

Erasmus Eureka! - Paris 4-10 May 2017

Thursday May 4th

After what seemed a lifetime of anticipation and building excitement the day finally dawned, warm and sunny, and we were off! Paris beckoned and we left Perth in high spirits, enjoying the sights of this fair land whizzing past the windows of the train.

Diligent students got out homework, and then promised Mrs Dibnah and Mrs Denyer that they would leave it in their cases for the rest of the trip so that they could focus on making the most of the opportunities that



lay ahead. As the day went on, in case we weren't sure just how fast we were whizzing south, Ben kept us up-to-date with his train speed app and seemingly encyclopaedic knowledge of the UK rail system. Further light relief was provided by the train conductor who turned out to have some great card tricks up his sleeve (though we didn't think literally)!

Arrival at King's Cross saw a quick visit to Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, but as we couldn't get through the wall and didn't have a flying car we stuck to Plan A and caught the Eurostar on to Paris. It was late evening by the time we arrived and we were all glad to see the welcoming smiles of the families the children were to stay with, who were waiting for us as we pulled in. The boys headed off by car and the girls and staff had their first experience of the Paris Metro (lots of stairs to keep us fit) en route to our respective homes for the week.



Friday May 5th

Our first full day in Paris was spent at the Ecole Saint Victor, our French partner school. We were given a warm welcome by the whole school community and enjoyed a delicious buffet breakfast of pastries, French bread, coffee and juice provided by the parents. It was a great way to meet parents, staff and pupils of Ecole Saint Victor along with time to say hello to pupils and staff from our partner schools in Greece, Italy and Romania.



Whilst the adults enjoyed chatting over coffee our energetic pupils soon discovered what was to become an unexpected highlight of the trip: walking on stilts! With the encouragement of their French counterparts, some of whom were very young, the Craigclowan contingent soon mastered the art of stilt walking. Then it was time for Mrs Dibnah and Mrs Denyer's turn: both were relieved to find that hours of childhood fun on stilts had not been forgotten (and it is still fun) and so honour and dignity remained intact! Stilts are now definitely on

the wish list for the Craigclowan playground.

Breakfast over we were wonderfully entertained by the Ecole Saint Victor pupils who sang to us beautifully both in French and in the language of each of the partner schools before hot air balloons were launched in the playground, different colours representing our different nations. Exchange of ideas and research followed, with the visiting schools joining different classes and both French and

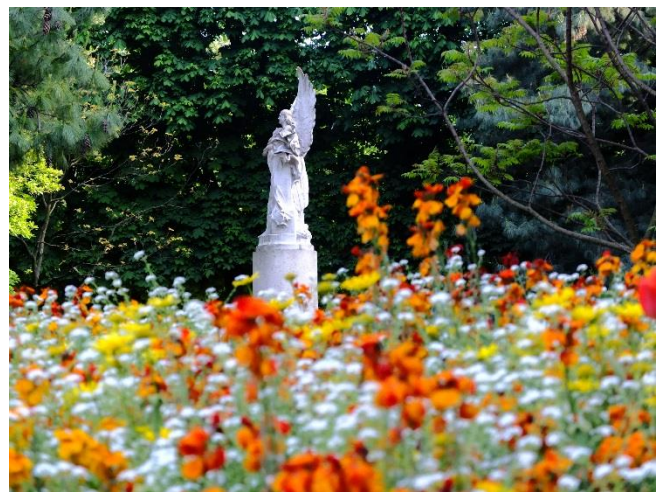


visiting nation students giving presentations highlighting the research they had done on inventors from their own country and the games or models they had made to disseminate this information amongst their own school community. Craigclowan pupils were treated to a bilingual presentation by our hosts. Something for us to aspire to?

The remainder of the morning was spent playing on the stilts (again) and joining in a giant game of stuck in the mud in a PE lesson! Appetites revived once more it was time for staff and pupils to enjoy an excellent French lunch of fish, cheese (of course) and wine (staff only). We began to wonder how they work in the afternoons if every lunch is like this!

Once lunch was finally over (it was hard to tear ourselves away from that cheese), the children joined lessons, including a visit to the local swimming pool, and the teachers from all five countries had a very productive project meeting to discuss the project so far, upcoming targets and the arrangements for the next phase. Launching in September, it will involve the children having the opportunity to devise their own inventions which will make life easier for someone else.

After heading home with their families, and the teachers from the four visiting countries enjoying an early evening stroll together to the Jardin du Luxembourg, we reconvened at the school for another wonderful meal. The parents had once again provided a range of French treats (including a comté cheese served to President Barrack Obama on his visit to Paris) and the sun shone as we relaxed with our friendly hosts and the children played on the stilts - again.



Saturday 6th May

Today saw the start of our cultural activities around Paris, and the beginning of many visits which showed us just what a beautiful and fascinating city it is.

