

TONBRIDGE FRENCH CIRCLE

REPORT TO THE TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL TWINNING COMMITTEE

1. The membership of the Tonbridge French Circle now stands at 60 francophiles of rather mature years, some of whom were involved in the original twinning with Le Puy-en-Valey and some of whom still enjoy French conversation classes.
2. For several decades we maintained a close friendship with a group of anglophiles in La Rochelle, with alternate bi-annual visits between La Rochelle and Tonbridge. But this now looks as if it has run its course for various reasons, including the the age profile of the respective groups. A few years ago, I tried to forge a similar exchange link via some close friends in the beautiful city of Angers, but this did not get off the ground.
3. We also have a link with the Cestas Exchange, which was established over 20 years ago and was developed by francophiles learning French at the Cranbrook, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells Adult Education Centres. Exchange visits take place during a long weekend usually in May or June and alternate between Cestas (in the Pessac-Leognan appellation area) and here.
4. Our regular activities now include:
 - an annual day or two day trip to France;
 - social meetings at members' homes, such as a "Déjeuner sur l'Herbe";
 - occasional boules matches with local organisations;
 - wine tastings; and
 - French film evenings.

Brian W Buck
Chairman
Tonbridge French Circle

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Report of Heusenstamm Friendship Circle for TMBC Committee meeting 3 July

Since the last Committee meeting on 28 November 2013, the Circle's annual Nikolausabend took place with a very good attendance of 51 people, including our Mayor and Mayoress, Howard and Jane Rogers and the following weekend I attended the Nikolausmarkt in Heusenstamm. Also present were Howard and Jane who were given a guided tour of the town, and Lyndsey Bennett with two of her friends from the STCB. The weather was mild and dry and everything was sold from the British stall.

The first social event of 2014 was a talk given by Dr John Ray on World War One, together with memorabilia. This took place in Tonbridge Parish Church on 25 January.

The AGM and Dinner, held at the Rose & Crown Hotel on 4 March was, again, well attended, by 44 people, the second highest since 2009. Once again, our Mayor and Mayoress were present. I really must commend Howard and Jane Rogers for the enthusiastic support they have given to the link with Heusenstamm, an example which I hope their successors will follow. During the course of the evening a presentation was given of our new Facebook Page, designed to try to interest young people in twinning. Vivian Branson was most helpful with the presentation. I have since made contact with Dillon Lancaster, Chairman of the Youth Forum, with a view to giving a presentation on twinning to the Forum.

The schools' exchange between Judd and the Gymnasium (TGS is no longer involved) took place at the end of March and was notable for the record number of boys who went (30). The return visit, (11 boys, 19 girls) girls, will be between 4 – 12 July, with a Council reception at the Castle on 7th, as referred to in the Secretary's twinning report. Karin Zwanziger, the German teacher at Judd is leaving at the end of the term. I cannot praise her highly enough for everything she has done for the exchange programme and I have recommended that this be publicly recognized at the reception. There is still a small work experience programme for Heusenstamm girls, which is being maintained, thanks to Christine Hill, though with some difficulty.

I am happy to say that progress is being made with forming a link between the Slade Primary School and a similar school in Heusenstamm. A teacher from the Slade School visited Heusenstamm last week to make an initial contact.

A joint coach holiday to East Anglia was successfully completed (13-16 June). A welcome dinner at the Vauxhall Inn on 12 June was attended by 56 (including five former Mayors) and the coach party consisted of 26 from Heusenstamm and 19 from Tonbridge.

Our annual summer outing will be to Bateman's on 9 July.

Later in July (18-20) we come to the Torbaufest in Heusenstamm, referred to in the Secretary's report. I shall be going with my wife, Dorothy, and at least two Circle members will be there too. Though our Mayor and Deputy Mayor are unable to attend, I understand that Mike Dobson will represent TMBC. I am pleased about this. The Torbaufest commemorates the most important event in Heusenstamm's history, and the July weekend brings celebrations which started in November, to a climax. The final day (20 July) is described as a festival for Europe, with a procession through the town, and their other twinned towns will have a strong presence.

Also in July (23rd and 25th) we have arranged for a quartet and quintet from the Wiesbaden Symphonic Brass Ensemble, who are visiting Tunbridge Wells to celebrate the 25th anniversary of their twinning link, to play in three care homes in Tonbridge (High Hilden, Town Lock and Mary Magdalene). High Hilden was the home of Anna Adams, who you will all remember was a founder member of the Circle. I am sorry to report her death on 13 May, aged 92. We all owe her a great debt.

As the Secretary has reported, Tonbridge is hosting the celebrations to mark 30 years of twinning in September (12-15). The Charter was signed on 15 September 1984. The Circle is involved with the Council in planning the programme. Unfortunately the Bürgermeister is unable to come, but the two most senior members of the Heusenstamm Council, other than himself, will be here. They are the Chairman of the Council (Frau Ingrid Henninghausen), the Leader of the Council (Herr Uwe-Michael Hajdu). The Chairman of their Friendship Circle (Herr Ulrich Höffken) is coming too.

I see no need to report at this stage on our planned winter events.

My final comment is to observe that this year, 2014, the centenary of World War One, is not a good one for Germany. This may be obvious, but it should remind us to be particularly sensitive to our German friends at this time, and also to be proud of our twinning link and the lasting friendships that it has created. I was pleased that Angela Merkel was invited to the D Day commemorations. It would be a nice gesture to invite Herr Jakoby to Tonbridge on Remembrance Day.

Thank you.

David Packer

29 June 2014