

# NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011

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## Future visits: updates

### VISIT BY PLANEGG

Thursday 24 - Sunday 27th November 2011

Plans are at an advanced stage for the forthcoming visit from a group of councillors from Planegg. This will be the second time that some of them have been to Didcot and the committee intends to show them a little more about how various services are provided to residents and to explore differences between the German and British systems. In addition, reflecting the recent designation of this area as an Enterprise Zone, there will be an opportunity to visit local employment sites.

A highlight of the visit will be the chance to see Didcot residents in relaxed mood at the Christmas Street Fair.

*If you want to get involved in this visit, please contact a member of the twinning committee.*

### DGS GROUP TO VISIT PLANEGG

A group travelling from Didcot Girls' School to see the Christmas Market in Munich will also take the opportunity to visit the Gymnasium in Planegg to meet students at the school. This visit builds on contacts made when a teacher from Planegg came to Didcot as part of their twinning party in 2009 and hopefully will lead to more opportunities for the young people of the two communities to interact.

### AGM REPORT

The AGM of the Twinning Association took place on Wednesday 22 June in the Chalk Room at Cornerstone. Terry Joslin, Chair of the Association, acknowledged the important contributions from members of the association, from local businesses and schools and from Didcot Town Council over the past year. He went on to provide a brief report of the business meeting that took place in Meylan in May (more details on page 4), attended by people from Didcot, including the mayor, from Planegg and Meylan.



## Didcot visitors welcomed in Meylan.

A group of 14 people travelled from Didcot to Meylan for the twelfth twinning exchange between the two towns. They were welcomed by the Council of Meylan and the Twinning committee with drinks at the Town Hall. The Comité du Jumelage had arranged a full programme for the weekend and details are provided elsewhere in this newsletter (pages 2/3).



Financial reports for the past year showed that the Association has managed to raise several hundred pounds towards the cost of future visits by Planegg and Meylan. Thanks were expressed to both Tappins and Baptist House who had made no charge when the Meylan group had to cancel at the last minute in 2010. The Committee were delighted to welcome Helen Ball from Didcot Youth Football and Serguei Tereskhov from Didcot Devils Basketball to outline their respective plans for sporting links with Planegg and Meylan, respectively.

### Cancelled Cake Stall

The Twinning Committee would like to thank all those people who volunteered to make cakes for the Harwell Fete stall. In the event, we would have been in direct competition with the Church stall and decided to withdraw. Your cake-making skills will be welcomed at a future event.

## Out and about in the Pays Voironnais

This year's twinning visit to Meylan included an interesting day in the Pays Voironnais. This region lies about 30 km northwest of Grenoble, in the Department of Isere and our visit was focused around the Paladru Lake, the fifth largest lake in France. We left the car park at Meylan Mairie soon after 9 am and were taken by coach to the Chateau at Virieu. We were welcomed by our enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide, Crystelle. Thanks to her stay in the UK, she was able to share her love of the castle with the English-speaking visitors. There has been a castle on this site since the 11th century although alterations have taken place over more than seven centuries. Interestingly, the Virieu family ceded the castle in 1220 when Beatrice of Virieu married Siboud of Clermont but the Virieu family bought it back in 1874 and still live there. Thus, this castle is furnished comfortably, rather than as a museum. Entrance into the castle from the courtyard is by way of an impressive door, studded with 2115 nails. The inner courtyard is home to a range of canon, given to the castle by Louis XIII in 1622 and from there we entered the chapel (built in 1681) dominated by a vaulted wooden ceiling covered in stars, with the stages of the cross, sculpted by Stephanie de Virieu when she was 80 years old, displayed around the chapel walls.

## CHATEAU AT VIRIEU



The Chateau at Virieu is one of the best preserved examples of its type Entrance (above) and view from the garden (below)



A canon presented to the Chateau by Louis XIII with our guide, Crystelle, and Phil Hayward, mayor of Dicot



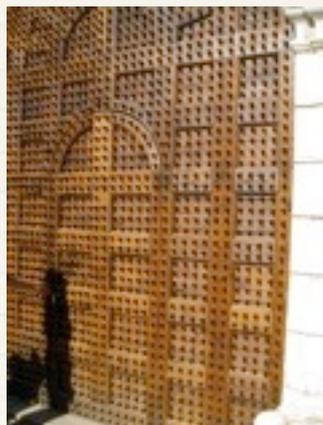
The massive medieval fireplace in the kitchen.

From the chapel we moved into the ancient kitchens, now used as a family dining room. The main feature of this room was the huge medieval fireplace with its massive roasting spit and bread ovens.

In contrast, we moved to the Grand Salon, a comfortably furnished family room with views across the French-style gardens, restored to their XVIIIth century grandeur.

Equally impressive was the King's Bedroom, so named because Louis XIIIth slept there in 1632. The room is dominated by the richly upholstered bed, which seemed quite small by modern standards. In contrast the White Bedroom seemed fairly restrained. It was interesting to see some examples of early en suite facilities, before a brief exploration of the gardens.

