

Summary – MBL 026

(Recorded as part of AGE UK Barrow Lakeland Laundry reunion. Age UK now occupy the original laundry building on Abbey Rd, Barrow)

Robin Reginald Beck talks about being employed as the last apprentice at Lakeland Laundry (1967-1972). He also talks about the general working of the laundry.

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| | <p>Robin worked as an apprentice at Lakeland Laundry for 5 years. He explains why this was 5 years rather than 4. He was the last apprentice. After his apprenticeship he went to the Ship Yard for 8 months then spent 36 years at sea.</p> |
| 1m 53 | <p>He helped the electrician Frank: mostly dealing with breakdowns. He talks of a 'slight tax dodge' with new machines. The Laundry was only closed for 4 days over the year. If there were any problems a voice would come over the tannoy to ask for the electrician. He talks about Frank his boss and how he approached Frank to avoid extra work. It was hard for companies to get apprentices because of the numbers going to the Ship Yard. The electrical dept was just him and Frank.</p> |
| 5m 11 | <p>What were you doing when not repairing machines? Sometimes electricians may have seemed a little 'idle'! He hadn't wanted to work at the Ship Yard and the employment office had directed him to Lakeland Laundry. He visited to seek work - entering by the front door which was only for management. Frank asked a couple of questions. It seemed good that he came from Millom. That was his interview for the job.</p> |
| 7m 23 | <p>Social side of Lakeland Laundry? The Christmas parties had stopped by the time he was there. He worked 8-5pm each day plus Saturday mornings (only the electricians and fitters came in on Saturday). He went on day release and to evening classes. There were few other choices than the Ship Yard. The Ship yard could offer jobs to every male school leaver in town in 1967. It was a struggle to get people into other jobs in town. He left school with one O level. He did an ONC at Howard Street College.</p> |
| 11m 53 | <p>When he left Lakeland he went to the Ship Yard. There were 120 electricians working on a submarine. He found himself glueing plaques next to electrical fittings and after 8 months he was bored silly, so he left and went to sea.</p> |
| 13m 20 | <p>A major machine in the laundry was the calendar machine which flattened sheets. He talks of music playing over the factory floor. The calendar worked non-stop. One day the machine caught fire. They tried to put it out. The firemen arrived and wanted to hose down the machine, but they were stopped as it would have cracked it. No one had left during the fire as they were on piece work. He talks of women sometimes putting in two sheets at the same time which stopped the machine, so they could go off on tea break whilst it was being repaired. They didn't lose any money because of it as they were paid piece work.</p> |
| 17m 10 | <p>He describes the process of marking items.</p> |
| 18m 30 | <p>The 'scrubbers' used to clean again anything that hadn't been cleaned properly. He thinks that it was only men who worked in the wash department.</p> |
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| | Interviewed and summarised by Emma Aylett |
| | July 2018 |
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