



# THE NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK

Summer 2016

PRESIDENT: MARJORIE ZIFF MBE    CHAIRPERSON: RICHARD CRITCHLEY

PO Box 129, Leeds LS8 1WY



*Mary's Tree*

*The Hermitage*

*The Triathlon*

*Friends' Garden*

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*Plus Past Postcard - Working Parties - Birdlife in the Park and so much more....*



## Chair's Letter July 2016

In this, my first report to members, let me begin by thanking Julia, the previous chairperson, for her dedication, hard work and for the many and various accomplishments achieved under her leadership. Having shadowed Julia for the last nine months I cannot emphasise enough the time spent, effort and scope of the work she has undertaken on your behalf, not to mention the breadth of knowledge she now possesses. She is a formidable act to follow and I do not underestimate the challenge I face.

My first official function was a very pleasurable occasion. That was the dedication and naming of 'Mary's Tree' on 18<sup>th</sup> June. We had a very good turnout for the event and, amongst others, were joined by Mary's nephew and nieces, all of our ward councillors and members of the park staff for what turned out to be a most enjoyable afternoon. A special vote of thanks is due to David Binns who oversaw all the arrangements and also to those members of the FoRP committee and park staff whose valuable contributions and sheer hard work made it all possible. The tree sculpture is a new and important feature of the park and is creating a lot of interest. We also hope that this is the catalyst for the future development of the surrounding area by the park management into a nature trail for children and adults alike.

Looking to the future, we want to build on our many recent successes to make the park an even more attractive and accessible place for all and a number of initiatives are already in train. Whilst our resources are limited and council budgets are tight, we will nevertheless continue to campaign to get the best settlements to maintain and further improve the park's facilities and appearance.

Let me end by thanking all members of FoRP for their support, but to pay a special tribute to those unsung volunteers especially those on the working parties who unselfishly give so much of their time and physical effort to help keep the park looking great; clearing paths, planting bulbs and collecting litter amongst many other things. By working together, I know that we can and will achieve great things in the future.

Have a great summer and, weather permitting, enjoy the many aspects of the park.  
Richard Critchley



Presentation to outgoing chairperson, Julia Wilson with David Binns (secretary, left) and Richard Critchley, our new chairperson



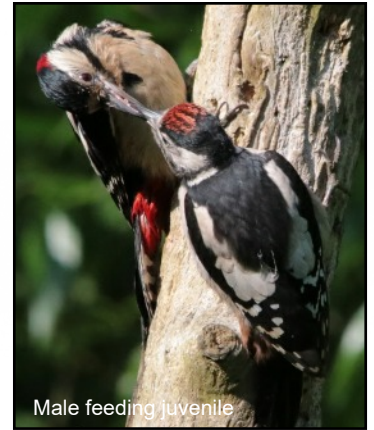
Mary's Tree  
Photo courtesy of Jane Fox



*We have featured many of the most frequently seen birds in previous newsletters, but our park provides home for many other species. We are grateful to Dave Johnston for this article, with his wonderful photos – encouragement for all of us to keep our eyes peeled.*

### **HEAD BANGERS IN THE PARK**

Three species of woodpeckers are found in Britain: the Great Spotted, the Lesser Spotted and the Green woodpeckers. The Great Spotted Woodpecker is the most widespread in our region, and there are several pairs of them in Roundhay Park. They can be difficult to see at times, but there have been more sightings in recent years, as they have started to visit garden bird feeders, especially in the winter.



Male feeding juvenile

They are roughly the same size as a starling, and basically black and white. Adult males and females both have red underparts, and the male has a red patch on the nape of its neck. Both male and female make the nest hole, where the female can lay up to 7 eggs. The juveniles have red heads and pinkish underparts. The amount of red differs from one individual to another, so you may be able to identify the different offspring. The red head of the juveniles begins to disappear in June, and adult colours take over.

The young are fed mainly on insects, but the adults will also give them other birds' eggs and chicks. When the adults hammer into the wood they can extract insects and grubs with their beaks, or by extending their long sticky tongues up to 40mm deep inside the wood.

