

The Newsletter

Friends of Roundhay Park



Winter
December 2016



President: Marjorie Ziff MBE

Chairperson: Richard Critchley



The Magical Lantern Festival comes to Roundhay Park.

Working parties tackle tough paths and aliens in Roundhay Park!

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Enough is Enough - Stand up for your Park

For some time now we have become more and more frustrated that our concerns appear to have been falling on deaf ears. All our suggestions have been met with platitudes, apparent shared concern and even promises, all of which have come to nought. We fully appreciate the current financial situation and that the parks budget has already been substantially cut with more proposed cuts in the pipeline. Those who faithfully tend the park, ably assisted by the small core of very active FoRP members (all volunteers) who carry out many support activities in the park e.g. working parties, litter picking, etc, do a tremendous job putting on a fine display with less and less resources. But Roundhay, as by far the largest jewel in the 'Leeds crown' and as a major tourist attraction, does not receive the special attention it deserves. We cannot and will not stand by and see important features of the park deteriorate or be lost for ever. Here are just a few examples of the outstanding matters that we are pursuing:

The most important threat hanging over the park at the moment is the proposed siting of a mini Go Ape experience, (a tree walk using ropes, bridges and zip wires) in Ram Wood, along the footpath between the Upper Lake and Park Lane. Whilst we have no objection to Go Ape as a commercial venture, we have many serious objections to the proposed site in Ram Wood. The issue has already caused a great deal of concern and outrage locally. FoRP has taken the opportunity to meet with representatives of Go Ape and representatives of the park management to forcibly express our concerns and objections and to listen to their proposals in detail. We believe that we may have made some progress and at the very least some reappraisal of the proposed site is being considered. But that does not mean that we are out of the woods yet (pun intended) and we may still need to mobilise public opinion locally to convince the council of the error of their ways. We trust we can rely on you if called upon to give your full support.

We have frequently raised our concerns regarding the leak from the canal in Canal Gardens which floods the lower area known as Dingle Dell where we created Mary's Tree which, incidentally, has just been given an architecture award. At last, following our meetings, we have had some reassurance that some preparatory work will be carried out to try to identify the source of the leak.

The condition of the footpath around Waterloo Lake gives cause for concern. Undertakings by park manage-

ment about drainage works have not taken place in over a year. A promise to insert 3 or 4 sumps to drain water from some of the worst parts has not been fulfilled.

The now derelict Carriage House, behind The Roundhay Fox, is in a parlous state and continues to deteriorate. In the past two years, the council has refused to consult FoRP and the local community about plans for the Carriage House or to keep us informed. Some time ago they announced they had a buyer but the sale has now obviously fallen through, but no information has been provided. More than 18 months ago FoRP, with partners, submitted a detailed proposal to the council for bringing the Carriage House back into use. This proposal was ignored. Indeed, FoRP never even received an acknowledgement. Some in the council are more concerned with selling off the family silver than making good use of it whilst preserving it for future generations of Leeds citizens.

Meanwhile the children's playground beside the Lakeside Cafe is in a disgraceful condition and despite this being raised with park management there has been little interest in improving this much needed facility.

Yet despite all this message of gloom and despair there may even now be some signs, at last, of our concerns being taken seriously. For that we are most grateful to councillor Christine McNiven who listened carefully to representations. She was the one who opened doors to give us access to Lucinda Yeadon, deputy leader of the council, who not only agreed to meet with us but also, at her request, agreed to let us show her both the splendour and the shortcomings the park has to offer. She has also agreed to meet with us on a regular basis. We were delighted to accompany her, together with local councillors McNiven and Hussain who give us their active support and other senior members of Leeds parks management.

Certain initial undertakings were given and we must now see whether or not they do translate into positive action. We sincerely hope so. At last we feel that certain departments in the council are beginning to understand the important difference between consultation and information.

Whilst we understand the council's need to raise revenue from the park this must not, in our view, interfere with the need to keep access to the park freely open for

the benefit of all the citizens of Leeds as intended when the park was first created. Let us now hope that 2017 is the year that we are taken seriously and can work with the various council departments to conserve and improve that wonderful Leeds asset, Roundhay Park.

Your organisation, the Friends of Roundhay Park, is determined to ensure that we and the community in which we reside is properly consulted and informed about matters that affect our lives and our environment. Our cash-strapped council seems to be using every opportunity to establish revenue earning activity in the park. Free public access to the park must be pro-

tected, and non-revenue earning aspects of the park must not be neglected.

