Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. July saw the introduction of a new amended timetable on our line, as rail companies increased the services they are offering to 85% of their planned timetables. South Western Railway intends to run the present two-hourly service until September 4th. Passengers still have to change at Salisbury for a service to Waterloo.

This month’s newsletter brings you up to date with all the latest developments on our railway, and continues to look to the future, as the rail network takes the next steps in the slow and difficult process of building back better. The latest newsletter, and copies of previous ones, can be found on our website: friendsofonitonstation.org.uk

The Friends of Honiton Station Launch New Website

July saw the launch of our new website. It has been designed by one of our members, Charles Pegman, who has created websites for a range of not for profit organisations and groups.

The site includes a history of the station, details of our aims and campaigns, and gives potential supporters and members a simple way to get in touch with us. The site is also a one-stop shop for anyone searching for information about our railway. There are links to the timetable, to real-time information on any train travelling to or from Honiton, as well as to the live departures board.

Visitors to the site can also find links to organisations and groups supporting the railway, as well as to local contacts such as the Museum, Gallery, Town Council and Honiton Health Matters.
A number of the photographs on the website were provided by another of our members, Vernon Whitlock. These include pictures taken inside the Honiton Signal Box, before it closed in 2012.

The signal box was built in 1957, replacing the original which had been constructed in 1875. The new box contained 22 levers. Signals and points are now controlled from the Rail Operations Centre in Basingstoke.

The Exmouth Junction Signal Box remains in operation, and there is a large Panel Box at Exeter St. David’s, which controls operations over a wide area of the South West.

**QUICK QUIZ:** What is unusual about the train entering Honiton Station, shown on the front cover of this newsletter? *(Answer on back page)*

This newsletter is emailed out to all members, and to a range of supporters. Members can also share a link to the website with anyone they feel might be interested in reading our newsletter. The newsletter can be read online at: friendsohonitonstation.org.uk/news

**Happy Birthday To Us... And To The Railway**

July saw two important birthdays. July 27th was the third birthday of the official formation of The Friends of Honiton Station. The group was formed after our members Caroline Kolek and Jenny Brown co-ordinated efforts to install the planters on Platform 1 in March of that year. This was made possible by funding from bookstall sales at Tesco, courtesy of another member Duncan Sheridan-Shaw.

Soon after, it was decided to form a station adoption group, to take our work forward. And the rest as they say, give or take a change of franchise, a new station adoption agreement or two, is history.

And talking of history, July was also the 160th anniversary of the opening of the railway line through Honiton, on July 18th 1860, when a train pulled by no less than three locomotives made the first journey through Honiton to Exeter’s new Queen St. terminus.

The first train was welcomed at Honiton by the Mayor, J.C. Jerrard, who said: “*We look upon this railway not only as an accommodation and boon to ourselves and the whole line of the country through which it passes, but as a great national advantage.*”

**Photograph:** The 12.45 train to Exeter St. David’s on July 18th, the time and date of the first train along the line in 1860.
Although we were not able to celebrate the anniversary in person, we still plan to hold the anniversary exhibition, and distribute the commemorative booklets, as soon as conditions allow.

We also intend to hold an event with the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (who met the cost of producing the booklets), the Community Rail Network and South Western Railway (who created the new display area in the waiting room) to mark the anniversary - and our birthday - in some way. Details of our plans will be announced when such gatherings become possible.

Birthday Greetings

We received some lovely greetings on the occasion of our birthday, and of the line’s anniversary.

Andy Harrowell, Community Rail Manager for SWR, got in touch to say:

“Happy birthday Friends of Honiton Station!

“You’ve come a long way in three years and it’s an absolute pleasure working with you. I am glad that this year we’ve been able to support you further with the addition of the notice board and display space inside the waiting area of the station.

“I am particularly impressed by how you have adapted during lockdown – producing high quality newsletters, which have certainly brightened my day, and given inspirations to others on our network. The website is a very natural, and excellent, extension of that.

“I do hope I can join you at the station, at the appropriate time, to celebrate both this and the line’s 160th anniversary.”

Dan Wright from Community Rail Network wrote to pass on his greetings:

“Are you really only three years old? Your commitment and dedication match that of many much-longer established station adoption groups! I have enjoyed watching you brighten up Honiton station and giving it more of a community feel, for regular users and visitors alike.

