

Myfanwy My name is Myfanwy Prichard-Roberts and I'm from Caernarfon and I worked here during the war 1952, I beg your pardon 1942.  
I signed up with the Women's Technical Service Register as an analytical laboratory assistant and I was sent here, as I say in 1942.  
When I arrived I was found digs in a little house in New Street, and then driven to Rhydymwyn and I was introduced to everybody there and then started work with, well as I say as a laboratory assistant. There were about a dozen of us I should think, laboratory assistants there. And this big plant P6, I'd never been in such a building before and it was divided up into offices, there was a restroom for us at the top, and then there was a chemistry lab, a physics lab, running down the right of the building and a glass blowing cubical.  
Then there's the big plant which housed these big machines.  
Our work started at 9 in the morning. And we were allocated different places to work with these doctors and the PhD's, scientists and er----

Lady Industrial Chemists

Myfanwy Industrial Chemists! And I don't-- can't remember quite how many of there were of them, but quite a number and we were moved around different places, working with different ones but they were a lovely crowd the lot of them. We didn't know at the time we had no idea what, we didn't produce anything, so we didn't know what the work was all about. And we never did, we never found out until after the war.  
In the chemistry lab, which I was there for quite a while, I worked with Ron Duggler— Ron Pearson. He seemed to be- he was head of the lab and we were sort of helping out in the lab itself, it was a matter of weighing powders and sorting things out, the apparatus, and then when something was set up, we'd have to take readings and the same thing in the physics lab where there was a Doctor Clark. He seemed to be the head of the physics lab and he did his own experiments, different experiments there and later on there was a Doctor London. I worked in the physics lab with him too and he had, as I say, other experiments going on. And then on the plant they had these big machines and when they started up the noise was something terrible but we had--- we had to go there too, taking reading on the manometers or barometers, whatever they call them. We soon as I say moved around, but they were a real good crowd and a soci as well, I was invited to, you know quite a lot of social occasions. Once they arranged a concert in Wrexham, with the Manchester Orchestra—

Lady Liverpool Phil?

Myfanwy no

Man the Halle?

Myfanwy The Halle orchestra. And that was my first big concert I went to. And er

Lady was it John Barbirolli?

Myfanwy That's right it was Sir John Barbirolli, he conducted and I went there with a friend that I'd made, he was one of the industrial chemists, he was a Czech and he'd be about 32, 33 and we went to this concert together, and they played Czech music funnily enough. And that's when they came on to one of my favourite pieces. To er

Lady Dvorack

Myfanwy Dvorack that's right. Dvorack and er—a lot of them stayed in er [...]

Lady Maes Alyn

Myfanwy Maes Alyn, on the way to Rhydymwyn between Mold and Rhydymwyn, and Marius this Czech, he stayed there. I know I was invited there for a party once, one time. And then we had the dances in the—what did you say it was called? That hall on the cross there?

Man the assembly hall?

Myfanwy the assembly hall?

Lady in Mold?

Myfanwy that's right. There was a cinema opposite in Mold.

Man the Savoy?

Myfanwy I can't remember. There was only just this one cinema. We had quite a good social life because they, as I say were a real good crowd and I really enjoyed my couple of years that I had here.  
The first lot of digs as I say weren't very clever, there was an old girl there and she—there was only one bedroom and then there was this big landing and that was my bedroom. And outside toilet, and I remember the first week I was there when I got home from work at night she would give me a basin and sixpence or something to go to the fish and chip shop and get some chips and that would be be my evening meal. Well I soon got fed up with this and one of the other girls she had digs, nicer digs and she said well, she said I have a big double bed, she said and I'm sure if—I forget the name of the landlady now, I'm sure she'd let you, she'd like to have you—and she said you can share my bed.  
So that's what happened. And we had a real good time. She's, she was ever such a nice girl. And she's in Bermuda now and I've lost touch with her.  
Oh yes, Ron Pearson. Now his wife worked as a secretary to the Boss and I was invited to a party up there one night in the winter. I remember. And he had a fun girl, I think it was, was it Pantymwyn?  
Pantymwyn, Is it somewhere up on—

Man the village just up the hill?

