

## **Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group 2013 Annual Report**

It has been a very busy and productive year.

Paul Hollinghurst assumed management of our website and it is now the best RUG website in the country. Unfortunately for us, Paul's work is moving out of the area and he will no longer be local, but he has kindly offered to keep the website running.

Brian Farmer has taken minutes of our meetings in a refreshing style, supported by Alexandra Abbots, a former Melbourn Village College student looking for administrative experience.

Sue Hanson and Beatrice Fisher have cheerfully managed our money, of which we have more than we know what to do with, hence the resolution tonight that we adopt a voluntary membership fee. Bruce Huett has audited the MSFRUG accounts.

Thank you to Foxton Gardens Association for their donation of £100 to keep Foxton station tubs well supplied, and to Roger Orpin, a Shepreth Resident, for his donation of £100 to keep Meldreth and Shepreth (and Foxton if necessary) similarly supplied. Together with membership fees and donations of surplus plants from local garden centres in Shepreth and Meldreth, our three station gardens have fared very well.

Teams of volunteers, including local primary and secondary schools, have continued to support our thriving station gardens. Shepreth Station Garden was featured in Shepreth Open Gardens and Meldreth Station veg path produce was sold by Meldreth Primary School, making a profit of £28 for the school. First Capital Connect have provided great support at all of our gardening sessions.

Huge progress has been made in our relationship with Network Rail and this has resulted in close cooperative working. A full upgrade to the pedestrian gate system at Foxton has taken place, including new gates and locking system, contingency path, resituating of electronic equipment in the crossing keeper's box and better CCTV coverage of pedestrian movements. Unfortunately, the electronic gate locking mechanisms have continued to fail due to an electrical earthing problem.

Network Rail's Route Managing Director attended a special public meeting on May 21<sup>st</sup> at Foxton Village Hall to address pedestrian safety issues at Foxton. In June he announced a feasibility study looking at all options for the closing of Foxton Level Crossing and this is expected to be published next month. The close scrutiny of pedestrian safety issues appears to have persuaded NR of the need to address wider long-standing wider safety issues at the crossing. Cambridgeshire County Council was supportive of the initiative to undertake a feasibility study.

MSFRUG responded to the DfT's Thameslink Franchise Consultation in August, and all of its aspirations were incorporated into Cambridgeshire County Council's consultation response.

Problems of full-sized bicycles on the 8:10 train from Meldreth-Cambridge, in spite of a cycle ban on that service, prompted the RUG to publicize the restriction. The situation appears to have significantly improved.

Risk taking at Shepreth, Foxton and also Meldreth level crossings has been identified. British Transport Police are now involved in trying to help address the problem, and Network Rail is actively involved in school rail safety education. Melbourn Village College students involved in the BBC Newsday project are collaborating on providing level crossing safety messages.

Melbourn Library Access Point provided a free book carousel for Meldreth Station booking office which has been very successful. The MSFRUG paid for a Christmas tree for the station booking office.

Steps have been taken to revive efforts on the very serious accessibility issues at Meldreth Station, thanks to Janet Cottenden from Melbourn. It is hoped that FCC's extended franchise will allow progress on this long-standing issue.

MSFRUG would like to thank Railfuture for their support and encouragement through awarding us with three of their inaugural rail campaigning awards for Best Website, Best Campaigner and Best New Rail User Group.

Finally, thank you to all our members, including those from our local villages, but also those from Cambridge and Waterbeach, for supporting our rail campaign.

Susan van de Ven  
7 March 2013