

Town Meeting 4th April 2019: Activity Report by Unlocking Warwick

Unlocking Warwick is the self-funding volunteer group based here at the Court House supporting the Town Council and the Visitor Centre with various community activities.

'**In the Ballroom**' the social gathering for local residents who might particularly enjoy getting out and meeting people for a chat over tea and cake has become extremely popular. Each month there is an interesting talk or activity and a topical quiz. For example next week there will be a presentation about the restoration of Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden with a gardening quiz, in May we'll hear about our canal network, and the June edition will feature a dramatic re-enactment of a Public Health Board meeting held in this building in Victorian times. 'In The Ballroom' is on the *Second Wednesday* of the month. On the *First Tuesday* of the month, we organise **Tea and Dance Lessons** in the ballroom with tea and cake and time to chat. Good exercise, good company and good fun.

Last year's splendid **Warwick Christmas Regency Ball** sold out months in advance with guests coming to Warwick from far and wide, many staying overnight. The costumes were particularly gorgeous this year and guests said how much they enjoyed the interval presentation of a ball scene from Northanger Abbey acted by two local students. This year's ball will be on *December 7th*.

Our **Court House Tours** resume this Saturday for the tourist season. These free 45-minute tours take groups around the Court House to tell of the history of the buildings on this site and introduce visitors to the history of Warwick. 13 tours are scheduled this year, on selected Saturdays. **Special Tours** can be arranged for groups and organisations. This year we have already conducted tours around Warwick for 50 children from All Saints Junior School. And last Saturday we helped to mark the start of English Tourism Week with a special 90-minute tour of Warwick's historic buildings.

We are currently helping the Town Council to develop a smart phone **App about the Court House** as a third location on the 'Town of Treasurers' app currently featuring St. Mary's and the Lord Leycester and a walk through town.

In the **Visitor Information Centre**, volunteers help out regularly to cover for sickness and holidays. We also provide the long-term list of events 'What's On in Warwick at a Glance' which is posted each month on the Visit Warwick website as well as the Unlocking Warwick website. It gets more than two thousand views each month. (Send entries in good time to whatson@unlockingwarwick.org)

At the end of last year we helped the Town Council to mark the centenary of the **WW1 Armistice** using the background stories about the Warwick Fallen researched for our special website www.warwickwarmemorial.org.uk We staged an **Armistice Tea** in the ballroom for the Warwick Words History Festival, with a presentation of personal stories, what happened in Warwick during the Great War, and period songs and poetry. Fifty people took part on our **Warwick World War Walk** from the Court House to the Poppy Display in St. Mary's, and the Unlocking Warwick tree in the church's **Christmas Tree Festival** had the names and photos of those who died in the war attached to keys with red ribbons. Our tree was the runner up in a public vote by thousands of visitors. And on Armistice Day itself, a recording of all 364 names of the Warwick fallen was played after the lighting of the Beacon of Light at the castle. We are still researching a few names on the memorial and hope local people will continue to send us information and photos from their family albums.

Our main **website** www.unlockingwarwick.org has plenty of news about our activities. We are also on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Please visit our table afterwards, where our Chair Karen Parker and I will be glad to tell you more about Unlocking Warwick – and if you'd like to **join in** with our activities – it costs nothing, and you can do as much or as little as you like!