



King Street was once the main route out of Norwich to the south, and in the Middle Ages it was a wealthy area: it runs parallel to the river and rich merchant houses stretched down from the street to the wharves on the river. Indeed two of the major survivals from medieval Norwich are still to be found along the street - Dragon Hall and the Music House. Its recent history however, has not been so happy. By the 19th century it was given over to light industry, culminating in the 20th century when a vast brewery warehouse was set down in the middle of it, dwarfing the surrounds.

Yet King Street and its river could, and indeed should be a major asset to the life of Norwich. With this intention the City Council has established a Single Regeneration Budget to bring new life to the area and to establish the waterfront as a major attraction. Archaeology is playing an integral role in this process, and in the first three years of the programme, over 10 sites have been sampled to assist the urban regeneration programme. At the same time such targeted work has provided a rare opportunity to study systematically a single and important medieval street.

King Street is the southern half of the cardinal route through Norwich, and has serviced the city's waterfront for over 1000 years. In that time its fortunes have been decidedly cyclical, its greatest decline beginning, socially at least, in the Georgian period. With new suburbs developing on the outskirts of Norwich the middle classes began to move away and the light industry of the Victorian period moved in to replace them.

In the 1930s there were several determined efforts at slum clearance which destroyed a number of important medieval timber-framed buildings. More clearance followed the air raids of the 1940s, which



*King Street today*

*Top. The dominating feature is the Watney Mann Brewery, occupying the site of the Austin Friars.*

*Attempts at conservation. The middle photo shows an unsuccessful attempt of the 1950s- at least the upper floor is more or less genuine. Beyond that is the newly restored Dragon Hall, shown below*