

## Newsletter 3/2016

Oberursel, 28. August 2016

To all our friends in Épinay, Rushmoor and Lomonossov,

We would like to invite you, our friends in our twin towns of Épinay-sur-Seine, Rushmoor and Lomonossov, to join us in celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday of our association in a few weeks' time, over the weekend of 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October. The chair people of our "sister" associations will be receiving official invitations but naturally we will be delighted if other guests can come too.

We will start off by getting together at the opening of an exhibition of Oberursel's photo club in the foyer of our town hall at 6 p.m. on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

On Saturday morning, 8<sup>th</sup> October, we would like to invite you to a city tour in one of Frankfurt's historic trams and in the evening we will hold our official birthday ceremony in the town hall conference room, starting at 6 p.m. We will take that as an opportunity for a short review of the past and plans for the future but the main aim to celebrate in an informal atmosphere. We are pleased that some musicians from our partner towns will be joining us.

We are planning a short walk in the Taunus on Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October for those guests who will be staying over until Monday.

At the moment we are in the throes of our preparations and sub committees are working on the various items on the programme. We have already received some replies to our invitation but it would be helpful if you could let us know fairly soon whether you will be coming to Oberursel in October, and whether you would like to stay in private accommodation or need a hotel reservation.

By that weekend our cookery book "Cooking with friends – a culinary journey through Oberursel and its twin towns" should be ready. We tried out the last recipes recently, photographed the results and, of course, tasted them too. The layout of the book is being finalised and then it can be sent to the printers. We wish to translate the recipes into English, French and Russian but no decision has been taken on whether to have a small edition printed in each of those languages or just attach an appropriate annex to the main book. We have to see what we can afford. So much for the future.

Looking back on the year so far, we see that we have been very busy but that means that our twinning relationships are active and we, in the VFOS, would like to play our part in preserving this for the future. While keeping those things which have been tried and tested, we would also like to think up and try out new ideas. We must also have the nerve to make fundamental changes, but above all we need active members prepared to work for the ideals of town twinning. In this connection we are thinking of organising a meeting in Oberursel with representatives of our sister associations in Épinay, Rushmoor and Lomonossov to discuss new ways on how we can work together in future. We will have drawn up our schedule of events and projects, and budget for 2017 by the middle of September and then we can see when would be the best time to hold such a meeting.

A group of 23 people from Oberursel and a guest from Rushmoor are in Lomonossov on a visit organised by us and KALINKA at this very moment. When they return home they will doubtless have many happy memories which they can share with us at our next VFOS Members' meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> September. Visits by groups of citizens are a good opportunity to get to know the twin towns and the local people. For this reason we intend to organise similar trips to our other twin towns, starting with Rushmoor in 2017. We think that these sort of visits form an important basis from which direct relationships between local clubs or private friendships can evolve.

There have been numerous meetings at various levels over the past few months. As always, the Brunnenfest in May provided an opportunity for us to meet guests from all three of our twin towns, and all those interested in twinning activities got together at the "Europadorf". Our turnover was considerably higher than in previous years but our association always ends up in the red at the Brunnenfest because we have to pay for all of the expenses such as the fees for the stalls, electricity, music, and hiring tables and benches. Costs for setup and operations are high so we do not make any money from the Brunnenfest. We are happy to finance it because we know that the Europadorf is a popular meeting place for all involved in twinning.

The "Day of Europe" took place at Graevenwiesbach, a small town in the Taunus, over the same weekend as the Brunnenfest. We were represented there on a stall with the town of Oberursel. Shortly before that, teams from Rushmoor and Lomonossov participated in the Whitsun football tournament for young people which was organised by Eintracht Oberursel. The Institute for European Partnership and Cooperation was joint host with the town of Oberursel and ourselves of a symposium on the theme of "Partnership activities in a time of crisis". Our presentation on the subject of "Town twinning in 2016 – old-fashioned nostalgia or a channel to promote understanding" and Oberursel's reports on exchange visits with children and young people attracted a great deal of interest. It was obvious that Oberursel's relations with its twin towns are very much alive.

We can cite some activities in June and July as proof of this. Children from Oberursel aged 9 to 11 stayed with friends in Épinay-sur-Seine and met pupils of the École Pasteur 2, where they attended classes, played sport, went on excursions and had fun together. In July some children from Épinay and Oberursel went on holiday together in Pleubian. Also in July some of the staff from our town hall met their counterparts from Épinay in order to become better acquainted and compare notes on their work.

Our quarterly get-togethers for members, our summer barbecue and end of year party are regular fixtures in our programme. Our summer barbecue on 16 July was well attended, and we were able to discuss many ideas and plans over afternoon coffee and cake and later during the barbecue. Part of the proceedings was an "American auction" which was not just a lot of fun but boosted our bank balance. After this summer party the committee met for its annual brain storming session to discuss future projects and, on this occasion, the emphasis was on our birthday weekend. At the beginning of August we were pleased to meet some friends from Épinay and Rushmoor who came here for the wine festival.

On the weekend of 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> September the town of Oberursel expects official guests from Épinay and Rushmoor who, among other things, will participate in the official handover to the town of the Memorial to the victims of National Socialism by the Association for Remembrance of the victims (Opferdenkmal e.V.) on 3<sup>rd</sup> September. A week later, on 11<sup>th</sup> September, the open day for historic memorials, we will sponsor a guided tour entitled "War and peace in Europe- what the graves tell us" as a joint event with Oberursel's town guides and the German Association for maintaining war graves. Angelika Rieber a historian, will take the participants on a journey through 100 years of history. War and peace are subjects which are still very much in the news and concern us all.

Finally, a few words on the decision by the people of Great Britain to leave the EU; the result of the referendum was close but was carried by a majority. There may be differing opinions on whether this is something to welcome or regret but the democratic vote of the British people has to be respected. It remains to be seen whether this decision will have any effects on our twinning relationship with Rushmoor. Our town partnerships are, as a matter of principle, tied to the people who shape them, meet up and give life to town twinning and not to institutions, and it is our belief that it should remain so in future.

The VFOS committee would like to convey its best wishes to you all and look forward to seeing many of you over our birthday weekend in October, or on another occasion in the course of the year. Europe needs the active engagement of its citizens with meetings at every level, and we would like to make our own small contribution to this.

You can learn all about our latest activities on our home page at [www.vfos.de](http://www.vfos.de), or on our Facebook page where you can "like" us. You will see photos of all our events as well as short reports on our activities there. If you have any questions or have anything to add, you can get in touch by mail ([info@vfos](mailto:info@vfos)) at any time. Naturally you can forward this newsletter to other people too.

With very best wishes on behalf of our committee and myself



Birgit Röher, Chairperson VFOS