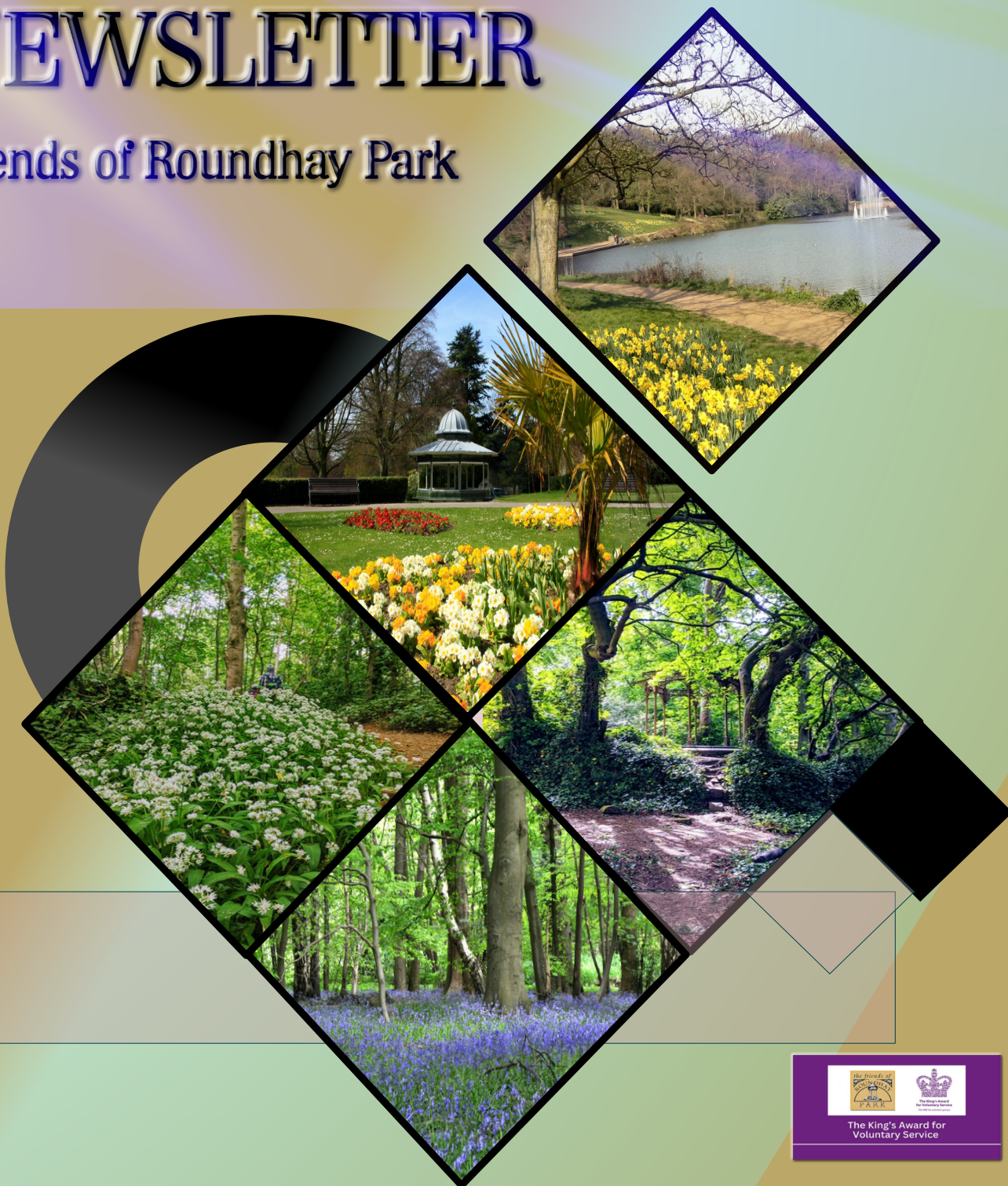


→ SPRING 2025

THE NEWSLETTER

Friends of Roundhay Park



Chairperson: Richard Critchley
 Friends of Roundhay Park
 PO Box 129
 Leeds LS8 1WY
 Website: www.forp.org
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CHAIR'S LETTER



2025 has now got into its stride as snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils have all made their appearance and Spring is in the air. So too, rather less welcome or spectacular, has been the arrival of parking payment machines in the car parks and along Mansion Drive. The promised charges came into effect in February. However, they seem to have been accepted as the car parks and Mansion Drive are all still in regular use. Let us just hope that this is as far as it goes and that there is no follow up or knock on effect elsewhere.

