



**BONNE ANNÉE**  
**2017**

Issue 7 : January 2017

## Happy New Year !



Dear Friends

It is hard to believe that it is already time for another Happy New Year message from our quiet little corner of rural France. As ever we offer you all our very heartfelt wishes for a healthy, enjoyable and fulfilling 2017.

Whilst we didn't manage to fit in another surprise wedding or house purchase at the end of last year as we did at the end of 2015, we have certainly been busy getting firmly focussed and ready for the coming year which is set to be our busiest ever.

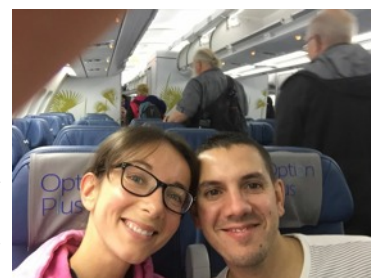
As a result of extra demand for what we do, our two distinct seasons now run from the very start of February through to the end of July and from the first week of September to the second week of November. We are hugely flattered and encouraged by the vote of confidence this gives us in the learning experiences we are managing to provide for young people.

We are very excited to be going into 2017 making some small changes to how we do things but also keeping other key aspects of what we do stable and familiar. Our professional aim has always been to improve what we do each year and never take the fulfilment or sustainability of our lives here for granted. This will always be based on our ever growing and evolving experience of your needs and the changing world that we live in.



At the same time that we make these improvements we need a level of stability to underpin the quality of what we do and what you and your pupils experience when visiting. We certainly aren't believers in change for change's sake and know that, in particular, our stability comes from the team that we employ to work with you during your time with us.

A large change in continuity for us in 2016 was the fact that we said goodbye to the magnificent Elodie who after six years with us has followed her dreams and gone to live in Canada with Ben. Naturally she leaves a large gap in our lives both personally and professionally but it would be too hypocritical of us to suggest that she shouldn't do as we ourselves did a few years ago by changing our lives and moving here to France.





2016 was also our first year at Lac Sauvvin without Fadila who has successfully settled into her new life in the UK. We are really pleased to hear from her that she is enjoying her teaching role at a challenging new school in Wembley. We know that she is going to be making an enormous impact on all the young people that she is inspiring to be linguists of the future. It was lovely to see her and catch up with her news at our end of summer season party.

So .... on to 2017. Happily for us all, and in part as a response to these changes, we are delighted to be able to welcome back Blandine and Estelle who worked with us so enthusiastically, professionally and effectively for the whole of 2016.



In addition we are also welcoming back Celine who many of you may remember from 2015. She has returned to join us again from her exciting year-long travels around New Zealand.



They are all colleagues that we respect greatly and we know that they are going to ensure fantastic life enhancing learning outcomes for all our visitors.

Continuity also features in the kitchen of course where David will carry on providing delicious and nutritional meals for all our visitors both young and old. Apart from food being such an important part of a cultural visit, experience in this vital area is of course central to ensuring safe and compliant eating for those visitors with special dietary needs for medical or religious reasons.

So for the coming year our focus is one of continuity to underpin our quality and growth along with small changes to enhance in any way possible the life and learning experiences of you our visitors.



Briefly, on a more personal note for those of you wondering, we are getting ever closer to our own change when the house project gets over the line and we can move in – something that has of course slipped but is really starting to look on track to happen before the summer. Naturally for those of you who saw the house during the past year we hope it looks suitably advanced when you return !

We look forward to welcoming old friends back and of course making new ones in 2017. Have a fantastic start to the year ....

À bientôt !

Alex and Mark



## Our work with local French Schools

Our work with local French schools and groups continues to develop. In 2016 we welcomed 4 different schools for our English experience days, were oversubscribed for our 2 day holiday 'English stage' and also served bacon sandwiches to customers at the local supermarket who had asked us to host an 'English breakfast' corner on a Sunday morning !



Our afternoon teas (with the cardboard cut out of the Queen) were enhanced by the very kind gift of English cake stands from Dianne Place of Sydenham High School. The French children were most impressed ! We also developed the English version of our market challenge ... the English Tea challenge and taught a very enthusiastic group of 3ème and 4ème pupils how to make a good cup of tea and toast a crumpet ready for some marmite .....

This year we are preparing to welcome a group of 5ème pupils from Collège Henri Morat in the Côte d'Or department of Burgundy. This is for a 2 day English experience and our first French school overnight stay.

The group is led by their English teacher, Amelie, who some of you may remember used to work with us a few years ago.



We have also tried to develop a few more links between English and French schools and have a number of schools here who would love to write to English pupils or link with English school groups. We do understand that there are some child protection issues around email contact but we have found that the more traditional paper route is actually more fun, ultimately more rewarding and avoids these issues. As one child said ... she is my 'penpal', I am going to write to her in pen !!!!



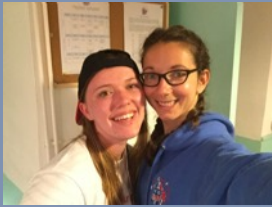
If this is something that your school would be interested in please do let us know.



## ACTIVITY UPDATES

**We continue to look at the different opportunities and activities that are on offer in the local area. This year we are working with AB Loisirs who run a variety of leisure activities including our ever popular tree climbing, to develop a Paintball and Orienteering afternoon. Our aim is to offer an activity that develops an understanding of direction, teamwork and communication (in French) as well as being fun and energetic for our particularly active groups.**

**We are also planning a meeting with a representative from Guédelon Castle. She was previously a language teacher in the UK and is keen to work with us to develop a programme that would enhance the experience of our groups. Guédelon is in the process of being constructed using original methods and is an amazing opportunity to see first hand how life was for the builders of great castles in medieval times. If we can add a French language element to this visit we hope that this will become a very worthwhile day trip option.**



## Our first MCF Graduate returns ...

This summer we were very excited to welcome our very first 'MCF Graduate' as a language assistant. Hannah came to us in 2011 with her school, Kent College Pembury. She has an amazing memory of her experience with us ... even down to the sanglier encounter in the coach with Malcolm. Apparently she returned home after the trip and told her Mum that she would be going back to Maison Claire Fontaine one day... and so she did. She is now studying French at University in America and made a huge impact on the pupils she worked with during the summer season. She is hoping to return again in 2017.

We look forward to many more returnees in the future. Please do suggest us to any 6th formers you know who are planning to study French at University and are thinking of a gap year in preparation.



## Puzzlemania ... 4 winners ?!



For the school competitions congratulations go to ....

3 person team winners : **St. Paul's Cathedral School**  
**Theo, Toby and Oliver** in 25 minutes and 31 Seconds.

2 person team winners : **Sandroyd School**  
**Henry and Ivor** in 30 minutes and 6 seconds

But this year the real competition was between the adults ... never let it be said that teachers aren't competitive !

Congratulations to **Vicki and Emma** from **Twycross House School** who achieved the best teacher time of 18 minutes and 9 seconds.

Congratulations also to **Elodie** who won the MCF staff individual competition in 18 minutes and 53 seconds. It would seem that practice does indeed pay off ...



## Tir à l'arc...

Its the hatrick !

Congratulations once again to **Sandroyd School**. Champions in 2014, 2015 and now 2016 ....with **Jack and Benji** on **37 points**.

Well done to **Oscar and Roman** from **Lochinver House School** who came second with **28 points**.



**Who will top the tables for 2017 and can you beat your school record... we look forward to helping you try !**

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