

VOICES FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR/ LLEISIAU O LAWR Y FFATRI

John Stanton (1967-9) and Salter (1969-78) Llanelli

Interviewee: VSW062 Sylvia Howell,

Date: 17 July 2014

Interviewer: Catrin Stevens on behalf of Women's Archive of Wales

Sylvia confirmed her full name - Sylvia Howell and her address and maiden name: Coles.

Her date of birth is: 8 May 1938

She was born in Llannerch, Llanelli, where her mother was 'in rooms', her father worked in the sheet mills in Sandy Road and her mother was a housewife. Her older sister, Joan, died two years ago from cancer. Her father was in active service for 6 years during the war. Her brother Barry was one of the post-war bulge babies. Both Joan and Sylvia passed to the grammar school, but Joan was eager to get out of school, and she went to work in Woolworth, then later when she met her husband-to-be she decided she wanted more money and she went to work in the Optical Factory in Cydweli. Barry was a waiter and then a driver with South Wales Transport.

1.50 Sylvia went to Burry Port infants and juniors, because the day war broke out, her father went into the army straight away because he was already in the TAs, and her mother descended on her Granny in Calver (?) Street, Burry Port and the family was there 'for the duration'. She passed the 11+, or scholarship then, in 1949, and went into the grammar school. She stayed to do her O Levels, and one of them was (to Miss Lloyd's surprise – Needlework teacher) a distinction in Needlework. There was only one electric machine in the sewing department and she never had to wait for it. **'I wouldn't tack if I could pin and I wouldn't pin if I could hold.'** She's always had an interest in sewing, and later she joined John Stanton's factory in North Dock.

She left school at 17 – she had every intention at that time of going into nursing. She did her prelim nursing at the then General Hospital Llanelli, and passed it and did Physiology and Anatomy etc prior to going in at 18. She was initially accepted at college in London, but then she met her husband-to- be, 5 years older than her and just out of the army on National

Service, and she decided that London was too far. Then she was accepted at Cardiff Royal Infirmary, but by now John and her were so madly in love (and they still are) and if you went into training to be a nurse you couldn't get married, and in those days you didn't live together, so she made a decision she has never regretted, she didn't take up her nursing career and they got married – 15/9/1956. They've lived happily ever after.

5.04

Her first job after leaving school was in Burry Port Post Office, (mentions their son David a G.P.). She left there because she was expecting her first daughter Judith, than after a couple of years she had Jonathan. After this she worked for a very short time at the Opticals on night shift. She lost a lot of weight – the way of life wasn't suiting her. Her husband John at this time was working in the Stamping, then in Vickers chemical works Burry port and then a conductor with South Wales Transport and then he was lucky enough to get into Carmarthen Bay Power Station where he worked between Burry Port and Somerset for 30 years.

She was offered another job when she was at the Opticals. **'Back in the sixties you could walk from one job into another.'** She had worked when in school as a Saturday girl (+ summer holidays and Xmas) in Woolworth. She feels she belongs to the last generation that hasn't had to go to work. When she finally went back to work they bought their first house and when they had their son Jeremy they moved to a house which didn't have central heating etc. – So she decided to go to work to pay for the central heating!

7.23

She was about 28 years old when she started at John Stanton's c. 1967. She got the job by word of mouth – a friend of hers had two sisters working there, but they were what were called 'examining' the clothes after they had been finished and cutting off the last little bits of cotton, pressing them, before they went on to the buyers.

This factory was based at the North Dock Llanelli, - **'it was a lovely factory to work in. ... Their main contractor was Marks and Spencers.** ' They made blouses, dresses and skirts and the occasional run of anoraks, but no tailoring. They didn't do underwear – a factory in Swansea was doing that? – but they did do a limited range of nightwear – nighties and dressing gowns.

The cutting would be done by machine in the factory. It was marvellous to see it. Marks and Spencers would have picked the material and the patterns etc. There would be a great foot or 18 inches depth of material and this guillotine would come down and cut all these patterns simultaneously per size.

