

A message from our Chairman, Neil Hornsby



In 2016, I wrote that whatever type of Brexit ensues, the Association will stand firm in its principles to “encourage friendship and understanding between all citizens of Brentwood and Montbazon”. By the time you read this, you will know the type of Brexit it will be. Whatever it is, we need to keep our peoples joined in “friendship without borders”.

2018 stands out by the number of French visitors we welcomed to Brentwood. 50 came over on the coach, which gave us one or two headaches to solve! But, as ever the visit was very memorable, including a visit to Windsor and a lively final evening of Scottish dancing. 11 French youngsters thoroughly enjoyed their stay and wish to strengthen their part in the Twinning. In addition to the “main visit”, in June we took part along with the Brentwood Arts Society in hosting a group of artists from Montbazon.

Social activities have continued unabated, of course, including the annual Fête des Rois, a quiz evening with over 100 guests and what has become our annual pre-festive gathering. These and other events are detailed inside. Once again, my thanks go to the Social Committee for all their work in arranging the events.

As part of the Executive Committee’s attempts to make the Twinning more visible in the Borough, we had a stand in the Chapel Ruins in the High Street on 14 July to “celebrate” Bastille Day. Several members of the Twinning took part in manning the stand and talking to the locals about the Twinning. It was judged to be a success, so much so that there is talk of repeating it next year!

My thanks go to Jude Ripley who continues to ensure the smooth running of the Association and to George Dunseath for managing the finances. I am also very fortunate to be able to work with my *jumelle* of 20 years, Annie Catusse, currently President of the Twinning Association in Montbazon. From the Association we send our best wishes to her husband Claude in his long spell of ill-health.

In closing, I would like to express the Executive Committee’s appreciation to Christine Minns and Judy Withyman for putting together yet another excellent review of the year’s activities.

Finally, I wish you all a very happy and healthy 2019.

Brentwood visit to Montbazon – 15th to 20th August 2019

Fête des Rois: 6th January by Pauline Myers

We were greeted with a very warm welcome by our Chairman, Neil, and found our places at the various tables where we were seated with some familiar friends and some not so familiar who became friends very quickly.

Papers, or rather answer sheets, on the tables revealed the reason for the many 'posters' on the walls. Our Quizmaster had set us to task! The quiz ranged from matching French artists to the pictures, to naming the sports personalities or the films in the pictures, and many more. All good fun, even if you do not have the kind of memory that gives you the answers instantly. I must say that the frowns on some people's faces as I was going round did encourage me a little as they seemed not to know most of the answers either. But, well done to the person who won with the highest mark, mine was nowhere near!

Our meal was lovingly prepared by six or more individuals, mostly committee members. The main meal and dessert were cooked to the same recipes; the cassoulet was a mixture of chicken, sausage and vegetables in a delicious sauce that we mopped up in true French style – some went back for seconds!

Our dessert, the Galette des Rois, is part of a very old French tradition to mark the arrival in Bethlehem of the Three Kings. It is made of flaky pastry with a frangipane filling and includes a fève, a small china charm hidden in the cake that comes with a golden paper crown. The person lucky enough to find the fève in their portion would wear the crown for the evening. I was the lucky one on my table and a photo was taken of us all together to prove it.

At raffle time we had an exceptional 'caller' in a young girl of about 8 years old, named Juliet, who did a wonderful job of calling the numbers.

It was a delightful evening, full of good food, laughter, good company and indeed plenty of bons amis!



Soirée Ciné-Crêpe: 17th February by Sue Sanders

It was a starry Saturday evening in February, the first after Shrove Tuesday, when members met together for our annual crêpes and film evening.

The Belli Centre was packed to capacity and we enjoyed a delicious welcome of pancakes with syrup, jam or lemon and hot drinks served by our committee. It was a good opportunity to greet new members and renew old friendships.

After an introduction by our Chairman, Neil Hornsby, welcoming Richard Millwood of the Brentwood Arts Cinema Club, we all settled to view the film, 'Le Havre', nominated for a César Award in 2012.



The film was a heart-warming story of the actions of the humbler people of this great port, as they went to the aid of a teenage refugee from Gabon, hiding him and eventually helping him on his way to England. A close knit and strong community, compassionate and conspiratorial. The film drew much applause.

