

200TM

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Railway 200
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the journey



Between the Lines

December 2025



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

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

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

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

South Western
Railway

Hilsea Travel Buddies

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

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



Southampton Central Exhibition Train

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

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



The End of a Remarkable Year

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

Historic Display

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



Cranbrook Birthday

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

