



Railway 200
Be part of
the journey



Between the Lines

Railway 200 special – January/December 2025

January

We were delighted to be first 'off the blocks' not only for SWR but across the whole of the UK, being the first to host the inaugural Railway 200 event. Winnersh station on the Reading to Windsor CRP event, which celebrated its 115th anniversary on the 10th January.

David Green, Chair of Winnersh Parish Council, Steve Tyler, Planning and Performance Director at SWR, and various other local community attendees, were treated to a plaque unveiling revealing the original name of the station in 1910 (Sindlesham and Hurst Holt), this was followed by refreshments in the local church with some historical highlights on heroes from the past from a local historian as part of the Southeast Communities Rail Partnership Blue Plaque project.



L to R: Lesley Doyle (Widow of Paul Fishwick – former chair of Windsor-Reading Line CRP, who died in November), Nigel Hopkins, Wokingham Town Crier, Carol Jewell, Deputy Mayor Wokingham BC, David Green, Chair, Winnersh Parish Council, Clive Jones, MP for Wokingham, Steve Tyler, Programme and Planning Director, SWR and Sandy Mahon, Line Officer Windsor to Reading Line CRP

On Monday 20th January, Weymouth celebrated its 168th birthday with a host of activities. Led by the Friends of Weymouth adopter group and supported by South Wessex CRP, the event kicked off with a medley of train-related songs from Weymouth Community Choir, followed by some speeches from the Mayor (Cllr Jon Orrell) and Lyndsey Robson-Malone, Service Delivery Director, SWR.

Newly commissioned pottery planters (created by Dan Sandham from the Great Pottery Throw Down) were unveiled alongside a special wooden train, which stands pride of place on the forecourt. Attended by 50 local people the celebration was enjoyed by all present. What a great way to start Railway 200 – we are looking forward to many more events throughout the year.



Cllr Jon Orrell (right) and Dan Sandham with his specially commissioned Weymouth plant pot



Paula Aldridge – Community Rail Manager SWR and Chris Henley, Railway Chaplain

February

Refurbished loos were unveiled to coincide with the 140th birthday of London Road Guildford station on Sunday 2nd February. The project was funded by SWR and the Railway Heritage Trust.

According to renowned railway historian Mike Lamport, its 1885 opening date actually makes it quite young.

“Rail mania came in the 1840s, so there was a mad rush to get railways all over the place, then they ran out of money. Then you got the Edwardian era when people started to commute more.”

“The railway from Guildford to Woking had opened in 1845 so that had been a very popular line and South Western Railways saw an opportunity to do the same. That was how this line came about.”

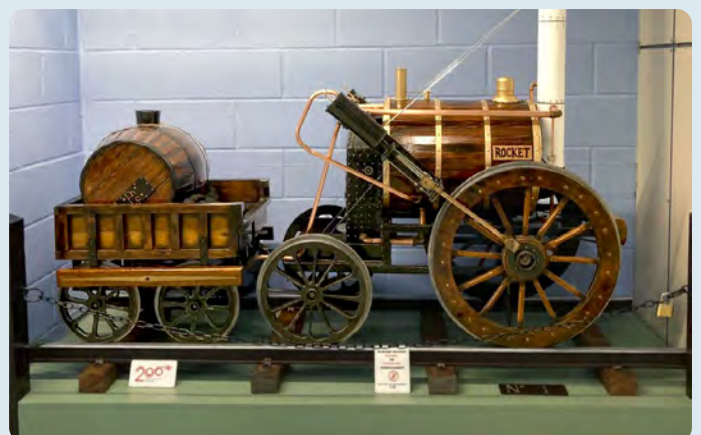
However, railways in the area could have looked very different. Mike explained: “The Northern part of the line is quite interesting as that was going to be part of the underground network. The plan was to build the District Line out through Kingston into Clandon but then the First World War came and that fell apart. The important thing was that SWR said, “this is our territory” and came and quickly built a line.



Mike Lamport – Railway 200, Bryan Robilliard – SWR and Tim Hedley-Jones – Director, Railway Heritage Trust

Feltham Station

To celebrate the anniversary of the first public railway service in 1825, retired dentist and local resident Dr Leno Cericola was commissioned by the Feltham Station Adoption Group to build a model of Stephenson's Rocket. Now on permanent display at Feltham station, the model was built using recycled and donated materials and with additional support from the Hounslow Council Neighbourhood Grant Scheme, Friends of Feltham Green, and Hounslow & Richmond CRP. Local friends groups and private donors also provided funds and hands on support to complete the project.



