

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWYR Y FFATRI

**Polikoff's, Ynyswen;, Sobell's, Rhigos; EMI, Treorci; Winchester Sausage Factory,
Ray-O-Vac battery factory, Treorci; Harwin's Electronics Factory, Treorci**

Interviewee: VSE029 Patricia Howard

DOB 9/4/1943

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**Interviewer: Catrin Edwards on behalf of the Women's Archive of
Wales / Archif Menywod Cymru**

0:00

Can you tell me your name and date of birth?

Patricia Howard. Born 9.4.1943.

00:19

Could you tell me a little about your background; your mum and your dad, your siblings, that kind of thing.

I'm one of 4 children. We lived in Blaen Cwm in a colliery house, because my Grandfather was an over man who actually lived with us, because my Grandmother was in a mental hospital unfortunately, which caused a little bit of.... what was it called years ago, a secret kind of thing. So I was bought up in that... my Grandfather was there my mother; my father was a collier, worked 51 years in the pit. My Grandfather was the over man. So there was friction there was one was the working man and the other one was the boss. My mother's family they were all over men and that. But my father was a good man and I look back and think how good he was. I've lost all my family now. I had 2 brothers and a sister. My sister died when she was 41 with breast cancer, my youngest brother committed suicide and my oldest brother has just gone now October, all colliery. I've got great admiration for collieries.

I've only ever gone to the heritage, I don't know if you've been there. You go down and they put the lights out and there is not darkness like it and that's only a little bit down. I found it so humbling that my father had worked there for 51 years and you never even realised. Even though, I've found factory work really soul destroying personally I always felt I underachieved but the self-discipline you had to have to do that. I've always said how humbling it was I never realised there was a darkness like it, you couldn't see, in the dark you can see something but you couldn't see nothing it was pitch I couldn't believe it.

2:27

Did your mother work at all?

No. No

She never went out to work?

No she had to look after her brother because of my Grandmother.

2:37

Tell me a little bit about your education, primary and secondary?

I was quite what-you-call in school... I used to come top. I remember I think it was 8 of us tried for our 11 plus and only I passed. And I went down there and I broke my heart. I really... and my father had to go and sign and we were the first ones. They signed over a six penny stamp or something that we'd stay until we were sixteen.. I couldn't stick it and my Grandfather was on my side, 'oh she'll have a break down', because that nervousness. So I went back to Treherbert and went to the ordinary school and then just wasted my time really... I could have done better I suppose. I think I would have ended up in the factories anyway.

3:27

Where did you go to Primary School?

Blaen Cwm School

And then you went to...

Pentre Grammar and then to Treherbert. My sister was in Pentre Grammar down there, but I couldn't stick it. I think if another one had come with me I would have been alright, even a boy. To be top of the class in one place and be a nothing on my own... I was out of my depth completely.

3:56

Did that feel a long way away then?

Yes

Going down to Porth?

No to Pentre I went....

Yes even Pentre seemed a distance because it was all day. I don't know if you've been to Blaen Cwm it's such an insular little place that you could run home dinnertime and all that. I was terrible. You look back and think would it have made a difference? But I don't think so. My sister ended up in a factory anyway. So I stayed there until I was 15 and i actually started in Polikoffs on my 15th birthday, April 9th, just after Easter. Because you could leave at Easter and all that then years ago and I hated that as well.

4:45

Tell me how did you get to Polikoffs were there people you knew working there?

Everybody was working there. I remember me and my friend Joyce going down before we actually left school. I think you had to have a job if I'm not mistaken before you could go. So we went down to Polikoffs me and Joyce and we had this job.

5:06

Did you have an interview?

Yes.

Do you remember the interview?

Well not really just you know your age and all that. I think practically everyone went to Polikoffs, there was no problem getting in there. We went in this training centre and I still don't like sewing, I hate it. I think i stuck it about a week, I think Joyce did the rest of her life there. I didn't I've never been like that I don't know why. Then I went to Sobells.

5:39

So you were only in Polikoffs for a week?

I was only there a week. I did go back years after, I did go back there, but I went to Sobells then.

5:50

Tell me about Sobells?

I found it long and dreary it was low and I actually had to work till 4:30 every day from about 8:00 and on Thursday and Friday they finished at 3:30. That hour.... the difference that hour made there... and you had to have 2 breaks. Say you'd go from 12:30 till 1:00 and if you went on that 1:00 till 1:30 you only had 2 hours then. You were going home on that Frank Williams bus.

Tell me how you got there?

On the Frank Williams, a Treorchy firm and bus service. There was droves going over there, that was the first time I went there. I was 15 I found it awful long.

6:44

When did you have to leave in the morning to get there?

To get there by 8 about 7:30 or something like that. Always got up early.

Did you have to pay for this bus?

Yes

It wasn't put on by the company?

No you paid.

7:01

So you worked started at 8?

Yes and finished at 4:30 Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; 3:30 Thursday and Friday.

