



Railway 200
Be part of
the journey



SWR and Network Rail colleagues and volunteers at the Railway 200 Fashion Show

Credit: Andrew Lalchan Photography

Railway 200

A year of celebrating with our communities and colleagues



Foreword

“What a year of celebration it’s been on our railway! Colleagues from South Western Railway and Network Rail Wessex, along with our community partners and stakeholders, have truly embraced the spirit of Railway 200 with some superb initiatives. The railway has played an incredible role in society over the last two centuries and it’s as important to people now as it has always been. I’m proud of the opportunity we have to continue that legacy, and I look forward with optimism to many more years of rail travel.”

Lawrence Bowman, Managing Director, South Western Railway and Network Rail Wessex



“South Western Railway was Railway 200’s top supporter. They saw the potential cohesive benefit that it could bring to its staff and to the communities that it serves and are reaping those rewards.”

Mike Lampert, Railway 200 Steering Group



The opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1825, marked the birth of the modern railway, an event that would change the world forever. To celebrate the 200th anniversary, we set our Community Rail Partnerships, Station Adopters and railway colleagues a challenge – to honour the rich and diverse history of our network and involve their local communities in celebrating their stations’ own anniversaries. They didn’t disappoint!

January

Following the ‘Whistle-Up’, one of the biggest railway heritage mass participation events ever, we were delighted to be first ‘off the blocks’ by hosting the UK’s inaugural Railway 200 event.

We welcomed the new year and the start of our year-long celebration by sounding off whistles and horns with **The Watercress Line** for the Railway 200 Whistle-Up at **Alton**.

At **Winnersh station**, the **Reading to Windsor Community Rail Partnership (CRP)** celebrated its 115th anniversary on 10 January.

The ceremony acknowledged the Chair of the CRP, Paul Fishwick, who passed away the previous year.

This was followed by **The Friends of Weymouth** celebrating their station’s 168th birthday with a host of activities, supported by **South Wessex CRP**. The event started with a music train medley from Weymouth Community Choir, and finished with the planting of a model train.



Unveiling of the plaque at Winnersh



Railway 200 Whistle-Up at Alton



Chantelle Bacon – South Wessex CRP officer with a celebratory planter

Attended by SWR colleagues, the Winnersh event also saw the launch of the blue plaque project with **South East Communities CRP**.

Working with local history groups, museums, and youth organisations to research historical figures and stories linked to the railway, South East Communities CRP commemorated these stories with Railway 200-branded blue plaques displayed at stations along their 10 CRP routes.



February

In February a model of a Stephenson's Rocket train was brought to **Feltham** for the anniversary of the first public railway service in 1825. **Friends of Feltham Station** commissioned local resident Dr. Lino Cericola to build it using recycled and donated materials and with additional support from the Hounslow Council Neighbourhood Grant Scheme, Friends of Feltham Green, and **Hounslow & Richmond CRP**.

Refurbished toilets for customers at London Road, Guildford were reopened to coincide with their 140th anniversary – this project was jointly funded by SWR and Railway Heritage Trust.

As well as celebrating the past, Railway 200 is also about looking to the future of rail travel. This includes developing the next generation of railway colleagues who will guide the industry in the years ahead.

During National Apprenticeship Week, we caught up with former apprentices who have since secured permanent roles in SWR. Apprenticeships are a fantastic way for young people to develop skills while gaining hands-on experience. For Jack Speich, who is now an Information Systems Controller at the WICC, the apprenticeship helped him overcome anxiety about working in busy public spaces: "I started with little confidence but facing my fears daily helped me grow."



Former apprentice and now WICC Information Systems Controller Jack Speich

Finding love on the railway

To celebrate Valentine's Day we tracked down some of the colleagues who have found love as well as a career on the railway.

Retail Development Manager Lynn and AM Support Clerk Andrew McLachlan met in the Basingstoke Ticket Office in 1988, and their railway careers were both inspired by generations before them. Andrew's grandfather was a lifelong Train Guard and Lynn's father was an engineer, involved in projects including the Intercity 125.

Regional Manager Tim and Woking Station Manager Jenny Keen also found each other on the railway. Tim's and Jenny's fathers were both Train Drivers during the steam era, and they both joined the railway through youth training schemes. Over the years, their roles have evolved and together they've contributed decades of service to the railway, showing it isn't just a career but also a way of life.



Jenny and Tim Keen



Andrew and Lynn McLachlan, with their son Aaron, who also contributes to customer service during events

Colleague stories

'My Railway 200' is a collection of stories from the people that make the railway happen. Throughout the year, colleagues got involved in Railway 200 by sharing their stories that show how deeply the railway has influenced and changed our lives.

What is one thing you've learnt during your career, and how has it shaped you personally or professionally?

I've worked in several roles in SWR and everyone I meet tells me that we really are a family when we work for the railway. People from all areas of the business care deeply about what they do and how it makes a difference. I've met so many people who have worked their way up the career ladder or took a step into a new field of work. There really is something for everyone, and how far you go in your career is only limited by your ambition.

Michael Smaldon, Safety & Environment Advisor, Wimbledon

I've learnt the importance of human connection. We're not just here to get people from A to B, but to ensure passengers have the best experience they possibly can whilst travelling with us. I often try to make my onboard announcements a touch humorous. It isn't easy to please everyone, but if I manage to make one person on my train smile, then I think I've done a good job. A few kind words or a quick joke can easily transform a stressful journey into a better one. Sometimes, it's the smallest actions which make the biggest difference.

Enzo Elson, Metro Guard, Guildford

I realised I was only ever a temporary custodian of the railway. It had existed for nearly 150 years before I came and took the baton from an earlier generation. A little over 40 years later, I handed that same baton to the next generation. The one thing that remains constant is that the railway carries on. I still want to be a part of the story and I rejoined SWR in January 2025 as a 'Guard Manager - Casual'.

Tim Pencyate, Guards Manager, Basingstoke



What's your fondest memory of working on the railway?

At Waterloo, I was assisting an older customer with their ticket through the wide gate when I heard a gate behind me start beeping loudly. Expecting to see luggage stuck in a gate (a standard occurrence), instead I was greeted by a giant rhino! After helping the customer, I learned he had been at a wildlife event in London and had been wearing the costume all day – to the point he had forgotten about it, and only then realised why he had gotten so many weird looks on the tube!

Skye Haynes, Body Worn Video Engagement Coordinator, Basingstoke

Due to the engineering works and a problem under investigation, there were delays at the station. A customer enquired about the reasons and I thought he looked like someone, but I didn't think it could be the actual person. I sheepishly asked: "Has anyone ever said you look like Lord Peter Hendy of the Railways?" The customer replied: "Yes because I am Lord Peter Hendy of the Railways!" I gave the Rail Minister an impromptu welcome to Portsmouth and hoped his train departed soon without further delay!

Mark Walsh, Driver, Fratton

One of the standout memories I have was when, as an RO2, I met Trudie Goodwin, who played June Ackland from The Bill. She came onto my platform at Wimbledon and asked me about a train service. I had to play it cool and be professional. I gave her the information and as the train rolled in, she chose the carriage right next to me to board and said, "Thank you." I replied, "You're welcome, Sarge!" I heard her laugh as she stepped onto the train.

