

## LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI / VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR

### Y ffatri staes/ The corset factory, Caernarfon (1954 - 1960)

Cyfwela: VN014 Margaret Williams  
Dyddiad: 13: 02: 2014  
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*There is an English summary of the interview following the Welsh text*

Cadarnhaodd Margaret ei henw, ei chyfeiriad a'i dyddiad geni, sef 30/12/1939

Mae'n enedigol o Gaernarfon ac roedd ganddi dri brawd a thair chwaer. Roedd ei mam yn gweithio mewn ffatri Corona (*soft drinks*), ond doedd ei thad ddim yn gweithio. Ond roedd o'n gwneud 'te i bawb' meddai. Roedd cyflog ei mam yn cynnal y teulu. Roedd y plant i gyd yn yr ysgol bryd hwnnw, a byddai ei thad yn paratoi bwyd iddynt ac i'w wraig ar ôl iddynt gyrraedd adre ar ddiwedd y dydd. "Ond doedd o ddim yn golchi'r llestri." Roedd rhaid i'r plant olchi'r llestri ar ôl ysgol. Dydd Gwener a dydd Sadwrn roedd Corona yn dod â lemonêd rownd y tai ac roedd pawb yn prynu potel a chael lemonêd efo cinio dydd Sul.

Aeth hi i'r ysgol yng Nghaernarfon a gadael yn 15 oed. Roedd y plant a oedd wedi pasio'r arholiadau yn gallu mynd i'r ysgol ramadeg. Mae Margaret yn cofio'r prifathro yn mynd i dŷ Myfi Powell Jones (VN012) ac yn trio'i hannog i fynd i'r coleg, ond roedd Myfi eisiau mynd allan i weithio. **Chafodd Margaret ddim dewis, aeth hi allan yn bymtheg oed i chwilio am waith, ond nyrs roedd hi eisiau bod, ac roedd hi'n meddwl am drïo hynny, pan oedd hi'n 17 oed.** Cafodd hi ei llosgi pan oedd hi'n ifanc ac roedd yn rhaid iddi fynd i ysbyty yn Lerpwl i gael ryw fath o '*skin graft*' ac roedd hynny wedi '**sticio yn fy mhen i. . . ond doedd dim digon o gyts gen i.**' Nyrs blant neu hen bobl roedd hi eisiau bod ond yn y diwedd wnaeth hi dynnu'n ôl. Roedd ei thad yn ei chefnogi hi i drïo bod yn nyrs, yn falch iawn ohoni. Yn ei thridegau, roedd hi'n helpu allan yn y *cottage hospital* am dipyn ar un adeg, ac roedd y *Sister* yno yn awgrymu ei bod hi'n mynd ymlaen yn SEN. Ond doedd hi ddim yn ddigon hyderus i wneud hynny erioed.

**8.00 Chafodd hi ddim dewis ond mynd i'r ffatri, meddai. "Ond roedd mam wedi deud *straight away*, "Unwaith ti'n 15, ti'n chwilio am waith." Felly, roeddech chi'n gorfod gwneud beth oedd eich mam yn deud, felly, lawr i'r ffatri, ynte."** Felly aeth hi lawr i'r ffatri corsets efo Myfi a gofyn am waith. Cawson nhw ryw fath o gyfweliad ond dim ond yn y cyntedd, dim byd swyddogol. Roedd y ddwy ohonyn nhw yno ar yr un pryd, a dywedodd y person, mab y *boss*, "**Oh, you'll hear by the end of the week, - pobl efo plum yn eu ceg.**" Cafodd hi lythyr ar y dydd

Sadwrn, yn deud bod hi ddim yn llwyddiannus, ond enw Myfi oedd ar y llythyr nid ei henw hi. Aeth hi lawr i dŷ Myfi efo'r llythyr a deud ei bod hi wedi agor y llythyr anghywir ond roedd Myfi wedi mynd i lawr i'r ffatri efo llythyr Margaret. Yn y diwedd, cafodd y ddwy ohonynt swyddi - yn dechrau ar y un pryd.

Roedd Margaret yn gallu gwnïo, achos roedd ei mam wedi prynu peiriant gwnïo iddi pan oedd hi'n blentyn, o gatalog, ond dim ond diwrnod parodd e, a chafodd hi ddim byd y Nadolig hwnnw. Roedd hi'n eithaf nerfus yn dechrau ond roedd Myfi yn ddewrach. Roedd Margaret yn poeni am fethu gallu gwneud y gwaith ond oedd hi'n 'grêt' meddai. Mae'n cofio'r diwrnod cyntaf, hi and Myfi yn mynd i fyny'r grisiau, tua 144 yn gweithio yno, llawer o sŵn peiriannau, a'r genod yn 'chatro.' Roedd hi a Myfi yn eistedd efo'i gilydd ar y '*training table*.' Un diwrnod, amser cinio, dywedodd Margaret "**Myfi, dw i eisio mynd i'r toilet.**" "**A finnau,**" meddai Myfi, "**awn ni 'te.**" **A'r ddwy ohonon ni'n mynd, rŵan, ac yn dod yn ôl yn gafael llaw ein gilydd, a phasio'r mashîns i gyd . . Dw i'n siŵr bod nhw wedi chwerthin - hosanau gwyn 'te. Ond dw i'n meddwl mai'r peth mwyaf braf oedd cael y cyflog cyntaf, a honno'r ail wythnos, ond oedd, *work a week in hand* oeddech chi, a chael mynd efo'r cyflog, yn yr enfelop bach brown, 'te, a mynd i roi'r pres i mam."**

