



CHRONICLE

OPEN-DAY SPECIAL ISSUE

The English Club Bremen e.V. celebrates its 20th birthday

Open Day from 11:00

Today, October 6th, the English Club has opened its doors to the general public in order to promote the Club and to show people who we are and what we do. Please feel free to ask a Club member any questions you may have

Party from 20:00

In the evening, members are welcome to come along and celebrate the Club's 20th birthday. Since its conception in 1987, a lot has happened and many people have come and gone. A buffet will be available and hopefully many members have made their own contributions.

Other events for October

19th Committee Meeting
18:00 - 20:00
Happy Hour
20:00 - 21:00
Pub Quiz with Heidrun & Vicki
from 21:00

27th Casino Evening
with our friends from
Le Cercle Français
from 19:00

November

4th Film Brunch - "East is East"
- with Indian Brunch
16th Pub Quiz - with K. & K.

December

2nd Film Brunch - tba
15th Christmas Dinner
- Details to be announced soon

The English Club was created by Lis Liesicke (née Poulter) and Christian Kunz in 1987 to give people a place to meet and converse in the English language. Originally the group met in a pub called the *Rover's Return* in Bremen-Walle, and when the membership grew too large for this small establishment, the decision was made to find a room to hold the meetings. The word "meeting" gives the impression of a circle of people conjugating verbs and role-playing renting a room, but this is not the idea behind the English Club.

The Club is a place for people to meet and speak English, using their prior knowledge of the language. Obviously, when using a language - especially with native speakers - improvement is inevitable, but a certain level of English is required to understand even half of the conversations in the clubroom.

The English Club is not a place to learn English. It is a place to use your prior knowledge of English. Meetings are totally informal and any subject is acceptable, providing all parties are happy with it. Our one simple rule is that anything said in the clubroom should be in English. It is not limited to just English people as our motto shows - "*Nationality Makes No*

Difference" - we have members from all over the world and welcome anyone wishing to simply have a chat in English.

We meet on Wednesdays and Fridays from 20:00 until the person on bar duty decides to call it a night, with some events occasionally taking place on other days and outside the clubroom. Such events could be a bike ride, the traditional *Kohlfahrt*, a visit, picnic or paddling trip (to name a few of our more popular activities).

We show films in English on the first Sunday of the month from October until April (and usually have a traditional English Breakfast with it). Other pastimes include darts, reading (we have an extensive library), games and our ever popular Pub Quiz (usually the third Friday in the month). New ideas are constantly put forward by the members and are acted upon accordingly.

Member participation is very important. We are a club and as such, we need members to actively play their part. The English Club is not run for profit (being an e.V. actually disallows this). Every member is called upon to join in and simply enjoy themselves whilst doing so. The committee is responsible for the smooth running of the Club, but they are dependant upon the members and their need and wants.



A Word From Your President

Club Twentieth Anniversary

To some people the idea that a group of individuals get together twice a week to speak what for the majority is a foreign language must seem pretty strange. Nevertheless The English Club is twenty years old this year. I think this is an incredible achievement. Even more noteworthy is the fact that the club functions pretty much as it has from the early days, run by the members for the members.

The club was started by English teacher Liz Liesicke and one of her students, Christian Kunz, to allow her class to continue using their English outside the classroom. I'm sure that initially at least she didn't expect the club to be still going after twenty years!

Although the primary aim of the club is to provide a comfortable place to speak English there is more to the club than just that. Firstly our motto '*Nationality makes no difference*' is an important aspect of the club – everybody is welcome and an equal member no matter where they come from.

Secondly the relaxed and friendly atmosphere at the Club evenings and events encourages people who need to practice their English the chance to speak and to listen to a high standard of English.

Thirdly the commitment and hard work of the members ensures that we can continue to run the club on this basis. Last but not least are the regular events to which family and guests are always welcome.

In recent years the club has gone from strength to strength, we now have a membership of around ninety members and strong finances. For the last three years the club has had a new 'home' in the Lönningstrasse. I think we have a club-room we can be really proud of. So many people on their first visit tell me what a great place it is, welcoming and friendly; of course the atmosphere is due entirely to the members (and maybe the cheap drinks!).

We will have to face a few issues in the near future. The proposed smoking



ban will almost certainly affect us; we must make sure that we comply with the letter and the spirit of the law. I am sure that in usual English Club style we will manage that change – and the next twenty years as well!

Mike Harding

Dear members,

Welcome to this special edition of the Club's *Chronicle*. To commemorate the 20th birthday of the English Club, we decided to put a little something together to celebrate this landmark achievement.

20 years! I can't quite grasp the fact that I've been in Bremen for the same amount of time. One of the things I did when I came to Bremen in 1987 was to look for some social outlet, simply to ease my way back into civilian life after 8 years of military service. The English Club was a fledgling at the time, not really a club as such, but more a loose conglomeration of people whose main interest was to gather, drink and have a chat in English. This was perfect for me! I'm English, like a drink and have been known to chat on occasion. I must have enjoyed myself in those early days, as over time, I feel I've become part of English Club lore, serving more than once on the committee, captaining the darts team, having a ball as newsletter editor and simply getting involved in everyday club life. The

English Club became a home for me and



a few members were part of my extended family. As in many families, there were tears as well as smiles and my present membership is my fourth . . .

