

Meet the Bat & Ball Station team:

Linda Larter: Sevenoaks Town Council Clerk and Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership Chairman. Tom, Debbie, Adele: Station Café staff. Derrick: Station Caretaker. Iona Green: Heritage Engagement Officer. Finally our Volunteers who help make each of our events successful

Welcome to the first edition of our Bat & Ball Station Newsletter post Covid-19. We had originally produced these Newsletters before the Covid-19 Pandemic but sadly it died down over the past few years. We will be producing these four editions a year that we hope will inform, engage, and keep you up to date with what our Station has to offer.

After a steady start into 2022, we've begun to get the Station back on its tracks, creating new events and thinking about how our Station can be incorporated within our community. Previously before Covid-19, the Station has hosted events which were mostly oriented around the opening of the station; Time Capsule event, History Lectures, and Open Days. These events were popular, however as Covid began in 2019 the Station closed down resulting in us losing our audience. Post Covid has provided us with a few challenges, but slowly we are getting a good foot hold with our community again. It's surprising how many people aren't aware of the Station existence, the café, or that you can hire the space out- even though they might live Sevenoaks!



Café Staff Tom and Debbie

Aside from our Station events, we have our Station Café working hard in the background. As winter has settled in, it's begun to get cold in the mornings and evenings. Our bubbly

café is a great place for a rest stop before exploring our Darent Valley Line or enjoying a crisp morning walk around Kent Wildlife Reserve.

Opening times: Monday - Friday
6:30am - 2pm
Closed from 24th Dec- 2nd Jan 2023



An old photo but the Station looking wonderful in evening

Station Awards 2022

Beginning the year with a good start, our Station Platform Loo's were awarded Loo of the Year 2022! In our restoration project, having a functioning station toilet was very important issue; before the restoration, the Station was in disuse and there was no functional toilet which was a great concern for many residences in the Sevenoaks Community. We're proud to have been awarded this, as it not only shows how important a Station toilet is but how hard our staff work to keep it in tip top condition!



Loo of the Year Award to the Station



Cycle Planter gifted to the Station by The Cycle Friendly Scheme

This year we also welcomed our Cycle Friendly Accreditation for the Station Café. We are keen to make the whole of our Station more accessible for all, and being environmentally friendly. Being awarded a Cycle Friendly Place 2022 means we have secure bike friendly storage, bike maintenance kit, list of cycle repair shops near by, cycle clothes wall hook, and our warm café to cyclists to visit! We also received a free cycle planter from the Cycle Friendly scheme, which Linda our gardener has kindly planted up for us!

What's been happening at the Station?

Events throughout the year



Arts & Crafts Workshops

Our first workshop from this season was our Art & Craft session, which of course had to be train themed! The workshop was tailored to children aged between 3- 11years, with over 80+ children attending. Families were able to make paper station buildings, trains, Station masters hats, and much more... it proved to be a great hit, with families coming back and asking for more workshops.

In 2023, we're going to be designing a few simple train and Victorian themed crafts to do at home via our website. These will be free printable downloads using recyclable materials at home, so families can colour, cut, and build at home!

Heritage Open Day

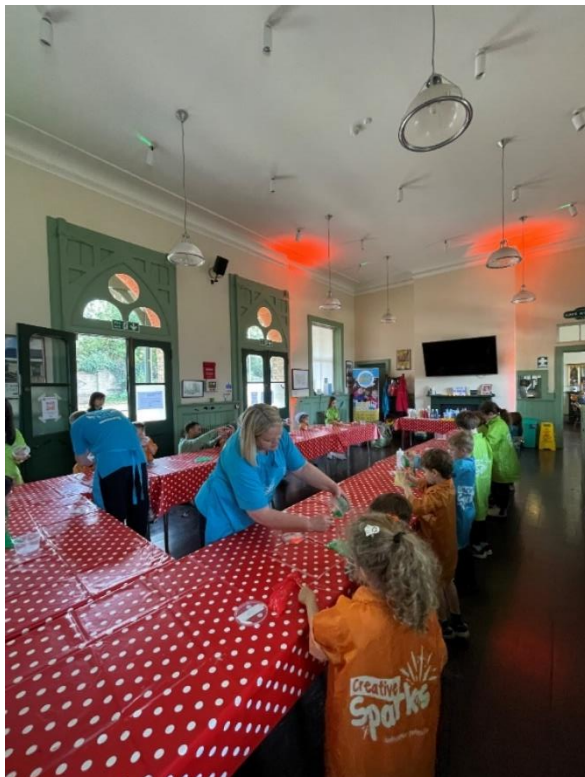
Heritage Open Day is England's largest festival of history and culture, every September thousands of volunteers across England help celebrate our history and culture for free. We take part in this event to celebrate Bat & Ball Station, and to bring alive our local Heritage landmark for our community. It is also the chance for the local community to discover why Queen Victoria came to Bat & Ball Station, how her long rein shaped Britain and the introduction to the first industrial revolution. Each person can enjoy afternoon tea with her majesty Queen Victoria, whilst learning the Victorian etiquette and how to become a Victorian themselves through dress up! Bat & Ball Station also teamed up with Swanley Park, where people could enjoy the park but also travel by vintage buses to get there.

