

UPDATES

WORKING PARTIES

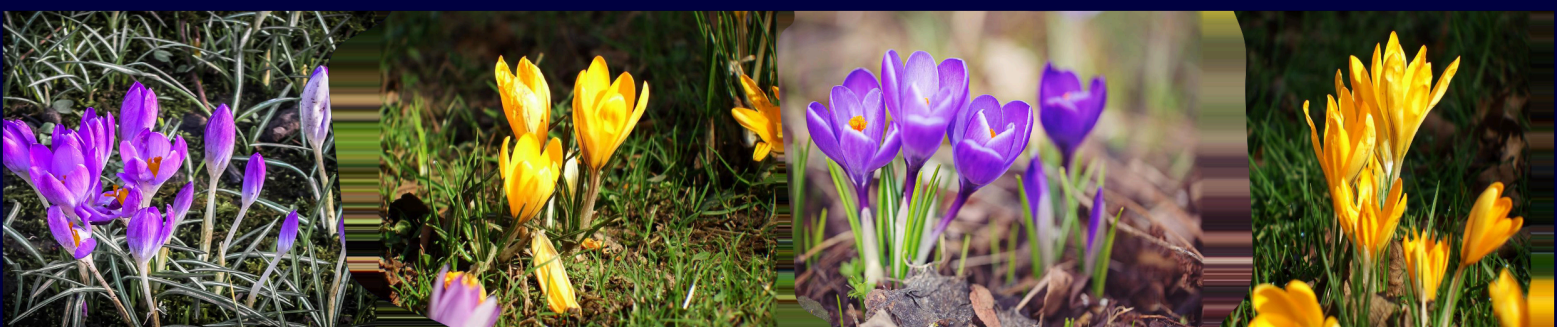
NEWS

INFORMATION

STORIES AND FEATURES

the Newsletter

the friends of roundhay park



spring 2024

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Kings Award for Voluntary Service for FoRP!



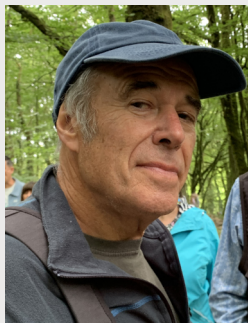
The Newsletter

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YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

We always welcome your comments, letters as well as longer contributions. We were aware that some readers found the font and coloured background made some parts of the last newsletter difficult to read. Sometimes this happens when the final copy is translated into print. We hope this newsletter will be easier on the eye. We are also interested to meet any members who are keen to contribute on a regular basis or who have desk top publishing skills and would like to get involved in the design. We always want and need your park photos. Send them to the editor please.

Chair's Report

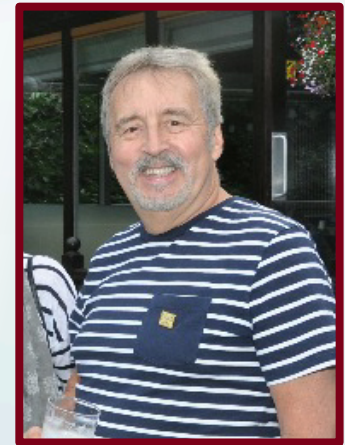
The 13th November 2023 and Monday 11th March this year were two very important and notable occasions in the thirty year history of the Friends of Roundhay Park.

The 13th November 2023 was the day that the King awarded his first Awards for Voluntary Service which included the 'Friends' and, on 11th March 2024, the Lord Lieutenant for West Yorkshire, Mr Ed Anderson, formally presented us with the framed scroll and a very heavy crystal glass memorial. The award, signed by the King, is given "for voluntary service by groups in the community" and it permits our use of the 'authorised emblem'.

The Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Anderson and Deputy Lieutenant Roohi Collins together with more than forty invited guests, sponsors and members of our working parties attended the ceremony which took place, appropriately, at the Mansion in the park. We are most grateful to Helen and Dan of 'Dine at the Mansion' for giving us the room and a most enjoyable buffet luncheon to follow. The Garden Café there is always worth a visit. The awards will be displayed at the Mansion. It was an exciting start to the year, recognising and supporting the work of our keen volunteers in such a prestigious way.

