

Who's Who..

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For more copies of this newsletter or for a larger text version, please contact Ian Paterson at the above address.

Useful websites

Southeastern Railway:	southeasternrailway.co.uk
National Rail Enquiries:	nationalrail.co.uk
Kent Community Rail Partnership:	ruralkent.org.uk
Association of Community Rail Partnerships:	acorp.uk.com
Traveline Public Transport Information	traveline.org.uk
Nu-Venture Coaches:	nu-venture.co.uk
Arriva Buses Southern Counties:	arrivabus.co.uk
Medway Valley Countryside Partnership	medwayvalley.org
Kent Wildlife Trust:	kentwildlife.org.uk
Passenger Focus:	passengerfocus.org



Explore Kent by Train

Use the train to explore the Medway Valley and the Isle of Sheppey. That is the message of a new leaflet produced by the Kent C.R.P.

Aimed at both local residents and visitors to the area, the Line Guide highlights the historical attractions of Rochester and Chatham, the facilities of Maidstone as well as the many riverside walks and countryside attractions along the Medway Valley Line.



Norman Kemp of Nu-Venture Coaches and David Eaton of KCC show off copies of the new Line Guide.

It also highlights the maritime history of Queenborough and Sheerness and the wonderful views of the Thames Estuary accessible via "SwaleRail".

30,000 copies have been printed and are available from most manned stations in the area as well as from Council offices and local libraries. Copies will also be distributed to stations and Tourist Information Offices around Kent and Medway. The leaflet can also be seen on the Kent Community Rail Partnership website.

Maidstone Borough Councillor Mike Fitzgerald who is Chairman of the Medway Valley Line Partnership said "The Medway Valley is a wonderful area, but not as well known as it might be. This Line Guide will help promote the area and encourage people to access facilities without adding to road congestion or pollution. Using the train is much the best option!"

The Snodland Festival 2007



The Snodland Chamber of Commerce is co-ordinating an action packed two week celebration of Snodland, with sponsorship from Berkeley Homes.

Prime event is the Picnic in the Park on Saturday 14th July – an open air concert featuring the Drifters as well as a Tribute to Diana Ross and supporting Groups.

Other events planned include a Carnival Night Dance on Saturday 7th, a Victorian Evening on Monday 9th, Hit Music from Broadway to the West End on

Tuesday 17th and Wednesday 18th, Jazz on a Summers evening in the Cricket Meadow on Monday 16th and a Sportsman's Dinner with Jimmy Greaves on Thursday 19th. A Classical Spectacular with the City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra will be staged on Thursday 12th.

Also on offer are historic Snodland Walks, Olde Tyme Music Hall, and many other events.

Further details are available through the Snodland Town Council website by selecting the Town Talk Link or logging on to www.town-talk.net.

Why not travel by train?

Services on the Medway Valley Line run regularly from Strood and Maidstone, with at least an hourly service from stations south of Maidstone. The last train from Snodland to Strood on weekdays is at 22.31 and on Saturdays at 21.45. To Maidstone, the last ones are at 22.45 and 21.44 respectively. All other times are available by contacting National Rail enquiries on 08457 48 49 50.

We're a Hit!

If you haven't already done so, why not check out our community rail pages at www.ruralkent.org.uk

All the Medway Valley Line newsletters can be downloaded as can the new Line Guide.



First MVL Stakeholder Meeting

southeastern.



The Medway Valley Line Partnership aims to hold an annual meeting of "Stakeholders" who have an interest in the line and the work of the Partnership. The first such meeting since the establishment of the Partnership was held at Snodland Town Hall on February 23rd.

We were delighted to welcome Vince Lucas, Commercial Director for train operators Southeastern who told the meeting of the first 10 months of his company's franchise and what the future held. He said that all stations on the franchise would be repainted and get new signage over the next four years. More ticket machines would be installed and ticket office opening would be more reliable.

In fact an action plan of improvements was being drawn up for each station on the franchise and Southeastern would work with the Partnership in deciding what was required for Medway Valley Line stations.

Vince acknowledged that there was too much fare evasion on the line and that this was a key problem for Southeastern to address.

Also speaking at the meeting was Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Link Manager for Southeastern with "Passenger Focus", the independent champion for rail passengers.

Tunde explained that Passenger Focus exists to get the best deal for Britain's rail passengers. They lobby the government and train companies and also undertake research and surveys into the customers experience.

Passenger Focus conducts surveys twice a year to find out what passengers think of rail surveys. The latest results show that 78% of Southeasterns customers are satisfied with the service - an increase on previous results. However, satisfaction with cleanliness, availability of staff and value for money have all dipped so these areas need attention. Finally, Tunde said that Passenger Focus supports the work of the many Community Rail Partnerships around the country, including the Medway Valley Line.

Focus On East Farleigh

In this edition we take a look at East Farleigh Station, an attractively situated rural station that still retains its traditional signal box, crossing gates and main station building.

