



Bonne année et Bonne santé

Dear Friends

As we start another exciting year of our adventures in beautiful Burgundy it is time for us to wish you all a very happy, healthy and we hope fulfilling New Year. We also want to send you some news about what we have been up to and perhaps more importantly what we are planning for the coming months.



We had an amazingly busy year in 2017 with more groups than ever visiting from the UK. Our workload was also bolstered by a large number of French children visiting us to enthusiastically take part in our English experience days of which we will talk more about later. Our “pop up” restaurant serving full English breakfasts and fish and chips by the lorry load is not perhaps as trendy as some foodies would encourage but it certainly hit the spot for lots of hungry and inquisitive French children.

All of this activity left us in need of a quiet Christmas enjoying life here complete with Alex singing in a concert in the Basilica at Vézelay and both of us visiting the multitude of Christmas markets in the region including the beautiful towns of Beaune and Chablis (sorry but no prize on offer for spotting the theme of our destination choices)

We had hoped that Christmas 2017 would be spent happily installed in our Avallon house (or never ending money pit as we are now obliged to call it.) Sadly we didn't make it over the line, well to be accurate the plumber installing the heating system didn't and it was just a little too cold to camp out. We are however starting January in undaunted and optimistic mood with time booked firmly in the diary of all our artisans to finish their last jobs. Doubtless we can discuss with all of you as you visit in the coming months how justified or misplaced this optimism turned out to be....

We continue to love what we do here and in no small part feed off the enthusiasm and energy our young visitors bring to us each week. Their honesty and the feedback that we get from them only encourages us to do more in the time we spend with them. We hope to open their minds to the pleasures that come from the experience of visiting another country and engaging with its culture.

Of course academic outcomes are vital to the success of a visit to us and we are making some fairly big changes to ensure this aspect of what we do evolves and improves.

Importantly though, we also want to make sure we continue to do so much more and promote openness, acceptance and engagement with the wider world in all those who visit us here. Thank you to all of you for being a part of our very fulfilling French life and we look forward to welcoming you back to Burgundy in the coming months for yet more high energy learning.

A bientôt
Alex and Mark



Out and About

There are some changes afoot for the activities that we offer schools when visiting us. Probably the most profound one is the change of venue that we will be offering for the *Restaurant Night*. The owners and our old friends at Le Relais des Gourmets have been looking forward to retirement for a while now and have greatly scaled back what they are doing. After a failed sale to another restaurateur during 2017 they are back in charge and having spoken to them we felt it best to move our clients to another venue. This is at Le Relais Fleuri which is a hotel situated just outside Avallon. There are no other sizeable restaurants that we can use in the town itself and Le Relais Fleuri has a number of function rooms that allow us to have a room suitable to the differing sizes of our groups.



Just as we had in Le Relais des Gourmets we will be serving fruit sirop and gougère as an apéro followed by a buffet starter and then a main course and a choice of dessert to finish. The main change is in the way that the children will be served. French waiting staff will serve the apéro, buffet starter and dessert and crucially pupils will have to speak to them in French individually to ask for their choices. We have always wanted to get more language learning and interaction with French people into this activity along with the fun and sense of occasion that pupils get from their evening. We feel that this change of venue and method of serving allows us to achieve exactly this. Feedback from the schools that used the restaurant in our Autumn season was very positive and we hope that it continues to be an upgrade to this particular aspect of what we offer.



In terms of the more active trips that we host we have added a paintballing and orienteering option to our menu. This is undertaken in the beautiful woodland that some of you will know which we also use for the tree adventure activity.



From a cultural perspective we have finally been able to find an appropriate visit to a fromagerie to add to our list of visits along with a trip to the factory making the local Anis de Flavigny sweets that many of you will recognise from our shop. Both visits require slightly more travel and are perhaps best combined when visiting Semur-en-Auxois, Beaune or Dijon.

We are very happy to talk further about any of these new options and look at how your timetable could be tailored to incorporate anything else that you would like to achieve during your week.



