



Brentwood/Montbazon Town Twinning Association

Issue No 27

[www. Brentwoodfrenchtwinning. com](http://www.Brentwoodfrenchtwinning.com)

2012 EVENTS

*A Message from our Chairman – Valerie Fletcher ,
seen here with Brian and their French counterparts Laurence & Bertrand*

I can hardly believe its 2013 already. The past year has been a momentous one with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the London Olympic Games, and the very successful visit of our friends from Montbazon.

At the AGM after many years as our Secretary, Sue Sanders decided to take a well-earned rest from her duties, and David Minns relinquished his post as Treasurer. I would like to thank them both for the time and effort that they have given to the Association, particularly Sue who has been in post for more years than she wants to remember! It was welcome news that they are both prepared to serve on the Executive Committee so their experience has not been lost to us. They were replaced by Emmanuelle Durat and Sajit Sahadevan respectively, who are already making their mark on these posts with enthusiasm. We also welcomed The Mayor, Cllr Ann Coe, as our new President and thank her and Paul for their continued support particularly during the official visit in July.



I had great pleasure in presenting a long standing supporter, Margaret Brehaut, with Honorary Life Membership at the Fete de Rois. We had managed to keep this under wraps for several weeks so it came as a complete surprise to Margaret who was delighted to accept the award.

Once again the Social Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sheila Hornsby, were busy raising funds and organising the programme for the visit, which you will be able to read all about in the ensuing pages, many thanks to them all. It has been a sad year for us losing so many friends and our thoughts are with Beryl and Tony, and Margaret and Jeremy's families. It has been good to see Beryl at some of our events particularly after her very nasty fall resulting in her breaking her hip.

We have also said goodbye to Kathrina and Gordon Fairgrieve who have moved 'north' to be closer to family. We shall miss Kath's cheerful disposition and delicious meals produced for so many of our events, and Gordon supporting in the background. We wish them well in their new home. Finally I would like to thank Rosemary Smith and Margaret Streather who edit this newsletter.

As I am coming to the end of my 3 years tenure as Chairman I look back with many happy memories and thank you all for your support and would like to wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

STOP PRESS: The dates suggested to us for our visit to Montbazon are 25 – 29 July 2013.

Absent Friends

Mick Guyatt, who had done so well after his heart operation, sadly became ill again and died in March. Well known to the Montbazonais as an English gentleman, genial host and Beryl's help and support especially in her years as chairman (although leaving most of the French speaking to her). He enjoyed his trips to Montbazon, participating in all the functions here and there. During one memorable Journee de l'Europe he could be seen cooking English sausages with Pierre Gisset and Jean Geay and encouraging the French to try them at the twinning publicity stall. . . . He'll be greatly missed.



Mick & friends

Margaret Hogan Where to start? . . . Margaret led such a busy life, during and beyond her time as Mayor of Brentwood. After retirement I joined a local group with some monthly meetings, discussing current events, hosted in her home. Before long this led to an invitation to a coffee morning she was hosting for the Twinners (of which she was then chairman), attending fund raisers and becoming members. It was my very good fortune to share good times with such a multi-talented, community minded lady, ever participating and enjoying to the full her many roles. She always had something interesting to say, especially when in the lead up to her 80th birthday celebrations she was recalling events in her past! A more delightful, gracious and caring person would be hard to find.



Pam & Margaret lead a sing-song

Pam Maule was a real Francophile having worked in France in her younger days and becoming fluent in the language. She was a friend of Margaret Hogan and in fact, she and Tony joined our association after one of Margaret's convivial coffee mornings. It was not long before she joined the committee and they enjoyed the Twinning visits, being very supportive of the fund-raising events, until her illness sapped her strength. We shall remember her enthusiasm and talent in the musical field especially as conductor of a hilariously animated choir attempting "Old McDonald's Farm" at one of the farewell nights -a lovely lady.

Jeremy Holiday was involved in Town Twinning since its inception and with his late wife Lesley enjoyed many visits to both Montbazon and Roth and often hosted guests from both towns. He was an active member of the Executive Committee for many years organising Beetle Drives, social outings, and helping with many other activities, always finding something in his fancy dress wardrobe to grace the occasion. He will be missed by his many friends and we all extend our sympathy to Claire and Gordon.



