

Website

www.forp.org.uk

After lying dormant for a considerable time, our website is now up and running once again. We would like to encourage you to improve it by submitting articles, photos, artwork or anything interesting and relevant. Contact details are on the website.

We can also be contacted on 01642 358888



Friends of Ropner Park Limited
PO Box 611 Stockton on Tees TS18 4WZ
Company No: 06247357
Charity No: 1125093



Friends of Ropner Park Newsletter

Registered Charity: 1125093

October 2009

Chairman's Ramble Round the Park

50p to non-members

Having lost our chairman and secretary within a few months, the new board has had to do a lot of hard work simply to keep things running smoothly, in an organisation with a six figure turnover and other offshoots beyond the cafe. Fortunately there have been some broad shoulders to provide stability.

Shoulders to Lean On

If you wanted to find someone to count every pound coming in and scream when any penny went out you would surely be looking north of the border. We're lucky enough to have such a person as our treasurer. June, a sociable, straight talking Scot is absolutely meticulous in caring for our finances and is also involved in all of our activities.

Anne and the events team are extremely well organised and have been more or less left to their own devices. Since Anne is expecting her third baby (congratulations) Vicky Nicholson and Barbara Gill did much of the preparation for our Autumn Event.

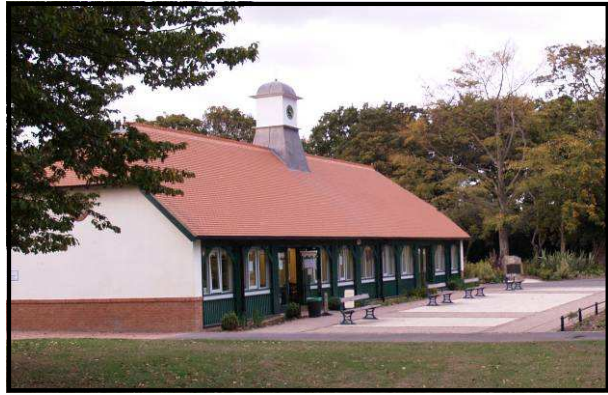
Gillian Sowerby has settled into the secretary's post with a refreshing calmness, dealing with any complicated red tape that we have to endure.

Music on the Bandstand

Because finances have been tight this year we were forced to cancel a large part of our concert programme. Margaret Eglington stepped into the breach and with the help of Phil Donegan and his friends at Simply Acoustic, a full programme has been achieved at a much reduced cost and, in my opinion, no loss of quality. One of the highlights was on Sept. 6th when Margaret presented a programme in a more classical vein. We will soon be looking to plan next year's concerts and with Margaret's help we may be able to give the opportunity to more local musicians to perform in public.



Chairman's Ramble Round the Park Continued...



Cafe

Ruth Ross as cafe manager has done everything possible to keep our standards high and to keep costs down in a year when finances are tight. Thanks also go to the staff who have worked well and coped with the flexibility that we need

Chairman

When I sat in the hot seat I knew that the first few months would be difficult and hectic. And so they have been. But they have also been enjoyable and rewarding. The most urgent task was to try to establish good relations with the numerous officers in Stockton Council who deal with our activities. Although there are still some outstanding issues to be resolved, I think that this objective has largely been achieved.

As chairman I have a constant dialogue with the cafe staff but also seem to spend a lot of time on the telephone or in front of my computer. Posters, new rotas, menus and much of the paper that is littered around the cafe comes from my printer. I have also managed to get our website working again and hope to make it more interesting over the winter months.

Looking towards next year we are already pushing for more Stockton Council events to be held in Ropner Park (we have had none this year). I would also like to encourage other activities such as wildlife studies or preparing a F.O.R.P. garden. We need enthusiasts to volunteer their services in order to widen our activities.

