

BUSINESS NEWS

Stratforward Newsletter

Issue 28 - 21 July 2016

Stratforward Director Hits The Streets

Stratforward's new boss has pledged to hit the streets in the coming weeks to meet as many BID members as possible.

Speaking at Stratforward's third quarterly networking event at the Falcon Hotel on Tuesday, Joseph Baconnet said he wanted to meet as many local business people as possible over the summer.

Just a week after taking up his role, Mr Baconnet told the event **that he will be "hanging around the town", either alone or with the Town Hosts, getting to know what the key issues are and what businesses want from their BID.** He also reiterated that his door is always open to members who want to meet him and chat through ideas and concerns.

"I want to get out and see as many businesses as possible," he said.

"From you the businesses I'm really interested in getting as much feedback as we can.

"It helps build a picture of what is going on, what people are saying, what staff are saying, what your customers are saying."

Mr Baconnet said he will also be meeting with developers and

property owners in the town to get an understanding of their plans, as well as working alongside the Stratforward team to deliver the **BID's** business plan for 2016/17.

At the meeting BID members were greeted by Chair Sara Aspley, **who said Stratford has had a "fantastic" year so far, with hundreds of thousands of people visiting the town in the first half of the year with millions of others seeing it featured as a result of media coverage of the Shakespeare 400 Celebrations, Aviva Cycle Tour, Lonely Planet Top Euro Listing, the Festival of Motoring and the River Festival.**

Tuesday's event was the third Stratforward quarterly networking briefing. Keep an eye on your weekly newsletter for details of the next meeting.



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River Festival - The Stats

Stratford's 2016 River Festival proved a hit with both visitors and businesses in the town, official feedback has shown.

More than 60,000 residents and visitors descended on Stratford over the weekend of the eighth annual River Festival earlier this month - 36,000 on the Saturday and 26,000 the following day.

According to official feedback - outlined at a networking briefing for Stratford members earlier this week - positive feedback for the event is at an all-time high.

Stratford's Events Manager Ruth Wood told the meeting that over 500 visitors had been surveyed at the event during the weekend and nearly a quarter of all town businesses had completed event feedback forms brought round by the Town Hosts.

The key points of the visitor research found:

- Of those visitors, 60% lived within 20 miles of Stratford, compared to 43% in 2015. 40% had travelled more than 50 miles to visit the festival, down from 57% in 2015.
- Just over a third of visitors (36%) walked, used public transport, cycled or boated to the festival
- **Roughly the same as last year's 37%. Just under two thirds (64% drove)** - again a similar proportion as last year (63%).
- From those visitors surveyed, the River Festival received fantastic feedback, with 90% reporting an **"excellent" or "very good" experience.**

The key points from the nearly 100 feedback forms returned to Stratford from members:

- Of those, 83% said the festival had an excellent or very good impact on visitor numbers.
- The majority of town centre businesses saw an increase in sales whilst 22% said they had no increase - something Stratford is keen to address and is open to suggestions from businesses.
- 75% of the BID businesses that responded thought the River Festival gave a positive impression of the town, with just 5% saying it gave a negative impression

Ruth also confirmed that a record 28 Stratford business members took part directly in the event this year.

And despite the weather not quite meeting the scorching standards of this week, all festival traders **saw an increase in sales, including Stratford members the One Elm, Barry the Butcher, Roly's Fudge, Huffkins, The View and Hathaway Tea Rooms.**

There were no public order incidents at the festival, just one complaint about sound levels - and one **that the sound wasn't loud enough, Ms Wood told the briefing.**

Ms Wood appealed to businesses with additional comments and suggestions on how to make the event even better for all members in the future to call for a chat.

Preparations are now underway for the Stratford's next big event - the Stratford Town Centre Food Festival - set to take place from September 23-25. There will be plenty of chances for BID members to get involved - check forthcoming issues of the newsletter for more details or give Ruth and the team a quick call.



BUSINESS AS USUAL AT DEBENHAMS AS BHS ERA ENDS.

It's very much business as usual at Debenhams, after the freehold of Stratford's Debenhams branch was bought by UK & European Investments, the company behind the Bell Court Development. The £12.6m deal means that Debenhams will really operate as a key part of the redeveloped scheme.

Stratford understands it's business as usual for the department store – as the sale related to the site only.

Meanwhile, BHS is to close its doors in Stratford for the last time on Saturday.

