

THE FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK

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President: Marjorie Ziff MBE

Chairperson: Richard Critchley

MEMBERSHIP CARDS ENCLOSED

Dancing in the Park – A treasured memory

The Mary Gordon – bygone boat trips on Waterloo Lake

Draining the swamp – improvements to Canal Gardens

Plus articles from our working parties and resident bird expert and others

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Chair's Letter

As I write this we are in the midst of winter's grip. Just as the crocuses gained their full height and burst into bloom, they were buried beneath a thick blanket of snow. But nature can cope with these events and we must be looking forward to spring with its fresh, clean appearance and colourful flora.

Meanwhile, the Parks Department staff are continuing their good labours to ensure that the park looks its best. They are also continuing their efforts to repair the leaking canal, reduce the flooding around Mary's Tree and to demolish the burnt-out changing rooms on Soldiers Fields.

Supporting their efforts are our own volunteers who quietly carry out extensive work in the park and have their own agenda for improvements during the coming year. One item to note is the extension being created to the Friends Garden which, when completed will contain a restful arbour with benching dedicated to the memory of our former member, Jon Vogler, who did so much to further our work and influence.

Finally, we cannot let the moment pass without saying an enormous thank you to our local councillors, Christine McNiven and Ghulam Hussain and to deputy leader of the council, Lucinda Yeadon for their total support and the assistance they have given us. All three will not be standing for re-election this year and will be sadly missed. I trust they will all remain friends of Friends.

Richard Critchley

Special notice from the Chair – Important Changes to Tropical World entry

As a result of perceived overuse of the free entry facility to Tropical World for FoRP members there was a proposal to remove the concession altogether. However, following a series of discussions and negotiations, we have achieved a valuable compromise. From 1st April, members will be restricted to **two visits per year for up to two adults and two children**. Membership cards will be punched or marked on each visit. There will be a further review in six months to monitor the situation.

This is a valuable concession and we are most grateful for the understanding and generosity of the park management. We understand that it costs the council and were extremely concerned to hear of suggestions of misuse such as back passing the card to gain unauthorised entry. This is totally unacceptable. Whether we are able to retain the concession for the future is now dependent on the conduct of you, the members.

Richard Critchley

For information – discounted entry to Tropical World is available to the public with Leeds Card (adult £,3.70), Leeds Card Extra (adult £,2.50) and Breeze Card £,2.50)

Life's a Bench

Development to the Friends Garden extension continued with the installation of a bench, and a mighty fine bench it is too. It is very heavy so it was all hands on deck. This bench is very special to us, as it is dedicated to the memory of Jon Vogler, one of FoRP's most active and dedicated members, who led our working parties for many years, including work on the original construction of the Friends Garden.

Our next task is to plant up the rest of the space. So watch this or that space for further developments.









Rock On! - Take the Geology Trail around Roundhay Park

It may have escaped your notice, but Yorkshire Geology Month is taking place during May this year. In 2008 FoRP was involved in a joint venture with Leeds Geological Association to establish a geology trail in Roundhay Park. In 2018, FoRP members, and other friends are welcome to join the leader, Bill Fraser, for a Geological Walk around Roundhay Park on Wednesday 9th May – meeting at 5.30pm at the Mansion House, outside the visitors centre.

Bill will lead a guided walk of approximately three miles, mainly along made paths, but with one steepish ascent and descent through woodland, following the geology trail that was established in 2008. The ten locations along the trail illustrate changing sedimentary environments in the Millstone Grit group (rough rock and underlying beds) and some interesting local and regional structural features. Copies of the trail guide and other handouts will be provided.

Come along to learn more fascinating facts about our wonderful park.

Dancing in the Park – A treasured memory

The editors are greatly indebted to Jean Hardman who provided this information from her friend Rose Green, together with the photographs.

