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At the beginning of the Second World War I was just an ordinary house wife, with a six month old baby, a baby girl. My husband was a reservist, and he was called up before the war started, about two months before the war started, in September. So I was just an ordinary every day house wife, with a six month old baby.

Q- Had you ever worked?

- Oh yes. I worked right up until I was expecting the baby. I'd always worked in the rag trade. They call it the rag trade now; we didn'tcall it the rag trade then, but they now call it the rag trade. I worked in all departments of the rag trade. That was in the West End. At the time when the war broke out I was living in Highgate In NI9.

How I came to work for the post office was the fact that, owing to unfortunate circumstances, I'd lost my baby, and I had no children, because she was my only child, and it came that I had to do a job. I would have been sent away from home; I'd have either gone in the army or into muntions. Well, my husband was a serving soldier, and he definitely didn't wanr me to go in the army, and I naturally didn't want to leave home and go into munitions. I was living with my sister, and her husband was also reserved, so we decided to pool things and share a flat while both our husbands were abroad. They both went out with the British expeditionarty force to France. So, how I came to work in the post office was the fact that that was war work. I went to a labour exchange. You see, I lost my baby in 1940, January 1940, and I went and got myself a job doing army uniforms; that was more hand work, sewing on buttons and doing bits and pieces like that, but I found it very heavy. Then my husband came back from Dunkirk, and he was stationed for the time down in Lincolnshire on a big fruit farm which adjoined Reasby Abbey, and of course, he wanted me to go down there, which I did do, because he'd just come back from Dunkirk. So I stayed there for quite a while, with him, and then I came back to London to work, to get a job. I went to the labour exchange, and they told me I'd have to do war work, so I putin for the post office.

It was my choice.

The nearest post office to me was called the North Western District post office, and it was quite a big one. They did every thing there; there were mail vans and a great big post office. You went to school in the post office, to learn where all the parts of London were. You had to know each district of London, you see, because not only were you a post woman, but you did a terrific amount of sorting as well for you r different walks. If you picked up a pile of letters, you had to know where South East was, if it hadn't got it on it, and you had, to know where more or less everywhere in the country was. I did sorting as well; I didn't only do post office. Originally I was a post woman, but when I did night work I was sorting all thetime. You had all pigeon holes, you see, and they were all marked, and when you picked a letter up, you had to know which pigeon hole in went in. So when you first went to the post office you went ot school, in the post office. You had these cards, and you knew where they were going, but when they came to test you, you couldn't tell where they were; they were just written down, and they were sort of blank, and you had to put them in the approximate pigeon holes, for where they had to go. After a while you were tested, and then you went down on the floor, on the big main floor. As all the letters came in, they were put onto this great big sort of platform, with a big conveyer belt, and all the letters were put on there to be franked. As it moved, you took the letters and put them on to the conveyer belt. The post men who used to take the little vans out collecting all the mail, they brought it in, and it was tipped out onto this great big table with a conveyer belt, and at the end was a machine where a man would stand franking them. So as they came in you would put them in pils onto this conveyer belt. Then peolple would take them away and sort them into the pigeon holes where they were needed.

Being a post woman, you only had to deal with the North district post office, where I worked. That had numbers I to II, which were all the local ones. That came under NW I, and it was for I to II. II was Goðders Green, which was the highest it went, at the time. What it's like now I don't know. We had what were called

our walks, so we used to have to go and get our letters, and just sort them out into the different streets we were going to deliver them in.

There were such a lot of deliveries in those days. We'd leave the office just after 7 o'clock in the morning, very often. You'd start you rsorting at 6 o'clock. The hours were from 6 to 2, and 2 to IO, unless you went on night work. Of course, you were sorting every thing then, sorting all over England and places like that. You didn't have to do night work, you weren't forced to do night work, because when you went on night work you were just sorting. You weren't delivering at night, naturally, but it made a change, to do night work. I don't know why I went on it; I think it was because you worked four nights, you did half past 5 to half past 7 in the moring, and then of course you had a bit of spare time. But when I first went there you didn't do that, you just had to be a post woman. Your job didn't entail just taking the post out, you had quite a lot to do, running around a lot, going and collecting you rletters and bringing them back to sort them intot eh different streets. As you came out of the post office, your walk might have been a bus ride away, because it stretched quite a way, the actual north west district. We did the NW I areas. 2 to II was sent on, not by us; we only did our own walk, which was NW I, which was a very big district. It went from where we worked nearly down to Edgeware Road, right down Marylebone Road, all round Regents Park. It was quite a big district, actually.

Q- Who trained you ?

- Oh, post men who were allotted that job, just ordinary post men.

Q- So were you taking over men's jobs?

