



WINTER 2024

THE NEWSLETTER

The Friends of Roundhay Park

Chairperson: Richard Critchley
Friends of Roundhay Park
PO Box 129
Leeds LS8 1WY
Website: www.forp.org
Email: editor@forp.org
secretary@forp.org



The King's Award for
Voluntary Service

Up, Up and Away - Historic Balloon Flight from Roundhay Park

In our Summer 2024 newsletter we reported on a visit and presentation by FoRP to the Southlands Retirement Apartments in Roundhay. This brought back many memories of the park for the residents, and we are most grateful to Patrick Riley, one of the residents, who has provided his own special memory of an unusual event in Roundhay Park. Patrick writes:

My wife and I, together with a group of fellow residents here at Southlands, were entertained recently when we were given a wonderful illustrated talk about the park's history. Carol Haughton and friends gave us a splendid picture of the park's history and features; we also learned about many of the remarkable and exciting events that have taken place there over many years.

As a former student at Leeds University in the 1960's and, subsequently, long time resident in North Leeds and Oakwood, I was surprised to learn many new facts about the park. I had known of Robert Blackburn and his company building aircraft locally at their Roundhay Road Olympia Works. However, the flight testing of those aircraft on Soldiers Field was something I was not aware of.

It was that fact which prompted me to recollect another event from the 1960's involving a remarkable flight at Roundhay Park. In 1963 I was involved with many other students in preparing for our annual Rag Week. Another student, Mike Gonzalez, I think it was, had

the idea of inviting a balloonist to put on a display in the park. Arranging the whole affair took many weeks of negotiation and careful consideration of the many safety issues which could arise.

The people who were eventually commissioned to put on the show were Jo and Nina Boseman. They were two of the leading balloonists of their day and recognised as the ones best able to deal with a dangerous hydrogen gas filled balloon! I had no knowledge then of the type of balloon or its specification but recent research has revealed some relevant facts. The lighter than air flying machine was, I'm certain, the same as the one described here. G-AVAT, was an orange and silver Van den Bemden hydrogen gas balloon called 'Jambo' (Swahili for 'hello'). Records show that it was wrecked shortly after landing at Halland, East Sussex on 20 July 1968. Earlier in its career 'Jambo' had achieved fame when it was flown by the sometime science correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, Anthony Smith. However his problem at first was that he wasn't a licensed balloon pilot. In 1962 the UK had almost forgotten about lighter than air flying machines and the regulations governing their operation had been gathering dust since before WW2. Thus there was nowhere in the UK that he could train as a balloon

pilot and the UK authorities could not, or would not, issue him with the necessary license. Nor, at that time, was anyone in the UK manufacturing balloons.

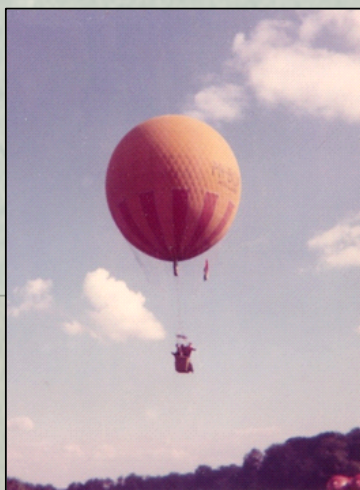
Undeterred, Smith crossed the Channel and placed an order in Holland with Albert van den Bemden for a gas balloon. Whilst there, he was able to undergo balloon flying training with experienced balloonists, Jo and Nina Boseman. Thus equipped with a balloon and having been trained to fly it, in 1963 he, Douglas Botting (cameraman) and Alan Root (film producer) set off for Africa with plans to journey across the continent. They started from Zanzibar and flew the balloon across the Zanzibar Channel to the African mainland, where they made a number of flights across the African plains. This adventure was recorded by Smith in his book 'Throw Out Two Hands'. Sources: <https://asn.flightsafety.org/wikibase/282780>

I was fortunate to have a camera on Rag Day and below is the one image I managed to capture late in that day in 1963 as the Bosemans took off from the park in their bright orange balloon!

