

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FOWP) Newsletter

Issue 2 - July 2021



Message from the Chair

Well we have seen some amazing weather in July, all the better for people visiting our lovely park. Things are really taking off now with the Friends group; we have had six very successful gardening sessions so far and we are starting to make a real difference in the sunken garden. The 'balsam bashers' have been hard at work and cleared a lot of the Limb Brook, but we continue to battle with this invasive plant. Our hard working Steering Group has been busy too organising the work into teams - see more in this newsletter - if you feel you'd like to join one of our teams do get in touch. In the meantime, I hope everyone is enjoying the summer and able to get away on holiday where restrictions allow.

Shelagh Woolliscroft
FOWP Steering Group Chair

Celebration event in June

The Friends of Whirlow Brook Park and the Sheffield University of the Third age (Su3a) held a private event on Wednesday 23 June in Whirlow Brook Park (unfortunately numbers had to be restricted because of Covid). The event celebrated 70 years since the park was opened to the public in 1951, as well as 10 years of dedicated work by Su3a in establishing a Commemorative Garden. The event also marked the opening of a new shelter in the park, as well as officially launching the Friends group. A lot to celebrate!



The pond in 1950.

Sir Jamie Benton Jones, the 5th Baronet of Treeton attended the event, as well as his mother, Lady Margaret Benton Jones. It was Sir Jamie's Great Grandfather and Grandmother, Sir Walter and Lady Madge Benton Jones who lived at Whirlow Brook in the 1920s and 30s and established the lovely gardens there with the help of the RHS. When Madge died in 1938, Sir Walter moved to the family seat at Irnham Hall, in Lincolnshire. The house and gardens at Whirlow were acquired by Sheffield Corporation in 1946, through the generosity of the Graves Trust and Sheffield Town Trust for £15,000, with a view to making it a public park.

Sir Jamie lives at Irnham Hall, Lincolnshire, and has never visited his family home at Whirlow and was very excited to be able to be there. On arrival, Tom Smith, manager of Whirlow Brook Hall (which is managed by Vine Hotels) gave Sir Jamie and family a tour of the house which they loved. After lunch, guests walked to the Commemorative Garden and were welcomed by Brian Cave, Chair of Sheffield u3a. The Lord Mayor said she was delighted to be there and to launch the Friends Group which has evolved from the Su3a garden. She thanked Su3a for all their hard work over the last 10 years and presented Alison Cowper, Su3a volunteer, with high viz tabards for all the volunteers. She commented that the Su3a Commemorative Garden is an indication of what can be achieved when communities work in partnership with Sheffield City Council. (SCC)



Sir Jamie Benton Jones opens the new shelter with the Lord Mayor, Gail Smith.

The Lord Mayor and Sir Jamie untied the ribbon on the new shelter and Sir Jamie spoke about the history of the Hall and his ancestors, and how pleased he is with all the work that Su3Aa has done and that the new Friend's group has been launched.

Sheffield u3a video group were there to record the event and there was also a musical accompaniment from 'Cellar V' a local band, who regularly practise in the park. You can watch the video on You Tube following the link <https://youtu.be/zdlgh-1AMz8>



Honoured guests and the FOWP Steering group

Shelagh Woolliscroft, our chair, who has been the driving force behind the Su3a Commemorative Garden and now the Friends Group, acknowledged the interest and support shown to date and the importance of working in partnership with SCC, in co-operation with Vine Hotels. She thanked honoured guests for coming, thanked all the donors for making the shelter possible, and explained how FOWP will be landscaping the area around it. She outlined

some of the plans that FOWP and SCC have for the park and invited people to join the Friends Group. Finally, Tom Smith, Manager of Whirlow Brook Hall, thanked everyone for coming and invited guests to take afternoon tea in the Hall, courtesy of Vine Hotels.

Extraordinary General Meeting - a date for your diary

We will be holding our first meeting of members in order to give an update on progress so far, and also to elect a management committee. We need to do this so Friends of Whirlow Brook Park can get properly underway. It really matters. And we promise to make it as interesting as possible! The EGM will be held on **Tuesday 28th September starting at 7.30pm** at Whirlow Brook Hall. At the EGM we will be electing a management committee of up to 12 people. Once elected, the committee will meet to appoint the following Officers from amongst themselves: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Publicity Officer. Other responsibilities to be allocated include - volunteer management; coordination of minor works; coordination of events; leading on health and well-being; horticulture and ecology.

If you are interested in being on the management committee you will need to fill in a Nomination form and find a proposer and seconder from within the Friends. Nomination forms will be sent out to paid-up members only with the option to nominate, second and stand, by 9 August, forms to be returned by 27th August. Councillor Colin Ross, a keen supporter of the Park, will chair the meeting. Tea and coffee will be available. Hope to see you there!

Who we are

The current Steering Group members are:

Chair - Shelagh Woolliscroft,
 Secretary - Roger Lasko
 Treasurer - Chris Cave
 Membership Secretary - David Jordan
 Publicity Officer - Maggie Girling

Join one of our Park Teams

Getting the park back into shape is a huge task! In order to tackle what needs to be done and in addition to the regular volunteering work, we are setting up teams to tackle certain aspects. These are:

Minor Works Team - looking at repairing fences, paths and painting benches etc

Ecology and Horticulture - looking at what plants work well and attracting wildlife

Events - organising events to attract visitors to the park and also to fund raise

Publicity - helping publicise FOWP through social media, website and newsletters and developing signage

Health - promoting the park as a centre for well-being and mental health therapy

Heritage - looking at the history of the park and surrounding areas

If you are interested in getting involved with any of the above teams please email us at friendsofwhirlowbrookpark@gmail.com quoting 'Teams'. You don't have to be in a team to still do the regular volunteering.

