

CITYLINK



Chairman's Letter

Anne Scicluna writes: Many members who were involved will, I am sure, agree that the exchange at the end of April was a resounding success. It was lovely to meet with our French friends again, and to pick up many conversations where they were left off last year! Julia and her team set a most interesting friendly programme, including a trip to Lewes and Brighton – although many of us, when we got to Brighton after a long day, simply relaxed over a cuppa or maybe something stronger, and chatted together.

The Bring and Share supper at Fishbourne Club was very successful too, and believe it or not, some food was left over, all having had their fill. In fact, the whole weekend was a lot of fun and we are looking forward to meeting our friends again in Chartres next year.

Our next event will be the Garden Party in the garden of Michael Bevis in West Way on 23rd of July. So those attending should be prepared for Anne Louise Briggs to make contact saying what type of food to bring along! Please come along if you can, as the garden parties are an opportunity for us to get to know each other better in such a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Look out for news of future events during the coming autumn, including the annual Christmas soiree, which will be held once again in the Bishop's Palace.

EDITORIAL

In this edition we bring you articles about the recent French exchange, and a reflection on our royal family's warm relationship with France, as well as a glimpse of how it feels to be a British expat living in a French village. We also include an update on Chichester's exciting new twinning with Speyer in the Rhineland.

As our events are now advertised by email and on our website, your committee has decided that in future, we will produce only two editions of Citylink per year, one in **December** and one in **June**. Please help us by providing interesting copy.

The Entente Cordiale is in Good Shape



It is only a year since we celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of Queen **Elizabeth II**. Our late Queen was a lover of France and made five state visits there during her seven-decade reign. Now we have a new monarch on the throne, **Charles III**. Charles also has a love of France, and made 35 visits there during his time as Prince of Wales - more than any other country.

France was chosen for Charles' first state visit abroad as monarch, due to take place before his coronation, but now postponed until the autumn.

Over the centuries France and Britain have often been at war with one another culminating in the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800's. However, in 1853 an alliance was formed to fight the Russian Empire in Crimea. In August 1855, **Queen Victoria** made a state visit to Paris. This was the first made by a British monarch in 400 years.

Victoria visited Napoleon I's tomb at Les Invalides in Paris and wrote in her journal: 'I stood on the arm of Napoleon III, before the coffin of his uncle, our bitterest foe! I, the granddaughter of that King, who hated Napoleon most.'

Two years after Queen Victoria's death, her son **Edward VII**, visited France in 1903, at a time when France and Britain were locked in a dispute over their colonial territories. He was welcomed by President Emile Loubet, but had to work hard to win over a hostile French public. On April 8, 1904, his efforts bore fruit in the form of the Entente Cordiale.

Europe was on the brink of World War I when **King George V** and **Queen Mary** visited Paris in April 1914. During a state dinner at the Elysée presidential palace, President Raymond Poincaré hailed the Franco-British Entente as 'one of the soundest guarantees of European equilibrium'. Europe was once again on the threshold of war in 1938 when **King George VI** and **Queen Elizabeth** toured Paris to cries of "Long live the king!"

Queen Elizabeth II's first official visit to France was in 1948 as a newly-married 21-year-old princess. Crowds lined the streets to catch a glimpse of her and her husband. She won hearts with her glamour, her command of the language, and what she herself called 'her great affection for the French'. On her death last year, President Macron said to the British people: 'To you, she was your Queen. To us, she was The Queen'.

Exchange 2023

After a gap of four years, we were finally able to welcome guests from Chartres this April. During the long weekend, old friendships were rekindled and new ones made. Luckily, the weather was kind to us and the planned activities were enjoyed by all. We include articles written about the exchange by our members and photos taken by the indefatigable duo, François Rémy and Didier Rocton. The dates for next year's exchange visit to Chartres were agreed:

Thursday May 9 to Monday May 13, 2024

The Friends of Chartres make a takeover bid for The Walnut Tree

Paul Everett writes: We were pleased to host 'Les Amis de Chichester' at The Walnut Tree on the 28th April during this year's exchange. It was in fact a virtual takeover of the restaurant area at The Walnut Tree where over 60 members and guests were treated to a fabulous meal.

The Manager, Mark, together with Paige and the other members of staff served us with dinner which consisted of a starter of **Crispy Shredded Duck**, a main course of **Fillet of Sea Bass**, followed by a delightful **Semifreddo** for dessert.

The menu hit the mark with everyone; notably, there were very favourable comments from our French guests, in fact there were comments such as 'This was the best meal we have been served during an exchange!'

Truly a fabulous evening, our thanks to Mark and his team.



