



Kent Community Rail Partnership

# Winter 2023

# NEWSLETTER



Wateringbury Station  
Courtesy of Ian Paterson



Sheerness Station 2000  
Courtesy of Colin Whitbread



Barming Station 2018  
Courtesy of Matthew Fraser

## Chairman's Report by Chris Fribbins

Do you recall the hot weather we had in the summer? It seems a long time ago now and this report was written as the first heavy snows of 2022 fell. Apart from the 'Christmassy' look, there was immediate chaos on many roads and Southeastern had to suspend train services as the snow and ice insulated the third rail and prevented consistent power to the trains. Access to train stations is going to be difficult as many have a gradient on the roads and paths. Local Authority and Railway operators always have to go the 'extra mile' to try clearing and gritting the roads and paths at times, so be patient and take extra care.

In the summer we were seeing the return of rail services and passengers after Covid restrictions and all looked positive, however it has meant some reorganisation of services across Kent, and the Metro areas in Greater London are expressing their concerns about removal of services to some London termini. This continues to affect our passengers and especially during the run up to Christmas and beyond. One thing that we all used to be able to rely on was our train services.

On a positive note, the KCRP has managed to secure some funding from Kent County Council towards the 2022/23 activities and running costs, reducing the immediate concerns, despite the financial difficulties facing them. However, we start to plan our activities and budgets for 2023/24 now and do not have any commitments from Southeastern, KCC and Medway Council yet - our primary funders. We do not receive much funding from District Councils but do get some support. A number of parish councils also make a small contribution from their limited funds, and it all helps. The problem with the lack of longer-term commitment does make it difficult to give our staff the assurances they need that their role is secure.

This year saw some significant rail events on the Medway Valley Line, with the visit of a Golden Arrow Steam Train (26th November on a strike day!) and Southeastern Santa specials for their staff and for our supporters, in partnership with the CRP.

## Community Rail Awards Success

We're excited to announce that we won a Community Rail Award with our Let's Celebrate Differences project with Five Acre Wood Snodland Special School. The project won the award in the Small Projects category. Students from Five Acre Wood all drew sunflowers and some of these were then made into a mural, which is displayed at Snodland station. The school wanted to link the project with the train operator's 'Just A Minute' (JAM) scheme, which recognises that some passengers may have hidden disabilities and require additional support. Southeastern issue JAM cards and sunflower lanyards to such passengers, with the sunflower, a globally recognised symbol for hidden disabilities.

Kent CRP also received a third place for the Youth Engagement projects they have been involved in over the last year. In all more than 1800 students have taken part in various projects in partnership with a number of schools and colleges including both Sheppey and Ashford College, Strood Academy, Five Acre Wood Special School Snodland, St Edward's Catholic Primary School, Heath Farm School, Cuxton Academy and numerous other schools who took part in the decals project at Ashford Station.



## Ashford College Community Week

Enthusiastic Ashford College students and their dedicated tutors spent their November Community Week giving back to their community at Ashford Railway Station. Ashford College has adopted the station and decided to provide five pop-ups to delight and surprise passengers. The pop-ups included nail painting by the beauty students, music from the music students, cookies from the catering students, give away colouring books the childcare students had produced and the hair dressing students offered hair styling. Passengers (and staff!) were especially grateful for the party atmosphere created by the music students in the station foyer and for the cookies! The students promoted their courses and 'giveaways' to passengers.

We are very grateful to the tutors and students for their generosity and for the benefits they brought to passengers. Donations were collected for Railway Children Charity.



## Led Walks

The Watringbury to Yalding Ramble took place on Saturday 15th October. A group of fourteen gathered at Watringbury station taking the long way round to walk to Yalding Station. On route we stopped to admire views of the Medway Valley and to hear tales of Hop Picking, leading figures in the movement to abolish slavery and snippets of local history from Ben Crozier, a North Downs Way ambassador accompanying us on the trip.

