



MAGNIFICENT MEMORIES FROM OUR LATEST EXCHANGE

****** This summer's memorable exchange visit to Hannover enjoyed a packed four-day programme that mixed culture, history, nature and friendship in equal measure. From jazz on the steps of the New Town Hall to fireworks over Herrenhausen, this year's exchange delivered memories that will last long after our return to Bristol.

A heartfelt thank you goes to our wonderful friends and colleagues in the Hannover Bristol Gesellschaft, whose tireless behind-the-scenes work made the whole programme run smoothly. Coordinating guided tours, restaurant reservations, board meetings and civic receptions across four days is no small feat, and the care and warmth that went into every arrangement were greatly appreciated.

The weather, it must be said, had its own ideas. May in Lower Saxony offered a full range of possibilities — bright sunshine one moment, blustery showers the next, and at least one occasion when the group was left wondering whether to pack sunscreen or an umbrella (the answer, as ever, was both). But a little unpredictability in the forecast only added to the adventure, and spirits remained high throughout!

The programme opened in the best possible style on Ascension Day, Thursday, May 14. We gathered at the entrance to the magnificent New Town Hall to enjoy Enercity Swinging Hannover, the city's popular annual jazz festival. The sound of live music drifting across the square set an instantly festive mood, and the numerous food and drink stalls ensured that no one went hungry or thirsty as the morning unfolded.

The evening brought a warm and convivial barbecue at the beautiful home of Petra Pilger – now a traditional fixture in our visits. Despite the threat of rain, the barbecue was a great success. The generous hospitality and excellent company rounded off the first day in the most satisfying way imaginable — a proper Hannover welcome!

Friday saw the group board a train for Wolfsburg, home of the VW company and site of the largest car factory in the world. We were there to visit Autowelt, the VW Group's impressive showcase for its different brands and its attempt to show its illustrious past as well as the future direction of the industry.

Saturday was perhaps the most varied day of the entire visit — a genuine Best of Lower Saxony showcase that moved from horticulture to dazzling pyrotechnics.



Explosive finale in Herrenhausen to the latest exchange visit

The group assembled promptly 'under the tail' outside Hannover station for the train to Bad Nenndorf and the State Garden Show (Landesgartenschau). We spent a full and rewarding day exploring the show's beautiful grounds, with lovely gardens, lakes and sculptures.

The evening ended on a spectacular note. At 8:00 p.m., the group gathered at the Schlossküche restaurant for a wonderful evening reception organised by Mayor Thomas Hermann, before heading to the fireworks competition which we viewed from the balcony of the magnificent Herrenhausen Gardens.

Against the backdrop of one of Europe's finest baroque gardens, the pyrotechnic display was breathtaking, a fitting grand finale to an action-packed day.

Sunday brought the visit to a close in a manner that was both moving and celebratory — a day that combined civic ceremony with quiet reflection and the warm conviviality of a farewell dinner.

At 10:00am the delegation was received in the council chamber of the New Town Hall for a formal reception with Mayor of Hannover, Thomas Hermann. These civic occasions are a chance to reaffirm the official bonds between Bristol and Hannover and to celebrate the people-to-people connections that give those bonds their real substance. The warmth of the welcome was, as always, deeply appreciated, as was the tour of the Rathaus, many of us viewing rooms previously unseen.

From the town hall, the group made their way by tram to the Ahlem Memorial near Linden, where an English-language guided tour of the memorial awaited. The Ahlem Memorial is a place of profound historical significance. In the 1920s and 30s it was a Jewish horticultural school and in the Third Reich it became a place of deportation for Hannover's Jews. The tour of house, garden and well-presented exhibition was a thought-provoking and sobering experience. Moments like this remind us why international friendship and understanding matter, and why visits like this one are about so much more than tourism.

The visit concluded in style with the farewell dinner at the Werkhof restaurant in the Nordstadt. Laughter, stories and a few heartfelt speeches filled the room as the group looked back on some extraordinary few days together.

Four days: a jazz festival, an insight into the future of transport, a garden show, a fireworks display, a visit to a memorial site, a mayoral reception and moments of shared laughter and enjoyment — the May 2026 visit to Hannover was a resounding success. The programme showcased the very best of Lower Saxony, and the care and support of our friends in the Hannover Bristol Gesellschaft especially Robert, Christine and Petra ensured that everything ran smoothly.

Even the weather, in its own unpredictable way, was part of the story. The Bristol–Hannover friendship has weathered far more than a few spring showers, and is stronger for every shared adventure. We returned home grateful, enriched and already looking forward to what comes next
---- IAN TURNER, Chair



Horror story from the latest BITA quiz

** A team from BHC competed in the annual BITA quiz at the Black Swan on Monday, April 27. BHC achieved a respectable third place but failed once again to oust Bordeaux from the podium.



