Interviewer:

Please, what is your full name?

James Fleming:

James Ian Fleming.

Interviewer:

Nice name. What year were you born?

James Fleming:

1947.

Interviewer:

What did your parents do for a living?

James Fleming:

My parents?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

My father was a postman, funnily enough, and my mother was just like most women were then, she had several cleaning jobs or menial jobs. That's it.

Interviewer:

Please, tell us why you decided to work for Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

Royal Mail, luckily enough when I was young and you didn't have qualifications, you had a wide choice of jobs. Not like now, but you had a lot of jobs working for the council, the transport, post office. And basically, I went into post office because my father worked there, and he just said it was a decent job, and it was. I went in there for a year or two, and that was 60 years ago.

Interviewer:

Tell us about any family members who work for the Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

Who, sorry?

Interviewer:

Tell us about any family members who work for the Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

Family members, my son worked there for about 10 years. He worked in the clerical side of the post office. Now, he left and now he's a train driver. Rest of the family, no one worked there, no.

Speaker 3:

[inaudible 00:01:27] Ask him a bit more his dad, what his dad did.

Interviewer:

What did your dad do-

James Fleming:

What did what, sorry?

Interviewer:

What did your dad do? Did he go to a union?

James Fleming:

My dad?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Speaker 3:

Yeah, you said he worked for Royal Mail, [crosstalk 00:01:41].

James Fleming:

Oh, yeah. He worked at Mount Pleasant, which is, I think, it's the largest sorting office in London certainly, and he dealt with letters and that. But when I started work, I worked at a place called the Agricultural, which is all parcels, foreign parcels. Had foreign parcels coming into Britain and going out. And basically, we unloaded the lorries and sorted all the work, and then all the foreign parcels had to go through customs.

Speaker 3:

He's going to ask you a load of questions about that in a second. [crosstalk 00:02:17]

James Fleming:

Sorry. Come on. Yeah, come on.

Interviewer:

What did your family members think about your decision to work for the Royal Mail?

James Fleming:

I don't know. It's hard to say really, because it's obvious if you're enjoying a job like Royal Mail, but you got to remember I was about 17, 18. It meant you was never going to get a really good job. Not there was anything wrong with Royal Mail, but you was never going to be, I don't know, a doctor or a lawyer or anything. You was just becoming a menial factory worker. It wasn't something I was particularly proud of to join the Royal Mail. Not there's anything wrong with Royal Mail or anything, but it's pretty much what they used to call a dead-end job. I don't know if they still call jobs like that, but there you go.

Interviewer:

Tell us how you started working for Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

Sorry?

Interviewer:

Tell us how you started working for Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

When did I start?

Interviewer:

No.

James Fleming:

1969.

Speaker 3:

Ask him that one again.

Interviewer:

Tell us how you started working for Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

How?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

It's the same, my father just advised me to join it, and we just did. I went out to Mount Pleasant, and when I went to Mount Pleasant, they gave you a choice of offices to work in, because there's many offices in Central London. And I just said to my father, and he went with the nearest one to where I lived was the Agricultural, and that's where I went to work.

Interviewer:

Describe the training you did.

James Fleming:

Training? The training was mainly sorting, sorting cards. You had to basically just prove you could read and write. It was nothing exceptional. And then, obviously, [inaudible 00:04:07] you went onto things like bloody hard things, like how to unload the lorry or things like that. No, it was much just menial work, because I didn't go out on the streets delivering anything, so I didn't have to learn streets or anything like that. [inaudible 00:04:24]

Interviewer:

What was the first job you did for Royal Mail?

James Fleming:

First job? It had to have been a sorting job. In the main job in the offices, all the offices are sorting the mail, because it comes in in bulk, and then you have to divide it into towns or areas of towns. And then, say if something come into London, I don't know if you're going to ask me this, but then you'd put in the area of London you're going to, then that'll go to another department. And then, that department will put that into streets, so then it'll eventually become your house. And the postman will go, "I'll do that street." And he just goes through about five or six people. It's a very good system, it works very well.

Interviewer:

Tell us how you felt on your first day at work.

James Fleming:

Well, obviously nervous. I was young, I was only about 19, I think. But I was okay, I was a typical flash Londoner, I wasn't that bothered. But I enjoyed it because you tended to work in gangs, you were groups of six. Well, I say gangs, I mean the nice gangs. It was groups of about six or eight people, so you became friendly with those people and it was good, it was nice. It's nice.

Interviewer:

Describe your work in those early days.

