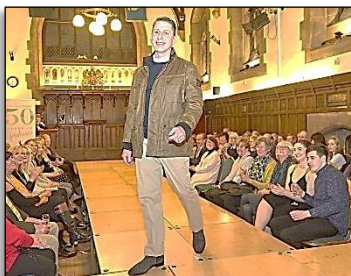


OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

On Wednesday 14 March the Mayor and Sheriff held a Charity Fashion Show in the Guildhall. This year's event was supported by 'Young Ideas' based in Bore Street, Lichfield and 'Obsession Salon & Spa'.



The event not only included a fashion show but also entertainment by local singer Cliff Antony and dancing by Victoria Neale's 'Want2Dance'. Our very own Mace Bearer, Richard Hunt was one of the models for Young Ideas and proved to be a natural on the catwalk.



The evening was a great success raising a total of £1312.16 for the Mayor & Sheriff's chosen charities Guide Dogs for the Blind and Staffordshire Blood Bikes.

On Friday 16 March the annual Arthur Price of England School Speaking Competition was held in the Guildhall.



The event had been scheduled to take place two weeks prior but had to be postponed for the first time in its history due to extreme weather conditions. A few changes were made as a result, including the welcome return of the previous long serving Time Keeper Robin Jones, Lay Rotary Member, as a judge for this year's competition alongside the Mayor, Cllr Mrs Janice Greaves, Simon Price from Arthur Price of England and Rotary Club Lichfield St. Chad President Tim Wadsworth. The question debated was chosen by the Chairman, Michael Fabricant MP *"That this House believes the British Monarchy should be abolished"*. The debate was conducted along similar guidelines that apply in the House of Commons with no handclapping, applause being made by the waving of programmes acting as ballot papers.

The five schools which took part were; Erasmus Darwin Academy from Burntwood, The Friary School from Lichfield, John Taylor High School from Barton Under Needwood, King Edward VI School and Lichfield Cathedral School. All of the schools taking part achieved the highest standards of debate. The judging panel then retired to decide on the best overall team and individual speaker. The winning school was King Edward VI who spoke against the motion. Jessica Sohl of King Edward VI was named as the winning individual speaker. The winners received trophies donated by Arthur Price of England and all students that took part in the debate received certificates.

On Friday 23 March The Friary School in Lichfield held its annual Encore event otherwise known as The Sheriff's Show. This was another great performance from the talented youngsters including a real stage fire in the second half - thankfully this was quickly dealt with and no one was harmed. Lichfield City Council negotiated with the Friary School PTA prior to the event to be sole raffle ticket vendors on the Friday evening. As a result a total of £296 was raised for the Mayor & Sheriff's charities.

On Sunday 1 April the Civic party processed to the Cathedral for the annual Easter Service. Following the service refreshments were served in the Guildhall, including the traditional Simnel cake. This was the last civic procession for the current Mayor, Cllr Mrs Janice Greaves and Sheriff, Cllr Andrew Smith and provided them with the opportunity to thank all those who have supported them during their year in office.

The Mayor & Sheriff's Entertainment & Tea Party for the Over 70's, was held at Curborough Community Centre on 9 April. More than 60 guests sat down to high tea served by members of Lichfield City Council. The highly acclaimed Lichfield Singers provided music and song with guests joining in with the singing of all the old favourites.

A free raffle was held with prizes donated by the Mayor & Sheriff. The afternoon closed with thanks from the Sheriff to all the voluntary helpers and a special mention to Travel Wood Ltd and their driver Councillor Brian Bacon for providing transport that enabled many to attend.

Preparations remain ongoing for St. Georges Court, Annual Council and Banquet, Court of Arroye, the Town Crier's Competition and the Sheriff's Ride.

2. Markets: John Beard and Lisa Howard, Markets Officer

The severe weather conditions at the beginning of March caused a further 4 market cancellations, including the March Farmers' Market. The Arts & Craft Fair also had to cancel their Sunday/Monday booking.