9.15

Then – the way it worked because of her past record, though she had no formal training in sewing – **'I ran through the machine and they said** (*note background noise of husband*

filling kettle and boiling it!) **‘Oh you’re a top-machinist, which meant that I would be part of the group that fitted collars, yokes, cuffs, as opposed to just overlocking or seams or finishing hems. There was a multitude of different machines there that did one process only. And of course you had a batch then coming in a nice polythene box – they’d all be the same pattern, or the same size ... you’d do the same process on each one and as you finished it you’d pass it over.’**

There were probably 100+ women working there and men on the cutting machines and in management, which was par for the course. **Actually she thought at the time the pay wasn’t bad – it was £8 a week - and if you had a procedure you could do reasonably quickly .. and properly – because it was top machining, after you had done your target first, from there on in the week you could go on bonus – so much per ten garments. If you had a good run, the machines didn’t break down, or there was no problem with the patterning, and the supply was coming through, you could actually bump your £8 up to £2 or £3 extra – to £11 before stoppages.**

They would work on a specific pattern in different sizes – 10 – 18 (or were these sizes or bust sizes used at this time?). If she was doing cuffs – she would only do cuffs – two sleeves. The buttonholes would have been done prior to coming to her.

12.05

Trained? **‘Well, I didn’t have any training as such. I don’t know whether I was essentially a natural, but you had to make sure that you did the job properly, that you didn’t go off the line because, if it was topstitching you had to be very regular. The machines were brilliant, they were very fast machines.’** They weren’t like domestic machines (although hers perhaps was). Every seam was overlocked before the seams were joined together.

She was called a top machinist but she had the same wage as everybody else - £8 a week; and as long as your garments passed the inspection (a lot wouldn’t for various reasons) – and of course they had a factory shop which was great, because they could buy Marks and S clothes in the factory shop and the public would come in and buy on certain days of the week **‘and it would be heaving there.’** They would go there in their lunch hour.

13.35

She’s unsure whether this was a new factory but it was very clean. They were sweeping up all day because if anything fell on the floor it could get dirty. A sealed concrete floor. They were very very conscious of oil spills, immaculate – some people just going round sweeping up. Dust and bits of cotton.

To wear they supplied their own overalls, no gloves or anything on their heads. The factory was very airy, very high ceilings and lots of skylights. Can’t remember it being cold – one time the fire alarm went off and it was bitterly cold out on North dock. You weren’t allowed

to smoke, because of the danger of fire. **'You were timed, you had to stop the machines and more or less put your hand up to ask permission to go to the toilet, I wouldn't say they were timing you but you were only allowed a few minutes. Because some would go in there and have a smoke, you know. That didn't worry me because I was never a smoker. But other than that it was fairly free and easy, as long as you knuckled down and got on with the job.'** It was noisy because of all the machines going.

