



*Recognition for Roundhay Park - Green Flag Award*

*The Outdoor Gym is Open!*

*Rowland Ding Yorkshire Aviator (1885-1917)*

*What your working parties are doing and much much more.....*



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## Chair's Letter

As I write I learn that the park has been placed fourth of the 'Best Family Picnic Spots in the UK', voted for by parents. Wow! Yet another prestigious and well-deserved accolade for Roundhay Park.

My thanks, as ever, go to our working party volunteers for all their hard work, and for giving such valuable support to the fantastic work done by park staff in making Roundhay Park such a beautiful and popular venue.

I must make special mention of David Binns who has stood down as our Secretary after thirteen years of loyal and dedicated service. David is staying on as a member of the committee and his knowledge will be invaluable. His place as Secretary has been taken by Carol Haughton who has kindly agreed to undertake this very demanding role. Farewell also to Chris Hill who has retired as Treasurer and welcome to John Tobin who has taken on the responsibility. A very special thank you to each of you.

Parents and others are carrying out a survey at the badly neglected Lakeside playground, gathering evidence to support a petition to the council to carry out much needed repair and replacement work. *Why is this necessary and why does it seem that, for possibly political reasons, such facilities in Roundhay are in a worse state than in other areas?* Roundhay Park is regularly used by many, many people from all parts of Leeds. If you support our initiative, please contact us.



Our thanks to David Binns

Photo courtesy of Tony Quinn

Finally, may I thank you for all the messages of support and good will following my recent health scare. I am making good progress and just awaiting treatment that will, hopefully, restore me to full fitness.

Richard Critchley  
Chairperson

## Changing of the Guard at FoRP

*The Friends of Roundhay Park could not exist without the huge contributions made by individuals who volunteer to take up vital roles for the organisation. For many years David Binns has served as our secretary, and Chris Hill as our treasurer, but both are now stepping down. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude for all their tremendous work, which has ensured that FoRP has grown and thrived – and is bigger and better than ever!*

*Now we are delighted to welcome Carol Haughton as our new secretary, and on behalf of all FoRP members we say 'thank you' for taking on this responsibility. Carol writes:*

I retired (early) from full time work 3 years ago. I was already a member of FoRP and had some experience of their working parties; the company I worked for came to the park on one of our 'Working in the Community' days. We had a great day with Jon Vogler in The Gorge. Jon's enthusiasm for the park stayed with me, so it was natural that when I retired I would become involved. I didn't expect to become Secretary, but David needs a break and he can be very persuasive! I'm sure that this work and my role as a Leeds Ambassador will keep me busy from now on.

We also welcome John Tobin as our new treasurer. Thank you, John, for taking on this vital work for FoRP



# Protest Meeting about the Expense and Management of Roundhay Park in 1879

*Our regular contributor on the history of the park, Neville Hurworth has put together the following account mainly using newspaper articles of that time. It paints a colourful picture of events, and focuses on debate about the boundaries of the park (still discussed to this day?).*

I have put together the following account, mainly using the text from a couple of newspaper articles of that time.

On a Saturday afternoon in September 1879, at two o'clock the committee of the Leeds Political Reform Union and about 250 other persons assembled in Victoria square in front of the Town Hall, from whence they proceeded to the park. A representation of a white elephant, swinging from a cross-bar at the top of two long poles, borne by two men, headed the procession, along with Ingledew's Brass Band.

Supt. Pullan, who was in charge of the police force at the park, had received instructions to inform the leader of the band that if he played in the park, he would be proceeded against and also to inform any persons making speeches in the park, they would be summonsed. Nevertheless, the band still played but no speeches were made in the park. On arriving at the Mansion in Roundhay Park, a brief halt was made, after which the company marched to a field rented by Mr. Crowther from the Corporation, and situated on the edge of the park estate.

