

A message from our Chairman, Neil Hornsby

Pictured here with Annie Catusse



23 June 2016 will for ever be remembered as the day the UK voted to “leave Europe”. I am privileged to have been elected Chairman of the Association, just one week later. I look forward to making sure that whatever type of Brexit ensues, the Association will stand firm in its original principles to “encourage friendship and understanding between all citizens of the Borough of Brentwood and the municipality of Montbazon”.

During the 18 years Sheila and I have been members of the Association, we have always “twinned” with Annie and Claude Catusse. It therefore gave me great pleasure to hear that Annie had been elected President of the Twinning Association in Montbazon and I look forward to being able to discuss the future of the Twinning with her.

The highlight of 2016 was, of course, the visit of the Montbazonnais to Brentwood. The Social Committee provided interesting and varied visits for our visitors, including Ingatestone Hall, Camden Lock and Market and a local bakery where, according to one of the French visitors, they met “an English baker baking French bread and a friendly French pastry cook so much part of England that he has forgotten his mother tongue!”

Social activities for 2016 were the well-established Fête des Rois, two rambles followed by food and drink of course, a coffee morning chez Minns, and a quiz evening. There was a talk about Giggly Pig and we enjoyed a pre-festive gathering at Heidi Brenke’s home. Please bring your friends along to our social events; hopefully they will be encouraged to join the Association.

My thanks go to the Social Committee, led by David Williams, for all their work in arranging and staging both the visit and these events and also to Jude Ripley, our hard working Administration Secretary, who not only keeps me under control, but also ensures the very smooth and efficient running of the Association. I would also like to thank Valerie Fletcher for tightly managing our

Brentwood visit to Montbazon – 17 to 22 August 2017

finances and, on behalf of the Association, I congratulate both her and Brian on their recent marriage.

In closing, I would like to express the Committee's appreciation to Judy Withyman and Christine Minns for putting together this excellent newsletter.

Finally, may I wish you all Compliments of the Season and a happy 2017.

Fête des Rois: 9th January by Jude Ripley

What a cold, miserable day it was again this year! But once arrived at the Belli Centre with its cheery flags, bunting and tables, we began to feel more festive.

Neil Hornsby's Who/What/Where quiz was a great success, due in no small part to the naked torsos of Aiden Turner and James Norton pictured on one of the sheets, which delighted many of the ladies present. There was much racking of brains, laughter and discussion over the various sections of the quiz as everyone tried to find the (sometimes elusive) correct answers.

On the menu this evening was Boeuf Bourignon served with new potatoes and green beans; this was followed, of course, by Galette des Rois and cream and finished off with tea or coffee. Thanks to all those who took on the role of chef to produce this delicious meal for the 63 participating members and friends.

After the usual photo of the "Rois" from each table, the answers to the quiz were given, accompanied by groans or cheers depending on the success or otherwise of the participants. The raffle was drawn to complete this most enjoyable evening and the diners departed in good spirits to brave the inclement conditions awaiting them outside. Roll on next year's event....



Quiz Night: 12th March by Christine Minns

61 members and friends gathered again at the South Weald Belli Centre for a quiz night. What knotty questions would be thrown at us this time? Our quizmaster, Colin, and his wife Barbara, were back with us again with an intriguing list of topics which kept our brains on the go. Not to mention the table-round with its ingenious selection of anagrams.



to the Association.

After the interval of a fish & chip supper it was back to work. A full team being eight, our table of only six – Anne-Marie and Stan Eve, new members Sandra and Ad Veerkuyten, and David and I – had to think that much harder. It didn't do much good as we tied bottom. We also played a Last-Man-Standing round, those taking part paying £1 in exchange for 'true' and 'false' cards to be displayed in answer to questions, and remaining standing with correct answers. The last woman standing won half the takings, with the other half going

A raffle again raised welcome funds. Thanks to the Social Committee for organising again such and enjoyable and successful evening.

South Weald Walk – Saturday 30th April 2016 by Rob and Frances Cowling

Almost forty of us enjoyed a lovely undulating walk through part of South Weald Park in bright sunshine. The bluebells were spectacular and many trees were beginning to turn into full leaf with the oak trees slightly ahead of the ash. According to the adage: 'Ash before oak then we are in for a soak but oak before ash then we are in for a splash' we are optimistic for a good summer!



