



# THE NEWSLETTER

## FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK



**SPRING  
2023**

PRESIDENT: MARJORIE ZIFF MBE CHAIRPERSON: RICHARD CRITCHLEY



# CHAIR'S REPORT

VESTIBULUM VELIT ORCI, BIBENDUM EGET

As I write this piece, the early flowers have come into bloom but today, it has started to snow and further snow and cold weather are forecast for the next few days. This will soon pass and by the time you read this, Spring may well have sprung.

2023 has been designated Leeds City of Culture and many events and shows are planned to be held citywide, including in the park. Whilst I do not currently have any details, I am sure that there will be many welcome and additional visitors taking advantage of the variety of attractions. This may cause our working party members some additional work and responsibilities, especially the litter pickers but, if our visitors treat the park with the respect it deserves, it should not cause us too many problems.

The year started with the very sad news of the loss of one of our most hard working and loyal members, John Ferguson. John was a long-time member of FoRP and was actively involved in every aspect of our work. A quiet and considered man but always willing, always present and making a positive and constructive contribution. Most of all he was a true and trusted friend and gentleman. He is sadly missed by all who knew him. We pass our sincere condolences to John's family.

You may have heard that the council was considering the introduction of car parking charges at parks across the city. This caused us and many others considerable concern. We are pleased to say that, following widespread concerns and objections from all quarters across Leeds, the council listened and has decided against the proposal. We are most grateful for their consideration.

Many will have seen the sad demise of Mary's Tree, having to be taken down and abandoned due to decay. However, some new carvings of wildlife based on Tropical World have been created and are ready to be installed in the same area in time for our Easter visitors.



I do hope that you will find many items and articles of interest in this edition of the magazine that will enhance your enjoyment and greater knowledge of both FoRP and of the park and we hope to see many of you when you visit. Please, if you see members, don't be shy. Do come and have a chat with us.

Richard Critchley



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It is with great sadness we have to report that John Ferguson, one of the most active and long-serving members of the FoRP committee passed away in early December last year. On behalf of all the members of the Friends of Roundhay Park we send our sincere condolences to John's wife, Lesley, and to all his family.

## In Grateful Memory of John Ferguson

John was born in Glasgow in 1943 and attended Glasgow High School. As his father's work involved much travelling, John went on to live in many different places, including time spent living in Kent and in France, before coming to Leeds in the 1960s to study textile chemistry at Leeds University. After further moves around England during which time he completed his PhD, John and his family moved back to Leeds in 1984, this time to stay.

John was a man of so many talents. In his youth, he was actively involved in the scout movement, and kept his love of travelling and holidaying, often under canvas, later allowing himself the luxury of a caravan and tourer. The family went on many skiing holidays, and John became a really expert skier, to the extent that he qualified as a ski instructor. He somehow also found the time to run his own business, only retiring from this at the age of 75.

It was our good fortune that John chose to bring his energy and expertise to the Friends of Roundhay Park. His contribution to FoRP through the years has been immense. In addition to being a regular on FoRP working parties and litter picking sessions, (for years accompanied by his beloved dog 'Mac'), he planned and led FoRP's Heritage Open Day Walks, leading participants to many of the hidden gems in parts of the park most people never see. John played a leading part in many major FoRP projects including the installation of 'Mary's Tree' in Canal Gardens. This was funded through a bequest from late FoRP member Mary Hill, and was carved by sculptor Shane Green. Unfortunately, the wet ground caused the base of the sculpture to rot all too quickly, and the tree had to be felled for safety reasons. However, John would never give up, and spent a huge amount of time in meetings and negotiations with various parties trying to secure some replacement sculptures. Having to deal with many frustrations on the way, John's efforts are at last bearing fruit. Two concrete plinths (to protect the wood from wet ground) were installed at the site, and new carvings by Shane Green should be in place soon. We will have John to thank for the end result.

In addition to all of this, John also undertook a huge amount of the 'behind-the-scenes' work for FoRP, including managing the website, the membership database, and financial payments systems. These vital tasks too often go almost unnoticed, unless something goes wrong...but this rarely happened, thanks to John's tireless efforts through all these years.

John will be greatly missed by all those who knew him. His contribution to FoRP has been immeasurable. We send our love to Lesley and all of John's family with our thanks for allowing him to devote so much of his time to the Friends of Roundhay Park, and to making this a better place for all the visitors who come here.



