A NEWCASTLES CULTURE ROUTE?

Could there be a special “cultural route” around Europe, based on our Newcastles? Levan Mikaberidze, who represents Akhaltsikhe in the Republic of Georgia on Newcastles of the World, tells us that Georgia has joined an enlarged partial agreement with the Council of Europe and Akhaltsikhe therefore has the possibility of becoming part of the 32 cultural routes of the Council of Europe. (http://culture-routes.net/cultural-routes/list)

And he has proposed an idea for creating a new route called “Newcastles of Europe.” The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia has advised Akhaltsikhe that this idea has potential and could be important for Akhaltsikhe as a vehicle for developing tourism and economic links between the EU and Georgia. “Many of the cities that would be linked on this route have old castles and great history, so it could be a platform for encouraging tourists to visit all the Newcastles of Europe. Levan would like to know our views – please contact him on levani@hotmail.co.uk and copy to newcastlesoftheworld@gmail.com

A delegation from Nyborg, Denmark recently visited Neuburg, Germany to share best practice on promoting their castles as part of their tourism offer. Here the delegates are received by Neuburg Oberbürgermeister Dr. Bernhard Gmehling (left). Read more about the visit on page 3

Leader interview - LIGITA GINTERE of Jaunpils, page 4
Elections in Neuchâtel have resulted in the election of a new leadership team for the city - but they’re old friends!

Fabio Bongiovanni (pictured 3rd left and close-up) takes over as Président of the Conseil Communal (Cabinet) until mid-2018. Thomas Facchinetti, Olivier Arni and Christine Gaillard (left to right behind Fabio) were all also re-elected to the Conseil Communal.

New member Violaine Blétry-de Montmollin (2nd right) completes the team and replaces Pascal Sandoz. Rémy Voirol, chancelier (Chief Executive) is also pictured (far right).

NEW MAYORS IN OFFICE

Vlădimer Zedginidze has taken over from Giorgi Kopadze (who is now a member of the national parliament) as Mayor of Akhaltsikhe Municipality, our “Newcastle” in the Republic of Georgia.

He is a graduate of Javakhishvili State University and worked as a lecturer at the University. Mr Zedginidze also worked at The Ministry Of Internal Affairs as Head of the Regional Division Department. He has 2 daughters and 6 grandchildren.

This year’s Mayor in Newcastle-under-Lyme, UK is Councillor Ian Wilkes who has been an elected member of the Borough Council since 2004.

Neuchâtel’s eco adventurer Raphaël Domjan has unveiled a solar-powered plane tonhead for the stratosphere. The City of Neuchâtel is proud and happy to be a partner of adventure SolarStratos. They say: “together, we are going to the stars!”

Spending a special birthday in January in the warmth of a South African summer among friends is just the ticket if you’re from the northern hemisphere - and that’s what Elfriede Müller from Neuburg did, meeting up with so many people in Newcastle, KwaZulu Natal who have hosted and visited our conferences. Sadly a few days after this photo was taken, our friend Ben Chowles (right) had serious heart trouble - happily he’s recovering, and we send him our best wishes.
A group from Nyborg, Denmark (Christian Ditlev Rasmussen, inspector at Nyborg Castle / Østfyns museums, Sanne Hoffensetz Andresen, head of tourism and Babak Djarahi, business manager in Nyborg) have recently visited Neuburg, Germany to gather more information and ideas on how Neuburg organises its famous renaissance Schlossfestival. Nyborg has its own medieval festival, Danehof which is held every first weekend in July and attracts over 35,000 visitors. The focal point of the Danehof is its big Knights Tournament on the town square where it took place originally. The square is turned into a large tournament course and knights in real armour and with real lances engage in fights on their horses. Around the historic area a market is held with medieval stalls, and in the old shopping streets a food market and modern market take place.

Danehof has existed since 2008, compared to the Schlossfest in Neuburg which has been taken place for the last 40 years. Because of the great experience Neuburg has concerning organising, developing and promoting their Schlossfest, the main objective of the study trip was to gain insight into how Danehof in Nyborg can be developed, in terms of hosting, branding, organisation, use of resources, financing, involvement of citizens, volunteers and corporate partnerships.