So did you clock in?

Yes clock in and clock out.

Do you remember what the breaks were like?

You had 10 minutes in the morning, half an hour for dinner and about 10 minutes in the afternoon, strictly. You were automated; you become automated to a buzzer. I found anyway... your life is ruled by a bell, when everything is... even though you are used to hooters in the colliery it was personal then when you had to go by a bell. From there I went to

7:53

Sorry before we leave Sobells I need ask a couple more things. So do you remember what your pay was like when you went there?

I can't remember. It was very low I know and you used to have a little bit of bonus if you could earn it and that always relied on... you were on a little team and then I went on the first moving conveyor and you are actually working and you've got a soldering iron in your hand and your actually working like that. I don't think it worked for long that mind, because you couldn't get up to go to the toilet or nothing you had to wait for someone, otherwise it would move without your part on it. I can't remember the wage - I know it was low.

8:39

Did you know anyone who worked there when you went there, did you go with friends?

Yes I know 2 from Blaen Cwm and there were quite a few older women there, Mary Dobbs, living next door but 1 but she was a lot older than me. We were all on the bus together. I knew quite a lot of people there.

8:58

So tell me what did you do, what was your job, explain your job to me at Sobells?

Well you were making televisions. I used to do like soldering a job. I was putting on this fibre glass filling on this sleeving, and I remember having this awful itch, and I can remember that plain. The found out after I finished there what that itch was. It was the fibre glass because people didn't realise then that there was something in it. Anyway I done that I don't what it was for, a part of the television just a mall and then I went onto the actual board of the television then, to solder.

So it was all televisions?

All televisions.

9:57

Were you given a uniform or something like that?

No paid for an overall, no nothing. Take your own everything and pay for your cups of tea. You didn't have much left over.

10:11

Was there a canteen there?

Yes

Did you used to eat in the canteen?

I mostly took my own stuff and sat there where we worked, or went for a little walk around.

What were the facilities like then?

They weren't too bad. The actual canteen if you wanted to use it was ok. But I found it a very forbidding place. The supervisors were hovering all the time. I remember I was only 15 and it was a long day and I remember the next thing they gave me this, they must have been watching me and gave me resistors and had to scrape the ends of them because they thought I wasn't doing enough. I was actually keeping up with what I was supposed to have done but I remember that. But you got tired at that age, up early and it was low, Sobells was.

11:16

Tell me about the building then that first day you walked in can you describe it to me?

I found it dark and noisy like I say I found it a bit intimidating to be honest. I remember when I went over there, I don't remember it when I was older I had to see a nurse and a doctor and they examined you, actually examined you all you know.

11:42

Is that what you... did you go for an interview?

No this was while I was working there because of my age, we were young. But I never had that in any other place after.

11:57

Were you trained there at all?

Yes you know trained for what you done, solder there's not much in that really?

How long did that take then?

Well to keep up once you knew the job it was easy enough but it was the speed you had to pick up then and you had to because there would be other people, the bit of bonus and you are pressurised then, but I didn't have much trouble keeping up, I've got to say that.

12:26

So did you, how were you paid, did you have a basic wage?

In a pack packet, yes a basic and a little bit of bonus if you earned it.

Piece work?

Yes.

12:39

And you don't remember how much it was?

No can't remember.

12:45

What did you do with your money?

I handed it over to my mother.

All of it?

Yes.

Did she give you any...?

Pocket money? Yes.

And you can't remember what you had?

Well you didn't need a lot.

12:58

What did you spend your pocket money on?

I used to go to Boys Club. You'd get in there for a shilling. Coffin (?) then - you could get in for 9 pence and there you are you only needed 10 shillings a week really. You never drunk or anything. I think I started smoking when I was in these factories, because it was thaw norm to do and you could actually smoke by your work place.

Oh could you?

Yes.

13:25

Did a lot of you smoke?

Everyone smoked.

In Sobells?

Mostly everybody yes.

And you didn't have to go out to smoke?

No you could smoke while you worked.

13:40

Could you talk while you worked?

Yes you could talk it wasn't that bad.

Was there music playing that kind of thing?

Yes they did play music I remember that.

Did people used to sing?

Yes. That was a good part of it people singing, you had a lot of that in the factories. All of them.

14:08

Do you remember the songs you used to sing?

The old bus trip songs I used to call them. You are my sunshine and all that. That's the kind of thing.

So was that the radio playing?

Yes I should think so with a speaker on.

14:27

What about the union was there a union?

Yes you had to join the union.

Do you remember any disputes while you were there?

Not in Sobells I don't. I mean everybody always wanted more money, there was little disputes but I don't remember ever a strike over there or being involved in anything over there.

14:53

So was it quite a happy workforce you'd say or indifferent?

I suppose some people found happiness there but we were one valley in another valley. Yes it was alright when I look back. It becomes part of your life, you get used to anything.

How did you find the work then?

