

**OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT**

**1. Civic Matters: Sarah Thomas, Civic Officer**

On Saturday 25 November the Mayor and Sheriff held their annual Charity Ball in the Guildhall which this year had a Masquerade theme. Some 78 guests attended and enjoyed a four course meal followed by a disco. In a change to the usual proceedings, Richard Winterton from Winterton auctioneers kindly gave his time to conduct a light hearted auction, assisted by our very own Ken Knowles.



All prizes were donated by local businesses and included such varied items as a Christmas Snowman, a signed football shirt and a Jaguar Land Rover Experience day to name but a few. The evening raised a total of £2,398 for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charities; Guide Dogs for the Blind and Staffordshire Blood Bikes.

The Mayors Carols for Christmas was once again held on December 5 in the Guildhall. The Mayor's Chaplain Revd Nest Bateman led the service and this was the first opportunity to use the City Council's newly acquired electric piano. Everyone then enjoyed the mulled wine prepared by Cllr Tony Thompson accompanied by warm mince pies. Donations received on the evening for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities totalled £141.



The Mayor and Sheriff's Christmas card was this year designed by Isla Brennan from Christchurch primary School. Children were asked to take a picture that reflected "*a child's eye view of Lichfield*" which Isla cleverly did using images from around the City. As a reward for her efforts the Mayor and Sheriff invited her and runner up Sophie Swallow to Donegal House to join them for afternoon tea in the parlour.

On Saturday January 13 the 3rd Mercian Regiment paraded their old colours through the City prior to laying them up in the Cathedral. The Vice Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Mr Graham Stow and the Mayor took the salute outside the Guildhall. The Civic party then processed to the Cathedral for the poignant service.





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

### **Market Closures**

Winter 2017/2018 has so far brought a number of storms with strong winds, snow and ice. In December there were two market cancellations and one early finish. This compares to three cancellations during the whole winter period in 2016/2017 and six cancellations during the winter of 2015/2016.

### **Incentive to introduce new traders to the market**

There are currently a number of empty stalls on the Friday market and very few casual traders due to the time of year. We are running an incentive offering traders one week's free single stall rent if they introduce a new trader by the end of March who signs up to be a permanent trader and stays for at least four weeks.

### **Newsletter**

A Newsletter has been circulated to traders, which includes special event dates for the year and housekeeping reminders to ensure they are aware not only of important dates, but confirmed relocated markets where they are required to submit paperwork in good time in order to be able to stand.

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

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum had a busy Christmas season, beginning with late-night opening for the Christmas lights-switch on. Events continued over the first weekend of December with 'A Johnson Family Christmas' over two days including a popular display of automata made by Kevin Lynch, The Lichfield Regency Dancers, Lichfield Singers, Storytelling, and children's advent trail.



Also in the December programme, Cath Edwards returned to the Birthplace with 'Midwinter Tales' on an atmospheric snowy evening and Sarah Dale led 'Christmas Crafternoon' craft sessions for adults. The Birthplace also participated in Visit Lichfield's 'Twelve Days of Christmas' promotional trail. In total there were 1,250 visitors to the house in December.



Other activities at the Museum included a visit from Friary school students with a selection of members of their newly-formed Johnson house, and a visit from Streetly Academy sixth form students for a Dictionary Workshop held by Sue Bray. The 7 Lichfield Scouts visited the Birthplace and the Guildhall Cells, and the Birthplace hosted the launch of a new book by local writer Tim Hayes, who is a member of the Museum's writing group.

An 18th century Staffordshire grand-daughter clock from the collection returned from conservation and is now restored to working order, and the items loaned to the Cathedral's Ashmole exhibition returned. Other M&HO work included recruitment for a consultant as part of the Birthplace Development Project, and preparing the 2018 events programme.

Since the last report the Museum team has said a fond farewell to Attendants Janet-Hill Gibbs, retiring after 6 years at the Birthplace, and David Titley, who retired after having worked at the Birthplace for 14 years.

The Birthplace begins 2018 with the news that 18,250 visitors were welcomed in the last calendar year, equalling the busiest year in the Museum's history which was 2015.

#### **4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer**

##### Limburg Cathedral Light Festival

Thousands of visitors came to the Limburg Light Festival over the weekend of 1 and 2 December to see Limburg's landmark Cathedral immersed by fascinating light. Limburg City Council had commissioned Lichfield artist Peter Walker, who, with the help of schools in Lichfield and Limburg, for the first time, transformed the Cathedral into a spectacular artistic Christmas scene. The Mayor of Limburg was very happy with the outcome and has already talked about repeating it again next year. The show was financed by local businesses in Limburg.





### 30 Years of Limburg Twinning Association

Limburg's Twinning Association celebrated their 30 anniversary on 10 December with a gala dinner at Limburg's prestigious Dom-Hotel with nearly 100 guests. They incorporated the theme of Lichfield's Garrick300 into their programme and invited David Titley from the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum to give a presentation as David Garrick at the event.

A number of members from the Lichfield Twinning Association were also invited to join in the celebrations and had a truly memorable weekend in Limburg. Peter Barrett, chairman of the Lichfield Twinning Association, together with all the Lichfield guests, thoroughly enjoyed the great occasion and returned home to Lichfield *"with renewed enthusiasm for the cause of Twinning"*.



### Lichfield Cathedral Boys Choir In Limburg



For the first time, the Lichfield Cathedral Choristers gave a joint concert together with the Limburg Domsingknaben (Choristers) on 12 December in Limburg's Cathedral.

