

The railway signal engineer celebrating 60 years under his belt

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There is no better occupation in the world than working as a Railway Signal Engineer according to Rod Price, which is a good job considering this year marks his 60th working in the railway industry.

Although many have retired by the age of 76, not Rod, who is still out in signal boxes at weekends, and passing on his wealth of experience to both young and old.

He's spoken to [railbusinessdaily.com](https://www.railbusinessdaily.com) about joining British Rail as a 16-year-old in May 1960 and the raft of technological changes in the industry in those 60 years.

"As far as I'm concerned it is the best job in the world and something I'd always had an interest in from very young and still do," he said.

"I love going in signal boxes and finding out new roles and systems. I was, of course brought up on lever frames, block bells followed by push-button N-X panels and now it is all work stations and electronics."

"I've had to keep myself up to date to be able to test it and work it. But over the years I've worked all over

the place and know the East Coast Main Line like the back of my hand.

“It’s a very interesting job as everywhere is different and although it is the same principles, you’ve got to adapt them to each particular layout.”

You could say Rod was destined to at least start his working life involved in the railways. His father and older brother worked on the railways, as did his granddad. He was also a keen train spotter, enjoying going out and looking at the steam trains passing initially, and then diesel engines including Deltics.

“After I left school, I went to the York Technical College for a 12-month general engineering course, which included electrical, motor and mechanical engineering and all those sorts of things,” he said.

“When I left there, because my father worked on the railway in the engineers accounts department he knew several of the bosses and got me the opportunity to either go into the York S&T Service Centre workshops or onto the York District S&T Department on the line as a Probationer, a Trainee Technician in today’s terms. I received four years training on all aspects of signal engineering.

“I really enjoyed working on both maintenance and in the new works electrical and mechanical gangs throughout my general training. At the end of my training period I was allocated as an electrical installer position within one of the gang’s based at York. I was then later promoted to become A Special Class Assistant Lineman based at York Station.”

After completing and successfully obtaining his Higher National Certificate in electrical & electronic engineering, Rod was invited to transfer into the Eastern Region HQ drawing office in York as a Technical Officer, before working his way up to being in charge of design section.

During the privatisation of BR Rod became a member of Signalling Control UK (SCUK) followed by Westinghouse Rail who bought SCUK.

His plans for retirement in the year 2000 were short lived as no sooner had he left Westinghouse than he was joining Gibb Rail and shortly after that he moved to TICS, where he has been for the last 18 years.

He said: “I worked full time until I turned 65/66 when I changed to part time, three days a week, which is what I still do now. My main duties as the TICS Signalling Standards Engineer these days include offering advice on projects and jobs and It’s up to me to get to know the relevant changes in the Network Rail standards, Railway Group standards, any Lessons learnt and then I produce a standards briefing document which brief out to the engineers.

“I don’t go out on the line any more, but as I’m still an IRSE licensed principal tester, I am often in a signal box or control centre working to the staff outside on the ground which I love doing.

“In addition, I am an IRSE approved competence assessor to undertake IRSE Licence competence assessments for all categories of signal design plus signal principle testers.”

The industry may have changed quite dramatically over the 60 years – most of the trains were steam and

there were semaphore signals – but one thing that hasn't changed is Rod's passion for the job.

He said: "I just love what I do like going in signal boxes especially ones that I have never been in previously, testing, corresponding and commissioning the new or alterations to the signalling.

"I like it so much because every day is different and always working on something new. Some of the major projects take several years, but when you commission something it gives you a great sense of feeling and job satisfaction when you see the first couple of trains go through on something you've worked on for years or even simply a couple of weeks.

"I also enjoying passing on what I know to the next generation of signal engineers. When TICS decided to take some apprentices on part of my role was to produce a training course on basic signal engineering. I've also done training courses for the more experienced staff on certain types of geographical and free-wired interlocking systems. I wouldn't say I'm an expert, but I know as much as anyone else.

"It will depend on my health when I will retire. I didn't think I'd last this long, but it keeps me working, keeps me happy and I like the comradeship. There's a great team at TICS and I still thoroughly enjoy going to work.

"In my spare time I have been a member of the Voluntary Guides to the City of York for over 20 years and as such undertake showing groups of people from all over the world around York.

"I also love all my family having been married for over 50 years we have both a son and daughter, six grandchildren and currently 5 great grand-daughters."

Photo credit: TICS Rail Signalling