MAYOR'S TWIN TOWN WEEKEND

Over the weekend of 19-21st April the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Cllr Colin Rayner and Mayoress, Mrs. Samantha Rayner, hosted Mayors or their representatives from the Borough’s Twin Towns of Bad Godesberg, St. Cloud, Kortrijk and Goslar.

The first event of the weekend was an official dinner in the Guildhall. An extra-special touch to this was added by the fact the drinks reception was held in the Borough Museum and guests were welcomed by the Town Crier.

On Saturday our guests were welcomed at the Headquarters of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Maidenhead, where there was an excellent presentation about the work of the commission and everyone was able to admire the recently renovated exhibition area. It was a valuable opportunity to talk about plans for 2014-2018 and events to commemorate the centenary of the Great War.

The group then joined the Mayor's party on the Long Walk at Windsor Castle for the ceremonial firing of the 21 gun salute in honour of the birthday of Her Majesty the Queen. They all had the chance to fire one of the guns, which was an unexpected thrill for them.

After an informal lunch the visitors enjoyed a walk in the sunshine to Eton and along the river bank and some retail therapy. The day concluded with a very pleasant dinner at La Taverna in Windsor.

There was a business meeting on Sunday morning, when plans for future twinning events were discussed and then the group went to Maidenhead Heritage Centre. Volunteers had kindly opened up the centre especially for our visitors and gave them a presentation on the work and organisation of the centre. An unexpected treat awaited them upstairs, where, as part of the Air Transport Auxiliary exhibition there is a Spitfire aircraft simulator and everyone watched with much amusement as Renate Lucksch, the Mayor of Goslar, flew the aircraft down the Thames Valley, over Windsor Castle and landed fairly safely in a field near Heathrow. After lunch in the Macdonald Hotel in Windsor the guests were taken to the airport for their various flights home.

Vivienne Williams
GOSLAR YOUTH SPORTS COMPETITORS REVISIT WINDSOR

The Mayor, Cllr Colin Rayner hosted a group of twenty-four young men and women from Goslar at a reception in the Guildhall on 10th May. The group was spending a long weekend in London and wanted to return to Windsor and Maidenhead because they had formed the team from Goslar who had taken part in the European Twin Town Youth Sports Festival in September 2012. It was a reunion for them, as well a chance to return to Windsor and spend a little more time at leisure.

The Mayor welcomed the young visitors and spoke to them about his work during the year. He answered questions about the Guildhall and explained the history of the official robes and chains of office.

The programme for the young visitors for the weekend included some shopping in London and a guided tour. During their short time in Windsor they enjoyed a walk by the river and a stroll on the Long Walk and they were pleased to meet up again with some students from Windsor Boys School, who had been members of the Borough team in September.

Vivienne Williams

The Mayor Cllr Colin Rayner shows the young visitors the Mayoral Mace

KORTRIJK COMPOSER WRITES SYMPHONY FOR WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD ORCHESTRA’S 40TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

The Windsor & Maidenhead Symphony Orchestra’s concert held in the magnificent hall at Eton College on Saturday, 9th March featured Symphony No 2, ‘Encounters’, written especially for the event by Kortrijk composer David Anne. This concert was a celebration of the orchestra’s 40 years of music-making in the Royal Borough. It is the second work that David Anne has written for the orchestra. In 2009 the Windsor & Maidenhead Symphony Orchestra performed his evocative ‘City Reflections’, a musical portrait of Kortrijk with four separate movements entitled City of History, Peaceful City, City of Development and Hymn for the Future.

His new symphony ‘Encounters’ was again rooted in history and the future, with four Parts entitled Tradition, Influence, Conflict and a culminating Challenge. It drew first on European mediaeval culture, extended its musical language to styles from other parts of the globe, explored the conflicts and tension that this can cause, and finally asked how we with an open mind can enjoy this diversity in the 21st century. David said “I was delighted to be able to come to the concert and was very pleased with the performance that the orchestra gave.”

Players in the orchestra have participated in a number of musical events in Kortrijk and are always made to feel very welcome there. Young players from Kortrijk and most of the other twin towns of the Royal Borough participate regularly in the Windsor & Maidenhead Symphony Orchestra’s annual Young Musicians’ Competition. In 2007 this prestigious competition was won by outstanding young Kortrijk cellist, Jozefien Vanherpe.

Frances Jones
MAIDENHEAD WOMEN’S GROUP FOR EUROPEAN FRIENDSHIP
VISIT ST CLOUD

Twelve ladies from the Maidenhead Women’s Group for European Friendship travelled by Eurostar to spend five days, 27th-31st May in St Cloud. The occasion was the celebration of the European Friendship Circle’s 50th Anniversary. Together with representatives from Bad Godesberg, Kortrijk, Frascati and Salzburg, the group attended a reception in the Weddings Room of the Town Hall at the invitation of the ADEI. The Mayor, M Eric Berdoat, made a speech of welcome acknowledging that this was a very special occasion.