Fête des Rois



The kings

<*****>
*****>

Margaret
receiving
her award
from
Valerie



French cheese and wine tasting

by Rosemary Smith



We are fortunate to have within our membership the expertise of Sheila and Neil Hornsby and Emmanuelle Darut who put together the menu of tastings for a most informative evening. Kathrina and her helpers enhanced the presentation with platters of bread and crackers to accompany the generous portions of the cheeses.

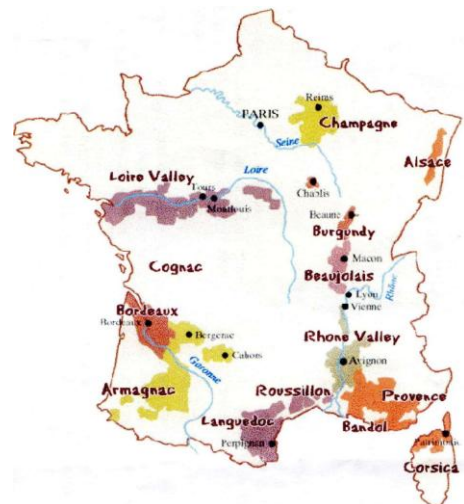
The fun part of the March evening was the "loto français" conducted by Emmanuelle, in her inimitable style, starting off with the brief lesson in the pronunciation of the numbers in French. Then there was the explanation of the rules of the game and the alternative connotations of some of the numbers (as we have in Bingo) e.g. BB (Brigitte Bardot) number 11, though many of them were the names of their Departements.

With cards ready and dried beans poised to cover the numbers, we concentrated our listening skills. A completed line required a shout of "quine" -and a full house was "carton plein". Eventually Mike le Surf was the overall winner and claimed first prize.

After this hilarious interlude it was back to the serious business of tasting with three red wines and their matched cheeses - one of which, to our surprise, was English Cheddar.

Everyone voted it an excellent social evening and it boosted our funds.

Thanks to all the organisers and helpers



JOURNEE DE L'EUROPE by Sue Sanders

Vive le Jumelage!

Travelling to Montbazon via Portsmouth St Malo, Peter and I arrived on Friday 4th May at the home of Michelle and Bernard Garbet to be greeted warmly by our hosts and friends at Veigne. On board our VW Estate an unbelievable and much requested load of British (Sainsbury's) merchandise for sale on the Montbazon/Brentwood stand the following day: 25 boxes of tea, Yorkshire and Earl Grey, Mamade marmalade concentrate, fruit cakes, ginger biscuits, shortbread biscuits, Bird's custard powder and plenty of Brentwood and other classic English beers. All tucked safely inside.

After an animated dinner with friends of the Garbet's (both right and left wing) we were left well informed of the significance of the French Presidential Elections on the following Sunday. The next morning up early to set up our stand at Monts at the Espace Jean Cocteau.

Many visitors arrived and it was not difficult to spot the musicians of the Brentwood Phoenix Youth Orchestra who had arrived at Sorigny the previous night. A wonderful open-air concert commenced at lunchtime under the direction of Robert Bailey, followed by a snack lunch for everyone involved



in the celebrations. In the evening a banquet for upwards of 250 people took place, prior to which Brentwood's Phoenix Youth Orchestra again played and were given a standing ovation by everyone present.

The banquet was prepared by all of the communes on the Indre who were involved in this celebration. Our contribution was the Jacobs's cream crackers and English cheeses, the latter provided by Auchun hypermarket. Unfortunately the Stilton had been crumbled rather than sliced, another 'catastrophe' for Michelle. After a late night dancing Breton style we spent a lazy Sunday morning, and went with our hosts to vote for the next French President. (Who turned out not to be Sarkozy) and then off to the beautiful church in Montbazon for an afternoon concert by the Phoenix and the Harmonie du Val de l'Indre directed by Patrick Cretenier. This unforgettable event was followed by what can only be described as a 'knees up' and Jam Session at the Grange Rouge, which was enhanced by much lubrication and



platter upon platter of delicious buffet food supplied by our French hosts. As the director of the Phoenix, Andrew said, we have had an unforgettable and wonderful weekend.

