

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/ LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI

**Currans, Lionites Spectacle Cases, Spillers and Bakers, Slumberland, Fletchers –
Caerdydd/ Cardiff**

Interviewee: VSE079 Madeline Sedgwick

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Interviewer: Catrin Edwards for Woman's Archive of Wales / ar ran
Archif Menywod Cymru

00:00 Can you tell me your name and date of birth please?

Madeline Sedgewick. Born 1929

00:19 Could you tell me a little bit about your background. Where you were born, your mother, your father, your background and any siblings, brothers and sisters that kind of thing.

I was born in Angelina Street in the docks Cardiff, which was known as Tiger Bay. I was born next door to what was called Angelina Street Mission. My mother had 2 rooms at the time in the house next door to Angelina Street Mission and then when I was a little bit older we moved further up Angelina street and had a further 2 rooms. We were there for a while and then my mother had a chance of a house which was still in the bay, called Francis Street. Then because we needed more room we got a house down the Pier Head way, down what was known as the docks. This house was in Dudley Street and from there I went to School in Eleanor Street, which I went till I left school. When I left school I went to work in a hairdressers in the Kiosk.

1:37 How old were you when you left school?

When I left school I was 14.

Would you like to have stayed on?

I don't think there was any opportunity to stay on in those days. I think the only opportunity was if you passed a scholarship and you could go to Howards Gardens or somewhere like that. But most parents couldn't afford the uniforms, so a lot of children who did pass couldn't

go anyway because they couldn't afford the uniforms. Then we moved down from the bay to Dudley Street and then it was the war, the war came 1939. They started then making shelters, but before they started making shelters my father was at sea and me and my mum used to go to the castle and you used to go down underneath in the castle and stay the night. So we used to go and take a blanket and things like that and we went...

2:49 Sorry what was the castle then?

The castle in Cardiff castle

Oh that castle!

Yes Cardiff Castle we used to walk up and go there. We'd stay the night there and then we'd come out in the morning and go home. Then gradually they started building shelters and if you had a garden you could have an Anderson shelter. We didn't have enough ground so we had a big table shelter inside. So we didn't need to go to the town to shelter and when we were in school they gave us a test and it was see if the raids were on when you were in school you'd see if you could run home in time to get into your house. I had to do this and I ran and at the time there was Margaret Street which was a little way from where I lived and this German plane came down machine gunning and I always remember I ran into Mrs Millers she pulled me in and her son Mark who used to go to school with us she took us under the stairs until it was over. I went home and I was really shaken. My mother said what's the matter so my mother went up to the school and there was holy hell to pay. So they never sent me home when there were any air raids. People don't realise but there were quite a lot of things that used to go on in the docks when there was an air raid. One day we were going to swimming in Gilford Crescent we used to go there and we were walking down and our teacher ran us quick into this shelter that was by there because the air raid was on and then when it was finished they were bringing men off the ship dead because the bombs got down and blown and some horrible things. There used to be a neighbour who delivered across the road from us and she thought it would be safer to move away from the docks. Where they moved to they got bombed and her and her daughter were killed. So they would have been safer staying where they were. But that's the way it was. The thing was it was everybody sort of helped one another. It was like community of people that were all happy together. Never any animosity or anything. It was always lovely and the docks was one place I could never understand why people used to say we weren't good down the docks, because it was one of the best places you could go. I can always remember whenever I walked even when I was older and went to a dance somebody would always shout you ok Madeline or you ok girl? Yes thank you. You'd walk down and you had respect and it was great one of the best places.

6:03 How old were you when the war finished?

When the war finished I was in 1939 I was 10 when the war started so I would have been about 15 or 16.

6:22 So you went to work in this hairdressers did you and then when did you start working in the factory then?

That was a few years later. I went into Currans and then they were doing enamel.

You went to Currans then so it would have been about 1940, do you remember what year it was?

