



CIRENCESTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION

11th December 2015

German Christmas Markets Trip 2015

Cirencester Twinning Association travelled to its twin town Itzehoe via Hamburg on Friday 27th November to be met with a large room buzzing with different folk speaking English, German or Polish. The Itzehoe Twinning Association had arranged for more than 43 different people from Cirencester, Paslek and Malchin to be hosted with people from the town in celebration of over 30 years of friendships between the towns. Amongst the German hosts was the founder member of the Itzehoe / Cirencester connection, a former youth leader who first exchanged with Cirencester in the 1980's.

Those people new to Itzehoe were introduced to the town and its history by a tour guided by local historian Herr Aberhart Schmidt. Whilst relatively modern, the town has an interesting situation being located close to the Danish / German border just northwest of Hamburg and close to the North Sea. It has featured as a strategic location during many European wars. With 33,000 inhabitants, it is far bigger than Cirencester at 19,000, particularly when you take into account the 1,000 refugees who have been welcomed. They are currently accommodated in a disused printworks and local people are volunteering to provide essential German tuition and are welcoming refugees into their homes to introduce them to local customs and cultures.

The group returned to host families for lunch - the main meal of the day in a typical German household. After lunch was the first opportunity to visit an authentic German Christmas Market complete with *Glühwein* in Barmstedt. The market was very interesting and included specialities such as deep fried *Blumenkohl*, different types of *Wurst* and beautifully presented decorations such as Advent Wreaths.

Itzehoe's twin town in Poland is called Paslek. Their choir was also visiting for the weekend and during their trip, performed a set of Christmas Carols in both German and Polish. The group as a whole spent a convivial evening of "bring and share" style dinner and carol singing. It was a fast paced carol singing Polish lesson. If you care to log onto www.cirencestertwinningassociation.org.uk you will find some audio clips uploaded by our own Mr Richard Gunner!

Heading North the following day, for the first Sunday of Advent, and dressing appropriately for the weather with at least two pairs of socks, gloves and a hat, hosts, Polish and English guests visited the Gut Stockseehof farmhouse which holds a famous, good quality Weinachtsmarkt. Many sampled the *Flameküche* and the *Apfelpunsch*, and browsed for presents. Onto Lübeck in the afternoon, famed for its marzipan sweets, beautiful German-Danish style architecture and Cathedral with its three-naved pinnacled basilica.

For many on the trip, it was their first tie in Itzehoe, but clearly the outstanding feature of this trip was the hospitality of the hosts and their varied programme of activities for all involved. This enabled a valuable insight into North German culture and language. This is down to the Itzehoe Twinning Association www.partnerschaftsverein-itzehoe.de and Renate Wilms-Marzisch. The Association has developed an excellent programme and a wide network of hospitable members with a similar desire to travel, exchange knowledge and widen experiences abroad.

Each year Itzehoe extends an open invitation to the people of Cirencester to visit the Weinfest and the Advent Market. The Cirencester Twinning Association (CTA) would like to hear from you if you would like to be involved in any trips, hosting or would like to help expanding its junior activities or its links to France. Equally, if you would like us to find your son or daughter a penpal please get in contact at cirencestertwinning@gmail.com.



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Outside Itzehoe's Old Town Hall

L-R : Renate Wilms-Merzisch, Tom Kidman, Susannah Gilbert, Jan Kidman, Joan Oakshott, Jo Wood, Carol Trasler (out of 13 on the trip)



Gut Stockseehof Christmas Market





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Lübeck Christmas Market



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