**Betty’s Story...**

**Betty Baldry interviewed by Claire Secton on 24th September, 2012.**

**Summary:** In this interview Betty talks about working at *Meantmore’s*, listening to Louis Armstrong and Jimmy Young, buying a new suit from Alexandra’s, Christmas jobs in *Woolworths* and working at British Gas.

 **I'm here with Betty on the-**

**Betty**: 24th

**-24th of September 2012 in her home. Betty, could you tell us your second name, and how to spell it please?**

**Betty**: Baldry - B A L D R Y

**And when was you born and where?**

**Betty**: I was born in *York Road Hospital* at the Elephant and Castle, and it was the 15th of February, 1932.

**So Betty, can you tell us about your work?**

**Betty**: Well I had quite a few jobs, I left school at 14 and I had quite a few little jobs then, but they were just short ones, but my longest one was at *Meantmore’s* which was at Hackney and they used to pick us up in a coach and they used to take us to Hackney to work in the factory and I think it was one of the first places that did the biro pens. And I worked there from, I was 17, till I was, I left there when I was pregnant in 1954.

**Who did you work with- what sort of people did you work with?**

**Betty**: I worked with quite a few girls. I’ve stayed friends with one, but she moved to New Zealand, but we still stayed in contact, but she died about 3 weeks ago. It was a nice crowd we got on really well, but it was hard work, but I enjoyed it anyway.

**What sort of work, you said it was hard work, what sort of work was it?**

**Betty**: It was hard work, I was drilling out the barrels of the pens before they went on to be polished and assembled with the ball points and the lids and things like that, you know, but I did the drilling out of 'em, which was hard.

**Can you explain that process a little bit?**

**Betty**: Well I used to put the solid, it wasn't quite solid. It was quite a small hole going through a tube. I used to have to fix that into a machine and then I had a hand drill to push onto the tube to make the hole bigger, so that the ink tubes could go inside.

**And was there a particular way that you had to hold the drill or hold the pen?**

**Betty**: Not really. You just held the drill and you sort of went in and out to make the hole bigger. And sometimes they used to break and your hand would slip and I'd get cuts on fingers, so what I sometimes used to do was wrap some bandage or plasters round some of my fingers.

**Who did you supply the pens to?**

**Betty**: Oh, that all went into a room and I think they would supply to retailers. I didn't have anything to do with that. Possibly then from the retailers they went to the shops.

**And you didn't know of any of the shops that they supplied?**

**Betty**: No, I don't, no, because I worked, as I say, in Hackney, where the factory was so I don't really know anything about that area' cos I lived in Peckham all my life.

**And did you need any qualifications- did you have to be good at something?**

**Betty**: No, nothing, nothing. I left without any qualifications anyway because I never had any exams to do- didn't in those days. You just went and if they was short of staff they took you on. But the money was good.

**How much did you get paid?**

**Betty**: I used to get, when I first started, I used to get about £3 for from 8 o'clock till half past 5; hour lunch and then we used to have a tea-break, but the tea-breaks you drank your tea while you worked. And then every year you got a rise. And then on the 5th year that I worked there, when I was getting £5 10 shillings, and I was earning more than my Dad, yep.

**And where did you go for lunch, did you bring it with you**?

**Betty**: No, sometimes we used to take it with us or sometimes we used to go to a market round Hackney somewhere and we'd have pie and mash, or we'd go into another caff and have a bowl of soup, but mostly we'd come home and have our- our dinner at home, yeah.

**Okay. What were the worst parts of your job?**

**Betty**: When my fingers used to get cut. Having to get up early to catch the coach, 'cos once the coach had gone you had to go by bus, and to get over there it took you ages and when you got there you lost part of your working day so you lost part of your money. So, if I was say 9 o'clock, I lost an hour's pay. And if you was out sick you never got paid.

**So, no sick pay?**

**Betty**: No sick pay, no sick pay, no.

**So what were the best bits- what were the perks?**

**Betty**: I think the best bits were, it was a good crowd to work with, really enjoyed it. Yeah, it was a good crowd and while we were working they used to have like music going on and when you couldn't hear it you had to put earphones on, and sometimes we could take our own records in and then somebody would play them over the tannoy, so that you'd put your earphones on and you heard the music.