Sadly, one casualty of the charges is the loss of the English Art Company who have traded in the Orangery at the Mansion over the past few years. They have decided that that they will no longer be able to fairly compete. We thank them, most sincerely, for their active support for FoRP throughout their time in the park. We will miss them but do wish them well for the future.

As I said, the park has awakened from its Winter slumber revealing an amount of work and many matters that need attention. The repair of the wall around the sensory garden has just been completed and is now safe. Unfortunately, and unavoidably, during the repairs there has been a lot of trampling down of the ground and some loss in the flower beds. A lot of work will be required to reinstate the area.

Consultation has now closed on the change of use and proposed extension to the old toilet block on Princes Avenue, opposite the Roundhay Fox which, if successful, will retain the character of both Princes Avenue and Canal Gardens and bring the building back into use.

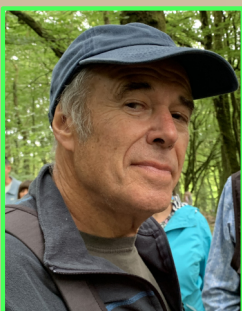
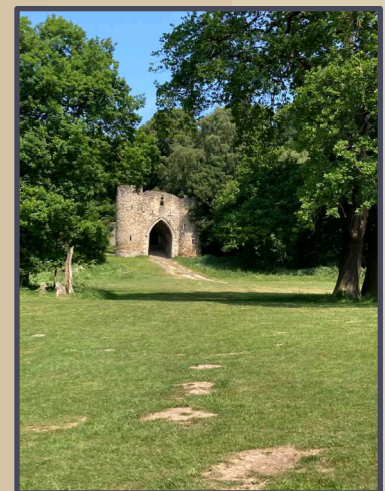
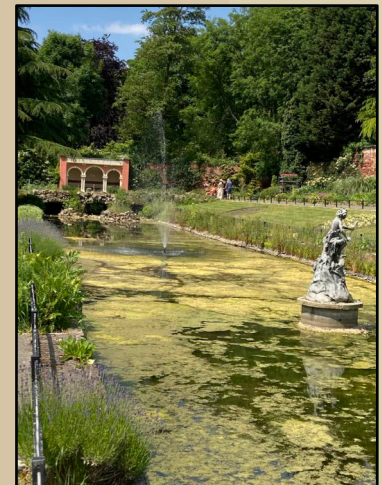
Work is to start soon on repairs to the shelter roof in Canal Gardens and to the paths in the Friends Garden which will complement the new pond which is now installed. A new slightly sloping path is planned for access to Dingle Dell and the tree carvings where, unfortunately, we have found that our efforts to surround them with plants have been unsuccessful, as they have repeatedly become trampled underfoot. With good weather and some additional help, we are hopeful that all will be ready and at its best for Easter. If you can spare any time, please get in touch if you could assist any of our volunteers in their efforts.

We now look forward to the remainder of the year as the park changes through the seasons. On 9th August, we learn that the World Music Festival will be returning to the park, following the success of the event in 2023.

Finally, good news for those with an enquiring and exploring mind who also enjoy outdoor activities. The Orienteering Course is now completed and ready for use. All the markers for the experience have been installed and a QR code on them will direct you to the various locations and routes across the park.

Whether working, exercising or just relaxing we welcome you to Roundhay Park and hope you will be a regular visitor.

Richard Critchley



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Soaring over Roundhay Park

Once again, our thanks go to Dave Johnston for treating us to some in-depth information and beautiful photos of a magnificent bird, which may have become more familiar to the casual observer, but is always spectacular.

