

## **Members of the Twinning Association of Beverley to Nogent-sur-Oise**

**30 November to 3 December 2018**

**Le Vingt Ans.** This was a very special occasion as the weekend was to celebrate the 20 years that Beverley and Nogent-sur-Oise have been linked by Twinning. We had the largest group so far taking part: there were 28 members of the Association and 6 people representing Beverley Town Council, the Mayor and Mayoress Bryan and Shirley Pearson, the Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress Duncan and Joy Jack and the Town Clerk Helen Watson and her partner Paul Downey.

On **Friday 30 November** the group of 34 people made their way to Nogent. Nearly half of the party undertook group travel by train and Eurostar and the remainder of the party travelled individually by car.

We convened for the official welcome by the Mayor of Nogent where we were entertained by a class of junior school children singing 2 songs followed by a buffet, meanwhile catching up with our French friends and meeting new ones.

After this reception there was a concert, which started with an unaccompanied choir who gave a spirited rendering of Handel's Hallelujah chorus as their finale and followed by a young male pianist who gave a virtuoso performance of various Chopin pieces. We then had a meal with our host families.

On **Saturday 1 December** we travelled from Nogent in 2 coaches to Albert, a town in the valley of the Somme where the Tourist office provided 2 guides for our day. We started in Albert at the Somme 1916 Museum which showed us in detail the horrors of trench warfare, and then we marvelled at the Church, the Notre-Dame Basilica of Brebière, which had been totally destroyed and painstakingly reconstructed under the guidance of an architect who was the grandson of the original architect.

We then had a little light relief in the form of an excellent lunch at a restaurant called Le Cochon Salé (the Salted Pig) at the nearby village of Authuille before heading to the World War 1 Memorials in the area. By then the weather was cold with heavy cloud and drizzle and we were all moved by the thoughts of the young soldiers, average age 19 and of many nationalities, who lost their lives in the bitter conflict which at the time was dubbed the War to End All Wars. We saw the Franco-British Memorial at Thiepval easily recognisable from TV coverage of the Remembrance ceremonies and we had a walk from the Canadian Memorial down the hill to the "Danger Tree" where 700 young Canadian soldiers lost their lives in the space of just 30 minutes.

We returned to the Tourist Office in Albert where we were revived by a light snack before heading back to Nogent and a wonderful Jazz concert. The band played hits from the Big Band era, there was a group of dancers one of whom was an excellent chanteuse and we drank Champagne. Our evening meal was again with our host family.

On Sunday 2 December, we were relieved to have a slower start, a later breakfast and time to chat with our hosts before the Official Celebration was due to start at noon at the Château des Rochers. Of course we started with the National Anthem of each country followed by a series of speeches in both English and French from the stage. The Maire of Nogent, Jean-François Dardenne spoke first with a response by the Mayor of Beverley, Bryan Pearson, both committing to unity between the towns of Nogent and Beverley and their warm hearted approval of Twinning. The remainder of the dignitaries on the stage included current elected members and officials and their equivalents from 20 years ago, together with the President of the Oise region of Twinning Associations. Finally, and possibly the most important as the instigator, there was Gillian Roux who was brought up in Beverley.

When she and Daniel Roux of Nogent were married they suggested joining the 2 towns, in a Twinning arrangement.

After the speeches there was a musical interlude given by the orchestra Sur un Air de Musique before a DJ took over for the rest of the afternoon. The dinner was excellent with four courses of good food and wine. We then had champagne with a cake decorated to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Twinning Associations. The DJ started off the dancing by encouraging people in formation dancing to a video. The later dancers ranged from the very talented, through "Dad dancers", those happy to jiggle more or less in time to the music and a group of children doing gymnastic moves. So good fun was had by all including those who were happy to just spectate. It was about 7pm when we departed for a relaxing evening with our hosts.

On **Monday 3 December** we took our leave from our hosts with much hugging and kissing, reflecting on what an amazing weekend we'd all had. The sombre and serious mood of our visit to the Somme on Saturday lifting to the joyous celebration of 20 years of the Twinning relationship between Beverley and Nogent-sur-Oise on Sunday.

Moira Brooks  
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