**Wow. So, what sort of music did you listen to?**

**Betty**: Oo, it was Louis Armstrong, Jimmy Young, quite a lot of old ones, you know.

**Did you ever take in any music?**

**Betty**: Yeah, a couple, a couple I did. What was that tune I used to take (sings) "I found my thrill on Blueberry Hill". That one, I think it's still playing now, innit?

**Yes, so they used to play that one? So what was it like when the music was playing?**

**Betty**: Yeah, we used to play that one.

**And what was that like when the music was playing and people were listening to it?**

**Betty**: You know, sometimes when you'd filled your box up with the amount of pens that you'd done, you know, you'd take it and then you'd take your earphones off and then all the girls would be singing to the tunes, yeah it was quite good, enjoyed it.

**So how many pens would you have to do a day**?

**Betty**: I used to have to do 144 in a box, and I used to have to do 6 of those boxes, and that was a day’s work.

**And if you didn't do that what happened?**

**Betty**: Well, we all did really, 'cos we used to help one another out. If you was a bit behind the girls who was on the same job as you they'd say, "How you gettin' on there, Bet?", and I'd say, "I'm a bit behind", so they'd help me out and I would help them out; help one another.

**And what were the relationships between you and the girls like?**

**Betty**: Oh, very good, very good, as I say I kept in touch for a long time when I left, and then they left and got married and had their families. As I say, one went to New Zealand and I'm still in touch with one of the girls now she was my bridesmaid when we got married, and I'm still in touch with her. We see one another now and again, you know which is nice. It is nice.

**So what- what was your place of work like, the noise, the smell?**

**Betty**: Oh the noise, the noise was terrible,' cos you had different machines going on. There was some girls that was on the polishing, which they had big wheels on 'em, but it was like soft and they used to have to put the tubes to polish them and all their fingers would be all shiny, where it would take off the skin, you know. I was never on that job, so I was quite satisfied doing the drilling.

**And was that quite noisy, the drilling?**

**Betty**: Oh yeah, yeah it was, you know, you could hear, you know, hear it. So sometimes when the music was off I would just put the earphones on, to stop the noise.

**What did it smell like?**

**Betty**: Well, mine didn't smell much. Oh, when the drill needed sharpening it smelt burning. On the polishing side it smelled "polishy", how polish smells, like tins of polish that you don't see much now anyway, but it smelt of polish. 'Cos all these wheels that were going round they were sort of being fed with a kind of a polish, to polish the tubes.

**What about the light- did you have windows?**

**Betty**: Not very many, not very many. There was some top lights, but they were narrow and then you had florescent lighting. It wasn't very good.

**And was that quite hard, not having the light?**

**Betty**: No you got used to it, you just got used to it.

**So how many hours a day did you work?**

**Betty**: 8 o'clock till half past five and then you had an hour lunch that was it. Your tea you used to have to drink while you was working.

**So how many hours were you out at work?**

**Betty**: So what oh I used to leave the house, to be, to catch the coach about half past seven, so I used to leave the house round about seven and I used to get home roundabout quarter past six.

**Where did the coach pick you up from?**

**Betty**: It used to pick us up at Commercial Way, in Peckham, on the corner of Commercial Way.

**And then how did you make your way home from there?**

**Betty**: I used to walk, 'cos I lived in Peckham Park Road and then when I got married I lived along Queen's Road.

**And did you ever like walk along with the other girls, did they live near you?**

**Betty**: Yeah, I used to walk along with two of the girls that used to live in my flats, so I used to walk along with them. Yeah, it was nice, we enjoyed it anyway.

**How did you hear about the job- how did you get the job?**

**Betty**: Well, I was thinking about giving up this job that I was working at and they said, "Oo", the girl who lived in my flats they said they want some girls in *Meantmore’s*. So another girl in our flats said shall we go up and ask for it, so I said yeah why not, so we went along and we got the bus there then, took us ages to find it and we went in and they said what do you want, and I said we're enquiring about a job, took our names and addresses and they said you can start on Monday.

