

*Interview with Mr Bernie Hayward of High Park Road, Ryde, on July 19, 1990.
(Mini tape 6, side A)*

Mr Hayward was the next tenant at Brickfield House after the Prangnells left in 1954 when their lease expired. Wyatts Lane Yard was situated at Wroxall Farm, Northwood, near school on opposite side of the road down by a wood. From Oxford Street turn right then 300 yards on left-hand side there used to be a lane leading to the brickyard. On the north side of copse.

Boyce ran Brickfields at Ashey (heavy horse place). Had daughter who married Seaward / Sewell (going back 40 years now). Sewell? Some such name. Closed pre-war, (39-45). Used to go there with Fred Winter.

Newtown.

Prangnells had a dialect all their own. Bernie came into contact with them when there were three of them, Mary, Billy and Annie. Annie was the brains who did all the dilapidations (would this be the depreciation when farm was taken over?) when we took over. Mrs Hayward could understand them but Bernie couldn't understand Annie in particular. Mrs Hayward said she had an extraordinary way of pronouncing words. One springs to mind, the name of a field called Rounding Down which she, (Annie), pronounced "Randlin Down".

In 1953, the County Press did an article on them. (This is the one that I have dated May 16, 1953). Water was supposed to be spring water from a pond which filled, by pump, a big tank outside the old lean-to at the side. Bernie decided to have it analysed before using it. The man who analysed it was so concerned lest it was drunk that he rushed out to Newtown to Elmsworth to warn them not to drink it as it was very badly polluted and could cause severe poisoning if drunk. Needless to say, the Prangnell family had survived it all their lives without ill effects.

Bernie said that the Prangnells had land rights as they were free holders. (I'm not sure what this means.) This may imply that they left of their own free will. I assumed that the lease was up and therefore they had to go or renew the lease. By 1954 there were only four of them left, Billy, Ned, Mary and Annie. Maybe it was too much for them to run the dairy or maybe the other farmers who wanted the area to be TT cattle only preferred to have a new tenant in Bernie. Assume the Prangnells left of their own free will to live in Clatterford Road. The reason why the other farmers wanted to go TT was the fact that they were paid bonuses if they had TT herds. This, (that Bernie had a TT herd), was one of the conditions laid down when they offered him Brickfields. The farm was leased from the Territorial Army. They only rented it as the Prangnells had done. The land was part of the Swainston Estate, Sir John Simeon. The water had to be analysed in order to be granted a TT herd as only pure, (safe), water was allowed for washing out the churns and for the cows' drinking water. Fortunately, Bernie had used athersone? tablets in the water which he had taken from the tank in milk churns for the cows' drinking water. The dairy officer was a Mr Bull at that time; he made a special trip over to tell Bernie not to drink any of it.

From then on all of their water was brought from the next farm. 200-gallon tanks were filled every day. There was no track to the house, only a right of way. However, Bernie had both a Land Rover and a lorry. Prangnells had a right of way too, but they seldom exercised it, preferring to travel mostly by boat to deliver their animals or buy food. There was also a "river right" attached to the tenancy. Alfred, (champion brickmaker), owned a yacht that he probably built himself and he often visited Lymington as well as Yarmouth and Cowes. Bernie's "Granfer" was the "mud Pilot"

for Newtown. His job was to guide the coal and brick barges in, either to Shalfleet or to Elmsworth, to avoid them going aground at low water. He, of course, had his own boat and like the Prangnells he used to be missing every so often. Rumour had it that they were all involved in smuggling. Coal for households came from Cowes by barge to the Quay at Shalfleet that Denby Roy? has now. (Check this). Bernie's father was a miller and also the mud pilot for Newtown River like his father.

