

[TRACK 1]

TONY WRIGHT:

This is Tony Wright, it's the 23rd of June 2012 and I'm talking to Mick Wilkinson. So, could you tell me your full name

MICK WILKINSON:

Michael David Wilkinson it is.

TW:

And where and when were you born?

MW:

I was born at Taylor's Farm, Bradshaw, Halifax

TW:

Right, so this is Taylor's Farm.

MW:

This is Taylor's Farm.

TW:

So you've lived here all your life then.

MW:

Wellactually no. We.....I were married.....we lived at the farm further along and then we came back here in 2006.....and we're back here permanent now.

TW:

Just out of curiosity, what kind of farming do you do?

MW:

Well I'm an agricultural contractor.

TW:

Oh I see.

MW:

But we have.....we were a mixed farm....dairy and beef and hens, pigs, and then my son's farming now; he's beef and he helps me, well he does the contracting as well because I'm getting past it.

TW:

Right.....so.....so when were you born did you say?

MW:

1937.

TW:

Right. So....you were born here and then you grew up here presumably.

MW:
Ah yes, yes.

TW:
Is that when you first met the Button family?

MW:
I was very young.....in....at that time radios had an accumulator to.....to run off, a glass thing, and Isaac had a.....a generator, a dynamo on top of a stand with a propeller, and my uncle who lived next door used to go every Sunday morning with an accumulator and bring a full one back, and I used to go with him, and that would be....I would be very young, happen five or six year old at that time.

TW:
Right. So.....Soil Hill Pottery.....when did he actually start that pottery, do you know?

MW:
That was started....they bought that from..... Cana Firth they called him, and that were in 1909, and they rebuilt the pottery. The pottery originally was further up the hill, and Arthur Button told me that when they came from Liversedge to there, they had a traction engine and a pan, which has only just been demolished the pan, and they ground the shale in the pan and built two big stacks of bricks and left fire holes in 'em, and then they fired them, and then when they'd fired them the inside, they took the inside out but all the outside fused together.....and course they used them until they'd given up with the.....till they'd built the pottery you see, and funnily enough I worked for a fella that owns it now, Donald Greenwood, for a sort of casual, and we came across the footings of these here big.....where they had the kilns for burning the bricks.

TW:
Right.....right.....so that was like the old pottery from like...the 1700s?

MW:
No that was a new.....oh the old one, yes, further up the hill, yes, aye....and my grandmother.....that were run by a fella winding a wheel

TW:
Oh really?

MW:
And the big wheel ran the.....ran the wheels that he made the pots on.

TW:
So they had someone actually turning

MW:
Aye, a big wheel with a belt which run....

TW:

Right. So was.....the Isaac pottery, sorry the Isaac Button we're on about, was it his father or grandfather who actually bought it originally?

MW:

It were George.....George....two brothers....George....and I don't know, I couldn't tell you what they called him....yeah, aye, because they were gonna make bricks there permanently and when I were.....well when I used to go to the pottery, outside the pottery was a brick mould and it had, in fact I have a Button brick across here, and they were gonna make these....but they couldn't agree on how many they wanted to make a week, and so they never got on with the job

TW:

Really? [laughing]

MW:

Yeah, one wanted to make something like a million a week and t'other one wanted to make a lot less and they never.....they never progressed with it.....just this test thing that's all.

TW:

Right. So they never made bricks there at all really?

MW:

No, only a few.

TW:

Well it's been called that though hasn't it?

MW:

Well they used to refer to it as t'brick oven but no, it were always pots, aye.

TW:

So can you tell me something about the family then?

MW:

Well.....in my mind it were a mistake because you see, when he'd done away with the steam boiler.....in it....have you ever been in t'pottery?

TW:

I've not been in it, actually in it now, because

MW:

It's all falling down yeah, well it were t'drying room; at the bottom of the drying room was a Cornish boiler and that.....all up the sides of the drying room were rows of pipes, so you see he always had heat for drying his pots, but when he did away with the Cornish boiler he didn't have that and he'd to wait.....his pots didn't dry as fast as they should have done you see. Mind you he were on his own as well; he didn't have anybody working with him.

TW:

Yeah that's what I think, yes. So did he just let them dry....like out in the air or did he use the drying room?

MW:

No he still used the drying room, but....you see he didn't have this heat in the drying room because it were always warm in there, with the Cornish boiler.

