
Honiton Station in Bloom

The Friends of Honiton Station - July 2023



Introduction

This has been another busy and varied year for The Friends of Honiton Station. Inspired by Councillor Jenny Brown, who provides such dynamic leadership on the development of planning and artwork at the station, we have continued to move forward on several important fronts.

We continue to believe that an important role for Station Adoption groups like ourselves is to link the station to its community, and the community to its station.

The Adopt A Pot scheme created by Jenny, has given a number of local community groups an opportunity to showcase to passengers visiting the station the vital work that they do.

And we believe that the station is the perfect venue to promote and develop community-based art. To that end, we are working with a range of partners to bring even more exciting artwork to our station.

What follows gives you a flavour of some of the projects that have taken place at the station over the last twelve months, or which are presently under way.

New Planter and Community Groups

Last month saw the unveiling of a new planter at Honiton Station, created by Dementia Friendly Honiton.

The planter was designed by local artist Phil Creek. The project was financially supported by South Western Railway's Small Grants Fund and is part of a wider project in which a number of local community groups and charities have created planters, each decorated with unique artworks.

The project is co-ordinated by The Friends of Honiton Station, the station adoption group for the station and is led by Councillor Jenny Brown.

Paula Aldridge, South Western Railway's Community Rail Manager, said:

"Planters are one of the ways in which our station adopters make their stations brighter and more welcoming for customers.

They are also a project that groups can work on together, allowing them an opportunity to meet and socialise with friends.

"South Western Railway is delighted to have supported this project and look forward to seeing the planter and flowers brightening up Honiton station for a long time to come."



Left to Right: Martin Long, Heather Penwarden, Phil Creek and Councillor Jenny Brown

Heather Penwarden, Chair of Dementia Friendly Honiton, said:

"Our planter was designed with love by our Honiton Memory Cafe Friends and we are most grateful to local artist Phil Creek for bringing our creations to life on the trough.

"Our plants have been chosen to stimulate each of the five senses. We are all very pleased with the end result and hope the display will be enjoyed by all rail travellers passing through Honiton."

Martin Long, Chairman of The Friends of Honiton Station said:

"We are delighted to welcome Dementia Friendly Honiton to the station. Their group does incredibly important work in our town, and we are pleased to showcase their activities in this creative and interesting way."

The new planter joins others at the station created by groups including Honiton Carers, Honiton Health Matters, Open Arms East Devon, Parental Minds CIC, #BroCheck, Honiton Scouts, The Beehive and Honiton Carnival Club.



Each planter is looked after by members of their group, supported by The Friends of Honiton Station, and is decorated with an original artwork created by them.

Each planter is accompanied by a small plaque telling people visiting the station about the important work each group does in the community.

Left: Planter promoting Honiton Health Matters. Artwork by Brittany Lakin

Right: Bulbs add a seasonal touch to planters

All the planters have had their planting updated several times since last summer, including the planting of bulbs last autumn provided by SWR.

The planting has also been refreshed this summer, funded by The Friends of Honiton Station.

Heather Penwarden went on to say:

“Gardening is a hobby enjoyed by many people with dementia and it has been a pleasure for us all to come together on this project.”

“Honiton Memory Cafe Friends and volunteers have also enjoyed taking part in the Chatty Train initiative with an afternoon out for a cream tea up the line in Axminster. We all love our train station and enjoy sharing many happy memories of train journeys taken over the years.”

The trip to Axminster was a Try The Train session, run by South Western Railway’s local Community Champion, Stacey Retter, and facilitated by the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership. Members of The Friends of Honiton Station were delighted to see the group off on their journey.

One of our other community partners, Honiton Carers Support Group ran a series of ‘Walk and Chat’ outings around East Devon this Spring. It was made possible through Devon County Council’s Connecting You Fund, which aims to help tackle loneliness through transport.

The programme allowed those who attended to visit locations including Exeter, Sherborne, Newton Abbot, and Axminster. The focus of the trips was to provide support for carers and ex-carers, with walking tours and refreshment breaks for all of the day trips. The first session was again run as a Try the Train activity.

Winnie Cameron, Honiton Carers Support Group chairman said:

“We know how important it is for carers and ex-carers to be supported, as they spend so much time looking after others. The Connecting You Fund has enabled us to provide free transport for them to enjoy days out to explore Devon, being supported by peers and our ambassadors.”



Devon County Council's cabinet member for transport, councillor Andrea Davis, said:

"The Walk and Chat outings run by the Honiton Carers Support Group clearly demonstrate the benefit of the Connecting You Fund. Providing transport to activities such as these removes barriers, allowing groups that may be at risk of isolation, to access support."

Honiton Station as an Art Hub

This Summer, The Friends of Honiton Station are looking forward to bringing even more locally-inspired art to our wonderful station. We are working with a range of partners, including South Western Railway, the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and the Thelma Hulbert Gallery in Honiton, to showcase the incredible work of talented artists, including local school children.

Honiton-based artist Brittany Lakin is being commissioned to produce a piece of original art to decorate two sides of the large green shed on Platform 1. Brittany also produced artwork on two of the existing planters last year.



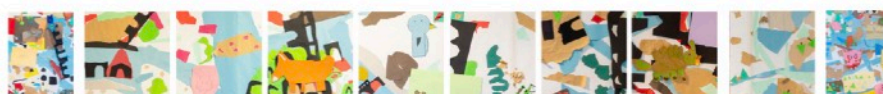
Brittany is an illustrator who started her creative practice in 2019. She received a BA (Hons) Illustration degree from Plymouth University in 2018 and began to pursue children's illustration.