March

As Railway 200 gathered momentum across the country we continued to celebrate events across our network – including personal stories, murals and short plays

Lots of cakes, whistles, and live music at the unveiling of the station mural on 15th March in New Milton. The mural, created by station volunteer Nicky Judd, celebrates the 200th anniversary of the railways in Britain leading to the opening of New Milton Station in 1888 and the creation of the town. Jane Lupson, SWR's Safety and Security Director and Phil Dominey, Senior Regional Development Manager attended to help with the unveiling. A proud day for all the volunteers, plus some very stylish cakes from the local Women's Institute.



The new mural at New Milton Station

Bitterne and Netley

Local community stories contributed to two events on the Three Rivers CRP. In Bitterne, we were treated to a short play, with dialogue taken from interviews with people about their personal railway memories. In Netley, after a guided walk from the station to Royal Victoria Park, we watched a short film which centred on the importance of the railway to Netley and the link to the Royal Victoria Military Hospital 125 years ago. Well done to Charlene Arrondeau for an interesting day.



Actors at Bitterne station

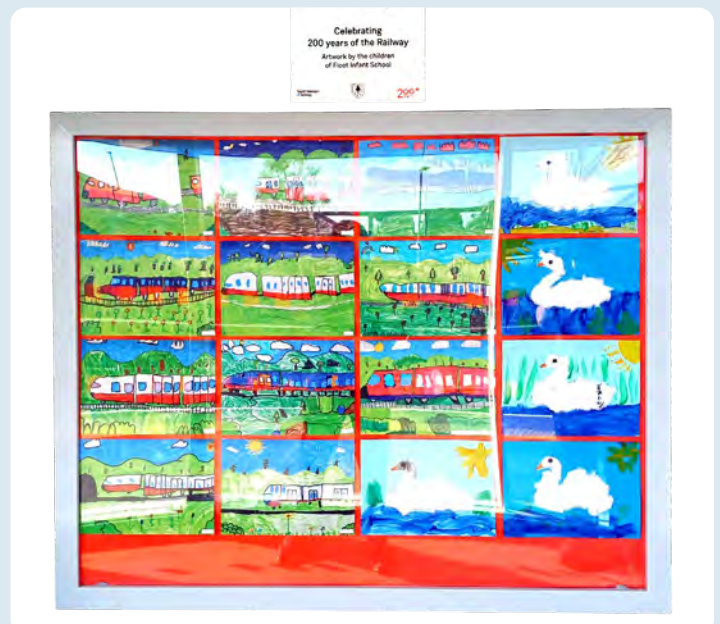


Walkers history talk at Netley station

Fleet Infant School

In Fleet two of our SWR colleagues (Paul Mills and Stefan Chybowski), the station adopters, teamed up with Fleet Infant School where some of the Year 1 children's artwork has been put on display in the waiting room.

The children chose Railway 200 and the nearby Fleet Pond Nature Reserve as their themes and what a fantastic job they did!



April

This month saw one station host a triple celebration and another unveil a superb piece of artwork, with plenty of music throughout

Reading Station celebrated its 185th anniversary at the end of March. The station opened its doors in 1840 as a temporary terminus for Brunel's Great Western Railway while engineers continued building the line to Bristol, the eventual final stop on the line. The Great Western Railway band provided live music, and an exhibition of railway-related images (kindly donated for the day by Reading Museum) went on display in the Brunel Arcade.



Right to Left: Sandy Mahon – SE CRP, Calum Mackay – Network Rail, Alexa Volker Reading BID, Alex Hills – GWR, Lucy Lomax – Hampshire CRP, Sara Grisewood SE CRP

Ashurst New Forest

In Ashurst, the Ashurst New Forest station adopters celebrated Railway 200 by unveiling a 55-foot-long mural featuring the beautiful scenery of the surrounding area. The local community turned out in force to celebrate at the station and were entertained with music from the Lymington Town Band. Well done to Andy Austin and his team of merry volunteers for this real treat.



Horsley Station

Horsley Station went for the triple on 12th April as they celebrated the stations 140th Anniversary, 100 years of the electrification of the line and of course Railway 200. The Mayor of Guildford (Councillor Sallie Barker MBE) and Jerome Pacatte, SWR's Head of Stations welcomed over 300 guests to the event which included Mystery History and Wildlife station tours. On arrival, guests and customers were treated to a pianist serenading them on the platform. Congratulations to The Friends of Horsley Station for creating such a brilliant and busy day.



