

The original voice of 'mind the gap' returns to London Underground 12 years after his death



The voice was instantly familiar to anyone who travelled on the Tube. 'Mind the gap, please!' it said. Oswald Laurence was the name of the man who recorded an announcement heard daily by tens of thousands of people for decades. Now the original recording of 'mind the gap' by Oswald Laurence, is now back playing in Embankment Tube Station.

But to one woman, that voice had a deeper and far more poignant significance. His wife used to hear it when she travelled through Embankment station anonymous among the 4 million a day who also use the Underground. Long after Mr Laurence died 12 years ago at the age of 80, she reportedly found comfort from hearing his voice on the loudspeakers, and would sit on a platform bench to hear him.

Unfortunately, times changed. Instead of the reassuring sound of her husband, progress eventually inflicted on the commuting public a computer generated recording that felt it necessary to add that the 'gap' was 'between the platform and the train'. Until now, that is. Because someone with a heart at Transport For London reintroduced the late Mr Laurence to Embankment station in response to a plea from his widow. She wrote to TFL bosses explaining the gap it had left in her life when his voice reached the end of the line - and won them over. TFL put a copy of the announcement on a CD and sent it to his widow. Then it got rid of the nasty computer voice and gave nice Mr Laurence the stage once again. Now he can be heard in all his glory on the Northern Line at Embankment. Nigel Holness, London Underground Director, said: 'Transport for London were approached by the widow of Oswald Laurence to see whether she could get a copy of the iconic Mind the Gap announcement her husband made over 40 years ago. We were very touched by her story, so staff tracked down the recording and not only were they able to get a copy of the announcement on CD for her to keep but also worked to restore the announcement at Embankment station.'