

From Steve Crago - concrete foundation

An announcement was made one Sunday morning that the Building Committee would like as many as possible to come the next Saturday to help with the concrete being delivered by the Readymix lorry. I and a number of others turned up in old clothes and shoes and were given a builder's wheelbarrow (somewhat more substantial than a garden wheelbarrow) and told to join the queue at the Readymix lorry. The instructions were simple; The men operating the concrete mixer would pour concrete into the waiting wheelbarrow then that person would push the barrow round the site to the waiting empty trench then pour the concrete into the trench. Sounds simple and, how hard can it be? comes to mind! when it was my turn with the barrow to receive the concrete, the man operating the Readymix lorry said, "you look like a big lad", and filled up the barrow to the top with wet concrete. It was heavy! I staggered off pushing the barrow full of concrete, to a trench at what seemed to me to be the farthest corner of the plot of land to where Cyril Morris, standing in the trench, was waiting to receive the concrete. I came to the edge of the trench and really struggled to lift the handles of the barrow and pour the concrete in. Then back to the Readymix lorry. Filled up again, then back to Cyril. This was an even bigger struggle to pour the concrete in. Back again to the lorry, filled again. Back at the trench this time I could not lift the handles, my arms couldn't do it.

Cyril was gazing at my effort with some amusement and said to the effect that he had seen smaller and younger men who had no trouble doing this. What could I do? Cyril then said that what you do is to walk up to the trench with the barrow, stop suddenly just before the edge of the trench and the barrow will naturally tip up with ease. I tried this and he was right. I did the rest with much less trouble.

After the lorry had gone, we had a break and Vera Greenen had made some cake and tea. Very nice, but I couldn't raise the mug of tea to my mouth, my arms were so weak! I had to put the mug on the mantelpiece of the fireplace in what is now the craft room of the Homestead, by using both hands, and then carefully tip the tea into my mouth. I had learned a lesson or a skill which may be useful in the future, but I don't think it will ever be on a building site again!