



The City of **Shinshiro**, Japan set November 13th as “Newcastles of the World Day”, this being the anniversary of the very first Newcastles of the World gathering in Shinshiro in 1998. A special celebration event was held to mark the occasion. High school students who recently visited Herceg Novi, Montenegro, gave a presentation about their visit, followed by a show of filmed messages of congratulation from some other Newcastles of the World member cities. There was also a quiz about Newcastles of the World, and, in addition, foreign residents of Shinshiro talked about what they like about the city. Finally, there was a congratulatory speech on Newcastles of the World Day by the Shinshiro Mayor Hiroyuki Shimoe. The event was the culmination of a month-long exhibition about Newcastles of the World (*see page 12 for photos*)

## SHINSHIRO CELEBRATES “NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD DAY”



## WILL YOUR “NEWCASTLE” BE PART OF THE 2025 RACE FOR PEACE?



We invite Newcastles around the world to take part in a special event on 16 June 2025 to promote international peace and goodwill within and between nations.

In these troubled times, the Race for Peace is an initiative which we hope will attract participation in many places beyond those already planned in South Africa and the United Kingdom.

June 16 is National Youth Day in South Africa where the idea first took root 30 years ago.

Anyone can take part, and they can choose to race, jog or walk to show their support for the principles of peace and reconciliation first set out by former South African President Nelson Mandela. It would be wonderful if lots of our “Newcastles” could organise their own events, whatever their scale, on the same day. You can read about the background to this initiative on page 4, and find out from Tim Cante-Jones how to register your event.



## SAVE THE DATES FOR OUR 2025 CONFERENCE!

We are delighted that **Jaunpils** in Latvia has confirmed that they will host our conference next year and have received the backing of their home municipality, Tukums. The conference will run from 8 August (arrival day) to 15 August (departure day), starting with the weekend of the annual medieval festival. The main conference venue will be the magnificent medieval castle, built over 700 years ago, pictured here.

We'll write to alliance members with more detail, and set out the discussion and visits programmes in our next newsletter. If you'd like to flag up your possible interest now, write at this stage to [newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com](mailto:newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com).



Two different faces of Christmas are illustrated here - the arrival of St Nicholas in **Neuchatel**, Switzerland to the left, and the “devils” who accompany him in **Nové Hradý**, Czech Republic, to the right. Read more about them on page 3 and about Christmas celebrations in several of our Newcastles on pages 2 and 3. Meanwhile,  
**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO  
YOU ALL !**





This is the Karlsplatz in the historic Old Town of **Neuburg an der Donau**, our "Newcastle" in Bavaria, Germany. It's one of Germany's most beautiful squares and hosts the city's annual Christkindlmarkt. This market, with over 30 years of tradition, features stalls offering Christmas ornaments, decorations, wool products, and jewellery. The city's tourist-information service organises "Living Christmas" workshops in the historic town hall, where local artisans display and sell their crafts. Visitors can also enjoy music, singing performances, and a magical light display.

Just a few metres away, Neuburg Castle offers more holiday treats, handcrafted gifts, and ceramics.



The Christmas tree outside **Newcastle upon Tyne (UK)** Civic Centre was switched on by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor Rob Higgins and Marit Warncke, Mayor of Bergen, Newcastle's twin/sister city in Norway.

For several decades, Bergen used to provide the city's Christmas tree as a token of friendship, but now (for environmental reasons) the tree is provided locally and Bergen sends a special bauble to be displayed on the tree.



It's traditional to find gifts under the Christmas tree, but perhaps not normally as large as this one under the Christmas tree in the main square of **Nové Hrady**, our "Newcastle" in the Czech Republic.

It probably won't snow for Christmas in **Newcastle, Kwa-Zulu, Natal, South Africa**, this year, but it did snow in September - the first snow there at any time since 2011!



One of the highlights of the Christmas festivities in **Nyborg**, our "Newcastle" in Denmark, is the wonderful Christmas market (see below), which is spread over two activity-filled weekends.



