

CHAIR'S REPORT 2016-17
Annual General Meeting, 26 October 2017

This is always an important but quite daunting task and this year in particular, I have had to ask myself: **WHERE TO START!** It has been – and still is – an amazing year, full of such a variety of events, involving people from all over Bristol, and of course Hannover, celebrating our unique position in being so very active 70 years into our partnership!

Having said all that, I do have to start on a very sad note, actually: After a very long battle with various illnesses, our old friend John Veale died on December 6th, St Nicholas' Day, in 2016. Some of the committee attended his funeral in January – in fact he had designated me to speak at it! Most of our members knew him personally: he had first visited Hannover in 1949, and as he always proudly said, 'at least once every year after that' – in fact he came with us last year, in a wheelchair, ably assisted by his friend David Perkins, who also has a long history with Hannover. John was an inspiration to all involved in the partnership with Hannover, he worked hard, he was always full of ideas for new activities and especially ways to involve young people. He is sadly missed – especially as he has just missed out on our wonderful anniversary year.

The committee has continued to work well, this year alongside a separate anniversary committee which was also engaged in organising events with Bristol-Bordeaux, and I am grateful to a small nucleus of the group who regularly attend meetings and are active in helping to move our activities forward. There are again some changes to the committee membership this year, with some welcome new members, and some resignations, but we will return to that later.

- Our last **AGM** was presided over by Lord Mayor Jeff Lovell, who looked forward to the celebrations in 2017.
- There was a series of very enjoyable and well-attended events before Christmas, including the first of three talks on **Weimar Art** by our member Colin Evans, some of us attended a seminar on doing **business with Germany**, and we finished off in grand style with a convivial lunch at the local **Christmas Market**, which has become one of our most popular events!
- I also attended the **Remembrance Day ceremony** at the German War Cemetery in Cannock Chase – it is co-organised by the British-German Association and attended by the Deputy German Ambassador, and was very moving. There are about 2,000 German war dead buried there.
- The **launch of the Anniversary year**, which we shared with Bristol-Bordeaux Partnership, took place on 20th January at MShed museum, opened by the Lord Mayor, and it included performances in French and German from primary and secondary schools across Bristol, as well as statements from the French and German Honorary Consuls – both of whom have served on our committees – and also a slide show of historical images of the twinning partnerships, put together by two Hannover students who did an internship with the City Council. It was a great start to the year!
- Later in January, some of the committee attended the closing exhibition in Bath of the **Honouring Esther** project, reconstructing a death march by the mother of one of the project initiators, Esther Brunstein, from Hannover to Bergen-Belsen. BHC supported the project and I reported on it last year; we hope to have Esther's daughter Lorna and her partner Richard White to come to speak to us here in Bristol soon.
- February/March saw a number of events, the start of the **In Somebody Else's Shoes project**, about which more later, an entertaining talk by Mark Allinson about **Christmas in the GDR**, I gave a talk on the history of **Bristol's link with Hannover** to BAGS, UWE choir gave a concert of German and French music at the Colston Hall, we had a visit from **Hannover archivist Christian Heppner**, who also gave us

an unusual talk about the ways in which Hannover's treasures were kept safe during the Second World War, later we had a rather muddy **walk in the Mendips**, and finally I was greatly honoured to receive the **Lord Mayor's International Medal** at a ceremony at the Mansion House.

- We again joined in the **BITA Quiz**, hosted this time by the Bristol-China Partnership, and lo and behold – we won it again! So we will be setting the questions next year!
- In May we joined with the British-German Association to host a **national twinning conference** of German twin towns; John Hobley of the BGA, ably assisted by the Executive Secretary, Sue Austin, worked tirelessly with us to ensure that the conference was wide-ranging in its scope and generated as many ideas as possible on the future of twinning, especially in the current political context. Mayor Hermann and HBG Chair Robert Nicholls attended, and it was a great success, even though it received only minimal local media interest, despite previous assurances from the BBC.
- Then in June THE BIG ONE! We hosted a group of our friends from Hannover for the **Zoo Party**, one of the main events of the anniversary year, and the Mayors of Hannover and Bordeaux came, with their entourages, and spoke, along with Mayor Rees, very movingly of the importance of the city partnerships today. 2000+ guests enjoyed a lovely evening of entertainment and conviviality. During that weekend, we and our HBG guests were treated to an unusual exhibition of Donald Hughes' paintings (he was one of the Famous Five men who went to Hannover in 1947 to extend the hand of friendship) together with musical accompaniment, at the Savages Wigwam, courtesy of Michael Withers. The now traditional reception with the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House started a full programme including the Wills Tower, Gloucester Cathedral, the beautiful Lantern Room at the Old Council House with the paintings of Hannoverians King George II and Queen Caroline, and the exhibition of historical photographs of the twinning at the CREATE Centre, which had been started by Helga Wawra, added to by me, and hung by Richard Harris.
- In August 31 of us, including 4 former Lord Mayors, went on a **magnificent visit to Hannover**, where we were truly treated like royalty by the City! Mayor Rees led the visit, and signed the Golden Book in a special ceremony at the Rathaus, and he and Oberbürgermeister Schostok, together with HBG Chair Robert Nicholls and myself, signed copies in English and German of a special Memorandum of Friendship between our two cities. We had a great weekend, including the Festival of Cultures, and a stunning fireworks display in the Herrenhausen Gardens.
- There have also been a number of **sporting exchanges** this year, coinciding nicely with the 70th anniversary, so the Ariel Rowing Club have received their Hannover partners Linden Ruderverein (and actually rowed in a combined team at the World Masters in Bled, Slovenia in September), the Badminton group have come over, the new to us Roller Derby of course: the Demolition Derby Dolls visited Bristol for the first time, and later in the year the Hannover gymnastics group will visit the Bristol School of Gymnastics.
- And as I mentioned earlier, apart from our final celebration **Gala Dinner** coming up in November, there is also the In Someone Else's Shoes project, which has been the subject of a number of awards, and will culminate in a fashion show on December 12th at the Colston Hall, when students from Fairfield, Cotham and IGS Kronsberg in Hannover will give a performance to show off the shoes which they will have decorated in the style of the seven decades since 1947 and exchanged one of them, symbolically, with someone in the school of the other country. I am sure it will be a great event, with deep significance for our twinning.
- Apart from all these events and visits, we are still in regular communication with the twinings around Bristol.

- We have given more **financial support** than usual to young people travelling to Hannover this year, and this is only appropriate in this exciting year.
- We were delighted to welcomed back **Nicole Friedlein**, now a law student in Hannover, and she will continue to be part of our young exchange link, I am sure.
- I would like here to thank **Alix Hughes**, the BITA coordinator, for the huge amount of help he has continued to give us in working with Hannover, and also in setting up events here in Bristol. His role has changed this year, now that he is working within the City Council, but I am sure he will continue to work with Janika Millan and Frauke Gläser in the Cultural Office in Hannover on our behalf.
- And finally, I would like to **thank the committee for their support** – everyone has contributed something, some more than others, and I am particularly grateful to Lynne Evans, Lynne McAleavey (who is unfortunately resigning from the committee) and Richard Harris, for their help in setting things up for the visits both to and from Hannover.

Ann Kennard
Chair