

Lucy Wright: Hello again, I'm Lucy Wright.

Juliette Maxam: And I'm Juliette Maxam, and this is Life on Rails.

Lucy Wright: We work in PR at Greater Anglia and host this podcast, which takes a behind the scenes look at one of the UK's largest train companies.

Juliette Maxam: We're talking to a huge range of people, from train drivers to film liaison staff, as well as some special Greater Anglia celebrities.

Lucy Wright: In this episode, we speak to presenter, writer, and director Robbie Knox.

Robbie Knox: So I went to university at UEA in Norwich, and I loved it. You get quite a lot of good bands here, lot of theaters, UNESCO City of Literature. I think it's a beautiful place.

Lucy Wright: Our resident affairs guru, Ken Strong.

Ken Strong: If you're going to XYZ place, you will actually save 20 or 30 quid on this particular journey. Including the cost of the rail card, they were actually saving money there and then.

Lucy Wright: Adrian Booth, Greater Anglia's film liaison consultant.

Adrian Booth: We worked on Killing Eve. I Hate Susie, which was Billy Piper. This is Going to Hurt, with Ben Whishaw for the BBC. And a big one, Jack Ryan from Amazon. That was an enormous setup that one.

Lucy Wright: And Paula Wilson, one of our area customer service managers.

Paula Wilson: I myself don't have a degree. And there's a number of companies who would not consider me for the role that I'm in now without it. And as far as I'm aware, I'm not doing too badly.

Juliette Maxam: To kick things off though, we're going to speak to Glenn Harwood. One of our driver training managers.

Lucy Wright: Every summer Greater Anglia sees an increase in the number of people on or near the tracks without permission. And this is a really serious issue. I wanted to speak to Glenn Harwood about it. He is a train driving manager, but has been a qualified train driver for 20 years. Hi Glenn, how are you?

Glenn Harwood: Hi, Lucy. I'm fine, thank you.

Lucy Wright: Welcome to Life on Rails. Thanks for joining me.

Glenn Harwood: Yeah, thanks for having me.

Lucy Wright: So just talk me through it. Why is it so dangerous for people to be on the tracks without permission?

Glenn Harwood: Well, from the driver's perspective, absolutely dangerous. Having somebody who's not meant to be on the track is a heck of a surprise. Of course, our trains are

traveling at high speed. As a driver, we haven't got a steering wheel, we can't divert round them. We can't then move to another line to avoid them. And ultimately we have to put our break into emergency. And unlike when you're pushing the road, a car can stop very quickly, our trains don't do that. It's about 3/4 of a mile from 100 miles an hour to stopping. And that's in good conditions. We added a little bit of rain into that, the train will slip and slide and could potentially be beyond the mile. So the reaction times are very, very slow for the train in that respect. So for the poor driver who's sitting there, there's nothing more we can do but put our break into emergency in a hope then that individual that's on the track moves. So it's very difficult and it's an extremely dangerous place to be. Ultimately, it's not a playground. And I think we really need to get that in there. It's its not a place to be, unless you are authorized to be there.

Lucy Wright: Exactly. And it's not just our trains that run. We have engineering trains. We have test trains. So by thinking, "Oh, I know this line. I've lived near this line for for years." It's not just our services that people need to be aware of.

Glenn Harwood: It's not. And we've seen that in the past. Actually, those are regular users quite often are the worst. Because you're right, they think, "Well, the train goes past me at 10:24. At 10:25, I'm safe to go over." All it takes is a slight delay and then they're going to get caught. And vice versa. Of course we have double tracks. So your train may go past you, but forgetting there may be a delay coming the other way. So again, you're putting yourself at risk all the time. So familiarity can actually be quite dangerous. And we've seen ourselves, especially some of our rural lines, where tractors, farm users, they're using it all the time, but quite often they do misuse it.

Lucy Wright: And have you ever had a near miss?

