Twin Town News
Colchester, Avignon, Imola and Wetzlar

Issue No: 53

Autumn 2012

Editor: Valerie Francis

Chairman’s Report

First, a warm welcome to our several new members! I look forward to getting to know you and to enjoying with you our Society’s activities.

Since the May edition of Twin Town News, there have been various successful activities and positive developments in our Society.

Events
The four Colchester-based social events which have been held since May have all been enjoyable and went well. Reports on these are given elsewhere in this newsletter. Features that have been particularly pleasing are the increasingly good attendances, the introduction of non-members to events and the overall value-for-money achieved.

We were glad to be able to open the pre-Oyster Feast dinner on 25th October to a wide clientele of members and non-members. At Lois Pertee’s excellent Curry Lunch, which attracted some 40 people, there was a star contribution by David Mummery, who invited eight non-member guests!

The next two events - the Christmas Carol Service on 13th December, and the New Yearish Dinner on 25th January - promise well.

Congratulations to Bodo von Broen and the Social Committee for creating such a variety of interesting events.
Liaison with other Colchester groups
It is healthy that a society of the standing of CTS should enjoy good relations with other Colchester associations, and, in so doing, spread awareness of its activities and their openness to all. In this regard, I was pleased to receive from Meg Prolingheuer, on behalf of Colchester Chamber Choir, a flyer about a concert, which I forwarded to members. In return I sent Meg our own programme, which she has passed to her members.

Bearing in mind that a number of our members belong to both associations, we especially value our relationship with the Anglo-French Circle. I have welcomed the interest and support of Dorothy Jameson and Stella Sommerlad, Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Circle.

Distribution of brochures, programmes and flyers: spreading the word
Our brochures, programmes of events and flyers (about individual events) are superb sources of information and publicity that are ‘begging’ to be distributed around Colchester and its outlying towns and villages! At risk of being thought a nag-bag - or something worse! - may I repeat the prompt I put in my letter to all members, of 1st October: ‘It would be a real help in spreading the word if we could all distribute brochures to family and friends and to any local organisations we know, to encourage new members to join.’

Lest I be accused of asking of others what I am not doing myself, I have tried to make a contribution in this respect, as various pestered associations, outlets, notice-board attendants - and (former) friends will vouch for!

If you have not already thought about this, please have a go! As before, brochures (with programme inserts) can be obtained from Martin Hearn, Stockwell House, 43 East Stockwell Street, Colchester CO1 1SS.
T: 01206 575970
E: colchestertwin1@gmail.com

If we could each aim to encourage at least one new (and different) member to join, that would be excellent! Not least, we are looking for members who are below the ‘of a certain age’ category which I have reached!

Relations with Wetzlar, Avignon and Imola
Twinning is essentially what we are about - so what is the current position?

Wetzlar
Relations with Wetzlar remain strong. This was shown, for example, in the recent visit by Bärbel Keiner, a Wetzlar town councillor, and Ulrike Sott, from the town’s cultural office, who has been a mainstay of our link over many years.

Both our guests attended the Oyster Feast, a dinner on the day before, and a supper and concert on the day after. They visited homes of some members. They were hosted and looked after by the Mayor of Colchester, and the Mayoress, the Society as a whole, and a number of individual members. As David Mummery has written: ‘All the evidence suggests that our guests were suitably impressed and satisfied.’
Next summer we look forward to a visit of around 30-40 twinning guests from Wetzlar. It is likely that our guests will be in Colchester on the evening of Tuesday 28th May and for the whole of Wednesday 29th May. The Committee and I would like as many members as possible to have the opportunity of meeting our visitors and socialising with them. So please pencil in the dates and ‘watch this space’ for more details, which I will send to you when I have them.

Avignon
Links with Avignon are less straightforward. The Mayor of Colchester invited the Mayor of Avignon and another representative to the Oyster Feast. They were not able to come, but our Mayor received from Avignon a clear wish and intention that twinning relations between Avignon and Colchester should flourish.

Meanwhile, on a separate front, I have been in contact with Hazel Bracco, from Robion, near Avignon. She has liaised previously with the Anglo-French Circle, some of whose members hosted Robion folk in their homes earlier this year.

