

MEDIA RELEASE



GO BEHIND THE STEAM AT PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY

Volunteer Recruitment Open Day – Sunday 23rd February 2020.

Ever wondered what it would be like to volunteer at Puffing Billy? Now is your opportunity to come behind-the-scenes and see what it takes to preserve and promote one of the finest heritage steam railways in the world.

On Sunday 23 February, Puffing Billy will host its volunteer recruitment open day, giving people an opportunity to find out more about volunteering and the types of roles available.

Taking place at the Menzies Creek Museum between 11am – 1pm, guests will meet a handful of current volunteers who dedicate their time to Puffing Billy, learning about their roles and the benefits of volunteering, as well as the rich history of this 119-year-old narrow gauge railway.

An exclusive tour of the Museum, which is not yet open to the public, will be given, while afternoon tea and light refreshments will be provided.

With volunteers coming from all parts of the community and across all ages, volunteering at Puffing Billy has been described as an unforgettable experience that will challenge, delight and inspire all who get involved.

No one knows this better than 56-year-old Glenn Eaton from Eltham, who became an engine cleaner in August 2019 after attending the ‘Behind the Steam’ event last year, which was soon followed by his son Kyle volunteering for the same role.

“I have fond memories of Puffing Billy growing up and always remember the sheer excitement I had on one specific trip I did in primary school when I was six. To be able to come back 50 years later, Puffing Billy still be here, and an opportunity arise for me to volunteer at this iconic Railway is something I couldn’t pass up,” Glenn said.

“The Behind the Steam event was really informative and quite special, particularly now that I am working with some of the volunteers I met at the time. It’s not every day you get to work with your son on 100-year-old locomotives, making those big locos sparkle from inside out!”

Joe Westwood, a 24-year-old qualified engineer specialising in robotics and mechatronics and current serving member of the military posted to Albury, Wodonga, has been a volunteer of the railway since 2016 and has enjoyed seeing the impact of his volunteering efforts upon the organisation.

“For generations, my grandfathers’ were enginemen in Malaysia, so railways have always been of special significance to me. I remember being four years old and telling my father that I wanted to drive steam trains and him telling me they didn’t exist. Now as a trained fireman, having worked my way up from engine cleaner, I feel an immense sense of pride to be here operating steam trains today,” said Joe.

“It’s been incredibly rewarding giving back to the community in this way and the friendships built with the older generations is priceless. I also get to do something that not everyone gets to do!”

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For Cranbourne locals Julie Park, her husband Ian, and their two children James (26yo) and Madeline (24yo), volunteering at Puffing Billy for the last 11 years has always been a cherished family affair.

"As a child, my family would take us up to Puffing Billy every year. Dad would drive the car and meet us at all the crossings, before we stopped for lunch at Lakeside. Once I got married, we did the same! What was once an annual visit turned into a more serious conversation about sharing our time with the Puffing Billy family, especially as we were already volunteering for several other local organisations." said Julie.

"Before we knew it, James had become Station Master and is currently the Chair of the Young Volunteers Committee, Madeline is a conductor and fire patrol assistant, Ian a guard and signalman now training to become a steam fireman, and myself a guard and signalman, duty manager, qualified diesel fireman and fire patroller, who is also currently training to become a steam fireman."

"We love it because we love seeing families just like us coming up and enjoying their time together. You meet some of the friendliest people you will ever encounter, including our fellow volunteers, and you get to learn about the past, present and future of Australia's favourite steam train. It's the most rewarding feeling and a really special place to be."

With many different ways to lend your time and skills to the Railway alongside some of the community pillars who help make Puffing Billy the major tourist attraction it is today, Puffing Billy is always looking for enthusiastic and energetic volunteers to help throughout the year and welcome those interested in finding out more.

For further information on the Behind the Steam event, or to register for the day, please visit www.puffingbilly.com.au/volunteer.

Event details:

Behind the Steam Volunteer Recruitment Day

Sunday 23 February 2020

11:00am to 1:00pm – FREE - **RSVPs Essential**

Menzies Creek Museum Precinct, 49 School Rd, Menzies Creek

RSVP via the website: www.puffingbilly.com.au/volunteer