ARCHIF MENYWOD CYMRU
WOMEN'S ARCHIVE OF WALES

heritage treftadaeth
LOTTERY FUNDED
ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/ LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI

Poliakoff's garment factory - Ynyswen

Interviewee: **VSE042 Yvonne Smith,**

Date: **7/4/14**

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

0:00:00.0 Could you let me know your names and date of birth?

My name is Yvonne Smith. I was born on the 4th June 1942 so I'm 71

0:00:23.0 Could you tell me a little about your background. Your mother, father and what they did for a living and your siblings.

My mum didn't work actually I think she spent an awful amount of her time looking after my Grandmother because she had a breast off and had cancer for quite a few years. My dad was very unusual in the valleys he worked on the buildings, he was a site manager for a firm who worked out of the valleys nearly all his working life. My sister then is 5 years younger than I am she did training as a nurse in St David's, Cardiff and worked on the district all her working life. Myself I worked in **Polykoffs** in the office as an assistant to the Personnel Officer, married moved away from home moved to Coventry with my husband and we moved back to Neath. My husband worked in the Ford factory in Swansea as a manger and then he got a job in Trefforest as a manager as well we moved back here and I worked for the police force for 15 years as a clerk.

0:02:16.8 Where were you born?

I was born in Avondale Road in Gelli in the Rhondda.

0:02:26.8 There's just the 2 of you

Just 2 sisters.

0:02:31.0 Tell me a little about your education where did you go to School?

Mt education I went to Ton School. I was in School at 3 I don't know if its memories, but I'm sure I remember being put to bed every afternoon to have a sleep on little canvas beds, which I must really remember it. Then we moved to Pentre I must have been about 7 and we rented a house on Pentre and I went to Pentre Junior School. Failed my 11 plus by 1 mark which I was gutted about and went **Bronllwyn** Secondary Modern and from there at 15 I went to the Technical College, Commercial College as they called it as it wasn't part of the Technical College, it was down in Trealaw, in a house we were just women I think remember 1 boy coming as well to be trained and I was there for 2 years and did short hand typing, English. There for 2 years

0:04:15.0 Did you enjoy that training?

You didn't have the opportunities then, if you didn't go to a Grammar School to do O Levels or A Levels in these days. Some of it I enjoyed, some of it I thought fun. You used to skip lessons do lots of silly things but when your 15-16 you do that sort of thing. When I was 17 and newly qualified I had a job in an accountants office in Treorchy and i was paid £3 a week, 5 shillings which they took off me in National Insurance and then they gave me back 2 and 6 for my bus fare. I gave all my money to my mother and she would give me 17 and 6 and she would keep the £2. I remember that.

0:05:35.4 When did you go and work in the factory?

As I say it was poorly paid and I worked there for a year and then I was 18 and one of the girls I was friendly with who lived in the next street actually worked in **Poliakoff's** and she told me that Mrs Farmer who was the Personnel officer and was 2 streets away was looking for a new clerk or assistant. She said go on off you go, knock on her door. I said I can't I don't know the lady. She said she's a lovely lady go and knock. So I went and knocked on her door and I said I understand that you are looking for a new assistant and I have done some work and have experience. She said well come and see me tomorrow and I'll do an interview and see how we go. So I went along and she interviewed me and said right when can you start. I was actually earning I think about £7.50 a week from £3 and I couldn't believe my luck to get a job like that. It was such a difference.

*0:07:05.1 So were there any people in **Poliakoff's** you knew?*

Yes. When I went there were actually, if I explain to you Poliakoff's started up in 1940 with I believe Lord Nutfield through the war effort and originally made uniforms for the troops. It went and I know that were records kept from 1939 or 1940 and they were kept of people who actually were employed-there. I went there 1960 - 1961 and those records were still there of people who were employed at that time. They were hand written records and were kept. They then diversified and they still made uniforms and they made ladies clothing, they also did bedding. I mean before the factory closed it then went in Burberry. That was way after I finished, as it was still **Poliakoff's**. They used to make a lot of men's suits and things like that. The factory itself was partitioned off into different sections. Part of my job every day was to check everybody on the shop floor had to have a clock card and throughout the factory there were clocks. In the morning when they came in they clocked in and when they went at night or lunchtime they clocked out. Those clock cards and the clocks themselves, there must

have been about 10 stations and every day I checked those clock cards. I checked for lateness and if it one's were not there. Then the clock cards were collected in, even sometimes there were 2 reds, which meant they were late, they were also collected in. To get their clock card the following morning they had to see either the Personnel Officer or me. They had to give a reasonable explanation as to why they were late or why they were absent. Very often I can remember Mrs Farmer, the Personnel Officer, telling someone, I think it's about time that you bought yourself a new alarm clock. It was really quite funny what things came out.

