

HL: This is Helen Lloyd recording the memories of Roy Southall at the Assay Office on Tuesday the 3rd February 2015. Roy, tell me about your background.

RS: I was born in Mary Stevens, Stourbridge. My father was a baker and he was made redundant after being given a job in a local bakery in Colley Gate and he needed another job and he went into the license trade and we had a small pub in Netherton. We stayed there for a few years. He then moved into a high street pub in Netherton, opposite Netherton Arts Centre and we were there during the war until I went into the forces in 1951. I attended Dudley Grammar School from the preparation classes, for two years, in about 1943, and stayed there until 1950, on which, at the age of 17, I went to work at the Brades Nash Tyzack in Oldbury, as an invoice clerk. In 1951 I was required to do National Service and I joined the RAF for three years, which was regarded as a potential permanent employment. After the three years I came out and I looked for jobs, found it a bit difficult at first, but I eventually worked for Bluebird Confectionary in Hunnington, which was a family concern, based on the principle of Cadbury's and it provided houses for people. I got married in 1956 and we purchased our own house in 1957. Working at Bluebird was rather large accounts department with about eight or ten people in it and an invoice department with about another eight or nine people in it. I was just an ordinary accounts learning the ropes and basically the way things ... The accountant there was rather a hard taskmaster and I found, a good taskmaster because he learnt me, that I had to be diligent and not accept things on the face value. I not only had to check stock coming in, but also the wrapping paper around the stock, which was rather amusing, and then I ended up doing virtually every job in the accounts office which...

HL: What experience had you had during your three years National Service before you starting working in accounts?

RS: I did my basic training, of course, which everyone was compelled to do. I then went into Personnel Records. I was stationed in RAF Hartlebury, which was only a few miles from home, when I finished my basic training. In those days, people didn't move around as much as they do nowadays and I hadn't a clue where it was, to be quite honest. Then from there I moved to RAF Stoke Heath, again as an NCO and was sent on several trade matters and NCO

matters to a full career in the RAF, unfortunately only lasted three years and I came out of the Forces.

HL: That brings you on to Bluebird and would you say that really provided your training in accounts? [00.05]

RS: Yes, I covered all aspects of accounts there, from checking van driver's expenses, sales representative's expenses, contacting customers who hadn't paid their accounts and uncovering several, shall we say, discrepancies, amongst things. It gave me a good background to that, in the meantime the company had taken over another confectionary company Parkes Classic Confectionary. This didn't work out and Parkes Classic Confectionary decided to go alone. I was offered a position in Parkes Classic Confectionary, which the accountant didn't want me to take, but I did because it's was more opportunity there for me and again, again, I came into a further advancement in different ways of dealing with accounts, a different type of machine accounting, down to a small machine which was called an addo, which was, by putting plastic things in a square to get the analysis of invoices and things like that. That didn't go well, it went well for me, as an experience, but they didn't, we were not financially viable in the end and were taken over by another group of companies. I eventually found a job with a small engineering company in The Lye, which mainly bookkeeping, a thing which I had never done before, and it only lasted a few months, before I moved on to a small period of self-employment with a friend, who again then couldn't afford me and I moved to a laundry environment where I saw the implement of a Singer Freedan computer, which was not one of the run of the mill computers, as indeed was the laundry accounting. Again I moved on within twelve months to a marketing company, which again gave me another aspect of purchasing goods, still doing the accountant's side of it, until I joined the Assay Office in 1976. So then I came for an interview at the Assay Office.

HL: What are your memories of your interview for the job at the Assay Office in 1976?

RS: First of all, I was interviewed by the General Manager, Mr Cartland, and then I saw Mr Maughan, the Chief Executive, who then requested I should see the audit manager at Coopers Lybrand. I didn't know much about the job, but it was for the position of accounts supervisor and I saw Mr Berry who was later to become an accountant at the Assay Office in his retirement years. He didn't know why they needed me, but at any rate, I would find out when I got there, if I was offered the position. I was offered a position and I joined the Assay Office in March 1976, I believe. I found that when I came there was well established procedures and also long-standing members of staff within the area I was covering. I found at first that Mr Berry was right and it was more looking for the minute details before I could amend anything. However since the long-established [00.10] members of staff were very near retirement, this enabled me to make a few changes to the way the staff were distributed with an invoice section and a cashier section.

