



# SALISBURY SAINTES TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Winter 2012



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*Dear Members,*

Salisbury Saintes Twinning Association has marked its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in many ways in the past few months, and it is to be hoped that a lot more people now know about the Association and its mission.

Just in case you've forgotten, that mission is to foster links between the communities of Salisbury and Saintes, be those links cultural, sporting, commercial, educational or social. We have set ourselves the task of continuing the good work, reaching out to those who still may not know what we try to do, while encouraging young people by offering awards for effort and achievement in French.



We all look forward to many get-togethers in 2012, welcoming visitors from Saintes, and smoothing the way for those who may wish to visit Charente Maritime for business or for pleasure. The next major SSTA gathering is the AGM on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February at which we will welcome Samy Joly, an amusing speaker, who is currently working as French "assistant" at Bishop Wordsworth's School.

In addition to liquid refreshment, there will be pieces of birthday cake for everyone who comes along.

Bonne année!

*Caroline*

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### ***Our new website***

After a lengthy gestation period, our new website has just gone live. You'll be able to get the latest updates for your diary, read about events which have happened, and browse a gallery of pictures from the past and present. There is a page for new members to join, with a form to download and print. For anyone in Salisbury, there's a page of information about Saintes. It has a map, pictures, and recommendations of ten things to do and visit there. For anyone from Saintes who is browsing the site, there's a Salisbury page, with similar local information for visitors. The newsletter doesn't appear on the site – that's something special for members, and will be sent to everyone. From time to time, there may be a link to the French 'blog' which is the means of communication for the Saintes 'jumelage' members and reports on what's happening in the Charente-Maritime.



To try out our new site, go to [www.salisburysaintestwinning.co.uk](http://www.salisburysaintestwinning.co.uk) MM

## **See You at the Next Rendezvous**

The next RV will be on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March, venue to be announced, between 7.30 and 9 pm. These are always very jolly occasions and it is lovely meeting up with old friends. Just turn up and you will be warmly welcomed.

## **Diary dates**

21 <sup>st</sup> February 2.15pm	Commemorative tree planting ceremony (see page 4)
24 <sup>th</sup> February 7.00pm	Annual General Meeting at the Cycle Club, Salt Lane, Salisbury.
21 <sup>st</sup> July	Annual BBQ kindly hosted by the Paiseys

## **Visit of Saintes Association de Randonneurs**

The Saintes Association de Randonneurs (SAR), one of the town's ramblers clubs, are visiting Salisbury, arriving in the morning of Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May and departing on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June. A group of 44 ramblers will be led by an old friend of Salisbury, Antoine Egéa, who was le président du comité de Jumelage before Bridget Brennan. They will be undertaking four walks between Monday and Thursday:

Monday 28<sup>th</sup>. Marlborough to Avebury following the Wessex Ridgeway trail. This will take them through the Fyfield Down Nature Reserve where the fields are dotted with huge sarsen stones and from where the Stonehenge sarsen stones originated. After a picnic lunch break at Avebury the group will walk to the West Kennet Long Barrow before returning to Salisbury via a stop at the Caen Hill locks at Devizes. Total walking distance approximately 12½ miles.

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup>. Morning walk from Stockbridge to Mottisfont down the Test Valley way. After a picnic lunch at Mottisfont the group will be free to visit the house and/or gardens before returning to Salisbury. Walking distance about 6 miles.

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup>. Starting at Stonehenge the group will visit the stones before being given a tour of the Stonehenge landscape. Following a picnic lunch break at Stonehenge they will walk back to Salisbury following the Woodford valley. Total walking distance about 12 miles.

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup>. A walk in the New Forest. The group will drive to Milford-on-Sea and walk to Hurst Castle. This castle was built in 1544 by Henry VIII as a defence against the French under their king François I. François I was born in Cognac, twenty miles upriver from Saintes, so there is a historical connection. This will be approximately a 6 mile walk so on the way back to Salisbury there will be another walk of about 10 miles in the forest itself.

