



THE PRIORITY

Newsletter of the Friends of Priory Park & The Green

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Membership total 425

Dudley M. B. C. Central Area Committee Meeting

This extremely well attended meeting on the 18th of June took place in Priory Primary School was dominated by the somewhat heated debate regarding the siting of THAT Academy in our Park. We would report the following address verbatim.

ADDRESS TO CENTRAL AREA COMMITTEE BY A.W.WESTON CHAIR FFOP&G 18.06.03

Our friends group formed 16 months ago to challenge the downward spiral of Priory Park.

Vandalism, antisocial behaviour, substance abuse and neglect was creating a no go area at the very centre of our community.

We are volunteers, our membership now exceeds 400. We are not Ludites, or Nimby's, we are not anti That Academy, we are anti its proposed location, the community do not want this building in Priory Park. Our efforts and voluntary work within the park and the community are on record. The improvements, community pride, and restoration of a feeling in and for our park are clearly visible. In partnership we have restored Priory Park to the community for their leisure and pleasure. The community now faces a greater threat to Priory Park, "THAT ACADEMY"

These proposals strike to the core of our aspirations for the park, the preservation of our park heritage, character, infrastructure and purpose. The community view is that the park will become in effect a college campus, ultimately, despite assurances to the contrary, effectively lost to local people.

FoPP &G are supported in our opposition by our Ward Councillors, past and present, our Ward Regeneration Board our Parish Council and the majority of the community as our petition demonstrates. We have written to persons and organisations with interest in these proposals, this list is available.

A quote from the project applicant, who is an officer of the council, and the college is worthy of repetition.

"Priory Hall as a location has the prestige and environment as well as other factors you rightly identify, there are other sites physically capable of accommodating That Academy proposals but none have that contribution of attributes

The other factors one presumes are the funding opportunities available due to the deprived status of the Castle and Priory ward.

Quote from the college: "Can I remind you that FOPP do not own the park". True, but then neither does the college. Who does? The council, but on whose behalf? I suggest on behalf of the communities of Dudley, the electorate and their de-

pendents.

The land containing Priory Park was purchased from the estate of the Earl of Dudley in 1927 by the council, with the intent of constructing a garden suburb, now Priory Estate, which relieved the overcrowding and slums of Dudley town centre.

The park and its buildings were designated for public open space for the leisure and recreation of the community. An assumption is made in these proposals that the majority of the new building is not within the park, this is not so. The current usage of this area does not constitute a shift in the park boundaries, indeed the project precludes future use of this area by the public.

The report lists the community consultation that has taken place FOPP dispute this, sparse information yes, consultation no.

To consult: ask the advice or opinion of, to deliberate together, to confer. FOPP reiterates we are not opposed to the academy, our view shared by our community is that Priory Park is obviously the wrong place.

Finally if I may I wish to quote from the 1932 Dudley Almanac on Social Amenities :-

"The year was particularly marked for the tremendous advances made in adding to the social amenities of the borough. In the first place the Priory Park scheme was practically completed, providing one of the most beautiful spots in the whole of the Midlands. Here have been made tennis courts, bowling greens and play areas for children, still further to be developed in the immediate future.

Magnificent walks have been constructed with a well laid out Italian garden and work is proceeding to make more of the grounds accessible to the public.

It represents one of the greatest achievements of the corporation all the greater since it was carried through in a year of particular difficulty."

In 2003 can we do less?

Please join with us in our opposition to site THAT ACADEMY in PRIORY PARK.

The Friends of Priory Park & The Green thank you for your indulgence.

STOP PRESS - LOTTERY BID
Great News See page 2

Editorial

Apologies for once again having this issue dominated by "THAT". It is an unfortunate episode but one which must be overcome otherwise the Park that we know and love will be lost forever. However with the help of all concerned parties we will win the battle.

This is certainly not what we were formed for and we would much prefer to have each issue full of the other news which you will find elsewhere. Top of the list must be the good news regarding the Lottery Funding which is a triumph for all who were involved in preparing the bid.

The school holidays are giving us a great opportunity to organise a variety of events for children of all ages but as usual it will fall upon a small band of volunteers to organise these, surely there must be someone out there who can help even if only for a few hours!!