HL: Before we move on to the changes you made, can you give me a picture of what the long-established staff were like and what the long-established procedures were like in 1976?

RS: They were very good. The staff were very helpful and effectively were able to explain what the Assay Office did and the way that things were done. We had a rather peculiar document, I think it was, Mr Maughan called it his bible, which we had to present to him at the end of every month for his report to the Wardens Committee. This was very well established and the method of producing the invoice meant that the work couldn't leave the office, when it was finished, until there was an invoice, so this was the way the invoices were processed through to an accounting machine. I'm not too sure whether it was a Burroughs or not, I think it was, a Burroughs accounting machine, and were the customers had accounts, the invoices were put to their accounts. Majority of the work, however, the invoices, were cash customers, coming in both by means of the goods received department, which they called the Trap, and through the post. The customers paid for their work, when it was collected, that were cash customers, and the account customers, took their invoice with the goods. The postal customers was a rather a peculiar system as well, the money was sent with the parcel, sometimes it was cash, sometimes it was cheques, so the cashiers department had to record the post customers with a little envelope which they put the cash in or the cheque in until they were given to okay from the invoice department and the invoice was produced. So

when the invoice was produced, then the envelope and the invoice were passed to the dispatch department so they could send it. Obviously when people sent notes in, there was change to go with it, and sometimes there wasn't enough money, which later in the day used to conflict with the aim of the production department for getting the work out, and also with the account customers who hadn't paid their accounts, I had to contact them to ensure we didn't get any, or very few bad debts and I don't think there were many, since they wanted their work back.

HL: Where did most of the customers come from in 1976?

RS: A majority of the customers, I think, came from all round the Midlands and sometimes far, because they were artists as well as jewellers, making precious metal jewellery and things like that and works of art, as they used to call them. We didn't have many outside of Birmingham for account customers, to be quite honest, I don't think at that time.

HL: How many people were working in the accounts department when you arrived in 1976 and what were they doing?

RS: [Pause] ... I would say about [00.15] eleven or twelve, in the two departments, two areas, some of them were part-time, and the younger staff were full-time and the younger staff, majority of them, well three or four of them, were still with me after the eventual strike, that was in 1980... You want names?

HL: Yes.

RS: Well, there was a Peggy Newing, she was the main employee and she was the chief cashier, I would give her a description of that. With the two part-time staff, one dealt with the cash customers and the other one dealt with the accounts, I think, I'm not quite sure, we had them, oh and Peggy also did all the payroll for the senior staff, and the other lady did the

clock cards for the factory and office staff. All the staff, were staff at that time, paid whether they were here or not. As I say, there was a machine operator that carried out all the posting of the accounts to the card account, effectively, and she also did all the payroll for the remainder of the employees. In the other department there was a supervisor who was a part-time member of staff, together with other part-time members of staff, who formed the basis of the production line for the turnaround of the invoices, which could have been up to three hundred invoices a day, so it was really a production function of invoices. The younger members of staff were integral to the speed of the department, to be quite honest, which, invoices had to be checked and the invoice valuation, an invoice was produced for release to the customer and the amounts were entered on to the worknote, which was retained in the accounts area for audit purposes.

HL: Tell me more about Mr Maughan's bible.

RS: Well, Mr Maughan's bible contained all the financial details of the month's work, when I say details, summaries, summarised details of the month's work, and I can't remember if it had the accumulative one or not but, the memory is very vague since it, although I was there four years, I suppose, it is now a very vague memory, it was rather a ginormous book, to be quite honest, it was two foot wide by eighteen inches deep, so there should be one somewhere in the Assay Office, which would prove interesting.

HL: Handwritten?

