

Winter 2025



The Newsletter

WINTER EDITION 2025

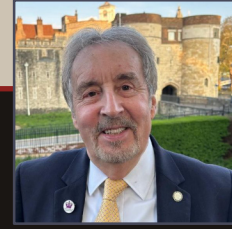
FRIENDS OF ROUNDHAY PARK

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newsletter

Friends of Roundhay Park 2025



Chair's Letter

As 2025 draws to a close, we are looking forward to 2026 and all it might bring.

This year was marked with unusually good weather throughout Spring and Summer and it is only the last four or five weeks that nature is returning us the much-needed rain. Globally and nationally, it has been a somewhat volatile time although, with the exception of issues surrounding funding and the future, it has little direct impact on the park.

One recurring problem this year has been the number of unannounced arrivals of travellers taking up encampment on the fields. The park staff have now installed a number of devices intended to deter or prevent their occupation and pressures have been put on council staff and police to ameliorate the ongoing problems and any aftermath.

Unfortunately, as I write, travellers have just occupied the car park at the former lido site on Wetherby Road and there have been some allegations of hostile conduct and roaming dogs which may intimidate some visitors. Hopefully by the time you read this, these matters will have been successfully resolved.

An unknown for next year will be the planned concerts in the park after the council substantially increased the maximum capacity for those wishing to attend. They have given us assurances that planning will ensure that there will be minimal impact on the park and the surroundings, and we will be closely watching on. Of course, the council's objective here is to raise more income to bolster their finances. We trust that the park will also receive some direct benefits as well.

Throughout the year our volunteers have worked tirelessly and done as much as they are able to ensure that the park is maximised to look its best. As ever, as the work and our objectives increase, there is always a need for more and we would welcome any interest from individuals or groups to join or augment the works that we find necessary to undertake.

It is also timely to look at the Friends' constitution and we are considering not only membership generally but also looking for volunteers who would be willing to join the committee and to involve themselves in the running and administration, especially looking to future leadership. We welcome all comers and new members to our published meetings throughout the year. Please, would you give our invitation some consideration.

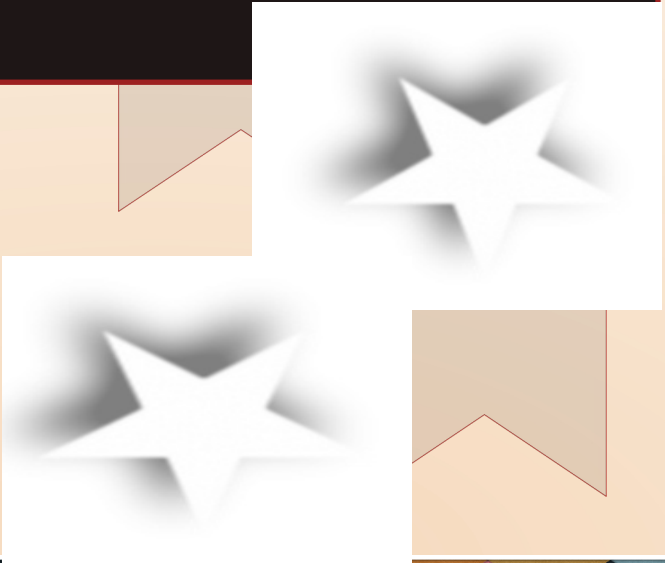
So now, in closing, however you choose to spend the festive period, we wish you all a peaceful and enjoyable one, and that you will be able to spend precious time with family and loved ones.

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



Friends of Roundhay Park 2025

Three Little Birds



Our bird correspondent Dave Johnston delights us once again with information and beautiful photos of three small resident birds that we can all see if we take the time to look around, and..... don't worry, because every little thing's going to be alright. (Ed couldn't resist the Bob Marley reference). Thank you Dave.



These three birds will often be seen in your gardens as well as in the park.

