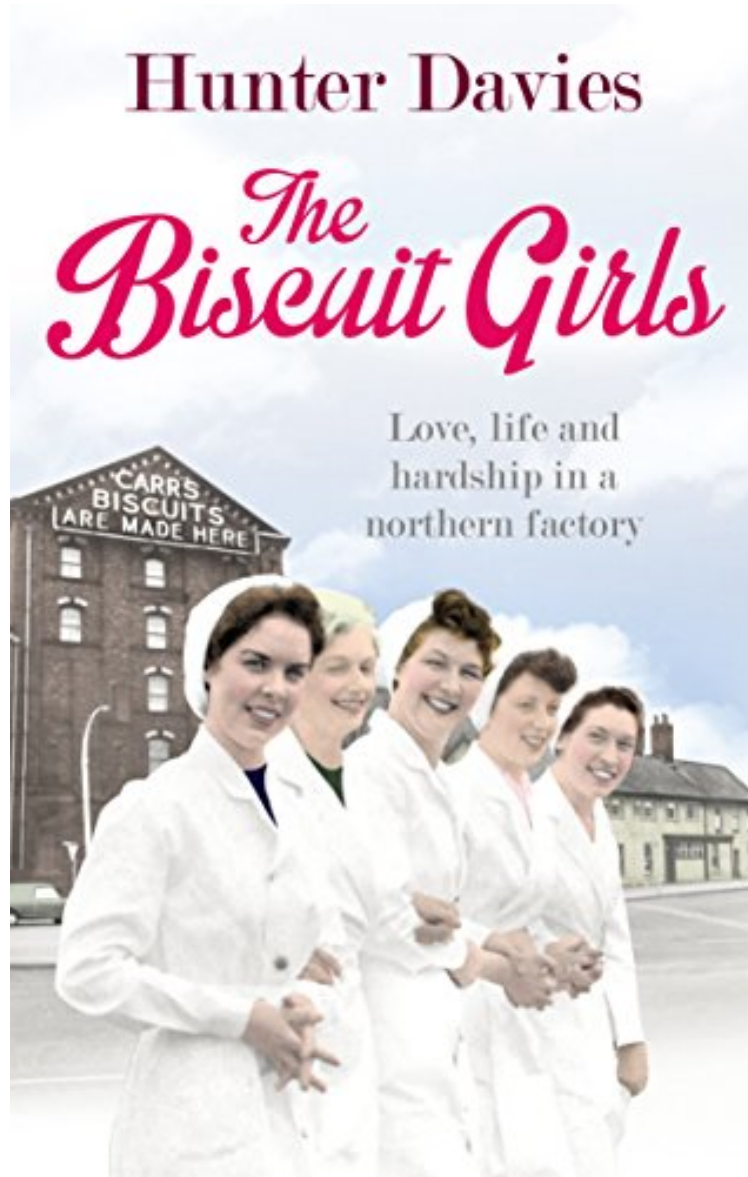


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## The Biscuit Girls

*Hunter Davies*

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**Hunter Davies : The Biscuit Girls** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Biscuit Girls:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two StarsBy Jeanie LightSome of the descriptive elements good and you could picture the era but repetitive in places.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent social history based on six retired biscuit workersBy Peter Durward HarrisThis book is not about the biscuit industry as such, although some of its history and products are featured, along with some information about Carlisle and its surrounding

area. Apparently, the definitive history of the biscuit industry has yet to be written, although books about individual businesses have been written, and are listed at the end of the book. I have no experience of the biscuit industry, but I once had a temporary job as a teenager in a jam tart factory (R and K Wise in Swindon, now closed), so I suppose that gives me some inkling of what a biscuit factory would be like. The author looked for volunteers among people who had worked for Carr's in Carlisle, to tell them his story. Seven women volunteered but one dropped out when she decided that she didn't want to discuss her life story after all. In the old days, very few men worked there, though more do so now. The stories told by the women are quite varied, but all seemed to think Carr's was wonderful to work for despite the boring factory work and modest pay. As no real thinking was needed most of the time, the women spent their time chatting while working. It wasn't all factory work, though. One of the women was eventually promoted out of the factory, to a position where she was more of a social worker, checking up on people who were off sick and looking after their needs. On one occasion, she was under instructions to bring back somebody's stool. She returned to Carr's with a kitchen stool, and never heard the last of it. As a leaving present when she retired, she was given a kitchen stool. Inevitably, there are common threads to the various stories, but I didn't feel any repetition was excessive. Take the biscuit, read the book. It makes great reading.

Ivy, Dulcie, Barbara, Ann, Dorothy and Jean all had different reasons for applying to work at Carr's biscuits, but once they had put on their overalls and walked through the factory gates they discovered a community full of life, laughter and friendship. To those who didn't know, the biscuit factory that towered over Carlisle might look like just another slice of the industrial North, a noisy and chaotic place with workers trooping in and out at all hours. For the biscuit girls it was a place where they worked hard, but also where they gossiped, got into scrapes and made lifelong friends. Outside the factory walls there might be difficult husbands or demanding kids, and sometimes even heartbreak and tragedy, but they knew there would always be an escape from their troubles at Carr's. Some, like Barbara, only applied because she needed the extra cash, until things got a bit easier at home. Her supervisor cross examined her about who would be looking after the kids while she was at work, but let her have the job. Like many of the women who joined up 'temporary' Barbara went on to stay at Carr's for 32 years. Beginning in the 1940s, these heartwarming and vividly-remembered stories have all been told by the women themselves to Hunter Davies.

About the Author Hunter Davies is a journalist who worked on the Sunday Times, where he was chief features writer, and later editor of the magazine. He wrote regular columns for Punch, and currently writes for Cumbrian Life, the Mail on Sunday, the New Statesman, and the Sunday Times. For three years he presented Bookshelf on BBC Radio 4. He is the author of the only official biography of the Beatles, as well as The Glory Game, The Good Guide to the Lakes, and Wainwright: The Biography.