

Newsletter Nr. 14

Because I reduced my work load I did manage to complete the newsletter before the New Year starts. 2016 was a special year. After 12 years of guarding the bridge we were happy to organise a meeting of previous bridge guards. I called it reunion although most of the participants met the first time. It was fascinating to see how quickly an overall friendship feeling came up – the idea, the aims of bridge guarding is a glue between bride guards. Certainly between the thirteen who accepted our invitation.

Jane Williams, is a poet from Tasmania. She spent three winter months with her husband in the residence. Jane is not only a poet with the computer keyboard but also with photo camera lens. A rarity: she managed to take a picture with the Maria Valeria Bridge from the airplane.



Why should I write about a writer, I lend a text from her blog that tells a quite typical bridge guard experience.

The Hungarian / German speaking family who live next door where they sell their wine from a glass cabinet in their sitting room. A few dusty bottles stand on the window sill looking out onto the street and would go unnoticed but for word of mouth. An unmarked, unassuming gate leads up a short path to the front door. I've met one of the oldest family members a few times now, she reminds me a little of my grandmother. We have no common lingo with which to converse, but a smile, a hand gently squeezing an arm works just as well. When I explain I am básnik (poet) she gives a little half bow/curtsey and we instantly laugh the same language.



You see Jane's pictures as background to the wine t(o)asting, you don't see the short poems accompanying most of the pictures. Thanks Jane for all the verbal and pictorial lyrics.

Days before the next bridge guard should have started her turn she suffered sadly an accident. So we had a hard time to find a replacement. We're very grateful to **Renate Hahn** from Germany who was flexible to take on the duty on short notice. Unfortunately she could only spend two months in the residence because she needed time to organise her matters at home. The bridge survived luckily its unguarded month.

Renate brought with her the chair her father used while he served in Wehrmacht during the II. World War. She used to sit on the chair in the middle of the bridge (that has been destroyed by the Wehrmacht in 1944) and looked to get in contact with the passer-by's utilising her knowledge of the Slovak language. A very strong gesture was the engraving of the names of the II World War victims listed on the monument near the residence into the chair. A reconciliation bridge that impressed very deeply the descendants of the victims.

Within the AquaPhone festival Renate made a performance.

Accompanied by Markus Eichenberger on saxophone she expressed with dance and a mirror the search for identity.



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The “summer” bridge guards in 2016 were the sound artists [Kate Ogle](#) & [Tim Crowley](#) from Cornwall, England. Kate & Tim invited people to sing their favourite songs. They did play the recorded songs on the bridge, they did let the bridge sing. The picture here is from the visit of the past bridge guards in the residence (a special experience for them) with a presentation by Kate & Tim about their work during they stay in the residence.

Unfortunately, Kate & Tim were in stress preparing their final performance and could not actively participate in the “reunion” work. The town intends to build a barrier free access to the bridge from the red light house side and asked us whether we could provide some ideas. It was a great topic for our reunion and a big fun what the resulting five models invented during the week in the hotel Eliot illustrate. Many thanks to Dušan and Janka and their team for providing us ideal conditions for being together in their hotel.



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Besides work there was enough time for individual leisure and common events. Although it was middle of September we had every day sunshine and up to 25 °C. So some used the opportunity to swim in the Danube and the less courageous preferred the Vadas swimming pools. We had a nice boat trip on the Danube, screening of a moving movie by Jane, a presentation by Zuzana and Svatopluk of their residence Stokovec in the railway station of Banská Štiavnica and a presentation of the work by the Swiss video artist Ursula Palla in the garden just before the good bye party. The “great bridge guard picture” has been made during the party, late with no flash. I look forward to the results of co-operation between participants and am curious how the wish to stay in contact and maintain the bridge guard network will be realised. Thanks for coming, thanks for the great time together.



Currently we have two bridge guards with a 6 month term, [Julia](#) from Germany and [Coni](#) from Chile. Once more my thanks go to Zsófi and Gyuri Himmler and their son Tomi and his girlfriend Dóri for taking care of the bridge guards with warm hearts and lasting enthusiasm. I thank Hanneke for helping me to select the right persons for this great job. Thanks to the town for providing the facilities and to Nelly accompanying our activities with interest and support. And thanks to everybody in the town who welcomes our artists and opens the heart for them, especially Zoli from the Green Pub. Have a great New Year 2017 in best health. Take care and spread the bridge guard message – the world needs more than ever in our lives our solidarity and the effort to nourish existing and build new bridges between human beings.

Feel free to forward the newsletter to your friends who may be interested.

If you don't want to receive the Newsletter anymore, please let me know.