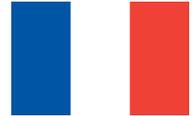




# BILLERICAY TWINNING ASSOCIATION



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## NEWSLETTER No 26 DECEMBER 2016

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### VISIT TO CHAUVIGNY 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> JULY 2016 by Howard Watson

Fifteen of us from the Chauvigny section visited our friends in Chauvigny, this being four years since our last outgoing official twinning visit. Travelling by train (eight), plane (two) and car (five), we first met up with our Chauvinois friends on the Wednesday at around 6pm at La Salle de la Poterie where we were warmly welcomed by our host families. Following a welcome drink and greetings, we then rounded off a long day having dinner with our individual hosts.

Thursday started quite early with a 9 am committee meeting at La Salle des Associations. This was followed by a casual stroll along the banks of the Vienne and a delightful picnic lunch at Les Essarts (Foret de Mareuil). Unfortunately, the weather turned a bit rainy on our arrival but it did not deter us from having a good time after retreating to rapidly laid tables in the adjacent hall.



*Picnic Gathering before the Rain*

Being 14<sup>th</sup> July, we spent a lovely evening altogether in the park back at Chauvigny listening to the splendid 'Harmonie', the band in which Jean Coudreau and Christian Mallet played. This was followed by a superb firework display from the high ramparts of the castle in the medieval sector of the town.



*14<sup>th</sup> July Fireworks*

Friday was a busy day with a great visit to Cognac albeit we had to get up very early for a 7.30am start by coach. The day in Cognac started with a guided tour of the town and then a delightful lunch in a local restaurant. After lunch, we had an interesting tour of the Hennessy Distillery which included a tasting of various cognacs. We returned to Chauvigny at around 8.30pm and spent the rest of the evening with our host families.



*Awaiting to Enter the Hennessy Distillery*

Saturday was a free day for everyone and many of the group took the opportunity to visit the market in town. In the evening, the traditional Gala Dinner was held back at La Salle de la Poterie where we all enjoyed one another's company and a splendid meal.

Sunday was largely another free day with our hosts arranging separate events. Some of us visited Richelieu where there was a historical re-enactment day being held. The good weather allowed those on that particular trip to enjoy a nice lunch outdoors. In the evening, there was a farewell meal for all at La Salle de Peuron in Chauvigny.

The group finally left on Monday with happy memories of a thoroughly good time with old friends. We look forward to welcoming them back to Billericay in 2018.

### **FUN WALK 2016**

On 22 May Association members took part in John Baron's Fun Walk. The starting venue was on the west side of Barleylands Road and not within the Farm complex on the other side of the road as before. The route was different and slightly under 3 miles. The venue was a bigger field than before which allowed more charities to set up stalls around the perimeter. For the first time the Twinning Association had a stall to explain our aims to those that enquired and to encourage interest.



*Twinning stall at the Fun Walk*

We thank Janet Cosgrove for organising us for the walk and we thank all those who sponsored the walkers. Money given by sponsors attracted an addition sum from the Fund Walk Trust in proportion to the amount collected. In all, we raised a sum of £389.

### **AMERICANS IN PARIS (well, in Billericay actually)**

By Marion Wilson

Two visitors from Fishers spent the day with chairman Marion Wilson on Saturday 19th November on route to Paris. They were Nick Vare, who was over here in 2011 as an exchange student staying with a pupil from Billericay School, and his mother Jocelyn. I stayed with Jocelyn's family in 2014 so it was good to see her again and as an added bonus it was her first visit to Billericay.

Nick has finished his degree in Geography and is now studying for a Masters degree in Environment.

We were lucky with the weather. After a very cold frosty start it was a beautiful sunny day. We decided to do the Town Trail showing all the historic houses in the High Street. Jocelyn was intrigued to see where Christopher Martin, victualler of the Mayflower is said to have lived.

We then discovered the new Italian Deli by the side of the Library. They were delighted by the cellar-like aspect below ground and it seemed the right place to stop for coffee. More excitement followed when Jocelyn saw the flag pole where we had flown the Fishers Town flag at the police station when they were here in 2015.



*The deli in the cellar*

A visit to Sun Corner allowed them to see the fact that it is a Field in Trust and to read the plaques explaining on what occasions the beacon had been lit.

We completed the round trip of the Town trail before stopping for lunch at Lo Monaco where much discussion centred on Brexit and the American election. Mike Pence the new Vice President elect was Governor of Indiana.



*In Lake Meadows with the Wizard*

After lunch we went to Lake Meadows to see the Dragon and Wizard carved from fallen trees. A walk around the lake allowed them to see the Child in the Park garden and the fountain. They thought it was

great to have such a pleasant place so close to the Town Centre. Our visit was completed with a look at the skate park and the new outside gym.

Sadly then they had to take the train back to London prior to catching Eurostar. A great pity they could not have stayed longer but lovely that they took time out of a short stay in Europe to come to our town.

## **WALK OF FRIENDSHIP THE BLACK FOREST, 20-27 AUGUST**

By Martin Hart

The beautiful medieval town of Zell am Harmersbach was the host location of this year's walking week. Zell am H is situated in the south-west German state of Baden Wurtemberg. The town lies in a valley, with a tributary of the Kinsig river running through it, and is in the heart of the Black Forest evidenced by the surrounding forest-clad hill sides. It has a monastery dating back to 1139, and is home to the famous Rooster and Hen pottery factory. It also sells excellent ice cream, but more of this later.

