

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Sarah Wallace, Civic Officer

On Sunday 13 November the Mayor and Sheriff joined other civic dignitaries including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant for the Remembrance Sunday Service. The civic party joined the Royal British Legion to parade to the Cathedral for the 10.00am Service.



The parade then joined members of the public in the Remembrance Gardens to observe the 2minute silence at 11.00am after which the Mayor and Deputy Lieutenant lead the wreath laying ceremony.

The Mayor and Sheriff welcomed 90 Guests to the Guildhall on Friday 25 November for a charity dinner dance. The event, with entertainment from the 'Bluebird Belles' was a great success, with initial estimates suggesting around £1600.00 has been raised from ticket sales and the raffle held on the night.

Preparations continue for the Christmas season. The Mayor's Carol Service will be held in the Guildhall on Tuesday 6 December at 7.00pm and once again singing will be led by the choirs of St Chads Church and St Michaels primary school.

It is also a busy time for engagements; the Mayor and Sheriff have already accepted invitations to attend seven Carol Services in the first two weeks of December alone.

2. Markets: John Beard, Markets Officer

The markets over the last month have seen attendances drop slightly on Tuesdays and Fridays mainly due to the inclement weather and illness. Saturdays however are still extremely busy with us having to share the stalls between our 'regular casuals' so they can all have a stall.

The farmers market has increased with the addition last month of two new traders and another two are due to start when the next one takes place in December.

The main focus this month has been on preparing for the Christmas Lights Switch-on market, which following a few initial planning difficulties was a great success. Some photographs from the event are provided at the end of this report

3. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Jo Wilson, Museums and Heritage Officer

The Birthplace moved to winter hours in October, welcoming 1500 visitors. Special events included a 'Somme en masse' painting event, with visitors contributing soldiers for the art installation at the National Memorial Arboretum. The finished artwork represents the 19,240 men who lost their lives on the first day of the Somme, including Rob Gilson, Tolkien's friend who visited the Birthplace in 1915, hence our involvement in the project.



Over the half-term week, young visitors and families enjoyed making some 'brilliant balloons', in honour of a visit from Mark Davies, author of 'the King of all Balloons' who gave a talk at the Museum on James Sadler, the 18th century pioneer of flight, and his Lichfield connections. The Regency Assembly dance group also began a regular Sunday afternoon meeting at the house this month.

Over 100 Year 7 students from Erasmus Darwin Academy visited the Museum, and Year 12 from the Pingle School in Derbyshire for a Dictionary Workshop session. A number of bookings have been taken for the rest of the winter, which will be the busiest schools season in recent years. Members of the Great Wyrley local history group enjoyed an outreach talk and have booked a further talk in the New Year, and the Birthplace welcomed twinning trainees Dennis and Lena for an afternoon.



Behind the scenes, plans for the year of celebrations are developing well and a special training session on Garrick for the Birthplace team was held. The Museum is working with the Festival on the Literature Weekend in March, providing partnership and venues at the Museum and Guildhall Cells. The oil painting of Johnson awaiting an audience with Lord Chesterfield returned to Lichfield, and is awaiting framing before being re-hung, and with some surrounding publicity, in the New Year.

4. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

Although the old Prison Cells are now closed for the winter season, there have still been 14 tours during the darker evenings. Burton TV also filmed in the cells recently, with the film currently being edited in readiness for publication in mid-December.

All of our regular bookings have been in: Archaeological Society, Ballroom Dancing, Band Practice, Bridge, Chess, Darby & Joan, Heyday Friendship, Italian Class, Ladies Cameo Group, Lichfield Poets, Meditation, Needwood DFAS, RSPB, Slimming World, U3A and U3A Gardening.

Market Research companies have hired rooms on six occasions. We have had four Craft Fayres/Table Top Sales, including one from Staffordshire W.I. (their first at the Guildhall) and the Cats Protection Society. We have also had a fabric sale.



The Guildroom hosted a Bible Exhibition and Bramshall Art Exhibition. A photographic display was also held in the Corridor Gallery.