Janet Caswell's encyclopaedic knowledge of the geography of the Middle East certainly came in handy but sadly the team was let down by its lack of knowledge of horror movies! Thanks to Viv and Rob for organising it ---- IAN TURNER



Hats off to Stradling Gallery for latest exhibition

** The Stradling Gallery on Park Row opened a new exhibition this spring showcasing the link between Bauhaus leading artist Marcel Breuer and BHC founding father Crofton Gane, as brought together by Ken Stradling in his unique collection.

The Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr. Andrew Varney led the first of two groups of members, who were treated to a fulsome history of the collection related with great enthusiasm by curator Tanya Martin.



The Deputy Lord Mayor with BHC members viewing Bauhaus artefacts

She explained how Marcel Breuer came to Bristol in the 1930s to escape Nazi Germany and became Crofton Gane's consultant, including furnishing his home in Westbury Park and created a Cotswold stone pavilion for the Royal Agricultural Show in Bristol, which he regarded later as one of his two most seminal projects, alongside the UNESCO Headquarters.

BHC members saw examples of furniture, art and ornaments - and the Deputy Lord Mayor posed in Crofton Gane's top hat ---- ANN KENNARD



Bristol-fashion welcome for the Ambassador

** The German Ambassador Her Excellency Susanne Baumann visited Bristol on April 15. A busy day included visits to Bristol University and its Max Planck Institute, the Bristol City Council and Airbus. The last event on the itinerary was a talk which Frau Baumann gave at Bristol University. The talk was jointly hosted by the Bristol-Hannover Council and the Bristol Anglo-German Society and orchestrated by Mark Bright-Allinson.

The audience included members of both societies, as well as invited guests from Anglo-German twinning associations in the region, including representatives from Patchway, Taunton, Bath, Bradford on Avon and Clevedon. Also attending was Jyles Allen, newly-elected president of the Bristol Junior Chamber and Eleanor Whitwam, who represented Bristol at the recent UK-Germany Youth Summit in Berlin.

The ambassador was welcomed by two British students from Bristol University's German department, speaking fluently in German, and by Bristol's Vice-Chancellor Professor Evelyn Welch, who referred in her speech to the prominent role played by the University's Professor August Closs in leading a delegation from Bristol to war-ravaged Hannover in 1947, a visit which led to the creation of the Bristol-Hannover Council, one of the UK's oldest twinning relationships.

Frau Baumann said that relations between the UK and Germany were now in a dynamic phase.

She referred to the state visit of the President of Germany, Herr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in 2025, and the conclusion of the Kensington Treaty – the first bi-lateral treaty between our two countries since the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890.



The Ambassador said that much had changed in the last 10 years since the Brexit referendum. Both countries had to come to terms with a drastically changed geo-political landscape and multiple uncertainties in the near future. It made sense to look for ways to cooperate to meet these challenges.

At the end of the event, the Ambassador was presented (pictured) with a small vase of Bristol Glass by Ann Kennard of Bristol-Hannover Council and Angela Greenwood of Bristol Anglo-German Society as a memento of her visit to the city. The Ambassador thanked the organisers and promised to return to Bristol in 2027 for the celebrations of the 80th Anniversary ---- IAN TURNER



Kindertransport in British memory

** BHC members took part in an online panel session on the Kindertransport in British Memory arranged by the BGA and the Leo Baeck Institute in London on March 19.

The focus was on children from Nazi Germany who arrived in this country as refugees in 1938-39. This subject has come to public prominence in recent years through books and films like *One Life*, which focused on the role of Nicholas Winton and his efforts to rescue Jewish children from occupied Prague.



This episode is typically portrayed as an heroic example of British humanitarianism. The researchers pointed out that whilst the children who were rescued were mostly very grateful and often went on to have very successful lives, the experience varied significantly from individual to individual.

A story was told of a brother and sister from a family of Jews who had converted to Christianity. They were placed in a convent and subsequently became a priest and a nun respectively. Exceptionally, the parents survived the war and travelled to London to be re-united with their children. By then the children had become immersed in their new lives in Britain and refused to go back. The parents had to recognise the fact and return to Vienna without their children ---- IAN TURNER



BHC put in the historic picture — in colour

****** A small band of Bristol-Hannover members visited the Werner Bischof exhibition at Lacock Abbey on March 8.

The exhibition, at the Fox Talbot museum, celebrates the pioneer of colour photography. The gorgeous colour photos on display were some of the first produced in the 1940s on an innovative device called a Devin Tri-Color camera. The images were captured on glass rather than paper and have incredible resolution and beauty.



Noteworthy were the photos Bischof took of Germany in 1946 including pictures of a devastated Berlin and Cologne.

