

WELCOMING EVERYONE TO LICHFIELD



September 2025

LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY

A somewhat belated welcome to this 7th newsletter. I actually made the decision to delay publication of this edition largely in order that we may share with you the feedback from our annual Middleton Hall picnic, which was, as always, a resounding success, with all ages and nationalities coming together in true friendship to enjoy a very happy 'final hurra' to summer, and with the rain kindly holding off until weary but smiling participants began to make their way home.

The summer months have been a period of great activity for LDCoS, with the appointment of Community Co-ordinator Ira Shchetykina, and the swift launch thereafter of Community Foundation funded projects, as detailed later in this newsletter. I know that you will all join me in wishing Ira every success and happiness in her new role, in which I am confident that she will, together with her excellent team of colleagues, take LDCoS forward into this new exciting chapter with sincere passion and empathetic commitment. On a less pleasant note, the summer has also once again been a period of unrest, with many amongst our community, as indeed in so many other communities across the country, experiencing fear and prejudice. Nigel will offer his insightful comments on this in his column at the end of this newsletter, with particular reference and feedback from his recent meeting, to which local councillors and members were invited to offer their observations and insight on hate crime, both locally and nationally. I have also included brief notes/suggestions provided by CoS, which may prove of constructive assistance and indeed reassurance.

In my preface to the June newsletter, I referred to the success of the 'Look Who's Here' event, and offer no apology for once again including my observation following this event *'Through kindness, compassion and tolerance, we may all live alongside each other in peace and harmony, irrespective of race, creed or beliefs, in the cause of non-judgemental support and inclusivity.'*

Please help us to continue to strive towards this vital objective.

Wishing you all a very peaceful autumn.

ROSEMARY BISHOP

Editor

IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ Annual Middleton Picnic
- ◆ Meet Community Co-ordinator Ira and her colleagues
- ◆ Now we need you -
- ◆ 'Hope not Hate'
- ◆ Calendar of events 2025
- ◆ Action Group Update
- ◆ Membership Form + Gift Aid Declaration
- ◆ Nigel Gann shares his comments/ experiences of last quarter's activities/ achievements
- ◆ Reg has the last word - as usual !



Annual Middleton Hall Picnic

Whilst last year's annual picnic coincided with the fifth Birthday of LDCoS, this year's event was no less successful or indeed enjoyable, with friends from Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Syria and Ukraine joining together in the beautiful English countryside, with ages ranging from 2 months old to 77 years (identity withheld!) Once again the weather was kind to us, with rain kindly holding off until weary attendees were departing following the grand rounders finale, and a variety of events, both indoor and outdoor, were offered, thanks as always to the wonderful organisation and forward planning of Sam Kirman and Pam Tomlinson. Attendees enthusiastically participated in craft activities - this year with a kindness theme - house tours (one brave young man was determined to locate a reputed secret passage and resident ghost!) and scenic garden walks, all interspersed with refreshment breaks and of course culminating in the hotly contested rounders match.

Yet again, this event demonstrated how disturbances, hatred and threats of violence, shocking and abhorrent as these are to all of us, do not in any way reflect the genuine kindness and welcome of Lichfield's residents.

Sincere thanks to all who made this event such a great success, with particular gratitude extended to Sam Kirman, Pam Tomlinson and Cathy Wood for their wonderful organisation and planning. Thanks also to the Middleton Hall staff and volunteers for their co-operation and warm hospitality, and to the British Guild of Historical Costume Makers for exhibiting their exquisitely made garments to such handsome advantage.





This is only a small snapshot of the day's events, but if you would like to view, or indeed share further images from the picnic, please visit the website via <https://lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org/>, or Facebook .

Ira has kindly set up an online folder where everyone can share pictures from the event - https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14xMv_i-ZDZ5Q6KY1XoLTV5Cf9fn7AES1?usp=sharing.

Please note that you are requested to share images featuring adults, and/or parents may share pictures of their own children, giving their consent to us to use them on the above platforms.



