

Autumn Rides

The Sustrans celebratory ride from Tower Bridge to Preston announced in the last Newsletter, which passed along the Loop on 17 September, proved to be a great success. It was joined by many of our members, swelling the total number of riders to nearly 80. Riders from outside Manchester were delighted with the Loop section. From Athol Road we cycled via Castlefield and Salford to join the Irwell Valley Way on the Bury border, and from there via Radcliffe and the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal to Burrs Country Park, where we were met by the Mayor of Bury for a photograph and late lunch stop. The return journey in a smaller group proved much quicker than the three and a half hours' outward trek. The comparison between the Loop section and the difficulty of the main road crossings between Athol Road and the centre of Manchester was another talking point, and Mark Stevenson has agreed to explore possible improvements there.

Another social ride in a much lower key (and much worse weather) took place along the length of the Loop on Saturday October 8th. Improved weather the following day encouraged two of us to join the Postdocs ride out to Tatton Park, from where this rider returned via Dunham Massey and the Trans-Pennine Trail. The TPT forms a pleasant mainly off-road route from Chorlton out to Dunham Massey and Lymm, and would make a good outing for one of our rides come the spring (see below).

Future Rides

A number of organisations are now joining forces to run regular social bike rides starting in the new year. The aim of the rides is to introduce 'returning' or new cyclists to local routes whilst providing a social outing for all ages. The Friends are one of these organisations, and Sustrans Ranger Dick Venes is acting as coordinator for the FotFL organised rides in the programme. The rides will take place monthly on Sundays, and the distance will be up to 20 miles at a gentle pace, probably with a pub stop for refreshment and socialising. We are aiming to run 3 or 4 of the planned 12 rides in 2006, so if you are willing and able to help with the rides, please contact Dick. He is also the point of contact for potential participants, so if you know someone who you think would like to join in, please get them to contact Dick. We will then email out a ride programme and ride details in advance of each event.

New Year Ride

Our usual New Year social ride is planned for Monday 2 January 2006. To enable riders to join at a number of points, the following times are proposed:

- 11 am: start from Debdale Park Boathouse
- 11.15: Highfield Country Park entrance
- 11.30: Sherwood Street entrance
- 11.50: Beechwood Road entrance to Chorlton Park (at bridge over the brook)

From there we will decide on the further route and which pub to call at for lunch, depending on the weather and individual post-festive condition!

Pubs on the Loop, no.3: The Sidings, Levenshulme (with thanks to Dick)

This Joseph Holt's 1980s suburban pub is built on the site of the formerly extensive sidings located to the east of the Levenshulme station on the Loop. Leaving the Loop on the north side of the former station site, turn right on Crayfield Road, left on Broom Lane and the pub is about 40 yards on your right. Probably not to everyone's taste, this basic but well kept boozer has a large lounge area and a smaller vault. The locals who mostly use it are friendly, and I have heard a few interesting stories from them about the Loop when it was a working railway. For sunnier months there are two outside areas at the pub entrance, which are ideal for visiting groups of mixed age cyclists and walkers. Food is not a feature of this pub, so you'll have to make do with crisps and nuts, but the beer makes up for it. The usual Holt's Bitter, Mild and lager are always available, plus an increasing number of their special seasonal brews, some of which have won national competitions, at very reasonable prices. The pub's ideal if you want to give visitors a taste of proper Manchester pub culture.

Manchester Cycleway Leaflet

A copy of the latest leaflet is enclosed for your information. If you have already seen it, perhaps you could pass it on to a friend, colleague or neighbour? The Loop is becoming a well-used facility, and we hope to encourage even more walkers, cyclists and joggers along the route. And of course new members for the Friends are always welcome (contact Dick).

More Dates for your Diary

Next Monday 21 November: Members' Meeting, Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield, 7.30 pm. All welcome.

Sunday 22 January: Tree Planting. We plan to repeat last year's very successful tree planting on the Loop with the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers, this time on the stretch from Longford Road northwards. Further details will be posted in the January Newsletter.