



BILLERICAY TWINNING ASSOCIATION



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CHAUVIGNY MAY 2012

By Mary Hawkins

The visit to Chauvigny this year took place between May 4th and 9th and was, as ever, a great success. We were welcomed on the evening of the 4th, after our arrival, with a reception at the Town Hall followed by dinner with our host families.



Gathering at Saumur

The highlight of the visit was undoubtedly the trip by coach to Saumur a delightful town on the Loire, where a guide took us round the old town and the magnificent castle, begun in 962 but altered many, many times throughout the Middle Ages. (The 15th century Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berri includes an image of the castle for the month of September – this is probably the most beautiful Book of Hours ever produced in the 15th century).



Saumur from the Loire

After a superb lunch by the castle and a wander round in the rain, enjoying the views from La Loire,

our visit to Saumur ended with a visit to the caves of the Bouzon-Labauday winery, where we enjoyed a talk about the winemaking followed by some serious sampling of 4 of their wines.

The weekend was an exciting time to be in France – on Sunday, 6th, the French Presidential Election was held and for several of us the evening was spent at the Charles Trenet Hall, watching, on a large screen, the local results as they came in. The pattern of voting in Chauvigny seemed to reflect that of the rest of France, which resulted in Francois Hollande being declared the new President.

A visit to the new Lingerie Indiscrète factory took place on the Monday morning which persuaded several in the group, French and English, that it was time they discarded their ‘user-friendly’ aged underwear and indulged in new! Several of us went to Chatellerault in the afternoon (a town on one of the routes to St Jacques de Compostelle) while others went to Terce and the Second World War Museum, which displayed, very movingly, the experiences of the Vienne between 1939 and 1945.



Ceremony at the Chauvigny War Memorial

In the rain, on 8th May at 12 noon, crowds gathered around the War Memorial in Chauvigny for the Service Monument Souvenir et Paix commemorating French Liberation from the German Occupation. Some of us had already been to a

nearby village with the town band for an earlier service and an unexpected glass or two of champagne! After the service, a lunchtime reception was held in the Salle de la Poterie followed by an afternoon spent with our hosts.

The official dinner took place that evening. And in the village hall at St Radegonde, we ate, drank and sang, to mark another wonderfully warm visit to our Jumelage friends in Chauvigny.



Enjoying the official dinner

Prior to departure back to UK, a joint meeting was held between the two twinning committees and our hosts were thanked for their efforts and the enjoyable time had by all their Billericay guests.



The joint committee meeting in Chauvigny

ANOTHER YEAR - ANOTHER VISIT FROM OUR FRIENDS FROM FISHERS

By Marion Wilson

One teacher, Erika Buzzard, and 4 girl students arrived tired but happy at Gatwick airport on 3rd July at 7.25 am, having left Fishers at 12 noon the day before (and a temperature of 100 degrees).



Our guests from Fishers

They were taken to Billericay School by Trevor Stansfield and met by myself where introductions and refreshments were provided before leaving with their hosts for a quiet rest of the day.

Wednesday saw them joining us on the narrow boat owned by Allen Evans for a trip from Paper Mill Lock where the girls were soon put to work manning the locks and even steering the boat. They got so good with the locks that I overheard one of them explaining how the locks worked to an English boy. Definitely a fast learner.



Working hard at the lock

We stopped for lunch on an island where Ulting church is based before returning to Paper Mill and then going further upstream.



Lunch at Ulting Church

We then returned to Billericay and English afternoon tea held this year in St Mary Magdalene Church in the High Street; a lovely venue and very historic too. The Chairman of the Council, John Buchanan (who is also our Honorary President), was there together with Sue Hammond, Head of Billericay School and a staff member from Mayflower School representing their head, Lee Brumby.



Tea at St Mary Magdalene's

I had the pleasure of welcoming the Rev. Paul Carr to his own church. He had brought along two parishioners, both from America. We were happy to see them, especially as it was Independence Day which we duly noted with banners saying that, alongside lots of Union Jacks and the flag of St. George. Altogether, with past students and teachers who had previously visited Fishers, we had about 50 people present. We were particularly pleased that the church had agreed to fly the flag of St. George on that day for us.

Thursday found us all gathering at Billericay station for a day out in London. Normally we have gone by coach but this year we thought we would risk going by train; the right decision as some of them had never been on a train before so it was a novel experience for them (and a lot cheaper for us). Because of the Jubilee and the Olympics, our programme this year was somewhat different. We went by train to Westminster and then spent about an hour looking at The Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the UK Supreme Courts of Justice, 10 Downing Street and so on. We were lucky that the Household Cavalry came trotting by as we stood in Parliament Square. And of course, as soon as they saw a red telephone box they were in it like a shot for photo opportunities.

