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# Chair's Report

2023 has been another exciting and positive year for FoRP, the park and its members, but one announcement, on the day of King Charles III's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in November, that he had granted the Friends of Roundhay Park the most prestigious recognition, that of the King's Award for Voluntary Service, overshadowed our other notable achievements.

The King's Award (KAVS) is the highest honour granted to volunteer groups in the United Kingdom and is the equivalent of an MBE. It recognises the exceptional work carried out by volunteer groups in their communities and we are proud to be able to display the award logo in all our communications. This is a fitting and justified reward for the work of our volunteers, past and present since our charity was formed in 1994. It is a tribute to current volunteers, who turn out in good weather and the not so good, to give their time working at the Friends Garden, the Sensory Garden, with the working parties, the litter pickers and in other ways. All were invited to a buffet luncheon at the Roundhay Fox on the day to be told

the good news. We were also delighted to be joined by John Roebuck and Deputy Lieutenant Sue Baker both of whom did so much to assist us. Grateful thanks also go to our secretary Carol Haughton, vice chair Sara Dawson and treasurer Jeremy Stonehouse who made it all possible.

We now look forward to the formal presentation of the award early in the New Year. (See further details later in this full and packed edition of the newsletter).

Other events of note during the year included the retirement of Mr Whippy (Ian Smith) after 25 years as an almost permanent attraction. On a sadder note, this year saw the deaths of Marjorie Ziff, our long-time Life President in April, and of Bob Reid in May. We send our condolences to their families and to all our members who may have suffered their own losses during the year.

On a much happier note, the two new tree sculptures which we commissioned to replace 'Mary's Tree' which had to be condemned, were eventually erected in the same part of Dingle Dell and the area around them landscaped to complete the setting. Much more news, of course can be found on the FoRP website.

Summing up, it is very important to say a very special thank you to you our members, families and friends whose continuing support allows us to carry out our work maintaining and improving the park and without whom we would not exist.

And so, in closing, and on behalf of your committee, volunteers, helpers and advisors and of myself may I wish you all a most peaceful and joyous Christmastide and a very Happy New Year.

Richard Critchley

### In Memory of John Ferguson

It was just over a year ago (December 2022) that our great Friend John Ferguson passed away. John was one of the longest serving and most active members of FoRP. His dedication and contribution to our work was immeasurable. Now we can announce there is a fitting and lasting memorial to his memory. Thank you John.

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023 a tree was planted in memory of our friend and dedicated FoRP member, John Ferguson. It is a London Plane tree and is located on the long walkway from the main gates towards the Mansion. It joins the magnificent row of trees lining the path and replaces one which had to be felled last year.

A plaque will be put in place in soon, once we have consulted John's family about the wording they would choose for this memorial.





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FoRP's tree for the St Andrew's Church Christmas Tree Festival, decorated by the Sensory Garden team, with further decorations t added by 'Little FoRPers' from Melody Thornton's Forest School

The tree fern's fronds have not grown as prolifically this year as in previous years, we have therefore sought advice from a specialist grower who advised on how and when to feed the fern and to care for it in winter. Having packed straw into the crown of the fern and wrapped up the trunk and existing fronds in horticultural fleece, we have also wrapped it in its very own duffle coat (lovingly sewn by Lindsey!) created out of old coffee bean sacks purchased from Horticap. Let's hope this does the trick!

During the summer we welcomed local children who were happy to help repaint some of the pebbles on the adder, which have once again faded quite badly this year. We also harvested lots of blackcurrants, which we have made into jam to sell when we give talks about the sensory garden at local groups next year. We have cut herbs and gathered flower seeds to share with park visitors and the local WI group.

Along with Melody Thornton, who leads the Forest School sessions each week, we have trimmed a Christmas tree as part of St Andrew's Church Christmas tree festival with decorations representing FoRP and Roundhay Park. Hopefully many of you will have spotted these if you have visited the festival. We have also once again decorated one of the willow obelisks woven out of the willow tunnel prunings for Christmas, do come along and see it!

