

and *The Entertainer* in 1902. The mood changed once more when the ensemble played the first movement (the allegro) of Vivaldi's *Concerto in G*. Again finding something completely different Elspeth, accompanied by Marian, brought the evening's entertainment to a close with a fine rendition of a traditional English ballad *Greensleeves*.

We had enjoyed an exceptional evening's entertainment, which had

something for everyone, with the music ranging from classical to traditional ballad to jazz and to ragtime all played with seemingly effortless ease.

Many thanks must go to Pat Hooper for organising the feast and to all who helped. The only problem Pat has now for the 2008 feast is that having set such a high standard in 2007 she will have difficulty in finding entertainment to exceed it.

January Meeting

WEIMAR AND DRESDEN

A talk by Lea Oakley reported by Alan Lee

The January meeting saw the return, of Lea Oakley, as a speaker, this time to talk about Eastern Germany illustrating her account with slides. In June 2005, Lea and her husband Chris took a short holiday in Germany, staying with their friends Manfred and Barbara who live close to Dortmund and Essen. A fascinating couple they are full of enthusiasm for the history, culture and art of Germany.

They set out bright and early and as they drove eastwards, they learnt how the arts had been encouraged so that composers, artists, writers and scientists flourished. They passed the discoverer of aspirin Bayer Pharmaceuticals; the Museum of Neanderthal Man; the house where Roentgen, the discoverer of X-Rays lived; the home of communism, where Friedrich and Marc Engels lived; the birthplace of Bach and the forests where the brothers Grimm wrote their stories. The further east they travelled the more noticeable was the modernization and rebuilding that had taken place, since 1989 and re-unification.

Later that day they reached Gelmeroda and the B&B that was to be their base for three nights. Close by in the village stood a church with a tall steeple, wonderfully illuminated at



Church at Gelmeroda

night. This had been made famous in the 1920s by an American artist, Lyonel Feininger, who had gained international fame.

The following day they visited the small city of Weimar, by the River Ilm, which had become a leading centre of culture in the 18th century. The Duchess Anna Amalia who was married to the Duke of Weimar had greatly encouraged the arts and after his death in 1754, and until 1775, she was Regent to her son Carl August and she had passed on her love of art, music and literature to him.

He had housed his literary collections which included works by Goethe, Luther Bibles and the largest collection of Shakespearean manuscripts in Europe, within the Anna Amalia Library. In 2004 this was severely damaged as a result of a horrendous fire, the roof was destroyed and 40,000 books were damaged. These collections are now housed in a new state of the art building which cost 25 million euros, ironically opened just five months after the fire.

The city's most famous resident was Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who lived from 1749 to 1832, the inventor of the glass barometer and an avid collector of fossils, minerals, butterflies and insects. He completed over three thousand works of poetry, literature and design. His house on the Frauenplan remains much as it was and it was there that he wrote Faust. Nearby lived Friedrich Schiller, writer of William Tell and Maid of Orleans, whilst yet another local famous resident was Franz Liszt.

In the late 1920s and the 1930s during the rise of the Third Reich Weimar was the hub of the Nazi regime and Adolf Hitler often addressed the people from the balcony of the famous Hotel Elephant.

Close by the city was the concentration camp of Buchenwald. More than 50,000 people died there, mainly German intellectuals, many of them Jews, although this was not an extermination camp. After the war, during the occupation the Russians built a huge war memorial overlooking the city to serve as a constant reminder of this dark period.

Maybe the golden ages are now returning, as in 1999 Weimar became the European City of Culture, 150 years after the birth of Goethe.

The second part of the couple's trip saw them visit the world famous Meissen porcelain factory as they moved on to Dresden. Known as *Florence on the Elbe*, after a painting by Canaletto, Dresden had grown in wealth and became the most beautiful baroque city in Europe, during the reigns of Friedrich August I and II, 1694 - 1763.

During WWII, on the nights of the 13th and 14th February 1945, British bombers, followed the next night by American planes dropped thousands of firebombs on the city. These raids caused the destruction of a great deal of Dresden and killed about 40,000 people. Since 1989, the restoration of much of the damage has taken place, but there is still much to do.

The *Church of our Lady* the *Frauenkirche* had been destroyed and the Russians fenced it off and stacked the remains where they had fallen. Since reunification, it has cost almost £200 million to rebuild it. A cross sent from Coventry as a symbol of peace was dedicated by the Queen in 2005. Some of the figures have been left in a blackened state which adds contrast and poignancy to the finished building.



Frauenkirche, Dresden 1991



Inside Schlosskirche, Wittenberg



Schloss Pillnitz

Other prominent features of the city include:

The Catholic Church, in a Protestant city, has a stunning white interior and a Silbermann organ. The heart of August the Strong is buried here and legend has it that, even today, the heart starts beating when a pretty woman passes by.

The *Semper Opera House* originally built in 1841 took 40 years to restore. Kings and princes, from the 18th and 19th Centuries, are portrayed on the *Wall of Tiles* one hundred metres long and covered in 24,000 Meissen tiles.

The *Zwinger*, built as a festival ground with spectacular fountains and baroque buildings, including the *Glockenspiel Pavilion* with its forty Meissen china bells is also noteworthy. *Cassel's Palace*, the home of the mistress of August the Strong is now a splendid tearoom and restaurant.

The *Statue of August the Strong* (1670 - 1733) which became a symbol of the city.

The Treasure Chamber of August the Strong, a part of this is the *Delhi Court* which has one hundred and thirty seven golden and enamelled figures, 5,000 diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls.

The couple took a boat ride on the Elbe to the *Pillnitz*, the summer palace of August, and were lucky that a wine festival with music was taking place. On their return westwards, they made a visit to

Wartburg Castle, Wittenberg where Martin Luther translated the Bible into German. He wrote 95 Theses and in 1517 he nailed them to the doors of All Saints' Church, the *Schlosskirche*. This is commonly viewed to be the beginning, or at least the spark which led to the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in Germany.

At the end of the visit as the four friends relaxed over a German beer they agreed that they felt stimulated and inspired by all that they had seen and learnt.

Lea, with her most enlightening talk, gave us just a taste of the treasures of Dresden and Weimar, where there is so much more to see. The area would make a wonderful holiday destination for us too.

Schlosskirchenturm, Wittenberg



THE PINES GARDEN & CALYX CENTRE

A talk by Olivia Clark and Edmond Rube reported by Terry Sutton

The history and progress of the six-acre Pines Garden at St Margaret's Bay was described to our members at a meeting at St Mary's parish centre on January 21st.

Guest speakers at the meeting were Olivia Clark, general manager of the St Margaret's Bay Trust, and her colleague Edmond Rube, the technical manager of the iconic Calyx conference centre that graces the gardens.



The lake at Pines Gardens

Olivia explained how the late Frederick Cleary CBE, who founded the gardens and the trust, first visited and enjoyed St Margaret's Bay when he was a boy and his father, a soldier, was stationed at Dover Castle. After a successful career in property Mr Cleary moved to live at St Margaret's and in the mid-1960s bought the six acres of the valley near his home (the former Napoleonic era military training ground) to prevent it from being built on. Mr Cleary died in 1984. (Alistair Gould, his grandson, is the chairman of the trust and was to have given the talk but he had another appointment in South America).

Olivia described the large monument in the gardens to Sir Winston Churchill, created by Oscar Nemon, and how the plinth on which it stands was changed and softened from black marble to rocks to make it more natural.