

Stafford Orchard

A Park for People

By the time you read this, the refurbishment of Stafford Orchard will have been largely completed and, apart from the re-landscaped football pitch, the park will have reopened. The grass on the pitch needs time to grow and it is important to protect it for a while to avoid damaging the playing surface, but it should be ready for use by the Spring. There may still be some activity by contractors, grounds staff and volunteers on the soft landscaped areas. They will be planting trees, hedges, shrubs, plants, willows and bulbs, but this shouldn't interfere with access to, or enjoyment of, the new facilities in the park. The closure of the park for the whole of the summer was unwelcome, but necessary. Public safety and contractor liability governed all decisions about access to the park during the construction period.

The rebuilt Park Services Building at the main entrance to the park in Station Road now houses the groundsman's workshop and office and refurbished public toilets. To help keep the toilets in good condition there is a dual-access system of coins and tokens. Local residents can collect a supply of free tokens from the parish office (and possibly other outlets) whenever they wish – other users will need a 20p coin. Coin access is not designed to make money or fund maintenance; it is simply to provide some control over access to the toilets, which are available 24 hours a day – they are also externally monitored by CCTV.

Immediately adjacent to the Park Services Building, the Grade 2 listed lock-up at the park entrance has been restored to reflect its appearance when it was first constructed as a gaol in Victorian times. It continues to be used by a takeaway pizza business. Alongside it are public stocks in the style of the ones removed in 1868.

Past the stocks, through the main archway and a little further into the park, is *The Handstand*, a sculpture by Ben Greenwood, featured in this edition of *The Quorndon*.

Behind *The Handstand* the under 8's play area is already getting a lot of use, and in the over 8's park near School Lane there are queues at peak times for the skate ramps, zip-wire, multi-user games area, and the play equipment. Those feeling more active can walk or run the new path circuit around the park, at roughly four laps to the mile. When that becomes too much there are benches on the performance area and all around the pathways; and everywhere is wheelchair and push-chair friendly.

For a more sedentary visit, relax on one of the benches in the sensory garden adjacent to the re-sited US 82nd Airborne memorial at the Station Road end of the park, amongst the trees, shrubs and plants planted by village volunteers. Jane Hollingworth designed the garden and supervised its planting. The garden will take a few years to mature but the plants have been carefully chosen to provide all-year round colour, fragrance and interest.

Or stroll down by the brook side, have a picnic on one of the new tables and look out for the wildlife pictured on one of the interpretation boards nearby. The brook area has been earmarked

for further development to improve the habitats for wildlife, for additional waterside planting and for the creation of areas for natural play.

When the refurbishment scheme is complete, the team of volunteers behind the planning, funding and design of the park for almost five years will hand Stafford Orchard over to a Park Management Committee. This group of volunteers and parish councillors will manage, maintain and develop the park on behalf of the village. Working with them will be volunteer park wardens, events organisers, casual helpers (please sign up in the parish office), and of course our new groundsman Danny Stevens, profiled elsewhere in the magazine.

Many professionals have been involved in making the Stafford Orchard project a success; our landscape consultants, Bellinger Design, worked closely with us throughout the life of the project from its inception in 2006 through to its completion this year; HFN Ltd was our main contractor for the reconstruction of the park (a special mention here for Tony Haynes, HFN's site agent, who managed to find a solution to every problem – and there were a lot!); Turnkey Design Partnership redesigned the Park Services Building and Tomlinson's Builders rebuilt it; Rick Rowley sensitively and carefully restored the lock-up; Michael White and stonemason Paul Timms designed and built the stocks; Mick Holders worked his usual magic with granite; Ben Greenwood sculpted *The Handstand* and Kevin Deignan carved the fox and hound on the chestnut tree; SMP Structural and Civil Engineers advised on building and drainage work; WSP Safety Ltd made sure the work environment was safe on site and for the public; Symbiosis surveyed the trees and advised on tree root protection; George Walker's did the tree surgery. And thank you to the staff of all these businesses – they did a great job.

Finally we should not forget the Heritage Lottery Fund, Charnwood Borough Council and Quorn Parish Council, without whose financial support none of this would have been possible.







