

**Elisabeth and Michael Mitchell – Transcription**

*Audio Quality: Good, a bit of overlap at times when both interviewees are talking*  
*Very detailed interview of working in the mill with particular emphasis on technical explanations, wages, workforce and lots of soundbites*

**0:00:00**

**LMI:** Hi, good afternoon.

**EM:** Hello there.

**LMI:** If I can have your name, please.

**EM:** My name is Elisabeth Mitchell.

**LMI:** And your name, please.

**MM:** My name is Michael Mitchell.

**LMI:** Thank you. Please can I ask your address?

**EM:** Yes, we live at [REDACTED]

**LMI:** Thank you.

**0:00:11**

**EM:** And it's the former mill site where my husband worked.

**LMI:** What was the name of the mill?

**EM:** It was Robert Clough's. It was called Grove Mills. And the Clough family were a local family, mill owners.

**LMI:** Right. And how long have you lived here?

**EM:** This is a new development, so we've lived here 13 years now.

**LMI:** Right.

**0:00:51**

**MM:** 14, actually.

**LMI:** And how long ago did they kind... was the mill demolished?

**MM:** Yeah. The old part of the mill which we're on here, which were called the old mill, I don't know when that was demolished. But the main factory that was on the part of the site where you've driven in, that was demolished while we've lived here. It was originally

supposed to be converted into apartments with leisure facilities in it. Like a club and things. But at the time when the recession hit, and the builder...

**LMI:** Pulled out?

**MM:** Well, he didn't pull it out. But he eventually knocked it down and built all them other houses down there.

**LMI:** Right, ok. Thank you. In terms of your mills experience then, which mill did you start working at? How old were you and what was your job title?

**0:02:07**

**EM:** I started at Smith Brothers and Foster's, which was down nearer the centre of Keighley. And I was an office junior in the accounts and wages. I was 15. Worked there until I was 18.

**LMI:** And which years was that. please?

**EM:** That would be from 1963 to '66.

**LMI:** Thanks. Accounts and wages. How did you find working in the mills?

**0:02:49**

**EM:** Oh, I loved it. In later years I regretted leaving it. It was a family run mill. Mr Thomas Smith ran it. He was from Silsden. It was his mill. And he treated everybody with respect. All of us. And it was a lovely environment. And as a wages clerk I got to go into the mill quite a lot. We had weaving sheds which were incredibly noisy. And then we had some spinning and warping, but we also had a very big mending department. Because once the pieces came off the looms they were then inspected. Perching department, where they perched on stools and looked for flaws. And then they'd circle those flaws and then the menders - they were mainly women - had to invisibly mend these pieces. So I got all over the mill. I loved it as an office junior. And as I say, everybody were really friendly.

**0:03:36**

**LMI:** In terms of the different departments, what was the difference? Was there a difference in environment? In terms of the noise? In terms of how people worked?

**EM:** Yeah, they... As a young girl, first time I ever went into a weaving shed, you went through big rubber doors and it was like going into some alien environment. Your ears just pinged. And then you were faced with all these fabulous... women, they were mainly... running up and down aisles, looms, and doing things that were a mystery to me. I got to know what it was eventually.

**0:04:26**

**EM:** And they were just incredible. They were so skillful and did it all with such ease. And, as you probably know, in the mills, in the weaving shed, they couldn't hear what they were saying so they lipread. And we had lots of different looms, we'd be what would be modern then, automatic looms, but we also had really old looms. And one of the things that I do remember is, we had a very old loom called 'a pick and pick loom' that was really dangerous. So when I went down with, like, we had piece cards that I had to collect, so they could calculate wages from.

**0:05:04**

**EM:** When I went down to collect them, or I took the wages tins round to give them their wage packets. You had to sometimes go up the... where the weavers were weaving along the looms. But on the pick and pick looms, they were far too dangerous. One of the ladies, she was our Lady Mayoress, which was really interesting. She was called Mrs Fins. And she worked there, and she was also Lady Mayoress of Keighley. And she was very glamorous. But she was really kind, because her loom was really dangerous. It was a pick and pick loom. So she used to come out and help me, take the wage packet off me, or give me her cards. So that environment was really noisy. But everybody were always smiling and happy. And the other biggish department was the mending which was just the opposite.

**0:06:01**

**EM:** Quiet and a nice, gentle environment. And ladies could chat to each other as they were mending their pieces. They were just incredible to watch. They were like... Their eyesight and everything, it was just incredible. Because they were invisibly mending these pieces of cloth. You couldn't tell once it had been finished, where there had been...

**0:06:26**

**EM:** It's obviously if there's a breakdown with the shuttles and things, you can't stop everything. So these ladies then mended it, and it was just incredible.

**LMI:** Invisibly mending?

**EM:** Yeah, they were called invisible mending.

**LMI:** So they weren't stopping the machines, they were just continuing as it...?

**EM:** Yeah. As the shuttle went through the warp threads, it'd be zooming along and occasionally, after each end, it'd make... were they call slubs? Something like that? Little slubs. Or it'd miss a few... picks, I think they were called...stitches were called picks, or something. And so, those pieces...that's what the weavers got paid on, the piece.

**0:07:14**

**EM:** They were quite well paid. They didn't have day rates, they worked piece rates. And those, when they were finished, were taken to this department for inspecting. And as I say,

these Perches...perched on buffets...they were mainly men. And they...it was put over a big roller, and they pulled down the piece so that the light was at the back of them. And then they could circle it with tailor chalk to see where it had mended. And then the really difficult pieces would be given to what we call 'Star Hands' - menders who were really skillful. So they'd get all the really difficult ones. But they would be really well paid for that, quite rightly so, because they were very skillful jobs. We did have other departments, we had warping, which were mainly men in there. Because I presume that might... well, it was all heavy work. And we had spinning...

**0:08:12**

**LMI:** In terms of warping, what did that involve, please?

**EM:** That's where you wind the fabric, the yarn, onto a big long roller. And those are the warp threads, those are the ones... That's... I have a fancy machine, I'll show you. This is a hand womb. So *these* are the warp threads. So those are the backbone, if you like. And then, shuttles... that the spinners... they put them onto shuttles, I presume. Or the things that go into the shuttle.

**MM:** Bobbin.

**0:09:00**

**EM:** The bobbin. And then that goes in and out, and in and out. And back again. So inevitably, in a great big piece of material and fabric, there would be some errors. And that's when they were mended. And we also had a design and finishing department. So... it was very high class, worsted fabric that we made. It went all over the world. And the finishing department used to send out samples. And samples were woven by the design[ers]... the designers actually wove small samples to send out. And that was right good, because I was 15, and miniskirts had come in.

**0:09:41**

**EM:** So if I begged a sample out of the sample room, I could get... out of a piece, because I've always liked sewing... I could get two miniskirts! One for me and one for other office junior, overnight. So we got all sorts. So yeah. And they had a smaller spinning department. Not like the big mills, that were proper spinning mills. The one I worked in was a weaving and mending mill. And so, as I said, the ladies... well, everybody, but mainly the ladies, worked on what was called piecework. Overlookers would get a standard wage. And the electricians and mechanics, the office workers got standard wages. But the menders and the weavers were paid by the piece.