I've always found factory work; well you've got to have a lot of self-discipline it's so boring. You just adapt because you need the money, your mother and father need the money. You are one of 4 children and you get on with it, like all women got to.

15:40

How many of you worked there when you worked there?

It was a big concern. I wouldn't know how many.

Hundreds or thousands?

Thousands.

Thousands. And what about women and men how many would say. Was it mainly women?

Mainly women yes. Women did all the, men put the tubes in and all that and cabinets and all that. Women did all the conveyors and the piece parts and all that.

16:22

Would you say there was a good camaraderie going on?

Yes. You we all got to know each other. We didn't go out over there because you couldn't get over there. Once you got home to your own valley that was it.

Was there any kind of works do's that you did go to?

I didn't go to any, but they did have work's do's. But I was young when I was there. I was only 15.

16:52 What about holidays were you given paid holidays?

Yes. Not many days. I remember you had to go in on New Year's Day. You used to have 2 for Christmas, Christmas Day and Boxing Day I think it was. I think you had a fortnight 2 weeks Summer holiday and it was never weeks. Like they have week now for Whitsun but you didn't have that. 2 days it was always 2 days and there wasn't an August bank holiday then when I was there years ago or May day.

17:38 What about the summer holidays could you choose when to have it off?

No it was a shut down.

And when was that?

Last of July and first of August. Same as the miners.

17:54 Anything else to tell me about Sobells?

No not really I don't think.

How long did you stay there?

I stayed there about 2 years and then I came back over here then and I went to EMI then which was nearer, I liked EMI.

18:12 Tell me how you got the job in EMI?

Will I think we went to the, what do you call it, the dole they used to call it then and they were taking people on so me and my friend Linda went down there and we had a job then in EMI. I think I was 17 then. You had to be an older age to go in EMI.

18:38 Why did you finish in Sobells in the end?

It was too going over there all the time and they were better over here, EMI was thriving as well and it's only down the road.

18:53 So were you aware, you didn't have a job to go to?

No I didn't have a job but I knew there was working going there.

You knew they were taking on?

Yes. So I went to EMI then.

19:05 So can you describe EMI for me on that first day?

I found EMI much more enlightening than Sobells. It's a higher place brighter and it seemed to be more homely I thought. Maybe because I was nearer home I don't know. That's how I

felt. I felt as if I could and I really got on with everybody there made good friends. I still bother with a couple that I worked there with. I see them on the road and that, I didn't mind EMI it was a different experience.

19:41 Was the work similar?

No I was sort of on my own you didn't work on a conveyor, I don't think there was any conveyors that time I went there.

19:55 Describe the work you did and the day?

The day I was doing a small little thing with a needle and a thread of gold wire and you had to count say 20 then you had to thread it into a little green core and then count to say 30 to finish it off until the core was really full and then they'd pass it down and have it inspected. But it was your own, I had to do so many a day didn't involve anybody else and I had bonus on what I had done myself then. I could do it I found that not everybody could get the hang of it but I could do that work. It suited me somehow yet I don't like sewing with a needle but I could do that alright.

20:43 Were you given a uniform or something?

No. You could order overalls there but they'd take it out of you pay.

Were they all the same?

Well you could have different colours and that what you choose yourself. But you had the catalogue and you could pick the one you wanted, but you paid for it.

21:11 What were the facilities like in EMI?

It was alright the toilets, the canteen you had to step outside and go up, it wasn't actually in the building. It was not too bad.

Did you used to eat there?

Sometimes yeah I used to go there on a dinner time or if it was nice you would just sit outside. I used their canteen I'd have something there some days, but I mostly took my own.

21:45 How did you used to get to work?

On the bus.

Again did you have to pay for the bus?

Yes. I remember I used to have a monthly, like a season but you had to pay for it. Like in Polikoffs they got it for you, but in EMI you had to put in for it yourself and I used to have this, my mother would get it and it would last for a month. You could actually use it in the night as well so that was a big bonus; you could go on the buses all day if you wanted to.

22:17 So how long did it take you to get from Blaen Rhondda to ...?

Oh not long. 20 minutes.

Was it quite cheap the bus?

Yes.

Season ticket?

Yes it wasn't too bad and you could go home dinnertime they had all the buses outside, double-deckers, to take you home and fetch you back. You didn't have much time really when you think about it but it was nice that break to go.

22:45 So did you used to go home sometimes?

Yes I always went home. My mother would make a bit of something. Something a bit quick kind of thing and you'd go back then. I remember that and double decker buses, conductors and drivers, it was work for them as well. Lot of things have gone like that. I didn't mind EMI out of all the places I have worked.

23:17 When did you start work in the morning?

7:30 in EMI and I think it was same there for a while that 4 o'clock and 3 o'clock. And then it all altered it went to all 4:00 o'clock if I remember right.

Did you have to clock in there?

Yes clock in and dinner time clock out and clock back in. It was all clocking in.

