

Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park

Annual General Meeting Friday 2 pm 7th November, 2025,
The Grange, Woodthorpe Park

Chairs Annual Report for 2025

Welcome to this year's annual report for 2025. With 27 members, 2025 has been a successful year for the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park, so much so that I can at last say that it is my pleasure to report that the train sculpture has been fully restored from its vandalised state, as you will see by the photographs below of before and after restoration. Indeed, it is also my pleasure to inform you all that it was entirely funded by the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park. So much so that at the last meeting of the Nottingham Open Spaces Forum, those at the meeting were singing Woodthorpe Park's praises.

On a personal note, I do have to say, I did feel a certain sense of pride when I was able to say to those at the meeting, it was the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park that financed the restoration of the train sculpture.



Train Sculpture Before



Train Sculpture After

As you will see from the photograph on the right, there are several fixtures and fittings still to replace, which include a model of the lamp on the left-hand side and the buffer on the right-hand side.

It has been an attempt of mine and both the vice chair's to approach people connected with either the rail industry or preserved railways to ask for a replacement, but to no avail. All of which leads me to say, if the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park cannot obtain one from either of the two we have approached, we will have to make a replica buffer ourselves or have one made by a professional welder. All of which we are willing to pay for, subject to price approval.

If you are wondering why the sculpture is painted in a green colour scheme, it was done to try and replicate the livery of the Great Northern Railway, which was the railway company that operated on the Nottingham Suburban Railway when it first opened in December 1889.

What I feel would complement the sculpture is to have a metal plate welded to the front of the smokebox with the numbers 67363, to commemorate the number of the locomotive that pulled the last passenger train, which was a RCTS special that was pulled along the Nottingham Suburban Railway line on the 16th July 1951 just three weeks before the line's eventual closure on the 1st of August.

With regard to Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park's activities, the two-hour gardening session led by Peter Wood, the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park's vice-chair, which is now held for two hours on a Sunday morning between 10 am and 12 noon, is well attended. Also, on the first Tuesday of the month, the Nottingham Green Guardians hold a well-attended gardening session on Woodthorpe Park, which the Friends are encouraged to become involved in.

Also, the illustrated talks I have given on the history of Woodthorpe Grange Park inside the Grange have all been well attended, whereas the heritage walks are always a little hit and miss due to the weather. In other words, the weather this year has been either too hot or, not so much as cold or wet, but too windy. All of which accounts for poor public attendance. However, I can say, the tree walks around the gardens in the park are always well attended, for which I thank Peter Wood for his knowledge and presentation skills.

On the subject of the history of Woodthorpe Grange Park. After the Grange's three private occupants, Henry Ashwell (1874 – 1890), Edward Parry (1890 – 1905) and John Godfree Small (1905 – 1921), the Grange had a fourth occupant by the name of W. G. Ayres, who lived in the Grange with his family as part of his job as superintendent of the Parks and Cemeteries Department.

W. G. Ayres as a resident in the Grange is all the information that is available at the present time, as it requires further research.

Another piece of history concerning the Grange. Under commanding officer Mr W. A. Boot, during World War Two, the Grange was used as a training centre by "E" Company, 5th Battalion, of the Nottingham Home Guard, which was part of the 190th Infantry Brigade, Home Guard. What is also interesting, when the Home Guard used the Grange, somewhere in the Grange, there was an armoury. As someone recently said, I wouldn't mind knowing where it was!

To return briefly to the train sculpture, what I would ask members to do, when out walking in the park and it looks like someone has interfered with the sculpture or that it has been vandalised in any way, please report it to either the Parks Department or post a message with a photograph on the Friends Facebook page.

Finally, there are other projects the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park will no doubt be taking part in the coming year, which will be notified to all members. In the meantime, I would like to thank all members for the continued support of the Friends of Woodthorpe Grange Park, and overall, for your continuing support for Woodthorpe Grange Park as a much-treasured open green space.

Paul R. Swift, Chair

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