Report on visit to Le Touquet Saturday 26th September- Monday 28th September

David Bates- Co- Chair Witney Twinning Association

I travelled across to Le Touquet by car and ferry arriving Saturday teatime and staying two nights at the Le Manoir Hotel in Le Touquet - a great hotel, and can recommend (about 1-1.5 miles from the centre).

Saturday evening I met up with Deputy Mayor Anthony Jouvenel and Councillor Kate Landry (who has the twinning brief at the Council) & Kate's husband for drinks at their home . We then went on for a meal at a great restaurant L'Escale, next to the airport. Delicious food, great conversation and a good start to the weekend

Sunday afternoon and evening was Le Touquet Air Show and I was invited to view it from the Town Councils VIP area next to the beach. The show is free to watch and takes place on the beach front. Police estimated 100,000 spectators. It was a superb afternoon for with clear skies and a slight breeze. Kate kindly introduced me around – my French speaking is minimal, and I was grateful for this. It was great to meet the Le Touquet Mayor, Daniel Fasquelle, and to enjoy a photo with him and the mayors of neighbouring towns (photo attached).

The Air show display was an impressive one with highlights being the French Alphajet Display team of the Patrouille de France, the aerobatics of the Royal Air Force's Red Arrows, and demonstrations by the Airbus A400M (familiar in our Witney skies from Brize Norton- amazingly agile).
Video attached of courtesy of Le Touquet

After the display all the flight crews displaying were invited to the Town Hall for a reception and to receive various commemorative awards. Great to see the Red Arrows and their French counterparts sharing the same stage – see picture.
A particular highlight for me was getting to have a good conversation with Red One, Red Arrows Team Leader, Wg Cdr Jon Bond. It was also nice to find someone I could converse with in English- maybe he felt similarly.

It was nice that Mayor Fasquelle mentioned Witney in his speech and the presence of a representative of Witney Twinning Association.

Monday morning Kate arranged for me to visit the Town Hall. During our 2 hours we visited the various departments – Planning, Finance, PR, Governance etc -meeting and talking to the officers present. Greatly enjoyed hearing how the mechanisms of government work in another Town and the challenges faced. Le Touquet I was advised have around 300 employees, but their range of functions is broader than in our Town Council- encompassing elements of what would be covered by our Town, District and County Councils.

The trip ended with a physical highlight, climbing all the way up into the bell tower and attic- don't have a great head for heights but was good to have done and got the pictures!

Overall an excellent visit, and great opportunity to have lots of good conversations with Kate (who is the Councils Twinning lead) building connections and discussing future events such as the Remembrance commemorations, Christmas Markets, World Book day and the Enduropale motor bike race(to be followed up separately)

Notes

- Travel and accommodation for my trip were self- funded – Councillor Kate kindly paid for our meal on the Saturday evening