If you walk through the park and look up to the skies you are likely to see a red kite, or maybe two.

This would have been impossible before 1999. Red kites became extinct in most parts of the UK in the 1870s, with only 5 pairs remaining in West Wales by the end of that decade. Before that it was a very common bird of prey in the countryside, and in towns and cities, where it was known as a "street cleaner", scavenging on refuse along dirty streets. Its extinction was due to persecution by gamekeepers and farmers, and by egg collecting in Victorian times.

New interest in conservation meant that by the early 1980s Wales had 50 breeding pairs. 1989 saw the reintroduction of kites from Sweden, Germany and Spain to Scotland and southern England. Reintroduction of red kites to the Harewood estate in 1999 was a huge success. Yorkshire now has 535 red kites (2024 figure).

Red kites are big birds of prey, 61 to 72 cm. long with a wingspan of 170 to 195 cm. This is slightly bigger than the common buzzard, which can also frequently be seen above the park. The main colour of the kite is a reddish brown. This is clearly seen in its forked red / brown tail. The buzzard's wings and tail are rounder and its general colour is brown. Red kites are mainly scavengers, making use of road kills and dead rodents in fields which are being ploughed or harvested.

Kites have a big nest, made in large trees, and often decorated with crisp packets, paper, wool etc. The female normally lays two eggs, which take one month to hatch. The young leave the nest two months after that and are then looked after by their parents for a further 15 to 20 days.

They are seen everywhere now, Oakwood, Moortown, even over the city centre. You may see them over your garden. Despite their success they are still being persecuted by some farmers and gamekeepers. For many of us it's great to have such a stunning bird over our gardens and the park.

'(And keeping a count on the rich bird life in the park – on 21st February I counted 82 mute swans and 38 cormorants on Waterloo Lake. Could this be a record?)'

Dave Johnston





FoRP is always doing what it can to protect the environment in the park. Martin Child leads our regular litter picking groups, and also leads on a water monitoring project, checking the purity of water coming into the park. It is a sad fact that there is always litter, and many FoRP members give their time to go out litter picking in addition to the regular organised sessions. Martin has provided this update.

Caring for the Environment – Litter Picking and Water Monitoring

Litter Picking: Our regular sessions got off to a slow start in 2025 as the first January session had to be postponed twice due to the freezing conditions. This is the first time we have had a double postponement. It was the right decision not to cancel the later January session because we would have missed Rosemary’s fantastic mulled wine! A few new participants have joined us and we have had good turnouts consistently (more than 20 people) which translates into significant amounts of litter removal (30-40 bags per session). There has been a small increase in the number of nitrous oxide cylinders found, but we have been pleased to see there has been no fly tipping behind the Carriage House since the bushes were reduced in height. We hope it stays that way.

Water Monitoring: We have now changed over to using the Water Rangers testing kits from the Fresh Water Watch kits. This means we are now testing water conductivity at all sites as well as nitrates and phosphates. We are also now testing the pH, alkalinity, hardness and chlorine content. We are measuring dissolved oxygen and E. coli levels at some of the sites.

Martin Child

Litter Picking Extra – Clearing up after the Travellers

The partnership between FoRP and the council staff who look after the park has once again demonstrated how valuable and important it is after the latest large group of travellers finally departed from Connaught Fields on 3rd April. They had arrived with their caravans and vehicles in mid March and when they left, the field was in a dreadful state. By 7am on the following morning the council team were hard at work gathering up piles of rubbish ready for their vehicles to take away. A priority was to have the area safe and ready for sport and leisure activities at the weekend. A group of ten FoRP volunteers joined in, collecting the smaller items scattered all over the field. James Watson, who leads the council parks staff thanked FoRP for their assistance in this truly unpleasant task. FoRP also wishes to thank the council for all their hard work on this. Anyone walking across the fields over the following weekend would not even know the travellers had been there. A great job done, and our thanks go to all who helped.