0:10:45.7 What would happen if they kept on being late?

They would be giving a warning, within a certain period, I can't really remember off hand, if it was a reasonable amount of time, I got a feeling it was a month or 6 weeks. If there were late a couple of times they were given a warning and then made redundant, you know. If they couldn't give a reasonable explanation. There was a big recruitment drive during that time and you were talking about 1800 girls the factory employed. Not all women because most of the presser were men. There were pattern cutters, most of them were men and there was a packing department and that mostly consisted of men. So there were a couple of 100 men I would have said there, but mostly women.

0:12:04.3 So 1800 of everyone working there?

Yes of everyone working there.

What percentage would you say were woman?

I would have said approximately 75%. Three quarters. The office staff were mostly women as well. The managers were men as they would be, but most the office staff. I can actually remember them taking on a manager who was a woman. She was in the design department of the bedding section. That was very unusual especially in those days. Women became supervisors, the foreman were usually men. It was accepted practice in those days. Women didn't climb up the ladder because they didn't get the chance.

It was a low glass ceiling?

Yes very low class.

0:13:18.3 Tell me then about the first day you went into the factory. Can you remember it?

The girl whose job I was taking over was leaving to have a baby. She was with me for 2 weeks, so she trained me, taught me the job and then on the following week there you are off you go; you're on your own. I suppose one of those things you accepted and fell in. You learnt as went along and a lot of it is experience. Mrs Farmer was a wonderful boss. A lady who never had any children of her own but was kind and known to be a fair manager as such. If any of the factory managers said anything about the girls she would have them up and say now you tell me your side of the story before anything was done. She taught me a lot over the years it was quite surprising.

0:14:47.4 Did the girls on the floor; they found her fair as well?

Yes very fair.

0:14:53.8 How did you get on with the girls on the floor?

Well one of the funnies which I remember, we had 2 nurses, one was the sister and one was the nurse. I was trying to remember I think they were both, one was nurse Rees and the other Sister Rees, and they both had the same surname. The nurse was very little but she was a bossy boots. Throughout the middle of the factory which was a very big building were the toilets. Now the girls every day they weren't allowed to smoke on the factory floor but they were allowed to smoke in the toilets so a lot would have a break and Shelia would say to me off we go. I would say right what are we going to you've got to come with me and tell the girls to go down stairs, they've had enough. We'd be up stairs and there would be a whole area that you could walk through and you'd see the girls scuttling, the nurse is coming, and there'd be rollers in the hair, someone would be doing the nails, they'd all be scuttling and she'd say you need to tell them. No nurse not today and I would be behind her a lot taller then her making eyes at the girls, all be off scuttling. I got quite with the girls it was a different relationship because quite often I was interviewing some of these girls first thing in the morning. When Mrs Farmer she became ill and she left me to do an awful lot of the things and I took charge of the office for 6 months. She was ill and I was just running the office as such. You can't discipline people and be best friends with them as well. It was very difficult. I was friendly with some of them and I'm still friends with them today. Mind the 2 friends I very friendly with now I didn't actual know them that well when I worked at Poliakoff's.

They were on the floor?

Yes they were on the floor

0:17:52.1 Did you find it quite hard to discipline people?

Very hard because I was only young myself but when you have a manger standing behind you that tells you, you've got to do it because what they did then they knew I was inexperienced they would come with me and stand behind me. But it was I that had to do the discipline. You accepted it as part of the job and move on.

0:18:26.4 Describe to me, you spent quite a bit of your time on the factory floor?

Yes i did.

Describe to me physically what it was like, what it looked like, smelt liked, the ambience?