September focus on LDCoS Community Co-ordinator Ira Shchetynina

We are, in this autumnal newsletter, delighted and excited to introduce to you LDCoS's newest - and already most invaluable - recruit Ira Shchetynina. Ira joined the LDCoS team during July 2025 following success in the selection process for this important and pivotal post of Community Co-ordinator. As a displaced person herself, and long term advocate for community resilience, sustainability, and social justice, Ira appreciates and warmly supports LDCoS's passionate commitment to promote equality, inclusivity and diversity in the public space, providing activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds and to deepen relationships between the host community, refugees and asylum seekers, and other marginalised people.

Ira's appointment has come at a time of great and exciting challenge and advancement for LDCoS, following the success of the charity's Community Foundation Funding application earlier this year. Ira will now spearhead the management of the vital projects which this funding has made possible, the structure of each of which was based on needs voiced by our members, and which met perfectly with the requirements of the funding panel. These projects will focus on 1:1 Language tuition, group English classes, speaking club, bespoke 1:1 sessions covering specific life needs, language familiarisation, immersion days in everyday life situations and locations, supplementary school for children, and library family sessions.

Ira has indeed hit the ground running, and in a very short space of time, she has made enormous strides in establishment and indeed commencement of these vital projects. She has regularly volunteered as a translator at the Job Centre, hospitals, and public events, has helped organise several local activities, fundraising stalls at the Lichfield Food Festival, and seasonal celebrations, and has a deep understanding of the needs and challenges faced by newly arrived migrants.

This life experience, alongside her skills in project management, event planning, volunteer coordination, and communications, make her ideally suited to lead these initiatives, and to identify and engage beneficiaries from Ukrainian, Afghan, and Hong Kong Chinese communities. Her background as a professional translator will also ensure that communication with participants is accessible and culturally sensitive.

And let's not forget

Neil

Ira will be ably assisted in her mammoth task by a team of skilled recruits, not least of which is of course Neil Kemp (right), who will continue to provide tuition, on a one-to-one and group basis, in language and life skills. Neil has achieved enormous success during his period as ESOL tutor and mentor, with many of his students successfully gaining employment and subsequent career advancement.



Luba Rodionov

As previously reported, back in January 2024, LDCoS started working with the Ukrainian community and Staffordshire Libraries to get a stock of Ukrainian books available to the growing community here in Lichfield, and in collaboration with the Garrick theatre, who very kindly offered space for these books to be displayed and enjoyed by Ukrainian families, this wonderful project came to fruition, and was launched with an inaugural family event on 08th February 2025 in the café area at the Garrick, hosted by Luba Rodionova. Luba will continue to co-ordinate and develop this initiative via regular family sessions following receipt of this additional funding.

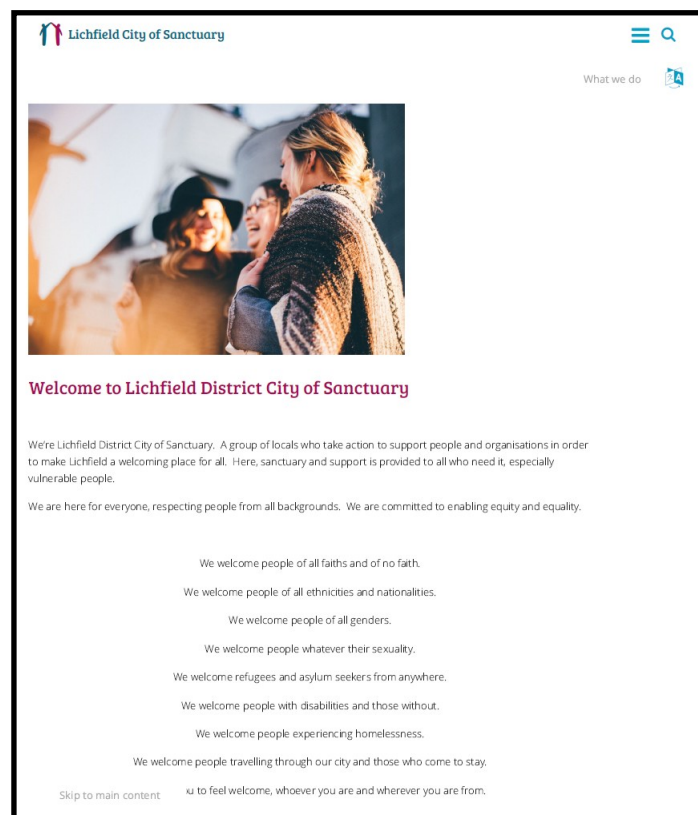


Last but by no means least -

Mike Burdes

Mike has courageously taken on the task of redesigning and developing the LDCoS website, and has already made enormous strides, making this platform both attractive, eye-catching and user-friendly. Visitors to the website will be able to access an archive of all previous newsletters, together with policy documents, as well as news of events, initiatives, achievements etc. Please visit and explore. <https://lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org/>

