

## Haspengouw, Gathering Belgium - May 2009

This Gathering attracted 34 enthusiastic 5W members from around the world. What a beautiful setting greeted us, as we spotted our home for the next five nights. The impressive castle of Mariagaarde, with its imposing entrance, lovely gardens and the serenity of a place run by nuns, set the scene for us during our visit.

We visited the Landcommandery Alden Bissen, built by the German Order of Teutonic Knights. This castle is now fully restored and is a cultural centre for the Flemish Community. The formal gardens were a delight as was the luncheon !!



Tongeren, called the "oldest town in Belgium" for a very good reason because Roman legions passed through its walls. Tongeren became a melting pot of tribes and cultures. The Gothic bell tower of the Basilica of Our Lady dominates the town and the surrounding area. It took more than 300 years to build this beautiful Gothic monument. To an Australian whose country was only settled in 1778, this is awesome.



Therefore, to visit Liege and discover and attempt to come to grips with so many years of art and history was mind boggling!

The orchards of pears and apples explored on foot and sampling the unique flavours of the products from these orchards was also wonderful. Some brave souls cycled around.

Thank you ladies of Belgium for your friendship and hospitality. Sharing your culture with 5W members from around the world, was something we will not forget.

**5W Member from Australia**