

Worcester Twinning Association

CONNECTIONS

SPRING 2021



Editor Contact: Derek Furby

Membership Contact: Derek Furby



A few members joined the Executive committee on Thursday 24th June for a Charter 400 walk with Paul Harding of Discover History. Charter 400 is being celebrated this year because it is 400 years since James 1 gave Worcester a Charter allowing the city to have a mayor who would run it along with the Council. Paul is very good at bringing the past to life and we were treated to a very clear description of what Worcester was like in 1621 when Edward Hurdman, who was to become the first mayor of Worcester, was living here.

Paul gave us some history of Edward Hurdman and how he came to be a wealthy merchant in the city after very humble beginnings in the countryside. The walk took us from the front of the Guildhall to the riverside, down Copenhagen Street, which was densely inhabited in 1621, and then along Quay Street and to All Saints Church, which still houses the Communion Cup which Hurdman left to the city. At the time of his death Edward Hurdman was living opposite the church and if you stand outside the Broad Street Chippy you are standing on his doorstep. Unfortunately, 2 silver bowls which were also left to the city on Hurdman's death, disappeared during the Civil War, and the City Council is hoping to replace those in pewter rather than expensive silver as a lasting memorial to our first mayor.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable walk and talk and told us a little of our city's history that is not widely known.

Jo Hodges

Kleve Contact: Margaret Tyas

News From Kleve

It has been quite a while since we last saw our German friends although we have seen a few of them virtually at recent online meetings.

I have been keeping in touch with Karl-Heinz by email and Whats App over the period of the pandemic and he is currently making a lengthy recovery from an operation on his spine.

Karl-Heinz has struggled with a back problem for many years, soldiering on and enduring a lot of pain continuously. However deliverance from his problem happened during our first lockdown when he went into hospital for a lengthy operation on his spine. He spent several weeks in a rehabilitation clinic afterwards and he is at present receiving physiotherapy to complete his recovery. He still experiences some pain when completing certain tasks but he is now much better than he has been for a long, long time.

It has been good to see some of our German friends online over recent months and of course we are all longing for a time when we can get back to face-to-face get togethers.

Unfortunately we won't be seeing them this year because with the Covid situation being as it is, it is far too risky for them to make a return Autumn visit to us and also it will be far too risky for them to attend our Christmas Fayre.

The Christmas Fayre just will not be the same without out our visiting European friends but better times lie ahead and we will hopefully return to our exchange visits with our German friends in the not too distant future.

Margaret Tyas

Worcester News

We are pleased to announce that we have been granted a monthly column in Worcester News to highlight the events that are occurring throughout the year.

If you wish to view online <https://www.worcesternews.co.uk/>

A decade of twinning with Lithuania

In 2011, the Mayor of Worcester signed a twinning agreement with the town of Ukmergė in Lithuania. In May of this year, the then Mayor of Worcester, Jo Hodges, met up virtually with the Mayor of Ukmergė, Rolandas Janickas, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of this twinning. Members of Worcester's Twinning Association and councillors from Ukmerge joined them. Jo spoke about the warmth and kindness shown to her when she went to their summer festival. She recalled going to a school for their "last bell ceremony", the final assembly for 18 year-old students; Jo was asked to talk to the students in the school hall – they all understood English and hung on her every word.

The Ukmergė Mayor said how much he appreciates the annual invitation to our Christmas Fayre. The presence of Ukmergė ladies selling their hand-made products in our High Street is the way many Worcester people know about our Lithuanian twin town; the ladies smile or sing to passers-by, and their products are always popular.

Rolandas went on to present Terry (the only Worcester liaison officer Ukmergė have known) with Ukmergė Mayor's Special Award for "the active promotion of cooperation between Ukmergė and Worcester, in the fields of education, culture.". He made some very complimentary comments about Terry, and said that he would put the actual Award (a badge and ribbon) in the post. In thanking him, Terry spoke about the UK's Lithuanian Ambassador making the first contact with Ukmergė (the Ambassador's home town), and recalled many productive visits to the town over the years, helping in schools, speaking at ceremonies and meeting many delightful and hospitable people.

