



The
Postal
Museum

Routes to Swindon



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Introduction

This booklet comes from a partnership between The Postal Museum and people who work at the Royal Mail sites at Dorcan. Between March and September 2025, people shared their stories and experiences. They also took photographs of each other in the workplace.

The booklet shows some of the ways in which people have come to work here, their differing career paths, and the jobs that they do. It also shows the importance of community. We hope you enjoy it.



Physical Routes

People have come to work at the Dorcan site from many different places. Swindon Mail Centre was originally in the centre of Swindon on Merton Street. In 1991 it moved to Dorcan. In 2009 the site expanded when Reading and Oxford Mail centres closed down and their operations moved to Swindon, along with lots of staff.

Since 2009 people from Goa have been a significant part of the workforce.



Ebenezer



From November 2001 to March 2002 Ebenezer worked as a Christmas casual in Reading Mail Centre (RMC). Ebenezer's line manager, Ian Young, suggested he join Royal Mail. After an interview and test he became an OPG (Operational Postal Grade) in May 2002.

Ebenezer used to sort large letters until 2009, when the closure of RMC gave staff a choice of moving to Langley or Swindon. He chose Swindon – and has been a part of the Mail Centre team ever since. Over the past 16 years, Ebenezer has taken on a variety of roles,

including training to run the Parcel Sorting Machine (PSM).

What he likes about Royal Mail is the flexibility the company has for families with younger children, including family friendly hours.

“I have met and worked with people from almost all over the continents. One thing I will miss once I retire is the food and cultures from other countries.”

Terry

“When Reading closed we had a choice of: stay at Reading on deliveries, go to Langley or come to Swindon Mail Centre. So I chose Swindon Mail Centre.”

Terry started working at Royal Mail on 21st August 1989 as a sixteen year old cadet. Cadets were split into groups. One week they did deliveries, one week they were on the shop floor and the other week they had classroom studies to learn about Royal Mail. To qualify for the next stage, cadets had to

sort 200 outward letters in 20 minutes and 500 inward letters in 20 minutes.

Terry later worked on the TPOs (Travelling Post Offices) at Reading. Reading was the first office to have the CFCs (Culler Facer Cancellers) and Terry was one of the first operators in the country.

At Swindon, Terry has worked on the CFC machine and was also part of the World Class Mail scheme. He helped to evaluate and improve the machine. Terry now works on the collection ramp and loading the vans.



Merton Street

Larina

“The Goan community in the UK has a rich history and has made valuable contributions to British society. From their delicious cuisine to their vibrant celebrations, Goans have added a touch of Goa’s charm to the multicultural tapestry of the UK. Their presence serves as a reminder of the power of cultural exchange and the positive impact it can have on society.”

“Royal Mail as an employer has opened a door to fulfil the dreams of the Goan community and have indirectly played a part in changing people’s lives for good.”

There is a significant Goan community in the UK, particularly in areas like Swindon and London. The community largely consists of individuals with Portuguese citizenship, who have been drawn to the UK for employment opportunities, especially within the hospitality, delivery and IT sectors.

Caetano Novaes (OPG Weekend Shift) spends some of his spare time on the patio tending to the gardens. He uses his own equipment and plants to make the patio a nicer area.

Thanks to his hard work for Royal Mail Caetano has been able to build a house back in Goa. He has built a replica post box in the garden.



Caetano

Career Routes

People started working at the Dorcan site for many different reasons. Some people start as apprentices, while others join later in life.

There are lots of job roles including: postal workers, drivers, engineers, managers, canteen workers, cleaners and office staff. They are all important.

Why did you decide to work for Royal Mail?

"Originally I trained to be a plasterer on a YTS scheme. And then the bloke said to me why don't you join Royal Mail? So I joined Royal Mail."

