

LLEISIAU O LAWYR Y FFATRI / VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR

**Ffatri Pullman Flexolators, Rhydaman; Alan Paine, Rhydaman; Mettoys, Abertawe;
Vandervell Products, Caerdydd**

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There is an English summary at the end of the Welsh text

Ganed Eirlys yng Ngarnswllt, tua dwy filltir o Rydaman, ‘pentre, diwylliedig, Cymreig iawn’ ar 1 Mawrth 1949. Aeth i’r ysgol gynradd yno, lle roedd tua chwe deg o blant. Roedd y plant di-Gymraeg a aethai yno’n dysgu Cymraeg yn gyflym iawn. Aethai Eirlys i’r capel bob dydd Sul, ‘fel pob plentyn arall’.

Glowr oedd ei thad. Nid oedd ei mam yn gweithio. Roedd Eirlys yn un o chwech o blant, ac roedd Eirlys yn un o driawd (triplets). Yn anffodus bu farw un o’i brodyr yn fach iawn.

Aeth i’r ysgol eilradd ym Mhontarddulais. Gadawodd yr ysgol yn bymtheng mlwydd oed a dechreuodd yn y gwaith ar y bore dydd Llun canlynol yn ffatri Pullman Flexolators, Rhydaman. Roedd digon o swyddi yn Rhydaman ar y pryd. Roedd ei thad wedi mynd gyda hi i’r ffatri er mwyn sicrhau ei bod yn cael swydd.

Nid oedd Eirlys yn mwynhau’r ysgol ac roedd yn teimlo’n falch ei bod yn gadael. Roedd Eirlys yn gwybod am y ffatri cyn mynd i weithio yno. Roedd y ffatri yn cynhyrchu seddi ceir, sbrings ar gyfer gwelyau, ayyb. Roedd lot fawr o’r pentre’n gweithio yno. Dechreuodd ffrind Eirlys weithio yno yr un pryd â hi. Tua blwyddyn ar ôl iddynt ddechrau yn Pullman Flexolators, fe glywodd Eirlys fod yna beryg y byddai’r ffatri’n cau. Penderfynodd Eirlys symud ond arhosodd ei ffrind a buodd hi yno tan tua phum mlynedd yn ôl.

02.43: Fe ddywedodd Eirlys, ‘Dewises i symud ‘mla’n a symud ‘mla’n nes i o un lle i’r lle wedyn ‘nny’.

Mae’n cofio’n teimlo’n nerfus iawn ar ei diwrnod cyntaf yn Pullman’s, ond eto’i gyd gan ei bod hi’n nabod lot o bobol oedd yn gweithio yno roedd yn teimlo’n eithaf gartrefol – yn barod i’w helpu, ac yn cadw llygad arni. Mae Eirlys yn amcangyfrif roedd tua dau gant yn gweithio yno ar y pryd. (Mae hefyd yn dweud roedd i fyny at bum cant yn gweithio yno.) Pobol leol oedd y gweithwyr – o lefydd fel Betws, Brynaman. Roedd y sŵn mawr yn y ffatri

wedi gwneud tipyn o argraff arni'r diwrnod cyntaf roedd hi yno, a theimlai'n ofnus. O fewn wythnos roedd wedi cyfarwyddo â'r sŵn, ac roedd pawb yn ei helpu. Teithiai i'r ffatri ar y bws cyhoeddus – James's buses – yn dod lan o Rydaman i'r Garnswllt.

Roedd y gwaith yn dechrau am wyth o'r gloch y bore ac yn gorffen am hanner awr wedi pedwar. Roedd yn ddiwrnod hir i ferch pymtheng mlwydd oed – gyda rhyw hanner awr i gino. Y 'supervisor' oedd wedi dangos i Eirlys beth i neud pan ddechreuodd yn y ffatri ac yn sicrhau ei bod yn iawn. Teimlai eu bod yn dda yn gofalu am y gweithwyr newydd. Roedd cymysgedd o ddynion a menywod yn gweithio yn Pullman's. Nid oedd y merched yn cael weldo. 'Wire forming' oedd enw'r gwaith roedd Eirlys yn ei wneud, ac yn ôl Eirlys roedd yn waith rhwydd. Gwaith ar dasg neu 'piece work' oedd y gwaith, ac roedd hyn yn ffafrio Eirlys achos roedd yn gallu gweithio'n gyflym.

Roedd mam a thad Eirlys yn falch ei bod yn gweithio. Nid oedd mynd ymlaen yn yr ysgol yn opsiwn iddi oherwydd ei bod wedi methu'r 11+. Gallai fod wedi mynd i ysgol nos ond unwaith roedd wedi dechrau 'ennill' nid oedd ganddi ddiddordeb. Mynd mas i weithio oedd cymhelliad Eirlys ar y pryd. Roedd digon o waith yn Rhydaman yn y dyddiau hyn – nid oedd angen mynd yn bellach. Roedd tipyn o waith ar gael yn y siopau hefyd er nad oedd y math yma o waith yn apelio ati.

00.07.00: Dywedodd, 'Roedd hwyl i gael mewn ffatri, chi'n griw gyda'ch gilydd ac mae pob un â'i stori.'

Buodd brawd Eirlys yn gweithio yno hefyd, ond nid oeddynt yn cymryd unrhyw sylw o'i gilydd yn y gwaith ac nid oedd yn ei weld e'n amal achos roedd e'n gweithio mewn adran arall. Roedd hi'n cael llai o arian na'i brawd, gan ei bod yn ifancach (ac o bosib yn cael llai am ei bod yn fenyw, ond nid oedd hyn yn ei phoeni ar y pryd.)

Nid oedd angen unrhyw gymwysterau i weithio yno. Os oedd unrhyw un yn dechrau yno ac yn methu ymdopi gyda'r gwaith byddai rhywun yn ei helpu. Roedd ganddynt berson swyddogol yn eu dysgu, ond roedd ambell ferch ifanc yn teimlo'n rhy swil i ofyn am help, a byddai un o'i chyd-weithwyr yn ei helpu.

Roeddynt yn llenwi tocynnau er mwyn cofnodi ei gwaith ac roedd manion fel sgrïws yn cael eu pwysu, a'r gweithwyr yn cael eu talu wrth y pwysau. Nid oedd Eirlys yn teimlo bod y gwaith yn undonnog, achos roedd yn cael symud o gwmpas o un swydd i'r llall. Roedd yn dysgu'r 'cyfan' wedyn.

Roedd pawb yn dod 'mla' yn dda achos roedd yr awyrgylch yn dda. Roedd ambell un yn cwmpo mas, ond rhai 'od' oedd rheiny.

00.10.18: Dywedodd Eirlys am y cydweithio, 'Ma' pobol heddi yn fwy hunanol. Yr adeg hynny roedd mwy o gyd-dynnu a hefyd oeddech chi'n nabod llawer iawn o'r bobol oedd yno ... ac o'ch chi'n fwy ewn wedyn i siarad â nhw.'