- Oh definiftely. Definitely taking over men's jobs. The post men who weren't called up, who were over age, as a lot of them were because naturally the older people wereleft, the walks were dealt out by seniority, so sme walks had much more to cart around than others. Some were quite small, especially when people evacuated from all around Regents Park and places like that, those great big houses. Our office was a walking distance from Euston Station and St Pancras Station, and also Kings Cross Station. That's

where they always used to bomb. On some of the walks, there wern't lifts, and you had to climb stairs up. When we post women started, naturally they all belonged to a union, and they didn't want women in there first of all, xx oh no, definitely not. They didn't want us in the post office in the first place. We had to join the union and there were some women workin g there who'd been post women in the First World War. Of course, they were married, nd some had grandchildren. They hadn't been doingit in between, they came back to do ityou see, as a job. There was money to be earned, you see. I can't remember what the actual wages were, but they weren't very much. I remember working hours and hours, 7 days over Xmas, when I was night work, I can't remember how many hours, but it must have been over 80, and I think I got about II pounds, and I thought that was absolutely marvellous. Drawing £II- what a lot of money. It was absolutely amazing.

Q- Was that what a man would earn?

- Oh no no, definitely not.

Q- What was the difference?

- They wouldn't tellyou, naturally. You weren't on the same walk all the time. You didn't know what walk you were going to be on from day to day, really, more or less. It was all laid out on this big sort of from. Some people preferred 6 to 2, and some preferred 2 to IO.

Q- So it all written up on a big list?

- Yes, that was in the main office. There was xxx a man who was in charge of allotting all the walks out. They were called walks. This big thing would go up, and you'd go and look at it, and you'd say Oh, I8m on so-and-so (groans); it'd probably be one where there were loads and loads of council flats, which no lifts whatsoever, and very often no lights or anything like that. Perhaps you'd go out with registered letters, and you could never get an answer, or little kids would come to the door. You'd say, "Is mummy in?" "Oh no, mummy's not in. Can I sign?" And of course, you weren't allowed to let children sign, so you'd have to bging it back; then you'd have to take it out again. One of the walks I was on was Euston Road, and of course that was all big firms, so you'd out with you r bag, a big one strapped across your shoulders, and you'd go out with this great big bag with piles and piles of letters, and you'd walk round to the beginning of Euaton Road; there were all

big firms, big buildings there, and they very hard, although they very quick, because you got rid of your bundles. When you came back, you went upstairs and had a break, and then you went down on the floor and started on the conveyer belt. You did quite a lot of different jobs actually, you didn't only do just one job.

Every body had their own locker, and when we first went there, we had boots, and skirts, and a jacket, which were allotted, and a hat with a big rim curled up. We got very cold, naturally, so after a while they let us have slacks. So we had slacks we could wear, but only for certain times, if I remember. I'm not quite sure about that, but we were issued with those skirts and the hat and the jackets, but not all at once. You'd have to go and be measured, and hoped against hope that they would fit you alright. We were issued with boots at first, and afterwards we got shoes. You didn't pay for the uniform, definitely not. It was a navy blue, and it was made of, not exactly a felt, but a very thick material. It wasn't a serge, it was in between. It was more like a serge than anything, a sort of blanket material. It was quite comfortable; the only thing was, if you went out and you got wet, which you would do, walking around, if you got back and you were wet an dyou had to go out again on you r next walk, you didn't have time to dry yourself off. We were issued with these sort of macs. We had the capes for a while, but nobody liked those. We didn't like wearing them.

A lot of girls came there and then they decided they wern't going to stay. Not everybody stayed, you see; they went off for something else. After quite a while, when quite a lot of people had been called up, they wanted people to drive these little vans. They asked me because I'd got long legs, and most of them who went in for it were little girls. That was one thing I did regret, that I didn't take up the opportunity while I could.

Q- Why didn't you?

- I don't know, actually. I think, in the first place, I was living with my sister, and they did quite a bit of night work and they quite often had to take things down to Liverpool St Station late at night. I don't know why I didn't, really and truly.

I'm very very sorry that I didn't. I've kicked myself often that I didn't.

Q- Did you ever learn to drive?

- No, never. And I've had quite a lot of chances. That has been one of the regrets of my life, actually, espaecially when I lost my husband. It would have come in so handy.

Some of th e walks were quite a distance from where the actual post office was, so you got fare money. I forget the actual distance, but some of them you couldn't do by bus. Some of them you had to walk to. You just came out... Before you came out you had to set up all your letters, so that where you rwalk began, that would be at the front, so that was what you did before you left. You tied them up into seperate bundles for different streets. If you had light parcels to deliver, or any recorded mail or registered letters, you had to take great care of them, because you had a slip to sign, and you had to make sure that that was brought back and given in to the office. Otherwise there was no proof that you'd delivered that registered letter, and nearly all the time there was money in it, because that was how money was sent during the war. That was your only proof that you'd delivered it, and that was a little slip, which you had to reaaly look after, and give back to prove that you'd delivered that registered letter. That was onw thing they were very particular about.