Yes it would be about that, it would be about somewhere about that. How old would I have been? Because before I went Currans and then yes it would have been about 1948.

7:09 So 1948?

Yes because I was there for a while and then...

Ok I'll just ask you about Currans first. So when you went to Currans did you know anyone who worked there?

I didn't exactly know anyone when I first went to work there it was just some girls from the valleys they would talk to you and things like that, but I wasn't there for an awful long time.

7:39 No but how did you get the job?

Well I went for an interview and I got the job, they gave me a job which was surprising because once they were very racial.

Were they?

Currans yes. Because going back over the years when I was too young then there were girls who went there and they wouldn't get a job if you were a black person. And yet they were Catholics, they were Catholics they were. You wouldn't get a job there.

8:17 Was it because you were black?

Yes they were colour prejudice at the time and then things changed automatically; I suppose they would have to because things were getting different. I remember girls, one particular girl who died not so long ago, Vera she was telling me about the times when she was in the forces as well she was. But she was telling me about the times she went to Currans and you wouldn't get a job because you were black, there were quite a few girls in the docks who couldn't get a job.

8:58 So when you went there, there wasn't a lot of black people there then?

No. There were a few more people in there then. On saying that I remember when not long after I left school me and this girl she was like an Arab descent, her mother was Welsh mind. But she was very pale and we went for a job in Littlewoods and I went in for the interview and this lady interviewed me and she said we haven't got any vacancies at the moment and I'm thinking well you'll advertising for staff. She said we haven't got any vacancies at the moment but she said we'll get in touch with you if anything comes up. So I came out and Alison went in. I waited because we were going to walk down home together, she never got it. We waited and a white girl went in and got the job. This is what it was like. Now when I go around and I've been to London and I see black girls serving in Next and big stores and I

think that's wonderful. It's not the colour of a person's skin; sometimes they were more educated than the person who had the job really. But it was just that, that stopped them, but it doesn't work anymore.

10:33 So did you know, you know when you went for this interview in Currans, did you know that they had this attitude towards black people?

I didn't know exactly at the time to be honest and I went and I got the job in the enamelling and everything. But I didn't know at the time it was only later when I heard and that was through an interview. We were interviewed and these ladies came on and said what it was like for Currans. I think but that was years later because they were older than me.

11:17 So you got the job and were you trained then. Do you remember what the interviews were about?

Well it was more or less they explained to you what you were going to do and that you would be working a machine and everything like that, which it was. You did things chamber pots and mugs and things. I was on pots doing it and then somebody else would do something else and like that. It was ok the girls and that were friendly and it was ok, but in the end it just wasn't me.

12:05 Did they train you, did you have training?

Yes you would have to have training. I've done a few jobs in my years. I once worked for a firm called Lionites over in Golander Road and they done spectacle cases and jewellery cases and you had to learn a machine and I learnt that, I stayed there a while. They were nice girls a lot of them were from Newtown.

12:32 Newtown North Wales?

No Newtown here in Cardiff.

Oh right.

You know when you go over the black bridge. Do you know the black bridge; well we used to call it the black bridge. It's you know that black bridge you go over and you're in Splott we used to always call that the black bridge.

12:49 What on Beresford Road?

It's on well when you come over it you come into like it would be like Tyndall Street way.

Yes I see.

13:06 So where was Newtown then sort of Tyndall Street way then?

Yes it was Tyndall Street way and Herbert Street in those days. As you come over Spillers bridge as we called it from Bridge Street there's a Salvation Army home there, come over the bridge which is different now and you turned right like that on that side you went into

Herbert Street and had a lot of families. Then when you went further up you had Helen Street and Alder Street and it was all known as little island because it was where all the Irish people lived. Around Adamstown and Adams Street and all there. It used to be called little island because there was so many Irish people came to live there and they were lovely people.

14:06 Before we leave Currans take me through a day of what you had to do. How did you get to work?