We then walked down the Embankment looking at the Eye on the way until we got on to a river bus which took us to Greenwich. That was a good journey too as they could see lots of historic buildings including the Globe theatre, The Tower of London and the Olympics rings on Tower Bridge as well as all the modern buildings. They thought the huge photo of the royal family that we saw on TV during the Jubilee celebrations was great.



On the Cutty Sark

We then visited the Cutty Sark which had only just recently re-opened and it was well worth the visit. We then walked through Greenwich Park taking in the Painted Hall at the Royal Hospital on the way.

We were lucky to get through Greenwich Park as it was due to be closed to the public a few days later but we did see the enormous stands being erected for the Equestrian events.

We finally made it up to the Observatory where we tried to explain what the meridian meant and got them to stand one foot in the East and one in the West. On the way back to the DLR railway we fitted in a visit to a souvenir shop which made them all happy. And yes, we didn't lose anybody and no-one lost their train ticket.

We were so lucky with the weather on this day and the day on the river after all the rain we had had recently. And yes, I think we would go by train again. It certainly helped having a member of staff from Billericay School with us who just happened to live in Greenwich too.

Friday was spent in Mayflower School after which our visitors were given a tour of Billericay Nurseries who provide our town's hanging baskets and were then entertained to tea and cakes. The visit did include tasting different varieties of strawberries and raspberries but that did not seem to stop our guests from tucking in.



Tea and cakes at the Nurseries

I did spy one of our Billericay pupils carrying their Olympic torch at Billericay station in the event organised by the Billericay Striders. All went well in spite of the poor weather.

Traditionally the weekend is spent with their hosts. I know some went back up to London to visit the shops, others took in Southend; again seeing the sea was a first time for some of them.

Monday they were at Billericay school and we rounded the week off with an excellent meal at The Hoop in Stock. They were fascinated by the oak beams and the history of the place.



Farewell meal at The Hoop

Tuesday morning saw us all gathered at 6 a.m. to see them off to the airport. Unfortunately one of them had forgotten one of her three bags so they had to retrace their steps to retrieve it; and of course, it was the one that lived farthest away. In spite of that, they got there in time to catch their plane and the first part of their journey went well. The second plane however developed problems; they had to return to Charlotte and spend the night there before heading for home the next day

It was an experience they will not forget and hopefully they will look back on their time in England (the first time for all of them) with pleasure. We now look ahead to our students going over there at the end of September accompanied by their teachers and Trevor Stansfield.

Fishers, like all American towns, is very hospitable and would welcome visitors from our Association. If anyone is interested, please contact Marion Wilson (01277 626321) and she will put you in contact with her equivalent in Fishers.

LA MARCHE EN ANGLETERRE, LE 12 – 17 MAI, 2013

By Mary Hawkins

On the last evening of La Marche d'Amitie 2012, I offered to find an appropriate venue for 'une marche' somewhere in England for our French, German and Italian friends. (Loud cheers from everyone there!). And after several months of enquiries and lots of help from Maggie Kingston and Margaret Trasler, we settled on May 2013 at a Ramblers Worldwide Holidays hotel in Matlock Bath, Derbyshire. This is a good walking area, but, in order to check that we'd made the right decision, Maggie, Margaret, Martin (Hart) and I booked a walking holiday there earlier this year, following the Ramblers itinerary. But, the hotel wasn't up to scratch, unfortunately, so we had to think again. We decided on the Yorkshire Dales, another good area, and settled on the Craiglands Hotel near Ilkley, (www.craiglands.co.uk) inspected by Margaret who has high hopes of it being absolutely suitable.



Craiglands Hotel, Ilkley

As ever, there will be a mix of people – French (from Chauvigny), German (from Geisenheim) and Italian (from Trino) and us, and we are hoping that more members of our Association will join us. There will be 3 days of walking and 1 day's visit, probably to Harewood House, and the cost will be £550, including all food, walks with 3 guides for different levels of ability and entry to Harewood.



Harewood House, Harewood, Yorkshire

If you would like to join in (and we can't emphasise enough what fun Les Marches are), then please get in touch with Margaret Trasler, Maggie Kingston or me.

AFTERNOON TEA CHEZ JANET COSGROVE

On the afternoon of July 28th Janet Cosgrove kindly opened her house and garden for a tea party. All members of the Association were invited and, as the picture shows, a good number attended.



Enjoying Janet's garden

Guests brought with them snacks, sweets and delicacies and Janet supplied the tea and coffee. There was a bring-and-buy stall, mainly pot-plants, which added to the interest of the afternoon. We thank Janet for her hospitality.

NEW COMMITTEE VENUE

For many years the Guild Committees have met in Classroom 95 in Mayflower School, which meant that prior to each meeting, desks needed to be moved to form a makeshift table and put back afterwards. From earlier this year we have moved our venue to Anisha Grange Care Home in Outwood Common Road where a properly appointed meeting room has been offered free of charge.