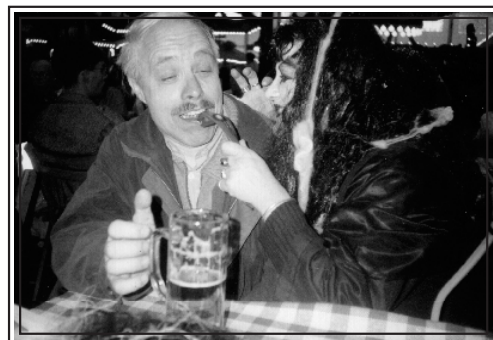
I don't think any of us thought that the English Club would still be going strong after such a long time. Member-

ship is high, our finances are solid and Club life is simply part of our lives. Obviously things change - people as well as circumstances and I don't think I will ever experience the close-knit camaraderie of the first few years, mainly because of how much I myself have changed since then. But there are many people I've met through the Club that I would class as more than acquaintances and my life is all the better for having met them.

I hope many members - past and present - will be present today to celebrate our 20th birthday. I am certainly hoping for a repeat of the Club's 10th birthday party, as it was on that occasion when I realised that the English Club will always be a part of my life . . .

I am especially pleased that both founder members Lis and Christian managed to give me a few lines to commemorate this special issue. Enjoy it as much as you do your normal *Chronicle*!

Steve Schmied



The English Club

How it all began

It's hard to believe that The English Club has actually been up and running for 20 years now. So why on earth did I ever think of starting it up?

Well, when I first came to Germany I taught at a language school, and quickly noticed that students who for some reason or another had the opportunity to use English privately were also learning far quicker than their classmates and, as a rule, achieving better grades. I also noticed that the longer I lived in Bremen, speaking German privately, the worse my English became. And so the idea grew of a private pub where only English was spoken – a home from home for native speakers and a place where Germans could speak English in a natural atmosphere. I told anyone who was interested (or maybe not) about my plans, hoping and waiting for someone to say – come on, let's do it.

That someone was my student Christian Kunz who, as he was planning to become a lawyer, was the perfect partner for sorting out all the bureaucratic legalities etc. of setting up an e.V., of which I had absolutely no idea.

We decided we would go ahead if we had 40 interested people. We advertised in the paper – “Do you speak English? Interested in meeting English people?” etc. - and were inundated with phone calls late at night from men whispering down the phone “ I like English, can I come to you now”!!!!!! No dears, not that sort of club!

I then received a phone call from the BGA – British German Association – who asked if I had realised that such a club already existed in Bremen. Great, I thought, no work, so I went along to have a look.

First of all, when I entered their club I was ignored. Then when I decided to force myself on the small group sat at the bar, I was amazed at the unbelievable British accents; they could have competed with the Queen easily, and not a British gene among them. They also told me about their club activities and again it was so stereotype OTT British that I decided that this was not my cup of tea, and that Bremen was big enough for two clubs.

After about 8 months of advertising we had 40 people interested and decided to meet up to discuss whether we wanted to commit ourselves to a club. Our very first



meeting – we were excited and nervous - particularly when we realised the BGA committee were also present en force and were handing out advertising for their Club. Christian and I presented our ideas and talked about how we thought the Club could be set up. At some point a member of the BGA committee stood up, pointed at me and shouted that someone so young (all of 23!!) could not possibly have any idea on how to set up a club “Vertrauen Sie diesem Küken nicht, sie hat keine Ahnung!” Oh well, enough of them did trust us, and the English Club was founded.

We first started meeting in the pub *Rovers Return* and then, once we had a bit of money in the bank, decided to take the plunge and rent our own rooms in Findorff. It was all hands on deck as we converted a bare long room into a bar area and seating area, Herbie Lammers professionally building a bar, furniture, glasses, pictures etc. being begged, borrowed or donated, any contributions were gratefully received. Some of it was a bit make-shift, but it was ours!

Now 20 years on, and two moves later, the English Club has become a Bremen institution. People have met at the Club, married and had kids. Some members have left and then come back (Steve for one).

Despite leaving Bremen 13 years ago I have always enjoyed reading the newsletter and looking at the photos on the website. And I am particularly looking forward to seeing old friends and new faces at the celebrations of the 20th anniversary!

Lis Liesicke

I was taking extra English lessons with Lis at the time in order to pass my “Nichtabiturientenprüfung”. We talked privately at lot during – and also after – the lessons and came upon the idea that English could be learned in a more simple and more comfortable manner. In the beginning, we imagined that the Club could be made profitable an that Lis could maybe be employed as a teacher by it. The

idea to involve native speakers and to offer them a home was one of the first we had. Also to offer a platform those wishing to speak English.

We managed quite quickly to get a few ads in the A-Z in order to see what the reaction would be.

