

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR OF LANCASTER FOR 2008/2009 - COUNCILLOR KEITH BUDDEN

Being elected Mayor of Lancaster was a proud moment and a milestone in my career as an Elected Member. This year has enabled my team and I to be part of and support a number of functions and organisations in a variety of ways, and I shall try to mention some from a long but not conclusive list!

Early in the year we were lucky to be given the chance to experience the Royal Garden Party in London. We also had the chance later that same month to be part of the delegation attending the Youth Games in Rendsburg, Germany. Our young people did us proud in both their sporting and personal achievements, and we were pleased to be able to welcome them to the Town Hall on their return to commend them for their efforts.

Although we have enjoyed all of the functions we have attended, the visits to local schools have been an absolute joy. We met children of all ages across primary and secondary education, and have been to support their events and to give the children the chance to ask questions. I am now very good at replying to the questions, "Are you rich? Do you live in a big house or the Town Hall? Is the chain heavy? Can you keep it?". We have also been fortunate to be able to attend the Awards Ceremonies at both Lancaster University and the University of Central Lancashire. We have attended presentation events at local schools and are pleased that these awards do not only recognise the high achievers, but they also provide equal recognition of those children who have tried and improved during their time at school.

Being involved in Local Democracy Week as Mayor has also been a highlight of the year. I have been involved in this event in the past as a Councillor and have enjoyed working with all the children on the theme of Democracy. Who knows, we may have inspired politicians of the future!

We have also had the opportunity to meet with and support a vast number of voluntary organisations. Special mention must go to the YMCA, at whose event I was privileged to learn of the adversity that has been overcome by young people with the help and support of this organisation. This too applies to the work being undertaken by the Princes Trust with the full support of the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service at Morecambe Fire Station. The young people are given an opportunity to work on the teams and this allows them to complete a project to benefit the local community, but also provides an opportunity for recognition - boosting their confidence and ability to spur them on to a life with aspirations. We have also had the chance to visit Galloways Society for the Blind on Balmoral Road in Morecambe, whose work is extremely important for those who are blind or who have visual impairments. We were also fortunate to be at the launch of the street pastors scheme and I have received an update from them which indicates that the scheme is a great success and is continuing to go from strength to strength.

We have had the opportunity to learn a lot about the cultures of others during the course of the year. We have been delighted to take part in celebrations for Chinese New Year, where I was asked to wake the dragon by painting in its eyes in Market Square,

Lancaster. We also enjoyed a lunch to celebrate the event at Mr Jones' restaurant in Lancaster where I was quickly taught five phrases in Chinese. Luckily I was able to pull off the impression that I was fluent in the language and my efforts received rapturous applause! We have also been part of local celebrations for the Hindu festivals of Diwali and Holi. We have always been so well received and have been fortunate to be able to learn more about the variety of cultures of people who live and work in our district.

We attended for the first time this year the Community Festival in Williamson Park in June. The festival was a great success and has grown in stature and numbers over recent years. We were able to visit over 50 stalls from organisations who were exhibiting on the day and successfully managed to raise the profile of the Mayoralty amongst them. We have since received requests for support from people we met at this event and I have been delighted to support them all.

Being Mayor also offers you the opportunity to meet and work alongside other Mayors in the County, and also the High Sherriff. Our roles are similar in some ways and different in others, but by coming together we have had the opportunity to learn about each others roles and responsibilities.

We have been able to be very supportive of the arts in the district. We have attended a variety of events at the Grand Theatre in Lancaster, where a number of local theatre and amateur dramatics groups have put on their performances. We have also been able to attend a number of events at The Dukes. We have two contrasting theatre spaces but their audiences are widespread throughout the district and beyond. It has to be said that one of the most amusing of these performances was the After Dark performance of the Adult Pantomime Aladdin in December. Although I was the subject of many of the jokes and innuendo, Heather and myself have not laughed as much for a long time and I was delighted to join in!

We have also been pleased to be able to support some of our local dance groups. We have watched shows which include dancers of all ages, and those of all abilities, but one of the most enjoyable was a show put on by a group of dance students who had physical and mental disabilities. I have been pleased to have had a number of visits from a local man, Chris, who is a volunteer at Animal Care in Lancaster. Chris is an ambassador for the work he undertakes at Animal Care but because of his special needs he has also kept me informed of the activities he is able to enjoy with a variety of clubs and organisations in the district, whose support he is able to enjoy with the help of his carers.