Lesley Collins-Field, Safety & Security Coaching Manager, SBC

I was working a train and upon stopping at Witley Station a passenger in a suit boarded. He said he didn't have time to purchase a ticket or a permit ticket as he was in a hurry and only just caught the train. I replied, "I won't penalty fare you as I believe you – you are still wearing your slippers." He said, "I'll have to buy a pair of shoes."

Stewart Hurdle, Revenue Protection Inspector, Portsmouth



March

Lots of cakes, whistles, and live music were in evidence at the unveiling of the **New Milton station** mural in March, supported by **Friends of New Milton station**. 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.

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 – was held in the Brunel Arcade.

Local communities contributed to two events with the **Three Rivers CRP**. In **Bitterne**, we were treated to a short play, with dialogue taken from interviews about local people's railway memories and in **Netley**, after a guided walk from the station to Royal Victoria Park, we watched a short film about the importance of the railway to Netley and the link to the Royal Victoria Military Hospital 125 years ago.



Nicky Judd's historic mural



Actors from the play, performed at Bitterne station

During March, a hidden tunnel was discovered by the team working on the Salisbury station forecourt project. This captured the imagination of historians and railway enthusiasts. With the station celebrating its 166th birthday in May, the brick-lined passage is another reminder of the station's rich heritage and history.



Salisbury station's hidden tunnel

What's your favourite Railway book and why?

'The Railway Children' was a book I read as a child and I remember being hooked on the story and feeling an array of emotions. When I became a Customer Experience Trainer, the poster for the Railway Children theatre performance was on display in the room. I couldn't help but think of the chapter where they stopped the train and how once, I also had to stop a train in an emergency. I was now going to pass that information onto others so that they would know what to do if they had to be brave.



Lesley Collins-Field,
Safety & Security Coaching Manager, SBC

My favourite railway book is 'Somerset and Dorset from the Footplate'. It's about the career of Peter Smith who joined British Railways as a cleaner at Branksome shed and worked his way up to become a fireman and eventually a driver of the steam locomotives that hauled trains over the treacherous route of the Somerset and Dorset Railway. Peter tells stories of life on the railway back then, including running a freight train down a hill with next to no brakes! It's interesting to see how much things have changed and how some things never change! It also features our network heavily. Fun fact! Peter Smith is still around and still visits preserved railways.



Tom Willis, Rail Operator, Eastleigh

As a former Library Manager, I am often found nose deep in a book and generally they are Nordic noir or railway related. My favourite railway book is '2750: Legend of a Locomotive', a recounting of a record attempt on a fictitious LNER locomotive from a driver's perspective. The passion in this book had me totally hooked and it invokes the feeling of the age of steam. Sadly, the book is no longer in print but I found a copy in Hampshire Libraries. You can still buy a copy on eBay, for a price – but not if I get there first!



Paul Taroni, Commercial Guard, Farnham Depot

My favourite railway book is Simon Jenkins' 'Britain's 100 Best Railway Stations'. This is as much an architecture and photography book as it is a railway book, but it has given me ideas and inspiration for many of my photo trips and shows the architectural brilliance of some of the UK's historical stations. Some SWR stations such as Waterloo, Surbiton, Windsor and Bournemouth feature in the book.

Ben King, Driver, Staines

April

Ashurst-New Forest adopters celebrated the railway by unveiling a 55-foot-long mural featuring the beautiful scenery of the surrounding area and the **Friends of Horsley Station** went for the triple on 12 April, as they celebrated the station's 140th Anniversary, 100 years of the electrification of the line, and of course Railway 200.

The Mayor of Guildford, Sallie Barker MBE, and Jerome Pacatte, SWR Head of Stations welcomed over 300 guests to the event which included Mystery, History and Wildlife station tours.

The Friends of Horsley won the SWR Community Award for Best Railway 200 project for such a great event.



Friends of Horsley station receiving their award at the SWR Community Conference

The **Blackmore Vale Line** and **Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership** launched an exciting campaign encouraging people to explore the region by train, bus, bicycle, and on foot. As part of the initiative, limited edition postcards were designed and distributed at over 100 destinations, inviting people to collect them and win Railway 200 prizes.

The campaign highlighted heritage-rich locations across the Salisbury to Exeter railway route and along the old Somerset and Dorset line, drawing new visitors to local venues and attractions.



The unveiling of the 55-foot-long mural at Ashurst

If you could take one piece of railway history or a moment to preserve forever, what would it be and why?

It would be the different liveries. There were some beautiful liveries in all sorts of colours. You don't see that level of diverse colour on trains anymore (bar a couple of one-off special liveries). For example, the London and South Western Railway which used to run across the Wessex patch had multiple shades of green depending on what that locomotive was designed for. I've had the privilege of seeing some of these old liveries up close and the hard work that went into them. It's a colourful piece of railway history that I would love to see make a comeback.



Adam Kellie, Train Planning Support, SBC

I think the first passenger train to travel through the channel tunnel in November 1994 was the most important moment in UK railway history. It marked the most technologically advanced step, achieving the dream of truly international high-speed rail, bringing nations together and creating a low carbon network.

Simon Hone, Driver, Salisbury

I think the standout moment would be the London 2012 Olympics. What a fantastic moment for all of us, also the happiest!

Drusilla Hodges, Ticket Office, Worplesdon

My answer is in fact a piece of railway history that hopefully WILL be preserved forever. The Volk's Electric Railway, Britain's first electric railway line. Electrically powered trains are a vital component of Britain's rolling stock, and to see what would have been such a revolutionary new form of locomotion, one that is still used nearly 150 years later, is amazing to me.

John Klim, Stores Operative, Wimbledon

The season ticket. Railways were predominantly built for freight service but it also provided passenger service. It was faster and more convenient than the road. The railway recognised that workers used the train regularly, and in 1834 the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway issued the first season ticket giving passengers a discount. This gave an incentive to use the railway (no queuing for tickets). It also provided a revenue stream to help expand the railway in the future. A plaque at Canterbury West station recognises this but little is known about it.



Chris Prior, Head of Control Projects, SBC

Here was the terminus of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway, which closed in 1952. The world's first railway season ticket was issued here in 1834.



May

May was the first of the busy summer months and we started with a triple celebration on 2 May. **Aldershot** and **Ash Vale** station adopters treated our customers to tea and cake to celebrate their 155th birthday with the **Wey Valley CRP**.

These coincided with **Guildford station's** 180th birthday weekend of walks, history talks and displays organised by Sara Grisewood from **Southeast Communities CRP**.

In the West of England, **Templecombe** and **Sherborne** station colleagues and volunteers were also busy baking for their respective events and customers at **Gillingham** were treated to goodies



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



Friends of Templecombe Station, with Station Manager Ben Stephenson, Chair - Derek Beer and Railway Chaplain John Roe

Under the superb guidance of local adopter Sue Bell, **The Friends of Micheldever** provided a whole weekend of talks in the village, including several by the Thomas Brassey Society. There were also themed walks, brass bands and a textile timeline of train travel on display by **The Watercross Line Steam Railway**. Over 60 people on each day were really immersed into Railway 200.

