

Leslie Thornton Muir, born 1950, in Kirkwall, Orkney.

Moved to Leicester with his parents when young, train spotter, joined the Leicester depot as a cleaner after his CSEs, applying to the shed master with good references from 5 years working as a paperboy.

Moved to Kings Cross after redundancy. Big depot, lots of drivers to learn from, friendly. Went through the rule book with other drivers.

Hostel lodging at Ilford. Basic, had a room to himself, meals provided, all taken care of out of wages, so always knew he'd be able to eat and have a roof over his head.

#### Work

Worked his way up, from shunting, local trips, junior links, 2 and 3 links to Peterborough, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

Lodged overnight at 'Anders Palace' in Newcastle as couldn't fit run there and back into an 8 hour day.

Compared training to become a driver in his day - it took him 10 years, with now, 'street to seat' in 18 weeks/months?.

Typical day described: sign on, given diagram of journey waymarks, could be 3 suburban trips, the outer suburbs or Peterborough, Cambridge.

Preferred British Rail days - could work on freight, passenger services, working your way up through the levels to become a driver. Had a co driver, a guard looking out for you, didn't appreciate what they did until he had to do it for himself. Fireman and driver worked together, rarely interacted with managers.

Diesel: introduction. Big, noisy but quick.

Cameraderie with workforce, good to excellent at KC.

Social life: trips to Blackpool, dinner dances, this all disappeared with privatisation. He became much more isolated in the cab on his own, on breaks there'd be no-one in the mess room.

Nicknames: 3 Burtons, named Clean, Scruffy and Tizer, latter only drank pop.

Passengers: met Jo Brown and the brothers, and Jimmy Savile, arrogant. Had to help a pregnant woman stuck on a train, man threw a bottle at him, someone was shot, trainspotters, horse on the line.

Downsides: early mornings, shift work, 3.20am train for the papers.

Dangers of the job: weather, slippery tracks, passed a red light as couldn't stop, out of control.

Worst day: Hitchin to Letchworth, no power, heat or light. Got everybody into 1 carriage to keep warm. Had to sort out rescue. V cold. Gold star awarded, as employee of the month.

Unfair treatment: never saw any prejudice. Some of the older men were offish to Trisha Roche, first woman driver.

Unions: encouraged to get involved with union after divorce. Became branch secretary.

Strikes: 1982. "We were bullied, cornered, manipulated. Still angry with them about that." Pay and conditions.

Tech changes: had to learn the changes. Moved from pulling levers to pressing buttons. Steam to diesel to electric.

Privatisation: biggest change, cut down on staff, lots of drivers retired, didn't want to work in privatised companies. "Still don't agree with it. Lots of people travel by train. Have to make it as safe as possible."

Looking back: Stable employment, not always well paid. Have a lot of sympathy with young drivers as don't have help from others that he had. Have to contract 10 years learning into 12-18 months.