

TONY WRIGHT: born 1951

Interviewed by Craig Fees: 5-10-06

[TRACK 1]

I'm Craig Fees, it's the fifth of October 2006, I'm in Hebden Bridge at The Mill Linden Mill Linden Mill, talking to Tony Wright, going to get a sense of who he is and his experience of Hebden Bridge. I guess the easiest thing really is just to literally start at the beginning and make one's way up to the present; we may not get there – who knows?

Well, ask away!

Well – when were you born, where were you born?

I was born twenty-ninth of December 1951 in Roswell, New Mexico. My father was in the Air Force and - but I was only there for nine months, and then we moved to Maine and I we were only **there** for nine months, and I can't remember either of them really.

Before you went to Roswell, where were your parents stationed?

In England - my father had – he was from Virginia and his father wasn't very nice really, quite a violent man and a drunk so I believe and he ran away from home when he was fifteen and ran away to an aunt went in Ohio and worked in the coal mines for two years, and when he became seventeen I think he lied about his age and he got into the US army, and this would have been about 1935, 36, that sort of time, and so he was in the army and when the Second

World War came along, so he was an experienced soldier, he'd been in five or six years, when Pearl Harbour happened he was a radio operator, he did Morse code, he was a sergeant and he got shipped and worked with the English so he was in Burma for four years as a radio operator working for them and when the war finished he...well he actually got out but because he hadn't any education as such he found it very difficult to get work so he joined up again and they sent him to England, and he was based at Burtonwood near Liverpool and my mum's from Liverpool and they met and they got married, and...he left the Air Force again, but couldn't - he got a job working for the Post Office *over here?* over here in England, but then he wasn't allowed to work because the immigration laws then were such that he had to be from the Commonwealth to be able to come to this country and of course America isn't, so he was out of a job, so he joined up again - the Air Force - and was stationed in Fakenham in Norfolk which is where I was conceived, and then at seven months that's when they decided to ship him off to Roswell, so I was born there.

I hate to keep taking you back, but I mean the Burma campaign - was he part of what one hears about - do you know?

Yes, yes - he was in the front lines, he got wounded, he got hit in the leg with a bit of grenade. He was in a team; they had teams of a Corporal, a Sergeant and a Lieutenant that were communications groups and they had about fifty of these groups, all Americans, who were handed over to the British so to speak because they were short of those types of people apparently, so he did four years in Burma and yeh, he was in that fight, yeh. He has a medal for it, I've still got it. He really learnt to like the English at

that time I think is what happened – he liked the British and...so when he did join up again he wanted to be stationed here, but after Maine he went to Korea and so me and my mother came and lived with her parents in Liverpool, and my first memories are of Liverpool – sixty-seven Lewisham Road; between Norris Green and West Derby it is. The house – the last time I saw the house it was all boarded up, I think it's probably knocked down now.

So we spent a year there and then when he came back from Korea we went to France and we were in France for four years, so we lived in Nancy for a year and then we went on to the air base, Toulrossiere it was called, and then when de Gaulle kicked all the Americans out of France we went back to America, and we went to Texas – Wichita Falls, but we were only there for a short time and then we were in a car accident; he was being re-trained at the time, my father, so we had to drive down to Biloxi *from Texas?* yeh. *That's a fair drive.* Yeh. An artic, a big tractor trailer hit us and I had a fractured skull, and had Bell's palsy for a few weeks or a month or two I think; nothing happened to my sister, mum got a cut and my father had three broken ribs and his eye I think broken so he was in hospital for a while and while he was in hospital we went to Virginia and lived with his parents on a farm in Wytheville which is...I suppose Roanoke is the nearest big town but very near the west Virginia border, in the sort of south-western part of Virginia so I went to school there and then once he got well we lived in Biloxi for about...I don't know - six months or nine months maybe

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So were you about twelve years old by this time?

