

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI

**Louis Edwards, Maesteg; The Rubber factory, Maesteg; Cymer Bookbinding;
Revlon, Maesteg**

Interviewee: VSE059 Elizabeth Esther Baitup

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

0:01 *Ok, so could you tell me your name and date of birth please.*
My name is Elizabeth Esther Baitup. I was born on the 5th May 1950.

0:18 *Tell me a little bit about your background, where you were born, your father,
your mother, that kind of thing, what they did for a living. And if you had any brothers
and sisters.*

Right, my mother and father used to live up what is called as the Monkey, (unclear)
called Mount Pleasant, it's not here anymore. It's up on the, you can see from my
window. The mountain up there, there was a pub, and they used to call the pub the
Monkey pub. My father was a miner. My mother wasn't working obviously because she
had us. There was originally seven of us but 2 died as babies which I can't remember
about. And I'm the youngest. I had 2 brothers and 2 sisters older than me.

1:01 *Right, so what about your education. Where did you go to school, primary first of
all and then secondary.*

It's just the Blaen Caearau Junior School up the top. That's no longer there, gone. And
then the Llwyni school I went to and that's it then, which I left school at 15.

1:24 *Sorry you said you used to live in the Monkey, by the Monkey?*
Up the Monkey there were houses up there.

Right. So you weren't living in the pub?
No.

1:36 *You left school at 15, would you have liked to have stayed on?*

I think at that time, it wasn't, I don't know if it was my family or what, but they didn't seem for it so.

1:53 *Were you happy to leave then?*

Yes. Yes.

1:57 *And what did you do after you left then?*

I went to work in the Edwards factory. I started there to be a machinist, with learning but they were short of somebody one day in the department what I was transferred to and it was where the pieces were sewn up. They were ticketed so make sure all the right pieces were together. We pull the tickets off, me and my friend and get them ready for the checkers make sure no strings or cottons on them.

2:24 *When you went there, how did you know about the job?*

I think what I remember is more or less everybody either went there or to the Revlon the cosmetics factory next to it. So just went there down, you hear of people saying "they're taking on" you know, so a few of us went down.

2:46 *Did you have to have an interview or something?*

You know I can't remember. I think we did, yes. I think we had to go and talk. Like I've had an interview since and it's not the same you know. It's just there you just had to give your age and your name, and then more or less they called you, you know and took you on. Because as I've said I've been for interviews since and this is more involved, but then it didn't seem to be. It's more or less when you finish school back in my time, and they took you on you know.

2:23 *So they gave you a job then as a machinist?*

Yes, you train as a machinist. There was supposed to be a 6 week training period.

3:31 *Tell me about that then.*

It was just we would sit on machines and run paper under first of all you know to try to get straight lines on odd bits of material and just getting to thread the machines, change the needles and just practising with scraps of material we were then. But as I say they were short of somebody in this department, and fortunately I was picked and I stayed there and was never moved from there.

4:05 *Did you do your 6 weeks training?*

No I don't think I finished my 6 weeks training, I was just put into another department and that was it then you know. That was the job I was with then you know.

4:21 *Did you use a machine in school at all?*

Yes

4:25 *So you could use a machine?*

Yes, yes.

4:29 *So what were they training you for then?*

Well I don't know, it was just on there just to basically I suppose to see how straight we could sew and that. Because obviously in the school you're going along at your own, for speed I suppose, building up our speed and you know, pressure of the machines see. But as I say I was only on it for 3 weeks myself and as I said I was put into another department.

4:55 *Do you remember what your wages were?*

No.

Nothing? Not training or starting?

No

5:09 *Tell me about this other job then. Take me through the day like what you do on the other job.*

In the morning, obviously the process in the factory, things are cut and they're ticketed to make sure each piece of it is different shades of materials, and they all have to go to the same different batches of material, so they're sewn up, they're stitched, whoever's taking them to the presser, hung them on hangers. We'd have clothes rails, and we'd get those, bring them to our department, and obviously we got to take all the tickets off, they're sort of like machined in. We got to snip, careful how you pull the labels off, make sure they're all the right labels. And whoever's finished off, haven't cut their cotton off, we take all those and we give them to the passers as they were called then where they check and make sure the stitchings right and they've been pressed right. And after that we take them into what we call a dispatch area where they'd fold and box them you know to be sent to the shops. But we'd been doing that all day, you know repetitive, things like that.

06:32 *So the garment would be kind of finished?*

Finished yes. But if all the threads everywhere if somebody hadn't you know, then we'd trim off. And sometimes then we'd check them if they were, well we knew what we were looking for, no were flaws in the materials, badly stitched, stitching opened, buttons not finished, and if the checkers who passed them weren't right, we'd take them back to the pressers. And wait for them to press it to take back, or if the buttons weren't sewn on properly or not enough space on them you know they're gaping, and we'd have to take them back then to be done, which people weren't amused at then you know because we'd have the brunt of it. "No it's not mine, it's not mine, how do you know it's mine". Because obviously they're numbered, and you know somebody has say 1-50 then it's theirs, but sometimes the tickets off and you don't know, and they're doing it and it's not theirs.