Receiving an award for Mary's Tree with sculptor Shane Green (rt)



On a working party with Mac and fellow FoRP volunteers



# STILL LITTER PICKING - IT'S NO LAUGHING MATTER

*There is always work for the amazing FoRP volunteers who keep turning out to pick up the rubbish some people leave behind. In recent times, some new items have appeared along with the plastic bottles and food packaging. Martin Child, who leads our regular sessions, takes up the story.*



Best hat award goes  
to Chris Ward



Coffee, biscuits and lots of  
nitrous oxide cylinders



Our first three sessions of this year were well attended and the weather was kind, particularly the February session, it almost felt like Spring was here. We have enjoyed the spectacular displays of crocuses and other Spring flowers to keep our spirits up.

Alongside the usual items of litter, we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of large blue nitrous oxide (laughing gas) cylinders in the park over the past year or so. These are heavy and difficult to dispose of. I have taken some to the local authority recycling centre at Seacroft. They are metal and need to be recycled. The police have been informed and are making

extra patrols to the known 'hot spots' which hopefully is improving the situation. If you come across areas where you are regularly finding significant numbers of these cylinders please let me know ([flying.martin@uwclub.net](mailto:flying.martin@uwclub.net)). A photograph showing the location of the find would be helpful.

The only 'up side' is that these larger cylinders appear to have replaced the hundreds of 'Sparklets' type small silver cylinders we used to deal with!

Everyone is welcome to join our group sessions. These will take place on the first Monday of each month throughout the year. We meet at 10am in the Car-

riage House car park, behind the Roundhay Fox. Purple bags and litter picking equipment will be provided. Coffee, biscuits and good company all add to the fun.

*More equipment needed*  
*Summertime sessions*

We are running a little short of equipment at present. Before committing precious FoRP funds to the purchase of more equipment, we are asking anyone with equipment they no longer need to please return it. Alternatively, I would be happy to come and collect unused equipment from you if that is easier. Please let me know. Thank you!  
( email [flying.martin@uwclub.net](mailto:flying.martin@uwclub.net))

Martin Child



# LEEDS YEAR OF CULTURE - 2023

## World Music and World Food Festival

The City of Leeds had been preparing a bid to become European City of Culture for 2023 before that ceased to be an option for UK cities. However, Leeds has decided to go ahead and create their own City of Culture 2023. Many exciting cultural events will be taking place throughout the year, and Roundhay, with its wonderful park will be very much involved. We have our own Leeds 2023 Neighbourhood Host for Roundhay, Nick Wayne, who has been in touch with FoRP and other local community groups including Oakwood Farmers Market, REAP and Roundhay Residents Association. Plans are being developed to set up The World Music and World Food Festival to be held at Oakwood Clock on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June. The Farmers Market will be on as usual in the morning, and the festival will take

place through the afternoon and into the evening. Music performers were still being selected as this newsletter went to print, but the range of treats on offer may include acts such as a Cuban Salsa Band, a Japanese Drumming group, a World Music Jazz Band, and an African rock band.

The organisers are also hoping for more World Food vendors to be part of the festival and they should apply to [roundhayhost@leeds2023.co.uk](mailto:roundhayhost@leeds2023.co.uk) (subject to space being available).

Keep a watch out for further information and details of what promises to be a wonderful community event, full of colour, music and food for all your senses ([www.leeds2023.co.uk](http://www.leeds2023.co.uk)).

**LEEDS**  
YEAR OF CULTURE **2023**

Supported by Leeds City Council

## Litter Pick Extra

On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March an extra litter pick was organised by Carol Stagg, our newsletter editor (who managed to drag her co-editor out of bed to help too). This covered the often neglected area around Elmete Hall and into the woodland and other nearby spaces. Eight valiant volunteers attended, and in not much more than an hour they collected all the rubbish shown in the photos. This included the wheelbarrow, left in the woods, and a broken laptop and three nitrous oxide cylinders. We anticipate more sessions may be needed in future.

Meanwhile, don't forget FoRP's regular sessions with Martin Child.







## IN THE FRIENDS GARDEN

*Just inside the wall by the Old Park Road entrance to Canal Gardens is the Friends Garden – a haven of peace and tranquillity created and maintained by FoRP. A dedicated group of volunteers led by Janet Wilkinson carry out regular work in the garden. Janet provided this update at the FoRP open meeting in February.*

The first session of the year in the Friends Garden took place on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February. The session was very well attended and we spent the time clearing leaves so that the spring bulbs have a little more space and light. The snowdrops and the hellebores were already flowering and the crocus and daffodils were all coming through. Hopefully the sessions will now continue on a fortnightly basis throughout the year, subject of course to the weather.

