

BUSINESS NEWS

Stratforward Newsletter

Issue 46 - 23 November 2016

Get Ready For Big Switch On

The big Stratford Christmas lights switch-on takes place tomorrow (Thursday). The lights, regarded as some of the best in the country, will be switched on at 4.30pm at a ceremony that centres around the Town Hall.

And this year Stratford businesses have played a greater role than ever in supporting the lights, contributing at least £7,000 directly to the display fund.

Dr Roy Lodge MBE, marketing member for the Stratford upon Avon Christmas Lights Committee, said this year has seen the biggest number of businesses supporting the lights, with an increase of 56 more on last year - making it the biggest number ever.

Each year the assembly and dismantling of the lights, including all the necessary testing and health and safety procedures, costs around £70,000.

Dr Lodge said: "Although the grants we receive are great without the support of the businesses in town and out of town we would not be able to maintain the high standard that is expected of the lights in Stratford.



"They have been described as going beyond impressive and pulling some serious Christmas shopping power."

Tomorrow's switch-on event starts at 4pm just before 4.30pm there will be a countdown from **BBC Coventry & Warwickshire's Vic Minett.**

The event will include an appearance from Father Christmas himself as well as a parade by the Mayor and Civic Party, led by the Shakespeare Morris Men, to officially turn on the Tree of Light at the top of Bridge Street before they tour Stratford's first festive Christmas market.



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And once the lights are on the "party" will move to Bridge Street and Henley Street...

Lights Herald First Christmas Market

The official switch-on of **Stratford's Christmas lights tomorrow** coincides with first of five special Christmas Markets which will run on Bridge Street on each of the Thursdays in the run up to Christmas.

Open from 10am to 8pm, the Markets will include a range of stalls selling anything from traditional and seasonal gifts to crafts and handmade and home-made items. Artwork and bespoke decorations will also be on offer, along with Christmas candles, and vintage, fairtrade and ethnic products.

Food and drink and entertainment - including carol singing, meet the market snowman and stilt walkers - will add to the festive fun on selected dates.



Reindeer Stars Of Henley Street Switch On Party

Families are being encouraged to head to Henley Street where traders are entering into the switch on party spirit.

Businesses such as Magic Alley, Bright Ideas, Compton and Clarke, Nuts in Ya Mouth, Vinology, Bensons, Bensons House of Tea, Fine & Dandy, Traditions of Britain, Timeless Tales, Nutcracker Christmas Shop, & Boston Tea Party will all be entering into the spirit of the party and staying open late on the switch on evening.

Stars of the party will be the reindeer who are flying into Henley Street from 4.30pm until 6.30pm



Photo courtesy of Google Images

A promotional poster for an event. The top text reads "VISIT THE REAL FATHER CHRISTMAS" in a stylized font. Below it, it says "FROM NOVEMBER 24TH UNTIL CHRISTMAS EVE AND EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC FOR YOURSELVES". The central image shows a close-up of hands holding a small, glowing object. At the bottom, it says "MIRACLE on MAGIC ALLEY". Below that, the address "Magic Alley, 21 Henley Street, Stratford CV37 6QW" is listed, followed by "BOOKING ESSENTIAL TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT", the phone number "01789 290969", and the website "www.SeekTheMagic.org/Christmas".

Visit The Real
FATHER CHRISTMAS
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Free Parking

The District Council have confirmed that Free parking is available every Thursday from tomorrow from 4pm to midnight in all SDC Pay and Display car parks, including Thursday, December 22nd.

Road Closures

Don't forget, road closures will be in place tomorrow, affecting Bridge Street, Wood Street, High Street, Chapel Street and Sheep Street. If your business is on one of these streets, this could affect your loading, deliveries and waste collections

And while on Henley Street and with Christmas Presents in Mind....

Henley Street Trader Set To Launch Latest Book

Henley Street Trader Barry Thornton is set to publish his latest collectible book, continuing the enchanting tale of a 'theatrical mouse' set in the Bard's town.

Mr Thornton, of B&W Thornton has already published two books following the adventures of 'Kit', a theatrical mouse who comes to Stratford, and will publish his third in February.

The books are written by ceramics dealer Mr Thornton, who has run his business on Henley Street for 32 years with his wife and son, and are illustrated by award-winning artist Debby Faulkner-Stevens.

