

My recollections of Wilsons. By Tom Sorbie 2015

At 15 my Father approached George Wilson to see if I could be taken on as apprentice, as he was looking for Bricklayers it was agreed that I would be a Bricklayer as Joiners had to spend a year at the School of Building Cambuslang.

At 14 I had a Saturday job in Avonhaugh Tom Wilsons home ,I split sticks for kindling and other minor jobs around the grounds, Mrs Wilson was a lovely lady.

My Father at 14 was the apprentice to Great Grandfather George the founder of the firm, he was a Joiner and Undertaker, my father carried the Streeching Board where the dead were laid out to check coffin sizes etc, he frequently had villagers asking Who's deid the day Bob, he had to coffin his own sister when he was called to help by old George. At the same age in 1914 my Father in the early morning had to go to the Old Workshop to start the gas engine that powered the belt driven machines ,I removed around 1954 this old machine from a chamber under the floor it was in immaculate condition. We built a second storey to the workshop. My Father worked for Wilson's until he left for the First World War 1918, he missed the trenches

As a boy I played with Stuart Wilson in his home at Greenside and being wartime we had use of the underground Air Raid Shelter in the garden which was carpeted and a great place to play.

My first housing job was in Markethill East Kilbride and I believe it was the first housing estate to be built by Wilson who went on to build numerous houses in the New Town, the sand by the way for mortar etc was taken from Chatelherault

At that time bricklayers had to serve five year before becoming a Tradesman and at three years you were all the bricklayer you were going to be other than experience, I was lucky in that I was told to work at times with the In House Bricklayer John Kelly an old Irishman gaining a lot of experience from John, his Labourer was Jimmy Timmins, we built shop and farm extensions and carried out general repairs etc . We also built the large hanger which sits on the site of the Former Loch Park Football field [The Violet]

The large timber beams that were used in the Church were reused in the yard to hold up doors and the lean-to roof sitting on brick piers that I built.

When the jobbing was low we worked in the Yard helping the joiners and unloaded/loaded lorries, Old Tom Wilson was a frequent visitor into the yard walking up from Avonhaugh.

A house we helped to build was George Wilsons new home at Greenside the two storey house with balcony built in part with hand made brick this was on the site of the former Church which after demolition the boiler had not been removed from the basement. Wullie Whitelaw set up sheer legs and block and tackle to lift the boiler when it was on its way out we heard a loud hiss ,the gas had not been disconnected, Wullie sharpened a piece of wood and hammered it into the pipe, I stayed well clear and heard the Green Street residents asking each other if the gas was off..

When working in

East Kilbride I remember coming home sitting in the passenger seat for a change from the canopy type hut with seats and a central bench a bit squeezed but it kept you dry, when just passing through Strathaven on the Stonehouse Road I heard banging looking behind me I saw the tipper part of the truck in the vertical position with about 15 men inside tumbling all over each other inside the canopy, no idea how it happened ,there was a few chosen words when it was sorted out.

I worked with Wilsons a good employer until I was called up for National Service, on return to Civilian life I went into electronics, then returned to the building trade, in 1964 I went into the County Buildings, Property side of the Architects Dept., from where I retired at 61.