At the start of January, Jan and I had a meeting with James, the Estates Officer, to discuss removing some of the lower branches of the tree above the newer part of the garden. It is hoped that by removing these we will get more light into that part of the garden.

We spent a significant amount of time towards the end of last year and the start of this year clearing leaves from both the pathways and the planting areas. It is hard work and very time-consuming. So we are exploring the possibility of investing in a leaf blower for the future. We are also hoping to purchase a few new shrubs and to move some plants, especially in the 'work in progress' garden to the right of the gate as you enter from Old Park Road. We particularly want shrubs that will add some winter colour.



# CAN'T TELL YOUR COOT FROM YOUR MOORHEN?

*Dave Johnston, our regular bird contributor has all the answers. Thanks, Dave for this comprehensive guide, and for the wonderful photos*



Coot

Moorhen



Female Goldeneye



You will probably see a lot of activity from two common water birds in the next few weeks on both lakes in the park - coots and moorhens. Coots and moorhens are not ducks, but belong to a group of birds called rails. Both can be very aggressive in the spring, and will be seen chasing each other and sometimes seemingly running across the water. They often grapple with each other and may even force the weaker bird underwater for a few seconds.

Coots are the bigger birds, being 37cm long with a wingspan of 75cm. The males weigh 810 grams and the females 690 grams. They are basically black with a white beak and forehead.

There are approximately 26,000 pairs of coots breeding in Britain each year, but this number goes up to 205,000 birds in the winter, when birds from the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the Baltic fly here. They are omnivorous, but prefer aquatic plants. Our breeding birds build nests at the edges of the lakes, and sometimes under the walls of the Upper Lake. They usually have two broods per year, each with 5 to 7 eggs. Coots can live for up to 15 years.

Coot and moorhen chicks can be hard to tell apart. Coot chicks have more downy yellow feathers around their heads and a bald red head and red beak. Moorhen chicks are basically black with fewer yellow downy feathers around their heads, with a red beak plus a yellow tip.

Juvenile coots are basically grey-brown in colour with a white face and breast.

Moorhens are smaller than coots, being 34cm long, with a wingspan of 52cm and weighing 350 grams. Again they are basically black, but have a red forehead and red beak with a bright yellow tip. They are also omnivores, preferring floating weeds and damp grass. 210,000 pairs of moorhens breed in Britain each year, and this increases to 305,000 birds when moorhens overwinter here from the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Our Roundhay birds have to compete with coots for nesting sites. Moorhens also have two broods per year, each with 5 to 7 eggs. Juvenile moorhens lack the white face and breast of young coots. They are basically brown, with white feathers along the sides and a white tail. They can live up to 11 years.

Both birds are good swimmers, even though they do not have webbed feet like ducks. Moorhens, with their long yellow legs and toes, swim with a jerky movement. Coots have strange looking feet. Their toes have an incomplete web. Their swimming action always looks smoother than moorhens. Moorhens and coots in flight may look a little awkward compared to ducks, but that doesn't stop them flying from northern Europe and back in Autumn and Spring. You may often see them together on both lakes, so look out for the beak and leg colour of the adults, and you will be able to tell them apart.

Two duck species have provided some excitement this winter. Up to 42 gadwall have been on the Upper Lake, and 4 female goldeneye have been at the top end of Waterloo Lake in January and February.

It is quite rare to see goldeneye at Roundhay Park.

Dave Johnston



# LITTLE FRIENDS LOVE ROUNDHAY PARK

*In recent years, thanks to the opportunities created by Sara Dawson and others we have seen increasing involvement of much younger volunteers – our true Little Friends. Their activities, supported by their parents and other adults have included planting bulbs, litter picking and helping with other working party activities.*

*Here is an interview with one Little Friend who joined a working party, and also did some litter picking (the interviewer was his mum):*

*Can you tell us a little bit about you?*

Hello my name is James. I am 6 years old. I like history- mainly the tudors.

*When did you volunteer at Roundhay Park?*

Saturday 11th February.

*What did you do while volunteering with the working party?*

Chopping dead flowers down and putting lots of leaves in a big pile.

*What was your favourite job?*

Pulling the leaves in a cart to clear the wild flower meadow. I also liked litter picking because I don't like litterbugs.

*Will you be volunteering again in future?*

Yes, because it is easy to get there.

*Would you recommend volunteering to others?*

I would recommend volunteering because you help the park.