07:37 *Were they on piecework then?*

Yes. Yes.

So it added to the irritation?

Yes.

07:48 *So could you do piecework?*

No we were just paid whatever we were paid.

07:56 *So you weren't paid a bonus for anything?*

No, sometimes if the area did well, he'd give us a little bonus the manager you know. If hes in a good mood he'd say there's an extra pound, that sort of thing.

08:21 *What time did you have to get in in the morning?*

I don't know.

08:33 *Do you remember how you went to work?*

On the bus. Say it's 8 o'clock and it used to be til 5. Then something came in and we'd finish a bit earlier and we were landed with that.

08:49 *Did you get the bus from the Monkey? What was the real name of the pub Monkey?*

Mount Pleasant was the place. I can't remember the name. I lived up there but I went to live with my granny then. I was living in Hamilton Terrace.

09:20 *When you were working?*

When I was working yes.

09:24 *Do you remember how long it took you to get to work?*

It was only about 15 minutes.

09:32

And you catch a bus down to Maesteg?

And down to Maesteg. It would take you straight to the factory. It was the factory bus.

09:40 *So did you pay for that then?*

Yes. We'd have to pay for that. You'd have a weekly ticket, it was cheaper then or you could pay every day and I don't even know how much it was.

09:54 *Did you have to clock in and out?*

Yes.

10:01 *And do you remember what breaks you had?*

I think we had a quarter of an hour break or it could have been a 10 minute break in the morning, say half hour for dinner. I don't think we had one in the afternoon, not that I can remember. Might have but I just can't remember that.

10:26 *What time did you finish?*

5 o'clock. But something came in then or was there half an hour earlier we finished. I can't recall but I remember there was something, and I can't remember.

10:48 *Was it hours of work?*

Hours of work something were cut, but what I honestly can't remember.

10:58 *So going by what you've said, you started working in 1965, is that right?*

Yes.

11:07

What did the factory make, the end product?

It was dresses for Marks and Spencers.

And it was all dresses?

All dresses yes.

11:15

And all for Marks and Spencers?

As far as I know all for Marks and Spencers.

11:20

Did they ever come round to the factory to buy or check?

I can't remember anybody. I can't remember.

11:36

Were there any members of your family, or neighbours or people you knew working at the factory when you went to work there?

No, no.

11:45

What about people from school?

Only my cousin. She started the same time as me.

11:59

How did you feel about that?

Alright because obviously when you're starting especially young as we were then, so we kept close together. But obviously then in a factory you get more people. There was me and my cousin started because we were the same age you know.

12:19

Do you remember anything about that first day, walking in there or any memories of how you felt or something on that first day or the first few weeks?

I'm trying to think now. Nervous I think most of all. Don't know what you're going in for, and you're walking through and there's all faces. But that's about it then. I think once we were there then and in a crowd it was alright. But we were all nervous, I'm not sure but I think there was 10 of us that started. Only my cousin I knew but of course we all sat together for the breaks.

13:14 *Were you all the same age?*

Yes all school leavers. Because that's what they used to do, the factories then, it was all school leavers that they took on.

13:24 *Do you remember what time of year it was? Do you remember when you left school did you leave at the end of the year or did you leave as soon as you could?*

It was as soon as I could because I think it was, maybe July or August time, from what I can remember. Because I know I could have stayed on til the September, I can't remember how it was, but they finished us a few weeks before then and started there then so I would say it was July/August.

14:10 *How many of you worked there do you think at Louis Edwards, when you went to work were but the whole factory, do you know how many people?*

No.

14:27 *Do you remember what it was like the actual building the factory, I knew you said you felt nervous, but do you remember what walking in was like, what kind of building was it?*

I can't remember. I can remember inside, but the outside I can't.

14:57 *Tell me what it was like inside.*

I know you go in and clock in and there were cages (unclear) because as you go in my department there was a cage, like wire caging that kept your department, they used to be in bands of machinists, there was to be about 4 bands and a supervisor on each band. And there were 4 lots of different areas. A pressing area in the centre, up the top there was an area where they sew the buttons on. There was another caged area where the cutting department was, cutting gout material for the dresses, there was another caged department holding all the zips and the threads. So like cages.

16:00 *How did that make you feel the cages, did that make you feel a bit strange?*

No I don't know because I'd never seen anything before and I thought that's the way things are. And where we were caged off but there was doors in to another department where they used to pack the dresses and that, and all the machines to cellophane them to send them off to the shops.

