



# Our Global Village

Oct/Nov 2016

## 5W Members receive VIP treatment in Tours, France and in Manchester, UK!

### Gathering in France 4-11 June 2016

Despite flooding, train strikes, delayed planes, rationed petrol, and broken bones, 22 women from all corners of the world straggled into Tours, France, one hour's train ride southwest of Paris, throughout two days in early June. Nothing was going to stop these 5W travellers from getting together to see all the wonders of the UNESCO site of the Loire Valley in Central France. Our local hostesses, Sally, Françoise and Corinne, along with their husbands and friends, warmly welcomed each of us and made sure we would experience as much of the lovely Touraine region as possible. With Françoise

entertaining us with old songs and tales of folklore during the bus rides, we were expertly led to favourite mediaeval and renaissance castles, vibrant country markets, beautiful gardens, fine dining and wining, and getting to know some dynamic women of the Loire Valley - past and present. Home base was at La Grande Breteche, a convent for retired nuns. Our first dinner was in the Conservatory of this enormous complex with the priest, staff, and some of the white-haired nuns aged 75-100+. The history and strength of significant French women became apparent as we visited their homes and tombs. Le Chateau d'Usse, the inspiration for Charles Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty" written in 1697, provided a good view of a working chateau with its old rooms, watch tower, horse stable and livery carriages, chapel, conservatory, moats, gardens, and caves used for wine and food storage. France is known for its delectable food, and we experienced the joys of French wining and dining every day starting with a lovely dinner for early arrivers at Sally's home, and ending over lunch in her husband's Sicilian restaurant, Zafferano.

We were welcomed to the French countryside by the goats and owners of the E.A.R.L Champion goat farm where we were schooled in all things chèvre related, and toured the massive caverns of le Saut aux Loups, one of many limestone caves along the Loire River now used for mushroom production. **Read more on Page 2 .....**



Guests of honour at Tours Town Hall



Cutting the 'dove of peace' cake on our first night at the convent



Sally and Pia

### Highlights from the Chester Gathering 26 July to 2 August 2016



Chester on the Walls  
with Chester Clock in background

**Chester** Roman walls, cobbled streets and the river Dee running through the town. The Rows are a mediaeval shopping mall made up of small shops on two levels with the covered galleries of the upper level, accessed by steps from the street.

The town crier, dressed in a fine red jacket, blue waistcoat and tricorn hat condensed 2000 years of history into 20 seconds as he declaimed "the Romans gave us the amphitheatre, the Normans gave us the castle, the Victorians gave us the Eastgate clock and..... the Americans gave us McDonalds"

**Manchester** A memorable tour of the vast Victorian Town Hall, conducted by the young and handsome Lord Mayor, casually dressed in jeans and a jacket topped off by the gold mayoral chain. Afternoon tea in the Lord Mayor's parlour was a relaxed informal affair with the Lord Mayor doing his share of filling the tea cups.

The ceiling of the Great Hall was decorated with the coats of arms of the many countries the City of Manchester had important trading ties with in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The New Zealand coat of arms was among them reflecting our exports of frozen meat and wool at that time.



Meeting the Lord Mayor, Cllr Carl Austin-Behan at Manchester Town Hall

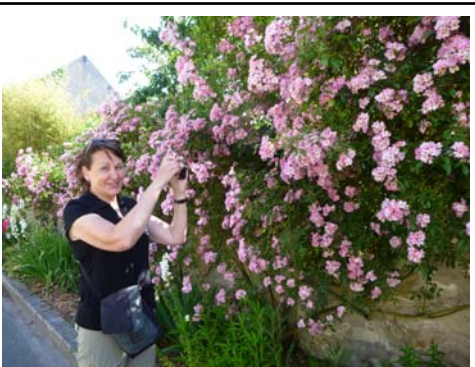
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## Gathering in Tours, continued .....

Most memorable, was the idyllic adventure that awaited us within the Renaissance gardens at le Chateau de Valmer. The main dwelling of the chateau was likely built as a hunting lodge. The grandeur of this Chateau is in the gardens where we hunted for ingredients amongst the flowers and greenery to use in preparing our lunch. The experience was a delight for all our senses.

