

## Chair's Remarks, September 2017

At this time of year it's time to review the activities and achievements of the Friends of Rose Hill Station over the past few months.

We started the year in fine style and on a winning note, receiving the TfGM award for best kept station at the Cheshire Best Kept Station awards ceremony in January. This was a new award in which TfGM help the judges to select the best of the 31 stations in G Manchester that used to be in 'Old Cheshire'.

We have had some splendid events over the summer and the flower beds and baskets are continuing to bring pleasure to users of the station. We appreciate the positive comments and tweets which FORHS receives for our gardening work.

We also passed the 2000 hours of work carried out at the station since starting in mid-2009. This works out at something like £30,000 of support given to the rail and transport organisations.

As well as caring for the appearance of the station, our other main goals are to develop the station, and our group, as a focus for community development; and to achieve a fully comprehensive evening and weekend service on our line. We are progressing well with the first of these goals - community involvement. Regarding the second, the planned timetable for May 2018 includes some welcome additions to the early evening service and we are continuing to press the case, to all relevant parties, for a late evening and a Sunday service to our station.

### Positive Developments

The waiting room is developing its reputation as an interesting and welcoming space. We even received a tweet from visitors to the station who are travelling to all stations in the country, that it is the nicest waiting room they have seen. This makes us very proud. The book swap continues, with a high turnover. Many thanks to Margaret who keeps the stock and the shelves in good order.

For the early months of the year, we hosted a very interesting and informative poster display about the story of conscientious objectors in the area, in WW1, including Fenner Brockway, who lived locally for a period. The display included information about the work of women in WW1.

In July, the wall space reverted to its use to display paintings by children of Rose Hill Primary School. This year's theme is '**How I would like to travel to school**' and generated some wonderfully creative ideas - come along to look if you can (Monday - Friday mornings, when the ticket office is open). Once again, we had a very cheerful ceremony to welcome the paintings, with the winning children and their families, with staff from school, being congratulated by Philip Harrison, ex-mayor of Stockport and retired local councillor - many thanks, Philip, for joining us at short notice - with prizes provided by Northern and much appreciated by the prize winners. Thank you again to Vicky Cropper, of Northern, for her support to this event.

The station was also a buzzing place at the start of July when we hosted our first charity coffee morning, in aid of Marie Curie. This was a great morning and we plan to make it an annual event. We are proud that the event raised over £300 for the charity. Thank you to all who attended and to Marple Carnival Committee for the loan of their gazebo.

We conducted our passenger count in May (we do this twice a year) and provided evidence to the rail industry of increased passenger use of our service. We also took the opportunity to give out sheets requesting comments about the station and received some very, very positive observations. Thank you to everyone who took the trouble to respond. This encourages us in our efforts and, more importantly, it raises the profile of the station to support our campaign for more trains.

Other features you may have noticed - or to look out for

- 3 of our bird boxes near the platform were inhabited this year by blue tits, great tits and a nuthatch family. For a couple of weeks in May it was possible to watch the parent birds working non-stop to feed their chicks. We do hope they take up residence again next year - and maybe in the newly erected Swiss Chalet (look out for it)
- Various items of railway memorabilia are now screwed into place, thank you to Craig for the donation
- We now have two new roll up banners, for display at our events - we are very pleased with their design

Just to note, also, that we have facilitated the involvement of Rose Hill Primary School in Network Rail's Safety Week at the end of September. A speaker has been arranged to go into school.

We continue our active involvement with wider groups campaigning for improved rail services and travel facilities and with the decision making bodies - Network Rail, TfGM, Northern and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. We have contributed to the study of transport needs in South East Manchester and to the Greater Manchester Travel Plan and we are working with the Getting Around group of the Marple Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Some Problems**

We were dismayed by one night of vandalism to our community orchard, near the station car park entrance. Our crab apple tree was broken down and the (unripe) fruit on all the trees was picked and discarded. A bitten apple provided evidence that the fruit had been tried and found to be sour. Such a shame - the fruit could have been there to enjoy, freely, given the chance to ripen.

However, this is the first damage we have suffered and we will continue to care for the trees and work on the assumption that this was a one-off.

Also, many of you will have noticed the rotting state of the fence along the platform. We have reported this to Northern and sent pictures and we have been assured that a full repair or replacement will be authorised. We are waiting....

### **The Future**

As already stated, our prime focus is on achieving a full evening and Sunday service on the line. We have the support of other 'Friends' groups on the route and we are enlisting

the support of our local MPs. We emphasise our view that additional services are wanted and would be well used.

To note - we work at the station on Sundays and we always encounter people who arrive, expecting a train and are disappointed.

It is worth pointing out that our membership group increases our profile. It is free to join FORHS and you will receive regular email updates about our activities. We welcome all new members - please also tell a friend.

We are also in negotiation with Network Rail about whether we can have access to the unused platform at the station where we would like to install some sort of art work to provide a better outlook for waiting passengers - we hope to be able to provide more news about this soon.

We are working with Stockport MBC to produce descriptions of walks around the stations of the South - East Manchester lines.

And finally, we are also hopeful that we will obtain additions to the station signage to give good information about local points of interest, especially the Middlewood Way, Stockport Hydro and the Alan Newton Cycle Path.

So, once again, thank you for taking an interest in our activities.

We would love you to join us, to bring your ideas and suggestions to the group, to help our campaigning and practical activities and to give us a louder voice, even if you are not able to come to meetings or to the working groups.

We usually work at the station the first Sunday morning of the month, from 10.00am, so do drop in to have a look at us, if you can. Alternatively contact us by email or twitter

Of course, Tony continues to provide the friendly, helpful service from the ticket office which guides the welcoming character of our station. As many of you know, Tony will advise and sort out ticket sales for any national rail journey you are making, so do call in to see him, any weekday morning.

Rachel Singer