

For Council: 4 October 2023 APPENDIX 7

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

The Mayor's 'Back to School' event took place on Friday 25 August and was well attended, helping approximately 120 families in Lichfield with the cost of providing school uniforms.

The afternoon was well supported with help from City Councillors, volunteers, with further support from businesses such as Tesco & Morrisons.

Generous donations were brought to the City Council offices by residents that included stationery and water bottles, plus some brand-new uniforms, purchased especially for this cause.



The Mayor, Cllr Ann Hughes, thanked everyone involved, from advertising in local shops, residents taking the time and effort to donate their pre-loved uniform and officers who helped organise the donations on the day.

On Saturday 9 September, the Sheriff of Lichfield, Adam Burns-Mace, took part in the annual tradition that is the Sheriff's Ride. Sadly, last year's ride had to be cancelled due to the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Led by the Clerk of the Course, Nick Sedgwick, the Sheriff and Sheriff's Consort, Anthea Maou, were applauded as they left the Guildhall at 10:30am in a spectacular horse drawn carriage.

After alighting from the carriage at the Pinfold, the Sheriff and Sheriff's Consort continued their journey with the Clerk of the Course by car. The



remainder of the event was organised by an independent sub-committee of the Shrievalty Association and went on to complete a reduced ride starting at Freeford Manor, via Maple Hayes and back into the city, accompanied by several horse riders & cyclists.



The Ride was led by the Sword and Mace Bearers back into the city via The Close, where they were welcomed at the Cathedral by the Interim Dean, the Rt Revd Jan McFarlane, to toast the ride with a glass of sherry. The ride then continued via Dam Street to the Guildhall, where the Sheriff welcomed over 90 guests for the Sheriff's Banquet.



The Sheriff's Ride is a tradition dating from 1553 when Queen Mary's Charter separated Lichfield from Staffordshire, making Lichfield 'a City and a County' with the right to appoint its own Sheriff. The Charter commanded the Sheriff to make a perambulation to inspect and enforce the city boundary each year. This year marks the 470th Sheriff's Ride.

The Sheriff said "I am honoured to have taken part in the historic tradition that is the Sheriff's Ride. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day that I will never forget. I would like to thank the Clerk of the Course & Lichfield Shrievalty Association, together with the landowners who made this day so special. The Sheriff's Ride is one of the most historic events in Lichfield. Long may it continue!".

Preparations remain ongoing for the Samuel Johnson Birthday Celebrations on Saturday 23 September, the Mayor & Sheriff's Charity Céilidh Dance on Saturday 7 October, and Remembrance Sunday on 12 November.

2. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Kimberley Biddle, Museums and Heritage Officer

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum has welcomed 8,446 people so far in this financial year (April-August), a 44% increase on 2022/23 visitor numbers.

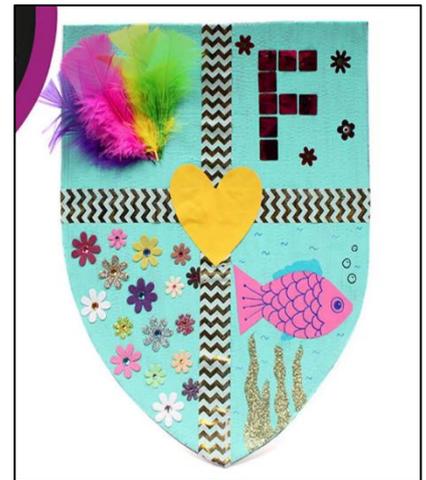
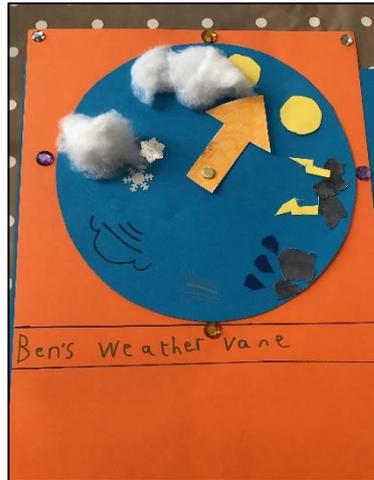
After 15 years as the Museums and Heritage Officer, Jo Wilson left Lichfield City Council in August to undertake a PhD on women in the 18th century provincial print trade at Keele University. As of the 29th of August, Kimberley Biddle has taken over the role. Kim has over 20 years' experience in the museums and heritage sector, having worked for Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT) since 2002. She has previously been the general manager of all BMT's historic properties including Aston Hall, Blakesley Hall, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Sarehole Mill, Soho House, and Weoley Castle. Kim was the curator manager at Aston Hall since 2015, and was the project manager for Aston Retold, a major reinterpretation project.