Myfanwy        yes, I can't remember the details of the place. And we had a lovely party there. And another time I went up there, and there was a friend, and I believe he worked—I think he was an industrial chemist too. And Ron Pearson had to go away, so he asked me if I'd stay with his wife and I think he'd keep an eye on her. So that was another instance. What else can I remember now? It's such a long time. The girls were all very nice. There was one from Flint and we were going to stay with her and went to a dance. We would an RAF place near Flint.

Man             Sealand?

Myfanwy        Sealand! Was probably it, yes, that's just sort of triggered my memory, you know. Getting back to P6, do you want me to say about the uranium?

Man             Yes carry on, yes.

Myfanwy        Well it was, I don't quite know how to put this, it was just hearsay, this is, just a story that went around. And it was two of the—there was this Mr. Manning and his deputy and there were some other people as well, took a van from Rhydymwyn here one evening to meet a plane, after one of the airfield, where would you think that might be?

Man             Sealand or Hawarden

Myfanwy        yes, one of those places. To meet a plane from America that was bringing some uranium in. and er, of course they had this big van and all these people went there for safety reason I suppose. And all they came away with was just a small box. And so the news the driver had, I don't think he should have let it out really,, but he did.

Man             yes

Myfanwy        what else?

Lady            the oxygen canisters.

Myfanwy        oh yes! Well there was this other, you know, small part of our works to er—well these machineries were set up to put the liquid oxygen and they were carried in flasks and we had to go get some, I can't quite remember just where but we carried them anyway to wherever we were working. And that was to sort of cool the systems but as I say we, we didn't know anything that was, you know, what it was all in aid of or anything. We just did as we were told and we never asked questions because we weren't encouraged to find out what was going on. Anyway we weren't—we were told we weren't to talk about anything that was going on the outside. Which none of us did, fair play, not even between ourselves. You know.

Lady            the glass blower

Myfanwy        oh yes, the glass blower. Oh He was quite a character actually. A real Yorkshire lad. And when he wasn't busy he loved to show us what he was doing. And it was fascinating.

Watching him bending these glass tubes into shapes for the chemists or the PhD's to do their experiments. And when he wasn't working, erm, he'd make some little necklaces for us out of vey very thin glass. Used to make little chains. And different colours and I wish id have kept them.

Erm, what else can I say now?

Man can you remember if they had gas here at the time?

Myfanwy sorry?

Man can you remember if they had gas here at the time?

Myfanwy Gas?

Lady gas masks [...]

Myfanwy oh gas masks

Man Gas masks

Myfanwy oh yes

Man it's only with you saying the glass blower, what kind of furnace did he use to heat it? Did he use a bunsen burner or some kind of [...]

Myfanwy oh it wasn't a—that's right it was er, I can remember him, he used to heat it in a—yes it would be gas. Of course it would be like a Bunsen burner. And he used to make flasks as well. He'd get this thick tube move down it and turn it and you could see it coming out into a big bowl. It was quite fascinating.

Man I just want to ask if there was gas on the site, you know for cooking and all that

Myfanwy yes. Well I don't know if it was bottled gas. It might have been bottled gas. Most probably was. What else can I tell you?

Man did you have changing rooms somewhere before you prior to starting work?

Myfanwy oh yes. We had our own room, which was you know, quite good, actually. If you didn't feel well you could go down the restroom,

Man did you

Myfanwy pardon

Man did you have to change completely before you started work?

Myfanwy oh no, no, no. we were just allocated overall's. erm the Laboratory assistants were. Green, green overalls and some of the others had overall's too, you know. But not all of them did.

Lady that's all you were issued with not shoes or...

Myfanwy well no we weren't issued with

Lady nothing, just an overall?

Myfanwy that's right yes.

Man so you went home with the same clothes other than your overalls that you worked in?

Myfanwy sorry?

Man So you went home in the same clothes that you worked in?

Myfanwy oh that's right. Yes, yes, yes. Except we had to carry gas masks.

Lady would they provide you with food there?

Myfanwy No. no.

Lady you brought your own then?

Myfanwy er yes, all we had. We brought food, er, from the canteen. As I can't you know, I can't remember really what the food was. Erm, things were on ration then wasn't it?

Lady yes

Myfanwy what else can I think about now? Have you got anything you'd like to ask me?

Man I've seen reference to a tuck shop that used to be over here. Did there used to be a tuck shop?

Myfanwy no, I don't remember that. No.

Man did you ever go in the canteen that had a bit of a stage with curtains?

