

A vibrant field of purple lavender flowers in full bloom, with green foliage and a blurred background of trees and a building.

Darent Valley CRP Poster Project 2022

Community Rail Network

Tourism Seminar

12 July 2022

Sarah Newman, Darent Valley CRP Rail Officer

Who we are



The **Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership (DVCRP)** was set up in 2019 by Sevenoaks Town and Sevenoaks District Council in partnership with other local town and parish councils, to bring local communities together with the railway.

Aims:

- highlight the potential of the stations from Swanley to Sevenoaks, including Eynsford, Shoreham, Otford and Bat & Ball (Thameslink and Southeastern)
- explore how the stations can be improved/brought back to life
- collaborate with members of the community - who advise on and help with that process
- plan how to achieve those aims (permissions, grants, timescales)

The context

- Two towns, four villages, set in Kent Downs AONB in West Kent; rare chalk grasslands and river; very close to London/M25/M20/M26; plenty of walking and heritage destinations; lots of day-trippers; a 'honeypot'.
- Swanley on the edge of London, fairly urban with a modern character and a very popular 60 acre park.
- Villages in-between very picturesque, lots of walking trails (North Downs Way, Darent Valley Path, Samuel Palmer Trail), several big tourist attractions (mainly heritage), UK's biggest lavender farm and a popular vineyard.
- Sevenoaks an old market town, lively shops/cafes/restaurants, lot of commuters. Lots of schools. Excessive traffic, local but also tourism-related



Target audiences for a 'come by train' campaign

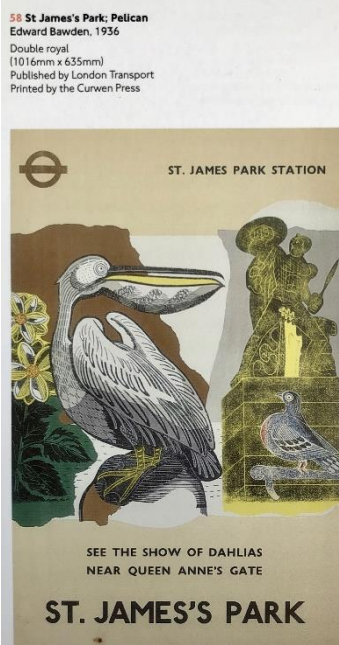
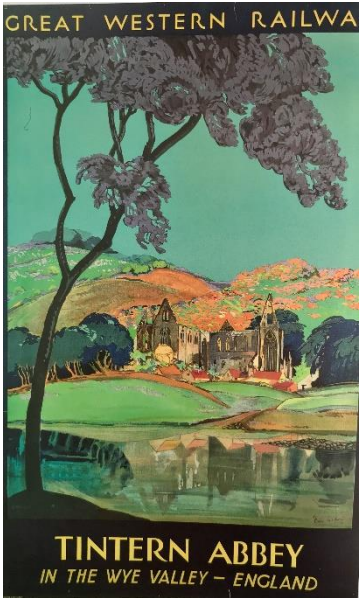
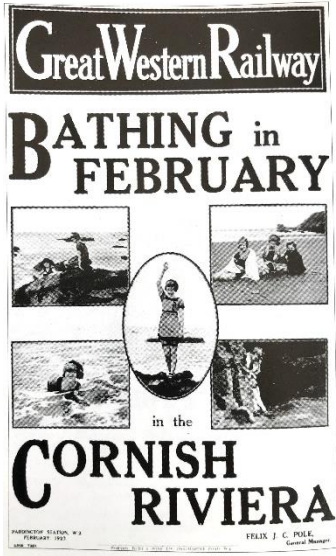
- Train line **connects with South East London** (two an hour), passing through places like Bromley South, Catford, Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill (Camberwell), with plenty of carless young people and families to attract. Plus older walkers. 46% of Londoners don't own a car and car ownership has begun to decline. But don't forget Sevenoaks to Hastings and Otford to Maidstone/Ashford for other groups.
- **Art-oriented groups** who will respond to Samuel Palmer Trail and other artists linked to the group – artists like Kit Boyd a great way of reaching these, with over 14K followers on Instagram.
- Remind the walkers and cyclists already drawn to the Valley of other areas to explore, with posters leading to our website for info.

