

A close-up photograph of two hands, one from a person wearing a black jacket and a black watch, and the other from a person wearing a black jacket and a black watch, forming a heart shape with their fingers. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

Welcoming Everyone to Lichfield with Respect & Kindness

ISSUE 2

JUNE 2024

LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY

As we approach the end of another quarter, we bring to you issue 2 of the LDCoS newsletter, which, once again, is - I hope - a fitting celebration of the wonderful work of this incredible charity.

Amongst so many happy events, a sun and laughter-filled picnic in May - made possible entirely by the work and commitment of the tireless volunteers- transcended language and culture barriers, and was truly a joy to behold.

The month of May also marked the appointment of one of our founder members, Cathy Wood, to the esteemed position of Sheriff of Lichfield. Many, many congratulations Cathy from all at LDCoS. A truly worthy appointment.

I am delighted to report that our membership continues to grow, with ninety-one like-minded individuals now numbered amongst our loyal ranks. Sincere thanks to all of our members, whether new or longstanding, for your commitment to our cause, which sadly remains more necessary than ever. Each of us can help to shape our city's future for the benefit of all, in the cause of non-judgemental support and inclusivity. Please help us to continue working towards making Lichfield a supportive, welcoming open-hearted city, where all are welcomed and treated with respect, understanding and sanctuary, irrespective of race, gender, poverty or disability, violence or abuse, and to co-ordinate vital services, practical help and advice for those who might otherwise remain isolated and marginalised.

ROSEMARY BISHOP

Editor

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Beaudesert Refugees Picnic



'Saturday 18th May was a golden day. The sun shone and the English countryside was at its most beautiful to welcome LDCoS members and friends to Beaudesert Park at the invitation of our local Iona Community group.

Some of us had travelled only short distances to Cannock Chase that day. Others had made much longer, often perilous, journeys and arrived from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Central America, Jordan, Pakistan, Syria and Ukraine.

Wherever we came from on that glorious, early summer Saturday, we were made welcome by our kind hosts. We shared food and drink, forest walks, tree-climbing & go-karting adventures – and many conversations in Arabic, Dari, English, French, Spanish, Urdu, Ukrainian. Small children played and slept in the sunshine. Teenagers mooched about. Elders, who would almost certainly never have met in past lives, exchanged stories and told Tasbih.

And so, for a while, on a sunny Saturday afternoon in the Staffordshire countryside, we all experienced what a better, kinder world might be. People from very different lives coming together in friendship and simply 'getting on'. We hope the memories of our Welcome Day and the friendships formed there will warm and sustain us in days to come.

'Cathy Wood

May 2024

Editor's footnote

So, so heart warming to receive this beautiful, indeed lyrical, report on such an inspirational day, and may I add - what a wonderful way to mark the Birthday of our esteemed Chairman and cricket aficionado ! Happy Birthday Warren from all at LDCoS, and long may your celebrated innings continue.



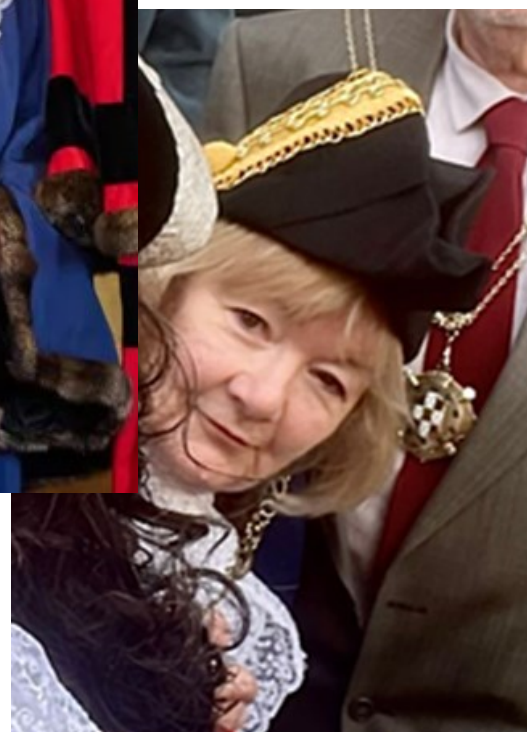


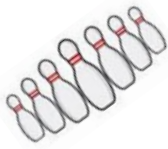
LDCoS is privileged to welcome a Sherriff to it's membership !



