



PRINTEMPS NEWS FROM MAISON CLAIRE FONTAINE



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A Busy Winter of Building Works

Well it seems like no time at all since we last wrote a newsletter to keep everyone up to date with events in the normally quiet hammeau of Méluzien. We have definitely been the source of some interest to our neighbours in the last few months as we worked solidly over the winter to make the changes we felt were needed to the buildings and facilities. The sight of us running around from job to job seemed to be a source of great entertainment to everyone locally but at the same time the encouragement we also got for what we were doing was very rewarding.

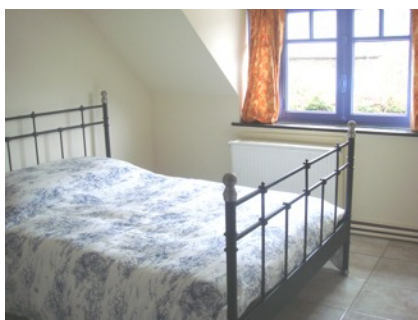
sorting out in the building such as getting all the toilets to work properly, all the old leaking taps replaced and the guttering replaced or repaired around the roof. Mark has discovered that he definitely didn't come to France to be a plumber but thankfully we have enjoyed the help of a great local man who has been fantastic at getting things flowing as they should.

We are also planning a bit more colour this year with some hanging baskets of flowers to brighten up the site. Perhaps most importantly we have installed a new fence along the top of the wall running by the river where the bus parks and the table football is located.

Perhaps of more interest to everyone is the news that we have replaced all of the mattresses on all the bunk beds and put some new beds in the teachers rooms (including a double bed in the annexe). On the subject of teachers' accommodation we have also added a brand new double teachers room in the dormitory at the far end of the first floor by the fire escape door.



Maison Claire Fontaine is at the heart of a very small community and we have never felt more aware of that than when discussing the refurbishment of the windows with the man who made the original ones in the 1950s who was walking his dog past us one day.



The safety aspects of putting this fence in seemed self-evident to us let alone the future prevention of all our footballs disappearing down the river Cousin ...



Although without a sink at the moment, this room is certainly a good addition to our facilities and makes for far better security and more even supervision of the upstairs dormitories.

Outside in the grounds we continued our work with the installation of a raised bed by the outside eating area to introduce some colour and scent into that part of the garden.

On the educational side of things we have also been very busy upgrading the classroom facilities with new display boards and blackboards and working to enhance the teaching resources that we have at our disposal. The feedback on our lessons and activities is that we are making improvements in our effectiveness which is enhancing both the enjoyment and educational value of the trips to us. We will continue to do far more on the educational side of our work and as we get to know each school better we will be increasingly focussed on trying to exactly meet the individual emphasis and objectives that you have for your trip to us.

We have spent lots of time on the simpler and frankly unglamorous things that needed

Website Update

www.maisonclairefontaine.com

The new website is now up and running, so please do visit it if you haven't already. We have included a teachers section to help you with trip planning as well as areas designed for pupils and parents.

In conjunction with the new website we have also found that the Blog and the Twitter feeds have been well received by parents who have wanted a better communication channel back to home whilst their children are away. Certainly we have found that by using Twitter it is possible to keep parents up to date and their minds at rest without being overly intrusive into the trip itself for visiting staff and pupils. Our experience of this leads us to suggest that it is well worth publicising this element of the trip and getting parents to follow us on Twitter and look at the Blog. We are also happy to take over the lengthy task of uploading photographs if you have permission from parents for us to use them.

Of course we can't help the one boy who got into trouble with his mother because he always seemed to be wearing the same clothes in the photographs we published when she was sure she had packed lots of changes of clothes for him ...



Personalised hoodies (£20) and polo shirts (£15) are now available to order ready for your visit.

T-shirts (10€) and baseball caps (6€) are now available to buy at the centre.

Coach Travel

We were naturally very sorry to hear of the two significant coach crashes involving school trips earlier this year. This led us to further examine the safety policies on this aspect of what we do.

Motts has a very strong safety ethos in place as a company and of course because they are specialists in the school travel area they are best placed to give advice on anything that can be done to minimise risks. They have a useful section on their website that deals specifically with safety for school travel which may be good to refer parents to who require further assurances on the safety of a trip to us by coach.

We also firmly believe that by using drivers who are very experienced in the precise journey to and from MCF along with the excursions that they follow when here, coupled with there being no overnight travel involved on our trips, significantly contributes to the safety of the coach travel associated with a trip to MCF.



Resto Night

In response to feedback from schools about the restaurant night we have been working with Laurent, the manager of Le Relais de Gourmets to try to enhance the French restaurant experience.



Changes include the introduction of Bourgogne gougères to the menu, a selection of

sirops for the pupils to try, a choice of desserts that need to be requested 'en français' and a presentation of the menu by the chef.

6th Form Trips and Gap Year Students

We are now almost fully booked for the main season in 2013, but are looking to offer courses over the winter for small accompanied or unaccompanied 6th form groups. If your school would be interested, please do get in touch.

We are also looking for French speaking gap year students to help out for the September / October season and then from February through to July 2013. If you know any suitable candidates do let us know.

Elodie and Alex were very pleased to meet some of you when they went to the ISMLA conference in March. Someone else they met was Andrew Finan who recently developed a new card game to aid with language teaching. Andrew has won a number of awards for his work since the launch of KLOO in October 2010 and we think it is a very good resource for the classroom, so much so that we have ordered a number of sets for Maison Claire Fontaine. Do find out more by visiting their website: www.kloogame.com and make sure you ask for a special MCF discount !



Au moment où nous écrivons ce bulletin nous fêtons nos un an à la Maison Claire Fontaine. Nous avons pris nos marques maintenant dans notre nouvelle vie et tenons à remercier toutes les personnes qui nous ont soutenus, qui ont encouragé ce que nous faisons et les efforts fournis pour améliorer continuellement la MCF.

Nous sommes déterminés à rendre votre expérience chez nous la plus éducative et sure et agréable que possible. Nous nous engageons à répondre avec pertinence aux objectifs que vous nous fixez pour vos visites et avons hâte de vous montrer les résultats.

À la prochaine !