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of Johnson's tour of Scotland, the Birthplace has been displaying caricature etchings by celebrated satirist Thomas Rowlandson, after drawings by Samuel Collings, published in 1784. The display is entitled *The Picturesque Beauties of Rowlandson*, and the full set of twenty prints will be on display in the Birth Room in four parts, with the display changing in September, October, and November.

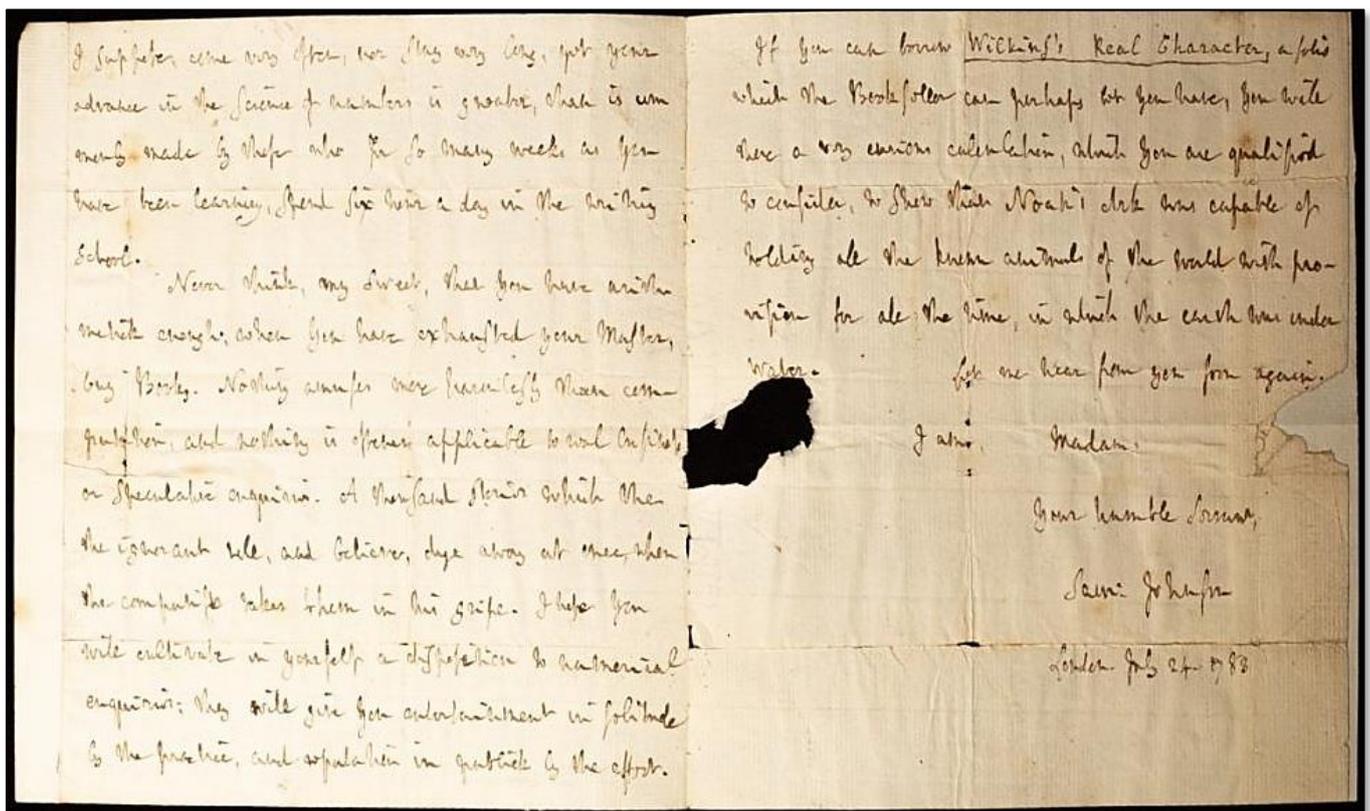


Throughout the summer holidays the Museum ran a popular weekly activity called 'Summer Fun at Sam's House' to engage local families and encourage repeat visits.

These activities were inspired by Johnson's travels to Scotland and accompanied The Picturesque Beauties of Rowlandson display. Examples of the children's work are shown to the right.



A private letter of historical importance written by Dr Samuel Johnson was acquired by the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum on the 19th of September, the week of the Johnson birthday celebrations. The Museum initially found out about the letter in a BBC article published on the 31st of August, and after acting quickly the acquisition was made possible by funding and support from the Friends of the National Libraries, The Johnson Society, Lichfield City Council, and Phil Jones, a private donor.



