

Worcester Twinning Association

CONNECTIONS

Summer 2017



Editor Contact Derek Furby
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Worcester Twin's Tour De France Link

The Tour de France 2017 starts on 1st July. This year the Grand Depart will be from Dusseldorf, Germany. Three years ago it was Leeds. What you're probably not aware of is Worcester's link to the town that's hosted the most Grand Departs in the Tour's 104 year history.

Surprisingly Worcester, 'The Faithful City', is twinned with Paris. Well, to be factually correct, an upmarket suburb of Paris called Le Vesinet. Despite having a population of only 17,000 Le Vesinet has hosted a remarkable 15 Grand Departs. The first was in 1925 and then for a 13 year period from 1927 to 1939. The last occasion was in 2003.



The reason for Le Vesinet's dominance is down to one man, Julien Rudolphe. Julien was a successful track runner and mid-distance cyclist before the First World War. In 1917 he opened a cycle shop at 15bis Boulevard Carnot, Le Vesinet where he built and repaired bicycles. When recruited to organise starts for the Tour De France he persuaded the owners to do this immediately outside his workshop. Today his premises is owned by Le Vesinet Council and is occupied on the ground floor by a Ford car dealership. The building has a plaque on its façade that proudly proclaims its link to the largest cycling event in the world.

Article by Lyndon Bracewell

Le Vésinet Exhibition

Over the weekend of 20th & 21st May the Camera Club held it's print exhibition in Le Vesinet, near Paris. Le Vesinet is twinned with Worcester and for the last few years Henry (with helpers) has organised the visit and taken the prints there. This year Geraldine and I set up and manned the exhibition as we were touring in France.



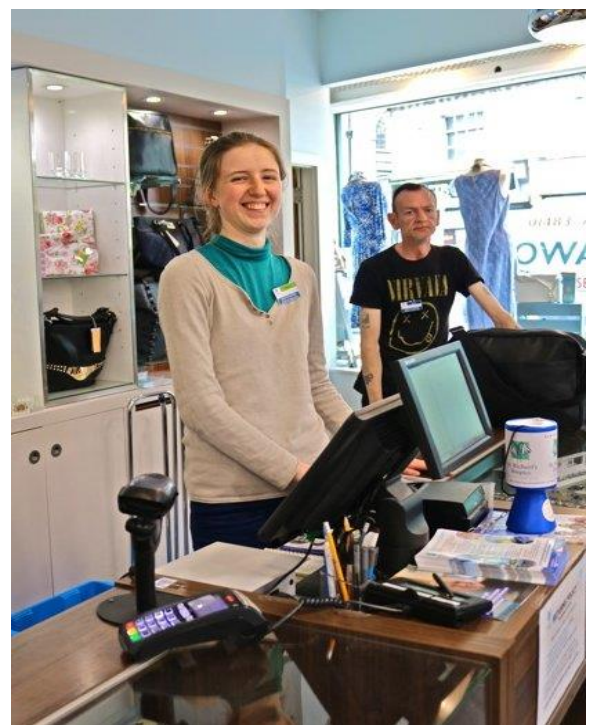
The exhibition takes place in large tents in the garden of Wood Cottage in Le Vesinet, a suburb of Paris and is part of an arts exhibition 'Arts au jardin' which mainly consists of painters and sculptors. Wood Cottage is a fascinating house built in 1860 in the forest which stood there before Paris expanded.

We took 42 prints from 21 club members and I am very grateful for those members who supported the exhibition. There was a lot of interest in the pictures and the stand was busy pretty much all of each day, from 11am to 7pm. We spoke to lots of visitors about the photographs, well, I spoke to the ones who spoke English! - fortunately Geraldine speaks French so she was able to help with those, we also had members of the twinning association on the stand for much of the time.

Article by Martin Addison

Work experience in Worcester

I really enjoyed my two week spring visit to Hanley Swan, staying with a wonderful family I met 4 years ago, thanks to the Twinning Committees of Worcester and my French town, Le Vésinet. As I wanted to improve my English, to meet people and to be useful, I chose to work in Worcester's St-Richard's Hospice Store and Snowdrops Bookshop and Café, a job that these Committees very kindly offered me. 5 days a week, from 10am to 3pm, I worked mostly behind the till, mainly in the bookshop and a bit in both the café and the fashion shop. The place is very nice and the other volunteers helping in the shop made me feel very welcome. It was a great pleasure to chat with them as well as with the customers, helping or serving them and concentrating hard to understand various different accents! Furthermore, I appreciated being able to visit most of Worcester during lunch breaks as the charity shop is in the city centre. In a nutshell, I am happy that I had the opportunity to do this work experience for it was socially enriching even if the place was not very busy, with the exception of the café where there was always someone to serve, tables to wipe down, plates to clean or to sort out (no time to chat with the other volunteers when working in the café!)



