

# the Newsletter

summer 2024

the friends of roundhay park

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The King's Award for  
Voluntary Service



# CHAIR'S LETTER

Summer came somewhat belatedly this year, but the park was ready and responded as usual.

The many attractions and sights recently installed include the new Sculpture Trail featuring eight wood carvings depicting the varied wildlife native to the park. The trail runs alongside the footpaths through Ram Wood, along the edge of the upper lake and on to the Castle Folly, directing visitors to the recently restored wildlife meadows. Please see the full article later in the newsletter.

The Yorkshire Air Ambulance Service garden which was created as a memorial for display at the Great Yorkshire Show has now been installed along the path on the approach to the Specialist Gardens off Mansion Lane. The Yorkshire Show display has been enhanced and improved and the fresh site is complete and ready for visitors to appreciate.

The gate and steps entrance to Dingle Dell have been repaired and re-opened. The sixteen tennis courts opposite the park gates are to be improved, resurfaced and fenced. The work will be financed by the Lawn Tennis Association.

But naturally, all is not good news. The council have now confirmed that car parking charges will be introduced at a number of recreational sites across Leeds, including Roundhay Park. The areas affected here will be Mansion Lane, the 'tram terminal', the 'lido' parking area and, we believe, Soldiers Field. It is not anticipated that it will be fully implemented until early next year, but we are concerned that displaced parking will cause problems for residents on surrounding roads, possibly leading to further parking and traffic restrictions and the possibility that potential visitors may be discouraged from visiting the local attractions and businesses.

Anti-social behaviour is a continuing annoyance, although visitor numbers so far this year have been lessened due to the earlier poor weather. Visible policing has been increased across the park to discourage those who do not want to conform. However, a break-in at the council depot in the park from where maintenance equipment was stolen has required replacement, and other equipment is now being kept at the Arium resulting in delays for park staff gaining access.

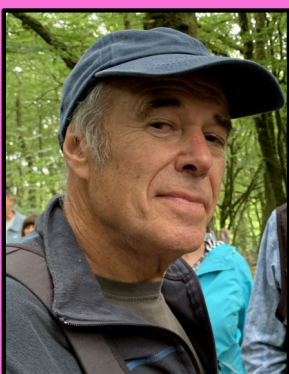
A knock-on effect of all this is a reduction in the time available for the already much reduced council staff to look after the fabric of the park. Much praise is deserved for what these loyal employees are still able to achieve. This situation requires ever greater efforts from our own loyal band of volunteers who now take responsibility for much of the maintenance in various parts of the park. But there are limits. The council were promising that some of the income from the proposed car parking charges will be returned to the park. We will see, and will seek to hold them to that commitment.

Our volunteers working in the Friends Garden, the Sensory Garden, the regular working parties labouring across the entire park, together with our stalwart band of litter pickers all make substantial and important contributions to the park's upkeep and appearance. Of course, we would welcome new partners and volunteers who can give just a little time to assist us in our efforts.

This leads me to membership of FoRP. We are incredibly grateful to all our members whose contributions help to finance our work. But membership is slowly declining. Please, ask your friends, neighbours, relatives, anyone who would consider becoming members. Applications can be made on-line at our updated colourful and entertaining website ([www.forp.org](http://www.forp.org)). Pay it a visit.

My message is a bit of a mixed bag this edition, but the park is still the largest jewel in the crown of Leeds attractions. We look forward to seeing you on your next visit.

Richard Critchley



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We always welcome your comments, letters as well as longer contributions. 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. Thank you to all the members and non members who post wonderful photos on Facebook and are happy for us to use them. Sorry if we are not able to acknowledge your individual names..





## How the Alhambra Garden came to Roundhay Park

*It was a delightful surprise when our secretary, Carol Haughton, was contacted recently by John Holliday who was the original designer of the Alhambra Garden, which we still enjoy in the park's specialist gardens area. John now lives in Fuerteventura but visited the park recently, calling in at the English Art Company where Catriona suggested he might get in touch with FoRP. Here, John tells the story of how he came to design this lovely garden. Thank you, John!*

I was studying at Askham Bryan College in York for a Diploma in Garden Design from 1995 - 1996.