The letter, penned by Johnson in 1783, had been documented but its location was unknown, and it was thought to be lost. After 240 years it was discovered in a cupboard amongst other historical letters in a Gloucestershire country home and was sold at auction. It is addressed to a twelve-year-old Sophia Thrale, daughter of Hester Lynch Thrale, a British author and patron of the arts. Samuel Johnson regularly corresponded with Hester Lynch Thrale and her children, yet this is thought to be the only surviving letter between him and Sophia.

In the letter we read Johnson encouraging Sophia to continue her studies, especially her mathematical pursuits. It demonstrates his views on the importance of young women's education in the eighteenth century. This charming correspondence is a rare and documented example of a different side to Johnson, its affectionate and paternal tone shows a softness not often associated with him.

Plans are already underway for the letter to go on public display at The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum.

Samuel Johnson's 314th birthday celebrations took place on the 23rd of September, it was a joyous occasion marked with the annual civic procession and ceremony, and performances from St Michael's Church Choir, Lichfield Lighthouse Company, and the City of Lichfield Concert Band. The Museum was open throughout the day with craft activities, storytelling, poetry readings, and celebratory free cake for visitors.



Photo credit – R Yardley

Work on the ground floor developments at SJBM are moving forward, an on-site meeting with contractors took place and planning is underway for the safe placement of the toilet pod by crane, costs for this are currently being worked up.

The City Plaques Project continues, with the restoration of signs progressing, and an agreement has been made with Lichfield District Council's Conservation and Design Officer for the Anna Seward plaque to be located on Pool Walk.

The Guildhall Cells are due to close for the winter shortly after the publication of this agenda. The cells have been open on Saturdays throughout summer, the new volunteers have settled in, and the attraction has continued to be a popular destination since reopening in April. They will reopen in April 2024.

3. Open Spaces: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer and Jane Varley, Clerical Officer

Christchurch Allotments

Fallen tree within Allotments required pest control treatment for two wasps' nests before final removal could take place.



Lichfield and District Allotments Society – Track Project

Allotment holders in Lichfield have benefitted from a CIL funded grant of £27,500 from Lichfield City Council to replace and significantly improve the main tracks at the City's allotment sites. The new access roads replace the previous provision which was severely broken down in various areas and of increasing concern to LDAS members. The works have been completed by D McCarthy Brothers (Lichfield) Ltd.



Relocated Bus Shelters

Five existing shelters in the Darwin Park area have been transferred to Lichfield City Council for maintenance. In conjunction with Leomansley Area Residents Association and SCC, two of these shelters have been relocated from redundant stops on Limburg Avenue.



One has been re-sited on Falkland Road (Agincourt Road), the second on Sainte Foye Avenue (The Whytmore). Both are on the X3 and 36 routes.

Footpath Tamworth Road to Wentworth Drive (FP3)

Following intense rain further repairs were necessary to this path as it had become undermined with ground water resulting in ballast being washed down onto Tamworth Road.

Surface repairs completed and edges along the fence line created. Holes within these have been drilled to help relieve the water pressure from below.

Woodland Trust – Tree of the Year nomination

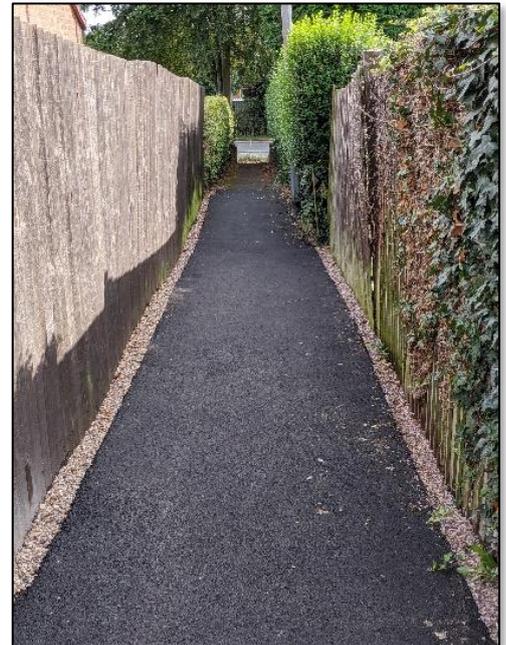
The Foxglove tree in Remembrance Gardens is nominated as one of the finalists in the ‘Tree of the Year’ competition run by the Woodland Trust. The Paulownia tree is native to China and shows off colourful foxglove-shaped blooms in springtime.

