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THIRD GENERATION TO JUMP ON THE PUFFING BILLY TRAIN?

A passion for trains runs deep in the Campbell family. Ian Campbell spent more than 30 years working in the rail industry, and has been a volunteer at Puffing Billy for 53 years.

His passion rubbed off on his grandson, Zac Campbell, who has volunteered at Puffing Billy since 2012 and currently works full time for Metro Trains in Ringwood. Zac's partner, Caitlin, is also a Puffing Billy volunteer.

Zac and Caitlin recently welcomed baby Edward into their family, and while they have no plans to coerce him into the railways, their family history and passion for the industry is bound to make an impression!

Despite living all over Australia for work, Ian would regularly travel back to the Dandenong Ranges to volunteer at Puffing Billy, coming from as far as the Pilbara to do a shift. His first memory of Puffing Billy is seeing one of the last trains to operate on the railway in the 1950s before it closed down following the landslide of 1953.

"I remember asking my Dad what it was, and he said 'That's Puffing Billy, but you can say goodbye to Puffing Billy'," Ian said.

"As we know, the railway was saved after the formation of the Puffing Billy Preservation Society, and Dad took us back there for a ride when it was up and running again. I have been hooked ever since!"

"I started volunteering in 1966 and would sell lollies on the platform from the old fashioned ushers trays. I have done nearly every role at the railway over the years, but I always had my sights set on being a train driver."

"When I was 16, I started working for the Victorian Railways and became a fireman. I gained skills that I could use in my volunteer work at Puffing Billy, and went on to become its first volunteer fireman. I was also in the first group of volunteers to be trained as a driver."

"My work with the railways took me all over Australia, but I would always make sure I came back to Puffing Billy every now and then to spend a few days volunteering. I currently live in Stawell and travel up most months. I have a long history with the place and still enjoy being there after all these years," Ian said.

Zac's first photo at Puffing Billy was taken when he was around six months old, and he visited many times with his grandfather during his childhood. Like many young boys, Zac loved railways, and having a grandfather that worked on one meant he got to fuel his fascination more than most.

"My family lived with our grandparents in Kalgoorlie when I was young, and Grandpa was a train driver there. I used to go to work with him, and I would also tag along on occasion when he would go to Puffing Billy."

"I got to spend more time at Puffing Billy once we moved back to Victoria, and went on to become a

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volunteer in 2012 when I was 16. I started as an engine cleaner and currently carry out many other volunteer roles, including fireman, signaller, guard and I am currently training to be a station master.”

“I work full time for Metro Trains as a Leading Station Assistant at Ringwood, but still love going out to Puffing Billy. As a heritage steam railway, the skills I can learn at Puffing Billy are completely unique. They are dying trades, but places like Puffing Billy keep them alive.”

“I also love the volunteers and staff at Puffing Billy. There are people of all ages, background and skill sets, and people come from all over the country – and even overseas – to volunteer and work at the railway. They’re a great bunch of people to be around,” he said.

So will baby Edward be the next Campbell to volunteer at Puffing Billy?

“We certainly aren’t pushing trains and railways onto Edward, and will have to wait and see what he is drawn to. It would be pretty special if he does have the same passion for the railway as Caitlin and I do, along with his great grandfather, but only time will tell!” Zac said.

Puffing Billy operates on Father’s Day, with trains running from Belgrave and Lakeside stations throughout the day. Tickets are also still available for the luncheon train, which departs Belgrave at 12.30pm.

Puffing Billy Railway has over 22 volunteer roles, from administration, events and retail, to station masters, engine cleaners and drivers. There are five entry level roles suitable for new recruits, all of which offer the opportunity to contribute to an iconic Melbourne attraction.

For further information about volunteering at Puffing Billy, please visit www.puffingbilly.com.au/volunteer