“Council member Elfriede Müller and head of tourism Marieluise Kühnl put together a great program for us” said Sanne. “This included meeting with the chairman and members of the Schlossfestival organising committee. We also had a meeting/reception with the Oberbürgermeister and a guided tour of the historical area by an amazing guide, Frau Sprenzel, and we saw the places where many of the activities during the Schlossfest take place. We also had dinner with members of Neuburg’s conference delegation to Canada - and it was so good to see them all again. Fortunately, we will see them all again in July where a 11-person delegation from Nyborg, will attend the second weekend of the Schlossfest.”

In late January around the world people marked International Holocaust Remembrance, being the 72nd anniversary of the liberation of the death camp at Auschwitz. Six million Jews died in this, the greatest crime against humanity, and millions more in genocides elsewhere since then. Commemoration events have been held in many of our ”Newcastles”. Here we share the history from Nové Zámky, our ”Newcastle” in Slovakia, and a photo of its synagogue which is a national heritage site.

About 2,500 Jews lived in Nové Zámky in 1938, when the city was occupied by Hungary. In May 1944 the Nazis established a ghetto there, where Jews from the surrounding area also were concentrated. The final blow in the destruction of Jewish life came on June 10-12, 1944, when two transports left the city for Auschwitz. The Neolog synagogue was heavily damaged during the bombing of Nové Zámky in March 1945 and later was demolished.

The Orthodox synagogue survives intact and is still used a Jewish house of worship. Located on the site of the historic town fortifications, the synagogue forms part of a Jewish communal compound. It is considered a local heritage site, and the Rundbogenstil façade is illuminated at night. The original interior has been preserved. The compound is marked as part of the Slovak Jewish Heritage Route, and several Holocaust memorials can also be seen. In 1992 a plaque designed by Michal Kern was unveiled on the outer wall, and in 1999 the Jewish community installed 19 plaques in the synagogue interior listing 2,300 Holocaust victims.

One memorial plaque is dedicated the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who saved thousands of Jews in Budapest. The most recent Holocaust memorial was erected by the Municipality in a park located next to the synagogue.

**NOVÉ ZÁMKY AND THE HOLOCAUST**
What did you do before you entered politics? I worked in a school as a junior class teacher. It was a wonderful time; my colleagues and I were young and socially active. It was very important to be responsible about our social lives and we were interested to improve the quality of community life. And if you are active, people take notice.

What made you want to enter politics? How did it happen? It was 30 years ago… and it was not my own choice. My colleagues saw me, assessed my qualities and chose me for this position. I wanted to improve the quality of social life, culture and education here in Jaunpils, to develop a lot of activities, give people choice on how to spend their leisure time - and to give a chance to our citizens do things to improve their prospects and opportunities - this is what politics is about!

What achievements are you most proud of as the leader of the community in Jaunpils? I am proud of the purposeful way we have made improvements to the environment in Jaunpils. Together we are creating a wonderful place. Thirty years ago, we started to improve the look of area - we took the first steps to clean, tidy up, make flowerbeds, and during those years the centre and the surrounding area became beautiful. Now it is time to move forward and decorate it with some modern facilities. I am proud of our old castle - the symbol of our municipality. The castle is not only a castle - it reflects our values, not only material, but also spiritual. The castle is open and every one of us can use all those values for intellectual development - this is the centre of our community life. There is a library, museum and culture house.

The municipality should create the platform and support and encourage those people who want to take action. We support initiatives of local people as much as possible, both NGOs and individuals. Together we build our community for ourselves, for our children, for the future... here and now. It’s simple as ABC - just remember our motto - “my home is my Newcastle”, built by us, to last.

What are the biggest challenges facing Jaunpils for the future? There is a rich and unique historical and culture heritage in Jaunpils. The biggest challenge is to keep and save it for future generations. It is very important is to build awareness of people's core values, those that we have inherited and developed together. Material values as a heritage cannot exist without human spiritual values also, so we must work together to keep alive the sense of feeling that all together we are responsible for it.

