

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI

BSA Tools - Cardiff

Interviewee: VSE061 Gwynedd Lingard

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

DOB: Oct 1934

Could you tell me then your name and date of birth please ?

0:00:09 My name is Gwynedd Lingard, October 1934, I will be 80 years of age in 4 months time.

Right. Tell a little bit about your background then, your parents, your mother and father, what they did, whether you have any siblings, that kind of thing

0:00:38 Right. Well, my, my mother died quite young but had been a very active women in her time. In her youth, she did a lot of sport, running and not very organised - not affiliated sport but local sport. My father's an excellent swimmer and he was in the RAF in the war, making and repairing the aeroplanes. That was his job. I had a very happy childhood. I have a brother who is older than me, to whom I was a nuisance as a young child. But as he got older so, as I got older so we got on a lot better. That all ?

Yes. Did - did your mother, what did your father do, did you say

0:01:24 My father was an upholsterer by trade

Oh, right

0:01:27 And after war he used his gratuity money to set up a furniture business which grew into quite a large scale business, which was good for him. But he retirement, dead on retirement age.

Did your mother work at all ?

0:01:42 Yes, my mother worked – she worked as a girl in a factory, making brushes. And then she married. And then didn't work until such time as the war came around. And then she was called in to the munitions factory where she worked in, in Currans making, moving shells, the large shells that they fired out of cannons and things. Very heavy work - shift work which was difficult for her because we, as children, with my father being away, traveling the country all the time repairing the aeroplanes, it meant that there were either nights when we had no parent at home, and so we had a young cousin who used to come and stay during those times. She was only 13 herself but we got through it. I had a happy childhood, my mother was very jolly , lovable, loving, sporting. She could run like the wind but she never had any training so. My father of course was very, very active too. So I think perhaps it came in my genes that I should do something physical with my life.

What about education then ? Can you tell me about, you know, the primary school, the secondary school, that kind of thing

0:02:50 Right I started off, I began school when I was three and a half, at Ninian Park School because we lived in Grangetown, Cardiff at the time. I went to Ninian Park School until such time as I went, I qualified to go to Grammar School. I must have done quite well in the exam because I won a scholarship which made it much easier for my mother, because there was a grant towards my clothing every year. A big grant so they kept me in school uniform. It was called the Caradog Wells scholarship. I don't know whether it still exists. And then in the Grammar School, I was doing rather well. But I was then beginning to miss a lot of studying that I should be doing because I'd got so involved in various sports, in particular gymnastics. And then when my gymnastic career came – and I was long listed for the, for the Olympic Games. I left school. My mother signed the form, my father hit the roof and I, so I went – I left school then so that I could – I knew I couldn't do the training I wanted for the, for the, to achieve the goals that I had if I had all the homework to do and I was going to be successful at it. And I was not good at losing and failing so I'm afraid it, leaving school was the only answer for me. Not for my dad. And so I went into work then, in Boots the Chemist. They only took Grammar School girls in those days. They were very, very choosy who they took. They only took Grammar School girls and I went there and but then of course, I was training on Sundays and in the week. And then when the training got more accute, as the listing towards the Olympics came and we started off, as you'd appreciate, with a very large squad. And it gradually was, people were dropped out and dropped out and so there were trials and things all the time. So they were gradually screening the whole thing and then it meant that I, that I eventually did then get selected for the Olympics in 1952, which was just wonderful for myself and everyone I knew.

You know, the pride was there. I lived in Grangetown, very much a working class district. And flags went out and you know, it was a, a street collection bought me a gold wristlet watch. You know, it was, there a lot and I felt so proud. And that was lovely. But then the, Boots the Chemist refused me the time to go because it was in August and the rule with them, there's, then was that if you had, if you had holidays, you could not take them in the August period. It was a company rule, which they wouldn't bend in my case and so although there was a lot of fuss made about it. I then, a friend of my mother, eventual mother-in-law, my boyfriend's mother had a friend in her Church who thought he could get me a job in a factory office and it was called BSA Tools. They made scientific equipment and microscopes and all sorts of things there. And I worked in the office there and they allowed me the time off. Not only the time off but with pay, which was quite something in those days – with pay. Because there wasn't the money in sport that there is now, you know. We had to, every time we went to a trial or anything, it was all your own expense. Train fares, new coat to go, my mum had to see that her daughter was the best dressed. So, that's how it went. But, yes, if it hadn't been for one, I think if BSA Tools hadn't offered me the job, I'd have left anyway, to be honest. Because it was my dream and I was, teenagers were very young in those days and it was my childhood dream to get there. And I did. I got to the Games, so that was good.