Jerome Pacatte, SWR Head of Stations at the event

May

May was one of our busiest months yet for Railway 200 celebrations, and the weather was extremely kind to us too

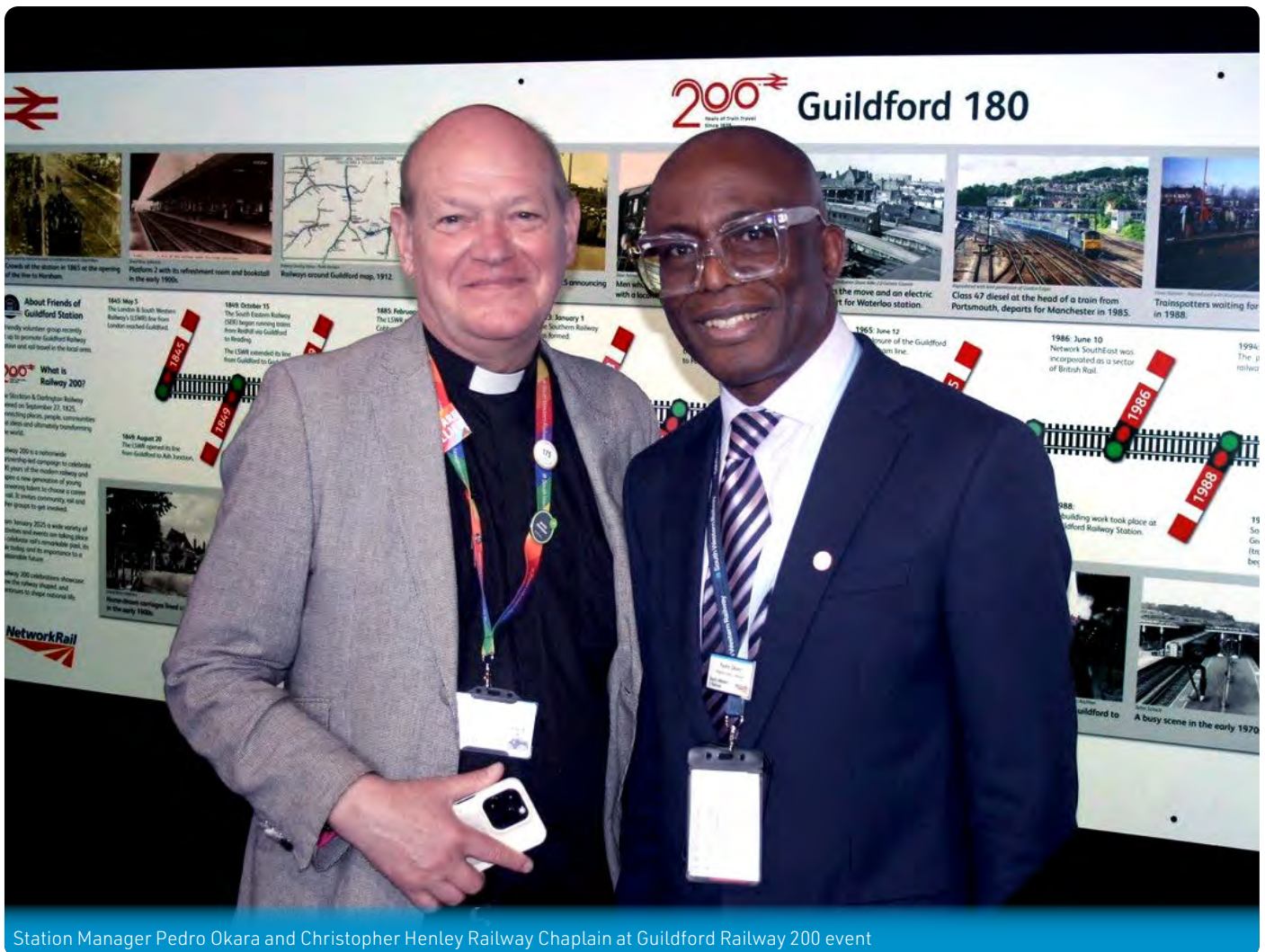
We started the month with a triple celebration on the same date – 2nd May. Aldershot and Ash Vale station adopters treated our customers to tea and cake to help celebrate their 155th birthday on the Wey Valley CRP. These came alongside Guildford station and its 180th birthday, which hosted a weekend of walks, history talks and displays organised by Sara Grisewood from Southeast CRP.



