

## *Unveiling the Obelisk*

*On 1 July a crowd assembled to watch the Lord Mayor, Cllr. Harry Lyons, unveil the Obelisk commissioned by the Whitworth art Gallery from French artist, Cyprien Gaillard, as a "monument to the dead buildings". It is made from recycled brick (the red parts) from demolished terraced houses in Bowes St, Moss Side, and concrete (grey) from the 1960's flats in Bonsall St, Hulme.*



*In unveiling the Obelisk, the Lord Mayor recalled his youth in Greenheys and his memories of the park and the Gallery, which was regarded then as a "place for other people". Dr Maria Balshaw, in her reply said that the installation of this sculpture was just part of the continuing re-connection of the Gallery with the Park and its people that would be further developed by the new extension which will, with its Art Garden, café and new entrance directly off the Park, bring the whole place together as one. She said kind words about our work, and that of Alistair Smith, her predecessor, who has been in the forefront of the process of reversing the decline of the Park after years of neglect. The structure was examined very carefully by Catherine Newall's dog before the ribbon was cut at which point he found more interest in retrieving a stick helpfully thrown by the Gallery curator who managed the whole commission, Mary Griffith. Amongst those present at this little ceremony were a group of four geography students from Roskilde University in Denmark who were in Manchester on a study tour of Moss Side. They had contacted Ken Shone, as Chair of FoWP, and he had explained the history of the Gallery and the Park before this event. Afterwards he handed them over to Cllr. Alistair Cox who gave them an insight into the culture of Moss Side.*

*Photos by Dave Delany.*



## **Annual General Meeting at Whitworth Art Gallery, May**

**25<sup>th</sup>.** The Committee's Annual Statement reported on complaints arising from the decision last autumn to close the Park between dusk and dawn. The Committee has agreed that we should review the arrangement this autumn, when it should be possible to take a balanced view of the effect of this change on the Park. The Committee's main work this year has been towards the drafting of the Management Plan 2011-2016, which has now been accepted. On the downside are the loss of most of the 20 new trees donated to the Friends tree planting exercise at the end of 2009, and the theft of the zip-wire seat and one of the swings in the new play area, together with Health and Safety misgivings about the ground treatment beneath the equipment, has delayed final completion. In spite of these setbacks there has been a noticeable improvement in the atmosphere of the Park, with visitors becoming more relaxed about enjoying time here in lunch breaks and evenings. There have been positive comments about the work so far, mainly about the improvement in maintenance, the introduction of the natural play area and the planting in the centre circle. The Committee wants to build on this and the redevelopment of the Gallery, due to start soon, is a good time to harness the interest of more people in the Park's development. The two year Community Archaeology and History Project is designed to revive people's memories and public interest in the Park. FoWP are partners in this with the School of Archaeology, the Gallery, the Museum and the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre. If successful in our application for an HLF grant we hope to involve the whole community in finding out more about what the Park was like, what has happened here and who uses it now. To do this we need to get existing park users, and new ones, to help us by joining in this work.

The Financial Report for the year showed that Subs and Donations were substantially reduced this year and we have also struggled to attract new members. However, admin costs are also reduced through greater use of emails and reduced postage, so that we are still in credit over the year and have a comfortable level of reserves. There are currently 47 members but we need to attract more in order to sustain our activities.

Ken Shone, Margaret Reynolds, Ian Gormley and Joe Gallagher were re-elected as Chair, Deputy Chair,

Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Dorothy Ennis-Hand and Liam Cregan were re-elected to the Committee, Alistair Smith agreed to be co-opted for a further year and Jo Beggs continues to represent the Gallery. There are still vacancies on the committee and also for co-opted members who could help us but not necessarily attend meetings regularly.

For Leisure Services, Ria Page, reported that over the last year, they have been working in partnership with us to devise and deliver a comprehensive management plan to raise the profile of the Park and in the future obtain a Green Flag Award.

In addition to the activities reported already by the Committee, she said that Leisure has helped the Gallery facilitate the Obelisk and another event associated with the Manchester International Festival when the park will be used as the venue for "The Influence Machine", an outdoor son-et-lumiere event which looks to be a fantastic opportunity to showcase the Park. The Spring "Funday" Event in the Park was also successful in spite of clashing with some large scale football events and poor weather which reduced attendance to 60-70 during the day. Whitworth Park has been noticed recently for its great location and facilities, and there has been one large scale commercial event this year – The Manchester Shine Event (sponsored walk), and a private event – The March for the Demise of her Holiness Lady Fatima, which was great cultural event which introduced new people into the park. Overall approx 200 people attended the march over the May Bank Holiday weekend. These events demonstrate the Park's great potential.

Ria said that every year the Friends work with Leisure to offer the community a chance to get involved and have again offered community clean ups. These have been very successful, collecting quite a few bags of litter each time. Leisure Services thanked the commitment shown by the Friends group and looks forward to continuing our work together.

Following the reports and the election Ken Shone delivered a power point presentation on "Where we are we up to?" This showed how we had made progress in reversing the decline of the Park and illustrated the improvements we hope to make during the next period through examples from elsewhere. He said that we needed to change our emphasis from planning to getting involved and he hoped that we will be able to exploit the interest that the extension to the Gallery has raised and will raise during its construction.

In the discussion that followed the possibility of attracting student members was raised and in reply it was noted that they have in the past helped us to organise our Easter events. It was suggested that exercise could be a means of attracting students and the possibility of remaking the ball court as a multi-sports and bike-polo pitch was mentioned together with plans for an exercise circuit incorporating a trim trail.

The meeting was unfortunately not very well attended, but those present agreed that they appreciated the opportunity to get together and reflect on what we have achieved so far, and what we hope to achieve in the future. The cakes were also very popular!

## Whitworth Park Community Archaeology and History Project

***Are you interested in the history of the Park?***

***Will you share your memories of the Park with us?***

**Research on the hidden history of Whitworth Park will continue this summer:**

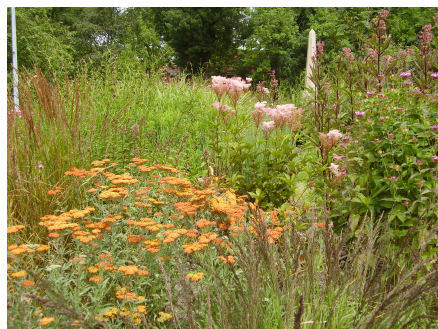
**An archaeological excavation will take place 5<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> September.**

**Site tours for the public, Open Day on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September.**

**Please share your memories of the Park with us; there will be an opportunity to do this at the Open Day.**

We have applied for a Heritage Lottery Grant to support the project and if this is successful we will be able to expand the public and school events surrounding the project to help people to **explore, reveal and interpret the 'hidden' history of the Park for themselves.**

**Contact Ken Shone on 0161 928 5744 or email [shones@altrincham.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:shones@altrincham.freeserve.co.uk) for info!**



*We need more members. Please tell your friends and neighbours about us and get them to join. Continuing the improvement of the Park in these difficult times depends on more of us getting involved.*

*You could help organise activities, membership, projects - every little helps! Or join our regular work-in?. Why not find out? Get fit, meet people, natter!*

***We meet at the Centre Circle most Wednesdays at 10am to help out with the maintenance of the Park.***

***Why not come and join us? – wear stout shoes and be ready for the weather. Everybody welcome!***

***This newsletter was put together by Ken Shone. - Contact him on 01619285744, email [shones@altrincham.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:shones@altrincham.freeserve.co.uk) with feedback, ideas, suggestions.***

***Have you renewed your membership?***