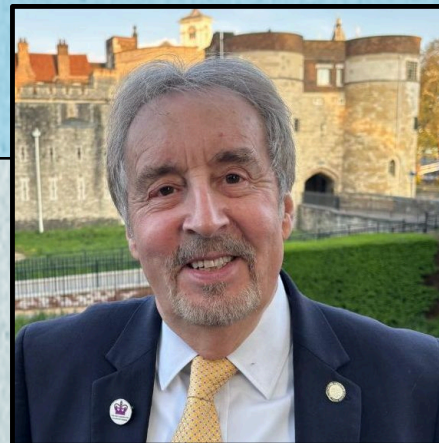
It was the culmination of a wonderful day of events which had been preceded by the Rag Parade and just two other of the snaps I took on the day have somehow survived many moves of home since then.

All of us here at Southlands want to say a big thank you to Carol and other Friends for such an entertaining presentation. Maybe these notes might even be added to your catalogue of stories about our great park

Patrick Riley



CHAIR'S LETTER



As we come to the end of yet another year, it is an opportunity to review the life of the park and of our involvements in it. 2024 has been a busy and eventful year for our willing and industrious teams of volunteers who achieve so much and make major contributions to the appearance of the park and the facilities available to visitors, supporting the work of the loyal but much depleted council workforce.

Among our many involvements and achievements are the improvements in the area around the new tree carvings in Dingle Dell including improved access. We also helped in the installation of the new Yorkshire Air Ambulance garden and surroundings in the approach to the Specialist Gardens. Improvements have been made to the Sensory Garden, although a large area is cordoned off due to the danger of falling masonry from one of the original garden walls. Work to repair the wall and the shelter in Canal Gardens is now underway. Meanwhile further improvements have been made to the appearance of our own 'Friends Garden' most recently, the installation of a new extended pond paid for by a bequest left by a former member.

The keen and hard-working members of the working parties are busy throughout the year cleaning, repairing, improving, installing and planting in various areas across the park making a special and important contribution to its appearance. Our litter pickers continue to meet regularly to patrol across the park, collecting and removing the vast amounts of litter and more unpleasant items left behind by some of the more careless visitors.

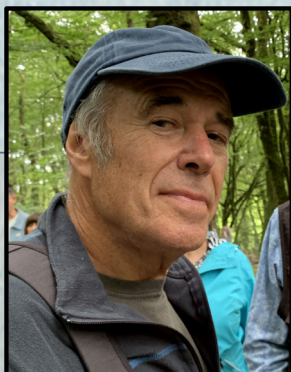
Behind the scenes, ensuring that the work of the Friends of Roundhay Park is properly reported, governed and managed are Carol and Peter Stagg who edit and produce this magazine and Jeremy Stonehouse, our Treasurer. Jeremy has done much to improve our finances and financial controls as well as getting involved with many of the projects undertaken by the various working parties and recently refreshing our website to bring it up to date and make it more attractive (please visit: www.forp.org). Overseeing all our work and facilitating a wide range of projects is our Secretary, Carol Haughton.

I would also like to thank the many other individuals and organisations who loyally support the Friends in differing ways. All help is greatly appreciated and welcome.

Some other ongoing matters that we support include an application to Leeds City Council to restore and change the use of the old toilet block opposite the Roundhay Fox, as well as proposals to restore and bring back into use the lodges at the park entrance on Wetherby Road. A less welcome decision by the council is the introduction of car parking charges at Roundhay and the other major parks across Leeds.