South Weald Park is one of the largest in Essex at 500 acres and has been established for more than 700 years. It is home to wildlife including fallow deer, cattle, herons, mallard ducks and other water birds. It is extremely popular with walkers, families and hosts many events including the Saturday Park Run. It was going to host the 2012 Olympic Games Mountain Biking but considered not hilly enough!



After the walk we were treated to an excellent cream tea with homemade cakes and scones. Our thanks go to all those involved in baking and serving the tea, with thanks to Wilkin and Sons of Tiptree, for donating the pots of strawberry jam to complement the cream.

Blackmore Ramble: 22nd June by Derek Kortlandt

Twinning Association members are well known for their love of rambling, and 25 or so enjoyed the annual walk around Blackmore, led by Colin Miers who kept us on the right path and pointed out local landmarks. It was a pleasant stroll round the fields, luckily lacking the excitement of last year's confrontation with an angry looking bull. There was danger however in the saucepan sized holes found on one of the paths, helpfully covered by cut grass like mantraps. Speculation as to the provenance of these holes came to no firm conclusion. I could start a rumour by suggesting they are trial boreholes for a new airport.

Having developed a thirst and feeling peckish, the group enjoyed excellent hospitality from Lawrie and his staff at the Prince Albert. The Ploughman's was delicious and substantial, augmented for the truly hungry by generous helpings of French fries, appropriately enough.



The new mayor, Noelle Hones, complete with chain, was a welcome visitor. She expressed her strong support for the twinning association. This was a most enjoyable evening. Thanks to all involved in organising it.

Coffee Morning: 10th September by Anne Long

On the 10th September, after a lovely sunny week, but on a rather dull and damp Saturday morning, David and Christine Minns kindly hosted a Coffee and Cake fund raising event which proved successful and raised £139 for our funds.

The coffee and tea flowed along with the conversation whilst everyone did their best to eat all the delicious cakes and buttered scones and jam which was provided by members of the Committee.



We were delighted that the Mayor Noelle Hones and Jon, her husband, who are both members of the Association as well, were able to be in attendance. In an entertaining two hours there were lively anecdotes about the Twinning exchanges with our French friends, recent and in the past - several tales going back a long way, which caused much amusement.

The morning concluded with the Mayor drawing the raffle. I think nearly everyone went home with a prize. A very successful morning.

October - Essex/Suffolk Joint Twinning Congress by Sheila Hornsby



In early October, Jude, Neil and I attended the above Twinning Congress in Colchester.

After the welcome by Valerie Francis, Chairman of Colchester Twinning Association, there were enthusiastic addresses from Theresa Higgins, a local councillor, and Nigel Hildreth, a music teacher experienced in fostering international exchanges between young musicians. Our own chairman also expounded the benefits and enjoyment to be gained from maintaining links with other countries and cultures.

Everyone attending had the opportunity to talk to other representatives attending which led to a useful exchange of ideas in attracting new members and planning social events.

Publicity in general was a common issue. Thoughts were that younger families could be better reached by using Social Media and websites must be kept up to date. Using local libraries for events had proven effective in raising interest. French markets, crêpe making and boules tournaments were other interesting suggestions.

Giggly Pig Bangers & Mash Evening: 17 November by Annie Tweedy

A very interesting and enjoyable evening was had by all. Tracy Mackness, founder and owner of the Giggly Pig Company, came along Blackmore Village Hall to talk to us about her life experiences. Little did we know what we were about to hear.

Tracy left school early with no qualifications. After a somewhat chequered and varied past, life proved challenging for her. It was during a long spell in prison that she sought the chance to work on the prison pig farm. She found that she had a connection with the animals and she developed an ambition to become a pig farmer. She also went on a sausage-making course and the prison allowed her to work in a butchers shop in Harold Hill. When she was released from prison on 26th February 2007, with £3k



savings and 30 pigs, she had no premises or equipment. By a stroke of luck a friend lent her £15k and she grew her farm to 300 pigs. Today she has grown her business to include 800 pigs, a butchers shop, 15 vans on the road, 22 shops, with 65 varieties of sausages.

We sampled her sausages after her talk and have to say they were very meaty and tasty.

Tracy is an excellent role model for others in life who have disadvantaged beginnings.

Pre-Festive Gathering: 4th December by Neil Hornsby

About twenty members descended on Heide Brenke's home in Hutton for a Pre- Festive Gathering. Grateful thanks are due to Heidi for opening her home for us, particularly as it meant a significant re-arrangement of furniture in her living room!