Having fun at Forest School



We have reported in recent newsletters that the long-serving Estate Officer for Roundhay Park, John Roebuck has now retired. The Little Friends found a special way to say their own thank you to John for all his hard work. They planted crocus bulbs to make the shape of John's initials (JR) in a grassy bank in the circular garden near the Carriage House. They have had to be very patient to see any results, but in late February/early March the crocuses had grown, spelling out the letters JR for all to see. If you missed them this year, watch out next Spring when hopefully the letters will still be readable.

John Roebuck knew nothing about this plan, and was surprised and delighted with the result. He said:

*"Thank you, I was very touched. Say it with flowers - never a truer statement. My best wishes to all. I think the crocus display has been one of the best. Many thanks J R."*

Thanks to you, John.

## Forest School

In 2023, we are delighted to report that the Forest School sessions have returned to Roundhay Park, and will run through into the summer. Forest School is "a child-centred inspirational learning process that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting". The sessions will take place in Ram Wood on the following dates and will be led by trained Forest School instructor Melody Thornton. The sessions run from 10-11am

Thursday 20th April - St Georges Day  
Tues 25th and Thursday 27th April - Anzac Day  
Thursday 4th May - Coronation of King Charles  
Tuesday 9th and Thursday 11th May - Mothers Day  
Thursday 18th May - Stickpeople  
Tuesday 23rd and Thursday 25th May - Woodland jewellery  
Tuesday 6th and Thursday 8th June - Spiderwebs  
Thursday 15th June - Fathers Day  
Tuesday 20th and Thursday 22nd June - Mud Faces  
Thursday 29th June - Daisy chains/crowns

Tuesday 4th and Thursday 6th July - Painting fireworks  
Thursday 13th July - final forest party

There is a £5 cost per child attending, and booking is essential. If you'd like to book, please email [fsroundhay@gmail.com](mailto:fsroundhay@gmail.com) or [forestschool@forp.org](mailto:forestschool@forp.org), or text 07837 035094.





## WORKING PARTIES - ALWAYS MORE TO DO.

Whitehair Streak Butterfly



*A vital regular activity for FoRP is our working parties. Volunteers led by Ian Nicholson carry out a range of tasks around the park in support of the council's own park staff. Tasks include clearing paths, planting bulbs, removing debris from the edges of the lakes. (Also drinking coffee and eating biscuits!). Ian has provided this information on recent activity.*



The early working parties of this year revisited the grids in Ram Wood beck which need regular clearing, planting the last of the snowdrops and pruning back some self seeded trees in the wall of the upper lake. We also replaced Post 7 of our adventure trails and tidied up the wild flower meadow. More barrows were sent for as it turned into a bigger job than we thought it would be.

plant and re-wild an area near the Folly where the rare Whitehair Streak Butterfly has been seen. It will be a large area, completed in phases and will incorporate relaxed mowing (signage will be put in place). Tropical World will also be running events, some coinciding with the Big Butterfly Count.



Leeds Parks and Countryside will be looking at ways they can incorporate conservation in to the park.

Discussions with the Butterfly Conservation group have identified rare species of butterfly in the area.

There are plans to extend the FoRP wild-flower meadow (opposite Barrans Fountain) to 3 times it's current area and to

Working parties are usually held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month from 10am - 12.30pm. For further information and to join in, please contact Ian Nicholson (email: [crashbambi@gmail.com](mailto:crashbambi@gmail.com))





## LEEDS CITY COUNCIL BACKS SKATEPARK BID

*The Roundhay Skatepark Project, chaired by Matt Evans was started by a local group of skateboarders, BMX'ers, rollerbladers, rollerskaters and parents who want to transform the current run down skatepark in Roundhay Park into a world class skatepark. FoRP has been involved in the process and our vice chair, Sara Dawson is on the project committee. There are many hurdles to overcome, but thanks go to Sara for this update on progress.*

Leeds City Council has pledged its full support for the campaign to build a new skatepark in Roundhay Park. Matt Evans (project chair), reported that over the last year the project had built the foundations of the Roundhay Skatepark Project, aligned with the Friends of Roundhay Park, built a website, grown good social channels, met with local disability activists and many skatepark users young and old. Project representatives have also visited many community events and created a merchandise range.

In addition, the project has identified key grants to apply for and has defined a funding strategy. Draft designs have been shared with several skatepark building companies, who have been really excited by the concept and are eager to work with the project.

An undertaking of this size and importance cannot be achieved without the support of the local council. On 18<sup>th</sup> January at Leeds City Council chambers, Matt made an outstanding presentation to the full council of nearly 100 people, including the Mayor, many councillors and senior council personnel, asking for their backing for the project.

