



WE SEND GOOD WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR TO OUR "NEWCASTLES" AROUND THE WORLD !

This issue is full of seasonal photographs - of course! : below, from Nyborg, Denmark (left) and Newcastle, Ontario, Canada, and many more inside.



On the left, here is the Christmas tree on Nové Hradý's town square (Czech Republic) - and on the far right is the tree from Jaunpils, Latvia.



But it's not all snow and warm clothing, because it's summertime in our "Newcastles" in the Southern Hemisphere. In Newcastle Australia (above) it's the reopening of the Ocean Baths - see page 9 for the story.



Merry Christmas

And a Happy New Year!



MORE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

In **Nové Hradý**, Czech Republic, early December brings the celebration of “Mikulas” or Nicolas.

Some (mainly European) countries mark December 5th as the memorial day of Saint Nicolas, third century bishop of Myra. It’s in the appearance of his helpers that the local traditions differ. In Central Europe, the helpers are devil-like figures and their origins go back to pre-Christian Nordic and Greek mythology. Dressed in animal hides, with horns, and a tail, they look like satyrs and fauns. Large masks or make-up are used to strengthen the scary impression. They carry chains indicating they had been tamed and are now helping their Saint. They also often carry bells, large jute sacks, and rods of birch branches.

In the Czech Republic, on Mikulas’ eve, groups consisting of St Nicolas, angels, and many devils roam the streets and visit the houses to find out which children have been good and which have not, to chase away bad spirits. This dressing tradition has survived to this day, and is purposely scary. Here are photos from this December.



A firework display took place on the square to mark the arrival of Mikuláš, accompanied by his angels. Thanks were given to Technical Services for clearing heavy snow from the town square to allow the gathering to take place.

Novohrad devils re-appeared on December 8th for the Mikulášsko-devil party in the hotel Máj, with dancing to the band Kredencz.

The switching on of the Christmas lights in **Newcastle upon Tyne** always attracts large crowds and this year was no exception.

Lord Mayor Veronica Dunn was helped by local media personalities - and some familiar Disney characters who were appearing in “Disney on Ice” at the Newcastle Arena



German Christmas markets are world-renowned, and the people of **Neuburg an der Donau**, our "Newcastle" in Bavaria, have been enjoying their own Christmas market, the ice arena and other seasonal festivities.



An attractive seasonal exhibition at the Koželužna gallery in **Nové Hradky**, our Newcastle in the Czech Republic is "The of Art of Giving Gifts at Christmas".

You can view or purchase paintings, decorative stoves, light holders, mugs, bowls, jewellery, books, calendars, Christmas decorations and many other seasonal artworks, all made by local craftspeople.

We liked this photo (*right*) from **Neufchateau**, Belgium with large Christmas tree, other decorations and attractive lighting of the Palais de Justice (courthouse).
The Christmas market is below.



On December 3rd in Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, the popular annual Bikers for Kids' Toy Run kicked off the city's festive season. The event, running for over 40 years, raises funds and contributes toys for children in need, and also funds for the the Salvation Army Christmas Appeal. And what a year! Record numbers of Bikes; Family Fun Day attendees of 5000; over 5000 gifts donated with an estimated value of over 100,000 dollars; 30,000 dollars worth of gifts purchased.



Following the bike run, spectators and riders enjoyed the music performed by local talent, Santa photos, food stalls, markets and motorcycle displays. The initiative brings joy into the lives of countless families in the greater Newcastle region through the fundraising efforts.



Christmas 2023 in **Nové Zámky**, our Newcastle in Slovakia, began with a Christmas craft market and the lighting of the first advent candle. Arriving by train was "Mikuláš" (St Nicholas/Santa Claus) - greeted by Mayor Otokar Klein (*bottom, centre*). Together with an angel (good) and a devil (not so good), Mikuláš distributes gifts to children. The lighting around the town centre is spectacular (see above). There are many concerts on the main square. Nové Zámky sends good wishes to all other Newcastles for peaceful holidays and a happy new year.



Here are photos that mark the beginning of the Christmas time celebrations in **Neuchâtel**, our Newcastle in Switzerland. Cabinet members **Violaine Bletry** and **Didier Boillat** were present at the launch, together with the local singer **Loris** (centre).