I wasn't that old no, I was eight – eight or nine I think, and then we

went to Nebraska; he was re-trained from being a radio operator, and what he was re-trained as in Biloxi was interpreting the spy photographs that they used to take of Cuba and everywhere else, of course we didn't know this at the time and it wasn't allowed – even after he'd retired he would never tell us until it got to a I don't know – a certain fifteen year period or something and then he actually told us what he did, so we were at Offutt SAC (Strategic Air Command) headquarters in Omaha and we lived there for six years, but in that six years I think I went to seven and eight different houses so we moved about a lot – that's the history of our family, is moving about.

In particular, why around Omaha – why so many moves there?

Because...well a couple of reasons really. He wasn't really well paid, I think that was part of it but also after we'd been there about a year or he had a heart attack quite early when he was in his early forties, my dad, and basically the Air Force kicked him out, got rid of him. He was on an extremely reduced pension and he had to really fight it to get his pension, but even then it wasn't a lot of money and he found it difficult to get work so my mother started working. It was also partly because of us – my other sister was five years younger than me and they were always trying to find a house where we could have friends and near a good school and all that so we moved about a fair bit because of all those reasons.

What did your mother do when she took up work?

She – well she did a business training course and then, well she worked in a big hotel called The Blackstone Hotel and she worked

in the restaurant, she was - I don't know what they'd it, there is a name for it, but she used to seat the people and basically make sure everything was kind of okay. She wasn't the manager as such but she organised all the shifts for the waitresses and for the cooks and the barman and all that sort of thing. She did that for a few years but it was shift work so she used to have to work all kinds of peculiar hours, and then she got a job working behind the bar right across the street from that, and there was a chap called Peter Kiewit and at the time he was the seventh richest man in America [laughing] and he built this tower block, and on the top of it he built a kind of bar, restaurant and sort of club for all of his rich friends and everything, and she worked behind the bar and got paid extremely well but again it was shift work, so we moved so we could be close to that where she worked because she doesn't drive. She only has one arm my mum so she could never drive, so she could walk to work from there. She actually made enough money for us to...move to Connecticut which is what we did, because the idea was always of us to get back to England really because they both really like England so we wanted to get back.

What was your dad doing all that time?

Well he was trying to get work; I mean some of the time he looked after us, but he got a job working as a barman in this hotel...and that didn't really work out very well, I don't think he...I don't think he liked the pressure and the stress involved in all that side of it really because it was like a service bar so it was like non-stop all the time, and he hadn't quite got over his illness, in fact he never really did get that well again although he did work later on when we moved to Connecticut.

Was your mother's eye always that way?

She got it when she was about ten or eleven...it's called – glaucoma I think it's called – it's a growth behind the eye and they might be able to remove them these days, but in those days they had to take the eye out so they did, so she's had one eye since that age really.

Well you got to Connecticut obviously and that's physically closer to England

Yes, well it was cheaper to travel over if we wanted to visit, or send things even I think. It was I think sort of a...whether it was reality or not I don't know, but the fact that it was 2000 miles closer just seemed to make it a lot easier that when we decided to move then we could do, in fact we tried twice – once we – we came and stayed in Mararoneck in New York with the parents of a friend of my father's who he was in service with. We looked all around – they looked all around for somewhere to live to either rent or buy that they could afford and they couldn't really, so we had to go back to Omaha for another year and in that year they saved up a bit and we bought a little trailer, and so we travelled in that because we thought we could live in that until we found somewhere that we could really afford. My father at the time was raising parakeets as a way of making money [laughing], you know raising these parakeets and flogging 'em on, and we also had a St Bernard dog with us [laughing] so it was crowded – it was only a small little one.