Tell me, just before we move on, what school did you go to ?

0:06:37 Ninian Park School for infant and junior. And then I went to the, it was first of all called Howell Gardens School and it was a school that had been bombed in the war and so there was only part of it being used for. But there had been a new, a new school built before Howell Gardens, in Penylan. That was to be taken over but the Americans, when the war came, it was used as an American Hospital. And so we, when I went, they were still in the old building (unclear). But by the second year then I went up to the new school in Penylan. And then it was called Lady Margaret Grammar School.

Right

0:07:14 And then I didn't go on to college, of course, because I left from there

Yes, so what, how old were you when you left ?

0:07:20 Sixteen

You were sixteen. OK. So

0:07:20 Well, maybe not quite sixteen, I might have still been fifteen. I'm not too sure about that

So, you were quite happy to leave school then, because it meant that you

0:07:30 Yes. I knew I couldn't do well at schooling. I knew that I was not going to do well in my exams. And the only way for me to do, was to give up some of my training time. And at that

time, although I'm sure it would not be considered a sensible thing to do but it was what I chose to do. So I left school so that I could concentrate on my training and then I did (unclear) but I mean at that time it was a little risky because I'd not yet been selected but I think I thought my chances might be pretty good so

And you say your mother was a hundred per cent behind you

0:08:04 Oh, yes, yes. And my father was too. He never missed coming to see me in competition and things like that - as long as he didn't have work on but, yes, they were, they were very, very supportive parents. My father even built, in his furniture factory, some equipment for me to train on at home. We had a balancing beam across our lounge, that was not far off the floor. When people came in, they had to step over it to sit down. I don't think many houses - where the parents would put up with that these days. And yes, I had my asymmetric bar in the garden. They were very good. (unclear) tie them down but yes, I had lots of support. I was very, very fortunate.

Yes, it sounds great. So you went into this factory - how did you get the job, did you say?

0:08:50 My mother-in-law to be, my boyfriend's mother was in church with a gentleman who -and they had a youth centre in the church and they had asked me if I would go to there and teach them to, you know, do a little bit of work on the mat, with some of the girls that were there. I can't say they were very keen but they did turn out and try. And then I got to know this gentleman who ran the youth club, that was for the youth club. And he knew someone, I don't know who, in BSA Tools and told them about my problem, that I was not going to have a job because of this, you know. And yet it was costing a great deal of money for me to train. I mean, when you we went to the Olympics in those, in 1952, apart from the fact there was rationing and every time we went to train somewhere, perhaps it was Yorkshire, you had to take your coupons, your food coupons with you and that sort of thing. And there was food, there were clothing coupons as well. And yes, when we went over, we were given a blazer, a dress for the walk in, a parade dress - a hat, a bag and a navy blue skirt and a long list of other things we had to buy - blouses, gloves, certain hand bags and it was quite an expensive thing to do. So my parents sacrificed quite a bit actually, for me to get there in the end. And so I was, you know, I was glad to have, to be working because at least I thought I was contributing something towards it. Although, you know, as a youngster like that I wasn't earning a lot in the office.

So you went to work in the office

0:10:24 In the office, yes. I wasn't actually on the factory floor. They were all men on the factory floor and my job was more working from end to end. Because I worked in what they called material control. And so I took a lot of leg pulling every time walked down there. They used to whistle in time with my footsteps.

So what was your work here, you know?

0:10:44 I was a material control clerk

Right

0:10:46 What it meant was, it was a big factory, they made all sorts of things and they specialised as well in – in scientific equipment and laboratory equipment and little microscopes and things like that. I had nothing to do with that other than, when they needed to make a new part, they needed a chit, a voucher to go to the (unclear) stores to get the materials to do that. So my job was issuing these and keeping the books and making sure that the stock was always there, so they, I could, they could order more if it was running down. So it was a very responsible job.