Meanwhile, the work of the Friends carries on unabated. Our volunteers will again be out in all weathers looking after the Friends Garden, the Sensory Garden, and litter picking, while the working parties continue clearing, planting, cleaning and numerous other tasks to help keep the park looking its best.

New initiatives have been introduced, addressing concerns about women's safety including the Bystander Training which



some of our members have attended and 'Switch on to Women's Safety' (for men), along with the introduction of the WalkSafe 'app' where Leeds City Council has partnered with the national project as part of their commitment to ending violence against women and girls. We also have our own successful local 'Mums Meander' led by Melody from Forest School, for a group of mothers to enjoy walks in the park after dark.

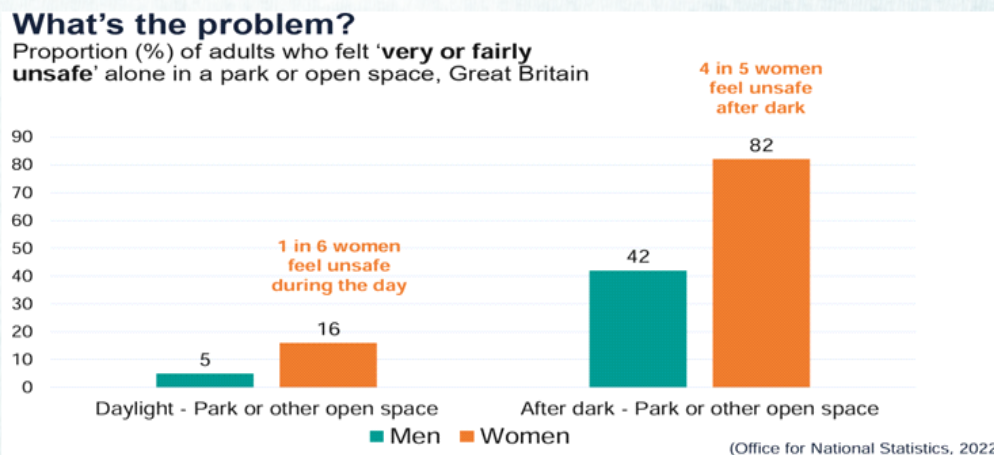
With all this in mind, we were extremely disappointed with the council's decision to approve parking charges at the various car parks within the park. This may not only deter some visitors from taking advantage of the many and various recreational and well-being opportunities that the park provides, but could well result in a problematic increase in car parking on the narrow streets nearby.

However, for now, the park has awakened from its winter slumbers and abounds with spring flowers. As trees will soon come into leaf and with the lighter nights the park's attractions are more accessible for longer. There is so much to see and enjoy. If you haven't visited recently, why not make time to come along and, to our regular visitors, we look forward to seeing you again this year.

Richard Critchley

Safety in Parks

At the FoRP open meeting on Wednesday 21st February we were pleased to welcome Dr Anna Barker, Associate Professor in Criminal Justice and Criminology from the University of Leeds who gave a presentation about her major piece of research into 'Safer Parks – improving access for women and girls'. Roundhay Park is Leeds biggest park with huge visitor numbers, and we want everyone to feel safe to enjoy the park. Unfortunately, across the country, it is clear that this is not always the case, especially for people on their own, and most particularly for women and girls. (See bar chart below). There is no reason to suppose Roundhay Park is any different. Indeed, given its size, this issue may be even more important.



Anna's research identified 49 factors that affected how safe women and girls feel in parks. These factors were turned in to statements, and the sample group of 117 women and girls were asked to rank these factors according to their importance to them. Many teenage girls felt that parks were not 'for them' and that equipment and facilities were used mainly by boys. Some women hadn't visited their local park due to safety fears; others scheduled their visits during busier times when they felt safer, such as during Park Run. The research was funded by the Mayor of Yorkshire and worked with Helen Forman (Urban Design Manager, West Yorkshire Combined Authority) and the Green Flag Award organisation.