April's Farmers' and Craft market was also impacted due to it falling in Easter week, with less traders attending than usual.

In a more positive development, the BID have begun to promote the Farmers' Market via Social Media (this is addition to our own Social Media activity). Jono from Jono's Tourism took some great photos in April, which we have been given permission to use on our Facebook page to promote future markets.

Cockerhoop Promotions held their first Grub Club on 28 March, which included hiring the Market Square to use as a seating and entertainment area. The evening was by all accounts a success and the Square has been hired to repeat the event on the last Wednesday

evening of every month through to October. This event generates extra revenue without impacting on the daytime activities of the Square and is therefore a welcome addition to our portfolio of events.

Market Square Hire continues to be popular and we currently have at least one Sunday booking every week through to the Middle of June. Work is underway to ensure we comply with GDPR, with a consent form and privacy notice being added to trader application packs.

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

2738 visitors came to Johnson's Birthplace in February and March. Special events and activities over the past two months have included:



Museum partnership events as part of Lichfield Literature Festival took place in March despite the snowy weather. Events included a 'Word Café' at neighbouring Devotea showcasing the Birthplace writing and literature groups, a reading by Lichfield Poets at the Museum, and a new drama created for the Birthplace by local community theatre group Fired-Up Theatre. 'Dr Johnson's Wikiwords' is the first part in a series of sitcom style comedy pieces, aimed at bringing the life and works of Johnson to new audiences.

February Half Term Fun activities were monster-themed in honour of the anniversary of the publication of Frankenstein. Johnson's Dictionary definitions for monsters and related words decorated the Birth Room, and two sold-out sessions enjoyed mask and puppet-making. Primary school visit for 60 children from Fulfen Primary School in partnership with Erasmus Darwin House in February



The Birthplace took part in the Tamworth and Lichfield District Networking event at Drayton Manor Park, and in a Visit Lichfield promotion for English Tourism Week for social media and the local papers, with a visit and photographs with the Mayor and guests.

Museum Administration Assistant Penny Taylor joined the team in February, along with new Museum Attendants Nigel Hunt and Christine Genders.



Consultants Susan Dalloe and Huw Edwards led workshops with the Birthplace Advisory Committee, staff and volunteers to assist their review and options appraisal report to inform the Birthplace Development Project.

35 works loaned to Dr Johnson's House in London returned after being exhibited there since last October. Also the 'Clean Team', a group of seasonal collection care volunteers, returned for their annual clean of the Birthplace collections and display cabinets.

The Museum's external signage has been amended to include the new March to October extended opening hours and the M&HO has assisted artist Caroline Lowe with images and research for an art installation about Johnson's willow, to be displayed in the boathouse at Stowe Pool.

4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer



On 17 March, Isabell Pikart, Lichfield City's most recent exchange student from the Limburg College ARS returned to Germany to continue her studies in Curative Education and Care. She successfully completed a 4 week internship in various locations in Lichfield that cater for children and adults with learning difficulties and special needs.

The Twinning Officer would like to express sincere thanks to Springfields Pre-School and Day Nursery in Beacon Street, Friends2Friends at Cruck House, Curborough Community Centre and Burntwood, as well as Cherry Orchard Gardening Services, who all kindly stepped in at very short notice when Queens Croft School found itself unable to support this latest exchange programme. They enabled Isabell to have a meaningful and varied experience in her field of studies, which is helping people with special educational needs. Isabell enjoyed her work placements in Lichfield very much, helping out with cooking, crafts and even street dance exercises at Friends2Friends. She also joined in various civic events, such as the Mayor and Sherriff's fashion show and the Schools' speaking competition, chaired by Michael Fabricant MP.

A meeting has arranged for the beginning of May between a French and German teacher at Lichfield's King Edward High School and a Language Co-ordinator from Limburg's Leo-Sternberg-Schule in order to discuss future projects and exchanges. Two Limburg colleges are also meeting the Head of Campus from the South Staffordshire College in Lichfield to investigate ways of establishing a possible cooperation between the two city colleges. In addition the geography coordinator at Christ Church Primary School and the Theodor-Heuss Primary School in Limburg have started work on a mutual project and we look forward to hearing about their work and progress in the near future.

