

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

On Saturday 24 November the Mayor and Sheriff held their annual Charity Ball in the Guildhall which this year had a Black and White theme, 70 guests attended the evening and enjoyed a four-course meal followed by live musical entertainment. Richard Winterton from Winterton auctioneers kindly gave his time to conduct a light-hearted auction, assisted by our very own Ken Knowles. All prizes were kindly donated by local businesses.



The evening raised an amazing £2,563.40 for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charities; St. Mary's in The Market Square and Lichfield Greenhill Bower Charitable Trust.



On Tuesday 27 November the Mayor and Sheriff held a Charity Wreath Making Workshop in the Guildhall. This event proved very successful and was thoroughly enjoyed by all that attended. It certainly got us all in the festive spirit with mulled wine and mince pies. Everyone got to take home their handmade creation, timed perfectly for the start of the festive season. This event raised £333.00 for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities.

The Mayors Carols for Christmas was once again held on December 4 in the Guildhall. The Mayor's Chaplain Revd Linda Collins led the service. Tony White played keyboard and was accompanied by 20 choristers from St. Chad's Choir.

Scotch Orchard Primary School gave a splendid performance with 15 students taking part. Everyone then enjoyed the mulled wine prepared by Cllr Tony Thompson accompanied by warm mince pies. Donations received on the evening for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities totalled £91.10.



Preparations continue for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charity Beer & Skittle evening on 1 February and Charity Sunday Lunch on 10 February. Mayors Sunday Church Services are to be held on Sunday 20 January at St. Peter & St. Pauls Roman Catholic Church at 11am and Sunday 10 February at Wade Street Church at 11am.

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



The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum celebrated the festive season with an extensive events programme.

Beginning in November, 'Crafty Sundays' were a new venture to showcase the work of local makers and craftspeople over three small craft fairs, which had good feedback from the stall holders and increased visitor numbers for Sundays.

The Museum opened during the Christmas Lights Switch-on, with 280 visitors in the evening and over 50 families taking part in free lantern-making activities. The Johnson Family Christmas Weekend followed on 1-2 December, with 422 visitors enjoying activities including performance from the Lichfield Singers, storytelling, an automata exhibition, craft activities and a face-painter, which was provided by 'Visit Lichfield'. A weekend of traditional Toy Workshops took place on 8-9 December, which were fully-booked. On 15 December the 'Words Alive' Saturday club held their own Christmas Play called 'Marbles', written by volunteer leader Don, with costumes created by the children during their sessions. The final event of the year was an evening of Wintry Storytelling from Lichfield Storytellers, with traditional folk tales for adults around the house.

Throughout the season an Angel trail was available to young visitors, and the Museum took part in the 'Visit Lichfield' 'Twelve Days of Christmas' region-wide trail. The Museum was also the venue for the Lichfield District Tourism Association Christmas networking event, incorporating the launch of the updated City Real Ale Trail, which includes quotes from Johnson.

In total 3,848 people visited the Museum during the November – December period and 20,898 in the 2018 calendar year, a rising trend making this again the highest number in the Museum's history.

The Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group and Burntwood U3A visited the Museum for guided tours, and an outreach talk was given to British Legion members at 'the Village' in Lichfield. The MHO attended the Literary Houses Network conference at Knebworth House, and visited the archives of the Royal Academy to research Samuel Johnson's role as Professor of Ancient Literature and a related painting in the Birthplace collection.

The Birthplace also hosted the first meeting of the Lichfield Cultural Educational Partnership (CEP), bringing teachers and arts practitioners together, for which the Museum will be a regular venue. The MHO also attended the first meeting of a new partnership for arts venues in the City arranged by St Mary's and the Cathedral.

Emma Bown, this year's 'History in the Workplace' student from the University of Birmingham, completed her 4-month placement. Emma re-catalogued 100 pre-1750 items from the Museum library, wrote a piece for the Museum website and curated a small display about her research on books owned by Samuel's father Michael. A student from South Staffordshire College also completed a two-week placement project in November, reviewing and creating content for the Museum's social media streams.



The Library was used for two days by a PhD researcher from Swansea, working on Anna Seward.

