

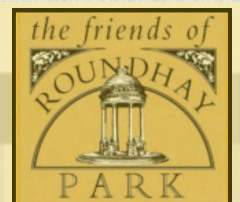
Summer 2023 | Friends of Roundhay Park

# THE NEWSLETTER

## FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK



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*With sadness we have to report that Bob Reid, one of FoRP's longest serving members passed away in May. Our thanks go to David Binns and to Bob's daughter Brigid for sharing this information about his truly remarkable life.*

# Bob Reid

## *A memory of*

DR. ROBERT JOHN  
OWEN REID (BOB)



Bob was a stalwart of FoRP and a major contributor to our achievements over many years. Sadly, he passed away in St. Gemma's Leeds on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023, at the age of 92.

Born in County Down, Northern Ireland, he gained his degree in Physics at Queen's University, Belfast and then went on to become a respected cosmic ray physicist, working in locations as diverse and exotic as Jamaica, USA, Antarctica and North Yorkshire.

As a hobby, Bob took up the challenge of designing, making and flying boomerangs, one of which he flew around the world – he was at the South Pole at the time, but technically the flight duration was 24 hours and 7 seconds! Unfortunately, he was not the first person to do this, as he was beaten to it by one of his students the year before, using a boomerang designed and made by Bob, which now resides in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington. Bob's last "flight" was on Soldiers Field on his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday – and it came back to him!

Whilst in Jamaica, Bob founded the Jamaican national rugby union team. He had a lifetime love for the game, which he played for many years. During his time in Jamaica, he met his wife-to-be, Noreen (who was practising as a doctor in Kingston) and coincidentally came from a village only fifty miles from his own birthplace.

The Reid family, which later included two daughters, Brigid and Frances, returned to the

UK in the early 1960s, where Bob became a senior lecturer at Leeds University until his retirement in 1991. Living in Gledhow, Bob soon became a Friend of Roundhay Park in its formative years and became a participant in the renowned Jon Vogler projects and working parties. A major milestone in the development of FoRP was the creation of the Friends Garden, which from start to finish took about two years and involved at least weekly working sessions. Bob willingly joined in almost every one of these and proved to be an excellent traffic manager when we had 60 tonnes of topsoil dumped on Old Park Road!

Following his retirement, he took a course in geology, which he put to good use when he introduced the idea of creating a geology trail in Roundhay Park. Working with Bill Fraser, the geology trail was created along with an explanatory guide and map. The trail is a very fitting memorial to Bob's love for Roundhay Park.

During the formative years of the litter picking team, Bob volunteered to take on the organisation of these sessions, which he did for several years, aided by his constant companion, Dillon (his cocker spaniel).

Bob will be remembered as an enthusiastic supporter of FoRP and a real "Friend" to all of us who knew him. He was an easy man to get along with and was always willing to get involved in the well-being of Roundhay Park. He will be sadly missed.



# Chair's Letter

WELCOME to this season's copy of the newsletter.

The year rolls on and the park is looking its sparkling best and whilst there are some setbacks, there are still many positives to be proud of. We are most grateful to all our willing volunteers, including those who look after the Friends Garden and the new Sensory Garden and to all the members of the working parties who support the depleted gardener numbers by planting, cleaning and generally maintaining various parts of the park.

Mary's Tree which had to be taken away has now been replaced by three new pieces of art created by the original sculptor. You may have seen them if you have visited Canal Gardens recently. A contractor is currently landscaping the area around the new sculptures to make the area attractive and welcoming. By the time you read this, the work should be completed.

It's good to see that so many swans survived the recent bird flu epidemic and have produced a record number of cygnets this year that are growing to maturity.

Unfortunately, there are too many examples of anti-social behaviour, and it appears to be getting gradually worse. Too many visitors to the park have no regard for the environment or for the enjoyment and well-being of others. Littering is a classic example. Our valiant band of volunteer litter pickers report that not only is the volume of litter increasing but that unpleasant, unhygienic and downright disgusting litter has become common place.