Did you, did you enjoy that job ?

0:11:21 Yes, I liked it. I liked it. The men spoke to me so that was nice. You know, I (unclear) and things and that

Was there anybody there that you knew, when you went work there ?

0:11:32 Only one, he was the gentleman that we used to go around checking on the work and he had been a boxer in his day. He'd won the Golden Gloves competition and my brother had done some boxing and he had coached my brother, so I got to meet him as well. I wish I could think of his name, but I can't.

So, where was the factory ?

0:11:51 It was off Curran Road. It was part of what used to be the unit that my mother worked in, in the war time, when she was making these huge, heavy shells. And so, you know, it was, they had great long, factories free from the munitions factories and it was in one of those. Yes, I, I don't know whether the company still exists. I know that factory doesn't. That particular building isn't.

Did you have to have an interview to get the job ?

0:12:20 Yes. Yes I did have an interview

Can you remember anything about it ?

0:12:25 Not a lot. I think they were more interested in my gymnastic career than everything else, you know. And they couldn't understand anybody so little, because I was four foot eleven, could possibly have been doing what I needed to do. But I mean, gymnasts perform best if they are of small stature actually. It was (unclear) built for job but they seemed to think I needed to be some sort of Amazon, which was not necessary.

So why, you say, there were quite supportive of you, the factory ?

0:13:00 Oh, yes

Why do you think that was ?

0:13:03 Well, I'd like to think it was because they wanted someone in Cardiff to be in the Olympic Games. But I can't really say I know. It might just have been jobs for the boys because this gentleman that had made the request for them to find me a job, I mean, I don't know contacts he had with the company or with whom within the company either, so I don't know. But, yes, they were supportive. And then if I needed extra time off for training, you know, sometimes you were training away and you'd travel up on a Friday and they were quite happy for me to go. So they were very good. Very good. British Small Arms, BSA was for. British Small Arms, that's the full name of the company. British Small Arms tool, tools. BSA Tools

So, was your exact work, then, was it, did you say clerking ?

0:13:54. Yes. Yes. Clerking, clerking that was all. I used to have to walk down the factory to where the steel stores (unclear) running out of something and then the men used to whistle in time with my feet all the way down, you know. They used to torment me. But yes, it was just really, it was not, I suppose it was quite responsible in a way because I had to make sure that all the materials and they were so many different metals and things that were required for the various jobs, that there was always stock there. Not that I ordered the stock, I would pass on the need and someone else would do the ordering.

Right

0:14:25 So I suppose it was quite responsible really and I was the only one doing it, so

Yes

0:14:25 So I was making sure that, making, giving them the notes, you know, to acquire the metals they needed for every job that was going on in the factory. So, I suppose it was quite responsible, I can't say I felt a great weight of responsibility at the time. But I think of it now and if I'd had the wrong metal for a start, I'd have been off, up the road in no time.

I thought you were going to say in for the high jump

0:14:52 (Laughs) yes that would have been a good thing to say. Yes

Did you, how did you feel about the men's behaviour ? Were you, did you find it threatening or ?

0:15:05 No, no, it was all in good fun. They used to, (unclear) they used to whistle de, de, de, de in time with me feet, you know. And however I changed my walk, they would have just (unclear) another one. And they would call out to me, you know, are you coming out with me tonight ? and things like that. But there was never anything offensive or abusive and I never felt threatened.

And there was nothing physical ?

0:15:26 No, no, no. They were very protective of me, actually. I think perhaps because I was little and young, they were very protective. Maybe some of the older girls had a bit more, but not me.

Was, that was a Charlie Chaplin tune, was it ?

0:15:40 Yes,

(unclear)

0:15:42 Back to de, dum, de, da (unclear)

What about the local people working in the factory, that ?

