

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

### Slimma Garment Making Factory in Cardigan, 1964

**Interviewee:** VSW038 (WISHES TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS)

**Date of birth:** 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1948

**Date of interview:** 6.3.14

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

The speaker was born in Carmarthen (or in Cardigan – she's not absolutely sure). She describes her father as 'the best cobbler in Wales.' He worked in Cardigan. Her mother didn't go out to work. She had two sisters and one brother. She and her sister were the eldest (they are twins).

She went to the grammar school in Cardigan and left when she was sixteen. She didn't like school at all as she was bullied, and therefore she was glad to leave. She worked in a hotel – this was after leaving the factory. She left school and went straight to the factory.

She had to have an interview in order to get the job at Slimma in Cardigan. The job didn't require any qualifications. She knew some girls who were working at the factory already. The job she got at the factory was as a machinist and was quite nervous when she started. She didn't mind working there – she would have taken any job.

When she started at Slimma she was making children's dresses and belts. They had targets at the factory. The work wasn't difficult but the factory was quite some way from her house. She walked to work.

They were quite strict about not talking at the factory, and would be told to carry on with their work. The machines at the factory were quite noisy. The speaker says she enjoyed the work but her eyes failed which meant that she couldn't do the belts properly. When she did the belts she would have to turn them inside out, and this is how her supervisor knew there was a problem with her work. The supervisor asked her if she minded leaving, and she said no. She got a hotel job instead – at the Grosvenor, and then at the Black Lion.

The girls that she knew at the factory before starting there herself were from Cardigan town. She felt nervous because it was her first job. She thinks there might have been twenty to thirty women working there at the time. They were mainly young women. She didn't bother to socialise with the other women there. There were no men working there at the

time. She would start work before nine o'clock in the morning. She would have a tea break during the morning.

She didn't mind not being allowed to talk. She can't remember how much she was paid, but thinks it wasn't a very good wage. She would give her mother money for her keep from her wages and spend the rest on dresses.

The speaker thinks it was a place where workers were treated fairly, although when asked about her own treatment said she didn't think she'd been treated fairly. She knew her eyes were bad, but didn't think they were that bad during the time she was in the factory. She was reluctant to talk about the way her employment ended in the factory.

She quite enjoyed the hotel work. She was paid fifty pence an hour and her work involved washing dishes and chopping sticks. Her eyesight didn't seem to be a problem at the hotel.

At Slimma the girls were afraid to speak because "she" (the supervisor) was watching them all the time although the speaker was reluctant to talk about this. She thinks she was a bit too strict. She thought she should have been given a chance because she had bad eyes.

00.13.52: She said of the supervisor,

**'She said I've got some sad news, you're going to have to leave because of your eyes. So I didn't say no more.'**

She wore her own clothes to work. The factory didn't supply anything. She caught her finger in the needle of the machine once. A first aider saw to her finger.

It wasn't cold in the factory, according to the speaker, and it was well lit. The day went quickly for her because she was so busy sewing. The noise didn't bother her. The salary was based on piece work. The girls who smoked used to go outside to smoke during their break.

She worked Monday to Friday, and over time was possible as well although she never did overtime. If there was overtime available certain workers would be asked if they wanted to it. When she clocked in, in the mornings sometimes there would be a queue at the machine. She used to go to the fish and chip shop during the [lunch] break. Many of the other girls used to walk to work. There was no social club there at the time. She would go out with the girls from work sometimes, and go to the pub in Cardigan. She didn't work at the factory at Christmas time so couldn't comment on what it was like at this time of the year. She did find the work boring at times, doing the same thing all the time.

It didn't take her long to find another job after leaving the factory. She isn't in contact with anybody from the factory now. The speaker moved to Pembrokeshire when her mother passed away. She enjoyed working in the hotel the most, more than working in the factory. She enjoyed washing up and working as a chambermaid.