TW:

Yeah, I've worked in potteries years ago, and I have a Cornish fire, well bigger than that, in my house and it throws out tremendous heat

MW:

Aye, but it couldn't.....they had it but it couldn't produce enough steam for....they had an engine; it were.....I can't remember t' name of it but it were made in Huddersfield, I remember that, but it used more steam than they could produce when they were.....if they were using t' pug or the washer or owt like that, it couldn't keep enough steam up to run it like.

TW:

Which is the reason they went over to electric then

MW:

Well not really; I suppose everything were changing in that day, and you see what would it be.....19.....it were about the time that I went in the RAF.....1955; it'd be '54 time I would think, and the.....you see, pots were going out of fashion big time; it were all plastic then wasn't it?

TW:

Yes...yes

MW:

So there wasn't the trade; had it been another twenty years on, nearer now, it would have been a different matter.....

TW:

Yeah, but he was one of the last potters in England really to make hand pots wasn't he really?

MW:

Oh big time, yeah. Apart.....there were one at Queensbury...Bradley...Sam Bradley....at Shelf. He gave up about.....in t'early sixties but that were.....

TW:

That was hand made as well

MW:

Yeah.....

TW:

Right. So.....because Isaac used to dig his own clay didn't he?

MW:

He did aye. Two sorts of clay – there were putty clay which you dug from a field as you went up towards the pottery on your left, and then there were stronger clay which you got from further over towards.....well towards....what.....Keighley Road, higher up; it had a little bit of stone in it and he used to do about two.....he had a Model T....wagon, well it might have been a car, I'm not sure, but he had it and he'd two loads of that and one of this here other clay to make his mix up, and he'd put it in t'washer and course it were mixed in t'washer when it went on to t'drying floor.

TW:

Yeah, I believe that he found it difficult to get....like apprentices or other people to work with him, so.....did all of his family help, I mean, did any of them help in the pottery at all?

MW:

None of 'em, none of 'em no....no.

TW:

So what did they do?

MW:

There were Roy which....Roy's t'same age as me, oh no, Keith, sorry...t'same age as me and then there's Roy and Andrew which were quite a bit younger, oh and Joan who was older than me, and none of 'em did..... I never knew any of 'em do anything in that pottery.

TW:

Was that just because they weren't interested do you think?

MW:

Well probably, aye, yeah.

TW:

I'm just wondering whether they saw it as.....as you say the times were changing and plastic was coming in and also, hand made pottery was on the way out, I mean there were still ceramics being made but they were all moulds and industrial; do you think they saw it as a bad job really?

MW:

I just don't think they gave it any thought to be honest

TW:

Oh really

MW:

Yes.

TW:

So he did it all himself? He did everything himself then?

MW:

He did aye. I used to go at 'latter end and dig his clay and.....and mess about in t'pottery generally; it was weather like we're having now....cold...and up there, just to spend a sort of afternoon or that.....

TW:

Right. So what did you actually do in there?

MW:

Myself? Well I'd carry off t'wheel and carry down into t'kiln when he were.....and wheel coal round t'kiln.....

TW:

Right. Was that towards the end of his life then?

MW:

Just.....just....anything that were.....he didn't pay me for it, you know, it were just a case of going on there and just messing about like.

TW:

Do you have any of his pots?

MW:

Oh aye this is.....oh no that's a what's it's name.....aye we've some in here

TW:

Oh right, okay

MW:

I'll show you if you want

TW:

Oh yeah that would be great.....let me move this out of the road....

MW:

Yeah that's a good idea.....let's have a look.....that's the last puzzle jug he made; he made it for a wedding present.

TW:

Oh right..... 'On Mother Earth I claim my birth.....I made a joke for man....now I am here filled with good cheer, so taste me if you can'.....

MW:

I've another there.....Mrs Button gave me that when they came out of the pottery but that's not them, that's....when they came out of t'pub actually.

TW:

John Laycock.....oh right.

MW:

But that....that isn't them, but she did give it me.....

TW:

I think I'll have to get a picture of those.....[looking at pottery]

MW:

Used to do a lot of that he did. Everybody used to....they used to go to them, in biscuit, take 'em home..... H Turner..... got them out of pottery after t'pottery were shut.....that's one of theirs as well.....oh aye that's a Button.....

TW:

Big mug

MW:

Yeah.....aye.....I think that might be about what I have of theirs.....you see that's t'problem with 'em – that'll be a Button an'all cos t'handle's off

TW:

So the handle's gone off

MW:

Yeah they do, you see.....actually John has a better blend of clay than Buttons had.....the clay is a lot harder.....[looking at pottery].....that's a sample pot.....I've quite a bit of John's stuff. Have you been to John's place?

TW:

I'm going on Thursday.