Their presence is more obvious in the park in early spring, when the male starts 'drumming' to attract a female. This year I heard drumming by the tennis courts, near the Mansion House, close to the lakeside cafe, in the gorge, near Barran's Fountain, and just inside the Wetherby Road entrance. Their drumming on trees is the result of violent impacts with their beaks, which would cause concussion in humans. They have evolved sophisticated shock absorbers where the beak joins the skull to prevent any damage. They mainly choose deciduous/broadleaved trees, and often select those that they somehow know are dying in the centre and easier to drill into.

There are now up to 140,000 pairs of Great Spotted Woodpecker in the UK. Their numbers have increased since the 1980s. Two reasons for this are suggested. Starlings will evict woodpeckers from their nest holes, but the numbers of starlings have dropped dramatically since the 1980s. There is also increased reliance on garden bird feeders in the winter, and peanuts and suet now make up a significant addition to their diet.



Female

So on your next visit to the wooded areas of the Park watch out for a flash of black and white through the trees. Listen for a soft tapping on the bark of trees while they search for insects, drumming in early spring, or a sharp repeated call called a 'kek' or 'pik'.

Dave Johnston



Juvenile in nest hole

Many thanks to Neville Hurworth, our regular contributor on the history of Roundhay Park who has provided more information about the vanished "Hermitage" we asked about in the Spring newsletter.

## More About "The Hermitage" in Roundhay Park.

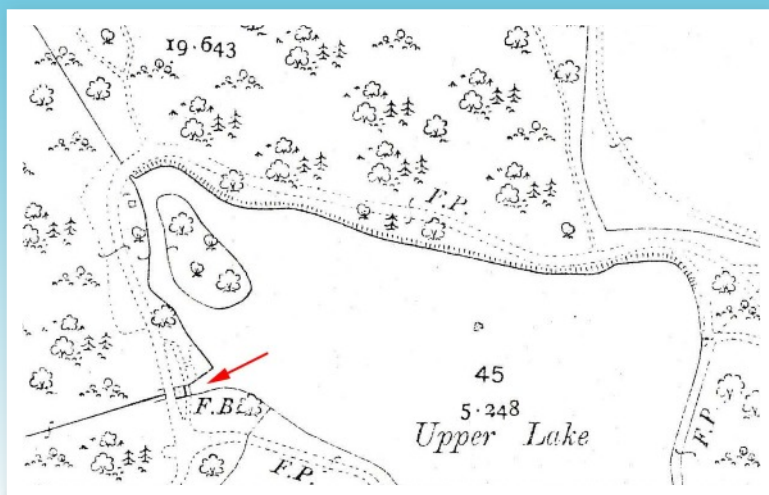
The last FoRP newsletter contained a short reference to "The Hermitage" showing a postcard picture of it and asking where it was. Here is some information about it.

A newspaper article of March 1872 tells us:

*"The upper lake ... has an islet at one end, a boat house, and 'Hermitage' ... 'The Hermitage' is built externally of boulder [cobble] 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."*

Several of the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps appear to show where it was, as does the Hepper sale map of 1871, but none I have seen, mention "The Hermitage" specifically. Strangely, the OS map surveyed in about 1850, shows a building labelled "Hermitage" below the path to the castle, in the Ravine, but it also has a "boat house" on the Upper Lake in the same place as later maps show it, which I suspect was where "The Hermitage" building was situated.

Many of the postcards of "The Hermitage" are in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the OS map of 1906 (the 1908 Edition, section shown here) seems to indicate (see lower left hand corner and arrow in red) that the boathouse with the Hermitage on top straddled a stream near where it entered the Upper Lake. The map section shows there was a broadening of the stream here and also a footbridge over it adjacent to what must have been the old Hermitage building.



Here is a postcard of about 1900 from the Leodis (Leeds Central Library) collection. It shows "The Hermitage" with the footbridge and fence next to it. (The editors are grateful to John Ferguson for supplying the other photograph below – a snowy scene showing The Hermitage from the opposite direction.



Leodis postcard



Photo courtesy of John Ferguson

Compare this with a photograph of the site today (p5). As shown in the postcard, the position of the stream can be identified by the fence on the left hand side on the path leading down from the car park to the Upper Lake. The stream is not much more than a trickle now and I assume its course hasn't changed over the years. If

this is so, it is easy to believe from the maps, that the right hand side of the wooden boards of the footbridge in this picture is close to where one end of the old “Hermitage” building and boathouse used to be.