FoRP needs more members to become active and make their voices heard about the future of Roundhay Park. Perhaps you have never really got involved before? We all have busy lives, but your park needs you, and now is the time.

Richard Critchley
Chairperson, Friends of Roundhay Park
December 2016

A Sorry State - Children's Playground

Next time you visit the Lakeside Cafe, spare a moment to have a look at the children's playground nearby. As parents or grandparents of small children will know, this playground, which was never 'one of the best' is in a terrible state. If you are affected by this, please add your voice to those pressing the council for improvements.



Slide - designed by Salvador Dali? What is it for?



The latest playground equipment - supplied by the council

Don't miss out on your Friends of Roundhay Park 2017 Calendar!

Once again FoRP has produced a beautiful calendar for the coming year, featuring wonderful photos of the park. These have been selling really well, and we are down to our last few copies. So, don't delay – avoid disappointment, and purchase your calendar now! For as long as stocks last, these are on sale at Tropical World, With Love at Oakwood, Philip Howard Books on Street Lane, Headrow Galleries at Alwoodley, Dine Café at The Mansion, Lakeside Café, One Stop Shop on Lidgett Lane (Chandos). Calendars purchased from any of these retail outlets are priced at £6.99. In addition, if there are any left, calendars may be on sale at the Oakwood Farmers Market on Saturday 17th December.

While stocks last, calendars can also be purchased from our on-line shop on the FoRP website (www.forp.org). The cost, including UK postage or delivery is £8.50. For copies to be delivered overseas, the price is £11.75. The FoRP secretary, David Binns, is also happy to receive orders by telephone (0113 293 2893) and delivery can be included within the LS8 area for £6.99.



Heritage Walks

The Friends of Roundhay Park owe sincere thanks to John Ferguson – one of our most stalwart members. Amongst his many contributions (e.g. working parties, website management, litter picking), John also leads the FoRP 'Heritage Open Day Walks' showing visitors some of the special features of interest within the park. These walks have proved very popular. On 11th September (split between morning and afternoon walks), John welcomed about 50 people for a walk titled 'Roundhay Park – The Hidden History'. The walk took visitors to the gazebo and the ravine with the fish pond, as well as Parc Mont, Waterloo Lake and Elmete Hall. Our thanks also go to Ben Craven, one of the visitors, for these photographs. It's good to see the sun shining on our visitors.



Caption competition

Readers may recall that our last newsletter contained an article about the World Triathlon event in Leeds which started with a swim in Waterloo Lake at Roundhay Park in June (and which clearly was the key event in helping the Brownlee brothers to gold and silver medals in the Rio Olympics). The article included a photo provided by Jonathan Brown in which a competitor appears to be texting or tweeting while cycling up the hill from the Lakeside Cafe. We invited readers to submit ideas for what message the cyclist might have been posting. The editors were quite underwhelmed by the response – so here are a few offerings.....

"Hi Mum. This Roundhay Park is great! Must come back for a picnic next weekend"

"Hey! Get me a new water bottle. I left mine by the roadside and it got cleared away by an old bloke wearing a high-viz jacket with Friends of Roundhay Park on the back"

"Are you sure this is the U3A veteran stroller group?"

After due consideration, 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes go to.....the editors!



Dave Johnston has been out with his camera again observing the wonderful wildlife in our park. In this issue he features one of our most familiar water birds.

Thanks Dave!

Diving for Yorkshire

Along with the Mallard, the Tufted Duck is the most widespread duck in the UK. It is the commonest diving duck at Roundhay Park (and in the country as a whole) today; but was unknown as a breeding species until the middle of the nineteenth century. The first breeding record in the UK was at Malham Tarn in 1849, a first for Yorkshire. There was then a sudden increase in numbers, which is believed to be due to the building of reservoirs and ornamental lakes throughout the nineteenth century. The invasion of the zebra mussel from Russia via the London Docks also provided them with a good food source. In 1907 the Wentworth Woodhouse estate in South Yorkshire introduced the Tufted Duck as an ornamental species.

There are now 8,500 pairs breeding in the UK. This number increases to about 55,000 in the winter, when more migrate here from Iceland, northern Scandinavia and Russia. Both of the lakes at Roundhay Park are good places to see them.

The males are easy to spot. They are basically black and white, and used to be called the “magpie duck”. The females are basically brown. Both sexes have a characteristic ‘tuft’ of feathers at the back of the head.

