



Newsletter January 2017

A Happy New Year to all our members and other readers! Whatever else 2017 has in store, we can hope that it will bring effective policies to encourage more people to walk and cycle on their daily journeys, and to improve the air quality in our towns and cities. Our part in this as the Friends has been, and continues to be, to help make the Fallowfield Loop as user-friendly as possible. To this end a major achievement in 2016 was to win Sustrans' agreement to open the internal barriers indefinitely, after we had taken part in trial openings and conducted surveys of users' experience of the Loop without barriers. This has made for a more pleasurable cycle ride, and has also allowed a variety of non-standard bikes and mobility vehicles for the disabled to use the Loop for the first time. An important initiative for 2017 will be to circulate our new map and guide to as many outlets as possible, and thereby encourage many new users of the route (see next item).

New map and guide to the Loop

As reported in the November newsletter, we have undertaken a major revamp of our map and guide to the Loop. This is now complete, and will go to the printers this week for an initial print-run of 10,000 copies. The map A3 page contains much more detail on how to reach other cycle routes from the Loop (e.g., the Trans-Pennine Trail in both directions, the Ashton and Bridgewater canals, the route to Salford Quays and the different routes to the city centre), as well as showing more parks and green spaces. It also distinguishes which of the entrances are accessible for non-standard bikes. The guide page is now divided into eight panels (instead of six) and can fit easily into the pocket. The front and back panels explain what the Fallowfield Loop consists in; inside the first fold are panels headed THEN and NOW, with the former giving a brief history of the old railway line, and the latter showing its present transformation into a Greenway and wild life corridor. The remaining panels deal with volunteering, cycling and walking contacts, use by the disabled and basic rules of the Loop ('share with care') respectively. Both map and guide sections contain many more pictures than in the previous editions (thanks to Cos for his inexhaustible photo collection), and we think they make for a more attractive publication as a

result. Copies will be available for inspection at our members' January meeting next Monday (see below), and will be accessible in due course on our website.

Wassail 2017

This year's wassail celebration was held at the Levenshulme orchard last Sunday, and was as memorable as on previous occasions, with the weather turning much more benign than last year. The bonfire burned brightly, the fireworks sparkled, the mulled cider and cookies tasted delicious, the choir kept our singing in tune and the Wassail Queen looked majestic. We all took part in hanging dipped toast on the trees to encourage good fruiting and ward off evil spirits. Photos of the event taken by Ian Barker can be viewed on our website. Our thanks are due to all who worked and contributed to making the occasion a success. Work to keep the trees at our three orchard sites healthy and fruitful (apples, pears, cherries, plums and greengages) continues throughout the year, and participants are most welcome at the relevant work days which will be calendared in advance.

Kingfisher sighting

A message from Mark Wilding reports his sighting of a kingfisher above the brook near the Princess Road bridge, a stretch where one has been seen before. It is appropriate that this month's Wildlife Champions outing will be devoted to birds on the regular fourth Sunday of the month, the 22nd (details will be circulated in advance), though we regret we cannot guarantee participants another kingfisher sighting. But who knows?

Other future events

A workday is planned for Thursday 19th January from 10 am. Ian Barker will circulate details and the meeting point shortly. Thereafter work days on the Loop will take place regularly on the first and third Thursdays of each month from 10 am.

On Sunday 19th February the Sale and Altrincham Conservation Volunteers will lead us in the planting of willow arches at the Levenshulme quadrants. They have experience of doing this elsewhere, so it will be a good opportunity for members to learn the trade!

Stop Press

Next Monday 16th January is our regular members' meeting at the Union Chapel, Wellington Road, Fallowfield, at 7.30 pm. Among other items of business will be discussing the distribution of the new map and guide, and responding to an initiative from the local Sustrans office to help plan a consultation programme for the further development of the quadrants, with the possibility of a substantial grant in the offing. All members are welcome.