The blue tit (top left) is just as popular as the robin for many people. It is a resident bird with a staggering 3.6 million pairs in the UK. It is basically a very active blue and yellow bird with white cheeks, measuring around 12cm long. It prefers deciduous trees, particularly oaks, and we have many of these in the park. It nests in holes in trees, laying 7 to 8 eggs. The young and parent birds prefer oak tree caterpillars in spring and summer, as well as other insects and spiders. The parents make at least 1000 visits per day to the nesting hole or nest box to feed their young. Their winter diet consists mainly of fruits and seeds. They will readily visit gardens supplying fat and seeds or nuts all year round. Their lifespan is about 3 years, although the record is 10 years. They have many predators including sparrow hawks, jays and grey squirrels. All of these are common in the park and surrounding gardens.

There are 2.6 million pairs of great tits (lower left) in the UK. They also prefer deciduous woodland, especially oak. They are bigger than blue tits, at 14cm long. As well as size, it is generally easy to distinguish these from blue tits by their black heads with white cheeks, olive coloured backs and yellow underparts. A black line runs vertically down through this yellow region, with the male having a wider line than the female. Like blue tits, they nest in holes in trees, the female laying up to 12 eggs and having two broods per year. They have a similar diet to blue tits, also commonly visit gardens, and predation is high with the same predators as blue tits. Great tits are known for their mimicry. They can mimic between 70 and 100 different bird calls and songs. This can be very frustrating for birdwatchers.

The coal tit (top right) is the least familiar of these three birds. There are about 7000 pairs in the UK. They are between 10 to 11.5 cm long and are often described as a monochrome blue tit, having a black head with white cheeks, a black bib and a large white spot on the back of its head. Its underparts are rufous and its back is grey. Like the other two birds it is a resident of the UK. It prefers conifers, but is well adapted to deciduous trees in parks and gardens. It nests in holes in trees, having two broods per year of 8 to 10 eggs. The young eat a range of insects and spiders. Predation is high, with the same predators as the other two birds. They are quite shy compared to the other two. (lower right - a young blue tit and coal tit come face to face).

Blue and great tits are regular visitors to many gardens and may stay around bird feeders for some time. Coal tits tend to fly quickly to a feeder, take some food and quickly fly away. All three can be seen regularly in the park and make pleasing additions to our gardens in the winter.

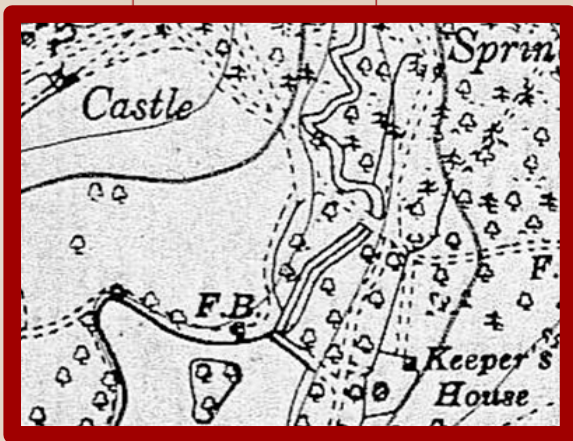
Dave Johnston

'Keeper's Garth' – A House that Once Stood in the Park

Our thanks go to our Friend and historian Neville Hurworth, who has contributed many articles for the newsletter over the years. Here, Neville brings us the history of a house which used to stand in the park. If the suggested date of demolition is accurate, we wonder if any FoRP members remember this house? It would be lovely to hear from you if you do.

There was once a house with its garden on the eastern bank of the Waterloo Lake not far from the island and the Gorge (see the map section below). It was where the gamekeeper lived and was one of a few six-sided similar lodges on the estate. Often called 'Keeper's Garth', it was an important part of the park when game was abundant in the nineteenth century and the owners were the Nicholson family. In 1934 the Yorkshire Evening Post (YEP) ran an article about it. One of the park workers, Mr Garrett lived there with his wife and family.

Diagram: Section of an Ordnance Survey (OS) map for 1891, showing the Gamekeeper's House. Crown copyright reserved.

