

**Glynn Jones and Mrs Jones, Pentre Halkyn, Holywell**

**Rhydymwyn**

Name?

**Yes.**

Glynn Jones.

***And what did you do at the factory?***

Well, a labourer. Say a labourer.

***Just a labourer?***

Yes.

***So, they told you on a daily basis, 'Go and do this, go and do that'?***

Yes.

***So, did you go everywhere on the sight?***

What do you mean, did I do different jobs, did I use different parts of the site?

**Yes.**

Yes, everywhere...on the river, down the bottom, assembly, everywhere.

***So, you went in the restricted areas, the lot?***

Yes.

***I see you worked on turning the river, was that difficult?***

Well, there was gangs of us, you see, gangs of us. You know by the mill, where they turned it down, underneath the works

(Mrs Jones) Where Bill lives.

Where Billy lives and we turned all that and it was by shovels, you know what I mean, there wasn't a digger or anything in those days, it was shovels on stages.

***So, how did you divert the River, while you were doing it?***

How did we...oh Lord

(Mrs Jones) Damn it up, I suppose wouldn't you?

***(Female Interviewer) Would it not be dry in the summer?***

(Mrs Jones) It would be dry wouldn't it, perhaps?

Well, aye, it would be dry, because it was going towards the old Post Office, wasn't it, and we turned it kind of thing that way, through the works.

***So you built the new channel and then only back filled the old channel when the new channel was operational?***

That's it. 'Cos that River used to come by the starter metre there and come right round to the Post Office, which was there, and, of course, when it was flooded it used to run down the village, instead of going....

***It used to flood quite a lot?***

Oh, yes.

***Yes, because there's been a great argument that the flooding only started once the turning was put in.***

Well...

(Mrs Jones) I've got a picture of me when I was only little and the water is only about that high then in the village.

It used to run straight down, straight through the village...

***Straight through?***

But they turned it you see, by the starter metre and it went up through the works.

***Yes, but they're saying the village never used to flood until that turning was put in?***

(Mrs Jones) Who's saying that?

***The people who live there now.***

(Mrs Jones) Well, they don't know do they?

***The trouble is they think they do.***

(Mrs Jones) I can show you a photograph...Billy's got photographs of the village flooded.

**Yes, we've got a bloke at work who's parents live just up, and he says the village always flooded, well before the factory.**

Terrible. Hyde, the name of the people, they used to keep the garage, used to run straight there and that was low down, where Gareth is now...

(Mrs Jones) Where Gareth is now?

**The last flood is where the water goes. It goes straight through the village to the garage and turns right, and then...**

(Mrs Jones) Yes, sits there.

That's correct, to the antelope and then at the antelope field, across there...

**And then back on to the site...**

Yes.

(Mrs Jones) Yes

**Yes. Still...**

(Mrs Jones) Once it was turned it didn't flood the village then.

**No it didn't because it was contained wasn't it. Although,**

(Female Interviewer) It was in a deep channel as well.

(Mrs Jones) But the other...this flood that we had two years ago, that was a different story.

**Well, it was blocked up by the caravans coming down....**

Aye, from Nant Alyn or somewhere...

**Which is again something...**

(Mrs Jones) Yes.

Bala wasn't it. Somebody said Bala, I don't know, Parts of it, I suppose.

**The site also flooded once, didn't it, initially when they first did the channel....**

**Was it February '41?**

**...the first winter, or something?**

'41 January, I went to the Army.

***So you wouldn't recall?***

No.

***Ok.***

***So you were involved in the construction phase?***

Yes, I was with, you know, ICI. I was with J B Edwards.

***So your first experiences, really, were digging the channel?***

The river....

***And then you went off ...***

Concreting, everything.

***And then you went off and came back again?***

No, no. I stayed in the works until 1941.

(Mrs Jones) Yes, well it's there, if you'd like to read all that.

***Oh, sorry. I did, I forgot.***

(Mrs Jones) If you'd like to read all that first. That's why I say, read it all first and then you'll know what he's talking about.

***Yes, miss. Yes, miss. So you also helped build the chambers, the tunnels?***

I was working with Halkyn United Mines.

***Did they know when they were doing the tunnels that they were going to hit that water course, or was that a surprise to them?***

Hit the water course?

***Oh, where they found the water was in an extension put in, in '42 or '43, so that would have been after you left there.***

Yes.

***You put in three tunnels and then there were the four chambers...***

Yes, off the main...

***Part way through the War, they extended two of those chambers naturally out, so that from the North Tunnel, they sent two of them out to the north of the North Tunnel and at then end of one of those it intersected a fissure that lets water into the workings.***

***That was after you'd left?***

That was after.

***Ok.***

That's after I'd gone. I went January wasn't it...1941. That's it '41.

***You then went to the assembly area?***

That's it.

***You actually assembled the shells did you?***

Well, I don't know what....I can't remember much about it. I can remember going round there on these green bats, we used to do, the twenty five pounders.

***The green bats...what's that?***

It's like a trolley and you guide it and you got all your loads in the back.

***So, it's motorised?***

Yes, well electric.

(Mrs Jones) It was on rails.

Batteries, wasn't it?

(Mrs Jones) Wasn't it on rails?

Eh?