Unfortunately, we can be almost certain the travellers will return, possibly on more than one occasion during the summer, and this really should not be happening. This most recent event has seen the worst instances of anti-social behaviour, including aggressive and threatening behaviour, stone throwing, damage to allotments and hedgerows used as a toilet. Some of the damage is irreparable e.g. a mature tree had a complete ring of bark deliberately stripped off. This will kill the tree, and it will need to be removed. Local residents, some of whom spoke to council staff and FoRP volunteers, are angry and dismayed that this keeps happening. FoRP is engaging with stakeholders in the city to try to find a solution to this ongoing problem which is a blight on our beautiful park.



Orienteering

Exploring Roundhay Park

Great news for all existing fans of orienteering and for those who would like to give it a try. A new orienteering course has been created in Roundhay Park. Following the course will be a lot of fun, and offers a great way to explore our wonderful park. Our thanks go to Airienteers and to our own FoRP working parties who have put in the hard work to create the course. Are you ready to take up the challenge? David Williams of Airienteers has provided this information to help you get involved

Airienteers, the local orienteering club, assisted by members of the FoRP working party led by Ian Nicholson have been installing a permanent orienteering course in the park. The course is now complete and available to use. There was a launch event held on Saturday 5th April at a meeting point near the Lakeside Cafe.

What is Orienteering?

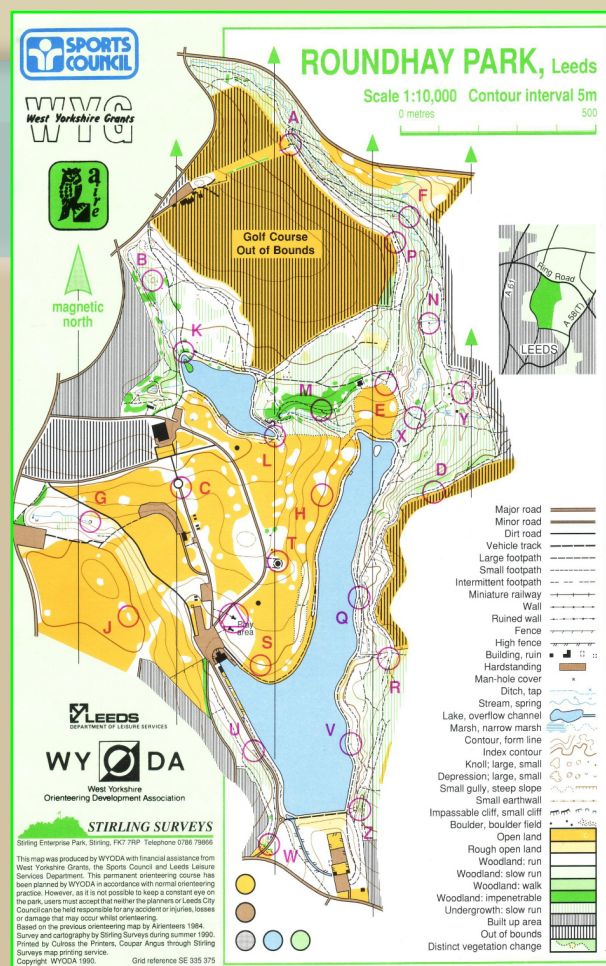
Orienteering is an exciting outdoor adventure sport that exercises mind and body. The aim is to navigate between checkpoints or controls marked on a special orienteering map. There is no set route so the skill and fun come from trying to find the best way to go! In competitive orienteering, the challenge is to complete the course in the quickest time.

Permanent orienteering courses provide an opportunity for an interesting leisure activity, exploring the park and woodland with the help of a detailed map. Experience is not necessary and you do not need to be a member of a club. There is no need to arrive at a certain time or buy special clothes or equipment. Orienteering on a permanent course is a leisure activity and no one minds whether you walk or run. A short (5 minute) video guide to permanent course orienteering is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4yfvUwkUxw>. This tells you all you need to know to get full enjoyment from the Roundhay Park courses.

Roundhay Park is an ideal area for orienteering. There was previously a permanent course set up in 1990. Unfortunately by mid 2000s the course had fallen into disrepair and became unusable. Remarkably four of the original metal posts survived and have been used on the new course. See if you can spot which ones were the original posts.