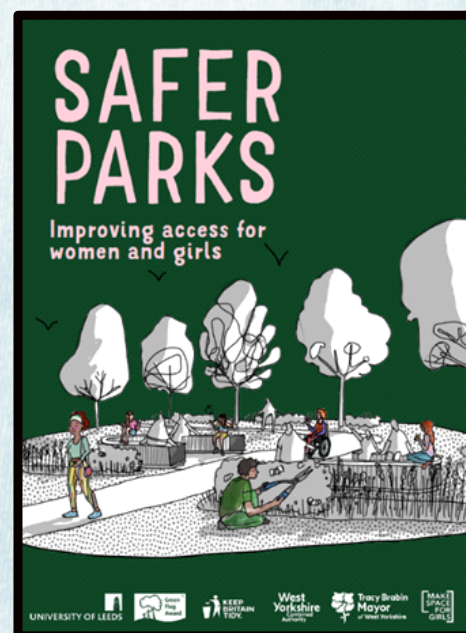
Anna's research revealed many important issues to be considered by park managers, designers and others. Among the factors helping women and girls to feel safe, are the presence of other people, visible staff, organised activities and facilities, good design and wayfinding, with thought given to signage, open space and lighting. Encouraging group activities is a good thing for feeling safe, and FoRP's own 'Mums Meander' walking groups introduced recently by our vice chair Sara Dawson is an excellent example.

Working with West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Keep Britain Tidy and Make Space for Girls, Anna used the findings to produce guidance on the design and management of parks. 'Safer Parks: Improving Access for Women and Girls' was published in May 2023.

The guidance has had significant impact locally, nationally and internationally. Its recommendations for active bystander training have been followed up with sessions where park 'friends' (including the Friends of Roundhay Park), staff and volunteers' groups attended. Feedback following the training indicated that participants are more likely to intervene when they see harassment in their local parks.

The research and guidance is a detailed and valuable piece of work, and we cannot really do it justice in this newsletter. If you want to find out more you can access Dr Barker's research via the following link <https://www.greenflagaward.org/resources-research/safer-parks-for-women-and-girls/safer-parks-for-women-and-girls/>

Our thanks go to Dr Anna Barker for this information.



Colourful Corvids in the Park

Once again our thanks are due to Dave Johnston for another great article about birds you can see in the park. Armed with his camera and binoculars, Dave is regularly on the lookout for interesting bird sightings. He has also taken these beautiful photographs.



Corvids are a group of birds of which five can be seen in the park - crows, rooks, jackdaws, magpies and jays.

Jays are now being seen regularly, and the first sight of them often surprises people: ("They are so colourful"). Crows, rooks and jackdaws are basically black. Magpies have long tails and are black and white, with blues and greens showing up in sunlight. Jays are pinkish with a white rump when flying, a black moustache and electric blue feathers on their wings. They are 32 to 35 cm. long with a wingspan of 50 cm. Males and females are identical.

The UK now has around 170,000 pairs of jays (an increase of 24% since 1995). Their main diet is acorns, followed by beech seeds, so the park provides an ideal habitat for them. Their Latin name is *Garrulus glandarius* (*Garrulus* for their screeching, raucous call, and *glandarius* for acorns).

Jays can be seen gathering acorns in the Autumn and burying collections of them. It is estimated that a jay may collect and bury up to 5,000 acorns each Autumn. A good place to see this is along the west side of Waterloo

Lake. They have good memories and slowly eat through their collection during Autumn, Winter and early Spring.

They mate for life, which is usually about 4 years, but may be up to 19 years. Nests are built in trees and bushes. They lay 4 to 5 eggs and incubate them for about 16 days. On hatching, they feed the young mainly on beetles and moths, which they catch among the leaves of oak and beech trees. The young can fly when they are 22 days old.

