

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Sarah Wallace, Civic Officer

September was an exceptionally busy month for the Civic Team;

Sheriff's Ride

On Saturday 10 September the Sheriff, Cllr Robert Yardley completed the 20 mile perambulation of the City boundary on horseback.



The ride was a culmination of many weeks of preparation and planning. This year a dedicated team of City Council staff was put in place to set out the course and provide the correct signage under the guidance of John Adams; friend of the late John Haggett, and Nick Sedgwick, the Clerk of the Course. The team worked tirelessly both before and after the ride to ensure everything was in place and then removed in a timely manner. This proved to be invaluable, as much of the intricate detail of the ride has now been documented for future years.



Although it rained for most of the day the weather did not dampen the spirits of the 49 riders. The Sheriff completed the whole course on his horse, Splash. This was quite an achievement for a non-Rider who only started taking riding lessons in May this year.

Luncheon was held at Freeford Manor where 120 guests enjoyed a buffet lunch. This also gave the Sheriff the opportunity to personally thank all those who had made the ride possible particularly the landowners, local businesses and support services such as the Police, paramedics and Vet.

Johnson Birthday Celebrations

The 307th Dr Johnson Birthday Celebrations took place on Saturday 17 September. The Mayor, Cllr Mrs Sheelagh James led the ceremony on the Market Square accompanied by other civic dignitaries, City Councillors and seven prefects from King Edward VI School. The ceremony culminated in the traditional laying of a Laurel chaplet on the Johnson Statue with musical accompaniment provided by the Lichfield Singers.

After refreshments in the Guildhall and a Toast to Dr Johnson, the Mayor and Sheriff joined in with the rest of the Heritage weekend celebrations. Under the guidance of our own Town Crier and Mace Bearer, twelve children entered the mini Town Criers competition on the Market Square. The Mayor and Sheriff had a difficult job to judge and three year old Daniel Conway was declared the winner.



The Birthday celebrations continued throughout the weekend with the Johnson Supper in the Guildhall on Saturday evening and a service at the Cathedral on the Sunday. The Mayor and Sheriff were then delighted to represent Lichfield in Uttoxeter and take part in their celebrations for Dr Johnson on Monday 19 September.

Freedom of the City: DMS Whittington

On Wednesday 28 September the City Council bestowed the Freedom of the City on Defence Medical Services Whittington. A Special Council meeting was held at 12.30pm in the Guildhall where the leader of the Council, Cllr David Smedley proposed the motion which was seconded by the Deputy Leader, Cllr Mrs Norma Bacon. The motion was carried unanimously after which the Mayor presented the Commander of DMS Whittington, Wing Commander Mike Harris, with a framed illuminated scroll.

The civic party, which included the Vice Lord-Lieutenant Mr Graham Stow, then processed to the Cathedral for a Service of Thanksgiving. Following the Service the Civic dignitaries took up position on the Market Square to take the salute as DMS Whittington exercised its right to parade through the City. Children from Lichfield Cathedral School lined the Close, enthusiastically waving the parade off with flags in hand, while children from Whittington School welcomed the parade on the Market Square. The day's events were ended with a civic Reception at the Guildhall. Photographs from the occasion are included below.

Forthcoming Events

Remembrance Sunday: Sunday 13 November

Mayor & Sheriff's Charity Dinner Dance: Friday 25 November

Mayors Carols: Tuesday 6 December





2. Markets: John Beard, Assistant Markets Officer

Re-paving of the Market Square

The re-paving of the Market Square has now been completed to a high standard and well within the original budget forecast. The photograph below shows the repaving of the final section on 12 October.



Farmers' Market

October's Farmers' Market showed an improvement in numbers of traders on the previous month. We also have other traders who are currently going through the application and verification process to allow them to trade at future Markets.

Of the nine empty stalls on a Friday mentioned in the Officers' Report submitted to the meeting of the City Council on 14 September, two are now occupied permanently and with a third to follow imminently. There are also currently five casual traders at Friday Markets.

Saturday Markets are running with a very low void rate and there are other Traders interested in taking stalls, while there are also signs of improvement in the Tuesday Markets. The situation is variable however and a close eye needs to be kept on the situation to ensure the Markets continue to thrive.

