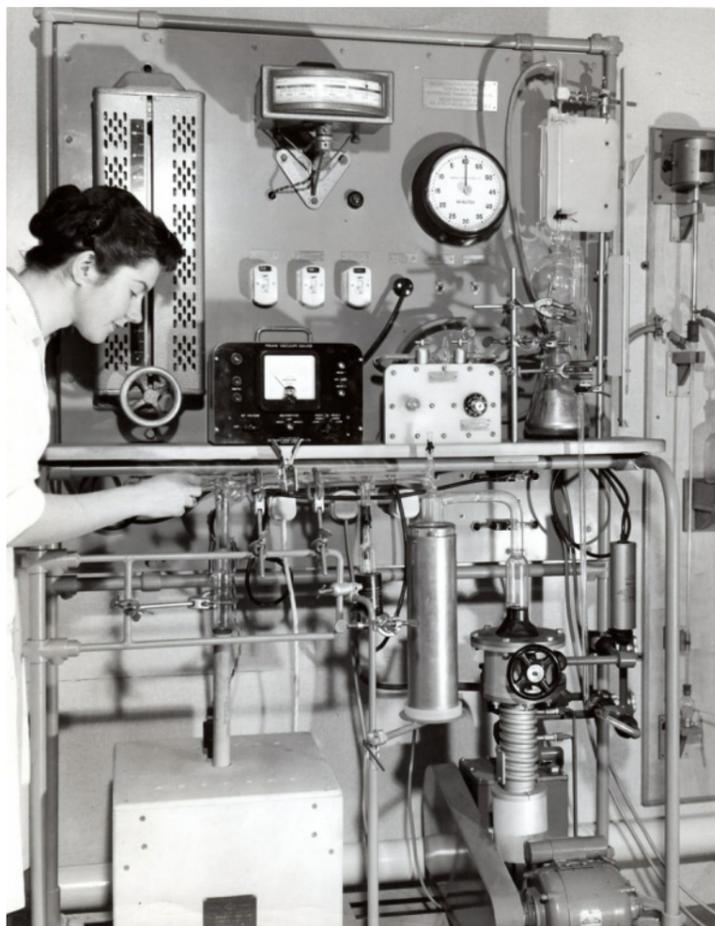


# My First Day at High Duty Alloys in 1952



**HDA Chemical Lab  
1950s-60s  
José Webb (later  
Smith)**

**Analysis of Hydrogen  
in Titanium Alloys**

**John Robinson  
determining  
Hydrogen level in a  
sample of Aluminium  
Alloy**



Through a relative I had secured an interview at High Duty Alloys, Forgings Division, Windsor Rd, Redditch. Because I liked Chemistry I decided I should like to work in the Chemical Laboratory.

The fateful day came Monday August 11th. 1952. Together with a veritable throng of school leavers I reported to the Personnel office in good time for a 8:30 a.m. start. From there four of us were taken to the Laboratory Block. One Joy Allen was taken to 'Test House', the mechanical testing department. While Ann Preece, Mary Watson and myself were shown into the Chief Chemist office. After an introduction to what actually happened in the Chemical Lab. then tea and a sandwich, the assistant Chief Chemist, John Robinson, led us into the Chemical Laboratories.

I had never seen anything like it. It seemed enormous. This was analysis on an industrial scale. Bunsen burners were rarely used to boil, evaporate or simmer there were 8 large forged slabs of aluminium about one and half inches thick. These sat two to a fan drawn fume cupboard with glass fronts to pull down. Four teak benches in two pairs complete with a sink at the end shared a paired fume board. the benches came with piped gas and compressed air. Shelves separated the facing benches while cupboards were underneath. As apart of the lab. was a balance room containing six or seven Oertling analytical balances. Another room was given to two Hilger 'Spekker' absorpstiometers.

We were introduced to the other 12 members of the team and given a spare white coat each. being all of 5 foot three or less I was given a ladies size. This was the first and only time I have worn ladies clothes.

John Robinson then demonstrated the analysis of an Aluminium Alloy with regard for Titanium. It was like magic, especially at the end when he added a colourless liquid to another colourless liquid and they turned yellow. Measurement of the depth of colour allowed the percentage of Titanium present to be determined.

I remained in that Chem. Lab for some 22 years before moving into the 'Spectro Lab.'. All the while working for that same John Robinson. He became a true friend even if we did argue like cat and dog over work matters.

**Don Vincent**

# My First Day at High Duty Alloys in 1952



**General view of HDA chemical laboratory**



**Ann Preece determining Zinc content in a sample of an Aluminium alloy**



**HDA Spectrographic Lab 1950s/60s Brenda Laughler Hilger and the Watts plate viewer.**

**John Cann Hilger and Watts Medium Quartz Spectrograph**



**Ifra Johnson (later Hartles) Using the Hilger and Watts 'Spekker' for the analysis of Silicon in Aluminium Alloys**

**Les Filer at the Titration Bench Analysing Metal Processing Solutions**



Images of the HDA Chemical Laboratories in the 1950s-60s from the RLHS archive  
RLHS-DAR-151 courtesy of Don Vincent