As mentioned earlier, we have welcomed an increasing number of French children to enjoy English experience days with us. This is led entirely by demand from schools and parents and is not something that we seek to make commercial gain from. We have formed strong ties with some of our local schools and really enjoy helping them with their language learning work.



We have led the days with food and English games as activities outside the lessons, starting the day with a full cooked breakfast followed by fish and chips at lunchtime and an afternoon tea with scones and biscuits made by the children themselves. David has become a dab hand at taking the crusts off cucumber sandwiches and our layered tea cake stands continue to give an air of sophistication.



Games have included pass the parcel and a sports day with the egg and spoon and sack races proving to be the most popular. Perhaps the most startling sight for all of us was how excited the children were to be playing quick cricket in the field at the centre!

At the end of 2017 we were also involved in helping children gain an insight into an English Christmas and whilst mince pies were a stretch for many of them the Christmas crackers were a definite hit. The biggest change on this side of our work here came with our first residential trips involving French children staying for a number of days. This was fantastic fun and really gave us a chance to impact the English learning of some pupils in just the same way that we do for English children visiting for their French studies. Seeing both English and French children learn languages shows us how unifying this experience is. On a practical level, our wider links with local schools may also provide chances for your pupils to form correspondence links with local children if that is something you would like to explore.



IN THE CLASSROOM

Towards the end of last year we managed to move forward with a long held plan of ours to further enhance the educational resources that we use during your visit. To this end we have developed work sheets and learning aids for each of the subjects and activities that will be taught and experienced by your pupils during their week. These resources are of course configurable to reflect the needs and levels of the different pupils that visit and they will naturally also reflect the very different make-up of the weekly timetables that we deliver.

We have designed these resources to be incorporated into a bound booklet that each child will receive in the first lesson and use as their exercise book during the week. As these are fully configurable we will of course be very happy to adapt any element of them and we are sure that evolving these to meet the needs of each visit to us will be an ongoing process. At the end of the week we hope that the booklets will be kept by the pupils as a lasting reminder of a very enjoyable and fulfilling week.

We are also looking to publish a greater breadth and depth of learning resources that we want to make available to our visiting schools and the wider language learning community. We are aware of the ever changing requirements of the examination systems and are keen to provide targeted resources that can be of real help. This is in the way of us giving further support to schools and enhancing our language learning capabilities and reputation. This is very much a work in progress and we would welcome any suggestions of areas that would benefit from further resource development on our part.

MCF TEAM 2018

We are delighted to keep the excellent core to our team from 2017 for the coming year. This is of course in the form of Blandine and Estelle on the teaching side and David who will be continuing in the kitchen. We feel that this continuity gives us a great base from which to grow and further enhance what we do and how we do it.

Of course we also welcome new members of the team throughout the year in the form of extra teachers starting this year with Pauline who joins us from Nantes via Manchester and Australia. We will also be welcoming a number of UK language students to the team during the year, one of our first in February being Rob who is on a gap year before going to university at Durham. We are delighted to be welcoming him to the team since he is in fact an MCF graduate having visited with his school Thetford Grammar during our first year, in 2011. For the start of the year we also have Anna who is joining us during her year abroad as part of her language studies at Durham. Clearly she and Rob will have lots to talk about in their time here ! Both they and the other students from the UK that we will be welcoming throughout the year form a valuable part of our team. We hope that they gain greatly from their time spent with us but we also hope that they can provide inspiration and encouragement for your pupils giving them extra motivation in their language studies.

Puzzlemania ...



Champions 2018 :

Ella, Hanna, Molly B from Rickmansworth School
in a fantastic time of 22 minutes and 13 seconds

Best time for a visiting teacher team :

Lochinver House School in 28 minutes and 15 seconds

MCF Staff winner : **Blandine** in 18 minutes and 15 seconds

Tir à l'arc...

Champions 2018 :

Les Superarchers of Thetford Grammar School
Maia and Lauren with an incredible 51 points

Special mentions also go to :

Ethan and Raj from Merchant Taylors School who scored 47 points
Jamie and Sam from King's Bruton who scored 43 points

Both of these scores would have been good enough to win in previous years



**Who will top the tables for 2018 and can you beat your school record...
we look forward to helping you try !**

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