St Nicholas arrives on the main square of **Nové Zámky**, our "Newcastle" in Slovakia. The town centre comes alive with lighting displays, and the huge Christmas wreath is blessed.







In **Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia**, the popular annual Bikers for Kids' Toy Run again kicked off the city's festive season. The event, running for over 40 years, raises funds and contributes toys for children in need, and also funds for the Salvation Army Christmas Appeal. It was another exceptional event, with record numbers of bikes; Family Fun Day attendees of 5000; over 5000 gifts of toys donated and many thousands of dollars raised for the causes. The initiative brings joy into the lives of countless families in the greater Newcastle region. The Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Ross Kerridge, was among those taking part! (bottom right).



The festive season lights at Cascade Park in **New Castle, Pennsylvania, USA** (*see right and below*) have been voted amongst the best in the state.



Christmas trees in **New Castle, Indiana** (above), **Neuchatel, Switzerland** and **Newcastle, Ontario, Canada** below.



In **Nové Hradý, Czech Republic**, early December brings the celebration of "Mikulás" or Nicolas. Some (mainly European) countries mark December 5th as the memorial day of Saint Nicolas, third century bishop of Myra. It's in the appearance of his helpers that the local traditions differ.

In Central Europe, the helpers are devil-like figures and their origins go back to pre-Christian Nordic and Greek mythology. Dressed in animal hides, with horns, and a tail, they look like satyrs and fauns. Large masks or make-up are used to strengthen the scary impression. They carry chains indicating they had been tamed and are now helping their Saint. They also often carry bells, large jute sacks, and rods of birch branches.

A firework display takes place on the square in Nové Hradý to mark the arrival of Mikuláš, accompanied by his angels. St Nicolas, his angels and the devils roam the streets and visit the houses to find out which children have been good and which have not, to chase away bad spirits. The traditions have survived to this day, and are purposely scary. Novohrad devils reappear later for the annual Mikulášsko-devil party in the hotel Máj.





# JOIN THE RACE FOR PEACE! (You can race, jog or just walk!)

On June 16th, 1976, chilling images were broadcast around the world from Soweto, South Africa, as police opened fire on unarmed school children, who were protesting against the teaching of their lessons in Afrikaans.

Hundreds of young people were brutally killed. Following the advent of democracy in 1994, the new democratic government declared 16th June as National Youth Day and June as the Youth month. In recognition of the founding of Youth Day, Nelson Mandela supported the Race for Peace, as a means to promote international peace and goodwill amongst all nations.

The event only ran for one year and lay dormant until 2024 when it was revived by the children of Orlando West and Phefeni High in Soweto, who were supported in their planning by Tim Cante-Jones.

Tim (*pictured right*), who is from **Newcastle upon Tyne**, organised the event in 1994 and is now part of a planning group, which aims in 2025 to organise commemorative events on 16 June in Soweto, London and **Newcastle upon Tyne**. It's hoped that the events will stimulate support from around the world.



Anyone, young or old, can be part of the Race for Peace, simply by organising their own local event, however big or small.

The Race for Peace can be walked, jogged or run over an approximate 5k distance. and anyone participating in events is encouraged to buy a T shirt or wristband, the profits from which will go to support youth charities.

Tim was a member of the welcome team for the 2012 Newcastle of the World conference, and has visited our **Newcastle in Kwa-Zulu Natal South Africa** several times. He invites the network of towns and cities of Newcastle of the World to organise their own local events on 16 June 2025. Profits from T shirts or wrist bands sold can go to support youth projects in your local area. For further information please contact Tim on [tim@wearefma.com](mailto:tim@wearefma.com) and find more details on the event at [www.raceforpeace.world](http://www.raceforpeace.world)



The YOWA (Youth Award) has been awarded by the Regional Youth Council in Slovakia's Nitra province for the past three years. The project of the year award for 2024 is the **Nové Zámky** Youth Parliament in our "Newcastle".