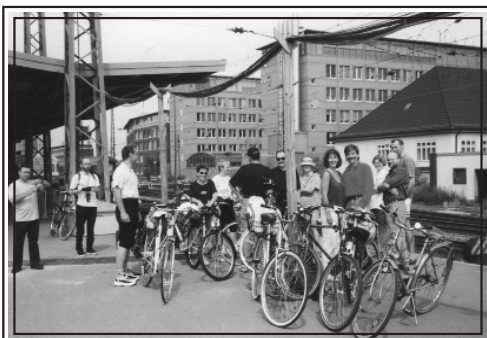
We met for the first time in *Peheiro*, followed by a few private meetings. Shortly afterwards, the *Rovers Return* became our home before we then moved to our own room in Plantage.



Christian Kunz

Did you know?

Christian is the English Club's legal wizzard and continues to support the Club in all matters involving laws and regulations. He actually recently managed to get an agreement out of the GEZ for us and for this alone he deserves his honorary status!



English Club Memories

I guess a 20th anniversary is a good excuse for a trip down memory lane, or in this case, down Steffensweg, Plantage, Ostertorswallstr. and Lönningstr.

It seems a long, long time ago that I joined the English Club. So long, in fact, that nobody really knows when exactly it was, as evidenced by the certificate which I was delighted to receive at the 10th anniversary celebration in 1997. It says, and I quote:

“Certificate of long-standing membership awarded to Paul Padget, who has been a member of the English Club for 5 years or more”

By my arithmetic, that must mean 15 years or more now. Wow! What I do remember is that I have Victor to thank for introducing me to the EC way back when. He invited me to join the darts team – back in the glory days when we had two teams, “69ers” and “50:50”. Of course I couldn’t refuse, and it wasn’t long before the welcoming atmosphere and friendly people persuaded me to become a fully fledged member. My earliest memories include late nights sitting at the bar with Victor, Carola and Irene, after everyone else had gone home, discussing points of English grammar into the wee hours. I usually lost, of course, because I was up against two university students of English and a teacher, after all. Great fun!

The Club was small back then, and felt rather like an extended family, with plenty of colourful characters like Norma and Herbie, Uwe, Big Ulli, Karen, Roswita, Arthur, Claire and Arno, “Killer Hans”, Gunnar and Sonja, Norman, Mark, Steve, Mike and, of course, the Club founders Lis and Christian. Hope I haven’t forgotten too many people from the old days. Since then I’ve had the pleasure of getting to know so many people who joined the Club and are now as much part of the furniture as I once was that I won’t even try to start listing their names.

Some of the first events I ever attended were Sunday brunch at the Waldbühne, a visit to the English language theatre in Hamburg, and film nights. Funnily though, one activity that has always stuck in my mind was a short game of “hunt the newspaper headline”. Whatever it’s real name, it simply consisted in Lis reading out some item or other, and the teams competed to be first to find the relevant article or picture in their newspapers. I’m glad to say that many things have not really changed much over the years: the brilliantly organised self-catering Christmas Meal and the Kohl + Pinkel trip complete with silly games, to mention only a couple. On the other hand, looking at the very first Newsletter (alas, it only says “Club Activities – November/December”, but not the year) in my collection, which now fills three files, it contains a few events that I can’t remember happening ever since: “Bridge evening”, “Guy Fawkes Breakfast” and, would you believe, “60s Party and Hula-hoop Competition”!!!

During my short period on the Committee I never had such imaginative ideas for “in-Club” events, so I tended more towards organising a few outdoor activities, such as a Wattwanderung and a guided tour to the peat-digging area of Teufelsmoor. I’m really pleased that two things which I think I introduced to the Club have become regular features and, in the meantime, have been transformed into much more impressively organized events by other members. What was announced in the Newsletter as “Traditional English Quiz Evening” (a.k.a. Pub Quiz) took place on Friday 22 May 1992, a very modest affair compared to nowadays, comprising just one round. While the first Canoe Trip on the Wümme set sail (sorry, set paddle) on Sunday 16 August 1992. I only wish I could remember who had the inestimable honour of being the first EC member to fall out of one of those Canadian canoes (well, actually to be thrown



out of the boat as it capsized) and test the water temperature – my bet would be on Carola.

I experienced all four venues: the Rover’s Return in Steffensweg (only as a visitor on darts nights, not yet as a member), Plantage 13 in Findorff, Ostertorswallstrasse 95, and now Lönningstr. 13. Sometimes I think back to Plantage days when, on a warm evening, we would climb out of the window onto the sloping roof for a breath of fresh air, or even to get a view of the Freimarkt fireworks.

If I had to pick a single defining moment in the Club’s history, it would probably be the day we acquired our very first kitchen sink (courtesy of Chris). Never again the trip to the loo to fill a plastic bowl for washing up the beer glasses. Luxury! I know I should really have chosen something more serious like when the E.C. became an “e.V.” on 1 May 1992, but if you ever did bar duty back then, you’ll know what I mean.

To finish, all I can say is long may the English Club continue to flourish, and a big thanks to Lis and Christian for getting the whole thing off the ground 20 years ago.

Paul “Parrogman” Padget

The English Club Bremen e.V.
Lönningstrasse 13
28195 Bremen
0421 - 3398442
www.englishclub.de

