

Keith Brazier Transcript

Speaker 1:

What is your full name?

Keith Brazier:

My full name: Keith Edward Brazier.

Speaker 1:

What year were you born?

Keith Brazier:

1944.

Speaker 1:

And where were you born?

Keith Brazier:

Sutton in Surrey.

Speaker 1:

And what did your parents do for for a living?

Keith Brazier:

My parents? What did they do?

Speaker 1:

What did your parents do for a living?

Keith Brazier:

Do for a living? My father, well, when was when I was born, was in the RAF. Of course, there was a war was on. My mother worked in an office at the time.

Speaker 1:

These next few questions will be about your family and childhood. Question One: Please tell us why you decided to work for the Royal Mail.

Keith Brazier:

Why I decided to work for the Royal Mail? At the age of about 14 or 15, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I thought about being a car mechanic and all that, but my father was a postman by then, and it was a fairly secure job. So he said to me, "You want to get yourself into post service? You'll enjoy [inaudible 00:01:02], and you get a decent pension at the end of it." So I said, "Right." That's how I started to join the post service, as a telegram boy.

Speaker 1:

Please tell us about any family members who worked for the Royal Mail.

Keith Brazier:

Any other family members? I follow that my uncle was briefly for a couple of years, but then he left and went back into the building trade.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

What they think about me being in the Royal Mail? I think I've done rather well, because I ended up going up the promotion ladder to a certain, sort of a halfway, and they seem to think I did pretty good about that.

Speaker 3:

I think the question was, what did they think when you first joined it?

Keith Brazier:

Oh, joined it?

Speaker 3:

Yeah. I mean, were they happy, sad, was your dad pleased?

Keith Brazier:

My mum and dad were pleased because they wanted me to stick to it, to make a career of it, which I did.

Speaker 1:

Okay. The next few questions will be about your early work. Tell us about how you started working for the Royal Mail.

Keith Brazier:

[inaudible 00:02:14] this about?

Speaker 1:

How you started working for the Royal Mail.

Keith Brazier:

How I started working for the Royal Mail? My father was a postman at South East London, but they hadn't got any vacancies there for what they called a young postman, which is a telegram boy. But they had some in South West London. So I applied there and got in.

Speaker 1:

Describe the training you did.

Keith Brazier:

Sorry?

Speaker 1:

Describe the training you did?

Keith Brazier:

Training I did? As a telegram boy, I did the training on the job, and I had a week in the Young Postmen school telling you how to deliver telegrams, et cetera, or what to do if nobody was in and things like that. Which is interesting.

Speaker 1:

What was the first job you did for the Royal Mail?

Keith Brazier:

The first job I did for the Royal Mail was delivering telegrams.

Speaker 3:

Can you describe that for the children?

Keith Brazier:

Oh, yeah. Do you know what a telegram is? Yeah, you do. All right. [inaudible 00:03:29] our telegram comes with a teleprinter as an operator puts it in an envelope and addresses it, gives it to the PSM, that's postman supervisor messengers. He throws them off into little areas, and he gives one boy one area, one boy another area. And then you should know where you got to go. And off you go and deliver them.

Speaker 1:

Tell us how you felt on your first days of work.

Keith Brazier:

Am I ...

Speaker 1:

Tell us how you felt on your first days of work.

Keith Brazier:

How I felt on my first day's work? Very strange because I'd never been living before. It was the first day. I went around. I didn't have a uniform. I just had [inaudible 00:04:11] clothes on with an arm band. But what you get first of all.

Speaker 1:

Describe your work in those early days.

Keith Brazier:

Describe my work in a daily?

Speaker 3:

Early days.

Keith Brazier:

Early days? I used to cycle to work from home from Streatham Hill to Victoria. And I used to go in, sign on, and a bit of banter was going, it was always going around. The joking was going amongst the lads. And then we went out on our first run together. Some of us went walking out delivering telegrams; some went out on a cycle delivering telegrams.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

The atmosphere was great. It was joking, banter, people having a laugh, and it was a joy to go to work.

Speaker 1:

What kinds of people were you working with?

Keith Brazier:

All other young lads, all from around the South West London area, or, obviously, all the same age, between 15 and 17. And I'd only just left school like you'll find out, and it was very amusing.

Speaker 1:

How diverse was the workplace when we started?

Keith Brazier:

Sorry?

Speaker 1:

How diverse was your workplace when we started?