Sarah Jackson

## A Feast for the Senses – Visit our Sensory Garden

Sarah Jackson and her team continue to develop this beautiful FoRP garden. Well done to Sarah, Lindsey and the team for your ingenuity in looking after the precious tree fern! Sarah has kindly provided this account of their recent work.

Undeterred by heavy rain and wild winds this Autumn, we have continued to garden weekly in the Sensory Garden. Some of the shrubs and grasses, planted three years ago when the garden was created had outgrown their space, thus hiding and hindering other plants further back in the borders. We also spoke to several wheelchair users visiting the garden and became aware how these plants were affecting their movement along the path.

Visitors also feared damaging the plants by unavoidably running over stray stems with wheelchairs and pushchairs. These plants have now been moved to different places within the garden where we hope they will flourish.

A major issue we have recently tackled is the black bamboos which had become invasive, sending shoots through the border and into the footpath. We spent a very wet afternoon digging a 70cm trench around the bamboos, then burying a special barrier material around them, which will hopefully restrict their growth. Eagle-eyed visitors will spot some of the retainer poking up out of the soil. This is essential to ensure shoots cannot spread at surface level. We will improve the planting in spring to mask these areas.



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# There's Always Work for a FoRP Working Party

Never afraid to get their hands dirty, the volunteers in FoRP's regular working party sessions continue to make a valuable contribution in keeping the park looking beautiful. Working parties are now led by Ian Nicholson, and we thank Ian for this update.

Over the past year there have been several areas that the working parties needed to revisit. In September we came back to give the Mansion steps a good weeding and general clear up. This is quite a satisfying job as it gives us instant results and we can see where we have been. It is however hard on the knees!

October saw us back at the Ram Wood grids. This is a job that we need to do every couple of months. The condition of the beck has improved since Yorkshire Water carried out work higher up the beck. We still need to remove fallen branches and occasionally, fallen trees. At the same time, we made a start on clearing the self-seeded saplings, pendulous sedge and brambles from the edge of the upper lake. We gradually worked our way around the edge, and this work continued on the next working party in November. Our last working party of the year was scheduled for the 9<sup>th</sup> December.

Working parties take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month. (No working party on 28<sup>th</sup> December). We meet at the Carriage House behind the Roundhay Fox just before 10:00am and work until about 12.30/1:00pm. We are always happy to welcome new volunteers!

Ian Nicholson







### John Tobin – FoRP Treasurer 2017-2022

A charitable organisation like FoRP which is staffed by volunteers always needs someone to keep our finances under control. John Tobin joined FoRP in 2017 and carried out the role of treasurer expertly until he stepped down in 2022. We have recently heard the sad news that John had passed away earlier this year. We are grateful for the all the work he did for FoRP and send our condolences to his family and friends.



Tom Cooper clearing the pendulous sedge



Clearing the grid in Ram Beck

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#### FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK WINTER 202

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# Winter thrushes

Winter is upon us and we say thanks once again to Dave Johnston for a truly seasonal offering. Here are some more birds to look out for as you take a winter stroll through the park.



We have song thrushes and mistle thrushes all year round in the park, but two more types of thrushes visit us for the winter - redwings and fieldfares.

Redwings are the smallest of these four species at 21cm long. They have a white stripe above the eye and a paler white stripe below their cheek. They do not actually have red wings, but have an easy to see red colour on their sides below their wings. Some red can also be seen on their underwings in flight.

Around 700,000 redwings begin to arrive in the UK in late September and early October, leaving in mid to late April. The normal date we see the first ones in Roundhay is about 4th October. They arrive from Iceland, Norway, Sweden and north west Russia. Migration often takes place at night, when they use stars for navigation. On a still night you can hear them calling to each other as they fly overhead. They make a high pitched squeaking noise.

On arrival in the UK they usually feed in the countryside first, and then move towards parks and gardens. They feed on worms and berries, particularly rowan and hawthorn berries. Flocks of these birds can be seen anywhere in the park where these trees grow. Flocks can be seen on Soldiers Fields and on the grass between the Mansion House and the Lakeside cafe in wet weather, feeding on worms there. In very hard winters they may come into gardens to feed on fallen apples.

