

ST ANDREWS-LOCHES ALLIANCE



President's Report, year ended 31st December 2019

2019 began with our now traditional New Year Drinks Party. This was a very pleasant gathering of about 25 members during which I was able to announce the Alliance Programme for the coming year.

We continued to run the bar for the first three SCO concerts at the Younger Hall, which raised on average about £130. We are grateful to the SCO for bearing the cost of the necessary 'occasional licences'. This activity has come to a temporary halt while the Younger Hall is closed for refurbishment.

In April we welcomed a group of golfers from Loches. The Community Council kindly offered a trophy and this was contested by the Loches golfers and a team made up mostly of Alliance golfing members. With some financial support from the Links Trust, matches took place over the Strathtyrum, Jubilee and Eden courses. The Alliance team narrowly beat the guests and won the trophy which was presented by Callum McLeod, Provost of St Andrews at a dinner on the last night of the visit. A return match in the Loches area is planned for 2020.

A group of pupils from Madras College once again visited their partner school in Loches, Collège Georges Besse. The Alliance was able to contribute £800 to help make this possible. We are very keen to support this exchange as it offers local pupils the opportunity to visit our twin town, practise their language skills and experience the French way of life. We were disappointed that the French school was unable to make a return visit, due largely to their concerns over the situation surrounding Brexit.

Pascal Dubrisay, one of the founding fathers of the Alliance on the Loches side, paid a private visit to St Andrews in May during which he kindly offered to give a lecture based on his recent book, 'Mémorial

d'un Grogard. The lecture took place in one of the University lecture theatres with a reception afterwards in the Byre Theatre. An invited audience from local schools, members of the Franco-Scottish Society and the University attended a fascinating talk.

For the first time this year the Alliance entered into partnership with Craigtoun Country Park. Our first venture was a 'Café français' held at the beginning of June, when, working with the café staff, we transformed the space into a French café serving French food and drink as part of the usual menu. We also encouraged the local primary schools to attend and organised activities and a quiz for the pupils with prizes. We hope to repeat this in 2020.

Our summer event, coinciding with the French Fête Nationale was a barbecue with a jazz group also to be held at Craigtoun.

Unfortunately, we did not manage to sell enough tickets to cover our costs for this event and so changed the venue to the Duncans' garden with lunch provided by the Alliance catering team. We were blessed with a beautiful summer's day and the occasion was much enjoyed.

Our last collaboration with Craigtoun was our participation in their Charities Fair at the end of the summer. This is an event to promote local charities and the Alliance had a stall with information about our work and membership and games for the children.

In October, a group of 14 members visited Loches. We were made to feel very welcome by our French hosts and had a most enjoyable weekend. There were visits to the Chateau de Verneuil and Loches. The visit coincided with the chamber music festival, 'Sonates d'automne' and the group attended two of the concerts. It is important to note that visits of this nature are funded entirely by those who participate.

To round off what had been a busy year for the Alliance, we held a Quiz Evening. This is our biggest fundraising activity of the year and we were delighted to have over 70 participants. Questions were set by committee members with the valuable help of Mark Dunkerley and supper was organised by the Alliance catering team. We raised £678.85

As to the future, while currently there remains much uncertainty we hope to be able to resume our programme of events before long. These events have a twofold aim: to raise funds to enable us to

support exchange programmes with Loches for the people of St Andrews and to raise awareness of the St Andrews- Loches twinning. One event already in the diary for 2021 is an exhibition run in conjunction with the St Andrews Preservation Trust which will be open to the public and during which we plan to run workshops for the local Primary Schools. There is also an initiative under discussion between St Leonards School and the Lycée Thérèse Planiol in Loches. The aim is for pupils from both schools to work together on an environmental study. We very much hope that we will also be able to continue to run a full programme of fund-raising events

The Alliance is in good heart with an increasing membership which is very encouraging, and I would like to thank everyone for their continuing support. Most importantly I would also like to thank the Committee members who have worked so hard to support our events and to ensure that they run smoothly, producing inspiring ideas and delicious canapés and everything in between. Thank you!

The Committee, Frank Quinault, Irene Constable, Elizabeth Gray, John Matthews, Izzy Murdoch and I have all indicated that we are willing to continue in post for another year. Under normal circumstances this would be put to a vote by members present, but these are not normal circumstances and so I would ask anyone who wishes to raise an objection to let me know by email.

That ends my report for the year 2019. If there are any questions, please submit them to me by email and I will be happy to try to answer them.

JWD 30/04/2020