

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) Newsletter

Issue 19 - Winter 2024



Registered charity no 1204004

Message from the Chair

It has been a mild autumn. Some of the perennials have only just stopped flowering and so we delayed clearing the herbaceous borders. The park may look less tidy in some parts but it is good news for the wildlife. And we are rich in wildlife - we found twenty species of fungi during a two hour session in October.

This autumn has seen a number of satisfying 'firsts' for FoWP. We held our first autumn plant and produce sale. The reconstruction of the maze was our first significant maintenance project. During National Tree Week we held a much-enjoyed Haiku writing event. And we have received our first bequest - a generous donation made in memory of Derek Holdsworth who enjoyed many years of volunteering in the rock garden.

We have received excellent support from our Area Parks Manager, Andy Mumford and the regular maintenance team led by Richard Godley. Hedges and lawns are well looked after and rubbish is cleared away promptly. The swale, dug by Ranger Tom Collier, is diverting much of the water run-off from Rough Standhills, although we are still seeking a more effective solution.

It is disturbing to learn that the Council budget for parks is to be cut yet again next year. Friends groups like ours can fill some of the gaps but we can never hope to match the knowledge and expertise of our professionally qualified colleagues. Instead, we will increasingly need to buy it in. Please help us to raise the necessary funds - every penny goes towards keeping your park in good shape.

On behalf of the management committee, I wish everyone a happy and peaceful Christmas. We hope to see you enjoying the park in 2025. Best wishes

Shelagh Woolliscroft, Chair of FoWP

Christmas Carols 16th Dec

This year's Carol Concert will be indoors again and we have the Salvation Army providing the music for us to sing along to. The concert will be in the main garden room at Whirlowbrook Hall with refreshments of mulled wine, tea, coffee and mince pies served in the Oak Room. We may spill out onto the terrace if it is fine, so please wrap up warm and bring a torch for the way home!



Carols at Whirlow Brook Hall



Monday 16th December 5-6pm

Music by the Salvation Army, mulled wine and mince pies

 **Bring cash and a torch!** 

There will be a collection for the Salvation Army



The Maze is Officially Open!

The children's maze was officially opened on 28 October. Jane Ferretti from the Sheffield Town Trust did the honours by cutting a rainbow ribbon. The Trust awarded us a grant to help towards the cost of the new maze, as well as the Blue Trail which was opened in July. The maze, which is made from recycled plastic, was constructed and painted by volunteer Michael Parker, a retired local builder. Coffee and biscuits were enjoyed by families and local councillors Martin Smith and Rebecca Atkinson attended the event.



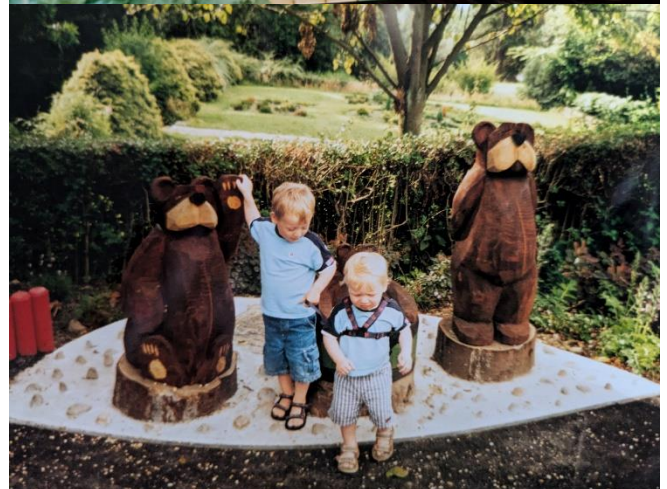
On the right Jane Ferretti, Shelagh Woolliscroft and Nick Goffin opening the maze



Michael Parker (left) with children enjoying the new maze

Old Photos

We were delighted to receive the photos below of what the maze and the children's area looked like in early 2000. A lady who took part in our engagement study offered to send us the photos and gave us permission to use them. We are hoping to restore some of the animal sculptures in the future too. If you have any old photos of any areas of the park we would love to see them. Please email them to fowp@friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.co.uk



Halloween Trail

A spooky Halloween trail was organised by the Shelter Cafe and the Friends group on Halloween. There were lots of happy families and excited children. We followed the Blue Trail in part with children clutching the scavenger hunt card looking for skeletons, pumpkins, spiders etc with a rewarding bag of treats at the Bug Hotel. Heading back, children enjoyed spooky food in the cafe afterwards too!



Fungi Walk

Ziggy Senkans from SCC led a fascinating walk and talk discovering fungi in the park. It was a fine October afternoon, but chilly. There were 23 fungi hunters including three people from the Sorby Natural History Society and two dogs. We found lots of small fungi on the lawns and under the trees by the car park. Some of the species found were: the Miller, Sickener species, bonnet, Slippery Jack, Knight species, Beech milkcap, Webcap, Turkey Tail, Puffball, Poisonpie, Fragrant funnel, Holly speckle, Wood woolly foot, Deceiver, False chanterelle, Plums & custard and many more.



