

Next stop – retirement! Train driver reaches end of the line after 52 years on the tracks

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TransPennine Express (TPE) has bid a fond farewell to beloved train driver, Joe Crean, following his retirement - 52 years after he started his service on the railway.

At 12:39 Joe, 69, pulled into Manchester Piccadilly for the final time – where he was greeted by a PA announcement, congratulating him on his outstanding service and thanking him for his many years of hard work. He was met by the applause and well wishes of his friends, family and fellow railway workers.

Joe said: “I have over half a century of cherished memories on the railway, and it means a lot to have shared my final journey with both my family and my railway family.”

Joe has spent his whole career on the railway, first joining in 1971 as a steward in the dining car for British Rail. With inspiration and encouragement from his colleagues, he then went on to apply to become a train driver.

In April 1975, Joe began his role as a trainee driver and after five years of training and working as a driver’s assistant, Joe became a fully-fledged qualified driver in June 1980.

In 2011, Joe joined TPE as a driver based at Manchester Piccadilly and went on to spend several years as a driver instructor, helping to train the next generation of drivers.

Matthew Golton, Managing Director at TPE, said: “Joe is amongst the rare few who have achieved the 50-year milestone on the railway. He has lit up Manchester Piccadilly depot with his humour, hard work, loyalty and diligence.

“Joe’s retirement marks the end of an era but his legacy and contributions towards the future generation of drivers will carry on. He has been a credit to TPE and will be sorely missed.”

Q&A with Joe

What is it like to work on the railway? The community side of the railway is like having an extended family – the camaraderie is second to none!

Throughout my career I’ve experience happy times and sad times, good times and bad but I’ve always had the support and friendship of my colleagues. The friends you make on the tracks will be your friends for life.

What is your favourite memory from your time on the tracks? My favourite memory was when I initially qualified as a driver in June 1980. I also enjoyed my time as a driver instructor, helping to train the next generation of train drivers.

What advice would you give to someone who is looking to become a train driver? If you want it, go for it! I didn’t think I would be successful when applying, but I was! I remember when I was talking to the owner of the gym I went to, and he gave this advice ‘it’s better to have applied for the position and for someone to tell you yes or no, than to not have applied at all and regret it.

Would you recommend a career on the railway? Absolutely. It’s hard work and the selection process you go through as a driver is tough, and the job itself is demanding, but it’s so rewarding.

I joined in 1971 and have seen many changes since I started, most recently the Transpennine Route Upgrade but that’s what keeps things interesting. It’s true when they say no two days on the tracks are the same.

What are you looking forward to doing in your well-earned retirement? I’m looking forward to spending more time with my wife, Christine, my sons Gary and Shane, and extended family, who thoughtfully came to see my final drive. I’ve booked various holidays and I love walking and spending time outdoors.

I’ll also be able to watch my local football team, Glossop North End and volunteer to help out at the club!