anyhow, they started there. They moved out and that was a printer's shop; that lasted a long while.

>Next to that, again a timbered shop with an overhang. And, again, a tall man could have touched the overhang quite easily. That had a carved, rounded length over the shop windows. When you went into that shop you dropped down about eight inches onto the floor. That was kept by a man named Sizer and his wife. **Mr Sizer** was a local council official and he eventually come to be Mayor

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of Ipswich. They specialised in **sweets and tobacco**. Sweets was one side and the other was tobacco and pipes was the other, on the left.

>We come out of there and there was another passageway. I can't think of the name, but that was **a court** and the Chinnery family lived up there. And another family that I can't remember; they were both dock-workers, stevedores on the docks.

>You come out of that and, there, you come to another **sweet shop**. That man at Christmas time used to have a Christmas club for us children. I joined it and I paid a penny a week, put on my card and at Christmas time I got a boat with a chocolate hull, a cardboard deck and a set of cardboard sails. I received that two days before Christmas.

> Next to that was a large house, standing back, with a gravel drive and a garden in the middle and shrubs all round it. That was **the police doctor's house, Doctor Fryer**. He lived there. [now the Co-op Educational Centre?]

> Next to that was **Keeble the butcher**. He was a man with flaming red hair and he was known as Ginger Keeble. Well, he had three sons. He had the shop there and the sons had shops of their own, which he obviously helped them to get, in different parts of the town.

> Next to that was **Burrows** and he specialised in **bananas**. He had one or two cabbages, one or two bags of potatoes, but the most I ever saw him have in his warehouse were bananas.

> Next to that was **The Spread Eagle public house**. That was not as old as The Neptune; I should say that was about one-hundred-and-fifty years old to date now. That was on the corner of Eagle Street and Fore Street and that was a heavily-timbered house. Part of it used to be a butcher's shop. I do remember them having a little butcher's shop attached to it with a small abattoir or slaughter-house, if you'd like to call it that, in Eagle Street. But after a while, that was removed. That was Mr Keeble's slaughter-house, that's right. And after a while, the abattoir was removed, the yard was cleaned and that was taken over by the Spread Eagle.

And there you've had the history, as far as I can remember it, of Fore Street – apart from the fact that right in the middle of the road there were two sets of lines that took the trams. The road was made of wood blocks and when it was flooded, the blocks all used to come up in the road. When the Corporation came along to repair the road, there was a lot of blocks to repair and they were given away to the people, who brought their cars to collect them. The fire brigade didn't like it a lot for the simple reason that when they put the blocks on the fire, they were loaded with tar. A lot of soot went up the chimney and the chimneys caught on fire. [The fire station would have been round the corner in Bond Street.]

Now you've got a pocket view of Fore Street around 1920.

[Second recording up to 37mins, 46 seconds]

Continues with description of trams going up Upper Orwell Street to the Beehive public house on Major's Corner and on to Cornhill; Ted King then gives us a tour of Carr and Tavern Streets (both sides).]

