

MAYOR'S REPORT 2012/13
Councillor David Becket

The most outstanding aspect of our year as Mayor and Mayoress is the talent we have witnessed from the young people of the Borough. Music, Drama, Dance, Sport and Community Activities have all shown the commitment and talent evident in the young people of Newcastle. Talent can be displayed at many levels, and the Christmas drama from young people with Downs Syndrome was as remarkable and entertaining a production as the concerts from highly accomplished musicians.

It is in support of our young people that we chose as our Charities New Vic Borderlines and The Realise Foundation; both work to support young people who need a helping hand.

We attended some 250 events, slightly fewer than in previous years, but we took a conscious decision not to travel outside the borough to events that were not civic or connected with a civic charity or supporting a Newcastle organisation. We supported all the Staffordshire Civic Heads, and made contact with Cheshire East.

Within the Borough there were many visits involving Churches, Schools, Charities, Commercial organisations, the Armed Forces and the two local Universities. Outside of the Borough the important visits included MoD Stafford, Whittington Barracks at Lichfield, the visit of German youth to the war cemeteries at Cannock and visits to famous buildings including Tatton Mansion House, Sandon Hall and Tutbury Castle. This year the Newcastles of the World Conference was held in Newcastle upon Tyne. I particularly appreciated a charity function at Marston's Brewery.

I must pay tribute to my Mayoress Anne who, following the tradition of the last Mayoress, entered fully into the role and played a significant part in representing the Borough. At the Newcastles of the World Conference she offered to establish links between schools in the countries represented. Currently few countries have responded, but Anne does not intend to give up yet.

Administratively it has been a difficult year, with ill health and staff shortage creating difficulties that involved the Mayor taking more interest in running the department than normal. I must pay tribute to Peter Whalan, my Secretary who was taken ill in February and I wish him a speedy recovery. Geoff Durham took over the role, though he was working reduced hours following a serious illness and Louise Stevenson provided daily back up, including presiding at my Ball, which was much appreciated. We were not helped by the snow, which caused the postponement of the Ball and a Parlour visit. We were also not helped by the change in the postal provider, which resulted in the Mayor delivering Ball Tickets to ensure they reached the recipients in time.

All of the traditional civic events went to plan, and were well attended. These included the Civic Service, Armed Forces Day, Catholic Mass, Fireworks Display, the Remembrance Day Service, Britain in Bloom and the Mayor's Ball.

The Mayor's Carol Service was held in the rural location of Betley Parish Church, a timber framed church of some note and host to one of the more talented village choirs in the area. The only disappointing feature of these events was the sparse attendance from Councillors.

A number of Charity events were held, and we expect the final figure raised to be of the order of £8,000. From this January money raised through the sale of recycled textiles will be donated to the Mayor's Charities. In a full year this could raise some £2,000, so keep recycling.

Derek Myatt, the Mayor's Sergeant and Chauffeur, retired at the start of our year, and we now have a Chauffeur, Carl, and Sergeant, Peter, who work under contract. The change over went smoothly, but we were initially left with a challenge. It was our intention to open the Parlour to as many visits as possible. Derek had undertaken the role of explaining the history of the Borough and introducing the items on display. We were on a fast learning curve and have developed a tour of the Parlour lasting about an hour. The Mayor has concentrated on the history of the Borough and the Mayoress the items on display. Anne has gleaned a considerable amount of information relating to the Grand Duke Michael (cousin of the Tsar of Russia who stayed at Keele Hall for ten years at the start of the last century). We intend to write the tour up in case it could be of use in the future.

With our interest in the history of the Borough it was particularly rewarding to travel to Crowborough, Sussex to meet John Mellard, a descendant of the Mellard family. He gave us an illustrated address that was presented to his ancestor Richard Bartlett Mellard, Mayor of Newcastle four times at the turn of the last century. This has now found a home in the Borough Museum.

I thank the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress for standing in for us when there was a clash of events. I also thank my Chaplain, Reverend Pamela Lane and my High Constable for their support.

Anne and I wish the incoming Mayor and Mayoress a very successful and enjoyable year in office.

There will be no presentation from us in the Chamber as we have already donated and planted two trees in the Brampton outside the Museum.

Finally I thank the members of the council for having the faith to elect me to this privileged position. Anne and I have done our very best to represent you and the Loyal and Ancient Borough of Newcastle under Lyme. It has been a great honour.

Councillor David Becket

Mayor of the Loyal and Ancient Borough of Newcastle under Lyme, 2012/13