RS: Handwritten. I didn't do a lot of that, this was the cashier's job, recording, as I say there were weights and everything that had to be recorded, how that was got I can't remember to be quite honest.

HL: You were nearly forty-three when you arrived at the Assay Office in 1976, so you had considerable experience of other work places, how did the Assay Office strike you when you arrived?

RS: Well, as I say, a none-profit making concern, which was rather strange to me because there didn't seem [00.20] the need to push the company any further, which I found rather strange. You know there were still problems with dealing with the amount of work they had and the incentive wasn't there, people were leaving early when there wasn't the work to be done or they had achieved their targets, which again was rather strange to me because I expected to be, if my hours were nine to five, I expected to be there at five, but I was also included in the leaving so we didn't knock a good thing. However, initially I did find it rather strange. There were times, with the time I had off in the afternoons, which I did seek other employment. I think I realised how good a job I'd got when one boss said they didn't want any clock watchers, which I wasn't. It had always been my nature to give one hundred percent no matter how long it took and without any financial reward for it. I'd never been paid for overtime, although when I was working in the confectionary industry we had to go in over holiday times, sometimes in order to get the payroll out in order to pay the employees on a short working week, which I did without any pay. The other experience I had was, the only time I got paid was when I worked supervising the workforce in the evening shift, which was an extra shift effectively and needed during the particularly busy periods, however, it was a complete different change. Mr Maughan and Mr Cartland, were both in the old style of caring employers, without being easy bosses, but they did care if you did have problems as was proved later in the dispute period.

HL: How would they have shown that they cared?

RS: Well if you had a problem, you could go to them and tell them and they had some sympathy. If you had anything you needed to discuss about your job, you could discuss it quite openly with them. If you had a customer who was being a bit stroppy with you, they would back you, which was very good, because when you're chasing money you have to be firm and polite.

HL: What changes did you make after you arrived?

RS: Well, in the cashier department, we had a lady whose function was to make a list of the cash customers and the amounts and write a name by it, and when the cash came in for that, she used to cross the amount out. So she was absent at one point and I thought, "Well there must be a quicker way of doing this," so I decided to use the list provided for crossing the customers out as they paid off their number. Then, just making a list of the ones who hadn't paid, because the parcels should still be in our possession and that was the first change I made. When she returned from sickness she said, "It doesn't balance, I shall hold you responsible," So I said, "That's fair enough" and I think she found it a lot easier afterwards. My object was to make life easier [00.25] for the staff, wherever possible, and more efficient. I can't think of many other changes that I made, until people retired and then I made a few changes then with the way the staff was arranged.

HL: Can you talk about the 1980s strike?

RS: The dispute was a distasteful period, to be quite honest. It meant that union members were outside chanting and being a little bit obnoxious and it left some nasty feeling between those who were none union and those who were union. It lasted for about six weeks, I think, a very unpleasant period, and the effect it had on myself was I didn't know whether I should continue working at the Assay Office. I spoke to Mr Cartland about this privately and he persuaded me, effectively, that I still had a future at the Assay Office. Then followed a period of reconciliation between members of staff and working relationship, because it meant they were short-time working, redundancies and a few people lost their jobs as a result, I believe, and it meant that it was necessary to regain any support from the Jewellery Quarter and the people who were inconvenienced by this strike.

HL: How many of your staff in accounts were union members?

RS: None of my members of staff were union members, so they made their way through the chants and the abuse. There were also redundancies in my department and by this time most of the redundancies were part-time staff. I can't put a figure on it, I think I may have been left

with ... about seven or eight people. But as I say, I think I had to take my share of them obviously, until the trade built up and then I was able to employ, now I'd already employed some of them, I think I'd lost two junior members of staff, my memory is a bit vague around that time. This was the time when, I mentioned that I'd moved people from the invoice department into the cashiers, so yes it was just two new members of staff which I lost, junior members of staff.

HL: What changes took place in your department in the early 1980s?

