

LLEISIAU O LAWYR FFATRI / VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR

Mettoys, Fforestfach, Swansea

Interviewee: VSW040 Ann Harrison

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Interviewer: Jaci Gruffudd on behalf of Women's Archive Wales

Ann was born on December 5th 1946 with spina bifida and the doctors said she would not live. Her mother took her to the military hospital in Morriston where they operated on her.

Her parents lived in Greenhill which was a poor part of Swansea, her mother was one of 10 children and her father one of 6.

They moved to Gendros in 1947 and **“they thought it was wonderful to have an indoor bath and all their brothers and sisters came from Greenhill to have a hot bath they thought it was wonderful.”**

She had one brother and they went to St Joseph’s Catholic school but many hospital visits between the ages of 8 and 11 meant that she missed much schooling and left school at the age of 11. Her mother got her into Technical School to do shorthand and typing which she passed.

Her mother worked in Mettoys and got her a job in the office. She felt the office girls were better than her so chose to work on the shop floor even though she had office qualifications,

“A bit nervous at first but they were really good girls and the jobs given were the same as everyone else which I appreciated as I liked being treated the same as everyone else. “

Made James Bond cars. Thoughly enjoyed it

Ann had a small interview for the shop floor job but not the office job as her mother had got that for her.

She could sit down to do the work but most of the work for everyone was sitting down. She could walk a bit then not like now as she is in a wheelchair. She couldn’t do any heavy lifting. All the jobs were suitable for her ability to do.

A working day started at 7.30 a.m. with a break at 10 a.m. a cigarette break –we used to go into the toilet. Lunch at 12.30 for 3 quarter of an hour and finish at 4.30 p.m.

5 days a week they were long days. Her mother had worked there for years and did evening shifts when she was small as her father could look after her.

Would catch bus into work with her mother if her father needed the car when on a night shift. She felt her mother was too protective of her when girls used to tell raucous jokes.

The men who worked with her were craftsmen, machine fitters or in the stores. No training or qualifications were offered . It was piece work- if you finished your work you would help others It was very good everyone helped each other. Paid every week cash in a brown envelope- can't remember now how much but can remember the money going up at some time. Kept the wages for herself before being married and after it went into household budget. Married at 21 and pregnant 3 months after. Stayed with her parents for the first few years as saving up to buy the bungalow where they still live. It suits my needs.

Was a member of a Union but can't remember any strikes or Union involvement.

Had to provide own overalls.

No Health and Safety training but no accidents.

“ when you think about it going back those days I would walk in and out of machines there were guards on the machines but red hot plastic came out of some machines They used to feed the hoppers with dry plastic and it used to come out boiling hot.”

Toilets and cloakrooms were good -used to go for a smoke in them. The canteen was large but used to take own food and just buy a drink from the canteen.

Music was played in the canteen and factory floor.

“ I can remember sitting there in the October time the music stopped and the news of the Aberfan disaster came. It was strange there was noise in the factory but it went really quiet after that. It something you don't forget. Quite emotional that day.”

Not allowed to smoke on the factory floor but could talk. The machines could not be stopped as the plastic would go hard so had to get a replacement worker if you left the machine to go to the toilet.

Worked 5 days a week and had a chance to work on a Saturday morning especially coming up to Christmas they would need you to do overtime. Only holiday could remember was going to Blackpool with Mam and Dad when 17years old. Had evenings out with factory girls and 21st party in Mettoys club

Made a good friend, Grace Beaman in Mettoys known each other for 40 years.

Evenings out were dancing and entertainment no discos then.

Can't remember any works parties in Mettoys but remembers going to one in Remploy with her uncle.

There were differences between office and factory workers she felt that they were cleverer than her.

Ann worked for 5 years in Mettoys and finished when she became pregnant. She didn't go back to work afterwards as she felt it would be too much.

Her mother was in service in Gwydr Terrace, Uplands, Swansea as a young girl – she walked there and back to Grreenhill every day . Money better in Mettoys and not appreciated when in service treated lower than factory workers.

Father worked in Felindre in the acid plant on shift work –not a very good job affected him in the end –died from lung cancer.

Brother also worked in Felindre in a better job on the rolling press. That's what happened in those days- families worked together.

In Mettoys lots of family members worked there –sisters and daughters.

Supportive to people with disabilities –young girl, Vera ,had Downs syndrome she was given lighter work which she could do. Very good like that.

Happy period of my life **“You can never be shy after working in a factory full of women”**
Husband, an apprentice engineer hated going to Spontex factory as the women would tease him to pieces – they felt they had the upper hand on men.

Also happened at Mettoys as well as one or two affairs.