'Another good reason to go to stay with our friends in France, I thought'.

by Pam Richards

Not that I need a reason because I know that I would be welcome any time at Francoise & Jeans'. This annual event was being held in Monts near to Montbazou and we were really privileged as it coincided with the visit of the Brentwood Phoenix Youth Orchestra. On the Saturday Sue & Peters Sanders and I helped Michelle with the setting up of our stall with all the 'goodies' Sue and Peter had brought with them in the car. It was interesting to browse around the other stalls and sample the German beers and Italian meats. I think we sold out of all our English produce and we hope the French people were happy with their Earl Grey tea and Yorkshire tea! The Phoenix Orchestra, together with Patrick Cretenier's Orchestra delighted us with a superb lunch - time open air concert. The European theme was continued with a four course meal in the evening with entertainment. A jolly good time was had by all. It would be great if more members could consider going one year, I am sure they would enjoy themselves.

AGM 2012



An Evening of



by Monica Donegan

This evening had been planned for some time and I looked forward to it with a mixture of anticipation and excitement.

The entertainment was provided by twelve members of The Mid Essex Magical Society and started with each table being treated to a display of close-up magic by a different member of the team.

Everyone on our table concentrated intensely to follow Ron's rapid hand movements but each of us failed to spot how he undid the knotted chain in front of our eyes. Similarly we were mystified by the card tricks that he performed under our close scrutiny.

Time for a supper break. We had around sixty guests so the catering was an important feature and required careful planning. Needless to say Kathrina and her team had worked their own special kind of magic to provide a magnificent Ploughmans that was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

A session of mind reading followed. Two volunteers were chosen from the audience and it appeared that the magician was able to predict what they were thinking even before they thought it. A young boy called Harry was the next subject. He was instructed to take various objects, including a £10 note, from the magician's wallet and secrete them about his person. The entertainer was able to say exactly what he had taken and where he had hidden it. The evening ended with an incredible display of levitation. A table seemed to rise into the air and float as we gasped in amazement. How did he do that?

This was the first time that we had arranged an evening of magic and it proved a huge success. The skill and dexterity of each of the magicians was of the highest standard and the presentation hugely entertaining.

A very enjoyable way to increase our funds



Reception and Pub Lunch by Brian Davis

After their long journey the day before it was decided that we would give our French guests a 'local day' starting with the official welcome in the Council Offices. As our French guests had requested that they visit a Real Essex Country Pub it was decided by the Social Committee that Valerie and I organise a pub lunch. We plumped for one of our favourites, the Black Bull

at Margaretting. This of course involved several visits to the pub in order to fully approve the menu, ensure that numbers could be accommodated comfortably, that parking for the French coach was available and of course that good ale and wine would be provided.



We met with Julie the landlady who confirmed that sole use of the saloon bar area, seating 65 would accommodate us comfortably, making a nice convivial atmosphere for all. Julie provided us with a two course lunch

of Roast Pork with all the trimmings (or a veggie option) followed by Apple Crumble and Custard. A glass of wine or soft drink was also included. The room was soon full of noisy chatter as everyone renewed acquaintances and chatted informally. By the number of clean plates after the meal it was obvious that it had been a pleasurable occasion and everyone including Michel, the French driver, had enjoyed themselves. Cameras were clicking away recording this happy occasion which also happened to coincide with Pam Richards' birthday.



All left in a jolly mood for afternoon tea and entertainment given by the children of Saint Peter's School at the Belli Centre, South Weald, where Laurence LeBlevec, the French Chairman, was delighted to meet the little girl who had been exchanging emails with her daughter Elsa as part of the recent initiative between the two schools.

St Peter's Young Linguists by Sheila Hornsby

Our twinning links have led to a successful exchange of letters between pupils at St Peter's School in South Weald and a Montbazon primary school. This initiative led by teacher Katie Corp and her assistant Pauline encouraged the children to learn about France and its language as well as communicating with others of the same age in Montbazon.

