

BEFORE I FORGET. by Ken Scott.

In my experience, your kids don't care a buggler where you come from, where you've been, or what you've got up to during your time on the earth. But when you're gone and it's too late to ask, they are consumed with interest.



Right then, here is a short history/ tree, My great Granddad was WALTER ARTHUR born march 1841 he married a lass who's surname was WHEELHOUSE, He died June 1890
My granddad was CLEMENT ARTHUR Born 1877 he married 1897 to my grandmother EMILY SHIRES. Her dad was BINGLEY SHIRES. Born 1855 at Wakefield Yorkshire.
he was married in June 1877 at High Green, he died in 1934 his daughters SARAH born 1879 and EMILY born December 1878 who married Clement, who died 22 July 1930. at High Green. Clem and Emily are buried at Burncross.

Clem worked many years at Thorncliffe ironworks, Chapeltown as a joiner / pattern maker. he made the wooden shapes for moulds used in casting iron, a highly skilled job
Clem and Emily lived at 140 Wortley road, high green raising a large family
IVY married ARNOLD SHAW Dec 1898. BEATRICE married ELMSALL 1900 VIOLET married JOHN (Kebber) PLATTS 1902. VERA married ERNEST NEWTH June 1905. ALFREDA married ALLAN UTLEY March 1907 ' FLORENCE ELEANOR (me mam) married ERIC ERNEST SCOTT 1909. ' CLEMENT VICTOR married 1911. GRACE married PETER POLLOCK ' RUBY married DENNIS RODGERS.
ME DAD.

I never found out much about my dad, after all he buggered off and left us when I was young. except he walked it to Howbrook from Batley or somewhere, and got a job on a farm. he ran away from home because he was the youngest of a family of boys so he was bullied. maybe that's why he was such a nasty bad tempered bastard.

He met us mother at High Green pictures (cinema) where she worked as a usherette / ice-cream seller. They got married. but as the Arthur family was rather large and the house, 140 Wortley road, was small they moved into a caravan behind t club. our Audrey was born there, it must have been pretty cold in that caravan, so they got a house at Hoyland Common West's yard, our Joan was born there, then me, dad must have been unemployed at that time because he had some training as a radio repairer (no TV in those days) he also took up singing and sang in a choir on the B.B.C. at one time, he became a good friend of Richard Tauber who was a famous tenor, a sort of pop star at that time, Tauber was supposed to be my Godfather but cried off due to illness, dad also worked as a groom for Lord Wharnccliffe at Wortley hall, he went so far as getting a pair of jodhpurs, me mam dint like him swanking about in them so her and our Audrey cut em up and pegged them into a rug, In between Audrey and Joan me mam had another boy, unfortunately it was born dead with a cowl over its face , apparently sailors have a superstitious belief that a cowl brings good luck so she was offered money for it by a passing sailor, she refused the offer, according to our Joan, Our Joan was born in Mexborough Montague hospital on 16 04 1936, and christened at John Knowles church Hoyland, same as me 12 08 1937, I was christened Kenneth Richard, but as Tauber pulled out due to a bought of flu , dad dint register the Richard bit, leaving me with slight problems later in life, we then moved to a old house on Lanky Row, Hawshaw Lane Hoyland, but dint stop long, for some reason we moved all the way to Birmingham, 17? Aston Lane, Perry Bar, There was a munitions factory very close and the Germans where bombing Birmingham a dangerous place to live, dad may have been working on war work or he had a bad back so he avoided call up but he did join the home guard who had to run out in an air raid to throw sand on phosgene bombs before they set the place on fire, anyway, we were evacuated, mam Audrey Joan & me, I was very small but can remember clearly being carried in the dark to a railway station , and standing on the platform when the biggest scariest thing came towards me, out of the dark, clanking, hissing steam, fire and smoke. I was so terrified I think I shit myself, and just out of nappies too. So the four of travelled up to Yorkshire, finishing up at aunty Graces in Hoyland. we'd had nowt to eat so we were all starving, no buffet cars then, luckily there was bread and butter pudding bubbling away on t oven top, there was nobody in to ask who's it was, so the four of us scoffed the lot, the best thing I ever tasted , and loved it ever since, The four of us where shuffled between relatives for a while, I don't know for how long, but mam [oat patience, went to Birmingham to fetch him, mam said he left a pregnant woman behind, But anyway he was back and got a job as a pipe fitter at Newton Chambers, Thorncliffe works, he dint know owt about fitting pipes, but luckily he had a fitters

mate who did, Dad was a chancer. working at Thornccliffe he was entitled to a company house, so we found ourselves living in Westwood row, end house top row, at the other end was a "Tin Tabernacle" a local name for a corrugated iron church. The two rows were built to house blackleg miners in 1870 when the members of the miners union were locked out in a strike over working hours and wages. It may have been that the army had their eye on him as he got a job on a farm at Nether Haugh, Rotherham, this meant he wouldn't be : called up: [reserved occupation] like mining and he wouldn't go down the bloody pit but he was still in the home guard, so he did his bit for the war effort. We were living in between Sheffield and Rotherham, the Luftwaffe were dropping a lot of bombs on them both with us in the middle, Birmingham may have been safer. Across the lane was a sloping field down to a small sewage works, our Joan climbed into an old peggy tub for some reason it rolled down the field with her in it, I got the blame of course, we rode round on the sprinkler thing a lot, we were happy kids, but mucky,

us next move was to STAINTON, our house was Rose cottage, practically in the farm yard, where dad now worked, Our Pat was born there, one day a steam traction engine came pulling a threshing machine which started work just outside our back door, it was an amazing thing to see, men were tossing sheaves of corn into one end and corn went into sacks at the other straw came out of the side and was tied into bundles or staves, the chaff piled up underneath, I was sent under to scoop it out being a big lad for my size. big wheels and diving belts whizzing round were a bit of a worry but I kept my head down

The Battle of Britain was at its height, so we were used to seeing aeroplanes whizzing round the sky, but once we were playing in the fields, we looked up to see a parachute coming down, all of us ran towards it, till the oldest kid said ' It might be a German', with that we turned round and ran the other way, fast, we ran and told dad, after all you left things like that to the home guard, We moved again, but only just down the road to RAILWAY COTTAGES, our furniture didn't go on a farm cart this time, dad's home guard mates just picked it up and carried it, it weren't far, and we didn't have much furniture, The cottage had a splendid iron fence all round it, till men came to cut it up and take it away, it was needed to make tanks for the war, They left the gate standing though , which looked funny,

Our next move was to 4 Well lane Wadworth, (can't remember much about that place except the teacher made us run round the playground wearing our gas mask, awful

We flitted again, to Wilsic next. All our furniture and us all onto a horse drawn cart, good fun, our house was the first one at the end of a long drive to the farm, there were still a lot of warplanes about as we were a short distance from Bawtry airfield,

I was stood outside one day when a spitfire flew towards me up the drive, so low I could see the pilot. I think he winked at me through his goggles, exciting times, but dangerous. it was a very long walk to school because we were back at Stainton school. Neville was born at Wilsic. a blue baby apparently, dad put a new clock together from a kit. he did it wrong because when he wound it up it just whizzed round and round, we couldn't stop laughing,

Our next move was to 3, Tong lane, Tong, near Driffild, The house backed onto a graveyard, so close in fact we could read the gravestones from the kitchen window. I could read by this time just, the house had a dark spooky cellar plus lots of stairs, also a lot of huge cupboards with huge shelves that came in handy when Aunty Freda visited with all her kids, they slept in the cupboards, one to a drawer with the baby's cot below, to break the fall of anyone falling out, It was here that I was taken ill with TB Infected glands in my neck, I was admitted to Bradford Children's Hospital for an operation. I don't know who paid for it, there was no NHS. in those days,) was in a week, coming out just in time for the next flit.

GEDGRAVE, near ORFORD, this time, the house was called Stone Cottage but the previous occupants hadn't moved out so we slept in the cow shed / milking parlour, away in a manger, some kindly people down the lane gave us breakfast, the first time in my life I ever had WEETABIX The war was still on, we had an officer billeted at our house and hundreds of

soldiers living in tents all around us. great for us kids as they got sweets, we didn't get sweets, they were on ration, I think me mam sold our ration to buy food, the officer lived in a cupboard over the stairs and one day he showed me his revolver, I could only just pick it up, later on I picked it up again and noticed it was a bit heavier, the soldier panicked, it must have been loaded, The soldiers were there use the anti aircraft guns sited nearby to shoot down flying bombs called 'doodle bugs' on their way to drop on London, the gunners only had to score a near miss to tip the bomb over, that stopped the engine causing to fall out of the sky, On us! We sheltered under the stairs because if you saw a bombed house, the only thing left standing was the staircase. not well thought out, but you had to go somewhere Another danger we were warned about by the police were butterfly bombs, these were dropped by the jerries 'Germans' at night, caught in the bushes and that and only exploded if touched , I never saw one but we collected lots of strips of silver paper good for Christmas decorations I found many years later it was dropped by the R.A.F. to fool German radar, another thing that puzzled me then and is quite obvious to me now was the sight of three Lancaster bombers flying lower than the hundreds of others we saw every day, slung underneath were a couple of big barrel shaped things it's obvious to me now they were the dam busters bravely flying out to destroy the German dams , tragically not many flew back,

There was heavy guns and ammunition stored all around our house plus heavy bombers flying overhead so it makes sense that we were evacuated, for whatever reason we moved to our next home, WISSET Pine tree cottage, It was very quiet at Wiset, we even met POWs working in the fields, Dad still worked the land, mainly cows, even our Audrey worked as a Land army girl, so when I woke up one dark night and saw an apparition I thought it was her, us kids slept together in a big bed, Audrey somewhere else, anyway our room was up in the eaves with just a very tiny skylight therefore it was pitch dark. I woke up and saw a ghostly figure standing at the bottom of the bed. I ducked under the blankets, terrified, laid there wondering what or who it was, I reasoned it must be the moon shining on the brass bedstead bottom, so, I peeped out and there was nothing there, extremely relieved I laid back down only to find it was bending over looking down at ME! I went straight back under the covers and even though I was frightened to death went straight to sleep, I reasoned that it was Audrey popping in to check on us before going to work, I dint say owt about it till many years later Audrey said she thought that house was haunted so I told her what I d seen she said she never looked in on us and anyway she never got up before daylight, you can't work in the dark, it was a ghost after all, I can only describe it as having a slightly glowing, fuzzy, human form, its face had dark area's where its eyes should have been, but I know it was looking at me, closely. We were still at Wiset on V.E. day Audrey met Des Fletcher there, his family owned Wiset Lodge Farm, she later married him, the school we went to was just over the fence from our house, I got into awful bother for getting our Pat, she was about four, to pass a bag of toffees over, all my mates got one, I got a good hiding as they were a month's ration, I blamed our Pat, after all she pinched them out of the house, walking up to the farm one day, A huge shire horse came trotting up behind me, I started running, the horse started running, I ran as fast as I could go with the horse thundering along close behind, some farm workers stood there laughing their heads off, while I was screaming mine off, I dint know that shires were the gentlest creatures on earth.

Our next move was to NORTH WALSHAM. Bluebell common, we celebrated V.J. Day there, with a party and a huge bonfire, Des Fletcher kept turning up on his old motor bike, we all had to push it to get it started,

We were soon on the move again, to Glebe farm Winteringham. Christopher was born there and Audrey got married to Des, while living there mam and dad got pally with a couple called Jack and Milly Kirkby, They had two boys about my age, we got on well together, as did our parents, Jack and Milly wanted a girl though and as dad was good at that sort of thing he helped them out, Jack was pleased about it, strangely enough There was no doubt who her father was because I saw her years later, she looked exactly like our Joan with Pats ginger hair.

We moved from there (quickly) to Low Laiths Farm, Ardsley near Wombwell, it was 1947, the year of the big snow, it was a yard deep, we had to walk on top of the stone walls to get to a

bus stop to get out to school at Stairfoot. I well remember seeing a beautifully painted narrow boat chugging past on the Barnsley canal , it was probably the last one, the canal was closed that year, sadly anyway, we dint stay there long, a big flit this time, to 8, HIGH STREET, PORTBURY, SOMERSET, Our Des was born here, it wasn't very long before Jack and Milly turned up, she was very pregnant, the baby was born nearly strait away, mum saw right away it was dads and showed the Kirkbys the door, things were alright for a bit, but dad got up to his old tricks again, mam and dad were fighting and as dad was smallest he always lost, his new 'bit on the side' was called Eileen, mam took Joan away with her to Audrey's I think, dad was never in so it was left to me to look after the kids, I invented games, we played blind man's buff, I made em bread an jam, we ran riot for a few days, so I was mildly disappointed when mam came back, although I was very glad really. we were filthy and she made us have a bath , Bathing was difficult, the bath was upstairs with no water supply, the house had no hot water anyway, outside was a copper plus a very large water tank fed from roof water, the method we used was to light the fire under the copper, fill it with water from the tank with a bucket, when it was hot mam filled the bucket with hot water, then passed it up to me through the bedroom window, I passed it to Joan who poured it into the bath at the other side of the room , we all used the same water, eldest first after me mam, young ens all in together, What fun, but mam was pregnant again, dad ran off with Eileen leaving us in a tied cottage with nothing, we managed for a while on charity, but mam had to go somewhere to have the baby so the family split up, I was sent to a place in Cheddar called 'The Bellows' run by a charity. The most miserable Christmas I ever spent, but things picked up after Christine came along, we were back together minus dad of course, council houses were very scarce due to the blitz, millions wanted housing and we weren't a special case, but on top of a hill near PORTISHEAD at REDCLIFFE BAY was an old army camp, once used to house soldiers who manned a battery of heavy guns put there to defend the Bristol channel. we were moved into one of these Nissen huts as they were called. we got called 'squatters', which was wrong because mam would go and paid 7/6 a week rent inc' electricity. we moved ourselves to a better hut when some people moved out, so that we had a much better view of the Bristol Chanel. the hut was made of corrugated iron so as you would expect it got mad hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, so we needed the two solid fuel stoves, mam got a job at MUSTADS NAIL FACTORY, in Portishead, they made horse shoe nails so having a bit of money at last, she bought me a bike, now after I'd made the porage, fed the kids, and got them to the bus for school, I went to school on my bike, happy days, (Joan was working too) we needed fuel for the stoves, mam got a sailors kit bag from somewhere, handed it to me together with two bob and told me to go to the gas yard by the docks after school and buy some coke, I did and after pushing it through the frame of my bike I was able to push it along, I couldn't pedal. from the gas yard to our hut was about six miles mostly up hill, there was two ways I could go, NORE RD which was all uphill or WEST HILL I chose the former, it was hard work, very tiring so I tried West hill. much steeper, but with a few rests, holding it on the brakes, I got to the top then YIPEE ! ! ! I climbed on and Coasted the rest of the way, after a few weeks doing that, twice a week, it got easier or was it that my little legs were getting stronger. I was handed another job to take the laundry to the BAG WASH , it meant taking a large bag of mucky washing on the bus to Ashton Gate, catching a bus from there to Elephant an Castle, hand that bag in at the bagwash, collect another with clean stuff in , pay for it, then catch a bus to Princes st. back to bay then go to school, that took half a day, my education suffered but I only paid half fare some of the conductors got so used to me that I travelled free they just gave me an old ticket to show the inspector if needed The bagwash was so called because they didn't take the washing out of the bag just put it through a tank of chemicals (trychoethelene) still in the bag to dissolve the dirt, it sometimes dissolved the clothes, Health and Safety? not invented yet, , There was no sign of a council house yet, although many of the family's at the 'camp' had been housed, after a family moved out their hut was demolished, so even neighbours were scarce, mam's friends the Clarks were housed, so after a couple of years mam was at the end of her tether. she put the kids into homes run by nuns, I was sent to live with the Clarks to Finish my schooling, as I was on my last term, Pat, Chris ,Des, Christine went to CLEVEDON. Nev to Kent,

mam took our Joan to stay at our Audrey's. My life at Mrs. Clarks was hard, they were Scottish which meant they were a bit tight, even though mam sent them money they told me she hadn't and I was living on their charity, I spent a lot of my time patching my trousers and darning my socks, I had to put cardboard in my shoes each day as they had holes in, apart from that I was ok. I still had my bike and rode to Clevedon now and then to see the kids but the nuns would only let me see Pat, seeing the others might upset them they said, very sad, Anyway, the time had come for me to leave school and Mrs. Clarks, I was extremely glad to see the back of both of em, Mrs. Clarks last task was to drop me off at Temple Meads station with a train ticket to Cambridge. saying 'your mother will meet you at the station' It turned out it wasn't the station I arrived at in London. I had to change trains, not only that, I had to change stations, I was only 15, on my own, and in a strange city, but I had a tongue so I found my way by underground, then caught a train to Cambridge, mam wasn't there, stupid Mrs. Clark in her telegram hadn't said train or bus station, or what time so mam had to meet a train then go over to the bus station, meet a bus and so on, but it all worked out in the end, it was marvellous seeing mam again, she took me with her to a prefab where she was housekeeping for an old bloke, but me being there dint fit in with his plans, so the old bastard threw us out, we kipped at Audrey's but with Joan there as well, too crowded, Now, all us aunties must have known what was going on because they all told mam 'bring thi sen back up ere, we'll see thi reyt' so the two of us went to Yorkshire to settle down. settle down? no bloody chance!!



1 Redcliffe Bay, the last remaining piece of "The Camp". We called it "The Slab"

SUPERMAN (BOY) to the rescue

When I was young and living at REDCLIFFE BAY in the nissen hut, all us kids were a harem scarem lot, building dens, climbing on the rocks by the sea and in the nearby quarries. we had an old fashioned pram, without a hood in which we put our Chris, him being too small to keep up with us. there was a farm at the bottom of a sloping field nearby, we were all playing around in the field one day with two mates, (twin brothers) I was walking up the hill on my own when I spotted the two twins with the pram at the top, our Des was sitting in it as usual. one of em pushed it off down the hill, to my horror it was heading towards a barbed wire fence surrounding an old caravan, the pram was gathering speed, the twins had run away so it was up to me, I started running as fast as I could go, I didn't think I had any chance of getting to the pram, or what I was going to do when I got there, all I could see was our Chris' terrified little face rushing towards five strands of barbed wire so I ran faster and when I realised I wasn't going to make it I took a despairing dive towards the fast approaching pram, then a miracle happened, I should have hit the ground but I didn't I just kept on going, then just as the thing rushed past me I reached out and my hands found the handle, I held on like grim death, not out of the woods yet

I thought this things going to pull me into the barbed wire. then gravity came to the rescue, I fell to the ground like a stone, dragging the back of the pram down with me, the front reared up, the wheels and the underneath of the pram hit the wire and bounced off, our Chris rolled out onto the grass, I picked him up and looked around expecting to see people applauding my superhuman effort, not a single person in sight, no one to witness except our Chris and he was too young to know what I had achieved, except he did remember, some years later I told him about it and he said he remembered it quite clearly, once again I felt like a hero, good old Des



MINOR TO MINER

Back with me mam in Cambridge we were stuck for somewhere to live, after the old bugger chucked us out of his prefab we took aunty Violets offer and moved up to Yorkshire, 59 Westwood row, High Green. it was a bit cramped as they had a large family, I had to find a job, a bit difficult as I dint speak the same language, my uncle Allan in Pilley told me to ask for a job at t'pit, tha'l av to tell em that tha'l go darn t'pit when tha's done in t'screens. (I was picking up the language quickly) so I saw Sid Steel and got a job. it was in the screens, sorting the coal from the "muck", it was an easy job, the best thing was the showers, there wasn't a bath at Westwood row, I was paid £6-6/-, I got the six bob. I soon got sent to Barnsley main pit for underground training, after that being 16 years old I was put to work at Howbrook pit,, round about then an old Bloke called Maxie told us he knew of a caravan going cheap, mam went and got that straight away. she got permission to put it behind uncle Denis's pub "The Salutation" at High Green, it was a small caravan just big enough for the two of us. even more crowded when our Joan turned up from Cambridge for some reason, we weren't in it for too long as we were awarded a council house on school road, straight away mam made plans to fetch the kids, I went with her to Clevedon to pick up the three youngest, then to Portishead to collect some belongings from Mrs. Clarks, only to find she'd flogged the bloody lot except for my Bike my model steam boat and a homemade wool rug, they had knocked a hole in my boat also when

mam unwrapped the rug on the train it was just an old filthy worn out pegged rug, she was so mad she opened the window and threw it out, later on I was shocked when Christine after talking ever so posh said "I want a shit" we found out she was saying was I want to sit, a posh way of saying I want a shit, dad never sent any money so mam got a job cleaning at Thorncliffe, I was down t'pit, good money and a free coal allowance, Mam swapped houses for one with cheaper rent on The Circle, Our Joan married Allen Hewitt and moved into a wooden shack down Elsecar, they kept a few hens and when they moved to a caravan at High Green we walked over to Elsecar with a pram to get the hens, I'd been told to build a hen pen in our garden for em, after a lot of running about we got the buggers into the pram, then we were told half of em had been given to Allan's dad, we released half, about 6, but the other six were too quick for us and they escaped, so more running around like headless chickens till we got our share back in the pram the wheeled the bloody things all the way to High Green, we were all absolutely knackered. So I was working underground at Howbrook, with two lads, Bruno and Norman, Bruno was a Pole on the run from the Russians. Norman was the pony driver, the horses name was Dick, a good horse but broken winded, I learned later that Dick could count, his earlier job at the pit bottom was to pull tubs of coal from the end of the haulage rope to where they could run down to the shaft, ten tubs coupled together, if the lads left eleven tubs on Dicks cobble chain he would go forward but hearing eleven clanks as the tubs checked out he wouldn't go any further. no other pony would do that, so it meant that Dick could count, one day, taking some arch girders to the face we had to go down a drift too low for the horse, the two lads had to take them by hand leaving me to hold the horse. while standing there I noticed an old man working nearby, doing a Bet of clearing up, he looked a Bit odd as he was wearing an old Mac and a flat cap, (nowhere to fix his cap lamp) he told me a strange tale I remembered for years, "I should have been killed with my father in an explosion in 1914 "he said but he was off work with a badly swollen knee, and his brother took his place on the machine, the machine that touched off the explosion that killed 11 men including his dad and brother. I was 16 at the time, the old man must have been around 20 years old to have been working on a coal cutting machine in 1914, so, he would have to have been born in 1906, when I met him he must have been over 65 and shouldn't have been working underground by himself, and due to the fact that I'd never seen him before and I never saw him again, he could have been a spirit come back to tell me his story I repeated his tale in 2014 to Pete Clarney at Wharcliffe colliery club, he did some research and organised a commemoration of the disaster. making a really good job of it including a DVD video, the only name missing from it is mine, not fair really as it was my idea.

