

Letter from the Empty Chair



Happy New Year to all our Twin Town members! This issue of our newsletter is full of articles about our recent activities so we hope you enjoy reading them. We are looking forward to our AGM on 6th February which will be a great opportunity to review all of these events, look forward to 2016 and elect a new Chairman. Our main event this year will be the annual International Reunion that will take place in Newbury in September so we hope you will be able to join us in welcoming many twin town visitors to Newbury.

Bagnols-sur-Cèze Visitors – July 2015

The NTTA were very pleased to welcome a group of 30 visitors from Bagnols last July. The weekend included a visit to Oxford including an expertly guided tour of the main sights. There was also a tour of Newbury, including a visit to St Nicolas Church bell tower, and a social evening with a bring and share supper for all visitors, their hosts and other Twin Town members. One of the many highlights of the weekend was taking part in the Newbury Carnival with our visitors. Our prize-winning Magna Carta float looked magnificent and we had lots of fun singing our way along Northbrook Street in the parade. A huge thank you to everyone who hosted or helped with the planning and preparation for the weekend. Our friends in Bagnols were very appreciative of all your efforts.



Paris Victims Remembered in Bagnols

A rally in honour of the victims of the attacks in Paris which left 129 dead and more than 300 wounded, was held on 18th November in Place Mallet, the central square in Bagnols-sur-Cèze. The local MP, as well as all the mayors of the 42 local Rhodanien du Gard communities were present for the ceremony, which was attended by over 1000 people. Members of the NTTA sent messages of sympathy and support to their many friends and colleagues in Bagnols at this sad time. The photo was taken by Mikael Anisset and included on the Midi Libre website.



Eeklo Visit – July 2015

Twin Town Members enjoyed the annual International Reunion that took place in Eeklo last July. This event also celebrated the twinning of Eeklo with Carcaixent and the 40th Anniversary of Eeklo's twinning with Braunfels. Sadly some of the planned events in the programme had to be modified due to heavy rain during the weekend but this did not dampen the spirits of those taking part and there were still plenty of opportunities to catch up with old friends both in Eeklo and on a day trip to Bruges.



Choir Tour – August 2015

Harmony Choir from Newbury visited Eeklo and Ghent in August and sang a beautiful programme of music at a number of venues, both formal and informal. Members of the choir were able to explore Ghent at their leisure in between the concerts at St Bavo's cathedral and enjoyed strolling around the city in the sunshine, seeing the sites and sampling the local food and drink. The choir also sang in the beautiful Eeklo chapel accompanied by the Luce string quartet from Eeklo who performed in Newbury in February 2014.



Quiz Night – November 2015

The popular Twin Town Quiz and American Supper was held in November and was an enjoyable evening with a mixture of challenging and fun question rounds. Thank you to Zita Lang and Mary Rye for organising the quiz and to Clara and Ben (pictured with the special Quiz Trophy) for organising the raffle.

Christmas Meal – December 2015



Twin Town Members enjoyed a social evening in the restaurant at The Watermill Theatre. Thank you to Zita for arranging the event for us once again. Kiskunfélegyháza asked for photographs from each twin town to be sent for a shop window display so we took the opportunity after the meal to send them our best wishes,



Youth For Europe in Hungary – August 2015

Members of NTTA's youth group travelled to Kiskunfélegyháza in August to attend the annual Youth for Europe Event. Theo Durrant tells us about some of the highlights:

'Like many of the participants in this year's Youth for Europe programme, I had never been to Hungary. This year's event was a great opportunity to experience another part of the world and an even better place to make new memories and friends from across Europe. Everyone became fast friends thanks to the fun and simple team building tasks and they really encouraged us to work together for a mystery prize at the end.'



One of the most impressive and remarkable things about our group was that everyone was always up for exploring and trying something new. Each and every one of us were united by a love of discovering a new culture and learning about each other. Even when we were just relaxing back at base, conversations about different countries, foods and traditions were commonplace – everyone had a story to tell and it was effortless making new friends.

Our first official day in the town began with a short tour and sightseeing quiz where we learnt more about Kiskunfélegyháza, including how to pronounce it's name. The town itself was gorgeous in the sunshine. Later on we had the chance to go up the clock-tower to get a better view of the surrounding area, you could see the ornate roof of the town hall proudly glistening and the quiet bustle of the marketplace. Passing through the main square we were treated to a piece of chimney cake, a spiralling piece of vanilla confectionery that we couldn't get enough of during our stay.

We attended a multitude of festivals during our stay, starting off with the motorcycle and sidecar festival which was choc full of Hairy Biker enthusiasts. The following day we celebrated Ancestor Day at another festival where the Hungarians displayed their heritage and traditions including horse riding and archery skills.

At the wine festival I even tried my hand at a local folk dance with a group of strangers. Anyone could probably tell that I was an Englishman from a mile away as at first I didn't fit in, but I got the motions down-pat towards the end and the lady next to me gave me a big thumbs up when we finished.

On a visit to Budapest we explored the parliament building which was layered with real gold, every room was a spectacle and we were even lucky enough to see the changing of the guard for the royal crown display. We also visited Buda Castle and St. Stephen's Basilica, both of them are now ticked off my sight-seeing bucket list.

After such a fantastic week, it was sad to say goodbye to our friends but, as we said our final farewells, everyone hugged and said 'See you in Poland next year.' I'm already counting the days.'



Carcaixent – October 2015

The 2015 Twin Town International Reunion was held in Carcaixent and also celebrated the completion of the twinning of Carcaixent with Eeklo. The groups from Newbury and the other towns enjoyed a weekend of activities that included visits to the parliament building in Valencia and other group activities. The visitors enjoyed meeting up with old friends and making new ones in the warm autumn sunshine. Mary Rye from Newbury travelled to Spain as part of the group, de-



spite having fractured her ankle a few weeks before. With typical Twin Town enthusiasm the Newbury group were able to assist Mary as needed and also to enjoy themselves, despite a few organisational hiccups!

International Reunion 2016

It's hard to believe that the last Twin Town International Reunion took place in Newbury 7 years ago and we have enjoyed welcoming many groups of visitors to our town since that time. In September we will be inviting 100 visitors from our twin and associated towns to visit and we are already planning a weekend of activities for them to enjoy. If you would like to be part of the Reunion as a host or helper, please get in touch with a member of the committee. We look forward to hearing from you.

Calling all Photographers!

As part of the International Reunion we will display a collection of photos taken in Newbury and our Twin Towns during 2016. We would like to invite everyone in Newbury (and residents of our twin towns) to contribute photos to this project entitled 'Where I Live.' Photos could be of people, buildings, festivals, food or anything at all that shows us something about life (both the highs and the lows) in Europe in 2016. A website is being developed to upload the photos and we are looking forward to seeing the results that are submitted.



Other Forthcoming Events

In 2016 visits are being planned to Bagnols, Feltre, Eeklo and Zamość . More details are available on our website www.newburytowntown.org.uk and we hope that many twin town members would like to take part in these events.

Contact Details

Chairman – Vacant. A new Chairman will be elected at the AGM.
Secretary – Vacant. A new Secretary will be elected at the AGM.
Braunfels Secretary – Elizabeth Anfield 01635 42210 or email admin@ema-accountants.co.uk
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Feltre Secretary – Stuart Durrant 01635 522428 or email sr.durrant@btinternet.com
Bagnols-sur-Cèze Secretary – Marian Hatfull 01635 47839 or email marian@diemphoto.co.uk
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