

Northern engineer celebrates 50 years in rail industry

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A Northern engineer is celebrating half a century of working in the rail industry.

Craig Neild joined British Rail as an apprentice in 1971, working at Longsight Electric depot as he was living in Wythenshawe at the time.

He then transferred to the depot at Newton Heath, where he worked for 25 years, moving to live in New Moston.

In his current role as an outstation fitter based at Manchester Picadilly, Craig is called out to fix anything from engines to gearboxes, doors, and customer information screens on Northern's fleet of trains running through the station.

Having such a diverse job has kept life interesting – and is the reason he has stuck around on the railway for so long.

He said: "It's so hands on, that it keeps me active. Every day is different and there's always a new problem

to solve.”

And his colleagues are also one of the reasons he has continued to work for Northern.

He said: “I have a good working relationship with everyone – drivers, guards, platform staff and maintenance control, as well as the rest of the outstation team.

“I’ve never wanted to go into management as I like to be hands on, but I think this is why I was encouraged to be a council union representative as well as a safety representative.”

Times have certainly changed – his pay when he started out as an apprentice was just £10.20 a week.

And that’s not all that has changed – Craig said his jobs is a lot more technical these days thanks to Northern’s modern new fleet.

Brand-new trains – electric Class 331s and diesel Class 195s – were first introduced for Northern customers in July 2019 and there are now 101 serving the network.

The CAF-built trains feature free Wi-Fi, air-conditioning, at-seat power and customer information/media screens with real-time information. They are also more spacious and fully accessible, with spaces for wheelchairs and bikes.

He said: “Technology on the railway is moving very fast and it’s a challenge to keep up, especially as Northern has more classes of units than any other train operator.”

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