Along the route, Mr. John De Morgan pointed out the boundaries of the Corporation property, which were indicated by a series of flags displayed upon trees in spite of attempts by the authorities to remove them overnight. Three hours after they had set out, at about five o'clock, the place of the meeting was reached. By then there

were from 800 to 1,000 persons present – chiefly working men. Mr De Morgan took the chair and said that an erroneous notion had prevailed as to what Roundhay Park consisted of. There were about 300 acres set apart for the recreation of the people of Leeds, but surrounding that, was a large tract of land which was really part of the park and which was also the property of the ratepayers. Leading from that portion of the park, along the north side of the lake, there was a very nice pathway through the castle. Beyond that, there was another portion about half a mile in width, between the north side of the lake and the northern extremity of the park.

Many of them might ask what there was between the portion of the park in which the public was allowed to walk and the farming land near to where they were then standing. He had been through that comparatively unexplored patch of land; the general public were not allowed to go there. On the north side of the lake in that tract of land of which he was speaking there was a nice piece of copsewood for the preservation of game, and below and beyond the lake there was a further portion of land used for a like purpose. He could not say what became of the game. As he was now a ratepayer, and helped to pay for it, it would not be a bad thing if he could now and again get some of it.

A portion of the estate was farm land. The field in which they were assembled was let by the Corporation to Mr. Crowther, who had received notice to quit because the Corporation now wished to farm the land themselves.

The whole of the Roundhay Park and the estate surrounding it, measured about 800 acres. In the Leeds Improvement Accounts the park was put down as costing £146,000 of which £46,000 had been paid off, leaving £100,000 still owing. He supposed they were paying interest upon that £100,000. According to the Corporation accounts, the Roundhay Park estate was costing the ratepayers of Leeds £12,000 each year, - and this the ratepayers paid so that persons might have game preserves and cultivate vineries.

Many gentlemen had been willing to buy the land off the Corporation at the price it had cost. The Corporation had tried to sell the estate but no one would be allowed to buy a plot of land to put up a house there unless he was prepared to expend about £3,000 upon such a house. Now, a gentleman who built a house at a cost of £3,000 wanted more privileges than that of walking in and out of a stable yard, for that was all he could do at present.

Then again, there was no approach. Street Lane, which might have been opened out without costing the Corporation a penny, was unfit to be used and the natural advantages of the park which afforded facilities for magnificent drives, were not made use of.

A resolution was proposed and carried unanimously. It contained the following "*That the Town Council of Leeds deserves the censure of the inhabitants for not developing the Roundhay Park Estate according to the original intention, thereby causing an annual loss to the ratepayers of about £10,000*" and called upon the Mayor to take steps to remedy the situation.

Neville Hurworth

# Keeping fit in the Park – Exercise for all

## *The Outdoor Gym is Open!*

Visitors to the park cannot miss the recently installed outdoor gym equipment next to the cricket pitch. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to John and Jean Hussey for coming up with the idea and really driving this project through over two years of negotiations (about the location etc.) to achieve the result. We also greatly appreciate the funding and support we have received from Leeds City Council, Green Leeds Ltd., and Groundwork, with over £3000 donated from the Local Community Fund, coming from Coop members and customers. And, not to forget, FoRP also made a significant financial contribution to help the gym become a reality.

There is something there for all ages, so go on, why not give it a try! Who knows, after a good few sessions on this equipment perhaps you will be ready to take part in the Leeds Triathlon?.....although the Brownlee brothers will take some catching!



## *World Triathlon Series returns to Roundhay Park*



Photo: John Ferguson

As last year, Leeds hosted one of the world triathlon series events on 11<sup>th</sup> June, with Roundhay Park taking centre stage for the 1500 metre swim section. Once again it was a triumph for our own Leeds heroes, the Brownlee brothers, with Alistair taking first place, and Jonathan in second. This international event is a wonderful showcase for the park, and we owe our appreciation to the park staff, and to our own FoRP working parties for making the park look splendid for the occasion.

