



FIRST JOBS KEEPING A CAREER ON TRACK

LNER
LONDON NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY



Tony Kocks' first job

Hailing from Essex, Tony Kocks landed his first job at the tender age of 16 in 1991. Commencing as an apprentice coach repairer, Tony's unwavering dedication and perseverance led him to climb the professional ladder, eventually securing an opportunity to retrain as a train driver.

In 2002, Tony embraced his new role, driving trains from London King's Cross to Newcastle. A lover of the railway, Tony's favourite part of the job is meeting new people and whizzing past historical landmarks daily.

A PR professional's first job offer

Travelling from London King's Cross back to Doncaster after a final interview for her very first job in PR, Naomi had not yet graduated from the University of Leeds but felt a great sense of achievement.

With her family residing in the north, she relied on LNER to get her to and from London for numerous interviews and had grown accustomed to the route.

As destiny would have it, the recruiter's call came just as she stepped onto the platform at Doncaster, offering her the coveted position. With eager excitement, she accepted on the spot and took her first steps into the PR industry – still working in the sector almost 10 years later.

First role leads to 'job for life'

In 1974, a 15 year-old Colin Lewis from Newcastle had two job offers on the table: one as a painter and another on the railway. Heeding his brother-in-law's advice – a rail guard who described the railway job as a 'job for life' – Colin chose the tracks over the paintbrush.

Fast forward 49 years, and Colin is gearing up to hang up his Train Manager's hat next year, leaving behind a career full of happy memories. His journey on the rails has been nothing short of an adventure, starting as a junior railman before climbing the ladder to become a train driver in 1985.

Since then, he's never looked back, driving across the East Coast in 19 different types of locomotive, travelling to Inverness, Aberdeen and London, with a smile on his face.

Ken Cooke's first time in the driving seat

Veteran Ken Cooke travelled down to London from York with LNER in early 2023 to pay homage to his comrades.

A Green Howards Private, Ken took part in the Normandy landings on Gold Beach on D-Day in 1944 and honoured the memory of the fallen by laying a wreath on the Great Northern Railway and LNER War Memorial at London King's Cross.

What Ken didn't expect was the surprise arranged by his friends at the York Normandy Veterans Association, working with LNER to make his return trip an unforgettable experience.

As the clock struck 09:06, a locomotive emerged before him - LNER's No. 91111 named 'For the Fallen'.

The surprises didn't end there. Instead of travelling in the carriages like any other passenger, Ken found himself whisked to the front, where he spent the entire two-hour journey seated in the cab for the first time - side by side with the driver, fulfilling a lifelong dream.

The retirement of Old Bill and his first time transporting bees

In October 1930, the Nottingham Evening Post featured a captivating interview with the legendary William Lowther, affectionately known as "Old Bill" in the railway community.

With an astounding 50 years of service, including 25 onboard the esteemed "Flying Scotsman", "Old Bill" was a revered figure among railroaders.

His charm as "Happy Bill" graced the trains, and his impeccable demeanour earned him the reputation of having the 'tact of a diplomat and courtesy courtier'. Throughout his illustrious career, he covered an astonishing 5 million miles, encountering countless fascinating individuals.

"Old Bill" shared intriguing stories of travellers' changing behaviours and amusing run-ins with "Card Sharps." His duties even extended to caring for an assortment of animals in the guards cab, from Shetland ponies to dogs, cats, snakes, and monkeys - an entertaining encounter with a swarm of bees sent from Germany resulted in a comedic turn of events.

As the interview concluded, readers were charmed by "Old Bill's" endearing stories and were reminded of the enduring legacy of the beloved "Happy Bill" onboard Flying Scotsman. His gracious and remarkable presence would forever be cherished by all who had the privilege of travelling alongside this esteemed guardian of the railway.

Flying Scotsman's first agony aunts

In November 1935, Flying Scotsman train had two remarkable female attendants, Miss E. Roberts from London and Miss H. Cunningham from Edinburgh.

With seven years of service and an impressive 757,344 miles under her belt, Miss Roberts was much more than just an attendant. She played the roles of guide, counsellor, and friend to the female customers onboard the train.

Women sought her out for all kinds of needs - from mending holes in their stockings or frocks to tending to cuts and scratches. She was the go-to person for forgotten essentials like toothbrushes or combs and a comforting presence for those feeling lonely or unhappy during the long journey. Some visitors simply came to chat, seeking a friendly ear to lift their spirits. Miss Roberts' warmth and kindness touched the hearts of many.

