



## Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde) – May to July 2025 – Team Update

In May we had a team meeting at the Solaris (South Shore) where we discussed matters and activities that needed to be addressed as we moved forward during 2025 – I think the 1.5 hours we spent were valuable and would help us maximise our work.

Moving on, the watering system on Platform 2 needed fettling after the Winter months. We depend on the system to help reduce some of the tasks which ensure our plants survive during the coming year. It can become quite technical as Michael in the first picture depicts as he uses a towel to hide the glare of the sun so that he can see if the water is coming out of the capillary pipework. The other picture shows him examining the timer which works off a battery and solar panel and brings the watering system alive when we are not there, all spiffing stuff. I am sure we can ask him, to see if he is available on a consultancy basis, for an appropriate fee. ☺



The raised beds on Platform 1 were given their regular tidy and we began the gradual process of introducing new plants and fresh compost in gaps where we removed some of

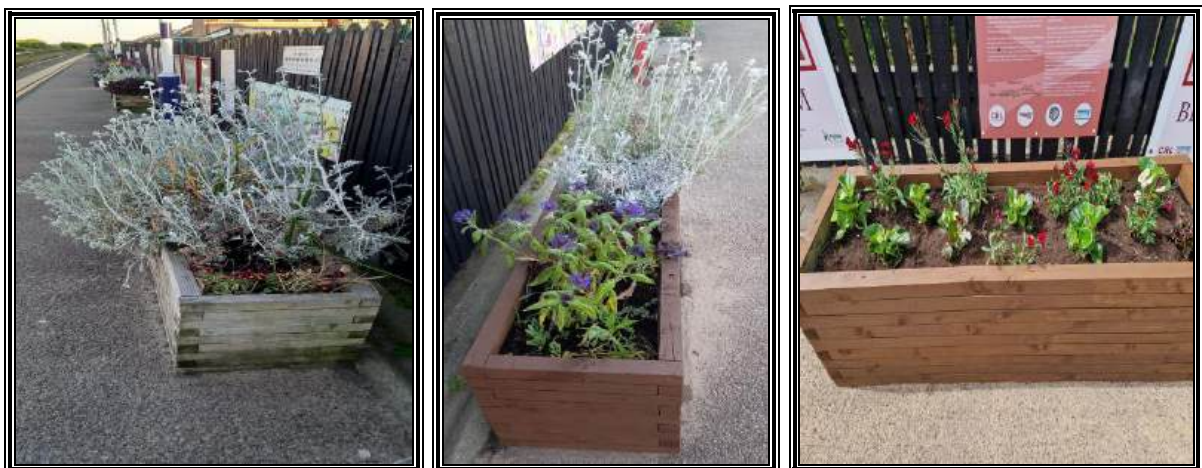
Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)

the time expired spring plants. It's a painstaking process to get a nice symmetrical layout of plants that will gradually take us into summer, adding more plants as we go along. If there is one thing we have learned, planting too close in our situation can mean that rainfall will not get down to the compost surface because the foliage will block it.

Unfortunately, we cannot win, because leaving gaps means the compost dries out as well. We added some vermiculite which is a natural mineral to aid moisture retention in a bid to help us with moisture.



We took the opportunity during mid-month to start painting the raised beds on Platform 1, they were looking dry and in need of nourishment before we began planting them up for summer. Before and after, and during initial planting.



The “new” station sign needed some remedial paintwork due to shrinkage whilst outside under cover. The framework joints needed sealing so that we could eventually erect it into place, as did the posts due to the weather. We managed to finally erect the new sign on the 15<sup>th</sup> May. Paul and I managed to get it into place using energy we didn't know we had, a spirit level and some right-angle brackets to take the weight when we put it into position.

We think it looks “reet smart” and certainly makes the station stand out. The letter Q caused a stir, to some it didn't look quite right but we are going to leave it as it is so that it can become a talking point – “is it or isn't it”? That way it does not become just another station sign!

Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)



Please bear in mind we are rank amateurs not professional DIY people we did try to get measurements correct to make sure the sign was level and equidistant between the posts and I think we did well! We thank Northern, Community Rail Lancashire, Network Rail, St Annes Town Council, Fylde Council and ISS for the valuable support you have all provided to us in enabling us to achieve this result and supporting the work we do to keep the station looking in tip top condition for rail users and especially the community surrounding us!



Prior to installation we had a discussion about whether support posts would be necessary? The consensus seemed to be that it might be a good idea because we can get some really fierce storms and wind speeds and whilst the posts are 11ft tall and in the ground quite deep in concrete boots, there might be some sway.

