



See the last page for information about our conference in April in Switzerland and how you can be a part of it!



and a Happy
New Year !



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A NEW NEUCHÂTEL IS SHAPING UP



Whilst local people are enjoying the beautiful Christmas lights (left) at this time of year, a new commune of Neuchâtel is starting to take shape. Following much consultation and discussion, the local governments of Neuchâtel, Peseux, Valangin and Corcelles-Cormondrèche have begun the process that will see the establishment of a single municipality, to be officially born on January 1, 2021. The new commune of Neuchâtel, with 45,000 inhabitants, will become the most populous commune in the canton. Violaine Blétry-de Montmollin, municipal councillor of Neuchâtel, is co-chair of the steering committee that is already at work to oversee a territorial merger and development plan, ready for the new political team that will be elected in June.

The excitement is building in Nové Zámky

as it prepares to begin its special year as Slovak City of Culture.



The launch event is on 23 January, and the city says "It will be an unforgettable evening full of artistic experiences, emotions and surprises awaits us. Let's enjoy it TOGETHER ..."



See pages 2 and 3 for more about the Christmas parade and other festive season attractions in New Castle, Pennsylvania- and in other Newcastles.



We all know that the Christmas markets in Germany are very special - and the market in NEUBURG AN DER DONAU is no exception. The historical "Christkindl Markt" (Christmas Fair) is held in the historical part of Neuburg on the 2nd and 3rd weekend in December. The Karlsplatz is filled with booths offering freshly-baked gingerbread, roasted chestnuts and Gluehwein (mulled wine). Within the castle walls visitors can admire displays of traditional arts and crafts at the "Lebende Weihnachtswerkstatt" (Christmas workshop).

There's still time to sign up to join us at our Newcastles of the World conference in beautiful Neuchâtel, Switzerland, from 21 - 28 April. See the last page for more details.



IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME !

PREPARATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS AROUND THE NEWCASTLES - CAPTURED IN PHOTOS

In **Nové Hradý**, Czech Republic, early December brought the celebration of “Mikulas” or Nicolas. Some (mainly European) countries mark December 5th/6th 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 one saint, often one angel, and several devils roam the streets and visit the houses to find out which children have been good and which have not, and chase away bad spirits. This dressing tradition has survived to this day, and is still very pronounced and purposely scary.



The cobblestone streets and little picturesque squares of the old town in **Herceg Novi**, our Newcastle in Montenegro, are displaying enchanting festive decoration. Here is a unique hand-made reindeer, sleigh and snowman, and all of them came from the Peulic family workshop. Father Zivko and son Ivan are skilled craftsmen, with many years of experience in mask making and carnival decorations.

The holiday season in downtown **New Castle Pennsylvania** began on November 23 - it included the Grand Opening of this year's Outdoor Ice Skating Rink (open for longer this year), the annual Holiday Parade (see below for more photos from the parade), a Pop-Up Family Festival, and the annual Light-Up Night: Tree Lighting and Pyrotechnico Fireworks display. The agency “New Visions” runs “Hometown Holly Days” with the help of dozens of community volunteers and partners, who not only helped in coordinating the kick-off, but with a host of activities throughout the holiday season. Activities throughout the month of December hosted by community partners include holiday movies at the historic Cascade Warner Theatre Museum, children's activities at the New Castle Public Library, caroling at The Confluence, crafting at Status Party Room and Two Rivers Artisan Coffee Works, and horse-drawn wagon rides.



Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes watches the giant Christmas tree going up in **Newcastle Australia**.

The Fenwick (department store) in **Newcastle upon Tyne, UK** is famous for its Christmas window display. Since 1971 there has been a Christmas display in the shop's windows, and people come from near and far to look at them. Last year it was “The Snowman”, and this year its “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” - with detailed sets and sophisticated moving figures across its 6 windows that enchant children and grown-ups alike.



SHARING MORE OF THE CHRISTMAS EXPERIENCE



Looking good for Christmas - (left) the area around the famous courthouse of **New Castle, Indiana**. It's one of the first of its type of construction, on the National Register of Historic Places in the USA, and marking 150 years this year since its completion in 1869. Thanks to Kendra Kennedy of the City of New Castle for the photo.

One of the country's largest and oldest seasonal markets is held in **Nyborg**, our "Newcastle" in Denmark (right). There's something for everyone to enjoy on the weekends before Christmas.