The last FoRP Newsletter mentions that “The Hermitage” was built by Thomas Nicholson. At first I was a little sceptical of this statement but on reflection, and after further research, I can now believe it. A newspaper account of 1811 gives us the information that Thomas was an angler. This predates the Waterloo Lake by several years and there was a small lake or large pond at the bottom of the Ravine in those days, where Thomas used to fish while his wife and his niece took their leisure in the Castle above him (yes, it seems the Castle was there in 1811 and not built in 1820 as is usually reported). A map of 1825 commissioned by Thomas’s widow shows the Upper Lake with a building at the end of the stream, as in later maps, which may have been “The Hermitage” and boat house. A newspaper account in 1941 records an interview with a former employer of the Nicholsons and whose father had also worked for them. He said that the boathouse under the Hermitage contained a small boat at the time of the Nicholsons and I wonder if Thomas might have used it when he fished the Upper Lake while his wife and niece sometimes watched on and busied themselves inside “The Hermitage.”



Readers might find it interesting if I digress here briefly to consider the development of the island in the Upper Lake. The 1825 map shows no such island. The OS map of 1850 shows a promontory sticking out which by 1871 had become the island as can be seen in the map accompanying the Hesper sale.

Finally, I have no idea when “The Hermitage” building disappeared. I have not found any record of its passing, which is a pity. At the same time the stream was probably taken underground for the final few yards before it entered the Upper Lake leaving the Park with no trace of this historic folly.

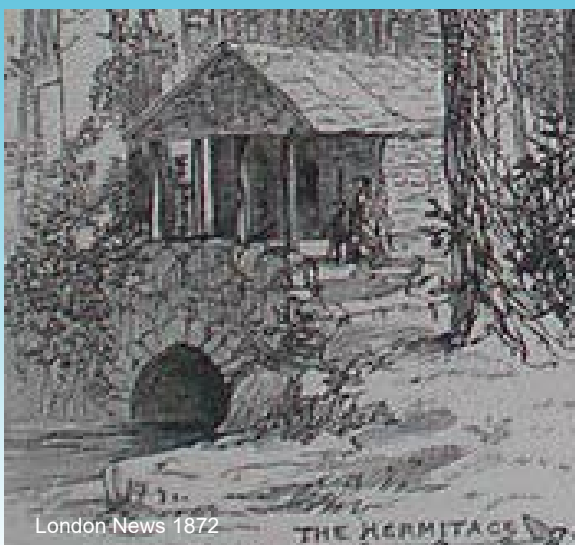
### What did The Hermitage look like?

Thanks to Neville Hurworth and other FoRP members including John Ferguson we know quite a lot about the likely location of The Hermitage. But most of the photographs and postcard images seem to show only the roof and part of the back wall. So what did the Hermitage actually look like? Neville has undertaken some further research and has found this drawing from the London News in 1872 (around the time of the sale of Roundhay Park which opened it up for public use). He has also unearthed this photograph from the Great Northern Railway collection. The description provided by the Great Northern Railway reads:

*“View of the Hermitage, Roundhay Park, Leeds, about 1900. This photograph was one of a series of views taken by an official Great Northern Railway photographer, to advertise sites that could be visited using the railway’s services”.*

(The webpage containing the Great Northern Railway image and further information can be found at:

[http://www.nrm.org.uk/ourcollection/photo?group=Doncaster&objid=1997-7396\\_DON\\_203](http://www.nrm.org.uk/ourcollection/photo?group=Doncaster&objid=1997-7396_DON_203))



## Even more About “The Hermitage” in Roundhay Park.

The photograph and the drawing (p5) show the Hermitage from an angle not usually seen, revealing a charming structure, far more interesting than the usual view suggests. What a pity this building did not survive. However, there is no stopping Neville in his quest for the truth, and he has been down under the little bridge with his camera searching for traces of the vanished building. We should let Neville himself take up the story:

*“I took the attached photo.... showing the stream going under the footbridge. I thought there may be a pipe or a soakaway. I couldn't see anything much so I used flash and I was well pleased with the picture. It reveals a stone arch which may have been the other end of the outlet beneath the Hermitage building.....I wish I could get a better inspection of this feature. There seems to be a wooden crosspiece in the wall section above the arch and different stone patterns. I wonder if there are any cobble stones in it?”*