Finally, it is important to say a special thank you to you, our members, families and friends whose continued support allows us to carry out our work. Without your support we could not exist. In closing, on behalf of your committee, volunteers, helpers and advisors may we wish you all a most peaceful and joyous Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Richard Critchley



The Newsletter

the friends of roundhay park

EDITOR : Peter Stagg

ARTWORK: Carol Stagg

Chairperson: Richard Critchley
Friends of Roundhay Park
PO Box 129
Leeds LS8 1WY
Website: www.forp.org
Email: editor@forp.org
secretary@forp.org

A Rare Bird Flies into the Park



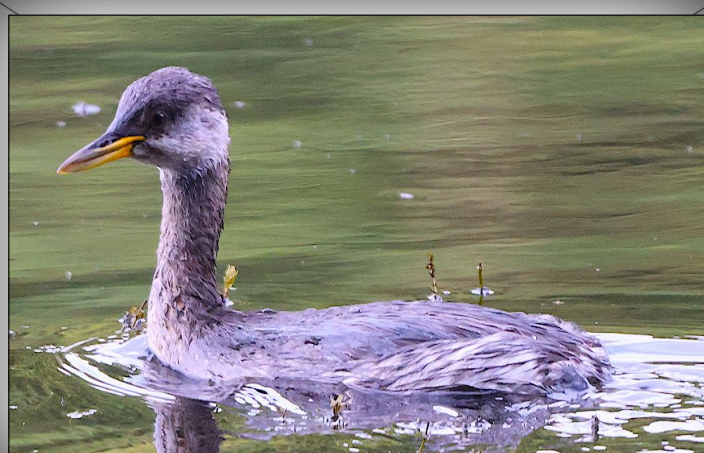
Our regular bird correspondent, Dave Johnston, is always quick to spot any unusual feathered visitors to the park. This Autumn brought something really special, which attracted a lot of interest from regular and casual observers

A red necked grebe appeared on Waterloo Lake early in October and stayed most of the month. This is only the second time that this species of grebe has been seen in the Park. The other time was in 1996. It created quite a stir in the birding world, with many birdwatchers and photographers visiting the lake to see it. One birder from Manchester read about it while on holiday in Majorca. He landed at Manchester airport at the end of his holiday, picked up his car from the car park and drove straight to Leeds to see it. It was that important to him!

Red necked grebes are usually seen in central and eastern Europe, where they breed. In the Autumn and Winter between

50 and 60 fly west to the east coast of Scotland and England. Now and then one or two are blown inland to lakes and reservoirs. They are around 43 cm long, smaller and stockier than great crested grebes (48 cm), which are often seen on the lake, and much bigger than our resident little grebes (26 cm long).

The Roundhay red necked grebe was in winter plumage, so it was lacking the spectacular red neck which it would have in Spring or Summer. It had pale cheeks and a dark neck with just a few red/brown feathers remaining. They have a yellow colouring on the beak, which is not seen on great crested grebes.



Like our other two grebes it is a diving bird, feeding on fish, crustaceans and aquatic insects. There are rumours that one or two pairs of red necked grebes stay in the UK to breed in the Spring, but their locations are very secret indeed.

The red necked grebe may have gone, but three of our regular overwintering ducks had returned to the park by the end of October: gadwall, wigeon and goosander. Keep an eye out for other less familiar ducks this winter, like goldeneye and pochard, as well as the overwintering finches and thrushes.

Dave Johnston

(On 12th November, Dave reported seeing 33 pairs of wigeon on the Upper Lake - a new record for him)

Orienteering in the Park

A note from David Williams, who is leading work to reinstate orienteering in Roundhay Park.

The FoRP working parties co-ordinated by Ian Nicholson are assisting local orienteering club 'Airienteers' in reinstating a permanent orienteering course within the park. A course of 25 marker points was originally set up in the 1980s and while a handful of those marker posts remain, the course over time has fallen into disrepair. Therefore a few years ago the club removed it from their website.

The club has recently sought to renew and reopen courses in the Leeds/Bradford area over the last few years, with courses at Becketts Park, Armley/Gotts Park and Bramley Fall Woods all completed. We hope the installation project goes as planned and we will be able to give a fuller announcement and details in the Spring newsletter.

David Williams
Airienteers Orienteering Club



Martin Child leads FoRP's regular group litter picking sessions – a task that (sadly) is never ending. It has become a tradition that the December session ends with the group of volunteers sharing some festive refreshments. Usually they would be huddled in a group warming their hands on cups of coffee while the December winds blow around them. This year, however, thanks to a new partnership forming with the Manor House care home on Park Avenue, they were invited to refreshments there in considerably greater comfort - richly deserved after all their hard work over the years. Martin provided these reports.

