

Worcester Twinning Association

CONNECTIONS

Autumn 2017



The Mayor and mayoress of Gouzeaucourt are greeted by The Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Lt Col Patrick Holcroft LVO OBE, at the opening of the Gouzeaucourt Exhibition in the Guildhall

Photographs by Rosemary Campbell

Our temporary twinning with Gouzeaucourt 2014 – 2018

We marked this temporary twinning with an exhibition in the Guildhall, with which many of you helped, and many also joined in entertaining guests from Gouzeaucourt who visited at that time. If you didn't see the exhibition then, **it will be in the Tudor House Museum from 27 September until early November (open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm).**

You can now also see it online. www.worcesterandgouzeaucourt.org

The website is not complete yet, and more documents and information will be added in the next few weeks, but it is there on the internet for people to see.

In the exhibition we tried to use as much of the original material discovered during our research as possible. We have had access to two previously untranslated wartime diaries, and to correspondence between Gouzeaucourt and Worcester between 1921 and 1925.

We had the opportunity to speak to residents from Gouzeaucourt

whose grandparents lived through the war, and learned about the use of the first tanks.

Worcester 'adopted' Gouzeaucourt in 1921 under the auspices of the British League of Help, a national movement to help civilians in France and Belgium after the destruction of war. Worcester raised money for a wind pump and petrol engine to restore a water supply for Gouzeaucourt.

It is against this background that the Council in 2013 decided to promote the temporary twinning with Gouzeaucourt as part of its commemorations of WW1.

Gouzeaucourt, spent the first years of the war under German occupation. Residents had to house enemy soldiers in their homes, had to labour for the invading army, had almost every household and agricultural possession requisitioned, suffered food rationing, were taxed by the Germans, had a curfew imposed and lived within earshot of the shelling on the Front. In February 1917 they were forcibly moved out while every building was blown up and their wells poisoned. They spent the remainder of the war as refugees. In 1918 Gouzeaucourt was in ruins, had no water supply and in the winter of 1918-19 suffered an outbreak of flu which, across Europe, killed more people than the war had done.

Many towns sent clothes, bedding and farm equipment to help. Worcester decided to send a wind pump and petrol engine to build a water supply for Gouzeaucourt and by coincidence, Worcester manufactured wind pumps – the world-famous Climax pump. These were made on the Droitwich Road and the factory's



owner, 'Pumpy' Thomas, threw himself into the spirit of giving. The petrol engine was supplied at cost price and 'Pumpy' Thomas sent 2 engineers to Gouzeaucourt to help install the pump. This then, is the story of Worcester's first twin. Not called a twin, but referred to as an 'adoption', a 'godchild' and Worcester as a 'godparent'. But the League of Help encouraged people from Britain to visit their godchild and talked of making enduring friendships through the scheme. *So really not unlike a twinning.*

Vernon

From Mayor to Secretary of State

In 2014, Sébastien Lecornu became the new Mayor of Vernon. Now, 3 years later, he is a member of the 2nd Philippe government: Secretary of State for the Ecological Transition, one of the youngest members of a French government.

However this young man (he is 31) is not a newcomer in politics. He became involved with the UMP (now Les Républicains) at the age of 16, when still at school. In 2005 he started working for the local MP in the Assemblée Nationale (the French equivalent to the House of Commons). He was on the staff of Bruno Le Maire, another local MP, who was in a previous government and is the Minister for the Economy in the present government.

However he did not forget his town: mayor of Vernon, then chairman of the Eure département in 2015 when he had to resign from his position at the head of the town (though he remains deputy mayor). He is also in charge of different local organisations and institutions. He is still very present in Vernon in spite of his new responsibilities. Not to mention that he is a reserve officer in the gendarmerie. A very busy life for a hard worker with a bright future ahead.