What are your hopes for the future of the Newcastles of the World alliance? I hope that cooperation will grow. We live in a time when the world's consciousness is expanding. We have a chance to make personal contacts all around the world. Modern technologies and travel enable us to explore other Newcastles in different continents. Through cooperation we have a chance to share our experience and find out our friends' best practices. In the future I believe that we will cooperate more in areas of common interests - of cultural heritage, conserved and presented through our symbols (such as our castles), our cultural projects, museums, art, education.

What would you say about your town to persuade people to come and visit? We are developing all the time. Local people are happy and we work together - shoulder by shoulder - to create an attractive, beautiful place. We want to show you that Jaunpils County is a place where one can fall in love with the silence and peace of the fields, get to know the traditions and customs of our inhabitants., discover the treasures of unknown testimonies of the past, and enjoy the medieval atmosphere. Discover that Jaunpils has a very special story of its own... the story of feelings, which remains in your long term memory once experienced... calling you to come back any time when you feel like want to have a rest, escape the hustle of a city, get inspiration, every time you want to feel more in harmony with yourself, nature and people around. We are proud if we hear good feedback about our Newcastle. Recognition and praise inspires us to take the next steps. We can’t describe all of the attraction and beauty of our Newcastle here, but we welcome you all here to see and share what we have to offer and the warmth of our welcome.

What are your other interests? I am interested in history, nature. I love travelling and like to be on the move and active. I am keen to meet people and explore new things, extend my range of vision. I am a workaholic, but as leader I invest a lot of spiritual energy in my work. So I need to recharge it, so I like beautiful things, tasty food and flowers. My dream about having a beautiful garden did not come true, but at least I have beautiful flowerbeds!
SEASONAL REFLECTIONS

OK, Christmas and New Year are just distant memories but on this page we have a few images and stories which may still give you a warm glow.

We're sure that all of our "Newcastles" displayed Christmas/winter illuminations in their streets, but in Nové Zámky (Slovakia) they have a factory that manufactures and exports illuminations all over the world. Since 1993 Orgeco (left) has specialised in developing and producing festive lighting for Christmas decors illuminating both exteriors and interiors. It is one of the largest producers of lighting decors in Europe, with 98% of its production for foreign markets of Europe, Canada and USA, and displayed in many great cities such as Paris, London, Vienna, Madrid, Prague and Rome.

In historic New Castle, Delaware, USA (above) the town transforms into a Victorian Winter Wonderland at Christmas time. "A Dickens Experience" transports visitors back to mid-nineteenth century England to experience an interactive version of Charles Dickens' classic novel, "A Christmas Carol".

The Faucher family of New Castle, Delaware install almost a million lights at their home (right) for their Christmas display, and have an electricity bill of around 80,000 dollars in a month.

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Kangaroos pull the sleigh in Newcastle, Australia!

Below : Wonderful Christmas markets in Europe - Neuburg an der Donau, Germany (with ice arena) - left - and Nyborg, Denmark
After 20 months of restoration work, the magnificent 18th century Town Hall of Neuchâtel opened to visitors before Christmas with free guided tours.

It has an impressive neo-classical façade with colonnades, but its monumental “staircase of honour”, and the ornate and sumptuous interiors are the glory of this building which was designed by Pierre-Adrien Pâris, an architect of the Court of King Louis XVI, and built between 1784 and 1790.

New Castle New Hampshire, USA is the largest of several islands at the mouth of the Piscataqua River, originally known as "The Great Island". It has many homes dating to the early 1600's when it was founded. The Piscataqua is the dividing line between New Hampshire and Maine, and has the world’s third fastest river current.

New Castle has played an important role in US history as home to the historic Fort Constitution site and to Fort Stark. Fort Constitution overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and the Piscataqua River, and was originally named Fort William and Mary. This fort played a great role in the Revolutionary War (War of American Independence). It was a colonial fortification in Britain's worldwide system of defences, manned by soldiers of the Province of New Hampshire who reported directly to the royal governor. It was captured by Patriot forces, recaptured, and later abandoned by the British in the war. As the area's importance in the ship-building industry grew, the importance of these forts grew as well, and they all underwent major fortifications.