What Hazel and I are exploring is a possible Robion/Avignon/Colchester link, to build on existing co-operation. We are looking into trying to meet the double liaison requirements of Town Hall with Town Hall and people with people. Plans are only embryonic, but where there is a will there is a way.

Imola
Of our three twin towns/cities, Imola is the one where, owing to a change of personnel in the city’s Council, our relations are at present only dormant. I’m sure none of us wishes to give up on our twinning, that dates from 1997, with this lovely city. If you have any thoughts, or are interested in helping to progress this link, by assisting Bertha Hindle, our Committee member who liaises on Imola (Bertha speaks Italian), could you please get in touch with me by email?

I state my appreciation of the support given to twinning in every respect by our President, the Mayor of Colchester.

Speakers
Do you have something interesting to tell us in ‘giving a talk’? Do you know someone else who does? If the answer to either or both of these questions is ‘Yes!', would you please let Bodo von Broen know on EricBVBroen@aol.com or 01206 543531.

Thank you!
Lois Pertee was impressed by the support she received from so many people for her Curry Lunch. Taking my cue from her, I thank all those members who have contributed to the Society in recent months - whether through organising events, or helping at or attending them, or in a committee role, or in administrative tasks, or looking after Wetzlar visitors, or recruiting new members, or other valuable activity. Your contributions to keeping our Society vibrant are appreciated!

Greetings
As this will be the last edition of Twin Town News in 2012, I take this early opportunity of wishing you all a very happy Christmas and New Year!
TWINNING SOCIETY JOINS ONE MILLION VISITORS IN WETZLAR

Immediately after the Jubilee celebrations, Colchester musicians set off for our twin town of Wetzlar. The Hessentag [State Fair] was held in Wetzlar from 1st to 10th June, when over one million visitors were expected.

The Sixth Form College Orchestral Ensemble was directed by Nigel Hildreth, and they were joined by Jenny’s Accordionists and Colchester Waits; together they performed on three successive days on varying stages.

On Friday 8 June, they were all joined on stage by the Mayor of Colchester, Christopher Arnold, who together with his wife, the Mayoress, Amanda, had flown in immediately after the Colchester Cycle Races.

Over a dozen Society members were also present, having travelled by land sea and air, by plane, train, boat, cycle or car, from England and France. All joined in many of the activities, including manning an information stand in the “Partnerschaft” marquee, and our Town Crier, Robert Needham, together with his partner Audrey took part in the final procession – together with Ian McMeekan “carrying the banner”.

A wonderful show by our twin town – a huge event, described as a cross between a big agricultural show, the Diamond Jubilee and a street riot! As ever, all Colchester representatives were made most welcome.

Oh! And the telephone box has been re-painted!

Ian McMeekan
A report from Doreen and Peter Goodchild.

Peter and I decided to go to Wetzlar for this ‘once in a lifetime’ event as a result of invitations from our many Wetzlar friends who almost expected us to be there. We also had an invitation to stay with a very good long-lasting friend with whom we had stayed on many occasions.

We travelled on June 5th, using Germanwings from Stansted to Koln Bonn. A friend, who took us to Wetzlar in time for us to enjoy a lunch together, met us. After lunch Peter and I took a walk into town to see just what the Hessentag really was. It was incredible – stands everywhere with plenty of seats where there were performers – particularly musicians.

We then progressed to the Twinning Tent, where we greeted by Wetzlar people, who thought we had come to ‘man the stand’, and also by the other German stands, the people on the French stand (whom we have got to know quite well over the years at the Ochsenfest), the people from the Czech Republic and many others. We spent some time in the ‘Twinning tent each day as Colchester had not been able to send someone to ‘man’ the stand. However, every one was very friendly and pleased to see us. We also met Ulrike Sott, who greeted us as ‘old friends’.

Wednesday 6th June. Another day spent wandering around the town, but going back to our ‘home’ for lunch. We walked down to the Lahn area and were surprised to see how many stalls and rides etc were available.

Thursday 7th June. Basically a repeat of the previous day, but we were amazed to meet so many old friends on each visit – some from 40 years ago! As a result, it took us some time to walk any distance! Today we met Bodo (and some others) who had brought over cheddar cheese. This needed cutting into cubes for sampling, once a good knife was located. I cut up much of it in the next few days.