RS: In my department? Well initially it remained the same, until the appointment, sorry until Mr Beechey, Assay Master became the Chief Executive as well. He then appointed Mr Ralph Rowlett as the accountant, who introduced computerisation. [00.30] The computerisation meant that the accounting system and the workflow throughout the Assay Office had to be catered for, in addition to the records being kept about the sponsors, which forms an important part of the Hallmarking Act at that time, and the records since the year dot, had to be brought in to make up the records. Initially, computerisation was, for the Assay Office, was at an early stage and the project was awarded to the ICL Computers, ICL System 25 and MFT, who produced the software for the bespoke area of the computerisation. At that time, we were all new to computers, although I had had some experience, and the computers were still at its early stage of development as far as the Assay Office was concerned, at any rate, in catering for the needs of the Assay Office. Initially when it was put in, we went to go live, we found various problems, which are related to computers, which they call breakdowns and other little idiosyncrasies which was caused by operatives and lack of understandings as to what we required.

HL: You mentioned you'd got some experience of computing before you arrived at the Assay Office, what was that experience?

RS: It was at Parkes Confectionary and, no beg your pardon, it was the laundry. They were introducing a new computer system which entailed me going on a course where they seemed

more intent on teaching me how to play Hangman on the computer, which, you know, I'd been used to working for a living, not playing, and I wasn't very impressed to quite honest, which, in itself, provided me with insight into what problems computers cause. Theirs was eventually based on a ticker tape type of a computer, which never got my head around, to be quite honest, tied to a system which were tied to a very similar low charges to individual customers using laundry, which was very small amounts.

HL: What part did you play in introducing computers into the Assay Office?

RS: Well I was appointed as the project manager, which meant I had complete liaison with the software people, trying to establish what they were doing with our system was what we wanted, and finding that there is a tendency when people are ordering computers, one tends not to give them the information you really what to give them. In other words, a simple thing, like a standard payroll that we had, which we didn't have a payroll for, which I had been used to and I thought the accountants would want to see it in their audits and things like that, so they produced me a payroll. When the payroll was produced I found that it didn't tie up with the weekly payroll that we did at that time. On investigation, I found they had people on the payroll which had left. [00.35] When I queried it, they said, "Well you didn't tell me you didn't want people on the payroll who had left" which was the simple sort of thing that people do overlook, you presume that people understand that people who have left are not the payroll but they are on the end of year returns, so that was one of the first things I noticed. Then, later on, when we went live, because we just produced statements and things like that, suddenly realised that, whereas before our worknote used to provide the proof of how much the invoice was for, the computer produced it and we had to copy the amount on the computer, which didn't show the working out, so I realised we hadn't got a copy of the invoice. So I changed the printing of the invoices to NCR paper, which meant that we'd get a copy, then we realised all our records were filed in worknote order, so then I had to have an invoice number put on so that we didn't employ our staff doing hours and hours of sorting worknotes into order, invoices into order to comply with the worknotes, and this had to be put on the computer so that we had both records. This saved time and effort and necessity for employing more and more staff to do it. So I still remained employed in the invoice department and three members of staff in the cashiers department for that area. Otherwise,

then we had a problem of how to enter the customers onto the computer records. Initially we entered them as they sent work in and then we had to build up the back part of the database with all the records of all the people who had ever sent work in and we had to then call in an extra member of staff, whose sole purpose was to go through to the various records and we re-employed one of the people who was one of the part-time staff we lost as a redundancy. So she was quite useful and another member of staff, if we needed staff, we could always call on one of the invoice clerks who had retired, not retired but who had left to have family.

HL: What training did you receive on the new computers?

RS: I think we self-trained to be quite honest. It was a question of putting the same information on the computer that was given to us. On the computer we had a price for certain items and they were given codes and the code list was given to the staff who opened the work and we had to work from that, and it was a question of putting the information on the worknote within the computer. At that stage it was, it wasn't what you now call PCs, it was tied to a main server and all the records were on that, with big disks which had be kept for records in case of breakdowns, and there were quite a few, and there were many hours spent discussing, because the errors came up on the computer, we had breakdowns which meant that we had to wait for someone to come in from the software people or ICL.