Origin of the Darent Valley Line poster idea

Kick-started by request from the Steering Group to create paintings for each station, but evolved. Influences on development of idea:-

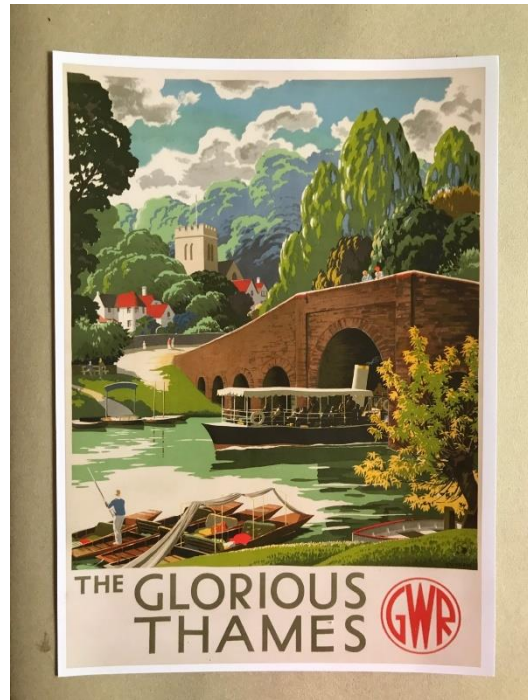
- the **long tradition** of transport industry commissioning artists to create amazing images designed to draw people to areas served by trains/tubes. Famous examples from 1920/30s included Frank Newbould, Tom Purvis, Austin Cooper, Dora Batty, Edward McKnight Kauffer. Revival of commissioning, following in tradition of Art for All (Frank Pick)!
- **constraints** of COVID 19 - project for lockdown
- **Engage community** by creating images which reflect their 'place'; Kit Boyd's travels
- **promoting the Line** through artistic merchandising, reaching non-rail users

From simple text with images to beautiful art – examples of design



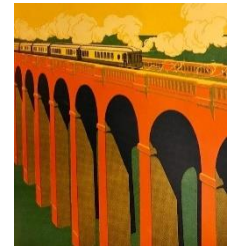
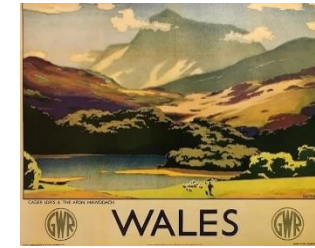
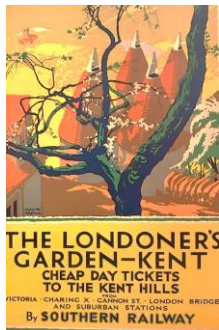
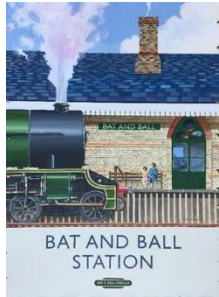
Posters for the Line

- process to launch



- identified and invited artists from the region and beyond to submit work (spring 2021)
- collated all the submissions
- voted within the Steering Group
- commissioned one artist - Kit Boyd (June 2021)
- agreed contract for work
- visited each station area together
- final posters created (over a number of months)
- social media/articles planned
- launch event at Bat & Ball station (March 2022)

Example: Darent Valley Line Station Artworks – The Original Proposal (2021)



"We are commissioning a set of artworks which will reflect and celebrate each of the communities/villages of Swanley, Eynsford, Shoreham, Otford and Sevenoaks, consulting each town and village along the line about which image/s they feel best captures their village or town, ones which work for the community and will also appeal to visitors (particularly in a way which helps them understand that to arrive by train is the best option). While this is likely to be a landscape or identifiable icon, images of groups or activities are also being considered. Historical references may well play a part, but we welcome contemporary images equally.