In addition to the exhibition, our visit involved a walking tour of the delightful village, a visit to Lacock Abbey, the country house based on a monastery which was Fox Talbot's country seat – and of course the obligatory visit to the National Trust café ---- IAN TURNER



Another great Rosenmontag party

** Our now-traditional party celebrating Karneval was a great success again – everyone enjoying the camaraderie, the hats, the food and drinks, not to mention the raffle. We were again able to watch the film of the earlier Karnevalszug through the streets of Cologne, the definitive capital of Karneval on the Rhine.

There were the usual Karneval princesses, dancing and standing on shoulders, colourful floats as ever, and here President Trump figured large, unsurprisingly, with floats saying ‘hands off Greenland’ and one with his rear end in view, indicating the obeisance of various world leaders ---- ANN KENNARD



Funding application success for RISE Youth Dance

** Congratulations to RISE Youth Dance in achieving a successful application with the Cultural Bridge fund ([www.https://www.cultural-bridge.info](https://www.cultural-bridge.info)). RISE secured funding for Letters from Home, a Bristol–Hannover youth-led dance and storytelling exchange running from April–October 2026.

The project focuses on inclusive, community-based activity with young people and local residents in both cities, building on the long-standing Bristol–Hannover relationship.



BHC Chair Ian Turner says: “We are thrilled by this news. RISE Dance has been one of our real success stories in recent years, highlighting the potential for youth and cultural groups in Bristol to connect with their counterparts in Hannover to create exciting new projects and develop deep and lasting relations for mutual benefit.

“Now that RISE has blazed the trail, we hope that other groups will be encouraged to follow in their (graceful) footsteps.”

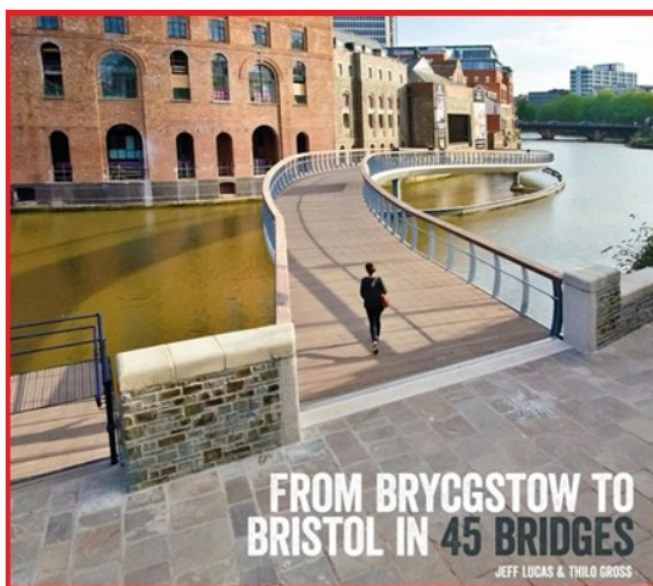


Bridging Bristol and Königsberg

** BHC and BAGS held a joint talk about the Bridges of Bristol and the Königsberg Problem on January 20. The talk was given by Jeff Lucas a local author who has written a book on the subject.

Königsberg (present Russian exclave of Kaliningrad) was a vibrant centre of intellectual study in medieval Germany. The city was built on two islands created by a river with several crossings and it became a diverting pastime for the citizens to see if they could walk across all the bridges but only once.

The problem ‘went viral’ in the 18th century and was eventually ‘solved’ by the mathematician Leonhard Euler who, in the process, founded a new branch of mathematics now seen as essential for modern life.



Euler demonstrated mathematically that it was impossible to solve the Königsberg problem. Fast forward to the 21st century and a German professor Thilo Gross, then at Bristol University, decided to apply the theory to Bristol's 45 bridges. Jeff Lucas then co-authored a book with him describing how the bridges could all be crossed – unlike in Königsberg – without re-crossing.

The Königsberg bridge problem was an intriguing introduction to a tour of Bristol's bridges which yielded fascinating insights into history, geography, engineering and politics.

Jeff showed how the bridges were built to address the developing needs of Bristol as a city through the ages. When the railways came to Bristol more bridges were needed and when the age of the motor car dawned in the 20th century bridges had to be built to help the flow of traffic into the city along the new Portway.

The post-industrial age from the 1980s onwards, created the need to repurpose some of the older bridges as well as develop more innovative new designs. Bridges however have always been controversial and Jeff's lively talk ended with some stories from history of how tolls provoked rioting and a massacre in the 18th century ---- IAN TURNER



Bristol-Hannover Council aims to involve as many Bristolians as possible, young and old, in extending the ties which have already enriched the lives of so many people in both cities since 1947. Many exchanges which have been - and continue to be – supported by the Council, include:

- ** Schools exchanges***
- ** Exchanges of citizens***
- ** Sports exchanges***
- ** University student exchanges***
- ** Band, choir, orchestra and drama visits***
- ** Youth club visits and exchanges***

**** Church exchanges**

**** Reuniting old friends**

