



Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association

Newsletter

February 2009

Although we are already well into the new year, I should still like to take this opportunity to wish all our members a very happy and prosperous year in 2009. As many of you will know, 2009 is a special year for the Association, as it will be 20 years since the signing of the Twinning Charter with Wiesbaden. Your committee is busy planning various events to celebrate this anniversary (more of that anon).

We had a good turn-out for our Annual Dinner on 31 January at the High Rocks, at which we were very pleased to be able to welcome Friedrich Schrecker of the Gymnasium am Mosbacher Berg as our guest of honour. Friedrich is a long-standing friend of the Association and brings a group of work experience students to Tunbridge Wells every year at this time. We were sorry that ill health prevented our President Tom MacAndrew from being present, but were pleased to welcome his wife, Edna, and congratulate her on her 80th birthday which she celebrated earlier in the month. Once again the High Rocks Restaurant proved to be an ideal venue for the dinner, with the use of a private room and the attentive service of the High Rocks staff creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. We hope everyone enjoyed the evening and thank all our diners for their generous support of the raffle and 'heads or tails' competition which between them raised the splendid sum of £150 towards the 2010 fund.

We can look back on a successful year in 2008 with a variety of activities and visits to and from our twin town. We started the year with a very moving talk on Lithuanian war graves in Siberia given by the then Lithuanian Ambassador to the UK, who has since been appointed Foreign Minister of Lithuania. This was followed by a more light-hearted talk from Denise Barnes who presented her entertaining memoirs of her experiences as a veggie cook in Bavaria. Then, in November, we had a very thought-provoking talk by Richard Milton entitled "Britain and Germany: Truth and Lies in Two World Wars". In June our excellent relationship with Wiesbaden's Music Academy and its director, Christoph Nielbock, resulted in 3 young local musicians going to Germany to join the orchestra and choir of the Music Academy in a production of Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace". This proved to be a very moving experience for musicians and audience alike. There was no trip to Fasching last year, but a small group of members went to Wiesbaden in August to visit the annual Wine Festival and as always were given a warm welcome. There were also several visitors from Wiesbaden last year, including a group of young hockey players who paid us a return visit organized by the Tunbridge Wells Hockey Club to take part in matches against local youth teams. We also arranged a 2-month work placement in the tourism section of TWBC for Stefanie Wolf, a student currently working for Wiesbaden Town Hall. We promote such exchanges and visits by young people as we feel they are an essential part of our twinning relationship.

Looking forward to the current year, we hope to again be able to offer our members a varied and interesting programme of events. You will receive the spring/summer programme within the next few weeks, but I can tell you now that the highlight will be a **visit from the Wiesbaden Brass Ensemble in May** to celebrate the **20th anniversary of the signing of the Twinning Charter**. You will

remember that this fantastic band from Wiesbaden's Music Academy last visited us in June 2006 as part of Tunbridge Wells' 400th anniversary celebrations. An advance party of 5 musicians will arrive on 19 May to provide a musical contribution to the Mayor-making ceremony on 20 May, then the full Ensemble will be here from 21 - 25 May. They will play at various venues in the town (as they did last time), including an afternoon concert on the Pantiles Bandstand on Friday 22 May. Their visit will culminate in a gala performance at St John's Church on Saturday 23 May at 19.30 where they will be joined by choirs from local schools. We hope that TWTFA members will support these events and not miss the opportunity to hear these enthusiastic and highly talented young musicians. Anyone who heard them play on the Pantiles in 2006 will remember what a wonderful uplifting experience their performance was. So, make a note in your diaries now! Also **if anyone could offer b&b accommodation** to these young people during their stay, we would be immensely grateful. Just contact Sheila Kirby on 01892 526891. During that same week we will be privileged to receive a **short visit from Wiesbaden's current Oberbürgermeister**, who succeeded Hildebrand Diehl as Mayor in 2007. When he came to office, Oberbürgermeister Müller expressed the wish to visit each of Wiesbaden's twin towns and he is now making good that pledge with this visit to Tunbridge Wells as the guest of our Borough Council. We hope he will be accompanied by the town's councillor with special responsibility for cultural affairs, Rita Thies.

Other dates to note are the **AGM on 21 March** (details to follow) and a talk by Jonathan Balcon on 17 March on the work of his father, Sir Michael Balcon, Director of the Ealing Film Studios.

Another event that may interest you, although not organised by TWTFA, is 'UNITE - Bring a Dish', a Celebration of Cultural Diversity at the Toc H Hall, Little Mount Sion, Tunbridge Wells on Saturday 14 March, 6 - 9 pm. This will be a multi-cultural gathering with poetry, music, performances, information and stall to which all are invited. No need to book, jut turn up! For more details, contact Meena at unite.twells@googlemail.com, mobile 07779661430.

You will notice that for most of our activities we use the excellent hall and facilities generously provided by St John's Church. Sadly Alistair Nurden, the Administrator of the Church Centre, will be leaving St John's at the end of March to take up a new post in Shropshire. We would like to offer him our warmest congratulations on this career move and to thank him for the generous support and help he has given the Association over the past 3 years. He has been a great friend to us and will be much missed.

Many of you will know Jean Holliday, but you may not know that she has just celebrated her 91st birthday. Jean has been an active member and keen supporter of the Association for 35 years and she and her late husband visited Wiesbaden many times for the Fasching celebrations. Her daughter Mandy, for several years a committee member, still continues the family tradition of involvement with TWTFA, helping to find accommodation for Friedrich Schrecker's work placement students. We should like to offer Jean our hearty congratulations and warmest wishes for many, many happy returns and thank her for her continuing commitment and loyalty to the Association.

Recently we received news of the death of Ron Wells who in the past was a staunch supporter of the Association and had visited Wiesbaden several times. No doubt some of our long-standing members will remember Ron, and we would like to offer his family our sincere condolences.

So we look forward to another exciting and busy year and hope members will continue to support us in our many activities.

(Christine Phillip, TWTFA Secretary, Tel. 01892 513944, email: cphillip@tiscali.co.uk)