

CITYLINK



Chairs Letter: Michael Bevis writes:

Welcome to the summer 2026 edition of Citylink.

In this edition we look back at a successful exchange visit to Chartres and look forward to some upcoming events.

It was our turn to travel this year, and we took the decision to travel by coach to Portsmouth and take the Brittany ferries vessel Guillaume de Normandie to Ouistreham where a coach was waiting to take us to Chartres. It was certainly a cheaper, less complicated

and a less stressful option than Eurostar and did afford some better gastronomic opportunities even if the coach journeys in France did seem a little long.

As usual our hosts had laid on a full and interesting programme about which there are several articles in the following pages and my thanks to our contributors.

This year's exchange took place against a background of major changes as a result of the recent local elections in Chartres. After many years as Mayor Jean-Pierre Gorges



and his list did not all get re-elected and on the second round Ladislav Vergne and his list were all elected. This meant that although Jean-Pierre Gorges himself was re-elected, only a few of his list are joining him in opposition on the Council. Patrick Geroudet who has been the Councillor with responsibility for international relations, the various twinnings and President of Chartres International has lost his seat. His place has been taken by Nathalie Mardelet. From the warm welcome we received once again at the Mairie there is no doubt, however, that the new administration is committed to maintaining and strengthening the twinning links.

I should not let this moment go by without thanking Patrick for all he has done for the twinning between our two cities. For so many years he has been there to welcome visitors from Chichester by hosting receptions for us at the Mairie and I hope that he will continue to take part and we can welcome him in a private capacity next year.

Please come and support our coming events at Chichester's Gala Day, The Four Cities Event as part of the Festival of Chichester and our annual Garden Party.

Meet the new Mayor

Chartres has a new Mayor, M. Ladislav Vergne, elected on March 28 this year along with an entirely new cabinet. At 34 years old, he is ambitious and dynamic – something of a new broom. He welcomed our group at the Mayor's reception, along with Mme. Nathalie Mardelet, who will be responsible for Chartres International. Addressing us in excellent English, perfected during his time working in the USA it was plain that he and Mme Mardelet are eager to maintain and extend the links between Chartres and its twin cities.

Our hosts had kindly supplied us with the April edition of Chartres Votre Ville which includes an in-depth interview with M Vergne. He says that his ambition is to be a 'maire de proximité', remaining close to the people of Chartres and listening to their concerns and hopes for the city.



M. Ladislav Vergne with Friends of Chartres Chair Michael Bevis

M Vergne's three priorities are to improve medical provision in the city, to revitalise the city centre and to ensure that urban planning includes the development of green spaces in the city. These plans include 'greening' schools and public areas in the city for citizens to enjoy all year round.

We look forward to working with M Vergne and Mme Mardelet and hope to develop and strengthen the links between our two cities.

Chartres Visit 2026

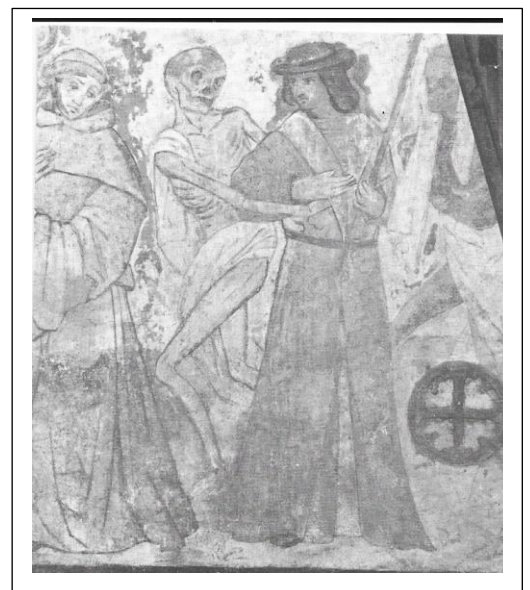
Mayor's Reception

Following a meeting of the two Twinning Committees where the dates for next year's exchange were settled (see Page 8 of this edition of Citylink), we were received by the Mayor, M. Ladislas Vergne in the historic surroundings of the Palais de Montescot. There was an exchange of gifts and M. Vergne received a copy of a new book about Chichester from Mayor Sean McHale.