15.30 Time and motion? Before the garments arrived – and before she went there they had already arranged a price on different garments because they were a re-run or similar run, - **the procedure would have a price**, but in a week you would have to get your target before you went on bonus. It was a weekly thing (not daily). She can't remember how many she would do in a week because every garment more or less would have a different price, e.g. if you were putting a cuff on and not topstitching it – then it was a shorter procedure. Slight variation in procedure, but a lot of these would be covered by a flat rate. They were very good in the factory because at the time Sylvia was politically active, but there wasn't a union there, (not enough men there to have a union for them?) – **17.10 'it's the first time I've worked in an industry where I needed to have an union and there wasn't one there ... but then we started – they had a new contract for dressing gowns, and they were lined dressing gowns, so one of the procedures – finishing was bagging, because of course if the lining isn't put in right, it shows below the garment and spoils it all, and all of a sudden we weren't top machinists any more. Oh no, they were trying to cut down the price. And up until then, they'd given us a price, temporary, and they decided then because we were doing too many, that it (the price) must be too high, nothing to do with our skill, but we'd have been earning too much. And they had us all in the office, and two of us were a bit more militant, and we said, "Well, you know, you can't be a top machinist one day and then just an ordinary machinist the day after just to suit you" And things became a bit heated, and this woman I'd got a bit friendly with, Joan Harper, - we'd found out in the meantime, somebody was talking, that Salter's down the road had opened up, and we said, "Right we're leaving." ... But this happened to be a Friday afternoon, and we finished at two on a Friday – that made your hours up, so we walked out lunchtime. We walked out, out of the office, "Where are you going" they said, "Back to the machines, to get my bag" "You can't go back to the machine". I said "You can't stop me, " Because one thing we had to do was provide our own scissors, I said "My scissors is there" I said, "and I'm going back for my handbag.". And Joan said, "I'm coming with you. " So we walked out, giggling like teenagers, and we said "We'll go up to Salter's and see what they can offer us." And we walked into Salter's and they offered us a job to start on the Monday at £11.50 a week, plus bonuses. So we were absolutely cock-a-hoop.'**

She'd been there about three years by then. If Salter's hadn't been there she may have bitten her tongue, - that then, would have been a first!

19.27

The other women at John Stanton's would grumble but not do anything about it. It was easy for Sylvia to say to walk out – but they were very dependent on their pay. She doesn't know who owned John Stanton's – she's looked at it on the web and there is a John Stanton University – but is it related? She never saw the bosses. There would be a line – supervisor, - it was a very clean environment, and most of the time it was fine. But on this occasion she felt the management was trying it on a bit. The supervisor was a woman – probably someone who had been there longer. She wasn't on a conveyor belt – she had her own batch to do and she just got on with it.

They couldn't talk much because of the noise of the sewing machines. Also she wouldn't have been that close to the person next to her – about six foot away, because you had to have room to stack all the boxes with the garments.

22.10

Were you allowed to talk at all or did they stop you?

Theoretically, yes. But you weren't allowed to sort of take your hands off the machine, ... because it was a fairly concentrated job and you had to make sure that the line was kept straight, because you were conscious of the amount of garments, because each batch were a different number, perhaps the size fourteen might have 24 in it, perhaps a size 10 would only have six in it. .. But you became almost annoyed then, because you had to stop what you were doing to get another batch so you were losing time, you know. So we would have a little chat then and have a little moan, saying, "I wish they would be a little more organised, and get the things together."

A lot depended on who was feeding them – these were mainly women. They arrived on very small forklifts – not motorised.

23.21

They did play 'Workers' Playtime' – as background music. No singing. They had a very nice canteen, and you had to leave your machine for a break in case you spilled tea or coffee over everything. A short break in the morning, had to go to the canteen; the whole factory would stop for lunch, sometimes she took a packed lunch and sat outside looking over the harbour if it was nice.

The factory provided buses for them to travel to work. And there was quite a good social group there. They organised one trip but she can't remember where, but to a Swansea nightclub (not her scene). She was married and she still went on it! The private bus which took them to work would pick up in Burry Port, already workers from Trimsaran on it, and then pick up again in Llanelli.

Hours – only day shifts. Start c. 8 o'clock, and finish at 4 but 2 on a Friday.

As top machinists their procedure would be the last on the garment before going to inspection and pressing by the finishers. Then they would be put on hangers in polythene bags and taken out like that.