The Ziff family in Leeds, who founded the Merrion Centre had agreed to fund the redevelopment of the old nursery at Roundhay Park, which had an entrance off Park View Crescent. In conjunction with Leeds City Council, Askham Bryan College agreed to arrange for the garden designs and construction using students at the college.

There were five of us on our course and our final project was to be a design for one of the five gardens at the site. I cannot recall what the other four designs were but they had to relate to somewhere in the world.

I chose the Alhambra Garden because my sister in law is from Iran, my niece was born in Syria. Also, my brother had worked throughout the Middle East and I had visited some of the countries and had an interest in the culture.

I read the Quran as part of my research and the original garden was based upon the gardens of paradise (paradeisos) in the Quran which are in essence self-contained refuges for flora and fauna, with humans as their keepers and end users. The water in the garden represents the four rivers of paradise, honey, milk, balsam and wine. Similar designs can be seen in the Taj Mahal (which I visited as part of my research) and the Alhambra in Granada.

Just as the gardens were to be constructed the funding was withdrawn and the Alhambra Garden was the only one of the five original designs built. However, in later years the Chelsea gardens were moved there, establishing the Specialist Gardens as we see them today.

As the gardens were all part of our course work there could be no recognition on site of who had designed them.

John Holliday

**FoRP is delighted to at last give John some richly deserved recognition for his work in designing the Alhambra Garden.**

*We also once again acknowledge the outstanding generosity of the Ziff family. In addition to their support for this project, they have been major supporters of Tropical World and of the Friends. Marjorie Ziff was president of the Friends of Roundhay Park for many years until her death in 2023.*



# Top Bird in the Park

*Small, shy, more often heard than seen, the identity of the UK's most numerous bird is revealed by our regular bird correspondent, Dave Johnston. Thank you, Dave*



The wren is the most numerous bird in the UK, with at least 11 million pairs. This may surprise you, as they are difficult to see in the park compared to the robin, which has 7.35 million pairs in the UK.

The wren is a small bird, around 9 to 10.5 centimetres long. It is brown, with a white streak above its eye. It holds its small tail vertically when perching or searching for food. Males and females are identical.

It spends most of its time in dense vegetation, ranging from that along our coasts to the heather moorlands in the Scottish highlands. Wrens can be found virtually everywhere in the park, where they will search for insects and spiders, particularly under ivy, leaves, twigs etc. They get their Latin name, *Troglodytes troglodytes* (meaning a cave dweller) from this behaviour.

They can be heard in the park most of the year, making very loud alarm calls compared to their size. This develops into loud melodious calls in spring.

In spring the male builds around 5 dome-shaped nests out of lichen, feathers, moss and dried leaves. He then allows a female to inspect all the nests until she chooses one. He may then repeat this with other females until all the nests are occupied. The females may lay up to 8 eggs twice in a season. Incubation takes around 18 days, and the young leave the nests 18 days later.



Wrens' survival rate has been high in the last few years because of our milder winters. Small birds do not cope well in cold winters because of heat loss and a lack of food. In cold winters wrens will use old nest boxes for warmth. Several birds will roost together to keep each other warm. An astonishing 61 birds were found together in one nest box in Norfolk in 1969.

You will hear wrens most of the year as you walk through the park, particularly around the Upper Lake, the ravine, the gorge and in the woods above Waterloo Lake. Monet's garden and the Alhambra garden are also good areas for them, where they forage between the plants for insects and spiders.

Keep your eyes open for a small brown bird darting around the undergrowth on your walks. Most gardens get visits from wrens sometime during the day, so you may also hear and see them at home.