Visit to the Eglise Saint Orien

On the first afternoon, some of us visited the Eglise St Orien. This simple church in the village of Meslay-le- Grenet houses an unexpected treasure, a large fresco depicting the Danse Macabre where Death leads a procession of 20 people from every social class towards their fate. These include on one wall grand figures like the Pope, the Cardinal, the King and the Knight, while on another, more humble figures are portrayed: a curate, a hermit, an astrologer and a moneylender. The fresco was painted at the end of the 100 years' war, a period where France was suffering from famine, plague and extreme poverty. It indicates clearly that in the face of death whether you are rich or poor, modest or humble, all are equal.



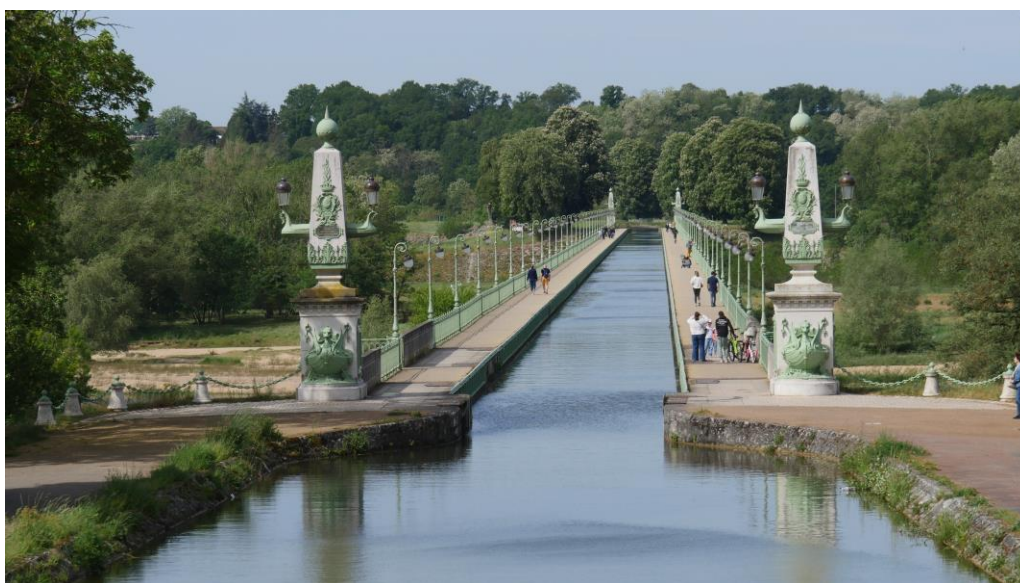
Cruise on the Canal de Briare

Our friends in Chartres had a very special trip planned for us on our day out – a cruise on the Canal de Briare. The canal runs from Briare to Montargis, a distance of 54 kilometres with 41 locks crossing the River Loire on a 660-metre aqueduct constructed in 1890. Before that, barges arriving at the Loire had to wait to cross until it was safe to do so. As the Loire is only navigable 220 days a year, this could take a long time.

Today a comfortable boat takes visitors along the canal towards Châtillon sur Loire and lunch is served during the trip. The journey starts by crossing the aqueduct at a height of 11 metres above the river. Today, this is a journey of 20 minutes, but at the time the aqueduct was constructed, barges were hauled by a team of 'towpath handlers' and the crossing took up to two hours. They were later replaced by teams of donkeys or horses. The last animal-towed barge crossed in 1969.



The aqueduct was designed by Gustave Eiffel, but the construction was delegated to another architect, Léonce Abel Mazoyer. The entrance is imposing, flanked by two columns with sea monsters at their base meant to protect the bridge from the evil eye and witchcraft. It has 72 lampposts, still the originals. It was one of the first monuments in France to benefit from electric lighting, powered by a turbine in the Loire. For over 100 years it was the longest canal bridge in the world until it was overtaken by a one-kilometre bridge in Germany, built in 2002.



