

Our Victoria Park Tales



A project to celebrate Victoria Park, a gift to the people of Ilkeston from the 9th Duke of Rutland in 1902.

The Brief

Following the award of funding from the Heritage Lottery Chrissie Hall was commissioned to extend the local archive relating to Victoria Park by collecting images and tales shared and donated by members of the community. The project included the creation of a portable accessible display of shared images and tales as well as a commission to write two new short stories inspired by the Park.

Challenges

- To identify community groups and individuals willing to share images and tales relating to their past and present involvement with Victoria Park
- To arrange meetings, attract participants and encourage members of the local community to donate written and oral stories, images and ephemera relating to Victoria Park for public display and consent to retain them in an archive
- To select material suitable to create an interesting and visually engaging portable display

Solutions

• A flyer inviting people to share their stories was widely distributed and circulated electronically through local networks. Chrissie attended meetings and events, visited the park and spoke about the project on local radio bringing positive responses including from:-

- Friends of Victoria Park
- Victoria Park Bowling Club
- Bennerley Viaduct Project
- Friends of Park Cemetery
- The Women's Institute
- Health and Leisure Groups
- Faith Groups
- Erewash Borough Council staff
- Kirk Hallam Community
- Erewash Sound listeners
- Arts Erewash and others



Solutions

- Everyone enjoyed chatting about the park, several wrote about it and a significant number of vintage photographs became available. The size limitations for the display board necessitated the use of a folder for the majority of donations from which Chrissie chose compelling extracts, key quotations and a selection of engaging images for the display
- By instigating an archive folder it was possible to retain copies of all photographs, ephemera and stories.
- When people wanted to chat about the Park Chrissie took notes and interpreted conversations into scripts and written accounts

Outcomes

- Happy conversations with groups and individuals in the park, the bowling green, the playground and many other places. Everyone enjoyed talking about their personal links with the park as children and as adults
- Vintage images of the park sparked discussions and comparisons between life in Ilkeston in the past and now
- Expressions of renewed pride in ownership of the park, appreciation of its beauty and high standard of maintenance
- Conversations have revealed how much the park is valued for leisure and family outings, appreciated as a **'green lung'** and as an event venue. Participants described it as **'a diamond in the middle of Ilkeston'** acknowledging its benefits for health and well-being, a peaceful place to walk dogs, jog, people watch, an accessible space where adults and children can exercise and play, sit on a bench and find someone to chat to - all free of charge!
- A portable display board holding a selection of short written tales and images about the Park, the people and the pets who used it in the past - and those who use it today
- A local, accessible archive folder full of previously unrecorded personal stories and privately held images



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