Speaker 1:

So, what's your full name, please?

Katie Dunning:

My name's Katie Joy Dunning.

Speaker 1:

And what year were you born in?

Katie Dunning:

I was born in 1979.

Speaker 1:

Okay, and where were you born?

Katie Dunning:

I was born in Notting Hill, Hammersmith Hospital actually, on Du Cane Road. Still there today.

Speaker 1:

I know. I know. It's called a different name though. What did your parents do for living?

Katie Dunning:

My mom was just a housewife and my dad's a Black Cab driver. He actually worked at the post office, done the knowledge while at the post office and became a black cab driver and he's still a Black Cab driver now. I think quite a lot of postmen used to go through that route.

Speaker 1:

I'll ask you more about your dad in a second now, but it's good to know, because the next load of question's about your sort of family childhood. So first a sort of general one-

Katie Dunning:

I should actually say that they separated quite young and I don't know too much about my father. So it's probably not questions I can answer, but yeah, I do know what his occupation was.

Speaker 1:

So can you tell us why, what the circumstance have you decided to start working for Royal Mail.

Katie Dunning:

I started working at Royal Mail, because I kind of left school and fell into, I think there was just natural migration for the girls that left school to enter into retail. I was just so bored of working of retail. I worked in Austin Reid and it was like the over 60's club and I looked around one day just for, "Oh God, I don't want to end up institutionalized here." So yeah, my uncle, my great uncle were both postmen, worked at Nottinghill delivery office, and just talking to my uncle, he said he'd speak to his boss to see if

he'd get me a job. I loved it. It was great. It was like being back at school. It's like the atmosphere of the workplace was fantastic. It was buzzing, it was like a small community, like a nice family.

Speaker 1:

I'm going to ask you more questions about the atmosphere and stuff in a second. Can you tell us a bit more about family members? Maybe talk about your dad and then your uncles who work for Royal Mail. When they worked there, what they did and stuff like that.

Katie Dunning:

So I don't really know too much about my dad because he kind of left the family home when I was quite young, but I can talk about my uncle and great uncle who I was quite close with. So my great uncle worked there first. He became a firm's driver. So he would drop mail bags out for the delivery staff and parcels. My uncle Larry, he was same as me, deliveries. He delivered to quite famous people actually. He delivered to Tina Turner, Gloria Hunniford, on his rounds. So working in Notting Hill, there was quite a lot of rich... Well, there still are, quite a lot of rich and famous that live in that area. So it was always a buzz when you saw someone famous and you got to speak to. So, Larry was quite fortunate there on his round here, quite a few celebrities.

Speaker 1:

So when you were a child, it was Royal Mail part.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. I mean, well, like I said, it was very much like a community, the workplace, very much like a big family. There was a thing called... Well still is, it's still in existence in many workplaces now, called sports and social club. So it's where postman used to pay like a sub their subs in every week, a pound or something like that. At the end of the year, you'd have like a Christmas day with all of the postman's families and children was able to come. My uncle used to take me and we'd have some food and one of the postman would dress up as father Christmas and you'd get a gift.

So when I started Notting Hill delivery office, most of the postman knew me, I'd sat on their knee at one point or another as a child. So it wasn't as [inaudible 00:03:48] I guess, going into that male dominated environment as it would be, for somebody that didn't have any connection to the post office and to Notting Hill delivery office. I was quite fortunate, to be honest.

Speaker 1:

Do you know when did your great uncle, when did he start working?

Katie Dunning:

Oh god I wouldn't know. I should've asked him. Really shouldn't have quite came. Well, he turned 60, he turned 68 this year. I think he retired, because you had to retire at 55 back then, but you could go at 50. So he left quite young. I couldn't guess, I'm rubbish at maths. When did he leave? Let me think, I can't think. I know my uncle Larry joined when he was 19. So as soon as he left school, he joined the Royal Mail, and I think Johnny, my great uncle, got him the job, and he left in 2001 to work for the buses. So he still works with Stagecoach.

Speaker 1:

Was that quite common that the family members would be encouraged by the family members [crosstalk 00:04:53]?

Katie Dunning:

It was the recruitment process. So managers could, you could recruit locally. It was very decentralized back then. So you was able to do things, for who you knew. I think prior to that, there was a lot of ex-military postmen when I joined, a lot of them seem to have a military background. I think when I joined, it was more like a lot of families, people's cousins, nephews, sons, daughters, work there. I think that was because it was the recruitment process was de-centralized, the manager did have more power on the hiring firing side. I think as privatizations happen, that's become more centralized, but it was good for retention because you you joined Royal... Sorry. It was good for retention because you joined Royal Mail and you didn't want to fail on the job because your family member had got you that job. So you wasn't just failing the job. You was letting your family down. So it was the next staff... So retention in Royal Mail was great. If you had a problem, you had a family member there.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Oh, interesting. That's so interesting. We'll talk about that. Did that have-

Katie Dunning:

Although my great uncle would never take out. I was always saying to him, "I'm go show up to my Nan," because he would never take my parcels for me. He'd probably back out to it. I'll be like, "I'm telling your big sister, you're taking the mail."

Speaker 1:

[crosstalk 00:06:23] a bit more about that when it comes to the work [crosstalk 00:06:28] but just going back to families. So you've touched on this already a bit, but what did your family members think when you left Austin Reed and you just got a job at Royal mail, what do they think of that decision?

Katie Dunning:

Well, Royal Mail was a job for life. It was great. It had a great pension plan when I joined and I was just... It was such a different... I'd gone from working in retail to work in nine till.. It was 9:00 AM till 7:00 PM or 8:00 AM till 10:00 PM on a Thursday because of late shopping these long hours. I'd always been somebody who got up early anyway. I think it's just, you were an early bird or you're not. So I'm always somebody that's got up early. I mean, I was going to work and I was getting finished. I was finished work, by lunch time and it was like, "God, I'd be clock watching now if I was working in Austin Reed." Oh, British Home Stores, I worked there as well. I'd be clock watching now thinking, "Come on, come on. I want to go home."

So it was great family. If you had a small family, it was a great balance for work and family life. A lot of the guys that I worked with had small children and they was able to get home in time, pick the kids up from school, start the dinner, while their wives went out and done their part-time or full-time jobs. It was really good in that sense that the... Sorry, if I'm wrapping in on. I have a tendency not to stop.

Speaker 1:

Not stopping is what we want. That's brilliant. I'm going to ask you about that in a second. A bit more about the ins of that job. So tell us the process of you starting work at Royal mail. You've said that it was

kind of internal, you've talked a bit about how it was internal kind of your uncle recommended you, but just to tell us a little bit-

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. So I remember I had my interview. So the interview was even at the local delivery office and I remember walking in and getting, "Oh, it's Katie..." Some of the postmen knew me, and I'm feeling really embarrassed because it's like I'm trying to be professional here. I'm going for a job interview. I remember the guy, I remember the manager that even took my interview, Tony Buckley, I think he's retired now, but he became quite senior up in the management field. I remember doing my interview and I dropped a joke. It was something he asked me like how tall was I, and Tony was quite short. I can't remember what I said, but it was borderline, could be... I can't remember it was something like, "I'm taller than you," or something like that, quite bit cheeky.

I remember he could have took it. I could have just failed that interview. He went to me, "Oh, you'll fit in here," because it was this kind of banter, jokey sort of atmosphere within the workplace. So yeah, thankfully it didn't go against me.

I remember the first day on the job. I got a lot of, "I wasn't going to last long being 19, a young girl." Fortunately I did. I've seen other women come into the workplace and kind of get, "Oh, she's all right. Quite like the look of her." I didn't have any of that fat uncles there, but I did get, "You're not going to get any extra help. If you can't lift that mailbag, then you're on your own." Some women that might've been a bit of different culture. But for me, it kind of made me feel like, "No, I'm going to do it. I'm going to prove to you. I will last longer than two weeks and I will do this job." I left this year in March to go on and work for the union, but I'd been there 21 years, so proved them wrong, but would lasted longer than two weeks. So that was a bonus.

Speaker 1:

Okay. So you've done your interview and you've started. Tell us about the training that you did.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. So the training was two weeks at West Kensington delivery office and it was in the basement. It was a [inaudible 00:10:25], and you had to go there for two weeks and learn [inaudible 00:10:29]. So the local... Well, if you was looking in the cabby sort of world, it'd be like the local knowledge, such as the street names, and each street names, you'd have a geographical... Say if you had a map, you'd have little area like that with all the street names. That would be called a duty. So you had to learn what streets were on what duty. So you had to learn all the street names and you had two weeks to learn that. If you didn't pass, you didn't get the job.

Speaker 1:

How did they test you?

Katie Dunning:

I think it was like 200, 300 little cards, little cards like that. You had a 56 [inaudible 00:11:07] phone fit in and they would time you, I think you had like a minute to throw off so many cards and get them right, and you was only allowed so many. I mean, I'm going back 21 years. I can't remember how many... You was given a proportion that you was able to get wrong, but you had to beat... Like, you could only get five wrong or something like that. You have to throw off like 50 cards or something like that.

Speaker 1:

How many streets would be on duty?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, back then you quite a lot of duties back then. So I think when I first started, there were something like 46, 47 duties. Today there's probably 19. That's how big the rounds have got. So there would have been... Let me think of my old... If I take of Ladbroke Square because Ladbroke Square was my favorite round. There was one, there was, [inaudible 00:11:53] Ladbroke Grove, Ladbroke Square. Sorry. I'm just thinking to myself. Then Ladbroke Grove. Yeah. So you had two main roads and then you had seven little houses that has... You're probably looking now to quadruple that, and that would be around today.

Speaker 1:

I'm going to come to the changes in a minute. Okay.

Katie Dunning:

Put it this way, take me 45 minutes to do. I did Notting Hill gate delivery, would take me 45 minutes today. That would probably take you four and a half hours because of how the extra roads that have been put on it.

