

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) Newsletter

Issue 22 - Autumn 2025



Registered charity no 1204004

Message from the Chair

Autumn has arrived and the park looks different. The trees, with their glowing colours and slanting shadows, dominate the landscape. The fungi and mosses have come into their own too (come and learn more about them with Ziggy Senkans on Friday October 17th).

I hope you will notice the recent improvements to the park facilities. The entrance gates and most of the benches have been painted; we have a new handrail at the side of the lower car-park steps; some of the uneven paving has been re-laid; and the orchard now has a lovely gateway. Other work is less noticeable - tackling invasive weeds, keeping paths swept and planting bulbs ready for spring. All achieved by our wonderful volunteers.

The SCC Woodlands team are determined to tackle the flooding behind the hall and in the top car-park, but first they need to know exactly where to dig out the small ponds and scrapes, designed to hold the water back, also the 'bunds' which will guide the water across the footpath into these ponds. So our task when the rains come is to record the water run-off from the hillside behind the house. You could help by sending us photographs or film footage via the FoWP website.

Beth at the cafe is busy designing a Halloween craft event on 29th October, new menus and some other special activities over the winter. Every park needs a café, so do support ours when you can. It is a cosy retreat from those winter rains!

Best wishes

Best wishes

Shelagh Woolliscroft, Chair of FoWP

Bat Walk

It was a still, pleasant evening lit by a full, golden harvest moon on the evening of 5th September; perfect conditions for our bat walk. Katie Smith, from the South Yorkshire Bat Group told the group about these amazing creatures which thrive in the park. The bat locators picked up lots of bats, mainly genera pipistrelles and myotis, the devices converting their high frequency sonar into clicks. We were pleased so many children came along too, with some excellent questions.



Katie Smith talking to the group

Upcoming Events in 2025

Fri 17 Oct - Fungi Walk 2.00pm
Wed 29 Oct - Pond/water work 9.30am - 1.00pm
Sat 29 Nov - Tree and Hedge planting event
10.00am - 12 noon
Mon 15 Dec - Carols in the Hall 5-6pm

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

Orchard Wild Flower Survey

Since we began clearing the orchard in June 2024 the area is now getting direct sun and rain for the first time in many years. It's interesting to see what's regrown, germinated from the soil seed bank and blown in. So we invited Gerry Firkins, a local botanist, to lead a plant ID session and found at least 20 different wild plant species, also skipper butterflies, other invertebrates, with frogs and froglets in the undergrowth. Special mention of the uncommon field pansy.

Gerry suggested that we introduce the following: garlic mustard - at the edge of the field and not near the fruit trees, red bartsia (local plant, parasitic on grass) and sweet woodruff. He suggested we should reduce the brambles, broad-leaved dock, creeping buttercup, creeping thistle and spear thistle. And remove cherry laurel, silver yellow archangel (lamium), Wilson's honeysuckle (lonicera nitida). Then we should sow from seed - corncockle, corn marigold, evening primrose, phacelia, sunflower, white mustard and wild carrot.

Thanks to Gerry and to everyone who came along.

Ros Hancock who was extremely helpful and knowledgeable.



Ros Hancock with net



The mint moth



Flying Insects Survey

An enthusiastic team of volunteers joined in the annual butterfly and small insect count in August for the National Butterfly Count. They spotted four types of butterfly - Small white, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue and Meadow Brown. There were about eight different types of Hoverfly. Bees included Honey, White Tailed and Carder as well as some small grass moths but they were hard to identify. There were Mint Moths, Shield bugs, seven Spot Ladybirds, Frog Hoppers, Red Soldier Beetles and a variety of Mirid bugs were also seen. It was a good morning. The group were guided by

Sprucing up the Park

We've done a lot recently to make the park look tidier and well looked after. Here's a flavour of what we've been up to.

Bench Painting

It was time to spruce up some benches in the park in September while we had a bit of fine weather. Most of our park benches are dedicated to a loved one and have been in the park for many years. Some are lovingly maintained by their families, while others for one reason or another are sadly neglected. One such family, after repainting their own bench, offered to help. Malcolm Dixon and his sister Andrea sanded, stained and varnished two benches alongside some of our regular volunteers. Malcom's recommendation was to use yacht varnish on top of two coats of stain so that's what we'll do in future. If any readers are a dab hand with a paint brush then do contact us. It's a painstaking job but very rewarding!



Malcolm and Andrea hard at work

New Handrail

We have a new handrail for those steep steps in the bottom car park, courtesy of Andrew Renwick, Director of Ridgeway Forge Ltd. We contacted Andrew a few years ago when we made the connection between him and our patron Sir Jamie Benton-Jones who it turned out are third or fourth cousins. Andrew kindly donated the handrail and we are very grateful- it looks great and it will hopefully stop any accidents happening in the future.