The Bridge Street store is among the first of 20 BHS stores across the country to close after the firm went into administration earlier in the year.

In other news, Primark has said it will NOT be opening in Stratford after it emerged that adverts for jobs in a 'Stratford-upon-Avon store' were an error and were for the chain's branch in Stratford in London.



Businesses Thanked for Understanding Following Bomb Scare

Police have praised businesses in Stratford for their understanding after parts of the town had to be sealed off and evacuated on Monday following the discovery of a suspicious package on Henley Street.

An unattended suitcase outside Edinburgh Wool Shop was reported to police in the late afternoon. Parts of Henley Street - including Shakespeare's Birthplace - were immediately evacuated and cordoned off while the Bomb Squad were called.

Once on site, the cordon was extended further to take in parts of Windsor Street, Mansell Street, Guild Street, Meer Street and part of Birmingham Road to allow for a controlled explosion to take place.

The closures remained in force until around 8pm. Afterwards police confirmed the suitcase was found to contain clothes and souvenirs.

Police thanked businesses in the effected area for their co-operation and understanding during the incident.



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Speaking at Stratforward's quarterly networking event at The Falcon Hotel on Tuesday, **Sergeant Richard Thomas, who works as part of Warwickshire Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team** in Stratford, said the team had visited businesses on Monday night and Tuesday morning and had received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

He said:

"We spoke to local businesses, they all understood what the issues were. It's a public safety issue at the end of the day, you can't take the risk."

Also speaking at the event, Director of Operations at Shakespeare's Birthplace, Philippa Rawlinson said when the police put the cordon in place it was quickly decided the best thing for them to do was to evacuate the premises.

She said: "From our point of view, the safety of our staff, volunteers and visitors is paramount."

Spotlight On Scorching Stratford

Stratford was the face of the hottest day of the year this week - appearing on TV screens across the nation thanks to two visits from the BBC.

As temperatures were set to soar to 35C (95F) in the town, Stratford had visits from both BBC Midlands Today and BBC Breakfast.

On Monday night, Midlands Today's Satnam Rana was spotted doing an outside broadcast from the river, with the backdrop of the RSC beamed across the Midlands.

And on Tuesday morning, BBC weather expert Carol Kirkwood donned her shades for early morning broadcasts from Stratforward member Avon Boat-ing where she said the predicted 35C would make it as warm as the hottest day of the 1976 heatwave.



BBC Midlands Today @bbcmt
Following

At last... the sun has got his hat on. A good excuse for @SatnamRana to put her shades on at 1830



Everyone Invited to Summer Sundays at Stratford-on-Sea



There is probably only one thing missing in Stratford when the temperature is as hot as it has been this week - THE SEA!

So it is very apt that the Royal Shakespeare Company is about to embark on a very special production which will help transform Stratford into Stratford - on-Sea for the summer. It is hoped that a package of seaside-inspired activities during the school holidays will encourage families to head to Stratford instead of the coast.

Each Sunday from this week (July 24) until August 28 there will be a range activities taking place on the Bancroft Terrace....everything from a giant version of the family game **Battleships to the 'Tempest Tricycle', where visitors can help The Tempest's Prospero escape his prison island.**

Highlights will also include four brand new theatre pieces commissioned by the RSC with Birmingham-based theatre company **Stan's Cafe** and inspired by the company's forthcoming ground - breaking production of *The Tempest*.

The free live theatre, suitable for all ages, will include different performances linked to *The Tempest* each Sunday from a range of groups.



Other activities will include a giant colouring workshop, sand sculpture and live music.

Performance and activities are as follows:-

FREE LIVE THEATRE COMMISSIONED WITH STAN'S CAFE

Caliban in the Rock Pool by the Bootleg Puppets

Sunday, 24 July: 11.30am, 1pm, 3pm

Find out what happens to Shakespeare's slave monster Caliban, from magical play *The Tempest*, who has now been left on the remote island all by himself. This puppet show is suitable for all ages.

Prospero and the Seaweed by the Reactor Factory

Sunday, 31 July: 11.30am, 1pm, 3pm

Enjoy watching this 20 minute performance inspired by Shakespeare's father and daughter duo - Miranda and Prospero. As Miranda prepares for her birthday the tide comes in and covers the beach with seaweed leading the pair on a huge adventure. Suitable for all ages.

