

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

### Dolgarrog Aluminium (1961-1975, with gaps)

Also Bacons Toys, Llanrwst (1959-61), Danline, Llanrwst and Hotpoint, Llandudno

**Interviewee:** VN003 Yvonne Stevens

**Date:** 25: 11: 013

**Interviewer:** Kate Sullivan on behalf of Women's Archive Wales

00:00 *Okay, Yvonne, could you start then by giving me your name and date of birth?*

Yeah, my full name is Margaret Yvonne Stevens. Date of birth is 30<sup>th</sup> of the 10<sup>th</sup>, '44.

*Lovely. So could you tell me a little bit about your background, where you were born, your parents.*

Well, I was born in Llanrwst, born on an estate called Cae Person Person, and my mother was named Emma and my father was named Harry, Harry Lamale, he had a, well, he wasn't French but his father was French, they've both died now. My father died when I was, dunno, when I was sixteen I think. And my mother died about nine, ten years ago.

01.02 *What did your parents do?*

My mother was a waitress in hotels and my father was in the army, and then from the army he went to the lead mines, and he died then, died after the lead mines.

*So the lead mines were in Llanrwst?*

In Llanrwst, yeah.

*When did they close?*

Oh, heck, in the 50s, about '52, I think, '53, something like that.

*Do you have brothers or sisters?*

Yeah, I have one brother, one sister died and I've got another sister, so there's one brother and one sister now.

*And are they all in Llanrwst?*

All in Llanrwst yeah, all the family's in Llanrwst.

*What did your brother and sister do?*

My brother's a butcher in Llanrwst and my sister, she was a waitress and cleaner in hotels, and she's still a cleaner in British Legion club in Llanrwst now, she's still a cleaner there. I worked there, but I worked there for twenty-three years but I retired, I retired three years ago.

*So did you work with your sister?*

I did, yeah. She's still working.

02:10

*Where did you go to school?*

In Llanrwst, it's a, well, we called it Central School, now it's called Bro Gwydir school for little, well, I left school there as well, I went from age three or four, or whatever it was, well it wasn't three or four, it was five or six I think, and I finished there as well, at fifteen. So same school all the way up, yeah. They hadn't built the new one, you know, when you go to the bigger school from eleven isn't it, eleven or twelve, I think.

*So why did you leave school?*

Oh, I just wanted to. We didn't have any opportunity to go anywhere, you know, we were going to a factory. We wanted to go to Dolgarrog, and I went into the factory in, the toy factory, and I was there for, I think it was about eighteen months, you couldn't start Dolgarrog until you were about seventeen. And that was on days and when you were eighteen you could go on shifts. So I started there, then.

*How old were you when you went to the toy factory?*

Fifteen, yeah, fifteen.

*And that was your first job?*

My first job, yeah.

*Did you have an interview?*

No, no. It was just ask, ask if there were any jobs going, available, and they just showed you how to paint and all that, you know.

*Who did you ask?*

Um, there was a foreman there called Mr Freshwater, he just told me to come back and gave us a job, like that it was then.

03:47 *How did you feel going to your first job?*

Oh, I thought it was brilliant. It was absolutely brilliant, a nice atmosphere there. And the paint room was quite big and I worked with elderly people, I called them Aunty Lena and Aunty Martha.

*Your colleagues?*

Yeah, working there with them, we had the radio on, really good.

*So how many of your worked there?*

Oh, there was about four of us. And then, I'd say about fifty-odd, about thirty to fifty, something like that, people.

*All women?*

No, young lads as well, young lads as well when I was there. Most of the young lads have died now.

*What did the men do?*

They weren't men, it was all young lads, up to eighteen.

*So what did they do?*

Their jobs was in the saw-mill, sawing the dolls houses out, oh, what do you call it, cutting it out, and then it goes upstairs to get assembled, then it goes from the assembly room to the spray room, cos they'd made them out of, what was it, hardboard I think, hardboard, that's what they were made of. They went to the spray room and these lads were spraying them and then they went to the paint room where we were.

05:09 *What was your job?*

Painter, we called it, painter.

*So you were painting the toys?*

I was painting the toys, yeah.