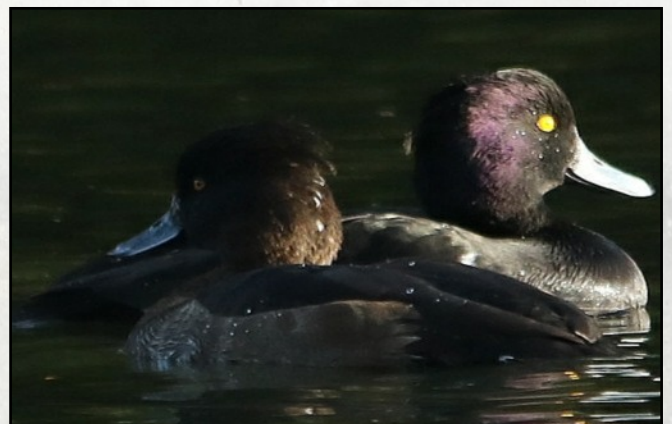
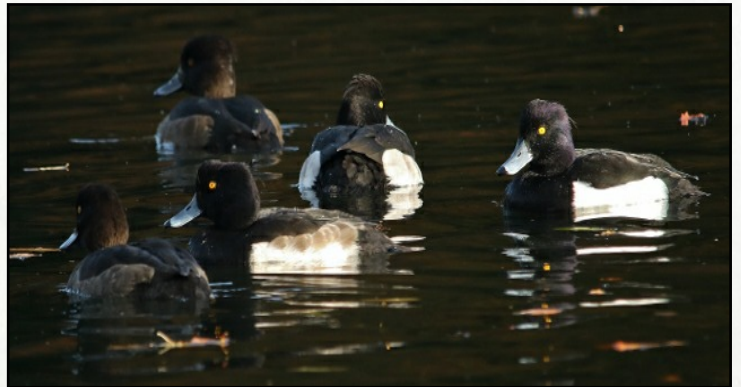
Probably the best views of them are on the Upper Lake. Choose a sunny day if possible. This will make purples, blues and greens show up on their normally black feathers. The yellow / gold of both the male’s and female’s eyes will also stand out on a sunny day. On November 16th this year there were 11 male and 12 female Tufted Duck at Roundhay Park.

They swim and feed in flocks, diving for food and remaining under water for about 15 seconds per dive. This may increase to 20 seconds, reaching a maximum of 40 seconds under water. They dive for and feed on freshwater snails, mussels, insect larvae and other crustaceans. They will also feed on small fish and pond weed.

Watch out for their courtship displays in winter. The males become very vocal, making whistling noises, swimming rapidly backwards and forwards and shaking their heads at the same time. The females respond by making growling noises, stretching their necks and preening their wings.

Nesting occurs in spring, when a pair will usually select a small tree-covered island. Around eleven eggs are laid. The females incubate the eggs and look after the young. Males spend late spring and summer in ‘bachelor parties’, having nothing to do with incubating or rearing the ducklings.

Dave Johnston



Trees of Roundhay Park

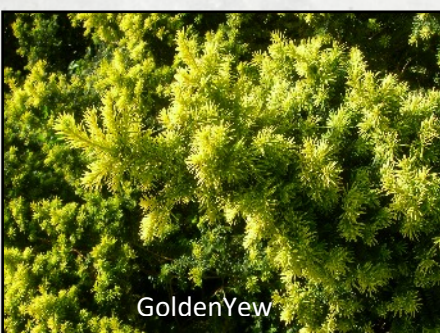
Our thanks go to Cecily Jarvis once again for extending our knowledge of the trees in the park. In this issue we feature examples which could be here for a very, very long time.....

Common Yew (*Taxus baccata*)

We have a number of yew trees in the park growing in the arboretum area between the Mansion and the Roundhay Fox. There are some Common Yew, one Irish Yew and a couple of Golden Yews.



The Common Yew is native to Europe including Britain and Ireland and their distribution goes as far north as Scandinavia, east to Iran and south into North Africa. Interestingly, yew is a form of conifer, even though it does not produce cones, but fleshy red fruits. There are separate male and female trees with male trees producing yellow



pollen and the female trees, insignificant flowers which eventually develop into the well known yew "berries".

