

Egészégedre (eggy-sheg-ed-ray) Hungary

IPA Veszprem County, Section Hungary, celebrated its 20th anniversary between 26 April and 1 May by organising a varied and interesting programme centred on both Budapest and Veszprem.

Seven members of Nottinghamshire Branch (Annie and I, John and Andrea Shand, Ted Pickard and Janet Overend and Christine Gibson) attended the entire programme at this year's event.

Julianna Papné Végső, International Vice President and organiser of the event, had arranged for an English speaking interpreter to accompany us throughout our stay in Budapest. This was absolutely vital as Hungarian is a very difficult language, unrelated to any other, and it is impossible to use any guesswork to comprehend meaning. Our interpreter Nicolett Szénássy is an economics student at the University of Budapest and her mother is a serving police officer, and IPA member, in Budapest. The group was even more fortunate because Nicolett had, prior to becoming a student, worked as a tour guide in Budapest and thus had a comprehensive knowledge of the city (good planning by Julianna, I'm sure).

On our first morning in Budapest we were welcomed with glorious weather and a short coach trip through the opulent shopping street of Andrassy Avenue and on to the Parliament building where we were given an extensive and fascinating tour. The building sits on the banks of the Danube in Pest and is overlooked by the Castle District of Buda on the opposite bank (Budapest is in reality two cities Buda and Pest). The Parliament Building was apparently inspired by Westminster Palace and was completed in 1904. Unlike Westminster Palace it is surmounted by a 96m high cupola. The interior is extremely opulent with lots of gold but the two things that were particularly memorable were a model of the building and the emblems of royalty.

The model is a scale model of the building made from matchsticks and a married couple constructed it in their 'council' flat until it outgrew the space. They presented the



Tony Berrington, John Shand and an old policeman

finished article to the State and in return the State presented them with a larger flat - now isn't that a nice reward.

We learned that the Hungarian emblems of royalty are the crown of King St Stephen (or Istvan), the orb and sceptre, and a sword. Other than the sword these are the originals and each has been stolen and recovered many times; during one such period the crucifix on top of the crown became crooked and it has remained thus since.

We were then treated to lunch at the ultramodern Budapest police headquarters and found a nice touch on entering was that, as well as display cabinets full of presented gifts, there was an art and craft exhibition for the enjoyment of all.

We then visited St Stephens Basilica; dating to 1867 it is the largest church in the city and contains the mummified right forearm of King St Stephen, known as the Holy Right, in a beautiful glass casket.

We then crossed the famous Chain Bridge and headed up to the Castle District and the Fisherman's Bastion and



Anne Berrington with officers from San Marino at the Fisherman's Bastion

Royal Palace; the latter is now an art museum, as there no longer is a Monarchy in Hungary. From these vantage points the views over Pest and the Danube are stunning and looking down on the Danube we saw cruise ships and dreamed of perhaps a future holiday visiting all seven countries through which this beautiful river flows.

In the early evening, having been joined by IPA members from Budapest, we boarded a somewhat smaller boat for an evening dinner cruise back and forth on the river. As darkness fell and the lights came on highlighting the baroque buildings we were treated to a magical sight and the Danube even appeared to be blue - of course, that view may have been enhanced by the wine accompanying dinner!



Davide and Maurizio from San Marino

Next day we saw more of the sights of Budapest including the thermal baths where the water has to actually be cooled to allow the bathers to swim without fear of being scalded. We then moved on to the Police Dog Training School at Dunakeszi just outside Budapest. Here both dogs and handlers are trained and there are usually some 200 dogs in training for all types of police and military work, particularly patrol and search for drugs and/or explosives. The training takes between 2 and 6 months. Although 10% may fail the course they find other uses for them rather than disposing of them to private owners. We were given an excellent presentation of the use of dogs in such stressful circumstances.

For all of us the star of the show, without doubt, was Joseph a 2 year old Yorkshire Terrier who with his handler, Major Tibor Hauszki, gave us a successful demonstration of his skills by searching a mock-up living room for drugs. Major Hauszki told us that whilst it was merely coincidental that Joseph had been recruited he believed him to be unique.