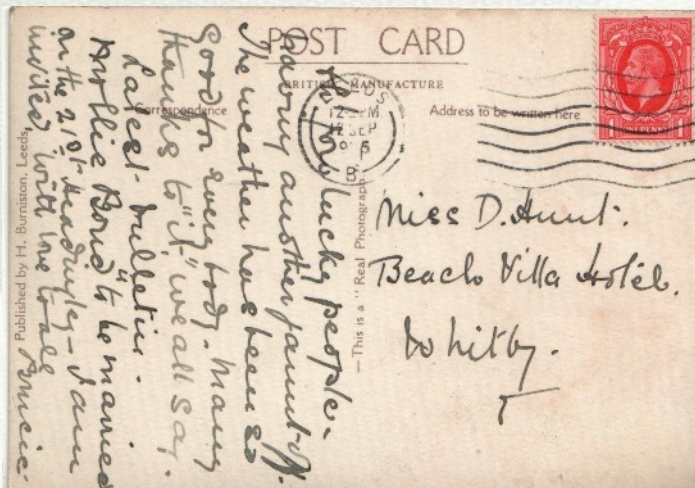
## Past Postcard – Revisited, thanks to Trevor Stent

The editors are grateful to our readers who contribute so much to the information in these newsletters. In the August 2014 issue we included this postcard showing the tennis courts.



It was not possible to date this as the postmark was only partly legible. We asked if any readers could help identify the year by the clothing worn by the players. We are delighted that Trevor Stent contacted us recently, and has come up with the most likely date for both the photo and the posting of the card. Trevor wrote:

*“The length of the skirt suggests that the photo was taken in the 1910s or early 1920s. By the 1930s skirts were nearer knee length. According to Beckett University website, H. Burniston (as on back of the card) published postcards from 1914 to 1927. The year of the date on the postmark appears to end in 5. 1915 would be unlikely as it was during WW1, and 1935 would be too late for the photo. All this would indicate that the card was most probably posted in 1925”.*



Thank you Trevor!



Waterloo Lake - Start of the elite women's race

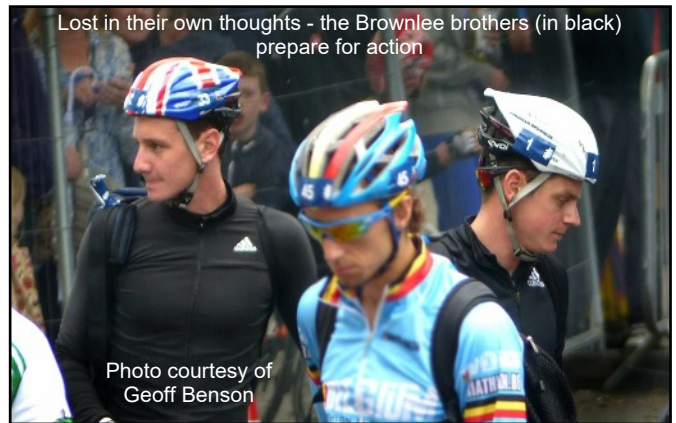


Transition to bikes by the Lakeside cafe

## World Triathlon comes to Roundhay Park

Over the weekend of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June, Roundhay Park received national and international acclaim as it hosted a major part of the UK race in the 2016 Columbia Threadneedle World Triathlon series. The park provided the location for the start of the races, right in front of the Lakeside Cafe, where the competitors plunged into the chilly waters of Waterloo Lake. They followed a circular swimming course, climbing back out of the water at the favourite duck feeding spot by the cafe, before running round to the car park on the other side of Lakeside Cafe over a blue carpet laid to protect their bare feet. Stripping off their wetsuits, and pulling on their cycling shoes they then leapt onto their bikes and swept up the hill into Park Avenue before racing away out of the park on to the rest of the course. Huge crowds had gathered in and around the park to watch this spectacular event.