Following the film, the youngest member of the audience, with great enthusiasm, drew the raffle for us before we stepped out into the starry night.

Quiz Night: 21st April by Sue Stevens

On a very, very hot summer-like spring evening, a group of Town Twinning faithfuls and their friends attended a Quiz evening at South Weald Parish Hall – in fact it was a record 102 friends who put aside their television viewing and put on their thinking caps.



The room was buzzing with chatter in anticipation of what questions would be put to us and we were anxious to get started. We knew that we would have to wait until halfway through before we could have a fish and chip supper.

We had the usual rounds of General Knowledge (where our team should have played the Joker, but didn't), History, Sport and Nature. Then it was time for fish and chips and to look again at the Marathon questions – scrambled names of Stars from the Silver Screen. Then we had categories of Food and Drink, 60's Music (not my favourite), followed by Literature and lastly Connections – which was absolutely beastly. Nothing seemed to make sense until we were told the Connection at the end was Paper – as in Rice paper – paper Boy, paper Weight and others.

After the last of the rounds, we had a True or False round which soon sorted us out, and we finished with the usual raffle. A very enjoyable evening and I'm sure we all learnt some useful facts – the problem now, is do we remember any of them?

Summer Ramble: 31st May by Derek Kortlandt

Taking advantage of a surprisingly sunny evening, 19 keen ramblers enjoyed this interesting walk starting and finishing at the Eagle in Kelvedon Hatch. Given the unpredictable weather, it was tricky to know what to wear. Various versions of walking gear were on show. Some had the full Wainwright - boots, sticks, waterproofs. Others were more casual and colourful, more indoor than outdoor, unfazed by the mud and nettles that might lie ahead. All completed the course intact.



Dave Williams, exploiting local knowledge, led us along quiet lanes and farmland. It is amazing the gems that lie down the English lane. It seems remote, and yet we were within a few miles of millions of people, most of whom seldom stray far from home – luckily for us. We saw a log cabin, a baby pipit, a distant bell tower, several charming houses and Soap House Farm. This gets its name from the soap boiling that took place there in the 18th century. A reminder that the countryside has long been a place of earnest endeavour and interesting smells.

There was a warm welcome back at the Eagle. The Ploughman's Lunch contained all the usual elements, including that annual treat, the pickled onion. Conversation was convivial and prolonged, a sure sign of a splendid evening. Many thanks to Dave and Brian Davis for planning the walk.

Summer Barbecue: 8th July by Sheila Hornsby

Following the success of the very enjoyable pre-festive gathering last December at the home of Jenny and John Daly, members were again invited to join them, this time for a summer barbecue on Sunday 8th July.

On yet another hot sunny afternoon about 30 Town Twinners had the chance to socialise and enjoy a tasty meal of meats cooked on the barbecue, salads and cheeses. The Pimms table was a great idea and at £2 a glass raised welcome funds.

Once again, many thanks to Jenny and John for their hospitality!



Coffee Morning: 14th September by Christine Minns

Fifteen members attended our customary post-visit coffee morning.

Although we were a fewer number than usual, it was a congenial occasion and coffee and cakes were enjoyed by all. Thanks to all those who contributed cakes.

The visit was still fresh in our minds and it was good to look back and talk about the highlights of what was a very successful visit.

The morning rounded off with the drawing of the raffle.



Halloween – Fun Night - Spooky!!: 27th October by Anne Long

It was certainly an enjoyable fun night with mysterious things happening even before the evening began.

One of the ceiling lights at the newly refurbished Hall at Kelvedon Hatch had decided to add to the spooky atmosphere of the evening by dropping to the floor. Luckily the others did not join in and stayed on the ceiling.

No need to worry or cancel the event as the lights were sectioned off by the Committee Members so that if the other lights had decided to join in the fun there would be no casualties.

It was a very enjoyable evening, great fun, a lot of chat, with many Halloween related games and also some participants dressed for the occasion as Witches, Skeletons, Imps etc. The jacket potatoes with several choices of fillings, provided by the Committee Members, were delicious.



There were many laughs especially with the confusion as to which way we were supposed to be changing tables. My favourite game of the evening was the way that Dave called out the Lotto numbers complete with the rhyming slang...never at a loss for words!!

This event was a good start to all the fundraising needed for the next visit in 2020.