0:15:52 Yes, I think a lot of the people who worked there were local. But of course some the skills were quite acute, because they used to make instruments, surgical instruments and things like that. So, although I'm quite sure part of their work was large scale work, you know, when they came to the intricate, making of things, then they could quite possibly have been shipping in specialists for that. I really wouldn't know. Most of the, all the offices for that factory were upstairs, except mine. Well, I mean I wasn't the only one in it, but the office I was in was the only one that was actually on the factory floor. For convenience, for it's purpose, you see. But I don't think the others came in contact with the, with the men much at all. And there were no women working in the factory at all.

On the floor ?

0:16:40 On the floor,

What about women in the office work, with you, were there women in the office ?

0:16:45 Yes, there women there as well, doing various jobs to do with, you know, with orders and things like that. You know, things that were coming in that needed to be done. But mine was just a small part of that, in that, just making sure the materials were there for them and that they could access them when they needed. And there was a – ohh – what do you call it ? Down the end, like a big forge, where they melted stuff and they'd – I can't remember the name of that

Furnace ?

0:17:17 Furnace. There was a big furnace then down the end. A man fell in actually (unclear), molten metal all over, while I was there

Oh, dear

0:17:25 Didn't find anything of him at all. He just disappeared

Ohh

0:17:29 Mmmm. But I wasn't a witness to that

No. Can you remember your first day at work ? And what your impressions were ?

0:17:41 Well, what the first day in BSA or

In BSA

0:17:44 In BSA. I was very nervous because I didn't know anything about the company or anything about what I was going to have to be doing so I suppose I was nervous in a way. But there was a lady who was, who had been doing that job for some time and was retiring and she was very good. She sort of helped me get to grips with it before she left so it gave me and opportunity for some training with her before she, before I was left on my own to deal with it, you know. But, I think, it wasn't a comfortable office because it was on a factory floor. So it wasn't carpeted or, you know, and it was a bit dirty at the time, because there was a lot of metal dust and so (unclear) didn't have a lid on our office, it went up to the roof. But no, I was quite happy there.

What did, how long did the training go on for ?

0:18:34 It just took about three weeks, I think. That's about it. And then there was a scene that the manager of that had taken (unclear) and was in the side office off our's, so if I'd have had any trouble I could have sort it out then, I'm sure. But I can't remember needing to do it. It wasn't a difficult job

No. But work, do you think, do you feel that you were well trained by then ?

0:18:59 Not really because the lady who did this with me, she made sure that I understood it all. But nobody checked after then, that I was OK

Right

0:19:06 So it you look at it like that way, there was no, well, I suppose you could say they were trusting. So

How about the physical appearance of the building ? You told me how you felt but when you walked in there, what was it can you describe it ?

0:19:22 It was quite dismal. It was like a corrugated building really, with concrete, and concrete walls and things. It was an old munitions factory and I mean, they threw them up in the war because of the need and so you know, they weren't, there weren't any finer points to it. The girls in the office upstairs had it, had it, they had more amenable surroundings. But I can't say I

ever felt that we were neglected in any way. There was a canteen there that catered for us very well. I used to go home for lunch on my bike but, yes, it was, it was, it was a typical dusty, noisy factory.

It was noisy was it ?

0:20:07 Yes, some parts of it were noisy. The end where they made the fine instruments was up our end and that was quiet. But as you went down, it got noisier

What about the smell ? What did it smell like ?

0:20:18 It smelt dreadful when I first went there but I got used to it in about a fortnight and I didn't smell it at all then. Yes. At first it was just a noisy engineering type smell. Nothing really offensive but it was – when I first went by I wasn't too keen. But as I say, you got used to it. It didn't matter

What were the women in the offices upstairs do there?

0:20:41 They did all sorts of paperwork. There was a drawing office there and, because they were designing things, machines, designing the equipment and implements and so on. And so, there were mostly men up there in the drawing office. But there some women there as well, clerical workers and secretaries and so on. And to be honest, we didn't have any reason not to, but we didn't have a great deal to do with them. We could see them in the canteen but we went to, there were four men and three women in, counting myself, in where I was. So when we went for our break, we three were always together on a table talking. We'd speak to the others but we didn't have a lot to do with them

Were there draughtswomen there as well ?