16:24 *Were you mainly women working there?*

Mainly women but there was a lot of men, the men were the cutters. But there was a one man was a machinist he was the one that was training us. I remember his name too, Philip.

16:48 *So was he the only machinist?*

Male one yes.

And were all the cutters men?

All men.

17:00 *Would you think there were more women altogether in the factory?*

Yes.

17:11 *How did you feel about working in the factory when you'd been working there for a while?*

I didn't mind it. I suppose you go with the flow of things. My friend that was working in the same department, we just got on with it then. Sorry I can't think of anything else.

17:47 *So it was ok?*

Yes.

17:49 *And how did you find the work?*

The work was alright.

Did you find it boring or repetitive?

It meant we sort of couldn't move around a bit because as I say we had to go to different departments to take things back so you weren't stuck in a place. But the only thing, we had the brunt of, it was up to us to take them back and we'd have the back lash of it. That was the only thing.

18:24 *Did that last on or was it said?*

It would go then. But you had a dread, somebody would say take these back now, take so and so the buttons, and you take them back and some were alright better than others and some you'd have an earful. It's not our fault, we were told to take it.

18:50 *So was there some people you dreaded seeing?*

Yes. It's the same in a restaurant, if the meals bad it's the waiter or waitresses that get the brunt not the cook, they have to sort it out. And unfortunately that was with us there.

19:09 *Did you enjoy the work on the whole?*

Yes. Yes. And the company, we were in a nice little group there.

19:22 *Did they play music while you were in the factory?*

Yes there was music. Not all the time, only a certain time, they wouldn't play it all the time.

19:35 *Were people allowed to talk?*

Yes yes.

Did people sing to the music?

Well we did.

19:50 *Was that something you could do because you were moving around? Could you talk more maybe than the rest of them?*

No, again it depends. Some don't like it. How can I say, there was a supervisor there and she'd try playing me and my friend against each other, if she was in a bad mood. One day she'd be praising me up, "oh Esther's this and Esther's that" and then "Gleny's is this". She wasn't very nice that way she tried playing us against each other. But nothing we mind, we knew what she was. She didn't like us laughing or having a laugh.

20:53 *So did you always work together, the work you did was it mostly stuff you did together?*

Me and my friend yes.

21:04 *When you had to take things back to the women did you go together?*

No we had to go on our own and have the backlash. No we would share it out, she'd go sometimes and I'd go other times.

21:25 *What about the kind of women that worked in the factory, were you all young?*

No it was a mixed age. Cos there was one, Betty Bird her name, I'll always remember her. And she'd always wear 2 suits, a summer suit and a winter suit and that's all she'd wear. She was very elderly she was and we'd go to her and she was lovely because like she used to then, me and my friend buy us a little Christmas gift, give us chocolates or something cos she appreciated what we did. And yet you get some completely the opposite, but they were all ages there.

22:18 *Was it mix of married and single women?*

Yes yes.

22:24 *What about women with children could they keep on working there?*

I'm not sure, I suppose so if they have someone to look after their children.

22:34 *You weren't aware that people had children?*

No.

And they didn't have any childcare facilities there?

No not then no.

22: 47 *Do you remember if you used to have pay rises at all?*

Yes, yes. How much I don't know.

23:00 *Was it annual?*

I can't remember. But I know sometimes he'd give us a bonus, the manger would give us a bonus and we had, I don't really know how much but we were landed at that. Now and then he'd come around and work was you know looked good, and he'd say give them a bonus. So we'd have a bonus, not many times but sometimes we'd have a bonus.

23:39 *Were you aware of what other workers were paid? What I'm trying to ask really is were you all paid about the same or were you aware that some people were paid more or earnt far less than you?*

Yes I think we were on the lowest me and my friend. (Unclear) What's the difference I don't know.

24:05 *Would the machinists?*

Yes they were on piece rate as you say. They would earn a lot more the more they did then. And obviously the ones cutting out and the patterns.

24:22 *Did you give your wages to your mother?*

No I was living with my granny I was. What I can remember I think I just gave her £3 a week.

Bed and board?

Yes.

24:41 *What did you spend your wages on?*

Clothes mainly. I never used to go out, obviously I didn't used to go out then. But I did buy myself a sewing machine. And I started making my own clothes and although I worked in a sewing factory I just (unclear) on the machines a couple of weeks but I taught myself. I did a bit in school but so I used to make my own clothes then you know.

25:10 *So were you allowed to use the sewing machines at the factory before you got your sewing machine?*

No not for personal no.

25:23 *Were the machinists allocated their own machines?*

Yes they all had their own machines.

25:35 *Did you say you didn't go out much?*

No not then, as I was only 16.

What about later on?

Yes, I think I was there about 3 years. I started going out when I was about 17, 18 then you know. Going to the club with my friend from work and that's it.