The adults will also feed on other birds' eggs and young. For this reason they were persecuted by landowners and gamekeepers from the late 1800s to the mid 1900s. Their blue wing feathers were also sought after for the hat trade in Edwardian times. Unlike birds of prey, they found it easier to hide in woods and were able to maintain a viable population. Today their numbers are slowly increasing. Birds from the park and surrounding countryside now frequently visit suburban gardens, where they particularly enjoy peanuts. A jay has been seen collecting 13 peanuts at once and flying away with them in its crop.

Jays have become good mimics. Some of our park birds have been heard mimicking red kites and common buzzards. It seems that the Roundhay Park jays, like the crows and magpies, are more tolerant of humans now, and do not hide in trees and bushes. So the next time you see an unfamiliar pink bird on your walks it might well be a jay.

Dave Johnston

John Wilkinson – The Blind Botanist

We are grateful to Cecily Jarvis and Helen Hodgart for sending us an article, passed to Helen by a friend, which comes from the local history section of Leeds Central Public Library. It tells the remarkable true story of John Wilkinson (1856-1937) who, with devoted support from his mother Theodosia, became a renowned botanist despite losing his sight, and is almost certainly responsible for part of the rich variety of trees that have been planted and established in Roundhay Park.

This article is based on one written by Jeanette Bolton of the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, whose curiosity was aroused by a reference to 'the Blind Botanist' on their website, and finding his family gravestone in the cemetery. Further research led to Jeanette learning a lot more about John Wilkinson (the Blind Botanist) and his equally remarkable mother, Theodosia, and to the article she wrote for the Leeds Libraries Heritage Blog – 'The Secret Library'.

John Wilkinson was born in 1856, the only child of Theodosia and George Wilkinson. Theodosia was the daughter of John Grimshaw and related to a number of gifted individuals in the arts and music, including the notable painter Atkinson Grimshaw, who was John's second cousin. George Wilkinson died when John was only ten, and became the first family member to be buried in Beckett Street Cemetery. Theodosia married again, to Thomas Crookshank a grocer, although they parted after a few years and Theodosia returned to using the name Wilkinson. John worked as a grocer during these early years, but as a hobby, he took up water colour painting, and by the time he reached the age of 20, he was producing beautiful paintings, showing great promise. One painting is believed to have been at Temple Newsam, but its whereabouts now is unknown. Trees and plants became prime subjects in his paintings.

When John was just 22 years old he tragically lost his sight following a serious illness. However, he was determined to find a way to use his other senses to enjoy the trees and plants he had come to love through his art. In this, he was fortunate to have his totally devoted mother as care-giver and support for the rest of her life. An article in the Yorkshire Evening Post of 14th August 1906 entitled 'The Blind Botanist – A Wonderful Leeds Scientist' contains quotes bearing testament to Theodosia's devotion, including the time after John lost his sight:

"He lost no time in ordering a set of the best standard authorities on botany. Hour after hour, day after day, year after year, his mother read to him their contents and he soon became so familiar with the construction and peculiarities of various trees and plants that in a very short time he could go into the fields with his mother as guide, and by touching and tasting could discriminate, not only between a Beech and Elm, but between the most minute of plants"

John's expertise, knowledge and skill developed to such an extent that he became President of the Leeds

Naturalists Club and Scientific Society in the early 1900s. The huge contribution made by Theodosia, who also pressed and mounted many of John's botanical specimens, was recognised when she was made an honorary member of the Society around 1906.

Theodosia died in 1907 and was buried with her first husband, John's father, George Wilkinson in Beckett Street cemetery.

John continued his work with great distinction and in 1915 was awarded an honorary MSc degree by the University of Leeds. During his lifetime he compiled many volumes of information about plants in Braille form. He died in 1937 and was laid to rest with his mother and father in the Beckett Street cemetery.

