

Cornwall teenage cancer survivor pays a special visit to the railway

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Network Rail's Roskear signal box in Camborne, Cornwall, recently welcomed a special visitor – 16-year-old William Beynon from Hayle, who has recently celebrated being given the all-clear from cancer.

William is a huge railway fan. In fact, it was while he was attending the Warley train exhibition with his grandfather in December 2019 that he first noticed he was feeling unwell. Shortly thereafter, he was diagnosed with cancer and spent three years undergoing treatment at Bristol Children's Hospital and Treliske.

William Beynon said: "The visit was amazing, it showed me how the hidden aspect of the railway worked and allowed me to get up close to the signalling and level crossing equipment.

"I hope that one day I can use my engineering qualifications to join this exciting sector."

Since his diagnosis, William has undergone a number of treatments, including chemotherapy and a stem cell transplant. Throughout that time, he kept busy – taking his GCSEs while in hospital and passing with flying colours. During his first round of chemotherapy, William's parents, Paul and Hannah, built him a shed

to house his model railway while he could only concentrate for short periods and wasn't well enough to help his grandfather Ivor with his own model railway.

Trips to Hayle station also became an important part of William's recovery; watching the trains helped when he was feeling unwell and provided inspiration for his own model railway.

Ivor Parsons, William's grandfather who visited the signal box with him, added: "It was really great to be able to visit the box with William. We were able to take a few rail trips before William relapsed again and it's good to get the opportunity to see how things work behind the scenes.

"The railway has been a very important outlet for William during the past couple of years and it's given us a chance to bond through a shared interest. It's also been the spur for him taking up the engineering course at college and I'm looking forward to seeing him flourish as he progresses."

Thankfully, William was recently given the all-clear and was able to ring the ceremonial bell at Treliske, marking the end of his three-year battle with cancer.

A week before he rang the bell, William paid a visit to Roskear signal box to see the railway in action. His grandmother, Helen Parsons, had seen a local Network Rail employee – mobile operations manager Craig Munday – posting about the signal box on Twitter and reached out to him to see if a special trip for William would be possible.

Craig Munday, Network Rail's mobile operations manager, said: "I was pleasantly surprised to hear from William's grandmother, Helen, asking if he could visit a signal box, so I arranged for him and his grandfather Ivor to visit the Roskear box at Camborne.

"William had a fantastic time watching the trains swish by the signal box having followed their progress from Truro and St Erth.

"William may be a budding railwayman himself – under strict supervision he was able to have a go at operating the level crossing at Roskear and Camborne, which he also enjoyed immensely.

"Everyone who met William that day was over the moon to hear that he's now studying engineering at Truro College and we hope that his love for the railway might lead him to a career in the industry one day, he'd certainly be very welcome