Her caring nature extended to looking after children travelling alone. She even took care of a 21 month-old infant travelling from Edinburgh to London, reuniting the little one with their parents after a stay with their grandmother.

Mrs Malthouse's first time in the drivers cab

George Malthouse, the dedicated driver of the esteemed Queen of Scots service, proudly served for eight years until his joyous retirement on his 65th birthday

On his last day and for the first time, his wife accompanied him in the Pullman car on his final non-stop run from London to Leeds.

The couple had much reason to celebrate, as a lively party awaited them in Leeds.

Shirley Marland's first ever dance audition

Shirley Marland had glitz and glamour in her future and, as she jumped on an LNER train headed for the bright lights of London for her first ever dance audition in 1992, she was full of nerves.

Ready for rejection, a 22 year-old Shirley gave it her all and boarded the train with big hair and beautiful make up, ready to make her debut audition for a job as a dancer onboard a cruise ship.

To her amazement, she got the job, and it was the beginning of an amazing decade-long career onboard luxury cruise liners that toured across the globe – visiting countries in Asia, South America and everything in between. Quite literally dancing around the world, Shirley even performed at Rio Carnival, and met her husband onboard a ship.

Shirley decided to draw the curtain on her dancing career in 2002, and moved back home to Newcastle, where she started a new career with LNER. Since then, she's never looked back – well, only to marvel at her memories.

Rachael Wilson's first job leads to a 20-year career

Rachael Wilson's journey with LNER started over 20 years ago, when she finished university. In need of a job, she joined the company in 2000, working in customer relations at York station.

Over the years, Rachael has moved up the ranks, experiencing different roles within the business. Now, 20 years on, Rachael is LNER's Community Investment Manager, which sees her working with and supporting local charities up and down the rail route across the UK, that focus on mental health, education and employability skills, making a real difference to people's lives.

When she started her career, the job role didn't even exist but, throughout her time at LNER, Rachael has always said 'yes' to new experiences, and has loved all her different roles within the company.

Gosforth Boy's first job results in a dream career

67 year-old Leslie Hall began his career in the rail industry during the 1970s. By 1976, Leslie was a Tyne and Wear Metro train guard.

The railway was different in those days, with a huge eight-carriage train pulling into stations every few minutes, resulting in up to 15 stops per hour.

Known as one of the 'Gosforth Boys,' Leslie was an integral part of the depot team in the town where trains underwent servicing. Today, he is the sole surviving member of that crew still clocking in.

His role, while physically demanding – with daily runs up and down platforms, climbing signal gantries, and replacing oil lamps perched 50 feet in the air – was a job he cherished.

Sadly, Leslie was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2019 and now enjoys working at Newcastle Central Station twice a week. Leslie looks back on his career fondly and looks forward to his remaining years at the station before retirement.

Gill's first job is the one she loves

You know what they say, find a job you love, and you'll never work a day in your life. LNER was Gill's first job.

Working with like-minded folk who share a passion for travel, for people, and, above all, for delivering exceptional customer service is a dream for her.

She's proud to have been a part of an industry that is continuously innovating and modernising to compete with aviation and other transport competitors. There are numerous similarities yet an array of challenges. But customer service is always delivered with a smile.

LNER's first female Engineering Director

Dr. Linda Wain was named Engineering Director at LNER last year, marking the first time a woman has occupied this role.

Boasting a rich career spanning three decades, Dr. Wain has experience in rail, engineering, reliability improvement, fleet and depot management.

Prior to joining LNER, she worked with prestigious organisations such as the Royal Air Force and the Ford Motor Company.

A chance encounter shapes Andy's life

Andy Kenny has clocked up an impressive 50 years on the railways and is now one of LNER's longest serving drivers. After applying for a position as a driver's assistant he worked out of Parkston Quay. A chance encounter with a driver on a bus convinced him to move to Newcastle – a city he has gone on to make his home. He currently drives trains which operate the entire length of the East Coast Main Line, right up as far as Aberdeen and Inverness.

Every day is different and Andy loves hurtling over the Forth Bridge or through the Cairngorms just as much as he likes arriving into King's Cross. While he still has lots of great friends and family down south, Andy's heart is firmly in the North East.