



Issue 9 : January 2019

Dear Friends

We find ourselves writing once again at the start of a New Year in beautiful Burgundy full of happy memories of last year and excitement and optimism for the year ahead. We have some plans for what we are going to be doing to make sure that this coming year sees us refine and improve what we do but ensures at the same time that we keep our focus on what works so well for us all.



Apart from a certain amount of excitement locally about a football tournament that France did rather well in, 2018 was the year of our booklet and the feedback we have had has been both enthusiastic and overwhelmingly positive. As we have produced more of these for the different weeks that we provide our store of differentiated resources has grown and we now feel that we have something that fundamentally underpins and supports the language learning that we aim to deliver for every level of child that visits us. We will be working further on this throughout this year and beyond.



A big change last year was the move of all schools to the Relais de Fleuri for their restaurant night. This has been a significant success with the format and chance for extra French learning and importantly practical use really helping to make this an enjoyable and valuable part of a trip to us.



A particular memory for us and for our local community in 2018 was provided by the pupils of St. George's School Windsor who put on a concert at the church in Magny. We helped the local children to learn some simple English songs during our Easter English experience and they particularly enjoyed performing these with pupils from St. Georges together with some French favourites. We were all very privileged to be able to enjoy the incredibly talented children in the group staying with us sing and perform to a very high standard. It so happened that it was announced the week that they were with us that the choir of St. Georges Chapel would be performing at the royal wedding and indeed just three weeks later we spotted some of the choristers that were with us singing at the wedding. What a treat for all of us in our sleepy little corner of France that concert was. A huge thank you must go to trip organiser Manuela Flieger and to James Wilkinson, Director of Music, for all their hard work and enthusiasm to make it happen.



Another memory from 2018 is our first 'snowed in day'. Our coach driver Martin is well known for bringing bad weather when he comes. In February he out did himself by bringing the snow on market morning and the coach was certainly going nowhere. Luckily Blandine and Alex were able to save the day by timidly driving into Avallon and buying provisions from Auchan. As we prepared for Le Marché de Méluzien the pupils of St. Dunstan's were thrilled to take part in a snow scene building competition. All in all it was a great success and fortunately with temperatures rising it had all melted by the afternoon for a safe journey home the following morning.



2018 was our busiest year yet with a record number of English schools visiting and yet more French children enjoying our English experiences both for single days and for two and three day séjours. We thought that we had got to maximum capacity in 2018 but now find ourselves with even more schools and hence children due to visit us in this coming year. This is certainly going to keep us on our toes but above all else we remain deeply grateful that schools continue to place their trust in us and what we do.



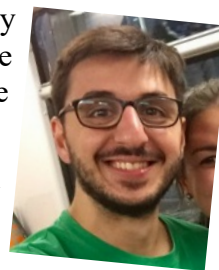
We wish all of you the most fulfilling, rewarding and healthy year ahead and look forward to seeing you back in Burgundy in the very near future to create more incredible memories with us.

A très bientôt !

Alex and Mark



We are delighted that our teaching team in 2019 will be led by Adeline who many of you will have already met in the summer and autumn seasons of 2018. She will be bringing her boundless energy and experience to bear ensuring that we continue to deliver very real learning outcomes.



She will be supported at the beginning of the year by Johann and Estelle. Johann was also with us for the Autumn season of 2018 and Estelle is now entering her fourth year at Maison Claire Fontaine. With these key members of the team coming back in 2019 we are excited about the continuity and hence quality that we will be able to provide, something that we have always seen as essential in our work.



We will of course be adding faces to this team throughout the year, some of whom will also be more familiar to you. In 2018 we were delighted to be able to welcome Amelie and Carole back to Lac Sauvvin for a week in July. In addition we were really pleased to have Sue as our Lac Sauvvin Centre Director. Sue originally visited us with her school in 2016 and we felt very fortunate to have her expertise and energy



throughout the summer season. Some of you may also have spotted a rogue teacher from Canada in some of the face book posts last summer. Although not staying long enough to contribute to the teaching team it was lovely to see Elodie and hear her news.



Our two students for the start of 2019 are Rachel and James. Rachel is currently at Edinburgh University studying French and Russian and James is on his gap year after completing his A levels last summer. We are delighted to welcome both of them to Maison Claire Fontaine and as with all our students from past years look forward to helping them on their language learning path.

With language learning at a higher level in the UK continuing to be in decline and the reports that we get of very large numbers of students not completing their year abroad as part of their degrees we see what we are able to offer and achieve with our students as a really important part of our role here.



Acting as role models for your pupils is combined with a safe and truly education focussed environment for our students to develop as both individuals and linguists. As ever we would remind you that should you have current or former pupils that you think would be interested in working with us then please do point them in our direction.

We were delighted to have three MCF graduates returning to us in 2018. Rob, from Thetford Grammar School, joined us for the Spring season. Hannah, who originally visited with Kent College Pembury, returned to us for her third summer visit from University and Tom was with us for his gap year in the Autumn season. Tom was actually an MCF ambassador when he visited with Twycross school in 2014 and proved an excellent choice. It is very rewarding to see these young people return to us and we hope in some way we have helped to develop the language ambassadors of the future.