Keeping it Clean – On Land, and in the Water

Litter picking sessions have continued as normal during the autumn, with good numbers turning out and lots of litter collected. Even the weather has been reasonably kind most of the time. Our traditionally festive December session was slightly different this year. The new Anchor care home, The Manor House on Park Avenue offered to host our session. They already have some residents who are interested in the work of FoRP, with some wanting to have a go at litter picking locally. The event was very successful and well attended and we look forward to possibly working with some residents in the New Year. Thanks to Chloe Oliver and all the Manor House staff for their support.



Martin Child with Chloe Oliver



A rare luxury for litter pickers.

Water Monitoring

Not content with just leading on litter picking, the indefatigable Martin also leads for FoRP on a water monitoring project (a local part of the international Fresh Water Watch project). Here is his update.

Water monitoring completed a full year in November. We have collected a significant amount of information over the past 12 months and the challenge now is to begin putting it together in an accessible format and making it readily available. This work is ongoing. We would very much like to continue this project next year. REAP provided much of the funding for the first year and FoRP have agreed to fund the new water testing kits for 2025. This is great news and allows this very worthwhile project to continue so that we can build a very useful database.

Martin Child

St Andrew's Charity Christmas Tree Festival

For some years St Andrew's Church in Roundhay has run a Christmas Tree Festival, where participants sponsor and decorate a tree. They produce a brochure and publicise the festival around the area to encourage visitors to come along to see all the decorated trees, and take part in a great festive community event. In 2023, FoRP sponsored a tree for the first time and the decorations were created and hung by the Sensory Garden team and Little Friends. FoRP also donated an A4 print of a map of Roundhay Park for the raffle.

We were delighted to be invited to take part in this lovely community event again in 2024. Our Little Friends and Sensory Garden team once again, joined forces to decorate our tree. The festival took place from 9-14th December. All trees had to be decorated and lit by the sponsors and St Andrew's set aside times at the beginning of December for sponsors to decorate the trees. The theme suggested for

decorations this year was 'stars', but sponsors were free to develop their own theme if they chose.

The church was open for viewing of the trees each day and offered home-made soup, cakes, drinks and Christmas cheer. In the afternoons people could view the trees to the accompaniment of music offered in a 'Palm Court' style. On the Saturday there was a Family Fun Day, which proved extremely popular.

More than 1000 people visited during the 2023 Christmas Tree Festival with all the profits going to the St Andrew's Roundhay Christmas Charities. Last year's festival raised over £13,000

FoRP was proud to sponsor a tree for the festival once again in 2024. The money raised by the event is to be shared between 3 charities - Kidz Club Leeds, the Sylvia Wright Trust and Commitment for Life.



We have high hopes that our contribution will have helped St Andrew's beat last year's total collection for their chosen charities.

The Wings of Change

We are grateful to FoRP member Lucy Evans who sent us a lovely little poem from almost 200 years ago which suggests there have been big changes in the behaviour of one of our common birds. Thank you, Lucy.

As you walk across Soldiers Field you are very likely to see quite large flocks of black headed gulls on the ground, perhaps taking a break from squabbling over the duck food down at Waterloo Lake. Readers of a certain age probably grew up calling these birds 'seagulls', although it seems many of these spend their lives nowhere near the sea. However, 200 years ago, things may have been very different. Lucy Evans sent a lovely poem to the editors, which certainly suggests things were different then.