The website will be constantly evolving, and all feedback and input suggestions will be welcomed, via admin@lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org



Now, we need you -

We have been delighted and privileged to introduce to you just a few of the many staff and volunteers who make the many achievements and successes of LDCoS possible, but the success of our objectives would not be possible without **YOU**.

Following her appointment, and in accordance with project funding objectives, we are proud to announce the first two of Ira's initiatives, as detailed below. These will also be publicised on the LDCoS website and via social media platforms, but it seems appropriate and timely to promote these two pivotal achievements here. Your involvement and participation is warmly invited, either as a volunteer, participant or indeed as a companion.

See each for contact details.

Saturday Activity Club

Free Saturday Activity Club

Kids from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Hong Kong, or other communities are welcome to our **Saturday activity club!** 😊

 **When:** Every Saturday during school term times

 **Duration:** 3 hours (from 2 pm to 5 pm)

 **Where:** Wade Street Church



Fill in the form to sign up

<https://bit.ly/4fPttZ6>



September 2025 
March 2026



Staffordshire
County Council



Lichfield District
City of Sanctuary

What's included:

-  Support with school homework
-  Art and creativity sessions
-  Sports activities
-  Exploring cultures and traditions of different countries
-  Group sessions with a psychologist to develop emotional intelligence and reduce stress
-  Help with exam and test preparation
-  Free time to play and communicate



lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org



Lichfield District City of Sanctuary



+44 7950 797901

'Language to Live and Work'



Are you from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, or Hong Kong? Learn English within our 'Language to live and work' project!

- English for A1-A2 learners by a Ukrainian-speaking teacher
- English for B1-B2 levels by a native English-speaker
- Speaking club
- 1-1 sessions on specific needs

+44 7950 797901  lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org

 Lichfield District City of Sanctuary

WE'RE MAKING
LICHFIELD A SAFE AND
WELCOMING PLACE
FOR ALL



August 2025 -
March 2026



These groups, whilst providing a valuable academic service to non-national adults and children, will also provide a rewarding and enriching social platform, in which cultures and experiences may be shared, and from which we may all learn and benefit equally from each other. Do consider coming along.





'Hope not Hate'



In the light of recent demonstrations of discrimination and prejudice-related violence across the country, CoS UK have actively endeavoured to offer, in conjunction with 'Hate not Hope' support, reassurance and guidance to both charitable organisations and individuals within the community. See below re links which may prove of assistance to us all, together with a brief extract of informative guidance offered by 'Hate not Hope'.

<https://hopenothate.org.uk/>

<https://cityofsanctuary.org/2023/04/19/building-solidarity-locally-responding-to-hostility/>

Staying Safe amidst Far Right violence

August 2024

Information for people fearful of or at risk of being directly targeted by far-right violence.

You have the right to be in and feel safe in your local community. You also have the right to carry out your usual, daily activities. No one has the right to treat you badly because of who you are or who they think you are, but at this time you might want to take precautions if you feel unsafe. We made some recommendations if you would like to think about additional safety measures if you feel these are necessary, and help in identifying places where you can find support and solidarity.

- Ask trusted people in your community about any recent risks. This could include whether there have been any local attacks or threats. This will help you to make good decisions about where it is safe and which places to avoid at certain times.
- Think about whether it might be better to go out with someone else, not alone where possible.
- Keep your phone charged or carry a charger with you, and make sure you have important numbers saved.
- It is a good idea to let people know where you are going and what time you expect to return, so that

they can check in with you or let someone know if they are not able to reach you.

