

**[TRACK 1]**

*TONY WRIGHT:*

*This is Tony Wright, it is the 26<sup>th</sup> of January and I'm interviewing Joe Whitehead.  
Could I ask you though your full name*

**JOE WHITEHEAD:**

Joseph Arthur Whitehead.

*And where and when were you born?*

Twentieth of the fourth 1936, Halifax Royal Infirmary.

*Did you live in Halifax?*

No I lived in Blackshaw Head.

*So were you born and bred in Blackshaw?*

Yeah I was born and bred in Blackshaw Head?

*What was your house like?*

Our house was a farmhouse, or ex farmhouse. Me grandparents that came from Halifax on mum's side of the family, and grannie's husband died and she bought a farm on the hillsides of Blackshaw Head, mainly I would think to get away from the loss.....and then she moved to Blackpool, and when she moved to Blackpool me father and mother got married and they lived in the house for a few years actually, about five years. I was born after they'd been married about fifteen month, they got married late, my mother was twenty-nine, father twenty-nine.....that sums that one up really.

*Did they actually work the farm or did they have other jobs?*

No, father worked for a firm in Hebden Bridge called Watsons who were builders, mother's father had three farms on the hillside at Blackshaw Head and she used to go and clean once a week for grannie and that was all she did – well I'm saying all she said, she looked after us. They had a few hens for eggs, that was basically it.

*Did you have any brothers or sisters?*

No, no brothers, no sisters. My mother had a very difficult time when I were born so that was the end of families for her.

*What were the names of the farms then?*

Well the farm that we lived on was Dry Soil, which is the first house on Dry Soil as you approach it from Blackshaw Head towards Hebden Bridge. It was a farmhouse, it's now been converted into a fairly big reasonable nice house, and following that there's I would think about nine or ten cottages, which I noticed in the paper last week

there was one for sale for two hundred and odd thousand pounds, which you could have bought the whole of Blackshaw Head for when I was born, never mind just the cottage. Grandfather had Parrock Farm and then he bought White Windows and Beverley Farm, and later on I think he bought White Windows lower down still, and me mother's brother farmed three of 'em because granddad decided he'd keep Parrock Farm which was the biggest of the lot, and he farmed a mixed farm – pigs, hens, cows, he reared ducklings from eggs, exported them all over the world, I suppose realistically he had a nice sort of a carry on. He went to live in Blackshaw Head because me grannie was – he actually came from Bradford and in those days Bradford suffered from smog a lot and grannie had a very bad chest, and she went up there to die basically, and they said she wouldn't live twelve month but she wanted to go to the country. Believe it believe it or not she was ninety-eight when she died

*That's a good age*

Yeah. So Blackshaw Head air must have something for it.

*When did you – well hang on, which school did you go to up there?*

Well you got to school age at three and a half, and we walked from...from Blackshaw Head over to Colden

*So what – Colden School?*

Colden School, yeah. You walked...across the field at the back of the house, down into Boggart Lane, down into Jack Bridge, up past Jack Bridge Mill up to the Colden School.

*What was it like at school?*

I never have liked schools. It was alright. It had its funny side; we had a dog that used to follow me to school and sit in the cloakroom all day long, and then to follow me back home, which really annoyed the headmistress. But at three and a half or four, you know, the dog sort of followed you and that were it you know. At the beginning of the war, or just before the war, me mother went to work there serving school dinners for a while, I don't think that lasted a right long time to be honest. We used to call in on a little sweet shop at the bottom of Jack Bridge there, and we used to call there and get a ha'porth of sweets if we were lucky. A ha'porth of sweets would consist of a liquorice bullseye and an aniseed ball, something like that.