To reassure you all, David will still be in charge of all things food related for those of you visiting the Méluzien site. Malcolm is also very much part of the team and will be the coach driver for the majority of schools when hours permit.



We are very lucky to have a fabulous team of drivers from Motts. However, in 2018 we were very sad to say a final farewell to Steve. He has finally decided to hang up his steering wheel and enjoy a well earned rest. He will be greatly missed by all of us and we wish him and his wife all the very best for an enjoyable retirement.



Life in Avallon



As we continue to settle into life in France we have been able to celebrate and commemorate with the local community throughout the year. We have to say that we were quite pleased that England lost to Croatia in the football World Cup semi-final. We were then able to join in with the festivities of the final as big screens appeared in Avallon, Mark appeared helping out behind a bar and there was a general feeling of 'Proud to be French' amongst our staff (we haven't been able to forget it since).



2018 was also a year to remember for more sombre reasons and we joined in with a very moving ceremony at the war memorial in central Avallon on November 11th. We felt very fortunate to be able to share this special moment with our French friends before returning home and reliving it with the BBC an hour later.

The relationships we are developing with local schools continues to be a very important part of our life here. Alex was delighted to be invited to take part in a training programme for regional primary school teachers where she was asked to talk about the differences in the educational systems between the UK and France.

This led to further contacts for French schools to visit us for English experiences and led us to make even better connections with local people. Interestingly a source of considerable debate was talk of the introduction of school uniforms to French schools. Opinions were mixed but the consensus was that it was likely to happen and that amongst younger teachers it was seen as a positive move.



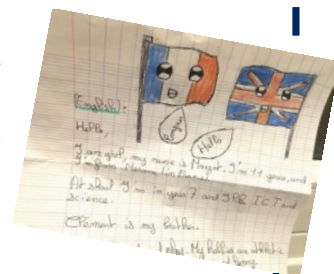
On a more personal note we are delighted to announce that we finally moved into our new home in the centre of town at the beginning of December. After hosting around 60 friends and family over the New Year period and also welcoming local French friends to our house warming we are now managing to enjoy the peace and quiet of just us in our new abode. After 3 years of work, trials and tribulations we are very pleased and happy to be settled in our new home. We hope we will have the opportunity to show you around on your next visit.



La Saint-Vincent Tournante de Bourgogne

For any wine buffs amongst you everyone here is currently getting very excited about Vézelay hosting La Saint-Vincent Tournante de Bourgogne this year at the end of January. An integral part of the history of Burgundy wine, the festival takes place every year on the Sunday closest to January 22, when St Vincent is honoured as the patron saint of vine growers and wine makers. The concept of the festival originates in medieval times, when the occasion was marked to foster the mutual collaboration and brotherhood of Burgundy's vine growers. True to the word *tournante* in its name, the festivities are held in a different community each year. This January Vézelay has been selected as a host for the very first time in its 75-year history in celebration of its recently allocated appellation. It will kick off as tradition dictates with a procession of the region's 100 wine guilds and a sacred mass at the Basilica followed by wine tasting at the village's ten cellars. Between 30 to 40,000 visitors from all over the world are expected at Vézelay so we are thankful that we don't have any schools staying or visiting Vézelay that weekend!

PEN PALS WANTED ! We are often asked by local children if we can find English pen pals for them to write to. If you have any particularly keen pupils of primary or secondary school age who might be interested please do let us know and we will help you to put them in contact. We can also work with you and the families to avoid any child protection issues that your school may be concerned about.



LEAGUE TABLES 2018

Puzzlemania...



With a time of **21 minutes and 53 seconds** the winners for the 4 person puzzle team are :

Olivia, Lily, Freya and Minna from
Sandroyd School

With a time of **23 minutes and 16 seconds** the winners for a 3 person puzzle team are :

Charlotte, Kilda and Elisa from
St Mary's School Cambridge

The very hard fought prize of the best teacher team was won this year by **Bedford School** in a time of :

14 minutes and 53 seconds INCROYABLE !!!

Special mentions also go to the teachers of ...

North London Collegiate School - 18 minutes and 10 seconds

Pilgrims' School - 20 minutes and 3 seconds

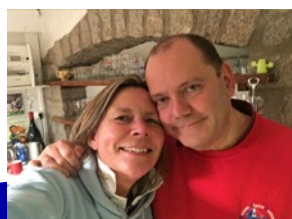
Tir à l'arc...

Bedford School also make the podium for the archery competition. With **29 points** **Kush and Tom** as team **Les Flèches** are the **Maison Claire Fontaine Tir à l'arc Champions** for 2018.



Special mentions also go to our runners up :
Merchant Taylor's School, Devon and Aaron - 25 points
Windermere School, Lewis and James - 25 points

Congratulations to all our winners and special mentions.
Prizes and certificates are on the way to you



Who will top the tables for 2019 and can you beat your school record... we look forward to helping you try !

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