0:21:26 Oh, I think there was one. The rest were all men. Mmm yes. And I think the woman was only really there because she did, there was no photocopying, they had a machine you turned around (unclear) I forget what they called that. It was like a sort of copier machine, but, and, so that they did, the lady that was there did a bit of drawing but to be honest I think she did loads of that sort of thing

So, can you remember how much you were paid ?

0:21:57 No, I can't. I can't. It was only just a few pounds. It wasn't a lot

How does it seem to you, at that age,

0:22:08 Well it was more than I was getting at Boots the Chemist. So I was quite pleased about that. But it really was just junior's rate, you know. I think I was only considered to be a junior although when I look back on it now, it was a fairly responsible job. To get it right, you know

Yes. So what did you do with your money ?

0:22:30 I lived at home. My mother used to put my money aside for me so that I could get the train, you know what I, towards my training and things. And as I say, when I went to the Games, there was a great list of things to buy. So it wasn't, you know, it was an expensive business and all the training, you (unclear). If you had to get there on your own, so you've got your train fare and my mum would never let me go, if I needed a new coat, I had a new coat you know, that sort of thing. And then there was always a gift for the lady you'd be staying with. Because someone would put you up there. My mother would cry because she'd have to part with her tea coupon and I didn't drink tea. But yes, it was, so it was, as far as the money was concerned it sort of went in this pot and I didn't, my parents didn't have any of it. They just used it as part of the support that I needed. And it was only a small part of the support that I needed

I was going to ask – was there any unions in the factory ? Were you aware of anything

0:23:40 I wasn't aware of it – there must have been for the men, I would think. Because they had several professions there. So there must have been for the men. But I was certainly not asked to join the union.

So you weren't

0:23:55 I wasn't in the union

And you weren't aware of (unclear) were you ?

0:23:58 No, no, no.

No. Did you feel that you were fairly treated ?

0:24:00 Yes, yes, I was quite happy there

Yes and do you feel that everybody was fairly treated ?. You know

0:24:10 Yes, the ones that I knew and I didn't know anyone complained. I can't say much about the men in the factory as I really wouldn't know any about that. But in our office, we were, we were, you know, everyone seemed to be OK

Were you aware of any disputes or anything ?

0:24:24 No never, never.

No

0:24:25 But yes, and I was there for, I was there until I was nineteen and during that time. I was there until I was nineteen and during that time I wasn't aware of any – I did have a good

deal of help on one occasion because I used to ride a bike to work. And we had a terrible snowstorm and when I was in school, I never missed a half day's school in all my education. My parents would, my mother would say you'll feel better by the time you get there, you know. So in the whole of my schooling I never even lost a half day. And I think that stayed with me. It helped me with my gymnastics and with my, the rest of my future. It taught me commitment, you know. And so this snow came pouring down and I got on my bike to go and as I turned the corner by, I lived in Grangetown. There was a Grange Gardens, I used to cycle past. As I turned the corner so this great lot of snow flew in my face and I put my head down and went into the back of a tractor on my bike and clean over the top. And knocked myself out. So the park keeper took me into his hut. I mean he wouldn't dare do it today, would they? But the park keeper took me into his hut, until he felt I was well enough to get up and I, and he wanted me to go home. But I said, no, I must go to work, I'm on my way to work. So I pushed my bent bike to work and when I got there, they were so concerned about me, they wanted me to go up to the hospital, which in those days was St Davids Hospital. And so the boss had a Rolls and a chauffeur, so I had my first ride in a Rolls Royce. Going to the hospital with my concussion.

And did you have concussion?

0:26:09 Yes, I had concussion

And this was before the Games, was it?

0:26:13 No, that was after

Oh

0:26:14 That was after

You talked a bit, I'll just ask you about this, because you talked a bit about this man who had a dreadful injury and well, disappeared. Were you aware of any other injuries on the factory floor?

0:26:32 No, I don't think I was. I mean, they had a nurse on site and there used to be, I think there was a man who once got his hands caught in the machine and because they used to be, after a bit dangerously and sometimes worked without a guard down, because the guard made the job difficult. And there was one man who caught his hands in there. But that's, but apart from that dreadful one where the man disappeared, I don't know, I don't recall any more. There must have been but they would have been small and insignificant injuries, I would think.

Yes. Do you think the work was dangerous?