It is almost 150 years since Roundhay Park became open to the public, and in that time it has been the location for many events and celebrations. Music and dance have featured strongly in the park's history. In this issue, we are delighted to say thank you and congratulations to Rose, who was born in 1918 (her hundredth birthday is on 3rd April). Through her friend Jean Hardman, Rose has kindly provided us with a photograph recording one of her treasured memories.

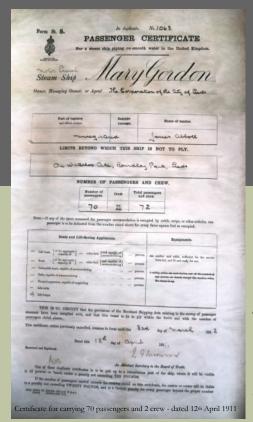
Rose was a member of a dance troupe from the Imperial Stage Training Academy, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, and she remembers dancing in the bandstand at Roundhay Park in the mid 1930s when she was 15/16 years old. The bandstand used was situated below the Mansion and was also used for band concerts and concert parties. Rose remembers that there would be a curtain or screen across the middle of the bandstand behind which they would change into their dance costumes before they emerged for their performance.

Thank you Rose, for sharing this special memory, and for this wonderful photo of you dressed for action. On behalf of all members of the Friends of Roundhay Park we send our congratulations and best wishes in this your 100th year.





Photo from 'An Illustrated History of Roundhay Park' Steven Burt





The Mary Gordon – bygone boat trips on Waterloo Lake

Our thanks go to John Ferguson for providing this article about the Mary Gordon — a pleasure boat operating on Waterloo Lake in the early years of the 20th century.

This is a copy of the Passenger Certificate for the motor launch Mary Gordon which provided trips around Waterloo Lake from 1900 to 1923. Named after the wife of the then Mayor of Leeds the boat was purchased by Leeds City Council from the boat builder William Sargeant of Strandin-the-Green, Chiswick at a cost of £600 and brought to Leeds by steam lorry. The launch was one of the largest electrically powered craft ever built, being powered by batteries stored under the seats.

In 1914 a Blackburn Aeroplane marine engine complete with an aircraft propeller was fitted to the rear deck, replacing the original electric motor. In 1923 the launch was sold to a Wakefield cinema owner Steven Askew who moved it on a wagon drawn by six horses to the River Aire from where it was sailed to the River Calder where regular Sunday trips were run.

How it got from there to the River Ouse in York where a sadly neglected boat was discovered in 1943 by three Lincoln boatmen, remains a mystery. Despite the war they managed to have her towed to Lincoln, where after repairs and restoration she was used for trips between Lincoln and Gainsborough

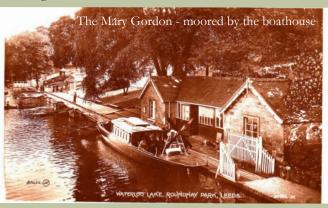
In 1948 a William Hendry purchased her and ran trips along the Fossdyke Navigation between the centre of Lincoln and the Pyewipe Inn.

Following Hendry's death in a road accident the boat was abandoned and sunk in the Trent. In the late 1970s there was an attempt at restoration sponsored by Leeds City Council but the attempt failed.

In 1999 the boat was offered to the people of Lincoln and was accepted. By this time the Mary Gordon was basically a hulk but an enthusiastic band of volunteers set up the Mary Gordon Trust to raise money for the restoration. Unfortunately the trust was wound up in 2017 so we must assume they were unsuccessful and that the Mary Gordon is no more.

FoRP are grateful for the gift of the Passenger Certificate by Kay Harris, daughter of Peter and Hilary Dyson, long standing members of FoRP, and also for the article about the Mary Gordon written by Hilary and published in Oak Leaves, the magazine of the Oakwood Historical Society, which provided much of the information in this article.

John Ferguson



Postcard courtesy of Gwyneth Spurr

Spring is in the air

During the very cold February and March we endured this year, some of us may have wondered if spring would ever come. It is reassuring to know that the birds in the park suffer no such doubts. Our thanks go to Dave Johnston who observed one of our charming resident birds getting ready for spring.