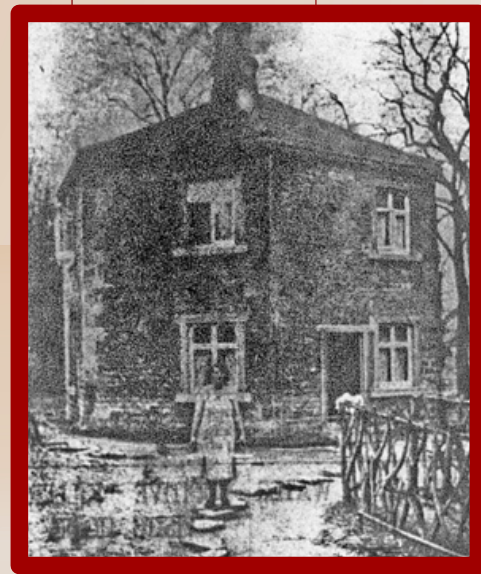


The YEP says the house was solidly built of grey stone and some of the walls were believed to be 18 inches thick. There were three bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, a pantry and cellars. There was no electricity and oil lamps were used for lighting.

Some earlier OS maps show a well on the site near the house, but by this time the family was fetching clean drinking water from the spring in the Gorge about two hundred yards away (see the top right-hand corner of the OS map section). On washing days, Mr Garrett made eight or nine journeys in the morning with enamel pails, presumably before he started work. The toilet was outside. It was a "spacious midden" without a roof and in summer it attracted rats and bluebottles.

Neville Hurworth

A few years later, Keeper's Garth was condemned as unhealthy and Leeds City Council agreed to accept a quotation of £30 for demolition of the site. The last year Keeper's Garth at Roundhay Park appeared in the Leeds Electoral Rolls was 1938 and it showed the Garretts were still living there. However, an OS map of 1956 still shows the "Keeper's House". Indeed, oral evidence suggests demolition occurred later in the 1960s and an OS map of 1968 shows no sign of this historic site.



The section of the 1891 OS map shows a fence or wall surrounding the house and garden with a gate leading through trees to the Waterloo Lake. I have searched where I believe the keeper's cottage may have been, but the area is overgrown.

Lots of single bricks can be found in groups in the ground in this part of the park, and there are sometimes two or three red bricks cemented together. If the midden had been brick-built, I suppose some of these may have come from its demolition.

The picture above shows Mrs Garrett outside the house. It's from a black and white photograph in the YEP article, which I cleaned up digitally from an image supplied by Leeds Public Library, from their newspaper microfilm copy.

A couple of sides of the house can be seen, and to the left (where a top window is obligingly open), another side of the house can be made out. There are flat stones in the ground (Mrs Garrett is standing on one) suggesting drainage of the site was poor. The picture shows what looks like fencing in the right-hand corner.



Janet Wilkinson and her dedicated team continue their wonderful work making the Friends Garden a special place within Canal Gardens. Visitors will always enjoy this place, but will be unaware of some of the setbacks the FoRP volunteers have to deal with. This is all the more reason we have to thank Janet and the team for all their fantastic efforts. Here is Janet's report – the good news and the bad news.

The Good and the Bad in the Friends Garden

First the good. We have had another good year in the Friends Garden. The lack of rain meant we had to do lots of watering, but the flowers in the garden were lovely and seemed not to notice the dry conditions. All our sessions have been well attended by our volunteers and from chatting to visitors it is clear that our efforts are appreciated.

By the time you read this our volunteers will be taking their annual Winter break from the garden. We will, however be back as soon as the weather allows, which is usually sometime in February. When we do return, hopefully the hellebores will be flowering and the spring flowering bulbs will be getting ready to put on their annual display. We will all be excited to get back into the garden so we can start planning for the year ahead.

Now the bad. Sadly this year we have had two plants stolen from the garden. The first was a an unusual acer that had been bought with

money donated to FoRP by a local group. The second was a lovely specimen plant that regularly attracted comments. This is so disappointing for the volunteers who give up their time to make sure the garden is kept looking good throughout the year. We continuously look to improve the garden and this often means getting new plants or removing plants that are diseased or no longer performing as they should. The new plants that we put into the garden are generally bought from the money that FoRP receives from its members. In addition some of the volunteers grow plants themselves from seeds or cuttings or we bring plants from our own gardens. Therefore it is very disappointing for us all when plants that we have nurtured are taken. Fortunately the theft of plants has been limited and hopefully there is no repeat next year.

Janet Wilkinson



The Sensory Garden is the Bee's Knees

The Sensory Garden within the walls of Canal Gardens is FoRP's own creation, supported by park staff. Sarah Jackson and her brilliant team of volunteers have turned this corner into a very special area with an abundance of beautiful plants to delight the senses. Just ask the bees – they love it! Sarah has provided this update. Thanks to all who help in this garden.



