

Trentham Memories

Tony Hewitt of Barlaston Old Road



Tony Hewitt spoke to two members of the Trentham Heritage Project in October 2021. He was asked about his life in Trentham and some of his memories are documented on the following pages.



Trentham Heritage Project

Tony was born on 30th November 1927 and his family moved to Trentham in 1928 to live at “Southleys” on Barlaston Old Road. He remembers playing in the garden where he had a sandpit and visiting the allotments at the end of Beechfield Road with his wheelbarrow. His mother, Joyce (born 1895) gave him an interest in gardening and he used to climb up to pick fruit from the neighbour’s trees. During WW2 the Hewitts kept eight hens in a hut on the back lawn and the eggs would be preserved in a bucket of isinglas.



Southleys as it looked in the 1920s

Tony’s father was named Joseph Kenneth (born 1896) but always known as Ken.

The Hewitt family factory was on Victoria Road, Fenton, a business started in 1863 by Tony’s great grandfather. Situated next to the North Staffs railway and also a marl hole from which they would extract clay to make bricks and other items for the pottery industry. Tony said, “All the bricks around the Michelin Tyre Company in Stoke were made by our company and hauled around by horse and cart”.



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Ken Hewitt was chairman of the family company until his death in 1984.



Trentham Golf Club Captains' Board



Ken at his granddaughter Sara's wedding in 1979



Former chairman dies, 87

Mr. Kenneth Hewitt, who was Chairman of J. Hewitt and Son, Fenton, for 48 years, has died aged 87.

He joined his grandfather's firm, who make refractories, in 1920, after he was wounded in the First World War.

Mr. Hewitt, of Meadowlane, Trentham, was captain and present of Trentham Golf Club, captain of Stoke-on-Trent Rugby Club, and keen cricket player.

He was also a member of the Mason's Crusader Lodge and the preceptory of Godfroi de Bouillon.

He leaves a widow, Nancie, four children, 13 grandchildren and eight-grandchildren.

Ken Hewitt's Obituary

Tony had two brothers and a sister. His eldest brother, David, was five years older and spent WW2 in the Army after which he worked at GEC in Stafford and later achieved a degree in engineering before joining the family business alongside Tony and eventually becoming Managing Director. David married Margaret Heywood and they lived in Trentham on Barlaston Old Road for many years before moving near Market Drayton. They had two sons and a daughter; the younger son also joined Hewitt & Sons.



Tony with his siblings at a family wedding

Tony's second brother Roger went to Harper Adams College in Newport and became a farmer after spending WW2 in the Army. Roger married Jean Corn and farmed near Market Drayton.

Tony's youngest sibling is his sister, Gill. She married an Army officer called Ian and they lived in Singapore and had two daughters and a son. Eventually, they moved back to the UK and Gill now lives in Scotland.

Tony spoke in detail about his different schools.

The first one he went to was Chaucer House, run by Miss Joy Sworn on Park Avenue (now Queen's Park Avenue) in Dresden.



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Chaucer House

Tony remembers travelling there by bus – Stoke Motors – on what he described as “the yellow buses”. The bus would travel from Trentham towards Heron Cross and Tony would alight near Drubbery Lane and walk up to school.



1930s Stoke Motors bus

From Chaucer House Tony moved to boarding school at Malvern Link Prep school following his brother, Roger. The school was originally The Station Hotel so situated beside the railway and here began Tony's love of trains. He said, "we'd go to bed fairly early and a passenger train would come into the station and there would be a lovely Great Western Castle class locomotive – gleaming." Back in Trentham for the holidays Tony befriended the porter at Trentham station and remembers helping him carry lamps up the line for the signal box as well as getting rides on the engines while they were in the sidings. Tony says he "got hooked on railways" a passion that he still has today.



Great Western Castle class train

From Malvern Tony went to Ellesmere College where he joined his Trentham friend Donald Shelley who had already been there a year. Tony was at Ellesmere until he was seventeen but life changed greatly for him when he suffered an accident aged fifteen. When asked how he felt about being sent away to school Tony said "I don't regret going away at all. I suppose I felt a bit homesick to start with but it didn't last. I think I learned a lot; it did me a lot of good."

He and Donald Shelley would spend their holidays at this time doing various jobs in the area. In the Christmas holidays they would take it in turns to go to the Post Office near Ash Green roundabout at 6 a.m. where they would be given post to deliver on an old-fashioned heavy bicycle. Tony remembers "we would go through Trentham Park and golf club and out the other side up to Hanchurch post office to drop off mail even delivering as far afield as Beech."

They would also help a farmer with the harvest on a farm near Barlaston and it was while doing this one day that the accident occurred. A horse and cart was being used to transport loads back to the farm from near the Downs and Tony remembers the day well “I was going back to the field with the chain horse, we hadn’t got far from the farm and we were near the railway line when a train went by. The horse hadn’t been broken in all that long so took fright and belted back to the farm. I held on to the reins and must have been dragged a hundred yards, fortunately I had put on long trousers!”

He was treated by Dr Peake back at home and then sent to hospital to have his broken leg fixed. The result was a whole term away from school but he was relieved on his return to Ellesmere in January to discover he could still play rugby.

Tony was almost twelve years of age when WW2 began in 1939 and he remembers having freedom to do much as he wanted during his teenage years. During the war the Hewitts first of all had a bank clerk lodging with them named Stanley Patmore from the Central Clearing House situated in Trentham Ballroom. When he left they got two girls as lodgers and they were both keen golfers so were pleased to accompany Tony to play. Tony had already joined Trentham Golf Club before the war and is now the longest serving member of that club.

Tony playing golf in 1980s



Trentham Golf Club Captains' board



In January 1946 Tony was called up to do National Service in the RAF and was sent to Norfolk for training before going over to Austria by train, managing a day at Lake Como on the way. He spent six months on an RAF mobile wing as a clerk but most of his memories are of his time off duty when he enjoyed swimming and boating on the lake. Eventually the unit was moved to northern Italy and Tony volunteered to drive a vehicle in the long convoy although he only had a provisional licence. The unit was soon moved again but stayed in Italy allowing Tony to enjoy a week's holiday in Venice, of which he said "The RAF took over one of the hotels there. Glorious! I must say I think we drank every liqueur in the place and I remember a symphony in St Mark's Square."

After Italy they were moved to Cyprus via Egypt and Palestine and once there Tony was employed on guard duty around the airfield before his final posting in Khartoum where he has memories of boating on the Nile among crocodiles.

Back home in 1948 Tony went straight to work with his father at Hewitt & Sons while also attending Shelton College part time in the evenings.

He worked on the production side but was also involved in sales and has particular memories of doing business with Coalbrookdale iron foundry. They were making Rayburn cookers for which Hewitts provided the special fire bricks that went inside and Tony remembers a lorry load of bricks would be sent to Coalbrookdale every day. Not all the clay Hewitts used came from nearby, some was brought in from Dorset and Cornwall and , as well as bricks, they started making saggars for the pottery industry and this went on until electric kilns came in.

Hewitt & Sons continued until 1991 when the business was sold.



A typical Hewitt brick

Tony was married for the first time in 1951 to Philippa Wilson.

They had three children – Jane, Jonathan and Charlotte.

Philippa died in 1974 and Tony married widow Barbara Beckett and has lived at Aston-by-Stone ever since.



Tony and Barbara