



# Friends of Williamson Park

## NEWSLETTER APRIL 2024

I remember our first meeting with the previous 'Friends of Williamson Park' group. Their chairman Derek Sykes was there with several members of the committee. The truth was that this 'Friends' Team had been helping in the park for a long time and whilst there was lots of work still to do, they had reached their limit and were no longer fit and able enough to continue.

This edition focuses on members own experiences of volunteering in the Park. Their names have been omitted for obvious reasons but I sincerely thank all of them for their contribution.

The 'Friends' of Williamson Park meet each Monday and Thursday outside the Café at 10 am. We work in the park and before we finish we enjoy tea or coffee and a good chat in the café. You can join as an active member, we do other work not just gardening or you can join as a supporting member. Membership fee is just £5. per year. Our mission is to support the Park and ensure it maintains its high standards for the benefit of the people of Lancaster. Please join us in our mission.

**BECOME A " FRIENDS OF WILLIAMSON PARK" AND HELP US  
CARE FOR THE PARK AND ALL THOSE WHO USE IT**

**IT IS YOUR PARK –GIFTED TO THE PEOPLE OF LANCASTER**

## Volunteering / Retirement

I never really envisaged myself in retirement, I just intended to do less and less as time went by. Having been self employed for most of my life it didn't seem a problem. Nothing stays the same as we all know and at the age of fifty nine due to my health and that of others I made a big change. We moved away from Lancaster and lived a life of retirement – for 3 months, then I got bored and needed to do something. Several friends and acquaintances I knew who had retired just seemed to sit down at home and do nothing but I soon realised it wasn't for me. I took on several different jobs and enjoyed most of them, The ones I didn't like – I quit. On returning to Lancaster six years later I started doing some voluntary jobs, some made a small payment and others didn't but it kept me active, it gave me a break from home life, it gave me an interest and an opportunity to talk and be sociable with other like minded people. Volunteering for organisations like the National Trust was most enjoyable and gave us some great days out whilst doing things we both enjoyed. Another twenty years has now passed and although I'm nowhere near as fit as I used to be, I still enjoy spending time in the garden with all its fragrances and fresh air filling my lungs.



For many years now the Friends have planted spring bulbs in the park. This year has possibly shown the best display yet, although the weather has probably held their flowering back somewhat . When the sun came out and the daffodils raised their heads it was a most beautiful sight. There are now spring flowers from the Quernmore Road gate all the way through to Wyresdale Road. We hope to do` some more planting this coming autumn in a different part of the park



Blue tits – that’s how it all began. Having watched these engaging little birds building their nests, I responded to a request for bird box sightings; one thing led to another and, before I knew it, I was a fully paid-up member of the Friends of Williamson Park (FoWP) with a weekly slot on the bird feeding station rota.

I’d seen posters about the FoWP Group and their Monday / Thursday morning sessions but, still working full-time, the Group work days weren’t an option for me and I assumed that meant I couldn’t be a member. The Group knew better. Having admitted an interest in birds that was that. No reason why you can’t be a member they said. You can still attend the general meetings they said. We’re happy to see you; just contribute where you can.

This was 2017 and the start of something which has developed into regular bird box observation sessions each spring, nest box cleaning each autumn, Big Garden Bird Watch each winter and involvement in the Emily Williamson memorial event with the RSPB last year.

It has also opened the door to other like-minded groups under the Green Spaces banner leading to weekend sessions planting trees in Ryelands Park and Miss Whalley’s Field, membership of the Scotch Quarry Gardening Group and Closing Loops Community Composting Scheme.



#### **Friends Volunteer Hours:**

**January 116 hours    February 146 hours    March 130 hours**

**Our next general meeting will be held in the Café at the Park. 5.30pm Wednesday 15th May. 2024**

**Our Annual General meeting will be held in the Café at the Park. 5.30pm Wednesday 26th June. 2024**

The executive members are in the process of looking at our current website as it is felt that it could do with an update. The website is controlled by the city council and it appears that whoever set up the original version has now moved on. If anyone has any ideas on an update please get in touch with and members of the exec and see if we can come up with something striking.