25:59 *Was it a factory club?*

No no.

A club down in Maesteg?

I think they did have social club there but we didn't join it.

26:13 *Were there any perks from working there?*

Yes you could buy clothes, their seconds, you know cheap.

26:20 *And did you?*

Yes, yes. They were obviously doing them for Marks and Spencers so used to buy some dresses then. That was a good perk that was.

26:35 *Were you aware of any pilfering going on in the factory?*

No no.

26:43 *Were there any trade unions in the factory?*

I can't remember.

So you weren't a member?

I can't remember.

27:03 *Did you have to wear a uniform to work?*

Not as such but had to have an overall. They'd allocate some but I think I bought my own nylon overall.

27:20 *So they weren't given to you by the factory?*

No no.

27:30 *Was the work dangerous in any way?*

No.

27:34 *What about the rest of the factory? Were you aware of any accidents?*

No, not that I can recall.

27:48 *What about heating and lighting? Was it well lit?*

Yes.

27:55 *What about heating? Was there any issues with it too hot or too cold?*

No I think it was alright there, different to last one.

28:07 *Was it very noisy?*

Yes it could be especially if you were by the machines.

Was anybody given any protective headgear?

No.

28:28 *What about the other facilities, toilets, changing rooms, canteen?*

They were good yes.

28:37 *Tell me about the canteen then.*

The canteen was a fair size. You'd go and get served, think it was reasonable, used to have breakfast toast and cup of tea, cheap.

Was it subsidised?

Subsidised yes.

28:57 *Do you used to eat lunch there?*

Yes yes, it was usually egg and chips.

29:08 *And did everybody use the same canteen?*

Yes yes.

And management?

I can't recall management being there offhand. Don't know whether they used to go out for lunch type of thing or have their tea taken up to them.

29:26 *What about the toilets and any kind of rest rooms or changing room, were they ok?*

Yes they were always cleaned, they always had 1 or 2 permanent cleaners for the toilets and the rest.

29:47 *So was the factory itself quite clean?*

Yes yes because they would have a man, Day his name was, and he'd come round with this cleaner, all around.

30:01 *Did that go on all day?*

Yes because he'd be in different parts. Every time the factory closed everything would be covered in paper, everything would be covered you know. Even up over head things would be covered over.

30:25 *Everything would be covered by the end of the day?*

Yes thin sheets over them.

30:31 *Did the machinists have to clean their machines?*

I think they used to do that. I don't know if they did it every day, I can't remember. But you'd have stop fortnight as they'd say then, the whole factory closed down so you really had to cover them, like a sheet of paper overnight or something but really when the factory was closed make sure everything was really double covered then you know.

31:00 *So what did they use then to cover?*

I can remember a very large sheets of paper, I can remember the paper cuts and sellotape them down so they wouldn't blow off.

31:10 *Did you help to do that?*

Yes we had to do that on our department with clothes see.

31:17 *So you all had to do your own?*

Your own yes.

31:28 *What about the smokers? Where were they allowed to smoke?*

I think it must have been in the canteen.

31:40 *But not on the floor?*

No.

31:50 *What about the relationship between the men and women, was that ok?*

It seemed to be, we didn't have a lot to do with the dispatch department. There was a man Lyndsey and somebody else, they were alright, you could have a laugh. If we had to go to get zips for somebody, somebody will ask us to go in the stock control and there's a man there and they seemed pleasant then you know. You could speak to some and they can huff you off you know.

32:32 *Was any kind of harassment then?*

No.

Either way?

No.

32:43 *Ok holidays. Did you have paid holidays when you were there?*

Yes yes.

32:54 *When did you have your holidays?*

I'm not sure. The miners fortnight as they called it, more or less everything around here was the miners fortnight.

So the factory would shut down?

Yes.

33:15 *Do you remember where you used to go on your holiday?*

Just stayed at home.

What about day trips?

No.

33:32 *What about bank holidays? Did you get bank holidays as well?*

Yes yes.

And Christmas holidays?

Yes you'd get paid for those, yes and off yes.

How long were the Christmas holidays then? Do you remember what days you used to have off?

Usually it was only the Christmas day and Boxing day, just the basic ones then. You'd work to have the week off in the last factory I worked in but there I don't think it was so it was just the basic.

34:17 *Did you do any overtime?*

Yes.

34:21 *And when did you do your overtime?*

It was sometimes they'd ask us to work an hour on in the night, might be all the week if we were lucky or might be one or two nights if they wanted to get something out they'd ask us to work on an hour.

34:36 *Did they used to ask you or tell you?*

No ask us.

And did you used to take it out?

Yes. We were landed with the extra money.

