

For Council: 1 October 2024 APPENDIX 5

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

Lichfield City Council's 'Back to School' event took place for its second year on Sunday 18 August and was well attended, saving families in Lichfield the cost of providing school uniforms. The afternoon was well supported with help from City Councillors and volunteers, with further support from businesses such as Tesco & Morrisons.

Generous donations were given by residents that included stationery and water bottles, plus some brand-new uniforms, purchased especially for this cause.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Rosie Harvey-Coggins, 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.



Deputy Mayor, Sheriff, City Council Staff, Councillors & Volunteers

On Saturday August 31, the Mayor and Sheriff hosted the inaugural Charity event of their civic year at the Guildhall. The 'Brains of Lichfield' Quiz & Music Evening was a resounding success, thanks to the enthusiastic participation and support from the community. The Quiz featured a variety of challenging rounds, including general knowledge, music, and local history, keeping everyone entertained.

Special thanks go to Tom Burns of 'Pineapple Quizzes' and Simon Foster, who generously gave their time free of charge to help create a fantastic evening. We also offer our heartfelt thanks to Lichfield District Arts for their kindness in providing the bar and gifting casks of beer to sell on the evening, with all the money raised going to the nominated charities. The event raised over £2,300!

On Saturday 7 September, the Sheriff of Lichfield, Cathy Wood and Consort Nigel Gann, took part in the annual tradition that is the Sheriff's Ride.

With a close eye on the public purse and the environment, the Sheriff and Consort opted to lead off this year's Ride in style aboard the Big Red Bike from outside the Guildhall. Pedal power was provided by volunteers Diane, Catherine & Nigel.

The Sheriff stated 'The Big Red Bike is a wonderful, inclusive charity which enables those who love cycling - but who may not be able to cycle independently - to experience the thrill of bowling along again with the wind in their hair!'

The remainder of the event, being organised by the Shrievalty Association, went on to complete the ride accompanied by several horse riders & cyclists.



They were later led by the Sword and Mace Bearers back into the city via The Close, where they were welcomed at the Cathedral by The Revd Canon Andrew Stead, to toast the ride with a glass of sherry. The ride then continued via Dam Street and Market Street to the Guildhall.



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 471st Sheriff's Ride.

Preparations remain ongoing for the Samuel Johnson Birthday Celebrations on Saturday 21 September, which takes place shortly after the deadline for this report. Preparations are also ongoing for the Remembrance Sunday Service on Sunday 10 November and the Mayor & Sheriff's Charity Masquerade Ball on Saturday 16 November.

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

The Birthplace has had a busy summer welcoming 4,261 people in July and August. Visitor numbers in the summer holidays are up 14% in comparison with 2023. August has been a popular month for group visits, guided tours, and outreach talks, including a booking to speak at the British Association of Numismatic Societies' conference; 'Numismatics' being the research of production and the way people have used coins, tokens, currencies, and other objects throughout history.

Events over the summer included family craft activities every Thursday throughout the school holidays. For adult audiences there was The Good, the Bad, and the Deadly, an evening talk on medicine in the 1700s by Sheelagh James, and How to Dress a Georgian Woman, a talk on historical fashion by British designer, Gemma Thompson (pictured).

The Birthplace also took part in the Community Day event on 29 August (pictured below) to promote the museum, upcoming events, group visits, and school visits. Preparations are underway for the Samuel Johnson birthday event, which takes place shortly after the deadline for this report.

Research visits were popular; the Birthplace library was used by a Keele University PhD researcher for her thesis on Anna Seward, and by an academic from Buffalo, United States, for her research on Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi. The Johnson Society also booked to view objects for their research on the Lomax bust of Johnson, and the Johnson Willow.