How can you have a go on the new course?

Visit our club website page <https://www.aire.org.uk/permanent-courses/roundhay-park> where full information is available and the map with all 25 markers and 7 different suggested course maps can be downloaded. These are free and print out in A4 size. Anyone seeing a course orange and white marker out in the park will be directed by the QR code to our 'Anytime O' page and just needs to scroll down to Roundhay in the 'Locations' section.



Suggested Courses:

You can score by collecting as many of the 25 controls by whichever route you want. Why not see how many you can get within 60 minutes? Allow 20 points per control but 10 point penalty per minute over time. Have as many goes as you like and try different combinations to see how you can get your highest score. We also have some course suggestions suitable for all from absolute beginners of any age to experienced orienteers.

- Short Easier 1.6km with 35m climb (4 controls)
- Short 1.8km with 40m climb (6 controls)
- Medium Easier 2.7km with 30m climb (7 controls)
- Long Easier 5.0 km with 60m climb (12 controls)
- Short Difficult 3.1km -100m climb (10 controls)
- Medium Difficult 4.6km -130m climb (14 controls)
- Long Difficult 6.6km - 145m climb (21 controls)

All courses allow you to start at any control point, this also becomes your finish and the marked start is another place to collect points.

Map: The map is a specialist Orienteering map at a scale of 1:7500 i.e. 1cm = 75m with 5m contour interval. (Surveyed 2024 by Chris Burden from Lidar base).



If you need any more information or assistance please contact David Williams airepermissions@gmail.com

David Williams



World Music Festival

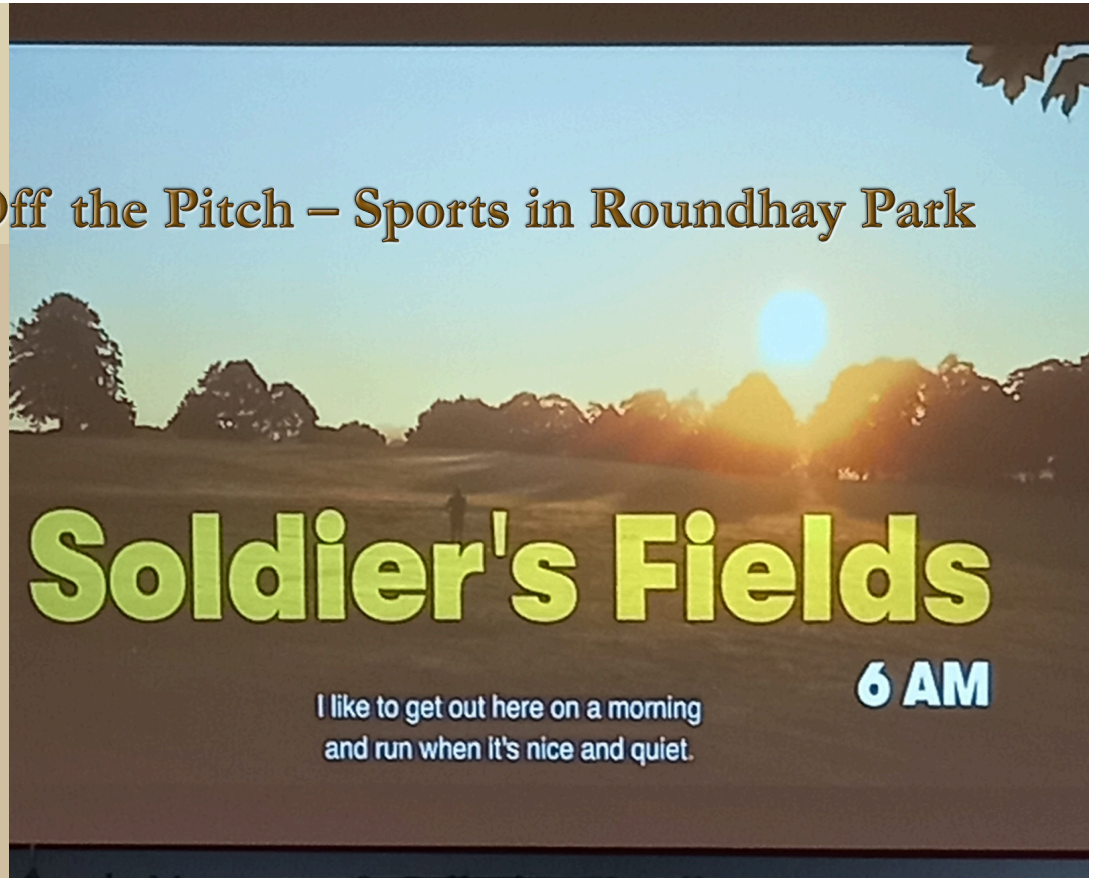
The World Music Festival is coming back to Roundhay Park!

