

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 1

MARCH 2024

LICHFIELD DISTRICT CITY OF SANCTUARY

LAUNCH OF QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

In 2019 a small group of like-minded Lichfield residents came together with a desire to work towards the recognition of our historic city as a City of Sanctuary. Five years on, *Lichfield District City of Sanctuary* is now a thriving testament to the determination of those founder members, and as a group, we remain committed to their initial ideals and beliefs, united in our commitment to make Lichfield a supportive, welcoming open-hearted city, where all are welcomed and treated with respect, understanding and sanctuary. We offer non-judgemental support to all those in our city who face discrimination or exclusion due to race, gender, poverty, disability, violence or abuse, and co-ordinate vital services, practical help and advice for those who might otherwise remain isolated and marginalised, with events, exhibitions, campaigns and meetings held to engage, inform, advise and simply offer welcome.

If you are reading this, you will already have joined the ranks of our ever-growing membership, and for this we sincerely thank you.

Each of us can help to shape our city's future for the benefit of all. Onwards and ever upward, and here's to the next five years !

ROSEMARY BISHOP

Editor

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With the generous support and sponsorship of HCB Solicitors and Valefresco Fine Foods, LDCoS member xxxx xxxxxxxx organised and hosted a Christmas Brunch for eight refugee families living in Lichfield, where a warm festive welcome - and a visit from Santa!- was extended to parents and children alike, and a magical time was had by all.

It is events such as this which offer vital community inclusion to those who, through circumstances often beyond their control , now call Lichfield their home, and which offer the opportunity to share knowledge of diverse cultures and life experience, and to promote mutual understanding and empathy.

Sincere thanks to xxxx for her tireless commitment to making this event such a great success- and of course to her fellow elves !



Other events of 2023/2024 to date



Walk of Penance

On Saturday December 2nd 2023, members of Lichfield District City of Sanctuary joined a silent “walk of penance” marking the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, walking from the Market Square to the Cruck House, where a plaque remembers Francis Barber, and stopping at specific points on route which bear resonance with our history of slavery.

With the focus of this day being to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery, such as trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, the worst forms of child labour, forced marriage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, LDCOS members walked to draw attention to the continuing use of slavery and other forms of work exploitation throughout the world and in the UK, to make penance for the part that the UK played in historical slavery that remains the basis of our wealth and the poverty of others throughout the world, and to question the nature of reparation that the wealthy nations of the first world might yet make to those countries and populations still suffering as a result of slavery.

The walk ended at Cruck House with a facilitated discussion on the topic of slavery and reparations, and all discussion outcomes were then included in a petition to the Prime Minister which it is intended will be hand delivered to No 10 Downing Street to draw attention to the issues of slavery, past and present.

Speaking on behalf of LDCOS, Nigel Gann stated ***“We want to say publicly that we’re sorry for what happened. Most importantly, we’re urging the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to lead on starting meaningful conversations about reparations. The UK’s role in slavery was a shameful period in its history – our history. It’s time we started to take action to compensate people who are still suffering today because of what our country did. Black and minority ethnic people in the UK today continue to face substantial disadvantages: worse housing, worse health, worse education, greater unemployment.”***





Volunteer Fairs 2024



Lichfield Cathedral 16 January 2024

'Organisers of a volunteering event in Lichfield have hailed it a success after more than 250 people attended.' Lichfield Live



A great success for LDCOS. Two new members enlisted, one of whom is now a member of LDCOS Action Group. Well done to all involved !



Encouraging amount of interest shown in the work and objectives of LDCOS by many attendees, and this superb venue is to be considered for future LDCOS events/outings.

Lunar New Year 2024

'Organisers of Lichfield's first Lunar New Year celebration say they are over the moon with the success of the event'. Lichfield



Lichfield celebrates Lunar New Year at Lichfield Guild Hall 17 February 2024, with LDCOS once again receiving a great deal of interest and appreciative feedback.

Future Volunteer Fairs

A couple more dates for your diaries -

Lichfield Cathedral – Saturday 27 July 2024 2-4pm.

Lichfield Cathedral - Tuesday 14 January 2025 2-4pm.

