

## Discovering Stratford Village: Working Lives Working Community

### Paige Kimberley

**Penelope Nixon:** Please can you tell me your name and your date of birth?

**Paige Kimberley:** Hello yes, my name is Paige Kimberley and my date of birth is 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1962

**PN:** Thank you, and whereabouts were you born?

**PK:** Bristol.

**PN:** Thank you. I'm going to talk to you or you're are going to talk to me about your working life and I thought if we start at the age of eighteen.

**PK:** OK

**PN:** Can you tell me what you did at the age of eighteen?

**PK:** Yes of course I was eighteen and a half I came to London from Scotland and joined the Metropolitan Police. It was eighteen and a half because you couldn't join before eighteen and a half.

**PN:** And what did the police training consist of in those days?

**PK:** Training was quite hard. It was all based up at Hendon, though there was an overflow of it at Wanstead, but the bulk of it done up at Hendon Training School. And it involved lots and lots of learning by parrot. You had to learn the legislation and procedures word perfect. So they were separated into one was 'Star Reports' and one was 'A Reports' – different levels of learning but basically you had to learn it parrot fashion.

**PN:** And what about physical training. Was that a part of it getting fit or reaching a particular level?

**PK:** It was. It wasn't particularly testing to be honest, back in – this was 1981. It wasn't particularly rigorous. There was a little bit of physical training, swimming as well. They tested you by making you jump from the high board into the deep end of the swimming pool, and making sure you could swim. I was a good swimmer anyway. And a little bit of self-defence training which is completely different to how it's done today. But yes, I did that.

**PN:** And as a Police Officer did you in time develop a special speciality in a particular area of responsibility?

**PK:** Yes I did. I was always pro-active. I liked front-line policing and operational policing. But I went through several areas of specialities in my time. I was a Rape Investigator quite early

on. In fact one of the very first rape investigation courses – they're called SIO Sexual Investigation Officers now - Sexual Investigator teams. And that was right on the back of ...there was a documentary by Thames Valley Police which portrayed a victim of a rape being interviewed quite badly by some investigators and it sent shock waves through the country. As a result of that the Metropolitan Police put forward these courses and I was on the first or second one of those, so very early on I was involved in that sort of work. I worked also with prostitutes up town because I worked in Soho and Mayfair. And later on in my career I was one of the first people who joined the Territorial Support Group when it was formed. So I did that and then I went through promotion, and when I went through promotion over the years I went into various specialities, but I finished up investigating crime in public order across London.

**PN:** Can you just explain a little bit about what that is?

**PK:** Yes of course. I think that what most people say is that police should be investigating crime, that's what they do. But if you have any public order event whether it's ceremonial, or a protest, or anything that's a massive event that takes place in London which is constant. You have various areas of responsibility. Some people are in charge of the helicopters, some people are in charge of the Thames, or geographical areas, and then you'd have people who are in charge of different disciplines within that particular function. My job was primarily to gather all the intelligence before a public order event so if anything was planned to cause disruption in London or disruption to the protest, or demonstration - my job was to identify what that was in order that plans could be put together to deal with that and address it. Even something like a ... if it was a protest if somebody else was coming out to give a contrary protest – so you keep the parties apart from each other. And then at the end of the public order event we kept knowing of the crime, who was being arrested, where they were going and dealing with the prisoners at the end of the event. So actually it was quite all encompassing my role.

**PN:** And was that mostly in Central London was it?

**PK:** Most of the protests are yes, yes. Because that's what gathers attention. But that's how I finished off.

**PN:** You referred to a sexual offences role. Were you chosen for that because you were a woman, or was that open to all officers?

**PK:** No I don't think it was open to all officers at the time. I think it was because I was a woman. I don't recall any men being asked on that course at the time. But times have changed obviously.

**PN:** And I was going to ask you do you have any particular views about equality in the police force for men and women. Was there ever anything that concerned you? Were you ever treated differently from the men?