Roedd cyfle i ennill arian da, os oeddech chi'n barod i weithio. Os oeddech chi'n cerdded o gwmpas ac yn siarad, a gwastraffu amser o'ch chi ddim yn ennill yr arian.

Roedd rhaid cloco mewn yn y bore, cloco mewn a mas i fynd i ginio, a cloco mas ar ddiwedd y dydd. Arferai Eirlys mynd â bwyd ei hun i'r gwaith. Roedd Eirlys yn cael siarad wrth

wneud ei gwaith, ond bod y gwaith yn cael ei wneud yn iawn. Roedd y 'benshys' wrth ochor ei gilydd, gyda lle i'r gweithwyr i gadw'u gwaith.

Roedd y radio yn chwarae drwy'r dydd. (Mae Eirlys yn credu taw Radio One oedd yn chwarae.)

Ar ddiwrnod o waith roedd Eirlys yn cloco mewn a byddai'r 'foreman' yn dweud wrthi beth roedd hi fod i neud y diwrnod hwnnw. Roedd brêc yn y bore a phaned o de. Byddai troli'n dod o gwmpas i le oedd Eirlys yn gweithio. Roedd hanner awr o egwyl amser cinio hefyd, ond dim byd yn ystod y prynhawn. Roedd gweithwyr yn ysmegu wrth eu gwaith. Mae Eirlys yn cofio'r 'foreman' yn cerdded o gwmpas gyda sigaret yn ei geg ac yn gweiddi am rywbeth.

O ran y gyfundrefn yn y ffatri roedd y supervisor, y foreman, y rheolwr, ac roedd popeth yn gweithio'n dda yno. Roedd undeb yno – roedd hi'n 'closed shop' felly roedd yn rhaid fod yn aelod, ond nid oedd yn rhaid i ganran o'ch arian fynd i'r Blaid Lafur. Dyna'r hyn roedd Eirlys yn ei wneud – dim ond talu'r arian i'r undeb byddai hi'n ei wneud. Credai Eirlys ei bod hi'n bwysig bod gan y gweithwyr undeb. Ar y dechrau roedd yn bosib mynd at y rheolwr os oedd problem, ond fel roedd amser yn mynd yn ei flaen yn ystod ei gyrfa ni fyddai hyn yn bosib. Roedd yn rhaid gweld foreman yn gyntaf, ac felly roedd yr angen am undeb yn fwy.

Roedd gwaith yn gofyn am sgiliau arbennig er enghraifft swydd 'machine setter' – a oedd yn gosod y peiriannau. Dynion oedd y rhain i gyd yr adeg hynny ac fel arfer roeddynt wedi cael prentisiaeth. Petai'r cyfle wedi bodoli i Eirlys hoffai fod wedi gwneud prentisiaeth ei hun. Cafodd y cyfle yn ddiweddarach yn ystod ei gyrfa.

Roedd y menywod a weithiai yn Pullman's ar y pryd yn gymysgedd o fenywod priod, a sengl. Dim ond shifft dydd oedd yn bodoli ar y pryd. Roedd menywod â phlant bach yn gweithio yno hefyd, pan roedd 'mamgu' ar gael i warchod. Cyflog Eirlys ar y pryd oedd rhyw dair punt a deg swllt. Allan o'r arian hwnnw roedd Eirlys yn talu 'lojins' i'w mam, a defnyddio'r gweddill fel roedd hi eisiau. Byddai Eirlys yn mynd i'r pictiwrs yn Rhydaman, neu i'r clwb pobl ifainc yn y capel, cyngherddau a dramau yn y neuadd. Roedd pawb yn mynd.

Roedd yn cael ei thalu bob wythnos – roedd dydd Gwener yn ddiwrnod mawr. Nid oedd percs am weithio yn y ffatri, ac nid oedd dim byd ychwanegol amser Nadolig chwaith a'r wahan i 'eich gwyliau o'ch chi'n deilwng ohono fe.' O ran yr arian i'r undeb penderfyniad Eirlys oedd nad oedd eisiau i unrhyw arian fynd i'r Blaid Lafur. Nid oedd hyn yn benderfyniad poblogaidd ar y pryd, ond mae Eirlys yn genedlaetholwraig, ac nid hyn yn ei phoeni.

00.22.10: Dywedodd Eirlys, 'Yr adeg 'nny os oedd rhywun yn dweud wrtho chi am wneud rhywbeth o'ch chi'n 'i wneud e'.... Nhw oedd y bos.'

Mae Eirlys yn gymeriad cryf, ond fel hyn roedd hi'n teimlo hefyd, ac roedd hi'n dangos parch at y rheolwyr.

Roedd y gwaith yn waith brwnt. Roedd y ffatri yn darparu ffedogau a byddai Eirlys yn mynd â'r rhain adref i'w golchi. Roedd un job o fewn y ffatri'n beryglus sef rhoi cot o baent ar

bethau. Roedd pethau'n cael eu dipio i mewn i asid yn gyntaf i'w glanhau, ac yna'n mynd mewn i'r paent. Buodd Eirlys yn gwneud y swydd hon, ond nid oedd gogls na dim byd yn cael eu darparu i ddiogelu ei llygaid, dim ond y ffedog a phâr o fenyg. Nid yw Eirlys yn cofio am unrhyw ddamweiniau'n digwydd yn ffatri Pullman's yn Rhydaman. Roedd yn cael ambell gwt ar ei bys oherwydd ei bod yn troi weiers, ond nid oedd sôn am roi'r mân anafiadau yma i lawr ar y llyfr. Roedd yna nysr barhaol yno.

00.24.20: Dywedodd, 'Os y'ch chi'n tisian heddi chi'n gorfod rhoi fe lawr ar y llyfr, weden i'.

Cred Eirlys bod yna swyddog yn gyfrifol am Iechyd a Diogelwch, ond nid oedd llawer o 'ffys' am y peth – un o'r gweithwyr ydoedd, nid rhywun o'r swyddfa.

Roedd y cyfleusterau'n y ffatri i gyd yn lan – er enghraifft y tai bach, ayyb, ystafell gotiau i newid dillad. Roedd un person yn gyfrifol am lanhau'r tai bach, ond roedd gweithwyr unigol yn gyfrifol am gadw'r safle ble roedden nhw'n gweithio'n lan.

Pe bai rhywun yn cael ei ddal yn cloco dros rywun arall roedd yn bosib colli swydd, felly nid oedd gweithwyr yn gwneud hyn yn aml. Roedd y ffatri'n dwym yn yr haf, ac yn oer yn y gaeaf.