Terry

"I needed a job!"
Gary

"Got made redundant. Sisters worked for Royal Mail"
Candice

"I wanted an engineering apprenticeship with an iconic company"
Steve

"It's a peace of mind job"
Laz

Cleaners

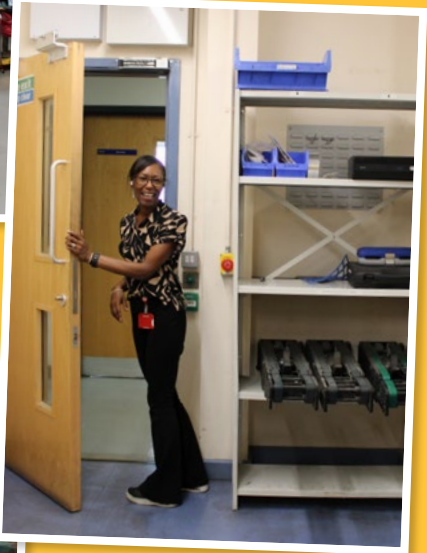


Postal Workers





Office



Engineers





Delivery Office





Drivers



Canteen



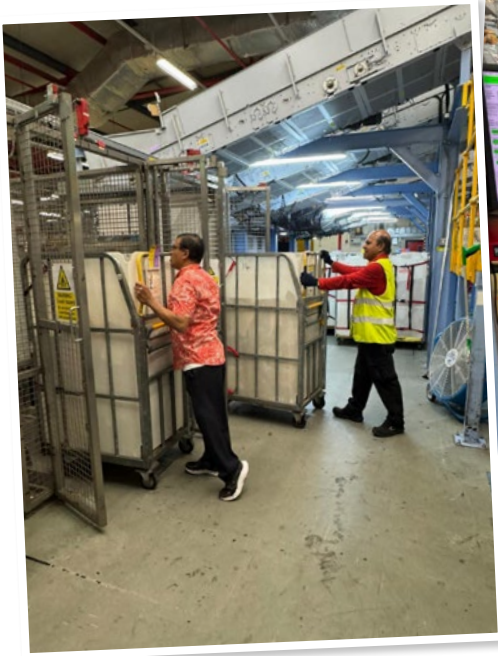
Mail Routes

The way in which the different buildings in Dorcan operate has changed over time. The layout of the site, including the location of some buildings and sections, has changed too!

New machines have been installed, and there is now more emphasis on parcels than there used to be.



Mail Routes



From Clipboard to Cloud



1999 • Clipboard & Pen

Traffic records logged by hand, typed into Excel, emailed 20 at a time.



2000s • Scanner & Floppy Disk

Barcodes scanned, data stored on floppies, turned into throughput, quality, and safety reports.



Late 2000s SharePoint & Automation

Instant sharing, automated tools, faster reporting.

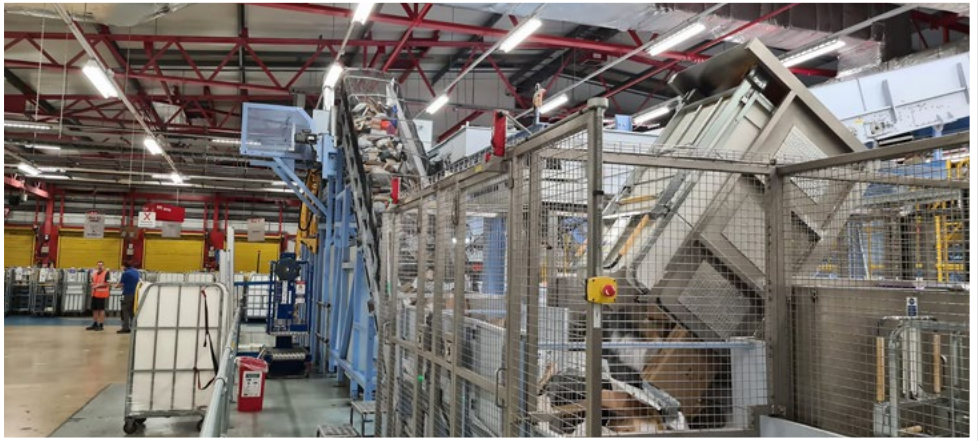
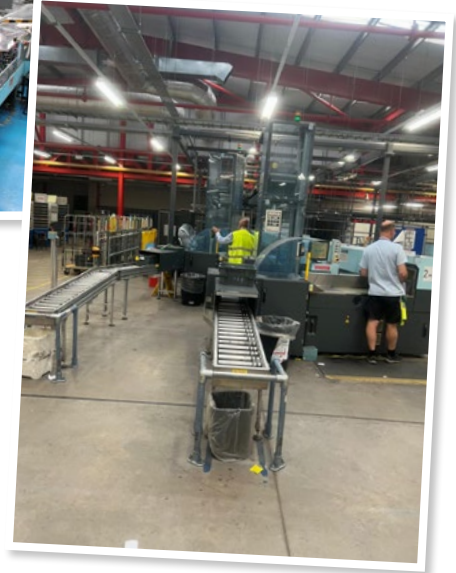


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Mail Routes



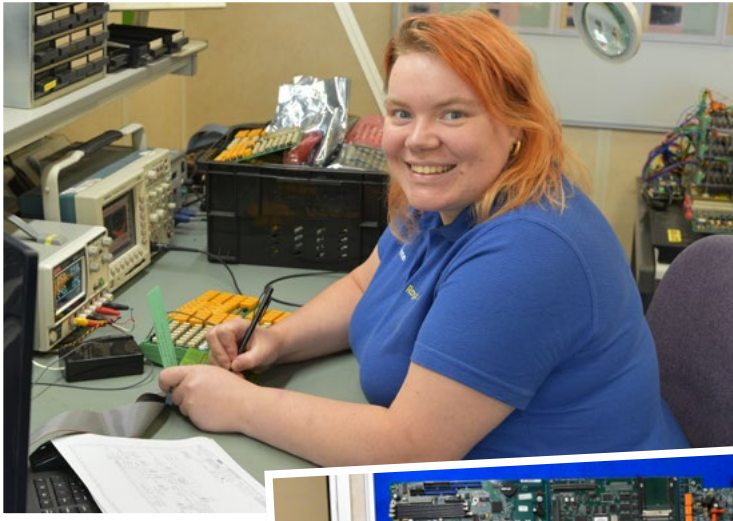
PETRA

The **Postal Engineering Test and Repair Agency (PETRA)** provides a range of in-house repair and manufacturing services to support automation equipment in Mail Centres and Parcel Hubs across Royal Mail.