Glenn Harwood: I've had several sadly. For the drivers, again, it's a regular occurrence. I'm not saying every day. I don't know if you're aware, but in the UK alone we have 34 near misses every single day on the UK network. So yeah, from the drivers' perspective, we see it regularly. I've had one recently stands out really like a sore thumb because it was very, very close to me actually killing somebody. It was on one of our rural lines. Ipswich to Felixstowe, and as we come into Felixstowe there's quite a sharp bend, so I'm blind basically. And on that bend are two crossings. As I came around the corner, there was a chap with his dog. That's fine. He's on the crossing. He can clear it quite quickly. Unfortunately, the dog escaped from the lead and which ran towards me on the track. And the owner in a panic decided to follow the dog.

So he's now coming towards me. I'm heading towards him at about 50 miles an hour. I put my break into emergency and I'm sliding towards him. And that's all I can do. And I actually turned sideways. I was convinced I was going to hit him. And the train came to a stand and I didn't hear a thud. So obviously, I haven't hit him. I pulled my window down and he was halfway down the train and he went, "Sorry." And I said, "Sorry?" Obviously for him, he was fine, I'm sure. But I was all over the place. My heart was pounding and yeah, it was really difficult. Because I almost went through all those emotions of killing somebody, but I didn't. Which is a good thing. And so yeah, that was pretty tough for me to take actually. And the impact on me was quite difficult. I actually went back to Ipswich and went and had a cup of coffee and had a quick 15 minute break just to calm down. It's quite shocking.

Lucy Wright: Yeah, so it's just as emotional having a near miss when you see a trespasser as it can be, if you do hit someone.

Glenn Harwood: Absolutely, yeah. I've had both, sadly. I have had a fatality so I can relate to both. And it actually was no different apart from the last element of it, the last two or three seconds of actually striking somebody.

Lucy Wright: It's just not worth it. It's not worth trespassing. It's not worth the shortcut home or whatever you think you're going to gain.

Glenn Harwood: No, no. Because the consequence is not only could you die, remember the impact on your family, your mother and father. And not just that, the driver, of course, as I said before, it's really traumatic and would need time off work, canceling, all that type of stuff. Ambulance crew, fire crew, they all come out to scene. And I do go to scenes that have involved fatalities and a lot of people are impacted by it. Absolutely, yeah. So there's a big impact, not just on the individual, but on the bigger picture.

Lucy Wright: And the railway, isn't just trains and tracks. There are so many hidden dangers. Can you talk me through some of those?

Glenn Harwood: There are, you're absolutely right. And we forget that sometimes. I think we just think about trains. And absolutely they're important and they are a big risk. But we have overhead wires, which our electric trains run on, and they're 25,000 volts. And you haven't even got to touch them. If you get close to them, you will be electrocuted and ultimately it will kill you. And we have tracks, of course, where people run across. We have points where our trains move. They're moving all the time. And so if we don't know anybody's on there, you could quite easily get trapped. You could even slip over and break an ankle.

Lucy Wright: So what should somebody do if they see someone on the tracks?

Glenn Harwood: I think first of and foremost I'd dial 999, make an emergency call via the police force. If you are near crossing and you've got access to a railway telephone, because all crossings have railway telephones, I would make that telephone call there as well. So inform somebody. At least do something with that. Don't just ignore it. And report it as soon as possible. But 999 from the police is great. They will have a link to Network Rail signal box. Or I said before, if you're near a telephone on a crossing, that goes straight to the signal box controlling that situation.

Lucy Wright: So tell somebody as soon as possible.

Glenn Harwood: As soon as possible. Immediately.

Lucy Wright: And I think it is important to acknowledge that not everyone on the tracks is playing around or looking for a shortcut home. And anyone who needs to speak to someone should contact Samaritans on 116-123. They are there for you 24/7 every single day of the year. Glenn, thank you so much for joining me today.

Glenn Harwood: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

Lucy Wright: I'm back with our resident fares guru, Ken Strong. Welcome back, Ken.

Ken Strong: Thanks for having me back, Lucy.

Lucy Wright: So the summer holidays are here, people are off on their holidays and day trips across the region. Now we want to help people save money. And today we are talking about a rail card which offers great savings. So Ken, what is a Friends & Family Rail Card?

Ken Strong: Friends & Family Rail Card is a product, it doesn't necessarily need to be for a family, hence they call it Friends & Family as well now, where you have a group of adults and children and you can make a journey at very good value fares. The main condition is there has to be at least one adult and one child in the group. You can't just have two adults. There are separate cards for groups like that. If you have an adult and a child up to four adults and four children, they could all be on the one rail card.

