

Oxford-Grenoble Association



Newsletter

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A busy year of exchanges

Our twinning association has finally caught up with Cherwell School's link with Lycée Champollion in Grenoble and the teachers involved have generously allowed us to reprint extracts from their reports of the exchanges that took place early this year:

In January 30 Year 10 and Year 12 Cherwell students embarked on the French adventure of a lifetime. Accompanied by 3 of their teachers the brave young linguists spent 8 days staying in snowy Grenoble, staying with families and immersing themselves in the French language. Outstanding features of the visit:

A walk on *raquettes* in crisp snow rewarded by a delicious *tarte à la myrtille*

A tasty sampling of cheese at the Ferme des Rappilles after learning how to make it

A visit to the Château de Vizille where the French Revolution was secretly organized.

But it wasn't wholly fun-time. The students on both sides had prepared for the visit by studying aspects of the First World War:

mercredi 28 janvier : Les élèves de Cherwell et de Champollion se sont présenté le travail mis en



Students from Cherwell school in Grenoble.



oeuvre dans chaque établissement. [Les premiers] ont parlé en français des sites liés à la Grande Guerre à et autour d'Oxford. Côté français, et en langue anglaise cette fois, des travaux sur le roman *How Many Miles to Babylon* et sur le 'Animals in War' memorial de Londres ont été présentés ainsi qu'un quiz élaboré à partir des expositions grenobloises qui commémorent la guerre.

Ce temps d'échange a aussi permis aux jeunes de réfléchir au rôle des artistes anglais et français dans l'illustration des événements dramatiques du front: le 'silence' des artistes français par opposition à l'énorme production des artistes britanniques désireux de dénoncer l'ampleur des massacres.

The return visit - Champollion to Cherwell - took place a few short weeks later (as described by teacher Brigitte Guillermet):

samedi 14 mars : Premières découvertes d'Oxford - Certains, peu nombreux, ont pris l'avion pour la première fois. Les correspondants nous attendaient à Oxford. On a eu plaisir à se revoir mais il y a eu aussi, pour la plupart, une légère crainte de cette expérience: être le/la seul(e) Français(e) dans une famille anglaise.

lundi 16 mars : Un weekend outre-Manche, Amazing!

'Pour un premier week-end en Angleterre, c'était vraiment cool ! Ça ne sera pas mon dernier weekend ici!' (Lorane)

'Journée shopping à Londres + balade avec une grand-mère adorable pour Mother's Day!' (Sarah)

'Une immersion complète: un week-end très enrichissant, rempli d'émotions et de découvertes. WONDERFUL!' (Louise)

'Visiter, marcher en Angleterre et vivre comme une Anglaise...' (Margot)

'Les frites les plus fines que j'ai jamais mangées!' (Manon)



Students from Grenoble visit the 'Animals at War' memorial in London.

'It was one of the best week-ends of my life!' (Mathias)

mercredi 18 mars : De Bath au Pegasus Theater... - Après la découverte de la ville de Bath (thermes romains et architectures géorgiennes), retour à Oxford pour l'atelier théâtre et la visite de l'Ashmolean Museum.

Les élèves ont suivi une séance organisée par Yasmin Sidwa, metteur en scène du Pegasus Theatre, sur le thème de la Première guerre mondiale. Chacun a pu tester ses compétences en anglais et de vrais talents de comédiens se sont révélés.

La visite du musée nous a emmenés sur les traces des grands peintres anglais célèbres pour leurs paysages : Constable, Turner....

jeudi 19 mars : Visite à la Tate Modern - Après un tour de Londres en car et un arrêt à 'Animals in War' memorial, chacun peut désormais expliquer pourquoi Cy Twombly laisse dégouliner sa peinture, pourquoi Luciano Fontana déchire ses toiles, Alexander Calder nous fait rêver, Man Ray transforme les objets, Bill Viola réveille les morts et Annette Messenger met en avant le rôle des femmes dans la guerre...

vendredi 29 mai : Dernière partie du projet (racontée par Etienne Brunet) - C'est avec plaisir que les 30 élèves partis à Oxford en mars, ont pu présenter à l'ensemble des personnes du lycée,



les plus belles pages de leurs carnets de voyage réalisées en France et en Angleterre. Premières impressions, expériences vécues, choses vues, oeuvres préférées, photographies, collages et dessins... Autant de choses parfois infimes, qui

resteront à jamais liées à cette aventure. Ils ont profité de l'occasion pour remercier une dernière fois la Mairie de Grenoble et la Région Rhône-Alpes pour leurs aides dans la réalisation du projet.

