

## **VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/ LLEISIAU O LAWYR Y FFATRI**

### **ITT Factory, Milford Haven (1970s)**

**Interviewee:** VSW037 Marina Joy McGowan

**Date of birth:** 29<sup>th</sup> November 1934

**Date of interview:** 5.3.14

**Interviewer:** Susan Roberts on behalf of Women's Archive Wales

Marina was born in Neyland. The family was split up after the death of her mother (after the birth of Marina. Her brothers were sent to Pembroke and she came to Cromwell Road, although she doesn't know much about the circumstances. She went to primary school in North Road, and to the Central Secondary School. She left school when she was fifteen years old, and then she started to look for work. She went to work in the Nelson as a chambermaid, where she enjoyed working because her cousin was there. She had hoped to have a job waitressing but there wasn't one available but she got a job emptying the chamber pots.

She said, 'That wasn't very pleasant, but I did that.'

The women who worked with her was a Jehovah's witness and never spoke to her. She stuck for a couple of years and then moved down to the Dock in Milford Haven. She worked there braiding fishermen's net for the trawlers, and this is when she met her husband. It wasn't difficult work, and she enjoyed it. They used to have a sing song while they worked, and all got on well. There was a forewoman there called Annie McDonald.

She then went to work in Grimsby Stores. There was a fishermen's shop downstairs. Marina worked upstairs in the braiding room. There were a few women there who taught them.

After Marina got married she didn't work for a while during the time she was raising her children.

She then went to work in the ITT factory in Thornton Park. It was a big factory and work there was plentiful. The factory made televisions and there were several different sections. She would go out to work from eight o'clock in the morning to four o'clock in the afternoon. The eldest of her children would keep an eye on the others until she got home. Her husband worked away most of the time.

00.14.00

Marina felt nervous on her first day at ITT until she made friends with a woman already working there, and they got on like a house on fire. It was very noisy. Marina used to chat to the woman in front of her. It wasn't dirty work. She would go to the canteen and have dinner there.

Marina enjoyed the company at the factory, and having a cup of tea with the women.

There were two shifts at the factory. Marina used to get a lift to work with a woman who worked there and lived up the road.

She had to speak to the man who ran the company before getting a job there. No qualifications were required, and didn't want to know anything like that. The forewoman showed Marina what to do when she started there. Marina didn't consider the work hard to do. She was paid weekly and everybody got paid the same.

When she started she didn't know anybody already working there. She was nervous initially because she didn't know what to expect. She worked there for approximately seven years. They did want her to do a different job but she refused. She didn't find the work monotonous but just 'got on with it.' They would listen to music on the radio while they worked. Sometimes they would have a sing along.

Marina said that the people who worked on the wires got more money than other people. Marina wasn't interested in doing this type of work anyway. Of the women working there, many of them were married women like Marina, who also had children. There were different shift at the factory, including a night shift. She was provided with a coat to protect her clothing, but she had to look after it.

Her husband worked at sea, and she would get eight pounds a week (which she would have to sign for.) There was a union at the factory, and it was a closed shop. Nobody complained about anything according to Marina, and she thought it was a good place to work. Marina speaks of another forewoman called Joan, who she said was very fair, as she didn't favour one person over the next.

Some of the work at the factory was dangerous. Marina can't remember the exact nature of the job she used to do, but she said that she was always careful and mindful of what she was doing. Other people had accidents, for example, cutting their finger. Marina thinks there was a nurse in the factory.

**00.27.05: 'There were rules and regulations everywhere you went.'**

The workers there were never cheeky.

Marina said, 'Nobody was cheeky to anybody. Not on our line anyway.'

Nobody was ever sacked.

The factory wasn't cold like other factories were, and it was well lit. Everybody would go to the toilet break time, and everybody would be rushing there.

There were men and women working at the factory. Marina didn't mix much with the other workers but spent her free time with her friend.

The factory held social evenings about once a month. Marina didn't go to these. Marina worked five days a week, Monday to Friday. She could have worked a Saturday, if she'd

wanted to, but she didn't want to. She could also have worked over time in the evenings but this wasn't an option for her either due to the children.

Marina would get up early and go and see to her mother's fireplace in Marble Hall before she went to work in the factory. She would clean it every day and light it. The woman who gave Marina a lift was always on time.

The canteen in the factory was good, and Marina enjoyed the cakes there.

Marina and the family would go to the beach during the holidays and went to places like Broad Haven. At Christmas time they would have a party in the evening and everybody would go, although Marina didn't go because her husband was always working away.

The workers ran the Social Club. They didn't arrange any activities for the children. She finished working at the factory when she got pregnant again. When she left she felt miserable and she felt happy, and dreaded telling 'the old man'. She didn't work anywhere else after this.

Marina was really happy at the factory, as she had been at the braiding room. She said of all the places she had worked,

**'I liked them all. They all meant something to me.'**

Marina isn't in contact with anyone from the factory. Her best friend there has died.

They collected for her at the factory when she had the baby, and they came to the house.