Speaker 1:

We'll ask you a little more about that in a minute, because we'll come to the changes later on. So taking you back to those early days. You've done your training. What was that like doing the test? Do you remember how you felt?

Katie Dunning:

I was so nervous. I couldn't sleep the night before because there was so much pressure. My uncle had got me the job and I didn't want to let him down. He passed it. How could I then turn around and say I didn't pass it. Yeah, I think I'm naturally someone that puts a lot of pressure on themselves anyway. I want to do well. I never liked failure. So yeah, I can remember not being able to sleep the night before, it was awful.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:13:14] your test describe how you felt?

Katie Dunning:

I freezed it, freezed it. I think I was like that with my driving test as well, but I think that's just my way.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Well, could you tell us a bit about your first job? So you've done the training. Tell us about your first job.

Katie Dunning:

When we first started, I got paired with a guy called David, I'm sorry, Alan Mills, who was my coach. We was put on what they call a training walk, which was the Ladbroke square, probably why it was my

favorite. He showed me around the route for six months. That was the standard. Then you got put on a training walk. So the rep in the office and the manager would agree a training walk in the office and an [inaudible 00:14:01] start as we were called new entrance coming in, would go on the training walk for six months. We did that for six months. So I worked with him for six months.

Speaker 1:

So you'd be someone else for six months?

Katie Dunning:

Six months yeah. They don't do that now.

Speaker 1:

It seems like a long time six months.

Katie Dunning:

But people stayed in the job for life. I think the changes that has happened with the training has been a bit detrimental around the retention. I think the balance isn't quite there. It might've been a bit excessive six months being with somebody on a walk, in hindsight now, but I think it's going a bit too far in this day and age. Anyway, so we went on a walk on that training walk for six months and then after the six months was up, you'd go on a reserve board. So everything IN the office was done on seniority. So if you'd been there the longest, you've got first choice, and the junior person you picked up whatever was there. So you'd have about 13, probably eight to 13 people on the reserve list and their jobs would be to cover annual leave

So you you'd probably be on a walk for one week, unless obviously someone's on leave for two weeks. Or if you had someone on long-term six, somebody undergoing an operation, in which case that would be vapored, but it was always done on a seniority basis, which I think is fair because you own your stripes. The way the walks were designed then was the more senior person who was the easier the walk becomes. So as you aged in the company, your job got easier because you had that seniority. There was a general understanding that if you came into the job... And I think it was probably, I think it was probably across the labor market in itself. Isn't it?

I can remember when I left school, if you wanted to be a hairdresser, you had to sweep the floor first and make the tea. So there was an acceptance that when you came in that if you was a junior person, you would get all the rubbish walks. So you swallowed it because you knew, "Once I've done my years, once I've got my stripes, I'll get that nice walk. I'll get that Ladbroke square. That will become my duty." So there was always that incentive.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Now just a quick one. So do you remember how you felt when you were doing those training months of the first phase, when you were out on the street with your colleague, how did you feel?

Katie Dunning:

Alan was just such a great coach. He was so easy to talk to, so relaxed. I'm probably a great student, because I'm really good at catching. You've only got to show me once and I've call it bosh. Yeah. It's in there.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:16:39].

Katie Dunning:

So he'd show me how to... So you'd have to go on the sorting, which was what you got tested for. Once you've done the sorting... We had used to have a song as well. Yeah, gosh. So it's only a stupid song. So the line manager, so you'd have a manager in the office and a line manager and the line manager's job in the morning was to lay out all the work on the frames, the sorting frames. For the first... It used to be called the primary sorting. So it was the first lot of sorting where you'd pull it into the walks.

So she'd call out a five past six, "Come on guys. It's five past six." I can't remember her name. Anyway. She was a female, our line manager, and she come out every morning at five past six and say, "Come on guys, it's five past six." And I think it was my uncle and his best friend Arnie who made the song up. He was like, "Come on guys, it's five past six, come on guys it's five past six, come on guys it's five past six, five past six in the morning." I would sing this song walking round to, from our workstations. So every morning it was just like one of those, but it puts you in a great mood for the rest of the day. You know what I mean?

I think, I didn't think the line manager, so the funny side of it. But actually she came around and started to sing it herself eventually. But yeah, it was great fun. There was always silly songs like that being sung in the office.

Speaker 1:

So I noticed also you said you sing the song and go around and what else would he show you when you actually [crosstalk 00:18:10].

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. So when we was out on the rounds?

Speaker 1:

So he'd showed you how to [crosstalk 00:18:14]?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, so he'll just show me the route. He'd show me how to fill out, we call them seven free nine cards. While you were out cards, we still use those today. The red cards, you'd always get problematic delivery points could be dangerous dogs. It could be that because... So like Tony Benn, for instance, didn't like his stuff in a letter box, he had a secret location where we had to leave it. So there was always this... Well he got quite a lot so you was constantly ringing the bell. Obviously he's an MP who was in the parliamentary world. So he wouldn't get your average couple of letters. He would get piles. So ringing on the doorbell every morning saying "Tony, I've got you." So we had a little secret location for Tony, but there were customers like that, that liked places... I had other customers that liked you to knock the door to say hello, just liked a little bit of social interaction.

Other customers would wait for you to come along because you was, "It's probably the only person I spoke to that day." So, you're a public service you're working with the public, but if you're a social person like me, it was quite, I looked forward to it, it took me ages though because I do tend to talk a lot. So yeah. So he'd show me around the route and show you how to fill out the cards and you've

got, remember it was two deliveries then, so we'd have to go back and redo the whole thing again, take the second delivery out. I think second delivery stopped in 2001. So when my uncle Larry left and joined the buses.

Speaker 1:

Okay so what about... You've described the work. What about the people who was in the office when you came over there? Old young who was there?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, it was a mixed bag. It's a mixed bag. So there was people that have come and gone. There's people that I had gone to school with, that I knew from the local area, there were people that had I'd socialized with, had gone to school with my mom, and there's people that had socialized with fam... Because a lot of the people that worked at Notting Hill lived in Notting hill. I know when I applied for the job, when I was working at British Home Stores, not Austin Reed at the time. I had to wait... Well, I left Austin Reed and I went to work at British home stores because I had to wait a year until vacancy came up in Notting hill because at the time Royal Mail very much wanted to recruit people that lived in the postcode area.

That was predominantly possibly because we started at 5:30 AM and transport links weren't as advanced as they are today. So it was very much the people you worked with lived in that locality, unless of course they've done the right to buy and had sold up and moved out. But yeah, they still had strong links in the area, which is great because you are a public service, you serve in the community and it's the community that you know, so it was that it bought trust from the community to the Royal Mail because you lived with each other, you worked with each other.

Speaker 1:

So how did that affect the atmosphere in the office then in having this group of locals?

Katie Dunning:

There was no secrets. Everybody knew everything. It was fun. It was just like one big family. You fell out, you made up. Even managers, it was not so much my manager, but some of the managers that before Phil... Phil Short my manager at the time, but someone who managed before that, my uncle had gone to school with. There was a manager called Bruce Rowe and I've got pictures of him and my uncle who had gone to Holland Park school and they'd played football together in local tournament. So it was very much... It didn't have that sort of... You wanted to help each other out. You cared about each other. If somebody went sick, we would fill their walk-up. We would get the walk done. No problem, because it was a mate. It was our pal.

As I got older, if I'd gone out with friends and I couldn't get up in the morning, I'd ring up and [inaudible 00:22:30] a bit rough, but I'm coming in. Time I got in the postman would have my mail all sorted for me. I would just have to-

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:22:40] let's just put this cable behind just to-

Katie Dunning:

Am I singing with it?

Speaker 1:

Was Notting hill typical or exceptional in terms of how offices were?

Katie Dunning:

No, it's typical. You went to West Kensington I found... So when I got elected as the area safety representative, I'm a known rushing along probably in the timeline with order of things. I had responsibilities for all of the delivery offices in West London. So from the West 2 to West 14 postcode. But if I went to west Kensington, if I went to Hammersmith, if I went to Paddington, it was exactly the same. It was exactly the same.

Speaker 1:

Interesting. Right. Okay. I've got a few questions to ask you about in a sec. How about the diversity of the workplace when you started racially and gender in terms?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, so there was more ethnic black and ethnic minorities and there were women. I think that's because historically women were always employed in mail centers. I think that's just because of the shift, the hours. Deliveries were 5:30 till, I think, it was 1:30 back then. I guess if you've got small children, you couldn't get them to school. So it wasn't very mummy friendly and it was a tough job. It's a very manual job working in deliveries. It's not the same as working in a mail center where you're sat and you're sorting all day, or distribution where you're driving, and you're just emptying boxes and pushing yorks, you're physically carrying stuff, you're up and down terrains, and it is a physically demanding job. You can see that with the wear and tear of postman, a lot of postman stuff with the hips, knees, feet. I call it [inaudible 00:24:33] . because I can never say... Was it [panisse 00:27:03] ? whatever it's called.

They call it policeman's heel was like a... But it's a foot condition that a lot of... It's like pain that runs up their legs. I can't, I can never say the word. Policeman's heel.

Speaker 1:

What's your last word?

Katie Dunning:

[Panasissi 00:24:48] or something like that.

Speaker 1:

So tell us how many women were there?

Katie Dunning:

When I started there was two women, one was the cook Lew, and another woman was Carol, and Carol's husband worked at Royal Mail. They met at Royal Mail. And there was this ongoing joke that you joined Royal Mail as a woman to find a husband.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:25:12].

Katie Dunning:

As much as I tried to rebel against that. Yeah, my husband does work for Royal Mail. I did actually meet him through the union rather than in the workplace. So, yeah.

Speaker 1:

And so you've alluded to this a bit before, maybe we talked about before the interview. How was it like to be... I mean, generally, I suppose there's your specific kind of experience about generally about what you think it's like to be a woman in that workplace?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, it was tough. It was tough. I mean, the workplace around there was very male dominated. There was probably images you wouldn't see today in a workplace like calendars, things that probably The Sun newspaper published on a particular page in their paper that you'd see on work frames. That was all taken down. That was all removed.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:26:03].