HL: You've talked about the staff mastering computers, but what about you initially?

RS: Initially [00.40] I was sent down to Windsor, on two or three occasions, to the ICL training centre to learn about the way ICL, the way the computer we were having, and it was very basic in training. And the leaflets they gave us, sorry the documents they gave us to how to use it were very, very minute print and I had to use a spyglass to read the thing and it was far beyond anything I needed to know in my opinion about computers. What we needed was for the computer to do the job it was set out to do and that was my main areas of interest, and ensuring that we got the information we needed out throughout the office in the various stages. Our contact following training with ICL was always to be invited at seminars at the

ICL office, which was on the Hagley Road into Birmingham, and it used to be the Automobile Association Office, as I remember. We went for one seminar there, which was introduction of a, what they were trying to sell in those days was crafts, bar charts and things like that and the person who was demonstrating it happened to be my daughter, who didn't work for ICL but worked for one of the companies who outsourced computer support and things like that. It was strange to be shown what they were selling by my daughter and she continued, she was about twenty, twenty-one at the time, and she spent all her life and is still working in computer outsourcing areas for various companies throughout the world.

HL: How did she view the introduction of computers at the Assay Office?

RS: She found the system was rather antiquated, in comparison with the areas which she was covering and at that particular time still developing into what it is today now, which is far in excess of what it was when I retired.

HL: You've implied that the people who make the computers think very differently from the people who've got to use them, is that right?

RS: Yes, there is some difficulty we had in communicating simple things, like when I said about the copy invoices. The means we had of getting the copy invoice was effectively, on a weekend, once a month, producing copy invoices of the work that had been, invoices that had been produced that month. If you're making three hundred invoices a day, that involved a complete weekends work in just coming in every four or five hours to change the paper on the computer, otherwise the computer would be printing onto a roller rather than into a thing, which meant that I was virtually coming in sometimes two, three, four o'clock in the morning just to change the paper. [00.45] Obviously this wasn't any good for my life. In addition to that, printers are very apt to jam when unattended and it meant that records were incomplete at that time. Hence I had to introduce copy invoices at the time of origination, so that is the problem with people not looking towards the thing. It also meant that because the volume, we had lots of breakdowns in any case, which meant we had to have an alternative to the

computer system which we were able to do because the way the records were kept and we managed to keep the office going until the computer was fixed.

HL: So your old manual skills continued to be relevant, but when do you think the computers became more reliable?

RS: I don't think they have even now, quite frankly. You hear about it every day, somethings gone wrong, generally speaking I always think, I tend to think whose done something wrong, is it the software people, or haven't they allowed for it, as I say, they still go wrong and people still blame computers for everything under the sun.

HL: Can you talk about where the computers and printers were around the Assay Office?

RS: The main computer initially was in the office next to the cashiers and the vault in the cashiers, where they kept the records and close to where the invoice department was. The main computer was where all the information accumulated. The invoice department, each of the operatives in the invoice department had a screen and a keyboard on which they entered information from the computer, from the job note, and they were able to enter the details of the work that was coming in and the, I can't remember, but I think they may have had a printer in there...or did that not arrive, initially that's the way it was.

HL: What about other departments?

RS: I'm a bit hazy about that period to be quite frank, I think it was, we had moved into new offices on the ground floor, that's right, we had moved into new offices on the ground floor and the...

HL: Where there any computers outside your department?