**PK:** Yes, certainly I was treated differently but it was of its time and that's one of the paradoxes posed with trying to judge what happened in the past with today's values and in all honesty I was so pleased to be a police officer and have a job and be working in London when the differences arose as they did I just saw it as - that's how it is. So I can't with hand on my heart say I was annoyed or angry about it or anything because I wasn't. And the differences were for instance, our own protection. I patrolled on my own in central London and that was expected I was on equal pay at the time in 1981. They'd equalled the pay. Equal hours. Equal circumstances. And was expected to patrol on my own. However I wasn't issued with a truncheon like the men were and I was given a handbag instead [laughs] and the rationale behind that was if they gave you a truncheon and you got into a fight they'd take the truncheon off of you and assault you and hurt you with the truncheon. Obviously that's changed now, it's completely different. I can remember thinking it was a little bit odd at the time but not enough to really question it, it was just as it was. So yes things were different in many respects but it wasn't something that we really questioned, that was the way we were. Beyond that yes there were definitely a case of within certain units, they'd have maybe a token female officer but it wasn't necessarily open to a fair balance representing the number of women that were there. The career expectancy at the time when I joined, for a female officer was three years. I know it is quite astonishing, but that was the case – it was three years. They didn't expect you and women generally didn't expect to stay beyond three years, and there were a couple of reasons for that. One was well it was marriage; I suppose that was the reason.

So once you were married they kind of expected you to leave but certainly by the time you had children you weren't expected back and that probably leads me onto the difficulties that I faced quite early on

**PN:** That would be really interesting to hear about it.

I became pregnant when I was 20, up until then I actually had been regarded quite highly for my work and I had lots of very, very positive feedback on the work that I had done. I was always being given good feedback from my supervising officers which was always very nice. That pretty well stopped overnight as soon as I said I was pregnant and there was an expectation that I would leave then. Now you had to leave policing when you were three months pregnant. That was as it was. It was actually written into statute. This wasn't a case an organisation had made it up. It was written into statute which underpins policing. So when I was three months pregnant that was it for me but they actually tried to get me to leave at that point and they really couldn't understand that I didn't want to leave and I knew that I was in a relationship that wasn't particular good. It wasn't healthy and I couldn't see a long future in the relationship. Undoubtedly the organisation took the moral high ground that I shouldn't have been pregnant and single but also they really went to a lot of effort to get me to leave by just explaining that's how things were, and I'd worked so hard to get a job and worked within policing in London and had enjoyed it so much, I refused to hand in

my warrant card but that meant that I wouldn't get paid I got no pay at all and I wasn't entitled to unemployment benefit because I was still employed by the Metropolitan Police. I have to say that did rankle for a quite a few years because I lost all my increments as a result of it even when I went back. I didn't get paid again until I went back to work when my daughter was three months old and I went straight back onto night duty because they didn't know of anybody else to draw a parallel to and I as far as I know I was the first woman to go back into full time work as a police officer with my daughter.

**PN:** So that was nine months, I am right without pay?

**PK:** I took nine months off without being paid, that's right yes.

**PN:** When you came back to work how were things then?

**PK:** Ooh I think they were quite startled actually which surprised me because I was just pleased to back and I did start back on night duty and one of colleagues had said he'd seen my number on my shoulder written down and he thought it had been allocated to somebody else he just didn't believe that women came back after having a child. So in some respects that went in my favour the fact that everybody was "whoah what do we do now?" and they really didn't know what to do so I just carried on as I normally did and went to work and went home, went to work and went home until it was just accepted that I was there and that's how things were going to be and so yes that how it was.

**PN** So do you think that you made a difference to other women becoming pregnant, do you think that helped to change things?

**PK:** I know I did, sadly a lot of women came to me and said that they had actually aborted babies because of the circumstances and obviously I suppose they probably thought they could have done the same but it was very difficult but also it is the most natural thing in the world [laughs] for a woman to have a child and once you have your child if other women want children and they see you as having done that of course they are going to want to do that but times were changing quite rapidly anyway so that's how it was. I left there, I was at West End Central <sup>(1)</sup>at the time and I am still in touch with people I was on that team with at west and central and we meet up a couple of times [a year] and we still talk about me going back to work. They talk about how they all go together in the drivers' room and say whoah this is unusual and have a little conversation amongst themselves but they had decided they were going to rally around and support me and I was supported and they were very good. From there I went to Ilford when my daughter was ... I think before she was a year when I transferred over to Ilford but it was tough again because I was met with that same resistance all over again and in fact one of the supervising officers and the senior officers said to me well what do you think you are going to be doing here and I said well I'll just do shift work like everybody else. And he laughed at me and I said I will and I would like to study for my Sergeants exam and he said well I can't see that happening, and he said well

you can leave now. And that's how I was treated until I just got in to the groove and did my work and people realised well you can come back to work with a child as long as you do your work and crack on that's fine.