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



Sue Bell with the Mayor of Winchester - Cllr. Russell Gordon-Smith, Stuart Meek, SWR and Network Rail Wessex Chief Operating Officer and members of the local community

Celebrating its connection to Jack Phillips, who was born in the area and was tragically killed aboard the Titanic, **Godalming Town Council** installed a picture of him at **Farncombe station**, followed by a railway-themed walk to Godalming Museum by **The Friends of Godalming**.



Farncombe ribbon cutting with Cllr Bob Crooks

Woking Station celebrated its 187th birthday on 21 May. Over 400 cakes were given to customers at the station, whilst a joint event was held at Woking Homes (formally the Railway servants' orphanage) for their own 140th anniversary.

The Lightbox Gallery in Woking also participated with an exhibition of artefacts from the orphanage.



Peter Williams, SWR Customer & Commercial Director and Paula Hook, Manager of Woking Homes unveiling the 140th anniversary plaque



Surbiton station silent disco

At **Surbiton station**, in the booking hall, customers danced away to tunes as they were treated to a silent disco by **The Community Train CRP**. We wondered what commuters 187 years ago would have thought of that!

May

Locomotive 45118 was re-dedicated as The Royal Artilleryman at **Salisbury station**, near to the Royal Artillery's headquarters in Larkhill.

Military personnel, including Lieutenant Sir Andrew Gregory, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire and Master Gunner St James' Park and the Royal Artillery unit joined SWR and Network Rail colleagues at the unveiling.

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, which was reflected superbly at this event.



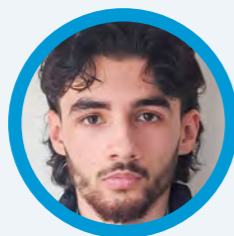
The rededication of The Royal Artilleryman locomotive at Salisbury

What first inspired you to join the railway?

When I was a child, I took the train to Heathrow Airport with my grandfather to watch the planes take off and land. This sparked a lifelong interest in trains and I made it my life's purpose to get myself onto the railway. I achieved my lifelong dream by becoming an RO2 at Putney.

My mum works on the railway too. She is now an RO2S in the Portsmouth & Southsea area, kickstarting the next generation of my family being railway people! This Railway 200 year, I'm making my next step up starting as a Metro Guard in March.

Aryan Kalia, Metro Guard, Wimbledon



I was inspired to join the railway when I was 18 and looking for work. As a rail buff, I've always had an interest in trains, how a complex network operates and how you could drive a train. I was fortunate enough to have a lot of support from my family, including a family member who was a Driver Instructor at another operator, and I joined Southern in 2011. The railway has always been a welcoming place and an extended family. My inspiration paid off after 13 years, and a number of roles from stations, fleet and onboard. I became a Trainee Driver late last year, and received my key at the start of December.

Nathan Wyllie, Train Driver, Salisbury



Nathan THEN



Nathan NOW

I joined the railway back in 1978 as my family members were on the railway. My uncle was under Sir Peter Parker, head of British Rail. My cousin was a wheel tapper. Transport was a part of the family as my father worked in road haulage.

Stewart Hurdle, Revenue Protection Inspector, Portsmouth

I always had an interest in trains. At the age of six, I was diagnosed with autism and ADHD and was told by various teachers and professionals that I would never achieve anything. While going to college, I passed through Clapham Junction all the time. Once, I spoke to staff members, one of whom was neurodiverse too. I thought, "My autism and ADHD is an ability, not a disability." I decided to join an agency within the railway for over a year, then attended an open event at Clapham Junction. I plucked up the confidence and put my name down and I've never looked back since!

Sam Iles, Rail Operator, Clapham Junction

I was inspired from my childhood, growing up to learn my Great-Great-Grandfather worked for the LMS railway company. I also spend a lot of time around others through the various railway organisations I volunteer for, and hearing their stories, and the sense of family that comes with it all made me feel confident that I could develop a fantastic career. I knew a lot of people who already worked in the rail industry and hearing of the atmosphere and where it can lead to made me determined to join.

Christopher Munday, Apprentice Rolling Stock Technician, Bournemouth

I used to see trains slowly pass the football ground at Aldershot as a kid and always used to wonder what it would be like to work on the railway. I applied in 1991, the same year as my brother who joined earlier that year but I just missed the boat (train!) on recruitment. My career went a different path in aerospace manufacturing but in 2005 I finally got a Guards job at Woking and been here ever since.

Kevin Paish, Commercial Guard, Woking

Members of my family have a habit of either choosing a career in the NHS or working in engineering-based roles. My Grandad (who I unfortunately never met) was a British Rail S&T worker. Dad would recall stories of what my Grandad did whilst a railwayman, such as maintaining and repairing damaged lines through South London during WW2, working in the Herne Hill signal box, and his part in modernising the signalling system in the 1950s. It was this bit of family history that led me to one day get a job on the railway.

Michael Smaldon, Safety & Environment Advisor, Wimbledon

I remember alighting at Boscombe Station with my mother as a four-year-old (many decades ago!) I've always had an interest, which was furthered by recognising the efficiency of steel wheel on steel rail and general interest in engineering and electrical systems! Our challenge today is to deliver reliability and a service that people want to use. My joining the railway helps to deliver a small part of this.

Martin Diamond, Driver, Bournemouth

A friend who worked on the railway mentioned SWR were looking for ticket office staff. I applied and was successful and nearly 18 years later I am still in the ticket office. I really enjoy the fact I am part of a huge team that helps millions of people get to where they need to go every year. We played a really important role during the pandemic keeping the country working and getting key workers to their vital roles. It feels good to know I played a small part in the efforts to get the country back on track.

Julia Ogilvie, Ticket Office, Totton

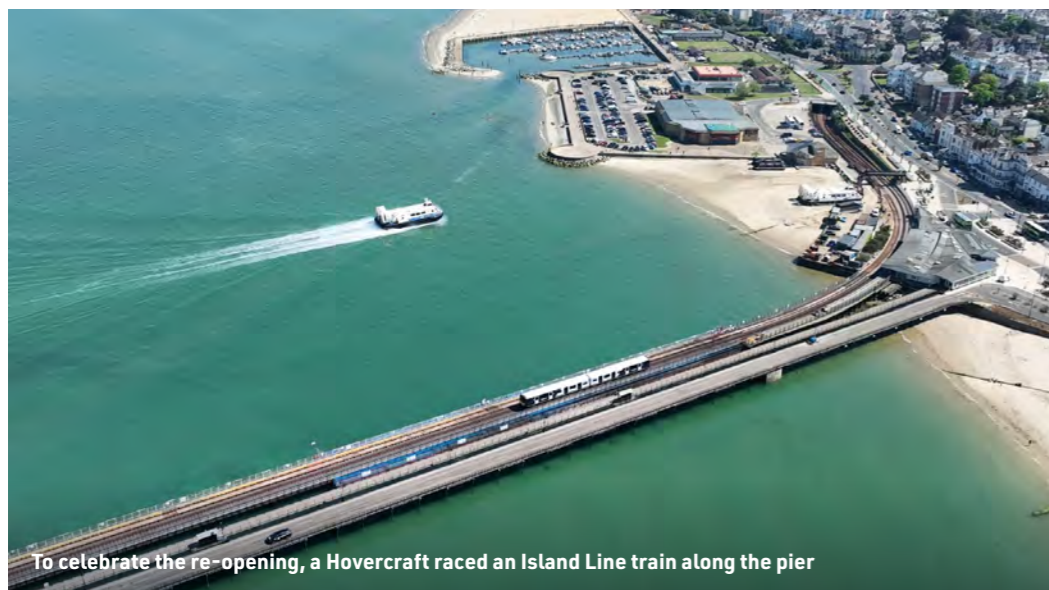
I left university with an art degree and I didn't know what I wanted to do. My friend told me to look at railway jobs. Like a lot of neurodiverse people, I have an interest in the railway. I ended up working part-time in the ticket office at Egham, where I went to school a few years ago.

