



engagiert.
tolerant.
weltoffen.

Verein zur Förderung der Oberurseler Städtepartnerschaften e.V.

Newsletter 2/2017

Oberursel, 11th September 2017

Greetings to all our friends in Épinay, Rushmoor and Lomonossov,

Today, we would like to send you another newsletter with an update on what we have been doing and our joint activities with the town of Oberursel.

Our Brunnenfest is now history. As we previously informed you, this year was the first time that we did not have any guests or a stand with representatives from Rushmoor. However, our Brunnenfest visitors still got some beer thanks to Braufactum, which offered freshly brewed local beer. This year we were lucky with the weather. Although there was a hefty storm on the opening evening there were temperatures of over 30 °C for the rest of the weekend which created a heavy demand for water but the white wine and beer went well too. The form of our future participation in the Brunnenfest is something which we will be considering and depends very much on whether the town authorities and the committee representing all the Oberursel clubs and associations come up with a new concept for the Brunnenfest.

Employees of the specialised departments of the local town halls of Oberursel and Épinay got together from 5th to 9th July to exchange ideas on their respective areas and learn from each other. Of course, there was some free time to see something of the local area and we were able to offer our support especially in translation and, thanks to our French speaking members, it was possible to hold detailed discussions in small groups.

We held our traditional summer barbecue in July and believe that such get-togethers are important in keeping a good atmosphere in our club. Our members and friends could chat over coffee and cake, and learn about future plans from our committee. There was an "American" auction which contributed to the afternoon's entertainment and to our finances. On offer were typical objects from Oberursel and our British, French and Russian twin towns or things having some connection to those countries. The rules for this type of auction are that each bidder has to pay the difference from the previous bid, including the one who finally "wins".

July and August were marked by several group exchange visits. There was a visit to Lomonossov from 15th to 23rd July which was organised privately by one of our members with support from us, and from Kalinka on the Russian side. We think it is wonderful when our members act on their own initiative to organise events or initiate projects, as this spreads the work involved in town twinning on more shoulders.

Then from 22nd to 27th July families from Épinay, our French partner town, were our guests. This trip was organised by a social/cultural centre in Épinay and Oberursel's department for culture, sport and international relations with some help from us. The group included twelve children aged from six to sixteen and their mothers, who had an entertaining week in Oberursel and the surrounding area.

The participants enjoyed a programme of varied activities even if the weather was not at its best. It started with a get-together organised by the VFOS. The programme included walks around Oberursel, visits to the Lochmühle amusement park, an excursion to the Braunfels

castle and to Frankfurt. One of the highlights was a trip to the Rhine; the children and adults were equally amazed by violins, pianos or whole orchestras which played by themselves in the Musical Instrument Museum in Rüdesheim. This week full of interesting activities concluded on the last evening when all those involved met for a final time. The children were busy with such things as painting, table football and balloon folding, whilst the mothers and others who had accompanied them compared notes with their German hosts. Many of our guests said that the week in Oberursel went by too quickly. Members of our association had helped out with translation/interpreting during the entire week.

Soon after that we had 23 visitors, aged from 11 to 70, from our Russian twin town, Lomonossov, who were here from 30th July to 6th August. About two thirds of them were guests in private homes while the rest, at their own wish, stayed in the hotel. Our members had prepared a varied programme for our Russian guests and it turned out to be a successful week, although there were some obstacles at the start because most of the group arrived in Oberursel a day late. However, there were many opportunities to meet people and experience many interesting things.

The participants who arrived on the first day were given a warm welcome in the town hall followed by a guided tour of the town and of the Alt Oberurseler Brauhaus where they were offered samples of its products. During the week there were excursions to the Rhine, Frankfurt, Bad Nauheim and Bad Homburg. Thanks to the flexibility of Oberursel's town guides an additional tour of Oberursel was made available to those guests who arrived late. Our guests also visited the Oberursel Wine Festival and there were some ad hoc evening meetings. An impressive farewell party took place on the premises of the Marinekameradschaft (Naval Club), where we did not just exchange farewell gifts and thank you speeches but had a barbecue, sang, danced and discussed a lot. Prior to that the town of Oberursel was presented with a 2 metre high lilac bush, which will be planted in the Lomonossov Park as a symbol of the friendship between our two towns.

Such regular exchange visits have developed into a tradition and become an essential part of our programme. We envisage something similar with Épinay and Rushmoor, perhaps with the option of including participants from the other twin towns.