Their department includes a mini Mail Centre used for testing and training, as well as a mechanical workshop used for small-scale manufacturing and prototyping.

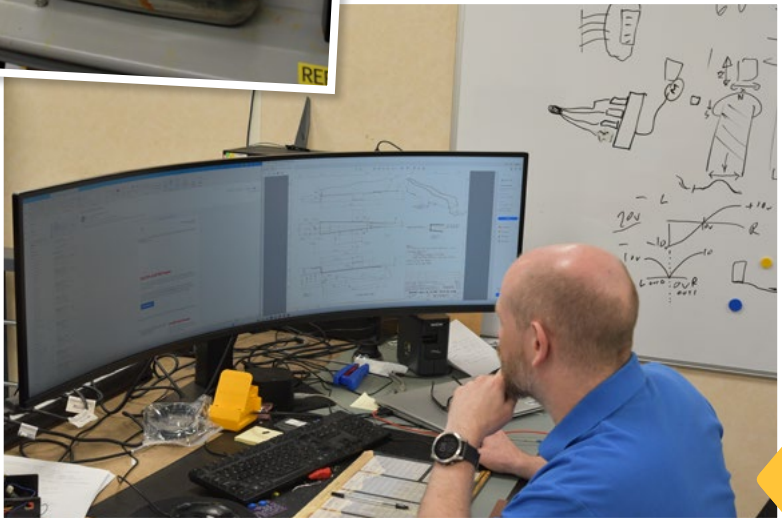






PETRA





Community Routes

Life in the buildings isn't only about work. The workplace is also a place of companionship, learning and the sharing of skills, knowledge, stories and food.



Isambard Learning Centre

The Isambard Learning Centre at Swindon Royal Mail is open to everyone. It is a joint venture between the CWU and Royal Mail. For the last 15 years it has been run by Sandra Absalom (Lead Union Learning Rep). Over the years it has offered lots of different activities. These have included Maths, English, drawing, computer skills, languages, yoga, flower arranging and singing lessons.



Community Routes





People

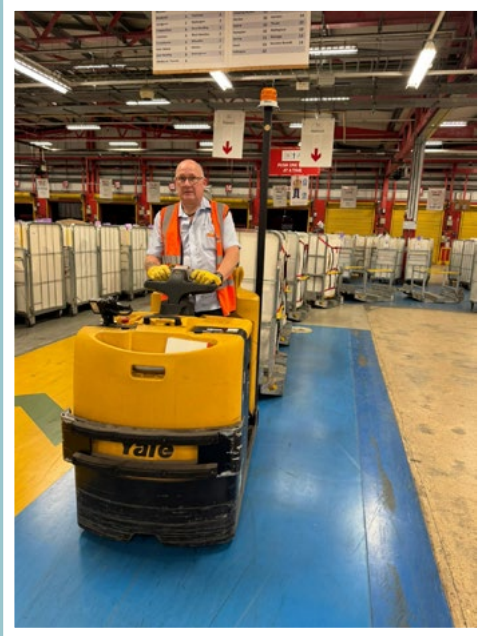
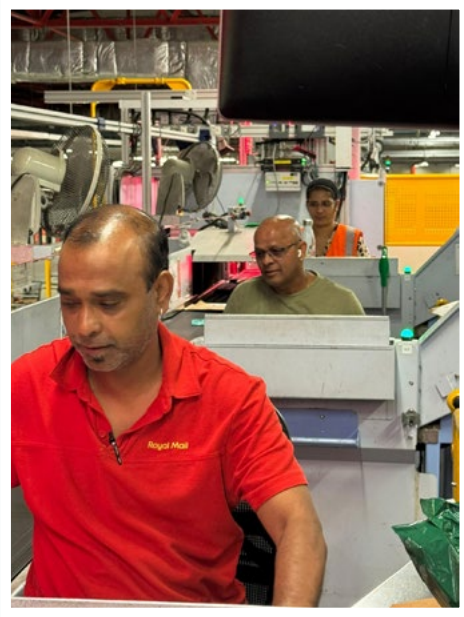
The Royal Mail site at Dorcan is made up of lots of people with their own backgrounds, experiences and stories to tell. Here are a few of them.





People





Thanks to everyone who helped with this project, including people who shared their memories, took photographs, appeared in photographs and loaned equipment. Special thanks to the people who helped to organise the project and the display, including:

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