Peter Baldwin Interview Harris College 1958 – 60,

Preston Poly 1960 – 1965/66

10 November 2022, 14:30

Gareth’s office, UCLan

49:46

Present:

PB Peter Baldwin

HH Helen Howell

KV Keith Vernon

HH Thank you for coming in today.

PB Yep

HH Would you mind just saying your name, and if you don’t mind, your date of birth please?

PB My Name’s Peter Baldwin, and I was born on the 29th of the 12th, ’44.

HH Thank you very much. So when did you attend the Harris, and what course did you do?

PB I attended the Secondary Tech, as we knew it then, from 1958 to 1960, and then I carried on when it was the Polytechnic, from 1960 to about… ‘65, ‘66.

HH Right, so when you were there in the late ‘50s, which, erm, were you at the Technical School, or…?

PB Yes, so I was in the Harris Building, yes, well, it was a separate exam that we took, after the 11+. We went to a completely different style of teaching to what I was used to and everything else, yeah.

HH Was it the entrance exam for..

PB Yes

HH And was it your Primary School, the – that sort of, told you about the Harris, and suggested that you do the entrance…?

PB Erm, no. I think it came either via my family, or erm, different things…There was a, well it was one of these silly things. I lived in Fulwood at the time, but there was no schools, they were all catholic schools as far as my parents were concerned, so I had to go to one in Preston, which meant that when they sat the 11+, I sat my 11+ in Preston, with the rest of the class, and then I had to go up to what is now Fulwood High School, it was Fulwood Secondary Modern in those days, on a Saturday, to sit my 11+. I passed in one, I failed in the other. [2:05]

HH Right…

PB So I never got to go to that one, but my interest was in the technical side, always had been, and I said ‘Right, let’s do it.’ Some way or another, and I’ve been trying…racking my brains to, I don’t know exactly how it all happened…There was two other boys, in the same class as me, who were also interested in coming to the Secondary Tech, and they, along with me, ended up with a Mr Allen as a form master, who not only backed us up with it, but also gave us extra tuition on what to expect from the exams and everything else, er so – yeah, and all three of us passed, so…yeah, we did all right there…

HH So which school did you go to before the Harris? [3:03]

PB English Martyrs Boys. They’ve pulled every school down bar the Harris, that I’ve ever been to…[HH Have they?] Yes [PB, KV and HH chuckle]

KV Where are they going to put the blue plaque?

PB I’ve no idea! It’ll have to go on the Harris!

HH So how old were you when you were at the Harris?

PB 13 to, well, nearly 16, yeah – my birthday’s in December, so, everything started in September, at the time, so…

HH Did you like it at the Harris?

PB Yes, as I say, it was a completely different way of teaching altogether, erm, you were treated like young adults. You were responsible for yourself, and the way you behaved and everything else, but er, you know, you could expect reprimands, but the original school that I went to, they were still using the cane, and everything else, it was the style at the time, just after the war and everything else, yeah.

HH Do you think the teachers were strict at the Harris? [4:11]

PB You wouldn’t call it strict, but they got what they wanted. There was a Mr Cheesborough who was a Form Master for the first year. He had a habit of throwing things at you, generally it was a piece of chalk or something like that, but he was a decent enough guy when it come down to getting on with the work that you had to do, and everything else, I mean to say we all got homework, I’d never got homework in my life before, so you know, that was again, a complete change, erm, so yeah, it took a bit of time…

HH So after you’d done the initial two years, did you go straight into a higher level of class, in 1960? [4:56]

PB No, I went into an engineering course, [HH oh right] I moved onto an Ordinary National in engineering. I failed the first year, I don’t know why but I did, and the regulations within the company that I was with, was that you didn’t get Day Release if you failed, so I had to come back to night school, three nights a week, for twelve months, on City and Guilds, and that was the only two options at the time, as I thought, and, well, I romped it in one sense, I was getting results like 85 and 90% on things like that so, one of the lecturers that I knew, said, you know, ‘You shouldn’t be in this, you’re too good for it,’ I said well, you know, ‘Can’t do the National, I’ve already failed that,’ and he said ‘We’re running a new course called Technical Course, or Technician Course,’ and they allocated a code of T1 to T5 for the references on the course, and they put me straight in at T2, and I never looked back – I was one of the 6 in the final year that passed the final exams. I think we started out with about 30 something, in the class…

HH And was that a full time course or was that when you were doing Day Release?