I worked on supplies for two years, at 18 I could have gone to work at the coal face but didn't like the look of it, the seam worked at Howbrook was the Whinmoor, 2 to 3 foot high, Bill Weymouth the manager was a crafty old bugger though and he put me on a button job, stood in the same place all shift stopping and starting a conveyor, deadly boring. a few days later he came passed so I asked if I could do my face training, "I'll put thee on t'waiting list " he said. it was a short list as the next day I was told to buy a pair of knee pads, after I'd done my 6 weeks training I was put on the "market" which meant I stood at the pit bottom to see who was having a lake day, (a day off) then I went with that gang, going to different parts of the mine meant I had to carry my tools, quite a long way, I soon sorted that out, all the men locked their tools up on a rod each using a number lock so they didn't lose the key, I found a way of opening number locks so I just used the tools of the chap who was laking, still getting tool carrying money though, I then got set on as back man on a coal cutting m/c with Harold Mallinson the years passed and me and Mally worked together on "undercutting" M/c s "Anderson" disc shearers then trepanner cutter loaders, The next face I worked on was the top Fenton seam, I had a scary moment there I was walking down the face which was six foot high, the face had only just been developed so it hadn't had its first weight, which meant the roof was only supported by the coal face where I was and the coal still in situ, plus of course the rows of Dobson hydraulic props, each capable of holding up 50 tons, I was halfway down the face on the coal side of the conveyor when things started to happen, all the Dobson props started creaking, which meant they were at their limit, I decided not to run, just crouched by the face and kept my eye out, the props started flying across the conveyor and banging into the coal face, luckily I had my prop key so I just picked them up and set them up around me and waited, soon with a noise like thunder several hundred tons of rock fell as the roof

caved in together with a blast of wind, six feet from me, things calmed down after that and I was able to chuck the props back over the chain and carry on, that face was cut by a disc shearer which pulled its self along a steel rope, the rope should have been close to the face out of harm's way, but the face had been allowed to take on the shape of a banana allowing the rope to be close to the prop line, the shearer driver carelessly lowered a prop that had been set on the chain to hold it down, without reversing the machine to slacken the steel rope, he'd done this before injuring a man on the face. me and Eric Haworth were working together 30 yards up the face, as the rope under terrific tension sprang across missing me by a fraction I said to Eric "that cunt's going to kill somebody doing that," I carried on with what I was doing till owd man Sylvester came up and said "oh poor old bugger" I looked round to see Eric laid out dead, the rope had hit him in the head with terrible results I stopped the chain and screamed for help, we carried Eric out of the pit. that was my last shift at Wharnccliffe Silkstone Colliery, Howbrook drift, it was on a Wednesday and as the pit stood for two days out of respect for the dead man, my notice was up that Friday, I didn't go back even for my tools which I didn't need on my next job anyway. which was a firm in Sheffield ..

DESCALING CONTRACTORS MAY 1964

I'd left the pit knowing that I wouldn't get called up by the army as I was too old at 27, a mate who lived just round the corner Wally Sanderson, had told me the firm he worked for wanted a man to look after their acid pumps, I saw a man called Rolley telling him that I was a pump fitter, I lied of course but after all I had worked with water pumps, no difference. I got a telegram from John Rolley right away to not go to the yard but to go with Wally to John Summers steelworks on the Wirral, Wally had a gang of three including me plus himself, we were descaling Peabody trays, in a long tank with a pump taking acid from one end and delivering it via a long hose to the same end, I could see right away that Wally knew nowt, I asked him what the pump was for, he told me it was to circulate the acid but wouldn't it be better if we pulled the hose to the far end of the tank " I asked him, to aid the circulation. "mind your own business I'm in charge here" he said. there were two Irish lads with us and he went up to them and said " I've just had a good idea, if we move the hose to the other end of the tank",,,, one of the lads was called PATSY FARREL, a really nice bloke,(remember that name for later), Wally travelled there on his m/c combination, I wasn't going to go all that way on that thing, I went in my Morris 1000 getting 6 pence a mile, we were living in dig's in Connors quay, not very good, she served up rhubarb every day, soon after that job I was sent on a job as foreman no less, (John Rolley recognised talent), to descale two boilers at a gas works in Norwich, after doing a remarkable job I sent my labourer back in the lorry so I could pop down to Cambridge to visit our Audrey, just outside Norwich a young couple were hitching a lift, I pulled up to ask where they were going, Cambridge they said, "jump in that's where I'm going" but said I was on my way to Sheffield, the lad who had ginger hair said that the girl who had long black hair had lived with him in her parents caravan in Sheffield, that made sense as she looked like a gipsy he on the other hand came from Cricklewood London, I dropped them off in Cambridge where they said they were going to do some fruit picking, My very next job was at Sutton Manor Colliery Lancashire, I was given another labourer called Gillever. on the way to the job we got talking he asked if I was married, I said yes, was he? I was he said but she ran off with a Londoner when we lived at Handsworth in a caravan. I don't know where they are now, I enquired if he had ginger hair and came from anywhere near Cricklewood? yes that's right he said, in that case I can tell you exactly where they are, fruit picking in Cambridge,,,

GROWN UP

Our Barry asked me to run him over to GOOLE , He wanted to see his girlfriend but his

mates had let him down with transport, I told him no, I didn't want to sit there like a lemon while he was with his Bird, don't worry he said we've fixed you up with a reyt nice lass, I d nowt else on so I said ok, We went to a house in SOUTHERN street where Barry met a lass called Marlene, then a girl came in and was introduced to me as JEAN who's dad had a Bike shop. She was my blind date, we all went to a dance at the baths hall Goole, no good to me as I couldn't dance, never learned, the girls were going to Manchester next day so we all agreed to meet there, we did and me and Barry went to Goole to meet them each week end for a month, Barry and Marlene split up but I was falling for Jean and kept on going over, Jean lost her job at BURTONS, & her mum and dad moved out of southern street and into the bike shop, the flat above the shop was only two bedrooms, Jean slept with her two sister's Marlene & jenny in one bed while Malcolm slept in the same room as his mum & dad, not a good arrangement. so when my mother found Jean a job in Barnsley at WEAVER TO WEARERS as a presser, same job as she was doing at Burtons and she would have to live at our house everybody was happy including me, she had to sleep in my bed, time passed by, me and Jean got married at t'chapel , I'd sold my scooter by this time and got a 500 Ariel motorbike, we did some mile's on that, mam got very ill, Jean left work to look after her, Mam went down to BRIDGWATER to our Pats wedding to Terry Elliot, she died and was buried there, I was allowed to keep mam's council house 6 the ave as it was home to my siblings, although they all buggered off to our Audrey's leaving me and jean with a three bedroom house, Jean didn't want to go back to work so I gave her some work, I got her pregnant, we had been married two years after all, so along came ROBERT, two years later GERALD two years after that CAROLINE, We'd been wed for seven years and what they say about the seven year itch is true, things started to go downhill. Jean started arguing and shouting to such an extent I considered leaving, but I had a good house, well furnished and three lovely kids, so I did the next best thing I got a job travelling away at the Descalers. I was a supremely happy man & Jean had plenty to keep her occupied, or so I thought



A CHANGE, NOT FOR THE BETTER,

Frank Socket was the contracts manager at the descalers, me and him got on pretty well,

in fact he was the only one who listened to me when I suggested we should get some better pumps for the acid jobs, so when he decided to leave and to go into partnership with a man in Birmingham I was a bit surprised. still in the same business but with some new jettters. I'd had enough of the old firm so I jacked up and got a job at his new firm AQUA DESCALING, They were doing acid work as well, so right up my street, or so I thought, the manager was a twat, he knew nowt, the first job he gave me was an acid job, "there's your pump" he said "and there's some acid" the little pump was ok but had no power cable, or hoses for that matter, he provided those, "there you are" he said. not quite I told him I'll also need a mixing tank to get the acid into the pump, I told you he knew nowt, I made a start descaling a heat exchanger at a steel works, doing ok, when he turned up, he asked me how long I'd had the acid in? " two hours" I told him, he went into a panic shouting at me that I was destroying the heat exchanger, "no I'm not, it's not finished till the acid stops gassing off" I was even more convinced he knew F*** ALL, when we got the brand new jettters my first job was in Hull at a railway yard, done in two days I rang up to tell him I hadn't enough diesel to get back to Sheffield, neither did I have enough money to buy any, he asked the engineer to give us some red diesel, he declined as it was against the law. then he wouldn't send any by telegraph. right I said "me and my oppo will put all the money we've got together to buy what we can afford, then I 'm going to point this bloody thing towards Sheffield and leave it where it stops", "do that" he said, we could afford a gallon, put it in & set off, I was very surprised to get as far as Goole where I stopped off at my father in law's to borrow a fiver,

another job was at MILTON KEYNES, jetting, my new oppo was a quiet lad, when we arrived at Milton Keynes we couldn't get any digs (too many contractors about) there was just one bed available at a transport cafe. so I let the lad have that, I slept in the cab where I kept a sleeping bag for such occasions, the first week went ok but the next Monday my oppo didn't want to go, I waited at the yard for a replacement. another bloke turned up I invited him into my cab as it was pretty cold, when the manager arrived he wasn't best pleased to see me, "my mate won't go" I told him, he asked the other fellow what he wanted, he was looking for a job, your "set on, jump into that lorry" so after we picked up his gear we drove to site, I explained about the digs but he wanted to sleep in the cab too, to save money, I agreed but told him it was Bloody cold, he said he didn't mind, he nearly froze to death that night so after work we set about looking for something to keep him warm we found a bed cover in a charity shop and with some big safety pins we fashioned a sleeping bag, he was happy

I forget how long I worked there but every job was a balls up, things came to a head when I was sent to Birmingham with another driver to tow a land rover back to Sheffield, we did that, it was the oldest land rover I'd ever seen, me and another chap were told to do some repairs on the brakes, we took it to bits, then he said," get underneath, scrape the chassis, then wire brush it and paint it black, I didn't mind working underneath on the brakes but not scraping & painting till we got some overalls, he said he wasn't getting any, "then I'm not doing it" I told him, "you will do it or your fired" "great, lick em on you bastard" I could see he regretted saying that but he couldn't back down he went into his office, meanwhile I collected all the new bits & pieces for the land rover, put them all into a bag, after collecting my cards I drove off down the road tossing them all out of the window, what fun

I went back to the Descaling contractors for my old job back, they set me back on after two days, the only time I was ever unemployed, I think they treated me a bit better afterwards as well, I fiddled my time sheets, my digs receipts, my expenses, and my diesel receipts and I never got caught, even though practically all the receipts came out of the same receipt book, weird. plus I was never laid off like most of the other blokes till right at the end when BIFFA / SEVERN TRENT took over and the firm and the firm went to the dogs...

I worked on the acid for 3 or 4 years, and like to think I improved things, When I started the pumps where cast iron & the mixing tanks where galvanised steel, the hydrochloric acid we used soon bugged them up so I spent most of my time repairing them, I persuaded my then boss Frank Socket to invest in plastic tanks & fittings , best of all a state of the art epoxy resin 2 "

pump, which I mounted on wheels so we could move it around easily, It was so successful they bought another two, They lasted forever so as the old cast iron ones only lasted a few weeks I saved a fortune, A scruffy bloke called JACK GUNNES got set on as he knew all about chemical descaling, he took over from me as by this time I had a H.G.V. license class 3, I didn't take a test there was no need if you where driving H.G.V.s at the time, I wasn't, I just lied, it cost me about £20 and I asked TONY DEEMING for the money, he refused, " it's your license" he said, so I waited a bit till he told me to take a vac lorry out one day, I told him I wouldn't because he wouldn't pay for my H.G.V. license, he gave me the £20 The vacs (vacuum tankers) where 15 ton lorries with two round hoppers & two round filters, the firm had three, used mainly for cleaning huge boilers on power stations, while I was working a vac at Cottam power station I saw 7 or 8 men, mainly Irish, had just come down off the boiler to make breakfast in the wooden cabin, the last man, DENIS COOK had just arrived when CHALKY WHITE drove up on the dumper, at full speed as usual, he drove past Cookie purposely missing him by inches & jammed on the brakes 2" from the cabin, he sat on the dumper grinning at Cookie, not seeing the joke Cookie gave Chalky a back hander, Chalky fell off the seat backwards, with his foot off the brake the dumper leaped forward & luckily stalled just as it hit the cabin, which collapsed like a pack of cards with the men inside, all cooking there Ulster fry's, a few seconds elapsed before all the men scrambled out covered in their breakfasts in a rage. Who did dat? they demanded to know, Cookie just pointed down at Chalky who was up in a flash and running for his life, they caught him as he reached an ornamental fish pond & threw him in, more than once

A TRIP TO THE FOREIGN AND A BUSTED FLUSH,

jeans grandmother Greby, on her mother's side was a tough old Bird, doing her own garden right up to her death in her nineties, she left a Bet of money, Jeans share being £250, we decided to use it to pay for a holiday. my mate Denis Cook's brother had a flat in Spain, in a seaside place called Javier, Denis could borrow it whenever he liked but had never taken advantage of it, he asked me if me and Jean would like to go there with him and Pat, his wife, we said ok and got the in-laws to have the two kids for a fortnight, we booked the flight and travelled to Javier. the first week we hired a car for two days so we could have a look round, Denis drove the first day, up the coast to Benidorm when we got there the three of them went to the beach to do some sun bathing, not to my taste I could have sunbathed in Javier so I set off to explore the place, after a Bet of walking around I went back to where I'd left the others to see if they wanted to go to the pub, they'd gone, not far as I had the car keys, I looked round for them in vain but did spot a Paneria (bread shop) and a Bodega (wine shop), I went in and asked for a bottle of wine, the girl behind the counter pointed to a row of barrels asking me in Spanish which I wanted in Spanish, I don't speak her language nor she mine so we resorted to sign language, she produced a small glass indicating which wine I would like to taste I pointed to one at random, I had a taste of that one and pulled a face, she tried me with another, I indicated a Bet better, after I'd tried a few more I plumped for one at random, she then pointed out that I should have brought my own bottle, I hadn't got one so she reached under the counter an produced a dusty bottle, wiped it a Bet then filled it from the barrel, I'd bought some bread and cheese, so back in the car I sat drinking wine and eating bread and cheese, I'd never had a better meal or enjoyed myself more till the other three turned up, Denis was ok but the girls wanted to castrate me, leaving Benidorm we saw a sign for an animal park and headed for that, we paid and went in, it was a drive through so we drove through observing the different wild animals, all went well till we arrived at a very high solid looking gate with a bloke on top, he was shouting to us in his own language, we didn't know what he was saying but he did open the huge gate, Denis drove us through, into the lions enclosure, the lions were all laying around, mostly on the road asleep, we thought, Denis had to drive off the road to get passed them, that upset them, some of them jumped up and ran alongside the car roaring at us showing their teeth, I looked behind to see if the girls were ok. not there, they were both down in the foot well, I told them not to worry because if a lion got

into the car I was going to demand my money back,,,,
next day it was my turn to drive. I took them inland to look at the mountains and through the olive groves and orange groves. I said I've always wanted to pick an orange off a tree and eat it, so as the orchard walls were broken down in places, I chose a convenient tree, stopped the car got out, nipped over, picked four oranges, one each and drove away, the oranges were delicious. one more off my bucket list,,,

Jean turned the wrong handle in the bathroom and got sprayed with water from some sort of Bidet, she was mad at that, even more so when she pulled the flush and the chain broke, we decided to replace the chain, off me and Denis went to find the caretaker, he should know of a plumber or a B&Q, he couldn't speak English so I mimed flushing the toilet whilst going shshsh at the same time I said to him "agua" meaning water, he nodded and took us to his flat and gave us a glass of water, we were unable to make him understand what we wanted, then a small girl came by, he called to her "Maria" and began speaking to her in Spanish, she said to us in perfect English "what is it you want?" we told her "a toilet chain or a plumber" she didn't have a clue but told her granddad, for that was who he was, he caught on and started laughing, then motioned for us to follow him, straight to the pub, he told his mates what happened and they all had a good laugh, then bought me and Denis a beer, we then set off to the plumbers but only as far as the next bar where the same thing took place, more beer. there was another three or four bar's before we eventually found the plumbers. the woman in the shop, (no English) didn't understand us mainly because we were drunk, but eventually we managed to make her understand what it was we needed, she had a laugh as well and said "manyana", which I knew meant tomorrow. so off we went with granddad obviously calling at every bar on the way back for him to give them all an update, more beer, arriving back at the flat rather the worse for wear, we were met by two very angry wives, I'm not kidding when I say I would sooner have been in the lions enclosure each time we went to a bar after that we had to give an update on the toilet situation. it was a small place so nothing much happened, obviously,

A TRIP TO THE SEASIDE,

The vac they were using at Boscombe nr Bournemouth to clean a gas main broke down, I was to take them a replacement. quickly, I'd set off mid morning and only just got past Derby when the ignition light came on , I pulled up & rang the yard "keep going it'll be ok" they said, more than half way there I stopped for a rest and a snack then found I couldn't start the engine, (flat battery) I walked to a garage & got a man with a breakdown truck who gave me a bump start so I carried on determined not to stop the engine again & let the gang in Boscombe sort it, after all I was to bring the other one back, I stupidly took a wrong turn at Newbury & had to turn round, I reversed into a side road and stalled the engine, it needed another bump start, seeing a garage down the road I set off walking towards it to see if they could help only to be overtaken by a woman demanding that I move the lorry as it was blocking a cul de sac holding up a funeral, her fathers,) went back wondering if there was enough mourners to give us a push start, I got back to find a young bobby looking round it, I explained my predicament & he rang for a breakdown truck, I was mobile again in no time much to the relief of the funeral cortege. and me, no more wrong turns & I was soon at the work site, I then made my FIRST big mistake, the only thing wrong with their vac was a displaced key steel which I foolishly knocked back into place, leaving me to take my vac back to Sheffield. It was too late to get back so I decided to call at our Des's in SOUTHAMPTON maybe he would put me up for the night, unfortunately the accelerator arm came off leaving the engine on tick over. I should have called for help but it wasn't much of a job except I couldn't stop the engine, so I had a go and reconnected it burning my fingers in the process. I arrived at Des's hungry and dirty they gave me some chips & a wash + a bed, next day by some miracle the engine started up and I was on my way home, I then made my SECOND big mistake, I stopped to ring the yard to explain why I was going to be late back, they told me not to come back but to pop over to NEWMARKET on my way back, I told them it was a 100 mile detour & I daren't stop the engine, "do your best " they said so thinking things couldn't

get much worse I started out for Newmarket, it was a U.S. A F, Airbase but by the time I got there the man I was supposed to meet had gone home, it was freezing cold, I had no money left & I wasn't going to sleep in the cab so I drove down to Cambridge, parked up on a building site & knocked on our Audrey's door, Next morning after saying goodbye & thanks to Audrey I was lucky to get a bump start from a council wagon and went back to the airbase, met the agent who took me onto the base to show me the job, which was vacing blasting shot out of a "Braithwaite" tank, I was told to park the vac on a grassed area near the tank, "can't do that" I said "shot is very heavy stuff an al get bogged down" he said the lorry with a big compressor on it had stood there a week so it'll be ok. I reversed onto the grass and as it was frozen solid it was ok.. meanwhile the firm had sent a man down with a new battery & to work with me I put the battery on , things were starting to look up but the weather was slightly warmer & it started snowing but we'd filled the vac with a ton of shot & we set off to the tip, we didn't move an inch, the now very heavy vac sank into the ground up to its axle, we couldn't do anything so we had to find somewhere to kip, not wanting to go all the way to Audrey's and there was two of us now we found a brick shed with switchgear in it so lovely & warm. Next day my mate JOHN SERGENT had to go home leaving me to my own devices, at least John had brought my wages so I could get something to eat at the cafe outside the gate, The engineer got a breakdown truck but it was useless, the YANKS told me I could use one of their cranes but not till the next day, so after another night in the shed the yanks came with a massive eight wheeled crane, the two men driving it both looked like and talked like JOHN WAYNE. One of them threw me a Beg thick chain with instructions to hang it on to the front axle I burrowed through the snow to do that as he hooked his end onto the crane. I jumped into my cab ready to go, one of the John Wayne's shouted "crank her up" which I took to mean start your engine, "to give us a hand" which I did, the crane moved forward slowly not even revving it's engine, heaving the vac out of the hole it had made for itself, as soon as my wheels were on the tarmac I unhooked the chain, bid the two cowboys goodbye and shot off to get shot of the load of shot, this meant crossing a vast runway, these days I could have been mistaken for a suicide bomber and had some ordnance fired at me, but I shot across the runway shot the load of shot and shot off without being shot at, It was supposed to have been a day trip, I'd been away for four days, I was hungry, filthy and tired but didn't stop till I got home, P.S. A couple of blokes went down and shovelled the rest of the shot into the great hole I'd made & covered it up, all's well that ends well.

ANOTHER COLD DAY

In the winter of the miners' strike the firm wanted two vacs taking over to FIDDLERS FERRY POWER STATION in Lancashire, Tommy Fox & me would take the vac's, Harry Hinchcliffe would take a minivan to get us home, I asked John deacey "what about the pickets" the striking miners were picketing the gates , deacy said you MUST get in but if you can't bring em back, the weather was freezing cold, the lorry cab had so many holes in it I nearly froze (no heater), by a miracle I found a pair of sheepskin mittens in the cab, they saved me from frostbite. it was snowing hard all the way over the M62, when we arrived the pickets were gone, frozen out probably. we left the vacs & set off back me driving of course, I drove back via the M62, all other routes impassable due to snow, the snow was getting into the electronics shorting the ignition so we were running on three cylinders causing us to go slower, all the other traffic was going past us showering us with slush, another cylinder cut out, when we were down to one cylinder I pulled over and stopped allowing the last cylinder to dry the electrics, slowly we were running on two then three so set off again, this happened a few more times until I noticed there were no vehicles of any kind on the motorway, just us puttering away on our own at 20 to 30 m p h, they had closed the motorway and didn't know about us, it was a glorious moonlit night the m62 was a skating rink and if the mini had packed up altogether we would probably have died of hyperthermia, I still thank God for those sheepskin mittens

FYLINGDALES. AND A COURT-MARTIAL.

