



THE NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK

summer 2020

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Friends of Roundhay Park

Summer 2020

Chairperson's comments

Every year brings new challenges and 2020 is no exception. It has brought more challenges than perhaps ever before, certainly in my lifetime. We started the year with many good ideas and plans, but by March it became obvious that we were not going to be able to carry them out never mind much of our normal maintenance and restoration works. Coronavirus, or rather Covid-19 has changed not only our lifestyles but also the work that the park staff and our members are able to perform. Park staff numbers have been significantly reduced due to isolation requirements. Nevertheless, they have managed to keep the park in good order, regardless. We appreciate all this hard work and our grateful thanks go to John Roebuck and his team.

Our own members have, where possible, also been active and I am most grateful to all the willing volunteers, usually working alone or in socially distanced pairs, who have worked throughout to help keep the park looking its best.

Of course, initially, the park was very quiet despite an unusually long spell of good weather and almost everyone followed the government health advice to avoid contacts. However, as soon as restrictions started to be eased, all seemed to go mad and much bad and anti-social behaviour ensued. Fortunately, after the initial wave, behaviour generally does seem to have improved somewhat.

Apart from the anti-social behaviour generally, the greatest problem has been litter which still piles up carelessly and relentlessly. Again, special thanks to all the litter volunteers who have made such a determined effort to keep it under control.

In June, our Secretary (Carol Haughton) and I had an online meeting with councillors, representatives of the council and the police to raise many of these issues. Of course, we accept that the issues we raised are by no means restricted to Roundhay or the park, nevertheless, we have noticed some improvements in some behaviour and noted increased police activity in the area. But unfortunately, we have not been able to hold any management or open meetings with members. However, Carol has responded magnificently keeping us all informed and on track. In May, we also lobbied and garnered support to successfully object to a proposal to erect a giant thirty-foot phone mast together with several satellite boxes in the park, directly opposite Oakwood Clock.

So, what next? Well the future is uncertain, but outlets and some entertainments have been able to re-open and we are now starting some of the Little Friends and other activities. Let us hope we can continue the return to normal. That, of course, is down to people behaving responsibly.

Finally, can I draw your attention to the re-vamped and much improved FoRP website (www.forp.org). Its creation is overseen by perhaps our most active member, John Ferguson. It is a really interesting experience, a great improvement and well worth a visit especially the aerial videos of the park and one of the Children's Days which used to take place and which, certainly to people of my generation, will be remembered with great affection.

Best wishes to you all. Keep safe and hope to see you in the park soon.

Richard Critchley



IMPORTANT –

How do you want to receive your newsletter in the future?

FoRP - into the digital age?

We are living through a communications revolution in which more and more documents are produced in digital formats rather than printed on paper. This has some significant advantages e.g. saving printing and delivery costs, and 'going green' by saving paper. The FoRP committee has decided to trial the provision of a digital copy of our newsletter on the FoRP website to enable members to try it out. At the same time, we are very aware that many of our members like to receive the paper copy, and may well always prefer this option. We continue to provide paper copies to all our members, but at the same time encourage members to try the digital version on our website. Later this year we aim to set up a survey to gather feedback from members about their personal preference for future issues of the newsletter. Ultimately some members may opt to no longer receive paper copies of the newsletter, and this would create some savings which FoRP could use for other useful activities. We recognise that not all members will want the digital option, and can reassure them that paper copies of the newsletter will still be provided for them in the future.

To access the digital newsletter:

1. Go to the FoRP website – www.forp.org
2. Move cursor to 'Membership' to reveal drop down menu and click on 'Newsletters'
3. Scroll down and click on the newsletter issue you want to see
4. To display the newsletter fully, scroll down to reveal the 'tool bar' at the foot of the newsletter and click on the crossed arrows (X)
5. You can increase the size of the pages by using the Zoom function on the toolbar at the foot of the page.
6. You can turn the pages forward and back using the arrows to the left and right of the screen (or by running your cursor over the bottom corner of the page)

Please give this a try if you can. We value and need your feedback any time, and especially when we set up a more formal survey later this year.

