

Shantaben Mistry Transcription

very good audio quality

0:00:00

AD Right we're just doing a quick test here would you like to say something see if it comes through just just speak okay to say what your name is

SM yeah my name is Santaben and I live in Bradford 7 well I used to live in Bradford 3 when I used to work in Solidarity.

AD Oh that's brilliant that's brilliant it's coming across very well so it's going in you don't need to that's not a microphone okay microphone here yeah so you don't need to worry about it.

SM First I used to live in Bradford 7 where there's a Cockten school, it was Cockten Street I used to live there all right you know back to back house.

AD Now we'll get on to that in a minute so so so would you like to tell me When you first came to the UK?

SM In 1967.

AD 1967, that's when I first came to Bradford as well.

0:00:53

SM Oh, same time. Yeah, exactly. June the 3rd. All right, it's been before me.

AD So June the 3rd, 1960, sorry, it's still recording. So June the 3rd, 1967, you came to Bradford, and where had you come from?

SM I came from Kenya. Kenya, okay. Mombasa.

0:01:12

AD Mombasa okay so and you arrived. Did you come straight to Bradford?

SM yeah I came to Bradford straight away in someone's house

AD you had contact here.

SM Yeah friend. Then I had my cousin living here in Bradford 7 St. Margaret's Road so I went to work in Saltaire. I lived with her for about a year

AD You went to work in Saltaire.

SM We had to take two buses.

AD Two buses?

SM Two buses. One quarter past six.

AD In the morning?

SM And then next one half past seven, eight o'clock start work.

0:01:57

AD So that's quite a long journey.

SM Yeah and we had to go last floor, top floor. So we had to run to get there to 8 o'clock and clock the card

AD you had to clock the card?

SM clock the card

AD so had you worked in factory before you came to England?

SM no no no Kenya I used to do sewing job oh sewing at home doing all the designs

AD oh nice embroidery yeah

SM embroidery I used to do.

0:02:26

AD Careful, careful with that.

SM Oh sorry, sewing blouses like that. Oh, oh really nice, really. So I had experience of sewing in industry.

AD So you knew a bit about textiles.

SM Yeah, oh yeah, I used to do a lot of fabric work, making all big big designs on saris, In Kenya, the ladies were very fashionable, not village type, very forward, very fashionable and they want to be separate from other people.

AD They want to be fashionable.

SM Yeah fashionable and they don't want to do same as other ladies, they want to be different.

0:03:08

SM So they used to get their own design and bring it to me and I used to do them and they used to don't look separate from other people.

AD Did you enjoy doing that?

SM I used to do design for them.

AD That sounds very skilled.

SM They bring design for me whatever they want and I used to do on machine.

AD That sounds very skilled.

SM Yeah and they used to pay me good because they were rich people.

AD So then you came to Bradford and you got, how quickly did you get a job in Salt's Mill?

SM In two weeks time, we came on third and in two weeks time we were working in Saltaire because that was the only place who used to give us job. We had to get card done, card, job card.

AD Oh right.

SM They used to give job card, no other people. That's why I worked there for two years and then I found out that there was allied industrial service where they used to do, sew industrial garments, chef jackets, overalls and nurses.

AD Is that the material for then?

0:04:20

SM for the new new garments I used to sew

AD oh so you were sewing garments

SM yeah sewing garments industrial garments like boiler shoes ladies

AD in salt's mill

SM so no no no in allied industrial after

AD after okay

SM no in a saltaire used to do cap spinning

SM cap spinning

AD cap spinning

AD is that the thicker one? thin bobbin

SM it's like a thick bobbin like that and cap on it

AD oh okay

SM so that is to cover the when we have to pull the bobbin out and if there's it's broken we have to sew it

AD and repair it

SM so that it goes not broken the thread has to be continuous and then put cap back and then put on there so it's spin

AD and then how long did you work in Salt's Mill for?

two years

AD and what was it like when you went there for the first day?

0:05:39

SM well they had to show me how to do it because I had no idea or no clue or no job like that I've done before so straight away you can they don't show you they you learn by seeing people working and then start doing it

AD so you didn't have any training?

SM No training, no. I just watched next door.

AD And it's a big mill, isn't it, Saltaire?