Roedd hi'n ennill £1 rhywbeth - 'papur punt, papur chwegian, hanner coron' - rhyw £1.60. Os oedden nhw'n gweithio *overtime*, roedden nhw'n cael swllt ychwanegol - gweithio tan chwech weithiau. Mae Margaret yn cofio mynd adre a rhoi'r pres i'w mam, ac roedd ganddi ddau frawd yn gweithio ac yn rhoi eu cyflogau hefyd. "**Ond oeddech chi ddim yn cael *choice*, fel mae *kids*, *rwan*.**" Roedd ei mam yn cael y pres mwyaf a hi yn cael beth oedd ar ôl. Bob blwyddyn roedden nhw'n cael codiad '*cost of living*' ac roedd ei mam yn cael hwnnw hefyd. Felly roedd y cyflog yn mynd i fyny dipyn bob blwyddyn. Mae'n meddwl pan adawodd hi ei bod hi'n ennill rhyw £3-£4.

17.25 Roedd hi'n cael ei hyfforddi sut i wnïo yn '*straight*', i wneud *binding* a *hems*, roedd rhaid iddynt wnïo '*absolutely straight*,' ac roedd y defnydd i gyd wedi'i dorri yn gyntaf, 'joinio fo efo ei gilydd.' Roedd yr hyfforddi yn parhau tan oedd rhywun yn gallu handlo'r mashîn. "**Doeddwn i ddim yn *bad* efo mashîn, a dweud y gwir.**"

Cafodd Myfi a Margaret eu gwahanu, achos roedden nhw'n siarad gormod, ac aeth Margaret i'r *binding* i weithio efo genod hŷn. Am y peiriant beindio: "**Doeddwn i ddim yn *keen* ar hwnnw, efo *double needles*.**"

Pan oedd hi'n 17 oed, aeth y *supervisor*, Nansi Fawr, yn sâl. "**Roedd gynnon ni i gyd ofn hi. Roedden ni'n mynd i lawr y grisiau i gael smôc, a Nansi'n smocio ei hun ond do'n i ddim yn gwybod hynny adeg hynny, tan wnes i ddod i nabod Nansi yn well. A chlywodd rhywun - "Nansi Fawr yn dŵad!" - ac yn gweld ni i gyd yn rhedeg mewn i'r toiled a chloi'r drws, a'r lle yn llawn mwg. . . . 'Margaret, dw i'n gwybod bod ti yno, smocio! Neu Rita neu Dilys Cross neu pwy bynnag oedd i mewn, watchio ni i gyd yn mynd, ond roedd hi'n gadael llonydd i ni am ryw faint, i gael 'cwpl o *puffs*' ac yna hel ni i gyd i fyny'r grisiau fel plant bach ysgol. A be nesa oedd Nansi ei hun yn cael smôc, wnes i i dal hi mwy nag unwaith yn cael smôc yn fan 'na.'**"

20.20 Nansi Fawr oedd y *supervisor* yn y '*binding section*', yn y canol. Rhywun o'r enw Glenys oedd y *supervisor* yn yr '*ystafell stitching*' y stafell gyntaf, ac wedyn y '*steel room*' - lle roedden nhw'n rhoi'r *steels* i mewn i'r staes "**job wirion, ha, ha**". Roedd stafell fach arall lle roedden nhw'n gwneud *suspenders*. Doedd Margaret ddim yn gwneud tipyn o bob peth. "**Os oeddech chi'n dda yn dy job, ychydig iawn fassen nhw'n symud chi.**" Roedd hi yn yr ystafell *stitching* yn gyntaf yn cael ei hyfforddi ac wedyn yn y *binding*, yr ail rŵm, tra bod Myfi yn aros yn y *stitching*. Roedd 'na

*supervisor* ar dop y bwrdd a dyna lle roedd y merched yn dysgu gwneud y gwaith. Dysgu ar staes oedd angen *repairs* wnaethon nhw.

"Ces i lot o jobys, rili, pan dw i'n meddwl. Aeth Nansi yn sâl, dw i'n cofio . . . a wnaethon nhw ofyn i fi os 'swn i eistedd ar y bwrdd mawr mawr reit ar y ffrynt, a'r mashîns ffordd 'na so on i'n gweld y genod i gyd. Deudwch bod fi'n rhyw *seventeen and a half*, falle, ac maen nhw'n gofyn i fi 'swn i'n mynd yn lle Nansi, o achos oedd Nansi yn reit ddrwg adeg hynny hefyd. A 'nes i fynd i'r office o flaen *The Big Man*, Mr Huntingdon, dyn del hefyd, a'r mab, ac roedden nhw'n deud '*Right, Margaret, we're going to offer you an opportunity now to be a stand-in supervisor but you're not to tell anybody because Nansi is ill. So seeing that you've worked with Nansi on the front, we're going to leave you there. Do you think you're capable? I'm not going to tell the girls off, you know*', medda fi, dw i'n cofio deud hynna, achos on i'n byw efo nhw, fassen nhw wedi lladd fi, siwr. Ac maen nhw'n deud bod nhw'n gwneud codiad i fi, dw i ddim yn cofio faint o godiad oedd o . . . '*and you're not to tell the girls,*' meddai fo, '*because you won't be a supervisor when Nansi comes back. We just want to see how you can work and send work down.*' 'I'll give it a try' meddaf i, *Brave o'n i, seventeen?* A ges i'r job, a ges i'r pres, deudwch fod o ryw hanner coron yn fwy."