*So when did you leave Blackshaw?*

Well, as you'll probably appreciate, the war started. I can remember sitting on me father's shoulders looking out towards Manchester and watching the blasts, the great big flashes as the bombs were dropped on Manchester. Father had had an accident working for Watson's, a window sill lintel – well he were carrying it up on his shoulders up to the first floor of a house in Heptonstall actually, and the rungs of the ladders gave way so he landed up on the floor with a bad back and he were off work for six months, and in those days you know, if you were off work, you were off work, so when he did start work again he went to work for Hebden Bridge Co-op delivering

coal, and...the war started...and he was called up, he went to Blackpool to drive, what they called Queen Marys in those days, which were big artics, sixty-foot trailers which carried fusilages and planes and wings and things, but because he were doing essential duty after six or seven weeks he were kicked out of the forces, back to delivering coal in Hebden Bridge, and in 1940 he rented a cottage in Heptonstall and we moved to Heptonstall, and we went to Heptonstall School, we lived at 40 Northgate for...seven years which was quite an experience in some ways.

*Why so?*

Sorry?

*Why?*

Why? Well, it were a war period, I wasn't used to living in a village so close to everybody, you know, in Blackshaw Head you're all spread out, Heptonstall it's all condensed if you want, and...we had a chip shop and we'd got a greengrocer's, we'd got the Co-op and a bakery and a butcher's which were all the things that we didn't have in Blackshaw Head so it all came as a bit of a culture shock I suppose really, but it were very enjoyable in a lot of ways. Through the summer months we always played down in the woods, in those days you could leave home at nine in the morning and come home at five at night and nobody worried about you. If you fell over and cut yourself there were always somebody around and so they'd 'just slap a bandage on there lad and you'll be reet' and off you'd go, so yeah, it were alright. Summer months it were holidays, for my parents on weekends, nice sunny weekends, everybody would go and have a swim in tak it home dam or paddle in the river, or make their own entertainment. My father had been...he had worked in Blackpool at the Blackpool Tower and consequently he could roller skate and ice skate and dance, he was a keen swimmer. He used to dive off the North Pier and swim to the Central Pier in a morning before going to work you know with two or three more lads...he worked at the tower, he enjoyed roller skating and ice skating. In those days if you went up to Gibson Mill they had a roller skating rink so he used to go up there occasionally and do a bit of roller skating. Being a nipper he'd drag me along and shove me on skates around there.

*Did you like it? Did you like roller skating?*

I did do, yeah I quite enjoyed it. I was never any good at it but I enjoyed falling down and hitting the wall. I always remember the big pillars that they had stuck up and down the thing. I don't know why but you could always find them!

*Did you ever like make rafts on the mill pond there?*

No, we never made a raft on that one. We moved from Heptonstall to Mytholmroyd in 1947. At the back of Scarbottom Mill there was a dam and we a raft on there for a while until the mill owners thought it weren't safe and kicked us off – sabotaged the raft somewhat. In nineteen...I forget were it – forty-seven, forty-eight we had a big flood in Mytholmroyd, and Thornber's timber yard, all the timber floated into the park so we had plenty of timber for a good raft there. It used to float up and down the park and around the 'rec and over the cricket field and get wet through and mucky as owt I

suppose you know.

*Whereabouts in Mytholmroyd did you live then?*

We moved from Heptonstall to Mytholmroyd, father got a job working for Moderna blankets so we lived at 15 Cleveley Gardens....but we lived there for...forty-seven till I got married in...fifty-seven, so I basically lived there from then. I did National Service so I'd two years when I was away from there but that was base, that were home.

*Where did you go in National Service?*

Oh there were a great big station abroad. In the army, oh in the RAF which I were in, they used to read your postings out after you'd done your square bashing.....and they always kept the overseas postings till last for some reason, I don't know why, and being a 'w' I were very last, and I remember a comedian that were there said, 'Whitey, we've got an overseas posting for you' and I were thinking 'Christmas Isles, Christmas isles, don't wanna go and.....he said 'your posting's going to be Germany, Isle of Man' so my overseas posting was Germany and the Isle of Man, I were there for about eight weeks and then we came back from there, we went down into Grantham, outside Grantham actually, Spittlegate, we did some more training there and then we went to Ryslip in London and from there we went into Great Portland Street, a specialised unit in Great Portland Street and from there we went out to Hendon, same unit, we moved out to a big house in Hendon which were an ex tea-planter's house being built by a tea-planter and in service terms it were very cushy, it were very nice, and that were that. Got de-mobbed, came home, got married.