We have already made a start this year when a group visited to our English twin town, Rushmoor, from 25th to 29th August. We and the twinning Association Rushmoor arranged this jointly and managed to put together a varied programme. This included a guided tour of Aldershot and Farnborough, the two centres of the Rushmoor District Council, with the historic old town, the Wellington Memorial, the aerospace museum and St. Michael's Cathedral which houses the graves of Napoleon III, his wife, Eugenie, and their son. There was an excursion to Portsmouth on the south coast including an interesting visit to the historic dockyards with its ancient ships, plus a chance to see the new aircraft carrier, "Queen Elizabeth". The group also visited the beautiful old city of Winchester and its famous cathedral, site of the first cathedral in England. Here and in the picturesque village of Chawton, they were following in the footsteps of Jane Austen, who died 200 years ago. While some participants stayed in a hotel, two thirds of the participants chose to stay with English families. There were friendly ad hoc meetings of guests and hosts every evening; one of the highlights was a barbecue with all of the hosts, many friends of the twinning association, members of the Hewley Badminton Club Rushmoor and the Badminton players from the Bommersheim Sports' Club, who happened to be on a visit at that time and whose friendship started 19 years' ago. This journey concluded with a reception with the Deputy Mayor.

Many thanks, Rushmoor! It was great.

We would like to offer visits to Lomonossov and Épinay next year and hope to be able to welcome guests from Rushmoor.

In August we took part in the flea market in Oberursel for the first time. Many members had donated glasses, vases, table cloths, pictures, toys and similar things, most of which were sold for a small price, with the proceeds going entirely to our club funds. We were very satisfied with the result – and it was fun too. Hence we plan to participate in the Oberursel Spring and Autumn flea markets in the future.

We have a lot planned for the coming months, starting in September when we want, in conjunction with other groups, to arrange a tour of the old cemetery in Oberursel on the occasion of the “open monument” day under the motto “War and Peace in Europe – stories told by the graves”. There are many graves with links to France, Russia or England which can recount the stories of individuals over a century of European history. Examples are war graves from both World Wars and those of forced labourers from Russia, or those of victims and perpetrators of those eras. Remembering the past is important for us because many town twinnings arose after the Second World War and then, later, after the end of the Cold War. Then as now they made it possible for people from various countries and of various ages to meet, get to know each other and discuss – even controversial matters – and learn to understand each other. Wars and their consequences are, unfortunately, subjects which are still very topical and therefore affect many people.

We will be offering a day trip to our own members for the first time very shortly, and will be going to Miltenberg, a small town in Franconia (Northern Bavaria). We have organised a guided tour of the town and a visit to a small private brewery. Then from 6th to 13th October a small group will be going to Cannes at the invitation of our friends in Épinay.

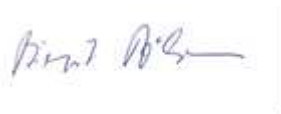
In October we are going to hold a “Stammtisch” (members' get-together) so that we can discuss how to make our organisation more effective, how to optimise our personnel and financial resources and how to reach younger people. We are also going to arrange a guided tour of the exhibition “Matisse, Bonnard – long live painting” at the “Städel” in Frankfurt as part of our “VFOS on the road” programme. In November and December we have the Christmas markets in Oberursel and Épinay-sur-Seine and our year end party.

We have a lot of other ideas but often lack the financial means and, especially, personnel resources to realise them. Still we do need to come up with something new to keep the idea of town twinning alive. This is the reason why we think it is so important to hold a joint meeting in the form of a work shop with our twin towns next year. We have now come up with a firm date: 23rd to 25th February (Friday to Sunday). Our concept would be for two representatives from each of our sister associations to come here and then, in small working groups, we could work out a common vision for town twinning, where we are today, what we want to keep and what we have to change. We will present a more precise plan at the Oberursel Christmas Market at the very latest. We would just like you to make a note of the date now and start to think about who should represent you. From our point of view, one or two representatives of your local town councils would be welcome if their participation seems useful and possible. The most important thing at present is that you should put this date in your diary.

So that is our latest news. If you have time you can always take a look at our home page: www.vfos.de or at our Facebook page, where there are brief news items (in German) and photos of our events. If you have any queries or wish to inform us of anything, please contact us via mail at: info@vfos.de

The VFOS committee wish you all the best for the coming months and look forward to seeing you soon.

With best wishes – also on behalf of the entire committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Birgit Röher', is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Birgit Röher
Chairperson VFOS