

**Knottingley & Ferrybridge Neighbourhood Network**

**Edna Ward's Story as told to Charlie Wells, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

I was born in Pontefract on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1927. I lived near Pontefract Castle, until I was eleven, and then we moved up to an estate in Baghill, which is still in Pontefract but to me, I thought it were a right long way away.

I went to school at Willow Park, I left at fourteen. They advised me to go to technical school and me mum said she wanted me to go but I wanted to earn some money and I went to Wilkinson's and I worked there from fourteen to twenty-five. I got married at twenty-one, and then when I was expecting Susan I left Wilkinson's, and then I was at home for about ten years because I had another daughter.

Susan was born in '52, Elaine was born in '56 and then I went to work when Elaine was four, I tell you my friend was the manager at Bagley's and he got me a part-time job and I worked on evenings and Roy looked after children.

I worked there in the decorating department on evenings for a short while, and then when Elaine started going to school I went there part time from nine o'clock until four, for maybe ten or fourteen years I worked there, in the decorating department. If there was no work in decorating department we used to go into the packing department.

We did all sorts in the decorating, they had machines that did screen printing which, you know milk bottles used to have writing on them? We used to do that, and then mainly, I used to do fruit sets and they were done by transfers, or we did some with spotting. You've probably seen some of these, have you seen some of these at Bagley's where it's spotting, and actually that isn't easy you know.

When I was on evenings I was in charge there, and we had a lady, and she was a really good worker, but she couldn't spot for the life of her, and so she gathered the things up that we did and brought us fresh ones to occupy her so that we could get on with what we were doing.

Then we had a lady that used to feed the lehr, it was only a little lehr, and you'll know about lehrs, you put them through the lehr for annealing don't you. We had a nice crowd, it was nice, and then when Dave left we got a new manager, Tom Stoakley it was, and I got on very well with him. Also, have you seen those apothecary jars that Bagley's used to do? I used to spray those and the spray for them is based on gold. We used to have a



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screen at the back where sprayed, and they used to save the cloths because they got more back from the gold out of the cloths than they paid for it in the first place. This is in a bit of time you know say after six months doing it, they used to get more money back for the gold out of the cloth than what they paid in first place!

I stayed there on days for a good long time, then we got a charge on that I didn't, well to be honest he were pig ignorant and I didn't get on with him, so I left there and I went to Warmer Bed Electric Blankets. At that particular time I were having a lot of problems, so I packed it in, well I had to do I had no choice and so I've been retired since I were fifty-three.

You had like a pencil, only it was shaped at the end, so you'd got like a little round dot at the end, and you mixed this paint, I've forgotten what you used to mix it with, and anyway, you mixed this paint and you put it on a little dish. You used to put your spot in it, and then you used to spot it onto glass, but, you often got a little tail, and if you got a little tail it were no good you had to wipe it off. So you got used to it and you got used to spacing them as well you know, how to space them and that, and everybody did it different, but we got there, and that was spotting.

They used to do it on Fruit sets, they used to do it on vases, Hanky vases, they're shaped like a pointed hanky. Then we used to do another one called Crinkle and you had six little dishes, with different colours say blue, green, pink, yellow. There were six different colours on a big dish and then there were six little dishes with each one of these colours, a blue dish and a pink dish and that. They were Crinkle, I don't think we did that for long as I think it was a bit hard to do.

All these Fruit sets and all the dishes had to be gold-banded. You did that with the really good paint brushes, hair they were. You see, then again, everybody couldn't do that, and some of these Fruit sets, on the top, they weren't all equal, so you'd sometimes have a problem doing the gold-banding.

For a long time a worked on the spraying, and if you didn't just get your gun right, you used to get stripes and they wouldn't go, They chucked no end of them away, but you know they had to have so much amount of cullet, and Bagley's never sell seconds you know. You weren't allowed to take a second, say there was a fruit set where one of the



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dishes was faulty, you weren't allowed to have that, the whole lot went, because they used so much for cullet.

Actually, a lady last week at the Guild, Bagley's did a powder bowl and she brought one with red spots. I had one but mine's clear because I don't remember spotting them. Well I worked at Bagley's a good bit and I've never used red spots, and the spots were a lot smaller than what we did, and I said to her, she had a number on this pot, and somebody had bought her it donkeys years since for a birthday present. She said it were Bagley's, but I doubt it very much, because I never got them with a number on, unless it's a sample, but the glass looked a bit too shiny for me for Bagley's you know what I mean? But I didn't say anything to her because she said it were a Bagley's.

