# What Happened Was - 13

Word started to get around as to who I was, where I am and what I could do, and a bit of work started to come in mostly from farmers (bless them). Jobs that had them stumped, sheared off bolts and studs. They had had a go at drilling them out but usually half a hole off centre, the favourite excuse being, our drills are cheap ones, not good ones like yours.

Welding jobs was another thing, there was series of blobs and lumps of slag somewhere near the line of a totally unprepared crack. The reason for that one being, our welder isn't big enough. Then sheet metal, a line of blobs and holes, the excuse being its thin and needs gas welding, most of those jobs I did with the arc welder just to show off, I also used to say I was using a better brand of electricity, for I had a separate meter for the welder and for this SWEB charged me four times the standard tariff.

I gradually got them educated and told them that if they wanted me to fix it then leave it alone! And above all wash it down, because I don't want that parked outside my back door smelling of roses.  Work was steady but I wasn't going to make a fortune in Spaxton when there was the rest of the world waiting.

Just outside Creech St Michael, Bryco Concrete were about to expand, they were bidding to cast a lot of bridge sections for the M.5. From Edithmead coming west and the future plans included someone to stick ironwork together, so it was agreed that I would do three or four days work a week, self employed and submit an invoice monthly.   Bryco's bread and butter work was pre-stressed lintols, columns and trusses for farm buildings, fencing posts and paving slabs.

This was about to change. A new man Jack Lowe from Trent Concrete took charge and had some big ideas, bigger and bigger was his motto, the fence posts and slabs were phased out in favour of big industrial buildings and the motorway bridge sections. These were all pre-stressed units which were produced as follows:   Imagine a concrete path four feet wide and about two hundred feet long, with two vertical R.S.Js (Rolled Steel Joists) set in each end with about four feet sticking out of the ground. High tensile steel cables were stretched between these and strained to the R.S.Js (heads) using a spreader plate and collets. Next the moulds were built up around the wires to whatever length the beams were to be.  The concrete was poured in and vibrated to exclude any air pockets and allowed to set . When the moulds were dismantled the wires were cut off flush with the ends and there you had fairly lightweight beams with the reinforcing pre loaded to a known strength.

What has all this got to do with welding? The moulds were all made of timber and there was a team of carpenters working flat out making and repairing them, but they had a limited life span, so steel was the best option.  Parkins of Exeter sheared and pressed eight foot long sections of plate to size and I set about welding and bracing them to shape.  Also with bigger and bigger the R.S.J heads started to show signs of weakness and so new ones were needed. When I say new ones, what they wanted to do was to beef up the old ones with extra struts and bracing. I pointed out that at the end of the day they would have a right mess not much stronger than what they already had.  After the powers to be finished wringing their hands in anguish I sketched out what I thought was needed on the back of an old time sheet and left it with them to think about, and to get in touch when they were ready.

SLB