Doedd hi ddim yn y job yn hir iawn, achos daeth Nansi yn ôl ar ôl rhai wythnosau, ond roedd hi'n dal i boeni'i bod hi'n cael mwy o arian na'r merched eraill. Roedd hi'n mwynhau bod yn *supervisor*, ac wedi gweithio fel rheolwraig mewn llefydd eraill ers hynny, ac yn meddwl bod hi'n dda efo pobl. "**Efo rhai bosses, chi'n cael 'hiwmiliato' bobl ar y llawr, on i ddim yn licio dim byd fel 'na.**" Cadw pethau fel hynny rhwng *one to one* sy'n well ganddi hi, meddai, cadw pethau'n dawel. Doedd dim rhaid iddi '*tell anyone off*' yn y ffatri corsets wedi'r cwbl "**Doedd gen i ddim authority yn y corset factory.** Swn i wedi medru gwneud ond roedd y genod yn y rwm hwnnw lot hyn na fi, 'sti. Yr unig beth on i'n wneud, os oeddwn i ddim yn licio eu gwaith nhw, on i'n mynd â fo yn ôl, wedyn on i'n rhoi croes lle on i'n eisio nhw rectifeio, ac yn deud "ti wedi colli" neu "ti wedi twistio'r *binding* yn fan 'ma", deudwch Myfi neu Mary, neu *whoever*, 'Mary, allet ti ail wneud hwn i fi, ti wedi twistio'r *binding.*' A nhw'n mynd "Iawn Margaret."

Wnaeth Mary ddim ffraeo efo neb yn y ffatri, roedd pawb yn dod ymlaen yn dda iawn. Roedd y rhan fwyaf o'r merched o'r dre, ond doedd hi ddim yn nabod y merched o'r Felinheli, Penygroes, Talsarn cystal. Ond roedd hi wedi gwneud lot o ffrindiau yno, merched o'r wlad yn dod i lawr i gwrdd yn y dref. "A 'dan ni'n dal yn gweld ein gilydd rownd y dre."

27.00 Roedd chwaer Margaret yn ddall, ond cafodd Margaret swydd iddi yn y ffatri. Roedd Jeanette wedi gadael ysgol arbennig yn Lerpwl ac roedd ei mam yn poeni beth oedd i'n mynd i'w wneud. Felly, gofynnodd Margaret i'r boss, Mr Huntingdon, "**On i well in efo nhw, 'chi, oedden nhw'n licio mi dw i'n meddwl. A be wnes i oedd chancio fo a gofyn iddyn nhw.**" Aeth Jeanette i mewn i'r *steel room*. Dydy Margaret ddim yn cofio beth oedd y merched '*sighted*' yn gwneud ond swydd ei chwaer oedd pwsio'r *steel rods* i mewn i lastig tew *straps suspenders* - "**Pusho fo mewn, pusho fo dan, a pusho fo wedyn fel bod o'n medru, rhoi fo ar y botwm. A wnaethon nhw ddeud, "We'll give her a try, Margaret. Bring her down so that we can see her."**

Mae Margaret wedi cofio hyn yn anghywir yma – y stori iawn oedd bod gan Jeanette ryw fenyw, rhywun oedd yn gweithio efo pobl ddall, yn gwneud yn siwr ei bod hi'n cael chwarae teg. Roedd y fenyw hon yn y tŷ un diwrnod pan ddaeth Margaret adre o'r gwaith a gofynnodd iddi beth oedd hi'n ei wneud yn y ffatri. A ffoniodd hi Huntingdon a galwodd e Margaret i mewn i'r swyddfa, dyna oedd dechrau'r peth. Gofynnodd nhw '*What could she do here, Margaret?*' A deudodd Margaret '*She could go into the steel room. She could feel with her*

*hands and she will be able to do it.*" Felly dechreuodd Jeanette weithio efo'i chwaer, ond doedd Margaret ddim yn yr un ystafell, ac roedd hi'n "ffantastig, yn gwneud mwy o waith na'r genod *sighted*," achos doedd hi ddim yn *distracted*, meddai. "Erbyn y diwedd roedd hi'n owtclasio'r genod *sighted* efo'r *amount* oedd hi medru gwneud mewn diwrnod."

Cafodd Margaret ei symud wedyn i'r *cutting room*, lle roedd hi'n gorfod defnyddio peiriant mawr i dorri'r staes. Lawr grisiau roedd y stafell hon ac roedd Jeanette i fyny'r grisiau, ac yn ystod y ddwy wythnos gyntaf roedd yn rhaid i Margaret fynd i nôl Jeanette i'r stafell ginio. Roedd y *bosses* ofn y byddai'n disgyn lawr y grisiau ond ar ôl ychydig o amser roedd Jeanette wedi cael ei *bearings* ac yn gallu mynd i'r tŷ bach ar ei phen ei hun. Doedd y *bosses* ddim eisiau i'r genod eraill helpu tan iddyn nhw ddod i nabod Jeanette, meddai Margaret, ond ar ôl dwy wythnos, byddai Jeanette yn galw lawr "*Margaret, you don't have to come up,*" achos roedd hi'n siarad Saesneg adeg hynny, "*You don't have to come up for me, Mags. I'll be okay now.*" "Right," on i'n mynd, "*you go first then and I'll be behind you. If you fall, you fall, remember, cos I'm keeping my distance.*" Ie, *ocê, iawn, off â ni.*" Teimlo ei ffordd o gwmpas, oedd Jeanette, heb 'faultio.' Doedd hi ddim yn mynd reit rownd y ffatri, dim ond lle roedd hi'n gweithio ac i'r stafell ginio a'r tŷ bach a'r *cloakroom*. Roedd agwedd y merched eraill tuag ag Jeanette yn 'ffantastig' meddai Margaret. "Oedd gynni hi lot o ffrindiau. Oedd hi'n cael *perm* yn ei gwallt, oedden nhw'n mynd â hi allan am *drink*, *which* doedd mam ddim yn aprwffio, ac roedden nhw'n rhoi *perm* yn ei gwallt, *of which* doedd mam ddim yn aprwffio. Oedden nhw'n dysgu iddi i ffrio *wy*, yn nhai eu hunain, *of which* oedd mam yn mynd yn *petrified* bod hi efo padell ffrio, *protective 'de.*" Doedd mam ddim yn hapus fod Jeanette wedi mynd i'r ffatri, ond roedd hi'n falch ei bod hi wedi cael gwaith.