Dangerous driving, complete disrespect for the fabric of the park and for the peace and enjoyment of others is also more problematic. Local residents have banded together to put pressure on the city council and the police to take action to attempt to turn the tide. We hope some progress may be forthcoming. At a recent meeting, it was agreed to make the entire park subject to a "Community Trigger", also known as an anti-social behaviour case review. It is intended to bring together the relevant agencies, the various departments of the city council, the police and local communities to develop actions to resolve matters. We wait in anticipation for some positive action.

But do not be dismayed or intimidated. There is no reason to feel vulnerable: the park is still a beautiful, calm and peaceful refuge to enjoy. I do hope that we will see you all enjoying its pleasures, very soon.

Richard Critchley



The new tree sculpture, with Shane Green (left), Carol Haughton and Sara Dawson

## Happy News!

Congratulations to our Chair, Richard, who got married to Carlos this summer. On behalf of FoRP we send them our very best wishes for their future together. (No cards or gifts, please!)







# Feathered gem

## Another feathered gem visits Roundhay Park

*If any unusual birds turn up in the park you can be sure our eagle-eyed correspondent Dave Johnston will be there to spot them. His latest sighting is really special. We are grateful to Dave for this description and the photos*

A very surprising visitor flew into Roundhay Park towards the end of May, and stayed on Waterloo Lake for two or three days. It was a male red breasted merganser (a bit of a mouthful). This is a duck related to the goosander, which we get on both lakes in the park in the winter. Goosanders are about 68 cm long, whereas the red breasted merganser is about 58 cm long (the same size as a mallard).

The male appearing in the park was darker than a goosander, with a wispy crest at the back of his head.

The merganser is basically a bird from Scotland and north east England. Some come down to Yorkshire in the winter, but to have one in Leeds in May is very strange.

Mergansers are diving ducks, feeding on 15 to 20 fish per day, which will be around 10 cm long. Mergansers and goosanders are known as "sawbills", because they have serrated beaks, which they use to catch and hold on to prey. Mergansers eat salmon and trout, which makes them unpopular with Scottish anglers.

Their nesting season in Scotland and north east England is usually the first week in June. They nest in holes in trees, where the female lays between 8 and 10 eggs. So it is difficult to understand why the male merganser was in Leeds at this time of year.

Turning to more familiar birds, male mallards in the park often look a bit shabby during the summer because they are moulting. Their green head and ring of white feathers

around the neck may disappear completely. Don't worry, though. By late summer or early autumn they will have a complete new set of feathers, ready for the coming winter.

Also, everyone will be aware of the large numbers of mute swans in the park. On July 10<sup>th</sup> we counted 60 adults and 24 cygnets. They obviously love Roundhay Park.



Dave Johnston



# Forest School – learning the natural way

*Melody Thornton has once again run a highly successful series of Forest School sessions in the park. Thank you, Melody, for this account*

Little FoRPerS have had a blast at Forest School this season! We are so lucky to have such a wonderful backdrop in Ram Wood to explore every week. The trees have shed and grown again, the canopy thickens every week, and we've even witnessed branches coming down in the storms. All of which we've used to our advantage, whether that's sheltering from rain to read stories, or collecting branches to make new dens and bridges. It's been a privilege to guide the children through all sorts of activities and listen to their passions.

It was wonderful that parents sent me photos of the children taking their work home and using it in their own gardens, taking the imagination and learning even further. All the children have grown in their knowledge and creativity as to what we can do when we play in the woods, with natural materials. We have made jewellery, painted with leaves, created crowns for ourselves, and of course found many minibeasts. The development of coordination has been outstanding with every child being accurate with a hammer come July - what progress! What has also been amazing is seeing the children start to gain confidence and coordination to navigate the ever changing terrain around us.

