



*Friends of Dartmouth Park*  
*Patron: William, 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dartmouth*  
*Newsletter*  
*Issue No. 17*

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Vote for Dartmouth Park to again have a Band Stand so that we can see crowds enjoying entertainment in the park just as they did when the park was given the original Band Stand by Alderman Reuben Farley



**Friends apply for funding for a Queen's Jubilee Band Stand**

The Big Lottery Fund and ITV, with the approval of Buckingham Palace, will be helping to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. They are looking for new projects that will improve local places and the lives of people in the community. The Friends thought this would be an ideal opportunity to try to raise funding for a Band Stand to replace the Victorian Band Stand that was once the centre of the social life of West Bromwich. The deadline for the application was 4 February and we will learn if we have been short-listed in June, when Central TV will feature two great ideas each night for three nights, competing for viewers' phone votes. At stake is up to £60K from the Big Lottery Fund.

To have a chance of winning we need to inspire local people to get involved with the project and persuade them to vote for us. It is expected that four awards will be given in each ITV region. If we are lucky enough to be short-listed please encourage all your friends to vote for what will be a wonderful addition to the park when it is restored.

**Membership Renewal**

It's that time of the year again and the Friends of Dartmouth Park have decided to keep the minimum donation to £3 this year. Please see Membership Renewal Form inside this newsletter, and note that cheques should be forwarded to the Membership Secretary and any cash posted through the door of the Treasurer. Their addresses can be found on the Renewal Form. We have had to stop using our normal postal address due to the Avenue being closed and post going astray, but will return to this address as soon as the Avenue is reopened.

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**Committee**

Nigel Slater, Chairman	Roger Stopford, Vice Chairman	Annette Welch, Treasurer	Carol Hartill, Secretary
Betty Finney	Margaret Geddes	Pauline Lawley	Sue Slater
Anne Wilkins	Mandy Timms Membership Secretary	Mark Barrett Social Historian	



This photograph, taken by Ray, shows the park on a foggy November day in 2009

### Local resident Ray Truby invites all who use the park to get snapping

I am currently undertaking a long-term photography project on Dartmouth Park. There is so much potential for great pictures in this park. On the one hand it is a quiet place, but on the other hand it can be a vibrant and lively place. The idea of this project is to capture all aspects of a year in the life of the park through the medium of photography.

I would like to encourage as many people as possible to contribute to this project with their own photographs of the park. The aim is that we can collectively put together a collection of images which document today's park. Anyone who feels that they would like to take part, start snapping now, and watch this space. **Ray Truby**

Seumas Kelly is a keen photographer who always has his camera with him when he visits the park and the valley. The following excellent photographs were taken on a very wet Bonfire Night in 2010.



### Dates for your new 2011 diary

#### Thursday 7 April

7.30 pm AGM and presentation on Coal Mining in the Sandwell Valley by Graham Worton  
Venue: Deaf Resource Centre, Dagger Lane



#### Thursday 30 June

2pm Walking Tour of West Bromwich with Robin Pearson, taking in places associated with Alderman Reuben Farley, first Mayor of West Bromwich, and the person responsible for providing Dartmouth Park for the people of West Bromwich. The walk will end at the Town Hall where Anne Wilkins will have assembled an exhibition on Reuben Farley in the Council Chamber. Following refreshments Robin will give us a talk on the great man. Those not wishing to take part in the walk can arrive in the Council Chamber at 2.30pm where Anne will be happy to show you her exhibition. Please note that access to the Council House is via a few steps and not suitable for wheelchairs.



### Competition Winners:

In the December issue of the newsletter there was a competition for £10 vouchers for the Pink Tank in The Public to the first three correct replies to a photo competition. The photo was, of course, taken outside The Public at night, and the winners were: Joan Richardson, Maureen Sommerville and Jenny Francis. I am sure they will enjoy their meal.

