

Tree dressing festivities reveal a close-knit community

Friday 2nd December 2011

It was a crisp December morning in Barbourne's Gheluvelt Park, as members of the local community joined representatives from the Duckworth Worcestershire Trust and Worcester City Council to take part in what has become the park's annual tree dressing event.

The ancient and global art of tree dressing, which in this country takes place during the first weekend of December, symbolises a community's appreciation of and relationship to its precious trees. And this sentiment was certainly in abundance amongst the group as they gathered around this year's selected tree; a beautiful Hop-hornbeam (a deciduous tree from the birch family).

As park wardens Michelle and Max, along with their tree team; Tom, Dan and Doug, gathered their climbing equipment, the group eagerly added the final touches to their decorations. The theme for this year's dressing was the wonderfully woolly art of French knitting. The inspiration came from DWT's volunteer and community co-ordinator Anda Phillips, who, together with her troupe of volunteers, sourced recycled materials from the WRE to create a family of 'Knitting Nancy' dolls.

“We wanted to use knitting as a way of getting local people involved with the work of the Trust, but also as a way of drawing attention to the trees in our park that we often take for granted” Anda said. “The Saturday knitting group had just celebrated their 5th birthday at the Pump House, so we saw this as a great opening for a community knitting event”.

In the six weeks leading up to the tree dressing, the loveable dolls, accompanied by instruction kits and an abundance of donated yarn, were placed around the Pump House café. All were invited to take part, which saw seasoned knitters joining forces with beginners, to create a staggering 200 metres of glade to dress this year's lucky tree.

The crowd cheered as Dan strapped on his harness and began to climb the tree, carefully wrapping the top of its sturdy trunk in a scarf of technicolor. The group soon joined in, covering the lower branches with swathes of rainbow weave, topped off with big fluffy pompoms. Before long, the tree was covered with the knitters' colourful creations, and the group stood back and took time to admire its magnificence.

The celebrations continued back at the Pump House, where creamy hot chocolates, strong cups of coffee and crumbly mince pies were accompanied by lively conversation and all-round good cheer. The event was a sure success, and will certainly be repeated next year. In fact, rumour has it that Anda is already planning to break the 200 metre record next year, so we'd better all get knitting soon!

Written by Zoe Piggott - Pump House Volunteer



Knitting Nancy & Ned

Bizzie Lizzie

