

HIGHLIGHTS

Lyttelton Lighthouse

West Smethwick Park

Robert Goodden

New Trust Acquisition

JAMES T. CHANCE
M.A. J.P. D.L.
FOR FIFTY YEARS A PARTNER IN THE FIRM
OF CHANCE BROTHERS & CO.
AT THE GLASS WORKS SMETHWICK AND THE ALKALI WORKS OLDBURY
HE PURCHASED THE LAND FOR THE PARK,
LAID IT OUT AND ENDOWED IT
AND ON SEPTEMBER 7th 1895 OPENED IT
A GIFT TO THE PUBLIC FOR EVER.
HE ALSO MADE THE ROADS ON ITS EAST AND WEST BOUNDARIES.

the CHaT magazine

NOVEMBER 2020



CHANCE
HERITAGE
TRUST



Chance Heritage Trust

www.chanceht.org

CBS Registered No: 8180

Ambassadors

Sir Sebastian Chance

Toby Chance

David Encill

Directors

Mark Davies (Chairman)

Henry Chance (Vice-Chairman)

Kieran Dyde

Tonia Flanagan

Tom Haydon

Olivia Hewkin

Joshua Lowe

Dr Ellen McAdam

Marianne Monro

John Montague

John Pye

Madelene Schofield-Whittingham

the CHaT magazine

... is a free and occasional publication aimed primarily at subscribers of the Chance Heritage Trust (CHT). Your contributions are welcome: please send articles, letters, thoughts, anecdotes to editor@chanceht.org

Photos are especially helpful! Please ensure these are photoed or scanned at high resolution for optimum result.

Photos are best sent as JPG or PNG, and without cropping if possible.

Editor: David Encill

e: editor@chanceht.org

All information is correct at time of publishing, E&OE. Copyrights are respected wherever possible.

Chance Heritage Trust

Find us on: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest & Instagram.



Front Cover:

The Monument to Sir James Timmins Chance at West Smethwick Park

Editorial CHaT

As the 125th anniversary of West Smethwick Park comes to a close, this issue celebrates one of the greatest benefactions of the Chance family (and there were many) to the people of Smethwick.

The scale of this gift was enormous; £50,000 was a large sum back in 1895, but this would be equivalent to £6.6 million today. Benefactions would follow from his son, John Homer Chance, and his nephew, Robert Lucas Chance, that would further enhance the park.

The gratitude of the people was expressed with the building of a monument in 1897 that was sited near the Lodge gates and dedicated to Sir James Timmins Chance (see front cover and Mandy Williams' article on page 6).

Sir Jeremy Chance unveiling Sir James Timmins' bust at the re-dedication ceremony in 2009

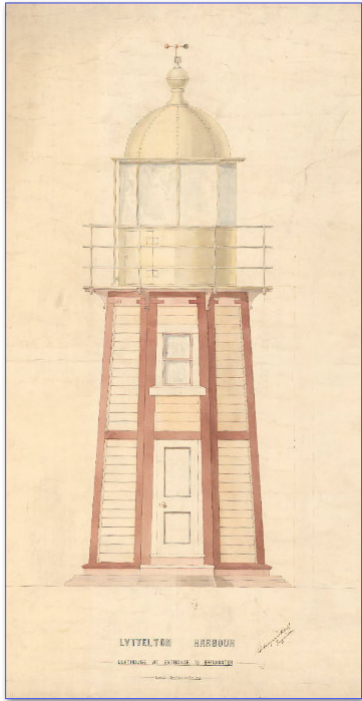


Successive generations of children and adults have benefited greatly from the facilities offered by the park, or just for the peace and tranquillity it offers.

Sadly, the celebrations and events planned for this year had to be cancelled for obvious reasons, but hopefully 2021 will see a resurgence of interest.

David Encill

LIGHTHOUSES



From Neil McLennan in New Zealand a story that shows determination can succeed:

"Construction of a lighthouse on the eastern mole at the entrance to the inner harbour was approved by the Lyttelton Harbour Board in July 1878 as shown in the concept drawing (left). The light must have entered service a few years afterwards, around 1880.

"The lens in the lighthouse was manufactured by Chance Brothers in England. The multi segment prisms of the lens were necessary to horizontally focus the relatively feeble output from an oil or gas-powered light. More correctly described as a dioptric lens, it was strictly no longer necessary once electric light became available in Lyttelton from about 1920. Nevertheless, the light source in the middle of the lens was electrified around this time.

"Another major change took place in 1981 when NZ adopted the IALA Region A convention. The eastern mole light changed from red to green, signifying that it was a mark to be kept to starboard when entering the port. Most of the world uses this convention, the Americas being a notable exception.