Possibly in Bernie's Granfer's time, the brickyard was situated at Lower Hamstead. (About 1800?) Billy told him this. He also told Bernie that when his people first came to Newtown, they started at Lower Hamstead, but the yard, after a few years, flooded so they moved to the Gurnard / Porchfield side of the river at the mouth. Billy showed him the foundations of the kiln at low water on the creek side of the point. They were clearly visible in the 1950s. They were there for a few years, (Don't know how long), then this too was flooded and they moved to the present site. (It is interesting that the house "Brickfields" was probably built about mid last century, 1850 - 60). Billy only knew this house. It could be that they built the house when they set up the new site. The new site was much more sheltered from the south-west and north-east. It had a copse which may have been used for fuel before coal was used. It also had a good spring for water and a plentiful supply of red and white clay. Billy said that his family came originally from Belgium. (We have no idea which generation.) Bernie seemed to think that it was probably only one or two generations back which ties in with John Nash bringing a master brickmaker from, say, London to make bricks for his renovations and extension to Hamstead House. Maybe he was a Flemish brickmaker. As there are records of Prangnells spelt in various ways in the Isle of Wight as early as the 1690's perhaps his daughter married a Prangnell, maybe one of the Belgium brickmaker's men as this is common among brickmakers elsewhere. It may be that the oral traditions of the Prangnell family had been handed down through the generations which again was common among those who were illiterate and so they may go back much further than we think. After all, by Tudor times, (1485-1603), bricks were well-established building material, so the Prangnells may have been the first Flemish brickmakers to reach the Isle of Wight long before they opened in Lower Hamstead. What a fascinating thought.

Bernie's father told him that the barge skippers told him that the old man, (referring to Thomas Prangnell, Billy's father), used to ask them never to mention what the day of the week was as the old man, possibly his father too, used to keep his sons working right through and if they didn't know what day of the week it was they didn't get a day off and he got an extra day's work out of them. Bernie says that all the yellow bricks in Ryde, Hamstead, Yarmouth, Sandown and Shanklin were mostly bricks that were made at Hamstead and later, Newtown. The early reds came mainly from Werrar. This was probably before the railways played such a big part in the transportation of bricks. Horses carting one ton of bricks would take two days to reach Sandown from Yarmouth. The only sensible way was to transport them by barge which carried 100 tons at a time and could, being flat bottomed, sail up on to a sandy beach at high water and be unloaded by horse and cart and float off at next high tide. A real sweat to unload, I reckon. So the coastal resorts of the Isle of Wight with good beaches would receive nearly all their bricks and materials by barge. Ningwood bricks may well have been carted to Shalfleet Quay for shipment. We know that the Hillis bricks went to Southampton in the 1920's by barge so why not earlier times also? The decorative bricks from Newtown were made by putting butter pats into the bottom of the moulds. The chimney bricks which were shaped to take up the cylinder of the chimney were also made at Elmsworth. Annie told me that they had the moulds when she was

young. Billy told Bernie that they used mainly horse power for pugging, carting clay to the brickmaker's table and for unloading bricks and coal. There seems to have been very little mechanisation and no wire cut machinery. All the bricks were hand-made. I asked Bernie about track from the beach to the coalbunkers and wondered if they had hoppers or wagons of any sort to unload the barges. Bernie, knowing Billy, said he thought not. The family seems to have been extremely thrifty and, like a number of rural families, not inclined to spend money, rather preferring barter than actually exchanging coinage. Brian Evans and I found evidence of tracks at the pond edge in the form of a heavy board on which the rails were fastened. This was probably to get clay up to the level of the field so that the men could then barrow it to the tables, a distance of about 100 yards.

The barge was the transport of the lot; both of the coke or coal for firing and the transportation of the finished bricks to building sites. A good contact is Jeff / Jack Barton of Harts Farm, Newtown. He knows a great deal about the history and general things and he may be able to tell me something about the brickfields. Harts Farm is on the corner from the Noah's Ark. (Richard Grogan may be able to tell me if he is still there). Arnold Heal, the gunsmith in Newport, is related to the Prangnells and John out at Sandford, near Godshill, is Arnold's son. He may be able to fill me in with a lot. These may be Louie's children if not one of the sons. I wonder how many of the eight children married? (Ask Mary Cox). Arnold Heal is listed in phone book as Guns and Cartridges, 86 B, Upper St James Street, Newport, 523352. His father was possibly a cousin to Mrs Saunders. Arnold, Bernie thinks, supplied a lot of ironwork when Newtown Town Hall was renovated.

The Brickfields cottage had all sorts of birds; nightingales in particular. It was through Bernie and his wife that the Cowes High School nature survey began. John Wilmot was their paperboy at Newtown and George Lawrence was his science teacher at school and when Bernie took over at Newtown, John Wilmot asked if he could come birdwatching and then he asked if he could bring his science teacher over and he and Bernie struck up a friendship that has lasted all these years. George said he would like to get his children on a project at Elmsworth. Bernie used to sign passes, which was the authorisation otherwise the Territorial Army wouldn't let them through especially in the spring when the birds were nesting. Mr Hutchinson visited it and he was impressed and gave it his blessing. That's how it all started and it is still enthralling and delighting a new generation of children. Bernie was a boatbuilder by trade. Bernie met a fellow boatbuilder who had "gone into the Union side of things".