Dave Johnston







Extract from trail leaflet



## A New Sculpture Trail In the Park

It was almost 10 years ago that FoRP established a link with the tree sculptor, Shane Green who created and carved 'Mary's Tree', a three metre tall trunk which Shane sculpted depicting a range of creatures living in the park. This piece of art work was made possible through a generous bequest made to FoRP by the late Mary Hill, who was a member of the Friends. Mary's Tree stood in 'Dingle Dell', the area of land adjacent to Canal Gardens with a gate opening onto Princes Avenue. Mary's Tree was much admired but sadly, due to the wet conditions in Dingle Dell the base of the sculpture began to rot all too soon, and Mary's Tree had to be removed for safety reasons. It has been replaced on the same site by two other tree sculptures, (Butterfly and Seahorse) also by Shane Green, this time mounted on concrete plinths to raise them above the wet ground.

This year, in partnership with Leeds City Council Green Spaces, Shane has created a sculpture trail through parts of Roundhay Park inspired by his own walks in the park. Beautifully carved from fallen beech trees, there are 8 different sculptures on the trail each featuring wildlife which can be observed in the park. The trail commences at the Park Lane entrance to Roundhay Park (by the golf club) and runs through

Ram Wood, and on to the wildflower meadow by the old castle folly. Following the trail you will see fox, deer, swan, heron, badger, fish, dragonfly, owl, squirrel, butterfly and more carved into the different sculptures.

Shane has also created 8 other sculptures set in other locations in the park. Thank you, Shane for all the care and skill that has gone into this project, and for giving us something else to enjoy as we wander through beautiful Roundhay Park.





# Yorkshire Air Ambulance Garden comes to Roundhay Park



*The Yorkshire Air Ambulance award-winning Reflection and Remembrance Garden is now a permanent feature in Roundhay Park*

The Yorkshire Air Ambulance (YAA) is proud to announce the permanent installation of its award-winning 'Reflection and Remembrance Garden' within the renowned Specialist Gardens of Roundhay Park. Nestled beside a large sycamore tree, the garden is appropriately located near the "helicopter seeds" of the tree, symbolising the iconic helicopters of YAA.

Designed by Kate Smithson, a talented graduate of the Yorkshire School of Garden Design, the garden serves as a serene space for remembrance and reflection. It offers a sanctuary for individuals touched by the work of YAA, allowing them to honour the memories of loved ones and reflect on personal experiences. This tranquil garden will stand as a lasting legacy for the community, providing a place for heartfelt dedications and contemplation.



At the heart of the garden is a striking yellow metal pergola, reminiscent of the YAA helicopters' blades and distinctive colour. The pergola, along with soft, flowing plantings and a central reflective pool, celebrates Yorkshire's diverse landscapes, over which YAA helicopters fly. The garden's design evokes a sense of calm and peace, a contrast to the critical emergencies YAA handles daily. The garden is fully accessible, with a surrounding path that connects to existing walkways, ensuring inclusivity for all visitors. The garden has not only restored an unused area of the park, but has also opened doors for community engagement. It promises to attract more wildlife and provide new opportunities for volunteering and skill development across various age groups.

The garden was initially launched at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, where Kate Smithson was honoured with a Premier Gold Award and the prestigious 'Best in Show' title. The garden's transition to Roundhay Park was expertly managed by landscaper Nick Fryer and his team, who ensured that the plants and shrubs would thrive in their new setting.

This project was made possible through the generous support of local businesses, grants, and trusts, ensuring the garden was established at no cost to the charity. Ongoing efforts are being made to secure funding for the garden's maintenance, guaranteeing its pristine condition for years to come.

YAA invites the Friends of Roundhay Park volunteers, known for their horticultural expertise, to assist in maintaining the garden. As the garden settles into its new home, YAA plans to use the space for future fundraising and awareness events, including 'In Memory' gatherings, where the public can leave lasting tributes to loved ones or share stories of support from the YAA's services.

