

“Jubilons Ensemble!”

“Let’s Jubilee together!” was my final exhortation to the crowd of French and English Twin Towners gathered in the lovely garden of the Meung Mairie, glasses filled, and refilled in the welcome sunshine. Maire Pauline Martin, Lymm P.C.V.C. Ian Marks, co-Président Jean-Claude Vivet and yours truly, looking the worse for a long journey and a cold, all paid tribute to our 44 year-old bonds of friendship and hospitality at the start of our five days visit.

Our French hosts had been swept up, no less than we English, in the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, watching the festivities on TV and no doubt wishing that they had a Royal Anniversary on Sunday rather than another critical election. As ever, over sixty of us had a warm welcome and enjoyed a memorable visit, in spite of the mixed weather, which has spoiled their Spring and Summer no less than ours. Almost half of the Lymm party travelled to Meung by coach, taking the overnight Hull-Zeebrugge ferry, whilst others, including several families with young children, preferred to travel by car, with the option of extending their holiday for a few days. After arriving on Wednesday June 6th, by the time of the Gala Dinner on Friday evening, attended by over 160 people, new and old bonds of friendship were visibly on display with handshakes, hugs and kisses, and some two dozen French and English children were just one happy mass.



Toasts, speeches, presentations and a five-course dinner meant that the entertainment by a local “Cowboy Line Dance” group took to the floor at a very late hour.

Nevertheless there was no shortage of French or English ready to join in enthusiastically after a little instruction. Perhaps fortunately, the next day brought a full day’s excursion by coach, heading south-east past Orléans and Gien, to the site of the medieval Château de Guédelon, a two-and-a-half hours trip which offered the weary the chance to catch up on a little sleep, ignoring the beautiful Loire landscapes.



The Château is a thirty-year project to design and build an eleventh-century fortress-castle, starting from scratch and using medieval building crafts and methods worked by volunteer labour. The project began in 1997 with clearing woodland and opening up an old sandstone quarry, so is now almost half-way to completion, and our visit gave us the chance to see close-up what has been achieved and to observe, and sometimes join, all kinds of craftsmen and women from blacksmiths to tile-makers, goat-herds to frog-farmers, masons to millers, and many more. The experience was completed with a copious lunch medieval-style: terrine de porc, plenty of meat: ham, chicken, sausages etc., macédoine of vegetables, peach & apricot pastries, all with plenty of bread and washed down with local wines. All of this was served up to several hundred visitors, including our three

coach-loads, part of the thousand visitors per day that this amazing project attracts.

Departure day came all too soon on Sunday afternoon, after five unforgettable days with our Bons Amis Français, the now wet weather reflecting our tearful Au Revoirs.!

TILL WE MEET AGAIN NEXT MAY IN LYMM

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