In the meantime, please send any comments to secretary@forp.org Thank you.



The Land Train is back – looking better than ever.

Scott Pullen's Land Train has been a familiar sight in Roundhay Park for some years. The lockdown due to Covid-19 has been a difficult time for all, and brought the Land Train to a complete halt for some months. Scott has always been a great supporter of FoRP, and we are delighted that the Land Train has now starting running again, looking splendid in its new colours – running weekends and some weekdays in school holidays, weather permitting. *All aboard!*

Lockdown birds



Many FoRP members will have found that the Covid-19 lockdown has given them more time to wander in the park, and to enjoy greater tranquillity there for a while. Our bird champion, Dave Johnston took full advantage as well. Thank you, Dave for this report on some of your sightings during lockdown.



Goldcrest

Visiting your 'local patch' once, sometimes twice a week over four months certainly bears fruit, especially when it is less busy than usual. Three less familiar resident birds and one summer visitor were frequently seen and heard in the park between March and July this year.

The goldcrest is the UK's smallest bird, at 8.5 to 9.5 centimetres. It is usually difficult to see, due to its size and basically greenish colour. It has a very high pitched call which is difficult to hear on normal crowded days, and also because our hearing at these frequencies is reduced as we get older. They were seen all over the park this spring. Yews and conifers are their favourite trees. The yews between the Mansion and the Upper Lake gave great views of these busy little birds, feeding and displaying in March and April.



Treecreeper

The grey wagtail (17 to 20 centimetres long), is often thought of as a river bird. The Wharfe above Harewood bridge and the Skell at Fountains Abbey are usually good places to see them. This year they have frequently been seen along the ravine below the Upper Lake, and up the gorge from Waterloo Lake to the Ring Road. They stay close to the water's edge, hunting for insects with, as the name suggests, a long constantly bobbing tail. They can look quite yellow, despite their name.



Grey Wagtail

The treecreeper is another small secretive woodland bird, 12.5 to 14 centimetres long, which is often overlooked. It has wonderful bark-like camouflage, but its sudden movements as it quickly climbs up tree trunks in search of insects and spiders often give it away. Like the goldcrest, it also has a high pitched call, often missed. The gorge in particular was a good place to see them this year, displaying in March and April, and in small family parties of 5 to 6 birds in May.



Whitethroat

The common whitethroat is a summer visitor from sub-Saharan Africa. This seems to have been a very good year for them locally, or it could be that frequent visits to the same area have made their presence more obvious. At 13 to 15 centimetres long, it is an insect-eating, basically brown songbird with a white throat. It has a loud song which it produces while sitting at the top of bushes, wires, brambles and nettles. The Ring Road end of the gorge, and paths alongside both golf courses have been the best places to see and hear the wonderful summer sounds of this bird.

Dave Johnston



CANAL GARDENS SHELTER

For many years FoRP has been concerned about the poor condition of the shelter at the end of Canal Gardens (in front of Tropical World), both in terms of its bland design and poor physical condition.

During 2018, we made several attempts to tidy up the shelter, but soon realised that a more radical approach was required and decided to grab the bull by the horns and get the thing properly sorted out by taking it on as a FoRP project. A small working group was convened, consisting of David Binns, Tom Cooper and John Ferguson with the aim of providing ideas and costs for the consideration of the FoRP Committee.

If you have visited Canal Gardens in recent months you will have seen the beautifully restored shelter at the end of the canal. This was achieved thanks to a lot of hard work by a team of FoRP committee members, led by David Binns. Our thanks go to all the team, and to David for telling the full story here.



The team investigated the history of the shelter and the earliest record found from the Leeds Archive was a photograph from 1880 which shows a Victorian gentleman in a bowler hat, carrying a tripod camera and standing alongside the canal (left). It is possible to make out a three-arch frontage, but the roof is a canopy of dense foliage.



Moving on in time, the next available image (lower left - probably from the 1970s) shows a similar arched front-

age, but is very crude in its design and construction.

Without doubt, the shelter is a very important visual element within Canal Gardens and is also a very well-used facility for those seeking quiet contemplation, a picnic out of the rain or even post-wedding photographs – a multi-tasking unit if ever there was one.



