

“Inspirational” Haverfordwest station retailer celebrates 60 years’ service

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A station retailer who has clocked up 60 years’ service has been praised as “an inspirational member of the railway family” by Transport for Wales.

Jimmy Summons, who runs the newspaper kiosk at Haverfordwest station in Pembrokeshire, began his career in the days of steam trains whistling past to meet the ferry at Fishguard when he was just 16-years old in 1961.

Over the years he’s seen Richard Burton, Prince Charles and Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II at the station and has served Lord Snowdon and Soldier Soldier actor Jerome Flynn.

And just a month short of his 77th birthday, Jimmy says he has no plans to retire yet.

“My cat wakes me up at 4:45am and I head down to make tea and get the papers ready,” says Jimmy, who has lived in the town his whole life.

“I’ll deliver to my customers around the town before coming down to the station to meet the early train.

"I love it because you never know who might walk through those doors or where they might be going, but I try to treat them all the same."

Having left school at 15, Jimmy worked with his brother before taking on the kiosk with a permit from John Menzies to sell newspapers, books and tobacco in the same year President John F Kennedy was inaugurated in the USA.

It was the last days of steam, before the Beeching axe had fallen on railways across Wales, and Haverfordwest had a much larger team managing parcels and wages from the site.

"We had some brilliant times over the years," said Jimmy.

"I'll always remember my good friends Dai Havard and Jimmy Morgan. The railway staff used to look after me when I was a youngster first starting and I've always loved being a part of things here. We've had plenty of fun over the years though there have been a few memorable moments.

"Once, many years ago, we had a parcel trolley fall on the line and I had to jump down with the rest of the boys and help get it up again before the train came through*. Another time I had to warn the guard that a lorry had hit the railway bridge up ahead.

"Richard Burton came in while he was filming Under Milk Wood in Fishguard and got the train back to London, though sadly we didn't see Elizabeth Taylor.

"We've had all the royals through over the years and I remember waving to Prince Charles and getting a wave back when they were off to an occasion at Picton Castle."

**TfW stresses that you must never go onto the track to retrieve any items dropped.*

Jimmy has been married to his beloved wife Lorraine, 74, for many years and she too is still working, in a residential home, despite being older than some of the people she looks after.

He stopped selling cigarettes several years ago and has seen the book trade diminish over the years.

"Not as many people seem to like reading on their journey any more, which is quite sad. They all seem to be on their phones or iPads. But it's nice that a lot of my older customers have started coming back after Covid and the papers are picking up more.

Transport for Wales Station Manager James Nicholas said: "Jimmy really is part of the fabric here at Haverfordwest and all our customers and colleagues think the world of him.

"The fact he's up so early every day and is still working so hard to provide such a great service for our customers even after 60 years is phenomenal and he really is an inspirational member of our railway family. Thank you for all the hard work Jimmy and here's to many more years at Haverfordwest."

Photo credit: Transport for Wales