

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Sarah Wallace, Civic Officer

On Friday 25 November the Mayor and Sheriff held their Charity Dinner Dance in the Guildhall. The 89 guests enjoyed a three course meal provided by the Olive Tree, followed by entertainment from the Bluebird Belles, a 1940's Vintage vocal harmony group. The event raised **£1,400** for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities and proved to be thoroughly enjoyable evening.

The Mayor's Carols for Christmas was held on Tuesday December 5. Revd Ian Hayter led the service with readings by City Councillors, the Mayors consort and the head teacher of St Michaels School. In addition two children from St Michaels School, whose poems were printed in the Mayor and Sheriff's Christmas cards, read out their compositions. The evening was very well attended and Cllr Tony Thompson kindly made his traditional mulled wine for guests to enjoy with a mince pie. Donations received on the night for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charity totalled £183.35.

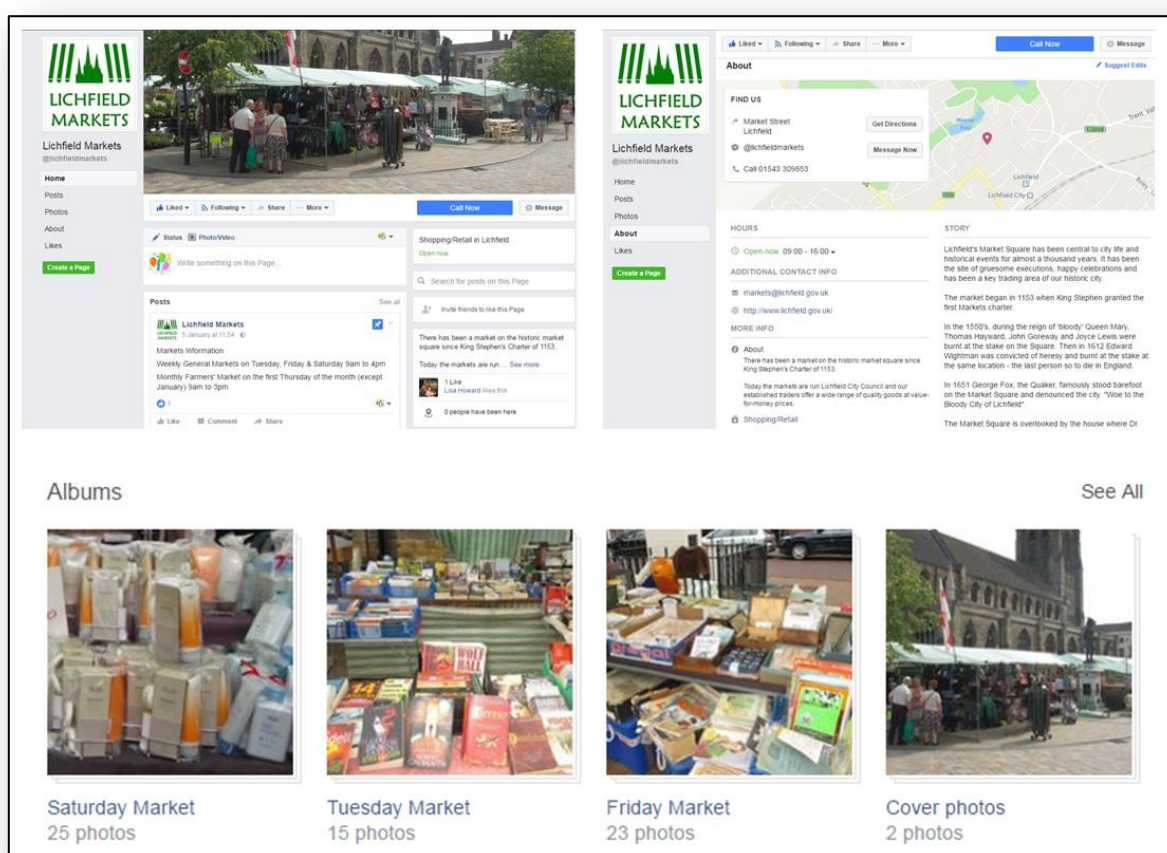


Preparations continue for events in the forthcoming year. The first charitable occasion will be the Mayor and Sheriff's Sunday lunch on 5 February. Guests are invited to join the Mayor and Sheriff for a church service at Wade Street and then continue on to the Guildhall for a traditional Sunday lunch. Tickets are priced at £20 per person.

The traditional pancake races will be held in Bore Street on Tuesday 28 February followed by the opening of the Shrovetide fair.

2. Markets: John Beard & Lisa Howard, Markets Officers

The dedicated Lichfield Markets Facebook page is now live and can be viewed at www.facebook.com/lichfieldmarkets. The page includes general market information, historical information and new photos of current stalls. Visitors to the page also have the option to immediately call or message the markets team.