Christmas Lights Switch-on Market

Work to plan the Christmas Lights Switch-on Market is ongoing. Invitations have been sent out to last year's proposed traders and a large number have already replied. There has also been some interest from new Traders.

Lighting

The Market Square stall lighting system is scheduled to be inspected in preparation for use following the end of British Summer Time on 30 October.

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

September is always the busiest month in the Birthplace calendar, and this year was no exception with over 1000 visitors to the house in the weekend of Johnson's Birthday Celebrations, and over 2,300 in the month.

The commemorations of the 307th anniversary of Johnson's birth were the most successful since 2009, and formed part of the wider Georgian Heritage Weekend which received excellent feedback from visitors to the City and local partners. The M&HO was part of the working group that developed the weekend and additional events at the Birthplace included a fascinating Oriental Tea talk and ceremony exploring 18th century brews, and a participatory dance workshop with the 'Regency Rebels'. Both events were fully booked. Entertainment on the Market Square included a new play by Intimate Theatre, the 6th junior Town Crier competition, and the City of Lichfield concert band.

Elsewhere in the City the cells also received over 1000 visitors, and the Black Country Players returned with costumed characters and street theatre.



Intimate Theatre



Regency Rebels

Other events in the month included the start of the new Latin course for adult learners, with 20 participants studying weekly in the Museum. The summer exhibition 'Harmony & Grace' finished, with the final weekend welcoming a large group of calligraphers who were attending a conference day in Lichfield, and the 'Bookworms' reading club began a new term, with new members and additional volunteers ensuring the club continues to thrive.

The Museum welcomed a group of group travel operators as part of a promotion event arranged by 'Visit Lichfield'. Megan, a student from the University of Birmingham, began a placement at the Museum which will run up until March as part of the Birthplace's involvement in their new 'History in the Workplace' module. Megan will be working on the small collection of coins and medallions in the collection, as well as contributing to the David Garrick exhibition planned for summer 2017. Behind the scenes, planning the schedule for next year's events is underway and the new Museum website is nearing completion.



Visitors signing Johnson's Birthday Card

The M&HO has also been making arrangements to collect a large oil painting of 'Johnson awaiting an audience with Lord Chesterfield', which has been in storage with a painting conservator for a number of years.

4. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

The renovation of the Guildhall toilets is almost completed, but some snagging items remain. The kitchens, lift and ground floor toilets have also been professionally deep cleaned.

Regular bookings have included: Archaeological Society, Ballroom Dancing, Band Practice, Bridge, Chess, Darby & Joan, Heyday Friendship, Ladies Cameo Group, Lichfield Poets, Meditation, Slimming World, U3A and U3A Gardening.

Two new hirers have also begun holding events at the Guildhall, a Holistic Therapy group and the RSPB (the RSPB have moved all their bookings from St Mary's to the Guildhall). Various groups have also held small meetings in the building.



Market Research companies have held three sessions recently. There has also been a Craft Fayre and the Stan Bowley Trust held a charity table top sale. Lichfield Leather held a successful sale and booked for Christmas 2016 and next year. A photographic exhibition/sale was held in the Corridor Gallery. We have also hosted two Wedding Receptions.

Lichfield Round Table held a Hog Roast and Beer Festival and have booked in again for next year.

Lichfield District Arts have held a Food and Drink Festival, and four concerts, as well as the L2F Festival which occupies the whole building.

Other bookings have included the Rock Choir and the Scouts Awards. Lichfield Cathedral Outreach Programme have used the Guildhall and booked in again for next month.

The old Prison Cells are now closed for the winter following another successful Spring/Summer opening period.

The Johnson Society birthday celebrations have taken place, which coincided with the Georgian Heritage Weekend in Lichfield. Over that weekend the Guildhall was also used by Black Knight Historical for a talk, book signing and Georgian Fashion Show in the Guildhall. This was followed by a NSPCC Charity Concert on Sunday evening.



5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

Limburg

On Sunday 18 September 2016, Bishop Dr. Georg Baetzing was installed as the 13th Bishop of Limburg, replacing the former Bishop, dubbed the “bishop of bling”, who was suspended in 2013 by the Vatican over his lavish spending on renovating his official residence. Bishop Baetzing will not live in the luxurious residence built for his predecessor.



