

LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI / VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR

Cookes Explosives, Penrhyndeudraeth (1946-1988)

Cyfwelai: VN030 Iorwerth Davies
Dyddiad: 10: 07: 2014
Cyfwelydd: Kate Sullivan ar ran Archif Menywod Cymru

There is an English summary of the interview following the Welsh text

Cadarnhaodd Iorwerth ei enw, a'i gyfeiriad a chafodd o ei eni yn 1932.

Ganwyd o ym Mhenrhyndeudraeth ac roedd ei dad yn gweithio yn y chwarel ym Mlaenau Ffestiniog, bu farw pan oedd Iorwerth yn 4 oed. Doedd o ddim yn iachus fel plentyn, na'i chwiorydd chwaith, yn dioddef o TB ac roedden nhw i gyd yn yr ysbyty llawer. Aeth o i'r ysgol ym Mhenrhyndeudraeth a gadawodd yn 14 oed i weithio'n syth yn y gwaith powdwr.

Ni chafodd gyfweiliad i gael swydd yn Cookes, jyst mynd i lawr i ofyn am swydd. Y pryd hwnnw, roedd y Blaid Lafur newydd ddod i'r brig a ddechreuodd hreol newydd fod gweithwyr ifanc yn gorfod gorffen eu gwaith hanner awr cyn y gweithwyr hŷn, felly roedd Iorwerth yn gallu gadael y gwaith am 4.30. Yr oriau arferol oedd 8.00 tan 5.30 ac roedd o'n mynd yn gynt. Roedd cryn dipyn o weithwyr ifanc yn Cookes achos aeth llawer o bobl y pentref yno ar ôl gorffen ysgol. Roedden nhw'n gwneud bagiau, achos roedd yn rhaid bod 18 oed i weithio efo'r ffrwydron. Gwneud ffrwydron i'r pyllau glo a chwareli yr oedd Cookes ar ôl y rhyfel.

Gwnaeth Iorwerth nifer o swyddi yn Cookes yn ystod y 42 o flynyddoedd roedd o yno, gan ddechrau efo'r bagiau - '*paper shells*' - yr oedd y ffrwydron yn mynd i mewn ynndynt. Dechreuodd efo'r ffrwydron yn 16, dywedodd Iorwerth, ond roedd y merched yn gorfod bod yn 18 oed. Wedyn roedd y bagiau yma yn mynd i'r merched yn y *packing* i gael eu llenwi efo ffrwydron.

Ni chafodd unrhyw hyfforddiant pan ddechreuodd ond - *thrown in at the deep end*, meddai. Ar ôl 16 oed, roedd o'n gweithio yn y cytiau efo merched a dynion eraill, dim efo'r ffrwydron ei hun ond efo'r bagiau. Roedd dynion hefyd fel *service waiters* yn mynd â bagiau rownd i bob cwt ac yn eu casglu nhw ar ôl iddynt gael eu llenwi.

Cyflog cyntaf Iorwerth oedd £1 a dau swllt, a oedd yn isel achos ei oedran, a chafodd o godiad wedyn. Doedd dim rhaid iddo wisgo *overalls* na dillad arbennig, gan nad oedd y gweithio efo'r ffrwydron, ond roedd yn mynd i'r gwaith yn ei ddillad ei hun. Roedden nhw'n clocio i mewn a mas

yn y 'time office.'

Fel dyn ifanc, roedd o'n hapus i gael swydd yn Cookes ac ennill arian. Roedd o'n rhoi ei gyflog i'w fam. Roedd ei ddwy chwaer yn dal yn yr ysgol. Roedd o'n cael 'swlltyn bach' iddo'i hun allan o'i gyflog. Roedd y berthynas yn dda rhwng pawb, meddai, ac roedd pawb yn nabod ei gilydd.

