

Malmesbury Twinning Association

Visit to Niebüll, Germany

6th - 11th July 2017

Thursday 6th

Nobody had remembered that this was the start of the G20 summit in Hamburg, which caused some delays to drivers, who were held up in the massive traffic queues; flyers were transferred from the airport in an official Niebüll fire engine, and were afforded a degree of priority. All arrived safely in the evening, however, and met their host families. We were staying with Eckhard, Erika, and son André, and had a wonderful meal to welcome us.

In the mornings we had a full German breakfast of cheese, meats, fruit, and a variety of breads – always fresh and full of flavour. Every afternoon we had tea or coffee with the most delicious, ample, and precisely-crafted cakes. We were lucky to arrive in the middle of the strawberry season, and had some terrific strawberry and cream desserts which would have not been out of place at Wimbledon. On our return we had certainly gained a few pounds!

The area around Niebüll is very green and has a relatively sunny climate, which encourages the people we met to spend a great deal of effort in cultivating and beautifying their gardens. These were delightful places to relax, especially in summer evenings. Public gardens, too, reflected this enthusiasm, and the gardens near Niebüll town hall and of the Emil Nolde gallery were showpieces. Malmesbury Park was a fine place to walk, jog, and get away from the bustle of the town.

Friday 7th

Uwe Christiansen, Niebüll's mayor, and Anja welcomed the eleven of us at a reception and lunch at the town hall; Julia replied and Jean translated. The very packed schedule of events was revealed. Guests and hosts circulated and met and introduced one another.

André took us to see Malmesbury Park in Niebüll - a lovely walk.

In the afternoon Erika and André took us to see the Emil Nolde gallery at Seebüll – apart from the gallery itself, we saw the beautiful garden and enjoyed cakes and coffee in the restaurant.

The evening event was provided by Beata and Wolfgang, helped by Christiana; they hosted a magnificent party, with cocktails in the lush garden, and a superb meal in what we took to be their banqueting room!

Saturday 8th

We had a trip across the border to Denmark's second city, Århus, where the first stop was the stunning art museum ARoS, with its spectacular "rainbow skywalk" on the top (10th) floor, giving a variously-tinted view of the city.

The "Garden" exhibition featured many German and English, as well as Danish painters and themes.

Also on display was a huge multi-coloured and bejewelled Valkyrie (a mythical Norse goddess who chooses those killed in battle who deserve to go to Valhalla). The piece, which dominated the entrance and extended vertically through several floors, was conceived and executed by women artists.

After lunch we joined the crowds shopping and generally enjoying themselves as we ambled along Strøget (the pedestrian street) to see the Cathedral – the longest and tallest in Denmark. Inside we

Malmesbury Twinning Association

Visit to Niebüll, Germany

6th - 11th July 2017

were struck by the white background which emphasised more dramatically the surviving mediaeval frescoes. The altarpiece, the font and the organ were all worth coming to see.

In the evening, Erika and Eckhart had a party to go to, and André entertained us and served our meal. This was delicious, but we discovered later that we were in disgrace, because we had eaten Erika's special gluten-free bread! (It was very tasty).

Sunday 9th

Another great day out – this time to the island of Sylt, the holiday resort island. It was great weather, just right for the seaside. We started with a train ride, then the bus to the northern town of List, where we lunched at the Gosch restaurant Alte Bootshalle (*Old Boathouse*). André had a ride on the big wheel.

There was an interesting permanent exhibition to explain the historical and ongoing events and forces which shape the North Friesland coastline, with descriptions and film of the tides and storms, together with an account of the wildlife to be found on Sylt and the surrounding islands. We took the bus back to Westerland, where we enjoyed the beach and a pop concert, and had cakes and coffee in the seafront restaurant, organised by Sigrun and Wilhelm.

The day out ended in a restaurant, which served a typical North German dish, common among sailors, called labskaus.

Monday 10th

We were driven through the surprisingly-varied countryside (marshes, plains, and low hills – evidence of glaciation) to see the flood defences at the mouth of the Eider river. The installation is similar in concept to the Thames barrier, and incorporates a lock passage for ships and a road tunnel.

The massive gates are raised and lowered strategically to preserve the surrounding countryside from flooding (much of it is now reclaimed) and to use the force of the outflow to wash away silt. We were made aware of the terrifying force of the tide by watching the water rushing underneath the gates.

Later we were entertained in the lecture room of the control facility. Jean did a sterling job in translating lengths of barrage, depth of piles, weight of gates, and volumes of concrete, to the delight of the engineers present.

In the afternoon, cakes and coffee were at Stegesand (Erika's home village), in the Café Zauberbuche (*The Magic Beech Tree*) – a delightful building which used to be the priest's house – lucky priest!

The evening was occupied with a farewell celebration meal in the restaurant under the town hall, with everybody present. We were treated to a cabaret featuring German and English sea-shanties and folk songs.

Tuesday 11th

Flying and driving home was a bit of an anticlimax – it was all over too soon. Nevertheless we savoured the drive through Germany (Hamburg was no problem this time)

Altogether we had a great time and enjoyed ourselves immensely. Old friendships had been strengthened (Jill had been visiting for 50 years), and new ones formed.