John Rolley who set me on at DESCALERS told me to take a mate with me, pick up enough equipment pumps, mixing tanks, acid and degreaser plus a huge 440v water heater and take the whole lot to Fylingdales early warning station near Whitby, n Yorkshire. I took the usual suspect Chalky White, arriving on site we met a man from ANDREWS WEATHERFOIL who explained the job we had to do. which was to clean wave guide cooling systems below the radar scanners that kept a watch over the north sea as far as Russia, after one hiccup, the two halves of the system, one made by the English the other by the Americans weren't coupled together, so the water I pumped in just ran out, a high level meeting was held to decide who was to join them together, the two being of different sizes. after that things went well, except every time I took my eyes off Chalky he drove off in the van loaned to us by ANDREWS W, the whole plant was underground so he had to drive through the tunnel, out of the huge door guarded by two police men, drive round the site and back to the other end, another Beg door guarded by two more police who wouldn't let him in until they'd called up a specific worker to officially recognise him, he must have been fed up, the coppers must have been fed up and I was fed up but he wouldn't stop, he'd had a driving ban slapped on him for driving without a license so it was a fetish. anyway there were three radomes, each housing a scanner the size of a house, we were told that the cooling systems had to be surgically clean, we did a good job on the first one, which passed the test after being charged up with demineralised water, so on to the next one even easier as we'd got the hang of it, we breezed through the last one and were keen to get home, after all we'd been there a week, had to get my time sheets signed by somebody, it was late with nobody about except a bloke in a dark suit who wandered in and out, he was tinkering with things so I assumed he was their official, I asked him to sign my time sheets and he readily agreed, after which we packed up and scarpered leaving the gear to be collected later, I went home thinking I'd done a good job so I was shocked to get a message from Rolley to get back up to Fylingdales as fast as I could, he said I'd closed the place down, the country now had no defence against Russian missiles, I drove up in a state of anxiety maybe to a firing squad, when I got there Weatherfoils man said the PH value of the demineralised water was of the scale so the system must be cleaned again, I was on my own now which was ok as chalky was bloody useless, I set to degreasing the system and worked all night just having a kip where I could when I could, Weatherfoils man helped out a bit but then made a big mistake, he closed the valves on the demineralised water tank to save the water which was very expensive just cleaning the pipe work, after I'd cleaned the pipes he took a water sample and could see bubbles in it which he took to be grease, do it again, and again, I insisted that the PH value on the PH gauge was well within limits. he eventually agreed the system was clean but it didn't end there I had to go to what I could only describe as a courts marshal, I went in accompanied by an American dressed in a light blue suit whose name was 'Rueben', I think he was my attorney. I stood with him in the middle of a large room facing tiers of men in air force uniforms with gold and medal ribbons who all wanted to know what I did to close the place down, I pleaded not guilty, the man in the Black suit had passed my work with flying colours, who was the man in the black suit?, I didn't know but I had his signature on my sheets, court adjourned till they found out, I walked away a free man with my brief Rumen who said "don't worry you'll look back on the time when you put the security system of the western world in jeopardy and laugh about it" I was scruffy and hadn't been to bed for four days so I was knackered and certainly not laughing but he was right I do laugh about it now. Much later I found out why Weatherfoils man had cocked it up, it turned out that when he'd shut the valves on the holding tank the powerful pumps weren't getting enough water causing something called emulsification when the pumps pull a vacuum in the water making bubbles, vacuum bubbles that stick to the side as they did in the glass making us think it was oil, when they stick to the side in a pump they cause damage as they burst inwards pitting the metal,

This knowledge came in useful much later when I was visiting our Pat in Bristol, they had a pool, I always thought that the circulation pump had too much motor, Hugh was working on the pump

saying it was drawing air as bubbles were coming out of the outlet, he was tightening everything to no avail, I remembered Fylingdales so told Hugh that the bubbles weren't air bubbles but vacuum bubbles, he thought I was mad so I proved I was right by looking for a blockage on the suction side, I soon found the problem, a filter under a screwed down cover was packed with old leaves after clearing that the problem was solved, no thanks from Hugh though which put me in mind of the time their toilet was hard to flush, I said the diaphragm was split, "I can mend that" he said so I gave him a hand to dismantle the toilet. a replacement siphon wouldn't cost much I said but he insisted it was repairable and he tried hard to do it, in the end we went down to B&Q to get one, it cost very little. while we were there I suggested he buy a rubber sealing ring to replace the squashed one, no he said it'll be ok. so we reassembled the toilet filled it up and it worked perfectly, except there was a leak under the tank, Hugh tightened the wing nuts till they broke, replaced them with nuts tightening them so tight I feared he'd snap the porcelain and still it dripped. "you really should replace that rubber ring" I said so we dismantled it again B&Q again for a 75p ring, job done,

Pat and Hugh sold the house in Bristol, putting an end to my days happily skinny dipping, they had bought a place in Spain, even better as me and Marie were living on the boat and retired so we locked up and took a week to drive to Pats. two weeks there and a week to drive home which took a month out of the winter. the place was way out in the sticks, they both said they wanted to be with Spanish people and blend in, then they built a six foot fence round the place, very odd, anyway Hugh had lots of the bamboo stuff he'd used on the fence and decided to make use of it by putting it on the steel frame already over the door as a sun shade, one of his better ideas. he'd put the fence up using cable ties but the bamboo strips were too close together to use the ties on top of the roof of the shade, pushing them through no problem getting them back impossible with a bit of ingenuity I manufactured a device to hold the cable tie push it up through then pull it back, brilliant I thought , Hugh wouldn't use it though because he hadn't thought of it so I chucked it away. when he'd struggled a bit he retrieved it and used it, sulkily. after all he was an engineer and I was just a retired sewer man. after two years Pat and Hugh sold up and returned to Bristol which put paid to out month of winter sun, nothing lasts forever,...

A NUCLEAR OPTION + FIREBALL FRED,

A job came up at WYLVA nuclear power station Anglesey north Wales, I had to take three men and a very high pressure jetting unit with me to scour the inside of a 3 foot iron pipe clean of molluscs, it was a sea water pipe, after gaining access into the pipe, not easy as the pipe was underground, we were blasting away merrily when the v h p pump broke down, I sent for a replacement, they told me Fred Robinson would bring one out the next day, when it didn't arrive I rang up to see why, Deacey told me he was glad I had rung because Fred's lorry had caught fire and he was "burnt to the ground" and could I go and rescue him from Conway, after I had dropped the gang off at the digs in Camaes bay I drove to Conway finding Fred sat beside his burnt out truck looking sorry for himself and as black as soot, driving him to the power station to get cleaned up he told me what happened. I was going along the A 55 Ok when one or two driver's flashed their light's, I flashed back thinking they knew me, but as I went through one of those short tunnels I noticed an orange glow behind me, I opened the window and flames came in. "what did you do then" I asked him, "I shut the window" he said, I asked him why he didn't stop and jump out, the road's a bit narrow so I was looking for a place a bit wider, "so you could blow up without inconveniencing anybody" I said, by this time a fire engine and a police car had caught him up. I was driving him along the same route that he was on while on fire, so he was telling me why he couldn't stop, "there were cow's in that field, some caravans over there, a house nearby. he showed me where he did stop, not a moment too soon as there was a couple of gas holders by the road not far ahead, God knows what would have happened if he had lit them up, as it was the two 5 gallon plastic drums of diesel he always carried with him went up like giant roman candles, he also said he'd told the police that he'd saved the main things from

the inferno, his flask & sandwiches and our wage's, "you stupid bastard" I said "we could have split those between us and had em sent out again"
when we first arrived at CAMAES BAY we found digs a bit pricey, after all it was a holiday place, luckily we were in the bar at the power station club one day soon after we arrived, A couple next to us asked where we came from, I told them the lads were from Sheffield and I came from Barnsley, whereabouts in Barnsley they wanted to know, so I told them Pilley, my uncle Carl lives in Pilley he said, Carl Burkinshaw I asked, yes that's him, by the way where are you staying round here? it turned out he had a 4 berth caravan we could use for a bloody lot less than the guest house. Tosh Flowers one off my blokes was a good cook into the bargain, happy days, one morning as I was walking across the site a strange rumbling started up, I stood still wondering what it was, it grew steadily louder and the ground began to shake, I thought it was an earthquake as the noise got louder and I louder four men in white overalls dashed out of a door, sprinted towards the reactor building and went in, then, steam erupted from a pipe on top of the reactor, then another and another till all five were going full blast, making a hell of a noise, eventually things quieted down, the pipes stopped one by one, the ground gradually stopped shaking I carried on to where I was going, thinking' if them blokes had been running away from the reactor instead of towards it I would have been a long way in front of them, I asked the engineer later what it was all about, he just said "we got uncoupled from the grid, and had to pull the rods"

The ganger at WILLINGTON power station was an Irish man called John Griffiths, A K A black paddy who wrote notes for the night shift, he wasn't all that literate so the notes read like, "if you dowd wat we dowd youl not dow too bad", The one that raised the biggest laugh was when he asked the lads "how do you spell whistle" they wanted to know why, he said " I am leaving a note for the night shift," whistle " need some more shovels tomorrow", another one was when he left instructions to blow down toads number 3 boiler, now a 8,000 mw boiler is huge with lots of places with strange names, But nobody on the nights knew where the toads were, so they sat in the cabin playing cards half the night trying to think where to find the 'toads', until one bright spark said "Iv got it he meant blow down TOWARDS No 3 boiler", they took the note & showed it to John Deacey who read it and couldn't work out why they didn't understand it, well, he was another paddy after all, In the cabin Paddy kept his food in a cupboard, he had some marge, potted meat and a jar of jam, his gang decided to play a trick on him by mixing ground up sleeping pills into his food when he wasn't looking, after breakfast of bread & jam Paddy went to sleep, the lads played cards round his head till dinner time when they woke him up pretending they had just come down off the boiler, they all ate there sandwiches, Paddy having his usual potted meat and going back to sleep, the lads carried on the card game waking Paddy up at home time, next day Paddy complained he hadn't slept a wink all night & he was dead beat, so he slept all day aided by his usual bread & jam breakfast, after a few days they decided to pack it in as they were probably killing him plus they weren't getting any work done,

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE (when I slept with a transvestite)

One day I had to take a vac unit to EAST ABERTHAW POWER STATION in S Wales, Leave it there for the man who was following me in a minivan (he had no HGV license) I was to return in the van, I got there in good time but no sign of the van, I rang Sheffield to ask where he was, they didn't know & asked me to Operate the vac till he turned up which I did to the end of the shift. then went back with them to their lodgings in two caravans in FONTAGARY BAY caravan park, not expecting to stay, I hadn't taken a change of clothes but the lads kindly lent me some, still no sign of the minivan, After a good night at the camp club we all went back to the caravan, there was only one spare place & that was in a double bed with a 'man' named ARNIE RILEY a quiet lad, next day back on site still no sign of my ride home I had to work the vac all day, the gang were very happy about that because nobody could use a vac like I could & I saved them a hell of a lot of back breaking work shovelling & carrying, I finished the job that day, the lads

showed their appreciation by paying for all my beer at the club that night, then after another kip with Arney I was off the next day with the vac to Sheffield, finding out that the mini driver had crashed into a corn field ending up unconscious in hospital, the police didn't know who he was, where he was going or where from,

WHERE IS ARNIE

Sometime later a woman came up the yard saying "my Arnies not come home for his dinner" she was told he hadn't been at work for about two or three weeks, that's right he s not been home for days, she said , it was worked out that he'd worked his last shift at THORPE MARSH power station weeks back with a gang led by BLACK PADDY who couldn't remember if he'd left site station down to search for human remains, the CEGB weren't happy about that, Then a decomposed body of a woman was discovered in a storm drain at Town end, Sheffield, well the body was dressed as a woman and had a rope round its neck just like the rope we used at the descalers, the rope went up through a step iron and was tied to the ankle, the autopsy revealed that the body was that of a man who turned out to be my old (temporary) bed mate Arnie Riley. He was a transvestite and liked to dress as a woman and walk around at night dressed as a woman after changing his clothes in the storm drain, what he was doing with the rope round his neck is something else,,,, I still feel sorry for old Arnie,

WILLINGTON, & MY DUMPER MAKES A BRAKE FOR FREEDOM,

Emptying a fly ash hopper at WILLINGTON power station, Black paddy in charge as usual, using two small dumper trucks, the best way to do the job and the easiest was to drop the ash into the dumper then take it away in turn, Not Paddy's way he just opened the bunker, dropping tons of ash onto the ground, then got some men to shovel it up and chuck it into the dumpers, Me and Johnny Batter drove the dumpers and were soon racing each other to the tip & back, there was a fire hose laying at the side of the road and I made a mental note not to run over it but, after a while running back empty I'd forgot about it and I ran over it with my back wheel, the one under the driving seat which made the dumper buck like a rodeo horse, it bounced into the air throwing me straight up, looking down between my knees I saw that the thing was going at the same speed as I was, leaving me to hope that I would land back on the seat, but my hopes were dashed as the infernal thing did a U turn , racing back the way it had come leaving me flying in the opposite direction, I was now on my way down so I got my legs going ready, so that when I landed I was running at full speed, but in the opposite direction to the dumper I skidded to a stop, and started running after the Bloody thing which was luckily slowing down as there was nobodies foot on the pedal, but it hadn't finished, just as I caught up with it it did a 90 degree turn to the right running strait into a metal fence guarding a 3,000 volt transformer,, it was a very strong fence and stood up to the onslaught but the dumper wasn't going to stop, it's front wheels started climbing up the fence, it wasn't going to get over as the fence was 10 foot high but you had to give it top marks for trying, I stopped it at last and after getting my breath back had a good look around to see if anybody had been watching my antics, nobody had so I counted myself lucky and went back to work, ,more slowly

Black paddy sometimes drove the dumper on site, he considered himself a good driver, good enough to pass a driving test, we all encouraged him of course even though we knew he had no chance, he bought a car, took a test and failed, so he took the hedge out in front of his house reversed the car onto his 'lawn' then he planted the hedge back

A bloke went to pick Paddy up one morning for work, he was told he wasn't up yet and to wait by his wife, "am just making his breakfast, do you want a fried egg"? he told her he wouldn't mind, the table had an oilcloth cover with blue & white 6" squares on it, she dropped the fried egg onto a white square, put a knife & fork either side and said "do you want any bread"? not mulch washing up to do at Paddies house,

A SHOCKING WAY TO TREAT A RELATIVE,

I was sent with a vac machine to I C I, MOND. at Anderton on the river Weaver, opposite the Anderton boat lift, MIDDLEWITCH. our Robert was with me and we were soon hard at it vaccing soda ash from the machinery & girders, we couldn't reach high enough to clean the girders, but I had a great idea, I fetched a long piece of 2"dia rigid plastic pipe, it had a bend on the end so it made the job wonderfully easy, I left Bob using this marvellous attachment while I went downstairs to check up on the vac, m/c, when I got back he was sat down gasping and hugging himself, when I asked him what was up he said "I've just had an electric shock" that made me laugh because static electricity builds up in the plastic suction hose then goes to earth through steel, mainly through girders, although people if they're in the way, giving a slight shock a bit like a harmless pin prick, just a bloody nuisance that's all. "you big Jesse" I said and picked the pipe up and started work with it myself, I was doing fine sucking ash off the roof girders 10 feet above my head when I noticed blue sparks chasing each other round the end of the pipe opposite to the end I was holding, I was marvelling at this spectacle when the little sparks joined together into a Beg spark that ran down the pipe very fast entering my body via my left hand middle finger, ran up my left arm, down the left side of my body, down my left leg and exited through my left foot, giving every joint a bang as it went, I fell to the floor in agony, only to look up (when I could open my eyes) to see our Robert with tears streaming down his face. whether in pain or laughing at me I don't know, but as soon as I could stand up I threw that fucking pipe as far as I could,



KING COAL

Arriving at the yard one morning I found Deacey walking round asking "will the old vac suck up dis stuff" he had a small bag of coal in his hand, nobody thought it would but I had a look and was confident that it would, so I got the job at WICKERSLEY school, clearing out a coal bunker full of washed singles (small coal), when I got there and looked into the bunker there was three men shovelling coal like crazy, sweating their bollocks off, I shouted to them to come out I'd come to do that, and threw in a 4" flexi pipe, when I started the vac up and the coal was disappearing fast the look on those men's faces was something to see, so having relieved the council workers me & Denis Cook sucked out the coal a ton at a time depositing it in the playground to be put back by JCB after fitters had repaired the 'screw stoker', which was what it was all about, a bit later the vac broke down, I had to send for a fitter, Charley the fitter turned up and got it going in no time, He said how he wouldn't mind a load of it, Now Charley helped me out a lot with my own vehicles so I said I'd be pleased to take him a load in our lunch break, so that's what we did, He was so pleased to see a ton of coal outside his house he insisted on giving us a fiver, we spent the money on a liquid lunch at the pub opposite. we left site with another load that I took home to fill my 'coiloy!'. Cookie had gas heating so didn't want any but

me being an honest thief delivered a load to one of his mates the school jobs came quite often so I sold a lot of coal to a lot of people, for more than a fiver the local coal merchant must have been puzzled. I didn't buy any coal for a long time,

WATER JETTING, A HIGH PRESSURE JOB.

I moved on to driving a 'jetting unit', A water tanker with a high pressure pump & hose, driving for ERIC BAYLIS, a fat bloke with an even fatter girl friend, we where jetting drains at CONOCO oil refinery near Hull, he sent me home for the weekend (paid of course) so that his girlfriend could have my bed at Mrs. macaws boarding house. When I got back the Monday after and picked him up at the digs he was in a Black mood, it turned out that Mrs. Macaw had put the two single beds together and somehow they both ended up on the same bed which collapsed under the excessive weight, Mrs. Macaw wanted a new bed of him and his dad wanted a new suitcase which was under the bed at the time,

soon after that I got my own 'jetter', it was second hand but practically unused, it wasn't fitted with any shock absorbers so if I ran over a raised manhole cover it just kept on bouncing, I pointed this out to Charley saying it was dangerous but he didn't do anything till one day in BRIDPORT reversing down a steep hill with a full tank of water, my front wheel ran over a brick just as I applied the brakes, the front of the lorry bounced up throwing me up in the air, my foot left the brake pedal allowing the lorry to set off down the hill, this brought the cab down with a bang I hit the seat, my foot hit the brake, the sudden stop bounced the front back up, this carried on for a while I kept banging my head on the roof and my arse on the seat all the while trying to work out how to stop it, my mate who had been looking out of the window was disappearing out of it, I had to lean over to grab him and at the same time apply the hand brake to regain control to stop the Bloody thing, needless to say on getting back to Sheffield I refused to drive it another yard until some shockers were installed on it,

The years passed and I had my son Gerald working with me, we were working together at LYME REGIS staying at a farmhouse, I noticed a large piece of rubber had come out of the front tyre, as soon as I got back to Sheffield I was told to take the lorry to Kennings tyres, they said the tyres were crossplies & nobody used them anymore and besides that the rest of them were old & perished. so I rang the yard for an order number, the only man there was the gas side foreman "how many do you need" he asked, "all of them" I replied, he may have thought I was driving a mini, he gave me a number and I had six tyres changed, a hell of an expense, but it stood me in good stead for my next job

OVER THE SEA TO THE ISLANDS, march 1982

So, I had a new set of wheels, making the wheels more valuable than the lorry, and boy did I need em. my next job was in STORNAWAY on the island of LEWIS. on the Western isles, our Gerald was working with me, we set off after dinner on Sunday from home to get to ULLAPOOL. the ferry to Stornaway sailed at 12 the next day, plenty of time, or so I thought, we had no trouble up to the Scottish borders, found an all night service station in EDINBURGH and fuelled up, as we headed up into the mountains it started to snow, the snow gates were open so I was quite confident we were ok. less confident as time went by as it turned into a blizzard and there were no other vehicles on the road, thankfully the snow stopped just as it got daylight and we could see where the road was, we arrived at the port at 11 o'clock just in time to get a meal at the seaman's mission before the ferry turned up, we drove on board and watched as they chained it down, not a good sign, it looked as if it was going to be a Bet rough, after the boat sailed we found it was a I of rough, Gerald went to the toilet and stayed there for the rest of the voyage, I managed to keep my dinner down, just, we were both happy when the boat docked and we drove off it, to be met by the man from the council who told us to follow him to our hotel, he pulled up outside a really big hotel, now we weren't used to lodgings like these and told him that, "for what your firm are charging" he said "in you go", it was a splendid hotel and when they handed me the Bell at the end of the week I just gave the firms address, one thing puzzled

me, they gave us a key for the front door attached to a white plastic fob, a foot long, the island was Presbyterian, or 'the wee Kirk' as they called it, so no pubs opened on a Sunday. we weren't allowed to work Sundays for the same reason, we went for a walk round instead, returning to the hotel for lunch we noticed groups of men lurking about, they all followed us up to the hotel trying to make out they weren't there, the door was locked but I had a key, on a huge fob sticking out of my top pocket like a flagpole, which is exactly what it was, because as soon as I put the key into the lock the men behind us rushed in passed us and up to the bar, the staff were not allowed to open up but once inside customers were served ok. we worked six days a week and got paid for seven, which was ok. then I was really ill, I just made it to the doctor who had a look at me and said he hadn't a clue what it was, his advice was for me to go to my own doctor who was 600 miles away, can you give me a note for my employer? I asked him, clutching the note I rang the yard telling them I was travelling home but as there was a force 9 gale blowing not on the bloody ferry, we were coming on the aeroplane, that's ok Deeming said, have you got enough money?, if I haven't you'll be the first to know, I drove the jetter to a council yard out of town, commandeered a passing land rover, got the driver to take us to the airport, (I'd already got two standby tickets) we boarded a plane right away and flew to Glasgow, just missed a train to Sheffield so got one to Edinburgh and just caught one to Doncaster. I'd rung home to arrange for MARIE next door to pick us up, I was off work two weeks, a long time for me, they asked me if I was alright to go back to Scotland, not if I'm going to get that again I said, the firm paid for me to see a skin specialist who diagnosed 'urticaria' "if you get it once you won't get it again" so reassured we set off back on t'train and plane to Stornaway. to finish the job, while we were up there they told us to pop over to SOUTH UIST to complete a job I'd been doing some time earlier, clearing molluscs out of a seawater pipe at a power station, I got the same digs as before, we had to work nights when there wasn't much load on the MURLEES engines and they could shut one at a time down, I hired a local chap as it was a three man job, he was ok although he was drinking all night, the next day he went to the cattle market with the farmer we were staying with so didn't get any sleep, the next night the three of us did another 12 hour shift, after that me and Gerald went to bed but he went to the market again to collect the cows they had bought the previous day, that night we did a few hours clearing site at the power station then back to the digs, packed up and left on leaving we saw our mate who hadn't slept for three days, drinking all the time, driving a tractor, ploughing a field, the furrows straight as a die, what a great Bloke, no trouble catching the ferry this time at lochboisdale. we had a trouble free drive home which was bloody lucky because the next day I took my jetter to the repair shop to get a bulb in a back light, Charley soon did that and told me to go, I couldn't go, the bloody thing wouldn't move, Charley jumped behind the wheel, he couldn't move it, it turned out that the differential (the thing between the back wheels) had completely fallen to bits. just think, 42,000 miles plus trip and broke down bang outside the garage. how lucky was that or what,

SEEKING ASYLUM

George Hunt and me were sent to a mental hospital at COULSDEN near CROYDON.