A large poster from 1887 advertising the sale of the Birthplace was donated to the Museum; this will form an excellent centrepiece for future displays about the history of the building. The Birthplace also acquired shelving from the SCC Museum stores at Shugborough to use for the move to a larger storage area in Donegal House which is taking place in January.

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



The Minster Pool up-lighters were repaired in time for the thousands of visitors on their way to the Cathedral illuminations in December. They were also a spectacle to be enjoyed for visitors and residents during the Christmas period.



There has been a review of all the Lichfield City Council footpaths and open space lamps in the city to enable a proposal to be put forward to members to change to low energy LED lighting. Should the proposal be adopted, the resulting project will reduce energy costs and environmental impact.

It is important to keep the area around the lamp posts clear so they can be regularly inspected and repaired. This does prove a challenge with overgrowth from hedges, new fencing and extensions to buildings getting in the way. One of the lamps in Bishops walk has recently been repaired after a small piece of fence had to be removed to allow access.

A drain surround next to Oakhurst was repaired in the autumn but further repairs are required to improve the surfaces of other footpaths. Following recent inspections a list of repairs has been identified to keep the City Council paths in good order and quotations for the work required have been provided. Together with the proposals for replacement LED lighting as outlined above, this matter is detailed as part of the separate agenda report at Appendix 6.

Following these visits, the inspection schedule for footpaths and open spaces has been updated to allow for changes in usage and risk.

4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer



Following the success of last year's Limburg Light Festival, which brought thousands of people to the City for the opening of their Christmas market, the Mayor of Limburg, Dr Marius Hahn, once again asked Peter Walker to stage another Cathedral illumination. The illumination took place over two nights and the main sponsor, the local shopping centre Werkstadt, was very pleased with the increased footfall to the City of Limburg as a result of the event.

Nils Jonas, a student from Limburg spent part of his gap year in Lichfield, playing hockey with the Lichfield Hockey Club's first team as their designated goal keeper. From the beginning of October until the end of December, Nils also worked part-time at a farmer's yard and fishery to subsidise his living expenses, as well as helping out at a charity, Forest Harvest in Yoxall, with some of their woodland projects.

His Lichfield host family from the Wade Street Church community helped him to improve his English language skills and he returned to Limburg just before Christmas and will start his University course at Easter. He summarised his months in Lichfield as 'enjoyable and very valuable'. The friendships formed within the Lichfield Hockey Club are strong and plans for a Lichfield hockey team to visit Limburg around Easter time are already underway.

On 13 January, three nursery nurse students from a vocational college in Limburg arrived in Lichfield to start their 5 week internship at Springfields Pre-School & Day Nursery on Beacon Street. This is the second year that Springfields Nursery has made this European Erasmus+ funded exchange project possible.

A drama class from the Limburg Adolf-Reichweinschule is taking part in this year's Lichfield Mysteries, performing "*Exodus from Egypt*". The event will be on Saturday 9 February at the Friary School theatre from 2.00pm - 6.00pm. The group will also perform their play again on Sunday 10 February during the Civic Church Service at Wade Street Church.

The Lichfield Twinning Association will be hosting guests from our French twin town of Sainte Foy from 12 -15 April. Anybody who is interested in getting involved or hosting a visitor is asked to contact the Twinning Officer.

From 11-18 May eighteen College students from Limburg will be visiting Lichfield to take part in lessons at the South Staffordshire College's Lichfield campus in the morning and excursions in the afternoon. The City Council is looking for host families for these young people for the week. Please contact the Twinning Officer if you are able to offer a room for one or two German students.

On 18 May the Catholic relief charity Caritas is organising a festival of the senses in the Bishop's garden in Limburg. The organisers would like to invite artists of music, theatre and performance from both their twin towns of Lichfield and Ste. Foy to participate in this wonderful, professional event. Please inform the Twinning Officer of any interested parties.

5. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

The Guildhall has been very busy over the Christmas period. As well as regular bookings, private bookings have included a Wedding Reception, 30th Birthday party and Jerome K Jerome's Annual Dinner. Most regular hirers also held Christmas parties and around 150 people visited a Bible Exhibition. Bramshall Art's Exhibition in the Guildroom was also very successful and a Pets Portrait display was held in the Corridor Gallery.