A very tasty and all-too-inviting spread of Stollen, mince pies and German-style chocolate biscuits in the kitchen attracted many visitors, and a seemingly un-ending supply of freshly prepared mulled wine encouraged the Festive mood.

A mix of new, not-so-new and more established members meant that there was lots of chat and getting to know one other. The afternoon made for a very pleasant relaxed start to the festive season, as well as the opportunity to catch up on members' news and to renew friendships.



2016 Visit of our French Friends: 19-24 August

« Avons fait bon voyage et l'arrivée très amicale. Avons été reçus à bras ouverts »

Friday 19th August - Mayor's Reception at the Town Hall hosted by Deputy Mayor, William Russell



« Nous avons apprécié le cérémonial et la gentillesse et l'amabilité de Mr Mayor »



Friday 19th August - Visit to Ingatestone Hall by John Saxton

L'importance de bien commencer couldn't have been better observed than by the Ingatestone Hall visit on Friday, 19th August, 2016, following immediately after the Town Hall ceremonials.



The gracious but unpretentious Petre estate, now well through its fifth century, revealed itself unhurriedly to our French guests with the three minute stroll from gated entrance to courtyard. In the two or three minutes before Lord Petre's arrival the visitors had become entranced with the spectacular espalier pear tree. Before we split into two tour groups, the 18th Baron Petre gave an open air synopsis of the Hall's history. The rare pauses for Jude's interpreting opportunities demonstrated her excellent memory! Even those of us on our nth visit to the Hall found Lord Petre's historical narrative fascinating. On the walk

around the hall he was persuaded to give way more frequently to the suffering interpreter!

Of great interest was William Petre, who served in senior roles under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. Father of the first Baron Petre, he established the Ingatestone estate and, most importantly, is considered the first civil servant, having devoted himself to serving the state rather than lining his pockets in the tradition of the courtiers of the day. The two priest holes, with the implicit story of religious oppression, also drew fascinated attention.

An excellent ploughman's lunch, accompanied, of course, by French wines, rounded off a memorable first jumelage day.



Saturday 20th August – Free Day

Visit to the Hanningfield Reservoir by Pam Richards

What to do on our 'free day'? Françoise and Jean have been to England many times and we have got to know each other quite well. I was sure the 'City of London' walk would be really interesting but opted for a leisurely 'Full English Breakfast' followed



by a visit to Hanningfield Reservoir which would not involve too much walking.



The drive there shows the impressive huge expanse of water before you actually reach the visitor centre. We arrived in time for a late lunch in the 'Café by the Lake' overlooking the reservoir with its abundance of wildfowl. Scampi and chips for Françoise and meat pie and two veg. for Jean, followed by a short walk. We saw the ducks and geese up close and whilst

many were admiring their beauty, I think Françoise was imagining them in a more culinary way!

Visit to Hyde Hall by Rosemary Smith



heavy shower but the lunch.

The afternoon was interesting talking two tent-like covers have ever seen.

Other points of made of parts of old photography in the



As our guests are retired farmers we thought they would be interested in what had developed from an original Essex farm when the RHS took it on.

The wide views from the hilltop site and the many different areas of planting were enough to keep us very busy. Sophie is a real plantswoman and we had fun identifying favourites from our own gardens and exotics from around the world.

The wind certainly made its presence felt and we did have to run for shelter from a very Barn Restaurant provided a good escape for

brighter and the vegetable plots gave us some points. The highlights of this area were the over what must be the largest pumpkins we

interest were some amusing metal sculptures farm machinery, a beautiful exhibition of education centre and, of course, the shop.

Visit to Constable Country by Brenda Dael

Martine and Pierre Marin were our guests. Martine is an artist who is very fond of landscapes so the idea was to take them to John Constable's Suffolk to see the area he made famous with his paintings. The Haywain came to mind and so we went to see Willy Lott's cottage and Flatford Mill. We had a lovely walk to East Bergholt church and into Dedham, with a picnic by the river.

As Martine and Pierre stayed an extra day we then went to London to see the original Haywain in the National Gallery.



City of London Walk by Jude Ripley

On Saturday, 20th August, about two dozen intrepid explorers gathered at Liverpool Street Station, ready to be guided around the City of London by Anne-Marie and Stanley Ede, who, in a previous life, had worked for the Lord Mayor of London.