Fieldfares are slightly smaller than mistle thrushes, at about 26cm long. They are more distinctive than mistle thrushes, having a grey head, chestnut coloured wings and back, a grey rump and a black tail. Like the redwing, they have a very distinctive call: a loud angry chattering noise. Again, around 700,000 of these birds come to the UK in the autumn, also leaving in mid to late April. They mainly come from Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Their food is the same as that of redwings, and mixed flocks of both types of birds are often seen.

700,000 may seem a large influx for these thrushes, but like many other European birds their numbers are falling dramatically. Both birds are now on the red list for endangered species, which means conservation is needed to make sure their numbers don't decline further.

If you have apple trees in your garden, leave a few fallen apples on the ground to help them survive the winter. Our resident song thrushes and mistle thrushes, and indeed blackbirds, will also benefit from this.

(Late news! Two female goldeneyes seen at the top end of Waterloo Lake at 1.15 on  $2^{nd}$  December.)

Dave Johnston



Clockwise from the top Redwing Fieldfare Song Thrush Mistle Thrush





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# Royal Acclaim for the Friends of Roundhay Park!

Most members will have already heard, but FoRP is very proud to have received the **King's Award for Voluntary Service.** The award was confirmed on 14<sup>th</sup> November as part of King Charles III's birthday honours list. This prestigious award is equivalent to an MBE. It is a time to congratulate and thank all our members and especially those volunteers who give their time and energy in so many ways to help keep Roundhay Park beautiful. **Well done FoRP!** 

It was in February 2022 that we received an email from Mike Fox (Lord-Lieutenants Deputy and former Roundhay Councillor) suggesting FoRP may be interested in applying. Our chair, Richard Critchley confirmed our interest, and Sara Dawson (vice-chair) and Carol Haughton (secretary) began preparing to make an application. In June 2022, through contact with Sue Baker (Deputy Lieutenant for West

"His Majesty The King has approved the KAVS National Assessment Committee's recommendation that the volunteers of Friends of Roundhay Park should receive The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) 2023. This represents a tremendous achievement and we hope that the group's volunteers will feel immensely proud of it".



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Yorkshire) we received an application form and further information, with an offer of help if required to work through the process. John Roebuck, who was Estate Manager for Roundhay Park (and a great friend to FoRP) for many years prior to his retirement last year worked with Sara Dawson on the challenging task of preparing a detailed application. During this process we received wonderful letters of support from other good friends of the 'Friends' including Lynda Kitchen (Chair of Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Forum) and Pat Urry (REAP). Our application was finally submitted in September 2022.

In November 2022 we were contacted again by the Deputy Lieutenant for West Yorkshire, Sue Baker, requesting further information, documentation and evidence supporting the impact of FoRP e.g. through volunteers, roles, activities and membership. We were also asked to assemble a small group of FoRP representatives including some committee members and leaders of working parties for a meeting in December with Sue Baker and her colleague Roohie Collins. This meeting took place at the Tropical World Cafe where we were asked to provide more details about FoRP's activities and the impact we have on the park and in the community. We have to thank all of those involved. Clearly they gave an excellent account of FoRP and came through with flying colours.

In January 2023, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II the previous September, we were informed that the title of the award would become the King's Award, and announcements would coincide with the King's birthday in November. In March we were invited by the Lord Lieutenant for West Yorkshire, along with the other 31 nominated organisations from our region, to attend an afternoon tea at Bowcliffe Hall where previous recipients of the award shared their experiences of how the award had helped them. FoRP was represented at Bowcliffe Hall by Richard Critchley, Carol Haughton and Jeremy Stonehouse (FoRP treasurer).

