

**Mayor's Report, Councillor Sara Bishop,
for October 16.10.24 Town Council Meeting**

Friday, September 20th Collection of donations from Tesco, Atherstone

As a result of enquiries made by the Deputy Clerk, about the possibility of Tesco, in Atherstone, supporting the forthcoming Civic Service by donating refreshments, the Community Champion, Claire, a member of Tesco's staff, invited us to the store to collect the donations and have photos taken.

Also, there with the Deputy Clerk, Consort and myself to receive the donations was Reverend Michael Brandsma from St. Mary's Church.

We also had the opportunity to meet the Store Manager, Vicky, who was very enthusiastic about Tesco's involvement in the local community. The chosen charity for the Civic Service is The Atherstone Friends of St. Giles Hospice and coincidentally the store has been raising funds for St. Giles by having a book stall in store.

As a result, I was invited to attend a Community network meeting at the store the following Wednesday.

Saturday, September 21st Civic Service, St. Mary's Church, Atherstone

This Civic Service was the first of its kind, for the Town Council, in many years, I believe. Over the past weeks the Deputy Clerk, Sally has been liaising with Reverend Michael Brandsma and myself to put together the service as well as handling the guest list, sorting refreshments and publishing the Order of Service. She has done a tremendous job and I'm very grateful for her work.

Local businesses also supported this event. Donations of sandwiches were made by Greencore of Atherstone and other refreshments, including cakes and biscuits, were made by our Atherstone branch of Tesco. Grateful thanks to Gary Chamberlain for putting together a film clip of images of Atherstone, which were shown on screen at the beginning of the event.

We were fortunate with the weather at the outset, as we greeted the invited guests at St. Mary's Church. Civic dignitaries came from councils within and around Warwickshire, including those from Alcester, Coleshill, Coventry, Hinckley and Bosworth, North Warwickshire, Solihull, and Whitnash. Also in attendance was the Chair of Warwickshire County Council Councillor Chris Mills with his wife Sue. A number of Atherstone's Honorary Citizens were in attendance and I was pleased that volunteers from a range of local community groups were represented, including Scouts, the Hockey Club, Leading Players, The Civic Society, The Jubilee Committee, Open Hands and Cohort 4, TQEA Governors, as well as representatives of the Fire Service, the Police, and the Royal British Legion.

As the charity I have chosen to support is The Atherstone Friends of St. Giles there were a number of guests representing the group as well as St. Giles Hospice's Regional Fund Raising Coordinator Alison Tumelty. One of the original Friends group, Laura Pennycuick, was also present and chatted to guests at the end of the service about the history of St. Giles Hospice.

The theme of the service was the Compassionate Community and serving others; it included readings from Mayor Consort Alan Bishop and Councillor Chris Jones.

I was particularly pleased that "The A Town Sound" Choir, under the leadership of Christine Evans, performed a selection of songs to entertain us all. Many guests told me how much they had enjoyed their performance.

At the end of the service volunteers from St. Mary's served refreshments in the lounge. In addition, Honorary Citizen, Yvonne Stone, who had been involved in Atherstone's Heritage and History Week, led a guided tour of the Church and gave a fascinating insight to some of its history, including the fact that St. Mary's Church is the largest parish church in Warwickshire.

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event and to those who may not have been there but gave their support in other ways. It was a valuable opportunity for members of the community to come together and recognise the variety of ways we serve and help to make our town a better place to live.

Sunday, September 22nd High Sheriff of Warwickshire, Sikh Service, Gurdwara Sahib, Tachbrook Park Drive, Warwick

The invitation to this event came from Mrs. Rajvinder Kaur Gill, High Sheriff of Warwickshire. It was a service of thanksgiving to mark the beginning of the Legal Year. It is of particular significance this year because Rajvinder is the first Sikh woman to be appointed to the post of High Sheriff in the UK. The post of High Sheriff is a Royal appointment, one of only two Royal appointments in Warwickshire, the other post being that of Lord Lieutenant. The High Sheriff is the Sovereign's representative in the county for all matters relating to the judiciary and the maintenance of law and order.

The High Sheriff's chosen charity for this year is Warwickshire Crimebeat, which aims to create safer communities and environments for all by empowering young people to make a difference and encouraging them to feel part of their communities.

I was very impressed by the welcome everyone received. We were greeted warmly as we entered the Gurdwara, a beautiful building in a traditional Sikh style. We were shown where to leave our shoes and after ensuring we both had suitable head coverings we were invited into the Prayer Hall, where the service was to take place. I was struck by the content of the service. It was emphasised that women have equal value to men in Sikhism and an underlying principle of their belief is service to others, much in common with the theme of our own Atherstone Civic Service.

The service was introduced by Jaswant Singh Virdee, by General Secretary of the Gurdwara. Music, recitations and prayers from Sikh scriptures were shared.

The High Sheriff herself spoke about her role and how she had become a Magistrate on the Coventry and Warwickshire Bench, serving on both the Adult and Youth Bench. She also spoke about her chosen charity and how she hopes to motivate young people from diverse backgrounds to make a positive contribution to their communities.

