

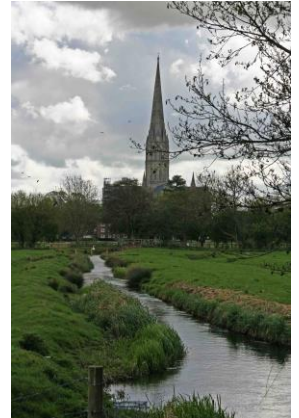


Summer 2009

SALISBURY–SAINTES TWINNING ASSOCIATION

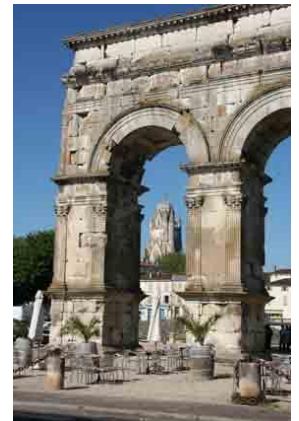


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Chairman's message

Before we know where we are the swallows will be gathering on the power lines in readiness for their great escape to the southern hemisphere. I have to admit there have been times when, like them, I've wished I could head somewhere warmer and a little drier. In spite of the weather and the presence of swine flu in our midst, there have been plenty of visitors to Salisbury from France, whether they have been school groups or families taking advantage of the weak pound and South Wiltshire's other attractions.



Although the French government announced weeks ago that they might cancel all school and college visits to the UK to help prevent the spread of swine flu, the long-planned visit by a group of 19-year-old students and staff from the Lycée Georges Declaude will go ahead next week.

For the past five months they have been working on their project for the Saintes stall at Salisbury's Food & Drink Festival on Sunday 20th September.

As last year, you will find the Saintes stall on the right as you enter the marquee parallel to Lloyds Bank in the Market Square.

Various events and trips have been arranged for the duration of their five-day stay, including a mayoral reception at the Guildhall. As they are studying horticulture and landscaping there are plenty of opportunities for interesting visits here.

Please contact Helena Wright if you are able to offer hospitality.

Next month, five artists from Saintes will show work upstairs at Fisherton Mill during the third biennial Salisbury Art Trail from 10th to 18th October. Some of the artists will be here during that time and will form a rota to man the exhibition.

Can you help by taking a turn on the rota? Please let me know if you can.

Caroline Rippier

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Annual Barbeque

The annual barbeque took place on Saturday 25th June, once again kindly hosted by Mary and Patrick Paisey. This year the weather was bright and sunny if not particularly warm. However it meant that we could eat and drink on the Paiseys' patio with its view over the city and were not cluttering up their house, at least until the last moment when the temperature got the better of us. It was a lovely evening meeting up and chatting with friends. Alongside Caroline's words of thanks to the Paiseys on the night, the rest of us who attended are very grateful to everyone who slaved over a hot barbeque, stove or bottle opener and of course everyone who contributed a pudding.

Diary date

Salisbury Food & Drink Festival, Market Place
Salisbury Art Trail
SSTA annual dinner at Wiltshire College, Salisbury
SSTA AGM at Salisbury Cycle Club, Salt Lane

Sunday 20th September
Saturday 10th to Sunday 18th October
Thursday 21st January 2010
Friday 26th February 2010

Do you know a good restaurant in the Saintes area?

It would be a good idea if anyone who has visited Saintes or the surrounding area and who has found a gem of a restaurant could share this with other members of the association. So, to start the ball rolling, here is a favourite of the editor's family, discovered on the recommendation of Bridget Brennan.

Clos de Cours
2, place du Théâtre
17100 Saintes
(0033) 5 46 74 62 62
www.closdescours.com

This delightful restaurant is very easy to find. To the left of the theatre as you face it from the Palais de Justice is a broad alleyway, half way down which is the restaurant. It is run by Jean-Luc and Virginie who used to run a restaurant in Auckland, New Zealand so their English is excellent. They started Clos de Cours just over two years ago and have built up a very good reputation. The food is typically French, very imaginative, of a very high standard and beautifully presented. There are three set menus at 12, 24 and 36 euros or you can choose off the à la carte menu. We think that this is the best restaurant we have been to in the region and so do many other people, as it is usually pretty busy. If the weather is bad and the tables outside cannot be used it is advisable to book a table.