As on previous occasions, these events have once again been organised by Support Staffordshire, and LDCOS will be staffing a stall at both of these events, so please spread the word to potential new members and volunteers, and indeed come along yourselves and say hello !



Community Engagement, Citizenship and Employment (CECE) course 2023/24

During 2023/24 a Community Engagement, Citizenship and Employment (CECE) course has been run by tutor/LDCOS Vice Chair as part of the ESOL scheme provided through English Class Private Language School. During the 2024 autumn term, Neil concentrated on employability skills (chosen by students as their most pressing need) and covered CV writing, job applications and the importance/value of a covering letter - the effective use of which demonstrates how the applicant meets the requirements and person specification for the vacancy in question. For many weeks, students practised answering standard interview questions, with group participation, discussion and sharing of ideas/feedback actively encouraged.

During the spring term, the focus changed to community engagement skills, imparting essential knowledge and insight into life in the UK and its history using simplified language which students at both intermediate level and upper intermediate level could readily understand. Students have been encouraged to read about these subjects to each other and discuss the similarities and differences to the situation and history in their own countries.

Students have been extremely positive about this aspect of the course and say that they 'have never experienced such a course before and that it has helped them to understand the country in which they are now living'.

Ultimately, the course has worked. Most students who have attended have obtained some form of paid employment, either full-time or part-time, during and as a direct result of the course.

Neil will continue to teach employment and life skills to students from his home in Central Lichfield, both on a one-to-one basis and via small group sessions, and will be very happy to hear from or of anyone who would benefit from his services - places subject to availability of course.

Congratulations and grateful thanks to Neil for his wonderful, and undoubtedly successful, work from all at LDCOS.

ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) Lessons at Wade Street Language School.

Lichfield and District City of Sanctuary continues to support the provision of ESOL lessons at Wade Street Language School , in a variety of ways. Jennie Mechti, the owner of the school works closely with LDCOS and thanks to the invaluable skills and hard work of Cathy Wood in securing vital grant funding, it has been possible to provide many students with funded lessons. ESOL tutor Gill Hollis is assisted and invaluable supported by several LDCOS members with Susan Gray, Rehana Firth and Pam Tomlinson volunteering each week, all of whom help to make lesson-times fun, but ultimately rewarding, with hard work encouraged and suitably recognised, and entry for annual Trinity College examinations presented as an achievable possibility/goal, and a valuable certification of their ever-improving English language skills.



Students receiving their ESOL awards

However, it is not just about learning the English language. So much of the Lichfield ESOL initiative is about making friends, learning about English culture and the diverse cultures of all students attending (this involves a lot of food!) Students come from Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey and Hong Kong, and are all keen to learn about Lichfield and their local surroundings. Consequently, a Cultural programme has grown up within the Language School., with strong links forged with the Cathedral and The Garrick Theatre through which the ESOL students have benefited from a range of wonderful activities: most recently, students contributed their thumbprints to the city-wide arts project 'March of The Elephants' promoted by The Garrick. Also, each year a Summer School organised by the Teaching Assistant volunteers takes students out and about around Lichfield, visiting places of historical and general interest such as Dr Johnson's House and Museum, Erasmus Darwin Museum and herb garden and Lichfield Cathedral. Last year, thanks to the provision of National Trust tickets by Shaz Umbreen, a visit to the 'Back-to-Backs' in Birmingham took place, and was enjoyed by all who attended.

Many, many thanks to Gill, and to all the members who volunteer their time and commitment towards the provision and success of the Lichfield ESOL initiative.



Visiting the Birmingham 'Back-to-backs'



'March of the Elephants'

It is perhaps fitting that the last word should go to Pam Tomlinson, who would like to hear from any members who may wish to volunteer at the Language School as Teaching Assistants or would like to volunteer at the Summer School which takes place in August.

'It really is great fun and we certainly all learn from each other.'

Nigel Gann, Secretary and founder member of LDCOS, shares his vision for LDCOS moving forward.

Welcome to Lichfield!

Supporting newcomers to our city and district is the founding principle of City of Sanctuary. It involves two broad activities welcoming and befriending arrivals, with a special emphasis on refugees and other displaced people; and challenging the fearful and negative stereotypes of incomers as threats and burdens.

