



The Friendship Force of Bristol Newsletter

July 2017

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COFFEE MORNINGS

August Jill & Reg

September Viv

Coffee mornings are a great way to keep in touch with other members. Your support is always appreciated

2018 Journey Assignments - Sylvia

"Experience different views and discover common ground" by putting these dates in your diary NOW !

April 2018 – Mexico City FF (Mexico) will visit Bristol

June 2018 – Bristol FF and Cheyenne FF (USA) will visit Calgary FF and Medicine Hat FF (Canada)

October 2018 – Northern Colorado (USA) will visit Bristol

Host and Ambassador Journey Co-ordinators will be required to start planning these exchanges later in the year – but you can volunteer now!

President

Sydney, Australia

The light is fading. The setting sun ,leaves pink and grey strands of cloud reflected in the pale turquoise sea. The water, almost motionless, rises and falls in the semi circle of the bay while boarders, still hopeful, stand in their wet suits waiting patiently for a swell. Winter in Sydney has failed to arrive and the calm sunlit days emphasise long shadows, lightly clad people and the laughter of summer. Something disturbs a flock of white cockatoos and send them screeching across the sky.

We are not taking part in the familiar pattern of a FF holiday but we are staying in our first Air BnB! Our experience is of a comfortable little self contained house in a private Australian back yard within easy walking distance of our tiny grand children and their family! The break from the hectic experiences of the last 6 months is very welcome and by next week I shall be ready to pick up the various reins in England and face up to organising my knee op My 9 day village festival is over for 2 years and I will be able to prepare for the nomination of a new committee for Bristol FF. Juggling the responsibilities for the two organisations was not easy but was worth the challenge. I cannot believe that the time has nearly arrived to appoint a nominating committee to start the nomination process all over again.

Taking over the presidency in the way that I did was not ideal. I was determined that Bristol Friendship Force would survive and luckily I had a strong and very loyal committee that was behind me. We saw every reason to move forward because we had all had positive experiences with FF and saw the benefits of travel in the FF way. The way ahead has not always been easy but the constant support from members has made the rocky road between despair and enthusiasm a manageable option.

We still have a club, we have new members who have come to us from other clubs and we are beginning to understand, between us. how we can join together us in a way that gives us all new ways of thinking with benefits to everyone.

We have one more week in Australia and probably many more than one 2 year old tantrum to come, from Ella our grand daughter! I shall be back very soon, to take up the various reins for my various societies. I have to admit that I have always enjoyed a challenge.

A stiff breeze has blown up and in the half light I can just make out a small wave, reluctant to form a white top and to break on the shore. Eventually it spreads its spume and as I close the door I sense the winter chill. Will we return to England in time to catch the last rays of Summer sun?

Jill

SCHWERIN - Visit from Schwerin FF 4-10 September 2017

Planning with the help of Carole and Bernard is progressing well. With very limited response to hosting we have managed to find just enough hosts but with two families hosting 3 each. Ann [Marlborough], Lesley, Maria and Ron, Carole and Bernard and ourselves - **it's not too late to volunteer!**

In addition, you can still get involved with this visit by being a day or dinner host. The programme is almost complete and will include a welcome pub lunch, farewell indoor curling evening, a day in Salisbury, a day in Bristol and hopefully another day in Bath.

Alan and Jane



REPORT ON VISIT BY HAMBURG 3rd—7th APRIL 2017

Our guests were picked up from Bristol Airport on the afternoon of the 3rd April and given a tour of the Chew Valley area before arriving at the village of Stanton Drew. Here they were able to view the stone circles that date from the same age as Stonehenge before toasting themselves before a lovely log fire in the Druids Arms. We had supper of fish and chips with a drink included, some even ordering a pudding. Our German friends were happy to be in a typically British country pub.

The following day our guests toured Bristol at their leisure with their hosts and either ate out in the evening or had dinner with their hosts.

Wednesday was the day for visiting Wells, which was Market Day and most visited Cheddar Gorge too.

On Friday a walking tour of Bath had been arranged but few people took part, most being happy just to explore individually.

We had booked a room in Saltford Hall for our farewell party so Sylvia and myself had cooked two main courses with salad, and a selection of puddings for supper. Indoor curling was enjoyed by our guests who then danced and sang for us.

Altogether a relaxed visit blessed by good weather. Our guests were most appreciative of their visit.

Viv Seward and Sylvia Dando Host Co-ordinators.

DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES TO NEXT NEWSLETTER - 31 October 2017

Thanks, Wendy

Articles should be provided in word format (not in pdf format as difficult to add to Serif software)



Report on Bristol Friendship Force Journey to Belgian Coast 8-15 May 2017

14 Ambassadors from 5 countries arrived in Ostend and Bruges to meet their hosts and in time for the Welcome Party at Marie Paule's house. This also gave the opportunity to meet most of the local members.

On Tuesday we went to Ypres for a tour of many sites, dinner and the memorable ceremony of the Last Post at Menin Gate.

Wednesday was a guided tour of the city of Bruges.

On Thursday we travelled further by train to Ghent for a guided tour.

Friday was a free day, when most of us went with our hosts or day hosts to explore the coast, some even going into Holland.

Saturday was a train trip to Brussels for a guided tour of the city with some free time.

On Sunday we had a tour of Ostend followed by a Farewell Lunch at The Royal Yacht Club. It was Mothers Day and somewhat crowded so lunch took 4 hours.

Monday, we were all ready on time to catch the 08:40 train to Mainz.

Overall an enjoyable exchange and we certainly saw most of the main sites of Flemish Belgium.

Lunch was provided most days as part of the hosting fee, which did cause the odd problem for those with dietary requirements. Apparently lunch is the main meal of the day in Belgium.

For those dedicated to shopping, they would have appreciated more time for this.

The mix of members from different clubs and nationalities went well with few problems. It gave the opportunity to have discussions and make relationships with not just the hosting members. A part of the Friendship force theme

Reg Williams ED

BFF Website

Apologies, this newsletter does not contain an embedded link to BFF Website as is usual. I am spending the summer in France (more later) and do not have a template of the newsletter, with link, in the publishing package I use - Wendy



Report on Bristol FF Club Exchange to Rheinhessen 15–22 May 2017

11 Ambassadors travelled by train from Ostend in Belgium to Rheinhessen in Germany on Monday 15 May. On meeting our hosts at the station we dispersed to various locations in Mainz, Alzey and Frankenthal

The week included guided tours around Worms, Limburg, Heidelberg and Mainz and a visit across the French border into Alsace to visit Wissembourg. Meals were at our own expense with the exception of the Farewell Party, which was included in our payment. Unfortunately, the hosts and restaurants we attended had not been informed that one person was gluten free and one vegetarian and this caused some problems for those concerned.

There was a lot of walking during the exchange which some ambassadors found tiring.

Our international group (England, Wales, Australia, Canada and USA) jelled well and in general terms everyone enjoyed the exchange. One member had an 80th birthday during the week which was celebrated accordingly.

There were some problems with travel which I discussed with the ED. As the host families were spread over a wide area this necessitated some ambassadors travelling by train or car between one and two hours to meeting points. Train tickets were difficult to obtain due to the privatization of the railways and various conflicting regulations. On several occasions, ambassadors were unsure of when and where they should be and how they were getting there.

The day visit to Wissenbourg was on the Sunday before we left for home. This town was German but is now French. There is a tourist train only on a Sunday. Some ambassadors had to travel 3 hours each way to get there and were reluctant to do so the day before a long 10 hour journey home.

Overall it was a good exchange with interesting and informative information with kind and friendly hosts and good weather! Lesley Morris ED.

Still Travelling: The trip to New Zealand, Tonga , Singapore January 2017

We travelled to New Zealand for the first time with the Bristol Friendship Force in 1999, Margaret Owen was the Exchange Director. It was a wonderful experience.

We returned to New Zealand again in 2007 with FF of Durham under the leadership of Ray Shaw. Another terrific time.

We considered returning to that part of the world but I felt less confident as we were 10 years older. It is the other side of the planet then I figured if we don't do it now then another ten years will pass even faster. Ron arranged flights and I helped sorting out places to stay.

We were away for 4 weeks and travelled over 25,000 miles.

New Zealand is a truly beautiful country, Tonga a unique Pacific Island and Singapore a good place to stay to break the very long journey.

We learnt a lot not least that we are prone to health problems as we get older and that did indeed happen, I will spare you the details, suffice to say we decided to continue with our plans and enjoy everything as much as possible. We just went at a much slower pace and as we were on holiday that was just fine.

We did however manage to climb to the top of Mount Victoria in Wellington and that was (for me) a big deal. Also went out snorkelling when we were in Tonga and much to my surprise I discovered that I really love fast boats (hate fast cars). We didn't exactly meet the King and Queen of Tonga but shared a church with them, the singing was amazing, and seeing the people in their native costumes was special.

