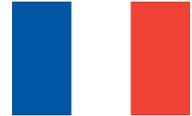




BILLERICAY TWINNING ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER No 14 February 2011

LA MARCHE

by Martin Hart

The picturesque village of Leiwen, situated on the banks of the Mosel, was the location for last year's "Marche de l'Amitie" – Walk of Friendship. This annual event, which has now been running for more than twenty years, brings together people from the twinned towns of Geisenheim, Trino and Chauvigny, joined more recently by Billericay, for a week of walking in the host country, which this year was Germany. Leiwen, which is located in the heart of the Riesling wine-growing region, proved to be an ideal base for walking and sightseeing, with plenty of opportunities to sample the local produce!



View along the Mosel

The event started on Friday afternoon, when the new arrivals renewed friendships made in previous years in a flurry of bonjours, ciao, guten tags and hellos. The local hosts, led by Doris and her team, helped settle us in the accommodation, which was the Eurostrand Holiday Village, a concept similar to Center Parcs, offering comfortable en-suite accommodation, shops, restaurants, recreational facilities and evening entertainment.

After a good night's rest, the first day dawned bright and sunny (a weather picture unfortunately not replicated for the rest of the week!). The beauty of the local scenery was revealed, showing the

nearby villages of Kowerich and Trittenheim, and the vine-covered hillsides surrounding the villages. Following the pattern of previous years, three levels of walk were on offer, varying in terms of length and height gained. Our local hosts had done an excellent job planning a good variety of routes, to ensure all needs in terms of fitness and ability were catered for. The routes covered walks through vineyards, paths through forest-clad hillsides, strolls along the banks of the Mosel and visits to local villages. One route even included a high level traverse of the steepest vineyard in Europe – not for the faint hearted!



On the Traverse

After a day's walking, it was good to unwind over a good meal in the on-site restaurant and catch up with the exploits of the other groups, finding out how they'd spent the day. The evening entertainment programme proved to be full and varied, with a professional standard of performers offering singing, juggling and light entertainment. One of the highlights proved to be the Saturday night fashion show, where members from the twinning group became models for the evening, stylishly parading clothes on sale in the on-site

boutique. The English representative in the show was Maggie Kingston, who did a splendid job on the "catwalk". Unfortunately there were no free clothes on offer as prizes!



Maggie on the Catwalk

As well as the daily programme of walking, our hosts had also arranged excursions to the ancient town of Trier, which has its origins in Roman times, and the picturesque towns of Bernkastel with its attractive medieval old town, and Cochem, popular for its wine tasting.

All too soon the week came to an end, and it was time to say our thanks and goodbyes to all our friends (in four languages!) with a promise to meet again next year in the Jura.

VISIT TO CHAUVIGNY JULY 2010

by David Clark

Chauvigny celebrated 40 years of twinning with Trino in Italy between July 12th and 15th this year. In view of the high demand for hosts, it was very kind of Nelly Teyant, the president of the Chauvigny Twinning Association, to invite two members from Billericay to join the celebrations with thirty people from Trino and thirty from Geisenheim. Originally, Janet Cosgrove and Mary Hawkins were selected to represent us, as French speakers would be preferable due to the fact that there would be the inevitable speech making! Unfortunately, Doug Hawkins broke an ankle before July 12th, so Mary was replaced by David Clark at the last minute.

David could only get an afternoon Eurostar and TGV to Poitiers on the Sunday at so short notice. So, having missed the official welcome and vin d'honneur at the Mairie, he arrived at Chauvigny at 9.30pm halfway through a convivial dinner chez his hosts, Annick and Christian Ragot, with twelve other guests. So it was rather hard getting up at 4.30am next morning, after turning in at 1.00am, to catch the coach to La Rochelle at 6.00am!

We had a guided tour of La Rochelle and lunch was taken at a restaurant facing the harbour, during which Andre and Nelly Teyant were congratulated in enthusiastic French fashion by the whole restaurant, on their 50th wedding anniversary. In the afternoon, in brilliant sunshine, we took a boat trip to the Isle d'Aix, fifteen miles offshore. The island is famous for its connections with Napoleon and its hollyhocks, which are twice as tall and the flowers twice as big as our home-grown variety.