PB No that’s Day Release, that. Day Release and two nights a week.

HH So one day a week, was it, and then you had to go in the evening as well?

PB Yeah, Tuesday evenings, all day Friday, and Friday night.

HH Wow, Friday night…!

PB Yes, well we come to an agreement, with the lecturer on Friday night. He also wanted to get home to his family, and we were in the phase then where some of the lecturers were not very keen on doing night schools, they wanted time for their own purposes, and I can’t blame them for that but, we come back to a thing where we went into a, well what’s now the Foster Building, and there was a Refectory there, and we all dived in there at the end of the Day Release, got some food down wer necks, came out half an hour later, and started about an hour or so sooner than we should have done, which meant that we were walking out of here round about 8 o’clock at night and The Sun was only just across the road [all chuckle] [7:41]

HH So which company were you working for when you were doing the Day Release?

PB Well it was English Electric originally, then it become British Aircraft Corporation, and then it’s ended up as British Aerospace. I did 39 years there, with them, yeah.

HH And did they come to the Harris to find people to employ, to then…you know, when you were 15…

PB Yes, there was two or three major engineering companies and that, that actually came in and sort of er, gave presentations and that. One was English Electric, one was Leyland Motors, and I think there was Goss’s. British Nuclear Fuels might have, I can’t remember, but they were noted for being good for apprenticeships. They did a good course at the time.

HH Do you think the Harris helped you get that job then?

PB Well yeah, it definitely, led on to it and yeah, yes, no problems with that.

KV So people from the companies would come in and sort of say ‘We’re looking for people’ [PB yeah] but then you applied…

PB Then you had to apply, yes..

KV OK

PB Yes, that’s what…I don’t know… I had some…the two lads that came from English Martyrs was Tony Ogden and John Davies. John Davies ended up at English Electric somewhere, and then I lost touch with him, and Tony Ogden, he carried on and did ‘O’ levels. [9:37] And then I heard that his family had moved somewhere up in Scotland, and the last I’ve heard of him, I’ve never met him since I left the Tech, last I heard of him, he was living in London, and that information came from his cousin who lives round the corner from me. [HH right] Yeah, so it's, yeah. It’s funny how you drift apart, you know. [All agree] There was another lad called Bernard Tag, who came to the Tech as far as I know, but he definitely was in the Release from English Electric, on Day Release, and er, he ended up being my best man at my wedding, and I’ve lost touch with him now! I don’t know what happened, whether him and his wife split up or what, but er, you know, one minute they was living in a particular house, and when I went past next time, it was, you know, somebody else living there.

HH Oh right…So when you came into the Harris initially, where were you living at that time?

PB At the Harris? I was living in number 40, Robinson Street.

HH Right…

PB You have to be careful with that one…at that time there were two Robinson Streets, one in Preston, one in Fulwood, [KV Ah ok]

HH Oh…Were you in the Fulwood one?

PB I was in the Fulwood one, yes, hence the 11+ coming under Lancashire County Council instead of Preston [HH Oh, ok] That’s how it worked at the time, yeah. [11:11]

HH Right…

KV So (sorry to interrupt), so at English Martyr’s, you sat for the 11+, [PB Yeah], and then was it a while later that you did the…

PB Yes it was later. We had to go to Fulwood, Secondary School as it was, and sit it again, but it was…I’ve learnt since there were certain levels of allocation given to… [HH ah right] so Preston got given so many places, Lancashire got so many others, and they varied, so it depended, and they only took the top so many then, erm…whether it’s 100% true or not, that I can’t verify…

HH So how did you get into town to go to the Harris when… at that time?

PB Well I’d two choices, I could either catch a bus that came down Plungington, and drop me off by the Adelphi, or I could walk.

HH It’s within walking distance I guess, isn’t it?

PB Oh yeah, yeah. I used to go home for my lunches. [HH Did you?] Yeah. Well, we got a, I think we got an hour then, but I can’t remember exactly, but er, yeah, I could walk home, have my lunch and come back again, and similar when we was apprentices. There was a lad there I got friendly with called Dave Sumner, [12:44] and he became a household friend of me mother’s, because every Friday when we were doing Day Release, I used to jump on a motorbike and he’d be on the back, and down Brook Street and home, yeah.