With this year's twinning visit in term time, it was a great opportunity for the pupils to meet some real French people and to show us all what they have learnt. Our French friends were delighted by the appearance of the pupils as they walked up the path to the church, smartly dressed as always in their uniforms, complete with red berets and caps. The children impressed us all with their accents and confidence as they introduced themselves in French. The letters from their correspondents were on display and young Clara Larcher for one spotted the photos of children she knew. As the afternoon concluded with tea and cakes in the Belli Centre both English and French enjoyed extending the Entente Cordiale!



Hadleigh Guildhall/Town Hall

by Rosemary Smith

After lunch, ending with the cutting of Twin cakes John and I along with everyone else in the party set off to explore the church and the Medieval wool town. Having been well primed with the pre lunch talk and slides and armed with the Town Guide and walk-around map it was like a treasure hunt. By chance when we reached No. 7 New Town Hall, we noticed the team of Hadleigh Town Twinnors clearing away. We tentatively asked if it was still possible to see the upstairs halls of the Guildhall. Peter Matthews (former pupil of Shenfield High and present chairman of Hadleigh TT) said he had time to spare and was delighted to give us a tour. What luck!



It's almost unbelievable that this timber-framed building constructed in the mid-15th century and Grade 1 listed is in such well preserved condition and so well-used by Hadleigh Town Council. Above the beamed hall where we all had the talk and lunch was the upper chamber, a beautiful light and bright hall still used for meetings, weddings, receptions etc. Even with the grade 1 status the planners have allowed the installation of a lovely modern kitchen and toilets which makes it ideal for hiring out.

Another flight of narrow low- ceilinged stairs and we emerged into the attic storey. Medieval walls, fireplace, beams and crown post roof show the lasting craftsmanship of the medieval builders and carpenters. There was even part of a linen-fold oak screen rescued from the renovation of one of the older shops on the High Street. Also displayed in the Guildhall building along with their own coat of arms are gifts from their twin town of Rousies in Northern France near the Belgian border.

To complete our private guided tour we were shown the Grand Hall of the new Town Hall (1851) a spectacular high ceilinged cube of a room (also with kitchen attached) where they have entertained their French twins to a Ball following a Medieval Banquet in the upper chamber of the older building. We felt privileged to have had such a personal tour.



It was our first year hosting during the French visit. I am French, so easy for me, but Sajit is learning French, so a bit more challenging for him. Luckily our guests speak reasonably good English and are easy going, so a positive experience for us. Rosemary's visit to Audley End was a popular event with our English members, and our visitors were looking forward to it. Our driver did wonders driving around a few tricky turns but sadly, the rain hit us on our journey there so we arrived in typically British weather (grey and drizzling), ready for a tour of this magnificent English Heritage property. Valérie, Rosemary and I headed 2 French speaking groups and an English speaking group for the guided tours in the afternoon. Every one of us had a ticket and knew where to go at what time, so it was time to explore the grounds and gardens at leisure or head to the cafe for a lovely pre-arranged lunch. Now Rosemary could relax, everything was going as planned.

Audley End has something for everyone: grounds and gardens, a stable yard (with horses) to learn about work in the stables in the Victorian times, a service wing where you can wander around freely and



learn about the various servants' tasks and roles at the time, and a huge and beautiful house (more like a *château* for the French). What we French like about houses, palaces or properties you can visit that are managed by English Heritage or the National Trust, is that they make you jump back in time, being furnished, decorated, and containing artefacts with a history linked to the property or the past owners. Whereas in France, most are empty so the atmosphere is not there..

After lunch, we met our guide and there my short - lived career of interpreter started as I am a translator but not an interpreter by training. If I am comfortable translating documents, it is a completely different business when it comes to translating someone's speech or presentation. You have to stop the speaker at the appropriate time to convey the message yourself in French, remember everything he or she said, and then translate it. Very different from my experience of reading a text, spending time researching meanings, subtle details in both languages and translating in writing with even more time to review and proof read.