**Straight away?**

**Betty**: Yes, straight away, yea.

**So, what was the first day like?**

**Betty**: It was strange really because they had to teach you what to do. I was on- on the drilling and May she was on, how can I explain, they was, it was round, you see that little blob there, well they used to have those on a separate box and they used to put that little blob in the glue, put it on there and bang it. That's not coming through on the tape really is it?

**We can film it- I've got a little camera in my bag, so we can film it.**

**Betty**: You have? Yeah, that's what May used to do. And all her fingers was all sticky with the glue. They taught us what to do and the next day, you was away doing what you had to do. You didn't have weeks of training, you had one day, or a few hours.

**And was there any like Health and Safety that you had to...?**

**Betty**: No, no, no Health and Safety going on there, that didn't come in until years later I think.

**And did you wear a uniform?**

**Betty**: Aprons, we used to wear aprons. You used to take your own little apron with you and once a week I used to change it like everybody else, you know.

**So, what did you wear- were there certain shoes you had to wear?**

**Betty**: No, you just wore what you want, what was comfortable. I used to wear flat most of us wore flat shoes 'cos most of us were standing all day.

**So you were standing?**

**Betty**: I was standing yeah, but my friend May she used to be sitting, so she was she was alright she was sitting down hammering her little plugs in the pens, sort of thing, you know.

**So how many hours would you have been standing?**

**Betty**: Well from 8 till half past five, except for lunch you'd be sort of sitting down then, all the time really. And now I'm having problems with me knee.

**I was going to say, was there any...?**

**Betty**: Now, now there is, I'm not saying it was that though, arthritis in the knees.

**Did any of the girls ever complain?**

**Betty**: No, we just got on with it. I think it was 'cos the money was good really. You just stayed in the job, although you weren't all that keen you got on with it and got paid at the end of the week.

**So what was- what was the holidays, what was your holidays like?**

**Betty**: Oh, we had a week off but the whole firm closed, so it was you sort of all closed down, I think it was one week in August and then after that week you just came back. I think you got half-pay for that, so that was about, when I was getting £5 that was £2.50 they'd pay you for your holiday. And that was good really, most firms you didn't get holiday pay.

**There was no holiday pay?**

**Betty**: Some, some firms didn't give holiday pay. No, you just took- took your week off for your holiday.

**And the whole factory would have...?**

**Betty**: The whole factory closed for that week

**Where did most people go for their holidays?**

**Betty**: Stayed at home or went away to South End for the day. Couldn't afford anything else. Went on a coach to South End, or-or caught the boat at Westminster and went to South End that way, or Margate; used to do that on a Sunday. That used to go on a Sunday.

**And did you go with anyone from work?**

**Betty**: I went with my Mum and Dad.

**Did your work affect your home life in any way?**

**Betty**: No, no, not really. Everybody worked. They had to work, no benefits then but no we was quite happy.

**Do you do you feel you was paid a decent wage?**

**Betty**: I suppose I was, because I was getting paid more than my Dad over five years. My Dad he did a few jobs, but when he first started, when he was in his 20's he was a tunneller. He helped to build the tubes, the tunnels, and he came out the army and he worked at making rope and after that he went to the Gas Board and he worked for the kitchens collecting all their groceries and their stores and then he heard about a job going at the Council as a Park Keeper and he took that and he loved it, loved it, and I think he earned £5 a week.

**So nearly as much?**

**Betty**: Nearly. Yeah, nearly as much, yeah.

**So, what did the factory look like, can you describe the factory to us with as much detail as possible?**

**Betty**: Well as you went in it was all full of machinery, it was quite big, I don't know measurements really. You know a school hall? Round about as big as that, but it was full of different machinery. Not very clean with all the dust and things like that going on. You used to have to go out in the yard to the toilets, even though it was pouring with rain (laughter). Yeah, yeah, it was about as big as a hall, a school hall, if you can visualise a hall in the old schools; I don't know what the new school halls are like now.

