



Steve Higgs and Payal Pandya get engaged on the 23:09 LNR service to Milton Keynes

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Railway romance leads to surprise engagement on London Northwestern Railway train

Exactly one year after meeting on board a late-night train from London, a couple returned to the same service to relive their first encounter and - unbeknownst to the bride-to-be - set the stage for a surprise proposal.

What could have been a brief encounter turned into a 100-mph love story after Steve Higgs (56) met Payal Pandya (49) on the 23:09 London Northwestern Railway (LNR) service from Euston towards Milton Keynes in

November 2024.

One year on, the pair boarded the same 23:09 service after a night out in London and, to the delight of fellow passengers, Steve popped the question.

The train operator was in on the plans as Steve had contacted LNR ahead of time. The conductor on the train made a special announcement hinting at the forthcoming proposal, which Steve took as his cue to get down on one knee.

Steve Higgs from Leighton Buzzard, said: “I first met Payal when I offered her my seat on the train after I’d been out for a few drinks with friends. I’m always up for chatting with people when I’m travelling and so I struck up a conversation. I remember she mentioned she’d just been on a first date where – luckily for me – sparks had failed to fly. Although we were only speaking for twenty minutes or so, I knew I wanted to see her again.”

Payal Pandya from Harrow said: “I’d told Steve I’d met my date for that night on the apps. Shortly after I got off at my local station in Harrow, he’d found my dating profile and sent me a message. We set up our first date not too long after and the rest is history.

“We always joke that the 23:09 LNR service marks our ‘encounter-versary’ – the moment we first met. I can’t believe Steve asked me to marry him on that same service and managed to get the conductor involved without me knowing!”

While Steve and Payal currently live separately, they plan to move in together next year before it’s full steam ahead on wedding preparations, with hopes to be married in the summer. Not only will this bring Steve and Payal under one roof, it’ll also unite their two pets – Bruno the Italian Greyhound and Zen the Cavapoo.

Jonny Wiseman, customer experience director at London Northwestern Railway, said: “When Steve got in touch with our customer relations team, we knew we had to help with his request for a special announcement. Their story is a brilliant example of the way the railway can connect people, not just to where they need to go, but to the people they’re travelling with too.

“We’re delighted to hear that Payal was on-board with the wedding plans and

said yes. I want to say a huge congratulations to them both and that we wish them the very best for their future together.”

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