But anyway we got there and all around New York it's – New Jersey we could afford but they didn't really like New Jersey and in The Bronx they found somewhere but they didn't like The Bronx so much so we just started going into Connecticut and of course Southern Connecticut is very rich, and by the time we got half way up towards New Haven they found somewhere, in fact we stopped to have a cup of tea in this little café sort of shop that sold all sorts really, and across the road there was this kid watering the garden with a hose and he started spraying our car with it, and his mother came out and started shouting at him and my mum was standing there and they got talking; she was American but she was an Irish woman, Mary her name was, Mary Ryan was her maiden name, and she said 'right - stay with us' so we parked our trailer in their garden and we sort of lived in and out of their house for about two or three months until we found somewhere, and then once they'd kind of found somewhere it was easier to...kind of settle in and find work and all that, and then she did – she found - she started working on one of these motorway, these posh motorway, not the dine motorway ones, the posh motorway ones miles away down in Westport so my father drove her there every day – he drove here there for the morning shift and collected her, then she had about a four hour wait then he drove her back for the night shift and they did that for a while so that was a bit difficult.

But eventually he got a job with the VA (Veterans Association). There was a big hospital in West Haven for all veterans and he got a job there as a guard and he did that for another thirteen years and working on the switchboard there as well, doing both, so he sort of found his little niche; he did alright out of that really, and she

got a job in a different restaurant as a manageress of the floor in a Jewish restaurant and did very well in that, and they bought a house finally when I was eighteen and moved away [laughing] ... well we lived there - well they lived there for...I guess it was oh quite a long time really, thirteen or fourteen years I think they were in Connecticut; I was only there for about...four really – the last three years at high school, which again we had two or three different houses in those three years, and then when I left – I went off , I went to Providence College to study to be an accountant but I soon realised that wasn't what I was gonna be! But I did get some good education because Brownwood University is also in Providence and they had an art teacher who used to come to Providence College and do art classes so I did that and really really loved that and said 'right, that's for me' and...so I only went there a term really from September to Christmas and realised I wanted to go to art school so I quit the college and got a job in a restaurant and earned money to save because I applied to these art schools and I'd gotten into one in Connecticut and I'd gotten into one in Liverpool as well, and I decided Liverpool was the best because it was the height of the Vietnam War and I didn't really want to get drafted so I went off, and when I'd finished art school the war was over really.

So we're talking 1969, 70?

Yeh, I finished high school in May sixty-nine, went to Providence at Christmas, finished at Christmas and so I worked through seventy – well came here in September seventy to go to first year at art school.

You worked in Providence and stayed there?

No I went back to Connecticut because I was like - I could live at home and save the money up I earned really, because we didn't really have any money as such, but it was an awful lot cheaper to go to college over here than it was in the States, and the accident that I'd had when I was about eight, whenever it was, they'd gotten a few thousand pounds – well a few thousand dollars and it had sat in the bank all those years, and that's what they used for me to go to college on. [answering phone]

So you've left the country, which is quite a substantial move really

Well I lived with my grandparents in Liverpool for the first year; they were both in their mid to late seventies at that time and had very interesting lives really, both of them, but my grandfather loved to talk and very often I would just sit in the front room with him and he would just tell me all these tales - how to dismantle and engine nut by bolt and how to put it back together again and all things like that really; I think that's where I first got my inclination to tell stories and listen to people talking about their lives and what they did really.

How did they compare to your father's parents that you spent that time with?

Well they were very different. When we were in Virginia...my father's mother died when he was two and his father re-married her sister so she it was his step-mum and they had quite a large extended family throughout Virginia into West Virginia and up into

Ohio, and they were Seventh Day Adventists most of 'em so they were very kind of fundamentally religious and all like that really, very calm and peaceful sort of people, whereas my mother's side of the family were very loud, talkative and drank a lot! [laughing] – so it was like chalk and cheese really!