Visit to Tangmere Aviation Museum



Michael Bevis writes: On the Friday afternoon of the visit by our friends from Chartres we enjoyed a guided tour around the **Tangmere Military Aviation Museum**. Sheryl Green, a retired French teacher who organises group visits, gave us a fascinating insight into the work of the museum which was set up in 1981 and her enthusiasm came across in her fluent French explanation.

The story of RAF Tangmere began in 1918 when the crash landing of a plane identified it as a suitable site for an airfield. During the Battle of Britain, the base with its satellite stations at Merston and Westhampnett (now the Goodwood motor racing track) was in the front line with its squadrons engaged in daily combat with enemy raiders.

After the war the base continued in operation with the sound of Gloucester Meteors and Hawker Hunters being part of daily life in Chichester including the distinctive bang as aircraft regularly broke the sound barrier.

After the planes were withdrawn, the base continued for a short time as a training ground for transport aircraft from RAF Thorney Island – the last commanding officer being Wing Commander Ray Dutt, whose wife Brenda was the first Secretary of the Friends of Chartres and led some of the early school children's exchanges.

The part of the Tangmere story of greatest interest to our guests was its role in transporting agents into occupied France either by landing in fields under the cover of darkness or dropping people by parachute. One of these was Jean Moulin who had been Prefect of Eure-et-Loir and who returned to France after his famous meeting in London with de Gaulle charged with the task of galvanising and uniting the resistance to the German invasion. Moulin was dropped by parachute from a Lysander aircraft, a replica of which is on display.

The City of Chichester twinned, since 1959, with the City of Chartres.

www.friendsofchartres.org.uk

Lewes: The French Connection

Julia Sander writes:

Lewes was selected as the destination for this year's Away Day with our French guests. It has much to offer: a historic market town with a castle and quaint narrow streets, a high street full of independent shops, a choice of pubs and other eateries - not forgetting the famous Harveys Brewery. Lewes also has an interesting link with France. **Thomas Paine**, the social reformer whose ideas influenced the French Revolution, once lived here.

Although Paine stayed only a few years in Lewes, there are many signs of his presence. The house where he lived, Bull House, on the High Street is sometimes open to visitors and one of Lewes' many pubs, 'The Rights of Man' is named after Paine's famous treatise. A mural in Market Passage commemorates the town's famous son.

Paine moved to Lewes in 1768 to work as a customs and excise officer. This move would prove a turning point in his life. Incensed by his working conditions, he published a pamphlet airing his grievances and exposing corruption. This won Paine no friends in the town; however, a chance meeting with Benjamin Franklin inspired him to move to America.

Paine sympathised with the growing desire for self-government in the country and actively supported it. His pamphlet, 'Common Sense', published in 1776, set out the case for America's break from British rule and sold thousands of copies. Its effect was described as 'incendiary'. The same year, on July 4, the American Declaration of Independence was made.

After some years in America, Paine returned to Europe, where he published his most famous work, 'The Rights of Man' in 1791. This work was considered so dangerous in England that the then prime minister, William Pitt, issued a warrant for Paine's arrest. However, Paine was already on his way to France, to promote his views in person.

Paine was warmly welcomed by moderates, and made a French citizen. However, Robespierre regarded him as an enemy and had him imprisoned. Paine escaped to America narrowly missing being guillotined. He continued to fight for human rights until his death in 1809.

Lewes is proud of its association with Thomas Paine. Many who live in the town have inherited his passion for free thought and his ideas are reflected in many events held in Lewes, such as its annual speakers' forum and in groups like the Headstrong Debating Club and Skeptics in the Pub.



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Forging Friendships

Pamela Kemp writes:



I had not met Catherine before she arrived on the coach with the other Amis de Chichester although we had both participated in the zoom session prior to the exchange so that we might, hopefully, recognise each other - which we then signally failed to do.

However, we did exchange email addresses and subsequently enquired as to food dislikes or allergies and exchanged a little background information, and, on Catherine's part, a request for suggestions as to a present she could bring for me. Most importantly, did she like cats, as I have an adorable but very shy one year old. I discovered that she not only likes cats but had rescued fifteen after some houses behind hers were demolished; good thing most of them were semi-feral so they did not all wish to move in with her.

Catherine had visited England before and had stayed with an English family, so her English was quite fluent. However, she had never been to Chichester and was very much looking forward to her visit. I had sent her details of the organised events and she was happy to participate in all of them, which we did much to our mutual enjoyment.

We had one free evening when Ellen and Stephen Haigh had very kindly invited us to have dinner with them. Catherine could not get over their kindness in inviting a complete stranger to their home and made sure to bring them a very French souvenir of Chartres.