On Saturday 9th August the World Music Festival returns to the park after a very successful first outing in 2023. This celebration of global sounds and cultures is set to unite people from all walks of life through the universal language of music. Imagine vibrant performances, delicious international cuisines, and a community of people coming together to celebrate diversity and creativity. This event promises a rich diversity of food and music for people of all ages to enjoy. Keep a look out for further information.

If you'd like to get involved with a food stall, community stall, volunteering or some stage sponsorship then please get in touch with the Festival Producer (and FoRP member): Nick Wayne: nick@worldmusicfest.org.uk

On the Pitch, Off the Pitch – Sports in Roundhay Park

Roundhay Park is featured in a National Lottery Heritage Fund project entitled 'On the pitch, off the pitch – Collecting Sport in Leeds'. This project recognises the important place of sport in the culture of Leeds, and has been displayed as an exhibit at Leeds City Museum.



Roundhay Park has long been an important venue for sporting activities and, as part of the project, FoRP was contacted by Rad Miller from Pocket Projects who were making a film about the sporting activities in the park. The resulting short film features Soldiers Field and the benefits of running, the White Rose Canoe Club and Leeds Rowing club, along with Park Run, race walkers, cycling, skateboarding and FoRP's outdoor gym.

FoRP committee members were invited to the premier at the Leeds City Museum and were delighted to meet those involved in the making of the film. Rad and his team very much enjoyed filming in the park and meeting the local community (although he was rather less enthusiastic about the early morning start (4.30am) when they met one of the runners!)

The film, one of four films shown as part of this project, can be seen at Leeds City Museum until Spring when it will move on to other venues in Leeds.

Further details about the project can be found on the internet by searching #DYC On the pitch: off the pitch – Collecting Sport in Leeds

This project focuses on current sporting activities in Roundhay Park, but of course, with all the wonderful space available there is a long history of a wide variety of sports taking place. These include tennis in the 1950s and 60s when some of the top players in the



Above: Tennis legends from the 1950s



Left: Cycling in the 1950s

Below: Triathlon in 2016



world played exhibition matches in the park during the period when a group of elite players turned professional and broke away from the amateur circuit. Cycling events have always been popular and in recent years the park has provided the venue for World Series Triathlon events. (Triathlon is returning to the park in 2025).

Short Course Triathlon returns to Roundhay Park

In 2016 and 2017 Roundhay Park provided the venue for World Series Triathlon events featuring top athletes from all over the world. Leeds' own Olympic medal winning Brownlee brothers were important figures in bringing these events to the park and to Leeds, and they competed themselves. Now, thanks to the Brownlee Brothers Foundation Events, which encourages mass participation in triathlon events, short course triathlon is returning to Roundhay Park this summer.

On Sunday August 3 the Leeds Triathlon will take place in the park over the sprint and super sprint distances with all profits going to the Brownlee Foundation, the charity which provides free mini-triathlons for primary school children across the country.

"We're inviting the triathlon community to be part of something bigger," says two-time Olympic champion Alistair Brownlee. "By taking part in Leeds Triathlon, you're not just challenging yourself, you're directly supporting the next generation of athletes. Every pound raised will be reinvested into grassroots triathlon".

