



Kent Community  
Rail Partnership

# Winter 2026

# NEWSLETTER



Class 56 crossing Jane's Creek  
Courtesy of Dominic Noades



Armistice Belle  
Courtesy of Dominic Noades



Class 67 at East Malling  
Courtesy of Dominic Noades

## Railway 200: Hollingbourne Station Heritage Day



The Community Interest Company at Hollingbourne Station hosted a highly successful Railway 200 Heritage Day open to the public and attended by visitors from as far away as Paris!

Our regular volunteer Chris Anthony and Therese set up the Kent CRP stand, despite the day being overcast and a little drizzly however, approximately 200 visitors attended. Attractions included a model railway, specially prepared rail history boards and photographs, local gin and vodka tasting, stalls selling railway memorabilia, BBQ, the sale of postcards depicting our volunteer Dominic Noades' train photos, the café kitchen offering light lunches, drinks and cakes and a fantastic 15 piece jazz band keeping us all in the party atmosphere!



It was wonderful to catch up with Kent CRP's first Chairperson, Mike Fitzgerald MBE. Many shared stories of their experience of travelling via the station. These stories are being captured for future generations.

## Valley Park School Choir, Music and Mince Pies at Maidstone East Station



On the evening of Monday 8th December Maidstone East station adopters, Valley Park School students entertained passengers with Christmas songs and mince pies at Maidstone East station. The students soon warmed the atmosphere with the magical sounds of Christmas songs. Passengers lingered to listen, allowing for valuable engagement sharing messages of our impactful community rail projects along our lines.

Jess Abbott, Valley Park School Lead Tutor for the station adoption recorded the students to share on social media. These events offer students opportunities to perform in public which tutors have informed us helps to build their confidence.

## Ashford Station –183<sup>rd</sup> Birthday Celebration, Music and Mince Pies



On Monday 1st December, Ashford International station celebrated its 183rd birthday having opened in 1842. To mark this auspicious occasion, station adopters Ashford College students entertained passengers with music and mince pies. With it being the beginning of December, everyone was ready to join in the festive fun!



The station foyer was chilly with the doors regularly opening for passengers to enter and exit, the atmosphere soon warmed up with the magical sounds of students singing. Passengers were interested in our projects along the line, one was very complimentary about the Signal Box community café at Hollingbourne, "It was so good, the staff are great, and the food is delicious, I didn't know that was one of your projects." Some received our tote bags with the Kent CRP logo, others pens, leaflets promoting walking and cycling routes around Maidstone, Ashford and Canterbury.

## Heath Farm School's Nature Garden Launch, Charing

On Wednesday 3rd December, Charing station celebrated the launch of its nature garden, the first garden on the Kent Downs Line. From the seed of an idea 4 years ago, it has grown to a hugely successful collaboration led by Kent CRP. A community licence was provided to Heath Farm School by Network Rail, Southeastern giving permission for an access gate to be installed, funded by Community Rail Network. A Southeastern in Bloom grant supported membrane and bark for the pathway. Students are learning new skills at school preparing items for the garden and working in the garden itself. Whilst working in the garden tutors have reported the students interact with passengers waiting on the platform answering questions about what they are doing. The garden provides a valuable opportunity for these students to communicate with the public in a safe space.



## Sheerness Town Council Christmas Event



Early on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December, we mustered near the Clock Tower on Sheerness High Street to get our stall ready for the festival celebrations.

Organised by Sheerness Town Council, the Christmas Event was a festive treat with stilt walking jugglers and a Christmas orchestra playing our favourite Christmas tunes at the base of the Clocktower. Sheppey Matters Radio was also present and lifted festive spirits with a great DJ set.



On the Kent CRP Stall, we had Project officer Vicky Wright and KCRP committee members Jonathan Fryer and Dominic Noades. There was a steady flow of interaction, and we gave out an array of goodies from Christmas KCRP train colouring in, Railway 200 pencils, tote bags and leaflets.

## Railway 200: Sheppey History & Heritage Day



Our day of celebration began with a collection of talks from rail experts and local historians. Vintage photography of The Sheppey Light Railway was shared and Peter MacDonald spoke of his experiences of riding on the line and the atmosphere on the very last day of the Sheppey Light Railway's existence on 4th December 1950.

Mark Kennedy from Queenborough History Society brought insights into "Flushing Pier", used by high society to board a paddle steamer from Queenborough to Holland. Graeme Gleaves shared the background to writing his book "The Railways of the Isle of Sheppey", and Chris Jackson from The Colonel Stephens Society gave a broader picture of the development of rail by Colonel Stephens across the country in the 1910s.