Pantomime (or “panto”) is a type of musical comedy stage production designed for family entertainment. It was developed in England and is performed throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland and (to a lesser extent) in other English-speaking countries, especially during the Christmas and New Year season. Modern pantomime includes songs, jokes, slapstick comedy and dancing. It generally combines gender-crossing actors and topical humour with a story based on a well-known fairy tale, fable or folk tale. Panto is a participatory form of theatre, in which the audience is encouraged and expected to sing along with certain parts of the music and shout out to the performers.

Pantomime has a long theatrical history in Western culture dating back to the era of classical theatre. It developed partly from the 16th century commedia dell'arte tradition of Italy and other European and British stage traditions, such as 17th-century masques and music hall.

Locally-born Michael Harrison not only writes and produces the pantomimes for **Newcastle upon Tyne’s** Theatre Royal every year but for many other theatres around the United Kingdom.

This year, the show at the Theatre Royal is *Pinocchio* (see photo below), and performers **Danny Adams** and **Clive Webb** will be starring for the 18th successive year in Newcastle, alongside co-star singer **Joe McElderry** - he’s another local boy, who won the 2009 series of the television show *The X Factor*.

Year after year, the pantomime at the Theatre Royal is the fastest-selling in the country.



It may not be winter in the southern hemisphere, but Christmas is a time for celebration in many parts of the world, in much the same way. Here's the Lord Mayor of **Newcastle, New South Wales**, Australia, **Nuatali Nelmes** (3rd from left) with the city's largest Christmas tree (and Santa Claus and local families).

New Castle in Pennsylvania always has one of the most spectacular Hometown Holidays Christmas parades and this year was no exception. The theme this year was “100 Years of Disney”. The historic Warner Cascade Theatre Museum in New Castle has been part of this year’s centenary celebration of the Warner Brothers Film Studios; this is the site where the four Warner Brothers – Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack – opened their very first theatre – the Cascade – on February 2nd, 1907. The Warner Studios officially celebrated its incorporation 16 years after their first theatre, in 1923. The New Castle parade, led by the “Grand Marshall” Bugs Bunny, also included ice sculptures, arts exhibitions, music, snow ball fights and snow blown in over the rooftops.



For over 20 years, the Plancker family from South Tyrol have enriched the Christmas market of **Neuburg an der Donau**. At their inviting stand, Anselmo and Christian Plancker, from Wolkenstein in Grödnertal, present a multifaceted selection of their superb wood-carving art and they have become as well-known in Ottheinrichstadt (Neuburg) as their own homeland.



Kabuki is classical Japanese dance-drama, and it is celebrated at the end of each November in a festival in **Shinshiro**, our "Newcastle". Kabuki is known for the stylisation of its drama and for the elaborate make-up worn by its performers. Kabuki was proclaimed by UNESCO as an intangible heritage, possessing outstanding universal value.

Christmas cheer is in plentiful supply in Muslim-majority **Kota Bharu**, our Newcastle in Malaysia, with churches welcoming people from every race and religion to learn more about the Christian faith. Here are the carol singers from among the Christian churches who perform from door to door.



Latvia's Independence Day, officially known as the Proclamation Day of the Republic of Latvia, is celebrated annually on 18 November and marks the anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence of Latvia by the People's Council of Latvia in 1918. **Jaunpils** is one of the many communities where the occasion is marked by a moving torchlight procession in honour of the freedom fighters.

Herceg Novi, our Newcastle in Montenegro is now officially on the cultural route of the European Federation of Napoleonic Cities. The President of the Municipality of Herceg Novi, Stevan Katic, and the President of the European Federation of Napoleonic Cities, Vincent Chauvet, officially signed Herceg Novi's accession to this federation at a ceremony in December. The history of the city is closely linked to that of Dalmatia and the Illyrian provinces of the First Napoleonic Empire.



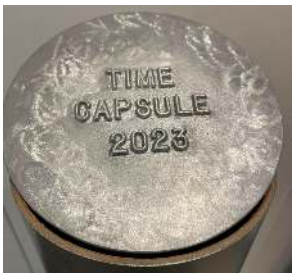
On 7 July 1807, following the Treaty of Tilsit signed between Tsar Alexander I and Emperor Napoleon I, the town of Herceg Novi and its region came under French administration. The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Embassy of France in Montenegro, the Ministry of Culture and Media, councillors and representatives of municipal institutions and agencies.



