

# Between the Lines

April 2026



Welcome to our first newsletter of 2026. April has arrived, the sun has finally made an appearance for Easter, and spring is bursting into life across the network.

On a recent change of trains at Surbiton, I managed to capture the image above — a reminder of how beautiful our stations and surroundings can be at this time of year.

## Tanks and Trains

A new set of heritage posters has been unveiled at Wool station, created through a partnership between The Tank Museum, South Western Railway (SWR), Friends of Wool Station, and the Purbeck Community Rail Partnership. As part of the nationwide Railway 200 celebrations, these displays tell the story of Wool station's unique connection to tank development and military training.



SWR, Purbeck CRP, Friends of Wool station and the Bovington Tank Museum at the launch

Visitors can now learn about the single-track branch line built in 1918 by the Royal Engineers and German POWs — a line many locals never knew existed. Though dismantled in 1936, its former platform can still be spotted opposite the Bovington Tank Training Area.



## Explore Hampshire – car free

Hampshire CRP has launched a [brand-new website](#), proudly funded by SWR, celebrating the best walks, pubs, cafés, and hidden gems across Hampshire and neighbouring counties. The launch included a guided city tour in Salisbury, showcasing how easy it is to enjoy riverside strolls, countryside rambles, cosy pub lunches, and independent eateries — all accessible from our stations across the Hills to Harbour, Three Rivers, and Wey Valley CRPs.



## Iain on his travels

Our knitted friend Iain — created as part of the Hilsea Railway200 project — has been spotted on the Exhibition Train, most recently making an appearance in Minehead. He continues to be quite the adventurer.



Iain in Minehead on his adventures.

## Pages of history

A book launch took place at The Butterfly House in early April, at Castle Gardens, Sherborne, with 40 invited guests including the full team of authors. The book explores the histories of Salisbury, Tisbury, Gillingham, Templecombe, Sherborne, Yeovil Junction, and Crewkerne stations, as well as the long-closed stations of Semley, Dinton, Fovant, Milborne Port, and Sutton Bingham. Packed with images, anecdotes, and stories of the coming of the railway, it's a wonderful celebration of local heritage, and the second printing was funded by Community Rail Network. Copies are available from Caroline Rowlands: [blackmorevalecrp@gmail.com](mailto:blackmorevalecrp@gmail.com)



A copy of the Railway 200 book.

## Aviation and motoring trip

Anna, CRP Officer for the Hounslow and Richmond line, recently invited Transit Community Support CIC from Whitton on a Travel with Confidence day to Brooklands Museum in Weybridge. The group had a fantastic time — and even better, they've now decided to become station adopters.



The group travelling to Brooklands for their exciting day out.

## Anyone fancy a brew?

As part of Brew Monday, volunteers from the Friends of Honiton — supported by SWR station staff — spent the day chatting with passengers, sharing information about starting conversations around mental health, and handing out Samaritans-branded tea bags to help encourage connection.



Friends of Honiton station with SWR station colleagues, distributing Samaritan tea bags.

## Success at last

Our adopters and CRPs truly did us proud at the CRN Awards in Derby. Their outstanding events delivered across the Community Rail network earned us three wins, along with a third place honors. A fantastic achievement and a testament to their hard work, creativity, and commitment. Well done to everyone involved and all of those shortlisted.