*So what did you do when you got back, when you got out then?*

Well, I suppose I should explain – before I went in I were a baker, I worked on Valley Road at Greaves's bakehouse, failed the exam and got straight call-up into the forces. When I came out I went to work for my wife's father who has CVS in Sandbed, well her father started that place.....I worked for him for quite some time and then he bought two shops and a house over in Littletown which is Cleckheaton district and we went over there and renovated this property, opened the shops as hardware shops; he obviously didn't make a living for us so I went out delivering milk for two years, well three years actually. I used to get up in a morning at five o'clock and start delivering me milk and then come back home and work in the shop while Maureen were doing what women do. Kevin were born in that time in Mirfield and he were brought up for four years there, three years definitely.

*What in Mirfield?*

No, well in Littletown. He were born in Mirfield but he was actually brought up in Littletown for three and a half years I would think.....and this year's his fiftieth birthday which he's not right pleased about!

*So why did – how did you get to come back towards the Hebden area or Mytholmroyd then?*

We moved back because we started...at the bottom of Oakville Road there's a quarry, or there was, it used to be Tommy Nudges quarry and well, Maureen's father had bought it and he'd been using it as a scrapyard and I would imagine that CVS and a scrapyard would be a bit too much and...Maureen's young brother moved in and we did a scrap business from there for a while, and then we did a bit off light engineering, or I did...I don't know what Roy went and did actually, we parted company and he went and did something on his own, and I did a bit of light engineering. Best part about it were every time we arced a welder all the local televisions went down to a dot and then when we stopped welding they all went back!

*Didn't you get complaints about that?*

Just the odd one or two yeah, could say that it didn't go down right well with the locals, so much so that the council decided that they'd move us, or that they'd look favourably on any other place we could find to move to. In between times of course, Calder Mill had been on fire and burnt to the ground more or less, well one wing of it had burnt to the ground, the other wing was left standing, there were a four storey piece left standing. I don't know if you know or not but it was full of polystyrene.

*I didn't know that, no.*

They brought a receiver in from down south...he must have looked and thought 'I could make money in' so he installed a grinder in it and he set to to grind this polystyrene up and use it for loft insulation, which it was good loft insulation but Christ it were inflammable! Your house were guaranteed to burn to the ground if it caught fire! We went to look at you know what were left of it....haggled for a price with the received who eventually accepted the price but it was on the condition I said 'well you leave that grinder in until we've finished with it' and....so I bought it and we moved it and we granulated all that was left of this polystyrene and sold it on, and this basically just paid for the mill, then we...moved our bit of engineering back down there, then we went into t'scrap job in a fairly decent way. Eventually...I'm proper asthmatic and eventually I got that fed up of it we moved down south and bought a guest house and some flats, and it was the most boring thing I've ever done in my life. Soon sold that and bought a fish and chip shop in Exeter which was quite interesting and quite entertaining, very rewarding, then Maureen's sister died and we moved back up here, and here we have sat since, not with a broken leg though!

*So when you went to buy the guest house, was that when Kevin took over the scrapyard?*

Yeah he actually worked for Shepherd's garage did Kevin. Quite a funny story really because when he left school he wanted to be a mechanic, but getting a job as a mechanic in those days was you know, like looking around for rocking horse muck, there just was none. I happened to see Trevor one day – I knew Trevor Shepherd quite well – I says 'are there any jobs going Trevor?' he says 'why?' 'our Kevin wants to be a mechanic but where does he go? There's just no jobs' he says 'send him down, see our Mary'. Well Trevor's son's stood at the side of me, Richard, and he says 'if your Kevin gets a job' he says 'I'm being a dentist, I'm in my final year at dental college' he says 'first one in my chair is you'...I hadn't seen a dentist in twenty-odd year...anyway, Kevin got a job, I got a dental appointment, Kevin served

his apprenticeship and when he'd done it, he wasn't dissatisfied with Shepherd's or anything like that, he just wanted to spread his wings I think, and we decided that we were going to move down south, see of the weather, climate was better for me or not, he wanted to have a go at the scrap job, so I said 'get on that' and that's how Kevin wound up working in a scrapyard.

