

# Worcester Twinning Association

# CONNECTIONS

winter 2017



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## VERNON VISIT

At the end of August we welcomed visitors from Vernon to mark the 10th Anniversary of our Friendship Pact, which was signed in 2006 by Nevill Swanson. The delegation from Vernon included three Deputy Mayors, a Councillor and members of their Twinning Association, who stayed with host families. Rosemary Campbell, who was Liaison Officer for Vernon, organised a varied and interesting programme of events, which culminated in a riverboat trip on Monday evening, and an opportunity for everyone to see the wonderful firework display from South Quay, signalling the end of the Worcester Festival.

On Saturday morning the visitors had a guided tour of Worcester, followed by a reception at the Mayor's parlour in the Guildhall.



In the afternoon they enjoyed tracing some of the origins of their town name at Hanbury Hall. Owned by the Vernon family until 1940 on the death of the last occupant, Sir George Vernon, upon which it was bequeathed to the National Trust. Followed by a celebration dinner at the Ketch in the evening.

Shortly after attending morning service at the Cathedral on Sunday, the visitors and Worcester members alike climbed to the top of the Worcestershire Beacon for a splendid view of the surrounding countryside. Vernon is famous for its annual Cherry Fair during Pentecost, and a visit to the Pershore Plum Fayre was a must for Bank Holiday Monday.

This was followed by high tea at Besford, where Liz Smith was on hand to cut the special anniversary cake and Hazel organised delicious homemade sandwiches, scones, cakes and of course local strawberries and fresh cream. The entire visit was a huge success and we reluctantly said goodbye to our guests on Tuesday morning.



This year 2017 we will be celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with our first twin Kleve. This year we will be hosting them here in Worcester. Arrangements' are still to be made, and I will keep you informed at a later date.

For 28 years of this bond between our two towns Les and Rose has been the backbone in bringing about a very happy and strong relationship between us and our German friends.

Unfortunately, this year they have decided to no longer continue their membership with our Twinning Association.

I'm sure you will all join with us in thanking them both very much for the hard work and devotion they have shown over such a long period of time.

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Last September Gisela and I went with friends to the Dutch island of Texel, where we had also been years ago with Rosemary and Les.

On a very sunny day we first traveled to the beach and the lighthouse, and later to the little airport of Texel where a skydiver center is located.

When we arrived many skydivers came down and I felt like a child under the Christmas tree, because for years it was my wish to do a parachute jump. But Gisela was dead against it for many years; she said you can jump when I'm dead – don't worry she is still alive – but because I was so fascinated and enthusiastic she finally gave the green light and 15 minutes later, after a short instruction I was up in the air. We were 5 jumpers in the plane, 3 ladies in their 30s. And one lady of 85 and myself.



I was the first on the plane and the last to jump so I could watch them all getting out of the plane. We

went 3000m high and then we had to move to the open door – the point of no return-. My tandemmaster pushed me out of the door and for 30 seconds we had a free fall before he opened the parachute, and for 5 minutes we slowly got down; it was a fantastic experience. When we were at about 300 m he told me to lift my legs and then we safely landed.

I hope I can do it again next year; there is an airfield not too far from Kleve where they offer parachute jumps.

So that is something I really would like doing again.

Karl- Heinz

## **Ukmerge**

It is hoped that a new liaison for Ukmerge will shortly be joining our membership and the Executive Committee. She was born in Lithuania and is now living in Worcester, which may inspire a new and better relationship between our two cities.

## Le Marché de Noël

### CHRISTMAS MARKET IN LE VÉSINET

Seven of us participated in the Marché de Noël des Jumelages at the beginning of December. For security reasons the marquee was erected in the front of the Town Hall and on Friday morning we assembled and decorated our stall ready to display our typical English produce to advantage. As usual each twin town was represented and this time we were delighted to meet Jessica McCann from Oakwood, USA and Louise, Jean and Nefissa from Outremont in Canada, who had all travelled vast distances to work on their stalls at this special Christmas event.

Worcester had an eye-catching display of mince pies, Xmas crackers and cakes, teas, shortbread, chocolates, special Twinning Xmas puddings, packs of cheddar and pots of Stilton cheese, together with homemade chutneys and marmalades supplied by Pam and Hazel.

On Friday evening we were invited to a concert at the theatre given by the young pupils studying at the Conservatoire. On Saturday morning the Harmonie Municipale gave a magnificent performance of festive music in the marquée and in the afternoon all the children were invited to drink hot chocolate. The Twinning Christmas dinner took place in Restaurant Soprano at 9pm on Saturday evening and we enjoyed the opportunity to meet up with old friends, make new friends and create bonds which last for many years. We would all like to thank our hosts for their warm hospitality and for making us feel so welcome.



## FESTIVAL DES ARTS - LE VÉSINET

On 1<sup>st</sup> July a member of the Camera Club, Jackie Evans and a Twinning member, Henry Tomsett, set off for the fourth Festival des Arts in Le Vesinet, a leafy suburb close to Paris. The exhibition was to be held, initially, on the week-end of 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> May but was cancelled on the forecast of bad weather: which duly arrived. A new date of 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> July was proposed. Thanks to the beneficence of Eurostar the original train tickets were still valid. Forty prints had already been sent to the organisers, arriving safely after some D H L adventures. Our accommodation was with the Chair of the Twinning Association.