It was created by the youth of the city under the guidance of former lecturer Peter Lenč and the coordinator of youth work at the municipal office, Jarmila Šimončíčová; was implemented with the support of the city of Nové Zámky and financial support from the EU Erasmus+ project. The award was received by parliament members Samuel Laho, Marek Bencze and youth work coordinator Lukáš Kocera. In addition, in the Young Person category, Viktória Takáčsová, a member of the Youth of the Czech Red Cross and a member of the Youth Parliament, was recognised. Another resident of Nové Zámky – Viktória Šutová – was awarded in the Youth Worker category.



Ten students and five adults from **Herceg Novi**, our "Newcastle" in Montenegro, visited **Shinshiro** in Japan this autumn.

The youths stayed with host families and enjoyed various activities such as tea ceremonies, Wadaiko (Japanese drums) exercise, and trying on kimono. They engaged with more than 800 citizens in Shinshiro in the six days of their stay, including students of local schools.

Just a few weeks before the visit, young people from Shinshiro had visited Herceg Novi, as we reported in our last newsletter. The mutual visits of this year have strengthened the bonds of friendship between the cities.



# PEOPLE

On 18 November, Latvia celebrated the Proclamation Day of the Republic and in **Jaunpils** it was marked with a concert in the castle. During the event, the head of the administration, Baiba Rasa, presented awards to residents, as recommended by fellow citizens, for their exemplary work, active social life and volunteering that benefits the entire community.

(see photo on next page) .

Special mention goes to **Vija Ziverte** this year, who many remember when she came to the 2012 Newcastles of the World conference in Newcastle upon Tyne. Vija has received the badge of honour of the Cross of Recognition, first degree, from the President of the Republic of Latvia in the palace in the capital, Riga (see photo, right). Vija's contribution to the development of Jaunpils and Viesatu parishes has been invaluable, activating, educating and inspiring the local community.

This has resulted in a large number of self-sufficient, active and growth-oriented associations in the area, creating a wide range of activities to improve the environment and the quality of life locally.



November saw the retirement of **YABhg. Dato' Haji Mohd Anis Bin Hussein** (see left), President of the Municipal Council of **Kota Bharu**, our "Newcastle" in Malaysia. During his leadership, many successes have been achieved by the city, including strengthening the management and administration system, improving and upgrading the city's environment (receiving recognition through the Clean Kelantanku Award) and fostering harmony among multi-ethnic communities.

The new President is Mr Azie Rahimi Mohamed - we wish him well.

**Congratulations to new political leaders in two of our largest Newcastles.**



**Dr Ross Kerridge** has been elected Lord Mayor of **Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia**, and

Councillor **Karen Kilgour** has been chosen as Leader of the City Council in **Newcastle upon Tyne, UK**.

Born and bred in Newcastle, Ross Kerridge works at the John Hunter Hospital as a Senior Staff Specialist Anaesthetist and also helps train young medical students at the University of Newcastle. Running as an Independent, he succeeds Labor's Nuatali Nelmes, who was Lord Mayor for almost a decade.

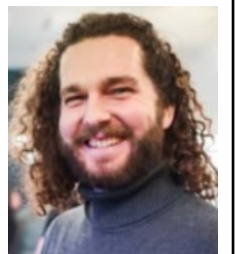
Councillor Kilgour is the first woman to hold the position of Council Leader. A native of the city and a former council officer, she is an experienced councillor with a decade of service, and has held important positions.

This includes Cabinet roles, most recently Deputy Leader of the controlling Labour Group since 2021.



Tamaz Kuchadze, of **Akhaltsikhe**, our "Newcastle" in the Republic of Georgia, has worked in the field of art and culture for 55 years as folk artist, singer, actor and creator. He recently received a special award from the municipality in recognition of his lifelong contribution. Tamaz is a singer in the folk ensemble "Meskheti", performing Georgian and Meskhian folk songs. He started his acting career in 1990 in the theatre-studio "Vardzia", and since 1997 he has been an actor in the celebrated Akhaltsikhe Puppets Professional State Theatre, creating many characters over more than 25 years.