*Do you think it's changed, the scrap business, do you think it's changed from when you first started to what it's like now?*

The scrap business has changed totally, absolutely unbelievable. When we was doing it, I used to go to a lot of ministry sales, mill sales, engineering works sales, buying machinery, scrap etc. We had contracts with local mills – Ormerods, Shapers, Pickles's Foundry, Marshall's at Mytholmroyd, we used to buy scrap of them, you know there was quite a lot of mills in the valley, and they'd ring you up and say, for argument's sake, Cinder Hill might ring up and say 'can you take some of these spinners out and put us some new ones in' and yeah, you'd go and do it. It was always a, if you want, pressurised job because they wanted 'em out quick to put the new ones in quick to get back to making money quick you know, which was, it were all logic, all just common sense but....Kevin and I did one job and we had to work till 10 o'clock till Friday night to finish it, but that were life, that were just how it came about you know, you might start at four in a morning and finish at ten or twelve at night, it had to go, it had to be done...it had its good sides like, compensation was that if you wanted to go off for half a day you could do, if you were lucky. But the price of scrap has altered enormously since them days; in them days you struggled to sell it, in these days you still struggle to sell it – China was buying it all and now they've stopped. They've actually just started again buying non-ferrous but they aren't buying ferrous, very little of it. The scrap side of it – non-ferrous is mainly being shipped out to Germany for some reason. They seem to have a look on tracks for world-wide...we keep buying it and we keep selling it; somewhere in between there's usually a little bit of profit....it's just part and parcel of life isn't it?

*So when you moved down south, whereabouts was that?*

We moved to Brixham, Devon, a little place just outside Brixham called St Mary's, nice spot but the job didn't suit me, simple as that. I'm not a 'yes sir no sir three bags full sir' – doesn't suit me at all doesn't that one, I think I've too much Yorkshire blood in me. It's the same as – what do they call the Yorkshire chef that were on TV last night....he says to this bloke that were on 'Ready Steady Cook' he says 'if you want to keep your fingers' he says 'I'd concentrate on what you're doing and not talking' – no actually he said 'I'd concentrate on your fingers and keep your mouth shut' and I thought 'well that's typical Yorkshire is that you know – shut your cakehole'.

*So do you like being back in Yorkshire then after going to Exeter and then coming back to Yorkshire – do you like being back?*

Yeah I like Yorkshire, yeah. I liked Devon as well – it were very, well it were always warmer. Basically it were always a coat warmer than it is up here. It were a good social life down there as well; I quite liked it, but I like Yorkshire so...I like wherever

I am really. It isn't what you are, it's who you are you know, where you come from, how you make your life you know. When I moved to Devon we had a creamery next door to us and the engineer there, he was a very Devonian sort of a bloke, and he said 'I supposed you've come to change us lifestyle now then?' I said 'no you've got that one wrong mate – I said why I've come is, to pick your brains so I know a bit more, that's all' and he says 'oh, oh right' and ever after that we got on famously, in fact his assistant who worked in this little engineering shop with him, it was a big firm that he worked for, they decided they'd shut that creamery down, and we went on holiday abroad....somewhere in t'Canary Isles, I forget just where we did go actually. I met a couple there, first day actually, this guy came to me at teatime and he says 'could you find us a few bob' he says 'I haven't been able to cash any money and she wants to go out tonight like' and I don't know, naive I suppose, I found him fifteen or sixteen quid or whatever he wanted and away he went, came back t'morning after and gave me my money back which was you know fine, no problem at all. He worked for the Yorkshire Post – no he didn't – well she was his girlfriend actually who worked for the Yorkshire Post, he worked for Young's Dairies strange as it may seem, up in the north of England. I just said to him, I said 'your firm's a rum lot aren't they' I said 'they've just stopped everybody, not giving them a chance for another job or owt' you know, cos they opened another factory between Brixham and Paignton, just right on the outskirts of Paignton actually, and....he says 'no they gave everyone the chance of another job' I said 'they didn't according to my mate Mervin' I says 'he's been sacked, no job and that's him out of work with a bloody child at home' you know. He says 'no, no, I'm not having that' he says 'when are you going back?' So I told him when we were going back, he says 'right, you ring me, let me know you're back' he says 'and we'll organise something' so I rang him when we got back and he says 'right, have a word with your mate' he says 'ask him when he can come and see me at Paignton' he says 'cos I'm down here at Paignton now for a week or two organising it' he says 'tell him to come and see me' so I got hold of Mervin and told him, he went to see him – assistant manager's job, somewhere in the ....

