



THE PRIORITY

Newsletter of the Friends of Priory Park & the Green

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Membership
Total 274

Another Success Story



As anticipated in the last issue, the disused gas substation has been demolished. What was an eyesore and used for various illegal purposes has been levelled and the exterior stonework stored in the Priory hall compound. The dense undergrowth has also been cleared and DMBC has promised new shrubs in the autumn. Hopefully at the same time FoPP will under plant with a selection of spring flowering bulbs. Many thanks to Transco and their contractors.

Roundheads & Cavaliers Goes off with a bang.

We feel that all who came to this event can only agree that it was a resounding success and congratulations are due to the organisers, particularly George Whitehouse the Town Centre Manager who was even collecting litter at 6 am on Sunday morning. Thanks also for the excellent display by the Sealed Knot Society, their recreation of events during the Civil War was set perfectly in and around the Priory whilst the wonderful weather was an added bonus for the crowds of people estimated at 5000 over the 2 days who came to watch.



The FoPPP members who worked so hard on our display are also to be congratulated particularly as they have now applied to the Guinness Book of Records title for the longest time to erect a tent – one and a half hours for eight people. However this effort was well rewarded as visitors were examining the excellent photographic display even before it was opened. All the members who manned the stand were continually being questioned about our work in the Park and it was rewarding to be congratulated on our efforts by so many people. Over £100 was raised by the raffle and every child under the age of 50 went away wearing one of our stickers (see later). A total of 54 new members were recruited the youngest being one year old and an even younger 84 year old — *both from the same family.*



Chairman's Report

Your committee meets at 7.00pm on the first Tuesday in the month. In future these meetings will also be attended by Council/College officers to keep us informed of the progress of the proposals for Priory Hall. Ward councilors have also asked to be involved and will also be represented at the meetings.

Since the general meeting on the 2nd. of July, involvement with council and community organisations has expanded to include funding opportunities with, amongst others, The Regeneration Board, D.O.S.T.I., Different Strokes and the Fair Share Lottery allocation. We have established contact with other voluntary groups within the Castle & Priory ward and this should be ongoing with the Community of Interest Network (COINS).

The census carried out on behalf of the council on over 200 Park users showed most wanted better site security, toilets and play and sports facilities.

The Pageant was a huge success and we have already been invited to join the steering committee for the next visit of the Sealed Knot and other events within the Park. In the longer term we will prepare a 10 year plan with your help showing in which direction FoPP feel that the management of the Park should be heading.

Community ventures Blooming Priory Park

Following the removal of the sub station and as a joint project with Priory School and Castle High we are having a "plant in" of daffodil bulbs on the now vacant corner of the main entrance.

We are actively seeking sponsorship of at least 1000 bulbs and hope that the results next spring will give a much more colourful and inviting appearance to this major corner of the Park.

Carol Service

The nostalgia generated in the last issue about the Carol Service has prompted us to revive this event and we have invited Priory and Castle High schools to help us make it a memorable evening. With some live music and a choir (or two) we hope as many of you as possible will attend and bring your best voices with you.

For those who do make it, a seasonal drink and mince pies will be on offer. This event will take place adjacent to the ruins on the evening of **Thursday 19th of December at 7.00pm.**

Letters to the editor

My name is Harvey Cantor. I am vice president of the Friends of Pennypack Park (FOPP). This is great that we have a similar organizations with similar goals. The Pennypack Park is a 1,600 acre woodland park in the most north-eastern part of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Park was formed starting in 1905 by the Fairmount Park Commission as a protection of the Pennypack Creek. The land was once part of mills along the stream and farm land. The last fully operational farm in the City of Philadelphia is found in our park, the Fox Chase Farm.

We have over 2,000 members in our FOPP. We were the rebirth in 1987 of a group that was originally formed in the 1950s called the Friends of Pennypack. This was a group of concerned citizens who saw a once rural park that was being affected by the over development of the area after World War II. The Park was being trashed. We are proud that our group has now kept the park clean and has we have become its protectorate.....

PennypackPark@aol.com
more next issue

My name is Rose Milnor . Harvey Cantor of the Friends of Pennypack Park sent me your site and his email to you. I was the 2nd President of the fopp from 1989-91 (I now live on the Elk River outside of Elkton , Maryland at the head of the Chesapeake Bay) and I thought you would be interested to know that during my time we went from 200 members to about 1600. We did it by sending letters to all those people who lived in houses near the park, asking them to join us -if not personally **at least financially**. It worked. I think it is wonderful that you have started to take care of your park. and you have a nice size group for such a short time. I am not sure where Dudley is but I plan to look it up on the map shortly. I am amazed at how much a few caring people can accomplish in a short period of time. One thing that we noticed was once we started cleaning the park people seemed to take better care of it. Your lily pond looks beautiful and I am sure after a few clean ups you will see that others do care. Good Luck and Best Wishes to all ,Rose

Rcmilnor@aol.com]



Be on the alert.