**0:10:33**

**LMI:** Are you able to remember any of the piece rates?

**EM:** Well, I can't remember the actual rates. But what was really complex was - they were only in shillings. In shillings and pence. And one of the big aspects of my job was to work... we had to work out their wages depending on the pieces. Now we didn't have big fancy calculators. We had a thing called a Red Book Ready Reckoner. So...we *did* have some really old fashioned adding machines where you keyed in one and threepence ha'penny, and things like that, and pulled a handle. But the piece rates were only in shillings.

**0:11:17**

**EM:** And one of the biggest jobs every year was when people got a rise. All those rates had to be changed for everybody, for the piece workers and for the standard rates. And we had to sit for days, a whole team of us, in the cashier's office, working out with these little Red Books, called the Red Book Ready Reckoner. And we had to work and convert. So if something was three and tuppence a piece, you had to work out the tuppence and the threepence by flicking through these little red calculating books. It was a really big job to change those piece rates. We collected the clock cards, everybody clocked in. And we collected the piece rate cards. And then mid-week we'd start working out the wages, the work costs, salaries, office workers got salaries. We worked out the wages for everybody.

**0:12:20**

**EM:** And they probably were paid what were called 'a week in hand' to give us time to do all this. And one of the other sort of things that were quite memorable was that when we worked out those wages, (and there were probably about two or three hundred people working there) people got a wage packet with... if you earned six or seven pounds, you'd get a fiver, two one-pound notes, a ten-shilling note, maybe a half-crown, a two-shilling, and one-shilling, a threepenny bit. But everybody had to have the exact amount in their packet. So, when we went to the bank, we didn't just say, 'Oh, well, we need five or six thousand pounds.'

**0:13:06**

**EM:** We had to calculate every pound note, every five-pound note, every ten-shilling note, for every person. Every half crown, every florin, two shilling piece, every shilling, sixpence, threepenny bit, penny. We had to work them all... We had to calculate how many of each of those coins and notes we would need. And then the cashier went down to the bank with someone else and got those numbers. And then we sat in a little team, the cashier and one of us at either side of him. He would take the first pay slip and he would coin it out. He'd take a fiver and a pound, and he would pass that to the person on his left. And whilst they were checking it, he'd do another one (because he was clever!) and pass it to the right. And they went in open packets. And they were all then lined up in a green tin, but they were never sealed. They were never sealed until we were left with nothing on the desk.

**0:14:12**

**EM:** If we were left with a shilling or a threepenny bit we had to go through absolutely every packet and start again. So they were never sealed until maybe five or ten minutes before we took them down to the weaving shed or to the mending department and that was...

**MM:** Didn't you lock the door when you were counting?

**EM:** Yes, we locked the door when we were... yeah.

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** It was locked because obviously it was a lot of money.

**LMI:** Yes.

**EM:** And the cashier went down with an escort. We didn't have Securico.

**0:14:42**

**LMI:** Yeah. And which day did people get paid? Was it Friday?

**EM:** They got paid on a Friday, yeah. So Friday morning were... that was a very big...

**LMI:** And you went with a green, what did you call it?

**EM:** It was an oblong green tin. Probably about two foot by 18 inch. And it was just the height of... three quarters of the height of a wage packet. So when we were stacking them, and we did them in alphabetical order for each department, so we knew... And then occasionally things would be wrong. And people would come knocking on the door.

**0:15:26**

**EM:** And if we were late, they'd be knocking on the door even sooner. Because they'd want... And then... I think one of the enduring things I have - about all mill workers - and we talk about this often. And we've been to the Industrial Museum more recently, and we've talked about it there - how people... it were mainly women... so if I'm talking about women, it were mainly women and girls who worked in the mill. They left school at 15, like my sister. They went in the mill. It was just accepted you go in the mill because you didn't have qualifications.

**0:16:04**

**EM:** And it was almost as though they weren't educated. That's how people made them feel. They didn't have any O-levels or anything. But believe me, they were some of the cleverest, the most skilful people you could ever meet. Because a lot of those processes in the mill are incredibly... I mean, Michael will tell you later, he was an overlooker, because he'll know more about that. But they were incredibly skillful. It were hard work. It were heavy work. They had to concentrate. And they were artisans, I think. But they didn't do this with a degree. They did this sitting next to Nelly. Literally, that's what it was. They went... at 15,

people like my sister would go and stand next to somebody who was a very good worker, and they'd watch. They wouldn't question, they'd just watch. And then they'd be allowed to do a little bit. Not a lot. But in a short time, maybe within the space of a week, they would be expected to crack on and 'earn their brass' as we used to say. So yeah, that's one of the things that I think they didn't ever get recognition from, for being really bright women and girls. And a lot of them... as I say, it were hard physical work. My husband worked in drawing and that were really heavy work. But these women, they were doing maybe eight hours in the mill. And they were going on and running a home. You know, they were going on and then putting the tea on. Or they'd be washing - no washing machines, they were physically doing hard work. And a lot of young married women ended up working evenings. If there's a couple of kids or whatever, the husband had come home from whatever they were doing. She'd have got the tea ready, cleaned up, all the kids washed and ready. Ready for bed. And then she'd go and do another four hours at a mill. So they worked incredibly hard. And I don't think that people recognise just how wonderful they were.

**0:18:26**

**LMI:** And evening shifts for women, what time did they start?

**EM:** It would be about 5...5 o'clock till 9.

**LMI:** So the kids were back from school, and like you said, they'd sorted everything out.

**EM:** Mam's got the tea. And in those days, the dad didn't come home and bath them and read them stories. That were all done. I mean it's old-fashioned, but that's how it was. They came home, the kids had to have been washed and ready for bed, or whatever... read [to]them a little. And their tea would be on the table. And she'd go and do another four hours. So they did work really hard. And most of our families... I mean, I would have thought most of the people in Keighley, have people...family members who worked in the mill. My mother, my cousin, my sister, cousins, you know, even nieces. Nieces would be the ones that would be working in the '70s and '80s in the mills. So they had different experiences. And machinery - machinery will have become more electronic and quicker. And hopefully not as dangerous. Because it was a very dangerous place to work.

**0:19:48**

**LMI:** In Wibsey there was a couple of factories that had creches so women could take their children in and then carry on working. In Keighley, in any of the mills that you guys worked was there any creches like that?

**EM:** I don't recall anything like that. No.

**MM:** No.

**LMI:** Did you ever join the union?

**EM:** No.

**LMI:** Any of the trade unions?

**EM:** No, I didn't. No. I don't...I mean, I... There may have been...There might have been one for sort of overlookers. I don't recall...

**0:20:20**

**MM:** There was one for Managers and Overlookers.

**EM:** Women weren't unionised in that... My mother and my generation, and probably generation [after] my nieces and that, won't have been part of unions. I wouldn't have thought.

**LMI:** Is that the only mill you worked in? Did you move to a different one?

**EM:** No. Later on I went to work for the Prince Smith and Stell, who made the machinery that all the mills used worldwide, didn't they? It was a renowned...

