

Media Release

Date: 5 July 2023

South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council's celebration of Ashford Railway Works is a huge success

On Saturday 1 July 2023, a vibrant Railway Vintage Festival was held at Newtown Green to commemorate the 180th Anniversary of the Ashford Railway Works and the 175th Anniversary of Newtown Railway Works.

Organised by South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council (SWANCC) and sponsored by Ashford Borough Council and Ashford International Development Company, who were present at the event, answering questions from residents and visitors.

The festival was enjoyed by community and visitors alike. There was wide range of entertainment and activities on offer, including classic cars, a vintage funfair and handcrafted market stalls; plus the land train which ran around the Green for the whole day. There were also amazing professional acts from London and Brighton who performed iconic music and dance pieces through the eras (1920s to 1960s), to signify when the last steam train left Ashford. Creative, local talent was also showcased on the community stage.

There was also an exciting world record attempt, for the largest human image of a train, with adjudicators from Ashford Borough Council and many Community Marshalls. The evidence has been submitted and the outcome will be eagerly anticipated.

SWANCC worked tirelessly to ensure the event was a fitting tribute to the important role Newtown Railway Works has had on the area. Reflecting the history of the area with a Community Memories tent hosted the Newtown Railway History Exhibition produced by local Historian Ani from Tales on the tracks, residents brought their own memorabilia diaries and photographs to give a rich tapestry of local history and memories of the life of Newtown Railway Works. Continuing the historical elements of the day exhibitions were also on display from AIMREC with model railway layouts produced for the Kings Coronation and displays from Ashford Museum.

The Mayor Cllr Larry Krause and Deputy Mayor Cllr Lyn Suddards attended the event and with Chair Cllr Sue Mullan and Vice Chair Cllr Andy Rogers planted trees in memory of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth and Cllr George Koowaree.

Chair of SWANCC Cllr Sue Mullan, remarked: "This Railway Vintage Festival has been a tremendous success due to a year of hard work and planning by SWANCC, but the key to its successful delivery has been the sponsorship from Ashford Borough Council with Ashford International Development Company and the indomitable SWAN Community Spirit volunteering to facilitate this fabulous festival it has really put South Willesborough and Newtown on the map! Thank you to everyone involved in making today a success."

Vice Chair of SWANCC Cllr Andy Rogers said: "Newtown has not seen an event of this scale for many years. Hopefully this is just the beginning of the vibrant future for South Willesborough and Newtown and Ashford as a whole community with the exciting development of Ashford International Studios."



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