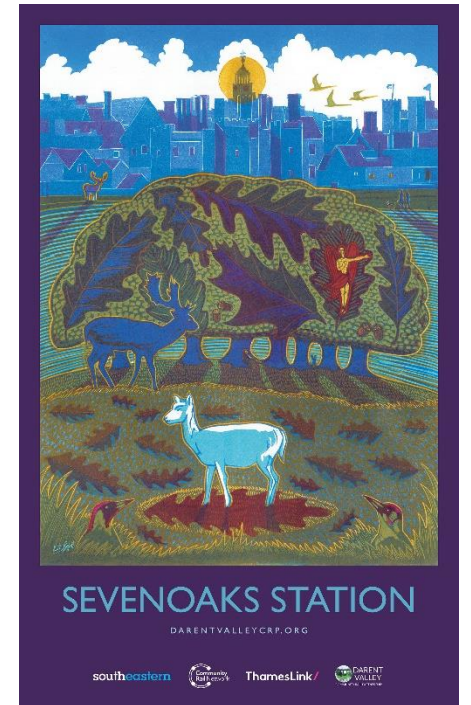
Artists have been invited to create an artwork based on their own and the communities' ideas (which we will share). The work can be made using any medium. Our suggestion is that the image is 'readable' from a distance of 4m (imagine you are viewing it from a train seat looking onto the platform/station walls), and therefore has some simplicity to the design. The image will be used in posters which will be approximately A1 in size and in a portrait (upright) format, with a band of words at the base, taking up about one-sixth of the design. As we hope to use the images for merchandise we will need to buy the copyright for use. We would ultimately like to hold **an exhibition of the artworks** commissioned, combining these with other railway poster art produced over the last century.

We invite artists to send us examples of existing artwork, a short statement about themselves, together with a paragraph outlining why they want to take part. Our intention is to get a lot of people involved so that we can spread the word about the wonderful world of community rail, and bring diverse groups together.

