



Website www.forp.org.uk
Facebook Friends of Ropner Park

Friends of Ropner Park is a voluntary group who appreciate the asset that the park brings to Stockton and aim to help the council to improve it.

This newsletter gives a snapshot of their activities. The array of awards shown below, coming from many different organisations is testament to the dedication of the many volunteers who give up their time to help.

Awards

- 2011**
RHS award for Outstanding Work in the Community.
- 2012**
Civic award from the Mayor of Stockton.
- 2012**
Catalyst Outstanding Achievement Award won by treasurer June Whyte,
- 2013**
RHS award for Outstanding Work in the Community.
- 2017**
Catalyst voluntary group award.
- 2018**
Winner in the Community Organisation Category in the Tees Valley Achievement BME Awards for work in hosting the EID Fusion Festival.

Friends of Ropner Park Ltd.



Registered
Charity: 1125093
Patron
Sir Henry Ropner

Friends of Ropner Park



Newsletter
Spring 2020
50p to Non Members

Chairman's Ramble

FoRP AGM.

The AGM will be held in the Ropner Park café at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday 24th. June. This is an opportunity to meet other FoRP members and to put your views on aspects of FoRP's activities.

David Squire.

We were very saddened by the death of David Squire. Not only was he an important figure in the rejuvenation of the park but he was a regular visitor, even in his later years, when he was in poor health.

Café.

The café staff continue to do us proud. We not only have an upgraded café but the standard is being maintained with the five star hygiene rating.

Beating the red tape.

An enormous amount of preparation is needed before our events can get off the ground. For instance the Event Management Plan, which has to be approved by the council, runs to 44 pages. There are more than 40 visiting stallholders, bands etc. who need to be booked and supplied with information. What a task! Our organisers deserve more than a medal.

Chairman`s Ramble (continued.)

Remembrance Garden

FoRP is always willing to look at new ideas and to help them proceed wherever possible. It has been suggested that a remembrance garden in Ropner Park would be an appropriate addition.

Our committee are enthusiastic and we have put this idea to the council to gauge the feasibility.

Events

They say that things come in threes. Two of our events had to be rearranged in 2019. The EID Fusion Festival had to postponed because Ropner Park was waterlogged. In December it was the wind that caused problems for the Christmas Fair. To cap it all, in February there was no gas for the ovens at our social event in the Cricket Club. Once again we coped

That makes it three! Hopefully, all will run smoothly in 2020

Music

The FoRP concert programme will once again run right through the summer. Not many bandstands offer entertainment every week. We can be proud that the people of Stockton can enjoy these free concerts. Talking to the band members, they all enjoy playing in the Ropner park bandstand on a summer afternoon.

Other FoRP activities

The FoRP volunteers have organised and paid for the decorating of the café and the new furniture. (See Page 4)

Thanks

The support of our members and volunteers is quite amazing but we also receive tremendous help from local businesses. Thank you all.

Brian Scrafton

Forp Board Members

Chair	Brian Scrafton
Vice Chair	Barbara Charles
Secretary	Stan Taylorson
Treasurer	Tina Whiteside
Trustee	Vicki Nicholson
Trustee	Cath Mulloy
Trustee	Jack Stokes

Ropner Park Band Concerts 2020

Sunday Afternoons 2.00—4.00

on the Ropner Park Bandstand

31st. May	Cleveland Police Band
7th. June	Simply Acoustic. Trish McClean & Friends
14th. June	Cockerton Brass Band
21st. June	Jailhouse Jets
28th. June	Silverwood Band
5th. July	EID Fusion Festival
12th. July	Jeremy McMurray & his Pocket Orchestra
19th July	Lockwood Silver Band
26th. July	Middlesbrough Jazz & Blues Orchestra
2nd. August	Cleveland Concert Band
9th. August	South Bank Brass Band
16th. August	So What
23rd. August	Billingham Silver Band
30th. August	Stockton to Darlington Ukulele Express

Events programme

Charity Walk	Sunday 8th. March
Palm Sunday Stalls	Sunday 5th. April
Spring Fair and Food Festival	Sunday 10th. May
Eid Fusion Festival	Sunday 5th. July
Bark-in-the-Park Dog Show	Sunday 6th. September
Ceilidh	Friday 13th. November
Christmas Fair	Sunday 6th. December

Membership Forms

IMPORTANT !

Please make sure that you fill in the form as you renew your membership. This is especially important if you have moved house or changed your email address. Also consider ticking the gift aid box. This increases subscriptions by 25% and such amounts are becoming increasingly important

Ropner Park Cafe

The winter winds and rains have not encouraged people to leave the comfort of their homes this year but the café relies on people visiting Ropner Park for its trade. However the staff have been pleased that even on bad days, people have turned up to enjoy their meals and hot drinks. The staff have been very appreciative and would like to thank these loyal customers.

