

Alfie's 'footplate-a-thon' for the Severn Valley Railway

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The Severn Valley Railway's Survival Fund appeal is getting an extra boost, thanks to a train-mad youngster from Shropshire. Eight-year-old Alfie Hewish from Telford has taken on a sponsored challenge to raise money for the appeal, as he aims to have his photograph taken on as many locomotive footplates and cabs as possible during the 2023 season, and already has 20 under his belt!

"The SVR is Alfie's favourite heritage railway, and we visit all the time as a family," explained Alfie's mum Louise. "He just wanted to do his bit to help after we heard about the railway needing extra support for its Survival Fund."

The SVR launched its £1.5 million Survival Fund appeal in April, and has already received more than £315,000 in donations. Managing director Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster has welcomed Alfie's support:

"It's absolutely wonderful that Alfie is putting his enthusiasm to good use to help the railway, and I can't think of a better way than this of both raising funds and raising awareness of heritage rail. When young people like Alfie get such joy out of the heart of what the SVR is all about, it makes you feel extremely proud, and hopeful for the future."

“I really love the SVR,” said Alfie. “And I want to do something to help them. I know that things are hard for them at the moment, so this is something I can do. The SVR is my happy place, and I love everything to do with it.”

The Hewish family has a long association with railways; Alfie’s great grandfather Gilbert Hewish worked for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway in Bristol during the 1940s.

Alfie visited the SVR with his mum, dad Richard and little sister Autumn for the recent Spring Diesel Festival. With 22 locomotives taking part, it was the perfect opportunity to ‘bag’ a few more photographs.

“Alfie’s as much at home with heritage diesels as he is with steam locos,” explained Louise. “All the drivers were extremely kind in letting him hop up into the cabs alongside the platform for photo opportunities. Everyone was so welcoming and spent time answering his questions and explaining what was going on.”

The family have created a sponsorship page for Alfie at <https://www.justgiving.com/page/alfie-hewish-footplatechallenge> . There’s more information on the SVR’s Survival Fund appeal at svr.co.uk.

Photo credit: Severn Valley Railway