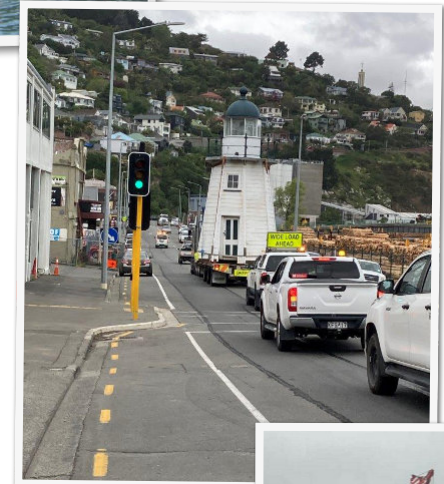
"On 4th September 2010, the Darfield earthquake caused a major subsidence of the eastern mole and the lighthouse took on a significant lean (right). The subsequent earthquakes made matters worse and we moved the structure for safekeeping in May 2011.



Left: On the move in May 2011

Below: Moving to a new home, 2020

Bottom: The final installation



"The welfare of the lighthouse provided some welcome light relief during the challenging early days of our earthquake response, but we all understood that it was part of our port heritage that we needed to take care of. We always anticipated that it would return to its original position. The lighthouse will no longer be part of the port's navigation infrastructure, but it is intended to display a fixed white light at night.

"We have reached the end of a phase of significant port rebuilding. Following completion of the cruise berth, the lighthouse is a fitting reminder of the situation we found ourselves in over 10 years ago, and the nationally significant progress in our port since that time."

Neil McLennan

<https://www.lpc.co.nz/>



History of West Smethwick Park

West Smethwick Park was bought and laid out by Victorian industrialist Sir James Timmins Chance as *"a gift to the people forever"*. It opened to great fanfare on the 7th September 1895. The opening ceremony featured a parade, singing, music, speeches, hot air balloons, athletic displays and finished with *"a grand display of fireworks at dusk"*.

The total cost including the land and its layout was £50,000, which is equivalent to around £6.6 million in 2020! The park had broad footpaths, grassed areas for sports, a boating lake as well as a bandstand and refreshment pavilion.

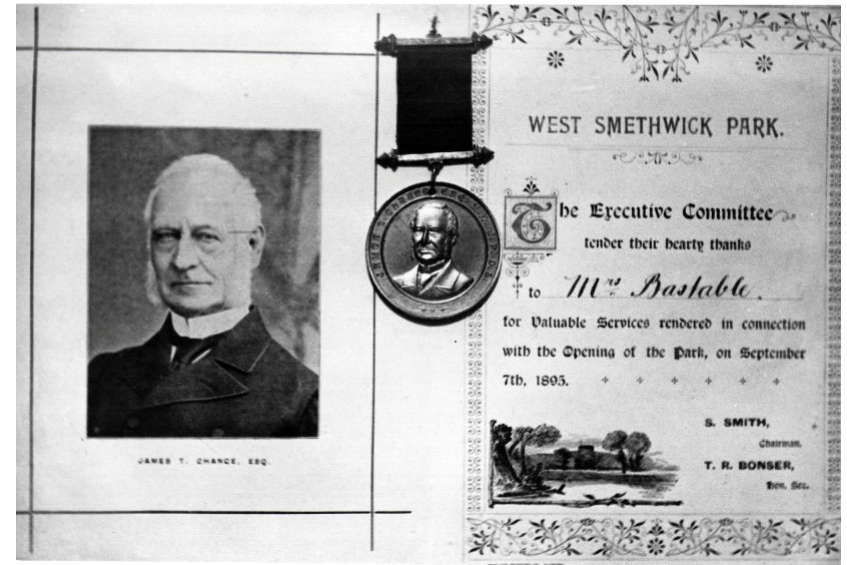
A report in the Midland Sun newspaper on 7th September 1895 said:

"It lies high and commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. Through the ground runs a tiny stream, which forms the boundary between the counties of Staffordshire and Worcester. It is in fact the source of the River Tame and has never been known to dry even in the hottest weather. It was arranged that nearly 50 acres of land should be laid out as a park and placed in the hands of trustees, with an ample endowment for its maintenance, for the benefit of the public."

Over the years a number of new additions have appeared including the John Homer Chance Fountain, the Lodge at Victoria Road, William Lees Memorial Home and the changing room block.

photographs courtesy of Sandwell Community
History and Archives Service

*The Memorial with the Lodge
in the background, c.1900*



*A Certificate and Medal awarded to Mrs
Bastable for "valuable services rendered"*

The park is now undergoing a major transformation thanks to players of The National Lottery via a £4.5million grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and through additional funding from Sandwell Council. A key element of the project is to conserve and restore the Victorian heritage of the park. This includes the Grade II Listed James Chance Memorial, the ornate fountain and two sets of entrance gates. A new pavilion will have community rooms, outdoor performance space, café and toilets. Nature conservation improvements include woodland, grassland and wetland works. New outdoor gym equipment will extend the gym trail.

This is all supported by a community programme that will be delivered over the next few years. The project will engage with all different schools, communities and local partners to make the park a focal point for all the community.