James Fleming:

Describe what, sorry?

Interviewer:

Your work in those early days.

James Fleming:

[inaudible 00:06:00], just had mainly just manual work, laboring really, unloading lorries or loading other lorries, or sorting parcels. You mainly did the laboring jobs.

Interviewer:

What was the atmosphere like at work in the early days?

James Fleming:

Yeah, atmosphere was very good. It's very good, it's very friendly. It's very nice, yeah.

Interviewer:

What kinds of people were you working with?

James Fleming:

Just the average working-class guys, like local guys. As I say, everyone was very friendly. All the way back then, you got a lot of old soldiers funnily enough, because this was... What was that? 20 years after the war, so there was still a lot... Do you know what conscription is?

Interviewer:

No.

James Fleming:

Conscription is when you had to go in the army. And it happened any of you, they just go when you were 17, then when you're going in the army for two years. There's no arguing about it.

Fortunately, that stopped about four or five years before I was due. But the bulk of people you worked with had been in the army. And you can normally tell when people have been in the army because they're very good at taking orders, which I haven't been in the army, and he was very poor at taking orders. But it was nothing, it was nothing really serious. Very nice people.

Interviewer:

How diverse was your workplace when you started?

James Fleming:

Diverse, you mean racially?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

Funnily enough, you say that. This is going back into history. There wasn't a lot. I suppose the main immigrants then were West Indians, which I think they started coming in the early '50s. But by coincidence, when I joined, '68, '69... You can Google this if you want to. There'd been a big uprising in Uganda in Africa, and the government there threw out all the Asians. There was loads of Asians in Uganda, and he threw them all out. And basically, a lot of them came to England, and a lot of them joined the post office.

And it was a terrible shame because I got friendly with a lot them, and the guys I got friendly with were very well-educated people. And I remember I used to work with an architect, a guy. But when they threw him out of Uganda, they literally threw him out with nothing, they had no money, took their houses away. And they came here, and there was an awful lot of Asians then. You called them Ugandan Asians. Because I don't know how much you know [inaudible 00:08:44], if you go into South Africa, you get lots of Asian people, and whatever, but in Uganda, they threw them all out.

So, there was an awful lot of diversity really. And you also had lots of Scotch and Irish, because again, if you go further back in history, my father was Scots, but he had to leave Scotland because they were literally hungry up there. They had no work, nothing. I'm talking about in the '40s, 1940s. And they came down to England to work, him and two brothers funnily enough. And they did every sort of work you can imagine, but then they joined the army. But as I say, we thought we were poor in London, but in places like Scotland and Liverpool, Northern England basically, they were very, very poor, so you got a lot of people, Irish and Scottish, in London.

And so, it was very diverse. But it's all very friendly. I don't think I ever saw one argument.

Interviewer:

What sort of equipment did you use for work?

James Fleming:

Equipment?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

Barrows. You know what a barrow is?

Interviewer:

No.

James Fleming:

A trolley. Trolleys, like to unload the lorries and things like that. That was right at the beginning. And then, now things have become electrified, you have things like rollers, that was it really. It's very basic.

Interviewer:

Describe the uniform.

James Fleming:

The uniform then was very heavy, and uncomfortable, and itchy. And it did improve immensely, it's much better now, it's much more comfortable now. But it was very, very, very itchy, always remember that. But it's okay, it's a good uniform. You did need a uniform because you did get very dirty, because a lot of the mail we were dealing with had been in hulls of ships for months coming to England. If you get a ship coming from Australia or India or somewhere, by the time... I think India takes about six weeks to get here on a boat, so you can imagine how they smelled and how dirty they were. Anyway, [inaudible 00:10:59].

Interviewer:

Tell us about the skills you needed for your job.

James Fleming:

The what, sorry?

Interviewer:

The skills you needed for your job.

James Fleming:

Skills?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

None, basically. No, there was no real skills, it was very menial jobs. And by menial, I mean that as jobs that you don't need any training for. There's nothing wrong with those jobs at all, nothing wrong. If you look at a street cleaner... There's one, one just walked by there. The job's got to be done, and so it's a perfectly respectable job, but you don't need any training for it, and that's what I mean by menial.

Interviewer:

Describe a typical day at work.

James Fleming:

Basically, you did as little as possible. It was very overstaffed to be quite honest when I first started. And you just had enormous long breaks, very long breaks. I learned to play cards, and dominoes, and snooker. I learned all those games. But it was good. It was good. I would say it was very friendly. Very friendly.