Jan Kypet Šmid (known as "Honza"), from **Nové Hradý**, Czech Republic, visited **Shinshiro**, Japan in November. He was the chief photographer of the 2023 Newcastles of the World conference in Czech Republic. Honza spent a month in Japan, including a week in Shinshiro when he took photos of the autumn Maple Festival, the Shinshiro Kabuki and many other events. For his time in Shinshiro, he did a homestay and had a great time with his host family.





## COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

The associations Le Pèlerin des Rue and the PIP Association (prevention of illiteracy from preschool) have received this year's Citizenship prizes from the City of **Neuchâtel**, our Newcastle in Switzerland. The Le Pèlerin des Rue was founded in support of the commitment of an extraordinary personality.

Bernard the Pilgrim, as he is nicknamed, has been seen on the city streets for many years supporting excluded, vulnerable and marginalised people. Over hot tea, he lends an attentive ear to those who suffer as much from precariousness as from loneliness. Thanks to the funds raised by the association, it also provides food aid, emergency housing or payment of bills to those who are swallowed up by debt.

The PIP association is dedicated to young preschool children, organising a wide range of activities around reading throughout the year to give young people a taste for discovery, curiosity and reading.



In October, the 2024 annual City awards were given in **Nové Zámky**, Slovakia - it takes place in the month in which the city was granted its city privileges by archbishop Gyorgy Szechenyi in 1691. Laureates were awarded for their exceptional devotion and work in spheres of education, sport, culture and philanthropy and spreading the reputation of the city at home and abroad.

### Award-winning laureates:

PRO URBE 2024 (cultural) awards: Július Ivan for the successful development and promotion of athletics; Václav Strejček for his long-term artistic activity in amateur theatre and in the Literary Club of Generations; and Katarína Štrbová for the development of the private library Bibliotheka Kalák.



Václav Strejček



Július Ivan



Katarína Štrbová

The Mayor's Awards: Hanka Révészová, PaedDr. Jana Garajová, Hidvégi József, Ladislav Horváth, Mgr. Magdaléna Krajčírová Dušan Laczkó, Marta Szilágyiová - also corporate awards to the National Transfusion Service (Nové Zámky branch); Secondary Vocational School of Hotel Services and Trade; DELTA-NZTRANS (a company marking 30 years of transport, forwarding and logistics).

Citizens of **Jaunpils**, our "Newcastle" in Latvia, receiving their recognition for outstanding service to the local community - *see previous page*.



## COMMUNITY ORGANISATION PROFILE



The **Newcastle Village and District Historical Society**, a non-profit charity, was formed by

local citizens 1981 to preserve and promote the heritage of the community in **Ontario, Canada**. Soon after, the Society moved into the former Village Library rooms in the Community Hall where the library collection, special artifacts, documents and photographs are displayed and made available free of charge.

Volunteers are on hand to assist the general public as well as members with their enquiries about local and family history. See <https://newcastlehistorical.ca/> for more. 6



# MORE NEWS

Mayor David Xolani Dube has officially opened the refurbished and extended Theku Mall in **Newcastle, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa**. The state-of-the-art shopping centre, which will almost double the size of the previous retail centre, promises to revitalise the local economy, creating jobs and stimulating growth.



A new fleet service of intercity trains in Australia, called the Mariyung, that will provide a new level of comfort and for the thousands of customers who travel between Sydney, the Central Coast and **Newcastle New South Wales**, came into service at the beginning of December.

Well done to the Retirement Society of **Jaunpils** ("Newcastle" in Latvia) who sent a shipment to support the defenders of Ukraine recently - camouflage nets, wool socks and gloves.

This is the third time that these camouflage consignments have been created, in which more than 30 members of the pensioners society and the group "Bullets" are involved. Net-making takes place in workshops, but material cutting takes place both at home and on site. Overall, 65 camouflage nets have been sent to Ukraine.



A statue of the late Queen Elizabeth II was unveiled in **Newcastle-under-Lyme** in October. Commissioned by the Borough Council to mark the town's 850th anniversary, the design is based on photographs of Her Majesty taken during her visit to the town in 1973 to mark the 800th anniversary. Cast in bronze, the statue is one-and-a-quarter times life size, but, unusually for a memorial to a Monarch, stands only a few inches above ground level in the town's Queens Gardens.