Lucy Wright: So four adults and four children. So eight people on one rail card.

Ken Strong: Eight people on one rail card. And you can either have one named holder who can then take up to three other adults and up to four children. Or you can have two named holders in which case only one of the two named holders. So if a say a couple of partners, one can take the children, the other one doesn't need to be traveling at all. Or then the next time, the other one can travel and the other one doesn't need to take the trip. So it's quite flexible. But you have to decide whether you want to have both people named on it. It's best if you're a couple to name both people. And then you have the flexibility.

You can have one person plus three others, or you can have the two named people plus two others, or you can have the other name person plus three others. So it's flexible like that. So if you're a couple, it's best to name the two people on the card. As I say, you don't have to be related at all. You can just take some random children along, if you fancy. Take the neighbors' kids out for a day out, something like that. It's all possible.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. So how much does it cost?

Ken Strong: It costs £ 30 a year, or it's £ 70 if you buy one that lasts for three years. And you can get it as a physical rail card from the ticket office, or you can also buy it online, which is easy to do these days, and have it as a digital rail card.

Lucy Wright: So £ 30 for a year and up to eight people on it, you must be able to pretty much recover the cost of the card in one journey.

Ken Strong: If you make a journey that's of any reasonable length, you'll save the money back on the card straight away. And I'll tell you, when I used to work in the ticket office many years ago, I actually used to say to people that were making journeys involving adults and children I'd say, "Buy a family rail card." And they would say, "Oh, I don't know about that." And I'd say, "Well, if you're going to XYZ place, you will actually save 20 or 30 quid on this particular journey if you buy the rail card." Including the cost of the rail card, they were actually saving money there and then. So we used to sell a lot of them to people just on spec because it was such a good deal. So it's certainly worth having.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. They're such good value. I like that bit of Ken history, you in the ticket office. So can you suggest some journeys that people can take this summer where they can use their Friends & Family Rail Card?

Ken Strong: So you can use it on short hops. You can use it just going down to the coast. I don't know, if you live in Colchester, you could go down to Clacton. Or if you are in London,

you could go down to Southend. Or if you're in Norwich, you could go to Yarmouth. You can use it on that kind of short to medium distance trip. Or you can use it on longer journeys. You can go from Norwich to Cambridge or go to visit some of our nice towns that we've got, Burt St Edmunds. Or if you're taking children, maybe the seaside, get down to Cromer or down to Felixstowe. There are lots of nice, interesting places you can visit. And not forgetting the west side of the network, you could go to Audley End House, or if you live in Bishop's Storeford or Harlow go into London for the day or up to Cambridge for the day. Possibilities are endless really. And as I say, all journeys take a discount. It doesn't have to be a great marathon of a journey over a couple of hours. It can just be a short hop of half an hour or so, if that's easier for you to make.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. Thank you, Ken. So another great way to save money this summer. Thank you so much, Ken. And I will see you on the next episode.

Ken Strong: Thank you, Lucy.

Juliette Maxam: Up next is Greener Anglia. Part of sustainability is about boosting the local economy. And one of the ways that we do this is by offering up our trains and stations as film locations. And this has a knock on effect on the local economy. Today I'm chatting to Adrian Booth, Greater Anglia's commercial film liaison consultant. Hi Adrian.

Adrian Booth: Hi there.

Juliette Maxam: So, Adrian, what do you do?

Adrian Booth: I look after commercial filming for Greater Anglia, which means facilitating the requests of television companies and film companies and advertising agencies who want to film trains and stations and put them in their dramas and TV adverts. And that means finding a place to film, getting all the permissions in place, sorting out the contracts, agreeing a price and sorting them out on the day.

Juliette Maxam: Why is it that railway stations and trains are so popular with film and TV companies? How does it add to a drama?

Adrian Booth: The railway station, the train is a touch of real life, of reality. They want to make things as real as possible. And this is our common experience. And also they're very useful for getting the characters from A to B and have dialogue on the way. Or people might be waiting for a train or waiting for people to get off a train, or even the kind of pathos of parting and the sweet sorrow of all of that. So there are so many reasons why script writers include them.

Juliette Maxam: Oh. And now you actually accompany them on the day of filming, don't you?