MW:

Cos all this is John Hudson's stuff.....that's one of John's.....you see.....it's a lot harder pot.....in fact all this here is John's.....

TW:

So that's a puzzle jug as well then?

MW:

Oh yeah

TW:

Now how do you actually.....do it?

MW:

Well what you do....to drink out of it.....you put your.....your fingers round.....there's one under here.....

TW:

Oh right

MW:

.....under there.....oh there isn't one in the handle, but you.....you put your fingers over 'em and suck it out

TW:

Oh right!

MW:

I'm not sure just how you do it, but that's how they did it.....yeah that's it.....19 when is it that.....about 1964, that's when we got married

TW:

Oh right yeah.....

MW:

That'll be t'last one he made cos he gave up then.....

TW:

And that's the very last one he ever made

MW:

Probably yeah, aye.....and he retired and then he.....he then.....he.....[still looking for pottery].....he bought a house down.....down just the back of them trees down there and he made it into a pottery.....ah now that whistle's that does....blow it

TW:

[blowing whistle] [laughing]

MW:

And he made it into a pottery and he had a heart attack and died before he re-opened it.

TW:

Oh that's a shame isn't it, yes.....so, was that his invention, that puzzle jug, or was that

MW:

Oh no, they've been on t'go for.....well I couldn't tell you when, but....no, definitely not Isaac, no, I mean look at this; this is.....1887....well, that's way before Isaac, because he was about.....he wasn't old enough, well he would be but he were on t'munitions through t'war.....couldn't just say how old we was, but he were an engineer down at Drake's

TW:

Right. So did he take

MW:

On nights

TW:

Right. Did he take up the pottery after the war?

MW:

No they all worked there; there were a big family of them, and they generally..... whittled down while there were just them two left, Isaac and Arthur, but there were the other side.....there were two brothers, George and.....whoever, but there were their lot worked in it; one of 'em travelled and sold pots and another.....Jack, there were quite a few up to the war and then you see it all stopped, because there were just Mrs Button.....and Arthur working there all through t'war, and then course he come back after then.....

TW:

Right. So what happened to the rest of the family? Did they not.....when they came back

MW:

Oh no, they just disappeared. There were.....there were one lived on t'road on here, Jack, he took a fish shop then he retired and....well he died....I don't really know.....the only two that I knew were Arthur and Isaac, yeah.

TW:

Right. Did he have any family at all then?

MW:

Isaac?

TW:

Yeah.

MW:

Oh yes he had.....Keith.....it were Joan.....Joan were the eldest, well Joan's still about, so's Keith....Roy and Andrew....aye

TW:

So they were his what....brothers?

MW:

Oh they were his children

TW:

Oh they were his children.....I see.

MW:

Two of 'em live down in Devon.....now. I think one of 'em's passed away not many years ago, and Keith, he lives at Shelf, and Joan lives down here in Holmfield.

TW:

Oh I see, right. So she's still here then.

MW:

Yeah, aye.....aye.....and then she had a son.....Paul, and he were in the..... computer business.....up 'top of King Cross and I don't know where Paul is now but.....he lived down there as well.....

TW:

Right.....yeah.....so.....did you ever watch him work then?

MW:

Oh yeah, yes oh aye, carrying off t'wheel and making.....he had a.....a stone....sort of a stone bench with a....what do they call them old weighing scales that t'Romans had....trunnion, trunes?.....

TW:

That's right, yes

MW:

And lumps of stone.....for the size of....say we were making that, you would want a lump of clay about as big as a cricket ball, and you'd a stone which weighed the amount of clay you wanted, and it came.....the clay came of t'pug about that square, and you'd get a lump off, make it into a ball, well weigh it for a kick off, and then make it into a ball and then you took 'em off onto t'thing.....and like sort of baking bowls have got bigger and bigger lumps you see.....smack 'em onto t'top of t'pig....onto t'top of t'wheel

TW:

Oh was that how he worked; he'd do....like if he making a bowl like that or a cup or what have you, he'd just do a whole load of just that one kind

MW:

Oh yes, aye.....t'same as these here; they would have been a popular thing....drinkers, or rabbit pots you know, the rabbit bowls; there's one across t'road, I think on wall and.....you would.....you'd make a whole pile of them and they'd boards, and t'boards would be about.....seven foot long probably and a foot wide, and then they filled them and they went into t'drying room you see, and then course he'd go onto summat else then, and might make stew pots....throw a few of them. We've got quite a lot of big baking bowls and.....them kind of things....

TW:

Yeah....I'm just wondering....because there's a....a quite famous....sort of film of him actually throwing pots

MW:

Oh yeah.....we have the film actually.

