



Forest Row Twinning Association



CHRISTMAS 2023



The Saint-Blaise des Simples Chapel - Milly-la-Forêt

BUILT IN THE 12TH CENTURY IN MILLY-LA-FORÊT, AND
ORIGINALLY USED AS A LAZARET.

DECORATED BY JEAN COCTEAU, FOR WHOM IT ALSO
BECAME HIS GRAVE, IT IS SURROUNDED BY A BOTANICAL
GARDEN WITH A VARIETY OF MEDICINAL PLANTS.

Diary dates:

12th January Turner's Hill Twinning
event [details TBC]

27th January French Breakfast 10 am –
12 noon Community Centre

10th February 2024 – Annual Dinner at
The Three Crowns Ashurst Wood [TBC]

FRTA Chairman's Notes June 2023

Ralph

Dear Friends

Once again, the Christmas Season is upon us and we can look forward to meeting friends and relatives in a festival atmosphere. And yes! It is also time for the latest edition of the FRTA Newsletter. This edition brings tales from some of our recent social events as well as information about various methods of transport to Milly.

As matters stand we have not heard from our French friends about any visits and we don't expect any meetings before the Spring of 2024. Time passes so quickly and the current travel arrangements can be cumbersome and costly, and this may have something to do with the lack of any plans being made. We will keep you apprised of any updates.



Sadly, we have lost two of our members recently as well as a long-standing member from the French side. Short recollections on all three feature in this Newsletter and we offer our condolences to all the families and friends left behind.

Patrick will be entering a tree in the Holy Trinity Christmas Tree Festival again this year. If you are able, please pop along to the Church to view all the lovely entries and give ours a vote. Maybe we can rise “up the charts” this year!

We are also arranging another French breakfast in the Community Centre in January, so please keep your eyes open for the notifications for this nearer the time.

On behalf of your Committee, I wish all of you a very happy Christmas and a lovely 2024.

News from Milly



We await news of a visit from our friends in France, now under the chairmanship of François Orcel. We very much hope that we will hear something definite about their visit soon.

August 2023 BBQ

Don

Despite the threatening weather 23 members and friends (including 6 from Turners Hill Twinning Association), undaunted, attended the FRTA BBQ. As a precaution the Holy Trinity Church Hall had been booked and was set up for dining. A single gazebo sheltered the BBQs from what threatened to be heavy rain. Salads and desserts were piled high in the hall as those attending arrived.



Ceri and Ralph were already braving the smoke to grill the sausages and burgers, with a small place on the grill set aside for the vegan options. A couple of lost American tourists turned up and were given a guided tour to the church – they had smelled the BBQ. They talked of coming back for the meal but did not show although we could have fed them. Everyone stood around the BBQ gazebo, drinks in hand, watching the black-clouds, as the cooking proceeded. The Turners Hill contingent waved to one of their



members driving the 270 bus as it passed. Was that the sound of thunder? All about us black clouds rolled by and it was particularly black in the direction of Tunbridge Wells, but it stayed dry until everything was cooked and we moved inside and shut the door. We just fitted into the space and everyone talked and ate. Only when someone opened the door was it apparent that the rain had arrived and that it was heavy. A huge puddle had collected on the roof of the gazebo which was removed without a drenching for anyone. Ceri quietly took down the gazebo and removed the BBQs while the conversations continued. At the end it was everyone to tidying up, washing the crockery, and getting everything ship shape. A great evening for all that attended.

FRTA Annual General Meeting 30th September 2023

It was a special occasion this year as we were treated to a private viewing of the Ashdown Arts Exhibition at the Large Village Hall, courtesy of Don. It was well attended (with 19 members present) and there was a convivial atmosphere with wine and nibbles provided. Ashdown Arts (established in 2009) encompasses a group of professional and semi-professional artists based in and around the village and they produce outstanding contemporary fine art, crafts, photography and sculpture. From the people I spoke to who viewed the exhibition, I heard quite a few superlatives – referring to the presentation, the artistic standard and the affordability of most of the

work on display.

Ralph (I), who chaired the actual AGM, reminded everyone that both The Chairman's Report and the Treasurer's Report had been circulated to members. He also briefed everyone about our continuing relationship with Turners Hill Twinning Association whose activities members were very welcome to participate in.



One of the discussion points which sparked quite a lot of discussion was transport arrangements when travelling to France. A number of those present indicated that they were interested in going but wary of the long coach journey. Ralph (W) suggested that we could use shared private cars, and travel to France on the Thursday, staying overnight

near the coast and travelling on as a group the next day to arrive in Milly mid-afternoon – which could be cheaper. [See below for more information].