The stunningly renovated Wentworth-by-the-Sea Hotel is located in New Castle. This hotel, built in 1874, is on the National Register for Historic Places. The 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth, which ended the Russo-Japanese War, was negotiated there by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Theresa’s valley is an English landscape garden near Nové Hrady founded by Countess Theresa Buquoy in the second half of the 18th century. It’s one of the oldest parks of its kind in the Czech Republic, strongly inspired by parks in Germany and England. The Count's family continued to develop this park throughout the 19th century and maintained it until 1945, when the park, together with all their other properties, was confiscated by the Czech state. A few years later, the park was declared both a cultural monument and a national nature monument. Many smaller architectural elements were not preserved, but others like the artificial waterfall, Swiss Cottage and the Countess’ Bathhouse have been preserved today. Thanks to these preserved objects and the inspiring natural surroundings the park is frequently visited both by locals and tourists.

The maintenance of the park had deteriorated over the past decade. The main problem was, and still is, that the park does not belong to the castle or town, but has several owners. Dissatisfaction of local citizens and city leaders with the situation had grown so much that the community established a beautification association designed to solve this problem. Over the past two years, several community meetings with representatives of interested organisations have taken place and much volunteer work (see photo) has been going on, helped via “crowdfunding”, aiming to save and restore the park to its unique combination of natural and cultural heritage. One of the successful activities was a collection in which several local families have joined to donate a park bench. “There’s a long way to go, but we can say that the condition of our park is gradually improving” say our friends in Nové Hrady
NEWCASTLE SOUTH AFRICA CELEBRATES
THE CONTRIBUTION OF ELDERS -
and they show that they are still full of vigour and hope!

Nelson Mandela once said, “A society that does not value its elderly citizens, denies its roots and endangers its future”. He said we should strive to enhance their capacity to support themselves for as long as possible and, when they cannot do so anymore, we should take care of them.

In support of this philosophy, Newcastle Municipality celebrated the elderly recently at an event held at Madadeni Community Hall.

Addressing the attendees Newcastle Mayor Nkosi said that he feels honoured to be in the same room with the generation that fought for freedom and made South Africa what it is today. “We know all the difficulties you went through, all the struggles you had to endure to make sure your children enjoy freedom and we are more than thankful”, he said.

Around 7,000 inhabitants of the town of Neuburg in Germany are over 60 years old - around 25% of the population - and demographic change means that the proportion of this age group will increase in the coming years. The 50+ generation has become an important economic factor and is a key potential customer base for the local businesses.

Older people need the right kind of support, and the Seniors Council of Neuburg and the City Marketing Neuburg e.V. have developed a quality mark for senior-friendly companies in the town, and those aspiring to be so.

Backed up by a media photo campaign, plus advertisements, flyers and posters, Neuburg is raising awareness of the needs - and of the opportunities for business.

Using a specially developed list of criteria developed by the senior citizens advisory board and city marketing, potential companies are assessed - and when they reach the benchmark score they are honoured as a "Senior Friendly Company". This is recognised with a certificate, and a conspicuous sticker was designed which is attached to the front doors of the shops.

So a high-quality shopping, café or even visit a pleasant visit to the doctor is assured.

Bev Foster, Executive Director of the Room 217 Foundation, is an experienced performer, songwriter and music educator whose inspirational music has received numerous awards and nominations. She was one of the best-received speakers at our Newcastles of the World conference in Newcastle, Ontario, Canada last year. She set up the Room 217 Foundation, which is dedicated to what is termed “music care” - music being increasingly recognised in healthcare as an effective psychosocial and biological intervention, increasing many aspects of quality of life.

In her inspirational presentation, illustrated with filmed case studies, Bev told us “Music is human. Music is far-reaching. Music is an evidence-based agent of change. Music is the phenomenon. Music care is the approach. Music care is an emerging approach to care that allows the therapeutic principles of music and sound to inform caring practices, in both formal health care settings and community- or home-based contexts.”

The Room 217 Foundation serves care givers, and ultimately care receivers, in a number of populations such as Hospice Palliative Care, Long Term Care and various contexts of Community Care including group homes and private family homes. End users include allied health care providers, family and volunteer caregivers, musicians, teachers, spiritual care providers and many more. Why not find out more? - https://www.room217.ca/
Students at Newcastle Ontario’s Clarke High School Craig Foster (L) and Emily James (R) have designed a coat of arms to represent their school at a ceremony at Vimy Ridge in April. Teacher Roger Stere (C) is organizing the trip.

