

NEWTOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION AGM 18th April 2024

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2023/4

Throughout much of 2023 and into 2024 our focus was on planning for the upcoming MUSIC VISIT to LES HERBIERS taking place from 2 – 7 April 2024.

However, we did find time to do other things! At the beginning of June 2023 a group of approx. 30 intrepid walkers from Les Herbiers arrived for a short visit which intentionally coincided with the Newtown Outdoor Festival. They stayed 3 nights, arriving Friday 2nd and departing Monday 5th June. On both the Saturday and Sunday they joined in the walks organised by the Outdoor Festival committee and thoroughly enjoyed seeing the beautiful mid Wales countryside. We were grateful to Tim Chilton for organising a visit to his property, Cwrt Plas yn Dre, on Milford Road when we all learnt of some interesting historical Welsh/French connections! On the Saturday evening a Ceilidh was arranged which was very much enjoyed by the French visitors. Sunday evening a farewell buffet supper was held at Hafan yr Afan and then the coach departed early Monday morning. A very successful, if energetic, visit!

Our Annual Dinner on 6th June was a great success. This was held at the Themes Restaurant at the Newtown College site. A beautiful French themed menu was served impeccably by the catering department students and all were in agreement that it was an excellent dinner and evening all round. The venue was immediately booked for the 2024 dinner on 11th June.

The annual Food Festival, on the first weekend of September, was our next major event. We had our 'French Village' stand and welcomed 4 members of the Les Herbiers committee with their French food and wines available for sale. The usual popular Small Plates of charcuterie, cheese and bread were, as always, very popular. Likewise, the selection of wines our friends from Les Herbiers had brought over with them.

Our regular popular film nights in October, November, January and February continued and are an ideal sociable way to keep in touch over the winter months

Unfortunately, the proposed December visit of Newtownians to Les Herbiers to see the annual Town Christmas Parade and the Christmas Market at Pouzauges had to be cancelled due to lack of sufficient interest to make it viable. Perhaps we need to do more market research before planning a winter visit for the future.

As soon as Christmas celebrations at home were over, our heads turned towards serious planning for the upcoming Music Visit to Les Herbiers. Our sub-group charged with sorting out the minutiae of everything applied themselves and we finally left Newtown overnight 2/3 April with 2 coaches and 69 musicians, singers and other interested folk. Our Newtown Twinning contingent were delighted to be joined by Gloria's Gang, singers from the Llanfyllin area, members of the Newtown Silver Band and musicians from Monty Folk and Ffonic. This would not have been possible without the hard work of all, especially the leaders of the 3 groups – Robin Midgley, Gloria Griffiths and Geoff Bielby with special thanks to Robin who co-ordinated the whole of the music side of the visit. 3 amazing full days were spent with our Les Herbiers friends with visits and pop-up events in the town, culminating in a grand concert where our singers and musicians were joined by those from the Les Herbiers Ecole de Musique. The quality of the music was absolutely excellent and we can all be very proud of our mid Wales participants. Everyone enjoyed the lovely French hospitality from their host families and all agreed it was a very successful trip. It even seems there have been some whispers now circulating of a possible Music Festival in Les Herbiers involving all 4 twin towns, Les Herbiers, Coria in Spain, Liebertwolkwitz in Germany and Newtown! It could be a little while hence but . . . watch this space!