

# the summer 2025 Newsletter



**FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK**

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*Chairperson***Chair's Letter**

We have been very fortunate to enjoy a prolonged warm summer. Of course, the park looks at its wonderful best in the sunshine and more people are able to attend and enjoy its many features and attractions. Whilst the grass, which turned brown, will soon spring back to colour with the help of a little rain, the prolonged dry spell can cause extra work for the excellent park staff and for our intrepid volunteers, especially those looking after the Friends Garden and the Sensory Garden, keeping the plants and foliage well-watered and in good order. Of course, all our other volunteers are also out ensuring that the park looks at its best.

Turning to the park estate and facilities, throughout the park's 150 plus year history, it has changed, adapted and developed into what it has become today. It has a thoroughly deserved place in local hearts and is loved by so many from Leeds and from much further afield.

Turning to the future and possible developments, plans are well advanced with a view to bringing back into use the lodges at the park's original entrance on Wetherby Road. We support this initiative which would not only maintain our heritage but also potentially offer slightly quirky holiday accommodation, nearby.

We also believe that Mitchell and Butlers, who run the Roundhay Fox public house, are negotiating to take over the stable block and house at the rear of their existing building. These properties are listed buildings but, with some careful restoration, could well be beneficial. It is important to retain these wonderful historic buildings which date from the original estate and bring them back to a full and useful life. We, with the Civic Trust, will be keeping a close eye on developments.

Of course, not everything is as pleasant as we would hope. Unwelcome visitors have become something of a nuisance, especially when they overstay. Taking account of our representations, the council has now placed large stone boulders at the entrances and possible vehicle access points all around the Connaught Field. Further work is expected and some heritage bollards have been erected by the council. We shall see what effect this may have for the future.

You may well have seen notices displayed in the area around the park which give details of the council's proposal to increase the maximum number of spectators able to attend events in the park from 20,000 to 70,000 in order to promote large scale income generating events. The park has hosted such events in the past, attracting some of the world's leading performers. The council invited written representations up until 29<sup>th</sup> July, so we will see what happens. We are aware that members and the local population may hold very different views about this proposal. It is most important that any future events are organised to the highest possible standard for the sake of the park and all local residents.

Whilst all this is in the background, we trust that the weather will hold for a while longer and that you will take the opportunity to come and join us in our work and enjoyment of what is clearly Leeds City's finest possession and recreational facility.

Richard Critchley



Any observations and comments can be sent to the editor or to the secretary. The email address for the secretary is on the cover.

EDITOR : Peter Stagg  
ARTWORK: Carol Stagg



Edmund Anderson CBE (centre) with FoRP representatives

## A Royal Celebration at Bowcliffe Hall

*March 11<sup>th</sup> 2024 was a very proud day for FoRP when we were presented with the King's Award for Voluntary Service. This Summer we were delighted to receive an invitation to send representatives to a special reception to honour the recipients of this prestigious award. Our vice chair Sara Dawson has provided this account of a great day for FoRP*



Lesley Garrett with the choir

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June, FoRP committee members were invited to the stunning Bowcliffe Hall by Mr Edmund Anderson CBE, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, for a special reception to honour King's Award recipients.

The event brought together inspiring individuals and organisations from across West Yorkshire who have received the King's Award for Voluntary Service and the King's Award for Enterprise - the highest national honours for voluntary groups and businesses in the UK, equivalent to an MBE.

Mr Anderson gave a warm reception, recognising the dedication and excellence of award recipients. Vice chair Sara Dawson, chair Richard Critchley, trustee Tom Cooper and Little FoRP leader Melody Thornton enjoyed listening to the West Yorkshire Police Band and Leslie Garrett singing with the Bantam of the Opera choir at the event. It was a real celebration of community groups and businesses making an outstanding impact across Yorkshire.

This gathering was not just a celebration of achievement, but a testament to the strength of community, innovation, and service

across West Yorkshire. We send a heartfelt thank you to Mr Edmund Anderson CBE, all awardees, and the team at Bowcliffe Hall for making this a truly memorable occasion.  
Sara Dawson

## Our Rich Heritage – Oakwood Film Academy Presents.....

As part of Leeds Heritage Open Days 2025, Oakwood Film Academy in cooperation with the Friends of Roundhay Park will be showing two short films made by the Academy.