I was lucky because Currans,... I lived in Dudley Street and I walked around the corner into Evelyn Street, go straight up the top just cross that there used to be like a bridge years ago that used to open for the sand boats to go down and all I had to do was go across there and down the side of Clarence Road School and I could walk to work I could. I was really lucky because it wasn't far from where I lived.

14:47 How long did that take you?

It would take no more than 10 or 15 minutes. It wasn't very far at all.

14:54 When did you have to be in there in the morning?

You had to in there by 8 o'clock.

Clocking in?

Yes clocking in.

15:02 So tell me what you used to do during the day then?

During the day you would go in and you'd have your overall on and all that. You'd get to your machine and you'd start doing whatever you were doing. You could be on pots or you could be on plates or whatever, different things you were doing.

15:24 What did you do to them; I mean what were you doing with these plates?

What I used to do mainly, I used to do the handles on the pots at the time. Then you'd have to wait for the thing. If you were doing plates as well then there would be the rim going round like that and it would go in a machine. But I would mainly do the pots with the handles, the chamber pots.

15:56 I see how would you attach those then?

You had them like that and you had a machine that would sort of jam into the work.

16:08 Did you say you were enamelling them?

They were in the enamel wear; it was all in the enamel wear. That's all they did after the war. Before that it was munitions and then after that when they went back they went back to enamelling, so it was all different machines doing all different things. Cups and mugs rather like a mug, plates and all sorts of things which in those days were quite popular. That's what

our mothers used to have mainly, the enamel plate for cooking and I used to do buckets as well. They used to have the enamel buckets as well.

16:57 Do you remember what your breaks were and things like that?

Pardon.

Your breaks.

Your breaks you used to get a small break in the morning and then you'd get about half an hour for dinner and then you'd go back to work and it didn't seem long before you would be clocking out to go home and it was good because I only had to walk.

17:23 What time did you finish?

I would finish about 5ish.

That was quite a long day then?

Yes.

17:32 Did they have a canteen?

Yes they had a canteen.

Is that where you used to eat?

Yes that's where you could go to get something to eat.

Was it reasonably priced?

It was 10% but you could take your own sandwiches anyway.

17:50 Because it was still rations then.

Yes rationing. Because my mother always used to do me sandwiches and stuff. I always used to go home to a nice hot dinner.

18:03 Do you remember how much you were paid in those days?

I've got to think it wasn't all that much. I'd say we used to get paid about £2.50 or something like that because we didn't used to get a lot of money.

18:35 Was that a basic wage did you get peace work on top of that or was that your wage?

That was your wage.

18:46 What did you used to do with that money then, did you used to give it to your mother?

Yes my mother I used to give my mother money and then I would put so much away from what I wanted for clothes and then it was the dance money and that was it. That was end of it then. Me and my friends used to go to the fish shop on the corner of Stewart Street, Mrs

Morgan and get a bag of scrumps and we'd go down then eating the scrumps and talking. There were different things that we used to do for nothing. It used to cost you about a penny for a bag of scrumps. All the things you'd do because you never had the money anyway. But it never made any difference to you because you were happy, I think happier.

19:52 What were the conditions like in the factory because it was an old munitions factory. Was it a good place to work?

It was alright but it wasn't a good place to work because the noise factor was awful. I wouldn't say it was a good place to work.

20:26 Did they play music on top of that?

No I don't think so; I don't think we had any music.

20:27 So what was the noise then?

It was like the machines, so many machines and men doing work there and these big machines and everything. A lot of noise.

20:39 How many of you worked there in those days?

There were a good few girls working there then.

Was it mainly girls or women?

Men as well doing things, but it were the bigger majority was women.

20:57 It was like hundreds was it?

Yes it would be about 100 maybe 150. But you know that I mean I'd say that many.

It wasn't massive but it was quite big?

Yes.

21:13 Do you remember were you unionised, did you have a union?

Did I have immunisation?

No union was there a union in the factory, you know like a trade union?

