

Review of the Year 2023

Thousands enjoy the festive cheer at the Christmas Fayre

Thousands of people visited the Christmas Fayre on Sunday 26th November to enjoy the festivities put on at the event organised by Ross-on-Wye Town Council. As well as over 85 stall holders, making it the biggest fayre to date, visitors enjoyed live music, street entertainment, Santa's grotto, face painting and the official switch on of the town's Christmas lights. The lights switch on was a very special moment with two-year-old Alfie McDonald taking to the stage with his parents, Courtney and Lannock, to turn on the lights. Alfie was diagnosed with a rare genetic condition which caused a seizure earlier this year. Following an appeal for nominations by the Town Council for someone to turn on the lights, Alfie was chosen. Charlotte Reynolds, Ross-on-Wye Town Council's Community Development Officer, said: "We were delighted to see so many people attending and supporting the event despite the poor weather in the morning. It was great to once again see the streets of Ross packed with visitors enjoying all the festivities. It was such a wonderful moment to see Alfie's smiling face as he switched on the lights. I am sure all who attended were moved at this moment."

Ross-on-Wye Town Council would like to thank event sponsors, REHAU, Fibre Heroes and Harrison Clarke Rickerbys Ltd, as well as Ben Abbott, AP Stage Solutions, Scaffolding 2000, Community First Responders, Caple Security, Steve Oakey, The Venue, Superson Entertainment, Valerian Entertainment, Looby Lou, Joey the Juggler, Erica Jean, Noah Rawlings, Chocolate Teapot, Border Belles, The Penyard Singers, A.W Parker (Drybrook) Band, John Kyrle High School. Captured by the Caves, West Mercia Police and EnviroAbility. To the wonderful volunteers – events like this would not happen without you! A huge thank you to all the stall holders and shop keepers for supporting this event. And finally, a special thank you to Alfie, Courtney and Lannock for agreeing to turn on the town lights and for sharing this special moment with thousands of people.



Ross-on-Wye Town Council were delighted to once again be able to supply some of the traders in town with a Christmas tree again this year to help give the town a little extra festive sparkle.



A huge thank you to Ross Rotary and Dinmore Trees for supplying us with another beautiful Christmas tree!



Congratulations to Maya Tafat and Molly Whyman who were this year's winners of the Mayor's Christmas Card competition. They both received a gift from the Mayor as well as having their designs used this year.

Successful Heritage Walks



Over the summer Ross-on-Wye Town Council launched our series of free history walking tours of Ross-on-Wye - the 'Ross Heritage Walks'. With the generous help and support from our four wonderful tour guides, Heather Hurley, Rosemary Sutton, Mark Sanderson and Phillip Gray, the walks were well attended and enjoyed by all. The popularity of these walks led to the Town Council submitting a successful grant application to the UKSPF Cultural Programming fund to create an app providing a series of interactive heritage trails around Ross, telling the story of past events and the rich cultural history which Ross-on-Wye was built on. It is hoped that this will be launched Spring 2024.



Funded by UK Government **LEVELLING UP** Herefordshire Council

Second digital tourist information point installed

Thanks to a generous grant from the Great Places to Visit Fund, provided by Central Government through Herefordshire Council, Ross-on-Wye Town Council has now completed the installation of the town's second digital tourist information point at the Library on Cantilupe Road to provide valuable information for visitors arriving into town.

Following the installation of the first digital tourist information point at the Market Place in January 2023 with the support of Fibre Heroes, Ross-on-Wye now has two screens in the town centre which provide instantaneous and direct tourist information, profiling businesses, services and activities available in and around Ross-on-Wye. The location of the second wall-mounted screen was chosen as it is in direct line of sight of the town's bus depot and therefore convenient for visitors arriving into town.

The digital tourism information point at the Market Place has so far recorded nearly 600 visitors who have browsed the screen's content, with 1.8k sessions in total. The most popular pages visited from the online menu include the town map, Eating Out, Activities, Shopping, Historical Buildings, Where to Stay and Cafés.



Ross-on-Wye Town Council appoints new Town Clerk

Ross-on-Wye Town Council is pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs. Carla Boyles as the next Town Clerk, succeeding Mrs. Sarah Robson, who has stepped down after eight years of dedicated service.

Carla brings a wealth of experience and a commitment to public service in this important role, which she has demonstrated in her role as Deputy Town Clerk to the Town Council over the last two years.

As Town Clerk, Carla will play a crucial role in ensuring the efficient functioning of local services within the town and as a key point of contact for the community and other stakeholders.

The external recruitment process was managed by Herefordshire Association of Local Councils to ensure a robust and independent procedure.