Keith Brazier:

Diverse? We used to deliver telegrams, express letters, occasional packets, et cetera, but nothing really big or heavy. And, of course, we used to go to all sorts of different places. In South West 1, it was quite an affluent area. So you'd be going to a nice posh house or flat delivering something, or an office block. We used to also get greetings telegrams to deliver. And a couple of occasions, I've gone to a flat in Victoria and knocked at a door with a greetings telegrams, and the greetings telegram was for a child. And when I opened the door and say, "Oh, it is your birthday? Oh," and I was just standing there by the front door and sing "happy birthday" to the little boy, little girl, wherever it was. Sorry.

Speaker 3:

Sorry. Carry on with that. Yeah.

Keith Brazier:

So that's how diverse it was.

Speaker 1:

What equipment did you use in your work

Keith Brazier:

Equipment? Well, we also have to wear a uniform with a badge on it for security. Mine was Southwest 2323. And we had a belt and a pouch we kept the telegrams in, and we had a bigger pouch when we was given greetings telegrams to deliver. Or if we had a few express letters on packets, we had a satchel over our head.

Speaker 1:

Describe your uniform.

Keith Brazier:

My uniform? It was always dark blue with piping around the cuffs, around the pails. Down the trails, there's red piping. Black buttons. A double breasted jacket and straight, normal, regular trousers. And the hat, of course. Pink cap.

Speaker 1:

Tell us about the skills you needed for your job.

Keith Brazier:

The ...

Speaker 1:

The skills you needed for your-

Keith Brazier:

Skills needed? We had to be a bit of a people person, because when you went to meet somebody, you didn't know who they was, especially in South West One. They could be an ordinary sort of every day householder, or they could be a member of Parliament, because a lot of them lives around there. So you act sort of rise and fall, according to whatever aspect you came across.

Speaker 1:

Describe a typical day at work.

Keith Brazier:

The typical day? A typical day, we went to work. You signed on, you had a laugh, you got your telegrams, and off you went delivering them. If you was lucky enough, you used to get tips for doing it if the people were grateful. And then you went back to the office, and when it was lunch time, you normally had your lunch in the staff canteen, which was quite, normally, pretty good. It was there. And in the afternoon you went and did a few more telegrams and letters. And then you bought a timer ... Whatever, if it was 8:00, start at 8:00, you go to about 4:00. Then it was time to go home. Other boys were doing 10:00 till 6:00. That's more or less what the two duties were as a young telegram boy.

Speaker 1:

What were the most enjoyable things about your job?

Keith Brazier:

The most enjoyable? I think the enjoyable part was meeting people, working with your mates, and having a laugh. I always used to like meeting various people, because you used to meet various MPs and famous people. There was TV actors and actresses that lived around there, and often you used to see them. Occasionally, I used to be a bit sneaky and ask for an autograph.

Speaker 1:

What were some of the difficult things about your work?

Keith Brazier:

Difficult? The only difficult thing is when it was chucking down with rain, or it was snowing. In 1963, it was very, very cold and there was snow. The snow lasted, was laying on the ground out there for seven weeks during that year in winter, and getting around on a push bike or on foot was extremely difficult. And you couldn't get as much done in the same amount of time.

Speaker 1:

Can you tell us about any discrimination you experienced or witnessed?

Keith Brazier:

Discrimination? I don't think I ever did suffer from any discrimination at all.

Speaker 3:

How did the bosses treat you?

Keith Brazier:

The bosses was only one boss. They treated me fine, the same as same as they treated all the other fairly young lads.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

Stand out my working life? As a telegram boy? I used to have to take telegrams to the Buckingham Palace sometimes, and express letters. And as I was going in, Princess Margaret was coming out, and I sort of just stood back and bowed, and she just got a smile and walked on. That was quite noble.

One trip, I had to take some flowers down to Tilbury Docks to somebody who was going to Australia on a ship, and I had to rush down there on a train and go to Fenchurch Street down to Tilbury Docks, get up onto the ship, go into the cabin, and deliver the flowers. And just then, the hooter was going. I was starting to bring up the gangplank sides to run quick down the gangplank off [inaudible 00:12:01]. Otherwise, I would've ended up in Australia. Would have been home late that day.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

Naughty? Naughty ... The only naughty thing you could do, really ... Of course, it was all governed quite well, but if you saw one of your mates in front of you and you let him get into the office first, then you went in after him. The next time they went out, he'd go at first and then you go behind him again. So if it's getting near going home time, he might not have to go out. So you'd be on the way home instead. That's the only naughty thing you could do.

Speaker 1:

Tell us about your favorite job.

Keith Brazier:

My favorite job?