## The Children's Playground – aiming for improvement

When it comes to the youngest park users, just starting out on learning to enjoy physical activities, there has been a lot of concern about the poor quality of the children's playground beside the Lakeside Cafe. FoRP has been very active in raising awareness about this matter, and, together with the council's Parks and Countryside Department, is now engaged in a project to bring about considerable improvements to the playground. As part of the process, a survey is being carried out to assess the numbers of children using the playground, and the quality of the experience for children and adults. If you would like to contribute to the survey you can find links on the FoRP website ([www.forp.org](http://www.forp.org)), or at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LakesidePlayground](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LakesidePlayground).



Once again the editors thank Dave Johnston for giving us wonderful glimpses of the bird life in the park. Truly spectacular!

## A Jewel in the Park

The top end of Waterloo Lake, around the island, is always a good place to look out for birds. Little grebes, mute swans, mallard, teal, tufted duck, grey herons, cormorants, Canada geese and a variety of gulls are frequently seen there. Less obvious, but also present, are kingfishers. Your first glimpse of this bird could be a flash of blue as it flies along the banks. You may also hear its call. This sounds like one, or sometimes two, sharp blasts of a dog whistle.

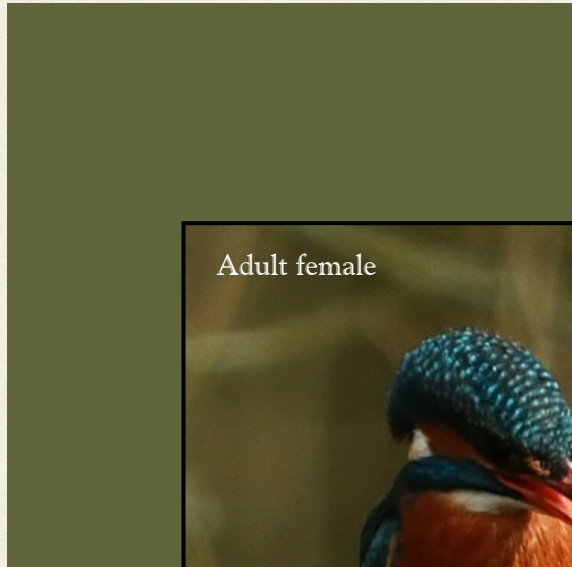
Kingfishers are only 17 to 19 cm long (smaller than a starling). In good light their appearance is stunning. An iridescent blue back, orange chest and white markings on its chin and neck make it look like a bird from the tropics. Numbers of kingfishers in the UK are around 4,900 pairs and increasing. This is probably due to the recent mild winters. They feed mainly on sticklebacks, minnows, etc., but will also take dragonfly larvae.

If you get a chance to look at one with binoculars, or photograph one, it is possible to tell if it is a male or a female by looking at the beak. On the female the lower part of the beak is red and the upper part is black. Both parts are black on the male. Both adult male and female have bright red feet. The juveniles can be distinguished from the adults at this time of year. Their feet are grey / brown.

Kingfishers nest in the banks of lakes and streams. They may have three broods in a good spring and summer, and can raise up to 18 young in one season.

As well as Roundhay Park, kingfishers are also now seen regularly in Gledhow Valley, the Hollies, Meanwood Beck, Rodley nature reserve and Adel Dam nature reserve. So keep your eyes and ears open the next time you walk round Waterloo Lake, and you may encounter a little gem of a bird.