The two films to be shown are 'Game Changer' and 'The Roundhay Park 150 Anniversary Celebration'. The film makers will be there to answer questions, and the whole event is expected to last about one hour.

**Booking is essential as places are limited – so don't miss out! For one day only! Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September at 14.00 (doors open 13.45) at the Ann Maguire Education Room next to the Mansion in Roundhay Park.**

You can book your seats through Eventbrite Heritage Open Days <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/oakwood-film-academy-heritage-open-days-tickets-1412719374679?aff=oddtcreator>



# Successful Breeding Season for Water Birds in the Park

*Our regular bird contributor, Dave Johnston, has been out and about recording some notable successes which bode well for the next generation of water birds in Roundhay Park. Here, Dave recounts some of the highlights.*

Some of our water birds have had a very successful breeding season this year. Notably, a female mandarin duck was seen earlier this summer near the island on Waterloo Lake with four ducklings. Maybe their numbers will build up in Roundhay Park, as they have at Golden Acre, Paul's Pond and Harewood.



Mandarin duck family

Coots nested on both lakes, with two pairs still sitting on eggs in the upper lake in July. Moorhens were also successful on both lakes and also in Canal Gardens, where two adults could be seen with their young on 14<sup>th</sup> July. The family consisted of five well-grown young, and a second brood of six very small young. It was interesting to see the well-grown birds feeding their younger siblings. This is quite normal behaviour for moorhens, but unusual in other birds.



Mallards bred on both lakes, where there are now families with young of varying ages. A female was seen on Waterloo Lake on 14<sup>th</sup> July with 8 very small ducklings.

Coots, moorhens and mallards often continue breeding well into autumn if the conditions are right.

23 mute swan cygnets had hatched by 2<sup>nd</sup> June, when 93 adults were also present. A pair with 7 cygnets on the Upper Lake and a pair with 8 cygnets near the dam on Waterloo Lake have been a delightful scene for many visitors.

Dave Johnston



Cute Coots



Young Moorhens



Moorhen feeding younger sibling



*One regular visitor who was delighted to observe the arrival of one healthy brood of swans was Neville Hurworth – a long time Friend and contributor to the newsletter, sharing his deep knowledge of the history of Roundhay Park. Neville described his experiences here.*

I had been watching a pair of swans incubating their eggs in a nest in the far corner of Waterloo Lake by the dam wall. Like many people in the park I have been unable to resist taking pictures of them with my phone from time to time. I was out early one morning in June and caught both parents asleep on the nest. There was no sign of any cygnets but it soon dawned on me that they were probably under mum (or was it, dad's?) wing. I had scarcely taken a picture when one of the brood popped his or her head out and gave me the opportunity to take another picture (below left).



Neville Hurworth.

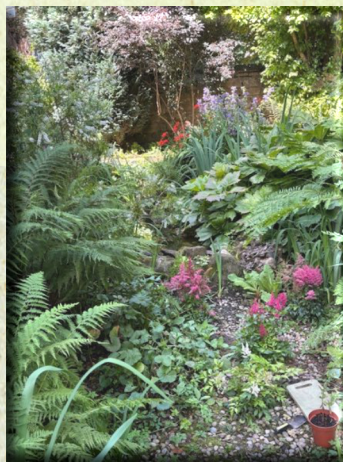


*(Returning to the nest a few weeks later, Neville was delighted to find the cygnets doing well (he counted 8), and took this other lovely photo (right).*

## 20 Years of the Friends Garden – FoRP’s own Special Place

# Friends Garden

*Created by the Friends of Roundhay Park in a corner of untended ground in Canal Gardens, the Friends Garden was officially opened in July 2005. Ever since then, FoRP volunteers have developed and cared for the garden turning this into a really special place. It is a testament to the dedication and regular hard work of the Friends Garden volunteers, led by Janet Wilkinson, assisted by our other working parties led by Ian Nicholson when some 'heavy lifting' is required. Janet has provided this update and photos*



Fortnightly sessions continue in the Friends Garden with our wonderful volunteers regularly turning up to keep the garden looking great for all our visitors. The enlarged pond which was put in late last year now looks like it was always there and we hope that in time it might attract more wildlife to the Friends Garden. One of the main challenges this year, as with all gardens, has been the lack of rainfall and as a result we have done lots of watering, particularly where we have put in new plants.

