

Friends of Locke Park



**Locke Park:
Barnsley's
People's Park
.... from 1862**



This booklet on Locke Park was originally produced in 2019, a typical year for the Friends of Locke Park (FoLP) group with events and voluntary activities taking place throughout.

2020 as we all know has been an extraordinary year. The last event in Locke Park run by the Friends group was its Christmas community event in December 2019. We look forward to more normal times at some point in 2021.

The restrictions imposed as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic have meant that all the events that FoLP and others organise in Locke Park were cancelled and activities such as the parkruns have not taken place since March.

Locke Park Café had to close for some of the year; they were much appreciated when they were allowed to be open or providing takeaways.

Locke Park Bowling Club also closed for a while during lockdown but then opened with additional safety measures. The bowling club held very popular open bowling sessions for members of the public before renewed restrictions meant that this was not possible.

After a break in the lockdown period, the FoLP volunteers carried on with gardening, new planting and other work in the park – and they were joined by new members.

Locke Park has continued to be visited by large and increasing numbers of local people, taking exercise and enjoying the open spaces and respite. They have often commented how grateful they are for Locke Park and the work done by the gardeners and volunteers.

The Friends of Locke Park have provided some new features in the park in the last year: 'the lions are back!' - two stone lions were reinstated in the park in late 2019; and in 2020, a fairy garden next to spectacular art work based on the 1980s children's films, Dark Crystal and The Labyrinth have been created. Lots of photographs being taken and favourable comments on social media!

An initial bid is also being prepared for improvements to Locke Park and a discovery trail.

Finally, we remember some stalwart members and former members of the Friends of Locke Park group who sadly passed away during 2020.

The Friends of Locke Park Group, December 2020

Introduction

Locke Park has been held in trust for the people of Barnsley by Barnsley Council since the 1860s. It is a great example of a Victorian Park, listed Grade II in Historic England's Register of 'Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest'.

It's 47 acres in size, only a mile from Barnsley's town centre, with gardens, trees and open grass areas, an historic tower, bowling greens, games / play areas and a café.

It's popular with Barnsley people who come to the park to have walks and picnics, take their children to the play area, meet up with friends, visit the café, play games, get exercise, enjoy the views and heritage, and have a good time.

School, play and mother and toddler groups regularly visit the park and the Multi-Use Games Area attracts good numbers of children and young adults.

The park provides all-year interest with its landscape of grassed areas and trees, and some areas of shrubs and flowering plants.



Friends of Locke Park (FoLP) is a group of volunteers who want to preserve the heritage of Locke Park and improve Locke Park and its facilities for the benefit of everyone who lives in or visits Barnsley. Friends of Locke Park was formed as a community association in 2002. We have worked since then to improve Locke Park. Friends of Locke Park was registered as an incorporated charity in 2016.

Friends of Locke Park fund raise, organise events and activities in Locke Park, and undertake voluntary work in the park.

Bids for funds have been made; experts have given their advice and drawn up ambitious plans; everyone has been asked for their views; some bids have been successful and, with money from gifts, donations and fundraising activities, improvements have been brought about.

Activities and events

In normal years, FoLP opens Locke Park Tower every first Sunday of the month throughout the year. There is no charge, however visitors are often generous with donations.

FoLP provides different events in Locke Park throughout normal years including three car boot sales in May, July and September to raise additional funding.



The Christmas and Easter events around Locke Park cafe and the play area are for the local community and have a family focus.

The two large scale events in June and August - a Classic Car event and a Summer Gala - attract several thousand visitors to the park. (See cover)



These events include brass bands, dance displays, fun dog shows and lots more.

They give local charities opportunities to have stalls free of charge.

Each week there are two popular parkruns – one for adults and one for children, and a Bowling club regularly meets.



Volunteers supporting FoLP events include park users and local residents, young people from the local youth organisation Exodus, workers from XPO Logistics, Royston Animal Welfare and local Rotary Club members, over 50 volunteers in total.

In turn FoLP members support other groups and organisations with events in Locke Park through publicity and on the day help. This has included Destination Barnsley - an event celebrating the diverse nature of Barnsley - as well as events to support Barnsley Hospice and Barnsley Hospital Charity.

Heritage Improvements

As well as being listed itself as of 'Special Historic Interest', Locke Park has a number of other heritage features, including the listed Tower, Bandstand and Joseph Locke Statue.

Locke Park Tower was made safe in a major operation in 2013 with funding raised by FoLP and from a local developer (£106). Since then, FoLP has opened the Tower each month for visitors with a display on the significance and history of Locke Park.

FoLP has instigated other improvements to the heritage assets in Locke Park.



These included the professional cleaning of the listed Joseph Locke statue (paid for in part by a Ward Alliance grant to FoLP) and arranging for the cleaning and re-lettering of the ABC steps (FoLP fundraising).

FoLP brought back the lions to Locke Park: one was reinstated on the plinth near North Lodge where countless children – now often grandparents themselves - had photographs taken in former times. Another was placed at the end of the valley where another lion previously resided.



Planning and Communication

The FoLP group normally meets on the first Tuesday evening of each month at the café in the park for planning activities and discussing progress. Generally, 8 to 12 people are there. Anyone can come along, express their views and give their ideas. In this way ideas have been generated for adult and junior parkruns, for fitness equipment in the park and for a fairy garden with murals based on the 1980s children's films, Dark Crystal and The Labyrinth. All these suggestions have now been implemented.

Others come along to share their ideas for projects. These have included proposals for a Smokefree play area, the 'Destination Barnsley' event, and 'Love on the Rocks' activities. Again, these have all been supported.