Felly, rhwng oed 14 a 16, roedd Iorwerth yn gwneud y bagiau papur; yn 16 oed, roedd o'n mynd â'r bagiau hyn rownd i'r merched yn y cytiau, ac roedd yn rhaid iddo wisgo *overalls* bryd hynny. *Wrappers* oedd y bagiau yma i fynd rownd y ffyn o gelignit. Roedd y merched yn gorfod lapio'r papur hwn rownd y gelignit. Doedd o ddim yn cael cyflog dyn yr adeg hynny, er ei fod o'n gwneud job dyn. Cafodd o air efo un o'r rheolwyr am hyn, a dywedodd y dyn nad oedd o yn gallu hawlio cyflog dyn achos ei oed, atebodd Iorwerth '*well, if I'm not entitled to a man's wages I'm not doing a man's work.*' Aeth y mater i'r uwch reolwr ac enillodd Iorwerth gyflog dyn yn y diwedd, pan oedd yn gwneud y gwaith o fynd â'r bagiau i'r cytiau a chasglu'r rhai oedd wedi'u llenwi. Roedd bocsys o ffrwydron yn drwm iawn, tua 75lbs, a dyna pam roedd y gwaith yn waith dyn. Roedd 'na lawer o fathau o bapurau, gwahanol faint ar gyfer y gwahanol fathau o ffrwydron, e.e. roedd y rhai efo 'permitted' ar y papur yn gallu mynd allan i'r pyllau glo, ond roedd rhai heb 'permitted' felly, dywedodd Iorwerth, doedd o ddim jyst yn fater o'u cario nhw o gwmpas, ond roedd yn tynnu tipyn o sylw ar hyn hefyd. Gwnaeth o'r swydd hon tan roedd o wedi cyrraedd 18 oed, ac erbyn yr oedran hwnnw, roedd yn cael cyflog dyn beth bynnag.

12.00 Yn 20 oed, daeth yn *charge hand* yn y *packing house* ac wedyn y tu allan, ac roedd hynny'n golygu mwy o gyfrifoldeb, er nad oedd o yn llawer mwy o arian. Fel *chargehand*, roedd yn rhaid iddo wneud rhagen waith i bob cwt, e.e., pa faint o ffrwydron roedd pob yn cael ei wneud. Roedd 600 o *cartridges* i bob *case*, ac roedd y merched yn lapio'r ffrwydron hyn i fyny i *25 pound or 50 pound case* (?). Roedd Iorwerth yn gwneud rhaglenni gwaith a oedd yn penderfynu faint o *cartridges* oedd yn mynd i bob cwt. Roedd yno 8 cwt ac roedd 4/5 merch ym mhob un. Dechreuodd o fel *charge hand* dros dro tra bod rhywun yn sâl ac arosodd yn y swydd.

Dywedodd, am y berthynas rhyngddo a merched y cytiau, "on i'n ffraeo efo nhw i gyd." Dim byd dig, ond efallai byddai un cwt yn cael cam neu yn cael gormod o'r meintiau bach. Doedd neb yn hoffi'r meintiau bach achos roedden nhw ar *piece work* ac os roedden nhw'n cael mwy o *cases* roedden nhw'n cael mwy o gyflog. Roedd Iorwerth yn trio fod yn deg ond weithiau roedd yn amhosibl rhoi, deudwch, tri *case* bach i dri chwt os oedd nifer i'w gwneud. Roedd y merched yn tynnu ei goes, yn enwedig o gwmpas adeg Nadolig.

Roedden nhw'n cael hanner awr i ginio ac roedd yn rhaid iddynt dalu am y bwyd. Roedd yn rhaid iddynt fynd i'r cantîn i gael paned. Roedd y gweithwyr yn gwisgo eu dillad a'u sgidiau arbennig yn y cantîn ond doeddwn nhw ddim i fod rhag bod ffrwydron arnyn nhw. Roedd ffformen yn rheoli ond roedden nhw yn '*very relaxed*' yn ôl Iorwerth, ac roedd pethau gwirion yn cael eu gwneud, *cutting corners* ag ati. Roedd Iorwerth yn sôn am achos pan oedd ddyn, a dylai fod wedi bod yn y *blockhouse* (*reinforced concrete building*), yn defnyddio '*remote control*' ie rhyw fath o *periscope*, a gadawodd y *blockhouse* yma a'r peiriant yma yn dal i fynd. Roedd pawb yn gwybod bod o'n gallu fod yn beryglus ond doedd dim gwaith arall o gwmpas, meddai.

