



**Lilian Miles (IWM SR 854)**

*It turned us yellow, all over. We were absolutely... that colour, the colour of my cushions. And our hair, I had black hair it was practically green! Well it wore off – once you'd come out of it, it wore off. Within a couple of weeks it was gone, it wore right off, very quickly. But while you were in it, while you were working in it, you were yellow. And it didn't make no difference, you'd wash and wash but it didn't make no difference; it didn't come off. Because all, your whole body was yellow. You were yellow all over, I mean it, you could have a bath but it didn't wash off. But it wore off, once you were out of it, it sort of got out of the system, I suppose.*

**Caroline Rennles (IWM SR 566)**

*We used to do aerial torpedoes. Well they were about a good 2 feet 6, I should think. And, ooh, they were heavy, heavy! So we used to fill them up with powder, and you know swing up, that's all you could do, swing them up to the front like that, you know, up to the other end of the hut, you see. And then we used to have a doctor come round every fortnight and he used to, like, pull our eyes down and pull our teeth and all that kind of thing. And I remember this doctor, he was looking at us girls one day, you know, and he said, 'Half of you girls will never have babies,' he said. I suppose he thought we were pulling our stomachs to pieces, you know! See, the powder used to go into your stomach. Now a funny thing, I was never poisoned in my stomach with it. But I don't know if they was actually poisoned, but it used to go into their stomach and give them bad pains and that. Because, you see, we were supposed to keep our mouths shut. Well, you know what... well you see we didn't realise the danger, really. When you're young, I mean, you don't realise then. I mean we'd never been in a war, had we? So a lot of them used to have, like, all these stomach pains but I never did, never. And they used to give us milk to drink, you know, I suppose to counteract the poison or whatever it was, in our insides. So we'd say, 'Oh, we don't mind dying for our country!' As I say, we were so young, we didn't realise.*

**Ethel Wilby (IWM SR 9356)**

*Oh, well, a bit dingy and noisy. You couldn't hear yourself speak without shouting: the noise was terrible really, all the machines going all the time. You couldn't make yourself heard! You could only talk when you was off duty, really, but you just got on with it. You had to stand all day long – it was a bit tiring there but, I mean, no different to service. It was wartime and that was that!*

**Lilian Miles (IWM SR 854)**

*Oh there was little accidents. Of course, you always heard of somebody getting hurt, like. I mean, I've seen the ambulance fetch people out lots of times but they've only been slightly hurt, not seriously hurt. When I was soldering one of the bullets, it sort of went back and then, bang, my fingers. That's why these fingers have always been a bit funny! But I was away from work for about six weeks with it. I couldn't use my arm; they put my arm in a sling, I couldn't use it. I had to go to work, because they wouldn't pay me. I had to go to work every day to get my wages because I couldn't stay at home. They wouldn't let me stay at home, they wouldn't pay me. I had to go to work every day although I didn't do anything!*

### **Florence Thompson (IWM SR 722)**

*Well there were two explosions I were there. The first, I can't remember whether it was 42 shell stores or 41. My mother worked in... I'm really sure she worked in 41 and it were 42 that the explosion was in. But I was on 'E' block and then the shell stores that went up was just like across there, like that block is but lower down. We'd just got there for the night shift; you went on 10 'til 6. And we'd only just got there and I were just picking a shell up, like, to put fuse on, when this explosion, you know. There were so many killed. I can only remember one name and they called her Florence Naylor and she lived in Gelderd Road.*

### **Lily Smith (IWM SR 9321)**

*I had no freedom as regards going and enjoying myself. I mean, it was all bed and work. Because when I was on days, it'd be 7 o'clock when I got home. By the time I'd had my tea and that, well, I was ready for bed. It were 6 in the morning 'til 6 at night, same at night: 6 at night 'til 6 the next morning. I mean, I had to be up at 4 o'clock to catch the train at 5. I mean, it was a long day for a girl of 17. They wouldn't do it today – they wouldn't, honestly, no!*

### **Lily Truphet (IWM SR 693)**

*Well we used to have a... when you were day work, you had a quarter of an hour for your coffee morning and then you had an hour for dinner, or sometimes half an hour for dinner. You'd get a 10 minute tea break for the afternoon cup of tea – more often than not, we used to make our own because it was quicker. We used to go to the end of the room where all the hot water... and just make our tea. And we could get it quicker than going up to the canteen and lining up and waiting for it.*

### **Amy May (IWM SR 684)**

*They sent me to this detonator place. There was a cap, like that, and that had to unscrew, come off, and that all comprised of about a dozen different things: little springs, little this, little that, all packed in there, you know in its order. And each part had to come out and be measured with a thing that we had for measuring. And weighing the springs to see if they took the right pressure and all that sort of thing. One would do this, one would do that. As you'd done that box load, so you'd pass that box on: the next girl would do her part to it. And that's how it would go on, right down the table. When it got to the end of the table, it'd come back to the other end being assembled again. You didn't do all the job yourself. That was how it was done.*

### **Elsa Thomas (IWM SR 676)**

*These men, you see, as we went in they knew we were going to start this, you know how it goes round. They didn't want to show us. Mr Bond, Sergeant Major Bond, who was in charge of us, he said to me, he said, 'Any difficulty you have, come to me.' Well I wasn't going to go to him because a man was rude to me; I never went to the major about it. They didn't want to show us their livelihood! You see, they knew it was their livelihood coming, women were coming in, you see, they were going to cut the wages, women! You know. We had all that to put up with. They didn't say anything to me, but you had that feeling you were going to take a man's wage from him: 'Oh there's some blasted women coming in.' You know how you'd feel.*

### **Ethel Dean (IWM SR 9439)**

*When we went in, we had special clothes. They had a big factory floor with a partition down the middle and what they called 'clean' and 'dirty'. When you went in, in the morning, you took your coat and clothes off and put them in the kit bag and that was called 'dirty'. Then you went over that whatsername in the middle, over to the 'clean'. You put their overall on, which had a whatsername on the back, your number and 'WD' on it, and a mob cap. You weren't supposed to wear any hairpins, any hooks and eyes – anything metal you mustn't have on you – and special shoes with 'WD' on and we went into the 'clean'. We wore our ordinary clothes, but you had to wear their overall. We were all covered up, mob caps, and we weren't allowed to have anything in our hair; all loose, you know. Nothing in your shoes to keep them on, no, nothing metal: no hooks and eyes, no nothing metal, no buttons. Even linen buttons with a metal ring, you couldn't wear them.*