SM Very big. I used to work on top of the floor. I went to see four years ago, but I couldn't go up. It was closed up there.

AD Sometimes it's open and sometimes it's not.

SM No, the last one is always closed. something over there I don't know what all the other floors I've been and I was so I was Watching like now my god 50 years 56-7 years.

AD So it must have been strange going back

SM It was it was and there was a man like you. Who's there? he wanted to know who worked here and I said I worked there He said did you I said yeah, I've worked two years here, 1967.

0:06:53

SM Walked, he took my picture and I said, you take my picture, but send me one.

AD Did he?

SM He's a very gentle man, very good person.

AD Oh, that's great. That's great.

SM And he was so pleased to know whatever I had to say.

AD Was it a good place to work?

SM well it was hard for us because it was two buses six o'clock we had to take first bus so every day we had to wake up early and go to bus stop quarter past six first bus if we miss then we can't go eight o'clock there we have to clock so to get there we had to so if quarter past 6 was first

AD if you didn't if you couldn't clock on if you got there late what would happen?

0:07:54

SM the manager would come and he would say Mrs. Mistry you are late so not very good people I say sorry sorry sorry next time I won't be late

AD and you were a young woman then

SM yeah I was very young

AD how old were you

SM 21 22 23

AD all right when you came over were you already married or

SM I was married then I had a daughter there

AD you had a daughter in India

AD no in Kenya sorry Kenya yeah yeah Kenya you had a daughter in Kenya,

AD so you'd come over to work.

SM She was ten months old when we came here.

AD So did all of you come? You, did your husband?

SM Me and my husband and my daughter came here.

AD All together?

SM The last one we had, we spent on plane coming.

AD That must have been quite a shock. What did you think of Bradford?

SM I didn't like it. When I was going near, you know, there is a corner, near University corner.

0:08:55

SM What are the roads like? Why are they like that? But I didn't know because it snows here so it has to be like that. In Kenya it's all nothing because it's snow here and all different here. It was and I remember too in 67 when I came

AD when you came all the buildings were all black with soot weren't they?

SM Yeah I didn't like it but then after when I lived here for so many years in Bradford, now 67, 68. So now I know why they had all this. And now all the buildings are changing and they're all getting new everywhere.

AD Yeah, and they're clean.

SM Can't believe what we saw before. But them days were really hard.

AD Did you, was the work, were you very tired?

0:09:59

SM We used to go in bath, we didn't have bath in our house so we had to go down in town.

AD Did you go to Windsor Baths?

SM You know the baths, I think still there's bath there.

AD By the Alhambra?

SM Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Still there.

AD Now it's all been turned into bars and restaurants.

SM I thought so. We used to go there and then the hard work, no toilet inside house, had to take a lamp and go around the house behind the back door

SM up the street, up the street,

SM other people lived behind us and had to go there and cold weather five o'clock going there because we had to get ready take bus

AD that's a hard that's a long day what time did you get home?

0:10:51

SM Sometime I used to work over and come 8 o'clock. Then I used to cook in pressure cooker. Our curries were in pressure cooker. I bought pressure cooker, I could afford to buy 5 pounds. I could spend 5 pounds. Them days 5 pounds was one week's wage. 5 pounds 50 we used to get for one week. That was my one week's wage I bought pressure cooker and that made my life easy so when I came home I used to do everything in pressure cooker

AD have you still got a pressure cooker?

SM I've got that pressure cooker still I've got

AD that same one?

SM same one and I still use it I've got new one small one because we are two of us only now no family so I use the smaller one mostly I eat here and take some take away from here so I still do

AD I've got a pressure cooker too yeah yeah I love them they're wonderful

SM they're very wonderful yeah you can do in minutes completely before I had strong hands very strong hands this I never done so much of

AD you would get up at 5 o'clock in the morning

SM and go out in toilet outside and around the house go in the small one and very cold and it's almost frozen

AD and you wouldn't get home till 8 o'clock?

0:12:10

SM 8 o'clock and then cook for my brother used to live with me because his wife wasn't here he just came and he didn't know where to go so he came and stayed with us so I used to cook for him as well

AD so you still did the cooking even though you were working

SM yeah yeah of course

AD yeah and let's talk about the mill a little bit so what was life like in the mill?