She went straight into being a top machinist without any formal training. She had a trial and she could do it. **'It took me a while to pick up my speed of course, because I didn't have the real confidence to really go for broke on it, but it didn't take long.'**

27.07

Dangerous? **'Well I did catch my thumb under the needle once and I've still got the scar on my thumb to show it. There it is there, ...'** It was her fault for not being careful. She just went to the surgery. She thinks there was a nurse in the factory but unsure whether she was full time. There were people there with first aid cover. **'I think they were more concerned about blood everywhere. ... And another thing then, if you did break the needle, that again was losing your time, '** Putting a new needle in was a bit of a cuffuffle. There wasn't rivalry between different machinists because it wasn't teamwork as such – because **'you earned the bonus, not the line.'** It was an individual thing – you'd have your docket number which you would sign, and they'd sign it off that you had done twelve or whatever. **'My name would be on that. Because you notice when you buy something it says, examined by machinist, with a code. And then, if I failed then, they were taken off my bonus.'**

She doesn't think she even stayed off work when she had her injury. Put a thumb stall(?) on and went back. No compensation (laughs!) Her fault. You could moderate the machine and go more slowly, but then she wouldn't have got her bonus. The machine had a foot pedal so you could ease off the pedal.

29.50

Social group there but informally and organised by the women themselves. They went to a Country Club near Crosshands once. No social club.

She did mention her O Level in sewing when she went for the job, but it was the practical go on the machine which was most important. They didn't want to see a certificate.

She never found an attitude towards factory girls in Llanelli. Looking back – she didn't enjoy getting up early to go to work. She was fortunate that her husband was working shifts now so, with her mother's help too, she was able to ensure the children were all right. **'I don't think I could have worked factory hours, full time, if it wasn't for my mother cooperating like that.'** John was a twentieth century man who helped around the house – cleaning potatoes for dinner, and with the wash and Hoovering. Her mother couldn't understand why Sylvia was expecting her boys to help with clearing up after a meal.

34.00

The factory itself - this was the first time she'd worked in industry (only 6 weeks nights in the Optical) – 'it was really nice. It was a nice clean environment, a very happy environment, nobody shouting and screaming you know,' No bad language really – just bloody and dam. **'In fact John Stanton's was considered quite a posh place to work, because it was Marks and Sparks!'** The women didn't have much to do with the men there. The management called them by their first names but they called them Mr

Holidays? Bank holidays and stop fortnight in the summer. They had a Christmas dinner in the canteen which (she thinks) was a free meal, but the Xmas does outside the factory would have been organised by the women for the staff. No party for the children of employees. They gave birthday cards within their groups. They weren't cliquey. She thinks school leavers might have been teased on their first days. The facilities were more than adequate. **Toilets 'you could guarantee if you went in there it would be reeking with smoke.'** **Supervisor shouting 'Come on you've been in there long enough now!'** They also smoked in the canteen.

She doesn't think her health has been adversely affected by the work. It was a wide space and it wasn't cramped at all.

38.35

Salter's Factory – on the site of the old Welsh Tinplate – the Stamping (according to the internet it goes back to the 1840s). Salter's bought it intending to carry on with the Stamping – they were stamping out the enamel goods. They were making the yellow enamel which was the Daffodil brand – very well known. The man must have been very with it, because no-one knew the actual formula for the enamel. It didn't chip and it would last – and possibly they lasted too long! It was mostly domestic ware – enamel plates, pie-dishes, frying pans Her husband worked there at one time and he brought home a heavy based frying pan – dark blue enamelled frying pan for half a crown, and it lasted decades. The old man took the formula to the grave with him, so Salter's couldn't produce this tinplate on the side and their weighing scales and bathroom scales in another part of the factory, they did do so for a while but they couldn't carry on.

She was a calibrator - a ranger. When the scales came in, they would be assembled and then come down on a canvas conveyor belt, - about twelve rangers would alternate down the conveyor belt, and the scales would come down. They would have been assembled on to the metal base, and then they would have kilos (now into metric) and they would weigh them and calibrate them by turning little screws on them, so that they were accurate within accepted parameters for domestic scales – not as stringent as commercial scales. Again they made different models of scales and again there was a price on each one. They started at £11.50 + bonus. Again you had to do your target before going on the bonus.