I wouldn't say that there were any particular smells but each area had its own ambience I suppose you would call it. I was quite friendly with one of the clerks in Packing Department, so I used to spend time and say good morning to my friend in the packing department. That was where men worked and everything was packed and left the factory. Then you went further in and there was mostly men doing the pressing. There was then a small department where there were ladies and they were doing hand sewing. Then there were the big long isles where the sewing machines were and each one did, some were trousers, some of them were

jackets, some of them there was a pattern department. So everything was sectioned out basically. The bedding department them went to a small factory because they felt that was there was more involved bigger machines because they had big machines and everything was done on a machine. They were machine embroidering on duvets and bed cover sand things like that.

0:20:46.7 So where was that factory?

That was alongside but it was completely separate and there was a manager on just that department.

0:20:57.5 Did that mean that the factory was even bigger?

Yes it did

Did they take more people on?

Yes and there was a canteen a very big canteen. I remember the canteen manager and I had a friend who worked as a cook in the canteen department. I also remember they used to make beautiful cakes and these pineapple cakes. I'd never tasted any pineapple cakes like those, they were absolutely beautiful. It's that kind of thing that you remember.

0:21:45.2 Talking about the canteen, did everyone use the same one?

Yes. Let me think there was a small part off it where the managers went it was a really big canteen because they didn't stagger the lunch hour everyone and you had a whole hour for lunch, so you had from 12 till1 every day. In the mornings there were approximately 40 buses that used to come to the factory to bring the people in. Lunchtime there would be some buses because obviously if they lived further away they couldn't get there and back. But there were a few buses that would go as far as Ystrad, as they knew that was accessible. Sometimes I would home and lunch and come back on a factory bus. Those buses were free.

0:23:03.4 Did they segregate in the canteen, did everyone sit together, except for the managers?

There were tables and quite long but I suppose it's like everything else, if I sat I sat with the girls from the offices because you sat with you friends and that was the way it worked. You mixed but only to a certain extent. We used to play cards a lot for money in these days, during our lunchtime. I can vividly remember that and there would be arguments to if you weren't careful.

0:23:55.6 What was the price of the food like was it reasonable?

It was very reasonable.

Was it subsidised?

No I don't think it was . I never understood it to be subsidised.

0:24:14.8 Did you eat there most days?

Occasionally rather than most days. But then when I went there like I say about 1961 that canteen was used for a lot of things. They used to have dances and things like that held in the canteen. They used to do, I remember there was workers play time and they came there and they used to have entertainment even on lunchtime for the workers.

0:25:07.3 Who'd arrange that then?

I believe it was the canteen manager who did that all that. He arranged that, I can't remember anyone else saying they had a hand in that.

0:25:25.3 So was it arranged by the factory or encouraged?

Encouraged by them but Mr Lawrence was a manager within the factory so quite probably when I think about it the food may have been subsidised to a certain extent as well. Maybe not run at a profit even. That was one of the things you would look if it was today that don't do anything unless there's a profit. It certainly wasn't done for profit in those days. I can't remember anyone saying about the canteen making money as such. All of the staff that was in the canteen was employed by the factory.

0:26:28.0 What about parties and Christmas do's?

Parties yes, Christmas Do's yes. Now the day that the factory finished the girls always finished, factory finished on a lunchtime and i used to be quite gutted as they all used to go to lunch but they would never pay anyone their pay for them to go to lunch they had to come by 4 or 5 o'clock and they were handed, in those days you didn't get money paid in the bank , you had a pay packet. Everyone was given their pay packets when they came back. If they didn't come back they didn't have their pay. It was kept until after the holidays. You can imagine a lot of those girls were really the worst for wear and you can imagine and i can still see a lot of women and a few men, and those men running for the lives down the factory, as the women were shouting come back here I want to give you a Christmas kiss. You can just imagine that. For myself I used to have to then, once everyone had clocked out I would go and collect the clock cards throughout the factory and sort them put them in number order and then book in whether they were late if they'd been on sick or whatever for that week. I was always the last one in the factory. It was something I had to do before I was allowed to finish on Christmas Eve.

0:28:47.9 So they did the wages then on Christmas Eve?

Usually

0:28:53.6 Were you involved with the wages?