Speakers at the service included Talbir Singh KC, Timothy Cox, Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire, Andrew Lockhart, Resident Judge, Warwick Crown Court and One Judiciary and Baldip Singh Aulak, Barrister and representative of Sikhs in Law.

Following the service the congregation were invited to the dining hall where “Langar” was served. Langar is the food served in the Gurdwara, free to all, regardless of religion, caste or gender, economic status or ethnicity.

It was a very enlightening and inspiring occasion attended by numerous Civic and Community leaders.

Sunday September 29th Mayor of North Warwickshire Borough Council Civic Service at St. Cuthbert’s Church, Shustoke

We were invited to attend the Civic Service by The Mayor of North Warwickshire Borough Council, Councillor Colin Hayfield. St. Cuthbert’s is a beautiful sandstone building standing on the site of the original St. Cuthbert’s Church which was built in the 12th century. The service was led by the Reverend M. Waterstreet. The service marked the 50th anniversary of the creation of North Warwickshire Borough Council formed by the amalgamation of Atherstone Rural District Council and a substantial part of Meriden Rural District Council.

During the service readings were given by Steve Maxey NWBC Chief Executive and Keith Woodward, Church Warden. In his address Councillor Hayfield talked about service to the community and thanked all those present for their service in whatever capacity. The Mayor’s chosen charity is the local Air Ambulance and the donations received were to be shared equally between the Church and the Charity.

In attendance were a number of Civic representatives including our newly elected MP Rachel Taylor with Atherstone Town Councillor Dawn Wilkinson, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Coventry, The Chair of Warwickshire County Council and his wife, The Mayor and Deputy from Coleshill, the Leader of Warwickshire County Council together with her husband Warwickshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner, The Deputy Mayor and Consort from Solihull, The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Birmingham and Lord Dugdale.

Along with some old favourite hymns, sung enthusiastically by the congregation The Nether Whitacre Choir performed “The Lord is My Shepherd”.

After the service we were all welcomed to take refreshments which were served at the nearby Griffin Inn.

Tuesday October 1st 2024, The High Sheriff of Warwickshire's Legal Service at The Collegiate Church of St. Mary's, Warwick

This was the second service for The High Sheriff of Warwickshire, Rajvinder Kaur Gill, the previous one being held at The Gurdwara in Leamington earlier in September.

It was a very well-attended and prestigious occasion as well as one which reflected the multi-faith, diverse nature of the community. There were representatives of the Judiciary, Police and Town, Borough and County Councils, within Warwickshire and beyond and a variety of voluntary groups, including Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire was also present. The High Sheriff's chosen charity is "Crimebeat", a charity which aims to create safer communities by providing opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities and through education make a positive impact in their communities

The Coventry and Warwickshire Gospel Choir performed "Amazing Grace" and a lively rendition of "Oh, Happy Day", in which the assembly were able to join in if they wished. In addition to this there was also a musical performance by The Senior Choir of Warwick Preparatory School, entitled "One World, One People". The programme included readings from Sikh scriptures, a Synagogue Prayer Book, the Quran and The Bible.

The address by the Reverend Canon Angus Aagaard, which focused on upholding law and justice included the appearance of a set of wooden stocks which would have been sited in the Market Place and held offenders to be pelted with rotten fruits and vegetables by the local community. Fortunately, Reverend Angus escaped any demonstration of the punishment which would have been exacted on an occupant of the stocks.

Other musical accompaniments included that of the brass instruments of Warwick School Fanfare Team, the tabla of Jagmeet Rihal and St. Mary's Director of Music, Oliver Hancock.

At the end of the service "langar" refreshments were provided in the Church.

Sunday, October 6th, Civic Service for the Mayor of Whitnash, at St. Joseph's Church, Whitnash.

We were very pleased to be invited to attend the Civic Service of Councillor Barry Franklin, Mayor of Whitnash for this year. The parish of St. Joseph Whitnash is of recent origin as a Catholic parish in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, having been born from the mother parish of St. Peter, Leamington Spa. The church is of modern design, having been built in 1971. It is light and airy, with colourful stained glass windows and textile wall hangings. We were made to feel very welcome.

The service was jointly led by Father David Hartley, Reverend Ben Cook and Reverend Sally Jones. Readings were delivered by Jenny Mason, Town Clerk, and The Mayor himself. In addition, three pupils from St. Joseph's School were also invited to deliver readings, which they did splendidly.

As the time of year coincided with Harvest celebrations the Church had been decorated appropriately and the theme of the service reflected the thanks given for the harvest and all the gifts of the earth that we are grateful for.

At the end of the service refreshments were served for the congregation and invited guests in the adjoining Parish Hall. Civic guests from Leamington, Warwick, Coleshill, Kenilworth, Nuneaton, Solihull, Stratford and, of course, Atherstone were in attendance.

Donations made at the service were for the Mayor's Charity, The Whitnash Charitable Trust, which helps to benefit those in need in the town.