A union I don't know if there was i never belonged to it, there probably was because they were coming up then. Because other places I worked in were unionised.

21:45 Do you think they were good employers, what did you think of them as employers?

Not a lot.

21:57 Did you have any problems when you were there, racial problems?

No I didn't, I didn't have any I've got to admit. It was just what I found out afterwards about what went on and I realised that probably they had to change their attitude because there were things for equality, racial things that people were getting more jobs and getting into more different jobs. A lot of black people getting more higher up jobs and things.

22:42 I suppose the war changed attitudes?

Yes definitely changed attitudes because then we had West Indians coming over in the army and air force it was all different.

And black GI's.

That's right, you had all sorts the Gurkha's it was a different ball game, the Americans. Things had to change.

23:11 Broadening people's horizons I suppose.

The only thing that didn't change was the Americans. The white Americans were still... it was still hard for the black American.

They still have what..., sorry?

It was still hard for the black Americans because they never acknowledged them, the white Americans they never liked it.

Weren't they segregated?

Yes they were segregated, that was so stupid people getting killed.

23:47 So how long did you stay then, in Currans.

I was in Currans for about 3 months. By then I'd had enough.

24:00 So where did you go then?

I went from Currans then and went to Spillers. I was quite happy there. They had a nice fore lady and all the girls from Splott were nice. And we used to do the flour and what it was in those days they had a shop and you'd take the flour down and fold it over then it would go through and there was a girl on the machine and she'd machine it. Then there was another girl on packing. They used to have music while you were working there. Then every hour you would change to the next job. Then you could go over to the dog biscuits and that was a nightmare. They came down so fast. Then they brought in this big machine it took 1 girl to watch this side going through to make sure it didn't get stuck. The other girl would operate it. So you had 2 girls instead of 5 or 6 girls. But the times it would break down and the times you had to ask her to stop because the glue on the thing because it wasn't working then it was stuck. The times they would have to stop that machine and you would have 2 girls on the end packing the flour from there. I suppose as time went on it probably got better.

25:36 So the big machine was for the flour not for the dog biscuits?

Yes it was used for the flour.

25:43 So what did it do just put the flour in bags?

Yes there was like a thing the bag would go on then the flour would come down and then it would go around and there would be a thing to flip it over with the glue coming to stick it down. You had to watch if you were on duty there and tell the operator if something was wrong. You had to watch all the time. Then you had the 2 girls down here packing the flour away in the boxes, ready to go to the shops or the factories.

26:15 So when this big machine came were people laid off?

They wasn't laid off, because obviously it was a new thing but I would imagine eventually they would. But what happened then they put us on shifts. They put us on 6 till 2 and 2 till 10 shifts. That might have been a way that they cut down. Because half of the girls were going 6 till 2, then 2 till 10. That was a way of cutting down on the staff.

26:59 either that or they were making more with the same people, do you know what I mean?

Yes because it was going till night, whereas we used to finish 5:00 o'clock.

And the factory would shut.

Yes there was nothing working.

27:14 So you used to work shifts then?

Yes I used to work shifts.

27:16 So how did that work?

Well the funniest thing was then again I come through the docks and walk over to Spillers from there. When i was on the 6 till 2 I would go over there then. On 2 till 10 I could get the bus. Walk up to Portmanmoor Road and home. It was alright I enjoyed the work there. It was ok the only thing that was horrible is when you see the rats. Because of the grain and the river. We had the rats that were horrible. I jumped I think I could have done the Olympics, the girls would be hysterical.

28:11 So where was Spillers, was it where Spillers and Bakers were?

Yes I know they've got flats there now. That's exactly where it was.

28:23 So you just made flour, you packed flour then and you packed dog biscuits?

We had dog biscuits. Say the flour was here well over on that side was the dog biscuits they were separated. Separate areas. I used to like it there it was good.

28:42 So how long did it take you to walk up from the docks; I mean Portmanmoor Road used to go all the way down to the docks?