The crowds turned out in very large numbers on December 11th in **Newcastle-under-Lyme** for the return of the spectacular lantern parade in the town.



NEWS



During the year we have featured the 850th anniversary celebrations in **Newcastle-under-Lyme**, England. The borough received its royal charter from King Henry II in 1173. The year has ended with a closing event at Brampton Museum in the town and included the sealing of a time capsule for burial.



Those who attended signed a scroll for the time capsule and spoke of the anniversary year's lasting legacy. A letter of acknowledgement and congratulation has been received from King Charles.



Mayor Simon White at the closing event.



One of the big festive season attractions in **New Castle, Pennsylvania, USA** is the opportunity to tour the historic home of Alex Crawford and June Hoyt where the Hoyt Art Centre is based. This is not just your average art museum.

It is an interactive experience for the whole family, with not only galleries but several different classes, events and even a school of art.



In the Hoyt House, there are twelve rooms featuring 20 trees and thousands of lights amid the museum's collection of art and antiques in the 1917 Tudor Revival estate. Check out <https://hojartcenter.org/maingallery/> for current and upcoming exhibitions and to find out more about this innovative centre.

The Hindu Shiva Temple in **Newcastle, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa** has been marking its 120th anniversary this year. Built in 1903 this unique temple is reputed to have the largest cella dome of its kind in the southern hemisphere. The cella is the chief apartment of the temple where the statues of the Gods and Goddesses are placed. In 1913 Mahatma Gandhi prayed at the temple while leading the coal miners' march through the town. This followed the "Indian Strike" which Gandhi led, when over 20000 men, women and children engaged in protest action against discriminatory legislation that restricted their economic, social and political mobility.



"Peek-a-Boo" is activities for children aged 1-4 and their guardians of many different nationalities to interact with each other, held by **Shinshiro** International Exchange Association. They had a Christmas party this December, and children had a wonderful time -all the games and performances are organised by their mamas and papas. Of course, the moment of meeting Santa Clause was the highlight of the party!

Preparations have begun for the 175th Anniversary of Lawrence County, **Pennsylvania**, in 2024. This will be a year long celebration and mainly in the county seat of **New Castle**. The year will end with an expo celebrating all that is and has been Lawrence County, plus a holiday themed parade celebrating those 175 years.



MORE NEWS

The flags were out at the Rabati Fortress, the castle in Akhaltiskhe, our Newcastle in the Republic of Georgia, on December 15th to mark the country gaining the official status of a candidate for EU membership!

Great news in **New Castle Indiana** where a grant of two million dollars has been received to help fund projects to make its downtown more vibrant and attractive to residents and visitors. The photo below shows Mayor Greg York and other key project members celebrating the award at the city's Castle theatre.



The government of Kelantan state in Malaysia, with its capital as our "Newcastle" **Kota Bharu**, is set to collaborate with almost 50 locally-born influencers on social media to promote "Visit Kelantan Year 2024". These include Wan Hassan (pictured, kneeling, second from the right in photo below) who has been an important representative of Kota Bharu in Newcastles of the World.



Kelantan Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage Committee chairman, Datuk Kamarudin Md Nor, said that as native Kelantanese, the influencers will be the best "salespersons" to promote the uniqueness and attractions of the state to lure both local and foreign tourists. He added that to enliven Visit Kelantan Year 2024, efforts are also being made to resume operations of Singapore Airlines' low-cost carrier, Scoot, for the Kota Bharu-Singapore route, which has been suspended since the Covid-19 pandemic.



Teachers and pupils of the Art School of **Akhaltiskhe** in the Republic of Georgia have completed a project to beautify many of the roads and pathways in the city.

The City of **Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia** has welcomed swimmers back into the water at the historic Newcastle Ocean Baths. An early morning swim and selfies with Santa heralded a highly anticipated return to the much-loved facility, as the upgrade of the pool and promenade areas reaches its final stage. The Baths are over a century old, and the upgrade will enable future generations to continue to enjoy the facility.



A special event was held at the castle in **Jaunpils**, Latvia, in November, on the anniversary of the proclamation of the Latvian Republic, to honour people of the parish for their achievements, selfless work and activity for their parish, county and country.