Katie Dunning:

Page 3 girls. From The Sun, calendars.

Speaker 1:

Could you be a bit more explicit about what was in. I'll just [inaudible 00:26:13] as the children not know. What were the pictures of?

Katie Dunning:

Just topless women, topless women, but it's not very nice, and there'd be conversation sometimes by the men about those pictures. Then sometimes, because it was so male dominated, that they'd talk about things and probably not ideal to talk about in front of women. So I think it was a bit of a cultural change for men in the workplace. And I think, it's getting better because we've got more women now working in... Not saying it's totally eradicated. You do get... There are pockets of areas from places where that still goes on, but I think Royal Mail and the CW are trying to tackle that.

Speaker 1:

How did you deal with that in the early days? Then you're 19 and you've just moved into this male dominated.

Katie Dunning:

Like I said, fortunately, I had my two body guards working on my delivery-

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:27:04]

Katie Dunning:

Well, like I said, fortunately, I had my two body guards working in my delivery office, so I didn't get approached. I've witnessed other women coming into Royal Mail, and men will go "I wonder if she's single?" And I often used to say to them, well, why would she look at you with your receding hairline and your pot belly? I'm sure this young woman's not even going to be extremely, attracted by you at all.

Speaker 1:

So it's quite tough if you didn't have... you think It was quite tough if you didn't have your bodyguards as you put them.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. It's quite tough. But I still got that, there was a perception that a woman couldn't do the job. I think that was because women were always in mail centers. If you look at the delivery, there was a perception by the men that women could do this job. It's too tough. But as I said, I'm one of these people you tell me, I can't do something. I will prove to you whether it kills me, I will prove I can do it. So I guess it just takes a certain type of person. So a lot of the women you've found in deliveries kind of had the same attitude as me.

Speaker 1:

So I've got some questions about equipment. What sort of equipment did you use in your work?

Katie Dunning:

It was a mixture, actually. I used a mail sack, so your satchel, we had a two Panner and a three panner trolley then, we didn't have the HTT's and they were-

Speaker 1:

You have to give me-

Katie Dunning:

Okay, two panner, imagined two of the satchels on a red frame. And it would just have a handle, like an L handle. So you've got that if your duty was normally, so you're, familiar with the area. So like Henry Dickens estate, where you've got high rise flats, they wouldn't really get a lot of mail. So you didn't really need a big trolley. These all are like a smaller trolley. And you could get all the work into. Areas like your Holland Parks, your Addison Avenues. You're not in Notting Hill Gates were you've got firms, you've got high, high profile people, businesses, you get quite a lot of volume of work. You'd get a bigger trolley, but we've seen the items going through the mouth change. Obviously we've had a rise in, not a lot of people sending letters now because of the internet email, eCommerce-

Speaker 1:

It's just the equipment when you were 19, what else? So you had the trolley.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, the trolley. You had a two panner and your three panner, and the three panner was just an extended version. It just had another pouch at the front. You had, oh god, the vans. They were hilarious. I remember one day, my uncle coming in, he'd gone out to do a collection, an afternoon collection and came in and he brought the seat in, it run off the runner. They were so old the vans and they had these

side doors. It would just, you turn the corner really quick and they would just swish open. I mean, thank God we don't have those bands anymore, but we've got some really decent ones. But back in the day, yeah. You know how someone would question if they was actually roadworthy, but probably shouldn't say that. Should I? But yeah, they were awful.

So you'd have a rendezvous drivers we've called them rendezvous drivers. If your walk was quite far away from the office, you'd get a lift down there. They don't allow it now because you're not allowed to lift. Health and safety, you're not allowed to lift it a fully loaded trolley, but we used to lift the trolleys into the back of the van. And, Ginger, was his name. He was our rendezvous driver bless him and he'd drop us down.

Speaker 1:

Were there Nicknames?

Katie Dunning:

Oh yeah. I had one, but it didn't really stick. It was... John... what was his name... Georgie Bottrill gave me a mine. He called me Ada. I don't know an old fashioned name. Ada...

Speaker 1:

What other names were there?

Katie Dunning:

My uncle's name. Cause we've done him called him Dumpers. So he was known as Dumpers Allen Arnold was Arne. Ryan Wood was splinter, wood. Steve Murphy was Spud. Then we had Tommy Smith, Smudger. Colin Moffitt was Mufti. So you had to-

Speaker 1:

Okay, so just coming on from the question about the equipment. What about your uniform? What your uniform like?

Katie Dunning:

I had blue shore. We had, we had summer trousers and winter trousers. so ones were light, ones were quite heavy. They were nylon. So they used to give me spots to be honest. My manager was always telling me off about my trousers costs. I know you got to give me a rash for some reason, when you sweat in them, they used to give me a bit of a rash, like a heat rash. Not nice when you were a girl, when you want to wear your shorts in the summer. And it was a blue shirt, Ben Sherman shirts always the best. We had black Reebok classic trainers back then. And they done away with them not long after I joined. And then we've had Dr. Martins. I think that the army used to get the Dr. Martin. So we kind of used to get some of the stuff that the army... Cause walking shoes, we needed proper walking shoes.

So yeah. It was that, what else did we have? Oh, I can't remember what the jacket... the jackets, actually when I was on the uniform Steven group, I was trying to get these jackets back. We have these long blue jackets had really deep pockets, but you could zip the arms off so that it was like a gilet, is it a gilet? And they were lovely. I loved those. And they discontinued those I've cried from that happened. But yeah, the uniform was very male. It was, it was cut for men unless she was a woman with an aged 13 body shape. They didn't fit. And that was one of my bug bears working in Royal Mail is that really, you want to employ women, you've got to feminize the workplace. You've got to make women feel

welcome. And you do that by providing all women's uniform. They did have a maternity range, which was hilarious. They was more like pajamas, when I got pregnant with my first hide them. And the buttons kind of came up to my armpits because obviously it's men designing a maternity range. So I don't know how big they thought your belly got when you was 3/4 months. But, this, I ended up giving it to a guy called Sean Couples who was quite a big lad and he took them home. Said they were quite comfortable.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Now just going on to a bit of, you've kind of touched on some of this stuff, but I'm getting the detail on your actual working life. So you've talked about what you were learning when you were over that first six month. What are the skills generally you needed for your job. So we're talking about the early, and then we'll come to the union stuff later, but this is the work side of it.

Katie Dunning:

Basically reading and writing, and maths, I remember you did have an aptitude test actually, when you went to the school, it wasn't just sorting, and I remember doing an aptitude test, reading letters, looking at if there was a postcode, postcode, wasn't correct. What you would do with that. And you had a look-up book. That was Ginger's job. So if the letter wasn't written properly, if there was part of the address missing, and it was just the postcode, we had a little look-up book where you could look up the postcode and you can get the address. So that was Ginger's job. I'm sure it's still digitalized now, but a lot of the time you didn't need it.

Speaker 1:

The maths...

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. So the postman, I mean, they were brilliant. You could, if you just had a name, Tom Smith was great on the Holland park. If you just had a name, he knew where that person lived and that's because you had the same postman on the same round for so long. So the intelligence that you got by being on the same round around your customers, who are the people you need to check out, check in on, if there was a parcel or a letter that wasn't written properly, they would just look at the name go. "Yeah, I know where they live... they live in the basement at such and such street"

Speaker 1:

Okay. So describe just briefly go over in those early days, maybe when you were on your favorite walk, a typical day at work.

Katie Dunning:

a typical day at work for me would be going in, clearing because you'd have night staff. So there'd be some mail prepped already, you'd go in clear down the primary sorting frames. And then I'd start-

Speaker 1:

What does that mean?

Katie Dunning:

So the primary clear down would be, remember I said to you about how you would have streets on a particular round. So if you had letters, they would go in a pigeon hole. You'd have a frame with like 56 box frame fitting. I don't know if they've got them in the museum as an example, but each hole within that frame. So it'd be like, imagine a grid, it'd be like that. And each frame stood for a walk. So you'd have Ladbroke Square was number 26. I think. So if I had Ladbroke Square around a street name on Ladbroke Square, I'd stick it in that hole.

So I'd come in in the morning, I'd clear all the number 26 boxes, which was for my round. I'll take it to my workstation. And on my workstation was an RM 2000 frame. They call those. So it's pretty much the streets with all the numbers with fillets in. So you could put if it saw the mowing into the street and the door numbers. So that was the secondary sorting. So the primary sorting was putting into the round, the secondary sorting was sorting it up into the numerical order for the street. So I'd clear that down, go to my frame and start putting the letters in. And then we had door to doors. So I'd might put a few door to doors in leaflets used to get paid for those individually. If, and when you got them and election materials.

Speaker 1:

You mean you get paid extra?

Katie Dunning:

You used to get paid extra for election materials and door to doors. You still do for election materials, but not for door to door items, they're workload now. If you didn't want to do the door to door, sometimes the next postman next to you might be going on holiday next week. We'll say, "you going to do those door to doors, or do you want me to do them?" So when he'd finished his duty, he'd come back and walk around my round, delivering the leaflets. And then he'll claim my door to doors. You had to let the manager know you was doing that. You can't just do that off your own back. But you know, if you was a young person like me and didn't really care about another 15 quid and you'd much rather go out on a Saturday with friends, it was great, it was a bit of gambling money. That a lot of the postman used to go racing a lot together or golf. So yeah. Give them extra money for that. What was the question?

Speaker 1:

So you can see your typical day. You've just done the streets..