Before restoration

In late 2018, sketch proposals and a budget were presented to the FoRP Committee and approval was given to proceed with design details, with a budget in the region of £15k. The project was to be designed, administered and funded entirely by FoRP.

A full planning application was submitted in March 2019 and an approval was received in late September 2019, which meant that works could not commence until early 2020, rather than the envisaged Autumn 2019. However, thanks to the help of everyone involved, we were able to complete the works on site by Easter this year.

The new design leans heavily on the 1880s three-arch concept, with a nod to the Edwardian era – (the planners were not keen on a few whimsical Victorian elements!). More detail has been incorporated to frame the arches, make the supporting posts visually stronger and create a more three-dimensional frontage to the structure. A more vibrant colour was introduced to accentuate the various elements and to give a real visual focus at the end of the canal.

FoRP are proud of their achievement and would like to thank the park management for their support and assistance and also the contractors (Wetheralds of Harrogate) who completed the whole project on site in four weeks without problems, on time and on budget. Above all, FoRP are very proud of the result of their project.



Restored (see top right for new plaque)

David Binns

The Problem with Litter



FoRP has always been concerned about the quantity of litter left in and around the park by less considerate visitors. Our regular volunteer band of litter pickers, now led by Martin Child does great work clearing away all kinds of rubbish in support of the hard-pressed park and council staff. This spring and summer, during the lockdown, the park has been a precious place for people to relax and lift their spirits, but sadly we have seen an unprecedented increase in the volume of rubbish carelessly left behind. This is most distressing and is not only a dreadful eyesore, but also a real health hazard, and attractant for vermin. As FoRP, we are doing everything we can to address this sorry state of affairs. Our litter-picking leader, Martin Child has provided this report.

I will resist the temptation to talk too much about these "strange times" because we have all shared the experience, although we will have been impacted in different ways. It was soon obvious in March that our formal litter picking sessions would have to be suspended but what followed was rather unexpected. Just as we were all beginning to grasp what lockdown meant, the sun came out and stayed out for many weeks.

This unseasonably good weather no doubt helped to reduce the stress of our unfamiliar situation. It also encouraged large numbers of people to visit the park and because most were not working, visitor numbers were high seven days a week. Unfortunately a not insignificant number of these visitors decided there was no need to take home the remnants of their picnics and other refreshments. This included large quantities of glass and plastic bottles, lots of take away food containers and snowstorms of wet wipes. There were plenty of filled nappies and industrial quantities of nitrous oxide cylinders.

Roundhay Park was in no way singled out. It was a country wide phenomenon which excited the interest of the media both locally and nationally. That is why FoRP were interviewed by local press and filmed for Look North.

What was so very heartening was that right from the beginning of lockdown, a very significant number of the FoRP litter picking team were active on an almost daily basis helping in no small way to tackle this regularly replenished tsunami of rubbish. I was regularly contacted by existing volunteers wanting more supplies and several new volunteers just wanting kit so they could get out there and help tackle the mess. It has been a credit to our dedicated team that they have gone out there, day after day and made a real difference in helping to keep our wonderful park looking as good as possible while enduring substantial abuse. It is tempting to name names, however I know those concerned would hate that and I would be afraid of missing someone. What I do know is that the park management have been very grateful for the help and have told me very clearly how much it is appreciated. I want to pass that message on to all those concerned, they know who they are!

The good news is that we are restarting the formal litter picks as from August 3rd. There will be no refreshments unfortunately but otherwise things will be much as before but observing appropriate distancing naturally.

Martin Child

If you would like to help, the litter picking group meets on the first Monday of each month (up to October) at 10.00am in the Carriage House car park behind the Roundhay Fox. Sessions last until 11.30 and all equipment is provided. All appropriate Covid precautions are being observed. (There is usually an extra 'pick' following bonfire night. Regular sessions start up again in early spring)





Other litter news

As Martin mentioned in his report, the litter problem and FoRP's involvement has been featured in both the Yorkshire Evening Post and on BBC Look North. Also FoRP has been awarded £500 from Tesco 'Bags of Help COVID-19 Communities Fund' for litter picking. We will use this money to provide extra equipment and to purchase cleaning products, masks and gloves needed to keep everyone safe while litter picking.