During February the Upper Lake was almost completely frozen over on several days, with Waterloo Lake having large stretches of ice on it at the top end. It was difficult to imagine that birds were already gearing up for spring, but loud rapid calling overhead demonstrated that that was indeed the case. The trees on and around the island in the Upper Lake, and the café on Waterloo Lake rang with the calls of the nuthatch. There were six of these birds displaying together by the Upper Lake by mid-February.







The nuthatch is a resident woodland bird, preferring oak and beech trees. It is around 12 to 14.5 cm long (about the size of a robin). A blue/grey back, buff coloured underneath, and a prominent black eye stripe make them reasonably easy to identify. Males tend to have a more chestnut colour in the under-tail region.

Nuthatches get their name from their habit of wedging nuts into cracks in the bark of a tree, and splitting them open with vigorous blows from their long hatchet-like bills. They feed on caterpillars and beetles in late spring and summer,

and seeds and nuts in the autumn and winter. They have a unique feeding technique, being able to climb vertically up tree trunks, and down again with their head and beak pointing downwards. In recent years more and more of them have been making use of garden feeding stations during the winter for a constant supply of nuts and seed. They may seem to be eating all day long, but in fact are hiding much of the food for later use.

Nuthatches generally live for about two years. They tend to mate for life, and jealously guard their territory with aggressive calling and display. They nest in holes in trees, often old woodpecker nests, and are very particular about the size of the hole. If it is too large they will plaster a ring of mud around the hole to make it the right size. They even do this with nest boxes if the diameter of the hole is not to their liking.

Up to 13 eggs can be laid. Incubation takes about 13 to 18 days, and the young leave the nest after 26 days. Both parents feed the young, mainly on insects, for 14 more days, and then the young must find their own territory. There are around 220,000 pairs of nuthatch in the UK at the moment. You will probably hear them before you see them, aggressively calling to each other, and to other nearby birds. They can be heard and seen all year round by both lakes, and also along the Gorge and the Ravine.

Dave Johnston

Draining the swamp – improvements to Canal Gardens

FoRP's working parties do sterling work, but we can only ever be support for the dedicated park staff working for the council. Tom Cooper reports here on some vital major work carried out by park staff in Canal Gardens.

The area around Mary's Tree has been extremely wet for a while now. It has always been a bit boggy, but it seems to have been worse this winter. Not only is this a problem for the public, but could cause the tree to rot prematurely. The park people have really rallied to the cause. They have constructed drainage channels around the tree and put pipes under the path. They have cleared and deepened the channel that should take the water round the bamboo thicket then away from the path.



Not satisfied with this they then drained the canal. There were not supposed to be any fish in the canal, but as the water level dropped a surprise was awaiting, fish galore! What a pity I did not have my camera with me. You will have to take my word for the size of some of the fish that were netted while I was there. 20-30 carp, many nearly a metre long. Hundreds, some say a thousand, of roach, rudd and sticklebacks. New homes have been found for them all.

It was now time for the big equipment to move in. A large digger dredged the mud from the bottom of the canal. However the park

workers still had to put their wellies on and work on the bits the digger could not reach. It puts our muddy escapades in the shade!

The sides of the canal will be pointed to stop the canal from leaking. This is going to be a huge undertaking. When the mortar has dried the canal will be refilled to its traditional level. Fingers crossed that Mary's Tree will sit on dry land for years to come.

Tom Cooper









A Voice from the Past

More praise for Roundhay Park from 'A Bradford Man'

In the December 2017 issue, we included extracts from an article in the Leeds Mercury of 21st March 1872 written by someone only identified as 'A Bradford Man'. Research by Neville Hurworth, has helped us put together this further extract — wonderfully descriptive of features of the park at that time, just before it became open to the public. Please read on, and let our Bradford Man' show you some of the beauty of our park.