Cancelled Markets

There have been two market cancellations for public safety reasons since the last Council meeting. Both were due to extreme weather conditions with MET Office predicted strong wind gusts in excess of 45 miles per hour.

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



The run-up to Christmas at the Birthplace was a busy and exciting time, with 2200 visitors in November and December and a diary full of events and school visits. Highlights in November included another in the Museum's popular series of history workshops 'Routes of Lichfield' created and led by Sue Bray, exploring travel in the city and using maps from the stored collections.

The second term of Latin classes began at full capacity, and the Museum opened for the Christmas Light Switch-on for children's activities and mulled wine with 200 people attending.

In December, visitors enjoyed 'a Johnson Family Christmas' over one of the City's Christmas festival weekends with activities including the Lichfield Regency Dance Group, Lichfield Singers, children's author Lorraine Hellier, a popular Angel Trail and a display of fairy-themed automata created by attendant Kevin Lynch.

The fairy theme continued into the following event, a reading of Johnson's fairy-tale 'the Fountains' to mark 250 years since its publication. Directed by David Titley and performed by talented local readers, adults and families enjoyed the Birth Room transformed into a magical grotto setting.



The Museum was also part of Peter Walker's illumination project, with projections on the side of the building and the Birthplace team contributing a quirky reading of Johnson's definition of 'Angel' for the online advent calendar. The Christmas season finished with a reading of 'Twas the Night before Christmas' by Sarah Dale, a free drop-in event as the finale of the Visit Lichfield '12 Days of Christmas' campaign.

In addition to the numerous events, the Birthplace has had school visits from Riverview (Stapenhill), Minworth and Chadsmead primary schools, and the Museum's children's book club 'Bookworms United' held a Christmas party.

Behind the scenes, the Museums and Heritage Officer worked on a number of partnership projects including arranging loans to Lichfield Cathedral's Turner exhibition and developing the programme for Garrick 2017, as well as attending the Museums Association conference and the Literary Houses group meeting. Other work included commissioning a frame for the recently returned painting of Lord Chesterfield and assisting a researcher with collection material on Johnson's willow at Stowe Pool. Minor work continued in the Introduction and London Life rooms ahead of decoration, and the Birthplace received its quinquennial inspection.



4. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

Although the old Prison Cells are now closed for the winter season, there have still been five tours, including an Age Concern Walk and Talk during December.

Burton TV has now posted their report following their recent visit on their website – www.burtontvnews.co.uk.

Our regular bookings have included: Archaeological Society, Ballroom Dancing, Band Practice, Bridge, Chess, Darby and Joan, Heyday Friendship, Italian Class, Ladies Cameo Group, Meditation, RSPB, Slimming World, U3A and U3A Gardening.



We have had one Market Research booking and four Craft Fayres/Table Top Sales. Lichfield Leather also held a very popular sale in the Guildroom just before Christmas.

The Guildroom hosted a Bible Exhibition, and has also been used for children to have lunch whilst they visited the SJ Birthplace Museum. One company held two Christmas Parties in the Guildhall, as well as our regular bookings having parties to celebrate Christmas.

Private parties have included a Golden Wedding Anniversary and a Harry Potter themed 30th Birthday Party. We have had one Wedding Ceremony and two Wedding Receptions. The Jerome K Jerome Society have also held their Annual Dinner once again.

The City of Lichfield Concert Band held two Christmas Concerts, and Sinfonia also held an event. Lichfield District Arts have held five concerts, and have a Beer Festival planned in the near future.

This year we have two new bookings in the Guildhall – each monthly. The National Trust (they previously used St Mary's) and The Three Spires Townswomen's Guild who have recently set up a branch in Lichfield. They have moved from the Fire Station due to increasing numbers.

The 2017 diary is busy, with very few dates available on Friday and Saturdays. We are now receiving Wedding enquiries for 2018.

5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

Limburg Christmas Market 2016

The photograph to the right shows the Limburg Twinning Association's Christmas Hut; ready to welcome its first customers to the Christmas Market, selling homemade Gluehwein, Schnaps and more...



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 underway. The celebrations will be held during the weekend of 6 October to 9 October 2017.

Erasmus+ Programme

Two male students in their early twenties from Limburg are planning a 6 week voluntary work experience in Lichfield from the middle of February of this year. They are studying social care at a Limburg college and have been granted funding by the European Erasmus+ programme to work with organisations in Lichfield who help people with learning difficulties. A few organisations, like Queens Croft High School and Cherry Orchard Garden Service, have already expressed their interest in offering the students placements. However, affordable accommodation for both students is proving to be difficult and any suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

Exchange Enquiries

Christine Jaudoin, the Twinning Officer from Ste. Foy, was looking for an English pen pal for her 16 year old son to improve his English and in return to host the English student in France. Contact has now been established between the two families and we wish them a long lasting friendship.

Thomson Travel Agency in Bore Street have kindly confirmed that they will be able to accommodate 18 year old Limburg student, Laura Peluso, for a 3 week work experience placement from 12 to 30 June 2017.

