

Charlie Wharton Transcript of interview in 2015 with Helena Fox, Everwitch Theatre.

My father died when I was 6 months old, left my mother with me, no husband and no money so the only family she had was her own family which consisted of my grandfather, grandmother and my mother's sisters and brothers. All the men were caught up in the 1914 War, so it left more or less a household of women and me! So therefore I was more or less brought up all my young life down among the fishermen, which is what my grandfather was and my three uncles were on fishing boats. So I think that's the reason I am speaking broad Yorkshire! I'm a Bottom Ender!

I went to Friarage School afterwards, and then senior school. In the meantime my mother moved up to Beryl Street. I went to the Central School between being an infant and senior school, so I moved up a bracket in the town, you see, from Bottom End (which everybody is proud to be) to the middle of the town among all the terraced houses.

I won a scholarship to the arts school but there were no jobs in Scarborough for art students., no matter how good you are. We had an art college. But there was no work in it. The only people who went there were apprentices in the painting industry: painter and decorators. And they taught them how to - all the trawlers had painting on them, art deco and all sorts on them in them days.

The painting apprentices went to the art school. The scholarship boys and girls, they went to the Night School which we all went to who got a scholarship, and there weren't very many in all of the town but there were a few. The arts school in those days was in Vernon Road, where the new hotel is now, the Travelodge. It got bombed during the war, so that was the end of the art college! There was no money in it so I went to be apprenticed bricklayer for a firm called Petch in Victoria Road, near the yard access, very old firm, hundred year old and had a staff of about thirty: bricklayers, joiners, plumbers, stonemason, wagon drivers- they were wagon drivers in them days, everybody else pushed a barrow!

I went to work for them and they were virtually church builders. And I was designated to the one in Cordelia Lane, Church of England and I was started there in the footings and the foundations and I was on it until it was handed over to the Church of England by the Marquis of Normanby of all people, of all the hobnobs, and all the workers had to be shooed into a hut so we weren't seen, which speaks of hypocrisy to me.

They also did St Mark's and St Luke's churches, built those, they also did maintenance on nearly all the churches because they were stonemasons, and they also owned the quarry at Cloughton, which is where local stone came from, so lot of churches, lot of stonework, lot of work for the firm and was quite busy until the war came and then all the men were called up or on airfields, making airfields, runways and housing for the troops so the firm was left virtually with a couple of old labourers and a stonemason- and they were all old men- and the young apprentices, and I was one of them.

I was about 16 when I started, When I was 18 I was called up for a medical for the army or whatever you went into, and medically unfit at 18! I'm 92 now! Solely because I had mastoids which I have no hearing in one side- completely deaf, a hole in my skull, that was the method of curing mastoids in them days and I still have the hole in my skull, it hasn't healed up.

I was a baby then, six months old. I remember being deaf when I was young, well deaf-ish I had good hearing in one (ear) but nothing in the other side. I remember getting clouted at school for not paying attention. If I was at one side of the teacher, teaching forty kids, I couldn't hear him. If I sat the other side I could hear him. So I'd get a (mimes being clouted) for not paying attention!

Anyway that got me out of the army- they wouldn't have me. I was 'Grade 4' and if you get a 'Grade 4' from the army it means you're half dead....well I proved them wrong! That's how I came to be bricklayer and that's what led to me being self employed and being a builder.

And after I was 20 I wasn't tied to the firm cos I was reserved until I was 20 as will all apprentices, so if they didn't want to go to the army or the airforce or they wanted to learn a trade, they were reserved until they were 20 and serve as tradesmen after the war.

So at twenty I thought I'm not learning a lot here, I was the eldest of all the tradesmen, there was nobody to teach me anything because there was no men. So I thought, right well I'll go down to London and I'll learn something there.

It was heavily bombed- so was Scarborough-but not as bad as London and I went down to London and I was there for 2 years dodging bombs, rockets, doodle bugs and I was living in one house where we got up one morning and there was no front door left it had been blown down, but I didn't hear it because I was laid on me good ear, so I never heard a thing!