34:47 *Was it only in the evening or did you do Saturdays?*

No I don't think it was the weekends that I can recall, it was just the evenings because I think on the weekends they'd have to pay you time and a half or something like that.

35:01 *So they paid you the same rate in the evening?*

Yes I think we'd have time and a quarter or time and an eighth, something like that.

35:13 *Tell me why do you think the bits of overtime would come up?*

It's because they had to get an order out mainly. There's a big rush for something and a certain amount had to get out, it had to be in the shop the next day and we'd work on to make sure it is. Because there's a van waiting.

35:41 *Was there any shift work in the factory?*

No.

35:53 *About the social life, was there any social activities organised by the workers that you were aware of?*

No there was a social club or something and they'd pay into it every week and they'd go away on a day trip or something like that and at Christmas maybe they'd go somewhere but me and my friend weren't in that so we didn't join that.

36:23 *And you didn't go to any Christmas parties?*

No, no. Sad isn't it.

36:37 *When did you decide to leave the factory and why?*

Because I was getting married.

36:46 *How long were you there for?*

Think it was about 3 years, just over 3 years. I think was 19 going on 20 getting married, 19 I think.

37:05 *And did you leave when you got married rather than when you were expecting a child?*

Having a baby I was then see.

37:15 *So you left when you were pregnant?*

Yes yes

So how long was that? About four years?

Yes say about that yes.

37:28 Did you go back to work in a factory then?

I did after I had the baby. I worked in Cymer bookbinding, a bookbinding factory. It was temporary work for the catalogue season it was, and that was shift work and I think I worked there for 6 weeks for the catalogue then finish. Things like that it was then. The bookbinding that's not there anymore now, because I know after I finished, then it moved to (unclear) and it closed again there.

38:17 So how old were you when you went to work there?

I was 20 when my daughter was born, so 20, 21.

38:28

So you could work shifts there?

There was shifts because I was early mornings and afternoons doing that.

38:37 And what exactly was your job there?

The girl I was with by the machine she was feeding the machine to sew the catalogues together so I was feeding her the work and palletizing the catalogues when they came out. So palletizing I was mainly and providing her with the (unclear) for her to do the catalogues.

39:10 How many hours a week were you working there? Was it part-time or full-time?

It was full-time for the 6 weeks for the catalogue season.

39:30 So why did you go to work there then?

I'm trying to think. No I didn't leave Louis Edwards when I was having a baby, it was when I was working there, sorry I got mixed up.

40:04 You started working there while you were working at Louis Edwards?

After I worked in Louis Edwards but I was having the baby and I think I finished there then because I was having a baby.

40:17 In the catalogue place?

In the catalogue place, in the bookbinding place, not just catalogues, it was books and everything. And I went back after I'd had the baby, for 6 weeks at a time doing the catalogues because I'd been there and I had shift work there then.

40:36 Do you remember what it was called?

Just bookbinding, Mr Freeman was the boss. Funny you can remember certain things.

41:02 Do you remember what the shifts were?

I can't remember, 3 til 10. And it was early mornings 6 til, I can't remember but I know it was shift work I did.

41:40 *Were there many of you working there?*

There was quite a lot working there, how many I don't.

41:48 *Again, was it a mix of men and women?*

Yes there was a lot more men I think than women or it could have been half and half, but quite a good mix there.

42:02 *So it was quite a big factory then was it?*

From what I vaguely remember. And of course after that for nearly 20 years I worked in Revlon. It was Revlon when I started there, but of course it had 2 changes and of course then it went bankrupt.

42:22 *So tell me about Revlon then? When did you go to work there then?*

I started there when I was 38, so that's 1988. And I remember when I had my interview, and he told me I was a bit old to be starting working. But that was evening work that was, 4 til 9 part-time work. At first when I started there, I was laid off, worked up til Christmas, laid off. And after about 3 years then I was taken on full-time evenings. Then I went onto night shift for 6 weeks. So I did a lot of shifts there. Then I went on to day shift. Then I went onto days and afternoons. Then I went to back onto day shift then the place closed.

43:41 *Was the factory going all the time then?*

Yes.

43:46 *How did you feel about working shifts like that?*

I didn't mind at all. At first I thought I only wanted evening shift, it suited me. Then I went to days I found it alright.

43:58 *So you wanted to work evening shifts?*

Yes when I started there yes.

44:04 *Why was that can I ask?*

I think when I started the evening shift, I had my daughter because I divorced when she was about 2 and I was on my own so only evening shift what I could sort out then. So went on the shifts, but I didn't mind the shifts.

44:37 *So who helped you look after your daughter when you were working shifts?*

She was older then, how old would she have been then.

44:54 *She would have been 18 then?*

Yes. So she wasn't young.

45:03 *So there wasn't a problem looking after her?*

No. because she was older.