Most of you will remember last years Cavaliers and Roundheads event which for me at least was the highlight of the Parks activities. Those who didn't see it missed a great adventure and should make an effort to be there for the assault on the ruins led by that well known Protestant, George Whitehouse.

Looking further ahead, FoPP's Strategy for Priory Park entitled 'The Way Ahead' has now been finalised, and we are looking (without much success to date) for funding to publish both this comprehensive booklet and also our Borough Architect John Hemmingway's "Illustrated Chronicle of The Cluniac Priory of St. James's". Both manuscripts will make excellent reading for those interested in our Park including all Council members.

Phil. Griffiths- Ed.

Lottery Fairshare Bid

Transforming your space

Further to the item in our previous newsletter, FoPP have now had confirmation of Priory Park being selected as the Band 1 Project in the above bid. This was ratified by the Local Strategic Partnership on the 16th of July and in effect this means that our proposals will **receive a minimum funding of £100,000**. This will be used to transform our leisure activity area by:

- ◆ Zoning of the play area according to age group.
- ◆ Converting the inner tennis court into a multi purpose games area with goal posts nets etc.
- ◆ Renewing fencing around the remaining 3 courts.
- ◆ Reinstating the disused court next to the bowling green as a new tennis court.
- ◆ Reinstating and fencing the bowling green as Priory Bowling Club's home turf.

Matched funding is being sought from R106 funds to provide adjacent benches, picnic tables and renew the pathways.

Priory Park has also been included in the band three awards. The schemes we have suggested include signs, events and suitable security to prevent cars gaining access to the Park.

Letters

House of Commons Westminster

Friends

.....Like you I support the principle of the Academy and the £12 million which it will bring into Castle & Priory Ward, including the half million from the private sector. However, the consultation with the public over the last two and a half years has been awful and I was especially unhappy when a commitment for maintaining the Park over the coming years was shorn off the proposal. As I told you, that meant I could no longer support the proposal in its present form.

Ross Cranston QC, MP

By email, Dear Friends,

When visiting your beautiful park we found a map of the probable layout of the ruins. We could not find a copy to take with us, and I wish I could have made everyone stay longer. Now that I'm back in Michigan (U.S.A.) I have developed my pictures of the ruins and I would love to have a copy of that map. Any help would be appreciated.... While my friend and I were walking through the ruins her husband was busy taping us and telling the camera, "Look! I've caught these two vandals here at the Priory. My goodness, just look what they've done to the place!" :)

Lois K.

PLEASE !! We have enough vandals of our own without importing any from the U.S.A.-but thanks for your email. Ed.

To R. Foote Dudley College / A. Sparke DMBC / FoPP.

You invited opinions on the above project. Here are ours:

We consider the proposals to build on the grounds of Priory Park absolutely inappropriate.

We know from experience that there are people working for DMBC who would agree to build on every spot of green if they were allowed to. It is our guess that these same decision makers drive to Dudley to work and then drive out again at 5pm. They show no respect for its residents.

The college is no better, openly admitting that students offsite are of no interest to them.... These latest plans bring nothing for local residents. The promise of job creation will be at best part time, minimum pay and unsociable hours -there's plenty of these sort of jobs already.....

Mr. & Mrs. Thexton.

By email, Dear Newsletter

I was shocked and saddened to see that the local Council would even consider such a proposal for what I can only say as being a monstrosity... I can of course only speak for myself but I believe that many people move to certain areas for several different reasons and I bought my house ... for the Park where on a nice day I can take a stroll with my 13month old daughter and take in the beautiful views. Have the people who propose this gone barking mad or is it a fact that they don't reside within the local community. Also such a structure would not be in keeping with the historic features already within the Park Grounds.

G. Robinson FoPP Member

Several more in a similar vein but lack of space-etc. etc. Ed.

Dudley Friends Forum

All smiles at the first meeting of the combined Friends Forum at Priory Hall on Thursday the 19th of June, with representatives of the Parks Friends Committees from:

Wordsley

Grange

Leasowes

Priory

It is intended that all Friends Groups will be approached to attend the next meeting so that items of common interest across all the Parks in the Borough can be jointly discussed and processed through DMBC Parks Department.



