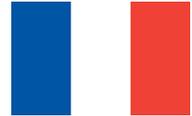




# BILLERICAY TWINNING ASSOCIATION



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## NEWSLETTER No 16 January 2012

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### OUR VISIT TO FISHERS 2011

By Marion Wilson

On 27 September all seven of us duly assembled at Billericay school at 5am. (Yes 5am!) to get the minibus to Gatwick. However we waited and waited and then phoned the cab company to discover that they hadn't got us booked in. Moment of panic! Luckily a driver had just turned up with the right sized transport to get us to the airport in plenty of time; but it could have been so different.

We had a good journey and as we arrived I explained to the others that I didn't know what Doug, our tour organiser, looked like. I had of course forgotten that the rest of my group had been on Facebook so claimed to be able to recognise him. Just as we were off to collect our luggage a large voice said "Hold it right there" It was Mike Kalb, my opposite number in Fishers, with whom I stayed last time. Although his wife had only just come out of hospital that day he insisted on coming to meet us.

All had gone well except one of the cases had been left behind at Charlottesville; the big blue one with the red spots. How could they miss that one? We were promised it would be delivered the same day. Well, they were almost right; it turned up at 2am Apparently they have to do that in case it contains medicines.

We spent a quiet night with our hosts after being taken to the train station for them to meet us. This is the station that only has trains once a year now, but is used as a meeting point and for other social events.

The Wednesday saw us having a tour of Fishers, visiting the Town Hall, Police department and the Fire station where Mollie presented our guide with a London fire brigade tee shirt. He was thrilled and treated us to a demonstration of him sliding down the pole. Some of our photographers managed to

capture him in flight. We then got them to bring out all their massive fire appliances and the photographers became snap happy.



*At Fishers Fire Station*

Then we were taken off to a quick trip around Billericay Park. Not a park as we know, it but lots of baseball pitches. And we saw their new pride and joy, a red English phone box. Many years ago the Association tried to ship one out to them but the cost of the shipping alone was going to be £3000 so it never happened.

Off now to Conner Prairie, a living history museum; it has genuine 18<sup>th</sup> century houses plus a forge, pottery, school room and store. These are manned by volunteers appropriately dressed and speaking in the language of the time, rather like our Kentwell Hall. A separate part of the museum was given over to the Indian history and we were just in time for our group to try their hand at tomahawk throwing with varying success.

Yet another visit; this time to a local firm who specialise in promoting dead celebrities! Not a job you often come across. They had a wonderful museum with memorabilia of Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Babe Ruth, Elvis Presley and so on. What a fabulous place. Thursday and Friday found us visiting the two High Schools with a request to be there by 7 am! I know our students were im-

pressed, not just by the facilities, but also by the cleanliness and orderly way in which the students moved about. One other big difference from our schools is that the pupils do not normally go outside during the school day.

The weekend was spent visiting and helping out at the Renaissance Fayre. We had a stand with lots of information about Billericay and England so that we could talk to the Americans and answer their questions. This is the Sisters Cities' (Twinning Association's) main way of making money. People come in their thousands all dressed up; everything from mediaeval to Tudor or even modern gothic. But it all adds to the spirit of the Fayre.



*Manning the stand*

Because I had been before, my host took me out for the day on Sunday. First we went to Columbia (in Indiana; not the one in Ohio!), a town famous for its architecture. They even have an architecture trail around the town. They haven't got very old buildings but what they do have are interesting. And I even spotted a Henry Moore statue outside the library. Then we visited Nashville (in Indiana; not the one in Tennessee!). This is a bit of a tourist town with lots of little specialist stores including a music store. They had wonderful locally made instruments, with dulcimers by the boat-load. I own a dulcimer (the sort you pluck, not hit with hammers) and you're hard pressed to find even one in our music shops; but there, there were dozens. They even have 'jam' sessions.

Our last day we went to the capital Indianapolis where we enjoyed a visit to the Indy racetrack. Dan Wheldon was trying out the 2012 prototype while we were there and so it was a shock to hear of his death shortly afterwards. Then off to the Eiteljorg museum; a mixture of art and, in the basement, exhibits of the early settlers which allowed our group to dress up and play with the toys! Then we were given time for some shopping. Our group certainly made the most of that.

