

become used to. For the first time in many years, our Civic Service was held in June at Christ Church, near Morrisons. I'd like to thank Reverend Mark Kichenside and all his team for their hospitality and for designing what for me was an entirely apposite worship – not least the wonderful arrangements of traditional hymns by the hugely gifted Andy Rayner (a Felixstowe resident), which had everyone singing their hearts out.

In July, the Mayor's Reception was held at the then brand new Felixstowe Academy building – indeed this was the first such event they had ever hosted! But the arrangements were exemplary, thanks to the academy's events officer Chris Ozanne and their catering team. This gave many Felixstowe people the opportunity to tour this spectacular new building. We are indeed fortunate that this project was rescued from the Government's abandoned Building Schools for the Future programme. Let us all hope that, now all the distractions to secondary education in the town over the last five or six years are finally over, our own academy starts to deliver the kind of academic results we see in other nearby schools in Woodbridge, Kesgrave and the north east of Ipswich.

This year's Carnival was a huge success, emphasised by the move of its traditional performance stage from Langer Park to the sea front, along with a fantastic air show and its concluding traditional fireworks display. Again we were blessed with wonderful weather. A huge thanks to all those involved for providing such a wonderful weekend – but a warning to us all that, if we want to see the event repeated on this scale every year, we all need to support it with both our presence and the contents of our wallets!

Over the first weekend in August the Town Council arranged a special church service to commemorate the start of World War One, followed by a short ceremony at the War Memorial. This was part of a programme of events over the whole weekend, which included a concert, an illustrated talk by Phil Hadwen and a further tribute to the inauguration of nightly black-out.

Fast forward then to October/November, when I had the privilege of launching the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal, followed two weeks later by a particularly special Remembrance Service in the United Reformed Church and a moving commemoration at the War Memorial. Again we were blessed with fine weather for this event, which drew thousands of people to the sea front and Wolsey Gardens.

The Christmas Season was a busy but most enjoyable and informative time. It was great fun switching on the Christmas Lights in the town – thanks as ever to the Lions for so faithfully providing this service to the town. There followed the traditional Mayor's Visits to Care Homes – thanks to every one of the 18 homes the Mayoress and I visited, for your hospitality. May I say here a special thank you to for the all the staff at our care homes, who do their very best to provide a happy and comfortable Christmas for all their residents.

Just before Christmas, we held a Civic Christmas Carol Service at one of Felixstowe's oldest churches - St Peter & St Paul's in Church Road – a first for this location. Thanks to Reverend John Aston and his team for a very fitting

service of worship, and for the hospitality which followed. Then on Christmas Day itself, I thoroughly enjoyed participating in the St Elizabeth Hospice's Annual Christmas Dip – I managed to get in as far as my shoulders before the chill of the water made a swift reversal inevitable! The Mayoress and I went on to wish Happy Christmas to all the in-patients in Felixstowe Community Hospital, followed by enjoying Christmas Lunch at the Salvation Army with 80+ people who would have otherwise had nobody with whom to share their Christmas.

But perhaps the biggest event in the whole year was the Mayor's Ball on 14th March. We had a wonderful evening, with nearly 150 guests packing into the Orwell Hotel, all in support of my two charities for the year – Level 2 Youth Group and the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Thanks to generous sponsorship by George Baker Shipping for the band for the night – Solid Gold – we were able to keep the ticket prices to well below £40. Thanks too to all the individuals and traders who generously provided a wonderful array of raffle prizes and some unique items to auction, as well as support from the Town Hall staff and the charities themselves in preparing for the event. As a result, the Ball made well in excess of £3,000 towards the final total of £9,000 presented to the charities at the Civic Awards Night on May 12th.

Of course during the year numerous other events have been held to raise money for our charities. Not least of these was the 100-Mile Walk which I undertook with my 12-year-old daughter Rebecca, in which we walked from Cattawade (just into Suffolk, on the north side of the River Stour near Manningtree), round the Shotley peninsular, over the Orwell Bridge down to Felixstowe, and from there along the coast path to Lowestoft. We did this on seven consecutive days in mid-August. Sponsorship raised at least £1,200 towards the Charities. Thanks go to Level 2 and the CAB for arranging hospitality at the start and finish, and for the weekend call in Felixstowe.