Rose Beds

You may remember back in our January edition a photograph of some very cold council workers planting rose bushes in waterlogged beds after a vigorous campaign by FoPP for their reinstatement .

Well their efforts were more than worthwhile and we would urge everybody to take advantage of the current (late June) good weather to see the results in their full glory. Thanks again to DMBC for their supply, maintenance staff for the planting and ongoing weeding and yourselves for making your wishes known.

If you can't get along do look at the full colour photos and all the other news on our website www.fopp.org.uk

Cor(e)– What a cheek

Despite universal opposition to the scheme the proposers of THAT press on regardless with the mechanics of their plan. Our photograph shows drilling for core samples being taken well outside the Hall grounds in mid June.

At roughly the same time an “arboriculture survey” was undertaken of the trees within the Park. Well actually only those which fell within the proposed area of THAT. Tags are evident on more than 50 trees. These include some of the finest examples of the plantings carried out when the Park was landscaped by Edward Prentice Morgan of the world famous Landscape Architects - T.H. Mawson Although no results of the survey have been seen, would someone like to guess how many will be found to be diseased, past their prime, unsafe etc. etc. and if the scheme progresses, will be felled.



Liaison Officer's Report

The Pavilion

The Contractors have officially handed over the building and so from the Councils point of view the work is complete. An application has been submitted to the Central Area Committee from FoPP for the erection of a partition wall, laying of a screed entrance floor and furnishings. The Pavilion is useable and Vicky (Park Keeper) will be on site two full days each week from the beginning of July (Still without her hearing dog !). Five of the Tennis Courts' floodlights are operational the other three are due to be fixed. A fourth tennis net should be arriving this week (1st. July)

Lottery Bid

We await the Councils final decision on our bid following an appeal by Buffery park. After a tour of Priory Park by the Appeals' Committee on the 26th June we are hopeful of a positive outcome. FoPP have made a donation to Priory Primary School for play equipment in recognition of the excellent work done in producing a Design for a New Play Area by all pupils. (See Page 2 Ed.)

Dudley Play Association Funding

FoPP and FoGP (Grange Park) have forwarded a joint application for monies to organise events for children aged 8-12 years during the summer holidays. We have been awarded £500 each (the maximum allowable). I have taken the lead on organising the activities - how silly! but gratefully acknowledge the valuable help from Chris our Sec. and Penny of Grange Park.

Forthcoming Events

- ◆ Monday 11th. August.
Coach trip to Millennium Point to visit the Think Tank Interactive Museum.
- ◆ Tuesday 12th August.
Art and Craft Workshop in Priory Park. Producing artwork of previous days experiences.
- ◆ Thursday 21st. August.
Priory and Grange sports tournament in Grange Park.– Plenty of games for the children to enjoy.
- ◆ Friday 22nd. August
PiPP (Picnic in Priory Park)
- ◆ Saturday 30 August.
Celebration Day in conjunction with the Cavaliers & Roundheads event organised by Craig Gutteridge.

◆ 30th & 31st. August - Cavaliers & Roundheads

Janet Alderman-Rowe.

Youth Work Activities

In addition to the above events, on the 29th & 30th July, 2 of days activities are being organised in the Park by Priory Detached Youth Worker- Mandy Winning. Events proposed are a Cycling Day– Bicycle maintenance, Proficiency tests, Security coding etc. and a Disc Jockey Decks workshop in the Pavilion. Details and offers of help contact Mandy on 07979 60901



Hedge cutting to the Bowling Green. - Brutal but effective



A start has been made to clean graffiti from the Pavilion

Fat Cats Congratulations to R. Banner whose entry won last issues competition with

Friends Are Tirelessly Campaigning Against THAT Situation

(Very apt Ed.)

And Finally.....

From a National Newspaper—Moscow.

A group of Muscovites led by Leonid Brezhnev's grandson has united to resist the Mayors plans to develop one of the cities most famous Parks. .. The Mayors plans have been retracted. He apologised and admitted that he should have consulted local people. "I had my first kisses on these benches.." said Mr Brezhnev. "We have won the first step in a victory against the Mayor and his greedy fingers".