I will be the guide for the walks and the marshalling and control of the group will be the responsibility of SAR itself. I would welcome assistance from any member of the association on any of the walks, French speakers would be doubly appreciated. I will be walking the routes on various days between early February and the end of April so if anyone would like to join me in any walk I would love the company. I cannot give any firm dates at present as much will depend on the weather. Thirty years in the Army have given me an aversion to walking in the rain. Any volunteers please contact me on [mandjpannett@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:mandjpannett@tiscali.co.uk) or phone 01980 611284. *MP*

## **Amitiés Saintes Salisbury – Report of the Committee Meeting 5th January 2012**

The Secretary of Amitiés Saintes Salisbury, Jacques Blanc, sent us the minutes of their latest committee meeting. I include them in the newsletter so you can see what our friends in Saintes are doing. They discussed a number of matters covering past and future events. An exhibition and sale, "The Charente from the Source to the Sea" was very successful and brought in a sum of 1,005 Euros, largely through the sale works by the artist exhibitors. The object of this event was to finance a visit to Salisbury next summer of a high school student from Saintes. God Save the Screen is a festival of British Film held annually in Saintes. The 2011 festival included some very good films and was well attended, although, sadly, not all secondary schools sent students. Now for future events. Amitiés Saintes Salisbury is organizing a St Patrick's Day event with Irish atmosphere on 16<sup>th</sup> March. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> May a group of 30 young rugby players (aged 11 and 12) from Salisbury, accompanied by 20 adults, will visit Saintes for a get together with young players from the Saintes Rugby Club. The association's annual Street Party will take place on June 30<sup>th</sup> and finally the Salisbury Folk Dance Club will perform in Salle de la Camelia in Saintes in October 2012. Following requests from the Salisbury schools Jacques was happy to report that two schools in Saintes, Georges Desclaudes and Rene Caillié have agreed to have links with two schools in Salisbury, Sarum Academy and St Edmund's Girls School respectively. *MP*

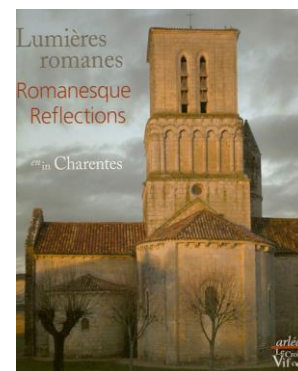
### ***Do you know a good restaurant in the Saintes area?***

Les Remparts Restaurant, 49 Place de la Cathédrale, 33430 Bazas. OK, so it is not that close to Saintes, but there is a connection nonetheless. This restaurant has been opened by Christophe Texier and two friends. Some of you may remember Christophe from the time he worked at the Red Lion a few years ago. You can view the menu on [www.restaurant-les-remparts.com](http://www.restaurant-les-remparts.com). Bazas is south east of Bordeaux so it would make a good day out from Saintes.

### ***Book Review : Lumières romanes/Romanesque Reflections***

When Jocelyn and I lived near the Dutch/German border we spent some time exploring Holland. Our strategy was to see as many windmills as we could, not through a particular love of windmills but because they would take us to places that we would otherwise never visit. We did not see all of the country's 700-plus windmills but we did see a lot of Holland. The same strategy can be employed in exploring the beautiful countryside around Saintes and the Charente, although windmills would probably not be the obvious destination. One of the icons of the area is the beautiful Romanesque churches, with their clean design and built in the warm Charentais stone.

A recently published book, *Lumières romanes/Romanesque Reflections*, published by *arléa/Le Croît Vif*, provides an interesting and colourful guide to many of these churches, lavishly illustrated with colour photographs by Phillipe Julien-Labruyère showing not just the churches themselves but unusual aspects and easily overlooked details. The book is in both French and English, the French text by Isabelle Oberson and the English text by Maggie Cole. Maggie has deliberately not provided a verbatim translation but has written to be more readable to an English audience. She also, along with her husband Martin, has written two books on walks in the Charente region. There is more on these books on page 4.



*Romanesque Reflections* is in five chapters, firstly setting the scene and describing how the Romanesque church style became so popular in the region. We are told that many churches in this and other parts of France owed their allegiance to the mother church at Cluny, which dictated that these establishments should be works of art on a grand scale. The masons who built them came from Lombardy and had kept the old Roman building traditions going through the dark ages. A standard design was adopted for these abbeys and churches which were based on ancient Roman architecture, hence the name Romanesque.

The other four chapters describe the Romanesque style, where and why many of the buildings are and describes the decoration and significance of the carvings found on so many buildings. Many have grown organically over the past millennium and they have been subject to many different influences but still retain their Romanesque character.

However, the joy of the book is the description and photographs of the churches found in the Charente, many of which are in the Saintonge. It covers the grand, such as the Abbey aux Dames in Saintes to the small, such as the church in the little village of Macqueville. It makes a wonderful basis for exploring the area, to go and see the churches described, and, who knows, whatever else one may come across along the way.

