



POSTMAN'S KNOCK

AN ORAL HISTORY OF
LONDON'S POSTAL WORKERS



ON THE POST

On the Post is an oral history project that explores the working lives of London's postal workers. Year 6 children from St George The Martyr Primary School worked with arts and education organisation *digital-works*, the Postal Museum, historians and current and retired workers to explore this history. With training in oral history techniques and documentary film making the children went on to conduct 22 wonderful oral history interviews which have been edited to make a film and a podcast series entitled *Postman's Knock*.

You can find out more about the project in this booklet and also see some of the writing and art work produced by the children during the project.

The full interviews, the film and a podcast series are all available on the project website...

www.onthepost.org.uk



By Aoife Sawdayee-Row

SOME HISTORY

During our time working on the Postal Project, we met many amazing people who had professions in the postal service and learnt loads about the history of the service. We managed to interview lots of people and still learn a lot from Peter, the historian who taught us.

We learnt about the history of the Post Office from Peter. We got to participate in amusing games about the history of the mail and we even did some role-playing. The Post Office was founded in 1516 by a person named King Henry VIII, also known as the person who married six different people. King Henry VIII appointed a Master of the Posts. Then came King Charles I who allowed everyone to access the mail but the person receiving it would have to pay when the letter arrived. Then Oliver Cromwell came along, he used the letters as a way to spy on people and see if they were talking bad of him.

We met a person called Bob Collins as a whole class. We soon learnt that Bob worked in the Post Office as someone who loaded parcels. The sacks were very heavy and had to be loaded very quickly. Bob also said that he would not mind his children working in the Post Office.

By Tajkira Ahmed





THE POSTAL MUSEUM

On Tuesday 25th May, our whole class went on a trip to the Postal Museum. Luckily everyone came to school that day so everyone could experience the trip. Our class was the first since Covid to go out on a physical trip whilst other classes had virtual trips.

I was stunned by the terrace which we first saw as we came in. We were split into 2 groups, one group went with Sav and Miss Jackson upstairs to the archive and found information (I was in that group). The second group split into two different groups, one went with Sally - a guide - and another with Andy, also a guide and visited the galleries. We went to the archive where we saw lots of artefacts from when the postal service first started.

Tajkira Ahmed



We then went into this mini train (the mail rail) and we were thrilled at the experience of watching the presentations on the wall and the movement of the train. I clearly remember a power cut happening and we were mortified until we found out that it was part of the experience. Once we did find out what happened, we couldn't stop laughing and carried on enjoying the experience.

Libena Tesfaldet

FILM TRAINING

Before we started interviewing we had to go through three days of thorough training. This involved camera and audio training, as well as interviewing skills. To help us fully understand the meanings, we watched a few video guides with excellent examples. Then we split into groups of six, and worked with professional film makers Matthew and Sav.

In our smaller groups, we learnt how to use the cameras. Furthermore, we did many setups with all the fascinating equipment, and filmed our friends in mock interviews. We had to be very systematic when working the cameras, because there were lots of things to think about. After a while, we moved on to interview skills.



These included speaking loudly and clearly, being polite and showing interest, listening and finally asking outstanding questions. We learnt so much. It was an incredible opportunity to have, and we are extremely grateful.

Aoife Sawdayee-Row



I'm so grateful that our school has these things because you know I am passionate when it comes to technology. Right now, we're working on interviewing techniques and developing questions since we have already done our camera training which was difficult for me. I personally think I've gotten the hang of it. My class and I are so lucky because it would take years but it only took us 3 days to learn. This week, I'm looking forward to interviewing all the guests.

Zaira Harris



INTERVIEWEES

We are very grateful to everyone who came into the school to share their wonderful and moving stories with us.

We could fit only a very small fraction of the interviews into the film and podcasts. You can listen to all of the wonderful full interviews on our project website. They have also been given to the TUC archive.

Listen to the full interviews now at www.onthepost.org.uk/interviews.html



ALAN RYELL



BALBIR BHARJ



BILLY HAYES



EGBERT HUGHES



BOB COLLINS



BOB MCGUIRE



CAROL SHONIDARE



JOHN HART



NICKY CARTER



MIKE SULLIVAN



DAVE CANNELL



DAVE BRADBURY



GREG CHARLES



KATIE DUNNING



NORMAN CANDY



ZEHRA GURKAKAN



HUW DAVIES



JANE BUTTIGIEG



JIMMY FLEMING



KEITH BRAZIER



PAUL WOOD



RAY MIDDLESWORTH



Dear Mr. Dave Bradbury,

I am writing to thank you for participating in our documentary. We greatly appreciate you spending your time to share your story. I was surprised to hear you have been in your profession for thirty years! I aspire to have a career as long as yours. I was fond of your story about the goose as I have never heard of anything like it before. I am grateful for your gifts and I am looking forward to posting it to my family back home.

Yours sincerely,
Era Morina.





Dear Mr Sullivan,

I would like to thank you for participating in our postal project. If you are wondering who is writing to you, I was the person who was interviewing you; Zachary. I would also like to thank you for giving me the book about the Mail Rail 'Mail Rail: Beginning to End'. I am sure that I will relish reading it.