Among the over 8,000 Canadian students expected at the ceremony in France on April 9, marking the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, will be 24 students from Clarke High School Grade 12. The Clarke coat of arms, with the school’s name and crest depicted along with the Vimy memorial and the silhouette of a WWI soldier, will be combined with designs from other schools to create a giant national flag which will be part of the anniversary ceremony at the Vimy memorial. As well as attending the Vimy anniversary, students will spend a day in the Normandy region at Juno Beach, and several days touring the famous sights of Paris and then London.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge was a military engagement fought primarily as part of the Battle of Arras, in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France. The main combatants were the Canadian Corps, of four divisions, against three divisions of the German Sixth Army. The battle, which took place from 9 to 12 April 1917, was part of the opening phase of the British-led Battle of Arras, a diversionary attack for the French Nivelle Offensive. The objective of the Canadian Corps was to take control of the German-held high ground along an escarpment at the northernmost end of the Arras Offensive. This would ensure that the southern flank could advance without being exposed to German fire. Supported by a creeping barrage, the Canadian Corps captured most of the ridge during the first day of the attack. The town of Thélus fell during the second day of the attack, as did the crest of the ridge once the Canadian Corps overcame a salient against considerable German resistance. The final objective, a fortified knoll located outside the village of Givenchy fell to the Canadian Corps on 12 April.
JAUNPILS YOUNGSTERS ARE MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Holiday time is when we want to do something good and useful. It is a tradition that Jaunpils’ social department, in cooperation with local entrepreneurs, organises charity events. This year local young people had the opportunity to participate in a charity campaign “Mail of Angels”. The youngsters were invited to become an “angel” to one of the town’s seniors, bring joy and make their daily life more colourful, by sending them a handwritten card or letter for Christmas.

Dancers from the local high school took part in the campaign by putting on dance performances in homes for people with disabilities. Other young people baked delicious gingerbreads for the seniors. The gingerbread baking campaign was held in collaboration with Jaunpils medieval tavern and its chef. It was nice to part of the charity project, says Jaunpils’ youth specialist Lāsma Zariņa.

Newcastle Municipality ward committee members inaugurated

Following Ward Committee Elections in Newcastle (South Africa) Municipality between November and January, an inauguration ceremony was held for the 340 elected ward committee members recently.

The inauguration ceremony led by the Office of the Speaker together with the Public Participation unit was chaired by Programme Director, Strategic Executive Director for Development Planning & Human Settlements Ms Nokuthula Thusi, and comprised two sessions and the elected ward committee members took an oath of service oath under the leadership of the Speaker.

Addressing the new members, Newcastle Mayor Cllr EM Nkosi emphasised the importance of being a ward committee member. “We as the municipality inaugurate you today as leaders that have been elected by your communities, it is therefore your duty to put the communities that elected you first. Being a leader is not about being in power, it is about the responsibilities given to you to represent and becoming leading examples in your wards”.

NEWCASTLE, AUSTRALIA RECOGNISES CITIZENS’ ACHIEVEMENTS

Refugee advocate and community leader Sister Diana Santleben was announced on Australia Day, 26th January, as Newcastle's Citizen of the Year for 2016. The Catholic nun with the Dominican Order was recognised for her tireless work helping refugees at the Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony & Awards presentation at City Hall by Lord Mayor Councillor Nuatali Nelmes.

An early childhood teacher by profession, in recent years Sister Di has supported refugee families and advocated on their behalf, helping people from Afghanistan, Iran, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia adapt to life in Australia.

Having previously established a micro-finance fund to help with small loans for medications, medical bills and short courses, last year she established women's refuge centre Zara's House in Jesmond. “Zara's House is open due to the inspiration and determination of a woman who has never been afraid to stand up for marginalised people, whether speaking up for them when needed, or by helping to provide physical protection” said Councillor Nelmes.

University of Newcastle student Phillip Johnson was named Young Citizen of the Year for 2016.
18-year-old Martin Bundy was the first-ever mail carrier for New Castle, Indiana, delivering mail on horseback during a time when much of Henry County was an untamed wilderness. He started in 1835 and New Castle, the town, was younger than Bundy, himself.

