



# The French Connection



Brentwood/Montbazon Town Twinning Association

Issue No 25

EVENTS OF 2010

## A Message from our Chairman – Valerie Fletcher

Six months have passed since the AGM and I would like to thank Beryl Guyatt, outgoing Chairman, for her commitment particularly during the last 12 months of her tenure whilst Mick was unwell. I am sure we all wish them good health in future and look forward to seeing them at forthcoming events.

Since being elected in June we have enjoyed a very successful visit by our friends from Montbazon. We had a busy programme staying close to home on the Friday and Sunday and venturing to St Albans on Monday. There was the chance for us to catch up with old friends and acquaintances, and make new ones too at the Sunday evening house parties, and I hope that you were able to join the farewell gathering at Jean and Tony Sleep's home. It was a most enjoyable evening with good food, good company and entertainment by Paula Masters and her Jazz Quartet. Thanks to everyone involved in any way making the visit one of the best.

The Mayor, Mayoress and Deputy Mayor joined us for much of the programme and it is hoped that Cllr and Mrs Tee will be able to visit Montbazon for the Journee de l'Europe at the beginning of May. I know that Cllr Holmes is looking forward to joining us when we visit Montbazon, probably in July. (At the time of writing the date is still to be confirmed)

Following the AGM we have some new members on the Executive Committee and we are already planning some interesting and varied fundraising events to finance the 2012 visit.. The Murder Mystery Evening will have been held in November and the Fete de Rois as usual in January. You will be notified of events as and when they are planned and I hope that you will be able to support them. If you have any ideas for fundraising or social events that you would like the committee to consider please do let us know.

The email link with St Peter's School, South Weald is proving popular with the pupils on both sides of the Channel and we hope to encourage other schools to link up via the internet. It is difficult to encourage visits with the current need for Criminal Records Bureau checks for hosts.

I would like to wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year. Please encourage your friends and contacts to support the Association's activities. If you know of anyone who is interested in becoming a member please let Vice Chairman, Monica Donegan know to contact them  
**My best wishes to you all**



**Fête des Rois** 12 February 2010 by Rosemary Smith

Our Twelfth Night Festivities were delayed this year by atrocious weather conditions in January, and the Three Kings finally arrived at Childerditch Village Hall on 12th. February. Snow still lay around, but the bright decor and table decoration of flowers and candles at the new venue soon lifted our spirits. Chairman Beryl welcomed everyone including deputy mayor David Tee and his wife.

This year the committee had decided on a menu of cassoulet and salad, followed by the traditional galettes. The cassoulet was fun to prepare with ingredients of duck, pork and chorizo mingling with BEANS, BEANS and more BEANS (which probably caused a few more windows to be opened at home, in spite of the cold weather!)

The 'fèves' in the galettes gave the finders at each table a chance to wear the crown for the rest of the evening, but the crowns seem to have shrunk (or we have become too big-headed) as they kept falling off.

A real mind-searching quiz with a French General Knowledge theme had been compiled by Pam Maule and we felt we could have passed a GCSE on the answers. I'm always amazed at my husband's retentive memory which paid off this time with the prize of a bottle of wine.

The usual raffle provided a good selection of prizes and, as always, boosted the funds.

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## Quiz Night yields over £800! by Barbara Staines

A total of 130 members, their friends and families, supported our Quiz Night at the Courage Hall. We raised **£801-53** towards the cost of entertaining our friends from Montbazon when they visit in August.

Members of the Brentwood Rotary Quiz committee hosted the event for us, and we thank them for their generous support and time. Thanks go also to our own members who excelled themselves in commitment to this event, especially Jeremy as Quiz Master. Well done everyone!

## Strawberry Tea - 4th July      by Rosemary Smith

Two years on and memories of gale-force winds and thundery rain had receded. The weather couldn't possibly be as bad, so we'll risk another Strawberry Tea in the Garden.

This time the borrowed gazebo sheltered us from the sun, the grass was dry, the flowers bloomed and umbrellas were left at home.

Calcott's strawberries were as good as ever, though not 'Pick your own' this year which did save some time. Members rallied round and produced a tempting variety of cakes to follow the traditional strawberries and cream. In addition there were freshly baked scones with home-made strawberry jam.