I apologise to our members who have been many months without a newsletter. Perhaps my ramblings will explain why this has (or has not) happened. Finally, as I write, we are experiencing some sort of an Indian Summer, following an indifferent July and August. Let's take the opportunity to enjoy our magnificent park

Then and Now



Ropner Park Lake

The park lake in Victorian times looks bare and, in a way uninviting, compared with the scene in 2009. The trees certainly add to the attractive feel of the park and now almost completely hide the houses in Oxbridge

Childhood Memories

Hello there.

It's me again. I thought it was time to let you know how long I have enjoyed Ropner Park. I first saw Ropner Park at the age of 3, in 1935. My mother had relatives in Hartlepool and Stockton. So we came to visit Summer, Christmas and New Year. I loved the flower clock and used to try to find out how it worked. The next stop was the lovely flower beds behind the fountain. Sometimes it was the Guide Emblem or the Scout Motto. The park to me was just a blaze of colour. I remember the great big shows in the park, all the animals, and different acts going on.

During the war I was sent to stay with my aunt Chris who lived in Bute Street. I attended Mill Lane School for about a year and loved every moment of it. It was about this time that my grandfather labelled me "Little Miss, Have case will travel".

In 1967 I came for an Easter break and ended up buying a house in Linden Ave. I moved from Glasgow in 1968, started work in the Children's Hospital and moved up to North Tees Hospital in 1974. I retired in 1995.

In October 2003 a neighbour rang me to say that Craig Adamson was looking for people to start "The Friends of Ropner Park", and the rest is history.

I have made so many wonderful friends over the years, walking my dogs in the park and the chit-chat at 7-30 a.m. is great. We, the volunteers, are looking forward to our next event at Christmas.

June Robertson Whyte

I have lots of wonderful memories of Ropner Park or as we [the local children] referred to it as "The park". One of those which stands out for me was the Stockton Annual Show. Each year on the last weekend in July the park would come alive on the Friday. The park was full of people erecting big marquees where flowers, crafts and cakes would be displayed and judged. These marquees were situated just behind where the café is now, on the grassy area down the banks.

On the playing field was the main arena where live stock would be paraded round for all to see and then judged for best in class. There were cows, sheep, goats, and beautiful big working horses all dressed up with their manes & tail plaited with lovely ribbons. So colourful! There would be show jumping and sheepdog trials, and with so much going on it was all so exciting. I watched the preparations and couldn't wait for it all to start on the Saturday morning.

I got up early waiting at the park gates for the opening. We paid our money and the time just passed so quickly. At lunch time when I left the park to go home I got a stamp on my hand to enable me to get back in on the afternoon, for more fun and excitement. To a child of 9yrs old it was magical.

I have been involved with the "Friends of Ropner Park" since it was formed, I now get such a warm feeling when I see the park being used so much, and also from all the support we receive from the public when we hold our events. The park has come back to life, and for myself, happy childhood memories come flooding back.

Barbara Clarke

Board games

When Craig Adamson resigned from the chair earlier this year, only four board members remained. They carried a considerable workload and responsibility. June Robertson-Whyte, Julie Hull, Anne Day and Vicky Nicholson worked hard to keep F.O.R.P. on track, but at the A.G.M. in June, Julie resigned from the post of secretary.

And then there were three.

The remaining members co-opted Brian Scrafton and Gill Sowerby to the new board. Brian was appointed to take the chair, and Gill was presented with a mass of paper work as the new secretary.

Going up.

The board of The Friends of Ropner Park is now:

Chair	Brian Scrafton
Vice Chair	Anne Day
Secretary	Gill Sowerby
Treasurer	June Robertson Whyte
Trustee	Vicky Nicholson

Could go higher.

The board can consist of a maximum of seven members meaning that we are still two members below full strength. If you think you have a bit of time, a lot of enthusiasm and would like to have a say in how FoRP is run, why not think about becoming a trustee. More hands make light work, and you never know, if you want to make a difference in your community, this might be the way to do it. Please speak to a board member for more information.

Events

Friends of Ropner Park have succeeded in presenting a variety of events throughout the summer, including promoting music on the bandstand every Sunday from June till September.

