

Friends of Gathurst Station

The Friends of Gathurst Station had been set up in February 2017 and had begun work on the Southport-bound platform soon afterwards. Mavis and Keith Till, the Secretary and Group Leader respectively, explained their motivation, their policies and the idea behind their community work. The Friends group had five members and all of them hoped that the local community might take pride in the station and offer to help with the work being done.

On the Southport-bound side most of the really hard physical work had been done. When they had started their biggest problems had been with access and availability of water. Everything had had to be barrowed up from the main road. They had made the wooden log planters themselves and had lined them before filling them with soil and planting them up. They had also cleared the areas for the flower beds and lined them with weed suppressant material.

Originally Northern had agreed to refurbish the old Victorian shelter and divide it into two, with one section acting as a storage facility for the Friends while the other section continued to be used as a shelter. The Friends had introduced water butts. One day they had arrived and found, to their amazement, that the water butts had been removed and the shelter had been flattened. The shelter of historical interest was replaced by a large and ugly modern shelter. The Friends now have a water butt again and utilise the new shelter to collect rain water in the butt.

Community engagement staff from TfGM have been very supportive and have helped the Friends to clear away rubble, paint the seat and the planters and fill the planters with soil. They have also pointed them in the right direction for the purposes of accessing funding. The group applied for funding, but it took a very long time to come. In the meantime they paid for things themselves and, once the funding arrived, they received a refund.

The Friends would like to replicate what they had done on one side of the shelter on its other side. However, they could not begin work on the other side of the shelter until a communications cable that was lying above the ground had been buried at a good depth by Network Rail. The cable was connected to the signal control box at Wigan Wallgate Station and there could be serious issues on the line if it was disturbed or damaged by people carrying out work on the flower beds in its vicinity. So far they had been waiting for two years for this to happen.

The Friends also had plans for the Wigan-bound platform. The Clerk had offered them the possibility of log planters created out of trees that had been felled in the park when they became available. They wished to accept the offer. Another possibility for the Wigan-bound platform was the introduction of a community herb garden for people to pick their own.