The Musée des Arts et Metiers was our first port of call. This museum, unknown to and unheard of by most of us beforehand, is well worth visiting. It showcases inventions and innovations over hundreds of years, so was a perfect fit for our Erasmus project. We all found different things to hold our interest, capture our imagination and inspire us.

There were parallels to be drawn with Scottish inventions, concepts the children had come across in Maths and Science lessons, objects that reminded us of books we'd read or films we'd seen, such as the satellite from 1962 that bore a striking resemblance to the Death Star from the Star Wars films, and yet others that struck a chord with current issues such as sustainability, for example an early solar-powered oven. By the



end of our visit we certainly agreed with a review we'd read that the Musée des Arts et Metiers is the coolest museum (and metro station) in Paris!

After a brief refuelling in a café with Scottish and Greek teams together (think chocolat chaud,

croque monsieurs and a variety of languages) the children headed off with their host families for the afternoon and evening. For Ben and Ross this meant an afternoon of fun, games, music making and sweets at their host's birthday party and for the Issy and Tessa a climb up the Eiffel Tower and an evening making crêpes and playing monopoly (in French of course). Mrs Denyer fulfilled a long held ambition to visit the Musée d'Orsay, home to work of the impressionist artists including her favourites, Monet and Pissarro, which she deemed well worth queuing in the rain for, and Mrs Dibnah caught up with old friends and old haunts!



Sunday 7th May



Election Day in France dawned grey and drizzly in the French capital, but nothing could dampen our spirits as we met at the metro and headed off to the Louvre. It was as spectacular on the outside as we had imagined, so selfies were duly taken with the backdrop of the glass pyramids before we happily dodged the queues and whisked through the groups' entrance.

Where to go first in this enormous museum? The Mona Lisa of course! We followed Mrs Dibnah along a maze of crowded halls and there she was (the Mona Lisa that is, not Mrs Dibnah), initially partly obscured by a large phone waving, photo snapping crowd. The advantage of being 11 or 12 though, is that it's easier to wiggle to the front, and the

advantage of being with 11 or 12 year olds is that people let you past to keep track of them, so we soon found ourselves enjoying a (relatively) close up view of this famous lady. More chocolat chaud followed in the cafe whilst we let this sink in and decided which parts of the museum to focus on next.

Mrs Dibnah led us to the Roman and Greek art where we saw sculptures of figures familiar from legends we had heard back in Scotland. We found a statue of a Greek God who looked as though he was taking the first selfie, another of



Romulus and Remus and an enormous marble bath! Mrs Denyer then put a bid in for the African art where we enjoyed a wonderful contrast from the European sculptures and paintings we had seen so far.



Outside the museum the stage was being set (quite literally) for Macron, who would turn out to be France's new President by the end of the day.

Tessa and Issy then headed off for the shops of the Champs Elysée with their hosts whilst Ross and Ben headed home with their family for an afternoon of games and more music making. The two Mrs Ds meanwhile headed off for a bit of shopping of their own and a visit to Monet's breathtaking water lily canvases (cue ecstatically happy Mrs Denyer) in the Musée de l'Orangerie.



The evening was spent with families for the children and a meal with the staff from all five Erasmus project nations for the teachers at a 'Moules' restaurant (another favourite for Mrs Denyer). It was great to be able to relax with our colleagues and chat about the similarities and differences in our respective schools, education systems and pupils! Whilst we ate news came through, whilst Ben and Ross enjoyed a victory party thrown by their hosts. It proved a wonderful opportunity for our pupils to experience the workings of democracy in another country.

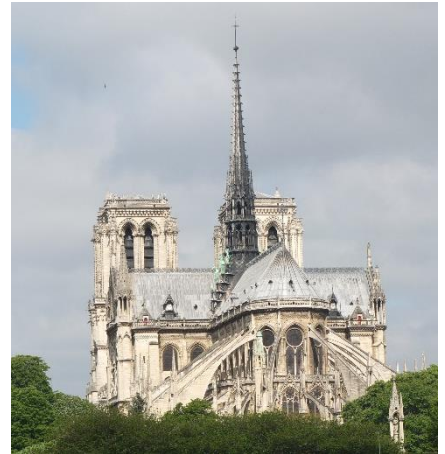


Monday 8th May

Monday, a French national holiday, brought brighter skies and a chance to get a different view of Paris, this time from a boat on the Seine. Pupils and staff from each of the five nations again joined together and enjoyed seeing some of the most famous landmarks of this beautiful city from the water. Many exclamations of 'ooh', 'aah', 'wow' and 'look over there' followed during a very happy morning which

flew by as we cruised past museums, the Eiffel Tower, the Notre Dame and Jardin des Tuileries to name but a few.

The national groups headed off in different directions after our boat ride and the Scottish contingent set off (after more chocolat chaud and croissants of course) in pursuit of another view of the city. First we headed up to the Arc de Triomphe, from which hung a huge Tricolor flag and underneath which had just been a ceremony commemorating those who had fought in various wars. It was a moving scene. From there we headed to higher ground as, with Mrs Dibnah as our excellent tour guide, we found ourselves in Montmartre standing outside the Sacré Cœur. The views were worth the walk and we had fun spotting the places we'd been and seen earlier in the day. Ambling through the streets of this colourful part of Paris was great fun, and so was shopping in the chocolate and souvenir shops we came across, followed by the fidget spinners that were quickly snapped up (and then rarely put down) by eager Craigclowan pupils.



