

Job Garratt

Woodside Park is a green corner of Dudley occupying a roughly triangular piece of land between Stourbridge Road, Highgate Road and Avenue Road. For over 100 years the park has offered a pleasant green space for the folk of Woodside to enjoy the outdoors, and one of the most prominent features of the park is a large granite monument.

Atop the pillar is a bust of a bearded man by the name of Job Garratt. Our Edwardian forefathers obviously thought that he was a great man, worthy of such a fine commemoration but, perhaps, the passing years have not been too kind to Job Garratt. Today the people who pass his memorial in the park as they walk their dogs or take their children to play there may have no idea who this old son of Dudley was.

Job Garratt was a local businessman who was the councillor for the Woodside ward for many years at the end of the 19th century. He was a former Mayor of Dudley and something of a local philanthropist, not just in Dudley but in the wider area too. On February 22nd, 1908, the old High Cross that had stood in Cornbow, Halesowen, for centuries was blown down in a gale. Halesowen Rural District Council dumped the remains on their rubbish tip but Job Garratt paid for the cross to be removed and rebuilt in Halesowen churchyard.

Job Garratt died just a few months later and the people of Dudley decided to commemorate him with a permanent memorial. A subscription fund was set up to pay for it and in the autumn of 1911 the memorial fountain in Woodside Park was unveiled in a grand ceremony that saw hundreds of schoolchildren parade to the park.

An account of the unveiling ceremony has recently been unearthed. It comes from Blocksidge's Dudley Almanack of 1912:

"The handsome monumental fountain which has been erected in Woodside Park to the memory of the late Alderman Job Garratt JP, was unveiled by the then Mayor of Dudley (Councillor J. A. Hillman), on Saturday, October 28th, 1911. The fountain, which is a beautiful specimen of monumental art, has been erected by Mr C. R. Davis, of Old Hill, from an original design sent in in competition, and has been erected under the supervision of a committee composed of Councillor Martin (chairman), Councillor J. Fullwood (treasurer), Mr John. A. Robinson (hon. secretary), Councillor T. W. Tanfield, Messrs. W. H. Chapman, W. H. Smith, Z. Martin, J. Wood, L. Webb, T. Knott, T. Shaw, J. H. Evans, T. Barnbrook, J. T. Protheroe, A. T. Troman, Elijah Green, W. Madeley, J. Parkes, D. Wilkes, J. T. Smallman, G. A. Ashton, W. G. Cumming, etc.

"The scheme was taken up with great enthusiasm from the first, and it is worthy of record that, within twelve months, from its inception, 2,000 persons have subscribed towards the cost, in amounts ranging from one penny to a pound.

"The fountain is an imposing piece of masonry, exquisite and unique in design. It is mainly erected with Aberdeen grey granite, with a finely-axed octagonal moulded base, with eight polished columns, whilst the bowl or basin, which is six feet in diameter, is of Peterhead granite. On the octagonal polished piece, to which are fixed two bronze lions' heads for supply of water, there are two crests upon which is carved the monogram "JG" and date respectively, while on the other four sides are incised the crests of the Garratt family, Dudley Borough, and of Worcestershire and Staffordshire respectively. On a polished circular piece of Kennedy light grey granite is the inscription: Alderman Job Garratt JP Born October 30th, 1839; Died June 12th 1908. In memory of his unselfish, untiring and patriotic devotion as a public man. This fountain is erected by the united gifts of all classes in the district in which he lived and laboured.

"Springing out of this base is a polished mould column and cap, of Peterhead granite, which is surmounted by a life-like bust of the late Alderman. The whole masonry weighs about 12 tons, and the total height of the monument is 19 feet. The cost is about £300.

"Councillor B. Martin presided at the Unveiling Ceremony. A procession was formed at the Holly Hall Schools, headed by the band of the 7th Worcestershire Territorial Regiment (Halesowen), followed by the Mayor, Officials of the Corporation, and a large number of the leading townsmen, friends and relatives of the

late Alderman, and 1200 school children. Councillor Martin, Mr John. A. Robinson, the Mayor, Alderman Cook, The Rev R. E. B. C. Daubeny, Mr Elijah Green, Dr Higgs, Mr W. H. Thompson, and Councillor H. W. Hughes took part in the ceremony, and spoke of their intimate personal knowledge of the late Alderman, of his goodness of heart, and of his devoted service, self-sacrifice, dogged perseverance and intelligent interest in the affairs of the town.

"Mr Julius Garratt (son of the late Alderman) proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman (Councillor Martin), the Hon. Secretary (Mr John A. Robinson), the Treasurer (Councillor Fullwood), and the Committee for their efforts in promoting the Memorial.

"Colonel Whitmore Garratt seconded the proposition, and thanked the various speakers for their kindly words concerning his father. He thanked, on behalf of the family, all who had subscribed to the memorial, both high and low, for their generosity, and the unveiling of the fountain, he said, would ever be regarded by the Garratt family as a red-letter day in their lives.

"The Mayor was heartily thanked for attending and unveiling the Memorial, and Councillor Martin afterwards announced that it was proposed to present a replica to the Dudley Free Library.

"Subsequently Tea was provided for the Mayor, Corporation and Friends, and the 1,200 School Children were entertained to Tea by Mrs Garratt, who was unable to be present through illness.

"The late Alderman Garratt entered the Dudley Town Council as Councillor for Woodside Ward in November 1872, and was elevated to the Mayoralty on November 9th, 1881, and re-elected in November 1882. On the termination of his two years of office as Mayor, on November 9th, 1883, he was created Alderman. The Dudley Chamber of Commerce was established through the instrumentality of Alderman Garratt, and he was President until his death. One of the most prominent things he took an interest in was the Free Library movement. Alderman Garratt was of opinion that a Free Library was necessary for Dudley, and he was instrumental in establishing one for Dudley and, in addition, branch libraries at Woodside and Netherton. When Mr Carnegie came forward and expressed his willingness to give to various towns a subscription to enable them to establish free libraries, Alderman Garratt was most persistent in trying to get something from Mr Carnegie for the Dudley Free Library, and his efforts were crowned with success. They had, in consequence, got one of the most handsome free libraries in Dudley that could be found."

The imposing monument in Woodside Park is not the only memorial to Job Garratt. He is buried in St Thomas' church, Dudley, in a large marble tomb along with several members of his family. Also in the church is a white marble tablet over the rear door in the south wall. It reads: "To the Glory of God and to the Sacred Memory Alderman Job Garratt JP of Wassell Grove. Warden of this church 1875-1877. Mayor of Dudley 1881-1882. For 30 years Justice of the Peace for this county. Founder of the Dudley Chamber of Commerce. After serving his generation for upwards of 40 years he fell asleep June 12th, 1908 in his 69th year. This is erected as a token of esteem by his staff and work people of the collieries and brickworks." The achievements of Alderman Garratt may have faded in the memories of Dudley folk with the passing of the years but his monument still stands proud in Woodside Park. The fountain may no longer be in use but its granite columns and the bust of Job Garratt have stood up well to the ravages of the last 95 years or so. There may be a little graffiti to mar their appearance but on the whole the memorial is in fine condition. A fitting tribute to a Dudley man who did so much for the people of his town.

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