Yes but the thing is when you think about the docks now it was different then. I mean they've shifted the Norwegian Church, everything is different. You could go to the dock gates and go through and walk over and you would go to Spillers. The way you'd go over and if you were going in the morning it was good because you could cut through there.

29:19 You could cut through the docks?

Yes you could go through the docks and come out into Spillers.

That was ok with you cutting through?

Yes it was ok then.

29:31 You can't go through the docks now?

Well it used to be then. There used to be the Flying Angel which used to be the Seaman's mission on the big gates and a policeman stood there and checking everything that went through. It went back and fore and everything when I used to go years ago. We'd used to go to dances in the Flying Angel and they used to have dances every so often it used to be good.

30:04 So how many of you worked in Spillers and Bakers?

There must have been about 12 or 14 of us and there were still some girls on the dog biscuits as well. It wasn't massive but there were a few girls. Then there were this other girls that worked on the machine and you had this girl then to pack as well. It wasn't massive like loads and loads of girls.

30:48 Was it mainly women?

Yes it was women because the men worked down underneath with the grain, the sacks for the flour. They used to work doing the grain, the ships would come in. See the ships could come in at the side and they used to unload the grain there and bring it in and then that would go into flour.

31:16 Was the grain milled there as well?

Yes it was milled there. That's what is; Spillers Mills they used to do the mill for the farm.

31:28 So the grain would come in on the ship from wherever, anywhere in particular?

Yes the men would take and unload the sacks and then bring it in and then they had the machines and then the grain would come through the hoppers and the thing. It would click then the amount goes in and then you'd get the next bag ready for the click. Because to would come through from the mill. Because there were a few men who used to work there.

32:06 So did the men work in the mill then?

Yes they worked in the mill and unloading and all like that.

32:15 Where did the dog biscuits come from then, did somebody used to make them there?

Yes I think they must have made them there. They used to come through as well, just the same off the hopper. they were fast though you had to be quick with them. They used to make all them. Do you remember, you wouldn't because you're not on that road are you? Because I'm 85.

Yes I'm 61.

You might not. Years ago they used to have the dog biscuits in a pack and they used to have Spillers on there. You know Spillers I used to call the stuff for dogs used to be Spillers.

Yes I sort of remember that you know.

They used to have Spillers on there.

33:10 Did you have to wear overalls or an uniform or something when you were there?

No we used to wear turbans on your head because the flour and that and the dust.

33:25 Did you have to wear protection?

No. We didn't use to have protection it was pretty good actually we never had any problems.

I'm just thinking of the flour.

Yes the flour. No we never used to have any problems because when you put it under the hopper and it went in you know the girls was taking it and putting it over, I used to like that, the sewing machine I used to love my time on there. They used to come and you would have to sew through. It was like a thing, twine sort of thing. Because years ago that how it used to be, things were sewn across.

34:07 So they used to sew up the bags of flour?

Yes they'd come and the top part would go through the machine, the next one. Then the girls would be there packing.

34:22 So was it paper the, the bags?

Yes it was paper bags.

34:28 So how long were the days there then? Oh yes you said you did shifts.

They used to be early. We used to go early in the morning at 8 and finish about 5. Then it went over to shifts, 2 till 10 and 6 till 2.

24:42 Did they have a canteen or something there?

Yes they had a canteen.

34:50 Did they have a union there?

Yes we had a trade union there, Maggie. We used to pay every week to Maggie. It wasn't much, but then wages weren't much.

35:11 Maggie was a shop steward was she?

Yes she was the one in charge. If we had any complaints we went to Maggie. She was a character.

35:22 So you were all members of the union?

Yes that was the one place where we did have a union.

35:27 Do you remember what union it was?

I don't remember what union it was, but I remember we did have a union there.

35:33 What were the conditions like there, do you think they were ok?