0:27:08 It must have been in some instances. If a the man could catch his hand and if somebody could fall in the vat

Mmm.

0:27:16 But my job wasn't dangerous

No. So let's go on to the hours and the holidays. So how many days did you work a week ?

0:27:32 Five. I worked nine till five

Right

0:27:36 Clock in, clock out

You had to clock in did you ?

0:27:38 Yes

And were there any shifts worked ? Were you aware of that ?

0:27:46 No, I don't think even the factory workers worked shifts. I think there were set hours there. I would imagine if they had an emergency or a big order that had to be met, there would, people would have turned to. But I think as a general rule, they stuck to. But the men had longer hours. They started at eight, I think in the morning and we started at nine.

Right

0:28:05 And I think they finished about the same time as us

So if they did have, I presume they'd work a bit of overtime, if they had an order. Would you ever be asked to work on ?

0:28:15 No, no. Because I'd just have to make sure that the material that they needed after hours was available to them.

Right. And did you have any breaks in your working day ?

0:28:28 Yes, we had a tea break. And we didn't used to, we had a canteen but we used to get a tea or coffee and bring it to the office. And then of course there was a lunch break and there was a canteen there. But I didn't. I lived, I used to get on my bike. It was the top end of Grangetown, near town and I lived in Clive Street which was not so far away. So I'd go home on my bike and come back.

How long would it take you on the bike ?

0:28:52 About a quarter of an hour each way and we had an hour for lunch. So it was enough

And you always went home, did you ?

0:28:58 Usually, yes. Sometimes I went into town – I did a bit of shopping. It wasn't far

But I wasn't much of a shopaholic then. So I didn't do much of that

You had your mind on greater things

(Both laugh)

So you never used the canteen did you ?

0:29:15 Yes I did occasionally, but just for coffee

Right

0:29:18 And to get to, go and get, I had to get the bosses teas and coffees everyday. And he hated it if I brought him back biscuits with currants in because he said they could be dead flies.

So, were you aware of what kind of food the canteen provided ? Was it like a full kind of

0:29:37 I don't think there was a lot of selection but it was cooked. I think there were probably two selections and there certainly wasn't a cold counter.

Right.

0:29:45 But those were not long after the war, in years you know.

Yes. So what about afternoon break, did you have one of them ?

0:29:51 Yes we had a afternoon break but we usually just carried on with our work and had a cup of tea or coffee at our desk, you know. Whereas we'd stop for ten minutes or so in the morning. And we had an hour for lunch.

So, you, did you have an annual holiday allowance with pay then ?

0:30:11 Yes, a fortnight. A fortnight was all

And you couldn't, (unclear)

0:30:17 Yes, you could book it you see, your own time, you could apply. You put in your holiday hours and I don't think it was ever refused

Right. Did you ever take more than that ?

0:30:28 No, I don't so

Was that sufficient, was it ?

0:30:30 Probably when we went to the Games, I probably did. Must have done then because we were there a bit longer. But I should remember that but I'm afraid I don't.

You said you were paid for your holidays, was that for just that fortnight or were you ?

0:30:48 Yes, well, they continued to pay me even though I wasn't - I had my holidays as well as that time for the Games. I had, I didn't have to take my holiday quota for to go to the Games. They gave me my holidays as well.

And they paid you ?

0:31:05 They paid me, yes. They paid me while I was away, yes. They were a very good company to work for I think

Right

0:31:12 Because I did have on one occasion a problem with a man I'd met on a train and spoken to. And who found out where I worked and he got to be pestering and an awful nuisance. And our managing director got him the sack from his company. He was quite a (unclear) business. So they did care about their staff.

Yes

0:31:32 I mean this had happened out of working hours. Just when I was on one of my train journeys for training, you know. And the gentleman just got talking. The carriages were, the corridor and (unclear) it was a long way, I was going right up to, changing trains at Manchester and going on then up to Yorkshire. So you know, this man just befriended me, I thought. And carried my case when I went to change trains. But then the conversation, I told him where I worked and he contacted me and made a nuisance of himself.

Oh, dear

0:32:06 And my boss sorted it out

Right

0:32:09 And the director of the company sorted it out, not my immediate boss

Right.