The exhibition was held on an estate belonging to the municipality in the grounds of a nineteenth century house known as Wood Cottage.

Viewing was started by the Mayor of Le Vesinet at 11am on Saturday. The Club's prints were already suitably displayed in a tent conforming to the exhibition standard, ready for his inspection. The concept of "Street Photography" particularly intrigued our visitors.

This year again the weather was less than perfect consisting of showers and sunny periods.



We had a steady stream of appreciative visitors throughout the two days, continuing until 6.30 on Sunday evening. Several prints elicited particular interest. Two of those being John Burrows extracts from the history of the Club. The French seemed to find most amusing the concept of a tricycle club morphing in to a camera club.

Our return journey, apart from the obligatory queueing in Paris, was as smooth as could be expected, rounding off a satisfactory International showing of the Camera Club's photographic range and ability. Thanks are due to those who loaned their prints for the exhibition.



## Worcester Ma.

Last year we had the opportunity to welcome quite a few of our friends from America, which considering the distance is always going to be a problem. Earlier in the year we had a visit from Peter and JoAn Geissler who were returning from an holiday with Les and Rose. They stopped over in Worcester for just the one night, but long enough for six of us to join them for a pub meal at the Royal Oak Broadwas and to catch up.

Later in August we had heard that, Hannah Solska, who is our liaison in Worcester Ma, was visiting Scotland along with David and Barbara Gow. We seized the opportunity to invite them to visit our Worcester.

Hanna arrived first and as she had never been to our Worcester she was keen to see the difference between our two cities, and who better to ask than Robert Loveless, who is a Green Badge Guide. He graciously obliged and Hannah was shown some of the sites that even I did not know about. In the afternoon the Mayor, Paul Denham had agreed to show Hannah around the Guildhall and afterwards we were invited to have tea with him in the Mayor's parlour.

The next day we were joined by Dave and Barbara who had stopped off en route from Scotland to visit old friends. They too had never been to Worcester, so another tour around the town, taking in antique shops and a pub.

That evening we were joined by the Mayor and his wife and other twinning members for a goodbye meal. To keep up the American theme it was at The Whitehouse Hotel. The evening and indeed their visit was all over far too soon.

We hope that our American guests will return in the not too distant future.



## Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre

The Christmas Victorian Fayre was attended by our usual 3 twin towns, Kleve, le Vésinet, and Ukmergė. The weather was very good this year and not too cold or wet, which meant that visitor numbers to the fayre were very high.

The locations of our stalls were just outside the front of the Guildhall, an ideal spot which was not too crowded but still had plenty of people passing by. We had arranged this year with the organisers L.S.D. to man the stalls for 3 days only. Except for Neringa and Daiva on the Ukmergė stall, they had arranged to work on Sunday too, due to a lack of flights from and to Lithuania only going once a week at this time of the year. This arrangement worked out very well, as by Saturday afternoon Kleve had managed to sell all their Gluehwein and Stollen. Le Vésinet sold all of their fromage and virtually everything else.

The leadership of our Worcester stall was taken on this year by Margaret Tyas.

She and her team were selling Christmas Puddings made by The Ultimate Plum Pudding Company.

There was a variety of types, such as Sticky Toffee, Gluten Free, Lemon, Triple Chocolate and of course the traditional plum pud.



Photo by Tobias Zugel





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Many of you will recall that we have a 'temporary' twinning with the village of Gouzeaucourt in northern France, part of the Council's commemoration of WW1 in memory of Worcester's 'adoption' of and assistance to, this devastated village. We have chosen to mark this twinning with an exhibition about our two communities. Applying for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund was slow, mainly due to our inexperience. Getting together letters of support proved time-consuming and had to be attached to the application. Then, having been awarded the grant, there were dire warnings from the HLF forbidding the start of work on the project until an almost impossible series of hurdles had been jumped through with the bank.

However, all that done, we now have the grant of £10,000 paid into a new separate bank account. A budget agreed with the HLF dictates what we can spend it on and accounts will have to be returned to them in the spring of 2018. Any underspend has to be repaid. All is done that is except the main part of the work, which is getting this exhibition up and running for the summer. The working group has been meeting regularly and is now well organised to collect the information which we need from records available locally, the Imperial War Museum and the Regimental Museum. A small group of four is planning a two and a half day visit to Gouzeaucourt where they will interview people who have family memories of life under occupation, the destruction of the village and its aftermath. They will also spend a day in the WW1 museum in nearby Peronne to look up any relevant details held there and any records of Worcestershire men who fought in the area. Their work will be recorded on video and photographically to add to the exhibition material. So the content of the exhibition is coming together. The next big job is to get the nuts and bolts together as an exhibition and to create a web site as agreed with HLF. We plan to open in the Guildhall on 22<sup>nd</sup> July – the afternoon of the opening of the 3 Choirs Festival in Worcester – and Patrick Holcroft, the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire whose great-uncle fought in the area around Gouzeaucourt, has agreed to open it for us. It will be in the Guildhall for a week, and then we hope to move it to other locations. As the day draws nearer, the working group will be approaching all members to enlist as much help as possible.

Liz Smith