



Bonne Année 2020

Issue 10 : January 2020

Dear Friends

Is it just us or does the passing of the years and as a result the production of these newsletters seem to come about a little quicker each time? Our current theory for this is that we are having such a busy and fulfilling life here that we don't have the chance to notice time passing. Of course it could just be that we are getting older....



Apart from undeniably getting older we have certainly got busier over the last year but importantly it was also an incredibly happy and rewarding one for us. We welcomed a record number of UK schools and as a result a record number of children to Burgundy in 2019. Coupled with this we grew our English teaching and engagement with the local community fairly dramatically, more on this later.

La Saint Vincent
Tournante de Bourgogne,
Vézelay
January 2019

We were particularly helped during our busy year by a fantastic team of staff who shared our commitment to providing the most impactful and memorable experiences to the children that visit us. We achieved a blend of continuity in our core team that is so important to us at the same time as welcoming some fantastic extra staff when we needed to expand in our peak weeks. It was a real pleasure to work with our 2019 staff and we know that they had a hugely positive impact on the children that they came into contact with for which they have our profound thanks.



We decided at the end of last year that it was time to update our website and this will be going live fairly shortly. We don't feel that this update was needed because of any profound flaw in our existing site or a shift in what we do, it's simply that we wanted to keep its design up to date and make sure that it correctly reflected who we are and what we do. Most importantly we wanted to really emphasise the values that we hold dear.



Halloween night with Berkhamsted School

Our main realisation during the year and when it came to writing the website is that whilst it is important to always keep a focus on what we do and how we go about doing it we must always keep ourselves grounded on the why of what we do. We love the life that we have here and are utterly focussed on providing opportunities for young people to engage with the wider world.



Everyone we have ever spoken to remembers their own school trips and as a result for us being part of creating those life long memories is a responsibility that we take very seriously. Being part of the memories that children make on trips, what they learn about themselves and the lasting influences this can have on them means so much to us and we want to reflect that in what we say about ourselves.

We wish you a very happy and successful year and look forward to welcoming many of you back to our Burgundy home to share our 2020 adventures.



À bientôt !
Alex and Mark



As we have always said, achieving continuity in a top quality team of staff is of paramount importance to us and we are delighted to tell you that this year there will be a number of faces in our team that you will recognise.



This year the teaching team is being led by Johann who most of you have met during his last 18 months with us. We are delighted that he has felt settled here and has put down some roots of his own in Avallon. We hope that you share with us a sense of pleasure that he will be here throughout the year and that we will all benefit from his enthusiasm and engagement with the children that visit us.



In addition we will also be welcoming back Pauline and Jess who will be working with us through the year. Both of them joined in September 2019 and very quickly became trusted and important members of our team. They both settled in very quickly and fully embraced the values that we want MCF to encapsulate. We know that through their involvement in your visits to us the quality, energy and sheer fun that the children will enjoy will be enhanced and that together we will create more of those positive memories that we all seek.



For our Meluzien visitors, you will doubtless also be happy to know that David will still be in the kitchen making sure that the food all our visitors enjoy is both tasty and importantly to dietary requirements.



We can't end our staff section without mentioning Adeline who during 2019 was such an important and vibrant member of our team, leading it throughout the year. At the end of the year she had the opportunity to follow her heart and move to Belgium to be with her boyfriend. Long distance relationships as any of us that have tried them will tell you are hard work. Whilst feeling very sad to see her leave we hope one hundred percent that she enjoys her new life. We are sure we aren't alone in sending her the very best of wishes for the future.

New in 2019

We were delighted with the success of our new excursions this year. For schools looking at a day excursion we included a morning visit to the Anis de Flavigny bonbon factory combined with an afternoon at the popular Château de Bussy Rabutin. The Anis de Flavigny sweets are made by a small family run company who have recently welcomed visitors behind the scenes to see how their sugary delights are produced. It is based in the beautiful village of Flavigny-sur-Ozerain which has been awarded membership of *Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*.



For schools visiting Beaune we added a visit to the Château de Savigny-lès-Beaune which is owned by an eccentric collector of all things motorised. From jet planes to model rockets, from Abarth racing cars to Norton motor bikes he has them all, surrounded by vineyards to make his own Beaune wine.

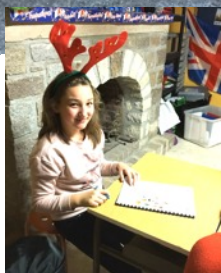


One of our highlights of the year was our Vauban week which we prepared for Ardingly school. This included a visit to the home of Maréchal Vauban, the Chateau de Bazoches where we welcomed the pupils in our medieval costumes.

Johann certainly revelled in his role as King Louis XIV !



Language Learning at MCF's Core



English language learning as you are probably aware is an area of our lives here in Burgundy that has grown beyond all expectation since we held our first sessions with very local schools four years ago. We now welcome several schools from further afield as well as our local ones and the demand for what we are doing is growing dramatically as word spreads. We welcomed a record number of schools and hence children to us last year and we will easily surpass this number in the coming year with bookings that we already have.

What we love about the work we do with local children is that it has led us into an even deeper integration with the local community. As you will all appreciate only too well, when you engage with the children of an area you meet their parents and that has certainly been one of the delights for us in our adopted home.

This integration could not be more clearly shown than when we asked the Mayor if they had any suitable buildings that we could use for us to expand what we do on this side of our business. With our capacity to host French children at Meluzien being very limited due to the growth of our UK school customer base we needed to find another site to cope with the French school demand. When we talked to the Mayor's office at Easter last year we discovered that they had greater ambitions for us than we could ever have imagined.



As a result of local people having experienced with their own children what we have achieved in relatively limited circumstances they want us to spearhead the English language learning of the town and create and deliver a programme of teaching in the town's primary schools. Everything is on hold for the moment in the build up to mayoral elections in March but if all goes well we hope to be progressing with plans from September. Watch this space ...

This project won't detract from our focus on the core of our life here which will remain the provision of French language and cultural trips for UK schools. What it does do for us is make us feel more involved with local life, provide further graphic evidence of our commitment to language learning in all its forms and to offer something substantial back to the local community in return for the universally positive welcome we have had since we arrived here nine year ago.



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 2019

Puzzlemania...



With a time of **28 minutes and 4 seconds** the winners for the 4 person puzzle team are :

Michael, Sebastian, Oscar and Josh from Berkhamsted School

With a time of **29 minutes and 54 seconds** the winners for a 3 person puzzle team are :

Krish, Matthew and Ryan from Merchant Taylors' School

The best teacher team for 2019 is Pilgrims' School in a time of : **18 minutes and 37 seconds**

Tir à l'arc...

Merchant Taylors' School also make the podium for the archery competition with a solo winning score of **44 points** by Adrian



Special mentions also go to our runners up :
Windermere School, Maddie - 34 points
Twycross School, William and Lilly - 32 points
Thetford Grammar School, Jack and Noah - 32 points

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



Who will top the tables for 2020 and can you beat your school record... we look forward to helping you

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