The main races for 'elite' women and men ran separately using the same course, starting with a 1500 metre swim (2 laps), followed by a 42.5km bike ride



Lost in their own thoughts - the Brownlee brothers (in black) prepare for action

Photo courtesy of Geoff Benson

ending in Leeds City centre, where competitors completed the triathlon with a 10km run. The elite men's race was won by Yorkshire's own Olympic gold medalist Alistair Brownlee, with his brother Jonathan coming in second – a great result for Yorkshire. The women's elite race was won by American athlete Gwen Jorgenson, her 17<sup>th</sup> victory in World Triathlon Series events.

The event was not just for the elite athletes. Over 6000 amateur athletes took part, able to opt for entry for one of three possible courses covering different distances – Olympic, sprint or beginner.

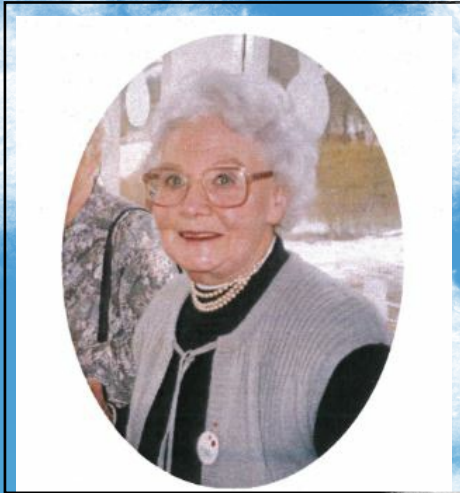
The elite race was a spectacular success, and the whole event was a great showcase for Roundhay Park.



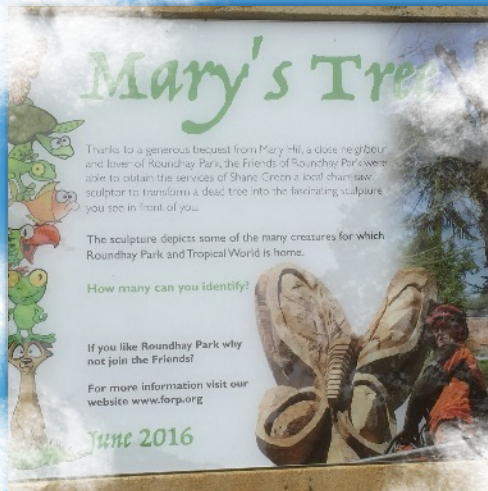
### ForP Newsletter Caption Competition

The editors thank Jonathan Brown for this photo of the male cyclists racing up the hill from the Lakeside Cafe. As Jonathan pointed out, the leading rider seems to be sending a text message..... Really?! What on earth could he be texting? Readers are invited to offer ideas of what the text message might say – please send your entries to [editor@forp.org](mailto:editor@forp.org). We will print winning entries in the next issue. (Unfortunately the ForP budget does not run to prizes....and the judges decision is final!)

# Mary's Tree



Mary Hill  
Photo courtesy of Tim Hill



FoRP will always be grateful for Mary Hill's generous bequest which has been used to fund the creation of a tree sculpture in the Dingle Dell area of Canal Gardens. Recent visitors to Canal Gardens cannot fail to notice that work on Mary's Tree by the sculptor Shane Green is now complete. The result is quite stunning – a brilliant piece of work providing a lasting legacy for Mary and her family. The official celebration to mark the creation of Mary's Tree took place on

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June. Our new chair Richard Critchley conducted the formal proceedings in front of a sizeable crowd, and we were delighted to welcome Tim Hill, Mary's nephew, who spoke on behalf of their family. His sisters, Stephanie Haydock and Sally Rains were also present. It really was a very special occasion.



Richard Critchley and Tim Hill (right) at the celebration for Mary's Tree



Shane Green, the sculptor, at work

The creation of Mary's Tree has been great team effort. We are hugely grateful, of course, to Shane Green, the sculptor, for his remarkable skill and creativity. We also owe thanks to a team of FoRP volunteers who helped (literally) prepare the ground for the placing of the stone which carries the plaque explaining the origin and significance of Mary's Tree. This was no small task, as Tom Cooper relates in his article below.....

## Tree-mendous efforts

By now, most FoRP members will have seen the wonderful tree sculpture in Dingle Dell, just below Canal Gardens. Shane Green has transformed a dead tree into a work of art. What you did not see was the effort made to get everything ready for the grand opening on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June.