**And what colour was it- was it colourful?**

**Betty**: Oh no, it was dreary. Dreary and dull.

**And did you have anything on the walls?**

**Betty**: No, nothing on the walls, no nothing. Just dark, dark, especially with the florescent lighting and all the machinery, you know.

**And who looked after the girls- who oversaw their work?**

**Betty**: The guvnors, foremen, but when like with me when I had a drill when it got blunt I had to call the man over to sharpen the drills. I forget what he was now, he was under the foreman anyway, Deputy Foreman?.

**And what- and what was the foreman like?**

**Betty**: He was alright, not bad. He used to carry on with some of the women.

**And was you allowed to talk or...?**

**Betty**: Well, you probably more shout at one other really to be heard. I suppose we'd have a little natter without anyone seeing us, without the Foreman catching us, you know, yeah.

**And did you ever get in trouble?**

**Betty**: No, I never, no I was a good girl.

**So when you was working, what did what did your job make you feel?**

**Betty**: I don't know really. It didn't give me any satisfaction, only on a Friday when I collected my wages, to be honest, you know. I mean, what is there in making a pen? So boring really when you think about it.

**What did you spend your wages on?**

**Betty**: Well, my Mum used to, I used to give my Mum £2, and the rest, when I first started. I was courting then, so I-and he was an apprenticed so on a Monday I used to pay for the pictures, 'cos he never had any money. We'd go out and buy fish and chips in paper. We'd go to a dance round the church hall that used to be about half a crown. I'd buy a few clothes for myself, but I used to have to save for that. My friend and I, we decided that we would go to Rye Lane and we would get a suit, a drape, they called them then and we went to Alexandra's and we was measured up for this suit and it cost us fourteen guineas, that was a lot of money. And we used to save and save and save, until every week we used to go up and pay for it pay for it and then when we got our fourteen guineas paid up we brought home the suit. She had a navy blue one and I had a brown one, lovely.

**And where did you wear your suit?**

**Betty**: I used to wear it weekends, 'cos you know, you never had much then so you used to keep that for weekends, so- so and wear like a different blouse with it.

**So, the other jobs you did before working for the Bic pens, can you tell us about those, where were those?**

**Betty**: Well, my first job was at the hairdressers and that was at Forest Hill, and I was earning ten shillings a week, 'cos I was an apprenticed. So I got fed up with that, because ten bob a week and I was paying about five shillings a week on fares, so that wasn't very good. So then I went to a grocers, no I went to, I've got to think now where I went, I went to (pause) oh I went to a grocers shop and that was in Peckham Park Road, and that was called Perksy's and I earned one pound a week, and that was hard work 'cos the deliveries used to come in big sacks of sugar and I used to have- have to drag those behind the counter out to the back, and then when we was short of sugar I'd have to drag it through and weigh out bags of sugar, on scales. So I got. I didn't like that very much. So then I went to Lewis', the flower people at Camberwell Green, in the office, they taught me the switchboard, I did a little bit of typing, but then they was going to transfer me to another office at Brixton, well I couldn't travel to Brixton so I left that and I went on to *Meantmore’s*, the pen people and that's where I stayed really.

**And how many years did you stay there?**

**Betty**: I worked at *Meantmore’s* from 17 till I was 22, 5 years.

**And at 22 you got married?**

**Betty**: No, I got married at 19.

**So you stayed on?**

**Betty**: Yeh, my husband went in the army, he had to join the army, didn't he? He got deferred for two years, because he was an- an apprentice bricklayer, and so- so I just carried on there while he was in the army. Then when he came home, I fell for my first child and then after a few months I left *Meantmore’s* to stay at home to get ready for the baby.

**So, what was it like working in a groceries?**

**Betty**: Ahh, bit boring really, because they never put me on serving customers very much because we was still on rationing and they still had ration books, so I don't think they trusted me to mark off the rations. It was alright, but I mean a pound a week it wasn't very much, was it? So, so I left there, and also we used to have to scrub the front of the shop and I was only about 14 - 15, so I thought, "I'm not having that!".

