



# Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association

## Newsletter – Summer 2025

Dear Association Member

The past three months have seen the Association hold its Annual General Meeting as well as successfully host a large group of students from Wiesbaden's Hermann Ehlers Schule. Let's begin with that highly-enjoyable school visit, which took place on 6 May.

For a number of years now, we have welcomed a group of students and their teachers from Wiesbaden's **Hermann Ehlers Schule**. The group spends six days in Kent, based in Herne Bay, visiting various tourist attractions, including London, Canterbury and the Borough of Tunbridge Wells. Back in 2010, the teacher who first began this initiative – Kristiane, who is now an active member of Wiesbaden's Vereinigung twinning group – established a link with Paddock Wood's Mascalls Academy. After a short break in this arrangement, the link with Mascalls has been firmly re-established; it provides an opportunity for (i) the students to mix with youngsters their own age and (ii) the teachers to learn about education methods and curriculum issues in the UK – both key elements in maintaining a meaningful school partnership.

Having spent the morning joining the Mascalls students in lessons, followed by lunch at the school, the group came to Tunbridge Wells, to learn more about their English twin town. This year, the Association arranged for two official tourist guides (one of whom was TWTFa member Josephine Sinclair) to lead the students and teachers on a tour of the town, starting at The Pantiles and ending up at the Amelia Scott cultural centre. On the way, the students – split into two groups, due to the overall number – learnt much about the history of the town, its spa water beginnings, attractive architecture, beautiful parks and open spaces, before being let loose at the top end of town, where we're confident that the many fast-food eateries enjoyed a surge in business!

An important educational element of the tour was a visit to the Amelia Scott, where the students took up the self-guided 'A-Z Challenge', requiring them to write down an item, article or display covering each letter of the alphabet. It was genuinely rewarding to see the vast majority of the students taking this challenge seriously and completing the task with real enthusiasm.

We must congratulate the four teachers in charge of the group – Tina, Martina, Jannick and Tim – for maintaining close control of the students. The 43 students should also be thanked for their behaviour and commitment. It was a great pleasure to have hosted such an appreciative group and we look forward to many more such visits in the coming years.

Huge thanks are due to: (i) the guides, Josephine and Alison; (ii) Beatrice, the Parish Administrator at King Charles the Martyr Church, who responded so positively to our request to extend the opening hours, to allow the students to marvel at the interior of the Church – especially that stunning plasterwork ceiling; (iii) Richard, one of the church wardens, who volunteered to be on duty for this visit; (iv) the staff at the Amelia Scott for their help and support; and (v) Mike Illsley, Mascalls Academy's Assistant Principal & Deputy Head, for supporting the school-linked element of this initiative so keenly.

*Photos: 1. In one of the touring groups, with Tina (their teacher in charge, on the left-hand side) and tour guide Alison leading the way. 2. Learning about the interesting antics of some of the apprentice-plasterers inside the King Charles Church. 3. A practical demonstration of our 18<sup>th</sup> century 'taxis' – i.e. the sedan chair!! 4. At the Amelia Scott, lining up for a group photo (too many to capture in a single shot – apologies!); 5. Jannick, one of the teachers, about to send the students off with their clipboards for the self-guided A-Z Challenge!*



## Wiesbaden's Fasching Carnival

TWTFA members Margaret, Carol and Pat (together with Pat's daughter) visited Wiesbaden in late-February, to enjoy the city's annual Fasching Carnival. They were provided with some wonderful hospitality for their three days there, courtesy of our twinning partnership members. Here they are being treated to a very enjoyable dinner on their last evening there, joined by 16 of the Vereinigung members. As ever, our grateful thanks for their kindness and generosity.



## Annual General Meeting

Thank you to the many members who attended our AGM, held on 15 March. The minutes of this meeting have already been circulated, from which you will have noted that our Executive Committee currently has one less member: Christine Phillip, who in earlier times served as an Executive Committee member in her capacity as Secretary for the Association, has decided to stand down from the Committee. As our Secretary, Christine always used her strong administrative and communications ability, as well as her fluent German language skills, to great effect. More recently, upon re-joining the Executive Committee in 2021, Christine's firm commitment and support could always be relied upon with all our projects and events. The good news is that Christine very much stays with us as a TWTFA member, volunteering help to the Executive Committee whenever and wherever it is needed. Many thanks Christine for your hard work, loyalty and never-ending willingness to help.

Those members who attended the AGM will remember hearing from Maya, a Wiesbaden student who first visited Tunbridge Wells in 2017 for a week of work experience, arranged by the Association. Most recently, Maya has been attending the University of Kent at Canterbury, as part of her 'Peace and Conflict Studies' post-graduate course; she has now returned to Germany for the continuation of her studies - but not before she completes an intriguing work experience period at the German Embassy in Tallinn in Estonia! With that level of experience, alongside her intelligence, determination and sunny personality, we feel that Maya is well-set for an enjoyable and successful career!

## Other Twinning initiatives

In our Spring newsletter, you might recall reading about further school partnership initiatives, one involving a Wiesbaden secondary school, another relating to a Tunbridge Wells nursery school / child-care centre. We are still working hard to make some progress, although no firm plans have yet been put in place. Interestingly, the secondary school in Wiesbaden which is keen to establish links with a similar school in our area has drawn attention to yet more difficulties associated with the UK's post-Brexit landscape, namely the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) permits. This requires all visitors to the UK to apply for an ETA permit – costing €18 – on top of the need for individual passports in place of EU identity cards. It is hoped that last month's UK/EU re-set agreement, part of which includes a commitment to a 'youth experience scheme', might lead to the easing of some of these difficulties, thus enabling us to make progress with these mutually-beneficial partnership initiatives. In the meantime, these additional expenses are clearly having an impact on the viability of some school visits; they have also been mentioned by others – including Vereinigung members – as they weigh-up the affordability of visiting us in Tunbridge Wells.

## Re-election of Wiesbaden's Lord Mayor

An email was sent to all members in April, advising that Wiesbaden's Oberbürgermeister (Lord Mayor) had been re-elected for a further six-year term. The Association successfully asked the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council if the Borough's Mayor for 2024/25 – Councillor Nancy Warne – might like to send a letter of congratulations, underlining the principles set out in our Twinning Charter between Wiesbaden and Tunbridge Wells Borough.

## TWTFA Annual Barbeque

If you haven't done so yet, do please make a note on your calendars and in your diaries for the social event of the summer: the Association's Annual Barbeque! This will be held on **Sunday 20 July at 1pm**.

*With best wishes from Sheila Kirby, TWTFA Chairman*

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If you have any news or photos of TWTFA activities that you would like

featured in a future newsletter, please contact its editor, Mike McGeary, at [mike.mcgeary@icloud.com](mailto:mike.mcgeary@icloud.com) (01892 532103)



Twinning Agreement

Tunbridge Wells - 1989 - Wiesbaden