On Tuesday morning, we gathered for a ramble in the woods at ten o'clock. The Germans were twenty minutes early, Janet and David arrived ten minutes early, but by ten there were very few French in evidence. In the absence of the official organisers, Christian Ragot took over and we had a very pleasant walk. At lunch-time, a hundred of us had a glorious picnic in the open air under the trees at a large horseshoe of tables. We then realised that the French, who always get their priorities right, had spent the morning preparing the delicious food!



A Party in the Woods

After lunch, five of us walked the mile or two to our next destination which was a goat farm, unlike the rest of the group who arrived by car! We had a tour of the goat pens, a talk on how the cheese is made with a generous tasting accompanied with wine, and a visit to the shop where much cheese was bought. We saw the goats being milked and realised that goats are very intelligent, unlike sheep. We were shown evidence of a pottery on the site, long before Apilco was established in the town. It may have been the original factory. Incidentally, the Apilco pottery went bankrupt a year or two ago, but is now thriving under Russian ownership.

Wednesday was le Quatorze Juillet. In the morning, the heavens opened and the parade of Sapeurs-Pompiers with the fire engines hooting all around the town was rather dampened. By midday, the rain had stopped and the market was held as usual in the square opposite the Mairie. The Italians had brought a gaily decorated market stall with them and were giving away free samples of

food from their region, the Piedmonte. There were cheeses, cooked meats including some heavenly salami, biscuits, cakes and rice. It was run by three young Italians who were among a large number of youngsters from both Germany and Italy.



The Twinning Stall at the Market

At lunch-time, Nelly and Andre Teyant hosted a dejeuner at St Radegonde and, once again, their 50th anniversary was celebrated. By the evening, all was dry again for the traditional (and obligatory by law) fireworks in the park under the castle. This year the theme was French aviation from Montgolfier to the present day, illustrated on a vast screen and augmented by a laser show. The fireworks were as brilliant as usual and the end of the show gave the impression that the castle was on fire. By now Janet and David had spent the time speaking nothing but French, and two or three times they even caught themselves speaking to each other in French! This prompted Janet to tell David, " I can speak English, you know!"

On the final day, the dinner was held and Janet and David had a place of honour on the top table with the Mayor of Chauvigny, Gerard Herbert and the mayors of Gesenheim and Trino who had come for the day. Speeches, some longer than others, were made by the mayors and the presidents of the various French, Italian and German committees and sub-committees.



David addressing the Mayors

Finally, Janet and David expressed their thanks and sent warm wishes from Billericay in three languages. Janet in fluent French and Italian, and David in French and German which proved very popular. David was later asked by the French if he would care to stand for Mayor of Chauvigny at the next elections!

OUR TWINNING SIGNS - THE FULL SET

In our last newsletter we mentioned that at long last Twinning Signs are now located on all of the main roads entering Billericay from Chelmsford, Brentwood, Basildon and Wickford. They are fixed beneath the BILLERICAY Town signs.

We thank Billericay Nurseries for making the signs on the London Road look so attractive by placing a flower-bed around them at their own expense where this photograph was taken.



Cllr. Peter Bowditch, Chair of the Town Council and President of our Twinning Association, Paul Bishop of Billericay Nurseries, Cllr. Marion Wilson, chair of the Billericay Twinning Association and Brian Hughes, chair of the Mayflower twinning Association

AGM 2011

For those that missed the notice that was sent out earlier, this year's AGM will take place on Monday 7th March starting at 7:30pm. It will be held in the Canon Roche Halls behind The Most Holy Redeemer Church in Laindon Road.

The evening will begin with a presentation by the Billericay students who enjoyed their visit to Fishers with Trevor Stansfield in the Autumn and be followed by the AGM proper.

There will be drinks and snacks for those wishing to stay on after the AGM has finished when there will be an opportunity to mingle and chat with other members of the Association.

We hope that as many members as possible will attend to make the evening more enjoyable.