41.40

Everything (plastic bowls, dials etc.) would be made off site somewhere but assembled on site. The component parts would come in and there would be a lot of different machines putting things together. Mainly this was in the main factory area – as big as Stanton’s but nowhere near as clean, nowhere near as modern. It had brick walls, in the winter it was bitterly cold. They would bring in calor gas overhead heaters, with big bottles – not very health and safety! There was an union there and there were more men there because there an element of heavier machinery there – more engineering. Again she and the rangers were almost at the end of the assembly. They would pick up the scales, take off one or two (as you would in a biscuit factory) and then too many would come down and you’d say ‘Stop the line, we can’t cope!’ and then we’d do them and you’d put your initial – she was the only S on the line – in chalk inside the thing before the case went on. Then if it failed inspection when everything was assembled, it would come back to her to be calibrated and she wouldn’t get paid for doing it again. She had to do things left-handed which she found strange – the screws were on the left hand side, putting the kilo weights on with your right hand, **but you got into quite a rhythm really.**

43.35

When they went there, when Joan and she walked down there to get the job, the company had only just taken over the site, and they hadn’t really got the production line going, they’d been open about 5-6 weeks, so they took them round - Peter Williams. The Salter’s base was in Wolverhampton in the Midlands, and they brought a lot of their expertise down with them. Nine years later when they closed the place none of them went back. They liked the beauty of west Wales.

There was the main office block. Once again they had to clock in (as also in Stanton’s) – on a very old machine. Again it was a nice atmosphere, not so noisy – you could talk to the girl on the opposite side of the conveyor belt, and that was the longest she worked anywhere – 9 years. **‘There was no responsibility which is what I liked, because the children were still small.’** But when she was in Salter’s Judith was getting married (1976), and there was a lot of interest in that there; e.g. one friend she made - Glenys Evans attended the wedding. Joan wasn’t so sociable.

46.06

There was a lot of music there. She learnt all the songs from Evita – it was blasted out because it was slightly quieter (i.e. machines) there. As long as they didn’t stop that was fine.

She was happy to have the money. Some would come in half past seven on a Monday morning and say ‘Roll on Friday’. But she’d say ‘What’s the matter with you?’ ‘Oh I’ve only come for the company’ ‘If you’ve only come for the company not the money, go and work in a ? shelter shop.’ I told them, ‘I’m here for the money, but I enjoy the company as well, that’s a bonus.’

At this time she was also on the council in Burry Port, she was on the tribunal regarding people on social benefits, if they'd had a clothing grant turned down, she'd be on their side, and she was a governor etc. So she had enough to do outside work – she didn't want it in work as well. **'When the conveyor belt switched off I switched off.'**

47.35

In the summer it was cool. **She was there the day Llanelli beat Seland Newydd and there were only a few women around. All the men had gone to Strade! Also Elvis died (1977) when she was there (she didn't follow pop music) but there were more long faces over Elvis dying than anything!**

When she first saw the factory she thought 'My God what have I got into!' Joan didn't want to be a ranger – she preferred to be on the machines. But Sylvia made a good few friends on the line, e.g. Betty from Pwll – her brother was the headmaster of Queen Elizabeth Grammar school in Carmarthen and her sister, she's got to know lately through chapel. Rita then used to be comical with sayings like 'Plenty of people in cemeteries would change places with you' and 'no pockets in shrouds.'

There was a union here – Transport and General. She was pleased there was a union. One of her friends Audrey Jenkins was one of the shop stewards. Audrey is the fund-raising committee Chairman of the hospice committee. A few years ago when Sylvia was Mayor of Burry Port and Cydweli she met Audrey at a function and she was challenged to be on the hospice committee. She apologised and said that it wasn't around when she went to Somerset in 1984. She promised to join when she had finished as mayor and she has and she does hospice duties on the stall on a Monday morning in Prince Phillip.

