

Kings Cross Railway Workers Oral History

Interviewee: Warren (Wally) Levy
Date of birth: 1944, Northampton
Interview location: ASLEF, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN
Interview date: 19th October 2022
Interviewed by: Robin
Summary by: Mark O'Loughlin

Warren joined the railway because it offered a good pension, he was told. He started working in 1968 and spent 42 years working on the railways. He started as a railman in Southend, cleaning trains, as part of a two-man team in an eight-car unit. When he started the trains had 'ladies only' carriages and he had to ask permission to enter. He became a leading railman which included cleaning out the signal box (which had levers and no electronics) and collecting coal.

In 1980 he came to Kings Cross as a foreman and worked in the lost property office where items that people left behind such as false teeth and umbrellas would end up. He enjoyed the wide variety of people at Kings Cross and remembers the 'ladies of the night' who were encouraged to leave the station. He recalls from his time working on security, the 'drunks, beggars, bag snatchers and undesirables' at Kings Cross.

He sometimes looked after VIPs and his favourite event was meeting the Queen (not the pop group) and Princess Diana (who was very chatty).

Warren recalls working at the station during significant events such as the Kings Cross fire on the London Underground, when the railway station had to be evacuated. And the London bombings, when the travel centre was turned into a mortuary.

Although he didn't notice a huge change to his job after privatisation (when he became a Rail Track/Network Rail employee rather than British Rail), Warren recalls going on picket lines and getting on well with Bob Crow.

Warren enjoyed the social life at Kings Cross and remembers when they only had a WH Smith and a Burger King in the station which is a huge difference to the choice of cafes, bars and restaurants now available on site. 'It's more like a shopping centre now,' he says.