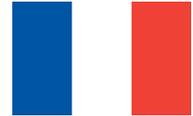




BILLERICAY TWINNING ASSOCIATION



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AMERICAN VISIT JULY 2014 *By Trevor Stansfield*

The twinning link between Billericay and Fishers was further strengthened in July of this year when 4 students and one teacher from schools in Fishers visited Billericay. They were hosted by the parents of students of the Billericay School and Mayflower School. The itinerary for the visit does not change much year on year but this time it was affected by the late arrival of the plane from America and the additional security in place at our airports. As a result our visitors missed the “chilling out” trip down the canal, an essential period of rejuvenation after a long journey from the States.

The day following their arrival was spent seeing the sights of London, with which they were greatly impressed. On leaving the underground at Westminster station there were loud exclamations of “Oh My God” when they first had sight of Big Ben and Westminster Palace.



Visitors and hosts outside Parliament

None of our visitors had been to London before and for some it was the first time they had left their country. Their excitement was infectious, I began to see London with different “eyes”. Continuing our sightseeing tour, the Supreme Courts of Justice quite clearly left students and teacher with a lasting impression of English justice; they had their photo

taken with the mounted guards at Horse Guards Parade, saw the parade ground where Trooping the Colour is held and the Cenotaph.



At Horse Guards Parade

Eventually we arrived at the Embankment where we boarded a Thames Clipper to Greenwich to see the Cutty Sark followed by a visit to the O2 building which is quite an impressive place.

Time to go home and the first part of the journey was made on the cable car over the River Thames. An impressive mode of transport which offered exhilarating views of the Thames and surrounding vista. The remaining four days of their stay was spent with their hosts and visiting the Mayflower School and Billericay School. Whilst at the schools the students and their teacher sat in classes, discussed the English teaching system, examination requirements and syllabuses and consequently became aware of the differences between the system in America and that in England.

All too soon it was time for our visitors to return Stateside. On the eve of their departure the Billericay Twinning Association organised a farewell party attended by the host families, teachers and students. On the morning of Tuesday 15 July they left Billericay to commence their journey home. One more visit during which new friendships have been established which, if past

experiences are repeated, will last a very long time.



At the farewell Party

REMINISCING FISHERS TWINNING

By Trevor Stansfield

On my way home, after saying goodbye to our guests from across the pond, I began to reminisce, trying to recall the events that lead to the formation of The Twinning Association. Some thirteen or fourteen years ago Fishers contacted the Billericay District Residents' Association with an invitation to enter discussions with a view to forming a twinning link. After much discussion it was decided to make contact with their Sister Cities Association and jointly to investigate the feasibility of forming such a link. Subsequently my wife and I paid a visit to Fishers when we met members of the Town Council and other organisations. So impressed were we with the town and the people that on our return to Billericay we had no hesitation in recommending that we should commence the procedure for forming a twinning alliance.

Details of the visit to Fishers, supported by photographs of the town, were displayed in the Billericay library and from those people who declared an interest a committee was formed in January 1998 which eventually became known as the Billericay Twinning Association. Its objective was to promote and foster friendship and understanding between the people of Billericay and other communities with which the Association may wish to form links in the future.



Fishers Town Hall

The Association was recognised by the Local Government Information Bureau (LGIB) the Authority then responsible for twinning matters in Europe, the Sister Cities International (SCI) a body with similar responsibilities America. The Town Council also supported the Association by association and the Chairman was declared the ex officio President.

During 1998 a Twinning Agreement was established with the town of Fishers, Indiana, USA which culminated in the signing of a Twinning Charter at a ceremony held in the church of St Mary Magdalene, Great Burstead, Billericay on 7 September 1998. The signatories to the Charter were the President of the town of Fishers, the Chairman of the Billericay Twinning Association and a representative of Billericay Town Council. In the evening a celebratory dinner was held in Barleylands Restaurant which was attended by seventeen residents of Fishers, including the Town President and his wife, the Town Communications Co-Ordinator, the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, the President of the SCI Committee, the Principals of the Senior and Junior High School and members the SCI Committee. Billericay was represented by a councillor of the Town Council, the Chairman and members of the Billericay Twinning Association, members of some of the organisations in Billericay and families who hosted the visitors. A shield, carved by a local craftsman, was presented to the President of Fishers to commemorate the event whilst a framed painting of Billericay was presented to each of the American guests.

