

**Website**  
**[www.forp.org.uk](http://www.forp.org.uk)**

Getting the FoRP website to work has been worth all of the effort. The site is receiving 200 hits per month and this is rising. The message from America has come from the contact address on the site. Reading elsewhere, there are members of "The Friends" who now live abroad. If you are one of those people, get in touch and we can possibly feature your story on the website.

## Board Members

The board of Friends of Ropner Park is now:

<b>Chair</b>	Brian Scrafton
<b>Vice Chair</b>	Anne Day
<b>Secretary</b>	Gill Sowerby
<b>Treasurer</b>	June Robertson Whyte
<b>Trustee</b>	Vicky Nicholson
<b>Café Manager</b>	Ruth Ross

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.

**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**

## Chairman's Ramble Round the Park...

**March 2010**  
**50p to non-members**

### Pre-Ramble

Now that I have survived my first six months as chairman I am pleased to say that the organisation within "The Friends" seems to be running much more smoothly. This is largely because people are coming forward to fulfil important roles. The board members, without any prompting, have taken on necessary tasks. Anne, our Vice Chair, is now springing back into action despite having to cope with three young and very lively boys. Gill, almost fully recovered from her ankle operation, quietly does what a secretary does. June, as always buzzes around collecting and cajoling, performing the treasurer's role, berating anyone who spends anything more than a penny, while Vicky shares the organisation of our events with Barbara Gill, and is always dreaming up ways of bringing in more money (try her home made marmalade and biscuits on sale in the cafe).



### Membership

Keeping track of the membership lists has been a concern since I took over the chair. Stephanie Court, who puts together our newsletter, has taken on this role, much to my delight. Until Steph took over, the membership list was becoming outdated and rather cloudy but Steph is updating and clarifying so that soon we will have a much clearer picture. If there are any omissions or errors please contact us and we will correct them.

### Music on the bandstand

We are working towards a more varied programme in 2010. Margaret Eglington has used her many contacts to produce an interesting mix of old and new, brass bands and jazz, and her own classical show in September. A new and exciting development is that we will have artists from "Arc" performing. The vibes coming from the organisers (at The Arc) are very positive and I am very interested to see how this partnership develops.



The full programme will be posted on the FoRP notice board at the side of the cafe and on our website. Leaflets will be available in the cafe. Bandstand concerts take place on Summer Sundays from 2-4 in the afternoon.

# Chairman's Ramble Round the Park

## Continued...

### Cafe

The bad weather and the recession have meant that this has been a difficult winter financially for the cafe. The Christmas lunches were praised by those who came and enjoyed them but a certain lack of organisation and forward planning on our part meant that we did not have as many bookings as in the previous year. We intend to put that right in 2010. Hot lunches are now being served every Wednesday and, after a slow start, the word is getting around, the weather is improving and the numbers are increasing.

A small band of volunteers redecorated the cafe in January. Thanks to those who scrubbed, cleaned, filled holes and wielded paintbrushes. Your help was much appreciated.

### Events

We will be promoting our usual events this year. The next one will be the Easter Fair which will take place from 2p.m.-4p.m. on Palm Sunday March 28<sup>th</sup>. Our full list of events can be found in the usual places. Thanks to Barbara and Vicki and the events team for all their hard work. Since extensive work is planned for Preston Park this year we were hoping that some events normally held there would be transferred to Ropner Park. Unfortunately at the time of writing that seems unlikely. The main problem is the lack of parking spaces allied to the expense of providing "park and ride" for large events. However we will keep on trying.

### Other Activities

With the help of Stockton Council we are planning to recreate the sensory garden. It will not be as quiet and secluded as the previous one but will be situated in a prominent position around the bandstand. Pauline Percival is liaising with the council design team to formulate the planting arrangements. We should be ready to go when the spring flowering display is removed. Various suggestions for other activities have been given an airing and some possibilities appear in other articles in this newsletter. If you have ideas, no matter what aspect of the park they refer to, we would love to hear them.



### Conclusion

I feel a lot more confident about the future of FoRP than I did when I took over the chair in June of last year. We can only survive and progress through the help of our members and friends and by attempting to provide what people want. I have been encouraged by the effort of so many people. Tell your friends about our organisation and try to persuade them to become members. We could widen our interests and encourage more people to enjoy Ropner Park if we had more members and input.