Bundy's task was a challenging one for an 18-year-old. In addition to the snow, rain, heat and gloom of night, Bundy had to ride through many miles of forest that separated communities at that time. Bundy's arrival at his various stops drew small crowds of eager residents who asked him to read out the news from the newspapers he was delivering. He was, in a way, their network newscast long before television existed.

Bundy would ride on to greater heights from that early postal job. He later became a judge, a member of the Indiana General Assembly and one of New Castle's first bankers.

In 1860, he was a delegate to the Republican convention in Chicago that nominated Abraham Lincoln for president. He soon became a friend of Lincoln's and was later appointed by the nation's 16th president as paymaster of the army.

But the greatest “Bundy” delivery arguably came years after his postal rides through the wilderness - and not by him, but by his wife. She gave birth to a son they named Omar, the Bundy who grew up to become the general that would refuse to retreat during the battle of Belleau Wood in World War I and help turn the tide to ultimately prevail over Germany.

**Nyborg Municipality and the Museums of Eastern Funen field trip to British ships on January 16-19th 2017**

Six British ship museums were visited on a study tour from Nyborg, Denmark - HMS Victory, HMS Warrior and Mary Rose in Portsmouth, SS Great Britain in Bristol, and HMS Belfast and Cutty Sark in London. They all provided inspiration for the project of the ferry M/F Broen (“the Bridge”).

The tour showed the long English tradition to preserve and exhibit the country's proud maritime heritage - drawing many visitors. The trip generally provided great inspiration as to how the M/F Broen project can be approached in Nyborg - both in terms of communication but especially compared to dry dock construction and design. It was agreed that a model similar to SS Great Britain would be the best for the purpose.

It also became clear that the space around the ship in the dry dock can be designed so that it in itself is a wonderful experience - possibly by including an artist. All the museum ship projects visited have been supported by private funds and events play a major role in their activities, and the visitors got very good inspiration here.

The ferry M/F Broen is a central piece of the story of Nyborg as infrastructural hub for 1,000 years - and represents an important contribution to the great cultural heritage project "Nyborg - The Heart of Denmark" which is making Nyborg Castle and the city of Nyborg a worthy candidate for UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The ferry is also a landmark in the ship building and design traditions of Denmark. The project has full support of Nyborg Municipality, who is under way securing external funding for the ship.
500 years ago in 1517, the German monk Martin Luther started the Reformation that swept across northern Europe in the sixteenth century by publishing his 95 theses on the church doors in Wittenberg. In Denmark the Reformation was introduced in 1536, but the anniversary has been marked or celebrated in Denmark every century since 1517. Nyborg Castle and city was transformed by the Danish king Christian III who introduced the Reformation in Denmark into a protestant princely city where the might and power of the newly reformed kingdom was to be staged. If Wittenberg was the spiritual capital of the reformation, Nyborg was the secular capital – home of the strongest of the reformed princes of northern Europe, the Danish king.

In 2017 the reformation jubilee is marked across the country, and of course we mark the big event in Nyborg with numerous activities and events and an exhibition at Nyborg Castle. It is an important chapter in the history of the city and a vital element in the ambition to make Nyborg a candidate for the UNESCO list of world heritage.

Come to Nyborg and walk the same streets and experience the same historic halls as did the king who introduced the Reformation in Denmark and supported politically and economically the reformers in Wittenberg that together shaped an important chapter in the history of Europe. We kick-start the events and activities on 25 February 2017 at the castle at an reception with the German ambassador as guest of honour.

WORLD’S BEST WILDLIFE PHOTOS IN NEWCASTLE, AUSTRALIA

An ominous silhouette of a shark next to a surfer, an ape with red, marble-like eyes and a sea turtle swimming as free as a bird are among the stunning images in a wildlife photography exhibition at Newcastle Region Library. Wildlife Photographer of the Year, a world-renowned exhibition on loan from the Natural History Museum in London, is showing in the Lovett Gallery until 25 February.

Featuring 100 awe-inspiring images -- from fascinating animal behaviour to breath-taking wild landscapes - the exhibition is the most prestigious photography event of its kind. Wildlife Photographer of the Year has showcased the natural world’s most astonishing and challenging sights for more than 50 years.

