Volunteering on the Ruislip Lido Railway

Read on to find out more information about joining as a member, and volunteering on one of Britain's premier narrow-gauge railways



Founded in 1979, the Ruislip Lido Railway Society has operated the Ruislip Lido Railway since the start of the 1980 season. Since then, the railway has been extended three times, now possessing over 2 miles of track, including a double track mainline for over half of its length.

21 passenger coaches have been constructed and purchased, 1 battery & 3 large diesel locomotives purchased, and 1 steam engine built in the Society's own Workshops at Woody Bay, along with 26 other permanent way vehicles for maintaining the railway.

Everybody on the railway is a volunteer; all working towards the common goal of running, maintaining and improving the railway. This includes all the frontline staff operating the railway on the day, as well as all the supporting and administrative work behind the scenes. Without volunteers, we would not be able to run the railway. Volunteers spend as little or as much time as they are able to with us – there is no minimum requirement.

This document contains information on the roles that we can offer to volunteers, with descriptions, any restrictions, training and other information.

If you would like to join or find out more, please email our Membership Secretary at membership@ruisliplidorailway.org who will always be happy to help.

Membership Information

An annual membership fee is applicable as follows:

- Adult: £20.00 (over 65: £12.50)
- Husband & Wife / Partner: £25.00 (over 65: £20.00)
- Young Person (14-18): £10.00

Members who are actively involved in the running of the Railway have their annual membership fee reduced to £5.00 per annum.

As well as the initial membership fee, a minimum of one RLRS share must be purchased to become a member of the society and actively volunteer. Shares are £5 each.

Included in the membership fee is three copies per year of our society magazine, Woody Bay News. Throughout the year we host a number of exclusive members social events.

Day to day at the railway:

Trains normally run at weekends throughout the year, and daily during London Borough of Hillingdon half terms and school holidays. On some years, there is a short break in train services from early January – mid February to allow for major projects and heavy infrastructure renewals.

On each operating day there is a nominated 'Duty Manager' who is responsible for the running of the railway on that day. The timetable for each running day can be viewed on the RLR website.

On a typical running day, volunteers are normally required on site from one hour before the first train, until 45 minutes after the last, although this can vary depending on the timetable and depending on the role. A typical day at the height of summer would be 11:00 – 17:45. Flexibility is made within the rostering system for some roles where possible, for members who may only be able to offer a few hours in the morning or afternoon rather than a whole day of duty.

Permanent Way work (track and general infrastructure maintenance), as well as Workshop activities normally take place on a Sunday from 09:30 onwards. Occasionally other work takes place during the week when trains are not running, but not regularly. A plan of work for the coming weeks is regularly emailed out by the relevant department heads for any volunteers assisting with these activities.

Minimum ages for roles at the railway:

- Tea Room / Gift Shop Assistant / Ticket Officer: 14
- Guard: 18
- Driver: 21 (18 for qualified Guards, subject to specific board approval)

Under 18s:

Our minimum membership age is 14. Under 18s are able to help in a variety of roles throughout the railway, making a big overall contribution to the RLR. Interaction with fellow members of similar ages and interests helps under 18s gain confidence and skills, and provides hand on experience dealing with the public, using tools and equipment and working as part of a team.

Oversight from our Child Protection Officer as well as department heads and Duty Managers helps to ensure that everyone makes a positive contribution to the railway, whilst still enjoying themselves.

Uniform:

We pride ourselves on presenting a professional image, so we make sure all our volunteers are kitted out with uniform. Upon joining, new members receive a polo shirt, fleece, winter coat, winter beanie hat and summer cap. We also provide specialist clothing and equipment (including personal protective equipment) for those members who take part in Workshop or Permanent Way activities.

Volunteer safety is important to us, it's therefore mandatory for all members to wear steel toe cap shoes/boots when on duty at the railway, excluding members working in the Turntable Tea Room, Woody Bay Gift Shop and Ticket Offices. If you don't already have a pair of boots, the RLR will refund you up to £30 for you to purchase your own safety boots.



Station Assistant





Duties:

Station Assistants assist passengers and the train crew as required. The main duties are helping to check and clip tickets, load and unload buggies, assist with loading passengers and generally assist with station operations.

The role is not safety critical and does not involve tasks such as coupling and uncoupling trains or instructing the Driver to depart. It is essential to have good interpersonal skills and make passengers welcome. It is also important to have knowledge of the railway, timetables, etc. to answer passenger queries.