*Very nice!*

It's not who you know it's just – not what you know, it's who you know isn't it, every time?

*That's good – that's very good.*

My good deed for the week were that one.

*So what was the chippy like? I mean you said it was very satisfying – what was good about that?*

Well you meet somebody different every day, you get a bit of crack with the customers you know – they abuse you and you abuse them sort of thing....it was quite comical really. We had one lad, teenagers, young people today can be...basically just very rude, and this lad came in – we'd young girls on the counter – he said 'give us a bag of effing chips' – I says 'hoy, we'll have none of that' he says 'or else what you big fat..' I says 'or else I'll throw you through t'door, I won't bother to open it'...'you and whose army' – I mean it were Saturday lunch time, the shop were full. I thought 'I'm having none of this' – young woman were frying and I said 'just watch

out' so I made to go round t'front, cos like he made for t'bloody door didn't he – 'I'm off' – but he just picked t'wrong time, t'wrong place cos there were a bloke there just a bit bigger than me and he just grabbed him by t'scruff of t'neck and he says 'I think he wants a word with you' and he just wouldn't let him go, and this kid's kicking and going on like this and he says 'you shouldn't hold me like this' and he says 'Sergeant So-and-so, Exeter Police Force' he says 'and when he's finished with you, I'll have a word in your ear' – sure enough he did, he took the lad to see his mother and father, his father reckoned he needed a good hiding, his mother wouldn't let him have one, but this here police sergeant said 'I'll just be watching you' and I'd no more bother out of him, but this sergeant says 'you can't through him through a door without opening it' I says 'I can when it's glass like that' ...on the other hand, it were quite entertaining, especially when you'd got twelve women working for you. There were all – well they weren't all part time but most of 'em were part time, and the ups and downs like – they'd ring you up at twelve o'clock and say 'I can't come in today' so you'd got to man another one then.

*So have you seen – what kind of changes have you seen, you know in Mytholmroyd and Hebden Bridge and like, even Blackshaw, anywhere in the Upper Valley – how has it changed do you think?*

Basically it was very commercial...you'll probably have all this because it were always you know, well logged weren't it that it was..

*Well there used to be lots of mills wasn't there and engineering works*

Well even when we were in the scrap job we had Pickles's, Ormerods, Shapers, , Marshalls, Cinder Hill, there were Moderna, there was....Crossley's, you know, there were just mills from Todmorden right down the valley.....take Fair Lea Mill there, it was a big thriving mill, a village on its own know and then next door to it there was the engineering works – there were a big engineering place next door to it and they've all just gone you know, like Moderna Blankets, they just disappeared, they became non-viable because Taiwan, China, Japan, they all had cheap labour, they could do it a lot cheaper than us – not point in working for nowt, you can stop in bed can't you? It's just gone from being a beehive of activity into a...basically it's just a tourist town now, I don't think there's many – there's Wireform, them that make kitchen sink units next door but one to us.....after that you've more or less had it haven't you?

*Do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing or just inevitable?*

Well it's what they call progress isn't it? Whether it's a good thing or a bad thing it's not mine to comment on.....it's certainly different, I mean how many cafes have we got in Hebden Bridge today? Twenty-three, twenty-five?

*Something like that.*

There's certainly a lot, I mean someone once came into the yard and said they'd counted 'em and there were twenty-odd cafes, and I noticed there's another two opened since then that I know of so, you know...how many cafes we have I don't know. I mean the Co-op building, it used to be a thriving Co-op didn't it –

greengroceries, groceries, shoes, chemist, you name it – it were all built into one big building. It were sold off and made into a hotel....it used to be the dancing facilities, big hall and Co-op hall, they used to have four or five big dances there every winter – you'd always got the Civic Ball, Farmer's Ball, Police Ball.....there were another two or three of them...I know cos we used to go to most of 'em

*Did you like dancing?*

Well there were nothing else to do. You know, you either went to t'pictures, took your girlfriend on t'park for half an hour or you went dancing, or you could go to the pub. Pubs was a totally different scene in those days to what they are today...there were a lot more social atmosphere in them, a lot more going on in 'em, they were a hive of gossip if you want – I supposed they still are a hive of gossip – if you go in t'Fox as you do, my son does, I don't think that's altered quite as much as a lot of 'em have.

