

### *Trustees' Report 2023 continued*

We were delighted to welcome Anne-Sylvie Vassenaix-Paxton as the speaker at our AGM in April. She took as her subject 'The Auld Alliance', explaining in French how at the outset it was a military partnership, but now it is social and cultural...as evident in the St Andrews Loches Alliance.

We were once again able to give generous sponsorship to the exchange between Madras College and the Collège Georges Besse in Loches. Thirty three pupils and accompanying staff spent a week in Loches with their French partners who returned to St Andrews a few weeks later. Taking pupils abroad has become ever more challenging for school staff and we are very pleased to be able to offer support to Madras College.

Twenty-five visitors from Loches came to St Andrews in June and enjoyed an action packed weekend. Amongst the group was a delegation from the Town Hall including the Mayor of Loches and his Deputy. They met representatives from the schools in St Andrews and the Police, business, The Preservation Trust (sharing heritage issues) and the Chair of the Community Council. They also visited St Andrews West, a housing development where one of the main roads is to be named 'Loches Drive'.

The rest of the group enjoyed a more relaxed programme with their host families, sight-seeing, shopping, putting and visiting the hidden gardens of St Andrews. There was a reception at the Town Hall organized by the Community Council, a short concert in Holy Trinity Church and of course a fish and chip supper. James and Lindsay Murray kindly welcomed the group to their beautiful gardens at Craigfoodie House where everyone enjoyed a lunch party organized by St Andrews Rotary. A formal dinner to mark the success of this town twinning was held at the New Golf Club. The visit was made possible thanks to generous donations from the Royal and Ancient Golf Club Town Fund and the North East Fife Common Good Fund.

In September, on what turned out to be just about the hottest day of the year, we held our first Loches sponsored Junior Tennis Championship. This was a good start to a venture which we hope will develop and lead to a tournament with the junior tennis players in Loches.

About the same time a group of members travelled to Loches to defend the Twin Towns Golf trophy. The team was sadly beaten on the 18th hole of the last round and so the Trophy, donated by the Community Council in 2019, remains in Loches.

In the autumn we held two film evenings. The first was a screening of the film *Délicieux* and the second an evening focused on French crime films produced before the First World War. Dr. Joseph North from St Andrews University provided a superb commentary while Callum McLeod provided a piano accompaniment, popcorn and ice cream. The money raised was donated to Holy Trinity Church.

In November we held a Quiz Evening, with a special musical round from one of our members, Lucienne Suter. This was our main fund raising event of the year and was very well attended. The competition was as ever, fierce.

The partnership between the Photographic Society of St Andrews and the Caméra Photo Club du Lochois continued. The two clubs work together on a common theme each year

and share the results. The themes for 2023 were *Légèreté* and *De Tout Près*. Members from the club in Loches were amongst the visitors we welcomed in June.

The Alliance has decided to fund a small bursary to students of French at the University who are planning to study abroad and in particular in the Loches area. This will be advertised in the spring of 2024.

Two of our members provided an opportunity for others to 'brush up their French' in the run up to the visit from Loches in June. These conversation sessions proved very popular and continued beyond the visit. We are very grateful to Jean-Marc Murré and Jo Goodburn.

This was a very busy year for the Alliance and we were very well supported by our members. It was felt that the aims of the Alliance were amply fulfilled in terms of raising awareness of French language and culture amongst schools and adults, supporting exchanges academic, sporting, cultural and official and giving the town the opportunity to become involved in our activities.