



# Bromsgrove & District Twinning Association



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2011

# LINK





## Letter from Chairman Judith Stephenson

Dear Friends

Many of us enjoyed the company of our European friends during our reciprocal visits this year. It was particularly delightful to be welcomed to Gronau by their youngest committee member Annika John – a frequent visitor to Bromsgrove.

We were fortunate to have good weather for our numerous summer events and following a late Indian Summer are now preparing for the longer winter evenings and another varied programme of entertainment. However, we really do need more support by way of higher attendances so please come and join us.

I look forward to seeing you again very soon.

Best wishes

### Letter from the Editor.

Unsurprisingly this edition of Link covers summer activities, notably exchange visits to Gronau and St Sauveur Lendelin. On the front page we have managed to catch that premature summer sun we enjoyed in late April at the Bodenham Arboretum also the hot, sunny part of the steam railway trip with our French friends in June.

As editor I have shortened everyone's article; I am sure you understand. Many of you have contributed to this Link and all of you were prompt in sending material. I had aimed at a September edition but my 90-year-old mother in Dorset had a nasty fall which slowed down my progress.

Once more I must thank husband Chris for doing the Desk Top Publishing for Link and for working his magic on the photos.

Ros Cooke, editor ( 01527 832467 ros.cooke@logicalroot.co.uk )

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## BDTA Visits Bodenham Arboretum 10th April 2011

As a member of Town Twinning for some time and living in Bromsgrove for over 30 years, I am always being surprised by the things I don't know about this area, but this time it was my turn to be surprised by how many members have never visited Bodenham and its wonderful mix of working farm, nature reserve and prize-winning restaurant. As a family we try to visit this place at least once every season to see the changes taking place. There is always something to amuse and interest every one from toddler, through teens to adulthood and beyond.

The working farm has a mix of both rare and common breeds of sheep, cattle and pigs, together with their associated crops, some chickens - supplying the house and kitchen with eggs, and visitors with amusement. Some ducks and wildfowl on the numerous small lakes and large ponds, some donkeys and horses are to be met and petted during walks through the woodlands and meadows - most of the less well-known trees are labelled with their names and origin - there



are over 3,000 different trees and shrubs; with wild flowers in abundance in the appropriate season. With some 150 acres to walk in - following either the several suggested routes available or just wandering at will, you are likely to find something to delight round every bend. - not least of which is the restaurant - at least two of the people in the photo decided to have two puddings each. You do work up an appetite if the walk is long enough.

For further information do talk to any in the front-page photo or go to [www.bodenhamarboretum.co.uk](http://www.bodenhamarboretum.co.uk) - See you there in the autumn!

David King

### First time hosts' perspective on French visit.

Ten o'clock on Thursday morning we assembled in the council car park to greet our visitors from Saint Saveur Lendelin. Our guests were Claude and Madeleine. After a glass and a few words of welcome in the Council House, it was back home for lunch. They were tired, having slept poorly on the ferry, so a brief siesta seemed sensible. Next, in 'free time' a trip to Hanbury Hall, where they seemed duly impressed by the formal architecture and splendid gardens. Then an inspection of our rather less splendid garden and learning the French names of our flowers. Finally off to Catshill Social Club for olde English skittles with drinks and eats.

Friday and it's breakfast and off to the coach to Cosford Air Museum. Amazing how it takes a foreign visitor to get one to visit the attractions on



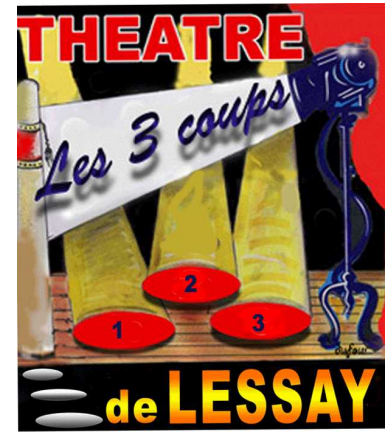
your doorstep. We were all suitably impressed by all that aviation history and planes dangling on wires from the ceiling of the exhibition hall. Then on to Daniel's mill and a lesson for me on the French vocabulary of water milling. Next, supper at home with some other visitors and their hosts - chaotic but fun.