Roedd cymdeithas a charwriaethau yn y ffatri. Cyfarfu Eirlys â chydweithwraig o'r Garnant pwy ddwarnod oedd wedi cyfarfod â'r gŵr yn y ffatri. Roedd llawer iawn o dynnu coes os oedd rhywun ifanc yn dechrau'n y ffatri. Mae Eirlys yn cofio merch ifanc yn dechrau a oedd ychydig yn 'araf' a dywedwyd wrthi am fynd lawr i'r storfa i ôl 'elbow grease'. Roedd y bachan yn y storfa yn gwybod yn union beth oedd yn mynd 'mlaen a rhoddodd dun o rywbeth iddi ddod nôl gyda hi. Roedd yn sbort diniwed.

00.29.15: 'Roedd lot o dynnu coes diniwed a phawb yn cael sbri'.

Buodd Eirlys yn gweithio'n Pullman's am ddwy neu dair blynedd.

00.29.57: Dywedodd Eirlys am yr hyn ddysgodd yn y ffatri, 'Dysgu byw 'da pobol o bob math, o bob rhyw a bob llun, 'u agwedd nhw, o'ch chi'n dysgu popeth. Ffordd o fyw. O'ch chi'n dysgu shwd gymint wrthyn nhw.... O'dd e'n addysg a gweud y gwir.'

00.30.34: 'Ar ôl wythnos o'dd e fel bod chi wedi bod yno am oes achos o'dd pawb mor garedig, ac yn moyn edrych ar ôl chi.'

Nid oedd clybiau cymdeithasol yn y ffatri hon. Roedd yr wythnos waith yn bump diwrnod. Weithiau roedd gwaith ar y dydd Sadwrn ond nid oedd hwn yn ofynnol. Roedd yr wythnos waith yn 48 awr. Roedd yn bosib gweithio gor-amser os oeddech eisiau hefyd, ac os oedd y gwaith ar gael, ond byddai'n rhaid cerdded adref wedyn oherwydd byddai'r bws wedi mynd! Roedd Eirlys yn gwneud hyn. Nid oedd unrhyw agwedd o'r gwaith nad oedd Eirlys ddim yn ei mwynhau. Roedd Eirlys yn cael gwyliau'r banc yn rhydd a rhyw bythefnos o wyliau'r flwyddyn. Byddai Eirlys yn mynd allan ar y nos Sadwrn gyda rhai o'i chyd-weithwyr. Roedd awyrgylch gyffrous yn y ffatri y diwrnod cyn 'shut-down' fel adeg Nadolig yn y ffatri.

Ar y bws i'r gwaith gwelai Eirlys weithwyr o'r un pentre' â hi'n mynd i ffatrioedd eraill hefyd, ac roedd tipyn o sbort i'w gael ar y bws. Nid oedd Eirlys wedi methu'r bws unwaith.

Ar ôl sbel prynodd feic i fynd i'r gwaith, er mwyn cael arbed arian. Prynodd y beic yn Waldrons yn yr arcêd yn Rhydaman am '16 guineas'. Roedd yn gadael y tŷ am hanner awr wedi saith y bore bryd hynny.

Ystyriwyd bod y cyflog yn eithaf da o'i gymharu â'r cyflog yn y siopau. Roedd gweithio mewn ffatri yn rhoi mwy o ryddid, achos roedd dydd Sadwrn yn rhydd rhan fwya'r amser.

Roedd tueddiad i'r iaith i fod yn 'wael' (hy lot o regi) ond roedd Eirlys wedi cyfarwyddo â'r peth yn gyflym. Roedd hyder gan y merched i ddweud yr hyn oedden nhw eisiau. Roedd dynion a merched yn cymysgu'n rhwydd yn y ffatri. Roedd y gwaith wedi rhoi lot o hyder i Eirlys.

00.38.25 : 'Na le ges i'n hyder i i fynd 'mla'n.'

Roedd Eirlys yn gweithio yn ffatri Alan Paine yn Rhydaman, ac roedd y merched i gyd yn eistedd yn gweithio pan ddaeth y newyddion am drychineb Aberfan ar y radio.

Dywedodd, 'Aeth pob peiriant yn fud'. Ac felly mae Eirlys yn cofio i'r dydd heddi' ble roedd hi pan glywodd y newyddion.

O Pullman's aeth Eirlys i weithio yn ffatri Alan Paine. Mae'n ystyried hyn fel camgymeriad mawr. Nid yw'n hoffi gwau na wnïo, a dim ond am naw mis buodd hi yno. Roedd y raddfa ar gyfer y 'piece work' yn fwy yno, ond nid oedd yn hapus yno. Symudodd oddi yno cyn ei bod hi'n cael ei thafu allan. Roedd yr awyrgylch yn dda, gyda phawb yn cyd-dynnu, pawb yn cael sbri a'r radio ymlaen drwy'r dydd.

Oddi yno aeth i Mettoy a buodd yno am dair blynedd. Roedd Mettoy llawer yn fwy 'strict'. Roedd llawer mwy o bobol yn gweithio yno, a 'dim mor agos atoch chi'. Gweithiodd yn yr 'Assembly' yn Mettoy, yn rhoi'r ceir bach at ei gilydd. Roedd y gwaith yn iawn, ond ym marn Eirlys nid oedd yr awyrgylch gystal ag oedd yn Rhydaman. Daeth yn gyfarwydd â phethau yno, ond roedd ambell un yn fwy cas. Roedd rhai o'r merched eraill yn 'ffit' ofnadwy. Roedd yr arian yn Mettoy yn dda a bws yn teithio o'r Garnswllt i lawr i'r gwaith.

Nid oedd angen geirada i fynd o un ffatri i'r llall. Roeddech yn gallu cerdded i mewn i'r swyddfa a gofyn os oedd jobs yno, cael cyfweiliad yn y man ac yna clywed o fewn diwrnod neu ddau os oeddech wedi cael swydd. I'r sawl oedd yn methu gwneud y gwaith roeddynt yn cael swydd wahanol i'w gwneud a byddai honno'n talu llai o arian. Yn anaml byddai rhywun yn cael y sac. Nid oes gan Eirlys gof bod streic wedi bod yn Mettoy tra bu hi yno. Dywedodd Eirlys am y gwahaniaeth yn y bobol yn Mettoy,

00.44.38: 'O'ch chi nawr yn mynd mewn i'r ddinas ac oedd agwedd bobol yn wahanol. O'n i fel pobol cefen gwlad, o'n nhw'n meddwl bod rhywbeth yn bod arnom ni. ... O'n i ddim yn deall dim byd'.