In addition there were 3 Craft Fairs, a National Childbirth Trust sale and a further 3 Christmas Fairs, Lichfield Leather held their usual Christmas sale and Market Research has attended on four separate occasions. A number of concerts were also held which included 4 by Lichfield Arts; 1 by Lichfield Sinfonia; 2 by the City of Lichfield Concert Band and 2 by Lichfield Operatic Society.

From 15 January to 25 March the Citizens Advice Bureau will be re-locating to the Guildroom on Tuesdays from 10.00am to 1.00pm whilst their premises on Levitt's Fields are being refurbished.

A review of Guildhall bookings in 2018 illustrates the venues popularity and the diverse useage, events have included:

7 Wedding Ceremonies, 16 Wedding Receptions and 1 Wedding fair; 15 private parties/dinners; 2 leather sales; 2 Beer Festivals and 2 Music Festivals hosted by Lichfield Arts as well as numerous concerts. Other one off bookings have included a Twinning Association social evening; U3A showcase day; student fashion show; sword fighting demonstration; student film night and a gin tasting day. The diary for 2019 is already filling up and bookings are now being taken for 2020.

Last year at Boley Park Community Hall there was an additional 84 bookings as well as the regular hirers. These included 54 children's parties; 3 Baptism celebrations; 6 Stamp Fairs; 3 dances; 1 Art exhibition; 1 New Year's Eve Dance and on Christmas Day a family dinner/party. The hall was closed in August for two weeks for decorating and essential maintenance work which included a new floor in the entrance hall and toilet areas.

6. Markets Officer: John Beard



The markets have been particularly busy in the build up to Christmas with the Saturday market being very well attended and vacant stalls being filled by casuals.

The re-opening of St Mary's in late December finally saw the removal of the hoardings thus restoring the square to its former glory. It is hoped that the

relocation of the Library to this site will increase the footfall to the Markets and the square as a whole. To compliment the refurbishment of St Mary's over the autumn all the benches, railings and fencing on the Square was repainted.

In an effort to promote 2019 Farmers Markets a mailshot has been sent to all Tourist Information Centres around the midlands as well as Libraries and hotels .



On Friday 21 December 2018 the Mayor and, Mayoress visited the market to bid farewell to one of its longest standing traders after 54 Years. Lichfield Country Market (formally known as Lichfield WI Market) first stood on the market on Friday 4 December 1964 offering a wide variety of homemade goods including cakes and jams. Manned entirely by volunteers who have braved every type of weather imaginable the stall was always popular with members of the public. Joyce Deakin, a member since 1983 said *"The fact that a lot of our members are looking towards retirement has led to us making the difficult decision to vacate the Lichfield Friday Market."*

Over the years the Lichfield Country Market has made cakes for many Civic occasions such as, Town Criers competition, Mayoress at Home and Simnel cake for Shrovetide celebrations. Whilst they may have vacated the stall on the Lichfield Friday Market, customers will still be able get in touch to purchase homemade delicacies and place orders for celebrations.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The switch-on of the Christmas lights took place on Sunday 25 November. Thankfully the weather was kind which meant the event drew large crowds. The Mayor officially turned on the lights assisted by competition winners Presten-Jay Abbotts, Ellie Vinnicombe and the cast of the Garrick Pantomime, *Dick Whittington*.



Prior to the official Switch on the audience was entertained by local bands “*The Hustle*” and “*Punch The Air*” followed by Christ Church primary school choir who led the traditional carol singing.

The City Council’s Health and Safety Consultants, Terrain and a local Fire Officer attended to carry out a full risk assessment.

The Deputy Town Clerk is pleased to report that no major issues were identified and the City Council was complemented on a well organised event.



In addition to attending the usual committee and Council meetings the Deputy Town Clerk is also working on the City Council’s Health and Safety documentation, which is due to be reviewed in February; the next issue of the City Councils newsletter which will be published in the City Life magazine in February, and assisting the Town Clerk with preparations for the implementation of the recently adopted staff Performance Review and Development Scheme.