His cousin Percy H Grimshaw wrote an obituary in which he recalled that he *"...walked some hundreds of miles with him on botanical excursions between the years 1881 and 1893, and during that time, with a keen mutual interest in the British flora, enjoyed many a happy day, picking up specimens as they attracted his eye and handing them over to Wilkinson who examined them carefully with the tip of his tongue. On these occasions he also utilised to good purpose the associated senses of taste and smell."* It is highly likely that some of the abundance of beautiful trees and plants we now see in Roundhay Park is there thanks to John Wilkinson, the Blind Botanist and his remarkable mother.

This article gratefully acknowledges Jeanette Bolton of the Friends of the Beckett Street Cemetery, and The Secret Library/ Leeds Heritage Blog at Leeds Libraries (www.secretlibraryleeds.net).

Members may not be aware that Sir John Barran, (Mayor of Leeds), who fought successfully to make Roundhay Park open to the public in 1882 is also buried in Beckett Street Cemetery (right).





A Snapshot – just some our achievements

- Picked over 5000 bags of litter in 5 years
- Held more than 50 forest schools
- Created 4 adventure trails
- Built 2 playgrounds
- Renovated a shelter in Canal Gardens
- Hosted more than 200 working parties
- Grown our social media by 7,000 followers
- Helped many injured swans
- Sold 30,000 bags of duck food
- Created the Friends Garden and the Sensory Garden
- Launched a regular night walk for women



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Date as postmark

Dear Richard

I was delighted to learn that the Friends of Roundhay Park have been recently rewarded with the King's Award for Voluntary Service and send you my warmest congratulations.

Your friends and colleagues in the City of Leeds and beyond will, I am sure, share my great pleasure that the Friends of Roundhay Park services have been recognised.

Kind regards

LORD MAYOR OF LEEDS
COUNCILLOR AL GARTHWAITE

Royal Recognition for the Friends of Roundhay Park

In our last newsletter we were proud to announce that FoRP had received the King's Award for Voluntary Service. This high award is equivalent to an MBE for an individual. The formal presentation of the award took place on Monday 11th March in the Mansion at Roundhay Park. Sara Dawson, FoRP's vice chair, has provided this account of this great event.

We were delighted to officially receive the King's Award on Monday 11th March bestowed on our charity by King Charles III. The crystal award and signed certificate were presented to FoRP by Ed Anderson, Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire at a reception kindly hosted by Dine at the Mansion in the park.

Accepting the award on behalf of FoRP were those that worked on the application - our chair, Richard Critchley, secretary Carol Haughton, vice chair Sara Dawson, retired park manager of 20 years John Roebuck, FoRP treasurer Jeremy Stonehouse, and Lynda Kitchen from Love Leeds Parks.

The certificate signed by Charles III read:

“By the grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of our other realms and territories King defender of the faith bestow to the Friends of Roundhay Park the Kings Award for maintaining and enhancing Roundhay Park for the benefit of the community and the wider public.

We being cognisant of the said group's outstanding voluntary work in the community and being desirous of showing our royal favour do hereby confer upon it:

The Kings Award for Voluntary Service.”

The reception played host to 50 volunteers, including the working party leaders, the FoRP committee, and long term supporters including Mr Whippy, Leeds (Tracy and Ian), Scott Pullen from Scott Pullen Fairgrounds, Love Leeds Parks, Art Roundhay Park and Leeds City Council.

Vice chair Sara Dawson said: *“It is an incredible honour to receive this award. It is shared by each and every volunteer, from the volunteers who tirelessly manage our gardens, litter pick and keep our park clean, to the little FoRPer's who plant snowdrops and attend our forest schools and the teams that fund raise and work in the background keeping FoRP shipshape and working with stakeholders - this is testament to the work you do.*

This award recognises the power that can be achieved together working towards a common goal - to protect and preserve the park for the people of Leeds - just as John Barran hoped for 152 years ago.”

In the words of the writer and cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Sara Dawson

FoRP has been invited to send two representatives to a Buckingham Palace garden party in May



Spring in the Sensory Garden

The sensory garden team, led by Sarah Jackson and Lindsey Ward are back in action following a winter break, tending and enhancing the lovely garden they have created with the other volunteers in the corner of the walled garden in Canal Gardens. Unfortunately they are faced with an unwelcome problem, restricting their access to part of the garden. Thanks to Sarah and Lindsey for this update.