Joan Wilson in her frilly pinny did a valiant job with the urn and teapots in the sauna-like heat of our sunroom, while her 14 year old granddaughter, Emily, was the star of the show with her new-found waitressing skills.



This left John free to give guided tours of our garden to any interested visitors, and the opportunity of a little exercise before another round of the cake plates!

The afternoon finished with the draw for the raffle run by Margaret and Stephanie which proved very successful and further boosted the funds raised by this event. Jeremy gave a vote of thanks to the hosts and all the helpers and I was silently thanking the weather gods.



**Pictorial Memories of the 2010 visit to Brentwood  
by our friends from Montbazon . . . . courtesy of  
John Norman**

## Day 1 - Friday 20th August

by Monica Donegan

We made our way to the Council Chamber at 10am on Day 1, our first opportunity to meet all our French friends. After lots of hand shaking and seat searching we settled down to await the entry of the Mayor. What an entrance it was!

To warm applause the mayor Cllr David Tee wearing his full regalia, his wife the Lady Mayoress and Mayor of Montbazon M. Bernard Revêche entered the chamber



together with members of the committees. We listened to a very warm welcome speech from David and an equally warm reply. There followed an exchange of gifts and lots of smiles,

handshakes and photographs. We were then invited to enjoy refreshments in an adjoining room. This provided an opportunity for everyone to relax and renew old friendships. The pastries were very good too!

Soon it was time to board the coach and for the next venue The White Hart Inn at Margaretting Tye for lunch. This is a picturesque country pub with pretty hanging baskets and floral arrangements in abundance. There were attractive lawns and some



small animals to admire. The task of seating more than sixty people was skilfully managed and we were soon all quite comfortable. The steak and ale pie was most enjoyable and time passed very quickly as we chatted in a variety of English, French and Franglaise while the wine flowed.



Next our friends boarded the coach to the Chelmsford and Essex Museum where they were given an introductory talk by one of the curators. They also had an opportunity to see exhibits connected to the general history of Chelmsford and in particular the military history. All too soon it was time for them to return to their hosts after a most enjoyable day.

When I collected my friend Elisabeth she expressed a desire for a cup of English tea. Clearly a sign that she was already feeling very much at home

## London in a Day!

21 August 2010

by Celia & John Hatt

Our guests opted to spend their 'free' day in London; Florence had visited twenty years ago, but neither Jean Louis nor the boys had been there before. We asked which sights they particularly wanted to see – and were immediately overwhelmed by the response!

We made an early start, having packed a picnic lunch for six in our rucksack, and caught a train from Shenfield to Liverpool Street, fortunately pausing long enough at Stratford to view the partially built Olympic Stadium. On arrival we walked to the Gherkin – a great favourite with Jean Louis and the boys, who photographed it from every conceivable angle. We eventually tore them away from the modern architecture they admired so much and continued on foot to The Tower of London and Tower Bridge. They had hoped to see the bridge open, but this was not to be!

Next on the agenda was a ride on the top deck of a London bus to Trafalgar Square, pausing to photograph St Paul's on the way. Antoine and Pierre queued with children of all nationalities to climb on the lions in the Square, and then we called into St Martin's in the Fields – ostensibly to admire the beautiful arched brickwork of the crypt, but more importantly to recharge our batteries with a cup of coffee and a brief sit down.

A walk down Whitehall gave our visitors the opportunity to see 10 Downing Street – albeit from afar – and Horse Guards Parade, where we were surprised to find that the mounted soldiers were female. A contentious talking point! We continued on our way to Westminster, where the view from the Bridge showed the London Eye to advantage, although it was so crowded that we had to be careful not to mislay any of our party. Next, of course, came Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, before we took refuge with some relief in the comparative calm of St James' Park and sat down to eat our

picnic. By this time the rucksack had begun to weigh heavily on our shoulders, but appetites were good and the problem was resolved!



We had experienced train and bus, so now it was time to investigate the tube, somewhat complicated by the fact that both Circle and District lines were closed for engineering work, and the remaining network was very crowded. However, we successfully travelled to Covent Garden, where our visitors were able to enjoy the street entertainers and the unique atmosphere of the market.

All that was left now on the agenda was a visit to Oxford Street so that Florence and the boys could buy something to wear as a souvenir. They purchased from shops that are as well known in France as in the UK and probably paid more, but they were happy to have clothes that were English. We left them to their shopping, Florence being confident that she could find her way back to Shenfield with our directions, and came home ourselves for a quiet sit down with a cup of tea!

