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## 'Platform 2b, or not 2b'... Shakespeare statues greet passengers travelling to Stratford-upon-Avon

In a tale worthy of the Bard himself, the railway between Birmingham and the birthplace of William Shakespeare has been transformed into a unique tribute to the world-famous playwright.

'All the world's a stage' according to Shakespeare's As You Like It - and now so is the route between Birmingham Moor Street and Stratford-upon Avon after a noble quest was completed to install statues and connect each station with a different Shakespeare play.

The exciting artwork was unveiled today (Wednesday 21 May) at Stratford-upon-Avon station and was celebrated with a short performance of an extract from *As You Like It* by students from King Edward VI School - the school Shakespeare himself attended.

The statues were made possible thanks to the Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL), Network Rail, West Midlands Railway, and Chiltern Railways which worked together to fund and install them.

With each of the 18 stations adopting a famous play, and the Shakespeare statues being complemented by special planters with beautiful flowers looked after by volunteers along the line, passengers can now enjoy a unique journey as they travel to the home of the world's most famous writer.

Some of the stations and plays connected along the route include Yardley Wood and *Twelfth Night*, Wood End and *The Merchant of Venice*, and Wilmcote and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

**Neil Morgan, treasurer of Friends of the Shakespeare Line, said:** "We have put the railway well and truly on the map with William Shakespeare now starring at each station along the line.

"All the volunteers have worked so hard and are so committed, and we are seeing benefits along the whole route with these special statues adding to this famous stretch of railway. We are building on other improvements made at stations along the way, including at Henley-in-Arden where we have brought new life to the station building and, in doing so, attracted more visitors to the town by train."

**Denise Wetton, Network Rail's Central route director, said:** "These unique statues at each station along the main route between Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon provides an impressive tribute to the world-famous William Shakespeare.

"It's also fitting these beautiful statues have been officially unveiled during Community Rail Week, and as part of this year's Railway 200 celebrations, marking both our local history, communities, culture, and the ongoing important role the railway plays."

**Jonny Wiseman, WMR customer experience director, said:** “The Friends of the Shakespeare Line have done a fantastic job designing and installing these statues along the railway line. The West Midlands is rich in literary history, and we are sure these new artworks will bring a sense of local pride to the millions of passengers who pass through these stations each year.”

The project benefits passengers and the local community and is supported by the Heart of England Community Rail partnership.

The statues have information on visiting the Shakespeare family homes in Stratford-upon-Avon, helping visitors and locals connect with the Shakespeare story in Warwickshire.

There are a total of 34 Shakespeare statues along the line for passengers to spot and each station has information about the play it is connected to.

Passengers can plan their journey and check the latest travel information at [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

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## **About London Northwestern & West Midlands Railways**

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