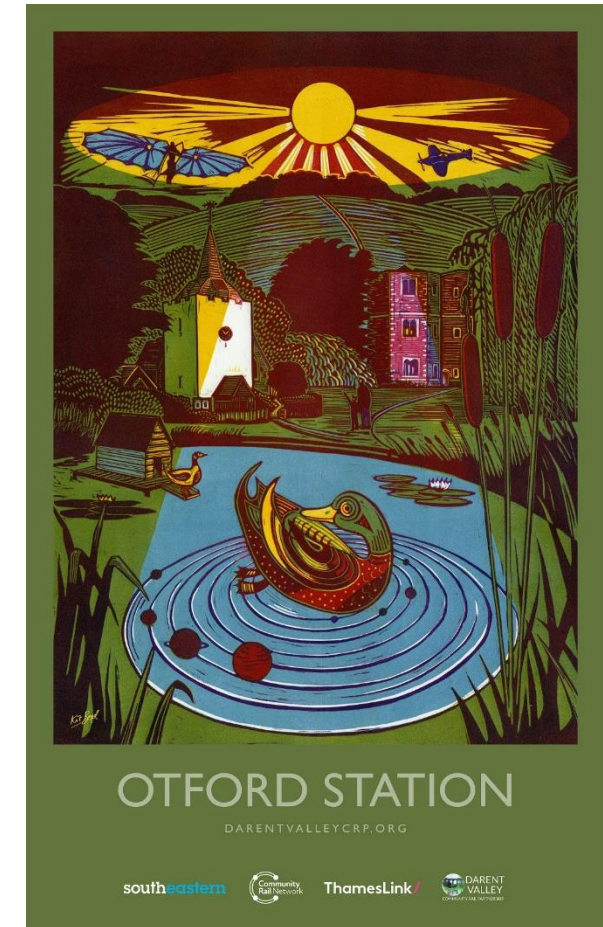
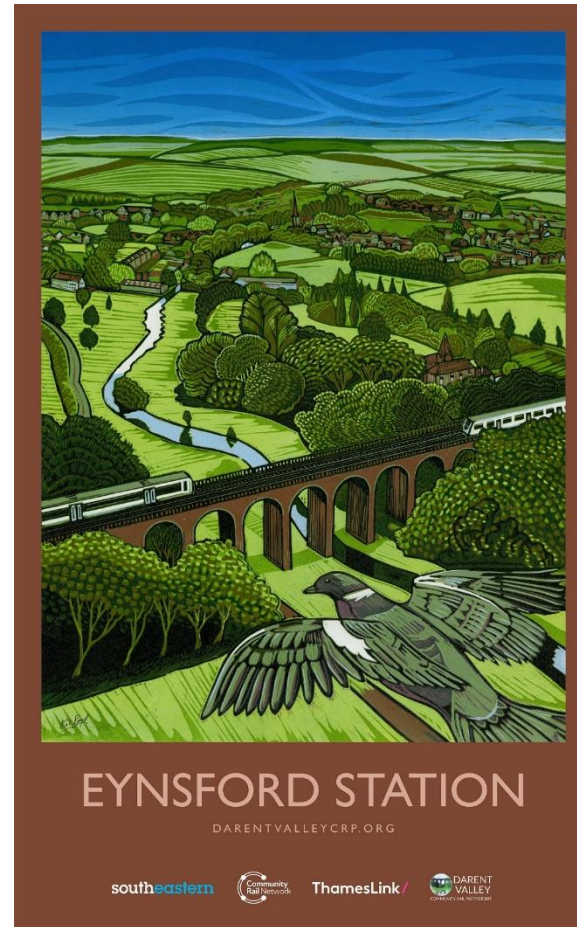
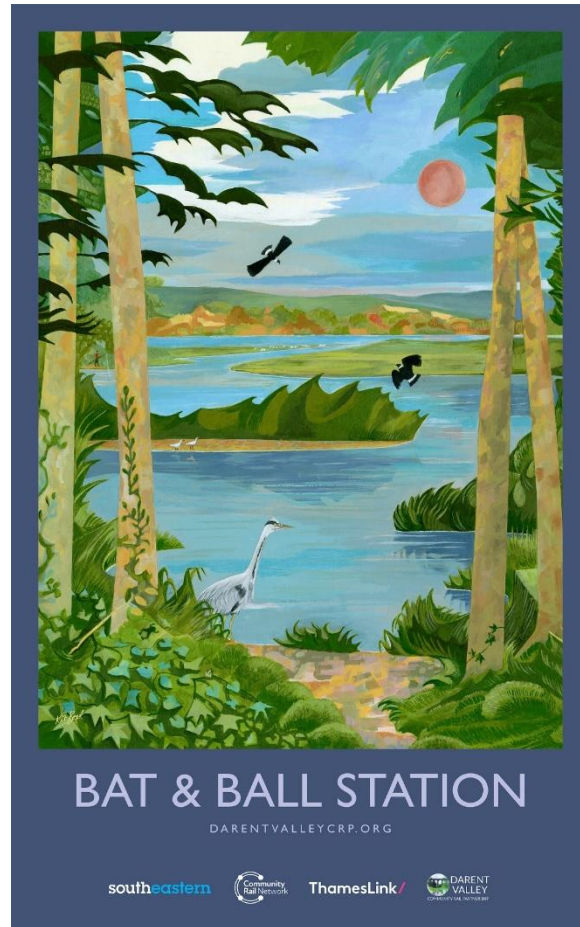
We will have a shortlist of artists to consider, from which to choose final individuals per station, and at that point commission works, with a budget of £xxx per artwork, consulting as we progress. "

