

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2025 Friday, 21 November Art Talk at the Maltings by Rob Smith, with wine and cheese. More details in September.

2026

Sunday, 4 January New Year Lunch. Venue to be decided.

Friday, 20 February Wine Tasting at the Maltings, led by Peter Mitic and Andrew Sorrell.

Monday, 13 April Annual General Meeting
Date to be decided Quiz led by Marilyn and Bob Young.

Sunday, 26 July Summer Picnic at Merula's in Howards Lane, Holybourne.

More information about all the events listed above will be circulated in due course.

FRENCH CONVERSATION GROUP

Shall we resurrect the French conversation group?

We used to meet once a month, in various homes, for a few years. We would begin with a pre-prepared topic, such as places we had visited or books we had read, discuss it in French then break for coffee and revert to English. Work permitting, Faye Mylward, who taught French, would join us and help when needed. The standard of French varied from person to person. We even met on Zoom during the pandemic. However, when Faye was no longer able to attend and the health of our late friend and organiser, Linda Mizen, deteriorated, the group disbanded. If you would like to form a new group please contact Pauline on pauline_esland@hotmail.com.



Bastille Day Lunch 2018

PERTUIS

A full report about our visit to Pertuis in May begins on page 2.



Heading home from Marseille Airport

Articles about our visit were published in the Alton Herald on 5 June and in the July edition of Round & About.

ALTON RAMBLERS

Cathy Turton writes, "In June, a few Alton ramblers accepted an invitation from our counterparts, the Mille Pattes, to a wonderful trip to Ubaye in the Alpes de Haute Provence. We enjoyed three days of walking in this beautiful mountainous region with a most welcoming group. We renewed our friendship and made new friends. We are hoping to reciprocate and welcome the Mille Pattes group in June next year."



15 – 19 MAY 2025 - VISIT TO PERTUIS

THURSDAY

On the morning of Thursday, 15 May, the main group set out from Holybourne to Heathrow in a mini-bus, with driver, organised by Richard. This was a stress-free way to travel. It was our first group visit to Pertuis since 2019 and we were all looking forward to it immensely. We were met at Marseille Airport by Jean-Jacques Dias, representing their Mayor, and Roselyne Haguenier, Secretary of the Pertuis twinning committee, and taken by coach to Pertuis where our hosts were waiting to welcome us. While we were aboard our BA flight others were travelling by train. Charlotte reports:

Four of us took the train from Alton to Pertuis this year. We stayed overnight close to St Pancras the night before our departure on the 14th so that we were ready for our Eurostar departure at 9.30am the next day. We had to be in the 'departure lounge' an hour earlier and after negotiating the Customs we found ourselves in a crowded waiting area. We were a little worried when we were told that our train to Paris was delayed by half an hour. However, once on the train we realised there would be time enough to get from the Gare du Nord to the Gare de Lyon using the RER line. Arriving in

Paris we steered our cases through the crowds straining our eyes to find the right level and right train. The signage was decidedly confusing but with more than a little help from some kind and understanding passengers we made it to the Gare de Lyon. It was a pleasure to climb aboard our TGV, such a sleek and streamlined train. We had a set of four seats facing each other, booked on the upper level, handy for the refreshment car. Three and a half hours later we were pulling into Aix TGV station where our hosts were waiting to greet us and drive us to Pertuis.

We all spent the evening with our hosts before the start of our very busy sojourn in Provence.

FRIDAY

On Friday morning we met at the *Maison de Culture* for an official welcome from Jean-Jacques on behalf of their Mayor, M. Roger Pellenc. Our Chair, Merula Frankel, read out a letter from Alton Mayor, Annette Eyre, in English followed by a French translation by Eileen Fawcett. The customary mayoral gifts were exchanged: a picture of Pertuis for Alton and some Jane Austen souvenirs for Pertuis. We were served a range of refreshments before departing for the market...



...where we admired the stalls piled high with local produce: fruit, vegetables, cheeses and even some live hens and chicks! Cherries, strawberries and asparagus were in abundance and some of these appeared on our dinner tables over the course of our stay. Whilst wandering around we met M. Pellenc a few times.



Our next port of call was in the countryside at the *ESAT du Grand Réal*, a restaurant that houses and employs adults with autism, where we were treated to a delicious four-course meal. The food is grown, cooked and served on site; it was all done impeccably.



Later in the afternoon Jean-Jacques took us on a guided tour of the older part Pertuis, visiting some places that even frequent visitors to Pertuis hadn't seen before. We did, however, begin at the *Mediatèque* that we had first visited in September 2017 before it was fully open the following January. We then continued to Place d'Ange (below left) and Place Mirabou (centre) where we explored the interior of L'Eglise Saint-Nicolas (right).