After several heavy digging sessions at the end of last year, we have enjoyed a well-earned rest over the Christmas period, although we did once again add Christmas decorations to an obelisk in one of the raised beds and a Santa hat to the tree fern.

Our focus now is on planning for the next few months in the garden, including investigating and installing new plant labels and signage as many of the original black plant labels have gone missing and the wooden signs have deteriorated in the very wet weather.

Having buried a special barrier material around the black bamboos last autumn in order to restrict their growth, we plan to purchase some evergreen plants to compliment the bamboo whilst masking the top 10cm of the barrier fabric. It is necessary to leave the fabric protruding but, although practical, it is quite unsightly.

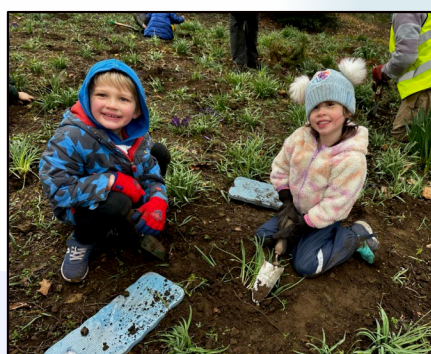
We recently gave a presentation about the sensory garden to a local ladies group, when we took various 'exhibits' to share and illustrate our talk, namely herbs, seeds, willow weaving and jam made using the fruit we have harvested. Some of our audience are unable to visit the garden so we wanted to take

the sights and smells of the garden to them.

Some of you may have noticed the hole which has appeared in the wall between the sensory garden and the rainbow garden. Initially 3 bricks had fallen from the wall behind the fruit bushes in January. The estates manager and his team inspected the wall and removed further loose bricks, then a couple of weeks after that a hole appeared in the wall. Although the wall's foundations had previously been assessed as 'sound' when we first expressed concern two years ago, it would appear that age and the wet and windy weather has finally taken its toll.

A surveyor has been out to inspect the wall and will submit proposals and costings to the estates manager for consideration. The characterful red brick walls are the historic backbone of the garden and, although not listed structures, we hope to see them restored if at all possible. Sadly, it has now been necessary to fence off this section of the garden to keep all visitors away. Due to the risk of further falling masonry at this time we shall only be able to maintain the other half of the garden until the issue is resolved.

Sarah Jackson and Lindsey Ward



Little FoRP making the park beautiful

On Saturday 9th March there was a great turn-out for a family-friendly FoRP working party. Enthusiastic little FoRPs came along for the session, where we proved that many (little) hands do indeed make light work, completing the considerable task of planting 1000 snowdrop bulbs in record time while having fun finding worms in the process.

Our thanks go to Tom Cooper and Sara Dawson for organising the event.

Litter Picking and Water Monitoring Report

As if he didn't already have enough to do leading FoRP's litter picking efforts, Martin Child and his wife, Heather, now carry out regular water monitoring checks as part of the international project 'FreshWater Watch'. Somehow Martin found time to provide this update. Thanks Martin!

Our monthly litter picking sessions continue as usual with many of our volunteers doing regular solo sessions as well. They continue to make a very significant impact on the park and surrounding areas. Thank you all.

The water monitoring project is establishing very well. All the major inflows into the park are being monitored on a monthly basis for the presence of phosphates and nitrates as are some other sites around Waterloo Lake and Wyke Beck. We may soon be increasing the testing at some sites to assess if runoff from roads is having an effect in the park. It's still early days but the test results are looking encouraging. I will keep you updated as we go forward with this.

A useful side effect was demonstrated recently when a water tester saw a heavy piece of gym equipment had been fly tipped into Fox Beck. She notified me and I was able to arrange for it to be removed within 24 hours.

Heather and I attended an excellent seminar/workshop at Leeds University on the subject of citizen scientists and how they can operate and be supported by academics and appropriate institutions. There were representatives from the Environment Agency, Aire River Trust, Yorkshire Water, the REAP water monitoring team and others. A very useful and stimulating session.