Our weekly sessions in the sensory garden have gone really well. Only a couple were rained off, and given the weather lately, we're quite happily counting that as a success!

The garden has really treated us this year. The hydrangeas and Japanese anemones have been absolutely stunning, keeping the borders full of colour right into autumn. Now that the leaves are dropping, the cornus are taking their turn to shine, with their bright red and yellow stems adding a lovely splash of winter cheer.

We have also had some interesting company while working in the borders. One of the zookeepers from Tropical World has popped by a few times during his regular bee and butterfly surveys. To our delight, he told us that our sensory garden has the widest variety of bees in the whole park - especially around the echinops, which the bees clearly adore as much as we do!

Our tree fern gave us a bit of a scare this summer when it didn't produce any fronds, and we worried it might not have made it. After checking in with the RHS, we learned that it really

prefers a shady, sheltered spot with plenty of water. So we gave it daily drinks through the warm months and were delighted when it finally showed some fresh new growth! It has now been moved to a more protected area of the garden, and we're keeping our fingers crossed for an even happier tree fern next year.

And yes - it's that time of year again! Once again, we decorated a tree for the Christmas Tree Festival at St Andrew's Church (see p 11). This time we celebrated all the brilliant work the FoRP working parties do, so we spent a fun afternoon crafting decorations that show off the different jobs they take on to keep the park looking lovely. (Photo lower right: Sarah and Lindsey making decorations)

We are also planning to bring back last year's "rubbish decorations," made to highlight the amazing work of FoRP's litter-picking team. They will be brightening up the sensory garden over the Christmas period, so if you didn't catch them on the St Andrew's trail last year, do wander over and enjoy them here instead.

Sarah Jackson

The Work goes on with FoRP Working Parties



Every Thursday and Saturday groups of hard working volunteers, led by Ian Nicholson get together as FoRP working parties. Never afraid to get their hands dirty, they tackle all sorts of jobs around the park in (almost) all weathers. Ian has provided this account of recent activities, and photos posted on Facebook. If you want to join in this valuable work you can make contact through our website at www.forp.org 'what we do'.



It has been another busy year for FoRP working parties. Many of the jobs we tackle are annual or even quarterly. Ram Beck features heavily, although this year it has shown significant improvement in the type of material we are clearing. The majority of the work is clearing fallen branches from the stream.

Brambles by the lake are also an ongoing battle. Brambles are only removed when they encroach onto the path as we are aware that brambles have value for the wildlife. Cleaning the pontoon deck and removing self-seeded trees from the area is always a satisfying job as we 'can see where we've been'.

This year we have managed to tackle both ends of the park, weeding around both the main gate and Wetherby Road gates. We felt that the main gate was particularly important as the 'face' of the park for the visitors. Another new area was a session in the Yorkshire Air Ambulance garden which had been badly hit by this years' drought.

Finally, we would like to thank all the members of the working party for turning out in all kinds of weather. This year has seen us welcome some younger volunteers who have significantly lowered the average age of the group.

Ian Nicholson

Keeping it Clean – Litter Picking and Water Monitoring



FoRP has always been very active in doing what we can to keep the park clean in every way possible. Our volunteers have been picking up and clearing litter for years. Sadly, this is a never ending task. In recent years we have also become involved in a major project monitoring water quality in the park. Martin Child who leads FoRP's regular group litter picking sessions, and also our involvement in the water monitoring project, has provided this update. Thank you to all the volunteers!

Litter picking has carried on at full strength during the autumn. We continue to attract new members which is great, particularly as some of the recent arrivals are lowering the average age of the team! Welcome to you all. We have a very dedicated and committed group of volunteers who make a tangible difference to the park, a profound thank you to all.

Water Monitoring

The water monitoring project has just completed its second year. Sue Tuffin from REAP has put together a final summary report. It is very straightforward and clearly demonstrates our findings so far. I think it is important to continue and refine this work into the future.