Our guide knew his audience would be French, so he geared his tour accordingly, with anecdotes showing links or differences between the English and the French way of doing things. We also had individual leaflets in French that summarised the history of the House and its various owners.

The great hall made quite an impression, and animal collections in the corridors raised a few comments of amazement mixed with fear. Various styles and periods were explained to us which showed through the different rooms and floors. We admired the views of the grounds, the unbelievable number of paintings and books, the decor of the rooms and their impressive ceilings. We were surprised by the Gothic style chapel debating on the purpose of the Little Drawing Room – the French attributed a more romantic use to the alcove than our guide would.

The house tour was very interesting and a genuine step back in history, and I was glad to see that even the youngest ones, who sometimes find historical tours a bit long and boring, enjoyed themselves. I am very grateful to our guide for his patience and hard work in making this tour very interesting for a French audience –and I am grateful to our French visitors for bearing with me when I was struggling to find my words in French! We came from the house with heads buzzing with history and facts, privileged to have had the opportunity to see the house through an expert's eye. Some of us decided to carry on exploring the grounds, heading to the kitchen gardens, and attend a little demo with a rescue horse in the stable yard. Despite the weather we enjoyed the day and went back to the coach ready to share our experiences.

First Time Hosting

by Brenda Dael

What a great few days, and a lovely family. Phillippe, Fabienne and Clemence were ideal guests, ate everything they were given and fitted in with the family despite a small terraced house. Phillipe's English was excellent and he was keen to help us with our French. Clemence was the most undemanding 12 year old we have ever met, she was an absolute delight (and we are retired secondary school teachers!) Fabienne too was full of fun.

Already we have seen our twinning family again. On the way back home from holiday in September we managed to see them for a couple of days, and had a very enjoyable time visiting them in their home in Montbazou. I am sure they will keep in touch and visit us again.

Mick and I would certainly host again and recommend others to join in.



Retail therapy with a plus

by Stephanie Aldous



We hosted our lovely friend Sylvie Giner again this year. It's often difficult to think of new things to show her, but again, we seemed to hit the nail on the head. We (myself and Barry) took Sylvie to the Van Hage Garden Centre near Ware, Herts

For those who have not been there, there are many shops, lovely plants and garden items, a mini zoo (free) and a mini train (which we did not try out - this time) Sylvie loved it and we were there for over 5 hours, including one coffee and one lunch stop. It was also very useful for Sylvie as her younger son is getting married next year and they had lots of wedding stationery etc in their chosen wedding theme - butterflies.

So we finally left with 2 full trolleys - including plants, shoes, kitchen ware etc etc - ready to prepare ourselves for the very enjoyable farewell 'Ho Down' that evening.



Sunday morning on a small railway

by John Smith

On the morning of the 'free' day, Rosemary and I took our French 'twins', Nicole and Jean-Pierre Goussin to the Chelmsford Miniature Railway. We had to share the car space with 'DEE', my 5 inch gauge Class 29 diesel locomotive which was to haul us once we got there, making it a bit of a squeeze, but since we are good friends, all is well. Once we reached Chelmsford, I found some shears and gave these to Jean-Pierre to clear overgrown vegetation from near the railway track while I got DEE set up to run with some coaches on the ground level railway. The ladies meantime got talking to some club members who were doing their own preparation work ahead of public running that afternoon.



By the time our preparation work was complete Barbara and Rob Staines had arrived with their 'twins' Michelle and Claude Gallon. They also brought Michel, the French coach driver, who was staying with them. DEE was set up with a driving truck for me to sit upon and then two passenger-carrying coaches, one of which was sit-astride and the other was sit-in. We then did several laps of the 1200 foot track with some or all of the above-mentioned as passengers. One photograph shows us rounding a bend in front of the signal box to take the line into the station.

A second photograph shows us on the station platform with the train in front of us - to the right is Roy O'Neil, a member of the club, and his larger locomotive with a second train is standing behind our train. While I was removing DEE and its train from the track, Roy gave further rides to our guests.