**LMI:** Which years was that please?

**EM:** Pardon?

**LMI:** Which years was that?

**EM:** Oh, that would be from... 1966 to maybe 1968, or thereabouts.

**LMI:** And what was the name of the organization please?

**EM:** That was Prince Smith and Stell.

**MM:** They employed about 2,000 people in Keighley.

**EM:** That was an incredible place to see.

**LMI:** And they made the machinery, you said?

**0:21:17**

**EM:** They made the machinery. There were lots of places. We had a loom makers called Hattersley's that were world-wide recognised. And in more recent years, about five years ago, we went to Sydney. And we went to the Sydney Museum, Industrial Museum. And lo and behold, there were a Hattersley's loom from early 1900s, with 'Hattersley's of Keighley' on. I suppose the two went hand in hand. If you have textile mills you'd have textile engineers. But Keighley was renowned for its engineering. Certainly in textiles.

**MM:** You know why the mills were built around here, don't you?

**LMI:** I don't.



**MM:** You don't?

**0:22:09**

**MM:** You don't know why they built the mills in this area? Because of that outside there, that river.

**LMI:** The canal?

**MM:** No, not the canal, the river. Fast-flowing rivers coming off the hills, to drive... originally, drive the water wheels.

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** Over here, there was a water wheel.

**MM:** This over here. Yeah. And where all the trees are now.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** There's still remnants of the dam...

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** ...of this factory that were here.

**LMI:** Ok.

**MM:** And they had like a big dam there and then they had like a little canal for the water to run along and run the big water wheel that was down here.

**0:22:50**

**LMI:** Ah.

**EM:** They were all belt driven.

**MM:** The soft water, the soft water here, and the fast-flowing water, that's why the mills were built here.

**LMI:** How much of the machinery etc., was run by this water then?

**EM:** Massive amounts.

**LMI:** So how much of the belt then was that?

**MM:** When I first started working here, it wasn't run by the water wheel.

**0:23:14**

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** On a Monday morning... on every morning we come in, we had to walk down the factory floors - the length of the factory. And it was a long room. And there's all these big shafts. Have you been to the Industrial Museum?

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** Have you seen the big shafts running on? Big belts coming down driving the machinery? Well, every morning we had to start them machines up. And it was like... that was a dangerous operation in itself. And on a Monday morning usually, some of them belts, them big belts that were going up from them big shafts to drive the machines, came off the shaft. Came off the pulley. So we had to go up, while they're running. And we stood on top of the machine with all the gears underneath us, putting the belt back onto the pulley with a stick.

**EM:** No health and safety, was there? Nobody cared. Nobody thought about it.

**0:24:16**

**MM:** When I... In this factory here, in the combing, what's called the combing, I'm talking to one chap... I didn't work in combing... I did a little bit, but not much. And he said, 'There's nobody here with a full set of fingers.'

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** Combing had like pins, doesn't it?

**MM:** All sharp pins. And a machine called a card, and that's a massive machine. Elisabeth will show you a card, a hand card. But the machine card... the roller... big rollers would be as big as this room basically. And then there's little rollers spinning round. And the material is going in, and it's what they call 'carding it.'

**0:25:09**

**MM:** So it's going through these big machines coming on some rollers. And then others are taking it off, others are putting it on and they're moving it down. And they're just open... The reason they were open... like that.

**EM:** Massive machines but with those sharp pins.

**MM:** But that big roller is covered in that stuff. That. And the pins, you know. Like a dog-leg pin like that.

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** That's why these ladies were skillful.

0:25:46

**LMI:** Yes.

**EM:** They were operating machines, massive machines with that. And doing it skillfully.

0:26:01

And on the Saturday, we have to sit on top of them big wheels, them big rollers...

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** Cleaning... what they called... I've forgotten the name of it now. But you just have to get the... because there's all bits of material in the wool, it's coming off. You know, all bits of seeds and stuff like that. It gets into them pins. And so every week you had to clean... You had to sit on them, push them round with your feet, these big massive rollers. Cleaning it with a thing that were like... you won't have seen a bale hook.

**LMI:** Right, yeah.

**MM:** But it's like, the thing... it's open and there's these big...it's like a comb.

0:26:37

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** But it would go for your fingers.

**LMI:** In terms of people missing fingers, were they getting caught into machinery?

**EM:** Yeah, yeah, yeah,

**MM:** Because...I don't know if you've seen a noble phone going around...

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** It's a big set of pins.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** Like combs, you know.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** That's going around. And then there's what they call a 'dabber'. Dabbing material in the way.

**LMI:** Yes

**EM:** When Michael was describing cleaning these... Round there, I do hand spinning, that goes with bands.

**0:27:18**

**EM:** And so he's doing the equivalent of that, these people are... On big massive machines. With hooks. Nobody appreciates just how dangerous and skillful you had to be to work some of these machines.

**MM:** Elisabeth's on about the... If you don't know a lot about textiles... Elisabeth's on about mending... If you've seen old mills... pictures of old mills and that, you'll see that there's a big mill with five or six storeys. And then at the back of it, probably, there's a one storey part. And the roof is like that. And that's north-facing for the light. That's for the mending, so that they've got pure light. Pure north-facing light coming in. So they could see, and stuff properly.

**0:28:07**

**EM:** It doesn't distort anything. North-facing light doesn't distort.

**MM:** The weaving and the mending used to be on the ground floor if you like.

**LMI:** Ok.

**MM:** And then they were on that one story. They didn't go up.

EM: ?

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** So normally, you would take your raw material... at whatever state of production you did... Like this factory that was here originally did everything. So it started off, you got wool sorters... You had a wool sorting department, then you went...

If you don't mind, please can I ask a couple of details for adding in? Which years did you work here, please?

**0:28:50**

**MM:** I worked here from 1963 to 1969. No, 1979. What am I talking about?!

**LMI:** And again, it was the Robert Clough's mill?

**MM:** That was Robert Clough's. And then it became British Mohair Spinners. So that was Robert Clough's, C.F. Taylor's at Shipley, and Ambler's at Bradford. Them three companies joined together and became British Mohair Spinners.

**LMI:** Ok. Moorhead?

**MM:** Mohair.

**0:29:23**

**EM:** Mohair. It was really, really high-quality worsted yarn, wasn't it? Sorry, woollen yarn.

**LMI:** Mohair Spinners. I've missed just the third factory's name. So I've got Robert Clough's, and S.F. Taylor's.

**MM:** C.F. Taylor's at Shipley.

**LMI:** C.F. Taylor's. Yeah.

**MM:** And Amblers of Bradford, at Bradford. Jerimiah Ambler's, who were on Canal Road at Bradford.

**0:29:43**

**LMI:** Ambler's. They all merged?

**EM:** Yeah. They became the British Mohair Spinners.

**LMI:** And now you were saying that they started with the raw wool and did all of the... they had all of the departments?

**MM:** Yeah. They had weaving and everything here. Spinning. There's a vast amount of work going [in]... It's unbelievable when you see the price of clothes, the amount of operations that that stuff's gone through. In wool, you need sorters to sort it. They used to get anthrax. And skin diseases...

