



Friends
of Williamson Park

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2021

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR : Keith Dawson

What an extraordinary time we have all had during this last eighteen months. The pandemic has caused many disruptions to our daily way of life; the lockdowns, the isolations and cancellations have all had a considerable effect on our lives. Surely we are all looking forward to some sort of cautious normality. Many organisations are now trying to recover membership and to rebuild the relationship with our volunteers and our specified cause.

I must publicly thank our past Chair, Joy Greenwood, for her continued commitment to the Friends during this time. Joy has really kept us going with monthly newsletters and meetings of the Executive Committee and kept us in touch with all things relating to the Park. Thank you Joy!

Today we are welcoming back all our Members and trying to provide opportunities for all those who wish to support us. The Friends of Williamson Park is a registered charity. Its objectives are to promote the preservation, care and improvement of the Park and its facilities in co-operation with its management and staff. In this respect we have been working hard on the Friends Garden, the Queens Garden, the Bird Feeding Station, the Mosaic Sculpture and the new pond in the Butterfly House Garden. We do need your help to maintain these projects. We are planning a painting project, coppicing and rebuilding the feeding station fence, and also lots of work in the Orchard. If you can help us in any way please get in touch.

Books & Prints

- The Secondhand Book Sale raised £300 for the Friends of Williamson Park.
- Richard Danks has produced a fascinating book. There are a few left for sale at £9.99 in the Park shop.
- Sarah Bellwood wildflower prints are also on sale in the Shop.



WILLIAMSON PARK, LANCASTER
A BRIEF ILLUSTRATED HISTORY



Tai Chi: Friday morning Tai Chi sessions have started again with David Redmore from 9.30 – 10.30 in front of the Memorial. Total beginners are welcomed. Please dress very warmly as the practise is outside unless very, very bad weather! No charge but donations to Friends of Williamson Park welcome.

FRIENDS NEEDED TO HELP WITH.....

Friends' and Queen's Gardens



Autumn is here, and the leaves are turning colour, adding interest to the Friends', mainly green, Garden. However pretty they look, they do need removing from the main path before it becomes slippery. Sweeping them up to transfer to the leaf mould bin is one of the tasks that will be keeping our garden volunteers busy in the next few weeks. However, it is not the only thing to be done. There seems to have been an unusual amount of plant growth this year, which means the weeds have been growing too. The borders need continual maintenance to remove these and, as we move round the beds at this time of year deadheading the plants, we are hoping to

lay down a mulch onto the cleared ground to discourage weed regrowth.

It would be wonderful if we could 'put the garden to bed' before winter in a satisfactory state so that in the Spring new plantings can be undertaken to add more colour into the area for next year.

The garden is rather large and, as we only work on **Monday and Thursday mornings**, we would welcome more volunteers to help us.

Butterflies in the Park

There have only been a few butterfly surveys in the Park this summer, and the results are pretty depressing, but they do mirror results from the national Big Butterfly Count. The number of species and the numbers of individual butterflies were very low, despite Bowland View flowery meadow looking good this year. The Meadow Brown butterfly, which needs tussocky grassland to breed, was the most numerous in the meadow. Other species seen are Brimstone, Small White, Speckled Wood, Orange Tip, Peacock, Ringlet and Large Skipper.



Bats in the new boxes

A check of the eight new bat boxes (from the local company, Green Ecohabitats), in October discovered that three of the boxes near the lake contained 9 bats! A success. Thanks to Will



Bird feeding station & boxes

We have kept the feeding station supplied over the last two years and experimented with different foods and feeding platforms to support clinging feeders, table and ground feeders without resort to common fillers of wheat and maize. Unfortunately, it seems you can't choose your dinner guests and the feast for birds has also provided a feast for rats – families of them. Having removed the ground feeders, they climb up the feeder poles and breach the guards to partake of best sunflower hearts. Even with new RSPB feeders and guards, the solution is proving elusive and so - the battle continues.



Bird food has always been bought with donations from collection boxes in the Café and Shop, but this source of funding has dried up, so if you would like to make a donation to bird food, please contact info@parkfriends.com.

118 BIRDBOXES are scattered throughout the 53 acres of Williamson Park.

Sine 2014 a small group of volunteers spend a few hours each week in Spring observing nest boxes to build up a picture of occupancy across the Park. However the annual bird box clean in autumn could not be done in 2020. So, this year we looked forward to donning hard hats and clambering up ladders 118 times.



