



THE PRIORITY

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Membership 582

Newsletter of the Friends of Priory Park & The Green

Gutted.....



.....Well most people were on Thursday 6th of May on learning that, during the previous evening, arsonists had struck at Priory Hall. The Reception area to the left of the entrance, together with the room above, were completely destroyed and most of the remaining rooms were smoke damaged. Only prompt action by our Fire Service prevented what could have been a major disaster.

Whilst it is easy to condemn the mindless few that would carry out such an attack, it calls into question why such a valuable and historic building together with a store of important documents are left overnight with no security of any kind.

FoPP's initial reaction was one of total disillusionment but this was soon replaced with a fresh resolve to continue and redouble our efforts to make Priory Park a safe and pleasant

place for all, and the results of our latest efforts are shown on page 3.



Editorial

Well summer's here (of sorts) and events are coming thick & fast and with FoPP's luck we have so far managed to avoid the rain, and all our gatherings on the Park to date have been blessed with bright sunshine. I hope this will not put the damper (!) on what is still to come. Details of more events are shown below and in our *late news*.

Much is happening on the Funding front –see later, and hopefully over the next few weeks work will commence on the Multi Purpose Pitch to be followed later with an extension to the Play Area.

Phil. Griffiths

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF PRIORY ESTATE

On Sunday 18th July 2004

Come and join the fun at Priory Park from 1–9 pm
And celebrate the estate's 75th Birthday

Also the Dudley Borough Festival's Wheels Event 1–4 pm

What's going on...

1 pm-Grand Opening by our local Councillors Margaret Aston, Alan Finch, Geoff Johnson and local MP Ross Cranston.

1-10 pm-Disco announcing Karaoke competition.

1.30 pm-Essential Khatra

2.05 pm-Buskers

2.35 pm-Fantasies Dancers

2.55 pm-DJ and old-time singalong

3.35 pm-Essential Khatra

4.05 pm- Fire eater

4.35 pm-Buskers

5.05 pm-Kiddies Disco / Competition Winners

6.05 pm-Karaoke Competition

7.05 pm-Disco

9.00 pm-Competition Results

3.30-4.15 pm Songs of Prajise

Visits from:

Blood Donor

GMB

Neighbourhood Watch

Fire Service

Police

Future Skills Dudley

Connections

Primary Care Trust

Barnardos

And many more...

For further information contact
Michelle Hartlebury on 01384 812572

Attractions include...

Jones Funfair, Donkey Rides, Face Painting,
Arts & Crafts Competition, Prize Bingo,
Football Skills, Story Teller, Food Vans,
Ice Cream Vans, Nails & Manicures and much more

Letters

Dudley Beacon and Castle
Primary Care Trust
Dear Friends of the Priory,

May we take this opportunity to thank you for including us in your trip to the Botanical Gardens. We had a lovely meal and a wonderful day out.

As a small group we do not have the opportunity to go on many trips, therefore we really appreciate the gesture and hope you will be able to include us on future trips.

Thanks again for a wonderful day.

Yours sincerely

St. Francis over 60's Club

Dear Friends of Priory Park,

A thank you card to express my appreciation for the day out you gave us the clients of Age Concern Stafford Street. Excellent meal and a lovely interesting time at the Botanical Gardens. (Very enjoyable).

Special thanks to Janet who worked hard organising the day out (Well done Janet). Once again many thanks to Friends of Priory Park (*and the Green*) that made this day possible.

Your sincerely

Irene West Age Concern

Just a sample of several letters of thanks received from some of the people who came on our latest trip - (see page 4). It makes the effort so worthwhile particularly for all the volunteers who work so hard and to whom I also offer my thanks.- Ed.

FOPP ON TOUR– PART 2

A trip to the Botanical Gardens



Following on the success of last year, when FoPP descended on Birmingham's Think Tank with some eighty local schoolchildren, this year our excursion moved to a new location and with a new age group.

Together with Age Concern Dudley and St. Francis's Over 60's Club FoPP took six mini buses full of lively senior citizens to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. The visit was preceded by an excellent lunch at the **Dormer Hotel** on the Hagley Road and once we were all fed and watered off we went for the afternoon's visit to the Gardens.

First of all we did a quick tour of the greenhouses and conservatories and saw some amazing and unusual plants from hotter climates then with the sun shining, (arranged as usual by FoPP), it was outside to the extensive and very colourful gardens.

But suddenly we all seemed to arrive at the Teashop for a welcome cuppa.