Adrian Booth: That's right. And we do not want any accidents on our watch. Particularly as things like distracted people might fall off the edge of the platform when they're looking through the lens or something like that. So I do have to do quite a lot of being with them just to watch out for their health and safety on the day. There are very clear procedures that have to be followed in order to get all the paperwork right to make sure that they can understand all the risks that there are and they might encounter.

Juliette Maxam: What are the most popular locations on our network? Because we've got some beautiful stations in wonderful scenery.

Adrian Booth: There are two particular stations that seem to have been singled out for a lot of attention. And they're both Grade II listed buildings, but in different ways. Hartford East is a beautiful red brick. It's, I think, probably Edwardian with mock Dutch facade. And it's very, very beautiful. But then there's a Broxbourne, which is a concrete cigar box I sort of think of it as being, is a good example of brutalist architecture. And the directors love it. So there's these sort of locations. But they both have different attributes. One is a very fast, busy station with a lot of trains passing through at speed. The other one's the end of the line, which means that you can actually film statically and have green screen outside the window, which is by computer technology they're able to, by the the wonders of modern technology, they can make it look like the countryside is rushing past the window and all of that. And we even move the train on the platform for them. So the different stations have different requirements. But those two are at the moment our most popular.

Juliette Maxam: Oh, so you've just revealed a secret of the trade. So when we look at a film or a TV drama and it looks like they're on the train and it's moving, they're just sitting at Hartford East station with something on the green screen.

Adrian Booth: Some of the time that is true. There are reasons for doing it, because they spend a lot of time lighting the inside of the carriage, which is much more difficult to do when it's on the move. There again, the post-production technology element of using green screen is very expensive. So it's roundabouts and swings. Sometimes they like the live feel of filming on a live train.

Juliette Maxam: I said at the beginning that this is all part of our sustainability strategy. It's supporting our local economies. Does the fact that we are offering our stations and trains as filming locations, does that have a knock on effect in terms of other filming taking place in the region? Or do they use local hotels, local restaurants or that sort of thing?

Adrian Booth: With the big productions it's like the circus comes to town and there's a lot of people and trucks and the whole logistics of it is enormous. And once they find a base that they can film at, they'll look around the area for different facilities. They might need a restaurant or a night club, or there are many, many different types of location they need. And if they can find that close to the railway station that they found that they can film through us that brings a lot to the local economy, that's for sure.

Juliette Maxam: So Adrian, which films and TV programs have used Greater Anglia trains and stations as a background?

Adrian Booth: We worked on Killing Eve series four. Breeders, for Sky with Martin Freeman. I Hate Susie, which was Billy Piper. A show called Suspicion that had Uma Thurman in it. That's an Apple TV production. Just little dramas like This is Going to Hurt with Ben Whishaw for the BBC. And a big one, Jack Ryan for Amazon we did actually at Liverpool Street. That was an enormous setup that one.

Juliette Maxam: I do like trying to spot them myself I have to admit. And have you ever been an extra in any of these productions?

Adrian Booth: Very often actually. I do a very good man reading book and man on the phone in the background. And sometimes, funny enough, the station might be so small that we're filming on like it was with Magpie Murders that we filmed at Woodbridge in Suffolk, it was so small there wasn't anywhere I could be to make sure that everything was going to be safe. So I decided the best place to be was within the extras that were just coming off the train.

Juliette Maxam: Oh, we're going to have to look out for you as well then, Adrian. It all sounds just absolutely fascinating. Thanks so much, Adrian. And it's just really interesting to hear and good to hear how Greater Anglia is actually supporting the British film industry and the TV industry. So thanks very much for joining us as a guest on our podcast.

Adrian Booth: My pleasure.

Lucy Wright: It's now time for meet a member of staff. And in this episode, I'm speaking to Paula Wilson, one of Greater Anglia's area customer service managers. Paula oversees 15 stations on our network, including the Southend Victoria Line. Hi, Paula. Thanks for joining me.

Paula Wilson: Hi, Lucy. Thanks for having me.

Lucy Wright: So you've had a really interesting career trajectory so far. So tell me about it. You've traveled all over the world. How did you come to work for the railway?

