



British-German Club Duisburg: Review of Activities in 2006

On 7. April 2006 we invited a circle of about 30 friends to meet and discuss forming a British-German club in Duisburg. A British-German club is part and parcel of a large German town with cosmopolitan aspirations in the 21st Century, we are sure you will agree. Yet, as a number of German "Britophiles", i.e. friends of the British Isles, and British and American ex-pat locals have repeatedly remarked recently, there is neither a British-German society nor anything similar in Duisburg. As a result, we decided to find out the extent of this demand and met at the "Lindenwirtin" Mühlheimerstr. 47058 Duisburg (Kaiserberg – near the zoo) on Thursday, 4 May 2006.

The aim of the club is to promote global German-British relations on a local scale. Apart from meeting regularly, we aim to have interesting talks and lectures from visiting professionals, academics, dignitaries and/or "just" people from all walks of life. We do of course seek to involve the Duisburger Portsmouth Freunde and St George's School, the University Duisburg-Essen, Volkshochschule and local schools, plus organisations such as the British Chamber of Commerce in Germany and in general endeavour to incorporate existing activities and watch and possibly discuss films and drama productions. We intend to have a circle void of party-political bonds that is open to all age groups.

The regular meetings take place at the Lindenwirtin every first Thursday in a month. We also hold special events which are announced well in advance. Email is the main means of communication. The language spoken is English on the whole, with translation into German on request. We get by with as little red tape as possible.

On 4 May 2006 the Duisburg British-German Club met for the first time and 25 English-speaking Germans and so-called English native-speakers signed a declaration of intent to form and/or join the club. In fact, an interesting crowd of potential enthusiasts from a variety of backgrounds turned up. Whilst on that evening old friends got together for the first chinwag in years, new friends were made. At the same time, ideas on what we will do were exchanged and initial plans devised.

At our second meeting on **1 June 2006** we were delighted to be able to welcome the visiting delegation from Portsmouth who came along to the Lindenwirtin for a convivial evening. Thanks are due to the Duisburg Portsmouth Freunde for helping to arrange that. All kinds of contacts were made and who knows what manner of invitations for visits and exchanges. Since it was only our second meeting of the British-German Club Duisburg we were quite chuffed. All together approx. 45 people turned up, including numerous newcomers, who have signed the declaration to help form and/or join our club.

The British-German Club Duisburg met for the third time on **6 July 2006** and we were delighted to be able to welcome two colleagues of Lord Norman Foster's who came along to the Lindenwirtin for a chat. Thanks to the Mayor's office for helping to arrange that. Especially of course, we would like to thank Ms Grapenthin and Ms Wegener for being such great sports, turning up to give us an insight into life in London and the work of the superstar architect. An interesting discussion ensued on architecture and urban development. By the way, despite holidays 25 people turned up.

On 3 August 2006 the British-German Club Duisburg met for the fourth time and we were delighted to be able to welcome a colleague from Business in the Community. John McGregor is director of this public-private partnership based in Belfast under the patronage of HM Prince of Wales. With typical Irish charm John jested about what it was like to work for a royal and life in the Northern Irish metropolis. Thanks are due to ESTA Bildungswerk for arranging that. Then of course, Gwyn and Valda Davies stopped off on a tour of Europe to pay us a visit. Gwyn has been capped for the Welsh national waterpolo team 115 times and 5 times for Britain. Since members of Duisburg waterpolo clubs were there, an interesting exchange with the inevitable name dropping entailed in international sport took place. Despite holidays 25 people turned up.

The **British cooking event** at Katholisches Familienbildungswerk on 31 October 2006 went down extremely well, not least due to the creative genius and timing of Karl Hülsmann, our Maitre de Cuisine, who learned all about lamb with mint sauce and other delicacies from Brits at NATO Headquarters. It goes without saying, there are no left-overs, but there was a feature a few days later on Radio Duisburg. In actual fact, you could taste the mulligatawny soup through the loudspeakers.

On 7 September 2006 the British-German Club Duisburg met for the fifth time and 30 people turned up. Our circle has consolidated itself and now comprises more than 60 interested people from all walks of life, whilst the average attendance is 20 – 30. We plan to sign up as a registered society in December.

On 5 October 2006 twenty-five people turned up for our sixth meeting at which we had an unexpected musical treat, totally unplugged. Unparalleled! Jani and Steve Tipping, thanks to you both. You never walk alone.

Remember remember the 5th of November – we certainly will remember this **Guy Fawkes in 2006**. Full marks to our chief pyro-technician David Baker for the perfect woosh and to the children from Steinbart Gymnasium for the Guy and their professional recital and all-round performance. The event was attended by approx. 90 people.

Thanks to Ms Horton, Ms Jackson and the Staff at St George's School we had a most informative and enjoyable evening at **St. George's School** main building, Oak House, in Duisburg-Wanheimerort on 8 November 2006. Also, it is well worth mentioning that we have a number of ideas for joint projects and events in the coming months. Thank you very much for your hospitality!

Our last regular meeting this year was on 7 December 2006, an occasion to look back at a **successful year 2006**. Our circle now comprises more than 90 interested people from all walks of life. The average monthly attendance was 20 – 30 Duisburgers and people from neighbouring towns interested in our network in Duisburg, plus guests from afar. We are always particularly chuffed when the latter turn up and it was usually on the spur of the moment, as was the case with visitors from London, Portsmouth, Belfast, Walsall and St Helens. We will be signing up as a registered society in January and running a website is being discussed with a local school. Finally, we have some interesting events lined up for 2007!

Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2007, and remember for 2007 we will have the same procedure as every year: first Thursday in the month (**not January - Lindewirtin closes for holidays**).

Yours sincerely



Robert Tonks



Klaus Barbian

Duisburg, 23 December 2006