

Family Exchange between Radlett and Louveciennes

It was a great evening in a back garden in Louveciennes – fifteen kids aged from 8 – 17 rushing around the garden whilst their parents enjoyed a delicious buffet accompanied by fine French wines talking about their experiences over the weekend in a mixture of French and English.

We had had a busy couple of days – arriving on the Saturday afternoon- a little later than anticipated due to a bit of swimming on the beach at Calais and then a short stop off in Amiens - to be greeted by families Dujardin, Weber and Benchimole with kler in the Benchimole's garden and then a walk through the Parc at Marly le Roi; day to day home to the French kings as opposed to Versailles, the location for Court matters .Perfectly manicured trees led via a fairly steep bank to the small lake – it didn't take long before the children were on the grass rolling down the hill. Having brushed off the grass, we set off towards dinner at the creperie – perfect Bretonne crepes - savoury to start and sweet to follow accompanied by good strong cider.



We all slept well (was it exhaustion or the cider?) and gathered early the next morning to visit the Sunday market at Versailles. Beautiful fruit and vegetables, an enormous variety of cheeses and meats – it was everything you could expect from a typical French market. The children gobbled strawberries as we admired the antiques shops which surrounded the market square, listened to the jazz and then we wandered northwards to take a look at the Palace of Versailles – just a brief glance from outside – the place was mobbed!



Next it was off for lunch – a café in the park at Versailles – our group of 27 comfortably accommodated. Refreshed and revitalized we hoped to rent bikes and boats but it seemed the whole of Paris had had the same idea – nothing available for an hour or so – improvising instead, the children – and a few adults started up a game of British Bulldog followed by an obstacle race and then we were introduced to a new game “beret” which involved tactical snatching of the “ball” and a race to home without being caught by your opposing team member. As a result we built up quite a crowd of onlookers from the passers by each commenting on the technical prowess – or otherwise - of the participants. At one point “Salade” was ordered by the referee of the game and all fifteen children seemed to head into a scrum – given the participation on the trip of no less than two of our local junior rugby coaches – I suspect that Beret may soon find its way to common use at Tabard rugby club if not in the playground!

There was just about time to take a short walking tour around Louveciennes home to the likes of Bridget Bardot, Renoir and Pissaro – a green oasis just 20 minutes from central Paris, no wonder the rich and famous liked it so much. We were treated to a private tour of the Pavillon de Music built for Madame du Barry – usually only open for conferences and weddings. We were lucky enough that one of the committee members for RAIFA’s equivalent in Louveciennes was the Pavillon’s manager and caretaker. The Pavillon itself was ornate with magnificent grounds leading from a significant height down to the River Seine – we were even able to spot the Eiffel Tower! Then it was back to the Dujardin’s for our final meal together.



Monday morning and families Withyman, Tomlins and Quinney set off for the Eurotunnel via Le Touquet and Cite Europe. It had been an excellent weekend . We're already thinking about next year's gathering which will be in Radlett – if you would like to participate, or know of someone who might like to get involved and host a French family please contact Miranda Quinney on 01923 856360 or email mirandaquinney@yahoo.co.uk – it's going to be a lot of fun.