Saturday - Off to Kidderminster to catch the Severn Valley Railway to Bridgnorth. Our guests

enjoyed the scenery but were slightly bemused by the English love for grubby old BR carriages. At Bridgnorth a visit to the market - not a patch on rural markets in Normandy. Then a pub lunch, which turned out to be embarrassingly awful. They were very polite but they are accustomed to better cuisine. On the way back we stopped off at Highley's Engine House, which was full of impressive, gleaming engines. Last event of the day - off to Trinity Centre, Lickey for a meal and crazy games.

Sunday - we put our friends on their coach and say 'au revoir'. We enjoyed entertaining our French friends and hope they enjoyed their time with us. It was fun to practice our French and encouraging to find they understood one or two of the sentences we spoke, while we even understood some of what they said to us.

John Kemm



## Les trois coups de Lessay : Jean Nagat

This theatre group name is untranslatable as 'coup' means knack, gust, blow, trick, grip of emotion. Jean is the man with the smiling face whom Annick has recently introduced to the St. Sauveur twinning group. During the twinning visit we arranged for him to see round our 'Artrix' Arts Centre. He was very impressed by the sound and lighting systems of the main stage - state-of-the-art equipment was put in place when it was built.

### The birth of a theatre troupe

In October 1988 Jean Nagat learnt that his wife who had been treated up until then as a manic depressive was really suffering from Leuco-dystrophy. As a man active in many fields he decided to raise money for research into this condition by setting up a theatre troupe, starting in the Lessay Sports Club, where he was Vice President but also actor and director for the past 55 years.

He took his first actors from among former actors and friends and wives of actors and directors. The first production 'Robert's Tureen' which took place in December 1989 was a great success and every year since then the troupe has gone from strength to strength. For the last 3 years they have put on three plays by the Englishman Ray Cooney. Cooney has brought out the talent of the actors and thrilled a packed St. Sauveur recently-built 'Salle des Spectacles' audience and made them roar with laughter. They have also played to packed houses of up to 450 people in theatres around Lessay.

They have given generously out of their profits to charities. This year they donated 4000 Euros to four medical research associations and to charities supporting young and older sufferers. They have already organised their programme for 2012.

Jean Nagat; Founder and director.

## Bromsgrove carnival June 18th

This year there was no Carnival budget for a workshop to teach organisations how to construct a large creation based on one, two or even three supermarket trolleys. The theme this year was 'Diversity'; it was obvious to us to chose international diversity. Janet and I then puzzled long and hard over how to make a globe for this. It took Shelagh O'laughlin's experience to put us out of our misery:

what we needed was a giant light beach-ball. Within a couple of days I obtained a 24" beach-ball which we covered with cut-outs of the continents.

On the day, despite the blustery conditions, the inflated beach-ball stayed firmly tied to the trolley. It rained on us all while we lined up outside the Artrix, but by the time the procession reached the High Street the sun was drying us out. Hundreds of people lined the route and hundreds more were in Sanders Park.

Ros wore an Indian/Afghani dress, Vera wore a Berber dress, Ken a North-German/Dutch outfit including clogs, Sue Douglas a Nigerian dress and Phil looked great as a Normandy onion-seller resplendent with moustache and bike as in the photograph. Janet sported her Gronau Rock and Pop museum T-shirt.

Ros Cooke



## Elizabethan Market

One week to go and still I had not located a cheap source of garden plants; last year's supplier could not help this time and after a dry hot spring, bedding plants were in short supply generally. Eventually Rowberry's Garden Centre came to the rescue with a good offer, so I toddled over midweek, as I knew that the car would not hold them all in one go. Then I was faced with another problem; where to put them all?

Anyway, time was on my side for once. My friends Bob and Sylvia, who live just at the top of New Road, came to my aid. They kindly had them all in their garden; just nice and handy for me to 'draw them off' all day as stocks went low on our stall. A very odd combination; music and plants but we sold every plant, and had a great day.

It would be great when everyone puts their garden to bed in the autumn if they planted one or two for next year's sale. Roll on next year!

Glenys Blackmoor



## A first visit to Gronau

Gronau 2011 was our fourth experience of twinning - we have hosted our French and German friends, visited St Sauveur; this June was our first visit to Gronau. The one thing we have learnt from our visits is to be prepared to go with the flow!

We were hosted by Heinz and Ulla Krabbe who had stayed with us last year. We knew our visit was going to be "off-piste" as we had accepted an invitation to Heinz's retirement festivities on July 20th. He was retiring after 27 years as Head Teacher of the local primary school.



