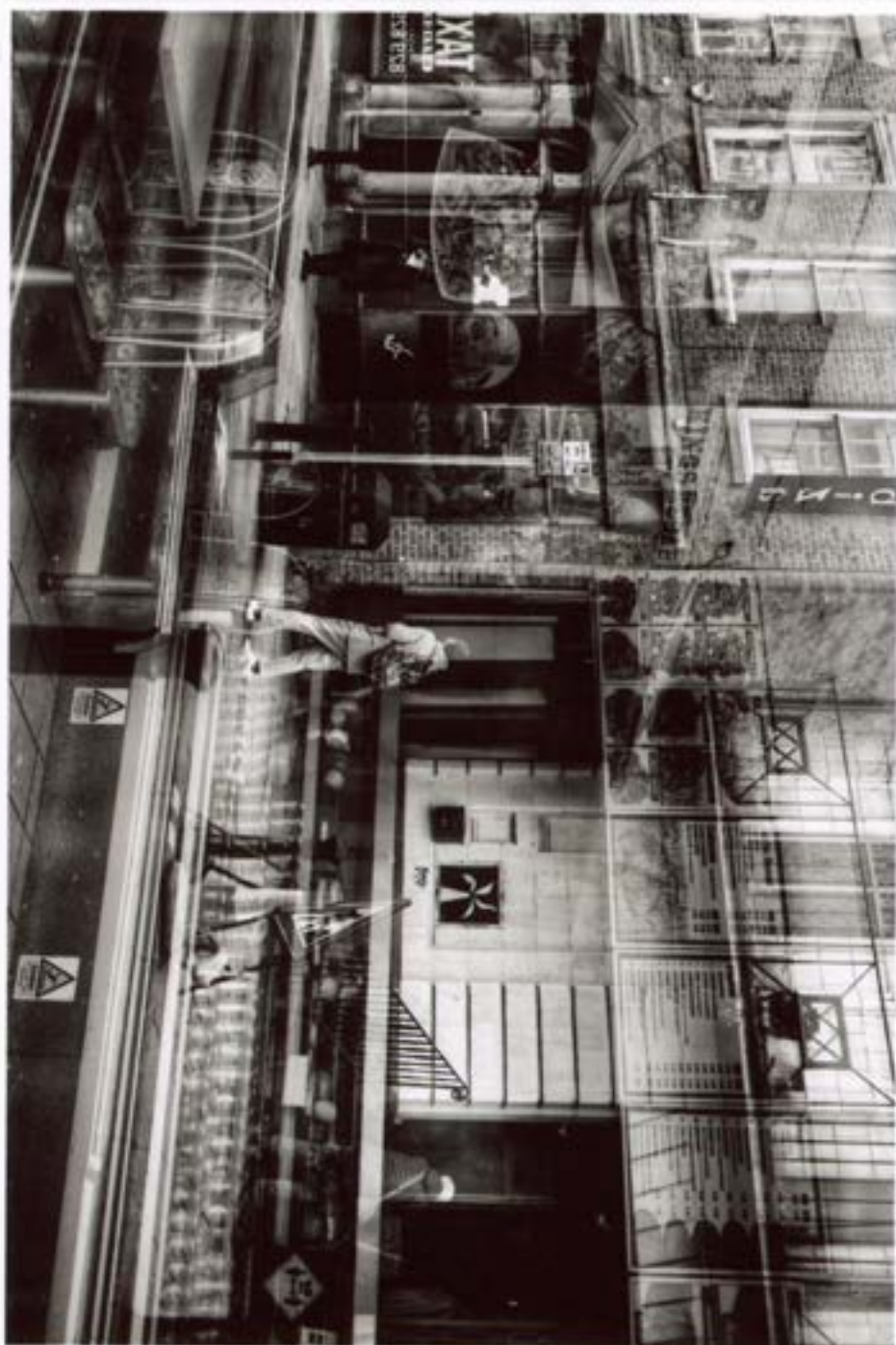


KING STREET - OH, THE KING OF STREETS
 - WHAT WENT WRONG?

RF-BIRTH CAN
 BE LONG AND



CUBS-LINKS, NOW HIGH JINKS - LIME
 DINING TURNED TO GRASS.

MESSY.



Introduction

The photos in this booklet were taken by members of the public who responded creatively to a series of walks down King Street with artist Ciara Leeming in early 2022, as part of the Streets Apart project.

Participants photographed the street and came together at a later date to write captions for their images, which reflect their memories of and feelings about the area.

The accompanying texts are the result of conversations Ciara had with people who attended the walks plus a number of other Wiganers who have worked on King Street or use it in other ways.

Cover: Steven Darbyshire

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What's behind No.34?



Opened and closed
So many times !!

MAKES ME THINK OF SOMEONE
LEAVING TOWN



WHERE IS SHE GOING?

"I knew the Royal Court Theatre building as the Court School of Dancing. Mr and Mrs Moss ran it, they were ballroom dancers of a seriously high standard. And they didn't allow everybody in, so I was only able to get in once. My friends and I didn't cause any trouble and were always smart. But you'd get to the door and Mr and Mrs Moss would be at the top of the stairs and would decide if you could get in. Well, we were always in a group of lads - five, six, seven of us - and they used to turn us away. But The Emp [Empress] was totally different. I met my wife there.

I'm from Standish Lower Ground - my dad and granddad were both miners but they didn't want me to go down the pit so I became a maintenance engineer. When I was a child, we used to go as a family to the Hippodrome on King Street, and on the way to the cinema my grandfather would stop at a little sweet shop and buy two Mars Bars, and cut them in half, one bit for each grandkid. That was our weekly treat. They had a pantomime every Christmas that we would go to. This would have been in the early 1950s. In those days I didn't know anything about the rest of King Street - we would just go to the Hippodrome and straight home.

Later on, I joined the Cubs at the Kings Street Baptist Church, in the cellars under there. It was a very different place back then. From a young age I was on the buses, I would come into town on my own. I also remember the Trusty Savings Bank, I had an account there from four years old. That was up the side near where Cubs was.

As I got older, it was a brilliant place. A friend's mother was the manageress of a music shop in the Grimes Arcade. We used to go down and pick a record and they would let you listen to in a tiny booth. It was brilliant fun. I would have been about 14 to 16 then, I bought my first record there and even remember it. It was Rhet Stroller 'Chariot'. He was a guitar player and I've been involved in guitars ever since. I did play, I don't any more due to nerve damage in my chest but I do buy, sell and restore guitars as a hobby. When I got to about 16 and started to drink, I would sometimes go to the Clarence, at the top of King Street.

The last time I was in King Street was about 20 years ago, on a night out with some friends. We ended up in a nightclub, we lasted 10 minutes and I caught a taxi and went home."

Ronnie Forshaw

WHAT A SHAME ALL BOARDED UP



SUCH A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING

The Turnkey was one of the first places on King Street I tried when I reached drinking age — I tried them all eventually - Scotts, Cheers Chaplins....



I was never a big fan of King Street, and preferred out of town clubs, that being said I did love a night in Princes which was just across the road.

"You went down the steps into the Turnkey, it was meant to be done out like dungeons. The food was absolutely fantastic. It was mainly an eating place when I was young, in the late 60s/early 70s, but not many people went because you didn't go out and eat back then like people do now - it was quite unusual. My auntie and godmother, who lived to her nineties, was having her silver wedding anniversary, and was a sewer and so worked with a lot of ladies. The family went for the anniversary meal in the Turnkey, but she'd organised several celebratory events because she knew so many people. I must have been 12 or 13 I think at the time, so I went with my family, but because she was asking various ladies who worked with her, they would drop out. So we would get a call asking 'is Jean free? Because we have a spare place...' The standing joke in our family was that I had been to more silver wedding meals than anybody else. And that sticks in my mind when I think about the Turnkey.

