

END OF AN ERA - ON THE ORDERS OF WOKING COUNCIL

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Whilst you are reading this article, I am probably perusing the papers from almost fifty years ago. Briefly browsing the front-page of a paper from June 1970 recently, my attention was arrested by the headline 'Old houses may be demolished'. As I started to read the report I suddenly discovered that these were not just any 'old houses' - one of them was MY old house! Not my current clapped-out home in Old Woking, but the house I lived in from when I was born until 1971 when (as the report noted), the Health and Social Services Department of Woking Council recommended it be knocked down.

Cherry Street in Goldsworth was described as 'one of Woking's oldest streets', with the houses 'about ninety years old and most of them damp and in general disrepair'. As a seven year old, I don't think I noticed much amiss about the house or its neighbours, but the council clearly wanted them gone - the report simply noting at the end that 'the council would be re-housing the street's thirty residents'.

My brother Neil and cousin Dave in their peddle cars outside No 15, with a train on the railway embankment in the background.



The houses of Poole Road backed onto Cherry Street, where my cousin Sue and I can be seen in our back garden.

In the garden was an old Anderson Shelter that served as a shed, with the coal bunker up against the living room window and the outside toilet tacked on to the end of the small kitchen. I still have a slight scar through my left eyebrow from when, on my fourth birthday, I cracked my head open on the toilet pan as I ran from the house in the pouring rain and slipped on the wet tile floor.

I can remember the old tin bath being brought in and placed in front of the fire in the living room, with buckets of warm water from a tiny boiler in the kitchen being used to fill it once a week on a Sunday evening (there being no actual bathroom) - and can still recall the embarrassment of being plonked in the kitchen sink for a quick 'bath' one day, just as my cousin called around to see if I wanted to go out to play!



I never went into the pub (even as an adult) – an Alsatian scaring me off the premises when I was young.

The newspaper article prompted me to look back through my copies of the Council Minutes from that time, where I found that No 12 Cherry Street (on the other side of the road) was served a demolition order as far back as May 1969. I can actually remember when it was pulled down – the old property becoming part

of our 'playground', with huge holes dug into the grounds forming 'secret dens' from which we would only emerge at dinner time.

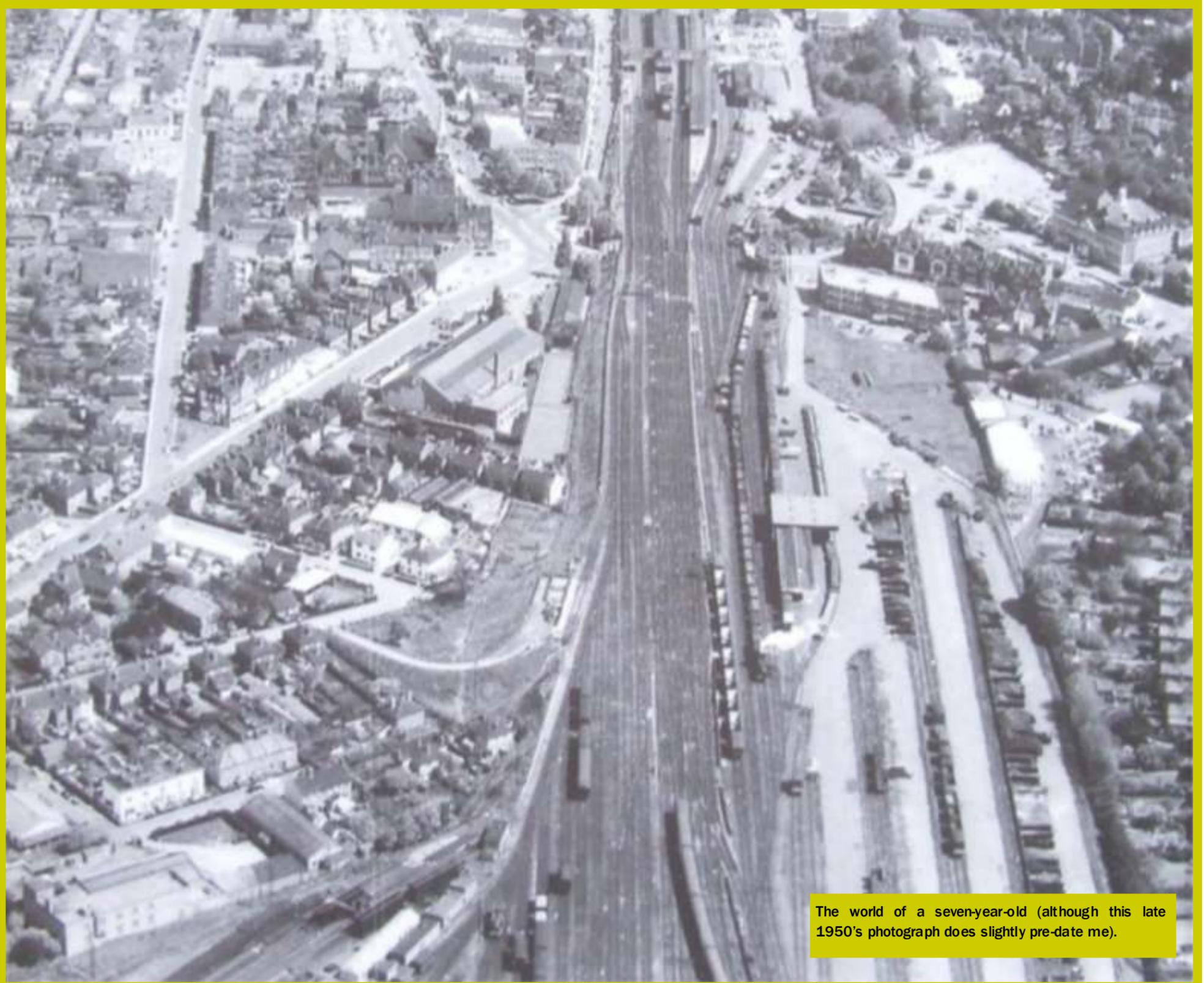
I remember too the large Alsatian dog at the Goldsworth Arms that chased after my cousin and I one evening when we were playing hide and seek around Poole Road and Snelgar Road

(as the first part of Cherry Street used to be called).