The first, 'A Midsummer Mouse', was released in 2014, followed by 'The Merry Mice of Stratford' in September 2015. The third, 'The Winter's Tail', will come out towards the end of February.

"It's going to be a trilogy, the third book will come out towards the end of February and it's quite funny," said Mr Thornton. "They are all quite funny actually.

"The big thing about the books are the illustrations, they are beautifully illustrated."

The first, whose full title is 'A Midsummer Mouse: The Memoir of a Theatrical Mouse or 'What you will', Kit the mouse takes to the stage, fights a pirate and finds true love, all set in Stratford.

And 'The Merry Mice of Stratford: A Fat Mouse in Love, The Further Adventures of Stratford-upon-Avon's Theatrical Mouse', again set in Stratford, sees Kit the mouse builds a theatre under a willow tree, frees the mice of Bidford and give the first performance of a new play by William Shakespeare.

The latest book is a series of tales told in the 'green room', including how Kit went to see the Queen and various other adventures, as well as a Christmas tale.

Of his book, Mr Thornton said: "I wanted them all to be first editions so I did them as individual pieces but they are a continuation of a family of mice along the river bank and all the crazy things they do.

"I used to write a bit when I was a kid but never did anything with them, and that was probably a good thing. I have enjoyed doing this, it's just something completely fresh and different."

"It's stopping the ideas that's hard. I can't write fast enough."

The books are only available through the Henley Street shop, with the first selling more than 2,000 copies.



"They are only sold in the shop, simply because we wanted to see what we could do with it," Mr Thornton added.

He said he may consider writing more, but will see how the third one goes.

"We're never going to make a fortune unless they catch on really well and somebody wants to animate them which I would love."

Until then, the books remain popular souvenirs with visitors to Stratford, including people from the other side of the world.

"So many of the people who come from Australia and America and Canada and may have relatives still living here or if come from here originally see it as a wacky English thing that they like."

"I talk to people about the books and I have signed most of them, and people are quite thrilled really."



China Welcome Training

Representatives from The Arden Hotel, The Falcon, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Johnsons Coaches, Shakespeare's England and Stratfordward attended a one day training programme that was intended to give tourism businesses the tools to welcome (and attract) Chinese visitors. The VisitBritain certified course was organised by Shakespeare's England.

The training programme covered the practical background of Chinese tourism, what Chinese tourists' motivation is, their attitudes to foreign travel, and what they hope to achieve through travel – including information on shopping and eating habits. It also covered ways to welcome visitors with signs and how to use technology to compensate for not speaking the language.

Top tips from the course will be in next week's newsletter.

Pride of Stratford Awards

Stratfordward has once again sponsored the Town Centre Business of the Year Category of the Pride of Stratford Awards.

The 5th Annual Touch FM Pride of Stratford Awards with Simplify IT will take place on Friday **3rd February at Stratford's Crowne Plaza**. Last year over 440 guests attended the glittering awards ceremony which celebrates everything great that happens in Stratford District. The awards are open to all and celebrate all sectors:



Business, Public, Statutory, charity and voluntary.

Whether you are a business large or small in the town or District or know of anyone who deserves a community award then enter / nominate now for free online at www.102touchfm.co.uk The deadline for entries will be Friday 9th December. For further enquiries please contact Jo Billings on 01926 485663

The categories are:

- Arts Organisation of the Year
- Tourism Initiative of the Year
- Customer Care Award
- Team of the Year
- Hospitality Business of the Year
- Town centre Business of the Year
- Business Person of the Year
- Business of the Year
- Small Business of the Year
- The Artisan Award
- Young Achiever of the Year
- Educator of the Year
- Citizen of the Year
- Carer of the Year
- **Stratford's Pride Award**

Entry forms can be found at <http://www.102touchfm.co.uk/pride-of-stratford-awards-2017/>



Investment updates

The Stratforward team is aware that Hotel Chocolat has been recruiting for staff for a new Stratford upon Avon store. **There's no news on which unit they are going to open in, but it's good news that another high end brand has chosen Stratford.**

Historic Spine Shop Front Grant Scheme

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has just launched the fourth round of their 'Historic Spine Shop Front Grant Scheme' and is once again inviting applications for grant funding of up to £10,000 to help improve the appearance of shop fronts.

The District Council is hoping the investment in Stratford-upon-Avon, will help to regenerate the town's retail offer and provide a better environment for both residents and visitors.

