

BACK ON PARADE

by MORT BIRCH



A FAMILIAR figure is back 'on parade' in a place of honour at the heart of Nuneaton.

The replica statue of a Boer War warrior has been placed on its plinth in Riversley Park where it is to be dedicated on Sunday.

Old soldiers are to assemble in the park to celebrate what has been another victory for them - and for a caring town.

They helped to raise thousands of pounds to replace the bronze statue of a British Infantryman that was stolen almost two years ago.

Nuneaton Royal British Legion stalwart Don Jacques, a member of the statue steering committee, said: "We must thank the many people of Nuneaton and other places that rallied round to replace the statue that was stolen.

"Their generosity was overwhelming and I am sure the dedication service will be both impressive and moving and fitting for a town that does not forget."

The service will be short and simple: "We didn't want a parade because it is too close to Remembrance Sunday," said Don Jacques. "But everyone is welcome to attend."

Among the people who will lay wreaths is Tim Roberts, who was so incensed when he learned about the theft of the statue that he took part in a sponsored walk from his Birmingham home to raise money to help replace it.

But outrage will be tempered with pride as the veterans join forces on an autumn afternoon to honour the men who served in the sun-browned savannah grasslands of South Africa more than a century ago.

A plaque on the plinth of the memorial records 48 men from the town who served and returned and the five who died in the Boer War at the turn of the last century

The life-size bronze statue was placed on its plinth yesterday by workmen from Nuneaton-based Ian Neale Construction, one of the firms who answered the 'call to arms' when the statue was stolen.

People are asked to start gathering in front the Museum and Art Gallery at around 2pm on Sunday for the service which will begin at 2.30pm with opening remarks by Don Jacques.

The Act of Dedication will be performed by the Rev Alex Potts, Padre of 30 Signal Regiment at Bramcote and a bugler will sound the Last Post which will be followed by a 20 second silence and then Reveille.

Wreaths are to be laid by the Mayor of Nuneaton and Bedworth, Cllr Gerald Smith, Tim Roberts and representatives of ex-service associations.

*Despite repeated appeals, no arrests have been made in connection with the theft of the statue, but a spokesperson for Warwickshire Police said: "Inquiries are ongoing."

The spokesperson added: "We would still like to hear from anyone who can remember seeing anything or anyone acting suspiciously in the Coton Road area of Nuneaton on Monday November 13 2006 to come forward,"

Anyone with information should contact the crime desk at Nuneaton Police Station on 024 76641111 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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