



"The Spokesman"

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Issue 50A - Eurostar 2019 Special Edition

The President's Message



Fellow Rotarians,

Despite the problems we are having, and none of us know for certain what the future holds for the United Kingdom and the European Union, our Rotary links are as strong as ever and a wonderful connection to our fellow European Rotarians with a chance to share fellowship with them.

A great big thank you to the members of the Rotary Club of Ile de Re and their President Jean Riviere for taking on the tremendous task, so soon after joining the Eurostar group. They shared with us their beautiful part of France and were very friendly and welcoming.

I was very proud to be a lady among all the male Presidents and wear the Chain of Office representing so many of our Past Presidents

Finally, I do hope that all those Croydon Rotary Club members and guests who made the journey to Ile de Re for the Eurostar visit had an enjoyable time and I give very warm welcome and special thanks to the new club on the circuit, the Rotary Club of Ile de Re.

We now look forward with great pleasure to the next Eurostar meeting at the Rotary Club of Yverdon-les-Bains in Switzerland.

Lorraine Davis — President

Day 1- Friday 7th June 2019

Reflections on Eurostar 2019 hosted by the Rotary Club île de Ré.

On Friday 7th June 2019 around 140 fellow Rotarians, their partners and friends, from the partner clubs from UK, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and France, gathered at the Mercure hotel in La Rochelle to begin this year’s Eurostar weekend which was being hosted for the first time by the Rotary Club île de Ré, the newest club to join the Eurostar group.



Having received the now customary ‘Goody Bag’ containing gifts of local produce and the itinerary we settled in to our rooms and then reconvened for the welcome buffet dinner.

A novel approach this year was to give the ladies a straw hat whilst the men received the traditional baseball cap



On Saturday morning we took a boat trip to St Martin de Ré.

Although a sunny day, once we were out on the water it became quite chilly (a typically British understatement).



Along the way we passed under the road bridge, 2.9 kilometres in length, that connects the mainland to the island of île de Ré.

Having arrived we divided into smaller groups to visit various parts of the town, with a guide, or we were free to do so at our own leisurely pace. A cup of hot chocolate was a necessity to warm us up before going sightseeing.





Following the visit to St Martin de Ré we returned to the mainland and headed for a lunchtime picnic at La Redoute, Rivedoux.

Here we heard more from our hosts and from the organisation that would benefit from the donations from Rotary.

The purpose was to raise funds, which this year totalled 40,000Euro, for the ile de Ré club's charity project to provide trucks to assist the work of The Association Verdiniere that exists to develop and promote projects for social, educational, cultural, artistic and nature protection in the local area.



After lunch we travelled to visit the 'ecomuseum' of Salt Marshes in Loix.



We heard about the journey of salt, from sea water to evaporation. An exhibition followed by a guided visit of the salt marshes showed the process of crystallisation of sea salt and the daily work of salt producers on the island. The museum includes a small exhibition of the techniques, tools and an ancestral know-how, which is passed on from generation to generation.

The salt workers, known as "sauniers" on the Ile de Ré, still use age-old techniques, as methods of salt production have barely changed here since the Middle Ages.

That night we returned by boat to La Rochelle and dined on board a larger boat, 'Esperance'.

Day 3 - Sunday 9th June 2019

On Sunday we travelled to Cognac for a tour of the city and a visit to the Otard Chateau de Cognac.

The Chateau had been the birthplace of Francois 1st. It was later bought by Baron Otard for his cognac business.

We had a tour of the chateau, learning of its history and then of the cellars containing many barrels of cognac.



Following the tour we were able to sample some of the cognac VS and VSOP, and were shown **but not allowed to taste** their most expensive cognac, 'Fortis et Fidelis' costing 3,725.00 Euro for a 70cl bottle!



However, we did get to enjoy a buffet lunch in the cellars of the chateau.



Day 3 - Sunday 9th June 2019 (continued)

That evening the farewell gala dinner was held in the dining room at the aquarium next to the hotel.

Our President, Loraine, exchanged club pennants with Jean Riviere, President of ile de Ré Rotary Club.



Since the inception of this Rotary Eurostar group, some 25 years ago, over 700,000Euro has been raised to support charity projects in each country.

Our newest partner club provided an excellent weekend of fun and fellowship.

We now look forward to next year's event being hosted by Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland.

Stephen Kirkman