**PN:** Well you must have been a role model for women and that must have gone along with the changes in legislation that were occurring perhaps?

**PK:** Yes I probably was on reflection but I was 20/21 at the time so I wasn't looking at it like that I was just hanging on to my job and that was it really and so yeah [Laughs]

**PN:** So how did you manage with a child and shift patterns and being on your own?

**PK:** Truthfully it was extremely difficult, it was extraordinarily difficult and it was one day at a time. I had no money, I had absolutely no money and I wasn't entitled to police accommodation because I had never been married and they wouldn't even give me [anything]; there were several different areas of payment for housing allowance; police officers got a housing allowance. If you are married it increased your housing allowance and because I had never been married I wasn't allowed that but I looked at their general orders and it says that if you had dependants you're allowed anything up to the married person's allowance or married man's allowance so I thought that must include me as I obviously got this daughter who was a baby. So I put in for this money but they absolutely refused to give it to me and they said no if we give you this money, or give you any increase in your money because of the housing allowance everybody will be going off and having babies. And they refused to, and then they found out I had a live in nanny because that was the only way I could go to work. These were people I didn't know they were sat up in Scotland Yard but had gone into what I was doing. And rather than saying well done you are doing everything you can to go to work they said: "We see that you have got someone living in your house (which by the way was in negative equity at the time) [that] has got seven rooms in it in total and one of those rooms has been given to a child-minder as part of her payment because you need somebody there all around the clock because you are doing shift work; we are going to deduct one seventh of your housing allowance because you shouldn't be getting it for that." So they were actually trying to make it so that I got less than everybody else rather than doing anything at that time to increase it. So I went through general orders again and had a really good scout through them and there is something about having a housekeeper, you are allowed to have a housekeeper and they were allowed to have their room as part of, that's ok. So I then said, I went back and said that actually she is a housekeeper and they went ok [laughs] but all I was doing then was fighting for the minimum payment that everybody else got but I wasn't entitled to anything for a dependant.

**PN:** So having a good eye for law really helped you there.

**PK:** I was pretty desperate, I was pretty desperate at the time and yeah... do you want me to talk about how I turned that corner?

**PN:** Yes

**PK:** It did take about three years to really get a grip on I can do this, because it was literally day by day. The housing market was in negative equity, I had a live in childminder which I had to feed and pay, and my daughter I had to feed and keep everything going. I even used to do the aid, sign myself up for aid all the time. At the time as a PC if you went on aid, like you did football or did a demonstration you went and you got fed and I always signed up for that as I got fed, I got overtime and if I got overtime all of that was a good thing but I was that meticulous with my money that I knew if I got fed that meant I didn't have to go on and feed myself from my pay, that's how careful I was around everything. I suppose when my daughter was about three, I did encounter a few problems in relation to... I had no child support and although her dad had regular access, he was less inclined to give me any money to support her even though at the time the men were going up to the miners' strike up north and they were earning a lot of money up there and he was earning a lot of money but I still couldn't get any child support. There wasn't the child support agency or anything like that and I was really, really struggling and I can remember just mentioning it one day, I mentioned it to somebody. I am not somebody who generally moans about things, but I said I don't know how I am going to manage this and if it really gets any tougher I am just really going to have to pack it in and leave. But I had really nowhere else to go and there was nothing else that I could do. And the guy's name who I spoke to was a Federation representative because we all paid into a Federation and his name was Bill Wright and he said to me the Federation will have a look into this for you and I thought well you never looked at anything before for me. But anyway as a result of that he arranged a meeting with a man called Mick Simms (who is now deceased) and I think I met with Mick once or twice but he was pivotal in turning my career around. And I went and saw him and he said you need to go to court and we will support you in going to court and we will pay your solicitor to go to court, we will pay your overdraft, and we will pay you money to go on holiday. And to me at that time that was £600, £200 for each of those and that was such a massive turning point for me and it was the first holiday, I actually used the money and I did exactly as they told me to and I used the money and took my daughter to a holiday camp at the time. So that really, really kept me in employment.