Training:

Duties are relatively light, though training will be provided in key areas such as the operation of the turntable and the process for converting the coaches to accommodate wheelchair customers. Initial shadowing will be arranged with an experienced station assistant to learn the ropes.

Restrictions:

There are no general restrictions for the role.

Guard







Duties:

The Guard is in charge of the train and therefore is primarily responsible for the safe operation of the train. Their presence and manner also helps to promote the railway.

The day starts with the Guard working with the Driver to perform a variety of checks on the locomotive and rolling stock, to prepare the train for service. The Guard is responsible for controlling any shunting movements to and from the various sheds, setting the route as appropriate and providing clear communications / instructions to the Driver.

The Guard clips tickets as passengers enter the platform, puts buggies etc. into the buggy wagon and ensures everyone is on board. The Guard instructs the Driver to depart when appropriate. The Guard is responsible for keeping a good watch on both sides of the train whilst in motion. Where appropriate, the Guard informs the Driver when they leave a section having checked the points have returned to the normal position.

When the train arrives at Willow Lawn, the Guard uncouples the locomotive and helps the Driver onto the turntable. It is then re-coupled and a brake test performed. Tickets are clipped and buggies loaded. There often is a Station Assistant to help. At the end of the day, the Guard helps the Driver dispose of the rolling stock and locomotives in the appropriate sheds, shunting and setting the route as required.

Training:

Guards are given four days of training over a period which is convenient to the Guard. If successful, the Guard makes 18 trips with experienced Guards before undertaking their final exam.
Regular assessments are made, and feedback given to ensure competence is maintained.

Restrictions:

A Guard must be at least 18. The Guard should have a reasonable level of fitness and manoeuvrability, and be confident if asked to deal with any events that may arise in the course of their duties. The Guard will have the ability to use the RLR till system in the basic functions of selling tickets.

Driver





Duties:

The day starts with the Driver working with the Guard to perform a variety of checks on the locomotive and rolling stock, to prepare the train for service. The Driver will follow instructions from the Guard to carry out any necessary movements or shunting to form the train for the day, before shunting the train into the platform at Woody Bay.

The Driver is responsible for keeping a good watch on both sides of the train whilst in motion using the mirrors, as well as a careful eye on the road ahead. The Driver should keep his train in good control, obeying all speed restrictions and lineside signage as appropriate along with acknowledging communications from the Guard when clearing sections.

During multiple train operation, the Driver will be responsible for exchanging tokens at Eleanor's Junction, or driving to instructions from the Controller using radio control, passing and receiving radio communications throughout the journey.

When the train arrives at Willow Lawn, the Guard uncouples the locomotive and helps the Driver onto the turntable. It is then re-coupled and a brake test performed. At the end of the day, the Guard helps the Driver dispose of the rolling stock and locomotives in the appropriate sheds.

Training:

When a Guard wishes to become a Driver, he will undergo four days on training on the mainline diesel / battery locomotives. Once the training is complete, the Driver will carry out 18 accompanied trips including the preparation and disposal of locomotives. A final exam will then be taken.

An experienced diesel Driver may go on to be trained on our oldest diesel locomotive 'Robert' and/or our steam locomotive 'Mad Bess', subject to training positions being available.

Restrictions:

A Driver must be aged 21. Drivers will have been Guards and will have the ability to use the RLR till system in the basic functions of selling tickets. They will maintain competence in both roles once passed as a Driver.

Controller





Duties:

The Controller is responsible for ensuring the safe and smooth running of the railway when there is more than one train operating under radio control. The role is performed from the dedicated control office at Woody Bay.

On most standard running days with two trains in service, 'token working' will be used as this does not require the presence of a Controller, but for special events such as the Easter Eggspress, Santa Specials and Gala days, radio control will be in operation for the increased flexibility and ability to run more than two trains at once.

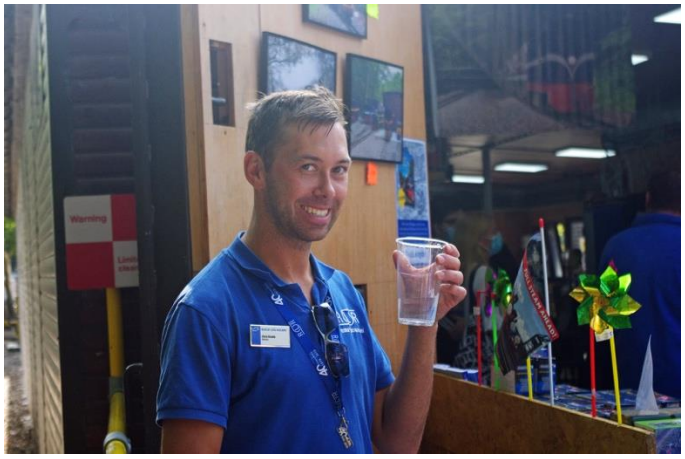
Training:

Theory training will be given to new Controllers by one of our experienced Controllers. A trainee will then complete a number of supervised shifts with an experienced Controller, before a final assessment.

