

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Sarah Wallace, Civic Officer

On Saturday the 9 September the Sheriff, Cllr Andrew Smith successfully completed the Sheriff's Ride. In keeping with this historic tradition some 43 riders joined the Sheriff on the 20 mile perambulation of the City boundaries.

At Freeford Manor an additional 110 guests joined the Sheriff for a buffet lunch where they were entertained by 'Jazz Tones '.



At the end of the day the Ride was escorted back into the City by the Sword Bearer and Mace Bearer. The Sheriff was welcomed into the Close by representatives of the Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral before continuing onto the Guildhall where the Ride culminated with three cheers for the Sheriff.

The Sheriff's Ride is the largest event the City Council undertakes and would not be possible without the support of many volunteers, local businesses and farmers. This year the Council was fortunate enough to secure the support of Jaguar Land Rover and Acorn Kia, Burntwood who provided the lead vehicles; Jaguar Land Rover kindly displaying the City Council Crest on their vehicle. It is hoped that the new relationships forged will continue in future years.



The Johnson Birthday Celebrations were held on the Market Square on Saturday 23 September. In keeping with tradition, just after midday, the Mayor placed a laurel chaplet on the statue of Dr Samuel Johnson after which St Michael's choir sang Johnson's last prayer to music specially written by Peter Hawsworth, their musical director.

As part of the Heritage weekend the celebrations and activities continued throughout the day including a Mini Town Criers competition carried out under the watchful eye of the City's own Town Crier Ken Knowles. The worthy winner was the aptly named Belle Jackson aged 8.



The Swinfen Broun challenge Bowls match was held on Wednesday 27 September, this was rescheduled from earlier in the year. In spite of the wet weather and fading light the City Council team put up a valiant effort but were unfortunately beaten 108 – 59.

Preparations continue for the Mayor and Sheriff's forthcoming charity events; a concert on Tuesday 31 October by Lichfield Rock Choir and a Masquerade Ball on Saturday 25 November. Tickets for both these events are now on sale and can be purchased from the Civic Officer.

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

Market Performance

We have had several new Traders sign up to permanent status this month, meaning that Saturdays are practically full and more guaranteed income on Fridays.

Market Promotion

We are investigating new ways to promote the Farmer's Market to ensure footfall is maximised. We have signed up to Lichfield's 12 Days of Christmas promotion for both the Farmer's Market and the General Market, also in an effort to maximise footfall. Over a 12 day period in December, a business displays a wreath and customers have to visit each designated business to collect a free gift (e.g. tangerine, gift soap etc).

Johnson's Birthday and Heritage Weekend

Despite a few issues regarding licenses in the run up to the event, the relocation of the market ran smoothly on the day and was deemed a success.

Christmas Lights Switch-on Market

Planning is well under way with a number of Traders having already applied to stand on this special Market.

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

September is always the busiest month of the year at Johnson's Birthplace, when the whole City comes together to celebrate the Birthday of Lichfield's most famous son. Johnson received an unexpected Birthday present this year with the appearance of a 'Google Doodle' on September 18. The M&HO contacted Google at the suggestion of the Johnson Tercentenary Committee about commemorating Johnson in this way for his 300th Birthday, so Lichfield may well have played a part in this moment of national recognition for his 308th, and visits to the Birthplace website and users of social media pages increased on the day.



This year's Heritage Weekend on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September also commemorated Garrick's 300th Birthday, and activities at the Birthplace included the traditional Birthday cake given free to visitors, craft activities and 'the Great Garrick dressing-up chest', which saw the Birth Room transformed into a theatrical wardrobe complete with a stage and scripts, and costumes kindly loaned by The Lichfield Mysteries.

The M&HO also worked in partnership with the Visit Lichfield team and the Civic Officer to arrange the programme on the Market Square and at the Guildhall Cells, with other events including Intimate Theatre performing on the Square and around the City, the Young Town Crier's competition, City of Lichfield Concert Band and the Black Country Players.

The weekend's events began on the Thursday evening with a Storywalk with the Lichfield Storytellers, featuring four storytellers throughout the building, and the Museum hosted the Johnson Society for their reception on Friday. The Birthplace received 716 visitors over the Saturday and Sunday, and the Guildhall Cells volunteer team welcomed 444.

Much of the month was taken up with preparing and promoting the Birthday weekend, which included taking a Saturday stall at the invitation of the Markets Officer and engaging with over 250 shoppers. Other events in September included the start of the new term for the Museum's Latin class, writing group and Bookworms club, and De Ferrers school from Burton visited with two Sixth Form English groups for Dictionary workshop sessions. The M&HO welcomed Dr Nick Seager and a group of academics involved in the Museum's ongoing Keele University Book History project for a visit to use the Birthplace library and a planning meeting for the 2019 workshops.