Saintes Roman Museum (Musée archéologique)

Saintes was the old Roman town of Mediolanum Santonum, which was the capital of the province of Aquitania. Such an important town had its fair share of fine buildings and other engineering projects, the remains of some are readily apparent such as l'arc de Germanicus and the amphitheatre. However, as the town of Saintes grew and rebuilding took place a large number of Roman artefacts were uncovered. Many of these are on display at the Musée archéologique, very close to l'arc de Germanicus.

The items on display range from statues in varying degrees of destruction, columns and capitols, and commemorative plaques to name but a few. Some of the items look so fresh and detailed that they appear to have been carved yesterday, highlighting the skill of the stonemasons of that era. Entrance is free and the museum is a fascinating glimpse into the Roman period of the town.

The museum is situated about fifty metres to the left of l'arc de Germanicus, as you look at the river.



View from the South West. Saintes Market, part 2

In the last issue of the newsletter I wrote about the weekly Saturday market located next to the cathedral and in the nearby covered market. However, that is not the only market held in the town, and certainly not the largest.

If you want to drive through the centre of Saintes, make sure that it is not on the first Monday of the month. For on that day a large part of Saintes is closed off to traffic and given over to market stalls selling a large variety of goods. The market stretches from the bottom of Rue Gambetta all the way up the Cours National to the roundabout above the Palais de Justice. A side shoot goes past the Arch Germanicus right out to the park, almost as far as the Abbé aux Dames. If you know Saintes you will appreciate that this covers a considerable distance, so there is a great number of stalls. The range of goods on sale covers such benign items as shoes and slippers, books and clothes, to less benevolent items such as hunting knives, samurai swords and even firearms, possession of which would undoubtedly get you arrested in the UK.

The market is very popular judging by the crowds that attend each month. As with many such events in France it is also a social occasion and the cafés and restaurants are all full of friends who have met up for their monthly rendezvous. It is well worth a visit, although perhaps not the best day to take the family out for lunch as it is difficult to get a table. As well as being fascinating seeing what is on sale on the stalls, it is also a perfect opportunity for French people watching.

Mervyn Pannett

L'Âne en Cullotte



According to the information on this postcard, purchased in Saintes, donkeys wearing trousers used to be seen working on the salt marshes of the Isle de Ré, just off the coast near La Rochelle. In the 19th century about 30,000 tonnes of salt would be harvested every year from the marshes and donkeys were used to transport it. To protect their legs from mosquito bites they were provided with pairs of trousers like these.

Salisbury Cathedral choir visit to Saintes

Salisbury Cathedral's choir (boys and men) packed in a lot of activities during their six-day visit to Saintes. In addition to giving five formal concerts in Cognac, Sablonceaux (part of a church service), Saujon and Saintes (in the Abbé aux Dames and mass at the Cathédrale St Pierre), the boys swam in the chilly Atlantic at Royan, they picnicked in the sunshine, sang and played football with French schoolchildren, they sang for a group of elderly people in a retirement home, visited General Lafayette's wooden frigate at Rochefort, and visited the Roman amphitheatre in Saintes and the Paléosite.

It may have taken 19 years of twinning for the first Salisbury Cathedral choir trip to happen but it certainly seemed to have been worthwhile. Without all Bridget Brennan's painstaking liaison work in the six months leading up to the visit it couldn't have taken place so thank you. Bridget, for all that you did to make it possible.

Twelve-year-old Robert Folkes, a senior chorister, spoke for all his friends when he said how much they'd enjoyed the trip. They managed to include a quick visit to a supermarket before they left Saintes and said: "We bought mostly sweets to take back home – they weren't too expensive."

Other highlights included a reception in a magnificent private house in Cognac and a buffet supper for 90 in Saintes. All the boys were a great credit to themselves, their families and their school (as were the adult members of the party) and audiences loved listening to them and to learning about the great English choral tradition.

The choir's visit was widely promoted on big colour posters in the area. It was also announced to members of the Saintes-Salisbury Jumelage and in the English language magazine "Living Poitou Charentes." Audiences comprising locals and ex-pats were large and enthusiastic. Jenny West and I were delighted to be among them and to meet up with old friends and to make new ones.

There is even a rumour that Salisbury Cathedral's girls' choir might visit one day. In the meantime, the St John Singers are planning a visit in autumn 2010, the year of the 20th anniversary of the link between Salisbury and Saintes. CR