My godmother would go to a haberdashery shop on King Street, she would be collecting and buying things there. She worked from home, she had one of those big sewing machines upstairs. She would go into town on a Saturday and visit places where she could buy zips, cottons and materials.

This is not a part of the town that I come to anymore, there's nothing to come for, at least not for me. But I have a 22-year-old daughter who comes to King Street with her friends. As a young person I always felt safe. Sometimes I would walk home from there on my own, to Hodges Street. I don't know if my parents worried, but they would always say be careful. I know my mum never rested until she knew I was actually home. I've seen what's happened to King Street over the last 30, 40 years. Whereas there only used to be one or two nightclubs, now there are loads.

I was very worried when my daughter said she was going down to Wigan to celebrate her 18th, because we're in a different age now. I had the same conversation with my daughter that my mum and dad had with me about being careful. She told me not to be silly, she doesn't feel threatened - just as I didn't at her age. You've got to trust them, I suppose. It's hard to let go, but it's a very different King Street to the one I knew. It's got a certain reputation.

It fills me with excitement thinking that King Street could be restored. I'd want to go down and experience that because my parents and grandparents would've gone to these places. My hope would be that there will be a reason to go down King Street and not to feel the sadness. It feels very cold at the moment."

Jean Hensey-Reynard

and I sometimes went to work
with him on a Saturday morning and we
still remember the feel of a 1960's director's office.



Behind this window my dad, Mike Carlson, looked after ^{the} legal affairs of some of Whigam's biggest factories and construction businesses. My little sister

"King Street is the reason my family came to live in Wigan. That's where my dad got his job and we've been here ever since. I've lived here all my life and my own children were born here.

My dad came from Southport and my mum came from London and they worked together in Liverpool. Someone from Wigan recommended him for a job here and that's how they ended up moving here before I was born.

Dad's name was Mike Coulson and he was a solicitor. I think it was exciting when he came to Wigan and by the time he retired he was the senior partner in the practice, he was there from about 1953 to the 1980s. The firm was called Arthur Smith and Broadie Griffiths – the sign is still there but the firm fell on hard times over recent years and closed down and Dad would have been annoyed now I think, as it's a bit embarrassing. I feel sorry about how it ended because it was my dad's life work.

His office window was above the shop next door on King Street, it used to be a painter and decorator underneath, I think.

Back then there was a bar called the Bodega, which must have been right near his office I think. Dad used to like to go for a drink after work, it seemed a bit spicy because it was a very serious street in those days and was mostly offices. There was a guy opposite who sold suits, a modest little shop near the County Playhouse. Dad worked six days a week so I would go down to King Street on Saturday mornings. It was always a bit exciting going in to his office as it was really old fashioned, like Dickens. There were wooden partitions in the office.

Dad liked the idea of having a brass plate on a door in an ordinary town. He had an article clerk who became a partner later, called Peter Higginbottom, who did the criminal work and who came quite big in rugby league. My dad concentrated on companies because there were quite a number of big firms around in those days and he acted for quite a number of them. He knew quite a number of the famous businesspeople in Wigan in those days and used to drag them home for tea without telling my mum beforehand.

He was the first person in Wigan to sandblast his office, so his building on King Street was the first to be cleaned up. I mean sandblasting is not so trendy now, in fact it's a dreadful idea, but Dad was always up for the new. He was always trying to persuade people to live in the town centre, and of course no one took any notice, but there is a lot of space above these shops.

This is real forward thinking I think now... but when we were looking to buy a house my wife – who was pregnant at the time – chose the house we live in now because she thought that this little baby in her belly (who is now 36) would be able to walk back from King Street without going too far or getting into trouble on the way home. And we wouldn't have to pick her up! It's quite a good base because all her mates used to come over here and then they'd all walk into town. We knew they wouldn't be walking back on their own. So King Street has been quite a feature in our lives."

Pete Coulson

Look up Look through look back



Look forward

ONCE WE WALKED OVER THE IRON BRIDGE WE WOULD
ENJOY TIME WATCHING THE TRAINS PASSING THROUGH
WIGAN

MY MUM
+ DAD
GAVE ME
A "HALF
CROWN"
EVERY
FRIDAY
TO TAKE
TO MY
PRIMARY
SCHOOL
TO SAVE
UP
FOR
MY
HOLIDAYS



THIS
WAS
SEEN
AS A
TREAT
AFTER
WE
HAD
BEEN
TO THE
TSB
BANK
IN
KING
STREET

I USED TO STAND HERE LOOKING OUT FOR THE TRAINS
AND WISHING THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS WOULD COME QUICKLY
SO I COULD BE ON A TRAIN TRAVELLING TO BLACKPOOL!!

Such a long time since
i've been out for a drink in
a King Street Bar.



Just wondering what is still
there, on upper floors, above
the ground floor clubs and bars.

I would have loved to see King Street in its
'glory days' with all the theatres and grand offices
still being used for the purposes they were built for.

"I've lived in Wigan all my life. When I was young, we used to go to Royal Court theatre, I think we went there to the pictures. There was a newsagent there on the right-hand side where we would get our sweets. I was going out on King Street from about 15, in 1982. Then I moved to London for a few years when I was 17 - I got married but came back with my young daughter when I got divorced.

When I returned, my mum and dad used to look after my daughter, who was two or three, so I could go out with my friends. I was lucky, I could go out a couple of times a week. We'd go to Chaplins on a Wednesday evening and used to dance the night away there and enjoy ourselves. A bit later on, there was Jumping Jak's, just a bit further up. I had my second hen party there, in 2002. We went somewhere else but ended up there later for a dance.

The King of Clubs was notorious for all kinds of people going there. I went in once to see what it was like. It was quite big inside but a bit scruffy really, carpets and tables and chairs.

Then there was the Bierkeller, we used to go there, as well as the Turnkey and Chicago Rocks. We would start off in the Vic, then the Clarence, then the Bee's Knees near the Parish Church. King Street would be packed in those days.

The only place I've been recently on King Street is the Berkley Square, we went there for my granddaughter's birthday not long ago. She's only 16, we went for a meal and had to leave at about 7pm."

Susan Rigby

The heart of King's Street



The man in the photo adds personality to the photo and shows the personality of the people on King Street despite how much it has changed. But the heart of the people there hasn't.

Going to Leonard's Supermarket with my Nan - helping to carry her shopping home and being rewarded with crisps & sweets.



1970'S

SLIP SLIDING AWAY ON THE DRINK FUELLED STICKY CARPETS - BOUNCED IN

DON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES



(WE SAW - EACH WEEK EACH DAY...)

AND BOUNCED OUT - MONEY ALL GONE, ALL SPENT - ONLY TO DO IT ALL AGAIN.

I LOVE THIS BUILDING AND EVERY TIME I SEE IT
IT BRINGS BACK THE HAPPY TIMES I HAD HAVING MEALS

I HAVE
ALSO
VISITED
HERE
TO HAVE
A DRINK
BEFORE
GOING
TO
WATCH
WIGAN
WARRIORS
PLAY



ON THIS
SUNNY
SATURDAY
AFTERNOON
LOTS OF
PEOPLE
WERE IN
TOWN AS
THERE
WAS A
RUGBY
MATCH
ON. IT
IS A PLACE
TO MEET
UP WITH
FRIENDS

I LOVE THE
FARCADE OF
THIS ICONIC BUILDING



ONE OF MY BEST MEMORIES OF KING STREET
WAS BEING TREATED TO A "WELL DONE" STEAK
+ CHIPS AT THE "BERNI" INN - THE MINORCA
I USED TO SIT AT THIS WINDOW TABLE

"It was in about 1966-67 that I was going to the Bodega Bar on King Street, which was a mod place. There was quite a big mod scene in Wigan back then - we also used to meet at the Las Vegas club on King Street West. I recall one year we decided to go to Abersoch, and 52 of us went, probably on about 20 scooters. We stayed for the weekend and it was a sight when we decided to go into Caernarfon for the day. But couldn't find the campsite afterwards so we had to sleep on the side of the road. I was probably about 19 or 20 years old then. As you walked down King Street there was the County Playhouse on the right-hand side. On the opposite side a bit further after Grimes Arcade there was a little turning that goes to Library Street - they built a Tesco there on one side. On the other side there was a shop on the corner and an entrance on the little street down into the Bodega. It was a Wimpy Bar but they also had a licensed premises there. We would all go down there and meet there - we used to park our scooters in the little street between King Street and Library Street. The Crawford Room was another mod place we would go, it was part of the complex for the Royal Court. Another was the Room on the Top, it was the name of a beat club on Hope Street, they were one of the first places to do all-nighters.