Six years later, I was making tutorial videos for our retail systems, finally using my degree. I'm not spiritual but it feels weirdly interconnected. Things may not be in a straight line but the long, winding path is more interesting.

Boris Howell, Inclusion and Diversity Manager, Southampton



May



To celebrate the re-opening, a Hovercraft raced an Island Line train along the pier

Island Line services reopened following the refurbishment of the historic Ryde Pier, the oldest seaside pier in the world still serving mainline trains.

The repairs mean the structure can support the railway long into the future.



The Secretary of State accompanied by colleagues and local school children at Bournemouth Depot

Return to public ownership

On Sunday 25 May, SWR became the first train operator to transfer to the DFTO (Department for Transport Operator) as part of the Government's plan to bring train operators into public ownership. Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander unveiled a 'Coming Soon' GBR logo at an event at Bournemouth Depot, which was also attended by Lord Hendo, Rail Minister, SWR colleagues, and local school children.



SWR colleagues welcomed Secretary of State Heidi Alexander to Waterloo

What does the railway mean to you personally?

In a career sense, the railway means helping passengers in the best way I can, to get them on their way for work, to see family and friends, get to events, airports for holidays, and concerts. I pride myself in making the railway the best place to be. The railway also means travelling to new places. It has been the sole means of transport for me as my family doesn't have a car. It's taken me to football matches, training, college, university. Having a reliable railway network has enabled me to do the things I love most.

Chris Mundy, Rail Operator, Salisbury

A colleague once said to me that he doesn't come to work to make friends, he comes to work to make money to pay bills. I can honestly say after 20 years of being in the railway, while that sentiment might be true for many, you can't help but make friends along the way. Being part of the railway is like being part of an extended family. And for me that's exactly what the railway is. It's about being part of something that's bigger than just myself.

Kevin Hook, Driver Manager, Guildford

I've had the privilege of organising events like 'Try a Train Days' with the elderly. I'm still in contact with some of those wonderful individuals. Working with the Hedge End community was also rewarding. We've made the station a hub of warmth and togetherness, especially during Christmas. Seeing the children of Berrywood and the surrounding community celebrate the festive season is magical. The moments surrounded by smiles and shared joy remind me how the railway is so much more than tracks and trains - it's a bridge that connects people, builds relationships, and creates cherished memories.

Sheree Whetren, Health & Wellbeing Practitioner, SBC

To me, the railway means doing something that matters. We move people around for work, rest, and play. If the trains don't move, people's lives don't happen. And what the railway means to me is doing something that really makes a difference. Our job matters.

Ash Elford, Driver Manager, Guildford



June

At the beginning of June, the **Friends of Brockenhurst** celebrated Railway 200 with their own 178th birthday community event which included stalls promoting sustainable and active travel, railway safety and local cottage industries.

Ascot station celebrated its 169th birthday with a permanent plaque unveiled in the booking hall and 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, the children and customers were delighted to share the 1.5 metre SWR Arterio cake and other refreshments.

The Friends of Wareham alongside **Purbeck CRP** delivered an all-singing celebration to commemorate its opening in 1847.



Local Ascot school children celebrating with an Arterio cake



A local Wareham choir singing in the sunshine



Colleagues joined the celebration at London Waterloo

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 and is now known as **London Waterloo**. To celebrate the namesake of Britain's biggest station, SWR partnered with veteran wellbeing charity Waterloo Uncovered and the Household Cavalry Museum.

On Saturday 21 June, Jane Austen fans flocked to **Alton** to celebrate her 250th anniversary. They were given a warm welcome to the station by Mr. Darcy aka Paul – one of our station adopters, who gave a guided tour into the town, where an unveiling of a statue of Miss Austen took place.



Paul Ebbut and Surbiton FSM Dave Josey in period costume

The City of Portsmouth College, funded through the GWR Customer and Community Improvement Fund, carried out a community flashmob event with 130 people marking Railway200. A group from SWR also joined in the dancing.



Portsmouth flashmob in action

What's been your proudest achievement or milestone in your railway career?

Being offered an apprenticeship. I know a lot of people who work in the rail industry and to be able to have the career that I wanted meant a lot to me and still does. The support and overall atmosphere I've had here has been really comforting and I look forward to coming into work every day to learn and progress my career.

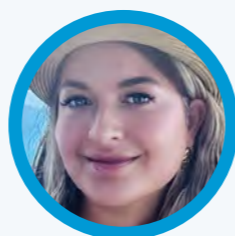
Christopher Munday, Apprentice Rolling Stock Technician, Bournemouth



My proudest achievements in my SWR career are being the first SWR Driver to earn a First Class BA (Hons) degree in Business, Leadership and Management along with a Level 6 degree apprenticeship, and studying for an MSc in Risk and Safety Leadership and Level 7 Master's degree apprenticeship all whilst working in the driving grade as a Driver Instructor.

Glen Allen, Driver Instructor, Guildford

One of the proudest achievements has been facilitating the naming of a train after the Alex Wardle Foundation. Witnessing the profound impact this had on Steve Wardle and his family was both humbling and inspiring. I'm also deeply proud of providing defibrillator and CPR confidence training to all colleagues at SWR, a programme I have delivered independently.



Sheree Whetren, Health & Wellbeing Practitioner, SBC

My proudest moment was when one of my colleagues nominated me for a 'You're A Star' award and being selected. I spotted someone about to get on the train who had just dropped a very long knife from inside his coat. I went to the Guard and informed him. The train was delayed and I waited for BTP and Surrey Police to arrive and I was asked to ID the offender. The YAS evening was absolutely amazing! We were treated to a lovely meal and I met other colleagues who had also gone that extra mile. I was also sent a 'Safety Hero' badge which I wear with pride.

Rick Kench, Shunter, Woking

July



The local community enjoying the Whitchurch celebrations

We made a strong start to July at an event with **Friends of Pokesdown**, supplying children's safety books and goodies to our customers.

It continued with several of Whitchurch town's community groups - Whitchurch Walkers with Whitchurch Town Council, the **Whitchurch in Bloom station group**, and Whitchurch History Society - refreshing the planters and installing plaques around the station, and celebrating the anniversary with local school pupils.

There were double birthday celebrations at **Honiton and Axminster**, where both station adopters were joined by Richard Foorde MP and their respective mayors, along with Gary Shipp from Community Rail Network. Some lovely cakes were shared along with the unveiling of anniversary plaques.



Axminster celebrations



Honiton celebrations

Wokingham Station welcomed guests and passengers to join its 176th birthday. It marked the occasion with the unveiling of a Railway 200 artwork by Learning Disability Partnership Board Champion, Lorna and the Town Council Mayor, Louise Timlin.

The artwork, led by artist Jo Werrett, was created in partnership with the Wokingham Learning Disability Partnership Board.