The meeting ended with the Ukmergė Mayor presenting the city of Worcester with a gift to commemorate our 400 year-old Charter. He intended to play us a very unusual song (about hope and energy), performed by a local, award-winning ladies' choir. It was a shame that the link did not work, but the song was sent later by email and circulated to all at the meeting. However, this glitch did not detract from the good humour of the occasion – it was a very successful meeting



Another French Connection

“Long live twinning.” This sentence, repeated with enthusiasm, with accents from both sides of the Channel, resounded in the town hall of Gouzeaucourt, France on 4th May. About 20 councillors and members of the Twinning Association in Worcester (in their own homes) were connected virtually with a dozen councillors meeting in Gouzeaucourt town hall for a celebration of their twinning which started in 2014. But this time, in spite of not being able to meet in person, the ceremony had a special significance, because the twinning, which had been temporary, became permanent.

Links between the two towns, of vastly different sizes (Worcester’s 100,000 inhabitants, compared with Gouzeaucourt’s 1,600), started after the First World War. At that time, 80 British towns adopted French towns to help them rebuild, and this northern French community was adopted by Worcester. The Mayor, Jacques Richard, reminded us that: “You became our wartime godmother in 1921. The village was completely destroyed in 1917, and you helped with the rebuilding. We will not forget your help.”

Almost a century later, the two towns engaged in a temporary twinning. In 2017, the centenary of the Battle of Cambrai, Gouzeaucourt hosted a group from Worcester. Jacques Richard recalled “Worcester Male Voice Choir came to sing in our church. It was magnificent”. After this, we had to content ourselves with virtual meetings but, despite this, they did not lack warmth. At the recent ceremony, the speeches in 2 languages expressed warm feelings, and were fluently translated by Rosemary Campbell, Vice-Chair of Worcester Twinning Association.

Cllr Jo Hodges, Mayor of Worcester at the time of the ceremony hoped to be able to visit Gouzeaucourt in the near future. Until then, the two towns are already working on a link between 2 of their schools, illustrating the wish, expressed by the two mayors of a “long and fruitful” friendship.

Terry Coles



FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE

Le Vésinet et ses villes jumelées



20 Juin 2021



In mid-June members from Worcester used to travel to Le Vésinet for our annual visit to the Fête de la Marguerite. Alas this has not been possible for the last two years due to Covid 19 restrictions. We therefore approached Le Vésinet some months ago with the idea of having a musical Zoom event between Worcester and Le Vésinet instead to celebrate the Fête de la Musique, which takes place each year on 21 June. After lengthy discussions, this had morphed into a much more ambitious undertaking between Le Vésinet and their own twin towns!

The Grande Soirée took place over Zoom on 20 June 2021, the eve of the Fête de la Musique in France. Worcester was immensely proud to be able to showcase two very talented young musicians:

Susie Greenow, granddaughter of Vivien and Patrick and former Heart of Worcestershire College student sang “Blue Skies”. This jazz song was composed by Irving Berlin in 1926 and was sung by the world-famous Josephine Baker, who lived in a beautiful Louis XIII style mansion called Le Beau Chêne in Le Vésinet for some years. Ella Fitzgerald also recorded this song in 1958. It was a hard act for Susie to follow but her superbly creative toe tapping performance, her flowing melodic lines and vivacious personality did not disappoint!

Abby Warner, the 15-year-old granddaughter of Margaret and Terry Coles, delighted us with her own recent composition “Hide and Seek”. She not only sang and accompanied herself on the guitar but truly amazed us with her awesome video and recording technical abilities.

Our heartfelt thanks and congratulations go to Susie and Abby and we wish them every success for the future!

Apart from Worcester, there were musical contributions from Outremont (Canada), Unterhaching (Germany), Hunters Hill (Australia), Villa Nueva de la Cañada (Spain) and of course the hosts, Le Vésinet. Otto from Unterhaching was quite the hero and deserves a special mention. Having already performed his song in German about the absence of snow last year, he spontaneously kept us entertained with a medley of songs in different languages during the interval of the concert, when computers in Le Vésinet had to be swapped over. Bravo Otto!

All in all, the Grande Soirée was a huge success and was very well attended by members and friends from twin towns. It enabled us to have an informal friendly get-together, learn a little about the music and culture of the various twin towns and keep us all up to date with the latest Twinning news. We take this opportunity to thank all the participating musicians and also the team in Le Vésinet for their hours of hard work in organising the event and in particular their President, Anne-Marie, Véronique, Edith and Anne-Marie Laurent.

