

Shak's Tracks

The Vexed Question of Fulshaw Lane

This time, we'll follow a road that isn't there, past a lake that was once a field, to find a railway that never was. All this entertainment in around 3 miles ! Pick up the route by the old school on Alderley Road and go north for about 50m to the apex of the bend. Take care crossing the road to the kissing gate into the field opposite. For a long time, the 'Welcome to Chelford' sign and the bumper of the car that uprooted it sat together in the hedge. Once safely in the field, we turn left and follow the wheel marks to the top of the small rise. Before us, if it's not bucketing, a glorious view of The Edge, Macc Forest, Shutlingsloe and Hen Cloud opens up. Beside us is the sand pit ! Run along the wheel marks keeping the big hole on your right to go eventually through a kissing gate. Run on down this footpath with the large oaks on your immediate left and the fence on the right.

Fulshaw Lane once made its way across the field on the right toward Sandle Heath. The line of the road shown on the 1789 map is vanishing as the sand pit spreads. Why do they dig up fields for sand to repair roads damaged by heavy lorries, many of which carry, ermmm, sand? I find it even harder to understand why they take down oak trees in the process. However, the local wildlife seems to be thriving. Our running companions will be foxes, hares, badgers, stoats, larks, lapwings, wheatears, all sorts of wildfowl and the usual buzzard. If we are fortunate, we'll see a kingfisher. Keep going on the track until you come to a field gate in the fence on your right. At this point, turn immediately left through the gap in the hedge.

We are now off the footpath, possibly trespassing but following the essence of Fulshaw Lane. Keeping the new hedge and lake on our right, we run on until we come to a metal gate to the track that leads to Bollington Lane. Go through the gate, bear right down the track, and watch out for wagons that rattle down to the ex-military storage buildings on Sandle Heath.

Eventually we join Bollington Lane and run on until we pass the road to Yarwoods on the left. After about 20m, we turn right into the

byway, Stubby Lane. This was once the main road to the south. Somewhere around here, the Manchester and Birmingham Railway would have crossed on its way from Alderley/Chorley to Congleton. However, the present line to Crewe was the preferred route to the south and the railway through Nether Alderley was never built. It would have left the Crewe line near Gatley Green Farm and crossed the A537 to the east of the end of Stubby Lane. The Alderley Edge History website has some interesting maps, www.alderleyedge.man.ac.uk/index.html.

We follow Stubby, cross the quarry track, pass Swiss Cottage on our right and turn right on to the field path that runs beside George's Wood (on our left). OK, now we're flying and inside the last mile and a quarter. We'll follow the path with the sand pit lake on our right. It looks wonderful in the early light of a sunny morning, much better than the moonscape that Mere Farm had become. Cross the sand pit road through the gates, and keep going ! The path eventually turns sharp left through the hedge then immediately right and we're back on the track near to where we left it to 'trespass'. We'll retrace our route to the old school and ponder where that track by Yarwoods might take us in future. Getting fitter and faster ? Top stuff. As the sainted Alf Tupper might say, "Now for some fish and chips!".