But I never got a scratch all the time I was there over the 2 years. Then when the war was over exactly seventy years ago yesterday. Once you got down there you couldn't leave and they wouldn't sack, because there were so many houses having their roofs blown off, ceilings down, and uninhabitable so we were the blokes who put tarpaulin over the roofs, kept them dry and I was taught plastering when I was an apprentice so my job, one of them, was putting new ceilings and walls up, all over London, no end of places, I went to Lancaster Gate- that was the headquarters of the football club, and still is. It just happened to be the headquarters of the firm I worked for - Longbins of Sheffield. Property works contractors. And that was their headquarters. We slept there, Then we got moved to Wembley Pool. About 2000 men sleeping in Wembley Pool- it was boarded over and that's where I was designated to go to. I worked in Wembley, Lancaster Gate Barking Creek, where the Fords works were, round the mud flats at Barking Creek, That was east London and was heavily bombed.

Then we moved to Kent and the South East where all the doodles landed, just across the water and we're doing the same things there, ceilings and roofs, and the same street twice! In the middle of the street were just a big pile of timber, old window frames and all sorts. A great big pile, a mountain of it so if you wanted anything, batons to work on we went and raked a few out of this pile. If you wanted anything else you went to the pile and got it, and that was sourced from the timber and suchlike cos they saved the timber to burn for a fire because there was no central heating in them days.

When war was declared done and finished I came back home and I got picked up by the son of the old firm who had started his own business and he said "Just the job! Just the man! Come and work for me" and I said "I've just come back from London, I want a week's holiday" (laughs) Anyway I went and worked for him for about two years. He was doing

exactly the same thing as we were doing down in London and also derequisitioning all the hotels. I worked on the Clifton Hotel, St Nicholas Hotel, various hotels, smaller hotels, one on South Cliff, all putting them back to what they were before the troops had moved in. Cos the troops had heavy boots and heavy equipment and most of the walls had plaster marks all hacked off at six foot high, in all these rooms were where the troops were- and you wonder why, wont you? Every time troops move in and out very quickly in Scarborough- Poles, Chekoslovakians, Free Fighters, all sorts, Free French, and they all came with their own equipment, and as troops moved out they brought in their equipment and they all brought their six inch nails- to so they could hold their clothes up! So thats why there was plaster holes six foot high, and when they went they took nails with them, you see? Somebody else came in- bang bang (he mimes hammering a nail in) so a lot of the plaster work was shaken, and so that was one of the jobs that we had. He made a mess of it, this lad that I worked for he couldn't get, well, not a lot of materials, so I thought if he can't make a living out of it, I can. So that's when I started up on my own. I was 23 when I started on my own in 1947 and I retired in 65 and my son runs the firm now, and grandson. I've also got 4 great grandchildren.

C A Wharton and son. Stuart Charles Wharton- he's 61. Times goes on The firm's been ticking over quite a long time without me, thank goodness- I dont want to be in it.

When I was an apprentice tradesmen and labourers could be finished at 2 hours notice, that's all you got. And when it was bad weather and you couldn't work you didn't get paid for it. You only got paid for the work you did. They had building inspectors in them days and if you were working in frost or snow which we did at times and the inspectors came in and said "Stop" cos you can't lay bricks in frosty weather, cos the cement doesn't set, it keeps soft, then freezes and then a couple of weeks later collapses. So you couldn't lay bricks so the gaffer used to send all the bricklayers home, come back when it's decent weather, and I remember one Christmas, I was working for the old firm and there was bad weather, and everything got stopped. And so they sent all the bricklayers home, apprentices went into the yard tidying up, they got paid, and when the weather was good went back to work, and the chappy I went to work with, the bricklayer, and says "Do you know on Christmas week you went home with more money than I did." I was like a second year apprentice then and got fifteen shillings. He went home with 12/6 Christmas week. When you say 12/6 that's 240 pence to the pound. Think about it.