HH So you would bring your motorbike here would you?

PB Oh yeah, parked it off Marsh Lane [HH Did you?] Yeah, there was a car park there next to the workshops – mechanical workshops were down there at the time.

HH Was that unusual, or were there a few of you with motorbikes?

PB No, no, it was specifically parking for motorbikes in that area. I mean to say I had a small 250cc, when I started off at 18 I think, and then when I found I wanted a bigger bike, I found my legs weren’t long enough to touch the floor, so I got a motorbike and side car, and everybody were having fun with the sidecar. Yeah, we got up to some fun with that. Somebody else drove it out of the car park one day, and he’d never driven a motorbike and sidecar, and I can remember the sidecar wheel ended up running down the curb, with a lamp post approaching, and I’m on the back playing hell with him and telling him to switch it off.

HH Yes! So what did your family think about you going to the Harris?

PB Oh it was a testing time in many ways, erm, my parents were, shall we say, old for the starting a family, me dad had been married before and his first wife had died, he didn’t marry my mum ‘til he was round about 50… I came along when he was 52. I never knew his age until he had to retire which was 65, and er, I’d just done my exam, he retired in May, beginning of May was his 65th birthday, he took us all away on holiday, for a week, which in them days was caravanning mainly, that sort of thing, he liked the outdoor life, and then we came back and that was when a letter was there – I’d passed! Yeah, so… I don’t know how me mum did it, but yeah, she got the school uniform and everything else. All’s he had was a state pension…

KV What did he do? What did your mum do…

PB He was commonly known as a Tackler, they call them loom technicians now, and of course the cotton industry was dying. The Tech used to have some looms of their own, I’ve been told, but I found that out later on, I became Secretary of a local bowling club, and the Treasurer who was a bit older than me, Dennis Roberts, he ended up saying ‘I used to go there,’ er, but he’d been in the – I think he worked for Courtaulds – but he’d been in the trade, and er, he used to go and learn how to weave on the machinery, yeah [16:11]

HH So would your dad have done some sort of training at somewhere like the Harris, or just go straight into…

PB He did something, yeah…because of his age, he was a little bit, you know erm, children should be seen and not heard was the term once quoted when he got a bit upset, and that, but yeah, he talked about going to Blackburn [HH right]. The East Lancs was a major weaving area, but he went to Blackburn on Saturday afternoons, and he walked there [HH Did he?!] Yeah well he’d no, he’d no transport, I mean to say, he saw the first car arrive in Preston, you know…They’d horse trams, but they only went round Preston, they didn’t go to Blackburn, you know, you could’ve probably caught a train, I don’t know, but I don’t know whether he could afford to keep going backwards and forwards, you know, similar thing, its…My mother should have gone to erm, well she wanted to go to Winckley Convent, she passed her 11+, but her family couldn’t afford to get her her uniforms, so she didn’t go, it was as simple as that.

KV So you got your tuition fees paid, after passing the exam, but you didn’t get anything for like, uniform, or…

PB Well she must have got something, but, you know, at 13, mums didn’t discuss things like that with us. The fact that she was in her 40s by then, you know…She was 16 years younger than me father, you know, it was a balance, one was born in the Victorian era, the other a bit later. Yeah, it er, it was hard in some ways, but you know, I learned various things. I used to take papers, when I was 13, til I was 16, 6 days a week, morning and night. Now they think they’re hard pushed if they take, go out one time of day, you know, and that was on top of doing the Tech and the homework….

HH So, getting back to the actual classroom experience at the Harris Institute, did you think the facilities – what were the facilities like?

PB They were better than what I’d come from, and that, yeah…I could probably take you back to the [rems?] if…they are in the same building now cos er, yeah, it was on the bottom corner, I can remember they were putting the Foster…building the Polytechnic while we were in class, and the problem was they were using jack-hammers [laughs] – it was a bit er, yeah, you could feel the building start to shudder, you know…

HH Was it quite different when it became a Poly, from being the College? I know you were doing a different level of class by then.