*And did you have training?*

No, we didn't, no, if we made a mistake, it would have to be rejected. And then you'd get a dab hand at it then, you know, it was really nice, really good. And, well, I don't think there's any around, not for me to know, it was a shame, really, I'd like to see a toy now of it, like a dolls house or a board and easel, or a skipping rope, or whatever. There's none around, nobody had them then, you see, nobody bought them, we didn't, well, we couldn't afford it, cos my mother was a widow, 'cos my dad died when I

started the toy factory. And my brother, he was only two when my dad died. So I was the only one that was going to work, you know, so we didn't have any cameras or anything like that, you know. So the money that we had, don't ask me how much money I was having, I can't remember that.

06:11 *Do you remember the money going to your family?*

To my mam, yeah, to my mother.

*Did you keep any for yourself?*

Yeah, cos I was smoking. I was a smoker.

*Before you went to the factory or after?*

Before, yeah, before. In school.

*Did all the women smoke?*

Yeah, they did, yeah.

*So the factory made toys, were they exported?*

Yeah, they were.

*Where did they go?*

Oh, heck, there was a packing room as well and they, well, everywhere, all over, don't ask me where, I couldn't tell you where. But they were exported.

*But the local people didn't buy them?*

Not round here, no, there was nothing round here then, there was no shops, we've got toy shops here now, couple of toy shops, but there weren't nothing like that in Llanrwst then, you know, when the factory was open, it was all going out of Llanrwst, you know, not in Llanrwst, wherever the shops were.

07:12 *Could you describe a working day? Did you have to clock in, for instance?*

No, you didn't have to clock in, no.

*What time did you start work?*

Half past eight and finished five.

*Did you have breaks?*

Yeah, we had a break in the morning and an hour for dinner. And as I lived up the road, I used to go home for dinner.

*Was there a canteen?*

No, no, nothing like that, no. Took our sandwiches if we wanted sandwiches or a flask.

*So they didn't provide any coffee or tea?*

No, nothing like that, no.

*Do you remember what your wages were?*

I can't remember, you know, no. I can't remember, it couldn't have been much, definitely not, about nine shillings perhaps, nine shillings, something like that.

*What was the factory like?*

Oh, it was an old building, and it was a bit creaky, you know, people were working upstairs, like, in the assembly room, and big and wooden stairs to come down, health and safety, would have been shut down by now.

*Did they take over an old . . .*

To tell you the truth, I don't know, I think it started around about 1950, you know, 1949-50, it was there, because the building was there, so what the building was before that I can't remember. But it was an old stone building but it was all rickety-rackety, rooms here and rooms there, you know.

09:09

*Was it cold?*

Yeah, very cold, but we did have electric wall heaters, little wall heaters, you know.

*And was it light enough to work?*

Yeah, yeah, in places where we needed to be, you know, in the paint room we wanted a lot of light, there was a lot of light coming from the sky-light, and something like that, you know, yeah, there was light, but only a couple of bulbs hanging down.

*So in the toy factory, did you do the same job the whole time?*

The whole time, yeah. I was employed as a painter, in the paint room.

*Were there ever any accidents or health and safety issues?*

There was a couple of accidents in the saw mill, you know, somebody had a finger off or something like that, you know, these young lads, you know.

*So what would happen in those circumstances?*

I remember one lad, Ronny, he's dead now, and he was my age, he's died as well. Um, yeah, I think he had his little finger off, if I remember, Ronny did, tip of his finger, cos he was on the saw mill.

*Did you ever have any accidents?*

No, I didn't, no.

10:12

*Was there sick pay or anything if you were off sick?*

I don't know, I don't think so, I'm sure there would have been, but I never had any cos I wasn't off sick. I'm sure there would have been.

*So you were the youngest of the workers?*

Yeah, and there were young lads about my age there, we were from school. There was Ivor, he was in the spray room, he died young, died of a heart attack. And like I said, there was no masks, there was no masks for them to spray, you know, he was spraying all the time, you know, it was horrible, well, he died of a heart attack. And Ronny, well, there's a few there that's died, like.

*And the older women that you were working with, were they married?*

Yeah, they were married, yeah. And most of their husbands were working in Dolgarrog, in the aluminium factory.

*Were there any perks working in the factory?*

Not in the toy factory there wasn't, nothing at all, not even the toys, no, not even the toys. Like I said, well, it used to be shame, we couldn't afford it, my mother couldn't afford it, if we'd had bought a fort for my brother cos he was only two, but we couldn't, you know what I mean, or a skipping rope for my sister, but no, no perks at all like that, no.

*Did you have holidays?*

Yeah, we had holidays, I think it was only about five days, five days holidays.