George was a long haired ex hippy who lived in a caravan at one time that he parked in a lay-by near John Paul Getty's mansion, he told me that he used Getty's garden as a toilet, he also told me some heavy's came one day with a land rover and towed him ten miles up the road, leaving him there, anyway, digs were hard to find in Croydon also expensive, we were lucky and got digs in the caretakers rest room, I carried around in my cab a roll of foam rubber for just such an occasion, we slept on the floor (I forget what George slept on) the caretakers didn't mind so long as we didn't trash the place, we lived free of charge plus we found plenty of money in the drains for our food in the nurse's canteen, after we'd cleaned it of course, all the time claiming full board & lodgings, the swimming pool attendant allowed us to use the pool in exchange for the old pennies which he put in vinegar to clean them up, convinced he could find a rare one, in all my time cleaning drains I found hundreds of em, not one worth owt, I just weighed em in for the

copper value..

George was in a manhole one day and I looked through a window to see some of the inmates watching racing on a big colour TV (rare in those days) while the staff served them tea and sandwiches, I said to George "just look in there, who are the mad buggers us or them" The place did have its own drain man who walked round with a long hook & a plunger. who would hook up a drain cover pretend to do something with the cane rod and that was that, he invited us into the mortuary for a look round, it was very interesting, what with two white slabs for autopsy's, rows of things like piss pots with body part names on, but when he walked over to a big door saying "there's only one body in just now, she's Maud, they are doing her tomorrow." and offered to show her to us, we thanked him and left, the very next day George was down a manhole when I noticed blood and stuff coming through, "get the fuck out of there & put the lid on it they're cutting Maud up" "and then go and get your bloody hair washed"

I was back at Coulsden some weeks later, Tom Fox had replaced me but got thrown off the job (as usual) for taking stuff in the caretakers place, things were better though, we got a room each in the nurses area (all nurses were male) with a bed and everything the door had 4 or 5 locks & bolts on it, lodgings were still free, although this time I had Denis Patterson working with me, a timid bloke who wasn't happy to have all the mad people around, after work one day I was going to the staff club for a pint & knocked on his door, he said he was going to ring his wife and would catch me up. on the way I met a tall chap who looked for all the world like a newspaper seller. he even had a canvas bag on his shoulder with DAILY EXPRESS on it, he came up to me and said "paper govner" now it was nine at night and bearing in mind where we were I said no thanks, he bid me goodnight and walked off, not long after as I was enjoying my pint Denis ran in out of breath in a sweat, it turned out he'd met the same bloke who asked him if he wanted a paper, Denis said yes and gave him some money whereupon the man reached into his bag, pulled out a handful of torn up newspaper, threw it over Denis's head and ran off, Denis told me he ran after him to get his money back but thought better of it, after all the man was bigger than him and a nutter into the bargain, so he went to the phone to call the wife only to find it engaged, the person using it wasn't speaking or anything just holding the handset to his ear, Denis opened the door to ask how long he would be, the man fell on his back still clutching the phone pulling the wires out and laid there rigid, Denis had had enough and ran to the club, his first pint didn't touch the sides,

SPALDING I meet a gunslinger,,

working with Eric Baylis again in Spalding, we were gathered with some council workers to jet a sewer but were unable to gain access to a manhole in a mad woman's garden, she's away tomorrow we were told so come back then, It was late by then and we hadn't got any digs, a council bloke spoke up in a Texas drawl "yuh can stay at mah place if n yuh like" we gratefully accepted his kind offer, he introduced us to his wife a timid soul and told her to get us some 'pork n beans' (bacon) an beans It was soon time for Eric to go for a pint, I'd had a long day so I stayed in, my host (av forgotten his name) asked me if there were any drawing clubs in Sheffield, art classes I asked? "no man" he said, ya see that sixgun thar, I can draw an fire in a third of a second, I had noticed a gun in a holster hanging on the wall in the front room, together with a black Stetson hat, he offered to show me how to do it, fastening the belt on, tying the thong to his leg, he put the hat on and after admiring himself in a large mirror he had there, he did a few practice moves, then took an empty milk bottle, filled it with water and stood it on the draining board in the kitchen, then stood 20 feet away, I had to shout "DRAW", he drew the gun cocked it and fired. it didn't go bang, he had no caps for it. it fired tiny steel balls which made 6 tiny holes in the milk bottle, It was now my turn, he showed me how to put it on and how to draw and fire it, the first time I missed the thing completely, go slower he advised, I did and found I could do it and hit the replaced bottle, Eric came in from the pub, he was persuaded to have a try, he reluctantly put it on including the cowboy hat so that with his stubbly chin and the

gun fastened under his Beg belly he was a ringer for Desperate Dan, he took careful aim at a new milk bottle and made six holes in the kitchen window, the job completed the next day we decided to take our hosts to the pub that night as they wouldn't take owt for our stay while sitting in the pub a man approached who said "your name is ken scoff" "you live in Pilley and you drove a blue lorry into town at 2-30 on Wednesday, how do you know all that I asked him, I'm a copper and I'm supposed to know he said, besides my name is Les Grain and I lived round the corner from you before I joined the police,

MARCH 1980

A job came up at a cheese factory in HONITON. just up my street. I needed two men so I took sharpie and our Mick. we set off in the 'very high pressure' jetting machine to site, only getting as far as Derby on the a 38 before breaking down, it took a long time for Charley to get to us (he was looking in the wrong place) but he got us away at last, although it was too late to get to Honiton. so I rang our Pat to see if she had room at her lodging house in BRISTOL for the three of us, she had but they were going out for the evening. but would hide a key under a stone so we could let ourselves in + some food in the fridge, she had no lodgers in either so we had the pick of the beds, we were asleep when Pat and Hugh came in so we didn't see them, they were both asleep when we got up and left so we still didn't see them, we arrived at Honiton, all famished so I took em into a pub for a breakfast, I paid, then we presented ourselves at the dairy. the job was a vertical milk cooler and we got stuck in with the VHP jetter, much harder than I thought, so it took us all afternoon and all night till all the tube's were clear and we were able to pack up & clear the site, driving back up the motorway, having had no sleep I was struggling to stay awake, my eyes closed for a second and when I opened them there was the back of a lorry I hadn't seen before a yard in front, my two passengers were chatting away together and hadn't noticed anything, I pulled into the next services to have a snooze, our Mick wasn't happy about it as he wanted to be in Sheffield at his local pub for opening time 'you drive it then' I said, and he did and except for nearly knocking a copper off his motorbike he did ok. it was classed as mobile plant so he was ok. Our Pat didn't charge us owt for the night's stay, but I claimed bed breakfast & evening meal+ the breakfast in Honiton for all three of us, I gave Mick a couple of quid but not Sharpie, that bugger screwed me out of some receipt money a few months earlier, revenge is sweet,

DEACEY

John Deacey was a funny bloke, the yard manager, but still a funny bloke, he said things like "you three are a fine pair if ever I saw one" and there was the time when we were painting some second hand planks red & white to go round excavations for public safety they had to be 11 foot long, we'd run out of 11 foot boards and only had 6 foot & 5 foot's left he said 6 foot & 5 foot's are ok as long as they are not less than 11 foot. everybody laughed but I knew what he meant, one of the reps came in one day showing people some special sunglasses he'd got, you could swap the lenses for driving in fog, Deacey wanted a pair and sent the office boy to buy him a pair, when he got back the boy had taken the glasses out of the packet and changed just one lens. Deacey put them on, then chased the lad back to the shop for his money back, another time he sent the lad to the shop for a packet of tipped cigarettes. on his return Deacey took out a cigarette, broke off the tip and lit up, the lad said "if you'd said you wanted plain cigarettes I would have got plain" "I always smoke cork tips they're better for your health" he said, He liked setting men on but hated laying them off when work was short so he left that to Mac the storeman, who loved it, he gave job to his son in law one day, who bragged of being an ex soldier, a Spiderman, and a steeple jack, he only drove the vans as fast as they would go, when asked by vin McDermott what if he got a puncture at this speed? he replied "you don't think about things like that" that's funny Vin said "I can't think of owt else" Deacey sent his son in law

to a job up north in a coking plant, emptying a coal bunker, there was tons of coal stuck to the sides which had to be removed, it was a regular job for the firm and the usual way was to start at the top and work down, not quick enough for this chap, he started at the bottom, when he'd under mined enough, tons of coal would start sliding down at that point he would run up the avalanche and sit down while the bunker was emptied from below, that was ok till he wasn't quite quick enough. he got burned under the coal, his team saw this and started frantically digging for him, after a few minutes they heard him shouting from overhead, he'd passed through the slide valve at the bottom into the charger unscathed, then climbed back up laughing , all this happened again till the third time, on a different bunker he wasn't so lucky, he was burned as usual but the charger wasn't in place so the slide valve couldn't be opened, by the time an electrician could be found to override the contacts to open the slide valve, the first thing to appear was his dead body, he wasn't the only death on the firm, the other was George Philips, another speed merchant, he drove everywhere at top speed, I was riding as passenger with him once on the A1 in thick fog and he still drove at top speed, I thought then 'this Bloke hasn't got long' I was right, Deasey told him to go to Carlisle and pick up Sharpie who was in hospital and needed fetching home, it was late in the day and Philips was mad as hell having to go all that way, he set off at top speed, burning rubber, he arrived at Carlisle safely and picked Sharpy up then set off back at his usual speed, travelling along the M6 he spotted Frank Grey in another firms van, Franks passenger lived near George and vice versa so George wanted to exchange passengers and signalled this to Frank, who refused, angrier than ever George put his foot down again, the only thing to do when riding with George was to shut your eyes, Sharpy must have done that because he wasn't aware that they crashed at the junction with the M62 George was killed instantly, Sharpy was taken to hospital, next day Frank Wright went to see him, he was in bed with wires and tubes all over him nevertheless he got out of bed trailing all the equipment, cursing Frank for taking so long, he didn't know anything about the crash, and thought he was still in Carlisle,

OWD WALLY AT WALTON.

Wally Sanderson, the mate who got me the job at the descalers was working with me at WALTON ON THAMES, we found dig's in an old pub in Horsham. owned and run by an ex copper called Sandy Cameron, he gave us a room on the proviso that we were in before 10-30, closing time in those days, Wally was a boozier so he didn't want to go out at all, Sandy allowed us to use his lounge to watch telly though but only after he'd introduced us both to his two dog's, one was a little terrier, the other was a huge great Dane. the terrier was no trouble but the other one had its own rules, it had its own place to sit, I found that out when I was sat on the sofa watching the telly, the dog came in and stood looking at me, our head's were level with each other ,it stared at me for a while and I could see it was trying to tell me something. it moved a bit closer, our noses were nearly touching, then it stepped back, made an exasperated grunt, rolled it's eyes put its huge paw under my legs and threw me onto the sofa, then curled up in the place where my leg's had been, after that I knew my place, The pub was called The Waterman's Arms, very good digs but Wally had spotted a working men's club in the town, "make a change to go there" he said, so we did, we were sat having a pint of Guinness when Wally said "you see that man standing at the bar, I fought him in a boxing match when I was in the army", I said that was years and years ago, besides he's stood with his back to us, Wally insisted it was him and went up to the man and introduced himself, the chap didn't know Wally but did remember the boxing match and that his opponent did a lot of running away, that was me Wally said "you knocked me down and I stayed down" they stood talking about the old times and supped a lot of Guinness. until I got worried about Sandy's curfew,, I dragged Wally away and helped him stagger back to Waterman's arms, The door was locked although some lights were on, we could see some people at the bar but they wouldn't open the door. we went round the back and knocked on the door, after a while the door burst open, Sandy rushed out, grabbed me and put me in an arm lock, his police training showing through. "what did I tell you" he said,) apologised

and blamed Wally, once inside Wally wanted another pint, there were some blokes standing at the bar drinking after Bird, you can buy drinks as you are guests, Sandy told us, so I got a couple of Guinness's in, Wally sat down, took one drink and went to sleep, not only that he started snoring, very loudly, I shook him awake but he just went to sleep again, snoring, he was embarrassing me so I supped his pint pulled him to his feet and pushed him upstairs after I'd chucked him onto his bed he wouldn't go to sleep, the annoying bastard kept going on about if he had upset me, I ignored him pretending to be asleep. Sandy came through later and put him in bed, in the morning the old bugger accused me of drinking his pint, I used my own van (diesel) to travel there and back, fuelling up at the same petrol station as the 'jetter', all on one Bell including enough to get back, the firm were paying me mileage so I was coining it, I always got to the council yard for 8 o'clock, picked up the jetter, then went to a quiet place by the Thames to have a kip, we were paid for 6 days so on Saturday I went into the yard at 8, chattered to people, drove the jetter out, had a cup of tea at the cafe, drove it back, took my van out and drove home, Saturday afternoon we went into the descalers yard to get us wagers, pretending we'd just got back from London, one Saturday Wally was overjoyed to find he had a rise, I hadn't so I went to see Deacey about it, "you driver's can't get your rise till Brian Looms gets his" Looms was in a different union so we had to wait, not good enough for me so I hatched a plot, back in London the next Monday after I'd picked up the jetter I asked Wally how much an hour he was getting now, it turned out he was getting more than me, in my book I told him the man getting the most money was in charge, so my last act as charge hand is to hand over the charge to you. he didn't want it but he had no alternative, after a while I asked for some instructions, he didn't have any, what about breakfast? I said, right, he said, after breakfast and a few cups of tea, no work done I suggested that as charge hand he ought to ring the yard to tell them what was happening, he wouldn't so I said he could instruct me to do it, which I did, I got Deacey and told him what I'd done and why, "go back to work" he said, I told him I would but Wally didn't know what needed doing, he got the picture and put me onto the general manager, I told him the same thing, he realised I meant it and that he would send my replacement by train that afternoon, ring again at 4-o clock, after doing nothing all day I rang up asking for Tony Deeming, he answered and snapped "talk to Deacey" I was put through, Deacey said "you've got your rise" "good man" I had no trouble getting the charge back from Wally, I think he was a bit relieved,

DUCK EGGS TO GO

Deasey always sent the bloody idiots to work with me, one was a scruffy little oik known as 'tively' after a character on the telly who advertised the TV times, I called him Walter Mitty as he lived in a dream world, on one occasion I had him with me at a coking plant at Wingerworth, we were using his car to get to work in, an old Morris Traveller, it was an acid job clearing pipes on the muck hill, all around us there was lots of coke so we took the chance to take a few sacks full home for the fire, on the way home on the M1 there was a slight smell of burning,) drew Tivey's attention to it but he said it was a fire he'd seen in a field we'd just passed, it got worse, you've got a problem with the car I told him, no he said that smell's from a lorry that just passed us (his old car didn't go very fast) ok I said but when I see smoke coming from under the dash I want you to pull over and stop, and that came to pass, he stopped on the hard shoulder got out and lifted the bonnet and was about to take the radiator cap off, I stopped him as he would have scolded himself, when the engine had cooled a Bet he removed the cap looked in and said he could see the water level, what he could see was the top of the tube's, the radiator was dry, he was all for waiting for a police car to come along with a can of water or something, I said that was a long shot but if the copper's came along they would send for a tow vehicle (expensive) then want to know about the three bag's of coke in the back, he still didn't know what to do, so I asked him if he had a can of some sort, he had one with some petrol in it so I told him to empty it, he was reluctant to do that and waste the petrol, empty it into the petrol tank I explained and

give me the can, we were parked under a bridge so I climbed up the embankment lifted a rainwater gully grid, filled the can with water from that and took it down to a totally amazed Tivey who must have thought I was a worker of miracles.

Johnny Bater was another one, some of the things he did defied reason, he was my mate on the jetter on one occasion I was stood by the door of the jetter trying to start the engine that drove the HP pump, (the ignition key was in the cab) the engine needed a Bet of throttle so I told Johnny to put a few rev's on, he got out of the cab on the passenger side ran round the back of the jetter where the controls were, then ran up to where I was standing, pushed passed me and plonked his hand on the accelerator pedal. Then there was the time we were working at Bournemouth, he was driving the firms van and pulled into a service area for diesel, he drove slowly passed all the pumps as if he couldn't make his mind up which one to use, then did a u turn and drove back, the last one he came to for some reason he drove the near side front wheel onto the concrete plinth, he didn't stop there but kept going till the wheel dropped off the concrete leaving both front wheels off the ground, he revved the engine in forward gear then in reverse, he turned the steering left and right, all to no avail I had to crawl out as the van's sill was level with the ground, I shouted at John to turn the engine off and get out, then stood there wondering how to get out of this fix, salvation came in the form of two huge blokes passing by, who without saying a word just bent down and with a heave pushed the van off the plinth, I went to thank them but they just grinned at me and walked on their way, am I a lucky bastard or what? I wasn't the only one lumbered with Johnny stupid Bater, Big John Greaves was saddled with him too, sometimes, like when I had a job in Taunton, I'd got myself a casual help locally so only me to get digs for, Big John & Bater were working together so staying at the same digs, I booked in at the same place, that night we all got ready for bed, the landlady showed me my bed, then Beg John threw Bater out off their room and told him to use mine, I asked him why, because he snores like a pig, so I occupied Baters bed hoping I didn't snore too loud. before I got to sleep though I asked John if I should switch off the huge heater alongside my bed, "no" he said 'have you seen the state of the windows' I had a look and noticed the broken panes, some packed with cardboard, I was only thinking about her electric Bell I told him, don't worry she's got the stick in he said, what stick I asked, I'll show you tomorrow. he did and I was amazed, she had a cocktail stick pushed into the meter to stop the little wheel going round with a small weight to balance it. everything in the place was electric, she never switched any lights off, she had two foreign holidays a year, her electric Bell was about £5,

NEWCASTLE

Cleaning sewers & drains may not be everybody's 'ideal job, but I enjoyed it, somewhere different every week, meeting different people, always something to laugh at, like the time I was in NEWCASTLE & sent to a blocked sewer in a pleasant housing estate, The young lady of the house came out in her pyjamas to tell us that the blockage was between a manhole on the drive and the garage. we lifted the cover to find it full to the top, and floating on top were a lot of used condoms, "that's what's blocking it" we told her, but she wasn't there, she'd made a dash indoors, I said "she must be in her working clothes"

LIVERPOOL

Working in Liverpool was like the curates egg, good in parts, the kids were little bastards, we were always chasing them away from the machine, but while we chased one another would run round pulling levers, turning handles and things, it did no good calling the cops, the bleeders weren't scared of them. the council men just told us to go & work somewhere else, we had to lock the doors or they would have drove it away, I fetched a copper to one 8 year old who I suspected had stolen my standpipe, some older lads pointed him out, I asked him what he had done with it, he said he didn't know what I was talking about, the copper didn't say owt but in front of him I threatened to beat the kids brains out with the turnkey if he didn't show me where

he'd put my standpipe, he ran over to some bushes and produced it saying "look what I've just found" I took it off him still wielding the key, till he jumped on his little Bike and pedalled off like mad shouting back "your fucking mad you are" the copper still said nowt, on the other hand there was always people asking us to do a 'foreigner', or in English a fiddle job, we always obliged and made us beer money. the council told us to go elsewhere if the kids got too bad so we did quite often, another team and got pestered continually, the brats pinched they're turnkey and opened a hydrant with no standpipe in place, sending a fountain of water skywards, for reasons best known to himself he drove his brand new 'vactor' over the fountain getting water into his engine smashing it up, he was a bloody fool, but a Londoner which explains it, I worked in London alongside him with our Gerald, he was having trouble clearing a blocked sewer and needed our help, we obliged of course and got there to find he was jetting upstream, wrong way I told him and set Gerald on jetting the sewer downstream, this meant a lot more shit and corruption surcharged up, but it had to be done I told him. ged was doing a marvellous job, looking across the road he spotted a KFC. "al have one of those when av done this" he said, that was enough for the Londoner he went behind a car and threw up, I had only been in London a few days when a chap came up saying " your still going to do that job for me" I didn't know him and said so, yes you do he said weeks ago you said you'd do the drains at HARCOURT FLATS "did I mention a fee" I asked, "yes, we agreed £50 " he said, "ah now I remember" I lied" but remind me were the flats are.

