

ELFORD/AWOINGT ASSOCIATION: FRIENDS OF AWOINGT

REPORT MAY 2022 - MAY 2023

Having ended last year's report on a very positive note, especially looking forward to our first post covid visit to Awoingt, we then had a series of disappointments which resulted in both our visit and our now annual pancake café being cancelled. In addition, the change in Head Teacher at the School in Awoingt had a negative effect on the ease of exchanges between the pupils of the Howard School and the École de la Source. All these setbacks felt quite demotivating. So the invitation to participate in the Platinum Jubilee flower festival was readily accepted and then from September onwards, thankfully, the momentum began to regain its previous rhythm. Fortunately the exchange of monthly news letters between the two villages ensures that our links always remain alive and well.

The École de la Source benefitted from another new Head Teacher which has allowed us to reignite contact between the pupils. By using the occasions of particularly French celebrations such as St. Nicholas, when all the pupils receive a decorative chocolate, we aim to keep interest alive and Mrs. Stephens, the French teacher is pleased to have the real, concrete references to use in her lessons. The support, engagement and enthusiasm of Staff and pupils at the Howard School is very much appreciated and we welcome warmly our new Francophile Head Teacher, Mr. Wynn.

The Service of Remembrance is always a moving occasion to bring the two villages closer together as the names of those in the Staffordshire regiments buried in Awoingt's War Cemetery are commemorated along with our own village casualties and on a more joyous note it was great to play a part in the Electric Avenue Christmas celebrations.

It was lovely to be able to welcome new faces to our social suppers in the pub although now we find it quite a squash to fit us all in! Nevertheless we very much hope that we can expand the number of Elfordians involved in a group entirely dedicated to making new friendships and enjoying experiencing the similarities and differences of our ways of life, especially younger (or less advanced in years!) members of our village: it is now ten years since the first contacts and visits were made and regrettably those who have been involved since the beginning don't seem to be getting any younger or more mobile!

To this end our next project is to run, to our mutual benefit, the July pop-up pancake café in the playground in conjunction with the School P.T.A. If it were possible to raise our profile further by being included in any welcoming letter offered to new residents and on the village website that would be much appreciated.

It is wonderful to be able to conclude this report with a brief résumé of a fantastic visit to our friends in Awoingt, from which a group of us returned on Monday evening.

After an untroubled journey we arrived to be greeted by friends old and new and enjoyed a very generous "aperatif" offered by the Town Council. Their Mayor, Eddy D'Herbecour, along with several members of their (15 man strong) council were delighted to receive the letter from our Chairman, Phil Turley in the exchange of gift one in particular is remarkable: the finder a Staffordshire regimental cap

badge in the War Graves Commission Cemetery had asked it to be returned, via the Elford délégation, to Staffordshire: it is intended to present it to the Regiment's museum in Whittington for display with a note as to its origins and connections. The two days passed extraordinarily quickly in a round of fascinating visits and beautiful meals, both as whole group, in smaller groups and individually with our hosts. Particularly memorable was our Saturday night entertainment in their village hall when the "Elford Choir" was "encouraged" to serenade our hosts with their local "anthem" and the visit to the school where we were warmly welcomed and in our turn were serenaded by the pupils singing God Save the King. The Awoingt pupils were so very pleased to receive letters and greetings from their correspondants in Elford. The significance of these international but individual connections is reflected by the article on our visit appearing in the local regional newspaper. The departures are always hard but is inspiring to be able to reinforce established friendships and create new ones in such a short time.

We are hoping to return the invitation in 2024.

Des retrouvailles, à Awoingt, avec les « jumeaux » d'Elford

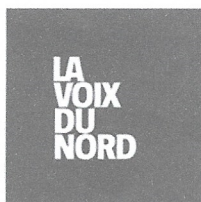
Par JM GUYOMARC'H (correspondant local de presse)

3-4 minutes

Ce vendredi 12 mai, Awoingt a accueilli provenant de la commune jumelle d'Elford. Des retrouvailles « émouvantes » après la période de Covid.



Deux représentants de la délégation anglaise ont remis un cadeau au maire. - VDN



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Vendredi soir, à la salle des fêtes, neuf Britanniques provenant [d'Elford, commune jumelée avec Awoingt depuis juin 2018](#), ont été accueillis notamment par Eddy Dherbécourt, maire, et Olga Leriche, présidente de l'association Amitié-Elford-Awoingt-Cambrésis.

Après avoir souhaité la bienvenue aux Anglais, l'édile a invité « les habitants d'Elford à venir découvrir Awoingt et le Cambrésis » et mis en exergue « les nombreux points communs existants entre nos deux villages » et adressé des « remerciements aux familles hébergeant nos amis d'outre-Manche ».

Des liens depuis dix ans

Olga Leriche a rappelé que « ces liens se sont tissés entre nos deux communes depuis dix ans. À tel point que les élèves de l'école de la Source et ceux de la Howard Primary School d'Elford entretiennent des échanges réguliers (lettres et appels vidéo, par Internet). » Pour elle, « cette visite est particulièrement importante, puisqu'il n'a pas été possible de nous revoir pendant la période de pandémie. Nos retrouvailles sont donc très émouvantes. » Elle a fait connaître aux invités le programme qui leur avait été préparé (entre le 13 et 15 mai) dont des visites au Labo de Cambrai, au centre d'interprétation Cambrai Tank 1917 à Flesquières et à