(Mrs Jones) Wasn't it on rails?

No...no.

***So, really, you went and got the shells...***

Well, this is what I can't remember. There were twenty five pound shells and those buildings down there, there was quite a lot of small buildings, no windows or anything like that in them, just rubber doors when you went in and then the main door was this side.

***And this was the chemical works side, not down at the bottom?***

It's the Assembly area, the bottom part of the works. It's a separate place.

***What, right down at the back?***

Right at the bottom.

***(Female Interviewer) In the small buildings with the camouflage.***

That's it.

***So did you go and get them from the chemical side?***

Well, we used to go about....I don't know if we used to bring them up to the cave buildings to fill them or what. We used to stencil them down in Assembly, I think, stencil the shells.

***What, just give them a number, identification?***

Well, there was a lot of things on them, you know, a shell like, they're stencilled, you know what I mean, put in dates and numbers or what, identity kind of thing. The only 25 shell is about that big, I would think, if I remember right and they used to come on, conveyer belts. They used to be inside the buildings. I don't know if we used to fill them or take them up to the Cave buildings or what. I can't remember. And nobody's mentioned this before?

***Oh, yea, it's just trying to put you where you were and which bit you did.***

Did they fill them in Assembly or take them up to the cave buildings?

***They filled them in the cave buildings and then they brought them into Assembly.***

I was wondering as I didn't know which was it was.

***Yes, they filled them...***

in the cave buildings and took them to the assembly....

***If they accepted that they weren't leaking, they were happy that they could release them and they were then passed over into the assembly area for the stencilling and the packaging that you describe.***

That's it. You know more than me.

***There were big dispatch shed at the bottom, weren't there?***

Big dispatch?

***Sheds...there were four big sheds right at the southern tip, the far end of the site. There were four buildings, weren't there? Do you remember those?***

Were they the cave building?

***No those were the dispatch sheds where when you'd done all your stencilling and they were then shipped off by rail, or whatever, to the units weren't they?***

Was there four big sheds down there?

***Yes. They aren't there now.***

I don't think they was there when I was there, I'm sure.

***It might be that you didn't go down quite that far in the site.***

We were right in the very bottom.

***Were you?***

Where the River Alun used to run down and go...

***So it's near where the sheds were...***

***Yes.***

Well that's funny. Perhaps they weren't there in '41?

***No they were there then.***

They were there then. Oh well....I don't remember them you know.

***They were only taken down in the '60's.***

***Because opposite them was the mounds, I don't know if you remember, was it the spoils from the tunnelling?***

It could have been, could have been, yes. The stuff they dug out then....Oh, I can't remember you see.

***I think there's certainly a lot of limestone rubble in that area now, so that was the understanding that that was the spoil from the tunnels.***

Yes, I suppose it would be. They'd have to put it somewhere.

***Yes.***

I don't remember buildings, you know, only small ones. I might be wrong.

***It might be that there were a number of small buildings, not far from where there was some sort of loading bay on the railways, there was sort of a platform area....***

Aye, the railway used to run down the side...

***But the river then did, as it were, cut out after that...but there was a bridge over and there was a little bit of the site beyond that. These big sheds were beyond that. Do you remember where you were in relationship to the magazines in the hillside? Do you remember the powder stores? They called them magazines...***

Magazines where they kept explosives? Where was that?

***They were on the hillside....***

By the air shafts?

***No, no, further up in the assembly area. They were in the trees. I don't think there were trees then in the War, it's all very heavily wooded now....in the bank side basically, in the valley side..***

I didn't know that.

***Right.***

That's news to me. I didn't even remember the big buildings that you talked about.

***Never mind. Anyway you then sort of went away and came back again?***

Yes.

***And then you went into the contamination plant, where you wore full protective clothing. Now what did you do in there?***

I was a fitter's labourer for quite a while.

***This was taking the thing apart then, was it?***

Yes.

***So, that's what really interests us.***

I was going to say that. That's what'll interest you.

***So, what happens there?***

There used to be this plant on the site and a fella, from up in Halkyn, used to work on it. He's dead now. You used to have to wear protective clothing. I was the fitter's labourer, holding the spanners, handing them to him.

***So, you just literally took the thing apart?***

Well, there was parts coming to the contaminator. They used to bring them and what did they do, boil them up and put stuff and clean the pipes. They used to bring everything to that place.

***When they brought the stuff and you boiled it and whatever and it was deemed that this couldn't be cleaned, it was still contaminated, what happened?***

That I don't know.

***Were there different piles?***

Oh, yes, different stuff all together, pipes and valves.

***And it was all kept separately?***

All the lot.

***Was it labelled clean or dirty, when you boiled it or was it all deemed clean?***

That I can't tell you. We were taking these thing apart, pipes, valves, all the lot used to come there, but what they did with them, I can't tell you.

***So you just took them apart and put them into vats?***

We took them apart. I was a fitter's labourer.

***You didn't put them in the vats of water and stuff?***

No, I don't think so. There were fellas working on that part.

***So, it was almost a production line. You took them apart; someone else put them in a vat....***

Yes, there were fitters there doing that.

***What date was this?***

46, when I came back from the Army.

