

**Worcester Twinning Association**

# CONNECTIONS

**Summer 2013**



**Editor Contact Derek Furby**



Visit to Worcester Massachusetts June 2013

[www.worcester-international-link.org.uk](http://www.worcester-international-link.org.uk)

Eight members of the Twinning Association from Worcester England set off for our sister city across the pond, Worcester Massachusetts, on 19th June. Our mission was to refresh and renew the twinning agreement which had been signed in 1999, but in spite of our best efforts, had never really taken off in the same way that our other twinings had. What we were looking for was a named person over there, who would be responsible for answering our e-mails and communicating with us about events and possibilities for links with organisations and families between the two cities.

Our journey went smoothly and we were met at the airport and driven to the home of JoAn and Peter Geissler with whom 4 of us were staying. There we all had the opportunity to meet with our host families and talk about the very busy programme of events which was planned for us during our stay.

The next morning we were up and out at 8.30am and our first stop was the Courts of Justice to meet with Judge Sullivan in the Housing Court and ask him about the Massachusetts system of justice and compare it with ours. From there we went to see the Mechanics Hall and then the Historical Museum before breaking for a luncheon barbecue at the back of the City Hall. There we had the chance to meet with the City Manager who welcomed us to Worcester MA and wished us a happy stay. After lunch we visited the City Art Museum and then the Higgins Armoury, quite a lot for our first day!



Our next day we had a bit of a lie in, because we were not off until after lunch when we visited the City Farm. This is a fantastic scheme by which land has been donated to the city and food is grown by volunteers and then distributed free of charge to those in need of it at a free market. There are a number of reasons why that would not work here, but what a super initiative. From the City Farm we went to the Willard House and Clock Museum, a fascinating insight into an early settler's home and also an amazing collection of Willard clocks which are very well regarded in clock circles. From there we drove to the City Hall to meet with one of Worcester's Past Mayors, and we exchanged greetings and gifts and expressed hope on both sides for a better

connection between our cities. Dinner at a diner finished off another busy but satisfying day.

Saturday saw us at a barbecue at JoAn's house and then on Sunday we had the opportunity to visit Tufts University which has a school of Veterinary Medicine close to Worcester MA. This gave us an interesting insight into the work done in the University.

On Monday we spent the day in Boston and had a detailed account of that fateful "Tea Party" which set the ball rolling towards independence for our American friends. We travelled there by double decker train, which some of us had not encountered before.

On Tuesday we paid a visit to the Plymouth Plantation, which is a village set up as it would have been in 1627, a few years after the Pilgrim Fathers first landed on the eastern shore of the USA and we had the opportunity to talk with actors who were playing the part of those early settlers. They held on to their characters even with intense questioning from us and the visit was enjoyed by all.

In the evening we enjoyed a barbecue with Barbara and David who were Pam and Derek's hosts and this gave us a chance to discuss with Mimi from the

international Centre about how we could refresh and strengthen our twinning arrangement. I am pleased to say that Mimi was able to reassure us that the twinning will in future be organised through the International Centre and a Committee has been set up since our departure which includes JoAn, Hannah and Mimi, who will be responsible for maintaining the arrangement.

Dave and I left for New York the next day but the others, Les, Rosemary, Pam, Derek, Hazel and David all stayed on for another 5 days when I am sure they will have enjoyed the same warmth and hospitality which we had all enjoyed for the previous week.

Article by Jo Hodges



## Worcester Massachusetts

The first time we visited our twin town, Worcester Mass was around 12 years ago, and we were not very impressed with Worcester itself. It did have some lovely buildings like Mechanics Hall, Union Railway station and a very grand modern hospital, with a lovely foyer with gardens, waterfalls, cafes and lots of seating areas. We have been back to Massachusetts on many occasions, but without visiting Worcester.

On our visit this year with a group of 8 people, we spent some time in Worcester and were amazed at the transformation that has taken place, making Worcester a much nicer place to visit.

Article by Rosemary Tunley

### Worcester Rugby U.S.A vs. U.K

A long awaited return rugby match will be played on the Westons Field Rugby ground, the Wanderers home ground, which is right at the roundabout at Six Ways Stadium on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August with a kick-off at 3pm.

### FRIENDS REUNITED

A long standing connection between our two Worcesters has recently been revealed.

During the 1940s a pen pal link was made with a school in Worcester Ma and in Worcester England. Obviously through the changing times, nearly all of the people have long since stopped corresponding to each other, apart from Doris Richard and June Walker. Over the last seventy years they have kept in close contact, but by letter and phone calls only. Sadly they have never had the opportunity to visit each other.