My father's lot were farmers really and then they'd become mechanics as well, so they fixed farm machinery and they had their own garage at one point. My grandfather, he was a lorry driver; he came from a very rich family. He was the oldest and... when the First World War came along I think he was about fifteen and his parents wanted him to become an electrician and had him signed up for a seven year apprenticeship at Lewis's the store there, and he did it for a bit and didn't like it but then what he did was he faked his age as well and he went to sea, and he joined a ship called the Bengaria which was a German ship in 1914 and he sailed round the world, so he went to South Africa and they went to India, I think Hong Kong, Singapore, various islands, Samoa; I have a gold watch that he gave my father and my father gave to me which he won in a poker game in Samoa from a German officer. [laughing] and I've still got that, and he had to smuggle it on board ship stuck inside a guitar because you weren't allowed to do things like that apparently, so that watch has a bit of a tale to it, and he went to the I think the Suez Canal – not the Suez, sorry, the Panama Canal had been built then so he went through that and he was in Galveston for a long time then he went up to New York, and in New York was when that the Americans joined the First World War in 1917. Because he was on a German ship it was impounded so he lived for eighteen months in New York, and he lived in a boarding house with an Irish woman and her eight

daughters; he had the job of making sure they didn't get into trouble, so what he did was he palled up with the local Irish police and used to drink a lot of whisky and play a lot of cards I think, which is mostly what he did for eighteen months because he was still getting paid! [laughing] and what the woman of this house did, who ran the house, she used to write his love letters for him to this girl that he knew back in Liverpool and through the post they decided to get married, and when eventually the war ended and he got back to Liverpool, he married her but she was a Catholic and his family weren't – they were Church of England I think, and that wasn't like – that wasn't a good thing.

But like I say, his family were very rich but his father was a purser on board a ship and his mother was with him and they were sunk, so they were killed some time in 1916, 17 – something like that, so by the time he got back he should have inherited like this they had....so his mother and grandmother were Welsh and they had greengrocers shops, and they had a haulage firm and a like a hotel and it had all been sold off and divvied up between them, and when he got back there was nothing, and when he got married they were shunned so he said 'right, stick it' and he just went off and made a life for himself with his wife - my grandmother. So I've inherited some of that I think.

A neat place to wind up.

Well, how do you mean neat – where, in England do you mean?

Well with those folks – those people.

It was good, and I got all this history was told to me all the time and at the time I probably wasn't as interested in it as I should be, although I did find it fascinating, because now I try to remember some of what they said it's just gone really, which made me realise the importance of recording things and documenting things really, so yeh – I suppose that's the first inkling of my real interest in oral history I suppose.

Is that reflecting back or is that something you think belonged to the time?

I think reflecting back really – I mean I did have an interest in that sort of thing because when I finished art school and got my degree in painting I immediately decided what I really was interested in was archaeology and of course I didn't have any money to do another degree, so I've just done that on my own, so I've read lots of books and visited lots of sites and talked to people about all kinds of things ever since really, but never really had the wherewithal to get it together until I actually moved to Hebden Bridge.

Just before I moved to Hebden I was doing reminiscence work in Manchester and when I decided to live in Hebden I decided that I was gonna to stay somewhere for a long time to see just what it was like, because through my childhood we'd lived in all these different places and from 1970 to 1985 in England I had been the same. I'd gone to school in Liverpool and London, then I'd moved to Wales for a bit then I moved back to London, then I went back to the States for a year or so and then I went down to Folkestone, back to London and then to Manchester, and eventually I ended up

in Hebden Bridge and I thought 'right I'm gonna stay' and the first thing I did, because I was doing Community Arts at the time and the first thing I did was to do a Reminiscence Project and...I got Yorkshire TV to lend me a video camera and did some training with them through York University, and I did a small project where I just did ten interviews but we did a lot of workshops in the schools where we did singing and dancing because the themes were toys, games and songs of childhood, so I interviewed the people about their childhood – the older people, about what kind of dances they did, what kind of songs they sang, and then went to the schools and did workshops with the kids based around those, and then we had a kind of big final celebration where we had...musicians playing songs and we got the people....we went into Old People's Homes as well, neither of them which exist any more - Holme House and Linden House just over here; they were both places where elderly people lived when they couldn't look after themselves, so we used to go in there and do sing-songs with them and then record them as well, and then we got them all into a local school – it was Central Street School - and they all came down on buses and everything, and we had people doing juggling, diablos and all that, and we had sing-songs and we had the kids doing dances for them, cakes, drinks and that sort of thing and I videoed all that, and that seemed like a very good thing to do so I thought 'yes I like this, I'll carry on doing this!