Guard at Aldershot



Adopters at Ash Vale Station



Station Manager Pedro Okara and Christopher Henley Railway Chaplain at Guildford Railway 200 event

Templecombe and Sherborne

Down in the West of England, Templecombe and Sherborne station colleagues and volunteers were also busy baking for their respective events with Gillingham distributing various goodies and treats to our customers the week before.



Station adoption group at Templecombe

Micheldever Station

Under the superb guidance of local adopter Sue Bell, organisers provided a whole weekend of talks in the village, several by the Thomas Brassey Society. There were also themed walks, brass bands and with the textile timeline of train travel on display by the Watercress Steam Railway over 60 people on each day were really immersed into Railway 200.



Sue Bell pictured with Stuart Meek, Mayor of Winchester, Cllr Russell Gordon-Smith and members of the local community

Winnersh Triangle

Was the youngest of all the stations to celebrate this month – at a mere 39 years young! The parish council were keen to recognise the importance of the station to the town and business park.



David Green, Chair of Winnersh Parish Council and Lyndsey Robson-Malone, SWR Service Delivery Director

Farncombe Station

The community at Farncombe celebrated its connection to Jack Philips, who was born in the area and was tragically killed aboard the Titanic with a picture of him at the station, followed by a railway themed walk to Godalming museum lead by Martyn Sandford station adopter. Thanks to Godalming Town Council for organising the event.



Ribbon cutting with the Mayor of Godalming, Cllr. Bob Crooks MBE

Woking Station

Colleagues at Woking station celebrated its 187th birthday on the 21st May. Over 400 cakes were given to customers at the station, whilst a joint event at Woking Homes (formally the Railway servants' orphanage) for their own 140th anniversary, was being celebrated. The Lightbox station adopters in Woking, also participated in the day with an exhibition of artifacts from the orphanage.



Colleagues at Woking station



Peter Williams, SWR Customer and Commercial Director and Sarah Kemp, CEO Woking Homes unveiling the Railway 200 plaque

Surbiton Station

On the evening of 21st May, customers were treated to a silent disco held by The Community Train CRP where they danced away to various tunes. I wonder what the commuters 187 years ago would have thought of that!



Customers enjoying the silent disco



Members of the 14th Royal Artillery, Locomotive Services Limited, Phil Dominey, Stuart Meek and Sir Andrew Gregory, Master Gunner St James Park and Vice Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire

The Royal Artilleryman rededication Salisbury

Locomotive 45118 was re-dedicated The Royal Artilleryman at Salisbury station on 30th May. This is close to the Royal Artillery's headquarters in Larkhill. Military personnel, notably battery personnel, Royal Artillery Association Members and the Honour Guard, were in attendance alongside railway colleagues.

Senior regiment representatives arrived on the re-dedicated train, having boarded at Warminster, and were saluted on arrival at Salisbury. The Dean of Salisbury Cathedral provided a blessing of the locomotive, owned by Locomotive Services Limited (LSL), before

guests made a special journey on the train via Southampton and Eastleigh before returning to Salisbury.

There has always been a strong relationship between the railway and the military and this event was recognition of this. South Western Railway has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and holds the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award and are now working towards the Gold Award. We have an active Armed Forces Network of colleagues who have served with a number present today. Last year, SWR partnered with charity Scotty's Little Soldiers to support bereaved military children.

June

Halfway through the year and we were still going strong

At the beginning of the month, the Friends of Brockenhurst celebrated Railway 200 with their own 178th birthday holding a community event which included stalls promoting Sustainable and Active Travel, Railway Safety and local cottage industries.

The focus of the day was the unveiling of a celebratory plaque and a photographic mural depicting the unique New Forest environment. The celebrations were capped with the cutting of a magnificent cake by Monica Fulford (pictured below), the great, great, great niece of Charles Castleman, who was the instigator of the railway through the New Forest. The cake baked by SWR employee, Hannah Clark, modelled the original station in 1855.

Over 100 locals and visitors to the Forest attended the event which not only engendered a spirit of the community but also showcased the significance of Brockenhurst Station in the history and development of the Railway in Britain.



Monica Fulford, cutting the fabulous cake made by Hannah Clark in Brockenhurst

Ascot Station Birthday

On the 4th June, we celebrated the 169th birthday of Ascot station. A permanent plaque was unveiled in the booking hall and invited guests, including many local school children, came to hear about the history of the railway.

Supported by Reading to Windsor CRP and the local adopter group, the children and customers were delighted to share the 1.5 metre SWR Arterio cake and other refreshments.