Janet Wilkinson



OUT

ORIENTEERS

STEPPING

WITH THE

*Our Spring newsletter featured an item from David Williams of Airienteers about the creation of a permanent orienteering course in Roundhay Park. Now our thanks go to FoRP members John and Jean Hussey who were amongst the first adventurers to sample the course. They have provided this account of their experience. Thank you John and Jean!*



A new orienteering course has been set up in Roundhay Park. Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April was an introduction day, so off Jean and I went to sample what it was about. We had a warm welcome at the Airienteers tent. We were handed a map, had everything clearly explained to us, and set off along with plenty of families where the youngsters were obviously having fun with the maps. It was a lovely sunny day so we decided to walk, enjoy ourselves and pay close attention to navigating rather than just rushing off all over the place. Most of the check points were found fairly easily, but a couple were slightly hidden and we had to look closely at the details on the map which made it all the more interesting.

We thoroughly enjoyed our exploration of Roundhay Park and think we will be off to the unknown territories of other local parks such as Beckett's Park another day. There are plenty of permanent orienteering courses around Leeds. Thank you Airienteers, for all your hard work designing the courses, and not forgetting our own FoRP working parties who helped install the marker posts.

All the details for orienteering can be found at <https://www.aire.org.uk/permanent-courses/roundhay-park> where you can download and print off individual maps for each of the 7 courses ranging from very easy to challenging. John and Jean Hussey

## Learning the Natural Way – at the Forest School

*If you go down in the woods some days, you might be surprised to see a group of excited and enthusiastic children exploring, and creating, using things they find in the wonderful woodland environment of Roundhay Park. Forest School, led by Melody Thornton, provides structured and enjoyable activities for 'Little FoRPer's', giving them opportunities to learn about the natural world. Thank you Melody, for giving us this update.*

Little FoRPer's have been having a blast in the Spring and Summer. We have made lots of dens, and binoculars, and gone on lots of hunts. The woods are different every time we go, and we love listening to the bird song, and seeing the canopy come out in bloom.

It has been great, consolidating our knowledge on all we have learnt, before a lot of children go off to big school in September. Also it has been wonderful to see growing understanding of what is compostable and biodegradable versus what is not. We've read lots of stories about animals and have learned about ourselves and what we can do. Playing in a group is always the best form of learning.

Of course, we tidy up all our things and leave the woods in a better place. Here is a photo (right) of us leaving the woods with all our kit. We earn our lunch!

Forest School will stop over August, and be back for open sessions come September, every Thursday at 10am. For more information email [forestschool@forp.org](mailto:forestschool@forp.org)

Melody Thornton



## Sensory Delight – Colour and Fragrance in the Sensory Garden

*It has been a very busy period for the fantastic team of FoRP volunteers who tend the Sensory Garden. Undeterred by major problems with the old brick wall along one side of the garden, they have continued their work. Thankfully the wall repairs are progressing. Sarah Jackson and Lindsey Ward bring us up to date with the work of their team. Thanks to all of the volunteers!*



Since the first phase of repairs to the wall behind the fruit and wildlife border have been completed, we have been working hard to restore the border to its former glory and are delighted with how colourful and vibrant it now looks.

Manure has been added around the fruit bushes and raised beds and we are awaiting a delivery of compost to further improve the soil. Following advice received from Debi and Mark at Skerne Alpines, we have restored the raised alpine bed (bottom left), removing lots of building rubble from the soil and adding a large quantity of grit. Skerne Alpines, once again, very kindly donated some new alpines to FoRP to replace those damaged during the building work. Thank you, Debi and Mark, for all your advice and generosity over the last few years, we've really appreciated it!

A rustic gate (left) created from a pallet being discarded by Tropical World has been added to provide a support for the loganberry bushes. The information panels under the rose archway to the rainbow garden have been rearranged to improve their appearance and we have erected two pieces of trellis, on the sensory garden side, up which we are training existing roses which were cut down during the repair work to the wall. The long-established climbing roses further along the wall, which had to be pruned hard back during the renovation works, have been rejuvenated and fed, which has encouraged new vigorous growth and an abundance of beautiful colourful and fragrant roses.