I think a good time was had by one and all. We came back to Brentwood for lunch, the Staines party headed off to preserved railway (full size!) sites in the Colne Valley, while Roy and other club members made money for the club by giving rides to the public that afternoon.

The French to the rescue!

by Marjorie Piper

I'd driven down to the Brentwood Centre to pick up three people returning from a trip. I was early so decided to give my car windows a clean inside and out. I suspect that was my undoing as when the coach arrived and my visitors were in my car, it refused to start - oh the engine made a few grunts but there was insufficient power to spark the plugs - how embarrassing was that! (In retrospect I can only assume that I'd had the car doors open, whilst cleaning the windows, and run the battery flat).

Out came the jump leads and a few of the onlookers (mostly French) tried to come to the rescue - at first I couldn't even get the bonnet open, Oh yes I knew where the switch was but it wouldn't work for me! Along came a friendly female French face who pressed the switch and hey presto the bonnet catch unlocked itself! Why didn't it do it for me? The jump leads were put aside and whilst I was still reading the instruction manual a knight in shining armour in the form of Pierre jumped into the driver's seat. We gave the car a push which got it rolling down a slight slope and shortly after there was a magical sound of the engine firing - what a relief - I'd had visions of having to camp out in the Leisure Centre car park whilst waiting for the AA. The experience could have been worse - at least I wasn't stranded down some country lane alone and in the dark miles from anywhere. Needless to say I did not switch off the car engine until I was safely home!

Thanks again to French friends for coming to the rescue. (PS Have since invested in a new battery!)

Memories of a perfect "Last evening"

from Helen Jackman

This year was my first opportunity to host one of our French visitors. I was supposed to put up the couple who entertained me in France last summer, and I was looking forward to repaying their kindness. Unfortunately they were unable to come but I was fortunate to host a lovely new Town Twinner. It was a shame that, due to family commitments, I was unable to participate in any of the daytime events.

Happily, I did not have to miss the last night – the Country Dancing at Navestock Side. To my mind there is nothing better than folk dancing to get people talking and laughing together, even when the participants have some idea of the dances.

On this occasion we had great musicians, an excellent caller, a party of French guests who had never seen, let alone dances and a host of more than their guests. organised chaos and une



attempted English folk English hosts who knew no The outcome – vaguely soirée of hilarity.

All this was sandwiched prepared by the ladies of they find the energy and and a well-rehearsed Olympic routine by our visitors.

around an excellent supper the committee (How do time?), a superb wine table

What fun! I am so glad I didn't miss it!

?? Did the caller feel the same as Helen ??



Plenty of instructions given . . . but it seems someone is still confused!



Yet more problems? . . . Yippee, all's well I think they've all 'got it!')



QUICK QUOTES

Rosemary

It was a heart stopping moment when the 57 seater French coach was negotiating Hadleigh's medieval - width High Street full of Saturday morning traffic and cars parked on double-yellow lines. Our hearts were in our mouths and there were agonised shouts of "Stop" and "Arrête" as the coach squeezed within a millimetre of the protruding corner of a (probably) 14th. Century pink house.

"Bravo, bravo" for the expertise and diplomacy of the chauffeur Michel and also Christian Dorgueil.

Christine

2) Watching Claude's face as she read the story on "Messing about in boats" and looked at pictures of herself in last year's Newsletter.

2) After the coach had left for France, Danielle and I entertained her daughter and the small Anglo-French grandchildren to lunch in my back garden. It was the only day in the whole summer when the weather permitted lunch in the garden!

3) Watching assorted French and British twinnings running round the car park at Brentwood Leisure Centre, pushing Marjorie's car faster and faster to get it started. It worked!

Monica

One lasting memory of the visit this year was trying to teach Elisabeth the Gay Gordons on the last evening!

The other was seeing all the French dressed in their various Olympic outfits doing that wonderful routine. Just as well they had room on the coach for all that equipment!

* * * * *

Behind the scenes by Kathrina Fairgrieve

When and how long is the visit? Budget? Somewhere interesting to visit? information welcome, please. Has anyone been there? Has it been visited before? When? Cost? Any limit on numbers? Best day to go? Timing? What about meals?