Children and adults started off with such curiosity and energy to learn, and by the end of the season, we were discussing which woods are best for various activities, which animals live where, and why, and which leaves belong to different plants. The children have all had the chance to explore their own interests, some are very confident and able to use tools straight away, whilst others like to watch from afar, and learn from what others are doing.

The beautiful setting of Ram Wood creates such a wonderful space for children to explore what feels right for them and an opportunity to find their preferred learning style, whether that's joining in with a group activity, or taking time to listen, watch and problem solve quietly, before finding their own rhythm. It has been wonderful to see friendships grow too. Towards the end of the session, when we were planning our final session, I asked the children what their favourite activity was, with one child saying simply 'seeing my friends'. Friendships are formed within the woods, and thrive in the woods. We will be back in September for more fun, We have had many new families coming down to the woods, some are off to school, some are eager to come back. We are running close to capacity, so booking in advance continues to be essential for an efficient session.

**Sessions currently run fortnightly on Tuesdays, and weekly on Thursdays. For more information, please contact [fsroundhay@gmail.com](mailto:fsroundhay@gmail.com)**

Melody Thornton





# A Special Place on the edge of Roundhay Park

*Have you really noticed the church tucked away at the edge of the park off Wetherby Road? This important church and graveyards has been sadly neglected, but thanks to the Friends of St John's Church, some improvements have been achieved. Lynne Staveley of the Friends group tells the story.*

Even people familiar with Roundhay Park are often not aware that part of the park is actually a church and graveyards, which are hidden behind the Montessori school and almshouses on Wetherby Road.

St John's church was built in 1826 by the Nicholson family, who lived in the Mansion and were the owners of the park. They, and subsequent generations, endowed the church with beautiful lancet stained glass windows, a fine organ and bells, and many silver and gold artefacts. After the park was bought for the city in 1872, the church continued to flourish and serve the needs of the growing population of Roundhay.

By 2007 however, the congregation had dwindled to such a small number that no more services were held there, and the church closed. In 2010, the Church of England sold the church and its grounds to the Pentecostal City Mission, for the princely sum of £1. A number of covenants were put on the sale, relating to the restoration and maintenance of the building and the graveyards, but no penalties were mentioned in case of these covenants not being honoured.

By 2013, the building had fallen into disrepair and the graveyards were overgrown with brambles. Caroline Feeman, who lives in the USA but has family connections to Leeds, put messages on the gravestones asking those who tended them if they would be interested in forming a group to protect the interests of this historic church.

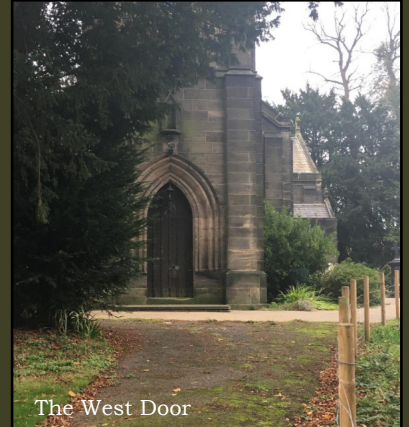
The Friends of St John's formed in 2014, and since then has worked tirelessly to bring the graveyards back to a good condition. The Listed Buildings Officer at Leeds City Council chases the owners for essential repairs, but despite this,

the building has become dilapidated over the years. Water ingress from a hole in the roof has led to wet and dry rot in the timbers, and sadly the organ is now just a pile of rotting wood. It is unlikely that the church could ever be restored to how it once was, and the mainly Victorian graves of the South Yard are dangerous due to age and subsidence. Two of the graves which can be seen from the path are those of the Lupton family, the great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents of the Princess of Wales.