“I have also been really impressed by your energy in keeping the group going during lockdown. Your newsletters haven’t just kept you all in touch with each other and with the railway, but have brightened up my lockdown too. Here’s wishing you every success in the future.”

Richard Burningham, Manager of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, and the Chairman of the Community Rail Network, sent us this message:

“Happy 3rd Birthday to the Friends of Honiton station.

“You have achieved much in the last three years and I look forward to helping you achieve much more in the next three years and beyond.”
Let’s Travel Safely This Summer

As lockdown restrictions are eased (despite the pause announced by the Prime Minister at the end of July) and as many people start to move around again, a shift to more positive messaging on public transport has been being strongly welcomed by transport charities.

In their latest newsletter, the Community Rail Network said: “Community rail has an important part to play in rebuilding trust and positivity in rail, and showing how it is a safe, sustainable and pleasant way to travel.”

SWR says that: “As lockdown eases, we are pleased to see a growing number of people using our services again, but our priority remains the safety of our customers and colleagues.”

At this stage, there is no change to the present level of service planned until September 4th. The rules on social distancing and face coverings remain in force, and passengers are still advised to carry hand sanitiser for use before and after their journey. Passengers are advised to travel outside of peak periods if possible, to buy their tickets in advance or by contactless means. Ticket machines will not accept cash payments.

Responding to reports of the new travel advice, Darren Shirley, Chief Executive of Campaign for Better Transport, said:

“A careful return to public transport, alongside walking, cycling and shared transport, will be essential to avoiding congestion and high levels of pollution as more of us begin to head back to high streets and offices. A third of people don’t have access to a car, so public transport is also essential to rebuilding the economy in a way that does not leave people behind.”

Jools Townsend, Chief Executive, Community Rail Network (right), added: “Trains, buses and community and shared transport have continued to provide for our communities through the pandemic, and they’re incredibly important to our future too. These sustainable modes of travel can help us achieve a green and inclusive recovery, benefiting our communities, health and wellbeing, and our climate.”

Until now, passengers have been urged not to use trains, if they could find another way to travel. Concern had been growing that roads will become congested and air pollution rise, if more commuters than before use their cars, as increasing numbers return to work.

The Government, Network Rail and rail companies have joined together to publicise the official message which is: “Let’s travel safely this summer.”

Rail Delivery Group chief strategy officer Andy Bagnall said: “Rail companies want to support the government in striking the difficult balance between reopening the economy, which of course means more rail travel, and guarding against a further widespread outbreak of the virus. “As the economy reopens this summer that means reassuring people so they have confidence to travel safely while adhering to government advice. Train operators are maximising capacity, boosting cleaning and helping with hygiene while also asking passengers to travel at quieter times where they can and to protect others by wearing a face covering.”
**Face Coverings Now Compulsory on Trains in All Parts of UK**

Face coverings became mandatory on public transport in Wales last month. This brought the Principality into line with regulations in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

First Minister Mark Drakeford explained that: “*Our decision to make face coverings mandatory on public transport is a combination of the fact that we know as the economy gets back into operation more people will need to use public transport to go to work and for other purposes, and when more people need to use confined spaces then additional protections need to be introduced in order to overcome the fact that 2m social distancing will not always be possible.*”

Children under 11 are exempt, as are people with a disability or illness that means that they cannot wear a face covering. South Western Railway say: “*We would consider that customers living with conditions such as PTSD and asthma will not be expected to wear a face covering. We are asking customers with a disability or illness who can wear a mask to do so.*” Someone providing lipreading support to a deaf passenger is also exempt.

Passengers have been reminded to keep face coverings on in public places where socially distancing is difficult, including at stations, to protect people around you. Passengers should wash their hands before and after their journey and carry their own hand sanitiser. Passengers are advised to travel during off-peak hours where possible.

**Testing of New SWR Trains Begins - But Sadly Not for Us...**

South Western Railway’s (SWR) Wimbledon depot has now welcomed its first Class 701 train, marking a significant milestone in the £1bn transformation of suburban travel.