We also had a free day on Sunday and I had asked Catherine if she might like to go to evensong at the cathedral that afternoon when the choir would be singing, to which she readily agreed. I then discovered that this would also include a special service being the installation of the intermediate Dean, but Catherine was fine with this also.

Naturally all the Great and the Good were in attendance or participating and there were some interestingly archaic forms of dress to be seen. Catherine thought the choir was marvellous and enjoyed the whole service but what struck her most forcibly, as I later overheard her remarking, was that alcohol in the form of Prosecco, had been served to everyone afterwards INSIDE the Cathedral.

Catherine was as good a guest as my host on my first exchange visit to Chartres, accommodating, thoughtful and generous. I shall look forward to staying with her in Chartres in 2024.

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The British in France: Views from Verteuil

'Au coeur de la ville pittoresque se trouve un magnifique chateau, véritable attraction pour les habitants et les touristes. Les environs sont parsemés de hameaux et de villages offrant un mode de vie rural idyllique.'



Peter Tudge writes: Thus, the purple prose of estate agents here or in France. In this instance there is mitigation for the effusiveness; **Verteuil-sur-Charente** where my brother lives and from where I have returned recently, is charming, ancient, picturesque in a slightly care-worn way and is dominated by a huge ancient castle remodelled during The Renaissance. It was, for a thousand years the home of the Duke of Rochefoucauld.

The village is well populated by the French and is home also to about 70 British expatriates and some other Europeans, not to mention some Britons who have holiday homes in the village and its environs. I was able, using my brother's friends in the village, to take an informal sounding as to why they sold their homes in Britain and settled in France.

It will be no surprise to our readers that a prime mover in the decision to live in France is that property in rural areas is much cheaper in a French countryside abandoned by the young. Brexit has also played a part, inasmuch as its effects have become factors since the referendum in 2016. Other reasons are less tangible; the notion of 'La Vie Française' held by many English people, encompassing a love of French cuisine and viticulture and the broad sunlit acres of the French countryside.

I take my grandchildren on some weekends to a café in Havant where I live, for a Full English Breakfast. The cafe run by Turks, has on its walls, illustrations of French boulevard culture. The French might look askance at the cuisine but they would be flattered by the homage to an aspect of their way of life.

This love of France is curious among the English when one considers our past. Major General Spears, who Churchill appointed liaison officer for De Gaulle in WW2, was born in France in 1886. He recalls his French nanny telling him bloodcurdling stories of chevauchées conducted by the barbarous English in The Hundred Years War, more than 400 years before the telling of the stories

Lord Raglan, Commander in Chief in The Crimean War, roused from sleep by the clatter of cavalry outside his billet, called out to his aide-de-camp, 'The French are coming! - this in a war in which the French were our allies!

So what do the French derive from us being there?

In Verteuil, as elsewhere, the presence of Britons, the largest group of European expatriates, helps to sustain rural economies and thus their villages. This is so well established, and the French are so much at ease with the situation, that in some areas they have elected Britons to be mayors.

A further consequence of the British presence is the exchange of popular songs, evidenced at the Ukelele Band concert in the village which I attended. The audience, almost all of them French, were wildly enthusiastic and sang the songs in English. The band sang them in French along with the audience.

I have one reservation to make about this cultural exchange; it is this. The British should be more pro-active in learning and speaking French. Even the attempt is welcomed by the French villagers who are kind and patient with stumbling French, as I well know.

I admire and love France, its literature, history and language - and the difference; always the difference.

Friends of Speyer

Chichester has recently formed a new twinning link with the city of Speyer, in the Rhineland. Speyer is already twinned with Chartres and Ravenna, so Chichester has become part of a network of European 'twins'.

Rob Campling writes:

The Friends of Speyer have come a long way since our introductory meeting, held on the 28th February 2023. The aim of that meeting was to create a Friends organisation which would develop links with the German imperial cathedral city of Speyer. These links would be based on those highly successful ones already existing between Chichester and Chartres, Ravenna and Valletta.



Over fifty people turned up to our first meeting, which, coincidentally, was almost exactly as many as turned up for Speyer's own first public meeting to discuss the same plan. Within a few weeks we had created a constitution modelled (with permission!) on that of the Friends of Chartres, a City Council grant had been applied for and granted, and an executive committee created which would hold the fort until our first AGM, planned to be held in August 2023.

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Committee members began planning a range of future activities, including language circles, film evenings and involvement in the Three Cities, now Four, contribution to the Chichester Festivities. By May we had finally fixed our membership fees, taking as our model those charged by the Friends of Chartres. However, we decided we would not start charging fees until January 2024 – until then membership is totally free.