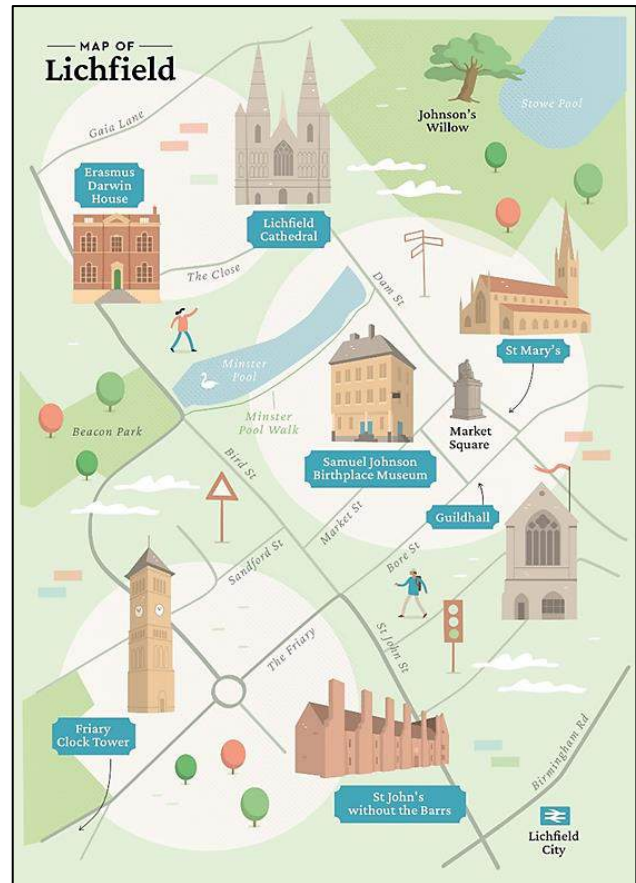
The MHO submitted an article, News from the Birthplace, for The Johnson Society's annual Transactions publication. Transactions promotes the Society's upcoming events and lectures and features a wide range of articles relating to Johnson and the 1700s.



As part of the Bookshop development project, the Birthplace has introduced brand new product lines, including a range of souvenir items such as the newly commissioned Lichfield map. The illustrated map, created by artist Tom Woolley, comes in A3 prints and postcards. The contemporary design features famous city landmarks and will appeal to both modern and traditional tastes.

After being granted Listed Building Consent, the Birthplace's attic window has been repaired. This work was needed to facilitate roof access to investigate issues identified in October 2023's drone survey. The MHO is waiting to receive a quote for essential maintenance to resolve these issues.

The MHO assisted with the shortlisting for Lichfield Arts' L2F Art Competition, with the finalists to be displayed at the Birthplace from 27 September to 5 October 2024. This year's theme is cakes and ale, "celebrating the good life".



As part of the continuing work on the City Plaques Project, the MHO has commissioned a metal conservator to replace the decorative screw covers on the Old Schoolmaster's House plaque and the bronze corner pieces on the Bishop Langton's Bridge plaque.

After obtaining permission from the building's owner, the MHO applied for Listed Building Consent to install a blue plaque on a property in Bore Street to commemorate Daisy Shaw. Shaw was Lichfield's first woman Councillor and first woman Mayor. She had been a suffragist and a Voluntary Aid Detachment Red Cross Nurse at a hospital for wounded soldiers during the First World War.

Samuel Johnson Bust Restoration, Reinstatement and Unveiling

A bust of Samuel Johnson was spectacularly unveiled from a scissor lift by the Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Sam Schafer, and Town Crier and Sword Bearer, Adrian Holmes, on Wednesday 18 September to mark Johnson's birthday. Deputy Mayor Councillor Claire Pinder-Smith, Sheriff of the City Cathy Wood, and the Sheriff's consort Nigel Gann were all in attendance.

The ceremony included speeches from The Johnson Society, who helped to launch the bust reinstatement project, and Jono Oates, who set-up the Go Fund Me crowdfunding campaign to support the bust's repairs and installation.

'The Johnson's Head' bust was donated to Lichfield City Council as a gift to the people of Lichfield by Peter Hone, who purchased it at auction in 2017 on the understanding that it was to be returned to its original location over the door of number 10 Bird Street.

There had been a 'Johnson's Head' overlooking passers-by in Lichfield for many years. An initial bust of Johnson was installed on the site around 1821 by bookseller and printer Thomas George Lomax (1783-1873), former Mayor and an important figure in Lichfield's history, who ran his business in the premises. The building became affectionately known as "the Johnson's Head". This bust was replaced by a second one in December 1884 to commemorate the centenary of Johnson's death and was eventually removed in 1969.