Paula Wilson: Basically after my career at British Airways, I was there for obviously quite a number of years, and when the pandemic hit and the airline industry began to change a bit, I thought it was a good time to try and move on another challenge. So I applied.

Lucy Wright: So what were you doing when you worked in aviation and what are the crossovers between your old job and your current job?

Paula Wilson: At British Airways, for the latter four years of my career, I was a customer service manager. I absolutely love travel. The crossover since I've come here, on paper, it's a very, very similar job. But there railway's completely different from the way I imagined it to be. The role is just so widespread and varied. No two days are different. So I'm enjoying a lot of different challenges, learning a lot about the railway itself, infrastructure, fleet. And then on top of that, obviously I manage 15 stations. So there's a lot of bits and bobs about facilities management and working with different stakeholders that I hadn't done previously. So it's been a great opportunity this one to develop myself.

Lucy Wright: So you've got a really busy area, the Southend Victoria Line and also Shenfield, so very, very busy with commuters, a lot of school children as well in that area. What are some of the challenges that you face?

Paula Wilson: Like you said, it is very busy. So our peak times, if something goes wrong somewhere along the line, very quickly we get a big buildup of different people. And it's a challenge to maintain getting information out to everybody, making sure all the staff are informed. So when you've got different groups of staff in all the 15 different areas, you need to cascade out that information to them, because they're in a similar situation to you. So even though you've got potentially thousands of people wanting to make their way into

London, you need to make sure that the information gets out to everybody and nobody falls through the net and gets forgotten.

Lucy Wright: And what's your favorite thing about your job?

Paula Wilson: Being able to support people probably. Being a manager in this company is genuinely an absolute privilege. Having had a number of jobs before, I've got a lot of things I can compare it to. And the best thing about Greater Anglia is that they really value experience on the railway. So as you know, we've got career pages that come out internal vacancies only. So that alone tells you they want to recruit people from the inside. So they don't put these ceilings that other companies put in when they're recruiting. So you can go from being on the gate line and being in control. There's really no end to where you could end up being. And that's lovely to see, there's opportunities for everybody. And I really enjoy working alongside people and helping them get to where they want to go and develop themselves. And the company's framework very much enables that. So that is absolutely lovely.

Lucy Wright: That's a really inclusive place, isn't it? And you don't necessarily have to have a degree or a master's or anything like that. Everyone is welcome at any stage really, as long as you're old enough.

Paula Wilson: Yeah. I myself don't have a degree, and there's a number of companies who would not consider me for the role that I'm in now without it. And as far as I'm aware, I'm not doing too badly.

Lucy Wright: You're doing great. Travel's obviously played a really big part in your life. So what are some of your places, both around the world and in the UK?

Paula Wilson: Well, in the UK, it would be remiss of me not to mention north of the border. I love Scotland. You would think I work for the tourist board. Anybody needs travel tips for Scotland, then I am here for you. When I was traveling the world for my job, I would always holiday back up in Scotland. So I've spent a lot of time going around the Highlands and Dornoch. I really like mountains. So Nepal's probably another favorite of mine. I did a hike out there for a month. I went to Everest base camp a few years ago. And ever since then I cannot get enough of mountains. That's what I do in my spare time.

Lucy Wright: You must have found the lockdown really hard when we were completely grounded.

Paula Wilson: Very much so. I used to be able to go to Bangkok if I fancied a Thai curry, and then for two years I've been going to Tesco and Sainsbury's. And the (inaudible) isn't the same, is it?

Lucy Wright: No, not at all. Oh, you've had such an interesting life. Thank you so much for talking to me today and for being a guest on our podcast.

Paula Wilson: Thank you for having me. It's been fun.

Juliette Maxam: It's time now for our myth buster segment. And in this episode, Lucy and I are discussing the ins and outs of lost property. So Lucy, what should passengers do if they leave something on the train?

Lucy Wright: Okay, so if you do leave something on the train, don't panic, it happens more often than you think. And we really want to help reunite you with whatever it is you've left behind. So the first thing you need to do is speak to somebody. Speak to anybody who works for the railway as soon as possible. So whether that's somebody at a station or if you're on a train, if you change trains and you left it on another train, just speak to anybody, any member of rail staff as soon as possible. If you have realized once you've got home, the best thing to do is to call our lost property team. You can speak to somebody Monday to Friday 9:00 to 5:00. And outside of that time, there's a 24 hour answer phone. If you just leave a message, we'll pick that up as soon as possible. Or email in. So it's [lostproperty@greateranglia.co.uk](mailto:lostproperty@greateranglia.co.uk) and we will all set about trying to reunite you with whatever it is you've left behind as soon as possible.