Finally in October, notification came through, in strict confidence, that FoRP was to receive the King's Award for Voluntary Service. It was only after the publication of the King's birthday honours list on 14<sup>th</sup> November that we could publicly announce this wonderful news. Our success was featured in an article in the Yorkshire Evening Post, including quotes from Carol Haughton and Sara Dawson. Sara was also interviewed live on BBC Radio Leeds. Later on the 14<sup>th</sup> November the Yorkshire Evening Post came to the Roundhay Fox for a photoshoot at a celebratory gathering of more FoRP members who had previously received an invitation to attend 'a special announcement', without revealing what it was. Our chair, Richard Critchley gave a speech, sharing the good news, and Sue Baker, the Deputy Lieutenant for West Yorkshire (2<sup>nd</sup> left in photo above right) also spoke to congratulate FoRP on this achievement. Altogether this was a very special day for the Friends of Roundhay Park, and fantastic recognition for many years of dedicated voluntary work.

Many congratulations have come from friends and colleagues we have worked with. Kris Nenadic, who recently retired from his role with Leeds Parks and Countryside and who worked closely with FoRP said: "How brilliant, and richly deserved.....I am incredibly proud of you all! Please pass on my warmest congratulations to the Friends"

Isobel Jackson (Senior Estate Manager – Roundhay Park) said: "Amazing news and huge congratulations" and James Watson (Estate Manager) said: "Well done to FoRP for such a wonderful achievement. Brilliant recognition for all your hard work".

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# Winter comes to the Friends Garden

....But Spring is always just around the corner. Thanks to Janet Wilkinson and her dedicated team of FoRP volunteers for all their hard work in tending this garden. Janet has provided this update on their activities.

It has been a strange year for gardeners everywhere. We had a very hot spell in June followed by wet weather from July onwards. At least we have not had to do much watering and the plants in the Friends Garden, particularly those that were newly planted this year in the new flower garden, appear to have been very happy, flowering over a longer period than usual.

Unfortunately, due to the poor weather, we had to cancel some of our regular sessions in the garden. However, as always our volunteers have risen to the challenge and when possible we have had extra sessions to ensure the garden has been kept looking as good as possible. Through the Autumn our focus was on clearing fallen leaves from the footpaths and cutting back the plants that have completed their flowering for this year.

We are now thinking about next year and have already moved some of the plants around in the new flower garden. Thanks to our Friends Sarah and Lindsey we have planted some of the white anemones that have flourished so well in the Sensory Garden. We have also planted some spring flowering bulbs in the new flower garden, so there is plenty to look forward to next year.

will always be welcome to join us for coffee and biscuits.



Finally along with the rest of our volunteers I would like to say a big thank you to Jenny Purcell, one of our loyal hardworking volunteers who has decided to hang up her gardening gloves for the last time. Jenny has been a regular volunteer in the Friends Garden for over 5 years and before that she was a volunteer at Harewood House. Thank you Jenny for your help and wonderful company, you

Janet Wilkinson



### Remembering Mike Lax – a Friend of St John's Church

In the last newsletter we featured the wonderful work done by the Friends of St John's Church in restoring and maintaining the north churchyard. Lynne Staveley (Chair of Trustees) recently sent us the sad news that Mike Lax, one of the very first trustees of the Friends of St John's Church, had passed away on October 21<sup>st</sup> 2023.

In Lynne's message to us we learnt that Mike was born and brought up in Roundhay, and his family grave is near to the west door of St John's church on Wetherby Road. As one of the earliest trustees he made a huge contribution to the Friend's of St John's Church throughout its 10-year history. "A charming, good-humoured and kind man, Mike was 'the perfect Yorkshire gentleman'. His wise counsel and ready sense of humour made him an invaluable member of the trustee team. He will be sadly missed by us all."

On behalf of FoRP we send our sincere condolence to Mike's wife Susie and all his family.

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# Mums' Meander

Another brilliant new idea, and yet another way in which our wonderful park can be life-enhancing. We thank Melody Thornton (who runs the Forest School events) for this great idea and Sara Dawson (FoRP vice chair) for making it happen

Melody's idea grew out of knowing that being a parent of young children can be a 'lonely place' sometimes, and wondering how Roundhay Park might be a magnet to draw like-minded mums together. Working with Sara, they came up with a plan to launch some walks in the park under the banner of Mums' Meanders. They posted an open invitation on the FoRP Facebook page and were delighted to get a strong response.