As part of this project, Sue and I went out in a powered inflatable on Waterloo Lake on Tuesday 12th November, courtesy of the rowing club, to do an 'outfall safari' to look at all pipes draining into the lake. Many are not

visible from the bank. It was a very interesting, if very wet, exercise and helps gain a clearer picture of what is flowing into the lake and from where.

I have also seen a final 'draft' version of the film the Oakwood Cinema team made around water quality and the monitoring exercise/citizen scientist project Friends of Gledhow Valley Woods, REAP and FoRP are all involved in. In my view it is an excellent piece of work and is now available to view on the FoRP website www.forp.org (look under 'News').

Martin Child

Oakwood Film Academy – Documentary on Water Quality

Dave Sellers, a member of the Oakwood Film Academy, has made an excellent documentary film about water quality in Leeds. This includes the work done by local groups - Friends of Gledhow Valley Woods, REAP and FoRP to monitor water quality in two separate areas of North East Leeds.

The filming with REAP and FoRP members took place in March 2024 and the project has moved on considerably since then. The initial results for Roundhay Park mentioned in the film only cover 2024. A few minor 'tweaks' were being made to the film at the end of November (mainly on the sound track), but there will be no substantive changes.

Winter Fun in the Forest for Little FoRP



Melody Thornton continues to run Forest School sessions, giving great opportunities for young children to enjoy and learn about the woodland in our beautiful park. This is so important, as these youngsters will hopefully go on to be fully fledged volunteers joining our various working parties. Thank you, Melody, for all your efforts and for sending in this report.

Winter in the woods is a restorative time for the Little FoRPer. We have been exploring other areas of the woods in an effort to keep warm, and compare what we find in our home base. Branches are drooping, and pine cones need collecting. We've had a lot of fun dancing in the rain, and seeing just how full streams can get in different weathers. We also had a great time building pretend bonfires and wrapping play dough around sticks to 'toast on the fire'.

What has been super fun is embracing and exploring all the different resources we find through the seasons - comparing leaf colours, making leaf rainbows, stick textures and strength, depth of mud and leaf litter. The opportunities are endless.

We made some willow stars to decorate the St Andrews Christmas tree too. (see p 11)

We'll be taking a small break over the festive season to rest, and look forward to exploring the winter wonderlands in January.

For more information, email Melody on forestschooll@forp.org

Melody Thornton

BIRD FLU HAS BEEN DETECTED IN THIS AREA. DON'T RISK SPREADING IT!

Bird Flu Alert

James Watson, the Estate Officer for Roundhay Park contacted FoRP on 25th November to inform us that a case of bird flu had been confirmed at the Upper Lake. We hope this will not spread, but in the meantime please make others aware that dead or sick birds should not be touched and dogs should be kept away. Public Health has asked that this poster should be displayed in the park. This includes an address where dead or sick birds can be reported online. Please take care.

Keep to footpaths, with **dogs on leads**

Do not **pick up or touch** dead or sick wild birds

Do not touch wild bird feathers or surfaces contaminated with wild bird droppings

If you keep poultry or other birds, wash your hands, clean and disinfect your footwear before tending your birds

If you find any dead wild birds, please report online



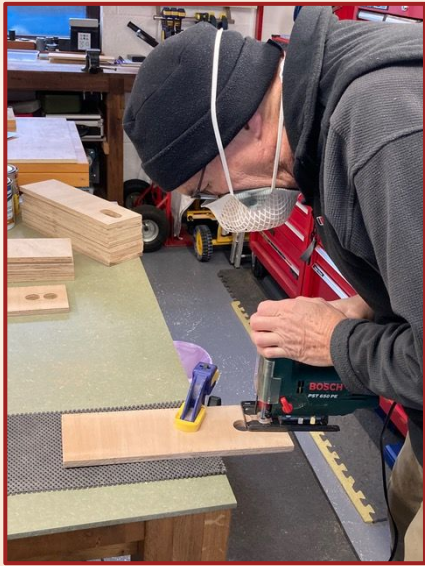
www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds

Or call the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77

APHA may collect some dead birds for surveillance testing. Otherwise birds can be disposed of, safely if necessary, by the local authority on public land or by the landowner/manager. www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-and-disposing-of-dead-wild-birds