**EM:** Scabies.

**0:30:37**

**MM:** I mean, they made it safer eventually. But originally... And then it would go through what they call scouring... They'd wash it. Then it would go through carding. Combing. Drawing - originally there were about seven operations in drawing. Because they were taking it from what they call a sliver, which were about that wide. Sliver of... No, I don't have the sliver.

**EM:** I haven't brought it.

**MM:** They were drawing it out with different machinery.

**EM:** And it ends up nice and floppy...

**0:31:16**

**MM:** Till it becomes thin enough to put on a spinning machine to then spin. And then it would go to twisting. And then it would go to winding. And then, depending on what it was going into, like some of the stuff on cloth weaving was on a small five-inch bobbin. And then we had the weaving. We had, like Elisabeth said, warping. But before weaving you had warping. Weaving, mending. So there's all them operations.

**EM:** And then it had to be dyed.

**MM:** Oh, yeah. And then we had a dye ? as well.

**EM:** And they had colour matches, didn't they? That was another process. Really expert colour matchers. I [worked with] a colour matcher for a time. He had to have really good eyesight to make sure that everything were right, didn't he, for colour matching?

**LMI:** I think that's more than 8 processes that you've said. So, yes, the wool. A lot of...

**0:32:11**

**MM:** And then, when I worked at Haggas's over the road, they had modern machinery. Really modern machinery. And...

**LMI:** Can I ask which years that was, please?

**MM:** Sorry?

**LMI:** Which years was that?

**MM:** At Haggas's? I worked from... 1980... to '85... Yeah, '85. Then I went to...

**0:32:45**

**EM:** For a break.

**MM:** A break. And I went to work at Benson & Turner's in Bradford.

**LMI:** Which year was that?

**MM:** Wait a minute, I've got that wrong. I went to Haggas's, and I only worked there 11 months. I was on nights. And they'd started to reduce the staff.

**LMI:** Ok.

**MM:** Because I was one of the last ones in. I was [finished]

**LMI:** That was 1980s then?

**MM:** That was 1980.

**0:33:14**

**LMI:** And they were already finishing?

**EM:** Yeah.

**LMI:** Had it closed down?

**MM:** No, they weren't closing down.

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** Because of automation.

**MM:** They were reducing the staff. They were cost cutting, if you like. They weren't short of work. Brian Haggas, he concentrated on producing what they call counts of yarn. And certain qualities. That's all he'd do, when he first started doing these really fast modern machines. He concentrated on bulk production, if you like.

**LMI:** And was there a specific name of the ones that he chose?

**MM:** Sorry?

**LMI:** Was there a specific name for the type of quality and counts that he chose?

**EM:** It was artificial fabric then, wasn't it?

**MM:** Yeah, you were looking into cashmere, and all that stuff like that.

**EM:** Imported fabric. [?]

**LMI:** Ok.

**0:34:31**

**MM:** But as I say, I only worked there 11 months. And then I went into engineering for 6 months. I went to Benson Turner's at Wyke.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** And I worked there from '81 to '85.

**LMI:** Ok.

**MM:** Then I went to Smith Ball at Halifax. I only worked there about 6 months. I went back to Benson Turners, worked there another 2 years.

**LMI:** '81 to '85. And then? Was that '86?

**MM:** '86 to '88, back at Benson Turners.

**0:35:11**

**LMI:** And were you in engineering again?

**EM:** No, no, he were an overlooker. All this time he was an overlooker. He only did a brief spell, didn't you, as an engineer?

**MM:** Yes, engineering, yes. And then I came back to Haggas's in '88 and worked there till 2004.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** And then I left and became a dustbin man. And that was the best job I had!

**LMI:** Bless you. So '88-2004 you were back. Argus's, please can I have the spellings for that? Is it A-R-G-U-S, Argus or...Angus?

**0:35:43**

**MM:** H-A-G-G-A-S.

**LMI:** Ah, thank you. And were they limited or was that just the name, Haggas's? What did they call themselves?

**EM:** John Haggas Ltd.

**MM:** John Haggas was the name. Yeah, limited.

**LMI:** Thank you.

**EM:** They were a local family as well, weren't they?

**MM:** Yeah, yeah. They were one of the big original... Massive factory over at the road.

**LMI:** And how long were you a bin man for?

**MM:** That's got nothing to do with textiles!

**LMI:** It hasn't, but it's interesting though.

**EM:** He loved it, didn't you?

**LMI:** So 2004 to 2010?

**MM:** 2011 I left.

**0:36:25**

**LMI:** Why was it the best job?



**MM:** Because it was outdoors and it was like... Really, when you're an overlooker it's like responsibility.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** People might say, you know, they were scared of overlookers. They weren't scared of me. No-one were scared of me. But you're responsible. It all comes through you. If there's any problems, or any blame, it comes through the overlooker.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** So you have all that responsibility...you also had responsibility and stuff like that. So...

**EM:** And it were indoors, wasn't it?

**MM:** Yeah, indoors. And that mill over the road, Haggas's .

**0:37:04**

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** The brand new, the new mill, which is... goes from...it's about a quarter of a mile long.

**EM:** Yes.

**MM:** No windows.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** The windows are there, but they're down at that level.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** And they've got like metal shutters on.

**LMI:** Right

**MM:** So you could open the shutters to let air in...

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** So... you didn't have a view. You couldn't look out even.

**EM:** You were just walking up and down, weren't you?

**MM:** Well, when I first went, it was 12 hour shifts.

**0:37:31**

**LMI:** Right. So when you... So, Michael I've got you from... 1980 you said you started at Haggas's. Is that the time when you were doing the 12 hour shifts? 11 months 1980?

**0:37:51**

**MM:** I left Clough's and went to Haggas's on 12-hour shifts. Yeah. And that was... you worked two days on and then two days off.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** But I were on nights. So I worked two nights and then two nights off. But it was seven days a week. So it was running 24-7.

**LMI:** Right. Ok.

**MM:** And then when I went back, it was the same op - two on, two off, 12-hour shifts.

**EM:** That's how they kept factories going, isn't it?

**MM:** They...he invested a lot of money in them machines.

**LMI:** In your first Finn, 1963 to 1969, in the Robert Clough's here, were you doing day shifts or night shifts?

**0:38:45**

**MM:** Day shifts, yeah.

**EM:** You started as an apprentice, didn't you, Michael?

**MM:** Yeah, I was an apprentice from 1963 till '68. And then I went on a management course '69.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** And then worked till 1979.

**EM:** And you worked with slide rules didn't you, Michael and old fashioned... They didn't have calculators, did they? They had really complex...

**MM:** First overlooker I worked for, as an apprentice, he had a little metal calculator. But he had a pin you put in, and pulled the numbers down like that. And eventually it added... it worked it out. It [wasn't] automatic... It was mechanical. It was like an abacus, moving things along. I don't know how it worked. I honestly don't know how it worked. And that's what he used.