The Irish Yew (*Taxus baccata 'Fastigiata'*) was originally found as a seedling in County Fermanagh around 1780. It has an upright hab-



it and dense, dark green foliage. A yellow-leaved form of the Irish Yew is Golden Yew (*Taxus baccata 'Fastigiata Aurea'*). Both have the familiar yew type leaflet form and the female Irish Yew will produce red berries like its cousin.

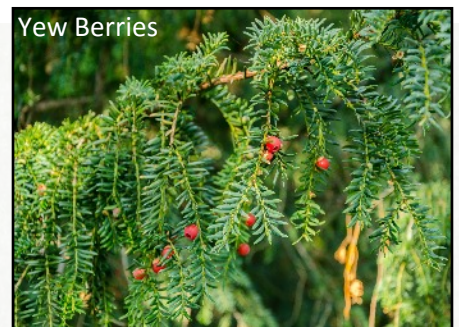
Famously long-lived, some yew trees such as the Fortingall Yew, Perthshire are claimed to be 5,000 years old. Certainly several hundred years life span is not unusual. The Harlington Yew near Heathrow has been estimated to be 900 years old and its location has been used by conservationists in their protest against the third runway!

As it ages, the yew begins a process of regeneration. The inside of the trunk and the major branches begin to rot away assisted by fungi, leav-

ing only the external ring of living wood and a hollow interior. New wood continues to grow on the outside, slowly encasing the old shell of the tree. In effect the tree is renewing itself.

Large, heavy branches may dip down over the years until they touch the ground where roots develop from which new tree growth appears. Over centuries and left undisturbed, a grove of new trees is formed.

Because of this ability to renew themselves around a hollow centre, there are no growth rings to count



and there is no heartwood which could be carbon-dated, so estimating age is very difficult. It can be no more than extrapolation based on the available wood/growing conditions/documentary evidence if it exists or, planting date if known.

Nevertheless, the UK is thought to hold around 90% of all remaining ancient yews in Europe and the Ancient Yew Group

<http://www.ancient-yew.org> claim there are at least 318 ancient yew trees in the UK - that is those with a girth in excess of 7m indicating an age of 800 years+

All parts of the yew tree are poisonous except for the red fleshy "aril" which surrounds the highly toxic seed. Birds, especially blackbirds

and thrushes, will gorge on the red berry while the poisonous seed passes harmlessly through their gut to be excreted and thereby distributed. Yews retain the poison even after branches or leaves are dead. Alnwick Garden's Poison Garden reports that a visitor related how having had some help with his garden, his helpers dumped the yew cuttings in a local field. Three cows died after eating the trimmings.

In spite of its toxicity, two chemotherapy drugs were originally developed from yew. One is made from the needles of our native yew tree and the other from the bark of the Pacific Yew. In Britain, yew clippings of a suitable quality are still used in the manufacture of the drug and there are specialist firms which collect and

process these clippings. However, the North American Pacific Yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) contains more significant quantities of the effective chemical in its bark and as a result of over-harvesting, this tree is now on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List. Fortunately, the drugs are also now synthesised in the laboratory.

So keep your eyes out for the yew trees in the park.

They are not flashy, don't have fabulous autumn colour or spring blossom that you would notice. Our "youngsters" are just starting out, growing away quietly at an infinitesimally slow rate for century after century.....

Cecily Jarvis

Happy Christmas from the dogs in Roundhay Park

Dogs in the park? Hardly big news, is it? Anyone who visits the park will be well aware of how popular it is with dog walkers. The wide open spaces, combined with expanses of woodland make it a perfect place for our furry friends. However, whilst out for a walk in early December, the editors were taken by surprise when they suddenly encountered a large crowd (pack?) of French Bulldogs, many attired in their finest Christmas jumpers, taking their owners for a walk. Emerging from the woodland path opening beside the mock castle, the crowd assembled on the field below the castle before continuing their walk around Waterloo Lake and back up the carriageway.

We managed to take a few photos, and discover that owners had come from far and wide as members of the French Bulldog Club of England (www.frenchbulldogclubofengland.org.uk) who meet up once a month. It was good to welcome them, and fun to see them enjoying our wonderful park.



The Magical Lantern Festival comes to Roundhay Park

From 25th November to 2nd January, (as this newsletter is being produced) Roundhay Park provides a wonderful setting for the 'Magical Lantern Festival, which made its first UK appearance in London last year. Described by the organisers as *"a spectacular fusion of art, heritage and culture"*, and with a Christmas theme, visitors enter the festival *"through a giant 16 metre wide lantern entrance feature before they embark on a fascinating journey through the park uncovering stunning lanterns in all shapes, colours and sizes from Santa and reindeer to flowers and animals"*. There is also a Santa's Grotto.