PB No it carried on more or less the same. You got to a stage where you’d really started to grow up, and you’d been responsible, you know, and that was it, and the Company made it very very plain, like I said, you could get Day Release, but miss out any time and you’re on Night School, and if you choose not to go to Night School, then you’re stuck with whatever you achieve on the benchmark, you know. It was a good thing for me, because I served my time, at my request, on a trade called metal spinning, and unfortunately, the bottom dropped out of the job a few years after I came out of my time, and I had to look at my family situation and everything else, like most people, with a mortgage to pay and everything else, and what I’d learnt, over that period of time, then got applied, and went as Assistant Project Engineer, and on that side of it, then gradually moved on to a number of places, within the company.

HH So I was going to ask, what were your fellow pupils like?

PB I had an enjoyable time, yeah. I just jotted some notes down here. Everybody acted reasonably all right, alright there were the odd daft times…I can remember a Miss Mellor [21:36], who unfortunately was rather a sensitive lady, and some of the lads used to try and take the mickey a little bit, but there was one famous one, was David Green [21:50]. He lived somewhere up I think round Tardy Gate, so I only met him in school, and I ended up having to sit next to him at one stage or another, and when he…he asked permission, he was into chemistry, and he’d made a firework, an indoor firework he said…and she said ‘Oh yeah, alright, OK’ and she allowed him to light it, and I’m sat next to him, a desk like that – two in a desk – the old pot inkwells, and he put it in one of these inkwells, and the things fizzing away, bubbling up, and all of a sudden, I saw Dave dive that way and I thought ‘No’ and BANG! [all laughing] Oh she was shaking, yeah.

HH I feel a bit sorry for Miss Mellor!

PB Well, as I say, she was, she used to…they knew damn well they could get away with it. She was a bit on the sensitive side, and that, and er, and some of the lads’d take the mickey like, you know, aye, so…

HH What was the discipline like then, was she an exception?

PB There were exceptions, yes… the ultimate thing was, you didn’t get caned or anything, you got expelled. [HH Right] That was it, and I don’t think anybody ever got expelled, but they got some severe reprimands occasionally. I heard a tale, though I’d nothing to do with it, of three lads riding a bicycle [23:34] down the ground floor corridors, 3 abreast [chuckles] but that occurred during lunch break I believe. Having said that, sometimes some of the teachers got their own back, [HH Did they?] Oh aye, Mr Tookey was a great one for things like that [23:59]. He was teaching chemistry and he also did the gym work and things. And then Jock Hulse as well, he’s one of the famous names that everybody remembers, he was there til the bitter end I think. But, those two teachers, took us to Saul Street swimming baths [24:22] after school time, and that, and that’s when they got their own back. They could…they actually joined us in the water, and they could lark about as good as the rest of them. I can remember going up onto the 5 metre diving board, in the large pool, and having to jump off it to get out of the way of Jock Hulse [24:43] [all laughing]

KV When you were studying at the Tech, was it a standard curriculum? Did everybody do the same subjects, or could you specialise to any extent?

PB I don’t know whether it was run exactly the same as… John Smith has talked to you, erm, and he’s, well he’s just had his 81st birthday, that puts him four year older than me, erm, but, the implications were, when he came, there was a Commercial section, and a Technical section. I never knew a Commercial section while I was there. [KV Ok] And the classes were mixed, whereas when John went, they weren’t. A lot of the girls used to go into the Commercial side, and well he only ever talked about one boy that he knew that went into the Commercial side, and that, so they, they were all boys when John went. I turned up, I’d been in an all boys school for God knows how many years, and all of a sudden, it’s mixed classes, you know…

HH So there were girls doing Tech?

PB Oh aye, yeah, yeah, and…there were certain times when they split us up into boys and girls, which was things like gym, and sports… and that, but er, and they didn’t, the girls didn’t seem to do metalwork or woodwork, which we did, erm, no, they went their separate ways then, so it was, you know, the form was a joint thing, and for things like mathematics, English, Geography, French…not my favourite subject that, Mr Pomphrey [or Pomfret?] didn’t like me at the end of the day, I used to ask him what page we were on! But, I’ve never had a very strong leaning towards languages. I can do maths and science and everything else, but I could never handle languages well…aye so yeah…[HH what….sorry] Yeah….So.. I liked the biology, [inaudible, rustling]… yep, the only…they taught us biology, I can’t remember the name of the teacher, I know she was married, and that, and I got very interested in it, and then, erm, they only taught us for first year, and then the girls carried on in the second year, and the lads went and did something different, you know, that was it, but I did find it interesting – one of them things.

