# Margaret Lloyd, 77, Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogogoch, Wales

1940's

FOOD – As a child I was not aware of food waste because there wasn't any!

After the 2nd World War there was " Rationing" of food and every family had coupons in a Ration Book which you needed to buy Sugar, Milk, Butter and fats, bacon and meat, eggs and later bread and sweets. Food was scarce and if there was any waste it was fed to chickens and pigs. When you're only allowed one egg per week then you don't waste it.

CLOTHING – There was rationing of clothing too. We had new clothes maybe once a year and many items were "hand – me -downs". I can remember a school dress with a double hem which was let down every year as I grew. The trouble was I didn't like the lines at the bottom of the dress. That dress was then handed down to my younger sisters and eventually cut up to be used as dusters for cleaning the house.

HOUSEHOLD - Paper was reused as I remember. When I went to visit my aunt my job was to cut up pages of newspapers into even-sized squares. These squares were then put on a metal hook in the outside toilet to be used as toilet paper! If a bed sheet was getting worn in the middle, then you cut up through the middle and joined the two sides to create a stronger middle for you to lie on. We didn't realise that this was recycling. It was just how we lived after the war.We were taught not to waste because of shortages.

1960 's

FOOD – Supermarkets ! Surprise Peas ! No rationing! If you were really posh you bought vegetables and fruit wrapped in plastic. This felt very modern and clean.

" Surprise peas " were bought in a plastic pouch. Then you poured hot water on the dried-up peas and the surprise was they then looked like proper peas. You ate the peas and threw away the plastic pouch into the bin. If you didn't like the peas you threw them away as well into the same bin. You could probably have baked beans instead and throw away the tin into the same bin as the unwanted peas and the plastic pouch. All this then went into landfill. Not many people had fridges so there was a lot of waste. But there was plenty of food anyway so it didn't seem to matter.

CLOTHING – Mini-skirts! Man made fibres like crimplene and nylon which were easy to wash but not very nice to wear next to your skin. Many were badly made and after a few washes would come apart at the seams and just get thrown away- into the bin. You couldn't mend them or pass them down to your sister. At this time I made many of my own clothes because I could buy better material and they lasted much longer. But my clothes weren't always trendy!

HOUSEHOLD – Plastic, plastic and more plastic! Everything came wrapped in plastic and supermarkets sold everything. Plastic bags were very useful and new and I used to wash them and dry them to re-use ( because they were so precious) . We stopped darning socks or "sides to middle" sheets. Man-made fibres made washing easier and no ironing but not very comfortable.

This decade was a time of plenty with no thought of recycling,repairing and very much a "throw away " culture. Bins were overflowing with plastic and everyone felt modern and content

2020's

FOOD – What on earth ....? 20 years ago there was no recycling system to deal with food waste or even concern about landfill. Apples and pears came in shiny hard plastic containers. Supermarkets sold convenience foods , high in sugar and fat and encased in many layers of plastic wrap. You only cooked from scratch if you couldn't afford ready meals.

But NOW we are beginning to realise - mainly through the efforts of young people and ,of course, programmes like "Blue PLanet" that we are causing untold damage to our environment and being very wasteful.

Food-wise , in this house, we are growing much more in the garden and it feels very much like the 1940's. We shop locally as much as possible and there is an excellent food waste Sservice provided by the local council. We are doing what we can to make up for our mistakes over the past 60 years .

Because of the Covid restrictions we have had to rely on supermarket deliveries to a certain extent. It is so infuriating to see fruit and vegetables only available in plastic wrapping. 60 years ago we thought this was posh.

CLOTHING – By now we are much more aware of the materials that clothes are made of and of the effect on landfill and oceans of man-made fibres and processes. I always look at the label now.
Covid has reawakened the joys of knitting and sewing in some people and it is surprising how lockdown has made us realise how few clothes we actually need. The fewer we have, the less we throw away.
I found some old wool and knitted my grandson a beany hat and he actually wore it! When he's finished with it he could either pass it on to his brother or use it in the bottom of a plant pot to retain moisture.

HOUSEHOLD – Too much stuff! isn't it suprising how often some people have a new kitchen or bathroom when there's nothing wrong with the old one? How many mobile phones, chargers, scart leads, headphones are in any one household ? I wish there was an easy way to recycle them.