45:10 *So what did you do in Revlon?*

All different things. I could be packing, I could be filling the bottles, labelling the bottles, palletizing, I did everything there. Examining things, labelling, filling, packing, everything of the products. Even putting the compacts in. Well in the end, last going off, we had to put the reels of labels on and everything. They were trying to get us to do the mechanics job. When I first started in Revlon I was working in the aerosol department, and I used to fill cans, and there was one line you had to jump over puddles of water, it was awful dangerous. We could have slipped and broken our necks. Because whether the big tank of water was leaking, we had to jump over it. And the cans used to under water to check for leakers and that, they used to be on a big conveyor belt, but it wasn't covered in. But if there was one with a hole it would explode and be like a rocket going off and we'd all be ducking and diving.

46:48 *What were you filling the aerosols with?*

Deodorants and that in the cans. Looking back, that was when I first started there, because some wouldn't go into that department. I had another friend who I used to travel with in a car, she'd be awful afraid. But you literally did because they'd shoot out of this big bath of water like rockets going. You'd be ducking like this. Really dangerous.

47:25 *Was anybody injured when you were there?*

No, how I don't know. And the perfumes then, you'd have a big sink of boiling water, you'd have a big tray, iron cage, and you'd plunge these bottles in to see if any gas was leaking to see if seals were alright and how somebody wasn't scolded I don't know. Really dangerous

47:51 *So you used to do all this different work?*

Yes.

And you used to work on the line as well?

Yes.

47:58 *Do you remember what you were paid when you worked in Revlon?*

Perhaps about £80, let me think.

48:22 *What did it feel like? Did the money feel ok?*

Yes.

48:28 *Did you feel you were well paid?*

Yes. I did. As long as I could cope then it was enough. And before that I was bringing my daughter up and I was on social security and it was bare money. I was there, to me it was double the money I was having so I could get on a bit with my life.

48:55 *Did you enjoy working there?*

I did, I think I was the only one who did. I'm sure I was. I was happy when I was going to work. You'd hear them say "I wish the place burned down" and all this and that. But I enjoyed it.

49:14 *Did you know people there when you went to work there?*

Yes.

49:19 *Did you have to have an interview?*

Yes I had an interview yes.

What did they ask you?

Mr Ritzo I can remember him. I can't really remember.

49:40 *Did they ask you what kind of work you had been doing?*

No. I think when I heard they were taking on because I knew someone there, and she'd seen this Mr Ritzo to arrange this interview for me so I think with that I more or less had the job. So it wasn't a kind of will I, wont I. It happened then, I think it still happens today. So it was only a part-time job in the evening, I don't think he asked me a lot of questions and about what I can't remember

50:33 *Was there a good gang of women working there do you think?*

Yes.

Did you make friends there?

Yes. A lot of enemies too.

50:47 *Did you used to go out with them socially?*

Yes some did. Because we had the group, I suppose you get your little groups. It was alright. I would say the majority of people there I wouldn't like to socialise with.

51:13 *Why was that?*

Well a lot of people couldn't do the work, and its not fair then you're struggling and you've done your work and you've got to stop to do their work. Because they're sitting there yapping and some don't care if they do the work or not, as long as they get paid and that's it.

51:36 *Were you on piece work?*

No not there no.

51:42 *Was there quite a bit of animosity in the factory then? Did people not get on?*

Yes with a lot of them. The majority you could work with. There was one little incidence, if you're having a baby you can't pick a cup up because they're having a baby. And these people cottoned on to this. And (unclear), because workwise health and safety were there, and you couldn't pass a red line if you were having a baby, because of where you're filling the perfumes the fumes, so you can only work down the bottom of the line. And there was jobs where they had to sit on their own, well a lot don't like that because

they like to yap and they don't like the jobs on their own. But they'll go up there all day and talk to somebody up there though, they're not supposed to be in that area but they can go up to do that, or that can't lift this, so they take advantage. But they're not supposed to go up there but they'll go up and talk to somebody or don't like the job because it's there. There was one incident, a girl was having a baby was doing a crossword on the line. A crossword. All her work was coming down to me and all the others, and nothing said. She was having a baby and it was if it was a disease.

And there was some that would sneak out for a cigarette. You're only supposed to have (unclear), and they'd sneak out. And they'd be gone then for the duration and you've got to try and do their work. And they'd come back in then and you'd go to the toilet, where have you been, you've been to the toilet, washed your hands come in, in and out but they can go for so long.

54:02 *Was it badly managed then?*

Yes.

54:05 *Why do you think it was so badly managed then?*

I don't know. The last manager we had I think he was besotted with blue eyes and blonde hair. We had to wear hats, these mop caps that covered all your hair. But the blonde blue eyed ones could have all their hair coming down like this and he'd say not a word to them, I was there one day and a wisp of hair must have come out and he went to shove it back in and the one next to me had all her hair out.