The three sambucus nigra shrubs, that had been chopped back to allow scaffolding to be erected, have been carefully pruned to maintain their shape, control their size and encourage colourful foliage and flowers. The bug hotel next to the den will be redeveloped once a final decision has been made about further repairs to the wall, as additional work on the wall would require access around this area. We have added a game of noughts and crosses to the den (top left), created from offcuts of timber. We are conscious the play pieces will go walkabout, but envisage children using twigs, stones or leaves they can find to play the game. In other areas of the garden, we have added new herbs to the raised beds as some had died, together with a sign inviting visitors to snip a few leaves to take home to put in their favourite recipe.

Members of FoRP's working party have recently repaired some of the wooden path edgings for us, unfortunately more of the edgings have since deteriorated. This is obviously going to be an ongoing issue. Many of you will have noticed that the tree fern has not produced any fronds this year and we have been concerned it may have died. We have sought advice from the RHS who have suggested we relocate it to a more sheltered environment later in the year. In the meantime, we remain optimistic it may still rally and continue to water it daily.

The purple geraniums, verbena bonariensis and echinops have been buzzing with bees all summer, attracted to the colour purple, and we were excited to spot a bee entering the bee hotel – the first one we've seen! In keeping with this year's trends at the Chelsea Flower Show we have also added some yellow daisies to the border to contrast with the purple geraniums and verbena.

Sarah Jackson and Lindsey Ward

# IRONMAN® comes to Roundhay Park



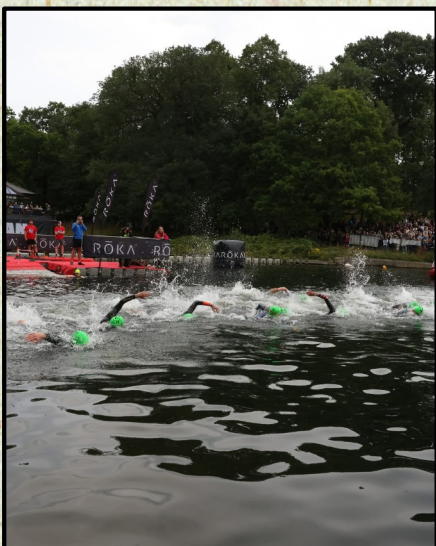
The city of Leeds has an international reputation for triathlon events, inspired by the Olympic achievements of the Brownlee brothers. Roundhay Park has always been central to these events, with Waterloo Lake providing the ideal location for the swim. Following on from these successes, on the 27<sup>th</sup> July Roundhay Park was the glorious centre piece for the only full distance IRONMAN triathlon to take place in England this year. The participants included some professional athletes, but mostly amateurs, both men and women, who were brave enough to tackle this gruelling event. Starting at 6am, the athletes plunged into Waterloo Lake beside the Lakeside Cafe to swim two laps totalling 2.4 miles. Running barefoot to the cricket arena to collect their bikes, they then set off along the carriageway, exiting the park for a 112 mile bike ride. The route covered 3 loops going through Shadwell, Thorner, Bardsey, Harewood, Eccup, Adel and Alwoodley. Having returned to the park the athletes left their bikes and set off to run a full marathon of 26.2 miles around the streets of Roundhay, eventually reaching the finish line back in the park. A total of 2,430 people took part, including 352 women. Ages ranged from 18 to 78, with athletes coming from countries around the world.



IRONMAN Leeds was a truly spectacular and world class event drawing huge numbers of spectators to the park and along the course throughout the long day, giving their support and encouragement as the participants gave everything. It was approaching midnight by the time some arrived at the finish.

Congratulations to everyone who took part – an amazing achievement.

Many of those taking part were raising money for various charities. One of our local participants was Sam Hollis from Moortown who took on the biggest physical challenge of his life to raise money for the Motor Neurone Disease Association in memory of his late grandmother. Sam was inspired to take up triathlon after watching the Brownlee brothers winning medals at the 2012 Olympics. Sam said *"It's quite a special thing to be able to do it on your doorstep. When we were kids all we did was go around Roundhay Park. Everywhere we are racing is somewhere relevant to me."*



# FoRP volunteers joined the IRONMAN Leeds team

A few days before the event, a group of 25 FoRP volunteers, friends and neighbours were 'employed' to pack bags for the athletes. They also helped with other tasks, stacking shelves with merchandise, folding T shirts and disposing of boxes. Among the volunteers was the father of IRONMAN competitor Sam Hollis. Refreshments and music were provided, making it a fun filled morning!