You did your bag up, and you walked out and went to each house. Sometimed they didn't have a letter box, so you'd bang bang bang, anf If it was early in the morning, people would get out of bed and come with their little dressing gowns on. I remember one place where I delivered, I had a registered letter for this person, and I'd already been told about him by one of the people who'd been on this walk, and apparently he was always in bed, and he had a registered letter delivered to him quite regularly. Of course, when people were on holiday, you took over these walks if you weren't on holiday t the same time. This chap always used to get out of bad, and he never had anything on, and he'd put the little slip up on the wall so that he could sign his name. You can imagine, in those days you used to feel absolutely dreadful, but you were too stupid to even say anything. You'd knock on the

door and he'd say "Come in", in bed, because I think he was a bit of an invalid. Naturally you always wanted to get rid of this registered letter, because it was a bit of a worry. If there was money in it, you didn't want to have to bring it back and take it out again, which you would have had to do, you see, go through all the paraphanalia again. I only ever went to him once, whcih I was very pleased about, because I was filling in for someone who was either sick or on holiday. It was terrible. He never used to have anything on, never below. He'd get up, you see, and put the slip on the wall to sign it. He must have done it deliberately, and I'd be thinking, "My god, let's get out of here". When I was on the Euston Road walk, you used to very often have to go into pubs, and all these ameriacan boys were in there, all soldiers a lot of them. "Here comes the mail lady", they used to say, "Got anything for me", and that was rather embarrassing, walking into pubs with this great big sack on you r back. They always called you the mail lady, not the post woman. Out there they call them the mail men, don't they? I always used to hate going in there, because I used to have to push through to get up to the counter to deliver the letter, and I used to hate that. I found that very embarrassing. The pub's not there now, because it's altered so much. One walk I had wa s the Whitehouse at the bottom of Albany St. I liked going in there. because when it got near the end of the war there was quite a lot of telelvision stars in there, which I used to have to deliver letters to. I remember on e who was quite well known, and I got into the lift with him. His name was Michael Renny, he's dead now, but people would know him. Oh he was tall and handsome; he'd just got back from the RAF, and I thought, gosh, Isn'y he lovely, that's Michael Renny, and he lokked round and spoke to me. I thought it was marvellous. It was funny, he came out in a film with Margaret Lockwood which was being shown at our local Gaumont up in Parkway, and I went to it and he was out in the foyer giving away photographs of himself. So of course I went up to him, and I think he recognised me. I said,"Ideliver your mail in the Whitehouse", so he said "Oh, do you", and he signed my ticket. I kept it for ages and ages. He gave me this big photograph, and hesaid "what shall I write on it", so I said to write it to my single name. I thought it was marvellous and iI had it for ages. In fact, it's probably about soemwhere.

So, often you met qutie well known people.

Q- What would happen if there had been a raid the night before?
- You went into the shelter. We had a lot of day light raids, and we used to have to stop work and all go down, they had air raid shelters downstairs. When it happened during the night it used to put things out a great deal, so when I was on night work, sorting, they had a lot of bunks down there in the air raid shelter below the post office, and a lot of people used to sleep there. There were real beds there, and quite a lot of them, employees of the post office, used to sleep down there. It came to ity in t the finish that we sorted down there. We never went upstairs at all, and all the sorting was done in the shelter. Of course, it was a bit cramped and that sort of thing.

Xmas time it was like a mad house, as you can imagine. You'd be sitting there and there'd be all these great big skips, and they would be piled high. Of course, you had a supervisor walking round all the time, and you really had to work. There was no messing around, you just had to get on. You'd look round, and there'd be all these skpps had to be done by a certain time, and You'd think "oh my god, not another one". Another thing you had to do, which was rather upsetting, was very often you'd be put on the parcels, sorting out the parcels for Mountpleasant, which was where most of the parcels used to go to be delivered. All the parcels that came undone were rather upsetting. You'd find ever so many parcels undone, and people would send kippers and thing sthrough the post. That did happen, you know, oh yes, people would send kippers and t things like that, and clotted cream, and stuff hat perhaps got all broken up. That was rather upsetting, but I must saythat thay tried their best, one thing about the post office, they tried their very best to deliver stuff. They really did. One walk I was on, it was called Hyde Park Mansion, and they didn't have a lift, and sometimes in these big flats, you maybe only had one letter for the top. Perhaps you'd been walking round, up and down, up and down, and you were really getting tired, and it was a hot day, so what some of the post men had done, was from one building to the other, and this is the truth, they'd put a plank across. Awooden plank; so if you had a letter for the

top of one building, and perhaps something for the next building, rather than go up the stairs and down again, and then up again, to the next biulding, you'd go up the top. Somebody told me; I didn't know about this for quite a ~~time~~ long while, and I was on this Hyde Park Mansions walk as it was called, it was nearly up as far as Edgware Rd, up in Marylebone Rd, actually, and I thought I'd try it one day. I went up there, and you daren't look down, because it was very high. Oh my god; and I did cross it one day, but I never did it again. I thought oh my god, nobody would know I was down there. But a lot of them did it. That was to save you legs, yousee, because you know, you had this big thing on you r back, and you were up and down stairs, and if it was hot you really did get very tired. Another time you'd be lucky, maybe and have a walk with hardly any letters on it. Perhaps the early post would have quite a lot of mail. I forget how many deliveried there were now; I think you left the office about half past 7, then was an II o'clock one, then I think there was a I o'clock. I think the 1 st one, after one, was about half past 3, in the afternoon.