32.00 Roedd Margaret yn cofio bod y ddynes oedd yn gweithio efo pobl ddal wedi clywed gan eu tad nhw bod Jeanette ddim wedi cael codiad cyflog, fel y merched eraill, er ei bod hi'n gwneud yr un gwaith, ac aeth i lawr i weld Huntingdon a dweud bod ganddyn nhw ddim hawl peidio rhoi codiad i Jeanette, a *bonuses*, hefyd. Y peth nesaf, cafodd Margaret ei galw i mewn i weld y *bosses*, efo'r ddynes hon, ac roedden nhw'n ei chyhuddo hi o fynd tu ôl i'w cefnau ynglŷn â'r pwnc hwn a bod hi'n lwcus eu bod nhw wedi derbyn Jeanette yn y lle cyntaf. "Wnaethon nhw droi at y ddynes a dweud "She can't do much, because whatever she knows is what Margaret has taught her." A wnes i ddweud "What do you mean, what I've taught her? I haven't taught her anything." "Well, you've taught her how to put her headscarf on", *which* on i'n wneud, chi'n gwybod, ac on i'n dangos pethau *basic* iddi. A fi'n mynd "Jeanette does more work in that steel room than your sighted people. Have you checked how many suspenders she can go in a day? Well, the others would take two to three days to match my sister. And no", medda fi, "I don't tell her what to do, she's her own person, she's a clever young girl," medda fi, "I've taught her the basics, how to put her lipstick on, how to put her headscarf on," achos roedden ni'n gwisgo *head scarves* adeg hynny . . . on i'n dysgu hi '*corner to corner*,' a *seams*, oedd gynnon ni *seams* adeg hynny, so on i'n deud wrth Jeanette '*feel your seam now and go up with your fingers.*' so roedd hi'n gwybod bod nhw'n syth . . . beth arall wnes i ddysgu iddi, d'wch? Brasias, efo ei brasia sut i adjustio'r *straps*, pethau bach.' Cafodd Jeanette y codiad cyflog yn y diwedd, efo tipyn o *back pay* hefyd.

Dechreuodd Jeanette yn y ffatri yn 15 oed a gadawodd i briodi, ychydig dros ugain oed. Ar un adeg, aeth hi lawr i Torquay i gael ci ar gyfer pobl ddall, roedd hi i lawr yna am ryw chwe wythnos, a daeth hi yn ôl efo cariad dyn o Birkenhead "**hogyn bach del**". Roedd y boi yma'n ymweld â Jeanette yng Nghaernarfon ond yn gorfod aros efo Margaret, achos doedd eu mam ddim yn *keen* arno a ddim yn hapus eu bod nhw'n mynd i briodi. Roedd ei mam yn orofalus o Jeanette, ofn pan oedd hi'n coginio a phethau. Aeth y ddau yno i fyw ar ôl priodi. Gadawodd y dyn hwn Jeanette ar ôl

29 o flynyddoedd. Mae Jeanette yn dal i fyw yn Birkenhead. Doedd dim amodau arbennig iddi yn y ffatri, yr un fath â phawb arall, er ei bod yn nerfus ar y dechrau – e.e. mynni ei bod hi'n gafael yn y *hand rail* yn dod i lawr y grisiau. Roedd y ddwy chwaer yn agos iawn. Roedd Margaret yn ei helpu hi lawer, e.e. yn ei gwisgo cyn mynd i'r gwaith a Jeanette yn dod i lawr rywsut. Byddai Margaret yn deud '*Jeanette, I'm not taking you to work like that, you can get changed, your jumper is filthy. 'It's a clean jumper. 'No, it's not a clean jumper, change it.'*

Roedd y ddwy ohonynt yn byw gartref gyda'u mam a chwaer fach arall. Roedden nhw'n cerdded i'r ffatri gyda'i gilydd ond ar ôl i Margaret briodi, roedd Jeanette yn mynd i lawr efo genod eraill yn gweithio yno, fel Myfi Powell Jones (VN012), Lorraine Piper, neu Enid dros y ffordd.

