



## British-German Club Duisburg

### Review of Activities 2010

*This year Duisburg was part of the European cultural capital Ruhr 2010. Duisburg in fact became the „port of the cultural capital“. Numerous events and activities of the Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft Duisburg contributed - as in years gone by - to the international variety of cultural happenings in our city in 2010.*

*Also in 2010, Portsmouth and Duisburg celebrate/celebrated 60 years twinning link, a model of post-war German+British understanding. Among the exchanges between municipal politicians was a visit by Oberbürgermeister Sauerland and Duisburg councillors to Portsmouth in May. Portsmouth responded with a delegation of councillors to Duisburg led by Lord Mayor Paula Riches in September. Robert Tonks and Klaus Barbian - as representatives of Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft and/or City of Duisburg - helped look after our friends from Pompey in the frame of official encounters and contributed to a jubilee booklet, edited by Duisburg City Hall. Numerous people congratulated the two cities on their achievement, their „diamond wedding“, including Lord Norman Foster, Jonathan Darlington and Consul-General Malcolm Scott. Some of our members – together with Duisburger Portsmouth-Freunde – travelled to Portsmouth, met and entertained Portsmouth folks in Duisburg. Special thanks to Peter Wende and Edith Ohletz at the Mayor’s office for the excellent co-operation.*

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This year we kicked off in **January** with Ray Jones, a Welshman. Ray is the only person in our midst who has an A Level in photography. With the aid of some of his favourite photos he demonstrated what makes Brits and Germans different. It was a very interesting insight from someone who not only travels around UK but also visits Germany frequently.

The co-operation with the Duisburg municipal library took on a new form: on **29 January** Jonathan Darlington, known by - and popular with - many as General Music Director of the Duisburg Philharmonic Orchestra, read some of his favourite passages from the works of Roald Dahl and others in the central library. Dahls version of Little Red Riding Hood spiced up with Jonathan's broad variety of vocal surprises will be remembered by the 150 people in the audience for some time to come. The proceeds of the event went to the book patronage project of the Duisburg Municipal Library.

At our meeting on **4 February**, Dr. Jan Pieter Barbian, Director of Duisburg Municipal Library, treated us to an extraordinary stroll-cum-insite around/into the libraries, architectural highlights, museums and galleries in New York and Washington. Many thanks Jan-Pieter!

From Tuesday to Friday (**2 - 5 February**) of the same week, meanwhile, Duisburg university English Thespians, DUET, put on Arthur Miller's „The Crucible“ at Uni Campus Duisburg. Our thanks are due to Nicole Winkler for involving members and friends of Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft Duisburg.

On **11 February** another event took place in co-operation with Volkshochschule. Robert Tonks told us all about his “Home Town“ Duisburg and how it is decorated with Denglish/Germisch expressions from top to bottom. In fact, he treated us to a satirical look at the quirky use of English and how it is changing contemporary everyday German. Using 66 photos and 66 caricatures, he illustrated to us examples of sayings and slogans in shop windows and shops and how they are just slightly off the mark from the point of view of the native speaker. Despite a full programme of carnival activities, 40 people came along to enjoy a witty alternative to the slap-stick and merry-making of carnival.

In **April** Stacey Blatt gave us a talk on health care in USA, which was as entertaining as it was informative. There can hardly be another area where the systemic structures and especially the mentalities in USA and western Europe are so different as in our respective health care systems.

At our meeting on **6 May** Roland Wolf told us all about his business plan „black soil“ and future possibilities of the sustainable, future recycling of human waste. It was a fascinating talk, which had people discussing for hours after.

On **7 May** we had a party in Paulus Kirche Duisburg-Hochfeld called „With friends in Europe“. Apart from excellent live music from France, Italy and Germany, the international societies involved had their respective traditional delicacies on offer. The event was the brainwave of Verein Gegen Vergessen e. V.

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Our Fifth Duisburg CityTalk „The EU in times of global crises“ took place at City Palais Königstraße, Duisburg city centre (in front of Casino), on Tuesday, **1 Juni 2010**, in co-operation with Europa Union, several international societies and Europe Direct Duisburg in the office for European affairs of City of Duisburg. The event was funded by European Union. Those taking part in the debate were MEP Jens Geier and Dr. Markus Schulte of European Commission, the British Consul-General Malcom Scott and Martin Hennicke, director Objective 2 office, North Rhine-Westphalia and finally Robert Tonks as moderator.

At our last last meeting on **10 June** inter-cultural studies expert at Duisburg-Essen University, Dr. Astrid Klooth, delivered an excellent talk on German-British stereotypes. Her inter-active approach really got people talking and chipping in with examples of their own.

Our **July** Meeting was at Hundertmeister just before summer holidays started. How could we not mention football (and goal-line technology)? By the way, the best team won.