It celebrates 200 years of railway travel and features individual pieces made by people of all abilities, brought together to form one larger piece.

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

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, tracing the station's historic journey.



Artist Jo Werrett at Wokingham

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.



SWR colleagues and local historians celebrating Hook's birthday



If you could innovate or invent something to improve the railway, what would it be?

First, I think that AI could open opportunities in customer communication, purchasing of tickets, assisting control teams during disruption with service recovery, and in keeping track of works or where they're needed. Second, I've noticed a lot of structures under tracks having issues with waterproofing. Currently, to do the waterproofing properly, all the track, ballast and sub-bases must be lifted which is very time consuming, costly and disruptive. If there were a way to inject something through the track for waterproofing but didn't affect the integrity of the track or structure, you could save all that disruption and a small fortune on maintenance costs!



Stephen Clark, Infrastructure Project Manager, SBC

My improvement to online purchasing would be a programme that recognises buying patterns so it advises the recipient accordingly. So instead of selling a ticket from Worplesdon to London, ad infinitum – it would show how much could be saved by buying a different ticket such as a flexi or a weekly. When I notice a person buying more often, I check with them to make sure they are buying the right ticket for their needs.

Drusilla Hodges, Customer Ambassador, Worplesdon

We have a work mobile phone to help update customers but this can't be said about our agency partners. I think we should have a simple QR code for agency colleagues to report everyday incidents. As a business, do we really know how many fare evasion incidents we have at our locations? SWR colleagues can report on the Safety app but what's in place for agency colleagues? Whilst initially this would only be a basic way of collecting data, it can be improved further so that we can know the true extent of issues.

Paul Mills, Gateline Assistant, Fleet

May I suggest an improvement to class 450s? I've noticed when passengers sit on the 3x3 seating, they often have their feet on the opposite seating. This ruins the seat fabric and others' clothing. A horizontal metal bar running just underneath the seats could act as a footrest. Problem solved.



Adam Pettigrew, Customer Ambassador Coach, Alton



Woking colleagues celebrated 300 ROs completing Arterio training



Anne at Sherborne



Railway 200 garden created at Axminster by SWR colleagues



Military personnel at the unveiling of the Royal Artilleryman locomotive



Ryde Pier Head celebration



Waterloo colleagues by the Clan Line steam locomotive at the Inspiration train event



July

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.



The original signage being showcased

Wonderful birthday celebrations at **Bournemouth** marked the station's 140th birthday. The team was joined by the Mayor of Bournemouth and Tom Hayes MP who enjoyed a tour of the station including the signal box – which Network Rail colleagues helped arrange.

Over in the Metro region friends of both **Effingham Junction** and **Kingston station** held small local events for our customers, including a school art project and a photo opportunity with our SWR birthday cake.



Local celebrations at Bournemouth



To round off a very busy July, our team was thrilled to part sponsor the Wight in Bloom Awards – which had a Railway 200 theme, delivered across the island. Our colleagues from Island Line, Emma Brown and Kathryn Wheeler, joined the celebrations and showed support for our community's green efforts. A special congratulations went to Lake station, which earned a well-deserved runner up for Best Young People Initiative for Broadlea Primary's garden.

In this Railway 200 year of historical milestones, the Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival celebrated its 35th year, having been founded in 1990 as a collaboration between Network SouthEast, SWR's predecessor, and Historic Royal Palaces. Colleagues designed a Railway 200 themed planter at the station to welcome customers attending the festival.



Hampton Court plant out with SWR colleagues

By now we are halfway through the Railway 200 year. At this point, we had helped deliver over 40 events – but we were still not out of steam!

Inspiration arrives at Waterloo

We were delighted to host the Railway 200 Exhibition Train – Inspiration at Waterloo, one of the two visits on our network in 2025.

Over 1,000 visitors explored interactive displays on the history, innovation, and careers in the railway industry.

SWR's exhibit 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 – which proved very popular with the train enthusiasts.



The Inspiration train arriving at Waterloo

Credit: Network Rail



Waterloo station colleagues and volunteers welcomed customers to Inspiration

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'.

The festival launched with a special event for families, 'Careering Through Time: A Solve-Along Railway Adventure Trail'. The time-travelling, puzzle-solving, walking theatre adventure took adventurers on a quest to help fix the National Fantastic Hamble Railway.



SWR Senior Regional Development Manager Phil Dominey and an actor playing the part of a staff member

Ash Vale Station Gardeners hosted a special day to celebrate 200 years of the railway, by walking two miles along the Basingstoke Canal and to Frimley Lodge Park where everyone enjoyed free rides on the miniature railway. A barbecue was a fitting way to end the month at **Shawford Cafe** with over 100 people in attendance.

If you could travel back to any point in railway history, when would it be and why?

If I could travel back to the Wild West, I'd pick the spring of 1876. The iron horse was carving its final paths across the American frontier. It was the perfect balance – railway travel was fast enough to connect worlds but slow enough that each journey still felt like an adventure. Railways didn't just connect cities – they connected dreams. Before long, steel would cover the continent, and the wilderness would shrink. But in that spring, the world was between the old ways and the new, and a single rail journey could carry you from dusty saloon doors to snow-covered peaks in a matter of days.

Kaspars Liepins, MB2 Stores, Bournemouth



The images above show groundframe signalling equipment built in 1900 in Liverpool. It would be amazing to see the minds behind creating the equipment used in signal boxes across the country, meet the people who maintained it, and understand the revolution that changed signalling. The groundframe is still in use at Fratton Traincare Depot and I still hold competencies to operate this amazing bit of historical kit. If you ever get a chance to visit the depot, ask to have a look at it and see it in operation.

Liam Mills, Depot Manager, Clapham

I would have liked to go back to 1938 and go to King's Cross to travel on Mallard with my father. He often told stories of when as a child, he watched the A4 trains amongst others, leaving King's Cross with steam and smoke pouring out their funnels. I would have loved to give him that special journey and see his face as the train gets up to speed, and leaves the London area and suburbs into the home counties and beyond to the North East!

Neil Hatcher, Customer Ambassador, Guildford

There are so many great and important moments in our history just to choose one, but the train nerd in me would want to travel back to the 1990s where at Bournemouth Depot I would be driving slam-door trains, 442s, intercity HSTs and loco-hauled stock. All gone now but I would have loved the challenge of driving them all.

Ashley Frost, Depot Driver, Bournemouth



For me it would be to the late 1960s so I could meet the people responsible for singling the West of England line to the west of Salisbury and ask "Are you sure about this?"

Justin Palmer, Ticket Office, Honiton

I would love to travel back to when my grandad was one of the drivers of the Mallard steam train. Not when it set its record speed run sadly. Would have been immensely proud of him.

Richard Bunce, CA2, Horsley



I'd like to go back to when cuts were made to railway lines. I'd travel on the lines to see how many people were travelling and get a petition going. I think we needed to do more to stop these cuts. Wimborne, Salisbury, Ringwood etc. have increased housing and there's no other transport bar buses and cars. The roads are so congested now. Effectively informing customers then about cuts and closures might have helped people come up with ideas that maybe the government didn't have at the time. This may have rescued some of these lines and helped lessen the congestion we now see.