The winner will be decided via a public vote which is open until 15th October.

More details and to vote visit:

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/tree-of-the-year/>





Other matters progressed/completed since the last report and in addition to routine inspections include:

- Planning for the CIL funded extension of the path from on Eastern Avenue to Lichfield Sports Club entrance
- ROSPA annual playground inspections
- Wordsworth Close (Site 26A) all trees crown lifted, deadwood removed and reduced back from carriageway. Planting of hawthorn hedging along noise barrier planned for late autumn.
- Boley Close (Site 23) tree works to reduce from road and clear phone wires
- Several footpaths have required cutting back where overgrowth has been unusually high, where possible this has been completed in time for new school year.
- Culvert clearance at Nether Stowe
- Curborough Community Centre – obtaining quotes to replace dilapidated fencing around car park and play areas.
- Cherry Orchard Allotments – new gate posts installed.

4. Markets: Jeremy Williams, Markets Officer/Michelle Read – Office Administrator

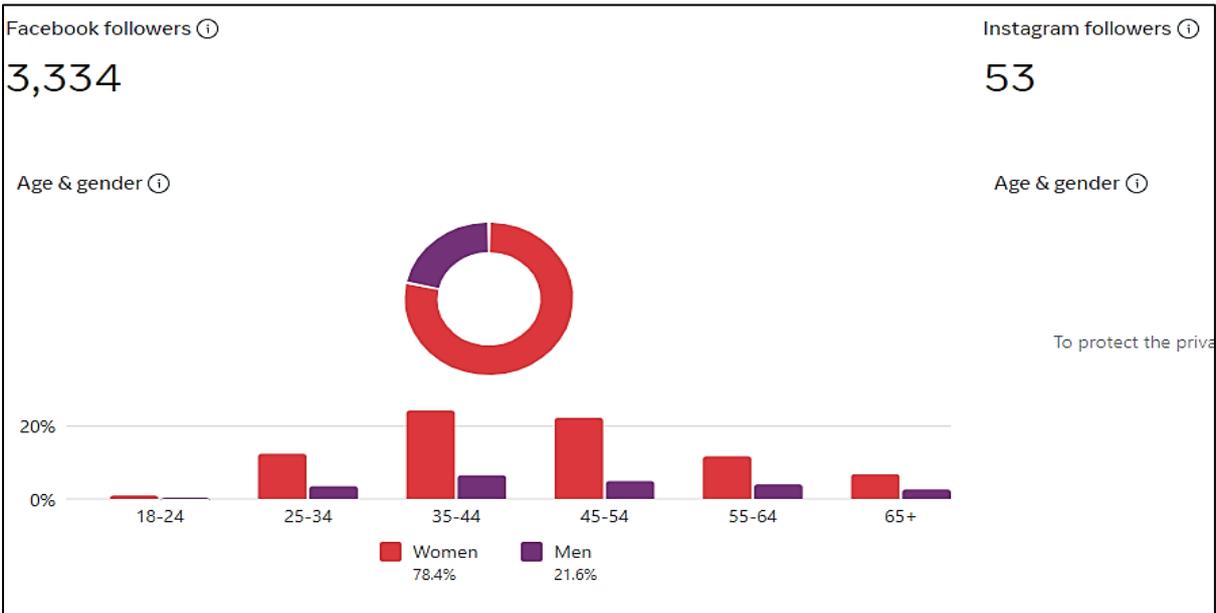
We have welcomed three new Traders to the Tuesday market, 'Ryan James Butchers', 'Mad Bags', who sell humorously designed jute bags, and 'Fab Cakes'. All have gained a strong customer following, particularly Ryan James Butchers. All new Traders have been promoted on social media. Atterbury's, who sell bespoke household items, has also been welcomed as permanent trader.



Social Media

There is a strong following on the Markets' social media platforms, with regular posts and promotion of traders, helping to showcase Lichfield and increase footfall. Promotion of the Christmas Market is also increasing.

Below are statistics illustrating the number of followers on Facebook and Instagram.



Pitch Availability

We currently have pitches available on the Tuesday and Friday markets, but a number of enquiries have been received regarding these. The one available pitch on the Friday Market has been utilised as a pop-up stall and for Saturday traders who wished to evaluate the possibility of standing on the Friday Market, too. The Saturday Market remains full.

Officers continue to develop the list of Traders who can cover stalls at short notice; this is working well and helps to reduce the number of empty pitches caused by holiday or general trader absence.

Vegan Market

The Vegan Market operates on the third Sunday of the month and has expanded to more than 20 stalls. Dates for 2024 have been agreed.

