

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) Newsletter Issue 25 - Summer 2026



Message from the Chair

The spring and early summer months are when the park looks at its best. The huge rhododendrons, many of them over 100 years old, give a blast of colour and the scent from the yellow azaleas is intoxicating. The Su3a garden has been a delight to wander round, especially since most of the uneven paving has been repaired. And the colours in the sunken garden and horseshoe border have been stronger than ever this year. Su3a members were certainly full of admiration when they gathered to celebrate their 40th birthday.



The recent warm weather has seen an increase in the number of families in the park at weekends-following the Blue Trail and inspecting the new sculptures. It is good to see families at our Sunday afternoon concerts too, with children dancing to the music! But during the week the park remains a place of tranquility, with plenty of places to sit in the shade during the hot weather. The new picnic table in the orchard is likely to get a lot of use during the summer and we hope people will take time to look at the new planting there.

This time of year is always the busiest for our volunteers. Not only do the gardens need constant attention but there have also been many events to organise. The volunteers turned up trumps to make sure they were a success!

Shelagh Woolliscroft, Chair of FoWP

Registered charity no 1204004

Sounds of Summer concert Sunday 28 June

Come along to our Sounds of Summer concert on Sunday 28 June 3-5pm. Please bring a chair or blanket as there is limited seating available. Bring a picnic and some drinks and don't forget the sun cream! Our bands for June are the very colourful and entertaining Treebeard supported by Ordinary Joes. See you there!

2026 CONCERT DATES	
MAY 31	Jig for a Kiss/Reclaimed
JUN 28	Treebeard/Ordinary Joes
JUL 26	On the Back Porch/ Sons of Rodger
AUG 30	Banjo Jen/Cobalt Tales
SEPT 27	Pluk/Kase Studies

Friends' Committee Members

Shelagh Woolliscroft - Chair

Roger Lasko - Secretary

Chris Cave - Treasurer

Maggie Girling - Publicity and Events

David Jordan - Webmaster and Membership

Nick Goffin - Projects and Maintenance

Barry Wiles - Volunteer C o-ordinator

Events in May - Easter Egg Trail

We had a very busy May with lots of events. There was an amazing turnout for our Easter Egg Trail on Easter Saturday this year. The weather was kind to us and the children had a great time! Big thanks to Miriam from Waymaster Games for entertaining the children after the trail and for Jess and Catherine for their super face painting. A huge thanks to our Events Committee and all the other brilliant volunteers for organising and helping make this a successful event.



Plant Sale

Another successful event in May was our annual Plant Sale. Lots of varieties of plants were on sale as well as 'willow' weaving with dogwood, making lovely plant supports, and we had bird box kits for sale. Thanks to Catherine Downes and Jane Doyle for those and thanks to everyone who came along to support us and to all our volunteers for all their hard work. A very successful morning- see you next year!



Teddy Bears' Picnic

We had a super day at the Teddy Bears' picnic with the official unveiling of the new three bears at the end of May. Hugh Facey, founder of Gripple Limited (our corporate sponsor) did the honours and Andrew Renwick, our patron, unveiled Percy the Frog who his company, Rigdeway Forge, had made. Andrew is a descendent of Percy Fawcett who built Whirlow Brook Hall in 1906 - hence the name. Many thanks to both for your continued support. Thanks also to Natalie Rusling, Chair of Gripple Foundation, for helping to arrange the unveiling.



L-R Andrew Renwick, Michael Parker, Hugh Facey, Shelagh Woolliscroft, and Natalie Rusling.

A special thanks must, of course, go to our chainsaw sculptor Mike Burgess, volunteers Nick Goffin, who liaised and arranged delivery with Mike, and to Michael Parker who re-concreted the plinth and installed the bears. The bears will provide hours of fun and pleasure to many children in the future.

Another thank you to the Co-op at Banner Cross for helping fund some of the refreshments and games. Lots of teddies were there and Garth won our 'Name the Teddy' competition by winning the bear - now named Bert! Lots of lovely picnics and happy children. Thanks everyone for coming - we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did! We hope to make the Teddy Bears' picnic an annual event.



Andrew Renwick unveils Percy the Frog



Parachute game at the picnic



Volunteer, Tricia Goffin (on the right) receives £100 worth of gifts from the Co-op at Banner Cross

Volunteers at Buckingham Palace

Following our celebration for the King's Award for Voluntary Service in February, two lucky volunteers also got the chance to go to Buckingham Palace to represent us at the King's Garden Party in May. Alison Cowper, who has volunteered in the park since 2011 and Maggie Girling, since 2014, were our representatives. They had a splendid day in London and the sun came out. Prince William and Kate were in attendance for the Royal Family.