Daeth i gymdeithasu gyda'r merched yn Mettoy, gydag amser. Aethant i glwb yn Townhil ac aros i lawr yn Abertawe, neu allan i Abertawe i gael bwyd. Roedd y profiadau newydd yn gyffrous, ond doedd dim yn well na mynd allan yng Ngarnswllt. Rhoddodd y gorau i'r gwaith yn Mettoy er mwyn mynd i weithio ar fferm ei hewyrthr, a oedd yn dioddef o salwch. Buodd yno am dua dwy flynedd. Roedd Eirlys yn ddigon hapus ar y fferm, er bod ganddi lai o gwmni yno, achos ei bod yn arfer treulio llawer o amser yno – pob penwythnos a phob

gwyliau haf. Hi oedd yn godre ac yn mynd mas â'r llaeth. (Roedd rhaid golchi'r poteli llaeth bryd hynny.) Roedd yn cael llai o dâl am y gwaith hwn, ond roedd yn gwneud y gwaith er mwyn gwneud cymwynas â'i hewyrthr. Roedd dim llawer o amser yn rhydd gan Eirlys, ond roedd ei hanti yn mynnu eu bod yn cael diwrnod Nadolig yn rhydd er bod hyn yn golygu llawer mwy o waith. Roedd yn golygu mynd â'r llaeth mas y diwrnod cyn Nadolig, a'r noson honno ar gyfer dydd Nadolig. Roedd rhaid mynd rownd yn y prynhawn i gasglu poteli, ac wedyn roedd rhaid mynd i gasglu poteli ar ddiwrnod San Steffan. Ar ôl dwy flynedd ar y fferm Eirlys i Gaerdydd.

Cafodd Eirlys y swydd yng Nghaerdydd trwy fynd i'r Ganolfan Swyddi yn Rhydaman. Roedd Eirlys a'i ffrind wedi penderfynu eu bod nhw eisiau mynd i ffwrdd i weithio. 1972 oedd y flwyddyn. Roedd Eirlys wedi dweud wrth y rhai yn y Ganolfan ei bod hi eisiau mynd i Gaerdydd i weithio. Cafodd lythyr yn dweud wrthi am fynd i gael cyfweiliad yn Vandervell Products. Yn Nhremorfa, Caerdydd oedd y ffatri ac roedd yn cynhyrchu rhannau i geir a loris – bearings, washers, locker arms a phethau fel 'na. Wythnos ar ôl cael cyfweiliad cafodd lythyr yn dweud ei bod hi wedi cael ei derbyn. Roedd angen lle i fyw arni nawr! Roedd ei ffrind a oedd wedi ymgeisio ar gyfer swydd fel nyrs yn ysbyty'r Waun heb glywed eto, felly roedd yn rhaid i Eirlys fynd ar ben ei hunan bach. Cafodd bedsit yn Grangetown (Holmesdale Street) ond nid oedd ganddi syniad fel oedd mynd o'r bedsit i'r ffatri.

Un ystafell wely oedd y bedsit, 'y cwbl mewn un', gyda dim ond un gwely dwbwl felly roedd rhaid rhannu. Y noson gyntaf yno eisteddodd wrth y ffenest, ar ei phen ei hun yn meddwl, 'beth ar y ddaear odw i wedi'i neud ... yn nabod dim cwrcyn o neb'. Ar y dydd Sul roedd yn rhaid iddi fynd i ffeindio allan ble oedd y ffatri.

Roedd dwy shifft yn y ffatri – chwech o'r gloch tan ddau, a dau tan ddeg. Buodd yno am yn agos i ddeng mlynedd. Pan gafodd gyfweiliad i fynd yno roedd y rheolwr wedi gofyn pob math o bethau fel paham roedd hi eisiau gweithio yno. Ymunodd ffrind Eirlys â hi rhyw fish ar ôl hynny ac roedd Eirlys yn gallu mynd â hi o gwmpas a dangos iddi ble oedd popeth.

Dechreuodd fel *machine operator* yn gweithio'r press machines mawr, ac wedyn aeth ar yr *inspection line* – yn archwilio popeth. Yna, daeth adran newydd yno ac o ganlyniad cafodd y merched gyfle i gael swydd gyda'r dynion, yr un fath â'r dynion. Fe dreiodd amdano fe ac fe gafodd y swydd gyda dwy ferch arall. Gorffennodd un o'r merched – nid oedd yn hoffi'r swydd. Roedd y swydd newydd yn golygu bod eisiau gosod y peiriannau newydd er mwyn cael eu rhedeg nhw. Roedd yn cael hyfforddiant er mwyn cael gwneud hyn. Yn Maidenhead oedd y ffatri fawr, ac roedd rhywun yn dod lawr o'r ffatri honno i'w hyfforddi nhw. Roeddynt yn cael dysgu yr un pryd â'r dynion. Roedd y dynion yn ddigon bodlon bod y merched yn cael cyfle ond nid oeddynt yn credu byddai'r merched yn gallu gwneud y gwaith. (Roedd hyn tua'r flwyddyn 1976 neu 1977).

00.54.55: Dywedodd, 'Yn y diwedd droiodd hi mas bod ni'n well na nhw'.

Roedd angen lot o amynedd i wneud y swydd achos roeddynt yn gweithio 'o fewn trwch blewyn'. Mae'n cofio fel 'ddoe' un o'r dynion yn dod ati a gofyn iddi am help. Nid oedd yn gallu cael pethau i weithio o gwbl. Yn ystod y cyfnod ar ôl iddynt hyfforddi oedd hyn, ac roedd y dyn hwn wedi hyfforddi yr un pryd â hi. Yn ystod yr hyfforddiant agwedd y dyn hwn oedd na fyddai Eirlys yn gallu gwneud y swydd. Ac yna, ar ôl yr hyfforddiant cafodd e'r broblem fawr yma - roedd y rheolwyr eisiau'r nwyddau fynd allan, ac roeddynt yn aros

amdanyn nhw. Roedd wedi trio hwn a trio'r llall. Pan ddaeth ati a gofyn am helpu dywedodd Eirlys wrtho byddai'n rhaid iddo aros am hanner awr cyn y gallai ddod i'w helpu.

00.56.01: Dywedodd, 'Gath e bobî am hanner awr.'

Tynnodd hi ei waith e'n rhydd a dechrau o'r dechrau. Fe gafodd y peiriant i weithio. Yna roedd yn rhaid mynd â fe at *inspector* a siecio'r gwaith yn erbyn y cynlluniau. Ac oedd e'n iawn. Roedd Eirlys mor falch. Mae'n dweud bydd hi byth yn anghofio'r profiad. Roedd y dyn mewn cymaint o stâd yn dod ati hi. Dim ond hyn a hyn o 'bearings' oeddynt yn cael i wneud y peth, ac nid oeddynt eisïau eu gwastraffu. Roedd wedi gwastraffu hanner boc, ac roedd hyn yn costi arian i'r cwmni.

Cafodd Eirlys ei chyfweld ar gyfer rhaglen Beti George gan Sulwyn Thomas, achos ei bod hi fel merch wedi cael y swydd gafodd hi. Gwnaeth Eirlys y cyfweiliad yn Saesneg a mynnodd y BBC ei gael wedi ei gyfieithu i wneud yn siwr nad oedd wedi dweud rhywbeth nad oedd fod i ddweud.

00.58.10: 'Na diwrnod gore 'mywyd i, mas o bopeth'.

