

## PRESTEIGNE AND NORTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION

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*John Kendall chatting with Robert Chabanel, President of Ligné Rando, at St-Florent-le-Vieil, on the south bank of the Loire, south-east of Ligné.*

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### NEWSLETTER No. 11 June 2005



*The French idea of a Pique-Nique!  
See Andrew Duguid's report in this newsletter.*

Dear Members and Friends

Welcome to Newsletter 11, a longer than usual edition this time. Enclosed are the provisional programme for the French visit in July and two books of tickets for this year's Grand Draw. We should be very grateful for your help in selling the tickets; further details are on page 7.

This year's exchanges got off to a flying start in April with the visit of the young footballers from France. They had a packed but enjoyable weekend which included a visit to the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff and playing in a friendly tournament in Hay-on-Wye on the Saturday. Later on Saturday they enjoyed a disco in the British Legion Club and took part in a "Tippet" competition. A joint Presteigne/Ligné team carried off the trophy in the latter. On the Sunday, the Ligné team participated in a Central Wales competition at Aberystwyth. This was won by the South Powys team which included several players from the Presteigne Under 16 team. After the games the Ligné team were presented with a rose bowl by the Central Wales FA as a memento of their visit.

The visit of the Ramblers to their French counterparts Ligné Rando was equally successful. Our Assistant Treasurer Andrew Duguid and his wife Janet were among the twelve Presteigne walkers who took part, and Andrew has provided a lively account of the visit as follows:

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Twelve walkers from the Presteigne area managed to tear themselves away from the excitement of the UK election day on 5 May to visit an extremely hospitable group of local walkers in Ligné. Six of us went by car and cross-channel ferry, and six by plane to Nantes.

The Grand Draw will take place on the Sunday. Counterfoils and money from tickets sold, and any unsold tickets, should be returned to Liz Boyles either in person by 24 July or by post to Bank Cottage, Stapleton, Presteigne LD8 2LS by 22 July.

The Food Fair at the Radnorshire Arms on the Sunday morning will be the main event of the weekend. The hotel is providing a marquee and ten stalls for local suppliers and for produce brought by the French visitors. The latter will include: honey and honey-based products; Breton biscuits; sweets; jams; preserved seafood products; patés and rillettes; salt from Noirmoutier and the Guérande; and grape juices. Sadly, British Customs regulations will not permit our visitors to bring bottles of the excellent regional wines for sale. Our grateful thanks go to Philip Smart and his team at the Radnorshire Arms for organising this event for us.

We plan to add another element to the twinning relationship later this year with a proposed visit to Presteigne by the choir from Ligné. The date suggested is the weekend of November 11-13, and we hope that the various singing groups based in and around Presteigne will be able to put together a programme with the Ligné Chorale which will demonstrate and celebrate our different traditions of music-making. Ideas will be further developed during the weekend visit in July, and more details will be in the next newsletter.

We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join us in the activities during the weekend of 22-24 July and look forward to seeing you there. Until then,

*Meilleurs amitiés*/best wishes

**Patricia Wilson**



*André Girard, President of the Ligné Twinning Association, and his wife, Marie-Odile, at the pique-nique.*

The other main spring event, the annual May Day Fun Day shared with the Chamber of Trade, was again very successful and raised £447.64 for the PNTA.

We are pleased that the new twinning signs at the eastern approaches to the town are now in place, in time for the French visit in July. There will be a special unveiling ceremony of the first twinning sign by Wilson Terrace on Sunday 24 July.

The provisional programme for the visit is enclosed. As many of the 42 Lignéens arriving this time will be newcomers to Presteigne, we have incorporated a number of activities which were on the programme for the first French visit in October 2002 and were enjoyed by our guests. The discussion at the Assembly Rooms on the Saturday morning will be on the social aspects of the industries visited on the Friday afternoon and/or the advantages of having a supermarket in Presteigne; Ligné has one large supermarket but few small shops. New activities include the visit to the Spaceguard Centre (weather permitting) and the rounders and boules matches in Wents Meadow on the Sunday. Elwyn is organising a range of activities for the younger visitors.