Simultaneously we have been developing our links with the Speyer Friends of Chichester via their Chair Juliane Zech. She told us, for instance, that there was much interest as to how Chichester would mark the Coronation, and a local newspaper was put in touch with us by Juliane. Members of the committee were asked to put forward their own views, which covered a wide spectrum from a degree of indifference to enthusiastic support. Everything expressed was published and a very fair article published. Speyer City also held a Festival of Cultures on May 8th at which the Friends ran a Chichester stall. Everything was called off at the end by a thunderstorm which soaked everybody – a good introduction to the weather perils of a link with England.

The mechanics of a twinning have gone well so far, but that is all they are – structures that are essential but not sufficient in themselves. The true sufficiency is to develop face to face meetings with our new friends in Speyer, followed by hostings modelled on those between Chichester and Chartres.

Once that is achieved, I hope that we will be able to develop in Chichester a love of Speyer and its people which will match that which has existed for decades between Chichester and Chartres.



Those who join the Friends of Speyer and visit that city will find a very congenial environment. Indeed, the branch association of Chichester's Queen's Regiment has already made use of our structures by forging a link with a Pioneer regimental association in Speyer. Both groups of retired servicemen have passed branch resolutions expressing a wish for a handshake meeting and the Queen's are organising a coach trip to Speyer next year.

An unofficial visit to Chichester will be made by a coach party of Speyer citizens in August this year, and we understand that some of the Friends of Chichester will be in the group. This may offer a first chance to meet some of our future German friends.

In turn Chichester visitors will soon be able to make similar trips to Speyer, trace its links with Rome and the Holy Roman Empire, enjoy its Rhineland environment and sample its foods and wines. Best of all, though, will be beginning the hosting relationship and the start of many long-term new friendships.

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Friends of Chartres Events: July-December 2022

Dates for your diary

Further details of events and booking forms will be circulated prior to the events.

Sunday July 23
Annual Garden Party
2.30 pm onwards



At the home of our Vice Chair
Michael Bevis
Little Oak, West Way, West Broyle,
Chichester PO19 3 PW

Bring food to share

Friday, September 15
Social Evening
with Fish and Chips
6.00-9.00 pm



The Fishbourne Centre, Blackboy Lane,
Fishbourne PO18 8BE

Try your hand at pétanque and test your knowledge about France on our quiz.

Saturday October 21
Away Day to Wallace
Collection



Hertford House, Manchester Square,
London W1U 3BN

Guided Tour: 2.00 pm
Own transport to London

Thursday, November 30
Christmas Soirée
7.30 - 9.30 pm



The Sherbourne Room,
Bishop's Palace,
Canon Lane, Chichester

Information Page

President

**The Right Worshipful the Mayor of
Chichester**

Councillor Craig Gershater

Officers and Committee

Chair: Anne Scicluna 789065

Vice Chair and Acting Secretary:

Michael Bevis 781016

Treasurer: Stephen Northdale 722148

Members

Clare Apel 783738

Anne-Louise Briggs 784346

David Nason 573716

Julia Sander 527435

Peter Tudge 023 9273 2538

John Wilton 788833

SECRETARY

We are looking for a Secretary to join our committee. Duties involve preparing and circulating the agenda for meetings and taking minutes. The committee meets 6 times a year. If you feel able to help and would like to know more, contact our Chair, **Anne Scicluna** either by phone (**01243 789065**) or by email at anne@annescic.plus.com

CITYLINK

We are always on the look-out for contributions to Citylink and rely on our members to help us keep our newsletter fresh and interesting.

Do you have a story to tell about a visit to France or some interesting photos? Or maybe you have some suggestions about the content. Please send contributions to foccitylink1959@gmail.com

Conversation Circles

Groups meet monthly for lively, informal conversation in French. We welcome new members, whatever your level of French at Petit Cercle meetings. For the Cercle Avancé, you need to be reasonably fluent to contribute to the conversation, but we are happy for you to listen if you wish to improve your French.

Petit Cercle du mardi

10.30 am to Noon

Tuesday, July 4

Tuesday, September 5

Tuesday, October 3

Tuesday, November 7

Venue: The Coffee Bar, The Festival Theatre, Oaklands Park, Chichester PO19 6AP

Petit Cercle du jeudi

10.30 am to Noon

Thursday, July 20

Thursday, September 21

Thursday, October 19

Thursday November 16

Venue: The Coffee Bar, The Festival Theatre, Oaklands Park, Chichester PO19 6AP

Cercle Avancé

5.00 - 6.30 pm

Monday July 10

Monday September 11

Monday October 9

Monday November 13

Venue: The Duke and Rye, West Street, Chichester PO19 1QU

For further details, call **Julia Sander**
01243 527435

Conversation Circles will not take place in August or December.