

Yes that's right. We used to work a fifty-two hour week at one time then we went down to forty-eight, forty-eight hour week. Then we went down to forty-four and before I were finished we were working a forty-hour week. It's surprising we used to work Saturdays as well you see but nowadays they don't work Saturdays – it's all overtime. You'd be surprised a number of girls that started there when they left school and when they didn't get married they stopped there all the while until they were sixty.

Working and lunch

So the smell of burning paper in the envelope room?

The heat was terrific in there because of the drying off of the gum. Each envelope machine had to pass over heat when they gummed the flaps you see. They were cut out in shapes and they, there was a thing come down like say with a flap like that. It had got a gum strip there and a gum strip there. There was a thing come down on top of the, top of the envelope and put a strip of gum there and a strip of gum round the bottom to fold the envelope and then they used to go through the machines, fold this section over that was to remain as the envelope, you see. You see, this section, they used to gum that edge underneath there, this edge and then something would come over and slap that down and leave this gummed edge open. Well they were feeding out in these machines like this: one, one and then through like this and they had to go through a hot section so to dry that gum. Well that's what made the heat. It was terrific in the envelope room. Nobody liked working there. I remember the, some of the girls were there when I first started. They belonged to our pensioners club and I know some of them, as I say, done from when they left school until when they retired at sixty.

We hadn't used to have any canteen facilities in them days. You used to have to take your own food. You could take your own food and go into the, what they called the 'mess hall' where you could have your sandwiches and that, or if you took a pudding or a pie they'd hot it up for you. Some of them, some of the wives, used to send the dinners in these old baskets.

Working

My father was a printer; the eldest sister was in the envelope room; me second sister underneath me was in the machine room; the next sister to me was in the rulers. The ruling department, there was a ruling department that used to rule lines on paper, blue lines, red lines. Me youngest sister was in the machine room. I was a printer. Me next brother was a printer, the next brother to that was a cutter. He went in for cutting up on these guillotines

machines; and the other brother, he was in the Post Office department. Two of us retired now, two still in there and I've only got one sister left. The other three have died. Me eldest sister died, ooh she was only nineteen when she died. As I say at one time all nine of us was in McCorquodales.

Jim Jones

Start time and wages

Started work in Wolverton Railway Works in September 1904 and of course that was the London North Western Railway in those days. We had to work a fifty-four hour week. That meant going at six o'clock in the morning, all through the year you know. That meant winter and summer, six o'clock in the morning, five-thirty in the afternoon, a break for breakfast and dinner.

Did your wife bring breakfast down?

I'm talking about when I was fourteen years of age.

Oh yes, did mother bring it or...

No we came home for breakfast, a quarter-past eight till nine, from one till two for dinner. We had to work until twelve o'clock on Saturdays and I got five shillings a week for that, the second year a rise of a shilling a week, six shillings a week.

Many of them walked miles to come to Wolverton Works to be there at six o'clock in the morning.

From the villages?

It was said that quite a number of people who walked from Newport Pagnell, Loughton, Shenley, Stony Stratford, Calverton and so on you know, arrived at the Works before some of those who lived across the street or in the adjacent streets.

In those days there was a man in charge of what was called the Mess Room they called it, we'd call it a Canteen today I suppose to be more precise, in charge of that Mess Room. They used to provide dinners for a small charge. But he used to be up and busy and got soup made before eight o'clock in the morning. So many of those that came in from the villages could go into the so-called Mess Room and have some hot soup before they started work at six o'clock in the morning.

Royal Train

Incidentally I daresay you know that the Royal trains were built at Wolverton and they were stationed here until the museum was started at York. Queen Victoria's coach for instance, we had that here.