0:32:15 So they did look after their girls

Do you think you were a kind of feather in their cap then, do you think ?

0:32:20 I don't know

Were you special do you think ? Or would they have done that ?

0:32:24 I think they would have done it for anyone. I can't say, you know, when I was in my home environment and when I was in my local environment, I was a star because I was going

to be an Olympian. But when I was in work, I was really just one of the girls. So I think the treatment I received, everyone would have had. They were very good employers

The holidays they gave you and the time off

0:32:47 Yes. That's right. And they took me in when, you know. But they weren't looking for someone to (unclear), they took me in because I had a need so they were a good company. I don't know whether BSA still exists. I'd like to know.

Yes.

0:33:00 I shall Google it, I'll Google it

What about bank holidays ? Did you have bank holidays ?

0:33:06 Yes, yes bank holidays off always. Yes

Right. Did you ever go on holiday anywhere else ? Except for your training.

0:33:14 Oh, yes. We always used to have holidays, from a small child

Right

0:33:18 My parents weren't well off but we'd lived the life of Riley, you know. We had holidays in cottages in West Wales and Wye Valley and I mean, sometimes we'd travel there on the back of an old black lorry. But we'd get there, and we'd pitch tents or whatever. And we were always at the beach. My father taught us to swim when we were very young. My mother could run like the wind, so she used to be dashing up and down, running fast. Yes, we, I had a very happy, busy, healthy childhood.

So, you said your father was a very good swimmer, was he ?

0:33:56 Yes he was. He used to, in them days, to swim in the Taff River a lot in those days. And they used to have the Taff Race every year

Right

0:34:04 And there was a man called – ohh, I've got him in this book. He always won the Taff Swim and he used to train for it by doing - and my father used to go with him and used to lead all the way, but didn't have the money to enter. He was, he was one, he was one of a large family that had neither father nor mother, both had died. And he was the bread winner from the age of fourteen. And so there was never the money for him to enter the Taff Race. And he used to swim with Radmilovich, a man called Radmilovich. He used to win it every year but my father would lead him on, could beat him every time but didn't have the money to enter.

Right

0:34:49 Very sad, very sad

What about your mother ? Did your mother race ? Did she

0:34:55 She could run, but she didn't, she wouldn't - there was no athletics in our area that I know of, in my mother's time. But she, she played baseball and she could get round those bases like a hare. And she had a crippled sister who had a clubbed foot who could bat like mad and was a very good backstop. So when it was her sister's turn, her sister would hit the ball and my mother would run for her

Oh, right

0:35:21 And then she'd have to do her own run as well

Yes, yes

0:35:24 She was very much that way but she'd had a very hard life and childhood. And from a, you know, in acute poverty and I mean, she, before she left school and she left school at about thirteen, she was already scrubbing out offices. She had to take, walk about half an hour to get to, before school and after school. And then when she finished school, it was the brush factory and then she was made, she became, she was - this is good, now I can be in a factory here instead. But no, she had to do the scrubbing in the morning, in the night and the factory work. So she came up the hard way, you know.

Yes

0:36:05 And my dad as I say, his (unclear)

Alright

0:36:12 His father was a engineer on the tugboats in Cardiff Dock. He dropped dead on the boat with a heart attack.

Oh, dear

0:36:20 And his wife had already died in the 'flu epidemic after the first World War. And she died with the, the youngest child was six months when she died. My father was the oldest boy and there were nine of them altogether. And then he was brought home, they knocked the door and they carried him in feet first, laid him on the table and walked out and left the children with their dead father. So he was, he was working hard right from the beginning. So you know, in those days, I was in the fortunate time when if you had skills and a bit of financial help, you could do it. Nowadays, you get lots of financial help and I'm pleased to see it. If my mother and father's day, there was no help at all. So their chances of doing anything in sport were nil really.

Yes. But baseball, were they both from Cardiff?

0:37:11 Both Grangetown people

Both from Grangetown. Because baseball was a big thing for women, wasn't it ?

0:37:16 Oh, yes, it was. It was. My mother played for Gripperly Mills although she never worked in Gripperly Mills. Because her sister worked there, but also - so my mother played for her team. So as I say, my mother worked in a brush factory. But, yes they played for Gripperly Mills

Oh, right. That's really interesting, isn't it ?

