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DOROTHY ADDISON (nee Robinson)

AYCLIFFE ANGEL

I got lodgings in Darlington and if I was on an early shift would get up at 4.30 am and walk through the park to meet my friend, Mabel. We would then walk to North Road Station and get the train to Heighington Station ~ the one before Aycliffe Station ~ so 'the enemy' couldn't see where we were going. We then took the bus to the factory.

I was on 'Group Five' and our job was to weigh cordite, put it into linen bags and sew gunpowder on top. This was put into '25-pounder shells' and the next block had to put the detonator on top! We were searched and if anyone was found with matches, it was instant dismissal! We wore protective clothing and shoes that didn't cause any friction and our hair had to be tucked in a turban. I remember one girl in the next block getting her hair in a machine and being scalped ~ she died!! German bombers often came over and all the lights had to be out. One night they came over ~ we knew the sound ~ the siren went and we all had to go into the shelters. The sky was lit up with hundreds of 'chandeliers' ~ our name for bombs. One was dropped in a field in Heighington and when next we were on a day shift we saw the crater from the train and realised we had been very lucky.

There were very few men working at the factory. There were two in our group, as they were medically unfit to go in the forces. The manager used to come into the canteen, blow up a balloon and could play any tune anyone asked for, on it. There was also a girl from Shildon who used to whistle just like Ronnie Ronald. One day we had a visit from King George VI and the Queen Mother. I noticed the King was wearing make-up, as well as his wife. Another day we were entertained by none other than Gracie Fields. She sang The Lord's Prayer and it was lovely. What we noticed about her were her false silver nails (even in the 40's)! Every three weeks I would go back to my family in Gateshead for the weekend, otherwise I didn't get any holiday. I stopped working there in 1944 due to ill health.

ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY, AYCLIFFEClock No. 5/553

6th July, 1945.

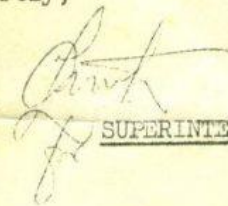
Dear *Miss Tomkin*

Consequent on the decision to close down Aycliffe as a Royal Ordnance Filling Factory, I must accordingly inform you that your services will not be required after your last working shift, week ending 14th July, 1945.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking you personally, and on behalf of the Ministry of Supply for your services to the factory in the past and to extend to you best wishes for the future. ~~Aycliffe has done a fine job during the last four years, and it is~~ largely due to the hard work and excellent team spirit of its workers. You may look back and be proud of your share in this great enterprise.

If in the course of your employment you have met with an injury, which has resulted in impairment of earning capacity, a form of claim for compensation will be supplied to you on application.

Yours sincerely,


SUPERINTENDENT.

AY/L/WAB/MG. (N.89)
29th June, 1945.