Brian Scrafton

# Christmas & Winter in the Park ...



Frozen Lake



Snow Band



St Peter's Choir



The Mayor's Speech



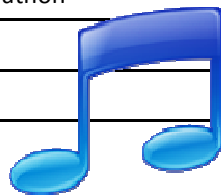
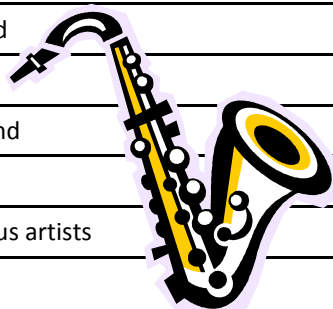
Christmas in the Café



Bandstand in the Snow

## Provisional bandstand bookings for 2010

	<b>Concerts on the bandstand from 2p.m.-4p.m. on Sunday afternoons</b>
June 13 <sup>th</sup> .	Bear Park and Esh Colliery Band
June 20 <sup>th</sup> .	The Arc. Four groups providing a variety of entertainment
June 27 <sup>th</sup> .	Billingham Silver Band
July 4 <sup>th</sup> .	Tricia McLean and Friends
July 11 <sup>th</sup> .	The Arc Four groups providing a variety of entertainment
July 18 <sup>th</sup> .	Marske Brass Band
July 25 <sup>th</sup> .	The Old Glory Jazz Band
August 1 <sup>st</sup> .	Sour Groove
August 8 <sup>th</sup> .	The Salvation Army Band
August 15 <sup>th</sup> .	
August 22 <sup>nd</sup> .	Simply Acoustic Various artists
August 29 <sup>th</sup> .	
Sept. 5 <sup>th</sup> .	Light Classical Instrumental and choral
Sept. 12 <sup>th</sup> .	
Sept 19 <sup>th</sup> .	Marske Brass Band
Sept 26 <sup>th</sup> .	Tricia Mclean and Friends The day of the National Bandstand Marathon
Oct 3 <sup>rd</sup> .	
Oct 10 <sup>th</sup> .	
Oct 17 <sup>th</sup> .	The Old Glory Jazz Band Friends of Ropner Park Autumn Fair



Margaret Eglington is still contacting artists to fill in the remaining dates. The final programme will be published soon.

## The Park Ranger's Words

Ropner Park has undergone a major refurbishment and improvement programme that has seen the restoration of the Park to incorporate the old Victorian splendour along with new modern facilities. The management of the Park is an important factor in maintaining the high standards achieved so far that have helped the Park win Green Flag status. The management is a combined effort that encompasses many sections from Stockton Borough Council (SBC) such as Horticulture, Care For Your Area (CFYA) and Parks and Countryside working alongside local communities, schools and Friends Of Ropner Park group (FoRP).

My role as the Park Ranger offers the chance for members of the public, residents, visitors, community groups, schools and a wide variety of other groups to relate back their thoughts and comments on the standing of the Park. It is an essential process that enables the Park to be managed in an efficient manner and open up ideas for further improvement. I have recently installed a healthy walk course and orienteering course that can be used at any time. Maps are available from the café situated in the Pavilion. FoRP help in the running of these events along with other planned events throughout the year. FoRP group is a good contact source and is very keen to encourage the promotion of the Park.



This time of the year requires a reduced amount of maintenance but the work is still essential to promote healthy growth in the spring. We will be cutting back dead, diseased vegetation and crown lifting trees to enable more light to come through that in turn promotes stronger growth both for the trees and bushes and for ground flora. The lake is regularly cleaned and detritus removed to improve the water quality – this works alongside the underwater aeration system.

Numerous bird boxes have been attached to trees throughout the Park over the years to encourage the bird population, this works alongside the bird feeders that are regularly filled throughout the winter offering a good source of food when this is in short supply. We have had school groups in carrying out this activity to help promote sound environmental education. We monitor the bird boxes to record which are used and this helps determine the position of future bird boxes that will be placed in the Park. Bat boxes have also been placed in the Park, mainly around the lake, as this is an ideal habitat for the bats as they feed of insects that swarm around the lake. It can take years for bats to use the boxes so we will need to be patient.