Supper followed in La Carré, the art and music centre. The St Cloud ladies had prepared their specialities including a 50th Anniversary celebration cake. The group was warmly welcomed by Marie-Noëlle Benjamin, President of the St Cloud Circle, who emphasised the benefits of friendships to understand each other. The next day, Tuesday, the Maidenhead ladies gave a presentation on the National Trust using pictures and text. This was extremely well received by the St Cloud ladies and their President, in her speech, quoted from memory, Wordsworth’s poem on daffodils. Lunch was taken in the beautiful Musée des Avelines and then the Director of the museum talked about the exhibition of sculptures by the living Turkish artist Coskun. They had all been made with a chainsaw.

A visit to the Albert Khan museum on the outskirts of Paris followed. Albert Khan was a philanthropist well known for his ‘Archives of the Planet’, a visual inventory of the surface of the earth. On this occasion there was only time to visit the gardens. Albert Khan created a splendid series of gardens with plants from the five continents. In the evening the ladies went to supper parties in individual homes.

There was a day trip to Compiègne to visit the Imperial Palace. It was one of the favourite residences of Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie. The decoration and furniture throughout is sumptuous with gilding and chandeliers. The Deputy Mayor of Compiègne received the group in the Town Hall. He spoke about its many connections with St Cloud and referred to Napoleon’s vision of a united Europe.

After lunch a guide took the group to visit various places of interest including the church where Joan of Arc went to pray. She was taken prisoner in Compiègne in 1430.

Thursday was a day of great splendour and privilege. Firstly, there was a visit to the Lower House of Parliament where the Deputy Speaker gave a resumé of the day to day working of the Parliament and its democratic processes.

Then the group was invited to a reception and luncheon with the German Ambassador in her splendid house, the Hôtel de Beauharnais, overlooking the Seine. The mansion remains to this day one of the most beautiful testimonies of Empire furniture and ornamentation thanks to its extraordinary interior decoration.

Her Excellency addressed the group in perfect French, congratulating the circle on its 50th Anniversary and again emphasising the importance of friendships in Europe. She invited everyone to explore the first floor whilst chatting informally as everyone ate wonderful canapés and drank Tattinger champagne, whilst sitting on Josephine’s plush upholstered chairs.

The Gala Dinner was held in Paris and several distinguished guests had been invited. Each of the Presidents of the Ladies Circles gave a speech of thanks and made a commitment to the fostering of friendly relationships.

Before returning home, the English ladies visited the Opera House, the Palais Garnier. This vast and richly decorated building was just the icing on the cake after a very memorable visit.

Lynda Cottrill
A GOLDEN AFTERNOON OF BELGIAN BRASS

There was double delight for visitors to Alexandra Gardens at 4.30pm on 25th May: the sunniest afternoon of the month welcomed the Kortrijk Brass Band to Windsor. Our Twin Town boasts the oldest brass band in Belgium. Founded in 1976, the band is composed largely of amateur musicians. They perform publicly in their home town only four times a year, so it was a privilege for us that they could accommodate a short concert in Windsor during their flying visit to the UK to participate in an international competition.

During the forty-minute concert, the group’s young conductor, Ward de Ketelaere, provided a varied programme of pieces. Highlights included ‘Carrickfergus’ with its moving euphonium solo, and ‘Gale Force’, a medley of Irish tunes by the British composer Peter Graham, which formed a triumphant finale to the concert. The range of moods and melodies prevailed undaunted by gusts of wind and undiminished by occasional aeroplane noises!

Apparently, brass bands are not especially common in Belgium. Certainly, Kortrijk’s brass band is uncommonly good and was very well received by an audience of all ages. Behind the scenes, Twinning Chairman, Vivienne Williams, led a Royal Borough welcome, organising and facilitating the concert and providing an informal after-show reception.

Cllr James Evans

ÉCOLE DU CENTRE CHILDREN VISIT WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

On 12th June fifty-eight children from the École du Centre led by Mdm Patay and other teachers visited the Guildhall, during their visit to England, to meet with the Mayor, Cllr Andrew Jenner and the Mayoress, Mrs Julia Jenner. The children were really well behaved and sat on the floor of the Guildhall while the Mayor and his Officer, Mark spoke about the Mayoral regalia. The talk was translated into French by the teachers. Afterwards some of the children asked questions of the Mayor.

They were intrigued by the historical use of the Mayoral Mace, which was used as a weapon to encourage recalcitrant citizens to pay their taxes. It was only when they had the opportunity of talking one to one outside of the group that many of them ventured to ask questions in English.

When the Mayor asked if any of the children would like to sit in the Chair on the dais, wear his hat and have their photograph taken with him, a line of children quickly formed.

During their visit, the group stayed at BCA in Burchetts Green. The programme included a day with their pen-friends at Wessex Primary School in Cox Green attending lessons and a day spent in London, which included a visit to the Tower of London.

We were delighted that teachers and pupils from the École du Centre were able to visit us this year, as we missed seeing them last year. The school’s visit over many years has become a feature of our annual twinning programme.

Pamela Bailey