

Transcript of Marion Rawling's Brief Time in Pharmaceutical Industry

Former President Marion Rawlings outlines her career in Pharmaceutical Industry working on Penicillin

Interviewer: Mr John Hunt

MR: When I got my degree, I went off to Monsanto Chemicals to work as an analyst.

JH: When did you go to Glaxo then?

MR: I looked around for another job and the job that I found was with Glaxo in Greenford and I went to Glaxo in Greenford and that's where I met my husband and I was there for three years.

JH: And what were you doing with Glaxo then?

MR: I was working on penicillin.

JH: In building 16?

MR: Yes, erm with Mr Lerrygow and Dr Adamson and during the course of that...but they had a research job going up at Ulverston, they had a small factory up there and I was sent up to Ulverston for a couple of months.

JH: That would be when it first opened then?

MR: Yes, and erm...

JH: They didn't buy that site until about '46.

MR: Yes, that's right, it would be. It must've been I suppose about 1948/49.

JH: So, in the laboratory in Ulverston then, you were doing analytical control work – that sort of thing – quality assurance?

MR: Yes, yes on penicillin products

JH: Interesting, because that was pioneering days, it was...

MR: Oh yes, yes very much so. The crystalline penicillin was quite a novelty at that time...

JH: Working on [deep fermentation?] process?

MR: ...that's right, they had a sort of a yellow gunge I can only describe it, which contained the penicillin antibody and this whole thing was injected into the patient which left a great big lump and the introduction of crystalline penicillin was a big step forward and it was actually working on that crystalline penicillin that made me go to Ulverston and carry out this little job.

JH: Because there'd been freeze drying the product...

MR: That's right

JH: ...beforehand, hadn't they – the yellow penicillin?

MR: That's it.

JH: So, you saw the first crystalline penicillin coming in with quite modest doses initially – 100,000 units

MR: Oh, that's right. I also, before I left Glaxo, went down to Stratford and worked down there on a liver product and it was quite an introduction to another sort of scientific life that was because as you went in through the door there was the man chopping up the livers and at the other end was coming out this preparation which could not be assayed but the main thing about that place was that it was in the courtyard of a factory that produced fish manure and when the fish in - Billingsgate rather – had begun to decay it was then shipped down to this place and tipped out into the courtyard and it was almost solid the smell. I mean now health and safety would [indecipherable – 0:02:37.3] it away you know, but that was one of things that I did when I was at Glaxo.

JH: And that was about the time they were beginning to work up from liver to vitamin B12, isn't it?

MR: That's right, that's right.

JH: And the [actimen?][0:02:47.3] I think I was told afterwards had a, possibly, a questionable five micrograms of B12

MR: Well, who would know I mean it wasn't assayable so I mean, you know, we just never knew.

JH: So, you saw an interesting bit of pharmaceutical development there didn't you, at that period?

MR: Oh, I did, yes, I did. Across a road when we were down at Stratford was not only the fish manure factory but was Yardley and Yardley products in preparation do not smell like they do of the culmination of the process.

JH: Yes, I think at that Stratford site they had been making penicillin by surface culture, hadn't they?

MR: Yes, yes

JH: And then it was all moved up to Barnard Castle originally.

MR: Yes, that's right, yes, I never got to Barnard Castle

JH: So then after that glimpse into the pharmaceutical industry you went back to do the apprenticeship at the Royal Gwent?

MR: Yes. I registered in 1952