The occasion was to celebrate the 30 anniversary of the Limburg Twinning Association. The Lichfield Choristers were welcomed by Limburg's Mayor Dr. Marius Hahn at the City Council offices, where they performed a selection of concert pieces which showcased their musical ability.

The joint concert in the evening was truly impressive and Mrs. Heide Bein, chairperson of

Limburg's Twinning Association thanked the Lichfield choir and considered it a great honour that they found the time to travel to Limburg in their very busy Christmas season schedule.

### Erasmus Exchange

On 14 January, three educational students from a college in Limburg arrived in Lichfield to start their five week work placement at a local nursery. Many thanks to Helen Marquise at Springfields Pre-School and Day Nursery in Beacon Street, who agreed to take all 3 students for their international work experience, which forms part of their degree. International DBS checks were organised to make this placement possible.

The students are already qualified and have practical experience in the area of early childcare. The placements are being financed through the European Erasmus exchange programme. The Mayor, Cllr Mrs Janice Greaves, welcomed them to their new workplace and wished them a successful and happy time in Lichfield.



### Twinning Events

To follow on from last year's successful internship of 2 students from the Limburg College ARS at Lichfield's Queens Croft School, the college will be sending another student this year for a 4 week placement in Lichfield from mid-February to mid-March. Peter Hawksworth, Queens Croft School's Headteacher has confirmed that he is very happy to accept Isabel Pikart at his school. The placement is funded once again through the European Erasmus programme.

### Exchange Enquiries

Members of the Limburg Twinning Association are planning a visit to Lichfield in early May 2018 and the Lichfield Twinning Association is organising a programme for the visitors. A delegation of around 50 people is expected and the Twinning Association is looking for host families to accommodate 1 or perhaps 2 people over a long weekend from Friday 4 May until Tuesday 8 May. Any offers please inform the Twinning Officer.

## 5. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

Although the Old Prison Cells are closed to the public during the winter months, there were still eight organised tours, including a visit from some Scouts. Johnathan Oates also booked the Ashmole Room and Cells for a talk and tour before Christmas.

We continue to attract our regular bookings such as the Archaeological and Historical Society, Band Practice, Bridge, Chess, Darby & Joan, Heyday Friendship, Italian Class, RSPB, Slimming World, U3A, Lichfield Poets and the National Trust.

Twelve meetings from outside agencies/societies have been held in the building over the last few weeks.

In December various Christmas parties took place which included two commercial ones. The Jerome K Jerome Society also held their Annual dinner.

The City of Lichfield Concert Band performed the annual Christmas concerts. The Superstars Academy held an awards ceremony and Lichfield Karate Club held a fundraising night.

Private bookings have included a Baptism Party, 40 birthday party, child's birthday party and another Harry Potter themed party in the main hall. In the Christmas holidays, a Wedding Ceremony and Reception took place.



The Lichfield Garrick Youth Theatre held a very successful Accoustic Fund Raising Evening recently.

Lichfield Arts have held seven concerts and the January Beer Festival will be held shortly after the deadline for this report.

Commercial bookings include Lichfield Camera Club's Exhibition in the Guildroom during a weekend in December, a fabric sale, Lichfield Leather sale in the Guildroom in the run up to Christmas (they are back again next August Bank Holiday), two Corridor Gallery exhibitions, a table top sale for the City of Lichfield Friends, Craft Fair and a Market Research booking.

Over the Christmas holidays, maintenance work was carried out in the Guildhall to clear blocked pipes. The build-up of limescale is highlighted in the picture opposite. The pipe was almost completely blocked, with only a very small area remaining for water to pass through. Without swift intervention the issue would have led to considerable flooding.



The 2019 diary is now open and there have already been several enquiries for Wedding Receptions.



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

### Rights of Way

Further to a Staffordshire County Council rights of way consultation document all the relevant pathways were visited in the City to estimate the level of maintenance required to keep them open, with information then being reported to members to inform the consultation response.

### Open Space off Tamworth Road

Although the snow was quite heavy in early December there were very few tree problems.

A spruce branch did break off at St Chad's needing clearing, and a couple of hanging poplar branches will need removing from this open space near the Tamworth Road.



### Curborough Garden

Tesco agreed to allocate £1300 of the “bags of help” fund to forest schools allowing the promotion of the new access-for-all facilities at Curborough Community Centre to schools and local youth groups. This is a great bonus not only for local schools but also for the aim of another RHS gold in 2018.

### Dovehouse Community Gardens

In a September meeting with the Lichfield Allotment Association it was confirmed that the site, just south of Dovehouse Fields, is not of interest to them as an allotment site. The area has stood vacant for some time due to a number of issues including site access difficulties, overgrown trees and vegetation and rampant ‘mare’s tail’.

Following a leaflet drop to local residents a committee was set up which included some of the original allotment holders to discuss ideas of how this site could be put to good use. The resulting proposals are the subject of a separate agenda report to Council.





### Lichfield in Bloom 2018

The next meeting of the Blooming Lichfield Group will take place in the Ashmole Room, Guildhall at 2:00pm on 28 February 2018. All are welcome to attend to give their input into preparations for 2018 and future years.

### **7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas**

Since being appointed on the 22 November 2107 the Deputy Town Clerk has attended both Council and Planning meetings. In addition she is working with an external company, Terrain to review all the City Council's Health and Safety policies and procedures.

Interviews for a new Civic Officer will take place on 24 January but in the interim the Deputy Town Clerk will continue to carry out this role.