At this year's, Christmas Fayre we are pleased to have our usual four stalls, which will include Kleve, Le Vésinet, Worcester and, with flights permitting, the two young ladies, Neringa and Daiiva will be manning the Ukmerge stall, bringing with them the beautiful hand crafted goods. Kleve hopefully will have ample supplies of Gluwine, Chocolate and Stollen. Le Vésinet, will be cooking crêpes, and my particular favorite is with a good splash of Grand Marnier, selling Fromage ,Paté and, if you haven't tried it yet one of the large tins of Confit de Canard. It is always good to have one of these at the back of the cupboard for when the unexpected guest arrives for dinner. The Canard is always covered with an excess of duck fat which is ideal for roasting your potatoes in. On our own Worcester stall we will be selling a variety of Christmas puddings, these proved very popular last year, especially the gluten free and the chocolate.

The Fayre this year will open on Thursday 30th November and finish on Sunday 3rd December We will be contacting all members soon for help during this very busy period.

Visit to England by the Pioneer and Caravelles Scouts

In 2016 a link was formed between Worcester 5th Sea Scouts and the Pioneers and Caravelles from Le Vésinet. A small group from Worcester paid a long weekend visit to their community Scout Hut in le Vésinet and a warm friendly bond was established. Both groups got on with each other very well and it was decided to organise a return visit to Worcester in 2017.

The Explorer Scouts (a more senior group of scouts) invited 35 members of the Pioneers and Caravelles here from le Vésinet to continue with this on-going friendship.

The adventure was split into three parts; the first week was spent on a Farm just outside Worcester. Worcester Sea Scouts then invited them to a boating fun day, where I'm sure most managed to find themselves soaking wet, and/or thrown into the River Severn. The next day was a visit to Worcester and the Guildhall, and explore the city.



Any visit to Worcester is never complete without a trip to Malvern and a climb to the summit.

The group then moved down country to the Nine Ashes Campsite near Wadebridge in Cornwall. This was going to be a very busy week of activities, which included cycling, surfing, pioneering, and bush-craft skills, which was organised by the Worcester Explorers. There was also a chance to try English food, with full English

breakfast and a roast dinner. Perhaps if there is a return visit next year, frog's legs *cuisse de grenouille* and snails *escargots* could be tried.

An excellent video has been produced by Antoine Klopocki which encapsulates their fun and experiences for everyone to enjoy and remember.

Photographs by Stuart Robinson

Mairie du Vesinet Stage – REPORT

I am a 20 year old student of French and Spanish at the University of Exeter, and as the third year of my degree is a compulsory year abroad, I asked my Grandmother, Vivien Greenow, who has been a very active member of the Worcester twinning association for many years, if she could introduce me to any of her French friends who might know of a job for me in France for the summer. I was incredibly fortunate to be put in touch with Madame Anne- Marie Borderie, president of the twinning association for Worcester's twin town Le Vésinet, near Paris, who found the perfect job for me. It was a 'stage' or work-experience in the Town Hall or *Mairie*, where I had the opportunity to work in various departments, such as finances and urban planning but I spent most of my time working on the front desk. The experience was invaluable to me as a languages student as I not only had the chance to speak French and engage with the residents of the town on a daily basis, but also was given a unique insight into life in a small French town, particularly the way in which things are run on a local level.

In addition to putting me forward for the job, Madame Borderie was also kind enough to host me for the duration of my seven week stay in Le Vésinet, and even took me out for various trips on my days off, including visits to the Palace of Versailles and lesser known areas of Paris that are hidden from most tourists. I was made to feel very welcome and at home as Madame Borderie treated me as if I were a member of her own family, something which I also very much appreciated.

I am most grateful for the opportunity afforded to me thanks to the Worcester-le Vésinet partnership, and am sure my French will have benefitted as a result.

Keren Greenow

Fêtes de la Marguerite 2017

In June this year, the 45th anniversary of the le Vésinet twinning with Oakwood USA was celebrated at the Fêtes de la Marguerite which was set in the park next to the grand lake Ibis. This was the first time that Pam and myself had been to the Fêtes de la Marguerite, the previous time we attended it was cancelled due to bad weather. Part of this

weekend also included the diner en blanc, which is a beautiful idea, where everyone dresses in white and enjoys themselves with hosts and friends by the side of the lake and as you can see by the photo the weather was perfect. Thanks to all at le Vésinet for making this possible.

