

The Society for New Zealand-German Student Exchange (Inc.)

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Dear Friends and Members of the Society

Hope you are all well. Welcome to the financial year 2009 and the 36th year in which our society has been in existence. The society continues to go from strength to strength, and we have had some wonderful successes of late. We are in a very strong financial position, and our exchange of students between NZ and Germany continues with another three German students planned to arrive in New Zealand in June.

2008 in Review

2008 saw another successful year for the Society in which the Society hosted the following two students from Germany:

- Sara-Maria Schlatter from Loeffingen who stayed with the Waterhouse family in Cambridge
- Valerie Reinhardt from Wetter who stayed with the Blair family in Dunedin

Our sincere thanks and appreciation go to those host families who provided such great hospitality for our guests. Without their support we would not be able to continue our exchange programme. Special thanks again to the Blair and Waterhouse families.



Here is a picture of the two students when they had just arrived in New Zealand. The Waterhouse family made a great welcome sign, and here they are pictured with Elizabeth-Jane Blair, and her mother and little sister. They look in great shape considering they have been travelling for 30 hours in economy class!

Late in 2008, three New Zealand students travelled to Germany as the winners of our scholarships for 2008. They had a fabulous time in Germany from early December 2008 to late January 2009. The scholarship winners were:

- Bronwyn Chapman from Wellington Girls High School in Wellington
- Kate Johnstone from Villa Maria College in Christchurch
- Stephanie Moore from Craighead Diocesan School in Timaru



Bronwyn Chapman



Kate Johnstone



Stephanie Moore

Our special thanks go to the sponsors who donated scholarships for the students travelling to Germany from New Zealand. These were:

- Bronwyn Chapman from Wellington sponsored by William Malpass from Bayer New Zealand.
- Stephanie Moore from Timaru sponsored personally by Michael and Helen Wiedemann.
- Kate Johnstone from Christchurch sponsored by New Zealand Germany Youth Exchange Trust – Erich Bachmann.

Without the support of these sponsors, and you as general members, we would not have been able to send the students on their exchange visit.

A very special thank you again to William Malpass, Michael and Helen Wiedemann, Erich Bachmann and all of you as members who were so supportive of our cause.

2009 Subscriptions

It's that time of year where we need to start collecting the subscriptions for the year 2009. You will find enclosed with this newsletter, your annual subscription notice which we would ask that you pay promptly. The Society relies heavily on the funds from subscriptions to ensure we are able to continue the provision of funding for the exchange of students between Germany and New Zealand.

Subscriptions for the year 2009 are as follows:

Adults	\$25.00 per year
Students (fulltime)	\$15.00 per year
Family	\$45.00 per year
Corporate	\$300.00 per year

When sending in your subscriptions, could you please attach the tear-off portion at the bottom of the subscription notice which you will need to complete with your name and address details. This will enable us to identify who the subscription is for, and will also enable us to update our membership database details.

Please pay as soon as possible, so that we can continue our good work. Thanks for your generous assistance. If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please let us know.



NO ORDINARY HOLIDAY!

Hearing my classmate's holiday plans in December sounded interesting but somewhat normal. Trips to the lakes or a shopping day in Christchurch just didn't compare to the adventure I was about to embark upon. On the 6th of December I flew out from Christchurch and 30 odd hours later landed in Hamburg airport meeting my host mother, sister and our group leader, Chris, for the first time.

My host family, the Reichel's consisted of parents Dirk and Birgit, my host sister Susanne, 16, Marieke, 13 and last but not least Lola the black lab! My family live in the most beautiful down in Germany, Lübeck in Schleswig-Holstein, not too far from Hamburg. At first the jet lag hindered my ability to understand all of what they were speaking to me about but I soon recovered and could communicate back. They spoke very good English but I tried to keep that as a last resort as I was extremely keen to improve my language skills.



The school I attended was Johanneum zu Lübeck, a gymnasium, 20 minutes by bike from our house. Having known before I left New Zealand that I would be biking to school in the mornings I had got some practise in but it was unlike anything I had I imagined. Biking to school in Germany is very different in many ways. The first is that it is pitch black and FREEEEEEZING COLD!! Gloves were essential! Because school starts much earlier there we were up at 6.15 and eating breakfast by 6.50 then it was on the bikes at 7.20 and off to school. Another difference was that we were biking to school in massive bunches in a bike lane that is separate to the footpath and road. I could not get over how many people were biking and how full the bike stands were at school. I really appreciated the bike ride to and from school as I could see the sights of Lübeck everyday.

School was also very different as there was no uniform and it was co-ed. I learnt very quickly how school in Germany works. If your teacher doesn't turn up to class, go to the cafeteria or if you smoke just make sure you do it outside. My favourite class was obviously English as I was excited to help people learn my language. Admittedly the teacher didn't make much use of me until the week before I left when she realised her portable dictionary would no longer be around. I was used many times by my classmates when they had important assignments on.



One thing that was fortunate was that I had six Australians in Lübeck who were on the same exchange, three being at my school. So whenever speaking German got tiresome and I just wanted to speak to someone in English it was handy to know that someone was there and feeling the same way too. One of the first weekends I was there was the Lübeck regional day where all the exchangees from Lübeck and host families get together for a tour of the city. This allowed me to get to meet all the Aussies who had all met each other either back home or in Singapore. It was a great day and I enjoyed learning more about the history of Lübeck.

