

MOTORWAYS or The secret life of the motorway, BBC4 by Ray Pearce

From time to time the BBC broadcasts the above programme and I usually when this occurs as I get calls and people tell me they saw me on the box last night. Why is this? You may wonder well the fact is that my late wife and I took part in the making of the programme.

It all began in 2004 when, on Midlands Today, they ran a story about the opening of the Toll Road service station at Norton Canes and we decided to pay it a visit. It turned out to be very good, we often went and got to know the staff. Three years later, in 2007 on a visit Lucy, my wife, needed a wheel chair to get from our car to the service station. The staff were very helpful and on this particular day, instead of me queuing for our meal a member of staff took our orders at the table and later brought them to us. Really good service. As we were leaving a gentleman, who it later transpired, was the manager asked us if we had enjoyed our visit. I told him I thought it was excellent so he asked if we had completed a customer satisfaction card. Never heard of them I said so he produced one for us to complete and sent to their head office. This we did and thought no more of it.

Then about 3 months later we had a phone call from their head office saying they considered our card was the best they had received and we had won the annual prize. This was £250 of vouchers to be used at any of the service stations in the group. As well as meals they could be used to purchase items in the shops, a worthwhile prize indeed.

We continued to visit Norton Canes from time when, several months later I received a call from an assistant producer at the BBC asking what I thought of the Toll Road service station. I said I thought it was very good so she asked if I would be prepared to say that on Television as they were making a programme about motorways. Yes, I said, modesty not being one of my many weaknesses. However I thought it better not to mention it to Lucy as I thought she would not like the idea. As it turned out when the recording was made. A time and date was agreed for us to go to the service station to record and film our contribution a December day in 2007.

On the day Lucy did not want to go out so I had some persuading to do as I still not told her we were to be on television. We eventually arrived there to be met by the TV crew and taken to a corner of the service station where the cameras were. Lucy wanted to know what was happening and why was she fitted with a

lapel microphone. Then cameras roll and I was interviewed and I prised to place whole heartedly, said who I had met there including Freddy Flintoff the then England cricket captain. I went on about being in Malaya when I was in the army and anything else I could call to mind. Then they asked Lucy if she liked the service station. Not particularly, was her stern reply so we had a meal and went home.

Much later we heard from the BBC when the programme was to be broadcast. It was on BBC 4 in three parts and we were in part 2 half way through the programme. It had been transmitted several times since and each time people tell me they have seen us on the programme. The last time was two weeks ago hence this article. For the morbidly curious it can be found on BBC4 iPlayer under the title. The secret life of the motorway Part 2.
I bid all my readers a good bye

Ray Pearce
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