It wasn't bad for a factory. It was a nice feeling there you know. The girls were all nice we used to be singing; well it was work as well as play time, doing all work and be singing away. Then we'd have a little conversation while were going, it was a nice job, I liked it because it was happy. I found Currans quite miserable.

36:13 Did you go there around 1949 then to Spillers?

Yes to Spillers.

36:22 Were you allowed to talk and things while you were working?

Yes we were in Spillers, we had a lovely fore woman called Gladys and I remember once I had my purse pinched and it had my dinner money in it for Spillers. All I had in there was my dinner money and that because we never had a lot of dinner money. I said to Gladys, my purse has been nicked Gladys so I haven't got any money for my dinner. She said don't worry about that and she gave me 3 shillings. So I said to her I'll give it to you back. Don't worry about that's alright. I get my dinner I go home and tell my mother and my mother said right and the next day I had the 3 shillings to give back to her. Because my mother didn't like owing anybody. I know it was struggle for her to give me that extra 3 shillings, but I gave it back. I mean she was a lovely fore lady i couldn't fault her. She wasn't nasty or anything. I think that's why we all worked so hard and worked well, because it was a nice happy environment.

37:47 So do you think you were treated well by the firm or was it the individual?

I think it was ok we never had any nastiness or anything like that it was always nice. It was one of the nicest jobs I had.

38:06 Do you remember how much you were paid there?

I think it was about £3 something. Then after that I got a job then down neat where I lived in the docks in a firm which done slumber arm beds. I used to do the matting on the machines

that went over it. I was there for quite a few years. That wasn't very good work because it was quite dusty. But I was there for a few years but I felt I had enough then. I don't know if you remember it but there was Fletchers Cleaners, the one day cleaners the first one day cleaners in Cardiff. Churchill boys opened it and they wanted someone in the factories so I went to get the job and they said no we're letting you go in a factory you are too smart we need someone in the office, you can go in the office. So I said well I've never worked in an office before. They said its ok you' soon pick it up and I did and that's where I stayed until I got married. I had a lovely job there I used to work every morning dressed smart, answering the phone doing all the invoices for the different shops. Sometimes I would go to a shop if the manageress hadn't turned up and run the shop, close it up and everything. It was lovely I loved it.

39:40 So that was Fletchers Cleaners?

Yes that was Fletchers dry cleaners; they started off in St Johns Square as we used to know it. It was near where there used to be Alders and Marcrofts years ago by the Queen Street Arcade. They opened shops in Swansea; there was one in City Road. They opened shops all around the County. Port Talbot all around. Vans would come in with loads of cleaning, invoices and you used to have to check all the invoices. I used to love. It was nice getting to work at 9:00 o'clock on the bus.

40:24 Going back then when did you leave Spillers to begin with and why?

I think what it was I got fed up with the shift work, that's what I think it was. Especially 6 till 2 and 2 till 10. You come home at 2 and you were shattered and your friends would say and you'd say I'm too tired and hats when I realised I needed to get a day job. I would have stayed there if it had been a day job for a while. I did shifts for a while but it was starting to get to much it was too much. It was like I didn't have a life, I was tired and that.

41:14 What about your social life did you used to go out with women from the factory?

I never went out with anybody from Currans. When I was in Spillers I was friends with all the girls but these 2 girls, from Bargoed and they asked me if I wanted to go up there because there was going to be this party. So I asked my mum she said as long as you get home safe, but my mum said if you go on a train and if its late and the buses are not there I want you to get a taxi. If you haven't got enough money I'll sort it when you get home, I'll always remember her saying that. I went to this party in Bargoed, Dilly's and Marion has asked me and it was lovely, they were lovely people. I come back on the bus and as it happened I got the bus at the bus station and it was too late so I got a taxi and when I got home I had to run to my mother she gave me the money for the taxi, it was 3 shillings and she said I'm glad you done that. Well I said other than that I would have had to walk home and it was a bit late. That was about the only time I really went out with the girls from Spillers, but we were always really good friends working. But they asked you to things and that but I always remember going to Bargoed to the party.