Y rheswm arhosodd yn Vandervell oedd achos ei bod hi wedi cael y cyfle hwn. Nid oedd un neu ddau o'r dynion gystal yn gwneud eu gwaith ag Eirlys, oherwydd nid oedd ganddynt ddigon o amynedd i weithio pethau allan yn iawn, i ystyried pethau cyn eu bod yn gwneud y peth i'r diwedd. Roedd y nwyddau'n ddrud iawn ac oes oeddynt yn eu difetha roedd yn gost mawr i'r cwmni. Roedd Eirlys wastad wedi ymddiddori mewn pethau tebyg – wastad yn ffidlan â beics, neu dractor gyda spaner yn ei llaw.

00.59.40: Dywedodd, 'Sen i wedi cael y cyfle pan o'n i'n ieuengach fel ma'n nhw heddi sen i wedi mynd naill ai'n fecanic neu yn sa'r. O'dd gyda fi ddiddordeb yn ceir a pethe fel 'nny, ond ces i ddim y cyfle pry'nny.'

Nid oedd y cyfle hwn wedi bodoli yn Pullman's er bod cyfleoedd i'r bechgyn oedd yn gweithio'n Pullman's.

Roedd clwb eu hunain yn Vandervell's. Roedd Eirlys yn chwarae *nine pin bowling* gyda chlwb y gwaith yn erbyn clybiau eraill, bob wythnos. Roedd cinio Nadolig a thripiâu i Maidenhead, achos dyna le oedd y fam ffatri. Un o fois yr undeb oedd yn trefnu'r trips yma, a hefyd roedd e'n aelod o'r clwb cymdeithasol. Roedd adeilad y clwb cymdeithasol ochor draw'r ffatri ac roedd yn cael ei rannu gyda GKN. Felly, roedd yr adnoddau a'r arian yn eithaf da. Roedd yr arian bron i ddwbl beth yr oedd yn ei gael yn Rhydaman.

Roedd profiad Eirlys yn wahanol yn Vandervells o'i gymharu â Rhydaman. I ddechrau, roedd Vandervells yn y ddinas. Roedd y bobl yn hollol wahanol – yn wahanol nid yn unig i Rhydaman ond i Abertawe. Mae'n credu eu bod yn fwy cymdeithasol yng Nghaerdydd nag yn Abertawe, ac yn fwy croesawgar, yn enwedig pobl Butetown. Unwaith roeddech chi yn eu cwmni nhw roeddynt yn gofalu amdanoch chi wedyn. Tra bod Eirlys yn gweithio'n y ffatri yng Nghaerdydd roedd un fenyw wedi colli ei bysedd yn y gwaith. Rhoddodd ei llaw yn y peiriant fel roedd fod gwneud ond daeth y *guard* ddim lawr ac fe dorrodd y peiriant ei bysedd hi. Roedd Eirlys yno ar y pryd.

Dywedodd, 'Na sŵn oeraidd.' Cafodd honno iawndal am y ddamwain oherwydd bod nam ar y peiriant.

Roedd streic tra bod Eirlys yn gweithio'n y ffatri yng Nghaerdydd, yn 1976. Ar y pryd roedd yn ddifrifol o dwym yn y ffatri. Fe dynnwyd y ffenestri o'r tô gan ei bod hi mor dwym a rhoi ffans mawr diwydiannol mewn. Roeddynt yn rhoi scwosh i'r gweithwyr. Tynnwyd darn o'r wal o'r cefn hefyd. Penderfynodd y gweithwyr fynd ar streic ond gwrthododd Eirlys. Ym marn Eirlys roedd y cwmni wedi gwneud popeth y gallen nhw i ddatrys problem y dymheredd. Dim ond o ryw ddau o'r gloch i bedwar o'r gloch roedd hi'n ddifrifol o dwym. Roedd Eirlys yn dadlau bod y cwmni'n gwneud cymaint ag y gallen nhw. Roedd gweithwyr yn cael mynd i'r drws i gael awyr iach am ddeng muned bob hanner awr, roeddynt yn dod â scwosh i'r gweithwyr, a dadl Eirlys oedd bod dim modd diffodd yr haul. Gwrthododd Eirlys fynd ar streic. Mae Eirlys yn credu bod hyn yn dangos cymaint oedd ei hyder wedi tyfu ers iddi fynd i weithio yng Nghaerdydd. Dim ond Eirlys ac un dyn arall gwrthododd fynd ar streic. O ganlyniad nid oedd neb yn siarad â nhw. Cafodd ei galw'n 'bopeth' gan y gweithwyr eraill ac roedd y menywod yn waeth na'r dynion. Onibai ei bod wedi gweithio mewn sawl ffatri cyn hynny ni fyddai wedi cael yr hyder i wrthod fynd ar streic. Roedd ar eraill ofn mynd yn erbyn yr undeb. Buodd yn 'Coventry' am dua pedwar mis. Daeth rhai byth i siarad â hi. Ond roedd rhaid galw ar wasanaeth Eirlys i drwsio'r peiriannau.

Yn ystod y cyfnod roedd yn Vandervell roedd yr undebau'n gryf, a phawb yn ymuno.

00.10.20: Dywedodd, 'O'n nhw'n neud beth o'n nhw'n moyn .. mwy na beth oedd yn rhesymol i wneud.'

Dywedodd Eirlys pe bai'n rhesymol i fynd ar streic, byddai wedi mynd ar streic ei hun.

Gwelodd Eirlys nad oedd yr hyder gan ferched eraill i wthio'u hunain ymlaen i wneud yr un gwaith â hi. Dechreuodd tair ohonynt hyfforddi yr un pryd, ond dim ond dwy ohonynt gariodd ymlaen. Yn ôl Eirlys roedd gan y ferch a roddodd y gorau i'r hyfforddiant digon o allu, ond dim yr hyder i wneud y gwaith. Aeth hi nôl i weithio ar y peiriannau.

Buodd yn gweithio'n Vandervells o 1972 tan 1981. Caeodd y ffatri rhyw naw mis yn ddiweddarach. Penderfynodd orffen yn y ffatri er mwyn priodi. Dysgodd lawer yng Nghaerdydd. Un diwrnod tra roedd hi'n y ciw i gloco mas roedd yn siarad Cymraeg â merch o Ddolgellau, a daeth merch o Gaerdydd a dweud 'do you mind not speaking that foreign language'. Dywedodd Eirlys a'i ffrind, 'We are speaking our own language in our own country.' Mae Eirlys yn sôn oedd pobol o Pakistan tu ôl iddyn nhw a neb yn dweud dim byd wrthyn nhw am siarad eu hiaith eu hunain. Ni ddywedwyd dim byd wrth Eirlys ar ôl hynny am siarad Cymraeg.