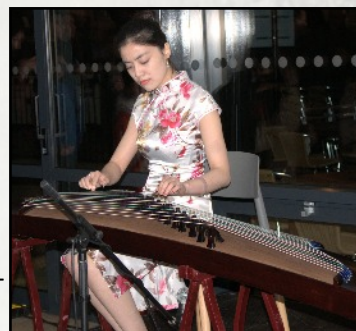
Up until the closing date, tickets for entrance to the Lantern Festival and Santa's Grotto cost £13.87 for adults and £9.62 for children (including booking fees) and can be bought on line at the Magical Lantern Festival Yorkshire website. An additional entertainment area includes an international range of food and drinks, a funfair and a synthetic ice rink.

A special preview was provided on Thursday 24th November, with visitor numbers

limited to 500 people. In addition to the lantern displays and other features, visitors to the preview were treated to performances by Chinese musicians and dancers. All proceeds from this preview night only (£10 per ticket, plus a £1 booking fee) are going to the Jane Tomlinson Appeal.

This spectacular festival will undoubtedly bring many more visitors, and for the duration, there will be restricted access to certain areas of the park. We hope that many members will have a chance to see the colourful displays.

Also, we all hope that a fair proportion of the revenue raised will be re-invested in the park and its facilities. Many thanks to John Ferguson for the photographs.



Thanks to Neville Hurworth for more fascinating history of the park. How different it all looks now!

About the old Lodge at the end of Park Avenue

Readers of this newsletter may be aware that there used to be an entrance lodge, or lodges, to the Park at the end of Park Avenue. As the postcard shows here,



these lodges appear to have been combined into a striking building which I will call "the Lodge", for convenience. It was built to a design by the Borough Engineer, by Franks and Evans, completed in 1883, and cost about £2000. Initially, some of the space was rented to the post mistress while the post office building near the entrance was being "re-erected" (presumably this was the present premises of estate agents, Wm Brown, at the bottom of Oakwood Lane).

The new Lodge had public toilets and rooms as well as residential premises and in the autumn of 1884 the Council advertised for a tenant to take on the duties of Lodge Keeper. In March 1885 the Park Manage-

ment Committee surprisingly demonstrated their authority by formally instructing that plates containing the words "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" should be fixed "over the front entrances to the new Lodge." In 1892 the Council was

still contracting out the residential rooms and duties of the Lodge Keeper, but it seems as time went by, these were taken over by a member of the Park staff and his family.

It was always understood that the Lodge building was constructed as a move by the Corporation to bring the Park nearer to town for people coming from the centre of Leeds and beyond. Lack of cheap transport in those days meant that many would have to walk a long way to get there.

A correspondent to the Leeds Mercury in October 1883 wanted an urgent improvement in this situation. He wrote: *"as the lodges ... are now completed ... the entrance to the Park should be there, and the ground behind laid out for cricket, football, croquet and other games, swings and other appliances ... for gymnastics and athletic exercises, so making the Park*

three quarters of a mile nearer to Leeds ... which I understood was the object ... Ten years have elapsed since the opening of the Park and yet who has not felt that we are very far from a finished exterior?"

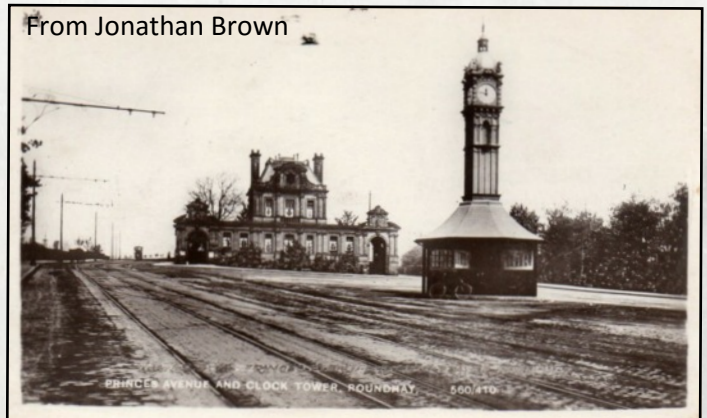
Maps from about this time through to the early years of the twentieth century, during which time affordable transport became available, show that the Lodge was still isolated from the rest of the Park without anything in the way of further public attraction here. By 1934, though, as can be seen from the OS map, there were some tennis courts along Park Avenue but these were much closer to West Park than the Lodge.

