Going Back

You don’t need eyes. Put your arm through mine and trust your nose. First: sawdust, the iron tang of blood, the haslet you used to love. Yes, Thompson’s: it’s a mini-market now.

We’ll pass Yvonne’s, breathe in shampoo, ammonia-acrid perm lotion (remember the Afro I just had to have?) to À La Mode – chemistry of Crimplene, tacking-chalk and wool: Oxfam since 1992.

No guessing here – gusts of smoke underlaid with yeast and hops. Yes, The Fox, where I lied about my age, drank gin with orange squash, pinballed home, fell into bed still dressed.

Let’s cross the road to the soiliness of spuds in roll-necked sacks, raspberries, a pail of gillyflowers: Clark’s – it’s been the Taj Mahal for many years.

Next, the lure of silky haddock in a crunchy coat and twice-cooked chips long before TV chefs invented them, all fried in lard.

But we’ll resist and make for Chez Monique where a new contraption caused so much alarm – its growl and hiss, the dark brown brew in tiny cups.

We’re nearly there, just Taylor’s now, its fresh-baked scones, and a doughnut waft that taunted hunger on the way from school.

Finally, St Jude’s. Remember that new vicar? Far too ‘high’ with incense and fancy robes. Rest assured, the churchyard still has daffodils in spring, the yews still harbour rooks and chaffinches.

But this is where we say Goodbye and I return you to your rightful place.

Gill Learner