As regards to the social life, we had a few ladies get together and we had this room up at Chappleton's, which was all part of same thing, and we used to get together and talk and discuss and things. And to be honest I loved water but I couldn't swim, I tell you I was about fifty then. And we went and got an instructor and we went to learn to swim.

And because my husband was very protective he always used to go and sit at the other side of the baths. Anyway this instructor, he was, and do you know, within two lessons I could swim, I'm not very good, but I could swim, and actually I had asthma at the time too and he said "Oh that's good come on, that's it that's good" and he took me down to the deep end, and it was 10ft.

He says, "Jump in" I said "Oh I don't know", "Go on jump in, you'll be all right" so I jumped in and seemed to be ages coming up. He was waiting for me the instructor, he said "Where the hell have you been?!" I said "I opened my mouth!" he said "There's no ruddy oxygen down there!"

So anyway he said, "Come on do it again", and Roy was there in a flash "She's not, she's not going in again." Anyway, I swam the length, so that was ok, it was a nice social, you know what a mean?

To be honest they were very fair were management really, and I got no problems until we got this new charge hand who, he were right "dirty". So my Manager said to me, "Are you sure you want this to go through Edna, are you sure?" I said "Yes, yes." and at



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the time I was having a lot of trouble that was causing me to be anaemic, so I think I was a bit, I don't know, so that were that episode.

CW: Do you remember, somebody mentioned that they used to have a Christmas dance in the town hall, just for the ladies?

EW: Roy's mam and dad used to keep *The Anvil* and they used to have the bar at these dances, lovely dance floor it was. Oh yes, and the cricket club had the monopoly, they always had it you know, and I said Roy's dad had bar downstairs, I've a photo somewhere with that as well, it were nice were that, it were okay.

During the war you see when Roy's dad had *The Anvil* he used to get all the Airmen coming from Pollington and Church Fenton. There were these airmen coming from Pollington, I think it were Pollington, it were either Pollington or Church Fenton, and you know where Town Hall is? It (the bus) went through the wall there and, I think it were about twenty-three that were killed, there were a lot killed. Roy's mother was in the WVS and she went, because *The Anvil* were right near. She went out to help and that, and yeah that were a bad episode. Them fellas, have spent their lives flying, and then they come to a dance and finish up like that, you know?

We used to go to dances at Pontefract Town Hall as well, regular and that, and there was another dance on up at, Welfare, we used to call it Welfare, I think they call it Havercroft now at Pontefract up Love Lane, we used to go there a lot.

All during the war I went to a youth club and we used to go biking a lot. Our first trip of the season was a trip to go to Knaresborough, and Roy lived at Knottingley and I lived at Pontefract, and a set off from Pontefract on me bike and the other group, when you get to what used to be the crossroads, when they turned left to go towards the A1, I carried on to go to Knottingley to meet Roy, and this car knocked me - well I'm saying it knocked me down, it came along side, I were riding with me hand on top of this sports car, and he stopped and he said "You know it were your own fault." and it wasn't because he thought I was going with the others and I didn't, I came on and I rode to *the Anvil* and Roy's mother bandaged me up with grazes and that, and I biked to Knaresborough after that as well you know. It were always when I had a green frock on, this green frock on, you know, always something happened when I had this green frock on!

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That particular time, we went to Knaresborough another time, and we went out on a punt and Roy wasn't doing very well and I said "You're not doing it right!"

He said "ere, you have ago if you think you're that good you have a go!"

So I get on this punt and I get it stuck between two rocks, and he says, "Let go of it!"

I say "I can't let go of it, I'm leaning on it!"

He says "Let go of it!"

I say "I can't let go of it!"

I let go off it and a fell in the river at Knaresborough, it was a red-hot day, and I fell in, and I tell you I couldn't swim then, and I clambered back out on to the boat, and I was laid at the bottom of the boat, and he started to laugh and I said "What are you laughing at?"

He says "I am sorry Lass but I can't help but laugh at you, you're like a baby seal laid there!"

A man on the bank threw me a towel, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry or what. He threw me this towel and said, "Here love, don't cry, I've seen it happen dozens of times."

Well of course I was wet through, and I had long hair then, and you used to make blouses out of parachute silk you know. Well I had one of them on, it clung to me you see when I were wet. Roy went into a toilet and took his shirt off, a slip-over it were, and I put his things on to get dry. He were right fair were Roy, and where he'd taken his things off, he were pale white you know, everyone was laughing at him not me, and anyway, we'd to come straight back home.