DRAX. and I'm a hero,,

Drax power station was the largest power station in Europe, Deacey told me to go there with my jetting unit to clear the perimeter drain, it was a 2' diameter french drain all round the coal stocks, they had tried to do it with a boring machine and failed, I got there with our Gerald to find the borers had left their steel rods stuck in the drain. we fastened a chain to them and pulled them out with the lorry, I'd done this drain a year earlier with the aid of a 6" suction pump so I had one delivered to site, then proceeded to work up from the bottom end as usual, there was nothing in it and I told the engineer that when he turned up for a progress report, "that's not right" he said, "come and look at this" we walked half a mile to the other end of the coal stocks to where there was a road , the road was built on a bank about four foot high, holding back an enormous lake of water like a dam, with the enormous cooling towers standing in it, "nobody had told me about that" I said "but now I know VI see to it" he told me that if the water comes up another six inches and enters the cooling towers he would have to close the station at enormous expense. "it doesn't bear thinking about "he said. so me and Gerald began lifting manhole covers until we found one full of water, we tried jetting up from the manhole below to no avail, not being able clear the blockage from that direction we put the 6" pump in and started it up, it didn't do any good but it lowered the water level slightly exposing a piece of plastic moving around in the flow, taking my life in my hands I climbed down m/h shaft and tugged at the plastic, I couldn't move it so called to Gerald to lower a rope and I fastened it to the 'bit' of plastic, back on the ground I paid the rope round the hydraulic hose reel and started to reel in, the rope came up pulling what looked like a plastic lorry sheet, it took a long time to get it out all together but after we did we laid it on the ground for the engineer to look at, he was totally amazed we had got it out and immensely relieved to see the water rushing full bore down the drain, We turned up next morning to find that instead of a lake there was a green field the size of three football pitches with a gentle stream running through it plus a very very happy engineer, he couldn't reward us enough he said except to give us the whole weekend to clear up, we spent most of it in t'pub ,

JAN 82

THE NEW FOREST a COW of a job

Jetting drains at EMERY DOWN in the NEW FOREST, me & Gerald met a cow, the drain we were working on was in a country lane, one manhole we had to reach was in a field alongside the lane, naturally we had to ask permission to enter the field, so went to the nearby farm to ask, the old farmer gave us permission but said not to forget to close the gate afterwards, we opened the gate to access the manhole and started work, just then we noticed a cow walking towards us up the lane all on its own, it walked with a determined stride not like other cows we'd seen who just ambled slowly along, now Gerald being a farm hand at heart was concerned for its safety, we decided to put it in the field, this field was full of lovely tall grass and to be honest the cow looked half starved, you could see it's bones, the gate was open but the cow ignored it and tried to push passed us to carry on up the lane, as if it had somewhere important to go, we pointed out the open gate and lush grass to the beast, it stopped what it was doing and looked at me quizzically as if to say "are you sure"? it went into the field and started happily scoffing the grass, we finished our job then went to tell the farmer we had done plus we proudly told him we'd rounded up one of his stray cows, that cow baint mine that be a scrub cow, where be it now? he asked, in your field we told him, GO AN GET THE BLOODY THING OUT he yelled at us, we did what he said although it took a Bet off time, the sodding thing didn't want to leave all that snap, we eventually got it to leave as it went it gave me a look that that said "make your bloody mind up" we went back to the farm to explain our case and to ask what a scrub cow was, "It be a wild cow ",he said "an it wanders around the forest" apparently there are lots of em the last we saw of that one it was grazing on a traffic island,

While we were down there we had a job at TOTNESS. but got called away to BUCKFASTLIEGH. Sharpie had got a winch bucket stuck, (again) in a 2 foot pipe under the road we had a go at it and moved a lot of rocks managing to free the bucket, the agent told us that if we didn't clear the pipe soon he'd have to call the job off, the locals would be disappointed as it was an old mill teat that ran through their gardens, that night we stayed at the same pub as Sharpies gang, it rained hard all night, the road outside was like a river, so when we all went to the job next morning the river was a raging torrent, Sharpie said "that's it, we can't work today" I corrected him, saying this is just what we want." take the bucket off the rope replace it with a chain I've got" it was a big chain with inch links, I'd put a couple of knots in it to bulk it up so that when it was dragged through the pipe it pushed the boulders around allowing the weight of water to shove the rocks out of the pipe so many at a time, I reckoned it would take no more than two days to clear the pipe, I had to return to Totnes so had to leave and let Sharpie take all the credit, I hated that basted,

A LIFE OF CRIME,

The police only felt my collar once while I worked for the descalers, which taught me a very important lesson in life. I learnt that all coppers are bent, for although I stole diesel, coal, scrap, tyres and various car parts for my own vehicles, (I never stole money or the fitters tools) I was a very honest thief, the only time I got caught was at a pit near Doncaster, me and Jack Gunnes where acid descaling a large condenser, it was foggy, there was a huge pile of coal adjacent to the power station where we worked on a regular basis, I was desperately short of coal at home so hidden by the fog, or so I thought, I filled five sacks of coal, after getting my time sheets signed I proceeded to drive out of the colliery, with five sacks of coal in the back of the van, surprisingly as I approached the gate the boom came down, this hadn't happened before so I feared the worst, the gate man then asked me what I was carrying in my van, I told him five sacks of coal which were in the van when I came in no, he said you where seen loading them up, somebody must have had good eyes, even I couldn't see what I was doing in that fog, well, he

called the cops, I told Jack to scarper, it had nowt to do with him, two cops turned up, had a look in the van and told me to drive the van onto the road, like a fool I did, if I had chucked the coal out of the van on NCB property they could only have done me for attempted theft, as it was they made me take the coal to the police station where I was arrested I later attended court in Doncaster accused of stealing TWO bags of coal, my plea that my children where freezing to death because I was unable to afford any coal for the fire, and seeing all that coal laying about I succumbed to temptation, it did no good, the magistrate fined me £5 although with a tear in his eye, the thing is I pinched five bags but was only done for two, who got the other three? why those thieving bloody coppers that's who.

John Stocks was a master at it, but not all that careful. he was caught taking lead off a roof in broad daylight after chucking the lumps down narrowly missing the copper waiting for him to come down, later, working at Scunthorpe he would look round the steelworks he was working at making mental notes of all the lumps of stainless steel laying around, when him and his gang went home he would hire a flat back truck, go back to the site after dark with his gang, load it all up and take it to the scrap yard after arranging for someone to be there to accept it, off hire the lorry, then go back to the site and have a good laugh at the security men looking around for the stuff, he did that for years buying himself a house on the proceeds.

NO PARKING or else!

Parking my TRANSIT van on the avenue was always a problem, what with Huton who lived across the road having a van + trailer (sandwich van), with a relation living next door who had a motor bike, both of them arrogant bastards, they commandeered their side of the road, if I parked on my side when they weren't there they would still park in front of their house's when they got back making life difficult for other drivers, I was always asked to move my van down the road so they could get through, one day we had just got back from holiday with my transit and caravan, nobody parked up so I parked the rig on the other side intending to take the caravan to where I kept it the next day, then took Jean into the club for a well earned drink, half way through the Bingo him who owned the Bike came in asking me to move my caravan so he could get his bike in, I said I would after the bingo, when I went out I could see he was taking the piss, there was plenty of room. so I went in for another pint, not long before he was back, saying he couldn't get his bloody bike in, I went out with him got his bike and wheeled it onto the pavement through his gate and threw it at him, on my way back to the club he shouted "I'm going to work at six in t'morning al nock you up to get it out again", I told him to f...off. home from t'club later there was a knock on t'door, two coppers telling me to move my van. I told them I was taking it away in the morning and anyway he could easily get his 150cc bike out, like I had got it in, one copper said "to keep the piece, would you move it forward a bit?" of course I will I replied, but as an officer of the law you shouldn't be asking me to drive after I've just supped four pint's, in that case do you mind if I move it he said, I said I'd no objection if he had a license. he moved it up two feet, him across shouted "that's ok" and went inside but the two copper's followed him in, to give him a bollocking I think, anyway I had trouble with him a bit later on, once again Hutons sandwich van was parked across in front of my van I parked behind it, when I wanted to move off he'd moved his rig back a bit so I had to reverse slightly to get out, I drove down a bit, turned round and came back to go but he was there waving his arms about and shouting that I'd hit his bike, which must have been close to my van cos I didn't see it, I showed him my insurance and thought nowt about it till I paid for my cover and found I'd lost my no claim bonus, I rang up about it and they told me they'd paid out for repairs to a motor bike, I told them there was no damage to the bike, his father in law had sent the Bell in so it was a fiddle, £30 it was but I'd lost a lot more than that so I said if I pay you the £30 will you reinstate the N C B, of course they said, so measure, it when I'd done that I Bided my time, and when I saw the bike on the road across unattended I walked over with half a pound of sugar, took the petrol cap off and dropped the sugar in, replaced the cap and gave the bike a shake for

good gave me great pleasure to see him trying and failing to start his bloody bike, even his wife had a try, I never saw that bike again. I don't know what he did with it but I'd got my revenge and felt a lot better,.,

a lucky wristwatch

our Joan's husband, Alan Hewitt collapsed in jump club with what turned out to be a brain haemorrhage and sadly died later in hospital, he had a really good watch, and after the funeral Joan kindly asked me if I would like to have it, I said I would but our Pats Bloke Dave white got hold of it first, he dint have it long, he fell down drunk and broke it, soon after that they both went on the run to Bristol, with a chap who sold woman's fashion after them, anyway our Joan let me have the broken watch, I knew a man who worked at the same firm as me who could mend watches I looked him up and handed him the broken watch, a week or two later I discovered that he had died suddenly, with a brain haemorrhage. I didn't know the man all that well so I wasn't too upset about his demise but I'd lost a damn good time piece, or so I thought, till I met a bloke in the garage used by the firm, he asked me if my name was Ken Scott, when I said it was he handed me the watch, I enquired after his health, and I was relieved to find he was fit and well, I wore the watch for quite a long time, it was self winding and very slim, quite expensive, but one day while I was working in a large power station boiler, vacuuming up fly ash I spotted a large disc, what I thought was a coin or something, I bent down to pick it up, but the vac got it first and sucked it up, I thought no more about it till I was in the shower later and found the back was missing off my watch. how the hell could the back of a watch come off when it was tight on my wrist, anyway I planned to have it mended, but had second thoughts, what if the repairer had a stroke or something, I'd feel really bad, so I put it away in a drawer while I thought about it, only to find later it had gone, now nobody would want a watch without a back, stuffed with boiler dust, so although I asked the family about it nobody knew owt about it and to tell the truth I wasn't all that fussed about it, glad to get shut really..

CHANGING TIMES

My old jetting machine was retired (sold) and I was given a VACTOR. an American designed machine, built in Huddersfield with a more powerful water jet + it had a very powerful) suction hose, hydraulically controlled. mounted on a second hand lorry it could have been a lot better, as it showed when it broke down on the M62, got charley out to it and he worked out that an injector pipe was breaking up inside, bits of metal were then getting into the injector, jamming it in the open position, thus allowing the cylinder pressure to push gasses back into the injector pump causing an air lock that stopped the engine, the lorry was returned to the supplier for repairs, ok, or so I thought, My next job was PORTSMOUTH the vactor broke down on the M27 with the same symptoms, FAMS a local vehicle repair firm came out & started it up, then told me to drive it to their yard in EASTLEIGH. it broke down again on the way, In FAMS yard I explained what I thought was wrong, i.e. an injector pipe was breaking up etc etc, They all laughed at that so I left them to it and travelled back to Sheffield, Monday morning and I was back at FAMS but no vactor. the boss said they had worked on it all weekend but couldn't find what was wrong. they had to send it round the corner to diesel injection specialist, When we got it back later that day the specialists report read, This was a very unusual fault but an injector pipe was breaking up causing a blocked injector thus allowing pressure from well just as I had told them, afterwards they all thought that I was absolutely brilliant, I basked in their acidulation for some time never telling them how I'd worked it out,

STOREMAN very boring.

the storeman got the sack for fiddling, casting round for an honest man to replace him, they were looking at me, now I'd pinched more from them than anybody, they didn't know that though, but having an honest face I got the job, We had been taken over by BIFFA by this time and things were going downhill, but we did get some brand new vactors Tony Deeming the manager asked me if I was happy in the stores, I said I wasn't and would leave the job if I got my hands on a new vactor so it was that I was the proud driver of a brand new VACTOR,

Along the road came Murphy's men like a troop of ballet dancer's

one in ten were time served men, the rest were fucking chancers

an old man approached the pearly gates, his head was bended low,
he stopped to ask saint Peter which way he was to go,
what have you done saint Peter asked, to gain admission here,
I worked for Johnny Deacey sir, for many a long hard year,
then come inside saint Peter said, come in for all is well,
pick up your harp, collect your wings, you've had your share of hell,
author unknown

A MOVE FOR THE BEST ,,,,But a stroke of bad luck

Robert & Gerald were married, just the four of us in a three bedroom house when a woman asked us if we wanted to swap houses with her. it was just around the corner, 32 Pilley lane, we went round to look at it, it stank to high heaven but had potential., it was two bedroom so just right, Jean couldn't stand the stink but I assured her it was the furniture & curtains that stunk, I was never more wrong, we swapped and moved in, or should I say didn't move in, even the mate's who helped us flit wouldn't go inside for fear of throwing up. the worst thing was she was a NHS nurse, anyway we put our stuff in and strayed at Caroline's while I came home from work each day and started work on the house. using gallons of black IZAL we scrubbed the place out, took all the wood chip off ALL the walls, painted everything, put carpets down, It took us weeks before it was habitable. but we moved in and it was all worth it, the house was freezing cold though Our Robert came up trumps by installing loft insulation, I then exercised my 'right to buy' I got it for £6-000, (God bless Margaret Thatcher). then we installed central heating plus double glazing. things were going along swimmingly until the worst happened, Jean had a stroke, not too serious though it just slowed her right down. it even meant she was easier to live with, she was a lovable woman again and I was still in love with her, One day when I had been working at CANTERBURY and been replaced by a team with a more up to date machine, I had to take them a van & bring my machine back, I asked Jean if she fancied a run to Canterbury. "oh yes please, I've always wanted to visit Canterbury Cathedral" she said, so off we went, My 'VACTOR' was parked at Sturry, I left the van there and drove the vector into Canterbury parking up as close to the Cathedral as I could, so nobody would say anything about me parking there I put out a few traffic cones & road signs, left the beacons flashing and took Jean into the Cathedral for a look round, she enjoyed it immensely, and I know she enjoyed the ride home in my beautiful jetter.

It was coming up Christmas 1993. we had arranged to go to our Joans at Alton for the holidays when an acid job came up, acid jobs were a thing of the past really and the only man left able to do em was me, Our Paul was passing on his way home and said he would take Jean for me while I did the job in Scunthorpe, it was a good arrangement, Jean wasn't keen but me and Paul persuaded her it was best, I followed a day or two later, both of us then paid our Pat and Hugh a visit in Bristol. back at Alton Jean was taken very ill, we sent for a doctor and ambulance, The two paramedics fought like tigers to save her life in vain, Jean passed away in the ambulance on the way to Basingstoke hospital at a place called GOLDEN POT, We had her body brought back to Pilley, she was buried in Tankersley churchyard,

QUESTION, WHERE WAS JOHN WAYNE TAKING ALL THEM COWS ?

John Wayne, Rowdy Yates and all the other cowboys were always driving hundreds of steers across the prairie. but where to, all they would tell us was back east, well I can tell you where to, To BIRKENHEAD, The reason I know this is because I worked there in a tunnel, this tunnel was about ten foot wide by ten foot high, hacked through the solid sandstone, for hundreds of yards, It had a penstock at the end , (a huge wooden gate) as the river reached low tide the penstock was opened allowing the huge tunnel to fill up with seawater as the tide came in, the penstock was closed at high tide. then, when the tide was at its lowest the penstock was opened again allowing hundreds of tons of water to rush out scouring the dock of mud and silt, keeping the docks navigable, the tunnel was abandoned when they invented powered dredgers, then the council wanted to lay a drain in the same place, to save a lot of digging they decided to use the long abandoned tunnel, they found it completely silted up so wanted someone to clear it out, a job for THE DESCALERS, The firm put in place a large road tanker plus a suction pump, it was a struggle as the pump wasn't up to it, so it was slow going, they needed a more powerful suction pump, the best vac the firm had was my VACTOR so I was sent to Birkenhead, with my suction hose coupled to the tanker and the suction hose to the other end we were in business. we could only work for four hours at a time at low tide because the tunnel filled up with water with the tide, another gang worked the next tide, so after we'd emptied the tanker we all went home, what we were removing from the tunnel was mainly cowshit and straw, I began to wonder where it all came from, so I had a look round on the surface, were there was a hell of a lot of cattle pens, all with drinking troughs and feeding manger's, four large buildings stood in a row, now I've worked in abattoirs and that was what these were, a railway line ran alongside each building leading to railway sidings again on a massive scale, so this was butchering on an industrial scale, the cowboys drove the herds to the railhead, then the trains took them to the docks to be loaded onto ships to be shipped , to Birkenhead . they were kept alive all the way as nobody had invented freezers at that time. the British rail network was second to none in those days so the fresh meat could be in London or anywhere in no time, I worked all that out for myself, no help at all from Michael Portillo, back to the tunnel, it had access manholes every hundred yards covered by a massive sandstone slabs, actually hidden under the railway lines which proved the tunnel pre dated the rails, we had uncovered two manholes and the lad's were digging for the next one, I was sure they were looking in the wrong place, so using my mining experience I sighted from the first manhole to the next, made a mental note of a landmark along that line on the surface, the tunnel was gun barrel strait so I strode out the distance between the two manholes underground then strode the same distance along the imaginary line on the surface, arriving at where I knew the manhole to be I called the men over pointing out they were digging in the wrong place, they trusted my word and soon found the sand stone slab a foot down, all the buildings and rails have been demolished now replaced by lots and lots of Beg houses, which is probably why they wanted the tunnel, for surface water drainage, I'll bet nobody living in those houses knows anything about the connection between their house and John Wayne

ABERDEEN, strange goings on

Descaling contractors had a CCTV division, sending remote controlled TV cameras up the sewers. to inspect the condition of the underground pipework. A job was under taken in

Aberdeen, now the scoffs were very canny and saved money by having only one set of manholes for both foul sewer & surface water drains, to make sure the one didn't run into the other the foul sewer pipe had a metal inspection cover clamped over the inspection hole, held in place by two brass bars & a brass bolts, the cctv gang had to remove the brass items to gain access to the sewer, needless to say the brass wasn't reinstalled but removed to the local scrap yard, a keen council worker inspecting a manhole one day noticed the brass fittings were missing,& reported the loss to the department, they looked into all the other manholes and contacted the police who went after the cctv gang intent on a prosecution. the gang who were still working there owned up to stealing it and lead the cops to the scrap yard. the Descalers management wanted to buy all the brass back to replace it. but the police said no, it's evidence, then they offered to replace it with stainless steel but the council weren't having that, they said no it had to be brass, so the descalers had to fork out for very expensive brass replacements, the police wanted to go ahead with a prosecution but the council wouldn't press charges, they said if it went to court, every villain in Aberdeen would know that the sewers were full of brass and it wouldn't stay there long, the cctv gang got away with it, the scrap man got away with it, the descalers got away with paying for it, everyone was sworn to secrecy. so only two people know about it, that's you and me. don't tell anyone,

ME AND FAG'S

Am proud to say I never smoked, not a single solitary cigarette, when I was young money was scarce so I couldn't afford em, when I worked darn t'pit and could afford em I would see owd miner's coming out o't t'pit after seven and a half hours, looking for their baccy tin's, usually containing two cigs and two matches, they would light up then start coughing their lungs up, as their faces turned purple, then, when they could breath, they'd ask me if I wanted one, "have one "they said "it' I do you good", "it Bunt look to be doing thee much good" I'd say "an anyway I Bunt smoke", then they would all say something that amazed me "I WISH I DIDN'T SMOKE! they didn't want to smoke and yet they went to the shop, paid good money for cigarettes, stuck em in their gob's and set fire to em, wishing all the time they didn't have to, I could see that there was something very odd about that, so I kept away from it, in a working men's club I was offered a fag by our Clifford's wife, I refused of course, but she insisted asking if I'd ever smoked, I said I hadn't, try one then to see if you like em she said, "well ok" I said, and took one out of the offered pack, I looked at it for a while savouring the moment, then broke it into pieces into the ashtray (this was when you could smoke in pub's) I said "I enjoyed that, can I have another? " she said "no you bloody can't you've ruined my cigarette" I pointed out that it was mine not her's as she'd given it to me, oddly enough she never offered me anymore, later on driving lorries, some of my mates would ask if I minded if they lit up. I said that I did but if they had to smoke they should lower their window a Bet so the smoke went out that way, then without him knowing,! would turn the heater off, it soon got pretty cold especially in winter, he would smoke the fag as quick as he could and it was a long time before he needed another, some men wouldn't do as I asked, they seldom worked with me again, I put being a lifelong non-smoker as the reason why I'm pretty healthy at my age of eighty summers (plus a lot of bloody hard winters), I tried to keep Jean off the fags with partial success. of my four kids only Gerald smoked, but not in my company. out of respect I think, and look at his health. poor bugger, you can take a horse to water, etc all in all I've been bloody lucky, working in coal dust and not getting pneumoconiosis working in power station boilers among asbestos and fly ash and not getting asbestosis. down sewers and not catching wieles disease (leptospirosis),,

CATCHING MY BREATH

The Descalers idea of breathing apparatus was not good, it consisted of a compressor with a filter device, but it worked, I first used it on a job for SHELL OIL at their oil refinery near Chester, we had to knock all the lime deposit off the internal wall of the Energy Recovery Plant. it was a

tall tower where all the combustible waste was burned, it had to be cleaned before scaffolders could go in to erect scaffolding for the engineers to do a survey. we put in a cradle to work from, two men on the cradle, one man on top to secure the safety lines and one below to look after the air lines, if the lime we were knocking off got wet it burned the skin so I worked out it was important not to get a sweat on, therefore wear as little as possible under our paper overalls, nobody agreed with me and they put on boiler suits with scarves round their necks to stop the dust, it was warm in the ERP tower, the dust got wet with sweat and turned caustic burning their faces, whereas I had no trouble, we did that job a couple of times a year, one time when it was my turn on top handling the safety lines I had two Irish lads on the cradle, they were ok till they were half way up, I had secured the lines when one of them found out he didn't like heights and started winding his end of the cradle down in a panic, the cradle hung at 45 degrees, the safety line supported him in mid air, but he was still trying to wind down, his mate slid down and started beating him up, I couldn't do anything for laughing, it was the funniest thing I'd ever seen,