The biggest task was getting the stone for the display board into place. David Binns had ordered one which was supposed to weigh just under 2 tonnes. When it arrived on Thursday it proved to be nearly twice that weight (This did not bother me as I was holidaying in Somerset!). Plans had been laid to move the stone from the road to its permanent site with some park machinery and the help of some working party volunteers. That part was successfully achieved. However, because of the stone's extra weight, the hole, which had been dug by the



A sea of mud



Fence down  
Bark spread



volunteers, was not big enough, and the machine not powerful enough to raise the stone to the vertical. Jeopardy!

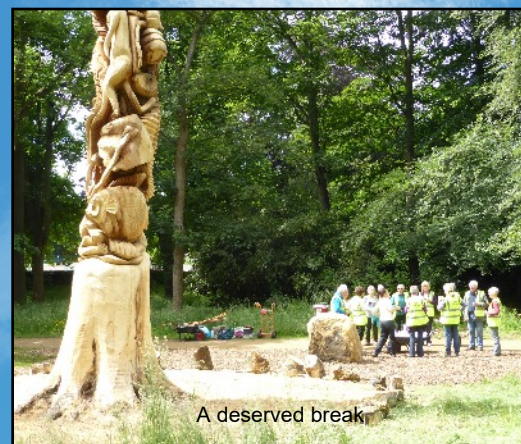
On Friday a JCB was found from somewhere and added to the workforce. This quickly gouged a much deeper hole, and with the two machines working together, the stone was easily put in position. Now, like an iceberg, much of its bulk is below the surface. There was a price to pay for all this earth-moving equipment, the site was now a muddy morass. More jeopardy!

Fortunately, as it turns out, the working party scheduled for the Saturday before, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, had been postponed because of the

Triathlon. So on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> a group of (mainly women) working party volunteers turned up ready for action. They toiled to flatten out the deep tyre tracks, remove the fencing and cover all that mud with wood chip, which had to be barrowed onto the site from the road. By lunchtime, amazingly, everything was finished and site transformed. We all went home for a much needed wash and brush up.

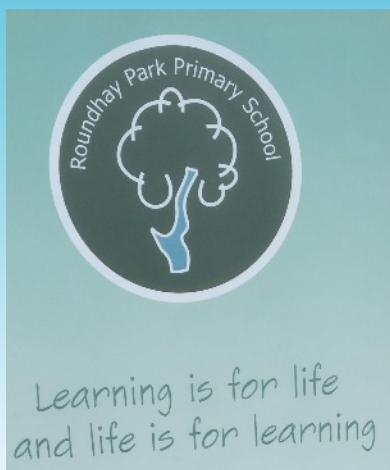
In the afternoon the sun shone, speeches were made and the site officially declared open to the public.

Most people were blissfully unaware of the Herculean efforts of David Binns, John Roebuck and some FoRP volunteers.



## Roundhay Park Primary School - Update

FoRP members will be aware of proposals for a new 'Free School' – Roundhay Park Primary School - to serve the area on the north west side of the park. Approval was given by the Department for Education in February for the development of this school. On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July the school ran a summer fair on Soldiers Field, with activities, sports and stalls. This was a lively, well attended event – fun for many families with young children who are potential pupils. The recently appointed headteacher, Robert Mold, gave a presentation setting out his vision for the approach to learning and the ethos of the school he intends to develop. Examples of equipment and resources were also available to view.



One vital question remained to be answered – the location for the new school. As this newsletter goes to print, the location has still to be decided, but we expect to find out in the near future. Meanwhile, Robert Mold made it clear that the school will open in September 2017, and every effort will be made to have the new buildings ready. We will feature a detailed article on the school in the next newsletter.

FoRP members will enjoy walking through the Friends Garden beside the Old Park Road entrance to Canal Gardens. We have to thank a doughty band of FoRP volunteers who have created and maintain this garden. Cecily Jarvis is one of these stalwarts, and the editors are grateful to her for providing this history.

## The History of the Friends Garden

Most members will have heard of, or visited the Friends Garden, but how many people know its history? It has now been established for over ten years and with regular maintenance by a group of volunteers, remains a jewel in FoRP's crown.

