

The Workers Story – Interviewee Form

Name: Peter Mansell

Number: WS09

DOB: c1932

Age at interview: c75

Dates at Royal Worcester: 1947 to late 50s, then again in 60s onwards.

Key areas: Gilding, acid room, china trimming, Severn Street

Date of interview: 08.03.07

Interview Summary

Peter started at RW in 1947 as an apprentice gilder under Ivor Williams. He was made redundant in the late 50s, but later came back to work in the Acid Room under Bob Turner. He also worked at Portland, but never enjoyed it there as it was 'like an aircraft hanger' and he detested the piped music. He married Joan, who got a job as china trimmer, and they were offered an RW house in Severn Street. Peter still lives there, and remembers that it was a sweet shop when he first started in 1947!

Interview Synopsis (per 5 minute tracks):

Tracks 1 to 0

1. (0.00) Name ident + date

2. (0.06) Peter gives his name and address again. After school at Stanley Rd, he did a short job then came to Royal Worcester. Says he was never a good gilder. Talks about centring a plate on the wheel to gild the edge. Started in the late 40s with three 'older gentlemen' Harry Lewis, 'a little man with a bowler had that looked like Arther Askey', Bill Phipps and Bill Ashley. Describes them as 'the elder statesmen'. Foreman was Ivor Williams. Peter walked to work, most cycled. His current house (26 Severn St) was a little sweet shop. Describes the layout.

3. (3.35) Further up the street in the current antique shop, was a 'pop' shop – you could buy a glass of lemonade. Where the café is now, was a wood yard. Remembers the church but not the school. In the gilding room, you called everyone 'Mr'. He was close friends with Andrew Macowski, a Polish refugee, who he describes as a 'good' gilder. Describes lay out of the 'shop' on the landing, with Ivor at the top and then about six apprentices in line, with a passageway. Bill Ashley got the best work. He hated doing 'raised colour'. Mixed the paste, put it onto the plate and raised it into a pyramid. Preferred 're-touching' work.

4. (8.35) Describes 'touching up' and says it was a good earner. Says he and Andrew Macowski were arrogant and played up Ivor Williams, so when they needed to make redundancies, they were kicked out (about late 50s). He did other jobs, until landing a job at Lefroyne china at St Martin's gate, decorating plates. Andrew got back to the Porcelain, and then got him a job. Went back to Porcelain to the Acid Room. Describes process. Printers put a print on rim of plate. This then came to Acid Room.

5. (13.35) Rest of plate is 'blacked' out with pliable black substance. Turn it upside down and 'black out' the back. Plates stacked on a rack. When the plates were dry, Bob Turner, the foreman, put them in a 'toast rack' and lowered them into an acid bath - 'the smell gets you in the throat'. Acid bites into the pattern, not the blacked out areas. John Tandy also worked in the Acid room. Says you never get used to the fumes. No safety measures in place. Says Bob Turner went out drinking every night of the week.
6. (18.35) Says Acid work was the best quality ware. Peter also worked at Portland - 'it was awful, there were no doors, it was like working in an aircraft hangar'. Mentions Queen's visit in 1951 and Christmas parties in the old days. Talks about getting his wife a job as a china trimmer (refers to document). Mentions going to art school one afternoon a week, to learn to 'throw a plate'. Also learnt to draw at night school to avoid the draft.
7. (23.33) Antics at work . Alf Shepherd used to come round with the wages. He could jump on a table from a standing position. Also mentions Pete Charters - a gilder - and a lunchtime incident, when they went to the river and climbed on a coal barge. Work hooter went, they all got off, and Pete Charters fell in and squelched back into work. Other incidents including getting his own back on Ted Hudson (?) a gilder. Talks of 'music while you worked' - half an hour morning and afternoon. Says it was a simple, gentle life, no rushing. Reminisces about his childhood pushing a wheelbarrow around to collect pig's swill. Moved to 26 Severn Street after marrying. It was owned by the porcelain.
8. (28. 35) Says that the Porcelain bought up the houses when they heard how cheap they were. RW owned 2 houses in the street. Peter was made redundant twice - the second time he got a pay off, and wasn't moved out of his house (his wife was working for the company by this time). Talks about the lunch break and going home for lunch. Bill Ashley used to have a kip. Percy Lewis would come in and swing on a beam.
9. (33.35) Talks about his girlfriends at the Porcelain. Went out with Christine Flynn and was engaged to a girl called Della Fletcher. Joined the YMCA football team. Never played for the Porcelain. Story about a match at Eardington. Went to the dances at the canteen every Friday night. Memories of Mr Gimson - 'he was the man'. If he walked in the room, you knew it. Says 'time study' changed everything. He preferred the good old days.