



# Friends of Preston Park News

## Christmas 2011

Merry Christmas !

Hello All,

Christmas is upon us and the new year is so close. This is my final letter to you as Chairman for as you will know I cease to hold that office in January. I hope that my tenure has been successful and delivered to the members a body and a strategy that can be the basis to represent you for the future. This year has been a roller coaster from the major high of defeating the school proposal to the nitty gritty of establishing what we stood for. It does end on major positives with great things happening and having happened in the park. From the refurbishment of the Hall to the new Play Equipment, which has been a huge success, to the improvements to pathways through the great work of our sister group, Friends of Tees Heritage Park, the park is getting better and better. 2012 promises to be wonderful with a host of exciting happenings and events; greater education opportunities and craft activities and of course The Grand Opening!

You will be happy to know that Stockton Council Officers have welcomed our Vision for the Park, and whilst there are a number of areas for ongoing discussion, some of our initiatives are to be prioritised, in particular Green Flag status, Improved Wildlife and Green Space developments and more Art in the Park!

You will also be glad to hear that the Park management is pushing ahead on many other initiatives including Partnerships with external groups, and we hope they will also push through improvements to Lighting, Bins and Seating. Further Funds are being sought from Landscape Partnerships and we hope to see major developments in Parkland Restoration and the connection between the Hall and the River. The development of training programmes for Heritage Craft Skills is another key vision issue that will hopefully be developed with community involvement.

So I feel that your committee have a lot to be involved in and with your ongoing support will be able to have a real impact on the future of our glorious Preston Hall and Park.

A major issue and my final project is the Gateway Sculpture project - more details in the following pages.

Have a wonderful festive season and I look forward to seeing you at our open forums in January!

*David Winship*

### A Final Word

To those who have paid their Subs. My thanks. To those who have not yet, Please, Please, Do. For the group to continue to have the impact it has on the Council Officers and their plans and programmes it is imperative that we have a solid membership base. £2 or £5 is, even in these difficult times, a small price to pay to ensure that we continue to have a big voice at the Management Table and set the agenda for what is our and our children's Park!!

*David.*

## Tees Heritage Park Proposed Artwork – Design update.

Earlier this year Friends of Tees Heritage Park (FTHP) carried out an extensive programme of consultation and involvement in the design of a series of Sculptures to act as Landmark “gateways” to the Tees Heritage Park, and most importantly a major work in Preston Park. You will I am sure recollect the schools’ involvement, the presentations at various locations and our own interactions with the sculptor both informally and in open meetings. In the final meeting the sculptor, Keith, presented his interpretation of the brief, which was accepted as the basis for the development of the final work. This design had many strong features, reflecting the essence of the Tees Heritage Park and the views of the children involved in the process. As the process advanced major difficulties were found in the application of the design. Rather than a compromise to the design, the artist went back to the beginnings of the project and has created a new design to meet the particular site requirements within Preston Park.

We believe it is important that you are aware of the changes, so FoPP and FTHP are trying to make sure all interested parties are up to date with progress and design details. The programme involves:-

- Keith visiting the schools to show the children how their ideas are encapsulated in the new design and explain the process.
- We and FTHP are keeping our members briefed.
- Doug Nicholson (FTHP) and David Winship jointly posting a briefing in the press this month.
- On 10 January we will be ground marking the site in the park to give clear scale.
- We have two open forums for you to attend and see the models and artwork and discuss the project :- Thursday 12th January 17.30 to 19.00 and Saturday 14th January 10.00 to 11.30, both in the Hall. As building work is ongoing the precise location is to be decided.
- The formal planning process has started in conjunction with this programme. We look forward to your attendance and feedback!!

For us to fully represent you in this major and exciting project we hope to see and talk to you in January.

To help you understand the process there follows a statement from the Friends of Tees Heritage Park and one from the artist involved, Keith. There are also some photo montages which indicate the style of the design but should not be taken as exact representations or technical drawings.

Gateway sculpture seen from the slope above.



17.30 to 19.00, Jan 12th

10.00 to 11.30, Jan 14th

Preston Hall - see the models and discuss the artwork design.

See you there?

## The Design Process - the artist's view

An essential part of my brief as the appointed artist to the Tees Heritage Park (THP), has been to work closely with people from the local community in developing the designs for the various land art works which will become an important part of the identity of the area. Preston Park was clearly an important site, geographically situated at the heart of the THP, and the most likely point of arrival for visitors coming from any distance. It is considered to be the main gateway or hub of the THP, and the art work designed for this site will need to represent that significance.

Representing the local community, about 60 young people from two schools, Preston Primary and Egglecliffe Comprehensive, were involved in the project and their work has been the inspiration to the final design. They began with a visit to the site overlooking the river and jetty. They made sketches and took photographs to help familiarise themselves with the area. They then participated in a series of sculpture workshops during which they designed and built their own maquettes expressing their values and understanding of what was important about the landscape, and would help to communicate these ideas to people visiting the site.