Balsam Bashing

We have had two very successful 'balsam bashing' sessions on 3rd and 10th July. Nineteen volunteers braved the incessant rain to tackle a huge area where the invasive plant has taken over. It was great fun and easy to do, just a bit slippy in the rain. There is more of it down the Limb Brook so if you spot any - please pull it up and leave it in a pile.



Our next volunteer days

All volunteer sessions will start at 9.45am, meeting at the grass square just below the top car park. There will be a register and a health and safety talk for any new volunteers. We will also ask you to give us an emergency contact number for a partner, friend or neighbour. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring gloves. There are a variety of gardening tools to use but you are welcome to bring your own. Bring a drink and hand sanitizer!



Saturday 7 August - Clear sunken garden and children's play area

Monday 16 August - weed sensory garden near children's play area. Cut back laurels near the park entrance.

Saturday 4 Sept - TBA depending on progress to date

Wednesday 22 Sept - TBA

Saturday 2 October - TBA

Monday 18 October - TBA

Saturday 6 November - TBA

Wednesday 17 November - TBA

Freedom day may have arrived but volunteers should still continue to wear masks in the gardener's store. And please don't come to the sessions if you feel unwell or have been 'pinged' by the NHS App.

Music in the Park

Recent visitors may have heard music in the park, usually on a Monday morning. This is Cellar V, a local band who use the park to practise. They play a mix of 60s and 70s rock, blues and folk.

Weather permitting, Cellar V will be playing on the grass in the lower part of the park on Sunday 8 August from 5pm. This is not a public event, but should be a pleasant way to mark the start of our Friends group. If it proves popular, then Sunday afternoon music may become a regular summer feature.

There is a wedding reception in the Hall starting at 6.30pm so we have to work around that. Please leave the upper car park free for wedding guests to park. If the lower car park is full there will be a notice at the entrance gate. There may be room on the semi-circle outside the lower entrance (but please respect residents parking) and also plenty of space on Whirlowdale Road. Better still, if you can walk or get the bus please do so in order to leave car park space for those with mobility problems.

If it is wet on 8 August, Cellar V will play on 29 August instead, at the same time.

So bring a picnic, chair or blanket and a drink/bottle and enjoy the evening. More information email us on

friendsofwhirlowbrookpark@gmail.com



Cellar V

Fridge Freezer wanted!

Does anyone have an old fridge freezer they no longer want? Or know anyone who has one? We need one for the gardeners' store. If so, please get in touch with John Coldron - email johncoldron@gmail.com

Grow



Steve Cotton (left) and colleague from Grow selling plants in the Park

We are in discussion with Grow UK and their business arm, Grow Gardening. Grow UK are a Sheffield-based charity who work with young people aged 16-25 through the medium of growing plants and tending people's gardens.

Grow are growing! They currently work at an alpaca farm in Crosspool, but they love this park and have recently expressed interest in developing the area we call the compound (at the far end of the top car park) for use as a new base. The Council are keen to explore this with them. If it comes to fruition, FOWP is looking forward to having a strong partnership with Grow. We could offer intergenerational work opportunities and they would be able to grow plants for the park and educate their trainees in amenity horticulture. Who knows, some of their young people may become the park managers of the future. So, watch this space!

Surveyor needed

We are looking for anyone who has building surveying experience to do a scaled drawing of the building in the compound at the side of the Hall. It is very much in disrepair but if you can help then please get in touch at friendsofwhirlowbrookpark@gmail.com

Partnering with Vine Hotels

And another story of partnering - we are hoping to form a successful relationship with the lessee of Whirlow Brook Hall, Vine Hotels. Founded in 2015, Vine Hotels is a UK based hotel management and development company, whose ethos is based on 'a sustainable business, adding improvement, value and generating tangible results for all stakeholders'.

Vine Hotels also manage the Kenwood Hotel at Nether Edge and Mosborough Hall Hotel. The current Sheffield manager is Tom Smith who has been very supportive of FOWP from the start.

Vine Hotels have agreed to become FOWP's first commercial sponsor and we plan to work together to show that it is possible to have a commercial enterprise operating within a public park.

Vine Hotels have a 25 year lease with Sheffield City Council to operate Whirlow Brook Hall as a wedding and events centre. There is no residential accommodation. It is a popular place for weddings and there are 96 bookings between now and the end of March.



Manager of Whirlow Brook Hall, Tom Smith, speaking at our celebration event in June.

Vine's responsibility is to look after the house and the terrace. Sheffield Parks and Countryside Department are responsible for mowing the lawns, trimming the hedges, spraying the weeds and making sure that the park is safe for visitors.

Wedding guests often spill out onto the top lawn but do not have exclusive use of it.

In return for their generous sponsorship FoWP will endeavour to improve the appearance of the terrace by fixing some hanging baskets (there is a watering system) and planting up some large pots.

Forestry Work

There will be some major forestry work in the Rough Standhills plantation starting in September. The Forestry Commission has identified larch disease and so the larches, together with any adjacent planting, need to be felled. The Forestry Commission will then fund the replanting with native species. It is hoped that the community will get involved in the restoration work. John Gilpin, SCC's Woodlands Manager has organised a meeting on **Monday 9 August at 6 pm.** (meet at the top car park behind the Hall.) There will be a walk and talk in the plantation taking approximately two hours looking at the work methods proposed. The Forestry Commission's Regional Woodland Officer, Ciara McCarthy and the Woodland Trust's Outreach advisor for North England, Liam Plummer will give their perspective and give advice on questions raised.

This meeting is not limited to local residents but is open to anyone who would like to attend.