

# Chew Valley Twinning Association

## Who and what are we?

We are a group of people of all ages from across the Chew Valley with a common interest in France and the French way of life. There are no membership fees, and our overriding aim is to enjoy ourselves. Many of us don't speak French.

In the late 1990s we were twinned with a town in the centre of France, but that connection dwindled away. It nevertheless fired us with the enthusiasm and confidence to find a more suitable and convenient partner. After exploring several possibilities, we introduced ourselves to Vern-sur-Seiche, a village in Brittany just south of Rennes. Vern's population of some 7,500 is broadly equivalent to that of the Chew Valley, and our friendship has matured to the extent that we now try to facilitate youth, cultural and employment exchanges.

Vern is a vibrant community with a secondary school, primary schools, a Dance and Music School, choirs, sports teams of all kinds, a modern Youth Centre and an ultra-modern Arts and Culture Facility. Nearby Rennes is slightly smaller than Bristol, is home to the regional Breton parliament, has numerous galleries and museums, wonderful shops and restaurants, and a cheap and efficient public transport system based on trams and an underground automated driverless railway. The city is home to the largest open-air food market in Europe, with some 800 stalls every Saturday morning.

## What do we do?

We aim to take a group of mixed ages (children to senior citizens) to Vern every other year, with a return visit in the intervening years. Our latest trip to Brittany was at the end of October 2008, when everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We spent quality time with our host families – lots of hospitality and wine and French cuisine!! We were taken round the nearby medieval city of Angers, we savoured a wine-tasting, and were startled to learn from an international exhibition in Rennes that King Arthur is French! Out of fairness, it seems that everyone has claimed the monarch as their own: the first written references were from Italy, but the historians have graciously concluded that although he became a Breton king, Arthur was indeed born in Britain.



English and French teenagers bonding in Vern in October 2008

We are encouraging other groups around the Valley (schools, music, youth, sports, historical, church etc) to liaise with their French counterparts with the possible aim of exchange visits. Our local primary schools are hoping to establish pen-pal correspondence with schools in Vern, and the secondary schools are exploring possibilities. Aside from the visits, we arrange lively social activities throughout the year - quizzes, skittles, Safari Suppers, barbecues etc.

## Interested?

If you are interested, or just think you might be, please contact Steve Ward (01275 333708), Eddie Catchpole (01275 333845) or Sasja Patten (01761 221659).

## Stop press

A group of around 50 French adults and children will be coming to the Chew Valley from 24 to 26 October 2009. If you would like to host, to take part, or would just like to know more, please ring one of the above.



The new Arts and Culture facility in Vern