There were rockers in Wigan as well but there was never any trouble really. A few of my friends had motorbikes. I remember one day, there was a café in Standish, called Lil's Café, and that was where all the rockers used to meet, and we used to go there sometimes with our scooters. There was never any trouble in Wigan, never any at all. My wife worked behind the bar at the Clarence and the Minorca, at the top of the street, and worked in Bluto's later.

When I was about 14 or 15, we used to go into school at St Thomas More, get marked onto the register and then sneak off. Where the County Cinema/Ibiza Bar is, underneath there was a snooker hall and we used to all meet up there in the afternoons. We did that quite a bit. I remember going to the Palace Cinema, which is lower down, the Court cinema and the County. There was also one on Library Street, the Pavillion. And opposite where the Berkley is, down a little alleyway down the side of the Clarence, there was a Princess Cinema, it was made into a club later.

We don't really go near King Street these days, it's not really our place anymore. Unless you're going to a certain part of Wigan you have no need to go that way. It's a shame really."

Ray Hinds

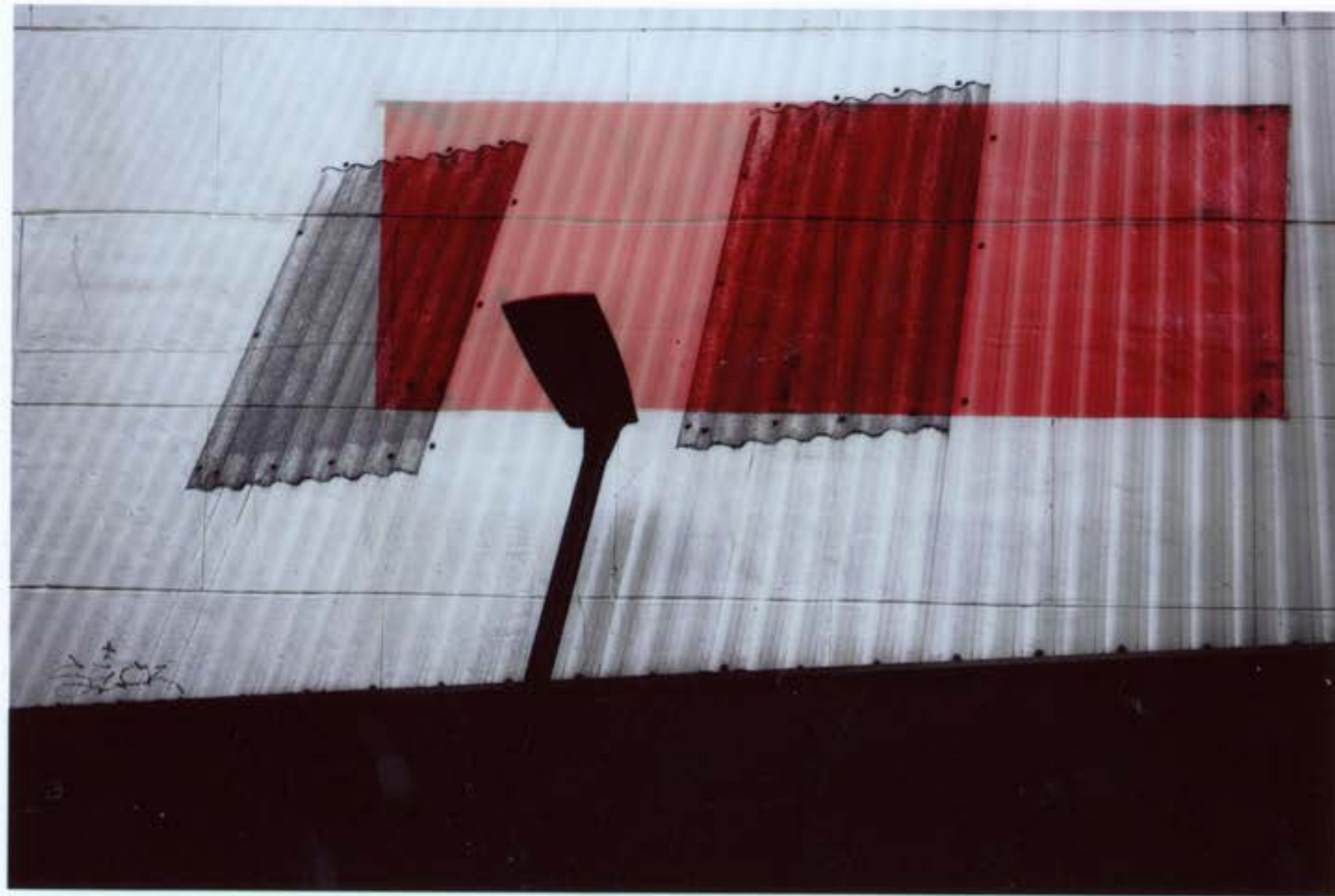


Trudging everyday

Up and down the alley

BROCOL HOUSE WAS MY LATE 1970'S DESTINATION
— 'DALE SCUM' AND DEWART — I WANTED HELP

SEARCHED THEIR RULES
+ SCULS...



NOT A GIKO — SO I TAPEO
THEIR CONVERSIONS AND...

I DO IT YOURSELF'

WHO'S
NOT
BEEN
UP
AND
DOWN
THESE
STEPS



THE BUSIEST PLACE IN
KING STREET IN THE DAY

"I'm from a family of miners, my dad moved from Cheshire to St Helens and then on to Wigan. The town hall used to be the mining college, and he was a colliery training manager later in his career. We moved to Wigan when I was about eight. We may have wandered down King Street when I was young to get to a proper army and navy shop down on Darlington Street, because I was into camping and scouting. I'd have got the train in from Bryn and walked down. There was a short period later when I went to the Turnkey or the Bierkeller down at the bottom of King Street but I grew out of that very quickly. It was very crowded and noisy in the evenings even then."

On the whole these days I have no reason to go to King Street, the only time the businesses are open is in the evening. I probably last went there five years ago, when I was going to Brocol House at the bottom, seeing a dole officer called Jim Callaghan - named after a former prime minister. He was a nice bloke, a human being. I was signing on weekly for the best part of a year. As a pedestrian, King Street doesn't go anywhere anyone wants to go, it just leads to a big car park. It really needs things there which are open during the day because everything either looks like it's shut or about to shut in the daylight, but that's a problem in all town centres I think."

Mike Leech

WITH ATTENTION TO DETAIL
EACH PURCHASE WAS 'SPECIAL'

THINGS NEVER LAST?



SUPPLEMENTAL CHANGE IS
NO CHANGE AT ALL

THE STREET OF DREAMS
- I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD
END LIKE THIS.

This photo says something about the
lack of movement of people to and
from King Street.



There's no one about - it's dead during
the day.