The statue stands close to a statue of Queen Victoria, Queen Elizabeth II's great-great-grandmother, which was unveiled by Grand Duke Michael of Russia in November 1903. The photograph is of Council Leader Simon Tagg alongside the statue.



**"Day of Open Atelier" – Welcome Home!** For several years, the workshop of blacksmith Daniel Cerny of **Nové Hradý** (Czech Republic) was one of those in South Bohemian participating in the Day of the Open Atelier. Normally, a single artist or artisan opens his/her workshop for the general public.

However, from the start, Daniel Cerny and his blacksmith friends and students made this into the public day for a friendly gathering of a group of blacksmiths, copper workers, lock makers, and silversmiths.

As a result, visitors could see several techniques being demonstrated at the same time throughout the Saturday and the artisans cooperated on ongoing works and sculptures. An additional highlight is the work on several historic very large power hammers and other historic equipment.

This year was a very special and emotional event for Daniel and his friends. In September 2023, Daniel had a very bad fall resulting in severe spinal cord injuries. After a year in hospitals and rehabilitation centres, he is back home, but still largely paralysed. This was the first time back in his workshop and enjoying a full day among friends.

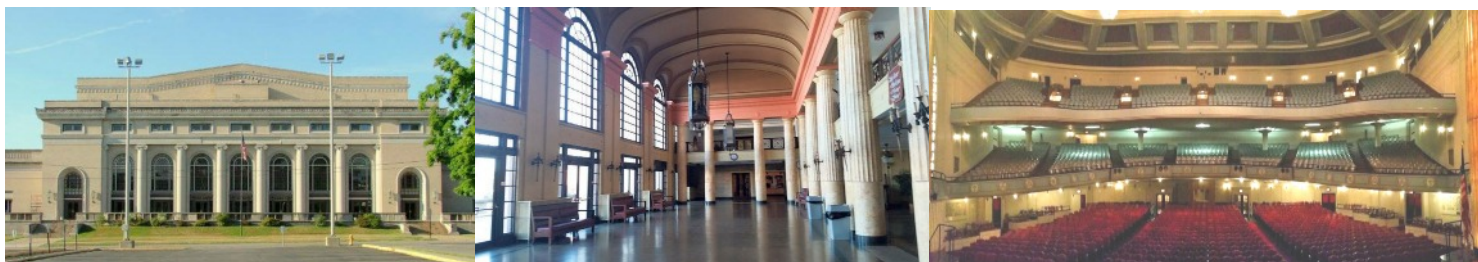


Friendships and interests made through Newcastles of the World are enduring! Yuki Kasegawa tells us that Elio Francisco (*right in photo*) from **Neuchâtel**, Switzerland, has returned to visit **Shinshiro** and met friends for the first time in six years.

Elio took part in the 2018 Newcastles of the World conference which was held there, and he is now studying Japanese language in Kofu.



The Visit Lawrence County Tourist Information Centre, based in **New Castle, Pennsylvania, USA**, has celebrated the growth and success of tourism in the county at its thirty sixth annual meeting. Among the milestone anniversaries in the year have been the programme to mark 175 years of Lawrence County and 100 years of the Scottish Rite Cathedral. Outside the castles themselves, the cathedral must be among the most beautiful and significant buildings in any of our Newcastles. Built in 1924, today the Cathedral is still used as a Masonic Temple (its original purpose), as well as a public Banquet Facility and a 2,800 seat Auditorium. The Scottish Rite Cathedral is the “home away from home” for the famous Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. For more about Lawrence County, see <https://www.visitlawrencecounty.com/>



Autumn brought the latest edition of “Mut Zum Hut” to **Neuburg an der Donau**, our “Newcastle” in Bavaria, Germany. It’s Europe’s largest hat festival – thousands of hats to admire, try on or buy, from top creators!



