

Interview with John Morgan - 12th October 2022

Interviewer: Sarah Gillam.

Summariser: Rozanne Gomes

- Born 1938, London.
- Joining the railways - his father asked him to look for a temporary job to help his business out. At 15 years old- too young to be an engine fireman, so became a cleaner instead, absolutely loved it and the people.
- First days - Good camaraderie, a pleasure to come to work with those drivers and exciting to be a fireman.
- Training – 2-week course mainly safety, how to fire an engine and coal. Did practice, but not on a real train. Difficult to move coal, especially at speed. Whole training process was 2 to 3 years. Lots freight at King's Cross, all steam trains and included short trips and local suburban trains.
- Description of King's Cross station - inside station not too different, but suburban side has changed to retail. The architecture has had a vast improvement. Busier than before; more locations and services available. Steam trains description.
- Job - Provided driver with steam he required, when required. Drivers mainly supportive if you were inexperienced. One person did coal per train. York was the longest trip - about 9 or 10 tons of coal. Well paid with a mileage bonus available. 140 miles in usual day, as agreed with the Union.
- Progression: Started with suburban trips - one year spent in each link then Cambridge link which was a semi express link. Bigger and faster trains, then afterwards freight, goods, passengers. Lodge links in York, Hull and Leeds. Top link: Newcastle link where he shared non-stop to Edinburgh. The lodgings were terrible, for example, in Leeds the hostel was in the middle of a depot on a triangle turntable, no food provided. He spent 22 years on footplate as a fireman progressing a driver. He trained drivers, became a supervisor, senior traction inspector, then after redundancy was a train crew manager. He left the job after privatisation.
- Relationships - First day, there were four men from the Windrush generation and one was a black man from Blackpool. Most were in their early twenties, he was 15 years old. He made friends for life.
- Favourite moments/ nicknames - In the mess room. Anecdotes given about the job.
- Funny story - Steam/ condensation anecdote given.

- Union - Joined ASLEF at 15 years old for his time at the footplate, then TSSA. Pro union - asked to join after 23 years. Has a lot of respect for the unions.
- Strikes - 1955 - due to proportional wage rises - he had a fortnight holiday! A social event was organised to gather money for those who didn't have a lot. He wanted to meet a girl and he met his wife still married to this day!
- Technological changes - He had to learn a lot and quick as the technology progressed, through Diesels - HSTs. Breaking system much improved - anecdote given.
- Reflection - his time on the railways has meant everything, no regrets from joining to all the jobs he had on the railways; absolutely lovely people to work with.