

ALL THE STATIONS

by Vicki Pipe and Geoff Marshall

A report of the LURS meeting at All Souls Club House
on Tuesday 8 January 2019

Vicki and Geoff are a married couple who share an interest in all things railways. Geoff is a previous holder of the record for the “Great Underground Run” (visiting all the stations in the shortest possible time). He and Vicki have now widened their outlook to all the railways stations in England, Scotland and Wales. They first discussed the idea about five years ago and decided to undertake it in 2017 – it took about four months (not travelling every day though).

They started with a large map of the British Rail network on the wall and a lot of paper spread over the floor whilst consulting timetables. Unfortunately, GWR and South West are the only two Train Operating Companies to produce paper timetables. The Rail Delivery Group which also provided assistance with planning.

Their travels were funded via KickStarter (an on-line Social Media platform) where people could pledge and sponsor a specific station.

A major consideration in the planning was those stations which have limited services such as Pilning (in South Gloucestershire) with a Saturday service only, Old Trafford (for Manchester United, match days only), and the whole of the Brigg line (Gainsborough via Brigg and Grimsby to Cleethorpes).

Plans and information were then input into the “Master Spreadsheet” (Vicki’s domain and woe-betide Geoff if he altered anything!). The plan was not just to travel through the stations but also to visit places of interest, especially castles. However, they soon decided not to get out at every station as it would have taken about a year to complete. They made a rule that their train had to be scheduled to stop at a station. This also applied to Request Stops, as it would not have been fair to the train staff for Vicki and Geoff to ask to stop at every stop. Therefore, they concluded that if the train would have stopped at a station if someone had requested it, then it would count. However, many times, when a Guard heard what Geoff and Vicki were doing, they would stop to allow them to take a quick photo.

They started from Penzance (the furthest station in Cornwall) and then worked their way north.

Throughout their talk they discussed various railway oddities such as:

- Coombe Junction, with its bay platform about 100 yards away from the main station and its hand-operated ground frame.
- The manual level crossing gates in the Brundall area of Norfolk (which are now automated).
- Spa Road (Southwark) which was the first terminus station in London, predating London Bridge.
- 153 stock (single carriage) trains running between Bradford and Halifax and being totally packed with commuters.
- The isolation of Lincolnshire and its lack of services between population centres.
- Carnforth station, where you can re-enact the film Brief Encounter and its museum about the film.
- The “invasion” of Shippea Hill in Cambridgeshire (which was the least used station in 2016) when Geoff and Vicki invited 17 of their friends to join them for the Saturday morning service.
- Cromford in Derbyshire which was used on the cover of an album by Oasis.
- Nethertown in Cumbria, which is immediately alongside the sea.

Vicki and Geoff met many interesting people on their travels including Ian “the Selfie King” of Lancaster Station, and the couple who had been following them on-line and just happened to be driving past so gave them a lift between Thorne South and Thorne North stations, which allowed them to make their connection.

Throughout the meeting, they led a game of “Guess the Moquette” with photos they had collected over their journeys.

Statistics: They visited the 2,563 stations by travelling on 672 different trains and 97.5% of these ran on time. Since completing, three more stations have opened (and they have now been visited).

There are 59 main videos, and 15 mini ones, available, free of charge, on You Tube. There is also a book of their travels published by September Publishing £16.99.

Vicki and Geoff's next plan is to visit all the stations in Ireland and Northern Ireland and this will be in Spring 2019 and there are only 193 stations to visit.

After the Q and A session, during which a question was asked about the new station at Cambridge North. They explained that they had visited just after it opened and their You Tube video had led someone to spot that the Braille labels were on upside down and the train company have now rectified this. They were also asked to confirm if they planned to open the station at Meridian Water in May 2019, which is the replacement station for Angel Road. A suggestion was made that Vicki and Geoff visit the Heritage Lines of the UK!

The meeting then thanked Vicki and Geoff in the usual manner.

Amanda Griffiths

(Who used to work near Pilning station but never caught a train from there!)