TW:

Have you?.....and he.....they were quite....simple sort of mug shapes really, almost like, weren't they really? Almost like little bowls in a way.

MW:

I think that when he's making....he was making rabbit pots then. They're about....that round and so deep

TW:

That's right

MW:

Yeah.....with a lip on.

TW:

Yeah. Why are they called rabbit pots?

MW:

Well they were for....people kept rabbits you see.....they could feed anything; birds or what they wanted, but they were.....they were.....that's what they were known as rabbit pots, oh yeah, and then he'd make pigeon bowls which were sort of.....a flattish bowl about that round; pigeons made their nests in them

TW:

Oh really.....oh right

MW:

Aye he made a lot of them and.....and plant pots....tons of plant pots.....and...

TW:

What did you say this one was for?

MW:

That's for feeding chickens – water – you see you can fill it and then t'water doesn't come out.

TW:

So you fill it

MW:

Well you just pour it in and then when it's full just put it like that and then you see the lip behind you is just slightly lower than the front, so it doesn't....it doesn't run out

TW:

Oh right.....very handy that [laughing]

MW:

I've some.....some that John made as well.....

TW:

So did John learn off Isaac?

MW:

No. John were a school teacher and.....I don't know how just really, how he come

to take potting up but he is a very good potter is John. He could make a lot of this replica stuff; you know *Time Team*?

TW:
Yeah.

MW:
When they....find summat....he can make exactly a good copy of it.

TW:
Oh really; oh that's good knowledge that.

MW:
Yeah, but he's only in a tiny, tiny workshop; I don't know how they manage

TW:
Well I'll find out on Thursday! I've been watching Time Team this morning and there's been a few on.

MW:
Aye, well I like watching *Time Team*.....

TW:
I'd better.....I can't quite understand it all. Because he worked on his own, he'd like go out one day and dig clay, then he'd have to process it all, and presumably he had a kind of routine, you know, you'd do.....

MW:
Oh, when you got the clay, say he wanted some...at t'latter end I'd do t'clay for him, and we'd dig.....happen.....get a big pile like at t'back of t'washer and then.....when.....well it used to be when they were firing t'kiln they'd do it, because the flue from the kiln went up under this here.....there's a....without going it's a bit difficult to explain, but at t'back of the pottery there was a long low shed which the flue went up underneath it; it would be....how long.....happen.....fifty foot long, happen more, and six foot wide, and when it ran out of t'washer, this clay, well he riddled it, you know how they riddle it

TW:
Yeah

MW:
It comes out and knocks all t'stone out, and all t'clay ran down this here about, it'd happen be two inch thick when it were dried, and then shovel it off and they might get two do's with the firing, the kiln firing, and drying if it were summer time, and then that went through t'pug and it'd come out in them blocks two foot long, and stack them up then for six months to sour they call it, and then when he were using it through winter or whenever, he'd put it back in t'pug and run it through t'pug again to get it just t'right texture and then it were for using that were, but they wouldn't use it sort of straight from been dug and washed; it had to go through this.....souring business

TW:

It had to be processed isn't it?

MW:

Yeah....aye, that's it.

TW:

To get the consistency so you could throw it properly

MW:

Well that were t'second time through when they did that, not the first....and stack it up....they do a lot in summer time mainly when it were.....and might dig t'clay in t'winter because it didn't matter, once it had been dug and tipped....in this here little wagon he'd two.....two and one and two and one.....two and one, well when you were shovelling it in you see, it got mixed into.....into t'washer. It isn't so long since he smashed that up; it were all there, he were a fool were Donald; I don't know why he did what he did with it.....

TW:

Yeah well, there.....there was a little group called The Friends of the Potters

MW:

Oh aye there were

TW:

And didn't they try to

MW:

Well they were gonna sell it them, then he changed his mind....aye

TW:

It would have been a great thing to keep, that

MW:

Well aye it should have been, definitely....it were a pit it weren't bought when he....when Isaac retired and gave up, because he sold it for next to nought

TW:

It's a real shame that, it would have been a real historical piece of evidence on how things worked.

MW:

Oh yes, aye....aye

TW:

It would have been great.

MW:

It were quite a big building. There were.....at t'bottom when you went up, the first part of the building was what you'd call the warehouse, well first there were some

sliding doors and this little wagon parked in there, and then there were t'warehouse where he had all t'pots for selling, and then the next where t'big sliding door at t'front is, in there were his kiln and.....t'Cornish boiler were on your right as you went in, and then a row.....the door went up the drying room and at the top were where the wheels were; there were....two.....three.....there were definitely three, possibly four wheels, there were quite a few, and then when you went through the door then, there were a.....another washer type of thing going round with the slip, and when anybody were throwing wheels, throwing pots, that were turning.....and stirring t'slip up; China clay he had

TW:

Yeah.....fine stuff China clay isn't it, yes.

