

## EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY PRESS RELEASE



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### **ELR Staff Spooked By Railway Spirit**

TERRIFIED staff at **The East Lancashire Railway (ELR)** are on high alert after an eerie encounter with a spooky spirit dubbed 'Billy the Guard'.

The heritage railway, which stretches 12.5 miles between Heywood, Greater Manchester, and Rawtenstall, Lancashire, is gearing up for its ever-popular Halloween celebrations at the end of this month (October).

But a suspected sighting of a ghoul said to haunt the waiting room at Bury Bolton Street Station has added a chilling extra dimension to this year's frightful festivities.

**Mark Hill, Commercial Manager of the East Lancashire Railway**, said: "The story of Billy the Guard is a famous one that has been synonymous with The East Lancashire Railway for decades.

"It's said that he stalks the waiting room at Bolton Street Station and a number of passengers have reported apparent encounters with him over the years.

"Last week, one of our staff was cleaning the station at night and he got the fright of his life when he caught a glimpse of a ghostly figure in overalls who seemed to be having a snooze, sat on a bench, in the waiting room.

"It was only a brief encounter but it spooked him so much that he is refusing to go near platforms three and four for the time being.

"There have been too many similar sightings of this ghostly figure over the years to be a coincidence, we just hope that Billy doesn't put a spanner in the works of our Halloween plans."

First opened in 1846, The ELR played a vital role in the industrial growth of the towns and villages of the Irwell Valley with the introduction of steam locomotives.

Passenger services between Bury and Rawtenstall ended in 1972 and coal services were terminated in 1980, leading to the formal closure of the line in 1982.

Regular sightings of the ghostly figure of Billy the Guard have seen the ELR become known as one of the most haunted railways in the UK.

And the popular heritage attraction will crank up the fear factor with the launch of [Halloween Ghost Trains](#) and a [Fright at the Museum](#) experience on October 28, 29 and 30.

Families can enjoy a bone-chilling ride full of spooks and screams and help the team banish ghosts, ghouls and monsters along the way.

The [Halloween Ghost Trains](#) start and end at Bury Bolton Street Station and the one-and-a-half hour round trip promises a spooktacular series of thrills and spills.

Fancy dress is encouraged and a delicious buffet of tasty treats and delicious drinks will be available on platform three - next to Billy the Guard's haunted hangout.

The ghost trains will set off three times a day - at 5.30pm, 7pm and 8.30pm - with tickets starting at £12.90 for kids and £18.30 for adults. Early booking is advised due to high demand.

The braver souls can head to Bury Transport Museum for a theatrical evening of spine-chilling tales told in exquisite darkness, with local ghosts, witches and all manner of unmentionables horrifying you with tall tales from the other side.

This is a scarier, 60-minute-long experience [Fright at the Museum](#) recommended for ages 12 and up. The tours will set off three times a day - at 7pm, 8.15pm and 9.30pm - with tickets £10 for kids and £12 for adults.

For more information and to book, please visit: [www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk](http://www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk).

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

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.