Neil Drury, SWR’s Engineering Director, said: “*This allows us to prepare our drivers, maintenance staff and other colleagues for a generational step-change in service performance, and ensure that the important components which define the experience of travelling on these new trains are ready before the fleet’s eventual introduction.*”

The new arrival allows drivers, maintenance and other depot staff to begin their training and develop new skills in preparation for the next generation of trains.

The train is also a significant part of SWR’s latest programme of testing on passenger routes.

Modern onboard features allowing passengers to stay connected and travel comfortably will be put through its paces. These include air conditioning, Wi-Fi, at-seat charging points, two by two seating and fully accessible toilets – as well as technology which significantly boosts reliability and performance for passengers travelling every day on the network.

*Members will recognise much that is on their wish-list for our potential new rolling stock, in the specification for the Class 701 (see details in Newsletter 4).*
Friends’ Chairman Seeks Support of Local MP for Track Improvement Plans

In July, the Chairman wrote to Neil Parish, MP for Tiverton and Honiton, to ask him to press the Department for Transport to back the latest proposals for the improvement of the line between Salisbury and Exeter.

The plans, which include reinstated sections of double track between Honiton and Feniton, and between Whimple and Pinhoe, would allow a twice-hourly service to Exeter. A second platform at Cranbrook Station is also proposed under the scheme published by Network Rail as part of the Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) process.

In his letter, the Chairman pointed out that: “The Whimple Loop in particular has been discussed for many years. If the line is to move forward, and provide a better level of service to the growing population that lives close to it, then these proposals deserve everyone’s support. Our railway is capable of great things. But we need the track and signal improvements, and the new rolling stock that the line deserves.”

He went on to remind Mr. Parish that two years ago representatives from SERUG met with all the MPs representing constituencies along the West of England Line, and a delegation met with the Rail Minister.

In January 2018, Neil Parish also asked a question in the House of Commons to the rail minister about progress with plans for these line improvements.

“Much work has been done since then,” the Chairman went on, “particularly in completing this valuable report. It is important that the present impetus is maintained, despite the difficult times in which we all find ourselves. The Prime Minister has made it clear that recovery should not include a return to austerity, but should be achieved through investment in much-needed infrastructure.

“We believe that this should include major investment in the West of England Line, which provides an important rail link throughout the region. I urge you therefore to call on the Secretary of State for Transport to urgently consider the CMSP report on the West of England Line, and to agree to move these proposals forward as quickly as possible, so that we can see work begin on these vital improvements.”

The Chairman also took the opportunity to lobby Neil Parish when he was conducting a street surgery in Honiton on July 11th accompanied by Honiton’s County Councillor, Phil Twiss, also a long-standing supporter of the railway.

The Chairman’s letter was part of a co-ordinated campaign in support of the CMSP plans. The Chairman of the Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users’ Group has written to all MPs whose constituencies are affected by these proposals. The SERUG Chairman’s letter ended by saying:

"A series of interventions are proposed which would dramatically improve both the capacity and timetable resilience of this railway.
“Specifically, journey times and capacity will be improved, delays will be reduced and, importantly, the development of the Devon Metro and additional connectivity provided. The importance of decarbonisation is also acknowledged.

“The proposals are common sense and agreed. We need your support again, to ensure funding for Network Rail is delivered, enabling further work to conclude the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline process for the infrastructure investment. We urge you to support this process, and lobby the Rail and Transport Ministers and DfT to progress to the next stage.”

Neil Parish replied to The Friends of Honiton Station’s letter, indicating that he had written to the Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, attaching a copy of our letter.

In his reply, the Rail Minister had this to say:

“The Department welcomes the report, and my officials will work closely with Network Rail and other key stakeholders to discuss next steps and consider how the schemes be taken forward.

“In line with our Rail Enhancement Network Pipeline, these and all other schemes will be assessed against the Secretary of State’s strategic priorities and investment principles, including demonstrating a robust business case and a focus on the outcome they provide for both rail users and taxpayers.”

Head of Community Rail Partnership Shares His Views on The East Devon Line

This month’s guest writer in the newsletter is Richard Burningham. Richard has been manager of the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP) since 1998.

DCRP was founded in 1991 and was the country’s first community rail partnership. As a non-profit organisation based at the University of Plymouth, DCRP seeks to promote Devon and Cornwall’s branch lines.