No I wasn't

But you were involved with the hours?

Yes and all the clocks cards that I had assembled, they were assembled I think in numerical order but i would put them into bands and they went to I think about 6 or 8 girls in the wages department who worked out the wages. The foreman or the supervisors would go and fetch their department's wags and pay them out.

0:29:36.7 So there was a handful of them who couldn't enjoy?

Yes

Where would they go then?

They'd go to the pubs and clubs. They'd all go out for lunch

In the day?

Yes. It was either Christmas eve of the day beofre maybe. I think it must have been Christmas Eve because in those days they didn't give you much time off. It would be Christmas Eve, Boxing Day perhaps, Christmas Day and you'd be back the following day.

0:30:13.9 Did they have a Christmas do anywhere?

Yes they used to have a lot more in the factory than the girls in the office ever did. But we did have Christmas do's this photograph I have here is actually a Christmas do that was organised and within the canteen. But we also I believe it was through the union because I know they were really involved in setting up a social club and hits social club was set up they bought an old vicarage. I was actually involved in doing a lot of the typing when the property was bought. I can remember being quite involved in that. I was allowed to do the typing for that Mrs Farmer said I was allowed.

0:31:32.5 What about the noise on the factory floor do you remember that?

Noise yes quite noisy. Noisy in that but not loud noisy but possibly well the machines were going and people chatting

They were allowed to talk?

They were allowed to talk and there was also a tannon system and there was always music being played on the tannon system. Nobody was told off for talking

Did they used to sing as well?

Oh yes

Did you join in?

No, definitely not

Why's that because you were office staff?

No because I can't sing.

Yes quite yes they did used to sing I can't remember anyone having a wonderful voice anyway. You would have a little chuckle as you passed them and it was quite noisy and I don't that because of the tannon system going as well don't think that they talked more than they sang that was the way it went.

0:33:15.5 So What else did your working day entail?

Well I would type letters I checked references, I interviewed late comers I kept record cards for each and every person who was employed.

0:33:53.6 What was on the record card?

There was an entry as to when they were employed what they were doing where they worked if they were late if they'd been reprimanded, all sorts of things. There was an envelope then and of anything needed to be kept it was tucked into the envelope they checked references because very often girls would say they were experienced as it meant a better wage and then you'd check their references and if they weren't right their pay was knocked down. That was quite important.

0:34:50.9 Did you have to dismiss anybody yourself?

Yes a few times

How did you feel?

Well not good sometimes I felt they were rather silly and I didn't feel responsible because it was their life they were being silly about I vividly remember one particular girl who was employed in the office and she was stealing from other girls. You didn't feel sorry for someone like that you just feel rather sad that they've come from a tidy home and they've still got to steal from friends that's one of the facts of life.

0:35:51.1 So were you involved in writing references for people when they went to other employment?

Yes I suppose a proforma type of thing. Mrs Farmer would dictate to me and then as i got more experienced i would do it myself because i knew what to do. It was more of a proforma. They were employed; they were good workers and whatever you just go down that road.

0:36:29.6 Was there anything that you did that you were really sorry that you had to do it?

I wouldn't say sorry but quite frightened about. I was asked or told by Mrs Farmer... we did sick visiting so we would go out sick visiting and I'd get the chauffer to take me so I'd be off in the best car..

So who were you visiting now... the employees?

Yes employees who are sick. There was once twice 2 particular people I went to visits and one of them was in the mental hospital in Bridgend ad I was taking flowers and fruit for these people. They'd been off quite a while. I can always remember going to the Mental hospital

never having been anywhere like that before because I was only 19-20 years of age being locked well not locked but between each set of doors you went through you were locked in and seeing all these people all down the corridor and I on my own. The blinking chauffeur said no you're on your own I'm not coming on there. I said Gee Thanks. I was quite frightened at the time and very glad to come out of there. I felt sad for the person that was there and I don't think, I went a 2nd time to see the same lady but I don't think she ever came back to work. Sad we had very big floods in part of the Rhondda where I was working and I got heavily involved in helping a lot of our people because they were flooded out. We had I think I remember helping to make up parcels of food and everything else which was brought into the factory with the canteen and all these parcels of food were taken out to the people who had been flooded out. That was hard because you feel you want to help more and you can't help one more than another. That I found quite hard.