Dave Johnston



Adult female

Photos by Dave Johnston

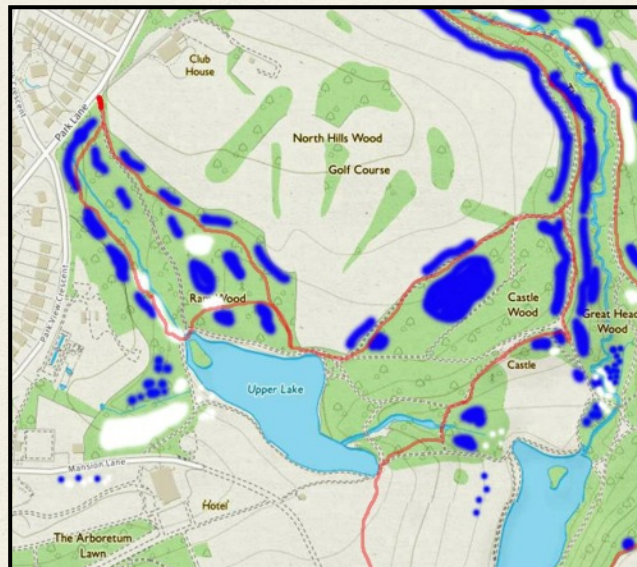


Juvenile, with tasty stickleback

## Ancient Woodland – an update from John Ferguson

Many of you will recall in the last newsletter that the Go Ape proposal triggered the suggestion that we apply to have Ram Wood and the Gorge designated as Ancient Woodland to increase protection against development. The process is quite lengthy but I am pleased to report on progress to date. Firstly we now have the application forms from Natural England together with details of supporting document required that will help establish our claim. Secondly I am grateful to Andy Killingbeck and Robert Cliff who have surveyed the woods recording the presence of Bluebells and Wild Garlic (*Allium Ursinum*) which are indicative of long established woods. (Shown in blue on the map). Thirdly, we have established from the first Ordnance Survey in 1858 that the areas have been woodland from at least that date.

The final requirement is to establish they were woods from 1600, or earlier, up to 1858. One of our members Helen Hodgart, who specialises in historical research is looking for historical documents assisted by Stuart Rawnsley a specialist in ancient maps.



Map courtesy of Andy Killingbeck

I feel quite positive about the eventual outcome and I hope by the next newsletter I can at least confirm our formal application.



Councillor Lucinda Yeadon with FoRP representatives and park staff

Photo courtesy of Leeds City Council

## Recognition for Roundhay Park

Roundhay Park and six other green areas in Leeds have been recognised as being amongst the very best parks in the country by the award of Green Flag status for 2017. This coveted award is presented by the charity 'Keep Britain Tidy', for sites that are "well managed, clean and safe". Councillor Lucinda Yeadon (executive member for environment and sustainability) welcomed the award and said *"An amazing amount of hard work is undertaken by the council's dedicated parks and countryside team, along with many volunteers and groups to ensure that green spaces across our communities look so fantastic"*. So it's hats off to FoRP – our litter pickers and other working parties, along with the all the park staff for their great work, which fully deserves this recognition.



Photo: John Ferguson

## Lighting up the Trees

You must have noticed the lights now adorning the trees lining the boundary of the park on Princes Avenue between the Roundhay Fox and the old tram stop car park - another FoRP initiative. Perhaps the only good thing about the nights drawing in as Autumn approaches is that we will be able to enjoy these lights for longer!

*Members may not be aware of the importance of Roundhay Park and Soldiers' Fields (a forgotten airfield) in early aviation history. Robert Blackburn, the founder of the Blackburn Aircraft company opened his Olympia Factory on Roundhay Road in Leeds (on the site currently occupied by Tesco) in 1914, and Soldiers' Fields were used for test flights. 2017 marks the centenary of the death of Rowland Ding, chief test pilot for Blackburn's. This year a commemorative plaque has been unveiled by his family, and a special talk, organised by FoRP was provided by Professor Robert Blackburn, the grandson of the company's founder and Rowland Burley, the grandson of Rowland Ding. We are grateful to Lynda Kitching for this report on a very special event held on 9th July 2017 at Roundhay School.*