*Was that in the summer, or Christmas?*

Oh it was in the summer, during the summer holidays.

*During Christmas time, were you busier?*

Yeah, very busy. And there was overtime then, we used to have, on a Saturday morning, we used to work a Saturday morning.

*And you got paid overtime?*

We got paid overtime, yeah, that was the busiest time coming towards Christmas.

12:44

*When you weren't working, did you go out?*

Oh yeah.

*Where did you go?*

I used to go dancing to Betws-y-Coed, it's called, Swallow Falls there, that was my

Saturday night out.

*That was a hotel, was it?*

It was the Swallow Falls in Betws-y-Coed, it's still a hotel now, they used to have dances there, you know, groups, not groups, bands and juke box.

*What period would this have been?*

Oh in the '60s, early '60s.

*Who did you go with, dancing?*

A friend of mine, again she's dead, she's died, I'm very lucky I am, but she died, Sylvia, she died young.

*Did she work in the factory?*

No she didn't, Sylvia didn't work, she was on the dole.

13:34 *So did you ever go out with any of the people in the factory dancing?*

No. Went out with the lads but as a friend, round town, there's a pub there, used to be, the Red Lion. Used to go there, sit in there and listen to the juke box there, Ronny and Ivor, but no, no. Out every weekend, looking forward to a Saturday night.

*Really? You went out every Saturday?*

Every Saturday, yeah, every Saturday.

*Why?*

Oh, just something to look forward to, you know, get dressed up and have your hair done.

*Were there any trade unions in the factory?*

Not in the toy factory, no.

*Why was that?*

I don't know. Well, I'd never heard of a trade union, not until I went to Dolgarrog Aluminium Works, hadn't heard of a trade union. I know it was on the news and that but I never heard of them, I never heard at all about them.

*What was the management like in the toy factory?*

Well, there was only the two, the manager, Mr Bacon, and the foreman, Mr Freshwater, that's all there was, the two of them. Mr Freshwater ran all up and down looking at the girls, you know. We had to work, you couldn't play about or nothing like that.

*Were they strict?*

He was strict, yeah, very strict. Well, he's died now, they've both died now.

15:07

*You say you couldn't play around, were you allowed to talk?*

Yeah, because the paint room and the spray room was in a different place, different building, compared to the saw mill, sand the packing and the assembly, it was a different place, you had to go out, outside in the yard, so, the spray room, because, when the toys were dry they used to come to the paint room, you see, and from the paint room, when they were dry, you had to put them in, like, a heated place and they went to the packing room then. Oh, no, no, you had to work.

*And you said you used to listen to the radio?*

Yeah, we had the radio on, it was in our room. And the girls upstairs, in the assembly room, they all had their little radio, you know.

*What did you used to listen to?*

Oh, I can't remember now, I can't remember what was on.

*Would it have been music?*

Oh, yeah, yeah, it would have been music, yeah, it must have been all the 60s music that was coming in at the time, I'm not sure really.

*Did you have to wear a uniform?*

No.

*What did you wear to work?*

I did have an overall, cos of the paint work, you know.

*So did the factory provide the overall?*

No, no.

*Who provided it?*

Our own.

*You had to buy it?*

Yeah, yeah.

16:45

*You said there wasn't a canteen, was there a kitchen, were there toilets?*

No, yeah, toilets, yeah, no kitchen. It was only the flask, you know. And if it was nice, if it was warm, you could sit outside and have your sandwiches and a flask.



*Was it noisy on the factory floor?*

Not where I worked, it was noisy in the saw mill cos of the saw going all the time, you know, and a lot of dust, a lot of dust flying around, you know, and that would carry on, all the dust going upstairs, and music going, and everybody, you know, you could have a chat, yeah, you could be talking but you'd have to carry on working, like.

*Was it a nice environment?*

It was nice, yeah, it was nice and friendly, because everybody was from Llanrwst and not far from the toy factory, you know, walking space from the toy factory, well, I only lived about five minutes away and everybody else only about a five minute walk from the place, like, you know. So we knew each other anyway, everybody that was there, we knew each other, you know. You didn't come from afar, you know, you didn't come from another village or anywhere else, no, it was all from Llanrwst.

*So you said you came home for dinner every day?*

Yeah, if it was raining I wouldn't go, I'd take a sandwich and a flask. Oh, no, I didn't have a flask, whatever my mother gave me, a drink or something.