Other events included a 1940s-themed Tea Party in the Salvation Army Hall, with music from Tyler-Kemp in August; two dinner dances in the Brook Hotel (June & November); a Christmas Concert in Trinity Methodist Church; and, a highly successful Curry evening at the Bombay Nite restaurant, which, due to the generosity of Mahbul "Shammi" Shamin, raised £1,000 for the charities from the full house of 70 diners.

Another aspect of Felixstowe life in which I become thoroughly immersed during the year was our twinning arrangements with Salzwedel and Wesel. These enabled me to visit both twin towns during 2014, honouring our 20-year association with Salzwedel in June, followed in September by the latter end of our 40-year association with Wesel. The Mayoress and I have also participated in a number of fund-raising activities of the Felixstowe-based twinning associations – and would like to thank both committees for the warmth of their welcome. The compliment was returned to us during the Mayor's Ball weekend in March this year, which the Burgermeisterins of both Salzwedel and Wesel, along with delegations from both towns attended. Wesel Fire Cadets provided a guard of honour at the Mayoral Reception, and a party of 30 Wesel school students made a visit to the UK in April, for whom we hosted a reception at the Town Hall.

Turning now to the Town Hall itself, I must first thank the staff for their unerring support during the year, especially the newly appointed Mayor's Secretary, Lorna Monsen. As has been written previously, a difficult period for the Town Council concluded in July this year with the appointment of our new Town Clerk, Ash Tadjrishi, following an interregnum managed by temporary clerk Gordon Musset. We are so pleased to welcome Ash, his wife Abigail and his two young daughters to Felixstowe. In just over nine months we have witnessed Ash get to grips with the Town Council's business with amazing dexterity and speed. This has culminated in a complete review and updating of many of the Town Hall's procedures, a new web site being created which will be launched shortly, a thoroughly revised and rationalised committee structure, a programme of maintenance work commenced on at the Town Hall; and much else. Ash – we hope you have a long and successful career with us in Felixstowe, and thank you for the enormous commitment you have already shown to the Council and the town too.

In mentioning “new Committee structure”, we have of course just been through an “all-out” election for the town council, leading to the appointment of no less than seven new Councillors and nine “returnees”. We thank Cllrs Sennington, Slemmings, Stokell & Webb - who did not stand for re-election this time - for their scores of years of sterling service to the town. Putting aside the rigours of the political and democratic processes, may I also acknowledge the contribution of former councillors Morris, Sharman & Walker – who were not re-elected this time - for their contribution over the past four years.

I then must pay tribute to Deputy Mayor Cllr Doreen Savage and her escort Mrs Osborne for their support during the year. Doreen of course doesn't need any lessons from me as to how to be Mayor, for if she is elected to office at Annual Council, she will have fulfilled the role on five occasions over the last 26 years! If that nomination is ratified, may I offer you best wishes - and the same success I've experienced - for your coming year of office.

None of the foregoing would have been possible without the unerring support of my family – particular my dear wife Janet who has been such an excellent Mayoress, my step daughter Alison (who has frequently acted as our unofficial - and certainly unpaid - chauffeur) and my daughter Rebecca for putting up with all sorts of last minute changes of plan and strange requests.

In closing, may I just reiterate, every one of us who has the privilege of living in Felixstowe has much for which to be grateful. To those who fill Facebook's pages and Ipswich Star blogs with negativity I say – look around you at many similar coastal towns. Felixstowe and its community are vibrant and economically strong; we enjoy low unemployment; we're host to the UK's largest port - responsible for more than one in every ten jobs in Suffolk; and a plethora of multi-national companies want to invest here. The Sea Front gardens refurbishment is nearly complete, long overlooked sites are being brought back into use, and the Spa Pavilion will soon re-open. Let's work together to make our town even more fantastic!

634. PUBLIC SESSION

The Mayor reminded the meeting that this was the Annual Town Meeting for the civil parish of Felixstowe at which members of the public could speak on any issue that they wished. The Mayor enquired whether any member of the public wished to raise any matters.

There were no matters raised or comments made.

635. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 7.18pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____