0:40:00.7 Did the idea come from the top or from the management this idea?

I would have said it was quite probably from Mrs Farmer herself because she was she went to Chapel she was quite a caring woman and yes I suppose most of the managers and a lot of the girls on the factory floor and I do believe they collected money for these people as well, which was divided up and hand out. Maybe it wasn't a lot but it helped their wages because al lot couldn't come to work.

0:40:57.4 So it came from the workers and managers?

Yes quite possibly it was as far as I was aware it was a managing director and that was the top as far as I was aware I don't remember there being a fuss it was the managing director and he was the boss

Who did you say that was?

He was a Mr Taylor and he was a very nice man.

Did he live locally?

I believe in the Vale somewhere

0:41:48.0 Do you think Polyakoff's was a good company to work for?

In the early days yes I suppose they were, they looked after the welfare very much of the girls because there was a surgery the doctor came a couple of times a work so if the girls had any problems the doctor was there so they didn't have to go to the surgery. What I particular remember when the small pox outbreak was in the Rhondda the factory because there was an awful worry within the valley at the times because some of the people who had small pox were put into hospital within the Rhondda.

Do you remember when that was?

Yes 1961. They organised for everyone who wanted an immunisation against the small pox to come and have it done within the factory and i was involved in doing the small pox injections

and I can't remember I think was sticking plasters on everyone and helping the sister was doing one lot and the doctor was doing the e other lot I remember the nurse's name was nurse Howell's and nurse Howell was saying oh stop flapping. But i can also remember some of the girls saying that they couldn't have an injection like that in their arm I'll have to have it in my leg and people fainting. You can imagine all this excitement as everyone had to leave their jobs and come and queue and get these injections. Records had to be kept to make sure they didn't give it to someone twice. Because some would have had it twice if they could. Anything for free.

0:44:17.5 That was all done in the factory?

It was all done within the factory.

That was a huge program?

Yes it was it took a lot of organising and also they organised we also had a problem with TB at one particular point. I had a friend who worked in the factory and hadn't been very well and went to the doctor and I remember saying to Mrs Farmer about it I wonder if we can see and get her the x ray to do the TB here, which they did. Everyone got x rayed who wanted it most of the people within the factory that was a big organisation as well. It was found that we had I think about 2 dozen girls with TB and some of those girls actually were in hospital for quite a long time. My friend was in hospital for quite a long time because of course just at the beginning when they used to give penicillin for TB but they used still keep them in hospital for quite a long time. It was quite a problem and i remember going and taking fruit and flowers for quite a few of these girls.

0:46:13.9 They wouldn't have known if weren't for this program?

No they wouldn't have

Were they all ok?

Yes well I don't remember anyone dying but the one friend I am very friendly with in the village she was actually one of the girls who was in hospital and I know Jean was in hospital for 6 months. There were some there for longer.

0:46:47.9 Did Polyakoff's keep their jobs open for them?

Yes they did most of the time.

0:46:58.3 What would happen with sick pay in those days do you remember?

No sick pay. I got sick pay but I couldn't tell you what.

So no sick pay for those on the factor floor?

No sick pay for them on the factory floor

0:47:24.6 Why did they differentiate between them?

I don’t know maybe because it would have been a very expensive outlay. Maybe the factory run on that kind of scale I don't know it was accepted practice the managers got good sick pay and things. But I can't actually remember as far as i was concerned being ill when you're young you're not as ill as when you get older. But no I don't remember anyone getting sick pay as such.

0:48:25.3 Was the position of the did you get sick pay form the government?

When you gave National Insurance. When you were pregnant you good 11 weeks maternity pay
Not from the company?
No and as with today the kept your job opened and paid you maternity pay within the company you are working. In those days they didn’t it was form the government.

0:49:18.6 Were you aware of the difference in pay between men and women in the factory?

Yes definitely. The men were paid and there'd be perhaps woman working alongside the men they would be paid less.

Do you know how much less?

Not off the top of my head I couldn't but I know they were paid less.

0:49:42.2 Do you know what happened when, were you there when the Equal Pay Act came in?