We used to bike, we toured all the Lakes on a bike, all 'round we did and that were nice. At the time me Mam were poorly, and I had a year off work to look after me Mam. That's the time when we went to the lakes. When we come back, me Dad says, and I used to see to me Mam and that, and when I come back from the lakes, me Dad says, "Don't be upset but your Mam's back in hospital" Well that doesn't do you much good does it?

I'd brought her a present back, she told me before I went I wasn't to do any climbing, and when I went to see her at the hospital, I brought her a purse, and I said to her,



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“When we were half way up Skiddaw, and there was a tea place where you could get tea halfway up Skiddaw”

and she said “I thought I told you not to go climbing”

I says, “Oh I stopped halfway me, I didn’t go any further.”

I went part time when our Elaine were four, and Elaine was born in 1956 so that would be 1960 wouldn’t it, and when she started school properly. I were there until I was, fifty-two actually because that’s when I had my hysterectomy, so I was there all that time. That’s 1960 until, I were born in 1927, say I were fifty-two, what’s that, 1979?

Yeah and I were quite happy there actually. Oh, when I gave my notice in because I wasn’t so well and that, we were paying into a pension scheme, and personnel came to see me. They did that, personal things and that, and “About your pension” he says, “if I were you love,” he says “I’d take a lump sum, and just leave a minimal amount”.

And when I think about it, I think he thought I was going to pop me clogs! I think he thought I’d had it! You know how much pension I get? Well it was less than this, but I get about £89 a year, a year, because I took the lump sum. When they say a lump sum, a lump sum wasn’t as much as they’re getting now, you know what I mean? But, they were good, I couldn’t really fault them really. I were okay there, there were some that came and didn’t like it, you know what I mean.

Ey and one day on the lehr, or end of the lehr it was, it was early morning and this lady, they called her Jean Barr, she says, she come from, up Newcastle way, and she said

“I’ve packed me husband’s bait”

I said “Why, is he going fishing?”

She said “What are you talking about?”

I said “You said you packed his bait, you know what for when you go fishing.”

It’s his lunch isn’t it, you know, and I laughed at her and she says “I don’t know what you’re P-ing laughing for.”

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Then when I went to the cart to get some bread, she said somebody came and asked for some “scufflers”, which we do you know, see different regions have different things, don’t they?

She says “He asked for scufflers” she says “see that’s no worse than asking for bait.”

We got a lot of Scotch people down as well; they came for the pit you see, and Roy were a joiner. He worked at the Shipyard a long time, but then he went to work at the pit as a joiner, and they had a social club as well, at Kellingley Colliery.

Bagley’s used to have a Christmas do as well every Christmas. We used to go to different places and have a meal and a drink and that. That were every Christmas we had that at Bagley’s, they didn’t give you a Christmas box though, but yes it were okay.

I went on at, I think it were six while ten, yeah because Roy used to come home from work and he used to look after the two little ones, he were a good dad.

That were when they had so many orders that they couldn’t complete them during the day, you know. But to be perfectly honest, I worked at Wilkinson’s all that time and it is hard work at Wilkinson’s but I were used to it. I was a supervisor there on evenings as well when they were little ones.

Ee-I can always remember my first wage I got when I worked evenings at Wilkinson’s, I think it were three pound something, and I went and bought Roy a watch out of Marks and Spencer’s because I were that pleased I had some money of me own.

To this day, I time myself with things, because you had to do fourteen dozen liquorice allsorts in an hour, you had to do sixteen dolly mixtures in an hour, sixteen dozen. Different things, and even now I time myself doing things, because it’s that ingrained in me. When I went to Bagley’s, my God it were, they didn’t work as hard as at Wilkinson’s oh they didn’t, they got away with murder, they really did, compared to what we were like. It opened your eyes actually, and they thought they were badly done by, those that had been there a bit, you know what I mean.

I suppose it’s still hard work, because you see, you were on timer at Wilkinson’s, you were on piece rate, you know what mean. Even if you weren’t on piece rates, to be honest, if you were on something, and he found that you were doing it easy, he’d higher

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the amount that you had to do, you know what a mean? Mr Harrison, Norman they called him. But I were used to it actually, I'd been brought up with it so I didn't, because we had women come there who couldn't do it, and I used to show them how to do it, putting sweets in these packets and that and she says "I'll never do it" I said "You will, you will" But some of them didn't stop cause it were too hard, it depends what sort of a worker you are, doesn't it?

