

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 3

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LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY

Unbelievably, another quarter is rapidly coming to a close. The evenings are noticeably shorter, and families are preparing for the forthcoming return of children to academia with mixed emotions. But before the sun-filled days of fun and leisure become a dim and distant memory, enjoy this third issue of the LDCoS newsletter, in which we will reminisce - and indeed celebrate - another event-packed season. Chief amongst these summer events was a wonderful day out at Middleton Hall to mark the fifth Birthday of LDCoS—a milestone indeed, which was marked in true style with a picnic and fun-filled activities for all the family, successfully overcoming language and culture barriers with warmth and laughter - and even the weather was kind to us ! This event was a soothing and reassuring balm to the soul ,after the shocking demonstrations of violence, and senseless prejudice and hatred seen across the country during the summer, and truly shows how , through kindness, compassion and tolerance, we may all live alongside each other in peace and harmony, irrespective of race , creed or beliefs. 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, 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. To this end, I am pleased to once again report that our membership continues to grow, with one hundred like-minded individuals now numbered amongst our loyal ranks—great milestone to reach! Sincere thanks to all of our members, whether new or longstanding, for your commitment to our cause. This remains more necessary than ever, so please help us to continue to co-ordinate vital services, practical help and advice for those who might otherwise remain isolated and marginalised.

Happy Birthday LDCoS, and here's to the next five years !

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Summer Birthday celebrations at Middleton Hall



More than 70 displaced individuals and families joined with members of Lichfield District City of Sanctuary on Saturday, 17th August to celebrate the fifth birthday of the charity. The party took place at Middleton Hall, Tamworth thanks to the trustees and the volunteer and outreach coordinator of the Middleton Hall trust. Volunteers provided craft workshops, lawn games and tours of the Hall and the stunning gardens. Guests brought their own picnics which were shared outside, preceding the now traditional multilingual and multicultural rounders game.

City of Sanctuary welcomes refugees and other newcomers to the district of Lichfield, helping them to settle in, to find the basics for living here and supporting them in working towards employment at their own level of skills and qualifications. The charity is supported by Lichfield City and Burntwood Town Councils, the Community Foundation for Staffordshire and Shropshire, Support Staffs and other local charities and individuals. We now have over a hundred members enjoying each other's friendship and support. Plans for future events include local community events and trips. The day out at Middleton Hall showed us how the recent riots, disturbances and threats of violence, shocking as they have been to us, do not in any way reflect the genuine kindness and welcome of Lichfield's residents.

Nigel Gann

Editor's footnote

Sincere thanks to all who made this event such a great success, with particular gratitude extended to Sam Kirman, Pam Tomlinson, and Shabnam for their wonderful organisation and planning. Thanks also to Julia Mitchell, High Sherriff of Staffordshire for her presence and generous gifts, and most importantly Middleton Hall staff and volunteers for their co-operation and warm hospitality.



LDCoS's very own shrieval member embarks upon her term of office in earnest.

Following the appointment of member Cathy Wood to the esteemed role of Sheriff of Lichfield on 15th May, she has indeed hit the ground running, whilst still quietly and sensitively proffering her compassionate support to all who come to LDCoS for assistance, together with her vital work at Lichfield Food Bank.

A landmark event in the Sheriff's year of office is the annual Sheriff's Ride, which was due to take place as I write this, on September 7th.

This unique event began in 1553, after Queen Mary gave Lichfield a Royal Charter separating it from Staffordshire and making it a county in its own right, thereby enabling the City to appoint its own Sheriff, and is the only one of its kind to take place annually in UK.



Practice run eh ????

Photos of 2024 event will follow in next newsletter, but to find out more in the meantime, visit https://www.lichfield.gov.uk/_VirDir/CoreContents/News/Display.aspx?id=71572 .

Fuse Festival July 2024

On a sunny weekend in July, LDCoS were proud and delighted to co-host a stall with 'Ukrainians in Lichfield District' at the 2024 Lichfield Fuse Festival in Beacon Park, with all proceeds going towards the purchase of Ukrainian language books for Ukrainian children and adults based in Lichfield and surrounding areas. Young visitors were invited to create painted masks and paper sunflowers, and Ukrainian artwork was much appreciated, with a healthy number of sales contributing to the extremely creditable final total takings of c£734 after a very successful weekend, which was greatly enjoyed by all who attended. Plans are now well in hand for choosing, buying, cataloguing and storing books. Well done as always to organisers and volunteers, without whom such collaborations would not be possible. And grateful thanks must also go to Fuse Organisers, Lichfield Arts, who very generously donated our pitch at the festival free of charge, Curborough Community Centre who were an enormous help with the loan of tables and chairs, and finally the kind friends of LDCoS who provided the very eye-catching gazebo for the weekend.. Last but by no means least, thank you Dean and 'Dan the Van' for your indomitable energy and enthusiasm as you transported, set up, took down ... Truly a dynamic duo !

A really wonderful, community occasion - and only 40 minutes of rain the entire weekend !





Mayor & Sherriff's Charity Brains of Lichfield Quiz

LDCoS were proud and privileged to put together a strong(well we thought so !) team for the first event under the auspices of our new Mayor and Sheriff, headed by our very own shrieval member Cathy Wood, who was joined by Warren Bardsley, Nigel Gann(aka Mayor's consort 'Mr Perfect' !), Pam Tomlinson, Sam Kirman and myself. What we lacked in knowledge was amply made up for with enthusiasm and fierce competitiveness, and the LDCoS team finished a very creditable ninth. Well done all !