The channel for barges is narrow, only 6.2 metres wide, which means that only one barge can cross at a time. Today, priority is given to the first boat entering the channel, but in the past a keeper managed traffic, three hours in one direction then three in the other. With each barge taking two hours to cross, it is surprising that up to 60 crossed every day.

Today, the aqueduct attracts 400,000 visitors a year. For those who wish to spend longer on the canal, there is the option of hiring a houseboat or spending the night in one of the cargo barges converted into luxury floating hotels. It is popular with cyclists too as the 900 km Loire à Vélo route crosses the aqueduct.

We thank our hosts for introducing us to this fascinating structure – and for the delicious lunch enjoyed on board.

Gregorian Mass at Chartres Cathedral

Pamela Kemp writes:

Two years ago at Chartres Cathedral it was decided to try having a Gregorian Mass, in which the director of the choir agreed to participate. Singers for the mass were successfully recruited, and the mass was held at the high altar before the regular Sunday mass. As is traditional, the mass is in Latin although the sermon is in French.



I went to one of the first of those masses on our visit in 2024 and hoped that I would be able to do so again on this visit. I was therefore delighted to discover that this had obviously been a success as it has continued during the intervening years.

When I mentioned to my host, Patrick, my interest in attending this mass he regretfully said that he was already committed to giving a tour of the Mairie, which I had done previously, but his friend, Jean Yves, kindly offered to accompany me.

From the entrance doors one has to walk the full length of the cathedral to reach the high altar which is at the very front of the cathedral. There is a magnificent, monumental marble statue of the Virgin Mary ascending into heaven, the Assumption, representing Our Lady of Chartres. It was carved by Charles-Antoine Bridan in 1770s. There are some steps up to area in front of the statue and below these rows of chairs have been placed with the choir stalls to the left of the chairs. So it is a relatively intimate setting which about fifty people attended that Sunday.

The priest was attended by three teenage boy acolytes and a second priest, all in long, white robes. One rang a small bell, another wafted burning incense in a thurible or censer. It was fascinating to watch all the rituals being performed, like a play in which each character knows his role and the actors move here and there, bowing, genuflecting, the tinkling of a bell, the burning incense, the priest's prayers and intonations. At various intervals the choir would sing and those in the congregation who wished to were invited to accompany them. Then, while the small congregation took Communion the choir sang a lovely anthem of early music.

After the mass we walked around inside the cathedral admiring the beautiful stained glass. I also noticed how much more of the stone has been cleaned since our last visit in 2024. It looks lovely and reminded me of the newly cleaned interior of Notre Dame cathedral.

Once outside Jean Yves took me for a stroll in the streets surrounding the cathedral explaining some of their history. In front of the cathedral a lot of re-surfacing is being done and in an area behind the cathedral there had been flower beds, but the former mayor felt that they were old and needed to be completely re-done in a more modern style. The inhabitants of Chartres were not in favour of so much money being spent in this way and did not like what he was proposing so the plans for the area at the back will probably not now proceed.

Chartres is an interesting and lovely old city, and I thoroughly enjoyed this visit and, particularly, my stay with Patrick and Jean Yves.

New to the exchange

It was Marion Gibbs' first exchange visit and she enjoyed the experience. Here is what she says. Thank you Marion for taking the trouble to write in French.

J'ai vraiment apprécié mon premier jumelage à Chartres, avec ma charmante hôte Jocelyn (JoJo). Nos hôtes ont été généreux et un moment fort a été le dernier repas partagé, incluant le quiz extraordinaire et très amusant ! J'ai aussi adoré parcourir la ville dans le petit train et en apprendre beaucoup plus sur son histoire. Les changements apportés à la cathédrale depuis mon dernier voyage à Chartres (de façon indépendante) étaient agréables à voir. Merci à tous ceux qui ont organisé le voyage.

Au Revoir

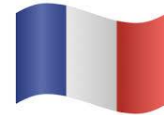
To send us on our way, our hosts organised a Bring and Share supper on the last evening, with a quiz to test our knowledge of our respective countries set by Jean-Claude Grouteau. It was a convivial evening at which gifts were presented to the organisers. In thanks for his long-standing support of our twinning, Patrick Géroutet was presented with a Chichester Monopoly game.