We were led us past the Crossrail works, where Bedlam was once situated; into narrow streets where the Queen's stockbroker has offices; past the headquarters of a variety of Guilds; alongside the rear of the Bank of England, which has no windows; to the Royal Exchange and Mansion House; onto London Bridge to admire a number of sights; past the Monument; and ending at Leadenhall Market, after a brief refreshment stop on the way.



Thanks to Stanley and Anne-Marie for a fascinating guided tour.

« Nous avons beaucoup apprécié la visite guidée et la liberté proposée l'après-midi »

Buckingham Palace Tour by Jude Ripley



We decided to take our guests to Buckingham Palace in the afternoon of our free day, Saturday. There were, inevitably, long queues, despite the fact that we had pre-booked our visit; but we eventually emerged from the security area into the Courtyard, armed with our audio-guides, and went into the Palace through the Ambassadors' Entrance.

Our first stop was the wonderful display of dresses and hats from the Queen's wardrobe, starting with the Royal christening robe, and ending with the outfit worn by the Queen at Charlotte's christening. What struck me most was how small the Queen is, judging by the length of her dresses, and how tiny her waist was at the beginning of her reign! And those beaded, embroidered evening gowns must have been so heavy on her small frame.

We continued through a number of rooms with beautifully decorated ceilings, paintings and furniture, all comprehensively described by the audio-guides (once we had worked out how to use them properly!). All too



soon we found ourselves in the garden at the end of the tour – but sadly there was no Garden Party to attend.

Saturday 20th August - A town twinning soirée by Chris Lacey

Planning the meal for the soirée was like thinking about writing this article. Where to start? Having been a guest to some excellent affairs, when in Montbazon, we couldn't let the side down. Including our guests and a local friend, we would be welcoming two brand new French town twinningers and what's more the Mayor of Brentwood was coming too!

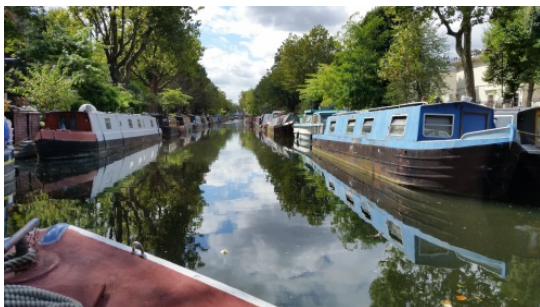
I needn't have worried, the evening turned out to be delightful. Everyone seemed to enjoy the Spanish theme food and wine. Starting with sherry and serrano ham, we moved on to a casserole of chicken with chorizo. Even the cheese came from Spain although we did return to our British roots by serving the dessert before the cheese.



As the wine flowed we discovered how much we had in common. I am reminded of a quote taken from a memento of another great day at Mayfield Bakery whose packaging states - "Good food ends with a good talk". Here's to our next soirée.

Sunday 21st August - Cruising the Regent's Canal by Rob Cowling

Sunday started cloudy for our trip, but soon the sun came out as we approached Camden Lock, the base for our canal excursion. After a cursory reconnoitres of the area we boarded our boat and sat at our tables.



The trip started with us having to navigate Camden Lock itself and we then headed west through the south side of Primrose Hill and then along the north side of Regents Park and London Zoo. A light lunch of pea and mint soup and a selection of sandwiches followed by tea or coffee was

Journée très occupée et très riche. Avons vraiment apprécié la balade en péniche. »

appreciated as we cruised further westward at just above walking pace. Two narrow dark tunnels later we arrived at our turning point, Little Venice and prepared for the return journey. This part of London contains some of exclusive areas, like St John's Wood, where we saw many villas owned by multi-millionaires.

« Très bon choix de sortie. promenade en bateau est très appréciée. Pour Camden Market, il aurait fallu peut-être plus de temps, mais »

surrounding popular area



Back at Camden Lock we disembarked and then explored the markets and streets. This is a very with tourists where you can buy

practically anything and enjoy street food from around the World.

Monday 22nd August - Visit to the Mayfield Bakery by Joyce Wynne

Our final excursion. Scenic route to Harlow to an old farm building complex. 2 groups, to alternate food and the demonstration talk. The double act from Nick and Noel was entertaining and informative with the history of the family firm and traditional techniques. A proper English afternoon tea with special decorations to celebrate the twinning impressed our visitors. Elegant 3-tier stands, with silver tableware, dainty sandwiches showcasing the flavoured breads produced on site, miniature scones with jam and cream (much discussion about whether to spread jam first or cream), little pastries to follow, with tea or coffee. Then time to make decisions about what to buy in the busy shop. Finally a gift for everyone of a fresh loaf.