When it got like that a lot of the men went snow shovelling for the council, cos in them days the council cleared all the pavements off and carted all the snow off on wagons and whatever stuff they could get hold of and it was all dumped on the beaches. When the sea came in it washed all the snow away and the next day it was all clear ready for more piles of snow. That's how a lot of men survived- and they had to take their own shovel as well, if you didn't have your own shovel you didn't get a job and they all queued up at Dean Road Corporation Yard> Thats how things were when I was apprentice. Things have altered now I mean to get over that problem of paying men 40 -46 hours a week, an awful lot of the bosses big boys as well, they employ people as self employed so they don't have to pay them their stamps, they don't have to pay their insurance, and they get away with it. When I was apprentice they didn't get away with it. They had to pay or just sack the men. That was my experience of the building trade.

Alf Wade, my Grandad was a chief engineer on the trawlers, in the days when they were all steam trawlers. The steam trawlers hadn't a sail so if the engine broke down they were derelict, weren't they? So the engineers all had to be trained and have a certificate that they were trained apprentice engineer and have a certificate to prove it. And he had his (certificate) and it was displayed in Rotunda Museum in Scarborough when they did a seaside exhibition.

My Grandmother - she was called Fanny Wade. She made hats in her younger days. She was a milliner. My grandfather was engineer and she was a milliner, so they were just a little bit above the grovelling class- when people were frightened of going to the Workhouse, which a lot of people did in those days, and people were frightened of going there. Like going to prison in them places.

They had five daughters and 3 sons.

Well apparently, so they tell me it wasn't talked about a lot but their daughter, my Aunt, walked over a grating, a cellar window grating, which let light into the basement, and it was two feet down, caught her leg and it was amputated. She couldn't work. she was more or less to live on which wouldn't have been very much, fifty pence a week or something like that. There was no money in the house at all in them days.

My Grandmother died through a heart attack, being told by the people come knocking at the door saying your daughter's had an accident and she had a heart attack and died at 62. That was the shock of seeing the policeman knocking on the door. They were very strict people, didn't swear, not at home anyway. I never heard my grandfather swear but all fishermen swear. I mean I don't swear but when I'm on a building site! I mean you're a lady so I don't swear. Thats how things were in those days-very hard.

Grandad was sunk and shipwrecked I think he said seven times in between 1914 wars and the last war. They lost all their kit and they were fitted out again by the Bethel Mission to Seamen which is a cafe now on the Foreshore. They were a charity that looked after the seamen and they kitted them out with new kit so they could go to sea again.

Grandad and his sons were in the boats that got sunk by the submarine that came in the 1914 war and sunk all the fishing boats, what were fishing twenty thirty mile off. He and all the others. The Submarine captain came up and said "everybody on the old tub(the oldest of the fishing boats)" and got all the crew off the boats and sunk them all with gunfire, and said ' They aren't worth a torpedo!"

So he sunk all of the fishing boats with gunfire, put all of the crew on to one boat and said "Bugger off home!" cos they were all Scarborough people, you see and me grandfather says, always said "The Captain of that submarine was a captain and a gentlemen," cos he didn't kill anyone or injure anybody. They were trying to starve us all out in them days you see, so we got no food and thats why he went after all the fishing boats.

And that was Grandad, and he spent no end of time on wrecks and God Knows What. He was on the old Emulator, was Grandfather. He finished on the Emulator. My uncles, one were on Strathdean, Strathclyde and my other uncle was on Cuba, and The Ribey. The youngest son he died with flu epidemic of 1917-1918 at 18 year old so he weren't at sea long. Thats when he died. He got the flu.

So there wasn't a lot of money in fishing, there never has been and never will be. Only the skippers they make the money but nobody else does.