Looking ahead to the future, Lee Jarmain from The Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Project detailed their vision to create a walking, wheeling and cycling route across the island, following the old Sheppey Light Railway route linking east to west.

We had a splendid 1960s vintage green double decker bus for the afternoon tour, filled to capacity. On the tour we travelled from Blue Town, passing the Flushing pier intersection, and stopping at Queenborough Station. We later journeyed on to Power Station Road, seeing the newly installed Sheppey Light Railway interpretation panel (care of the hard work of Linda Brinklow and John Nurden) near the original Sheerness East Station site, and then walking the along the original rail track pathway to Scrapsgate. Jonathan Fryer and Jeremy Segrove were our historian guides, giving fascinating insights along the way.

Travelling through Minster we saw key areas, noting the former sites of the Sheppey Light Railway's stations and road crossings.

We concluded the trip with a real highlight, visiting the Eastchurch Aviation Museum and passing the original Eastchurch Station.

The Aviation Museum was fantastic with a wealth of archives and information on the early development of aviation, and the importance that rail had played in accessing the airfield. In addition our historian Jeremy Segrove led an outside tour of the site, adding depth and understanding to what had been present a century ago.

In organising the day, we have to say a big thank you to the team at the Criterion, our speakers, bus driver and tour guides, Kent CRP volunteers Linda Brinklow, Jonathan Fryer and Dominic Noades. We could not have done it without your support.

## Railway 200: Art panels launched at Ashford International Station

Ashford College engaged with EKC group primary schools to colour train templates provided by Ashford International Model Railway Education Centre, celebrating the many different trains that have travelled through Ashford over the ages. Teachers, young learners and parents attended the unveiling on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September, with Ashford College hosting a coffee and bakes stall to raise funds for MacMillan Cancer Support.



## Tracks and Trails, Putting Down Routes, Cuxton

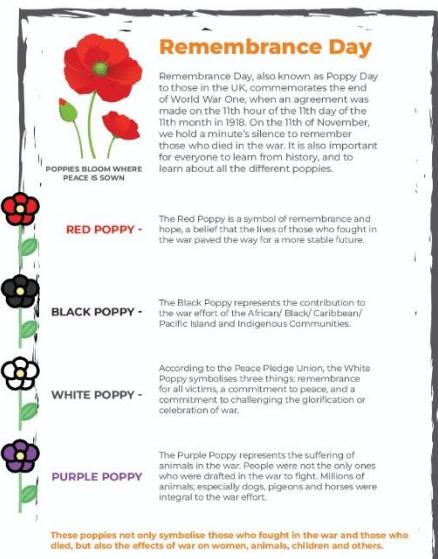
A total of 14 people enjoyed a 6 mile circular walk taking in the stunning chalk downland and farmland of Ranscombe Farm, the impressive Darnley Mausoleum, village of Cuxton and Britain's newest National Nature Reserve, North Kent Woods and Downs NNR. Walkers came from near and far, including Medway, Ashford and Croydon.

We began by passing through Cuxton village to find a bridge that takes the North Downs Way across the London – Dover mainline railway. We were then in woodland with extensive views across Dean valley and Bush valley. The Autumn colours in the trees and landscapes were a joy to behold. Having explored Cobham woods and the mausoleum we returned to Cuxton, where some of the group visited the pub for refreshments, bringing tourist spend to the local economy. Others made straight for the station to complete their onward journeys.

Everyone was smiling and had enjoyed the walk. There had been friendly conversation and laughter throughout, with many people planning their next Tracks and Trails adventure.



## Remembrance Day



This poster was created by Level 2 Electronic Engineering, Administration & Communications students from EKC Shepway College, in collaboration with Swale Rail and Kent Community Rail Partnership.

EKC Shepway College collaborated with the "Knit and Natter" Age UK group to create a poppy installation at the front of Sheerness-on-Sea station, with over 200 specially made woollen poppies.

A poster about the project and the meaning behind the different colour poppies, designed by students was also displayed at the station.

## Rehoming Abandoned Bikes



Sharon Gray of Southeast Communities Rail Partnership alerted us to another pile of abandoned bikes, this time at Tonbridge station. Maidstone CAN were again happy to take these bikes, that their volunteers could refurbish at the Maidstone Repair Cafe project, and teach others who would like to learn cycle maintenance skills. Over 30 bikes were collected. All will receive a basic safety check before either donation to Make a Difference to Maidstone for sale, raising funds to support their project work and getting bikes to people who need them for everyday transport; or being refurbished by Maidstone CAN at the Maidstone Repair Café.



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

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