Moonlight Dinner

The Limburg Twinning Association held a Moonlight Dinner in an exclusive roof top restaurant on 16 October to celebrate Erasmus Darwin and the Lunar Society. The Lichfield Cathedral artist-in-residence, Peter Walker, was invited by the mayor of Limburg to repeat the son-et-lumiere projection which had been part of the Lichfield Georgian Festival in Beacon Park, to round off this special night.

Twinning Feature

Mercury Editor Andy Kerr has visited the City Council Offices to put the final touches to the Twinning feature which will include details of its almost 25 years' history, its opportunities and its future in the wake of Brexit. Publication is scheduled for October.

Exchange Enquiries

The Ste. Foy Twinning Officer, Christine Jaudoin, is looking for a Lichfield exchange family for her 16 year old son to help improve his English. In return, a Lichfield student will be hosted in France. Interested families are invited to contact the Twinning Officer.

An application has been received by a 17 year old Limburg girl for a 3 week placement in June of next year, in either the public sector or the travel industry. Placement ideas or offers would be very much appreciated.

Initial plans are in hand for the choir of the Church of St. Michael on Greenhill to visit Limburg and perform a concert in August 2017.

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

At the RHS Award Ceremony Lichfield received a Silver Gilt in the Small City Category. In addition the Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust received a special award for the Environment, and Lichfield resident Sylvia Davis won the RHS 'Greening up the Grey' Award for the colourful bedding she had personally planted around Swan Mews. The competition remains a very good catalyst to make things happen in the City, arranging community events, improving the environment, plus all hanging baskets and planting which helps to attract shoppers and tourists.

The Chairman of Blooming Lichfield, Richard Lewis, has once again expressed his gratitude for the support the project receives from each tier of local government.

Much of the recent work at Curborough Community Centre was centred around Lichfield in Bloom. The new Forest School Area has regularly been used by the Rocklands Special School since its installation in June. In September we were notified by Tesco that we have secured £8,000 funding from the "bags of help" fund. This is to enhance access to the Forest School and to improve the hard standing to make it easier for wheel chairs. If shoppers vote for us in-store between 31 October and 15 November, the £8,000 can increase to £12,000. Such a donation would help enable helping the Community Centre to improve their security camera provision too.

Minster Pool and Walk continues to be a good advertisement for the City with filming on Saturday 8 October for the series "Shop Well For Less", a BBC2 production.

The Woodland Trust is also filming a short documentary about the Verdun Oak in the Memorial Gardens on 14 October.

On the 5 October four members from the Parish of Galleywood, a small village in Essex, came to receive two Verdun oak saplings grown on by Lichfield City Council.

Mr Paul, the Chairman of the Council was presented with the plants by the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Sheelagh James. Mr Ken Knowles read details of Verdun and recited a poem called the Ash & the Oak by Louis Simpson. It was a rewarding day for all concerned.

Much was learnt during the planning and preparation for the Sheriff's ride which will prove highly useful for next year's event.

The Conduit Fountain on Friary Corner has been serviced and is back in working order. The ground by the fountain is very wet - this is the responsibility of Severn Trent Water who are working to locate a possible leak in their pipework nearby.



7. Deputy Town Clerk: Tony Briggs

Final snagging of the Guildhall toilet renovation is due to take place imminently. Minor additional work is due to be completed around the time of the Council meeting to replace tarnished and worn handles and signage in order to complete the renovation. Sourcing appropriate signage has proven slightly difficult, with what was generally available being either too small or too flimsy, hence the delay in completion. The final account is forecast to be within budget.

With the return of the repainted City Council crest to the front of the Guildhall in late September, the work to the front elevation of the building is now complete. A final invoice from the contractors showing the overall cost to be around £1,000 under budget has been approved by the City Council's architects and payment is currently being processed.

Tenders for the repair to the 'stairwell' area of the Guildhall roof and the conversion of part of the basement of Donegal House into WC's and a kitchenette have now been returned.

The recommendations of the subsequent meeting of the Tender Committee are the subject of a separate agenda item.



Following the recommendations of the fire safety risk assessment carried out at the Guildhall earlier this year, additional emergency lighting has now been installed on the rear fire escape.

Work has also begun on the arrangements for the Christmas Lights switch-on event scheduled for Sunday 27 November, with associated entertainment, Christmas Market, carol singing and of course an appearance from Santa!