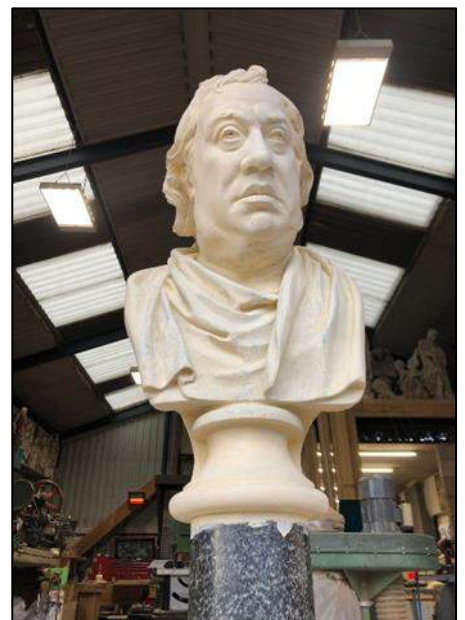
The project to repair, restore, and reinstate the gifted 1884 bust was helped by the generosity of local people, businesses, and the Go Fund Me crowdfunding campaign. The bust required extensive restoration and specialist installation, which was carried out by Jones Carving, Messenger BCR, Brownhill Hayward Brown Chartered Architects, Hibberd Consulting Engineers (of Lichfield), and Green Power Plant Hire who have each kindly donated their time to the project which was led by Lichfield City Council.

The Go Fund Me campaign, set-up by Jono Oates of Jono's Tourism, raised over £3,000 to support the associated costs, receiving generous donations from The Johnson Society, Viking E-Cigs and members of the public. Mr Oates himself also made a separate contribution.

A booklet to commemorate the occasion was prepared by Museum Support Officer Francesca Benson; copies were distributed on the day and later emailed to all invitees for their records.

A selection of photographs follows;

Restoration (photos courtesy of Jones Carving): This included an initial washdown and assessment, removal of sand-based mortar, replacement of the bust's plinth, replacement of a section of stone to the lower back and shoulder, and many coats of limewash.



Installation – 17 September 2024



Unveiling: 18 September 2024 (Photos courtesy of Robert Yardley)





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

Curborough Community Centre (Site 9)

Replacement of picnic table to front of premises, the previous table having reached the end of its useful service life



Remembrance Gardens (Site 28)

South Staffs Water are undertaking repair works to the sewer that runs through the Remembrance Gardens, this follows other work that was completed in the area a few months ago. The work is scheduled to take approximately three weeks, with commencement during early September. Assurances have been received that the ground will be reinstated to the previous standard, and that works and making good will be complete well before the Remembrance commemorations.

An excavation 10m in length is required to repair the worst defects, followed by re-lining works to the remainder of the pipework. Separately, LCC officers are progressing repair and restoration works to benches and memorial railings.



Beech Gardens to Manor Rise (FP6)

Repair to damaged wall and slabbed steps at access point to this footpath.



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

- **Festival Gardens (19C) & Heather Gardens (19B)** – Costs and detail are being sought for additional lighting for pathways on approach to the subway under Western Bypass which separates these two gardens. Tree works are being undertaken, particularly around roadside embankment, to include felling of self-set trees growing through fence, crown lifting and removal of epicormic growth.
- **Clock Tower (19D)** – Removal of moss and weed growth from gravel areas surrounding Tower, apply preventative treatment and replace gravel.
- **ROSPA annual playground inspections** at Curborough, Lincoln Close and Stowe Croft.
- **Wordsworth Close (26A)** – Severn Trent have served notice to carry out a sewer and surface water main requisition at this location.
- **Beaconfields(15)** – Various treeworks to include cutting back from pathways, removal of deadwood, hanging branches and severing of ivy.
- **Stowe Croft (10)** – Cutting back of hawthorn to fence line of adjacent property.
- **Dovehouse Community Gardens** – clearance of garden waste.
- **Friary Wall Repairs** – Consent from Historic England now in place.



Photo Clive Read ©

Wildflowers on show! Eastern Avenue

3. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

A letter from the Ste. Foy open spaces officer regarding an exchange of fruit trees in 2001 was received by the City Council. Back then, Lichfield City Council, together with the Darwin Walk Trust, sent two old variety speciality apple trees to France in return for two Mulberry bushes planted in the Darwin orchard at Elmhurst. The letter reported that the trees were still doing well and full of fruit this year.



At the end of July the choir from St Michael-on-Greenhill, Lichfield, led by Choir Secretary Ted Green, gave a concert and sang at a Sunday morning church service in our twin city of Limburg. Rector, Revd Abbie Walsh, also joined as a member of the choir. The trip was a fantastic success and the choir hopes to be able to build on this new relationship, particularly in acting as host to a Limburg choir in the foreseeable future.

The church in Limburg was the *Lutheran Evangelische Kirche* and the two Directors of Music worked for several months to find music that the choirs could sing together with minimal joint rehearsal time, including *You'll never walk alone*, sung as a hymn on the Sunday morning. There was also a special concert on the Saturday evening. The Lichfield party also included families and friends and the visit involved a number of social activities, including the Limburg Wine Festival and a tour of the medieval Old City.