Carla states: "I am honoured to be appointed as the new Town



Left to right: Sarah Robson and Carla Boyles

Clerk and look forward to working with councillors, staff and the community for the benefit of Ross. I would like to thank Sarah for being a fantastic mentor to me over the past two years."

Cllr Linden Delves, Chair of the Council's Personnel Sub-Committee said: "I'd like to thank Sarah for her hard work over the last eight years and I'm delighted to see Carla take on the very important role of Town Clerk. I'm looking forward to working with her in her new role as we continue to deliver valuable local services."

The Town Council wishes to express its gratitude to the outgoing Clerk, Sarah Robson and wishes her well in her future endeavors.



Saying goodbye to Sarah Robson

Council invests in Cemetery Mapping Software

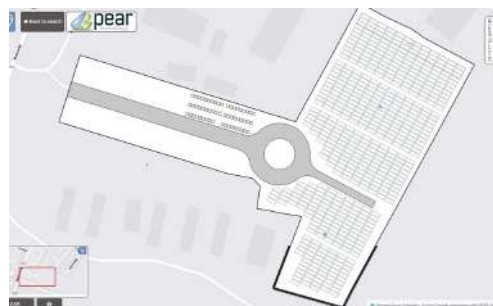
Ross-on-Wye Town Council has invested in new software to enable easier access to the burial records of the Town Cemetery in Tudorville. Cemetery Searcher is an online cemetery search facility which enables the public to easily search digitised burial records to find ancestors, as well as any other people of interest, and

locate their grave or memorial on a digital map. Using the unique search platform, burial plots can be quickly located and highlighted on the map.

The site can also be accessed on your smart phone which enables quick and convenient access to burial records and map.

Deputy Clerk, Carla Boyles, said: "The addition of this resource to our website provides free searchable information which can be accessed from anywhere. We're pleased to be able to offer this service which we hope will be of benefit to family history researchers, genealogists and others with an interest in the Town Cemetery."

View the map here: <https://www.rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk/about-ross/cemetery-map-searcher/>



Market House to get urgent repairs thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund



Ross-on-Wye Town Council has been awarded a £112,780 grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to carry out urgent repairs which are needed to restore and protect Ross-on-Wye's historic Grade II* listed Market House. It was confirmed in October that The National Lottery Heritage Fund grant had been awarded for this exciting heritage project on the Market House which has been central to the life of the town for over four centuries. It is expected the works will start Spring 2024 for final completion expected to be approximately November 2024. Over the years the Market House has suffered extensive stone erosion and urgently requires specialist conservation. The stone window surrounds are so badly eroded that there is a serious risk of the glass falling out and the windows being boarded up. This would severely restrict use of the building, jeopardising its future, and harming the character of the town. The work will not only be for conservation and restoration repairs to the fabric of the building, there are also a number of legacy projects planned, including new interpretation boards to tell the story of the Market House and its wider historical context.

An app-based tour telling the history of Ross which will provide an engaging walk of the town, in addition to working with createRoss to add to their Museum Without Walls Augmented Reality exhibits which celebrate the history of the town and bring the past to life for residents and visitors. Working with local Nature and Wildlife Groups we will seek to create a 'Hedgehog Hub' to share the story of the hedgehog as the town's historic emblem in order to raise awareness of the serious decline in hedgehog numbers and engage people with wildlife conservation. At the end of the work a special exhibition, in partnership with Made in Ross, will be launched to celebrate the building and its heritage. Sarah Robson, the Town Clerk said: "We are delighted to have received this support thanks to the National Lottery players and are pleased the project will offer the opportunity to conserve this magnificent building. The Market House is such an iconic landmark within the town and it's exciting to know that the restoration will enable residents and visitors alike to continue to enjoy it for many decades to come."

Equinox Festival success



Ross-on-Wye Town Council's free world music and wellbeing Equinox Festival, Friday 22 and Saturday 23 September, was opened by The Border Belles and enjoyed by hundreds of locals and visitors who came to enjoy the riverside event. Thanks to an additional grant of £10k from the UK Government through the Shared Prosperity Fund, the town council was able to host even more music and activities this year including yoga, meditation, dance, arts, crafts, circus skills, face painting, a chess zone and live world music on both days. Artists included former BBC journalist, DJ Andy Kershaw, Guinean N'Famady Kouyaté, Serbian/Iranian Pouya Mahmoodi Quartet and international headliners, The Turbans. Yoga classes held on Friday afternoon included a school children's session with Ashfield Primary School's Year 6 pupils who enjoyed learning about the equinox and participated in a relaxing half hour of yoga with Tracy Derrett. A Hawaiian hula dance session on Saturday morning was led by Jo from Lehualani Hula and included an introduction into the meaning behind the gentle movements before a full dance from participants. Around 30 stalls were set up by the Bandstand, a selection of street food and drink, a new Maker's Market selling artisan crafts and products plus local charities, wellbeing, therapy and health providers. Taurus Healthcare attended with their mobile consultancy unit and provided free health checks onsite including advice and tips on healthy living. Festival goers enjoyed participating in the Wye Valley River Festival's arts and crafts sessions and series of dance workshops under the stretch tent whilst local samba band, Forest Thump, paraded from the top of Wye Street to the festival site and led a drop-in drumming session for everyone to enjoy. A popular feature this year was the brilliant Jitterbug Circus who ran activities throughout the day including juggling, giant bubbles, plate spinning, a limbo challenge and lots of fun activities for both kids and adults. We would like to extend special thanks to our sponsors, Rehau and Fibre Heroes, for their support, to our volunteers who helped to steward the event and Simeon Cole for providing our hay bale seating.