It seems ironic, therefore, that according to the Yorkshire Post of 19 January 1937, when Leeds City Council were now ready to develop the area, the scheme apparently required the demolition of the Lodge! In its place there was to be *"an ornamental garden and flagged area ... putting and bowling greens" were to be provided "and a pavilion built."*

The Lodge building was indeed demolished, - but of the proposed putting and bowling greens and the pavilion, nothing seems to have survived the War, if indeed they were ever built. The 1947 OS map of the area is identical to that of 1934, - the tennis courts along Park Avenue were still there, but there was no Lodge. This impressive building had lasted for just over fifty years from start to finish and we seem to have lost it for no good reason.

Neville Hurworth

From Jonathan Brown



As ever, the FoRP working parties have been hard at work, with generous assistance from other volunteers. We are grateful to Tom Cooper for this update.

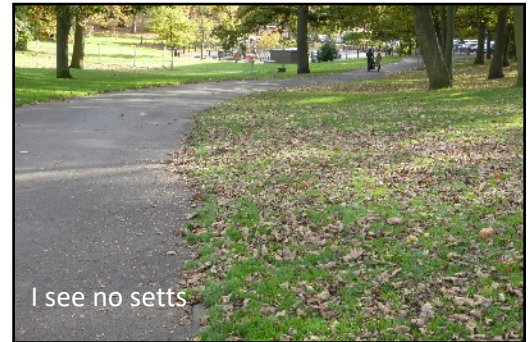
A Clearer Path for a Party in the Park

John (one of our regulars) is a bit of a pathfinder. During Heritage Week he leads walking groups to remote areas of the park that few people visit. While walking his dog Mac, he noticed that the path at the bottom of hill 60 was edged with York Stone setts, but you could hardly see them. They were almost totally hidden by the soil that is washed down the hill and by grass growing on both sides of the path. This would need a major effort. As well as exposing the stone, the soil and grass would have to be moved by wheel barrow all the way to Fox Wood.

Luckily Roundhay Runners joined us for two sessions this autumn. They are becoming addicted to this sort of graft and positively revel in the hard work. Some of them even have wheelbarrow races with wheelbarrows full of grass and soil! We started the work in October and finished clearing the path at the bottom of the hill in the December working party. However there is still the slope up to the main drive to clear.

This is not the only path to get the full FoRP treatment. We have once again tidied up the path on the west side of the Upper Lake. As well as exposing the edges, we have cut back saplings growing right by the edge of the lake and dug out the raspberries and nettles that seem to love it there.

Runners are proving to be a big help. In September Park Runners joined in, as we attacked the undergrowth at the Lidgett Park Road end of the tennis courts. With their help we got the whole job done in one session. The shrubbery behind the fencing was cut down and removed. Then lots of saplings, some quite a size, were cut down as well and hidden behind the laurel. This should improve the air circulation at that end of the courts, help them to dry out quicker and slow down the growth of slippery lichens on the courts.



**FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK
WORKING PARTIES**

TO FIND OUT MORE GET IN TOUCH TODAY

WWW.FORP.ORG

A new primary school, or not? – An Update

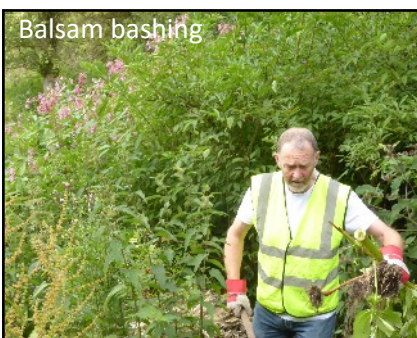
We have previously reported on proposals to set up a new 'free school', called Roundhay Park Primary School. Whilst the proposal was approved by the Department for Education, after many months of delay the council announced that it was unable to identify a location for the school and it will not open in 2017. Whatever your views about a potential location, this is a much needed school for the local community. Once again there has been a complete failure on the part of the council to consult and inform partners. For concerned families and local residents the problem has not gone away. We will return to this when further news emerges.

Aliens spotted in Roundhay Park!

Yes! Aliens have been spotted in Roundhay Park! Why has this not made the national newspapers? Surely the ones who use extra large headlines would love a story like this. It's not really news, that's why. They have been here for years, though they do appear to be taking over.