Congratulations went to the winners of the Tukums Municipality Award - Kaspars Leimani, Aija Svāni, Ilza Renčbergs and Ieva Renčbergs, Judīte Valaini, as well as the People of the Year nominations for Jaunpils:

Honorary Youth - Baiba Rasa,
 Annual Society - "BK Jaunpils",
 Young man of the year - Emils Zekunde,
 Senior of the year - Ligija Rutka,
 Family of the year - Steini family
 Employee of the year - Arnis Kārkliš,
 Teacher of the year - Agita Trokša- Grāvīte,
 Young Member of the Year - Kristine Liepina,
 The annual amateur arts collective - Jaunpils mixed choir,
 Event of the year - Charity Concert "With Music Against the Storm"



A ground-breaking ceremony and site visit for a Madadeni Clothing and Textile Industrial Hub in **Newcastle KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)**, South Africa has taken place and was attended by dignitaries such as the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for KZN Economic Development and Tourism, Siboniso Duma. "As part of our efforts aimed at rebuilding our economy and to create jobs, today we will be slowly realizing our long-held vision of the establishment of a Clothing and Textile Industrial Hub in Amajuba District Municipality," explained MEC Duma.

Situated in Madadeni township on a 10.7-hectare piece of land along Yellow Street, Ithala Industrial Estate, this 46 million rand (2.3 million euros) strategic asset is expected to generate approximately 4,500 jobs upon its completion. MEC Duma pointed out that 100 workers from the local community have already been employed for the project, and the government plans to create more than 1,000 jobs during the construction of Phase One.



ORGECO, a company based in **Nové Zámky**, our Newcastle in Slovakia, is one of the most important companies in Europe for the production of display lighting decors for Christmas interior and exterior lighting. As well as lighting for homes and gardens they specialise in decorations for parks, shopping centres, squares and entire town and village displays. 98% of the company's production has been realised abroad (European, Canadian, American market) and they have participated in creating the Christmas ceremonies in many places in Europe such as Paris, Monaco, London, Vienna, Madrid, Dublin, Prague and Rome.



HISTORY ON THE WALL

Painted on a building in downtown **New Castle, Indiana** is a wonderful mural that depicts much of the history and heritage of the city and the people who feature most strongly in that history. Having seen a photo of the mural, we were interested to know the detail - we are indebted to local photographer, author, genealogist, and historian Mark Sean Orr for the information below that he has supplied. The artist is Pamela Bliss - see the foot of this page to find out about her.



AT THE TOP OF THE BUILDING: "New Castle" with a tilted "S", a nod to pop artist Robert Indiana (1928-2018) who is famous for his LOVE sculpture, INDIANA Obelisk sculpture, and his American Dream series. AND BELOW THAT - Roses because we were once known as Rose City. We grew roses that were sought after worldwide and whose buds were as large as a goose egg.

THEN, FROM THE LEFT:

Wilbur Wright - famous inventor(s) and aviator(s), on the Wright Flyer at Kitty Hawk North Carolina. The Wright brothers were first in flight.

General William Grose on his horse. Grose was a General in the Civil War. His former home is now our Historical Society & Museum.

The entry arch at Baker Park, named after our first 4-time mayor Sidney Baker.

The sign for Henry County Memorial Park, our living war memorial park, established in 1920.

Charles Hernly (1857-1914) portrait-politician and industrialist. We named an elementary school after Hernly.

The high school that was known as the "Castle" was built about 1895 and rezed in 1974.

A Maxwell automobile. The Maxwell factory opened here in New Castle in 1907 and then became the Chrysler manufacturer

WWI General Omar Bundy, the General who would not retreat. Bundy refused the order to retreat by a French commander at the battle at Belleau Wood. *My grandfather Harold Obediah Orr has a battle clasp for that battle. We named an auditorium for Bundy and there is a memorial to him in our Memorial Park. We also have a Bundy Avenue.

The Big Blue River runs through the center of the mural. It's where American Indians first settled in Henry County.

An eagle at the mouth of the Big Blue River.

The Interurban line which ran north, south, east, and west began in the early 1900s and ended in about 1941.

Walter Scott Chambers portrait. Chambers was a newspaperman and founded the New Castle Democrat newspaper. He "waged a relentless war against the Ku Klux Klan as an enemy of tolerance and hence of all freedom and democracy."

The Castle Theater (movie theater) which opened in 1935 and closed in about 2015. The movie showing on the marquee is "Raintree County" which is based on the 1948 novel of the same name by local author Ross Lockridge Jr., and known by some as The Great American Novel. The novel is about the people and places of Henry County, Indiana including New Castle which is known as Freehaven in the novel.