Miranda's Beach by Amy Haigh and Kate Taylor Marshall

Sunday, 21 August: 12 noon, 1.30pm, 3pm

Watch this modern take on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* which examines the importance of recycling as Miranda, stranded on an island, sets out to create her own world from what's

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around her. Suitable for all ages.

Ariel on the Cliff by Cloud Cuckoo Land

Sunday, 28 August: 12 noon, 1.30pm, 3pm

Check out this story about Shakespeare's magical spirit Ariel which uses acoustic music and sensory storytelling to tell the tale. Suitable for all ages.

OTHER ACTIVITY

The Tempest Tricycle

Sunday, 31 July: 11am-4pm, Sunday 28 August: 11am-2pm

Go on a quest to help Prospero escape his prison island with The Tempest Tricycle. Visitors will be given a map, some clues and a bottle of sun-boosting potion to help Prospero on his way.

Up against the Wall: Giant Colouring Workshop

Sunday 24 July: 11am and again at 2pm

Watch artist Scott Walker as he creates a giant cartoon seaside scene on the Bancroft Terrace and then come and help him colour it in the next day.

Sand Sculpture

Sunday 7 August: 11am-4pm

Enjoy creating a sand sculpture in this special one-off workshop with professional sculptors Sand in Your Eye.

Live Music

Sunday, 14 August: Between 11.30am and 4pm, Sunday, 28 August: Between 2pm-5pm

Families can enjoy a feast of live music at this special afternoon session.

Much Ado about Puffin by the Open Attic Theatre

Sunday, August 14: 12 noon and 2.30pm

Using puppets, music and storytelling, visitors can enjoy this funny tale about a puffin and a man.

Massive Battleships by Mufti Games

Sunday 21 August: 11am, 12.30pm, 2pm and 3.30pm

Check out our supersized version of family favourite, Battleships and enjoy using binoculars, flags and flashcards to signal spectacular hits and misses. Sign up on the day. Suitable for ages seven and over.



Photo courtesy of Paul Blakemore

So think Sunday, think summer, think sun.... think Stratford-on-Sea !

Will's Will is Back!

Thousands of visitors are expected to flock to Stratford over the coming weeks for a "once in a lifetime" opportunity to see Shakespeare's will.



Photo courtesy of The National Archives

The last will and testament - one of the most important documents relating to Shakespeare - **is being exhibited at Shakespeare's Birthplace** until August 4, giving residents and visitors a rare chance to see the historic document right on their doorstep.

It is the first time the document has been in Stratford for 400 years. It was written in March 1616 **then taken to London in June of that year by Shakespeare's son-in-law Dr John Hall** to get a grant of probate.

Cared for by The National Archives, the document has been loaned to Stratford member The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust from July 16 until August 4 as part of a major exhibition celebrating **400 years of Shakespeare's legacy**.

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, which promotes Shakespeare's work, life and times and cares for the world's largest Shakespeare-related museum and archives, will temporarily display Shakespeare's last will and testament in its Treasures exhibition, which gives an insight into Shakespeare's social circle.

William Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616 at the age of 52. By the time of his death, he not only had considerable means but owned substantial property. He left the bulk of his estate to his elder daughter, Susanna Hall and £300 to his younger daughter Judith.

His wife Anne Hathaway was left his second-best bed. Beds and other pieces of household furniture were often the sole bequest to a wife while it was common practice for the best things to go to the children and the second best to the wife.

Paul Taylor, Head of Collections at The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, said: "We're incredibly excited to be able to present this once in a lifetime opportunity for people to see Shakespeare's original will back in his hometown where it was drafted by local solicitor Francis Collins 400 years ago.

"Displaying this historic document alongside other treasures from our world-class collections will complete the story of Shakespeare's social circle and his relationships with family, friends and business."

Dr Katy Mair, Early Modern Records Specialist at The National Archives, said: "We are delighted to be working with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust to bring Shakespeare's will back to his hometown.

"Thanks to work carried out by The National Archives' conservation team, the will's appearance is now closer to its original state allowing us to carry out new scientific and archival research into this iconic document.

"This summer offers a great opportunity to see the will, which includes three of Shakespeare's six known signatures, before it has to rest for a recommended 20 years."

Shakespeare's last will and testament will be on display in the Treasures exhibition at Shakespeare's Birthplace until August 4. For more information and to plan your visit, see www.shakespeare.org.uk

Raft Race Set To Make A Splash At Start of School Holidays

Crowds are expected to descend on Stratford this Sunday for the 40th annual Stratford Raft Race.

