

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) Newsletter

Issue 17 - Summer 2024



Registered charity no 1204004

Message from the Chair

I am writing this in the warm afterglow of our second concert last Sunday - without any rain this time! It was lovely to see so many people there, including families with young children. The two bands gave their all and were much applauded. What's more, people were back home in time to see both of England's goals! Three more concerts to go, so do come and join us!

The park seems to have been busier this year, with people enjoying the splendid colours in the rock garden and the peaceful atmosphere of the sunken garden. We hope to conduct a short survey of park users during the summer holidays to find out more about their experience and give us a pointer for future activity.

Meanwhile, we are putting in place the last components of the family trail, ready for an official opening by Blake Benton Jones on 28 July. There will be a trail map in the cafe and beautifully illustrated wood roundels to help children to find their way around. It has been our most ambitious project so far but we have had help from many quarters. Do come and try it out whilst the ground is dry!

Finally, the wretched Himalayan balsam is marching down the Limb valley and has entered the park. It is not difficult to pull up, so please come along on Friday 12 July at 9.30am at the Round House at Ringinglow and help us remove it! The more, the merrier!

I hope that you enjoy the remainder of the summer, and if we are working in the park when you visit, please come and say hello!
Best wishes

Shelagh Woolliscroft, Chair of FoWP

Sounds of Summer concerts

A brilliant second concert on 30 June brought the best audience so far for our concerts. Michael Richards and Kiri Smith kicked off the show at 3pm, supporting 'covers' band, Pluk at 4pm. The weather held despite rain being forecast. Picnics and wine were enjoyed and despite a power cut, Pluk played on without mikes to rapturous applause. A great day and record money donated of £455. Thanks everyone for coming and see you at the next one on July 28.



Michael Richards and Kiri Smith

Pluk (below)



From Blue Tits... to Tawny Owls.

The second of our guided bird walks led by Monica Frith in May:

"We had an enjoyable walk on 21 May, a cool and cloudy day, with seven members recording what birds we saw or heard, in the park and surrounding area. There were all the usual woodland birds around plus Chiffchaff, Nuthatch and Treecreeper, which were really good to see. A Carrion Crow, was strutting his stuff by the hall and a Jackdaw nesting in the roof. Not forgetting the Blackbirds that serenaded us on the whole of the walk.

On the dam we saw a Heron, Mallard with ducklings and unusually one Tufted Duck. We also heard Chaffinch, Wren, Song Thrush and the lovely melodic Blackcap. But the most interesting thing we heard was a Jay and a Tawny Owl having an altercation high up in the trees - presumably the Owl was after the Jay's young. A total of 21 Birds were seen or heard - not bad for 1.5hrs. Obviously the bird feeders in the Children's Garden and by the Cafe help to boost the numbers. Thanks to all who came.



The following day I heard about a pair of Mandarin ducks seen up by the hall, which I have seen since on the dam, I hope they stay to breed. Volunteer, Sue Turner also spotted a Kingfisher on the dam on 27 May. We are not aware of any previous records".

AGM in June

A power cut at the Hall put a different complexion on this year's AGM on 3 June. Fortunately with the lighter evenings this wasn't a show stopper. Ruth Bell, Head of Parks and Countryside at SCC was our key note speaker and wasn't in the least perturbed about not being able to access her PowerPoint presentation. She delivered an interesting talk on SCC's current situation and budget constraints. She was also impressed with the amount of projects and work that FoWP has completed or has in hand. Display boards showed what we have achieved so far, as well as history displays about the Hall and the family who lived there. Both Trustees and committee members were re-elected.



Trustees Roger Lasko, Shelagh Woolliscroft, and Chris Cave with Colin Ross (second from left)

Upcoming Events in 2024

Sun 28 Jul - Launch of the Family Trail 12.30pm
Sun 28 Jul - Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm
Sun 25 Aug - Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm
Fri 6 Sept - Bat Survey 7.30pm
Mon Sept 9 - Heritage Open Day at the Hall 11am-3pm
Wed 25 Sept - Pond Clearance 9.30am
Sun 29 Sept - Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm

Details of all our events are on the website at

www.friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk/events/

Family Trail Launch 28 July

As mentioned in Shelagh's Message, we will be launching the first of our family trails - the Blue Trail on Sunday 28 July. The trail will run from the café across the drive and down into the 'Dell' along the newly mulched path, past the Story Chair and on through the woods, past the Bug Hotel and back across the drive to the café. We now have most of the wooden roundels in place; thanks to Geraldine and Pete Brown for all their hard work in sanding and designing them. And also thanks to our family trail working group who have installed them on the trail. There are also metal birds, fairy doors, the newt sculpture and of course the story chair. Kath Wiles, one of our volunteers has kindly offered to sit there and tell riddles to the children during the launch event. The trail will be opened by Blake Benton Jones, son of our patron Sir Jamie Benton Jones. Attendance will be by invitation only and refreshments will be served on the lawn.