The project succeeded in securing council backing and even received a round of applause.

Thank you to councillors Zara Hussain, Lisa Martin and Jordan Bowden for your support and encouragement for this project.



The Skatepark 'team' at Leeds Civic Hall to make their presentation to the city council on 18<sup>th</sup> January, with Sara Dawson on the left.

*The Roundhay Skatepark Project needs your help to build this skatepark. Without the backing of the local community we cannot take this project forward. Please consider donating through our website, purchasing a T-shirt or coming to one of our events. Your contribution will help us turn a dilapidated area into a world class skatepark.*

[www.roundhayskatepark.com](http://www.roundhayskatepark.com)



# Spring comes to the sensory garden

*Inside the walled garden at Canal Gardens you will find FoRP's sensory garden. Now entering its 3<sup>rd</sup> year Sarah Jackson leads the volunteers who are continuing to develop this lovely space as a sensory treat for visitors of all ages. Sarah has provided this update on recent activities*

Lindsey Ward creating a willow obelisk in Sarah's kitchen



During the winter months we have continued to work on the sensory garden with general pruning and tidying up. The dried flower heads were left on the verberna to allow them to scatter their seeds in the breeze. The grasses have been particularly beautiful, especially with the morning frosts on them. A Christmas tree obelisk was decorated with organic natural ornaments for visitors to enjoy.

Away from the garden we have been very busy utilising the tall willow stems we harvested in the autumn. We have woven three tall obelisks, three cloches and willow dragonflies, butterflies and flowers to decorate the sensory garden. We have placed cloches around the geum which spilled profusely over the footpath when in flower last year and, whilst lovely to brush past, were being slightly battered by visitors to the garden. The plants needed staking but in order to avoid using sticks with sharp ends which could scratch people as they walked past, we decided cloches would be preferable. Through the sale of willow wreaths and stars before Christmas we have

been able to purchase more ajugas and daffodil bulbs, a mahonia for winter colour in the bug hotel area and a new fleece to protect the tree fern.

We continue to monitor the condition of the Roundhay Adder, especially after spending many hours on our hands and knees last year restoring most of the pebbles which had faded badly since they were laid. As soon as the weather is fine and dry enough, we shall apply another coat of varnish to protect the pebbles. We have again reinforced the 'fedge' which protects the Adder using willow prunings.

We are planning to establish a bruising bed in one of the raised planters using plants which have scented foliage and so release a distinctive smell when touched. In the raised bed which is in the sun most of the day, and where some herbs have struggled to thrive, we are going to create an alpine bed for added interest.

We have now started our weekly working party visits to the park, focusing on general tidying and fur-



ther improving and expanding the wildlife zone. Having planted over 1000 bulbs over the last two years, we were thrilled to spot more snowdrops appearing in the garden this year and the daffodils should soon be in flower. Spring has arrived in the sensory garden!

Sarah Jackson



# A Fond Farewell to Mr Whippy

Sadly, we have reached the end of an era, as Mr Whippy (also known as Ian Smith) has announced the decision to downsize the business and they will no longer be serving ice creams from their pitch by the lakeside playground. Mr Whippy Leeds has been in operation since 1962. Three generations of Ian's family have been working in the business and Ian himself has been working in the park for 25 years. He has spoken of his love for Roundhay Park and has always been a great supporter of FoRP, including generous sponsorship of the newsletter. His generosity extended to giving away lots of free ice creams when groups of volunteer school children joined Martin Child to do some litter picking.

Mr Whippy (Ian and family) will be greatly missed by visitors to the park. We wish you all the very best for the future and hope you will be relaxing and enjoying an ice cream served by someone else. Thank You!



Ian Smith in classic pose. Martin Child is the happy customer.



ADDRESS

## Proposal to introduce parking charges dropped

Leeds City Council consulted on a proposal to introduce car parking charges at many of the parks across Leeds, including Roundhay Park. However, after gauging public opinion and taking feedback, the council announced in January that it had decided not to proceed with these plans. However, we need to be aware that the council remains under severe financial pressure. In announcing their decision, the council said *"having listened to the valuable feedback we have received from residents, we will not be progressing this proposal at this time. Nonetheless, the financial outlook for all authorities remains challenging and further work will need to be done to identify further savings and efficiencies for 2024/25 onwards"*

It is clear that the continuing financial pressures on the council will mean that our beautiful park will need all the Friends it can get.