A small group [more welcome] ponder, discuss, question and eventually put together a schedule while enjoying a cup of tea at Sheila's house. Oh! What about the final night's celebration-- suitable venue? Entertainment? Suggestions?

We hope this year's programme met with approval and that our French friends returned home having experienced more of la Vie Anglaise. The French twist on the Olympics certainly added a new dimension to our traditional barn dance and even the Band were reluctant to call it a night! Thanks to everyone who helped {always appreciated} who set up and most importantly clear up afterwards [very much appreciated].

Already the committee are looking for entertaining ways to raise money for the next visit. If you attend a function which you enjoy, let the group to know or even be part of the planning for the next visit in 2014. Unfortunately even with the best will in the world I will be unable to continue as a member of the town twinning group as we will move in December. So I wish you all Seasons Greetings and best wishes for the future.

Beyond Twinning-Exploring Scotland

by Rosemary Smith

Our Montbazou friends, Nicole and Jean-Lou had decided that the hectic pace of the group visit had become too much for them so we felt rather sad that we wouldn't be hosting them. However two comments by Nicole in the past were the catalysts for a "Grand Plan". Firstly she had said she liked cool climates and secondly that she'd always wanted to visit Scotland . . . Brilliant!

We agreed that we would book suitable accommodation, they would fly to Edinburgh and we would meet them with the car so we would have a leisurely week together "at our own pace". We chose the middle of May. I booked a beautiful cottage in idyllic surroundings but convenient for the Trossachs National Park and the historic towns and villages of Central Region, an area well known to us. The Lachaux were advised to bring warm, waterproof clothing - it was Scotland after all.

Everything went to plan and the first famous sight we visited was the **Forth Bridge** where we mingled with the crowds of tourists off a cruise ship and the guests of two weddings crowding the local hotels. However we did manage to get fish and chip lunches so our holiday was off to a good start.

The pink cottage in the grounds of the big house gave rise to 'wow' and 'ooh la la' as we felt the warmth from the Rayburn and central heating as soon as we entered. The estate gardens were well tended and all around were fantastic views of river, farmland, woods and the distant mountains. In the next week Jean-Lou was delighted to see deer, squirrels, pheasants with chicks, rabbits, hares, many different birds and hundreds of sheep and lambs on his early morning strolls.

John and our French Friends



Our first day's weather was chilly and damp as expected but suddenly it changed and the rest of the week was sunny, hot (for Scotland) and dry: the locals we met took delight in our appreciation but kept assuring us 'It's not always like this!'

During the week we visited Callander and the Trossachs where we had a steamer trip on Loch Katrine, Stirling castle and the Wallace Monument where we met William Wallace (an actor taking part in a tourist board film being made by German company) and we had a special dinner excursion on a steam-hauled train which took us from Edinburgh over the Forth Bridge and along the Fife coast.

We also spent a day 'en famille' with my daughter, her husband and my grandchildren and great - grandchildren. Jean Lou and four -year-old Chloe sang nursery rhymes together and toddler Logan had his kilt fitted for the forthcoming wedding of his parents.

Quite apart from enjoying a holiday in beautiful surroundings with fantastic weather, it was the sharing of everyday things like shopping, cooking and sitting around reading or playing UNO in the evenings that has further cemented our twinning friendship.

Objects of Interest, a social afternoon

Members and friends enjoyed an October afternoon at the Belli Centre, while helping to increase the funds. Sixteen of them produced an 'object' and spoke about it for a few minutes. These items were varied and interesting and there was much hilarity when attempting to identify them, especially as some of the owners seemed unsure themselves!



The afternoon continued with a delicious spread - Victoria sponges, chocolate cakes, scones with cream and jam and of course some delicious cup-cakes were much enjoyed



Quiz Night in November

Thanks go to Mike le Surf who organised our latest quiz night at Courage Hall when we were delighted to have an early sell-out of all fifteen tables.



This Evening with a French Twist, combined with an attractive array of raffle prizes has further improved the funds ready for next year's visits.

Salute to the Olympics from our visitors