50.40

She didn't become a shop steward although she is political. There weren't any real disputes or problems although it was a period of a lot of strikes. **She remembers Callaghan as Chancellor of the Exchequer saying there should be a ceiling of £6 on every pay rise regardless of what your pay was and 'we had that £6 rise'.** She doesn't remember any strikes. If there were any disputes, they came to an amicable agreement about it.

They would have new machines – and although they didn't deliberately slow down, they used to say **'Don't get too familiar with them too quickly. Otherwise they're going to drop the prices on them.'** So they did use a bit of a tactic there. Because that didn't allow if there was a break in the line, sometimes parts wouldn't come in and some days the parts hadn't come in from the manufacturers. They didn't stop your pay but you were on basic. You'd work on other things – cleaning up and if people had bought weighing scales and they were faulty, they'd come back to them. They'd be issued with new scales, because of Salter's policy of replacing faulty machines with a new one, and they'd spend that time then trying to get these back into production. **So we wouldn't be idle, but we wouldn't be on bonus then.**

53.00

The machines in Salter's tended to break down because the mechanism had to be riveted to the base, and sometimes the rivets wouldn't work or they'd go on wrong. This would certainly slow up if not dry up the supply to their line – this would be disruptive. However they knew that the management weren't doing this on purpose.

Again there weren't any dangers – there were guards on some of the machines. This was the seventies now and they were becoming more Health and Safety conscious.

Then she was offered a job to go on inspection in the warehouse. They'd bring in stuff just as the distributor, e.g. they'd have Zeiss items – more kitchen gadgetry things, - had operated slicers and choppers and a different kind of scale with two bowls on it. They wanted them to check them and they would take a percentage of the production to do this. They checked them and stamped them. There were three of them in the old warehouse doing this. She brought in an old radio and they could listen to the afternoon play because it was quiet there. They were given pallets of stuff to check the quality. She enjoyed this because it was really a bit of a soft perk. They had to do so many and sign them off.

56.00

Perks: The shop in John Stanton's was good because they had not only the garments they made in Llanelli, but also underwear and nighties which were made in other John Stanton factories. They never had children's clothes though. She went back to the Stanton's shop when she worked in Salter's.

There was a factory shop in Salter's as well selling the scales and things from Welsh tinsplate – enamel plates etc. She had enamel pie dishes which lasted for decades. These would be seconds – but often very little wrong with them – perhaps the wrong label had been put on, perhaps a size 12 on a size 16, but they wouldn't go back and put a new label on, because that was part of the process and you destroyed the garment doing that, then they had to be marked with a red stamp 'Second', and the actual size put on it and the reason why it had failed, you know - 'wrong size'.

No social club in Salter's. A very good canteen there, beautiful food subsidised to the hilt and it had to close because it wasn't paying its way.

Her son Jonathan worked at Salter's after leaving grammar school at 16, and while waiting to go into the air force and he worked there for about seven months. He was a general labourer there. **They teased him especially since he was her son. There was another Sylvia working there – she wasn't a ranger, but Jonathan said 'Mam, will you tell Sylvia by here, I am a virgin aren't I?!' She answered 'I don't know if you're a virgin as long as you're not a father!'**

In Salter's working in grease etc , but yet they came out clean. It was more physically demanding but neither really physically demanding. In Stanton's perhaps her neck would ache a bit – repetitive strain injury perhaps but this hadn't been invented at the time!

Again in Salter's they provided their own overalls.

1:00:25

In John Stanton's she had to take her own scissors – not a dress making one because she wasn't really cutting, but a sharp one, because it was part of their remit to cut the ends off, although the examiners would also go back over them to make sure none had been missed – to ensure no rough edges too. You had to make your own bobbins, but they were made automatically, while they were sewing. So it was just a case of changing it in the shuttle.