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

I did various jobs. I was a telegram boy, which I've told you about. Then I was a postman at Streatham. And then I was a sorter in South East London sorting parcels, which was a good well-paid job there because they were short of staff, and we had to do a lot of overtime. Then I was a junior manager at Chelsea, and that was a bit hard because I hadn't been in a letter sorting office for a long time. So I had to pick it all up again. But the best job I had was when I, just before I retired, was when I was a middle manager in charge at nighttime. I used to like working nights because I had a job where I was driving around South West London, and I was in charge of the area at nighttime from South West 2 to 20.

And if anybody had a problem at nighttime in the sorting office, I used to have to go and sort it out. Like if a lift broke down and all the mail had to go upstairs, then I'll get them to form a chain gang passing the mail up the stairs. I generally made sure everything was running correctly. If there was any problems, I used to stay behind in the morning and see the officer in charge when he started at 6:00. Other things I used to get: If somebody got taken ill during the night, I used to whip around there and call an ambulance or take them to the hospital myself if they had an accident or something like that.

Speaker 3:

You told me about the rail floor. You're talking rail floor?

Keith Brazier:

Rail floors. When I was a junior manager at Victoria, the rail floor was called that because all the sorters used to letters to all over the country. And I used to tie, to do a dispatch, tie letters up in bundles in a bag, down the chutes onto a lot of mail vans that were waiting downstairs, and I used to take them all to the various railway stations all over the country. Paddington, King's Cross and [inaudible 00:15:09], Victoria, Waterloo, where they went off all over the country. As the way the mail was, it was first-class mail. If it's posted by 5:30 one day, it's going to be delivered by first-class, first delivery next day in the country.

Speaker 1:

Tell us about your favorite job.

Keith Brazier:

Oh, that was my favorite job, when I was in charge of South West London at night, because you never knew what was going to happen. Anything could happen, and I used to drive around in this little post office van. And so I'd been visiting all these offices and making sure everything was going good. It was the easiest and quite fulfilling because as long as I did my job right, everybody got their mail the next morning.

Speaker 1:

How did you progress in Royal Mail?

Keith Brazier:

How what?

Speaker 1:

How did you progress in Royal Mail?

Keith Brazier:

Well, normally, from messenger boy, telegram boy to post was normal function. For postman sorter, or PHG as they're called, was normal progression again. And then we went out acting. You were acting Junior Manager and called Postal Executive D. And then you had to prove yourself doing that. And then once you passed yourself, your bosses used to write reports on you every week to say how you was doing, giving you advice and guidance. And then when you got that, and then you had to go on enough acting list for Middle Manager, which is Postal Executive C, which is what I ended up.

Speaker 3:

You haven't mentioned your work at the Houses of Parliament.

Keith Brazier:

Yeah. I worked in the House of the Parliament as a telegram boy for about 18 months. I kept myself smart. Used to wear a black tie and a white shirt, and one of the big bosses who's in charge of post

service messengers, telegram boys, he said to me, "Would you like to go and work in Buckingham Palace or House of Commons?" I said, "Yeah, fine." So after a few months, he says there was a vacancy at the House of Parliament, so I went up there and saw the officer in charge of the post office there. And you had to be smart. You had to keep your trousers pressed and your jacket pressed, wear a white shirt and a black tie.

And because you were serving the MPs or the MPs' secretaries, you used to deliver telegrams inside the House of the Parliament because I had a teleprinter in there, and we used to receive express letters. And there was a full postal system in there. There was a few postmen working in there, as well, to do collections. And then the van came from Victoria, South West 1 to collect it, and it went off to be processed, the mail did. But that was very interesting because you saw a lot of the MPS. I saw the opening of Parliament several times, or four times. And I saw the Queen as she came and opened Parliament. Before she did that, she did a speech in the House of Lords. Where we was, you could look through into the House of Lords and see the Queen sitting in there doing her speech.

Speaker 1:

Tell us about your relationships with your colleagues.

Keith Brazier:

My colleagues? As telegram boys, it was funny. It was always a laugh. Same was also as a postman. And when I was a PHG sorter, that was also all funny, as when you get into the managerial part of the job, it's a little bit more upmarket, if you know what I mean. We joke, yeah, but you don't joke about with other managers like you used to your old uniform colleagues. There's a slight bit of difference.

Speaker 1:

Tell us about your experiences of joining clubs at work.