Mae Margaret yn deud bod y ffatri yn lyfli "**swn i'n mynd yn ôl yno rŵan, 'taswn i'n cael yr un un criw.**" Roedd llawer o **swn o'r peiriannau** ond mae'n deud bod y lle yn iawn i weithio. Amser cinio roedden nhw'n mynd i gael sglodion o'r siop. Ar ôl symud i'r *cutting room*, ger y cyntedd, roedd hi'n agos i'r drws ac yn cael *orders* gan y genod "**Ydyn ni'n cael fish and chips heddiw o Wedgewoods?**" Mae'n cofio mynd un amser cinio efo bocsg gwag i ddod â'r *orders* yn ôl ynddo, ac aeth hi'n syth i mewn i'r *boss*. "**Where are you going?**" **For chips,**" medda fi. "**Chips? What are chips?**" **'Chips,**" medda fi, **'chips you eat!**" **'What are they?'** medda fo. **'Well they're potatoes like that, medda fi, 'and you slice them, then you slice them again like fingers, like that . . . and you put them in hot fat.'** **'I've never had chips,**" medda fo. Tynnu arna i oedd o, ie, pawb wedi cael chips, tydyn? **On i'n flin bod o'n dal fi yn ôl, achos roedd na ciw yn Wedgewoods, so oedd o rhyngof i a'r genod o'r Compact.**" Roedd merched y Compact yn cael bwyta tu allan, ond doedd merched y Corset ddim yn cael bwyta tu allan, dim ond yn y cantîn. "**Roedd merched y Compact amser cinio, yn yr haul, efo tyrbans a rolyrs yn eu gwalltiau a phan oedden ni'n pasio, roedden nhw'n mynd 'Oh, maen nhw'n dŵad, y bobol fawr!' Ha, ha, ond oedden ni'n nabod nhw i gyd, ac yn deud 'Hiya genod, tyrd 'mlaen.'** Ac roedden nhw yn eu hoferôls . . . gwaith budr oedd y Compact."

Doedd y ddwy ffatri ddim drws nesaf ond ddim yn bell, tua hyd 10 o dai. Roedd y ffatri Corona rhwng y ddwy, ac yn yr un lle, roedd ffatrioedd llechi, blawd a bisgedi.

Doedd dim rhaid i ferched ffatri Corsets gwisgo oferôla. "**Oedden ni'n posh, ha, ha.**"

47.00 Roedd rhyw fath o *first aid* yn y ffatri ond dydy Margaret ddim yn cofio neb yn cael damwain ddrwg. Roedd hi'n gweithio ar beiriant mawr yn y *cutting room*, roedd wedi cael ei hyfforddi gan fenyw fach o'r enw Jeannie Lovell. Roedd llwch yn dod o'r defnydd, meddai, achos roedd o wedi'i foldio ar y bwrdd. Gallai fod llawer o ddefnydd – yn dibynnu ar faint yr ordyr. Roedd yno ryw *designer* yno a oedd yn marcio'r top *layer* iddi hi. Roedd hi wedyn yn clipio hwnna ar y peiriant a thorri'r gweddill allan. Cafodd hi anaf ar ei bys un tro ond un arwynebol oedd e. Roedd hi yn eithaf bach ac roedd y bwrdd yn llydan ac weithiau roedd yn rhaid iddi fynd ar ben y bwrdd i gael gwared â rhyw ginc yn y defnydd. Gwnaeth hi hynny sawl gwaith heb ddiffodd y peiriant. Byddai hi'n torri allan ryw '*six dozen*' yn yr un patrwm ac wedyn eu hanfon nhw i fyny'r grisiau i gael eu gwnïo. Pethau hyll yr oedd y ffatri yn eu cynhyrchu, meddai, gan gynnwys staes rwber. Mae'n cofio bod Myfi yn modelu'r cynlluniau newydd a gofynnon nhw iddi hi hefyd, ond doedd hi ddim eisiau gwneud hynny. Modelu ar gyfer catalogau oedd hyn, heb ben y ferch tu mewn i'r staes, jyst i roi syniad o'r maint. Roedden nhw'n cynhyrchu '*waspies*' hefyd, staes bach ffansi fel roedd y '*filmstars*' yn eu gwisgo, a bras fel yr oeddynt yn moderneiddio. Roedd y *supervisor* yn tynnu'r lluniau, mae'n meddwl.

Roedd rhai dynion y gweithio yn y ffatri, un ohonynt yn torri'r defnydd i Margaret, gyda *blade*

mawr. Doedd ei pheiriant hi ddim yn ddigon cryf i dorri'r staes mewn darnau unigol, felly roedd yn rhaid i'r dyn yma wneud hynny, eu torri nhw allan mewn '*patches bach*', job drom.

Dywedodd Margaret stori am ddyn oedd y gweithio yno, ac yn canlyn hogan o'r Felinheli, ond doedd y boi yma ddim yn fodlon dweud pwy oedd hi. Roedd hyd yn oed mab y *boss* wedi gofyn a oedd o'n codi'r ferch yma o'r Felin bob bore. Roedd Margaret yn canlyn yn 14 oed, hogyn o Lanberis. Priododd hi pan oedd hi'n 19 oed. Roedd o yn y fyddin a phenderfynon nhw briodi pan oedd o '*on leave*' pan oedd wedi dychwelyd i gladdu ei dad. Roedd yn rhaid iddynt dalu 'saithdeg chwech' i gael priodi mewn *registry office*, meddai. Roedden nhw wedi talu unwaith i briodi ym mis Ebrill ond cafodd Wyn ei alw yn ôl i'r baracs ddiwedd Mawrth, felly roedd yn rhaid iddo ohirio a thalu eto.