In response to FoRP's request the park authorities allocated an area for the garden on the site of what had been at one time a small zoo at the west (Old Park Road) end of Canal Gardens. The site presented quite a challenge. At one side was a stagnant water course which drained under Old Park Road, the area was completely overgrown and the soil was full of bricks and stony debris. However two sides of the site were bounded by beautiful old stone walls and among the over-growth were two acers and a weeping cherry.

FoRP member Judith Rothenberg designed the garden taking her inspiration from the Yorkshire Dales with rock outcrops, stepping stones over the stream and woodland beyond. With her plans agreed by both FoRP and park management, a grant of £10,000 was obtained from "Living Spaces" to cover the cost of construction.

Since the site was too confined for heavy machinery, all work had to be carried out by hand. This included handling enormous stones and the construction of gabions to consolidate the ground around the stream. FoRP members pushed, pulled and lifted an estimated 200 tonnes of materials onto the site. No commercial contractor was employed and the entire project was carried out by these volunteers with advice on dry stone walling from The British Trust

for Conservation Volunteers. The garden opened officially in July 2005.

The garden has matured beautifully, the trees now gracefully overhanging paths and the open areas of flowering plants, creating a woodland feel, especially in the spring. However, the heart of the garden – the water – is missing. A leak in the main canal means that the water level has fallen so far that except following heavy rain, levels are too low for the pond area to fill. It also seems likely that improvement to drainage work elsewhere has resulted in the original underground stream being diverted or culverted.

In 2015 to avoid being left with a sad, smelly, dried up pond area, under the guidance of FoRP member, Jon Vogler, working party members installed the "stone river" which has become the new feature in the garden. In wet weather water collects and brightens the boulders and pebbles and at other times, we have an interesting dry river bed. Regrettably the frogs and toads still try to spawn in the tiniest puddles left after rain, but the Friends Garden team try to rescue as much spawn as possible, moving it into the main canal. Nature, however, being what it is, ducks and fish respond to this bonanza with amazing speed! We continue to be hopeful that one day in the not too distant future, the council will have the resources to repair the leak in the canal which will allow the water to flow back into the Friends Garden.

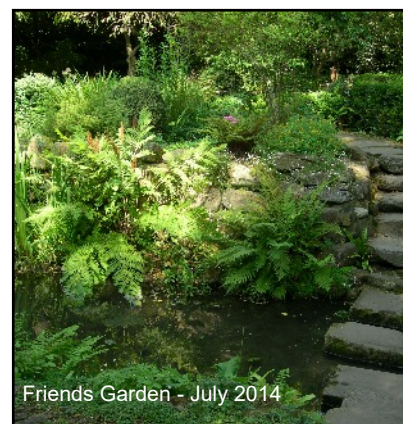
Cecily Jarvis



Early stages -2003



It's heavy work



Friends Garden - July 2014



Friends Garden - August 2015

## Mudlarks at a Party in the Park

### *A working party report from Tom Cooper.*

The weather has been weird this year, don't you think? There was no winter to speak of, and summer seems to have made several false starts. However this has been good weather for the working parties and we have completed several tasks that should make it easier for visitors enjoy the park.

In the last issue one job was still to be completed, clearing the drive by the sham castle. We have to thank Roundhay Runners who helped us finish this task. The drive has now been completely cleared all the way from the Upper Lake to the edge of the gorge. The mud had been building up over the years since the Park had its millennium makeover. We had to move 15 years of leaf fall, and sediment washed down from the bank by rain. It is so rewarding to look back at the section you have just cleared and compare it to the

section that is untouched. All we have to do now is stop the trees dropping their leaves, it makes the place look so untidy!



From the Upper Lake



Past the Sham Castle



To the ravine

As with many jobs, you improve one area and it just highlights another area that needs some TLC. It was the path on the mansion side of the Upper Lake that caught our attention. In places the original path surface was buried under more than 25cm of soil and was less than half the original width. We had to scrape away the sediment while leaving the original surface intact. All that soil then had to be barrowed away. We were very grateful this time to the Park Runners who came to help us that Saturday, *after they had done their Park Run!*



