



THE NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK



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Triathlon 2021 – The race is on! Seeking volunteers to help at this event

In recent years, Leeds has hosted one of the events in the annual World Triathlon Series. Roundhay Park has been the venue for the swimming and for the start of the cycling leg of this major event. Yorkshire's own Brownlee brothers have been regular participants. It has been announced that the Triathlon will take place in 2021. The dates set are Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th June. Taking account of Covid restrictions, this year's event will not include Leeds city centre, but both the start and the finish of the race will be in Roundhay Park.

The organisers are looking for volunteers to help at the event. FoRP members would be very welcome owing to their familiarity with the park. If you would like to get involved, you can find more information and an application form at:

<https://leeds.triathlon.org/volunteer/>



Photo: John Ferguson

Stargazing in Roundhay Park Observations from John Roebuck, Estate Officer

As Friends of Roundhay Park, we gladly give our support to the dedicated team of council staff led by Estate Officer, John Roebuck, who work tirelessly to maintain and improve the parks in Leeds. This task is a huge challenge given the continuing pressures on council budgets. On behalf of FoRP and all the visitors to the park, we would like to say 'Thank You' to John and his team for all their efforts. FoRP will continue to do whatever we can to help.

John recently sent this vivid description from the park as he was already at work before daybreak in late January.

This morning as I went down to lakeside from the Mansion at 6.20 am, I thought how lucky we are having such a park. As I dropped down the steps from the little hexagonal roundabout below the Mansion, I looked up at the sky and saw why I was so happy this morning. With hardly a soul about I gazed in wonder at the enormity of the sky and all the stars twinkling in the frost. Sometimes it takes moments like this to realise that you don't have to travel miles to see fantastic skies.

As I walked to the cricket pavilion you could see the glow of the city over the top of hill 60, and Emley Moor mast lit up in the far distance. The sky above was clear and dark with hundreds of pinpricks of light. The Plough from here was obvious looking back to the Mansion.

As I continued my early morning check and ventured past the café on the left, in the corner of my eye I noticed movement and just caught the last of a shooting star as it dropped to earth. Fantastic.

Looking up at the sky again from the lake you get the same fantastic night sky - what a great place for sky watching. (The sunrises are spectacular from Mansion Lane as well).

The mornings are gradually getting lighter, so if any one fancies stargazing you will need to be up early!

John Roebuck
Estate Officer



Friends of Roundhay Park

Chair's Letter

Well, Spring is in the air once again. Springtime flowers are already in bloom and the prospect of lighter nights is upon us as we enter Summer time. In addition, as the restrictions on meeting are gradually reduced during the next couple of months there is the prospect that by mid-summer things will be returning to something approaching the normality we used to know.

This is good news for the park, its visitors and of course for the members and volunteers of the 'Friends'. We have a number of initiatives and plans that we have been patiently, if not impatiently, waiting to put into action as indeed have the 'Little Friends'. Tomorrow would not be too soon but, a little more patience is required. As soon as restrictions are lifted, we will be there.

That is not to say or even suggest that nothing has been happening. Our fantastic volunteers have still been extremely active throughout the winter months planning, working, gardening, tidying and collecting the litter that the careless and more anti-social types leave behind. Although our volunteers could not work in teams, their individual efforts have not only produced great results but have even managed to recruit new members to our cause.

Concentrating on litter for a moment, we have negotiated with parks management additional litter bins which have now been installed throughout the park. This will be appreciated by those who properly care but will still not, I am afraid, be utilised by a certain minority.

This year, because of Covid restrictions and other financial uncertainties, the Parks Department are not planting out floral displays. So we have agreed to sponsor one, or possibly two floral displays in busier areas to bring a little colour to the park through the summer and, of course, our volunteers will continue maintaining the Friends Garden, an area of peace and reflection, to its usual very high standard.

2021 will, I trust, be the year in which we move out of the darkness and with your continued support once again move forward. It is also one hundred and fifty years since the park was bought for the pleasure of the citizens of Leeds which it still does, magnificently, even in these more difficult times. Please, do take care and be safe until it is time for us all to be able to celebrate together again.