43:00 So there were a few women from the valleys working in Spillers from Bargoed?

When I was in Spillers.

Yes there were a few women from there because you said

From the valleys yes there were a few from the valleys used to work there. Dilys was funny I would laugh she was a character, her sister you would never think they were sisters they were really different.

43:38 What about holidays then did you have proper holidays when you worked in Spillers?

You had holidays, but do you know what; when you had holidays they had 2 weeks. They would take everything out of it so by the time everything was taken out of it like tax and whatever, stamp, all you left was equivalent to one week's wages really. Because there was so much taken off you. You never had a lot of money to go anywhere. I did used to go sometimes on day trips with some of friends and things like that. But I remember when I was working in the bedding factory me and this girl went to London and we booked to stay in this hotel off the Edgware Road. We get there and booked in. We gets up in the morning have a hot breakfast and goes out looking around. I don't know what it was but every place you passed there was this horrible smell of this oil cooking, it would turn your stomach. We go back to the hotel and they said that we would have to leave because they had over booked. So we had to try and find a different hotel for a couple of nights to stay. We went around and I was really angry and every time I smelt this oil cooking i didn't want anything. We went to St James' park to see the changing of the guard and the next thing I woke up under a tree with people all around me. I must have fainted from the smell. We find this lady she had a room and it was lovely and clean. She's got single beds in there and everything. We said that would be alright for us and it wasn't long before this guy said if you want good food you should go to this pub. Well we went to this pub and we had this cooked meal and it was the best I'd ever had it was lovely. Then we go back for the night in this house, beautiful house you know those lovely big Georgian looking houses. We go into our room and we never slept because there were little mice running around the room. We were on the bed like this. We were saying its ok we're going home tomorrow. We get on the first train the next day and my mother says what happened then. I said mam please don't go there. It was funny that was, it was different then, not so much people around then. I know you had to be careful who you spoke to and what you did. This hotel was by Marble Arch everything was quite handy to get to different places. Then my friend said she wanted to go and see a friend in Ilford. So we get on a bus and it's a good way outside of London. We gets off she can't remember the address, so we never see the friend because we have to get back on the bus and get back into London. It was a nightmare that London trip, it was so funny.

47:39 So what did you do when you were in the bedding factory, what kind of work were you doing?

It was like a fibre and it come out of this machine and you'd take it off and put it all over the matting you'd fed it. Then it would go through it and they'd sew it on. Then that would go over to the other unit where they were making the beds and that would go on top of the springs. Then they'd put the padding over that. We used to make a lot because they used to go

to the other factories as well. But the thing was they used to get paid more in Paisley's Birmingham than we used to get in Wales. We used to do the same work but you never got the same pay. It's the same now; people don't get the pay that they get in other countries. They were getting more in Paisley than we were getting and we were doing the same job. And the same for the girls making the beds. We used to get about £3 something for that after all stamp and everything was taken off.

48:55 Where was that factory?

That was in Bird Street down the docks. How could you explain it? You know where the police station is well if you come just past the police station the police station is on this side and on the opposite side coming up James Street you come up to the police station that side because I'm working up this way and the police station is that side well you come by there, there's shops still there on the corner and you go up there that side of that street to the top and that was the factory where there's all housing now.

49:33 Up Dumball's road?

No up Bird Street. It was on the opposite side, have you got me?

Yes.

If you were coming over from Grange Town over Palace Road bridge and you come along if you went up the side street just up the side there used to be a big factory at the top. It was quite a big area and there they used to do, it was a Slumberland firm. Because I could walk there as well from my house. So I didn't need a bus I could walk there. It was horrible in the winter because it was cold and all the tips of your fingers would be bleeding because the fibre would be cold. Icy and everything.

50:36 Did you have a trade union there?

No we didn't have one there. We had nobody really to do anything there, but it would have been good.