Interviewer:

What were your favorite things about your work?

James Fleming:

Probably the people. The people were all very nice then. I got on well with everyone really, I was a nice guy. There was a lot of nice people there. And mainly men, by the way. When I first started work, it was all men, it was 100% men, that only changed, I don't know, 10, 15 years later. Women started coming in.

Interviewer:

What were your difficult things about your work?

James Fleming:

Difficult, nothing really. No, you had to work the shift work, but I quite like shift work. A lot of people didn't like it. Shift work is when you don't work 8:00 until 4:00, you might work until 10:00 at night and that, but I didn't mind that at all, because that meant you didn't start until the afternoon, so you didn't have to get up in the morning, which suited me fine. And you also did night work. They work 24 hours a day, the post offices.

Interviewer:

Can you tell us about discriminations you experienced or witnessed?

James Fleming:

No, not really. I've never come across anything. I don't think I ever heard of anything to be honest. I'm sure it must have gone somewhere, but I always thought it's very equal, equal office.

Interviewer:

Tell us a story that stands out from your working life.

James Fleming:

You're far too young to hear those stories. As I say, it was mainly you did get in the attitude, you didn't want to do a lot of work and you did as little as possible. I only lived round the corner to where I started working, and I think I spent more of my time at home than I did in work. You three are obviously far too well behaved, but it was very much a job of dodging governors. You get away. If you could get away with it, you got away with it. I'm not talking about anything serious, I'm not talking about thieving or anything like that, but I'm just talking about sitting down, playing cards and things. And someone would shout, "It's the boss." And you'd all get up and pretend you're working, pretend you were sweating. [inaudible 00:14:30] it was good, it was nice, it was a good atmosphere.

Interviewer:

What were some of the naughty things people did at work?

James Fleming:

[inaudible 00:14:41], you tried not to do too much work, that was the basic thing. I don't think there was very little criminal stuff went out. I very rarely heard of things getting stolen or anything like that. Very rarely. But there was, I think rarely, the office we worked in was surrounded by pubs, so there was a lot of drinking went on. But the main thing was to try and get home as early as possible, to get out of it as early as possible. It was just the normal things that people do.

Interviewer:

Talk us briefly through the different jobs you did while working for the Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

What? Sorry.

Interviewer:

Talk us briefly through the different jobs you did while working for the Royal Mail.

James Fleming:

The vast majority of it was with manual work. For the vast majority, loading lorries, unloading lorries. There was a grade above where I worked, I was just a postman, then you got a postman higher grade, and those guys, actually they used to pack the bags. They did the final bit of sorting. I don't know how to describe it. We'd sort them where we sorted into, say, Australia, and there'd be a thousand parcels

going to Australia, and then you got these postman higher grades, they'd go in and they'd sort it down within Australia, different cities, and different towns. So, that was the grade above us. And then, they'd put them in the bags, and we'd take the bags and put them in the lorries, and they'd go down to the docks, and away they go to Australia.

That was it basically. I'd say the vast majority was manual work.

Interviewer:

Tell us about your favorite job.

James Fleming:

My favorite job? I don't know really. I don't know. I didn't mind working, sometimes you got to go work with the customs guys, because, as I say, all the parcels that come in had to go through customs. And a lot of the time, you had to just open people's parcels and go through it. And if you're nosy, it's a great job. The customs guys would look for strange stuff in there, and you'd find some really strange stuff in people's parcels. But I'd say the vast majority of it was just manual work. It's good. It's okay.

Interviewer:

How did you progress in Royal Mail?

James Fleming:

I didn't personally, but that was choice. That was choice, because the easiest job was the one I did, and if you wanted to go up to a harder job, you got very little extra money. You did get some extra money, but it wasn't worth giving up an easy job. Do you understand what I mean? To go onto a harder job, and I'll never have a [inaudible 00:17:43] of that, and the vast majority don't. The vast majority don't.

Interviewer:

Tell us about your relationship with your colleagues.

James Fleming:

Very good. Very good, yeah. Obviously, there's one or two people I didn't get on with, but I think the first we went, there was 300 men working there, and you're not going to get on with everybody naturally. But there was nobody I really hated. I don't know. I think it's vice versa, I don't think anyone really hated me. I had very few arguments in the job, very few. And you didn't see a lot of arguments because it was easy to keep out of people's way if you had to. It was okay. It was a good atmosphere.