Tessa Klemz, Regional Fundraising Manager for YAA, expressed the charity's excitement: *"We have long envisioned a permanent memorial space for our supporters. The opportunity to showcase a garden at the Harrogate Flower Show was the perfect catalyst. Kate's design beautifully captured our vision of a tranquil, reflective space. We are thrilled that Leeds City Council has provided a permanent location in Roundhay Park, allowing the public to enjoy this peaceful garden daily. We look forward to seeing the garden grow and mature, and to offering a place for lasting dedications that support the life-saving work of YAA."*

If you are interested in volunteering for Yorkshire Air Ambulance, please call our friendly team on 01422 237900 or send an email to [info@yaa.org.uk](mailto:info@yaa.org.uk).



*Our thanks go to Rebecca Selkirk and Tessa Klemz of YAA for providing this article and the photos*







Carol Haughton with Patrick Riley  
(Southlands resident)

## FoRP Reaches Out

FoRP were pleased to be invited to attend morning coffee with the residents at Southlands Retirement Apartments. Sandra Maclean (Litter Free Leeds and FoRP) has a close connection to the residents and provided lots of photographs of them enjoying their visits to the park. These photographs, along with some historical pictures and information about Roundhay and FoRP prompted lots of interesting conversations and memories. The residents were delighted to see the KAVS award certificate and crystal received by FoRP earlier in the year...and we enjoyed meeting the residents and team at Southlands!

Those attending from FoRP were Carol, Ian, Jan, Julia, with Sandra Maclean.



## The Litter Pickers' Work is Never Done

*It's not really news, but it is so important we keep recognising the tireless efforts of volunteer litter pickers around the park. Our regular sessions are led by Martin Child. This time Martin reports on efforts to reach litter in less accessible areas. Please take care, Martin!*

Litter picking has been broadly uneventful since the last newsletter. We did support a successful event run by the White Rose Canoe Club on Waterloo Lake. This was on Tuesday evening 9th July. Seven of our team came along and we helped transfer rubbish collected by the canoeists onto the shore. Quite a few bags were collected, probably 7 or 8 in total. The weather was good initially and then a fairly spectacular storm ensured we all went home soaking wet! I attempted to clear some detritus from the dam and despite wearing decent walking shoes with Vibram soles I still took the quick way down and ended up with a few scuffs and bruises! I always tell people never to tackle the dam when it is wet because it can be treacherous...do as I say, not as I do!

Martin Child



Sasha - young volunteer.





## The Circle of Life - Composting in the Friends Garden

*Janet Wilkinson and her dedicated team of volunteers carry on their great work, developing and maintaining the Friends Garden. In this report Janet describes how they make the best use of all the natural resources and processes to create the best growing conditions for the plants in the garden.*

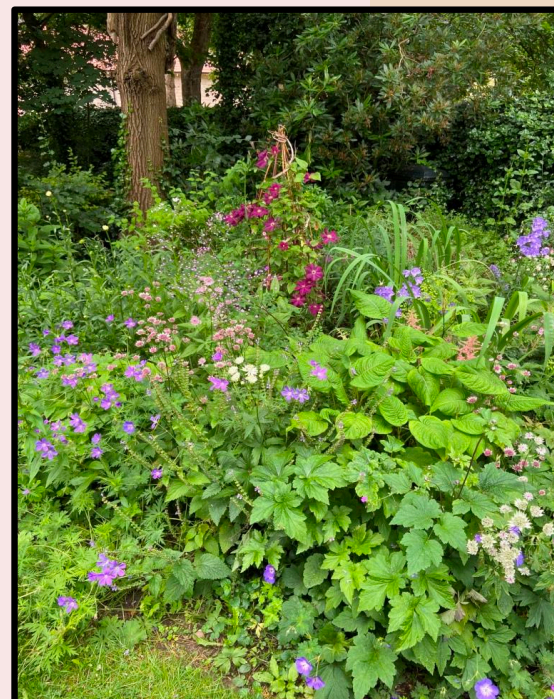
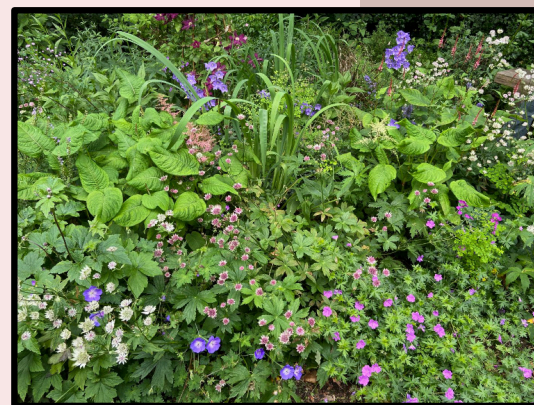
In the Friends Garden we aim where possible to recycle as much of the garden waste as we can. We have three large compost bins, one for leaves, and two others for soft cuttings. We have lots of leaves in the autumn and the soft cuttings are in the main from cutting back the many perennials we have in the garden. Tougher cuttings and those from cutting back the trees are separately taken away by the park gardeners.

