



# The **WORLD** in our street

Interview with

## **Ruby Dunbobbin who lives in Brook Street.**

Ruby is 86 years old - she was born in 1929 and has lived in Brook Street virtually all her life. She was born in Altrincham and was about 4 years old when she came to Chester and lived in Duke Street. Her Grandad was the head slaughter man at the slaughter house in Queen Street (at the back of Tesco's – the stage is still there where they used to load and unload). He was the only man in Chester apart from the police who could wear a gun.

Ruby's Mum was born in Cuppin Street and then they lived in Charles Street and she was one of 8 or 10 children – all girls apart from 1 boy. She had only a small amount of formal education but had an entrepreneurial streak and ended up buying a caravan and several bungalows at Robin Hood Camp in Gronant – just before Prestatyn. She lived till she was nearly 80.

Ruby's mum and dad had lived in Chester but they moved to Altrincham to be near his brother. Her Grandad had a butchers shop in Chester market and so Ruby's mum used to come to Chester to help Grandad in the shop. When he died, he left the shop to her mother so they came back to Chester and lived in Duke Street for a short while and then moved to 112 Brook Street before then moving to her current house. It was the Ormonde Hotel who owned the row of houses and these could only be rented until the owners' spinster sister had died then they could be bought. Ruby's house cost £350. Ruby believes she was 7 or 8 when the family moved into her current house. She went to Egerton Street School and then to Christchurch in Newtown, she remembers that this was during the war as she remembers a girl hitting her with a gas mask in a box!

In the 1930's she used to collect rags and jam jars and would sell these to Patsy Dobbins which was located where the Mill Hotel is now.





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She worked at Davies Tobacco Factory on Canal Street then at Bradley's Tailoring on City Road, then at BICC British Insulated Calendar Cables. She then went on to Woodsy's Chain Works. Ruby always moved to another job to get more pay. She then went to Davies Glass Works on the canal side in Saltney and used to do glass blowing at the works.

Ruby remembers that there was a garage where the car wash is and they used to have to turn the handles to get petrol from the tank above.

There was also a coal hole under the house and the coal man would deliver the coal direct into the cellar. Now she has a coal shed and the coal hole has been blocked off.

Ruby worked for 35 years on the railways – her first 4 years were spent as a carriage cleaner and then she was a train announcer and telephonist and was 55 years old when she finished. She remembers that there was an article in the local newspaper "Chester call girl retires – everyone knows her voice!" She absolutely loved the job. She remembers when the circus arrived at the station and porters trying to get an elephant into a wagon and they couldn't do it so they "sent for the little Indian" to help and he told the elephant to get into the wagon and immediately it did! She also remembers that they used to unload the horses at the station for the races and also pigeons for racing and having clocks to time this.

She has a lifetime rail pass and sometimes goes to London on the train and travels more locally using the train.

Ruby got married in Chester to Wilf, he was a technical clerk. They were married at St John's in Chester by the amphitheatre and they went to Bray in Ireland for their honeymoon. Very sadly he passed away when they were on holiday in Ibiza in 1985, he was just 54.





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Ruby then worked in the veg shop which was next door to the Railway Pub, next door to what is now the Scope shop. She worked there for a short time before the shop actually closed. She had always got food ready for The Cottage Pub and so she got offered a job there and worked for the landlady Muriel serving behind the bar. She then worked in The Egerton and then in The Liver Pub – she was 75 then! (This is now Lloyds Guest House).



Now, Ruby just plays darts and looks after the house!! She is very well known in Brook Street which is lovely. She sometimes goes to McColl's to buy a Lottery ticket. She has seen huge changes in the street.



There was always everything you would need in the street – 2 chemists, a solicitor, a bakery which was opposite The Cottage – Ruby and her friends used to go to the back of the bake house and get the broken biscuits. She also remembers a Spiritualist Church and going to séances above where the Istanbul BBQ is now. There was an undertakers too.



Ruby remembers the cattle market once a week and at Christmas there was a Fair which is now held at the Little Roodee.



The St Werburgh's social club was a hotel and Ruby remembers being in there once and there was a dance hall at the back of it.



Back in 1939, she used to play marbles in the street in exchange for sweets with her friends. From the age of 14 she worked on a Sunday for 3 years earning 7/6 a day cleaning steam engines at the London Midland Service sheds.

When Wilf passed away, he left her with a large cavalier hatchback and so her brother in law swapped this for the Mark 1 Escort that she has now – it is in pristine condition and despite being 43 years old it has not done 80,000 miles yet. She has kept it for sentimental reasons.





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She calls it “Geriatric”. She still drives occasionally – sometimes to Ellesmere Port.

Ruby used to have a pet dog – a cross between a collie and a sheltie, it was called Bonnie and lived to be 17 years old.