MW:

Yeah well that's what he made his slip with, and then at t'back where he were sat, where he were throwing, there were another one going round which were grinding.....glaze, lead glaze....

TW:

I find it quite amazing really that he did all that, because he had to process all that clay and then he was the only one throwing, so he's throwing pots, and then they all had to dry properly and then he has to.....you know, fire them and then put the glazes on and fire them again, and to co-ordinate all of that and then still be able to sell them properly, I mean it's a.....it's an incredible task that he did.

MW:

But he didn't.....he didn't do a great deal at the latter end, but you see everybody went for the things; he didn't.....he didn't go anywhere with it you know, he didn't sort of go and advertise them, he just....but if you wanted a pot you went to the pottery.....and of course it were there

TW:

Yeah. A lot of people must have known about it to sell enough, you know, to live on

MW:

Yes, aye...they used to come from all over t'place.....sort of stew pots and, you know, stew jars and things like that.

TW:

He didn't sell any to like.....you know, big companies or you know

MW:

I don't think so, not to my knowledge, no. At one time they had this horse and cart and they used to go hawking up t'Dales with hawking pots you see; well they were known as pot hawkers weren't they?

TW:

Yeah. Did he do any of that or

MW:

No he never went anywhere; he lived just down the road did Isaac, well Arthur lived at the end of the road.....and that's....they just did it between themselves but they never.....never ever....well they never went away from t'place really, not....not to do any selling.

TW:

So that steam engine, when they stopped doing that and he went electric, so that big kiln was all fired through electric?

MW:

No, oh no....he went on for a while with a big kiln but you see it were too big and it took too long to fill, and then he bought

TW:

Yes, it was massive wasn't it?

MW:

Pardon?

TW:

It was massive, that kiln

MW:

Yeah it was quite a big one, aye.....one two....I think there were five or six fires in it....round it like, but it used to take ages to fill it when he were doing it on his own... because it were all....it were interesting to see how they did it; they had these here quarries which were about two foot by a foot, it were three inch thick, and they built....it were all built up then, depending what there were in, and for the baking bowls he had like half moon type of things, they were sort of L shaped and they put a baking bowl in, rested in it, and then another row and another and another, and stacked them way up as high as they could

TW:

Because in the biscuit fire you could just stick 'em together couldn't you but if you had a glaze on they had to be separated didn't they, so they wouldn't stick together?

MW:

Yeah, well these.....these didn't, you know, these would be on shelves, they were made with these quarries you see, and if they wanted to.....something they didn't want as severe a burn, they would put it inside say a bread pot or something like that, and it would be burnt inside.....aye

TW:

So did he use like wood or coal?

MW:

Oh no coal, aye, a load of coal

TW:

So did he buy all that in then?

MW:

Oh yeah....although they did get a bit of quirk, but not much coal

TW:

Is there a bit around here then?

MW:

Oh there's quite a lot of seams of coal around here; it's all been mined.....every bit of it. I have a book on.....potteries and it actually gives this place as a pottery but I've never really seen any trace of it.

TW:

What, this Taylor's Farm?

MW:

Yeah

TW:

Oh really?

MW:

Aye.....aye it does, but I've never ever seen any trace of it, and the top of the hill up here, were doing.....we bought some land and Matthew and myself were.....there were an old building and we were tidying it up, and I picked a pot up.....not a pot, a.....like a tile, but it were tapered a bit and that were throwing about on there for years and years and years, and then when we moved in 2006 on here I came across it, it were in t'garden, so I took it up to John's and he said 'do you know how old that is?' I says 'I've no idea' he says 'that's just 2000 year old' and it were a Roman land tile.

TW:

Really?

MW:

Aye.....from t'top of there

TW:

Oh right....well maybe the Romans....

MW:

Oh there's a Roman road across there

TW:

Yeah well maybe they started a pottery up there

MW:

You never know do you?

TW:

No.....it's interesting that

[laughing]

MW:

Aye, yeah.....but it's every bit being dug for either clay or coal all around...