Article by Camille Klopocki

The Ukmergė Festival, May 2017

Relationships with Ukmergė have taken a turn for the better this year. In May, we were invited to the Ukmergė Festival, so Vilma and Terry went to represent Worcester. There are not many flights to Lithuania from nearby airports, so they had to go a few days before the Festival. Terry spent these days helping in Ukmergė schools where he was impressed by the standard of English being taught, even to those just starting school. However, he was bowled over by the musical experience he had in the schools. They say that all Lithuanians can sing, but the standard of singing in the Ukmergė schools was exceptional; despite not speaking the language, he felt the emotions transmitted by the songs which the children sang.

The schools welcomed us with genuine kindness and affection, but then so did the municipality on the eve of the Festival. At the introductory ceremony, the Mayor welcomed us, in Russian, since most of Ukmergė's twin towns understand Russian – in fact Russian was used throughout the evening, when gifts were exchanged and speeches made.



After this a sumptuous meal was offered to the guests, followed by singing and dancing. The visitors were introduced to Lithuanian folk dancing, which mixed people up well. The evening finished at 1 in the morning, and the Festival had not started yet!

The day of the Festival was packed with events – so packed that, half way through lunch, we had to leave to take our places in the procession! About 1000 people took part in this, from schools, businesses, twin towns...It was well received: there were lots of waves from the crowds lining the streets. Then the Mayor officially opened the Festival, which included concerts, stalls and numerous free activities for children; Vilma had her son with her – he tried out almost everything! The Mayor seemed to have influence beyond the confines of Ukmergė since, as well as organising a magnificent Festival, the weather was hot and sunny as well!

One thing had changed since we were last in Ukmergė: the government has introduced stricter drinking laws, so you can no longer drink alcohol in the street. However, you do not need alcohol to be



happy, especially in Lithuania so, despite the lack of beer stalls, a good time was had by all!

Another formal dinner and dancing that evening was rounded off by a firework display. It was sad saying farewell to the friendly Lithuanians in our twin town, but we are hopeful that we will see more of each other in the coming years.

Kleve Contact Margaret Tyas

At our last committee meeting on June 5th, at the Guildhall, we had a surprise visitor, Karl-Heinz. He was visiting Worcester for a few days while staying with Les and Rosemary. This year should have been our 30th anniversary with Kleve. Unfortunately within the first few weeks of Margaret taking over as our new Liaison Officer she had a fall which caused severe damage to her right arm. This left her unable to take up her duties for the association. Due to holidays and limited time this year, and with the approval of Karl-Heinz it has been decided that their visit will be postponed and arrangements are now being put in place for their visit to Worcester early next year. A party from Kleve will be with us again this year for the Victorian Market.



Earlier this year members of Karl-Heinz's English speaking group, went to a restaurant near Kleve for a typical English high tea. The cakes and the food were all prepared by the restaurant and was enjoyed by everyone.

A visit to Gouzeaucourt in March

Recently, 5 members of Worcester Twinning Association made a very successful trip to Gouzeaucourt, the French village adopted by Worcester after the First World War. Gouzeaucourt had been completely destroyed in the War, so needed a lot of help to make the place habitable again. In the 1920s, Worcester raised the money to reinstate their water supply.

We were there to get information for our WW1 project “Worcester and Gouzeaucourt” – the outcome of this will be exhibited in the Guildhall in July. The idea of going to Gouzeaucourt was not just to make official contact with the Mayor, but also to interview local people with relatives who had lived through the German occupation and evacuation between 1914 and 1918. Martin Addison, of Worcester Camera Club came with us to take photographs of Gouzeaucourt, and the local cemeteries where Worcestershire Regiment soldiers are buried.

Gouzeaucourt’s Mayor had given us the large hall in the Mairie, to meet a select group of residents, but first, local historian Lucien Defawe gave us a presentation on Gouzeaucourt during WW1, the occupation, the evacuation, the battles... This did not leave much time for morning interviews, but Rosemary moved fast, and set up in a corner to start interviewing. She managed 2 before a rather special lunch, at which we presented the Mayor and Lucien with presents from the Mayor of Worcester.



In the afternoon, more people exchanged wartime memories.

During the day, we arranged a time to meet Philippe Gorczyński, who had recently discovered and dug up a 100 year-old British tank in the area. Another historian, Jean-Luc Gibot offered to take us on a cemetery tour the next morning. Our time was quickly filling up!