Typically, nest boxes users are blue tits plus the occasional great tit and nuthatch. In October, we started the cleaning to find a high proportion of boxes showing evidence of nest building or at least investigation, if not egg laying and fledging. Some boxes contained mossy nest upon mossy nest from successive years, others showed the tell-tale Williamson Park preference for tennis ball nap of various hues. Some nests held unhatched eggs or skeleton chicks, a result of 2021 poor Spring.

Whilst the bi-annual approach has clouded the picture, results so far are at the lower end of the 36-46% occupancy band established over the past eight years.

If you are looking for an all-round work-out, come along and help on the Bird Box Clean!

BTO WeBS?????? -

What does that mean? The lake and reservoir at Williamson Park have been registered as a BTO WeBS site. The British Trust for Ornithology Wetland Bird Survey (BTO WeBS) is a monthly national count of waterbirds across the UK. Waterbirds include ducks, geese, waders, divers, and herons. Gulls and terns are optionally included. The Park does not support such a wide range of species but does provide valuable quarters to a large number of Mallard on the lake and Moorhen/Mallards on the reservoir with a sprinkle of Herring gull, Black-headed gull and Little Grebe. Website:

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/wetland-bird-survey>. You may remember that a pair of Little Grebe had two broods of young on the reservoir in 2020, however there was only a solitary bird all summer in 2021. Wonder where the rest of the family went?

NEWS FROM THE PARK MANAGER: Beth Nortley

After a busy Summer including the successful Highest Point Festival, the staff will now be starting on the winter tree management work, and planning events and activities next year. This year the Park has once again been awarded the Green Flag Award and Green Heritage accreditation.

There has been a problem with loss of water and blue-green algae in the lake this summer, so major clearing and repair work will be carried out in the coming months, once the fish have been moved to a new home!

Special Activities to look out for are:

- Light up the Ashton Memorial – different colours to support different charities
- Light up Lancaster – viewing area. 6th Nov
- Christmas Wreath Making Workshops 27th Nov, 5th Dec, 10th Dec
- Carol Concerts 13 – 17th December (Friends are needed to steward, entry free)
- Family Activities in School Holidays

Full programme and details of events can be found on the Calendar on the Williamson Park website.



COME ALONG AND MEET THE FRIENDS IN THE PARK ON MONDAY AND THURSDAY MORNINGS AT 10 AM BY THE CAFÉ. WE DO A VARIETY OF PRACTICAL WORK AND GARDENING FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS, AND HAVE A CHAT OVER A CUPPA AFTERWARDS.

For more information contact: info@parkfriends.com



MEETING FOR ALL THE FRIENDS

TUESDAY 9TH NOVEMBER

BOWERHAM CHURCH HALL

For more contact info@parkfriends.com



BETH – Park Manager
Worked in the Park 9
years, starting in the
Zoo.
Loves all the Park!



JULIE – Shop
Worked at the
Park for 14 years.
Loves the view
and the Butterfly
House Gardens



DAMIAN, JOSH, NICK,
MATT, STE- General
Maintenance Operatives
(GMOs) –
Love all the Park,
especially Fenha Carr
PAUL – Maintenance



GAYE – Café
Worked in the
Park for 14
years. Enjoys
walking her dog
here.



MILO & EMMA –
Zookeepers for 3
and 5 years
Love the Butterfly
House & Ferrets

ROB – Café Supervisor-
3 years
BETH – Weddings
Coordinator/Duty
Supervisor- 5 years,
loves view of Memorial
from Copper Beeches



Friends of Williamson Park

YOUR COMMITTEE

KEITH – Chair
Friend since 2010.
Decorating, birdbox building. Loves the Fuschia Garden area.

CEDRIC – Friend for 12 years, tackles all jobs needing doing. Favourite area is the pond in the Zoo which he has just finished.

JENNY – Membership
Loves the Bird Feeding area

ROSE – Vice Chair
Friend since Butterfly House Garden

JOY – Was Chair for 4 years .
Gardening and all things for birds. Loves the Copper Beech trees.

JIM – Treasurer since 2012
Loves the view from the top of the Ashton Memorial

TREVOR– Secretary
Friend for 5 years. Loves Fenham Carr.

PAVEL – Friend for 5 years.
Helps wherever needed. Loves the whole Park.

HILARY– Publicity since 2012. Wildlife surveys, conservation work. Loves the Mosaic Sculpture area.