No that was 1975

No 1970

Was it 1970 no because I finished in 1964

0:50:00.5 You told me about the union

Yes a very strong union

The Garment Union?

Yes the Garment Union

Were you a member?

No

You didn’t have an office union?

No office union

How did you feel about that?

Never even thought about it. It was even suggested i suppose in those days it was just accepted practice. If you worked in an office you didn't belong to a Union. I had quite a lot of dealings with the union obviously through the girls on the factory floor.

0:50:50.8 How did those dealings go?

Always well they were always reasonable because I think especially with Mrs Farmer she was, obviously they disagreed on something's, but she was a reasonable persona and her put look that she tried to come down on the side of the girls. That if there was any way she could keep them that she possibly could she would. She wasn't a hire and fire. I think when you got as many people involved within a large factory like that it takes all sorts there are some people and you've got different kinds of problems that you have to deal with. Some people have personal problems that t You can't very hey smell and then people come and say they are not working with them and that kind of thing and how do you deal with that problem that can be difficult. You can't very well say here is a bar of soap go and have awash it can be very difficult to deal with that kind of problem.

0:52:15.6 Did they come to you with personal problems?

Very often

To you and Mrs Farmer?

Yes

And you could help to sort it?

Well if you possibly could you would.

0:52:33.1 So you'd say there was a good relationship between

Yes very good. I suppose you couldn't solve everyone's problems but you tried to help as much as you could.

0:52:48.8 Were there any disputes while you were there?

Strikes yes.

How did you deal with them?

I don't know I've got to think about that.

Do you remember any disputes?

Yes I do. I remember parts of the factory being on strike quite possibly I remember the pressers which were the men going on strike because they wanted more money. They weren't being paid enough and they were being paid a lot by the hour they were paid. There was a time in motion department within the factory which employed about 3 people who timed everything that everyone did within the factory. But I do remember the pressers going on strike and the union being involved the personal officer Mrs Farmer being employed with that

but it would be more down to the managers on the factory floor. I think she would only sit in as an observer rather than any perhaps sorting and smoothing things over and helping, than being involved in any of the dispute as such. I didn't remember her doing anything maybe I'm wrong not that I remember being involved in anything like that.

0:55:19.4 Was there any present feeling about it when these disputes happened between office and floor or management and floor?

There was sometimes disputes more I think as far as perhaps the wages department were concerned in the office and we would perhaps sort out problems if someone had dispute as far as their wages were concerned. They would come to us and they'd say well I haven't had enough pay and we would sit down and work out and say right tell us what's gone on and show us and what you think and what you got and work it from there. Then go to the wages department and there was a woman in charge of the wages department who would sort it out from them. But that was the kind of situation that we got involved in.

0:56:34.6 Not an industrial dispute?

No not an industrial dispute as such.

0:56:40.9 Do you remember any trips while you were at Poliakoff's?

I do remember going on a trip to London. A whole train full of people they used to command a train and the train would go off London. I think I went twice.

Where would this train start from?

It would start from Treorchy pick people up all the way down the valleys and when you got to London you went your own way and the train would return at a certain time that evening. A whole train full of people I remember that.

0:57:32.8 Who would book the train?

No not at all I wasn't involved in anything like that. I would imagine because was there a social department within I think it was under Mr Lawrence in the canteen and I think I remember a department and they used to organise the dances and things like that to the trips. I do remember that.

0:58:11.9 So what did you do in London?

I've actual got a photograph standing in Trafalgar Square with some other girls who weren't working in Poliakoff's but I'm sure they were on the trip with Poliakoff's standing with my hands feeding the birds. Perhaps going to see a show but I remember much else.

0:58:56.1 It wasn't just Poliakoff's employees then?

No you could invite friends and things as well.

0:59:09.1 Did it happen quite often?

About once a year. It was only a once a year trip

Always to London or other places?

I can't remember perhaps the other women can remember. But I can't remember anywhere except London.

0:59:29.4 Did you pay for those or did they pay?

I must have paid for it or did we get it free or cheaper. I can't remember

0:59:52.4 You were telling me about the social club tell me about that.