Katie Dunning:

So clear in frame it all up, and then you'll get Marta. That was her name, come out and say it was five past six and we'd sing our song. And then we'd be on the sort team with them for about 45 minutes until you cleared all of that work up. And then we'd sort it, all of the work up into our frames. You do redirection. So if people moved, you had these fillet cards on your frame and they'd have stickers and envelopes in. So if you had a letter you'd redirect, it can take that into the pigeon hole if you had any mis-sorts. So if you got a letter that weren't to your walk, you'd throw that back up. And then just before you went out, you'd have to clear that down again. So there wasn't any mail left behind you totally cleared the office and yeah. And then depending on what round I was on, So if I was in a round further away from the office, I'd go with ginger on a rendezvous van. Or I would just walk to the first delivery point and then that would be it you just crack round on your round. Come back.

Speaker 1:

What time would you start delivery?

Katie Dunning:

Depends what walk I was on probably about might be half seven. Yeah, half seven, maybe get back to the office about nine. You'd have your break. Everyone used to come back, you'd have to delivery them to come back and you'd have your meal break upstairs. And that's when you'd normally have union meetings or, we used to have pool tables up there. So you'd have pool table competitions. And if Lou, done a curry, gosh, you run around, your delivery really quick. Cause you had to get back before the Curry went.

Speaker 1:

Tell us about the canteen.

Katie Dunning:

So canteen was just, it was run by one woman, Lou, she was hilarious. It, depended on what mood she was. You could go up there and say, can I have beans on toast Lou? And then she'd serve egg, bacon chips and beans. But you don't say anything to her because she'd get cross.

But she was lovely. But when she made a curry, oh, her curries were the best you and I'd seen postmen. I remember I was delivering once in Portobello Court and I saw a colleague of mine, Bob, and he was racing down. He was racing away from the office and I said, where are you going? He went to the cash point, Lou's done a curry. I remember thinking, bloody hell, because we knew if there was a Curry, it wouldn't be that long. You'd get stuck with egg, chips, or whatever she wanted to dish you up. But if there was a curry, you had to get back to the office quick. Cause it will be gone by the time you got back.

Speaker 1:

Describe Lou for us.

Katie Dunning:

I don't know where she was from. I think she was West Indian, she was short very thick west Indian accent didn't take no nonsense, Crash banging around in the cafe. And then she left. She wasn't there long because she got ill. She had breast cancer and then we had Vicky. Vicky was lovely. I think she was African, but yeah, a lot of the cooks were from BAME and ethnic minorities and the cleaners

Speaker 1:

In the same way that the office reflected the area. I mean, cause obviously Ladbroke Grove, Notting hill was a very mixed area. It was not fair [inaudible 00:41:31] did the office reflect that as well?

Katie Dunning:

It did. When I was there like I said, there was a lot of BAME and minority we had [inaudible 00:41:39] from, but "yeah, you're talking to me", you know like yeah. Clarkey, he still works there. Clark is great. He was a driver. Yeah. We had a guy called Winston, bless him. He, he died on delivery. He had sickle cell did know, but he used to be a BMX champion. He was just such a Ray of sunshine that he'd never had a negative... I'd always come in. You could be in a really crap day and he'd put your arm around you and I really cheer you up. He was such a lovely fellow.

Speaker 1:

He died on delivery?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. He was really young. And he went out. I remember cause I spoke to him just before he left the office and we got a call into the office and I remember it was Bruce Rowe was our manager then.

And he went out on delivery and they found him slumped over a wall, outside Marley house on the Henry Dickinson state. That was his duty around there. It was the day before Valentine's day. And he come back and he just said, Winston, he's died. I was working in the callers office. I was working indoors and just couldn't believe it. I was just, I've only seen him an hour ago. I just spoke to him. But yeah, he passed, he had sickle cell. We didn't know he had the condition. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Oh.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. So it's really important that, you've raised awareness around the people get tested, make sure they know if they've got that because he could have prevented that.

Speaker 1:

Yeah Okay-

Katie Dunning:

and talented guy as well. I mean, he was a BMX champion for Britain, he raced internationally. He was so talented. It's such a shame, but...

Speaker 1:

What were your favorite things about [inaudible 00:43:25] what were your favorite things about your work?

Katie Dunning:

Just the social side of it. I think I've always been somebody that likes to give back to the community. It was nice working outdoors. I liked speaking to... I was actually having a conversation this week with my mom about one of the residents in Portobello Court. Cause you get some characters around Notting hill don't you, guy called jockey. He had mental health issues, but he lived in the... He's nice guy, a bit of a drinker, but, and he had a mouse infestation in his flat and had finished delivering Longsdale house and I'd come around the back and he'd moved all of his furniture from his front room outside and had an extension laid. Sitting in his arm chair with with a duvet cover and it been snowing the night before. And there was a layer of Snow and I was like "Jockey, what are you..?"because like I said, I talk to most of the customers. I knew their names well on the letters as well. I was like, Jockey, what are you doing? He was like, "I've got mouse. So if they've moved..." he had an Irish accents, I'm not even going to try and replicate it. But he was like, if the mice are moving in, I'm moving out. And so I remember taking him to the delivery of it back to the office with me because it's just across the road. And we having to ring the council and the environmental health and said I've worked for Royal Mail, you've got one of our

customers and they, they come and dealt with it. But I think if we didn't have that intervention or that community sort of relation, he'd probably be so sat outside there now with his duvet cover.

Speaker 1:

Okay. So what were the difficult things about... You talked a little bit about when you, you had a duty... you said you went down to one of the estates that you said was a bit... down towards Notting hill... the difficult things about your work.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. I think there's invisible lines in Notting hill. So you've got really affluent parts, like the Holland parks, you're Caroden Roads. And then if you've moved more towards, we call it Longsdale area so, like your Henry Dickens or, down by you get different types of customers. So you'd have what the social sort of things, if that you'll get people... We used to do for drivers. And so you'd walk down there, you get a bit fearful because you'd be like, I've got any dry roads you get followed. Mind you, you used to have post office, sorry, used to get post office police that would come out and keep an eye on you as well. So that was always comforting. But yeah, I can't remember what story did I tell you?

Speaker 1:

I think you just, sorry, let me look... You talked about the office, just kind of what you said really about feeling threatened at times when you-

Katie Dunning:

Yeah No. There was one Lancaster. I think I know a little about Grenfell. Grenfell estate was horrible to deliver to. And then you'd have like Lancaster west estate. Some of those have got bars in front of the doors. and really dark corridors. I don't know if they've done them up now, but when you know, young girl, 19 walking along those dark corridors, when they're people have got bars at their front doors, like a barred gate, you kind of think, Hmm. You know, this estate isn't safe. So I mean, I, wasn't that fearful because I kind of knew people. I went to school with people that lived in the estate and you kind of know people in the local community, but I guess if you were somebody that came from a different area, that would be quite a daunting experience when they're going into a block of flats where.... I never used to like to live with it, Grenfell tower.

Didn't like to deliver to Grenfell tower, it was just, it was creepy. So it was like a one way you just kept having to go down... I didn't like the lift. The lift was really small so I can understand the difficulties when the fire happened four year ago. And why people struggled to get out of that building because it just wasn't, the stairway, the lifts...well you couldn't use the lift in a fire anyway, but even the staircases were ready narrow. And it was like, it was like, dead-ends you imagine a U shape.

Speaker 1:

What about the whole thing about stereotypical thing everyone thinks about in terms of dogs and postal workers?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, there was a dog. Some dogs were really okay. Some dogs, they used to be on our station, I call it our station in Westbourne Park Road that in the basement, every day I would forget that it was out and you

come down at the window, but there was a dog and I'll never forget this dog. It was like a Lassie dog. What do you call those?

Speaker 1:

Collie.

Katie Dunning:

Collie in St. Luke's muse. And you'd go in and it'd always be sat by the front doors it was dead old. But I think when I spoke to the owner, it had cancer and it had its voice box taken away, but I didn't know, it was just. So I walked in and it was like, (coughing) there was no noise. (coughing) It was just like air, I said, it sounds horrible. Cause you shouldn't laugh at things like that.

But I couldn't stop laughing I was thinking, oh my God. I was quite scared when I walked through the gate. Cause I've not approached the dog before. But when I spoke to the owner, she said it been ill and it had the voice box taken away.

Speaker 1:

Were you ever bitten by a dog?

Katie Dunning:

I did actually, it was in I'm sure it was the in Cath Kidston. It was when Cath Kidston became... it weren't Cath Kidston it was opposite, it was along that muses Ledbury Must north or west, there was a firm and they just had a child gate and I went to give the letters and they just come up and nipped me, I didn't draw blood, but I didn't... There had been postman had been properly bitten. I mean, I just had a neck, but yeah, she kind of blamed me.

Speaker 1:

Did she?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

This was Cath Kidston?

Katie Dunning:

No it wasn't Cath Kidston. Cath Kidston had, before she became famous, she had a little place down, one of the muses where she used to start her work from. But I think it was opposite. It was opposite. I'm not... Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

Katie Dunning:

Woman with long blonde hair, Yeah. She nipped me and she said, "oh, you shouldn't have put your arm over the fence."

Speaker 1:

So you touched on this a little bit, but, and I think we'll talk about it more in the union work. Cause I think it comes in there. But within your working level, tell us about any discrimination that you experienced or witnessed.

Katie Dunning:

Oh, So we did have, there was in the office. So a lot of the BAME and ethnic minority groups would work together, like they'd sign for duties where they all worked together. And there was comments made sometimes about it being the black corner, but that kind of disappeared when certain individuals left the business. If you know what I mean? What was the question again about discrimination? So for me, I experienced discrimination when I got pregnant, I was starting, it was actually cause I was studying for a union role. I was told that I couldn't do the union role because I was pregnant. And there was this perception that I would never come back. It was even from the business, she's pregnant now she'll go on maternity leave and she won't come back. And I'm sure there must've been women that may have done that, but to generalize me and to think that, just because I'm pregnant, that's it, I'm not going to be able to do any work. And I'm useless to everybody in the office and that once I've had this child, I'm not going to come back. And once again, I proved them all wrong.

Speaker 1:

Did you have to fight that day?