Thanks to Didier Rocton for providing the photos for this edition of Citylink.



France Trivia Quiz



Here is a little quiz to whet your appetite for the Fishbourne Social Evening in September.

Answers on the next page

- 1** How many roads are connected to the roundabout circling the Arc de Triomphe?
- 2** Which glass and metal structure designed by Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei stands in the main courtyard of the Louvre Museum?
- 3** What colour features in the national flags of all eight countries that border mainland France?
- 4** What is the top prize awarded at the International Film Festival held in Cannes?
- 5** What French jeweller is famous for its "menagerie" animal pieces, including an onyx-and-diamond bracelet shaped like a panther that was owned by Wallis Simpson?
- 6** Which Irish-born playwright and novelist wrote in French and English and spent much of his adult life in France?
- 7** Which French river rises in the southern Massif Central and flows northwest for 634 miles to the Atlantic Ocean?
- 8** Which French monarch reigned for 72 years from the age of four? Name and regnal number required.
- 9** Serving from 1981 to 1995, who is the longest serving President of France?
- 10** What airline other than British Airways flew the Concorde?
- 11** The French state headed by Marshal Philippe Pétain during World War II is usually known by what name?
- 12** What major eastern French city on the border of Germany is home to the European Parliament, Parc de l'Orangerie, Musée des Beaux-Arts, and Petite-France?
- 13** Which fruit, known as pomme d'amour in France, was wrongly thought in Renaissance times to be poisonous?
- 14** Which southern French city near the border of Spain is filled with terra cotta brickwork, leading to its nickname: "La Ville Rose?"
- 15** What is the name of the antisemitic political scandal that occurred in France during the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

Information Page

President
The Right Worshipful the Mayor of
Chichester

Councillor Sean McHale

Officers and Committee

Chair: Michael Bevis 781016
Vice Chair: Anne Scicluna 789065
Treasurer: Stephen Northdale 822148
Secretary: Martin Foakes 07853 264641

Members

Clare Apel 783738
Martyn Bell 539806
Anne-Louise Briggs 784346
Pual Everett 603513
Emma Heaver 930054
David Nason 573716
Julia Sander 07788 641926

Friends of Chartres Future Events.

Monday June 22: 7.30 pm

Four Cities Event: Assembly Room
Talk by Chichester City Archaeologist, Dr
James Kenny: **Normans and Romans**
Playing in the Park

Saturday June 27: 11.00 – 4.00

Chichester Gala: Priory Park

Sunday July 19: 3.00 – 5.00 pm

Summer Garden Party at the home of
Emma Heaver, East Ashling

Sunday September 7: 6.00 – 9.00 pm

Social evening with Fish and Chips and
Quiz (Venue to be confirmed)

To be confirmed:

Ciné Club: October and November

Christmas Soirée: early December

*Details of events and how to book
will be circulated in advance.*

Date for your diary

Exchange 2027

Chartres to Chichester

Thursday April 29 – Monday May 3

Conversation Circles

Groups meet monthly for lively, informal conversation in French. We welcome new members, whatever your level of French at Petit Cercle meetings. For the Cercle Avancé, you need to be reasonably fluent to contribute to the conversation, but we are happy for you to listen if you wish to improve your French.

Petit Cercle du mardi

10.30 am to Noon

Tuesday, July 7

August: Vacances

Tuesday, September 1

Tuesday, October 6

Tuesday, November 3

Tuesday, December 1

Venue: The Coffee Bar, Festival Theatre,
Oaklands Park, Chichester PO19 6AP

Cercle Avancé

5.30 – 7.00 pm

Monday, July 13

August: Vacances

Monday September 14

Monday October 12

Monday November 9

Monday December 14

Venue: The Chichester Inn, 38, West
Street, Chichester PO19 1RP

Answers to quiz Page 7 1 12 2 A pyramid 3 red
4 Palme d'Or 5 Cartier 6 Samuel Beckett 7 Loire
8 Louis XIV 9 François Mitterand 10 Air France 11
Vichy 12 Strasbourg 13 tomato 14 Toulouse 15
the Dreyfus Affair