The poem was written by T S Bristow and appeared in the Odd Fellows' Magazine of the Manchester Unity

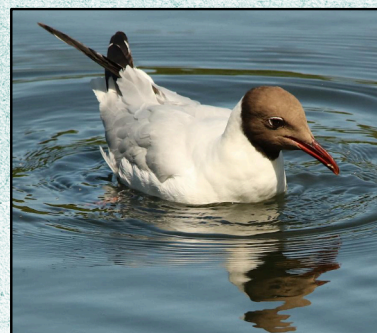
of the Independent Order (Vol VI:

Jan 1840 – Oct 1841). It refers to a sighting by the poet in 1826 which inspired him to write the poem, an extract of which is shown below. (The historical location of fish ponds in Roundhay Park is still not entirely clear).

On seeing a tame Sea Gull on the Fish Pond at Roundhay Park

*Poor widow'd solitary bird
Hast thou this rural spot preferr'd
To thy own native shore
And dost thou here contented stay
When kindred friends are far away
Where ocean's surges roar*

T S Bristow



(Photos by Dave Johnston. It is thought that seaside birds like this may have been driven inland during the mini ice age in the late 19th century)



As another winter arrived, Sarah Jackson, Lyndsey Ward and the Sensory Garden team have worked hard to ensure that the garden is well prepared to get through the colder months. They also got into the festive spirit, creating FoRP's contribution to the St Andrew's Church Christmas tree festival. Our thanks go out to Sarah, Lyndsey and the team.



Seasonal Greetings from the Sensory Garden



We have been busy in the garden every week with routine tidying up with only one session cancelled due to poor weather, which has made a welcome change from previous winters! Some of you may have noticed the new brass King's Award and Bee Friendly Award plaques have now been added to the information boards in both the Sensory Garden and the Friends' Garden.

As the colder months approach it's time to prepare our tree fern for winter to ensure it stays healthy and vibrant. Tree ferns can be sensitive to cold, especially in areas where frost is common. The trunk has been wrapped in layers of horticultural fleece to prevent frost damage. Straw has been packed into the central crown from where the fern's fronds grow and has been secured with twine and fleece. This keeps cold air from seeping in and affecting growth. Finally, the whole tree fern has been wrapped in its own duffle coat created out of old coffee bean sacks purchased from Horticap, a charity based in Harrogate which provides training in horticulture, allied crafts and rural skills for adults with learning and other disabilities.

In September, work started on repairing the wall between the Sensory Garden and the Rainbow Garden. The construction team has carefully restored most of the brickwork using reclaimed bricks, maintaining its unique aesthetic and ensuring it stands strong for years to come. Unfortunately, once the large coping stones on top of the wall were removed it became apparent that additional courses of bricks needed to be replaced in places. At the time of writing, the park's estates manager is awaiting authority to instruct the

contractors to proceed with the necessary remaining repairs.

We have once again trimmed a Christmas tree as part of St Andrew's Church Christmas tree festival, this year creating decorations made out of litter to represent the work of FoRP's litter picking team. Hopefully many of you will have been able to visit the trail, I wonder if you were able to identify what items of rubbish were used to create the different decorations?

Sarah Jackson and Lindsey Ward



Preserved on Film -

Roundhay Park Features in Leeds Heritage Open Days

On 7th September, as part of Leeds Heritage Open Days, four short films made by the Oakwood Film Academy were shown at the Ann Maguire Education Room by the Mansion. FoRP and the local film makers worked together to organise this well attended event. The four films, each lasting about 20 minutes covered:

- The History of Roundhay Park
- The Friends Garden – a documentary showing how, over a number of years, a dedicated group of FoRP volunteers created this hidden gem of a garden from a derelict area at the back of Canal Gardens alongside Old Park Road. This garden has achieved the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Britain in Bloom' Platinum Award, its top rating
- The Man at the Clock – a heart-warming story of a lonely old widower who sits every day under the Oakwood Clock, and finally forms a transformative friendship with a teenage girl
- The Making of the Man at the Clock – made for under £200, showing how the film was scripted, shot and edited, with brief interviews with those involved including the actors who gave their service.
- After the film about the Friends Garden, there were opportunities for the audience to ask questions of some the creators and current FoRP volunteers who care for the garden today (David Binns, Judith Rosenberg, Cecily Jarvis, Janet Wilkinson, with Carol Haughton representing FoRP). The members of the Oakwood Film Academy setting up the films were Johnny Edmonds, Paul Harker, Roger McNally, David Sellers, Elle Stewart and David Barnard.