Arhosodd Margaret efo'i mam am dipyn ar ôl i Wyn ddychwelyd i'r baracs, ond wedyn cafodd hi dŷ yn Llanberis. Parhaodd hi yn y ffatri tan iddi gael ei babi cyntaf, ond ar ôl hynny, doedd neb i ofalu am y plentyn yn Llanberis. Ar ôl tipyn, symudodd hi yn ôl i'r dref ac aeth hi yn ôl i'r ffatri corsets ran amser. Ond doedd o ddim yr un peth meddai, achos roedd y lle wedi mynd yn llawer llai nag o'r blaen. Roedd ganddi lot o waith, hefyd, a dwy ferch fach, ac roedd yn rhaid iddi ddod â nhw i fyny i dŷ ei mam bob bore, trwy'r gaeaf, a doedd y pres ddim ddigon, doedd hi ddim yn werth o. Roedd hi'n gweithio o naw tan dri ac yn gorfod mynd yn ôl i nôl y plant a mynd â nhw i'r fflat a gwneud bwyd erbyn i'r gŵr ddod adre am bump. Dim ond am chwe mis y bu hi yno'r ail dro, ac roedd hi'n ormod o drafferth i barhau. Gweithio mewn lle llechi yn Llanberis yr oedd ei gŵr ac wedyn yn Ferrodo.

Roedd Margaret yn y ffatri corsets am chwe blynedd yn y lle cyntaf, ac am chwe mis bedair blynedd ar ôl priodi. Roedd hi gartref gyda'r plant ac wedyn ar ôl iddynt fynd i'r ysgol yn gwneud swyddi a oedd yn gweithio o'u cwmpas nhw – e.e. yn glanhau tai pobl, mewn ysgol, y *cottage hospital*, ac wedyn fel *home help*, ac yn y diwedd, roedd hi'n gweithio efo pobl anabl.

Pan oedd hi'n ifanc roedd hi'n eithad swil - byth yn mynd allan i yfed gyda merched y ffatri er enghraifft. Mae'n dweud bod ganddi fwy o gyts nawr, yn enwedig ar ôl colli ei gŵr, Wyn. Doedd hi ddim yn gallu cynilo ei chyflog pan oedd hi yn y ffatri gan nad oedd yn ddigon mawr. Roedd hi'n gwario ei harian ar *make up* a dillad, ac mae'n cofio prynu cot newydd, hir - "**Rhywbeth on i byth wedi cael yn fy mywyd, ie, gwyn . . ac wedyn ges i got fel '*Princess Margaret nipped in at the waist.*'**" Roedd genod y ffatri yn mynd i Fali gyda'r nos, ond dim y hi. Un diwrnod roedd grŵp o ferched yn mynd i ben yr Wyddfa ond doedd mam Margaret ddim yn fodlon iddi hi fynd efo nhw, er ei bod hi eisiau, roedd hi'n 17-18 ar y pryd. **Roedd ei mam yn meddwl mai 'pobol comon' oedd yn mynd i fyny'r Wyddfa, a hogiau.**

**Doedd 'na ddim partïon Nadolig yn y ffatri, roedd y gweithwyr yn mynd i'r dafarn. Doedd dim partïon o gwbl. Dydy Margaret ddim yn cofio cael *bonus* erioed a dydy hi ddim yn cofio undeb yno, ond dydy hi ddim yn cofio streic chwaith. Dim ond atgofion hapus sydd ganddi am fod yno ac mae'n credu bod y genod i gyd yn teimlo'n hapus hefyd. Mae hi'n dweud bod y *bosses* yn iawn ond yn *strict*, ac 'yn sbïo trwy grac(iau) drysau.'**

Dywedodd hi fod *manager* yno, Mr Arnold, yn eistedd drws nesaf iddi ar y bwrdd yn y cantîn ac yn gofyn a oedd hi wedi dechrau ysmegu - roedd hi wedi dechrau yn 17 oed. "**Yes,**" meddai hi. "**Please don't,** medda fo. '**But,**" meddai Margaret, "**you smoke.**" '**That's why I'm telling you don't!**' '**I don't smoke much, you know,**" medda fi, "**I only smoke three or five.**" '**But they won't stay as three or five.**' Chymerodd Margaret ddim sylw - yn newid i'r Gymraeg ac yn deud bod o'n ddyn gwirion, yn mwydro bod fi'n smocio. Fel yna on i.'

Dim ond un llygad oedd gynno fo ond fo oedd y dyn a oedd yn sbïo drwy'r craciau yn y drws. **Roedd o'n ddyd lyfli, meddai, ond roedd y merched i gyd yn ei ofni, ac os oeddent yn siarad gormod neu'n canu, byddai'r rhybudd yn dod 'Mae un llygad yn sbïo arnon ni.' a phawb yn mynd yn ddistaw.** Ond doedd dim ots gan y *bosses* os oedd y merched yn siarad, os oedd y peiriannau yn mynd o hyd. Roedd y merched yn siarad ac yn canu drwy'r dydd. **"Ac yn yr haf, a'n ffenestri ni i gyd yn agored, a'r hogiau yn mynd am eu *jobs*, a dyna'r genod *pheeeew*, wislo trwy'r ffenestr, ha, ha, ac roedd yr hogiau yn gweiddi'n ôl. Pethau fel 'na. Oh, good times! On i ddim yn un o rheina, 'chwaith, on i'n rhy *shy*."**

Hyd: 1 awr 15 munud

### *English summary*

## **The Corset Factory, Caernarfon (1954 - 1960)**

**Interviewee:** VN014 Margaret Williams

**Date:** 13: 02: 2014

**Interviewer:** Kate Sullivan on behalf of Women's Archive Wales

Margaret was born on 30 December, 2014. She's from Caernarfon and had three brothers and three sisters. Her mother worked in a Corona soft drinks factory and her salary kept the family. Her father didn't work. All the children were in school at that time, and her father would prepare food for them all by the time they got home, although he never washed the dishes. This was the children's job. On a Friday and Saturday, Corona would bring the lemonade round the houses and everybody would buy a bottle and have it with their Sunday lunch.