Mae'n cofio ffrwydrad yn 1988, pan gafodd ddau ddyn eu lladd. Roedd ffrwydrad yn 1957, pan laddwyd 4, ac yn 1968, meddai. Roedd waliau o gwmpas y cytiau, er mwyn atal difrod yn achos ffrwydrad, ond yn 1957, methodd y rhain, a chafodd merched y dets eu brifo hefyd. Ar ôl hyn, adeiladwyd '*mounds*' o gwmpas y cytiau. Mae'n cofio dyn yn colli ei olwg hefyd mewn damwain efo un o'r *periscopes*, ac ar ôl hyn, gosodwyd teledu yn ei le. Gwellodd diogelwch ac iechyd, yn

ogystal â chyflogau, pan gymerodd ICI drosodd.

23.00 Roedd Iorwerth yn aelod o'r undeb, er nad oedd yn rhaid bod yn aelod. Roedd hefyd mewn cronfa bensiwn, ac roedd yn talu 10 ceiniog y bunt i hwn (?), a nes ymlaen 6 ceiniog o bob punt pan oedd o ar y staff, yn 36, ac yn cael ei dalu bob mis, yn lle yn wythnosol, fel gweithwyr y cytiau. Cafodd o bensiwn da ar ôl ymddeol achos gwnaeth un o'r rheolwr ei gynghori i ddechrau yn 18 oed. Roedd y gweithwyr yn mynd i ffenestr y swyddfa bob dydd Gwener i gael eu cyflog, ond yn nes ymlaen roedd pawb yn cael eu talu yn syth i'r banc.

Y tu allan i'r gwaith, roedd Iorwerth yn mynd am beint neu i 'chwilio am ferched.' Ond cwrddodd â'i wraig yn y gwaith, roedd yn gweithio yn y cytiau.

Doedd o ddim yn cofio streic yno, ond bu rhyw achos pan oedd yn 16, ac yn mynd â phapurau rownd i'r cytiau, ac roedd 4 hogan mewn pob cwt, ac roedd rhai ohonynt mewn un cwt wedi bod yn gas efo un o'i chydweithwyr. Roedd y merched eraill i gyd yn gwrthod dychwelyd i'r cytiau ond roedden nhw'n sefyll o blaid y ferch yma a phan oedd yn rhaid iddynt fynd yn ôl i'r cytiau roedd y merched i gyd yn gweiddi 'boo' ac yn dilyn y tu ôl y tair hogan a oedd wedi bod yn gas. Ar y cyfan, roedd pawb yn dda efo'i gilydd, ac roedd hyn yn anghyffredin iawn, meddai. Dro arall, fel fforman, anfonodd o hogyn i fynd â'r rhaglenni gwaith rownd, ac roedd o ac un o ferched y cytiau yn ffraeo, ac roedd y boi yma yn ei galw hi yn 'hwren,' ac roedd yn rhaid i Iorwerth, fel fforman, fynd lawr i sortio fo. Roedd pawb yn cael 'nicknames', meddai. Pan aeth o yn ôl, ar ôl ymddeol, a doedd o ddim i fod i adael i neb fynd i mewn i'r safle roedd y dynion yn ei alw fo'n 'Hitler.' Dydy o ddim yn beth hawdd, dywedodd, gwneud swydd bos.

Pan ddaeth yn fforman, roedd o'n barod yn 'acting' fforman ar y shift nos, bythefnos pob yn ail fis, ond dim ar y staff, ac roedd rhywun wedi ymddeol a chafodd o ei alw i'r swyddfa, a gwnaethon nhw gynnig y swydd iddo fo. Roedd gynno fo bump o blant a doedd o ddim eisiau gweithio gyda'r nos, ac roedd swydd fel staff *supervisor* i fyny yn fuan wedyn, a chafodd o'r swydd honno. Aeth ei gyflog i fyny gryn dipyn. Ar y shift nos, roedd yn cael £40 yr wythnos.

Roedd pedair shift - bore, prynhawn, nos a dydd, ac roedd y shift nos yn rheolaidd, tra roedd y lleill yn newid o wythnos i wythnos. Roedd Iorwerth ar shift nos am ddwy flynedd ond roedd o 'biau'r' shift nos yr adeg honno, meddai, - dim ond un dyn uwch ei ben o.