I am hoping to carry out some walks throughout the Park working alongside FoRP chairman – Brian Scrafton to take in the history, heritage and wildlife aspects. If you have any questions, problems or suggestions to help in the continuous development of Ropner Park please contact me on the number below or look out for SBC staff in the Park who will be pleased to help you.

**Colin Powles- SBC Park Ranger - 01642 613591**

### **Nature Walks**

Colin has agreed to lead nature walks around the park showing where interesting wildlife habitats can be identified and explained. We are hoping to arrange the first walk at Easter, but at the time of going to press the time and date have not been finalised. Look out for details in the press, The FoRP notice board and on our website.

## A Volunteer's Story

As a young girl I often visited Ropner Park, either for a walk, to feed the ducks or watch a performance at the open air theatre. Then many, many years passed and I did not think to go. However, one day a leaflet came through the door asking for volunteers to help run the cafe. So much work had been done in the park and as I had recently retired I joined FoRP and decided to offer to help out. I really enjoyed doing that and when a big event was to take place a friend and I manned one of the stalls. Then somebody said to me "Seeing as you help out why not join the events committee." So I did. Everybody was friendly and welcoming. We meet before the events to discuss the different stalls and activities and things we can do. Four coffee mornings are held each year in the Parish Church hall to raise money for the park and recently a craft group has been set up to make things to sell at the events. I look forward to these mornings. I feel this is a way to meet new people whilst helping the community.

*Diana Medlock - Volunteer*

## Cafe Manager's Report

Hello, my name is Ruth and I am the proud manager of the Ropner Park café. I would like to remind you of our delicious menu options which range from homemade soups, pies, sandwiches and cakes, to name but a few. We also provide a satisfying hot lunch every Wednesday from 12 - 2p.m.

We will be introducing hot-dogs and beef burgers for the duration of the school summer holiday period.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our customers for their support over the years through rain, sunshine, wind and snow!! Thank you once again from myself and all of the staff. If you have any suggestions we will always consider your ideas. Please contact us.



**The Café at Christmas**

*Ruth Ross - Café Manager*

## Kid's Corner!

### **Make a Paper Cone Easter Bonnet...**

**Why don't you create your own Easter bonnet to bring along to our Easter bonnet parade on 28th March at 2.45pm? Parental help and supervision is required to make the following bonnet...**

#### Materials

Coloured Paper  
Crayons, markers or stickers  
Tape or Stapler  
Scissors  
Elastic thread or ribbon



#### Instructions

1. Decorate the paper with crayons, stickers or markers – draw pictures or glue on magazine cut-outs.
2. Add streamers, ribbons, feathers or any other decorations.
3. Make the cone hat by folding the paper into a cone shape (making sure it will sit on your head) and tape or staple together.
4. Cut across the bottom so it is even. Staple a length of elastic thread or ribbon on each side to hold the hat to your head.

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## Music on the bandstand

"If music be the food of love play on....." and that is exactly what we do each Summer and Autumn Sunday in the park. Last season we had bands, guitars and voices treating us to traditional tunes, classics, jazz and blues, plus popular songs from the past and present. The setting is idyllic, the weather usually kind and, as a bonus, it's entirely free to the listener.

Seating is provided, and only metres away, there is a lovely cafe selling hot and cold drinks, snacks and yummy ices- all reasonably priced and utterly delicious. Everyone is welcome so come and sing along if you wish, dance if you feel the urge or simply tap your feet. Dogs can join in so long as they bark in time with the beat! See you all on Sundays in the park.

*Margaret Eglington*

## Sensory Garden

FoRP is working with the council to create a sensory garden in the beds next to the bandstand. We are fortunate to have the help of Pauline Percival (our secretary's sister) who is a trained horticulturist. Here are Pauline's views.



Spring Flowers

The sensory garden is a long term aim, with the first year being very much on a trial basis to see what plants will suit the conditions etc. The planning is underway now for the summer bedding scheme. The Council gardeners at the park have very kindly offered us plants from the selection they will receive this year to get us started, and by using some of these plus others that can be donated free of charge or grown by ourselves we will be able to start on our planting scheme.

This long term plan will also include roses, which will recreate the spirit of the old rose garden, and will eventually include those which will involve all the senses – sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch. Sensory gardens are also important for wildlife, in particular butterflies and birds, and hopefully other beneficial creatures.