The compost bins do get full particularly in the autumn when most of the clearing in the garden takes place. We usually leave the compost bins for a year or two which allows the contents to rot down and then we set about the task of emptying the bins to get to the compost.

This is a big job and involves taking all the top layers out of the bins so we can get to the lower layers where the compost is. Thankfully we have our 'Compost Queens' including Jan and Sally (see top right) who are now very used to this work. However, all the volunteers play a part as we usually have to sieve the compost to ensure it is weed free and then it is spread all across the Friends Garden. I like to think that by creating our own compost we are completing a cycle of growth. The plants in the garden grow and flower, in the autumn we cut these back and collect the leaves from the trees, these go into the compost bins and then we wait for the contents of the bins to magically create the compost which is then used to put goodness back into the garden to help the next round of growth.

At this time of the year when the garden is in full bloom I think it is clear that all the work that goes into creating our own compost is definitely worth all the effort.

Janet Wilkinson





# The Sensory Garden – a haven for the birds and the bees



*Sarah Jackson, Lindsey Ward and the Sensory Garden team continue their brilliant work tending and developing this lovely area inside the walled garden in front of Tropical World. Access is not possible to the part of the garden by the unsafe wall, and this problem will take time to resolve, but the team of FoRP volunteers have been very busy in the rest of the garden. They have earned richly deserved recognition for their work, as Sarah and Lindsey report here.*

During the winter months we were busy preparing our garden to apply to the Bee Friendly Trust for bee friendly status. The trust was established in London in 2016 to increase forage for urban bees. They have now made it their mission to create habitats for honey bees and all pollinators to thrive all over the country. In our garden our bee friendly plants, covering all the seasons, are highlighted with special yellow labels for visitors. Did you know that bees favour purple flowers? Did you know that bees struggle for food particularly in winter? Planting mahonia and hellebores can help.

On World Bee Day, on 20 May 2024, we were thrilled to be one of the 9 gardens awarded Bee Friendly Status. Our award and certificate will be going on display shortly in the Education Room in the Mansion. (Top photo; Sarah, Lindsey, Helen and Sue with the award).

And so, to the birds. We are delighted to report that great tits nested in our bird box this spring with possibly a further nest in the adjacent clematis. It was wonderful to watch them going backwards and forwards feeding their young whilst we were gardening.

We were pleased to see that the tree fern had survived the winter and there are several healthy fronds on it this year. As last year, we will continue to feed the fern at least weekly but advice now shows that the fern should be watered daily whilst uncovered. Watering and feeding now will not increase the size of this year's fronds but will ensure a good display next year.

After the recent press about the damage invasive bamboo can do in a garden, we are keeping careful watch over our plants. Last year the black bamboos were spreading into the path and we took steps to restrict their growth by installing a black membrane liner around each plant. New plants have recently been added to mask the necessary protruding membrane. They are a mix of evergreen and perennial plants, including ferns, fatsia, echinops and nepeta to enhance the jungle feel to this area.

