

CHAIR'S REPORT 2017-18
Annual General Meeting, 18 October 2018

The start of this year coincided with the end of our fantastic 70th anniversary year, and so I have to report on how that year ended, but also how some aspects and one project in particular carried on through into this year and beyond. The committee has continued to meet regularly and we have continued to be active, albeit on a somewhat lower level of intensity to that of last year!

- Our last **AGM** was presided over by Lord Mayor, Councillor Lesley Alexander, who took part in a number of the anniversary events and was very complimentary about how the celebrations in 2017 had gone. We are delighted to welcome her back as Deputy Lord Mayor to preside over this year's AGM also.
- Autumn saw a splendid finale to our 70th anniversary celebrations - the first event to mention was a beautiful lunchtime concert given at Bristol Cathedral by the famous **Hannover Bach Choir**, which is resident choir at the Marktkirche, partner church with the Cathedral.
- The season was crowned by our **Gala Anniversary dinner** at the Mansion House, hosted by the Lord Mayor, Cllr. Lesley Alexander. 68 members and guests attended a splendid event with good food and wine, excellent company, including representatives of both the German and French embassies, and the speeches reflected on the many events of such a wonderful year.
- In the same month of November Bristol's own baritone, Niall Hoskin, accompanied by pianist Stephen Brown, performed **music by French and German composers**.
- A long-standing sporting exchange is that of the **Bristol School of Gymnastics**, who hosted their partners, VFL Eintracht Hannover, at the beginning of December. They were celebrating their own 40th anniversary, and some of us watched them training, including club member Vicky Ashworth, who has been in the England gymnastics squad for the last 3 years!
- In December the now well-known project '**In Someone Else's Shoes**', commemorating the beginnings of the link with Hannover, finally got started, after much preparation over many months and being awarded a Lottery Grant to set up a travelling exhibition. Students from Hannover's IGS Kronsberg school came to Bristol to join up with Fairfield School students to stage a historical fashion show at the Colston Hall, featuring upcycled shoes, stories and songs. This was followed by an exhibition in January at City Hall, opened by Mayor Marvin Rees, and later in the year a visit of the Fairfield students to Hannover. We are also working on linking in Redfield Primary School to the project. I will not say more on the project, except to say a huge thank you to project creator Ruth Myers, who will present the project later, and also to Sharon Barnes of Fairfield, who went more than the extra mile in ensuring that her German students could take part.
- The year was of course rounded off by our usual enjoyable lunch at Bristol's **Christmas Market**, and the numbers of enthusiasts seem to grow every year!
- The post-anniversary year started in style with a series of very interesting talks: first, Richard White and Lorna Brunstein gave an illustrated talk to round off their project '**Honouring Esther**' which BHC had supported; in February, member Colin Evans gave the third in his series of talks about **German art** – 'What happened to all the art?' after the Second World War; and later member Stephen Thomas gave a fascinating illustrated talk on the history of **Berlin architecture**.
- In March, artists from the **BV Studios in Bristol** were supported by BHC to make an initial visit to Hannover to meet up with a group of artists there. They then went over in July and had an exhibition in Hannover, supported by Hannover City Council. The Hannover artists plan to come here and exhibit their art in Bristol in Spring 2019.

- We hosted the **BITA Quiz** this year, but this time BLINC, Bristol's Nicaraguan twinning were well ahead of the field, so they won and will be setting the questions next year!
- In July we were delighted to welcome 6 artists and youth workers from Hannover for the **Upfest** weekend, and after visiting their artwork, we had an interesting Q and A session with them in the Hen and Chicken pub, all facilitated by Alix Hughes – thanks Alix!
- The big event for us this year was undoubtedly the **visit of 15 of our friends from Hannover** at the end of July/beginning of August. Highlights were visits to St Fagan's Open Air museum of Welsh History (and Chepstow Castle on the way back), the new Aerospace museum in Filton, the Blue Glass factory at Henbury (where the glass blower made a decorative tooth from blue glass for our Professor of Dentistry, Husa!), Blaise Castle, a walk round the centre of Bristol, with an entertaining commentary by our guide, member Roger Harper, a visit to the Impossible Garden sculpture exhibition at the UoB Botanical Gardens, a reception by the Lord Mayor and a visit to the SS Great Britain. This was then all rounded off by 50 members and guests enjoying a delicious farewell meal at Watershed, where BGA Vice-President Michael Withers presented the BGA's Medal for Distinguished Service to our dear friend Helga Wawra, who has done so much work over the years on behalf of the Hannover-Bristol Gesellschaft. This is the same medal awarded to BHC in 2014, the year of the 300th anniversary of the accession of the Hannoverians to the British throne, for services likewise rendered to the city partnership since 1947. We shall in our turn visit Hannover next year, most likely in July.
- In August a delegation of 17 people from the **Bristol Junior Chamber** and their senior counterparts, the **39 Club**, were hosted by their partners in Hannover, and enjoyed a lively social programme, including part of Hannover's international fireworks competition.
- Following on from the publicity about our anniversary last year, we have had a larger number of **visitors from Hannover** than usual this year: apart from the a/m visit, a Hannover city councillor, **Afra Gamoori**, did a 3-month placement here with the City Council, a Hannover city council officer, **Gwendolyn Kusters**, a landscape architect, spent most of the summer working at the City Council, and gave us a fascinating talk about her work in September; and we had the bi-ennial visit of the **Hannover dental students**, for whom I gave a the usual talk about the city partnership.
- Apart from all these events and visits, we are still in regular communication with the twinings around Bristol.
- I would like here to thank **Alix Hughes**, whose role has changed now that he is working directly for the City Council, and is currently heavily involved in the preparation of the imminent Global Parliament of Mayors, and we are delighted that Mayor Thomas Hermann will be part of that. Alix's support has always been a great help to our organisation.
- And finally, I would like again to **thank the committee for their support**, but want to thank former Lord Mayor, Alderman Colin Smith, for his support over the years, as he has decided to step down this year. Everyone has contributed something, some more than others, and I am particularly grateful to Lynne Evans and Richard Harris again, for their help in setting things up for the visit from Hannover.

Ann Kennard
Chair