A BLEAK SCENE OF A ONCE-BUSTLING CHARITY SHOP IN WIGAN. MANY EXCITING TREASURES COULD BE FOUND IN THE TOWN'S MANY CHARITY SHOPS

STARING THROUGH THE WINDOW,
WISHING YOU HAD MORE MONEY AND TALENT



WE ALL WANTED TO BE SUPERSTARS

"I grew up in Ashton-in-Makerfield. I come from a mining family, both sides local to this general area. Ashton would have been the place I would have gone to more than Wigan, as a child. But I did used to come into Wigan to use the old swimming pool, on Library Street. I'm guessing I would have been about 12 or 13 then and it would have been in the early 70s. I remember coming the first time and we couldn't have been very old and weren't great swimmers. They didn't let you off the top diving board – which was 10 metres – unless you could dive but the next one was also quite high. There was a spring board which was 3 metres and a concrete board which was about 5 metres – you could see it through the windows, you could see people on the diving boards. I also remember McNulty's Shoes on Library Street, which at the time was the only place you could buy Doc Martens and they also sold genuine leather brogues, which were all the rage in the early 70s – but it was an expensive shop.

My only memory of King Street was going to the cinema there – I'm not sure which one – to see a film called Soldier Blue, back in the early 70s. I might have come with a girlfriend, I was 13 or 14 or something like that. I used to go to the all-nighters at Wigan Casino when I was 15 or 16 – we weren't really old enough but I had quite liberal parents. Years later, when I was 18 or 20 I'd come to this area for a night out – we'd go to the Bee's Knees, the Clarence and Blutos. I don't have a lot of memories of King Street itself though.

The last time I went there was with a photography group in about September 2021, and I was surprised by how Wigan looked to be honest. It's dying because of online shopping and out of town shopping."

Dave Banks



*SHOPS THAT REMIND ME OF SHOPPING IN
WIGAN TOWN CENTRE WITH MY GRANDMA, ANNE
WHISTECRAFT. WIGAN INDOOR MARKET, FRIDAY
CHIPPY TEAS AND A ONCE + BUSTLING TOWN CENTRE.*

Standing for hours outside the Newsagents
With my Guy Fawkes - made from old clothes
Stuffed with Newspaper & a deflated football
as a head



"Penny for the Guy?"

1980's

REAL OR FAKE HISTORY



JUST SOMETHING TO DISGUISE
WHAT'S UNDERNEATH?

"My first experience of Wigan was when I moved back from London in my 20s, as a single lad. I was brought up in St Helens, but didn't know anyone there. My parents lived in Parbold and I wanted to get out of London, I wanted to live in a smaller town. There was a lot more going on in Wigan than St Helen's. Wigan was where you socialised. I do remember going out to Blutos and the Turnkey, I remember the fun pub at the top. I also distinctly remember going out on Boxing Day, which had a wonderful atmosphere. I was a bit of a stick in the mud but would dress up. I remember a guy came in to a bar I was in one Boxing Day, with absolutely nothing on. He casually ordered a drink, drank it quite quickly and walked out again. No one dared say anything until he'd left - when someone quipped: 'I wonder where he's put his money!' He was braver than I am, that's for sure.

When my kids were young, we lived near other friends with similar-aged children. We developed a little tradition where the dads would stay at home with the kids, put some popcorn on, watch a bit of TV, and the mums would go out together on King Street and stay out until the wee hours. They would come back with their kebabs and we'd get all the tales. And the next morning it would be: 'I must have eaten something dodgy...'

Nothing to do with the amount of alcohol of course! They were fun times though and we still reminisce about them now.

It would be nice to see this area of town get a new lease of life which would appeal to more people. I don't know if people are aware of what they want or if someone could come up with ideas. For me personally, I would like it to become somewhere where you can go after 8pm and get a coffee - somewhere to socialise without alcohol. Some proper local shops would be nice but people would have to use them of course."

Jeff Quirk

*The disparity between night & day
What used to be O'Neill's reflected in the window*



*Working there in the nineties, we used to end
the night dancing on the bar - some people's
night's just ending as ours was just beginning*

1990's

I IMAGINE THE "CLUB-GOERS" WHO ARE WAITING TO GO INTO JAKS NIGHTCLUB STANDING IN THE CENTRE OF THE "ANGEL WINGS" FOR A PHOTO TO SHRE ON SOCIAL MEDIA. THEY WOULD BE HAPPY

BEFORE IT WAS JAKS I REMEMBER IT BEING THE FAMOUS "TURNKEY RESTAURANT. GOING TO THE DUNGEON EATERY WITH MY GODMOTHER



AND LOOKING FORWARD TO A GOOD NIGHT OUT WITH THEIR MATES

BRIGHT COLOURS IN CONTRAST WITH THE DARK COLOURS OF THE REST OF THE STREET.

MRS. NELLIE JUKES FOR HER "SILVER WEDDING" ANNIVERSARY. SHE HAD "SEVERAL" MEALS THERE TO MARK THE OCCASION - FOR FAMILY + FOR HER "SEWING" FRIENDS OR "CHURCH FRIENDS". I WAS LUCKY BECAUSE I WENT ON ALL MEALS

KING STREET - OH, THE KING OF STREETS
- WHAT WENT WRONG?



CURB-LINKS, NOW HIGHJINKS - LINE
DIPING TURNED TO GREASE.



SOME NATURAL BEAUTY TRYING TO EDGE ITS WAY ONTO
KING STREET. THE SKIP-OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH
THE NEW (WE HOPE)

Roughness of King Street

The contrast is very clear. It shows the rough side of King street where despite the illuminous signs, warning people, there are multiple graffiti around still. It shows the lack of respect for the law.



The angle and layers in the photo makes it feel personal, like you are there. Shooting through the gate let's the audience know what the main story of the photo is.

"I worked on King Street in 1974. I ran the Stable Bar, which was a side business to The Berni Inn. It's now the Boulevard, I think. It's on the corner opposite where the post office used to be.

The Stable is half still there. You will see the big mews-style doors at the top end of King Street which is where the main entrance was. The posh people in the Berni Inn upstairs could order their prawn cocktails, steak, and Black Forest Gateaux unmolested. I worked upstairs too sometimes.

A few years back I asked the new managers of the big sports bar, which is what it is now, if I could have a look. It was nostalgia but I thought it might make a good venue. Parts of it is still there but most of it now is a dental organisation making implants. The Boulevard staff were very happy to talk to me about it and had themselves wondered about it.

My friend from those days was older than me and her ex-husband was a freelance electrician who fixed all the lighting etc up and down King Street. We were regulars at the King of Clubs. I asked but she has no photos at all left of those nights. Ripped up unfortunately. Long gone, him too.

I was seriously underage then but was working in bars in Plymouth soon after. Underage there too - but nobody cared about 'underage' in the 70s. King Street, beyond work, was never really my scene. It was usually Puffers and the Beachcomber for me.

My friend does remember that King Street at one time was for grown-ups. I think it can still cater for a wide age range but no longer for my friend.

I think the night time economy is under-rated. The togetherness of people who can meet up, get drunk, get dressed up, let loose a little in a local place, and still get home, is a good thing. I feel differently about this compared to some of my friends who can't imagine it's an important place for growing up.

But I was there, working, and it saved me. If you could handle King Street, you could handle anything."

Gillian Forrester

This is what King Street should be - it's the light trying to replace the dark.