On November 11, Latvia commemorates the soldiers who died in the freedom struggle for independence from Russia. In honour of their memory, people all over the country go in procession in the evening with torches - a very emotional occasion. Here is the scene from **Jaunpils**, our “Newcastle” in Latvia.



November brought the annual “Chocolatissimo” festival in **Neuchâtel**, our “Newcastle” in Switzerland. It’s a fantastic celebration of the chocolate-making heritage of the city, with its origin in “The World According to Suchard” exhibition in 2009.

This year marks a decade since the event took the form of a major gustatory and festive event with workshops, competitions, demonstrations and tastings. There’s even a “Neu'chocolat” movie night, organised by the city’s Youth Council. The final day saw prize-giving for the best creations, including by the apprentice chocolate artisans. The Chocolatissimo Association brings together nine confectioners-chocolatiers from the canton of Neuchâtel for the festival. Each year, three new chocolate bars with different and original flavours are created for Chocolatissimo and then made available to the public.





# ARTS AND CULTURE

It has been announced that in February the MOBO Awards are coming to **Newcastle upon Tyne** for the first time. The awards are an annual British music award presentation honouring achievements in "music of black origin", including hip hop, grime, UK Drill, R&B, soul, reggae, jazz, gospel, and African music. The photo shows Kanya King, founder of the MOBO Awards, at the launch in Newcastle. Newcastle is renowned for its vibrant nightlife and varied live music scene. Ahead of the ceremony, MOBO is collaborating with Newcastle City Council to bring MOBO Fringe Festival - a series of activities and events celebrating Black music and culture in the host city.



## New home for the Neuburg artist collective "Brückenkollektiv"

The "Brückenkollektiv", a young artist collective from **Neuburg an der Donau**, Bavaria, Germany, will soon be moving to the city's historic Old Town. The collective had been searching for a larger space that could also host events and they found it in the former Vivat! building, which will now serve as both office and event space. The adjoining gallery will be used for readings, exhibitions and poetry slams. Before the official opening in spring, the "Brückenkollektiv" is organising a "Collective Winter Market" where artists will display and sell their works. In the long term, the collective plans to use the outdoor area for events such as concerts and readings, and will evaluate after two years whether the new space is suitable for the collective's future.

For almost two decades, the Rozmberk Society has organized a traditional Potato Day on the last Saturday of October in **Nové Hrady**, our "Newcastle" in the Czech Republic. This year, the many visitors could taste typical South Bohemian food such as potato pancakes, potato cake and sweets. Children could make potato stamps and animals or Halloween figures using leaves, wood picks, nuts and, of course, potatoes.



The second edition of "**Neuburg Earlier and Today**" was published six weeks ago and almost 1,000 have already been sold. It's obviously proving to be a popular Christmas gift.

Congratulations to author/editor Bernhard Mahler for creating this record of images and information about the wonderful Renaissance city on the Danube.



The 18th edition of the renowned traditional festival devoted to jazz and blues music was held in **Nové Zámky (Slovakia)** in November. The international line-up included artists from Slovakia (Juraj Schweiger and The Groove Time - see below - also Džez a Hružka), Hungary (Balance Wheel Group) and Czechia (Ptaszek & Bužma). It brought a broad spectre of genres, from traditional delta blues and spirituals, through new jazz wave to a groovy rhythm & blues.





# 'RETURNING TO SENDER'

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME'S REBORN FOUNDING CHARTER RECEIVED BY KING CHARLES

© By Glenn Martin James 2024

*Glenn Martin James is an author and illustrator of some repute, shortlisted for the Ruth Rendell Award 2022-23. Last year, Glenn recreated the lost founding charter of Newcastle-under-Lyme, and the charter has found its way back to the King...*

During the reign of Charles II, someone noticed that the founding charter of Newcastle-under-Lyme was missing. It had apparently been missing for some time. This crucial birth certificate of the Borough, possibly the oldest Borough in the United Kingdom, has certainly not been seen since. How lovely to think, then, that all these centuries later, a new incarnation of the document has made its way to King Charles III, returning to the desk of the monarch.