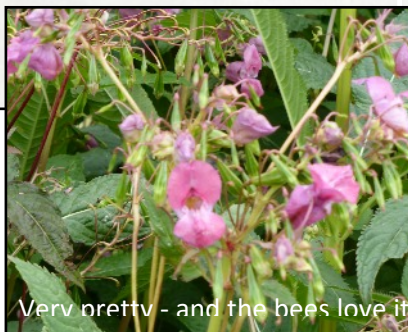
Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) was introduced to the UK in 1839, (at the same time as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed). It is hard to believe that these huge plants are related to the "Bizzy Lizzy" growing on your window sill. At the time plant hunters thought they were plants which had "*Herculean proportions*" and "*splendid invasiveness*". They did not know how right they were! The bees love Himalayan Balsam as it produces lots of nectar. It also has pretty pink flowers that look like policemen's helmets, hence one of its common names, but unfortunately in sunny damp environments it out competes most native species. Popping ripe seed heads is fun, they "explode" on touch, shooting the seed up to 7m. This is how the plants spread so easily and also give it another name, "Jumping Jack".

We have been attacking the Himalayan Balsam again this year. We try to keep it under control during the summer by gently pulling it up by the roots and leaving it in piles to rot down. Unfortunately it is happy to grow in inaccessible places, not just out in the open. It loves wet or boggy places but hates heavy shade. It is from these hide-outs



Balsam bashing

Get me out of here!



Very pretty - and the bees love it

that it re-establishes itself each year. No doubt we will be "bashing" again next year.

Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia Japonica* or *Reynoutria Japonica*) can also be seen in the park. It is not just a native to Japan, but much of East Asia. It was introduced to Europe by Philipp von Siebold. He found the plant growing on the side of a Japanese volcano, hence the name, and brought it back to Holland. By 1850 the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew to you and me, had it growing and loved it, as it would grow anywhere. They were not kidding! It is now classified in much of the world as an invasive species and there are strict laws on how to control or dispose of it. Eradication is difficult as the roots can be up to 3m deep and a mature plant 3m tall! In the park it has to be treated by a special team. Our job at FoRP is to report any sightings to park management. In the past if Japanese Knotweed was found near a house it would make selling it difficult, but now it is considered possible to eradicate the plant with treatment from specialists, and so it is not such a catastrophe. If you spot Japanese Knotweed growing in the park, let the Friends know about it (you

can contact the editors or talk to anyone in our working parties) and we will pass the location on to the park management. This year alone we have highlighted 9 areas where hawk eyed FoRP members have spotted it growing. At least we have not spotted any Giant Hogweed.

Japanese Knotweed



Growing in the fernery



Look for the red stems



It grows quite tall

If you fancy joining in our exciting adventures, e-mail me at tomandcath@ntlworld.com and I will add you to the working party list. I e-mail everyone on the list before each session to tell them what we are planning to do, so you can then decide whether the excitement is too much or just right for you.

(We meet 2nd Sat & 4th Thurs of each month. Usually we assemble at the Carriage House behind the Roundhay Fox at 10.00am and are done by 1.00pm).

Tom Cooper



Notices

FoRP Needs You!

We are grateful for the support of all members through annual subscriptions, but the organisation can only function due to the tireless commitment of a relatively small number of very active members who volunteer to fill certain roles and lend a hand in many other ways. Believe it or not some of them are not quite as young as they used to be! We desperately need new people to step forward to provide the next generation of FoRP volunteers and activists. In particular our Secretary, David Binns will be stepping down after 13 years of dedicated service. We owe David a huge debt of gratitude, but now need someone with appropriate skills to step forward to take over this role. If you would like to know more please let us know (news@forp.org or editor@forp.org)

Forthcoming meetings:

The next Open Meeting for the Friends of Roundhay Park will take place on Wednesday 8th February 2017 at 7pm, in the Education Room at the Mansion

FoRP Action Plan

The FoRP committee met on 29th November and carried out a detailed review of our Action Plan. This re-affirms and updates our commitment to the preservation and improvement of the park into the future. When finalised, the Action Plan will be posted on the FoRP website.

An Important Request

One of the privileges enjoyed by FoRP members is free admission to Tropical World. To avoid embarrassment on all sides - **Please note this does NOT include any free tea/coffee offers.**



Space needed
for Address
labels