**PN:** That was a big thing in your life?

**PK:** It was massive, massive thing because up until then all I was doing was fighting, the thought that somebody was going to step in and help me out with that sort of thing was quite an important moment.

**PN:** Could you please explain what the Police Federation is?

**PK:** Yeah, police officers are not allowed to strike and we actually not allowed to join the union so the Federation is there to protect us and to ensure that we are looked after and look after our rights in the same way. It's a group of police officers who take our concerns to government. But largely sometimes it's difficult to be effective because we can't take action. I say we but police officers cannot take action. They can't withdraw their hours, they can't go on strike. There lots of things they can't do. So really if you don't like what's happening there not a lot we can do about it but that's what the Federation is. It's a body that protects us.

**PN:** Did all police officers belong to a federation? Was it automatic or was it a choice?

**PK:** Well we were all encouraged to and most did but we were allowed to opt out if you wanted to, yeah, yeah. And also, quite often as a police officer you are vulnerable to malicious allegations as well and complaints. There was a time where if a suspect put in a complaint about you it could hold up the actual investigation, you probably remember this bu, so it was very normal for allegations just to to come in and to hold up the court investigation. So for those malicious allegations it was really useful to have the police federation there supporting you and access to solicitors.

**PN:** So yes, yes that was like a trade union in that regard, the protection element.

**PK:** Yes, yes

**PN:** And I believe there have been changes in clothing and equipment, resources over the years. Do you have any memories of how things have changed?

**PK:** Oh, yeah many, when I joined, I didn't have a hard hat, I had a little hat which was made of felt and there was a white plastic covering over it and if you went out in the rain it shrank. If you got wet you couldn't take it off and leave it somewhere as it was just smaller when you put it back on again [laughs], but they were our hats but you could take the white plastic off and wash it as they got grubby and the band that went around it. The uniforms were a lot stricter then, I think, because there is a few variations of uniform now but we were expected to wear... If we had long shirts on we had to have our cravat on, women wore cravats not ties. We wore a tunic all the time where it is now ceremonial really only for tunics. Women wore skirts between April and October, they weren't allowed to wear trousers. The skirts were a nightmare, I mean they were quite tight fitting anyway, but the actual lining was just a pencil lining and we had to cut it in order to walk. So we had these skirts and then in the winter time we were allowed to wear trousers so between October and April we were allowed to wear trousers, but now it's totally different, completely different. We also got a stocking allowance yeah, that was interesting because the guys used to really rattle on about this stocking allowance which was only a pound a month but boy did they go on about it and they used to say we wouldn't normally buy black socks; we want a sock allowance but they didn't get one and we got our stocking allowance.

**PN:** A small triumph

**PK:** so in some cases we did get paid more! [Laughs]

**PN:** And what about equipment to protect yourself, you mentioned truncheons, tell me about perhaps handcuffs, or radio technology?

**PK:** Yes, of course, of course. Yeah, we didn't have very much when we first started. We had a whistle which we could blow when we got into trouble. We did have radios when I first joined they were called the Storno radios and they were quite different to the ones we got now. You could really annoy everybody by pinging the back every time as there used to be bit of metal that folded over and slotted through the top of your tunic and if you put it on and pinged the back it could become really irritating for everybody and that went on quite a lot. There was a lot of high jinx obviously, things like that. You could turn it down by moving; you only had three volumes, but by moving it in between the volumes you could virtually turn it off and not hear it. Yes they were the old Storno radios a little bit different to what they have got now. Today's ones are much more advanced. There were many, many black spots with them, you went to lots of places where you just simply couldn't transmit and the batteries were always running out as well, so yes we had those. But they were a step forward because before that they didn't have radios and so they were our radios and so about the truncheons, eventually we did get truncheons and what else, oh yes the handcuffs. The handcuffs they have now are fixed they have a fixed metal plate in between the two handcuffs which you are trained to control your prisoner with if they start to resist or they are particularly violent. There are certain things you can do to control your prisoner. Back then they were different. They were handcuffs with a chain that was in-between, and we also had cases where people could get out of the handcuffs as well. It wasn't uncommon for people to get out of their handcuffs, but we weren't able to control our prisoners with those handcuffs, other than have them handcuffed. So yeah, that's the difference between those. So now, there's many other things, we have Tasers now, you've got Asps (2), you've got many other different pieces of equipment that simply, have been brought in gradually over the years.