Richard Critchley



Spring 2021



Cover photograph:
Dave Johnston

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Friends of
Roundhay
Park

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome contributions from all our members. If you have an article or letter you think our members would enjoy please send it to the editor@forp.org. If possible please attach photos. We have regular contributors but would welcome your contribution also.



Fairies move into Ram Wood!

If you have been down for a walk through Ram Wood since early February, you may have seen a number of fairy houses amongst the trees. Tiny doors, steps, rope ladders, balconies and rustic roofs all appeared mysteriously, and without warning, where fairies have set up home in the trunks or stumps of trees. Nobody seems to know where these have come from, but they have brought delight to many children and families passing by.

So far, however, no-one has reported seeing any of the residents, but after the pubs finally re-open – who knows?



Photos by Andrew Killingbeck



A Message from Leeds Parks and Countryside

Over the last year, we have spotted fairy villages popping up in woodlands and green spaces all over Leeds. Woodlands are magical spaces anyway (we think), but having the initial rush of delight at the discovery of that first door, followed by the anticipation of more appearing before your next visit.....it has really brought a sense of wonder and joy to what could otherwise be a struggle to get children out of the house.

Leeds City Council's Parks and Countryside Service aims to help people enjoy and value their local green spaces. Fairy trails are a lovely way to encourage children and families to explore their local nature areas and get close to wildlife. We would like to work with fairy trail creators to make sure anything that is introduced to local woodlands and green spaces is not going to damage protected trees and habitats, be a risk to anyone's safety or conflict with other site users. For anyone who is planning to invite fairies to their local wood, **please contact the Parks and Countryside Service** (parks@leeds.gov.uk). We can help you choose a suitable spot and give you guidance on best practice when putting up a fairy trail.

A surprising new resident for the park this winter?

From our bird correspondent, Dave Johnston.
Thanks again, Dave!



Female with 2 juveniles



Male

Female



Many of us look forward to "winter visitors" in the park, such as redwing, fieldfare, and ducks such as goosander, shoveler, pochard and so on. The arrival of parrots before Christmas came as a surprise. These are ring-necked parakeets. Up to 23 in a flock have been seen regularly all over the park, particularly near the lakeside cafe and along-side Waterloo Lake.

Bright green, they are very noisy birds. 40 centimetres long (including a long tail), they have a wingspan of 35 to 40 centimetres. Both males and females have bright red beaks. Males have a distinct black and pink neck ring. Females and juveniles may have a faint grey neck ring.

So where have these exotic birds come from? They originate from escaped pet birds. The first wild parakeet in the UK was recorded in Norfolk in 1835. Small numbers of them were recorded after that, mainly in the London area. There were two large increases in numbers in 1932 and 1950, when birds in private collections were released because of scares about a potential "parrot fever". Also, there are some (probably apocryphal) stories of them escaping during the filming of *African Queen*, with Katharine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart, in 1951, and that Jimi Hendrix released some in the 1970s.

London is now their stronghold. Large roosts of them are found in the parks there. You may be able to hear their distinctive squawking call in the background of outside broadcasts from the Houses of Parliament.

They are usually found from West Africa across to India south of the Himalayas. They cope very well with our climate, concentrating in suburban areas, and feeding on fruit, berries, nuts and seeds. Garden bird tables and feeders are ideal for them. There are now at least 8,600 pairs in the UK, and they have spread as far north as Aberdeen.

They are a controversial bird. They start breeding in January, and nest in holes in trees. Because they start so early, there is now a great deal of evidence that they take potential nesting sites of native woodpeckers, owls, nuthatches, stock doves, etc., before they have a chance to build their nests. 2 to 4 eggs are laid, which take 3 weeks to hatch. The young leave the nest 4 weeks later. Each pair may have 2 or even 3 broods per year.

There are suggestions of a culling programme for these birds in the UK, which is upsetting a lot of people. No decision has yet been made about this. So, for the time being at least, it is possible to observe and enjoy this new arrival in the park.