Keith Brazier:

Joining clubs at work? I was in a post office camera club because I was, I'm a keen photographer. That was okay. I was also in a post office fishing club because for a few years, I was interested in angling, fishing. That was okay. I was also, did a bit of snooker. Played snooker for the post office and a bit of cycle racing for the post service time trials, et cetera.

Speaker 3:

You were telling me, just in that break, about when you were telegram boy, just the time trials were then, weren't they?

Keith Brazier:

Yeah.

Speaker 3:

So can you tell Chris, was that competition? How did that work?

Keith Brazier:

The time trial was, I think it's to do with the Boys Club Youth Summit Association, which got in touch with the boss of the telegram boys. And he said, "Does any of you lads want to do a time trial?" Which is a 10-mile time trial up in Essex, around [inaudible 00:20:21] area. And we wanted to get up very early morning and ride our bikes to the start and then whoosh off. We went to do this 10 miles, five miles there, five miles back. I think my time was a bit mediocre. After I'd ridden there, I was a bit tired, so I couldn't give it my full, best thing. But that was interesting. I enjoyed that. [inaudible 00:20:48] and ride the bike home again.

Speaker 1:

What made you join the union?

Keith Brazier:

Join the union? Well, first of all, I joined the Union of Post Office Workers when I was a telegram boy, I think? Yeah. And also I was in that when I was a postman and a PHG, then that became the ... Yeah, I was in that one, and then when I was a manager, I joined PAMSA. Was Post Office Managerial Staff Association, which became CMA. That's Communication Managers Association. But it all helps to be in a union. I was just an ordinary member in the postman's union, but in the managers union, I was the local treasurer in South West. And I used to look after the financial books for our branch until I retired.

Speaker 1:

Why is the union important postal workers?

Keith Brazier:

Why what?

Speaker 1:

Why do you think the union is important for postal workers?

Keith Brazier:

Well, it's important because the union is the staff, and the managers are in charge of the staff, and it's a link between the two. If the boss wants to make changes, et cetera, he goes to the union, says, "What we want to do this. We want to do that." And then the union put it to the staff, and then we see how the temperature is, whether the staff like it or not. Normally they'll bring in any way, so. But it's a form of approach to the staff and the managers.

Speaker 1:

What part did the union play in your life?

Keith Brazier:

What part did I play? As I said, I was just an ordinary member in the postman part, and I was the treasurer of the CMA local branch South West. I used to have to keep [inaudible 00:22:58], make sure people are paid their dues, their fee, every year. And I used to have to present the accounts to the headquarters at the end of each year, financial year, which was quite a responsible job.

Speaker 1:

Tell us about any strikes or disputes you are involved with.

Keith Brazier:

Sorry?

Speaker 1:

Tell us about any strikes or disputes-

Keith Brazier:

Strikes? Well, I was involved in the 1971 strike, which went on for six weeks when I was a sorter. We all started over the winter. And [inaudible 00:23:42] everywhere went on strike just as I was going on a week's holiday. And I thought to myself, "Oh, flipping [inaudible 00:23:48], that'll be all over the time I'll get back." But when I came back, went another five weeks of it myself. So things got a bit short. Of course, people didn't have a lot of money behind them in those days, not like they got now. So when you went without your wages for a few weeks, you really felt a draft of going into your savings, et cetera. Then there's been other similar small strikes, which I've been involved with over the years, but nothing like the '71 strike.

Speaker 3:

How did that bend, the '71 strike? Do you remember?

Keith Brazier:

We wanted another three quid a week, I think, for everybody, and the post office wouldn't have it. And in the end, it went to arbitration. We all had to go back to work, and we still didn't get it. So we lost a lot of money over that. So, really, in a nutshell, striking is not worth the [inaudible 00:24:46] because you lose more than what you gain.

Speaker 1:

What was your most memorable moment at the post office?

Keith Brazier:

Most memorable? I think the most memorable was when the Queen came to open Nine Elms' sorting office. I didn't get presented to her, but I was lined up there for security reasons. I was a middle manager at the time and we'd just opened up the brand new sorting office. And she walked quite close to me. Closer to me than what I am to you now. Very nice lady, obviously, but not that big as you'd expect a lady of her stature. But she didn't have a duke with her. She had a lady and [inaudible 00:25:40] with her.

Speaker 1:

What was your most challenging moment at the post office?

Keith Brazier:

My ...

Speaker 1:

Your most challenging moment at the post-

Keith Brazier:

Challenging? Challenge? I don't think I really had a challenging moment, because everything ... In the post office, when you're a manager, you try and offset any problems you might get by doing something which, if something happens, it doesn't affect it. So you kind of think ahead all the time when you're running the sorting office, "What would happen if so-and-so happens?" And that's how you get around it. So if you haven't planned it, then you're going to come on stuck. If you plan what you're going to do, you good.

