

Marsh Park History & Volunteer Project – UKSPF Impact Report

Initial Archaeological Dig

Prior to getting WMCA UKSPF Funding for this project, in January 2024 the Friends of Marsh Park uncovered a World War Two ROC lookout posts foundations. The team, working with DMBC and Wolverhampton Archaeological Group managed the site over four weekends to excavate the 15 feet by 11 foot remains of the foundation walls. At first it was thought the site would have to be filled back in, but they were in such good condition and assessed as reasonably safe to be left uncovered. As part of the recent additions to the park as part of DMBC's Future High Streets funding, other additions were able to be added to the park, which celebrated the Second World War history of the park including Laser cut ornamental benches, a WW2 themed viewing platform and research into the basic history of the site.



Gathering Further History

The first stage of the UKSPF funded project was to produce posters to be used on social media and in local shops, pubs, cafes and the library, to capture more personal stories of local families during war time here. In simple terms these posters and social media posts asked locals to send us their memories of the war, passed on by relatives and friends. There was also the offer to take in any artefacts or documents to be scanned and copied at the library. We had some great responses, including one gentleman who sent a picture of the Home Guard who were on duty in Marsh Park during the war. Further promoting of this image has helped us identify several members from the picture. We also received a copy of some local identity cards, and several memories of the lookout post itself and the men who guarded the post (see attached document – Marsh Park ROC and Home Guard information).

We Can Do It!



Funded by
UK Government

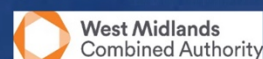
culture@brierleyhill.net

POST FEB. 15 TO FEB. 28

WAR PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE



YOUR TOWN NEEDS YOU!



***Brierley Hill Culture are gathering family memories of WW2
Do you have tins with old pictures from here, or stories passed down?
You can take pictures and documents into the library to be copied, or email us!***

Talk at Harry's 18th February 11am to 2pm

Tim and Frank from the Brierley Hill Community Forums History Engagement Team, were invited to attend a history week at Harry's Community Café and give a talk about Brierley Hill during war time. Attended by members of the Women's Discovery Group, Adult Community Learning Local History Project members, Harry's staff and members of the public. While Tim focussed on a series of maps and arial photographs from the early decades of the 20th Century, Frank spoke about the dig at the park. Images and ephemera were shown to the audience as part of an audio-visual display using a projector and archaeological finds displayed on tabletops from the March park dig.

Talk at St Michaels by Clive Westwood WAG March 5th 7 to 9pm

Clive Westwood the lead archaeologist from Wolverhampton Archaeology Group gave a detailed talk on the history of Brierley Hill going back to the first settlers in the 15th Century. This talk described the changing landscape and led into the history of WW2, focussing on the relevance of Marsh Park as a high spot in the landscape, which was superbly set to play its part in the war as a perfect spot for a lookout post to be used by Royal Observer Corps and guarded by local Home Guard members 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the duration. He explained how pre-empting the outbreak of war, the site had been established as a lookout point as early as 1938.

Going on to discuss the probable layout of the building when it was in use, including a small office, stairway, latrine and camp bed area within the voids of the newly exposed foundations layout. Clive also showed a large amount of cleaned up finds from the dig. The event was attended by members of the public and the Community Forums Stakeholders group.

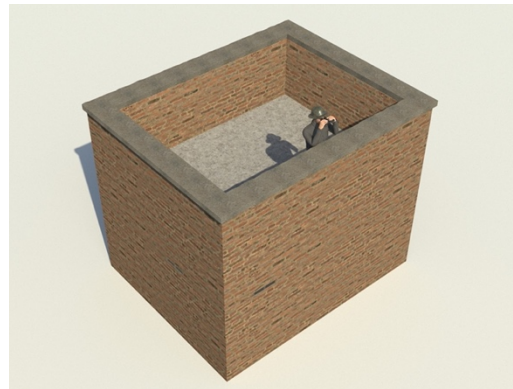
Community Litter Picks at Marsh Park on Fridays 7th and 14th March from 10am to 12pm



As part of this project, at all of the activities, press releases and talks, audiences have been invited to come and join the gardening group as volunteers. Two gardening events were held on consecutive Fridays to welcome new volunteers gently into the group. Three volunteers have been added to the group from this project. The litter picks do a god service for the community and also serve as a great way of socialising and adding a wellness element to the activity as we walked and talked.

3D Rendering and Augmented Reality

Anthony Young a local graphic artist and 3D rendering artist was commissioned to work up a digital model of what the lookout tower would have looked like. We have also worked with Anthony to research the possibility of creating a version of this structure that can be viewed from a smart phone or tablet via a QR code when visitors are in the park, near to the site of the dig.



The imagery will also be available online at some point via the Forums web page and will be added to the database of information we share with local primary schools. There are some issues with using augmented reality as it only currently works on the latest smart devices less than a year or so old. As part of the research into using this in the future we are looking at alternative technology that will make it more accessible to a larger audience.