Lake, 33 acres in extent, bordered on the right hand with woods and on the left with the deliciously green park, dotted with forest trees, enlivened with clumps of hollies, and spreading away in graceful undulations up to the hall, seated on a gentle eminence. The lake here expands into a wide bay, and the water pure and clear, is broken into miniature waves by the strong north wind. A pathway to the right leads to the principal waterfall, the water descending in one fall to a deep pool, 57 feet below. Although this work is artificial, great care has been bestowed in giving it as natural an appearance as possible. Nature has supplemented the efforts of the landscaped gardener, and has clothed the rocky sides of the ravine with ferns and other plants delighting in moisture........

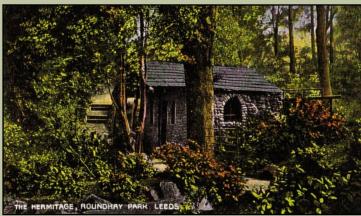
The pathway is continued round the margin of the lake on the east side, through the woods which clothe the slope to the verge of the water. Varied prospects meet the eye; fine hollies, bright with berries, are seen; the white and yellow celandine flowers raise their lovely heads, and the foxglove and wild hyacinth are thriving vigorously amid the brown leaves of last year's ferns. A turn in the lake, and, on the opposite side, a pretty ruin, known as the "Old Castle," comes into view, covered with ivy, and forming a picturesque object. A couple of swans float on the bosom of the lake, a duck starts up with a sharp cry, and flies across the water, breaking the stillness which prevailed, and a stock dove, or wild pigeon, darts away with a loud flap from the trees over our heads and seeks its mate in "the ruin." The pathway leads to the "Old Castle," a spiral stone staircase enables the visitor to mount to the roof, and an extended prospect is obtained of the wide expanse of the lake. The ivy clusters to the old walls in dense masses of green, and is fast coming into flower. Some precaution is needed to prevent accidents at the top of the staircase in the event of an influx of visitors. A portion of the building was at one time habitable. The roof, however, fell in, and although the building has been re-covered, the room is in a dilapidated state. The old mantelpiece and quaint fireplace are still there, but the floor, set with small stones, is in a rough state, and the silly propensity to scribble on the walls has been freely followed out by visitors. Most of the scribbling takes the form of laudation to the Mayor of Leeds (Ald. Barran), and hopes are expressed that the park may be preserved to the people of that town.

Following the pathway, a splendid holly hedge on the left, and plantations of evergreens on the right, a cascade of water, flowing over huge moss-covered stones into a deep wood-embowered glen, makes a merry sound, the water flashing under a momentary gleam of sunshine. A rustic stone bridge, tasteful as everything else about the place,

spans the glen, and to the right the surplus waters of the upper lake tumble over rough stones, fall about thirty feet, and form the cascade as the water runs on its way to the lower lake. The upper lake is five acres in extent, is nicely shaped, has an islet at one end, a boat-house, and "Hermitage." A man in charge showed us "The Hermitage," and told us the history of the place-how the grounds had been laid out by Mr. Nicholson, formerly a banker in London; said that the Waterloo Lake was so called because it was finished in 1815, the year of the memorable battle; that the lakes are supplied with water from springs on the estate, and, with the exception of the overflow, there is no other diminution of the water save by evaporation. "The Hermitage" is built externally of boulder stones, and internally it is lined with small hazel sticks, forming fanciful designs. There is a fireplace, rustic chairs and table, and two small windows on either side of the doorway, filled in with stained glass on the borders and plain glass in the centre. On the latter a couple of poems are neatly cut in, evidently executed with a diamond by a master hand. Under this little building is a boat-house.....