Finding the edge



Park runners at work



Job well done

We did not stray far for the next bit of park beautification. Our laser like attention was drawn to the area between the lake and Ram Wood. Brambles and bracken were marching steadily out of the wood. It looked like an enormous task, but as Lao Tzu said "A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step", so one Saturday we cleared a small area near the fernery. For the following working party we were fortunate to have some young muscles to help us, in the form of a group of volunteers from Cushman & Wakefield. This has really broken the back of the job. We are reseeded as we go so hopefully the gang mower will keep the wilderness at bay in future. A group from C & W were coming back to the park again on Sun 10<sup>th</sup> July for an "It's a Knockout Tournament"

*(I went back to the area 1 month later to see if the grass seed had taken, and was amazed by the transformation. What do you think?)*



First steps



Help from C&W



End result

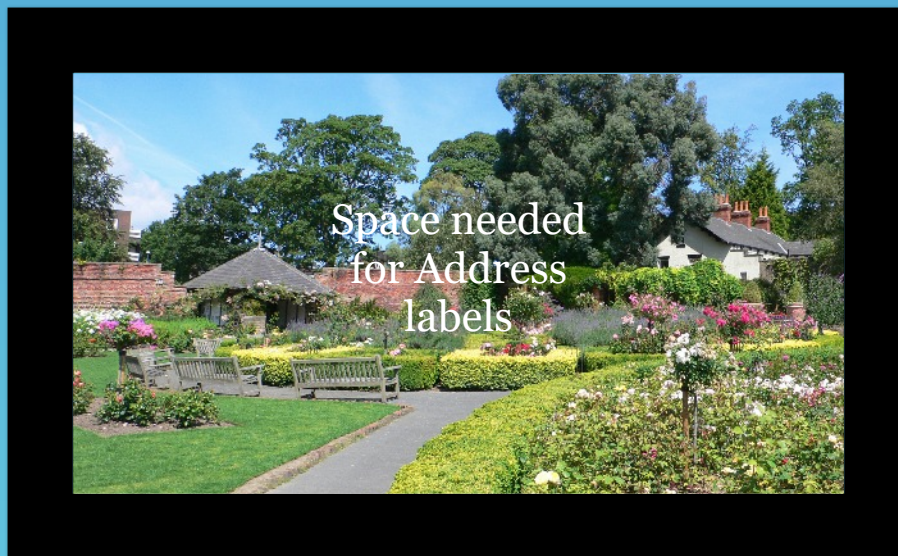
## Annual General Meeting - a landmark meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Roundhay Park was held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June in the Education Centre. The meeting was attended by 27 people, including our president Marjorie Ziff. Shaun Gregory was also present to report on behalf of the park management. This was a landmark meeting because Julia Wilson, our chairperson for the past six years was stepping down. Richard Critchley has now taken up the role of chair. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Julia for her wonderful work for FoRP, and also thank Richard for stepping into the role. All FoRP members wish him well, and will give every support to him in his important work. Julia's contribution was marked with a presentation at the AGM.

Some other key points from the AGM were:

- Memberships had increased to 555, which allowing for joint and family memberships probably equates to about 1000 people. We have lots of Friends!
- It was with great sadness that the resignation due to ill health of Jon Vogler from the executive committee was accepted. Jon has been an absolute hero for FoRP as a leader of the working parties and in so many other ways. Thank you Jon. We will keep in touch. Our thanks go to Tom Cooper who has taken over in leading working parties.
- Liz Gillett and Cecily Jarvis were new appointees to the executive committee.
- The sale of the Carriage House has fallen through, and no one appears to know what will happen next. It also appears the Asset Management Team at the council did not consider the very detailed proposals put forward by Jon Vogler and Alexis Keech.

A full copy of the minutes can be obtained from David Binns ([news@forp.org](mailto:news@forp.org))



## Forthcoming Events

**FoRP Open Meeting – Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> October** at the Education Centre, The Mansion at 7pm

**North Leeds Food Festival – Friday 19<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August**

**OnRoundhay Festival – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September** A major music festival 12 noon – 11pm

For other events, see the FoRP website [www.forp.org](http://www.forp.org)

If you would like to join our working parties, e-mail Tom Cooper at ([tomandcath@ntlworld.com](mailto:tomandcath@ntlworld.com)) to be added to the e-mail list. Tom e-mails everyone on the list before each session to tell them what's planned so you can then decide if you would like to join in. (We meet 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat & 4<sup>th</sup> Thurs of each month. Usually we assemble at the Carriage House behind the Roundhay Fox at 10.00am ).