Our second treat was a delicious meal at Roochi's afterwards. As usual the food was mouth-wateringly delicious. The popadoms and chutney/pickle trays, for example, were like a meal in themselves. The restaurant was full so the very polite and friendly staff were fully stretched (as were most of our waistlines as the portions are so generous!) but not too busy to offer us a complimentary Baileys, which our table had to decline as we were already very satisfied. A lovely end to an Indian summer.

Pot d'Amitié and Quiz at the Peter Griffiths Hall 18th November 2023.

Although numbers of FRTA members were slightly down on last time, we were able to fill the hall as we happily welcomed nine twinnings from Turner's Hill. Together we made it a very memorable night of friendship, fun and, of course, culinary delights! Such was the variety and tastebud appeal of the homecooked fare that everyone was keen to join the queue and pick and mix from such goodies as pasta salads, a wonderful meat stew, French onion



soup [a bit of a challenge as there were hardly any bowls!], and lots of other savouries, sweets and cheeses.



Having sustained ourselves with these splendid eatables, we prepared for more cerebral activities. Before the quiz Andy from Turner's Hill gave a warm speech about our mutual social events and invited everybody to the coach trip to Winchester on the 10th of December.

The committee had prepared a variety of French-themed questions, which – naturally – were light-hearted and easy. And how could they not be easy when we had such questions as “The red grape of Burgundy is what?” and “What is the stage name of Jean-Philippe Léo Smet”? Although our team came fourth, we were cheered up when we were told we were only two points behind the winners.

It was a lovely social evening – as satisfying as full-fat cheese with chanterelles in garlic.



ALTERNATIVE ROUTES/TRANSPORT Forest Row – Milly



As Sussex Coaches are no longer offering trips to France, Don is investigating alternative providers. There is also the possibility of alternative routes/methods of getting there – as we discussed at the AGM. I have listed some examples below.

OPTION A: BUS Victoria – Paris and then train + bus to Milly If you're going by coach from London Victoria Coach Station to Gare Routière [Milly bus station], it's a relatively affordable route, although fairly long and, I would imagine, it could be tiring. It costs about £32 – 45 to Paris [Bercy Seine] and takes approximately 8 or 9 hours. You then would need to get the train from Gare du Nord [also Gare d'Austerlitz] towards Corbeil-Essonnes and alight at Maise. From there you take the 4342 bus to Milly. This 2-hour part of the journey would cost about £10.



GARE DE MAISE, WHERE YOU ALIGHT FOR THE BUS TO MILLY.

OPTION B: Train

It takes an average of 1h 48m to travel from London [Charing Cross] to Dover Priory by train. There are normally 146 trains per day travelling from London to Dover Priory and tickets for this journey start from £12 when you book in advance.

The P & O Ferry from Dover costs from £60 - £200 for foot passengers [DFDS have suspended operations for foot passengers for now]. The ferry crossing is approx. 1 hour 30 mins. + extra time for passport check etc. + you lose an hour. If you're staying in Calais overnight, there are many reasonably priced hotels varying from about £45 - £65 for a double bed room per night e.g. Hôtel Metropol - £55 – situated in the town centre.

If not staying overnight you can get the train from Calais to the Gare du Nord [prices vary but are approx.. £10 - £50. You may have to change at Amiens.

OPTION C: Via Eurostar

The journey from **London St Pancras Int** to Paris Nord is approx. 2 ¼ hours and prices vary [e.g.£100 - £300]. You then would proceed from the Gare du Nord to Milly [see above).

OPTION D: VIA NEWHAVEN (without car)

It is possible to take a train from Haywards Heath to Newhaven Port. It's a 4-hour journey to Dieppe – either at 11.00 am or 23.15 pm. On the night sailing you could book a cabin. The prices for the crossing can be as low as £46. If staying overnight in Dieppe, there are many options e.g. Hotel chez Marcel £67 (400 m. from Dieppe beach). The train from Dieppe to Paris takes an average of 2h 32m to Paris St-Lazare by train, over a distance of around 91 miles (147 km). There are normally 12 trains per day and tickets for this journey start from £14.50 when you book in advance. You would then have to make your way to the



ROOM IN HOTEL CHEZ MARCEL, DIEPPE

Gare du Nord and proceed as above. Overall cost: approx. £150 per person one way (not inc. hotel).