It was called Poliakoff's social club. I actually met my husband there. We used to go along and they used to do it was quite a big social club. There was entertainments room where I had gone with a friend, we were quite a few women friends and then this man came and asked me could he take me home because there were lions around that night. I fell for it and here I am 51 years later still married to him. Like i say we had part of our reception when we got married. We all went back to the social club after we were married and that was accepted in those days that all the entertainment and it was all home grown entertainment. Everyone sang you made your own e entertainment you didn't employ bands to anything else. Everyone had a good time.

1:01:31.4 Was that in the Chapel that was bought?

It was the vicarage that was bought

1:01:40.9 Whatever happened to it?

The vicarage is still there but is more or less derelict now. Way before Poliakoff's finished it closed. I think they may have sold it because it was actually owned by the people, I'm sure it was. In those days the girls would give to the social club they paid out of their wages we all did. So maybe thinking about it when we went to London it was Social club that paid for that trip because we were paid for it through our wages and originally the premises were bought I believe they had a mortgage but it was paid out of the wages of the people within the factory.

1:02:52.7 What was the proportion would you say of single women and married women who worked?

There were quite a lot of married women my sister in law worked there for many years. When you got pregnant your job wasn't kept open and you weren't paid maternity pay or anything in those days you had to finish. If you wanted to go back to work then and there was a job there then they would give you a job, but it would quite possibly be something that you hadn't done before. As long as you were a machinist you were offered the job. There was also a training department with the factory run by a lady called Kate, a single lady and she trained all of the girls who came in out of Schools 15 year olds she handled all t hose girls and she handled it with a rod or iron they had to listen to what they were told. It could be quite dangerous, and a friend was only saying this Saturday because we were talking about it. We

weren't classed as a machinist until you got a needle in your finger. It was quite surprising how it was run

1:04:50.0 You know the wages were the paid peace work or were they paid a basic wage?

I believe they were paid a basic wage and then the peace work was timed peace work which was on top of what, which was paid as a bonus. So they had their basic wage and then their whatever they did. As a conveyor they were paid on a bonus but they were all paid the same then if they were on a bonus. So there was always that competition if you like that they kept up because they had more money. It worked

1:05:39.0 How did their wages compare to yours did they get more money?

I think I got more money than them. I don't think you ever really discussed that kind of thing within or on a friendship basis. I can't remember ever asking. It wasn't until I got older perhaps that I said how much money are you on? When you're young I don't think you think of that thing.

1:06:22.1 You said at the beginning that you gave money to your mum, did you continue doing that until you were married?

Yes I did.

1:06:34.4 What did you do with the money she gave you?

Bought clothes with it as all young girls do. Went shopping, went to Cardiff, wonderful.

Did you used buy anything from Poliakoff's, any sales or perks?

They didn't so much make young people's clothes in those days, in my day they mostly made men's suits and uniforms and things like that. I can't remember them making, later on they made ladies rain coats and things like that. Maybe they did but they weren't something I would buy. Because they were perhaps well you're young and you don't have a lot of money you don't go for things that were going to last, maybe to posh.

1:07:40.6 Did you buy records and things?

Yes records definitely Cliff Richards and thing like that.

1:07:53.5 Did you spend a lot on going out?

Yes. I can remember going to Cardiff and going to see Bill Halley and The Comets.

Where was that?

In Cardiff in the Capital. Billy Fury, who else. I don't think I ever saw Cliff Richards, but quite a few shows and I also remember going to one of the cafes in Cardiff and having a meal out which in those days was quite unheard of. Even when we started courting first and taking my husband Cardiff, well boyfriend in those days and him saying I'm not having a meal out,

I've never eaten a meal out. People today don't even think about things like that we lived through a different era then.

1:09:08.6 Are you still in touch with women you worked with?

Yes I am.

From the office?

No one from the office I have spoken to people over the years but nobody I worked with, well the girl that worked in the packing office I was her bridesmaid and we are still best friends, so in that sense we're still very good friends. The other girls I know off the factory floor like I say I didn't know them as well then when they were working on the factory floor as I do now.

1:10:08.3 The girls from the floor often talk about the camerardarie?

Yes

Did you feel the same do you think?

For the girls from the office quire possibly but there was a big comptometer department in their office in those days but we were 3 who worked on our own. There was a secretary to the factory manager who was Jean Browning. There was another girl who was the planning manager's secretary and I. We 3 always met and we had a lot of cameradarie fun together but more just us 3 because we worked on our own

1:11:17.9 So you met out of work?