On 12 November a Film Night was held in the Guildhall featuring a 1928 black and white movie with a live piano score by Meg Morley. It was the last silent movie starring Lillian Gish, one of the leading stars of the era.

Private bookings have included a 50th Birthday Party and a Wedding Ceremony plus Reception. Engaging Communities held a public event on 22 November, and Lichfield District Arts have been very active in the Guildhall - as well as their L2F weekend festival, they have held seven Concerts.

5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

Limburg Council Apprentices

Lena and Dennis, two public office apprentices from Limburg City Council, visited Lichfield in October for one week, to experience the duties of public organisations and their work in the Lichfield Community. They spent time in the City Council, District Council, Staffordshire County Council, Erasmus Darwin House, Library, Records Office, Tourist Information Centre and the Samuel Johnson Birthplace.





They very much enjoyed their stay in Lichfield and would like to thank everyone involved for their time in explaining their workplaces and duties. They compiled a report on their Lichfield work experience for the Limburg Mayor and City Council, which is published on Limburg's council website. A press release on their time in Lichfield was also published in Limburg's local newspaper.

Ring Twinning Anniversary

The Mayor's office in Ste. Foy has confirmed that preparations for the 25th anniversary of the ring twinning between Ste. Foy, Limburg and Lichfield are now underway. The celebrations will be held during the weekend of **6 October to 9 October 2017** and 80 guests from each Twin City have been invited. The Twinning Officer is now taking initial reservations from interested parties.

Moonlight Dinner

The Limburg Twinning Association's Moonlight Dinner, which was held in an exclusive roof top restaurant on 16 October to celebrate 250 years of the Lunar Society, was a great success. Amongst the guest speakers was Rebecca Klarner from the Wedgewood Museum in Stoke-on-Trent, talking about Josiah Wedgewood and his involvement in the Lunar Society. The highlight of the evening was Lichfield Cathedral artist-in-residence, Peter Walker, and his light show outside on the roof top terrace, high above the Limburg skyline. The mayor of Limburg was extremely pleased with the evening and as a thank you, invited all contributors to the Oktoberfest the next day.



Twinning Feature – Lichfield Mercury

News editor Andy Kerr published an extensive report on Twinning and its benefits in the Mercury newspaper on Thursday 27 October 2016. It was a very positive promotional feature as we approach the 25th anniversary of the ring twinning agreement. Digital copies of the report are available from the Twinning Officer.



Walking Trip to South of France

With lots of good memories and plans for the future, a group of Lichfield Twinning Association members returned from a 6-day walking trip to the South of France, where they met up with twinning members from Limburg and Ste. Foy. These walking trips have been running since 2005 and are being organised roughly every 2 years in alternate countries.



French Visitors

On Thursday 27 October we had a large group of French visitors to the Guildhall and prison cells, arranged through the Market Drayton Twinning Association. Their main reason for the visit was to gather information about the French airman, who is commemorated on a plaque of the George Hotel, and who was from Pezenas, their French twin town.

Arts and Heritage Procession

The Lichfield Twinning Association took part in this year's Arts and Heritage Procession on Saturday 15 October, promoting the work of the organisation.

Exchange Enquiries

The Ste. Foy Twinning Officer, Christine Jaudoin, is looking for a Lichfield exchange family for her 16 year old son to improve his English and in return to host the Lichfield student in France. Interested families are invited to contact the Twinning Officer.

An application has been received by a 17 year old Limburg girl, for a 3 week placement in June of next year, in either the public sector or the travel industry. Negotiations are progressing with Thomson Travel Agency in Bore Street.

Two Limburg technical colleges are interested in a cooperation with a school in Lichfield to work on a project together, possibly through the Erasmus+ eTwinning scheme.

A Scout leader with Lichfield 7th Scouts, as well as being a fire fighter, has contacted Twinning to investigate a possible exchange with Limburg Scouts, and indeed with the Limburg fire service, sometime in 2017.