Katie Dunning:

So no I'm quite vocal. So, I give as well as I get kind of nipped it in the bud at the beginning, challenged it. And then if they did say it, they didn't say it to my face.

Speaker 1:

I'll ask you a bit about your work on the marriage part in a minute, but I'll come to that. Okay. So next one is, talk us briefly through the different jobs. While you're at Royal Mail before moving up to union is the later, but you talk us briefly about the jobs, different jobs you did?

Katie Dunning:

I just did it. Oh, I done deliveries. I did postman's higher grade. They call it now you don't call it that now because they've regraded everyone. But it was basically working in the caller's office. So that was people coming to collect parcels, dealing with custom charged items that hadn't been paid, getting things back out for redelivery, where customers have asked for things to be redelivered. Then it was a rotational thing you then go into next, the following week, you'd go into the key cage where you'd issue out all the special delivery. So it was your job to sort all the special deliveries and scan them, which was probably the introduction of track and trace and things now. So you'd issue all those out to drivers. You get a lot of abuse of people going "look how much I've got", and anything more than two would be a lot in those days that have a nightmare.

Now some of the old postman, if they see that the amount of volumes of work you get now, but yes, I work on that. And then on the third week you do like the balance, like the, manpower sort of

thing. It did, computer work and kill off all the dead items that, you couldn't find addresses for. They'd all go to Belfast or had a conversation with my mum actually this week she asked me what, what happens to mail if you can't deliver it, it goes to Belfast. If it hasn't got returned address, it used to go to Belfast and they open it up to see if there is something. And if not, I think it just gets destroyed. I think they've got like this special, Special ops Place where... Yeah, we used to just back it all up. It would just go to Belfast. They'd have to clear it out the office. You couldn't keep it anything longer than three weeks.

Speaker 1:

So the next one was, tell us about your favorite job, but you've spoken about that already about delivery. So how about, you talked about the seniority side already, but how did, how did I suppose this is a personal question, but also a general question about how people progressed at Royal Mail?

Katie Dunning:

So you've progressed.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:54:04]

Katie Dunning:

So you progressed. There wasn't really an appetite to go into management, I think. We used to have a joke actually, we used to say that a lot of the managers were foul postman and they couldn't do the job. So, I think it was probably a bit generic. I think a lot of managers, their home lives, finance, probably pushed them in that direction. But there wasn't really much of an appetite for people to become managers. The pay was good. The conditions were good. The work-life balance was good. There was always this thing, why would you want to progress? Quite happy with the level of responsibility that you had.

I've forgotten the question, I tend to do this.

Speaker 1:

Just how people progressed.

Katie Dunning:

So, the only way you could truly progress, was by getting yourself a nice walk. And you did that for whenever there was changes made in the office. So obviously like any company, Royal Mail would approach the union every year and ask for financial savings. And normally that was done by reducing the number of walks. So you'll remember I said to you, we had 46, 47 walks when I first started Notting Hill delivery office. I'm not sure what it is today, possibly around 16, the 17 mark. So it's more than halved.

Speaker 1:

So 46, 47 walks would be 46, 47 people doing that delivery, would it?

Katie Dunning:

No, you'd have 47 walks a bit round. So there'd be 47 different rounds. And you'd probably say, you could have two or three streets on your round. So you'd have 47 people against each walk. So to make savings, they would take streets and put it onto a different walk. And basically dissolve one of the

rounds. So they'd put some streets on it, on different walks and get rid of that duty. So that was a person gone.

And then people would be offered voluntary retirement. So when people left or if people left and they hadn't advertised the position, it would just naturally disappear. So once there was that kind of exercise in the office, you then had to resign. So it allowed everyone to cycle, because all the duties had changed. And the senior person might think, Oh, this duty, which used to be quite good, actually isn't anymore. And I want to sign for a duty that's easier.

So you'd have a resign. And so you could sign for a walk. If it came down to you on the seniority list, you could actually get off that reserve board and get yourself in. It's a bit like the property market really, isn't it? It's trying to get onto the property market, off that reserve. Pulled off that rental market and trying to get into ownership. Yeah. It was pretty much like that. So that's how you progressed there.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

Katie Dunning:

Oh, actually I think they used to have, which Royal Mail are bringing back now, the apprenticeship scheme. So there was a lot of apprenticeship schemes around. I didn't get involved in that. But they were around, apprenticeship schemes. And I know Royal Mail and CWU from working to reintroduce that. So hopefully, kids today will be able to join those apprenticeship schemes and get involved in, get jobs in Royal Mail.

Speaker 1:

So there were apprenticeship schemes that you were joined as a postal worker?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. And a lot like Ginger. Ginger, you used to talk about, he'd been there 50 years. He'd been a cadet. He started off in the cadets. He's no longer with us. He would have been a great person for you to interview. You would have loved him.

Yeah. So you had apprenticeship schemes. I'm not too sure how they worked out. Because like I say, I came through a different channel. But from what I hear, they were really successful. And then for some reason, Royal Mail did away with them. But I know our national postal executive have been working with the new CEO. And they're reintroducing those, as we speak. So, really good for youngsters today when they leave school. Were you've got opportunities for them there. So there's hope.

Speaker 1:

Ginger had started as an apprentice?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, he started off as a cadet boy, just telegram boy. Telegrams, the cadets. So I'm not sure how that worked. Because I wasn't really that interested in [crosstalk 00:58:19]. So you'll probably know about that. You probably know more than me.

Speaker 2:

Cadets are the one after telegram boys. Telegram boys, cadet.

Katie Dunning:

Well, he was a telegram boy, Ginger. Yeah. I probably should have give you Ray Dunning, well he's not no relation. But it was his son-in-law, who was my branch secretary. Probably should have give him a call. I don't know if you've interviewed him. I did put it on the website now. But he would have been a great person to interview. But it's another Royal Mail you was looking for.

Speaker 1:

Well no. Just general [inaudible 00:58:56].

Okay. You talked a bit about this already, but we've got the section on social life here. Tell us about your relationship with colleagues. You've already said that, really. What about some of the biggest centers, like Mount Pleasant, had clubs and stuff like that. Did you join any clubs at Notting Hill?

Katie Dunning:

We had the sports and social club. We had a Friday club that we used to just basically go to the pub after work, which was quite funny. Because you see all different sides of your friends when they've had a drink, don't you? So, Friday was a ritual of, after you finished a delivery, we would go to Norfolk. Which was just a couple of doors down. We'd have a drink. And then it was often times, I took all the postman back to my grounds for a fried egg sandwich. Once we'd had a drink, she loved it. She thought I was her boys.

Speaker 1:

Okay. There are a few questions on social, but I think you've covered them all, really.

Katie Dunning:

So, yeah. I know some delivery offices, like Kensington delivery office, which was used to be just by [inaudible 01:00:02], on Kensington and High street, had a bar. Paddington had a bar. And there's often stories of where, wives have actually turned up to the office to get their husbands home. Because they haven't come home after. Because they used to get paid cash in hand, before everyone had bank accounts.

But they used to queue up and get their money, or so I'm told, from the PHG. And then they'd all hit up in the bar. And often there are stories of wives walking up demanding the salary, before their husbands drink it all in the post office bar. Before my time. I missed out. Socially, I remember organizing. I got quite heavily involved in the local gym, at Port [inaudible 01:00:51].

And I remember organizing the paintballing sessions. It was like the postal workers against the 18 professionals from the gym. And we won, because we had this teamwork. So, when we went to do the paintballing, because we kind of operated as a team. The action men, we called them from the gym, were very much, Look at me, look at me. And we got them all too. It was quite funny, to be honest. And we would go up there and then it was all like, "We're going to thrash you. We're fitter than you, we're at the gym six days a week".

Speaker 1:

And it was the postal worker's team?

Katie Dunning:

The postal worker's teamwork, yeah. Defeated them. So, that was fun.

Speaker 1:

Okay. We'll go on to the union side of things. So what made you join the union?

Katie Dunning:

My uncle told me to. It's simple, with a simple answer. I joined Royal Mail and joined the pension scheme, on the same day. So it was when you signed your contract. Your manager says, "Sign that, it's for your pension". And then I came out and then my uncle said to me, "Have you joined the union?" And I didn't have a clue. I was brought up in an education system of the factory years, no milk. So I had no clue about what a trade union was. So my uncle said, "Have you joined the CWU?" And I was like, "What's that?" And he's like, "trade union". And I was like, "What do they do?" And he goes, "Join them. Because if you get into trouble, you'll need them". So I joined the union, seeing it as a security blanket, as an insurance. I didn't have any intentions of getting involved in it.

To me, it was just a bit like an endowment escape or something, that I was paying into. I was 19, I was naive. And then I was covering the Holland Park. There was a Holland Park One, and Holland Park Two. I was covering the Holland Park One of the Holland Parks, for quite a long time. And the guy that worked, because the guy was off sick. And the guy that worked next to me, Steve Murphy [inaudible 01:02:59], was the rep. And we kind of became friends. I smoked back then. So I would go out and have a cigarette, a cup of tea, outside the front of the office. And he would just talk to me about what was going on in the union and things. A lot of it went over my head, if I'd be perfectly honest. But he was going on leave, on holiday for a couple of weeks.

And he asked me to cover him. And I was like, Oh God, please don't ask me. I really didn't want to do it. He's like, "No, you just need to be my eyes and ears". And I found there was the power for me. Well, it wasn't the power. It was having a voice. So being part of the decision-making. Say, you'd go in, in the morning, you'd look at the coverage. Because obviously, we're governed by the USO. Which means we have to deliver to every single address.

Speaker 1:

What does USO stand for?

Katie Dunning:

Universal Service Obligation. I think that's currently being reviewed at the minute by Ofcom. But we have a legal duty in law, that we have to deliver to every single address, six days a week. And if we failed that, we get fined. And if we got fined, we used to get a bonus, a PBS bonus. You wouldn't get the bonus. But there was things clawed into it. The manager would get in trouble. And no one wanted to do that. The company would get fined. So we had to make sure the USO was done.