**So, how many hours did you work there?**

**Betty**: The shop opened at 9, and I worked till, I think it was half past 5, hour lunch. You closed Thursday afternoon and you went in on Saturday, all day Saturday. It was a lot of hours, but I went home to lunch there because my Mum was only in the next flat sort of thing, in Peckham Park Road.

**And how did you get paid- did they give you a wage packet? Or...?**

**Betty**: No, they just used to give me- me pound out of the till. And I can remember I was working behind the counter and I'd put a bit of lipstick on, and my Dad was then was getting the groceries for the Gas Board and he came in the shop and he said, "What have you got on your mouth?" I said, "A bit of lipstick, Dad" and he stretched over the counter and wiped it off, oh dear, strict!

**So, what were the ages like that worked is it *Mintners*? *Meantmore*.**

**Betty**: *Meantmore’s*.

***Meantmore’s*, what was the ages of the girls what worked there?**

**Betty**: Well, I was 17. Some of the girls’ were 20. Some were married women they must have been in their 40's. I think there was a couple there in their 50's as well, 'cos they was talking about their husbands when they were in the army during the war. So they must have been you know coming up 50, quite different ages really, quite a lot of different ages. There was men working there as well, but I think they was doing the dipping, the dying, I don't really know what they were doing, but they had quite a hard job I think.

**Were the men and women allowed to have lunch together, allowed to socialise?**

**Betty**: Oh yeah, you used to talk to one another, no it it wasn't separated or anything, no we got on well with them. Two of them, one of the men and one of the girls got married, yeah one her name was Bernadette and the fellers name was Nobby, and I thought, "Why do they call him Nobby?", but then I found out his name was Clarke, and all Clarke's were called Nobby.

**So people that worked, did they come from the community that was around the factory?**

**Betty**: Most of them did. The coaches that used to pick us up, there was about 3 or 4 coaches, and I suppose that held about 45 people each, roughly. The factory was on 4 floors, I don't know if it was 4 or 5 floors, but most of them came from round the Hackney area, you know over the East East End sort of that way.

**Can you tell us about the East End and the South East workers? Were they divided?**

**Betty**: We got on very well, no got on very well. It's only in later years, as I've got older, I’ve found that the East Ender's are different to the South East. They're more, how can I explain, jewellery they like to wear jewellery and they parade, am I being nasty? No, they seem different, their humour is seemed different, but I didn't notice that when I was younger, only as I've got older I've noticed that, yeah.

**So, what was- what how big was the factory from outside, if you was walking up to the factory?**

**Betty**: I'm trying to... You know Tesco's along Old Kent Road, I suppose it- it was about as big as that, width-wise, on their on their widest area, that was about as big as the front, but of course it was higher than Tesco's cause it was 4 or 5 floors high.

**So, what did it look like, were there any smells?**

**Betty**: No, it was very dark, it wasn't like nice brickwork. It was dark. I don't know if it was dirty or what, but it- it wasn't very nice, it was just dark to me. As you arrived you saw this black building, and then you went inside and it was black inside, you know. Not much difference really inside and out.

**Did it affect the community in any way, the factory?**

**Betty**: No, I don't think so, probably helped them, because it gave people work, something to do. Mind you there was lots of factories about then, wasn't there, so it was just a place for you to go. And it was a new thing, the biro, and it- it was strange because later on in life my sister she worked in a factory over at Hemel Hempstead and she was making pens, but she made the upper class ones, and she made some with diamonds in it that went overseas, yeah, yeah. I can't remember the name of them; my husband would know the name of them I think it began with 'S'. Shall I ask him? Yeah we can do. Claire. (Calls out to her husband) Son. Sonny. (No reply) I bet he's got the door shut.

**We can ask him afterwards.**

**Betty**: Yeah.

**So you left when you got married, but was you ever made redundant?**

**Betty**: What from *Meantmore’s*?

**Or, just from work?**

**Betty**: No, no. I did a couple of Christmas jobs when the baby was born, just to help out that was at Woolworth's.

**What Woolworth's?**

**Betty**: First one I worked at was Oxford Street, and my Mum used to come and mind the baby. And then, I've got it wrote down here, and the I did a bit of homework where you collected these corks that you put in bottles, but they had faces on the top and you had to paint them and I was earning two and six a dozen and it took me ages to do these different heads. My husband used to help me and in the end he got fed up he said you're not doing that anymore, so that was that.