The cemeteries were a poignant reminder of the enormous loss of life in WW1; we took our time, and Jean-Luc

filled us in with details of what was happening 100 years ago. The tank, called Deborah, was one of the first which had ever been used successfully in battle. Philippe was an enthusiast and told us exactly what life had been like in a WW1 tank: noisy, hot and painful! Nevertheless, it was an experience being beside Deborah, and thinking of her history.

We rounded off the trip with a visit to Thiepval museum and war memorial, and to Péronne's documentation centre. In Péronne, we read more accounts of life under occupation 100 years ago, and saw albums of photos taken by German soldiers - a different side of life in occupied France!

We returned with heads spinning with what we had learnt, and very pleasant memories of the helpful and hospitable people of Gouzeaucourt. The Mayor will bring a group from Gouzeaucourt to Worcester in July, to be at the opening of our exhibition and see, for the first time, the city which helped them to recover from the devastation of war



Article by Terry Coles

Worcester Ma.

Tale of Two Worcesters

For the past three weeks, I have been living in Europe. I am very fortunate to have this opportunity of a lifetime. I am staying in Kamp-Lintfort in North-Rhine Westphalia. My classes do not start until the 3rd of April, so I took advantage of the time off and went to Prague on one weekend, and England the following week. I flew from Düsseldorf to Birmingham. When I arrived in Birmingham, I hoped on the train and I was on my way to see the Worcester on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. My visit to Worcester, England was in the works for a few months. I reached out to the Mayor's Office (Worcestershire), and I was put in touch with Liz Smith, the chair of the Twinning Committee in the

other Worcester. Liz put me in touch with Lord Richard Faulkner, and we were discussing my trip for a while as well.

Liz had arranged for Derek and Pam to meet me at the train station. We went to Liz's house for dinner and desert. I tried British tea for the first time, but unfortunately tea is not for me. We spent a few hours at Liz's and I felt very welcomed to Worcester, almost like I was being welcomed back home across the pond. After we called it a night, I went back to my B&B, and stayed there until the morning after.

The following morning, I got to see their Worcester's downtown with Pam and Derek, which is completely geared towards foot traffic. This is something that we could learn a thing or two from our sister city. After going through downtown, we went up to the park where there used to be a fort, and it was the final battleground of the English Civil War in 1651. After lunch, we took a trip to the Commandery. This was a building that dates back to the 1000's, and it has served a multitude of



purposes throughout the millennium. Following the tour of the Commandery, we went back to Derek and Pam's house. We stayed there for an hour or two before we were ready to head back out for dinner. We went to dinner at a restaurant that was located in a farm house from the 1500's, and was converted in such a tasteful fashion. After that, we went our separate ways again.

On Friday, the 24th we started off the morning by taking a trip to the Worcestershire Regiment Museum. It was a small little museum that showed the history. The Worcestershire Regiment dates back to 1694, and they served in the numerous conflicts throughout British History, including both World Wars. They were amalgamated with the Sherwood Foresters to form the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment in 1970. That was then amalgamated with the Cheshire Regiment and the Staffordshire Regiment in 2007 to form the Merican Regiment. As someone who really is into history, I am jealous that our history does not go back very far in the United States.

Following our trip to the museum, we went out

for a quick lunch. At 1:00, we made our way to the Guildhall. The Guildhall serves as their City Hall now. Its construction began in 1721, a year before Jonas Rice founded Worcester, MA for the third and final time. This is where I met up with Liz Smith, Lord Faulkner, and Mayor Paul Denham. The Mayor took me for a tour of the Guildhall. We started with his office, which had a throw that was gifted from Worcester, MA. On it were various buildings from our city, but most prominently City Hall. He showed me the 400+ year old ceremonial sword of Worcester, and explained to me the history of the golden chain that the Mayor of Worcester wears. The chain dates back to the 1800's and it has been passed down ever since. We then went upstairs to see a room which is not typically open to the public. Inside the room were all of their twinning documents, including the one with Worcester, MA, signed by Mayor Raymond Mariano. There was also a letter from President Bill Clinton acknowledging the twinned pair. Following that we went to the main hall. Inside the hall was one of the most beautiful ceilings I have ever seen. It is very difficult to describe, and pictures do not do it justice. This is one of

the things you would have to see for yourself to truly understand how impressive it is. From the main hall, we went into our final part of the tour, and that was the City Council chambers. Their city council does not meet in full very often, only 6 times a year to be exact. When they do meet, the meetings are certainly not short.

