**Sudbury Silk Stories Interviews**

Colin Bowman - Head Knotter - Vanners

File Length: 00:07:54

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

*00:00:13:24 - 00:00:28:09*

I grew up in Long Melford so I went to Melford Primary School which was now the old school. And then I went to the Middle School at Sudbury which is All Saints which isn't All Saints anymore.

*00:00:28:09 - 00:00:33:09*

And then I went to Sudbury Upper and finished there at 15

*00:00:39:29 - 00:00:49:29*

I saw the job advertised at school and applied. That was the first job I ever applied for and I had a phone call saying I'd got the job.

*00:00:50:03 - 00:00:51:23*

So when could I start?

*00:00:58:02 - 00:00:59:04*

My first day.

*00:00:59:14 - 00:01:12:11*

Well I had a point to be picked up in Melford so me and my friend Rob who's a tackler now. We started the very first, same day.

*00:01:12:12 - 00:01:35:22*

So we both walked down there picked up in the van and it was a white van and had two benches down the side and so we all got in and there was about five old women in there. So we were quite young and sort of having a laugh and that. And we were the last two and the van driver pulled off.

*00:01:35:23 - 00:02:04:21*

It was like a race track, sort of thing, everyone was hanging onto the seats because he was accelerating fast and breaking fast so he was trying to make everyone move up and down. Of course then there was no seat belts so it was just two benches in the back of a van to get us into work and the same going back but we got wise to that and as soon as we got in last time we hung on for dear life really. So that was our first day

*00:02:04:26 - 00:02:05:22*

getting on the van.

*00:02:12:09 - 00:02:17:02*

A Head Knotter is in charge of the knotting and entering department.

*00:02:17:02 - 00:02:48:21*

So, with the knotting, is tying one knot, one warp onto the other warp. So you set it up and there's a machine that goes across and ties all the knots together. And if there's any difficult ones, always the Head Knotter does it. So you get all the hard ones to tie in like you've got the stripes so the stripes have got to be spot on right the way through for every design.

*00:02:48:21 - 00:02:53:02*

So you take responsibility for all that.

*00:02:59:14 - 00:03:08:23*

As I was told when I first come here is the queen of fibers. That's what they said it's the queen of fibers it's natural. It's

*00:03:10:15 - 00:03:13:27*

not manmade it's the best of the best.

*00:03:13:29 - 00:03:14:12*

So

*00:03:20:02 - 00:03:21:18*

lots, lots.

*00:03:21:18 - 00:03:29:14*

Health and Safety. We have it now. We didn't used to when we first started. The machineries totally changed.

*00:03:29:14 - 00:03:33:02*

When I first started it was shuttle looms.

*00:03:33:26 - 00:03:51:03*

So and they will run off of a big generator that we had in the room and everything was run off belts. Now they're all electronic, computerised. It's still noisy but not as noisy as what it used to be.

*00:03:56:21 - 00:04:11:15*

It's a job that you'll have for life I think. I think once you've got into it. I think you would stay with it. Like most people here, They've been here for a long time. So

*00:04:13:04 - 00:04:19:22*

it is a good trade to get into because there was two other factories to work in!

*00:04:20:15 - 00:04:38:01*

You know if you don't like one you can move on to another but everyone seems to like the factory that they in at the time so you know it's not like when I was younger when you could go for a job in the morning not like it leave and get a job in the afternoon.

*00:04:43:19 - 00:05:14:18*

When I first worked here I was the card boy but I was the pattern card boy. And there was an old girl that used to work here called Emie. She was 80 when I first started here and she was still weaving. And apparently they'd tried to get rid of her four times but she just kept on turning up on the Monday morning. She kept on doing her job and everything. And she was a lovely old lady.

*00:05:14:23 - 00:05:25:09*

And she used to give me sweets and everything. And yeah she just used to turn up and she'd say she's started work here when she was 14.

*00:05:25:17 - 00:05:31:05*

And she eventually left here when she was 84. So she had

*00:05:32:27 - 00:05:43:27*

a long period of employment. So. And another one was she used to work next to Beryl Willis see who's still alive today. And

*00:05:46:07 - 00:05:47:16*

I worked with her for so long.

*00:05:47:16 - 00:05:49:19*

I used to call her my factory mom.

*00:05:49:20 - 00:06:01:08*

I not long went to her 80th birthday party and give her a big hug and everything and she still recognised me and everything. Even though she said I put on a bit of weight but it doesn't matter.

*00:06:07:01 - 00:06:12:29*

The Vanners ghost, there is mixture of talk about it.

*00:06:13:06 - 00:06:17:26*

They're supposed to be a man with a hat with headless or something.

*00:06:17:29 - 00:06:29:22*

And that's what someone said. And someone said it was an old woman. So but the far end of the factory they say used to be over

*00:06:31:28 - 00:06:35:21*

A graveyard. So I don't know.

*00:06:35:21 - 00:06:46:15*

And the other other side of it used to be a pub so I don't know anything about the history but that's just I don't know if it's people trying to wind people up or what.

*00:06:46:15 - 00:06:57:15*

So I don't really know personally but I did get that experience with some person coming in saying they'd seen the doors move, close on their own so.

*00:07:03:22 - 00:07:22:03*

It has to move in different steps I think. You've got to change with the fashion. When I first started they had the big kipper ties. The big ones but they've changed to thinner ones. I think we've had to try it.

*00:07:22:04 - 00:07:38:16*

Woven straight ties so you've got a move with the with what's going on. Really. And I think we've gone into fashion and then we've gone into fabrics as well.

*00:07:38:17 - 00:07:49:15*

So I think you just got to move with the times so I don't think it's dying but I think it needs a poke every now and again.