Attracting 361 entries when it launched in 1965, today the competition receives more than 42,000 entries from 96 countries. The latest 100 award-winning images have arrived in Newcastle as part of an international tour that allows them to be seen by millions of people across six continents.

NEW CASTLE, PA - “HOT DOG CAPITAL OF THE WORLD”

That’s the claim of New Castle, Pennsylvania, USA, based on the famous “New Castle Chili dog” They’re the product of Greek immigrants who came to New Castle in the early 1900’s and established a restaurant downtown which specialized in selling Greek-style hot dogs with their own secret chili sauce. Historians remember cooks stacking up to 20 hot dogs on their forearms in order to speed up the addition of condiments (it was that busy!) Over the years, what became called “Coney Island” has grown into multiple locations and continues to be one of the most popular hot dog destinations in America.
Networking in Preserving the First World War Multicultural Heritage in the Danube Countries (Networld)

Robert Dulfer from Nové Hrady reports great news. “Our Networld project has been approved under the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme (DTP). The aim is to develop a joint and sustainable World War One heritage protection in the Danube countries by combining it with developing quality cultural tourism. The idea is to go beyond the traditional general statements and show this heritage as a network of local and personal events that provide strong links between the regions and countries involved.

The WW1 heritage on the Western Front is well described. However, much information on the East and Central fronts is missing and there is no coherent larger database and management structure to preserve this heritage, educate future generations about this, and capitalise on its assets in an organized transnational way.

The project will build upon the existing “Walk of Peace” initiative along the Isonzo front in the Upper Soca river region (northeastern Italy and western Slovenia). This front line is also known as the Italian front or “the forgotten front”. Its casualties (over 180 thousand dead, close to 700 000 wounded and poisoned and over ½ million captured or lost) equalled the Verdun numbers but are hardly ever mentioned.

Each partner will make an inventory of available data on WW1 events and their local effects. The focus will be on individual stories. Results will be made into a universal database (English and local language). Through joint tourism and research websites, the data will be accessible to the public. New or improved war monuments, cemeteries, and front locations will be promoted as interlinked heritage destinations.

Public awareness will come through websites, educational events, and conferences. An important point is that national websites will link to the different war locations, the soldiers’ home towns, WW I event calendars etc. Innovative ICT tools including QR code shields and social media will be used improve accessibility to the information. Attracting and informing the younger generations, both as tourists and as school students, is an important objective for the project.

Czech partnership and activities

The Rozmberk Society in the Nové Hrady area (which Robert runs) is a full project partner. One important aspect for our participation is that especially our young people have no concept of WW I. Soldiers of Czech origin were fighting on both sides (as part of Austro-Hungarian empire and as independent Czech Legionnaires on the allied side). In addition, no fighting took place on the Czech lands itself.

The Society will conduct research for the database and help develop tourism and educational tools and publications, specifically focussing on ICT (websites, QR-code tools, and social media). In Nové Hrady, a new WW I monument will be established, including connecting monument stones in the surrounding villages. Names of the fallen soldiers will be linked with the places where they died. New WW1 exhibitions will be established in the Nové Hrady Museum and the Kojakovice Museum. Although not a formal partner, the Town of Nové Hrady is fully supporting the project and will become owner of the monument and exhibition in Nové Hrady.

In spring 2018, the Society will organize a large WW1 conference in Nové Hrady. This conference will be connected to local and international 2018 commemorations (100 years end WW I, 1938 Munich betrayal, 1968 Prague Spring, 1618 Thirty Year War) and the opening of the Nove Hrady tourist season. Contact dulfer@rozmberk.org

The project comprises 14 full Project Partners from 9 DTP countries and 10 Associated Partners (without budget). The Lead Partner is the Soca Valley Development Centre. The Rozmberk Society is a full partner with a budget of 114 000 EUR (Total budget 1.87 mil. €)
**In February it's the annual Surfest in Newcastle, Australia.** With over 800 national and international competitors – and thousands of spectators – Surfest is the largest festival of surfing in the southern hemisphere. [http://www.surfest.com/](http://www.surfest.com/)

**SHINSHIRO MARATHON RUNNERS BRAVE THE COLD**

The Shinshiro Marathon Festival took place in January with over 3000 runners in the main race and other races at shorter distances. Our "Newcastle" in Japan was celebrating the 41st running of this event, which was held with snow on the ground. The festival has 31 categories according to age, gender and distance. Almost 2000 brave runners took part, although many more had to cancel because of the very cold weather and difficult conditions under foot.