We ate on their return, but strangely enough everyone felt weary, and our guests suggested that an early night would be most welcome. We didn't disagree . . . . .

## Our Day In London

by Beryl and Mick Guyatt

How often does one go to London and actually see **Tower Bridge open**? After alighting from our bus with Pierre, Christiane and their grandson Clement we noticed that the traffic had come to a standstill. A small cruiser, pulled by a tug was making its way up river, the centre of the bridge started to rise and Clement was able to take these photographs.



Asked what he would like to see during his first visit to England this had been top of his list of the sights of London and we also ticked off Southwark Cathedral, the Globe Theatre, the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben chiming, Buckingham Palace and London Eye. What a pleasure it is to stroll along the South Bank now with mime artistes to entertain us. How do they keep so still – surely their noses must itch occasionally! After seeing Whitehall, Horse Guards Parade and a lovely St. James's Park plus treasures of the National Gallery it was time for our evening meal in a Bistro just off the Strand.



**Meanwhile Jeremy took the coach driver  
Michel, to see ceremonial London**



## Olympics and Greenwich

by John Norman

Although the weather was changeable we decided to carry on with the plans for our day out with our guests Marie Francoise & Christian Dorgueil



We went to Stratford by train then we changed for the Docklands Light Railway. I had been informed that if you got off at Pudding Mill Lane station you could get to the viewing area for the Olympic site. This involved a short walk through what can only be described as a building site, but they both thought it was worth it.

We walked back to the station to continue our journey to Greenwich, which unfortunately is having a make over. As well as the Cutty Sark completely enclosed, all views over the river were covered with solid fences. First stop the Covered Market which they both thought was great fun.

By this time it was getting close to lunch so after a little discussion they decided on a beer and sandwich in a typical English pub. This was not difficult to find in Greenwich and they both enjoyed a glass of English beer and what can only be described as "door-step sandwiches" in a pub just slightly removed from sawdust on the floor.



It was time for a bit of culture, first stop the Discover Greenwich exhibition which would have been interesting to them had the exhibits not been displayed in English only so we went in and out very quickly. Next stop the Old Royal Naval College, which they enjoyed, but the icing on the cake was the Queen's House which was open to visitors. By this time it had started to rain so we decided to call it a day and head for home. On the whole it was a successful day enjoyed by all.

## Farm, Fun & Fish & Chips

by Pam Richards

### **Barleylands Farm and Craft Village Sunday August 22**

Not too early a start for our trip to Billericay through the country lanes. Even for those of us who had visited before (with grandchildren or alone) it was an interesting morning with so much to see and do. The weather was kind to us so we were able to have a relaxed stroll around the farm looking at the rare breeds.



Needless to say the French youngsters had a great time firing at each other, as did Michel the coach driver.

After leaving the enclosed farm area there was plenty of time to wander around the many craft and shop units, all displaying various wares including hand made cards, antique jewellery, (one French lady bought a pretty Victorian brooch), sweets, dolls house furniture, teddy bears, far too many to mention all of them.

There are many attractions suitable for children - a ball park, bouncy cushion and zip wire but I was pleased to see an additional indoor play area with toy bazookas. (coloured balls for ammunition rather than rockets). The notice for adults read ' Let the children have a go !'



Some of our French guests bought pottery from Hazle Ceramics. This range of ceramics depict many types of English houses and shops. They are very quaint and made charming souvenirs. Some of the more adventurous had wandered over to the Boot Sale and managed to pick up unexpected bargains.

Lunch of Fish & Chips and Apple and Mincemeat Flan at 'the Hive' was washed down as usual with plenty of wine. We were all impressed with the hard work of the waitress who seemed to be the only person allocated to serve lunch, dessert and coffee, clear, top up wine and water and generally be at our beck and call. She did a wonderful job.

## ‘C'est une blague’

August 22 by Sue Sanders

With the August visit in full swing, after a morning visit and lunch at Barleylands, our French guests and many of the Brentwood hosts were privileged to have a private visit to the church of St Mary the Virgin, Great Warley. This Grade 1 listed parish church was built in 1902 with money and land donated by the Heseltine family and consecrated in 1904.

Neil had cones off the lay by for the great white coach and our Mayor and Mayoress greeted the Montbazonnais as they arrived at the lychgate.