I liked doing transfers, the spraying were okay because I used to spray with me best friend, we got on really well you know. They used to say "I don't know what you two have to talk about all day!" and I liked doing transfers.

Oh, and we used to do beer mugs, we used to do beer mugs for Black Label, and even then you know, you found a variation in how people did them. How they just placed them you know what I mean, to do, you're supposed to have a template. When you do transfers, you have to- you have two rubbers, one's a hard one and one's a soft one, and depending which, some transfers would stand the hard one, you press it on to get the air bubbles out, because if you have any air bubbles in the blow on the lehr, and that's when they're no good, you know the little pin-holes, they're no good.

And we used to do some transfers that were gold, and they were used, you had to use the soft one. And to be honest they were hardest to do cause they were delicate, and if you didn't just do them right they would blow on the lehr, and you see they were expensive, you know what I mean, the transfers were expensive and that.

You have a bowl of tepid water, not too hot, hot too cold, and you put this transfer, it's on a sheet of white paper, you put it in the bowl and you let it settle, you know just soak in a bit. Then you lift it out, and then you slide it off with your finger, and then you put it onto the article that you're decorating, you smooth it off, and you hold it in place with your thumb, and then you get your rubber, and you do it like that, to get the air bubbles out and down. Then when you think you've got all them out, first off you just do it roughly to see if you've got it in right position, and then after that, you get your, you do it with the rubber, make sure you get them all out, and then after that, you do it with a very fine, like cheesecloth you know. Wipe it, wipe it dry like that, and then you'd have about six of them around a fruit bowl and you used to have a little one for the dishes that matched up with it. Then they just went through the lehr. And if they were alright, oh





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they went through the lehr, then they came off, and then they were gold-banded. You sat on a stool or a chair with a wheel going round, you know, and you clamped this dish onto this, where it clamped on and then you'd go around with the gold. But I shall tell you, if some of them were uneven, you couldn't do that, you'd sit on the table and do it, do it with your little brush, and you see it depended on your brush, because you got used to your own brushes, and you could trim them to get the right density.

Yes I liked gold-banding, but see even then, if you went down, you'd got to make sure that you've wiped it off, really wiped it off. We used to use carbon tetrachloride a lot to clean things and I didn't know, but it's, it's a bit lethal, you know if you get too much of it, it can - because Dave, he were the manager and he were a friend, he were our best man actually,

He said "You've got to be careful with that Edna, it's a bit lethal you know"

Because you used to use it like nowt, you didn't think about it. I don't know whether they've banned it now or not, but that's carbon tetrachloride we used for cleaning things, and our official name was Vitreous Enamel Workers, now then that's posh isn't it, Vitreous Enamel Workers.

And we used to have young lads come in, we had one lad come in, I think he was supposed to be a bit of a tearaway, and do you know, I found them young lads, if you were right with them, they would do owt for you. You know, pallets could be a bit heavy or some of the things were a bit heavy, and they'd come and say "I'll shift you that", you know and that. They were good were the young ones, I find that you know.

I think if you treat young 'uns right, they'll correspond don't they, you know they respond to it. But treat them with, like some of them does, I've noticed on buses and that, there's some selfish old people you know, and some of the young 'uns will be good and get up and let them sit down, and they'll never even say "please and thank you" which is not right is it?

When I were younger I went round the glassworks, and my Sister-in-Law, her Dad, were a pattern worker at Bagley's, he used to make all the patterns and that for Bagley's, but I tell you, that in regards the process of making it, I don't know that much at all about it. Probably Elvia would have known, but I don't know owt about processing it. I've seen it when it's going through the lehns and I've seen it as they chop it off you know and that.

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Odd times I went up to Jacksons and we had to do some sorting, and if you got a bottle, that were, they call it a 'bird's cage', have you heard of this? They call it a bird's cage because, you know like they do that sugar icing like little strands, well you could get that inside a bottle and if you got that it were bad, because if it went out it could be dangerous. And if you found one of them you got, I don't know how much you got, but you got a reward if you found one of them. That were if you were sorting them you know, and then, well we were only novices at sorting cause we weren't doing it, but them that could sort knew just what to look for when it was coming off lehr.

We used to do some big thick ashtrays; they were transferred as well, with writing off the cigarettes. But they, the rim of the ashtrays were about as thick as that, at least, and they used to go through lehr very, very slowly because of the thickness of the rim, it were very thick. But I can guarantee, if I put six ashtrays on, you'd lost half of them, they'd break, with the lehr and that. So, it were very, very awkward to do them.

