

12th August 2019

BRIDGNORTH TWINNING ASSOCIATION - Thiers 2019

Report From Cllr Helen Howell

Our Twinning with Thiers took place in Bridgnorth in October 1978. It was not without its problems as the Bridgnorth Journal of the day reported - 'Troublemakers to blame for the rumours' 'Traders board up windows' - these referred to the fact that there were to be pub opening extensions during the Twinning weekend! But then... The Page One comment goes on to say 'Five coaches of tired but happy Thiernois left Bridgnorth in the early hours of Monday morning. They were delighted with the welcome which was afforded them by the people of the town; they were charmed by the old world similarities between the two towns; and they were grateful that the whole weekend had passed with scarcely a problem.'

Whew - that was alright then!

The then Town Clerk predicted that about 1,100 would be going over to Thiers from Bridgnorth the next year.

But to return to 2019 that number would require the two 00s removing as the number which went this year was 11. There are many reasons for the decline in numbers but the warmth felt between the two towns remains the same.

Most of us took the opportunity to visit Thiers as part of longer stay in France. The week before our visit had been the 'canicule' the much reported heatwave. It was still very hot and reached 41 in the sun during our stay. Our welcome was equally as warm with a variety of events planned for us.

A visit to Clermont Ferrand with its Black (volcanic rock) cathedral was a highlight. A shower of rain when we arrived cooled it down and made it more pleasant to wander round the city. We were taken past the home of Michelin tyres - the company is very much part of the city - and a very proud coach driver took us past the home of the famous Clermont Ferrand Rugby Club! After our return to Thiers there was a 'picnic in the park' with the food and drink provided by our hosts. We also had the chance to renew our acquaintance with the visitors from Schrobenhausen - there were about 30 in their group.

On the Sunday there was the chance to visit the cutlery museum (which I had done on a previous visit) or to go on a guided walk of the town (which I had also done before - but decided to go on - and it did cover a different route!) It was very hot and we were glad to see the little tourist 'train' which took us to the upper town.

Then, the 'formal' meal together which took place in the Espace hall and consisted of many different courses and drinks and was very much enjoyed. It was rounded off by a few words from the different twinned towns and it was regretted that our Mayor was unable to be there because of ill health.

It was the weekend of the Pamparina - a free music festival - with groups playing around the town and a main stage in the town 'square'. Ear plugs were provided! It was good to just wander round the town and mingle and have a cold drink at one of the cafes with their tables outside.

The majority of us stayed with hosts - many of whom are now old friends. For those who haven't taken part in Twinning before I can recommend it as a way to get to know a place. You can immerse yourself in local life and meet more people and it is very enjoyable and convivial. Our local Twinning Association would be very pleased to welcome some new members.....

Helen Howell