



## Chair's letter November 2019

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### Dear Members,

It is now coming up to eight months since our AGM when I took over the chairmanship from John Auric, where does time go?

Before that we had held an auction of Promises and below are few articles from people who made successful bids. This proved to be a very good fund raiser and your committee would certainly like to repeat it in the future, get your thinking caps on.

In May this year we hosted our French visitors and I'm sure you'll agree that we had a great weekend; I seem to remember that the weather was fairly kind.

As usual we met our guests at Portsmouth on the Friday evening. Saturday we rode the double decker bus to Amberley open air museum; due to the low bridge at Amberley we took the slightly longer scenic route.



On arrival we had an introductory talk by one of the volunteers, after which we were free to wander round at our leisure. We were divided into two groups to watch the demonstration of the Faraday machine, many thanks to those who provided the translations for our French guests.

Lunch was at the Riverside Café a short walk from the museum, the proprietor had agreed that we could have sole occupancy, much appreciated. On the menu a

British ploughman style meal, which I think our visitors enjoyed.



After dining we made our way back to the museum and spent more time browsing. On the day of our visit there was an added bonus for some, a rally of Minis which brought back fond memories for those of us who owned one in our youth (I am talking cars not skirts)! Sunday morning we were free to entertain our guests, John Auric had arranged for us to have use of the Boules Pitch at Bedhampton and several members and guests had a match.

That evening was our gala dinner catered by Fresh Food Catering. Following dinner we had a Line Dancing lesson run by Richard Hennessy and many of us enjoyed the dancing whilst others enjoyed chatting and watching. I don't expect any of us who were present can forget the amazing cakes.



Earlier this year Hazel and Gary organized an evening walking quiz round Emsworth and we followed this with a Fish and Chip supper, another occasion when the weather was kind to us.

Just last weekend there was another French Themed quiz run by John Auric and his family, many thanks. We





soups containing chicken and its stock, Chicken Divan with secret ingredients, Chicken & Mushroom pie and a dish I now cook regularly Jambalaya etc. We then sat down and enjoyed the “fruits of Sheila’s labour” – what a really convivial time we all had.



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### D-Day 75 years on

(John Auric & Keith Richardson visit D-Day Celebration)

At our Twinning soirée in Emsworth in May 2019, Alain Tranquart, [President of St Aubin Jumelage] invited individual Emsworth members to attend their “D-Day 75 years on” commemoration ceremonies In Normandy on June 8th.

So it was, two of us from Emsworth took the Normandy ferry on the evening of Thursday June 7th. Keith Richardson and John Auric were met at Ouistreham by Keith’s hosts, Serge and Huguette Bouet and driven to Langrune-sur-mer, to the house of Linda and Jean El-Bahar, John Auric’s hosts.

The next morning, the first commemoration ceremony was held on the beach at Bernières-sur-mer, the commune immediately to the west of St Aubin, where the Canadian forces landed on June 8th 1944.



*“French, Canadian, British & German flags flying on Bernières Plage”*

The ceremony was very moving, featuring many young Canadians whose grandfathers had made the courageous storming of the beach that day in 1944. For the first time, I believe, a group of young indigenous Iroquois from the French Canadian interior performed a traditional chant for the spirits of their departed ancestors – incense was burned and drums played. Many tears were shed amongst the onlookers.

The mayors of Bernières and St Aubin welcomed all those present and listed the representatives from twinned towns in England, Germany and Canada. The priest [not sure if he was a bishop or local padré] gave a blessing to those fallen on both sides in the conflict.



*“The priest and mayors n carried a wreath across the sands and laid it at the sea’s edge.”*



*“Local schoolchildren then formed up and laid decorated “cailloux “along the sand”*

Keith and John were next invited to cross the border into the commune of St Aubin and immediately met up with other members of the St Aubin Twinning Association. Amongst them was Sophie Marie , who stayed with Siriol and Roy Seabrook in May. Sophie said we must go and see the “memories exhibition” in the village square where

there was a display of “vignettes” by residents – children, teenagers in 1944 – who recalled/recounted their experiences, some harrowing, of those days of bitter fighting, with villagers caught up in between.

Sophie also said that the English translations for some of these vignettes she had much help from Siriol and was really pleased with the result.



*“Recollections of Paulette Meriel, founding member of the Twinning, at the ‘memories’ exhibition.”*

There was due to be another commemoration ceremony on the promenade at St Aubin but apparently the new commemorative plaque was unavailable so we were invited by Alain Tranquart to join with 150 or so young Canadians mainly from New Brunswick, to lunch in the “Gymnase de la ville”

This was mass catering French-style, with a full three course meal, wine, beer and cheese, provided on pre-formed lunch “platters”. Perhaps not gourmet, but very well cooked and very welcome.



Myself, Keith and his hosts found ourselves on a table with several very amiable young ladies from New Brunswick. They explained to us that they have three languages at school and at home. First is often English, then their native Indian language – “Acadian” and then Quebecois French – quite impressive as they said

how important it was to retain the traditions of their forefathers and foremothers !

All of a sudden, people were standing up, cheering and clapping and we saw in the doorway a gentleman of some years dressed in British naval uniform and a purple beret. He was helped to a table and we were told that he was one of the veterans who had a part in the naval engagements around St Aubin during the conflict.

With a short respite for after-lunch coffee we were asked if we wished to follow the cavalcade for another ceremony at Tailleville, a village about two kms south of St Aubin. This was to unveil a plaque to commemorate the deaths of Canadian and German soldiers following a skirmish around a barn at the edge of that village. We were deliberating when Alan offered us a lift part of the way in his car. This turned out to be more than just a relief on the leg muscles as we found ourselves sharing a back seat with a rather charming young blonde lady!

She told us in French that her name was Désirée and she was one of the two German schoolteachers with a party of pupils from Liebenburg. Alain dropped us off to park in a cornfield and we walked up to the village chatting to Dedeirée. When she found out that we were English she exclaimed that this was the first time that she had spoken to English “veterans” [?] in French – so we were a bit chuffed by that !

At the site of the fallen in Tailleville, the events of that day were explained to us by Serge and we watched while a live interpretation of the fighting was re-enacted by young Canadian soldiers, before a new plaque on the wall of a barn was unveiled and honoured by those assembled.



*“New commemoration plaque unveiled at Tailleville.”*



On the way back to St Aubin, Serge explained to me how the coastal villages from Corseulles in the west to Lion-sur-Mer near Ouistreham had escaped much of the allies naval bombardment as they were aiming at the main German forces assembled some five kms inland. However, when we dropped in to the “memories” exhibition [shown previously] there was much evidence of other types of destruction, both of humans and buildings, recounted vividly by those who were youngsters in St Aubin at that time of struggle and eventual liberation - started on the Normandy beaches in June 1944.



## FUTURE EVENTS

Your Committee is currently planning the following:

- A Mince Pie & Coffee morning 7th Dec.
- AGM & Annual Dinner (2020, date TBA)
- Call My Wine Bluff (2020, date TBA)
- French Exchange 8-11 May 2020 (VE Day)

## Members of the Committee 2018-2019

<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Judi Milburn 02992 471645</b>
<b>Vice Chair:</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Martin deLaporte 01243 373618</b>
<b>Secretary/:</b>	<b>Carol Sheppard 01243 698487</b>
<b>Exchange</b>	
<b>Membership:</b>	<b>John Auric 01243 379018</b>
<b>Events:</b>	<b>Hazel Willard 01243379877</b>
<b>Travel:</b>	<b>Keith Richardson 01243 430737</b>
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