**So where- how did how did you get into that job?**

**Betty**: I don't know, I don't know how I got that one, somebody was doing it and they said, "There's a bit of homework here, Bet" so I said, "I'll have some of that", so I went and got that.

**Can you tell us where you got it from, so how did that come about? That’s amazing.**

**Betty**: I don't know. Must have been a neighbour of mine- must have told me. Yeah, it was a neighbour of mine, because she use, yeah it was, because she used to go and do it. Pick these faces up and then paint them, then she told me about it and we both went together. And it was down St James's Road somewhere where we used to pick them up. I didn't last long though because two and six for a dozen, it took you ages 'cos you had all different paints, the eyes and everything, it was awful, terrible. And then what else did I do? And then I had my other baby and then on the Christmas I had another job in *Woolworths*, but that was in Cheapside and they put me on bowls and household goods, saucepans and all that sort of thing that was on that counter, then they put me on the sweet counter. That was terrible 'cos I used to eat some of the sweets, didn't I, but they never gave you any pockets in *Woolworths* in their overalls for certain things, you know. They asked me if I'd like to stay on, but I said no, I only did it for Christmas 'cos my Mum used to come and have the boys for me. And then what else did I do? Oh and then I got a job in a sweet factory, and I used to do a couple of days a week there and they put me on the liquorice allsorts and I was on the guillotine, where I use to have to cut the sweets, you know, in different shapes. I only stayed there for a short time I didn't like that, well it was too much really having two kids and that. And then I got another job, my neighbour said there's a job going round the sweet factory. And what it was, it was all different sweets in jars and boxes and the reps used to go out and get the orders from the sweet shops and you used to have to get a list of different sweets that each shop wanted, and you used to have to climb up ladders to get these jars and the boxes and go down the cellar and then you used to have to go in the chocolate room. And as you went in the Chocolate Room, you had all moths flying around, ‘cos they came out of the nuts that was in the chocolate.

**What did it smell like?**

**Betty**: Chocolate! Just full of Nestles and Cadburys, all sorts of chocolate, like bars and boxes of chocolates. And then after that I had another two jobs: tea-lady's, I had a tea job in an insurance where I used to serve the teas on a trolley on a couple of floors; I lasted there for 2 years. Then during the lunch break I worked in the canteen clearing tables in the afternoon we did the tea again. I left there to get another tea job, 'cos they was paying more, 'cos I was getting £5 on this tea job and they used to give me 3 shillings a week, in a voucher, dinner vouchers, so that was a good job. But then I left there and went to the Gas Board, 'cos my Mother-in-Law worked there and she said, "I'll get you a job at the Gas Board" I said, "No, I don't want to go in an office". So she said, "Yeah, yeah, go in an office, I'll get you a job in the filing", so I said, "Oh, alright then that'll be fine, A to Z, you know", putting files away. Anyway I went up for the interview I had to do a little test, I got the job, but they put me on Service Request Cards, which is where the fitters go out and they have to write down the name and address of the customer and what job they did and how long they did it for, and if they had a part to put in I had to price that all up. It was more accounts, I was alright at adding up, I was alright at that, figures, but it wasn't what I was expecting but they kept me on that for years. And then I got the job in the Gas Board doing central heating, so I did that for quite a long time. Then when the area was flooded with central heating, people had had their central heating done and had their boiler exchanges and everything, they then went on to fitted kitchens, and that was a nightmare. There was a bit missing here and a bit missing there, people would phone up and they'd say, "This is missing", and I'd have to get onto the manufacturers, it was awful, absolutely awful. And when they said that they were going to put the kitchens on to, there was just one office for that but it was going into the main office where it was going to different sections so they said you can go to the different section or you can be made redundant, so I thought, "Thank God for that", so I got made redundant. But first of all they asked me if I would I go over and teach 'em, I said, "No way, no way am I going to teach people my job", “Well why not?" I said, "Well you're making me redundant". So they just sort of forgot that, and then I got made redundant after 19 years, so that was the end of my career of working.