LDCoS was delighted to witness the truly well-deserved appointment of member Cathy Wood to the esteemed role of Sheriff of Lichfield on 15th May, and is honoured to count this wonderful lady amongst our members. Cathy is a founder member who has worked tirelessly for, and with, those who come to LDCoS for assistance, and whose work often remains unnoticed, as she works quietly, sensitively and without hesitation in the service of others.

Congratulations Cathy, and may your term of office prove fruitful in the inclusive cause of our diverse community.





Lord Mayor's Beer & Skittles evening



In anticipation of the impending elevation of our esteemed member to the shrieval peerage, LDCoS was well represented at the 2024 Lord Mayor's Beer & Skittles evening, as incumbent dignitaries prepared to had on their chains of office, and our demon bowling Chairman did not disappoint . I wish I could say the same for your Editor's bowling prowess, but suffice to say that enthusiasm exceeded success !





FAITH PLACES OF SANCTUARY



Part of the genius of the City of Sanctuary movement is the introduction of 'Streams of Sanctuary', which includes schools, libraries, local Councils, to name but a few. And, more recently, 'Faith places of Sanctuary'. How does this work?

In 2022 five Lichfield church congregations* and the local mosque, responded to an invitation from LDCOS to be Faith places of Sanctuary and their representatives met to find out more. Over a nine-month period we explored what it means to 'learn, embed and share'; to increase our awareness of those seeking sanctuary and how to include them in our activities; to recognize the contribution they make to our society and the benefits of a welcoming culture for everyone. The Council of each congregation agreed to these principles and practices and application was made to the national City of Sanctuary. Each was approved and granted the Award, which reads:

In recognition of its work and ongoing commitment to the City of Sanctuary vision of being a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.....is hereby by awarded the Church/Mosque of Sanctuary Award.

When the awards were presented, we said; 'This is a sign, not that we have arrived but declares a commitment to what it means to be a Faith Place of Sanctuary'. We have invited representatives from each congregation/meeting, to serve on our LDCOS Action Group and to meet from time to time to assess progress. If there are other Faith Places in Lichfield/Burntwood who wish to apply, please contact:

Rev Warren Bardsley
Chairman LDCoS

*RC Church; St Chad's CE; Wade St Church; Lichfield Quaker meeting; Methodist Church; Lichfield Mosque.



 City of Sanctuary UK



 City of Sanctuary UK

AGM 2024

In our annual business meeting, we thanked retiring trustee Diane Harrison for her year of service. Diane will not disappear, however, since she and continuing trustee Kate Bragger will be leading on storage and recycling of clothing, toys, bedding, soft furnishings and small household items. We now have a 50 sq ft space at Sure Store in Eastern Avenue granted to us at charity rates of £400 pa for insurance.

Warren Bardsley, as required by our constitution, stood down and offered to be nominated for re-election. Unsurprisingly, this was agreed by those present! Also elected to the board was Ihor Shpykuliak from Ukraine. This means that we have two trustees out of seven who have lived experience of seeking sanctuary here in Lichfield. Our Action Group also has a significant representation of those fleeing war and political repression.

The Annual Report of the Trustees to the members, distributed previously to all members, including the Financial Statements to April 2024, was approved. Our financial position is secure and we start a new year of the charity with some £10k carried forward, including the generous contribution of last year's Lichfield Mayor's charity nomination. Thank you, Cllr Ann Hughes.

Our book-keeping is a particular strength in these difficult times. Our relative financial security is down entirely to the unstinting work of Rosemary Bishop, who keeps our books, balances monthly returns so that we are always aware of income and expenditure, and in amongst manages the membership list and – of course – edits this newsletter. Rosemary has been instructed not to edit a word of this paean of praise! Colin Booker's voluntary contribution as adviser and unofficial auditor is also invaluable.