To sum up :

When I was 7 there was hardly any waste because there was a shortage of everything after the war. There was a natural system of recycling and repair although we didn't realise it at the time.

When I was 17 there was plenty of everything and mountains of waste but no recycling system or any thought of global warming, environmental pollution or climate change.

Now that I'm 77 and I'm trying to make up for my ( and society's) mistakes.

My hope is that the young people of today can learn from this and ACT NOW.

# Jo Cowan, 61, North Ballachulish, Scotland

## Litter

I'm 62 this year and, because I was born in 1959, I have lived in 8 different decades – 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s, 10s and now 20s. So much has changed over that time. How have my views on waste, recycling and litter changed?

I grew up on a hill farm in the Highlands, so I think I was always aware that litter is a problem in the countryside. Plastic bags, tins, glass can all harm, or even kill, animals as well as spoiling the beauty of the landscape. I just don't understand why anyone is so lazy that they can't take their litter home or wait until they find a bin. I don't like seeing litter in towns as well: it's not only messy, but also depressing to see how little people care about their surroundings and about the cost and effort of clearing litter up.

Even in our very scenic area, which is quite a distance from a town, there are lots of carry-out cups, food trays and bags and drink tins along the grass verges and along our beaches and shores. Why do people think that it's okay just to chuck these out of their car windows?I also don't understand why people would go to all the trouble of putting dog poo in a bag and then just leave it somewhere random. What's the point of that? People here often blame litter on visitors or tourists – but it happens all year round so they are kidding themselves if they think that it's not a local problem too!

I love seeing people picking up litter, as it shows that they care about where they live. They don't take the attitude that someone else should do it as it wasn't them who dropped it. They just get on with making our village a better place to live.

Plastic packaging is the worst waste because of the amount of time it takes to degrade. Making plastic recyclable doesn't solve the problem of plastic waste because plastic litter stays on the ground or in oceans for a long time. It takes time to get used to new ways of doing things. I've started using shampoo bars instead of shampoo in a plastic bottle – and I carry a metal re-fillable water bottle that I got free from Scottish Water.

But plastic itself shouldn't be demonised. Some of us are still using plastic picnic cups that are 40 or 50 years old!

## Waste

My grandmother was a great cook and baker, and she never threw any food away unless she absolutely couldn't help it. When things were a bit stale, they got toasted. If milk was going a bit off, it was used to bake scones, or she made "curds" with it. Left-over vegetables ended up in a soup that was always bubbling away at the edge of her stove. I can thank Granny for the fact that I can still make a great meal out of the leftovers in the fridge. The food that I'm worst about using up in time is fruit and salad. Some of that ends up in the compost heap.

My mum grew up during the Second World War when food was rationed – as was petrol. Sweets were a real treat and something you couldn't have every day. Because we lived in the countryside that was true for us too. We could only get sweets as a treat when the travelling shop came around.

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When I was young, we weren't allowed to leave food on our plate or ask for something and not finish it. Wasting food was just not allowed. Looking back, I do wish that I had been given more choice about what was put on my plate in the first place though!

Phones have changed such a lot throughout my lifetime. When I was young, many households couldn't afford a phone and they had to rely on using a neighbour's phone or a call box. Our parents saw the phone as something for business or emergencies and limited the amount of time we could use it for chatting with friends. We were possibly the first generation who used the phone to casually phone a friend. If we have been talking on the phone for a long time, my Mum still thinks that this is "wasting money" – whereas I take it for granted that I can use the phone whenever I want as I have already paid for the calls. I wonder if this is wrong of me. Also, I have a mobile and a landline phone – Do I really need both?

I come from a big family of cousins, so we got lots of hand-me-down clothes when we were young. If it was something I liked, I was delighted with this, if not, I hated it and wanted something new. Mum knitted most of our jumpers. We rarely got a shop-bought jersey. Our school blazers had often belonged to at least two people before us – not necessarily the same shape or size! What was a bit annoying and embarrassing became more exciting when my big cousins could afford really nice jeans and passed them down to me once they were fading.

As I got older, I started to see how much waste is due to changes in fashion and clothes. I started to buy things that I really liked, good quality clothes that aren't "fashion fads". I'm still wearing many of them decades later. I wear a lovely shirt which I got for my 19th birthday – 42 years ago. It still looks great. My Harris Tweed coat is 30 years old – but people still stop me and ask me where I got such a fabulous coat. I don't worry now whether other people notice or like what I'm wearing – as long as I like it myself. I think I worried about these things much more when I was young.