The book provides some lovely details about the area and the people who have made their mark upon it. For instance, anyone who has visited Saintes cannot have failed to see the Church of St Eutrope, But who was St Eutrope? The simple answer is that he was the first Bishop of Saintes, but simple answers tell us very little. St Eutrope was a 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD Greek who was sent by the Pope to evangelize the Saintonge. In this he was successful, indeed he converted the daughter of the Roman Governor to Christianity. For this he was stoned to death and then decapitated. The moral: don't mess with the governor's daughter. *MP*

### ***Etymology***

Those among us who speak a bit of French know all about the dreaded "faux amis", those French words and expressions that don't translate as we think they should. They are proof that you cannot make assumptions about translating anything.

However, I made an interesting discovery that turns this assumption on its head. I wanted the translation for our mad expression "it's a piece of cake" for something that is really easy. To my amazement the answer is "c'est du gâteau."

Now how did that come about? No doubt an etymologist would have a satisfactory answer. *CR*

*If anyone knows of any other similar semantic quirks please let me know. MP*



## ***Tree Planting Ceremony***

After a couple of postponements caused by inclement weather conditions, the planned ceremony to plant the pin oak to mark the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the twinning will now take place on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February at 2.15pm.

We will all assemble with the Mayor of Salisbury, SSTA president, and some pupils from Leehurst Swan School in the small (free) car park by the dual carriageway opposite the Friary. We hope as many members as possible will be able to attend because, as Prince Charles will attest, trees and plants do much better if they feel loved.

## ***Salisbury and Saintes - Twinned yet inexplicably and inextricably intertwined***

Anyone who has passed some time in both Southern England and the Charentes will be aware of the similarity in climate and thus flora and fauna between the two regions. An early seafaring Celt would have noted little change in a voyage between the two. Historians and archaeologists are now increasingly convinced such voyages took place from as early as 1200 BC, if not before.

Old Sarum was sufficiently far inland to prepare for raids from piratical seafarers, yet still close enough to the coast to gain from all the benefits of wealth and civilisation that come from trade. Saintes is similarly fortunately positioned, with access to the sea via the River Charente and the mighty Gironde estuary. We cannot know with certainty whence they originally hailed, these intrepid navigators who criss-crossed the western approaches by boat as winds and tides directed. We know from their artefacts and the ambitions of Rome that their seafaring prowess was desired and their other attributes were considered essential to suppress. Thus Saintes and Salisbury adapted to the conqueror's culture and became Roman.

Under Roman occupation, the city of Saintes was known as Mediolanum Santorum. A stroll through the city will take you back through many periods of history. The Roman city extended from the left bank of the Charente River to the right bank by way of a bridge, upon which stood the Arc of Germanicus, which is still standing. Saint Eutrope brought Christianity to this region in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Martyred, his tomb became a pilgrim shrine, making Saintes an important halt on the pilgrim route to Saint Jacques de Compostelle. By the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries there were a great number of churches and monasteries in the Saintonge, built specifically to accommodate the popularity of pilgrimages. Strategically situated on the Charente, Saintes became the frontier during the 100 Years War. Here you will also encounter the name Bernard Palissy, one of Saintes' famous residents during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whose work in ceramics is well documented. He was also a protestant thinker, and it is thought that he brought the flame of reform to Saintes. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the cognac industry was beginning to make a huge impact in Saintes; in the following century, due to the wealth created by this trade, rich merchants built beautiful classical homes on the outskirts of the old town. Many serve as museums today, recording the city's rich history.

Our family first started visiting the Charentes on holiday in the early 1990s, knowing none of this history. Now retired here since 2005, we have become deeply involved in exploring the region's history. In order to share our discoveries and some of the hidden charms of the countryside, we have so far written two bi-lingual books, which include walks and drives covering barely half the area of the two Charentes. As walkers and sailors we have nonetheless tried to tie in our itineraries with historical anecdotes which reflect this region's often turbulent past. History has left its traces even here in our small commune, located on the border which ran between the Angoumois and the Santonge, of which Saintes was the capital; it was the limit of the diocese of Angoulême in 1100, marked the frontier between France and England from 1337 to 1453 and was on the Demarcation Line between Vichy and Occupied France in 1942.

In considering the bi-lingual aspect of our books, it is interesting to note that long ago, the Franks, who settled in France, shared the same linguistic roots with the Anglo-Saxons, as evidenced by this quote from the Venerable Bede: "In the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century the French and the Anglo-Saxons mutually understood each others' language, which was derived from the same Teutonic roots." If only this were still true today! Our books each contain over 150 pen and ink drawings which enhance the bi-lingual text - illustrations which, we hope will speak for themselves.

*Maggie and Martin Cole*