My last job for Descaling Contractors was at Shell oil, working with our Robert, an Irish bloke called Mick, and Patsy Farrel, who was the son of Paddy Farrel, the same man I had worked with on my first job for Descalers, just a mile away from Shell, what are the chance's, Mick & Patsy made us

laugh when Mick made the remark "when your inside that tower it looks really tall but on the outside it doesn't look all that tall at all" to which Patsy replied "atall atall. the thing I remember about the Descalers was although it was a sometimes dirty, sometimes dangerous job you never stopped laughing, A job I didn't think dangerous but was, was at Grimethorpe coal prep plant, all we had to do was clear out a pumping sump half full of mud, using my 'Vactor', I'D sucked out and disposed of all the mud, then went down into the sump wearing waders to tidy up a few loose bricks there were two large submersible pumps plus a lot of heavy duty pipework and valves, so it was hard to move around, sticking out of the wall low down was a 9" steel pipe, I'd wondered what it was there for as the only inlet pipe was 3 foot wide. by a huge stroke of luck I was standing right next to the exit ladder when water at extreme pressure rushed out of the 9" pipe, filling the sump so fast that although I ran up the ladder as fast as I could the water lapped at my feet all the way up, there's no way I could have got to the ladder if I hadn't been standing near it, also I couldn't swim wearing waders, I was lucky to escape with my life, which is what I told the engineer (the *very* person who started the inrush of water to start with) when I met him to sign my time sheet, he didn't seem all that bothered, he was a TWAT

TIME FOR A CHANGE

It was a sad life living on my own, the Descalers now BIFFA or Seven Trent Water were going downhill away work, the management had changed, Deacey retired and Frank Wright took over, which was a disaster as he knew bugger all, Tony Deaming was sidelined by another shithead who knew less than Frank, then things picked up, the firm were asking for more redundancies, drivers this time, they'd laid off the non drivers but kept them in the yard for 5 weeks with nothing to do thinking they would jack up, losing their redundancy money, we were told not to give them a lift to or from the yard or we'd get the sack, we did of course, but just round the corner, anyway I got a call on my cab phone, it was the manager and he told me if I wanted my redundancy I could have it, all I had to do was put a request in the next day (Tuesday) and I would be gone Friday, "not treated like the other poor bastards then?" I said, "no, you will get your money and cards on Friday", then put my name right at the top of the bloody list I told him, so I went into the office with three others one of them was Grayson the man who took over from me as storeman, he was crying his heart out, I listened to the boss's spell about being sorry & things going downhill, then I grabbed my envelope, shook his hand and ran for it before he changed his mind, something else happened on my last week at the descalers that I should mention, my very last job was at SHELL oil refinery with two Irishmen, one of them was PATSY

FARREL the son of PADDY FARREL the man I worked with on my very first job, at JOHN SUMMERS, Both firms on the Wirral not two miles apart. what a coincidence, So in the dole oyle I was told to look on the board to see if there was a job I could do, "but am 58 " I said, I looked on the board with not much hope but there were some adverts for H G V drivers, the first one I rang asked me how good I was at roping and sheeting, "good at roping, never done any sheeting" I replied, "Can you start tomorrow" it was an agency but it was work, after a few different jobs I ended up at JEWSONS NO WAIT, delivering kitchens & bathrooms, I wanted a new bath and saw one with a slight chip in it in the skip, the manager agreed that I could take it, as I was loading it on to my lorry a forklift truck driver came up, "where you taking that"? he said, it's ok I've been told I can take it I told him , "its damaged" he said, "yes I know but Richard said I could take it" whereupon he took the damaged bath away and came back with a new one of far better quality, "this one's better" he said, the next thing I wanted was a cooker, so I asked Richard if I could have one, you can have one for cost price, £90, I got the money next day, he showed me the cookers, the same forklift driver came to give me a hand, he pointed out that the fan assisted ovens were much better, and right beside the others, but they are £300, all you have to do is exchange the cardboard covers by moving the strapping across and back. with that he took the oven to the door, I went to get my fiat panda, opened the back door, just then Richard the manager came up." don't lift that on your own let me give you a hand" so the manager helped me to steal an oven, I also needed a new kitchen, so like 'Johnny Cash' I took it one piece at a time and it didn't cost me a dime, things were going very well, the money was ok and the warehouse men were friendly, but once again redundancy beckoned, Richard told us Jewsons were moving to Cannock in seven weeks, but if we carried on working hard we would receive £700 tax free, that was all very well but my kitchen wasn't finished. so I had to take two pieces at a time, I just made it,

LEAVING JEWSONS JOINING PRICE TRANSPORT

After leaving JEWSONS I was back on the agency. who sent me to PRICE TRANSPORT, based in Ecclesfield. they had good vehicles, and everything was palletised, an easy job, one day ,I hadn't worked there long, another driver attempted to drive his 10 foot high truck under a 9 foot bridge (unsuccessfully) it was stuck fast, he radioed the yard and told them of his predicament, they told him to let some air out of his front tyres and get away, quickly, which he did but didn't get away because he let all six tyres down, so when he reversed out from under the bridge all the tyres came off the rims so he couldn't move, after the police and the railway engineers had come & gone, the firm sent a breakdown truck to pump all his tyres up and tow the badly damaged truck away, later in his defence he said he could have got under the bridge if it wasn't for the train standing on it, when they had stopped laughing they sacked him, they asked me if I wanted the job,) did so they handed me an application form. filling it in was a question "hobbies"? I thought what's hobbies got to do with driving? so I put down "athletics", the man looked at me a 60 year old, and said "athletics"? I said, well a short time ago I had a dose of athletes foot ,I got the job and was handed a ten ton curtain sider, with a sleeper cab + cab heater, the job took me all over country, if I was anywhere near Cambridge I would call in to see our Audrey for my tea, but sleeping in my cab, anywhere near Alton I'd stay the night at our Joan's. but best of all was Bristol, at our Pats, first of all I parked my lorry in the road opposite Pats house, until a grumpy old bugger complained, I ignored her but the next time the old bastard sent for the police, there were five coppers with three cop cars, I asked them where I was supposed to park, three of em stood around while one scribbled in his notebook, Hugh had come out by this time and was taking an interest on my side, the fifth cop (the good cop) said why don't you take it to the library car park round the corner? its empty at night. he even told me the way, I said to Hugh "keep em talking" while I drove off, finding the car park, I drove in & parked up and was happy to find our Pats place was just across the road through a hedge, an added benefit was that Pat and Hugh had a swimming pool, it was midsummer so it was nice to jump into the pool to cool

down, there was always a towel on the line, but never any trunks, but who needs trunks, it was a very private pool and I was all alone so I did a bit of skinny dipping, at least till Pat & Hugh came home, that was ok in the summer, a lot different in t'winter driving towards York on a sunny but cold day, it had snowed leaving about two inches on the road. because of that I was driving carefully, along a narrowish road, turning a corner the road went downhill at the bottom was a cart trying to come up, but it wasn't moving, I thought I'd better stop till he got moving, I touched the brakes, nothing happened if anything I was going faster and slewing round, foot of the brakes to straighten up and tried again, no good, same thing happened, I was getting pretty close to the other lorry by this time when I was horrified to see the other driver opened his door to jump out, right into my path, he thought better of it and went back in probably saving his life, in a split second I made the decision, I couldn't stop, his lorry was better than mine, so I made my mind up to commit suicide and drive my lorry into the ditch, my heroic action was rewarded, the ditch wasn't as deep as I had thought so with my two near side wheels in the ditch it pulled the lorry straight, all I had to do was engage a low gear give it some gas and drive past, looking in the mirror I saw there was about two inches clearance, back on the road I drove away wondering what the other driver was thinking, after he'd shit his self, he must have thought I was the best driver in the world, or the luckiest, which was the truth, One of the warehouse men was a nice bloke and we got on well together. after work one day he asked if I wanted to go for a drink, in the pub he said he wanted to tell me about something strange that happened to him a while ago, he'd never told anybody before as they might not believe him, so he told me, on his way home he looked up to see a man standing on the roof of a bungalow, not that strange except how he was dressed, he had a red face, a bushy red beard, he was wearing a close fitting metal helmet, a sort of fur jacket and a kilt made of leather strips, on his legs were thick woollen leggings, his shoes were leather sandals fastened with strips of leather which criss crossed up the legs, he was standing with his legs astride the roof gutter holding a spear and smiling, my mate ran home to fetch his wife to have a look, but although he was gone only a few seconds the man was gone, his wife didn't believe him so he never told anybody else, I told him I believed him and what he saw was his spirit guide, who was there to protect him through his life, he was so happy that somebody believed him he got another round in, I told him of the numerous times I had unexplained near misses and of one I will relate here, while working underground as a young man I joined three other men on a job to retrieve some steel pipes from an abandoned airway, we'd walked quite a way and the deputy called a halt at a junction with another 'gate', the three of them went into a 'box hole', (a small room cut into the side) with forms to sit on, it hadn't been used for years and stank so I went round the corner and sat down in the gate out of the draft, I had a drink of tea resting up against a conveyor gear head, wondering why they had left such an expensive unit in place after abandoning the gallery, I could hear the others had come out of the box hole so I went back to join them, as we carried on down the airway I looked for the gate with the gear head in it but it wasn't there, just a wall of broken stone. now if the whole thing had collapsed it did it very quietly as I didn't hear anything, and anyway I would have been underneath tons of rock the others not knowing where I was, very strange. anyway I didn't say owt to the others as I would have got a bollocking from the deputy for wandering off on my own in an unstable district, they were working a coal seam underneath us, we could even hear the shots being fired

FENCING WITH MY NEPHEW

On my two weeks holiday driving for Price Transport, me and Marie decided to go to our Joan's. Joan liked us to visit and it was cheaper than Blackpool, as soon as we got there we called on Richard and Jill, they were working for a posh woman called Cherida who lived at a Beg house nearby, Jill looked after her horses while Richard worked as handyman, she'd lumbered him with a job fencing the paddocks. he'd purchased all the fence posts etc and borrowed a tractor with a back actor for stamping the posts into the ground, but he was having trouble because it was a two man job. his son Simon wasn't Beg enough so he asked me to help for £5 per hour, I'd nowt else to do so I agreed to help. we kicked off with me driving the machine and him positioning the posts, not practical as a hole was needed for the pointed ends of the post to go in, Rich started

using a pointed steel bar to start off with but it was very hard work, I suggested a KANGO hammer with a long steel, he agreed and went off to hire one, the tractor had a bucket at the front so we put the Kango motor in it, then roped the jigger pick to it, Rich drove a hole in the ground then positioned the post in the hole I moved the tractor into position and using the mechanical hammer on the back, drove the post home, I enjoyed doing the job and would have done it for nowt, after all I was being paid holiday money from Prices, we were a good team and were making good progress when Cherida turned up, she thanked me for helping Richard asking if £6 an hour was enough, I assured her it was but out off my eye corner I saw Rich looking a Bet embarrassed. when the job was finished in about two weeks, Rich got my wagers out working it out at £6 per hour, "no" I said " you set me on at £5 and that was what I want, but on the other hand you would have had a Bloody hard job without me, so if you want you can give me a bonus." the difference was £60 so I asked for £20, Rich to keep £20, and £20 to Jill for making the tea and sandwiches, so we all agreed on that,

LIFE GOES ON

with our Janet working for the CO OP we got a discount for Jean's funeral plus bringing her home from Alton. only Marlene came, Jenny had family problems and coming for Malcolm would have meant getting a bath, I was a bit sad living on my own but then Janet left Karl & came back home with baby Luke, so at least I had some company, I joined the club committee after a year or so, I used to sit with a group including MARIE SILLS. Marie's husband never came into the concert room, he just glowered at us from the games room together with our Gerald, Anyway Marie left Alf eventually getting a place down Hoyland, she divorced Alf, Marie & me started knocking around together, Janet got a house round the corner so I was on my own, as I was living on my own in a two bedroom house with no visitors I decided to sell up and move in with Marie for a few home comforts, I sold the house for £39-000, after buying it for £6-000 I dint do so bad, one day seeing retirement looming and having no hobbies except D I Y I had the urge to buy a narrow boat to live on I ran the idea past Marie thinking she'd run a mile but she surprised me by saying "what a bloody good idea" so we went looking for a boat, we looked at lots of second hand ones but didn't like any, then reading a waterways mag we saw a new built boat advertised that we could afford. I put half of my money to, the rest into a bond, Marie matched my share so after a bit of a wait the boat arrived at the boatyard was craned into the water and immediately started to sink, a panic ensued, it was only a gland that needed sealing so the boat needed lifting up, the crane started to lift but ran out of diesel & stopped, also the bloody things hydraulics weren't good as it slowly lowered the boat, the crane driver ran about for some diesel, put some in the tank then bled the engine then thankfully got it started, eventually it was in the water & all was well , we went to pay for it, it cost us £26-000, I took a check for my half Marie paid her half in cash, she had bank notes in her purse, in her bra's, in a bag, in her knickers, the chap taking the money had never been so surprised. we were lucky to get the boat, the firm that built it went bankrupt, ours was the last they made. We didn't care, We were boaters & live aboard into the bargain, we had found moorings at TINSLEY MARINA by talking to the lock keeper, a jolly chap called Dave who'd pointed to a space and said "you can have that one"



FEMINA FERREA

So we owned a narrow boat. we had British Waterways moorings at Tinsley marina, although when we rang B W to confirm our moorings and how to pay the fees, the woman at the Doncaster office said we shouldn't have moorings there as there was a waiting list. I was shocked, "how many are on the list" I asked, she replied "nobody" so I said that if she put our name on the list we would automatically be at the top, "It doesn't work like that" she said, we asked Dave the lockey what to do, he told us to put the boat into the moorings he had indicated, send the money to B W and welcome to TINSLEY MARINA, we settled in and found it to be a friendly place, we now needed a name for our boat, I wanted a name no other boat had so after giving it a lot of thought, I reasoned that if Margaret Thatcher hadn't sold me my house for peanuts I wouldn't have afforded the boat, so I was going to call it 'iron lady' all boats are ladies & it was made of iron, Marie wouldn't have it though, she hated Margaret. but I was still driving and arrived at our Audrey's one day, I asked Marcus who knew how to speak Latin, " what's Latin for iron lady"? he told me that you can't say it that way, its 'lady of iron', ok I said what's Latin for that? oh, 'femina ferrea'. that's bloody marvellous six letters+six letters it'll look really good on the side of the boat, when I told Marie she said the name was just right, and when I told her what it meant she still liked it, the first thing we put in was a solid fuel stove, it was a good un plus we got it cheap, except for that it was fully fitted out but not up to Marie's liking, so everything had to be changed, over time we put in a bigger fridge, better oven, a good telly and more comfortable bed and seating, I was approaching 65 and working for Price transport, my H G V license was about to expire, a good time to pack in work and sail away into the future. so that's what we did but first we had a good holiday just in case we couldn't afford it later to AUSTRALIA. we spent a week at our CHRIS & KAY 's, then flew to Sydney to catch the INDIAN PACIFIC train, travelling first class, with Chris & Kay, (they didn't want to be left behind) to PERTH, the train took four days and nights to reach Perth stopping now and then but not for long except at KALGOOLEY where everybody had to get off, there was a bush fire burning further up the line, too dangerous, the station master told us a few bus's had been laid on to take us the rest of the way, a long long way, not good enough for Kay, she & Chris decided to use their

insurance to fly to Perth, they moved into a hotel for the night, it was a hot night, me and Marie sat on our cases on the platform waiting for the bus. I went over to the hotel to see Chris and we drank most of the mini bar, back at the station the station master gave us the good news, a steel train had come through meaning the track was safe, the train could proceed, all aboard, I asked Marie "what about Chris and Kay" she said "leave them where they are" we didn't though, the rest of the ride was uneventful, the service was excellent I ate kangaroo steak for every meal
,,great,
Then we flew back to permanent retirement, instead of hurtling around the country at sixty mph we cruised around at four mph,

BOATERS OR FLOATERS?

So, we had a narrow boat together with moorings' not far from my place of work, I was driving for PRICE TRANSPORT' who's depot was only a mile from TINSLEY where we moored the boat, Marie knew of a sign writer who painted signs for the scaffolding company she worked for, she wasn't a scaffolder although she could have been if she wanted, probably, she was an office cleaner' and good at it, for when we left on our first cruise they told her they'd keep her job open till we got back. anyway she got the sign writer to paint the name on the boat, and he made a bloody good job of it, another bonus was they gave us all the old scaffold planks nicely sawn up to keep the fire going on the boat all winter I fitted the stove myself and it worked a treat keeping us warm all winter, I bought a folding bike from another boater which I used to get to work' taking it with me in the lorry' using it to ride to the pub from where I'd parked the lorry' I slept in it at night' it had a cab heater and I got a small telly, life was good, a couple of months before my 65th Birthday my HGV license ran out, I put my notice in at 'Prices' as it would have cost me money to renew it (price's wouldn't pay for it so bugger em) anyroad I'd had enough of rushing round the country at 60 mph' I wanted to creep round the country at a leisurely 4 mph, it was two or three months till my birthday when I could draw my pension so I went to the doctor for a sick note for a month' he knew I had a bad back' we set off on our first cruise with Pat & Norma, their boat was called Buffer Girl, they argued a lot and got into all sorts of trouble' if they weren't running aground they were fouling the prop' which meant going into the weed hatch, Pat wasn't very tall & his weed hatch was deep this meant that Norma had to hold on to his legs and lower him down, never seen owt so funny in me life' We were in Wolverhampton looking for somewhere to moor for the night' so we turned into the WIRLEY & ESSINGTON canal, we found no safe moorings so kept going Pat fouled his prop under every bridge' blaming me for stirring things up in front of him, I sent him in front, still no better' we eventually reached SNEYED JUNCTION' which is on a tight bend with a small marina. a boat was struggling to exit the marina so we hung around a bit till he'd gone, a chap came up to apologise for the holdup saying "I told him not to worry as no one uses this canal, I looked up to see you two coming round the bend" we asked if there was any moorings and he was glad to oblige we moored there a few days and that was handy because I had to go back to get another sick note and Pat had to get something as well, we caught a bus to WALSALL and hired a car, back in Sheffield I persuaded the doc I was still in pain, got another sick note, stayed the night in Pat's campervan then drove back I dropped Pat off telling Marie to bring the boat down to Walsall to pick me up after. I'd off hired the car, I knew she'd be ok as she was a boater in an earlier life, although she did ring to say she'd come to a junction and which fork to take?, I just said guess.

OUR FIRST CRUISE

Our first trip on our nice new narrow boat was with Pat & Norma, and Tony & Kath, we had done a lot to the boat to make it more comfortable' we painted it and had the name sign written on it, but we'd scrapped the black pitch off the hull by taking it up to the quays through ice' we booked a dry dock at BURTON ON TRENT' for all three boats, due to torrential rain the Trent was in flood so we were held up at Newark flood gates, when we arrived at JANEL CRUISES boatyard there wasn't much time to waste so we put our boat in first, had it water blasted' slapped the blacking

on and as soon as it was dry floated it out next morning Pat's went in next and it was ready in the afternoon, the six of us worked nonstop Pats boat was out & Tony's was in just in time to get it water blasted. we all worked into the night to get it scraped & blacked' then went to bed exhausted, next morning we were up early only to find the black paint on Tony's boat had all slid off on to the floor, the paint we had used wasn't compatible with that already on the hull, Tony was raging mad' he was going to sue everybody. after we calmed him down' we got stuck in and all of us scraped the hull to the metal' painted it over again let it dry and floated it out just in time to avoid an extra day's charge for the dock, panic doesn't get you anywhere' and boating is a leisure pursuit.