The day and the visit finished with a dinner for a large group of people, all with present or past associations with us. It was nice to see two of our group spontaneously get up on stage to say a thank

you to our hosts and the organisers.



*All dressed up*

An uneventful flight back saw us landing on time and being met at Billericay by the parents. It was a good visit and I can only say thank you to our hosts and to our students and teachers for being such a credit to us.



*An impromptu performance at the dinner*

## **WALK OF FRIENDSHIP 2011**

By Sandra Neill

This was the 24<sup>th</sup> *Marche de L'amitié*, organised for the twinned towns of Chauvigny, Trino, Geisenheim and Billericay and represented this year by 38 French people, 28 Germans, 19 Italians and 6 English.



*Six English on La Marche*

Most people arrived at the hotel in Bois d'Amont in the Jura by 5.30 on 20<sup>th</sup> August in time for a briefing by the hotel director. The hotel is situated in the valley of the Orbe river, between the southern tip of the Swiss Lac des Joux and the northern tip of the French Lac des Rousses, with

views across to the Noirmont (1510m). During the week we crossed over the border many times.

Our walks took us into the mountains on both sides of the valley as well as around part of the Lac des Joux and south to the tip of Lac des Rousses. John and I joined a 'blue' group each day – one of three groups of medium walkers – and were highly impressed with our lovely guide Murielle. She not only gave encouraging support and waited patiently for me to catch up on numerous occasions but gave us clear and lively explanations of all sorts of interesting facts. We learned how the Jura mountain range was formed; the Alps pushed up and squashed the surrounding flat plain into pleats. We discovered why the frontier line was so convoluted; the cheese farmers wanted to sell their cheese in the same country as they made it. We learned the names and life cycles of the flora and fauna, and about the working lives of the local farmers and how their houses were constructed to protect them against the weather.

We were treated to the delicious, fresh taste of mountain mushrooms, chewed pieces of thistle (it tastes a little like artichoke) and ate wild strawberries and raspberries (N.B. only on the higher slopes where there is no danger of fox-induced disease).

We were walking in a beautiful area – soft, wooded mountain slopes alternating with grassy coombes, and always the evocative tinkle of cowbells. We would look down on the peaceful Lac des Rousses or beyond it to Lake Geneva, and at our feet a carpet of wild flowers. And we were walking in very hot weather – sometimes 30 degrees – but often protected by the shady forest stretches. The first day came as a bit of a shock to some of us – 6 km after breakfast and 8km after lunch, and up to 150m of ascent each time. Day 2 was rather long and hot – 10 km (was it *really* only 10?) and 500m ascent.

By the Tuesday we were ready for a gentler day. The hotel had organised a trip – by car, train and boat – down to the Swiss, northern edge of Lake Geneva and across to the charming French medieval town of Yvoire. The whole party had a simple but beautifully cooked lunch in a restaurant before exploring the town. This was an enjoyable outing, only marred by Swiss railways who, reminiscent of the Billericay/Liverpool Street line on a bad Sunday, were undertaking 'work on the line' and bussed us part of the way. Unfortunately they did not provide enough buses so a lot of waiting about ensued.

Another minimal-walking day followed: on Wednesday, after a short walk along Lac des Joux,

we picnicked in a clearing at the lakeside, the hotel staff providing aperitifs, barbecued sausage and chicken with accompaniments – and the essential coffee. In the afternoon we went to the top of the Dent de Vaulion (1482m.), a strangely-shaped peak which was visible from the hotel.

One of the most enjoyable walks was on the Thursday, when we had only short, usually gentle, ups and downs to contend with, and beautiful views from Mont Tendre (1678m.). Our last, shorter, walk was on Friday morning when we stepped on decking paths across the marsh (or it may have been bog – I haven't quite understood the difference!) around Lac des Rousses that we had looked down on from a great height earlier in the week. The weather held until the Friday afternoon, when we visited a Comté cheese warehouse which occupied a one-time barracks built by Napoleon. It was interesting to see the hundreds of large round cheeses stacked in long rows, but a little smelly and cold inside the cave-like building with its thick stone walls.