The Lichfield Twinning Association will be welcoming friends from our twin town of Limburg, Germany. A delegation of around 50 people is expected from Friday 4 May until Tuesday 8 May. There will be a varied programme with city tours and excursions further afield, afternoon tea with the Mayor in the Guildhall and a friendship evening meal for all those involved.

A Limburg student has enquired about a 3 week work placement in July in the hotel industry and talks are taking place with the George Hotel in Bird Street.

Limburg City Council have asked if Lichfield City Council would be able to offer a week's work experience again for two of their council apprentices in early October, which has become an annual event.

Three Limburg artists are looking in to the opportunity to exhibit at a selling exhibition at Lichfield Cathedral this summer, which is coordinated by the Sculpture and Art Foundation CIC. The "Composition" exhibition runs from 30 June to 15 July and will include all fine art media including painting, sculpture, ceramics and photography.

5. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

The Old Prison Cells are open to the public again between 10.00am and 4.00pm on most Saturdays from 7 April until the end of October. In recent weeks we have had three Cell tours and two school visits.

We continue to attract our regular bookings: Band Practice, Bridge, Chess, Darby & Joan, Heyday Friendship, Italian Class, Ladies Cameo Group, Lichfield Poets, National Trust, Needwood DFAS, RSPB, Slimming World, Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society and U3A Thirteen meetings from outside agencies/societies have been held in the building.

Private bookings have included a Golden Wedding Anniversary Party and a Wedding Ceremony followed by a Reception.

The Donna Louise Hospice held two Gin Tasting events which proved to be very well attended and the Leicester University Chamber Choir held a Concert. The City of Lichfield Friends held an Easter Egg Hunt in the Guildroom.



The Boswell Society held a Luncheon, and the Fairtrade celebrated their 10th Anniversary here. Lichfield Bower Committee held their Prince & Princess Selection in the Main Hall, and the Johnson Society had their AGM. The Worshipful Company of Smiths held their annual Feast.



Two Craft Fairs and a National Childbirth Trust Sale were held in the Main Hall. Market Research have used the Guildroom. Lichfield Arts have held five concerts. Some bookings were cancelled or re-scheduled because of the adverse weather.

Building work was completed on schedule in the first floor kitchen. Following this work the kitchen and disabled toilets have been deep cleaned. Unfortunately the lift was broken for a few weeks but has now been repaired this resulted in some bookings being re-located to other rooms.

We are still looking for a new home for the Guildhall's upright Piano.

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

Croft Building and Conservation Ltd are due to start work repairing the crack to the north wall in the Remembrance Gardens at the end of April, along with repairs to the adjacent balustrade. They will also rebuild the car damaged red stone wall in the Heather Gardens during this programme of works.

Also in the Heather Gardens, the Friends of the Historic Parks re-planted the two rose beds either side of the path. This is a major thoroughfare for people entering and leaving the City on foot and the beds will now look more inspiring and uplifting for passers-by to enjoy. The two new beds were designed by David Austin so there would be colour and year-round interest. Most of the finance was received from a member of the FOHP group in memory of her niece, and it our hope that this will provide a fitting tribute to her memory.

Dovehouse Community Garden working parties were arranged in March to prepare half of the site for the official opening on 6 April; brambles were removed, a community bed started with plants found on site and some growing spaces marked out. A skip provided at no cost by Barnes was filled to remove some of the rubbish collected and some plants provided free by the Lichfield Garden Centre helped to make the project more presentable. During the official opening the Mayor, Cllr. Mrs. Janice Greaves planted an almond tree. Lichfield City Council were thanked for their support, and messages of good luck were passed to the DCG committee.



Two Blooming Lichfield meetings and the Regional Seminar in Worcestershire made it a busy start to the year. Lilas Rawling from Friends of the Historic Parks agreed to Chair the meetings for a year until Richard Lewis is well enough to return to the job.

