

OFFICIAL VISIT 2007

By David Bland



The Mayor, Councillor Frank Kenny, Angela Bailey and Andy Stroulger are welcomed by Landrat Herbert Eckstein, Ingeborg Werner and Walter Schnell

A forty strong group representing the Brentwood side of the Stadtpartnerschaft touched down in Nürnberg late in the evening of Thursday, 31st May 2007 to be ferried in the wee small hours to their respective Gastgeber.

Roth and Rottenbach

Friday morning began with the official reception at the Landratsamt in Roth, with old and new friends, catching up on gossip before the speeches of welcome and presentations began. The Landrat, Herbert Eckstein, and our mayor, Councillor Frank Kenny, spoke of the continuing importance of such regular meetings and the need to try and foster more contacts at youth level.

Following this, the group was taken to Rottenbach town hall where the young mayor, Thomas Schneider, ably assisted by his sister, Gabi Pirner spoke in a humorous and self deprecating way about this small community. This was followed by a visit to the local school, fire station and very unusual *Kneippbad* whose curative powers were

only invoked by a high stepping walk around the spa. It was worth the trip just to recollect Jeremy Holliday's fine knee lift! A wonderful lunch was provided by people from the village, which included all the varieties of sausage produced in Franconia!

Amberg

Saturday saw the group in the fine old town of Amberg where a guided tour was given in both English and German. The afternoon was spent in Theuern at the local industry and mining museum. As usual, the day was punctuated by delightful eating and drinking opportunities – our friends certainly know how to 'lay on a spread'.

A Sunday service for those who wished to attend was held in the Catholic Church in Buchenbach – those who missed this were denied the treat of coffee and cakes in the Parish Hall. Janet and I spent our free time on Sunday catching up with the 4 generations of the Zottman family in

the lovely village of GroBweingarten, finishing up at a birthday party for one of the aunts.

Ansbach

On Monday we visited the Regional Government of Mittelfranken in Ansbach followed by lunch and a shopping trip in the Brücken-Center and then a guided tour of this beautiful town.

Monday was completed by the traditional friendship evening where once again the value of these contacts was emphasised. And, of course, we were treated to the fine singing/cabaret act that is always one of the highlights of the trip.

Schwabach

Tuesday morning saw us all at the Landratsamt in Roth where most of us made our farewells and were then taken to Schwabach Town Hall from where we made a guided tour of the town, finishing at the Goldenen Saales where we were introduced to the intricacies of goldleaf making. Following another sumptuous lunch we visited a former US forces building, housing some fabulous Faberge ornamental eggs.

Then it was a final short coach trip to the airport and farewells to the hosts who had accompanied us and a time to reflect on another successful trip in the company of friends, both English and German.



Guests and hosts partake of the curing waters of Rottenbach's Kneippbad.

[Sebastian Kneipp 1821-1897 was a Bavarian priest who developed a form of hydrotherapy which became world famous]

VISIT FROM THE STADTKIRCHE ROTH TO ST THOMAS'S

As you will know, the Stadtkirche and St Thomas's have their own exchange partnership. This year it was the turn of our friends from Roth to visit us. They arrived on Friday evening 26th October and were met at Stansted Airport by their hosts.

Canterbury

They had requested a visit to Canterbury and we had hoped to arrange this for Saturday. However, the Cathedral had a large choral/orchestral concert booked for that day so were unable to host us. Despite this we decided to go ahead with an 'informal' visit.

Our party broke up into individual groups and each did their own thing. There was a giant stage erected in the Cathedral and the orchestra was rehearsing. It was an unique experience to walk round the church to the strains of Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony. After touring the town we went off for a 'free' evening.

Sunday morning saw us in St Thomas's for our normal 10 o' clock mass when Antje Dittmar and Karin Shaw read the lessons for us in clear and beautiful English. Afterwards there was an opportunity for all to meet over coffee in the Church Centre.

The afternoon was free and in the evening we met again in the Church Centre to have a discussion on 'Marriage in a Changing Society'.