Churchwarden Peter Proud gave a brief description of the church and pointed out the gilt dove on the spire, ‘bringing the good news to Noah’, before leading us inside. We filled the pews and, with Valerie Milcent translating his words, Mr Proud told us of the history of the previous churches, including the dismantling of a wooden predecessor which was folded up, flat packed in IKEA manner and taken to Yorkshire when the incumbent died. *‘C'est une blague’, (you're joking) said Valerie at this point, but no, every word was true.*



The beauty of this art nouveau church was obvious as soon as we entered. It incorporates ten metals, eight marbles, much mother of pearl and just one wood, walnut, in its interior. Peter proudly pointed out to us during his fascinating talk the magnificent angels on the font and rood screen and the beautiful windows, altar frontals, carved woodwork and decorations in the nave and many other details of this art nouveau masterpiece.

At the end of his talk we were allowed to explore the interior of the church whilst Mr Proud answered some of the many questions posed by our French guests before we left. I for one was breathless at the beauty of this lovely church and amazed that I had never visited before. A pure gem in the heart of our community.



## Group Visit to St Albans

It seemed as though autumn had arrived early with just a chilly breeze when our French guests and some hosts assembled in the Courage Hall car park for our trip to St Albans. We divided into two groups for morning and afternoon tours of the city and the cathedral, joining up for lunch.

Although Valerie and I had made two previous trips to St. Albans to arrange town and cathedral guides and review several lunch venues one thing we could not control would be the traffic/road works on the M25. However the gods were smiling on us and after a sticky negotiation at junction 28 we were on our way and arrived with 15 minutes to spare. Hilary Booth, our French speaking Blue Badge City Guide for the day, was already waiting.

With city tour on its way Valerie escorted the second group to the cathedral where a French-speaking guide was waiting. Coach driver Michel and I safely secured the coach in the park at the bottom of the town and hoofed it back up the hill for the first cathedral tour.

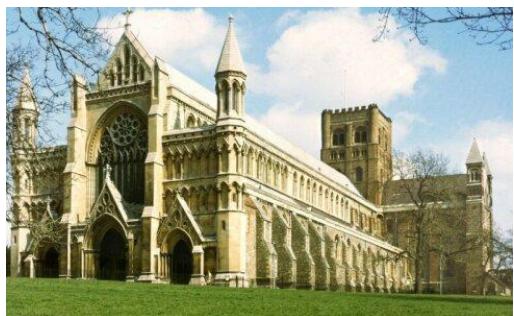
Both morning and afternoon guides were very well informed and made the tours not only interesting but amusing too. Our French guests were very impressed with the cathedral guide who explained the history of the cathedral from its founding as a Benedictine monastery in 793 to the building of the abbey in 1077 becoming a cathedral in 1877. One of the French ladies said that she could feel the spiritual presence within the building and it made her feel

**23 August by Brian Davis**

quite overwhelmed with emotion. Valerie and I must find time to go back for a tour ourselves before too long.

Hilary was an excellent guide, having had a lot of experience and a 'town twinner' herself she was able to put some of that experience into practice. By special request from Marie Therese she even adapted her intended tour to encompass the site of Verulamium as she was particularly interested to see that.

We invited Hilary to join us at the Café at the Cathedral, where we had a first-rate two course lunch with wine and coffee before splitting into two groups again for the afternoon tours.



St Albans has an excellent range of small and large stores in the High Street and the large shopping centre. Many people wanted to buy gifts to take back home but there was just 45 minutes free time for shopping as we needed to be ready for the farewell dinner. (Perhaps we could build more shopping time into future programmes). By now it was starting to rain and we managed to get everyone back on the coach just before a heavy downpour.

## Farewell Dinner

by Margaret Streather

The final evening for our visitors was to be dinner and entertainment in a beautiful English garden and guess what – the weather let us down!

Nothing daunted Tony Sleep and a band of helpers moved to 'Plan B' and created a structure using a marquee and some gazebos. In this they installed lighting and brought in the many tables and chairs needed to seat us all.

Meanwhile Kathrina had masterminded the preparation of an impressive buffet (despite last minute water supply problems in her kitchen). On arrival the guests discovered that in one 'annexe' to the main marquee dining area was a table full of



the tasty results, another area held liquid refreshments and a delicious range of desserts awaited us in the house.