Situated close to the medieval stone road bridge, its immediate environment has remained largely unchanged over the years. The station is a very handy stopping off point for walks along the banks of the River Medway to Maidstone in one direction and to Watlington and Yalding in the other. It also provides a quick and direct train service to Maidstone and Paddock Wood.



The locks overlooked by the station offer the chance on a fine day to watch pleasure craft passing through and the Victory Pub on the other side of the station offers pleasant views from its outside garden as well as a full range of drinks and lunchtime meals. Why not give it a try? Copies of the local train timetable and the Rail Partnerships newsletters and Line Guide are usually stocked at the Victory. We are pleased to be able to bring to you a special meal and drink offer for rail travelers.

East Farleigh Station has recently benefited from the installation of new improved lighting and the old station building has had new guttering fitted, with the Maidstone bound platform receiving improvements to the earth bank edging that would help with any future landscaping.



Southeastern, with help from Department for Transport funding are also intending to improve station signage. The Rail Partnership is now keen to see this station adopted by local community members or organisations. Anyone interested in receiving further information should contact Ian Paterson or Nigel Whitburn – details are given elsewhere in the newsletter.

Special Offer At The Victory

25% off a main meal and/or 50p off a pint of beer.

The new landlord is offering these discounts to holders of a valid rail ticket to East Farleigh dated for the day of purchase until **30th June 2007**.

“**The Victory**” is right next to **East Farleigh** station and overlooks the River Medway.

The newly redecorated pub features a restaurant area and garden. Why not leave the car at home, take the train and treat yourself to a drink and meal at “**The Victory**”. Meals are served from **12.00 to 15.00** each day.

Phone **01622 726053** for details.



Cheap Day Return Fares to East Farleigh from Medway Valley Line Stations

Paddock Wood	£3.10	New Hythe	£2.90
Yalding	£2.40	Snodland	£3.00
Watlington	£1.90	Halling	£3.40
Maidstone West	£1.50	Cuxton	£4.10
Maidstone Barracks	£1.50	Strood	£4.40
Aylesford	£2.60		

Newer Trains - Better Ride

As planned, most journeys on the Medway Valley line have been operated by newer "refreshed" two coach electric trains (seating 168) since December 11th. The old 1979 three coach trains (seating 219) are now covering just a few journeys each day.

The newer trains have an onboard toilet and a much brighter and lighter ambience – so if you have not yet tried them, why not do so?

We would welcome feedback on whether you find they are more comfortable, provide easier access to and from the platforms and if there any instances of overcrowding in peak periods.



Class 466 train

Keeping You Covered

With most stations on the line being unstaffed, passenger protection from the elements is largely reliant on a number of metal framed shelters that were provided in the nineteen eighties and early nineties.

Unfortunately, at many locations these have been subjected to vandalism, particularly in recent years, leading to long term loss of glazing. Southeastern refurbished all the shelters along the line last Autumn, at the same time replacing the back glazing with metal on those most often attacked.

Whilst sporadic damage is still being noted along the line, Southeastern are responding to such incidents quickly and full repairs are being carried out as soon as possible. We hope you notice the difference. Additionally, the British Transport Police have recently stepped up their patrols in those station areas most affected by vandalism.

If you notice any crime being committed on railway property, call free on 0800 40 50 40 to report it.



Good news on the Fares front!

With the January national rail fare increases, local fares along the line have remained largely unchanged! However, day return and cheap day return tickets to London have increased. The average Southeastern fare increase amounts to 6.3% (a figure based on a Department for Transport formula of RPI +3%) but increases from Medway Valley stations have been a bit lower than this so our line has fared quite well.

By how much did petrol prices and bus fares increase during 2006?

"Stands The Clock at 10 to 3..."

We may not hear it ticking again, but hopefully the hands of the clock at Paddock Wood will soon be telling the time. The MVL Partnership has obtained a grant from The Railway Heritage Trust towards the cost of converting the clock to quartz drive. Further grant funding is still required, but we are hopeful that the time will move beyond 12.53 soon!



Unfortunately, the old clockwork mechanism is beyond economic repair and will be removed, but at least some of the parts will be used as spares to restore other old time pieces.

A few copies of the souvenir booklet marking the 150th Anniversary of the Strood to Maidstone West Line are still available. They can be obtained from the Tourist Information Offices in Maidstone and Rochester for £2.00.

Tour de France comes to Kent

If you are a cycling fan then July 8th is a big day for you when the Tour de France comes to Kent.

Many roads in the county will be closed for up to 5 hrs on the day, so if you want to see the race live use the train to get to the many places where the race goes close to stations - including Strood and Maidstone West. If you are not a fan, but just need to get out and about you may still need to use the train - the roads will be hell!



7th & 8th JULY : PROLOGUE & STAGE 1