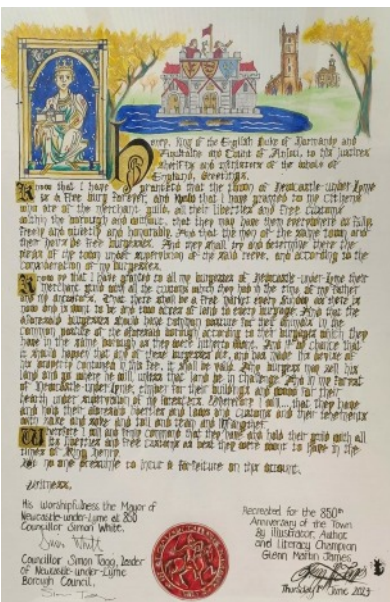
Jeremy Lefroy (Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire and co-chair of the Friends of the Guildhall) Jamie Wells, (Senior Locality Officer, Support Staffordshire), Hilary Jones (Friends of the Guildhall), Glenn Martin James - Jamie is holding the framed letter from King Charles.

Originally granted to the new town by the brilliant Henry II in 1173, the charter of Newcastle-under-Lyme may be one of the first granted, (if not THE first), and the fledgling settlement prospered mightily after the monarch's bold new stroke.

Granting independence from Royal and Church control, the charter made the traders free Burgesses, (Liber Burgess) and the townsmen were able to prosper from their own mercantile success. And prosper they did, with the towns 'new-castle' by the 'Lyme' Brook, from which the settlement took its name.

And so, 850 years later, Newcastle-under-Lyme celebrated a venerable birthday in 2023. I'm very proud to have made my contribution to the celebrations.

The original charter would have been small, a couple of paragraphs in Latin on vellum or parchment, able to fit in a saddlebag. The great elegant charters, beautiful works of art in their own right with a detailed portrait of the monarch, were yet to come, but it was this style I wanted to emulate.



The reborn charter is an illuminated document, with an image of King Henry, surrounded by autumnal lime tree leaves in ochre and yellow.

It has the town's famous castle, taken from the common seal, (the fortress is sadly long gone), standing in its pool, and cameo sketches of ancient St. Giles church and the Guildhall. A dual document, one version is in English and one in Latin. I am indebted to Professor Andrew Fear for authenticating the Latin translation, and to Jim Worgan for affirming the Burgesses rights.

Part of the *Lost Charter* project (where the surviving charters were exhibited together at Brampton Museum), the whole endeavour was a huge success.

Supported by then Mayor Simon White, Leader of the Council Simon Tagg (both pictured with Glenn), and the Borough Council, the celebrations were a great success.



At the conclusion of festivities, I sent a copy of the charter to King Charles – and, much to my delight, he replied, in affectionate terms, clearly approving of the reborn document.

There is a lovely circularity to this: the charter hasn't just come home, but returned to the throne whence it came.

A copy was presented to Newcastle-under-Lyme Guildhall, to the Friends and also to *Support Staffordshire*, the voice for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations in the county - and is on display with the charters.

*Glenn dedicates this article to Dr Roger Joy, a Medieval Historian who was a great inspiration on the Charter project.*



# SPORT

The City of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia has created the state's first wheelchair-accessible skate bowl as part of a financial boost for local inclusive sports events. Local Paralympian athlete Paul Nunnari was on hand to launch the initiative.



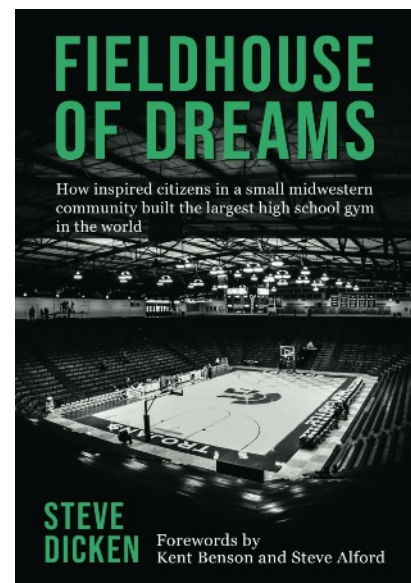
In a joyous homecoming celebration, **Newcastle Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**, welcomed local hero Lucas Sithole, the first African wheelchair tennis player to win a Paralympic medal. This follows his wonderful performance in the men's doubles at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games where he reached the semi-final.