All too soon it was back to the coaches for the short journey back to Dudley and the reaction to the visit can be seen from the letters on page 2.

New Lottery Funding Bid



FoPP seeks funding for more improvements and more facilities for the local community.

I'm sure that most members appreciate that FoPP's committee is doing a lot of work behind the scenes which is not reported here - it's not that it is particularly secret, but until and unless it has positive results, it does not seem useful to report on it here. However, we will mention one of the initiatives briefly now - a meeting with representative of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Dudley Council today. FoPP is hoping to get funding to develop a plan which would lead to more improvements in the park and the facilities it offers to the whole community, and the maintenance of the park as a whole. Much work still remains to be done even to put the proposal to HLF, but we are optimistic that we can present what we think will be an attractive proposal.

Report by Mike Hessey which first appeared on our web site on the 27th of May.

Since the above was written a further meetings have been held and FoPP are submitting a funding application for £50,000 to enable a Master Plan to be prepared for the overall regeneration of the Park. This will be produced for FoPP by an firm of Chartered Architects together with Quantity Surveyors, Archaeologists and Landscape Consultants and others. Further details will be made available as soon as possible.

The photograph shows representatives from English Lottery, Dudley Council, the Borough Archaeologist and a local Architect having a conducted tour of the Park by members of FoPP.

The Priory that ran a Town.

In 1184 King Henry II had Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, murdered. This event sent Europe into an uproar. The Pope canonised Saint Thomas and he very quickly became the people's saint. Gervase Paganel, Lord of Dudley, who had been a friend of the king quickly changed his allegiance and supported his son Prince Henry in a revolt against his father. Henry II suppressed this revolt and had the castles of the perpetrators slighted (made undefendable). Gervase, not wishing to live in a ruined castle left for his home county estates and never returned to Dudley.

For 50 years the baron's stayed away from Dudley and the Prior of St James took on the responsibility of running the town's civil and religious life. Gervase had just founded the Borough (town) and being new it was a little unsteady in its development. The Prior being a scholarly man helped it to get through these early problems. As every market town had at least one annual fair he got permission to hold one in Dudley on July 15th. This was St James Day, the Apostle that the Priory was dedicated to. Close to where the fountain stands today, stocks were built. These were a wooden contraption in which to lock up people who were not law-abiding. Just to remind the market people God was always watching them a stone cross stood next to the stocks.

Thanks to this help the town began to

grow and prosper but it was in other ways that the Priory helped with the town's growth. Medieval society was not one in which much thought was given to protecting peoples welfare. The church began to take on this role. The monks built a hospital (on the west range of the cloister, next to the great west door). In those days hospitals were not only for the sick. One role it took was a place where travellers could have a bed for the night and a meal, (normally free of charge). Another was a place where old people could retire, (they would help pay for this by handing over their property to the monks). But of course there was a place for the sick and a monk (like Brother Cadmon in the fictional stories) was a herbalist who made medicines. Given the knowledge at the time many of these people were terminal cases and a small part of the building was reserved for the dying. It was a small, quiet room with paintings on the walls of the various saints who would protect the person on his/her entering the next world.

It was also in the role of education that the Priory had its place. It took only boys (sorry girls!) and taught them to read and write. As the Priory had a library as well, once they had gained the reading skill they could delve into the knowledge of the world; mathematics, history, geography and of course Christianity. As education in that age was intended only for men who would join a religious order, his teachers would be highly delighted if a young man took the vows of a monk. Many men educated at Dudley Priory went on to greater fame; Stephen de Swetemon, became a lawyer and eventually a clerk in the

royal court. Robert de Dudley became Prior of Buildwas Abbey and John de Dudley, who took his Masters Degree at Oxford became Sub-prior at the Monastery at Worcester. Most pupils, however, when they finished their schooling, went back to work as their fathers had, as traders in the Market at Dudley.

For a while the Prior was the most important leader of the communities that grew around the castle. He took on the responsibility for many aspects of the peoples lives. When in the 1230's Roger de Somery returned to Dudley as Baron, he found a prosperous place thanks to the Prior and Monks. Today we think of the ruins as a quiet or solitary place, but what stories could the stones tell about the past if only they could speak!

John Hemingway.
DMBC Archaeological Officer.



Although the most obvious signs of the trainees from Future Skills in the Park is when they are carrying out their horticultural duties, they do in fact learn a variety of basic tasks.

Our picture shows two of the team building a partition wall in the Pavilion in order to provide FoPP with its own meeting room. Thanks fellas.