They engage with local communities, supporting economic growth in the surrounding area. They work with a range of partners, among other things to deliver improvements to the rail service.

In 2010, Richard was awarded the MBE in recognition of his work. He is presently the Chairman of the Community Rail Network, the national body for Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adoption Groups such as The Friends of Honiton Station.

Although originally from Surrey, Richard has a long association with Devon. After spells working at Charing Cross and Waterloo, he moved to Barnstaple as Travel Centre Manager in 1985.

After a promotion to the Southern Region Press Office at Waterloo in January 1989, he then became Public Relations Officer (South West) for the Southern Region, which later became South West Trains when it was part of Network South East.
He has been quoted as describing the line from St. Erth to St. Ives in Cornwall as: “Probably the most scenic in Europe, if not the world.” However, he is a great fan of all the wonderful branch lines in Devon and Cornwall, including the East Devon Line of course.

He has been a supporter of Brentford FC for over 35 years, so he watched with excitement as they reached the Championship play-off final this season, and sought promotion to the Premier League. Whatever the result, DCRP has long been in the premier league of rail partnerships.

Richard has provided a huge amount of help to The Friends of Honiton Station since DCRP began to support the East Devon Line. You may also find him browsing Honiton’s excellent second-hand book shops from time to time.

**Richard writes...**

Now that it is becoming possible again, we’re really looking forward to ramping up promotion of the East Devon Line and the places both on it, like Honiton, and those within easy reach by bus, like Sidmouth and Seaton.

Our Jurassic Coast by Train promotion is ready to go and was only halted by lockdown.

Helping existing groups like The Friends of Honiton station and working to establish groups, however informal, for the other stations is a key focus for us.

We want to encourage more people to get involved with the railway, in all manner of ways, and we want to encourage a wide range of projects linked to the railway.

We’re also keen to help the efforts to further improve the line, its stations and services and strongly support the recent CMSP study led by Network Rail. The achievement of a second train an hour between Exeter, Honiton and Axminster is a goal we share with the Friends, SERUG, Devon County Council and many others.

Finally, these next twelve months see three big anniversaries and we are keen to help local people celebrate them.

The 160th anniversary of the line’s opening was in July, and Cranbrook Station will be 5 in December. And next May it will be 50 years since Sidmouth Junction reopened as Feniton, one of the first stations closed under the Beeching axe to do so.
Inquiry Announced into Pandemic Effect on Transport

The longer-term implications of the coronavirus pandemic for public transport are to be examined by the House of Commons’ Transport Select Committee, which has called for written evidence on the extent that the pandemic ‘could, and should’, be used as an opportunity to influence how people choose how to travel in the longer term.

The committee said policymakers will need to ‘reimagine’ the transport system as more people work from home, shop online and choose to walk, cycle or drive.

This also presents a chance to explore reforms and technical innovations that may shape the future of transport.

The committee is particularly interested in the long-term implications of the pandemic for:

- the use of public transport and the way that people choose to travel, both locally and for longer domestic journeys;
- central and local governmental transport priorities and finances and funding for transport;
- devolution of transport policy-making responsibilities and powers;
- resilience of the transport system for future crises;
- decarbonisation of transport and the capability to meet net zero carbon emissions targets by 2050;
- innovation and technological reform.

The inquiry will take a ‘holistic’ look at how public transport is changing, and the implications for government strategies including the Williams Rail Review.

The committee will also look at how governments and transport authorities in other countries are responding to similar challenges.

Local MPs Simon Jupp (East Devon), above, and Chris Loder (West Dorset), shown left, are members of the Transport Select Committee.

The deadline for submissions is September 24th.
Community Rail Network Stresses the Benefits of Engaging With Young People

July saw the launch of a report sponsored by the Rail Delivery Group that focused on the importance of engaging young people with our railways. The report by Community Rail Network found that, by becoming involved in this way, young people learn and apply skills, have their voices heard, become more confident, ambitious, and socially mobile, and embrace their role as active citizens, creating and contributing to connected communities.

Involving young people in this way, allows community rail, and rail generally, to become more diverse and inclusive, better placed to serve its communities, more progressive and equipped to deal with succession, and able to benefit from the creativity, passion, and new ideas and approaches which young people bring.