## “Rowland Ding, Yorkshire Aviator (1885-1917): His Life and Achievements”

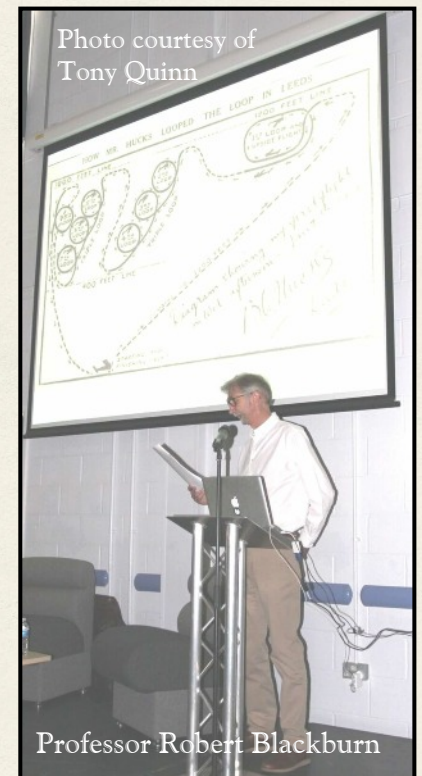
On behalf of FoRP, Lynda Kitching welcomed everyone and thanked our speakers, Professor Robert Blackburn, who had come up specially from London, and Rowland Burley from Hong Kong, who made other arrangements to fit in with the talk. Thanks were also due to Doug Roberts, Support Services manager at Roundhay School for setting up the arrangements. Huge thanks were also due to Carillion, managers of the school, for allowing us use of the hall and facilities, and to the FoRP volunteers who were ensuring everything ran smoothly.

Robert Blackburn took us along a timeline, from his grandfather's time in Saltburn around 1910, his workshops and flying schools at Hendon and Filey, the opening of the factory on Roundhay Road and how in 1914, Leeds City Council allowed testing and landing on the Soldiers' (Military) Fields. He was at the helm of the company until 1936, although kept up his interest in flying. He died in 1956. There was much design and testing as WW1 progressed.

The Blackburn and Ding families knew each other and mixed socially. Robert showed us family photographs, as well as many of his grandfather with Ding and various designs of plane. It is easy to forget how pioneering these men were until we remember that the first flight was only in 1903.

Born in Northumberland, Ding went to university to study aeronautics. In 1911, as a teenager, he had seen BC Hucks flying and was inspired to ask for a job. Hucks was the first pilot to loop-the-loop, and in 1914, over the Soldiers' Field at Roundhay Park performed this not once, but 8 times during one flight, - it was a sensation!

That year, Ding was Blackburn's chief test-pilot and had set up a flying school at Bowness on Lake Windemere, flying a Blackburn plane. He tested many of Blackburn's 80 designs, including the Bi-plane and White Falcon. In May 1917, in a government-designed, newly-built bi-plane, watched by a large crowd at a flying display in Roundhay Park, he looped-the-loop, successfully the first time, but at the second, slower, attempt, the engine stalled, one wing collapsed and the plane crashed, killing Ding outright. Along with many people, the crash was witnessed by Mrs Blackburn, grandmother of our speaker. Ding's death sent shockwaves through the aviation world. He was seen as a brilliant and genial innovator who popularised and progressed aviation.



Professor Robert Blackburn



Photo: Tony Quinn

Rowland Burley (lt), Professor Blackburn (rt) with Mike Hallett (standing) with the 'Wars of the Roses' trophy



Rowland Ding

Rowland and Connie Ding had 2 children, Aphra and Denys. Aphra grew up and married Henry Burley. Their son, Rowland Burley (our second speaker) has also flown, not in wartime, but across the world in the charter and corporate airline business. He is a senior pilot with Cathay Pacific and will retire later this year after over 40 years flying.

When we heard from members of the audience it became clear that other grandfathers and in one case, dad, had a link with Blackburn's. Mike Hallett spoke about his grandfather – Harold Blackburn (no relation), a very early aviator. He and Robert Blackburn met in Hendon where Blackburn was running a flying-school. He (HB) moved to Yorkshire and became Robert Blackburn's test-pilot (before Ding). Amongst other ventures, he flew from Soldiers' Field delivering copies of the Yorkshire Evening Post to London.

A 'Wars of the Roses' flying match was set up between Blackburn's and Avro's in Lancashire. This was won by the Yorkshire team, and the splendid trophy was presented to Harold Blackburn. There was no re-match, as the war intervened. Harold joined the Royal Flying Corps, winning the MC. He continued in the RAF, fought in and survived WW2. The trophy was given to Harold's family in the 1950s and Mike Hallett had brought it specially from his home in Milton Keynes for the talk.