## VIRIEU CASTLE



The nail-studded door

The Chapel's star encrusted ceiling



An early en-suite facility



The Grand Salon



### THE COMMITTEE

**Chair:** Terry Joslin

**Vice Chair:** Keith Beswick

**Secretary:** Geoff Oldham

**Treasurer:** Robin Eastham

**Town Council Rep:** Peter Read

**Communications:** Sue Totterdell

**Webmaster:** Adrian Evans

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Given the glorious weather, many hosts opted to take their guests into the mountains (top and middle - Alpe d'Huez and the lac Noir) or for a swim in one of the lakes (bottom)

## Paladru Lake

About 6 km long and 1 km wide, Lake Paladru is the fifth largest natural lake in France. Formed in the glaciation period, its shores were one of the earliest inhabited areas in the region. After a very enjoyable lunch at the Beau Rivage restaurant at Charavines, followed by coffee on the beach terrace, we visited the Lake Paladru Museum, housed in the Maison de Pays, to learn more about the earliest settlers in the region. Extensive underwater excavations have revealed how changes in water level swamped some of the early settlements, preserving them in the lake mud. The first dates from the end of the Neolithic period (village des baigneurs) and the second from the medieval period, (Colletière). The museum houses many of the artifacts recovered from the lake, including an iron age axe, and a primitive boat called a 'pirogue'. Some of the Didcot group recalled their visit to the ARC-Nucléart facility, near Meylan, where important advances in the preservation of items made of organic materials, like wood and fabric, have been pioneered.

This fascinating visit was followed by an opportunity to experience the lake itself, by pedalo or rowing boat, or for the more energetic, a swim. Many ended the afternoon with a beer by the lake side.



## Time enjoyed with hosts

Saturday provided an opportunity to spend time with host families and resulted in many different activities. Firstly, there was the annual 'Forum des Associations' (right) an important day in Meylan's calendar, when all the local organisations set out their stalls to recruit new members.



On Saturday evening, the gala dinner (left), attended by the mayors of Didcot and Meylan, was held at the Auberge St Michel, in Sonnant d'Uriage. Visitors and hosts enjoyed a delightful meal and musical entertainment and there was an opportunity to reflect on the benefits of twinning and to acknowledge the efforts of particular individuals.

Members of the Didcot party were sad to hear that Aline Cuvecle (above, left), the person in Meylan with special responsibility for links with Didcot, was standing down from this post. Her contribution to many successful twinning visits was greatly appreciated and we look forward to seeing her in Didcot next year.

# Report on the business meeting in May 2011: Meylan, Planegg and Didcot

by Terry Joslin  
Association Chair

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**The great fact about twinning is that it can act as a wonderful facilitator. It brings together people with similar interests but who would not normally encounter each other, or their way of life.**

**It brings out the best in them when they cooperate in a common purpose.**

In May this year, we were invited by our twin town of Meylan to take part in a three-way 'business weekend' initiated by the mayor, Mme Marie-Christine Tardy.

The meeting was three-way because she had also invited their other twinning partner of 20-years, the Bavarian town of Planegg. Her vision was that, representing three world class science communities, we could produce partnerships of real significance and create business, employment and educational benefits, on a scale not previously seen in Europe. Pre-planning to explore the structure of the workshops had taken place at Cornerstone the previous October.

To meet the tough criteria, we sought an input from our local organisations and were thrilled to take a party of seven which included three scientists from STFC (Rutherford Laboratory), a senior language teacher from Didcot Girls School, a DGS school governor specialising in choral activities and the Mayor of Didcot, Phil Hayward. We each prepared papers to present to the seminar audience of some 60 people.



*Presentation to the meeting*

Briefly, we concluded that the three towns had much to offer in the way of **enhancing apprenticeships**, both short and long term. Improving technical skills and languages, essential to careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, would be the main aim.

We agreed that an **Internet Portal** between the three towns would be invaluable. Any citizen or organisation would be able to converse with any others, on any topic, be it private, business, science, arts, sports, cultural, local government or educational. The internet would become the main conduit for learning, for reference and for information.

A **Business Club** was also proposed to facilitate networking between science and business people, not only on normal business topics but including an after-work dimension. Here, families would meet and interact whilst enjoying social events such as picnics, sports events, cultural events, concerts, dances, etc.,

In our Science Vale UK area, families from the Harwell campus, Milton Park, Culham Science Centre, the power stations and many other local businesses could participate in festive social events.

We also expressed a desire to set up a **data base** of people and organisations in each town

who would be prepared to act as hosts to any of our visitors from Meylan or Planegg, whether they come to Didcot for the usual weekend twinning exchanges or for a prolonged business visit, for example, an apprenticeship exchange or to conduct experiments at our local science facilities such as Diamond or ISIS.

Finally, DGS representatives met their counterparts and arranged language and music **exchanges** with each other. We are pleased to learn that, as a result of these meetings, a party of 27 girls will be going to Munich in December.

In conclusion, we all learned much from each other and agreed that the three towns, working in harmony, could be a vehicle for great improvements in the way we conduct business and operate local governance.

We concluded that successful economic development depends on a 'hidden partnership' between the producers of the income (i.e. the local employers) who in turn depend upon the local authorities to provide the infrastructure services that are needed by their employees (i.e. good housing, schools, shops, medical services, roads, etc.,). Get these two factors right and you have a successful and harmonious society. Stimulation and the exchange of ideas, as is well proven in Silicon Valley, accelerate the process.



*Delegates listen to the presentations*