Speaker 3:

Jimmy, I just want to jump in, because I had a talk with Jimmy before, can you tell Jeremiah about what you said that lots of redundant workers talk about how they came to work with you.

James Fleming:

In the docks?

Speaker 3:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

Yeah, what happened when I had been at the Agricultural for... It was only about a year or two, and they shut that office down to move it to Canning Town. Well, Canning Town is right in the East end of London, in the old docklands. At the same as they moved us, they were shutting a lot of the docks down, which is a completely different subject. But they were shutting the docks down, and a lot of the dockers were made redundant, and they came into the post office. So, you had this strange mix of ex-soldiers and ex-dockers. But again, everyone got on really well. You wait until you talk to the ex-dockers, then you'll hear some stories. No, they were all nice guys, all cockneys basically, all working-class Londoners.

And when you get older and you travel around England, you will find that most people are the same. If you go to the people places like Liverpool or Manchester or Glasgow, Newcastle, it's very much... I don't want to sound like an old socialist, but it's much worked out on social and economic people. So, working-classes are the same the world over from what I've known. And I've done a bit of traveling, and everywhere you go, everyone's just the same basically.

Interviewer:

Tell us about your experience of joining clubs at work.

James Fleming:

Clubs at work?

Interviewer:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

There's an old saying, I won't want to join any club that'd have me for a member. That's a very old saying, Matthew is laughing, he must know the [Marsh 00:20:15] Brothers. Clubs, clubs, clubs. No, not really. No. No, I didn't really join any official clubs. I didn't play for the football team or anything like that. But there was a lot of clubs in work. There was football teams, cricket teams, photography clubs. Lots of clubs, but I didn't join any, me.

Interviewer:

And tell us about any other opportunities to socialize.

James Fleming:

Opportunities to what?

Interviewer:

To socialize.

James Fleming:

Socialize? Of course, because you work with all these people, you became friendly with them, and we used to go on holidays together a lot of us. Obviously, I made some very good friends. And then, they were in groups, and we went away on holiday in groups. It's good. It's very good. If you work in a large firm like that, it does become your social life working there.

Interviewer:

What made you join the union?

James Fleming:

I'd have joined the union anyway, but I've always been a bit left wing. I do believe in socialism, and I think you have to basically if you're a working-class man [inaudible 00:21:32]. There isn't really an alternative. That's all. I embraced the union, and I still do even though nowadays they're very weak now.

Interviewer:

Why is the union important for the post workers?

James Fleming:

What, the union?

Speaker 3:

Yeah.

James Fleming:

It's not only postal workers, it's anybody in the lower grade jobs, because literally you haven't got a voice. You haven't got a voice. And the only way you can be heard is to group together, and if you group together, you're a union. And obviously, if it comes to it, you can help each other and things like that. I think unions are very, very important. Very important. Especially as I say, for the working-class man. Lower down the scale, you need a voice, and the only voice you can get is by being a group. But unions now are not half as strong as they used to be.

Interviewer:

What part did the union play in your life?

James Fleming:

Nothing official really particularly, but I was always... No, I was never an activist as it was. But I always enjoyed the union, but I was never really a working member of it.

Interviewer:

Tell us about strikes or disputes you were involved with.

James Fleming:

That's a funny thing, because that's how things could become life-changing. When I first went in, in 1969, I had just got married, and I had just had a baby, and [inaudible 00:23:12] I joined the post office. And I had only been in there about three months, and they had the longest strike in history, which I hardly knew what it was about. And we went on strike for six weeks. And I would have very easily had walked away, and then who knows how your life would change? But I was really tempted to walk away and say, "Well, I can't do this." Because six weeks is a long time to go without. But fortunately, I had friends who used to work in the markets and that, so I could go work in the markets and that.

But there's a lot of people had to leave because six weeks is a long time. If you're living hand to mouth, which basically means you were just living off your wages, but your wages just stop, it's very difficult for people. But they did last six weeks, [inaudible 00:24:13]. And then, that was it, I did last it out, and we just went back. I can hardly remember what it was about, but it must have been about money because it's always about money, bottom line.

Interviewer:

What was your most memorable moment at the post office?

James Fleming:

I don't know really. I don't know. Honestly, I wouldn't like to say. I really wouldn't like to say. As I say, if you're in a job for a long time, I'm sure it means any sort of job, it does pretty much take over your life without you realizing it. And it's just memorable by... I don't know. If I say the old job was memorable, that's probably exaggerating, but it was your life for a long, long time. I was there for about 30 years I worked there, so it was a long time. And obviously, in that 30 years, a lot of things happened. That was it.

