



Newsletter March 2014

Due to the lack of news (combined with your correspondent's all-too-recent return from abroad), this month's Newsletter will concentrate on forthcoming events. Your participation in any or all of these will be most welcome. Please note them for your diaries.

Sunday 16 March: Debdale orchard planting

This will be our final orchard planting, so anyone who wants to learn how to plant fruit trees should take advantage of this opportunity. The holes for planting were prepared on Sunday 16 February with the help of the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers, and a lot of old railway rubble was removed from them. The routine for this coming Sunday will involve: mixing compost with good soil to fill the holes, fixing in stakes, planting the trees themselves and attaching them to the stakes, finally fitting wire guards around them and covering the soil with wood chippings to discourage weeds.

How to get there. The simplest method is by bike. Travel east along the Loop until you pass the turn-off to Debdale going down on the left, and you will see the site immediately on your right. If you are travelling by car we suggest you park in the Debdale Park carpark on Wall Way at the top of Reddish Lane. Walk past the boathouse and the end of the reservoir, then under the bridge which carries the Loop and turn up immediately right on to the Loop. You will see the site in front of you. We suggest you wear stout shoes or boots and bring gardening gloves. We plan to start at 10 am and continue till the work is done, so come whenever it suits you.

Monday 17 March: Members' meeting

This will take place as usual at the Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield, at 7.30 pm. We will be discussing any issues that have arisen since our last meeting, and planning further events for the spring and summer. Among the former will be the progress of the quadrants site in Levenshulme. Those who live nearby or pass there will have noticed the felling of the large trees on the NW quadrant. Fortunately our treasurer was able to speak to the contractors as the felling was taking place, and ensure that the trunks were left on site to be used for a future play area (United Utilities had failed to notify the contractors as promised after several representations and a meeting with them in town). The NE quadrant is due to be developed by Incredible Edible Levenshulme for veg and soft fruit beds, as agreed at our last meeting.

Saturday/Sunday 26-27 April: Rolling clean-up of the Loop

This will be our third rolling clean-up after the successful ones we carried out in May and November 2013. This one is particularly important as it will help make the pathway attractive for the coming walking and cycling season, and lighten the work of those of our members who are volunteer Rangers and take responsibility for individual sections. Do help us if you can at

any time and for any length of time during the weekend, and note it for your diaries. We plan to start on the Saturday at 10 am at the orchard site in Debdale (see above for directions), and work westwards towards Levenshulme. The Sunday start will be the same time at the Levenshulme quadrants, working west towards Sainsbury's and beyond. You will find us somewhere along these stretches, according to the time you plan to join us.

Reflections on our orchard planting and other activities

I was struck at the weekend by an article by the Observer's gardening correspondent, Dan Pearson. He wrote about the responsibility 'of being the custodian of our land and of the glance in time that will mark our own moment. I like the idea of planting for longevity,' he continued, 'and find myself increasingly drawn to the idea of planting for the future.' With this in mind he proceeded to plant three oak trees, which take up to 300 years to grow to maturity, which of course he will never see, but future generations will benefit from. Naturally fruit trees mature much more quickly, and we have already seen the benefit from our previous planting in some lovely blossom and some fruit. But the same point applies, that we are doing this for a future that some of us may never see.

There is a wider point here, which covers all our activities. The Loop is a free public good, which anyone can enjoy free of charge. As such it challenges the dominant idea of our times, which is that the only valuable things are those on which a monetary price can be placed, and which the users or purchasers have to pay for. In contributing to the maintenance and enhancement of the Loop we are, even if only in a small way, showing that there are other values which matter, and which can be realised in very practical ways.