The energy and ideas that Lilas has brought to Bloom, all the projects currently in progress around the City, and all the administration work by Jane Varley has meant there is some optimism in the Group for 2018, as well as a lot of work. Judging day has been agreed as 26 July.

St Michael's Churchyard remains the best wildlife habitat in the City but with some of the biggest challenges in terms of maintenance. Last year a mature lime had to be felled after a large branch had fallen near a path.



Unfortunately, many of the mature trees are beginning to show signs of age. This is particularly noticeable along the northern boundary with the health centre where the limes and an ash all have severe fungal infections. This is nothing new as evidence is that some 40 years ago these trees were coppiced for the same reason. Advice from Gareth Hare at LDC suggests we remove most of the stems but leave the healthiest trunks to re-establish.



It has been harder to reach a consensus with trees along Burton Old Rd where the fast re-growth overhangs the road and hides the road signs. A compromise will be reached which will be better for the health of the trees in the future.

On a positive note the PCC with volunteers and Queens Croft School have made major inroads into cutting back some of the undergrowth. This has meant clearing where the herb layer can recover. It is hoped that the violets that used to thrive here will regrow. The snow drops and the bluebells will be magnificent this year. Due to the hard work of Ray Allen from the church and others including the work done by LCC a £10,000 lottery grant was awarded to the church. This will go some way in reorganising 'God's Acre' and planting new trees for future generations to enjoy.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

A survey of the central heating system in the Guildhall and Donegal House has revealed that a total of six new radiator valves are needed. The replacement of these will require the whole system to be drained so will be arranged for a time to ensure the minimal amount of disruption to Guildhall hirers.

After several weeks of waiting the Guildhall lift has finally been repaired and is now fully operational. The Deputy Town Clerk is looking into alternative suppliers to try and ensure that should there be a reoccurrence of the problem then repairs will not take as long.

Work continues to progress with the City Councils Health & Safety Consultants, Terrain. Obsolete Fire Action signs have now been replaced in both the Guildhall and Donegal House. Risk assessments continue to be reviewed and updated and a new Health & Safety manual is due to be issued to all employees in the next few weeks.

The Deputy Town Clerk is working closely with the Town Clerk to ensure all areas of the Councils undertakings are compliant with the new GDPR legislation. It is also hoped to arrange a training session for Officers and Councillors.

The Deputy has also represented the City Council at meetings with outside agencies and has already attended a Streetscene meeting at Lichfield District Council as well as attending a meeting of the Civic Society.

The long awaited refurbishment to the first floor kitchen has now been completed. The work entailed the removal of the former 'band store' cupboard to greatly improve access, circulation space and natural light to the kitchen. The opportunity was taken to renew the aged flooring and redecorate as well as upgrading the lighting. In addition the step that was previously present at the entrance to the kitchen has now been replaced with a ramp, making the transportation of plates and food both easier and safer than previously.

The work was completed on time, on budget and to a very good standard by Box Construction Limited.



Guildhall kitchen before



Guildhall kitchen after

While on site Box were also asked to carry out some minor repair work to the remaining Guildhall cell that is closed to the public. The loose door frame has been repaired and missing brick infills replaced, plus some repointing has been completed to the rear wall. Once cleared it is hoped that this final cell will be open to the public early in the 2018 season.

Following the repairs to the Guildroom as a result of longstanding water ingress due to faulty rainwater goods at Donegal House, the opportunity has been taken to redecorate the room. A dado rail has been installed for the dual purpose of improving the décor and also serving to protect the walls from the extensive 'rubbing' of chairs that has led previous attempts at redecoration to look tired within weeks of completion.

The redecoration included repainting walls, ceiling and gloss work and was carried out by the City Council's casual Premises Attendant, Nigel Boden. This is the first phase of proposals for the Guildroom, the second phase being the upgrade to the ground floor kitchen to the rear of the Guildroom that was approved by Council in January 2018. This work is currently scheduled for July of this year.