Paula, Brian and friends braved the elements to provide

background music in a style very reminiscent of the Temperance Seven (remember them?). They must have been so relieved when the buffet was cleared and they could move into its space. Hopefully they will still be happy to return and entertain us another time / another place!



Time marched on and it was the moment for light-hearted farewell speeches and the exchanging of gifts. Especial thanks were extended to Beryl Guyatt, our retiring chairman and to Tony & Jean Sleep for allowing us to use their garden with all the disruption and hard work it entailed.



The evening and indeed the whole visit had obviously been the usual great success, with the making or renewing of friendships and it was good to see at least one table of young people enjoying the fun and taking town-twinning to another generation.

Finally our guests were given a timely reminder that the coach would be leaving early in the morning and that there would be a two year wait for the next one if they missed it!

My over all memory was the honest to God natural friendship that surrounded our two peoples especially on the last night at Tony Sleep's home.

Sitting on deck chairs in the sunshine, in St. James' Park, resting our tired feet, listening to a Regimental Band, so very English, they didn't want to leave.

My special memory is entering the Council Chamber with the Mayor of Montbazon to the applause of the French and the English hosts standing up.

Learning how to cook stuffed tomatoes and being taught the importance of the "chapeau"

**Sitting by the banks of the River Stour soaking up the warm sunshine and talking to the ducks in French ( they say "coin coin" )**

What a surprise when we took our couple out to a local restaurant and the manageress spoke to them in French, and told us she knew Montbazon well: she had been on school exchanges from Shenfield High and is still in touch with her friend from many years ago!

A great feeling of pride in Brentwood's welcome when our French guests saw the French flag flying alongside ours outside the Town Hall

I had it easy this time with only one guest, Monique Réau, grandmother of Mathilde who stayed with me for five weeks last summer. For urgent family reasons I needed to take time out on the Sunday. The support from the other hosts was fantastic and Monique and I were both thoroughly spoilt that day.

Our visitors wanted to try and taste everything British including porridge, a scone cream tea and black pudding but not necessarily on the same plate.

The success of the final night and the commitment made by members of the association to organise and stage the event

Being part of the marquee erection team.

Our guest saying 'Oh Blimey' and correcting her to 'Cor Blimey'!

Those who met Mathilde last year may be interested to know that this summer she went to Madrid for Spanish lessons ("easier than English") with the intention of going to Peru to work with a charity.

Our highlight, with myself, and my partner Barry Webster, was taking Sylvie Giner to Lavenham. It was a lovely day, and she was thrilled with Lavenham. She had asked to go to a pretty English Village, and Lavenham fitted the bill perfectly. Lots to see, and not too spread out. She says she would like to go with all the French as a visit next time.

As deputy Mayor I was very pleased to help welcome our friends from Montbazon. They arrived at the Town Hall in a blaze of glory with horns tooting and lights flashing. Although not a host I did join in some of the activities and was amazed at the friendships that had been made and nurtured over the years and look forward to meeting them again

**Hearing the bells at St Mary's.**

Peter, Bernard and Michel sharing their memories of their National Service.

It was delightful to be with our good friends again and to share in the many enjoyable activities.

**Samedi 28 août 2010 à 11h**

(côté parking de l'Office de Tourisme)



A footbridge (passerelle) has been built spanning the River Indre between the Guinguette (ex Marlene's) and l'Ilette. The inauguration date of July 14<sup>th</sup>, was abandoned because of terrible weather and was rescheduled for **28<sup>th</sup>. August** -just after the Town Twinning group returned home. The photographers had a great day for it, and we are informed that the Montbazonnais are very proud of the new facility.



photo by email from Jean Lou Lachaux



## FOOTBALL TRIP TO MONTBAZON 2010

by Bob McLintock

Our annual trip to Montbazon is in danger of becoming predictable if not boring. Every year we have a most enjoyable visit, receive fantastic hospitality from our hosts and in recent years ... *lose the football*.

The 2010 visit began with a 5 am departure from The Brentwood Town Hall. Now less than 33% of the players work at the Town Hall but we continue to use the building as the meeting place to begin our adventure.

