

50th Anniversary Visit to Wiesbaden

Tunbridge Wells Twinning Friendship Association and
Sea cadets from Tunbridge Wells and Whitstable
visiting the twin town Wiesbaden for "Fasching" (11-16 February 2010)



Between 11 and 16 February 2010 a coach party of almost thirty, the majority long-standing TWTFa members, travelled for 22 hours through snow and ice to Wiesbaden to take part in our twin town's carnival celebrations. They were accompanied by two further coaches taking sea cadets from Tunbridge Wells and Whitstable - plus their instruments and uniforms - to play in the carnival parades, thus reviving an old tradition of visiting our twin town for "Fasching". This year's visit marked the 50th anniversary of the original reconciliation visit to Wiesbaden by four local ex-servicemen, among them our current President, 83-year-old ex Royal Marine Commando Tom MacAndrew.



As usual the town was in festive mood with local people in traditional Fasching costumes. We were welcomed at the Town Hall by the Lord Mayor of Wiesbaden, himself in 18th century dress, and were able to watch the three-hour-long parade with close on 300 floats from the main balcony.



On the eve of the parade the Association's Chairman, Professor Michael Holman, was awarded the Wiesbaden Town Medal for his active promotion of links between Tunbridge Wells and Wiesbaden.

A 50th Anniversary Dinner was held on the final night in the family-run Oranien Hotel, which has always given guests from Tunbridge Wells a particularly warm welcome.

At the dinner the Chairman presented specially inscribed,

framed commemorative certificates to friends in Wiesbaden who over the years have helped promote friendship between the people of our two towns.



Among those thus honoured were Peter and Johanna Exel, who in 1979 walked with a small group of friends all the way from Wiesbaden to Tunbridge Wells and in subsequent years have been wonderful hosts in Wiesbaden and frequent visitors to our town; former Lord Mayor Rudi Schmitt - until recently the only Honorary Alderman of Tunbridge Wells and an active supporter at the very highest level in Wiesbaden of the twinning link; Claus Rönsch currently Chairman of the Royal Tunbridge Wells-Wiesbaden Association; Christoph Nielbock, Director of the Wiesbaden Music Academy and Patron of the Tunbridge Wells International Young Concert Artists' Competition; and Bernd Brusberg, whose splendid steel cycle stands now grace key points in our town and whose

father was one of the German ex-servicemen who first hosted groups of Tunbridge Wells ex-servicemen on visits to Wiesbaden in the 1960s.



'Sea cadets storming the Rathaus'

Edgar Pinckert (centre)
with TWTFa Association members
Frank Monckton (l) Roy Standen (r)



During the recent visit to Wiesbaden Association members Frank Monckton and Roy Standen, together with the Chairman, had the privilege of being able to visit ninety-year old ex-paratrooper Edgar Pinckert, who first responded to the hand of friendship extended by Tom MacAndrew and his comrades in 1960. Despite a fall early in the day, Edgar was greatly pleased to receive his guests from Tunbridge Wells and proudly showed them his photograph albums with many carefully annotated photographs from the early days. He also showed them a large number of cuttings from 'The Courier' and local Wiesbaden papers with reports of visits both ways. Sadly, ill health prevented both Tom and Edgar from attending the dinner, but in his concluding speech Chairman Michael Holman expressed the gratitude of all present to both old soldiers and their comrades for their courageous pioneering work in the cause of peace.

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