Afternoon teas & Children`s Parties

Call at the café or ring 01642 633767

Details on the website www.forp.org.uk and on Facebook.

David Squire

Twenty years ago Stockton Council was awarded a lotteries grant to rejuvenate Ropner Park. As an engineer David was heavily involved in the planning of the new facilities, particularly with regard to the park drainage.

On a personal level, I got to know David because of his regular visits to the café where my wife was working as a volunteer. When it became clear that

ForP was in danger of folding, I spoke to David on a number of occasions and he helped to persuade me to take on the position of chairman of ForP. The rest, as they say, is history.



Brian Scrafton. 3

Ropner Park café refurbishment

Anyone revisiting the café after Christmas will have noticed a vast improvement. The café has been repainted and the colour scheme brought up to date.

New tables and chairs

New tables and chairs have been bought and the old wooden ones which had stood us in good stead for so many years have finally been put out to grass.

This has all been possible by the efforts of our magnificent "Volunteers Group". They have raised the money and chosen colour scheme. One of the members donated the paint.

There has been much searching and visiting of showrooms before the choice of furniture was finally approved. The volunteers have willingly devoted their time and energy to getting the best value for money for improvements to the café, one of the most popular places for park visitors to enjoy.

Café floor

The floor also sorely needed treatment . Over the years the wooden surface had become dark and sticky. Although this work should have been the responsibility of Stockton Council, there was no sign of it being done soon. Once again the volunteers bit the bullet, received tenders, and chose a firm to sand and lacquer the wood. What a difference!

Volunteers Meetings 2020 – 9.30 – 11.30am.

April Thurs 2nd.	May Fri. 1st.	June Mon. 1st.
June Tues 30th.	July Wed, 22nd.	Sept. Fri. 4th.
Oct. Thurs. 1st.	Nov. Mon. 2nd.	Nov. Thurs 26th.

Summer Music Programme

This year`s Summer Concert Programme promises to be an exciting mixture of some of our favourite performers from 2019, some old friends who haven't played in Ropner Park for a while, and also some performers new to Ropner Park.

Each Sunday from 31st May from 2.00pm to 4.00pm this year we have a programme of 13 concerts, opening with the fantastic Cleveland Police Band, and finishing on 30th August with the inspirational and entertaining Stockton to Darlington Uku-lele Express.

In between we will mainly alternate each week between brass bands and a range of other performers, featuring acoustic music, jazz music, 60s music and fun music!



Cockerton Prize Silver Band

The full programme is on page 14.

As ever **Ropner Park café** will be open to during each concert for refreshments and snacks.

Other FoRP Winter Activities

Christmas fair

FoRP Christmas fair was one of the events that was affected by the weather in 2019. The event was rearranged and took place in Yarm Road Methodist Hall which proved to be a good venue although the turnout was rather poor. It was still an enjoyable morning and FoRP came away with a small profit. Santa certainly enjoyed it!



Fund Raising

FoRP hired Stockton Cricket club for a "Sixties night " in February with live music by "So What", This was disrupted by the fact that there was no gas for the ovens – someone spiking the grass for maintenance managed to puncture a gas pipe. Another emergency for our events team to deal with. They coped this time by heating the food up at the cafe and serving it at the beginning instead of the middle of the evening. Everyone understood. What`s more FoRP added £570 to the park funds.

Charity Walk

FoRP has a regular charity walk in March. This year the charity to benefit will be the Butterwick Hospice. Details will be posted on our website and Facebook pages.

The rest of the interior



The FoRP Volunteer Group meeting in the newly decorated café.

Having rejuvenated the café, everyone was naturally disappointed when the council said that there was no money to redecorate the corridor and toilets. We pleaded that the park was being let down by the state of these facilities. To no avail!

We decided to call on one of our councillors, Louise Baldock, to see if she could break the deadlock.

Almost immediately a surveyor appeared to assess the work needed and the rest of the building has now been brought up to standard.

Thanks Louise.

2k & 5k Runs



Runs take place in Ropner Park every Sunday morning. If you are interested, meet at the bandstand at 9.30. The runs are well organised and the routes are patrolled by volunteers.

Most runners like to keep an idea of their running times and you can do this by registering on line with www.greatlocalrun.com.

However you don't need to register but can simply turn up on the day. The runs are free and we will guarantee that you will enjoy Ropner Park. What better way to start the day and get some fresh air. Many runners and spectators also pop into the café to enjoy a drink and a bacon butty

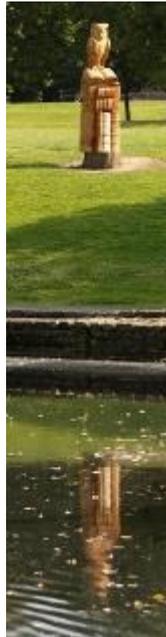
Stories from the park

In 2019, Friends of Ropner Park installed our first sculpture, The Owl (pictured right) down near the lake. This is the first piece of what we hope will become a sculpture trail, which we have agreed with Stockton Borough Council, will be based around the lake area.