23:46 Do you remember what your wages were?

Around the 4 or 5 pound, but I'm not sure.

You don't whether that was basic?

No

What year are we talking about here when you went to EMI?

When did I leave school? seventeen I was 1960 something like that. Yes late 50's early 60's. I had my daughter in 1962; I was only 19 then mind.

Was it unionised?

Yes everywhere I have gone it has been union.

24:34 Do you remember which union it was?

Was it ET? Yes ET Electricity Trade Union.

Was that the same as Sobells?

Yes.

Do you remember any disputes or anything in EMI?

Not walk outs or anything. But yes we would often be in the canteen drumming something out, someone would be doing something.

25:01 Do you remember what they were about?

Not really I think there's always somebody who wants to do a bit of instigating going on. But no I can't really think.

25:18 What were the conditions there like? You know you said it was quite light and airy but heating and lighting that sort of thing?

The lighting was alright... the heating... I think it used to be cold sometimes. It wasn't perfect by a long way but I just thought it was better than the other place. The heating wasn't that great but the lighting was good. It had to be because the work was so small; we had a lamp as well.

25:49 Did the heating or lack of it ever cause disputes?

Yes in EMI. That was the second time I was there.

Did you walk out?

Yes we did now you're bringing things back a bit.

26:07 Can you remember what the temperature was that kind of thing?

It was cold because... they asked someone what you think of it and it was really cold.

How did they resolve that?

I think we went home that day. I may be getting mixed up because I worked in EMI twice. But I know we walked out on one time, they let us go home.

26:37 Do you remember what the management did to get you back?

I think it must have broken down that day, it wasn't permanently cold.

26:52 You say it was nicer there, was it cleaner?

Yes I found the atmosphere better there were a lot of them used to say. There wasn't music there but we used to sing a lot and have a bit of fun. It was great companionship, I found.

27:09 Were you mainly women there again?

Yes. The men were either in the tool makers or in the machine shop. The men were over our mind you always had a man like the manger was a man mostly. I've always worked with women.

What about the shop stewards were they women or men?

Men, some were women, but men run mostly things, men were the top and you had a few women shop stewards.

27:45 Do you remember about holidays?

Same again -2 weeks with the miners, 2 days Christmas, 2 days for the banks not weeks never weeks. You got used to that. Sometimes you'd have a Saturday morning and you'd pick up a bit more money things like that. That was alright then a little bit more everyone's glad of that.

28:19 So you had overtime?

Sometimes yes.

Only sometimes?

Yes.

Do you know why?

When they'd have an order or something. EMI done The Beatles didn't they. The Beatles didn't they make their records or something when they came in.

Parlaphone - was that EMI?

Yes because I can remember having a bit of the bonus because of The Beatles.

In what way how did that affect you?

I don't know. I remember we had something because The Beatles had made all this money.

29:04 What did you actually make, what was the end product?

The second time I was there I think I can't remember. Do you remember the Ernie? The Premier Bond used to pick the Ernie? Well we did the machine for that, the one time. We had to solder different colour wires to different points and all that. We were all doing a big part but the whole thing was the Ernie.

I remember that. So the Ernie was one thing, what else did you make?

I don't know what that little core was for I can't remember I didn't mind doing that. It was part of something.

29:51 Did you used to make record players?

Yes

Do you remember what kind of record players?

Well I only remember the speaker and the motor I don't know what they actually went into. They must have been selling them to a lot of big names.

So it was only a part of it?

Yes I was balancing the rotor which was the core of a motor and then we were doing.... I was working on the motor section and then they had the speaker section. So it was all for record players and different things like that.

30:25 How did you feel when you were told you had a bonus because of The Beatles?

The Beatles! because they were... I thought they were fabulous when they came out. Everybody was so excited about that.

Did it make you feel a part of the whole thing?

Yes you felt as if you knew them all like init? Because we were only from and a little place and they're all up in England. I remember that.

Part of the swinging sixties?

Yes. They were swinging they started it all off. Flower power and all that. I remember wearing a cow bell around my neck, my friend fetched it that was in EMI she went somewhere and she came back with these cow bells.

31:19 You talked about your friendships there with people in EMI, can you tell me a little more about the camaraderie, between the women, that kind of thing. Did you go out socially?

Yes I did. I got on lovely with them, made good friends in EMI. Like I said I see them today, I don't actually go out with them, you always remember you've worked together and there's that bond. That's what I find.

Did you used to go out with them then though?

Yes.

Where did you used to go?

To the Shack, Pentre Legion but they called it the Shack. Everybody went to Shack when they were a certain age. Then you'd go the Alex first when you first started. I think I was a little under age to begin with but got away with it because I looked older. Then we'd run up by 9:30 to the Shack because you had to be in by 9:30. They wouldn't let you in after 9:30.

32:19 What happened in the Shack?

Dancing and you met people there. Most people met their future husbands there.

What was the music like?