We used to do bottles for, there was a lot of variety of things for Avon. Ooh, aye, all sorts of different things for Avon. We used to do a lot for Aramis, and Aramis were very, very particular. They'd only accept one percent, when a say one percent, if you got a right little spot, they were screen printed, and if you got a right little hole in the screen it'd come through wouldn't it. And when somebody were printing them, you'd got somebody at the other end, checking them over to see that they were okay. If you'd got one little spot, that were a fault, and you'd to tell 'em it were a leak you see. So they'd patch the screen up, I don't know what they did that with, but they'd patch the screen up. Aramis would only accept one percent faults, and you used to have a person doing that who were really particular, and did what they, you know, watched what they were doing.

Oh and there used to be acid-etch, but I refused to work in the acid-etch actually, because a thought it were, well it were dangerous because, you know the wall when you come past Bagley's, or what used to be Bagley's, the outside wall. This acid-etch used to creep through the wall, you could see it on outside of the brick wall, and I had a bad chest, I refused to work in there.

I was the safety officer, and there was one lass, who were a bit thick, and there were bails of straw in this acid-etch place, because these bottles used to come wrapped in straw you know. And this lass, she sat on the bales of straw, smoking a cigarette.



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I said “I really don’t think you should be doing that do you?”

She said “You what Edna?”

I said “You’re smoking on a bail of straw, I just don’t think that’s on.”

She put it out, but really I think you’re own common sense should tell you not to smoke on a bale of straw, shouldn’t it?

Old Spice, we did Old Spice, and then, what were that what we did downstairs? I think that was a spray, we sprayed a bottle in yellow, I think it was for Avon. They’d only accept so much as well.

We used to do Laura Ashley, they were on screen-printer then, not transfer. A lot of it went over to screen-printing because transfers were hands on, slower, too expensive a suppose. Well one you see, you sat and did it, it were individual. Everybody’s work is individual, isn’t it? With screen-printing it’s all the same, it’s mass, and it were a lot quicker, were screen-printing.

Mainly when I were there, screen printing were milk bottles, oh and Old Spice I think. But it were mainly milk bottles, and then they stopped printing these milk bottles because other things came in, you know what a mean?

We did Estée Lauder, screen printing, Aramis were screen printed. A lot of Avon were screen printed. Yeah because a lot of the little bottles and that, they must have been screen-printed, because there were too many to do by hand you know. The apothecary jars were hand sprayed. What used to go through the acid etch? Because I tell you I used to take them off the lehr, but I didn’t have a right lot to do with it.

They used to put these bottles on a rack, and they had these like dipping troughs and they’d drop them in, into the acid-etch, and leave them for so long. Lift them out, let them drain, then they wait while they dried, and then they’d go through the lehr to be annealed, you know. but other than that I really don’t know. But I did go in because I saw her smoking and that, but you got extra money for working in there, not a lot but you got a bit extra money.

Upstairs, where we working in the decorating, we had a lehr only about that wide (*indicates about a metre wide*), but normally, the lehrs were nearly as wide as this settee,

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big ones you know. And you used to have two people, depending on if they were these really small bottles. The lehrs were like a mesh mattress that used to go round, and you'd to be careful, you've seen the size of the blue glass and those little bottles, you'd to be careful how you stacked them because, if you didn't stack them right, you know that domino effect, it'd do that! So you had two people putting them on the lehr and different temperatures for different things. Very slow for these ashtrays I tell you, some that take so many different hours to go through, some that you can put through right quick.

I'm talking about our little lehr here, because that's mainly what I had to deal with. And when it, if it's one person, you can usually take that off, because there's not so much on, because it's not so wide. But on the others there's two, and if you've got these right little bottles, at the other end you'll get three or four depending on how far. You know, you can let the lehr come down a bit and you can catch up with it, but if you've got these little bottles you've got to, you know. You've to sort them you see, when they come off at the end of the lehr, and you've probably, if you've got one of these spots, these what you call leaks, you'll find you've got a lot of them. Depending how big it is and who they're for, I'm talking about pin heads you know, really, for them to go through and that. But yeah, I don't know much about working, I just know different things went through at different temperatures and different speeds.

I did enjoy it, I was upset when a left actually, and I tell you I left through, well I was a bit down, a bit low and that really, and I thought I shouldn't have let him rule me really. But it were okay, they were good times. Quite a few of them's gone now though, I suppose I'm lucky.



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