ForRP have recommissioned Steve Iredale, who did the Owl sculpture to do more pieces in 2020.

We will make a decision over Easter, in collaboration with SBC, and some young people who have volunteered to help us, as to what pieces we want to see installed in 2020.

Huge thanks must go to the Co-op who are providing the money for these projects through their charity scheme.



The Ranger Reports (contd.)

The fountain is scheduled to be serviced and operating again ahead of the main summer season and the other features of the park such as the bandstand, sculptures and gates again will be inspected and maintained as required.

As in previous years, various events run by groups or individuals are already scheduled in not only Ropner but other parks throughout the Borough .



The Spring display 2019

As in previous years, various events run by groups or individuals are already scheduled in not only Ropner but other parks throughout the Borough and this is a fairly straightforward process through the Council. There are various activities from sporting challenges to family friendly events taking place all year and the council is more than happy to work with anyone who wants to run an event- especially if it is raising money for good causes. All applications are considered on a case by case basis and even if you just have an idea, it may be worth contacting the Council just to see if it is possible.

Ropner Park Calendar

A local photographer is to produce a 2021 Ropner Park calendar. It should be on sale at the EID Fusion Festival in July and in the cafe.

The photographer is June Ross. She has issued calendars of Stockton but in this case the images will be just of Ropner Park. You can view some of her photographs on line at juneross.co.uk and on Facebook at *June Ross Photographer*

The Ranger Reports



The ground is warming up and colour is returning to the park in the form of both formal bedding along the main drive and the various flowering bulbs. This is the result of work that has taken place over the winter months and from previous years.

Other work over the recent months has been the annual pruning and mulching of the shrubs and the planting of a couple of memorial trees within the park.



Spring is coming.....slowly **Snowdrops and Aconites**

Fortunately, we are moving into spring without the loss of any significant mature trees from through the winter, although the routine inspections continue as required. The start of the grass cutting season varies from year to year and for areas such as Ropner it comes in slowly - as the grass gets going while the ground is still wet and you may see the edges tidied up before the big lawns are cut by the larger machines.

Lake and Fountain maintenance

Winter is also the time of year to clear some of the natural debris out of the lake, which has been done and soon the aeration system will be serviced and set to run for several hours per day from late April, rather than just one hour in the winter to keep the pumps running smoothly.

Tweets

One afternoon, on a dull January day, my wife who is a regular visitor to Facebook, said that someone had just posted an article to say that they had seen a Kingfisher in Ropner Park that morning. "That's nothing," says I trying not to look too smug, "I was in the park this morning and saw a Golden Eagle, and what's more I have a photo to prove it.

The owner of the eagle visits Stockton most weeks and has time to kill in the morning. Keep your eyes peeled, you might be lucky enough to meet this very Impressive young bird. Even on the bleakest of days there is something of interest to see in Ropner Park.



For many years two swans lived happily on the Ropner Park lake, producing a family of cygnets each year. Then one day the female died leaving the male on his own. He has chased away any interlopers, all male of course, from his prized territory.

True Love?

Then a new pair of swans appeared. The new male was swiftly sent packing leaving the pair of swans shown here. A nest now seems to be under construction

Swans Parakeets & Cormorants



Parakeets look exotic and may seem out of place in the North East but they can often be seen in Ropner Park and nearby gardens.



Cormorants seem to have secured the fishing rights to the park lake

Spring Fair and Food Festival

Sunday 10th. May 11.00—3.00

Music and Entertainment

The Radio Pensacola Band, Willow Creek,
Morris Dancers, Punch and Judy,

Fun For all

Funfairs, Inflatables, Unicycles and Juggling, Woodcarving.

Children`s activities

Face painting, Magician, Make your own Soup. Seed Planting,
Balloon Man.

Charity Stalls

Butterwick Hospice, Daisy Chain, RSPB.

Stalls

Three Brothers Brewing	Local Real Ales
The Busy Whisk	Cheese Cakes
Pie Jackers	Meat Pies
The Green Guerilla	Vegetarian & Vegan Food
Lip Lickers Doughnuts	Doughnuts
The little Korean	Hot & Cold Korean Food
The Clucking Pig	Scotch Eggs
Lacey`s Cheeses	Yorkshire Cheeses
Sue Fawcett	Home Made Wines
Chintzy Cakes	Cupcakes & Fancy Cakes
Proper Pizzas	Freshly Baked Pizzas
Evies Pupcakes	Dog Food Cakes
Mr. Whippy	Ice Cream

EID Fusion Festival

Sunday 5th. July 12.00—5.00

EID Fusion Festival has been cancelled for 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.