*« Quel plaisir de rencontrer un
boulangier anglais qui fait du
pain français et un très
sympathique pâtissier français
tellement bien intégré en
Angleterre qu'il en a oublié sa
langue maternelle !!!!! »*

Final Night's Barn Dance by Diane Matthews

You put your right arm in, your right arm out!!

Have you ever attended a Barn Dance in French? Well that's what we did on our last night.

Some of us arrived early to help set up the hall - with so many hands on deck it was done within minutes and looked absolutely fabulous, with bales of hay and cartwheels to set the stage and tabletop vases decorated with corn sheaths and straw and we were all handed neckerchiefs, red or blue with white polkerdots to go with our decorated straw hats; the scene was certainly set. Wine was served and the dancing began.

The enthusiasm was electric and the hall was packed and the callers even gave instructions in French. It was great fun but I think the English had more difficulty to follow the steps than the French. We even managed to put our left arm in when it should have been right and our right arm in when it should have been our left! In between all the frivolity we had the most exquisite meal - very English - all home-made. Not only were our guests impressed but so were we. It was especially great to see most people going back for more, wanting to try all the typically English desserts of home-made apple crumble, sherry trifle and chocolate brownies. I even spied some having all three!

Many thanks to all who arranged such a wonderful last night.

Barn Dance Memories





« Très bonne soirée avec
ambiance Country. Le repas
était très bon et copieux et nous
avons tellement dansé que nous
n'avons pas pris de poids »



Farewell until we meet next year!



« Comme à l'habitude, le départ fut émouvant mais nous repartions avec de merveilleux souvenirs et l'espoir de nous revoir un an plus tard (ou même avant). Merci à tous pour l'hospitalité et l'amitié. »

« Nous avons des hôtes charmants et vraiment très gentils. Nous avons passé un très bon séjour »

« C'était très agréable, beaucoup de sympathie et enthousiasme »

« La visite était très variée et intéressante cette année. Ressentiment très positif »

« Il est toujours triste de partir »

« Comme à chaque départ émouvant et difficile »

A First Time Host by Rosalind Garrod

Although over the years we've had many guests to stay from Europe, including pupils from Montbazon, as a relatively new member of the Brentwood-Montbazon Twinning Association, this was the first time that I was able to reciprocate the kindness which was shown to me during my first visit to Montbazon in 2015.

I waited in anticipation as I was aware that two of my guests did not know the third, the coach driver Stephane. My fears were quickly allayed as they got on very well with each other and were the most co-operative, kind and amusing guests, not only showering us with gifts of chocolate and wine but also quick to pick up a potato peeler or a dishcloth and even taking us out to a restaurant one evening.

For me it was a linguistic heaven, as my guests spoke little English, I was able to speak French the whole time. We talked about various subjects ranging from the English mayoral system to recycling, gardening, the delights of grown up children and about many other topical issues.

My guests not only admired the typical English gardens but were also amazed by the number of large vehicles parked outside them!

They appreciated all the visits and I was able to accompany them on each occasion except the walking tour of London and the visit to the Mayfield Bakery. Instead, they presented me with a loaf of homemade bread on their return! They were fascinated not only with the history of London and locally the history of the Petre family but also, on another visit, with the buzz of Camden Market.

An entertaining soirée was held at our house with a very English menu and vegetables from the allotment (we have since been sent a packet of radis noir seeds to plant next year). A request was made to visit my husband's allotment the next day en route to Thorndon Country Park, to see Thorndon Hall, the other Petre residence. Last but not least, a visit to the local supermarket to stock up on English cheese and the local Brentwood beer just before the Barn Dance at Blackmore.



A most enjoyable and rewarding way to establish and forge links with our friends from Montbazon. Vive le jumelage!



Forthcoming Events for your 2017 diary

“Soirée-Ciné-Crêpe” Film Night with Pancakes

Saturday 25th February



Quiz Night

Saturday 29th April



Other events to be confirmed:

Ramble

Magic Evening

Visit to Montbazon

Thursday 17th – Tuesday 22nd August

