



FAST TRACK

Update on the benefits being delivered by volunteers from local communities along the Shakespeare Line, collectively known as the **Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL)**

Renovated, Repurposed and Reopened The Station – Henley in Arden

THURSDAY 22ND February 2024 was a special day for the Shakespeare Line as it marked the official reopening of the station building at Henley in Arden.

The renovation of the station has seen a truly tremendous commitment and effort by individuals from Henley in Arden with fantastic support from local businesses, suppliers and even national utilities.

The Friends of the Shakespeare Line has also played its part throughout with support to the volunteers. You can read more overleaf about the delivery of this groundbreaking project.



Lord Peter Henty of Richmond Hill, Chair of Network Rail and Angela Okey, Chair of the Friends of Henley Railway Station CIC officially open Henley in Arden's renovated station building.

Planting on the Shakespeare Line 2024

Prospero uses magic to conjure a storm and torment the survivors of a shipwreck, including the King of Naples and Prospero's treacherous brother, Antonio. Prospero's slave, Caliban, plots to rid himself of his master, but is thwarted by Prospero's spirit-servant Ariel. The King's young son Ferdinand, thought to be dead, falls in love with Prospero's daughter Miranda. Their celebrations are cut short when Prospero confronts his brother and reveals his identity as the usurped Duke of Milan. The families are reunited and all conflict is resolved. Prospero grants Ariel his freedom and prepares to leave the island.

THE TEMPEST
A comedy by William Shakespeare
"We are such stuff as dreams are made on"
ACT 4 SCENE 1

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) was born at Stratford-upon-Avon and was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist.

WELCOME TO

WHITLOCKS END

This station is supported and cared for by local volunteers

As part of the route called the "SHAKESPEARE LINE" we have chosen a story from our world famous Bard

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Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Discover Shakespeare's story and his enduring legacy when you visit his family homes in Stratford-upon-Avon. Start at his birthplace, explore Anne Hathaway's Cottage and his final home at New Place.

More information and how to volunteer at this station is available at friendsofsl.org.uk

An example of the planter boards - this is the one for Whitlocks End - that will accompany each Shakespeare silhouette.

A big thanks to West Midlands Trains for their support for this year's planting along the Shakespeare Line. We are pleased that the support will now enable volunteers at all our stations develop their planting themes as we see the project "Bringing Shakespeare to the Shakespeare Line" come to life along the line later this year enabling each station to express its interpretation on the Shakespeare Play that they have adopted.

The usual arrangements apply with planting, any questions or for more help please contact Neil Morgan our Treasurer.



Planting at The Lakes

Completion of the Renovation and Repurposing of Henley in Arden's Original GWR Station Building



The interior of Henley in Arden Station Building on completion 22 February 2024

By far, the renovation and repurposing of the derelict original GWR station building at Henley in Arden has taken up a tremendous amount of time and commitment over the past 18 months. The scale of the works, the level of administration, the need to ensure safety, competency and insurance, the need for ongoing liaison, and the emergence of unforeseen structural problems have all taken up much time and commitment.

That said, the Friends of Henley Station CIC (FHRS) have prevailed, and it's been crucial to have the tenacity of their Chair, Angela Okey, leading FHRS.

Both the Chair, Fraser Pithie and Treasurer, Neil Morgan, have been involved in providing support to the Friends of Henley Station, which is now a Community Interest Company.

The full scale and understanding of taking on a derelict station building is now completely understood and should not be entered into lightly, nor is it for the faint-hearted. Nevertheless, that tenacity and perseverance of FHRS has finally paid off. Henley in Arden's original GWR station building has been renovated and repurposed in less than a year!

With the support of Network Rail, West Midlands Railway, Henley-in-Arden Parish Council and the Railway Heritage Trust, FHRS carried out structural repairs to the building before reworking and renovating the space which now houses a fantastic community bar and lounge.

The building accommodates its own micro-brewery which local residents will run, with their products being served in the bar alongside other local beers, local wines, soft drinks and snacks. The lounge will provide a multi-functional community space, equipped with IT facilities, which can be hired for small functions.