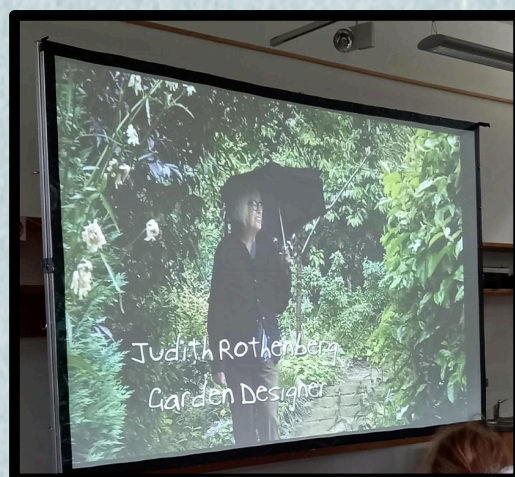
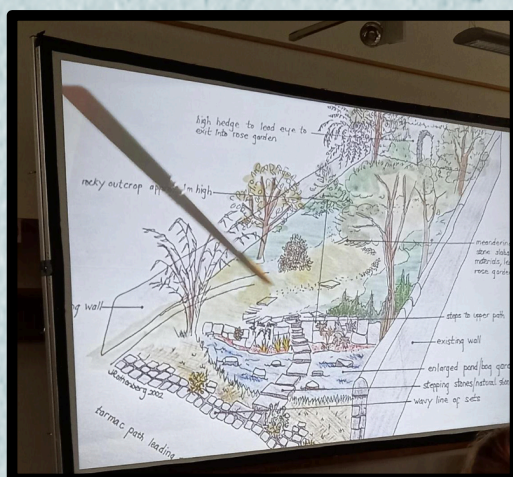
Cecily, one of the current gardeners said "It was really encouraging to hear such positive comments from the audience. Sometimes you get used to things, and forget how important they are to others"

Judith Rosenberg, one of the garden designers, gardener and major contributor to the making of the film with the Oakwood Film Academy said "I was more amazed than proud. Everyone had a part in the garden and the film"

David Barnard of the Oakwood Film Academy thanked FoRP for helping to make the event so successful. (The Oakwood Film Academy is a non-profit making group which meets at Oakwood Parochial Hall on Thursday evenings with a view to making short films about local activities and stories. For further details visit www.oakwoodfilmacademy.org)



Carol, Janet, Judith and Cecily at the film showing.
(Below, left - Judith's design for the Friends Garden)



Changing Seasons in the Award-winning Friends Garden

As we reached the end of another year in the Friends Garden there was still a lot going on with our thoughts turning to 2025. The volunteers have been busy with lots of planting that should add to the winter, spring and summer flowering displays. A number of hellebores have been planted which should flower in winter and early spring. Lots of spring flowering bulbs have been planted and, for flowers from late spring into summer, we have planted foxgloves and a range of new plants in the area at the top of the garden which is surrounded by the low hedge.

One of our volunteers, Cecily Jarvis, had been looking at what could be done to reintroduce water into the garden. An estimate was obtained for the renovation of the Friends Garden pond which had slowly

disappeared since the main canal in Canal Gardens began to leak despite the best efforts of Ian Nicholson and others to rescue the situation. This work was agreed and work commenced on 2nd December. We looked forward to seeing a flourishing pond as we move through winter to next spring.

Work is also planned to improve the appearance of the bridge in the garden. Whilst structurally safe, it has been decided that work will be carried out to improve the look of the bridge by replacing the handrails which are showing some signs of rot on the edges of the rails.

Janet Wilkinson

The dedicated band of FoRP volunteers, led by Janet Wilkinson, who look after the Friends Garden never cease their efforts to improve the garden so it looks beautiful all the year round. Here, Janet reports on some of their recent work. Thank you to all the volunteers! Do be sure to visit this most tranquil spot next to Roundhay Park.