- People in your local community may not be well informed, and a time of heightened far-right activity and violence, may be mistrustful of large groups of people. Large groups may also draw unwanted attention from both people with hostile intentions and from any authorities who are present. Make an assessment of whether it is safe for you to meet in a large group at this time.
- Stay connected to your community. Being connected to others is good for us in lots of ways and it is helpful to know that there are many places in your community which are thinking about and prioritising your safety. If you know of a group or charity that gives information, briefings, wellbeing sessions etc contact them and ask how you can join in. If you don't know, ask others, and look out for posters, notices etc. These can be good ways of getting information on all kinds of things and a good way to stay informed and safe.

If you are scared about an urgent risk, or if you have information to share, call 999 in an emergency or if you are concerned or in doubt, call 101 for non-emergencies.

LDCoS have, at a local level, listened to the fears and experiences of members and their families, and as a result, a meeting was held on 3rd September, to discuss the increasing incidence of hate-related crime to which local councillors and LDCoS members were invited. This event, attended by 5 local councillors as well as members, offered a visible and heartening display of solidarity, and a frank discussion ensued about the rising tide of racism within our city, with personal accounts of abuse. LDCoS will pursue further collaboration of this nature within the community, and in the meantime, Nigel Gann offers his insights post-meeting in his column at the end of this newsletter.

LDCoS calendar of events 2025

NOTE - LDCoS will
not be represented
@ event

Date	Time	Details	Venue	Attendees
Thursday 10th July	5:00pm-7:30pm	Community Co-ordinator interviews	Lichfield Methodist Church	Interview panel(WB, PT, IS)
Friday 11th - Sunday 13th July	N/A	Fuse Festival	Beacon Park, Lichfield	
Monday 14th July	7:00-9:00pm	Trustees meeting	Curborough Community Centre	Trustees
Thursday 17th July	7:30-9:00pm	Faith Places of Sanctuary' meeting	Lichfield Methodist Church	WB co-ordinating attendees
Tuesday 29th July	7:00-9:00pm	Fund raising group meeting	Covey Close	Fund raising group
Wednesday 27th August	7:00-9:00pm	Action Group meeting	Curborough Community Centre	Action group
Saturday 30th August	11:00am- 15:30 approx	Middleton Hall Outing	Middleton Hall	All welcome. Volunteers required
Wednesday 6th August	12:00-2:00pm	Volunteer Fair	Lichfield Guildhall	All welcome. Volunteers requested via e-mail
Tuesday 02nd September	7:00-9:00pm	Fund raising group meeting	Covey Close	Fund raising group
Wednesday 3rd September	7:00-9:00pm	Meeting re hate crime incidents	Curborough Community Centre	Members and invited councillors
Monday 15th September	7:00-9:00pm	Trustees meeting	Curborough Community Centre	Trustees
Wednesday 12th November	7:00-9:00pm	Action Group meeting	Curborough Community Centre	Action group

DEFERRED FTB - to
be rescheduled



Action Group update/report

We still need you !



Dear members

With CFF project work, and hate-related concerns covered separately in this issue, I will in this update concentrate on two additional issues which were discussed during the recent Action Group meeting, namely -

Faith Places of Sanctuary

An inter-faith meeting has now been held, with each of the 6 places of worship represented. The importance of said representation and maintaining contacts was emphasised, with unanimous recognition that becoming a faith place is not an end in itself, it is an ongoing commitment. It was agreed that this shared forum is vital in order to promote and achieve cross-faith understanding, with the mutual aspiration for twice yearly meetings. Meanwhile, during Quaker Week 27/09 – 05/10, Action Group member Michelle Gerard is hoping to arrange a social event with the local mosque. It is noted and acknowledged by the Action Group that the addition of Mosque, Wade Street and Quaker representatives to the Action Group has benefitted and enriched both group and wide membership. It is proposed that LDCoS should consider an approach to Lichfield Cathedral re becoming a Faith Place of Sanctuary.

