

The floods didn't dampen our Joy de Vivre

Lymm has been twinned with Meung-Sur-Loire near Orleans in France for 48 years now. It joins voluntary member associations from both sides of the channel once a year following a year of socials and fundraising activities. One a year there is an exchange visit where the people from Meung and Lymm can get together to renew old friendships and makes new ones. This year it was the turn of people from Meung to host visitors from Lymm and the surrounding area for a few days of events in early June. This was a visit that few of the members will forget.

The initial worries were about fuel and transport. The news was full of information about strikes and petrol shortages. Would everyone all be able to get there and back? In the end the ferry and train cancellations caused delays for some people but everyone got there. What caused bigger problems was the rain over central France and Southern Germany. This flooded the AutoRoute between Paris and Orleans. The Mauves River was channelled through Meung many years ago to run all its water mills. The channels, one of the features of Meung, overflowed and the people from Lymm arrived to find sections of Meung under water.

The town hall where everyone was supposed to meet up on arrival was flooded and so was the hall booked for the reception dinner on the last evening of the visit. The town's officials were busy organising the defences against the water from the Mauves and the Loire that flows past the bottom of the town. No one had seen anything like this before. The last recorded flood was in 1910. All organised events were initially cancelled. However the flooding was only in the centre of the town and nobody from Lymm arrived to find their host's house flooded out. So despite being the worst possible time in the year to turn up the people of Meung welcomed their visitors and put extra effort into organising impromptu events for their guests over the visit. Everyone was looked after and no-one was left out. As there were no other organised activities the Lymm visitors all did different things over the visit. Some went round the historic towns and castles of the area, whilst another party went to the zoo.

Thankfully the rain stopped and the Mauves subsided. Showing great community spirit an army of volunteer townspeople and firemen cleared up the town and removed the barricades. Michel Bret, the Meung Twin Town Chairman, managed to relocate the final event to a nearby village hall. This turned out to be a lovely relaxed affair where everyone could get together and have fun. Finally all the people in the two twin town societies were together in one place. This enabled everyone to share stories of the journey, find out what everyone had been doing and discuss whether the floods and strikes were going to hinder the journey home. It is believed that everyone arrived back all arrived safe and sound and almost as planned.

Plans are now in motion for next year's return visit, 18th to 22nd April, when English families will host visitors from Meung for five days. The Lymm Twin Town Society organises social events to raise funds towards the exchange visit. The next social event will be a barbeque in July and anyone interested in the society is welcome to participate. For more details about the society, membership and events, contact lymmtwintown@gmail.com or visit www.lymmtwintownsociety.co.uk