

This is Terry Ford for South Shields Local History Group on the 6th of December, 2023 and I'm interviewing Terry Ford and he's discussing his mother, Lily younger and her sister Margaret Younger.

So Lily and Margaret my mam was 18, 20 when the war started and her sister was age 18 and they lived at 344 Stanhope Road in South Shields. When the war started my mother wanted to join the Wrens (WRNS), but unfortunately she was too small she was only about four foot eight, so she was far too small to join the Wrens. And then during the early part of the war, women were then conscripted to work in the munitions factories and she was called up and her and her sister were sent to work in Birmingham to work in a munitions factory there. And when she was there, she said some of these machines were obviously designed for men and with her being so small, she had to stand on a box to operate the machines and she took a little bit of stick about this, but she wasn't someone to be messed with and she used to say that her comments were always "There's good stuff in little bundles" was her refrain about this. So she worked there for about four or five years during the war, and she rather enjoyed it because it was freedom from her family, her father. And also she went to all the dances. And there was a lot of American soldiers there who had these nice, fancy uniforms, very, very glamorous, where she said the English uniforms were rather drab like khaki but the American ones were very flash and they had tons of money and buying all sorts of things. So they were always much more an attractive proposition than some of the English soldiers.

So they stayed in Birmingham in a lodging house with a landlady and her sister Margaret, once told us one time, that there was a shortage of nylons, nylon stockings, because seemingly nylon was used for the parachutes. So what they used to do is they used to colour their legs with gravy browning and then draw a seam on the legs with an eyeliner pencil, which is for use for makeup and this was called Liquid Stockings.

When the war ended in 1945, my mam didn't carry on working. She had to go back and look after her father. But Margaret, her sister, who was unmarried also, she just carried on working and she worked much later. But my mam had to look after her father and never worked again after the war and that was fairly traditional.

She married in 1950, so never worked after that. She lived until she was 90 years of age.