Myfanwy I don't think so. I, there's one thing—just can't remember where the canteen was. Whether it was attached to P6. It couldn't have been very far anyways.

Man it was just over there.

Myfanwy where?

Man you see that land there

Myfanwy        yes

Man             just behind that land it used to be, so it was quite close to P6.

Myfanwy        was that 'cos it was only for P6, you know we didn't er—

Man             I think you were kept separate.

Myfanwy        we had to keep separate, you see. It was then we'd see the odd person you know, a stranger, coming down with the big noise's you know. But we didn't see them when we were working. But they might have been walking down to have a look at the machinery or something like that. But we'd no idea who they were. Evidently big noises from somewhere else.

Man             these people came down from ICI in Billingham did they?

Myfanwy        I should think so. Yes. But as I say, we didn't really know. But they must have been big noises because they were made a fuss of by management. And we used to—they used to come in from—down for lunch. In the canteen you see. Er and then what else?  
I talk a lot sometimes

Lady            the gasmasks but leave the butter in?

Myfanwy        oh you don't want to hear that. (Laughs) as I say the people were so very kind to me. Especially when I had these terrible digs. Everybody seemed to know that I had dreadful digs, but I must have been one of the last ones re-allocated to her digs. But I suppose what happened in war, with all these people coming in. and it was a much smaller place then than what it is now. That all the houses that could take in people, they'd all been taken, and so I was one of the last ones. But there was a couple from Birmingham, and she was a laboratory assistant, and he was. I don't quite know what he was actually, maybe he worked at one of the industrial chemists or—I can't—don't quite remember. But they were a lovely couple and they used to ask me down and have—to have an evening meal with them. And quite often, so when I used to go home to Caernarfon, I lived in the country, my father kept chickens, you know, market garden and we used to do bartering with erm, keep your [...] butter, fresh butter, eggs for butter you know that kind of thing. So when I got home my mother erm, she used to pack things for me, and she gave me some butter once when I came home for the weekend, to give to these—I can't remember their names, this kind couple. And I thought I'd got to smuggle it out of the house, tomorrow because this old girl wasn't, you know, very pleased about this. So you know, so I used to take the gas mask out and hide it under the bed, and put this butter in the gas mask case, and bring it down to work. (Laughing) which was all highly illegal, of course and that's how I smuggled that in.

Lady            tell me about the chicken

Myfanwy        oh that's another time my mother cooked a chicken for me to bring. Oh she thought that will be a nice treat for you. And so on the Monday, I came up to work for the fourth

time with this cold chicken. And when I got to the house, my landlady, she was an old girl, she's 80, like I am now. And she got her daughter and her 2 grandchildren there, and there all sitting at the table. And I could see, oh this poor chicken, what was left of it, the wings. And she said I've kept some chicken for you, she said, and its lovely too. And she put these 2 wings on my plate and that's all I had. That was the last time I brought a chicken.

Lady           you get fined on the bike

Myfanwy       oh yes. That's another thing (laughing) cycling without a light from— I forget where we'd been now and it got dark before we realized it. I think we'd been to a dance somewhere and maybe out to Buckley or something like that, I don't know. And we'd cycled back. I don't know whether my light failed or not, but I hadn't got a light. And we were cycling, I think it was through Buckley, and I'd been stopped by a police man, and I was fined

Lady           on the spot?

Myfanwy       oh no, no. he took me down-- took down the particulars and so on. And I was fined. I think it was something like five or ten shillings. And my names on the files you know. Criminal! (Laughs). Oh Chester and there was another place, have to remember, I went with Jean, which is the daughter of the house. And this is after Kit—Kit left before me, she went back to Billingham. Because you know we were all invited back, the girls where, to Billingham, if we wanted to go. But I didn't want to go, as I said. So I was left in the digs with Jean, the daughter. And we went to Chester when they came. And there was a dance on somewhere, and we went to this dance. And after the dance we went back to the station and we missed the train. Oh dear, what were we going to do now? so we asked the station master or whoever it was or guard or whoever was on duty there, you know. What can we do? So he said well you better get the police man to let you— because they weren't on the phone or anything like that. They wouldn't know where we were you see. So they got in touch with the police station master and if they can send a policeman to the digs in Mold so they know where you are. So this policeman came along and we told him. So we went down to the police station and got through to Mold and they sent a police man on a bike to the digs. And we were stuck at the station master and he said right I'll take you to the waiting room he said, and stay there. Don't open the door at all, all night. So we sat and slept there all night in this waiting room. And of course we had a terrible row when we got home. (Laughing)

Man           so where were your digs in Mold? Have you covered that part?

