

FoRHS Chair's Remarks, January 2019

Greetings to all readers in this first newsletter of the new year. I have two big projects to report on as well as the usual summary of our ongoing activities for the station and our campaigning for improvement in our rail service.

Intergenerational Community Mural

Most of you will, by now, have had a chance to view and appreciate the mural behind the orchard near the entrance to the station car park. The mural was unveiled by the Mayor of Stockport, Walter Brett, on 17th November 2018 and we were thrilled to see so many people attend the event and the obvious appreciation and enjoyment of the art work.

If you haven't yet seen it, do go along to look. You will see an array of individually created discs, by Marple people of all ages, which illustrate many aspects of our local history, environment and community life.

Some of you will be aware that you have created discs which are not yet on display. Fear not! A further three panels will soon be fixed and the remaining completed discs will be put in place. We will announce when the extension is ready. At this time of year, we are weather dependent on when we can do the work.

The mural work was led by local artist, Tracy McGuinness-Kelly, of Art Stop, Marple who recruited and encouraged so many people to express their artistic abilities. We are also grateful to Adetoro Adeniran-Kane (Mama 'Toro) of Global Cultural Connections who helped us to see the wider community potential in the project which enabled us to bid, successfully, for funding from the National Lottery. Consequently, the project developed to include workshops which have brought together and recorded memories and experiences of Marple life and highlighted some of the wide range of groups and activities which thrive in our community.

In addition to the mural, a further outcome of the project will be a resource booklet which will document the unfolding of the work and the experiences of being part of such a community activity.

This project was made possible by the financial support of the National Lottery and, for the site preparation, by sponsors from community rail and from the Manchester Airport Community Fund. We are extremely grateful to all our sponsors.

And, needless to say, we are extremely happy with the results of this initiative, which began with a simple wish to cheer up a bleak concrete wall.

Rose Hill 150 - Celebrations during Summer 2019

Planning is underway to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the opening of Rose Hill Station and the M&BM (Macclesfield, Bollington and Marple (Rose Hill) railway line.

As well as events around the station, we are working with groups in each of the villages which were served by stations along the line - High Lane, Middlewood Higher, Higher Poynton and Bollington - to recall the line in its hey-day and to enjoy the facility which the Middlewood Way now offers.

The actual anniversary is 2nd August 2019 when we will unveil memorial plaques at the stations but, as this falls well and truly in the holiday season, there will be events along the Middlewood Way earlier in the summer as well - early in July at Rose Hill and as part of the Bollington Arts Festival, 10 - 26 May, which has adopted the railway as its theme this year.

Look out for publicity in due course.

Other Projects and Activities

- Garden work - this continues, and we are in the process of refreshing and replanting those beds and planters which are looking weary after several years of growth and the inevitable winter die back.
- Waiting room pictures provided by pupils of Rose Hill Primary School. The current theme is safety on the railway.
- Charity coffee morning, raising funds for Marie Curie, which was held at the end of June 2018. There was a lower attendance this time and consequently less was raised for the charity. We will review the timing of next summer's event.
- Annual Santa event - another very successful and popular visit from Santa, this year held after school in the last week of the Christmas term. We changed the day from the usual Saturday due to the ongoing train strikes and the feedback we received is that the new time worked well for families. We will consider fixing the event for a similar time next December.
- Our twice yearly passenger count - this snapshot of the number of passengers using our station provides solid evidence for our campaign to improve the train service.
- As ever, we attend meetings, contribute to consultations and give feedback to the various bodies which have a part in planning and delivering our rail service. We will be contributing our views on the need for more evening and weekend trains to Rose Hill in the forthcoming discussions about the December 2019 timetable.

Current Service Provision

- The ongoing dispute between Northern and the rail union shows no sign of resolution, so the consequent disruption to services seems set to continue. Announcements are made on a monthly basis and there will be no trains at Rose Hill (nor at Marple) on Saturdays throughout January.
- NB: if you check on one of the timetable apps for train times please ensure that you confirm the day to which the information refers. Often information is displayed for the next available day to that which you requested i.e. the Monday timetable (for Rose Hill) will display if you request Saturday (when there is a strike) or Sunday.
- Passengers will now be aware that Northern require you to purchase a ticket before travel from the ticket office or from machines at stations. The machine requires card purchase and you can take a 'promise to pay' slip if you have no card available.

The ticket machine at Rose Hill is sited behind the station building, facing the car park. We have requested that Northern provide a directional sign for this at the bottom of the passenger ramp.

- There still appears to be a slight increasing trend of passenger usage and the timing of the 15.14 departure is more popular for the school pupils. The additional early evening trains seem to be useful to commuters.

However with complaints of insufficient carriages and poor timekeeping on the peak time trains there is a general dissatisfaction with Northern's performance as seen on tweets and noted by our counters. In fact, on this occasion, the timekeeping of the trains out of Manchester was really poor with 45% arriving late by 3 minutes or more.

Focus of our Campaigning

Timetable - We will continue to campaign for a full evening and weekend service to Rose Hill. This includes lobbying and responding to consultations during the timetabling planning stages.

Service Standards - We continue to monitor, report and respond to the ongoing and very disappointing level of service: poor train punctuality; overcrowded peak services; unacceptably old units - the damp smelling, leaky and noisy pacers. These are due to be phased out, though the date for this has again been pushed back due to delays elsewhere on the rail network.

We encourage you to use social media to report your own travelling experiences and the service you would expect to see. We know that Northern, Network Rail and TfGM read and take note of Twitter and Facebook comments from members of the public.

The train units which are gradually replacing the Pacer trains on our line, the ones we will see most frequently, are refurbished and in some ways more comfortable. However, we are concerned and we are collating comments from passengers, that the new carriages are higher and the step up (and down) from the train to the platform is difficult.

Again, we encourage you to contact FORHS and to use social media to contact Northern, Network Rail (who we would look to to deal with issues of platform height) and TfGM if you have comments about this.

Our railway industry and community partners

- We are extremely grateful to the Marple and Romiley Lions who donated the two large planters on the platform.
- We are also pleased and honoured to have received donations from Make it Marple and the Marple Website
- These acknowledgements make us feel connected to and that we are playing our part in our local community
- We are grateful for the support - advisory and financing of projects - from across the railway industry. As a Friends group, we are part of the 'Community Rail' focus by which the rail industry seeks to increase awareness and use of the railway within local communities and to maximise the use of station facilities for the benefit of the community. We receive support from Northern, Network Rail, SEMCRP, Transport for Greater Manchester, the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRPS), Rail Futures and even Cross Country trains (because our line runs to a mainline station where they operate)

- We liaise with the 'Getting Around' group within the development of the Marple Neighbourhood Plan and with the Goyt Valley Rail Users Group (GVRUA)
- We engage in joint projects and activities with the Friends of Marple Station and both organisations include working together in our planning and campaigning, making the case for an improved railway service to Marple as a whole.

Membership

- Membership of FORHS is free. New members are always welcome, with whatever skills and ideas you can bring, whether it be gardening, IT, campaigning or any other. Be assured that we also value it when people who do not have time for an active role join, as this enables us to communicate with you easily and demonstrates interest in our station.

Whether or not you choose to join, do please follow us on Facebook and Twitter. And you can always email us with comments or queries: forhs142@gmail.com

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. But please check our notice board or website for dates, as sometimes these change.

Best wishes and happy travelling to you all.

Rachel Singer
Chair, the Friend of Rose Hill Station