Nid oedd Eirlys eisiau gadael y ffatri. Aeth i ffermio gyda'r gŵr. Roedd Eirlys yn gweld eisiau'r cwmni ar ôl gadael. Roedd cymdeithasu'n fwy pwysig i Eirlys yn ystod yr adeg buodd hi'n Vandervells achos ei bod yn hŷn, ac roedd wedi cymysgu mwy gyda phobol.

Roedd Eirlys yn cymysgu gyda Chymry Cymraeg yn llefydd fel tafarn y Conway. Roedd yn aelod o Blaid Cymru felly roedd yn mynd i ddiwyddiadau gyda nhw.

Yng nghlwb cymdeithasol y ffatri, roedd tîm criced yn ogystal â chlwb bowls. (*Nine pin bowling* ydoedd dim deg.) Mae Eirlys yn amcangyfrif roedd tua phum cant o bobl yn

gweithio yno. Roedd tair shifft – shifft dydd, shifft prynhawn a shifft nos – er nid oedd menywod yn cael gweithio shifft nos. Doedden nhw ddim yn cael cynnig gwneud shifft nos.

00.16.27: Dywedodd, ‘Gwahanu rhwng dynon a merched eto’.

Roedd Eirlys wedi gofyn os byddai’n cael gweithio shifft nos pan aeth i gael cyfweliad, ond fe ddywedwyd mai dim ond y dynion oedd yn gwneud hyn felly roedd y dewis ganddi o ddewis neu gwrthod cymryd y swydd.

O’i gymharu â Pullman’s roedd y gwaith yn Vandervell yn fwy caled. Roedd y peiriannau’n fwy o seis (y ‘press machines’). Roedd merched eraill wedi mynd ymlaen i wneud yr un gwaith ag Eirlys yn y ffatri yn Maidenhead. Roedd teulu Eirlys yn gofyn pam ei bod yn gwneud yr un jobyn â dyn, ac roedd Eirlys yn dweud wrthynt mai achos ei bod hi llawn gystal â dyn, os nad yn well.

01.19.56: Dywedodd, ‘Oedd y cyfle ddim ar y dechre, pan ddechreues i’n bymtheg o’ d. Ond fel o’n i’n newid swyddi o’dd mwy o gyfle’n dod, ac o’ch chi’ gallu gwi’tho lan yn fwy ac yn fwy. O’dd dim lot o ddiddordeb ‘da fi mewn mynd ‘mla’n mewn addysg. O’n i’n credu bod fi’n gallu neud swyddi fel hyn, bod y gallu ‘da fi. Bod fi’n gryf i neud e. A o’s o’n i’n cael y cyfle bydden i’n gallu neud e. A ges i’r cyfle ar y diwedd. Ond o’dd dim digon o gyfle. ‘Na’r unig bryd ges i gyfle o’dd wedi i fi fynd i Gaerdydd, i Vandervell Products. O’dd unrhyw ffactori arall bues i ynddo, o’dd dim cyfle o gwbl, yn unman. Yr unig le ges i gyfle nes i neidio ato fe achos o’n i’n gwbod bydden i’n gallu neud e. A bydden i ‘di neud e’n gynt sen i wedi cael y cyfle. Fel o’n i’n gweud, sen i ‘di cael y cyfle’n gynt yn bymtheg oed, i fod fel mecanic, neu gwitho fel gwaith sa’r, bydden i ‘di neidio ato fe. Ma’n nhw’n gallu neud heddi. Ond ges i ddim o’r cyfle ‘nny. Ond o’dd rhaid neud y gore o beth o’dd ‘da fi wedyn.

Roedd ei gwaith yng Nghaerdydd yn waith caled. Weithiau byddai’n gweithio chwech diwrnod yr wythnos, achos roedd y cyflog yn dda.

Aeth i weithio yn ffatri laeth Llangadog am gyfnod byr. Yna, aeth i’r ffatri gaws yng Nghaerfyrddin. Nawr, roedd yn gweithio gyda phobl wledig.

01.22.44: Dywedodd, ‘O’n i nôl mewn ardal wledig Cymreig’. Ond nid oedd modd iddi ddefnyddio’r sgiliau oedd wedi’u dysgu yng Nghaerdydd.

Yn y ffatri yng Nghaerdydd y mwynhaodd fwya achos dyma le cafodd y profiadau mwyaf.

English summary

**Pullman Flexolators, Ammanford; Alan Paine, Ammanford; Mettoys, Swansea;
Vandervell Products, Cardiff**

Interviewee: VSW061 Eirlys Lewis

Date: 15.6.14

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

Eirlys was born on 1st March, 1949 in Garnswllt, a small very cultured, Welsh village two miles from Ammanford. She attended primary school there, where there were approximately sixty children. The non-Welsh speaking children who started there soon learnt Welsh very quickly. Eirlys would go to chapel every Sunday, just like all the other children.

Her father was a miner. Her mother didn't work. Eirlys was one of six children as well as being one of triplets. Unfortunately, one of her brothers died at a very young age.

She went to secondary school in Pontarddulais. She left school at fifteen years old and started work the following Monday in Pullman Flexolators in Ammanford. Jobs were plentiful in Ammanford at the time. Her father went with her to look for work, to ensure that she got a job.

Eirlys didn't enjoy school and was glad to leave. She knew about the factory before she went to look for work there. It produced car seats and bed springs, along with other products and many people from the same village as Eirlys worked there. Eirlys's friend started there the same time as her. After working there for about a year she heard that there was a danger the factory might shut so she decided to leave.

02.43: She said, 'I decided to move on, and move on I did from one place to another after that'.

She remembers feeling nervous on her first day at Pullman Flexolators but was comforted by the fact that she knew many of the people already working there. This made her feel more at home. Eirlys estimates there were about two hundred people working there at the time. (She also says that there were about five hundred people working there.) The workers were local people – from places like Betws and Brynaman – and were very ready to help her. The noise of the factory made a deep impression on her on her first day, and she felt frightened. Within a week, she'd got used to it. She travelled to work on the service bus – James's buses – from Garnswllt to Ammanford.

She started at eight o'clock in the morning and finished at half past four, and would have half an hour for lunch. It was a long day for a fifteen year old girl. The supervisor had showed her what to do and made sure she was okay. She felt the workers were looked after. There was a mixture of men and women working there but women weren't allowed to weld. 'Wire forming' was the name of the work that Eirlys did, and she thought it was easy. It was piece work and this suited Eirlys because she was a fast worker.

Eirlys's mother and father were glad that she was working. Staying on in school wasn't an option for her as she'd failed her eleven plus. She could have gone to night school but once she had started work she wasn't interested. Going out to work was what she wanted to do, and there was no need to search further afield than Ammanford. There was a lot of shopwork available as well but this type of work didn't appeal to her.

00.07.00: She said, 'It was fun working in a factory, you were a gang of people together, and everybody had their story.'

Eirlys's brother worked there as well, but in a different department, so she didn't see him very often. She earned less money than her brother because she was young (and possibly because she was a woman, although this didn't bother her at the time.)