And that was 1985?

That was a bit later – it was eighty...eighty-eight, eighty-nine over that year.

So you came to Hebden Bridge in eighty-five?

No I came here in eighty-seven. I was doing the Reminiscence in Manchester; I came to Manchester in eighty-five and did this Community Arts course and then started practicing it and eventually I got a job doing reminiscence work with the Hospital Arts Team at the MRI, Manchester Royal Infirmary...and that actually led on - someone who was running that actually worked for Manchester Poly at the time, and I got a job in the History of Art Department...creating educational resource packs for schools and colleges and what have you, and I'd probably still be there today but my wife got pregnant, and this all happened right at one time; I was working there and she was a social worker but she'd never done the training but she'd gone into Leeds to get the social work training and what happened was that we'd gone to Scotland on holiday and the car broke down in Hebden Bridge. It was on a Saturday night and we couldn't get the car fixed for about four days so over that four days we looked at a load of houses and decided tit was a really nice place to live – half way between Manchester and Leeds – and we bought a house. It went through in five weeks, and then about a fortnight later she found out she was pregnant so either she had to give up college or I had to give up work; I gave up work and...and I've been here ever since! [laughing] and that was eighty-seven we moved here.

It's an interesting way to be introduced to a place

Well we'd been once before. One of our family traditions is to drive out on Sundays; my parents always did it when we were young, and since my father died that's what happens; my sister does it

mostly now but in those days I did it and I think my mum had read about it somewhere so we came to Hebden Bridge and spent a day here - 'yeh very nice, that's good' and then six months later my wife said 'that was a nice place, can we go through there on the way to Scotland from Manchester?' I said 'it's a roundabout route but yeh okay' and then the car broke down and we realised it was just really really good, it was a really nice place, and quite convenient as well, and cheap at that time. The prices were going up then – it wasn't really dead cheap, but it was cheap compared to in Manchester where we were.

Where did you stay in those four days?

We stayed at a bed and breakfast. You go up Oakville Road and that splits – if you take the down road it actually goes to the arches by where the Woodman Pub was; you probably won't know it, but that's where the car broke down under those arches and someone told us about this bed and breakfast. The woman who ran it worked for the local estate agent, so we'd go and look at houses and then talk we'd to her about them and she'd tell us if it was a good place or not such a good place, or if that was a decent price or not a decent price, so we were lucky to have that information at our fingertips really and it put us in good stead really.

It's a bit like the house where the boy was squirting you with the hose in a way isn't it?

Yes, it's,, I mean, it just sort of happens.

Did I misunderstand you – did you say your mother heard about

Hebden Bridge and thought it was a good idea to come here?

Yes.

So that sort of suggests she came over here.

Oh yes, they retired in...when did they retire....1980 my father retired from the VA and of course he could combine that with his Air Force years so he was on like thirty-three years worth of pension so he got quite a good pension and they came over and unfortunately he died very soon afterwards; he had a stroke, in fact he had a series of strokes every six weeks almost like clockwork for fifteen months in which I took my mother to see him every day really- they lived in a little town called Manea in Cambridgeshire at that time...and ever since then my mother has followed me about really.

So is she still with you?

She's not with me, she's got her own house, but she lives in Hebden Bridge, yeh.

And it sounded like your sister was still here too?

My sister's here now; she was married and living in London at the time and when my father died I was in a relationship and moved to London..and then to Folkestone so my mother moved to Folkestone, and then I got on this course – well I moved back to London; well I hurt my back is what really happened – I hurt my back and couldn't work and my mother wanted to move to London so she did and I stayed with her for a bit, then when I got okay

again I helped start up a housing co-op and an art studio and started doing all of that. As part of that process I found out about this Community Arts course in Manchester and got on it so I moved to Manchester to do for a year, so she sold up in London and moved up to Manchester, but her brother was nearby – her brother lived nearby and his kids lived nearby so it wasn't just that I suppose. Then when I moved to Hebden Bridge she moved up here as well about a year later and shortly after that my sister came up because of everything that was going on; she'd got divorced and wanted a change of scene and everything so she moved as well and we're all here now.