Producer's Market

The Producer's Market, which is run by CJ Events, operates on the first Sunday of the month. This market is well supported by traders and remains very popular.

Food Festival

The Food Festival held on 26 August often results in many regular Traders deciding not to stand. Traders cite reduced interest in the Market and issues arising from festival security, notably gaining vehicle entry and exit through the road closures. Those who did attend reported that some members of the public were buying food from the Festival traders and using the Market stalls as shelter from the weather, causing particular concern for those traders offering goods liable to be damaged or become less saleable due to grease or the smell of food.



Due to the difficulties, it has long been the case that Traders are given a choice to not attend the Market during the Festival, with no arrears incurred. 10 permanent traders chose not to trade, but six of the pitches were covered by casual Traders. The difference in pitch income on that day when compared to a normal full Saturday market was £205.83.

Minster Pool Walk was hired by the event organiser for the Food Festival, but one LCC trader had to be relocated from Speakers Corner to Market Square as his usual pitch had been taken by a Food Festival Trader.



The space made available on the Square by permanent Traders not attending due to the Food did allow for Lichfield District City of Sanctuary to provide a stall in honour of Ukraine Independence Day. The stall raised nearly £600 for humanitarian aid in Ukraine and, importantly, also raised awareness of the existence of refugees among us now. An email thanking LCC members and Officers has been received from the LCoS Secretary.



5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden – Twinning Officer

Lichfield's Nick Dewhurst Band performed at the summer festival in the twin town of Limburg, where his 6-piece jazz band received a very warm welcome. The Limburg organisers were very pleased with how the Lichfield musicians were received by a sell-out audience. The City Council awarded a £300 grant to assist with arrangements.



The date for the next triennial Ring Twinning Celebration weekend to be held in Lichfield has been provisionally set for 2nd to 5th October 2026. Early preparations are underway.

6. Guildhall & Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Bookings Officer

Although bookings were quiet in the summer, regular hirers have now returned after the summer holidays and the diary is almost full until the end of the year.

There has been an increase in the number of meetings booked by external organisations, with 16 such meetings held since the last report.

Lichfield Festival hired the Guildhall as part as their summer festival and held events in the building on two dates. Lichfield Arts also held a concert and have begun their autumn/winter concert series which includes a Beer Festival.

Following another successful summer, the Old Prison Cells are scheduled to close for the Winter shortly after the deadline for this report, and a Ukrainian Group also had a cell tour last month.

Private bookings have included a wedding reception and three birthday parties.

Commercial bookings include five market research bookings with further sessions imminent. A craft fair has also taken place, with more craft fairs booked towards Christmas.

LDC held a Leisure Centre drop-in session, which was well attended and displayed information about what the new leisure centre may look like.

The Greenhill Bower recently held their cheque presentation (pictured below).



Photo credit – R Yardley.

An advertisement for the Guildhall has been placed in 'West Midlands Weddings', which was advertised at a Wedding Show at the NEC in August. The edition also featured a couple who had their wedding ceremony and reception at the Guildhall last year. Your West Midlands Wedding - August/September 2023 (Issue 87) (County Wedding) (P37-41).

As mentioned, the diary is quite full up to Christmas – the only Friday/Saturdays free currently are 29 Sept & 28 October. We also have a wedding ceremony/reception confirmed.

Boley Park Community Hall

The hall remains very popular for children's parties. Work has begun on the end of your accounts in readiness for submission to the Auditor. As well as regular hirers, since the beginning of July, there have been bookings for 6 meetings, a Stamp fair, 11 children's parties and a Back to School (uniform) event. The boilers are also due to be serviced imminently. The NHS Breast Screening Trailer is outside the building, utilising electricity from the Hall's external Lucy Box. Monthly readings are taken with invoices raised to the NHS for the cost of electricity used.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

In the absence of the Civic officer the Deputy Town Clerk, along with other members of staff facilitated the Mayor's school uniform exchange event.

In addition, much progress has been made regarding the city Council's Critical incident procedures as detailed at Appendix 9.

The Deputy Town Clerk recently facilitated a meeting with all major contributors of Remembrance Sunday. Until recently each organisation involved (Cathedral RBL ,DMS Whittington) had been working in silo on arrangements for the day. Thanks to the City Council all organisations are now working together to deliver the event and have a greater understanding of each other's requirements.

The Deputy Town Clerk will be providing secretariat support at the Markets Working Group, the newly combined Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Working Party and Grants Committee, full Council and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee.

Preparations are continuing for the Christmas Lights Switch On Event with particular emphasis on implementing Counter Terrorism Policies.