HH Did you do…I know you said you went swimming after school, they took you swimming, did you do any other things after school with your classmates? [28:22]

PB No, no. We had a full afternoon for sports, which was down over tram bridge, on the field at the side of the river there. It was mainly football, and cricket and that, and if it was unfit to play, ie snow or something like that, the whole school used to go on a cross country run, which started off at the same place at the Harris Buildings on the Avenham Street, through Avenham Park, over tram bridge, down Factory Lane, up Marshall’s Brow to what was then Penwortham Railway Station, and then come back down the side of the railway line, which was a public footpath, across the old bridge over the river, by the Bridge Inn, as it was, and back again through the park. A number of us, was more interested in doing the cross-country running after that, than playing football, and we actually did convince the teachers, that every week we would give him the course we were going to run on, and they used to come and check us occasionally, and all of a sudden you’d see somebody there in the car like you know, and we’d go running. There was about 7 or 8 of us maybe that would go running instead of playing football. The object of it was to get round the course as fast as we could, because when you came back you could get the clean water in the bath. [29:57]

HH Right. Did you have a specific PE kit, like a uniform for PE?

PB Well, yeah, they were specified, I think…everything came from Hellewell’s as I remember. I don’t know, I might even have one of my old school caps, because one of the things with the boys anyway was you never wore your cap. If you did, you got a ducking. [KV Oh, OK] I don’t know why, but that was it.

KV So, if you *did* wear your cap?

PB Yeah - if you did wear your cap, yeah. You always had a cap on you, if somebody wanted you to put it on like, you know, in your pocket, but you never wore it deliberately. [30:41]

KV Ah, OK. We heard one story where somebody was at the bus stop, without the cap on, and one of the teachers saw them…[PB Yeah, that were John Smith!] [All laugh] [HH Yes]

KV So…you didn’t necessarily live near a lot of your classmates, because of coming in, so after, when you went back home, did you still mix with the kids in the street, and…?

PB Oh yeah, yeah.

KV OK

PB Yeah, this is a funny thing, you know, I went to English Martyrs from the age of 5 until almost 13, I can remember the names of some of them, but there’s only the odd one that I ever became friendly with, because when I finished I went back home, you know, all the other lads and that, were living around the building.

KV Was there any kind of…the people where you lived, of a similar age, was there any kind of standoffishness, cos it was quite a special thing coming to the Harris…

PB No, I didn’t feel anything like that, a lot of them as I say, they’d been there since forever, type of thing, we played with them as a child, and grown up with them, no they get er, there used to be, er, rivalry between different locations, especially on bonfire night, because we used to go round collecting wood, and er, one of the easiest ways of collecting wood was the old, er, [seth?] job, you’d go round and nick somebody else’s when they’re not looking, you know, er…and it could get serious I suppose, but I’ve never, nobody ever seriously got hurt I don’t think. It’s not like today, there were no people running round with knives and everything else. If you got into a bit of a rupture about something or other, then you had a fisty fight, that was it, yeah. You know, the area itself, it’s difficult to try and explain to people, the area itself was right on the edge of Preston at the time. Lytham Road existed, up to the railway bridge, and just beyond it, but a lot of the houses on the right-hand side of the road as you’re going west, didn’t exist, the bungalows, they weren’t there, it was grassland. I had a friend called Bill Lewis who lived on Mill Lane, and Mill Lane was a cinder track, and his dad owned the small holding between the brook and Cadley Causeway. It’s now a playing field and er, the rest of it’s been built on. [33:54] But…we were out in the country once we got out there. Bill had a donkey as a pet. Me mother used to play hell about it. He’d come down with flamin’ donkey and a flat trailer, and every time she opened door, donkey tried to get in, she liked crusts of bread and things like that, and me mother only 4 foot 10, and this thing was there with it’s head and everything – it were only truck behind it that stopped it going through door like, it couldn’t get any further, aye. And Bill wasn’t the favourite subject because Bill was shall we say, pretty basic, he could swear like a trooper, and he was there cursing at the donkey and tried to get it to, yeah, that was, no, but they were good times. It was all clean fun, and relaxing. Holidays, as I said, me dad had a friend who was a farmer at Cockerham Sands, and we used to go up there for the fortnight. We didn’t have a car, so me dad got a mate to drive us up there. Once we got there, that was it, until his mate turned up a fortnight later, everything was Shanks’s pony – you walked everywhere, and that, but we had the time of our life as children, me and my sister. It was safe paddling and swimming, and it was everybody out in the farm, if there were anything going on in those days, but that was the life.