A reciprocal charter was signed in Fishers on 24 June 1999 by the President of the Town Council, all its Town Councillors and the Clerk-Treasurer to the Council. It was also signed by The President of Fishers Sister City Association. The Chairman of the Billericay Town Council, the Vice Chairman of the Billericay Twinning Association were the signatories for Billericay.



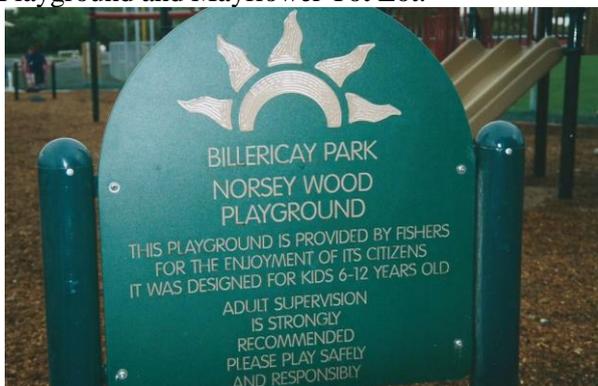
Signing the Fishers Charter 1999

Fishers is a rapidly developing town. In 1963 it had a population of some 350 people which by 2010

had increased to 72,000. Its workforce is predominantly white collared and the town hosts the headquarters of many big businesses. It has its own small airport, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Airport, which is about 30 minutes from the Indianapolis International Airport but no railway. In 2015 it is to become a city with an elected mayor but at present it is governed by a town council consisting of 7 elected councillors and a Town Clerk/Treasurer assisted by a Town Manager.

Since the formation of the twinning link, Fishers Town Council and the Sister Cities Association have promoted the twinning philosophy with enthusiasm. Each year they organise a Renaissance Fayre the theme of which is Billericay and England. The event is attended by Queen Elizabeth I and her entourage, there is jousting and mock executions, people dress up in mediaeval attire as in Elizabethan England and every attempt is made to replicate the language and ambience of the period.

Probably a more lasting tribute to Billericay is the creation of a park which has been named "Billericay Park" to celebrate the twinning link. Many of the facilities in the park have been named after places in Billericay such as Norsewood Playground and Mayflower Tot Lot.



At Norsey Wood Playground, Fishers

The long lasting legacy is, of course, the annual visit of students and teachers of Hamilton Southeastern High School and Fishers High School to Billericay. Our visitors are hosted and entertained by the parents of students at Mayflower High School, Billericay School and the Billericay Twinning Association. A reciprocal visit to Fishers is made by students and teachers of the Billericay Schools later in the year and in 2014 this visit will take place in October.

In my mind twinning is a good thing. One learns about the customs of another country and of the community in which one lives for a while. It also promotes friendships which can last for a long time. I am still friends and communicate with the persons who hosted Margaret and I on our visits to Fishers. Several students are still corresponding with their

American hosts and some have visited their hosts outside the twinning link. It is to be hoped that this special relationship with Fishers will last for well into the future.

LA MARCHÉ 2014

By Martin Hart

The village of Saint Gildas de Rhuys on the southern coast of Brittany was the location of this year's Marche de l'Amitié. Situated near the Atlantic, our accommodation in the Pierre Bleue village de vacances, provided an ideal base to explore this Maritime area. There were five of us from the UK this year – Jeannine and Howard, Margaret and Martin, and Janet.