Speaker 1:

Would you like to add anything to that?

Keith Brazier:

No. Well, the old thing is, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. It's another saying, which is [inaudible 00:26:45] ever so true.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

Main changes? Well, each grade I went up to was a change. It was a different area of working, a different way of working from working on the job itself, to make sure people see ... making sure the other people do the job, et cetera. Of course, you get older as well. That's a change in life.

Speaker 1:

In what ways do you think your job has improved?

Keith Brazier:

Mechanization. Whereas when I was in it years ago, everything was done by manual. Hands where the tools of the trade and the sorting letters, et cetera. Nowadays, they've got automatic faces, automatic ... When I say "faces," turns the letters up into the right way. And they got sorting machines which sorts all the letters into the counties and from the counties into the places. And it's all done mechanized. Nothing goes in a bag like it used to when I was in it. It all goes in a box.

Speaker 1:

In what ways has it got worse?

Keith Brazier:

Yeah. I can't really tell you whether it's got worse or not because I'm not in it anymore. It's a difficult question, that one. I've spoken to a sort of new postman the other day, actually, and he said, "Oh," he said, "[inaudible 00:28:42], good job you out when you did. It's this, it's that, and it's worse, and the

governors are doing ..." I say it's what you hear all the time. So, obviously, whereas all used to get away with time and things, nowadays they don't.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

My ...

Speaker 1:

Child.

Keith Brazier:

Child?

Speaker 3:

Yeah, [inaudible 00:29:13] work for, would you recommend [crosstalk 00:29:15]?

Keith Brazier:

Oh, would I recommend a child? Well, if it was the same as I had, which it wouldn't be if my child went into it, yes, I would ... If I had my time over again, I'd do exactly the same again because what I've done during my lifetime, I had a cracking life, I had plenty of, never out of work. I was part of the strike. I had plenty of money all the time. And I would do it again.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

If I was the boss of Royal Mail? That is very difficult to say because remember, I retired in 1998, which is 23 years ago. So things have changed a heck of a lot in 23 years. So I can't really answer that one.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

Working for Royal Mail meant to me? It gave me security, money, pleasure, all the good things that you get from a good job, which it is, or it was. [inaudible 00:30:30] now.

Speaker 1:

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

Keith Brazier:

No, I don't think so. You give me quite a good grilling there.

Speaker 3:

Anyone else got any additional [crosstalk 00:30:48]?

Keith Brazier:

Yeah, you got any questions? Any additional ones?

Speaker 3:

Could you describe the atmosphere when you were a telegram boy? What was it like when you get on your bike and you're out? What did that feel like? [inaudible 00:30:57].

Keith Brazier:

When I got on me push bike and I was going out delivering telegrams, first of all, you have to lay them in so you don't go back on yourself. If you've got six telegrams, you'd lay them in from the nearest to the furthest. And you just make sure you're off in the open air and the sunshine, if it's in the summer, and you quite enjoy what you're doing. You're driving on and the wind's blowing, et cetera. You're getting healthy exercise on the bike. And just drop off and deliver your telegrams in the best possible way and politeness to the people, because they are customers and we're serving them.

Speaker 3:

You talked a bit about the military, the atmosphere, the climate, just the kind of atmosphere, military atmosphere there. [crosstalk 00:31:52] talk a bit about that?

Keith Brazier:

The military atmosphere? Well, mostly the military atmosphere came in because when I was a postman, most of the people or men there were ex-military that had been fighting in the Second World War. Excuse me. So they had military background for the few years they was in it. And of course it sort of rubbed off on the rest of us to be like that the army, I suppose, or the Navy or the Air Force, whatever aspect you was in.

Speaker 3:

And the last one, just from our conversation before, could you to talk a bit about whether there was any tension from going from being, what better way of putting it, from being a worker to a manager? You talked a bit about that in terms of the relationship and the jokes. Was there anything else that you've talked to Chris [inaudible 00:32:47]? Was that an issue?

Keith Brazier:

No, it wasn't really an issue. You just worked your way, cruised through it. You was with your mates, one mate one day, and you [inaudible 00:32:57]. Then you start acting manager, and then you didn't sort of joke around with the uniform staff, obviously, because you're managing them, but you did occasionally have a laugh with your colleagues, to other managers. But you sort of drift up with ... you sort of get used to it.