**0:39:38**

**LMI:** Are you able to remember your first salary?

**MM:** This what sorry?

**LMI:** Are you able to remember your first salary in 1963?

**MM:** Yeah, £5.

**LMI:** And that was for 6 days work?

**MM:** 5.

**LMI:** 5 days.

**MM:** Yeah, that's 5 days.

**LMI:** Which hours were you working?

**0:39:58**

**MM:** My dad were an engineer and I wanted to be an engineer but I left it too late, waiting for me O-levels, see what O-levels I got. And by the time I got my results it was September and all the apprentices had been set on. But as it turned out they got about £2.50 a week -£2.10 shillings a week. Whereas an apprentice overlooker got £5 a week. So I had twice as much money as an apprentice. But once you got to overlooker stage, the engineers got more money than us.

**LMI:** Yes, I would imagine. In terms of the hours, which hours did you work?

**MM:** Which hours? Half past seven till half past four. You got like an hour break at dinner time.

**EM:** You all had canteens in mills as well, where you could have a proper dinner, didn't you?

**MM:** We had. This factory here, they had their own, what they call roller coverer, and they covered the rollers in leather.

**0:41:06**

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** They had a pin setter, that was Mavis's husband. You know I was going on about them pins and all that?

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** It's joined together. Drawing machine, there's pins in drawing as well. What they call fallers. He used to be able to put all them new ones in. Replace the blunt ones if you like.

**LMI:** Yes.

**EM:** And you had your own basket makers, didn't you?

**MM:** We had three electricians. We even had a...who shoes horses? Blacksmith. We had a blacksmith. And we had mechanics, a boss of mechanics and then a boss of him. So they had quite a big...

**EM:** But the man who made the...wool cones... and moves around the factory and what's...like big woven baskets called skeps, weren't they? And they had their own man here who made the skeps. God, that was so clever.

**0:42:04**

**MM:** Two skep makers. Like what they do now, the basket making.

**EM:** Willow weaving.

**MM:** But they made them into big skeps. They were about 4 foot long, 3 foot deep and 2 ½ foot wide. Something like that.

**EM:** And they made those, didn't they?

**MM:** They made them big things and you had to put a lid on them.

**EM:** Leather straps to hold them, like a picnic basket. We had four children but our last two were twin girls. And that skep maker wove them, for a little present, like a carpet beater. He wove them one each, but a really tiny one, about a foot long. We've still got them, haven't we? And he were the skep maker here.

**0:42:55**

**MM:** All these willow trees on here...

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** He'd coppice them.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** And put the willow into a bath of water, a big bath of water. And leave it overnight to soften it. And then they could manhandle it into skeps.

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** Yeah, there were a lot of skilled people, weren't there?

**0:43:21**

**LMI:** In terms of the canteens, what were they like? Were they affordable? Could you afford to have a meal from them every day?

**MM:** To be honest with you, I can't... I don't know because I never...

**EM:** You went home for dinner. You probably did have canteens,

**MM:** I went up to your house at dinner time, didn't I? I got meat pies!

**EM:** But the mill canteens...most of them had them because people... in those days we didn't have lunch and dinner as a meal in the evening. You had your dinner at dinner time, 12 o'clock, and you had your tea when you went home. That's what we called your dinner time. Most people ate the main meal in the middle of the day in those days. So the canteens were there to give you your meat and two veg sort of type of meal.

**MM:** They didn't have dispensing machines.

**EM:** No, no. They had people working, a bit like a school kitchen really.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** But they're always hearty and good quality. And the one at Smith Brothers, the lady who cooked them with a small team of people. And then they had to have them ready for 12. Because people only got an hour for the dinner hour, didn't they?

**0:44:32**

**EM:** And if they couldn't get home, I mean if you were lucky enough to get home that were ok, but otherwise they had to do whatever they needed to do in that lunch hour. So she had to get everything ready. And she'd be doing things like stewing dumplings, and pies, and things like that.

**LMI:** And did everybody get lunch at 12?

**EM:** Yeah. Oh yeah, yeah.

**LMI:** Everything shut down?

**EM:** Yeah, because...and you know we told you about Prince Smiths who employed 2,000 people? Lots of places employed lots of people. That one was one of the biggest. It were called 'losing,' wasn't it? When you finished work it were called 'losing'. And at dinner... when the mill 'lose at dinner time', that's what you said. When those 2,000 bodies... You know where Asda is now?

**LMI:** Yes.

**0:45:18**

**EM:** That was the big factory that made all the machinery. When that... at lunchtime... when 2,000 bodies were going across the road to the canteen, or going home for lunch, the traffic had to stop. You can imagine... it was just a sway of the people... we didn't have a lot of cars in them days anyway. But it was just constant, wasn't it? And the canteen were over the road. So they'd all got to trek out. So everything closed down. It was more efficient for the working practice. You couldn't have some doing a bit of this and some doing a bit of that. The machines stopped. People went and had dinner, as it were called then. And then came back with a little belly full and cracked on for another few hours. But that were a big part of mills - having a really good canteen. Because it was hard physical work. There were no Pret A Manger.

**0:46:09**

**MM:** Course, there were more people employed in Keighley at that time. With all mills, and like I say, that factory at Magnet. There were some... Beer Blacks.

**EM:** Well over a thousand, these places.

**MM:** These big employers, weren't they?

**EM:** Yeah. But that were... that was the

**MM:** Especially the way they all work now, all people... There were more people living in Keighley now than what they did then.

**LMI:** But we struggle now don't we for jobs? And there's a lot of unemployment...

**EM:** It's automated as well, isn't it? And AI...

**LMI:** And we're not stopping are we? we're continuing with...

**EM:** It saddens me. Because, as I say, around the corner there, I do hand spinning... and it does sadden me that skills...and I'm not being sentimental... but we're losing skills. And I know we don't need to know how to do hand spinning and things like that now. But once these people have gone, people will no longer understand how things were processed. Or even how to use wool or fabric. I mean, you'll see up there I still do a lot of craftwork, knitting and making things, and that. And it saddens me that all those things will be lost.

**0:47:39**

**EM:** Two of our granddaughters,...well, all three... have learned how to knit in a fashion, and use a sewing machine and things. But I don't think their children will. And they'll say, 'Well it's just an old fashion thing.' Nobody, you know, threshes the cotton anymore.'

**MM:** You say you've been to an industrial museum?

**EM:** Yeah, [she's] working with them.

**MM:** Have you seen the mule spinner?

**LMI:** I wouldn't have known exactly which machine is which.

**EM:** You will when you see it. It's the most dangerous thing!

**MM:** If you get a chance, go and have a look at that.

**EM:** Scary.

**MM:** Young children under the age of 10...you're talking 5, 6, 8... 7 or 8 year olds...

**EM:** Little. You had to be little to do this job.

**MM:** The machine is here. And then there's some rails coming out on the floor.

**LMI:** Yeah

**MM:** And there's this big...

**EM:** The size of this length of this, isn't it?

**MM:** A big machine. And when it... It spins and it twists, but it comes out...there's like a gantry coming out on them rails.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** It runs out to about... let's say from...

**EM:** Half of the room probably.

**MM:** ...here to there to that door. So it's gone out, and it's still working...

**LMI:** Yes

**MM:** ...and it does it so as it comes back in it wraps it onto the bobbin. It wraps the yarn onto the bobbin. But while that's doing that, going out on this thing and coming back, them little kids had to go underneath. Because the yarn's at this height, going across there. They had to go underneath and clean it. Get the dust and...

