

The logo for East Lancashire Railway, featuring the text "EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY" in white capital letters inside a dark red, rounded rectangular border with a white outline.

**East Lancashire Railway hails volunteers for 2,000 years of service**

The **East Lancashire Railway (ELR)** hailed its most dedicated volunteers for clocking up over 2,000 years of combined service - as it calls for more people to join the railway community.

Its inaugural Long Service Awards saw 58 staff and volunteers awarded plaques for contributing to the railway for over 50 years.

The four longest-serving volunteers received gold awards - Lois Veevers Hatton and Peter Lord for 52 years, and Richard Law and Phil Bailey for 51 years who, back in the late 60's, along with many others not now with us, rescued the railway from disappearing, so future generations could enjoy it as a 'living history'.

Ten volunteers received silver awards for over four decades of service, while the remainder received bronze awards for three decades of dedication to the railway.

Many were able to collect their awards in person at the event held at Bury Transport Museum on October 20th. Just some of the comments from those who attended:

“It was great to see so many familiar faces, many of whom have been pivotal to the ELR's success”.

“It was an enjoyable evening meeting again the many volunteers who established the East Lancs Railway”.

**East Lancashire Railway Chairman, Mike Kelly**, a fellow volunteer himself, said: “Our volunteers have and continue to be the absolute lifeblood of the heritage railway.

“Put simply, without them, we could not function, so it’s only right that we step out to salute their incredible selfless and unwavering service.

“Our Long Service Awards provided the perfect opportunity to celebrate their contribution and to thank them for their dedication that stretches back decades.

“This was more important than ever after the last 18 months which have been incredibly challenging for the railway due to the coronavirus pandemic, which put our future in jeopardy.

“With the help of our super staff and volunteers, the railway has been able to bounce back and continues providing magical moments for everyone who visits. But not everyone has returned from our pre-pandemic teams and we aren’t quite up to full strength. We desperately need more people to join our fantastic teams.”

The ELR relies on its committed volunteers to maintain the railway, run the heritage trains and host the events and experiences that their guests love.

There are currently over 700 volunteers at the East Lancashire Railway who work in a variety of roles and are the cogs that keep the railway running. From staffing the ticket office to restoring classic locomotives and period carriages and greeting families, for enthusiasts there are plenty of exciting areas of the railway needing volunteers and lots of benefits too.

These include free trips on the line, a free family trip once a year and discounted rates for all other journeys and, most excitingly, a behind the scenes view on how the help and support keeps the heritage railway open.

Volunteers can donate as much or as little time as they want and will gain lifelong skills, experience and friendships along the way.

For more information on how to volunteer with the ELR, visit:

[/www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-with-us](http://www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-with-us).

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

### **About East Lancashire Railway**

ELR opened as a heritage railway in 1987, and hosts around 200,000 visitors annually, as one of the leading visitor attractions in the North West. Operating steam trains from Bolton Street Station in Bury, along a 12.5-mile line between Heywood, in Greater Manchester, and Rawtenstall in Lancashire. The railway was recently recognised with a TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Award for 2021.

Images: <https://we.tl/t-CkoWYEt3V6>