

LEDBURY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 30TH APRIL 2015

MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

May the 8th 2014, is a day that I will remember for the rest of my life. It was the day that my opinions were no longer just mine, but those of the Mayor; there is a difference, my family came second to the townspeople, as I now represented Ledbury & its people in everything I did or said. You cannot be Mayor when you choose to be, it is 24/7, 365 days, but what an honour & privilege to be bestowed upon someone, to be able to represent this Town, the jewel in Herefordshire's Crown, far & wide across the County & beyond.

At this point I would like to record my thanks to those who have supported, advised & guided me through this past year.

First & foremost, my Mayoress, Carol, who has embraced her role beside me, we are a team, through the good times & the not so good. She has worn the Mayoress' pendant with as much pride as I have had wearing this chain of office.

Next I thank Mrs Karen Mitchell, Town Clerk, along with Maria, Barbara, Rosie, Tracey & Rachel. They have given me guidance on protocol, support when needed & their considerable wealth of experience has been invaluable.

Finally, for now, I would like to thank the Councillors who have supported me through some challenging times.

It has been a very busy year, the Mayoress & I have carried out 145 engagements, ranging from opening of shops to Garden Parties with the High Sherriff, from 100th birthday parties to the Anointment of Bishop Richard at Hereford Cathedral.

There have been many memorable events, too many to mention here, but a few of the significant one's were the Inauguration of Bishop Richard, doesn't happen very often, the declaration of the new High Sheriff, Edward Mortimer Harley, a ceremony that dates back to the Magna Carta, numerous Civic Services, including our own, which involved a number of community groups coming together to celebrate the new Council, a wonderful day. Locally we attended, Community Day, the Carnival, very wet, opening of the October Fair, also very wet, and the best Christmas Lights switch on event in the County, brilliant; nobody does it better than Ledbury. We have also attended numerous events this year linked to the WW1 commemorations, with services in the Cathedral & in Ledbury, remembering, in particular, those of "C" company, Herefordshire Regiment, who left Ledbury, for the conflict, on August 4th 1914. Part of our own Town commemorations, was the "Life in Ledbury" display, held in St Michaels, put together by Jenny Harrison & Brenda Hill, it told of what Ledbury was like, at that time & how life in town was changed. It proved to be very popular, & Jenny is putting together a new exhibition, this August, to commemorate the Herefordshire Regiment's involvement at Gallipoli.

A continuation of the County Commemorations will see Ledbury take centre stage in June 2016, when we will be hosting Armed Forces Day, the British Legion County Rally & commemoration events for the Battle of the Somme & the Battle of Jutland, the latter due to our affiliation with HMS Ledbury. Cadet forces & the crew of HMS Ledbury will be marching through the Town; there will also be a concert in the Church in the evening.

Despite the changes of crew and the fact that Ledbury is now in dry dock for new engines, the town's affiliation with the ship & its crews, has been maintained, with a group of affiliates visiting Portsmouth last December as guests of the navy. The present Commander has visited Ledbury recently, in preparation for a crew visit on the 20th May, more information will be available shortly. They are coming to town as part of a charity triathlon, Portsmouth to Ledbury.

One of the Charities they are raising money for is SSAFA, one of my nominated charities, my other charity, being the Royal British Legion (Ledbury). I would like to give thanks to all those who have helped to raise funds, & awareness, for these two charities, Ann Beard's Wiggles opening, with David Beckham lookalike, Ledbury Primary School, harvest festivals, Church collection at the Civic service, Remembrance Sunday & Mrs Jane Rules funeral, Isaacs Fashion show, the Community Choir Christmas concerts, & my December dance. A brilliant effort by everybody, & we are not finished yet, with the Military Wives Choir performing a concert in June.

The present total raised so far is £6,000.

Becoming Mayor also brings with it other responsibilities, you are suddenly Honorary president of the Community Choir, a great bunch of people who represent a wide range of the community, this was a fun appointment, you also join Ledbury in Bloom, although we were only required to escort the judges around town & then provide them with lunch, another positive for the office staff. It must have worked, as we received Gold, again. There are many different calls on your time, none more so than at Christmas, with the town carol service, Christingle & the Christmas morning service, after which visits to the Hospital, Nursing Home, Harling Court & Leadon Bank are expected, the patients & residents being very pleased to see you.

The Ledbury Places project suffered a setback, when its grant application was rejected, for now, & the team are working up a new application to get this major investment in Ledbury's heritage back on track, no debate yet about lift access for the Market House.

The major success of the year has been the completion of the Masters House restoration & the opening of the new library, the attention to detail has been outstanding. Spellar Metcalf, in conjunction with Herefordshire Council & the friends of the Masters House, must all be congratulated on such a magnificent achievement, to save it from near dereliction & restore it to its present state, is a credit to the skill, dedication & expertise of the workforce.

The Council are still waiting to hear whether their application to register the Recreation Ground as a Fields-in-Trust, Memorial Field, has been accepted. Success, & we are very confident, will mean that the Rec will be protected as a memorial, not for just this generation, but the next & the one after, & the one after that, ensuring that the ground is retained for its intended use, recreation & exercise, when bought by the townspeople, through subscription, back in 1919, in honour of the men who fell in the 1914-1918 war. The Council are preparing a 5 year strategic plan to improve the area, replace the play equipment & improve the skate park, so that the rec will remain the place to take the kids on a sunny day.

To close I would like to say a few more thanks. Six members of the present Council are not standing for re-election, & I would like to record my gratitude, on behalf of the townspeople, for their commitment & dedication for the service they have given. They are Councillor Derek Durham, Councillor Chrissie Stallard-Daniels, Councillor Chris Ridler, former Mayor, Councillor

Allen Conway, former Mayor, Councillor Paul Winter & last, but certainly not least, after 20 service, Councillor Clive Jupp. Thank you all, your experience will be greatly missed.

I would also like to remember those no longer with us, former Chairman, Mr Peter Harling, former Mayoress, Mrs Jane Rule, Councillor Mr Peter Watts, & although not from Ledbury but a lady that dedicated to St Michaels Hospice, she was one o the founders, & a formidable Chairman of Herefordshire Council, Mrs Olwyn Barnett. They will all be so sadly missed.

It just leaves me to wish good luck to all the candidates for the forthcoming election, if next year is as exciting as this one, it will be a rollercoaster.

I will now hand you over to the Committee Chairmen for their reports.

Thank you.

Cllr R Barnes
Town Mayor
30.04.2015