Walk from Swan Pub through Brierley Hills History 23rd March 11am to 2pm

Working with Kirsty and the team from the Swan Pub in Brettle Lane Amblecote, we persuaded them to do a walk in the opposite direction to their normal routes through Stourbridge. This meant that for the first time a walk would go from the pub into the heart of Brierley Hill and explore the towns deep history, from the industrial revolution through both world wars and beyond. Tim and



Frank led the walk using audio listening equipment purchased for the community as part of the previous CGLEF funding legacy. There were 30 spaces on the free walk, and all tickets went within two weeks of the call out. This meant that a large group of people came along to have a nice walk, which helped with well-being and physical fitness, while also educating them on their towns history and opening up spaces they had previously either not been to, or had simply walked by. Free food was also laid on by the pub and donations received on the day will be given to the Royal British Legion. Books

on Marsh Park and the town produced as part of the Historic England funding legacy were given out to all 30 attendees on their return to the pub.

Detectorist Closed Event on 29th March 11am to 1pm

To complete the dig research on the park a group of semi professional detectorists were invited to come and survey the park around the site of the dig. Working with the DMBC Events Team and Greencare we were encouraged to do this work with much enthusiasm and support from the council teams. As we did not just want anyone to turn up and dig holes around the parks landscape, this was a closed event for the detectorist of Stourbridge Detectorist Club only. The group had longed to work in local parks, but this takes some organisation. They were really pleased to work in partnership with the Friends of Marsh Park and Dudley Council to make this event happen on the day.



Four members of the detectorist group and two volunteers from Friends of Marsh Park, worked together to cover a large area of the park from the main entrance, through the top area where the WW2 remain are and over onto the old bandstand site. Finds from the day included a horse shoe believed to be the size for a pit pony (this was found at a deeper depth than any of the surface finds. The surface finds included a brass button,

coins dating back to 1902, 1907 and 1939. There were also various pieces of industrial and domestic metal and pottery.

Attendees and Engagement

Social Media/Press/Poster Callout	3000
Talk at Harry's	8
Talk at St Michaels	25
Community Litter Pick	16
New Park Volunteers	4
Walk from Swan Pub	30
Detectorist Event	6

Pre-Planning Phase

In the preliminary weeks of the project, we met with Greencare DMBC, Events Team DMBC, Clive from the archaeology group, Kirsty from the Swan public house and Jules from the detectorist group. The site was visited at Marsh Park to show the different teams around and check on safety and DMBC rules for such activity. Also, posters were produced and placed in public houses, including the Swan, Batham's Bull and Bladder and the Corn Exchange. Posters were also put up at the library, market, bakery, shops and in 3 x different local parks notice boards, as well as this we shared widely on social media to over 3000 followers on three of our history, culture and local information pages. During this time Tim and Frank worked with the team from the Swan to research and plan a 2 – 3 hr walk from Amblecote, around Brierley Hill and back to the pub, taking advantage of the most prominent historic locations relating to the great wars.

Main Project Phase

During the second phase of the project rollout, the team gathered all the incoming information from press releases, social media posts and poster feedback and collated it into an easy to access document with the most interesting facts included and some images to detail the research. The history and archaeology talks took place at Harry's Café and St Michaels and all attendees were informed of opportunities to volunteer on the parks, either to help curate the history or to garden at regular Friday morning meetings. A booking and information system was set up online to control the limited spaces of 30 people able to go on the history walk. During the last two weekends of

March the history walks, and the detectorist events took place. We worked with Anthony the 3D modeller to draft a model on screen of what the building would have looked like.

Future Planning Phase

We would like to do more history walks in the future and have pencilled one in for September during Heritage week, due to the high demand for the walk this time. Working with Anthony (3D designer) we will create a QR code that can be added to the park's information panels, Facebook page and the Forums web site. This will allow us to begin to experiment with developing a 3D experience for visitors at the park, using that fixed web address, but enhancing the content as time and technology move forwards. We would like to archive the material we have gathered from this project, including our own research and collected images, the archaeology report and some news articles. Frank and Tim will also use the information gathered to feed into a bigger war time project we would like to try and do later in the year during Heritage Week or on VJ day.

Social Media and Press

Posters

<https://www.facebook.com/BrierleyHillHOD/posts/pfbid02pkt15qDmZWSoMxYxdcxneQ9qXxKoLXqUuq9xug12JmuvTpxdx6Tpu71Qq6szge4U>

Archaeology Talk

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/192KRkpG3H/>

Home Guard Callout

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/12Exto19BQU/>

Express & Star

https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2025/01/27/world-war-2-lookout-point-found-in-park/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJJAglleHRuA2FlbQlXMQABHSa5E4OpPLdlrTRwBrcP5LXnQ4eBcuBJu_QvZWCPlvO65Yab2rVcxp3e7w_aem_f42OkM1sk14sM7peyj-zjg

Dudley Council News CAPA

https://councilnews.dudley.gov.uk/news/world-war-ii-remains-uncovered-in-brierley-hill?fbclid=IwY2xjawJJA5leHRuA2FlbQlXMQABHSP3OzIPLwEO3pwoPq9jpxRiJaRnHX5AL63fOj6a0Q0BZesk4zflqpWKVA_aem_cVmvcXtacxBl2psDMK-oOQ

BBC Coverage of the above article

<https://www.facebook.com/100064073706197/posts/1030674939078287/?rdid=9r0SQVZTtl3Ok0wK#>

Swan Pub History Walk

<https://www.facebook.com/theswanbrettelllane/posts/pfbid02AnmcpeanxJiAYK9k612k7PeJGmxfJmrbWTF2ciUW4UZxnv3sD7czrpMVZhSrsDREl>

Detectorist Event

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16PYB2WJwg/>