Schools of Sanctuary

Action Group member Nathalie Smith is still pursuing SoS accreditation for Lichfield Cathedral School. In the meantime, she has recounted to the group an example of recent cross-culture activity during National Refugee week – "Simple Acts" of kindness and solidarity with refugees encouraged via dance, poetry, art etc, using Tove Jansson's first Moomin story, "The Moomins and the Great Flood" to promote themes of courage, hope, and belonging. Members of the Action Group will further explore how best to approach other local schools re SoS accreditation. In this respect, National Schools of Sanctuary have offered much support and reassurance recently, in the light of activist misrepresentation of SoS work which has, as a result, placed schools and staff at risk. I set below the suggested website statement offered by National SoS, which I believe encapsulates all that SoS truly stands for -

'Being recognised as a School of Sanctuary means our school has shown a clear commitment to making sure every child and family feels welcomed, safe and supported to thrive. Safeguarding is our highest priority. The Schools of Sanctuary programme is not political – it simply helps schools to understand why people seek safety and to lead with kindness and humanity. We are proud to be a school where every child feels safe, where individual needs are understood, and where pupils are equipped to be kind and thoughtful members of our community.'

Last but by no means least, as per my rally cry at the top of this column, **we still need you!** The LDCoS Action Group always needs more members. If you think that you could offer your time and indeed input, please get in touch via admin@lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org. Alternatively, if you think that you might find it difficult to get to meetings but would like to volunteer a skill or a little of your time, or to help in anyway with the upcoming events, please do get in touch. We would love to see you and would very much appreciate your support.

Kind wishes

Pam

Action Group Chair



LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Thank you for showing an interest in Lichfield District City of Sanctuary.

We invite anyone living or working, or with any other interest in, the area of Lichfield District Council to join us in helping to make Lichfield a welcoming and supportive city and district that provides sanctuary to all who need it, especially vulnerable people.

There are 3 types of membership:

- Individual membership
- Delegate membership, as the representative of a Lichfield-based organisation
- Organisational partnership, as a group sharing and committed fully to our objectives

We hope that members will contribute to the organisation. Here are some of the ways in which you could do this:

- Make an annual or monthly donation enabling us to offer practical support to incomers – perhaps based on an amount equivalent to one-thousandth of your annual income
- Help to develop projects and events designed to inform people about national and local sanctuary issues
- Provide practical short-, medium- or long-term support to incomers, for example, welcoming, orientating incomers, shopping, language-development, accommodation
- Collecting and distributing materials – clothing, toys, books
- Engaging with immigrant status and other issues around refugees and asylum-seeking
- Serving as a member of our Board of Trustees or our Steering Group, helping to develop and monitor policy and/or providing specialist support (e.g. in financial or legal issues)
- Engage in campaigning on national and local issues of sanctuary

What benefits do you get from membership?

- The knowledge that you are helping some of the world's most vulnerable people and addressing serious global issues while helping to enrich the culture and ethics of our home
- Regular news and information about immigration laws and the government's conduct of refugee and asylum-seeking issues
- Access to a range of events provided or supported by Lichfield District City of Sanctuary in the area and beyond
- The opportunity to engage in local developments and improve the environment in which we live.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM IN BLOCK CAPITALS OR TYPE (questions in italics are optional)

LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY

Preferred title & full name

Name by which you prefer to be known

Address

Telephone/mobile numbers

Email address

Self-identifying gender

Self-identifying origin

Type of membership: Individual
 Delegate membership (name of organisation)
 Group partnership (name of organisation.....)

What skills/experience/qualities do you have that might be of value to Lichfield District City of Sanctuary?

What, if any, role(s) might you like to take on in the organisation? (on separate page if preferred).

Please sign to show that you support the declaration below:

The core principles of Lichfield District City of Sanctuary are:

- 1. All asylum seekers, refugees and migrants should be treated with dignity and respect.***
- 2. A fair and effective process to decide whether people need protection should be in place.***
- 3. No one should be locked up indefinitely.***
- 4. No one should be left sick or destitute in our society.***
- 5. We should welcome the stranger and help them to integrate.***

I support (or we support) this declaration. I am happy to be contacted by Lichfield District City of Sanctuary by email/telephone/post (delete as appropriate)

Signed

Name Date

Group (if applicable)

Please return the form to The Administration Officer at admin@lichfield.cityofsanctuary.org

Or alternatively by post to 34 Rocklands Crescent, Lichfield, WS13 6DH

If you feel able, we welcome donations by BACs into Lichfield District City of Sanctuary's account at Lloyds Bank, sort code: 30-98-97. account number 79373963, either ad-hoc, or by standing order arrangement. You may also pay a cheque or cash into this account.