Grenoble vit l'Europe, mai 2015

This was the title of the booklet presenting Grenoble's 'Mois de l'Europe' which offered a rich menu of music, exhibition, workshops, debates, theatre, film ...and even a London bus 'pour l'Europe'. Oxford couldn't fail to be represented, first by serial visitors East Oxford Community Choir, who with partner choir Ensemble vocal Interlude kicked off the month with a concert. But for EOCC member Martin Kuhn this was his first visit to our twin city:

Some of the Grenoble choir sang with us in Elgar's *Music Makers* [during the 2014 celebration of 25 years of Oxford-Grenoble twinning] so it was going to be a nice re-encounter for the 14 of us who made the journey.

Looking into some facts about the city and its people before I set out, I was impressed particularly by a seemingly long-standing radical tradition. Going back over two centuries, the Grenoblois liked to think they helped to kickstart the revolution in 1788; after the threat of tax rises on top of a bad harvest and the high price of bread, local displeasure resulted in the Day of the Tiles when citizens rained down roof tiles on royalist troops attempting to quell protesters. Some historians now agree.

The city and its region was a renowned focus of resistance to the German occupation. And now, uniquely in Europe, Grenoble has a green mayor who has begun his campaign by removing the 'visual pollution' of advertising hoardings and by furthering tree planting. Apart from Oxford there are an astonishing 14 other twinning cities or towns including the Israeli Rehovot and the Bethlehem Palestinian Authority. These facts may be old-hat to knowledgeable twidders, but as a first-timer they definitely coloured my interest in the place.

At Grenoble station, in the heady, blurred moment of arrival, Matthew and I met our host

Sabine de Fumichon Hudau, who walked us back to her lovely apartment six floors up with a view over the mountains. There too was her husband Gérard, a retired but much-travelled metal-processing consultant. They made our sojourn an absolute delight, never mind the rest of the programme.

We were to be on a very tight schedule, long rehearsals with lots of warm-up, and without doubt it was all very invigorating as our youthful Latin American conductor took us through the paces. His habit of raising a pointed figure in an uplifting sort of encouraging gesture to make our notes sharper might have raised eyebrows in another culture.

The two concerts of 19th century French sacred music, with short pieces by Gounod, Saint-Saëns and Fauré, went well I think, the second night being completely full and rapturously received. Singing Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine*, for example, it was difficult not to feel one might shed a tear, never mind the audience being moved by it. That's the thing about singing in a choir, you have no idea of the overall impression, but just the little circle of sound in the immediate vicinity; then sometimes there's this extraordinary resonance when everything is at perfect pitch and you feel your own voice has disappeared.

Two excursions were also squeezed into the four-day programme (with a choice of options). In my case one was to a wine-tasting which was a very nice unsober occasion, with a delightful couple describing their small organic vineyard and the complexities of growing and processing. The second entertainment was a pétanque tournament in which sadly only Mel [EOCC director] and I took part with six from Grenoble, but never mind, it was all huge fun as, for one, I'm an obsessive ballplayer and, for two, my partner and I actually won the bottle



of wine and salami. Pétanque comes from the Occitan language (*pes tancas* means ‘fixed feet’) and the old regulars hanging around were thoroughly dismayed whenever, on casting the ball, our feet moved.

Playing this game added physical pleasure to the spiritual uplift engendered by all the singing. How good can things get? The farewell evening was filled with song both English and French. With this wonderful send-off, I left the city to cross France and embark on the Chemin de Saint-Jacques, the old pilgrimage route which ends in Santiago in north-west Spain, all those songs still in my ears for many a day.

Oxford photographer and OGA member Paul Medley also took part in Grenoble’s Europe month with an exhibition which presented his photos of Grenoble’s modern university and his Grenoblois collaborator Anne-Marie Louvet’s contrasting photos of Oxford University. Here he writes about his experience:

The physical presence of the universities of Grenoble and Oxford could not be more different. The Grenoble campus is an open area outside the city centre with a large number of fine examples of late 20th-century architecture amongst tree-lined avenues and framed by the snow-capped

Alps on all sides. Oxford, as we know, dominates the city centre with its medieval buildings, yet is at the same time both hidden and enclosed. This contrast was the starting-point for a photographic project with myself and Grenoble photographer, Anne-Marie Louvet.