OPTION E : BY CAR – Eurotunnel

The drive to the Eurotunnel takes about 1 ½ hours [£19 – 27]. The *le shuttle* run every hour [35 min. journey]. The average price with a car is £251. Car prices can range between £142 and £400. All Eurotunnel prices can vary from season to season. It is then a 3 hr 25 min. journey by car to Milly – 218 miles - £52 - £75 so the average cost could be about £300 [could be shared between passengers].

OPTION F: by car – Ferry Dover Calais

It is about a 1h 35min journey by car (77.9 miles) £22–31. The car ferry takes 1 hr 30 mins. [approx. £30 – 40]. Then a 3 hr 24 min. journey by car to Milly (216 miles) [approx. £52 – 75]. If you wish to have a hotel stop one option would be a double room in Amiens – they can be as low as €50 - €70.



HOTEL LE PRIEURE ET LA RESIDENCE,
AMIENS

OPTION G: Car via Dieppe

Drive from Forest Row to Newhaven for Dieppe – approx. £5 - £10 1 hr [+ or -]. The average price with a car is £200. [Car prices can range from £107 and £473]. Times – 11.00 am and 23.15 pm. Then Dieppe > Rouen > A13 > A6 > D 409 > Milly. [2h 45min 158.6 miles]. Cost including Peage tolls – approx. £40.

Some of these routes may be a bit challenging, but if you are travelling as a group with friends/family and with forward planning each one could be tailored to your preferred pace.

Fond memories of departed friends who are not forgotten

Reverend Roger Harley - Patrick

Roger, a long-standing former member of FRTA, died on 13th September 2023, aged 85. On Monday, 16th October, a funeral service was held in Leek, Staffordshire and this coincided with a local celebratory service at St Dunstan's, where many who knew him as Vicar of Forest Row and Ashurst Wood from 1995 to 2003 and from his long association with twinning events, gathered to remember his life.



**ROGER - TAKEN AT THE LAST FRTA EVENT
THAT HE ATTENDED**

Two of the hymns and the same reading which was read at the funeral were used as well as short prayers. There were also spoken contributions, reminiscences, poems and readings. Other hymns included Taizé chants, as Roger had loved this form of music and his experience of staying there.

Many who spoke at the celebratory service commented that their initial impression of Roger as a reserved and serious man of the cloth being dispelled within minutes of getting to know him. There were so many references to his sense of humour and capacity for fun, which were remembered especially by all those who accompanied Roger and Camilla on holidays to France – not only to Milly, but other parts such as Brittany. As I did not know Roger during the time he and Camilla were involved in the

Twinning, Julie has kindly written her memories below [with input also from Jeremy, Gwenda and Camilla].

Roger Harley

Vicar of Forest Row 1995 – 2003

Julie

When Roger came to Forest Row with his wife Camilla, they came from a densely populated urban parish in Croydon and were delighted to 'escape to the country'! I remember being shocked when Roger told us that he often conducted funerals in Croydon with only himself and the verger present, something rarely witnessed in Holy Trinity.

In his first year, Roger instituted a 'Village Sunday' at which he called upon us to rejoice in and celebrate how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful place, with such a thriving and enterprising community. Roger and Camilla very much enjoyed exploring the neighbourhood and entered into the spirit of village life, among other things by joining the Twinning Association. They came on at least two trips to Milly and also hosted some of our French guests. Roger was a keen boules player and every year played a highly competitive match with Bob Dyke at the Twinning Fun Day on Foresters Green.

Roger loved France and he and Camilla had several holidays there with a group of local friends, including the Kirks and the Scaifes, spending time in Montreuil,

Honfleur, Arras and other lovely parts of Normandy and West Brittany. In Arras, all ten of us stayed in a manor house and drew lots for rooms, mostly palatial but one or two rather less so! I seem to remember that the Harleys ended up in a very small four-poster.

In June 2012 we all shared a lovely house south west of Cahors, and Andrew and I drove the Harleys to Rocamadour, a fascinating clifftop village between the Dordogne and the Lot valleys, with a complex of religious buildings set into the steep hillside. We had lunch there and on the way home Roger fell asleep in the back seat, only to be rudely awakened by the sixties music which Andrew had suddenly switched on, forgetting that we had two very quiet and sleepy passengers in the back! Fortunately, we were all able to laugh about it!

Back home, Roger was a keen supporter of the Holiday Club in Ashurst Wood and he showed himself to be a very good sport by allowing himself to be made up as a clown by Philippa! That year the week-long event was called 'Going Bananas' and Philippa and I provided some light relief as two clowns called Ripe and Rotten! I like to think Roger enjoyed it!