*It's one of the few I think yeah – you can always go in and if you need an electrician, a plumber, a mechanic or this or that, you can always find one or know someone who knows one.*

Yeah, whereas when we got married I had a friend lived up Heptonstall Road, we'd been mates since we were eight year old, and me and John used to walk down to t'Fox and go in, and there'd be three or four card schools going and a coupla dominoe jobs going on and...Tommy Crampton would be there giving it some....it was.....like the local information centre really, if you wanted to know anything you could get to know. Then next door to it there were a bloke called John Hanson who still lives in Hebden Bridge actually, he had his...he used to buy and sell a lot of sacks and do a bit of non-ferrous for scrap, and then next door to that there were houses going down towards Mytholm

*They're all filled in now aren't they?*

They're all pulled down and gone yeah.

*When did they knock those down then?*

Early fifties.

*Was that because they weren't fit to live in or*

They were all back to back weren't they, back into t'hillsides, they said you couldn't live in them, they were too damp and all the rest of it, they didn't have damp membranes in them days. Today they'd just drill it out and shove a membrane down and that would be that wouldn't it, it would be dry.....One thing that crosses me mind sat here when you just start talking about there – High Street...

*I know where you mean yeah, on that big grassy bank there.*

That's all a grassy bank from Heptonstall Road down to Bridge Lanes – was High Street and believe or not there was well over a hundred houses on that hillside, it were

like a rabbit warren.

*Was it just houses or was there anything else in there?*

No, there were just houses, there were that mill at the bottom, Cuckoo Steps, but that were it. The rest of 'em, there were just houses, there were a shop which was George's, and George was a character – he was always unshaven and squinted, untidy sort of individual, but he used to open at eight, maybe earlier in a morning and not shut until ten at night, you know, so you could always get your like loaf of bread or couple of candles or your gas mantle, or whatever you wanted in that direction, he stocked it and he'd sell it you know.

*What was his name?*

Don't know what his last name was – his first name was George.....he were just one of the local characters you know.

*Were there any other sort of characters about?*

Aye there were loads of characters in Hebden Bridge, unbelievable – road sweepers....there were just, you know, loads of 'em – characters of you know, they were all...in those days if you spoke out of turn it were a whack round t'earhole, it were no 'don't do this or don't do that, that's bad manners' or anything like that, it were just 'crack' and you got one, you knew what went on then....there just were lots and lots of individuals you know. Road sweepers used to be....there were a guy in Heptonstall called Ernie.....to us kids he were t'village idiot....he were sixpence short of t'shilling.....he were pretty harmless unless you ragged him up really t'wrong way and then he used to – he had a stick and he used to wave it about and if you ever got in t'way of it, Christ he'd have killed you...he used to pick all t'dog ends up of t'road and he used to get on t'bus in Heptonstall and ride down to Hebden and t'bus conductor never even bothered trying to take any money of him cos he never had any money, you know...'you're getting of at Hebden Ernie, you're not stopping on my bus, you stink' 'oh I don't stink' 'aye you do'.....he used to get all these dog ends of t'floor and take baccy out of 'em and put 'em in a pipe, but t'bus conductor would say 'you're not smoking that bloody pipe on my bus either' but...he got on t'bus once and t'bus conductor got on to him so he put his pipe in his pocket, when he got to Hebden Bridge his trousers were on fire! [laughing]. He walked into t'café at t'side of t'bus stop in Hebden, got a jug of water and threw it over his trousers!