This unidentified low flying machine, captured by your intrepid photographer, was seen sweeping through the Park recently. Any future sightings should be reported to the appropriate authorities. Seriously, thanks to DMBC for cleaning the paths in the Park prior to the Cavaliers & Roundhead meeting.

English Heritage

At the invitation of your committee Mr. Ian George from the English Heritage West Midlands Regional Board paid a visit on the 18 September to the Park together with members of DMBC and Councillor Jeff Fletcher.

The object of the visit was to assess the deterioration of the Priory ruins and determine the best way to maintain the structure in good order and how best to make this Grade 1 listed building more attractive and informative to visitors.

The following points were agreed by all.

- ◆ DMBC to liaise with E.H. regarding replacing fallen and damaged stonework and repointing of loose items to prevent further damage. This work will commence as soon as possible and be on an ongoing basis.
- ◆ DMBC to prepare proposals for a more suitable fence around the main structure together with signs to both warn of the dangers but also for educational purposes for visitors.
- ◆ DMBC to selectively remove bushes fronting the ruins along the Broadway to improve visibility.
- ◆ A further meeting to be arranged with all present and John Yates of E.H. to further examine Priory Hall in a similar manner to enable work to be carried out to prevent damage and deterioration.

A second meeting was held on the 23 September at the Park and attended by committee members and Mr. Johnathon Luvie of the principal English Heritage office based in London.

This follows a formal submission by FoPP to English Heritage to have the area of the Park stretching from Priory Hall to Woodland Avenue listed in the same manner, and afforded the same protection, as that currently enjoyed by the Ruins, the Hall and the surrounding parkland.

A comprehensive document has been produced by members showing the history of Priory Park and supported by numerous old photographs, Ordnance survey maps dating back to 1750, extracts from the Preliminary Design report dated 1929 etc. etc.

Fears were expressed for the future of the Park in light of proposed developments and Mr. Luvie was advised of the previous attempt to use the Green in a manner for which it was not intended. A detailed tour was made of the area including the pavilion and toilet block and numerous points made and noted.

Mr. Luvie undertook to produce a detailed report and his findings by mid to end of October.

Roundheads and Cavaliers Raffle

Prize-winners

Chris Banner Day's Golf at Enville Golf Club
Mr. Rhodes 2 tickets to The Village
Leisure Centre
Mr. Bashford £10 W.H. Smith vouchers
Mr. Londton £10 M. & S. vouchers
Mr. & Mrs. Blackhurst 2 Cinema Tickets
Nicola Freeman Bottle of wine
48 Gervase Drive Bottle of wine
Mrs. Rowe Framed Picture
Mr. L. Mole Sweater
Sally Anne Wright Books
Mr. Whitehouse Books
Mrs. Beckett Japanese Bowls
Pat Griffiths Chocolates
B. Jones Shawl
Tremaine Bashford Craft bag
Cathy Acket Candles

TREASURE HUNT Alex Grice Aged 11

**Congratulations to all our winners and many thanks
to everyone who generously donated excellent prizes.**



Christmas Card

Thank you for the favourable response to the article regarding past times in the Park and the picture of the Ruins in the snow. Several member have suggested that the latter is reproduced as an FoPP Christmas card and we are intending to do just that. Further details a little nearer the time.

We are having a small and fairly quiet social evening on the 22nd of November at 7.30 in Dudley Town Hall Banqueting suite. Due to the size of the room there will only be 80 tickets available for this get together so would those interested please phone 01384 252832 As soon as possible.

Sticker Competition

Congratulations to Mike Hessey on winning our competition in time to have stickers handed out at the R. & C. Pageant. It was felt that the design was to the point and described exactly *the purpose and intentions of our organisation*. A similar layout will be used for the car emblem. A bottle of plonk is on its way.



And finally.....

Were you a child of the 50's living in the area surrounding the Park?. Did you use it as your playground?. I am sure there must be quite a few of us left.

What do you remember of that time. We always felt safe over there and our parents never had any qualms about letting us go. I flew around on my bike, roller skates and scooter at different times, but you always kept one eye open forthe Park keeper. You knew if he saw you a real telling off would come your way.

I remember how we used to avoid the path near the Gas house (see earlier—ed.). It always smelt of gas even then and the surrounding made it dark and damp. The ground to the right of this path was overgrown and we imagined there was a swamp in the middle into which we would sink without a trace. The Park was not so open as it is now, all down Paganel Drive side there was thick undergrowth of dark bushes and trees. No one used that side of the footpath if they could help it.

We used to take our nets and try to catch tadpoles in the spring in the Lily pond, trying hard not to fall in. What we did with them afterwards I cannot remember. In the semicircular area below the pond I can only remember one monkey puzzle tree but I see there are now two ! How memory and time plays tricks on us. The rose garden was always full of heavily perfumed roses and the bowling green was immaculate . No one dared set foot on it.

I am sure I could go on and on but enough of my ramblings. Can someone else take up the pen.

Its good to think that FoPP may be able to halt the decline and neglect of a Park that is part of our heritage and history.

Another FoPP supporter.

Mission Statement

To return the Park & Green to you for your leisure & pleasure.