54:52 *What about the supervisors then? Were they any good?*

No.

54:57 *Were they local women?*

Some of them yes, not all of them. Most of them were local.

55:10 *Did it have a name for being badly managed?*

Yes. Think most of them would say.

55:15 *And was that over the years?*

Yes it must have been over the years. I'd work almost every weekend, I'd go in Saturday morning perhaps we'd start at 6 o'clock and I'd gone in, and the line leaders are in the canteen and we're waiting to go in and they're in the canteen. By 7 o'clock we hadn't done a stitch of work. And one week we went in to work the line but one of the line leaders who was supposed to have set the machine up but he'd been on the razzle the night before but he set it up all wrong because he'd been on the razzle. Bit of a hangover and done things wrong. All morning and no work, we were paid time and a half for that.

56:09 *You weren't suffering wages wise?*

No.

56:12 *But it was irritating? Frustrating?*

Yes.

56:18 *What kind of employers were they Revlon?*

Well its gone on since I'd been there. There's the ones you can have and not. But I don't understand.

56:36 *Was it unionised?*

Yes.

And were you all in the union?

Yes, all in the union.

56:45 *Were there any disputes there?*

When you say disputes?

Strikes?

No.

57:00 *Or possible or near strikes?*

There was something and I can't remember what. But I can't understand how things got the way they did. I went into work one sat morning and this girl went out the toilet or went out for a cigarette, she went out at 7 o'clock and she came in at 8:15. We had to run the line without her, obviously the work wasn't getting out as fast because we had to stop. Beautiful day mind, she didn't realise the time. And get away with it. Things like this you know.

57:53 *And there was nobody checking?*

No.

58:00 *So what happened to Revlon in the end?*

I don't know what happened with that. It was taken over twice. Cozy was the last one, I'm not sure of the other one. Or it was Cozy and someone else took it over.

58:18 *Were you there when it was taken over?*

Yes.

58:21 *Did things improve?*

No

58:25 *Did they keep the same management?*

Yes. Probably if they had a shake-up. When you take something over, have a good shake up, look at the work record. There in the factory if you were off sick you got paid full wages. If you were there 20 years, you can have 20 weeks full wages on the sick, and there was one girl she made sure she had 20 weeks off sick every year. She made sure she had the full quota off sick off every year and that's what they did.

59:16 *That's incredible especially these days. So how long were you at Revlon?*

15 years, without a break. But there was another 5 years before on, off, on, off so they wouldn't count that because I know I got a 15-year certificate. Because they used to do there finally to try to break the sickness, that each year you were there you would have £200. I had it every year because I was never off on sick.

59:53 *So you'd have £200 if you didn't take any sick leave?*

I think it was £200 yes. Its better them paying that out then the hundreds or thousands of pounds they're paying somebody who's taking sick leave

1:00:07 *Did you have a party or something when you left?*

No.

1:00:10 *Did you have a gift from them when you left?*

No because the last few weeks we didn't know whether we would get paid.

1:00:20 *It was shutting down when you left?*

And then I had to fight because you could have your holiday anytime but I always have my holidays at the end of the year. And I hadn't had my holidays. And they tried to say there that I'd had my holidays. Well I did have it in the end, I had to fight for it and keep going back and fore. But there was no party.

1:00:47 *Did you keep in touch with people from first of all Louis Edwards?*

Not in Louis. Only my friend. In Revlon, I say Revlon or whatever it was called last, I think there's about 2 that I phone. But I see a lot because I do a lot of sewing. And I used to do a lot of sewing for people in the factory, well a few still come up to me. Because you know Marilyn, you know her friend Christine Hall, Christine comes up to me with sewing, well Marilyn has started bringing sewing up to me now through Christine, because I used to do a lot in work. The bag lady they used to call me in work.

1:01:52 *Do you see people socially?*

Not from work no.

1:01:59 *What about Louis Edwards, did you feel there was good camaraderie in the factory? Or you were a bit detached from it?*

Yes but there was a nice crowd there.

1:02:15 *Did you think that factory was well run?*

Yes.

1:02:25 *Do you think they were fair employers, Louis Edwards?*

Yes.

1:02:29 *What about Revlon?*

They were fair but it was the management part of it that wasn't.

1:02:39 *So what you're saying is, did you think the management was too lax in Revlon?*

Yes very much too lax.

1:02:47 *And that had an effect on the other workers?*

People getting away with murder you know.

1:02:57 *Can you tell me a little bit about this rubber factory you worked in?*

I was only there for a couple of weeks because of the smell, you had to wash your hair every day because of the smell of rubber.