Local school children celebrating at Ascot



The choir in action at Wareham station

Wareham Celebration

The Friends of Wareham alongside Purbeck CRP delivered an all-singing celebration on the 14th June to commemorate its opening in 1847. A visit to the original brick Goods Shed was offered, alongside a brief history and an opportunity to see the wonderful new Stephenson's Rocket planter produced by the local Men's Shed.

Community Flashmob in Portsmouth

The City of Portsmouth College, funded through the GWR Customer and Community Improvement Fund, carried out a community flashmob event with 130 people focussing on the railway to mark Railway 200. Dancers aged 14 to 69 representing a range of special educational needs and disabilities organisations performed a dance at Portsmouth's Guildhall Square called A Ride Through Time. The dance told the story of the railway, with one of the young people dressing up as GWR's original chief engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel. SWR also provided a team for the dance - including our very own Phil Dominey!



The dancers in action!

Waterloo Day

Wednesday 18 June was 'Waterloo Day' – the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, when British and allied forces under The Duke of Wellington triumphed over Napoleon Bonaparte and ended decades of conflict in Europe.

This year marked the 210th anniversary of the famous battle, which first gave its name to Waterloo Bridge, opened on the second anniversary in 1817. In 1848, Waterloo Bridge station opened, the station now known as London Waterloo.

To celebrate the namesake of Britain's biggest station for Railway 200, South Western Railway partnered with veteran wellbeing charity Waterloo Uncovered and the Household Cavalry Museum.

Waterloo Uncovered, whose patron is the 9th Duke of Wellington (the direct descendant of the victor at Waterloo), brings recovering veterans and serving personnel together to explore the history and impact of the battle through archaeology.

The Household Cavalry Museum, based at Horse Guards Parade in Whitehall, preserves and tells the story of the Household Cavalry, consisting of the two most senior regiments in the British Army: the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals.



The celebration began a bugle call by Trooper Davis – a trumpeter for the Life Guards regiment. He was joined by fellow Life Guard, Trooper Barlow, and Chelsea Pensioners donning their iconic scarlet coats.

Throughout the day, customers were transported back to the Napoleonic Wars by live reenactors, dressing-up opportunities, mock excavations and the story of John Edwards, who sounded the charge of the Life Guards at the famous battle when he was just 16 years old.

Alton Station

Saturday 21st June saw Jane Austen fans flock to Alton to celebrate her 250th Anniversary – and were given a warm welcome to the station by Mr Darcy aka Paul – one of the station adopters, who gave a guided tour into the town, where an unveiling of a statue took place. The Wey Valley CRP were on hand to support to deliver cakes and local walk information.



Paul Ebbutt greeting a Jane Austen Fan



Dave Josey and Paul Ebbutt greeting our customers at the station

July

July was an exciting month, with one of our stations reaching its 100th anniversary – and the Railway 200 exhibition train making a stop at Waterloo

Starting Strong at Pokesdown

We kicked off the month at Pokesdown, where Viv from the Friends of Pokesdown was on hand to greet customers with children's safety books and goodie bags.



The adopters at Pokesdown station enjoying the day



Pupils and local community and adopter group

Wonderful Whitchurch

A coordinated effort from local community groups – including Whitchurch Walkers, Whitchurch Town Council, Whitchurch in Bloom, and the Whitchurch History Society – helped the station shine on its birthday. The station was adorned with refreshed planters and historical plaques.

The Montessori Nursery School and History Society provided displays and pictures, while children serenaded guests with Happy Birthday, followed by cake for all!

Art-tastic at Wokingham

Wokingham Station welcomed guests and passengers to mark its 176th birthday (opened in 1849). An impressive new artwork was unveiled by Lorna, a Learning Disability Partnership Board Champion, and Louise Timlin, Mayor of the Town Council.

The piece – led by artist Jo Werrett in partnership with the Wokingham Learning Disability Partnership Board – celebrates 200 years of railway history and was created by individuals of all abilities, contributing to one unified work.



Chandler's Ford: A Walk-Through Time

Hampshire Community Rail Partnership hosted a memorable History Talk & Stroll at Chandler's Ford to celebrate Railway 200.

Jim Beckett delivered an insightful onboard history session detailing the station's past, from its 1847 roots to its Beeching-era decline and revival in 2003. A guided walk followed, racing the station's historic journey.

Snapshots: Events held at Effingham Junction & Kingston



Motspur Park: A Century of Service

Motspur Park Station marked its 100th anniversary under sunny skies with the original station sign on proud display!

