

CHAIR'S REPORT 2019-20
Annual General Meeting, 22nd October 2020

Well, to adapt a well-known sporting quote, this has been a year of two halves! Who would have thought this time last year that we would have been stopped in our tracks in March, immediately after the fantastic Mayors for Peace exhibition in City Hall, our programme cancelled, and that we would be holding this year's AGM online via Zoom – which most of us had never heard of a year ago! But here we are, and it is time to look back – much has happened in all sorts of ways, and it is important to note the trajectory of our activities, to try to plan for the future – but also to look on the bright side whereby we can welcome our friends from Hannover online, as well as Joanna Mathers of the SS Great Britain to entertain us!

- In her opening remarks at last year's **AGM the Lord Mayor, Cllr Jos Clark** praised the committee for having managed to organise such a varied programme with such a small group of people. She had very much enjoyed the events in which she had participated, and hoped to visit some of Bristol's twin cities during her period in office.
- In November we were treated, courtesy of our art expert Colin Evans, at Stoke Lodge to a **film about Alma Mahler, called 'Bride of the Wind'** after a painting by the leading modernist of the time, Oskar Kokoschka
- The weekend of November 28th-/December 1st saw the 42nd year of the annual exchange here in Bristol of the **Bristol School of Gymnastics hosting VFL Eintracht Hannover**. The two groups trained together on Saturday and otherwise had a great time visiting and socialising in and around Bristol. Unfortunately I assume their plan for a return visit to Hannover for December 2020 is unlikely to take place, due to the coronavirus restrictions
- The **Christmas Market lunch**, our regular winter social event – though not this year sadly – was a great success as usual, with a record 37 members and friends, in the company of the Lord Mayor and her consort, enjoying a German-style meal together
- From September 2019 to January 2020 an exhibition was held to celebrate the centenary of the Bauhaus art movement: **Bauhaus in Bristol** traced the friendship between **Crofton Gane**, one of the famous five men who went over to Hannover in 1947, and his friend Marcel Breuer, founding member of the Bauhaus in Germany
- Later in December, **Jasmin Mittag, artist and activist**, who participated in Upfest with Mansha some years ago, returned to Bristol to undertake a personal project to interview people about their most important possessions, for presentation on Europe Day this year. She sent us the results, which were interesting and fortunately, online.
- In January, **Paul Seath**, son of **Edward Seath**, another of the five men who went to Hannover in 1947 to extend the hand of friendship, celebrated his 80th birthday, and I was invited to take part in order to represent BHC. It was a splendid occasion, with a display of photos from Paul's choir conducting days, including visits to Hannover, Bordeaux and Oporto, and Paul's wife Elfriede gave a comprehensive account of Paul's varied life. Sadly Paul died in September, during the time of Covid restrictions and so the funeral, to which I was also invited, involved a much reduced number of Paul's relatives and friends. But I rejoice that he was able to enjoy his 80th birthday, and he will be remembered warmly by all who knew him. An unexpected gesture from the family was to make BHC one of the two charities for donations, and so we intend to use the money which comes in for a small project in Paul's memory.
- Throughout February we were honoured to host **an international Mayors for Peace exhibition** in City Hall. This was to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, signed by the USA, the Soviet Union and the UK in 1968. Hannover city council had been involved with setting this up with its partner city Hiroshima, and it had travelled to many countries. Visitors found the exhibition moving and poignant in today's troubled political climate.
- Monday February 24th saw our last convivial social event before all doors were closed, namely the **Karneval party on Rosenmontag**, held at the Black Swan as ever. We were

delighted to welcome the Lord Mayor to this enjoyable evening, where we ate and drank and sang Karneval songs.

- On March 1st, our Hon. Sec. Lynne Evans and I were honoured to be invited to the **Lord Mayor's annual Civic Service** in the beautiful Lord Mayor's Chapel. This had a special significance this year, as it was to start the 800th anniversary of the Chapel. Unfortunately the programme of events which was planned will have sadly been cut short, due to the coronavirus, as the national lockdown started soon after.
- In August, however, two Bristol street artists took part by invitation in the (this time virtual) **Urban Nature Art Festival** in Hannover. Last year it was possible to be present in Hannover to participate in this international event.
- Also in March, our Committee member Tim Illston, who has carried out the office of **Honorary German Consul** for the past 3 years, decided to step down for family reasons, but the plan to install his successor, Kai von Pahlen, had to be put on hold due to the lockdown. The transfer finally took place in September, and Kai has now taken on this role as well as becoming a member of the BHC committee. Thanks are due to Tim for carrying out the role at a difficult time internationally, and congratulations to Kai for taking on this responsibility.
- The transfer to the new Consul was carried out by **the new German Ambassador, Andreas Michaelis**, in Bristol, and we had an excellent meeting at the SS Great Britain with him, **Hans Löffler**, the Consul General and their entourage. The Ambassador is a Hannoverian and is very keen to support us, mentioning that there may be funding available for twinning projects, especially for young people, so we are in discussions in order to submit a proposal.
- Further to that visit, the **Vice-President of the Bundestag, Thomas Oppermann**, also visited Bristol in September and had a number of meetings with a view to cooperation, as part of a tour of various UK cities. I attended dinner with him and his colleagues and he also showed great interest in our link with Hannover, not least because he had been a State Minister of Lower Saxony, and a good friend of Stephan Weil, former Oberbürgermeister of Hannover and now Minister President of Lower Saxony.
- Since the lockdown, we have been unable to meet in person, but we have had committee meetings online, we did send out a Newsletter in April, elaborating on the activities which I have listed here, and we have kept in touch with our **Hannover friends by email**. In July and August, we held **two online quizzes**, which were well attended and great fun, so we at least got to see each other, albeit on the screen. But we are delighted that this strange and unexpected situation does mean that not only can we have Gerard Owen and Richard Harris join us from Germany for committee meetings online, but we have also been able to invite Robert Nicholls and our friends in Hannover to join us for this meeting, which gives me great pleasure!
- Perhaps here I should mention that Hannover has reached the second round of the competition to become **European Capital of Culture in 2025**, and Bristol is hoping to participate in the event that Hannover is chosen!
- And finally, it only remains for me to thank **Alix Hughes**, a stalwart of this and the other twinings, who has kept the ball rolling from his Home Office (as I find it is called in Germany!), and the **committee also for their support** in what has been a busy year for a number of reasons! I am delighted to welcome two new members to the committee, Kai and Carol Pickard, who recently moved to Bristol, and I hope we will be able to involve them in 'real' activities before too long! In the meantime, thank you for attending, and please do stay with us: we do have all sorts of plans for the future!

Ann Kennard
15th October 2020