

Worcester Twinning Association

CONNECTIONS

Summer 2018



Editor Contact Derek Furby



Worcester Male Voice Choir

Members from Worcester Twinning Association accompanied the Worcester Male Voice Choir on their tour to Vernon and Gouzeaucourt from 20th to 24th June 2018.

There was a moving ceremony at the Tilly Monument and wreaths were laid next to the Memorial Stone, which was quarried from the Malvern Hills.

www.worcester-international-link.org.uk

I think we can all agree that our visit from our friends in Kleve in May was a great success. We all gave them a hospitable welcome, they enjoyed their time with their host families and all the excursions were so interesting. The deputy mayor Allah Ditta also gave our guests a civic welcome in the mayor's parlour on the first full day of their visit.

I had to look outside the Twinning Association for two of our hosts because so many of our members were on holiday themselves at that time. Hopefully when they visit again in October 2019 there will be more hosts around at that time of the year.

Our trip to Stratford on the Tuesday was a real education. Our visitors were shown the places where Shakespeare lived, where he was educated and where he is buried. There were people from all over the world looking at these sights.

Blists Hill to my mind was the best day of all the excursions. After spending a few hours soaking up the atmosphere of a Victorian town, we moved on to the Jackfield Tile Museum and finally we spent some time in Ironbridge town itself.

The children in particular loved the town with its sweet shops, chip shop, candle makers, horse and cart rides, fun fair and lots, lots more. For myself I loved the tile museum, the colours and the patterns on all the tiles were just fabulous. The bridge in Ironbridge was covered in scaffolding for repairs but even so it was majestic and the whole scene of a bridge straddling the gorge on a beautiful sunny spring day just seemed to be so quintessentially English.

Our morning in Hereford Cathedral was so interesting and the Mappa Mundi exhibition was fascinating. The Mappa Mundi is an ancient map that was created in Medieval times showing us what they believed the world looked like then. The map is primitive and simple compared with what we know about the world today.

The chained library in the cathedral also dates back from medieval times when books were so few and so precious that they were kept chained onto their place on the shelf and they were for reference only.

I'm sure that Blenheim Palace could not fail to impress our visitors. We had about ten of our club members joining



our visitors on this trip and I was disappointed that our guide round the palace spoke only in German and not in English as well. Never the less it was a very interesting day. It was lovely to see a few children and teenagers with this year's visit and I'm sure they found it to be a very educational trip that widened their horizons as well as improving their skills with the English language. We were sad to say goodbye to our visitors. For some of us it was a reunion with old friends and for others it was a chance to make new friends.

Margaret Tyas

Foire de Vernon

Six delegates from Worcester travelled to France to take part in the Foire de Vernon from 31 May to 3rd June 2018. We were placed next to the stalls from Vernon's twin towns Massa (Italy) and Bad Kissingen (Germany) and although we worked from morning until midnight, everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Each evening, the bands on stage nearby entertained us and the seats in our café were full.



We sold homemade marmalade, lemon curd, cheese, jam and chutney. Visitors had the opportunity to sample our local beers and other cold drinks or simply quench their thirst with a pot of English Breakfast tea or coffee.

Rosemary Campbell

Ukmergė Festival 2018

Each year at the end of May, Ukmergė celebrates with a festival, and issues invitations to the mayors of each of its twin towns to come and join them. This year was a special year, since Lithuania was celebrating 100 years since it regained its independence in 1918. The Mayor was not free, so I took his place and was there to celebrate with them.

Whenever I go to Ukmergė I feel that I am being treated like royalty. Despite my plane arriving late in the evening at Vilnius airport, the Mayor's car was there waiting for me, and the Mayor's driver took me to the door of the hotel in Ukmergė. There are not many flights from Birmingham, so I arrived several days early, but there is never a problem finding things to do in Ukmergė. The next morning another car appeared to take me to a local school, where I visited some English classes; I listened to presentations in English, answered questions in English and even learned a Lithuanian dance! They were very interested in the royal wedding which had happened the week before; they had



watched it on TV, and I was asked lots of questions about this!

I also had time to visit the house, close to Ukmergė, where the first president of Lithuania, Antanas Smetona lived. The Lithuanian people thought that he should have a statue in his village, so raised money for this, but he considered that a more fitting memorial would be a school, so used the money to build a school, which is still there! I also met the new director of education for Ukmergė and discussed links between schools in Worcester and Ukmergė – they are very keen at their end.