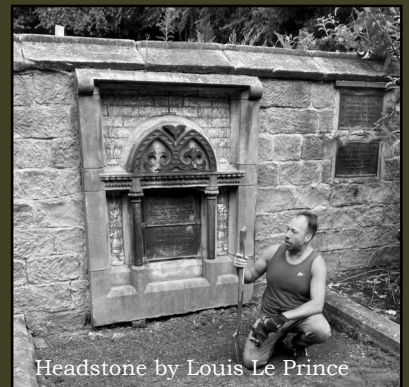
The north churchyard (established in 1932) is however fully accessible, and has some interesting graves such as that of James Kitson, the Lax family, and Sarah and Joseph Whitley. The Whitleys were the parents-in-law of Louis Le Prince, who designed the headstone for them, and which is now separately listed as a historic monument. A number of war graves are also located here.

**If you are interested in St John's and the work of the Friends, please check out our websites at [roundhayfriends.com](http://roundhayfriends.com) and [roundhaystjohnchurchyard.org](http://roundhaystjohnchurchyard.org), or ring Lynne Staveley (Chair of Trustees) on 07553-161463. We would be delighted to hear from you.**

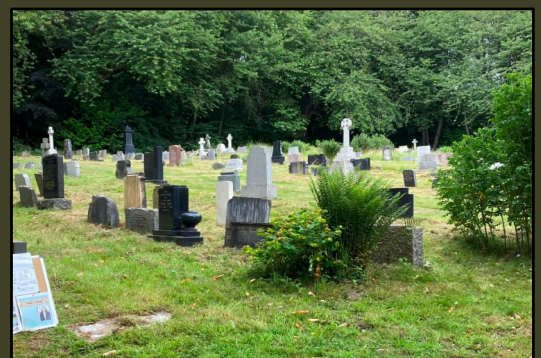
Lynne Staveley



The West Door



Headstone by Louis Le Prince





# Sensory Garden news

We have welcomed lots of visitors to the sensory garden over the last few months and have especially enjoyed leading sessions with a group of Little FoRPers, two school groups and two childminders with the children they care for. Various activities have included looking and listening for signs of spring/summer in the garden, completing a quiz about the Roundhay Adder and repainting some of the faded pebbles, planting onions, herbs and seeds and generally exploring the garden.

Over the last few weeks two of the raised beds have been replanted, one as an alpine bed and the other as a fruit and vegetable bed in a 'nod' to the sensory garden's former life as a kitchen garden for the Mansion. Raspberry canes, strawberry and tomato plants have been added and the onions planted during a session we held at half-term with the Little FoRPers are starting to emerge. Sadly the climbing beans we planted around an obelisk and several courgette plants have been eaten by slugs, but we'll try again next year! The currant bushes and loganberries which we pruned extensively two years ago have been extremely productive this year. New herbs have been added to the 'bruising bed' near the willow tunnel, together with a sign inviting visitors to stand and smell the herbs. See if you can identify some of the more unusual herbs we've sourced!

We have done a lot of work in the wildlife corner of the garden since spring. We changed the informal log pile to a more rigid wooden structure made with a recycled pallet, as we were finding that sticks and logs were being removed from the log pile on a regular basis. We feel that the new square shape of the bug hotel complements the wooden planters already in the garden. A new bee hotel, made from recycled timber and slices of logs from our gardens, has also been added.

We are conscious that the willow might look rather untidy as some of the stems on top of the tunnel and den are now almost 3m tall. We have woven in and pruned the stems along the sides so that plants growing in the borders are not hidden, but, following RHS advice, will prune the top stems in autumn once the leaves have fallen, retaining some stems for willow weaving projects.

One issue we need to address is the black bamboos in the garden which we are concerned are becoming invasive, despite the landscapers who planted the garden having been assured they were the non-invasive type. We hope to deal with this problem in the autumn by digging up the bamboos and replanting them in a special barrier material, which will hopefully restrict their growth.

Sarah Jackson



Alpine bed



Luxury dwellings for bees and bugs (above and left )



Little FoRPers at work in the sensory garden



# Leeds 2023 at Roundhay Park

*Leeds missed out on the chance to be European City of Culture 2023 when we left the EU, but the city pressed ahead to create its own celebration of culture under the banner of Leeds 2023. Among the many events running through the year was a festival of world music and world food at Roundhay Park. Nick Wayne, Leeds 2023 Neighborhood Host for Roundhay provided this report.*

## The Roundhay World Music and World Food Festival

With 'My LEEDS Summer' well under way (part of Leeds 2023 Year of Culture), one of the highlights was the superb, family friendly, World Music and World Food Festival which took place on Soldiers Field on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June.

An estimated 2,500 people brought chairs and blankets (and sun screen!) and listened to an eclectic mix of music featuring Caribbean Breeze, transporting you to Jamaica with the sunshine sounds of steel pans kicking off the Festival at 1.30pm, followed by Salsa and Cuban band – Charanga del Norte, to get you on your feet and swaying those hips, followed by a tribute to our Ukrainian residents, with a group of visitors to Leeds giving us some traditional Ukrainian singing, closely followed by the well-known, much loved, choir from St Gemma's Hospice who were the event charity.

The audience was treated to the amazing “super-group” Caution Collective with the very best of Leeds musicians and singers giving us reggae, soul, R&B and jazz in their inimitable style, led by musician/composer/singer extraordinaire, Christella Litras. The next to perform were the highly entertaining Raunakh Mela, a traditional Punjabi folk and dhol drumming act.

Next came Talking Spirits, whose members boast involvement with the likes of Frank Zappa, Steve Harley and Cockney Rebel, Joan Armatrading, Van Morrison, Billy Ocean, Jeff Beck and many more. They started their act with the whole band walking through the audience, giving a fantastic performance of virtuoso musicianship. Finally, Ubuny, with their pounding rhythms of Africa blended with the explosive energy of a live band. This vibrant group of Zulu performers combined with seasoned musicians from the UK, mixed ancient tradition with contemporary flair. The perfect way to round off the evening!

All these live acts were introduced by the effervescent JoJo Kelly from Capital Radio and music between acts was provided by Screwloose Sound System. It proved to be a great line-up for a perfect summer's day.

To make the day even better, there was a great selection of world food and drink vendors dotted around the site so the audience didn't have to leave the festival for refreshments. Ian Smith's real Mr Whippy ice-cream van made a welcome return to the park, and Scott Pullen's famous fairground rides for the children added to the fun. There was also a police van with child size uniforms for the kids to try on and have their photographs taken. All this meant a great day's entertainment and the weather held with 95% sunshine and only 17 drops of rain!

Nick Wayne



Martin and Heather at the FoRP stand at the festival

## 2024 Roundhay Park Calendar

The English Art Company is once again producing a wall calendar featuring beautiful photos of the park. These should be available from mid September, priced at £12.50. FoRP receives a contribution from every calendar sold.

To find out more visit: [www.theenglishartco.co.uk/wall-calendars2024/roundhaypark-photos](http://www.theenglishartco.co.uk/wall-calendars2024/roundhaypark-photos)



# Children's Day Re-Imagined

'Children's Day' used to be a major event in Roundhay Park over a number of decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though it has been 60 years since the last event. As part of Leeds 2023, 'Children's Day Re-Imagined' involved 1000 Leeds children in an event taking place on Soldiers Field on 14<sup>th</sup> July. Participating children took a leading role in designing and creating the content of the event, including presentations, and short videos delivering powerful messages about the environment, peace, equality and the importance of listening to children – they are the future. The event was staged in a 'protest camp' where the audience could sit to watch presentations on big screens on the central tower. The 'camp' was surrounded by hundreds of banners carrying messages for the future which had been created by children in Leeds schools.



## Antisocial Behaviour in the Park

Regular visitors to Roundhay Park will be aware of growing problems with antisocial behaviour. The Yorkshire Evening Post reported on this problem on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, including interviews with FoRP vice chair, Sara Dawson and the leader of our litter picking group, Martin Child, both of whom were quoted in the article. The YEP led with the headline **"Roundhay Park Vandalism: Antisocial behaviour reaches new high at Leeds park say disillusioned volunteers"**.

At the time of the report, Barran's Fountain had just been badly defaced with graffiti. We cannot remember this happening before, certainly not on this scale. Sara Dawson said: *"It's really sad, but I wasn't surprised to hear about the fountain. There is an increasing amount of antisocial behaviour in the park. I'm not really sure why, but we have definitely noticed an increase over the spring and summer"*. Barran's Fountain was erected in 1872 to mark the establishment of Roundhay Park as a public park for all, thanks to the efforts of John Barran, who was the Mayor of Leeds at the time. Referring to the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022, Sara continued: *"John Barran's descendants came down for the celebrations. They were even talking about having running water at the fountain for the first time. They would be devastated by this vandalism"*.

In addition to this new example of antisocial behaviour, we also have a never-ending problem with litter. Interviewed after leading the litter picking session on 3<sup>rd</sup> July Martin Child said *"We're just sick of it. We are seeing pizza boxes and curry packages thrown out of car windows. We're seeing things like well filled nappies dumped in trees, and discarded barbeques. There were about 16 large nitrous oxide canisters collected today, some of them still full. Education is really important. We need the local authority to work with the police to take action."*

Sadly there are other problems e.g. cars racing along roads around the park, and repeated overnight arrivals of groups of travellers on Soldiers Field. However, whilst there may be frustration, FoRP's active volunteers will never give up their efforts to keep the park beautiful, in partnership with the hard-pressed park management and the council.

The Friends of Roundhay Park are working with Leeds Parks, local police and local councillors to try and stamp out this current spate of anti social behaviour in the park. Your help in reporting incidents is needed. Where possible,

give details of times, dates and vehicle registration numbers.

### How to report anti-social behaviour

For non urgent issues and to pass on information, call **West Yorkshire Police on 101**.

In an emergency (if a crime is in progress or you think the offenders are nearby), call **999**.

To give information anonymously, call **Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111**.

You can also use the WYP website which provides online forms, a live chat system and useful information <https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/report-it>

**Please be careful when gathering information. Keep your distance from offenders, please stay safe.**







*A dedicated group of FoRP volunteers has been working for years maintaining the Friends Garden, making it a beautiful space by the Old Park Road entrance to Canal Gardens. This spring they teamed up with our other regular working party group who provided assistance with the 'heavy lifting' on two special projects. Janet Wilkinson has provided this account.*

(Friends Gardeners - from left: Janet, Alison, Cecily and Jutta)

# Joining Forces - FoRP volunteers team up in the Friends Garden

Spring has been a busy time for the FoRP volunteers in the Friends Garden. In addition to the usual clearing up and weeding we have undertaken two projects to make improvements to the garden

The first was to redesign and replant the newer part of the garden which is to the right as you enter through the gate at Old Park Road. Most of the shrubs in this part of the garden have been moved to the back of the area and new plants added at the front to provide a longer display of flowers throughout the summer months. Some of our volunteers kindly donated plants from their own gardens and additional plants were purchased from local nurseries. Thanks to our friends Sarah and Lindsay we have a beautiful obelisk woven from the willow tunnel in the Sensory Garden. Two clematis have been planted round the obelisk and hopefully these will provide a great centrepiece. Over the summer we will watch how the plants perform in our new flower garden so that in the autumn and next spring we can add or move plants to improve the display for next year.

The second project was to create a pond in the garden that will hold water throughout the year and encourage wild life. Visitors to the Friends Garden will have noticed during the last couple of years that the water that is supposed to be in the stream that runs under the bridge has been non-existent. This is because we were dependent on water coming through from Canal Gardens and unfortunately the



water level there has fallen which means no water is coming through to the Friends Garden.

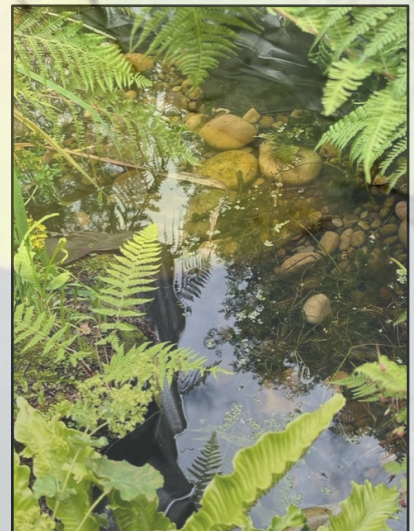
To address this issue one of our volunteers, Cecily Jarvis, suggested we should look to create a separate pond. This is in the same area as the current stream, but is not dependent on water coming through from Canal Gardens.



Ian Nicholson led this work supported by his working party volunteers. This has been heavy work for the volunteers including Cathy, Jan, Sally, Tom and our little FoRP member James. They had to work really hard to lift the stones that lay at the bottom of the stream to create more depth, lay a new liner to ensure the water is retained and then put the stones back. After a slight delay due to a lack of a water supply in the park, we now have water in our new pond. Visitors will notice that some of the pond liner is still visible, but the edges will soften over the next few months and the pond will merge into its surroundings. The good news is that already a few frogs have made the pond their new home and if it is good enough for them it is definitely good enough for us.

We hope that visitors will agree that both these projects have enhanced the garden. We will continue to monitor the changes and will all watch with interest as both mature over the next couple of years.

Janet Wilkinson



## The Friends Garden on film

The Friends Garden is one of FoRP's greatest achievements, and the Oakwood Film Academy has produced a documentary film about the creation of the garden. The film had its first screening on 22<sup>nd</sup> June at Roundhay Parochial Hall, before an invited audience of people involved either in making the film or developing and maintaining the garden. It was also shown at the Oakwood Cinema on 24<sup>th</sup> June before the main feature film. We hope the Oakwood Film Academy will bring the film to one of FoRP's open meetings in the near future.

Our thanks go to David Barnard and Judith Rothenberg of the Oakwood Film Academy for all their work on this project.





# Still Litter Picking

*FoRP volunteers, led by Martin Child carry on their sterling efforts to keep the park looking good. Martin reports:*

The FoRP litter picking team has been working away as usual, both individually and at our monthly sessions. I think it is fair to say that the weather this year has not been great and that does reflect in how much litter is deposited in the park. That is not to say it is litter free, just a little less than last year. We had seen a marked reduction in the nitrous oxide cylinders since the peak around Christmas and the New Year. Unfortunately this has changed and we are now seeing considerably more cylinders at the moment. There has also been some fly tipping of building materials which has been challenging to remove.

**Anyone interested in joining our enthusiastic group can do so via our website at [www.forp.org](http://www.forp.org). Leave a message in 'contact us' and we will be in touch.**

Martin Child



## Antiques Road Show at Roundhay Park

The Antiques Roadshow came to the park on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> to film 3 programmes for this popular BBC series - to be shown in the autumn/winter series. **Martin Child didn't miss the opportunity to get Fiona Bruce into litter picking!**



ADDRESS

Many thanks to Julie Cliffe for the front cover photo. And also for the photos from Jane Fox on page 3. Please continue to send photos of the park to our editor. They are needed to make your newsletter as colourful as possible and truly reflective of our wonderful park. The newsletter is produced by volunteers who are not photographers and they are sure there are some wonderful photographers out there in our FoRP community. The email address for sending your photos is on the front cover. We will do our best to acknowledge them, if and when we use them. If you wish to send photos to be used anonymously that is also wonderful.

**FoRP Open Meeting: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 7pm in the Education Room by the Mansion**