Brittany's work focuses on establishing creative imagery and eye-catching designs through lighting and colour, using real world influences.

She mainly works with traditional media such as pencil and ink, drawing intuitively to create imagery often inspired by nature and organic forms.

We hope that this new artwork, and the station itself, will become a key focus of the planned Honiton Town Street Art Trail. We want as many people as possible coming to the town to see the planned trail to arrive by train.

We were invited by SWR to work with local children to produce artwork to decorate the inside of the footbridge. To this end, we became part of a local project co-ordinated by Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG).



Exeter Side (Not to scale)



Axminster Side (not to scale)

A collaborative collage was created by Honiton Primary School Year 5 students during workshops at THG. As part of the national 'The Wild Escape' project, art sessions were led by artist Alistair Lambert working in partnership with THG, Honiton Primary School, Allhallows Museum and the Blackdown Hills AONB.

The collage was inspired by the natural environment of the Blackdown Hills and fossils on display in Allhallows Museum. The fossils reveal that about 140,000 years ago Honiton was home to the hippopotamus, existing in the same climate as Africa today. The project explored changes in natural landscapes, revealing stories and connections which cut through time, posing questions about how we live, the creatures we coexist with and biodiversity in the UK.

THG was delighted to be invited by Honiton Town Council to showcase the creativity of local young people and celebrate the remarkable natural environment which surrounds Honiton.

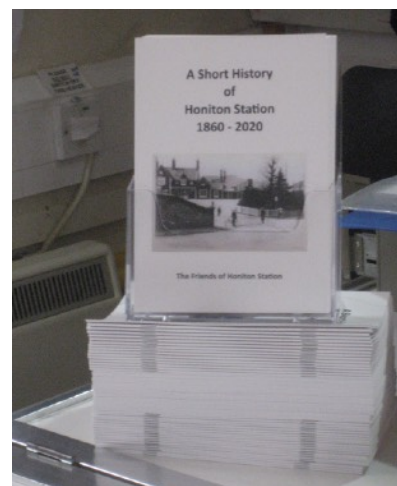
We, along with our industry partners, are commissioning the artist Alistair Lambert and THG to enable the designs to be reproduced on vinyl to wrap each of the inside panels of the footbridge at Honiton station.

Looking further ahead, we are still examining the possibility of painting the cream-coloured storage container under the footbridge on Platform 1. The front panel, the door surround and most of the door panel (plus the rest of the container if possible) could be painted in SWR blue, with the recessed centre door panel to have a vinyl, for instance showing a view out of an idealized rural train window.

Communications

This Spring saw the handing of the last of 1000 copies of the booklet outlining the history of the station which we wrote in 2020. We have now moved the booklet online, with visitors to the site able to read the booklet via an online reader.

The display of historical photographs remains in the waiting room, and a notice by the display gives details of how to access the website.



We continue to provide a service to local community groups, by advertising their meetings and activities on our Community Noticeboard which was provided by Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, and is maintained by one of our volunteers.



We have now produced 40 editions of our monthly newsletter, since its launch as a lockdown project in the Spring of 2020. It is available via our website to read online through the viewer, or to download.

There is an archive of all previous editions, as well as a set of key documents produced by the group, including our Annual Group Plan.

The newsletter is advertised on local community Facebook pages, and through local partners such as

The Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users Group. We were delighted when several members of RailFuture nominated the newsletter for its Rail User Group Newsletter of the Year.

Other Projects

We are continuing to work with Honiton Town Council and Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership to secure the locating of a Town Map board, similar to that in Lace Walk Car Park in the front car park of the station.

We were delighted that SWR responded to our on-going campaign for a defibrillator to be installed at the station, with its own project to install this vital life-saving equipment at all its staffed stations.

Engagement with SWR

We supported the campaign by our Rail User Group partners to bring back timetable posters at local stations, and pay tribute to all those at SWR, especially to Tim Mears, our excellent Station Manager, who made this happen.

We continue to raise with the company issues that we believe are of interest and concern to passengers, including printed timetables, the number and range of posters on display at the station, as well as operational issues and problems.

We are grateful to all those at SWR who engage with us on these matters, including the Community Rail Manager Paula Aldridge, who supports us in so many ways, and Andrew Ardley, the Regional Development Manager.

We are grateful to Paula for the regular Community Live Teams calls that she organises, which allow Station Adoption Chairs to meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest, and to hear from key colleagues at SWR.

We engaged with SWR when the recent proposals for Ticket Office closure were announced. We took a full part in the consultation, sending in a detailed response to Transport Focus. We also contributed to the response from the Salisbury to Exeter Rail Users Group.

As we always try to do, we sent a copy of our response to all the relevant managers at SWR, and have made it clear that we are ready to engage constructively with the company on this matter, as we try to do on all other issues.

Conclusion

These are not easy times for Community Rail. However, the team at The Friends of Honiton Station continue to be fully committed to supporting our station, its staff and all those who work to make the passenger experience the very best that it can be.

We continue to strive to connect our station to its community and the community to its station. We look forward to continuing our work in 2023 - 2024.

For further information about The Friends of Honiton Station and to read our monthly newsletter, check out our website: friendsofhonitonstation.org.uk