THE
GRANDUR
OF KING
STREET
IN TIMES
PAST. A
CLASSY
STREET
WITH
STUNNING
BUILDINGS.
THREE
PLACES
OF
ENTERTAIN
MENT

PLACES
TO
EAT
WHERE
MEMORIES
WERE
MADE
WITH
ME IS
FAMILY

REFLECTIONS : PAST : KING
+ PRESENT : STREET



AT
PRESENT
WALKING
DOWN THE
STREET
FILLS
ME WITH
SADNESS
AS IT
APPEARS
SO DARK
+ COLD
DISUSED
BUILDINGS
ARE NOT
WELCOMING
LITTER,
CRUSHED
CANS +
"SICK"
WERE
NEXT
TO
THIS
BRIDGE

MY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE ?
THAT IT CAN FIND IT'S WAY TO WHAT IT ONCE WAS

"There was at the time, probably in the early 70s, there was nowhere to buy a set of cufflinks and there was a shop on King Street (around where the cash machine is now) where they used to have cufflinks, separated in little drawers. And they used to have cravats, ties, all sorts of gloves, again, covered over in tissue paper. You'd ask for them and they'd go behind the counter, open a little drawer and pull the goods out. It was very genteel, compared to what King Street is now, it was an amazing place. I'd only have been about 12 or 13. I'd have gone into town with my mum, and I really wanted those little drawers, they were always kept polished and clean. I don't know what I'd have kept in them, they were just display cabinets but they were lovely. The shop was almost from a different age.

King Street for me growing up was me being unemployed and going to the DHSS, walking down there, standing in a queue with my UB40. That would have been about 1978. It was right down at Brocol House and people were still smoking then, it was a filthy environment. I remember being dragged in and I also remember doing things like recording the interviews because they were trying to stop my benefit at the time because I had mental health problems at the time. They wanted me to take jobs that I wasn't suitable for, they were pressurising me, they used to bring you in earlier and earlier in the morning. I had no problem getting up because I was usually up all night. It was a very difficult environment then, a very harsh environment. For me at the time, I was also hallucinating and having psychotic episodes, they didn't realise that because I never told them, I think they thought I was 'swinging the lead', that was the thing then. I was a scrounger. So that was King Street.

I went in to the King of Clubs once, when I was 16. That was halfway down the street and you used to go downstairs into the club. They had very large bouncers on the door who used to just shove you in. They knew I was under-age - the place was generally for older people and I was very much younger. I was there at the end of a pub crawl, paid for my girlfriend's dad. I was sat there with a pint of bitter and the guy next to me was half-cut. The bouncer came over and picked him up, punched him in the face and dragged him off and no one batted an eyelid apart from me, who didn't know what was going on. I'd never been to such a place and I never went back. Nowadays for me King Street is a cut through, I look down and make sure I don't step in any pools of vomit. I wouldn't want to linger there and I wouldn't want to go at night, which is sad."

Steven Darbyshire

"I wasn't born in Wigan, I'm from Lowton, I came to college here in the mid 70s, to the art college - now the town hall building - for two years, from 1976-77. I'd to go King Street a little but it wasn't somewhere I went that much. It was very loud and very noisy, even then, and it had a reputation then too. I was into music then, I used to go to the Casino to the rock nights, they were on Saturday nights at 8pm until midnight and then we would leave and the northern soul people would be queuing outside. I was never into the disco type nights out.

I've lived in Wigan for 12 years and now I find King Street quite a sad area. My wife used to work in the town hall, so I used to sometimes park at the bottom and cut through. It just feels sad, it would be nice if something could be done with it. It's a shame but people have got to try."

David Fox

"The bank on the corner of King Street and Wallgate was NatWest. I left school on a Friday in 1982 and was asked to show up there on the Monday. I was from Haydock so a couple of buses away. It was like another world and I was terrified. I spent a couple of weeks training there, with lunches in the Bees Knees across the road. I was then transferred to another branch."

Wendy Collins

This is a comment on what King Street is today. This should not be allowed to happen - or should at least be cleaned up quickly.



This makes the place look neglected and unloved. There are very few businesses located there today. It's depressing really.

THERE'S A GHOST HERE
 — THE CRUEL SEA AND
 DA WHO KI ORA AND

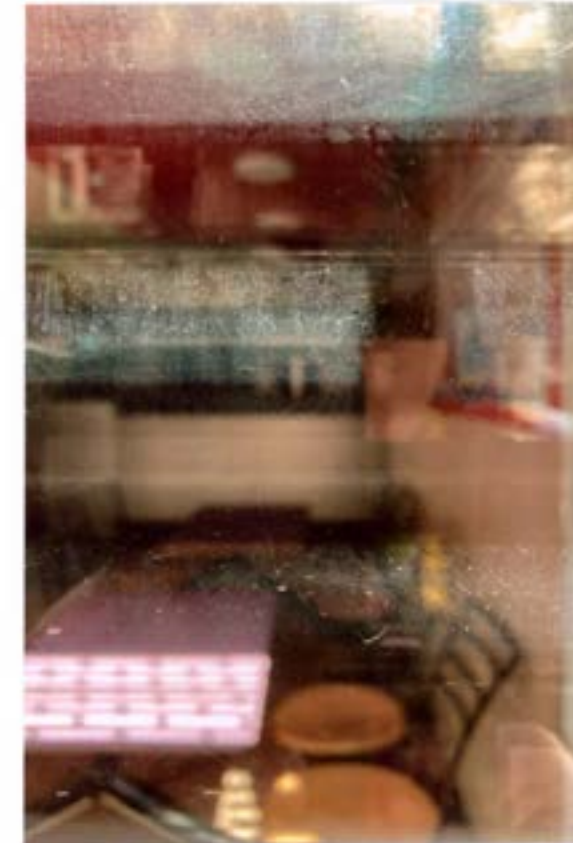
THE GHOSTS OF PAST
 THE WRECKAGE OF NOW



CUTURE WARS WILL BE
 ELECTRONIC — STREETS IN THE SKIES

PEANUT POPPETS — WORN OUT
 VELVET DIDN'T DETRACT
 — WE WERE KINGS + QUEENS

I know King Street has always had quite
 a bad reputation but its really no different
 to Streets in other areas, where the main