Roedd y rheolwyr yn iawn efo fo, ac roedd agwedd y gweithwyr tuag atyn nhw yn iawn hefyd, ond unig fai'r rheolwyr, meddai Iorwerth, oedd y cur pen roedd y gweithwyr yn ei ddiodef achos roedden nhw'n anadlu'r gelignit, y merched yn y cytiau a hefyd y bechgyn a oedd yn mynd a chasglu'r bagiau. Triodd y cwmni ddatrys y broblem, rhoi gwyntyllau i mewn, neu sgrin, ond doedden nhw ddim yn gweithio. Doedd dim masgiau na menig yn y dechrau ond tua'r diwedd roedd pobl yn gweithio yn y blockhouse (?) ond oedd pawb mor involved yn y dechrau (?). **Ar wahân i'r pennau tost, roedd merched yn llewygu weithiau. Roedd y nyrs arfer rhoi rhywbeth i'r stumog iddynt ar gyfer hyn - Isotop?** - dydy o ddim yn siŵr o'r enw. Roedd pobl yn mynd â darnau bach o gelignit adre gyda nhw ond wnaeth Iorwerth mo hynny.

35.00 Dechreuodd o ganlyn yn 1950 a phriododd yn 1955, pan oedd yn 23oed, roedd ei wraig yn 21. (Roedd gan Iorwerth ffoto o'i deulu fan hyn). Roedd Mary, ei wraig, yn gweithio am ychydig o flynyddoedd wedyn, tan iddi gael plant, cafodd hi bump i gyd, a daeth hi'n wraig tŷ. Roedd pawb yn byw felly ar gyflog Iorwerth ac roedd yn galed iawn, meddai, er ei fod o'n ennill mwy. Prynodd o dŷ yn Nhanygrisiau cyn priodi ac roedd yn mynd i'r gwaith wedyn ar y bws, ac yn gorfod talu.

Daeth yn rheolwr *transport* wedyn a doedd o ddim yn gallu gyrru, er ei fod o'n gyrru lorïau o

gwmpas y safle, a wnaeth y cwmni dalu iddo gael gwersi gyrru a phasiodd ei brawf. A wnaethon nhw roi ffôn i mewn yn ei dŷ yr adeg hynny.

Weithiau roedd y ffrwydrion yn chwysu ar y ffordd i ryw bwl glo a pan ddigwyddai hynny, roeddent yn beryglus iawn. Swydd Iorwerth oedd rheoli pethau felly a delio efo'r perygl. Pan roedd y ffrwydrion yn gadael y ffatri, roedden nhw'n solid, ac yn ddiogel, ond ar y ffordd, os oeddent yn mynd yn wlyb, roedden nhw'n chwysu ac yn mynd yn feddal, ac yn beryglus. Roedd yn rhaid iddo deithio'n aml i lefydd pell iawn i'w gwneud nhw'n saf, gan foddi'r stwff mewn gwlybwr a woodchips. Weithiau roedd nifer fawr o *cases* wedi mynd yn beryglus, fel y 12 yn Doncaster un tro, ac roedd yn rhaid iddo aros yno am bedair noson i sicrhau eu bod nhw'n saff. Taflodd y 12 *case* wedyn i mewn i'r North Sea! Yn yr Alban yr oedd *head office* Cookes.

Enillodd o ddim cymwysterau yn Cookes ond cafodd lawer o brofiad. Pan orffennodd o yn 1988, dim ond 90 o bobl oedd yn gweithio yno ac roedden nhw i gyd yn gorfod gwneud popeth. Pan ddechreuodd o roedd tua 700 yno. Peth arall yr oedd yn rhaid iddo'i wneud tua'r diwedd oedd delio efo *detonators* ac roedd wedi dod yn ôl achos roedd rhywbeth yn bod efo nhw, ac roedd yn rhaid iddo fo'u distrywio nhw. Roedd o wedi gwerthu *detonators* o'r blaen fel rhan o'i swydd, ond dim byd fel hyn. Beth roedd o'n gorfod ei wneud oedd *detonate* nhw mewn i rywbeth roedden nhw'n galw yn 'bell' a phan oedd hwnnw'n llawn, roedd o'n taflu'r cyfan i mewn i'r llyn, live *detonators* oedd y rhain, ac yn ffrwydro'r cyfan. Doedd dim llyn yno i ddechrau, ond creodd y cwmni un ar gyfer pethau fel hyn. Doedd dim ofn gynno fo pan oedd yn mynd i mewn i'r cytiau lle roedd y merched yn lapio'r ffrwydrion ond roedd gynno fo ofn mawr o'r *dets*.