Comparing the two factories: the one she enjoyed most was probably Salter's, whether she was there longer or because she moved around and didn't do the same thing all the time – more variety to it? She had a sewing machine at home but she'd bring material in and overlock it in the factory. They didn't mind if she did this in her lunch hour. She'd ask permission beforehand e.g. to make a chiffon dress. The factory overlockers trimmed and overlocked together. This was a commercial machine. **'I had lovely finished garments. Tidier on the inside than on the outside!'** She made a lot of her own clothes and for her daughter.

She was never a miniskirt wearer and they were allowed to wear trousers to work.

Language? 90% English, though if workers were Welsh speaking and working together they would speak Welsh ' but immediately they turned to you they'd speak in English.'

No important visitors e.g. royalty (Laughter!)

1.03.52

Her politics are very important to her. Always in it – on her mother's side. Her grandfather was a founder member of the ILP in the days when admitting you were a Socialist could cost you your job. In the last ten years her sister found out that they had a great grandfather living in Burry Port who was the Manager of the Ashburnham Tinplate works and when her grandfather became a Socialist, his father had nothing to do with him, and they never knew they had a great grandfather living in Burry Port. Her grandfather was a member then of the Labour Party, officially, and her Granny used to plead with him, 'Don't come home here nominated for Council' – It would cost him his job.

In the factories they knew where she stood – she never made a secret of the fact that she was a card holding member of the party and active. She joined the party when she was about 19-20 a year after getting married and she's given the minutes of the women's section when her mother was the secretary to the Women's Archives. They say 'Mrs Betty Richards, the Chairman, welcomed Mrs Sylvia Howell to the meeting.' That was in 1957. She went to

summer school – they put a crèche on for the children, and finally became a councillor before going to Somerset. She stood in her twenties but not elected. Council meetings were in the evenings. Her husband John, when working in the Bay, officials were allowed time off because it was a Nationalised Industry. She retired as councillor when she was 70 after doing her year as Mayor (about two years after that).

1.06.34

She is also a member of the Cooperative Women's Guild, which officially is the non-political part of the Co-op movement, but in Llanelli it's two sides of the same coin – women of similar thinking. It was formed after she came back from Somerset in 1995 – in 1997. There may have been a branch years in Llanelli ago. But she'd already joined the Co-op Party in Llanelli – the political side of the movement, and she's also a member of the Co-op Group.

Similar minded people in the factories – no die-hard Tories and Plaid hadn't really become much of an issue then, in the late 60s early 70s.

1.08.30

She has made lifelong friends in the factories. She notes that the car factories have a bad name for being militant and striking etc. the two industries she worked in – that did not happen, **'but then was that because in the main, the majority of the employees were women? And most of them were there – some of them said they were there for the company, but ... we all know we were there for the pay packet at the end of the week.'**

She considered her pay packet as subsidiary income – John and she put their pay packets on the table unopened. She mentions another woman whose husband is doling out her pension to her! In this day and age!

Pilfering? Yes, **'Certainly cottons. I've still got some cottons in my bag that were colours that weren't needed any more. But, the point is in any case, they were very big reels, they were about 5000 metres, and once they'd go too low, you know you couldn't really use them, because you wouldn't have the weight to run them, so they would be thrown out. So I'd throw them into my bag! Quite a few did the same thing, you know, which is why I've got such a selection of cottons all these years later.'**

In Salter's the scales weren't going out in lorry loads! But certainly if you went to the shop which members of the staff would open certain hours every week, you would say 'Such and such a model scale now, make sure I've got a tidy one now, right? And I want a red one.' But you'd pay for that in the shop. She had one of the Stylus(?) range – which they got 5% for checking the stock and also a big scale. She still uses her chopper regularly – still in good condition.

In sewing, if she was working on a cream blouse, and the top stitching was blue – you had to be a little bit more careful. Black on black was really bad, but the lighting was good, but if

you did a lot of that it would be more tiring. It was strip lighting and daylight (not individual lighting).

(Off the recording Sylvia said she got £900 redundancy pay when Salter's closed in 1978. She spent this on a full bedroom suite of which she is still very proud today.)