Organised by the Friends of Motspur Park, the celebration included a talk by rail historian Christian Wolmar, ribbon cutting by Mayor of Merton Martin Whelton, and Wimbledon MP Paul Kohler. Locally made colourful bunting and an impressive model railway rounded out the event.



Showcasing the original sign at Motspur Park station

Hook Station Turns 139

Thanks to our fantastic SWR colleagues and the local community who came together for Hook Station's 139th anniversary. Guests enjoyed stories of the station's history and the unveiling of a brand-new plaque in the waiting room.



Colleagues celebrating at Hook station

Honiton & Axminster: Double the Festivities

Double birthday celebrations were held at Honiton and Axminster, with MP Richard Foord, mayors from both towns, and Gary Shipp from the Community Rail Network in attendance.

Each station had cake and a commemorative plaque unveiling and in addition Axminster hosted a model railway display and the Railway Kitchen hosted a special evening supper with a film show and talk about the Lyme Regis branch and the AleWay is hosting a photo display of images of the branch for several weeks.



140th Birthday Bash in Bournemouth

Bournemouth Station marked its 140th anniversary with a visit from Mayor of Bournemouth Cllr Jackie Edwards and MP Tom Hayes. Guests enjoyed a tour – including a behind-the-scenes look at the signal box, thanks to Network Rail – and engaged with railway memorabilia displays and the Swanage Railway Friends.

A wrapped 'poster plaque' was unveiled before everyone enjoyed birthday cake, accompanied by live music from Magna Sinfonia.

Railway 200 Exhibition Train – 'Inspiration' Arrives at Waterloo

The Railway 200 'Inspiration' Exhibition Train opened to the public at Waterloo Station, following a VIP preview.

Over 1000 visitors explored interactive displays on the history, innovation, and careers in the railway industry. SWR's exhibit (Day 2) included a Virtual Reality game simulating on-train scenarios like ticket inspection and train dispatch.

The Clan Line steam locomotive made a special appearance during the train's visit.



To round off a very busy July, our team was thrilled to part sponsor the White in Bloom Awards – which had a Railway 200 theme, delivered across the island.

Our colleagues from the Island Line were in attendance, Emma Brown and Kathryn Wheeler, joining in the celebrations and showing support for our community's green efforts. A special congratulations goes to Lake station, which earned a well-deserved runner up for Best Young People Initiative for Broadlea Primary's garden.

August

Walking and wheeling into Railway 200

Eastleigh Borough Council and Hampshire County Council funded Sustrans, the walking and cycling charity, to deliver the Borough's first 30-day Walking and Wheeling Festival helping residents 'Walk, wheel and connect'. Local organisations, artists and volunteers are providing over 30 free led and self-led routes across the Borough over 30 days to explore by foot, wheelchair and mobility aid. They cover a range of themes, lengths, locations, and access needs over 17 locations – so there was a route to suit everyone!

As part of Railway 200, this free activity celebrated the 200 years of public railways in Great Britain along the Hamble Rail Trail.

Ash Vale celebrations

Ash Vale Station Gardeners hosted a special day to celebrate 200 years of the railway, by walking 2 miles along the Basingstoke Canal and to Frimley Lodge Park where everyone enjoyed free rides on the miniature railway.

The weather was perfect, sunny with a light breeze, and there was plenty of fun along the way. They finished the day with a litter pick along the canal, leaving it tidier than they found it. A lovely day out that brought the community together and celebrated our railway heritage.



Participants enjoying the train ride at Frimley Lodge Park

Wool Station

Purbeck Community Rail Partnership teamed up with local artist and graphic designer Maria Burns to create something really special at Wool Station. They wanted to bring a splash of creativity to the station, so Maria designed a big, colourful mural on the west side of the station building. Now, everyone arriving at the main entrance gets a bright and welcoming first impression!

Station art is a great way to get the community involved and make stations feel warmer and more inviting. This mural also shines a spotlight on two of our area's most iconic spots – Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door – perfect for travellers heading out by train and connecting bus.

The mural ties in perfectly with the brand-new Wool Information Board – also designed by Maria.

Art has this great way of connecting people and leaving something lasting behind. With so many passengers passing through Wool, we know this mural will catch plenty of eyes and it feels like the perfect legacy for the Railway 200 centenary celebrations.

A huge thank you to Community Rail Network for helping in funding this project.



BBQ for Shawford

Finally, to mark the end of the month Platform 1 café at Shawford station held a summer Railway 200 barbeque – around 100 people attended to mark the occasion.

