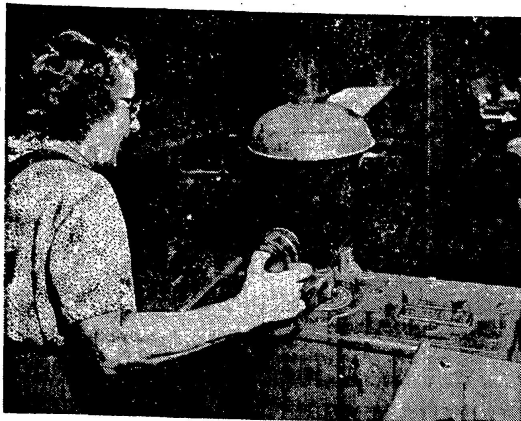


Up in the Air and Under the Ground



A proud great-grandmother within the last few days, Mrs. Beatrice Freeman at the controls of the 40-ton crane at which she has worked for nearly 20 years and as many feet above the heads of her workmates.

HIGH above the men and machines at the Gloucester works of Fielding and Platt, Mrs. Beatrice Freeman, a diminutive great-grandmother in dungarees, manoeuvres a 40-ton crane. She began learning to control travelling cranes of this sort when she went back to work in 1941 after 20 years of married life. Her husband had died, there were four children to be cared for, there was a war on; Mrs. Freeman went into engineering work and found it exciting and satisfactory.

The feminine touch suggests lightness and delicacy. Industry has taken advantage of it more and more in the past 20 years, setting women to work on precision instruments, at electronics and in the laboratory. But heavy engineering, which had to recruit women in their thousands during the war, has managed to retain the loyalty and enthusiasm of a few who would now seek no other way of life. However, accustomed as we are to women invading worlds considered to be exclusively male, it is still startling to discover a woman who, for the past four years, has been entitled to draw the old-age pension working the controls in a crane cabin—a task which convention has classified as masculine and tough.

TWO OF THE FEW

Among the 70,394 women members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, there are several driving cranes, but there cannot be many factories where two women work overhead cranes side by side. Often working in cooperation with Mrs. Freeman and her 40-tonner, Mrs. Mary Hamp, another wartime recruit to industry, controls a much lighter crane. Young enough to be Mrs. Freeman's daughter, she came to the factory early in the war when she suddenly found herself the only support of a baby daughter, and needed more money than she had previously been earning as a cook. Factory life seemed rough at first, but after a few months, when she felt more at ease in her cabin, she used the

intervals when there were no loads for her crane to move darning socks for the men. They would like to talk her into doing it now, but she insists that the emergency is over.

NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY

Both women are quietly amused by the interest they arouse in visitors to the factory, and rather proud of the confidence shown by the men working beneath their cabins. Not a hair stir as a 40-ton dynamometer is hoisted overhead, to be gently lowered on to its base in the assembly pit with no more than an eighth of an inch to spare. There must be something in the foreman's belief that hands experienced in guiding a needle or baking a cake can bring the same deft and sensitive touch to the levers that propel these mighty machines. Thinking in three dimensions at once cannot be easy. Sideways, back and forth, up and down: checking, edging forward, raising the load a fraction of an inch in response to a wave from a figure crouched nearly 20 feet below. But neither Mrs. Freeman nor Mrs. Hamp thinks any more about the hazards of her task than a veteran airline pilot would of his. "After all," says Mrs. Hamp, "I live higher up than I work."

So, with concentration but without strain, they operate their cranes as if they were extensions of their own limbs. A touch on a lever and, in one complex move, the hook with its burden slung beneath the bridge from which the control cabin is suspended swoops up and across the busy machine shop, bearing a load worth thousands of pounds.

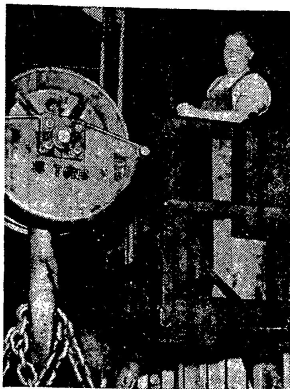
There were 50 women working here during the war, but only Mrs. Hamp and Mrs. Freeman remain. No one in the factory, nor in their families, thinks that there is anything unusual about their jobs, although there is an inclination on the part of the younger men to tease them a little and treat them rather as if they were works mascots. A question about danger money was greeted with slight surprise, and dismissed with a joke about the men working underneath deserving it more than they did. In spite of the high and

narrow walkway Mrs. Hamp traverses to her cabin, neither she nor her colleague see any real danger in the job. For their man's work (as some might call it) they do get man's pay, but if they were a few more feet off the ground they might be eligible for "height money", earned by most of the drivers of the giraffe-like cranes used on building sites. Instead, they receive bonus pay for their craftsmanship and experience, which helps them to support the families dependent upon them.

ENTHUSIASTS

Mrs. Freeman would rather talk about her family than her job, though most of them have emigrated to Australia. Her oldest and most marriageable grandson is "more interested in his job than in girls", so she may have to wait a while longer for great-grandchildren as far as he is concerned. At 64 she is not in the least anxious to retire, nor would she change her job for anything.