Emerging on to the lawn in front of the mansion, the eye can wander over the greater portion of the park, taking in the two lakes and the well-wooded, undulating, and pastoral country to the south-west. Conspicuous in the distance is Whitkirk church, the woods of Temple Newsam, and in the far distance, on a clear day, Pontefract Castle is distinctly visible. The only tall chimney to be seen is the one at Manston colliery, and the smoke of Leeds was only dimly visible over the woods to the westward. It has rarely been our pleasure to enjoy a more lovely prospect, and if the land-scape is beautiful in winter, what must it be in the glorious summer days and in the autumn, when nature decks the woods in the most gorgeous hues.

A Bradford Man



Postcard courtesy of Mr and Mrs P Dyson

Blackburn Mercury aircraft model goes on display

We are grateful to Carol Haughton, FoRP secretary, for providing information about the display of the model aircraft, and for the photographs.







In previous newsletters (most recently in summer 2017), we have included items on the Blackburn Aircraft company whose factory opened in 1914 on the site currently occupied by Tesco on Roundhay Road, and who test flew their machines from Soldiers Field. Last summer FoRP hosted talks by Professor Robert Blackburn, the grandson of the company's founder, and Rowland Burley, the grandson of Rowland Ding, the chief test pilot who flew Blackburn aircraft from Soldiers Field. The year 2017 marked the centenary of the tragic death of Rowland Ding when his aircraft crashed on one of these test flights from Soldiers Field. A memorial plaque was unveiled by members of the Ding family on 12th May 2017.

For many years the remarkable fact that Roundhay and its park played such an important role in early aviation history has been almost forgotten. However, about four years ago FoRP and Leeds City Council Parks Department began working together to try to bring about some recognition for Robert Blackburn and his aircraft that flew from Soldiers Field. Following a lot of research, this joint effort between FoRP and the Parks Department led to the construction of a model Blackburn Mercury monoplane. It was intended that this should go on display, with some information, somewhere in the park. Initially it was intended to go on display in what used to be the Visitors Centre in the Mansion. But of course, that never happened, and the model ended up in an office at Redhall Nurseries. Now, at last, this large model aircraft is on public view, suspended from the ceiling in the Tropical World cafe.

We are sure that visitors will be surprised and amazed to learn about the Blackburn Aircraft company and its association with Roundhay Park, and we are delighted that this wonderful exhibit is now on display.

Playground Update

Leeds City Council has confirmed it has no funding available for improvements to the Lakeside playground. However, work on the 'Playground Project' is intensifying, focusing on fund raising. The aim is to raise £100K for groundwork and equipment. Lexi Moffat and Laura Webb from the Playground Project attended the FoRP committee meeting on 7th February to update us on the ideas being explored, and discuss ways in which FoRP might help. After discussion, the FoRP committee agreed to commit £20K in order to support bids to other funding sources. These include the Postcode Lottery, Veolia Environmental Trust, other community grants and local businesses. The team are also exploring the potential for donors to sponsor a personalised brick/plaque in the new playground. Visit https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/friendsofroundhaypark. for more information. We plan to raise sufficient funds to allow the playground improvements to start within 12 months, with procurement of the equipment and installation being carried out by Leeds City Council. For more information or if you have any questions please contact the team on playground@forp.org.

A more detailed update will be shared in the summer newsletter.

A Path Cleared to a Party in the Park

FoRP's gallant working parties have continued their hard work throughout the winter, tackling a range of demanding projects. Thanks to Tom Cooper for his leadership of the working parties and for providing these reports and all the photos.