Pat & Norma were always rowing with each other which upset Tony & Kath so much that they went off down a different canal, all went well with our two boats till on the way back on the HUDDERSFIELD NARROW CANAL, BW rang us to say that a boat had sunk in the STANDEDGE TUNNEL. & we had to wait at Upermill transshipment warehouse, no trouble as there was water and an 'elsan' sluice, two days after Pat got restless' he told me there was plenty of water in the canal & we could go on up to DIGGLE tunnel end. I said we are supposed to wait for B W staff to escort us up the flight, but he was determined to go' so off we went with him in the lead, the first two locks were no trouble but at the third he was taking an awful long time to go up, eventually his head appeared above the bottom gate and he moved forward and out of sight, straight away we could hear Norma screaming for help,, I leaped off the boat' scabbled up the bank to find Pat's boat balancing on the cil. he'd run aground on the cil' the pound ahead was empty & the lock chamber was emptying fast, Pat was stood on the stern running the thing forward then reverse and not going anywhere as the prop was spinning in air, the boat was stuck fast but in danger of tipping back into a now empty lock, I shouted to Pat to abandon ship but first throw me the back rope so I could secure it to save the boat from tipping back, he did but there was nothing to secure it to, I managed to get his pole 'laid it across the lock chamber and tied the rope to that, it was ok for now but somebody had to ring B W for help, Pat wanted me to do it but I said it was his idea and his bloody boat' he should do it, two B W men came quite quickly and took charge, they started penning water down from further up' as the pound started filling up the front of the boat lifted putting a strain on my jury rig on the back, this broke the pole allowing the back end to drop' at that angle the boat was sure to slide back, Marie then came into her own ordering some bystanders to join her standing on the bow, this kept the boat in position on the cil while the lock filled up, then Pat' always full of surprises' leapt off the lock wall onto the back of the boat, this broke the equilibrium, the boat started sliding back into the now nearly full lock threatening to crash into the bottom gates causing untold damage to them and probably killing Pat, I shouted to the people stood on the bow to jump for their lives, while me & the two B W men hung on to the ropes like grim death' we stopped the boat just before it smashed into the gates, Pat stood on the back deck with his hand on the tiller quite unconcerned' looking like captain Smith on the TITANIC prepared to go down with his ship, or more likely he was just stupid, the two collie dogs who had leaped off earlier and run away, came back but wouldn't go on board, they stayed on our back deck for two days till their nerves settled down, the trip over the top was hard work, the canal only just being opened after a hundred years and not up to cruising standard, we were taken over the hill in a taxi' our boat was towed through STANDEDGE TUNNEL behind an electric tug, B W didn't have the insurance for passengers, they sorted it out later so the next time we went through' a couple of years later we were avowed to stay on our boat' still behind a tug, the next time we steered the boat through ourselves, (they couldn't afford new batteries for the tug) It's a two hour trip through the tunnel, cold & wet but good fun, the journey down the other side to HUDDERSFIELD was just as fraught' with Pat running aground at every opportunity' our next cruise with the two mad dwarfs was to BIRMINGHAM, all went well till on us way back up the GRAND UNION we left it too late to go up a large flight of locks and turned into the WIRLEY & ESSINGTON canal to moor for the night, it was too dangerous to moor there' (a bad area) so we carried on' this canal is nicknamed the curly whirly' it twists and turns a lot with lots of low bridge's , it was full of rubbish and shopping trolley's so Pat kept getting his prop fouled, which meant he had to go into his weed hatch a lot,

him being only small he couldn't reach far enough so his wife had to hold on to his leg's he accused me of stirring up the rubbish in front of him' because I hardly ever fouled my prop I let him go in front' he still struggled and we still had nowhere to moor, then a miracle, we rounded a bend and there was a little marina, SNEYD JUNCTION, a very nice chap came over to us saying "we don't see many boats here then two come at once" he asked us if we wanted over night moorings, we thankfully accepted, this was the first place wide enough to turn round but we didn't, we went on to WALSALL,

IF I CAN HELP SOMEBODY AS I GO ALONG

Owning a narrow boat means you have to be good at self help, usually there's none around when you need help most, there is 'Canal & river rescue' of course but they can be costly, so I didn't bother with them I did my own repairs, I also helped a few boaters along the way, the first time we were to up the Trent by ourselves we arrived at KEADBY and found a small boat waiting there, they were going up on the next tide as well so we're very happy to have company, we were old hands having done it before (once), both boats locked out together, I was dismayed to find their engine only had two cylinders, too slow to get to CROMWELL on one tide, but they had said they were in a hurry and had no time to moor at TORKSEY to wait for the next, they had never done the Trent before so we were worried they would get into difficulties, it took a long time but we arrived at Cromwell just before the lock keeper went home, even then they carried on to NEWARK. Cromwell's a bit Bleak so we went up to Newark as well, it had been a awfully long day so we went for a drink and found the crew off the other boat in the pub, we all got drunk together, they told us they were going to their moorings at SOULBURY THREE LOCKS, and to look them up when we got there so they could thank us properly for looking after them on the Trent, It works the other way too' as I was coming up to CAMDEN locks I hit trouble. Marie had gone on to open the lock gates' as I approached the closed gate I engaged reverse and revved the engine to stop the boat only to find I was still going forward, but faster, not knowing what was wrong I took it out of gear' and waited for the inevitable, I thumped into the gate with Marie stood on top of it, she was shaken all over and nearly had a fit, she only calmed down after I looked in the engine room and showed her a broken gear change cable, I rigged up a jury rig to get us through the locks and to some private moorings, on getting there a chap came up to ask what we wanted' and if he could help. I asked him where the nearest chandlers was & told him about my cable trouble; it's a fair way off he said but don't worry I'll take you there, he drove me half way across LONDON to Uxbridge & back. he even offered to fit the new cable, he wouldn't take a penny for his time or fuel and even avowed us to moor for nowt, a great fella. going out of a tunnel a year or so later I was surprised to find a boat stuck across the canal motionless' as I drew abreast of him he called out "my gearbox has gone" he could only get forward gear, I said "no' your cable's broke" no he said it's a new boat' I told him I'd have a look' which I did and showed him the broken cable, "what can I do" he said' "I've only got a few more miles to go to my moorings," now I carried a spare cable after the Camden thing, but I wasn't going to let him have that, so I did what I did then, fastened a piece of stick to the broken end of the cable & told him to pull up on the stick to go forward and push down on it to go back, also when you've had a new cable fitted watch where you put your feet' you must have trod on it to brake it, he couldn't thank me enough and in true tradition I refused all payment, it's nice to be nice,

NO HELP WANTED,

I was always ready to help anybody in trouble, but JANET & BRIAN on their boat APRIL FOOLS were different! they refused help even when they needed it, Janet was a twerp! she made a flask of coffee in the morning before setting off but only drank it at lunchtime when they stopped! as they always did, odd because she could have made it fresh she always steered the boat! which had a low tiller arm making it impossible for her to steer and look where she was going over the top of the boat, so she moved to the left to look down the side! taking the tiller with her, then she moved to the right still with the tiller to look down that side, the boat zig zagged along the canal all the time, going through a tunnel behind them was murder as she moved at a snail's pace, in a lock she wouldn't use a rope to steady the boat against the flow of water, she just used the engine, forward gear, reverse gear forward, reverse, she actually ruined the gearbox doing that! Brian was just as bad! they had plastic squares that locked together to cover the back deck! that had to be lifted up to get access to the engine! it took ages to lift them up & put them back down so therefore he didn't go into the engine room very often, which he should have done at the end of every day to check the oil & water levels also to put half a turn on the greaser! that lubricated the stern gear & prevented water getting through, needless to say his engine room was always 4 or 5 inches deep in oily water. We had travelled together to LONDON and on the way back his engine stopped, Janet was panicking as usual Brian went into the engine room (brave man), no good, I was asked my advice and diagnosed an air lock, I operated the lift pump! got rid of the air lock and started the engine, but the bad news was the lift pump was on its way out, we moored at UXBRIDGE and went to the chandlers to ask the price of a new pump, yes he had one for £90, buy it I said! no I'll get one when I get home! he said, I pointed out that as he lived on his boat he was at home, but he didn't get one and we pressed on to BIRMINGHAM, going through a lock he fouled his prop which stalled his engine, after cutting carpet from the prop we were ready to get going except his engine wouldn't start, no amount of pumping the lift pump would get it going, so we tied a rope to his boat and towed it to DUDLEY, they were members of River & Canal Rescue! so confidently rang em up, a man in a van soon turned up, had a quick look & diagnosed a duff lift pump, he hadn't got one on him of course but would send for one, a courier brought one next day & the RCR man installed it then the bad news! Brian only had the bronze cover so although the call out & initial diagnosis was free, he had to pay for the fitting + delivery (courier) together with the pump a total of £300, what a mug, I would have done it for nowt, just £90 for the pump, Brian's first boat was built by 'Liverpool boats' and it gave them loads of trouble, so when they decided to get a bigger boat you would have thought they'd have got it somewhere else! but not Brian & Janet 'Liverpool boats' again and it was worse than the last one, One day Janet inadvertently steered into the bank! Brian had gone ahead to open the next lock! so she went to the front of the boat to push off! and fell in, up to her neck in water clinging to front of the boat she screamed for Brian to come to her aid! he was deaf anyway so that was no good, luckily a lone angler saw her plight and pulled her out, We had a solid fuel stove which kept us lovely and warm all year, Janet & Brian had a diesel fired stove, there was nothing wrong with it except Janet wanted to see the flame, they sold the stove and purchased another that you could see the flame through a glass, it didn't work all that well Brian was forever messing about with it! getting diesel all over the place, I didn't need R,C,R I did my own running repairs, only once did I need professional help! when a bracket holding the alternator broke, even then I just took the thing off, made a rubber belt to keep the water pump going, till I got to a chandlery & got them to weld it together, he only charged me £5 so I filled up with diesel to give him some profit, red diesel was always cheap until the EU made us pay tax on it! but only if it was to be used for propulsion! used for domestic purposes it was still cheap, therefore I got two jerry cans & filled them up at the pump for 'domestic' purposes! then siphoned it into the tank later. I did my own oil changes & saved lots of money by purchasing a 5 gallon drum & all the filters I would need at the car spares where Marie's son worked before each cruise, living on a boat was cheap anyway! there was always

plenty of wood lying about' so fuel for heating was free, no electric bills (except on the moorings with a supply) just gas for cooking, we always had a pub lunch on Sunday anyway, A problem with red diesel is that it contains a small amount of water this collects at the bottom of the tank which causes problems' (diesel bug) my first encounter with this stuff was when my engine stopped as I exited a lock on the LLANGOLLEN I hadn't had the boat long & didn't know where the lift pump was, the manual said it was a mechanical pump but there was no sign of it, so I followed the diesel pipe and found an electric pump fixed under the engine, with some difficulty I removed the end cap' out popped a filter the size of a cotton bobbin absolutely bunged up with black gunge, I cleaned it up a bit & put it back, then bought a new one only to find that it was a hell of a price, as was the main filter, after that I didn't buy any more VETUS filters, I instated an ordinary filter on the line before the two vetus ones costing a fraction of the price, I removed the gunge from the bottom of the tank by using the suction pump provided to suck the old engine oil out, the first time I took out about 2 litres,) repeated the operation after each cruise' saving myself an awful lot of money, back at the marina I showed a lot of grateful boaters how to do it' I put an in line filter into another chaps boat saving him some money' not only that I saved him an awful lot more by advising him to get in touch with his insurance co after him & his mate made a bad mistake by bolting the two sides of the flexible drive together' causing enough vibration to shake the engine off its mountings and bending the prop shaft, I suggested he told the insurance co he'd hit an underwater obstruction that did all the damage' they believed him and he saved about £2-000, he thought the world of me after that,

THE LAST CRUISE,

We'd set off to LIVERPOOL' to have a look at all the improvements made since our last visit, via the LEEDS LIVERPOOL canal, we went up the Huddersfield narrow as far as ROACHES LOCK' it was a difficult passage because as usual the water was very low, at one point it was just mud, I had to bow haul the boat to get through' looking back I saw that Marie had stopped the engine making it much harder, but that's what she did without thinking, another thing was she couldn't get the boat to the bank in one go, she'd get the bow to the bank' the stern was usually a yard off, so I would walk along the boat to the front with a middle rope' only to find she'd put the back end in which meant the front was now a yard out. I'd take the rope to the back by which time the bow was in & the stern was out, she'd go back and forth like that all day so there was nothing for it but for me to jump to the bank, on one occasion the stones were slippery and I slipped on my arse and bounced into the canal, the water closed over my head like the clap of doom, standing up (it was only three foot deep)) leaped onto the bank' while I was laying there a youngish woman rushed to my aid shouting "are you alright?" I toyed with the idea that she could give me the kiss of life if she wanted' but no I jumped up and pulled the boat to the bank as usual, the only other time I fell in was my fault' I slipped off the back /left of the boat' the water was fairly deep so I clung to the left side trying to keep my feet away from the propeller which would have cut them off, shouting to Marie to stop the engine to save my life' she didn't she put it in reverse and revved it up sucking my legs towards the prop, I had to scream at the top of my voice "SHUT THE FUCKING ENGINE OFF", she did' thankfully, so' we went as far as Roaches' Bobs old pub' he came over with Janet to see us and they joined us on the boat as far as STALYBRIDGE, we carried on over the Leeds Liverpool, but the locks & swing bridges were getting harder and harder' or more likely I was getting weaker' I came to the conclusion I was getting too old for this sort of thing, something had to give, I could have gone on a Bet longer but Marie would not slow down, if I said we should moor up early I was tired' she'd say "there are better moorings just round the corner' except there weren't' just another flight of locks, so another long day, it was no good trying to have a lie in she'd start the engine' untie the ropes and off we'd go, the only time she'd let me steer was on a river or through a tunnel, coming out of the tunnel she would find something very important for me to do' like, check the fresh water

level or something else that needed my immediate attention so she could grab the tiller, so I wasn't the captain I was the bloody cabin boy, so when we got back to Sheffield I put it to Marie that we ought to sell the boat and get a council OAP bungalow, spend the proceeds and relax for a bit, we got a bungalow at HIGH GREEN so I was back to where I started as a young miner, we took the boat to a broker in Sheffield (the same one who launched it 14 years before) in DEWSBURY, he didn't sell it so we took it to THORNE to another broker who sold it in no time, we got practically the same as we paid for it' less the price of new stern gear and of course commission, the two happiest days in a man's life are when he buys a boat and when he sells it,

TRANSPORT inc 'TAKEN FOR A RIDE'

After leaving the tied cottage at Portbury and moving into the tin hut at Redcliffe bay, due to dad bugging off' me mam got me a bike, I don't know how she afford it because money was scarce but riding it to school saved on bus fare plus fetching the coke and running errands was useful. anyway when we all got back together again at High Green and I got my bike back from the Clarkes where I'd been forced to leave it' it was useful[for getting to work on at Howbrook drift mine, I then bought a MOPED to make it easier, I rode that around for a while' but when I rode it to Corby to see a girl I had met on holiday' I realised it wasn't up to it and traded it in for a scooter, which was an awful lot better, I'd get to Cambridge in about two hours to our Audrey's' A bloke I was working with called Billy Burns sold me his old tent' & I went camping with him and his wife and nieces once to the lake district' a very soggy experience, I sold the tent, Burns and myself worked together underground for quite some time, meanwhile I met Jean who moved in to our house at number six' when we got married Burns was my best man. not long after me and Jean went to their house in Sheffield for days visit, it was Christmas, it was freezing and the roads were very dangerous so we were glad to be invited to stay overnight, the next morning we were served a splendid breakfast and had a good time' but come diner time we noticed the table was only set for three, So I looked out of the door and said "t'weathers picked up" they pushed us out the door so fast it made us heads spin, having made no arrangements for us Christmas diner we called in at Auntie Graces' who insisted we stay for diner with them'([thowt she might) the following Christmas Burns said that as we had stayed at their place last year they should come to us this year, me and Jean had the house to us selves as the kids were at Audrey's' mam was gone' so it made sense, unfortunately that Christmas lasted a whole week' so they ate us out of house and home, I thowt "right monkey" wait while next Christmas, so when Christmas came round again. as expected the Burns invited us to their house, we gladly accepted, but were astounded when they handed us a sheet of paper with a list of items to bring with us' including: a pound of bacon' a pound of sausages' tins of tomatoes' tins of beans, some loafs of bread' some butter & lard and could we see our way clear to give them a few quid for the gas, needless to say we weren't falling for that but as we had accepted they're kind offer we had to do some quick thinking, I went to the in-law's and got them to write us a back dated invitation to their house' we showed it to the Burns and they were visibly devastated, "but what can we do" I said I've got to keep in with them, later on I traded the scooter in. Burns had bugged it up anyway thinking he was 'repairing' it, I got a 500cc ARIEL ' fast ? it could catch pigeons, Burns had a 1000cc Ariel (too fast) and set about building a sidecar for it, I helped him' but could see it was no good as he didn't put any decent joints into the wooden frame' plus he clad it in stainless steel' much too heavy, so it was a failure, but it got me interested so I built my own' it was so good I drove it for a long time' it had a square back and was nicknamed 'the flying henoyle' I was justifiably proud of my flying henoyle' it was strongly built' clad with aluminium making it light' plus it had a safety glass windscreen, it had a proper little car door as well the seat back swung round for access to the back seat, I found a child's arm chair and fixed it in the back for Robert' he loved it, but when Jean had Gerald it was getting a bit cramped, it had to go, I traded it in for my first car, a MORRIS MINOR rag top (convertible), I passed my driving test on the second attempt'

Billy Burns had left the pit by this time but we were still mates. him and Pat would come over to

play cards on a Sunday' Bill & me would go to the cock inn for a pint, I always got the first one in, he got the second and I got the third, then we went home, I was being twirled and knew it but he always pleaded poverty, anyway I'd just got my new (second hand) car and was keen to show it off to Burns, so I drove over to his house in Sheffield, I went to his door only to find it open but nobody in, at the top of his yard was a two story building with steps outside up to a workshop where a bloke with a wooden leg worked upholstering furniture, I thought he might know where the Burn's were so I went up the stairs to ask' nearly at the top I could see Pat and the upholsterer on a sofa' but at the same instant they saw me, he jumped up and ran to the back of the shop as fast as his peg leg would allow, Pat sat up smoothing her skirt, now I didn't see exactly what they were doing but it wasn't upholstery although some stuffing was probably involved. I politely asked Billy's whereabouts and was told he was on the afternoons at the rolling mill, the very next day he turned up at our house to tell us Pat had left him, well she was there yesterday I told him working with the upholsterer, that's who she's run off with he said, so it all became clear,

Billy still came over' on his own, seeking advice about whether to take her back or not, obviously she wanted to go back to him, if he said I ought to take her back' I'd agree with him, If he said he shouldn't' I'd still agree with him, anyway he took her back and neither of them visited us again, it didn't end there though as we got a solicitors letter telling us to never again to go to Burns' house or speak to either of them' it appeared that they blamed me for splitting them up, no mention of peg leg though, but all's well that ends well, we were just glad to shut of the sponging murderers,

The canvas top of the car was a Bet mildewed so when Robert and his pal used it as a trampoline it couldn't stand the strain. they caused an enormous rent which I repaired using 'wondermend', the same fabric glue I'd used to patch my pit clothes, when I'd stuck a huge patch to the arse of my trousers while I was wearing em, I'd stuck my trousers to my shirt lap so couldn't get undressed, in desperation I cut myself free using the knife I had for cutting conveyor belt' it was razor sharp so a lot of care was needed, the repair to my car roof wasn't all that good so I tried to find a replacement, they were as rare as hens teeth, luckily I was having the usual blazing row with Jean, now my farther in law had the same trouble with Doris' his missis, what he did was to go and sit in his car for an hour while she calmed down, now' I had a car and could do the same, so that's what I did, only after a bit I was freezing so I started the engine' no good' so I decided to drive round a bit, that did the trick but I didn't like driving aimlessly so headed for CAMBRIDGE for no reason, I arrived at our Pats in GOLD street at around two o'clock, they made me welcome & gave me a bed, they also gave me some clothes' I had neglected to pack, Pats husband Terry Elliot said I ought to get a new roof for the car, I agreed with him but didn't know where to get one, you could try Bingham & harpers' they have everything for Morris cars he told me, so he took me down to the garage, I asked the storeman for the canvas cover/roof, he went off and returned with large package covered in dust, "we don't get asked for many of these' this is the last one" he said, I stayed at our Pats for three days and forgot to let Jean know where I was, she'd quietened down a lot when I did get home, and stayed quiet for quite a while, I successfully fitted the canvas to my car' it was great driving it on summer days with the top down but got quite a shock when I checked the mirror & saw the two lads sitting on top of the rolled back canvas with huge grins on their faces, if they had fell backwards it didn't bear thinking about I gave them a bollocking' then gave Jean the same for not watching em, my next car was another Morris 1000, this one was a TRAVELER with a wooden structure, the wood was ok but the underneath went rusty & the brakes were pathetic, so much so that it wouldn't pass it's m o t, I chucked it away and got a AUSTIN CAMBRIDGE I was working in Derby and still using my own transport to get to work, some of the M1 had just been opened and it seemed a good idea to see what it could do. I put my foot down, that car could really motor and was going really well until it developed a serious rattle, the big ends had gone, I just managed to get it off the motorway and thumbed a lift to the B,O,C. where I was working, the engineer kindly sent a truck to tow it in, the job was finished anyway and I'd ordered a lorry to clear the site, the driver of the lorry offered to take my car back to Sheffield on the back with the

descaling equipment, when we got it to the yard where the empty carboys were kept' we put the car there as well, Ken Robinson who ran the lorry firm asked if I wanted to buy an old wreck of a van he had, the engine would fit into my car he told me, it did and I swapped the engine's over the weekend, I'd paid him £25 for it' it was a brilliant engine' the first thing I did was get a speeding ticket, that car ran really well until a laundry van hit me up the arse in the fog' and that was that travelling back from Scunthorpe with Harry Hinchcliffe I spotted a red van for sale' written on it was DIESEL, £100, I went in and asked the price for cash, £75 he said, al av it I said' al go an get t'money, I had £25 and asked at work for a 'sub' of £50, a lot for a sub but I got it and bought the van the next day, I used the van to travel to work in WALTON ON THAMES where I was doing a jetting job, I was being paid mileage which I exaggerated their & back each week' also I filled the van up with diesel when I fuelled the jetter lorry, which totalled more than my wage + I fiddled the digs money, happy days, I made a lot of money with the red van & I was sorry when it fell to Bets, I bought a BEDFORD van next but with windows in, the day after I bought it I chucked all the camping gear and all the kids in and set off to the south coast' trusting or what, it did ok but the next winter I slid down a hill on the ice and smashed into a parked car, that buggered it up, by a stroke of luck my father in law had just got a van exactly the same, he sold it to me for £25, I never did pay him for it, but I had taken his daughter off him so he was glad, I didn't bother doing owt with the two vans' I just swapped number plates, although I did take the windows out and put them into the 'new' van, that vehicle ran well for a while but it was petrol and I missed the 'free' diesel,

Calling in at a second hand van sales at Bawtry' I spotted a J4 diesel ex MOD Leyland van, it was an automatic, I always fancied an automatic so I bought it, then took the old van to an auction, I didn't mention that there was something wrong with the gear box, getting the asking price, £65 after a while I discovered a couple of faults with my 'new van, one was that the engine over heated due to the radiator was too close to a bulkhead, I made a scoop & fitted it underneath to direct air upwards, that did the trick, the other annoying thing was the automatic gears, as soon as a hill appeared in the distance it changed down and refused to change back up till it was well over the top so it was very slow with the engine screaming its bollocks off, fortunately Charley the fitter had an engine exactly the same with a manual box we swapped engines' he knew somebody with a boat who wanted mine, I fitted the engine into the van myself' easy peasy, fitting windows & painting it 'descaling' blue with a four inch brush, that van ran well for a few years until I found out that the local farmer/milkman was selling his milk van, a ford transit with a York engine, so I bought it' I put windows in' obviously' & a couple of bus seats this time, we had a caravan by this time so I pinched a tow bar off one of the transits the descalers had scrapped' (among other things,) and fitted it to my transit, we toured the country with that caravan at zero cost' using the descalers diesel, I never felt guilty using their diesel, after all I did get that 2'000 gallons of the stuff for them for nowt. so I reckoned a lot of it was mine, the caravan was put to good use, we lived in it instead of paying for lodgings, still charging the firm full price, they thought they had me when they told me to leave my van at home & use a firms van, I got a welder to make & ft a removable tow ball, the descalers paid for it too' I just billed them for something else, the only thing was I didn't get any mileage, the van being left at home wasn't a bad thing though because Marie next door took Jean to the market in it, eventually I swapped the transit for a Peugeot diesel but it never was much good, the engine blew up anyway, I sold that and got a small Ford' which was so under powered I was glad when somebody stole it, then I got a beat up Fiat Panda'[thought no buggeral' pinch that, but they did, after that I got meself a push bike, so' back to square one,