Martin Child

(Heather with the unwanted gym kit - right)



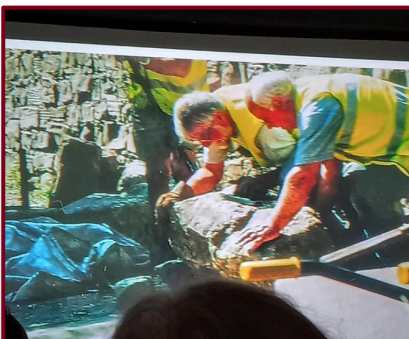
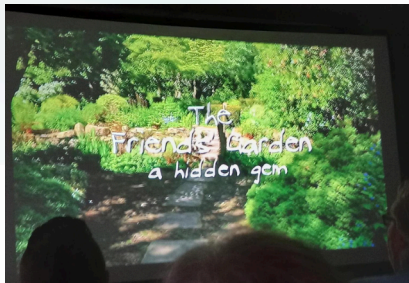
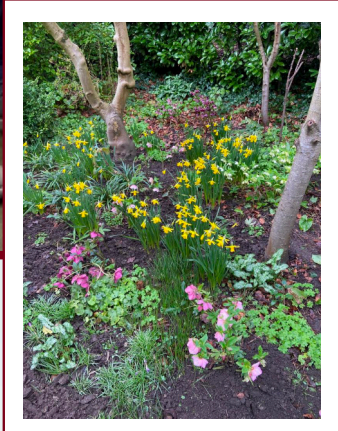
Birdlife Extra

Our ever-observant bird correspondent, Dave Johnston, got in touch with the news that on the morning of 20th March a group of 33 whooper swans turned up on Waterloo Lake. We rarely see whooper swans in Roundhay Park, especially in such numbers. They can be distinguished from the mute swans that are ever present by their yellow bills. Sadly this large group did not stay long, but keep a look out for any swans with a yellow bill in future.



Springtime in the Friends Garden

FoRP is rightly proud of the beautiful Friends Garden, nestling in a peaceful part of Canal Gardens by the Old Park Road entrance. This lovely garden really is 'all our own work' from initial concept to its current splendour. Our current team of FoRP volunteers, led by Janet Wilkinson, continue to do a fantastic job in maintaining and developing the garden. Janet has provided this update.



On Thursday 1st February, at the Parochial Hall, the Oakwood Film Academy showed the film made in the Friends Garden featuring the FoRP volunteers who designed and created it, starting work in 2004. I am sure that those of you who were fortunate enough to see the film will join me in thanking the members of FoRP who were involved in the original design and development of the Friends Garden. I don't think I had really appreciated the amount of hard work that was required and as a volunteer regularly working in the garden it made me realise it is not only a privilege, but also a big responsibility to continue to maintain and hopefully build on all that hard work.

Fortunately we continue to have a dedicated group of volunteers who love and care for the garden come rain or shine. It is with these thoughts

in mind that we started our new gardening year. We did have a break during December and January, but we are now back tidying the garden in readiness for its Spring show of hellebores, snowdrops and daffodils.

This year we will look to further develop the flower garden which is on the right as you enter from Old Park Road. We carried out lots of work last year to develop this part of the Friends Garden and it proved to be a great success. We did move a few plants around in the Autumn and we are planning some further planting to ensure there is plenty of colour through Summer into Autumn. There is also further work required on the pond we started last year to soften the edges so it fits seamlessly into the garden.