Although we had all worked hard to design the event, sadly the event had to be cancelled due to the Queen's passing. We believed that as it was a Heritage event and the same week as her passing, it would be insensitive to continue on with the festivities. We would like to thank all those who were involved in the organising of the event; hopefully 2023 Heritage Open Day will be bigger and better!

Halloween and St John's Hill Pumpkin Trail

We kicked off Halloween at the Station by designing a free pumpkin trail on St Johns Hill. The trail was sponsored by Wealden Properties and the pumpkins were also sourced by Aspens Garden Centre in Tonbridge. The trail map could be picked up from the Station café and on our website (printable download); families would count the pumpkins they see in shop windows and collect a sweet from the Café as a reward. It proved to be a successful trail, with over 20 shops involved!

On Saturday 29th October, we hosted our Spooky Halloween workshop collaborating with The Creation Station; children making sticky slime, funky headdresses for Halloween, and eating our delicious Station café cake. Before the event started at 2pm, our new nifty volunteers Edwina, Edwina's two sons Luke and Antonio, and Marianne got to work fast decorating the Station with spooky ornaments. I would like to thank all our volunteers for their efforts and The Creation Station staff- it wouldn't have been a success without them!



Halloween Workshop collab with The Creation Station

Winter at Bat & Ball Station

Sevenoaks is very busy over Christmas time, starting in November when the High Street Christmas lights are switched on. We believed it be important that the Station host a few Christmas themed events for the Northern Part of Sevenoaks, keeping us connected with the Christmas spirit and of course celebrating how the Victorians brought Christmas to life!

To start, our Christmas lights were up and ready by the 1st December, transforming our Station into it's own wonderland and ready for our Station's first Christmas craft market on the 3rd December.

Twelve stall holders joined us, showcasing knitting, chocolate, jewelry, skincare and more; all individual businesses and a few new businesses from the Sevenoaks area. The Station café opened especially during this market as well, making a good profit and driving customers through to the market. As this was our first market, there were a few tweaks to be made and things to be improved for next year!



Christmas Craft Market

Father Christmas made his special appearance at the Station on the 10th December, bringing all his Christmas cheer and presents for children who visited him in his wonderful grotto. As part of the event, children could make Victorian inspired crafts such as Christmas crackers, paper angel decoration, and Christmas cards for Father Christmas. Children had a wonderful time meeting him and learning a little about how Christmas through the Victorians. I would like to thank our Father Christmas, who kindly gifted his time to make all the children and families very happy! If you'd like to see the cards made at the event, they are on display in the Station Cafe.



Visitor holding a Christmas gift from Father Christmas

Warm Welcome Space

The purposes of these spaces are for people who might be struggling with the cost of energy crisis and would like to visit a non-judgmental warm space. Around the UK, many households are struggling with the cost of living, often having to make the decision between feeding their family or turning the heating on. Due to this, Councils have been taking the initiative to set up 'signposts' for public places that cater to families. Although our café is open during the week until 2pm, we wanted to open up our Station Booking Hall for families or individuals needing a free warm space and also chat to volunteers who assist running the mornings.



The Station a few days before the snow came, it looks very cold!

We have welcomed these mornings by opening up our Station building with the occasional talk, teas & coffees, a second hand free coat rack, and book swap bookcase; all of which are free. Our new volunteers have been keen to help out by referring speakers for talks and offering to volunteer on the day.