The event - which signals the start of the main school holidays and therefore the busiest time of the year for the town - will see scores of teams take to the River Avon for the fun-filled event.

The race – organised by the Shakespeare and Wellesbourne Lions and sponsored by Stratford member The Rosconn Group – will see rafts enter the Avon in Wasperton, with teams



racing to paddle a 7.5-mile course to Stratford, negotiating two weirs en route.

Since it started back in 1976, the Raft Race has raised more than £750,000 for different charities, with Heart of England Mencap, supporting local people with learning disabilities, set **to benefit from this year's event.**

Among those taking part will be the "pirates" from Heart of England Mencap (pictured).

Money raised will boost fundraising for specialist cycles and storage – allowing people with learning disabilities to get out, keep fit and experience the joy of cycling.

Setting sail in Heart of England Mencap's fearsomely-named craft 'Boaty McBoatface' will be six pirates, including Head of Operations Hayley Hemmings, Quality Assessor Yvonne Ferguson and Team Leaders Chris Howkins and Ben Pate.

Cath Errington, Fundraising Manager for Heart of England Mencap, which will also be running **several stalls on the Recreation Ground, said: "The ultimate aim is to have a dedicated cycle track.**

"The support of the Raft Race and all of those taking part will make a huge difference – we can't thank the Lions enough, and we wish everyone the best of luck on the river – not least our very own pirate crew.

"Huge thanks to Rosconn Group too – the company's sponsorship will fund safety teams at both weirs."

There is still time to sign up for the challenge and put a raft together. Please go to www.rafrace.org.uk to find out all of the information you need, including raft-building advice and tips. Entry forms are available on the website as well.

And even if you're not planning on making a splash on the day, you can still head to Stratford to soak up the atmosphere, watch the rafts paddle in and enjoy some good old fashioned fun and games.

Face of Stratford Finalists Revealed

Gorgeous Obsession

The finalists of the first Face of Stratford competition have been revealed, with the lucky winner set to be announced next week at the **town's first ever 'Showcase Stratford'**.

The showcase, which takes place at Stratford Arts House on Thursday, July 28, will bring together the very best of local fashion, beauty, dance and music.

Organised by Stratforward members Gorgeous Obsession and New Idle, it marks the culmination of the major competition, launched in March, to find the Face of Stratford.

The finalists will be introduced by four guest judges - celebrity hairdresser Matthew Curtis, Stratford Mayor Juliet Short, Kufa Matiya, founder of In2Ambition, and Rozie T, founder of Rozie T Dance Academy - at the showcase next week.

The winner will not only walk away with a prize package including a **celebrity-style photoshoot and treats from Stratford's finest independent businesses, but will also front the campaign Gorgeous Obsession's Gorgeous Tempest makeup collection - inspired by characters from Shakespeare's The Tempest** - for a year.

Finalists are: singing harmony trio 'Ed & Co'; sisters Ruth and Grace Harkin; Shakespeare's England Chief Executive Helen Peters; Philippa Rawlinson, Director of Operations at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; and Dr Anjna Chouhan a lecturer in Shakespeare Studies.

Helen Peters said: "I feel very proud, I'm really looking forward to the event. I'm not quite sure what to expect but it sounds really exciting.

"I'd normally shy away from something like this. I'm used to standing up in front of people and presenting in a professional capacity, but it feels a bit different when it's me.

"This is a great event for Stratford. The organisers have put such a lot of time and effort into it, it's only right to support it."

Philippa Rawlinson added: "Gorgeous Obsession is sponsoring a leaf on a tree at the New Place with their Tempest range so we're giving something back to them by getting involved.

"Rachel worked with a number of the team last year to recreate some figures from The Tempest and I was stunned by the transformation."

The winner will be announced at next week's Showcase, which promises to be a night of music, fashion and fun featuring live African drums, flamenco dancers, runway models, dance academy as well as the Tempest characters and William Shakespeare himself as you have never seen them before.

Tickets for the showcase, priced £15, are available from Gorgeous Obsession Boutique, New Idle, and Stratford Arts House.



Juliet Short



Kufa Matiya



Matthew Curtis



Rosie T

BID CARD OFFER

For BID cardholders, if you buy three or more tickets, the price drops to £10 per ticket.