Q- Did you do the collections as well?

- No, mostly men did that. That as done with the vans. That's why they had their little vans. The'd either deliver very big things, if there were sack fulls of mail, but most of the collections were done by van. That was what their job was really. But one night, when I was on night work, there was this young girl, well, she was married, and she was a driver. Well, she had to take some thing down to Mountpleaseant, and on to Liverpool St. It was shortly after the City had benn really very badly bombed, it really had, absolutely dreadful. Of course, she didn't want to go on her own, and they wanted a vonunteer to go with her, and I don't know why I did, but I volunteered to go. Oh my god, well of course, there was so much bombing and devastation, that how she ever found her way ther I'll never know, but we managed to get to Mountpleasant, but that was a very harrowing experience. She drove and I sat with her. They couldn't let her go on her own, naturally, and it was about 3 o'clock in the morning.

One thing about night work, you were very lucky in a way because you could get meals. You had your breakfast about half past 2,

and it would be bacon and whatever was going. There was quite a good canteen, because it was a very big office. You'd have break fast at about half past 2 and then you'd have something befor you came away. The very hardest thing about doingthat duty was trying to sleep. After I lost my child, I didn't have anymore children, and I thought, well, if I'm going to get it, I'm going to get it. Where I lived was, really and truly, although it was quite a distance from all these main post offices, considering by plane, it was nothing, so of course we were in a very very vulnerable position. When those buzz bombs came over, I've been home and looking out of the kitchen window, and seen those buzz bombs come down, in the distance. You knew very well, you'd seen it come down, and you thought, that's not goingto hit us, but you'd be out and the warning would go, perhaps while you were out delivering, and it was very awful in that respect. To get on at 6 o'clock I had to get up at 5 in the morning, and very often the warning would still be on. It wasn't very pleasant, anyway.

When I was on night work, it was a shame really, because I worked with my sister, and she had a baby who was born the same time as mine had died, and I used to say to her, once I got home, I'd be so tired and I've always found it very hard to sleep, right from when I was a child, and I'm still the same now. Even as a kid I culdn't sleep. I used to sleep at the top of the house, you see, we had the upper half of the house, quite a big area, and I had the top bedroom. I used to say to her,"Don't wake me up, if there's a warning, don't wake me up", and it was very upsetting for her really, because perhaps the warning wound go, and she be saying,"shall I wake her up", and I must have put her in bit of a spot, when I think of it after wards. And of course our shelters were in the street. They were surface shelters. We din't have any in the back garden, because it wasn't big enough. You had your special part that was allotted out to you. Well, that was something I could never do. I hardly ever went in the shelter, but naturally I wanted my sister to go in, because she had the baby. But when I was on night work, I would say, "Don't wake me up, whatever you do", I had to get some sleep, because it was quite ling hours, you see, from half past 5 to half past 7 in the morning. And sorting all the time, and looking

at white, as all the letters were mostly white, but for all that, I didn't mind doing night work, because you got about 3 days off, you see. You worked so many hours, from half past 5 yo half past 7 in the morning, which I didn't mind doing, and then you 'd go back on day work, and you 'd do 6 to 2, and 2 to IO. Alot of the women kept off for quite a long time, but how I came to leave the post office, which I'd really enjoyed, as I8d always worked in the rag trade where it was all women, but being in the post office it men and women, and there seemed a differnt atmosphere. I hadn't seen my husband for about 4 years, after he came back from Dunkirk he went abroad and he wnet through every where, and he came back in November, and of course I fell for Peter then (Her eldest son), and of course, in 1946 a lot of the men started coming back. I thought, I'm not going to be here while I'm pregnant. I wouldn't like people to see I was pregnant, and Peter was born in the August (1946), you see, so of course I left. I left in the January, so I8d been there from 4I to 46, about 5 years. But a lot of them stayed on for quite a long while. You didn't have to leave right away. People left, I suppose once their men came back from the war and that sort of thing.

Q- Dod you think you would have stayed on?

- Oh yes, I did, especially when the war was over. Oh yes, I would have stayed on, because I really enjoyed it. After being in the needlework trade, because that was very hard; you'd go in in the morning and you'd work ever so hard, and then perhaps in the after noon there wouldn't be any work. I enjoyed it very much. I didn't want to leave, to be honest, no I didn't, but once the men started back, and I knew I was going to have Peter... I was on the Victoria Memorial, you know, and he should have been bornon the 25th of July, but that was in July when they had VE Day. I was on the Victoria Memorial, and my husband had managed to get us tickets, and I couldn't get off. I was over my time, because he wasn't born till the I2th of August. I was stuck up there, and there were all these guinea pigs from the RAf, who'd all been burnt, and they were so cheerful and lovely. They'd all got their nurses with them and they were doing a lot of commentating from up there. But once you'd got on, you couldn't get off, you see, and you had to get on there early; you can imagine, Peter was about to be born, and I was stuck on there. I was dying to go to the toilet...That as

was on the memorial just outside Buckingham Palace, with this special ticket which my husband had managdd to get.

