Our 10th Anniversary celebration Summer Fete on Saturday 18 August, funded by the Lottery

Our Summer Fete, to celebrate 10 years since our formation to support Sandwell MBC’s bid for Heritage Lottery Funding to restore Dartmouth Park, was well attended. The Friends group have over 200 supportive members and many of them came along to enjoy the day.

Visitors were entertained with music on the bandstand provided by The Persuaders. The children were well catered for with a Punch & Judy, Bouncy Castle, Craft Tent and also sport provided by Creative Academies Network, who have been entertaining children visiting the Park every Wednesday during the summer holidays. This was also funded by a grant we have received from the Lottery’s Awards for All programme.

The stalls offered a variety of goods and the bargains were snapped up by the visitors. Some had to make two journeys to their car to deposit their purchases.

We opened the Snack Bar in the ‘Fort’, which was appreciated by those seeking refreshments.
Armed Forces Day—Saturday 30 June
Photographs taken by Seumas Kelly

It was one of the hottest days of the year for Armed Forces Day, and the Snack Bar in the ‘Fort’ did very good trade with cold drinks, as did the ice cream van. A good time was had by all who attended.

The Friends of Dartmouth Park have sponsored Creative Academies Network to provide children’s entertainment in the Park during the long summer holidays with a grant from the Lottery’s ‘Awards for All’ programme

Creative Academies Network have been a great success this summer providing a variety of free activities both indoors and out of doors every Wednesday throughout the school holidays. The sporting activities outside proved very popular and the craft opportunities in the Community Room in the ‘Fort’ produced some very interesting results. One of the sessions included an opportunity to interact with small animals and the children were very keen to stroke them and find out more about them. Parents and groups looking after children in the holidays have taken full advantage of this initiative, which we hope we will be able to bring to the Park again next year.
Forthcoming Events in 2018

To continue celebrating our 10th Anniversary, on **Tuesday 9 October at 2pm** we have arranged an Afternoon Tea in the Community Room in the ‘Fort’ with a flower arranging display by Pauline from Posies Florist.

Tickets will be on a first come, first served basis as the room has a limit on numbers. This event is being funded by the National Lottery.

We had a wonderful Christmas Concert last year with the ‘Voices of Hope Cancer Choir’ at Dartmouth Central Bowling Club, followed by tea/coffee and mince pies. (We had intended to use the Bandstand in the Park but the Park was covered in snow.) The event was such a success that we are holding our Christmas Concert again this year in the warmth of the Bowling Club on **Saturday 8 December at 2pm**. Tickets will be on a first come, first served basis, so book your place early.
Cost: £1 for refreshments.

Our annual Christmas Party is again at The Hawthorns in the Millichip Suite and the date is **Tuesday 11 December 7pm for 7.30pm**. The cost will be £27.00 for a three-course festive meal with tea or coffee.

Back by popular demand to entertain us will be Mike Surman who kept us on our feet dancing all night at last year’s party.

If you want to take advantage of what is always a very special evening please send your payment to Annette, c/o The Lodge, Reform Street, West Bromwich, B71 4AS.

We’re still looking for volunteer gardeners to help with the Sensory Garden and the other beds planted by the Friends of Dartmouth Park. If you enjoy gardening and have some free time call into the Park on a Friday morning and have a chat with the gardeners who will be happy to explain what is required. If you call in at around 12.00 you can join them for a very welcome drink in the Snack Bar in the ‘Fort’ which follows the gardening session. Some of the gardeners are also in the Park on Tuesday mornings, if Tuesday is more convenient.
Terry Price, BEM, local historian and author, unveils a Blue Plaque on Wood Lane Community Centre to remember Darby’s Brewing association with the site

On Saturday 25 August a group from the Friends of Dartmouth Park climbed aboard the No. 28 Circular bus that first saw service back in 1952. It was driven by Graham Harper, who, with a group of colleagues, has restored the bus over a period of years. We were going on a brief tour of some of Darby’s pubs that are still trading under new ownership. The Stone Cross was our first brief stop, followed by the Millfields, and then on to Hill Top and Great Bridge, to the site in Greets Green where Dunkirk Inn and Darby’s Brewery once stood. Houses now stand on the land. We then made our way to Wood Lane Community Centre (formerly The Bush and later Darby’s Fish Restaurant) where Terry Price, BEM, author of many books featuring the local area, the proceeds of which go to local charities, was to unveil a Blue Plaque to remember Darby’s connection with the site.

We were met by Ms Fajli Bibi, Chair of the Centre, and staff and volunteers, who gave us a tour. They made us very welcome and we were so impressed by the many activities that the centre has on offer for the local community.

Terry gave us some of his memories of Darby’s pubs, and this was followed by Robin Pearson presenting a water colour of the original Bush Inn. Robin is the author of several books on Black Country pubs and was Chief Librarian at the Central Library in West Bromwich for many years.

A photographer from the local press arrived to take photographs of the unveiling and we all stepped outside for the ceremony. Terry’s unveiling went very smoothly and he said: “Congratulations to the Friends of Dartmouth Park for commemorating the important contribution the Darby family made to the social life of West Bromwich and the Black Country communities during the 19th and 20th centuries”.

Following the unveiling we went back into the Centre and raised our glasses to toast a job well done.

Our hosts at the Centre then joined the Friends of Dartmouth Park on the bus and we travelled back through West Bromwich to Dartmouth Central Bowling Club, situated next the Park, where a very tasty buffet lunch awaited us.

The next phase in this project will be the unveiling of the sympathetically restored Darby’s Ale ghost sign, saved when Lombard Street West was demolished, which is to be mounted on the outside wall of Dartmouth Park close to the main gates. The final phase will be a book about Darby’s, together with stories from staff and customers. A big thank you to those who play the Big Lottery for making this project possible.