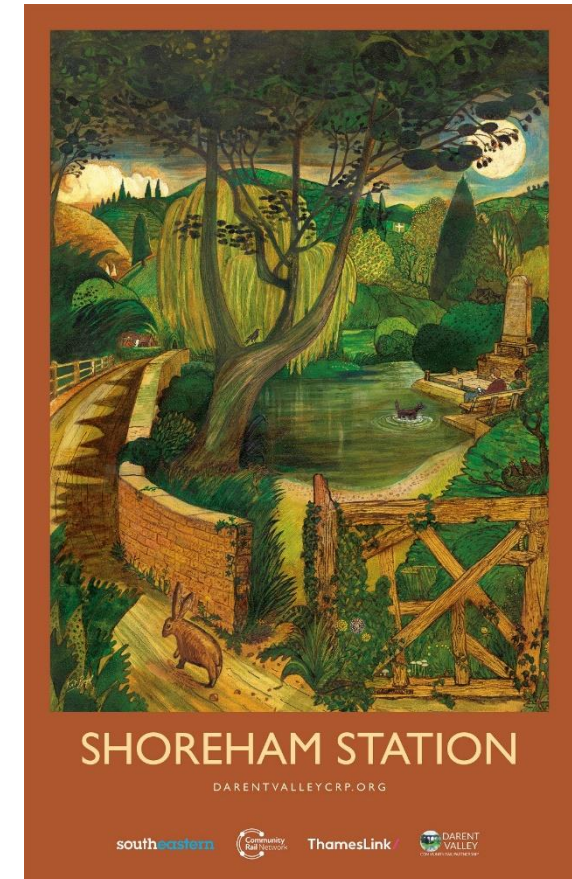
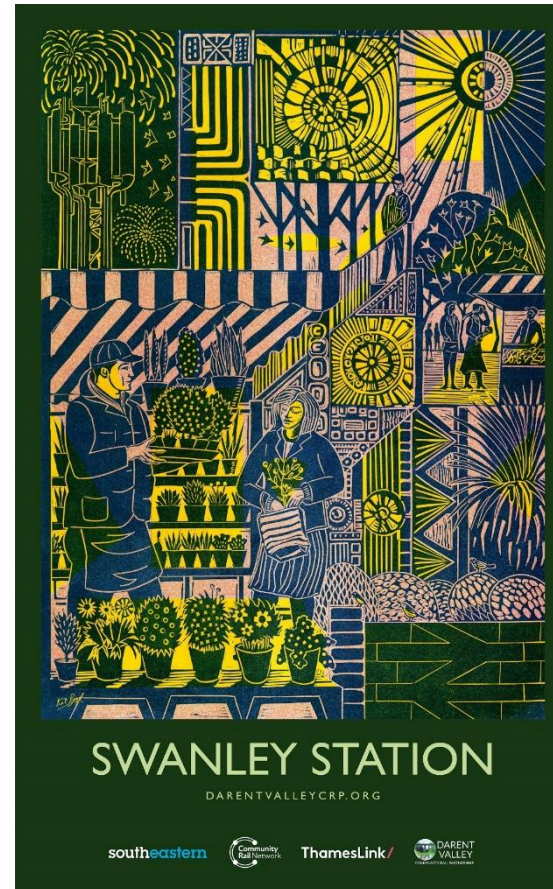
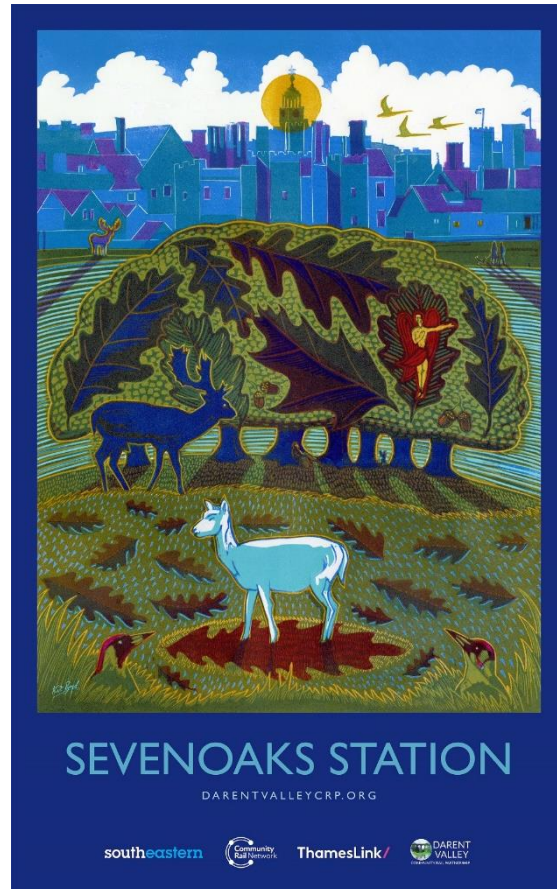
Bit more on the process – from idea to product...not easy!

