



THE PRIORITY

Issue No. 13
January 2004
Web: www.fopp.org.uk
Email: info@fopp.org.uk
Membership 536

Newsletter of the Friends of Priory Park & The Green

Carol Concert in the Park.

IT WAS A LONG, hard and very cold day on Wednesday 17th December for all the volunteers who erected the marquees and helped in the other preparations for our second Carol Concert, but in the end I am sure everyone must agree that it was worth the effort. With traditional Carols from Priory Primary School followed by a sing-a-long with the audience, school staff



and choirs led by Father Geoff of St. Francis's the evening got off to a good start. A break for a mince pie and a hot drink, in some cases a cup of mulled wine, (well done



the Tea Ladies) warmed up the proceedings and it was left to the future "Pop Idol" contestants from Castle High to entertain us with a selection of more modern Carols.

Thanks again to Town Centre Manager George Whitehouse for providing the means to show us again how beautiful the Ruins look with floodlighting, the staff of both schools and for all who took the trouble to attend and give support and encouragement to our local schoolchildren.



A.G.M.
See page 2



Editorial

WELL WHAT DO YOU THINK of our new format?

With two years under our belts we felt it was time for a New Look. Previously our excellent photographic work had to be shown in black and white but we now have the opportunity to come alive with full colour. The reduced size will also make it easier to distribute, and easier filing for those of you who hang on to their copies.

With the festive season now just a memory, I trust that you all had a Merry Christmas, which I unfortunately forgot to wish you in our previous issue due to the excitement regarding the news of the College Academy. On the other hand it is not too late to wish you a Happy New Year and with it, turn our thoughts to future projects.

Elsewhere and in greater detail we bring news of our first joint meeting with DMBC to progress the implementation of our proposals for the new play area.

Phil. Griffiths

Annual General Meeting

FRIDAY 12th OF MARCH

A.

is the date of our third Annual General Meeting to be held at Priory Primary School.

G.

This is an opportunity to meet all of your committee, voice your feelings, hopefully give a little thanks and see our visions for the future.

M.

The positions of Secretary and Treasurer and Committee Members will be up for re-election and applications must be with our secretary Chris Rich - ring 01384 237959 by 3rd of February.

Light refreshments will be available from 6.30, with a start time

of 7.00pm

Letters

By email

Thank you for the November issue of the FOPP newsletter. Many articles of interest and well presented. Good news about THAT Academy. Sad news about the mature beech trees. I have one concern to share with you. The work of removing shrubs from the park boundary near to the ruins ...is almost complete and, I do agree about the view of the ruins being opened up. HOWEVER I am now seriously concerned about the ease of access to the grassed area between The Broadway/Paganel Drive and the ruins.

Arnold Jones

*Thanks for the email, we are pleased that you appreciate FoPPs initiative together with **Future Skills** in opening up the view of the Ruins from the Broadway. We have already agreed with DMBC that under our Fair Shares Lottery award, oak posts will be placed at regular intervals along the perimeter where appropriate to prevent access.*

Ed.

By email

I wish to become a member of FoPP. Please forward any Newsletters etc. May I take this opportunity to thank you for a great ghost walk on Halloween and congratulations to you all in succeeding in the refusal of THAT Academy being built in the park!!

Rhoda Pearson

Thanks for your interest and best wishes. We will happily send you copies of our Newsletter but would point out that these are available on our excellent website.

Ed.

Chairmans Report

OUR SECOND YEAR, 2003, has proved highly successful, and membership is now well in excess of 500, with a junior membership established.

The highlights of the year have to be the successful park events, the growing partnerships with other ward voluntary bodies, the continued improvements, and the announcement of the abandonment of the council/college proposals to build a catering academy on the park. Funding as always plays a major role, and our activities would not have been possible without the support of the bodies who helped financially throughout the year. It is proper for me to recognise these and thank them on behalf of our members.

Funders:-

DOSTI, Different Strokes, Dudley Central Area Committee, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Dudley A.C.N, Community Education and Development, Connexions Black Country via Detached Youth services.

My sincere thanks for the sterling support throughout the year of a strong team and of course the continuing support and confidence of our membership. Building on the hard work of our first two years the coming year should see us make further progress with:-

Events (music, activities for all ages, pageant, celebration day, Halloween, carols, social.)

Improvements building upon the maintenance project partnership between Future Skills and Green Care which helps train unemployed persons and improve our park.

Park Watch introduction and evaluation.

Lottery Fair Share scheme, completion of Transforming Your Space, multi purpose pitch, play facilities etc.

Activity in the park in partnership with Primary Care. Removal of charging for leisure activity on the park. Commence heritage lottery bids for restoration preservation of park and buildings.

Arthur Weston

Have you seen this Man?



The image is probably of Roger de Somery, second son of Roger de Somery, Baron of Dudley. Roger was born between 1280 (the birth of his older brother) and 1291 (the death of his father) but other than that he is rather a shadowy figure in the family and died in 1306, it was the manner of his death which is most intriguing as he was killed by an arrow while out hunting in the Wolverhampton Woods.

