



# FIRST BIG LIFE MOMENTS

**LNER**  
LONDON NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY



## Evacuees return home for the first time in five years

In 1944 a bustling scene unfolded at London King's Cross station as 4,000 evacuees returned home for the first in almost five years, accompanied by cots, prams, children's baths, high chairs, and suitcases. Alongside them, many women anxiously waited.

Throughout World War II there were air raid threats which saw 1.5 million people leave the capital, although only a fifth were official evacuees. While the government had halted evacuations in September and advised children to stay put, their pleas were ignored as thousands crowded at London King's Cross.

A porter highlighted the situation and said, "Yesterday, trains from Darlington, Newcastle, and the North were crowded with evacuees and, at 9pm, the station was packed out." The urgency and determination of the evacuees to return home created an unforgettable sight at the station.

## LNER colleague's first trip to Pride

In 2017, Craig, a proud LGBTQIA+ member and native of Newcastle, experienced his first Pride celebration with LNER. Accompanied by 26 colleagues, he ventured to York, where he was blown away by locals' huge show of acceptance.

As the parade moved through the streets, they passed schools, retirement homes and churches and were greeted with celebrations and cheers.

Fast-forward six years, Craig has participated in numerous Pride events across the UK, including Edinburgh, London, and Doncaster. He was also there to celebrate his partner's first Pride. Beginning his journey at LNER in the ticket office, Craig now serves as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead for the entire organisation.

His aim is to encourage an inclusive environment to help people thrive in their workplace and create epic Pride parades each year.

## Meeting a famous radio DJ

Jane McQuillen was enjoying a relaxing journey between London and Edinburgh in the First Class carriage when she thought she recognised a famous face sitting across from her.

She immediately texted her daughter to share the exciting news that radio presenter Greg James was on the same train. Fond of a spot of mischief and unbeknown to Jane, her daughter Colleen immediately tweeted Greg to let him know about her mum's theory.

Reading the message, Greg then coolly asked, "are you Jane?" much to her initial shock, before being shown the tweet and confirming it was sent by her daughter. The video clip of Jane's first meeting with Greg subsequently went viral and the pair even posed for a selfie.

## Taking a wedding dress home for the first time

Poppy travelled from London King's Cross to Edinburgh with the most important garment she'll ever own – her wedding dress.

Carefully boxed up and placed in the overhead shelves, together they were taking the train for a very special reason – Poppy's wedding to Tom.

The staff were so kind and helped her carry her special dress around so she could dazzle on the big day. A very happy memory.

## Writing your first book onboard

Alex Merchant found the East Coast Main Line to be an unexpected muse for creativity, so much so that she wrote four novels about the life and legacy of King Richard III on her travels between Leeds and London King's Cross – including her acclaimed debut, *The Order of the White Boar*.

Those two hours onboard the quiet carriage offered a sanctuary for writing, escaping the distractions of daily life.

As she looked out over lands through which Richard himself often journeyed, she put pen to paper to document the King's life.

The writer even travelled with her young daughters, braving fellow customers' quizzical looks. The girls embraced the quiet atmosphere for their own literary pursuits – like mother, like daughters.

## Sue's first big break

In 2012, Leeds Station Support team member, Sue Day, spotted posters in her station calling on people to audition to be in a new television advert for the operator at the time. As an amateur actor and singer, Sue decided to sign-up for her first ever audition.

Four days later she got a call that she wasn't expecting – she'd bagged a leading role in the advert. Sue filmed with Leeds comedian, Vic Reeves, for two days on an empty train shining in her role as a catering team member.

Etched in her memory forever, the advert even made it to the big screen in IMAX cinemas. For a brief moment, Susan felt like a movie star.

## A First Class first, for a whisky lover on her way to a distillery

This summer, whisky lover Moa journeyed to the Fettercairn Distillery near Aberdeen in style, enjoying the luxury of a First Class train ride.

The journey offered her a beautiful view of the sea as she travelled north from Edinburgh along the idyllic coastline. Moa sat back and enjoyed a smooth journey with VIP treatment in a First Class seat. The greatest perk? A delicious bacon roll and a cup of tea for breakfast, of course.

## How a comedian's first time performing to one audience member ignited his career

For the first time in his career, Scottish comedian Robin Grainger took to the Fringe stage, performing his comedy set for a single audience member after slow ticket sales for one of his daily shows. His one-man show made headlines, and he was inundated with press requests and interviews thereafter.

Grainger arranged performances in London, Newcastle, and Leicester, capitalising on the momentum, playing sold out gigs ever since. Throughout his tour, he relied on LNER services for his travel needs as he visited different venues.

## Alice Malseed's first Fringe Festival

In 2006, a young drama student was finding her way in London where she was pursuing her dreams at Goldsmiths. As summer approached, she felt an undeniable pull to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. With friends starring in their own shows throughout August, she knew it was an experience she couldn't miss, so she headed for Scotland.

Alice spent a week immersing herself in the world of theatre by day and comedy into the night.

Now, almost 17 years hence, she brings her very own creation, "Half Moon," to the grand stage of the Fringe.

## Premier trip to the Fringe spurs on annual visits

Langley-born Gemma Hirst was always drawn to the performing arts from a young age.

In 2014, Gemma transformed her dream into reality, travelling to Edinburgh for her first role at Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Starring in a contemporary version of Shakespeare's Macbeth, Gemma had a blast but decided her skills were better suited behind the scenes.

Since then, Gemma has returned to the festival every year, but this time as a journalist, interviewing artists from across the UK and delivering reviews of the festival's standout performances.

## Trio bring 'Digitize' to London for the first time

Pam, Tony, and Niall embarked on a memorable journey filled with a few firsts as the trio travelled from Scotland to the famous Bett conference as 'Digitize.'

It was their first trip to London together, and they revelled in the opportunity to share the hard work they'd spent years building. Meeting the people with whom they'd formed online connections with was quite a thrill.

This trip also marked Tony's debut visit to London. They seized the moment, ensuring his first impression of the city was unforgettable by visiting many of its renowned landmarks.

## A baby born on Flying Scotsman

On Flying Scotsman in November 1929, customers quickly rallied, searching for doctors and nurses onboard, while a message was urgently dispatched, calling for medical attention at London King's Cross.

Why? On a high-speed train, Mrs Winifred Scott gave birth to James Elner Scott, named after LNER.

In celebration, a cake modelled as the "Flying Scotsman" and a christening cup were gifted to the newborn.

There was, however, a problem with working out where exactly the baby was born for registration purposes, but company officials concluded it was in the parish of Huntingdon.

Mrs Scott wrote a letter to the Chief General Manager stating 'her sincere thanks to all those members of the train and stations staff who rendered assistance during her trying experience.'