Winter is a time when we all love to stay in doors with a cup of tea and a good book or a jigsaw (I lead such a wild life!). However for FoRP volunteers it means shovelling mud. Once all the leaves have fallen it is time to start path clearing. Even with the enthusiasm of FoRP workers, we cannot tackle all the paths in the park in one winter, so we chose the worst and/or most used. So far we have we have worked on four areas:

Firstly, the drive from the Mansion car park to Upper Lake side had all the fallen leaves removed. Secondly, the drive by Sham Castle needs some work every

Clearing the leaves

done lots of work in the last few years, digging drainage channels and filling them with coarse gravel. However as the path is at the bottom of a steep hill, natural springs in the bank wash soil into the gravel, reducing its draining ability. So we removed the old gravel from the worst sections and replaced it with new. Channels from the path up to the springs have also been dug and filled with gravel, in an attempt to stop the soil from being washed down the hill in the first place. Fingers crossed.





year as it is the route the park workers use to get their heavy equipment down to the Waterloo Lake path. This drags mud onto the path. Also any heavy rain washes mud onto the path from the bank. A double whammy! The section east, from the castle to the gorge has received our tender care, but there is still the section towards the Upper Lake to look forward to.

Thirdly, we've made a start on improving the drainage of the footpath on the west side of Waterloo Lake. Park staff have





Our fourth project has been in Ram Wood, at the entrance from Park Avenue. The section through the narrow gate was getting extremely muddy and could not be avoided. We removed as much mud as possible, without causing any damage to the path surface. Crushed stone was then barrowed, tipped and spread over the affected area. This should create a mud free entrance, and in a short time it will bed down to make a better walking surface. We also cleaned and filled an enormous puddle and the area around it. With experience gained on the Waterloo Lake Path, we cut a channel into the woods and filled it with gravel to provide an escape route for the water. We achieved far more than I expected, but we did have some Roundhay Runners with us, and they do bring muscle and stamina with them. We probably need to work on the entire length of this path, but it is such a big undertaking it might be several years before we get all the way down to our fern garden by Upper Lake.







Talking of jobs for the future, the snowdrops at the top of the Serpentine Path have looked so lovely in the sunshine this year we have decided to expand that area and even develop completely new beds of snowdrops. To try to stop people cutting the corner and walking on the snowdrops one working party laid silver birch logs along the edge of the path. This has been successful and looks good too. It has inspired us to plant primroses in the spaces between the logs. The plan is to do this in March when we can plant the snowdrops "in the green". Can't wait for next year!

If you fancy joining our exciting adventures, e-mail me at (tomandcath@ntlworld.com) and I will add you to the working party list and let you know what we are planning for each session. We meet 2nd Sat & 4th Thurs of each month. We assemble at the Carriage House behind the Roundhay Fox at 10.00am and are done by 1.00pm.

Tom Cooper

Notice Board and Events

FoRP needs YOU!

Please help: FoRP is urgently seeking a volunteer to act as our **Public Relations** person – we need someone with PR skills to help us raise our profile and gain even more community support.

Please contact the editors (editor@forp.org) or secretary (secretary@forp.org) if you can help.

A geological walk around Roundhay Park – as part of Yorkshire Geology Month a geological walk, led by Bill Fraser will take place on Wednesday 9th May 2018. Meet at 5.30pm at the Mansion House outside the Visitor Centre.

Litter Picking Group will meet at Lakeside Cafe car park on the following dates: Tuesday 3rd April, Monday 30th April, Monday 4th June, Monday 2nd July and Monday 6th August.

Oakwood Day 2018 – The Oakwood Traders and Residents Association will host another Oakwood Day from 12pm – 7pm on Saturday 28th April. Come along to enjoy music, arts and crafts and food stalls at this vibrant community event.

ITU World Triathlon Series returns to Roundhay Park and Leeds on 9th and 10th June 2018. Can the Brownlee brothers make it three years in a row by taking first and second places in the elite men's race?

FoRP Working Parties will meet at the Carriage House behind the Roundhay Fox at 10am on these dates:

Saturday 14th and Thursday 26th April

Saturday 12th and Thursday 24th May

Saturday 9th and Thursday 28th June

Saturday 14th and Thursday 26th July

Forthcoming meetings – held in the Education Room, The Mansion, Roundhay Park from 7pm Trustees and Committee meetings:

Wednesday 11th April and Wednesday 15th August 2018

FoRP AGM – Wednesday 13th June 2018