RS: There were computer stations in each department where the work was progressing through. All that was required was to enter a number into a set screen, which told the records that work had passed that point and was down to the next point, so that the progress people who had a computer to see the situation were able to say whether the work was ready or not. The screen, had two bits of information, where the parcel was supposed to be, and the state of the assaying, whether it had failed or was waiting to be passed, or passed. All that was required was numbers to be entered into the computers [00.50] and at each department it related only to that department and information was available to the progress people or their management for that information. In addition to that there was also a screen within the registration department for the sponsors, so a person was able to see where their registration was, or look up a registration, to find a sponsor's mark. Aside from that there was a printer within the computer area, which provided us with the monthly accounts and a daily report of parcels which weren't progressed for each department, so that we could effectively chase up whether the work was where it was supposed to be and if it was not there, or it was on a list which was placed by the computer for people who couldn't enter the numbers because it hasn't been passed from the previous one and this was the way the work was progressed, still probably an archaic situation. But the invoice department had their own printer for printing out invoices, cashiers had their own printer for, no they didn't have a printer in the cashiers, the information they were able to put in for the payment of accounts and the payroll then was generally also entered in there but the printing out of the payroll always was in the computer area.

HL: Can you talk more about staff training?

RS: Staff training was rather generally on the job training. Basically it required them to have knowledge of what they were supposed to be doing and how to do it. In our stations which was entering just the worknote number, the office staff who was gradually seen by myself, that I needed the staff to become more up-to-date for future references within the PC world which was developing at that time. I arranged for them to take courses at a local college, for the small cost of, I think, twenty-five pounds, and allowed them time off to go to a local college, which was based in Halesowen and it proved to be fairly useful to them, since later computer that we had were PC based in any case they needed to have their own thing while

feeding into a main computer. In regard to my own position, I was supposed to teach them all I knew, which was very difficult because I don't know all I knew and I don't know, I mean on one occasion, as I say which again I used to go when I went on holiday I used to ring in to find if everything was okay, if there were any problems, I told them what to do in case I couldn't get in touch, but you don't know what the next problem's going to be with a computer to be quite honest, how can you teach them what you know until you know it. We did go out to MFT, I went out to MFT when the computers were being changed over at times and I took one member of staff with me. And we also travelled up there to see that they were doing, what we wanted them to. [00.55] They got rather amused at me when I getting to be rather ancient and complained they weren't showing me what I wanted to see. I was first of all, the first lady I trained left the year before I due to retired, so then I was left with passing all the knowledge, which was Sandra, onto, and I probably left them in the lurch a little bit by retiring but I felt there's only one way to learn how to deal with the thing, is to learn how to deal with the computer people, tell them what you want, how you want it and let them do the hard work of changing things to the way you want it. Unfortunately it's cost a lot of money.

HL: How did the Assay Masters react to your suggestions that more money should be spent on computers?

RS: Well, initially for the first computer, Mr Rowlett had been appointed and Mr Rowlett's sold the idea of computerisation in the Assay Office to Mr Beechey and he was to responsible to Mr Beechey for the accounts and I was responsible to Mr...Rowlett for the computer and the functioning of the accounts department. Mr Cartland was then, still the general manager and I had less involvement with him because he was more tied to the work being done and Mr Beechey was the overall Executive and the Assay Master, so my contact was very limited with Mr Beechey. When it came to my suggestions to the accountants, they mainly came in after Mr Ward was appointed as the Assay Master. Through my taking up training on PCs at the local college and my staff's training, I was able to produce a document on PowerPoint which the Assay Master didn't want to look at and the idea of consolidated invoices, which if you think the main customers were sending numerous amounts of work in during the day and a week and receiving statements where were books in themselves, with probably three months accounts on, and in addition to that a lot of repetitive amounts appearing on the

statement meant that sometimes it would take two or three hours to pay off an account. I introduced the idea that if I could get the software people to produce one invoice a day for the customer this would be less amount of invoices on a statement and it ended up with me being able to produce one whenever I wished, which meant I could get many as twenty or thirty parcels on one invoice. So instead of having a twenty or thirty page statement, they had a two page [01.00] statement which proved to be success. To sell this to the Assay Master which provided him with other things he was able to do, which I can't mention and also I had to liaise with customers, get their approval, however once I'd got their approval and the Assay Masters approval, I then came across an objection from the progress department, because they thought I was about to deprive them of a document which allowed them to release. I pointed out to them they would still get the document in the form of a dispatch note which was printed instead of an invoice. So I think that was actually quite expensive, but it proved to be quite a success with the Assay Master and the customers and it saved hours of work in the cashiers department.