The cooperation between us began when I was in Grenoble two years ago. At that time someone suggested I visit the campus and I was immediately drawn to it as a subject. Meanwhile Marie-Christine Simiand [AGO president] delved into her extraordinary memory to bring up the name of Anne-Marie Louvet, a photographer I had met many years earlier. Thanks to Marie-Christine we met again and the idea of the project was born. Last year Anne-Marie came to Oxford and was given permission to photograph in a restricted way in a couple of colleges. The result is a joint exhibition of our work entitled *Universités: Regards croisés Grenoble/Oxford* that was first shown in May this year in the Maison de l’international as part of the *Grenoble vit l’Europe* month. This was made possible by funding from the Association Grenoble Oxford in Grenoble and the University of Grenoble, which covered the cost of printing and mounting the photographs.

I travelled to Grenoble first to collect the work from an excellent photographic printers



East Oxford Commiunity Choir takes on Interlude at pétanque.



Universités : Regards croisés Grenoble/Oxford - exhibition on display at Grenoble's Maison de l'international.

and then worked with Anne-Marie to set up the exhibition, while someone else helped with the display boards and lighting. Near the end of the day a TV crew turned up wishing to interview us both for the regional news channel. As Anne-Marie had had to leave early the interview was conducted in English for my sake (could a local film crew in Oxford operate bilingually?) and the short report was shown the same evening.

The opening the following day of all the exhibitions in *Grenoble vit l'Europe* was very

well attended and, typically of France, included a number of speeches from the Mayor and everyone else involved, including Anne-Marie. The degree of interest throughout the evening demonstrated that Grenoble truly does 'live Europe'.

With funding promised by a number of French universities the exhibition will move to the campus in Grenoble in October and then hopefully to the University of Lyon before coming to Oxford next spring.

The Brittendens in the Vercors ...

Last year the Brittenden family won the joint first prize, offered by the Vercors Tourist Office, in our 25th anniversary photo trail quiz. Pat and Kitty take up the story:

Having had the privilege of winning a week in the Vercors massif back in the summer of 2014, we had to wait until May 2015 to take our holiday. But it was well worth the wait! After a few hiccups on the journey down through to the south-east of France (Eurostar and hire-car issues) we arrived in Villard-de-Lans. We were very warmly welcomed by Chantal Baud, who had equipped our chalet with all the creature comforts you could want and, despite it being self-catered, had made sure we had breakfast on our first morning.

Villard-de-Lans is a little village (commune) in the Isère department in the Vercors, a stunning range of rugged plateaux and mountains whose limestone foundations have created dramatic peaks, valleys, gorges, cliffs and dales. We enjoyed visits to the underground water caves, and climbed some of the local peaks. The trekking routes are so well marked and there is something for everyone, from beginners right through to the more ambitious. We also enjoyed the local specialities of *raclette*, sumptuous *saucisson* and local beer.

In addition we were lucky enough to meet up with Jean-Claude and Christine (members of Alliance Grenoble Oxford, the twinning association) who came up from Grenoble to meet us and show



us the sights. We were even interviewed by a local journalist from the village! We visited Grenoble on a lovely sunny day, took the 'Boules' up to the Bastille, and tried out one of the 'adventures' at the top. We saw the evening out eating walnut flavoured ice-cream. It was a wonderfully relaxing and fun week.

The family outside the Grotte de Choranche.

...and MJC Prémol in Oxford

This time last year Grenoble youth worker Vincent Simon from the Maison des habitants Prémol began to plan, with a group of local teenagers, a visit to Oxford this August. They met every Friday evening over ten months to work on four aspects: improving their English; practical arrangements for travel, accommodation and finance; making contact with young people here; discussing migration and integration. Vincent Simon assesses the results (summary):

Six jeunes de 16 à 17 ans sont partis à la rencontre de jeunes Anglais au sein du Blackbird Leys Community Centre. Nous avons également rencontré la communauté africaine et visité Oxford, ses universités, ses musées, et la mairie. Les jeunes ont tenté tant bien que mal de communiquer; chaque jour nous faisons un debriefing de nos journées en anglais en vue de préparer le compte-rendu de notre séjour. Ce qui est certain c'est qu'à la fin de cette semaine les jeunes avaient très envie d'être plus assidus à leurs cours d'anglais! Dans l'ensemble ils ont senti les Anglais très accueillants.

Les diverses rencontres que les jeunes ont réalisées à Oxford leur ont permis de se rendre



At East Oxford Community Centre.

compte de la diversité des parcours de vie possibles. Nous avons également longuement échangé autour de la place de la pratique religieuse dans leur vie et des parcours migratoires de leurs parents ou grand-parents.