HH Did your sister go to the Harris?

PB No, now hang on, where am I now? I think you’re sat here in the same building that she used to work in. [HH oh right] It used to be…Was it Collins? Or – it was a wholesale fr…

HH Was it books, no? Askew…?

PB No, not Askew’s no, it was fruit and veg and all that sort of thing, they now have a big place up… opposite Red Scar works, where Booths have their offices and everything [HH oh yes] I think it was Collins, was the name of the company, but the main trade name they used was Spar [HH oh yeah, yeah]. But yeah, they functioned out of this building. Yeah, she ended up, what was it, what were they called, they weren’t computers, they were called comptometer operators [36:42]

HH Oh yeah.

PB Me dad tr…er, she went away on a course, I don’t know who did the course, but she did a course for about 3 months, and he paid for that, so that she could get the opportunity to come here, aye, so, that’s er, yeah, that’s life.

HH So, erm, what would you say would be your abiding memory of the Harris Institute, and the Poly?

PB And the Poly? Erm, I don’t know. It’s just somewhere I enjoyed. Like I say, you were treated completely differently to the previous school, and that, you were treated like a human being, you could have a bit of fun, but it was serious, when you had to learn, you learned. Jock Hulse used to say ‘You’ll learn four years in two,’ and he wasn’t joking! [37:46]

[Laughs] Yeah, it was graft. But, er it was enjoyable in many ways, finding all sorts of different things out, I mean to say, at my old school, we never did things like chemistry. [HH right]. Mr Tookey were there with his bunson burner and everything going…

KV So was it the first time you did, kind of, science type subjects when you came here?

PB Yeah, yeah. The one thing they used to have at English Martyrs, was when I was 7, there was a Miss Turner, I’ll always remember her, because she was into nature, and she taught natural history, and things like that, and she started off every year with a glass tube, quite a large diameter, filled with different types of soil, different colours, and she put a handful of worms in and you could see how the worms worked, you know, every day you went in, you could see that it was mixing up a bit more, you know, and it er, for seven year-olds, it was [interesting?]

KV And you spent most of your working life at English Electric?

PB All my life, all my working life, yes. I started off at Strand Road, spent 17 years there, moved on from metal spinning to assistant project engineer, then what’s something called a change engineer, which was handling – the RAF used to put modifications out that they wanted doing, and we had to try and get them on the aircraft before they left so, I worked with a team of people, some on the shop floor, myself and a couple of others, and we wrote all the paperwork out, and got the team to do whatever we wanted. We managed to do that with only about one major mistake…[chuckles] yeah, it’s one of those things. Then I went from there to Engineering Release Group, at Warton, and did 22 years at Warton. I also got involved with the union on health and safety, and the last 10 years of my life there, was as the health and safety advisor for a building with 300 and odd people in, so, yeah, I can have a bit of fun every now and again with that, especially when things start coming through the roof… [HH oh dear…]

KV So you moved quite a way from where you started, but, [PB Yeah] would you say it was what you studied here that set you on the way? [40:36]

PB Everything bar the health and safety, was what I’d learnt, you know. The other week we went round the engineering block and of course, it’s completely different now, I mean I worked on a centre lathe as a metal spinner, which is basically a head stock, a tail stock, and whatever rotation between we had put in, those machinery’s, you can’t even tell what’s inside them because health and safety wise, they put whacking great guards round them now. But erm, yeah, I mean to say, I learnt…one thing I can remember was the American control machines coming in at Strand Road, and I’d learnt in here about certain machining options and things like that, and then I went down on the shop floor, one day, and one of the foremen I dealt with, he’s scratching his head, hair out like, you know, he can’t work out why things aren’t right. They started on Jaguar by building wing skins out of solid metal, whereas previously, they’d been folded metal and riveted. The idea was to produce a smoother surface with less wind interference and everything else, but the problem was they start off with a billet about 4 inches thick, quite a fair size, and they’d shape the outer contour of the wing, which was a small amount of metal off the surface, then turn it over. A machine mashes the metal away so that it left a rim every so far, to stiffen it up and make it strong, but the problem was, they were doing it in one go, and then every time they unclamped it off the table, the thing went like that [gestures] because you’d taken that much out of one side it’d stress relieved itself, and that, and they couldn’t get it within about a 25 thousandth of an inch, and I, you know, I turned round and said you can file to 10, of course which didn’t exactly enamour him to me [KV laughs] But then I started saying what I’d learnt and he ‘Oh, we don’t do it like that’ you know. But the concept was you put it on an old machine, which has a certain amount of wear and tear on the bearings, rough it out, let it stress relieve itself, then put it on a second or even a third machine, to do a final cut, and it’s stress relieving itself all the way through, so you get it accurate, and it’ll stay within the dimensions, but er yeah, it were comical were that, they were scratching their heads all over the place. Yeah, they even got to use, what was it called, shot-peening, I don’t know [if you know?] anything about that. It’s basically a form of, like sand blasting, you blast out of a nozzle onto the metal, under pressure, but instead of sand, it’s small ball bearings, so it’s literally like hitting, somebody beating the thing with a ball bearing hammer all over the place, but it’s done very fast, and that was the way they were straightening them up to get them to the right size.