After my tour of the Guildhall, I was taken to see the Worcester Cathedral. Parts of the building predate the 1100's, and it was the burial place of King John. This part of the tour was taken over by Lord Faulkner. After touring the magnificent building, we discussed our desires for our twin cities to grow closer, and develop a deeper relationship with one another. To put it simply, Worcester, England takes twinning more seriously than Worcester, MA, but part of me going there was in an effort to make that change going forward. I am hoping to see a beautiful relationship form between the two Worcesters. I am excited to see the enthusiasm on their end, and I hope that we can channel it into something constructive.

At 7:00 I met up with Derek and Pam at the Guildhall again, for the Mayor's charity Brass Concert. It was in the main hall, so I got a lot of time to study the craftsmanship. During the intermission, a surprising amount of people came up to talk to me. I guess being from Worcester, MA does mean something! I had several good conversations with different people before the show continued on. After the show, I went back to my B&B for the final time, for I was catching the 10:24 train to Manchester the following morning. All in all, I had a great experience and met some excellent people. So far, this has been my favorite part of my trip, and it is not a place that tourists typically go to. Sometimes, traveling off the beaten path can be a very fruitful experience. No matter how large or small of a roll I played, I am honored to have been a part of *A Tale of Two Worcesters*.
Article by Evan C. Corrigan

Vernon

La Foire de Vernon

This year the traditional Foire aux Cerises has given way to a different version of this popular event. The town has taken over and brought a few changes: it lasts only 3 days (Friday to Sunday), will always take place at the beginning of June, opens late on Friday and Saturday evenings (10 pm and midnight) and there are no more stalls selling windows or lawnmowers. It is meant for families, especially children, to have fun for free. At the same time there is a "Fête Médiévale" organised by an association of local shopkeepers. A lot of mainly wooden games have been set up in the town centre: climbing frames, games of skill such as skittles...The emphasis is also put on gastronomy and local produces that can be purchased at the medieval market or food market. The twin towns are also invited, as usual. Many visitors were eager to buy English goods and were disappointed not to be able to meet the people from Worcester this year. They are looking forward to seeing the English stall again in 2018. There was music too, with a stage on the main square and bands or groups to cater for different tastes (however some strollers said the music was too loud and overpowering!). The Saturday was wet and a little chilly but this "new look" fair seems to have met with the approval of both visitors and organisers (Johan Auvray, Deputy Mayor, who was in Worcester last August for the 10th Anniversary of the Friendship Pact, masterminded it).

Article by Bénédicte Reynolds



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Dear member

I am sure you will remember that, in addition to our other twin towns, Worcester has a temporary twinning with the village of Gouzeaucourt (in France) as part of the city's commemoration of WW1. This temporary twinning has been running since 2014 and is due to end in 2018.

We are now planning our only real event to mark this twinning. We chose 2017 for this as it is the centenary of the total destruction of Gouzeaucourt by the occupying enemy, and a small group of us have been researching and preparing an exhibition to mark this commemoration.

We will be visited by six guests from Gouzeaucourt (to include the Mayor) in the last week of July when the exhibition will be opened in the Guildhall by the Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Col Patrick Holcroft, whose great-uncle, Capt Cyril Holcroft, was involved in the wartime fighting around the village. I hope that as many of you as possible will come to the opening, but also help your Association by filling out the rota of 'attendants' needed to man the exhibition during that week – details to follow.

We will be entertaining our guests that evening at the Ketch (Saturday 22 July) when all members are invited to join them. On the following day (Sunday 23 July) you are all cordially invited to an evening garden party at 6 Park View Terrace. Before that we will be taking our guests to a fringe event of the 3 Choirs Festival given by the Worcester Cathedral's Girls Choristers 'Fly, singing bird, fly!' at the Countess of Huntingdon Hall. Once again everyone is welcome. The concert starts at 3.00 pm and tickets are available (subject to availability) from the 3 Choirs Festival, cost £12.00 – 18.00.

I hope that as many of you as possible will enjoy both our exhibition and the company of friends from Gouzeaucourt. The British League of Help, under whose auspices the 'adoption' of Gouzeaucourt by Worcester was undertaken, stated in its governing document: “ **It is to establish a personal bond that the League aims.**”

Saturday 22 July, 2.30 pm

Exhibition opening in the Court Room, Guildhall by the Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire.

Saturday 22 July, 8.00 pm

Meal at the Ketch. Cost to members £12.00 for 2 courses to include a glass of wine. Please book through Jane Wood tel 755244.

Sunday 23 July, 5.00 pm

Evening garden party at 6 Park View Terrace, WR3 7AG (tel 01905 611700) Free but please let Jane Wood (tel 755244) know for numbers before 2nd July