The first walk (a night walk) took place on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November and was a great success. The group met at the Lakeside cafe and walked for a hour, going round the Upper Lake and venturing into the woods towards the castle folly and then round Waterloo Lake. Participants, some of whom had come from as far as South Milford, had the opportunity to meet other inspiring women, share their experiences and build friendships

Following this success these walks will continue, taking place on the second Thursday of each month. The next two walks are planned for 14<sup>th</sup> December and 11<sup>th</sup> January. **To book your place, please email fsroundhay@gmail.com** 

# Any Old Rubbish – Litter Pickers keep on Picking

It is a sad fact that there is always plenty of work for the many FoRP members who spend some of their time picking up the rubbish other people leave behind. Central to our efforts are the regular group litter picks, led by Martin Child, which take place on the first Monday of each month. The group meets at 10am by the Carriage House behind the Roundhay Fox. Our thanks go out to Martin and all the volunteers for their tireless efforts. Perhaps we should introduce a small prize for the weirdest piece of rubbish found each season? This season's prize goes to a halogen standard lamp.

Martin has also been very busy getting FoRP involved in a local element of a global project called FreshWater Watch, monitoring the water quality in Roundhay Park. For further details see page 11.



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### FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK WINTER 2023

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# Healthy Eating for Ducks and Swans – another FoRP success!





Ducks and swans cannot (and should not) live by bread alone.....but for many years the birds on Waterloo Lake were bombarded with the stuff by park goers and their children, who naturally love feeding the birds. FoRP set up an ambitious project aiming to introduce healthy eating for ducks and swans, and reduce the excessive amount of bread ending up in the lake. FoRP committee member Tom Cooper started the project, and has turned it into a great success over the past 6 years. We will let Tom tell the story in his own inimitable style......

It is early summer 2017 and the FoRP working party is beavering away near the Lakeside Cafe getting things looking their best, ready for the park's annual spot on TV as the World Triathlon series comes to town. Chatting to Dick Constable, of White Rose Canoe Club, instead of getting on with the job, he takes me to the corner of the boathouse. "Just look at this" he says, and I look down into the water. "What *is* that?" I ask, looking at a mass of brown and grey gunk floating by the corner of the landing stage. "In the Canoe Club we call it 'bread pudding'' says Dick. "And it's not just the stuff you can see. It spreads right under the landing stage, and some of the boathouse. Do you think FoRP could do anything about it?" "Rather courageously I said "I'll have a think."

At the next meeting of the committee, I mentioned 'bread pudding' and suggested we fasten some banners to the railings, asking people not to throw bread into Waterloo Lake. Chairman Richard said "If we were asking people to stop feeding bread we need to provide an alternative." The late, great John Ferguson and I put out heads together. He found the source of floating swan and duck food that we still use today. I sourced a sales rack and found a supplier of paper bags. John got a self inking stamp made for us to stamp the bags. I got a cash box, and George Read cut a slot in the top, to use as an honesty/donation box. My wife and I spent hours stamping bags, then putting duck food into them. The very first rack full of bags of food was placed in the Lakeside Cafe at the beginning of Autumn half term 2017.

We could not believe the demand! We were up and running! Since then, in order to cope, we progressed first to home working by several people to fill the bags with food, then holding 'bagging parties' in the Mansion. Then we started ordering the food in 15Kg sacks, a pallet load at a time, and having the bags pre-printed with the FoRP logo on both sides. Eventually, needing yet more help, we found a not-for-profit company called 'Enabled Works' run by the amazing Tina Brown MBE who do the food packing for us.

Now we have a team of 11 wonderful FoRP volunteers, who take turns to put 4-500 bags of food on the rack at Lakeside Cafe each week. Despite initial worries that the public would just take the food and run, we do cover our costs and make a small profit for FoRP funds.

So that is the story of how FoRP came to be in charge of a rack filled with floating duck and swan food in the Lakeside Cafe. And in case you are wondering, bread pudding is now off the menu, and bread soup is no longer visible in Waterloo Lake.