Roedd yn rhaid iddo losgi'r ffrwydrion hefyd ac roedd golygfa hyfryd o'r lle roedd yn gwneud hyn, lawr dros y môr tuag at Harlech. Ar un adeg, roedden nhw'n anfon ffrwydrion i'r fyddin yn Iwerddon adeg y '*troubles*' ac roedd yn rhaid llenwi bob math o ffurflenni swyddogol are u cyfer. Roedden nhw'n llenwi ffurflenni ar gyfer pob math o ffrwydrion ond roedd rhyw '*dye coch*' ar rheina ac roedd yn rhaid clirio cwt arbennig i'w gwneud.

Pan gâi o wyliau, roedden nhw'n mynd i Butlins, yn Barry, Bognor Regis, Minehead, Skegness, fel llawer o'i gydweithwyr, - yn nes ymlaen roedd hyn, pan oedd o'n ennill yn well. Roedd cinio Nadolig yn Cookes pob blwyddyn a hefyd roedd *Workers Playtime*, rhywbeth mae'n ei gofio'n dda yn y cantîn pan oedd o newydd ddechrau yno.

Aeth llawer o gyn-weithwyr Cookes i Drawsfynydd ar ôl i'r ffatri gau, neu pan gawson nhw eu diswyddo, ond mae Iorwerth yn deud bod hi wedi talu iddo aros yno mor hir, achos mae wedi cael pensiwn da iawn. Roedd o'n mwynhau gweithio yno ar y cyfan ond dim y pennau tost. Roedd yn rhaid i'r gweithwyr cael archwiliad iechyd yn rheolaidd, roedd dau feddyg, Dr Pritchard o Borthmadog a Dr Mansell, ac efo'r ail, yr unig beth oedd yn digwydd oedd, roedd o'n gofyn "Sut ydych chi'n teimlo heddiw?" a'r gweithiwr yn ateb "Iawn, diolch." Ond gan Dr Pritchard, roedden nhw'n cael archwiliad llawn a da.

Roedd yn rhaid i'r gweithiwr gael archwiliad meddygol hefyd cyn dechrau. Roedd pawb yn cael ei archwilio wrth ddod i mewn trwy'r giât, rhag ofn bod matsys ganddynt. Os oedden nhw'n smygu, roedd yn rhaid iddynt fynd i'r cantîn ac roedd peiriannau arbennig ar y waliau i osod eu *cigarettes*. Doedd dim hawl ganndynt i fynd ag arian - *coins* - i mewn, rhag ofn gwreichion, ac roedd yn rhaid iddynt roi sgidiau arbennig am eu traed a thynnu eu sgidiau eu hunain rhag ofn fod rhywbeth arnynt a allai achosi ffrwydrad. Mae'n cofio rhyw ferch o Danygrisiau, gweithiwr newydd, yn mynd i mewn efo *studs* yn ei sgidiau, sgidiau roedd y cwmni wedi'u rhoi iddi i'w gwisgo trwy gamgymeriad ond roedd rhai dynion wedi sylwi mewn pryd.

Stori arall a ddywedodd Iorwerth oedd - pan oedd yn rhaid iddo losgi ffrwydron ac roedd yr heddlu a'r frigâd dan wedi dod, fel oedd yr arfer, ac yntau'n gweiddi 'tanio, tanio' fel rhybudd i bawb - a dim byd yn digwydd.

Ar y staff, roedd rhaid iddo fynd i gynadleddau hefyd, i Ogledd Lloegr a Jersey, ac roedd y cwmni yn talu am bopeth. Roedd o '*in charge of disputation (?)*' pan oedd rhywun yn ymddeol dros y wlad i gyd yn y diwedd. Cafodd o llun o Fynydd Cnicht pan ymddeolodd. Mae'n dal mewn cysylltiad efo nifer o'i gydweithwyr. Does dim un o'i blant wedi mynd i weithio mewn ffatri.

Lle mawr oedd Cookes, sydd nawr yn natur a bywyd gwyllt.