Nigel noted that the day of the AGM was Windrush Day – a reminder of the country's failure to respect the extraordinary contributions of migrants since 1948. He emphasised our work supporting the Ukrainian Community throughout the year and the approaches to the three local authorities towards recognition as councils of sanctuary.

Warren spoke of the need for volunteers to step up to fulfil limited roles in the leadership of the charity. He pointed out that Nigel, for reasons of health, would be stepping back from the management roles he has performed and these are some of the tasks to be distributed. Some commitment – however small – is needed to ensure the future of the charity and its important work. We need our members to commit to taking on single areas of responsibility – as Diane and Kate are doing. This makes these tasks manageable, with maybe a commitment of just a very few hours each month – or indeed – just one event a year. The Action Group will be working on this distribution of leadership alongside the Trustees.

Warren was delighted to welcome the Mayor of Lichfield, Sam Schafer and, of course, the Sheriff, Cathy Wood. He then interviewed Ihor about his and his family's experiences of sanctuary in Lichfield.

The AGM finished with conversation and teatime treats contributed by the members. Thanks to Cathy Wood, Pam Tomlinson, Janet Crews and Shabnam Turani for their organisation, to Curborough Community Centre – especially manager and member Ania Kluk – for their hospitality – and to all the members who came and contributed to an informative and jolly afternoon.



LDCoS Action Group update

As gratefully recognised in our previous newsletter, the LDCoS Action Group consists of a small core group of dedicated members, who meet on a regular basis to discuss a variety of topics.

During the past quarter, the Action group have been instrumental in facilitating a successful pop-up Ukranian restaurant event, whilst also assisting in planning and co-ordinating the recent Beaudesert picnic (covered elsewhere in newsletter). The introduction of guest speakers from South Staffordshire Police Service Community Liaison, Burton Mind and Alzheimer's Society has also helped to raise awareness of the work of LDCoS, and to encourage collaborative inclusive community support and understanding.

More recently, the Action group have been involved in Refugee Week, helping to mark World Refugee Day Thursday 20th June with a recruitment/awareness raising event at The Hub at St. Mary's, and have also provided valuable support at the recent AGM, helping to organise, set up the room, provide refreshments etc. Key members of the Action Group are also helping to research membership skills and experience, with a view to vital future succession planning.

Events now on the horizon include the forthcoming Fuse Festival (further details elsewhere in newsletter), and a members' outing to Middleton Hall Saturday 17th August, with a packed programme of activities set to include a tour of the Hall, craft activities, lawn games, an al-fresco picnic lunch and a nature trail. There is also a possibility that this venue may be made available for future Art Therapy classes. This will be discussed at the visit in August.

As this brief testimony shows, the Action Group quietly and unobtrusively continues to provide a vital and hugely supportive backbone of support to the charity, and for this reason would be delighted to hear from anyone who may be interested in becoming a member. Many hands indeed make lighter work!

Thank you to all of the wonderful members who have facilitated so many supportive arms of support, and have made so many happy events possible since their initial formation.



Nigel Gann, Secretary and founder member of LDCOS, shares his comments and experiences of the last few months LDCoS activities/achievements.

Another year of intense and satisfying year's work for those active members of LDCOS comes to an end. We are secure financially and gaining evermore recognition and praise for our work. Even as the world situation becomes ever grimmer, the theme of 'welcome' in Lichfield is spreading throughout the city, the town of Burntwood and the villages.

We note particularly the rise of what is termed 'the far-right' across Europe. As a charity, we do not become involved in party politics, but we see with alarm how people who seem to hate 'foreigners' are spreading their wicked and violent message again across this continent and beyond. We all come from foreigners. We are an island of immigrants at the furthest end of a continent of immigrants. Immigration is not a type of behaviour to be controlled. It is wired within us from the first recognisable humans who left the campfires of southern Africa some 150,000 years ago. Did anyone reading this ever run a company or a voluntary organisation? Then you'll recognise that, alongside the loyalty of the stalwart members of many years, the need for regular injections of new blood is a matter of survival. So it is with councils and parliaments. And so it is with communities and countries.