The day of the festival started with a presentation from twin towns in Sweden and Ukraine on working with Ukmergė on developing transport based on hydrogen; they had secured 100% EU funding for their project, which sounded very interesting, since the only waste product would be water. Then there was the procession: all the twin

towns, local schools, youth groups, businesses, etc. lined up and walked through the town. It was very hot, but I had a minder who provided me with lots of water! After the procession, we all assembled in the park for the official opening ceremony, accompanied by national dancing and music from the Lithuanian Army band and choir. A representative from each of the twin towns was invited onto the stage to offer congratulations on Lithuania regaining independence 100 years ago – so I followed the mayors of the other twin towns and made my short speech in English, after saying “Good day, Ukmergė” in Lithuanian – which pleased the crowd! The Mayor in Ukmergė is always very welcoming, and we were very well looked after. When the festival was over, I was driven back to Vilnius airport, but did have my first chance to look around this capital city before my plane took off; Vilnius is a small, but very friendly city, so I look forward to seeing more of it next time!

Terry Coles

Gouzeaucourt Contact Liz Smith

Gouzeaucourt 2018

This is the centenary of the year when the fighting in Gouzeaucourt, involving the Worcestershire Regiment, actually stopped. So, it seemed appropriate for Worcester Male Voice Choir to visit Gouzeaucourt. They came, they sang, they conquered the hearts of the people of Gouzeaucourt!

It was also a good time to take our exhibition “Worcester-Gouzeaucourt” to Gouzeaucourt; this showed what life was like under German occupation during the War, and the help offered by Worcester to the village once hostilities were over. So we arrived with the exhibition on the afternoon before the day of the concert. We were greeted at the mairie by local historian Lucien, the Mayor and his wife, and 3 young men who had the job of carrying the exhibition up to the first floor and assembling it. The Mayor had had to leave a wedding reception to open the mairie for us, but was very welcoming. After the exhibition was set up, he then had to go to the church to prepare it for the concert, while we were invited to supper with Lucien and his wife. They fed us very well!

On Sunday morning, the day of the concert, the orchestra from the local Cambrai Conservatoire arrived early, to rehearse in the church. There was no time to rehearse with WMVC, since they were on a very tight schedule! However, there was no need to worry - the orchestra and choir performed together very well indeed. Some members of WMVC even said that this was their best concert of the tour, since they had an excellent orchestra to accompany them. The audience certainly appreciated the music, and demanded an encore, so the orchestra and choir performed Elgar’s “Land of Hope and Glory” once again.

After the concert, refreshments were laid on in the village hall, and the choir sang again, in this hall, before they left Gouzeaucourt to return to Worcester. This was a very happy occasion, uniting lots of people in Gouzeaucourt and Worcester once again. 100 years ago, at the end of the First World War, Gouzeaucourt was a very sad, devastated village; when the inhabitants were allowed to return, they had to rebuild their lives from scratch – this is when Worcester adopted Gouzeaucourt, and raised money to help its French “godchild”.

Terry and Margaret Coles

If you still haven’t seen or would like to see again the Worcester Gouzeaucourt Display Banners, then don’t despair. The main exhibition will be in the Tudor House Museum until 21st of November.

A smaller display is also in the Guildhall by the main doors until after the 11th November.

Please also visit the website at www.worcesterandgouzeaucourt.org

Diner en Blanc

Next year we will be celebrating our 25th anniversary with Le Vésinet. As part of this celebration we will be invited to take a coach party to visit them at the Fete de la Marguerite, which is between 21st and 25th June. There will be a full programme of brilliant events over those four days. One of these, possibly my favourite event, is normally the Diner en Blanc. If you have not yet experienced a Diner en Blanc, or perhaps you don't know what one is, I think that a brief explanation is in order. This unusual dinner party started 30 years ago, when a chic group of friends in Central Paris, had a private party. The idea has grown and grown over those years and this year between 20,000 and 30,000 joined the festivity in central Paris. It has now been taken up by many countries in different parts of the world. But this is no ordinary picnic where a blanket is laid on the grass. White tablecloths, white crockery, white candles, white wine or champagne, and not to forget white food where possible, is required.



The Diner en Blanc in le Vésinet is altogether a smaller event (thank goodness) and is situated alongside the beautiful Lac des Ibis. As you can see from the picture above that there is one thing I have not mentioned yet, the white clothing. This is the one thing that makes it so surreal, almost heavenly, not that I have been there recently. As this is a strict dress code I think it fair to warn you that it can present a few problems, especially for men. Trying to find white trousers and shoes in England can be quite a challenge. It can also be a challenge for ladies, there are so many different shades of white, if you are intending to come to join in next year, then now is a very good time to start looking for your white clothing.

Derek

Beryl Williams 25th November 1940 to 24th September 2018

In the past 12 months we have lost some of our very good friends and long serving members of the Twinning Association. The most recent being Beryl Williams. Those that managed to attend the Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving on 16th October would agree it was a very special and fitting service to remember her by.