The library was also visited by director Tim Ford and cast of 'Letters to Emma' at the Garrick theatre during the rehearsals for the play, seeing some of the Anna Seward letters, books and objects that had inspired the play's writer Carolyn Scott-Jeffs.

Work was also underway on the 2018 events programme for the Museum, including meeting with the Lichfield Festival team on plans for the Birthplace to be a venue and partner for the March Literature Festival; and with Fired-up theatre, a local community theatre group who are developing some Johnson-themed theatre to be performed in the Birthplace, and are looking at potential performance and sound pieces for the future development of the Guildhall Cells displays.

4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

Due to the timing of the Twinning Weekend in Ste Foy, a full report on the event will be included in the Officers' Report to be submitted to Council on Monday 4 December 2017.

5. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

The Old Prison Cells close to the public on 21 October, with a volunteer on hand to offer information about their past. School parties have visited the Cells (by prior arrangement) and there have been several Tourist Information Centre tours recently in the evenings, especially during October.

Since the last report, the Guildhall has hosted three Wedding Ceremonies and a Wedding Reception. There are two more Wedding Ceremonies booked in before the end of the year.

We have had two Christening Parties, with another one due in a few weeks. There have also been two birthday parties and a Silver Wedding Anniversary party. The diary is very full, with no availability for Friday/Saturday evening bookings for the remainder of the year. There has also been an increased interest in childrens parties – enquiries are usually for a Sunday or in the downstairs Guildroom. We have had three Harry Potter themed parties so far this year.

Other bookings include an Awards Presentation for the Pauline Quirke Academy, the Lichfield Bower Cheque Presentation Evening, and a Thank You Gathering for Lichfield Festival.

The Lichfield Round Table held their Oktoberfest which was very well attended, and have booked again for next year. The evening included an ompah band, hog roast and beer. They also held a Murder Mystery Evening. The Johnson Supper was held during Heritage Weekend.

Lichfield Arts have held five concerts as well as the L2F Festival of Folk. The Beer Festival is also booked and promises to be as popular as ever.



We continue to attract commercial bookings. Lichfield Leather held a sale in the Guildroom over bank holiday weekend – it went so well they had to source more stock! They have booked for Christmas and again next August. There have been two Craft Fairs, two Corridor Gallery displays and a Bible Exhibition. Market Research have held two events.



We have managed to work around the bookings to do maintenance work. The ovens have been cleaned in both kitchens and repair work has been carried out to address the damp wall in the Guildroom.

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

It was a pleasure in September to attend the Cities in Bloom awards at Warwick Castle and witness the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Janice Greaves being presented with a Gold award for Lichfield. It was the result of a lot of hard work by all the members of the Blooming Lichfield Group, the District Council Maintenance team and others in the City. It was wonderful to see everyone's efforts being recognised with such a coveted award.



Certain Green Spaces and footpaths seem to come up regularly with concerns from the residents. If these are recurring problems then more work will be done this year to achieve a more permanent solution. This will be more cost effective in the long term.

It was for this reason that the canopy of trees in Fecknam Way and Johnson Close were lifted by 4m which may seem extreme but means the problem will not need revisiting for 5 years.

Although one resident felt the work on the trees was too brutal, other feedback was complimentary including an email thanking the City Council for "an excellent job" and appreciation that the "streets looked so much better". This feedback has been passed on to the tree surgeons who carried out the work.



7. Town Clerk: Tony Briggs

The damp-proofing work to the rear of the Guild Room has now been completed. A membrane has been installed to prevent further damp ingress, and the area has now been skimmed with new windowsills installed and the existing skirting board and other fixtures now back in situ. While relatively minor in nature, this work will enable the whole of the Guild Room to be redecorated in due course to enhance the room's appeal.

New signage has been installed adjacent to the lift access on the ground, first and third floors of the Guildhall and at the bottom of the main stairs. This signage has been commissioned due to the many comments from visitors and hirers regarding the clarity and location of the existing signage. Additional replacement signage is currently being prepared due to the renaming of the Committee Room and this will be in place shortly.

The Civic Officer's report provides details of the Sheriff's Ride which took place on Saturday 9 September. Prior to the arrival of the wonderfully turned out horses and riders and myriad chains of office, there was a rather less glamorous duty to be performed in the field in which the marquee was placed at Freeford. Cows were in the field until around 2.45pm on 8 September, so at 3.15pm the City Council's recently formed but elite team, armed with shovels and bags, removed that which cows deposit so freely and liberally from the area.

This is just one example of the work undertaken by City Council staff that falls outside of their regular role but allows events such as the Sheriff's Ride to be such a success.



The Clearance Team: L to R Keith Howes, Nigel Boden, Albert Hartley, Richard Cotterill, Nick Burton, Sarah Wallace and Richard Hunt (sans Mace).