**So there was a change in what the company were doing?**

**Betty**: That's right; there was a change in what they was doing. You see the central heating was in one office and when that sort of collapsed, not collapsed, but it went to the general office, because it wasn't that British Gas was doing the central heating, it was contractors. Well they could see that they were making money, so the Gas Board took it over and they started putting it in. Then they took in the fitted kitchens, and then after a time that got taken over. So, that was that. Oh, then afterwards, when I got made redundant in the December I thought I don't know, I was 56, no 58, I was 58 and this little job was in the paper one week a month clearing bank, doing the cheques. I thought, that seems handy, one week a month that's not bad 'cos I was going up to my Mum near enough everyday making sure she was OK. Anyway I went up for the interview and I got it, so I started clearing banks for four years, but it was only one week a month, so really that was only one year I did out of four. And I earned £80 a week doing that.

**What's clearing banks?**

**Betty**: That was putting the cheques, the used cheques used to come in bundles, and you used to have to put those through a machine which was photographed. And that was where if anybody had a query with their cheques they could get the photographs and see the cheques going- going through the machine and then I use to bundle them up and then that used to go onto somebody else, and that's all I did.

**And where was that?**

**Betty**: That was at Lloyds and it was at the Elephant and Castle, but it was off the Elephant and Castle, not sure of it was the Butts, or not sure if it went, I don't know what-what name that was to the right, but I worked to the left, but as I say I was there for four years. Then I retired from there when I was 60, and they was a nice crowd.

**Better than the Gas Works?**

**Betty**: Loved it, loved it. Lovely office- all got on well together. I'm still in touch with 3 people from the office, yeah. In fact I had a letter from my Supervisor on Saturday, yeah. We used to phone one another, very rarely, and then and I like letter writing, so I just thought I'd give Alan a ring, a letter, so I wrote a few letters, I said, "It's nice to get a letter than phone calls" and he wrote me back, so every now and again, not often we have a little letter between us. And Maureen, who worked opposite me, I'm still in touch with her about once a fortnight we exchange phone calls, Birthday cards, Christmas cards. Eileen, who was a Under-Supervisor, she was a laugh, she was absolutely wonderful, very good. And she moved down to Rochester and I stay in touch with her, and she's 90.

**And did you get sick pay?**

**Betty**: Oh yeah, yeah, you got sick pay from the Gas Board a little bit of Health and Safety came in there. Because I complained once, in the corridor they opened a bar and in the corridor they put the piana and I went up and complained about it, because I said if that's an exit nothing should be in the way (whispers: "I was being awkward"). So they moved the piana.

**Was there a change in terms of like Health and Safety coming in sick pay that affected the workplace throughout the years?**

**Betty**: I think it was the Gas Board really, 'cos I worked there the longest, let's face it, that I saw a lot of changes. I did, we used to have a medical place there and I went on two courses for health, you know, I forget what you call it now ... medical?

**First Aid?**

**Betty**: First Aid, that's it, couldn't think of it. And when you did your First Aid they asked you would you like to go on the rota, so I said, "Oh yea", not thinking. So when the nurse wasn't in you had a rota and if anybody came to the medical they used to look on the rota to see who was on the rota and then they would ring you to come from your office to come and see to them. And then they called me, 'cos I was on next on the rota and I had to see to a man who had hurt his hand and I had to bandage it. I was bit nervous because I'd never done that sort of thing before, and then another time I got called down and this man had been walking along and he'd gone down a man ..., not a man-hole, it was a round man-hole not very big, but he'd trod on it and part of it'd gone down and he’d hurt his foot. Anyway I got called out 'cos it was my name on the rota, and I went down and said I think you ought'a have somebody see about this because it's not for me to do. And I looked at it he'd cut it, so I called an ambulance and the ambulance came and they took him away, he'd sprained his ankle (laughter). I said take me off the rota, I was so nervous, it was awful. So that was when Health and Safety more or less was coming in, because when the nurse wasn't there you had to have someone on, that's how I noticed that was having someone on the rota.

