



BONN OXFORD WEEK 2015 is going to be upon us soon and the programme is developing. Please keep the dates of 27 to 31 May free in your diary.

2014 brought about some very memorable events for the Bonn Link. Many of us supported the youth drama project MESH at Pegasus theatre, where we learnt how to make baguettes on an industrial scale for the 150 participants' lunch! The German group Mujeres put on a very mature and powerful dance drama about the 'disappeared' in Chile and Argentina-illustrated by photographs of people who had been arrested and then disappeared.

At the end of the week, there was a stunning performance of a newly created play based on the story of Beowulf, which had a great deal to say about the state of fear and violence in the medieval world which it created. The young people took to the streets of Oxford to publicise their performance and were soon surrounded by an interested and enthusiastic crowd.



GARDEN PARTY



In July we held our garden party-on a lovely sunny afternoon in the garden of Voirrey and Robin Carr. This was a very pleasant way of spending an afternoon! There were fantastic cakes, lovely savouries and all sorts of drinks on offer. It was a very relaxing afternoon and we might repeat it this year so do come if you can!

REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND



Poppies at Normandy

November saw the visit of Helmut Kollig, Bezirksbürgermeister from Bonn to join with senior representatives from Perm, Leiden and Grenoble for a weekend of discussions about common problems and to be present at the special service of Remembrance at St Aldates which also marked the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. Feedback from all the representatives has been excellent. They found the discussions on urban planning particularly interesting and there is now talk of following this up with a similar event in Leiden.

Message from the Chairman, Alan Pope.

WELCOME!

After more than a year of various discussions, the Bonn Club Oxford took a formal decision at a special meeting on 30 October 2014 to cease to exist as a separate organisation and to place itself under the umbrella of the Oxford Bonn Link.

This decision has obviously been taken with much reluctance, but, in view of the Club's continuing fall in membership and the difficulties in maintaining a social programme, the only other alternative would have been to wind up the club altogether.

The Oxford Bonn Link will now need to decide how to reorganise itself in the future so as to take on the role of the Bonn Club as part of its programme. However we in the Link recognise the importance of the connection with the Oxford Club Bonn and the need to maintain this.

If you have ideas about the future of the Oxford Bonn Link and whether it should develop into a formal Association do write in to us with your thoughts (to Editor voirreyc@aol.com)

FIRST VISIT

A new choir from Bonn visited in November- the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Gymnasium and they joined with East Oxford Community Choir under the baton of Mel Houldershaw to give a very spirited performance of Karl Jenkins' musical 'The Armed Man'. They sang to a packed church in St Michael and All Angels, Summertown. After the concert, the choir entertained us with some lovely arrangements of English folk songs- with perfect pronunciation. It is a choir made up of pupils, parents and teachers from the school and they are of a very high standard. We are delighted to have been able to link them with St Gregory the Great Academy in Oxford and hope that this will be a very positive thing for both schools.

The visitors were thrilled by their visit to Oxford, and, after they returned to Bonn, a souvenir report was produced – 20 pages long! The various articles indicate just how much this visit and the musical performance meant to them. Two extracts have been selected (and translated!) to give you a flavour of the thoughts expressed.

Impressive Performance by the EMA Choir in Oxford.



The timing was felicitously chosen: on the exact date on which 70 years ago the allied bombers reduced the historic Bonn Altstadt to ashes and rubble, and over 300 people lost their lives, a special encounter now took place on 18 October 2014 in Bonn's twin city Oxford. With a combined performance of the Mass for Peace "The Armed Man" by Karl Jenkins, the choir of EMA, the East Oxford Choir and the Oxford Studio Orchestra strengthened the peace and friendship between the cities and the countries.

The EMA choir director and initiator of the visit, Toni Schüller, said after the return of the choir (over 70 singers), "The appreciable emotion of the English audience shows that we together with the Oxforders succeeded with an intense and moving performance. We all experienced the harrowing impact of this music composed in 1999 at the turn of the millenium as a musical plea for peace which, given the political conflicts in the world today, is even more necessary than ever."

"There and back again – Bonn – Oxford – Bonn.

70 years ago were our fathers and grandfathers and perhaps even our great grandfathers flying? To England, in order to bring death and destruction to the people.

Now it's for us to make the same journey, but with a totally different purpose. We cross four frontiers with just one perfunctory passport check, come to a city in which young people from all over the world study, live, party and work together, and we perform together with our fantastic hosts a work which is a single outcry against the insanity of war and for peace and dialogue between nations.

Naturally there were also many articles describing the sightseeing in Oxford and experiences of the living with hosts – all complimentary. Indeed one comment was that the British cooking was much better than it is made out to be! Many thanks to everyone who hosted guests from Bonn so hospitably.

OXFORD SCOUT LEADERS AT BONN SCOUT CAMP

In April 2012 a link was established between the DPSG scouts of Bonn and the scouts in Oxford when they came to visit us. They returned for the Oxfordshire One World camp in May 2013 and then extended an invitation to their District camp at Rhens in October. Unfortunately our Scouts couldn't take up the offer as it fell right in the middle of term time but Oxford was represented by Val and Bill Butcher who are Oxfordshire's assistant County Commissioners for Adult Support.