It is certainly the case with City of Sanctuary. As our editor notes elsewhere, we have recruited many new members this year, including many relative 'youngsters'. New members are taking on new responsibilities. In a particular case, your secretary, who has been plagued with unpredictable ill health since the mid-2010s, and whose conduct of CoS' affairs has often had to be taken on at no notice by his indefatigable partner and wife, needs to step down from the essential tasks involved in coordinating the charity's work. While I hope not to step out entirely, I am unable to continue the daily tasks necessary to develop our work.

I am therefore recommending to the Board of Trustees that they look to engage a part-time community coordinator. Given our current financial standing, we can afford to pay someone for at least 8 hours week for a year to keep the wheels turning. Early in the year, I hope this person can shadow those of us in leadership roles and increasingly take on a selection of the tasks. We would hope then to continue that post as a result of further fund-raising. More news of this, hopefully, soon.

Of course, the charity needs not just to survive but to develop. The great news is that, for the second year running, we have been rewarded for our role in community development by a further substantial grant from The Community Foundation of Staffordshire. This will help us to enable the growth of the Ukrainian community and its activities in Lichfield and to support work with our guests from Afghanistan. So more to come – with a need to engage more of you in the important and indescribably rewarding work of engaging with migrant populations.

Thank you for your continuing support. Thank you to those who make regular donations without which we would be quite insecure. And thank you to everyone who toils, in whatever small way, to ensure that Lichfield is a place known, not for hate, but for hope.



Forthcoming event for your diary



Fuse Festival Stall (Friday/Saturday/Sunday 12 – 14 July)

Organisers of Fuse Festival (venue Beacon Park, Lichfield) have kindly 'donated' a stall to 'Ukrainians in Lichfield District' in partnership with LDCoS to raise funds for 'Books for Ukrainians'. A Fuse sub-committee has done great work in planning this event, and so far, they have been successful in acquiring the generous loan of a gazebo from friends, and also Curborough Community Centre have kindly agreed to loan 4 small tables and 10 chairs for the occasion. With saleable artwork prepared by children and adults, and a Ukrainian dressed doll provided, this should be a fun-filled event for all generations, to enjoy, but **we still need volunteer helpers to staff the stall on Saturday and Sunday**. Please get in touch if you are interested, and we will be happy to provide further details of site access and timings.

Calendar of other forthcoming events June-July 2024

Wednesday, 19 th June 1-3.00pm	Support Staffs VCSE Marketplace Forum	Burntwood Memorial Centre WS7 9BE	Volunteer members please 3 or 4 to staff a stall
Saturday 22 nd June 4.30 – 6.30	Curborough Community Centre	Lichfield District City of Sanctuary Annual General Meeting	All members, please
Thursday 11 th July 11.30 – 1.00	SCC Resettlement Partnership	Zoom	Volunteers ?
Saturday, 27 th July	Volunteer Fair (Support Staffs)	Lichfield Cathedral	Volunteer members please 3 or 4 to staff a stall

August 2024



As detailed in the latest Action Group update, a member outing to Middleton Hall is due to take place on Saturday 17th August 2024, between 11:00 am-16:00 pm. Transport is kindly being provided once again by Kendall & Wall, and whilst attendees are invited to bring their own picnics, ice creams will be provided ! Family activities planned for the day will include a tour of the Hall, inter-active craft sessions, lawn games- including rounders- and a nature trail. Invitations, and further details will be distributed shortly, and it is recommended that you respond swiftly thereafter if you are interested, as numbers will necessarily be limited due to transport seating arrangements, so it will unfortunately be first come first served.

And finally -

A word from our most prestigious honorary member (and Sheriff's consort ??), Reginald Gann Esquire -

Thank you once again for your continuing loyalty and generous commitment of both time and ,most welcome, financial contributions, no matter how small. This is sincerely appreciated, and may LDCOS continue to offer a supportive, open-hearted welcome to all who arrive in our wonderful City.

And congratulations to my devoted subject Cathy Wood upon her shrieval appointment , although I am somewhat surprised that I was not invited to accompany her to her inauguration, in my esteemed capacity of consort ?



Reginald Gann Esq