Hyd 1 awr

English summary

Cookes Explosives, Penrhyndeudraeth (1946-1988)

Interviewee: VN030 Iorwerth Davies

Date: 10: 07: 2014

Interviewer: Kate Sullivan on behalf of Women's Archive Wales

Iorwerth was born in 1932 in Penrhyndeudraeth. His father worked in the quarry in Blaenau Ffestiniog but died when Iorwerth was four years old. He didn't enjoy good health as a child, neither did his sisters, suffering from TB and they all spent time in the hospital. He went to school in Penrhyndeudraeth and went to work in the powder factory. He went down there and got a job without being interviewed. The Labour party brought in a law saying that young workers had to finish a half hour before their seniors so Iorwerth finished work at four thirty. The usual hours were eight until five thirty (?). There were many young workers in Cookes who started there straight from school. They made bags and weren't allowed to work with explosives until they were eighteen. Cookes made explosives for the coal mining industry and quarries after the war.

He did many jobs during the forty two years that he was there. He started on the bags – the paper shells –and moved on to work on the explosives when he was sixteen (the girls had to be eighteen). The bags they made would go to the girls in packing to be filled with explosives.

He wasn't given any training when he started work but was thrown in at the deep end. When he was sixteen he worked in the sheds with the bags rather than the explosives. Men also worked as service waiters taking bags round to every shed and collecting them when they had been filled.

His first wage was one pound and two shillings which was low because of his age but he later received a pay rise. He didn't have to wear overalls or special clothes because he wasn't working with the explosives, and he had to clock in and out in the time office.

He was happy to get a job in Cookes and be earning money. His two sisters were still living at home and he would give his wages to his mother. She would give him a shilling or two from his wages. Everybody knew each other at the factory and got on well.

Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen Iorwerth made paper bags. When he was sixteen he started taking these bags around to the women in the sheds. He had to wear overalls to do this job. These bags were wrappers which the girls put around the gelignite. He wasn't receiving a man's wage at the time, even though he was doing a man's job. He had a word with one of the managers about this and was told he couldn't have a man's wage due to his age. Iorwerth argued, 'well, if I'm not entitled to a man's wages I'm not doing man's work.' The matter went to the senior manager and in the end he secured a man's wage. The boxes of explosives were seventy five pounds and quite heavy, and that's why it was a man's job. He did this job until he was eighteen.

12.00 When he was twenty he became a charge hand in the packing house and then outside, and this meant he had a lot more responsibility, even though it didn't pay much more. As a charge hand he had to do a work programme for each shed, and had to decide matters such as how many explosives

everyone made. There were six hundred cartridges to every case, and the women wrapped these cartridges in twenty five pound and fifty pound quantities. Iorwerth made work programmes to determine how many cartridges went to each shed. There were eight sheds and four to five girls working in each one. He began work as a temporary charge hand while somebody was off ill but ended up staying in the job.

He would quarrel with the girls in the sheds who would get angry if one shed got the smaller amounts of cases. They were on piece work, and this meant that they earned less. Iorwerth tried his best to be fair but sometimes it was impossible. The women would tease him especially around Christmas time.

They had half an hour for lunch and had to pay for their food. They had to go to the canteen to drink their tea, and would wear their special clothes and shoes there but weren't permitted to take any explosives with them. The foremen were very relaxed and did cut corners occasionally. Everybody knew it was dangerous work but there was nothing else around.

He remembers an explosion in 1988 when two men were killed, one in 1968 and the one in 1957 when four people were killed. There were walls around the sheds to stop the impact of an explosion but in 1957 these failed. Mounds were then built around the sheds. He also remembers a man who lost his sight in an accident with one of the periscopes. Health and safety, and wages, improved when ICI took over.

23.00 Iorwerth was a union member, even though it wasn't compulsory. He was in a pension fund and paid ten pence in every pound into it, and later on six pence in every pound when he was thirty six years old, on the staff and being paid monthly (unlike the girls in the sheds who were paid weekly.) He received a good pension when he retired because one of the managers advised him to start paying in when he was eighteen. The workers would go to the office window every Friday to collect their pay packets, but later on everybody got their wages paid into the bank.

Outside work hours, Iorwerth would go out for a pint or to look for a girlfriend. He met his wife in work while she was working in the sheds.

He doesn't remember any strikes taking place there. He does, however, remember an incident that took place when he was sixteen, during the time when he was taking the papers round. There were four girls working in a shed and three of them had been nasty to the other one. The other girls in the factory refused to return to their sheds in order to support this girl and when they eventually did return had followed the three girls who had been nasty and booed them. On the whole though, animosity like this was rare, and everybody understood each other. Another time, as foreman, he had to sort out a situation where one of the lads had called one of the girls from the sheds a whore. Everybody got nicknames. When he returned after retiring he was dubbed Hitler because he wouldn't allow just anybody onto the site.