Our **Christmas Fair** is still to come. This year it will be on Sunday December 20th. This is smaller than our other events but, weather permitting, always has an intimate and friendly feel about it. Perhaps it's the time of year, but choirs singing Christmas carols and a small band playing gently in the background seem to be ideally suited to the nostalgia of a Victorian park. Stalls and sideshows add to the ambience.

The fun will start at 11a.m.and continue till 1p.m. Come along and soak up the atmosphere before your Sunday Lunch. More details will be found in the press nearer the date.

Next years events are already being planned for the following dates



Easter -
Palm Sunday, March 28th



Summer -
Date to be agreed with Stockton Council



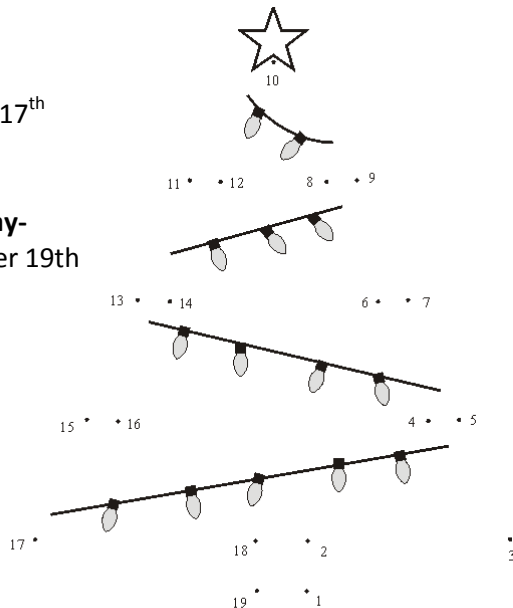
Autumn -
Sunday October 17th



Christmas Sunday-
Sunday December 19th

Kid's Corner!

Join up the numbers to reveal the picture...



A Park with a Heart

Deputy Chair

It's been a busy year for FoRP. We've organised three events, four coffee mornings, run the cafe and had many changes to the board of trustees.

Personally, I would like to thank all the people who have given their time and energy into FoRP, whether that was by manning a stall, making cakes or volunteering to become a board member. We have had a challenging few months, but I hope that in looking ahead, we will be able to plan some exciting new opportunities for the local community and the park. I would like to see how we can work together with the council and other organisations to help more people get involved in activities in the park. Whether that is by helping at events, taking members of the public on nature walks, working with the horticultural staff or promoting the work of FoRP within the community, let's see what we can do.

Ropner Park has always been at the heart of Oxbridge, Hartburn, Parkfield and the surrounding area. Because of this, people cared enough to help see the park restored and make FoRP happen. Let us continue to care and get involved. Ask yourself, what can I do? Become a member, bring your ideas and let's see how we can make Ropner Park a place which enriches all our lives in the years to come.

Anne Day



Say Hello to your new Board Members

Chairman

Before I retired, I spent 40 years as a dentist in general practice. I moved to Stockton in 1969 and became involved in the local scene, joining the ratepayers revolt in 1976. I became secretary of Hartburn Residents Association and with their support I was elected to Stockton Council in 1979.

Other roles followed. I served as treasurer and chairman of Grangefield School P.T.A. and had a further spell as a councillor.

This sounds terribly boring, but I do have a lighter side. I enjoy pop music, especially from the 60's. I have enjoyed playing sports, but I now ruin my leisure walks by slicing a little white ball into all sorts of hazards. I have also become a keen gardener.

I like to be doing something useful, and although it is time consuming I am enjoying being involved with the Friends of Ropner Park. My aims are to achieve a firm financial footing and to widen our range of activities.

Brian Scrafton

Secretary

I am married to Mark and we have 2 children Gemma aged 14 and Josh aged 11.

I was born and brought up in Stockton and have used Ropner Park throughout my life. My mother, Vera Skipp, was on the Board of Trustees and worked in the café as a volunteer until she died. She told us stories of when she used the park as a child and how she took us as children, so I feel I have carried on from where she left off as she was very passionate about promoting Ropner Park.

