Our Spring Fair on Saturday 7 May 11am-2pm
will be a very exciting event

Lots of stalls, including all your favourites, plus children’s activities, and new this year a West Bromwich History Event in the Events Room in the Pavilion. Outside the Pavilion there is going to be a display of West Bromwich’s famous iconic Jensen cars courtesy of the Jensen Owners Club. They are particularly enthusiastic about being in West Bromwich the home of the Jensen.

We’re also hoping that the new Bandstand will be in action with some entertainment for everyone to enjoy.

Don’t forget the date—Saturday 7 May—11am to 2pm.

What a great turnout for our AGM on the 6 April

It was bright and sunny in the Park for our AGM on Wednesday 6 April and we had lots of support from our members. The business of the AGM included a brief summary of what we had achieved during the year and a big thank you to everyone who had helped with our various events and initiatives.

Our guest speaker, Keith Hodgkins, treated us to an interesting presentation on the 'The Civic Architecture of the Black Country', which made us realise how many great buildings had been lost to redevelopment, and how we should try to preserve the few remaining civic buildings in West Bromwich.

We then welcomed a surprise guest, Black Country hero ‘Blind Dave’ Heeley, and his wife Deb, to the events room which is named in his honour. Dave gave a short talk and then settled down to sign copies of his book ‘From Light to Dark’. It’s a great read and many of our members took advantage of purchasing a copy with a personal message inside from Dave.

The meeting ended with light refreshments and an opportunity for everyone to socialise.
Being a wheelchair user presents big problems when you want to spend time in the warm climate of Thailand during our British winters. Two years ago I arrived in Thailand only to be told by my friend Chris that help would not be available until the next day. “Look”, I said, “I can manage on my own in my home in England, but I cannot manage on my own here in Thailand without help”. “Don’t worry”, said Chris, “my friend’s sister, Thurian, will take care of you until tomorrow”.

In due course Thurian turned up. She was dressed in village clothes, spoke very little English and was very shy. I learned later that she didn’t want the job. She told her sister that she didn’t want to care for an old falange in a wheelchair. (Falange is the Thai word for foreigner).

Anyway by the next day she had changed her mind and stayed with me until it was time for me to go home.

We kept in touch via Skype and Thurian and Chris were waiting for me at the airport the next January. When I told Chris that I wanted Thurian to visit me in England he asked me to write a letter addressed to her inviting her. He put a case together, presented it to the Embassy and (against all the odds) obtained a six month visitors visa starting from May 2015 for her to visit. I thought that he would be unsuccessful, but when she arrived on the doorstep on a Friday night I was overjoyed.

I didn’t think she would settle and would want to go home after a few weeks—so did most of her friends. Anyway she settled better than I dared hope. I bought a bike for her and we went around Dartmouth Park and Sandwell Valley together. She loves West Bromwich and the home that we share.

She stayed until the visa ran out and we returned to Thailand together. We stayed with her family 150 miles from Bangkok where I was welcomed into the family.

We got a Thai solicitor to help us to marry in Thailand. We are both in England now for six months but will return to Thailand until we get a better visa for her to settle for a longer time.

She has, no, we have, family in Thailand so we will keep going back.
The beautiful Sensory Garden has become victim to vandals recently with hanging baskets being wrecked and, even worse, three benches have been totally destroyed. With the new bandstand nearing completion, the Friends of Dartmouth Park became fearful of what might happen when it is unveiled. This led us to write to the Leader of the Council, Darren Cooper, to ask for help. With Mr Cooper’s sad passing, we didn’t expect a reply, but were very pleased to receive a positive response from Adrian Scarrott, Director of Neighbourhoods.

He was disappointed to hear that the Park had suffered a spate of vandalism, especially in the Sensory Garden and added “the Volunteer Gardeners do a fantastic job in maintaining the Sensory Garden”.