**EM:** It's called shoddy. Because that... what were left, that fluff that comes off, if it gets the wrong way, it got reprocessed. So it had to be collected. On each pass of this machine travelling along this river.

**0:49:47**

**MM:** I've never seen a mule spinner in Keighley, but they did have them. I don't know if they had any here.

**EM:** Our parents will have known about them.

**MM:** We've seen one at an industrial museum up in Lancashire, we saw one, didn't we? Working. They run it. And the one at Bradford, they run it, that mule spinner. So if you get a chance, have a look at it. And just think of them little kids going underneath there.

**LMI:** In Haworth they had some. I was taking to some tours around Bronte's. And that's part of the tour. You know, they had to be, like you said, really little. And often they had their hair pulled out. They'd have like pieces of hair missing where the hair had got caught in the...

**EM:** And we once went to a graveyard, we were walking in Derbyshire. (We did a lot of walking) And this old, really old church, when you look around the graveyard, they were all tiny... they were graves of tiny children, weren't they? They were five, six, seven year old. And that's because the mill owners... this was in Derbyshire, but it will have gone on here. They used to go up to London and bring children from places like London.

**0:50:56**

**EM:** They probably said to the parents, 'Oh, they'll come to Yorkshire, they'll have fresh air.' Because they'd have big families, they wouldn't be able to feed their kids. And that's what they had to do when they came, isn't it?

**MM:** All the graves are all little children's graves.

**EM:** All the little children that were killed. But on the promise, I mean you're going back to like Dickensian times when people had big families. They didn't know about birth control and things like that. They couldn't feed those families. They were destitute.

**MM:** Robert Clough's here, this Robert Clough's they had their own... they had a personnel department. And the woman who... the personnel officer... I can't remember her name.

**EM:** It doesn't matter, does it?

**0:51:41**

**MM:** She used to go to Italy.

**EM:** And Malta.

**MM:** ...and recruit young girls to come and work in mill. Then when they started getting... they went to Malta. And there's a place over here called Red Alt, higher up the road a little bit.

**LMI:** Yeah.



**MM:** And it was like a hostel for these girls. They brought these girls in there to work in mill. The Asians come in, you know...

**EM:** In the early '60s.

**MM:** They were recruiting, but they were going out. Actually, she used to go out and recruit.

**EM:** Yeah. I think as well, if you could ever get to speak to some of those girls... A lot of them would be our age, won't they? Because it was around the period, early '60s, when they used to go on what I call 'raiding parties'. And they were going to areas like...some of the girls ...They married the overlookers, some of the girls, didn't they? Or the people who worked locally. And they were friends of mine, some of them. And they were living really rural lives in, say Malta, where there'd be very little mechanical things. And they'd probably just have a few goats or cows and things for milking. So that sort of life. And then to come at 15 year old...imagine yourself - you'd be excited, your mum would tell you it was great, and you'd come. And it'd be like going into a new world. And then you'd be plonked in this big hostel.

**MM:** Noisy. Noisy mills.

**EM:** Noisy mills.

**MM:** Smelly. Noisy.

**EM:** It must have been horrendous for them but they was always right happy and lovely weren't they? They were lovely girls....

**MM:** A lot of the people who worked in the mills were what they called 'DPs'. Displaced Persons.

**EM:** That's how it was referred to in those days.

**MM:** From war and that, you know. There was an overlooker who worked on here with me, well, in next room to me, he were Ukrainian. He'd come from Ukraine. He escaped from Ukraine. The war...

**EM:** Lithuanian, Ukraine, Polish.

**MM:** All displaced from war. A lot of displaced....

**EM:** But those young girls... I mean, if you imagine, think about being 15. And you going on an aeroplane and you know, it's so exciting and your mam had the right place for you. And you get here, and you think, 'Oh my goodness me!'

**LMI:** And the raiding parties? What did you mean?

**0:54:14**

**EM:** I call them raiding parties.

**MM:** Recruiting parties.

**EM:** Recruiting parties. But to me it was like...

**MM:** They'd go to a place where they struggled to get work.

**EM:** We go on about slavery now, it's a big thing, but that...It's not slavery, but it's like we were just saying about the Dickensian times, mill owners wanted workers. And they would get workers however they could. And they would be promising mums in Malta and Italy, 'Oh your girl will be doing so well. She'll send you back her wages.'

**MM:** Even the Asians. I had a Pakistani bloke work for me over here, he'd been a teacher in Pakistan. But he worked on the machines.

**LMI:** Yeah, yeah.

**0:54:52**

**EM:** They had a horrible time, didn't they, at first? They were really awful. And when I'm talking about kids being in these circumstances and going from being families... This is nowt to do with textiles - but Michael's grandad, who I knew. You know, he lived quite a while...we've been together since we were 15 years old. So in my lifetime I knew this man as well. He was sold for a shilling to a farmer. Not in textiles. But you know, that went on in our living memory. That this man, Michael's grandad, was sold for a shilling. Because his parents, they lived up in Cumbria, they'd no money. They had a big family, and farmer needed workers. And he would come to households like theirs and say, 'Well, I'll give you a shilling and he'll get three meals a day and a bed at night.' And you'd say, 'Yeah.' You know, 'Look after him,' wouldn't you?'

**LMI:** How long was it due for? Was it like set period or..?

**0:55:56**

**EM:** No, he lived there. He was sold for a shilling. He'd work for the farmer.

**LMI:** Permanent?

**EM:** Yeah, yeah. And then he went down mine, didn't he?

**MM:** Yeah.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**EM:** Times are so different now, that we've no concepts of...

**LMI:** If I can get an idea of what it was like working as an overlooker, then.

**MM:** You don't want to know!

**EM:** Come on, we do.

**MM:** As I say, you're responsible for everything that's going on in that room, if you like. And then as times change, like you said, as times change, and people are not as pliant as what they were...

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** The more, they think... of their rights and stuff like that, you know what I mean?

**EM:** More conscious of their rights.

**MM:** Yeah. So...

**0:56:49**

**EM:** More challenging!

**MM:** More challenging. Yeah, yeah. I found it that. I mean, that was just me.

**LMI:** In terms of the unions and stuff, did you have to deal with them? Were there any issues? Did you have any conflicts?

**MM:** I had conflicts, yeah. But I joined the union when I worked here. Managers and Overlookers. I wasn't in it long because I didn't think much of union at the time.

**0:57:19**

**MM:** They weren't powerful enough, if you know what I mean. You know, managers and overlookers, when you've got... all staff outnumbered you by... whatever. So your particular input of saying, 'Well, we'll go on strike.' Or whatever, it won't have mattered that much.

**EM:** Your mum must have been in a union, because your mum was a spokesperson. I remember her telling us. She went in to talk to... they put her up for... I don't know... a spokesperson to go and tell the managers what they wanted.

**MM:** I don't think she was in a union.

**EM:** She turned round, and they were all gone.

**MM:** I don't think it was a union. I think it was...

**EM:** I thought it was a union.

**0:58:05**

**LMI:** In terms of your salaries then, how did they change over a period? So you said you started off with £5. And then when you were working between 1988 and 2004, at John Haggas's, how much would your salary have been then? Approximately, because then it's quite a lot of years.