*On 24 July 2010, the Loveparade tragedy happened in Duisburg at which 21 people died and more than 500 were injured. Numerous members of British-German Club Duisburg, their friends and relatives were at, or near, the venue, they followed the day and the aftermath in the media from home or on holiday. In the name of the members of British-German Club Duisburg, the chair entered condolences in the condolence book at City Hall in memory of the victims and injured. Our website bore the message: „our thoughts are with you“. What was true then, is true now and always.*

On **5 August** we had invited members and friends to our summer bbq. The evening gave us an opportunity to exchange thoughts on the tragic outcome of the Love Parade in Duisburg on 24 July 2010. Heinz-Günter Clasen filled us in with some balanced background information.

In the frame of the 60-year twinning link anniversary between Portsmouth and Duisburg the Deutsch-Britische-Gesellschaft in Duisburg and the Deutsch-Französische Gesellschaft Duisburg joined forces on **26 August** to present „Charles Dickens und Arthur Conan-Doyle in Portsmouth“ in the council chamber at Duisburg City Hall. Klaus Barbian and Wolfgang Schwarzer read excerpts from the works of these two world-famous authors and chatted about their lives and their strong links to Portsmouth. An entertaining and informative evening was had by an audience of approx. 40.

On **2 September**, Mair Edmunds Harrington, lecturer at Uni Duisburg-Essen, came along with her daughter, husband and friends for an evening of a special kind. Mair told us stories from Wales and Scotland, accompanied in several interludes by her daughter on the harp. Some of us Brits were reminded of childhood days in the valleys, hills and woods, and/or of bed-time stories told by mum and dad. In fact, all of us enthused to the accomplished story-telling style and the appropriate music to go with it.

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The European Youth and Citizens' Forum "Debate Europe in Duisburg" took place in Paulus Church in Duisburg-Hochfeld **3 - 5 September** 2010, an event by EUROPE /DIRECT EU-Bürgerservice, City of Duisburg, with the support of Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft et al. On 4 September, Robert Tonks welcomed the guests from Poland, Lithuania and Duisburg schools including St. George's, Duisburg's international school in Wanheimerort. In so doing, the tragic deaths and injuries at the Love Parade were remembered with a minute's silence. Lord Mayor Paula Riches addressed the approximately 150 young people assembled on 5 September.

For this year's Last Night at the Proms concert at Burg Linn in Krefeld on the second Saturday in **September** we had booked tables and seats for the evening. People brought food and drink and we dined in style with table cloth candles etc. Both the Duisburg Portsmouth-Freunde and three friends in town to set up the Conan Doyle exhibition on loan from the Portsmouth City Library at Duisburg library joined us and enjoyed a „quirky“ evening, as one of the latter put it.

In Duisburg Central Library, Monday **13 September** 2010, we had something special lined up within the frame of the 60-year-anniversary of the Portsmouth-Duisburg twinning link: celebrated radio journalist Hanjo Kersting read "Sherlock Holmes und der blaue Karfunkel" in German. The fascinating exhibition "Dem Mörder auf der Spur" - eine Ausstellung über das Leben und Werken von Sir Arthur Connan Doyle", comprising exhibits on loan from Portsmouth municipal library, lasted 13 September - 30 October.

This month's first Thursday meeting was at municipal library (Stadtbibliothek, Duisburg-Mitte) on **7 October** 2010 . Within the frame of the above-mentioned 60th anniversary of the Portsmouth-Duisburg twinning link, Duisburg crime story authoress of „Elchtod“ and other equally gripping novels, Patricia Vohwinkel, read some of her favourite Sherlock Holmes passages. Again, the proceeds went to the "book patronage project" of the Duisburg library foundation.

*By the way, the above-mentioned Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Exhibition on loan from Portsmouth City Library in the frame of Portsmouth-Duisburg 60th twinning link anniversary was a great success enjoying considerable media coverage.*

For those of you who like a good tune this was a must in your diary. Steve Tipping (vocals, guitar) and Jani Tipping (vocals) came to sing us some of their favourite songs at Volkshochschule Duisburg, on **29 October** 2010. They get better every time. It was an evening boasting British jeans and a debutant, i.e. "his majesty" Paddy Tipping (tin whistle).

Our favourite story-teller Mair Edmunds-Harrington „tortured“ those who dared to turn up with some truly gruesome stories at Pianissimo on **30th October** and get people in the mood for Halloween.

"Remember, remember the **fifth of November**, gunpowder, treason and plot". This year again we had the only Guy Fawkes Night bonfire in Germany worth writing home about, to celebrate this great British tradition and thus champion democracy, no less. Alison Arriotti told us some of the history and read out the unabridged version of „Remember remember ...“. Approx. thirty of us met as always at Freie

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Schwimmer, Masurenallee, in Duisburg-Wedau, thanks to our go-between Klaus Barbian. Thanks again to Axel Freude, alias Axel the Merry and his team of equally merry men, we had the finest pile of wood this side of Sherwood Forest. Des Jarvis' Guy was so life-like that some of the children thought he was real. Folks brought along ample food for the bbq and drink. Jacket spuds, crumpets, sweet chestnuts and marsh mallows went down well. There was a shelter of course, so no danger of getting wet, though there was a slight drizzle. The fire was two meters high and white hot at its climax. It was a great evening for the children, who insisted in staying to help douse the fire.