He did own his own house though did my grandfather. And it's still there. It was 22 The Bolts. It had shutters on the front

. There was only my Aunt. And she didn't marry and lost her leg in an accident, and she lived there with Grandfather until he died. He died at 90 and she used to look after him, or he used to look after her, one of the both. The thing about it was, he was a sailor and he liked a drink...like they all do. He liked his rum. Nelson's Blood as he called it! If he got Christmas presents, birthday presents bought, people used to buy him they used to buy him a little bottle of rum. And he used to have a little cupboard by the fireplace which he used to put his rum in,

Anyway he was never ill, never saw a doctor, although he was registered with one and when he eventually died he had said " I dont feel good" so he went and had a lay down in bed and his daughter went up the flight of stairs. She had a wooden leg, stiff with no joints, cut off below the knee and he says "Just go and bring us a drop of Nelson's Blood will you? A nice drop of Nelson's Blood. So she hobbles downstairs, tips in the glass, took it him and says "There you are." He says "You're a bit stingy aren't you lass? Go and put a bit more in it." So she went downstairs and poured some more in and put a double in, took it upstairs. "That's better!" he says, and drunk it. Laid back and died!

So she went to the nearest telephone which is one of the people - they had houses on the foreshore in them days- and one of the owners was a skipper and they had a telephone. So she went to his house and rang her sister up and says "Come down at once home, cos I've just killed your father!" She was convinced she'd killed him with the drink, cos he'd drunk it and gone.

They had to get the doctor and ascertain what he died of. And he said "He just got tired. Got old." Very old, in them days 90 was very old. He said "He just got tired, fed up of living." So that was the end of Grandad.

Shortly afterwards the people from the town hall building inspectors and everything like that, said "The house is unfit to live in." cos it had no bathroom- although very few people had bathrooms in those days- and an outside flush toilet, kitchen, frontroom two bedrooms up on three floors and they said "We're going to close the house. It's unfit to live in." to the old lady (aunt). So they moved her into a council house and put a cordon on the house (22 the Bolts). That was my aunt, the one that lost the leg. And she moved into a flat at Longwestgate- a ground floor flat mind you, She says "I don't know what I'm going to do with the house" "oh we can get rid of the house for" they says, and they did. One of the restaurant owners bought the house for a hundred quid and its a dump now. I'm sure people live in but are not supposed to do. It's used as a store and what have you.

But it is still a house, brought 8 children up in it and themselves, and apart from the young boy that died of the flu, they all lived to 80 or 90 and yet they said it was unfit to live in. So that was no 22 the Bolts, and its still there.

It had shutters on the front. That was the house I grew up in, because I was dumped there you see while mother went to work, had to work. Worked at Rowntrees cafe in Westborough. She got about 25 bob a week for a 46 hour week. So that was her income.

She got a house in Melrose Street and thats where I went to school, Central School in Melrose Street. She let rooms off, young people who needed them, just got married, or come back from the war and such like. So I lived in Melrose Street until I got wed, and then I bought a house in Melrose Street. I lived there for a while, then bought another in Melrose Street. Then moved into West Square. Moved about a lot. Job doing houses up, putting new fireplaces in.

My aunt Ena was a beautiful lady, she was 96. She was married to the last of the kipper people, a man named Youngman. Youngmans were generations of smoking kippers and he was the last one, and she married him when she were young. They didn't have any family and I sort of kept me eye on her, cos she was very old, but bright as a tack, sharp as a tack. But her hips went spongy and so if she had to go and see solicitors or anything like that i used to run her down in the car and just pop in once a week see if she was ok. That photo was Christmas time, look Ive got my Christmas jumper on And she used to come down here for her Christmas dinner but when she got very old and she couldn't get out, my wife cooked a Christmas dinner here, put it in the back of the car and we went up to her house and had Christmas dinner with her. And that was the last one, and that was taken. She was a lovely woman. She was the youngest of all my aunts- I had five. She was the youngest one and she looked after me a lot cos I was passed from pillar to post, I was a nipper then. Ena Youngman.

My grandfather and grandmother said what are we going to call this one, cos they were running out of names, with five girls anyway he came in the next day and he said I've got a good name for her you dont often hear this but I've seen it Scotch boat came in and they call it Ena! So she got named after a Scotch fishing boat Ena. Ena Youngman.(instead of Ena Wade).