Christmastime in Newcastle Ontario

Christine McSorley explains what Christmas means for one of our smaller Newcastles:

"Christmas brings our strong community together even more than usual, as we all support each other to create the best of the season for everyone within the community. Central to the many Christmas events that happen in Newcastle is the Business Improvement Association (BIA) one of four in Clarington municipality.



Everything started this year on November 17th with the Winter Wonder Lights, the Community Town Hall lighting ready for the Santa's Parade on the 19th, fireworks, marching bands, various floats, a walking letter box to mail your letter to Santa and a food donation collection for the Clarington East Food Bank, along with the special gentleman himself; Santa. And he made another visit to our village for the Santa's Pancake Breakfast on November 30th.

The festival of wreaths and trees is also a must to visit.

The last Friday of November saw the Winter Market take place. A local photographer took pictures of children and others with Santa for donations, making a collection of \$900 for the food bank. Another thing that has shown the community spirit all through 2019 has been the wonderful support and fundraising for Durham Region Hospice Clarington, culminating this year with a wonderful calendar highlighting work by local artists.

And by December 2nd the Christmas weather had also arrived, delivering more than 6 inches (15cm) of snow! All of these events are what makes Christmastime special here in the Village of Newcastle Ontario Canada, made possible by the support of local businesses, volunteers and the people who live and care about their community.

**Merry Christmas / Joyeux Noel from our Newcastle to yours wherever in the world you may be
Peace, Joy and Happiness for 2020"**



As well as lights and fireworks, at the town's main museum in **Newcastle-under-Lyme (UK)**, the Council's arts and cultural officers have organised a free festive-themed events programme. The main gallery of the Brampton Museum has been transformed into a treasure trove as part of the annual "Buy Me for Christmas" exhibition which runs until 5 January 2020. A total of 30 local artists are showcasing their creative abilities – people can buy exclusive gifts such as handmade jewellery, artwork, ceramics, textiles, metalwork and glass.



In **Nové Zámky**, Slovakia the whole of the month of December is filled with a rich cultural and religious programme. There's a huge advent wreath (left) that decorates the main square, Christmas lights, children's performances, good music and a magical atmosphere.

Lighting up everyone's Christmas!

ORGEKO, a company based in **Nové Zámky** 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.



TOURISM AND BUSINESS

KOTA BHARU PROMOTES "VISIT KELANTAN YEAR 2020"

In late November the "Visit Kelantan Year 2020" was launched by Minister of Tourism, Culture & Heritage for Kelantan state, YB Dato' Md Anizam Ab Rahman at the most iconic tourism spot in **Kota Bharu**, the Sultan Ismail Petra Arch Square. Our "Newcastle", Kota Bharu, is the capital city of Kelantan and does much to promote Visit Kelantan Year. Kota Bharu is the gateway to Kelantan, the land of Malay culture and heritage.



The state is targeting six million tourists both local and international to visit Kelantan next year. The theme for Visit Kelantan Year 2020 is "family, food and festival" with a focus on the main products of tourism in Kota Bharu. From Asean cuisine to Western and Middle East cuisine, Kota Bharu has it all. At least six big festivals will be held in Kelantan mostly in Kota Bharu to welcome tourists next year. Among the festivals are

The Kelantan Cultural and Arts Festival in March, the Ramadan Festival in May, Kelantan International Run and Ride in August, Kelantan International Kite Festival in August, Kota Bharu Food Festival in October and the International Bike and Auto Festival in November.

The Sultan Ismail Petra airport in Kota Bharu is one of the busiest in Malaysia with 52 flights daily to Kuala Lumpur, Subang, Penang, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Johor Bahru and Singapore. A parade and culture performance was part of the launch event.

Hundreds of people from all government agencies as well as tourists were present.

Newcastle Airport, commended by the **South African** Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) as a fully-fledged operational airport, will soon become a training destination for aspiring pilots. The Municipality announced that a non-profit air ambulance operator has earmarked Newcastle Airport as a training facility for previously disadvantaged individuals who are interested in pursuing a career in aviation.

Unfortunately, whilst the airport is used by a number of private charter operators, it is not yet ready for scheduled commercial flights. However, the recent installation of the global navigation satellite system last month – a CAA requirement – brings the municipality to a state of readiness for Airlink to take over. The Municipality stated: "All that is left is for Airlink to have its application to land at OR Tambo Airport (Johannesburg) and its route approved by the CAA. We are on the waiting list at the moment, but we are hoping the CAA will fast-track the process, as we are the only airport that will offer commercial scheduled flights in Northern KwaZulu-Natal."