You can find out more by visiting the website:

https://www.britishtriathlon.org/events/leeds-triathlon_16519

Working Parties Tackle a Thorny Problem

Undaunted by even the thorniest problems, the regular FoRP working parties have been out and about doing all they can to tidy and improve areas of the park, keeping it looking its best. Ian Nicholson leads these regular sessions and has provided this update.

This year got off to a slow start for the working parties, due to poor weather. Our first session was on the 30th January where we started clearing the steps down from the old castle folly as the sun was out!

Moving on to the top of the serpentine path at the end of the upper lake we spent our time cutting back brambles.

Our second session was on another cold morning but we soon got warmed up, apart from the feet. Splitting into two groups, the first group, started in the gorge that is overlooked from the bridge on upper lake. They removed branches and planks, and also some litter and bottles though, to be fair, not too much of the latter. Meanwhile the second team scraped and brushed the bridge deck at the bottom of the serpentine path. All the team finished the morning cutting back brambles. It's all about the brambles!

Coffee and biscuits were our reward, as always.

Working parties continue their activities on Thursdays and Saturdays throughout the year. If you want to join in you can contact us via our website at www.forp.org

Ian Nicholson





Learning is Fun at the Forest School

As Winter turned to Spring, Forest School has continued to offer rich outdoor learning experiences to the children taking part. It's great fun too! The sessions are led by Melody Thornton who has provided this update. Thanks Melody!

The children have been running into Forest School throughout the Winter. We have attacked everything that we could find, including frozen lakes and puddles, protecting sprouting bulbs and hibernation dens, feeding hungry ducks and swans as well as weaving willow stars, making Christmas trees and painting pine cones. When the woods freeze over, we keep moving to climb on fallen branches and discuss the wooden carvings. We also had some great fun running through the willow tunnel in the Sensory Garden, and discussing the old water mill in the Specialist Gardens. Of course the highlight of every session is having a hot chocolate with a story. We've been acting out butterflies and bears, pretending to be bees dancing to each other, and playing some serious hide and seek.

It's a highlight of the week in the woods, and it's been great to see some new faces getting involved, as well as our crew of 'every weekers', who leap from task to task with smiles on their faces and wellies on their feet. Now that Spring has arrived we look forward to continuing to honour the woods in all her glory.

If you would like to find out more about Forest School, visit our website at www.forp.org and for more information you can email forestschool@forp.org



Your gifts for swifts





1. Sensitive renovations
2. Create new nest sites and play calls
3. Record nest sites and screaming parties
4. Help raise awareness
5. Start a group or neighbourhood colony
6. Help to build boxes
7. Help change legislation

The Swift - Drawing attention to a Beautiful but Threatened Bird

On 1st April FoRP members joined local conservationists 'Leeds Swifts' at the Ann Maguire Education Room for an illustrated talk about the much loved but disappearing common swift. The talk, by Linda Jenkinson of Start Birding, was very informative and we were invited to join the campaign to 'Save the Swift' by installing Swift Boxes, creating gardens for insects and recording nest sites and screaming parties.

If you missed this talk there is another one on Thursday, 8 May 2025 at Swillington Village Hall. Booking essential via Eventbrite - search Leeds Swifts Roadshow.



St John's Church
Wetherby Road
Leeds LS8 2LE

Gardening Parties
2025

Please join our friendly group of gardening volunteers to help maintain this beautiful and peaceful churchyard in Roundhay.

We meet on the first Saturday of each month at 10am in the North yard.

Dates for 2025:

3rd May	5th July	6th September
7th June	2nd August	4th October

For further information, please see our website:
roundhaystjohnchurchyard.org

Open Day at St John's Church – Saturday 17th May

We keep in touch with the Friends group who care for the lovely churchyard at the historic St John's Church which stands on the edge of the park by Wetherby Road. The church is no longer in use, but the Friends group tend and care for the churchyard. The Friends of St John's are holding an open day on Saturday 17th May (10am – 3pm). Visitors are invited to join in and help with some gardening, and there will be a tour of the north churchyard at 2pm. This is a special place, containing many important memories and is well worth a visit

The Friends of St John's rescued the churchyard from a sorry overgrown state and restored it to a beautiful and tranquil place. They hold regular gardening sessions to keep it looking its best, but are always looking for more volunteers to help into the future. If you would like to lend a hand, the sessions are held on the first Saturday of each month at 10am.