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

A full market is still being maintained on Tuesday, Fridays, and Saturdays. Any departing traders have been swiftly replaced from those on the waiting list.

Tuesday Market

Currently all pitches on the Tuesday market have been filled by casual traders. The turnover of traders on this market is quite high however, the waiting list maintained by Officers has proved effective in rapidly filling any spaces.

Unfortunately, due to the predicted high winds on 20 August a restricted market operated with traders permitted to bring vehicles on site, not only to act as a windbreak but also to facilitate the quick removal of stock and gazebos if the weather deteriorated further.

Friday Market

The Friday market is now full, and all traders have become permanent. The Markets Officer maintains a list of casual traders from all three markets that are invited to stand when permanent traders are absent or take holidays.

Again, there was a further restricted market on 23 August due to the predicted high winds and gusts of up to 44 mph. Only six traders stood on this day.

Saturday Market

The Saturday market also remains full. Officers continue to receive several enquiries each week from prospective traders as this is the most popular day to stand.

All food stalls continue to be monitored to ensure compliance with food hygiene regulations, this includes checking the temperature of stock sold and stored on the market. Lichfield District Council's Environmental Health Officer is kept informed of any new food trader who attends the market.

The Market Square toilet block has now been repaired and repainted, with the installation of new splash backs, kettle and microwave for the traders use. In addition, a new notice board has been erected on the Market Square to display the Council agenda.



Vegan Market

The Vegan market takes place on the third Sunday of the month. This is becoming increasingly popular with an average of 26 traders helping to bring something different on to the Market Square with a range of diverse stalls.

Festive Market

Preparations continue for the Festive Market being held in conjunction with the Christmas Lights Switch On event on Sunday 24 November. In addition, general market traders have been asked if they wish to trade on extra days on the run up to Christmas. They have indicated that Thursday 19 and Sunday 22 December would be the preferred dates to trade.



Producers' Market

The Producers' market, operated by CJ Events is held on the first Sunday of the month. This market is well supported by 30 traders standing and is immensely popular with customers, many revisiting every month.

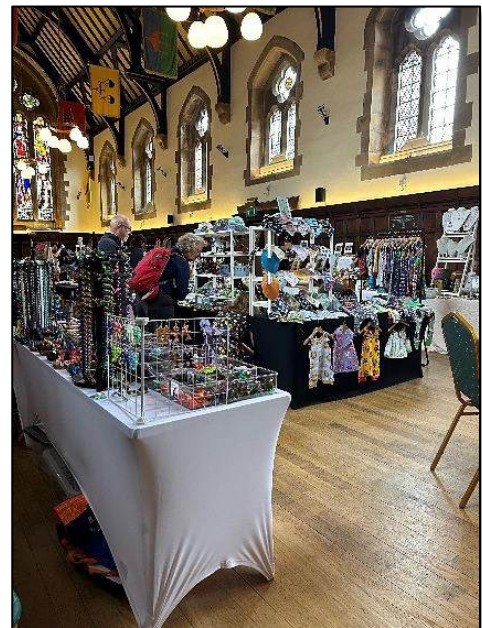


5. Guildhall & Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Bookings Officer

The Guildhall diary is picking up again after the summer holidays. Returning regular groups include: U3A, Bridge, Chess, Slimming World, Lichfield Friendship Centre, Band Practice, RSPB, Staffs Archaeological and Historical Society and the National Trust.

The Cells are due to close for the season shortly after the deadline for this report, but will be open on 21 September as part of the Heritage weekend. The Cells are scheduled for cleaning during October.

Commercial bookings have included a craft fair held during the Food Festival weekend. Unfortunately, this was not as successful as previous craft fairs due to a large food stall situated a few inches from the front of the Guildroom, hiding the craft fair banners and the noise of generators drowning out the craft fair organisers PA system.



'Party Bingo' held a successful evening in July and are back in October and December. Their events are held in different towns and advertised on Facebook. Market Research have had several bookings over the summer, too. Arts bookings include Lichfield Festival who had two bookings in July and Lichfield Arts who have started their autumn programme of concerts.

Private bookings have included: Birthday parties – 50th + 60th joint party, 70th, and a birthday party which incorporated a concert as part of the celebrations.

The Sheriffs Ride Banquet was also held in September. A local netball group held two awards sessions, back-to-back recently as well. Civic events include a Charity Quiz Night and Back to School Event.

