



Newsletter November 2012

Community Orchard Completion

The site of the community orchard at Levenshulme Green has now been completed with the laying of a woodchip path between the trees. The work was mostly carried out on the weekend of 15-16 September by local residents, members of the Friends and a Challenge group of young people mobilised by Lara Moore/Critchley of the LoveLevy project, who also ran a childrens' play area and stalls on the Sunday. Thanks to all those who took part in the work. We are working with local residents and Sustrans to plan improvements to all four quadrants of the Green, though we will maintain a special responsibility for maintenance of the orchard. All members, and especially those who sponsored a tree, are welcome to visit the orchard and walk round it. The name tags of sponsors are becoming faded, and we hope to get more permanent ones made in the near future.

Cos Harnasz has come across some traditional accounts of wassailing, not the house to house carol singing but the much older drinking ritual in orchards to ensure the health of apple trees; and he has suggested we celebrate the ritual during the Christmas period at the orchard site. The 'wassail' was a hot mulled cider, into which pieces of toast were dipped and hung on the trees to scare away evil spirits and ensure a good harvest for the following year. Wassailing songs would accompany the ritual, such as this example:

Here's to thee, old apple tree,
Whence thou mayst bud, and whence thou mayst blow,
And whence thou mayst bear apples enow!
Hats-full! Caps-full!
Bushel, bushel sacks-full!
And my pockets full, too! Hurrah!

We will circulate details of the proposed event nearer the time. One possibility is to combine it with a New Year ride on Sunday 6 January.

A further orchard proposal

The Friends' committee has agreed in principle to go ahead with the planting of a smaller orchard on a secluded site to the side of the Loop just beyond the Wellington Road bridge in Fallowfield. At the same time we will hope to plant a hedge along the wire fence at the Sherwood Street entrance to improve the look of this key access point. Provisional dates have been agreed for the preparation of the two sites (Sunday 17 February 2013) and the planting out (Sunday 17 March) with the help of the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers. Any members interested in taking part in these events please contact the Secretary. We will of course keep you posted via email and the website nearer the time.

Surveying wildlife along the Loop

At the September members' meeting we had a talk from Matt Holker of the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, which has won a grant for a three year project to liaise with voluntary groups in producing records of wildlife across the region. We agreed to firm up our plan for a comprehensive record of species along the Loop, to complement the plant and flower record already compiled by Dave Bishop. To carry this forward our November meeting (**next Monday**) will be addressed by the Sustrans national ecology officer, Hannah Lewis, who we will accompany on a bike ride survey of the Loop that day, starting from St. Werburgh's Metro station at 12.30 pm. Any members free at that time are welcome to join us.

Other Loop news

We have won a ward cash grant to install our graphic design and map of the Loop in a Metro-style notice board by the station at St. Werburgh's Road, Chorlton. We will use the one now obscured by graffiti at the nearby lectern. Metrolink have agreed to include it in their regular graffiti cleaning programme, so hopefully it will survive better than in its existing location.

At the very other end of the Loop at Fairfield we now have a definite commitment from the builders Bellway to open up the cycle route through the new housing estate, to avoid having to use the hazardous path round its edge. This was always part of the original planning agreement, and we are grateful to Paul Kirkham of the Friends of Debdale for pursuing this so vigorously with Tameside Council and the builders.

Social rides

We will continue to run social rides involving the Loop and neighbouring off-road routes in 2013, and will aim to give adequate notice of these via email and our website. For those members who want more regular rides up to 35 miles, both on and off road, the Chorlton Wanderers run regular rides on the second Sunday of every month, starting from Chorlton Water Park at 10 am. The ride last Sunday led by one of our members, Mark Taylor, involved the Loop, the Moravian settlement at Fairfield and Daisy Nook Country Park, as well as the Irwell Valley trail, and was an eye-opener for those of us who did not know these parts of the city. The provisional programme for next year has just been published, and those who would like to be put on the circulation list should contact Andy Coles.

Stop Press: Members' meeting

Our next members' meeting will be this coming Monday 19 November at the Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield at 7.30 pm. Besides a talk by the Sustrans ecology officer, Hannah Lewis (see above), we will be planning our schedule of winter activities, and hoping to have a discussion with Peter Green of the Sustrans Manchester office on matters of joint concern. All members are welcome.