It was in the bushes beside Charles Mitchell Printers in Snelgar Road where we had another of our 'camps' – right under the window of the Managing Director's office. He politely pointed out to us one day that it was probably about



Before my time, but another view of the street, taken during the VE Day celebrations (with my Nan, uncles and my father no doubt somewhere in the picture).



The world of a seven-year-old (although this late 1950's photograph does slightly pre-date me).

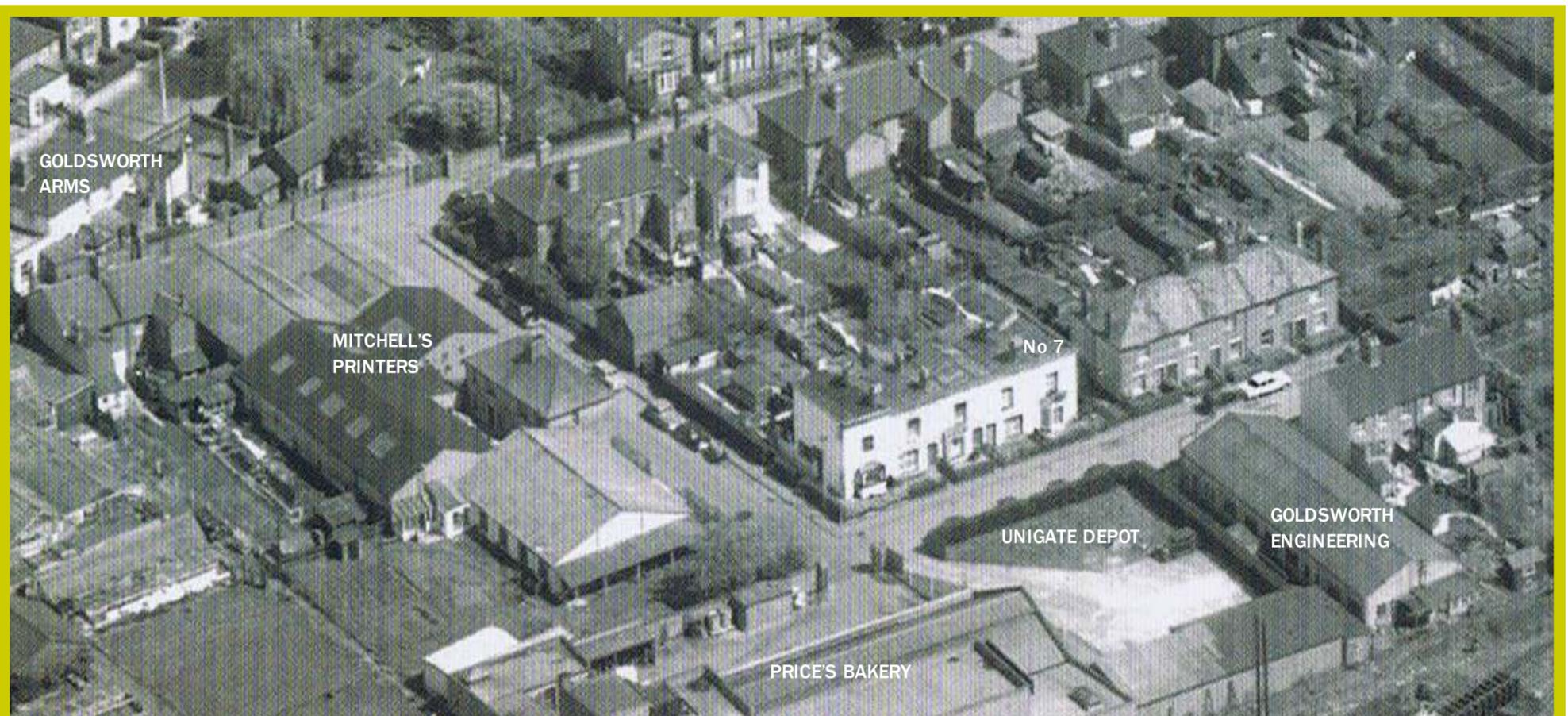
time we moved on. I remember him showing us around the print room before giving us each a pad and pencil to amuse ourselves elsewhere.

Then there was Goldsworth Engineering and the Unigate Dairy depot almost opposite us, with

Price's Bakery in the corner, the gates of which are still there I believe overlooking the area of waste ground at the back of Morrisons.

The industries remained after our houses were demolished and new industrial units built in

their place (allowing factories displaced by the town centre's redevelopment to continue trading). I took a trip down memory lane just a few weeks ago when I had to take my car to a garage at the end of the street - I hardly recognised the place.



GOLDSWORTH ARMS

MITCHELL'S PRINTERS

No 7

UNIGATE DEPOT

GOLDSWORTH ENGINEERING

PRICE'S BAKERY