Peter, Lord Hendy, chair of Network Rail and who opened the renovated station building, said: "It's an absolute pleasure to officially open this brilliant new community space that has been created in the old station building. It is wonderful to see partners and volunteers coming together to put the railway at the heart of the local community. I'd like to thank everybody involved in this project and I hope passengers from Henley and beyond will experience the benefits that this repurposed building brings for years to come."

Angela Okey, chair of Friends of Henley Railway Station, said: "After living in Henley for several years and walking my dogs past the derelict station building every morning, it saddened me to see the state of disrepair of what was once an iconic and beautiful building. The aim was always to make this a community project and by involving local people with the same love of their town, it has been a delight to work on and watch the enthusiasm of everyone. "As well as being a welcoming meeting place for residents, we hope it will attract more footfall to our beautiful town of Henley-in-Arden, which in turn will support our local businesses and traders."

Tim Hedley-Jones, Executive Director of the Railway Heritage Trust, said: "We are pleased to have supported this project with grants to restore the building, and we have presented the station with a plaque to record its history which Lord Peter Hendy has unveiled today. It is a testament to the community that they have brought the building back from dereliction."

Jonny Wiseman, Customer Experience Director at West Midlands Railway, said: "We are thrilled to see the opening of a new community space which will offer a new lease of life for Henley-in-Arden Station, and we were delighted to be able to support the project through our Customer and Communities Improvement Fund. Community projects play an important role in enhancing the customer experience at local stations and Henley-in-Arden will hugely benefit from this refurbishment."

The Education Express at Woodrush Academy

IT'S BEEN NON-STOP at Woodrush Academy situated in Worcestershire ever since the secondary school chose to adopt and look after nearby Wythall railway station.

It's quite a story and it demonstrates how the community and organisations can all come together and make a real and significant difference. Starting with looking after the station, installing planters and producing local artwork for the waiting shelters, Woodrush wanted to do more.

That's where Friends of the Shakespeare Line came in who brokered key relationships with West Midlands Trains & Network Rail. The relationships have gone from strength to strength providing real opportunities for students at Woodrush.



Jay Barber, Headteacher at Woodrush Academy in conversation with Lord Peter Hendy, Chair of Network Rail on a visit to the school on 22 February 2024

So far at Woodrush...

- Planters installed by Earlswood Garden and Landscape Centre, planted out and maintained by students
- Artwork depicting interpretations based on the history of Wythall and district.
- Built, uploaded and launched on global **Geocaching.com** - the first railway based geocaching adventure based on the Shakespeare Line.
- Launched the first City & Guilds NVQ 2 course and vocational qualification for Horticultural Studies based on railway volunteering. Now running and in its second year.
- Students presented to West Midlands Trains Stakeholder Conference.
- Students attained work experience placements at Network Rail.
- Network Rail working with Woodrush Academy to influence and contribute towards building closer engagement to enable students from Year 8 onwards consider options that benefit modern apprenticeship opportunities should they wish to pursue them.



Freya Cooksey a student at Woodrush Academy joins Denise Wetton, Director for Central Route at Network Rail, Lord Peter Hendy, Chair of Network Rail, Fraser Pithie, Chair of Friends of the Shakespeare Line, Sara Lom from The Tree Council and Gille Bulteel, Tutor at Woodrush Academy as they plant a tree on 22 February 2024 commemorating the visit of Lord Hendy to the school.

Shirley has got the bug...

IT'S UNIQUE AND IT WAS 'MADE IN SHIRLEY'! - Sue and David Shrimpton, together with Mike Revell, look after Shirley railway station and as many will know the ex GWR station is immediately adjacent to a builders supplies yard operated by E H Smith.

E H Smith are a long standing, local and much respected company and early last year Friends of the Shakespeare Line and Friends of Henley Railway Station approached them to enquire if they would support the renovation of Henley's station building. The answer was a big YES.

As a result, E H Smith made the project at Henley much easier with their contacts across the various trades and the help they gave with competitive prices ensuring the Henley project was able to make every pound go as far as possible.