Juliette Maxam: I often see some things on @greateranglia Twitter. " Oh, I've left my bag on the train. I've lost my phone." Is it worth tweeting?

Lucy Wright: Yeah, you can certainly tweet. Just get in touch with us anyway possible.

Juliette Maxam: It sounds good. Do we get much lost property? And do we often actually manage to reunite people with their belongings?

Lucy Wright: Yes, we get a lot of lost property. We get thousands of items left on our trains every year. And we do our best always to reunite people. And a lot of the times it is successful. We had a really nice one recently where a man left a birthday cake for his daughter on the train and he got in touch with us.

Juliette Maxam: I bet he was in trouble.

Lucy Wright: Well, no, I don't think anyone found out in the end because we managed to reunite them. He called and spoke to somebody and they managed to track this cake down. It hadn't been too long and we had the cake, reunited it and happy birthday indeed.

Juliette Maxam: Oh, isn't that a lovely story? I'm so pleased to hear that. Now that seems pretty unusual. I've not heard of birthday cake before. What sort of lost property do we usually get?

Lucy Wright: There are certain items that we get a lot of on the train. So wallets, phones, keys, that kind of thing. They often fall out of your pocket. Laptops, all kinds of things like that. Kindles, books, anything like that can be left behind. Jackets, clothing, coats, and hats and scarfs in the winter. So those kind of things are quite usual. We get some unusual things left on our trains as well. We've had a front door.

Juliette Maxam: That is crazy.

Lucy Wright: It was a proper full size front door with a number and a door knocker on it and everything. And that was left on the train that came into Norwich station. And we obviously took it off the train and the man came back the next day to retrieve his lost property. He came back in to claim his front door. So very pleased to reunite the customer with his item on that occasion.

Juliette Maxam: Not the sort of thing that you'd normally take with you on the train. I reckon he can be forgiven for leaving that on the train. Although you'd have thought he would've noticed it as he walked past to get off the train. But there you go.

Lucy Wright: I mean, how can you forget your front door? It's not every day you travel with your front door. I hope.

Juliette Maxam: Yeah. God, imagine that. Imagine the feeling when he got home and realized he'd left his front door on the train. Anything else unusual, Lucy?

Lucy Wright: All kinds of unusual things. A wooden leg we've had before, which begs the question how did the customer leave the train without the wooden leg? We've had a large amount of cash. And we're not talking coins here that have fallen out the pocket. We're talking a lot of cash. It was bag which had tens of thousands of pounds in it in notes.

Juliette Maxam: Blimey.

Lucy Wright: Yeah. And as soon as any money is handed in, it's put in a safe place and logged in in front of another member of staff. And on this occasion, it was tens of thousands of pounds. And the person did come forward to claim it. And it was a young person and they were a student and it was their student fees. Their parents had given them the money to pay for their university fees in a bag, which they had then left on the train. So again, really, really happy we could reunite the customer with their missing money on that occasion.

Juliette Maxam: Thank goodness for that. Otherwise that would've been an awful lot of shifts in the pub that he'd had been working to pay that off.

Lucy Wright: Absolutely.

Juliette Maxam: So what happens to the loss property then?

Lucy Wright: So all loss property is collected and logged. Usually at a station, sometimes at a depot if the train goes back to the depot after it's last working. And we log it, we keep it for a very short amount of time before it's collected by a company called Pakex. And they take it to their big warehouse really, where they store it. And because of that, there's obviously a cost. There's a cost to us in keeping and storing this lost property. So there is a slight cost to some people when they get their items back. It ranges from just a couple of pounds to I think it's £ 20 or £25. So that it is capped. But yeah, there is a cost because it is a charge to us because it happens so frequently. So the moral here is please, please, please don't leave your items on the train. Please check before you leave the train that you've got everything. Because it's horrible. The moment you realize you've forgotten something your heart stops, doesn't it? You think, " Oh my goodness. Where is it?" So please try and take it with you in the first place.