Wednesday visitors to the garden will have seen us once again on our knees tending to the restoration of the Roundhay Adder. Sadly, the persistent wet weather has taken its toll on the designs. After a thorough wash, we are now slowly restoring the pebble designs. A bark mulch has been added around the edges and the design has been enhanced further by the addition of a waterproof sealant around the 'coils of the snake'. Yacht varnish will be applied as a protective coat for winter in due course.



# FoRP Working Parties, Party On



*Led by Ian Nicholson, FoRP's regular working parties never run out of valuable jobs to do. Ian has provided this report on some of tasks they have tackled during the summer. Our thanks go to Ian and all the hard working volunteers.*

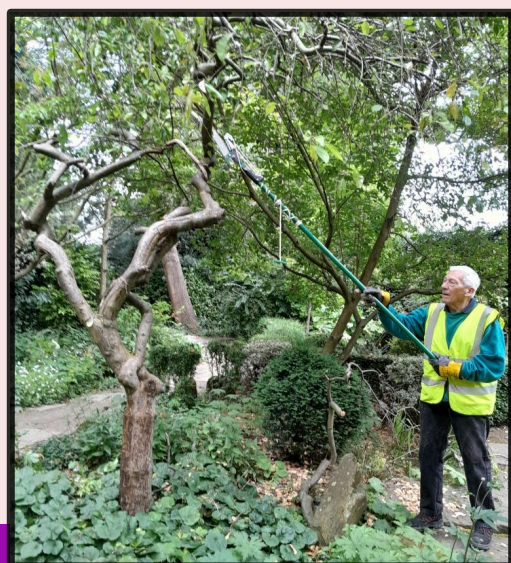
The last few months we have been further afield in the park and concentrated our efforts in and around Waterloo Lake and the Wetherby Road gate houses. The first of these tasks was to tidy and weed the ramps leading down to the boathouse, which we have not done for 2-3 years. (Sat 8<sup>th</sup> June).

We moved on to Waterloo Lake overspill and the first bastion for a spot of weeding and clearing the self-seeded sycamores and brambles from the dam wall and as always, a cup of coffee and a biscuit. (Thurs 27 June).

July found us back to the second bastion including clearing a line of sight to the left-hand gatehouse to make it less secluded, as the AGM had reported that the inside had been sprayed with graffiti. Our new volunteer Bethany and her two friends contributed to a successful day (Sat 13 July)

Our last outing in July was closer to base - the Friends Garden and the flower beds round the shelter in canal gardens. Janet, the Friends Garden co-ordinator had asked if the working party group could help with shaping a dying tree to allow them to grow a climber over it, letting in more light and making it more attractive. The rest of the party occupied themselves with the beds in front and around the shelter clearing weeds. Sally and Sonja hacking back the huge nettles path side. Cathy re-excavated the overgrown bed and finally, of course, there was a "cup of coffee and a biscuit" (Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> July).

Ian Nicholson







## Forest School Fun for Children

*The forest school sessions in Roundhay Park run by Melody Thornton continue to flourish. Thank you Melody for giving youngsters this opportunity and for providing this report*

Our little 'Forest Schoolers' continue to have a lot of fun in the woods. It's such a blessing to watch the woods transform week after week before us, and celebrate all that we can find and use now that we're in summer. We've been balsam

hunting, hamak hanging, and jewellery making. It's great to see the depth of knowledge of nature coming through with our work, and exploring how everything works together, for our little nature seedlings.

What has also been really joyful is parents coming together to share a cuppa, and laugh and cry together as we muddle our way through parenting. We parents also learn a lot through working with nature, and how we can hold each other up, just like the plants do.

We are sensitive to photos being taken in sessions, due to working with children, but here is Melody, our Forest School leader (above right) getting a good feeling of the ground we walk on!

