Good weather prevailed for the Friends’ Jubilee Event and the Official Opening of the Pavilion

Bank Holiday Monday 4th June was a bright dry day for the Friends’ Jubilee Celebrations in the Park. The event commenced with the official opening of the new £900,000 pavilion by the Mayor of Sandwell, Cllr Keith Davies, and Friends’ Chairman, Nigel Slater. This was followed by the official dedication of the Joe Johnson Snack Bar by Joe’s daughters, Shirley and Josie, who were joined by twenty other members of the family. Our afternoon tea for over 200 members was catered for by The Pink Tank at The Public, and entertainment included a Talent Show, with eight very talented acts. Everyone in the audience had a voting slip and when the votes were counted Mikhael Mala, age 13, who sang a Michael Jackson number, was announced the winner and presented with a certificate and a prize of £50. A big thank you must go to Mikhael who very kindly presented his prize money to the Chairman for the Friends’ Sensory Garden Fund. Other entertainment included the Martinique Jazz Band, Great Barr Musical Theatre Co. with a rendition of one of the songs from their forthcoming show ‘Our House’, Mike Surman, Holly Turton, Mark Fletcher’s Elvis, Ian Casey, Malcolm Palmer with his Ukulele, and some Black Country Humour from Marlene. The Friends would like to thank everyone involved for making the Jubilee Event a success.

Photographs 1, 3, 4 and 5 taken by Seumas Kelly.

On the right Brian Johnson, Joe Johnson’s grandson, the Mayor, Cllr. Keith Davies, and Shirley Flood and Josie Botfield, Joe’s daughters, at the opening of the Joe Johnson Snack Bar

The Tea Party gets into full swing (Photograph taken by Shirley Flood)

Mikhael Mala, Talent Show Winner, with Chairman, Nigel Slater, and in the background Talent Show Contestants

A regal member of the audience

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Committee

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Dave’s year so far has been very busy, not only with his continued fund raising for various charities, but also he and his family have been busy attending events recognising his inspirational approach to life and the fact he has raised over a £1m for charity. In March he was made Sandwell's 11th Honorary Freeman at a ceremony at the Council House and in April at our AGM he officially opened the ‘Blind’ Dave Heeley Events Room in the new Dartmouth Park Pavilion, which was a very important occasion for the Friends. Then there was great excitement in May when it was announced that Dave would be one of the Olympic Torch bearers and we saw him live on national TV running his section of the route in Cobridge, Stoke-on-Trent.

At our event Dave said he remembered the park as it was when he was a child and how a visit to Dartmouth Park was as exciting as a day by the seaside. Dave said he was very proud to be given this honour and he's delighted that his grandchildren in years to come will visit the park and be able to see his name. Dave presented the Friends with a signed shirt used during his Top2Toe challenge for MacMillan and announced that he had raised £126,296 by running and cycling 1000 miles from John O'Groats to Lands End in 10 days. This special shirt, which will be displayed in the pavilion, was donated by Tony Ellis, of AB Waste Management, Darlaston, who bought the shirt in an auction at a special Gala Dinner and gave it back to Dave to present to the Friends of Dartmouth Park for the ‘Blind’ Dave Heeley Events Room.

Nick Bubalo, Area Director for Regeneration and Economy for Sandwell MBC, came to our AGM and gave a brilliant presentation on the history behind the regeneration of West Bromwich and how the town will look once the work is completed in October 2013. It has been a massive exercise that has taken many years of planning and negotiating, but has already given us the award winning Bus Station, a school, the new college, police station, health centre, and also quality housing in the Lyng area. We can soon look forward to having a cinema again in West Bromwich together with restaurants and well known retailers, and, of course, one of the largest Tesco Stores in the country. Not forgetting that this development is on the doorstep of Dartmouth Park and will again bring the park back into the town. Below are images of the new Tesco development taken from Nick’s presentation.

The Friends given a £2,000 boost from Midcounties Co-operative Fund

We have been awarded a £2,000 grant from Birmingham and Black Country Community Foundation from the Midcounties Co-operative Community Fund (MCCF) which is one of many funds administered by the Foundation.