TW:

Well it's.....the geology around here, I mean, if it's.....if you find a clay deposit you wanna build near it because you don't want to have to cart it very far; that's the greatest idea really is to build next to it.....and if the Romans found it.....oh right.....my research says that it started in the 1700's although it could have been back earlier I suppose.....but even so that's quite a few hundred years, the same place to still do pottery

MW:

Oh yes, well it's every bit clay around here. We do quite a bit of draining and funnily enough, now and again if I come across some fresh stuff, I take John some and see if he wants it, and a lot it won't take glaze

TW:

Is that right?

MW:

It shrinks and t'glaze comes off it. You've got to just get the right

TW:

The right blend

MW:

Yeah, in order to do it. Well on there, well on here in fact, there's no difference in the band of clay up at the pottery as we have here, but at the top of the hill, where there's a row of trees, that's what they call band clay which is.....refractory clay; it stands any amount of heat, and then you get the hard bed clay which is white clay.....they make....all sorts....they make crystal glass out of white.....out of band clay, and then there's.....clay down below is slender, but the yellow clay that he uses is the clay that you find near the top, because it had the iron in it you see....it wouldn't....this wouldn't be out of yellow clay, all this lot, whereas for.....that other stuff, hard bed and that, it made a different type of thing altogether..... band clay they would make fire bricks and the like out of.....

TW:

That's interesting, yeah, good.....so.....which of these pots here is your favourite pot?

MW:

Well you know I never think about it, I mean.....I got that when I were a kid, actually it says on the bottom....when I used to go to the pottery.....'1951 Soil Hill Pottery M D Wilkinson'.....

TW:
Oh right.....but did you make that?

MW:
I don't remember doing but I probably might have done, I doubt it very much; it looks a bit too expert doesn't it?

TW:
Well.....maybe you had a knack back then! Do you remember decorating it with

MW:
Oh I'd probably do that, definitely, yeah

TW:
With the bird and.....flowers.....

MW:
But loads and loads of people used to go to the pottery and....collect a pot and away they'd go and....and go back with....probably in a different shape than when they took 'em away when they'd broke a lump off and that

[laughing]

TW:
Did he allow people to make their own at all?

MW:
No, not on the wheel, no, oh no it's an expert job

TW:
But just decorating it then?

MW:
Yeah just decorating

TW:
And then they'd decorate their own then?

MW:
Yeah, jugs and vases and the like. They used to take....well these.....these were all on the go; these were table lamps

TW:
Oh is that what that is?

MW:
Yeah....aye

TW:
You need a hole in there for the wire to come out

MW:

Aye it needs a hole in it, but that's what they were made for; they used to.....you could buy a fitting that fitted in the top

TW:

Yeah, it's all dolphins is it around

MW:

Yeah, aye.....but that.....that I got after... after t'pottery had given up , long after it had given up.....when they were knocking it down it were just in among all t'stuff

TW:

Right.....right

MW:

It were one that somebody had never bothered going back for.

TW:

Yeah, that's too bad really.....well I'm just thinking.....is there anything that I haven't asked you about that.....anything else that you can remember about the pottery, or Isaac and the family

MW:

No not really, no.....I just.....no, just.....

TW:

So..... just let me have a look at that, yeah.....so can you remember then, I mean if he started it up in.....after the war in the early 50's and then carried on to the middle 60's or later on, was it the whole of that time he was on his own?

MW:

Oh yeah, yes aye definitely. In the odd times he had students come and do a bit, but no, after Arthur went to Causeway Foot he were on his own, yeah.

TW:

Right. So did he do it before the war, before the Second World War?

MW:

Oh yes, well he'd work there as a lad he would, yeah.

TW:

Cos.....I thought you'd said that he'd done a different job as well.

MW:

Oh you see they had to do it through t'war didn't they? And he was on munitions down at Drake's on nights

TW:

Oh I see, but he worked in the pottery after the war and then he was

MW:

He had to go and.....they were forced, they wouldn't have wanted to, they had it to do, and he happened to be rather mechanically minded did Isaac.....course he were charging folks' accumulators and all such as that, and he went down there and worked there

TW:

I see, I see.....so it was a family business all the way up to the war and then after the war.....so they were still using steam up to

MW:

Up to 1955, fifty-four, yeah.....

TW:

So it was only the last ten years that it wasn't really

MW:

Oh definitely aye.....you see it were impossible for him to do it after that on his own. I know he tried by he just couldn't do it; it were too big a place.....it was quite a big place.....