Jane Jerrard, Envoy Clerk, Bournemouth

I would return to the Great War years, 1914-1918, to witness how the railway carried not just soldiers and supplies but also hopes and letters between home and the front. It showed how railways were more than transport – they were lifelines.

Konstantinos Tomatzidis, Metro Guard, Woking

September

September, the month we'd 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.

Fashion through the ages

We started with something truly unique.

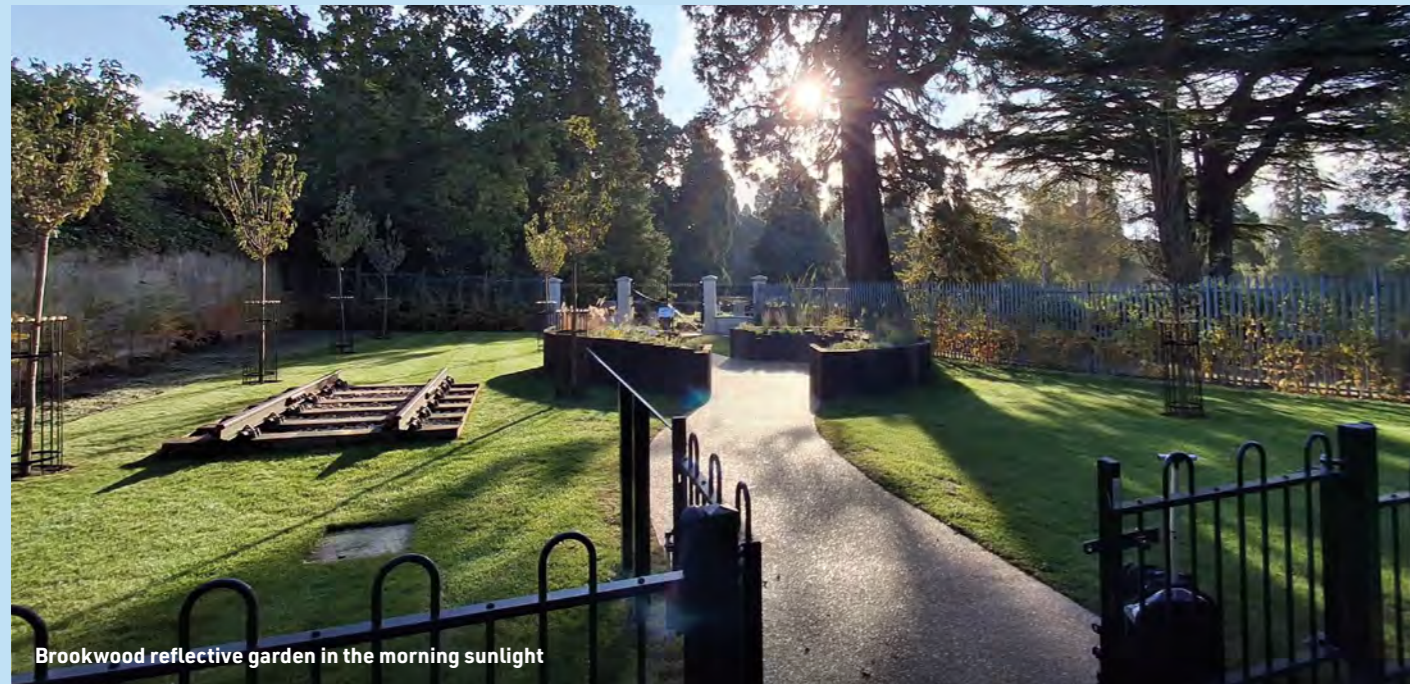
The **Community Train CRP** helped us celebrate 200 years of travellers' outfits with a vibrant fashion show, on a catwalk inside one of our new Arterio trains and on the concourse at Waterloo.

The outfits were modelled perfectly by our colleagues from Network Rail and SWR, 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, with support from the volunteers from The Watercress Line.



Colleagues and volunteers - modelling period costumes



Brookwood reflective garden in the morning sunlight

The reflective garden at Brookwood

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 contractors, volunteers from Network Rail and SWR, 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.

Meanwhile, **New Malden** marked the occasion in a musical way.

In honour of the 60th anniversary of the Sound of Music soundtrack, we were treated to an entertaining spectacle featuring many excitable 'nuns' singing the most iconic songs – a fun and fitting tribute to a classic film moment. A big tune-up thanks to the **Friends of New Malden** for organising.

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 SWR colleagues who rallied to make the day such a success – it was truly a celebration of community spirit.



The transformation of **Richmond station**, supported by Lord Henty, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and the Railway Heritage Trust, was officially completed this month. The restoration, which brought the station back to its former Art Deco glory, also won a prestigious National Railway Heritage Award for SWR and Network Rail.

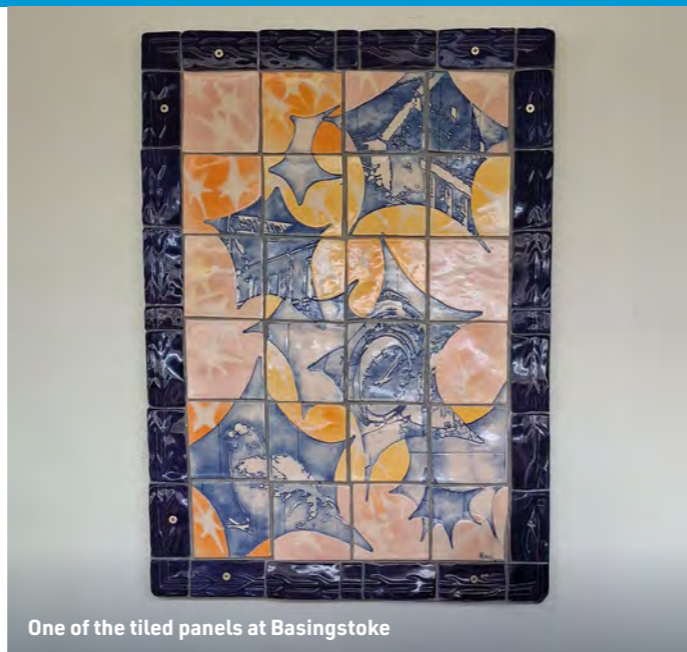


October

Students from Queen Mary's College showcased their 200-themed permanent tiled artwork installation at **Basingstoke station**. Commissioned by the Arts Society Basingstoke, the students poured countless hours into researching, sketching, and perfecting their sgraffito and slip designs, which culminated in six colourful tiled panels.

We also had two smaller but 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** shared homemade cake and stories from local residents reminiscing about railway life.