We heard too from Matt Ridley, whose grandfather was 8 years old when Ding, his hero, was killed. He told Matt all about it, and showed him the crash site at Oakwood/North Lane. Matt was 14 then, and has never forgotten how it affected his grandfather. He wanted to mark the crash-site, so arranged for a plaque to be made, unveiled on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017 by some of Ding's family.

FoRP member George Nelson's father was the chief engineer at Blackburn's, up to the time the factory closed in Leeds and moved to Brough. George has a commercial pilot's licence and still enjoys flying. Another FoRP member who is also a pilot is Martin Child, who told us about Raymond Glew, another early pilot, and his family link with the oldest Blackburn aircraft still flying (occasionally!)

There was a call for a permanent memorial on the Soldiers' Fields to recognise Blackburn's achievements. It would be an acknowledgement of the pioneering, innovative work those visionary people did. It is a Roundhay, Leeds, Yorkshire, British and international story.

Another FoRP-led project perhaps?

A copy of 'History of Roundhay Park' was presented to each of the speakers, with our thanks.

Speakers and audience alike learned much during the afternoon, and we thank them all for some fascinating contributions.

Lynda Kitching



FoRP's working parties continue to make a huge contribution to the upkeep and improvement of the park. Thank you to all the volunteers, and to Tom Cooper for providing this update.

## A Spring in our Step at a Party in the Park

In the last newsletter I told you of our endeavours on the island in Upper Lake. As I am sure you will have seen there were unforeseen consequences! By cutting back more of the laurel, we enabled Mr and Mrs Swan to set up home. For several weeks they were quite the celebrities, or at least Mrs Swan was; sitting patiently on the nest. Mr Swan seemed to spend his time "swanning about" telling everyone how clever he had been. The family can still be seen in the park and are still quite an attraction.



Photo courtesy of Andy Killingbeck



Family at large

Also mentioned in the last newsletter was our plan to plant ferns and cowslips in a new area of the park. It is by the side of the path which goes down to Upper Lake from the Mansion car park. The spring job was to clear the area of wild garlic and plant the ferns. That has been achieved, but we will need to keep an eye on the wild garlic, to make sure it does not stage a revival. It does not look terribly impressive at the moment, but if we can plant the cowslips as planned in the autumn, we have high hopes for next spring. It is nice to have long term projects that we can see develop over time.



Wild garlic - the challenge



Getting stuck in

Another big attraction in the park again this summer was the triathlon. Several working parties were devoted to making the park look its best, especially those areas that we thought might feature on the telly. We got the steps and landing stage by the boat house shipshape. Another session was spent cutting back the sapling growth at the margin of Waterloo Lake. I hope you noticed how smart it all looked.



All hands on deck



Getting down and dirty



Looking good for the TV

Other tasks completed this season have been:

- Resetting the path in the Friends Garden after the depredations of the "Magic Lantern Festival".
- Clearing the branches which were clogging the stream in the ravine.
- Lots of digging out of brambles at various locations.
- Digging the small saplings out of Fox Wood.

We have been joined on occasions by Roundhay Runners, Park Runners and volunteers from Cushman & Wakefield.

If you fancy joining our exciting adventures as well, e-mail me at ([tomandcath@ntlworld.com](mailto:tomandcath@ntlworld.com)) and I will add you to the working party list and let you know what we are planning before each session. 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 and are done by 1.00pm. The next 2 Saturdays are 9<sup>th</sup> Sept and 14<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Tom Cooper



Photos courtesy of Cecily Jarvis

## Annual Flower Meadow

*In 2016, FoRP volunteers created a wild-flower meadow in the park. Now in its second summer, we can all enjoy the results of their tremendous hard work. The editors are grateful to Cecily Jarvis for this update.*

Anyone walking through the park during July will have seen the flower meadow (above the Lakeside Cafe, below the group of trees on that hillside), in glorious bloom – mainly the field poppies which came up this year in profusion.