She followed you over then – you came over, she's five years behind you age wise, so she must have come over after high school?

Well no, when she finished high school she got a kind of bursary grant sort of thing to become a horse master in a place in Minehead in Somerset to train horses and all that, which is what... she really loved horses because she'd had one in the States... Half way through that she met a friend of mine who had gone to art school with me. He'd gone over to the States to stay with a family on holiday and she'd actually met him then, but when she came over here they re-acquainted and they got married secretly, didn't tell anyone [laughing]. They were together for... seven years or eight years maybe I don't know, something like that, but it didn't work out eventually.

So that places you all in Hebden Bridge, I mean obviously a massive centre of gravity for you in various ways.

Well it's become that, yes.

So what was the progression from the Manchester Reminiscence Project to you know – you broke down and all of that – how did you progress to where you are today?

Well...let's think how to explain it...when I first moved to Hebden I was still working at the Poly in the History of Art and when I gave that up...I was just painting really and exhibiting, not making a lot of money I must admit. I started doing community arts work and painting murals and a lot of that work was working with local communities and talking to them about their life and the place in which they lived, and how they wanted that reflected within a mural because quite often it was them helping to produce them; it wasn't always just me doing it on my own, so an awful lot of what I did was talking to people about their lives and their communities and finding Then ways of using that in a mural that sort of decorated a sports hall, a community centre, a school or whatever it was. I did that for quite some years and it was fine, then I got divorced and I had to get a more 'steady income' I suppose is the word because I had to re-mortgage and all that sort of thing. I had a teaching qualification in FE but the work in FE is sometimes sporadic shall we say, so I did a training course in secondary education and I started teaching; I did that for five years, I did some primary as well but I never got a full-time position because they would either have to pay me the full wage because of my experience and qualifications and if they wanted someone of my age they wanted

someone – I'd only been teaching for a few years; they wanted someone who had been teaching fifteen or twenty years, and if they wanted somebody new which I was relatively speaking, they could take someone straight out of teacher training college and pay them the lowest they could possibly pay 'em so I was kind of stuck in the middle, so after five years of this I realised it was going nowhere and thought 'right'. It got the end of this one summer term and I thought 'what am I gonna do? I've had enough of this, it's a waste of time' and I thought back over all the things I'd done in my life and all the rest of it and I realised doing the reminiscence and the kind of oral history stuff – that side of things was something that I really enjoyed - and I thought I should do something like that, and of course jobs in that field are usually based on experience and it was a very much the same young and old sort of thing again, so I decided to start up my own really, if I could and I talked to a lot of people about it. I got a group of people who were willing to be a kind of committee, and I started a community group and realised if it was going to go anywhere it had to be a charity so we formed it into a charity, and we just started applying for funding and we got some from The Scarman Trust and some training from them as well, and there was a lot of training going for free really through the Voluntary Action and through WYCAS and various organisations that help people start things up, so I did it and did the oral history training as well...and then really just carried on from there and just really tried to keep going forward all the time because like I say I never really lived in one house for more than two years until I moved to Hebden Bridge and the fact that I was in one place, lived here all the time, knew a lot of people and talked about the history of the place and their lives really, it became my home and I became committed to here really and it

just seemed the natural thing to do; to do something about it because...I used to go into the cafés or pubs and speak to the old people about the work they did and what it was like when it was all mills and it's fascinating stuff.,

Then I realised after a while that they're all dieing off one by one and I thought 'well really this should be collected' and through realising that I also realised 'what about my son?' He was born here, he's into his own thing – he's not really into what I'm into that much but when he gets older he'll probably think back to when he was little and growing up; having a record of what actually went on his youth would probably be a valuable thing, and it wouldn't be just for him, it would be for anybody of his age or anybody that might move here, because this is one of the things about Hebden now; you get a lot of people moving here from somewhere else who are interested in the history of it but don't know that much about it really, and I thought 'this would be a valuable resource for the people how live here' and the wider world really, so I started up Wild Rose Heritage and Arts; hopefully it will continue.