**EM:** When we got married in 1967, you got...

**MM:** I got 13 guineas when we got married.

**EM:** You got 13 guineas. So how old were you then? You were 20.

**MM:** That was in 1967. I was still an apprentice then.

**0:58:38**

**EM:** Yeah, so we got married on 13 guineas, didn't we? And I earned £2.50. £2.10.

**MM:** But I was still an apprentice, so I would get more money once I'd become an overlooker. But I can't remember what it was.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** And I applied at Haggas's, I can't remember what wages were there. But I know... I always thought about getting another job... but I always thought because I'm a, what's classed as a skilled man, I've served my time, I wouldn't... I'd have to go into a labouring job or machine minder.

**0:59:15**

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** And I, like when I went, when I left... I left here and went to Haggas's on nights.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** Now, when I got made redundant at Haggas's, I went into... just doing what they called... a semi-skilled fitter in engineering. In an engineering firm.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**0:59:40**

**MM:** I got exactly half the money that I'd got as an overlooker on nights. But they were well paid at Haggas's, compared to what I was getting here. But I was on nights as well, so you got more money for that.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** So in my head all the time I'm thinking, 'I can't leave the job and go, because I won't get anything. I'll lose money.' And we had four children. We couldn't afford to lose money.

**EM:** Four children and a mortgage, hadn't we?

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** But when I did get made redundant in 2000. When I...yeah, I got made redundant in 2004. Well, I got offered another job there, but I turned it down and said 'I'll take redundancy.'

**1:00:17**

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** And I went and worked for council on gardens, but only for a few a month. And then I got the job as a dustbin man. I was no worse off as a dustbin man than I what I had been overlooking.

**LMI:** Right. And how much was your salary at this stage?

**MM:** How much wage? That's a good question. I can't remember.

**EM:** Trying to think back.

**MM:** I can't remember what we got.

**LMI:** Maybe a couple of hundred by now?

**MM:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Maybe £240/£250, something like that? I don't honestly know.

**1:00:47**

**LMI:** That's fine. I'm gonna have to stop at this point. Is there anything that you both would like the children to know? Or like other people in Bradford who didn't work in the mills? To kind of, you know...

**MM:** Well, it's like Elisabeth said, the people who haven't worked in a mill, who looked on it as being...

**LMI:** Looked down at it.

**MM:**...down at the bottom of the tree, have no idea what were involved and how skillful the job is. I mean, it won't be as skillful now, because a lot of it is mechanised. I think... even when I still worked at Haggas's...I think he was looking at setting up a factory in Dubai. But he found out that if he did that, he would have to supply accommodation for all his workers.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** So obviously he pulled out of that.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** He did buy... what is it...? He bought Harris Tweed.

**EM:** Yeah, he did. His son's got Harris Tweed.

**MM:** He hasn't got it now. I think he gave it back to them eventually.

**EM:** I think... We just talked a lot about how undermined they were.

**LMI:** Yes.

**EM:** And mainly the [women]... well, the mill workers, I should say...they weren't all women, because a lot of the Asian men had to work in the mill, didn't they?

**1:02:30**

**MM:** Most of the night shift would be Asian.

**EM:** Most of the men were either mechanics or overlookers, the British ones. But the people who worked in the mill, they were so skillful. And it saddens me that they never had any sort of recognition. And I think a lot of people who are in care homes now will have worked in mill. And if somebody could, you know, somebody like you, could go and revitalise those memories with them, it'd be brilliant for them. I think that's something that sort of sits with me, that...

**LMI:** Yeah.

**EM:** They've got lots of memories. They've got lots of, you know...things that entertain them.

**MM:** If people could have gone...like when I took one or two groups round the factory here. And it's such an eye-opener to see...when it was as it was then. on our apprentice, to show them all the processes it's going through and to show them round. It's really interesting. Like going to museum...

**LMI:** Yes

**MM:** Or going, you know, the one in Lancashire. That's a good one to see. Because that...it's slightly different but you learn... have you heard of being on tenterhooks?

**LMI:** No. Well, I'm familiar with that one, but I didn't know where it came from.

**1:04:01**

**MM:** It came from textiles, yeah. Because what they did, when they scoured the wool, when they washed it, they had to dry it, so they put it out on big metal things,

**EM:** In fields

**MM:**...on hooks. And they were called tenterhooks. And the stuff were out for two or three days, drying in the sun. So that's where that word comes from.

**EM:** I think another thing...if part of this is about certain education, I think...to simplify it...as I say, I've got a spinning wheel...if you could get kids to see the processes in the

simple way, these sorts of things. I'm sure the lab people at school are doing, what would they call it now, textiles and things?

**LMI:** Yeah, yeah.

**1:04:54**

**EM:** And you can see the processes, that's how it's drawn out in these machines. That's how it's twisted. And look how strong it is when it's twisted, how, you know, it's strength and that. There's a lot to be gained from understanding processes. But obviously you can't go back to old mills. But I'm sure if textile teachers could show them these processes. And even that spinning wheel. It's right interesting to see it going from this...

**MM:** There's all different sorts of spinning, you'll know about.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** Different sorts of spinning.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** There's cap spinning, ring spinning, flyer spinning, now mule spinning. And also, there's one that took over... Basically Benson Turner's at Wyke...they concentrate completely on repco spinning.

**EM:** Which were modern things, weren't they? Really modern.

**MM:** Haggas's went into repco spinning. I worked in repco.

**1:05:50**

**LMI:** REP?

**MM:** REPCO.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** It's actually an Australian firm who were... an engineer...reclamation... something like that, I can't remember now. But they developed this machine. And it's fast. Really fast compared to...

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** But even with that machine, producing what it could produce...there's only small machines at repcos, but you've got a lot of them, you know.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** But when China started, and India started going into textiles, we were selling [them the] machinery. We couldn't buy the raw material for what they were selling the yarn.

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** You know when we're on about the '70s?

**1:06:35**

**MM:** So that's why the textile industry went down.

**EM:** And the mills closing down in the '70s? The biggest reason for the decline, locally in Bradford, Keighley, [they'd] started importing Turkish yarn, didn't they? And once they started importing Turkish yarn... So, a lot of our mills were using natural fibres, weren't they? Mohair and sheep's wool. And once they started importing cheap Turkish yarn, they couldn't compete, could they? They couldn't compete. So that were beginning of the downfall, wasn't it? We, you know, people who were involved in mills, we understood that then.

**1:07:13**

**MM:** It's like we said about going through all them processes to produce yarn. Our daughters both have got sheep on their farm.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** When they get sheep sheared, they lose money. They lose money,

**EM:** Nobody wants it.

**MM:** They're losing... they're paying more to get the sheep sheared than what they can get for the fleece.

**1:07:39**

**EM:** It goes to Wool Marketing board in [Bradford].

**MM:** The fleece are virtually worthless.

**EM:** Pennies for a fleece. For a whole sheep. It's... when we got, well, just shortly after we got married, we lived right high up on Riddlesden didn't we? And all the mills, they still had mills, chimneys, (we didn't have clean air zones), it was just a cloud wasn't? And you do know that's why Keighley wasn't bombed, do you? Do you know that piece of history?