Our task was easily completed and we received lots of lovely comments about our efficiency and willingness to take on a variety of roles. Leaving early allowed some volunteers to picnic in the park ...or have an impromptu visit to the pub for well earned drinks. Our efforts earned FoRP a £300 donation.

As with any event of this scale, there was a lot of clearing up to do afterwards. Once again FoRP volunteers were lending a hand. The IRONMAN team did a great job clearing away all the fencing and the big equipment. Then on the Tuesday, 16 FoRP volunteers, working in three shifts, spread out across the park picking up and bagging the small items of litter.

**Overall, the IRONMAN Leeds event was a huge success – well organised and managed by their team. As ever FoRP was ready and willing to help and support wherever we can. Thank you to everyone involved!**



After the event FoRP volunteers clear up.

**Sir John Barran**  
John Barran was a prominent Baptist. He was a wealthy manufacturing cloth. His clothing factories were world leaders, employing many people, including Michael Marks, who left to set up his own market stall with its slogan "Don't ask the price, everything's a penny". Marks later teamed up with Thomas Spencer who worked at one of Barran's suppliers. The rest of that story is more Leeds history! Barran went on to become Lord Mayor of Leeds and Member of Parliament. He acquired Roundhay Park for the city.



## Connecting with the Past – Beckett Street Cemetery

*In our Spring 2024 newsletter we featured an article, kindly donated by Jeanette Bolton of the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery, about the 'Blind Botanist' who is buried there. Also buried in the cemetery is Sir John Barran. We are delighted that Jeanette has been back in touch with news and information members will find interesting, including free tours of this fascinating cemetery during Heritage Open Days. Thank you Jeanette for this information.*

You may recall reading an article in the Spring 2024 FoRP newsletter which featured two impressive gentlemen who played special roles in the establishment of Roundhay Park for the people of Leeds, namely Sir John Barran, who

secured the purchase of the land for the park and 'The Blind Botanist' John Wilkinson Grimshaw who advised on the planting of trees in the park. Both are laid to rest in Beckett Street Cemetery.

I thought the FoRP committee and members might be interested to know that the Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery have a display cabinet in Abbey House Museum which features both of these men along with some interesting objects on loan from various museum collections, including the original programme for the opening of Roundhay Park by HRH Prince Arthur K.G. on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1872. One of the original botanical specimen pages created by John Wilkinson Grimshaw is on loan from Leeds Discovery Centre.

The museum is a lovely place to visit and is worthy of support especially as its fate hung in the balance last year. The display is there until November 2025. It is free to view if visitors are not able to go around the entire museum and is located behind the entrance/shop by the bottom of the grand staircase.

**The Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery will be offering free tours of the cemetery during Heritage Open Days in September if any FoRP members would like to join us.**

Jeanette Bolton

# More Rubbish!

## There is always litter to be picked

*It is been a challenging summer for FoRP volunteers (and others) who give up their time regularly to pick up other people's rubbish in and around the park. FoRP runs regular group sessions, led by Martin Child, but volunteers are out and about at other times, individually or in support of the council programme 'Litter Free Leeds'. A huge thank you is due to all those who take part. Martin also leads FoRP's contribution to a major water quality monitoring project. Thanks Martin, for this update.*

The regular monthly litter picking sessions have been well attended and (other than Storm Floris on 4<sup>th</sup> August) there have been no cancellations due to adverse weather! We welcomed a small number of new attendees that have been recruited during our sessions out and about clearing up after the travellers. They have enjoyed meeting the team and participating in Rosemary's excellent refreshments.

This summer has been challenging because of the multiple traveller encampments, mostly on Connaught Field but some on Soldiers Field. Each group dumped very significant amounts of litter and most also fly tipped large amounts of waste. The last group (so far) were only on site for 24 hours before they were evicted but still managed to produce lots of rubbish to be removed. This has meant much of our litter picking activity has been concentrated on Connaught Field and rather less on the wider park generally. These efforts have been very significant in helping the park staff to return the field to as near pristine as possible so thank you all for your efforts.