After a few anxious moments caused by none of us knowing that it was essential, when using a mobile phone, to dial the code for France even when in France, we met our hosts close by Le Préambule – the hugely impressive cultural centre built a couple of years ago. It is equipped with a vast new car park for which Powys County Council should note there is no suggestion of a charge of any kind.

We were all greeted very warmly indeed. Each couple was led away to where they were staying and to enjoy excellent meals provided by our hosts. John, Jenny, Andrew and Janet were treated to a very convivial joint meal at André and Marie-Odile's house, at which Yves and Marie-Jeanne and Christine and Philippe Lepage were also present. Perhaps inevitably, discussion turned to the forthcoming French referendum on the European constitution – whereupon Christine revealed that she had read the whole document from cover to cover! We were very impressed.

We were all back at the same spot by Le Préambule the next morning to drive to St Florent le Vieil, crossing the majestic Loire, for our first walk. There we were each handed photocopied maps showing our route, and shielded from the traffic at the start by brave walkers in luminous yellow vests. It was a delightful walk, including some rather tippy stepping stones which the cleverer half of the group managed to bypass. (I was among the least clever in the less clever half and got my feet wet.) We passed fields of buttercups that were three feet high – sorry, a metre. We learned that they are called *boutons d'or* in French: bluebells are *clochettes*. At one stage we walked along the banks of the Loire, and watched cows cavorting on an island. We also read about the massacre of Vendéens during the revolution.

At lunchtime we drove to an especially lovely flat spot by a smaller river, surrounded by old trees, where there were pic-

nic tables. I watched in some surprise as very compact metal boxes were removed from various car boots. These were opened up and each turned into a picnic table with seats for four people – all in one cunning construction. Table cloths, aperitifs, bottles of local wine and splendid food reminded us that we were in a different world, where *pique-nique* means something very different from picnic with the East Radnor rambblers!



The walk after lunch was only three km, which was just as well. We came to an unexpected outcrop of rock, quite high above its surrounding countryside. We were then taken to a surviving windmill where corn is still ground, and given a detailed and very interesting tour. Some of us may remember the words for corn, barley and oats.

In the evening we went to a charming *auberge* where we and about thirty hosts were all able to sit at one big table. At one point Jean produced a rather snazzy machine for checking alcohol levels. I was found to be well over the French limit of 50, but at 75 within the UK limit of 80. Our hosts were incredulous about that. (I wasn't driving.)

On Saturday we had another well-organised walk in some unusual terrain, where once there had been slate mines, now eclipsed by cheaper sources, just like closer to home. We were intrigued by a lily-like plant that flourished there, amid countless bluebells. We finished in time to join in a ceremony to unveil an exquisitely colourful twinning sign. John Kendall, who had organised the whole trip, made a speech in French in re-

ply to the deputy mayor, thanking them for the friendship they have shown us in so many ways. We were treated to a toast, a *vin d'honneur* and a tour of the very well-equipped *Préambule*, where we learned that something cultural – an event or a class – goes on nearly every single day. This strengthened the resolve of some of us to gain more support for rebuilding our Memorial Hall.

On Saturday evening we all converged at the home of the very hospitable 'Monsieur Jacky' and Huguette, where we had an exchange of amusing speeches between Robert and Bob – the latter being egged on by his considerable local female fan club! We presented our hosts with a charming picture of the bridge at Presteigne, painted by June Coveney. A tremendous spread appeared from nowhere, and we all enjoyed an evening in a marquee with spontaneous French songs and Breton dancing. At around midnight it was time to say our farewells. This took about half an hour, with frequent rounds of four kisses.

The next day Bob, Joy, Val and Frank had an early start for the ferry crossing. Kevin and Laura resumed their camping trip. The flying group – the Kendalls, Shirley, Emlyn and ourselves - paid a visit to Nantes and ran into a poignant ceremony to mark 60 years since Europe's liberation. This seemed a fitting end to a wonderful weekend of continuous hospitality and warm friendship between the walkers of Presteigne and Ligné.

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