Speaker 1:

How would you describe your younger self working at Royal Mail?

Keith Brazier:

My ...

Speaker 1:

Younger self.

Keith Brazier:

Younger self? Well, when you first can leave school, what you'll find out, you're a bit green, you don't know what to expect, and you have to pick up the way of working for your living very quickly. You do it all right. Of course, there's other people there doing exactly the same as you. It's no problem, really. That's how it is.

Speaker 3:

Could you describe the bikes you rode when you were a telegram boy?

Keith Brazier:

The bikes? Yeah, but they were normally a red, "sit up and bake" type of cycle. 27-inch wheel, single speed, no gears, roller lever brakes, and a bell. And some of them got a carrier on the front and someone got a carrier on the back. Some of them had both. And in fact, when I was a telegram boy at South [Came 00:34:28], part of my job every now and again was to service the post office cycles. I used to oil them and grease them and pump the tires up and repair any punches, et cetera, purely because when I was, going back a bit on myself here, when I was at school, I had a little job in a local cycle shop doing that. So the man in charge: "Oh, you worked in the cycle shop? You can have a look at some [inaudible 00:34:54] bikes here." Which I did.

Speaker 1:

Was it a fathing bike?

Keith Brazier:

Was it what?

Speaker 1:

Farthing.

Speaker 3:

Penny-farthing. Was it penny-farthing?

Keith Brazier:

No, not quite that far back. These are two-wheel bicycles. Normal bicycles. As Matthew knows; he's got a photograph of some of them now.

Speaker 3:

Any last questions? How about just the last thing? I've just got some notes here about women. How many women? Were there any? Was it just men or boys? What was that like? And through your working life, how did that change?

Keith Brazier:

The only time I really started to ... When I was a telegram boy, none. There was a postman that had been, but I never worked with any. When I was a sorter, not really, but when I was a manager, junior manager, then women were working in sorting offices. That's the only sort of time, especially when I was at Nine Elms, quite a few of them working there. That's the only time I really worked with women.

Speaker 3:

Why is that? Why weren't there more women earlier?

Keith Brazier:

I don't know. It's just how it was in the '60s and '70s. Nine Elms opened in 1983 when there was more women around working for their life than what there was previously, I should imagine.

Speaker 3:

The last one, just ... In the '60s, some people have said that as many as one in four workers in Britain worked for the Royal Mail or associated. Do you know how many people were working for Royal Mail [inaudible 00:36:31]?

Keith Brazier:

I know it's supposed to be about a quarter of a million working in the post office in London, but the exact figures I couldn't tell. But it was, as I said before, it was a manual way of working. And then machines came in, and, of course, the post office was wanting to get rid of people as quickly as possible because the machines were doing the work. And they wouldn't have to pay out the wages.

Speaker 3:

Could you tell us a little bit about how the circumstances of you stopping [inaudible 00:37:08] over time and what led up to that and what was involved?

Keith Brazier:

Well, when we all went to ... When was it? Be about 19 ... 1990 ... 1998. We were all about to go for an interview to our jobs back. I could see the writing on the wall where my job was going to go because it looked to be so cushy and all that, but, so.

Speaker 3:

[inaudible 00:37:40]?

Keith Brazier:

Yeah, my job looks a bit iffy because it looked a cushy job until something happens. So I thought, "Oh yeah, we're getting rid of him and put him on redundancy." Well, then I went, and they realized they made a mistake, and they put a [inaudible 00:38:03] doing it, what I'd done for about seven or eight

years on me own. And then he realized he couldn't do it on his own. So I put ... to put men doing the same job I was doing on my own. So that was wasn't very good money-saving scheme, was it?

Speaker 3:

But how did you feel when you were kind of almost forced to take redundancy? How was that?

Keith Brazier:

It frightening, actually, because all my, since I was 15 till I was 53, I'd earned good money. And all the sudden, I realized that I was only going to get ... I think I got a nice pension, but that's not the same as a nice salary. So when I retired, or got my redundant, I went to a mate of mine. I said, "Come and drive a lorry for me for a couple of days a week," which I did. But it was very hard going because of course I used to start off at about 6:00 in the morning, driving this lorry, end up a Bradford or lead to somewhere by 5:00 at night, and I still had to drive for the thing home again afterwards.

So I did that for two days a week for a while. And then he went bankrupt. [inaudible 00:39:16] to do with me; it was some other thing he was on. When I got finished with that, I started to do a little garden maintenance business. I used to go around helping old people do their gardens for them, which was a quite good. Interesting.