Martin also pointed out that this is a nationwide problem. Through Leeds City Council, Roundhay Park was selected as one of 8 local authority areas across the country to take part in a DEFRA funded 'SNAP Intervention Project' linked to the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. This provided a range of resources such as posters, banners and campaign materials focusing on the problem of litter. This project is to be evaluated in September, and we look forward to learning useful lessons from the report which will be produced.

In addition to all this, there are plans to hold an online 'Big Debate' on litter organized by Love Leeds Parks with speakers from Zero Waste, Keep Britain Tidy, and Leeds Parks, as well as our very own Litter Tsar - Martin Child.



Look North interviewing Cllr Mohammed Rafique and Martin Child (rt)

Number Crunching

From a Freedom of Information request to Leeds City Council.....

9,616 The number of fixed penalty notices issued city wide in Leeds for a variety of litter offences between 1st January 2017 and 30th June 2020

0 The number of fixed penalty notices issued for litter offences in the whole of the Roundhay ward, including Roundhay Park over the same period.



Charred bench and litter near Elmete Hall

How to report anti-social behaviour

- For non urgent issues and to pass on information, call West Yorkshire Police on 101.
- In an emergency (if a crime is in progress or you think the offenders are near by) call 999.
- To give information anonymously, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.
- For further information go to: <https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/advice/abuse-anti-social-behaviour/anti-socialbehaviour/anti-social-behaviour/how-we-can-tackle-anti-social-behaviour>

Memories of Roundhay Park – Past Times



31 AUG 1941
OPEN-AIR BATHS

It is always good to hear from people who have moved away but still have fond memories of the park. We were delighted to hear from Mr S G Pickford who now lives in Surrey, and we thank him for sharing these memories of the tram car park by Princes Avenue. Mr Pickford writes...

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the car park did not exist. After Dunkirk, German bombers attacked many manufacturing cities in the UK, and occasionally destroyed municipal transport depots with the loss of many vehicles and the decimation of bus and tram services. Leeds City Transport, therefore, decided to disperse their bus fleet and park overnight in the open. It selected an area next to Soldiers Field next to the boundary with Roundhay Park, creating a tarmac parking space for many buses. The parking bays were identified by a short wooden post to which was attached an electric socket. On parking overnight each bus was plugged into the socket which connected to an immersion heater in the bus radiator. Thus the bus was 'warm' when started up at 4.30/5.00 in the morning. (It should be remembered that winters then were colder and longer than today.)

This dispersal system was unlit due to wartime blackout restrictions and remained in use until peace was declared in 1945. Thereafter the electric socket system was dismantled and the space was used as a car park.

In the 1950s, Leeds began to withdraw its tram service and at the same time car usage increased as the park facilities became more attractive, so the space was extended and overhead lighting was installed using discarded tram poles.

And Mr Pickford also shared some of his own youthful pre-war memories of the park. He writes....

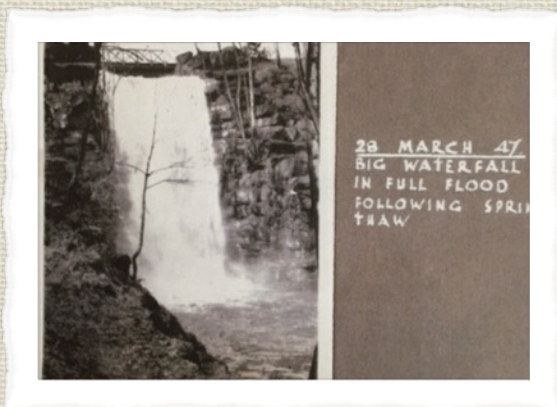
My pal and I had just started work, so weekends were the only spare time. We worked Saturday morning, so leisure was Saturday afternoon, evening and sometimes Sunday, although this day was usually a family day. Saturday afternoon was Roundhay Park, Saturday evening the cinema..... Roundhay Park in winter was sledging or ice skating on the little lake; Spring walks and flower gardens; Summer boating on the big lake; and events in the arena; Autumn walks and roller skating on the flat roof over the boathouse; Refreshment in the Lakeside Cafe. The Mansion was too expensive for us.....