Andrew Renwick and the new handrail



Volunteer Nick Goffin painting the front gates

Safer paving

There is much loose paving in the park which can cause trip hazards. We always keep a close eye on it and repair it or cordon it off until done. Volunteer Michael has previously repaired paths in the Rock Garden. He also spent several days recently repairing and restoring an area of paving in the sunken garden to make it not only safe but much more attractive. It just needs a bench now. Thanks Michael!



Tree Survey

We recognise that the lovely trees are the park's biggest asset, and we want to ensure that we look after them properly and replace them when necessary. A grant from the Graves Trust, together with a generous anonymous donation, has enabled us to commission a survey of 150-200 'significant' trees and these will form the basis of a tree management plan. The survey will be undertaken this autumn/winter by Weddles, a team of experienced arborists, ecologists and landscape architects. When it is completed we will know the exact species, age, health, growth rate, life expectancy and carbon asset value of each tree. We will be able to update the plan with records of any future interventions or replacements.

Hedge/Tree Planting - 29 Nov

In February this year the 265th Greenhill Scouts helped plant the 25 metre double row of native hedge and trees and it is now thriving. Later this month (October) the rest of the 60 metre Leylandii hedge will be felled and a trench dug for the second stage of the hedge planting. This will take place during National Tree Week on Saturday 29 November 10am-12noon, as part of the Community Payback scheme. If you would like to be involved then please come along on the morning to plant some whips. It should be warmer than in February and easier, as we may know what we are doing now!

The whips are being donated by South Yorkshire Woodland Partnership via Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust and the Tree Council 'Branching Out' scheme. More fruiting trees will be planted in the hedgerow in the country way, for future foragers and wildlife: native crab apple, plum bullace, Mazzard cherry, bird cherry, damson, wild pear and sweet almond.

If you would like to sponsor a tree please email us at Shelagh.woolliscroft@gmail.com

Gripple

A special thanks to Gripple Limited, our corporate sponsors, who have provided a great deal of support in terms of volunteer sessions and supplying wire fencing for the Orchard. They have also sponsored the summer concerts.

Corporate Volunteers

We've had a number of corporate volunteers over the last few years but not as many at one go than when Aviva arrived with 14 very willing and positive volunteers. The weather was dreadful but they still managed to smile while clearing weeds, brambles and scrub from the community orchard and doing some work around the Hall. The plan was to stay all day but the rain was torrential so they had to cut short their stint. Thanks for all the help and hope to see you again soon. If any other companies are interested in a day's volunteering then please email us at fowp@friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk



The Aviva team



Working in the orchard

Dog Walkers

Sheffield City Council has now approved a voluntary code of conduct and voluntary registration scheme for professional dog walkers. Registered walkers will be limited to walking six dogs at a time, which must be kept under control at all times and on a short lead from March to August in certain areas. Registration will cost £120 a year. This will fund signage. We will keep you informed once we know more.

Sounds of Summer Concerts

We've had an amazing summer of concerts this year with bigger and better bands and bigger audiences. Our July concert had the biggest attendance with over 150 people of all ages. The sun shone, people brought picnics and wine, one couple even had a Gaz stove to cook prawns on. Children danced and played in the sunshine and even wedding guests from the Hall came to watch. A special thanks to our promoter and musician Michael Richards who pulled out all the stops to give us great live music all summer and for all the volunteers who tirelessly set up in the mornings and then took everything down at the end. Here's to next year for our own mini Glastonbury!



Treebeard playing in June



Crowds enjoying the music in the sunshine - July



Follow us on Facebook

We have now reached over 1.3K Facebook followers! (1,356 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>

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](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofwhirlowbrookpark)

X @FriendsBrook

Telephone: 0114 255 8948

Registered Charity no. 1204004

Christmas Carols

Only 87 days till Christmas! At least it was when we went to press. So an early heads up for our Carol Concert (in conjunction with the Friends of Whinfell Quarry Garden) which will be on Monday 15 December from 5-6pm. We will have the Salvation Army band again and all donations will go to support the invaluable work they do; so please give generously. It was very busy last year so please park on the road outside the park if possible or on Whirlowdale Rd or better still take a nice winter walk to the park. Mince pies and mulled wine will be served afterwards.

Volunteer Days

We volunteer four mornings a month. We meet on the grass square near the top car park. 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!

Gardening dates: 4 Oct, 13 Oct, 20 Oct, 1 Nov, 10 Nov, 17 Nov, 6 Dec, 8 Dec, 15 Dec and 3 Jan (tbc)

Orchard volunteer dates: 18 Oct, 15 Nov, 20 Dec (tbc)

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



Carols at Whirlow Brook Hall



Monday 15th December 5-6pm

Music by the Salvation Army, mulled wine and mince pies



Bring cash!



There will be a collection for the Salvation Army