Other ideas come from informal discussions in the park or at the café since FoLP volunteers are well known and often in the park.

Indeed, everyone can find out about what's happening in Locke Park from the Friends of Locke Park website and social media posts. The FoLP facebook page now has over 4500 followers.

Park Management, Maintenance and Planting

BMBC Parks Service manages Locke Park with three grounds maintenance staff based here. They continue to cut grassed areas regularly, maintain the hedges around the Bowling Greens and the Tower, manage the trees, prune shrubs, and much more.

FoLP volunteers - up to six in number - work in the park on three mornings a week. [Others join them when larger projects are undertaken.] FoLP arranged for work in the park by Sodexo community service order groups and GoodGym volunteers. FoLP volunteers continue to support the ground maintenance staff by clearing paths and grass of leaves, edge trimming, weeding and new planting as well as other activities.

FoLP has planted roses in the beds in front of Locke Park Tower, English bluebells in woodland areas, daffodils in grass areas and wildflower patches elsewhere.



Local school children visiting the park were encouraged to place bulbs in a prepared bed – and come back to see them flower in the spring. They are excited both by the bulbs and by the inhabitants of recently replaced bird boxes.

A group of Horizon School pupils have planted a ‘purple heart’ of crocus bulbs with the support of Stainborough Rotary Club and FoLP.

Horizon pupils have also attended events and raised money for a tree which has been planted in Locke Park.

Other activities involving school groups have been planned.



Other trees have been planted as replacement or new features by the gardeners, sometimes in memory of a loved one. They have planted two special trees to frame the Joseph Locke statue.

FoLP volunteers have worked in particular on clearing and replanting the bed at the entrance to the valley for year-round interest.



BMBC staff and FoLP volunteers are quick to identify issues in the park – be they graffiti, bins set on fire, trees fallen or damaged, etc. Grounds Maintenance staff at the park remove litter and keep the park tidy and safe.

Following requests from FoLP and parkrunners, an assessment of the condition of paths led to the areas of most concern being resurfaced by Barnsley Council.



FoLP volunteers have cleaned benches and litter bins around the park, painted the public toilets on the café building, re set toppers on flower bed walls and organised painting of ironwork by young people in the National Citizen Service.



Fund raising by parkrunners enabled FoLP to install a Defibrillator at the café.

Raising Funding and Support

FoLP has been active in raising funds through its events, including three car boot sales a year, donations and grants following bids. The latter include ward alliance funding for fitness equipment and cleaning of the Joseph Locke statue. Public health funding to FoLP launched a junior parkrun. Section 106 funding from developers arranged by Barnsley Council funded the provision of a Multi-Games Area (MUGA) and, with FoLP funds, enabled work to take place to open Locke Park Tower. National Lottery, Landfill Tax funding and contributions from FoLP created the Play Area.



Future Plans

We are continuing to raise funds to carry out the full restoration of the Tower together with other improvements to the park for future generations to experience and enjoy.

These include the restoration of the bandstand with electrical power being installed, the restoration of the historic drinking fountain, replanting at the head of the valley with ferns, and a sensory garden.

Funds also need to be raised for other facilities in the park to be brought up to a good standard or replaced. These include the toilet block, the bowling club building and other community facilities.

The sale of the two Lodges in the park together with funds raised by FoLP will provide matched funding for larger scale bids for capital funding.

A further activity being actively researched by FoLP is for a Companion Cycling (Wheels for All) scheme in Locke Park in association with Barnsley Council, Greenacre School and a local cycling group. This scheme would enable young people and adults with special needs to enjoy the fun of cycling, by offering access to a range of specialised cycles which will need to be housed in the park.

All of these and more are being incorporated in a five-to-ten-year plan for the Park and will be the subject of bids to different funding organisations.

An initial bid which does not require matched funding is being prepared for submission to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Comments from park users

'Beautiful and scenic, well cared for and attractive part of our home town. lots of fairs and galas, a real community pinnacle. A great play area for the kids, workout/fitness areas and a cafe that's warm and welcoming: let the kids run riot, take in the beauty and give the dog a walk too!' 22 June 2019

'Fab place to walk your dogs, playground for the kids and a lovely cafe selling hot drinks and fab cakes. Very clean and well maintained.' 15 November 2018

'A Haven - stunning grounds, great play park for the kids and the Friends of Locke Park put on brilliant shows and attractions throughout the year and it's just outside the busy town - a must of a visit.' 24 July 2018

'Absolutely loved it, a huge variety of cars all shapes and sizes. Nice stalls and entertainment for little ones. Kept mini-me happy so all is well.' 9 June 2019

Just started to visit the is beautiful park recently. Been twice now, and it really is a stunning place. Very well kept, flower beds, mature trees, and shrubs. It's like going back in time to a traditional Victorian Park. It was great for my dog Violet, who loves to run, and ideal for people who just want to sit quietly as well. October 2020

Had a really good walk all around the park, and even managed to find some conkers. Lots of leaves to kick around in. Quite a number of people out enjoying themselves but plenty of space for everyone. Really recommend Locke Park to take children, dogs or for people by themselves. November 2020

'We went to this event today; it was absolutely brilliant. And my daughter found the fairy house! Brilliant day!' 9 June 2019



Fairy house in Locke Park for one day.



Lion back in Locke Park, in the valley near the ABC steps.



New fairy garden and spectacular art work based on the 1980s children's films, Dark Crystal and The Labyrinth



Friends of Locke Park, December 2020

Website: friendsoflockepark.org.uk
Face Book | Friends of Locke Park
Twitter | FoLP_Barnsley