A few years back I decided that I didn't need to buy any new clothes – so I stopped buying clothes for two years. I did it because I realised that, although I sometimes wanted new clothes, I didn't really need them. I think friends felt sorry for me because they kept giving me clothes they no longer wear!

## Recycling

This has been the biggest change in my lifetime – people becoming aware that we have to re-use and recycle all kinds of things rather than just putting them in the bin to go to landfill. I feel that I should re-use things as well as recycling. For example, my parents' generation used to wash and re-use freezer bags and plastic containers much more than people do now. In a way, being able to recycle some plastic has made me lazier about this. Perhaps I should re-use things more.

I feel happy when I hear about ways of not throwing things away. An example is that I recently learned of a bird rescue centre which uses old mascara brushes to clean rescued birds.

There are things I do which I know aren't good for the planet. I still like a printed book rather than an electronic book. I drive a diesel car. I sometimes treat myself to vegetables that have been flown into Scotland from far away. I eat quite a bit of red meat. I know these are things that need to change – and, over time, I will try to do a bit more because it's important for the generations coming after me.

# Rhona Lawson, 71, Kinlochleven, Scotland

We never recycled when I was young.  We didn't recycle because everything we bought was fresh. We went to the butchers and it wasn't pre-packed, we bought a pound of mince loose. We bought butter loose. So we didn't have problems. We didn't have recycling bins because we didn't really need them. We also didn't have plastic bags to carry things home because we took our own shopping bag, which we also do now, which is great!  We had a shopping basket that we took to the shops, we never went to the shops empty handed; we wouldn't have dreamt of asking for a plastic bag to carry our shopping. All our bottles were also reused. Like milk bottles, you got a fresh bottle of milk in the morning and you'd put the empties outside your door at night. There was no waste from bottles.

We would always repair things; I can remember my mother's washing machine being repaired and repaired and repaired. And you just you didn't automatically bin your appliances and go and buy a new one. You just didn't think of that. A cooker lasted years and years and years because we got it repaired. I think there were many more repair people then because people didn't buy new things often.

All my clothes were handed down. I was a second child and I never got new clothes ever. In secondary school we learned to sew on a button. We learn to make tweed skirts. We made hats as well!  But they don't do that in schools now.

I find the "throwaway age" horrendous.  Think it's awful that people, people will say, "oh, the fridge is broken, we need a new one." The first thought is not "can I repair it?" Nowadays, we don't have many butchers so many people need to go to the supermarket and buy pre-packed food in plastic wrapping. Thankfully, people are becoming more aware of this!  Some supermarkets are not wrapping things as they did before. So that's great. And but there needs to be more of that.

To reduce waste, we have to buy carefully. We have to go into the shop and think, "that's got wrapping around the box. We won't buy that we'll take the item with no wrapping." We have to think carefully and educate children to think carefully and not just grab the first thing they see.

In terms of clothing waste, I tried to encourage my daughters to share clothing and to do it with their children, but they're of that age that they want new things for them. You know, they see it as unfair that a second child should wear the first child's clothing and not get new things. Whereas it was just accepted when I was growing up.

I know times have had to change. But I do think it was a much simpler life we had. It was simpler, less complicated and less damaging to the environment.

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# Kookie Manchanda, 78, Bangalore, India

A lot more garbage has certainly been generated since I was a young girl. We didn't have a lot of food or material things from outside India, so we always had freshly prepared food which had very little wastage. Material things were only purchased when required or for birthdays. This all stopped as it became easier to pick up anything we wanted at the drop of a hat at shops.

In India, there used to be women who would pick up the rubbish everyday and they disposed of it in huge dumpster like bins which helped keep the roads clean.

There was a lot of food waste during mango season! Mangoes are our most popular fruit and eaten by almost everyone. However, nowadays, in India we have many cows resting on the road and sometimes people give the cows fruit and vegetable peels which they like to eat - so it helps reduce waste and feed cows. We didn't do that when I was younger because we didn't have cows on the road like now - they were all in their ghoshshalas, which means cow resting place.

I personally think these days we are using too much plastic packaging and I would love to see everyone try and reduce our plastic waste.

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