As spring is getting under way it is now time to listen and look for our summer visitors, such as blackcaps and chiffchaffs. Keep an eye on both lakes for swallows, house martins, and sand martins. Swifts should be with us by early May.

Dave Johnston

On 2nd March, Dave reported meeting a fellow 'birder' that morning who knew of two active parakeet nests in the park. He had seen one being ravaged by a grey squirrel. Dave had counted 78 mute swans that morning but feels there are probably more, with so much displaying, flying and disputing going on.

Dave also saw two pairs of great crested grebes displaying, and one male goldeneye – the first time he has seen one in Roundhay Park, though they are regulars at Eccup Reservoir in winter.



The People's Park

- 150th Anniversary of Roundhay Park

The editors are grateful to our expert local historians Steven Burt and Neville Hurworth, whose work is the source for much of this article

"Here we have an estate which would make an ideal playground for the people of this town. Future generations will remember us with gratitude, as they stroll along the pleasant walks and enjoy the ease and shade of the trees".

John Barran, Mayor of Leeds 1871

Roundhay Park has not always been open to the public. In medieval times the area was a hunting park. In 1803 part of the estate that was to become Roundhay Park was bought by a wealthy businessman, Thomas Nicholson who was born in Chapel Allerton, but made his fortune in London, making his half-brother Stephen an equal partner in his businesses. Stephen also bought land in a different part of Roundhay.

Thomas Nicholson wanted to turn his newly acquired land in Roundhay into a fine country estate and spent over 15 years creating some of the main features we now enjoy in the park. These features included Waterloo Lake, named after the famous battle in 1815. The workers creating the lake included soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars. Thomas also was responsible for the 'folly' – the Old Castle, and of course the Mansion itself. Much of this work was carried out while Thomas divided his time between Chapel Allerton and London, but, after his niece died in London in 1816, he moved to live in the Mansion with his wife Elizabeth for a few years before his death in 1821.



Thomas specified that his Roundhay estate should not be sold, but should remain private land, passed down, after the death of his wife, through male family members. He had no children and, following his death, the estate passed to his half brother Stephen, who in turn died without any children. However, he had become very close to his nephew William Nicholson Phillips. Stephen left the estate to William (who had changed his name to William Nicholson Nicholson to comply with a stipulation in Thomas Nicholson's earlier will). Most importantly, Stephen gave William absolute freedom to do whatever he wanted with his estate, and changes in the law also gave him the same freedom with Thomas's estate. So it was possible for the land we now know as Roundhay Park to be sold.

Unlike his predecessors, William had several children, but over time his potential heirs blotted their copybooks in various colourful ways (as described in Neville Hurworth's publication *"The Nicholsons of Roundhay Park: Devotion and Family Betrayal"*). As a result, William did not feel inclined to leave his estate to any family member, but after his death in 1868 his will opened the way for the estate to be put up for sale.

It is our good fortune that, just at this time, the Mayor of Leeds, John Barran, set his sights on turning Roundhay Park into a public space for everyone to enjoy. John Barran and his associates bought the land encompassing the park on October 4th 1871. They immediately offered the land to the Leeds Council, at cost plus interest. Despite vociferous opposition from some of the wealthy elite of Roundhay who did not like the idea of working class folk wandering about the area, the park finally became accessible to all, and remains for us to enjoy today.

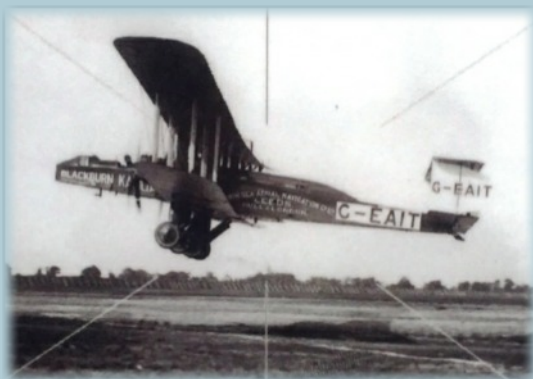
150 Years - The History Boards

Next time you visit Canal Gardens and Tropical World, do take some time to enjoy the History Boards which were placed there in 2019. The boards were created by FoRP's Sara Dawson with help from local historians, and were designed by Anna Wanczyk. The images were sourced from our archives and donated by Leeds Museums and Galleries and Yorkshire Post Newspapers Ltd. We are grateful to Fastsigns for printing the boards, and to John Roebuck and his team at Leeds Parks and Countryside for the installation. The boards show the highlights of the past 150 years since Roundhay Park became open to all. These include:

The official opening - On 19th September 1872 Roundhay Park was officially opened by HRH Prince Arthur. Having spent the previous night at Harewood House, the Prince arrived at Leeds Town Hall at 11.30 am to be met by the Mayor, John Barran. From there the Prince, escorted by the Yorkshire Hussars and a grand procession of civic dignitaries made their way to the park for the opening ceremony (below).



Soldiers Fields as an airfield – the early days of aviation saw aircraft manufactured by the local Blackburn Aircraft Company taking off and landing from here. The first scheduled passenger flights between Leeds and Bradford



The Lido (1950/60s)

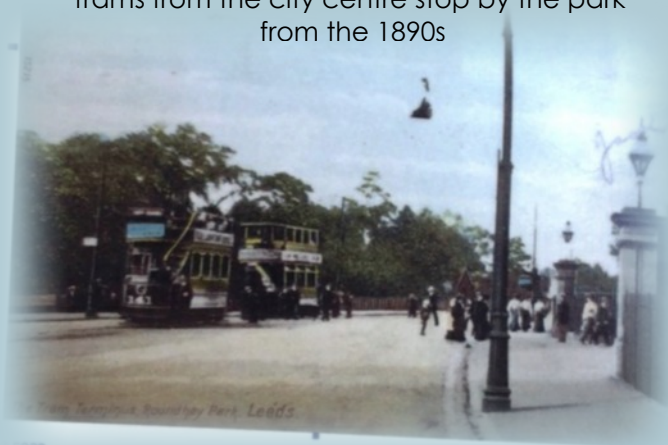


© Leeds Parks and Countryside



The History Boards

Trams from the city centre stop by the park from the 1890s



Children's Day Festivals (1920s - 1960s)



And not forgetting major music events from the 1980s e.g. The Rolling Stones, Madonna, and Bruce Springsteen

References

To learn more about the history of Roundhay Park, see Steven Burt's book 'An Illustrated History of Roundhay Park'.

For John Barran's battle to acquire the park for the people of Leeds – see Neville Hurworth's book 'John Barran's Fight for the People's Park'. Just Google the title to download this from the Oakwood Church website.

For more about the Nicholson family – see Neville Hurworth's recent book 'The Nicholsons of Roundhay Park: Devotion and Family Betrayal', following his earlier book 'Thomas and Elizabeth Nicholson: The Quaker Founders of Roundhay Park'

Little Friends Trails

The 'Little Friends' team have achieved great things in recent years, including the installation of the new Lakeside playground, and the Sky Climber apparatus on the top playground. They also created the Little Friends Trails – adventure trails with clues to follow for children and their families. The Covid crisis meant that quite a few activities had to be cancelled during 2020, but Little Friends will not be deterred.....

Welcome to Yorkshire featured the Little Friends Trails in their 'Welcome to Walkshire' year long campaign to make this county the home of walking. On their website, Welcome to Yorkshire say:

"A great way of seeing some of the hidden gems of the park is by following the Friends of Roundhay Park Adventure Trails. There are two trails, one for pre-schoolers and one for primary school children, but each trail is split into sections so you can do as much or as little as you want!

The trails are a great way to engage the children with the fun of walking, as well as introducing you to areas of the park you may not have known about before. The trails can be downloaded for free from the website."

Maps and clues for both trails can be downloaded from the FoRP website at <https://forp.org/little-friends-trails>. These documents are free, but since FoRP is a charity, donations are invited and welcome.