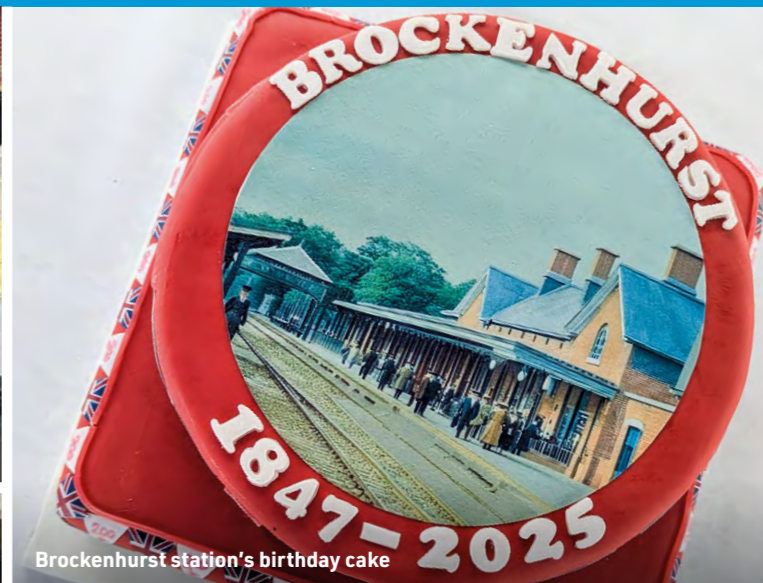
Over on the Isle of Wight, **Brading station** was the perfect setting for the launch of *Through the Window of My Train* – a glossy, full-colour book celebrating both 200 years of railway heritage and 20 years of the **Isle of Wight CRP**.



One of the tiled panels at Basingstoke



Railway 200 Champions, SWR's Paula Aldridge and Network Rail's Jack Wharton



Brockenhurst station's birthday cake



Friends of St Margarets Station with Mayor, Cllr Penny Frost



Sound of Music sing-along at New Malden, including Liberal Democrat Leader, Sir Ed Davey MP



Mike Lamport, Network Rail's Imelda Cox and Jack Wharton, Patricio Forrester, SWR's Paula Aldridge, and Phil Dominey at the unveiling of the Waterloo mural

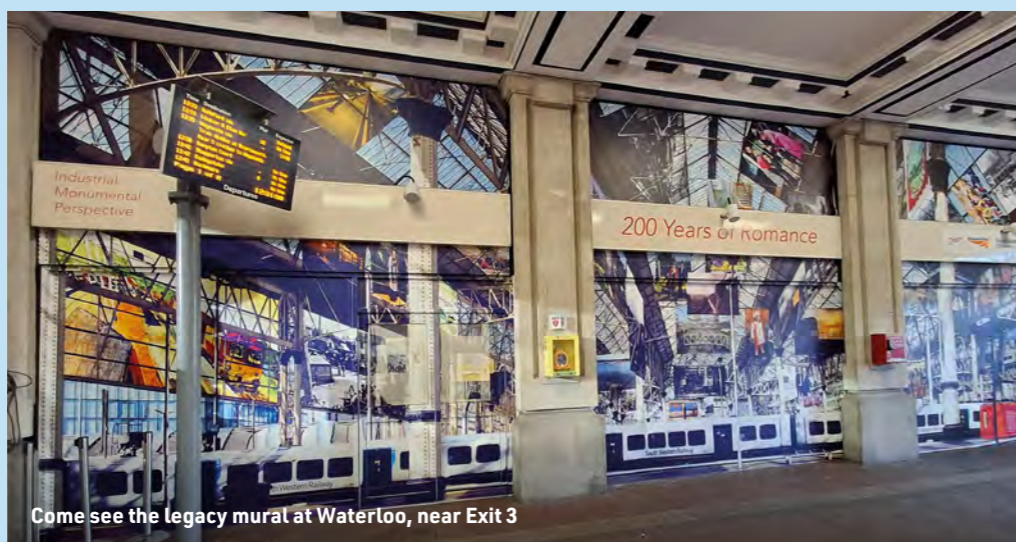


Friends of West Byfleet station receiving their award

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', where over 80 stations across the region were involved.

200 Years of Romance

One of our larger events with Network Rail in October was the unveiling of the **Waterloo mural**, a legacy project featuring images from SWR, Network Rail, and several of our community partners. The ribbon cutting was performed by SWR and Network Rail Wessex Chief Operating Officer Stuart Meek, Railway 200 Steering Group member Mike Lamport, and artist Patricio Forrester.



Come see the legacy mural at Waterloo, near Exit 3

What's your favourite destination on our network, and what makes it special to you?

My favourite destination has to be Weymouth. I'm biased as it's home to my depot. But I grew up looking forward to coming down to see the train come through the harbour, dropping off people for the ferry to the Channel Islands. At Weymouth, you walk up to the clock tower and see the beautiful golden sandy beach it is known for. In the distance is George III on his horse chalk carving. At the Nothe Fort and Gardens, squirrels climb up your legs for nuts. Beyond Weymouth is Portland Bill Lighthouse, where time has stood still.



Samantha Childs, Driver, Weymouth

My favourite destination on our network must be Ryde Esplanade, 'gateway to the Island.' I love the sandy beaches, coastal walks, tea rooms, bus museum and watching the hovercraft and boats. With Priv fares on Wightlink and Hovertravel, there's no excuse!



Adam Pettigrew, Customer Ambassador, Alton

My favourite destination is Weymouth, so we can spend time in my dad's caravan at Littlesea. Portsmouth to Weymouth on the train is definitely better than driving. Family time is the best time.

Brenda Skerratt, Commercial Guard, Fratton

Winchester. I started my railway career there as RQ2S. I made so many friends at the station and ones near it. I bought my first home there and the station is also where I met my wife Emma who at the time was Revenue Protection based at Southampton. Our first child was also born in Winchester. We now live in Basingstoke with two children but visit Winchester regularly. Now as a Mainline Driver at Basingstoke, I get to drive my train through there and it always puts a smile on my face.



Rahul Chatterji, Driver, Basingstoke

Ryde Esplanade on Island Line because every day from April to October, travelling to work feels like going on holiday! With views across the Solent, along the beaches and up the pier and families excited to be using our underground trains to connect with the Fastcat or the Hovercraft, the station is buzzing and alive.



Mark Dunn, General Manager, Island Line

November

One of the year's greatest champions, Mike Lamport – Mr. Railway 200 himself – was presented with a commemorative plaque in recognition of his outstanding support and enthusiasm. For once, Mike was genuinely surprised and even lost for words.



Presenting Mike Lamport with his special Railway 200 award

In **Alton**, Paul from the Station Adopters hosted an excellent brewery tour to launch the new **Treats, Tipples and Trails website**. The event highlighted the many independent cafés, eateries and ale houses along the route.

The **Friends of Fareham** restored the original Solent Link Electrification display poster from 1990, unveiling the refreshed version as part of their 184th birthday celebrations.



Colleagues and the Friends of Fareham unveil the refreshed poster from 1990



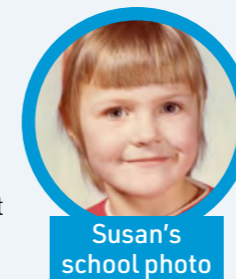
Special rides on historic trains (Credit: John Faulkner)

On the Isle of Wight, the Steam Railway and Island Line marked the 150th anniversary of the Ryde and Newport Railway with a special joint travel ticket.

Visitors enjoyed rides on Island Line Class 484 units, steam locomotives Calbourne and Freshwater, brake-van trips behind diesel engines, and the debut appearance of 03179 in Network SouthEast livery.

What's your earliest memory of the railway?

As an eight-year-old, I went on a school trip to Edinburgh Zoo. It was my first trip on a train. About halfway through the journey, I popped to the toilet. The radiator was on full pelt. Just as I was about to sit down, the train jolted and I sat on the burning hot radiator instead. When I got back to my seat, I was uncomfortable and squirming. A teacher came back to the toilet with me and I remember her shock when she saw it: I'd been branded with the BR logo!