Community Orchard Update

Since our last update we have achieved a huge amount in terms of clearance in the Community Orchard site. This is thanks especially to our corporate volunteers, but also to dedicated FoWP volunteers who have embraced this project so passionately. You can now walk the full length of the area without the need for a machete!

But there is still a lot to be done in terms of clearing the bramble and ivy roots which are deeply embedded. If you would like to help out we are having a hedge planting session in the orchard on Saturday 15 Feb starting at 9.30am. Just come along, but make sure you wear appropriate clothing and sturdy boots.

We have also been supported with our orchard project by SCC Parks and Countryside Dept in terms of advice and also in removing/pruning old or dead trees. A group of us met Laura Inglis and Toby Pillatt from the SCC Community Forestry Team to discuss layout, paths, number of fruit trees, areas for soft fruit, herbs etc.

A section of the leylandii hedge which borders the area, will be removed to let light in and the tops trimmed for the remaining section. We propose to plant a native hedge in its place consisting of hawthorn, holly, rowan, hazel, crab apple, some blackthorn and many more. We hope to source some of trees from Sheffield Fruit Trees and free packs from the Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV). We have also applied to the Local Area Committee (LAC) for funding in respect of a water tank/hosepipe.



The cleared orchard site in the recent snow

Getting to 'Gripple' with the Orchard

Following our hosting of corporate volunteers from Henry Boot and Cadent Gas earlier in the year, we had another volunteering stint from Sheffield based company Gripple Ltd. On two consecutive days in October, they tackled the huge task of clearing the scrub and brambles from the site of the former orchard that we are presently restoring. They also constructed a dead hedge to block off a very steep path. They worked incredibly hard and seemed to enjoy the challenge. Over the two days, they filled around 60 builders' bags with gardening waste, so much so, that we had to go to Pagets for more bags who kindly donated them for free.



The dead hedge



Clearing the Orchard with Gripple

Volunteer Update

Other than all our work in the orchard, volunteers have still been very busy in the rest of the park. We have continued to plant up the horseshoe bed near the children's maze and hope to continue with this in commissioning some sculptures to replace the animals that were there in the 70s/80s (see pics on page 2). The volunteers are now responsible for trimming all the lawn edges (there are lots of them). We have planted spring bulbs and some roses in the sunken garden so hope to see some colour there next spring. And we continue to weed, weed, weed and mulch keeping the park looking tidy and cared for. If any of our readers would like to volunteer then please get in touch. Sessions are presently twice a month - you don't have to come to every session and you will learn a lot and meet some lovely people!

Email us at:

fowp@friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.co.uk



Chris and Rory planting the roses



Weeding the horseshoe bed

Moss

The paths around some areas of the park are looking a bit mossy! We asked Parks and Countryside Dept what they could do about it and they kindly brought one of their moss removing machines. It did a great job on some of the paths, especially around the horseshoe bed near the top car park, but unfortunately because some of the paths are in a bad state of repair the machine would just make it worse. Back to scrubbing with a broom then!



New Path

More path work has been done by SCC to help improve access and safety in the park. The loop path on the right, when walking up the drive, has been repaired and new tarmac laid. This will mean that pedestrians can take this path to avoid traffic on the narrow and curved area of the drive. SCC will also look to repair the fencing adjoining the path in the near future.



Haiku Workshop

About 20 tree and poetry lovers gathered to celebrate National Tree Week and the Sheffield Urban Tree Festival on Sunday 1 Dec. Dr Tom McAuley from the University of Sheffield gave a short introduction to the history and essence of haiku. After a silent walk past some of our special trees, we dispersed to write our haiku. Shelagh and Nicola circulated with mugs of hot Japanese green tea. Later, summoned by the calming tones of a Nepalese singing bowl, we shared our haikus and ate Japanese matcha and red bean cake. Haiku poems are traditionally set out in three lines with 5, 7, 5 syllables. What makes a haiku is open to many interpretations; elements include motion, emotion, nature, seasons, change and reaction. See below for some of the lovely haikus we wrote...