I've gone off track again.

Speaker 2:

You were just talking about joining the union and power. Not power, but being involved.

Katie Dunning:

Having a voice and having been part of the decision making. In fairness, I think everyone should be treated the same. There should be no favoritism in any way, in the office. And sometimes that happens because of the dynamics of the office. Because you had family members. Especially if the manager was related to somebody in the office. They'd always get the holiday leave that they wanted, for instance. So, I'm still very passionate about everybody being given the same opportunities to be treated fairly.

So that enabled me to have that influence. So you would work with the manager to make sure that all the walks were covered. Make sure that overtime went out on the board. Just making sure everything was tickety-boo in the office. But I got the bug. So when I came back, I didn't want to give him the power back. So he made me the deputy rep spot. And if it wasn't for spot, [inaudible 01:05:23], to be honest, I probably wouldn't have got involved in the union.

And he made me the health and safety rep, as well. So yeah, started off there. And then I stood in an election in 2005, against the area health and safety rep. Bottom line was, I didn't think he was doing the job very well. Not a lot of it. He was supposed to go around and do quarterly inspections. You only ever saw him in an election period, apart from that. As somebody that was supposed to be working on doing the... there was no engagement. So, somebody is not doing the job. What do you do? Stand against them. So I didn't expect to get the role. I basically did it to give a bit of a kick up the bum. To say, you've gotten complacent. And there are people that will challenge you. But obviously the whole area felt the same way I felt.

And I won by I think, 11 votes or something and I was pregnant. So there was this whole thing that, Oh, what? It was scandalous. This young girl who's pregnant, has took out the... whose name was Collin. Has took out Collin, who's been the area safety rep for 35 years. This is scandalous. This can't happen. So yeah, had that. But again, me being me, proved everybody wrong. And I've done that role for 20 years, as the area self-direct.

At the same time, I sat on the Women's National Advisory Committee. So that's the national level of the union. I've done loads of stuff. Spoke at labor party conference to UC, now. I've been the assistant regional secretary. And now I work as a policy assistant in the Quality Education and Development department at the CWU.

So, worked my way up in the ranks. Hard work. In between all that, I did, through the union, thanks to the CWU. Cheers. I did a Bachelor's degree in international trading, in international labor markets and trade union studies. And that was funded by the CWU. So they gave me a second opportunity in education. Because I didn't really leave school with much. And through the union I've been able to get up to a level six BA degree.

Speaker 1:

When did you do that?

Katie Dunning:

I did that at Ruskin College. I graduated in 2018, so fairly new. And I never let anybody forget, in five years of me studying that, that I was studying it. Because every time I opened my mouth was like, "I don't know if you know this, but I'm studying for a degree at Ruskin College".

Speaker 1:

So, the next question, how did the union play in your life? But I think you've kind of [crosstalk 01:08:14].

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. So, I've been all the way through. I've always tried to make sure, especially on the safety side, that my members came to work in the conditions that they left work. So in the conditions that they came in. And try to keep the environment as safe as proper, working with management. Especially around the changes, some of the changes they introduced. They needed a lot of help.

But I've always been very passionate about women's place in that particular industry. Because we are poorly represented, even on the managerial side. And it's been a struggle. I think there has been a slow progression for change. I still think there's a long way to go. And the only way you can do that is, by youngsters today. Keep driving that through, because that's the only way it's going to change.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I got a bit more I want to ask you about the union stuff, the second part, I just want to get you to talk a bit about how, so you're working and you're the local union rep. And then you became health and safety rep, as well. How did that work in terms of your duties with Royal Mail?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, so you get full release. It's in legislation. You get time facilities, paid time facilities to carry out your union duty. So, I was given full time release. Part of my role as the health and safety rep, was to go around different workplaces. And this is where, when I started to visit Paddington, [inaudible 01:09:47], Chizik, all of the different delivery offices and carry out routine inspections. And then, you'd work with management to try and bring things up to legal, well, there'll be a legal standard, but you want them to excel. You'd sit on health and safety committees, you'd be part of. And if there was change introduced, you had to make sure that whatever would happen in, that my members were safe. And that the conditions that you left the changes in, we're going to be safe.

And there were times where we'd had a leak. Some of the buildings are so old and as much as Royal Mail used to try and invest and try and keep... it was pretty much putting plasters over cracks. Because a lot of the buildings are historical and heating systems don't work. Or the heating system, they don't make the part for that particular. And it's just throwing loads. It was ridiculous amounts of money you'd have to throw at it. And I'm sure that the business still have those struggles today. But they are quirky, lovely little buildings. You usually want to try and keep them. Because they are part of the history of certain communities, aren't they?

Speaker 1:

Well, linked to that, I suppose there's a double question. How did it feel leaving your family at Notting Hill behind?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, it was awful. I was torn. I was excited to start a new role. But I think at the same time, I didn't want to leave my little family. And they was like, "You'll never come back, you'll never come back". And I was like, "I will. I'll come and visit you all the time". But I think it's a bit like when you leave home, isn't it? You, "I'll come back and I'll visit every week and I'll come for Sunday lunch". But it starts to deteriorate over the years.

So yeah, it was a difficult transition. It was all more difficult that I was a new mom. So trying to balance being a parent with this additional responsibility. To be honest, looking back, the release time gave me a lot of flexibility. Because I'd gone from being a 5:30 employee, to 1:30. When I got the area rich job, I covered all functions of the business.

So I'd have to cover nights, sometimes. You'd have to do the late shift sometimes. So, with a child, I was able to schedule my own diary. So if I couldn't get childcare on a particular day in the morning, then I'd go in work later on. And carry out an inspection in the distribution or in the late shift. Or in the night, I'd go in on the night shift sort of thing. So it gave me that flexibility. It helped me in a way. And it also helped me push the women's initiative. I remember setting up a forum in Notting Hill, with one of the female managers, Paula. She still works in West Kensington. We set up a woman's forum. Where I did, in a few words, a manager, CWU, we came together. We gave women opportunities.

So there was a time where, they was recruiting a lot of coaches, to become a coach. To train new people in the company. And if you looked across the demographics of who those coaches were, they're were predominantly men. So we noticed that, me and Paula. And we was like, Right, we're going to make this forum. We're going to invite all these women and we're going to find out what are women's issues in the workplace? And it was things like not having toilet facilities. Not having sanitary provisions in the toilets, simple things. Uniforms, not being given any job opportunities like the coaching. Now, the coaching came with an additional payment. So really, all these women are being excluded from actually potentially earning more earning.

So we highlighted that and we gave women a voice. We gave them opportunities to apply for jobs. We gave them information about women's role in the company and in the union. Because we've got a whole equality sector, where we campaign. CWU had been heavily campaigning for free period products, for the last few years. And hopefully, the business will start to do what other companies do. Like BT, where they're providing free sanitary products for their female workers. We want the business to do the same. I don't see why they can't. But like I say, all these things will help the next generation of workers, won't they?

Speaker 1:

So that's a lot of the stuff going on.

Katie Dunning:

Well, it's been going on the last probably, decades. I'd say, we've been pushing.

Speaker 1:

So then, there were the more dramatic clashes between CWU and Royal Mail. [crosstalk 01:14:40]

Katie Dunning:

I think every two years. I think when I sat down one day and I had a look at when we'd been in dispute, it always seemed to be in an odd year. So the odd year is like 2011, 2013, 2009, 2007. If you go back, it isn't an even year. We're all, Come by our end. But on the odd year, yeah. I don't know why that is. But there's a pattern that has formed. So yeah, we've had many disputes.

Speaker 1:

What kinds of disputes?

Katie Dunning:

So I remember there was a London dispute, where we walked out on London weighting. So, they didn't want to increase the London weighting. And I think that I wasn't involved. Was I involved? I think I was involved. But I didn't really know too much about why we was going out, at the time.

I knew it was to do with London weighting. We went out and we tried to get support from the rest of the country. It happened in the end, but it was a long process. A lot of the disputes have been around an erosion of our terms, and conditions, and pay. Pensions has been a contentious issue all the time. And we've gone from, when I first joined, having the best pension scheme, to probably having one of the worst. Because there was a black hole in our pension scheme for such a long time.

And just automation, privatization, liberalization. It's all had an impact onto the industry. The children probably won't understand that terminology will they? So I think a combination of things. And now that we're privatized, it's continuous need for profit, to keep making money. Although we're already a profitable company. It's just, where does that profit come from? If people aren't mailing letters. It's got to come from staffs. So you get rid of your staff. People aren't only money. You're not putting that back into the economy, so it doesn't work. But that's something bigger than Royal Mail, isn't it? That's just my, my view.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. What about union membership among Royal Mail workers now?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. If we look at union membership as a whole, it's been declining, hasn't it? Ever since the factory years. So I think, we're no different. That trend is reflective in our membership. We have lost members. We've gone from a union that was 200,000 plus strong. I think we're now at 197, just nearly under 190,000.

Speaker 1:

What's that in percentage terms? How many Royal Mail workers in the CWU?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, I don't know Royal Mail workers. Let me think off the top of my head. I'm normally quite good for statistics, but I can't think. I can get you that information if you want it.

Speaker 1:

But it's some of the older people we talk to, talked about being a closed shop. You had to be in the union, whereas now...

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, so that was because of legislation. So over the last few decades, it's mostly been to where governments have tried to suppress workers' rights. Workers being able to fight for better rights under the anti-trade union laws. So I can't remember, I think was nine... don't quote me the years. I can get you the actual dates. I'm terrible, memory is going shot.

But it used to be a closed shop. You had to join a union. And then there was legislative changes where it wasn't a closed shop. And recently, I think 2006, when there was the new anti-trade union laws that made it really difficult now to go out on an industrial action. So you have to have a fresh hold on

your ballots, over 50%. But over 80% have had to vote. They've made it really difficult for workers in this country, to defend themselves against exploitative employers.