BID Businesses Bloom at Home and Garden Show

The Stratford upon Avon Home and Garden Show returned to town at the weekend, attracting 15,000 visitors.

Two hundred high-end traders set up shop at the three day event - regarded as one of the best organised events on the trade circuit - between Friday and Sunday.

Now in its third year - the second at the Recreation Ground - the event is already becoming a firm favourite in the Stratford town calendar.

Media gardening guru and Show Director, Steve Brookes, said:

"We are thrilled to be back in this stunning location for the second time. We are indebted to Stratford District Council and the town for allowing us to hold this event against the backdrop of the River Avon, Holy Trinity Church and the Royal Shakespeare Company."

He added:

"The standard of exhibitors this year is second to none. Each handpicked to for their quality and relevance to create an eclectic mix of artisan and unusual."

Several Stratforward members had stands at the show - including Home of the Sofa, For Something Different, Shoe Med and the Stratford Herald. Stratforward member The Rosconn Group were a key sponsor.

A dedicated Stratforward stand was packed with information on its members and manned by the Town Host team throughout to direct visitors to the show to businesses in the town. BID cardholders could take advantage of special ticket offers for the show.

The event also gave BID's new director Joseph Baconnet - on his first week in the job - a chance to see how things are done in the town and meet Stratforward members and representatives of key town organisations. He attended a charity preview evening on the **Thursday to raise cash for the show's chosen charity** Bliss and then returned to the showground at the crack of dawn the next morning for a special charity breakfast - organised by Stratford Business Forum in aid of Bliss - where he met with among others, local MP Nadhim Zahawi.



Town Centre - Performance Data

Day	Total Visitors	+/- Prior Week	Av Stay (mins)	Busiest Time
Sunday 10th July	27594	-12.12%	63	13:00
Monday 11th July	27168	0.68%	50	14:00
Tuesday 12th July	25644	-9.67%	49	14:00
Wednesday 13th July	30271	3.35%	51	17:00
Thursday 14th July	28323	1.42%	53	17:00
Friday 15th July	29661	-2.94%	51	13:00
Saturday 16th July	33054	3.50%	64	12:00
Total or Average	201715	-2.31%	54	-

Dates for your diary!

16th July - **4th August Shakespeare's Will Exhibition**
 23rd July - Warwickshire School summer holidays
 24th July - Lions Raft Race, River Avon
 24th July & following Sundays - Stratford-on Sea events
 25th July - Full meeting of SDC
 27th July - Stratford in Bloom Regional judging
 28 July - Face of Stratford Finals
 28th July - Stratford Race Meeting
 11th August - Stratford Race Meeting

18th August - Stratford Race Meeting
 24th August - Stratford Race Meeting
 3rd September - Stratford Race Meeting
 5th September - Warwickshire Schools return
 11th September - Stratford Big 10K Run
 23rd to 25th September - Stratford Town Food Festival
 29th September - Stratford Community Forum (SDC)
 New Place Re-opening - date to be confirmed

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BID Member Spotlight - Whitewall Galleries

Whitewall Galleries was created to make the amazing world of contemporary art accessible to everyone and we believe passionately in the joy of collecting.

Whitewall Stratford recently opened its newly extended premises with an inspiring collection of award winning artwork and the response has been overwhelming. Jacqueline Bulow, Gallery Manager and her team radiate a warm welcome and positively encourage visitors to kick back for a while, and take the opportunity to enjoy viewing an exceptional range of original paintings, collectable limited editions and sculptures in comfort and style.

Whitewall represents a phenomenal portfolio of fine artists at different price points, ranging from top international names and award winners such as Fabian Perez, Sherree Valentine Daines, Doug Hyde and Rebecca Lardner to the most exceptional new talents including Anna Gammans, Sarah Stokes and Mary Shaw. We are continually sourcing new artists from around the world to ensure that our gallery walls remain fresh, cutting edge and exciting.

Jacqueline says: "The Whitewall Stratford experience is now twice as exciting! We are delighted to showcase double the amount of award winning artwork and we are excited to welcome friends old and new to view in person over a glass of bubbly."

Register with the gallery to receive invitations to celebrity artist appearances, exhibitions, private views, and launch parties.

Whitewall Galleries Stratford-Upon-Avon

50 Sheep Street Stratford-Upon-Avon

Telephone 01789 209 201. Email stratford@whitewallgalleries.com

