

SwaleRail

Community Rail Partnership

News

December 2005

CCTV Camera Keeping An Eye On Kemsley

It has taken longer than we had hoped, but at last a CCTV camera has been installed at Kemsley Station.

This was one of the first projects identified by the SwaleRail Working Group and we were able to broker an agreement between South Eastern Trains and Swale Borough Council whereby cameras would be connected to the Swale BC system. This means that the cameras are constantly monitored and recorded.

Kemsley has had a history of vandalism and understandably, train operators have been reluctant to provide better facilities as they would rarely last long.

Now that the cameras are operational it is worth planning some improvements. The first project that is being planned will see a landscaping and planting scheme on the Sheerness bound platform. This is being put together by Sittingbourne Community College and the "Groundworks" team.

If the vandalism problem is cracked then we may be able to get further improvements. Wouldn't better shelters and more seats be nice!



The new CCTV installation at Kemsley Station can monitor both platforms

Platform Alterations at Queenborough



The recent signalling upgrade on the Sheerness branch means that the lines through the platforms at Queenborough can be used in either direction. So a few months back an experiment was tried where all passenger trains were scheduled to use the platform closest to the station building. It was hoped that this would lead to less conflict between passenger and freight trains and a reduction in delays to services.

The experiment was inconclusive, but what do you think? Was it a better arrangement for passengers? **Let us know your views.**

Kent Community Rail Partnership

New Faces On SwaleRail



I am **Paul Randall**, **Station Manager** for the Sittingbourne area since the 25th July.

Before I became Station Manager I was a conductor for seven and a half years, based at Gillingham. During this time, I worked a lot in the Sittingbourne area and on the Sheerness line. I have listened to customers views of the railway, and the environment in which they have to travel.

So as a new Station Manager, although I am still learning, I have plenty of ideas on how to improve the service we provide. I will also try to encourage new users onto our trains. I look forward to working along side the SwaleRail partnership, to improve our environment for our customers.

I am **Ty Wallis**, **SET Area Manager** for Swale and Medway. I have 5 years managerial experience and 13 years total railway service. I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly in that time.



I support the Station Managers in their quest to try to improve your stations and experience when travelling with South Eastern. We have been working hard over the past 18 months to improve the appearance of stations and environment and we are still working on this. We are also improving our customer service to ensure that your journey with us is to your satisfaction.

If I can assist you or you have any suggestions, please feel free to write to me and drop your letters into the ticket office of staffed stations when you travel.

My name is **Nigel Whitburn** and I am the **Kent Community Rail Partnership Officer**. Since April of this year I have been responsible for Kent CRP and the individual line partnerships and other projects with which the CRP is concerned.

I have been involved with the SwaleRail partnership since July 2004 through my other role as Rural Transport Partnership Officer for Kent & Medway, but my knowledge of the Sheerness Branch goes back to the 1980's when I spent several years as Station Manager at Sittingbourne.



Train operators are now more willing to engage with local communities and it is my role to facilitate this dialogue. Together we can find ways to improve local lines, make them better known and enable them to better serve the transport needs of the area. **You can contact me on 01303 850816 or at nigel.whitburn@ruralkent.org.uk**

My name is **Ian Paterson** and I have recently joined Kent Community Rail Partnership as a **Project Officer** on a part time basis. I will mainly be working on the Medway Valley Line, our latest Line partnership, but will also pop up on SwaleRail from time to time.

I have a background in financial services as well as with the bus industry, but have long had an interest in rail travel as well.

You can contact me via 01303 850816 or at ian.paterson@ruralkent.org.uk



A Message from SwaleRail Partnership Chairman, Cllr John Wright

I have put pen to paper to comment on the progress of the SwaleRail Working Group and the Kent Community Rail Partnership over the last year, which have seen many changes and challenges still to come.

Firstly I would like to thank Peter Chegvidden for all his hard work in setting up the SwaleRail Community Partnership and wish him well in his new position. Nigel Whitburn is now the Community Rail Partnership Officer and he is being assisted by Project Officer Ian Paterson. Ian will concentrate on the newly established line partnership for the Medway Valley Line, but will be seen on SwaleRail from time to time.