When was the actual start up date?

Well officially I think 2002 but I was thinking about it previously to that.

Yeh, nothing ever starts when you say it starts – there's always a gestation process

Like I say I started in May thinking about it...kind of had ideas

about it through the summer then when September came along I was doing supply teaching and there wasn't any, so I spent a month just phoning people up – all kinds of organisations and funding bodies, charities, foundations and all kinds of things. I spent a month on the phone talking to people and learned an awful lot. I applied for this grant from the Scarman Trust, they came and saw me and gave me money to buy a video camera...and bits and pieces, all things to go with it, so I started recording then I got an Awards for All to actually start recording people and set up a web site and so I started recording people and set it up and through that time we turned it into a charity and I have continued doing that. I had to get a job in between, being the Environmental Community Warden for Hebden Bridge which was a great job, I quite enjoyed it because it was really just walking around the streets looking for things that needed fixing for lack of a better word, or things that could improve it, so if the drains were blocked I could get them unblocked, if lights were out, if there was graffiti I could get it removed, if there were posters all over the place I could get those removed, but then I started getting paths like fixed for people; older people would say 'between this road or that road the path's all wobbly and we fall over in the winter' so I could get that re-paved for them, then it was - we could put hanging baskets in the town to make it a nicer place. I planted a whole load, about ten thousand bulbs of crocuses, snowdrops and daffodils so that every spring there's flowers all over the place and in that process I again met an awful lot of people...who would come to me about a problem, like 'that light's out - can you get it fixed?' and that conversation would then turn into a bit of their life history and I would say 'I also interview people about living in Hebden Bridge, would you mind if I came along?' 'oh that's okay' and it's just

become my life really, engaging with the people around here so I enjoy my work.

There's a huge amount here – I'm not going to do you a very good service here because we're coming up towards the hour, but there's a huge amount here that would be fantastic to get into – you mentioned earlier that you were part of Linden Arts - you founded that. You seem to have founded an awful lot of things one way and another – you've started a lot of things.

I've helped - I can't say it's all me, but yeh in London, a housing co-op and art studio I was part of and then in Hebden I helped set up the nursery which is now – well there's Moss Lane Nursery – it was just over here originally. There were people trying to do that for two or three years before I came along; they were just at the end of their tether and were going to pack it in. Me and my wife and one or two others came along and gave it new impetus and we weren't even the main people in it. I was the Treasurer and I helped work out the figures side of it and what have you, but there were people doing other things that made it all happen. And again North Lights Arts Studio – I helped set that up, but again there were two or three people who had decided to do that but they needed others and so I was one of the first of the 'others' to come along.

What was that?

Again it was an artists' studio and it's still going now, although they've moved premises recently. I was in that for about...six years I think, then a few of us from there decided that we didn't want to

be there any more – we wanted to have our own separate studio so we came here and set up Linden Arts. As a group I think there were six or seven of us and that's still going as well. There's only one original member still, all the others are people that have come in after, which is the nature of art studios I think; lots of people come and go over the years and usually one or two stay over quite a long time. It's just the way to get things done really.

When I helped to set up the housing co-operative in London I didn't know anything about any of this, and what I found is out that if you jump in with both feet in the deep end you either sink or swim and you soon learn how it works, and then if you have like-minded people with you, then you can get a lot of things done – not everything perhaps, but you can get an awful lot of things up and running and it's beneficial not only to yourself and the other people that you're working with but usually it extends to the wider community.

A phrase you've used a number of times before we started recording and after, is 'it's still going now' – I mean that's...well it just stands out.