The report found that society benefits from young people becoming engaged with issues that matter to them, which will also improve social inclusion, community cohesion, and health and wellbeing.

Responding to publication of the report, the Chairman said: "As part of our aim to make the station a community resource, we need to consider how we will connect what we do with the younger members of our community. As one person quoted in the report said - ‘That’s one of the great things about working with young people; they are very creative, very inventive, and they come up with great ideas that we wouldn’t think of.’"

No News Yet on Return to Hourly Rail Service for Honiton

At the recent meeting of the Devon Rail Forum, held online, Andrew Ardley, the Regional Development Manager, reported that SWR is not yet able to return to an hourly service on the East Devon Line. There were, he said, practical reasons why this is difficult, including the availability of rolling stock and the difficulty in maintaining social distancing while accommodating demand.

SWR is presently running an Exeter to Salisbury service, with trains made up of six carriages to aid social distancing, which connect at Salisbury for Waterloo services. Longer trains and reduced capacity in the depot for maintenance, mean that SWR do not have sufficient units to return to an hourly service west of Salisbury yet. The present situation has also reduced the number of available crew and meant that staff are less likely to volunteer for overtime.

Feniton and Whimple Left Without Trains on Sundays

One effect of the new amended timetable is that there are no trains to or from Feniton or Whimple on Sundays (see below). The permanent timetable has a two-hourly service to these stations throughout the day.

The Chairman has raised this issue with South Western Railway on behalf of our friends in these communities. SERUG has also raised this as a matter of concern. We are asking SWR to urgently review the lack of Sunday trains to these stations.

We believe that it is possible to include additional stops without adding to the overall journey time, as the London-bound service waits in Honiton for 8 minutes before continuing to Axminster.
Honiton Train Service Updated - July 6th to September 4th Timetable

Trains call at all stations on Mondays to Saturdays. **There is no service to or from Feniton, Whimple or Pinhoe on Sundays at present.**

Passengers are reminded that they must wear a face covering on public transport.

Passengers with disabilities or some health conditions, and children under 11 are exempt from this requirement.

**Train Departures from Honiton – Mondays to Fridays from July 6th to September 4th 2020**

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**Train Departures from Honiton – Saturdays from July 6th to September 4th 2020**

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**Train Departures from Honiton – Sundays from July 6th to September 4th 2020**

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<td>22.21</td>
<td>Exeter St. David’s</td>
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Engineering work sometimes affects journeys at weekends. Please check SWR’s website for details of forthcoming work. There is a link to this page from our website. Use the Timetables tab.

Services may be disrupted when GWR trains are diverted along The East Devon Line through Honiton between Monday September 28th and Friday October 2nd.

The line between Honiton and Exeter will be closed between Saturday 24th and Friday 30th October for track renewal work at Exmouth Junction in Exeter.
GWR’s Public Expectations Poster - What Do You Think?

GWR have been displaying this poster at their stations for some time.

Public Expectations – Put Yourself in their Shoes

Passengers would like staff to:

• Remember they’re individuals; some passengers need more help than others;

• Understand they might not all be familiar with the railway environment;

• Keep them updated with clear information as soon as they can.

Staff would like passengers to:

• Treat them and fellow passengers with respect;

• Explain any problem as clearly as they can and be patient with staff as some things are out of their control;

• Follow any instructions they might give – these will be for everyone’s comfort and safety.

Should South Western Railway have a similar set of expectations? What would passengers like staff to do? What should be on such a poster, if SWR had one?

Send your ideas to our usual email address

New Homes Sought For Five 80 Year Olds Heading for Retirement

South Western Railway is looking for new homes for its soon to be retired Island Line fleet. The five Class 483 trains, built in 1938 for the London Underground, have been serving the Isle of Wight since 1989. However, as announced last year, the current fleet is due to be replaced by Class 484 Vivarail D Train units, also former Underground trains.

South Western Railway is looking for new homes for the trains as soon as possible, to make room for the arrival of the first Class 484s for testing this year. Organisations interested in adopting a train will need to demonstrate the capacity and financial security to remove and look after it, as well as a suitable long-term physical location for the train.