A 21 year old Limburg banking student with the German Bundesbank in Frankfurt would like a 3 week work experience placement, ideally with a Lichfield bank or public offices early next year. The Twinning Officer is currently in negotiations with the Bank Manager of Lloyds Bank in Lichfield.

An invitation from the Limburg Table Tennis Club has been received, for the Lichfield Table Tennis Club to take part in an international twinning tournament in June of next year, as part of the Limburg-Offheim 800th anniversary celebrations.

6. Open Spaces and Tree Management: Nick Burton, Open Spaces Officer

Quotes have been received for the autumn tree work which is scheduled for completion January 2017. Residents have been notified if for any reason work is not to be done in this year's schedule. To offset the work, 105 trees from the Woodlands trust were planted in the Curborough Open Space by the Community Payback Team in November.



ROSPA completed the annual play equipment inspections for areas belonging to the City Council. All items were low risk except some feature uprights on Stowe field which were medium risk. A rotted post has been removed.

It was also suggested benches should be painted with a preservative which has been ordered.



Japanese knotweed has been found growing on the banks of the brook in Stowe Croft open space No.10. The District Council are to brush weed kill. If this is not successful the stems need to be injected which is a more expensive process. The Japanese knotweed previously found beside the Open Space by London Road has not reappeared after the treatment a few years ago.

In October the volunteers from the Countryside & Parks Conservation Group cleared some of the weeds & reeds from beside the brook in the Festival Garden. Nettles are often left to dissuade people from getting too close to the water.

The leak in the mains pipe at Library Corner has been repaired with no apparent damage to shrubs in the vicinity.



7. Deputy Town Clerk: Tony Briggs

At its meeting of 22 June 2016 the Council resolved to convert the Guildhall's Stonynge Room into a storage area in order to increase available storage space. This dovetailed with the process of clearing the area of the Donegal House basement that has been set aside for conversion into toilets and a kitchenette (the tenders for which are the subject of a separate report to Council). While there has been a desire to progress this work, concerns over the potential need to use the Stonynge Room as a meeting room on a temporary basis before and during proposed repairs to the Whytmore Room/Stairwell roof led to a delay. However, with those issues resolved, the City Council's casual PA Nigel Boden completed this work in early November, and the result is excellent. While the Stonynge was a very small meeting room it makes a very large store room, allowing items from across the Guildhall to be consolidated in one area, including bulky items such as the staging and Skywinder.

A large crack has been identified in a storm water pipe inside the Guildhall beer cellar, leading to rainwater running into the cellar, under the door and along the main corridor during spells of bad weather. The pipe, which is substantially hidden by brickwork, has been inspected by a specialist company who identified blockages at ground level and also discovered that the crack extends to the top of the pipe. Remedial work will take place on 5 and 6 December, with the installation of a new rodding eye agreed as part of this work to help prevent a recurrence of the blockage, and a sleeve to be fitted to the downpipe to make it watertight once again.

The quinquennial inspections have been carried out at Donegal House, the Guildhall and the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum. While the detailed reports are yet to be received and

will contain several recommendations, including further investigation of water ingress noted at the Birthplace, the City Council's architects have confirmed that no urgent structural remedial work has been identified.

The history of the Friary Clock Tower was the subject of a talk organised by U3A at the Guildhall a few weeks ago. One aspect that may not have been covered during the talk was the lighting of the Tower. Four lights were installed around its base many years ago, one of which was vandalised and then stolen soon after being installed, and a second unit failed around 10 years ago and had not been repaired. A third fitting had become overgrown and was casting very little light, leaving the impression to passers-by that only one light was working. In late October the remaining three fittings – including the fitting that had not been in working order for 10 years - were overhauled, repaired and foliage cleared.



The switch-on of the Christmas lights took place on Sunday 27 November. Thankfully the weather was much better than last year and the event went ahead as planned, much to the delight of the gathered crowds and the relief of the Deputy Town Clerk. A selection of photographs is presented below, with some pictures courtesy of Cannock Sound Hire;