Saturday was the day of arrival, and old friendships were renewed, and new acquaintances were made amidst a torrent of bonjours, ciao and wie geht es. To help people settle in, a briefing was provided in the evening by the resort staff (plus a glass of the local cider!) covering resort facilities and the all-important agenda for the week. This covered the walks planned, the visit to the medieval town of Vannes and Friday's boat trip to the Ile d'Arz in the Golfe du Morbihan.

After the briefing, everyone headed off to the dining hall for dinner. The food was of a very high standard, and during the week, the resort made sure we sampled all the local dishes such as moules frites, crêpes and gallettes and fruits de mer. Suffice to say it was all delicious!

After absorbing so many calories, some exercise was called for, and Sunday commenced with a walk to the coast.



The coastal walk commences

In keeping with the Marche tradition, three levels of walk were on offer each day, usually ranging from 5 to 16 kilometres, and people signed up for the distance they felt comfortable with. The walks were ably led by Monique and Jean-Paul, plus our local guides Charlotte and Marina. As it is a maritime region, a lot of the routes followed the shore line of the Atlantic and Golfe du Morbihan, offering sea vistas and bracing sea air.

The Golfe is a major natural feature of the area, comprising a large inland lake, with an 800 metre wide inlet from the sea. There are many islands in the Golfe, and a wide variety of birds live in this area. A number of the islands contain prehistoric remains in the form of ancient standing stones (locally referred to as dolmens and menhirs) and burial tumuli. The Golfe is also a mecca for sailing and bird watching.

After a morning's walking, a lunch time picnic was usually the order of the day, often on the seashore. One memorable day when we were near the village of Saint Jacques on the Atlantic coast, lunch was supplemented by fresh oysters expertly harvested by Jean and Renée, who showed great skill in: a) selecting one that was suitable to eat, and b) opening it with a knife. Suffice to say no gastric problems ensued, so their judgement was sound! After the seafood lunch, the day's walk ended with a visit to the beautiful Chateau de Suscinio, an impressively restored Middle Ages residence of the Dukes of Brittany.



Jean Harvesting Oysters

After a hard day's walking, the groups would return to Pierre Bleue for some R & R, the evening meal and the in-house entertainment. A range of offerings were available during the week including karaoke and a demonstration of Breton dancing.

As a break from the walking schedule, on Thursday, a visit was arranged to the beautiful medieval walled town of Vannes, which sits on the northern shores of the Golf du Morbihan. After arriving, the group was divided into two, with German and French speaking guides leading a tour around the town's main areas of interest. Of particular note were the lovely civic gardens laid out in the remains of the town's moat, the cathedral and the medieval streets and old timbered buildings, some dating back to the 14th century.

After a few hours walking around the town, appetites had been stimulated, and a well-earned lunch, which included a local speciality sausage, andouillette, was taken in a local hotel.



In Vanne

The week's activities culminated in the Spectacle evening of entertainment on Friday. One of our guides, Marina, not only guided during the day, but also acted as compere / host / singer for the evening entertainment - a true testament to stamina and dedication! The Spectacle was really good, comprising comedy sketches, music and song and dance routines. Marina was supported by her fellow guide Charlotte, who proved to be an excellent dancer / actress, the resort manager (a great comedy talent) and other resort staff. Audience participation was achieved by "guest appearances" by Monique and Heinz who excelled in the comedy roles they were "volunteered" into! Suffice to say it was a wonderful evening and a fitting end to a fun and memorable week.

Sadly all good things must come to an end, and Saturday morning was spent saying farewells and departing for home. Many thanks must go to Monique for all her hard work organising such a splendid event, making sure things ran smoothly day by day, and being a guide on some of the walks. A noble effort.

The venue for La Marche 2015 will be in the mountain resort of Bardonecchia in Italy and we're already looking forward to it!

FRENCH EVENING ON 28th NOVEMBER

The Friends of Chauvigny are pleased to announce a French Evening to be held at Canon Roche Small Hall, Laindon Road on Friday 28th November commencing at 7:30pm. The arrangement is similar to last year. It is free to all Association members who are asked to bring food and drink to share. The French singer, Olivier, will entertain us as before. Please come and join in the fun.