The international tourism exhibition "TT Warsaw" was held in Warsaw on November 21-23 and **Akhaltshikhe** was present, with representatives of Akhaltshikhe City Hall and Akhaltshikhe Fortress providing information about the tourism potential and opportunities of the city and region.

There was great interest from travel agencies in tourist facilities, hotels, catering and transport facilities within the municipality, and 400 brochures and maps were distributed. The Warsaw International Tourism Fair is a very large-scale event in which more than 500 tourism companies and organisations operating in the tourism business of 50 countries participate.

Meetings were also held with the ambassadors visiting the exhibition.



If you live in a town, city or village called "Newcastle", whatever your language may be, you are part of a worldwide family of Newcastles! Newcastles of the World helps you connect with each other - if you would like to partner with another Newcastle on a cultural project or youth exchange or for business, or if you would like to know more about the other Newcastles with a plan to visit, then contact us !
newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com <https://newcastlesoftheworld.com/>



ARTS, HISTORY & HERITAGE

Many countries mark November 11th as the date that the First World War ended. In Latvia, the day has an added significance, commemorating the Latvian national army victory over the West Russian Army on 11 November 1919. To mark this event, "Lāčplēsis Day" honours these freedom fighters and their role in Latvia's independence. **In Jaunpils**, our "Newcastle" in Latvia, as elsewhere in the country, candles are lit and there was a torchlight procession through the town, gathering at the castle.



RETURN OF "THE FLYER"



This is an interactive art installation at the old railway station in **Newcastle Australia** called "The Flyer". It's an interpretation of the historic Newcastle Flyer express train that ran between Newcastle and Sydney from 1929 until 1970 - one of the most famous of the old steam train services in the country. The 6500kg work, which was lowered into the site by crane earlier this year, also consists of a row of two seats and a stainless steel replica timetable, all of which simulates a carriage behind the engine. More than 500 hours were invested in its design and it took more than 1000 hours to fabricate and assemble.

KABUKI TIME IN SHINSHIRO

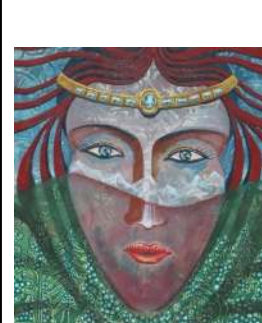
Kabuki is classical Japanese dance-drama, and it is celebrated at the end of each November in a festival in **Shinshiro**, our "Newcastle". Here are some photos from the recent event there. Kabuki theatre is known for the stylisation of its drama and for the elaborate make-up worn by its performers.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



This is a new initiative, started for us by artist Sharon Race of Newcastle upon Tyne. If you're an artist - professional or non-professional, - or you manage a gallery or museum or arts group, then look out for "Newcastles of the World Artists Together" on Facebook or email us via newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com to link up.

In the new year we'll be looking at projects that we can work on together, starting with film/photography and poetry. We can work towards funding applications for larger projects and for the endorsement of the Newcastles of the World conference in April for a wider programme of collaboration.

Meanwhile, if you'd like to send us a photo you have taken that best captures your "Newcastle", or a poem or prose piece of up to 100 words on the theme of "hopes for a new decade" then we'd be happy to share them.



Above - some of the stunning paintings by Georgian artist Fridon Bolkvadze on show at his current exhibition in Rabati fortress, **Akhaltsikhe** - our "Newcastle" in the Republic of Georgia.

A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS IN NOVÉ HRADY, CZECH REPUBLIC

Robert Dulfer writes: “ On the last weekend of August we celebrated the anniversary of our town... well, it’s not exact like this but almost... We know that as a small village on the “Czech” side of the famous Silva Nortica (Forest of Nord as Romans called it) our town was founded around 1251 – 1252. However, it’s in 1279 that the name of our town is mentioned for the first time in a written document – in the historical deed, the owner of our town Hoygirius de Gretzen (Ojř z Nových Hradů) is mentioned as an attestant/witness. So, that’s why we have the year 1279 as a starting point of our rich history - and why we have celebrated the 740th anniversary of that date this year.



“In August we had a great medieval show in Nové Hrady, but also by our neighbours from just over the border in Austria. We had around 100 people from Nové Hrady and Weitra in costumes from the 14th century, the children made special knight’s helmets and swords and we walked as if we were 14th century merchants on the historical trade route between the Danube and Moldau. We enjoyed these two days very much and we are happy that this historical drama has motivated our people to learn more about history of our Newcastle and the border regions.