All our group meals were incredible! One lunch was savoured at a Michelin restaurant, Le Bon Laboureur in Cenonceaux, where afterwards we were invited to visit the restaurant's garden and animals. Another was at an old farm, originally a cloister associated with le Chateau de Villandry, with its goats, rabbits, chicken, ducks, gardens, and an interesting mix of centuries old stone walls with solar-panel-covered barn roofs. Everything was served fresh from the vicinity. Yet another fabulous lunch, enjoyed in the village of Montsoreau, was followed by a peaceful boat ride on the Vienne River, viewing the flooded riverbanks over glasses of French wine. As we wandered through weekend markets in the towns of Langeais



*Pia from Sweden.  
She loved Chédigny, the rose village*

and Tours, we were reminded that, in France, no opportunity for the beautiful presentation of food is ever wasted. Both were full of all sorts of fruit,

vegetables, mushrooms, cheese, meats, seafood, plants, and kitchenware. Even the "simple" supper we enjoyed one evening at the convent was served in multiple courses.

Not to be outdone by the food, were the flowers. In the garden village of Chedigny we leisurely strolled through rose covered streets. In 1998, the mayor planted over 800 rose bushes and the villagers planted even more. Now they drape over everything in sight.

Twice, we were privileged to be invited for private visits at artisan workshops in Tours. At Atelier d'Offard, we learned how antique wallpaper from around the world is stunningly reproduced using original hand blocking techniques. Inside the 12th century clock tower of the Basilica St Martin, Master Jeweler Emanuel Lecerf, demonstrated how he is recreating 1700 gold medals commemorating the 1700th anniversary of Saint Martin (316-397), using an 11th century medal stamping machine. Saint Martin, third archbishop of Tours, is remembered for using his sword to cut his cloak into two pieces and giving one to a beggar dressed only in rags. Still today, the people of Tours honour his guidance by always sharing their friendship.

Our last evening in Tours, we were guests of honour at the Tours town hall. The Director of International Relations welcomed us and gave each woman in our group a gift from the Mayor's Office. An interesting ceremony was held during which two women from our group, Debbie and Angela, were selected to be inducted into "The Guild of Veritable Nougat de Tours," which was founded to spread friendship and sharing throughout the world. Morgan, gave a heartfelt speech of thanks to our hosts in French. We finished with a champagne toast in front of a statue of Marianne, the national symbol of France, before heading to our farewell dinner at another fabulous French restaurant.

It was a spectacular week in France filled with grand chateaux, charming villages, sensuous gardens and markets, abundant French cuisine and many friendly faces. **Peggy, Michigan, USA**

## Gathering in Chester continued ....

**Liverpool** "Snowdrop" one of the gorgeous brightly painted ferries bustled to and fro across the Mersey as "that song" played over the loudspeakers.

We visited the night club where the Beatles had played. The Cavern was accessed by a narrow winding staircase and a wave of noise and heat greeted us as we arrived in the long narrow room. On the tiny stage at the far end of the room a band belted out Beatles songs. Marina and Christine danced enthusiastically and Jo was once again a starry eyed teenager as she told us how she and her aunt had spent an hour with the Beatles one evening in the 1960s, while the band waited to go on stage for their next gig.

**Blundell Sands** Sculptor Antony Gormley's cast iron statues are placed every few hundred metres along this stretch of tidal sandy beach. I found them very moving as they stand, facing the sea, silent reminders of the many thousands who left Britain in search of a better life. I was reminded of how much I miss our New Zealand beaches and being close to the sea. I took off my shoes and walked barefoot, in the sunshine, on the wet shining sand. **Jackie, Auckland, New Zealand**



*Jocelyn, Leonie & Claudia  
with one of Antony Gormley's statues*

**I was one of the lucky ones, 20 in all, to attend the Chester**

**Gathering in late July.** Linda and her group of helpers did a great job. We were accommodated in Chester university rooms with our own bathrooms, 3 kitchens to share for breakfasts and any spare time where we shared lots of giggles and stories.

Wonderful days out, one to Chester, with a very informative guide and walk around the Roman wall. Next day to Manchester City and a visit to the Royal Exchange Theatre, then tea with the very hospitable young Lord Mayor. One day in Liverpool with a ferry ride up the Mersey, spare time to wander around, have photos taken with the Beatles statues, then a trip down into the Cavern, being a Beatles fan bought back lots of memories!!! Friday was a day off with local 5W girls showing some of us around. Thanks to Sue and Kath who took myself and Lavern walking up Frodsham Hill then lunch in their pretty town. Next day off to the Anthony Gormley Statues on Crosby beach. Monday a bus trip to Conway with its imposing castle and cute village. Also a canal trip along the aqueduct in Llangollen...delightful.

It was wonderful to meet up with members I have met before and ones that I hope I will meet again A big thank you to Linda, Teresa and her husband Tony, Peiata and her husband Phil for all their hard work to make a fun reasonably priced gathering.

**Therese, Sydney, Australia**



*With Master Jeweller, Emanuel Lecerf*



*Jo shared her story of meeting The Beatles!*