Mr Scarrott has acted quickly to resolve the problem by requesting “the Warden Service to regularly patrol the park in the evenings”, looking into “extending the CCTV coverage to include the Sensory Garden and also the Bandstand”, and finally, something we have been trying to achieve since the restoration, the locking up arrangements for the Park “with a view to reducing the number of gates left open during night time”.

The Friends would like to thank Mr Scarrott for his interest and look forward to seeing these new security incentives in action.

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### A favourite pastime in the Park gets an update

**It’s time to feed the ducks!**

Just like you, ducks need a healthy balanced diet – including salad!

Here’s what we should be feeding our feathered friends to keep them healthy:

- **Fab quack snacks:**
  - Porridge oats
  - Rice (cooked or uncooked)
  - Birdseed
  - Peas
  - Chopped lettuce
  - Chopped vegetable peel

- **Junk food for ducks:**
  - Bread
  - Crisps
  - Chips or crackers
  - Chocolate
  - Nuts

Get your kids out of hibernation this spring with our free family activity book and duck food pouch – the perfect place to store your healthy duck snacks!

**Text QUEST to 70060**

*to get your FREE activity book and duck food pouch*

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### Terry Price donates £200 to the Friends

We would like to thank Terry Price for donating £200 to the Friends to go towards one of our projects. The donation is from the proceeds of his latest book. We are hoping to put this money towards a much needed PA System for the new Bandstand.
Update on the West Bromwich Building Society Mural by Carol Hartill

The first time I saw the wonderful Mural in WBBS’s HQ was in 2011 and it had been in their reception for thirty years. Most residents of West Bromwich still do not know this depiction of the history of West Bromwich exists.

I didn’t think much more about it until I heard the BS was moving to a new HQ in West Bromwich and I asked what was going to happen to the Mural. When I was told it would stay in their current HQ I decided to try to get it moved so that it could go on public display.

I approached the BS who kindly agreed to the Mural being relocated and following funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for its removal, the BS transferred the Mural to the Friends of Dartmouth Park. We had already found a new home for it at Sandwell Park Farm and we just needed to wait until the BS were ready to move out before the contractor we had appointed could move in and carry out the work.

A small section of the Mural

The BS are moving out throughout April and we can start work on the Mural’s removal in May.

Ever since we have been involved with the Mural we have been trying to locate, without success, the artist, Mr William Burgess. I decided to put a letter into The Black Country Bugle requesting that if anyone knew of Mr Burgess’s whereabouts could they put me in contact with him. This letter bore fruit and I met with Mr Burgess recently and had a very interesting morning looking at images of just a few of the 32 murals he had produced for the WBBS over 21 years, between 1974 and 1995. Many of them have disappeared, so he is very pleased that his West Bromwich Mural will be saved for public display.

Mr Burgess has offered to help with its removal as he knows exactly how it was fixed in the first place. Our contactor is very pleased that Mr Burgess will be on hand to assist. He also said he would, if necessary, be able to modify it to fit the new location.

Hopefully sometime in May we will see it in its full glory at Sandwell Park Farm and the Friends would like to thank the Building Society for their co-operation and the Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting this initiative.

Bishop Asbury’s Cottage, Great Barr

You have probably, like me, seen the recent newspaper coverage of the Anniversary of the death of Bishop Asbury. This made me decide to visit Bishop Asbury’s Cottage, which I frequently pass by without a second thought. There were some open days a few weeks ago and I strolled up the steps not knowing what to expect.

It was a revelation. I was greeted by two members of the Sandwell MBC museum staff in period dress and they were so knowledgeable about Francis Asbury’s early life in West Bromwich and his many achievements in spreading Methodism across America.

Francis Asbury must have known the 2nd Earl of Dartmouth because he was a staunch Methodist and attended Methodist gatherings in Wednesbury where he was known as Brother Dartmouth.

It is mostly American Methodists who visit the cottage, but if you would like me to arrange a private visit for members of the Friends group, please get in touch. My contact details are on page 1.

The cottage is quite small so numbers will be limited.