The Bank Manager of Lloyds Bank in Lichfield has kindly confirmed that he will be able to offer 21 year old Limburg banking student, Klara Schreiber, a 3 week work experience placement at his bank from 23 January to 10 February 2017. He has also organised some days at the Lloyds Bank International Branch in Birmingham, to make it an interesting experience for Klara, before she starts work with the German Bundesbank in Frankfurt in March.

The Lichfield Table Tennis Club has accepted an invitation from the Limburg Table Tennis Club to take part in an international twinning tournament in June this year, as part of the Limburg-Offheim village's 800th anniversary celebrations. The Lichfield Club is sending three teams to Limburg and we wish them every success.

A German and French teacher at Lichfield's King Edward VI School, is enquiring about partner schools in Limburg and Sainte Foy for possible exchanges and penfriends. Enquiries have been sent to both Councils in Germany and France.

A 20 year old student from Sainte Foy is looking for a 6 week work experience placement as personal assistant, possibly in HR, in Lichfield during May or June of this year. The Twinning Officer is looking for interested companies and would appreciate any suggestions.

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

The winter tree work is proceeding well. Some enquiries have been received about the felling of too many trees but felling will only be done if there is a potential hazard to people or property, or to improve the health of other trees.

The Chestnut in the centre of the picture had to be felled immediately before Christmas being at the junction of 2 pathways at St. Michael's where 600 people were due to pass. The forecast of high winds meant ACME came off their Christmas break to do it for us.

The consequence of felling 2 dead Chestnuts, also a Yew and multi-stemmed Ash damaging graves, is an open view from the road to St. Michael's Church for people to enjoy.



Likewise the three Alder trees in front of an electricity sub-station in Boley Ward were removed as dead branches were frequently falling in and around the enclosure causing a potential hazard. Some timber was left with the ivy and shrubs as a wildlife habitat.

Other timber from this year is to be used to mark out a small area in the NW corner of the Festival Gardens to create an area of natural woodland.

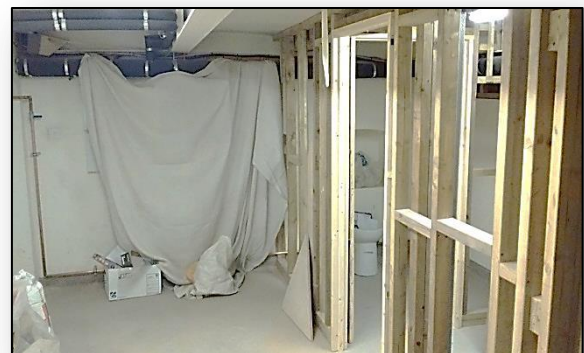


The footpath by Netherstowe School between Stowe Pool and Stowe Fields has now been widened to allow pedestrians and cyclists to pass safely. All hedges along other footpaths are due to be pruned in February and March.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Tony Briggs

At its meeting of 5 December 2016 the City Council resolved to accept a tender for the conversion of part of the basement of Donegal House into toilets and kitchenette facilities. Work on this conversion is now well underway with an anticipated completion during February 2017. This conversion has been planned for some time and will allow staff access to running water from a source other than the kitchenette on the top floor of the building as well as easing the pressures on the toilets located on the top floor, especially as new tenants are due to arrive in the currently vacant office on the second floor.

The photographs below show progress from the clearing of the basement area through to the current stage of the renovation:





Repairs to the roof of the 'stairwell' area of the Guildhall are due to begin at the end of the month. This will resolve the longstanding issues of water ingress both in to the stairwell and the neighbouring Whytmore room that have been ongoing for some time. Repairs to the existing lead roof have been limited to patching for many years but this more comprehensive scheme should ensure the area remains watertight for many years to come. The existing lead roof will be covered by a single ply waterproofing membrane, which given the difficulty in accessing the area and disposing of waste materials (the only access and egress being via the Velux window in the Whytmore room), reduces costs and inconvenience considerably when compared to a traditional roof replacement process. In order to increase value for money, a sum of has been included in the tender to replace broken/missing roof tiles and repair spalled bricks etc that are in the vicinity of the work area but not directly related to the roof replacement.

A great deal of work has been put into compiling the recommendations for the 2017/18 R&R budget which is included in a separate report as part of the Budget proposals. Guide prices have been obtained for several items that will help inform R&R budgets over the medium term and ensure that the planned improvements are approached in a strategic manner.

While the recent focus has been on the more major repairs and improvements there have also been some small scale improvements to the Guildhall, including the repainting of the area of the main corridor immediately behind the main entrance door and the replacement of the ageing light fittings on the top floor landing with brighter, more efficient LED alternatives.

The Neighbourhood Plan continues to progress with a draft consultation statement being submitted to the City Council's consultants shortly after Christmas for their comments and suggestions. Once completed, this document will be submitted to Lichfield District Council along with the draft Neighbourhood Plan and various supporting documents for further consultation and independent examination.