Two years ago, Doris Richards from Worcester MA suddenly stopped receiving replies from June Walker. She became increasingly worried about her close friend and with the help of her family searched far and wide on the internet to try and find June, even so far as fearing the worst and checking Worcester News obituary records, but to no avail.

Worcester International Link received an email asking for help with their on-going search.

After visiting the house where June used to live, we confirmed that she no longer lived

there and were able, with a lot of luck to trace June's daughter. She explained that

following an illness June was unable to return to her former home and now lives at Malvern care home.

Correspondence has now been re-established between the two ladies with the help of June's daughter and Doris's perseverance in trying to find her friend.



## Vernon Contact Rosemary Campbell

### Foire aux Cerises

This year over the Whitsun Bank Holiday, I visited the Foire aux Cerises in Vernon for the first time. I had a meeting with Jean Jacques Créto, the President of the Fair, who said that there might be an opportunity for Worcester Twinning Association to have a stand next year at the fair, which lasts for about 4 days. Vernon Twinning Association are not able to support our presence at the fair, but if anyone is interested in going over to Vernon during Whitsun 2014 to help run a stall at the fair, please let me know as soon as possible. Obviously we would need enough volunteers to ensure that the stall would not be left "unmanned" at any time. I would really welcome ideas from members regarding the sort of items we could sell. It would be a great chance to meet everyone in Vernon, which is a very beautiful town on the river Seine, and great fun too!

## **Work experience in Worcester**

My name is Kathrin and I'm a 16 year-old student from Kleve, Worcester's twin town in Germany. I came to Worcester in July, at the end of my grade 10 at school, to do work experience in the Press Office of the Communications Unit in County Hall.

In Worcester, I have been living with host families, who have been really kind. They have shown me Worcester and its surrounding area, and have taken me to work every morning.

I'm here to improve my English, which I have been learning since 2002, as well as to have a look at the daily work of a press office. In the Press Office, I was given the task of writing press releases, e.g. about the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a Children's Centre, a Reading Challenge at Pershore Library and about the Redditch Cycle Challenge. I enjoy this because writing is something I really like, and my releases are actually used. Adam Blackmore and Kirsty Crawley are supervising my work experience and they help me if I have any questions.



At the beginning it was quite strange for me to write in English but I got used to this as well as to the UK computer keyboard which is a little bit different from the German one. This is the second time I have stayed in England but it's my first time in Worcester and I like it a lot. I really enjoy the work experience, so it was worth coming to England.

At the beginning, I had to learn the "Marketing and Communications Unit Media Relations Protocols" - 41 pages long! This was quite hard for me because I had to translate it in my head into German, but I got through it and followed the translated version. In the Press Office, I also did Media Monitoring and Headline Bulletin, which gave me an overview on the local, and the headlining of national news for the Education Department. From the beginning, the people in County Hall were really kind to me.

One of the most memorable days of my work experience was the first anniversary of the opening of the Hive, when I was allowed to film for the homepage. I filmed the speeches of Adrian Hardman, the Leader of Worcestershire County Council and Professor David Green, the University of Worcester Vice Chancellor, then I also filmed little interviews with people who work at The Hive and they told stories about how they remembered the last 12 months and the Queen's opening of the Hive in 2012. I liked that day because I was working in direct contact with the people connected with the Hive, and it showed me a new side of press work.

I'm thankful to have had this amazing chance of working at County Hall and I will never forget the time I spent in Worcester in 2013.

Kathrin Tekath

## **Visit of Worcester Grammar School pupils to Kleve**

A group of students and two teachers from the Royal Grammar School, visited Kleve in May this year. They were greeted by Mr. Jochen Schmidt one of Kleve's deputy Mayors in the Rathaus. He explained on the model of Kleve, some of the local history and showed where the Rathaus is located, and also what building plans are discussed at the moment in Kleve.

Later he showed the council room and explained how many parties belong to the city council etc.

Coffee and soft drinks were served and questions were asked both ways.

Mr. Schmidt highlighted that Kleve now has a university (Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences) and that more than 80% of the lessons are given in English.

The two teachers I had previously met on another occasion and one of them even in Worcester at the swan statue.

Article by Karl-Heinz Koster



## St Martin's Choir at Stiftskirche in Kleve

The Choir of St Martin's Church, London Road, has paid a visit to Kleve in June, organised by the Kleve Twinning Association (or however you normally translate *Städtepartnerschaft!*) The Choir has visited twice before (in 1995 and 2003) but this was the first time they've been able to take the Rector of St Martin's (Canon Ken Boyce) and the Curate (Revd Phil Bradford).