*When you came home for dinner, who was here? In your house, were your brother and sister having dinner as well?*

Yeah, no, Dorothy was in school and Carl was only little, Carl was two and a half, something like that, three.

18:23

*So your mother was at home?*

Yeah, my mother was at home.

*The lads that worked in the factory, and the women, what was the relationship like? did they get on?*

Yeah, yeah, great lads, great lads.

*Was there any sort of banter?*

Yeah, there was, yeah, we had a good laugh with them all, you know, we did, yeah.

*How do you think the men, or the boys -*

Yeah, they were, only young boys, you see, only young boys, like I said, when I left, coming on seventeen I left, and there was lads after, I didn't know them, you know, there was different sort of people there, wasn't there, then. Yeah, they were good lads, all good lads, there was a lot of good lads there.

*What did they think about women working?*

Well, it didn't interest, you know, now they're saying, well there's more men and we can't get a job cos the men are taking this job over, and all that, there was nothing

talking about that at all, if you got a job, well, 'oh, I'm you working with so and so and so and so', you know, and that was just work, no jealousy because I've got a job or, well, we were all on the same wage, you didn't get a wage cos you were an assembler or a painter or a sprayer, or more for anything else, I think we were all on the same wage, like, you know, no, they were good lads.

19:57

*And was your father alive then or not did you say?*

No, my father had died, he died when I went to the toy factory, I'd left school at fifteen.

*So just around them time?*

Yeah, that right.

*How did he die?*

No, I was in the toy factory, no, sorry, no, I was in Dolgarrog works when my dad died. yeah, Carl (?) was 59. yeah, I was in Dolgarrog works when my dad died. My dad died of cancer, lung cancer.

*What did your parents think about you going work in a factory?*

Well, they didn't mind as long as I had a job, you know. But what I wanted to do when I was in school, I wanted to be a kennel maid, looking after dogs.

*Why?*

Oh I do like dogs, kennel maid, and there was one in Chester, but I couldn't get to Chester, you know, and my mother and father never had no money, cos my dad was ill for a good two years.

*Did they know you wanted to be a kennel maid?*

Yeah, they did.

*Did they try and encourage you or help you?*

Well, no. They didn't say not to, but they couldn't, I couldn't go anyway, we didn't have any money to go to Chester. There was nothing like, oh I don't know what it's called now, you know, you go for work experience, nothing like that, there was nothing like that, but that's what I wanted to do .

*So did you get in touch with the place in Chester?*

No, no, no, I didn't, no . . . never mind.

*It's different today, isn't it?*

Oh, yeah, of course, oh heck, yeah.

21:46

*At Christmas time, were there parties?*

No, no.

*Nothing? No Christmas party?*

No, no. No Christmas party. When you finished at Christmas, you finished and went home. You had a bonus, you had a bonus from the factory, from Mr Bacon, you know, and that was it, no parties then, no, no.

*So the bonus was a Christmas bonus?*

Christmas bonus, yeah.

*It wasn't dependent on how many toys you'd made?*

No, no, nothing like that, it was just a Christmas box, you know, a Christmas box from them.

22:16

*Did the factory workers go out as a group at Christmas time, or any other time?*

No, no, nothing like that.

*Nothing social?*

No, nothing like that, no.

*How long were you at the toy factory?*

I'd say about eighteen months, I think, yeah, about eighteen months.

*And why did you leave?*

Cos I wanted, everybody wanted to go to Dolgarrog Aluminium Works.

*Why?*

There was more money and you went on shift work, you know - six till two and two till ten. So I went there then.

*So did other people from the toy factory go there at the same time?*

A lot went there, not the same time, exactly the same time, but most did, yeah.

*How did you get the job in the Aluminium Factory?*

Oh there was an advertisement, you know. But I was on days, I think I was on days, eight till five for about six months until I came eighteen, something like that, yeah, eighteen, then I went on shifts then.

*Did you have to have an interview?*

Yeah, you did, yeah, you had to have an interview in the factory then.

*How did you feel about having an interview?*

Oh, I was a bit frightened, but it was alright. Well, I was a bit frightened cos I hadn't done it before, just walking into the toy factory, just off the road, no, but I got the job, I was an inspector, inspecting aluminium.

*You were?*

I was, yeah.

*So you went in there as an inspector?*

I did, yeah.