- poster design – size dictated by TOC Double Royal poster frames
- working with artist on scope and timing of project (what, how, when)
- legal agreement (scope? merchandising...)
- briefings on locations, links to communities, visits
- scans of artwork (quality, quality, quality)
- more graphic design considerations (border colour, bleed to edges?)
- printing (nothing is ever as simple as you think – paper, ink, costs)



Posters for the Darent Valley Line: Final





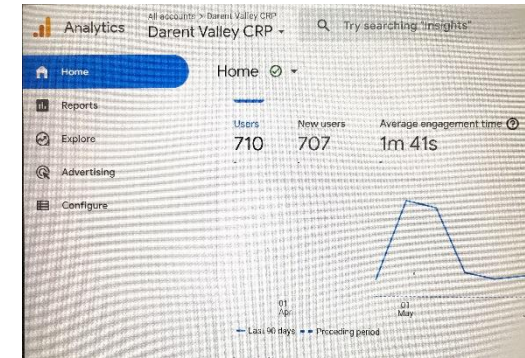
Launch event March 2022

- Took place at one of our stations, the beautifully restored Bat & Ball station
- Invited a limited group due to Covid, mixture of creatives and local officers/representatives together with community rail reps
- Issued Press Release, leading to local coverage and social media



Impact!

- Press release prompted a call from **BBC South East newsroom**, requesting a set of interviews – broadcast in April 2022. Three minute item filmed at our stations. Perfect story about enjoying the area travelling by train.
- Flurry of **social media** interactions, with highest number of Likes since launch of DVCRP Twitter (we have 300 followers and building).
- Following Sevenoaks District InShape article (sent to all households in the area), spike in views on **website** and over 90 emails through website inbox, very positive comments and requests to buy posters
- Volunteers to help with the stations have been in contact as a result of the advertising
- **bloggers**, e.g. Pilgrims Way – wrote item about the posters and now promoting Otford
- Coverage in **smaller magazines** online and physical in the area, leaving to more interest but also in publications like ASLEF's magazine
- **Kit Boyd**, the artist, who has over 14K followers on Instagram and is well connected in London print world, promoted the artworks resulting in more coverage, with over 700 likes for first tweet about launch and over 2000 for subsequent posts
- Great deal of positive feedback from locals on village Facebook pages who keep telling us they love the posters!



Poster sales/merchandise

- Early days yet, but over 150 sold
- Working on **online sales** – quite complex!
- Have developed greeting cards to go on sale soon
- Working on further merchandise (tea towels, mugs)
- Collaborations with stakeholders e.g. Kent Wildlife Trust, Bat & Ball Station Café, local landscape partnership schemes, local shops for sale of items, pushing visitors through Café at the Station (double bonus)
- Train operating companies – Thameslink and Southeastern – marketing departments poised to coordinate big campaign. Posters to go up and down along linked lines (already up at our stations)
- Sevenoaks District Council and other local councils using images for various launches to define our 'place' – a positive marketing tool beyond the CRP
- Arrays of posters (all six) to go up outside Swanley and Sevenoaks stations



What next?

- Budget put aside for **Facebook targeted campaign**, with a view to using poster images to draw non-train travellers (and, to be fair, existing travellers) to the area from south-east London (within easy reach) and from the arts-oriented south coast (Hastings)
- **Exhibition** of original artworks, posters, other heritage posters and 'tools of the trade' (linocuts, demos, lithographs) in November 2022
- **Collaboration** with art centres within reach by train (Turner Contemporary, Hastings Contemporary), cross-promoting our planned **exhibition**, activities focused on linked artists Samuel Palmer and also Edward Bawden and Graham Sutherland. Linocut classes.

With thanks to:



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