Sunday 2nd December: Festive Gathering by Neil Hornsby

This year was the second time we experienced hospitality Daly-style for our pre-Christmas event.

The spacious surroundings in Primrose Hill once again proved an excellent venue with different groups congregating - round the computer to look at the latest promises and bids on the Auction Site, in the conservatory chatting and round the food and in the kitchen, of course, where we were treated to mulled wine, naturally, and also this year mulled cider. Not forgetting soft drinks. Mulled cider? I'm not sure. Good to try but I think I'll stick with the more traditional "mulled"!

Thanks to Jenny and John for the use of their house once again; thanks to all those who helped set up and wash up and thanks to those who contributed prizes for the raffle. An enjoyable and profitable afternoon was had by all.



Another French Connection...

Visit of the French Artists to Brentwood

In June the Brentwood Art Society welcomed back for a second time a group of artists from Montbazon, whom they now consider friends - as do we in Town Twinning.

They enjoyed an action-packed programme of activities which included a trip to Tate Britain, a boat trip on the Thames, a print-making workshop and a studio session.

This has proved a very successful exchange as members of the Society have been invited back to Montbazon. In their words "We look forward to continuing this wonderful exchange of culture and friendship".



2018 Visit of our French Friends: 16 – 21 August

Friday 17th August: Visit to Prittlewell Priory, Southend by Rosemary Smith

First day, first excursion – the huge black coach dropped us at Priory Park, Prittlewell, and we relished the short walk to the historic priory over soft green grass and shaded by large specimen trees – luxury after weeks of dry, hot days.

Our guide, dressed for the part, welcomed us into the lofty hall which was the only building left of the 11th century monastery, originally the refectory. The history of the site over the last ten centuries has been varied but the main talk was about the small group of Benedictine monks of the Cluniac order who came over from France with William the Conqueror and founded the priory at Prittlewell. The life of the Prior and his few monks was so taken up with prayers every three hours that they required a large number of lay brothers who actually did the work of the huge estate of abbey buildings, agriculture and fishponds.



We were entertained by our guide's demonstration of the monks' invention of a sign language (Benedictines are a silent order) before a short tour of the gardens and a chance to look round the small museum. Then it was back on the coach to the sea front and prospect of lunch and the afternoon in Southend.

Friday 17th August: Lunch at San Fairie Ann, Southend by Rita Anderson



Following our interesting visit to Prittlewell Priory we were all ready for lunch. The day's organisers had done really well to find our venue, San Fairie Ann, tucked away in a side street off the High Road. This place was a feast for our eyes as well as our appetites. It's a really quirky antique house where the whole place is a cross between someone's living room and a miniature stately home. There are lots of paintings, trophy heads and ceiling hangings. Nothing matches, plates, crockery, glasses, chairs, tables, which adds to the interest.

Our main course on our set menu was Fish, Chips and Mushy Peas, always a popular choice with our French guests, was really well cooked and served by friendly efficient waiting staff. Following the meal everyone was well set for a walk to the sea front and a visit to the pier.

Friday 17th August: Evening Civic Reception at Brentwood County High School, hosted by the Mayor, Councillor Sheila Murphy



Welcome by Chairman, Neil Hornsby



Response by Principal Deputy Mayor of Montbazou, Sylvie Giner



Customary exchange of gifts



The Mayor, Neil, and Sylvie, joined by Maxime Rival, Mayor of Montbazou Youth Council



Eric Rival, 2nd Deputy Mayor of Montbazou, joins the group photo

Saturday 18th August: Free Day

Visit to Hyde Hall by Chris Lacey

After the hustle and bustle of Southend, it was lovely to show our French guests another side of Essex by taking them to see the wonderful gardens at Hyde Hall.

The gardens, run by the Royal Horticultural Society, offer the best of traditional plants and planting together with the latest design ideas and innovations in the gardening world

Our guests, both keen gardeners, wandered around looking at familiar plants and learning their English names, whilst I was fascinated by the use of ornamental grasses. On this windy site, their movement creates an ever changing tableau.

In a quiet corner of the gardens we found the "Floral Fantasia" exhibit - a display of annual plants created by the seed company Thompson and Morgan. It was filled with plants of every size and colour. In the centre there was a conical tower over 8ft tall covered in flowers. A giant size deckchair stood nearby enticing everyone to try it for size.



The afternoon was completed with a delicious afternoon tea. How wonderful.

