



## 1. **SISTER PAMELA:** All Hallows Community, Julian of Norwich

When I came to this house as a novice in the early 1970s, King Street was very much the red light district, with a lot of prostitutes around the place, and rather salubrious. Later it improved; Dragon Hall was being refurbished, a lot of the houses were closed or being pulled down, and things gradually seemed to be tidied up in the area. Over the last ten years I have seen rapid change because of all the building. Before the houses were built on the former Watneys site it was lovely looking down to King Street over a field of ragwort and poppies. King Street is a mixture. There is Dragon Hall, and some very nice houses, but further along is the Waterfront, which I remember going to a meeting about and a lot of people were protesting, but it was a foregone conclusion. The noise of people coming from that several nights a week does impinge on the silence, which is a pity because a lot of people come to St. Julians for silence and quiet. The housing in Music House Lane unfortunately has gone down; I know there are two drug dealers living there at present, there are people with mental health problems and it is not the area it was. So on one side we have the casualties of life and on the other some very affluent people.

The House itself is on Rouen Road but is still sometimes addressed as "All Hallows, King Street", because the church garden used to back on to King Street. One of the most exciting things I've seen is the development of the new footbridge. I was here when the Novi Sad bridge was opened; in fact my old dog, Luke, was the first dog across that bridge and my present dog was the first across the new bridge! The council held a competition for naming the bridge and you had to give reasons for your name. Because it's

near the Lady Julian shrine and would be used by visitors coming from the railway station, we decided to go for "Lady Julian Bridge" and lots of people voted for that - although Dragon Hall wanted "Dragon Bridge" because it comes out at the back of the hall - so it is now called the Lady Julian Bridge and Sister Violet and myself attended the opening with the Lady Mayoress. It will be nice when the rest of the area there is developed, it's a bit derelict at the moment. Before they started building the bridge, I got to know the "boat people" who used to moor along the area behind St. Anne's Lane and the Waterfront, a bit rough and ready but they built up their own little community and supported each other. The Council moved them on when work on the bridge started.

Our community has been in Norwich for over a hundred years. We originally had a house on Ber Street. In those days, before Rouen Road, there were little lanes running down the hill. One sister worked in each parish of the city so we had a sister working at St. Julian's, St. Etheldreda and St. Peter Parmentergate. After the Second World War, the church had been bombed and Watneys wanted the area opposite the church, where we had a little house, so they built this one for us. We were very involved with St. Julians Church and the local people. 1973 was the 600th anniversary of Julian's revelations, her visions, and people came from all over the world for that. We had services, lectures, exhibitions and a wonderful silent procession of witness from the Cathedral, the whole length of King Street., to St. Julians Church. Interest in Julian of Norwich has snowballed and this house has turned from a parish house into a guest house. The Mission also survives to the present day. We were parish sisters, visiting people in their homes. People still

call on me for that, but I am here alone so cannot run the house and work with the homeless and so on. It's never lonely, I don't have time! We have had more sisters here; at one time there were five in the novitiate, we had a house in the Cathedral Close, I ran the home for the homeless in Calvert Street, and there was a community of English sisters withdrawing from an African mission, four of whom came to live in this house. We have had as many as fourteen guests in the house. Anyone is welcome, irrespective of whether they belong to any religious group. Because we are so few, our conference centre is

now run by the Christian Conference Trust. We are going to have an Emmaus Project, for the homeless, on site. The Friends of Julian look after the Julian Centre and the shop but it is struggling a bit as we are off the beaten track.

I do know some people in the new houses, just to say hello to, and I speak to people when I am walking the dog, but I feel that nowadays people do tend to keep to themselves more than they used to.