

Trip to Grafelde

Wednesday 12th – Sunday 16th April 2023

Having had our planned trip to Grafelde in 2021 cancelled due to the COVID pandemic the band, plus family members and friends, were excited to finally board the coach and head off to Germany.

It was a very early start for 35 of us, and our band mascot, when we set off from Durrington Junior School at 2.30am on the Wednesday morning. We were a little apprehensive as we made our way to Dover's Ferry terminal, given the chaos that had happened there the previous week with the Easter Half-Term getaway and people queuing for hours to catch a ferry. Thankfully when we arrived just after 5am all was quiet. We even managed to get an earlier ferry and arrived at Grafelde at 6pm Wednesday evening.

A warm welcome awaited us by MZG (Musikzug der Freiwillige Feuwehr) and after unloading the coach the band split off to meet their host families or make the short walk round the corner to the newly refurbished hotel. Everyone gathered back at the fire station's community room later that evening for a social get together with MZG, which included plenty of beer, wine and the local schnapps Lockstedter, the power of which should not be underestimated at 45%!



Many of us were sporting new band hoodies which one of our players had designed to mark the trip. They proved very popular and MZG were given their hoodies that evening.



For many band members this was their first visit to Grafelde and the first time of meeting MZG band members. They made us all feel so welcome and by the end of the evening it was like we had known each other for longer than just a few hours. For others it was a chance to catch up and get reacquainted, as the last time the two bands met was in Durrington in April 2019.

The next morning all available musicians from DWWB and MZG came together at the fire station in their purpose-built practice room for our first rehearsal. Having been separately practicing the pieces for the concert, we were already in step with each other though at slightly different speeds in some places! Volker, our conductor, quickly got us all back in time and the rehearsal went as well as we had hoped.



DWWB 'groupies' not involved in the rehearsal had the opportunity to visit Marienburg Castle, a Gothic revival castle in Lower Saxony about 30 mins away from Grafelde, which had historic involvement with the House of Windsor and the Georges.



That afternoon we went with some of the MZG members to Hildesheim for a guided tour of the picturesque town, which was very interesting. Having split into two groups for the tour we came together again in the Town Square and had some time to go shopping or frequent the local café's and bars before heading back to Grafelde.

The band hosted us in the evening for a BBQ at the fire station with more socialising and German hospitality. It is lucky they have beer on tap in their Community Room (non-alcoholic beverages were also available for our younger players).

On Friday DWWB had a day out in Goslar, first visiting the Rammelsberg Mines which many of us had not visited before. We then headed into central Goslar for some lunch and to take in the sights of the mediaeval town. Ready for 3pm we were all gathered in front of the Town Hall so we could watch the glockenspiel automation which is mounted at the top of the Town Hall.



Friday evening saw both bands come together again for a full rehearsal of the concert programme at 7.30pm, including players from MZG that could not attend Thursday morning's rehearsal. The heavens opened whilst we were rehearsing but the sound we made, which by all accounts was very good, drowned out the heavy rain hitting the sky lights. It was lovely to hear such a beautiful sound from so many instruments, especially the bass section, which DWWB are light on compared to MZG.

During the rehearsal Peter Eve, our Band Manager, presented our German friends with a framed photo of DWWB taken just before we left for Germany. The fire station has a photo gallery of MZG through the years and previous pictures of DWWB, so we thought a new picture would be a great addition to their collection.

The rehearsal was a success and we certainly felt ready for our forthcoming performance the following afternoon, so to celebrate we headed to the Community Room for a well-earned beer – how else would you wind down after a good rehearsal!

Saturday morning was free for us to do what we wanted until meeting at the fire station to pack the coach with instruments, music stands and music folders, plus the band mascots who had their own travel case. Dressed in band attire we left for Alfeld at 1pm. We had hoped to take a group photo of both bands outside the fire station before we headed off but unfortunately the weather had other ideas as it was pouring with rain again.



Once we were set up in St Nicolas's Church ready for the concert starting at 3pm, a group photo was taken inside. Despite the weather, the church was full and we were given rousing applause after every tune. It was a packed programme with pieces played chosen by both bands.

First Half

Textilaku
 Selections from My Fair Lady
 Lilo & Stitch
 The Greatest Showman
 Bohemian Rhapsody
 Südböhmische Polka

Second Half

Concerto d'Amore
 John Williams in Concert
 Disney Film Favourites
 Nessaja
 Grease – Greatest Hits
 Wachtel-Polka



The church echoed with shouts of zugabe (encore) so we played Sweet Caroline and In Harmonie Vereint.

The concert was compered by Graham and primarily conducted by Volker Jörns. Our conductor, John Ashton-Jones was unable to travel with us to Germany, so Peter Eve more than capably stood in conducting Concerto d'Amore and Sweet Caroline. Detlef Ladwig from MZG also conducted a piece.



One very special member of the audience, close to the heart of both bands, was Rheinhold who formed the link between our band and the Grafelde band in 2008. Rheinhold, whose daughter used to play trumpet with us, was involved in three bands at that time and choose MZG because it had the same ethic as ourselves in encouraging young players.

Speaking after the concert Peter Eve said:

“Music brings friendships and changes lives. We saw the effect on Rheinhold and we know it to be true.”



Our final evening in Grafelde was spent at the fire station, where MZG put on a fantastic cocktail evening, dinner and disco. Enjoying each other's company and reflecting on how successful the concert had been, we ate, drank and danced the night away - our younger members were very keen to throw their moves on the dance floor!



Then all too soon our visit was over and we were boarding the coach at 8am on Sunday morning to head back to Durrington. It was a wonderful four days with new friendships being made and previous ones being re-kindled.

We had some great comments from the DWWB contingent when we arrived back home:



“My thanks to everyone for a fantastic trip to Germany. The playing, the laughing and camaraderie was phenomenal.”

“I am so pleased we both decided to come to Grafelde. We had a great time and it was wonderful to be able to get to know others better and listen to the concert which was brilliant.”

“It was great having time to meet everyone with the added bonus of making some German friends and playing music with them.”



Now back home we are already thinking ahead to 2025 and starting our planning for when MZG will be making a return trip to Durrington.



If you would like to listen to pieces from the concert, go to:

<https://www.durringtonwallwindband.org/music-samples>

If you are interested in coming along to the band, please contact us:

<https://www.durringtonwallwindband.org/contact-us-1>