Visit to the Shard by Jude Ripley

Having consulted our guests, Bernard and Josée, in advance, they expressed a desire to visit the Shard, one of the few London landmarks they had not seen. We booked tickets for midday so that we would not be too rushed and have too early a start in the morning.



Once there, we discovered that Josée did not like heights! Not a perfect location for her, but she gamely agreed to continue up to the viewing level. Once there, she remained at the back, creeping along the wall, whilst the rest of us made the most of the beautiful weather to pick out all the sights of London laid at our feet. We were even able to make out the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge at Dartford.

We learned that a fox had been the first inhabitant of the Shard, having somehow entered the building in 2011 before construction was complete. Given the name Romeo, he lived there for two weeks, eating scraps of food dropped by the builders, before finally being captured, removed and released onto the streets of Bermondsey.

After buying guide books at bargain prices and photos at ridiculously high prices, we set off to have lunch at the Mudlark, a traditional pub by Southwark Cathedral, before returning home.



Sunday 19 August: Visit to Windsor Castle by Eileen Hillman

Originally built in the 13th century after the Norman invasion of England by William the Conqueror the castle was designed to protect Norman dominance around the outskirts of London as well



as a strategic part of the Thames. Windsor Castle is notable for its long association with the English, and later the British Royal family and for its architecture. It is the longest-occupied palace in Europe and today is the preferred weekend residence of the Queen.



« Windsor,
c'était la cerise
sur le gâteau »

A great tourist attraction and open all year round, its popularity has only increased since the fairy-tale wedding of Prince Harry to Meghan Markle.

On the beautiful day that we visited Windsor with our French friends we certainly experienced "The Royal Wedding effect".



Monday 20th August: Visit to Layer Marney by Diane Matthews

Shouts of praise were heard more than once as the French coach driver navigated narrow country lanes and the entrance and exit at Layer Marney Tower! We were greeted by the present owners of the tower, husband and wife Sheila and Nick Charrington, who guided us in two groups around the church and the tower which is their home.

Inside the church we saw how the tombs of Henry Marney and his son, John, were crafted. Services still take place there every Sunday.

Entering the tower, which was built during the first part of Henry VIII's reign, we were in the grand entrance hall which used to be an open area for horses and carriages to pass into the inner courtyard.



I found the most interesting part was when we went up a spiral staircase and into the private quarters of the house, seeing the private apartments including the massive bed with initials carved in the headboard and the huge games room with a full sized billiard table displaying some crests given to dignitaries who received the Order of the Garter!

Some of us then ventured to the top of the tower for superb views, some went to the children's play area and to see the animals and gardens and some headed straight to the grand hall (converted stables) for an excellent ploughman's lunch. After a short holdup (shoppers shopping) we departed at 2.40pm to prepare for our final evening. A most enjoyable visit was had by all.

Monday 20th August: Farewell Scottish Themed Evening by Pam Richards

We arrived at Navestock Village Hall, some managing to find it more easily than others, and were greeted by a Highland piper, Matthew McRae, which was a very appropriate start to the evening. Everyone had made a real effort with various tartans, kilts, scarves, hats, ties, and some very dubious sporrans. Members had been very busy during the day decorating the hall with bunting and French and English flags. The lovely table decorations were red-covered vases with tartan ribbon, heather, teasels, thistles and tartan napkins.



Unfortunately, there were problems in the kitchen and the meal was delayed. However, with a quick rearrangement of the programme the Upminster Scottish Dancers then treated us to a display before inviting everyone to join in. Some dances were a lot more complicated than others but



everyone tried very hard with varying degrees of success - the 'dosey does' seemed to create problems of their own! But the Dashing White Sergeant and the Gay Gordons were expertly executed.

The food arrived, continuing the Scottish theme. We had Balmoral Chicken, carrots, swede and creamed potatoes, followed by cranachan (raspberries folded into cream,

flavoured with toasted oatmeal, honey and whisky) and, in true Scottish fashion, 'a wee dram' of Aberdour Single Malt Whisky.

« La soirée
écossaise et le
déguisement qui
aide à se mettre
dans l'ambiance »

It was a great evening with lots of fun and laughter, the French contributing with a children's song Youkaidi to which they had added funny words. Many thanks to all the committee and their helpers for such an enjoyable evening.