Mother was Nellie, and there was an Elsie, a Lily, there was five altogether. The girls married barring the one. Some moved out of town, as they do, one married a railway guard and worked at Woolworths on the cosmetic counter, she was in charge of that. He was a guard and came to Scarborough on the train as a guard, had a walk round the town, met up and they married and then they went to Louth in Lincolnshire. There was another one she went to Doncaster. So they were getting split up. Ena lived in Scarborough cos there was fishing, they were fishing merchants and curers, he used to cure smoke anything. Salmon, hams, anyone wanted smoke stuff they used to take it to him, and he used to hang it up on these real high building- 30 ft high with nothing but slats across and they used to light fires underneath which was made of chippings, oak chippings and oak sawdust on top of the chipping so it burnt very very slowly and made a lot of smoke oak smoke, and the walls were just lined with tar, shone all the walls, generations had smoked in this building, they owned it and it was passed on from generation. It was at the bottom of Durham Street and all that area was smoke houses and the big firms used to travel with the Herring fleets which circulated around the whole of the coast of the British Isles, going round and round so they were all mobile, and when they used to get to Scarborough they used to hire one of these smoke houses and I think they had 3 did the Youngmen Family.

He was 69 when he died, and retired at 60. It was a good job he did as he only got 9 years retirement and he was a businessman. Very sharp very keen.

He was nice to her, He was too straight, he didnt drink, he did smoke, and so strict teetotaller he wouldn't have a drink at his wedding even. He was so straight sort of a bloke, cant relax very well.His only entertainment was when he bought a car. He used to like a nice big car. And he had a humber and i think he enjoyed washing damn thing and polishing it! Too much hard work for me. He was very good to her, and she was good to me.

Elsie the eldest one married a barber, and they had premises in Newborough. Eastborough, sorry, down at the bottom. And he had a hairdressers looking out toward the beach and she had the front of the shop in Eastborough selling postcards=- silly postcards

for trippers and tobacco and cigarettes at the front. Haircuts at sixpence, always sixpence. It was hard work making a living at that. There were 2 or 3 married businessmen,

Old age pension was 50 pence in them days- ten bob so everybody else- on a Saturday night all the family used to go down (to Grandad's) and some would take groceries or make bread, cakes, the like, and take a basket of that down. All the lads when they were fishing, when they landed, they got their batter fish cos you couldn't keep fish in them days so it was shared round the family you see nobody had refrigerators, so they were more or less brought up on gifts, were my family as they did in them days, families kept families. You all looked after the old people. Now the old people have got to look after the younguns I'm afraid.

GREAT GRANDFATHER

Great grandfather was a sailmaker on the great big old clipper boats. He used to go to America and all over the world on them. When you think of a sailmaker you think of sailmaking- oh good he made sails but when you think of a boat what is run by an engine the engine runs the boat, whereas those boats (clipper boats) were run by the sailmakers and the captain. They tell me, I don't know how true it is, but they used to keep spare sails and big rolls of sail cloth on board, so if anything blew away they had to make them so the boat went, so it sailed, so that was an important job. He could read and write in them days. He saw to it that my grandfather when he went to sea, that he got an education, cos education was I think it was a penny or tuppence a week and the education was a slate and a piece of to write on. And thats how granddad got his education and he also read books and he also read poetry of all things.

My grandfather came of Gateshead, very broad yorkshire cum Geordie. He had no money, he had nowt, and only had what he had given to him.

When my mother was having to go to work, she'd take me down to Bottom End from Melrose Street to my grandfathers and then Aunt Ethel her with the one leg, she used to take me up to school to infant school on Longwestgate. Cut through all the steps and back passages from the Bolts and you're soon in town at Longwestgate. You didn't go anywhere if you didn't walk and so I used to go there. Then when I used to go to school on Melrose Street I became a latchkey kid. She used to go to work at quarter to nine and I used to go to school at quarter to nine. And she had to work til 6 o'clock more or less, by the time she got home and from 4 o'clock to 6 o'clock i was a latchkey kid, had to let myself in. From 5 or 6 years old. Cos there was a junior school in Melrose, then back to Friarage- back to the Bottom End again.