

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) Newsletter

Issue 5 - November 2021



Message from the Chair

A relatively dry and very mild autumn has enabled the volunteers to push on with various tasks. More about this in our update below.

We held our first Management Committee meeting on 27th October in the Hall and were provided with refreshments from Vine Hotels. Roles were allocated at the meeting. (See note below).

We welcomed Nick Goffin to the management committee. Nick's experience of preparing bids for funding will be of great use. We are still looking for that special someone to lead an events team - could that be you? We are not planning huge events at present - perhaps an Easter bunny hunt and some musical evenings next summer. If you would like to help please do get in touch.

A special thanks to Geoff Nixon who spent a whole morning sharpening people's secateurs and loppers and raised £60 for FoWP funds. If Geoff is willing we would like to repeat this in the early Spring.

The history team have been very busy too, as you will see from the article below. When we are finished, there will be a full account on the website.

Our last session for 2021 will be on 4 December when I expect there will be leaves to gather, yet more weeds to pull up and mince pies to eat! Maybe we will be able to start sanding the benches with the cordless multitool bought by John out of the donation from the SW Sheffield People Keeping Well Partnership.

Thanks to everyone who has helped to get FoWP off the ground so quickly. We are certainly making a difference!

Shelagh Woolliscroft
FoWP Chair

Volunteer Update

We have cleared, cleaned and repainted the children's maze and dug out hundreds of alchemilla mollis plants from the same area.



A great team effort!

We had the big pond clearout on 18 October (see below) and dug up the brambles around the lower pond. And we've replaced the fencing between the upper car park and the lawns with the help of Parks Dept.

We've also planted nearly 3,000 bulbs - scillas on the top lawn and muscari/daffodils along the drive-side.



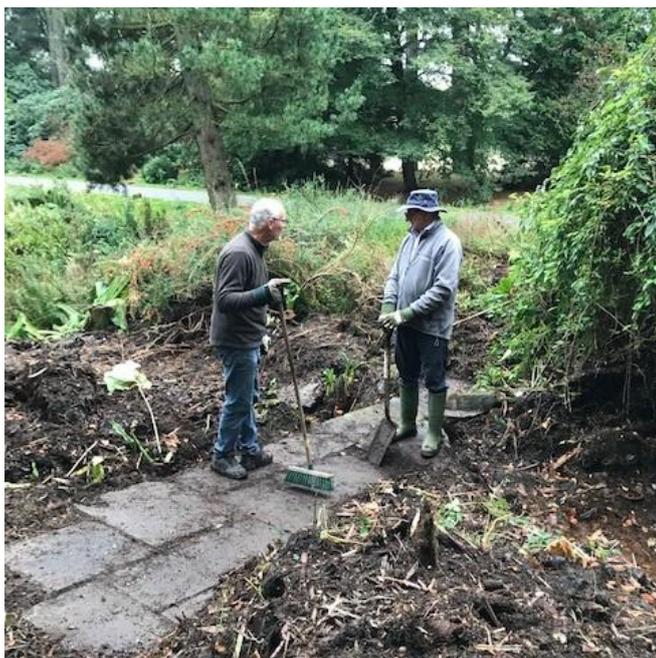
The new fence

The Big Pond Clear Out

This was a great success! We removed about three tons of muck from the ponds (and revealed a little bridge that we didn't know existed). We had around 25 volunteers on the day, including members of Abbeydale Rotary and students from the University of Sheffield.



Mud glorious mud!



Uncovered the bridge

Progress on the Sunken Garden

You will recall what a terrible state the sunken garden had got into - overgrown and infested with weeds. It was clearly due for a makeover!

After Parks Dept flattened it with a digger, we discussed the layout of the central beds. Not

quite as painful as Cop26 but almost as protracted. The outcome is that we shall have two symmetrical octagonal beds and some side borders to fill. Parks have marked them out and the bare patches in the lawn re-seeded.

We are looking at planting scented shrubs and plants. Being in a dip, the scent will linger. One of the tree officers suggested a white birch for the centre of each octagonal bed and Andy Mumford, Area Manager for SW Sheffield, is currently trying to source some that won't break the bank.

The first lot of shrubs are on order for delivery in February. Organic matter will be spread on the new beds before Christmas, to be absorbed (we hope) before February's Big Dig. Next spring will see the fruit of our labours. If it all comes together it will be truly a cause for celebration.

If you wish to support the planting of the sunken garden then we would gladly accept a donation via the website. The cost of good shrubs has risen and there will be some side borders that won't be filled until FoWP's bank balance is a bit healthier. Thank you.

FoWP Management Committee

Roles were allocated at our first management committee meeting on 27th October.

Chair - Shelagh Woolliscroft
Secretary - Roger Lasko
Treasurer - Chris Cave
Membership Secretary - David Jordan
Construction and Maintenance - John Coldron
Marketing and Publicity - Maggie Girling
Funding - Nick Goffin

This leaves a further five places which may be filled by co-option. We need more help with fund-raising, organising events, and volunteer management. If you're interested and feel you could make a contribution, please contact Shelagh on 0114 255 8948.

Additionally, Bridget Tattersall has kindly agreed to be an adviser on health and wellbeing.

Our next volunteer days

All volunteer sessions start at 9.45am, meeting at the grass square just below the top car park. No need to book - just turn up! There will be a sign-in sheet and health and safety information for new volunteers. We will also ask for an emergency contact number for a partner, friend or neighbour. (Under GDPR, we don't keep this data and it is shredded after each session). 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 sanitiser.