Roger's father died in 1291 and the Barony was run by his mother Agnes, while his older brother John became a ward of John Saint John and went off fighting

the French in Gascony. Roger stayed at home and spent much of his time hunting. A document of 1306 shows that Agnes and her son Roger were given royal permission to have hunting rights in Prestwood and the Haye of Ashwood; that, although it was part of their manor of Kingswinford, they did not actually own. The occupiers of the land were the Chetwyn family and the idea was perhaps that Roger should marry a Chetwyn heiress and thus gain the property that way.

Unfortunately he was killed in a hunting accident in the same year by Walter de Wynterton, which put a marriage out of the question. Although little is known of the event we do know that the hunting parties of the period included greyhounds to flush out the deer and bowmen who would kill it with arrows. In this case Walter appears to have been one of the bowmen. Presumably what happened was that the young Roger excited by the chase got in the way of the arrow as it was being shot at the deer. The fact that Walter 'flew' from the scene suggested to many that he had murdered Roger on purpose and he was outlawed.

Killing a son of the Baron of Dudley was no mean event, and as Roger's brother John had just come home from the wars, Walter no doubt was scared what the family would do to him. Fortunately common sense prevailed, and Walter gave himself up to the Sheriff of Staffordshire. The King's Justices tried him and found he was not guilty, the result being that Walter was pardoned. Roger must have been in his late teens or early twenties when he died and he was laid to rest in the Priory of St.

James, Dudley where his father and grandfather were buried and where his mother would be buried in the following

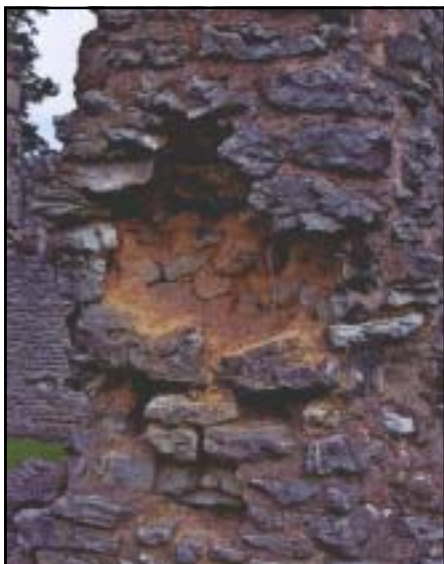
year.

The tomb-top was excavated in 1939 during an archaeological excavation of the Priory, and although it is broken (the feet have been removed), most of it is still there. In 1306 this would have been part of a magnificent table tomb with the effigy of the young Roger laid out on top. He is obviously pictured with his hands in prayer. Certainly the clothing and possibly the skin and hair would have been painted, though what colour we do not know, perhaps the deep blue and gold of the Dudley coat-of-arms!

The dress is also interesting as it is a young man's fashion garment of the period 1300 to 1350 and as far as we know Roger was the only man wealthy enough to have afforded and worn that costume in that period. I will describe it in the order of the way you would take it off. It was comprised of a hood which you can just make out around his upper chest, (the part that went over his head has slipped around his neck). A long *cote hardie*, this was a shirt-type garment with long sleeves and this lay on top of a *chemise or tunic* - a main body garment.

So why my title? Well, the tomb-top went missing, probably during the Second World War and if anyone knows where it went I would dearly love to hear about it. From my point of view it is just as important as the grey stones that make up the Priory itself. The men and women who lived and worked there and those who were eventually buried there are the living history of the Priory and we should not forget them.

John Hemingway, Archaeological Officer. DMBC



Repairs to the Ruins

WITH THE SCAFFOLDING to the East facing Arch having been removed we are now able to see this fragile elevation in its glory again. To be frank, not much work seems to have been carried out, but this is quite deliberate with the main object being to make the repairs as unobtrusive as possible. The keystone has been secured with 2 stainless steel fixings and all open joints or water traps have been re-pointed. Great care was taken to ensure that the lime based mortar matched the original, not an easy task considering that there had been numerous attempts previously over the years. More obvious are the repairs to the South wall Transept. In more recent times facing stones were being removed exposing the rubble core rendering it rather unstable. This has been refilled and matching stone, some of it from the Wrens Nest, used to replace the missing items.

Many thanks to all involved including DMBC Conservation Officer Peter King, Bernard Oakley of the "Building Dept" and the Contractor - Russcott Conservation.

Forthcoming Events

Whilst it may seem a little early to talk of events in the summer and beyond, the efforts needed by a small band of volunteers means that we have to decide on these fairly early. In addition to the Steps to Health walk organised jointly by DMBC/NHS (which may have taken place by the time you read this) there will be both a musical event and a Cycling Festival organised by DMBC Entertainment Officer - Gareth Lloyd. FoPP proposals include a Celebration Day in association with Priory Community Association, an Easter Weekend, Halloween and Carol Concert. Following our successful trip last year with our Junior members we are also hoping to have a Senior Citizens outing. Dates and more information next issue.

VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH THESE EVENTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

Times Past

This picture of the Priory and accompanying text, measuring some 10 inches by 7, was recently discovered in the house of one of our more Senior FoPPs. The hand coloured etching is dated 1774 and shows the Priory in a much more complete state than at present.



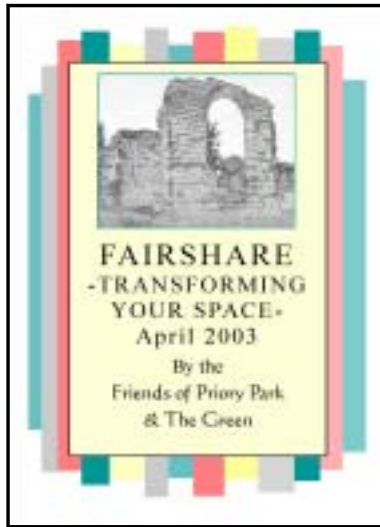
THIS Priory stands a small distance west of Dudley Castle. It was founded about the year 1161 by Gervase Paine, Lord of this Manor, and of several others in these parts. In the preamble to his charter he sets forth, that it was done in consideration of a like endowment intended by his father.

It was dedicated to St. James, and filled with Clunian Monks from Wenlock, in Shropshire, to which it was deemed a cell.

THE founder granted to these Monks the ground on which the Church of St. James stood, as also the churches of St. Edmund and St. Thomas, at Dudley; and those of Nockphel, Segesse, Iggenne, and Bradfel, with the tithes of his bread, game, and fish, as long as he resided at Dudley or at Herden; also pasture, wood, and divers other privileges.

ANNO 1190, Pope Lucius, by his bull, ordained, that the rules of the Order of Clugni should be for ever observed in this Priory, and that all its possessions should remain undiminished; namely, the church of St. James at Dudley, and the chapels of the said town of St. Edmund and S—, the church of Segesse with its appurtenances, the church of Portfield, with the chapel of Coston, the church of Ingle and its appendages, the church of Bratefelde, with the chapel of Englefelde, all of the gift of Gervase Paine; the church of Womburne, with the chapel of Trefel, and other dependencies, the gift of Guido

New Opportunities Fund – Update



FOLLOWING FoPP's successful bid last summer for the Lottery funding under the Fair Shares Programme, a meeting has been held with Melanie Wheelwright.

She is heading up the DMBC's team to implement our proposals for the renewal of the various sporting facilities. We are in receipt of three quotes for the multi-purpose pitch and enhanced play area and at present we are waiting for DMBC to do the final costing. The timetable is to have these up and running before the end of September.

At the same time, under the lesser Band Three monies, and to run simultaneously with the above, we will have provided improved signs throughout the Park and additional security in the form of oak posts to the more accessible parts of the perimeter.

Friends Forum

PRIORY HALL was the venue on Thursday 15th January of the second meeting of the NEW Friends Forum. About a dozen representatives of different Parks within the Borough were present including officials from Grange, Buffery, Netherton, Mary Stevens, Kingswinford, Wordsley and Priory Parks.

This initiative gave a platform for a lively exchange of views, information (and gripes) and was very helpful for the FRIENDS who were at different stages of development of their group. A comprehensive list of possible funders for voluntary organisations was also distributed.

It was an opportunity for the organisers of each group's events for the year to inform other members of their proposed activities and will ensure that there are no clashes of similar activities. Offers were made to share equipment between groups which will also help while monies are in short supply. FRIENDS who are benefiting from the N.O.F. (see opposite) were also able to exchange views on progress of their initiatives.

It was interesting to see how the same problems of vandalism, security and drug taking were common to all groups and how different FRIENDS are tackling these problems. Mary Stevens were having particular success with their TWO Community Police Officers who take serious interest. It is hoped that we can have a Senior representative of the Police force at the next meeting to advise on coordinating their actions across the Borough.

Altogether a very successful meeting. Our Groups have a combined membership well into four figures and represent a broad cross section of people who have the interest of the community at heart.

Next meeting Priory Hall on 11th March at 6.30. All FRIENDS groups welcome.

Junior FoPP Corner



Memories of warmer weather during last summer's Picnic in the Park. Pictured is one of our JFoPP taking somewhat tentative steps on rather fearsome looking stilts, helped by our fire eating, juggling all-round performer.

Congratulations to Mike Hessey for capturing the spirit of the occasion with an excellent photograph.

It is hoped that we will be able to repeat most of last year's events in the coming months.

New Members

Welcome to new JFopps Katie, Victoria and Laurence Scorey. We look forward to seeing you at our events and all other juniors wishing to become members of the Friends.

COMPETITION

A special prize for the first JFoPP to email us with the name of the shirt type garment worn by Roger de Somery. (Clue-See page 4).

Happy Birthdays

February James Bradley, Sarah Hann, Emma Knowles, Laurence Scorey.

March Christopher Tranter, Annahleigh Cooper, David Hall, Joe Woodward, Stephanie Porter, Shannon Mitchell, Nick Ange Nouwe.

We hope that those of you who have had birthdays since the middle of December have received their special JFoPP Birthday Card.