**AND SWIMMERS IN NEUBURG, TOO!** At the end of January over 2000 people in Neuburg (our “Newcastle” in Bavaria, Germany) will took the plunge into the waters of the ice-cold River Danube. This annual event is in its 43rd year and is not only fun and a great tourist attraction but also raises funds for local causes. We spotted that earlier that week the temperature fell to MINUS 14 Celsius, so we reckon it could have been warmer in the water than out of it.

Edward "Eddie" Hall from Newcastle-under-Lyme in England is an professional strongman, notable for being the only man ever to deadlift 500kg under strongman rules. He has also won on multiple occasions both the UK's Strongest Man and England's Strongest Man titles. He has also competed at the World's Strongest Man and is the current world record holder in the deadlift with straps. The deadlift is where a loaded barbell or bar is lifted off the ground to the hips, then lowered back to the ground. It is one of the three internationally-recognised powerlifting categories.

One of Northern Ireland's biggest annual car shows took place at the end of January at the Slieve Donard Hotel and Spa in Newcastle, County Down. The unique indoor Vintage, Classic and Sports Car Show attracted thousands of visitors over the weekend.

Filling the hotel’s Grand Ballroom were more than 40 vehicles spanning 80 years of automotive history, all of them lovingly restored and maintained by their local owners.

Highlights of this year’s show included an iconic DeLorean, and a 1913 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost. Now in its 23rd year, the show donates all proceeds to Cancer Research UK.
There are more than 100 different “Newcastles” or “New Castles” around the globe, in many different countries and in different languages. It was the mayor of one of them, in Shinshiro, Japan, who took the initiative to bring the Newcastles together via the Newcastles of the World summit in 1998. Subsequent gatherings were held in Neuchâtel, Switzerland in 2000, USA (New Castles of Indiana and Pennsylvania) 2002, South Africa 2004 and 2010, UK 2006 (Newcastle-under-Lyme) and 2012 (Newcastle upon Tyne), Germany (Neuburg) in 2008, Nové Hrady (Czech Republic) in 2014 and Newcastle, Ontario, Canada in 2016. The aim of Newcastles of the World is to foster links of friendship, culture, education, business and tourism. 

There’s an exhibition of paintings on the theme of "Spring in Newcastle" at the Culture and Information Centre in Nove Hrady, Czech Republic. The exhibition will display the work of artists with a connection to that part of South Bohemia, in addition to the paintings from the gallery’s own collection.

A new exhibition using Lego bricks has opened in Newcastle upon Tyne UK at The International Life Science Centre, and runs until April. It's called "Brick History" with "Lego Landmarks" of the Newcastle area. The photos on the left show St James' Park where Newcastle United football club play, and the historic 12th century castle of Newcastle.

The creators of these exhibitions are expert Lego builders Steve Mayes and Warren Elsmore. Along with his team Elsmore has built more than 50 models depicting some of the most pivotal moments in history, from the sinking of the Titanic, the Moon landing and President Obama’s inauguration.

Resident of Newcastle, Washington State, USA, Alan White is to become an official member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's Class of 2017. His band Yes is one of seven new inductees that will be enshrined in April, and White is the band's drummer.

Born and raised just south of Newcastle, United Kingdom, White took up piano and drum lessons as a youngster. In 1969, he joined the Plastic Ono Band after John Lennon invited him to play at the Toronto Rock and Roll Revival festival. White went on to play on other recordings by Lennon, George Harrison, Ginger Baker's Air Force, and Terry Reid. "Owner of a Lonely Heart" (1983) became No. 1 on the US Billboard Hot 100 chart - the groups’ biggest success.

Fenwick is an independent chain of department stores in the United Kingdom. It was founded in 1882 by John James Fenwick in Newcastle upon Tyne, and today consists of 11 branches. It is famous for its Christmas window displays - the most recent told the story of Beatrix Potter (born exactly 150 years ago) and her wonderful children's stories.