He was already acting foreman on the night shift for two weeks every other month when he was called up to the office and offered the job. He had five children and he didn't want to work nights and a job as staff supervisor came up soon after that and he got that job. His wage increased considerably. He was getting forty pounds a week on the night shift. There were four shifts – mornings, afternoons, nights and days and the night shift was a regular shift unlike the others which chopped and changed from week to week. Iorwerth was on the night shift for two years and there was only one man above him on that shift.

The women working in the sheds and the men collecting the bags suffered headaches because they were breathing in the gelignite. The company tried to solve the problem by installing fans or screens but this didn't work. The workers didn't have masks or gloves in the beginning. **Women workers fainted from time to time as well. The nurse would give them something for their stomachs.** Some people took small pieces of gelignite home with them to sniff because they would suffer withdrawal symptoms from the gelignite when they were off work, although Iorwerth never did this.

35.00 He started courting in 1950 and got married in 1955 when he was twenty three and his wife was twenty one. Mary, his wife carried on working until she had children, five in all, and became a house wife. They lived on Iorwerth's wages and it was difficult despite the fact that his wage increased. He bought a house in Tanygrisiau before getting married and would get the bus to work.

He became a transport manager and would drive the lorries around the site even though he hadn't passed his driving test. The company paid for him to have driving lessons and he passed his test. They put a phone in his house at the same time.

Sometimes the explosives would sweat on their way to a mine and when that happened they were very dangerous. Iorwerth's job was to manage things like this and deal with the danger. When the explosives were leaving the factory they were solid and safe, but if they sweated and got wet in transit they became soft and dangerous. He had to travel great distances sometimes to do this like the time he went to Doncaster to deal with twelve cases. He had to stay there for four nights to ensure they were safe. He ended up throwing the twelve cases into the North Sea. Cookes head office was in Scotland.

He didn't get any qualifications working in Cookes but he gained a lot of experience. When he finished in 1988 there were only ninety people still working there and they all had to do a bit of everything. When he'd started there, there were about seven hundred. Towards the end he also had to destroy faulty detonators that had been returned by detonating them into a bell and throwing them into the lake. They were live detonators and would explode. The company had created a lake for this purpose. He didn't feel frightened when he went into the sheds where the women wrapped the explosives but he was scared of the detonators.

He had to burn explosives as well, and there was a wonderful view over the sea towards Harlech from the place where he did this. During the troubles in Ireland they were sending explosives to the army and they had to fill in all types of official forms. They had a special red dye on them and a shed had to be cleared specially for them to be made.

When he was earning better money he would go to Butlins in Barry, Bognor Regis, Minehead or Skegness on his holidays, like many of his co-workers. There was a Christmas lunch in Cookes every year and he remembers they had Workers Playtime on the radio in the canteen when it had just started.

Many of the Cookes' workers went to work in Trawsfynydd, but it paid for Iorwerth to stay on because he got a good pension as a result. He enjoyed working there but didn't enjoy the headaches. The workers had to have a medical examination regularly. There were two doctors - Dr Pritchard from Porthmadog and Dr Mansell. Dr Mansell only ever asked the workers, "How are you feeling today," but Dr Pritchard would give them a proper examination.

Workers had to have a medical examination before they started work. Everybody was searched for

matches as they came in through the gate. If they smoked they had to go to the canteen where there were special machines on the wall for them to light their cigarettes. They weren't permitted to carry coins in case these caused a spark, and couldn't wear their own shoes in case there was something on them that could cause an explosion. He remembers a new female worker from Tanygrisiau going into the shed wearing shoes with studs on them. The company had given them to her by mistake but some of the men noticed just in time.

Iorwerth tells another story about burning explosives. The police and fire brigade were in attendance, as was the norm, and he kept on shouting 'Fire, fire' but nothing was happening. When he was on the staff he had to attend conferences in the North of England and Jersey at the expense of the company. When he retired he received a picture of Mount Cnicht. He is still in touch with many of his co-workers. Not one of his children has gone to work in a factory.

Duration: 1 hour