The lead up to Christmas was a true highlight and we visited many Christmas markets which sometimes seemed like one big eat-a-thon. We would arrive and have a wurst and mulled wine, then battered cheese, a giant pretzel, roasted almonds then mini donuts. Sometimes we would leave without looking at stalls! But going Christmas shopping in the streets of Lübeck and hearing Christmas carols in the malls was a treat. Going to buy a Christmas tree in the freezing cold was also an experience! Our mission: finding the perfect tree. To be honest I wasn't sure you could ever find a 'perfect' tree but after a lot of 'it's too big, small, brown, bare' we found the tree that suited all members of the family and my host dad took out his saw and began to cut it down. After tying it to the car roof we enjoyed a hot drink from a nearby stall and we headed home. Decorating it was also fun and we had a few kiwi decorations that added a touch of home. Christmas was such a lovely time as I got to meet the extended family of my hosts and tried to sing along to carols in German. Jingle Bells was a favourite pick of mine.

In Germany the celebrations begin on Christmas Eve and ended about three days later – or after your stomach gives way. We spent Christmas Eve going to church and then opening the presents.



This took a good couple of hours as presents were opened individually so each person would open one at a time. We then ate and went to bed. The next day consisted of relaxing, playing board games and getting to know the guests. My German Christmas experience was filled with laughs, family and traditions that I quickly grew fond of.

Straight after Christmas my host sister headed off on a handball tournament and I went with the rest of the family to Saint Peter-Ording on the North Sea. A small beach town on the coast. Except for frozen sand I had the best time and saw many beautiful places. Here we got close to the Danish border and I learnt a lot about the history of Schleswig-Holstein. We were back in Lübeck for Silvester (New Year) which we celebrated at friends who live around the corner. One difference was that at midnight everyone let off their own fireworks instead of all going to one display such as we do here.



After New Year was our GASS Winter Camp in Hameln – home of the Pied Piper. This was for all NZers and Aussies plus our host siblings. Over the week we had many activities including a town rally, lantern making, an entertainment evening, a town tour and Frühspor! In short this involved being woken up at 6am and doing a one kilometre run and a number of star jumps – IN THE SNOW! Despite the torture this activity was meant to inflict on us I actually quite enjoyed it and won't forget it in a hurry.



Having a youth hostel to ourselves was such a luxury and we were able to have free reign on the whole facility. On the last night we had a love parade theme- party which saw everyone bring out their fluoro and fishnet stockings. It was a great night! Throughout the camp we planned our free travel which we were to embark upon the week after. My free travel group was with the other two kiwis, Kate and Bronwyn. We all had a similar idea of where we wanted to go so planning was easy.

After our camp we headed with our packs on our backs, by train, to Cologne to see the breathtaking cathedral there. We stayed for a mass and a photo op and then continued on to Munich that evening. After a long train ride we navigated our way to our hostel. There we met former Irish child television star, Brian, whom we had heard a lot about before actually meeting him. We saw many things in Munich such as the Cathedral, Dachau concentration camp and the Residenz Museum which was incredibly beautiful! After a few days there we headed to Salzburg where the hills are definitely alive with the sound of music! We began our first day in Salzburg by watching the Sound Of Music and then taking the Sound of Music bus tour where we saw many locations from the film. It was a very exciting day for us! After spending a couple of days in the home of Mozart we went back to Munich for a night and then we headed home. Free travel proved to be an independence-building, fun, sight seeing, amazing experience where we had so many hilarious times! Such as ending up in Wunstdorf on the first day... not on our way to Cologne.



In my opinion only two weeks back with our host families after free travel was too short. However, in this time I went to see the new film 'Buddenbrooks' from the famous novel by Thomas Man that is filmed in Lübeck, attended school and had an amazing trip to Copenhagen for the weekend. Dirk, Suse and I headed there on the ferry and the trip was full of sightseeing. It was a wonderful place and we fitted in a lot of activities in one weekend. The next week was also jam-packed full of activities such as a night in Hamburg to see the musical Tarzan. I really enjoyed this as I am a huge theatre lover and everything about this show was incredible – and all in German which was great as I understood everything! Packing up my bedroom and leaving my host family was pretty emotional and I was really sad to leave them. But I knew that soon enough I would be back to visit or I'll hopefully see them here one day.

From Lübeck we headed to Berlin for another week long camp in the capital city. Berlin made a long lasting impression on me and I have a great appreciation for the history and culture of the city. I had



a blast there and saw things such as the Berlin Wall and the Brandenburg Gate that I never imagined I would see in my life. Throughout the week we had many adventures and I loved every moment. Getting closer with the Australians here made it even harder to leave them in Singapore on our way back home. We did many things such as a city tour, climbed up the Reichstag and had a reception with the New Zealand and Australian ambassadors to Germany. It was interesting to talk to them and hear all about what their jobs involve. After a tiring week of sightseeing and laughter we headed to Berlin airport and departed from Germany having to say goodbye to the country I had grown so fond of. At Singapore parting our separate ways was very tearful but getting home to see my family was great.



All in all I had the most amazing time in Germany. I made friendships that I will treasure forever. I became a part of a wonderful family and saw so many things that I never imagined I would see at this stage of my life. My language skills improved incredibly and I am now confident in my speaking of German and cannot wait to get back over there and practise more!

I would like to say a huge thank you to Grant Smith and the Society for the opportunities they have given me. Also to my sponsors Michael and Helen Wiedemann who have given me the experience of a life time that I cannot express how fantastic it was! Also to all the people at the Goethe Institute who put me forward for the scholarship, GASS Germany, Chris Munro our group leader, my host family and my German teacher Shona Reid. I had the best time and encourage you all to continue this wonderful society as the opportunities you create are amazing!

Stephanie Moore, Year 13, Craighead Diocesan School, Timaru.

SUMMARY

Isn't it great to read of the wonderful experiences of our exchange students? Well done Stephanie!.

These are experiences that will shape these young people for their future lives, and you have all contributed to making this happen.

So don't forget to send in your subscriptions to enable us to fund our German and New Zealand students this year.

Until next time.

Grant Smith
PRESIDENT