Travel arrangements went to plan, no delays on Eurotunnel and the French roads free of problems, so we pulled into the Grange Rouge at 3.30 pm. Following Marlene's retirement we were anxious that the facilities and arrangements that she had provided in previous years might not be available. However, we should not have worried, from our arrival to departure we had everything we needed.

Having pitched our tents we were welcomed by the Mayor, Bernard Revêche and Twinning President Laurence Leblevec, at a reception for representatives of the football team and Town Twinning. This was followed by dinner at the campsite and our first meeting with our new host, Dominic. His waitress clothed from head to foot in white was quickly christened, La Stig (viewers of BBC's Top Gear will appreciate). Looking worried when the meal commenced she began to smile as the Chinon flowed and she realised we were better behaved than she had been told.

The general view was that it was our "best ever" trip but we have said that for the last 13 years. **Here's to 2011**

Saturday dawned and after our normal morning activities including a trip to the Decathlon sports shop, volleyball, food shopping and swimming, we walked over the new footbridge across the Indre on our way to Jean and Francoise Geay's for lunch. In previous years the thought of our football match kicking off at 6 pm has ensured a sensible approach to alcohol – Not so in 2010.

Encouraged by Jean and friends the consumption of aperitifs, Chinon and other bottles brought to the table broke all previous records. Unfortunately it also ensured that we had little or no chance of winning the football match against Montbazon. Without the "heavy" lunch it would have been a difficult match as the Montbazon 2010 team had a number of new players over 20 years younger than their Brentwood visitors. However, as always the game was played in a good spirit and although we lost 5 – 1 (we conceded 4 goals in the final 15 minutes) it is always good to renew our friendships with our footballing friends.

Sunday's cultural visit took us to the château at Usse followed by lunch and our usual boules competition. Wonderful weather added to our day and although the final evening dinner was quieter without Marlene it was most enjoyable. It was particularly pleasing to be joined by Annie and Claude Catusse and Christianne and Daniel Veron.

## Joint Twinning Congress

9th October

by Margaret Hogan

Kathrina Fairgrieve and I, along with Anne Long representing the Landkreis Roth Twinning, attended the Annual Meeting of the Essex & Suffolk Joint Twinning Congress held this year in the beautiful old Guildroom at Hadleigh, Suffolk. 14 Associations attended and were warmly received by the Mayor, the Chairman, and the coordinator of the Hadleigh Association

The Mayor gave us a very interesting talk about Hadleigh's history. Stone age artefacts discovered, a bronze age crematorium cemetery, traces of Iron Age habitations, two Roman farms excavated plus early Saxon burials etc. etc

The Chairman then introduced the business of the day. The points raised by various members on the whole applied to us all. It was stressed, from experience, that it is good to keep the Councils informed of our programmes, with members of the council encouraged to participate. It was agreed that it is important to maintain, and in fact, encourage the current civic link between our towns and those in France and Germany.

One member had tried applying for a grant from the E.U. through something called "Power of well being" - perhaps this is worth looking into? A need for younger members was common to all. Gt. Waltham has a teenager on its Committee who has introduced Facebook etc. Fund raising events mentioned which I do not think we have tried were Car Boot Sale, Jumble Sale and Fashion Show. **Any ideas for fund raising will be gratefully received by the Committee**

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## Murder Mystery Night

6th November

by Joan Wilson

Valerie welcomed everyone and introduced The Starlight Productions Company, an amateur dramatics group from Southend, who enjoy much fun together whilst raising money for charities.

Telling us to follow very closely, they set the tone for the evening by introducing characters with hilarious names who were attending the reading of a Will. Soon loud screams from housekeeper Dusty Crevice heralded the off-stage discovery of the body of young Major Walter.

Each actor then spent a few minutes at each table answering questions while we tried to discover how and why the murder was committed and "whodunit". The Police Inspector gave further information and there was a crossword to 'help' with clues. Finally eight people guessed the correct solution and were awarded small prizes

The refreshments of fresh baguettes with cheese and pâté were attractively served on a large platter for each table during the interval and were well received. Everyone enjoyed the evening and I for one would be happy to repeat it.

**Editor's PS.** The total boost for funds was approx **£ 335**, so thanks to all who came, to Margaret for the raffle of donated prizes and to youngsters Emily, Harriet and Danica for an innovative raffle of Damson Wine with an unexpected prize of Sunday Lunch for Two at the De Rougemont Hotel. Well done Joan & Peter for the whole idea.