SwaleRail covers the branch line from Sittingbourne station to Sheerness. Its aims have been to work with South Eastern Trains / Network Rail and other partners to: -

1. Improve station environments such as facilities, litter controls, décor etc.
2. Improve station train security, which would include CCTV, fencing and lighting, security personnel, redundant building usage etc.
3. Improve information to communities and users of the services
4. Improve bus, rail, taxi, cycle, pedestrian and disability issues in and around stations
5. Involve local community and business in joint initiatives such as station adoption, or the teaching to youth groups of station and railway safety

All this work we have started and have had some small success, but we have been somewhat side tracked over the last year with changes within the rail industry such as the Strategic Rail Authority Consultation and meetings with the four franchise bidders for the line, as well as changes within South Eastern Trains management and structure, but this will soon be finalised.

All the franchise bidders have welcomed joint working with SwaleRail and the Community Rail Partnership to secure a better future and service level for the Swale branch line.

As a group we have secured some small improvements for travellers on the branch line in terms of station décor, security and litter control, but now we wish to have a wider membership of interested businesses, community groups, people and users of the services and so we would welcome and invite any approach to join the group. Please contact Nigel or Ian on 01303 850816. A stronger interested community team at SwaleRail can only benefit the future of the Sittingbourne to Sheerness branch line.

I look forward to meeting new and old faces at our next line meeting.

Regards,

John Wright

Thank You

***Kent CRP would like to thank
South Eastern Trains for funding
this edition of the SwaleRail
newsletter.
We are very grateful!***



Steam returned to SwaleRail on the 4th September when the Shepherd Neame "Spitfire" special ran to Sheerness. The train is here seen at Faversham prior to its return to London.

New SwaleRail Webpages



SwaleRail still has dedicated pages on the Swale Borough Council website. However, these pages have not been updated recently and information on the line partnership will in future be found on the **“Action with Communities in Rural Kent”** website at www.ruralkent.org.uk

These pages are still being developed, but please have a look and let us know what you think. What would you like to see on them?

POSSIBLE NEW USE FOR QUEENBOROUGH STATION



How long is it since the first floor of the station building at Queenborough was in use? If anyone knows please tell us!

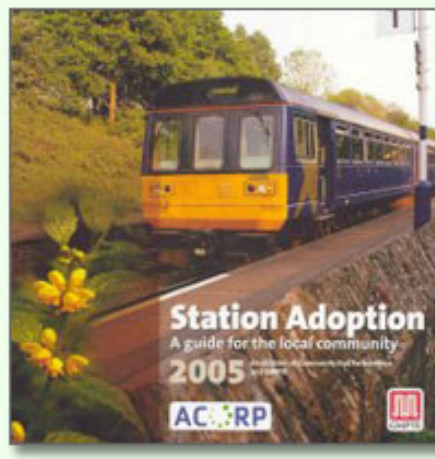
Now there is a chance that the rooms may be converted to an exhibition space. This would initially be used to present an exhibition linked to the Channel 4 Time Team dig on the site of Queenborough Castle, but other exhibitions would be put on after that.

The deal is yet to be done, but here's hoping!

Station Adoption - The Future For Small Stations?

Railway stations aren't often orphaned - but they can sometimes be a bit neglected. One way of overcoming such neglect is to “adopt” your local station and the Kent Community Rail Partnership is keen to see a Station Adoption scheme introduced in Kent by the new Train Operating Company.

What does “station adoption” mean? Well, it can vary, but it definitely requires the involvement of the local community. At its simplest, station adoption involves a volunteer visiting a station on a weekly basis, completing a simple pro-forma inspection report on cleanliness, faults, vandalism etc and forwarding that report to the railway company for their attention.



At its most complicated, community groups undertake cleaning and basic maintenance, utilise redundant buildings for cafes, bookshops, tourist information offices and look after gardens and planted areas.

All of this must be done with the permission of the train operators and following some basic safety instruction. A number of train operators such as “Wessex Trains”, “Arriva Trains Wales” and “one” have set up very successful schemes and more details can be found on their websites.

We want to see this happening in Kent as a way of improving smaller, rural stations.