



The Sugar Girls - Joan's Story: Tales of Hardship, Love and Happiness in Tate & Lyle's East End

Duncan Barrett, Nuala Calvi

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This is Joan's story, one of four stories from The Sugar Girls. During the Blitz and the years of rationing, the Sugar Girls kept Britain sweet. The work was back-breakingly hard, but the Tate & Lyle factory was more than just a workplace - it was a community, a calling, a place of love and support and an uproarious, tribal part of East London.

'Joan had joined Tate & Lyle expressly for the social life, and she was determined to make the most of it. She could see that her old friend Peggy already had an established group of her own among the sugar girls, so she set about building a new set of friends. It wasn't difficult for Joan, whose cheerful self-confidence, natural chattiness and naughty sense of humour acted as a magnet to those around her.'

In the years leading up to and after the Second World War thousands of women left school at fourteen to work in the bustling factories of London's East End. Despite long hours, hard and often hazardous work, factory life afforded exciting opportunities for independence, friendship and romance. Of all the factories that lined the docks, it was at Tate & Lyle's where you could earn the most generous wages and enjoy the best social life, and it was here where The Sugar Girls worked

This is an evocative, moving story of hunger, hardship and happiness, providing a moving insight into a lost way of life, as well as a timeless testament to the experience of being young and female.

Includes Joan's own personal photographs of life as a sugar girl.

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Josie Garcia:

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