All rock and roll. The skirts with the net, American tan. I remember those tights and the petticoats. You'd stiffen them up with sugar and water, anything that would make them stick up. Ballerina shoes and cardigans back to front. You never had much. You used to have your

black skirt as the staple and you used to have the cardigan with the buttons in the back them rope pearls. You would think you were it, fabulous.

33:03 Was it live music?

Yes

Was it a local band?

Yes local bands.

Did they used to play every week?

Yes I remember they were good.

Do you remember what the name was?

No.

Did they make records?

It was a little before the Rock & Roll when you first started there. Then it was records mostly after with the Rock & Roll.

33:33 Did the company put on dos?

Yes now and again they would have a do. I can remember going to one or two EMI do's.

Where did you go?

In the canteen.

In work?

Yes

33:49 So what kind of do was that?

Dancing and a bit of buffet if I remember right nothing elaborate. But you liked it.

Was that in the evening?

Yes.

Was that for Christmas?

Yes that had a Christmas do, but we mostly went individually for our Christmas do's though section by section. You'd organise it yourself they never put anything on for you.

Where did you go for Christmas dos then?

I can't remember. Labour club anywhere you could dance. I remember going to the Den a nice room in the back there. Places like that you went to, you could book a room anywhere you want. They'd put a meal on for you but all your own money none of the factories did anything like that. It was the union mostly who put do's on in the canteen now and again but Christmas was individual sections.

34:56 Were there any perks from working in EMI?

No not really. You were paid for what you done and that was it. You bought your own season ticket, uniform. You never had much.

35:14 Do you remember how many of you worked there, you were talking about different sections?

I think it was around a 1000 perhaps more. Because it really came into its own then doing its own electronic and all that.

Where was it exactly EMI?

In Pentre that it is no Treorchy. I also worked in the Rayovac making batteries behind there, it was an American company but it all came under EMI.

What was it called sorry?

Ray-O-Vac.

When did you go there?

After EMI I went away. Me and my sister went to live in Winchester we thought we'd go away and try it. And ended up twisting sausages in a factory there. There was someone at the end of the line cutting them like that. Now come on that was really I didn't stay there long. Where did I go from there, Rayovac making batteries.

So you came back?

Yes. Then I had a job in Rayovacs. Somebody said they are taking girls on in Rayovac so I had a job in Rayovac and it was really dirty there because it's all carbon. I was soldering there as well and then I got my sister a job there. I was always with my sister we were like twins, a lot of people thought I was a twin with her and we went to Rayovac making batteries. She was in a little cubicle mixing flour, I don't know what else goes in a battery and I used to solder the tops then. Then I fell with my daughter about 18. You worked till you were 6 months and then you finished. I went back to EMI after. I had to go back to work because I wasn't married I never had family allowance. I had 25 shillings off her father. I did put the bans in to marry him but he felt that he was too young so that fell through. I never had anything.

37:44 So when did you go back to work?

I was out 2 years if I remember. I looked after her for 2 years, it's been a sad tale my life. She called my mum 'Mam' and I sort of took a back seat. I went back to work when she was 2.

Was that something you wanted to do?

I was 21. Yes I think I was glad to go back to work because it was a funny life. I've always worked. I think that why I'm still working now. But yes my mind is fixed I've never felt that someone has had to keep me. I don't know whether because of what happened, I was let down it made me that way. So I worked in Rayovac then and then I went back to EMI, because it's the same firm you see.

Yes

So there was more work in EMI so I started back there at 21.

38:58 Did you go back there to do the same job?

No that was when I went on the motor section if I remember now.

Did you prefer that job?

I preferred EMI.

Yes but what about the job within EMI though did you prefer the second job?

No I wouldn't say I preferred it but I was with the age group then when I went there a second time they were different girls but I met a really good friend; she's gone now love her and she was such a wonderful friend to me and you don't forget that. I always used to tell her and she'd say how do you say that Pat I've only ever talked to you and tried to. But I found that was great. It's not for what people give you is it, I don't think. The support she gave me I'll never forget that. I fill up when I think of her she was really good, she was married. I made some good friends on the way through my working life I never forget and like I say who I meet now.

40:19 What do you think the work gave you in a way, when you went back there a second time did it give you an independence do you think?

Yes I've been too independent through my life. Joyce my friend always says; Pat you've got too much pride and that, I'm not now I'm willing you come from life like that. I always remember my brother saying he's dead and gone now. All the talk about the pits used to get my hair off. If I was a boy I would have had to go to the pits it's your gender that puts you where you are, you didn't have a lot of choice, there wasn't a lot of other jobs. It was factories for us and you helped out.

41:18 But it gave you a measure of independence?

Yes I don't knock it it's been my way working. I made my living I've never made mega but I've made my living and I'm proud of that. I kept my daughter on that. I lived on pocket money until I was 29. I've never said that to many people but I did.

You were still giving your mum..?