We have been asked by the Council gardeners to ensure both the plants and the planting are of a high standard, to ensure that the success in previous years with the Northumbria and Britain in Bloom competitions is continued. As Ropner Park is considered the flagship park within the borough, we will of course do our utmost to ensure that these standards are maintained. Our grateful thanks go to the park management and team for their generous offer of plants, plus ongoing help and support.

*Pauline Percival*

## Getting Your Green Fingers Out

We are currently in talks with members of the council who are responsible for Britain in Bloom. We would like to invite people who live in the streets of Oxbridge which lead up to the park, to enter a hanging basket competition. The details are yet to be

formalised, but we would like to encourage people to put on a display and maybe win a prize. Wouldn't it be lovely to walk up to the park and admire some local handy work. We hope this will encourage more people to make hanging baskets, and perhaps it might be a step towards them having a new hobby. If you would like to be involved in the organization of the competition, please get in touch with Anne Day.



Cherry Blossom

# Easter Fair 28/03/10 - Ropner Park 2pm - 4pm

## Children's Games

Hunt the Bunny

Egg Decorating

Tombola / Raffle

Easter Bonnet Parade

Go Karts

Fairground

Face Painter

Café

Live Music on the Bandstand

Cake Stall

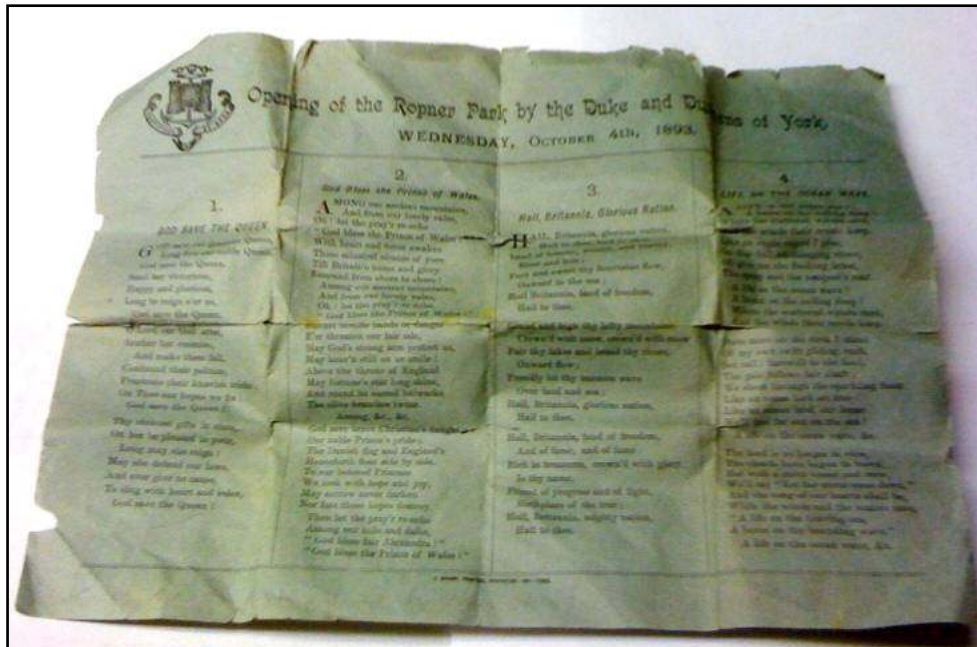


  
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## Interesting find in America

We have just received a communication from a lady living in Illinois. About 15 years ago she bought an antique box. Inside it was a wrinkled piece of paper (photo enclosed) which seems to be part of the programme of the official opening of the park by the Duke of York on Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup>. 1893. This seems to be an interesting find. We are following up this contact and hope to have more information in the near future. How the paper surfaced in the centre of U.S.A. after such a long time is anybody's guess.



## Then ...



## And Now



What happened to the cannon? The most believable rumour is that it was melted down along with the park railings in world war two. Do you know better? Careful study of the two pictures shows that the old bandstand has been replaced by the new version and that the trees alongside the path, which were mere saplings in the original, have now grown and matured. Behind the bandstand there were open fields which are now filled by the housing estate which includes Ropner Avenue.

A large version of the original photograph is displayed in the cafe. There is also a possibility that the cannon could be replaced by a floral version similar to the model of the S.S.Millpool situated near the tennis courts. Early days yet though.