The programme started at 8am in the morning, when some of Heinz's colleagues arrived on bicycles decorated with flags and flowers, with a local TV crew in attendance! There were 2 similar bikes for us and we all set off for the school. The children were lined up in the school drive all waving flowers. A full day of events followed - services, sketches, singing and speeches. Heinz is obviously a well-loved member of the local community.

Saturday we went round the RKW plastics factory making both strong and weaker giant rolls of composite sheets. Later we visited the ancient town of Munster with our



hosts; it has a busy market and excellent Picasso Museum. That evening we all had an indoor barbeque as it was so wet. Our chef was on the winning team of the World Barbeque Championships this year.

We joined the Farewell Dinner held at a local Epe hostelry, owned by Horst and Gabi; members of the Twinning. Again, the beer and wine and song flowed freely and it went on till well past midnight. The programme allowed us to spend a good deal of time with our hosts and we felt that we had got to know them really well. We can't wait for Heinz and Ulla to visit us again next year!

Shelagh O'Loughlin

## A Ten Year Old's view of Town Twinning

I travelled for the first time from Bromsgrove to Gronau by coach catching the ferry at Harwich. I had a family cabin with my Nan and Glenys; it had a very large window so I could watch the ships go by.

Next morning, the journey through Holland was exciting and stopping at a McDonalds for our break was great fun. In the photo I am the girl in the hat.

We arrived at the Rathaus and met all the host families. We then had lunch and after some speeches, I presented Gabi with some celebration chocolates. My host family arrived, Gudrun with her daughter Vivienne who was also 10 years old. They took my Nan and I to their house where I met Vivienne's Dad Mark. I was greeted by two Jack Russells who were called Lenny and Leo.

Gudrun took us all to the Rock & Pop Museum, and after we had tried on all the head

-phones and heard all the tunes, we made a recording. Vivienne, Linda and I dressed up and danced to some music which was put on a memory stick for my computer. I sat outside the museum and some men on penny farthings cycled past. Vivienne and I went on a walk around the LAGA, visiting the Bromsgrove Garden.



In the evening, we listened to the 'Night Watchman' telling us the history of Epe. It was cold and trying to rain.

Next morning we all went into Gronau to buy some presents to take home. After lunch we met everyone at the Rathaus. We got on Michael's bus and went to Steinfurt Garden and after a guided tour we had cakes and a drink.

On Sunday morning Mark took us into Holland to a large supermarket and it rained all day. We had dinner at a pub in Epe, where there was a table football game which we played on. Vivienne and I then got the chance to go to an ice-cream parlour.

On Monday morning Vivienne was going to a holiday play scheme early so Gudrun took us to the Rathaus by herself on her way to work.

The coach left at 9 a.m but we didn't arrive back in Bromsgrove until midnight, I was very tired, but had plenty of stories to tell my Mom and Dad especially how it was good staying with someone my age.

Megan Phipps

## Schützenfest (Epe Marksmen's Festival)

Our visit to Gronau this year involved a greater interest in Epe - the joint town with Gronau. Epe is smaller than Gronau but a very beautiful town, very modern and largely traffic free. The 15th Century church has recently been fully refurbished internally and is really stunning. The highlight of Epe's weekend was the 'Schützenfest'. This is an annual event and has been in existence in Epe since 1928. The whole town was awash with green and white flags and bunting which heralds the week long festival.

The Schützenfest is historically based on the military defence of the town and members today continue to dress in extravagant military style green and white uniforms. Today the festival is no longer of a military character but of traditional and social character and involves a considerable amount of drinking and entertainment, jazz bands, side shows, fun fairs etc.

Thundering canons officially start the Schützenfest. After several parades through the town the last day is dedicated to the shooting competition. Contestants compete by shooting at a wooden representation of a bird called 'Vogel' positioned high up on a pole, .22 rifles are usually used. One after another they shoot at it until it eventually falls down. What all Schützenfests have in common is that the winner becomes the new Schützenfest König, 'King of the Marksmen' and retains this title until the following year's competition. Any marksman may participate, however, it has to be born in mind that becoming the 'King' is associated with considerable expense and expenditure of time (we were told this could be as much as €10,000 in the year). Many of the marksmen therefore only aim to 'wing' the bird and try to avoid being the one to bring it down.

Our own festivities ended with a splendid meal in the local hostelry owned by one of their association's members Gabi and Horst..

Ivor Stephenson

## Epe an historic tour exclusively for the visitors

A small, historic town reluctantly joined to its near neighbour, Gronau, but frantically trying to cling on to its own traditions and customs. As he went around his watch at dusk the Nachtwächter or Nightwatchman explained something of the history of Epe. He dressed in 17th. century costume and carried his historic symbol of office as had his predecessors for many generations.