Les jeunes ont monté le projet de A à Z et se sont investis dans chacune des étapes (réservation auberge de jeunesse, recherche des billets d'avion et de bus, réalisation des courses et des repas ...)



A brief taste of the teenagers' final report:

We observed many differences between the MJC in France and the youth centre Blackbird Leys. The first one is the fact that they are more open-minded than us because for them it's normal to share something with the others. We can almost say that it is deep-rooted in their culture. They don't judge anybody. The second one is that they are used to promote/encourage each other's skills. We shared about our roots and our lives, the way they live and they feel their differences in England and the fact that we are not used to live like this in France.

Bob Price, the Leader of Oxford City Council and OGA member, met the group towards the end of their stay and spent an hour answering a range of interesting questions about relationships between the different communities in Oxford and giving a short presentation on the big issues of housing and transport that face the city. Bob says: 'I was very impressed by the efforts the group had made to improve their spoken English and by the very good relationships they established with young people from Blackbird Leys whom they had met through the Community Development Initiative.'

A first for French twin?

Grenoble city council aims to bring back a bit of culture lost in the technological revolution by installing orange & black short-story dispensers, for example at bus stops and stations.

Read the full story at:
www.konbini.com/en/lifestyle/grenoble-short-story-dispenser



Science Festival in Grenoble

In early October a delegation of Oxford scientists will represent our city, led by Saïd Hasnaoui from Science Oxford, who is managing

director of the Oxfordshire Science Festival. We look forward to hearing more about their visit on their return.

OGA wine-tasting evening

On a May evening around 20 OGA members and friends gathered at the Maison Française d'Oxford in Norham Rd to taste wines from the Rhône valley, located in the same region (Rhône-Alpes) as Grenoble. We were guided in our 'dégustation' by wine connoisseur and OGA member Roger Zetter and his neighbour Cecilia, who works in the trade. They brought

along two whites and four reds, which were enjoyed and discussed, together with cheeses from the region. Many thanks to the Maison Française for allowing OGA to use the venue.



More twinning news

This year the Oxford-Perm link is celebrating 15 years of official twinning and 20 of partnership; in 2016 it will be the turn of Leiden (70 years) and León (30).

a free non-denominational event organized by artist Diana Bell and Oxford Stanza Two in collaboration with Christ Church Cathedral and Oxford International Links. Diana writes:

Remembrance weekend and the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War will be marked on Saturday 7 November at 3pm by

Entitled 'Reflections on Humanity', the event, which explores friendship and our common humanity through art installations and poetry,



features a reading of poems from some of the countries involved on both sides of the hostilities. These are not war poems but works that look at connections between nations and reflect humanity and compassion in time of war; they were composed by poets who were either writing during the Second World War and experienced it directly or by poets who remembered it from childhood. They will be read in their original language by native speakers and English translations will be available. Afterwards those who wish will be able to meet together in the Frideswide Room, Christ Church, for an

informal sharing of poems and discussion. There will be representatives from our twin cities Leiden and Bonn and people linked with Perm, emphasizing our twinning friendships of many years. Corinne Pinchon will represent Grenoble. The accompanying art installations will be on show in the cathedral 7-22 November.

A Bonn school choir will be arriving in December to take part first in the Lord Mayor's carol concert, then, on the 21st at St John the Evangelist, in a Christmas concert with East Oxford Community Choir comprising Britten's 'Ceremony of Carols' and 'St Nicolas'.

Plans for 2016

We hope to find an evening in January and a venue to celebrate the *Fête des rois* with the



traditional *galette*. Any further ideas welcome for that or a subsequent OGA social event.

Plans are in progress for an exhibition in Grenoble in June/July at the Ancien musée-bibliothèque in the Place Verdun. The exhibition, entitled 'Material World', is being coordinated by Diana Bell and Tiffany Black (Oxford Brookes University). The plan is for a student from Brookes to join the exhibition and link with a student from the School of Art in Grenoble. There will be four artists from Oxford exhibiting with four from Grenoble. The Grenoble artists will then be invited back to Oxford (Oxford venue to be confirmed).



OGA membership subscription



Please complete the form and return to: Jean Burrell, 59 Bedford St, Oxford OX4 1SU

I wish to join/rejoin the Oxford-Grenoble Association for the calendar year 2016

Title: _____ First name(s): _____ Surname(s): _____

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Signed:

(Please enclose a cheque payable to Oxford-Grenoble Association: £10 individual or £15 household)