

Every Christmas, politicians are invited by the Royal Mail to visit their local sorting office to meet the local posties and get a better understanding of how they manage the busiest period of the year. I love it to the extent I don't even mind getting up early on a cold dark December morning.

This is in part because I have a deep fascination of how mail works. I did once write to a well known TV programme asking if it could be fixed for me to become a letter! It never was fixed for me so instead I had to become a local MP and then wait for the invite to see for myself.

It will not surprise you to learn that it is a fascinating but highly organised operation, thanks to the dedicated postmen and women that work through the night and day to make sure we get our letters and parcels on time.

Christmas is naturally the busiest time of year. It is amazing to think that the tradition of sending Christmas cards was established in 1843 with just 1000 of them sent that year. Now we send millions.

One of the nicest things about visiting the Snodland office is I get to see my own postman Rick before he heads out into the wilds of Aylesford. He has been our postie for 40 years and is a strong community presence. He knows everyone on his round, and pretty much everyone knows him. It is that kind of dedication and commitment that many others have within the service, despite many challenges they face.

They work hard throughout the year and very rarely get thanked for getting up at a ridiculous time of day to do their best to deliver our mail. So thank you Rick and all the postmen and women – stay safe over Christmas and the winter period.