A lot of these men (at the post office) weren't fit, and it was an important job, of course, getting all the mail and keeping all the things going.
Q- Were you one of a team doing these walks?
- Not really, you had your own walk, but if the walk was a terrific amount of mail, you'd be put on with a person who's walk it was, to sort of help him. You'd split the walk up between you. You didn't work as a team. You'd be all sorting together, and when you'd been there a while, after you knew things, then you had your own walk, and you had to do everything yourself and sort it all out. And actually, as I say, when we first went ther, the chap who was in charge of the union, he was against women going into the post office, which a lot of these firms were, but of course after a while they realised they had to take it, and they were quite good, and they would be very helpful.
Q- Why dod you think they were against women?
- Well, I don't know, It was just one of those things, because women had never worked in the post office, only behind the desk, only as clerks, you know. It had always been men. It was a male thing, wasn't it? There were never any lady post women in London.
Q- The women were being paid less, so do you think that the men were worried that it would be an excuse to lower their wages?
- Yes, definitely, more than likely they did think that. Yes, I8m sure they did.
Q- Was there any bad feeling ?
- The men could be really grumpy, and really object to the women, but after a while you saw the change and they realised that the women had made a lot of difference to the atmosphere of the place. In fact therewas quite a lot of romancea going through it. Quite a lot of people had romances, got married and everything, from meeting in the post office. They did object to us first of all, definitely. They thought that they'd have to carry us, I suppose, and that we wouldn't be able todo the work, and naturally some people were better atit than others, and if they were very tiny, which some women were, they couldn't very well carry great big sacks on their backs, you know. Because sometimes you had a very heavy load, you know, a terrific heavy load. Sometimed you might not

have very much at all, but you still had to go all over your walk, because perhaps one letter would right at the finish of it, you see. You were allowed quite a bit of time. When you got back there was usually time to get a cup of tea, and there was quite a good canteen. I enjoyed it, to be perfectly honest, for all the fact that there was alot of worry, what with air raids and making sure you got up early in the morning.

Q- How did you get to work?

-By bus. Buses used to run very very early in those days. I used to get to work bybus. When I was on night work I used the bus if it was running, but I did start to cycle. I hadn't cycled for years, but I got a bike, because I lived about 3 miles from the post office. I had this lovely fur cape, which I exchanged for a cycle, with a friend of mine, She tried this fur on, it was a very nice one actually, this little fur cape, and she had this bike , so we did a swop. We were paying out quite a lot of money for rent, living in London and living in this flat, so you didn't have a lot of money to spare, actually, at all. When my husband first got called up I had my own flat. I was paying I7 and 6 a week, which was quite a lot in those days, ane I was only gettin just over 30/- a wekk, and I had a baby to keep on that, so things were very hard, you know. I can't remember what we got at the post office, and of course we had topay national insurance stamps out of it. It must have been about £3 a week, or something like that, if it was that. But you could do over time, you see, which naturally you did, to boost your savings, and your wages. I was lucky in a way, living with my sister, because we shared everything. Me working in the post office, I was able to get some meals, which helped out a bit, because you didn't have to give any coupons up. A lot of the women there, their husbands were in the army, some of them were prisoners of war. I had a great friend whose husband wa staken at Dunkirk, so he was a prisoner of war for 5 years. In a way of course, It was very hard, but once they came back they got all their back pay, from the whole 5 years. So they were able, once her husband came back, and alright it was ver hard being a prisoner of warin Germany, they worked on farms some of tham and it wasn't bad, like being a prisoner of war in this country, and of course he got all his back pay. It so funny really, because we knew Dunkirk was on, but we hadn't heard anything, and I remember I'd got all my hair in curlers, and all of a sudden

there was a knock on the door. Of course, we never went down stairs to open the door, because of the blackout, so I lifted up the window and I called out, "Who is it", abd this voice said "It's Tom". It was my husband. I hadn't heard whether anything had happened to him- well, I nearly fell out of the window. I8d got all my hair in curlers. We hadn't heard anything about my sister's husband and he had benn very unfortunate, cause he'd been thrown into the water but not very badly hurt. He was in hospital, so my husband went to see him. He hurt his hand, but fortunately he wasn't seriously hurt. I always remember that; you want to look your best, you haven't seen your hubby for ages, and I looked out, "who is is it?"- "It's Tom"- "Oh my god".

