

### **Case studies for Rail Wellbeing Live**

#### **Dean Barnes and Al Collis**

Dean Barnes (37) and Alan (Al) Collis (35) work on the Greater Anglia Route out of Ipswich, Dean as a driver and Al as a guard. Dean had reached around 16.5 stone and Al 20.5 stone in weight and each married with children and in conversations with each other they discovered that their weight was making them unhappy and becoming a problem. This was partly an historic issue, both had tried various diets for years with little success, but it had been made worse by Covid-19 and the struggle they found as they became less busy at work. Together they decided to they needed to focus on something positive and to lose weight so they decided to start off a YouTube and Twitter channel where they would talk about their issues with weight and how they were going about tackling it practically in their everyday lives.

Since August, Dean and Al have been using their videos to motivate them to set themselves challenges from setting personal meal plans to running 60 miles in a month and even testing apps and technology aimed at helping them keep fit. The videos are filmed once a week in and around where they live and work and as of October 27<sup>th</sup>, they are 11 weeks into a 52 week plan during which they hope to shed at least 3 stone each.

Dean said: "Driving a train can be lonely, which is partly why I eat a lot at work. We've both got families and we decided we needed to lose fat and get fitter but finding a way of doing it where we wouldn't fail like we had in the past so many times. The YouTube channel was really Al's idea and it was our way of getting us motivated and keeping us accountable to losing weight and so far, fingers crossed, it seems to be working. Wellbeing is really important in the rail industry, especially during these trying times with Covid and I hope our example inspires others to tackle the issues that affect them".

Al said: "Dean and I got fed up with our weight not going down after various attempts individually so we made a pact with each other that we could become fit and healthy for the sake of ourselves, our families and each other. The videos we make together are our experiences of trying to lose weight in the real world and there's certainly no fake glamour to what we do. So far, we're on track to achieve our goals and with hundreds of followers already, we are hoping to inspire others too."

You can follow Dean and Al's weight-loss journey on their YouTube channel at:

<https://youtu.be/UyJ1BOAf7Aw> or their Twitter feed at: [www.twitter.com/2FAT2FIT2](https://twitter.com/2FAT2FIT2)

**Phil Brooks**

SouthEastern train driver Phil Brooks, 56, from Kent is married with five children. He joined the railway at 16 as a driver's assistant. Over his career he has been involved in two trespass fatalities which have both had a significant effect on him.

Phil said: "The incidents I was involved in were traumatising and had a severe impact on my mental health, and my family too, as I became withdrawn, reflecting on the impact of what happened. I decided to turn this into a positive and I'm now happy to speak out and share my experience for the benefit of others. We all need to talk about the issues facing us and I commend the Rail Wellbeing Live event for all it's doing in shining a light on occupational health in our industry."

*Incidents*

It was 6pm one day in January 2001. As Phil was rounding into a station platform, he saw a woman (aged 38) stood on the tracks. She was trying to retrieve a hat that she had dropped. He hit the brakes but there was nothing he could do.

When the train came to a stop, he walked back to the station as the train had no guard. The woman's friend was standing on the platform screaming. He went to her and offered her comfort. There was a woman working in the booking office, who had witnessed the trespasser on CCTV and had warned her to get off the track. Phil's manager came to the station, collected him and took him home.

He had to have counselling for three months. Initially he was referred to a counsellor near to where he lived, but he found that did not help. He was then referred to a railway counsellor who made a big difference.

He suffered depression following the incident and had a nervous breakdown. It took its toll on all the family, especially his wife. His children were young and knew something was wrong. It especially affected his youngest. Her grades at a school fell that year, which they attributed to the stress that she suffered at the time.

He couldn't attend the coroners' inquest as he was too ill at the time. It's always stayed with him and he still knows the woman's full name. He has never forgotten the look on her face. He was given a commendation for service for his actions, especially for helping her friend. But never had any contact with the family or the friend afterwards.

Two years later, in 2003, he suffered his second trespass fatality.

On that occasion it was a man who had dropped £1,000 onto the track and jumped down to retrieve it. Again, he couldn't stop the train. This time there was a manager on the train. He told him the trespass was alive but had life-changing injuries.

Phil was taken to hospital to be checked out - things had changed in the time between the incidents and the railway now had procedures in place to look at the wellbeing of drivers. Whilst waiting, the injured trespasser was wheeled past him. The man later succumbed to his injuries and died.

Phil felt better able to cope with the effects of this incident and did attend the coroners' inquest. He found it difficult facing the grief of the victim's family. The family sent him a letter afterwards, which greatly helped him as they told him that they didn't blame him for the accident at all.

After the second incident he was transferred to a different train route. For the first ten years following the first incident, Phil would get depressed in January, around the anniversary of the event. It doesn't happen now, but the incident will always be with him. One thing that has happened is that he has become hardened. He has changed and one of the unexpected effect, is he is a more confident person whose willing to speak up, especially about the incidents, something that he would never have done before. His pet hate is when people are messing around on platforms and playfully pretend to push each other onto the track. That's something both adults and children do. They don't realise the fear that this can inflict on the driver.

### **Rachel Avenell**

Rachel has worked of the Rail Delivery Group in their communications team for nearly 18 months – she has suffered from anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder for most of her life.

Rachel said: "I have worked at RDG for nearly 18 months now and have always been very open about my struggles with mental health. I've had anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder for most of my life, along with periods of other mental illness. I use my experiences not only to educate others that OCD isn't just being clean or turning a light switch on and off, but to enable others to feel safe to discuss their own struggles.

"One in four of us will have a diagnosed mental illness at some point in our lives and I believe that we all go through periods of mental unwellness, however brief they may be. The most effective coping strategy I have is talking about what I've been through and what I go through on a daily basis.

"I don't claim to be a medical expert; my knowledge of mental illness is solely based on my own experience, but I hope to bring to RWL a story of hope that even the darkest of days have a small light at the end of the tunnel."