Bury St Edmunds

Monday morning saw us off to Bury St Edmunds in individual cars, all to meet up in the Refectory for coffee before a guided tour of the cathedral.

Fortunately, the woman who was in charge of administration in the cathedral spoke excellent German and so our party was able to break up into two groups on the basis of language. St Edmondsbury Cathedral is still in the process of completion and it was very interesting to compare it with Canterbury. After the guided tour we celebrated Mass in the Lady Chapel. It is always a joy for us to share worship with our friends from Roth, both here and when in Germany. Following lunch in the Refectory we were free to explore the town, eventually to meet up again in the evening in our Church Centre.

Just as the Town Twinning Association has a tradition of a barn dance, so we have the tradition of a fish and chip supper. This we enjoyed in the Church Centre where we were entertained by four very musical members of our congregation.

Brentwood

Tuesday saw us visiting both the Infants' and the Junior Schools belonging to St Thomas's. Our friends were very impressed by the amount of IT (Interactive Whiteboards in every classroom, networked PCs in every classroom, laptops in the library and an IT suite with 31 PCs). I am very pleased to say that they were also impressed by the good behaviour of our children.

From school we went to the Artichoke for drinks and lunch and then Dr Gladys Ward, the well-known historian took our guests on a guided tour of Brentwood, which was much appreciated by all.

From there we took our friends to Stansted as they were going home that evening. Or so they thought! We took them to Stansted at 17.00 hours that evening and waved them goodbye. However, a faulty aircraft meant that they did not arrive back in Nuernberg until 04.30 the next morning. Since the trains only start running at 05.05 it meant they did not get home until 06.00.

I hope that they enjoyed their stay with us more than their flight home.

Bernard Francis



Farewell lunch at the Artichoke

FUTURE VISITS

Finally, it does seem that things are starting to move on the youth front. In addition to the regular visit to St Martin's School from the Gymnasium in Roth, we hope to be hosting at least two visits this year. The first one will be, for the first time, a group of the final year students from the Hauptschule in Hilpoltstein. A total of 28 youngsters, some of who will be coming to England for the first time, will be staying at Stubbers Outdoor Pursuits camp near Upminster from 24th – 28th May. We are hoping that we shall be able to arrange some meetings with young people in the Brentwood area and members of the Town Twinning Association as they all want to improve their English before returning home to sit their exams. They will be led by Christoph Bauer. On top of this the Hauptschule and its enthusiastic headteacher, Heinrich Abt, is hoping to pair up with the Hartwood Stars football club to start up a football exchange. This has been initiated by John Tyler, team trainer, who has considerable experience in twinning partnerships of this kind. In September another visit is being planned by the Kreisjugendring (Youth Service) of Roth. They also hope to be staying at Stubbers and likewise are hopeful that they can meet up with young people in the town. They visited us this year – see account below.

Finally, the Gymnasium in Hilpoltstein is seeking a twin school. Their English teacher, Petra Krone-Kunze will be part of the June official visit in the hope of finding a partner.

Visit from the Kreisjugendring

Brentwood was pleased to help host a visit from the youth service in Roth this year, who were given a warm welcome by the Mayor at the Town Hall. A small group of 14 year olds came over and stayed at the Youth Hostel in Epping. They spent much of their time in Southern England, visiting Stonehenge, Oxford, Cambridge and London and then on two of the days they came to Brentwood. The first time they were given a warm welcome by the mayor in the council chamber at the town hall and this was followed by a meal at Pizza Express which we were able to fund.



Vice-chair Bernard Francis welcomes the group at the Town Hall

The following Sunday they were invited to have tea at the home of Jill & Gordon Dimmock. Fortunately the weather was not too bad so we were able to spend time outside. They were really a charming group of very well-behaved youngsters.



Tea at the Dimmocks

Host Families Found – and still needed

Nadja Freiburger has found an au-pair position with a local family and Felix Braun has also found a family, although not locally. We have another request for two 13 year old boys to stay with a family for a week – in May or the summer holidays as paying guests in order to improve their English. Contact Jill – 216712 – if you can help. Remember, you don't need to have children the same age – grandchildren are just as good!

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