TW:

Oh that's interesting, right

MW

And he got a.....well the electric kiln he'd got would be bigger than that cabinet there, a lot bigger than John's

TW:

So it's what, sort of.....well that will be getting on six foot

MW:

Oh it would be over six foot tall, and probably about.....five foot across, aye, and what, about a yard deep I would think it was

TW:

Yeah, that's a good sized kiln

MW:

Oh yeah, but he were.....you know, I mean it were interesting to see what he could do. If he had some.....a little bit of something he wanted to burn and they were.....well this were when he had the engine, he'd make a little.....build a little kiln on the end into t'flue, you know, and put it in there

TW:

So you could get a different kind of colour

MW:

Oh aye.....aye it were just a little bit in, where they used to throw t'pots

TW:

Rightso really he learnt to do it because the family did it

MW:

Oh they all did it, yeah all

TW:

Yeah, so he didn't go to an art school or a craft school or go off to study with anybody else?

MW:

I wouldn't have thought so. I have a.....I have a book, *Soil Hill Pottery*, where the heck can it be? I ought to sort it out.....and there's a photograph of him at....I would think it's at Sam Bradley's place, it's over Keelham way; you see were a big pottery at Keelham, where Keelham....Farm Freeze is on Keelham....do you know around this area?

TW:

Not that much. I know.....mostly the Upper Valley quite well, well very well, but I know a bit of it around here, but

MW:

Yeah well, if you went past t'Raggles Pub

TW:

I know where that is, yeah

MW:

Well if you go on there, there's a big Farm Freeze there isn't there?

TW:

Right, yeah

MW:

Well that were a pottery....

TW:

Oh right

MW:

And down....there's a cellar, well in fact Andrew, he died did Andrew very young, but he made that place, but there were a cellar and it were full of pots it were, but they just walled it off and it will be full to this day because they did away with it you see.

TW:

Right, well.....I think that's probably about it then really. It's been very interesting, very interesting. I'm just wondering.....could I take some....I won't use the video camera. I'd like to take some photographs of these

MW:

Oh certainly you can, have any of 'em. I'll see if I can find you a baking bowl and all.....[looking through pottery].....they used to make a lot of these....

TW:

Oh wow, look at the size of them

MW:

Actually they made 'em bigger than that and smaller, right from....well there's one smaller I got off John, but.....that's down to that size you see, that's a John Hudson's that

TW:

That's like for baking isn't it, for making bread in or mixing

MW:

Aye that's it, aye

TW:

Well I've got a....well I used to have...I used to know a lot of potters in years gone by and I did work in one for a while when I finished art school cos that's what I did – I did pottery and I did print making and I did painting and all that; I've been doing this for about ten years now, but.....so I know a little bit about it but I'm not an expert if you know what I mean.....[looking at pottery].....let's just have a look at that... (There's about 45 seconds of shuffling about)

MW:

I'll just go and see if I can find that pottery, that Isaac Button book....

TW:

Okay, thank you.....

MW:

Where's that Button book? That Isaac Button book?..... (Mick and his wife look for the book while Tony takes photo's of the ceramics. There's another 1 minute 45 seconds of shuffling)

I'll just get me glasses, I'll see better.....I think there might be a picture of him in there

Mrs Wilkinson:

There's some more up there, there's some.....that with the roses on, that's

MW:

Which is that?

Mrs Wilkinson:

That one up here, that ginger jar; that's one that people put their own pattern on.....

TW:

Oh that big one up there

Mrs Wilkinson:

Yeah. There's another.....another one.....in that corner there, it has fishes on it

TW:

Oh, yeah we had that one out

Mrs Wilkinson:

You had that one out, well that ginger jar there, me daughter found that in an antique shop in town

TW:

Oh really?

Mrs Wilkinson:

And she bought that, yeah; and there's that....have you had that coloured stuff out?.....The blue and yellow

TW:

No I don't think we've seen that

Mrs Wilkinson:

That's lamp doesn't work I don't think. It's up in that corner, it's the large one.....he made a lot of that blue and yellow.....[taking photographs of pottery].....[kitchen noises]..... (There's another 2 minutes 10 seconds on shuffling)

Mrs Wilkinson:

Would you like a tea or a coffee?

TW:

Any, either.....whatever you're making

Mrs Wilkinson:

I can do both

TW:

Tea then would be fine, that would be great

Mrs Wilkinson:

You'll have tea, right.....[looking at pottery].....

MW:

I don't know where the heck it can be.....[looking through pottery, taking photos]

Mrs Wilkinson:

Have you found it?

MW:

No I haven't, I don't know where the heck it can be.....there's that much stuff you can't.....there he is, that's the man himself.....

TW:

Ah there he is, working away, yes.....fine.....I think.....there's another chap.....but he worked.....he did some work for them as a lad but he's moved up to Northumberland recently, and he said he's got ahe's got a picture of him in a top hat and dicky bow

MW:

What Isaac?