Animal & Plant Health Agency





Can you Help Build Swift Boxes



As if he didn't have enough to do already, Martin Child has become involved in the building of 'swift boxes' for nesting swifts. The editor had the pleasure of watching swifts flying around above the Upper Lake one day in the summer. It would be lovely if these remarkable birds could become a more regular sight in the park. Martin explains why help is needed. (Photos: Martin at work, and swift looking for a home)

My main roles within FoRP are in supporting the wonderful litter picking team and being part of the water monitoring project which has just completed its second year. Away from this, I also construct swift boxes for Leeds Swifts. I have no idea how many I have built over the last couple of years but it must be over 100 units. These boxes are bought by supporters of Leeds Swifts and installed, preferably in or close to existing swift colonies in Leeds.



Swifts are in serious decline, partly due to the use of pesticides which has dramatically reduced the volume of insect food available and also due to the loss of nesting sites. Swifts traditionally nested in the eaves and roofs of houses and barns, as well as cliff faces and other natural sites. Unfortunately, the advent of uPVC soffits and fascias and the drive to improve insulation and make houses less 'leaky' many swift nesting sites have been lost. Nest boxes are a good alternative.

I am looking for help to meet the increasing demand for boxes. Truthfully, to produce them in the numbers that I do, you need some decent equipment and reasonable levels of skill. A good table saw and a mitre saw or large bandsaw are needed and a good pillar drill is helpful. You will know if this person is you! Each box is given a quick sanding and two coats of exterior water based wood stain (varnish). If anyone could help with this task alone, that would be extremely useful.

I can be contacted by email at flying.martin@uwclub.net or 07507 571440. Thank you.

Martin Child





Firmer Footing

The footpath around Waterloo Lake has been a problem for many years, suffering from the fact that it provides a beautiful level walk around this spectacular lake. People flock to this place, and hundreds of thousands of feet of all sizes walk this path every year. Maintaining anything like a good surface is an expensive and continuing task for the cash-strapped local authority. Runners and cyclists also use it on a daily basis. The path faces many challenges, in addition to heavy footfall, including water run-off from hillsides and numerous springs in various locations.

In recent years, the busy section of path running from the Lakeside Cafe, which is a popular spot for feeding the swans, ducks (and gulls!) has become particularly bad, with deep ruts, making it very difficult for buggies and anyone with limited mobility. From November, this section was closed off for the council to undertake major repairs and resurfacing. We all look forward to treading this greatly improved path again soon.

FoRP on Show at the Xmas Tree Festival



Once again, St Andrews Church in Roundhay put on a Christmas Tree Festival in the run up to Christmas (4-6th December), and FoRP provided a tree with decorations made and hung by volunteers from the Sensory Garden team and children from Little FoRP. Decorations were carefully chosen to represent the work done by FoRP in the park, hence the inclusion of some unusual items such as a miniature garden spade. The end result looked lovely and festive. We hope you managed to get along to see all the trees at this annual festival.



Notices

A Generous Legacy for FoRP

FoRP has been left a legacy in the will of Susan Fiona Slavin. The money will go towards future purchases of items for our working parties and is gratefully received. Our condolences go to the family and friends of the deceased. It appears that Susan was living in a care home in Louth. If any members knew or remember Susan we would love to hear from you.

No FoRP Calendar for 2026

For many years FoRP was producing its own calendar featuring beautiful photos of the park. This was an onerous task, and in recent years Catriona Moore and The English Arts Company had been producing the calendar for us with photos by Catriona and art by David Lyon. The English Art Company no longer operates the gallery beside the Mansion and changes to the way they operate mean they will not be producing the calendar in future, although they remain good friends of FoRP. Thanks, Catriona, for all your contributions.

Traveller Update

FoRP continues to be active in efforts to deter repeated traveller encampments on Connaught Field and other possible sites. In November, travellers set up in the lido car park on Wetherby Road – the first time this location has been used. We are grateful to John Jackson who has been liaising with the council on behalf of FoRP on this matter. We understand tree planting will be carried out between November and January as part of the effort to restrict access to vulnerable areas.

SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS
BEST WISHES FOR 2026

Address label

Many thanks to members who have donated such lovely photos of the park. We always need them so please continue to send them to the editor. We are not always able to acknowledge who took the photo, but please be reassured that we appreciate your contributions.