Janet Wilkinson



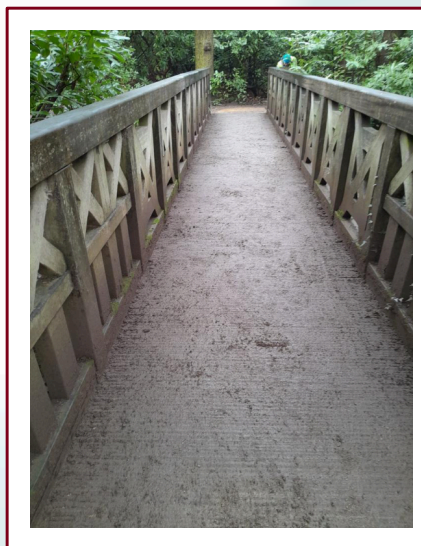
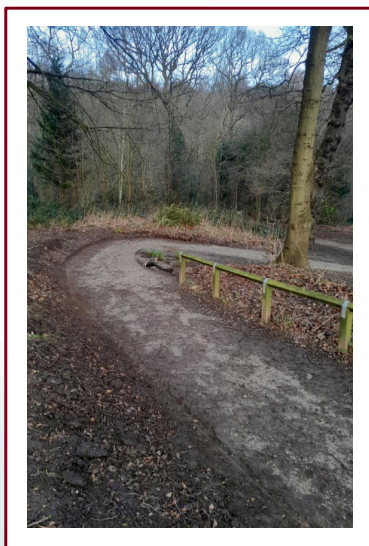
There's always work for FoRP Working Parties

It cannot have escaped your notice that this has been an exceptionally wet Spring, but the gallant volunteers who make up the working parties, led by Ian Nicholson keep up their great work whenever they can. As you might expect, there has been quite a bit of mud involved! We thank Ian for providing this information and the photographs.

In the early part of this year we had 3 working parties. In January, Martin and Heather Childs reported to us that the grids were blocked above the upper lake. Martin and Heather had already removed some of the larger logs and we removed the rest. The rest of the session we cleared saplings and pendulous sedge from the edge of the lake.

The next session we finished the clearing and removed a large tree branch from the lake. The serpentine path was our next area of concern. We cleared the edges and tried to re-instate the path edges along with moving pendulous sedge to try and stabilise the slope next to the path. This work continued on the first session of February. We worked our way down the path to the bridge across the gorge, clearing the path and shovelling mud off the bridge.

Ian Nicholson



Car Parking Charges

Most members will have heard by now of council plans to introduce charging for car parking at Roundhay Park. Despite strong opposition in the public consultation which closed on 21st January, the council has announced their decision to 'support the principle of modest car park charges'. (Middleton Park and Temple Newsam are also affected). Any proposed charges at Roundhay Park are subject to a legal process to enable them to be enforced, so are not final, and although the public consultation process closed on 21st January there will be a further opportunity to provide comments on the proposal through the separate consultation exercise that will be conducted in connection with the legal process. However, it now seems almost certain that charges will be introduced. These will apply to the car parks along Mansion Lane and by the Upper Lake, Wetherby Road, the Lakeside, including part of Park Avenue, the 'Tram Stop', and Roundhay Golf Club (Park Lane). The Oakwood Clock car park would not be included, as it is considered to serve the shops and businesses of Oakwood. However, a two hour waiting limit is likely to be imposed. The charges, applicable from 8am to 8pm are likely to be:

- £1 up to 2 hours
- £2.50 for half a day
- £4 for a full day
- Season ticket: £10 per month or £80 per annum

Consideration is being given to the enabling any season ticket to be used across all of the parks that will levy a charge, which may ease some concerns. You can access the council's recent decision documents at this web address: <https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=57267>

Address label

FoRP AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Roundhay Park will be held on Tuesday 11th June 2024 at 7pm in the Ann Maguire Education Centre by the Mansion. All members are welcome. (Please note the new date for this meeting (has been changed since the last newsletter).

If this newsletter reaches you before the end of the Easter school holidays....

FoRP has partnered with CatCat Events to host a FREE Easter Egg hunt in Roundhay Park. All you have to do is go for a stroll and look out for the decorated eggs around the park.

There are 15 to find! If you find a golden egg post photos of the egg on social media tagging us and @CatCat_Events and you will be entered into a draw to win a giant chocolate egg.

The map is available using the QR code you can find on FoRP's Facebook page.