***46 and at this time the works was being dismantled, or just the start of the dismantling?***

***Were they using the incinerator on site to get rid of mustard, can you remember? Were they burning materials off?***

That was the kind of thing it was this place, where it was, in the top end...

***When you say top end, where do you mean?***

The top end was by the P buildings, the very big ones, by the P buildings.

***Near the old mine shaft? Between P4 and P5, that was the incinerator was it. It got used quite a lot?***

Oh, yes, it was in full swing then, they were doing it.

***So anything, clothing and stuff, was just burned?***

We could only work for, I think it was, two hours and then you'd have to go and have a shower and if you were going back, you'd have to put them on again. You had to change. You could only work for two hours with full protective clothing. If I remember rightly, I could be wrong.

***Can you remember if, at the other end, the southern end where the river has had its weir and things....***

Outside the railings?

***Not so much outside, but just inside the railings....***

In the assembly?

***In the assembly area, yes, in the bottom, where the river goes past and there's a weir outside of the railings, just on the inside of the railings at that point?***

***Do you remember anything that happened down there? Can you recall anything happening down there?***

I can't.

***You can't remember if they had a sort of burning area down there, where some material would get taken and buried or burnt?***

No.

***Did they still keep it as a secret and you were just told what....***

We didn't know what was happening.

***You weren't told this?***

No idea.

***When you went back and you were putting your clothing and stuff back on, did you have free access or were you controlled where you could go?***

What, around the works?

***Yes, when you were in the decontamination undoing these pipes and stuff?***

Well, all you'd do is go where you were told to go and that was it.

***And you couldn't go anywhere else?***

Well, no. I was with like a mechanic, what do you call them, a fitter.

***True, but human nature is that you go wandering. Were you allowed to go wandering?***

Oh, no, I don't think so.

***Because, again, if you were in the top end, you wouldn't have seen anything happening down the far end and no one spoke about what was going on?***

I've not heard anything.

***But, when you were there, you weren't chatting to your mates about what was going on?***

No.

***When you were having your shower or in the canteen? So, when you went to the canteen, you had to take all your stuff off, have a shower?***

Oh, yes, you wouldn't go in that stuff.

***Which canteen did you use, the one in the tunnels or the one in the top end by the gate?***

The one at the top end, if I remember right, by the labs.

***Near the main entrance.***

***Were there lots of people there then or just a few?***

Oh, there was stacks of people there. When they were dismantling do you mean? Oh, it wasn't like when it was during.....

***It was very quiet was it?***

Oh, aye.

***So, there wasn't many people dismantling, just some?***

Oh, yes, there wasn't a lot.

***As time went on and it went to 1947,'48 did the degree of control and expertise decline on the sight or was it fairly rigid all the way through?***

I'm just thinking now, I went on a new job, I took on going on the effluent line to Bagillt.

***I'll ask you about that in a minute.***

I don't know how long I was in the works, see, because I got took off that and went to do this other fella's job, Jack Williams, a fella from the village.

***Before we talk about this, let's come back to this people getting burnt, what happened there?***

I can remember fellas getting burnt, no end of them, with these blisters.

***But, weren't they wearing protective clothing?***

I don't know about that. They used to go to Mold, I think. They had a place there where they had a nurse and sometimes they would go to Mold, to the hospital.

***But, the people who got burnt were the people who were taking it apart were they? It was at the time you were there, your undoing of nuts?***

Aye and all the rest of it. I don't know. It's funny. They were getting burnt....

***You wore protective clothing, so if you hadn't have worn it, you'd have got burnt.***

Yes, that's right.

***It's odd that people didn't wear the clothing.***

Well, how did these people get burnt? I can't make that, but they did get burnt.

***Was this after the War in...after you'd been in the Army or was this in your earlier...?***

(Mrs Jones) No, after.

***It was during the decontamination, so it could have been that the clothing wasn't right or they weren't wearing it. You knew of it or was it a rumour?***

It wasn't a rumour because I used to see the fellas and they were bandaged up and all the rest of it. But, I don't know when it was, that's the thing.

***No, and you don't know how they got it?***

No, I don't.

(Mrs Jones) But, surely, the clothing should have been compulsory.

Well, in jobs like that, it was. You wouldn't go without.

***He was wearing it, so you would presume so, wouldn't you? Again, only two hours and then you take it off.***

I think it was two hours but I'm not saying yes.

***This is the intriguing thing, why did people get burnt if protective clothing was issued, unless, of course, they were working in areas which weren't being polluted. Who knows? We'll never know.***

But there was quite a few burnt, wasn't there?

***I don't know. Was there?***

I would think so, because we used to see people going, I knew people who used to go to Mold or to the surgery or whatever it was. They had burns because I seen them.

***This was during the decontamination?***

Well, this is a point again, because I can't remember.

(Mrs Jones) It was after and not before the War.

Oh, it was after, yes.

***It could have been that people dropped their guard?***

Could be.

***We just don't know that. If we go to the effluent line, what did you do on that?***

Well, you used to have a bike and go all across the fields.

***This was during the decontamination period was it or was this before?***

(Mrs Jones) It was after you'd been in the dismantling lot.

***Because the effluent line was operational even when they were dismantling the place. It was still used.***

(Mrs Jones) Somebody else was on it. You took over after them, didn't you?