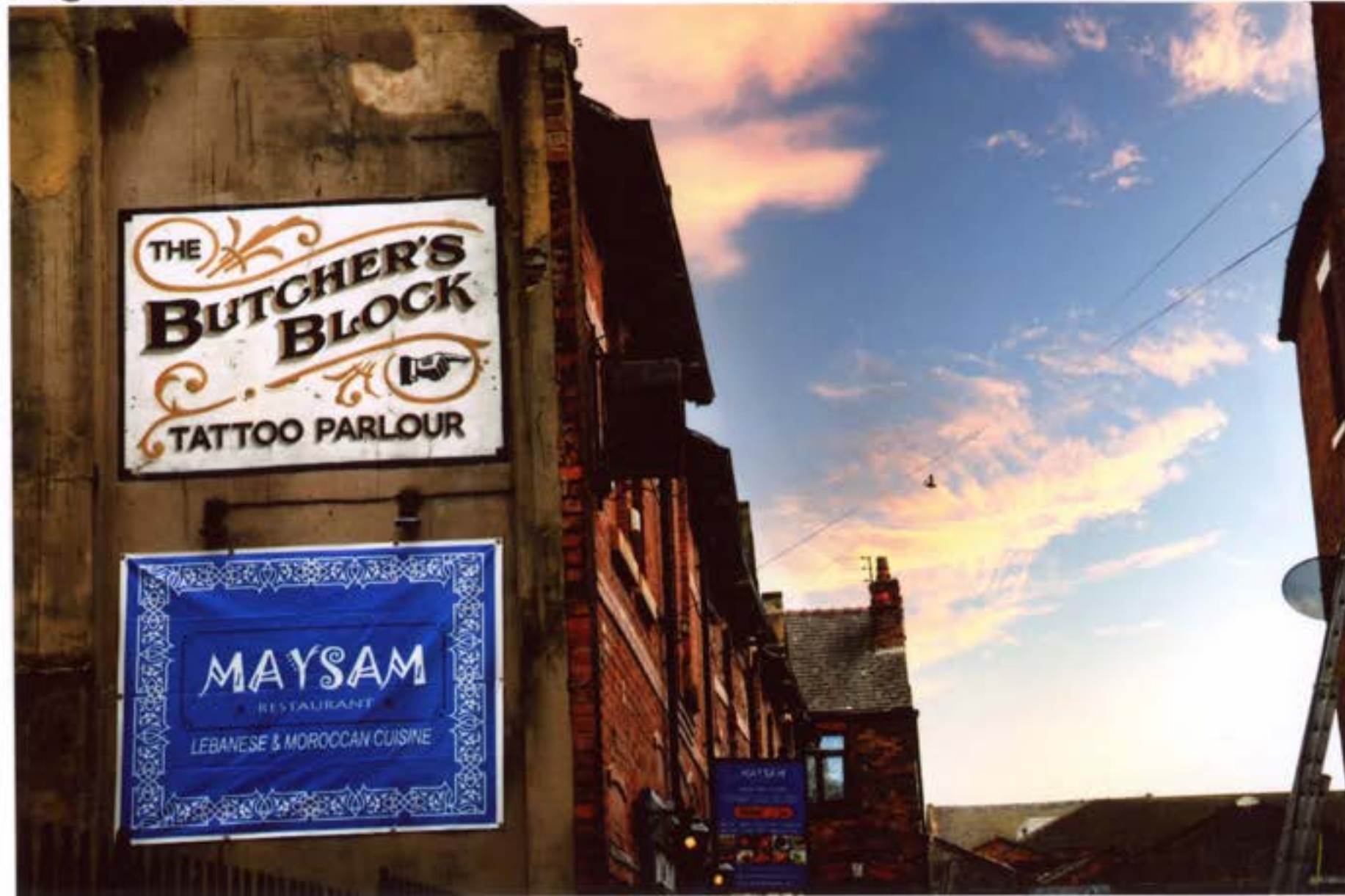


use is for the Night time economy — Just
 Sad that even the Night life has gone from
 the Street and we are just left with
 decaying buildings, empty shops & offices — no
 more than a cut through to the train station
 were we can board a train and get out of there!!



PINK, RED AND ORANGE UNITE

This looks like old King Street but isn't. The sign looks old but is modern. The old King Street was a beautiful place. But these days it is nothing like that. It's been allowed to deteriorate.



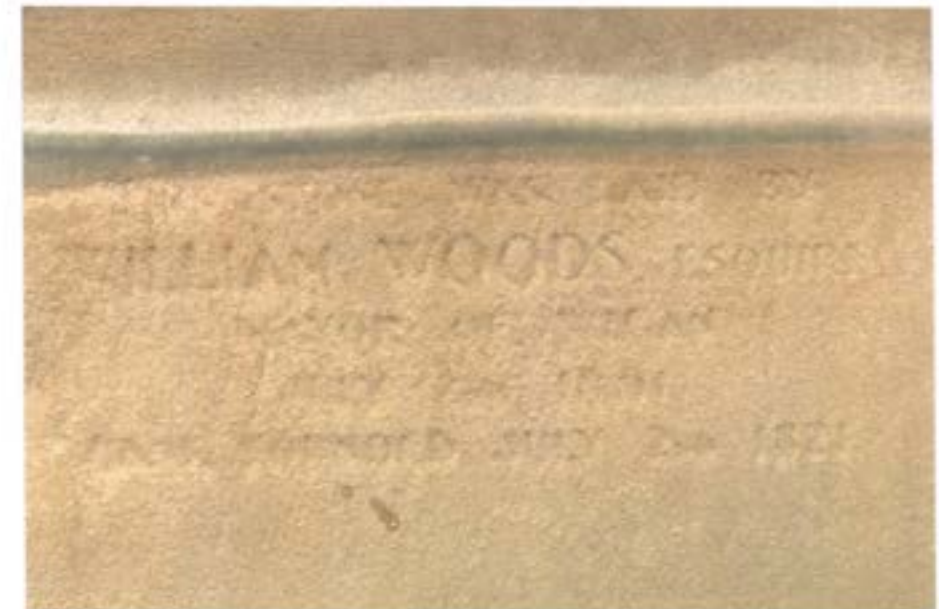
I don't know why, who or what is to blame. It was a beautiful place, but is not any longer.

"I worked in the Berni Inn during the mid 70s, and then my daughter worked there was a commis waitress, clearing tables and doing the desserts and so on.

I used to work Saturday, Sunday and Monday, but then I dropped the Sunday and I used to do Thursday, Saturday, Monday. There used to be two restaurants, I worked in the one downstairs. There was no difference between them really, it was the same menu. Then the downstairs restaurant became a bar, so we all went upstairs then. I worked there for about seven years. On the walls there were lots of old photographs of Wigan, they were lovely, they were in nice frames. And the day we were leaving, and it was closing down, one of my colleagues decided to unscrew a couple of these pictures from the walls. That was very naughty, she stole them! Most of the menu was steak - sirloin steak, rump steak, fillet steak and so on. Soup, prawn cocktail, stuff like that. I used to make a fortune in tips and I worked with a great team. I still bump into a few of them now in Wigan. When it closed down I ended up at Radio Rentals, facing Marks and Spencer."

Irene Burke

GONE, AND FORGOTTEN, LIKE MUCH
OF KING STREET'S STORIES



WAS HE ONE OF THE GREAT AND GOOD
OR JUST WEALTHY

SMILE FOR THE CAMERA



SATURDAY AFTERNOON ON THE TOWN

"We own Ibiza Bar and the office building next door but it's not like it was many years ago, so much has changed. Wigan as a town is a disgrace, there are so many closed up buildings. The average person in Wigan is not happy I think, I meet a lot of people."

I've been in the town a long time. I was an electronics engineer originally and came to Wigan from Liverpool a business opportunity, I'd worked on everything from photo cells to a container base in Liverpool. I built the Wigan Pier site in 78/79 with a partner, Terry Lennon, and that was quite famous for a few years. It had been a cabaret club, and they were dying. My partner was a pure businessman and I was purely technical. We got together and remarketed it as a disco. I put a big laser in there, it was a monster of a thing in its day, the lightshow was incredible. People came from all over the place, it was a huge success, it put Wigan on the map.

Then that closed and was demolished and I bought the Playhouse building on King Street, and what had been the Princes Cinema at the top of the street, now Pure. People's habits and tastes change. I won't even go into the drugs now, that's not good for anybody - never mind King Street and Wigan. It's a sad town now, I've seen it depreciate over the years. There's been no investment other than in cycle lanes and I don't know what they're going to bring in.

We could do more with this street during the day - we could have tables and chairs outside some of the venues. If it was pedestrianised, we could do more. People have tried it in the past but because it's been one person trying, it hasn't worked. If the whole street did it, changed the culture, it might stand a chance.

David Collict

THIS PHOTO IS SYMBOLIC OF HOW I FEEL "KING STREET"
HAS BECOME SINCE WHEN I WAS IN MY TEENS, EARLY 20ths.
THIS IMAGE WAS TAKEN OUTSIDE OF BERKELEY SQUARE.

IT IS
SAD TO
SEE HOW
KING
STREET
HAS
DECLINED

WALKING
DOWN
KING
STREET
FEELS
COLD +
SINISTER



CAN
WE
BRING
KING
STREET
BACK
TO IT'S
FORMER
GLORY?

THE SMART BUILDINGS OF BANKS, SOLICITORS OFFICES + THEATRES
ARE SO DILAPIDATED + "UNLOVED" - AN ERA NOW GONE...

EMPTY STREET DESERTED TOWN



WHERE IS EVERYONE?



A WIGAN VENTURE TRYING ITS VERY BEST TO MOVE
THINGS ON A LITTLE ON KING STREET. WE ARE ALL BEHIND YOU.
HAPPY MEMORIES VISITING WITH MY LOVELY MUM, LESLEY PRICE.