Yes. Then I married Maureen's brother then when I was 37 that didn't last long but I come into a good family they've always stuck by me, I've made friends with them.

41:56 How long were you in EMI the second time?

9 years. I finished for a dispute there.

What was the dispute?

They were all drinking on a Christmas they used to have a big break up day and they always used to say not to do it and this and that. I don't think this manager took to me very much and they were all drinking sitting and I stood up and went like that. I was suspended because he thought it was the equivalent to flagging him. What a naughty girl. So he suspended me when I went back and I was worried about that because he told me come to the office when you come back, memories by here. I was worried all over Christmas and I went back and had to go up to the office and he suspended me. Well the whole factory went out on strike because they were all doing it but I happened to be the one standing up. So they went on strike.

43:06 Where were you drinking, in the factory?

In the factory on the day we broke up. Nobody was working actually say you'd work for a couple of hours and then you'd start having a drink and everyone had food with them. They all went on strike for me.

43:24 Do you think that the management decided to make an example of you?

Yes I really do. Because he was a new boss and he was dead against it because he reckoned he had a friend who'd got killed through these drink up days. They are pretty heavy mind these break up days because you end up in the EMI club. There was a lot of drinking done that day. I think it was a bit of an example. they all came out on strike and he had to calm down and he didn't like it.

44:06 So they came out on strike for you. How long were they out for?

Couple of days and then they phoned me that I had to go back I don't think I was on the phone. I think I had a message from the kiosk to go down. I went down and had to go in front of the.. it was frightening. I think my age group are intimidated, I'm not now but i was then by anything in power. I lived by a manager in Blaen Cwm and you did have that respect or afraid of them you don't know. But I remember going down there and he said we are taking you back in Pat and the Union man said you've won the day Pat. So I started back but it was never the same after that.

44:59 Why was that do you think?

It was as if he had me back on sufferance you know. They pushed me around a bit. I don't think I stayed there much longer then.

45:13 You mentioned there was a club at EMI, what sort of things went on there?

Social club it was quite a nice a little club at the top end of Treorchy.

Is it still there?

No it's gone now. They're selling fireplaces there now. Once the contributions go they're not there. They used to always sell tickets, prize money would keep it going and the social money. Everything dies and the work goes.

45:46 Was the prices good in the club?

Yes. I liked the EMI club. Through the week they had all outsiders to go in there. I suppose they had bingo and all things like that going on. Table and all that. I would only go there now and again personally. It was there.

46:15 Was it popular with the workers?

I think it was popular in the Treorchy area because it was a nice looking club.

And did you used to go there?

I'd go there occasionally for a social night and things like that.

46:29 Was it somewhere the girls would go together?

Yes I think we'd go there but it wasn't, I didn't go there on a regular basis because it was used by everybody.

What about holidays when you were at EMI, you told me it was the same holidays?

Yes.

46:48 Where did you used to go?

I remember going in a caravan with a couple of went, marvellous. A battered old caravan, broken door.

So tell me about the caravan holiday?

I think there was about 6 of us went and we went in a caravan. It was alright we thought it was great but it wasn't. To us it was great.

6 of you from EMI?

From EMI. 2 of us from Polikoffs and 4 from EMI. We took all our tins and everything. A couple of bob.

Tins?

You know cans of beans and all that. To stock up so we didn't have to buy much. We were all the same years ago. People shared more, I think it was much better than today.

47:48 Where was the caravan?

In Trecco Bay. Marvellous I thought it was fabulous. We were independent for a bit.

What would you do?

This was before I had my daughter. I don't remember of the club was there then but there was pubs. We used to go up The Ship and Castle. I can remember that song Shaking all Over had come out. Great we used to up The Ship and Castle and play it on the juke box. Lovely memories of that I've got. I love Porthcawl. I still got lovely memories of Porthcawl, that caravan site. I went there many times after me, my sister and that. But I remember that because we were young and it was our first to go on our own.

48:39 What was the relationship like in the factory between the men and the women?

Alright yes. Bit of fun going on you know banter, you've got to be used to banter and some met their husbands there, quite a few. My friends met their partners.

48:59 Was there a lot of teasing going on?

Yes they would tease you but it was good natured.

No sexual harassment or anything?

No nothing like that. I mean you had someone you fancied and things like that. I don't remember feeling any discomfort with anybody?

49:29 What about how the women treated the men?

Just as bad. Women can be I find.

49:31 So did you enjoy working in factories?

Looking back yes it had a lot of good points. The friendship I remember was good. For the work I'm quite good at adapting I learnt that self-control. In actual fact it bored me I always felt I under achieved and I think I did. I was a scholarship girl I didn't do it but it was there. I sort of adapted and looking back the friendship and the people I've met things like that have been very good points in my life. I've got enduring friendships through it.

50:18 Are you sorry you didn't stick on at school?