But Epe does not live in the past. There are few historic buildings remaining though there are historic locations in which, tradition and legend have it, witches and ghosts have roamed and acted. The local parish church bears witness to many occurrences connected with local feuds and struggles, especially between Protestants and Catholics as the dominating

families and minor royalty established their supremacy in the area and wished to impose their faith loyalties upon the populace.

One interesting fact was that one house, the home of our interpreter for the evening and Freundeskreis Chairman Heidrun, had been the headquarters of the British army when they occupied Epe after the Second World War. We, as successors of that time of occupation were treated to a welcome warming schnaps to stave off the effects of the rapidly declining temperature

It was good to see in the cobblestones the brass memorials to the horror of fallen members of the Jewish population, embedded in the pavement beside a popular shop, and the site of their synagogue; poignant reminders to the current generation of the unforgettable and relatively recent brutality of a former regime. It was an interesting, if long, evening, delightful in that we



became part of the tradition of the town in accompanying the Nachtwächter on his rounds, and it was heartwarming to see the courtesy with which he was greeted by the local townsfolk. Thank you, people of Epe, for making us feel at one with you all.

Mike Herbert

### How many of us to a tennis court? Gronau v. Bromsgrove

Manfred (Hildegard's partner and a very keen tennis player) researched the tennis facilities in Gronau and Epe for me.

There are three tennis clubs in Gronau and two in Epe. There are a total of 23 courts in Gronau, of which 2 are indoor ones. In Epe there is the Blue-White Tennis Club (where Ros and Manfred played), with 5 outdoor courts and 2 indoor ones. Then there are 3 other outdoor courts in another club, making a total of 10 courts in Epe. (In addition there is a private indoor tennis centre with 5 indoor courts, not included in the totals for Gronau/Epe, as indeed there are 5 in the David Lloyd exclusive sports and Fitness centre in Bromsgrove.)

In the Bromsgrove District Council area we have the following facilities in clubs for a modest charge: 8 outdoor courts in Bromsgrove, 10 in Barnt Green, Belbroughton and Hagley combined. There

may be a few others. We also have two municipal courts in Sanders Park whereas Gronau/Epe have none at all.

This is an interesting comparison as Gronau/Epe have a population of 48,000, half that of the 92,000 in Bromsgrove. My calculator tells me that with 33 courts Gronau/Epe have one court per 1,362 inhabitants and Bromsgrove has one per 5,100. I conclude that Gronau/Epe are roughly four times better provided-for than Bromsgrove - no surprise then that German players outshine the British players at Wimbledon or the Olympics most years.

Hilde and Manfred suggest that the discrepancy may be due to Germans being keener on sport. I think that it is because the German schools have no tennis courts whatsoever and the school day finishes at 13.30-14.00, so young people play in local clubs in Gronau/Epe whereas many Bromsgrove youngsters only play in school. Please email Ros with your thoughts ([ros.cooke@logicalroot.co.uk](mailto:ros.cooke@logicalroot.co.uk))

Ros Cooke



French Friends with us at Cosford Air Museum

### Welcome to New Members:

Mr M Beet

Ms A Bennison

Ms M Blanchet

Mlle D Mouchel  
c/o E Reston - only here for a year

Mr J Teece



Ten year old Megan making a video at Rock and Pop Museum, Gronau

### Future Events: Dates for your diaries

**Thursday Oct. 13th Bromsgrove Day of Kindness, Bromsgrove High Street.**  
Twinning has a stall - join in the fun.

### 7th - 10th November 7.30pm French film at Artrix.

L'homme qui voulait vivre sa vie (The Big Picture) with Catherine Deneuve. A lawyer accidentally kills his wife's lover, a photographer, and runs off, taking his identity. When he becomes successful in his new role, trouble begins. In French with subtitles.  
Please phone Janet on 0121 445 2802 if you would like to go; she invites you on each evening to please meet for a drink together in the foyer at 7.00. Please book your own ticket on the evening; Janet and Ros have never known a French film to sell out.

### Friday Nov. 11th French Bistro Evening

Theme 'Hallo, Hallo' on Poppy Day venue Barnt Green Cricket Club.

### Saturday Dec. 17th Christmas party with the Gemini Choir

St. Andrew's Parish Centre, Barnt Green.