A mixed martial arts and wrestling tournament was held in the autumn at the castle in **Akhaltzikhe**, our "Newcastle" in the Republic of Georgia, with the financial support of the municipality. Athletes from different regions of Georgia participated, and the competitors from Akhaltzikhe were among those who were successful, including Rudik Virabian, Arut Torosian and Levan Gogoladze.



Congratulations to Johan Pieters and all the other organisers, sponsors and helpers who made the latest edition of the **Newcastle Airshow in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa** another huge success.



Now available via Amazon

This is Steve Dicken's fascinating account of how inspired citizens in the small community

of **New Castle, Indiana** built the largest high school gym in the world.

As the home of the New Castle Trojans basketball team, this provided the basis for New Castle to become an important player in the sport - it also hosts the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

November marked 65 years since this amazing venue was opened.

We were very sorry to read of devastating flooding in **Kota Bharu** (our "Newcastle" in Malaysia) and the surrounding towns and villages of the state of Kelantan



right through to the time of publication of this newsletter in mid-December. Lives have been lost, thousands of people evacuated and agriculture, business and community life disrupted.



Earlier this year, the Municipal Assembly of **Herceg Novi**, our “Newcastle” in Montenegro, decided to establish a cooperation and twinning agreement with the City Municipality of Sopot in Serbia. This took effect at a signing at the end of November.

Here is Mayor Stevan Katić (left in photo on the right) with the President of Sopot Municipality, Živorad Milosavljević.

This is the culmination of many years of excellent relations between the municipalities and will contribute to strengthening the bonds of cooperation between the municipalities and their citizens as well as the realisation of joint activities in the fields of economy, education, sports, and especially tourism.



Left to right above: Kushiro Mayor Hidenori Tsuruma, Councillor Nathan Errington of Port Stephens and Newcastle Lord Mayor Dr Ross Kerridge renew the Sister City Wetlands Affiliation.

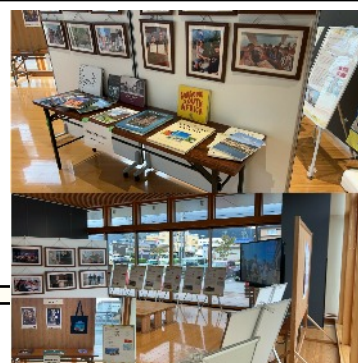
A delegation from the City of Kushiro in Japan visited **Newcastle, Australia** in early November to renew a Ramsar Wetlands protection agreement between Kushiro, Port Stephens [40 minutes north of Newcastle] and the City of Newcastle.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is a world-wide movement comprising 67 member cities .

The councils of Newcastle, Port Stephens and Kushiro, Japan, are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the signing of the original Sister City Wetlands Agreement.



**Shinshiro** celebrates Newcastles of the World day (see front page)



## ABOUT NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD

There are more than 100 different “Newcastles” or “New Castles” around the globe, in many different countries and different languages. It was the mayor of one of them, in Shinshiro, Japan, who took the initiative to bring the Newcastles together via the Newcastles of the World summit in 1998. Subsequent gatherings were held in Neuchâtel, Switzerland in 2000, USA (New Castles of Indiana & Pennsylvania) 2002, Newcastle South Africa in 2004 and 2010, UK 2006 (Newcastle-under-Lyme) & 2012 (Newcastle upon Tyne), Germany (Neuburg) in 2008, Nové Hradý (Czech Republic) in 2014, Newcastle, Ontario, Canada in 2016, Shinshiro again in 2018 and Nové Hradý again in 2023. Our aim is to foster individual, group and civic friendships, with practical links through culture, education, business and tourism. See <https://newcastlesoftheworld.com/>



**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR !**