

Offering the Hand of Friendship

Audio contributors:

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Ann Kennard has been the chair of Bristol City Council for the last 17 years.

- I've got a quote here from General Sir Gordon McCreehy who was Regional Commissioner for lower Saxony at the time he agreed with this idea of linking the 2, but he added that they should limit itself to cultural contacts and I quote "in no way lending itself to exercising pressure on the military government with reference to political matters" so it has actually been very largely a cultural link. The very first allegation was just these 5 men and they were representing different parts of the life of Bristol and they were incredibly well received in Hannover they could not believe it in Hannover that there was this kind of friendship being extended so soon after the war, but then fairly soon 48/49 especially there were the first youth visits etc and that then continued from then onwards with all sorts of different groups.

Many people have been involved in Bristol Hannover Council over the years. Marina Dolman now president of Bristol City Football Club has supported and volunteered for the Council for years.

- I was in Bristol Hannover council from 63 until about 83 really

Here she is in conversation with Ann Kennard

- I'm very full of people getting to know other people from other countries and I think the BHC particularly has worked extremely hard and has a wonderful record when you come to think it started in 1947 with Alderman St Reed and Alderman Bert and
- Edward Seath and whose son is still around
- Yes and of course I remember Edmund Seath because he was a youth officer in Bristol and I was secretary of the first multi-racial youth club in Bristol called the Mill Centre so I know what a wonderful man he was and he was very keen on furthering the relationships with all countries from Britain's point of view
- Professor Closs
- Professor Closs he was my professor and I came to Bristol to study German and that's how my connection with Hannover came about. He was a dear man actually he was a delightful man. Very absent minded and eccentric, but we always felt very protective of him and he made me certainly me love German poetry and Philosophy and so on and he was very anxious that some of us at least should go to Hannover so in February 1956 I and the rest of my cohort went to Germany for 6 months and I think he was a real friend of Hannover.

That was Barbara Cowell. Professor Closs also found ways to get young people not associated with the university to go to Hannover. A young Marina Dolman had already been there on school exchange.

- And then you went there the following year I think you said.
- Yes, that's right. I think that was because I won a competition organised by the university here and I just had to write an essay about Germany and I did and apparently I won it and so that gave me another month in Hannover during school holidays. Professor Closs was the one who rang me up and told me I'd run the competition and so over the years I kept in touch with Professor Closs until he died.

Marina Dolman ended up living and working in Hannover for 18 months in her twenties. Ann Kennard has got to know Hannover well over the years.

- It's not a city that people think of to go to when they think about Germany although they should really, considering that we had a Hannoverian monarchy for quite a long time, but it's been beautifully restored, reconstructed and of course it has a transport system to die for. My very first visit to Hannover was actually in 2001. I was very impressed.

In August 2017, a large group went to Hannover to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the twinning

- There were 32 of us went over there and they really did treat us like royalty and there were ceremonies in the Rathaus and you know festival of cultures and the huge fireworks display that was absolutely wonderful and we had had them here for a great big event at the zoo with 2500 people and entertainment and you know the mayors were there and that was amazing.

Also on the trip was Alix Hughes, twinning coordinator

- I was going to say one of the most moving moments for me was in Hannover City Hall this chap Nick Rickard (he was deputy ambassador) if I remember rightly, he said so I bring greetings from the British ambassador in Berlin, he's on holiday, he can't be here today, but I wouldn't have let him come anyway. So I thought that's interesting then he said sort of this is my official foreign office speech I won't use that and he points to the balcony above him and he says as I stood there as a 12 year old school boy from Bristol taking part in the Hannover exchange you know I made a friend for life. I came back again after I started learning German. It inspired me to go on and I've had a career in the foreign office you know it was just a wonderful personal from the heart speech. I think some of our delegation were in tears. I wanted to hug the guy. I didn't even know him so for me that was a great moment.