

Who are the Friends of Rowntree Park and what do we do?

The FRP started out as a community group and have evolved into a charity. Our volunteers help maintain and improve Rowntree Park. We do not manage the park, that is the City of York Council. However, as funding cuts have meant less council involvement over recent years, it has meant our volunteers have taken on more responsibilities in the park. We represent the public's view to the council and notify the council of issues or concerns.

As the council maintenance teams no longer plant or plan new 'gardens' in the park, our volunteers have taken over key areas that we care for. We fund all the plants in these areas and we look after them. Our areas of responsibility can be seen here. Other areas are council responsibilities. We cannot maintain the whole of the park gardens and flowerbeds as we don't have the funding or enough volunteers to do so.

Our volunteer also litter pick and help with goose maintenance. Both are officially more 'council' areas but our volunteers help as they are areas that clearly need more focus on!

We also run a range of children's events and nature education programmes. We also run community events and projects and a Mental Health and Wellbeing programme that includes our extensive programme of volunteer opportunities as well as sessions and events. At times we work with local schools, other organisations and charities too.

We do quite a lot, but in truth are only a small team of people who come up with these programmes and run all the volunteering and events. We would love to have more people involved.

A summary of the key things we have done through 2021:

- Gardening - specific areas
- Litter collection volunteering
- MHWB programmes that include sessions and an extensive volunteer programme as well as work with other charities and organisations such as MIND
- Children's events and activities linked to nature and conservation (includes Forest School, Home Education, one off events and more)
- Organising events in the park by outside providers
- Goose Maintenance help and duck food (wildlife education)
- Projects in the park like Words from a Bench and Art in the Park as well as working with craft groups on installations.
- Adult events - nature walks, history walks, nature craft sessions
Trails around the park - Yoga and Trees

- Bird Feeding
- Trying to get funding and a team for the park keepers lodge to become a community building
- Projects such as 'Girls and the Park' to look at ways to encourage more older girls to use the space.
- Funding new benches (picnic tables)
- Getting grants and funding for projects
- Communicating what is happening in Rowntree Park via social media, monthly newsletters and website
- Communicating with CYC on maintenance issues

What areas of the park gardens do the FRP look after?

The Friends look after:

- The Long Borders
- The Friends Garden (Railed Garden)
- The Sensory Garden (Railed Garden)
- The Rose Memorial Garden/Pergola
- Pollinator Project - Terry Avenue Gates flowerbeds
- The 'new' wildlife area - Back of Butcher Terrace Football Field (being developed)
- The Lodge Garden - an area where we are starting to propagate plants for the park

We also care for the story circle/forest school areas and a volunteer cares for the rockery near the clubhouse/cafe.

Long borders

This is the long stretch through the centre of the park. Our aim here is to have a range of perennial plants that will grow year after year. The Long borders bring colour to the park. We aim to introduce more lupins to the long borders. Lupins are very much part of parks history. George Russell who pioneered types of lupins was originally from the Southbank area of York. His flowers became famous worldwide and the park used to have a range of Russell Lupins.

The Friends Garden

This garden is aimed at those who want to picnic and play in a safe railed space that is goose free. The raised beds are filled with annuals to bring colour to the area. The planting is being redesigned for the purpose we find the garden is used. We know children play here and like to hide amongst the bushes, so we are making sure the area is filled with ornamental grasses and shrubs rather than pollinators or spikey plants. We have bird feeders in here too, which volunteers maintain.

The Sensory Garden

This railed garden is being planned to be a Sensory Garden – an area to stimulate the senses! A range of plants that bring colour, fragrances, textures, and some that taste! This area is intended to be a great place to relax.

The Pollinator Project

This is a fairly new project that started in late Summer 2020. It is based at the Terry Avenue Gates as you enter the park. The area near the Skatepark and Basketball courts. Our volunteer gardeners are creating an area to help with biodiversity. Native plants that will provide food and shelter for bees, butterflies, and other beasts! This project is funded by 'Betty's Trees for Life'.

The Lodge Garden

One of our big projects from 2020 onward included starting to set up our own Propagating Garden. We need to make the gardening the FRP does in the park more sustainable. There isn't much funding available for new plants, so we want to grow our own. If we have a surplus, we can sell to raise funds too. The Lodge Garden is the space behind the cafe. It is enclosed from the general public. We welcome volunteers interested in propagating for the park!

The Rose Memorial Garden/pergola

This area is a place for quiet contemplation and to remember those we have loved and lost. There are some plants/trees dedicated to people here. Also some plaques. Our volunteers maintain the rose garden and the climbing roses on the pergola. The Friends of Rowntree Park cannot organise dedications of trees, plants or benches as this has to be done via the council.

The Wildlife area

This is a large area at the back of the Terry Avenue Football Field. The FRP actually first started work in this area around 10 years ago when they planted around 12 apple trees and added a pond. However, this area has been a little neglected and will be redeveloped between 2021-24. The aim is to have a new pond, abog garden rockery, benches, wildflowers, paths, our orchard working wood to be used in forest school sessions and more!