That evening we visited the police refresher training school at Csopak where Julianna or should it be Lieutenant Colonel Julianna, is the commanding officer. Formerly a basic training school this wooded site comprises some 54 hectares of land (that's about 135 acres) with only 27 single story buildings set in the grounds. Last year some 3000 students passed through the school for courses of 10 days duration. When we last visited Hungary some 11 years ago Julianna had been a Major and she explained to us that the rank has little to do with the job that you do but is based on service/age. Our visit to the training school had nothing to do with learning about Hungarian training however. No, of course not we were there for wine tasting. We had a very simple but nice meal followed by sampling many Hungarian wines and because of the language barrier the organisers had come up with the novel idea of a slide show with the detailed description of each wine there for us to read in English. As the wines took their effect one of the officers took his place at the keyboards and the dancing began. It was quite a surprisingly wonderful evening - not at all what one would have expected in a police training school.

We rose next morning to sunny weather and had a short guided walk around Balatonfüred. One item of particular interest was that during a walk along the tree lined lakeside promenade we were shown many mature trees which had been planted by Hungarian celebrities each of whom had also placed a plaque in front of the tree to record the fact. Not to be outdone Julianna had arranged that a tree and plaque be placed there to commemorate the IPA. Our



Julianna Papné Végső with the plaque



Outside Thermal baths in Budapest

morning was completed with a cruise on Lake Balaton and yet another excellent meal in the company of a growing number of our local hosts.

That evening the visitor numbers were swelled by the arrival of other visitors from Regensburg and Graz and we were now a respectable number. The attraction was a medieval evening at Sümeg and below the ruined hilltop castle we were treated to an exhibition of horsemanship followed by jousting and a very realistic medieval 'punch-up'. Despite inflicting severe injury on each other including one beheading, the protagonists reappeared shortly afterwards to serve us with our banquet.

Saturday morning, and our last full day in Hungary, began with a visit to County Hall in Veszprem for the traditional exchange of gifts. Serving officers were in uniform and all were impressed by the very short length of skirt worn by the female Hungarian police officers. We were aware that Hungary was not a wealthy country but didn't realise that economies affected the amount of material available for police uniform.

A big hit at the event, and at the Gala Dinner that same evening were our two new young friends from San Marino, Davide and Maurizio, who appeared in uniform to the delight of all the younger ladies (and the older ones too) all of whom demanded they be photographed together. These officers belong to a group called 'Garda di Rocca' which is clearly 'Guards of the Rock' upon which their country is built. Even though technically military they are all sworn in as criminal police officers. We believed that the 50th anniversary of IPA San Marino may be imminent and made great efforts to persuade our two friends that a Festival in San Marino was vital!

The Gala Dinner was superb with an excellent meal followed by a most unexpected cabaret. Commencing with a duo who performed modern music for general dancing we were then treated

to a ballroom dancing formation display team, in full tails and evening dress, each of whom then split off and took members of the audience onto the floor. This was followed by a group of retired ladies who gave us a very creditable western line-dancing display which was then followed by a very eastern foursome of belly-dancers.

The morning of our departure dawned, perhaps appropriately with grey skies and drizzle reflecting our mood at having to leave behind the superb hospitality we had enjoyed. With a late flight to catch our hosts didn't want us to just be hanging around all day so they took us to the Benedictine abbey at Tihany which had been in view across the lake from our hotel. Built in 1055 it is sumptuously decorated and has a tiny Romanesque crypt which contains the mortal remains of its founder King Andrew I.

Hungary is a country of only 10 million people with a beautiful capital city astride the enchanting Danube and plenty for all to see and do. Having joined the EU in 2004 they are awaiting entry into the Euro. Now may be a good time to visit whilst the currency is still the Forint and while prices are still incredibly low. Although the language is challenging, the welcome and hospitality of the people could not be warmer. If you do go 'cheers' is 'egészégedre' and is pronounced 'eggy - sheg - ed - ray'.

Tony and Anne Berrington

To view more photographs from this event visit: www.ipa-uk.org/Notts-Celebrate-in-Hungary

Editor's Note: Are you planning a similar branch trip or event? Send your Branch Twinning News to lee.hemmings@ipa-uk.org