HH And what’s that technique called, sorry, shot…?

PB Shot peening. [Spells it]

HH Not heard of that one.

PB No, it’s not used too often. It’s a bit like metal spinning, you never hear of that anymore.

KV What did that involve?

PB You put a sheet - a circular piece of sheet metal, or something like that, into a lathe, and folded it round a template. [KV Ok]. What are you going to do, use a pan tonight? [KV mm] Well how do you get that shape, for your pan? [KV Ah, OK] That’s a simple thing, it’s a pan, but we were making parts in those days for Canberra, Lightning, we did TSR2, and we also produced stuff for the English Electric Deltic, because we were English Electric, we did everything, and when GEC took over, they took the work away from us, that was one of the reasons why my job started dropping off. There were only four of us, in the whole factory.

HH Did they take that work abroad, or did they just do it somewhere else in England?

PB They changed things completely. In those days there was a major difference in what you could do. A lot of the things that we spun, could nowadays could be pressed, with press tools, but in those days, the aircraft orders were relatively small, so, it wasn’t mass production, and if you are going to produce press tools, they’re expensive to make, whereas metal spinning, you could knock it up on a, well, they originally started out, I believe, using tree trunks, and shaping tree trunks to the shape they wanted and then…we use metal because tree trunks wear after a time, but, er…the funniest thing I ever did was make some gongs for Hong Kong trams! [HH, KV laugh] [46:44.] English Electric used to make trams, and we still had a tool in stores, yes, aye. That were a beast that we’d to…, aye, it were something like an eighth of an inch thick plate and we had to roll it into that dome shape that you get for footbells, yeah. [HH Excellent]

HH Is there anything else that you would like to tell us that we’ve not talked about so far?

PB Er, no, not really, no, not unless you can tell me something about all these people [got that I’ve never seen ?]

HH It would be interesting to find out, or maybe contact some of the teachers…offspring as it were, and meet them, find out what they heard about the…

PB I don’t know whether Jock Hulse ever had any children or not, but that would be interesting because he did claim at one stage that he was also responsible for the design of the modern mini [47:50] which was built originally at Preston, and it er, I don’t know. I have a lad that I used to work with who I bump into occasionally, John Smith has a custom…classic car, and er, I go with him to these shows, and I bumped into this fellow again after he retired, and he’s there with bond minis, he’s got four or five of them, and he does them up and things like that you know, and then he turned up one day with a motorised bicycle, and so, but yeah, the bond mini started out with a 175cc engine, that was a Villiers engine for a motorbike, and you didn’t need a reverse, so you could drive one with a motorbike licence. The whole engine drove the front wheel, and it was on, basically like a turntable, and so when you wanted to turn round, you just turned the wheel hard over and it spun round in it’s own distance.

HH That would be really handy now, wouldn’t it, with everywhere being so busy!

PB But the early ones, you had to lift the bonnet up and use the kick start on the engine to start it, and a 175 cc motorbike engine didn’t go very fast when it had a larger body on it or two people in.

HH to KV Any more questions?

KV I don’t think so. Thanks very much Peter, it’s been…

HH Yes thanks very much.

KV Thanks for your time.

PB I’ve rambled a bit but..

HH It’s been very interesting, thank you.

PB Ok