ME AND FAG'S

Am proud to say I never smoked, not a single solitary cigarette, when I was young money was scarce so I couldn't afford em, when I worked darn Pit and could afford em I would see owd miner's coming out o't t'pit after seven and a half hours, looking for their baccy tin's, usually containing two cigs and two matches, they would light up then start coughing their lungs up, as

their faces turned purple, then, when they could breath, they'd ask me if I wanted one, "have one" they said "it'll do you good", "it Bunt look to be doing thee much good" I'd say "an anyway I Bunt smoke", then they would all say something that amazed me "I WISH I DIDN'T SMOKE! they didn't want to smoke and yet they went to the shop, paid good money for cigarettes, stuck em in their gob's and set fire to em, wishing all the time they didn't have to. I could see that there was something very odd about that, so I kept away from it, in a working men's club I was offered a fag by our Clifford's wife, I refused of course, but she insisted asking if I'd ever smoked, I said I hadn't, try one then to see if you like em she said, "well ok" I said, and took one out of the offered pack, I looked at it for a while savouring the moment, then broke it into pieces into the ashtray (this was when you could smoke in pub's) I said "I enjoyed that, can I have another? " she said "no you bloody can't you've ruined my cigarette" I pointed out that it was mine not her's as she'd given it to me, oddly enough she never offered me anymore, later on driving lorries, some of my mates would ask if I minded if they lit up, I said that I did but if they had to smoke they should lower their window a bit so the smoke went out that way, then without him knowing I would turn the heater off, it soon got pretty cold especially in winter, he would smoke the fag as quick as he could and it was a long time before he needed another, some men wouldn't do as I asked, they seldom worked with me again, I put being a lifelong non-smoker as the reason why I'm pretty healthy at my age of eighty summers (plus a lot of bloody hard winters), I tried to keep Jean off the fags with partial success, of my four kids only Gerald smoked, but not in my company out of respect I think, and look at his health poor bugger, you can take a horse to water, etc all in all I've been bloody lucky, working in coal dust and not getting pneumoconiosis working in power station boilers among asbestos and fly ash and not getting asbestosis down sewers and not catching wiesles disease (leptospirosis),

A LIFE OF CRIME

The police only felt my collar once, which taught me a great lesson, the lesson was that all coppers are crooks, what happened was I was working at a pit near Doncaster, I'd parked my van near a huge pile of coal, it was foggy, so I filled 5 sacks of coal, I'd finished the job at the power plant and had it signed off and was on my way home, when I approached the gates the boom came down and the gate keeper came out and wanted to know what was in the back, I told him it was some coal but I had brought it in with me that morning, he didn't believe me and rang the police, I told my mate Jack to jump out and wait as it didn't concern him. the copper's arrived and told me to drive onto the road, which like a fool I did, (they couldn't arrest me on n c b property) as I hadn't stolen owt till I was outside, so they got me, later on in court I was accused of stealing bags of coal, I pleaded guilty saying that my children where freezing and I succumbed to temptation, I was fined £5, but where did the other 3 bags go? those bloody coppers pinched em, I dint mined, I'd nicked loads of brass valves and stuff from that pit, as I had from Pilley pit when I worked there, smuggling it out in my snap bag, it helped pay the bills, now, descaling boilers with acid gave me a chance to obtain some brass valves, pumping acid into a boiler meant removing a few valves which I tossed into the mixing tank, if I was asked where they were I'd say that I was descaling them, nobody ever asked, so they left site with me. one Christmas me and Cookie were jetting drains at Fiddlers ferry power station's sub basement and discovered three good Tenths of cable already stripped off, when we were ready for leaving site we tied them together end to end, uncoupled some of the jetting hose, which luckily looked exactly like the hose, then wound it up tied to the hose onto the hose reel, as we were doing this the engineer came by to have a look at us and to ask how we were doing, "doing ok" I said "

weal be round to get our time sheets signed in a short while" he saw the cable but didn't see it, it was hidden in plain sight. the same thing happened in Leeds, jetting a s w culvert that emptied into the river we were working in the council yard, we found a 4 inch lead pipe running through the culvert, it looked disused so we cut 6 foot lengths off as we worked along it, I put the lengths of pipe down by some old damaged street furniture (road signs) the grey posts looked just like the lead pipe, once again hidden in plain sight, the council man even asked me if we ever found anything in the drains, I said now and again, he said you'll find nowt in this one, little did he know he was standing right next to what we'd found in his drain,, I didn't stop at metal theft, I once pinched a couple of rolls of carpet from a carpet factory by draining the jettors water tank, removing the man lid, putting the carpet in the tank. exactly the same method with some fence posts I found. also some stainless steel scrap, but it was easier when we got the 'vactors' we just opened the back up and pushed stuff in, I nicked a lot of beer from a brewery while on an acid job by turning an empty plastic carboy over, cutting a hole in the bottom, filling it full of cans of special brew, turning it back upright and putting it on the back of the truck among the others, the same method I used at Dunlopillow, it's surprising how many pillows you can get into a 10 gallon carboy. you just need a bigger hole in the bottom,

HYINCHCLIFFE a funny bastard,

Harry Hinchcliffe, living in Pilley was out of work, his dad Irvin could have set him on at Reedies, a local private colliery as he was an overman there, but he didn't want that, I knew him vaguely and told him I would get him set on at Descaling Contractors, so I took him to the yard and told Deecey to give him a start, he worked with me on the acid jobs and we got on well, especially on the ones on aerodromes, We used hand pumps to pump hydrochloric acid into the domestic water systems in the R A F workers houses, the boilers were full of lime scale, as were the kettles. while we were dissolving the scale in the boiler, we dropped a Bet of acid into their domestic kettle, the ladies in the house were amazed at the result, the block of scale was completely gone leaving the kettle as good as new, of course they were a Bet unsure so invited us to have a cup of tea, then watched us closely as we drank it, when we didn't suffer any ill affects they must have told their mates so that we always got tea or coffee in all the houses we worked in, and there were an awful lot of them, we lived on site in the transit Billet for nothing, eating in the NAAFI for next to nowt, while all the time claiming full board & lodging from the firm, add to that we got so good at the job we got so far ahead of schedule we could knock off at midday on Friday and go home, submitting a time sheet for a full week, we worked together at RAF Cottesmore for about 10 weeks, Harry said it was the best job he'd ever had , so I was surprised when one day I was driving a van with Harry and two other men to a job when he gave a loud shout and threw his arms up, giving me cutch a start I dug him in the ribs and told him to shut up, with that he started punching me, I was trying to drive and fend off blows at the same time, the two lads in the back quietened him down before we were all killed. after that I had to watch him because if I accidentally splashed water on him he would purposely throw a jug full at me, one day jetting drains in London I tripped on the pavement bumping into him, I said sorry and carried on working, the next day he shoulder charged me off the pavement into the road, I landed on my arse in the traffic, he could have killed me and all he said was "well you did it to me yesterday" , I thowt I'd better keep my eye on the silly bugger, we worked together for a fair while, but things came to a head at a factory in Olive Grove, Manchester, he was down a manhole clearing some rubbish, the last thing he passed up was a spot board, (a small piece of ply wood), it slipped through my fingers and fell on his shoulder, he scrabbled around for something to throw up at me, but found nothing to throw, which made me laugh. that did it, he climbed out in a blind rage and challenged me to a fight, I told him to calm down, when he

wouldn't and just kept on jumping about shouting and swearing, waving his fists, I ordered him off site, if I had started brawling with him we'd both have got the sack, he calmed down and we worked the rest of the shift ok. but very quietly, we travelled back to Pilley where his car was parked still not a word, then as soon as we got out of the lorry he took off his jacket rolled up his sleeves and said "come on then lets finish what we started" I had no intention of fighting in the street over a stupid thing like that. so I just said go to the yard in the morning, with that I turned my back on him and walked off, giving him the chance to attack me from behind, had he done so I would have given him a fight, nowt happened though, I went to Olive Grove next day to finish the job borrowing a man from another gang, the next morning in the yard the manager, Deacey, took me into the office. "give me the full strength" he said "what happened at Olive Grove"? so I told him plus the other times Harry had buggered me about, "I didn't think he was like that, shall I sack him" he said, well if you don't, you must never send him to work with me again I said. he sacked him and I never saw that ungrateful bastard again, the only thing that pissed me off was we'd found a gold sovereign working in London and he still had it, double bastard, On a lighter note, while working in Somerset jetting drains, an old chap came out of a house, he asked me if we were there to see to a gully cover that had been annoying him for a long time,, he told me every car that went passed his house rattled the grid, "the noise is driving me crackers" he said "clack- clack ,,,clack- clack I can't sleep at night " wont the council do owt I asked, "no, it's an obsolete type they said" I felt sorry for him and had a look at it, it was very old and coming to pieces, I lifted the wonky grid out of the frame, carried it 100 yards up the road, changed it for a good one then put that one into the gully frame, the old fellow was very happy and rewarded us with some produce from his garden,

PILLEY CLUB,

Pilley club, full name, WHARNCLIFFE SILKSTONE WORKING MENS CLUB AND READING ROOM was in the pit yard of Wharncliffe Silkstone colliery, so paid no rent, it got its electricity from the pit's generators free, as well as heat from the pit's boilers, this kept the beer very cheap up stairs was a well stocked reading room, most of which were engineering text books all beautifully leather bound, all the engineers at the colliery learned their trade mainly from those books, down stairs there were two full sized snooker tables, but no ladies toilet, so if your wife wanted a pee you had to stand guard at the door,, My uncle Allen was night watchman at the pit, one night the pit manager caught Allen having a pint in the club and asked him why he wasn't guarding pit property, "this club is pit property" he replied, the manager had to agree and bought Allen a pint, I made myself a member in 1956 when we moved to Pilley from High Green, the only other pub was the Gate inn at the top of the village me and our Barry and Maurice Aderly used to ride between the two on my scooter me at the front, Barry in the middle, Maurice on t'luggage rack, we were lucky the village bobby never caught us, a new club was built at the top of the village next door but one from our house, quite handy, my mother got the first job in it as a cleaner with Vera Scholley

Some years later and after mam had died, lean got the job of cleaner, with Marie Sanderson, Jean also worked behind the bar for a time, she packed it in when it got too much for her, after she died and I was on my own I decided to join the committee, they were very short of committee members so I was co-opted on with George Lange, we weren't paid but were given beer tokens, two tokens per duty, each token exchanged for a pint, the club was bloody cold so I set about checking the heating, under the stage were two hot air blowers I took them out and cleaned them up, one wasn't even working so I told the committee, they handed it over to the local electrician. he put in a new motor and fixed it back in place, when it was switched on it vibrated so badly you couldn't hear the organ, he went back under the stage to rectify it, when he'd done that the stage shook so much the organist was unable to play the organ, the electrician washed his hands with it even though he'd charged £250 so I took it upon myself to rectify the situation, I was driving for 'Price transport' who moved fans about for a firm in

ROTHERHAM, I took the club secretary there and we picked up a brand new fan for £92, after I'd fixed it in place things were a lot better and I was paid 12 duties, well done me, I served on the committee for two years, it was about this time me and Marie had moved onto the boat so it was too much to travel to Pilley two or three times a week from Shuffled, I resigned my post, proud of the fact that I had been on the committee for two years without being voted on or voted off, my grandson Luke worked behind the bar for a while, so that was three generations working there over time, all good things come to an end though, the club was demolished in 2016 and now looks exactly like it did when our family moved into number six, flat as a pancake, the more things change the more they stay the same

ANOTHER NARROW ESCAPE

We bought a new smart TV, after exchanging it for the one in the room I took that one into the bedroom, then took the old one to t'auktion, later I bolted the one in the bedroom to the wall, a job well done I thowt, but then I started feeling ill and laid down on t'couch, with pains in my chest and jaw I remembered how Jean went on when she suffered a heart attack, so asked Marie to ring for a paramedic, they turned up just in time because they'd just wired me up to their machine when I passed out, my heart rate had taken a dive apparently, they brought me round and I woke up to find one of them holding my feet up, I thought I'd just dropped off for a second and asked why the chap was holding my legs up, they wouldn't say, just that I had to go to hospital, they loaded me into the ambulance I told Marie not to follow as it might be a long wait hospitals being what they are. we arrived at the hospital and I was surprised to be whisked strait up to the operating theatre, I realised then this was a Bet more serious than I had thought, they put me onto the operating table telling me not to worry about the confined space, I said I've worked down t'pit I know all about confined spaces anyway, a Bloke came up and introduced himself as the surgeon telling me he was going to insert a, stent into my right wrist, while he was at it a chap on my left said something to him so he waited a Bet till the other bloke pumped something into my left wrist which made my arm go very cold, they had took my trousers and under pants off just in case they had to put the stent into my groin so I was bloody cold already, I could have done with a blanket, when the surgeon had done his stuff they took me off the table and down to the recovery ward, to my great surprise our Gerald turned up saying his firm had given him the day off so he could pay me a visit, that proved to me that I really was in a bad way, he'd never visited me for years, then Marie came in, good timing as those two can't stand each other, I was in that ward till the next day, then moved to a ward, they took that long to get me unhooked from the wire's I told the nurse (kev) I needed the toilet, but by the time I got there I had shit myself, I told myself it was their fault and got strait in the shower, Marie came in with some clothes, that night I had a good sleep that I badly needed, another day on the ward, and sent home next day for three o'clock, so not bad going, admitted on the 28th back home on the 31st, I am sure that if Marie hadn't sent for the paramedics when she did my kids would have all been orphans, I hope they appreciate that, I know I do,

places of interest,

West's yard Hoyland common = Joan & Ken

Lanky row, Hawshaw lane, Hoyland common Aston lane, Perry bar, Birmingham,
end house, top row, Westwood row, high green

17 Daniel lane, nether haugh, Rotherham rose cottage, Stainton, Maltby Pat

4, well lane, Wadworth, Bawtry

Wilsic, = Neville

3, tong lane, tong, Dridlington

stone cottages, Gedgrave, orford

pine tree cottage, Wissett halesworth, Suffolk

bluebell common, north Walsham, Norfolk

glebe farm, Winteringham, = Christopher

the farm, Ardsley, Wombwell

8 high street, Portbury, Bristol, = des & Christine

ex army, nissen hut, redcliffe bay, Portishead, Bristol family split up,

32 school road, high green, Sheffield

3, the circle, high green

6 the avenue, Tankersley, Barnsley

32 Pilley lane, Tankersley

JEAN,

I met Jean on a blind date, our Barry wanted a ride over to Goole to see a girl he was sweet on, his mate's with a car had let him down, so he asked me to take him, I told him no I wasn't going to sit there on my own while he enjoyed himself. "don't worry, we've got you a date with Marlene's friend" so off we went to Goole, Marlene's friend was a good looking lass called Jean Woodall, she had a stinking cold at the time so things got off to a bad start, it got worse, Jean was a keen dancer and I wasn't, I never could dance, we went to the dance and I stood on the sidelines and watched as she twirled around with Marlene, she could really move, me and Barry went over the next weekend and found out the girls had booked a train trip to a funfair in Manchester, Barry and me arranged to go there on my scooter to meet them, we all had a good time and when we went to the station to see them off Jean ran all the way down the carriage and jumped up (she was only small) to give me a Beg wet kiss. I thought right away I could go for this girl, which I did, Barry and Marlene packed up so I went over to Goole on my own, better really because I stayed at Jeans house Sat & Sun night, we were really in love by this time so when Jean got laid off at Burtons where she worked as a presser, my mother, God bless her, told her they were advertising for a presser at a tailors in Barnsley, I took my mother over to Goole to meet Jean's parents, they got their heads together and agreed that Jean should come to live with us, she got set on at Weaver to Wearers, Barnsley, we hadn't much room at number six so Jean slept in my single bed, in my room, I was in there with her in no time, and I have to admit she taught me a lot, I was careful though so we didn't have to get married, but we did ,it was the done thing in those days, we got lodgings with uncle Allan on stone row, things went well till my mother became very ill, Jean didn't like working in Barnsley so she packed her job up, handy really as we had to move back up to number 6, so that she was able to look after my mother who got worse, when mother died at only 51, we inherited her council house, so we had a house, I had a good job, Jean didn't so we agreed to start a family, Robert first, then Gerald and then Caroline, as time passed Jean started turning into her mother who was a bad tempered old git, giving my father in law a hard time. I could see that happening to me, so I packed up my job at the pit and got a job travelling, which probably saved our marriage, we had some troubled times but I stuck to my vows, till death do us part, which it eventually did, through good times and bad, I loved Jean right to the end, God rest her soul,

just in case anybody wants to know, here's a list of my recent ancestors, great granddad
WALTER ARTHUR born march 1841 died 1890,
granddad
CLEMENT ARTHUR born 1877/8 High Green Wortley. married March 1897, died 1935
great granddad BINGLEY SHIRES born 1855 at Wakefield, married June 1877, at Wortley
died 1934 Wortley,
great aunt SARAH EMMA SHIRES born March 1879 Wortley, great aunt GERTRUDE ARTHUR
Clements sister
grandmother EMILY SHIRES born December 1878 married Clement 1897, died July 22, 1930,
CLEM AND EMILY'S FAMILY
IVY, born 1898 married ARNOLD SHAW
BEATRICE FENELLA born 1900 married , ? EMSALL VIOLET born 1902, married JOHN (KEBBER)
PLATTS VERA born 1905, married ERNEST NEWTH,
ALFREDA born 1907, married ALLAN UTTLEY,
FLORENCE ELEANOR born 1908 married ERIC EARNEST SCOTT, CLEMENT VICTOR born 1911,
married KATH. GRACE born ? married PETER POLLOCK, RUBY born ? married DENNIS ROGERS,

NOTTINGHAM AND A LAST HURRAH

A good mate from Tinsley marina, VIC. had his boat painted at Nottingham Castle marina, him and two pals took it there damaging the back cratch (the canvas tent thing on the back) by hitting a bridge on the way there, he'd had it repaired but having had the boat given a nice coat of paint as well he didn't trust that crew to get it back to Sheffield without damage, so, he looked

for a more experienced crew and thought 'I know, Ken & Marie', after all he had promised us the use of his boat after I'd helped him out a couple of times earlier so he asked us if we would help to get his boat back we jumped at the chance although I was a bit worried whether I could do it or not, being 80 years old now but what the hell you only live once, the week we had to fetch it back Marie was unable to go for the first two days and Vic was working through the week, she ran Vic & me to the boat yard in our car so we could take the boat down the Trent, swapping over at Keadby lock where the Sheffield canal meets the Trent, a good plan as Marie doesn't like rivers, Vic said I could steer the boat and he would work the locks, he's younger than me, we went through Nottingham in fine style avoiding the bridges and on to the Trent mooring at Gunthorpe for the night, here I made a mistake walking to the toilets I spotted some lovely Beg mushrooms and picked a few on the way back, we cooked some next morning for breakfast, they didn't taste all that good so we chucked the rest away, we both had the shits for the rest of the day, I didn't mind as I'd been suffering from constipation, we moored that night at Torksey moving out next morning on the ebb tide to get to Keadby for the start of the flood tide, getting into the lock was easier at slack water, all was going well till Vic wanted to know what he needed to get for the boat when he went off cruising, he stood in front of me writing things down,) was distracted, I looked up to find we were heading for the bank Vic shouted a warning just as I threw it into reverse, we still hit the bank but by a good stroke of luck it was mud not rocks, no harm done, arriving at Keadby Vic said he'd like to take it into the lock, ok by me, he needed the experience, he hadn't done it before, he'd phoned the lock keeper to advice him of our imminent arrival so when we were close he took the tiller and I went to the bow ready to throw a rope to the lock keeper, I heard somebody shouting, it was the lock keeper letting us know we had passed the lock, I went to the back to tell Vic we were on our way to Hull and to turn round. it wasn't really his fault, I'd told him to go for the green light which he did only it was the wrong green light, a navigation light, one of many. after that he took the boat in pretty well even though the lock keeper was pissing himself laughing, Marie was there to meet us having come on the train, we picked her up and set off for Thorne where Vic was leaving us by train to Sheffield, we got as far as the sliding railway bridge. we couldn't raise the bridge keeper so I disembarked and walked across to tell him we wanted to go through,) waited while a train went over and the bridge was pulled back only to see Marie waving her arms about, they'd stopped the engine to wait for the bridge and it wouldn't start, so I was needed, the keeper had to close the bridge again (more trains) while I went to look at the engine, it was a blown fuse, I knew where to look for the fuse because it had happened before with this boat, so Vic had some fuses and I inserted one, it blew again strait away, trouble, to start the engine I used a pair of small scissors to make a connection we were off again, after troubling the bridge keeper again, no more bother till we got to Thorne and the engine wouldn't stop, luckily Vic knew of a stop button on the engine, he then had to go back to Sheffield on the train so after a couple of drinks at the pub off he went, next morning I had to find out why the engine was playing up, I decided it was the fuse holder and would go into Thorne to find another, then the strangest thing happened, there was a fuse holder still in a packet laid on the bed that we had slept on, it wasn't there the night before, it wasn't there when Marie made the bed so where had it come from? spooky or what, I bought some stronger fuses and that sorted it, two days later we arrived at Eastwood Rotherham and were gratified to find the boat belonging to the bastard who wanted to take me to court for spreading rumours about him had been covered with graffiti, foul graffiti, I couldn't stop laughing, next day Derrick the lock keeper was at Holmes lock early so we made a swift passage up the flight meeting Vic at the top, he made a quick inspection of his beloved narrow boat and finding no damage gave us an envelope with strict instructions not to open it till we were at home, it contained £80, far too much but he was happy, we would have done it for nowt