No qualifications were needed to work there. If anybody started there and couldn't manage to get the work done somebody would help them. They had somebody official there to teach them, but some of the young girls felt too shy to ask them, in which case one of the others would help her.

In order to work out how much they should get paid, they would have to fill in tickets, and weigh the screws they had produced. Eirlys didn't feel the work was monotonous because she could move from one job to another.

There was a good atmosphere there and everybody got on well, apart from the odd one.

00.10.18: Eirlys said, 'These days people are more selfish. In those days, people had to get on with each other, and you knew most of the people there ... and you felt more comfortable talking to them.'

You could earn good money there, if you were prepared to work hard. On the other hand, if you walked around chatting and wasting time you didn't earn money.

She had to clock in in the morning and clock out at the end of the day. Eirlys would take her own food to work. She was allowed to talk as she worked as long as she got the work done. The benches were side by side, with a place for workers to keep their work.

The radio would be on all day – Eirlys thinks it might have been Radio One.

After clocking in Eirlys would be told by the foreman what she would be doing that day. There was a break in the morning for a cup of tea. A trolley would come around to where Eirlys was working. They had half an hour for lunch but no break during the afternoon. Workers smoked as they worked. Eirlys remembers the foreman walking around with a cigarette in his mouth.

The chain of command consisted of a supervisor, a foreman, and the manager, and this system worked well. There was a union there – it was a closed shop so everybody had to be a member, although the money didn't have to go to the Labour Party. Eirlys thinks the union was important. At the beginning of her career it was possible to go to the manager if you had a problem, but as time went by this became increasingly difficult. The foreman would be the first port of call then, and this meant that a union was needed.

Some jobs there required special skills such as the machine setter's job. These jobs were done by men who had usually done an apprenticeship. If the opportunity had existed, Eirlys would have liked to have done an apprenticeship. She got the opportunity later in her career.

The women who worked in Pullman's at the time were a mixture of single and married women. There was only a day shift. There were women with children working there – these were the women who had help with childcare from their own mothers. Eirlys's pay at the time was approximately three pounds and ten shillings. Out of this money, she paid her mother money for lodgings and used the rest as she wished. Eirlys would go to the pictures in Ammanford, or go to the young people's club in the chapel, concerts or dramas in the hall. This is what everybody did.

She was paid weekly – so Friday was a big day. There were no perks, and they didn't get anything extra, even at Christmas time. Eirlys decided that she didn't want any of the money she paid towards the union to go to the Labour Party. This wasn't a popular decision at the time, but Eirlys is a nationalist, and this didn't bother her.

00.22.10: She said, 'In those days, if someone told you to do something, you did it..... They were the boss.'

Eirlys is a strong character, but she showed respect to the managers.

The work was dirty. The factory provided aprons, which Eirlys would take home to wash. One job at the factory was dangerous, which was putting a coat of paint on things. Things were dipped into acid first in order to clean them, and would then go into the paint. Eirlys did this job, but didn't wear goggles or anything to protect her eyes, only the apron and a pair of gloves. Eirlys doesn't remember any accidents happening in Pullman's. She would get the odd cut because she was twisting wires but didn't write these minor accidents down in the book. There was a nurse answering there.

00.24.20: She said, 'I think if you sneeze these days, you've got to put it down in the book'.

Eirlys thinks there was somebody responsible for Health and Safety, possibly somebody from the office, but not much fuss was made of it.

The facilities in the factory were clean – the toilets and the cloak room where they changed their clothes. There was one person responsible for keeping the toilets clean, but the workers themselves were responsible for keeping the area where they worked clean.

Clocking somebody else in or out was a sackable offence so this didn't happen often. The factory was hot in the summer and cold in the winter.

There was a strong society and many courtships in the factory. Eirlys met up with a woman from Garnant the other day who had met her husband in the factory. There was a lot of leg pulling when somebody new started. Eirlys remembers a young girl starting there and being sent down to stores to get some elbow grease. The man in stores knew exactly what was going on and sent her back with a tin of something. It was innocent fun.

00.29.15: ‘There was a lot of innocent leg pulling and everybody had fun’.

Eirlys worked in Pullman’s for two or three years.

00.29.57: Eirlys said about what she’d learnt in the factory, ‘Learning to live with people, from all walks of life, and their attitudes, you learnt everything. A way of life, you learnt so much from them. It was an education to say the truth.’

00.30.34: ‘After a week it was as if you’d been there for ages because everybody was so kind, and wanted to look after you.’

There were no social clubs in this factory. The working week was a five day week and occasionally there was work on a Saturday, although this was optional. She worked a forty eight hour week and could work over-time if she liked. She would do this even though it meant that she would have to walk home afterwards rather than get the bus. Eirlys enjoyed every aspect of the work. She had time off on bank holidays and about a fortnight’s holiday a year. Eirlys would go out on a Saturday with some of her colleagues. There would be an air of excitement in the factory the day before shut-down and at Christmas time.

On the bus to work Eirlys would see other people from her village travelling to other factories, and they would have a lot of fun on the bus. Eirlys never missed the bus once. After a while she bought a bike to save on bus fare. She bought it in Waldrons in the arcade in Ammanford for sixteen guineas. She would leave the house at seven thirty in those days.

The wages were considered good compared to shop workers wages. Working in a factory offered more freedom, because they didn’t have to work Saturdays.

There was a tendency for bad language in the factory but Eirlys soon got used to this. The women felt confident enough to say what they felt. Men and women mixed easily in the factory. The work had given Eirlys confidence.

00.38.25 : ‘That’s where I got my confidence to go on.’

When Eirlys was working in Alan Paine’s factory she was sat with the girls listening to the radio when the news of the Aberfan disaster broke.

She said, ‘Every machine stopped’.

She’d gone to Alan Paine after leaving Pullman’s and says this was a big mistake. She doesn’t like knitting or sewing but was there for nine months. The rate for piece work was higher there but she didn’t like it. She left there before she was thrown out. There was a good atmosphere, and everybody got on well. The radio would be on all day and they would have a lot of fun.

From Alan Paine she went to Mettoy and stayed for three years. Mettoy was much stricter. There were many more people working there, and they weren’t as friendly. She worked in the Assembly in Mettoy, putting the toy cars together. The work was fine but the atmosphere wasn’t as good as the factory in Ammanford. She grew accustomed to the new atmosphere but there were one or two nasty people there. Some of the other girls were quite bold. The money in Mettoy was good and there was a bus travelling there from Garnswllt.

No references were required to go from one factory to the other. You could walk into the office and ask if there were any jobs available, be interviewed on the spot and then hear within a day or two whether you'd got the job. Those who couldn't do the work would be found a different job, which paid less money. Workers weren't sacked often. Eirlys can't remember a strike taking place.