Juliette Maxam: Oh, that sounds like good advice to me. Thanks very much, Lucy. That was really interesting. And I'm sure it's extremely helpful to customers. And I look forward to talking to you next time and busting some more myths together.

Lucy Wright: Thanks, Juliette.

Juliette Maxam: Up next is travel surgery. And today we're talking to Robbie Knox. Robbie is an award-winning writer, producer and director. His past credits include presenting for Soccer AM and he's a proud Norwich resident. Robbie, how are you?

Robbie Knox: I'm very well, thank you. The awards, I've sort of put that on my Twitter bio, I've not really won many awards. But we got an award at Soccer AM for the best portrayal of stamp from the Norwegian Post Office once. So I just put that, I thought that counts, doesn't it?

Juliette Maxam: Deeply impressive. Deeply impressive.

Robbie Knox: So it's not a BAFTA but it's honest work.

Juliette Maxam: So stamp impersonating and everything else, you've had a very varied career. Can you talk us through it a little bit? How did it start? What are you doing now?

Robbie Knox: Now was born, went to school, went to university, went to Canada for a year, came back, started working in a TV studio for a year. Then I went to Soccer AM and worked there for seven years. Then I went to work at an internet TV thing for a bit for a couple of years with a guy called Simon Fuller who managed the Spice Girls and David Beckham and things. And then I went to start my own production company and more recently have started doing YouTube because I'm having a midlife crisis. And I do a podcast called JaackMaate's Happy Hour that is moderately popular.

Juliette Maxam: And so your YouTube video, I've had a quick squizz at it. You seem to cover all sorts of things. Tell us a bit more about that.

Robbie Knox: I describe it as it's... I started doing YouTube because of a friend of mine, Will Brazier. I never really thought of doing it. He said to me one day, "Why don't you do a YouTube channel?" And I said, "I think I'm probably a bit old for that." I'm 45. And he said, "I don't want to sound rude, but I know what it's like being an 18 year old starting uni because every September there's 10,000 vlogs on being an 18 year old. So I don't really know what it's like being middle-aged." So I thought, "All right, fair enough. I'll do that."

Juliette Maxam: And then the podcasts, now you talk about being a 45 year old man, the first I heard about your podcast was from my son who was first year at university.

Robbie Knox: So this'd be Happy Hour. Yeah, so my friend Jack, who I met years ago in a Chinese cooking competition, he's a YouTuber and he has been for a long time. He's quite popular. He has a podcast and they invited me along on it once. And then I just sort of came back a couple of other times. And then eventually, just through no real decision making process, am now a permanent co-host of it just by not really leaving. But yeah, it is popular. We got these statistics from Spotify around Christmas time that said a quarter of a million people listened to Happy Hour more than any other podcast, which is mad. Because no one had ever really told us any statistics up until then. So I didn't really know.

Juliette Maxam: Oh so it's a few more than Life on Rails then? Just one or two more I think.

Robbie Knox: For now. But we're looking over our shoulder.

Juliette Maxam: Yeah, obviously. You're into brewing now as well. Aren't you? How did that happen?

Robbie Knox: Very good question. Again, through the YouTube channel I've worked out that I make a bit of money from ad revenue. The way it works is if once you've reach a certain level of subscribers and watch time YouTube will show adverts and you will get a percentage of the money that they get from advertisers. So it's not always a huge amount, but most of the time I'll probably make 50 quid at least sort of thing. So I worked out that I could try any idea up to the value of £ 50 as long as I make a YouTube video on it. So during the pandemic, I got a beer making kit and made a beer. And then it surprisingly turned out pleasant. Because my memory of home brewing was in the '80s and '90s, mate's dad getting some kit from Boots and making beer in the kitchen that was disgusting from all reviews. I didn't drink it in the '80s because I was 12. I did.

Juliette Maxam: I did. And I will concur, it was absolutely disgusting.

Robbie Knox: Okay, good. But no, this turned out really well. So I got a bit more kit, did a bit more brewing, went to a brewery. A friend knew to make another video of getting professional brewers to try my beer. They were quite complimentary as well. And then my friend Mike and I thought, " Well, let's just start up a virtual brewery if you will." And we've just been around I think four or five different breweries now brewing beer with them and selling it to to people to drink.