2020 is the park's 125th Jubilee and a programme of events, activities and memorabilia were planned throughout the year. The Coronavirus pandemic has halted all of these for the time being, although these will restart as soon as it is safe.

For more information on the project and the programmes email:

wsp_project@sandwell.gov.uk, visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/westsmethwickpark or
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/thewestsmethwickpark>

Mandy Williams

Community Engagement Officer, West Smethwick Park

ROBERT GOODDEN, CBE



Originally training as a silversmith, Robert Goodden's (1909–2002) early career started with his design business, Asterisk Wallpapers, in 1932. From about 1935 he took commissions from Chance Brothers to design pressed glassware.

During the war he designed camouflage for the Royal Navy, and by the late-1950s he had produced designs for the Wedgwood Orient Line pottery, called "Sunlight on the Ocean".

Spiderweb, 1935

This range of glassware moved away from the stuffy, pseudo-pressed glass patterns that proliferated in the 1930s and bought cleaner lines that strongly resembled lighthouse optics. Whether this was deliberate by Goodden is not known, but it is hard to argue against that reasoning!

The original pressings were in clear and coloured glass and they are also distinguished by the taller, domed base. These models are very scarce.

Following the war, the range was reintroduced having a squatter base with annular rings and was only made in clear glass. From about 1950, all manner of decoration to the outside of the glassware was introduced.



Two pre-war fruit bowls in purple and teal colours



Post-war advert showing the full range that became available

Ashtrays, 1935

In-keeping with the Art Deco period, these ashtrays were designed with distinctive wings for the cigarette rests. The ashtrays came in a variety of colours and by adapting the top ring of the press a motto can occasionally be seen around the rim.



Lotus, 1948

This was the last known contribution from Goodden. Lotus was created at a time of austerity for Britain following the national debt that was incurred during the war and the rather plain lines of the Lotus design probably did not endear itself to the buying public. Lotus was manufactured in clear glass, but was also sprayed with a colour enamel to the outside.



An original label, now 70 years old but still in pristine condition

Lotus bowls showing the three different styles of rim; plain, scalloped and flared with scallop. The last two styles are very hard to find



Following the war, Spiderweb was decorated in a variety of ways – not always desirable today!

STAINED GLASS PANEL

The Trust was very fortunate to obtain this unique stained glass panel. Although there is no written attribution, it is believed that it originated from the Chance Brothers works. If so, then this should date it prior to 1867, which is the year that the Coloured & Ornamental Department closed down.

The panel depicts a figure, probably a disciple, and possibly St Peter.



NEWS

Howard Cosnett, 1928–2020

Howard joined Chance Brothers from 1942 until the date that the gates closed for the last time, in 1981. As was common in these days, he would follow his father, Richard, into the company.

After his training he received the mandatory call up to the Forces in 1947 for two years, following which he started as a garage mechanic in 1949, eventually rising to become a Foreman.

Howard was also a participant of the Chance Brother's Works Consultative Committee – often referred to as its House of Parliament!



Above: The Works Consultative Committee in 1956. Howard is on the back row, second from left

After Chance Brothers closed, Howard would help run the Chance pensioners scheme and he was still active when he passed away in July 2020.

When his daughter, Judith Cosnett-Durn, contacted us she decided to donate over £200 in Howard's memory and also a quantity of Chance glassware. Thank you Judith!



CHANCE
HERITAGE
TRUST

Do you have any news you would like to include?
Please just contact info@chanceht.org

UPDATES

Social Media

Plenty of new activity on our Facebook page!
However, we now have our own forum if you would prefer to use this ...

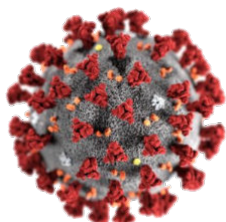
New Chance Forum

Go to our website at www.chanceht.org/forum and browse the topics.

Anyone can join and we look forward to meeting you there! Contact info@chanceht.org for more details.



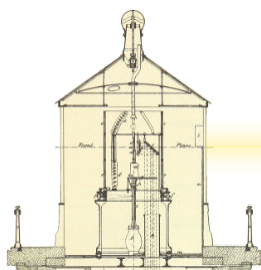
Coronavirus Update



Sadly, the Powerpoint presentation of *A Brief History of Chance Brothers* scheduled on the 5th November for the Friends of Dudley Archive, has now been **cancelled**.

We are hoping that 2021 will give us more freedom to spread the 'Chance' word a little further!

In a joint initiative with [Smethwick Heritage Centre](http://www.smethwickheritagecentre.co.uk), every available issue of Chance Comments is now available to view online! Go to www.chancecomments.co.uk for more details.



Do you have an interesting lighthouse story? Mail me at editor@chanceht.org.

the CHaT magazine

a free and occasional publication



CHANCE
HERITAGE
TRUST