But... it didn't and hasn't stopped there. E H Smith enquired was there anything else they could do to support the community and the railway. Our answer was a definite yes and soon E H Smith met with Sue, David and Mike and discussions started regarding Shirley station. Within a couple of weeks of the discussions staff at the building supplies company had made their very own Bug Hotel and deployed it on a large redundant area where Shirley signal box used to be situated.



The specially built "Bug Hotel" at Shirley station. E H Smith will be continuing to support the Shirley volunteers from now on so 'watch this space'.



Spring Road Investment

The 2023 Customer and Communities Investment Fund (CCIF), operated by West Midlands Trains, invited bids to the fund from community groups in the summer of last year.

FOSL chose Spring Road as the station to base its bid on and was successful. The bid has provided new welcome boards at the station as well as new 'daycation' boards that have been placed on and have brightened up the waiting shelters.



Spring Road station is looked after by Sue Weake and the 260th Birmingham Scouts and it's fair to say that Sue has persevered despite several setbacks that have been caused by anti-social behaviour. FOSL volunteers have always been and remain on hand to support one another when needed and that's happened a couple of times a Spring Road. Sue's determination is inspirational and last year the Principal Route Engineer for Network Rail, Federica Labanca and West Midlands Trains Director of Property, Rob Goode, visited the station with the volunteers to consider what can be done to help lift the standard of stations that are situated in inner city locations.

Consequently, several improvements have been made and are still ongoing as at Easter 2024 so watch this space as things at Spring Road change. Spring Road station, and particularly Sue Weake, shows how volunteers can make a real contribution and difference. Mention is also due to FOSL Trustee Howard Hemmings from neighbouring Hall Green station. Howard has been and remains very supportive of Spring Road and has provided much help especially with administration of the CCIF grant and works.

Unsung Sandra



PASSENGERS at Hall Green station are treated to something unique. The station has its very own poetry boards; in fact it has two. One in the Booking Office waiting room and one on the platform.

Poetry is displayed for passengers to read as they wait for their train, and many passengers do just that! They read the poetry and often comment how much it makes a difference to them to take time out on a normal day just for a couple of minutes and enjoy reading the poetry which is changed each month.

It's all down to Sandra Hateley who is one of the station adopters at Hall Green and is responsible for the poetry boards which she has been doing for several years at the station. However, that's only half the story because as well as helping Howard Hemmings look after the station's floral displays, she has also been busy looking after Birmingham Moor St station too!

The garden that is located between Platforms 2 & 3 at Moor Street were in a pretty poor state when a task force of FOSL volunteers descended upon the station to help Chiltern Railways and Network Rail complete a makeover of the station in preparation for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

From that day onwards the garden at Birmingham Moor St station has been Sandra's cause and she has spent hours and hours volunteering and working hard to restore the garden to the condition it can now be in which is much improved. Sandra's efforts have also been recognised too. FOSL was so pleased when Chiltern Railways, who manage Birmingham Moor Street station, acknowledged Sandra's efforts. Chiltern named Sandra "Gardening Hero of the Year" at a Stakeholder event in October 2023. We are so pleased that Sandra has been recognised for her tireless efforts.



More information



Supporting around 80 volunteers at 18 stations

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Birmingham Moor St | Small Heath |
| Tyseley | Spring Road |
| Hall Green | Yardley Wood |
| Shirley | Whitlocks End |
| Wythall | Earlswood |
| The Lakes | Wood End |
| Danzey | Henley in Arden |
| Wootton Waven | Claverdon |
| Bearley | Wilmcote |
| Stratford upon Avon Parkway | |
| Stratford upon Avon | |

COMMUNITY BAR OPENING HOURS

THURS - FRI 4pm - 10pm
 SAT 12pm - 10pm
 SUN 12pm - 3pm

PRIVATE HIRE VENUE

Available for private hire*

Corporate Events
 Meetings
 Wakes

*outside of normal opening hours

Visit thestationhenley.co.uk for more information

If you would like to volunteer at one of the Shakespeare Line stations just contact us at our email address. We welcome new volunteers at any of the 18 stations where FOSL volunteers are active. Our email address is;

FOSLvolunteers@protonmail.com

friendsl.org.uk

@FriendsSLine