You think about those things, naturally you do, once they're gone. And the baby, that was very sad. I say she was a casualty of the war. She had a very very slight protusion of the naval. I used to take her every week to the clinic, and they tried to put a button onit to keep it back, but it was still protruding. It was a hernia, you see. And they said that it was alright now, but once she grew up and got married and had children, it might affect her. It would be just a very slight operation, so they put her in the University College Hospital. I took her down. Well, from the University College Hospital they evacuated her right down to a place in Box Hill. I wasn't working then, and I had hardly any money, and it used to cost me a fortune to go there. I had to get a train to Watford, and then I had to go by bus to see her. Well, I went out there one day, and when I got there her nose was running, her feet were cold, and if I8d have had a blanket with me I'd have wrapped her up and taken her home. She was 9 months. She was born in the March, and she went in in the December. They'd evacuated, and I didn't realise. They didn't tell me they were goingto evacuate her. They evacuated all the babies, because they thought, what with the terrible air raids, they'd want all the beds. Well, I saw her, and her nose was running and her feet were freezing, and you can imagine how I felt, all on my own, my husband away, spending all that money which I xouldn't afford, I had to borrow it off my brother. Any way, she picked up diahorrea and sickness in the hospital, and she died of gastric enteritis. I gave her a blood transfusion and everything. She was the first

and she was adored. She was so loved. I say that she was a casualty of the war.

Well, of course, I wanted to bring her body home from this place, to be buried up in Finchley near where we lived. One thing I will say, when they knew how ill she was, I said to the specialist that my husband's out in Dunkirk in the British Expeditionary force, and they let him home. I never saw the end of her, because he went out there, and I was taking my sister to hospital to have her baby down at the University College Hospital. She was about to have it, so he went off because they said come quickly. Poor Tom went all that way and when he got there it was too late. She was gone, you see. It was very tragic, reaaly, and we tried to get a little help to get her body home, and they wouldn't give it to us, so we had to borrow money even to have her body brought home. We didn't go the right way about it. We were really a little bit... things were very bad at the time. Anyway they got better after that, but naturally that made me very bitter, and of course I went 7 years before I had another baby. I said I'd never have any more, no more children, no fear, not me. I was very bitter about that. All of a sudden, one day, I think I waslying in bed, and I was thinking to myself, a funny feeling came over me, and I thought well, perhaps fate had something worse in store for her. Perhaps she would have been somewhere and got bombed or something likethat. And I thought, oh well, it's no good being bitter about it. You've got to get out and get yourself a job, and that's how I decided to go out and get a real job. Well, I had to, actually. I thought otherwise I'm going to be called up or put in the munitions, andI don't fancy that. I know my husband wouldn't have wanted me to go in the army. I know he wouldn't, so I thought, I'll go in the post office, and that's what I did. But if my baby hahdn't died, I don't suppose I'd have gone out to work. I would have been looking after her. I could have been evacuated if I'd wanted to, but not everybody wanted to. You were there and you thought well, that's it, abd we had some very harrowing times, believe you mespecially when those buzz bombs started. We had some really terrible nights, really and truly.

End of Side A.

Side B.

Q- If you were delivering to an area which had been bombed, how did you find the people?
-Well, there was usually somebody who knew where they'd gone. If people were evacuated you could always come to the post office and you filled in a form; I think it cost about 3d, and you could have all the letters sent on to you. They could be re-addressed and it didn't cost you anything. A lot of that went on. And of course, most people got so that they didn't stay in their houses. They went into air raid shelters, so you could usaally find them, or otherwise they'd moved on. Funnily enough, most letters got delivered; how they did I don't know.
Q- So you might have to go down into the shelters...
- Yes, and call out names. Especially if it was someone in the army. If it was one of their letters that they'd been waiting for, and army letter, you always knew which was the letters from the soldiers, and naturally you wanted to deliver them, especially if they hadn't heard for a long time. We never had to deliver telegrams or anything like that, because that was always done by the forces, any bad news, we didn't have that sort of thing to deal with. They couldn't put their address or where they were or anything like that, but very often a whole lot would come in all at once and everyone would set to and make sure that they got delivered right away. But very often the warning would go as you were delivering, because it went in the day time quite a lot. You got a bit blase, actually, to be perfectly honest, but when it first started...well, I was living quite near a raiway station in Highgate, and this thingwent off at II o'clock- they'd given out that the war had started and there was going to be this thing, abd I'd got packed, and I had this cat, Pickles, and I thought, I must go down to my mother's house, so I packed and I got the cat as well, and I got on thebus with the cat and my baby, and of course the cat got away, running round the bus. It was a beautiful cat. It was a tortoishell, and I called it Pickles. My husband was very fond of cats, actually, and I was taking it down to my mother's with the baby. I thought I must get down to my mother's, the warning's gone. I was right up at Highgate, overlooking this branch of a raiway, and the house did get bombed actually, bombed to the floor, but I wasn't living there then. I was in betwwen Tufnell Park and Highgate, in that area.

