

Chair's Annual Report 2024

2024 marked the 36th year of the twinning link between Bristol and its twinned City of Tbilisi. During this time, we have been able to participate in the remarkable changes happening in Tbilisi and Georgia. Tbilisi has changed from an old soviet style city to a modern dynamic Capital City of an Independent Georgia that is moving closer to becoming a member of the European Union and has recently achieved Candidate status. During the last twelve months we have still been coping with the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, which has very much affected our programme of events. For example, there are no longer direct flights from Britain to Georgia, cheap flight costs have risen fivefold making it too expensive to fly artists between our cities to promote each other's cultures. For our programme of events, we had to rely on what we can achieve locally or via zoom.

The BTA has both a website and a Facebook page, which thanks to Nina in Prague and Hannah in Bristol are kept up to date and relevant and ensure that anyone can check on what the BTA is doing and what events are forthcoming. We are fortunate to have the support of the International Office of Bristol City Council and have recently welcomed Zoe Gibbons into the role of International Officer. In Tbilisi Nino Beglarishvili has continued to support the BTA as an Officer in the International Department in the Mayor's Office and as always moves mountains to help us.

We had a wonderful Georgian barbecue in the grounds of a local Manor House owned by one of our members, which we now hope to be an annual event. We have had over the years a number of Georgian wine tastings and this year with the help of Gardabani wines, we held a joint event with Business West to showcase a wide variety of Georgian wines. Furthermore, for the second time, we participated in the Festival of Voice initiative with St George's Hall, who showcased the work of choirs and included recordings of choirs from our twinned cities. Plans for next year are already underway.

This year we again supported a number of students attending Bristol University, who we hope, when they return to Georgia, will become champions for the twinning link and based on past students, future leaders. Our most recent event was our annual supra, which, thanks to the support of the Georgian Embassy, a number of Georgian wine companies, the Bristol Georgian Choir Borjghali and a small army of volunteers and Esther pulling everything together as Head Chef, proved to be a wonderful evening not only to mark 36 years of twinning, but as a showcase for Georgian food, Georgian wine, Georgian singing and giving a true example of Georgian hospitality.

I would like to thank all the Executive for all their support and hard work which has enabled the BTA to have another successful year.

The next twelve months are already looking to be a busier year with two live talks on Georgia happening before the end of the year and we are already looking forward to the possibility of a BTA trip to Georgia in 2025, when we are hoping that cheap flights to Georgia will again be on the table. For anyone who wants to keep in touch with the activities of the Bristol Tbilisi Association check out our website and Facebook page.

<http://bristoltbilisi.com/>

https://www.facebook.com/p/Bristol-Tbilisi-Association-100064286847006/?paipv=0&eav=AfZwuc_jAuwdMTZkPEb7l8XyPNuXCnc0FGobWNo5MNg9an5q34NGZxUPxIGZ9bWmEwY&_rdr

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