Our stomach's nudged us in the direction of the Place des Tertres and we settled down to an outdoor lunch of pizza (pupil's choice), onion soup and baked camembert (adult's choice). The square was filled with artists and we had great fun watching them at work as we ate and then wandering around their stalls afterwards. Then Mrs Dibnah's hidden talent for haggling came to light as she swiftly negotiated

a price for Issy, Ross and Tessa who wanted to have their portraits drawn by some of the artists competing for their business. Ben and Mrs Denyer were captivated by a street musician in a colourful costume playing a variety of inventive and unusual instruments whilst the others posed for their portraits under Mrs Dibnah's watchful eye.

As the afternoon went on we visited the Opera House where we hope one day to hear Ben sing and, as we could not go in due to a performance, we retreated to a cafe for a chocolat chaud to make up for the disappointment! Our final sight of the day was the Place de la Concorde, which we saw from the vantage point of the Big Wheel. We marvelled once again at the sights of Paris, this time in early evening light, and were surprised how much ground we had covered on one day.



But sightseeing is hungry work, so after a visit to a French supermarket to stock up on picnic supplies for the next day we were ready to meet the other schools and some of the families in a cr perie. Sweet and savoury cr pes were devoured by all, as the children chatted with their French, Italian, Romanian and Greek counterparts (helped by fidget spinners) and the staff caught up with the day's news from colleagues and host families. Hugs were exchanged with our Greek friends as the evening drew to a close as they were to head home in the morning.

Leaving the cr perie we were struck by a view of the Panth on, lit by moonlight. A fitting end to a day full of the wonderful sights, sounds and flavours of Paris.

Tuesday 9th May

This was, in some ways, the day we had been waiting for (or at least, Mrs Denyer had) - a trip to Monet's garden in Giverny. A metro ride together to the train station allowed Ben, Issy, Ross and Tessa to perfect their balance moves between stations, before a pleasant train ride through pretty French countryside towards Monet's home.

Arriving in Giverny we went first to the church where Claude Monet and many of his family are buried, visiting his grave and taking in the peace and quiet of this tranquil spot. A picnic lunch followed and we were blessed with sunshine and birdsong.



We ambled through the pretty village of Giverny and there we were, at Monet's garden. A project on Monet back at Craigclowan and an excellent assembly by the Art Club had helped to prepare us for this visit and it was fabulous! There was a huge amount of colour in the garden, despite the relatively early time of year, with different flowerbeds

being given over to different groups of colours. We looked around Monet's house, saw some of the paintings he had hanging there by other artists and imagined ourselves in his shoes as we looked out over the garden from the upstairs windows. Of course the most well known part of the garden is the lakes, with their water lilies, weeping willows and Japanese bridge. Although the lilies were not yet in flower the reflections on the water were beautiful and it brought our understanding and appreciation of Monet's work to life. Mrs Dibnah and Mrs Denyer were impressed by the impact the garden clearly had on Tessa, Ross, Issy and Ben and their response to it: after all, gardens are not usually most 11 and 12 year olds first choice for a great day out! This special garden held us all captivated though. Our time passed quickly and although Mrs Denyer would have liked to stay indefinitely (perhaps even taken up residence), we were eventually coaxed out with the promise of ice-cream.



Our journey back to Paris gave us some time to reflect on what we had seen, as well as to enjoy the novelty of sitting upstairs on a double decker train! At the station we bid farewell to the Romanian and Italian pupils and teachers, wondering which of them we would see again, and where.

A final evening with host families and the opportunity to give thank you gifts for the hospitality our pupils had been shown was eagerly embraced and we were once again impressed by just how these four Craigclowan pupils had thrown themselves so wholeheartedly into every aspect of our time in Paris.

Wednesday May 10th

An early rendezvous at the Gare du Nord saw fond farewells between the Craigclowan families and their hosts, with open invitations issued to visit their hosts again, bringing their own families with them, and promises made to visit Scotland in return. The Eurostar awaited and we soon found ourselves being whisked out of Paris and back towards London, our week in the French capital having flown as quickly as the train ride.

The journey to London and then on home to Perth passed easily thanks to exchanging memories , a little sleep, Ben's train facts and train driving simulator and (seemingly) endless hours of playing with fidget spinners. As we began to recognise the familiar landscape of Scotland, complete with flowery gorse glowing in the late afternoon sun, a different kind of excitement took over as thoughts turned to being reunited with family and friends. Pulling into Perth station we realised we have the best of both worlds - we had shared a memorable and inspiring week away and have the warmth of loving families and a fabulous school community to come back to and share our experiences with.