HL: What impact did the different accountants and Assay Masters have on your life?

RS: Starting off with the Assay Masters, Mr Beechey was an old type of boss and he just let people get on with their work unless there was something wrong. Obviously when we were having problems with the initial computerisation, I suppose he tut-tutted a little bit but I didn't have much to do with him because he had an accountant who he could vent his feelings about me on. But with Mr Ward I found him to be dynamic, he wanted to move the Assay Office forward, both on the computerisation and he wanted to be the best Assay office in the UK and he was determined to bring more customers to the Assay Office who we didn't attract before. This resulted in ... better ... an improvement in the ability of the Assay Office staff to earn, by overtime and the demands upon the Assay Office. Over time, at some periods of the year still uneventful but in general, but in the busy times it meant that people were able to earn a lot more and consequently improve their pension rights, which was another thing which was improved by the Assay Masters throughout, and I might add, Mr Beechey was also for improving the pension scheme. Although he did tell me that when we changed to the, then new Assay Pension scheme, we shouldn't have to do any more work, and we wouldn't have to produce the payroll for the Assay people, we found, in fact, we did. But nevertheless

that was just a small part of it and with Mr Ward also the inclusion of the government's idea of profit related pay or things like that. Since we went to profit related pay, it was related to performance related pay, would be a better word and we were able to get very nice annual bonuses which were related to your previous year's income, [01.05] which were very nice. So I think in all, it also enabled us to build up our own pension benefits, which was good and that is why I'm able to still be alive. Mr Ward was also good at motivating his workforce and without ... and understanding of his workforce. He was very good if you had personal problems, like for once my daughter rang me up and had been involved in an accident on the Hagley Road and he came in, he'd taken the call during the lunch hour and he told me that she'd had the accident and it was alright for me to go up and sort out with her and things like that. I think it was the same whenever anyone who had a problem, he would be willing to listen and dealt with in what nowadays is probably the old-fashioned way, which I feel may have disappeared, and in that way built up a lot of loyalty within his staff, at the same time without losing his position of strength as a manager. Regarding my relationship with accountants, I'd been used to dealing with accountants as boss since I came out of the Forces and were able to manage myself in a way I could deal with any problems that may occur and in fact, Mr Ward used to have a bit of a competition with me. One of my functions was, I had a member of staff who came in early to produce a daily report of the previous day and I used to come in, in addition to her and he used to try and beat me into work. But he came on morning and the lights were on, on the ground floor, he said, "Blimey, I can't get in before you, no matter how I try" but we had a fairly good relationship. Although it was rocky to start off with, I must admit, because when he was first brought into the office, he was saying what he intended to do and I passed some comment because at the time there were jewellers vanishing to Spain, I said, "I hope they've got their passports ready then", it was my Black Country sense of humour, I'm afraid, which I hope I never lose. Some of the jewellers in the trade tending to take the easy way out of their debts and vanish into Spain, when it got a little bit too close to comfort in this area.

HL: It's now getting on for seventeen years since you retired, looking back how do you feel about your time at the Assay Office?

RS: Well, I feel it was very challenging and for the staff that I had around me, they gave me their support and I'd like to thank everyone at the Assay Office for the opportunity they gave me and for allowing me to earn my pension and the rewards of seventeen years almost, of retirement in somewhat comfortable, not as comfortable as it could have been, but the opportunity was there. I'm also grateful to my first employer who after the ... National Service requirements [01.10] who convinced me to go into their pension scheme, for which I get about thirty-one pound a month, which I look forward to receiving every year. Unfortunately I couldn't transfer this to the Assay Office pension scheme because it was pre-many other government arrangements which allowed it. But it did teach me the benefit of saving in a pension scheme and the opportunity given me by the Assay Office to earn money on my working overtime, allowed me to provide my family with a good living and at the same time provide me with a pension I saved in addition to the Assay Office pension.

[End of interview 01.11]