Forlorn flags, leaves' litter
But life waits curled hard and sharp
Budding hope for spring
- Debbie J

Weep not bubbling stream
trees sleep, earth takes old leaves back
buds unfurl next spring
- Jill L

Ivy desires sky
But can grow no higher than
The tree lost within
- Jason L

Three Corsican pines
Mediterranean trees
At home in Sheffield
- Dinah S

If fireworks froze
Fell as shapes of twisted smoke
Took root and grew old
- Verity S

Plant hunters travel
Glass boxes protect seedlings
Now huge in Whirlow
- Nicola G

Read more haikus on our website
<https://friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk/haiku>



Upcoming Events in 2025

Sat 15 Feb - Hedge Planting Session 9.30am
Wed 26 Feb- Joint FoWP and u3a Session 9.30am
Sat 19 April - Easter Egg Trail 2.00-4.00pm
Sat 10 May - Spring Plant Swap/Sale 10am-12pm
Sun 25 May Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm
Sun 29 Jun Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm
Sun 27 Jul Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm
Sun 31 Aug Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm
Wed 10 Sept - Heritage walks in the park (TBC)
Sun 28 Sept Sounds of Summer Concert 3-5pm
Sat 4 Oct - Autumn Plant Sale
Wed 29 Oct - Pond Clearance 9.30am - 1.00pm

Details of all our events are on the website at
www.friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.co.uk/events/

Park Users' Survey - Summary

We recently undertook a park users' survey to discover who, why and when people visit the park. Interviews were carried out in person by FoWP volunteers, using a questionnaire with a mixture of open and closed questions. We are currently analysing the data in more detail, with the full results expected to be published in early 2025. These will be shared with Parks and Countryside Dept at SCC, and other partner groups and will be used both in bidding for funds and in future planning for FoWP activities. Here is a short snapshot of what we found:

Not surprisingly, there was a broad range of views expressed, sometimes contradictory. Over 120 interviews were completed with 58.8% by females. Users were largely 'white' (92.1%) and of mixed age profile (26.3% aged 18-30; 32.9% 31-60; & 40.8 over 61). This age spread seems quite positive.

The key priorities people thought needed addressing were the environment/landscape of the park with an emphasis on biodiversity, water and flooding issues and the gardens. Also in the top five priorities were 'Children's issues' although comments on these were mixed. Park users had largely travelled to the park by car (73.5%), although 21.2% had walked. This is interesting as the main areas they came from were fairly local with S11 (35.1%) dominating, along with S7/ S8 / S17. We also had 6.3% of visitors from outside the city. Those interviewed largely came to visit the café (51.2%) and/or to exercise (46.5%), as well as to visit the gardens (35.6%). Nearly half spent between 1 and 2 hours on site.

When stating their key likes trees, flowers, plants, and gardens came out top, but peace & quiet, the café and the children's trail were also all emphasised. The key dislikes (when there were any) were dog mess, dog walkers, speeding cars and the lack of toilet facilities. Further analysis will follow but we felt that members, especially those who did the interviewing, would be interested in some early (if unaudited) results.

Level 2 Horticulture Course Sept 2025

Our Friends at the Botanical Gardens have asked us to advertise the following course which starts in Sept 2025.

The Sheffield College's land-based department will be working with the Botanical Gardens to deliver a Level 2 Horticulture programme specifically for adults. This full-cost, 1 year course will run at the Botanical Gardens every Tuesday from September 2025, with support and access to online materials throughout.

The course is perfect for adults wanting to learn something new or upskill their green fingers with guidance from highly qualified teaching staff to gain a qualification accredited by City & Guilds. The majority of content is practical and will consist of small assessments that take place during the course delivery by the teaching team. You'll learn to prepare areas for planting, create seasonal displays and use the appropriate tools. There are no formal entry requirements, however a keen interest in gardening and horticulture would be beneficial. Students who successfully complete this qualification could progress on to:

- Level 2 Diploma in Practical Horticulture
- Level 2 Diploma in Environmental Conservation

Course fees

This course is eligible for full funding. Where full funding cannot be secured the learner contribution would be £362.

You can find out more here: [Adult Horticulture at the Botanical Gardens Level 2, P00570 \(sheffcol.ac.uk\)](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/botanicalgardens/level2/P00570)

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

Volunteers Wanted!



We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. Perhaps you are recently retired? Or would like to do a bit more exercise and meet new people? We meet twice a month on the first Saturday and third Monday of the month. We are a friendly bunch and you will be made very welcome. No gardening expertise is necessary, just a lot of enthusiasm. And you will learn a lot! Visit our website or Facebook page for more details or just turn up on the day!

Volunteer Days

Volunteer sessions run from 9.30am-12.15pm on the first Saturday and third Monday of the month. From January 2025 we are introducing more days to cope with the amount of gardening we have to do! (See new dates below and on our website). We meet on the grass square near the top car park. No need to book - just turn up! New volunteers always welcome. 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 2024/2025

Sat 7 Dec, Mon 16 Dec, Sat 4 Jan, Mon 13 Jan, Mon 20 Jan, Sat 1 Feb, Mon 10 Feb, Mon 17 Feb, Sat 1 Mar, Mon 10 Mar, Mon 17 Mar.

Please don't come to the sessions if you feel unwell especially if you suspect Covid.



Follow us on Facebook

We have now reached over 1K Facebook followers! (1,230 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>



Twitter or 'X'

Please follow us on X- [Twitter@FriendsBrook](https://twitter.com/FriendsBrook)
<https://twitter.com/FriendsBrook>

***A very Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year to all our
Friends and Volunteers!***