"I worked at Walkabout when I was 18, I started off behind the bar and then moved up to supervisor. I was there probably about 18 months. It was amazing, it was the best place to be and people used to have to queue to get in.

Everybody who was everybody went to Walkabout – it was like the TV show Cheers – everybody knew your name. It was in the building that is now Madam Geneva's and Platinum. I had already been going out on King Street before that – I shouldn't have been because I was underage, but I was. It was an Australian bar, so we used to get lots of Australian people and South African people coming to work there while they were travelling in the UK. But it was a place that everybody in Wigan wanted to go to at the time. The queues were massive every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It was where you finished your night, everybody congregated there and had a laugh. Downstairs was more of a bar area, upstairs there was a dancefloor and a balcony, there was a DJ as well. It held a couple of hundred people.

I've been back working on King Street since the beginning of October 2019, in an office there. It feels like a totally different place now to what it was then. It's a lot quieter, even if you go for a night out. There's not as many places to go as there was back in then. I think it's a generational change, people aren't going out as they used to. I think it's spread out now, there's more new bars elsewhere in the centre than there used to be. But my younger cousins don't seem to go out in the same way that my friends and I did. I think they go out for meals, or to each other's houses a lot more. When I talk about how King Street used to be I think it seems like this magical place seen through rose-tinted glasses, but it just used to be a fantastic place to be – the atmosphere even on the street was great. You'd be chatting to people, it really was great. You'd get some trouble I think but not like there is now.

I used to work Friday, Saturday and Sunday but when I wasn't working, I'd still go out on King Street back then. I also used to go to somewhere called Orange House, Reef Bar used to be Maloney's which was a cocktail bar, we also used to go to Jumping Jak's, and also Liquid, which is derelict I think at the moment.

I don't really go out on King Street much – the last time would have been September 2021 for my birthday. We went for a meal elsewhere and then went to Berkley Square and then Revolution and then went home because it was a bit boring. I think Covid has had a lot to do with it as well. Now I have kids so it's more about going to other people's houses than going out. I think Wigan has also changed though, it's not a nice place to walk around anymore. I think with the Pier nightspot closing down and Kudos, there was a certain clientele which went to those places, who took drugs, and when they shut down those people maybe started coming into Wigan and you'd see more fights and things. It's not as much of a desirable place to go anymore."

Laura Ashcroft

LOVE 'EM OR HATE 'EM,
THERE'S NO GETTING ROUND 'EM



(IT KEEPS THEM OFF THE STREETS)

Music and singing

Talking and kissing



Laughing and crying

Dancing and drinking

"I used to go to the Turnkey in the late 80s and early 90s - I think that was one of the first places I went to, it was a clubby, pubby kind of thing. I also went to Chaplin's next door but one from the Turnkey, although I think it may have been renamed something like Movies in later years. There was also a Scotts nightclub on the street and of course the King of Clubs, which faced the Turnkey.

I used to work at O'Neills in the 90s - it had been a bank and then became a Russian bar. It is such a massive building, there was still the old safe there which they couldn't remove of course.

I think I worked there from about 1993 to 1997 - instead of doing job interviews when O'Neills opened, they auditioned the staff. The local newspaper wrote a story about it. I used to work there Tuesday, Friday and Sundays - the rest of the time I was a buyer for Welcome Break Service Stations. When I left that job it turned out I'd moved to a really dodgy firm - I went full-time at O'Neills for about three weeks until I found something else. I was definitely still working there in 1997, when my stepdad died, because they closed the bar and made me a meal. I'd gone in there absolutely pissed as a fart after the funeral and they closed the bar and made me some food."

Vicky Boylan

"I played twice in Cheers Bar, in Grimes Arcade, with my band Squid Pyramids in 1992 or 1993, so I'd have been about 18 or 19, and there were all of about 20 people in the audience. I was a student at Wigan Tech at the time. Another band called the Dreaded Piano Clubbers were also playing.

I remember the day in the college library where we used the photocopier to make the flyer for it. The picture was photocopied out of a 2000AD annual, the rest was felt tip and Letraset transfers."

Andy Burke



A FLASHBACK TO THE MANY BARS AND CLUBS FOUND OFF KING STREET. WILD NIGHTS FOR SURE, DRESSED AS SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS ON BOXING DAY.

"One year we went to Boxing Day dressed as Teletubbies. I was the red one, my sister was the purple one and we made my brother be the green one, but then my other sister was ill so we didn't have the full set. Another time I dressed up as Big Ears and made my sister dress up as Noddy. She looked very cute and I looked ridiculous. One time I was a pink lady - that was a low effort year. One year we made my friend Tom, who is ginger and a bit overweight, dress as Henry the Eighth, which was great. He looked amazing, and we all had peripheral costumes. I was one of the wives, and there was an Oliver Cromwell character who is now my husband. Boxing Night used to be amazing - I basically went every year from being 18 because I'd always be home at Christmas.

I feel like we just made our costumes a few days before, whereas like our really lazy friends would like go and spend 50 quid in the fancy dress shop and buy something. I remember somebody dressed as a £5 note one year - an outfit from like the fancy dress shop - which was just a big rectangle basically with a hole for your face."

Chandan Shergill

"I always remember getting a phone call off my fella, saying they'd had to take one of their mates to hospital because he'd been attacked on King Street. A group of lads had decided he'd been talking to one of their girlfriends and they didn't like it. One had picked up a traffic cone and then somebody else picked up a bottle and he ended up getting battered over the head with this traffic cone and bottle ended up in A&E, getting his head stitched up. My fella came back covered in blood. We saw the video evidence later and it was so brutal. He still goes out there though, it didn't stop him.

Another time when we were out there, the police cars were there because a woman had been raped and they had to secure the scene and everything. It hit home about how close you can be to something bad happening. It still makes my skin crawl a bit."

Maria Lowe

Safety of King street!!! (2022)



It shows the safety King Street is under. The bright, illuminous colour is to ensure the sign & message are visible even in dark enviroment. The sign being placed in the middle of the window makes people's eyes go straight to the sign as there's nothing distracting surrounding it.

Hope for King Street?



The colour and design of the window door lets the audience know there is hope for King Street. The window being open indicates this as the rest of the picture is dim, cloudy but the centre of the picture is the only light of hope.

layers
and layers and layers of



the past

Still in

the present

"My sister is 10 years older than me and I always used to copy her style. There was a shop on King Street, back before this was trendy, which used to have the kids' size and the adult size of every dress. Our granddad used to give us money and we'd go in and pick a dress and put money away - because we'd be buying it on tick. And we used to buy the same dress - I remember we bought pink, lemon and blue, and they were tight and had a great big belt and a big v-back. And we bought matching court shoes, we had lemon court shoes. We used to put them tick as well because in those days - late 70s / early 80s - you couldn't afford to go and buy stuff.

You'd go downstairs into this shop and for a kid it was like Christmas, like Santa's Grotto. It had all these toys - you were allowed to pick one and secretly, my mum would go in every week and pay it off ready for Christmas. And she would get a card, I remember her showing me a card, telling you how much you'd paid, and then you could take it. King Street was full of shops back then.

The other one was right at the top, there's an archway which has been boarded up now. And there was a little music shop where you'd go for your recorders and sheet music for school. It was a cute, old-fashioned arcade, with tiles on the floor and stained-glass windows at the top. When I was 13, I had a paper round with a newsagent opposite Lennons Supermarket at the bottom of King Street. Because my mum used to go in every day after the bingo and pick the Wigan Evening Post up for my dad, she got to know the people there and got me a job. It was in the curved building. I used to get off the bus from school, collect my papers and deliver them to the big Scholes flats. It used to take about two hours, which was hard work, and I probably used to get about £3.50 for it. I did it three nights a week, that was my first ever job.

