

OFFICERS' REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Sarah Wallace, Civic Officer



On Friday 15 January a special Council meeting was held to formally confer the Freedom of the City on Peter Young. The Guildhall was dressed to replicate the last time the Freedom was bestowed on an individual which was over 45 years ago. In recognition of his 28 years' service Peter was presented with an illuminated scroll to mark the occasion. Councillors,

friends & family then gathered for light refreshments to celebrate this momentous event.

Children from Christchurch Primary School took part in a talent show in the Guildhall on Wednesday 3 February.

There were a variety of acts which included singers, dancers, piano recitals & ball skills. The event raised over £300 for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charities.



The annual Shrovetide Pancake races took place in Bore Street on Tuesday 9 February. For the first time competitors were asked to pre-register before the race rather than on the day, this proved to be highly successful enabling greater organisation of the event.

The Mayoress, Mrs Sallyanne Smith entered into the spirit of the day, donning her trainers to take part in the ladies races. There were also men's races and a record number of Mascots took part, each representing local businesses.

2. Markets: Lucy Clarke, Assistant Markets Officer

The County Council's carriageway re-paving works surrounding the market square are progressing well and are currently ahead of schedule. The re-paving has had minimal effect on market days with only a few relocations into Market Street to ease unloading/loading and access issues. Market Traders have been very understanding of the situation.

We have an ongoing issue with market traders leaving hot taps running unnecessarily in the Market Square toilet block, after several reminders this problem continues and self-closing water saver taps have now been fitted to prevent this from happening in future.

Debit card payments are now taken over the phone to secure casual stall bookings, payments made in advance will prevent non-attendance and loss of revenue issues.



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

2016 has started well at the Birthplace Museum, with 1,860 visitors in the first 8 weeks. St Michael's school made a repeat visit with two groups of Year 1 students, in a joint visit with Erasmus Darwin House and lunch at the Guildhall. A new volunteer, Margery, has joined the team to assist with school visits and children's events, starting with 'Half Term Fun' in the February holidays, where young visitors enjoyed a 'Brilliant Bees and Butterflies' activity.

The Birthplace Book Group is thriving, with so many new members that a waiting list is in use for the first time. A new volunteer pool has been recruited for the children's 'Bookworms' club, which will allow that to develop in size over the coming year. A new monthly Birthplace Writing Group has been established, to begin in March. Run by a former Book Group member and creative writing tutor, it will be an informal group open to beginners as well as experienced writers.

In the Museum's work with organised group visitors, Attendant Sue Bray gave an Outreach talk on Frank Barber to Alrewas WI in January, and the M&HO has been working with the Visit Lichfield-led 'jamwig' group on developing marketing for the city to groups. Other partnership work in the city included meetings of the LDTA Management Committee, Christmas in Lichfield working group and feedback on the Draft City Centre Development Strategy.

The Birthplace hosted the launch event for the LDTA 'Real Ale Trail', which uses a Johnson image and quote on the leaflet. The event gained some excellent publicity, and was covered by midlands news channel 'Big TV'. The Birthplace is also playing a lead role in developing the plans for Garrick's 300th Birthday anniversary in 2017.

The Museum benefited from the regionally funded 'Expert Eyes' programme, with a visit from Potteries Museum curators to provide advice and information about the stored and displayed ceramics items.

Other work since the start of the year included plans for a display about the history of the Birthplace in collaboration with a local history group for April, and the 1915 visitor book with Tolkien interest will be travelling around venues in Staffordshire from March, as part of a touring exhibition beginning at the Museum of Cannock Chase.



The M&HO has also made arrangements for the Birthplace to become a 'placement provider' for the University of Birmingham, with a student contributing one day a week for two terms, beginning in October. Repairs have been made to some floorboards and the back courtyard stairwell; volunteer Nicola has completed a full five-yearly inventory check of the collection; and the Birthplace has acquired an engraving of Francis Barber, and an unusual early 20th century photograph postcard of the Birthplace has been donated.

4. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

I joined LCC on 2 February, replacing Sarah Wallace as the Guildhall Bookings Secretary. After a relatively quiet January, bookings for the rest of 2016 and into 2017 are now starting to come in strongly. Regular hirers such as Darby and Joan and the Archaeological Society have renewed their bookings for 2016.

In addition, there have been some notable events over the past few weeks, including the beer festival organised by Lichfield Arts that took place on 23 January. A Craft Fayre was once again held at the Guildhall on 13 February, and another is booked for the end of the month. We also hosted a two day Camera Club Exhibition and the Worshipful Company of Smiths held their Annual Feast on 23 February. A Speaking Competition is being held at the Guildhall on 26 February involving local schools and promises to generate lively debate.

5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

Limburg City Council

On 6 March 2016 the county of Hessen and the city of Limburg will be holding elections for a new county and city council. Limburg has eight wards and the Councillors are being elected for the next 5 years. There is no Mayoral election Mayor Dr Marius Helm, the current incumbent, was elected last Summer for a term of 6 years following the retirement of Mr. Martin Richard.

After 19 years of service, the twinning officer Limburg, Mrs. Margret Wolf, retired on 16th February 2016. Her successor is Mrs. Astrid Siegel.

The Twinning Association, with around 50 people, visited Limburg from 9 October. to 13 October 2015 on an unofficial visit. The official visits take place every 2 years.