Migrants, both internal and external, willing and enforced, bring us so many things to treasure, new ideas, new cultures, fresh perspectives. Can you imagine a successful company or a winning sports team that doesn't encourage - and need new blood as much as it requires and values its old stalwarts ?

So it is with communities, and we are proud that this message is heard in high places - the leader of Burntwood Town Council, the current mayor and the next sheriff of Lichfield are all committed members of Lichfield District City of Sanctuary. But there is much to do. The decades-long shortage of affordable housing, the focus on expensive homes for the retired and expenditure on city-centre 'amenities' continue to bedevil opportunities to develop vibrant new communities.

Our collective vision is to challenge and disprove the view that newcomers are a threat. We also deny that inward migration is a new and growing menace. Statistics show that we are among the meanest of European countries in accepting people from war zones, famine and terror. Nevertheless, the British Isles have been the final stopping place for westward-bound travellers for thousands of years. Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians, Normans, Huguenots (one of my own origins), Jews, Irish, Africans, African-Caribbeans, South Asians, and most recently, Ukrainians and Hong Kong Chinese have contributed to our bloodlines, boosted our economy, brought new skills and inventions, and given colour to our lives.

Above all, perhaps, is the worldwide ethic of hospitality. Hostility, fed sadly by much of our government and our media, leads to fear and hatred. But hospitality - the range of hospitality provided by our community here - springs from kindness, generosity and respect. That is what City of Sanctuary displays, encourages and enables. And, of course, hospitality is much more fun than hostility!

Thank you for all you do. If you would like to be even more engaged with our work, we always welcome members to our Action Group and we have vacancies for Trustees to join our Board. Please ask for details.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS: JANUARY TO JULY 2024

Sunday, 14 th January 11.00	Wade Street Church	Presentation of Faith Place of Sanctuary award	WB/AH/NG/CW
Tuesday, 16 th January 1.15-4.00	Lichfield Cathedral	Volunteer Recruitment Fair	WB/NG/CW
Saturday 20 th January 9.30-12.30	Lichfield Methodist Church	Members' Workshop: Succession Planning	Members
Wednesday, 24 th January 7.00-9.00	Curborough Community Centre	Action Group	PT/MG & AG members
Wednesday, 14 th February		Outcome of LDC grant bid	
Saturday, 17 th February 12.00 – 3.00	Lichfield Guildhall	Chinese New Lunar Year event	PT/CW & others, please
Saturday 24 th February 3.00 – 4.00	The Hub at St Mary's	Ukraine Photo Exhibition	All welcome
Monday, 19 th February 7.00-9.00	Curborough Community Centre	Board of Trustees Meeting	Trustees + PT
Tuesday, 12 th March	George Hotel	Lichfield St Chads Rotary	NG
Saturday, 16 th March 12.00 – 4.00	Middleton Hall B78 2AE	Open Day & Volunteer Fair	All members welcome
Saturday, 16 th March 7.00	Mayor's Cocktail Dinner	Lichfield Guildhall	Members?
Thursday, 21 st March	Support Staffs VCSE Meeting	Lichfield Garrick Theatre	NG
Friday, 22 nd March	"20 Days in Mariupol"	Lichfield Garrick Theatre	
Tuesday, 9 th April 7.00-9.00	Curborough Community Centre	Action Group with guests from Staffs Police & Alzheimer's Community Co-ordinator	PT/MG & AG members LDCOS Members welcome
18 th April 1.30-3.00	SCC Resettlement Partnership	Zoom	
Friday 3 rd May 7.00-9.00	Mayor's Beer & Skittles	Lichfield Guildhall	Members?
Wednesday, 15 th May 6.30-7.00pm	Lichfield City Council Mayor & Sheriff-making	Lichfield Guildhall	Open to all members of the public
Saturday, 18 th May	Iona Community Refugees Picnic	Beaudesert	All welcome
Saturday 8 th June	Inderjit Bhogal visit to Birmingham	Details later	
Sunday 16 th – Sunday 23 rd June	Refugee Week		
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

And finally -

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

Thank you 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.

Must sign off now. Time for a fish supper and a pre-prandial snooze



Reginald Gann Esq