*How did you manage that?*

Well, they gave me a trial, you know, they gave me a trial to inspect the, um, well it was a big factory, wasn't it, off the press, the circles, making pressure cookers, or whatever you make out of aluminium, and you had to sort all the aluminium out, bad ones, scratch marks coming off the press and all that. So they gave me, and I passed. And then I went on days as an inspector then for about six, eight months, then I went on shift work, then I went to another department, that was called Teflon, they made Teflon coated, and I was on, at the end of the oven, making them, I was inspecting them then, coming off the oven.

24:43

*So did you expect to go in there as an inspector?*

No, no, but they offered me a job there and I said 'I don't know what to do' but they explained and all that, and I got the job.

*So why do you think they offered you an inspector's job?*

I think that was the only thing that was going, I think. That was the only one that was going, yeah. And that was a load of women, there. My husband was talking about Helen, she was there, but Helen wasn't an inspector, Helen was on the press, cutting the circles out.

*Was it a much bigger factory?*

Oh, big factory, big big factory, yeah.

*Was it purpose built?*

Oh, do you know what, like I said, it was there when my mother was a young girl. My mother was working, all the men were at, during the war, so my mother was working there then.

*What was it called?*

Dolgarrog Aluminium Works, you'll see it everywhere.

*What did they make?*

Well, anything to do with aluminium. Saucepans, kettles, you name it, everything, fences, corrugated sheets, and everything, you know.

*You started in which department?*

Inspecting. Inspection.

*What did that entail? What did you have to do?*

I was inspecting, seeing if there was any marks on the aluminium before it went then to the packing place again, and we used to put them in boxes, and then inter-leave them with a tissue, and we had to put them in a box, and they'd roll along on a thing, what do you call it?

*A conveyor belt?*

Yeah, a conveyor belt, and into the packing room.

*So you were inspecting the finished product?*

Yeah. But they didn't make the saucepans there, they didn't make the saucepans or frying pans or all that, you know, they made like, what do you call it, little circles and they used to send them away and then they used to make the saucepans, like, you know.

*Where did they send them?*

Oh, all over the country, everywhere.

*What happened if you inspected something and it wasn't very good?*

If it was no good, they'd put it in the reject bin and then that would go down to another place, in the recast, and they'd get melted down, you know, melted down and they'd roll it out again, and then cut it on the press, and then it'd come back, like that, you know. There was no waste at all.

27:16

*If a piece of metal was not good enough, would you go to the person who'd done it?*

No, no, no. I'd throw it out and it'd go to the reject box, and if you had a box, cos there was loads of us around there, if you had a big reject box, then, like I said, it went to the recast house, and then they would melt it down and pour it out, roll it out and then send it back to the, it might have been a tooth, the press might have made some sort of a mark on it, or scratch mark, or something like that, but no waste, you could cut them, roll it again, like.

*So the workers weren't punished for that?*

No, no, nothing like that, no. And then from the inspection I went to another department, cos it was big, so rolling mill then, to a rolling mill, Teflon. And I was at the back of the Teflon oven then, cos there used to be big ovens there, inspecting

them there then, inspecting the scratch marks, back again, and out again.

*Did you have higher wages in this new factory?*

Oh, yeah, yeah.

*How much?*

Oh, I can't remember. No, can't remember now.

*But would you have had higher wages as an inspector?*

No, no, no.

*Was everybody equal?*

Yeah, we were all equal in inspection.

*How many inspectors were there?*

Oh, there was a good crowd of us on day shift. Oh, I don't know . . . one, two, three .. about twenty something. Twenty-odd, yeah, men and women.

*How many working underneath you?*

Like, what do you mean, underneath?

*Well, the people, who were making these plates?*

Oh, this was in the main factory then, they were on shifts, you see, so well, there was over a thousand people there anyway. There was over a thousand people there working anyway and that was the biggest place around here, like, you know.

*Did you enjoy working there?*

Oh, yeah, loved it, yeah.

*Better than the toy factory?*

Well, yeah, I did, yeah. I did, because I was growing older and it was a better place and all that.

*How long did you work in the aluminium factory?*

I went there eighteen, eighteen, nineteen, it was about two and half years, first time. I left.

*Why?*

I left there, I went away to live, from Llanrwst, I went away to live with a boyfriend. Met a boy and went away to live in Birmingham and I was there for about four or five years and I came back to Llanrwst, on my own, without a boyfriend.

*You left him there?*

I left him there, and tried for Danline, this little factory that's in Llanrwst, the little factory that makes brushes, had a job in Danline, I only stayed there about, oh, six weeks in Danline.