Thank you, Mr Pickford, for sharing these memories, and for these photos from your album – images of the park in days gone by.



ROUNDHAY PARK
27 FEB. 1944

ORNAMENTAL GATES



28 MARCH 47
BIG WATERFALL
IN FULL FLOOD
FOLLOWING SPRING
THAW

Little Friends Update

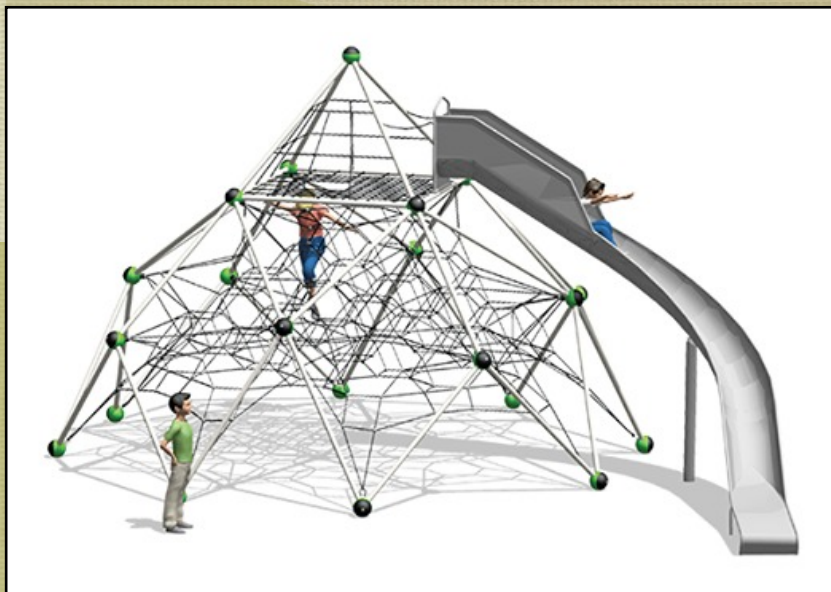
The Little Friends team has made a huge impact over the past couple of years, creating fantastic new opportunities for children and their families. Thanks to all the team and to Sara Dawson for this update.

Little Friends Events - Some good news!

Due to Covid-19, our planned events could not go ahead between March and August. However, the good news is that at the end of July we were given the go ahead by the council to start offering outdoor events again. Laura Webb of the Little Friends team is working hard to provide all the information and to make sure the event providers comply with all the Covid-19 safety requirements. Little Friends aim to set up a Forest School before the end of August. Of course it is possible that circumstances may suddenly change, but we look forward to children and families being able to enjoy Little Friends activities again. *Please watch the Little Friends of Roundhay Park Facebook page and the FoRP website for updates.*

£55,000 raised for Upper Playground!

We are excited to announce that we have raised over £55k for the upper playground on Soldiers Field in Roundhay Park. After the success of the Lakeside Playground appeal we decided we needed to raise something for the top playground too. A new campaign was born and in about six months we raised over £55k. Thank you to Leeds City Council, Friends of Roundhay Park, Coop and Veolia for your contributions to the cause.



The funds raised enabled us to select a large and exciting piece of new equipment, which is basically a spiders web with a slide at the top of it. It will be a great addition to the playground and we are hopeful this will be installed this year

*Well done to the fund-raising team:
Laura Webb, Petra Smith, Lexi Moffat,
Sara Dawson, Julia Wilson.*

Children's Garden

We are planning to build a children's garden in Canal Gardens. Recently we were successful with a Wade's Grant (£4,500) and luckily we have unlimited time to spend this. We are in

talks with landscape gardeners and garden designers to see how best to use the space that the Leeds Parks and Countryside has kindly set aside for the project.

