

New chains of office honour a rich heritage

Geraldine Scott

geraldine.scott@archant.co.uk

They have been worn for more than 250 years but now the civic chains worn by Norwich's Lord Mayor and Sheriff have been replaced with some more practical for everyday wear.

Since the originals were given in 1757 by Matthew Goss, a wealthy dyer and Freeman, the Lord Mayor and Sheriff have been wearing beautiful chains at important events.

However, because of their historical importance and as they are not practical for everyday wear, new chains have been made to be worn on a daily basis at civic functions.

Crafted by local goldsmith Sonkai – a family business in the centre of the city – the new chains, made of gold-plated sterling silver, tell a story of Norwich through motifs depicting significant aspects of history.

The new chains were presented by Sonkai to the Lord Mayor, Marion Maxwell and Sheriff Richard Marks – with representatives from the Freeman of Norwich, who have funded the project – at City Hall last week.

They are set to be formally unveiled to the public on November 5, when anyone who wants to see the chains is welcome to an open event at Sonkai, on Dove Street, 12pm-2pm.

Mrs Maxwell said: "The Sheriff and I couldn't be more honoured to be the first, in what I hope will be a very long line of civics to wear these truly stunning new pieces of history.

"We would like to thank Sara



■ From left, Sara Sweet (Sonkai), Nigel Back (Freeman), Lord Mayor Marion Maxwell, Michael Quinton (Freeman), Sheriff Richard Marks and Craig Snape (Sonkai). Right, the original design dating from 1757. Pictures: KEIRON TOVELL, SONYA DUNCAN

Sweet, Craig Snape and their team at Sonkai for rising to the challenge of capturing the rich history of Norwich so beautifully, as well as the Freeman of Norwich and their Town Close Estate Charity for making this

possible through their generosity." Nigel Back, chairman of the Freeman's Committee and Norwich Town Close Estate Charity, added: "The gift of these chains of office is in keeping with the modern role that

the Freeman of Norwich and their Town Close Estate Charity continue to play in the life of the city."

The 1757 chains will still be worn on special occasions such as mayor-making.

The 18 motifs included on the new chains

The new chains have a total of 18 motifs, with the option of adding more. The motifs include: Chocolate – Norwich has had a sweet relationship with chocolate, from the Caley's factory which began making it in 1886, with many manufacturers since.

■ Norwich Castle – One of Norwich's most famous landmarks, built by the Normans as a royal palace 900 years ago. From a palace and later as a prison, it now hosts a museum and art gallery.

■ Printing – The first printing press in England was in Norwich, allowing for printed material for the masses.

■ A canary – Representing the weaving trade and the weavers who brought them over, and, of course, Norwich City Football Club.

■ Mustard – Colman's has been producing mustard in the city since 1858 and mustard fields can be seen across the countryside.

■ Freeman of Norwich – In the past, becoming a Freeman of the City gave the right to trade in the city and it was also governed by Freeman.

■ Lion – This is part of the city crest and two heraldic lions flank the main entrance to City Hall.

■ Literature – In 2012, Norwich



■ Canary.



■ Mustard.



■ Freeman of Norwich.



■ Printing.



■ Lion.



■ Clock.



■ Snap the Dragon.



■ Chocolate.

became England's first Unesco City of Literature, one of only seven in the world.

■ Snap the Dragon – Snap led the grand annual Guild Day procession held at the inauguration of the new mayor

in the time of the guild in the 14th century.

The other motifs represent angels, aviation, brewing and pubs, Guildhall, Kett's Rebellion, the Norwich mint, Norwich

market, and the shoe and leather industry.

Sonkai owner Craig Snape said: "My favourite emblem is the aviation symbol, due to the complexity of its design and finish, and I am particularly

pleased with how it turned out. "Finding out about Norwich's rich history has been a fascinating part of this journey and we are all so pleased to be helping make a little bit of history ourselves."