***Well, what did you do?***

Went over the line. It used to be every day but they cut it down to three days.

***I suspect they would. But, when you went what was your function?***

Well, you go to look at the fences in all the fields.

***The line was fenced either side, was it?***

No there was a viaduct, but only small ones. There was a big mound in the ground, they'd build a wall each side and put flags on the top, so you can go over, with railings each side, to see that the cattle hadn't broke any fences.

***Oh, so you were just checking everything?***

And you'd look inside the manholes.

***So, you looked at every manhole?***

Well, yes, in turns.

***But, when you looked in one, what was you looking for?***

We were looking for leaks in the valves and things like that.

***And, so you looked and if it was alright, closed the lid and then came back.***

Yes.

***Now, what happened if you found that the cattle had broken something or there was a leak on the valve?***

You'd go back and report it.

***And someone else would go and mend it?***

That's it. There were joiners down there.

***Did they switch it off while they mended it?***

There were big motors those, down the effluent, weren't they?

***It ran 24 hours a day, didn't it?***

It was marvellous.

***Were there many breakages and accidents on that pipeline?***

No, very little. But, you had to go in case.

***Eventually, you went out to where it went into the Dee Estuary and checked there?***

Right at Oakenholt. That's where it came out, in Oakenholt, right across the Dee. It could only go out so far, depending on the tide.

***So, in a day you went from one end to another, did you? Then you checked manholes every so often?***

That's it, every so often inside.

***After a while, you didn't do it at all, I suppose?***

I don't know what happened in the end. They didn't run it very often, in the end. It was too dear.

***They ran it for a number of years after.***

***Up to the 80's but they ran it as and when they needed.***

When it was full up or something like that. It was very expensive.

***Some of the local drainage went into it, at one time. Some of the local houses....***

***Were you in the village in the eighties?***

No, we went to Halkyn.

(Mrs Jones) He left in 1952 and we moved to Halkyn in 1955, when he was in the Post Office.

***I believe that drainage was put in then. It was all to do with the A55 because the A55 cut off the pipeline which meant that the village had to be put onto... Was that when the sewage works was put in, in the village?***

(Female Interviewer) I don't know. The antelope....

***That could have been the driver, couldn't it? It would have been the driver.***

***But the pipeline was kept going, on and off.***

But, it wasn't working very much, was it?

***It was emptied on an as needed basis, rather than continuous.***

I think that's what they did, but in the end there wasn't much effluent going out, I suppose.

***When the A55 went through it, it all changed. So, you left in '52 but did you stay in the area? Why did you leave? You left in '52 to get another job or go somewhere else?***

I got a job in the Post Office as a postman.

***In the village?***

In Mold.

(Mrs Jones) We lived in the houses, right in the Avenue.

***So, you saw what was going on in the 50's there? Was much changing, apart from taking bits down?***

(Mrs Jones) No, once the works finished we never saw anything, really. It was the travelling that I saw mainly. Eight o'clock in the morning, buses and trains. No cars, you know, bikes and buses and trains. It was very, very busy and then at five o'clock at night the same.

***It was 24 hours. There was three shifts going.***

(Mrs Jones) It wasn't as bad as eight o'clock and five o'clock.

***Really, it was a main shift and two small shifts. Again, 50's and 60's, you didn't notice much there, it'd just stagnated, because it then became a store area, didn't it?***

(Mrs Jones) Yes, it was just there.

***Again, just a bit of coming and going.***

(Mrs Jones) It was just there.

What did they do, store sugar and flour and everything?

***It was a government store area. It intrigues me that this huge chemical works was there, working 24 hours a day and yet no one spoke about it or talked about it.***

You didn't.

(Mrs Jones) I don't think in those days you were nosey enough to ask what was going on. It was a works and gave people work and you just went to work there.

Working in the factory, you didn't know.

***I assume thought, that people filling the mustard gas into canister knew that it was mustard gas?***

I suppose they did.

***They had to wear protective clothing and goggles and carry a mask around at all times. You weren't there when the works were working, were you, because you left. The works were working for a period, weren't they? Were there any funny smells or didn't you notice?***

(Mrs Jones) I don't remember any funny smells, but I lived over the fence. They're saying today that people blame it on cancer and all sorts of things. I was there, when it started and I was eleven and yet, we never got anything.

***The trouble is anyone can blame anything on anything. One of the people we spoke to yesterday, his father worked there. She was in the filling area and she wore a mask at all times. Her Dad was like you and a general handyman walking around the site with no protective clothing and he complained of smells. I just wondered if you'd noticed that?***

We did used to smell the Synthite when that was working.

(Mrs Jones) You can go past the Synthite works in Mold and the smell is terrible.

***That's a chemical works in Mold.***

***Another factory?***

A chemical works. It's been going for years.

(Mrs Jones) On the Denbigh Road as you're going into Mold. It's the big building on the left. The smell from there is terrible but I don't remember when I was young, it having a smell. But, it may have been. You just forget, don't you.

***Smell is funny. It's one of the most evocative things.***

***You tend to remember. This woman's Dad made a point of telling her. What we've found, with all the people we've spoken to, they've never spoken about anything to anyone and there's this 'closed shop', where they don't want to talk about it. People, who appear to have remembered, haven't talked about it in the past.***

(Mrs Jones) As I say, it was a different age. Today, they wouldn't have allowed that works down there and all the smells.

***We're sixty years on, in a 2003 environment, reminiscing about 1939, just before World War Two. Now, if you go back to the East End of London, where I used to live, and the things that went on, we wouldn't put up with that now. Everything is different.***

(Mrs Jones) We have a lot more knowledge now.

***It's odd, that a number of people that worked there, of the thousands who worked there, no ones ever said a word to anyone. It's so odd.***

(Mrs Jones) But you went to work and you came home.

***It's just odd, that you work in a chemical works, that was for the War effort and it made something funny because no one told you what it made, you would have thought that over the sixty years period after it closed, that there would have been discussion over it and there's be a lot more local knowledge of what went on in there. Not that we've analysed it, other than making mustard syrup went on there.***

(Mrs Jones) I don't think we knew, in those days, it was a chemical works.

***You don't think?***

(Mrs Jones) No. Did you know it was a chemical works?

ICI, it was chemical wasn't it.

(Mrs Jones) ICI was just ICI, wasn't it.

***You'd just regard it as a chemical works, not anything different than it made chemicals. The fact that there were shells at the end, munitions and the fact that you wore protective clothing, didn't trigger anything?***

(Mrs Jones) You see, there was a room with all the Queen's jewels in it.

Nobody knew what was in the tunnels.

***They were in another tunnel in Wales somewhere. Wales's tunnels were used for lots of storage.***

***(Female Interviewer) It could have been stories spread around to hide the truth.***

***I do wonder.***

(Mrs Jones) So what do you think the truth was?

***It was a chemical works making mustard syrup and given that there were a number of accidents, it was totally uneventful. I came for these reminiscences thinking I'm going to find really good stories about what happened and I haven't. Speaking to the woman yesterday, who was an inspector working in the filling compartments, the chemical works made the stuff and it was pumped and came out of a pipe with a tap, and you opened the tap and you filled a baked bean tin up and as the tin came to the top, you turned the tap off. Now, if you didn't turn the tap off, the thing over flowed. I was trying to get to, as we're human in nature, that a number of people were over filling the tin. It maybe that she didn't want to remember. There was a thing that took it away. I said, "Where did the thing go to?" and she said, "Don't know." Now, her reminiscence is that it hardly ever happened and it wasn't a problem because we was all wearing full kit, with a mask and you think, but she was paid danger money, it appeared she got paid a fortune, which puts the other aspect of working in the factory into perspective, if they were paid that sort of money.***

(Mrs Jones) But she didn't bother about that. It was her job. She wasn't bothered about what she was doing and that's what I'm saying. In those days you didn't query things.

***No, it's not a question of querying it, it's surely for your own self preservation, you'd have said, "Look, I'm paid all this money, I'm paid danger money, I know munitions factories are just the same, I know there's a War on," but you'd have thought wouldn't you, that your own self preservation would have told you, "What am I doing? Why am I wearing all this kit? Why do people come up in blisters? It's dangerous." I didn't get the vibe that they'd sussed it was dangerous, so they were extra careful. There was this person, normally a man, and she didn't say why it was a man....***

***Women were only allowed to work in the toxic areas later in the War. Initially it was only men in the dirty areas.***

***There was this bloke opening the tap and I thought there was this piece of kit that was scales that turned it off, but the way she said is that you open the tap, the stuff goes into the tin and you close the tap and she's looking over the shoulder to make sure the level is high enough. These tins didn't have a mark, it's just you filled the tin.***

(Mrs Jones) But, that shows the age. It's sixty years ago. It wouldn't have happened today. We'd all have been sealed in like these drinks out of a cup.

***It may have been, but given that the factory was constructed very quickly, given there was a War on and given that it all happens again next year, I can see it repeating itself. If there's a War on, if it's of utmost importance that the thing is built up and run as speedily as possible and the process produces as much of the stuff as possible, all the safe guards go out of the window.***

(Mrs Jones) But, you've got farms today with safeguards that they never had sixty years ago. Today, if that happened next year, there'd be lots of safeguards. You wouldn't even be in touch with that stuff. It would all be behind cabinets.

***In theory they weren't in touch, because they had all their protection every day. They didn't change theirs every two hours. When the shift started you undressed, put the protective clothing regime on, went across and did what they did, used the same protective clothing to go to the canteen, which meant that the canteen was contaminated, which is why I asked which canteen did you go to...***

***(Female Interviewer) Obviously the right one.***

(Mrs Jones) It's a wonder you're alive to see 82.

***This is another aspect of it, that given the thing happened sixty years ago, so that the people I'm speaking to are, like yourself, are in their eighties, eighties plus is a fair age to live to in this modern day and age. You've still got all your faculties, except in your memory. You see what I mean. The number of people, who are in their eighties who worked in that place, actually gives testament to the fact that it wasn't as dangerous as I'm inferring it could have been because everyone is still alive. You always get a percentage that live longer and live shorter. She had her protective clothing on all day and then when she finished, that clothing was then discarded. We think it was laundered, but we don't know.***

Laundered.

(Mrs Jones) Not destroyed.

***So, your stuff was laundered?***

I don't know.

***(Female Interviewer) What did you do with it at the end of the day, just leave it behind or did you put it somewhere? It's so automatic.***

***You'd put it into bins, into dirty bins?***

We went for a shower and changed. Did we take them to the changing rooms? I don't remember.

***It's intriguing that you're only allowed to wear them for two hours.***

***Was that more the point of working in the heat of all the rubber gear?***

I can remember wearing all this gear.

(Mrs Jones) If it was only for the heat then why did they have to have showers every two hours?

Don't forget we were outside dismantling.

***Outside?***

Yes, a lot, by the contamination place.

***You were actually in some of the dirtiest parts of the plant. The lady in the filling shed said although it could have gone horribly wrong, by and large it didn't. In the decontamination area you were opening up and exposing liquids and people would have been coming into contact in a way that the production side wouldn't have.***

***Even the showering could have been safety first? But, you can't remember if you put the same kit on again?***

I can't.

***I wouldn't have thought, because it would have made a nonsense out of having a shower.***

I don't think we did, you know. I wish Albert Pearce was here now. He'd tell me because he was with the stuff inside it.

***Your sister made smoke bombs. Anything she might have told you, you can't recall anyway.***

But, she was in the cave buildings. I never went in the cave buildings or else in and out.

***She never spoke about it afterwards?***

We never spoke about it. It took blood out of a stone getting that out of her. She lives in Whaley Bridge.

(Mrs Jones) Her husband worked there and I said, "What did you do?" and he said, "I don't know," and he's the same age as him.

He was a fitter's labourer with JB Edwards. I was with JB Edwards.

***More of the local people tended to be on the construction side, because a lot of the workers were bussed in?***

(Mrs Jones) Oh, yes. They all came in double decker busses.

There was a lot, thousands, wasn't there? You wouldn't believe it.

***I still think it's odd that out of the working environment you didn't chat about what happened during the day, because you all worked there.***

(Mrs Jones) You never came home and said anything about work. Nobody talks about it. It's just work.

***(Female Interviewer) We're looking at it with hindsight and interest aren't we?***

(Mrs Jones) If you'd had the sense, you'd have kept a diary every day.

***It would have been frowned upon due to Official Secrets, wouldn't it?***

***(Female Interviewer) Did you have to sign the Official Secrets Act?***

You do. It's like going in the Post Office.

***Did they labour and go on about it or just get you to sign this?***

You sign forms and things don't you.

***It's just that there's been a lot of telly broadcasts about this site and lots of press articles. Every time they find someone and go and talk to them they say, "the stories I could tell you." But they can't because of the Official Secrets Act. You think, was it reinforced that heavily? From your recollection, you just signed a bit of paper.***

That's it.

***Yet, the number of people we have come across that have said...***

(Mrs Jones) Yes, but you have always said that doesn't apply now. They wouldn't get into trouble if they started telling.

***No, but it's the fact that it's sixty years on and they're still so aware.***

(Mrs Jones) Or they've forgotten.

***As you say, at the time, people didn't take notice of what they were doing. It was a job.***

***(Female Interviewer) They are so programmed into it.***

***It's a job so I can't speak about this. That's what I'm trying to get to the bottom of. It was a job. You got paid money. You did the hours and went home and got on with your life, unless, of course, they've forgotten.***

(Mrs Jones) I don't believe that anybody would have a story that they're not going to tell you, especially when they're not going to be in trouble for it now.

***It's the ones the press find. They reckon they have these stories and yet they've never chatted to their mates or their colleagues or their families in the sixty years since.***

(Mrs Jones) A lot of that applies to the War. You were in Germany, Dunkirk and all the rest of it, and yet he doesn't tell you a thing.

***No, but it's been talked to death.***

(Mrs Jones) Every so often something will come on the television and he'll say, "Oh, yes. I remember that." I haven't heard that before. You forget these things. You don't bother.

***True, but on those wartime things in the last ten years, I've never heard anyone saying, "I remember these things, but I can't tell you." But, we've come across it on this site time and time again. There's a mystique. Now, whether or not it's done on purpose to just keep the mystique going, I don't know.***

***(Female Interviewer) This is really what this is about.***

(Mrs Jones) You want to offer them a thousand pounds, they'd soon talk.

***Julian has a history of the site, written by the people in charge of it as it was being decommissioned and I glanced through it last night and as I say, by and large, it was uneventful.***

(Mrs Jones) I was only in school then so I don't know what happened. They all came into the village, all went home at tea time. The works was over the fence.

***(Female Interviewer) Was there an emergency sign if there was a problem that went off to warn you?***

(Mrs Jones) Oh, yes, a siren used to go off.

***It could have been the shift times, couldn't it?***

(Mrs Jones) It could have been. I remember a siren did go off.

***(Female Interviewer) They didn't practice any kind of emergency procedure?***

(Mrs Jones) Not to evacuate us, if it came over the fence. We weren't told anything like that.

***Occasionally there were spillages and fumes and the people working there came out and people went in to sort it out, but it wasn't publicised.***

Spillages...that's one of the things that used to happen.

***Yes, there were a number of spillages, but it was in areas where people were supposed to be wearing protective clothing and very often, as this lady said last night, people stopped wearing their mask and their goggles, which meant when there were spillages...Woof.***

(Mrs Jones) You do become complacent.

***You get complacent. There were two masks, a civilian gas mask that everybody had during the War and there was the special gas Valley Works mask, you put on when you went into the dirty area. So, people in the dirty areas wore the special mask.***

Dirty and clean areas. That was down assembly.

***I suspect you had a mask, did you?***

Yes.

***Did you have two different masks?***

I don't know. That was dirty and clean areas down assembly. I remember that now you're talking. There was clear way and dirty ways.

(Mrs Jones) He used to have to brush the floor, but he can't remember why.

***Where was this?***

In assembly. It was all doing a lot of brushing.

***I suppose, in case there was a sparking?***

(Mrs Jones) He said, "It's all in there." I said, "Where are the sparks coming from?" He said, "I don't know."

***If you remember down there, there was a funny floor or a soft floor, wasn't it?***

Asphalt.

***Some of the tyres were rubber and all the tools were copper.***

Did we wear proper shoes?

***You wore rubber wellies and the idea was, no sparks.***

That's what I said last night. It was to prevent sparks.

***There was always the chance that if the floors got dirty, if stones got there, little stones could spark.***

That's it. I told you that, didn't I?

***No one told you why to brush then?***

Oh, I can remember using these brushes a lot.

***You were told to brush the floor, but they didn't tell you why you were brushing, just go and brush the floor?***

But, I suddenly thought last night, it was in case of sparks. There was a lot of us together. We were all local people and they were doing this trick, you'd get your brush and put it on the floor and me, like a fool, you'd go round it so many times and see who could do the most. I made myself bad, didn't I? I was so daft, I went and did it.

***(Female Interviewer) Was there a lot of camaraderie amongst the workers there?***

(Mrs Jones) Yes, because they were all young and locals.

Oh, aye, we were all locals, Mold and Rhydymwyn. Caernarfon.

(Mrs Jones) They came from Denbigh. They came from everywhere.

***Was there much mingling going on?***

I don't know what was going on.

***There again, if you were all in your separate areas and you all had to do what you had to do....but, you can't remember?***

No. there was a lot of women working down there. I never bothered. We had a good time really. I enjoyed it.

***You enjoyed your time there?***

We were on the river and there was a lot of Caernarfon lads and there used to be a lot of singing and things on the river, when we were taking that stuff out of the river to concrete it. Marvellous times and lovely weather it was at that time. We just enjoyed it.

***Was that the summer of 1940?***

'39 was it? But it was nice. These were the good singers, the Welsh people. It was lovely outside.

(Mrs Jones) I used to go to work on the train and make sure he was by the fence every morning at twenty to nine. He couldn't have been busy could he?

Well, you're down the site aren't you?

***(Female Interviewer) When you were involved in the tunnels, how long did that take you to do?***

I don't remember. I was transferred from JB Edwards's contractors to the tunnels.

***(Female Interviewer) And you just laboured?***

Yes. Concrete I was doing mostly.

***Was this the floor?***

Floors and roofs and those P Buildings, there was a lot of young lads of my age and you used to make scaffolds and the planks and we used to be running up and down with barrels of cement. They had a big, massive pump they used to use.

***So, it was all made on site?***

It was blown up to some, but other we used to go up with barrels.

***But, it was made on site?***

All made on site.

***Huge, great planks?***

Planks and scaffold.

***I thought cement was hard to come by during the War?***

Hard to come by... Good Lord, it was like dust round here. It was all concrete, concrete gangs.

***You wouldn't get your patio done then.***

Cement...oh, they ate it. It's everything concrete.

***As they built the works, the place where they had the cement production must have got in the way?***

Oh, they used to bring it in lorry loads and build it up and put sheets on it everywhere.

***So, they didn't necessarily always make it on site?***

A lot of it was mixed on the site. They brought the bags of cement.

***Yes, but didn't it get in the way of all the buildings they were building?***

Oh, they'd always find a space to put it. There was plenty of room for them. There was lorries coming in with cement all the time.

***No, not the cement, but making the concrete, considering the site was full up with roads and buildings there wouldn't have been much spare space, would there? Did they move it or did they pick...***

I think they moved it to where they wanted it.

***No, the plant that made the....***

The mixers?

***The big mixers, they didn't move them much, did they?***

Not the very big ones. There was one very, massive one and a lot of smaller ones.

***They used smaller ones did they?***

Yes.

***There must have been lorry loads of bricks coming in.***

***(Female Interviewer) We haven't asked about the bricks. Where did they get sourced, Ruby?***

***Could have been. Anywhere.***

Anywhere that had them I suspect. Was Ruby going then? What year did Ruby close?

(Mrs Jones) My father was in the Ruby and during the War he was sent to Aber Mew(?) to Montgomery.

Well, I went from the Ruby too, to the Valley. I had four years in the Ruby brick, eleven pence an hour and slaving.

***Did your money go up much when you went to the Valley site?***

I went to the Valley for 1 and 4.

***Not a lot more?***

Well, in those days, yes.

***So, people were paid much better on the site?***

I went to the Halkyn mine in the tunnels and my wages were 9 pound then. It was marvellous. I forget how much we relied on that.

***That's good value, was it?***

Yes, with the Halkyn mine. From JB Edward's I was better off going to the mine.

***When you worked for the Valley site, for the Ministry...***

I went to Assembly after.

***When you first went, the money was good then, was it, when you worked for the Air Ministry?***

***You worked as a contractor but was it always with JB Edwards?***

I was with JB Edwards's concrete gangs.

***Did you ever work for the Ministry of Supply?***

No.

***So, when you worked in Halkyn District doing the mines and then worked in the Assembly area, who did you work for then, when you drove the green bats?***

Was it ICI?

***I think you would have been working for the Valley. Did your money change?***

I didn't get 9 pound down there as I got it for Halkyn. I don't think I got them wages when I went to assembly.

(Mrs Jones) Is that after or before the War?

***It was after he came from the mines, after building the chambers, he went to the assembly area...***

(Mrs Jones) That was before the War. You weren't on 9 pound a week then.

When I went to the mines I was, when I went to work for Halkyn.

(Mrs Jones) before the War?

Yes, of course it was.

(Mrs Jones) Why were you on 9 pound then and only on 9 pound when we got married, which would be '41 to '50, five years later? I don't think you'd be on 9 pound a week then. It was far too much.

***The lady we were talking to yesterday, she was saying she got 104 pound, but that was with danger money and for working shifts.***

(Mrs Jones) 100 pound a week! That was good money wasn't it.

***It was a fortune.***

***Would it have been possible, or do you think her memory is.....Was anyone, in those days, on 100 pound a week?***

Them were the ones that worked in the cave buildings. They reckoned they were awful jobs there.

***She liked it.***

She liked it?

***I think she liked the money.***

I always remember that I went from eleven pence to 1 and 4 and then I had good money when I went to the mines.

***It sounds like there was quite a difference in pay between what jobs you were doing?***

***It does sound that the dangerous jobs were paid.***

When I told Hartley, the boss of the brickworks here then, the foreman, he offered me a penny more to stay. I says, no thank you. The way those fellas used to work there, slavery. How fellas are living after working in that place? My father was one.

(Mrs Jones) My father was 89. His father was 89 and they both were in the kilns and it was hot.

Three o'clock in the morning to make a living.

***That's the point, it didn't do them any harm, did it?***

It seemed to do them good and they used to work like slaves, setting bricks, fifty on a barrel, bending down every time, three of them together.

**Keep them fit?**

How they did it....

(Mrs Jones) They were eating all the fat and all the bacon and then they were working it off. It's a different lifestyle isn't it? They wouldn't do it today. His father even cycled, when the Ruby finished he went to work in Gresford and he left home at two o'clock in the morning, cycled to Wrexham ready for his six o'clock shift, did a twelve hour shift, cycled home, to go to bed to get up at two o'clock in the morning to start all over again.

***This lady reckoned she had a three mile walk to the site.***

That's nothing. We'll tell you a tale about it. You tell them about Betty Goodwin, just lives down here. She died.

(Mrs Jones) She was a teacher and she cycled from here to Prestatyn and St Asaph and all round there, just to teach and then she'd cycle home. How long would that take, to cycle to Prestatyn?

***Why wouldn't she have caught the train to St Asaph?***

(Mrs Jones) There was trains, but look what that would have cost. The day we got married, we only went to Colwyn Bay for our honeymoon and it took us three trains and two hours. So you see, she'd never have got from here to Prestatyn.

And perhaps at that time of the morning...

(Mrs Jones) You'd have to go from here to Denbigh, Denbigh to Rhyl, Rhyl to Colwyn Bay. It's a different life, totally different life. We tell our family these stories and they just laugh.

***It would take you at least a couple of hours to cycle to Prestatyn from here.***

(Mrs Jones) It would and all the hills, just to teach for the day and then she'd cycle home. Can you imagine a teacher doing that today?

***It's a different world, isn't it?***

(Mrs Jones) I still say that we had a better world than what the youngsters have got today.

***I don't know. I'm quite grateful I haven't got to cycle two hours.***

(Mrs Jones) But, you can't let your children out.

***They're used to it, so it doesn't matter.***

(Mrs Jones) Oh, I think it matters.

***It matters to you, because you could, but they don't know any different, so they are used to it.***

(Mrs Jones) That's not a childhood.

***They play around. They play in their back gardens.***

(Mrs Jones) We used to go up Tufner Gwint (?) and we used to go all day. My mother wouldn't worry where we were.

***I used to play on bomb sites. In the East End there were water tanks, a big V, dug out and concreted. I used to play in them. Now Health and Safety would say it was dangerous.***

(Mrs Jones) Don't you think you had a better life in those days than a child in the East End could have today?

***Compared to what my two live with in my back garden, they had a far better childhood than I've had. I never had the chance to ride a bike.***

(Mrs Jones) His bike was two rusty wheels on a frame, no tyres and he'd roll down the hills on that.

***In the country you could do it. I was in the East End of London and there was nowhere to do it. So, there is different levels of childhood.***

(Mrs Jones) Children have bikes today and they are three and four hundred pound bikes.

I didn't have until I was eighteen.

***I didn't ride a bike until I was past fifty. That's another story. Everything is relative and if you've grown up with whatever it is today.....***

**[End of recording](#)**