I work in the civil service in Stockton and have done since I was 21, a few years now!

I still use the park regularly all through the year either walking, cycling or just for a cuppa and a piece of cake with friends at the café.

I would like to see Ropner Park continue to prosper and grow so my children can take their children and grandchildren and have the memories I have.

Gill Sowerby

Trustee

I have lived and worked in Stockton for over thirty five years. In a former life I was a primary school teacher and I still maintain a keen interest in education as a school governor.

My interests are gardening, theatre, reading and spending time with my family, who do not live locally, which include my three grandsons.

My own sons spent many happy hours in Ropner Park playing football, cricket, rounders and tennis and they still enjoy visiting the park when they come to stay with us. I work in the café for a short spell each week because I enjoy it.

Vicki Nicholson

Christmas Menu 2009

£17.95 per person



Pate and Toast

Prawn Cocktail

Melon served with Raspberry coulis (v)



Lemon Sorbet (v)



Roast crown of turkey with pork, sage and onion stuffing

Beef cooked in red wine

Fillet of Salmon (v)



Christmas Pudding

Pavlova with Fruit (v)

Lemon Cheesecake (v)

Cheese and Biscuits (v)



Tea/Coffee and after dinner mints

Complimentary water/fruit juice

Please feel free to bring your own wine but soft drinks must be purchased from the cafe

(v) denotes vegetarian option

Please see Cafe Staff or call 01642 633767 to book

Stockton Borough Council Statement – October 2009



Ropner Park was part of Stockton Borough Council's overall entry to both the Northumbria and Britain in Bloom competitions, in which Stockton won best small city at Northumbria and a Gold Award in the National Competition. The judges were impressed with the high standard of management at Ropner which is considered the flagship park within the borough. Ropner Park continues to also hold the Green Flag Award which also recognises high standards in overall management.

The Bowls Club extension has recently been completed and was opened by local MP Dari Taylor and Stockton's Mayor Councillor Paul Kirton. The extension allows for indoor bowls to be played when the weather is poor or in the winter. There will be the addition of two display panels outside the bowls club explaining the history of the facility in the near future.

Grounds maintenance programmes are continuing and the summer bedding has been stripped out and rotavated recently by the Horticultural Services operatives and the planting of the Spring 2010 bedding commenced on 15th October. The planting will include approximately 5000 plants on the bank around the fountain and 600 plants each in the 20 beds along the main drive up to the Main Gates on Hartburn Lane. The beds at the lodge houses will also be planted up for the spring during these works. Staff from the Cleansing Department of Care For Your Area will ensure that the footpaths are kept clear during these works and leaf clearing will commence as soon as the planting is completed.

Other recent grounds maintenance works included the planting of a hedge and the addition of a decorative fence at the top of the bandstand steps. The wildflower area has been cut and cleared by Parks and Countryside staff in order to promote the growth of natural wildflowers through late spring and summer 2010. The 54 bird boxes and 30 bat boxes have all been cleaned out and repaired and 30 bird feeders will be added during November and kept topped up with feed on a daily basis through the winter.

Continued ...

Stockton Borough Council Statement – October 2009 Continued ...



The onset of the colder months has also seen the reduction in the hours of the lake's aeration system which is used to keep the water clear, although during 2009 a biological compound was also added to the water to combat build up of organic matter. The lake itself is cleaned out regularly and during this summer this included the removal of a build up of Canadian Pondweed. The annual strimming of islands is scheduled to take place before the end of November and the salt bin on the slope down to the lake has also been replaced for the winter and will be kept topped up as required.

More than 250 children used the park for environmental education activities and orienteering throughout the summer of 2009 and the park is also a popular venue for the programme of Health Walks run by Stockton Borough Council.

The gate closing will also be brought in line with other parks in the borough as of the end of British Summer Time on Sunday 25th October, 2009. The gates will be opened every day at 6am through out the year and will close at 5.30pm in the winter and 9pm in the summer.