*Why so short?*

I didn't like it there.

*Why not?*

I didn't like it, oh, I just didn't like the atmosphere, I didn't like it, didn't like going into work, and I never ever went like that cos I've always worked, but I didn't like it even though it was only just up the road from where I lived. I just didn't like the, not the people, I just didn't like the job, I just didn't like the job.

*What sort of job was it?*

It was making these brushes, and they had to bend hard, um, they gave you gloves and all that, hard bristles, you know, bristles on the brushes and things. I didn't like it. And you know these wire brushes when you have, well, you scrape off paint and all that, all that it was, I just didn't like it. So I left there and then I went to Hotpoint, got a job in Hotpoint, it was heck of an easy thing getting work then, wasn't it, can't get it now. And then I was working on the machine, on a conveyor belt then, putting the, oh what do you call these things, the sides and the front and the back on twin tub they called it, washing there, tumble dryer there, oh, tumble dryer, spin dryer, and I used to rivet on the sides and the front, and they went on a conveyor belt and then people was working putting the drum in on the other side. I only just riveted the sides and the front.

32:15

*By hand or did you have a machine?*

No, no, no. Machine, electric screwdriver, you know, yeah. And then from there then, there was another job going in Dolgarrog, back again. And I went back to Dolgarrog. But I wasn't an inspector then, but I was on the, you had to roll the aluminium out, like, you know, cos it started, oh I don't know, five or six inches thick, and you rolled it down, the pressure, you turned it, so I was on the roll then.

*So how did you get the Hotpoint job?*

Advertised, yeah, advertised.

*In the paper?*

Must have been, yeah, must have been in the paper.

*So you had to travel?*

Yeah, well, people then they had cars, people had cars, and I used to pay them a lift to go work like, you know.

*Car sharing?*

Car sharing, yeah. I couldn't drive, I never drove anyway.

*How much longer was your day?*

I was days, it wasn't too bad. I started off about half past seven, I think it was eight o'clock, yeah, eight o'clock till five, that was day shift only, yeah, it was day shift.

*Were the wages good in Hotpoint?*

They were, yeah, they were good then. I can't remember but they were very good.

*How long were you there?*

I met Mark then in Dolgarrog the second time, the second time I was in the aluminium factory, and then going out, and I got pregnant, I think I was there about two years, that's all.

*In Dolgarrog?*

In Dolgarrog, the second time.

34:00

*So you were in Hotpoint for how long?*

Oh, not very long, twelve months perhaps.

*Why did you leave?*

Another job came in Dolgarrog.

*So you wanted to come back?*

So I came back to Dolgarrog, yeah, cos you used to catch a bus to Dolgarrog, you know, there was buses often, like, well, not often, but on shift work again. And that's it. And Mark was there, so I met him.

*So you came back to Dolgarrog on shift work again?*

Shift work again, yeah, six till two and two till ten.

*So how did that work? Did you do six till two one week and . . . ?*

Yeah, and two till ten the other week.

*How did you find that?*

Oh, I loved the shifts, yeah.

*Did you ?*



I did. But the two till ten one, if it was a nice day, it was terrible going in at two o'clock, cos you didn't come out, you know, well you did, you could sit outside, there was a canteen, there was everything there for your use, you know, there was a doctor and a nurse on there.

*Was there?*

Yeah, there was a doctor and a nurse on the factory floor and a smashing canteen.

*So the conditions were quite good?*

Yeah, very very good, yeah. And that was when the trade union was in, when I joined the union and all that.

*You joined a union then?*

I did, yeah, joined the union, yeah.

35:14

*Was it compulsory? Did you have to?*

No, no, no. But they did like you to, I think they did like you to join it, like, you know.

*So was there ever any dispute ?*

Yeah, there used to be. Didn't strike, didn't strike, but there was a lot of disputes, there was a lot, you know.

*Why?*

Not for me to remember. The men, like, you know, something must be, something wasn't right with the rolling, you know, or something coming in, I don't know what, but I remember there used to be a lot of disputes. But I just went with the flow, sort of thing, yeah.

*So you met your husband, what was he doing there?*

Mark was in, um, he wasn't, no, where was Mark, oh, he was on the presses, he was on the presses, yeah.

*You started courting when you were both at Dolgarrog?*

Yeah, yeah, when we were both there.

*Was that common? Did people meet their husbands and wives there?*

Yeah, yeah, they did, yeah, that's how they did in the factory, and the aluminium factory had houses in the village and people married and bought a house from the factory, you know, well they've got houses there now, you know.