The film will premiere at The Postal Museum on the 20th July. I hope you will be able to grace us with your presence; I look forward to seeing you again.

Your sincerely,
Zachary Ohenhen

Dear Mr Greg Charles,

I am writing to you to say thank you and I am grateful for you taking the time to come to our school and giving us an opportunity to interview you. We appreciate you participating in our documentary that is going to premiere on the 20th July at the Postal Museum.

I admired your interesting stories about moving to Birmingham, joining the army and moving to London after finishing because your girlfriend was having a baby and then the fact you changed your profession to work for the royal mail. I also found it interesting when one of your friends got a t-shirt that was signed by David Beckham and Gordon Ramsay.

Matthew and Sav are going to come back after 4 weeks and will show us the rough cut (they need to select parts from all the interviews) and then my class and I will approve it.

I hope you enjoy watching the documentary. You have created a very memorable experience for us .

Yours Sincerely,
Sami Hussain





Dear Diary,

Today has been such an exhausting day. I enjoy my job a lot but I am sick and tired of people discriminating against me just for who I am. This will not make me quit my job because they can't stop me from doing what I love.

When I first started my job there were lots of people looking at me and made disrespectful jokes. Sometimes they would say it right in front of my face. There were other people who actually helped me. Annoyingly, people would say that I am not good enough. Fortunately I was surrounded by brave people that stood up for themselves and they inspired me to do the same. Soon after, people stopped doing this and everything was fine. It still happens now sometimes but it is very rare.

As usual I started off my day by waking up from my loud alarm. My job is as a delivery driver, which some may say is a very important job. Annoyingly, my alarm went off 30 minutes later than expected. I was in a rush because my work started in 45 minutes and I needed to get



ready and eat breakfast. I had my coffee and left for work. The roads were busy so it took me an extra 10 minutes to reach Mount Pleasant.

Upon my arrival, my boss called me to his office. I was very nervous because this was very random and I thought I would get fired. I came into his office and he said that I have been promoted. I was so overjoyed because this was unexpected but I am glad he has seen how hardworking I am.

Anyways I'm off to bed now.

Tameem Hussain



The “On the Post” project was much interrupted by Covid. We are extremely grateful to everyone involved for accommodating the many changes of plan necessitated. The children created some commemorative stamps about the year they have just been through.

Artwork by:

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Miah



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Penny Amatt at Royal Mail.

The staff at Mount Pleasant Sorting Office.

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Image credits:

The Postal Museum

Various photos taken throughout the project by staff.

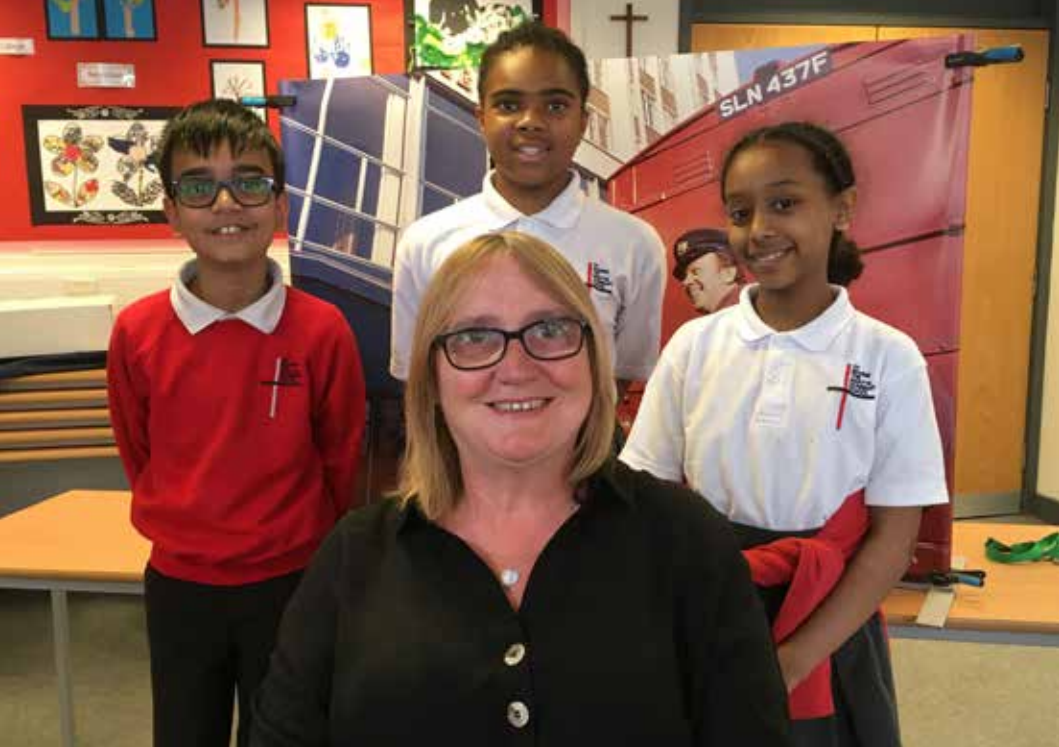
You can listen to all of the interviews in their entirety, see the film, listen to the podcast series and find out more about the project here...

www.onthepost.org.uk

For more oral history projects about London please visit

www.digital-works.co.uk





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