A depiction of the Courier-Times newspaper that tells about the 1932 New Castle State Champion Basketball Team here led by Vernon Huffman, arguably the greatest athlete to come from Henry County. Huffman was an All-Star in Basketball and Football. We used to have a football field named after him.

Street signs designating Main Street and Broad Streets.

Danny Danielson portrait-philanthropist, and volunteer. Danielson was awarded the Sachem Award for exemplary virtue which is the highest honor in Indiana.

An American flag. AND LAST - The Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, based in New Castle - the groundbreaking was July 21, 1988



"I began observing and drawing as a young child which lead me to take all the art classes possible in high school. I continued my art education in college and received a bachelors degree with a focus on studio arts. I furthered my education at Indiana University and earned a Masters of Arts Administration degree. Most of my canvas works are predominantly in oils, however, I do some work, such as interior murals, in acrylics and mixed media. The outdoor murals are typically created with exterior and/or industrial grade paint to withstand the elements. My subject matter is figurative, landscape, architecture, representational, portrait and many other subjects. I use oil, acrylic or house paint. I use boom lifts and scaffolding to reach heights. I also paint smaller canvas paintings. I have painted many historical, diverse, ethnic murals".

CITIZENSHIP AWARD IN NEUCHÂTEL



Cultivating the land, cultivating connections and creating beautiful friendships: the New Gardens of EPER, a project that brings together migrants and other Neuchâtel residents around a vegetable garden, has received the 10th Citizenship Award of the City of Neuchâtel.

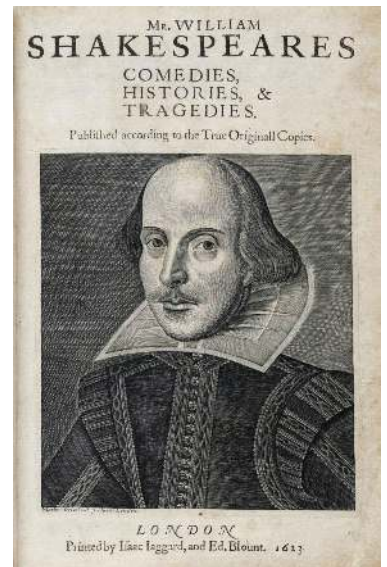
The Municipal Council chose to award this project, out of 17 submitted to it, for its strong symbolic dimension and its concrete contribution in terms of integration.

The winners received 5000 Swiss francs as well as a work created especially by a student from the Academie de Meuron. "Since 2014, more than 140 nominations have been submitted for the Citizenship Prize," said municipal councillor Thomas Facchinetti, which demonstrates the impressive vibrancy of civil society in the municipality area."



SHAKESPEARE'S "FIRST FOLIO" 400 YEARS AGO !

"Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies" is a collection of plays by William Shakespeare, commonly referred to by modern scholars as the First Folio, published in 1623, about seven years after Shakespeare's death. It is considered one of the most influential books ever published and has been the occasion for a great national celebration in the United Kingdom this year to mark its 400th anniversary.



Containing 36 of Shakespeare's plays, it was prepared by Shakespeare's colleagues John Heminges and Henry Condell. Although 19 of Shakespeare's plays had been published in quarto before 1623, the First Folio is arguably the only reliable text for about 20 of the plays, and a valuable source text for many of those previously published. Eighteen of the plays in the First Folio, including The Tempest, Twelfth Night, Macbeth, Julius Caesar and Measure for Measure among others, are not known to have been previously printed. The Folio includes all of the plays generally accepted to be Shakespeare's. Of around 750 copies printed, 235 are known to remain, most of which are kept in either public archives or private collections.



Newcastle upon Tyne has a special association with Shakespeare. For around 30 years, the city was the "third home" (after Stratford-upon-Avon and London) of the Royal Shakespeare Company who performed a season of Shakespeare's plays every year, across two and sometimes three of the theatres in the city.

"Shakespeare Street" in Newcastle city centre runs alongside the Newcastle Theatre Royal, and in the east end of the city is this interesting brick mural (on a house gable end), near to a series of streets that carry the names of Shakespeare characters.



Christmas celebrations in New Castle, Indiana, USA.