Sainte Foy les Lyon

France held a census from 21 January until 27 February 2016 to determine the official population of each community, including Sainte Foy les Lyon.

Mrs. Veronique Sarselli, mayor of Sainte Foy since 2014, has invited 80 guests from each twin town to the official celebrations of 25 years twinning with Lichfield and 50 years twinning with Limburg from 6 – 9 October 2017.

Fuse Festival

A band from Adolf-Reichweinschule, Limburg is taking part in the Fuse Festival from 8 - 11 July 2016. They are staying with Reverend Ian Hayter at Wade Street Church.

Peter Walker - Sculptor

The sculptor Peter Walker, who created the sculpture of Erasmus Darwin in Beacon Park and presented the Christmas projections onto Lichfield Cathedral, has a large scale exhibition of his work in Limburg from 11th March to the 17 April 2016. We have invitations to his vernissage (grand opening) on Friday 11 March 2016 from 7pm. Peter has applied for a grant to Lichfield City Council to help with some of the costs.

English Garden Party

Limburg is holding an English Garden Party on 10 July 2016 from 2pm in the Abbey gardens, Villa Scheid. All twinning partners are cordially invited – hats are a must (for women and men).



City council apprentices Limburg

Limburg City Council are sending two of their apprentices for a one-week work experience to Lichfield City Council from 15 to 24 October 2016. Guest families have been found and County Councillor Terry Finn has kindly agreed to take them to Stafford for a day to experience life at the County Council. Arrangements with the District Council have yet to be established.

Lichfield Society of Artists

Jason Reakes, chairman of the Lichfield Society of Artists, has contacted Lichfield City Council to explore cultural exchange opportunities with artists in Germany. Contact has been established with Lahn Artists Limburg.

Erasmus Darwin Project Limburg

The director of “Lebenshilfe Limburg” (a charity for the disabled) and the head of department for the disabled from Adolf-Reichwein-Schule Limburg are visiting Lichfield from 20 – 23 March to compare the provisions for the disabled in both cities. Initial contact about the project had been made with County Councillor Terry Finn about a year ago and they now have been granted funds for this visit. A programme for possible visits is being established with Schools and organisations in Lichfield.

Twinning promotion

In view of the approaching 25 years of twinning with Limburg and Sainte Foy les Lyon, new avenues of exchanges are being explored and promoted.

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

The mature Lime on Minster Pool Walk has been felled, the results of the Picus Test proving accurate. To illustrate this, the man in the picture is inside the hollow trunk. Apart from the timber going to fire wood as renewable energy and the chippings used in the maintenance of paths by the contractor, it is planned that most of the trunk will be used to set up a Forest School in Rugeley.

The string of lights by Minster Pool had to be taken down temporarily for the felling. The row of existing uplighters are being repaired so the lime trees can once more be displayed in the evening.

Clean for the Queen is a campaign to encourage cleaning events across the Country to keep Britain Tidy and to bring greater awareness of a growing problem. All events are listed on its website: <http://www.cleanforthequeen.co.uk/home/2365#about>



Two local Lichfield events have been registered so far for Saturday 5th March. The first, organised by LCC, is open to anyone. The meeting place is the Hedgehog Pub Car Park at 10am. Special ER Plastic bags and a few litter pickers are provided but helpers are asked to bring thick gloves and boots. The first 20 volunteers who register receive free refreshment provided by the Hedgehog Public House.

Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust is also cleaning in the South of the City, meeting at Lock 26 on the Tamworth Road at 10:00am.



Further to the discussions at the last meeting of the Council, arrangements are in hand to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's 90th Birthday on 21st April by the lighting of a Beacon in in the Memorial Gardens as part of the national celebrations where beacons will be lit across the nation on that evening.

The burner head of the beacon is suitably shaped in the form of a rose, and as part of the event, prior to the lighting it is hoped to have a Civic procession to Speakers Corner on Dam Street, where selected written compositions can be read out by Lichfield school children.

The City Council continues to support the "Blooming Lichfield" campaign and a number of ideas for planting and sowing are being developed with applications for grant assistance also being made.

ITV filmed in the Memorial Garden as part of the Woodland Trusts Verdun Oak research project. Lichfield has one of only 8 known Verdun Oaks in the Country. These are trees known to have been grown from acorns brought back from Flanders after the battle which began 100 years ago on 21 February 1916. The Woodland trust thought it quite possible that the other oak in the Memorial Garden known to have been planted in 1920 is also a Verdun Oak.

The piece was broadcast on Midlands News with pictures of the Cathedral, Minster Pool and the Gardens all looking fabulous in Winter sun & blue sky. Our thanks go to Lichfield District Council who maintain the flower beds and lawned areas. No extra work to the Gardens was required for the filming.



7. Deputy Town Clerk: Tony Briggs

15 February saw the launch of the City Council's new website, which has been the culmination of one of the Deputy Clerk's largest ongoing projects. The City Council's card machines are also now functional and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) compliance is in place. Evidence from the Birthplace Museum in particular suggests that payment by card is proving popular and helping to boost sales. The next step towards introducing a range of electronic payment options is to provide customers with an online payment facility, the provision of which is the subject of a separate agenda item.

Early discussions with the City Council's architect in regard to the alterations and renovations of the Guildhall and Donegal House scheduled for the 2016/17 financial year have also taken place.