For further information visit the website at: www.roundhaystjohnchurchyard.org

A New Wildflower Meadow

In a collaboration between Leeds City Council, Butterfly Conservation and Tropical World, a new wildflower meadow is being created below the castle folly. Butterfly populations around the country have been in decline, and the creation of 'wild spaces' has become a mission, not just because wildflowers look pretty, but also the diversity of plant species provides good habitats for our native butterflies and moths. The noticeboards now in place explain:

"The mix of flowers and grasses growing in the wildflower meadows will affect the butterflies attracted to it. To establish the meadows and increase the native flora, we have sown locally sourced wildflower seeds which will introduce a diverse mix of wildflowers and grasses including Bird's Foot Trefoil, Yellow Rattle and Scabious, whilst also encouraging existing wildflower species present such as Knapweed and Yarrow"

We will keep our fingers crossed for a successful first season for the new meadow. As we go to print with this newsletter, we are hoping for a few April showers, following an unusually dry and sunny spell.



NOTICES

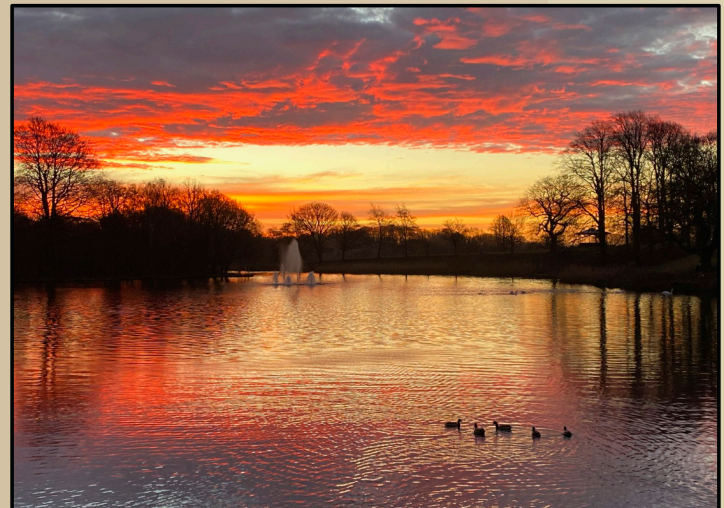
Sad news from the English Art Company.

Catriona and her husband David at the English Art Company have supported FoRP from day one. The gallery sold our merchandise, including the 150th Year Celebration prints and aprons, which Catriona helped to produce, and the Val Bell prints and Steven Burt books, with all proceeds going to FoRP.

When FoRP stopped producing a calendar, Catriona and David stepped in, offering their own photographs and art work and giving a donation from each sale to FoRP.

Catriona also helped greatly with the sale of the Bronwyn prints, including holding special open days to tell the story of the artist and how these prints came to FoRP. In addition, Catriona and her team made sure the Little Friends trail leaflets were always available by keeping the leaflet holders near the toilets fully stocked at all times.

Thank you Catriona and David. We will miss you!



ADDRESS

REAP Open Gardens: Entries are now open for the 2025 event which will take place on Sunday 22nd June 12.00 to 5.00 pm. The Friends Garden and Sensory Garden will be shown as a 'garden of interest' as they were last year. Both have information boards in place explaining the garden and the plants. REAP are also looking for volunteers to help organise the event.

Contact: roundhayopengardens@gmail.com

New Website for FoRP

The address is the same, but the FoRP website has been redesigned and updated. We thank Jeremy Stonehouse for all his work in overseeing the redevelopment of the website.

Visit us online at www.forp.org

FoRP AGM: This will take place on Tuesday 17th June at 7pm in the Ann Maguire Education Room by the Mansion. All members welcome,