She went to school in Caernarfon and left when she was fifteen years old. The children who had passed their exams could go on to the grammar school. Margaret remembers the headmaster going to Myfi Powell Jones' (VN012) house and trying to persuade her to go to college, but Myfi wanted to go out to work. **Margaret had no choice but go out to look for work when she was fifteen. She wanted to be a nurse and her intention was to try and achieve this when she was seventeen.** She received burns as a child and had to go to the hospital in Liverpool for a skin graft. The experience made a lasting impression on her. She wanted to be a children's or old people's nurse but in the end she didn't pursue it, even though her father was very supportive of her intentions. When she was in her thirties, she helped in the cottage hospital occasionally and the Sister there suggested she should do the SEN course, but she didn't feel confident enough.

**8.00 The factory was her only option.** 'Mam had said straight away, "Once you're fifteen, you're going out to look for work." She went down to the corset factory with Myfi to ask for work. They had an informal interview in the reception area. The son of the manager told the both of them in his plummy accent that they would hear from him before the end of the week. She received a letter on the Saturday saying her application had been successful, but it had Myfi's name

on it. (Myfi had received her letter.) They both started work at the same time.

Margaret could sew because her mother had bought her a machine when she was little. She was quite nervous starting work but Myfi was more confident. Margaret worried about not being able to do the work. She remembers her first day when she and Myfi went upstairs where there were 144 working, the sound of the machines, and the girls chatting. Her and Myfi sat together at the training table. One lunch time, Margaret and Myfi went to the toilets together and came back holding hands like school girls. It was a good feeling when they had their first pay packet - they had to work a week in hand so they received it in the second week – and putting the little brown envelope into her mother's hand.

Her pay was about £1.60. If they worked overtime, sometimes until six o'clock, they received an extra shilling. Margaret and her two brothers gave their wage packets unquestioningly to their mother. They received a cost of living pay rise every year, which her mother would also get from her. She thinks that she was earning £3 - £4 by the time she left.

17.25 She was trained to do straight sewing, and to do binding and hems. The training lasted until they could handle the machine.

Myfi and Margaret were separated because they talked too much. Margaret went to 'binding' to work with older girls. She wasn't keen on the binding machine with its double needles.

When she was 17, Nansi the supervisor became ill. **"We were scared of her. We used to go downstairs to smoke. Nansi herself smoked, although we didn't find that out until we got to know her better. ... Somebody would shout "Nansi Fawr is coming!", and we'd all run into the toilet and lock the door, and the place would be full of smoke. ... She would leave us for a little while to have a few puffs then she would chase us all back upstairs as if we were school children. .... I caught her more than once having a smoke in there herself."**

20.20 Nansi Fawr was the supervisor in the binding section, in the middle room. Glenys was the supervisor in the stitching room (the first room) and also in the steel room where they put the steels into the corsets. There was a small room where they made suspenders. If a worker was good at her job they tended to keep her on the same job. She was trained in the stitching room first, and then on the binding in the second room, while Myfi stayed on the stitching. There was a supervisor at the top of the table and this is where the girls learned their work. They trained on corsets that needed repairs.

When Nansi was seventeen and a half she was called to the office to speak to Mr Huntington, "the big man". He said, ***'Right, Margaret, we're going to offer you an opportunity now to be a stand-in supervisor but you're not to tell anybody because Nansi is ill. So seeing that you've worked with Nansi on the front, we're going to leave you there. Do you think you're capable?'*** She said, ***'I'm not going to tell the girls off, you know'***. They offered her a pay rise and said, ***'you're not to tell the girls, because you won't be a supervisor when Nansi comes back. We just want to see how you can work and send work down.'*** She said, ***'I'll give it a try.'*** She got the job and the extra money – it was about half a crown. Nansi came back after a few weeks and she was worried that she was still earning more than the other girls. She enjoyed working as a supervisor and worked as a manageress in other places after that.

**"Some bosses humiliate people on the floor, but I didn't like that." ... I had no authority in the corset factory ... the girls in the room were much older than me. The only thing I did if I**



**didn't like their work was take it back and I'd put a cross where I wanted them rectified and I'd say 'you've missed here' or 'you've twisted the binding here' .”**

The majority of the girls were from the town although there were girls from Felinheli, Penygroes and Talsarn. She made many friends there with the girls who had come to work there from the countryside. She still sees the girls around town.

27.00 Margaret's sister was blind, and had been to a special school in Liverpool. Margaret says she asked Mr Huntington if there was a job there for Jeanette and she went to work in the steel room.

**What actually happened was that Jeanette knew a woman who worked with blind people, ensuring that they got fair play. This woman was in the house one day when Margaret returned from work. She asked her what she did in the factory. The woman phoned the factory and Margaret was called into the office and asked if there was a job there that her sister could do. Margaret said, 'She could go into the steel room. She could feel with her hands and she will be able to do it.' Jeanette got on well in the steel room and worked better than many of the sighted girls because she didn't get distracted.**

Margaret was moved to the cutting room, where she had to use a large machine to cut the corsets. This room was downstairs and Jeanette was upstairs, and for the first two weeks Margaret had to go and fetch her to go to the canteen. The bosses were scared that she would fall but after she had found her bearings she would go to the toilets on her own. After two weeks Jeanette said, **“You don't have to come up for me, Mags. I'll be okay now.”** Jeanette would feel her way around but didn't go everywhere in the factory, only where she worked, to the canteen, the toilets and the cloak room. Jeanette made many friends there who took her out, permed her hair, and taught her to fry an egg – none of which her mother approved of. Her mother wasn't happy that Jeanette had gone to the factory but she was glad that she'd found work.