We thoroughly enjoyed walking in this lovely country and with such a competent guide. And we loved the international atmosphere and the many conversations with our French, Italian and German friends; nods, smiles and goodwill overcoming language difficulties. To our consistently charming and elegant French hosts – a big 'thank you'.

### FRIENDS OF CHAUVIGNY BARN DANCE

On Friday October 21st, the friends of Chauvigny held a Barn Dance at the Canon Roche Hall. 45 members attended and the caller was Eric Probert. Thanks to Eric, it was a very successful occasion. Patricia Clark thought up the idea and organised the evening as a modest £5 get-together for members to meet each other. But, quite unexpectedly, the Barn Dance made a profit! It is planned to hold another next year.



*And around we go!*

It is a great way to relax and has the advantages of your not having to bring a partner, and you don't have to dance. The dances are usually arranged for sets of eight people who feel like dancing their

socks off! So, we hope to see more members and your friends next year.



*Just take your partners*

### **NEWS FROM FISHERS**

Lots of things were happening in Fishers in the lead up to Christmas.

At the Ambassador House in Heritage Park there was a Victorian Family holiday at the beginning of December. Dressed up as Victorians were Dickens characters and carollers, helping with storytelling, craft making and games. There was a Main Street market full of goodies, somewhat like our Christmas Market in the High Street. Girls between 3 and 7 went to Billericay Park with their dolls to have tea, sing, dance and hear stories.



*Holiday Tea with Teddy and Me*

Young children could also send their letters to Santa Claus via mailboxes in the Town Hall and have their photograph taken with him or join the Cookies and Santa event there. Perhaps Billericay Town Council should take a leaf out of their book!

Throughout the festive season, residents visited Reynolds farm to see an amazing lights display which covered some 7 acres. And it was free!



*Reynolds Farm with Christmas Lights*

Connor Prairie hosted a Gingerbread Village where you can not only taste the gingerbread but enter your own gingerbread house in a competition. This was the venue too for a candlelit guided tour whereas at the Holland Memorial Park there was a candy cane hunt for those between 6 and 10. Lots of entertainment for children in Fishers at Christmastime.

### **CHAUVIGNY VISIT 2012**

Our visit to Chauvigny this year is confirmed as Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May to Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May. Most visitors from Billericay will be travelling on Eurostar and TGV to Poitiers and arrangements are in hand for a group booking. All those who have not yet put their names forward and would like to go should contact Jeannine Watson on 01277 657624 or to [jeanninewatson1@onetel.com](mailto:jeanninewatson1@onetel.com) as soon as possible.

### **FRIENDS OF CHAUVIGNY FUN QUIZ 21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY**

Ray Keilthy, David and Patricia Clark will be hosting our Annual Grand Fun Quiz as usual. It is our major fund-raiser of the year and a great opportunity for members to meet each other. It will be held on Saturday, January 21st 2012, in the Canon Roche Hall. Doors open at 7.00pm for 7.30pm. Come with your friends and make up a table of 6-8, or we can put you on a table. Tickets are £5.00. Bring your own drinks, glasses and nibbles. This is a very popular quiz and if you have not already booked and would like to go, please contact Patricia on 01277 625448 immediately.

### **AGM 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH**

This year's AGM will be held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2012 at Canon Roche starting at 7.00pm. The Association has booked the small hall, rather than the lounge as in previous years. As a prelude to the meeting, the students who visited Fishers in September will give a presentation of their experiences. Also during the evening Terry Gandy will give a short talk titled "Poitiers, the Black Prince, Premature Death and the French Connection." Terry will be happy to answers questions after the talk and there will drinks and nibbles for those wishing to stay and socialise.

### **CORRECTIONS TO NEWSLETTER No 15**

On page 2 in the Article "Six Years of the Friends of Chauvigny", lines 8-9, change "Town Councillors" to "several Billericay Residents led by Trevor Stansfield". Line 16-17, change "group of Town Councillors" to "delegation".