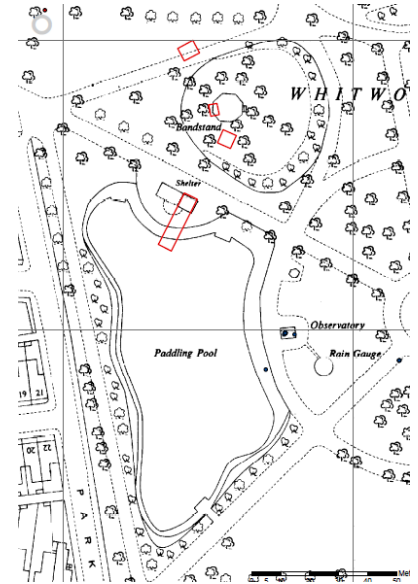


"Why were those people digging in the Park?"

The Community Dig in September was very successful, in spite of the poor weather. Our members gave a good account of themselves in totalling 45 days or part days over the two weeks in contribution. Lots of people came to see what we were doing and children from Medlock and Heald Place Primary Schools, Manchester Academy and Xaverian College joined in enthusiastically. The work this year has been on the site of the Lake Pavilion and, under the trees near the swings, the bandstand and a lost path. We didn't find any remains of the pavilion but we uncovered the paving leading down to the lake, the cobbled lake edge and the start of the lake bottom. In the process of this we collected loads of small finds which were recorded and taken to the labs for cleaning and cataloguing afterwards. These, and the dig records will be studied by the archaeologists over the next few months and we await their findings with interest. We shall, of course, be digging again next year so if you want to have a go, watch this space for information about when and how to join in. In the meantime, for those who have internet access, the blog at <http://whitworthparklife.wordpress.com> is full of information about what we did, who did it and what we found with lots of pictures. Comments and discussion are welcome so have a look and join in!

*Another part of our contribution to this Lottery funded Project is to help build the **Historical Archive**. Although we have a fair amount of stuff about how the land for the Park was assembled and by whom, the original aims and the way they were followed up, we do not have much about how the Park was used after about the 1930's. We need to find out more about this last eighty years and in particular, how the Park has been used and changed during and since the second world war. **Perhaps you remember the bandstand and music in the Park; the lake; the observatory and the readings taken there; the barrage balloons in the war; the "shelter"; the marches and demos that started and finished in the Park, and there must be lots of other things that I don't know about that make this place "special". And we also want to capture ordinary everyday activities and experiences as well as impressions of big events – playing there, meeting friends there, playing games- the things that make this place special. Whatever memories you have we'd love to hear from you.** If you know anybody, or if you have memories yourself, please, please, let me know so that we can get it into the record and build up our picture of the Park. What I have seen so far is fascinating – we already have a wonderful story to tell from the postcards and the formal records, - lets fill it out with some human interest stories and the bits of ordinary people's lives that make this place really interesting – and different from any other Park, anywhere!*

Ken Shone 0161 928 5744 shones@altrincham.freeserve.co.uk.





Autumn is showing itself on the trees in the Park just now and we are starting to think about our next adventure!

The most noticeable impact of the "Cuts" on the Park has been the reduced grass mowing. This arises out of the reduction in the maintenance contractor's contract. Our reaction to this was to turn a negative into a positive by asking that the areas where the grass is not cut relate to the areas of the Park where, in the Management Plan, we hope to develop "flower rich grassland" and, in the area behind the Academy, a wildlife area. To start with grass paths will be cut through these areas on the lines where we intend the original perimeter walks eventually to be reinstated, so that out of the "cuts" comes a start to the next phase of our planned improvements to the Park.

However, in addition to this we plan to start work on the area behind the Academy to make it more attractive not only to people passing through but also to the birds, bats, bees and insects who live in the Park. Where there is presently mown grass we want to see colourful areas of wildflowers, reed beds and the woodland carpeted in daffodils and bluebells, with log seats where we can sit and watch the birds, have picnics and generally "chill". All this is in accordance with our strategy to reinstate the paths and increase bio-diversity over the next five years and our plan to start on this was boosted by an approach from a group of young people who meet regularly in the Manchester Museum, the Youth Board. They approached us through Andrea Winn from the Museum with a fully costed and funded plan (by Starbucks) to carry out a "bee project" in the Park next spring. They also requested that they join in our plans for work in the wildlife area. Their project aims to install solitary bee hives and plant wild flowers. They point out that bees have been Manchester's symbol for centuries and that bees are now in decline, which has serious implications for many aspects of our wildlife as bees are great pollinators. They plan to organise an event at the Park to raise awareness of their project and the plight of the bee, but which would involve fun activities and games for children and adults. This is absolutely in line with our thoughts about getting more people involved in the work of improving the Park so this, together with a grant of bulbs from Community and Cultural Services ("Manchester Leisure Services" as was, another result of the cuts), has resulted in our *autumn event*. We plan to invite the Youth Board to help us plant these bulbs - English Bluebells - on *Saturday 19 November between 11am and 1pm*, and anyone willing and able to help is welcome to join us. You will need stout shoes/boots and weatherproof clothing and please bring a trowel or spade if you have one.



We will follow this up with work in the winter to plant trees and shrubs to form the hedge and prepare the ground for sowing and planting in the early spring, so this will be another activities day and about Easter Time we will all help the Youth Board with their "Bee Project" which will make a home for solitary bees and do the actual sowing and planting and celebrate all this through a big joint Fun Day.

We need to raise funds for our part of this enterprise and we are looking into that as this report goes out, but thanks to Starbucks, the Youth Board work is already funded.



All this will be repeated later in various parts of the Park where we want to add interest and colour to the un-mown areas which will, in the meantime, be spontaneously producing a wider range of plants, already attracting wildlife. The pictures on the left are examples of what can be done - it will require patience and persistence, but if we get it right, these examples show that the effort is worth it. Why not make a start with us through the bulb planting?

Saturday, 19 Nov, 11am-1.00pm

For further information about any of this, or comments, or ideas please contact Ken Shone at 0161 928 5744 or by e-mail at shones@altrincham.freeserve.co.uk