The Halling to Cuxton Ramble on Tuesday 8th November

It was an unexpected start to the day when early morning reports of a landslip between Cuxton and Strood left us wondering who would still be coming along for our Rail Ramble. We needn't have worried, neither wind nor rain nor rail replacement bus services shall stay these walkers from the completion of their rail rambling and a group of eighteen gathered at Halling station to walk through the Kent Downs AONB to Cuxton.

On Sat 19 November 11 walkers set off on a four mile walk from Harrietsham station for a guided tour of Harrietsham village taking in attractions. The walk was led by local resident, Shira Adler-Drake. The group then made their way onto the North Downs Way for the 30min walk to Lenham village for another guided village tour led by Therese. Some walkers enjoyed the annual Mid-Winter Market in the Tithe Barn at Lenham and refreshments in local eateries prior to catching the train home.



## Meadowfield Travel Training

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 14 students and 3 tutors from Meadowfield Sixth Form School visited the Travel Safe Travel Smart Centre in Margate.

The purpose of the trip was to:

1. raise awareness of how to stay safe near to a railway line or when visiting a station.
2. encourage students to be independent travellers and be able to plan their journeys.
3. know who to ask or where to go if they need help at a station.

Our thanks go to our hosts Network Rail and Southeastern for their support to make the day possible.

## History of Sittingbourne

Kent CRP have been working with the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne over the last few months to design an information board for the waiting room at Sittingbourne Station.

The board provides an overview of some of the historical buildings and places you could visit in the area. This will shortly be appearing in the waiting room on Platform 1 in the next few weeks.



## Works at Sheerness Station

You may have noticed some scaffolding at Sheerness on Sea Station recently. This is due to repairs to the canopy on both platforms which is being repaired and repainted.

## Swale Halt Murals

If you have been along the Swale Rail Line recently you may have noticed that more of our wonderful murals have appeared at Swale Halt.

Lacie's design from Sheppey College has been completed along with murals to depict some of the places you can visit close to our 5 stations.



The final four murals will be appearing soon, so keep an eye out as you pass through the station.

## National Rail App

Due to rail strikes, adverse weather and timetable changes over the last few months, services have been running at different times or a reduced rate. To keep up to date, use the National Rail App or check online at <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>. There is also a small supply of paper timetables available at ticket offices.



Train times & tickets

From Maidstone West to Strood (Kent)

When Leaving Today at 09:30

Return Leaving Today at 17:30

More options, railcards & passengers

Fastest trains only

Go

## Dates for the diary

Friday 24th March Led Walk- Hollingbourne - Lenham

Thursday 27th April - Annual Stakeholders Event



Keep up to date! Visit our website: [kentcrp.org.uk](http://kentcrp.org.uk)

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@kentcrp1



Facebook Kent Community Rail Partnership



@kentcommunityrailpartnership

The Kent Community Rail Partnership is hosted by the registered Charity Sustrans. The Kent Community Rail Partnership encourages greater use of the Medway Valley, Kent Downs and Swale Rail lines by local people and visitors and aims to improve station environments and facilities on offer.

## Santa Train

On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December, Southeastern ran a Santa Train along the Medway Valley Line between Paddock Wood and Strood, departing from Maidstone West. Volunteers from Kent CRP joined in with the festive spirit and helped entertain the passengers waiting to meet Santa.

All the money raised from the event was donated to the Railway Children Charity. The charity supports children who have run away from home where they have suffered poverty, violence abuse and neglect.

The event was also featured on Meridian news, celebrating the community spirit as all the volunteers gave up their time to help raise money for charity and bring joy to the families in our communities.



## Rail Safety Pop-Up

On Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November, Kent CRP were joined by Matt Fraser from Southeastern at Tonbridge Station. This was to promote rail safety and the 61016 service operated by the British Transport Police. Over 200 cards with the number on were handed out to passengers. The notion behind the 61016 number is to allow passengers to discretely inform the British Transport Police about an incident or if they are feeling vulnerable, while on a train or at a station.