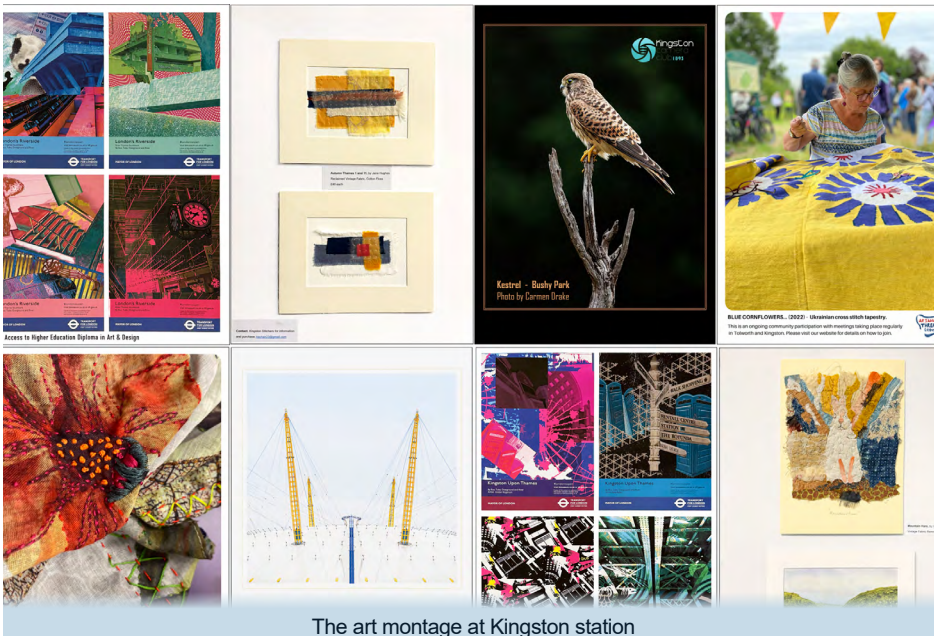


### Winners

- Wokingham Learning Disability Partnership Board for Railway 200 Artwork
- Southeast Communities Rail Partnerships for Railway 200 Blue Plaques (pictured left)
- Friends of Motspur Park for Motspur Park 100 event

## Navvies memorial event

The Friends of New Milton brought the community together to honour the Navvies who built our railway — particularly the nine men who lost their lives constructing the line between Brockenhurst and Bournemouth. The event was attended by SWR Chaplain Christopher Henley, Nick Saunders from the Milton Heritage Society, and David Rice-Munday, Deputy Chair of New Milton Town Council (pictured right). Music was provided by Steve West and his band of Hobos, who performed a traditional song dedicated to the Navvies. Friends of New Milton offered hot chocolate to attendees and passing customers.



The art montage at Kingston station

## Kingston art montage

We're thrilled to support the brand-new Art & Craft Community Hub at Kingston station, showcasing an inspiring mix of local creatives. The current display features: thread work created by migrant communities; embroidery by local stitchers; photography by local artists; and graphic and design work by local students.

## Message from Jenni Jones - CRN Officer

I think it's fair to say it's been a bumper year for SWR Community Rail! As well as the plethora of Railway 200 events, 12 SWR people and projects were shortlisted for the Community Rail Awards, with several top 3 places. Huge congratulations from all at Community Rail Network. We've also seen a record number of successful awards from the grants we administer, including 134 SWR Station Adoption Fund, 33 Small Grants Fund and 10 Community Rail Development Fund projects. No wonder it's been busy!



Jenni with Charlene Arrondeau (Officer for Hills to Harbour CRP), on a Travel with Confidence trip, alongside Portsmouth City Council.

## More news from CRN:

### Community Rail Week, 1-7 June

Celebrating connections, inclusion and the journeys that bring people together is at the heart of this year's Community Rail Week theme, 'Journeys for All'. The theme shines a spotlight on the vital role community rail plays in fostering inclusion, strengthening local connections and breaking down barriers, helping ensure that everyone can access and enjoy rail travel

### Welcome to Allison

We are delighted to welcome Allison Hughes to our training team – keep an eye on our newsletter and website for a wide range of training and networking opportunities coming up

### Community Rail Conference, 19-20 October in Derby

The conference, specifically for community rail partnerships and rail industry partners, is an opportunity to network with colleagues, exchange ideas and experiences, learn and find inspiration for future activities.

As always, do get in touch with me directly if you want to talk training, funding or project ideas:

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Amanda Martin MP for Portsmouth North (right) on a recent visit to Hilsea station to meet Jane - from Community Spotlight (left), to discuss plans to bring the redundant space back to life. Jane has fantastic plans!