Members may have seen or heard of the 'Roundhay Adder', a long rock snake on Old Park Road, made entirely of rocks children have handprinted during lockdown. We felt it symbolised community spirit and draws on Roundhay's positive energy during lockdown, so we plan to display it in the new garden.

Sara Dawson

And don't forget.....The Little Friends team has created some wonderful adventure trails for children around the park. So even though some events have had to be cancelled, these trails are still available while Covid restrictions are in place. Details are on the FoRP website www.forp.org. And don't just take our word for how good these trails are – you can find out more at <http://muddybootsmummy.co.uk/2020/08/01/adventure-trail-in-roundhay-park/>

Friends Garden

Friends Garden is a little gem within Canal Gardens. Created and maintained by FoRP, it must be one of our proudest achievements. This year a notice board has been placed beside the garden, so that visitors can appreciate the love and hard work that FoRP has invested in this project. We thank Cecily Jarvis for this information, and the photos



Installing the board

In one corner of Canal Gardens, just inside the gateway from Old Park Road, is a beautiful small woodland garden created by the Friends of Roundhay Park. It is all too easy to pass by on the way into the heart of Canal Gardens or to Tropical World without realising the garden is there. To bring people's attention to the garden and to explain its history, the Friends have organised the installation of an information board.

The information board gives a brief history of the garden from the days when it was a neglected corner with overgrown plants and a soil full of rubble. All construction work was carried out by volunteers and because of the limitations of the site, no machinery was employed, just lots of enthusiasm and muscle power. The garden was opened in 2005 and in the summer of 2018 was awarded "Platinum" in the Open Spaces category of Britain in Bloom.

The provision of the information board was generously supported by funding from Leeds City Council Wellbeing / Youth Activity Fund Inner North East Community Committee and in March 2020 Councillor Angela Wenham (Labour, Roundhay) joined with members of the Friends and John Roebuck (Estates Manager) to mark the occasion officially.

Cecily Jarvis



Celebrating achievement (lt to rt) Cllr Angela Wenham, Cecily Jarvis, Jean Hardman, John Roebuck, Carol Haughton

Hidden Gems in our park

During the early part of the lockdown the two golf courses were closed so walkers, including the editors, were free to roam the park and beyond. It was wonderful to wander across green pastures close to home mostly with not a soul in sight. We think we walked every inch of the park, finding the farm up by the Leeds Golf course where fresh farm eggs could be bought. Having got used to not using money we often moaned when eggs were available but we didn't have any cash with us! We found little bridges above the gorge in an area which later became covered in bluebells. More recently our walks found wild raspberries, probably left over from what might have been ornamental gardens surrounding Elmete Hall, the former home of James Kitson. This open area is popular with dog walkers but it is also close to one of the park's hidden gems. In the woods behind Waterloo Lake you will find the gazebo, James Kitson's long forgotten summerhouse. It is nothing like it would have been with only its skeleton remaining but it has an eerie, ethereal feeling and is worth the climb. You will find it following the 'red route' carefully climbing up from the Wetherby Road car park.



Friends Gardeners - Update

There is no stopping the tireless Friends Gardeners. Not only do they look after the designated Friends Garden in Canal Gardens, but they have been hard at work in other areas of the park. Thanks to Cecily Jarvis for this report.

We have not been able to keep up with regular maintenance of Friends Garden during lockdown but now that regulations have been eased, Friends Gardeners have attended at times best suited to them individually and for now the weeds have been conquered!

Shortage of staff in Parks & Countryside has meant that some areas of garden in the park have had to go untended lately. A call for help was answered by FoRP members and in particular, the long border in Canal Gardens and the Alhambra Garden. The latest challenge for the "Demon Weeders" are the rose beds in front of Tropical World. Thank you to all those who have helped out and made such a difference and thanks to the park staff who have kept up with removing our piles of weeds.

The big ash tree at the side of Friends Garden has been much reduced by Forestry as it had become top heavy and unstable. We hope that late in 2020 Forestry will be reducing the top growth on some of the other trees which have put on so much growth and are now significantly shading areas of Friends Garden.