Bernie's family name is Shaver. This official saw Bernie in the New Inn, Shalfleet, and got talking and told Bernie that Calthorpe's, the oil people, were thinking about an oil refinery to be sited at Newtown. Nobody else knew anything about it at the time. Bernie said, "I happen to be the tenant of the land", "so he gave me all the low-down on what was mooted for it". He was there because he had to sort out all the labour involved, in so far as it touched the Union that he worked for. This information tied up with a boat, an old motor launch, which used to ply the Solent and was always in the Newtown vicinity. In fact, the skipper used to put in to Newtown to Elmsworth to buy fowl and butter and cheese and all that sort of thing, and Bernie used to ask him, "What are you doing around here so often?" And he told him that he was surveying for the Ordnance Survey to make a new map. Bernie didn't believe him and he said to his wife, "There's something fishy going on here", and of course, there was. Summer came and Bernie was out in the fields one day and two young fellows came strolling along so Bernie told them that they were trespassing and they were very apologetic and let out what had been happening; how that the motor launch boat had made a

detailed survey of the creek for the oil company, Calthorpe. They had tried to get on to Southampton water and had been turned down so they then cast their eyes in the direction of the Isle of Wight and Hamstead in particular. The irony was that while the union officials, locally, were giving Bernie no end of support, the Trustees were trying to make a packet selling off the land to the oil company. This was because the land was very poor farming land and it was a lot more valuable as a second site to a developer. Hamstead side of the river was going to be the Administration side (1956). The marsh breached in 1954. One hundred and two acres were underwater. The old Ward Estate used to supply so many fitches and faggots to prevent the water from flooding. They had a man who used to go along and put them along the dyke. When Bernie's father was a boy he used to go snake hunting there. Mr Spearing got it all sandbagged right round. Then it breached, and if only the Council had backed him up it could have been saved. After the Haywards left Elmsworth farm they held Spelling's old farm just so that Calthorpes couldn't make a bid without their knowing. Brian Machen and Oliver Fraser joined in the fray later with Marcia Seabrook.. These people backed Bernie; also Bill Shepherd, (Crematorium Superintendent). The latter moved a lot behind the scenes. Bernie employed delaying tactics. George Lawrence was one of the biggest opposers. Ron Mason who was secretary of Newport County Council kept tabs on the correspondence coming into the Council etc. Bill Shepherd, because he was a naturalist, worked to prevent the marshes from becoming industrialised. Two years after they left Elmsworth it was still dragging on. This would have been 1956 - 8.

Because of the trouble that all this stirred up, Bernie was faced with a court "Bad Farming Order" on him. At this time he was very hard up and if at that time the powers that be had offered him £1000, he would have gone with no fuss. However, this didn't happen. He had a letter from Annie Prangnell at the time of their taking the farm over, stating the amount of agreed "dilapidations" with the landlord so most of the allegations against him were proved groundless. When they took over from the Prangnell family, the land was in a terrible state. Hedges were 20 feet high, some even as high as the house itself; gates were all of them missing. All the Prangnells thought about was rabbit shooting and a bit of milk and practically nothing else. Bernie had negotiated with Colonel Dopperall ? of the Swainston Estate, on behalf of Sir John Simeon, that the same rule should apply to him, Bernie, as applied to the Prangnells. This was to the effect that when moving time came for Bernie, there should be no "dilapidations" to pay before leaving. Unfortunately, Colonel Dopperall died and this added to Bernie's problems when he came to leave. Colonel Dopperall owned the buildings on the land; the land itself belonged to the Swainston Estate. When the Prangnells left it was impossible for them to reinstate the land as it was when they first took it over. For example there was the massive kiln etc. so Colonel Dopperall excused them any payment and presented it for lease to Bernie as it stood. People said that Bernie and his wife were mad to even think of taking it on, especially as Bernie was walking on two sticks, having had an accident that put him out of the boat building trade for ever. Bernie maintains to this day that it was the life and the pure air of Elmsworth that restored his health.

Tom Prangnell came back from New Zealand, (would this be Annie's Dad?), and took over the running of the yard. Bernie can remember a plant in front of the house that was from New Zealand that only bloomed once every eighty years. It bloomed whilst they were there much to their great delight. It was a yellowy flower and had lots of frond-like leaves.