Children's Sensory Garden

The Little Friends of Roundhay Park have raised £10,000 to build a children's sensory garden in Canal Gardens opposite Tropical World. Sara Dawson from the Little Friends team has provided this update on their latest great idea:

The interactive children's sensory garden will aim to provide a fun and relaxed space which children and adults visiting the park will be able to enjoy, and which will encourage natural play and a sense of discovery. Planting will take place in the Spring to bring the garden to life.

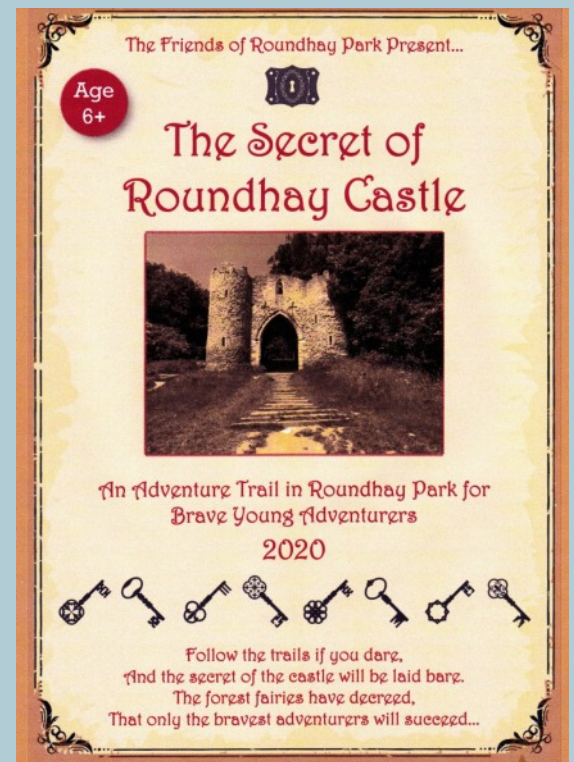
Before lockdown the Little Friends put forward proposals to build this garden. The Parks team identified a suitable area that was prone to shade and difficult to plant that would be best suited to paths, tactile planting and willow trails. The Little Friends team worked with Kingdom Gardens, a local garden landscaping company, to design the L-shape piece of land to create an attractive area for children and adults. The area will encompass various different zones in which learning and nature can be freely explored, it will be laid out with colourful and tactile planting, with plenty to see and smell, as well as encouraging wildlife.

Some of the plans include a winding pathway, an 8m willow tunnel, a bug hotel, herb beds, with wildflower and sensory planting to engage the five senses. Some of the plants being considered are *Houttuynia cordata* (chameleon plant), *Helichrysum italicum* (curry plant), *Lavandula angustifolia* (lavender), *Echinacea* (coneflowers), *Echinops* (Veitch's Blue globe thistle) and the *Briza maxima* (great quaking grass).

There are also plans to turn Dingle Dell near Mary's Tree into a children's sensory area.

If you would like to donate to the children's garden please donate through FoRP's website

Sara Dawson



The Little Friends team is hoping to refresh the trails over the next year. If anyone has any input they would like to make into the trails, please email littlefriends@forp.org



A great sporting arena – Cricket in Roundhay Park

In normal times, Roundhay Park provides an excellent venue for all kinds of events. We are grateful to Andrew Braid for sending us information about some important cricket matches which took place in the park in the 1940s. Also we owe thanks to John Wells for sharing some of his own first hand cricket memories.

The large 'arena' in Roundhay Park has presented a superb space for major sporting and entertainment events through the years. Between the 1920s and early 1960s 'Children's Days' were held here. Many music events have taken place here, featuring world-renowned artists. A wide range of sporting events have also featured, including cycling, and tennis. In the late 1960s and early 1970s when a group of elite tennis players broke away to become professional, excluding themselves from the 'Grand Slam' events, there were several exhibition matches in the park featuring some of the 'greats' of the game, including Rod Laver.



Watching the cricket - 29th May 1944

Photo courtesy of Leeds Libraries, Leodis.net

The arena provides a perfect setting for a cricket pitch, which is in regular use every summer (COVID permitting!). Going back in time, this cricket pitch has been graced by some top players. Andrew Braid spotted an obituary in 'Wisden' of the Yorkshire cricketer, Jack Appleyard who died in 1975. Jack was responsible for setting up some notable cricket matches in the park. The obituary (from Wisden Almanac 1976) includes the following:

"APPLEYARD, JACK, one of the best known faces in Yorkshire cricket circles, died in hospital after a long illness on August 20, aged 77. Thousands will remember him as the man who brought Sunday cricket to a sports starved public during the Second World War. It was in 1940 that Appleyard first organised Sunday cricket in Roundhay Park, Leeds, a natural amphitheatre. The games were extremely popular with Test stars attracting as many as 70,000 to one game. Over the years Jack Appleyard's matches raised more than £20,000 for charity and cricketers' benefit. Probably the greatest team of all turned out for the Hedley Verity memorial match in 1944 when 18 internationals played and Wilfred Rhodes and Emmott Robinson were the umpires."

After the war – an eye-witness account

John Wells, a Roundhay resident and veteran of North Leeds Cricket Club has very kindly shared some of his own memories of cricket in the park just after the Second World War. Here are John's reminiscences:

"I was born in 1937 and lived in Oakwood about a mile from Roundhay Park Oval where the matches took place. My father who was a keen cricket fan took my brother and me most Sunday afternoons during the summer to watch. In good weather we sat on the grass on either Hill 60 or Hill 40 amongst many thousands of others. After the war people had very little money and this entertainment was free (donations only)."

Jack Appleyard's team included some very good local cricketers and a few who had played at a higher level e.g Arthur Wood (Yorkshire and England wicketkeeper), Johnny Wardle (Yorkshire and England slow bowler). Also, the county cricket championship was run Monday to Saturday during the summer. With no play on Sundays in the county championship, many visiting county teams playing against Yorkshire at Headingley would turn out in full for charity against Jack's team on Sundays in Roundhay Park. I know this is correct because my mother's maiden name was Cornford and there was a chap called Jim Cornford playing for Sussex, and we managed to get all the autographs of the Sussex team. I think also that the Australian Test team (including Don Bradman) played in the park in the middle of the 1948 Test Match at Headingley."

And it's not cricket but - Believe it or not.....

Hands up anyone who knew that Leeds had bid for Roundhay Park to be the venue for the FA Cup Final? It's true! But the bid was in 1913, and was unsuccessful. Otherwise I think we would all know about it. Here is the newspaper clip from the time, spotted and shared on Twitter.



Litter Picking – Aiming for a ‘Litter Free Leeds’

During this time of lock down you have probably spent more time than ever walking all over the wide expanse of Roundhay Park. If you have, you will have been dismayed by the increased volume of litter scattered all over the park. Martin Child leads our FoRP litter picking activities, and can still provide equipment if you need it. Meanwhile Martin is busy building our links with other projects aiming to achieve Litter Free Leeds. Wouldn't that be great! Martin writes:

It has been fairly quiet since Christmas in the sense that we are still not running organised litter picking sessions. That does not mean litter picking has stalled. Lots of our regulars are venturing out on a very regular basis to keep the dream alive! Thanks are due to all of you.

There has been a steady trickle of new members to the litter picking group which is very encouraging. Once we are able to start formal group sessions again we are going to be in a very healthy position. John Miles and myself have been doing a few sessions recently, particularly targeting rubbish in Waterloo Lake. The wet, muddy conditions have been a challenge with the snow and ice a welcome relief to be honest. We have done as much as we can, hopefully the swans can nest in a slightly more salubrious environment this spring.

We have removed many bags full of rubbish. We are seeing lots more empty bread bags which is probably because we are not able to sell duck food at the moment. It seems a shame to feed the birds and then dump the bag in the lake. We are also seeing an apparent increase in the number of full dog poo bags. Not scientific but it may be reflecting the increase in dog numbers since the first lockdown.

Thanks for all your hard work. The difference you make is visible.

I am in the process of working with ‘Litter Free Leeds’, aiming to transition to the Litter Free Leeds bags. They are a distinctive purple colour and many of you will have seen these appearing in ever increasing numbers. The bags are used by volunteer litter pickers around the city and are recognised by local authority staff who will collect them when they are left tied off by council bins. I would like to thank Sandra McLean from Litter Free Leeds for her help in facilitating this change.

Litter Free Leeds is a voluntary organisation set up to help clean the streets of Leeds. They are already having a significant effect. It seems sensible to use their bags, which are provided by Leeds City Council, because they are so recognisable and they do indicate that the bags have been filled by volunteer collectors. I know many of our litter picking group do not limit their litter picking activities to within the park boundaries so are likely to be interested in the work Litter Free Leeds are doing locally.

If you would like more information they now have a website (<https://litterfreeleeds.co.uk>) and are on Facebook and Twitter.

Martin Child

More Litter Bins

The council is providing some more litter bins to be installed in a number of busy locations in and around the park. These include the Lido car park (Wetherby Road), by the old castle, some popular picnic and dog walking spots, Park Avenue, and additional bins near the Lakeside Cafe.



Doing a great job - Heather Child with one the new purple bags



Spring is coming to the Friends Garden

Janet Wilkinson is now leading the dedicated group of volunteers looking after the Friends Garden. Thank you, Janet for taking on this role, and for this update.



If you regularly visit the Friends Garden you may notice that some of the trees at the Old Park Road side have now been cut back to allow more light into the garden. This should hopefully benefit some of the other plants in the garden which have been struggling in the shade. This work has been carried out by John Roebuck and his team, so a massive thanks to them for doing this work during such difficult times.

ForP volunteers continued working in the garden on an ad hoc basis, either on their own or in twos until the beginning of December. Their hard work meant we were able to leave the garden looking tidy for the winter months.

Now that the weather has started to improve and the garden is coming to life volunteers have been back working to prepare for the year ahead. At present in line with current restrictions volunteers are either working alone or with one other person. It is hoped that as restrictions are eased the number of volunteers will increase and we can look forward to resuming the formal ForP sessions in the garden. If you see any of the volunteers working in their yellow jackets please give them a wave, but also remember to keep socially distanced.

Janet Wilkinson



Bird boxes

Two birdboxes have been placed in the Friends Garden. It will be worth keeping an eye on these over the next few months. Last year we had a family of blue tits nesting in one of them. The box on the wall was made at one of the Little Friends workshops by our ForP secretary, Carol Haughton, with a little help from the Rangers from Leeds Parks and Countryside.

Notices

Donation to FoRP from The English Art Company

FoRP did not produce a Roundhay Park calendar for 2021. However, the English Art Company, who have operated from the conservatory at the Mansion (pre-Covid!) produced a calendar containing a mixture of beautiful original artwork by David Lyon, and photographs of the park by his wife Catriona. They generously offered to make a donation to FoRP from the sale of their calendars. **FoRP says a big 'Thank you' to the English Art Company for their donation of £120, and we look forward to seeing them open up again in the conservatory soon**

FoRP Working Parties

Our working parties, led by Tom Cooper have been a mainstay of FoRP's efforts to maintain and improve the park. Covid restrictions have made it impossible for the working parties to operate in the normal way, but Tom and his team of volunteers are champing at the bit to get back into action. Please watch the FoRP website for news (www.forp.org). If you want to learn more or would like to join the team please contact Tom at tomandcath@ntlworld.com.

ADDRESS LABEL



150 Years of Roundhay Park Historic Map for Sale.

As we mark 150 years of Roundhay Park, members may be interested in obtaining a copy of the historic map produced by Hepper for the sale of the park. This is a truly beautiful piece of professionally printed art work which would grace the wall of any FoRP member. It is available in two sizes – A1 for £50 and A0 for £80.

These can be ordered through the FoRP website at <https://forp.org/product/historic-map/>

Membership Cards

Your new membership cards are enclosed in this newsletter. Please note, these cards all carry the same expiry date of 31st March 2022. This is not related to the date you made payment for membership, but is for Tropical World staff to check that visitors are current members, and therefore entitled to the two free visits. Your actual membership is for 12 months from the anniversary of your original payment. If you do not pay by standing order you will receive an email reminder when payment is due.