Restrictions:

There are no general restrictions for the role, however in order to be trained as a Controller a member must first have been a qualified Guard and Driver, ensuring that the member has a thorough understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the colleagues the Controller will be interacting with, as well as a good understanding of the railway route and geography.

Duty Manager





Duties:

Every running day has a rostered Duty Manager, who is responsible for the overall running of the railway on the day. They ensure that the crew of all traction types are suitably briefed and instructed, Station Assistants & Ticket Officers are in place, and liaise with Tea Room and Gift Shop volunteers as required.

The Duty Manager is responsible for overall site safety on the railway and will coordinate / lead responses to any incidents that may take place. The Duty Manager will carry out Guard and Driver duties on the day along with the other train crew, and is then responsible for cashing up at the end of the day, ensuring all buildings are secured and that the site is left safe etc.

Training:

A Duty Manager will be an experienced member of train crew, qualified and as a Guard and Driver and able to use the RLR till system in the Tea Room / Gift Shop when necessary. Training will be given to be a Duty Manager as required.

Restrictions:

There are no additional restrictions on the role providing a member meets the requirements for being a Guard and Driver.

Workshop





Duties:

The Workshop department maintains, services and repairs the one steam, one battery and four diesel locomotives on the railway, as well as all of the railway rolling stock including 21 passenger coaches and 26 permanent way vehicles. There are two main teams within the Workshop;

Led by our Carriage & Wagon Supervisor, the 'Wednesday Gang' meet on a Wednesday, focusing on rolling stock inspections and maintenance, along with a variety of other miscellaneous engineering jobs that may be required to assist other departments around the railway. Work may include light engineering, painting, electrical repairs, machine tool work, as well as preparing the coaches for train service later in the week.

Led by our Chief Mechanical Engineer, the 'Sunday Team' generally look after the inspection and maintenance of our 6 locomotives as well as heavier engineering projects and overhauls within the Workshop.

Both teams are regularly found assisting with a variety of miscellaneous engineering and construction jobs around the railway as necessary.

Training:

Most members of the team have some mechanical, electrical or engineering experience / knowledge but this is not a requirement. As long as you are prepared to learn and get your hands dirty you will be welcomed and given as much guidance as you need. Training will be provided on Workshop equipment & locomotive/coach maintenance as necessary.

All tools, equipment and personal protective equipment will be provided. There is a comfortable and well-equipped mess room on-site where you can change and clean up afterwards if necessary.

Permanent Way





Duties:

The Permanent Way is defined as all the engineering structures (the track including rails, sleepers, ballast, embankments and culverts) within the boundary fences. The quality of our track has been highly praised by industry experts. The team carries out regular inspections to ensure that the trains can run in a safe and timely manner and that passengers and rolling stock can enjoy a smooth and comfortable ride.

Regular work is undertaken throughout the year, with the team usually meeting on most Sundays and occasionally on an ad-hoc basis during the week. Generally, work will involve replacing rotten sleepers, lifting and packing sections of track to improve the alignment and ride quality, oiling, inspecting and maintaining the 19 sets of points and two turntables on the railway, as well as a whole other variety of engineering tasks around the railway.

Major renewals and track replacements are undertaken most winters, sometimes requiring a short interlude in train services through January and early February to allow full access to undertake works on the railway.

Training:

Working days will be led by one of our experienced Permanent Way Supervisors. A variety of hand and power tools are used, and full training will be provided as required. All personal protective equipment is provided as necessary.

Restrictions:

There are no restrictions on helping with Permanent Way duties –a large number of under 18s are regularly found working out along the line with the team. Volunteers should be mindful that tasks may involve physical work in a variety of weather conditions, but to see what has been achieved after a hard day's work is immensely satisfying and rewarding.

Landscaping and Gardening





Duties:

Lineside work often takes place in conjunction with Permanent Way activities on a Sunday; leaves are cleared up, drainage channels cleared, encroaching brambles cut back and other vegetation tidied up and controlled. It is also important to remove fallen branches and assess trees on a regular basis.

