



## **Witney Town Band – Unterhaching 5<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

Fourteen members of Witney Town Band, plus 7 accompanying guests, departed London Heathrow T5 early on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July in a British Airways A320, climbing into a bright morning sky. They arrived at Munich International Airport in Bavaria at approximately 11am, to begin a 4-day programme of international relations and entertainment.

Unterhaching lies immediately to the south of Munich city centre, is an independent municipality with a population of 25,000, and is a twin town of Witney. The purpose of our visit was to take part in the official twinning ceremony, and to perform concerts at the town's annual beer festival. Unterhaching is twinned with several other European towns that include Bischofshofen in Austria, Le Vesinet in France, and Zywiec in Poland; delegations from these towns were also present.

The band was warmly greeted by our twinning hosts Thomas Jaeger and Bernard Maidment on arrival, and swiftly conveyed by coach to our hotel in Unterhaching. The band soon headed for lunch at a nearby hostelry to sample the local food and beer; after our early morning start and travel, this met with the band's full approval!

Friday afternoon saw WTB's first performance at the beer festival. We were positioned at the entrance to the festival site; Orts Park has a lake & fountain, fairground rides, and what appeared to be the world's largest beer tent! The 10-day festival season was about to start, and the band helped commence the festivities with an hour-long set. Playing outside as the public arrived, we performed a mix of popular tunes including numbers by The Beatles (Hey Jude, Ticket to ride), Dolly Parton (Nine to five) and The Proclaimers (500 miles). The first beer barrel was "tapped" by the Unterhaching Mayor, and the festival was underway.

Saturday was a day of rest and relaxation with no official engagements. The band was extremely well looked after by our Unterhaching friends, who cannot be thanked enough for making us so welcome, and for providing our transport and such delicious food and drink during our stay. We were taken by train into Munich city centre, and treated to an open-top bus tour to view the principal sites of the city. Memorable places included the beautiful Isar river, the central Marienplatz square with neo-Gothic buildings, and the Feldherrnhalle monument, site of the infamous Beer Hall Putsch of 1923. The band was then treated to a marvellous lunch, and after a hot afternoon strolling in the city, the day concluded with dinner in Munich's most famous beer hall, the Hofbrauhaus.

The official twinning celebration ceremony was on Sunday morning and held in the Kubiz Hall, attended by several hundred dignitaries and guests. The band of the Unterhaching Fire Brigade first played outside as people arrived, and then during the ceremony Witney Town Band shared the stage with two bands from Bischofshofen. There were many dignitaries in ceremonial costume, in particular representatives from Zywiec looking splendid in national dress complete with fabulously feathered helmets.

Our Mayor, Duncan Enright, delivered an eloquent speech of friendship, entirely in German, that was extremely well received and followed by heartfelt applause. It was clear that the alliance and comradeship offered by the twinning program will endure long after the uncertainties of our current political turmoil fades. The band played two pieces, first was the Barnard Castle march, and after prayers this was followed by a beautiful rendition of All Through the Night. Full of warmth and harmony, together with changes in dynamics and tempo, this was a performance of which the band was especially proud. Our multilingual euphonium player, Helen James, delivered a speech in German on behalf of Witney Town Band, thanking Unterhaching for their warm hospitality, their continued friendship, and for being such excellent hosts.

The formal ceremony was followed by a procession by all participants to Orts Park and the beer tent. Sadly, the fine weather had deserted us, the rain was falling, but spirits were never dampened, and the Austrian marching band played with gusto. Once in the tent, Witney Town Band set up on stage, and performed another hour-long set to the festival-goers. We started with a rousing "Salute to Sullivan", and then progressed through ragtime, some classic brass band numbers (Floral Dance), movie themes (Beyond the Sea from Finding Nemo), a Michael Buble number (Sway)... and of course ending again with a rousing rendition of The Proclaimers' 500 miles. It was a good performance, there were several hundred people in the audience, and we hope that we did Witney proud!

On Monday we had one final engagement, which was to play at lunchtime for the Unterhaching pensioner's club. Once more in the beer tent, we set up again on the now-familiar stage and launched into our well-honed repertoire. We played our final performance, which was well-received, and then we headed for home. A coach returned us to Munich International Airport, and we arrived back to Heathrow at 10pm.

This trip was a great success. As ambassadors for Witney, the band took its role seriously and we hope that we gave our best. It was an absolute pleasure to spend such valuable time with our German friends, whose hospitality and friendship made us so well received. For several members of the band this was their first time to Unterhaching and Munich, and everyone returned with fond memories.

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30<sup>th</sup> July 2019



Witney Town Band with Mayor Duncan Enright and Mrs Sally Anne Enright



On stage (left) during the civic twinning ceremony



The cornet section in full swing at the festival



Enjoying the Bavarian hospitality – Fliss Hill (left) and Zoe Franklin



The band sightseeing in Munich