For any more info, please contact [fsroundhay@gmail.com](mailto:fsroundhay@gmail.com)

Melody Thornton



## Memories of Meeting the 'Blind Botanist'

*In our Spring newsletter we ran a feature on John Wilkinson – the 'Blind Botanist' (1856-1937). We were thrilled to hear from FoRP member Gwyneth Spurr that she had actually met the man himself. Here, Gwyneth recalls that meeting. Thanks for the memory!*

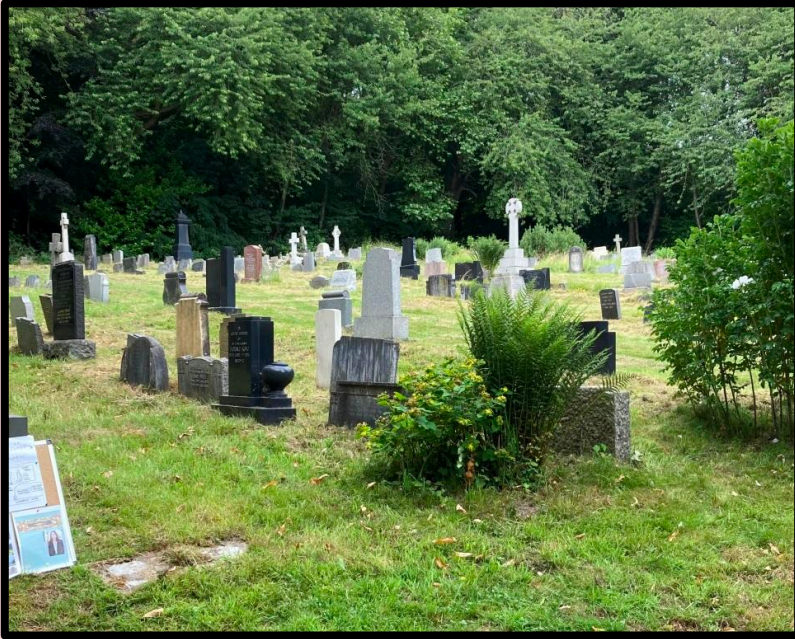
After reading the interesting article about John Grimshaw Wilkinson, the blind botanist, in the recent newsletter, I was reminded that I had actually met him when I was a child. John Wilkinson died in 1937 so I must have been 4 or 5 years old. At the time, my father, Bill Evans, was Nursery Manager for Leeds Corporation Street Trees Department and we lived in West Lodge, the house on Old Park Road near the tennis courts. The Park Director, Thomas Trigg, brought John who, I believe gave advice on the planting in several Leeds parks, to meet my father. On shaking hands with my mother he commented on her new gloves.

John Hillaby, in his book 'Journey Round Britain' wrote "Old Wilkinson, one of the best botanists in Yorkshire, was blind, a strange knowledgeable man, who could name any plant by running his fingers over the stem and leaves. Sometimes he smelt them." He also used the tip of his tongue to check the texture of leaves.

Gwyneth Spurr



## St John's Church Open Day – All Welcome!



In a recent newsletter we featured the great work done by the Friends of Roundhay St. John's Church to maintain and protect this historic churchyard. This is a fascinating site, where a number of very important people in the history of Roundhay and its park have been laid to rest. Many other interesting memorials are there, including war graves. This tranquil and beautiful place is well worth a visit. Now there is an ideal opportunity as the Friends of St. John's are holding an Open Day.

The Open Day will be on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September from 10am to 3pm. There will be guided tours at 11am, 12 noon and 1pm, and a drama presentation at 2pm. Light refreshments will be available.

St John's Church is behind the Montessori School on Wetherby Road LS8 2LE. This is a special place – come and see for yourself!

## ADDRESS

### Our King's Award on Display

FoRP is proud to have received the King's Award for Voluntary Service. This is now on a display shelf in the 'Barran Room' at the Mansion – one of the upstairs meeting rooms. We have placed it there as we are nervous about displaying such a lovely item in public, but anyone who wants to see it is welcome to go in and ask one of the team at the Mansion to show you the award which they will happily do if time allows.



### FoRP General (Open) Meeting

The next open meeting will be held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October in the Education Room adjacent to the Mansion, commencing at 7pm. All members welcome!