When they retired to St. Margaret at Cliff, Roger and Camilla left the church a legacy in the form of fully computerised church records, for which we are most grateful. For several years they continued to come to Twinning events here whenever they could and quite a few of us kept in touch for a number of years until they moved to Leek in Staffordshire, to be nearer their daughters.

Roger died earlier this year and those of his friends who could held a quiet service of remembrance in St. Dunstan's at the same time as the service was held in Leek.

Guy Guoin

Gwenda Kirk

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death on 11th October of our dear friend



STETSON TWINS, GUY AND JEREMY

at the age of 93. We first met and hosted Guy and Juliette in 2002, on their first visit to Forest Row and knew right away that this would be a real and long-lasting friendship although they were somewhat older than Jeremy and me. This was the year of the 10th anniversary of our Twinning with Milly-la-Fôret and we received the most beautiful letter of thanks from Guy. The following June we spent the first of many weekends enjoying the wonderful hospitality of the Gouins and discovered the

delights of Guy's cave from whence issued bottles of his home-brewed liqueurs, many of which came back with us over the years!. Our weekends often included a visit to Guy's *potager* and orchard, of which he was very proud. His walled garden at home was a beautiful place to sit and enjoy the fruits of his and Juju's horticultural talents.

So very many years of enjoying their company both here and in Milly! So many laughs and shared *bonhomie*. Guy always entered whole-heartedly into the spirit of the activities and shared *bonhomie*. Guy always entered whole-heartedly into the spirit of the activities arranged for our unforgettable weekends and though he never ventured to utter any English, apart from the occasional "sank you", this really didn't matter a jot as he spoke with such clarity and slowly enough that Jeremy could participate in conversation with Guy in French, (usually about rugby)!

I wish that we could have been among the many who attended Guy's funeral service at the church in Milly on 19th October. We wish him a fond adieu and like to think of him now reunited with Juliette beside whom he was buried in the cemetery in Milly. As other Forest Row friends have said of Guy, he was a true gentleman.

Val Osbon Saul

Patrick



Val Osbon Saul, who passed away suddenly at the end of October, seemed to be part of the fabric of the village – so involved was she in numerous local events and activities, including the Twinning Association. Although she did not travel to France with FRTA, she regularly supported events such as the French Breakfasts and our BBQs.

Val lived in Plumstead, S E London, and worked at the Oxford University press until 1969, when she moved to Edenbridge, where she brought up her two sons. She later moved to East Grinstead but continued to work at the Lingfield Hospital School [now Young Epilepsy]. In the 1990s she began studying with the Open University, using to advantage her love of history and politics and

gaining a BA Hons (Open) and a BA Hons in the Humanities with Literature. Whilst studying, she worked at East Surrey College as a Teaching Assistant, gaining a City & Guilds Teaching Certificate.

Before moving to Forest Row, Val started a Fine Arts Foundation degree supervised by Greenwich University (in the part of London where her father grew up). In Forest Row she volunteered for the library and at Standen and helped at the Thursday Club. Val also ran an Art Class under the umbrella of the University of the Third Age and



has been exhibiting her work in various locations. She described herself as a figurative artist and many of her paintings and drawings featured the female form. As a volunteer at Standen, she would often be called upon to give talks to school parties that visited the Arts and Crafts House. Val also worked for Mid Sussex Council, helping with the electoral registration procedure in East Grinstead. She also helped with the poll count this year. Val has said that her social conscience and involvement in politics was influenced by her father and father-in-law, both of whom fought in the war.

I am grateful to Richard [Evans] for telling me about the online website 'Bridging Ages' – a not-for-profit community company founded in 2014 by three friends who were concerned about loneliness and the lack of social contact between generations. The idea is that teens visit older people in their homes, ask them about their lives and then write a professionally produced book about them. Val was one of the people chosen in 2017 and her life story in her own words is available online. If you would like to read about Val's life story, you can find it at <https://bridgingages.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LIFE-STORIES-Alice-Parr.pdf>

It is a really interesting read – told by Val and written by Alice Parr.

OUR CHRISTMAS TREE ENTRY FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



Our tree this year is based on a famous French historical monument. I hope you can guess what it is! Please come along to Holy Trinity Church from Thursday 14th December to Saturday 17th December (from 10 am to 4 pm) and, if you like it, you can vote for the FRTA tree [number nine], although it won't be called that. It is called L'Arbre d'Eiffel – oh no! I've given it away!



As always, a big thank you to all our contributors. If you have any news, articles, comments, or suggestions for the next issue, please email me, Patrick Crawford, at pnmimische@fastmail.co.uk [Website: <https://forestrowta.wixsite.com/forestrowta>]

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