*So did you and Mark do that?*

No, no, didn't no. I wouldn't like to live there, cos there was only a shop and a post office there.

*Where was Mark from?*

Llanrwst.

*Had you known him before the factory?*

Yeah, I did, yeah, and his family, like, you know.

*Did you have friends or family working there as well?*

Not when I was there, but all my family had worked there. My brother-in-law was there when I was there, oh, two brother-in-laws there, and my uncle, my uncle was there, Iorwerth was there, Llew was there and David was there, yeah. And a lot of my family was there before I was born, perhaps.

*What year did you get married?*

1974.

37:27

*Did you stop working then?*

I stopped working when I had Matthew and I stopped working for two years. Then I went as a cleaner then in the school.

*And what year was Matthew born?*

Er, '75. And I went, after two years, then, Matthew was in pre-school, I remember I used to fetch him and I used to do the cleaning in school at half past three until half past six. Mark was home on afternoons, er, morning shift, it was alright, six till two, and my shift was alright. And my mother used to have him two till ten when Mark was in work, for two hours.

*So did Mark continue at Dolgarrog?*

Yeah, yeah, Mark worked there twenty-six years I think, twenty-five, twenty-five, twenty-six years, yeah. But it was very poor paid, you know, very poor paid.

*Was it?*

Yeah, very poor paid. On night shift, and morning shift, Mark used to come from there and he used to do gardening for extra money, like, you know, yeah, gardening, very poor wages.

*Did you find it difficult with a child?*

Oh, it was heck of a job, yeah, hard job, yeah, it was. And that's why I went to work to the school, cleaner, you know. And I've been a cleaner ever since, when I finished three years ago. And then when Matthew finished school, he was going to college, I cleaned for a lot of solicitors around, well, not a lot, I cleaned for two

solicitors and I used to clean in the aluminium factory where I worked. I went back there to clean and I cleaned the school. I was cleaning, I had four jobs going in a day.

*So where were you living when you got married?*

With my mother at first, then we had a flat, and then from the flat we got a house cross the road to my mother, and then from there we went to live with my mother again, cos my mother was very ill, and then my mother died, and then we came down here to live.

*So you'd been renting?*

Renting all the time and then we bought this, yeah.

39:50

*What was it like working in Dolgarrog, because it was a very big factory, what were the relationships like?*

Smashing, everybody was, well you couldn't hear because then they had all ear, things in their ears, you know, ear plugs.

*For protection?*

Yeah, yeah. And there was a bit of upgrading there than there was in the toy factory.

*The noise level?*

Oh, terrible, terrible, yeah, it was awful, it was all banging of the aluminium, you see, they were rolling out and yeah, it was very noisy.

*Did you find that difficult?*

Yeah, I did in the beginning, but you got used to it after, you know, you done all the shouting, you had to go up to them to talk or whatever, yeah. But otherwise it was OK after you got used to it.

*Was it stricter?*

Oh, heck yeah, it was a lot stricter.

*Why?*

Oh, you had to be careful what you was doing, because the aluminium was hot, you know, there was a lot of billets (?) hot, you had to be careful where you put yourself, and there was a lot of sharp things, after being cut off the presses you know, you had to be careful, even though there was a lot of walkways to tell you where everything dangerous, or whatever.

*So was it quite dangerous?*

Oh, it was very dangerous, yeah, especially for the men on the rolls, you know, oh yeah.

*So if the men did the more dangerous work, what did the women do?*

They were at the back of the press catching the circles and they had to sit at the press, well that was coming along, and that would drop out, but every circle had to be interleaved, had to have tissue paper in between, you know, you used to catch them, whatever they were, fifty or a hundred, and then put them on a pallet and take them to the inspection room.

*To you?*

To the inspection, yeah, to be inspected, yeah.

42:00

*What was the management like?*

Oh, we didn't see them much, didn't see them, no.

*Who did you report to?*

Only to the foreman, you know, to the foreman. In the inspection, they had a forewoman, in inspection.

*What was she like?*

Yeah, she was okay, she wasn't too bad. She's still alive but she's gone off with the fairies again. Joan her name was, Joan Griffiths, yeah.

*So coming back to when you had Matthew, were you glad to leave work to have your baby?*

Well, yeah, I was, yeah, I think I was. Just had the one then went back to work again.