Val and Bill drove to Rhens on the 1st October and stayed in the town as health reasons prevented them actually camping but they visited the Jugendzeltplatz site on a daily basis, helping the leaders wherever possible. There were almost 200 young people on the camp ranging from six to eighteen (equivalent to our Beaver Scouts through to Explorer Scouts). These young people had to tackle a number of tasks in order to "graduate" from the camp and Bill and Val, in addition to helping in the cook house, also acted as judges on a couple of occasions.

The whole thing was a huge success, highlighting the differences yet similarities of the two Scout Associations. Whilst Val and Bill knew many of the leaders it was the first time with the youngsters. They were made very welcome and allowed the Germans to practise their English. They were reticent at first but once they realised they weren't being judged they enjoyed the opportunity.

Val and Bill came home having learnt a great deal about scouting in Germany. There are already plans in place to host some Bonn scouts leaders at a leaders' get together at Scout Headquarters in Gilwell Park in 2015.

SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARY



At the beginning of September the German Evangelical Congregation in Oxford celebrated the 75th anniversary of its first service in St Mary's Church (the University Church). The date of this original service (3 September 1945) was coincidentally the day on which Britain declared war against Germany.

The anniversary service was a very happy occasion, and at its close a number of tributes were paid, including one from the current vicar of St Mary's, the Revd Brian Mountford.

Alan Pope was able to convey a greeting from Bob Price, the Leader of Oxford City Council who was unfortunately unable to be present, and also to read out effusive greeting letters

from both the Oberbürgermeister of Bonn (Jürgen Nimptsch) and “our own” Bezirksbürgermeister Helmut Kollig.

The Pastor of the German congregation (Georg Amman) preached a very interesting sermon for this occasion (in English!), and with his permission we are including a shortened version of it here....

“When I prepared for this service, I was amazed again by the beginnings of the German services here at St Mary’s. Dick Milford’s invitation to the German Protestants- the strange and amazing fact that the first service here at St Mary’s coincided with the British declaration of war against Nazi-Germany on the 3rd of September 1939.

There had been German protestant services before, thanks to people like Nathaniel Micklem, the Principal of Mansfield College. Micklem had visited Germany in 1938, He was very much aware of the situation of the Bekennende Kirche, the confessing church who tried to oppose the pro-Nazi groups and church structures in Germany and Micklem was aware, too, of the plight of the German refugees, especially of the so called non-Aryan ones who came to Britain after the Pogroms of November 1938.

It was Micklem’s friendship with an exiled German theologian, Hans-Werner Kramm that brought the German services into existence, the first one with 8 attendees in Mansfield College Chapel in February 1939. A bit later came the invitation by Dick Milford, then Canon at St Mary’s, to this largely academic, *bildungsbürgerliche* crowd to come to the University Church.

I wonder how the “founding fathers and mothers” of the German protestant congregation would comment on us today, would view our situation, would question us, the fellow workers of God today.

If Gerhard Leibholz or Sabine Bonhoeffer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s twin sister, could be talking to us, or if Else Joseph could be here, protestant daughter of a Jewish vet from Berlin, or Mr Cale, who had been in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp after the Pogroms, or Miss Steinitz, whose father was a German solicitor.

I fantasize: I imagine that they would find it quite moving that there still is a congregation here - not too big but with lots of younger members, still quite a lot of academics, families and children who come together here, celebrating the fundament that is laid in Jesus Christ; teenagers who go to confirmation class, and older members, who have stayed here for good.

These first congregation members would probably be amazed if I would introduce them to my new colleague Laura – women in the Pfarramt, in the priesthood – and they would be even more amazed would I tell them that even in the Church of England there can be

women in the ministry on all levels now... I am not sure what Mr. Leibholz' or Pastor Kramm's comment might be on Anglican or Lutheran women bishops.

They would be fascinated to hear about how the British, French and Germans together commemorated the outbreak of WWI in early August, would be fascinated by the long period of peace in Europe and to hear about the attraction and strength of the European idea, all the problems notwithstanding - and they might be inclined to regard the uncomfortable feelings of many British as a bit of a luxury problem.

And we – we might tell them about the numbers of refugees today – half of Syria's population on the move from war and civil war and Islamist terror. People risking their lives trying to get to Europe across the Mediterranean, trying to reach this country via Calais.

And yet, with all these encouraging and the agonizing news, I imagine that Gerhard Leibholz, Else Joseph, Ilse Steinitz and others would be quite moved to know that we as German Protestants, as Anglicans, and faithful and searching people from the most different backgrounds listen together to the gospel, break bread, share the chalice, sing carols, and continue building on the foundation already laid."

NEWS FROM THE LINKS

The **Perm** Association is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year with a series of events. Yarmarka, the wonderful dance and folk song group from Perm is coming in April and will be performing at the Town Hall on 24th April. This group is really exciting to watch and the costumes and music are fantastic. Please put the date in your diary.

Later in the summer, Karavai, the equally amazing Balalaika group from Perm will be in Oxfordshire and they are performing on the evening of September 18th at the church in Bampton (made famous by Downton Abbey)

Leiden Link celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2016 and is planning a range of events, including some activities around celebrating the Oxford connection with Alice in Wonderland

It is hoped to put on a **Multi Link** music project for children in October 2015 in the Town Hall in Oxford, conducted by John Lubbock, conductor of the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square, who has been involved in so many exciting projects with us in the past. Members will be pleased to hear that John was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List. The work chosen for our project is Noyes Fludde by Benjamin Britten. It will be performed on 8/9 October-another date for your diaries!