**Sudbury Silk Stories Interviews**

Alison Younger - Stephen Walters

File Length: 00:10:45

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

*00:00:13:27 - 00:00:28:21*

I grew up in Sudbury and school was in Great Cornard. It was the old Upper School in Great Cornard and I went to the primary schools in Great Cornard too and the middle school. I grew up in

*00:00:29:20 - 00:00:36:15*

Sudbury and Great Cornard really.

*00:00:36:24 - 00:00:46:11*

I went straight from school and I wanted to earn a living. I wanted to buy a car so I came to work here, at 16.

*00:00:53:15 - 00:00:58:04*

My mum worked here and she done nearly 40 years here.

*00:00:59:05 - 00:01:09:01*

So I have known it right from when I was little. She started working here in 1978 so I was four years old. She actually started work on my birthday.

*00:01:10:18 - 00:01:44:07*

so I can remember lots of trips coming down to visit mum because obviously she done like a night work as well because she was there for us in the day and she was here at night time working so I used to come down with my dad and pick mum up from work because that was the days that she didn't drive. And so I used to come into the factory and I can remember looking through the bars on the factory floor looking at all the weaving looms and and everything about it. The smells, the

*00:01:44:21 - 00:01:57:15*

look of it. Everything about it and how frightening it was as well because it was so loud. I was very interested in it because I've always been very artistic. So it did interest me right from a young age.

*00:01:58:12 - 00:02:02:17*

And I've always said... I can remember saying to my mum I want to work where you work.

*00:02:04:05 - 00:02:22:01*

So yeah it was a bit bizarre that I ended up here. But yeah, I came here to do my work experience from school as well and I was the first person as a school student to come here as work experience. When I was 15.

*00:02:22:27 - 00:02:58:07*

And I worked in the design department it was for two weeks and I worked in design department and in the Rep office learning different things about the trade. And it got me hooked really. I was allowed to design my own little design. I remember being proud as punch with it, it was all new technology, it was the CAD design in the design department so it was on a new technology and I remember going back to school after my work experience being proud as punch with what I'd achieved.

*00:02:58:15 - 00:03:01:21*

So when it did come to leaving school

*00:03:03:12 - 00:03:35:05*

I got all my design portfolio all together and I remember coming here to see his name was Halley Dosser, he was one that company directors and he interviewed me and he knew my mum very well who worked here as well. And he offered me the job here. And I came here as an inspection worker and where I inspected the fabric. And it was actually in this room here because this was a whole department

*00:03:36:22 - 00:03:37:07*

of

*00:03:37:21 - 00:03:52:12*

Fabric inspection. So the factory actually changed quite a lot over the years. So yeah and I'm still here twenty nine years on. So it's an interesting job. So yeah and it's good family firm as well.

*00:03:54:05 - 00:03:58:10*

It has good family values. I can remember when I first started here

*00:04:00:13 - 00:04:19:06*

everybody who worked here was either related to somebody who'd worked here or related to someone who'd been in the silk industry. So it's always been a family firm where, They encouraged people to come to work here as a family unit.

*00:04:19:08 - 00:04:24:04*

So yeah there was lots of like brothers or sisters or moms and daughters and that sort of thing.

*00:04:29:18 - 00:04:34:10*

My mom was a silk weaver. Yeah she's been a silk weave since she was 15.

*00:04:34:21 - 00:05:03:18*

She started off at Vanners when she was 15 and then when she had my sister and myself. She then, after that, came here to work. And like I say she she started here doing winding. And then it progressed that she'd become like a weaver. And she'd done. I would say about thirty seven years near on as a weaver here.

*00:05:10:08 - 00:05:32:08*

Changes I've seen... I've seen new technology come introduced into the firm. New technology as in the way of, I've touched on design, so it is gone from paper design where people would sit at desk and colour in the patents.

*00:05:32:09 - 00:05:45:06*

The patent cards and design cards. And it's been progress on to computers because computers sort of came in sort of early 90s really, late 80s, early 90s.

*00:05:45:13 - 00:06:00:01*

So it became like CAD design. And then also with new technology being introduced on the silk floor and weaving floor. It went from shuttle looms, which I was taught on,

*00:06:00:19 - 00:06:27:01*

And progressing on to like the automatic looms and jacquard looms. What we have today. And they are so much faster, going from the little shuttle looms where you had a shuttle going forwards and backwards and you stopped it as and when you needed to and to push button now and touchscreen so technology has come a long way. It's come a long way.

*00:06:33:14 - 00:06:37:22*

Silk is very special because it comes from ancient China.

*00:06:38:11 - 00:06:47:12*

It's been something on this planet for many many many years and it's a luxury it's it's a luxury item.

*00:06:47:29 - 00:07:05:07*

And it's very bespoke as well and especially with what we do here because our designs are very bespoke. We pride ourselves on that to be honest and it's something to be very proud of because it's not mass produced.

*00:07:05:08 - 00:07:10:03*

It's our own. And we're renowned for it all over the world.

*00:07:11:23 - 00:07:19:28*

The silk industry is very important because it's not as busy as it used to be.

*00:07:20:10 - 00:07:41:19*

And it's become very, How can I put it, very museum really. And because we've got these bigger factories now which mass produce everything. But we are still doing things very traditional. And I think that's really important to keep that in our culture.

*00:07:41:19 - 00:07:57:10*

And so we still learn from that. Where it's based from basically. We tend to forget what we wear is and how it's made. So it's, you know, it's something to be quite proud of to have this industry.

*00:08:03:21 - 00:08:11:23*

It's exciting because it's fashion. And you get to see all the new fashions come in.

*00:08:14:09 - 00:08:49:11*

It's very unique because like I say we're very bespoke in what we do. So you're part of that. And for me to go outside of this firm. And to see it on display and see what I've produced on display I'm very proud of. I had an experience of, I did a piece for Buckingham Palace. And I was told from one of the directors that's where it was going. And I actually went to Buckingham Palace, not through the firm but off my own back.

*00:08:49:11 - 00:08:51:04*

I went to one of the day

*00:08:52:29 - 00:09:01:14*

Things that you can go on to go and see Buckingham Palace. And I actually saw my piece of work on display and I was so proud.

*00:09:01:21 - 00:09:05:18*

I've been to Chatsworth House and seen my work on display.

*00:09:05:19 - 00:09:29:27*

So it's, you know, it's a real proud moment. And also when I've been to like south of France on holiday and I've been in like the Hermes shop and places like that and I've seen designs that we do here on display and yeah you get a real sense of pride of what you do because it's you've made it, you've made it with your hands and it's a skill.

*00:09:35:29 - 00:09:41:17*

You have to be very proud of what you do and enjoy what you do.

*00:09:41:17 - 00:09:53:01*

It's a passion. You've got to have this sense of pride in what you do and understand it. You know and love it and breathe it. It's in you.

*00:09:54:16 - 00:10:02:27*

When I walk in here as soon as I get the smell of it and I see it and I can feel the fabrics, it excites me.

*00:10:03:18 - 00:10:17:21*

And that's in here, is it's not a 9 to 5 job where you're on a conveyor belt or something like that. It is very personal to you and and so yes I believe everybody who works here has got that in a

*00:10:18:07 - 00:10:31:09*

Love of this. This firm that we've created and everything that we create inside it and the fabrics are just out of this world, they're stunning.

*00:10:32:29 - 00:10:39:12*

Yeah. And like I say everybody is very proud of what they do and achieve and it's a real skill.