Our base for the holiday was the excellent Hotel Klosterbraustuben located in the east of the town. The hotel was well appointed with a swimming pool, sauna, spa and spacious dining room. The helpful, friendly staff ensured our stay was a very enjoyable one.



*Black Forest Walking Trail*

As always, the holiday began by renewing friendships with our friends from Italy, Germany and France. Over a welcoming drink, language skills ranging from the excellent to the "trying very hard" were dusted down and practised, and a good time was had by all. One of the more amusing points to emerge was that the UK is now known in some countries as "Brexitland"! After a very good dinner, most people went to bed for an early night to recuperate from a long day's travelling. To help bring back happy memories of previous walking weeks, a viewing was held on Monday night of a video produced by our Italian friends of the 2015 La Marche in Italy. This was held in the alpine resort

town of Bardonecchia, home to the 2006 Winter Olympics.

And so to business. The focus of the week is the walking, and to help us with this we had the assistance of two local guides, Frank and Willi. Three levels of walk were on offer each day, the differentiator being the distance covered and overall ascent. People would sign up to which group they wanted to join based on personal preference, and how well aching limbs had recovered from the day before! Those who didn't want to participate in the walking, took advantage of the opportunity to visit some of the beautiful local towns such as Gengenbach and Triberg, which has an impressive waterfall, and is reputedly home to the largest cuckoo clock in the world.



*Gengenbach Town Centre*

Weather-wise the holiday began with an unpromising wet and grey start on the Sunday, but afterwards things changed dramatically for the better, with endless blue skies and temperatures in the thirties for the rest of the week. Splendid as this was, this posed its own problems in ensuring you were properly hydrated - suffice to say I was consuming more than two litres of water every day!



*Looking down on Oberharmersbach*

The Black Forest is covered with a multitude of walking paths and trails. They are well signposted giving altitude, distance to next key point and estimate of time taken to get there. One of the more novel features to be found on the walks were the

dispensers, sometimes in the form of a hollowed out tree stump, containing bottles of schnapps, glasses and an honesty box for payment. At the price of one Euro 'a tot', this proved to be a very popular idea with my walking group and certainly helped to revive weary walkers when the going got tough.

Our guide Frank led the longer walks, and he was always accompanied by his dog called Lucky. The group would take it in turns to hold Lucky's lead, and not only was he a faithful companion but also proved to be a tower of strength by pulling you up some of the steeper ascents.



*Freiberg Cathedral*

After a couple of days of walking a little R&R was called for. This was accomplished via a day trip to Freiburg, the main town in the Southern Black Forest. Freiburg is a beautiful medieval town dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. It also lays claim to registering the hottest temperatures recorded in Germany. The main point of interest is the cathedral which survived the bombing during the Second World War. We visited the cathedral noting in particular the statues of the kings of the Old Testament and the apostles situated on the buttresses. Afterwards we walked around the surrounding market area which included craft stalls, food vendors and street performers. A novel feature of the town is the shallow streams that run in gullies at the edge of the streets. Their original purpose was to provide running water for the town's inhabitants in medieval times, and now provide a novel facility for the local children to play in.

After an excellent lunch in a restaurant near the cathedral we headed to Lake Titisee, the largest body of water in the Black Forest. The lake is a mecca for water sports and a very popular tourist attraction evidenced by the number of shops, restaurants etc. on the lake shore.

The final three days of walking were memorable with extensive views over the forest and valleys. Some of the higher summits Mooskopf (871 m) and

Brandenkopf (945m) had towers on the top facilitating even better views of the surrounding countryside. We even discovered old wolf traps on the trails which harked back to a time when this region was wilder and more dangerous. The temperatures got even hotter and we were impressed by Lucky's simple technique of rehydrating – when he saw a pond or stream he would just jump in and drink! For the humans in the group recovery methods at the end of the day took a more 'sophisticated' approach by the imbibing of coffee / beer / ice cream or sometimes all three.

Sadly all good things must draw to a close, and Thursday evening was the scene for farewell speeches and the presentation of gifts to our two excellent guides, Frank and Willi. Special thanks must also go to our German hosts who organised such a splendid and memorable week. Next year's walk will be in France near the Pyrenees. Looking forward to it already!

### **JANET'S GARDEN PARTY**

Well that was a misnomer. Luck ran out after several years of having beautiful weather. Despite tweaking the garden all the week and dusting off the garden furniture, the Garden Party on 25<sup>th</sup> June at Janet Cosgrove's house was a Living Room party and the garden could only be viewed through curtains of rain.

Approximately fourteen members of the Twinning came and everyone bought delicious plates of their specialities. The Bake Off programme would have been envious of the efforts made by the members. Janet had been in Chauvigny at the beginning of June and had returned laden down with gifts from our friends in Chauvigny and their other twinned towns of Trino in Italy and Geisenheim in Germany. Therefore we had a raffle where everyone won a prize, some bigger than others.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

A date for your diary. On Monday March 13<sup>th</sup> 2017 the Association will hold its AGM. It will take place in the Town Council Meeting Room in Crown Yard, High Street, Billericay (venue subject to confirmation) with action starting at 7:00pm. An interesting talk relevant to the people of Billericay is planned before the AGM. More information in due course.

### **QUIZ NIGHT**

Another date for the diary. The Association's Quiz night is planned for the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2017 at Canon Roche Hall. The quiz will start at 7:30pm and guests should arrive at 7:15. There will be tables of up to 8 people and the cost is £5 a head. Ask your friends to form a table with you, although singles and couples will be accommodated.