Interviewer:

What was the most challenging moment at the post office?

James Fleming:

The most what?

Interviewer:

Challenging moment at the post office.

James Fleming:

Challenging? Again, I don't really know. It's probably when we was told we could leave, take redundancy. Redundancy is when they want to you leave, they offer you a lump of money to go. So, you're not being sacked, you're just being... And they keep putting the money and up, and up, and you think, "Can I go?" Dare I go?" And eventually, I did. And that's challenge, because if you've worked in one place for a long, long time like that, to turn around and say, "I'm leaving," is hard. Very hard. But I did. Funnily enough, I never regretted leaving as much as I enjoyed it there. But they have different circumstances.

I must say, saying that, I'm talking about after about 16, 17 years. So, I was out the post office for seven years, and what did I do? Went back in the post office, and did another 12 years, so I must have liked it.

Interviewer:

Over your working life, what were the main changes at work?

James Fleming:

The main changes, lots of changes in the post office. As I said earlier, the post office when I first joined was very, very overstaffed, so it was very easy to do nothing. Very easy to hide and not do any work, but

now they work very, very hard, the guys. The last office I went into, as I say, there was about 300 men, and when I left there, it was about seven years ago I left, that 300 has shrunk 110. And unbelievably, you do more work. They had more work going through it with about a third of the staff, because where I used to deal parcels a lot, you've now got Amazon and eBay and all those things.

The amount of mail that goes through the parcel offices is unbelievable. You get very few letters nowadays. It's a long time ago, you might never have seen a handwritten letter, but people used to send letters to each other, this was before emails. Now, you don't see letters. But parcels, you get more and more parcels every day. Every day. So, they really work hard, the postman, believe me. Anyway, ever since I left, now that's a coincidence.

Interviewer:

In what ways do you think the job has improved?

James Fleming:

I don't think it has improved. I don't think it's improved at all. No, I wouldn't say that. No, I'd just say they work much harder. I don't think it's improved since I went in there, not at all.

Interviewer:

In what ways has it got worse?

James Fleming:

It's probably got worse by they actually work a lot harder, I mean physically they work hard. Believe me. When you see a postman walking round the street and he's got a bag hanging on his shoulder, he's probably got another six bags in his van. Believe me, they work hard these guys. I'm talking about the letter delivers and all that. The last 10 years I was here, I drive a van, so I never actually had the physical thing, but you try delivering to tower blocks and things, it's hard work. It really is. It's a young man's job now.

Interviewer:

What would you think if your child wanted to work for Royal Mail?

James Fleming:

Good luck to them. It is a job. I don't know if the attitudes have changed, because when I was young, I'm talking about when I was 16, 17, a lot of people wanted a job for life. You got a job, and you'd probably be married very... I think people used to marry earlier then, I'm not sure if that's why. But by the time I was 20, I had two kids. Married with two kids. You had to have a regular job. But fortunately, you could get jobs like working on the council, working on the buses, post office, those jobs weren't hard to get.

Interviewer:

If you were the boss of the Royal Mail, what changes would you make?

James Fleming:

I don't know, because even a lot of these things are very hard, very hard. I don't envy the bosses at all because you probably could only probably make the changes if you increased the prices of the mail an

awful lot. You got to remember the post office, like transport and things like that, they're more services than companies. They serve the public, so they're not expected to earn lots of money, and they don't earn lots of money I don't think.

Interviewer:

Looking back over your working life, what has working Royal Mail meant to you?

James Fleming:

Probably the friendships. The actual job, I'll be quite honest, didn't mean a lot to me at all. But the actual group of friends I made. I made lots of good friends and all that. That's why you kids have got to have a good education, and don't work in a job like that. You go out and be architects, or film makers, or whatever you want to be, or at least try to be. That's what I drum into my own grandkids. My grandkids, I think they was the first people in my family to go to university and things like that. It's good to see them getting on. You got to set your ambitions high.

Interviewer:

[crosstalk 00:31:17]

James Fleming:

Sorry, go on.

Interviewer:

Do you want to add more?

James Fleming:

No, no, it's fine. Go on.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much for answering our questions. Is there anything that you would like to talk about that we have not covered in our questions?

James Fleming:

No, not really. And just to let you know, it's just the advice to you guys like I just said, try and set your targets high. You don't want to work in a job like the post office, whatever people might tell you about it. It's not a bad job, don't get me wrong. It's not a bad job, but set your targets a lot higher. That's it.