FoRP Secretary, Carol Haughton attended a bird box-making class with the Little Friends and her bird box was put up in Friends Garden early this year. In no time at all it was taken over by blue tits and they could still be seen going in and out well into the summer. Unfortunately, my photographic skills are not up to Springwatch quality – so no wildlife picture.

Flower Meadow

Lockdown prevented any work on the flower meadow this year. Currently there is a great deal of long grass and not much else to see. We had the flower seed ready to go but with such a dry spring, it is unlikely much would have germinated, had we been able to sow it. Instead, the plan is to weed and prepare the meadow in autumn (Covid restrictions permitting) and to sow the seed we have. Much of this seed comprises common annuals many of which will remain viable for another year and to which we can add new flower seed for 2021.

Cecily Jarvis

A video of the Friends Gardeners at work in various parts of Canal Gardens was posted on Facebook and was viewed by 8,783 people. It is good to know their efforts on behalf of FoRP are much appreciated. Comments included: "Stunning", "Making the view all nice and lovely", and "Amazing work in this heat. Thank you" (This last comment must have been in May!)



Cecily Jarvis in the rose garden



Weeding - Jan and Ian Nicholson



Jan Nicholson



Rosemary and Chris Ward

Other News

David Corbett – a true friend of Roundhay Park

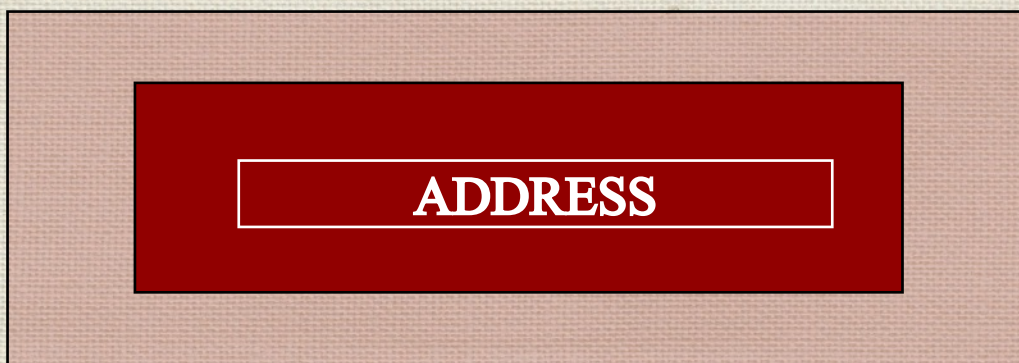
In our Spring 2020 newsletter we were delighted to feature some pre-WWII memories of Roundhay Park sent to us by David Corbett, who now lives in the USA. David has generously followed this by making a financial donation to FoRP. Our Chair, Richard Critchley has phoned David to thank him on behalf of all of us, with assurances we shall use our funds wisely. Thank you David. Let's keep in touch.

Mary's Tree

Our Spring 2020 newsletter included an item describing the plans in place at that time for Mary's Tree which previously had to be felled due the base becoming rotten. Since then, the council has decided that plan was not appropriate, and so FoRP is busy once again exploring alternative ways to preserve this important piece of art work. Thanks to committee member John Feguson who has worked tirelessly on this issue. Further developments will be reported in future newsletters.

Easy Funding

You can help raise funds for FoRP just by buying things you were going to buy anyway. All you have to do is to sign up to 'Easy Funding' at <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/roundhaypark/payments/62/> and you will find over 4000 different shops/brands where every time you buy something they will automatically make a donation to FoRP. *It doesn't cost you anything extra!*



Oakwood Farmers Market

The Oakwood Farmers Market and REAP (Roundhay Environmental Action Project) have always been great friends of FoRP. We are delighted that the Farmers Market is up and running again after an inevitable break due to the Covid-19 problem, albeit with special arrangements to assure safety and social distancing. The market was held successfully in July and August and is scheduled for the 3rd Saturday of each month from now on. Come down to support your local Farmers Market and the all the traders there.

Tropical World Open!

Tropical World and its shop re-opened on Monday 17th August (10am - 4pm daily). The cafe is also re-opening from 10am to 3pm. Visit <https://tropicalworld.leeds.gov.uk> for more information and to book tickets.