**1:08:07**

**LMI:** I didn't know. Because they couldn't see?

**EM:** They couldn't see Keighley. And we had a munitions factory up the road. At Steeton.



**MM:** Silsden had a munitions factory. And the Germans wanted to bomb it. But because of all the smoke, the pollution over the valleys, they couldn't find it. We didn't have sat nav in those days.

**EM:** And we'd moved up Riddlesden because we had a child that wasn't well, and our doctor said, 'Move them over the muck line', didn't he? That's why we went to Riddlesden because it was above what he called the 'muck line'. And you looked down on to the valley and it was like living in a haze, wasn't it?

**LMI:** Spinning, you mentioned cat spinning and repco. You mentioned two other names.

**MM:** There's cap spinning, ring spinning, flyer spinning, mule spinning and repco.

**LMI:** Thank you very much.

**MM:** Now, the flyer is what Elisabeth is doing with that machine there.

**EM:** I'll show you before you go.

**MM:** That spinning wheel. That's the flyer. Ring spinning...

**1:09:09**

**LMI:** I'm not going to ask you the details, just because I've got the next interview, and I've run out of time. However, what I do want to know is, um... How did you find Asians when they came over? Because you worked with the Italians before, Malta, Lithuanians. How did you find that?

**MM:** I've always had Asians working for us. But they were the older generation of Asians.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** Which was different to the younger generation.

**EM:** Ali were different.

**1:09:34**

**LMI:** What's the difference?

**MM:** Well, I suppose they're more militant, if you like, that younger generation. The older generation...

**EM:** Old Ali were lovely, wasn't he?

**MM:** Yeah.

**EM:** He was called Ali.

**MM:** Old Ali was a labourer in this factory here.

**LMI:** Yep.

**MM:** And on the Friday when everybody got paid, he used to go around. And he had a wad of money.

**1:09:55**

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** He was collecting money from all the Asians in the mill. Because he'd sent money over to Pakistan to bring them over here.

**EM:** Because he let out his...

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** Then they paid it back, didn't they?

**MM:** Then he had, I think he had about seven houses. Seven houses, which he'd rent.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**MM:** And he wouldn't just have one person in it. There'd be a few of them.

**LMI:** Lot of them, yeah.

**1:10:18**

**MM:** So he lent them money for coming over here. He rented them... so pay him rent every week. Honestly, he were a chubby little chap. He were only small. He was a lovely bloke. But honestly, I've never seen... He had a wad of money, like a roll of money. In them days that were a lot.

**LMI:** Well, if you had six, seven houses and you'd loaned them as well.

**EM:** I went... in '50s before I started work, I went to a grammar school in Bradford from Keighley. And one of the memories I have, because the Asian community in mills had started coming over in late '50s or mid '50s. And I'd be going to school, on a bus from Keighley to Bradford at... maybe, I don't know, seven o'clock... because it was a long way to go then.

**1:11:06**

**EM:** And the mill workers would be going home. And they were mainly Asian, on the bus, because they'd worked night shift. And just like on our local buses, we all smelt of mill. But because I was a schoolgirl, it was more prevalent to me then. But as you got on buses anywhere in Keighley, all mill workers, they were all... My dad was a leather worker, he smelt of leather. Engineers smelt of oil. And most of us smelt of mill, didn't we? And them poor fellas would be going home and getting in bed, and going back and doing another night shift, wouldn't they? Bless them.

**1:11:36**

**LMI:** In terms of the smell of mill, what was it like?

**EM:** It's lanolin really, isn't it? It's not as bad as leather.

**MM:** It's got its own smell.

**EM:** I should imagine... You see, we've got girls that were farmers, so they always smelt of sheep wee. Sheep wee and lanolin. That's what you smelt like, sheep wee and lanolin.

**1:12:01**

**MM:** That's what you get soap from.

**EM:** Yeah, it makes soap, does lanolin.

**MM:** Esholt, the... what is it... at Bradford...

**LMI:** Water reservoir.

**MM:** ...at the time when I was an apprentice, was the only sewerage works in England that made a profit.

**EM:** Because it made soap.

**LMI:** Right.

**EM:** And we'll have to let you go. We won't tell you owt else! We could go forever! You can see that we're passionate about mill people, aren't we?

**LMI:** Thank you.

**1:12:40**

**MM:** When I said it was horrible at mill, it wasn't. I do think it's brilliant. But like I said, I didn't like being an overlooker. But I am fascinated by the different processes and how it all worked. Like the people who invented all these machines, and stuff like that. Like... on here now, at this end of the factory, called the Old Mill, they put some brand-new machinery in, and I were in charge of it. And it was called ASD -Uniflex. And that was... rather than, like we said with bit drawing, all them operations, it cut down to three operations in the drawing, rather than seven. But you could put in a lot thicker roving, because you could put like a hundred draft.

**LMI:** Yes.

**MM:** Whereas normally you'd put six... when your draft is going from that thickness to 1/6<sup>th</sup> of that thickness.

**LMI:** Right.

**MM:** Where you could do a hundred on Uniflex.

**LMI:** I wanted to ask you one more question. In those days when majority of the women were going into the mills, how come you ended up in the office? And how common or uncommon was that? To find women working in the [office]?

**1:14:06**

**EM:** Well, my sister went in the mill. And she worked in a woollen mill – Mariner's, didn't she? At the time of the fire, she worked there. But I'd gone to grammar school. And was the only one in family had gone to grammar school. So, I suppose my mum and dad thought that I should go in an office. That's the sad thing, that you were sort of like...

**MM:** But also...in your childhood you'd been poorly. With your lungs and that.

**EM:** Yeah, a poorly as a child, with my lungs. So that I don't think they wanted me to go in mill. But yeah...

**LMI:** In terms of the grammar school, was there a test? Were you cleverer than your sister? Did you manage to pass it and get in?

**MM:** It was an 11 plus, wasn't it?

**1:14:36**

**EM:** We had what was called an 11 plus. And that's another sad thing. That classified you about whether you were clever...

**LMI:** Yeah.

**EM:** My sister's just as clever as me.

**LMI:** Yes.

**EM:** And she's more skilled than me. She's a beautiful pianist, isn't she? And she did all this. In fact, when I were a little girl (because she's eight years old than me) I used to go to the mill in school holidays. She worked in a thing called Balling and Banding, didn't she? You know knitting wools got bands round? And you'd get them in a packet? And that was her job. And in school holidays she used to let me do it. You'd press it. You'd put the thing and press the pedal. And she used to make them up in a little wage packet. So yeah, she was far more skilled than me. Far more... you know... intelligent than me...

**LMI:** That's how we classified them.

**EM:** But sadly, that's how society was at the time, wasn't it?

**1:15:15**

**LMI:** I'd love to carry on talking to you. Thank you very much for coming.

**EM:** You're welcome anytime for a cup of tea. And we can bore you some more!

**LMI:** Thank you so much. You haven't bored me at all. That has been fascinating. It's been really interesting. And I'm sure people who hear it are going to feel the same.