We met out of work mind we would go as the office staff would obviously have a party of their own and we went Bindles Barry for dances and things like that quite often, I have many photos of that. But as far as going out on a weekly basis maybe more the 3 or 4 of us or whatever, all mostly the office staff we did meet up and get on quite well.

1:12:06.4 I meant to ask you what time did you start work, did you start the same time?

now then when I started the factory used to start at 7.30 in the morning and finish at 6 at night. It was a long day but they had an hour for lunch. Then they altered the time to quarter to 8 and they finished at 5.30. But the office staff would start an hour later which was 8.30 but then because I used to give out clock cards and Mrs Farmer didn't want to do the early morning shift. I used to do the early morning shift most of the time. I used to start the same time as the factory and finish an hour earlier.

So she stayed behind?

She stayed behind yes quite often.

1:13:22.2 When did you decide to leave and why?

I didn't actually decide to leave, I got married and pregnant and left because I was pregnant. Of course i had to train someone else and within the time I was working there Mrs Farmer had died and the lady who was in charge of the wages department, a Mrs Gladys mars was then appointed Personnel Officer and I was told because I was only 20 there were very sorry but they couldn't offer me the job although I had done the job for 6 months and would I train her in Personnel work which was one of things. Became I was married. I was married in 1963 well about a year and half later I finished I was 6 and a half month pregnant. My son was born in 1965.

1:14:33.2 How long did you work there?

About 3 and half a year's because I was nearly 22 when I finished.

How did you feel about leaving?

I suppose in a way quite sad but when your first baby about to be born you are excited about having a baby and moving on to a different life which was the way it went.

1:15:04.1 Did you ever go back and work in a factory after that?

Funny story there when my son was about a year old my husband had his pay and we leaving my mother in laws and he gave me the pay packet and I put it in the top of my bag and lost our pay packet which was, we didn't have much money for the week and I went back to Poliakoff's and I said to Mrs Gladys Mars do you think you could give me a job for a couple of weeks to make up the money. She said of course we can and I left my son with my mother for 2 weeks and went back for 2 weeks and earned enough to replace the money that we'd lost because we didn't have any money. It was the way it went in those days. Other than that no I finished work then and we moved away to Coventry and then back and lived in Neath I went and did some extra training and had a job with the police and worked as a clerk for the police for about 15-16 years.

1:16:40.8 Looking back how do you feel about the time you worked in the factory?

Well I think you remember it fondly you don't remember the mishaps you only remember the funny things. Well I think one of things as well we had how would you describe it, a manager who you would describe as a randy old man these days and he was a nuisance. But when you're young you don't know how to cope with a man like that and I was a girl on my own in an office. Like I say Mrs Farmer would be there sometimes and sometimes she wouldn't be and he would come into the office and put his arm around me. There was no way I could say to him I don't like it. He wouldn't take telling so I'd hear him it was a long corridor and I hear him coming up this corridor and we had 2 doors because Mrs Farmer had one office and I had the other and we had two doors. So I'd tiptoe and go to the one door and I'd hear him coming through the I door and I'd open her door and go out. He say where are you going come back here and I'd say no way you come back in the morning. There was no way he was catching me in that office on my own. Today young people don't have to put up with things like that anymore but that was the way it went in those days. I can vividly remember he used to fancy girls on the factory floor and then you'd hear the girls on the

machines and they'd be singing who were you with last night because they knew what was going on and he take one of the girls out from the factory, he was a married man, but that kind of thing has always gone on.

Yes

1:19:02.2 was there a lot of harassment do you think or the other way round the women chasing the men?

I think men used to enjoy it when they were chased as such. No well I suppose if things did go wrong then we were the department that dealt with anything like that and I could deal with it for someone else but not for myself which is the way it goes.

Can you remember dealing with it?

For other people quite possibly yes and then you would involve the manager whose sector they were on. It could happen if there was harassment involved you're always going to have that when there are men and women working together it's never a perfect world. Not like it is today.

80:20

END OF INTERVIEW/ DIWEDD CYFWELIAD