32.00 **The woman who worked with the blind had heard that Jeanette hadn't had a pay rise like the other girls even though she was doing the same work. She went to see Mr Huntington to complain and Margaret was called into the office and accused of going behind their backs on the matter. They turned to the woman and said, “She can't do much, because whatever she knows is what Margaret has taught her.” She replied that she hadn't taught her anything and said, “Jeanette does more work in that steel room than your sighted people. Have you checked how many suspenders she can go in a day? Well, the others would take two to three days to match my sister. And no I don't tell her what to do, she's her own person, she's a clever young girl.”** Jeanette got the pay rise in the end with back pay as well. C

Jeanette started in the factory when she was fifteen years old and left to get married to a man from Birkenhead when she was twenty. She'd met him on a trip to Torquay where she'd gone to look for a guide dog. Her mother was over-protective and didn't like him but they went to live with her after getting married. He left her after twenty nine years. She wasn't given any special treatment in the factory. The two sisters were very close – Margaret would help her to get dressed.

The two sisters lived at home with their mother and little sister. They walked to work together but after Margaret got married Jeanette walked to the factory with Myfi Powell Jones(VN012), Lorraine Piper, or Enid from across the way.

Margaret would go back to the factory tomorrow if she could work with the same crew of people. The machines were noisy but it was a good place to work. They would go and get chips from the

chip shop at lunch time. After moving to the cutting room she would take the girls' orders. There would be a race to Wedgewoods the chippy between the corset factory girls and the girls from the compact factory. The compact girls were allowed to eat outside their factory but the corset girls had to eat in their canteen. **"The Compact girls would be sitting in the sun lunch time in their turbans and rollers and when we passed would shout 'Oh, here they come, the important people'.** They would be there in their overalls, as it was dirty work in the compact factory. But they all knew each other and it was good natured. The two factories were only ten houses or so apart. The Corona factory was situated between the two, and in the same area there were slate, flour and biscuit factories. The girls in the corset factory didn't have to wear an overall.

47.00 Margaret doesn't remember anybody having a serious accident. She worked on a large machine in the cutting room and had been trained by a woman called Jeannie Lovell. There would be dust from the material. A designer marked the top layer of the folded fabric. She would then clip that onto the machine and cut the rest out. She hurt her finger once but only superficially. She was quite small and the table was wide so sometimes she had to get on the table to get rid of any kinks in the fabric. She did this several times without switching off the machine. She would cut out six dozen in the same pattern and then send them upstairs to be sewn. The factory produced unsightly things like rubber corsets. Myfi modelled some of the new designs, and they asked her too but she refused. The photos of the corsets were for catalogues to give an idea of their size and didn't include the girl's head. They produced waspies as well which were the fancy corsets worn by film stars, and as the factory modernised when it started making bras. She thinks the supervisor took the photographs.

There were men working in the factory, one of whom cut fabric with a large blade for Margaret. Her machine wasn't big enough to cut the corsets into individual pieces.

One of the men was courting a girl from Felinheli but wouldn't tell anyone who she was. Margaret had a boyfriend from Llanberis when she was fourteen years old. She married when she was nineteen. He was in the army and they decided to marry when he was home on leave to attend his father's funeral. Margaret stayed with her mother for a while after Wyn returned to barracks, but soon got a house in Llanberis. She remained in the factory until she had her first baby. She had nobody to take care of the baby for her in Llanberis. After a while she moved back to town and returned to work in the corset factory on a part time basis. It wasn't the same and she struggled with child care arrangements. It was too much trouble for her to continue. Her husband was working in the slate place in Llanberis and then in Ferodo.

Margaret was in the corset factory for six years the first time and for six months the second time. After that she stayed at home with the children and when they went to school got jobs that fitted in around them – eg cleaning houses, in a school, the cottage hospital and then as a home help, and in the end she worked with disabled people.

When she was young she was quite shy and never went out drinking with the factory girls. She has more guts now, especially after losing her husband Wyn. She couldn't save money during the time in the factory because her wage was too low. She spent her money on make-up and clothes and remembers buying a long white coat - **"Something I'd never had in my life, yes a white coat ... and then I got a coat like Princess Margaret, nipped in at the waist".** The girls would go to Valley for a night out but she wouldn't go with them. One day a group of girls were going to climb Snowdon but Margaret's mother wouldn't allow her to go with them even though she was about seventeen or eighteen years old. Her mother thought that the people who went up Snowdon were common and was worried there might be boys there.

**There were no Christmas parties in the factory itself, the workers went to the pub. She doesn't remember ever getting a bonus. Neither does she remember a union being there, or any strikes taking place. She thinks the girls were happy there. The bosses were okay but strict, and would spy on them through the crack of the door.**

One of the managers there, Mr Arnold, advised her not to smoke even though he smoked herself. She argued that she only smoked three or five a day but he argued this would soon become more, but she didn't listen. This manager only had one eye and would look through the cracks in the door. He was a nice man but all the girls were scared of him. If they were singing or talking a lot one of them would say 'One eye is watching us', and they would all go quiet. The bosses didn't mind if they chatted, as long as the machines didn't stop. The girls chatted and sang all day. In the summer some of the girls would whistle at boys going past, and they would shout back, although Margaret claims she wasn't one of these girls. She was too shy.

***Duration 1 hour 15 minutes.***