L-R Alison Cowper and Maggie Girling

Upcoming Events in 2026

Sounds of Summer	Sun 28 June	3.00 - 5.00pm
FoWP AGM	Mon 29 June	6.30 - 8.30pm
Insect Survey	Sat 18 July	10am - 12 noon
Sounds of Summer	Sun 26 July	3.00 - 5.00pm
Sounds of Summer	Sun 30 Aug	3.00 - 5.00pm
Heritage Walks	Mon 14 Sept	11.00 - 1.00pm
Sounds of Summer	Sun 27 Sept	3.00 - 5.00pm
Fungi Foray	Fri 16 Oct	2.00- 4pm
Orchard Apple pick	Sat 17 Oct	10.00am - 12
Carol Concert	Mon 14 Dec	5.00-6.00pm

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

Su3a 40th Anniversary



The Su3a 40th Anniversary celebration took place in Whirlow Brook Park on Tuesday 9 June. It was a week of very mixed weather so we were fortunate to have a beautifully sunny morning. Many Su3a groups contributed to the programme of events with a variety of music and singing performances, classes on 'Drawing for the Terrified' and 'Sketching Outdoors', guided walks and orienteering around the park.

The Lord Mayor of Sheffield performed the opening ceremony on the Terrace Lawn; he and the Lady Mayoress then went on a guided tour of the Su3a Commemorative Garden. The Su3a Gardening group held a plant stall, with everything from sweetcorn, broccoli plants, house and garden plants through to cacti. A plant crèche was available to avoid visitors having to carry their purchases around all day. In addition, the Su3a gardeners offered guided walks around the Commemorative Garden on an hourly basis, which proved to be very popular with visitors.



Eventually our good luck with the weather ran out. In the early afternoon ominous dark clouds started to gather and a torrential downpour sent people scurrying for cover. Not to be deterred, activities planned for the afternoon simply moved into the Hall continuing as before, and bringing a successful end to an enjoyable day.



Volunteer update

With the warmer weather our volunteers have been extra busy in the both the park and orchard. We installed a new picnic bench in the orchard; if you've not been down there yet do go and see how much the fruit trees and the native hedge have grown! And we have created a new Mediterranean herb bed. Volunteers have also taken advantage of the warm weather to paint some of the 35 park benches. They are sanded down, given two coats of paint and finished with yacht varnish! More attractive to sit on.



Volunteer Nick erecting the new picnic bench



Creating the new herb garden



Painting the park benches - only another 30 to go!

Volunteer Days

We volunteer four mornings a month, first and third Saturdays and second and third Mondays from 9.30am -12.15. We meet by the gardener's store to the right of the Hall 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 Jul, 13 Jul, 20 Jul, 1Aug, 10 Aug, 17 Aug, 5 Sept, 14 Sept, 21 Sept.

Orchard volunteer dates: 18 Jul, 15 Aug, 19 Sept

Please don't come to the session if you are unwell especially if you suspect Covid.

Herbs and Healing Plants

At the beginning of May several members paid a visit to Naturescape in Nottinghamshire where we enjoyed seeing fields and hedgerows full of native plants. We brought many different varieties back and these have been planted in the orchard. Wild flowers with medicinal uses are now part of the new hedgerow and those which prefer drier conditions are growing in a new 'Mediterranean' bed. We are also trialling some plants such as red clover and chamomile as ground cover.

The next phase of this project, towards which FoWP has received a generous grant from the SW LAC, will focus on how to interpret herbs and healing plants to park visitors.

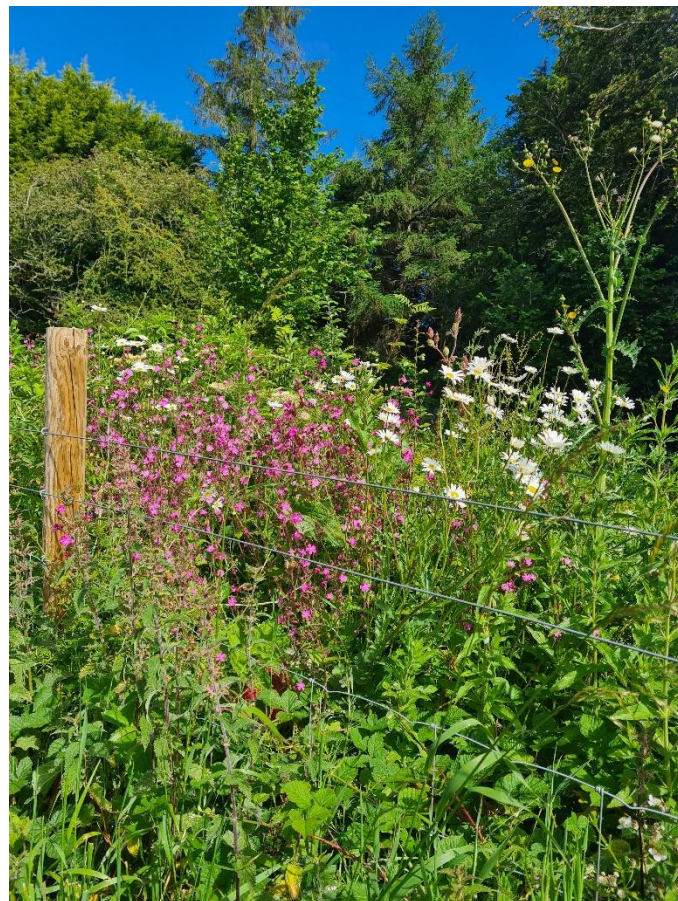


The new Mediterranean garden in the orchard

Orchard Open Morning 6 June

The weather was not kind to us on the day. We had baked cakes, prepared notices and leaflets and Sue Pitt, a local herbalist, had brought along a special herbal tea for people to try. But the wind and rain kept all but the most intrepid visitors away. Those who came were treated to a tour of the orchard by Nicola Gilbert, our expert in fruit growing and permaculture. Our botanist

friend, Gerry Firkins, inspected both the hedgerow and the fruit trees and was amazed to find that we had not lost a single whip despite last summer's drought! Star of the show among the trees was the medlar which boasted a large number of little fruits. Sadly these have had to be removed to avoid damage to the still slender branches. But next year....