## More old plans of the Park discovered – this time at CHAS Report by Mark Barrett, Social Historian

In the October newsletter Carol reported on the 1882 plan of the Park which had been discovered in the basement of the Museum & Art Gallery at Wednesbury. Work is still ongoing to have it properly conserved and it will hopefully be put on display in the new pavilion when it is opened.

Meanwhile I am pleased to report that several more early plans & drawings relating to the Park have come to light – this time at the Community History and Archives Service at Smethwick. We initially got wind of these items before Christmas and the most I was anticipating to see was a couple of drawings of A4 size. But then in early January I was invited by Richard Slaughter to take a look at them and there was actually a total of 14 plans and other documents.

From the original 1878 Park there are 2 drawings of the first pool - which is described as “Ornamental Water”. They show clearly the original shape of the islands and numerous measurements of the depth of the water. Intriguingly one of them shows a proposed railway line which was at one time intended to run alongside the pool outside the then perimeter fence of the Park. But more of that another time.

Then from the 1887 extension there are another 10 documents. 8 of these are from the planning stage and include a 2-page memorandum and 6 related attachments. The memo is from a Stourbridge Civil Engineer by the name of Edward Bindon Marten and presents several alternative designs and costs for the Boating Lake. The costs vary from £2200 to £4300.



The other 2 plans from 1887 relate to the completed extension and one of them is shown here. This is a very interesting document as it shows clearly the 2 pools that were originally included in the new extension. i.e. the Boating Lake and the Bathing Pool or Swimming Bath as it is variously described. There are very few plans/maps that show the Bathing Pool as it was not a success. For some reason they could not prevent the water from leaking out and in little over 10 years it was decided to abandon the original use and convert the space into a Bowling Green. The Bowling Green was officially opened in June 1900. This means that the Bathing Pool never showed on any of the Ordnance Survey Maps of West Bromwich and has led some people to doubt that it ever existed. But you now know for certain that it did.

The other plan from 1887 shows some fine technical details. i.e. the water supply and overflow, and designs for the landing stage for the Boating Pool and the diving boards for the Bathing Pool.

And last but not least - toilets! We now have 2 fine, coloured drawings of the public conveniences which were provided, firstly by the path that runs parallel with Lloyd Street (1910), and then inside the Herbert Street entrance (1914). All trace of the latter disappeared when the Expressway was built. But the foundations of the former are quite likely still there somewhere under the turf. It certainly seems ironic that there were more toilet facilities in the Park in 1914 than there are today!

### Dartmouth Park Ranger

Richard, our dedicated Dartmouth Park Ranger, is proving to be a great asset to the Park and also to the Friends of Dartmouth Park. His role involves encouraging more community involvement in the use and care of the Park, as well as increasing the Park's nature conservation value.

Richard joins us at meetings with local schools and has become involved in our partnership with Sandwell Visually Impaired to design a Sensory Garden in the Park. He also attends our Monday afternoon Health Walks and is representing Dartmouth Park at the monthly Sandwell Valley Countryside Watch meetings organised by West Midlands Police.

Our Dartmouth Park Ranger has lots of exciting ideas to get us interested in the flora and fauna around us, and he also keeps a keen eye on safety in the park for all its users. If you would like to know more about his role or are interested in Dartmouth Park he can be contacted directly on 07530072601.

## It was even colder back then!

As we experience the second bitter winter in a row it is interesting to look back to a time when winters were even colder, and life for many considerably harder.

In the early days of Dartmouth Park it seems to have been accepted that the ice on the pools would regularly be thick enough to allow skating. The evidence for this is in the 1888 advertisement shown on the right inviting tenders to run the activities on the pools. These included Boating, Fishing, Bathing and **Skating**. The main variation was that the first three were annual rentals, whilst the skating rental was charged on a daily basis. The annual rentals agreed on were £150, £10 and £30 respectively. The daily rental for skating was £5.

A review of the newspapers from this era shows that the winter of 1894/5 was one of the coldest and we need look no further than the snippet below for proof of this.