To be eligible to apply for funding, qualifying premises must be located in Bridge Street, Chapel Street, Church Street, Greenhill Street, High Street, Henley Street, Sheep Street, Union Street or Wood Street.

Subject to necessary permission, applicants can apply for up to 75% of the total project funding costs up to a maximum of £10,000 for a variety of works including the replacement of a modern shop front and/or signage that is not in-keeping with the historic environment; additionally, repair/routine maintenance and redecoration of existing shop fronts will also be considered for funding.

The deadline for receipt of applications is Friday 17th February 2017.

Further information and a copy of the application form can be obtained by clicking here.

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/business/shop-front-grant-scheme.cfm>

Jobs – please let us have adverts for jobs for the website

Some of you will be aware that Stratforward has a jobs section on the website <http://www.stratforward.co.uk/job-vacancies-external>, but not everyone is using this free to BID members service.

When we see businesses with recruitment posters in the window, the team will drop in and ask you for the details, however, it would really help if businesses remember to send them to Stratforward when you are advertising. **Send as much info as you can including your logo (and importantly, a closing date) and we'll put it onto the website for you.**

Please mark emails: "job advert" and send them to info@stratforward.co.uk

Have a guilt-free Christmas and enter the Stratford Marathon



It's 'on your marks, get set, go' for Stratford workers looking for a guilt-free Christmas with **entries open for Stratford Rotary's Shakespeare Marathon and Half Marathon.**

The popular events take place on May 7th, 2017 so aspiring athletes should lace up their running shoes and get training - meaning you can eat as much turkey and Christmas pudding as you like.

The marathon course is mainly flat, taking in 26.2 miles of pretty Warwickshire villages as well as sights like the River Avon, the Greenway - **Stratford's disused railway path, and the**

world-famous Royal Shakespeare Theatres.

The Shakespeare Marathon has been awarded the BARR Gold standard, reflecting the high standards in its organisation and more than half the money raised from the event goes to local charities including the Shakespeare Hospice, Stratford Samaritans, Lifespace Trust and ESH Works.

Some parts of the event are sponsored and it is it is organised and marshalled solely by volunteers meaning an absolute minimum is spent on administration and facilities.



Cliff Armstrong, Race Director and Rotarian, said: "The Shakespeare Marathon and Half Marathon is now in its 36th year.

"It has an excellent reputation and many loyal runners enter year after year. It's well-known for its superb marshalling and outstanding safety record. As marathon training usually takes about three months, entrants will have plenty of time if they sign up now."



Sign up for the Shakespeare Marathon and half marathon at www.shakespearemarathon.org.uk.

Dates for your diary!

19th October to 14th December - Charity Christmas Card sale at The United Reformed Church

24th October to 30th November - Stratford Autumn Literary Festival

24th November - American Thanksgiving at Harvard House

24th November - Christmas Light Switch On and Celebrations including Christmas Market

24th November to 24th December - Father Christmas at the Magic Alley, Henley Street

1st December - Christmas Market

1st December to 6th January 2017 - **A Very Tudor Christmas at Anne Hathaway's Cottage**

2nd to 10th December - Toad of Toad Hall at Bear Pit Theatre

3rd December - Small Business Saturday

3rd December - RSC Lantern Procession

3rd & 4th December - **Victorian Advent Weekend Anne Hathaway's Cottage**

6th December - Orchestra of the Swan at The Arts House

8th December - Christmas Market

10th December - Shakespeare Hospice Santa Fun Run

14th December - Christmas Window Competition winners revealed

14th to 27th December - Aladdin, Stratford Arts House

15th December - Christmas Market

15th December - Lions Christmas Carol Service in Bridge Street

15th to 17th December - Garden of Curious A-Muse-ments at Shakespeare's New Place

16th to 28th December - Beauty and the Beast at The Attic Theatre

17th December to 3rd January 2017 - Warwickshire Schools Christmas holiday

17th to 23rd December - **Tudor Christmas Talk Shakespeare's Birthplace**

22nd December - Christmas Market

28th December to 31st January - Meet the Scrooges at the Enchanted Manor, Henley Street

Contact Us - Give us a call for more information about our services and products

Stratfordward

10-11 Sheep Street
Stratford-upon-Avon

Main Line

Joseph & Sandi
01789 292718

Events & Finance

Ruth, Tor & Pauline
01789 299011

Town Hosts

01789 268291

info@stratforward.co.uk

Visit us on the web at
www.stratforward.co.uk