Susan's school photo

Susan Fishwick, Customer Experience Trainer, Basingstoke

My earliest memory of the railway is split between two things: seeing the trains when going to primary school as I live near to the railway and the trips with my mum when we went for days out.

Hannah De Boise, Ticket Office, Addlestone

My earliest memory of the railway is getting the train for a holiday in Dorset or Hampshire, with my late nan on the old slam door trains and later the 442s.

Kieran Walsh, Customer Ambassador, Wareham

My mother taking me on a trip from Denmark Hill to London Bridge, in what was a new 456 with those doors that open with a button! I must have been four or five, in the middle of the summer. I wanted to see Tower Bridge that day. Great memory of my mother and perhaps the start of my enjoyment of the railways!



Chris Kyrke-Smith, Metro Guard, Waterloo

As a child in the early 00's, I remember we'd travel to London in the summer, departing from Poole or Bournemouth. I remember huge racks of printed timetables in the waiting rooms. I'd flick through wondering where all these exotic and unknown stations were, places like Upwey and Moreton! Mum and I would ponder where we'd go in London while Gran snuck off for the smoking area on board! My fondest memory would be the search for the buffet car. I'd always get a KitKat. Nowadays the taste always reminds me of times on the train as a youngster!



Sam Elliott, Trainee Train Driver, Yeovil Junction



December

We wrapped up the Railway 200 year with more events, showing our commitment to strengthening the railway's legacy and to touching more lives.

On 1 December, we celebrated **West Byfleet's** 138th birthday with lots of cupcakes and a history display, created by the **Friends of West Byfleet**.

Windsor & Eton Riverside's birthday is also on the same day, but it is 38 years older than West Byfleet.

Serenaded by the Windsor Soundswell choir and singer, Sarah Martin, guests were treated to some beautiful carols and the Children from Our Lady of the Rosary School created decorations for the tree. Optalis Ability provided 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 and Woking FDSM Joe Nurse, distributing cakes to delighted customers

In 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.

The **Friends of Rowlands Castle** had been busy creating some fantastic historic displays for the station, unveiled by the Chair of the group and then followed by a short trail around the village.

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

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



Knitted travel buddies at Hilsea Station

To top the year off, SWR and Network Rail jointly hosted the Exhibition Train Inspiration at **Southampton Central** for three days, with just over 2,200 people hopping on board.

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 number 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.



Knitted travel buddy Iain is all set to travel on Inspiration

More Arterios in the network

With an eye firmly on the future, in December, we welcomed the arrival of the 30th Arterio onto the network.

The Arterio trains will transform journeys on our suburban network by providing more capacity, quicker journey times, and better reliability for our customers.

As we keep bringing more units into service, training for our colleagues was in full swing with the Drivers, Guards, and Rail Operators, each surpassing the 300-colleague mark this year.



Lawrence Bowman presented a symbolic key to Commerical Guard David Brown at London Waterloo



The Inspiration train's visit to Southampton was supported by a team of Network Rail and South Western Railway volunteers

Who has inspired or supported you the most during your time on the railway, and how?

I recently joined the railway as an IT Service Desk Agent in Overline House. My father, Paul Simper, has worked for SWR (previously SWT) for the past 20 years and inspired me to join because of the positive culture and attitude of colleagues he has referenced and this has been reflected in my time here so far. The Customer Experience Training team in Basingstoke had made me feel welcome from the very beginning, and all the IT department has helped me settle in, providing guidance on any questions that I have had so far in my new role.

Reece Simper, IT Service Desk Agent, Southampton

I'm part of the SISS team at Eastleigh. Alan Wenlock and Graham Hall (managers) helped me learn and supported me since I joined them. Nothing is too much trouble, they have helped me in so many ways with site visits and body worn video issues. We laugh mostly at my mistakes.



I learnt so much by being in their team. I came from a ticket office environment and had little knowledge of body worn video or passenger information. To be honest this is more of a shout out for being fantastic managers and helping me along the way.

Charlotte Thorby, Systems Administrator for body worn cameras, Eastleigh

The person who has inspired and supported me most during my twenty-five years (I hit my 25th anniversary on 16 October) on the railway is my current boss, Paul Wade, On-Train Manager for the Contingency depot. Paul and I have worked together in different stints throughout our careers. When he was Depot Manager at Fratton, I was one of his Guards around twenty years ago. At Woking, he was Depot Manager and I was a Resource Manager. Paul helped me learn from my mistakes and celebrated my victories too. His guidance has helped me improve and develop skills that I didn't do so well in my younger days.

Matt Hance, Contingency Guards Inspector

I've been on the railway for over 26 years. During that time, I've lost family members, a husband (also on the railway) and I'm now a registered carer for my neighbour. The support I've had from my managers has been absolutely amazing, especially in the past six years. They are good listeners, caring, compassionate and always there for me, either in person or on the end of the phone. This is a great comfort for me and I certainly wouldn't have coped without them.

Claire Marriott, Customer Ambassador, Gillingham

Before joining SWR, I was a regular customer travelling from Surbiton and every day I saw a senior gentleman who worked as a dispatcher and was with the railway all his career. I always used to say hello and was amazed that someone would work for one company all their lives – inspiring that it was possible to be part of an extended family for life! Another inspiration and the reason for joining SWR was to improve things for the customer after being a customer myself. This is central to my thought process today – always asking “How will this benefit a customer?”

Jeremy Walt, Senior Digital Manager, SBC

What's been your proudest achievement in your railway career?

My proudest achievement so far was receiving a Rail Staff Awards Nomination. Compared to other colleagues I am still very new and still learning. I was apprehensive at first when I received the email, because I wasn't sure what the Rail Staff Awards were, but once I found out I was very surprised. It felt really good to know that I had made such a good impression on my managers and colleagues, and despite not being with the company for very long, I had done enough to warrant the nomination. Since receiving the nomination I received high praise from my colleagues and peers and huge levels of support, and it's made me feel really welcome within SWR.

Christopher Munday, Apprentice Rolling Stock Technician, Bournemouth

I am relatively new. I started in January 2025 originally on a fixed term contract but have just been made permanent into a Service Desk role. I took up the challenge of running the service desk single-handedly before the other team member started. I was happy to do this. I am growing my knowledge of IT within SWR.



James Read, IT Service Desk Agent, Overline House

What are your hopes or predictions for the railway in 2050?

My hopes and predictions for the railway in 2050 would be for it to be something everyone is proud of, steadily opening more stations, particularly those previously axed by the Beeching era. I hope that all trains will be fully accessible with no ramps required, simpler ticket options and greater community involvement. I hope that with the railways all being under GBR, it will be easier to attend to customers with long journeys across the country and in turn, help connect all of us across the GBR network.

April Flora, Contact Centre Administrator, Overline House



'Coming soon' GBR logo unveiled at Bournemouth depot



Celebration at Farncombe for Community Rail Week



Inside the Inspiration train at Southampton



Bournemouth station's birthday cake



Legacy mural unveiled

Our heartfelt thanks go to every volunteer, community partner, station adopter, contractor and supporter, along with our wonderful SWR and Network Rail colleagues for making our Railway 200 year a success.

Here's to the next 200!