*Did you enjoy work?*

Oh, I loved work, yeah. I could have carried on in the British Legion working with my sister, because you can still work up to seventy now, you see, you don't have to pack it in, but I had an argument with the committee so I left there, I had a row with the committee, and I won't go there now, you know.

*And did you enjoy factory work?*

Oh, I loved factory work, yeah.

*What did you like best about it?*

Oh, I don't know, a little bit of independence I think, when you're there, you know, had a good laugh with the, we used to have Christmas parties in Dolgarrog, in the aluminium factory, we used to have a coach, well not a coach, two or three big coaches, going to Llandudno to the big hotels and have a Christmas party there. And in Dolgarrog, well Mark was still working there, if the husband or wife was working there, the children used to have Christmas parties as well, in the canteen. So all the kids used to have a Christmas party there as well.

*So did the company provide everything?*

Everything, yeah, and a present for all the children. It was very good, yeah, the works have done really well for round here.

*Did they do any outings in the summer?*

Yeah, they did, yeah, we went everywhere. Went to Butlins a couple of times, Alton Towers, and Christmas time we used to go and see a pantomime, we went to Stockport, oh, we went to a few places, to Liverpool to the Empire Theatre, we went to a few places.

*And the company paid?*

The company paid, yeah, all paid. It was very good, yeah. Somebody had to be working in the factory, you know, husband or mother, cos there was mothers there working, yeah, it was very good.

*So the mothers didn't have to give up work when they had children?*

No, they didn't.

*Did the factory provide child care facilities?*

I don't think so, no. Oh, no, nothing like that, no, they didn't have that there. You had maternity leave, I think it was twelve months then, yeah.

*Was there anything you didn't like about working in a factory?*

No, I don't think I did, it was great working in a factory, yeah, in my time, yeah, I did enjoy it.

*Do you have any particular memories that I haven't asked about? Anything you remember?*

No, I don't think so, no. The best thing I remember is going straight from school into the toy factory and working with Aunty Lena and Aunty Martha, and that was it.

*Did they look after you?*

Yeah, they did, yeah. But there again, they were on the same estate where I lived, so I know them, you see, I knew them, it was all like one big family in there, you know.

*That was lucky.*

Yeah, they were called aunty, but they weren't my aunty, I just called them Aunty Martha and Aunty Lena.

*Were they friends of the family then?*

Yeah, on the same estate, you know. There was only seventy houses on the estate so,

just imagine, everybody knew everybody, the doors wasn't closed, everybody walked into everybody's houses and all that.

*So it was a very close community?*

Yeah, very nice, yeah, very good, smashing.

*Okay, Yvonne, thank you very much.*

Thank you.

*Continuation of interview, VN003.1.2*

### **Talking about catching the bus to Dolgarrog Aluminium.**

When I first went there, we had to catch the, this was the six till two shift, but I had to get out of the house at half past four in the morning to catch the bus, cos there was that many people picking up, we used to get to work about twenty to six, in Llanrwst to the aluminium factory, from here, I don't know how many miles it is from here to Dolgarrog. It's not half an hour but it took us that long because of the old bus and everybody had to be picked up here and picked up there, always a bus full you know.

*And the same coming back?*

The same coming back. The factory paid, the aluminium paid the bus, you know. And you see, as you went along, you know the Llanrwst bridge there, if you went over the bridge, and there was a quarry there, so if the bus wasn't in time before the quarry blasted, you had to wait for the quarry to blast, and then everybody would be rushing because we had to go and clock in you see.

*What time did the quarry blast?*

Well the bus didn't wait, if you weren't there, the bus wouldn't wait for you, because they had to go before the quarry blasted. I think it was about six o'clock in the morning the quarry blasted, so everybody that was coming off nights, the night shift that was ten till six, and they were always in a hurry to get past, but they wouldn't make it past before the quarry blasted, you know. But now it's closed now.

*So when you saying blasting, blasting into the rock?*

Into the rock, yeah, into the rock, yeah. It wouldn't come out, you know, you couldn't hear it on the road, you can hear right in the mountains, in the mountains, you know.

*So there was a stop sign and somebody there, was there?*

Yeah, there was yeah, just somebody there, yeah, there was a stop sign, yeah. But the bus driver wanted to get there before the quarry blasted.

*So did he put his foot down?*

Well, and the roads haven't altered, they're still windy roads anyway. But he always

got us there about quarter to six in the morning and we all clocked in, ha, ha, oh dear me.