Visiting my nephew Greg and his lovely wife Liz was a big bonus, we had a memorable New Years Eve party. They live in an area of outstanding beauty, the Bay of Islands and we were fortunate to experience trips around the Waitangi Treaty Grounds which won a Tourism Award in 2016. We also experienced a small hospital in that area! I am proud of my clever nephew glad to be part of the clan but so grateful for his understanding wife who drove us to that wee hospital on New Year Day. We could only fit in a short trip to Nelson to visit our hosts of 2007, Daphne and John Widdowson, they were about to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary and remain as we remember them the best FF people.

We would not have known New Zealand if it had not been for Friendship Force, we would not have considered the journey if we had not been invited by our friends in Tonga, and having Greg and Liz in New Zealand.

Will we do such a big journey again ... who knows?

Maria Henderson

Bristol Friendship Force AGM 2017

The AGM will be held on SATURDAY 28 October 2017

(Note: Saturday not Sunday this year) Venue and time to be advised.

Social Events Diary Dates:-

Lunch at Tortworth Court. Monday 16 October 2017. Please contact Carole Duckett for more details



La Bergerie. Cénac, France

Many years ago I was captivated when reading *A Year in Provence*, by Peter Mayle and thought how brilliant it must be to live in France, to experience the culture, learn the language and in particular, to establish friendships with local people. Little did I realise that nearly 30 years on I would have the opportunity to do just that.

Having lived for over 26 years in Keynsham, becoming a member and latterly newsletter editor of BFF during that time, I moved to The Forest of Dean at the end of March 2017, where Barry and I found a house (and garden) with enough room for my cats and space to entertain friends and family. We hope to welcome some of you there for a coffee morning in due course.

A little over 3 weeks later we packed four cats into travelling crates, not much room for much else in the car, and set off for the Midi Pyrenees in South West France, which will be my home until October. Two suitcases, jam packed with my clothes and other essentials for a long stay were collected from the UK and delivered to me by a brilliant organisation, Luggage Mule, within a week of arrival. Barry already lived here so his luggage requirements were minimal I am pleased to say!! We plan to live in France until October and then return to the UK for winter. The house here is in a rural location with few neighbours and bleak winters (but hot summers usually).

The UK house is being well cared for in our absence and the garden is blooming I am told. It will be exciting on our return to see exactly what it contains. We knew there were strawberries and raspberries and our neighbour's children have been instructed to eat their fill.

The weather here has been a mixture of torrential rain, storms, cloud and intense heat. The plants have enjoyed the rain though, particularly the Hibiscus and Lavenders.

I am pleased (and relieved) that the cats have all settled in well.

Cénac is in the Lot département, a huge wine growing region. Our house is surrounded by numerous vineyards. Deers and hares visit the garden occasionally and also many birds, including cuckoos. One of the most beautiful is the secretive Golden Oriole (a summer resident).

In May we watched the successful rearing of a nest of bullfinches, tiny birds with wonderful songs.

The recent hot spell provoked a colony of honey bees, which normally live in a corner of the roof, into swarming. This was a fascinating sight but unfortunately it appears that most of the swarm, with the queen, took off into the forest whilst a small group took up residence in the guttering and downpipe of our terrace. A local bee-keeper came yesterday, Saturday 8 July, and put up a small hive hoping to entice this group inside and that the main swarm would follow this up. Sadly, he has just returned to find that none had entered the hive and tells us that the few loose ones will shortly die. Very sad but he is seeing the continued decline of the honey bee. *Both of our gardens will continue to be planted with bee friendly plants and I urge you all to do whatever you can to help the bees, which are so vital to our existence.*



Nearby is the town of Cahors which has some interesting remains of a Roman amphitheatre. There is a medieval quarter and a famous bridge, Le Pont Valentré, which is on the pilgrim route to St James (Santiago) of Compostella. A pleasure cruise on the river Lot is wonderful on a hot day.

Local markets have been visited, in order to practice my modest French speaking. Sadly, I seem to be able to say more than I can understand in return. In this part of France some locals speak an old language, Occitan, which it appears is incomprehensible even to French speaking residents, c'est la vie.

Yesterday a lovely lady, Ostiane, came to help me converse with the bee-keeper and we plan to meet again for coffee and conversation. So, whilst not on a BFF exchange, I am ever mindful of the motivation behind Friendship Force and hope to establish lasting friendships during my time here.

I wish you all a very happy summer.

Wendy



Sunset from the terrace at La Bergerie

Once again my thanks for input from many sources. It has been a pleasure to prepare this newsletter. I look forward to any articles you might like to share with other members in the next newsletter.

Wendy