Myfanwy       the what?

Man           where did you used to stay in Mold?

Myfanwy       the first one was in New Street. A little house right at the bottom of New Street on the right. Behind the sign.

Lady           there was no houses there. There was a chapel wasn't there on the left?

Myfanwy that's right. that was a chapel at the bottom there somewhere. There's a row of cottages and little houses and they have outdoor toilets. Oh, and that's right, there's another night I can remember. I went to the dance at this erm—assembly room then. And it was all P6 you see, everybody came from my side you know. They all came. It was a lovely evening. I think it must have been a Christmas party or something like that. And this old girl, there was no electricity upstairs, just candles. And she used to say to me "I don't want you going out at night, I don't like to be left alone here". She was [...] so er, I'm going to this dance tonight. "Well don't stay out late". So anyway I stayed to the end. Me being young, having a good time, and it's just at the end of the road anyway. So where with this nice couple, is it aunt somebody else, I forget who he was now. There were three or four of them, he said come on I'm going to take you down and we'll wait- we'll wait outside and if she won't let you in or she doesn't answer the door, you can come and stay with us. So anyway, it was dark. Knocked at the door. Waited for ages and then knocked again. and then could see the light above the door, she was coming down the stairs. Oh! With a candle. Oh! And she was actually furious you know. But anyway she was "oh! Come on in" she said so that was alright. But that was you know—and then after that I went to stay with the Craves and everything was fine then.

Lady was there something up at Coed Du? There's a hospital now isn't there? That's the road here. There's a big house it's now a hospital or something. Did you say you went out up the hill?

Myfanwy no, er, no. I remember going to—Kit and I, on a Saturday night, we went out and I was just having my taste for a tippie and er, you know, let's go out to a pub. In the country side. And I don't know where it was, but it was on Rhydymwyn road and you turned up turned up right somewhere. I don't know where it was. And we got there and—Oh there's a marvelous atmosphere there. There was a lot of men you know.

Lady it was an actual pub?

Myfanwy and they were all singing. And Kit, of course she came from Yorkshire, she thought this Welsh singing was marvelous. And they were singing, I can always remember it Bread of Heaven. And Kit was going at it. Oh! It was wonderful. Wonderful evening. You know the oldies singing in the pub. And we had to walk home then. Dear oh dear!

Man Royal Oak. Does that ring a bell?

Myfanwy Pardon

Man the Royal Oak. It's the first pub as you go towards Denbigh

Myfanwy do you know I really can't remember. I really can't remember where it could have been.

Man cos you go on up to the main road,

Myfanwy We went up the road somehow

Man You can go up the back lane here

Myfanwy Yes

Man And you turn back on yourself really sharp to the right. And it's just down there.

Myfanwy could have been. Yes it could have been

Man and then you sort of turn back sharp, and on the main road.

Myfanwy yes.

Man if you walked you would have done it in about half an hour.

Myfanwy yes. Here we are back here [...]

Man yes it's still open

Myfanwy yes, yes, it was a very happy two years I must say, you know. Especially first time away from home. It was rather nice actually to have been mixed up with all these nice people. So I don't know if I could tell you anymore. Not off the cuff you know.

Man [...] for a drink

Myfanwy yes [...] in those days. But er—there was another pub at the bottom of, of the street.

Lady well it was. It's converted. Next to the assembly Room

Myfanwy that's right. What was it called? Can you remember?

Man Market. Market Vaults

Myfanwy oh yes.

Man Market Vaults

Lady oh. Is it a shop now, a clothes shop or something?

Man that's right yes.

[.....]

Man Cross Keys

Myfanwy Cross Keys, yes, could be. I remember. I remember going in there. Everything was, you know, first time away from home everything was new. You wanted to try everything. And especially when you were with a good crowd, you know.

Lady and you came by train did you? From Caernarfon?

Myfanwy      that's right, yes. Well there was—nobody had cars in those days. I had my bike put on the train. I know [...]

Man            would you like some Tea

Myfanwy      no I'm fine thank you.