If you are a current UK taxpayer you can boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate. In order that we may do this on your behalf, please complete and return the Charity Gift Aid Declaration on the next page, if appropriate, when returning your membership application form.

Thank you.

LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY

Charity Gift Aid Declaration

In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below :

☐

I want to Gift Aid my donation of £_____ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years
(delete as appropriate) to:

Name of Charity *LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY*

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

My Details

Title_____ First Name/Initial(s)_____

Surname _____

Full Home Address_____

Postcode_____ Date_____

Please notify the charity if you:

Want to cancel this declaration

Change your name and/or home address

No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Selfo-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Nigel Gann, Secretary and founder member of LDCOS, shares his comments -

"If one sees a man struggling at the bottom of a well, one's natural impulse is to pull him out. If a man is starving, one's natural impulse is to share one's food with him. Surely it is only on second thoughts that we don't do these things? Society seems to me like an organized system of second thoughts."

What a great newsletter! So many good things are happening in Lichfield, that it is difficult to understand how some people – across the country but here in Lichfield too, apparently – appear to believe that friction is better than harmony and that hate is better than love. I am sure we all believe that, while Britain is a better place than most today, our nation's history is not without blemish. So it is frustrating that people might think a country that rejects people who have, usually, a legitimate right to find sanctuary here, is better than a country that will proclaim the historic values we mostly treasure, of engagement, of a place of safety, of hospitality and welcome.

"Over 12 million people in England, over a quarter of the population, volunteer to help others at least once a month . . . a very large section of the British population are still determined to help, and within that group, a number are drawn to help refugees" (*We Came by Sea: Stories of a greater Britain*, by Horatio Clare – a wonderful book to read if you despair of our country!).

Twenty-six members, including five local councillors, with a few guests, met on the 3rd September to talk about 'Keeping Lichfield Safe for Everyone'. The stories of abuse and discriminatory treatment in our own city and district distressed (and I think surprised) us all. Only a few days later, our friends at the mosque suffered an incursion by two possibly drunken young men set on displaying union flags there as if, somehow, people of the books many of us share as the basis for our faith – Christians, Jews and Muslims among many others – are less 'patriotic' than unhappy (mainly) men who prefer hate to love.

What we all share is that this is *our* town, *our* city, *our* district and all the places of worship here are *our* churches, mosques, temples and halls.

The new forum will meet again in November. In the meantime, the great news is that good people have joined together to reject displays of supposed 'patriotism' organised by far-right groups based in Birmingham. A revealing video shows a Lichfield man erecting flags in our city centre that he openly claims to have been given directly by 'Tommy Robinson', a convicted criminal and rabble-rouser. How we reclaim our streets from these people is a question for us all. But the local councils, the police and many groups and individuals are now working together to re-establish the real values of Lichfield – of warmth, friendship and welcome.

"'You know', says an interviewee in Horatio Clare's book: "40,000 people coming in a year – it's not even half a football stadium! People crossing the channel in 2023 was 4 per cent of immigration, 4 per cent! You must tell this story – we are all migrants. We are a migratory species. Migration is a human right.'"



And finally -

A word from our most prestigious honorary member Reginald Gann Esq



As 'sleeping' chair of the feline branch of LDCoS, I have always actively sought to promote the ethics and mission statement of our charity, actively demonstrating inclusivity and tolerance towards my human servants. But I must reluctantly confess that my spirit of inclusive and non-judgmental compassion has been sorely tested of late. I have however risen to the occasion, and whilst clearly indicating my position of seniority, I have graciously tolerated (at a respectful distance you understand) the arrival of a fellow feline of unknown abode, and I have indeed acceded to the generous gesture by my faithful cook and comforter to offer a modest shelter to this somewhat enigmatic visitor. I am reminded by the editor of this newsletter that we may all, I quote (or slightly misquote) ***'through kindness, compassion and tolerance, live alongside each other in peace and harmony, irrespective of breed, coat quality (his is rather nice I must admit), size (I fear he may be bigger than me) in the cause of non-judgemental support and inclusivity.'*** I admit to having been sorely tried, but I will endeavour to offer the patronage befitting to my esteemed position, and to uphold these admirable sentiments with kindness and mercy. May we all live by such sentiments, and in doing so offer a welcome to all who are in need of our support.



Reginald Gann Esq