### The Birmingham Post: 9<sup>th</sup> February 1895

**At 6.45 yesterday morning the thermometer in Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich, registered 30 degrees of frost.**

This is the equivalent of minus 17 degrees centigrade, and far colder than any local temperature I can recall in recent times.

As canals and mains water pipes froze factories and businesses were forced to close. The effect on working people was catastrophic as they were left without money for food or fuel. Thankfully there were Relief Committees and private charities on hand to help the most desperate and deserving cases. They made small monetary hand-outs and opened soup kitchens.

Another snippet from **the Birmingham Post of 23<sup>rd</sup> February** tells us: **It was reported that a number of men had been employed in Dartmouth Park at the rate of 3s. per day, which had diminished the number of applicants for relief.**

As well as the "have-nots" there were doubtless still plenty of locals who could afford the charges for skating on the pools. And my guess is that these men were employed in preparing the ice and otherwise assisting the skaters.

There may even have been a few entrepreneurs who found other ways to put a little cash in their pockets. A report from Edgbaston Reservoir in Birmingham tells of men who provided chairs and the offer to "put your skates on for a penny".

All in all we see that our ancestors had it just as bad if not worse than us. But I am sure that when next winter approaches we will all be hoping for the return of just a smidgen of global warming!

**Mark Barrett**

## Press Call to witness the historic cutting of the first sod for the new pavilion

On Thursday 10 February the cutting of the first sod of the park's new pavilion will take place, and the press have been invited to record this historic event.

Also in a few weeks time the Mayor of Sandwell will be unveiling the Drinking Fountain and opening the newly restored Avenue. The fountain is a faithful replica of the one donated by the 5th Earl of Dartmouth when the park opened in 1878. It even has the original inscription carved into the stonework. Information on the date and timing for this event will be posted on our website and on notice boards in the park. Please come along and join in this celebration of the end of Phase 1 of the restoration.

### BOROUGH OF WEST BROMWICH. DARTMOUTH PARK BOATING AND BATHING POOLS.

**T**HE Corporation of West Bromwich are prepared to receive Tenders for RENTING the BOATING, SKATING, and FISHING in the Boating Pool at Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich, containing about Six Acres, and the BATHING and SKATING in the Bathing Pool, containing about half an Acre, for 3 or 5 years, from the 24th of June next.

Tenders to be sent in to me, endorsed "Tenders for Boating, &c.," by Twelve (midday), on the 6th June.

Forms of Tender can be obtained on application to me. The terms of the proposed Agreement for Letting the Pools can be seen at my Office.

By order, **ALFRED CADDICK**  
Town Clerk.

Town Hall, West Bromwich, 17 May, 1888.

## Project Manager's Restoration Update

Despite the big freeze we've continued to make progress and a large proportion of the Phase 1 work is nearly complete. The Main Avenue should finally be open by the end of February, as well as the new entrance from Sandwell Valley. I appreciate that both features have been a long time in coming but I'd like to thank everyone for their patience. There is a fair amount of 'snagging' to be rectified but this will be sorted in due course.

Construction of the New Community Pavilion on the location of the old pavilion commences on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011. We expect the building to be up and running by September of this year. I'm led to believe the remnants of the old Pavilion were buried on the site following the fire and demolition in the 1980s, so it will be very interesting to see what we will find once the excavation works commence.

The detailed design work of the latter landscape phases is continuing and we hope to go out to tender on this within the next couple of months. We have just commissioned some Arboriculture work to commence in the next few weeks, prior to the bird nesting season.

Draft proposals have been drawn up for a sensory garden to be located at the end of the Main Avenue. Mansell have kindly agreed to construct a raised bed free of charge and we will be looking at introducing some sensory plants and features to this area in partnership with the Sandwell Visually Impaired group.

Should anyone have any queries on the restoration project then please do not hesitate to contact me on 0121 569 4248 or via email to [johnr\\_satchwell@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:johnr_satchwell@sandwell.gov.uk)

**John R Satchwell**