

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

The War Memorial Park's 100th Birthday. Just 6 days to go!



Next Friday, July 9th, the War Memorial Park will be 100 years old.

The Friends of the Park had planned a huge celebration – until Covid came along to limit the party. But we will still be marking the milestone with some fitting tributes: to the Park, to the Coventrians it commemorates, and to all the people who use it now.

Friends Vice-Chair Trevor Cornfoot sums up the mood, *“We're proud to play our part in celebrating the Park's 100th Birthday. We can't welcome crowds, as we'd hoped. But we can celebrate a fantastic asset for the city, at the start of what will be a memorable Centenary year. As restrictions ease, there will be lots more to come.”*



We have been planning for the Birthday since 2019, and several of our projects are now ready to launch in time for the start of the Centenary year.

The Remembrance Tree Trail

Two years ago, we launched a campaign to research, map and restore every individual memorial in the Park. Thanks to the Parks team and support from the City Council, every memorial tree, plinth and plaque is now ready for July 9th.

Over the Birthday weekend, the Friends will display 53 stories of the Fallen, on the trees that commemorate them. We have produced a map and printed guide to this remarkable historical trail.

We will also be opening the Chamber of Silence in the Memorial, where visitors can see the Roll of the Fallen.

The Community Sensory Garden

In 2019, after a survey of Park users' experiences, we set out to create a new Community Sensory Garden to enhance the enjoyment of the Park for people of all abilities.

Working with Coventry Resource Centre for the Blind, the Samaritans, Grapevine and some very enthusiastic

volunteers, this new corner of the Park is wheelchair-accessible, and full of plants to stimulate all the senses. It also has a flexible seating area designed to counter isolation and encourage conversation.

It's a community project, with community involvement in planting and maintaining it. The Sensory Garden will be open to the public from Saturday July 10th.

The Memorial Bench Tour

Over the Birthday Weekend, the Friends are also launching the first phase of our brand new audio Bench Tour, which gives visitors the chance to hear the human stories behind some of the memorial benches – recorded by the families who dedicated them.

We'll have a map to show you where to find the first nine “story” benches, and how to listen to them. All you need is a smartphone.

“Many yappy returns” - a tribute with the RSPCA

We're delighted to be working with the RSPCA on a unique birthday greeting to the Park: from the hundreds of dogs (and their faithful owners) who see it as their second home.

Look out for a set of charming canine banners around the Visitor Centre over the Birthday weekend.

Walk the Labyrinth

Earlier this year, designer Mig Kerr approached the Friends with an idea to create a temporary Labyrinth for the Park's Birthday.

We were very happy to help: and her creation will be unveiled on the old Bowling Green near the Aviary on Friday, for peaceful (and socially-distanced) exploration.

If you enjoy it and you'd like it to be a permanent feature of the Park, please let the Friends know and we'll try to make it happen.

Children's Centenary celebration trail: by SENA

Throughout lockdown, our good “Friends of Friends” at South Earlsdon Neighbourhood Association have organised nature trails through the woodlands opposite the Park, on the other side of the Kenilworth Road.

For the Park's Centenary, they are creating a special new trail, based on the number 100. We're very happy to support a great initiative.

Birthday presence in the Park

Starting on Friday and throughout the Birthday Weekend, the Friends will be in the Park, to help to guide you around all our projects.

We'll be at the Memorial, opening the Chamber of Silence; and we'll have a stand outside the Visitor Centre, where you can ask questions and pick up maps, guides and leaflets.

Thanks to the support of the City of Culture team, their volunteer City Hosts will also be on hand over the weekend to point you in all the right directions.

To find out more about the Friends and how to join, please get in touch:

via the Postbox in the Visitor Centre

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