The new native hedgerow has flourished

AGM Monday 29 June

Our AGM will be held on Monday 29 June kicking off at 7pm with guest speaker Esther Hyde from Weddles Landscape Architects, talking about the extensive tree survey they undertook in the park. There will be displays to look at from 6.30pm and tea and coffee will be available. Members only are allowed to vote, but please come along if you are not a member to learn more about what we do and maybe join up as member on the night. It's only £10 a year for a household and there is no obligation to volunteer.

Olivia Blake visits the park

Our local MP, Olivia Blake, is passionate about the environment and food-growing (she still has half an allotment in Sheffield). She has been a supporter of the Friends' Group since it started and spoke at the launch of our Climate Change Action project four years ago. So we were delighted to meet her again on Saturday 20 June when she called by to see how we are working to increase biodiversity in the park. First stop was the orchard where she was impressed with the range of orchard trees and soft fruit. The first section of hedgerow was looking spectacular, with the wild flowers in full bloom.



Olivia Blake MP with volunteers and fig tree

During her walk round Olivia spoke to five young people who are volunteering on Saturdays for their Duke of Edinburgh Awards. She also planted a fig tree for us. We then had a whistle-stop tour of the rest of the park, during which she saw the barn owl boxes (sadly no owls in residence as yet), the willow moth and the bird copse. There were damsel flies on the top pond in the u3a garden. We just had time to explain what we plan to do to repair the ponds and safeguard the tree stock before it was time for her to be whisked away to her other Saturday engagements. An MP's life is certainly a busy one, and given the pressure on her time we feel very fortunate to have Olivia's support for our work.

The Lord Lieutenant returns

Monday 15 June dawned sunny and mild for a second, 'less formal', visit by the Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire, Dame Hilary Chapman. We had been confined to the Hall when she came to present us with our King's Award on a dull February morning and she wanted to see the park in the summer. We were joined by our patron Sir Jamie Benton Jones who had come over from Irnham Hall to meet her. Sir Jamie is the great grandson of the Hall's owners, Sir Walter and Lady Madge Benton Jones. He happens to be a deputy Lord Lieutenant in Lincolnshire and so the two had much to talk about!

Dame Hilary donned her boots and we made a complete circuit of the park, showing her all that we and the u3a gardening group have achieved, and equally, what more there is still to be done. She was particularly impressed by the number of groups who helped to create the orchard. Then there was time for her to have a coffee with the volunteers and to admire the King's Award crystal in its lovely case in the gardeners' mess room (the case had been fashioned by James out of an unused TV cabinet). Finally Dame Hilary donned a pair of gloves and ceremoniously planted a caryopteris 'Summer Sorbet' in the border by the car park.

It was a lovely visit and over far too soon, but Dame Hilary promised to come back in a few years' time to check progress. No pressure then!



L-R Sir Jamie Benton Jones, Shelagh Woolliscroft, Roger Lasko and Dame Hilary Chapman

Sounds of Summer in May

Our first concert of the summer attracted a large crowd, with families enjoying picnics and children dancing. The two bands 'Reclaimed' and 'Jig for a Kiss' were both very talented and entertaining with each set lasting 45 mins to an hour. We also held a successful raffle. Thanks to everyone who came and for your very generous donations. We raised around £700 to support future projects in the park.

Our next concert is on Sunday 28 June at 3pm. Bring a chair or blanket and come and enjoy the music. Future dates and details are on the poster on Page 1.



Crowds enjoying the Sounds of Summer in the sunshine



Children dancing to Jig for a Kiss

Thank you

A special thanks to Mike Cox for raising an amazing £700 from his concert at Dore Methodist Church in May. Mike sang a selection of songs from Opera, Broadway Musicals, Gilbert and Sullivan and others. The money will go towards future projects in the park.

Heritage Walks

If you would like to discover more about the history of Whirlow Brook then Sue Turner is leading a tour round the park as part of this year's Heritage Open Days Festival
www.heritageopendays.org.uk

On Monday 14 September, starting at 11am, Sue will tell the story of the park, its origins and the people who made it what it is today. You'll learn about Percy Fawcett who built the house as his family home and his sister 'Madge' who loved the gardens so much she left instructions that she wished to be buried in them. The tour will also tell of the park's decline in the late 20th century, and the on-going improvements made by volunteers who are now caring for the grounds of our well-loved park.

The tour is free, but places are limited and booking which opens on 1 August is essential. Please contact Sue on jsturner2020@btinternet.com to reserve your place.

FoWP Contact Information

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

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