00.44.38: She said of the people in Mettoy, 'You were now going into the city and peoples' attitudes were different. We were country people, they thought there was something wrong with us ... that we didn't understand anything'.

In time, she started socialising with the girls in Mettoys. They would go to a club in Townhill and stay in Swansea, or go out to Swansea to have food. These new experiences were exciting, but not as good as going out in Garnswllt.

She gave up the job in Mettoy in order to work on her uncle's farm, as he was suffering from ill-health. She was there for two years. Eirlys was happy working on the farm, even though she had less company here. She was used to spending time there. On the farm she did the milking. She received lower wages for this work and didn't get much time off. After two years on the farm she went to work in Cardiff.

Eirlys got the job in Cardiff by going to the Job Centre in Ammanford. Eirlys and her friend had decided that they wanted to go away to work. This was in 1972. She was invited to go for an interview in Cardiff with Vandervell Products. The factory was in Tremorfa and it produced car and lorry parts — bearings, washers, locker arms, etc. A week after being interviewed she received a letter saying she'd got a job. She then had to look for a place to live. Her friend had applied for a nursing post in the Heath Hospital but hadn't had a reply as yet so Eirlys had to go to Cardiff on her own. She found a bedsit in Grangetown (Holmesdale Street) but had no idea how to get to the factory from there.

The bedsit was just one room with a double bed. The first night she stayed there she sat by the window and thought to herself, 'what on earth have I done ... I don't know a soul here.' The Sunday before she started work she had to go and check where the factory was.

There were two shifts in the factory — from six o' clock in the morning until two, and from two until ten. (She later says there were three — including the night shift.) She was there for ten years. When she'd been interviewed the manager had asked her all types of questions such as why she wanted to work there. Eirlys's friend joined her about a month later and by then Eirlys could take her round and show her everything.

She started as a machine operator working the large press machines, and then went onto the inspection line. Then a new section started there and as a result women had the opportunity to work as machine setters. Eirlys and two other women got jobs doing this and were trained at the factory. One of the women didn't like this work and gave it up. They company had a large factory in Maidenhead, and somebody would come down from there to train them alongside the men. The men seemed quite happy that the women were getting these new opportunities but didn't think they would be able to do the work. This was circa 1976/7.

00.54.55: She said, 'In the end it turned out that we were better than them.'

The job required a lot of patience as they were working to within very narrow margins. One of the men training the same time as her had the attitude that she wouldn't be able to do the job. After they'd completed their training he was having a major problem which required sorting out quickly as the manager wanted the goods to go out. He'd tried everything but had failed and eventually had to ask Eirlys for help. Eirlys agreed to help him but made him wait for half an hour first.

00.56.01: She said, 'I let him stew for half an hour.'

She took his work to pieces and started from scratch, and got the machine working. The work had to be checked by the inspector, and against the plans, and it was approved. She'll never forget that experience. The man had been in such a state when he came to her. They weren't allowed to waste bearings and he had already wasted half a box trying to sort the problem out.

Eirlys was interviewed for Beti George's programme by Sulwyn Thomas, because she'd had this job.

00.58.10: 'That was the best day of my life.'

This opportunity at Vandervell was the reason she stayed there. A few of the men weren't as good as Eirlys at their job because they didn't have the patience to work things out. Eirlys had always been interested in how things worked and always had a spanner in her hand, and would be tinkering with bikes or tractors.

00.59.40: She said, 'If I'd had the opportunity when I was younger, like they do today, I would have become a mechanic or carpenter. I was interested in cars and things like that, but I didn't get a chance at the time.'

The same opportunity had not existed for women at Pullman's.

Vandervells had their own social club. Eirlys played nine pin bowling for them against other clubs. (There was also a cricket team.) There were Christmas dinners and trips to Maidenhead, because that's where the mother factory was. One of the men from the union would arrange these trips. The social club building was at the far end of the factory and was shared with GKN and the facilities were good. Her wages in Vandervell were nearly double what she was earning in Ammanford.

Eirlys's experience of working in Vandervells differed from her experience in Ammanford and Swansea because of its city location. The people in Cardiff were very friendly, especially the people from Butetown, and would look after each other.

During the time that Eirlys worked at Vandervell's one woman lost her fingers. She'd put her hand in the machine but the guard hadn't come down as it was supposed to. Eirlys was there at the time. The woman received compensation because the machine was faulty.

There was a strike at the factory in 1976. It was a very hot summer and the windows in the roof had been taken out and fans put in to try and counteract the heat. In addition, the workers were given squash and a part of the back wall was removed. The workers went on strike due to the heat but Eirlys refused to go on strike with them because she thought the

company had done everything in their power to try and help. The heat was at its worst from two o'clock to four o'clock and workers were permitted to go to the door to get fresh air for ten minutes every half an hour. Eirlys's argument was that the company couldn't switch off the sun. Eirlys sees her refusal to go on strike as a manifestation of the confidence she felt since going to work in Cardiff. It was only Eirlys and one man who had refused to go on strike. She got called 'everything' by the other workers, and the women were worse than the men. If she hadn't worked in several factories she would not have had the confidence to refuse to go on strike. Others were scared of going against the union. She was sent to 'Coventry' for about four months and some of the other workers never spoke to her again.

During the time that Eirlys was in Vandervell's the unions were very strong, and everybody was a member.

00.10.20: She said, 'They did what they wanted ... more than what was reasonable.'

If it had been reasonable to go on strike, Eirlys would have gone on strike too.

Other women didn't have Eirlys's confidence to push themselves forward. The girl who gave up the machine setter's job had the ability but not the confidence to do the job, and went back to work on the machines.

Eirlys worked in Vandervells from 1972 until 1981. The factory closed about a month afterwards. She learnt a lot in Cardiff. One day when she was clocking in she was speaking to a woman from Dolgellau in Welsh, when a woman from Cardiff said 'do you mind not speaking that foreign language'. Eirlys and her friend said, 'We are speaking our own language in our own country.' She was never reproached again for speaking Welsh.

Eirlys didn't want to leave the factory but left to get married and went to work on the farm with her husband. She missed the company after leaving. She'd socialised with Welsh speakers in places like the Conway pub in Cardiff. She was a member of Plaid Cymru and went to their events. There were three shifts in Vandervells – the day shift, the afternoon shift, and the night shift. Women weren't allowed to work the night shift and Eirlys sees this as another example of how women were treated differently. There were about five hundred people working there.

Compared to Pullman's the work in Vandervell's was harder – the machines were bigger. She sometimes worked a six day week because the factory paid well. When Eirlys's family asked her why she was doing a man's job she replied that it was because she could do it just as well as a man if not better.

Later on she went to work in the milk factory in Llangadog, and then the cheese factory in Carmarthen.

01.22.44: She said, 'I was back in a Welsh rural area'. But these jobs in West Wales didn't give Eirlys the opportunity to use the skills she had acquired.

She enjoyed her work most at the factory in Cardiff.