<https://jumelageslevesinet.com/fete-de-la-musique-2021/>

Incidentally, the Fête de la Musique first took place in Paris in 1982, but it has now become a global tradition and takes place in towns all over the world. It is usually informal and both amateur professional musicians of all ages perform in the streets, parks, cafés and pubs free of charge rather than in theatres and concert halls. Everyone and anyone can take part or simply enjoy the fun!

Worcester Ma. Contact: Kevin Gaffney

Worcester, Massachusetts celebrate their 300th anniversary as a town in June 2022. I connected with their Mayor, the Chief Executive and his project officer on Zoom and found Mayor Joe Petty keen to involve us in his cultural celebrations next year. Indeed he said that he himself would look forward to visiting the UK next year, officially or unofficially, COVID restrictions permitting of course.

Worcester Mass Choral Society visited us in 2019 and their leader, Paul Dexter, continues to work with us. He encourages his members to keep in touch by attending our Zoom presentations. Of course the discussion on The Mayflower by Howard Robinson was the most popular with our American friends, some of whom can trace their own ancestors back to the Pilgrim Fathers. The recent Worcester Charter 400 presentation by Dr Adrian Gregson highlighted to the Americans what was going on here when the Pilgrim Fathers were making their home in New England and was very well received in Massachusetts.

At Christmas 2020, Kings' School Worcester and their counterparts in the USA collaborated on Zoom to create and perform Christmas carols which showed the innovation of young people on both sides of the Atlantic. I am confident we can build on this connection to contribute to the Worcester Mass celebrations next year.

Kevin Gaffney

Social Secretary Contact Jean Robb

Social Calendar for Autumn/Winter

It has been a busy 6 months where we have made the most of Zoom to bring you presentations about The Mayflower and The Magistrate as well as the celebrations with our friends in Ukmergė and Gouzeaucourt. Dr Adrian Gregson presented the history behind the celebration of the Worcester Charter granted in 1621 which gave us our Mayor and members enjoyed the Walk around Worcester to explore some of the places mentioned by Adrian. I hope you enjoyed our latest Members' event too – the Fete de la Musique concert hosted by Le Vésinet.

Building on the success of this programme, please look out for the following events in the run-up to our AGM in February 2022.

Sunday 3 October on Zoom – Worcester Charter 400 opportunity for an informal chat between our members and members in our twin towns, where we will show case the contributions given by our twin towns for this occasion.

Early December on Zoom – Exchanging Festive Greetings with our friends in our twin towns

Late January – Quiz Night

Wednesday 23 February at 7pm - AGM

Jean

Charter 400 Photobook



We are still eagerly seeking any photos in digital or hard copy, from the early days of twinning, that can be added to the Charter 400 Photobook. If you have any, then please get in touch with any of the contact addresses above. Here are just a few that have been collected so far.



Some news from Vernon

The school holidays have started here in France and a lot of people have left their homes for the seaside (mainly), the mountains or the countryside, only too pleased to get away and find some sort of normality. Like everywhere else things have been at a standstill since mid-October, with ups and downs. Now we can see our family and meet our friends like before (or almost). A lot of people have been vaccinated, even though there are still people who are reluctant or refuse to do so.

Not many foreign visitors in Vernon of course : the Americans and Asians who usually represent a large part of the visitors to Giverny are absent, European visitors are very few too, but they may come now that restrictions have been eased.

There are road works in the centre of Vernon as it had been decided some time ago to modernise it and change the system so that there would be fewer cars, more space for pedestrians and cyclists, and more greenery. The Collégiale is surrounded by scaffoldings, It was badly in need of a new roof, for a start. But the whole building will be seen to in the next few years.

In June there were elections in the country at the level of the regions (Normandy for us), and départements (Eure). Very few voters turned up and nothing has changed.

What I miss personally is going to England : we haven't see family and friends since February 2020. I hope we will be able to do so before too long without having to spend a week or two in quarantine.

Now I hope the weather will improve too as it has been wet and a bit chilly for days in the northern half of France. It seems it is warm and sunny in the southern part, once you have crossed the River Loire, more or less, Lucky them !

Better days ahead ! And best wishes to all.

Bénedicte Reynolds