

THE 13TH YEAR OF THE GANG OF TEN

Once again it was reunion time for "The Gang" and this time a ten day tour of Italy. The ten being, Frank & Eileen Carter, and Harry & Jean Hobbs from Sussex Branch, Frank & Pat Hawley and Dennis & Tricia Parkes from Staffordshire Branch and Eric & Marion Owen from Wales.

The places visited over eight days of touring included Siena, Assisi, Rome, Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Venice, Verona and Lake Garda. It was a tiring eight days but very enjoyable. The weather was even kind and did not mar the visit. Plans are in motion for next year's reunion.

The title "THE GANG OF TEN" was given by past President David Read after trips to Australia and South Africa that he had organised in 1996 and 1999.



German IPA visit to 10 Region



10 Region IPA members provided assistance and hospitality to 40 visiting German IPA members from Monchengladbach.

The Germans were on their first trip to Colchester, Essex and for many of them it was their first visit to the UK – what better start could you have than to visit Britain's Oldest Recorded Town! Accommodation had been arranged at the nearby Holiday Inn Hotel at Eight Ash Green. The visit was 'low key' with many of the group 'doing their own thing' making the most of the 3 day visit. Some of the group had made their own arrangements to visit the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester which houses military detainees from around the country.

Others visited London for a day but all of them visited Colchester on the Thursday evening for a guided tour by 'IPA friend' Police Sergeant Mark Youngs. Mark is an official 'Blue Badge' Colchester Guide and with one of the group acting as an interpreter they enjoyed his stories of the history of the town. With the 'weather on our side' Mark was careful to include many of Colchester's 'historic pubs' in the tour to wet parched throats – well his anyway!

Others enjoyed a favourable Pound V Euro exchange rate and purchased many bargains. One of the guests, the son of an IPA member told me he saved £25 on an MP3 player compared to prices in Germany! Others bought quality shoes at a 'fraction' of the price back home.

Some also visited the picturesque town of Dedham and soaked up the atmosphere and enjoyed scrumptious food at the pubs there.

The 'highlight' of the visit was an IPA Hospitality Evening which took place at the Crown Public House at Lexden on the Colchester border. Usually we arrange such events at Colchester Police Station but this year due to a previous booking this was not possible. So the Beer Garden was 'taken over' and a 'typical' fish and chip supper was supplied from a local fish and chip restaurant. The Germans seemed 'fascinated' with mushy peas – but needless to say tried them enthusiastically! Unbeknown to me the pub had 'squeezed' us in on their 'Transvestite Karaoke Night'....?!! There were many surprised faces at some of the singers but once I had explained that there was no extra charge! - a great evening was had by all.

I was reliably informed that the evening was the 'talk of the bus' on the return journey home!

Steve Hunt