

# WGC

## Wharfedale German Circle

**If you are interested in German and the countries where it is spoken, our club has plenty to offer you. We warmly welcome all members and visitors!**

### **Who we are**

We started in Ilkley in 1988 as the Ilkley Anglo-Germany Friendship Society to forge friendship links with Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Since then, our membership and activities have expanded a lot. So, when we celebrated our 10th anniversary, we changed our name to Wharfedale German Circle.

Our society has three main areas of activity:

- monthly evening meetings, with significant German content;
- events for foreign-language teaching assistants of all nationalities, to help them enjoy their stay in Yorkshire;
- hosting visitors from Germany and making return visits.

### **When and where we meet**

Our monthly evening meetings are generally on the 15th of the month, unless this is a Friday or Saturday, in which case we choose a day close to the 15th.

We meet in the upstairs Function Room at The Malt, Main Street, Burley-in-Wharfedale, LS29 7DN.

People start arriving at about 7.30 to get drinks etc before the meeting starts at 8pm.

Visitors are welcome, for whom there is a charge of £1.50 (deducted from membership fee if they decide to join). There is no charge for students.

### **Typical monthly meetings**

These attract, on average, 30 people and last about two hours.

We try to ensure a significant German content, but with English summaries and visual aids to help those who do not know much German. Sometimes the meetings are in English, but there is always the chance for German conversation before and after.

Several times per year we have talks by experts on topics including art, history, politics, music, science and current affairs,

all, of course, in relation to Germany, Switzerland or Austria.

Such experts include academics, speakers from the German Embassy and our local Honorary German Consul.

Our WGC members also like to give talks from time to time. Recent examples include the history of the German Mark, BMW, German weddings and the city of Cologne.

About once a year we have a music evening to which members bring along a piece of German music for us to play. Sometimes musicians such as the Chevin Hand Bell Ringers or the Stairheid Band entertain us.

We also like to show a German film (with subtitles) each year and occasionally we have games or quiz evenings, discussions or debates. In early spring the foreign-language assistants often organise an evening for us. We also have a reading group.

Sometimes we get out and about, for example for wine or food tasting at a local supermarket or to visit places with a German connection, such as Bradford's Little Germany or German church.

We have a local summer evening walk and a pre-Christmas celebration with food and drinks. And, of course, we always have an AGM, in April, with plenty of time for drinks and chat afterwards.

Our main fund-raising event is Otley Victorian Fayre, where we have a stall selling Glühwein and Stollen and a tombola.

### **Student events**

Between October and May each year we organise about 9 events for the foreign-language assistant teachers who come to live in Yorkshire and work in the local schools. These are for **all nationalities**; there are usually as many French students as German ones and a fair number of Spanish-speakers too.

At these events we speak the common language: English.

We organise day trips at weekends to local places of interest such as Ilkley, Bolton Abbey and Skipton. There are also evening trips to typically British entertainment, e.g. a Burns' Night ceilidh, a pantomime and a curry. Most years we host a pancake party and go bowling. We end in late May with our Bye-Bye Barbecue.

Leeds University also organises events for these students and we liaise with them to ensure there is a varied programme, also taking part in some of the trips organised by them.

Each year a few of the students keep in touch after they return home and several have been back to visit us. We also enjoy visiting them in their home towns on the continent.

### **Visits to and visitors from Germany**

Over the years we have made friendships in several German towns. In particular we helped to host Leeds-Dortmund twinning visitors in the early 90s. Through this we got to know several Dortmund families and we are still in contact with them.

In the mid 90s we established a good relationship with the Anglo-German Society in Minden, which continues to this day. There have been several WGC visits to Dortmund and Minden and we have played host to many visitors from these towns.

In addition, we occasionally organise trips to other places in Germany. We enjoyed a very successful short break in Dresden in 2004, where a former assistant teacher of German in Leeds helped us to organise our trip and proved to be a great guide. In 2008 we had a very enjoyable trip to Berlin as part of our 20th anniversary celebrations.

### **Our membership**

We have over 50 members and new members are always welcome. They are of all ages and have a wide range of ability in German: a few are German-born, many have learnt the language through evening classes or other study, some hardly speak it at all, but have a strong interest in countries where German is spoken.

They live mainly around Ilkley and Otley, but also come from the Leeds and Bradford areas in the south and Skipton in the north.

Membership fees are currently £10 per year for individuals or £15 for a family living at one address.

Some members serve on the WGC committee, which meets every two months or so. They organise the programme and look after such things as finances, publicity, membership, quarterly newsletter and website.

### **German conversation**

Before and after our monthly meetings there is plenty of opportunity for you to practise speaking German with other members, whose German ranges from fluent to faltering!

From time to time we have discussion evenings with round-table conversations on topics of interest.

### **And finally....**

We keep in touch with the other Anglo-German clubs in Yorkshire and sometimes attend their meetings and social events. We always exchange newsletters with them. The WGC is a member of the British-German Association.

We are also proud that two of our members have recently undertaken a research project into Otley's Teutonic Links, gathering information and recollections, especially about the POW camp in the town. The information is now in Otley Museum and the Second World War Experience Centre in Horsforth.