The Choir's association with Kleve began in 1994 when Organist and Choir Director Trevor Tipple was invited to give a recital on the grand organ of the *Stiftskirche* - the magnificent Roman Catholic church in the town centre. The following year he returned with the Choir which, at that time, had a number of children and young people.

Most of the party stayed with hosts in Kleve, and they were given a guided tour of the town, as well as a day trip to Nijmegen and a cruise on the pancake boat which cruises along the River Waal and includes all-you-can-eat pancakes.

The Choir joined the Lutheran congregation in the *Versöhnungskirche* (the Reconciliation Church) for Sunday morning service. There was no other choir in church that morning, so St Martin's Choir shared some of its own music as well as singing some German hymns, and the Pastor invited the Worcester clergy to take part in the service.



Later the same day, the guests moved to the *Stiftskirche* for an evening concert in the *Geistliche Abendmusik* series. They presented a programme of favourite pieces in their repertoire, including two anthems specially composed for the Choir – by Dr Herbert Sumsion who was Organist of Gloucester Cathedral (1928-1967) and a leading influence in the Three Choirs Festival during that time, and a more recent work by Worcester composer Amanda Ballard, called *Rejoice in the Lord*, which gives the concert programme its title. There were organ solos by Trevor Tipple and recorder solos by Emma Williams, a young, gifted musician who grew up as a chorister at St Martin's.

Article by Shirley Scott



## Fetes de la Marguerite 2013

What an action-packed weekend we had at le Vésinet for the Fetes de la Marguerite! This year they were celebrating 35 years of twinning with their German town, Unterhaching, in Bavaria, and a 25 years' friendship pact with Hunter's Hill, near Sydney, so there was a large German contingent and five representatives from Australia.



Eight of us comprised the Worcester delegation, and having arrived by various means of transport we first met up at the celebratory dinner on the Friday evening. This was again held in the foyer of the theatre, and a delicious buffet meal was served, with musical accompaniment by a small group from the town band, l'Harmonie municipale, and dancing by the Trachtverein folk group from Unterhaching.

Saturday morning dawned bright and sunny, and the first event was the inauguration of the Promenade de Hunter's Hill, a pathway beside the stream at the rear of the Town Hall. Other twin towns, including Worcester, already have stretches of footpath named in their honour.

Next came the presentation of a European flag awarded to le Vésinet by the Council of the European Community in recognition of their services to European twinning. This was followed by a buffet lunch in the park, after which the delegates had a choice of activity: some went on a coach tour of le Vésinet, but most of us went into Paris where we visited first the gardens of the Palais Royal, and then the Palais Garnier, the Opera House in the heart of Paris. Our guide was most entertaining and showed us the splendid foyers and breathtaking staircase built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Napoleon III style. It was the highlight for fashionable society of the period to parade themselves on the staircase or before the mirrored walls. Unfortunately we could not visit the auditorium as a rehearsal was in progress, but our guide delighted us with an impromptu performance of a Mozart aria in his superb baritone voice.

Sunday's activities followed the usual pattern – an open-air Mass with prayers read by members of the visiting delegations, and then a mass picnic with all the Twinning guests and hosts at tables under the trees. Residents of le Vésinet enjoyed a range of entertainments, this year including dances by the Germans, rides in a tethered air-balloon and an exhibition of vintage cars. The Harmonie rounded off the proceedings with a programme of light music, and the weather was fine and sunny throughout.

We hoped for similar weather for Monday's excursion to Provins, south-east of Paris, but though it started well, an hour-long traffic hold-up and then torrential rain delayed our arrival and we missed the falconry display, arriving just in time for lunch before our tour of the medieval town. Amazingly the temperature had risen from 17° to 25° by the time we got to Provins and some found it too hot to walk around the town, preferring to take the little tourist train. Either way we were able to admire the old walled town which in medieval times had been an important market town on intersecting trade routes, and home to the Dukes of Champagne. Their impressive tower, the Tour de César, still remains and provides a panoramic view of the surrounding area for those fit enough to climb to the top.

Every evening the official programme includes "diner dans les familles", but things are so arranged that families host a different group of guests each evening, giving us the opportunity not just to enjoy a delicious home-cooked meal, but also to meet guests from other countries on a more informal basis.

We are most grateful to Annie Serin and her team who are to be congratulated on arranging another most enjoyable and successful weekend.