0:12:34

AD were the people friendly?

SM well they were all working you know they were all busy working but the other Indian people they were working who we know - so men, ladies those who didn't have English, don't know English

AD so did you keep quite separate at that time?

SM no no, we used to work, we used to get three lines, three and a half lines each of cap spinning, many cap spinning, this line and that line and that line, three and a half lines we used to get each, each oh sorry, we had to handle them all the if there is any broken we have to we have to connect and get it running because broken is means that that that bobbin is to not feel so you have to quickly mend it so that it rolls with other when we get the whole roll out all the bobbins out each and every have to be filled up not half filled

AD and what happened if you didn't see it break and it was half filled

SM but you have to go everywhere and see which one is broken you had to be very very quick yeah

AD and was it dangerous at all? Were all these machines...

0:14:02

SM It was dangerous because my cardigan, sorry, my cardigan, one day my cardigan wasn't buttoned up and it went in, in that machine they used to roll.

AD And what happened?

SM Not the tap spinning, the machine that goes on and on and it went in so hard to come out because it went inside

AD and it pulled you towards it

SM yeah it pulled inside and because it is so much noise no one can hear you nothing nothing to hear nobody could hear you die

SM they all did their job they were looking into there and no one hear

AD were you very scared?

SM I was scared my sweater's in when it happened but then I pulled it hard and then God helped me it came out or if it rolled double I would have

AD you would have got been pulled

SM pulled in and maybe they damaged my face or something because it pulls in and in

SM very big piece of machinery.

SM And my cardigan wasn't buttoned up so it went straight away in and rolled. I had to pull because I knew there was there wasn't going to be any help.

0:15:34

SM 67 women 68

AD so I expect you were very careful after that were you?

SM I'm still careful I still remember if I do anything wrong it will be no good yeah it's very dangerous you can't hear anyone

AD was it very noisy?

SM very noisy because all the machines were same time on same time off only dinner time little bit off

AD so what was it like when all the machines were turned off?

0:16:05

SM ah it's good and very quiet and how long did you have for lunch? I can't remember but I think half 45 minutes so we used to we didn't used to go into canteen, canteen was too far we were on the last floor top floor and we had no time to go there so whatever we used to bring from home we used to sit and eat there all the chapatis and whatever we made last night we took you know

AD your own food

SM and then eat and then...

AD And what was the management like? Were they okay? Did you see many of the managers?

0:16:56

SM Oliver... Anderson Anderson

AD He was your manager?

SM He was our manager then days but then after four or five years he was retired because he was too old.

AD And what was he like?

SM He was good but he used to go around looking around.

0:17:15

SM Everyone working.

AD Did you work harder when he was there?

SM No, we had to work hard because our supervisor was there. Who was sitting there. If he find out that our bobbin wasn't filled and when the person comes out and take the bobbins out he had to look watch all the bobbins are filled up not half filled then I'd be in trouble

AD and were you paid piecework or was it a weight?

SM fixed wage so you weren't paid on how many bobbins? no no no no they have to come out full

AD yeah

SM all those three and a half line I don't know how many were in line

AD I've seen those machines

SM kept spinning remember kept spinning

AD I think they got them up at the industrial museum in yeah

SM they've still got the few bits and that I went and saw that day

AD all right so how long were you at Saltaire?

Two years.

0:18:20

SM Two years. 67, 68, 69 I went to Allied Industrial where I used to sew industrial garments.

AD Oh right, so you went from spinning to sewing industrial garments. And how long did you do that for?

SM 17 years.

AD Oh that's a long time.

SM Yeah. Before I used to live in Bradford 3, Thornbury. I used to come from there to Allied Industrial here in Bradford you know where the new house is.

AD Oh yes I do know exactly.

SM Now it's gone now. So Allied Industrial. I used to come there but then we bought house right opposite you know where the new houses are.

AD Yes. Where the cemetery new houses

AD In Schoelmoor.

SM Yeah down Schoelmoor..

AD Oh it's nice around there.

0:19:13

SM Oh very nice, our house is detached.

AD Yeah, so you could get to work very quickly.

SM Very quickly, three minutes.