Following the workshops it was my job to produce a proposal for the site in Preston Park taking inspiration from the young people's work. From the range of interpretation expressed through so many models this was not necessarily going to be an easy thing to do, however some strong common themes had emerged. The formality of Preston Park had been recognised in a strong architectural quality that was shown in a majority of works. A ceremonial quality was apparent in many designs in such forms as processional avenues, arches over entrance ways, and formal monumental structures providing a backdrop to seats or sculptural features. Many of the works also functioned as a device from which to better view the landscape such as a tower, raised seats and even a sunken pit to view under the river Tees through glass. Many of the designs also represented a transition between formal design and nature, for example in a stone pillar with the branches of a tree, a flower in stone mosaic, or a fish in a sculptured splash.

An original design was based on these themes, and was generally well received in exhibition and community consultation. However following further review with Stockton Council and Preston Park management representatives, it was realised that it had not taken in to account certain aspects of the vision and aspiration for the wider landscape of the Park. A quieter impact on the landscape was looked for. Rather than tinker at the edges of the original, I felt it was better to take a new approach and design a work which responded to the reservations expressed, but which was still rooted in the source inspiration of work from the children and students. The second design was well received and felt to contribute to the longer term aspirations for the Preston Park landscape.

The ideas that had fed the first design are also essential to the second. It is to be located midway down the path to the jetty, providing a view over the wider landscape of the Tees Heritage Park looking east towards Queen Elizabeth Way and Thornaby Woods. On the west or high side of the path is set a background stone arc laid in to the embankment with contrasting dark winstone and light cast petals radiating from the centre, a stone and timber seat is set in to the base of the arc. On the low side of the path is a raised semi circular cast iron plate describing the Tees Heritage Park and enabling the visitor to locate their position. Falling away and radiating out from this point are a series of waves, internally faced with stone, and externally with grassed embankment. The internal waves have an architectural quality, and as they radiate out they become more organic and natural in form, and invite the visitor to explore the wider landscape, drawing the eye and emotional attention away in to the surrounding environment.

Gateway design viewed from below



The design is founded in the original work of the children and students in the following ways: the semi architectural quality which acknowledges its place in the formality of the park landscape; the ceremonial quality of the entrance which has the intention of marking the importance of the site through the arrival at a strong centre; the elevated position and incorporated seat which provides an advantageous view across the Tees Heritage Park; the transition from formal to natural and organic in the concentric waves falling away and out from the centre. These are

all predominant themes which emerged from the young people's work. The way in which this second design differs most from the first is that the concentric waves were originally proposed as five stone constructed arms or tendrils stretching out from the centre. The concentric waves have allowed for external embankment, which means the work is less visible from a distance, but creates a greater sense of discovery and arrival when entering in the site and viewed from its centre.

Keith

## Statement From Doug Nicholson – Chairman FTHP

The Tees Heritage Park comprises some 2000 acres of green space along the River Tees and its tributaries between Yarm and Stockton, with Preston Park at its heart. Stockton Council's core strategy includes the Heritage Park as a key environmental element in future policy.

The Friends of Tees Heritage Park (FTHP) have worked tirelessly over a number of years to secure and promote the Park and secured £600,000 of Lottery funding in 2010 to implement phase 1. The funding covers a variety of benefits including new and improved footpaths, new planting, wildlife habitat provision etc. To raise awareness and community ownership of the lands, gateway features are to be provided and landscape artworks built at appropriate locations. An artist was appointed in August and worked closely with local school children involving them in the process of design for artworks near them. Exhibitions of their work and the artist's initial responses were held earlier this year and well received by the public.

The first artwork near Horseshoe Bend at Thornaby was recently completed and a second one at Black Bobbies' field behind Thornaby Green is under construction - three others are proposed in Phase 1, including Preston Park.

In the original application for funding the Preston Park site was shown next to the jetty. However, after the appointment of the artist it was felt that the artwork would be better located on the bank, in association with the new footpath and seating alcove. The first design from the artist was well received as an artwork in itself, but concerns were expressed at the impact and suitability of the design in this particular landscape location. The artist and FTHP

appreciated the concerns and the design was reviewed. They concluded that the first design could not be successfully amended, and still retain its integrity. A new design was produced, which the artist felt was still true to the ideas expressed by the school children but also addressed the special landscape aspirations for this location. The new design was enthusiastically welcomed by FTHP and Stockton's officers.

During the process FTHP have worked with local community groups and FoPP were very supportive of the first design at Preston Park. They were naturally concerned when this was replaced, but following further consultation and understanding, FoPP support the second proposal. FTHP look forward to working closely with FoPP to ensure the successful implementation and maintenance of the artwork for the benefit of the wider community. In particular there will be continued involvement of local schools.

A positive, progressive step for both the Heritage Park and Preston Park!