*Are there any other sort of changes then, not just about the kind of work that goes on, but any other things that have happened that you've noticed?*

Well there's a big decline in social things....if you look at any organisation today like Women's Institutes, Scouts, Community Centre at Mytholmroyd, Freemasonry, Women's Institute, take anything, the enthusiasm for it seems to have gone out, mainly I suppose cos of that box

*The television*

Yeah. People just don't....communicate with each other as much as they used to do you know, they not interested in doing anything.....but that's one – to me it's a big sad thing because you just miss out, you know, we....I was stood on t'corner of Crown Street and Carlton Street talking to Richard Marshall and a bloke called Keith Scotford who died last back end actually; Keith were the local youth officer and at that time I was taking Hebden Bridge Scouts, and we was talking were me and Keith about you know, various things regarding youth activities – he were a good guy to know because he got to know what were going on in Calderdale Council and up and down t'Calder Valley and all the rest of it; Richard came out of t'barber's and he looked at us and he says 'what's you two up to? You're scheming something' I says 'we are actually' I says 'we're just trying to work out how we could get a bus to take t'youth of t'Upper Calder Valley and t'Scouts t'Guides out' I says 'we've drawn the conclusion that it's a pretty impossible task' 'no it's not, anything can be done' which is true, it can.....and from that we had a meeting in the White Lion where we invited every organisation in the Upper Calder Valley to a meeting to discuss whether we should run a lottery in Hebden Bridge or not

*Oh really?*

And we started the Hebden Bridge Lottery – Hebden Royd Lottery, and we raised just over quarter of a million quid for local charities

*That's a lot of money*

For local charities – we never did get that damned bus though! We never got that bus.

*When did they start that then?*

To be honest, I think late sixties, maybe seventies...I don't know really

*And how long did it last?*

About eight year.

*Right*

Every Monday night we used to meet.....well, basically in a local pub, do a lottery draw, which....we had a big drum, segregated with tennis balls with numbers on, whip 'em round, somebody pulled the numbers out and we had a stack of books which agents ran in the local mills actually you know – Melbourne, Astin's, up and down, anywhere where they could get away with it. Pick a winner, or winners, and the surplus was....you had to give by law I think fifty per cent of it had to go back to the customers if you want, and fifty per cent of it you could keep, but we had....two entertaining do's out of that one. I don't know for some reason, but probably because we were one of the first to do it in the country and we had more or less the whole cast of Emmerdale Farm come to watch us doing it one night in Heptonstall Working Men's Club, and they came on a Monday and on a Monday on those days there weren't a café or a restaurant open in Hebden Bridge, they were all shut, I know we had above half of them come up to our house for a meal at tea time because they just couldn't get food anywhere, and Maureen said to 'em 'give 'em steak chips, egg and

chips a-piece'

*This lottery – what kind of organisation were you?*

What organisation was we as a lottery?

*Yeah*

We was the Hebden Royd Lottery – the Hebden Royd Community Lottery.

*And were you like from the Scouts and then someone else from something else, like a committee?*

It was made up of people out of various organisations within the Upper Valley, we had a JP on it, on the committee, we had a mill owner on the committee, there was meself on it, a dental receptionist – female...various women doing various things you know, we had a teacher, housewife, sewing shop worker...there were about in total there'd be ten, and strangely it were like a little club if you want because we used to meet every Monday night, do the lottery and have a pint and.....it was, it were a good crack actually.....and then once a year we used to have a dinner ....cos the secretary, we decided that she should have a honorarium, she'd worked damned hard and she should be...I wouldn't say suitable rewarded, but she should be recognised if that's the right term, and so we had a dinner and at that dinner we presented her with a cheque every year for a...a nominal amount. We used to invite one or two guests to it, which looked good in the Hebden Bridge Times I suppose you know, 'our guest of the lottery was the local Reverend' ....I forget what his name was...I know he could drink wine.....

*Part of the job description isn't it?*

Pardon?