**Did it have an impact on the workplace when new laws started coming in?**

**Betty**: I don't think so. I think the unions stepped in and pushed it a bit more to make it more better for the workers. I can't think of any at the moment. I think the unions did quite a lot to bring that all in.

**Was you part of a union?**

**Betty**: I joined it, yeah, I joined it. And when I packed up there I paid a, I became a life member, I paid my union due and I'm still getting a booklet from them, and I've got a card, not that it does any good, but I've got it. I believe in the union, not always for their strikes, but they do help people.

**So when everyone had their central heating, which area did you cover?**

**Betty**: I covered Bexleyheath, Kent I covered, but my friend Maureen whom I'm still in touch with, she did all this area Catford and all round Lewisham, and all round there but I did more or less Kent.

**What was the response from the community when you said you were going to get central heating?**

**Betty**: What do you mean?

**When central heating started to come into people’s homes, what was people’s response?**

**Betty**: They would phone up and ask questions about it, and I would say, well look I’ll send round a representative to explain it all to you, and then they would give you a quote and what it'll cost 'cos they knew what sort of boiler they needed and what sort of radiators they needed in each room, and this is how it took on really. And some people they used to phone and they used to say my central heating is lovely; it's really warm, which I can appreciate now 'cos I've got it.

**So, when you were looking for jobs and changed jobs, what was the process like of being able to find another job if your wasn't happy?**

**Betty**: Easy, 'cos there was always something on-going. Not like it is today, there was always jobs going, whether or not you liked them or not you took it on and if you didn't like it you left and you went somewhere else. This is what I did in the first place from when I left school at 14 until 17, then I worked there for 5 years at the pen place, and then at the Gas Board for 19 years, so it was quite easy really. And also it was a lot easier for married women, with children to have little little jobs, you know, little part-time jobs 'cos their mum's used to help them out, my Mum helped me out.

**Just going back to the homework, so once you'd done, you'd painted your faces where would you take that down to?**

**Betty**: I would take that back to where I'd collected them from.

**In *St. James's Road*?**

**Betty**: And they would give me- me half a crown for a dozen. It was hard work, you'd be up all night trying to get them done- it was awful, absolutely awful.

**How long did they give you to do 'em?**

**Betty**: We had to do them overnight, yeah. You had to collect them and then return them the next day. Then you'd pick up another lot and return them the next day. Oh, another little job I did as well was delivering pamphlets and yet now I go off alarming when I get all these pamphlets through my door.

**What did you deliver pamphlets for?**

**Betty**: Well it was in the paper, this man wanted women to deliver pamphlets and yet, so my neighbour and I from when I was at school, she said, "Here, what do you think about this, Bet?", so I said, "Come on then we'll do it". Anyway we met this man he had a car, and he used to give us these pamphlets and he used to say, "I want you to deliver to certain streets". It wouldn't be every day, it was just every now and again he'd get a little job, I suppose it was a little bounce for him really, and then we would deliver it. And then I must admit some of the times we had the flats to do, and I would put some of the pamphlets down the chute. Dear oh Lor', we had some fun. But when I home of a night, because we never wore trousers very much then, and I went I got home of a night my legs they used to be black and the bottom of my slips they used to be really dirty, and I said to Lil, who I sort of delivered with, "What are your legs like when you get home, Lil?", and she said, "Blimey, they were really dirty" so I thought, "Thank God for that, I'm not the only one".

**And what did you- what was the wage like for that?**

**Betty**: Oh a couple of quid, I think, for every sort of bundle we got rid of sort of thing, you know.

**Down the chute?!**

**Betty**: He would say now I've got to deliver these, like a batch and I'll give you a couple of quid for it and that was that. Then a couple of weeks he'd say, "Oh, I've got another lot to do", so it was a couple of pound to help us out really.

**Thank you very much for that, Bet. Thank you.**

**Betty:** Oh, that’s alright.