The Pond – with Water

In grateful memory of Ted Donovan

For some time FoRP has been trying to solve the problem of water leaking out of the little pond in the Friends Garden. Now, at last, we believe the problem is solved. Thanks to a legacy of £2000 left to FoRP by the late Ted Donovan we have been able to fund a more thorough repair. Lynda Kitching knew Ted, who had been an English teacher in two Leeds schools. He loved Roundhay Park and was a frequent visitor, also attending many of the talks organised by Lynda. Thanks to Ted's generous legacy the work has gone ahead. For this, we also have to thank Simon and Josh for getting their boots muddy. They have every reason to look very happy with the results of their labours.



Getting their hands dirty – FoRP working parties



No job is too dirty for our stalwart working parties led by Ian Nicholson. As Ian reports, they really got stuck in during the Autumn. It's easy to say 'someone's got to do it' – but without FoRP, represented by Ian and his great team, this kind of work wouldn't get done. Huge thanks to all the volunteers who turned out.

The 24th of October saw the WP tackling the big job of clearing soil, grass and weeds from the steps on hill 60, from the old tram stop down to the cricket oval. This was hard work but the results made it worthwhile. We then stopped for tea and biscuits (essential) sat on the steps in front of the cricket pavilion. We had intended to stop work, but somebody mentioned that they needed to fill another half hour. Well, an hour later the seating in front of the pavilion were (almost) weed-free.

The last working party took us to the grids on Waterloo Lake which we think had not been touched for at least 5 years. This was a filthy, smelly job but Ian, George, Tom, Robin and Nick attacked it with gusto. Too much gusto in Ian's case as he ended up nearly losing a welly. The results were clear to see though, as we watched water flowing into the lake.

Our next big project for the new year is to help David Williams reinstate the orienteering trail.

Ian Nicholson



Reflection and Remembrance – YAA Garden

In our Summer 2024 issue we reported on the creation of the Yorkshire Air Ambulance garden of 'Reflection and Remembrance' located in the Specialist Gardens. Further work by FoRP working parties and by Nick Fryer's landscaping team has enhanced this peaceful space. The beds have been tidied and planted with a variety of shrubs and other plants and the paths around the garden have been completed. We look forward to seeing this through its first Spring an Summer in 2025.



Congratulations to Lynda Kitching – Recognition for so much good work



Lynda Kitching has been a friend and active supporter of FoRP for many years, organising events and making things happen. She also has a leading role in a number of other voluntary activities and is now vice president of the Leeds Civic Trust. So we were delighted to hear that Lynda's work has been recognised through a new sculpture – 'Ribbons' – that has been located at Quarry Hill. The 4 metre high sculpture consists of five intertwining steel ribbons with the names of 383 inspirational Leeds women cut into it. Lynda's name is there. The sculpture was unveiled on 11th October by another notable Leeds woman, Rachel Reeves MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Thank you Lynda, for your huge contribution, not just to FoRP, but to so many other activities in Leeds.

Photo: Outlook - Leeds Civic Trust Newsletter
November 2024

Hesco Lounge Support for Roundhay Park

October 2024 saw the opening of Hesco Lounge on Street Lane in Roundhay. Hesco Lounges are committed to local community engagement wherever they operate, and FoRP was delighted when they offered to give support to us. Their first offer was to donate 20p per coffee and 50p per burger sold throughout the first month of trading. Just before going to print, we heard the great news that Hesco Lounge had raised £862.90 in this way which they are donating to FoRP. Thank you, Hesco Lounge!

The aim is to maintain our links with Hesco Lounge, and they have offered us space for future meetings or fundraisers.



Roundhay Park Calendars 2025

Once again the English Art Company has produced a calendar for the New Year with beautiful photographs of our park looking its best. These are available for sale at the English Art Company shop beside the Mansion priced at £12.50, with a donation going to FoRP for each calendar sold. So don't miss out – 2025 is coming!



ADDRESS



*Seasons Greetings
to all the
Friends of
Roundhay Park*