*Part of the job description [laughing]*

Well he sat with me....there were me and me wife, Margaret....the local Justice of the Peace, the vicar.....think there were about six or seven bottles of wine and three or four of 'em didn't drink, that's the sad bit [laughing]

*So how did you decide how to give the money away then once you'd got it – did people have to apply for it?*

People applied, and then.....the committee...that's sounds posh doesn't it, the committee, would sit in judgement if you want and decide who was getting what..... it was done in a very.....what should I say...systematic sort of a way. There was no favouritism to any organisation in the district, you know, if they applied and they wanted money and they were in need of it and they were justified they got it, and it went like that. And then from that we went on to build the Community Centre at Mytholmroyd which is still going strong

*It still is yeah. Did you never ever want to get involved in building the swimming*

*pool that everybody always wanted – that's been going a long time that, idea, hasn't it?*

That idea's been going on longer than you and I put together have been living mate! It was first voiced, as far as I can make out, it was first voiced in 1910, 1912

*That far back – really?*

That far back, that there should be a swimming pool in Hebden Bridge for the local population, and.....why there's never been one I don't understand it to be honest cos they had – in those days they sufficient people and means to build one, but they never did, but me mother said one of the first things that she could remember, you know, about the local amenities and things, was why hadn't we got this swimming pool in Hebden Bridge, and she lived to be ninety-seven and a half. It's t'best part of ten years since me mother died, so it's been going on for a hundred years had that lot, and now there is the possibility of one being built at Mytholmroyd you know

*Oh is there? Oh right, oh – where?*

I might be out of order here...

*Well I heard they were gonna build it in the car park at the Community Centre, this was a couple of years back I head something along those line but nothing ever happened.*

When we moved back up here – I've been friends with Richard Marshall who's the Chairman of Mytholmroyd Community Centre for a long time actually, and when we came up we went out for a meal with him and Richard was saying that you know, they'd like to build one and I went out for a meal with him last back end and.....the things is progressing, in fact somewhere I have all the blueprints and plans and all the rest of it for it, but whether it's privy information I don't honestly know.

*Well we won't go there just in case!*

Well I think it will happen, I think it's going to happen to be honest.

*Well it would give the young people a place to go wouldn't it?*

If it comes to fruition it will be a marvellous thing because they'll have basically a new centre.....and a much newer and well-presented facility which can be used for conferences and anything else you know, so, as I say I've seen all the plans and future projections for it and what have you. You see I were the last Chairman of it when we started it for a period and then Tommy Dawson took over. I were Vice Chairman of the lottery and they wanted me to be Vice Chairman of the Mytholmroyd Community Centre, and I said 'right I'll do it as a very temporary measure but I'm not doing it permanently' then Tommy Dawson said he'd do it so he actually wound up doing it, but I were on the committee for a long time.

*Well I look forward to seeing that.*

I don't think it will happen in my life-time, but it might.....we'll all look forward to seeing it.

*Right, well I'll just - we're nearly up to an hour now, so is there anything you'd like to mention that I haven't asked about – is there anything that you'd like to say?*

Not really – you'll have heard all about the gangs in Hebden Bridge won't you?

*Which gangs?*

Fairfield, Stubbing, High Street, Mytholm.

*Right*

No?

*No. Were they football teams*

No, no, they were all the kids – we all had a gang.....they were t'Fairfield gang, t'Stubbing Holme gang, t'High Street gang,,,,t'Heptonstall gang, t'Mytholm gang

*So what did you do?*

Fight each other! [laughing]

*Did you? How old were you then?*

Anywhere between eight and twelve you know, that sort of age group, maybe a bit older. When the war finished we had a big plot in Heptonstall for the VE Day, so the Heptonstall gang went down Mytholm wood there and chopped a bloody big fir tree down – talked about many hands make light work you know, if you can imagine four lads swinging axes all at t'same time at a tree

*You're lucky you didn't lost something like a finger or an ankle!*

We lost a bit of dignity because the local council sent us all a letter that they were going to prosecute us for chopping a tree down in t'woods – they never did.

*Did you actually burn it then?*

Oh yeah it made a great centre pole, yeah. How we got it up the wood I don't know.

*It's a fair walk up that hill up to Heptonstall.*

Yeah, the middle of Mytholm wood there up to Heptonstall, it's just a steep climb... but I suppose there'd be twenty of us dragging this tree up one way or another....but we used to play some stupid pranks, like....we used to....in the village as you're going down Heptonstall, most of the house doors open inwards and we used to get a bit of string and tie that door to that door handle then knock on t'doors and belt it away like – one day t'village bobby came down on his bike and went base over apex

[laughing] didn't he – caught a bit of string, that went down well!

**[END OF TRACK 1]**