September

September, the month we had all been waiting for, finally arrived, marking the official 200th anniversary of the modern railway. It was a month full of creativity, community spirit, and legacy projects across the network

We started with something truly unique. The Community Brain helped us celebrate 200 years of travellers' outfits with a vibrant catwalk that took place both on one of our new Arterio trains and on the concourse at Waterloo. The outfits were modelled perfectly by our colleagues from Network Rail and South Western Railway, as well as our wonderful station adopters from Cosham, Creating Chaos. It was a joyful nod to how travel and fashion has changed through the ages.



Volunteers in uniform from the Watercress line and SWR



Fashion throughout the ages on display with our proud models

Brookwood Reflective Garden

Over in Brookwood we unveiled one of our flagship 'legacy' projects – a special reflective garden in the historic Brookwood Cemetery – the largest cemetery in the world when it opened in 1854.

Set on disused land behind the station that leads directly into the cemetery, the garden has been lovingly created with the help of our contractors, volunteers from Network Rail and South Western Railway, and the unwavering support of the cemetery team. The space now offers a peaceful spot for reflection, complete with information boards about the historic Necropolis Railway. It will also in time provide a place for memorial plaques dedicated to railway colleagues who have died. The launch was a truly special occasion, with a blessing from Railway Chaplain Christopher Henley, a short performance from a new play 'A Train to Woking' by the Fleur de Lis Classical Theatre Company, and a fascinating historical walk led by railway historian John Clarke.



Volunteers from Network Rail and SWR planting and painting in the garden



The completed reflective space

New Malden Sound of Music

Meanwhile, New Malden marked the Railway 200 celebrations in a more musical way. In honour of the 60th anniversary of Decca Records producing The Sound of Music soundtrack, we were treated to an entertaining spectacle featuring many excitable 'nuns' singing four of the most iconic songs – a fun and fitting tribute to a classic film moment.

A big tuneful thanks to the Friends of New Malden for organising.



Sir Ed Davey MP, for Kingston and Surbiton, celebrating at New Malden

Haslemere Event

Down in Haslemere, the community came together for a fantastic family fun day that showcased local talent, live music, vintage buses, and even some good old-fashioned tabletop games. A huge thank you to all the South Western Railway colleagues who rallied together to make the day such a success – it was truly a celebration of community spirit and connection.



SWR colleagues dressing for the occasion with Chris Ashdown, Town Crier for Haslemere

October

October was another productive month for our Community Rail family. It was filled with art unveilings, and of course more station birthdays

One of our larger events this month was the unveiling of the Waterloo mural, a legacy project featuring images from South Western Railway, Network Rail, and several of our community partners.



The ribbon cutting was performed by Stuart Meek, SWR Chief Operating Officer, Mike Lamport, Railway 200 and artist Patricio Forrester

We kicked off the month at Basingstoke station, where students from Queen Mary's College unveiled their Railway 200-themed permanent tiled artwork installation.

Commissioned by the Arts Society Basingstoke, the students poured countless hours into research, sketching, and perfecting their sgraffito and slip designs, which culminated in six colourful tiled panels.



Celebrations

We also had two smaller but still well-attended celebrations.

St Margarets station hosted a cheerful birthday gathering, with talk already turning to grand plans for their 150th anniversary next year and Pinhoe Station, complete with homemade cake and shared stories from local residents reminiscing about railway life.



St Margarets station celebration



Cake cutting at Pinhoe

Through the Window of My Train

Over on the Isle of Wight, Brading station was the perfect setting for the launch of Through the Window of My Train – a glossy, full-colour book celebrating both 200 years of railway heritage and 20 years of the Isle of Wight Community Rail Partnership.

The publication showcases poetry, artwork, and photography from local residents, all created through a series of creative workshops that capture the island's deep connection to its railways.



Bloom Awards

We were also delighted to attend the South and Southeast in Bloom Awards at RHS Wisley, where we proudly presented the certificates for our sponsored Railway 200 category, 'Celebration Stations.'

A huge congratulations to all entrants on their successes.



Paula Aldridge and Derek Beer, SSEIB judge presenting West Byfleet Adopters their award

Our annual Community Rail Conference saw many winners, but Friends of Horsley Station won the Best Railway 200 project award with Friends of Micheldever receiving a well deserved ' Highly Commended'.



Friends of Horsley station receiving their Railway 200 award

November

As we entered the final two months of Railway 200, we were proud to celebrate one of the year's most dedicated champions

We presented Mr Railway 200 himself, Mike Lamport, with his very own commemorative plaque as a thank you for his support, enthusiasm, and guidance throughout the year. In a rare moment, Mike was truly surprised – and even speechless.