The same enthusiasm grips Mrs. Hamp. She might marry again she says, but only that or retirement could lure her away from her beloved crane. As a relaxation she cooks for pleasure, having been a cook before she married, proud of her light hand with sponge cakes. Her daughter, only a few months old when mother took to crane driving, still lives at home and accepts this out-of-the-way occupation



Mrs. Mary Hamp also in the cabin of her crane in the same works, this a 15-ton affair and equally high.

quite phlegmatically. Once, however, she did remind her mother not to call on the headmistress of her High School wearing overalls.

But, casually though the children accept their mothers' uncommon calling, Mrs. Freeman's grandchildren must surely enjoy the thrill of capping schoolfellows' stories of what "Dad does" with the dramatic claim "my Granny drives a crane".

NEXT Thursday at the annual meeting in London of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, Dr. Kathleen Kenyon, C.B.E., the director, will announce the school's plans for 1961, naming the site chosen for next year's "dig".

Coming from the leader of the expedition that excavated Jericho, uncovering evidences of what, to date, is the oldest known city in the world, this for some could be exciting news, though "exciting" is a word Dr. Kenyon herself uses only with the utmost caution.

She is the first to deflate those romantics who equate archaeology with buried treasure and fabulous cities revealed by the spade. On the contrary, she stresses, it is a scientific study involving skilled and laborious work: yet no one who speaks with her can miss the intense enthusiasm, enjoyment, and—yes—excitement she communicates when discussing her chosen subject.

LECTURER

A sturdily built woman of middle height, with a face that combines strength and humour and a consuming intellectual curiosity, Kathleen Kenyon has hands that move sensitively, as from long practice in handling brittle, age-old things; and a low-pitched, musical voice that the students to whom she lectures at London University's Institute of Archaeology must find pleasant hearing.

"I suppose it was almost inevitable that I should become an archaeologist, or something of the sort," she comments, referring to the fact that her father, Sir Frederic George Kenyon, was, from 1909 to 1930, Chief Librarian and Director of the British Museum. "One grew up in the atmosphere. It fired the imagination."

From St. Paul's Girls' School she went to Somerville College, Oxford, to read Modern History; and thence to Zimbabwe, Southern Rhodesia, an apprentice participation in expeditions which ever since have led her far afield and home again—to Sabiratha, Tripolitania and the Jewry Wall in Leicester; to Samaria and Vezulium—a progress interrupted only during the war years when she filled the post of Divisional Commander of the Hammersmith Division of the Red Cross.

The discoveries at Jericho brought a fame to which she is totally impervious; perhaps years spent in uncovering civilizations reduced by time to a handful of sherds and a scattering of bones have made her more sensible than most of the transience of human vanity. "We found more than we expected", she says modestly, stressing the team rather than the individual, and putting the excavations into

perspective as only the latest of a series begun as long ago as 1857—"and have not nearly finished yet."

Typically, "Digging Up Jericho", her shorter account of the expedition, as distinct from the three-volume detailed report upon which she is still engaged, makes no concessions whatever to what might be considered the popular taste. There is no highlighting of the expedition's unique achievement, no playing-up of the new-worthy connexion with the Book of Joshua. Instead, it is a painstaking record that fascinates by its very sobriety, and affords the uninitiated some insight into the complicated substructure of scholarship, delicate technique, and a dimly intuitive "know-how" upon which a large-scale archaeological expedition is based.

HER TOOLS

The physical discomforts of "dig" life Dr. Kenyon accepts as an inescapable accompaniment of the job: she speaks of the pick and the trowel as a sculptor might speak of his chisel or a painter of his brush.

Obviously she relishes to the full the time spent on the actual site. But that is only a beginning, only three months out of her year; a provision of the raw material for the long process of evaluation and interpretation

which alone renders the work of permanent worth, and in turn prepares the ground for the next step to be taken in the field.

She works on this mass of material, either at the Institute of Archaeology, a large, functional building in Bloomsbury whose starkly modern vestibule houses in surprising amity such disparate artifacts as the latest in lifts, an Assyrian jar of c. 612 B.C., and a flint scraper from Neolithic Jericho, or at her cottage in Buckinghamshire, outside High Wycombe. "Preferably the latter. I try to be in the country all I can. I have never thought of myself as a Londoner." Gardening is her hobby: "I am a serious gardener."

Kathleen Kenyon takes pleasure in belonging to a profession which offers equal opportunities to women as to men. Indeed, the women may even have a slight advantage, for the initial remuneration may well discourage young men with family responsibilities or the urge to assume them. For those of either sex who persist against the odds, London University offers a two-year, post-B.A. course leading to a diploma in Archaeology.

"It's a rewarding life"—says Dr. Kenyon, who clearly cannot imagine exchanging it for any other; adding a smiling qualification: "so long as you aren't afraid of getting dirty. Even in fine weather, excavating is dirty work, and when it's wet—!"



Dr. Kathleen Kenyon.

SUNSHINE BABIES

NEXT Wednesday will probably not be the first occasion on which Mr. Kenneth More has been presented with a buttonhole, and by small children. It will probably not be the last. But this time the children will be

possible, but also: "Blindness in a young child has a strong effect on the emotions and pity may smother common sense. It is easy to forget that he needs the same discipline and consistent firm handling as his sighted brother. Over-protection and 'petting' are no compensation for his handicap, but are likely to hinder, his

For Summer Parties

A Good wine cup should be light enough to be drunk in quantities sufficient to quench a summer thirst, but not so diluted—with fruit or

Up in the Air and Under the Ground.

The Times (London, England), Monday, Jul 11, 1960; pg. 13; Issue 54820.

Category: News

Gale Document Number:CS218324715