TW:

Yeah, from when he was a young man.....yeah, he's gonna come down.....he lives in Northumberland now and his brother lives in Preston

MW:

Well isn't that him that took Wetherigg over?

TW:

It might have been, it might have been

MW:

Because for a short time after Isaac finished, that fella took.....that over for a bit and then he.....well in fact he took all the blummin' wheels and all such as that

TW:

Oh right.....well I'm not sure if it's him; it might be. This chap isn't a potter; this chap, he said he is a forester

MW:

Oh yeah

TW:

That's what he is, but he lived here, well not in this house, but he lived very local....he was born here and he said when he was.....at school holidays he always went to the pottery and did for him, and then I think.....he married.....he married a lass from Hebden Bridge and I think he must have.....he must be getting near to retirement now I think, and they've moved to Northumberland somewhere, and they come back to Hebden Bridge every.....twice a year to meet his brother, and for her to see her family and friends in Hebden, and when they come down the first couple of weeks of July he said, he's gonna phone me up and I'm gonna talk to him about it as well.....but basically his memories of it are when he was like a teenager and doing the summer holidays so it will be a different glance on it really.

MW:

Yeah aye.....yeah.....

TW:

This is a good book

MW:

Oh yeah that is.....it's all about the area, it is a good book that.....

TW:

'Forgotten Villages'

MW:

This is about pottery here, t'history of it here.....

TW:

Yeah there's part of the picture of the inside of a kiln as well.....oh right.....

MW:

And on the other page it has.....it lists Rosemary Hall as a pottery which..... which..... the Spencers, actually Spencers owned the mineral rights to all this lot round here, and that's across here

TW:

Oh all the way down

MW:

That's the Spencers

TW:

Is that all Bradshaw down there then?

MW:

Well across from.....you can't just see it for the blummin' tree, but it's smack on t'top of that white roof

TW:

Right

MW:

It's in t'go.....they make....tell you what they make there; they make.....bricks..... blocks for making glass melting retorts

TW:

Oh right

MW:

And they don't sell.....well they didn't sell anything from there, it all goes out on lease and comes back to be reground because when they light the glass furnace it runs for three years non-stop doesn't it

TW:

I'm not sure about that

MW:

Yeah, and then it's all dismantled and then they come back here to be reground and they go again to be rebuilt because they have to be absolutely precision - there's nothing between them – they're just blocks

TW:

Right.....right.....so yeah, so there was Denholme Pottery

MW:

Yeah, and Rosemary, well Bradshaw Row was literally known as Bradshaw Row.....but I've never seen any trace of a pottery here for all, it's all dug up at the back here

TW:

Small clues

MW:

Yeah small clues across there

TW:

Oh right.....

MW:

It's on that hillside.....

TW:

There's Rosemary Hall I see, yeah

MW:

Rosemary Hall

TW:

Bradshaw Row as you said, yeah

MW:

Yeah well that's.....yeah

TW:

So there was a kiln excavated here?

MW:

Yeah it say so but I've never heard tell of it.....

TW:

[looking through book]..... 'excavation report in Yorkshire Archaeological Journal Volume 40' it says.....well, I know some archaeologists because that's another one of my things – I'll see if I can track that down.....but it does sound like there were lots of potteries about

MW:

Oh there were, yeah

TW:

There must be because of the amount of clay about, and if.....if that's true then you would think someone as clever as the Romans would.....would work that one out would you?

MW:

Well there were one [serving tea and coffee].....there were a pottery on that hill end there that they excavated, and that were supposedly by.....some gypsies that came from.....and that were 1600's

TW:

Oh really?

MW:

Round that corner there, yeah

TW:

Is that Southowram there?

MW:

No Southowram's at t'other end, that one behind; that's.....all that's Holmfield hillside up there, and then....so you go round t'corner and you come across another hill.....the far side of that, and that's where this here pottery were excavated, not a great number of years ago, and when they had somebody that were learning to use a wheel they used to make a.....you know vitreous bottles, them big glass jars

TW:

Ah I know, yeah

MW:

And they used to make them, to learn how to use a wheel

TW:

Oh really?

MW:

The plug, you know, that went in the top

TW:

In the top yeah

MW:

Aye, I've one of them throwing about somewhere but I don't just.....couldn't just put my hand on it.....

TW:

I suppose you have to learn all sorts really when you're training up, from the really delicate to the massive

MW:

Aye yeah, well they were the thing in them days weren't they? They're weren't such a thing as plastic and it had to be everything were made of this stuff

[END OF TRACK 1]