### Lending a Hand on Roundhay Road

Litter Free Leeds organised an event clearing the Tesco, Sports Direct and Wickes site on Roundhay Road at the end of July. Several of the FoRP team attended. It was tough going but very productive. About 30 very full bags and lots of other detritus was collected, including tyres, road signs and cones. Well done Litter Free Leeds!

Overall I think this year has been the worst for litter in the park since the first year of Covid. The weather has brought people out and the traveller camps have significantly exacerbated the problem. The FoRP litter pickers really make a difference day in, day out in maintaining the park as an attractive relaxing place to visit. Thanks to all of you.

### Keeping an Eye on Water Quality in the Park

Regular monthly testing with the new Water Rangers kits is continuing in the park.

On 11th June Cecily, Alison, Heather and I attended another well organised meeting at Leeds University entitled "Empowering Citizens Science Partnerships". The aim of the meeting was to explore challenges/successes that have been faced and co-develop strategies for collaboration/mutual support. Cecily gave an excellent short presentation relating our group's experiences.

Martin Child



# Always Work to Do - FoRP Working Parties get Stuck In!

*Whatever the weather, there is always plenty of work for the valiant FoRP volunteers led by Ian Nicholson. It seems there is almost no job they would not tackle. As Ian's report describes, it's not just their hands that get dirty! Thank you to all the volunteers!*

# Working parties



A great team!

The first two working parties of April saw us concentrating on the pontoon side of the upper lake. The job was to clear brambles and self-seeded saplings from the lakeside. Care was taken not to disturb nesting birds and in a couple of places plants were left in place so as not to disturb the residents. In May, work continued here to weed and sweep the pontoon deck. We then moved on to the Serpentine path (top of the upper lake) to divide clumps of snowdrops. Later in the month we were to be found at the top of the upper lake weeding the bastions by the dam.

Late June saw us in the stumpery, preparing the ground for the planting of new ferns as soon as we get some rain! We also took ourselves down to the tram car park to weed the rhododendron bed (Alison's bed). This turned out to be a huge job due to all the horsetail in the bed. I have no doubt that we will be back on this soon.

The first session of July tackled another big job-Foxwood grids. We chose to do this on a hot, dry day so the water level would be low. This did not mean however that it would not be muddy. As we were dragging large pieces of wood out of the stream we were soon covered in very smelly black mud. I don't know about the rest of the working party team but the Nicholson's work clothes needed two washes to get rid of the smell. The Thursday session found us in the more pleasant surroundings of Canal Gardens where we weeded the steps down to Dingle Dell and around the benches overlooking the canal.

Ian Nicholson



Weeding by the dam



Working by the upper lake



Clearing the grid - Left to right: Before, During and After



newsletter

## Notices and Information

### Traveller Update

Members will be aware of the problems caused by repeated use of Connaught and Soldiers Fields by groups of travellers. FoRP has been very active in pressing the relevant authorities to take steps to prevent vehicle access to these areas. The council parks department has installed large boulders at some access points to Connaught Field, and bollards are also now in place at two main access points. FoRP is engaged with the council and the police with regard to further action to protect these areas.



ADDRESS

### Anyone for Tennis?

It is good to see that the tennis courts at the corner of Lidgett Park Road have been refurbished, looking very smart in green and blue. The courts are free to use, but it is necessary to book online in advance through <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/RoundhayParkTennisCourts>. The introduction of a booking system was a condition attached to the funding received from the LTA which made the refurbishment possible. Group coaching sessions are available at weekends throughout the year – booking and prices online via the website. We hope the new system will provide good access for players, and also help maintain the good condition of the courts for a long time



### They swam and they swam right over the dam....

In recent times, concern has been expressed by some members and others about ducklings falling over the dam at the Wetherby Road end of Waterloo Lake. FoRP has previously been in touch with the RSPB and we have been advised that the birds are not in immediate danger and have plenty of food. There is a way out which they will find.

**FoRP Open Meeting** – the next open meeting for members will be held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm in the Ann Maguire Education Room, next to the Mansion.