

Bob signals the end of 54 years on the railway

April 6, 2021



One of the West Coast Main Line's longest serving employees has retired after 54 years on the railway.

Avanti West Coast Service Manager Bob Bigsby waved a final farewell to colleagues at Euston Station this month ending a distinguished career.

As a 15-year-old, Bob joined the railway after arriving at Euston on April 3, 1967. He was given a role on a British Rail Service from London to the Lake District and back, where he pot-washed in the kitchen for First Class passengers.

"They gave me an induction which didn't last long," the 69-year-old said. "By 10am, I was on the train to Windermere. It was a shock because I'd barely left London. I was worried about my parents who had no idea when I'd be home – it was before the mobile phone days!"

Bob has held a number of roles working on the trains while travelling millions of miles on the network. These have included an Assistant Steward, Steward, Chief Steward (as the roles were known) and finally as a Service Manager for Avanti West Coast leading First Class and wider catering service on board.

He has also worked on the Royal Train since 1974, including the Queen's Silver, Golden, and Diamond

Jubilees as well as being awarded the Royal Victorian Medal in 1999 for his role on the service.

Explaining why he stayed in the job for so long, Bob said: “It’s the joy of meeting people that the railway brings. It’s the comradeship between the colleagues and the variety of customers I’ve had the pleasure to meet. I can honestly say I’ve had fun every single day.

“But like a lot of people I took stock of things during the lockdown. I’ve still got my good health and the time to retire just feels right.”

For someone who has seen plenty of changes over the years, Bob explained it’s the evolution of technology which has had a major impact.

“Technology has revolutionised things,” he said. “Whether it was my roster or orders, I had to write it all down or deliver and pick up notices all over the station. Now it’s all just a call or a click away.

“But what has stayed the same is the friendship of the staff. There’s always been so much support and love, and if you’re in this world you’ll know what people mean by ‘railway family.’ Everyone stands by each other and that’s priceless.”

Paying tribute to Bob, his manager Kelsea Davies, said: “He’s been on the railways for over half a century and I don’t think we’ll ever see this length of service again.

“It’s such a pleasure to work with him and he knows the job inside out. He set a very high standard and he’ll be impossible to replace.”



Photo credit: Avanti West Coast