One of the many wooden roundels carved by Geraldine Brown

Newt sculpture

As part of the Family Trail, FoWP commissioned local sculptor Steve Roche from 'The Stone and Letter Workshop' to carve a lovely newt sculpture in a rock near the small stone bridge by the lower pond. We have spotted a few newts in the pond, so hence the sculpture. Part of the reason for developing the family trail is, apart from it being great fun for youngsters, we hope it will foster a love of nature in children and give them the space to stop and look at what's around them.



Steve Roche hard at work



The finished sculpture

Willow moth

Still on the theme of the family trail, we also recently commissioned a willow weaver, Patrick Amber, to make a willow moth for the trail. This will be suspended between trees for children to spot and then hopefully learn about moths. The moth is soon to be installed once suitable climbers have been appointed. So get ready to spot it in the park very soon!



Patrick Amber with the willow moth

Our next volunteer days

Volunteer sessions run from 9.30am-12.15pm on the first Saturday and third Monday of the month. We meet on 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. Don't forget to bring a drink. Biscuits provided!

Dates for 2024

Mon 15 July, Sat 3 Aug, Mon 19 Aug, Sat 7 Sept
Mon 16 Sept, Sat 5 Oct, Mon 21 Oct, Sat 2 Nov,
Mon 18 Nov, Sat 7 Dec and Mon 16 Dec (TBC).

Please don't come to the sessions if you feel unwell or have a positive covid test.

Bat survey in September

Earlier in the year Katie Smith from the South Yorkshire Bat Group (SYBG) came to look in the bat boxes situated in the park. She discovered two pipistrelles and we have asked her back to do a bat survey on Friday 6 September. The event will start at 7.30pm, meeting at the park entrance. Places will be limited to around 25 people. If you are interested in joining us please contact Nicola Gilbert

nicolaanngilbert@gmail.com



Balsam Bashing

It's that time of year again when the dreaded Himalayan Balsam is flowering along the Limb Brook. We will be organising a balsam bashing session on Friday 12 July at 9.30am. We'll meet at the Round House opposite the Norfolk Arms, Ringinglow, to work our way down the Limb. We can also offer any lifts from the top car park (in the park) from 9.15am.



A great Easter Egg Trail in March

Our third Easter Egg Trail on Saturday 30 March was a great success, despite the very wet conditions underfoot. The more challenging 'Carrot' Trail for older kids had to be abandoned because of it was far too muddy, but the day was sunny and bright. The children had a great time finding the wooden eggs on the trail and were rewarded by bags of sweets after solving the riddle 'What do you get with rabbits in the desert?' Hot cross bunnies!



Well-deserved prizes!

Super Plant Swap!

Another success story for our annual plant swap/sale held in May. The event was very well attended with lots of interesting plants and artefacts. We also made about £50 on sales of second hand books. And the overall total was an amazing £940! Thanks to everyone involved, but a special thanks to Nicola Gilbert whose brainchild it was. Proceeds will go towards the Family Trail and Community Orchard.



Youth Service helpers

In April, two brave teenagers from Wesley Hall Youth Club in Crookes joined us for a day of volunteering. In the morning they helped clear brambles and nettles from the site of the community orchard. After lunch at the café, they enjoyed making bird boxes which they proudly took away to put up in their own gardens. It was a drizzly sort of day and they went home with very muddy trainers, so we have bought plenty of overshoes ready to welcome more teenage volunteers during the school summer holidays.



FoWP Contact Information

If you wish to volunteer and/or join the friends please contact us at:

Email: fowp@friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk

Website:

www.friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk

Facebook@friendsofwhirlowbrookpark

Twitter or X @FriendsBrook

Telephone: 0114 255 8948

Registered Charity no. 1204004

Sir Jamie welcomes FoWP to Irnham Hall

In April, an excited group of volunteers from both FoWP and the Sheffield u3a gardening group were invited to Irnham Hall in Lincolnshire by our patron Sir Jamie Benton Jones. Sir Jamie has taken a keen interest in Whirlow Brook Park since 2021 when our history group tracked him down to tell him about his ancestors, Sir Walter and Lady Madge Benton Jones, who lived at Whirlow Brook Hall in the 1920s/30s. Madge was buried in the garden at Whirlowbrook, but was later disinterred to Irnham churchyard when Sir Walter returned to the family seat at Irnham. The group was escorted around the beautiful grounds of Irnham Hall as well as the village itself. Lunch was taken in the Griffin pub. Sir Jamie will be joining us on 28 July with his wife and son, for the launch of the family trail in the park.

For more info on the Benton Jones's go to www.friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk/history



Sir Jamie with Bella, and volunteers outside the Griffin pub



Walter and Madge Benton Jones's graves in Irnham

Steel City 10K

Another great turnout in April for the Steel City 10k run through the park and woodlands. And a generous donation from them of £150. Thank you! We love having you in the park.



Park Survey

We're always curious to know what types of people come to Whirlow Brook Park, eg what age, gender, ethnic groups etc and why? To find out more we've developed a short survey which we want to use to interview park users over the summer. So we need your help! If you would be interested in talking to people in the park and getting them to complete the survey then please get in touch.

Email us at

fowp@friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk



Follow us on Facebook

We have now reached over 1K Facebook followers! (1,144 to be precise) But we'd like more! 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>



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