Juliette Maxam: You have partnerships and it's Bin Day Breweries, isn't it?

Robbie Knox: It's called Bin Day Brewing. Yeah, I made a video that was quite popular about taking the bins out. I really want to manage expectations if anyone's thinking of going to my YouTube channel, this is the level we are pitching it at here. So Monday was not an exaggeration.

Lucy Wright: That's not all you did in the pandemic, is it? Because you moved to Norfolk.

Robbie Knox: Oh God, yeah. Sorry. I thought, " What had I done?" That was terrifying. Yes, I moved to Norfolk. So I went to university at UEA in Norwich, University of East Anglia and I loved it.

Lucy Wright: Good. Pleased you're here. So what is it you love about the city?

Robbie Knox: I like the culture of things. When I was at uni in my first term, this is for the older people, we had like Pulp, The Stone Roses, Black Grape all play in my first term I was there because there's not really many places nearby. I know now you get gig at Thetford, but there's not many people, no one's coming and playing Bungay. They're either coming here or not sort of thing. So you get quite a lot of good bands here, a lot of theaters, UNESCO City of Literature. I like all that stuff. I think the people are friendly. I think it's a beautiful place. There's lots of pubs. Everything really. I think it's great.

Lucy Wright: So what kind of things do you like to do with your family?

Robbie Knox: I like going out places and doing things. So vague. We like going to beaches. We like going to the countryside. The boys are quite into playing Fortnite and games like that, I try and get them, when possible, outside away from screens and doing things. So a lot of

that sort of stuff. I do like it if it can involve a pub as well at the end of it sort of thing for some lunch. Just seeing all the joys that the Norfolk countryside has to offer.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. Well, as part of this part of the podcast, we recommend a place for you to go and we'll give you a ticket and send you on your way.

Robbie Knox: How exciting. Did I have to go immediately?

Lucy Wright: Right now. Bags packed.

Robbie Knox: Right now. Good.

Lucy Wright: Kids are waiting.

Robbie Knox: Fantastic.

Lucy Wright: No, not at all. So we are going to suggest a place called Chappel & Wakes Colne, which is in Essex. There's the East Anglian Railway Museum there.

Robbie Knox: I love a railway museum.

Lucy Wright: Yeah?

Robbie Knox: Yeah, I love a railway museum. My grandpa worked on trains. He was a guard on trains in the olden days for (inaudible) steam and stuff like that. But I used to go with him all the time to Glasgow Transport Museum. So I'm already convinced by this place.

Lucy Wright: Oh, you'll love it then. Because there's something for everyone. There's little children up to adults. And you can actually sometimes actually drive the trains there.

Robbie Knox: That's incredible.

Lucy Wright: Steam days, diesel days, you can drive them.

Robbie Knox: Why isn't this the biggest attraction in the country?

Lucy Wright: Well, we're going to make it the biggest attraction.

Robbie Knox: Good. I'm on board.

Lucy Wright: It's a really nice place. Set in loads and loads of acres. So good for picnics. Great for children. And also there is a beer festival there.

Robbie Knox: Oh wow. This is good. Can I go on the beer festival day or are you just teasing me?

Lucy Wright: You can choose.

Robbie Knox: Okay. I'm in. I'm in. All right, perfect. This works out brilliantly.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. That's great. Thank you so much for joining us.

Robbie Knox: Thank you. It's been an honor. And can I just say an honor to be in the upstairs of Norwich Station as well in the behind the scenes. Because I've always admired from the concourse.

Juliette Maxam: Our pleasure. Thank you very much.

Lucy Wright: And that rounds things up for this episode of Life on Rails. We hope you've enjoyed discovering a new perspective into Greater Anglia.

Juliette Maxam: Please do tweet us @greaterangliaPR and leave a rating or review on your podcast platform.

Lucy Wright: Life on Rails releases every other month. So check back soon for episode six.

Juliette Maxam: And in the meantime, follow or subscribe to the podcast and visit our website at [www.greateranglia.co.uk/podcast](http://www.greateranglia.co.uk/podcast) for more information.

Lucy Wright: Thanks for listening.