We have been very privileged to have been able to meet a number of local centenarians this year, including a visit to the late Honorary Alderman Arthur Briggs prior to his 101st birthday. I have to say that I was visiting a lady of 105 in Morecambe and remarked how I had never met anyone as old as her – and she told me to go and speak to the lady in the corner who was 106! I visited the same lady last month and helped her celebrate her 107th Birthday – an absolute joy!

The Court for the Admission of Freemen in July was a very special and very select gathering where I was pleased to be able to play my part in the continuation of this very longstanding tradition. Of 10 applicants in the first Court sitting, 8 were admitted as the sons of Freemen, proving that this ancient rite is still cherished amongst some

longstanding Lancaster families. We also held a second court to be able to immediately admit two men as the Sons of Freemen, their father having just been admitted himself. It is a quirky ceremony but one which will hopefully strengthen and find a purpose in these changing times.

Our connection with The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment has again continued this year and we were lucky to be able to attend the handing over of the new Regimental Colours by Her Majesty the Queen in Preston. It was a very moving ceremony and we were proud to be part of such a big event on behalf of "our" Regiment. We will be maintaining this strong link later this month when I take the old Regimental Colours from the Regiment, so that they can be kept safe until they can be displayed in the Regimental Chapel at The Priory Church. I shall be honoured to undertake this duty on behalf of the brave men and women who are risking their lives for all of us.

The launch of the Poppy Appeal and attending the Service of Remembrance at Lancaster Town Hall will provide one of the most moving memories of my year. I have never attended the event at Lancaster as I attend an event in my own Parish, but the number attending and the solemnity of the event was as I had expected. What was moving for me was to see the parents of a young local soldier laying a wreath in his memory. They lost their son only two years ago and they clearly found comfort in this event, but they also provide us all with a thought provoking image which our young people can associate with and appreciate. It is also very touching to be stood on the steps of the Town Hall to take the salute from the ever decreasing number of First and Second World War Veterans. The applause they receive is very, very much deserved.

Attending the open day at Torrisholme Cemetery was an absolute pleasure and I was delighted to be there to support the work of our Officers in recognition of the presentation of the Blue Flag award to this flagship project for the district. Long may they continue and inspire others to take pride in their communities.

I have been asked to support a number of local businesses to help raise the profile of their new enterprise or support the continuation of a successful business – something which we should be shouting about in the current economic climate. Amongst these I shall mention that I was asked to open the newly refurbished Wagon and Horses pub on St George's Quay, and also the newly refurbished Co-Operative Funeral Home in Lancaster. There is no connection of course!! Two very diverse businesses, but I have been pleased to support all of those who asked me to visit them.

We enjoyed the switch on of the Christmas lights in Morecambe and in Lancaster. At Lancaster we had the pleasure of meeting the other man in the red "suit" and his live reindeer. Another experience not to be forgotten. As well as being ridiculed at the adult panto I have also been upstaged by Bob the Builder at Busy Bees Nursery, not everyone can say that!

We supported, by our presence, the Lancaster Guardian Toy Appeal at Christmas. I attended the launch at Big Storage on White Lund and Heather and I were lucky enough to be able to go to the shop unit in Marketgate to help bag up the toys for distribution. Some of those toys were destined for the children and their families at Derian House in Chorley. A lot of money is raised in the Lancaster District for Derian House and one of

the local volunteers invited Heather and myself to pay a “joyous” visit to Derian House to see the work that is done there. Although I was not sure whether I would be able to cope with what I would see, I was assured that it was a happy place – and that it was. We were taken to see the sensory rooms, the soft play areas, we were able to chat with some of the older clients there – two teenage girls off into town in their wheelchairs! I had always assumed that Derian House was a place for terminally ill babies and toddlers – but the advances in medicine mean that Derian House can support a child and their family through their childhood and sometimes into adulthood. Their fundraising efforts will continue and we can now support our local volunteers in the full knowledge of the work that the centre undertakes.

I have had a few tough jobs but one in particular - well someone had to do it! It was to open the annual Round Table beer festival at Lancaster Town Hall. A fantastically well supported event and I was lucky to go on what they claim is their quietest night– opening night. The place was packed to the rafters and they will have raised a huge sum of money for Charity.

Before closing, I must add my sincere thanks to June and to Alex for their support in carrying of the duties of Deputies which they have carried out with grace and dignity. My biggest thank you however must go to my wife Heather, who has been at my side without question. I am and will always be grateful for her support, especially this year.

The whole year has been a privilege. We have enjoyed everything. Some of the events have been serious or poignant and others have been great fun, but they are all part of the tapestry of the year. I really hope that the next Mayor enjoys every moment of the year because it really does go in the blink of an eye!

Councillor Keith Budden
The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Lancaster
2008/2009