## DAFFODILS

Since moving to Lancaster I have spent many happy hours at Williamson Park, including my wedding day and countless trips to the playgrounds and Butterfly House with my kids. During lockdown we visited almost every day, and appreciated even more than before how lucky we are to have such a fabulous outdoor area so close-by. I joined the Friends of Williamson Park last June when I reduced my hours at work. I love being outdoors and it's been great to get involved in the various gardening and maintenance projects, and know that I'm helping look after such an amazing place. I've learned a lot about the history and ecology of the park, and would recommend volunteering as a great way to get some gentle exercise and meet new people, while helping with some really worthwhile projects. The Friends meet each Monday and Thursday 10:00-12:00 and are always looking for new volunteers to help out, on either a casual or regular basis. There's no expectation to come every week so don't be put off by the weather!

## VANDALISM ( unwanted news)

Sadly, the Friends of Williamson Park, have to report acts of vandalism in the Park. ( It can be an on-going problem!) The parking ticket machine, near the cafe, has been damaged.

Many of the festoon of lights in the Dell have been smashed. Sentry style litter bins have been damaged and some have been pushed down the embankment.

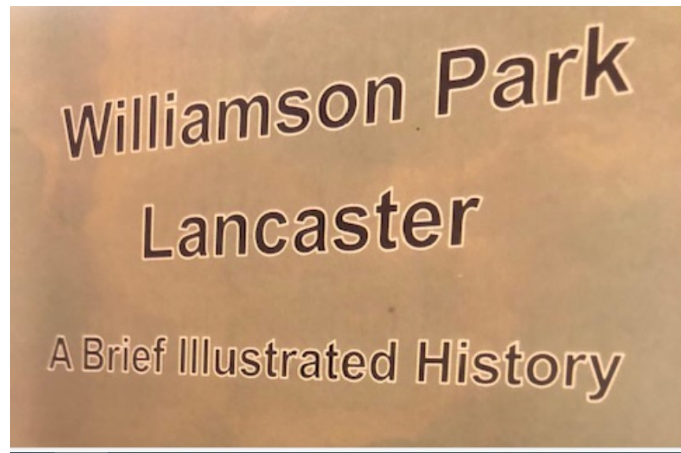
Also, the following damage occurred in the daytime, when the Memorial was open. On the upper balconies, names, comments etc. have been scratched into the stonework!!

Why, oh why, does this happen time after time? The Park is for the enjoyment of the people of Lancaster and the surrounding areas. Not for the mindless few who wreak havoc. If you see such acts being committed, do not approach those concerned, but report them to the police on 101, or inform the Park management or staff. Sadly, CCTV does not even seem to deter them!!

*During this years snowdrop season some of the 'Friends' took a day out to visit Lytham Hall, Lytham. The hall is a grade 1 country house and parkland managed by Heritage Trust for the North West. It was opened in 1764 and is situated one mile from Lytham town centre. The park covers around 78 acres of wooded parkland. There are various functions and workshops on specialist subjects, There are the Tearooms, an animal hub and Garden hub. There are also tours round the Georgian Hall. There is in February an amazing display of snowdrops throughout the whole estate. The Hall does have its own gardens and parkland manager Alan Hulme who also holds training sessions in the garden. The gardens are well established and maintained by volunteers who meet every Tuesday and Thursday, I was amazed to see at least twenty five volunteers all busy working in the gardens in early February. A visit like this really needed finishing off with some refreshment in the Tea Rooms. I can only say this was first class, a good variety of meals and snacks are on offer at a very reasonable price and well worth a visit at any time of the year.*



Bird Boxes made by a local craftsman now on sale in the shop £12.



Contacts:

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or the Park shop/ office

Compiled by Richard Danks , Friend of Williamson Park

Second printing now available in the shop.

The website which is with the Lancaster City Council site is at present being updated. We hope to supply new pictures of the work of the Friends .

Other News:

The planting of new hedging around the orchard in Fenham Carr has been successful, the seedlings which were planted last October are shown healthy growth. We are now trying to keep the bracket and brambles down to give them more room.

We have hired a wood chipper to clear lots of dead wood around the Park and volunteers are involved in this project.

The two Tree Routes— Exotic Trees and Native routes are in the process of being re-drawn, new numbers being put on the trees. A new leaflet to all the trees should be out soon.

The Bird enclosure in Fenham Carr has been repaired by members and a fresh covering of wood chips have been spread. Please do not feed the birds as food lying on the ground only encourages vermin.

Who designed the Ashton Memorial ?.....