SPORT

On November 18th, the Forum Eight Rally Japan 2023 took place in **Shinshiro** for one of its stages. This year's rally winner was Evans Elfyn of Great Britain with his co-driver Martin Scott, of the Toyota Gazoo Racing team.



The Toyota World Rally Team scored a dream 1-2-3 finish on home roads at Rally Japan, concluding another extremely successful World Rally Championship season.

The Shinshiro Rally, which began in 2004 and has been held for 20 years, has now come to an end. The city will be exhibiting photographs, posters, goods and other memorabilia of past tournaments during February 2024.



In late November, the city of **Nyborg, Denmark**, held another celebration for their local Danish champions in a wide range of sports and age groups. Mayor Kenneth Muhs said “the city hall was overflowing with both young talents and skilled seasoned masters, who we salute for their great achievements this year”



We reported in the last newsletter that **Herceg Novi**, our Newcastle in Montenegro, has won the prestigious title of European City of Sports for 2024 from the organisation - ACES Europe.

The official ceremony was held in Brussels on December 7th - *see right* - Herceg Novi Mayor Stevan Katić is second left in the photo.

It has been also been announced that Herceg Novi is planning an Olympic-size pool with a theatre capacity of more than 1000 seats, and within the complex will be incorporated space for a business centre. “We will be able to organise large-scale competitions and European championships in water polo or swimming, said the the Mayor”.



Sport Newcastle (**Newcastle upon Tyne**) promotes and supports talented young sportsmen and women. At the 2023 annual dinner in November, the awards to the “Rising Stars” were presented by Lord Mayor Veronica Dunn and Newcastle’s Olympic champion and world record holder (triple jump), Jonathan Edwards - in the front row of photo.



The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Sarah Hunter (*left, above*), recently retired England’s rugby union captain and record cap-winner (141 international caps).

Another big winner was Kieran Reilly, BMX Freestyle World and European Champion.

YOUTH



The youth from Newcastle of the World are organising a photographic competition on the theme of Winter in Newcastles. We'll show the winners in our next edition.



TO ALL YOUNG READERS - let's hear the news from you or your youth group for our next edition - email newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com.



Youth council members from **Shinshiro, Neuburg** and **Neuchâtel** have been meeting online to evaluate the future use of Instagram and Connectle as communication platforms.

Newcastle Municipality, South Africa is backing Philile Lethokuhle, a talented local educator and model for the award of Best Social Media influencer at the SATMA (South Africa Traditional Music Achievement) awards. Her youthfulness is matched only by her ambition, as she passionately grooms over 500 youngsters through the Unfolding Teen Coaching Center, known as Oqhawe and oQhawekazi. Philile is dedicated to reviving and embracing cultural roots within the Newcastle community.



The **Nyborg (Denmark)** Municipality youth council has elected its very first young mayor and deputy young mayor. There were six candidates - Alfred Nørregaard (centre, light blue top) was elected mayor and Vega Wind as deputy.

Dear Newcastles family,

FROM THE NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD CO-ORDINATOR

It is time to close the books on 2023 and look forward to the New Year. At the start of this year, when we were discussing the future of the Alliance and the options for the 2023 conference, deep in our hearts we were keeping our fingers crossed on which direction this would go. After five years without conferences, two years COVID pandemic and still ongoing COVID flare-ups, the continuing war in Ukraine, and the ongoing problems with air travel, it was unclear if there still was enough interest in carrying on. The initial response, and the registration for the conference, also did not look promising. However, the final tally and results of the 2023 conference proved without doubt that within our membership, there is a strong commitment to continue and even extend the Alliance and intensify its activities.



We were able to welcome new members in our midst, most existing members gave their full support, and even some of the hesitating members decided to stay with us. Despite not being able to participate live, some member Newcastles joined online and expressed their intent to continue and play their role in our Alliance. Without doubt, the most important result was also the strong participation of youths and the agreement from all members that the youth should play a more prominent role in the Alliance. In the coming years, for the first time, we will welcome youth representatives in the Executive Board of the Alliance. We also aim to get more practical projects and cooperation events under way, and especially more exchanges and joint activities between conferences. On a personal note, we should not forget that the Alliance is about people. Several of us went or are going through darker times and have to cope with family problems. I believe that within our Alliance, there is also support for this, if only a friendly word or ear. I hope that the New Year will shine some light and bring improvement.

To all of you, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Robert Dulfer