Steps to Health Comes to Priory Park

Last year Priory Park was chosen to take part in a national project, which is aiming to encourage people to take part in physical activity. The project, called Steps to Health, is working with Friends of Priory Park to offer new activities and events, which are fun for the whole family.



The Steps to Health Launch took part in the park in April, followed by the recent half term activity afternoons. Project coordinator Melanie Taylor said "Hopefully these events are just a small sign of things to come in Priory Park".

"We are now planning a series of activities for the summer holidays, which will include multi-sports afternoons, soccer skills, athletics and a fun day. This will be in addition to more opportunities to take part in guided group walks"

We are hoping that the activities will encourage people of all ages and abilities to come to their park to take part in physical activity. Being active doesn't have to mean working out at the gym or leisure centre. Priory Park is the perfect alternative, with a wide variety of opportunities for activity, with fresh air thrown in for free!

PRIORY PARK COMES TO LIFE.



During the Whitsun Half-Term holidays Priory Park was host to two Activity Afternoons where the park CAME ALIVE with the sound of 243 children having lots of fun getting fit and with some animals from Dudley Zoo!

The activity sessions were the first event organised by the partnership of Friends Of Priory Park and the Green and the Health Authority's Steps To Health Project. Tennis, Basketball and Football coaches kept the older children very busy whilst even the youngest of children could enjoy parachute games, mini rounders, short tennis, hopscotch, hoop and beanbag games, Remember SpaceHoppers –they were VERY popular.

The physical activity resulted in hungry and thirsty children, a problem which was resolved by ace teams skilled in the art of fruit preparation, delivering healthy platters and kebabs of fresh and exotic fruit, washed down with a huge amount of squash.

On 3rd June, FOPP were pleased to have organised a visit by Mr Shephen Woolard who is the Chief Education Officer at Dudley Zoo.

Both children and adults were fascinated by the variety of animals on show including cockroaches, a chinchilla and snakes, furs and skulls were also involved in the presentation, many interesting facts were given, but the main message was to show respect to animals.

All participants received a commemorative certificate for their efforts and FOPP hope these events have given the community a taste of what we wish to offer for the Summer Holidays and also an insight to both children and adults of how getting fit can be fun. Many thanks to all our members who helped, especially Jo Powell and Celia Shakespeare completing registration and Val Beddall with her culinary expertise.

Janet A-R.



Junior FoPP Club



Studies in concentration as Steve Woollard from Dudley Zoo holds the audience spellbound with his lecture on work being done at the Zoo for conservation of rare species of animals. Steve was a popular attraction at our Whitsun activity afternoons and we hope that FoPP and Dudley Zoo can come together to have more talks and bring along more animals to our future events.

Happy Birthdays

June

Cloe Hickens , Joshua Baddams, Luke Hadley, Chelsea Perry, Jenika Patel.

July

Ellie Pearson, Fazia Tebani, Keely Wakefield, Charlie Mantle.

New Members

Welcome to Jade & Rachel Broom, Sophie & Millie Warhurst and Connie Davies.

Competition Corner

Well done to **Sarah Crane** and **Stacey Ball**, joint winners of last months competition.

The answer to “What was the earliest date on the Plaque on the East corner of Priory Hall ?” was **1826**.

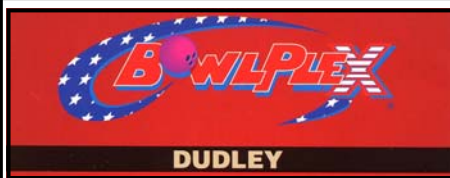
Both winners have received tickets to **BOWLPLEX** at Castlegate Bowl and we hope that they and there friends enjoy their visit.

New Competition

To have a chance of winning 4 more Tickets to **BOWLPLEX** let us know what is Friends of Priory Park & The Green’s **Mission Statement?**

Clue– This is shown on our website homepage at www.fopp.org.uk .

Email answers to editor@fopp.org.uk or phone 01384 252832 or 01384 258962, or post entries in FoPP’s post box at Priory Primary School.



Many thanks to Mike Bowater the General Manager of Bowlplex Dudley who kindly donated the above prizes.

Late News.....

Sports Afternoons

From July 21st. To August 26th **Steps to Health** will be having afternoon coaching sessions on the Park for Football, Tennis, Basketball, Cricket and Volleyball. They are also hoping to have Archery and a Climbing wall. The cost will be £1 per session - come and improve your skills. Limited spaces available.