Oh right – well the people who are involved now, I mean, it's them that are keeping it going – it's nothing to do with me, but I suppose if you set up something that's reasonable in the first place it allows people to carry on. I think you do need serious people who are committed to whatever it is they are involved in for things to carry on; I haven't been part of North Lights for twelve years or more, maybe fourteen years, no – about twelve I suppose, so in those years there's somebody involved that has kept that going, so it's all power to them.

It's the same with Linden – I haven't been with them for seven or eight years and the people that are in that have kept that going. We have had good landlords I suppose is the word because both of these are in old mills and they're hard to do anything with, so the fact that they get an income from artists having studios in their buildings means that the building doesn't deteriorate, they get a regular income and it's good for everybody all way round really and it keeps the buildings intact, they don't get knocked down for a start or as the thing is now, they don't get turned into supposedly modern flats at exorbitant prices.

How did you recruit the folks - directors for this current project?

Much of it through word of mouth. Initially it was to do with people who I thought...who I knew were interested in..'cos I talk about this sort of thing all the time, so I knew there was a kind of interest from people...and so I approached them and said you know 'I have actually started a formal group – would you like to be on the committee?' and they said yes. From that some people have approached us...and then they've sort of joined as it were...it's as simple as that really, we haven't advertised or anything, it's been

through people who knew people who wanted to get involved, so you usually get a fair amount of commitment when people get involved in that way I find, so I suppose that's all there is to say about that.

I am aware that I'm doing you a disservice because there's a huge amount; I was expecting us to you know, more into the Hebden Bridge side of things, and if we were starting again, if we had the time to put another tape in, then – there's a huge amount there that's all part of the history of the place and part of the texture of your understanding of Hebden Bridge and all the rest of it, which would be great to record – maybe some other opportunity will arise, but do you mind if we wind up?

No, no – I mean I'm here for you today basically, so if you wanna do more we can do more, but if you haven't got the time, then that's fine or if you've got other things that you have to get on with then that's fine.

That's what I say – I'm doing you a disservice and I'm aware of it because it's my time restraints we're looking at now, not yours. I mean, how do you find that?

That's okay.

I mean, how did you find this whole thing?

Oh this whole thing – well I have quite enjoyed it really. I am one of these people who can talk forever, and there's lots of stuff that I could have said that I didn't say because there was a kind of time

limit on it really, because the tapes only last an hour so I've cut some of it short [laughing] – it might not sound like it but I have, but I've enjoyed talking about this type of thing and it does make me think back; being on this side of the camera is quite different in a way and so it's made me realise that when I'm on that side of the camera there are other ways I could go about interviewing people I suppose, so I've thought about that since I've been talking really... so I think it's – I've really enjoyed it, put it that way. I don't know if this will be of any use to anybody in the future, but it might be – you never know.

Are there questions that you wished I'd asked that I haven't asked?

No, I didn't have any notion of what it should or shouldn't be; I was just gonna to be here and respond to your questions really.

I suppose I should whip out a consent form now – do you have them readily available?

They're on the computer – I can print one out, no problem, yeh, and a release form, and an evaluation form if you want 'em!

Well I mean they're all part of the project aren't they? Seriously, that would be...

Do you think that this should actually be as part of the project, not just for your evaluation purposes?

I'm assuming that it's recorded, and I'm assuming that it would be

a useful thing to have in the archives, and there are parts of it that you might even find useful in your various compilations, because you're part of all this in other ways as well. There's some fascinating stuff, I mean just as the Environmental Warden – the whole world that you introduced there, you know – there's a tremendous amount to be talked about you know, and included in all this – so yeh, it should be part of the project

Okay – I'll take your word for that! [laughing]

Okay, thank you very much

You're quite welcome. Normally it turns itself off; it's still recording.

If you stop talking it turns itself off? [laughing]

No, when it reaches its time limit it just buzzes and makes a noise and stops, but I'll stop it now.

[END OF TRACK 1]