“In September we celebrated the 145th anniversary of our volunteer fire brigade. This firemen party was also a nice moment when we awarded a prize to the best firemen from our brigade and where we met our firemen friends from other villages of South Bohemia and from Austria. Town Mayor Vladimír Hokr was also recognised as an honourable member of the firemen brigade. The young firemen team showed the skills they had learned - we have not only a rich history of our firemen brigade but also a secure future.

“The town also organised a variety of music and traditional craft activities during the year - and annual traditions have been celebrated such as the St Maarten celebration for young children, the Devil’s forging and potato day in the Smithy; and the municipal Mikuláš (Saint Nicolas) celebration, lightening of the Christmas tree and advent events helped lighten up the shorter, darker days before the end of the year (see page 2 for more on this). And let’s not forget that, in conjunction with much of eastern Europe, this year we also marked 30 years since the fall of Iron Curtain.”

30 YEARS ON: REMEMBERING THE 1989 EARTHQUAKE IN NEWCASTLE, AUSTRALIA

At 10.27am on 28 December it will be 30 years to the minute since an earthquake devastated the city. The City of Newcastle will be remembering the 13 people killed and the courage, resilience and community spirit that followed the quake by hosting and supporting a range of events to mark the anniversary. Christ Church Cathedral will host a special commemorative service and there are several exhibitions that remember the event and its aftermath. As well as killing 13 and injuring 160, the quake caused around four billion dollars in damage. More than 35,000 homes were damaged, leaving 1,000 people homeless, as were 147 schools and 3,000 other buildings in what was one of Australia's most serious natural disasters.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Congratulations to Chris Frye Jr who has been elected new Mayor of New Castle, Pennsylvania.



In late November, at the conference organised by the Solidarity Fund - “Active Citizens - A Strong Municipality! Civil Budget in the Republic of Georgia”, the Municipality of Akhaltsikhe was awarded the Certificate - 2019, for the implementation of its own civil budget process.



The Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Australia, Councillor Nuatali Nelmes has launched a version of the famous board game Monopoly which features many of the city’s attractions from its beaches to locations like Newcastle Museum, Blackbutt Reserve, and Fort Scratchley.



This year’s Mount Horaiji Maple Festival was held from 11 November - 1 December in **Shinshiro**, Japan. The Maple Festival is a three-week long event in which visitors can take in the beautiful views of the changing colour of the leaves in the area of Mount Horaiji, shop for local specialties, and listen to live performances. The vivid red, orange, and yellow coloured leaves were a sight to behold this season, and performances by local music organisations livened up the atmosphere, making it one of Shinshiro’s memorable events of the year.

JAUNPILS NEW ROAD BRIDGE Larger cities are well used to benefiting from new infrastructure projects but it’s good to see that one of our smaller “Newcastles”, **Jaunpils** in Latvia, has seen investment in a important new road bridge in the town. And the whole community came out to see Council chairperson Ligita Gintere cut the ribbon and declare the bridge open. The bridge is important for improving accessibility between the different parts of the town.



During the recent World Transplant Games, held in **Newcastle upon Tyne** (see our September - October newsletter), **Neuchâtel** resident Gisèle Ceppi won three gold and two silver medals, bringing her total to 44 medals at all tournaments.

In early December the now 73 years old Gisèle received a special prize from the Neuchâtel State Council at a city Sports Awards ceremony. Gisèle takes advantageous use of her visibility to promote the case for organ donations, for which there is still great demand.

ABOUT NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD: In 1998 the Mayor of Shinshiro in Japan took the initiative to invite representatives of seven Newcastles to his city. They have continued to meet every two years – in Neuchâtel, Switzerland in 2000, USA (Indiana and Pennsylvania) in 2002, South Africa 2004 & 2010, Newcastle-under-Lyme (UK) in 2006, Neuburg an der Donau, Germany in 2008, Newcastle upon Tyne (UK) in 2012, **Nové Hradý**, Czech Republic (2014), Newcastle Ontario, Canada (2016) and Shinshiro in 2018. The aim of the Newcastles Alliance is to foster friendship and collaboration, and to share and enjoy each other’s heritage and culture. Each gathering takes one or more discussion themes to ensure practical, usable outcomes, also involving our young people.



YOUTH AND SPORT

Congratulations to **Newcastle-under-Lyme & Stafford College Group** which has become the first further education provider in England to achieve the top grades in every single area of the country's recently reformed Education Inspection Framework.