Yvonne Palmer, Director – Operations & Programmes of Birmingham and Black Country Community Foundation said: ‘We are delighted to be able to award this grant to the Friends of Dartmouth Park and to support them in the work they are doing in their community. The Foundation is all about supporting local people to find local solutions to local problems, by distributing money to people who really do and will make a difference for the future.’

The money is to create a new rose bed and a bank of spring bulbs in the sensory garden. The aim is to create the rose bed as soon as possible and plant the bulbs in the autumn.

First meeting of Sensory Garden Volunteers

The first meeting of the Sensory Garden volunteers met on Friday 18th May and we would like to thank all who attended. It was agreed that the group would meet once a month on a Friday morning at 11am in the pavilion. The next meeting will be on the 15th June.

Each month the group will meet and decide on the priority task for that day. In the main this will be planting and maintaining the garden beds. If you would like to join the group then just turn up to the next meeting. Meeting dates will be posted in the Notice Board.
The sun shines and the park springs into life

The swans in the park have had seven cygnets this year and proud mum takes them for an outing around the pool. Our Canadian Geese have had lots of goslings and it looks as though they’re being taken for a walk. The sunshine has also brought a bit of romance into the park. Photographs taken by Seumas Kelly.

Launch of Titanic on Dartmouth Park Pool to mark the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the ship

Sandwell Model Boat Club member, Marcus Wheal, from Tipton, has made a remote control model of the Titanic from pictures he has collected and online images. The ship took three months to create and is 7'6" in length and weighs 50lbs. Marcus says: ‘Everyone whose seen it has been very impressed and they think it’s pretty accurate to the great ship’.

The Titanic was launched on Dartmouth Park Pool, the home of Sandwell Model Boat Club, to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the ship. A crowd was on hand to watch its maiden voyage and this Titanic didn’t sink. It will be seen out on the water at future Sandwell Model Boat Club meetings.

Panels installed on the pavilion walkway illustrate the history of the park

Pictured are three of the sixteen panels which were researched by the Friends of Dartmouth Park and designed by Breakthrough Marketing. They start with a Time Line for the Park and wind around the walkway giving the history of how the park was conceived and developed, together with memories of people who have used the park over the decades. Many of the photographs used are from members of the Friends group. The panel above left shows the Legge Family Tree (the Earls of Dartmouth), the centre panel illustrates the life of Reuben Farley who was instrumental in providing a ‘people’s park’ for West Bromwich, and the panel on the right shows some of the wonderful floral displays in the park over the decades. We are unsure of the opening times for the pavilion at the moment.
West Bromwich Central Library was formally opened in 1907. It is a very handsome building from the outside and has a stunningly decorated interior, which most of its current users probably take for granted and hardly notice. Next time you’re in the library take the time to look around at the beautiful tiles, mosaics and paintings.

The Library is included in the schedule of buildings of special architectural or historic interest made under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

A flight of steps leads into a wide spacious hall and the open-well stair has a mosaic and tile decoration which includes the description: ‘This building is the gift of Mr Andrew Carnegie to the Borough.” Murals in the stairway and lending library depicting scenes from The Canterbury Tales were commissioned by Guildford O’Hodges in 1940. Mr Hodges was Librarian from 1900-1947. The foyer and staircase is lined with glistening pale green and yellow faience, some in relief designs, and lighted with a large glass-domed roof. The stained glass windows in the foyer depict the great men of literature—Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, Bunyan, Dryden and Goldsmith.

From this central hall access to all departments is obtained. The lending library itself has a number of murals depicting scenes from West Bromwich

The murals in the library of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales were painted by Patricia Arnett. She also painted the John Wesley mural and the ‘First Train Through West Bromwich’.

Patricia F. Arnett N.D.D. D.F.A., pictured above left, was born in West Bromwich and attended The Memorial School of Art, West Bromwich. She also attended The Slade School of Art in London. Pat was awarded The Richardson Scholarship at the University of London and First Prize for Design and Drawing.

A number of artists based at West Bromwich Art School painted other murals in the library.

The Friends of Central Library are looking to set up a fundraising group to get funding for the cleaning of the murals in the library.

If anyone would like to be involved please contact Sue Clark on 0121 569 4918.