2021

Wednesday 17 November

Saturday 4 December

2022

Saturday 8 January

Monday 17 January

Saturday 5 February

Monday 21 February

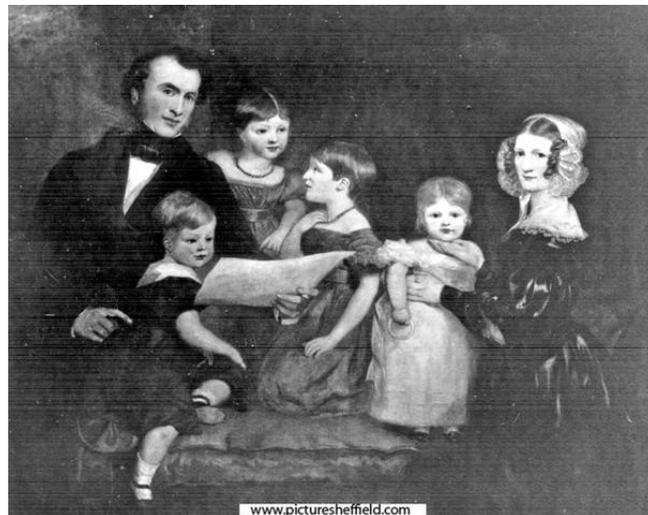
Volunteers should still continue to wear masks in the gardener's store. And please don't come to the sessions if you feel unwell or have been 'pinged' by the NHS App.

Digging up the past

We have formed a small, but very enthusiastic history team to research the history of the park and hall and our detective work is paying off. The Hall was built by Percy Fawcett in 1906, but later passed to Percy's sister Madge and her husband Sir Walter Benton Jones.

Our online research has added to the Fawcett and Benton Jones family trees. Newspaper clippings have been very revealing. The Fawcett trail has led us to Clarke House (now Birkdale Junior department) which was the home of William Fawcett and his family. (William was Madge Benton-Jones' paternal grandfather). Other houses in the Sheffield/North Derbyshire area connected to the Fawcett family include Middlewood Hall, Whirlow Court, Standhills Farm, Dore Moor House, Unstone Grange and Dunston Grange. We are meeting with Dorne, the archivist with the Dore Village Society who may be able to

tell us about Dore Moor House and the history of the land called Rough Standhills, of which Whirlow Brook is part. (The building was never called Whirlow Brook Hall or even Whirlow Brook House - just Whirlow Brook. The term 'Hall' was added by Fretwell Downing when they acquired the lease and started to hold functions.)



William Fawcett and family who lived at Clarke House

Another piece of detective work relates to who designed and built the rock garden and ponds. We believe that it was Backhouse of York, a famous landscaping firm of which Samuel Doncaster (who lived next door at Whinfell) was a director. Whinfell Quarry garden is certainly a Backhouse creation, as are several others in Sheffield. We are meeting with a PhD student who is researching Backhouse and hope she may be able to confirm its provenance. The ponds need major work, and if we can establish their heritage it may help us to attract funding for restoration.

We've not yet discovered any plans relating to the layout of the gardens. Was the lower car park once a tennis court? If you have any information about the early days of the park we would love to hear from you. Email shelagh@woolliscroft.com or phone her on 0114 255 8948.



Follow us on Facebook

Please follow us on Facebook - the more likes and followers we get the more exposure we will have to spread the word about our lovely park and recruit more volunteers! Search for <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofwhirlowbrookpark>

Update on Larch Tree Felling

Those of you who like to wander from the Park into the surrounding woods may be interested in the latest information on the felling of larch trees due to ramorum disease. The Council has informed us that this work is now due to begin in mid-November. The work will be on two sites. The larch trees in Rough Standhills, beyond the back of the Hall, will be felled by machine, with access from Long Line, and is expected to be completed by the end of December 2021. The felling on the steep slopes to the north of the Limb Brook will be manual and is expected to begin in December and to be completed by the end of February 2022. These estimates of timing are weather dependent. The work will require some temporary closures and diversions of Public Rights of Way.

More information, including a map and a six-page document provided by the Council, can be found on the News and Archives page of our website. www.friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk The document includes answers to 20 'Frequently Asked Questions'.



The larch plantation to be felled

Christmas Cards on Sale

Our Christmas cards are selling well! The Friends of Whirlow Brook Park Christmas Cards are priced at 50p each. They are available to buy at Dore Moor Garden Centre, The Norfolk Arms and the Hammer and Pincers. If anyone knows of any other shops, cafes, libraries etc that would be willing to stock them please let us know. If you are finding it difficult to get them then please contact us via the website or phone Maggie on 0114 236 5699.

Volunteers' Christmas Lunch 13 December - a reminder

Volunteers in the park are invited to join us for a Christmas lunch on Monday 13th December at the Hammer and Pincers at Bents Green. There are still a few places left so hurry - first come, first served!



The cost is £12.99 for two courses or £14.99 for three. Shelagh will bring menus at the next volunteer session on 17 November and 4 December. People can then make their menu choices and pay a non-refundable £2 deposit. Anyone who cannot get to one of the volunteer events can book by phoning Shelagh on 0114 255 8948. The balance will be payable direct to the pub on the day. Looking forward to it!

Spotted in the park



Fly agaric mushroom