

## **VERWOOD & THREE LEGGED CROSS TA DTA AGM 2011 - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

In 2010/11 we have been as active as ever.

After last year's AGM our winter season of members' meetings continued with talks from Stuart Timbrell (again), Les Deux Cyclistes, and Verwood Fairtrade committee. In addition, as suggested at the AGM, we trialled a summer season of afternoon teas. These started well but attendances have been tailing off of late so your committee have decided not to continue with them next summer.

A new venture for us last November was our skittle evening, held in Horton Village Hall. This event was a sell-out with an excellent supper laid on and some unexpected skittles stars emerging! Since then I understand the hall has had some sound-deadening installed and we will be repeating the event next January to test this out!

The trip to the Brussels Christmas markets was wonderful, with our hotel - the Sheraton in Brussels - proving to be very popular for the unexpected touch of luxury it provided. On the way home we paused in Bruges and most of us took advantage of looking at the ice sculpture exhibition there - I don't think I've ever been so cold! There was even a bar there made of ice and selling ice cold drinks. But the sculptures were spectacular. As a result of my opening the trip to non-members and members of other organisations I belong to in order to fill the places we made over £700.

The Christmas event was well attended and very entertaining, with one of my quiz-go competitions following a seasonal sing-along facilitated by Phil Blake on piano and my wife Anjie leading the singing.

The boules season has once again had its ups and downs for us. We did win 2 games, against the teams who finished top and second in the league, but lost or drew our others. However, once again we avoided the wooden spoon by finishing second from bottom - or perhaps it's more positive to say we finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the league!

The companion dog show was held in May, once again organised for us by Audrey and Dave Palmer and once again, together with catering by the ladies of the committee, a financial success.

By far the high spot of the year was of course our visit to Champtoceaux. We were received with a *vin d'honneur* under the chestnut trees behind Champtoceaux church at Le Champalud before heading home with our hosts. On Friday we had a trip down the Loire from Nantes to St Nazaire where, after a trek from the landing stage to the former U-Boat pens, we were treated to

lunch. Mention must go to Sandra Ground who provided a sterling service on the boat translating the commentary given in French by an obvious enthusiast! On Saturday morning we were guests at Drain library, where an exhibition of things English had been set up. We were spared having to sing for them (that came later) and we were presented with an Abécédaire of Drain, which I have here if anyone wishes to look at it in the interval. The soirée later on Saturday was presaged by another *vin d'honneur*, this time at a local manor house which offers chambres d'hotes and also houses a collection of vintage cars. Later in the evening - and I have to say with not nearly enough wine having been drunk - Verwood's honour was maintained when Anjie and I were press-ganged on stage to sing a French folk song followed by Paddy Townsend who held the French spellbound with "The Wild Rover" and "The Fields of Athenry". As happened coincidentally on our previous visit, the Saturday evening saw a spectacular lightning display and thunderstorm to complete the entertainment! Sunday was spent *en famille* and a very early start on Monday morning got us home that evening.

I should add that later that month we were staying on the campsite at Drain when monsieur Hérissé - one of the French photographers - came to visit us and presented pictures of the on-stage appearances. He told us that in his opinion the atmosphere had been lifted by the English contribution and many people agreed the soirée was the most enjoyable they had attended.

The summer outing was a boat trip from Poole to Swanage. A fish & chip supper was served on the outward voyage and we watched the Swanage fireworks from the boat before returning to Poole. Apart from rather choppy seas around Old Harry Rocks, I think everyone enjoyed the evening.

The Rotary Rustic fayre was the final fling of the summer, where we ran Café René as usual. Business was up in terms of numbers on last year but we sold less wine than usual, people opting instead for the tea and coffee which we were offering this year. Despite gearing up with two large urns it was a bit of a struggle to keep up with demand at times - in fact we got through over 160 litres of water and ten litres of petrol for the generator on the afternoon! In the end we raised roughly the same amounts for our funds and for Rotary as last year. Thanks go to the members who helped us out with the café and the wine tombola. Next year we are planning on having our German friends over for the event. We hope that they will take a stand to display or sell German goods or delicacies. Of course this does mean that it will be particularly busy hosting as well as setting up and running the cafe so if there are any members who feel they could give a little time to help us out please make yourselves known.

Tomorrow we're off on this year's weekend trip - this time a champagne tasting in Reims. Take-up for this has not been as good as last year - perhaps another

sign of the difficult times we're all experiencing - but I'm sure we'll all enjoy ourselves.

As is customary, I would ask the committee members who have all worked so hard to make all this happen to please stand and if the meeting would please show its appreciation in the usual way. Ladies and Gentlemen - your Committee.