1:03:14 *Where was that exactly?*

That was next to Revlon, because you had Louis Edwards, Revlon and this, I can't remember the name. But that's all we were doing is trimming the rubbers that go round the window sills of cars. And we had, it was supposed to be a sharp scissors to trim it off. That was you were paid by what you did. Obviously we were training, me and my friends from Louis had finished there. But we didn't stick it out because of the smell. If we were there 3 weeks we just didn't like it there.

1:03:58 *So did you go from there to the bookbinders or the other way round?*

The bookbinders from there.

1:04:05 *So of all the jobs you did in factories, which one was the best?*

The bookbinding.

1:04:13 *Why did you like that better?*

Well everybody worked, you were doing your work, you're not skiving off and somebody else doing your work. You all had to do your own work.

1:04:30 *Did you make good friends there?*

Yes, yes.

1:04:33 *Did you keep in touch with them?*

No. Funny enough the one who I used to work with on this sewing the catalogues as I said, she's going to be my granddaughters future mother in law.

1:04:49 *Are you still in touch with her?*

Yes I see her because I do a lot of sewing for her and her husband. Small world in it how things come around.

1:05:04 *So looking back how do you feel about the time you spent working in factories?*

Well I enjoyed it. Bookbinding was the best because of everybody, like the management there weren't down on you, you had to do your work, everything was fine. Revlon was the worst because of the management and supervisors. Just one incidence this supervisor, well probably he'd have jail for it now, he was chasing this young girl, he was married

with children and following her, she told us he was following her in the car. But they got together eventually and they split up and he had us all in the canteen crying and thanking us all for not discussing about him.

1:06:08 *And he was one of the managers was he?*
Yes.

1:06:13 *What about the rest of the factory, was there any other men working there except for the managers?*
Yes, a lot of boys, men working on the lines as well yes.

And how was the relationship between them?
Great great. A lot of the boys were great.

1:06:30 *Any harassment going on between male workers and female workers, both ways?*
No. Well I suppose you'd get the ones who'd talk, no it was alright.

1:06:44 *No physical stuff?*
No. You just get the clicks you know. It depends if they were short of somebody we'd be moved about. And if I'd go and there's this clicky group you'd sit there all evening, and they'd be yapping to themselves, some would leave you out. A lot of things like that. Why I don't know. Not only me but to others as well. And a lot of jobs were repetitive and my fingers, you know screwing on caps, but somebody will see you do that forever and they won't do it. It got then that you had to change around then because of the blisters I've had And some won't budge, they're not changing. They've got a nice little easy job, yap yap yap. Another instance I was on a line and you'd all move about but one job you're up on your own. There's 2 of you here, 2 of you here, where you could talk but ther's one job you're right up there you can't talk to nobody, nobody wants to do that job. But we all change so we all have a chance. Couple of hours up there and then turn around. But it got then I was up there it was my turn, but this girl didn't want to move, well I don't know what she called me because she didn't want to be up there on her own. You know you'd get that. Everybody's not fair in the jobs.

1:08:26 *Would you say you were unhappy at Revlon?*
No. Things go over my head. I enjoyed going to work, you know I still enjoyed going to work, although there was a lot of harassment there, I still enjoyed going to work. I enjoyed what I was doing. I was paid well for what I was doing.

1:08:50 *Was that your last job?*
Yes. No it wasn't sorry. After I finished then I wasn't working I had to sign on. I started working, cleaning in the bakery down the road, I forgot about that. And I was there for 2 years, and I finished there and it was part-time 6 til 9. Suited me great. I'd clean the offices, and the floors and the changing rooms, and I really enjoyed it.

1:09:31 *And did you retire after that?*

I put in my notice only because they changed the hours. And what it was on a Thursday they changed the hours 8 til 11. Which I didn't like. Because to me once you finish at 9 I've got the day to myself. They changed to 11, by the time I come home its nearly dinner time, the morning is gone. Because on a Wednesday I used to have my great grandson only on a Wednesday. And I asked the boss could I start at half past 5, half an hour earlier, yes, fine. Same thing happened on Thursday then. If I finished at 11, I'd have to wait half an hour for a bus. So I asked if I could finish quarter of an hour earlier, I asked this other manager of me on the line, could I finish quarter of an hour earlier on a Thursday that's all, save me waiting half an hour for a bus. No, and he said there is a reason but it would take too long to explain so I put in my notice for that.

1:11:07 *So going back to the factories, would you say that you enjoyed working there on the whole?*

Yes.

1:11:19 *And was it a good life do you think?*

Yes. Especially in the Revlon, (unclear) it was good money, I worked every weekend, and I'd go on 2 good holidays a year. And that's all I wanted. And it made me, I haven't got a grand home but it's got me more than I got when I wasn't working. So no I enjoyed it. As I said I think I was the only one. There wasn't a morning where I woke up and think though "oh I got to go to work", thank goodness.

72:06

END OF INTERVIEW/ DIWEDD CYFWELIAD