

Didcot-Meylan Twinning Association

NEWSLETTER

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Grenoble is in the province of Dauphinée and the symbol of the city is a dolphin. Dauphinée derives from the Allobroges word for the flower delphinium and the region was independent from France until 1349. In the Middle Ages, Grenoble was home to the counts of Albon, who founded the dynasty of Princes Dauphin. In the 15th Century, Dauphinée was governed by the future King Louis XII and the tradition developed of naming the heir to the French throne the Dauphin. Almost incidentally, it appears, one Countess of Albon nicknamed her son 'dolphin' and the similarity of the name to Dauphin resulted in the adoption of the dolphin as the symbol of the city, no doubt to the confusion of many visitors.

www.didcotwinning.org.uk



Les Caves de Chartreuse, Voiron

The flight from Luton arrived at Grenoble St Geoirs early Thursday afternoon and our hosts had thoughtfully organised a visit to the Chartreuse distillery at Voiron en route to our official welcome in Meylan.

The famous Chartreuse liqueur was created by Carthusian monks and the precise combination of ingredients that give the liqueur its distinctive flavour is surrounded by secrecy. From small beginnings in the early 17th century, when the monks were known for their herbal remedies, the recipe was refined over the next century and it had remained the same since 1737 and today Chartreuse liqueur is known and enjoyed worldwide.

Our tour showed the various stages of processing and refinement, interspersed with short films describing the sometimes turbulent history of the monastery. The visit ended with a dégustation from a selection of green and yellow Chartreuse or one of the other fruit liqueurs made on the premises and everyone appeared to enjoy their choice.



Tour of Old Grenoble, Friday 23 September

How old is Grenoble? About 3 centuries BC the Romans settled by the river Isère, ideally placed between Rome and Vienne. Parts of the elliptical Roman wall round the city remain and the outline of the rest is marked by metal studs in the ground. Despite recent developments, much of its original character is retained in its squares, churches and houses, seen in our morning tour. We were also privileged to see behind the facades of a few building, to glimpse courtyards and ornate staircases that hinted at an opulent past.

The author, Stendhal, was born in the city but turned his back on it in his late teens, preferring the heady delights of Paris. Nevertheless, both



his birthplace and his grandfather's home are preserved for visitors to see. The philosopher, Jean-Jaques Rousseau, only visited Grenoble for a month in 1768 but his house is also identified. More prosaically, Grenoble is home to the second oldest cement factory in France (1842) and the material is used functionally and decoratively to good effect in the city.

Le Musée des Automates

The entrance to this small museum could easily be missed in a crowded street, but the interior is crammed with automata representing over two hundred years of invention, presented as a memory to a former Grenoblois, Jaques de Vaucanson, who was one of the early inventors of animated objects. We were treated to carousels, fairground organs, whistling birds, musical boxes, pianolas and an amazing variety of mechanical figures; pressing buttons and turning handles reawakened childhood delights. Although the objects themselves were fascinating, much of the enjoyment of our visit stemmed from the enthusiasm and showmanship of the owner who clearly took delight in challenging our eyes and imaginations with one surprise after another. *JC October 2005*

Dinner at the Chateau du Mollard

Arriving from Lyon airport where we had been met by Georges what seemed like only minutes earlier, we heard the group before we saw them. A gentle, persistent hum of conversation greeted us as we found the rest of the twinning party on the castle terrace in the soft night air. Shortly after we entered the ancient dining room and were treated to a delightful meal. There followed an exchange of civic gifts when Didcot's mayor, Colin Daukes, presented a framed photograph he had taken himself of the new Orchard Centre. After a very long day, we gratefully returned to Meylan to sleep, well fed and delighted to be back. *ST October 2005*



ABOUT OUR ORGANISATION

Chair	Terry Joslin
Vice Chair	Jerry Goff
Secretary	Janet Cockburn
Treasurer	Erin Goff
Web Editor	John Farren
Communications	Sue Totterdell (01235 850080)
	susantotterdell@yahoo.com
Other Members	Carole Newberry, Nick Hards, Gareth Wheeler Sheralyn Hares Peter Read



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Straws salamanders & syphons -

A visit to the Grottes de Choranche

An early departure on Saturday, and we arrived at the entrance to the caves in the Parc de Vercors via a road that did not seem to be ideal for coaches.

Donning our warm jackets, we entered the dark, underground world. Although there are many kilometres of caves, we explored only a small part. The caves are most notable for the very fine, straw-like stalactites (*fistuleuses*) which are



due to water seeping in through extremely narrow openings in the cave roof. Atmospheric lighting made the most of the spectacular shapes and forms

and culminated in a son-et-lumière in the vast Cathedral cave.

On the way out we stopped at some glass tanks which, on close inspection, contained salamanders (*protées*). Emerging into the sunshine it was hard to believe the vast extent of the water-hewn tunnels just behind us in the cliff. (www.grottes-de-choranche.com)



Water for lunch?

Another delicate piece of manoeuvring on the part of the coach driver brought us to the Musée de l'Eau in Pont en Royans just in time for another excellent lunch. Despite being dedicated to water, we were served some more delicious wine with the meal and then made our way into the museum where we met our enthusiastic guide. Passing through imaginative displays highlighting the importance of water not only for life, but also for recreation, we discovered the humanitarian projects that the museum has initiated in Africa. Finally, following a talk about the history of mineral waters, we tasted some of the enormous variety available in the *bar à l'eau*. We then had an hour to look around the charming town of Pont en Royans and to see the historic bridge and the *maisons suspendues* perched precariously over the river Bourne.



Pont en Royans, squeezed between the river and the mountains, was where wood from the local hillsides was assembled into rafts and sailed down the river to their markets in the south. In return, goods were transported back up to the town to trade for the wood so it became a thriving trade centre. Finally, after some shopping and a cool beer, we took the coach back to Meylan



A new Magic Roundabout

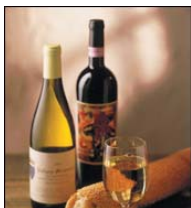
If you happen to drive through Meylan, watch out for the Rondpoint de Didcot, the newest recognition of the special link between the two towns. Although roundabouts were only introduced into France in about the 1970s, they are cropping up everywhere. The one dedicated to Didcot is a particularly fine example, landscaped to reflect the local terrain, with trees and rocks. On a fine Saturday evening in October, the party from Didcot assembled with their hosts from Meylan to witness the official naming ceremony attended by the two Mayors, Colin Daukes and Marie-Christine Tardy. Whilst the local police stopped the astonished local traffic, the party circled the roundabout first 'à l'anglais' and then in the French direction. As the traffic restarted, the group dispersed to spend the evening with their hosts.



Meylan celebrates 20 years of twinning

Over the weekend of November 5th and 6th, the Twinning Association of Meylan celebrated its first 20 years of twinning, at the Clos des Capucins. The original agreement with Planegg has been expanded to include Gonzales in Louisiana and, of course, Didcot. We were represented at this important celebration and at the festive dinner by our Chair Terry Joslin and Vice-Chair Nick Hards.

For more information see: www.comitedejumelage.com



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Get your Christmas presents:

Tea-Towels with local scenes around Didcot available from committee members.



Mon beau sapin, roi des forêts
Que j'aime ta verdure
Quand par l'hiver, bois et guérets
Sont dépouillés de leurs attraits
Mon beau sapin, roi des forêts
Tu gardes ta parure

Toi que Noël planta chez nous
Au saint Anniversaire
Joli sapin, comme ils sont doux,
Et tes bonbons, et tes joujoux
Toi que Noël planta chez nous
Par les mains de ma mère