The “rear support posts” are prepped and ready to install, they will offer resistance against the weather, a consequence of being so close to the coastline.

We are good “re-purposers” of redundant poster cases at the station and given the opportunity we can use them to the advantage of rail users and the community, we like to think that our station is a “Community Railway Station” where people can “visit” and enjoy the surroundings whilst waiting for their train.

We have gradually been adding some wildflower posters to the platform fencing in order to inform people of the vast wealth of flora that is all around them, even in their own streets and parks as well as the countryside and road verges.



In **June** we were able to begin assembly of the lean-to roof over the water tank on Platform 1, we had collected some timber from a church in Ansdell that one of our team had spotted and we had accumulated timber from other sources in order to build the framework. The idea for building a “lean-to” had ostensibly come from discussions with Network Rail who suggested attaching guttering to their palisade fence but we took it a step further in agreement with Northern and this was stage 1. The next stage would hopefully occur in July.



We also began fence painting as well, using paint provided by ISS, the fence at the far end of PI had not been touched for quite some time and both sides were completely dry and looking forlorn, it still has our Covid Volunteers Safe Distancing Sign in place which shows how long it is. Shirley Van Gogh, given that name because of her painting prowess, is quite

Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)



specific about drips etc, even her colleagues! She was working on P1 and others on P2 which is why her expression looks like an “eh” moment.



More work was done by Carol and Barrie on both platforms adding plants to beds as summer was now in full swing and a grant from Northern enabled us to buy specific plants. Even a local cat had been doing a little bit of tidying up, one rat less to worry about. We finally got some colour shots of our foxes at the station. The large picture was from one of the six wildlife cameras we have dotted about. A local resident from the houses overlooking the line also took some short videos of the fox cubs from her home, we have cut out the pictures of the cubs at the far end of Platform 2 moving about.



Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)





Final touches were made to raised beds that previously had flowers in them and got missed during the initial painting exercise. And of course, other types of wildlife were making their appearance for all sorts of reasons, we are not sure if the snail wanted to get a brush and join us as it was exploring a paint can.

The fencing was certainly looking better by the weeks and you can see at the bottom right how bad they were.

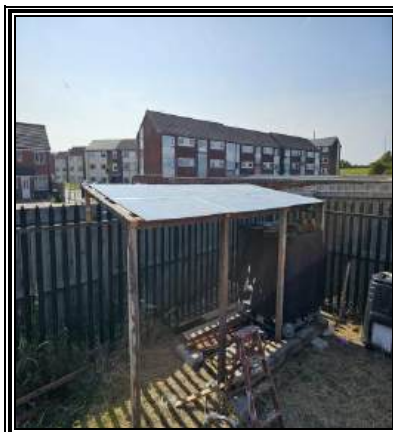


Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)





Lots of sunshine moving into **July** and the pressure was on to keep the plants watered and fed, which was certainly a lot easier with the water tank full. Stage 2 of our “lean-to” which you will have read about previously took place after **Northern** gave us a grant to finish it off. It enabled us to remove the loose roof panels and give them a coating of a fibreglass solution which would protect the panels and ensure the water runs off into the guttering and eventually the tank. All hands to the task, though I bottled out in the excessive heat which was too much for me, but Michael, Paul and Shirley did an excellent job.



The finishing touches were guttering and pipe which you see Michael above using his drill to attach the final bits, then below a view down the guttering followed by a “before and after”

Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)

view of the framework support frames which Paul, myself and Shirley painted on a cooler day.



Below are “before and after” pictures of our tank on Platform 1, initial rainwater from the roof on the left, and then on the right, the following week, when Fylde came and topped it up for us with 850 litres of ground well water. This should now keep us going through the rest of summer and into autumn along with the water accumulation from the roof system. Self-sufficient once again and no heavy lifting of water containers or having to bring them in by car.





Of course, the **Lytham Festival** brought out lots of people to use the train services from Squires Gate to Lytham on most days.



The station is looking extremely colourful at the moment and we are proud of our efforts. We even received some additional plants from Fylde Council which added that extra edge, particularly to the ramp beds on Platform 2.

Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)



There is always something for us to do at the station, the water system is a real asset to us on Platform 2 and continues to be developed by Michael. Platform 1 is the next challenge to get water from the new tank to the beds bearing in mind that we do not have the benefit of no public access like we have on Platform 2 so there is more likelihood of what is developed being damaged – but we are sure we will be able to fettle something to assist us.

We are as always, grateful for the all the support given by our partners without which we could not do what we do for the benefit of rail users and the local communities around us. Thank you!

Barrie Russell/Paul Nettleton

August 2025

Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde Lancashire)