

Steve Gregson (Industrial Museum documentary)- Transcript

Audio Quality: Good

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LMI: We ready?

Tech: Yeah.

LMI: Steve Gregson interview. Hiya Steve.

SG: Hi.

LMI: So you worked with the mills in various ways over numerous years. Were there any memorable moments that you can remember?

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SG: Yes, there's one in particular. It was a wind up by the loader that used to load the lorry. I was in the staff canteen, which was subsidized for the mill workers. And I were allowed to go up and get a meal, which were brilliant. Now I was having my breakfast one morning and the lady that ran the canteen got a phone call saying, 'Steve, can you come down and move your lorry, it's in the way.' Well, I'd just got my breakfast, so I said, 'Right, I'll be down in a minute.' [I] Go down. When I got down there there were no lorry in the yard at all. So as I'm going to see Ernest, who were in charge, I said, 'Where am I in the way?' He said, 'Oh, I've just rung up to say that, so you can get your lorry in loading bay. There wasn't anybody there at all.' Well, by the time I'd gone back and backed into the loading bay and got my breakfast, it was cold. So I got another breakfast for free. But I thought, 'Right, it's payback time here.'

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SG: Now, what I must say is, Ernest, he was... I don't know the technical name... but he organised pantomimes at the Yeadon Town Hall. And he was in charge of the scenery, organising the scenery and everything. So I thought, 'Right.' So one day, coming... on my way back from Lancashire, I pulled up down the road in the lorry. And I walked up to the mill receptionist so that I couldn't be seen with the lorry and he knew I were there.

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SG: And I went in, and I asked her if she'd put an internal call out for a Mr. Ernest Benson, saying there's somebody on the phone for him. So she says, 'Yeah, I'll do that.' I said, 'But whatever you do, don't mention it's me. Just say you don't know who it is.' 'Right, ok.' I said, 'Give it five minutes.' So down at the bottom of the mill yard were what they call the 'grey

room' where the cloth were sorted out. And I went in there and got on the internal phone. And this voice came on... It rang, and I picked it up. 'Hello?' 'Oh,' I said, 'Is that Mr. Benson?' He says, 'Yes.' And I'm trying to put a false voice on at this... I said, 'The thing is, Mr Benson, I don't know whether you know me, but I'm one of your neighbours. And I know that you've something to do with Yeadon Town Hall. The thing is, there's a lorry just pulled up, a big delivery, a pantechnicon and they're taking scenery out. And they're propping it up against your garden wall ready to be delivered. The thing is, it's starting to rain as well.'

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SG: Well, there was such a commotion. I could hear him cursing in the background saying... Well, I can't go into that. He said, 'I better come out and come up in my car.' I thought, well, I better not have him coming out of work, because if it all turns out, I might get into trouble. So what I said was, 'Don't come out. Stand at the mill gates. I'm coming down past the mill. Watch for this certain car and I'll pull up and tell you all about it.' And he said, 'Oh, ok then.' So I ran back down to my lorry and drove up, as though I was just coming back and turned into the mill yard. And Ernest's stood at the gate. And I waved and he waved back. And I pulled up and I jumped out of the lorry. And I just walked up and said, 'Oh, is everything all right?'

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SG: And he says, 'No,' he says, 'some idiot has delivered scenery to my house instead of the town hall. And it's raining.' He said, 'I'm fuming.' I said, 'Oh,' I said, 'Ernest, have you ever heard of a programme called 'You've Been Framed, with Jeremy Beadle?' He says, 'Oh, yeah.' I said, 'Well, you've just been framed. It were me on the phone.' He was *livid*. That guy never spoke to me for two or three days. And he had to load my lorry. It were awkward.

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SG: And it took him two or three days to come round. He said, 'Look, Steve, I were annoyed.' I said, 'Well, it were payback time for you having me coming out of the canteen for nothing and let[ting] me breakfast go cold. So it's one to me.' And the mill workers absolutely *loved* it.

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SG: Whenever I was walking through the mill and passed them, they'd say, 'Steve, are you taking the *scenic* route?' And things like that. It didn't half wind him up. But it was great. I will never forget that. That was brilliant.

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LMI: Such an amazing story. And really quickly, you told me before about being invited to a 'fuddle'. Could you just explain what a fuddle is and how all that came about.

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SG: As you can gather, I didn't actually work in the mill, but I was the lorry driver for them. And over the years I were doing it, I got to know them all. It was great. And I were actually invited to what they call... 'Would you like to come to the Christmas fuddle, Steve?'

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SG: Well, it were new to me. 'What's a fuddle?' Basically, it's a Christmas do that the workers have. And I were invited to go, which I thought were quite nice. So yeah... so I went to a couple of these fuddles over years, and it were great. And as an aside to that, the managing director bought every... I mean, there were two or three hundred worked in that mill. And the managing director actually bought a turkey for every member of the mill, for Christmas. And I had the, well, pleasure of going down to frozen food place to pick two or three hundred frozen turkeys up to bring back for them to distribute to the mill workers. And I actually got one. It was brilliant.

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LMI: Oh, that's lovely. Thank you. I think that's all we need because I've got the full interview of Steve on audio.