Speaker 3:

Can we [inaudible 00:31:56] after the group? I've got a couple of questions for you, because I spoke to you before, but I'll come to those. We were all going to ask you questions [crosstalk 00:32:04].

James Fleming:

No, of course.

Speaker 3:

[crosstalk 00:32:05] answer towards Jeremiah, just for the consistency of everything. Any questions occur to you, or any other questions? But Jeremiah, we can have a little chat.

Interviewer:

How would you describe your younger yourself working at the job?

Speaker 3:

Nice question. How do you describe your younger self working at the job?

James Fleming:

My younger self?

Speaker 3:

Answer towards Jeremiah, please.

James Fleming:

Yeah. I don't know if you know what a young hippie was. I was a typical 18, 19 year old. I don't know. It's very hard to say looking back. You'll have to ask your grandparents what the '60s were like. And they really were as people tell you what they was like, it was a good time to be alive at that time I think, looking back.

Speaker 3:

What were you into? Music, [crosstalk 00:32:57]

James Fleming:

Everything. Yeah, music. Yeah. Everybody was. When people say how good the '60s were, it's one of the few things I don't think is exaggerated. It really was a good time to be alive because people were earning a bit more money, the music was unbelievable. And that music was really unbelievable because the technology, you had things like radios. And when I say radios, I mean transistor radios and tape records and things like that. And you're getting out the time. You got to remember when I was your age, you'd turn the television on, you had two channels, and the television finished at 11:00 at night, and that was it.

Speaker 3:

You need to hold eye contact, remember? Because he's talking to you, okay?

James Fleming:

Yeah, you had two channels, and that was it. And the radio, you can't believe how bad the radio was. And then, they started getting what they called pirate stations, and they were literally on boats all round England. They were just outside the British waters. But they started playing pop music all day. You might not be able to imagine it, but you couldn't hear pop music on the radio until that all kicked off, that all started. It was great. It was a great time to be alive.

Speaker 3:

How did it influence the work atmosphere then? How did the '60s influence the work atmosphere?

James Fleming:

It probably drove the old boys mad. No, I'm sure every wave of young people think they're going to change the world, which you don't really, but it was a good time to be alive thinking back.

Speaker 3:

Can I just ask a question about your father, what was it like growing up then to start having your dad work as a postman? How did that affect your childhood, do you think? If you talk to Jeremiah.

James Fleming:

No, I don't think it affected my childhood having him work. I suppose it's good that he was in work, regular work. Again, I don't know if you guys can imagine what it was like as my mother, I know at one time she did three different jobs. My mother, three different cleaning jobs. And she used to go and clean offices and schools and things like that. And she'd go out 4:00 in the morning to clean an office out, somebody else's office. But it was no embarrassment. We used to wear second hand clothes. There used to be charity shops that you'd go to, [inaudible 00:35:30] charity shops, but these were charity shops. There's no embarrassment because all the kids were wearing them.

That was probably the one other trouble with the '60s, and that suddenly you wanted to wear the right labels, the right brands, and you didn't have that when I was your age. You didn't have that at all. Nobody was going to go, "Oh, you've got the wrong trainers on." But there you go.

Speaker 3:

So there's a question, you told me about, so you left in '89 and you came back in '98, and you talked about the difference between working in the office, and then becoming a driver. You said it was quite different, you were quite lonely. Could you just set the scene? Just say you were offered redundancy in '89, because [crosstalk 00:36:11]

James Fleming:

Yeah, I was offered redundancy in '89. As I said right earlier, then we used to work in gangs. So anyway, I took the redundancy and I left. And when I decided to go back, I've got a local office to where I live, it's only 200 yards from where I live. And I went down, but now this was a letter office. These were the guys that walked around delivering your letters. And it's so different from where I worked with the parcels, because the one thing, it's a lot harder work, and the other thing is you were out on your own. You don't work in gangs, you're on your own.

And if you can't do the job or if you're late, tough, you're going to be late. You can't turn around and say to somebody, "Oh, give me a hand with this." And it was a lot, it was hard work. I did that a year or two, and then I became a driver, which suited me better, driving. Because again, you were still out on your own, but you didn't have the physical side of it so much. I must say, I admire the postmen now. I've been in there for a long, long time, I've never really realized how hard they work. I'm talking about the guys that go out delivering. They do work hard, believe me.