A first time Host by Clara Greenaway

No time for regrets

It had been in my mind for many years to join the Brentwood-Montbazon Twinning Association. I finally did and offering to be a host has been one the best experiences for a long time, and a bit scary too.



My contact with France and its people had been minimal over the years and, although I always like the French language, it is somewhat rusty. But having guests was an opportunity to put my limited knowledge into practice.

For the five members of the Rival family it was their first time too. The plan of sharing the guests with Jude and David was excellent. They hosted the boys Alexandre and Maxime - Sophie, Eric and their daughter Pauline were with us, just a walk away.

Time went too fast. It was lovely to spend time with the children and admire their behaviour at all times. A very kind and bright young family who made an effort to communicate in English. To my surprise, for Eric it was helpful to remember a little Spanish.

No time for regrets. It was great fun to see everyone enjoying the different events and outings. The Scottish evening encouraged hosts and guests to 'let their hair down' in a very well organised event to end a busy and memorable experience. Thank you Jude and David for their support and advice.



Photos from the Visit



Prittlewell Priory



Introduction by a "brother" who guided us round

Visit to Southend



Enjoying lunch in San Fairie Ann

Taking a breather on the pier

Scottish Evening





Owner, Nick Charrington, leads the tour

*Layer
Marney
Tower*



*Heraldic crowns and crests once displayed
at St. George's Chapel, Windsor*

Farewell to our friends – until we meet next year



« Tout le monde a été ravi de ce séjour. Nous avons passé d'excellents moments en votre compagnie. Un programme bien équilibré, varié, de belles rencontres, une découverte de plats typique pour les nouveaux venus, un retour dans le passé avec l'histoire de Windsor et de la Tour Layer Marney, une soirée d'adieu festive et du temps libre, le tout accompagné de belles journées ensoleillées. Vive le Town Twinning. »



Quotes from our French friends

« L'accueil de ces anglais, de nos anglais !! Tous les ans, c'est mieux encore!! Mais comment font-ils ?? »



« Voyage très réussi avec des visites superbes, et de joyeuses rencontres avec nos amis anglais. Nous espérons leur donner autant de bons moments en 2019, et encore bravo aux organisateurs ».

« Toujours aussi agréable: L'ambiance de notre groupe, la chance d'avoir une météo superbe, l'accueil très chaleureux chez une nouvelle famille, des sorties et des visites superbes avec des horaires adaptés. »

« Il est bon de le répéter: BRAVO aussi au Comité d'organisation Français pour leur implication et leur dévouement qui a permis une organisation du voyage au Top. »

« J'ai trouvé le voyage parfait!....Félicitations à Brentwood pour un très bon séjour; avec des visites intéressantes et des repas dans des cadres très agréables, et pour tout dire, Windsor c'était la cerise sur le gâteau! »

« Excellente organisation de A à Z. Accueil très chaleureux et programme de visites très intéressant, particulièrement Windsor et Layer Marney qui nous ont replongés au cœur de l'histoire de GB et de ses relations passées avec la France »

« Nous sommes revenus enchantés tous les 4 du voyage. Nous avons apprécié le planning, les lieux des visites et les soirées. Merci à tous ! »

« J'ai adoré ce séjour, surtout Windsor. La convivialité était au rendez-vous comme d'habitude. Merci à nos amis anglais. Buckingham la prochaine fois ? »

« Tout était parfait des deux côtes. Bravo et merci pour tout. »

« Il est vrai que l'Angleterre est pleine de charme, et que, pour nous faire plaisir, pour que nous nous sentions bien, ils se mobilisent tous, et se mettent en quatre, Neil en tête. Nous ne les remercierons jamais assez !!!! Nous les aimons tous. »

« J'ai trouvé les visites particulièrement intéressantes cette année. Le fait d'avoir du temps libre est appréciable aussi. »

Forthcoming Events for your Diary

'Soirée-Ciné-Crêpes'
Film Night with Pancakes
Saturday, 9th March



Quiz Night
Saturday, 27th April



Visit to Mantlazon

Thursday 15th August – Tuesday 20th August 2019



Âllo, Âllo! by Jude Ripley



A very informal French conversation group meets in the morning of alternating first Wednesdays or Thursdays of the month at Brentwood Library. Do come and join us for a chat and a laugh with other like-minded people. £1 per person, all levels welcome.

