

20th Anniversary of Signing of Twinning Charter Tunbridge Wells-Wiesbaden (1989-2009)

2009 marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of the town's Twinning Charter with Wiesbaden, our only twin town. To help us celebrate this important anniversary, between 19 and 25 May a number of Wiesbaden high officials supported by more than thirty musicians from the Wiesbaden Music Academy's Symphonic Brass Ensemble visited Tunbridge Wells.

Lord Mayor's visit

Herr Dr Helmut Müller, the Lord Mayor of Wiesbaden and his wife Dr Dorothea Friedrich, together with Frau Jutta O'Such from Wiesbaden Town Hall's Foreign Relations Department were here at the invitation of our new Mayor, Councillor Len Price. The high point of the visit was their participation in Councillor Price's Mayor-Making, when the Quintet of the Brass Ensemble entertained with suitably festive music and the Lord Mayor made a short address to Council and guests. Apart from meeting leading members of the Borough Council, the Lord Mayor also attended a business luncheon organised by the West Kent Chamber of Commerce at the Rose and Crown in Tonbridge. In addition he toured the Pantiles, savoured the Chalybeate spring waters and, over a cream tea in the open air, discussed possible commercial co-operation with the Targetfollow Portfolio Manager for the Pantiles and representatives of the Association of Pantiles Traders. This was his first visit to Tunbridge Wells, one of Wiesbaden's twelve twin towns.

Cultural exchange

Following closely on the heels of the Lord Mayor, came the elected Wiesbaden Councillor with responsibility for Cultural Affairs and the Environment, Frau Rita Thies. Frau Thies, a leading member of the Wiesbaden Greens, was accompanied by Herr Jörg-Uwe Funk, head of Wiesbaden's Department for Cultural Affairs, and the Director of the Wiesbaden Music Academy, Herr Christoph Nielbock. The cultural trio were in Tunbridge Wells from the evening of Thursday 21 May until the early afternoon of Monday 25 May. As part of a very full programme of meetings and visits intended to acquaint them with the town's cultural offerings and civic concerns, they had discussions with senior Council officials and leading representatives of cultural life in the town. The high point of their stay, apart from attendance at the two concerts given by the Wiesbaden Brass Ensemble, was their visit to Dunorlan Park to observe the Race for Life staged by Cancer Research UK, an organisation with no counterpart in Germany.

Before they came, Frau Thies and Herr Funk had heard about the cultural delights of Tunbridge Wells from Christoph Nielbock, now Patron of TWIYCA and a regular visitor to the town. Their visit has enabled them to discover for themselves what our town has to offer and, as with the Lord Mayor, they returned to Wiesbaden with ideas for a variety of additional co-operative projects that will enrich the lives of young and old in our two towns.

Festive brass leads the way

A festive foretaste of future co-operation was provided by the Wiesbaden Symphonic Brass Ensemble which was in Tunbridge Wells for the second time in three years. Its Quintet., specially brought together for the Tunbridge Wells celebrations, was in town from Tuesday 19 May until the early morning of Monday 25 May and played in a variety of locations: outside the Council Chamber for Mayor-Making, at Claremont School for morning assembly, at Rusthall Lodge for the retired residents - one well over a hundred years old – and at Tunbridge Wells Girls Grammar School, where they gave an ‘Ambassadors for Brass’ demonstration to pupils of year seven. The Quintet was joined in the late evening of Thursday 21 May by the remainder of the Ensemble, totalling some 30 musicians. They performed to a packed and good-humoured Pantiles on Friday afternoon 22 May and, together with choirs from musicians and choirs from TWGGS and Kent College, entertained a large and enthusiastic audience at St John's Church on the evening of Saturday 23 May. (Following their successful Tunbridge Wells debut, playing to young and old, the Quintet musicians intend to continue performing together.)

Outcomes and future plans

The main purpose of the visits from our Wiesbaden colleagues was for them to gain some understanding of the cultural and business life of the borough. At the same time the visits enabled representatives of cultural life in Tunbridge Wells to learn more about the cultural richness of our twin town. It is our hope that the general public in Wiesbaden and Tunbridge Wells will benefit from the visits of the Lord Mayor and the cultural representatives in a variety of co-operative projects. Appended to this brief report is a summary of the areas of possible co-operation identified during the visits.

The Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association is delighted to have assisted in organising the celebrations for the 20th anniversary and looks forward to more co-operative ventures in the future. If you wish to take part in or contribute to the organisation of any of these projects, your help would be much appreciated. Just contact the Chairman, Michael Holman on 01892 523013, e-mail: michaeldekholman@googlemail.com, or the Secretary, Christine Phillip 01892 513944, e-mail: cphillip@tiscali.co.uk.