Not really because like I told you my sister done the full set and she ended up in factories, so I think what's meant for you doesn't pass you. I don't know if I'm a fatalist but you do what you can in life like I'm doing now. You just do the best with what you've got. I haven't got bad memories of it, they're not all great, but life isn't all great. I do remember the singing and you saying about the joking and teasing. Good natured teasing which is different I see malice today. Not then because we were all on the same level. Looking back at that caravan we

shared everything that we took it was between us. I remember trying to make gravy and not one of us could do it and we ended up with Oxo water but we just enjoyed it. It didn't matter we were all the same level it is different today.

51:33 What was the reason you....

Well it was the last one I worked in.

Oh yes you told me about that.

I've made trimmings I've done that seasonal work which is all I could get at one time. I was made redundant, I went back to Polikoffs and made redundant. I was out of work so I made trimmings and then I had a job in Harwin's which I done for 11 years.

51:45 Tell me about Harwin's?

Harwin's was a Portsmouth firm and they wanted to either take it to Wales or Ireland. But there was a Welsh man in it at Portsmouth and he badgered for it to come to Wales. He was very rich the owner apparently he was either the Godfather of Princess Ann's children or she was to his children. But he was very down to earth man you would never pick him out as being so rich. But he was quite a nice man and he opened it up with the help of the WDA in the Welsh something pay a lot of money and I went there and that was very small work. I stayed there for 11 years and I was made redundant at 53 because I was losing time looking after my mother. It was taking a toll on me really and you don't realise it. Until I finished work I didn't realise how low I had got by trying to do with my mother it was really hard going. I went on the sick for a while and they sent for and signed me off for a while. I fought it mind and in the end this man said has anyone ever helped you Pat. I said no I don't think so. Well I had a job then in Ty Rhos at 59 and I had a job down here at 64 so that's not bad to have a job at 64.

53:30 Tell me about Harwin's - what did you make?

Harwin's components for all different parts it was very intricate. What we done wasn't intricate but it was components for lots of different things, microscopic things. But it was quite I used to put little tiny pins in a little black box like that, about 20 little pins and press them down by hand. The noise the men were banging you know on the machine. I went for a hearing test the other day over that. I'm alright though, because it was so noisy.

54:13 Do you think any of this factory work has affected your health?

I've lost 10 per cent.

Of your hearing?

Yes but see they were clever. We worked there about 4 years and then they decided to give us these things to go over our ears. But we didn't have to wear them but we had to sign to say that we had been given them. That was a precaution for them.

54:35 But that was after 4 years?

Yes.

So you had 4 years of noise?

Of that banging. Because yes I have lost 10 per cent as I went for my hearing test, because I thought I'd go and find out because my Grandson's always telling me I'm going deaf as I have the television so loud. I've lost 10 per cent but that's not bad, but you don't want to lose anything really.

54:57 What about other things has your health been affected by other things from your work in different factories?

No I'm pretty strong. My thumbs and that holding those tiny little pins and I know it's that because it's the two I used to pick up with that like that and that swells up now and again. Because you do that pinching effect all day it's bound to.

Like repetitive strain injury?

Yes I think it is because its arthritis but I think that's what effect it had.

55:35 Did you find that when you were doing it?

Yes it used to hurt sometimes and I can knit. But if I knit now that swells here so I can't so a lot of that now.

55:46 Did they used to take account of that when you were working?

No. That's what I was saying they never accounted for nothing.

They do now don't they RSI if you...

Do they?

Yes

Well I had this phone call and they said they had a record that I had worked in a noisy industry and would I come for a hearing test. I said yes I'll come. So I went down to the university in Trefforest. They called me back I done the test and she said you have lost 10 per cent you could claim, but what you claim would only pay the solicitor. So it wasn't enough to claim. She did say I could do it privately but I said no it's not worth it if I have to pay. So I just hope it won't go worse because no one wants to go deaf. It does take a toll on different things it's bound to. I can imagine Polikoffs' girls I wasn't years and years there I done twice there. That dust and all that there I can't imagine a lot of people and the smoking we used to go up that stairs and smoke like anything. Funny I've given that up now 2 years that was hard. I haven't got any regrets really.

57:10 How did Harwin's...

Harwin's was a nice place he really cared about us that man I found him really nice. I was doing this dipping this thing in the solder. He wasn't watching me I've got to say that but he said watch your hands by there. He was quite amazed that I was he most probably hadn't seen it before. They were quite they'd try very hard they wanted it to be a nice an atmosphere, they wanted to look after you and all that. It lasted a good while.

57:49 What was the end product of that in Harwin's?

They were just doing these small components for all different things.

57:57 Was that a smallish factory compared to the others?

It was building up. They actually arranged a bus trip for us to go up to Portsmouth to see the main factory which was a big factory.

Did you go on that?

Yes we had a nice day out and they treated us. They tried to treat us well but no union.

58:23 Was that a condition?

Yes.

How many of you worked there?