So, if anyone has a very large train layout in their garden, or is looking for the world’s most unusual greenhouse, maybe now is the time to contact SWR. Seriously, this offer follows a competition held last year to come up with new uses for redundant Pacers. The prize? A Pacer, of course.
SWR Tackles Railway Trespass Incidents

A scheme designed to tackle trespass incidents and reduce rail delays has been shortlisted for the Safety Achievement of the Year in the National Rail Awards 2020.

Trespass and Welfare Officers were introduced onto the South Western Railway network a year ago as part of a joint initiative with Network Rail. They are on hand at 97 stations to promote the safe use of the railway, identify and check the welfare of vulnerable rail users and intervene where necessary to try and prevent trespass incidents, which all too often have tragic and fatal consequences.

The officers were introduced after delays on the Wessex line caused by external factors, mainly trespass and fatal incidents, had doubled since 2013/14. Since their introduction in July 2019, they have intervened 115 times with people in crisis, potentially saving a number of lives, as well as helping to prevent countless delays.

The East Devon Line experienced several trespass incidents of its own between July 2018 and March 2019, when objects were placed on the line on several occasions. Incidents took place near Feniton (see right), at Crannafor Level Crossing and outside Pinhoe Station.

A number of road signs and large poles were placed on the line. In one case, damage was caused to the brakes of an Exeter-bound train, causing the line to be blocked for several hours.

In March 2019, a young man sadly died after deliberately stopping his car on the level crossing at Stoke Canon near Exeter.

(Photo: British Transport Police via Twitter)

During lockdown there has been a worrying increase of trespassing on Britain’s railways, with the first month seeing 25% more than the previous year. In response, a national competition has been devised, with backing from across the rail industry.

Maddy Mills, an officer for North Downs CRP said: “We want young people to show off their creativity to get the message across to their peers that being on the tracks is potentially deadly.”

The competition is open to all 11-18 year olds across the UK and has six categories, with entrants being asked to make a video, write a song/rap, produce a storyboard or write a script which shares the anti-trespassing message. For each category, a GoPro Hero8 bundle is up for grabs. The video must be made from the young person's home or garden and must not show any violence.

The competition closes on 30th September and more information can be found on the website: www.downtheline.org.uk/projects/backtrack.
Our Lockdown Story

The Chairman was recently asked by South Western Railway to contribute an article called *Our Lockdown Story*. It looks back over the last four months, and reflects on what the group did when we faced the question no-one ever expected to have to answer: “What does a station adoption group do, when the one place you cannot go is the station?”

The article looks back to how the advice we received at the start of lockdown, to spend time looking at our plans and projects, and to find new ways to keep in touch with members, lead to three new publications. Since April, as well as this series of newsletters, we have produced the commemorative booklet on the station and created our new website.

The article has been shared with our colleagues at Community Rail Network and the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership. It will also be available on our website.

On July 23rd, the Midweek Herald carried a story based on a press release from SWR, referring to the increase in station adoption groups across their network. Although not mentioned by name, the article gave Honiton as an example of where this work is going on.

SERUG’s campaign to gain MPs’ support for the CMSP (see above) has also been covered in the South West Independent, which also carried an article on the importance of regaining confidence in our railways.

Latest Phase of SWR Special Compensation Scheme Now Open

The Managing Director of SWR Mark Hopwood wrote to stakeholders recently to update them on the Special Compensation Scheme for customers who were affected by the industrial action in December 2019. He stated that SWR had so far contacted over 50,000 annual and monthly season ticket holders and over £2.6m has been paid out.

SWR has now launched Phase Two of the scheme, aimed at customers who hold, or held, weekly season tickets and daily tickets, as well as those customers with longer-term season tickets who have not been contacted by SWR during Phase One.

This second phase of the scheme will run until 13th September. Customers can apply by going to the dedicated page on the SWR website: southwesternrailway.com/dec-comp.

Watch the Big Screen at Waterloo

Network Rail and South Western Railway have begun testing a 3 m wide and 1.5 m high full-colour high-definition passenger information display screen at London Waterloo station.

Network Rail said this was the first time that a full colour LED display had been installed at one of its managed stations solely to provide passenger information.