Q- What happened to the cat?
- I managed to get hold of it, and I took it down to my mother's. It was down there for quite a while, and then I got a different flat. It was a beautifu cat, my Pickles, and it got loose on the bus; and of course, people were panicking a bit then, but the all clear went soon after. You just wanted to get to your home, because I had a few brothers who hadn't been called up then. My sister lived in Ealing, and her husband was called up, so we decided that we'd go in together. One of my brothers at the time, he hadn't been called up, and he was working for a firm and he had a great big lorry, so he went and got all her stuff and brought it over tomy flat, and then we went the rounds. We used to go into estate agents, and I'm not telling a word of a lie, you'd get a bunch of keys about that long. They'd just say, here you are, go and look at those, and you couldn't carry them. There was all those in Camden Rd, all those massive houses, and we had keys for all those. We'd goin, and we'd look up and see this spiral stair case, going right up. When I think of it now, I could have bought a house absolutely for nothing. My freind didthat, actually; she bought about 4 houses. We used to have all these great bunches of keys, and the addresses'd be on the buches of keys. You wouldn't have one bunch, you'd have a whole load. We'd say, we'll go to soand-so's estate agent today and we'll look at their flats.

Anyway, we decided on this place near Tufnell Park. It was the upper half of a house. It had abathroom, a nice big bathroom, which we shared with the people downstairs, and I think it had two toilets. We decidedtto take that, and we shared it between us. But when I think of it, we could have got the biggest house for a song. Some of the places we went to were really spooky, but we used togo and have a look. I remember this one with the great big spiral stair case. Some of them had been beautiful. They'd had servants and everything.

One of the xperiences I had withthe buzz bombs, my sister had had a second child by then, because her husband had come home on leave. The baby was in the hall. We'd had all our windows shattered, great big sash windows; we had two great big windows in one of the rooms, we had a great big bay, and also a massive great sash window, and they'd all been shattered, with bombs falling quite near.

Those buzz bombs used to come over in the day time as well as the n night, and her baby, Carol, was about 10 months, was in a pram in the hall, and I heard this bomb coming over, and something made me go down and pick her out of the pram. I picked her out of the pram, and I went to the end of the passage and just round the corner our cellars were down ther, our coal cellars. We had the thing outside, like a metal plate and the coal went down into the cellar. I stood round the corner, and blow me if the front door didn't blow in. That is the truth. It blew right off all together. It blew to the bottom of our street, in Tufnell Park Rd more or less, near the Holloway jail.

Q- How did you manage at work when you hadn't had any sleep?
- Well, I don't know, it's surprising what you can do. You just kept going, you just had to. Of course, you were longing for the time when you could go up stairs and have a break. It wasn't so bad during the day time, because you could sort of hang your walk out a bit; perhaps you'd be lucky one time when you went out, and you didn't have many letters to deliver. You were allowed a specific time, and if you got back quicker than that, if you ran down and did it, you could back to the canteen and have a nice little break, a cup of tea, as long as you were down on the floor in time to catch your next lot of letters.
Q- Who were your supervisors?
- They were men, not in uniform. They'd worked their way up. They nearly always came from the sorter's part.
Q- Were they the one's who would draw up theplan for the week?
- No, there was a certain man who did that. You always had supervisers walking round all the time. They watched you all the time. It was noses to the grind stone.
Q- How did they behave towards the women there?
- Well, a lot of them were very young- I don't think I ought to say this if it's going on the cassette- it was funny, really, the romances that went on. This one person who was in charge, he was the head of the union, the shop steward. He was tall and very very stern, with his moustache; he'd been in the army years ago- a lot of people in the post office had been in the army originally, and I suppose he'd been in the First World War. He was a b against the women. He could not bear the the thought of the women being there. But didn't he get himself tied up with a woman? A

married woman, actually, and when I knew... Bumpers his name was, but don't put that down for god's sake. My god, you'll get me in terrible trouble, because it might break a marriage up. It was surprising, the romances that went on, but I was always afraid to have one, to be honest. Because there is a temptation, when you haven't seen you rhusband for years and years. My husband came back from Dunkirk, in 40, and then he was in this country for not quite a year. Then he went abroad, and I never saw him again until the end of the war. A very long time. But I always thought, if I do anything, something'll happen to him. It'll be fate, and something'll happen to him. This girl I told you about(driving through the City), the her husband was a prisoner of war for 5 years, and another one, Mary, I think we were about the only three who didn't. These people who'd been against the women, and they really were against you originally, they tried their hardest not to get women in there... they must have felt threatened. They thought, once the women come in... and it was a new thing for the women, and they were all eager. I quite enjoyed it, to be perfect;y honest, I did. I'd always worked in the rag trade, and it was always with women, although perhaps the presser would be a man, and perhaps the cutter, but otherwise it was all women, and to me it was quite nice to have both. It made a different sort of atmosphere I suppose. I had my little crushes, naturally. I'd think, he's rather nice, I hope I get on a walk with him. Some of these older men, they were still nice. Some of them couldn't go for some unknown reason (i.e. into the forces). We were in our 20's, after all.

Q- So it was quite a good time for you?