Next year the celebrations will be in honour of 20 years' twinning with Worcester, and plans are already in hand. We shall be receiving a large delegation to be hosted in Worcester and later inviting Worcester members to join the coach trip to France. Anyone who has ideas as to what form the celebrations should take and wishes to host guests, or take part in the festivities is invited to contact Vivien Greenow.

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## **"How to get (some of) YOUR MONEY back from the EU"**

....and at the same time do some sightseeing in Strasbourg.

There are not many ideas I would borrow from Nigel Farage but I picked this one up at the recent UKIP "Love-In" in the Guildhall.

If you approach your/any MEP he/she will have an allowance to fund a visit by you (and family) to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The visit takes 2.5 hours and at the end of it you will be handed 275 Euro (in cash, in a not-brown envelope); the rest of your time there is yours!

On my visit on July 4th there were 22 in the party, all allegedly from the West Midlands but a couple in fact from Hastings. We began with a talk from a very pleasant EU civil servant (Ryan Meilak) from Malta. I had not realised that Malta is an EU member (Cyprus too). Croatia had joined on 1st July, making 28 members now. He explained to us the make-up and functions of the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament and all their various groupings and committees etc. (Farage is Chair/President of the Europe of Freedom & Democracy Group).

We learnt that there are 754 (766 after Croatia) MEPs. The UK has 73 (as has Italy), Germany has the most with 99, France is second with 74, Ireland has 12. We heard how the EU decamps to Strasbourg for 4 days 12 times a year (that's all the MEPs, their 2000 PAs and the 6400 strong army of staff (translators etc.)). However this exercise it seems costs only 2.30 Euro per year per EU citizen.

Next up was our sponsoring MEP Mike Nattrass (although, having used up his visits budget, he had been given some of Trevor Colman's). He described some of his betes noirs and some of the obvious idiocies of the European Parliament. For example, voting by arm counting (often patently wrongly counted) in preference to (accurate) push button voting. Another gripe was to remind us that the EU's accounts have not been passed for 18 years!

We then observed a debating session in the chamber of the Parliament. A large part being about the (non)uptake EU wide of all the facets of the "new" 112 Emergency Number.

All in all a fascinating and eye-opening experience which left one aghast at the enormity of the profligacy and the gravy train.

And the sight-seeing bit? Well Strasbourg is beautiful - the cathedral (142 metres high, 332 steps, an amazing astronomical clock, "the pillar of the angels" etc.), the river, the parks, the ramparts, the old "La Petite France" quarter - there's a mass to see (and lots of Alsace wine to try). Get onto your MEP and the Strasbourg Tourist Office asap!

## Gouzeaucourt

Worcester City Council has asked the Twinning Association to enter into a temporary twinning arrangement with Gouzeaucourt in France as part of the World War 1 commemoration events which will take place over Worcestershire from 2014 to 2018. The requested twinning with Gouzeaucourt is the result of the help which Worcester gave to that town after the end of the Great War in the form of the dispatch of a water pump and pipes to restore a water supply to this badly damaged town.

Many organisations will take part in Worcestershire's programme of activities and many events will take place and it is pleasing that Worcester Twinning Association has been asked to be part of that commemoration. We are still very much at the planning stage and no definite proposals have been agreed but early thoughts are that the best way to commemorate this help to Gouzeaucourt is by a visit to meet with the Mayor and Municipality there and to invite them back here in 2016 which is the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. Gouzeaucourt is in the region of the Somme and so this is likely to be when the town was damaged, but that is still to be explored.

In addition it seems appropriate to have a visit in 2018, the anniversary of the end of the war when we actually became involved with them and the water pipes were sent.

This is all in the very early stages and is still to be discussed with the Executive Committee who may have more information than I have on the timing of events in Gouzeaucourt during the War.

## Bland, Dull and Boring

This might be the impression that some people may have of twinning. However, in this case it would appear to be correct, since the town of Boring in Oregon USA has agreed to twin with the small Scottish village of Dull in Perthshire.

The idea came when a resident of a nearby village was on a cycling holiday in America and passed through the town of Boring. She contacted her friend in Dull who set the wheels in motion. The residents of Dull (population 84) hope that this will raise the tourism profile of their village and the Perthshire area.

Boring's considerably larger population of 13000 means that at the moment they are not technically, officially twinned, as there are limits on the difference in town size. Instead they have an official friendship arrangement with one another.



Since news of this twinning hit the global media, the town of Bland in New South Wales Australia, thought it might also be a good idea to try and twin with them, so negotiations between the three towns are at present taking place. I wonder if there are any other towns throughout the world that could join this unusual partnership.