Now it is time for me to hand over the reins of this project to our doubly wonderful stackers Nicky McGoldrick and Maggie Ade. But don't forget - if you fancy joining our team of Rack Stackers, email me before I disappear into the sunset at the usual address: tomandcath@ntlworld.com.

#### Tom Cooper

On behalf of FoRP we say a huge thank you to Tom for all his hard work on this project which has achieved a level of success beyond what many thought possible. Well done to Tom and all the team, and good luck to Nicky and Maggie in taking this forward.

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Keep it Clean! – FreshWater Watch

FreshWater Watch is a global project run by the environmental charity Earthwatch Europe. Martin Child, who leads our regular litter picking group has stepped up, with his wife Heather to lend FoRP's hands to this project. Our thanks go to Martin for taking a lead on this for FoRP and for providing this update.

FreshWater Watch in Roundhay is a project instigated by REAP to monitor the quality of water flowing into Roundhay Park. On behalf of FoRP, Heather and I have volunteered to monitor Ram Beck and other members of REAP are monitoring the other sources of water flowing into the park. We carried out our first water sampling session for the project on 5<sup>th</sup> November and will continue monitoring the water every month. We are particularly looking at monitoring water downstream of Combined Sewage Outlets (CSO's). Currently we are just monitoring levels of nitrates and phosphates which are nutrients that generally come from sewage and/or agricultural run-off. This can cause excessive growths of algae which lead to oxygen depletion within the lakes, potentially causing harm to all forms of wildlife and vegetation living in and around the lakes. We follow a very specific protocol to ensure accuracy. We also monitor turbidity to estimate how cloudy the water is and we record any potential sources of pollution adjacent to each sampling site (including litter). The park managers are very supportive of this work.

Our sampling site is very close to the stainless steel screen constructed for FoRP by the late John Vogler some years ago to help catch debris heading for the upper lake. At each sampling a photograph looking upstream is added to the report. Sampling must be from exactly the same site each time for consistency.

It is early days yet and for those interested it would be worth having a look at the FreshWater Watch website as there is much more information there. (<u>freshwaterwatch.org</u>)

Martin Child

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## Notices Friends Garden Film

The Oakwood Film Academy will be showing the short film made about the Friends Garden featuring the FoRP volunteers who designed, created and maintain the garden. The film will be shown at the Parochial Hall in Oakwood on 1st February 2024. Members of FoRP and the general public are welcome to attend. Look out for further details in the New Year.

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### Raising funds for FoRP via Easy Funding

Amazon Smile has discontinued the scheme that some of you may have signed up to, raising funds for FoRP when shopping. However, you can still raise funds via Easy Funding. Over 4,000 shops and sites will donate to Friends of Roundhay Park - FoRP for FREE when you use 'Easyfundraising' to shop with them. You can find out more and join in by visiting

www.easyfundraising.co.uk/causes/roundhaypark

### Roundhay Park Wall Calendars 2024

The English Art Company, run by Catriona Lyon, has a gallery next to the Mansion. Catriona and her husband David Lyon have produced two limited edition wall calendars featuring beautiful images of the park. One features photographs taken by Catriona. The other contains images printed from original paintings by David Lyon. Both calendars are priced at  $\pounds$ 12.50 – a perfect Christmas or New Year present. Call in at Art Roundhay Park by the Mansion, or order online at: www.theenglishartco.co.uk/wall-calendars2024

A donation from each sale of the calendars will go to FoRP

FoRP also have items for sale at the gallery and via our online shop - visit our website www.forp.org

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## FoRP Meeting Dates 2024

Meetings will be held at 7pm in the Ann Maguire Education Room by the Mansion Open Meeting – Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 AGM - Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024

## Desktop Publishers?

The editors would like to know if there are any members of FoRP out there who are familiar with the Serif Affinity software package or who want to learn how to use it. Whilst the editor responsible for the art work is not yet ready to give up her computer we are aware that we need to forward plan. So we are looking for a younger model! If you do not have the software but are willing to commit to learning how to use the software suite we would like to meet you. This package of software has been chosen as it is a reasonable cost and is accessible to IT literate users. FoRP will meet the cost of an extra license. Contact us at editor@forp.org