**PN:** Did you have a camera, I've seen police officers with body worn cameras?

**PK:** They have been introduced, largely since I've left. So the body worn videos, as they are called and the police officers love them. You'll find a lot of the complaints have gone down because of them. The complaints from prisoners because everything is on video now and people are really not in a position to deny their violent behaviour if they are being videoed. So I think we all things there is a little bit of resistance to begin with but when they realise because we brought cctv into cell area, the custody area and when that started there was resistance to that but actually it just made such a difference. We were able to support what we were saying, people couldn't make malicious allegations or say it was planted on us in



the custody area because you could see everything coming out of people's pockets. Completely different so there has been progress. It's a good asset.

**PN:** You're moving into policing, was that the influence from anyone in your family or was that something that just came from you?

**PK:** Came from me. I came from a really chaotic family, we were on the move all the time, we moved every year. I didn't really have a proper education and there was no national curriculum then so every time I moved school I was learning new stuff and I gave up in the end. I just lost the ability to follow anything at school so I left at 16. I left school, went into a holiday camp and really I wanted to join the services. I wanted some sort of stability and I wanted to be paid properly. I wanted to get away from home, I really did and I applied for the Army, the RAF and the Police. The police came through and when I joined both my brothers joined. They were a year and two years younger than me and they joined after me. My daughter went into it as a civilian, as a crime analyst. She has now moved on, she is no longer in the policing world but has been heavily influenced by it.

**PN:** So again you were a role model for your brothers and your daughter with regards to policing?

**PK:** I suppose so, I not sure as a role model, but I set the scene for them and gave them access.

**PN:** Opened their eyes to what they might be able to do?

**PK:** Yeah because I enjoyed it. Really enjoyed it and I think when you do enjoy something, that comes through and everybody thought, what are we missing? What can we do?  
[laughs]

**PN:** And can you tell a little bit about the shift work pattern, that is something that civilians don't understand. How does a shift work?

**PK:** There were many different types of shift work. So they changed it every so often to make it better or more productive or get more people out at the more relevant times but there is no easy way to do shift work and at the beginning, we were talking about this the other day actually at work, what we started on when I first started they simply would not accept now. We did seven nights. After the night duty on a Sunday night which we finished at 6.30 a.m. We were then back on 8 hours later so. In central London for instance we would have to travel into central London, do our shift work and then that last night we would have to get home, have something to eat, get some sleep and then back in all within eight hours and we just did it. Nobody questioned it, we just did it. We all felt terrible and then we did another late turn from what I remember and then back on our early turn. It was really four shifts covering the 24 hour pattern. Interestingly enough though, many years later when I was an Inspector at Charing Cross we realised that our - I'd moved on through the

organisation by then - we realised that most of our work was being conducted at night time. So Charing Cross, West End, Westminster, yes there is crime during the day but most of it goes on at night and the footfall is very high at 2-3 o'clock in the morning. It is extremely busy, so we were trying to think of ways of how to get extra cover at that time of night and I introduced the first permanent night duty in the Metropolitan Police at Charing Cross and I went through all the legal systems, equal ops, everything and I studied a lot on people doing permanent night duty which is actually better for you than doing these quick change overs that we were always doing and I introduced that permanent night duty at Charing Cross. So introduced another shift and you only went on it if you wanted to do it. No one was forced to do it and it ran alongside everything else going on. It just boosted up the figures. Slightly less on during the day time but many more on during the night time and they did seven on, and seven off.

**PN:** And did anybody else follow that pattern?

**PK:** They did, yes, yes. By in large it has all stopped now but most of that has stopped but yeah they did afterwards and the Federation didn't want that. They were very much against it and I kept saying to them people want this and they said well it's a slippery slope and I said well come out and have a look what it's like at night time. But anyway what happened at Charing Cross was a lot of the PCs wrote to the Federation and said we want this and this is something we actually want and they pushed it through themselves.

**PN:** Good, presumably because they could see it was meeting the needs of the public in that particular location?

**PK:** Well it was meeting their needs as well [laughs]. So we knew then from night duty we had more people on and the people that wanted to do permanent night duty could do it, and the people that didn't want to do, so it was a win, win. So everyone was happy with it.

**PN:** Thank you

(1) West End Central is the area for the police station in Savile Row

(2) Asps are the metal slim telescopic truncheons that officers have