The Director of the School Music Groups in Wetzlar spotted us from the stage and came down to greet us in the audience. He is Nigel Hildreth’s opposite in Wetzlar.

Friday and Saturday were spent in similar ways, but in every visit to the town we saw something new. We also took our hosts out to dinner one evening and had a superb meal in the old barracks area which has now been redeveloped and not too far from where we were staying.
Sunday 10th June. The day of the Parade. We were advised not to go into town as it would be difficult for me to stand for two hours after my recent illness. It would also be televised. We agreed to stay at the house, were given the remote control and saw the whole of the parade, which took over four hours. We had made a good decision. After that we visited friends for dinner. There was also a concert in the Dom (the only event we had to pay for), which was very good.

Monday 11th June.
We again visited the town and were amazed at the efficiency of the workmen, and the machines they used, to clear the town centre. In the evening we were taken to a final dinner for some Russian Nurses who had spent four weeks in Wetzlar learning the German ways. It was an experience and we were made very welcome.

Tuesday 12th June. After a last lunch in Wetzlar we were driven back to Köln Bonn airport for our flight home.

All in all a super visit – an experience that is a ‘once in a lifetime’.
Doreen and Peter Goodchild.

Sommerachtsweinfest auf dem Wetzlarer Schillerplatz, 27-29 July 2012

The team from Colchester, ably led by Jenny Glayzer, included also Douglas Hall, Ian McMeekan, Chris & Lois Pertee and Stewart & Val Francis. We all stayed at the excellent Hotel Bürgerhof, whose friendly staff looked after us very well.

We were welcomed with great hospitality and friendliness by our Wetzlar hosts throughout. On the first evening we were treated to a jolly and sumptuous reception and dinner hosted by the Partnerschaftsdezernent, Karlheinz Kräuter, and the Wetzlar twinning chairman.

The Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft Wetzlar joined us on Saturday evening in the square where the Weinfest took place. On the final evening we, with our French and Italian friends, were treated to a lovely meal and evening in the home of Dieter and Gisela Lefèvre.

Val and I were given an expertly conducted tour of Wetzlar by Yvonne Sahm, Vice-President of the Anglo-German Association and an official town guide.

In between all this everyone worked long hours in the stall, selling wine and marmalade - with success.

We had informal talks with our hosts about future twinning arrangements. Both sides are keen to promote these for all our members. Some attractive suggestions were mooted for visits both at home and away, which we look forward to developing.

Stewart Francis - 1st August 2012
There was a stage in the square where a number of performances took place. Nigel Hildreth was there with a Sixth Form orchestra and they and other groups performed. As a result there was much jollity. The atmosphere was amazing.

**BARBECUE**

The annual Twinning Society barbecue took place in Peter and Uta Luff's garden on Sunday, 2nd September, when 21 members and friends spent a happy occasion together.

The weather remained dry as we enjoyed our barbecued chicken drumsticks and sausages with salads followed by cakes and fruit salad and chatted under the awnings.

It was a shame more members weren't there, but several, I gather, were on holiday and so missed a most enjoyable occasion. Our grateful thanks must go to Peter and Uta for once again hosting it.

Shirley Kitch
Talk by Bodo von Broen on the Dutch Quarter and the Garrison Church

This successful event was held at the Red Lion in Colchester High Street on the 12th October.

Bodo started by mentioning he had gone to Veere in Zeeland to see if could discover any of his German/Dutch ancestors. In 1565 Dutch refugees from Flanders had settled in this central area of Colchester after the Catholics in Europe persecuted them. Most of the Flemings were weavers and they established a very profitable cloth trade, using the plentiful local wool. International traders in cloth and other merchandise had imported our Colchester cloth.

They built attractive timbered houses, which are mainly found in West and East Stockwell and Maidenburgh Streets. One of the best examples is Peake's House in East Stockwell Street.
The Stockwell Arms is another interesting building, dating back to 1385. At the present time it is being renovated, but should open early next year. They will have a new room available for our Twinning Society meetings.

The Flemish Weavers enjoyed much prosperity, which benefited the town of Colchester. Like so many other people the Dutch community suffered during the Civil War and many houses were destroyed. As a result, many Dutch residents returned to their homeland. Cloth continued to be made by those who remained, until around 1780.