Since my last report, the Guildhall continued to attract smaller bookings including choir rehearsals, many meetings, and educational sessions – booked for five days per week across September and October. Future bookings include parties, concerts, party Bingo and an NHS consultation event.

There have also been two wedding ceremonies, a blessing ceremony and three receptions. A tractor and trailer was used as a Wedding vehicle for one event, which was an unusual but effective choice, and a great talking point.



Boley Park Community Hall

During the summer break, the hall has once again hosted a summer playscheme. I am currently looking at the waiting list for regular slots to see if I can fit a couple of more regular hirers in the hall.

A craft fair in aid of St Giles is being held on 28 September; not to be confused with an event being falsely advertised at the Hall on Facebook. We have made every effort to alert people to the nature of this false event, clearly designed to extract money from unsuspecting potential stall holders. This seems to be a common tactic, with several other similar scams identified locally and nationally.

Children's parties have returned after the summer break and we also have a Christening Party in the next few weeks. A stamp fayre was also held in August.

During the last week of the summer holidays, when the daytime bookings were quiet, we took the opportunity to fill the holes in on the lower wall and to re-paint it a slightly darker grey. I am now starting to work on the end of year accounts.



7. Deputy Town Clerk – Sarah Thomas

Community Day took place on Thursday 29 August on the Market square facilitated by the Deputy Town Clerk, Markets Officer, and Office Administrator.

The aim of the event was to bring together local organisations, charities, and service providers to highlight the wonderful work they do in the Community.

This is the first time since the Covid pandemic that the event has taken place, and it proved to be a great success. Organisations such as the Police, Fire Service and NHS Everyone Health stood alongside charities such as Lichfield Arts, Cats Protection and St Giles Hospice.

Each of the 26 organisations chatted to the City's Town Crier, Adrian Holmes, about their work. Everyone was also delighted to welcome Lichfield's very own Gold Medallist, Sophie Capewell, fresh from her triumph at the Paris Olympics. Sophie took time out of her busy schedule to chat to the crowd and pose for photographs with her Gold Medal

Entertainment was provided by Liberty Jamboree's Sign and Shine Choir and the Guitar group from U3A. The children enjoyed free face painting and a chance to get up close to some owls and birds of prey.

Bob Harrison from Lichfield Litter Legends said: *"Many thanks for organising the Community Day today. It was a fantastic success and made better by the lack of rain! I found this model of interaction with the public far more successful than attending volunteering exhibitions at internal events. Looking forward to attending again next year if it is on!"*

A sentiment that was echoed by PCSO Andy Lovatt who said *"Really good, positive day from my side. Did not stop all day with people wanting to speak with me about anything & everything & kids wanting to go in the car. Well worth it. Thanks for asking us again & will definitely be up for next year"*

It is hoped further community events can be held in the future.

A selection of pictures are included in the following pages providing a flavour of the day.

The Deputy Town Clerk is continuing with preparations for the Christmas Lights Switch On event on Sunday 24 November.

Last year's event was successful with approx. 4,000 people attending at peak times however, our professional security team and the Police voiced concerns around the safety of such large numbers. The Deputy Town Clerk has therefore been working on a solution that will not detract from the event and yet ensure the safety of the public.

It has therefore been decided to introduce a large 46m² mobile LED screen and stage (similar to the one pictured overleaf) which will be situated at the 'McDonalds end' of the Market Square. The moving of the location of the stage should ensure that everyone can see and hear what is happening. In addition, local businesses have been invited to purchase advertising space on the screen and the City Council can also utilise it to make safety announcements.

As usual there will be live performances on stage from 12.30pm right through until the official Switch On at 5.00pm. There will also be a Festive Market on Minster Pool Walk, a free tabletop football tournament, children's rides, face painting and Christmas events at the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum.

It is hoped that by presenting the event in this way it will be more inclusive and enjoyable for the community. A full post event account will be included in the December Officer's report.



To further the Council's community engagement the Deputy Town Clerk attended the Locality Forum on Wednesday 18 September. Operated by Support Staffordshire this was an opportunity to network and engage with organisations from the voluntary sector.

At the request of the Chair of Curborough Community Centre, Cllr P Knight, the Deputy Town Clerk and Mayor's Sergeant visited the centre to discuss mitigation measures in the event of a critical incident. An initial assessment was carried out and advice given in regard to lone working policies, additional security measures and the training of staff. A short report detailing all the recommendations discussed was presented to the trustees who are currently considering how they wish to proceed.

In addition, the Deputy Town Clerk has prepared agendas and secretariat support for the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee and Markets Working Group.