50:48 So what did you do, you just kept on working?

Yes just worked on. What happened was I had a bang there. I had a terrible leg, fluid on the knee look at it now, if you did that now you could claim or you can get pay, you got nothing then. That was when I came out of there and I decided I had had enough and soon as I got well I got that job in the office in Fletchers and I stayed there until I was married.

51:23 Were you off work with that bang on the knee?

Yes because my leg was so swollen up all my ankle was 3 times the size, it was the fluid. I had fluid on the knee it was really painful.

Did you get paid?

No. You had to put in for sick pay then. Then that was gone. All the filling in and it wasn't that much. But it was a help anyway. But I had my leg up I couldn't do a thing. I thought I've had enough of all my bleeding fingers and knocking and I thought no I've got to do something and that was when I went to Fletchers.

52:09 Were there quite a few of you working in the Slumberland?

There were 2 of us working in the fibre the rest were all men. There was the foreman who used to do the orders and there was another boy working on the machine giving us the fibre to do it. Over the other side you would have about, I would imagine not an awful amount of girls, about 10 or 12, over the bedding. They used to have to stitch it and all that. There were some on the machines. That was all. The one part of the factory was big where we were they went through the doors and on the other side there you had a big area where they actually made the beds. Then over this side you had toilets and next to it you had this little canteen place, where you could go and make a cup of tea and have a little sit for your break or whatever.

53:16 So were the facilities alright?

They were alright; they weren't out of this world. Everything like in the cold weather if you went to the toilet they were outside, they weren't inside and you went in, there were 2 toilets. You would say it was hard work; it was cold in the winter and really bad on your hands. Even the girls who were on the beds used to have short gloves on doing the work.

53:54 So what were your hours then?

The hours there were, we used to work 8:00 o'clock and we used to finish at 5: o'clock. Then on a Friday we used to finish at 5:00 o'clock then they brought in that we had to work so many hours, so they took us up to 6:00 o'clock on a Friday which wasn't very good. I used to belong to this Legion of Mary and we used to do things. 6:00 o'clock was long so the girls and I said why don't we go over the office and ask Mr Pinching, he was the boss, why we have got to work till 6:00 o'clock on a Friday. So went over the office and they went off and left me to do it all. SO I asked Mr Pinching what it was and he said that you've got to work so many hours. So I said to him why can't we work half an hour extra on 2 days. He said no you have to do till 6:00 o'clock. So I came out and said you're a right lot aren't you. The boss came up to me the next day and he said do you know what Madeline we really admired you, because you had the guts to come in, we know the others were there. He said that's alright.

55:29 It's funny that because usually they make Fridays shorter days.

Yes. It changed we used to work till 5 and that was nice.

55:45 So how long did you work in the office in Fletchers then?

I was there a few years in Fletchers.

You really enjoyed that?

Yes I enjoyed that and i left there because I got married. I was having my first baby and left. I worked a bit then up until and that was more or less it.

56:09 Did you ever go back and work in a factory.

No I never. The only thing I ever did after that was cleaning. Doing a couple of hours in the morning cleaning after that.

56:23 Looking back then how did you feel about the time you spent working in the factories?

Some good some not so good.

What about the friendships you've formed there, do you still see people from that time?

No not really. I think what happened as well, I did see a couple of girls but saying that I think they've passed on now. There are a lot of people I knew that are not here anymore. They've gone on like and I see in the papers and I say gosh I used to go to school with them. I recognise the names and they've gone. I used to go, they used to have a little thing in the docks and you'd go down and see some of the girls you knew, but a lot of them have gone now. Quite a few have gone. In fact you would be having a laugh about friends. I'm the only one left in my family now that's the oldest, I'm the oldest and they're all gone now. My last brother died last year from cancer. So I'm the only one left in my family now.

Thank you very much Madeline.

It has been a pleasure

57:56

END OF INTERVIEW/ DIWEDD CYFWELIAD