The trial is scheduled to last until December. Depending on the outcome, similar screens could then be rolled out elsewhere.

“Accurate, real-time, and easy-to-understand customer information is critical to passengers’ experience in stations and is key to putting our passengers first,” said John Halsall, Managing Director of Network Rail’s Southern region.
South Western Railway Delivers on Promise to Re-Paint Stations

South Western Railway has announced that the company is spending over £1.5 million on re-painting stations.

The first phase of the programme is already underway, with repainting currently taking place at 10 stations, including the flagship stations of Wimbledon, Portsmouth and Southsea and Basingstoke. The stations involved will have a complete re-paint, with both interior and exterior walls receiving a facelift.

Alan Penlington, South Western Railway’s Director of Customer Experience, said:

“When SWR took over the South Western franchise three years ago, we agreed that we would improve and maintain our stations. This significant investment in our stations is just one example of how we are honouring this commitment.

“Our stations sit at the heart of the communities we serve and play a key role in providing the quality service our customers rightly expect and deserve. This programme will smarten up a whole host of our stations and enhance the overall experience of using our network.”

The next question is, of course: When will it be our turn here at Honiton?

The Queen at “Bee Alston” Station

The Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership has been working with Bere Alston Scouts to improve the planters on the disused platform, which has an old waiting room and signal box from the time when the line extended to Tavistock, Okehampton and Exeter.

The Scouts planned to use the signal box to store their tools and as a potting shed. Unfortunately, there was one rather large problem standing in the way: a colony of 60,000 honeybees.

Removing the bees had to be done at just the right time of year so that the colony would survive relatively unscathed. July 16th was chosen as the date and Rebecca Catterall from DCRP met local beekeeper Dale Wood early at the station to begin eight hours of work.

It was important to find the Queen to enable the colony to carry on. By midday, after already working for 4 hours in what was becoming an increasingly warm day, the Queen was found, much to Dale’s relief. Three hours later most of the bees had been safely removed and five buckets full of honeycomb cut out.

Dale said, “A large colony that has been here for such a long period of time, when others have been decimated by disease, could actually be very important for the species.” Dale took the bees back to his hives in Cornwall where, with the Queen, they will establish a new colony.
Seaton Tramway Re-opens After Lockdown

In common with much of the tourism industry, Seaton Tramway re-opened on July 4th.

Passengers are asked to book in advance if possible, but tickets can still be purchased on the day.

Face coverings must be worn on all trams and where 2m social distancing cannot be achieved, unless passengers are under 11 or medically exempt.

Passengers are assigned a seat number when boarding to adhere to the 1m+ social distancing rule.

Seaton Tramway is a narrow gauge electric tramway, which runs between Seaton and Colyton, and opened in 1970. The line operates along part of the former Seaton branch line, which closed in March 1966. It ran a distance of 4.5 miles from Seaton to Seaton Junction Station, the remains of which can still be seen. The line originally opened in 1868.

Answers to July’s Quiz

Here are the answers to last month’s quiz was set by Andy Harrowell, South Western Railway’s Community Rail Manager (right). His quiz focused on the 11 Community Rail Partnerships on the SWR network.

The Community Rail Partnership with close links to the Swanage Railway is Purbeck.

The two nautically related CRPs which had diverted funding provided by SWR for their annual ‘Music on the Move’ performances to set up the ‘Food on the Move’ project, to organise meals for the most vulnerable, were Isle of Wight and Lymington to Brockenhurst.

The CRP which has taken on a lease for a redundant space at Swaythling, in order to return the redundant space back to community use is Three Rivers.

Our neighbouring CRP, which launched its 68 page Line Guide in 2019, is Blackmore Vale.

The newest CRP on the SWR network is Surrey Hills To South Downs.

And finally, the station on the Exeter to Waterloo Line, with a very active Friends group, which won the Small Station of the Year category at the National Rail Awards in 2019, was, as I am sure many readers guessed, Templecombe.

ANSWER TO THE QUICK QUIZ ON PAGE 1: The train shown arriving at Honiton consists of two Class 158 Units. It is rare to see two of these 2-carriage units coupled together. They are normally seen joined to a 3-carriage Class 159 unit, or operating alone on the evening shuttle service.