A short distance from the town centre is the Garrison Church, where a school I taught at used to have their Christmas Carol Service. This was built in 1856 and as many as 1,500 soldiers used to be able to stand in the church for services.

It was rumoured that it was built as a Nightingale hospital, but this was untrue. In fact after the Crimean War some 5000 Germans arrived in the town, housed in prefabricated huts and tents – the German Legion. They did not want to return to Germany, which then consisted of 12 separate states. Many also feared persecution, as they had been political activists. They proved popular with the townspeople, particularly with the unmarried girls from the silk factory and the shopkeepers. 380 German soldiers married local girls and their descendants still live in Colchester today. Some were offered a free passage to South Africa and settled in the Cape where they acted as local militia. Preference was given to those who were married. The remaining Germans, meanwhile, were shipped from Harwich in batches of 500, many protesting (probably correctly) that they were engaged to Colchester girls.

The church became redundant in 2007. Thankfully it has been restored and is now an Orthodox church.

The Red Lion provided an excellent dinner. Many thanks to Bodo for organising the evening and giving such an interesting talk.
The following week we welcomed our friends Bärbel Keiner and Ulrike Sott from Wetzlar. They had been invited over by our Mayor, to attend the Colchester Oyster Feast. At short notice we asked Twinning Society members whether they would like to join us at the Red Lion for dinner. The Mayor and Mayoress also attended. We were delighted with the response and 26 came, including new members.

Bärbel and Ulrike at the Oyster Feast

On 4th November Lois Pertee prepared a magnificent East African curry lunch at the Oak Tree Centre. 40 hungry members and friends turned up to enjoy this tasty meal which consisted of vegetable and meat samosas, a choice of curries and fruit salad. How Lois managed to cater for so many was quite remarkable. It was a lovely friendly occasion, much enjoyed by all who were there.

Our grateful thanks must also go to Mike Hogg, Helen Chuah and all the other merry band of helpers who assisted in the kitchen and in getting the hall ready.

Valerie Francis

LORELEY

This is a newly formed German Circle "LORELEY" Most members (12 at present) are from Germany, we meet every month at different locations (local Cafes, Pubs, Restaurants, private homes), mostly during the week at 2pm for about 2 hours.

Membership is free. Please contact: Bodo von Broen, 57 West Stockwell Street, Colchester CO1 IHE, Tel. 543531, email: EricBVBROEN@AOL.com
The Colchester Anglo-French Circle continues to flourish and to attract new members and visitors to a wide variety of talks and activities, both in French and in English. Since our AGM in May there have been talks on the Très Riches Heures of Jean de Berry and Gauguin in Brittany as well as a celebration of the 600th anniversary of the birth of Joan of Arc. We had a very enjoyable summer party at the Minories and we commenced our autumn programme with a guessing game, mostly in French. In October there was a highly informative talk on the history of Burgundy, followed by an evening much closer to home, a virtual guided tour of Flatford, in French! Visitors and new members are welcome at all of our meetings and there is always an opportunity to chat, in French or English, before the presentations or afterwards, over coffee.

Our programme for the next 6 months is given below, once again covering a wide range of subjects including a members’ evening of Memories of Avignon. The Circle meets at Christchurch Hall, Ireton Road, Colchester, at 7.30 for 8 p.m., usually on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. The annual subscription is £15, with a visitors’ fee of £3 per session. For further details please contact the Chairman, Dorothy, [tel 01206 578949] or the Membership Secretary, Jane [tel 07759 727436].

PROGRAMME JANUARY – MAY 2013

Wednesday, 9th January
**Souvenirs de Noël et du Nouvel An**
A members’ evening in French and English.

Wednesday, 23rd January
**Colette** présenté par le Cercle littéraire.
Readings and commentary led by Wylva Andon in French and English.

Wednesday, 6th February
**L’Alsace, une région pas comme les autres**
A talk in French by Pamela Parrott.

Wednesday, 20th February
**Champagne or Cava – the difference?**
A talk in English, and a tasting, with Mary Mudd.

Wednesday, 6th March
**Orthographe et prononciation - le rôle de la syllable phonologique?**
A talk in French by Phil Brew.

Wednesday, 20th March
**Memories of Avignon**
A members’ evening in French and English.