Speaker 1:

And what impact would you say that's had on the ability of the CWU to represent?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, it's made our members angry. I think the more governments behave that way. The more you try and bully us into a corner and say, "You won't have a say and you won't be able to defend yourself. And we will exploit you and we will treat you like crap". The more people naturally are going to rebel against that. You're going to say, "Well, no, you're taking a bit of the mick. We're not going to stand for that".

And I've always been really proud of the CWU. That we're a fighting union and that we don't take the crap. And we do challenge. And we do have this attitude, that against all odds, sort of attitude. What have we got to lose, sort of attitude. Which has always helped, I think. Much to lots of CEO's disarray. I mean, the CO we've got now is great. But his predecessor was awful. What was his name? Rico Back. He lived in Sweden. Wouldn't even acknowledge us or talk to us. We were nothing.

Speaker 1:

And now?

Katie Dunning:

And now the government got rid of him. Now we've got Stewart. Who seems a pretty nice guy. We'll see. We'll see how things go.

Speaker 1:

How's the relationship between Royal Mail and the CWU now?

Katie Dunning:

I think it's better now than it has been in the last few years, I think. Yeah, definitely. Let's hope it stays that way.

Speaker 1:

Right. We're getting towards the end of it, now. Just a few more questions. So, changes with the Royal Mail. So, over your working life, what was the main changes that have happened with Royal Mail. That could be questioned in that?

Katie Dunning:

I think the major change is privatization. We've gone from being a public service, who you put the public at the heart of your concerns. To a privatized service now, that is looking just to drive that profit margin at any cost. Even if it means a detriment to the quality of service to the public.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:21:04]

Katie Dunning:

Of service to the public. I don't know what the new CEO's strategy is because obviously I'm not in the industrial area anymore, but previously a lot of the business strategy was aimed towards splitting it up, which happens in a lot of privatization.

If you look at BT or British Gas, they break down and sell off parts of the company, the profitable parts. And then you're left with a dysfunctional service that the public end up paying twice as much money for and because we have that close connection to the community we don't want our customers having to foot the bill, to put that profit into billionaire's hands, because let's be frank, that's where most of the profits goes. It goes to dividends and shareholders. It doesn't go back into the public coppers.

So I think there was a lot of wrongdoing I feel. Personally, of course, I'd love to have seen Royal Mail back into the public hands, renationalized.

I think there's a lot of services that the public benefit from that I think should be renationalized. I think, Royal Mail and BT, especially with COVID. And we've seen the role that Royal Mail and BT have paid in keeping us all connected. I think there is a massive argument. It's just whether or not there's the political will and appetite to do so.

Speaker 1:

What ways would you say that the job has improved for anyone? It could be particular groups, you mentioned the work you've done around women, in what ways has it improved?

Katie Dunning:

Oh, that's a quite difficult question. I think it's improved for the customer in that it's a bit more transparent. They're able to see where their packages are. I don't know if it's improved that much for members, I think they're struggling with the race against technology.

We're humans, we're not technologies, we're not robots and I don't think it's unique to Royal Mail. I think it's just something across the labor market where we're seeing employers pitting abilities against technology, and we can't work as fast as technology.

There's no room for human error. There's no room if you're ill, if you've got a disability. They just want people to work harder and faster for longer at a cheaper price.

Speaker 1:

What's happened to your Notting Hill office?

Katie Dunning:

It's not the job. That when I was talking to you about the song singing, the happiness, I feel like before I left Royal Mail, people feel like they've had the wind pumped out of them. It's not the job. They don't get the enjoyment. You used to look forward to going to work. You used to want to go to work.

Now you wake up knackered, tired. Your rounds have got longer. It's much more pressure on the job. And I know they're working towards at the minute, but there's massive bullying culture in Royal Mail, and they're trying to change the culture. Let's hope they do.

Speaker 1:

Bullying from who?

Katie Dunning:

It comes from managers but a lot of that comes from the pressures that they're put on from above. And again, it's that race for efficiency, basing it against technology. "Got to go faster, faster, faster," it just don't have the resources or you don't have the people there to work to do at those levels, but they don't want to invest. So it creates that culture, doesn't it?

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

Katie Dunning:

Stress, probably.

Speaker 1:

So the next question is, in what ways has it got worse, but you've kind of spoken about that.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

What's happened to your Notting Hill office now?

Katie Dunning:

It's a coffee shop I think. It's a coffee shop.

Speaker 1:

What happened? Tell us the story of that.

Katie Dunning:

They closed the post office next door first, which was a Crown Post Office. And then we stayed there, I think for about 10 years after. So it was part of Royal Mai's drive to... They argued that a lot of our offices were not fit for purpose anymore.

The mail's volumes were going up. Yes, West 11's office was particularly small. We didn't have a loading bay. There was a bus stop right outside. It was probably ideal back in the 1950s when people used to get a little bit of mail.

But as the business argued that a lot of our delivery offices were not fit for purpose. There was a view by many that it was because we were situated in inner London and we got an inner London payment.

So you get different bands of pay for London weighting and we argued that, well, actually you want to shut these buildings down because they was all in inner London and places in Park Royal where it is now, Premier park, so that you don't have to pay that extra payment and they could sell off the buildings.

They'd argued that they'd been offered, I think they said they'd been offered a couple of million for Notting Hill, fortunately, I had a friend who works at the local council, told me that, well, there would be an appeal because it was a stage two listed building.

And so there was some environmental people as well because there's trees and stuff outside, so it had actually been on hold so a lot of the stuff Royal Mail was telling us wasn't quite correct.

Speaker 1:

Was that whole process to sell off the little offices?

Katie Dunning:

They were worth money. So again, when it was privatized, you got to make money, haven't you? So sell off those buildings, relocate us in somewhere else, you've made a bit of a profit. That's my view, whether that was the business case was that those buildings weren't fit for purpose and that there was moving us to a beautiful new location in Premier Park, which is situated in Northwest London.

We argued that it would be detrimental to the public because they'd have to wait longer because we've now got a 30 minute journey before we first letter through the door. But it was what it is.

They told us the buildings had been sold and we had to move anyway.

Speaker 1:

How did you feel when you first heard they've been sold?

Katie Dunning:

It was awful. It's a bit like your family home, isn't it You do get attached to certain places. There was history in that building. There was stories in that building. Do you know what I mean?

Monday even when I went to Reading and I had to go to Paddington, I walked past and I saw big high rise block of flats in [inaudible 01:28:09] and it got me there. I thought, "Oh."

Sorry, it got me here because it was like, "Oh, it's just horrible not to see that mail center building there anymore," but I guess I'm just getting old probably.

Speaker 1:

Okay. What would you think if one of your kids wanted to work with Royal Mail now?

Katie Dunning:

Hmm, I don't know. I've always tried to work with the company to make Royal Mail an environment where I'd want my children to work there.

It depends. If the CEO would like to improve the culture and up the pay and maybe provide more opportunities for progression, then maybe I'd say, "Yeah, go and join the Royal Mail." But at the moment, let's see what happens I think. At the moment I'm borderline.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Ties into the next question. If you were the boss of Royal Mail, what changes would you make?

Katie Dunning:

I'd renationalize it, to be honest. If I was CEO of Royal Mail what changes would I'd make? Let's see. Well, I would properly train all of my managers. I'd invest in training across the board I think.

I would make sure that workers had a voice and that they were properly listened to. I'd give more power to local managers so they could make proper decisions, informed decisions and have more power.

I think it's become too centralized to the point where not one size fits all. So if that was me, that would be where I start. I'd be decentralizing a lot of the stuff and putting that power back in the local office and making sure that workers are part of that change. I think that's what I would do. But more money definitely, yeah.

Speaker 1:

Looking back over your working life. What has working for Royal Mail, what's that meant for you?

Katie Dunning:

So proud. Growing up if someone asked me what my occupation was and I said, "I worked for the Royal Mail." I was proud to work for the Royal Mail.

When I joined you was taught I want to find it, and I don't know if I can get my hands it, on the training pack. They taught you the history of Royal Mail.

About the Penny Post, about postmasters and the historical developments of the Royal Mail, our heritage. So you was proud, you worked for a company that went right back to the 1800s and things like that.

And because we was a public service company, when you joined you had to sign something to say that if you were caught stealing or taking people's mail, that you would be given a heavier sentence.

So you felt important. You was proud to work for this company and you were part of their brand and you was in the community, you was trusted. It was great. I loved working for Royal Mail, really did. It made me, whoever that is.

Speaker 1:

That's brilliant. I've got a couple of notes that I'm going to ask you a couple more things on in a second, but yeah, the children always [inaudible 01:31:41] thank you very much for answering the questions. If there's anything else you want to talk about we've not covered in our questions.

Katie Dunning:

Not really. Hopefully I'll get to meet them, but yeah.

Speaker 1:

You will do.

Katie Dunning:

I'd love to have got their perspective on what they thought of the Royal Mail.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. We'll see, but obviously COVID's complicated but we'll see what we can do next. Sam, is there anything you want me to ask?

Just a couple of things that made notes on here. So you were on the round for seven years. How long were you on the round for?

Katie Dunning:

I think I was on rounds for 10 years.

Speaker 1:

Even the story about Tony Benn.

Katie Dunning:

Oh yeah, Tony. So Tony-

Speaker 1:

You have to say Tony Benn.

Katie Dunning:

Oh, so Tony Benn, yeah. Lived on one of the rounds I used to do. And I'll tell you a story actually. I remember walking down I won't mention the street because I'm not sure if I'd get into trouble if I let where he lived, but I was walking down the street and I saw some officials outside his property and I thought, "Oh, something's going on there."

And as I approached near, right, Tony was talking to these two people, they was obviously from the local council, as I got nearer. And they'd actually been a homeless person who had been sleeping rough in Tony's front garden and some of his neighbors had phoned up the local council to complain about this homeless person.