With multiple gardens and displays at Woody Bay, Welington Junction, Haste Hill and Willow Lawn to look after through all the seasons every year, regular work both on weekends and throughout the week is undertaken by the team.

This includes the planting, weeding, watering and general maintenance of the flowerbeds, lawns and baskets as well as looking after station ornaments and features. As the railway runs mainly through woodland and grassy areas, regular maintenance is required throughout the year by this happy team.

New volunteers able to provide time and energy to take on new areas and improve other areas with new ideas are always welcomed, as well as anyone looking to support the upkeep of existing areas.

Training:

Training will be given as required to new members who wish to help the team. A wide variety of hand and power tools are available to assist the team and if the member feels comfortable in using them, training can be given on items such as leaf blowers, lawn mowers,
strimmers, hedge cutters and cutting saws etc.

Green-fingered volunteers are always welcome but horticulture knowledge is certainly not a requirement, just a keen eye on presentation and the willingness to be prepared to 'muck in'.

The Turntable Tea Room





Duties:

Our Turntable Tea Room is located at Willow Lawn Station,. The member will sell tickets and serve a variety of hot and cold drinks, snacks, ice creams etc. They will need to have a friendly disposition, good customer service skills and an understanding of how the railway operates.

It is essential to keep the Tea Room clean and tidy so regular clearing and cleaning of tables and the work area is part of the role, along with sweeping / mopping the floor as necessary and emptying the bins. Re-stocking is also required of both Tea Room products and the Gift Shop products which are also sold in the Tea Room. Basic numeracy and literacy skills will be needed to operate the tills.

Training:

Training in tickets, till functions, drinks preparation and hygiene will be provided.

Restrictions:

There is no age limit. However, volunteers aged under 18 cannot be at Willow Lawn alone.

Woody Bay Gift Shop





Duties:

There is a small Gift Shop at Woody Bay Station which sells train tickets, a variety of beach goods, railway souvenirs and other small items, along with a small range of cold drinks and snacks. You will need to have a friendly disposition and good customer service skills.

Basic numeracy and literacy skills will be needed to operate the tills along with an understanding of how the railway operates.

Training:

Training in use of the till, the items available and the general requirements of the role will be provided.

Restrictions:

There is no age limit.

Ticket Officer





Duties:

Ticket Officers operate the Ticket Office at Woody Bay Station in the 'off season' when the Woody Bay Gift Shop is not open – usually from mid–October to March. At all other times of the year, tickets will be sold from the Gift Shop at Woody Bay.

Ticket Officers and are the first point of contact between the railway and the public. The main duty is to sell tickets from dedicated workspaces using the RLR electronic point of sale till system.

You therefore have to be willing to deal with the public, handle cash, use the very simple machine to sell tickets to customers. Another important aspect of the role is to liaise with the train crew, particularly the Guard, to ensure that all passengers wishing to travel on a particular train have boarded. At the end of the day, you are responsible for completing a simple cashing up process using the figures provided by the ticket machine.

It is also important to have knowledge of Ruislip Lido in general and the railway in particular so you can answer questions and give out information to assist customers with any queries that they may have.

Training:

Training is given on all aspects of the role until such time as both you and your trainer feel that you able to operate unsupervised.

Under 18s





Duties:

April 1993 saw the introduction of the 'Junior Supporters' to engage with younger members who could not at the time join the main society until turning 18, but were still keen to be involved with the railway. The number of members who've passed onto the main society via this route over the years has demonstrated its effectiveness, with several members involved in the day to day running of the railway and administration of the Society having joined as under 18s.

Under 18s can assist in any of the various roles at the railway except driving and can work towards completing their Guard training with a view to passing as a Guard after turning 18. They can be Station Assistants and help the Guard clip tickets, load and unload buggies and help passengers on and off the train.

They can be members of the Permanent Way and Gardening teams. The Permanent Way team on a Sunday is mostly made up of a number of under 18s, resulting in an excellent atmosphere of fun and teamwork, gaining a variety of practical skills and experience at the same time.

Numerous under 18s over the years have gained practical experience from their activities at the lido, and have since gained apprenticeships with engineering companies based almost entirely on their experiences at the Lido. Finally, they can help in the Turntable Tea Room and Gift Shop, where a large number of under 18s can be found gaining huge experience and independence dealing with the public, handling money and gaining significant responsibility. In all cases, they will be suitably supervised.

They can support special events in various guises, making a crucial contribution to the Santa Specials in particular every year.

Training / restrictions:

Training will be provided for each role as per older members. A member must be aged 14 or over. We are pleased to accept Duke of Edinburgh Award participants.