Our “Newcastles of the World” alliance has led to a dream work placement for a Northumbria University (**Newcastle upon Tyne**) student as we reported in our last newsletter. For the next year mechanical engineering student Chris Brownhill has swapped Newcastle upon Tyne for the city of **Shinshiro** in Japan. Soon after Chris’s arrival the Mayor of Shinshiro hosted a welcome gathering at Shinshiro City Hall- and a splendid cake had been baked to mark the occasion. Students from Shinshiro who met Chris during their summer visit to Newcastle upon Tyne were among those at the welcome party, together with civic dignitaries and officers and representatives of OSG, the company where he is now working.



For the first time, the Newcastle Oval Track played host to the World of Motorsport (WOMZA) **South African Dirt National Championship**.



After months of preparation and planning, the Oval Track club members pulled out all the stops to ensure an event of this magnitude was a success. Racers from across South Africa arrived in town to compete for the big prizes – almost 150 competitors in several categories such as Stock Rods, Heavy Metals and Hot Rods.

From 7-15 December, **Neuchâtel** hosted the Womens World Floorball Championships. It was a great success with over 300 players from 16 countries and 30,000 spectators. The host country performed brilliantly to reach the final, losing narrowly 3-2 to Sweden. Floorball is a type of hockey with 5 players and a goalkeeper in each team. It is growing in popularity, and in Switzerland, the sport has 33,000 registered players.

Neuchâtel hosts World “Floorball”



Photos - copyright Claudio Schwarz

NYBORG CELEBRATES ITS SPORTING ACHIEVERS



In **Nyborg, Denmark**, Mayor Kenneth Muhs (*far left in photo*) hosted the annual event to welcome and congratulate sports men and women from the city who have achieved national success or represented the country internationally.

They are - rowers Charlotte Buchwaldt and Lena Stolzenbach, champions in double sculls; billiards champion Jørgen Pedersen; Jesper Rasmussen who has again won the Danish Championship for remote-controlled cars in the 1/10 Off-Road 2WD class; Bjarne Kingo and Anders Møller of Nyborg Cycling Club with two Danish Masters in Track Cycling (3km pursuit); Simon Henning Hoppe - Masters champion (under 18) in the sport of kettlebell (lifting).

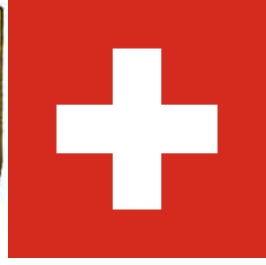


Newcastle 500 draw the crowds again

The Supercars **Newcastle (Australia) 500** delivered another successful event for the city in November, with over 150,000 attending, widespread exposure for the city and tens of thousands of dollars raised for communities affected by bushfires and for other charities.



21- 28 April
 Ville de
Neuchâtel



This is YOUR invitation to the 2020 Newcastle of the World Conference in Neuchâtel, Switzerland !

Around 80 people from more than a dozen “Newcastles” from around the world are expected to be at our 2020 conference - and we’d like you to be part of it! The conference, from 21st April (arrival day) to 28th April (departure) welcomes delegations or private individuals who are resident or otherwise associated (past or present) with any Newcastle and who wish to visit new places, make new friendships and share knowledge of matters of common interest to our respective communities.

There will be talks and presentations, round-table discussions, visit to many places of interest locally - and lots of opportunities for informal sharing of information and ideas.

We’ll be reviewing what we have achieved together - and what we might do in the future - in our particular fields of interest: culture, tourism, business and education/youth engagement. And wrapped around this will be the chosen theme of the “Smart City”. This is about how we collect data and use insights gained from that data - to manage resources and services efficiently to make lives better for our citizens; and how technology can help the Newcastles of the World to work together in a smarter, stronger way.



Contact Evelyne Zehr on AllianceNeuchatel2020@ne.ch or David Faulkner at newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com for further information, or to let us know of your interest.

Firm, final bookings by 12 January please.

Neuchâtel is named after its castle, proudly overlooking the beautiful city and lake. The city is a network of alleys bordered by elegant buildings made of Hauterive stone, the yellow limestone that lights up and brightens the whole city. It invites you to go on a long stroll through the largest pedestrian zone found in all of Switzerland!



On the lake, aboard the paddlesteamer "Neuchâtel", you will enjoy a lovely view of the Alps in the background. In the city you can take in wonderful museums and galleries, sample the food, wine and chocolate (the home of Suchard) for which the city is famous, and learn about the fascinating tradition of watch-making as well as today’s leading edge technologies.

The main conference hotel for delegates is the Hotel Beaulac

