

COOKHAM VISITS SAINT-BENOIT October 2023

Over the October half-term, 21st-24th October, 18 members of Cookham Twinning visited Cookham's twinned village of Saint-Benoit, near Poitiers in France. Cookham has been twinned with Saint-Benoit since 1994, but this was the first visit since 2019 because of Covid restrictions.

ST BENOIT VISIT October 2023

Our visit to Saint-Benoit is almost here, taking place over the start of half-term, October 21st - 24th. It will be the first visit since 2019, with a two-year Covid break, and then the visit of Saint-Benoit to Cookham last year. Twenty-one of us will be staying with local families, and it is always interesting and enjoyable to experience typical French ways of life. We are fortunate to be twinned with Saint-Benoit, a lovely village with a great community spirit, situated just outside historic Poitiers. Saint-Benoit has a strong environmental movement, encouraged and supported by their local council. We traditionally give them a gift from Cookham during the visit, and this year we will be presenting them, 'The Wind in the Willows', both English and French language versions, enabling us to talk about Cookham's water-vole project. I'm certain that, as always, we will have a great weekend together.

Keith Le Page

ST BENOIT VISIT September 2023

We are now very much looking forward to our visit to Saint-Benoit during October half-term. A group of about twenty people from Cookham Twinning will be journeying to Saint-Benoit, staying with local families and participating in a weekend of cultural and social activities. Meanwhile the latest news-sheet from Saint-Benoit reports back from their 20th 'Flowers of May' festival, when the centre of Saint-Benoit is closed and becomes a flower market. The theme this year was climbing plants, and residents were able to have a free plant of their choice to embellish their garden. The Saint-Benoit environmental focus continues, with all 1,425 street lamps being changed to LED. There is a target in Poitiers, (of which Saint-Benoit is a part), to reduce energy consumption in 2025 by 43% in comparison with 2021. Saint-Benoit also has some cliffs alongside their river valley, and one of their ambitions is to re-establish safe climbing, working in collaboration with qualified climbing organisations. It is not expected that climbing the cliffs will be on the itinerary of our October visit!

Keith Le Page

WILD ST BENOIT! July 2023

Saint-Benoit have an enthusiastic environmental organisation, 'Commission Citoyenne de Transition Ecologique', (CCTE), and we are connecting Wild Cookham to them. Our local environmental star, Brian Clews, has produced an article, 'The Wildlife of Cookham', which has been sent to Saint-Benoit for circulation around their Twinning and environmental organisations. In the article, Brian describes Cookham's Garden Wilding scheme, the detailed hedge surveys, and most importantly, the work to re-introduce Water Voles to Cookham. We have translated the article into French, and learnt that a water vole is 'un campagnol aquatique'. Brian was involved at the very beginning of our

Twinning activities so it's very appropriate that he has now written this article to make an environmental connection between our two villages. We have a good group already signed up for our visit to Saint-Benoit over October half-term, (21st-24th October), but spaces are still available. Anyone interested in joining this trip can find out more by contacting keith_le_page@hotmail.com. No French language ability is required!

Keith Le Page

THE CORONATION June 2023

Our friends in Saint-Benoit also celebrated the May 6th Coronation with a nine-kilometre walk, in tribute to King Charles III. The walk joined the neighbouring villages of Saint-Benoit and Liguge, with receptions in each location from the respective mayors. The walk also visited Saint-Benoit's 'Jardin de Cookham'. We are starting to think about our visit to Saint-Benoit over October half-term, (21st-24th October). Anyone interested in joining this trip can find out more by contacting keith_le_page@hotmail.com.

Keith Le Page

COOKHAM VISIT TO ST BENOIT

Saint-Benoit's local magazine provides interesting information about their community. They are a four-star 'ville fleurie', (the highest award), and their annual flower festival in May attracts 15,000 visitors. There is a flourishing 'jardin de Cookham' and in 2019 they set up the 'jardin d'image' a public space where an exterior exhibition of large pictures is shown in a lovely garden setting.

Saint-Benoit is about the same size as Cookham, and has numerous village organisations as well as a theatre seating 750 that also serves the local area. They are twinned with locations in Germany, Portugal and Romania as well as with Cookham.

We look forward this year's event, and to taking a group from Cookham to Saint-Benoit in 2023.

Keith Le Page