And Tony was arguing with the local authorities, saying it was his property and he had no problem with him on his property but they was arguing saying that they had to take him away.

So Tony actually moved him in and said, "Well, I'm taking him indoors. You find him somewhere to stay." And I just thought, "What a nice guy, how many people would do that?"

But yeah, whenever we went out on strike, he would visit our picket lines. He'd come down and see the boys and girls on the picket line, well girl, on the picket line. Buy cups of tea and then even me or my delivery rep he'd get in the car and they would take him round all the other picket lines.

But he was there every time we went out on strike, he was there. But again, that was because I think he had a connection with the Royal Mail because he was postmaster general. I can't remember what year it was. And like I said to you, he was responsible for removing the Queen's head and having pictures on stamps.

Speaker 1:

Why did he do that?

Katie Dunning:

I don't know the reasons around it. He just tells me the story that he went to meet the Queen and I think he'd spoken about trying to get these pictures and he was told that it wasn't advisable. The Queen wouldn't want that.

And he'd gone to meet the Queen for some other reason and taken all of these pictures, we know pictures on a stamp and showed them to her, and she was like, "Oh yeah, these are wonderful. These are wonderful."

And he kind of negotiated from there, came out of that meeting, negotiated from there that he'd got it agreed that her head would come off and that they'd start putting pictures on stamps. I think it was more for monetary, isn't it? Because you can get payments so it was probably to boost the profits.

But it was a good idea, Tony. It's worked a treat, especially for the stamp collectors out there.

Speaker 1:

So. I think I could ask you, you've talked about-

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, there's loads of famous people all around there. I think Damon Albarn for awhile lived above our delivery office from Blur.

Speaker 1:

Would you get to know him?

Katie Dunning:

I used to see him some mornings. He'd come out on his scooter and he'd fly down to the local newspaper. There's lots of faces. Robbie Williams, we had Geri Halliwell for a while. There's loads around there, loads.

Speaker 1:

Do you feel some responsibility to preserve their privacy? How does that work?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, I wouldn't never. We always were told we couldn't give out, it's personal information, isn't it? So if anyone asked where such and such live, you're not allowed to tell them where people live.

Equally, you're not allowed to give people mail in the street without any idea. Or when they come to collect a parcel.

Penny Smith once come to pick a parcel up and because I worked mornings, I didn't know who she was. She was I think she was a news reports, wasn't she? On GMTV and she came up, she said, "Do you who I am?" And I was like, "No. You need ID."

And there was another guy, I think he was a cricket captain for England. I can't remember, Jonathan something, is it? And I remember my uncle, he was in hysterics because I was at the callers office and he came up to get his parcel, and I asked him for ID and my uncle was like talking to me at the time.

And he went, "Don't you know who that is?" I was like, "No." He was like, "It's the cricket captain for England." And I was like, "I don't know him." And they was all laughing at me. I was asking all these people for ID's but they were famous and I was supposed to know them.

Speaker 1:

Are there any history questions? Do we want any contextual stuff and edit in-

Katie Dunning:

I've got some stuff that I've done. Like I said, I can send you that stuff about the marriage bar.

Speaker 1:

When did the marriage bar end?

Katie Dunning:

We'll have a look on there.

Speaker 1:

Roughly? Was it living memories?

Katie Dunning:

No. I think 1960s, I think or sometime. I think it was dealt with under the second liberalization of feminism, wasn't it around the marriage bar? Or it might be before, I can't remember.

Katie Dunning:

It was very much the very much older people-

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. What the marriage bar in Royal Mail?

Katie Dunning:

[crosstalk 01:37:30]. Loads of places.

Katie Dunning:

But the unions tried to keep that in, when that was taken away by law, they changed the legislation. I found evidence that the unions were trying to maintain that.

Speaker 1:

Maintain the marriage bar?

Katie Dunning:

Mm-hmm (affirmative) A lot of the work, the shifts so like night shifts, a crew did an extra payment, but women weren't allowed to do night shifts. So a lot of women were excluded from particular shifts, which a crew did extra payments. So it kind of was a bit of a disparency there.

Speaker 1:

So the union was involved in that-

Katie Dunning:

Unions were always very hostile to women. If you look back at, even in TUC, Henry Broadchurch, when he was a head of the TUC back in the 1860s, he actually got up at a TUC conference and said, "Women's place should be at home."

And there was a view that men should only be in unions. Men should only be at work and a woman's place is at home. So I think that was reflective for social sort of standards around that time.

Speaker 1:

You talked a bit about your own battle because you were pregnant when you were-

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. And I think as much as a lot of people argue that we've come a long way in terms of equality and women being given equal opportunities, we still live in a patriarchal world, the government.

Speaker 1:

Are you still finding that at CWU?

Katie Dunning:

If it's in society, it's going to be in the workplace. It's going to be in unions. There's no escaping and we have to start in the communities and we have to start in society if we want to change that.

I'm not saying that employers and unions don't have a role to play, of course they do, it starts everywhere, but we have to change society as well and that's where businesses and trade unions can be leaders in that.

Speaker 1:

Does CWU have more women?

Katie Dunning:

We have 20% women membership. Like I said, although our membership's declined, we've got more activists. So when I looked at the data last, we've got from January, we've gotten 200 more activists this year.

So people are starting to engage with trade unions. I think COVID has exacerbated that and I think people are starting to say, "I want more involvement. I want more of a say in my work and home life." Yeah, we can't get it in politics now can you?

Speaker 1:

So you think the unions got stronger?

Katie Dunning:

I think there is an avenue for people to use unions, as a way of, yeah voicing their opinions and creating change. Because I think people are disengaged with politics. They don't trust politicians. They trust the union.

Speaker 1:

Okay. That's great. That's been absolutely fantastic, Katie. Is there anything else you want to talk about?

Katie Dunning:

No. Not unless you've got any ad hoc questions you want to ask me?

Speaker 1:

Let me just have a quick look through here. Sam, is there anything else?

Katie Dunning:

Sam's been very quiet.

Katie Dunning:

That's my job.

Katie Dunning:

Is it?

Speaker 1:

That's his job now. Just that I'd spoken to you before that's why we thought it'd be better for me to have a chat with you.

Katie Dunning:

If you know off the top of your head when the different privatizations because there-

Speaker 1:

Split up. Wasn't it? Royal Mail and-

Katie Dunning:

Yeah, so I think-

Speaker 1:

If you could talk towards me.

Katie Dunning:

It was taken away from the government.

Katie Dunning:

Oh, I don't know. Because I remember doing something in union. So I think it was 2001, we was liberalized, no 2003 liberalization. Pete Mandelson, didn't he, come in done his business.

Speaker 1:

What does that mean? Liberalization.

Katie Dunning:

Liberalization is like regrading. Oh no, can we come back to that? So privatization happened and I know when privatization happened, because I was in Portugal with Billy Hayes, who was our general secretary at the time, and we was at UNI Europa conference just about to move a motion to get international solidarity against the privatization of Royal Mail.

And 20 minutes before Billy was due to get up the roster and to move the motion, we got the announcement that Royal Mail had been floated on the exchange market so it was like, "Oh."

Speaker 1:

What year was that?

Katie Dunning:

2013. September, 2013.

Speaker 1:

Okay. So liberalization in 2003, privatization in 2015.

Katie Dunning:

Billy would have been able to tell you about liberalization, privatization though.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. We can talk about it.

Katie Dunning:

Yeah. So I think, yeah, liberalization was 2013.

Speaker 1:

Just as a-

Katie Dunning:

Oh that liberalization allowed other companies to piggyback off our network, so dump mail into our mail center. So you'd have DHL, TNT, remember TNT? Whistl was well, do you remember Whistl? We had the delivery guys.

So yeah, they liberalized the postal sector market, which allowed the third party companies to piggyback back off the back of Royal Mail's network. So not do the final mail where there was no profit because we always run at a loss in deliveries, you don't make no money in deliveries, you make money in the mail centers and distribution.

So it allowed third parties to piggyback off the back of the network so they would be able to collect from firms and then just dump it and throw it into our pipeline and we'd have to deliver it.

Speaker 1:

Just briefly, don't have to go into loads of detail, expand on what does that mean that you don't make money on deliveries?

Katie Dunning:

Well, no, you never make money on deliveries because you're delivering the service. So if you was a company, you make money collecting this stuff from firms, the actual cost, the manpower you need to deliver, would always run at a loss because you need more people to deliver. You don't need as many people to collect than you do to deliver.

If you look at it as a business, if you looked at it different sections, we was always told deliveries always make the loss. It's the post office limited where the money goes into that makes the money. It's where you take the money.

Speaker 1:

[crosstalk 01:44:11]. Okay. Makes sense. Okay. Well, I've Really enjoyed that.

Katie Dunning:

Have you?

Speaker 1:

Hope you've enjoyed the question passed.

Katie Dunning:

I hope I've passed the test.

Speaker 1:

I'm just going to do a quick assessment. Sam, you happy with that?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Are you happy with that? This is your interview, so.

Katie Dunning:

I'm fine.

Speaker 1:

Yeah?

Katie Dunning:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Should we stop recording? Are you going to come up with loads of really brilliant interesting-

Katie Dunning:

No. It's just, I wish to God I'd kept a diary. Like when you was at school.

Speaker 1:

Reading Tony Benn's diaries at the moment.

Katie Dunning:

Are you?

Speaker 1:

They're really good.

Katie Dunning:

You'll probably get to the point about the stamp.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I'm just at the start of it.

Katie Dunning:

I remember it was one time he came to our picket line and Hilary had got him this, it was before you could record on your phones, and it was like a little USB video.

And he was so excited about this new piece of technology gadget. He was like, "Look at this, look at this, you just do that, plug it in and it uploads. It's fantastic."

He was great. Honestly, he was so funny. He cracked me up. Probably not funny to other people, but just his mannerisms used to make me laugh but I do miss him.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:45:23]