Well I went in on the first batch they interviewed and there was no work around here not much. They interviewed loads and i was lucky I got in on the first 12. 12 of us started and then it built up, I think it went into the hundred's. I don't know what happened it that I think it would have been, I was sorry to hear that it had gone.

58:56 What period are we talking about?

43 I was. I'm 71 now April so that's 28 years ago. I finished when I was 53.

So that's the 80's then?

Yes they done nice area outside had all these lovely benches and seats for us to sit out and they tried to arrange for us to go yes they were alright. There was a difference in their attitude I've got to say. I remember that very well but that wasn't that long ago.

59:35 What was the mix of ages when you were there?

I was 43. The first batch were practically my age with one or two were younger, really younger. It was only 12 it was nice. It's funny being in the beginning of something.

1:00:09 When did you decide to leave there?

I was made redundant.

Right. How long did you work there did you say?

11 years.

What did you do after that?

I was just looking after my mother for a couple of years then which I found hard. I was still living with her at 55. It was soul destroying. I had a little flat then in Church Newydd and it was the making of me. I had my own little door and it was wonderful. I went every day to look after her and then she died and I tried to sell the house at Blaen Cwm and I couldn't so I went back up there with my daughter. Someone from Ty Rhos come there she was buying the house. While you are here are you the new matron in Ty Rhos? She said yes. I was 59 and I said you haven't got a job there. Yes she said you can come in the kitchen so I went up there and I have been caring ever since. I'm down in the old Tin Tiller now. My friend was in the one I'm in now and I'm now only having to look after the 3 where I was working really hard up there and I'm getting older now. And he gave me a job Layton bless him. Because if I had given him a form and I was 64 but he gave me the chance to see him and he must have thought well I think she could do it because do you know what I'm trying to say; is they say your 64 on paper I've done 7 years here and if they had just gone by that paper I wouldn't have they would have thought that I was too old. I've actually done 7 years. I'm hoping to do a few more.

1:02:06 Looking back now you said you are in contact with your former mates is that mostly from EMI?

Yes and Harwin's mind.

And Harwin's?

Yes. I phone my friend from Harwin's we're very much in touch and we go out for a day here and there. We've got our bus passes. We get about a bit shopping mostly. Or Porthcawl if it's a nice day. Porthcawl is nice I still like it.

1:02:40 Looking back how do you feel about the time you spent working in factories?

I look back with it that I made my own living and I'm quite proud of that. I think we haven't been cheated like we could have been as it wasn't easy long hours and we were young. We started off young. It has its ups and down. I look at the companionship with care but I'm angry that we were not looked after as we should have been. That was the best that Harwin's did try at the end, but we were in a different era then. I found Polikoffs was an extension of school. On a Friday everyone got excited you were paying your little bit here, there's your club there and things like that. But there's a strictness you stood up to that bell and you daren't move till the bell rang, don't run.

1:03:54 On the whole looking at Polikoffs, EMI, Sobells the older factories then not Harwin's do you think they were fairly good employers or not?

Yes for that era I think they done the best for what they had. They were restricted the same as us. I'm sure that they could have given us a bit more.

1:04:36 Tell me about what you said you were working for EMI...

I was working for EMI and the Cambrian had the big disaster in the mining pit. So the union of Polikoffs decided to have a women's football team from Polikoffs to oppose a football team from EMI and I remember going in it and I was full back. We borrowed a boys club's clothes and we sold loads of tickets I remember my brother was there with my daughter with the banners loads over there in Caemawr and anyway we beat them; EMI beat them. We all went down to Polikoffs club then and there was ructions. Polikoffs pushing and shoving - jealous because we had won - it was funny you know. I remember that plain and we made quite a bit of money for that. The one I was telling you about my really good friend we had that companionship she kept that photo for years and when she died her daughter fetched it up. It's only a copy but it's out of the Rhondda Leader and I'm in there. When I look it now, it was a nice thing to do because it was a big disaster - the Cambrian.

1:06:11 Do you know why they decided to play a women's team?

For the novelty of it. I don't think it had been before I think that was the first that we had and it did cause you know there were reporters there and everything because it was a beautiful day I remember.

Did you play football?

I was full back in it. But no I'm not a very sporty type but I think I like to be a bit in the lime light. Chaser a bit..(?) I was only 21 init. Yeah I remember that... bickering about who was going to go in there. It was great fun you know.

1:06:57 Do you know how much money you raised?

No. I know they made quite a bit, shilling a ticket or something like that. The beauty of it was it was a beautiful day and everything went well. That bickering in Polikoffs was funny really... It was only a silly little football game you think it was an international.

Do you remember how many people came to see you?

It was packed over there I couldn't say how many. It was a novelty and for a good cause. We had a mining a community it was good.

Did you play football ever again?

No. Oh yes I did in Blaen Cwm once for another.. I don't know where I'm getting thinking I'm a footballer from....

67:50

END OF INTERVIEW/DIWEDD Y CYFWELIAD