SATURDAY 31 AUGUST

MAYOR & SHERIFF'S CHARITY

BRAINS OF LICHFIELD QUIZ...



From 7pm at the Guildhall, Lichfield

£20 per table (up to 6 players)

Pre-booking is essential

Limited Bar & Raffle

Prize for the winning team!

Bring your own snacks & nibbles

Includes free entry to the evening of live music

FOLLOWED BY

...AN EVENING OF LIVE MUSIC



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

Hatred, riots - and different types of ignorance: what is the role of the community when 'unity' goes missing?

When Cathy and I first came to Lichfield – only seven years ago – if we remarked in passing on the lack of diversity in Lichfield faces, or the predominance of men in positions of power, we were told “This is Lichfield”. Things seem to have changed dramatically in that seven years. There is plenty of diversity now and we had a woman mayor last year, a woman sheriff this year and there will be a woman mayor next year. All three, not entirely coincidentally, are members of Lichfield District’s City of Sanctuary.

We are not immune to recent ‘movements’ across the country. While most of us experienced a pretty peaceful time, riots in Tamworth and Stoke-on-Trent threatened the safety of displaced people, people of colour and those who would protect them. A number of our own members and others were locking themselves in their homes or not going out. The news broadcasts alarmed many of us, especially those who thought they might be targets.

A good time for local politicians and media to send out messages of support and comfort, you’d think. That wasn’t obvious. We at City of Sanctuary sent around some “Keep Safe” advice put together by national organisations, for which many of you thanked us. But we got a warning directly from the police about the possibility of incidents being planned for the city centre and at the mosque and, when we passed it on to those who might be affected, we found ourselves pilloried by local councillors and the press for ‘inflaming’ the situation.

Well, you don’t have to believe all you read. While Lichfield Live is often a very valuable source of local news, it can be susceptible to publishing anything that comes to hand. Indeed, we have seen several examples of misinformation from Lichfield Live and the Express and Star the very week I am writing this.

As we often experience, a lie can be halfway around the world before the truth has got its boots on – and a truth can still be lying in bed, while the lie marches around the market square. So you may have missed some of the great things that are happening in our usually very welcoming city and district.

In early July we received a further grant of slightly under £10k from the Community Foundation of Staffordshire. The donors were very impressed with the development work we have been doing alongside the substantial Ukrainian community. We will develop the essential Art Therapy classes for war-affected children, organise trips and days out for all our guests, help to develop the Ukrainian choir that gave such a moving concert at The Hub last Christmas, and will go on supporting the Ukrainian community, with support from Lichfield Arts and Transition Lichfield, to raise money for books for Ukrainian children.

Our second Summer Day’s Out was held at Middleton Hall – see elsewhere for an account of that.

Communities don’t develop by chance. You can’t just dump an estate of two hundred plus houses on the edge of the city and expect those residents to develop a sense of being Lichfieldian. A playground and a sports field don’t cut it. You need people to grow a sense of community with ‘unity’.

By October we should have a Community Coordinator in post – if only for one day a week for one year. Alongside our indispensable but voluntary Administrative Officer (your editor), the postholder will help to take some of the essential organisational tasks off the (somewhat ageing) leadership! We will need to do some serious fundraising to be able to run this post on into future years.

We have a growing – and noticeably younger – voluntary team organising events and coming up with important projects. Many of them have lived experience of seeking refuge here. We go from strength to strength. Thank you to all of you, however small your contribution is. We now have over a hundred members. Thank you and bless you all!!!




Calendar of other forthcoming events September—December 2024

Monday, 16 th September	2.00-5.00pm	Interviews for Community Coordinator post		
Monday, 30 th September	7.00-9.00pm	Trust Board of Directors Meeting	Curborough Community Centre	Trustees
Friday, 4 th October	7.00-9.00pm	"Coming to England"	Lichfield Garrick Theatre	Free for guests from abroad; £5 for members
Monday, 7 th October – Sunday, 13 th October	OFFICE CLOSED			
Tuesday, 15 th October	12.00-3.30pm	Volunteers Fair	Burntwood Leisure Centre	Volunteers needed, please
Sunday, 27 th October	9.30am-5.30pm	Guests trip to Stratford-upon-Avon		Information from nigel-gann@lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org
Sunday, 24 th November	5.00pm	Christmas Illuminations in City Centre		The Mayor and the Sheriff of Lichfield!
Tuesday, 14 th January 2025	12.00-3.30	Volunteers Fair	Lichfield Cathedral	Volunteers needed, please

And finally -

A word from our most prestigious honorary member Reginald Gann Esquire -

And so the shrieval whirl begins in earnest - marred (in my sage opinion)at the very outset, by the somewhat lack-lustre performance of the Sheriff's team in the 'Brains of Lichfield 'Quiz. 'A creditable ninth' eh ? Oh well, they only have themselves to blame. I did offer the benefit of my vast knowledge, but was for some reason omitted from the final team selection. I have however, despite this knock back, continued to pursue my academic pursuits, focusing of late on historic research, in anticipation of the Sheriff's historic ride through the city. And I have, after much burning of the midnight oil (or cat's eyes) managed to conclusively trace my family tree back to Dick Whittington's cat 'Tommy', who I am delighted to find has a statue in his honour at the foot of Highgate Hill.



Inspired and motivated by this exciting discovery, I have now submitted an impassioned petition to the Sheriff (aka the hand that feeds me) for the erection of a statue in honour of yours truly in the historic town of Lichfield. I will report back on progress very soon I hope, and in the meantime, I will continue to practice posing to best advantage. Contemplative and inscrutable perhaps

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

Reginald Gann Esq



Just a thought ??.....