Because the flowers we grow are annuals which die back in autumn, last year's growth was cut down over winter and the area rotovated in early spring. In addition this year, Parks & Countryside generously provided, delivered and spread 20 tons of topsoil to help improve the area which is heavy clay with shallow stony pockets. Being a south facing slope, the meadow dries out very quickly.

On April 8<sup>th</sup> the soil was worked down to achieve a suitable seed bed and the flower seed sown. The seed is very small and we mixed it with kiln-dried sand to make spreading thinly easier. The area was then rolled and left to nature, but nature wasn't helpful. No rain of any significance fell between sowing and mid-May. The ground dried out and began to crack in places, though we did have a frost or two and some sleet one day! Last year, as we finished sowing, the rain came down in torrents and possibly washed some of the seed away onto the grass. This perhaps shows how difficult it can be to hit the right conditions. Ideally we should sow just before rain..... but I don't believe FoRP volunteers would enjoy having such short notice of a working party.

Nevertheless, flower seed is tough stuff and eventually a green haze developed and the first flowers began to appear in early June. The "Rainbow Annuals" seed mix we use contains around 12 different species with a balanced range of colours, flowering times and longevity. I suspect the hundreds (thousands?) of red poppies we have come in with the topsoil but are no less lovely for that and are a bonus in that they flower so early. We can now look forward to an expanding colour range as later flowers get underway.

Cecily Jarvis

# Extension to Friends Garden

*The FoRP volunteers who created and maintain the Friends Garden continue their sterling work. Thank you to all the volunteers, including Cecily Jarvis who has provided this article describing their latest venture.*

Across the footpath from Friends Garden, to your right as you come into Canal Gardens from Old Park Road, was an area of overgrown shrubs and low tree branches. Altogether an uninspiring sight!

The park's estate manager, John Roebuck asked the Friends gardeners if they would be interested in taking over and improving this area. Our first reaction was that we couldn't take on any more work. At the time we were working hard to restore Friends Garden following the Magic Lanterns event. However, as we overcame that and spring began to happen, our interest quickened and everyone became keen to take on the new challenge.

The first job was to cut back the shrubs which revealed the potential of a peaceful, secluded area for just sitting and gazing along Canal Gardens or into Friends Garden.



Mysterious cast iron box revealed

Next came the big job of cutting back overhanging tree branches which were creating heavy shade, taking out low branches and removing lots of dead wood from within the big shrubs. Thanks to FoRP volunteers and most especially the "Demon Sawyers" led by Darren Wall, for completing this task at our July working party.

There is still much to be done to get the area ready for planting. Ivy is growing across the



Branches and dead wood removed

whole area and needs taming. There are many tree seedlings and old shrub roots still to remove but the Friends gardeners are looking forward to getting on with this work over the summer.



Margaret Read (left) and Alison House - discoverers of the cast iron box

Photo courtesy of Carol Haughton

During clearing, we uncovered a cast iron box (see photo) which was possibly to do with street lighting early in 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is one just like it over the park wall along Mansion Lane and probably others around the park you may know about. We intend to make a feature of this, cleaning it up and re-painting. Also the tree sawyers found a stolen handbag and credit cards lurking in the undergrowth. This was evidently recent "booty" and will be returned to the owner.

FoRP's very own garden designer, Judith Rothenberg is working on the layout for the new garden and with the committee's approval, we hope to purchase plants and seating to put in place in the coming autumn/winter.

Cecily Jarvis

# NOTICES



## FoRP Calendar 2018

It's later than you think!.....believe it or not the 2018 calendar will soon be on sale (£6.99). Watch out for this on our website, at the Farmers Market and various retailers as we head into Autumn. Many thanks to all our sponsors who make it possible for us to produce the calendar.



## Not a pretty sight!

Bread soup? Not good for any of us, including our feathered friends. Tom Cooper is taking on this problem on behalf of FoRP. If you have any views on this, please contact Tom (at [tomandcath@ntlworld.com](mailto:tomandcath@ntlworld.com)) or the editors ([editor@forp.org](mailto:editor@forp.org))

*Watch out for our next newsletter, where Tom will have much more to say on this, and on what FoRP hopes to do about it.*