A souvenir to remember

Ross-on-Wye Town Council were delighted to gift the children in the schools in the parish of the Town Council a mug to commemorate the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

Pictured is former mayor, Cllr Ed O'Driscoll, handing out the mugs to the children at Brampton Abbots Primary



Town Council's aspirations set out in Riverside Management Plan

'Riverside Management Plan' is not a phrase that has been widely used in Ross-on-Wye until recently. Our town's beautiful riverside is at the heart of the residents' daily lives, a great visitor attraction and one of our greatest natural assets. The Town Council's Management Plan sets out how, working with partner organisations, including The Wye Valley AONB and Natural England plus volunteers, it will ensure that the riverside biodiversity, environmental and ecological impact is developed and enhanced. The River Wye forms the western boundary of the town and plays an integral part of the town's green space areas. They include the Rope Walk and Long Acre, covering approximately 1 kilometre in length. Investment and hard work over the last few years has seen more of the riverside become accessible to all and enhanced with planting, ensuring that it has become a major focus for amenity, leisure, and

relaxation. Duncan Rowe, Operations Manager, said: "The Riverside Management Plan sets out the aspirations on how the Town Council will oversee the riverside and amenity areas between now and 2028. Our vision is to build and maintain a successful amenity and wildlife habitat for the future, and to conserve the landscape and its natural features as well as the wildlife. The area covered in the Riverside Management Plan is a rich asset with large areas of open green space, set on the floodplain and with areas managed as floodplain meadow." Some of the actions in the Riverside Management Plan include; to maintain the riverbank with established management regimes, tackle invasive non-native species, protect wildlife within the park by increasing biodiversity through planting and habitat creation and to promote the health benefits of using the park.

Ross-on-Wye Town Council were saddened to hear of the passing of Joyce Thomas MBE DL. Joyce became a Councillor for Ross in 1970, and made local history when she became the first woman to be voted the Town Mayor in 1975.

Joyce did a huge amount for the town. During her time as a councillor she was involved in some major projects including helping to provide the town's first playground at Homs Road and was instrumental in creating Deanhill Play Park; a park that is still enjoyed by many young residents today.

Joyce passed away peacefully in her sleep at West Bank Residential Care Home on Monday 20th February 2023.



Picture courtesy of Herefordshire History

Who's Who - your Town Councillors

EAST WARD

Milly Boylan

milly.boylan@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
07827 668971

Corina Lodea

corina.lodea@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

Ed O'Driscoll (County Councillor)

ed.odriscoll@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
07966 238510 / 01989 566644

Bev Pope

bev.pope@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

Michelle Setchfield

michelle.setchfield@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

James Vidler

james.vidler@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

NORTH WARD

Chris Bartrum (County Councillor)

chris.bartrum@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
01989 563299 / 07958 199452

Dan Ciolte

dan.ciolte@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

Valerie Coker

valerie.coker@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
07773 330569

Shelley Foreman

shelley.foreman@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

Daniel Lister

daniel.lister@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
07841 194954

John Winder

john.winder@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

WEST WARD

Linden Delves

linden.delves@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk

Katie Fowler

katie.fowler@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
07794 248571

Sarah Freer

sarah.freer@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
07970 469475

Louis Stark (County Councillor)

louis.stark@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
01989 568622

Rob Taylor

rob.taylor@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
01989 563670

Julian Utting

julian.utting@rosstowncouncillors.co.uk
07900 261367

Contact us

Ross-on-Wye Town Council offices are normally open Monday to Friday from 0930 to 1300.

✉ The Corn Exchange, 7 High Street, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5HL

@ admin@rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk

☎ 01989 562373

🌐 www.rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk

OFFICE TEAM

- Carla Boyles PSLCC | Town Clerk
- Duncan Rowe | Operations Manager
- Jane Mainey | Tourism & Marketing Manager
- Charlotte Reynolds | Community Development Officer

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