



Newsletter May 2014

The 2014 edition of the Sustrans map of the National Cycle Network, North West, highlights the Fallowfield Loop for special mention as a family-friendly route for cycling, with particular mention of the parks passed on the way. This publicity confirms the value of our efforts to improve the environment of the Loop for all categories of users, of which the following have been the main features since the March Newsletter went out:

Sunday 16 March

With the help of the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers we successfully planted 14 mixed fruit trees on the site adjacent to the pathway at Abbey Hey, and have since circulated local residents to inform them of the new community resource. Across the three orchard sites (Abbey Hey, Levenshulme and Fallowfield) we now have a total of 56 trees planted. This year the cherries, pears and apples have all had abundant blossom, which has mostly set, whereas the plums, gages and damsons have had a less successful spring. If any member would like to help in maintaining one of the sites – basically keeping the weeds and brambles at bay and improving the paths – please get in touch with David Beetham on tel. 0161 445 1524, or by email.

Sunday 6 April

We removed undergrowth around the proposed children's play area at the Levenshulme quadrants, and spread wood chippings around the fallen tree trunks. Our thanks to the many local helpers who joined us on the day.

Saturday/Sunday 26-27 April

This was our third rolling clean-up, starting this time at Abbey Hey and working westwards to the Levenshulme quadrants, while the Whalley Range scouts and other helpers tackled the stretch from St. Werburgh's to Princess Road. Our thanks again to all those who helped. Hopefully the Loop will now look cared for through the summer. If any member would like to volunteer to keep a short section free of litter on an ongoing basis, please contact Dick Venes on tel. 0161 224 3843, or by email.

Blues and Gospel Train Commemoration

Cos Harnasz writes: 'There is so much history woven into the Fallowfield Loop, of all sorts, and one of the biggest surprises was discovering several years ago that a very special concert had taken place on 7 May 1964 near the present Athol road entrance. It was the site of the old Wilbraham Road station, already then disused, the line having been closed to passenger traffic but still having freight trains rumbling along it. On tour in Britain that year was the 'Blues and Gospel Train'. It included musicians like Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Muddy Waters, Sonny Terry

and Brownie McGhee. Granada TV had the idea to film a show in Manchester and mock up a southern states style railroad station. Ours was the one. The programme was broadcast later in the year – and clips visible down the tunnel of time are available on YouTube. A memorable moment is seeing Rosetta Tharpe saying to the welcoming audience who had come on a chartered steam train from Central Station in the city centre: “England, we love you.” It was the time of Civil Rights back in the USA.

With all this in mind the idea kept coming up to celebrate the 50th anniversary as near the original date as possible. A venue was chosen, the Carlton Club in Whalley Range. Jo Banana gathered bands she knew and played in, plus inviting a Gospel Choir; and with Phil Busby, who in addition to being a blues player is also a historian of the blues, the original set of songs sung half a century ago had new life breathed into them, and were performed as a group again. There was a DJ, and (a new one for me) a VJ who projected video and images onto the backdrop and ceiling – including footage from the original concert onto the present day players!

All those who came – thank you – and sorry if you came but couldn’t get in. We never imagined we’d be turning people away shortly after reaching capacity at the Carlton Club. Maybe it was the mention on national radio, when Mark Radcliffe flagged us up on his R2 Folk Show. We ran from 8 pm to 1 am. Thanks to *Unicorn Wholefoods* who donated food vouchers, *Forest Foods* who gave boxes of savoury snacks and the splendid *Black Cat Cakery* who made and gave the biggest chocolate cake I’ve ever tucked into. *Poynton Players* lent lights, and thanks also to Richard Rhodes who came with them as controller. And next year?’

Future Event

Monday 19 May is our next members’ meeting, 7.30 pm at the Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield. Besides planning our summer schedule of activities, John and Wendy Eaden from Manchester Beekeepers will talk about encouraging bees along the Loop.

John writes: ‘According to BeeBase, the national register of bee colonies, there are 265 registered honeybee colonies within a ten mile radius of Fallowfield. This means that it is most likely that some of these bees are foraging along the embankments of the old railway line. A walk along the Loop last week revealed the extent of the pollen-rich species that are providing food for honeybees and a range of native bumblebees and for many other insect species such as hoverflies which feed on pollen. We will provide a list of these flower species in our talk, as well as explaining how bees live in a city environment. Next time you are out on the Loop stop for a moment and see how many pollinating insects you can spot. They are supporting not only themselves but also through pollination the flowers on which they depend. In this way the Loop helps support our bees and our bees in turn help support the ecology of the Loop.’

We hope also to welcome at the meeting Marc Attallah who has been working on a university project to survey biodiversity along the Loop. All members are most welcome to join us for what promises to be a very informative evening.