Alton Brewery Tour

Over in Alton, Paul from Alton Station Adopters, treated us to a fantastic brewery tour to help launch the new Treats, Tipples and Trails website, developed with SWR funding and hosted by Hampshire CRP. The event was a great success, shining a spotlight on the many independent eateries, cafés and ale houses along the route.



Mark Miller – Director Hampshire CRP and Paul Ebbutt at the launch event

Restoration Project

Meanwhile, the Friends of Fareham have lovingly restored the original Solent Link Electrification display poster, first unveiled in 1990. The refreshed display was revealed as part of their 184th birthday celebrations.



Friends of Fareham with colleagues with the restored poster

150th Anniversary

Over on the Isle of Wight, during the weekend of the 29th and 30th November, the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, in partnership with Island Line, celebrated the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Ryde and Newport Railway and Railway 200. A joint priced all day travel ticket of £20.00, allowed travel on Island Line and the Steam Railway.

The visitors were able to ride on current Island Line class 484 electric units, steam locomotives Adams 02 'Calbourne' and Terrier 'Freshwater', enjoy brake van rides behind diesels D2554 'Nuclear Fred' and, for the first time, a new arrival the steam railway 03179, in Network South East livery.



Compass School Mosaic

The Compass School, new adopters at St Denys station, have been working hard to breathe new life into the station planters. They have also created a colourful mosaic, now proudly displayed on one of the planters for our customers to enjoy.



December

Hooray – we finally made it to the end of this historic year, and what a momentous journey it had been! We danced, sung, walked and talked, created unique pieces of art, and enjoyed more than a few slices of delicious cake – all in the name of Railway 200

From West Byfleet to Windsor this month, and from knitted dollies to the Exhibition train Inspiration, every community has embraced the spirit of celebration in its own unique and imaginative way.

The 1st December saw us celebrate two events. West Byfleet station marked its 138th birthday, including lots of cupcakes and a history display created by the Friends of West Byfleet. Over in Windsor and Eton Riverside, they were proudly celebrating being 38 years older!

Serenaded by the Windsor Soundswell choir and singer, Sarah Martin, some beautiful carols were heard and the Children from Our Lady of the Rosary School created decorations for the tree. Optalis Ability provide some delicious mince pies and shortbread to top off the event. Thanks to Sandy Mahon, officer for the Reading to Windsor CRP for organising this Christmassy event.



Friends of West Byfleet with SWR Joe Nurse



Southwell Choir at Windsor

Hilsea Travel Buddies

Jane, one of our dedicated adopters at Hilsea station, proudly collected over 150 knitted travel buddies, to be distributed across our network, local hospitals and care homes. #hilseatravelbuddies

A special buddy called 'Iain Inspiration' – was given to the Railway 200 train crew. We hope Iain enjoys his journey across the UK.



Southampton Central Exhibition Train

To top this year off, SWR and NR jointly hosted the Exhibition Train Inspiration at Southampton Central for three days, seeing just over 2,200 people come through the doors. On the Monday we delivered a VIP event, featuring the Steam Town Sea Shanty singers and a tour of the pre-train experience room. This included a bridge building exercise by our apprentices, a model train from Network Rail and Winchester Railway Modellers and a Railway 200 'guess the year' timeline, before they boarded the train.

The Southampton event helped the numbers of visitors to Inspiration reach 50,000 in total for this year. The train will continue to travel across the UK network until June 2026, calling at Kingston and Salisbury in February.



lain, the knitted Hilsea buddy, being gifted to the Railway 200 team

Historic Display

The Friends of Rowlands Castle created some fantastic historic display for the station, unveiled by the Chair of the group and then followed by a short trail around the village.



Cake cutting at Cranbrook

Cranbrook Birthday

Mid-December we celebrated the youngest birthday on the network with Cranbrook station turning a mere 10 years old. Cake and printed tote bags were distributed by the Cranbrook Town Council and Devon and Cornwall CRP, to our customers. It's hard to believe that the station is only ten years old as it has already hit over 120,000 annual users in the 12 months to March 2025!

The End of a Remarkable Year

I would like to thank my colleagues Phil Dominey and Jack Wharton for their support over the past year, alongside our many other dedicated colleagues from SWR and NR. Finally, my absolute thanks go out to every volunteer, community partner, station adopter; contractor and supporter who stepped up to celebrate this milestone year. You have shown the very best of what Community Rail can achieve – and it has been a joy to share this remarkable year with you all.