0:37:34 Yes. The whole thing about women and factories and sport

That's right

0:37:37 It's very interesting, actually. Yes

So, did you, were there any social activities in the factory that were arranged by the workers ?

0:37:49 Not that I can recall. No, I don't think there were any. I think, on the, on the last working day before Christmas, I think a lot of them used to go to a pub for a celebration. But I was never one for drinking. So I just used to wish them a Merry Christmas and go home, you know.

Yes

0:38:07 I wasn't very good at drinking, so

Were you a bit younger than most of them as well ?

0:38:11 Yes, yes, I was. And my parents weren't, I mean, my mother would have a sherry at Christmas or something, you know. But they weren't pub people. They didn't have nothing against pub people. My grandfather (unclear) me - my mother's father was. But no, they didn't, it wasn't something that interested me. And there was nothing, there were no outings like. I mean I worked for the gas board, (unclear) outing. But there were no outings in this factory. No, it was just for work.

Just work

0:38:41 Yes

So when did you decide to leave ?

0:38:48 When I was pregnant

Right. And when, how

0:38:50 I got married at nineteen

Right

0:38:54 And I had my baby at twenty. My husband was at sea. And he went off to sea after the wedding but he didn't know I was pregnant. And when he came back, my son was six weeks old. And my husband was not very welcome.

Alright. So you stayed on working then

0:39:08 I stayed

After you got married

0:39:10 I worked until I was seven and a half months pregnant. And then of course, I stopped

Right

0:39:18 And I didn't go back

How did your husband feel about you working? Still working, you know, when you were married then?

0:39:24 Oh, well that was fine because we were hoping to buy a house. You know, we were both going to be saving for a house. And of course, it didn't work out that way for me. Yes. It was a bit of a shock but a welcome shock eventually.

So, what did you do afterwards? How many, I mean, did you have more than one child?

3942 Yes, I had two boys

Yes

3944 Two boys and I didn't go back to work until the youngest was fourteen

And what did you do when you went back to work

3952 I became a network analyst with the Gas Board.

Right

3956 Just Wales. It changed as time went on, I went onto computers. But what it came down to, you made sure that if there was a new factory going down at the end of the road, the people at the other, the lady at the other end could still boil a kettle. So, they had had to put in governors or extra pipework and all we did was supply the engineers with all the information and they made the decisions on what it should do. And then eventually, I mean we started off just with

maps and pens and paper. But eventually, it was all done on computers. And I had three computers that could all talk to each, from different parts, North Wales, West Wales and mine could all talk to each other

Right. And did you do that for the duration of your....

4034 Yes until I retired. From the time my son was fourteen, my youngest was fourteen so let's think now, he was born in '58. So that was '68, '72. So that was from 1972 until I was 58.

41:00 (She talks about how long she worked there)

So you retired then?

4130 They were dismantling the gas industry and our engineering team department was going to Birmingham. And I had a chance to work there if I wanted to. But I knew it was part time anyway. And I was two years off retirement. I was, what, just less than two years off retirement. That was when retirement was at sixty, so I opted for redundancy and went.

**So, tell me then about the parallel universe of your sports career. Tell me what happened in Helsinki?*

4205 Oh, it was amazing!

(She talks about the Helsinki Olympics , other Olympics, World championships , her career as a gymnast and her role as international coach and then today coaching special needs children.)

64:32 Looking back now, how do you feel about the time you spent working in the factory?

I loved it. They made me feel very welcome. I was a very young, young teenager – I think we were younger in those days and they were all adults that I was working with and so it did feel a bit strange when I first went there because when I was in Boots there were a lot of girls that worked there. But no -they were happy days and they were very kind to me, they were appreciative of the work I did, I felt the men in the factory treated me nicely and it was good – I enjoyed it. I only left because I had a baby and in those days, at least I was of the opinion that if you had a baby, you became a mum. That was your first priority.

65:25 (She talks about the Grange Ladies Gymnastic Club)

66:17

END OF INTERVIEW/DIWEDD CYFWELIAD