- It was in a way. Although it was terrible in a way. Sometimes I felt guilty when I did night work, although you had to do night work, and I thought, I'm leaving my sister. We had this marvellous person who lived down stairs. She had the front room, and then there was aroom in between, and then there was her sort of kitchen, so of course this room in between, it only had a kind of a fan light window at the top, so you felt secure. When there was a warning we used to troop down into there. She was amarvellous neighbour. We couldn't have had a nicer one. It was a huge great house. It had ten rooms, and they quite big rooms. One had this massiv e great window, a bay window, and that shattered. And we were fools, all our curtains were got rid off, and you could go and

get coupons to get you rblackout, but we never did. We were soft anything. And it was very very sad, because my sister, when I was doing night work, she was expectingCarol, and blow me if the baby didn't come, and shewas on her knees downstairs, with this person downstairs, witht the baby born. Nobody had phones in those houses. You had to go out and phone from the street for the ambulance to come and get you. She was carted off witht the baby already born, the most marvellous bay, she never did any harm, a beautiful girl; my sister was in hospital when they absolutely bombed London. I think It was on a Sunday. There was fires everywhere. She was in Dick Wittington Hospital up in Highgate. That's where Peter was born, actually. Robert was born here (Colchester) and Valerie was born in Gibraltar. Josie, my youngest sister was there with her ,and she just had to stay there on the floor until the ambulance got there, because the ambulance couldn't get there in time, you see.

My sister did evacuate eventually. She went to the Isle Of Wight, because I had a lot of relatives on the Isle of Wight, and my sister went there. I think I went with her because she had the two babies. She didn't stay, though; she came back, and we got very blase about it. What we did dread was the bozz bombs, because once they shut off it was silent, and you just waited there with baited breath.

I remember being in the Finsbury Park Odoen, in the cinema, and that was a terrible experience, for a warning to go off while you were in the cinema, especially if you were sitting under the circle. But you see, once I'd lost the baby I gat a bit fatalistic, and I thought, right, if it's goignto be, it's going to be.

I think the worst part of it was the black out, and we had fogs in those days too.

Q- Did you feel safe walking in the dark?

- I had a terrible experience once; I was round my mother's, and I was coming home about ten o'clock, and there was a terrific fog. It was such a bad one that all the buses stoppdd. They were all queued up in Camden Rd. The just could not move. And there was a warning on. You literally couldn't see a hand in

front of you r face. You couldn't even see where the curb was. I was walking down on the pavement, praying let me get home, let me get home, and all of a suuden, this great big thing came rolling towards me, and I thought, my god, whatever is it, and all of a s sudden this chap came after it, and you won't believe this. You know what it was? It was a big drum. This chap was goung to play somewhere, and he said he was on a bike, and it had fell off, and this great big thing was rolling towards me. It came out of the fog, and I thought, what the hell's that? All wrapped up, and it was a drum. I have never prayed so much in my life, I couldn't find my turnigg, and it was no good going back, because my mother was in a great big block of flats and I'd never find my way there. It was best to try and make you r way home. I have never been so thankful to get home in allmy life.

My husband used to write to me, so many letters, and I kept those letters for years. We both decided, when we went to Singapore, to get rid of our letters. That was one thing I've regretted, that I got rid of all the letters. They were a special thign, and also there was a special sort of aerogramme.

Women were never the same after the war. People couldn't get servants. The two World Wars were the finish as far as people going into service. My mother went into service, for the simple fact that she lost her mother when she was quite young. But it was country people who went into service. We were in London and we never dreamed of it. There was so much work there, you were never out of work. But it was funny, once I knew I was having Peter, and I had my other children, I never ever went to work. It was just one of those things that I thought I ought to do. I don't know whether I did right or not. The first work I did was when we decided to take the shop. I never worked up to then. Peter went to scholl and he used to come home to lunch, and my husband used to come home to lunch, so you couldn't go to work anyway if you wanted to. But I must say that I enjoyed myself in the post office, and that is the truth. If you'd got work, I was glad that I picked the Post office. I can say that in all honesty.
Q- Do you think that was so for the other women?
- I think so. Well, I don't know. The men came home on leave, and they had babies and worked right up until they left, and

they didn't come back. Some of them moved, naturally, but I think it was a geveral feeling, a nice atmosphere. Once we got into the union. Some of the men were miserable to work for, but wherever you work there's a misery, isn't there, who absolutely objected to you and didn't want you to be there. The walks were allotted out in seniority, so when it came to a certain time walks were sort of put up for auction, more or less, so the bloke who was senoir had the pick, and that's how they did it. Then the man who was second on the list, he had the second pick of the walk. Some of them liked a walk that was in a certain area; some of them, you see the last walk you did you didn't have to come back to the post office, you went home, so they would pick a walk that was near their home, if they could. So it was more or less dead men's shoes. You had to be there quite a while before you became established. You didn't come in and becam established right away. I thought to myself, just as its becoming interesting, all these young people coming back, I'vr got to leave to have Peter. There were all these nice young blokes coming back, and there was always anice sort of joke and a sing while you were sorting.

They never took any more women on, although I know one woman stayed on. You din't have to leave, but once you left you weren't replaced by women.

It was actually called Mornington Crescent District office.