AD No, five o'clock in the morning.

SM No, no, no, no, it was so easy. My life was so easy.

AD And was it, was the work less, was it easier work?

SM No, it was a clean job because it was new garments, we were sewing new garments. but very hard, not hard, they used to put in minutes and seconds on whatever you, whatever parts you throw

AD So had a time-sheet, every piece had a time

SM We were given this minute, in this time we have to go, that much job we have to be done. I'll give you one example a boiler suit like the big one you know what boiler suits are like whole ones so the from from there to there

AD sleeves to there all the way down to the bottom of the leg

SM and there and there and there both and put sleeves on

AD put sleeves as well

SM in boiler suit both two minutes

AD two minutes

SM and in that minute if your cotton braids you have to put it in if your cotton finishes because the twinning is a two needle job not one needle two needle sewing so

AD oh i see

SM you know the boiler suits that have got twin seam

AD twin seam

SM it is on there, there,

AD on your arms and down the sides.

0:20:54

SM The sides, yeah.

AD Oh, interesting.

AD So it has to be in one go. Yeah, golly.

SM Not broken in between, then it looks ugly.

AD So which did you prefer, working in Salt's mill or in Allied Industries?

SM I used to do a sewing job in Kenya.

AD So you were happy sewing.

SM I used to sew sari blouses like this. Like this.

0:21:20

AD Oh beautiful. Very nice.

SM I used to do all all

AD It's a very lovely design. I might take a photograph of that. Okay. I'll do it in a minute. I'll take a picture of you as well. For the record so you brought your family up as well as working in the mill yeah all those years

SM yeah I had my daughter from Kenya and she was a 10 months old and someone my sister only who we lived with her mother in Delhi used to look after her

AD so did you have any more children?

0:22:02

SM Yeah, another two. So I have two daughters and a son.

AD And you worked all your life, all your working life?

SM I worked, yeah, all the time. I worked from 67 to 93.

AD That's very good, very impressive.

SM 67 to 93. Then I left job because I had many other problems. Menopause and then back problem.

AD Oh, hard, hard. How old were you in 93 then?

0:22:32

AD How old were you then? 93,

SM maybe 55, 56.

AD Oh yeah, actually we are about the same age. Yeah, same age. I know you're a bit younger than me.

SM Yeah, yeah.

AD Well, listen, it's been great talking to you. Yeah. And it's been a really interesting story you've told me about Salt's Mill . Yeah, yeah I didn't know

SM But I love to go there and see I mean, three, four times I've been there and had lunch there It's very different now, isn't it?

0:23:01

AD No, very different I mean, the whole area is very different

SM My son-in-law is English

AD right

SM My son and my daughter, they took me there. We had lunch there

AD It's very nice, isn't it?

SM Yeah, and I just wanted to stay there for a bit and remember how good and

AD the other thing about that mill because I worked in a mill for a little while and one thing you always remember is the smell the smell of the mill very bad all the time and and Salt's mill that smell stayed for years years and years after it closed yeah walk in and still smell

SM but it was a job so you can't complain. No no. 5.50 a week was very good. I used to save every week I used to save one pound and put in bank every week.

AD That's very good.

SM Because I wanted to buy a house.

AD Yeah that's very good.

SM And then after three years, no after one and a half year I bought a house, 350 pound house.

AD 350 pounds for a house?

SM Yes yeah. Couldn't do this today could you? God my shopping!

0:24:05

SM But well I used to do so much it helped my husband a lot

AD Wow that's great

SM because he was working at the same time he was doing.

AD Where did he work?

SM He was getting seven pound fifty a week I used to get five pound fifty a week, them days ladies and...

AD Yes, well I think it's still like that in a lot of places. Yeah, yeah.

SM I think it's still like that.

AD Well listen, thanks very much. That's great.

SM And my manager was called Jeffrey.

0:24:39

SM Not, manager, supervisor.

AD Supervisor.

SM So, was called Jeffrey. Don't know what, we used to call him Jeffrey.

AD And he was a nice man?

SM Very nice. Young boy whose girlfriend was working there and they got married.

AD Oh, how nice.

SM Don't know her name because she used to work downstairs.

AD Right, I'm just going to turn this off now. Thank you so much.