My mum, we called her Nanny Bingo, because she used to go every day. The Gala used to be there on King Street, and because it was an old theatre it was very plush. It had red velvet seats and looked dead posh to go in. The first session used to be from 10am to 11.30am and then one of my brothers used to go and pick her up for 12pm and she'd walk back down [from Scholes] for 7pm to 9pm, and she did that every single day of her life. My mum and dad ran pubs. Nanny Bingo and Granddad Bet-shop, we called them.

Also on King Street there was Chaplins and the Turnkey, which is where I met my husband, my children's father. King Street was bouncing, it was the street where everything was. Sadly now it's only home to pubs and nightclubs but there's a lot of history there."

Wendy Doherty

The multiple signs tell a story about this specific building and what it did to help people.



The texture contrasts to the messages in the photo as it shows what King Street has become and how much developing it needs. The messages are caring whereas the texture is Broken + Hard!

"I moved from Australia at the age of four to Aspull – my mum is from Wigan and her family has a mining past, but she was working over there. I lived here until 18 and then moved away and have been back and forth a bit since then. Now I live in Manchester, I'm 35. When I was a younger kid the only experience I had of King Street was the knowledge that I should avoid it, unless I was going to Wallpaper Supplies to buy a sledge for the snow. My grandma said the street was rough. I didn't actually know if it was rough or not, but she said it was and I used to come into Wigan with my grandma on a Friday for fish and chips and we knew not to go there on a Friday.

I also once got into a bath and it was faulty and I cut all my leg on it and was very scarred. I remember going to the solicitors on King Street because my mum said we were suing B&Q, that's a memory of King Street for me, I think it was called Smiths or something. They're my only memories from being young. I went to sixth form in Preston but my friends went to a sixth-form in Winstanley. We used to go out drinking in Wigan town centre and King Street would be the destination. Boxing Day would be massive and for us the main attraction was the indie scene. Bands like the Libertines, Arctic Monkeys played here before they got big. I remember my friends having a few tricky situations with verbal abuse about how they looked but I also remember having an amazing time, such fun going from bar to bar to nightclub to watch a band.

Café Nirvana was a big draw for many people in my crowd at the time, and then they'd all go to Maxime's, which wasn't on King Street. The last time I went to King Street was about four or five years ago but only to Revolution, and only for tea and a glass of wine. And we only went there because it's at the end of the street and you can get out fast. For Boxing Club once I went as a doctor, I think I dressed up as a bee one year. There was one guy who had an amazing massive outfit made out of sponge and his friends kept having to wring his outfit out all night because people kept bashing into him with drinks and he was becoming too heavy. My brother went as Big Ben because he's called Ben, and we painted a clock on his face. King Street was the focal point for Boxing Day when I was about 18, you couldn't get into bars, you'd have to buy tickets. It was huge and a big night for making money for the bars. I don't know if it is so much now. Now it makes me feel a bit sad because I hate to see how places are closing. The idea that Wigan is not prosperous makes me sad. It's a street with beautiful buildings which could be restored but it would need to be sustained."

Gemma Price

A different perspective on King Street.
Maybe this could be read as an optimistic
photo.



But if I'm honest, I don't really feel that
optimistic about King Street. I've seen so many
regeneration programmes end up in total disaster.



Reflections A VIEW OF BOTH SIDES

"I moved into this office on King Street, in 2017. I'd built my travel business since 2008 – at one point there were four people working around my house. Before Covid there were 12 of us here, but the pandemic ruined everything. We're now back to four people and trying to get back on track. I knew Dave [Collict] because I used to put nights on at Pure. I knew he had lots of properties, so asked if he had any office space. This place was sitting empty – he had bought the property for its outside space when the smoking ban came in. Bands were using the top floor as practice space but this floor was empty. It had previously been a solicitor's office – the firm had been struck off and all the paperwork was still here. I made sure everything was shredded.

I've lived in Wigan all my life except for a few years when I went to uni. I always preferred more alternative places, but came to King Street a fair bit at 16 and 17 because I couldn't get into other venues underage. When I moved home at 21, I thought the nightlife was terrible. I talked Walkabout Bar into letting me do an alternative night on Mondays. I told them I'd regularly DJed in Manchester but in fact I'd only done it once. It was their quietest night of the week so it never really took off, but I'd play a mixture of anything 60s and 70s, indie music, rock and Northern Soul.

It came to an end after about nine months. One night when the rugby crowd was in, the owner asked me to play something 'more normal'. She suggested Tina Turner but I put on Heroin by the Velvet Underground. She told me to pack up and leave.

I went on to put gigs on at Lux Club and Fever, in Rowbottom Square. I booked Arctic Monkeys after hearing their songs on MySpace – that cost me £60 but a few months later, when I booked them to play at Pure, then called Club Nova, they were charging £3,000. I ran weekly nights from 2003 to 2012 but started to feel like a completely different generation to the people coming to my events. We started doing fewer events – something every few months, then just once a year on Boxing Day. Covid killed it off, we couldn't be bothered any more.

In 2018 I ran a Wigan tour to mark the 10-year anniversary of our travel business, Lupine Travel. We set up a three-day Wigan tour and advertised to our clients. We got 40 people from all over the world come to Wigan for the tour. Part of it was a tongue-in-cheek open top bus tour which started on King Street, just outside our office.

This building has a lot of problems. During lockdown I came to check the mail one day and realised water had been coming in through the roof for weeks. Two rooms are completely ruined by it, and all of upstairs is a complete mess. Covid has decimated all the venues on the street so people don't have the money to spend on these properties, some of which are listed. I'm hoping that the funding that's coming in will help protect some of the buildings and make the street more attractive to businesses.

King Street has always been seen as an area to avoid – I think this is a challenge for the area. When I've put on events, I've always found getting away from the previous reputation of a venue – even just for a different music style – is quite difficult."

Dylan Harris

"I've worked on King Street for about 10 years now. I run Ibiza Bar and Pure (previously The Kaff/Princes), just off King Street West. My brother-in-law David [Collict] owns the venues. King Street has always been lively but it's gone quiet now on Saturday nights. Since Covid it hasn't been as busy as it used to be - I just don't think people can afford to come out like they used to. We're struggling at the minute because of this. We don't open on Fridays at all anymore. On the bank holiday Thursday of the Jubilee weekend, we thought we'd give it a try, but we only got 10 people in so closed after an hour.

Pure only opens for events these days, which is sad really. We can't afford to keep it open every week - we tried it but it doesn't work, because it's such a big place to fill. We went to events only around the end of 2021. The events we hold there are bounce music - an outside promoter hires the club and sorts everything - we just open up.

I was born in Liverpool and moved to Wigan when I was four. I turned 60 recently. I didn't go to King Street a lot growing up. I mainly went to the Riverside and Pemps, but did like Chicago Rocks - we used to queue up at 7.30pm to get in there.

David opened Chaplins where Ibiza Bar is now, and it later became the Playhouse. When he turned it into Ibiza Bar in 2000, the invitation to the opening was a baggage label.

I used to be a nanny and then managed a tyre garage. I started working here when I moved back to Wigan from Leicester. Until the lockdown, Ibiza Bar was strictly for over 21s but we've had to lower the age to over 19 (as long as you look sensible) because we weren't getting enough people in. I know other businesses on the street are also struggling. We've recently had to lay some bar staff on - we only had one person on each bar last week. We're only open for five hours a week now, on a Saturday - they come in at 12am and finish at 4am. The girls at Pure all have other jobs and are happy with one day a month. It's a shame though. It's hard to know what stock to order - we used to order every week but now I go for weeks without doing a big order. Luckily David owns the buildings so we've no rent on ours but for others who have to pay rent, it's sad."

Joy Podmore



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