Forget-Me-Not Cafe

Similar to our Warm Spaces mornings, we have started up a new Forget-Me-Not Café at the Station. Forget-Me-Not Cafés are a place where anyone with memory loss, their carer or family may find friendship with like-minded people and signpost to more formal help if so desired. These cafes are a life line for many families, to feel safe and enjoy some happy social time over a cup of tea or two.

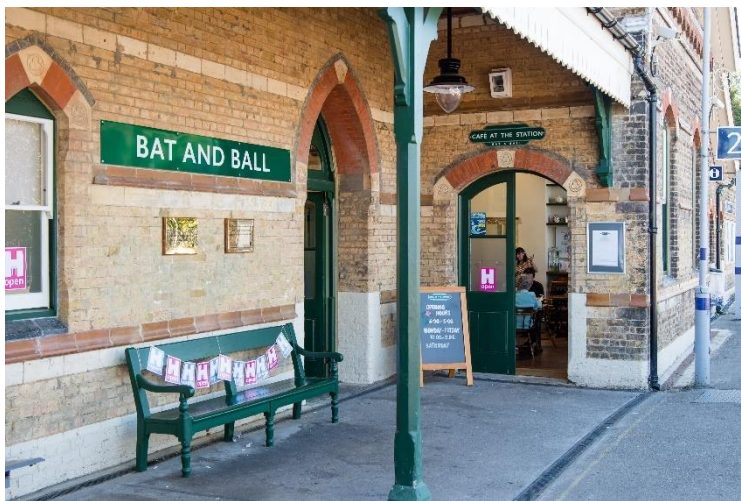


Forget-Me-Not Cafe opening

On Wednesday 16th November, we hosted a volunteer meet and greet morning with one of the founders from Forget-Me-Not Café Elaine to discuss the volunteer role and learn more about Forget-Me-Not Cafés in Sevenoaks. It was great to see a few locals who aren't volunteers for the Station attend the meeting and share their insights for the café.

South East & Chatham Style Bench

When we first opened the Station, our wonderful South East & Chatham Style Bench has been displayed outside on Platform 2. The bench has added to our Heritage status at the Station but also providing seating for those visiting the café, Station, or railway. We recently enquired into funding a replica of this bench to match the original and will replace the current metal South Eastern bench in situ. Railway Heritage Trust has kindly rewarded us with a grant for the bench, and which will be built at the beginning of 2023.



Heritage bench at Heritage Open Days in 2019

however as a functional railway track, our station can come be damaged in all sorts of ways by the public. We're currently looking into the restoration of the bench however in the meantime our Station Caretaker has kindly cleaned up the bench whilst it's still on the platform.

Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership

Darent Valley Commissioned a set of 6 artworks promoting the stations along the Darent Valley Line. The posters were designed by the wonderful Kit Boyd who designed original artworks for each Station; Swanley, Eynsford, Shoreham, Otford, Bat & Ball, and Sevenoaks. The artist was commissioned last year 2021, where he spent 6 months exploring and absorbing the relevant areas; capturing details and speaking to local residents. From this, he created designs using traditional fine art techniques using linocut printing and two watercolour paintings. Each of these posters have been available for purchase through Bat & Ball Station café in sizes ranging from A4 to A1. Tim Higginson has worked closely with Kit Boyd and DVCRP to help produce the final prints, taking inspiration from travel posters in the 1920's and 30's. Tim has also helped produce A5 cards, which are also available at Bat & Ball Station.



New DVCRP poster cards

On another note, as part of the Darent Valley line, Eynsford was another station that needed a bit of restoration work similar to Bat & Ball Station in 2018. The works are finally complete, with a wonderful new Station meeting room and all the windows are no longer boarded up. If you have a moment to visit the Station, please do so!

A last note

With a New Year brings new opportunities for our Station. There are a few events in the Station diary, however we are always open to new ideas. If there are any events which you think would work with our community and the Station, please don't hesitate to contact me. As Christmas is less than a week away, I'd like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Thank you,
Iona Green



Current damaged bench

Sadly, since this our original railway bench was damaged by vandals; wanting to lift the bench off the ground aside from it being bolted to the platform, and resulting in the bench arms being snapped off. It's a great shame