Our final stop on the walk was at a delightful art exhibition, after which we made our way home for dinner with our hosts.

SATURDAY

On Saturday morning we set out, with Emmanuel as our Tour Manager, on a coach ride to the medieval priory at Salagon, just over 40k north-east of Pertuis. The priory houses some art installations and is surrounded by beautiful gardens.



Midday saw us arrive in Forcalquier (below left) for lunch, either a picnic or in a restaurant, and a wander around the town. The more energetic amongst us could climb up to the citadel for views over the surrounding countryside. Back on the coach, we were driven to the beautiful Jardins de l'Abbaye de Valsainte (below right) where an event celebrating the blooming of their roses had just begun.



The final visit on Saturday's *grand tour* was to La Chocolaterie de Banon. Eileen gave an impromptu translation of the introductory talk before the serious business of tasting began. Some members couldn't resist buying some to take home.

Thank you Emmanuel and the committee for organising such an enjoyable day.



SUNDAY

Sunday is traditionally a day spent with our hosts, going off to a variety of places, and this year was no different. This is where some of us went.

Hania and Rob were taken in style by Roselyne to the centre of the village of Mirabeau where the car formed part of a display of classic cars and was much admired. There is no rear seating but the front is designed to seat three.



Charlotte and Tony went to the market in Saint-Martin-de-la-Brasque with Catherine, Denis, Josette and Jean-Jacques.



At least three groups were taken to Marseille where our activities varied a little. Sarah and Patric travelled on the land train to the basilica of Notre-Dame de la Garde. Merula, Barbara, Eileen and the two Paulines visited the Grotte Cosquer which is a replica of underwater caves 37 metres beneath sea level, the entrance to which was discovered in 1985. The replica is a work of art in itself. We descended

in a lift and were transported round the *grotte* in 6-person open carriages. The exhibition opened in 2022 and the entrance is situated next to the Gallery of the Mediterranean that we visited in 2013. Photography is forbidden but you can see pictures on their website www.grotte-cosquer.com.



Entrance to Grotte Cosquer is on the left-hand side



Merula, Pauline R, Eileen & Barbara have safely surfaced from the deep

After a tasty lunch and walk around the old port, Merula, Barbara and Pauline E were taken on a tour of Marseille, culminating in a drive to the slopes of the basilica where some of our party felt strong enough to make the final ascent.

Sunday evening saw us return to the *Maison de Culture* for a buffet supper, this time with their Mayor, M. Roger Pellenc, in attendance. After the speeches, gifts between our twinning associations were exchanged: a William Morris tablecloth for Pertuis and Provençal produce for Alton. Afterwards we joined in the singing of both English and French songs.



MONDAY

Due to a strike by taxi drivers, our departure from Pertuis was brought forward to 6 am. Our journey to the airport went very smoothly and we arrived before 7 am in plenty of time to have a leisurely breakfast. The journey to Aix wasn't quite so smooth for the train passengers. Charlotte reports:

Our return journey also started earlier than intended due to the strike. We made it to the ramp just short of the station entrance but were forced to a standstill in a line of other vehicles. On either side were many taxis, their drivers standing talking amongst themselves. Our host decided it would be wisest to leave the car. He led us through to the station entrance. After saying our goodbyes he returned to his car. We

smelt burning rubber shortly afterwards and heard the siren of a fire engine. The taxi drivers had set fire to a heap of tyres. We just hoped our hosts got home without too much delay. Our TGV to Paris was late but after 40 mins the train drew in and we reached Paris with adequate time to change stations, get through Customs at the Gare du Nord and catch our Eurostar to London.

As always, we were royally looked after. The Zoom calls between Pertuis and Sarah and other committee members were certainly worth while. We are extremely grateful to all our hosts and organisers and we look forward to seeing them in Alton next year to celebrate our 20th Anniversary.

SUMMER PICNIC

For the second year running Merula invited us to her home in Holybourne for our annual summer picnic on Sunday, 27 July. It was a lovely afternoon – dry, but not too hot, with good food and company. Thank you, Merula and everyone who helped set up and kind neighbours, Sue and Nigel Stephens, who let us park in their grounds. Thank you too to everyone for bringing such a marvellous selection for the buffet.



More thanks for all the raffle prizes that were donated. We sold lots of tickets and made £160 for ATTA funds.



More good news... Merula has invited us back next year!

We look forward to seeing you at the Art Talk on Friday, 21 November

With best wishes from the ATTA Committee