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The mission of Friendship Force International is to create an environment where individual friendship can be established across the international barriers that separate people.

THE FRIENDSHIP FORCE OF CORNWALL

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2009

President's Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of this Newsletter for 2009 and also my first as President. It is some time since the last Newsletter and there is quite a lot that I feel that I need to tell you about now so please excuse the length of what follows!

2008 Review

Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to Margie Lundie for all the hard work which she put in keeping us going in 2007 and 2008. It is really good that she has agreed to stay on as Vice President.

It is good also that two previous members of your committee agreed to return – Maggie Adams and John Baughan. We have just been told that Adrian and Lesley are to leave Cornwall and we wish them well.

Several other members have also decided that their travelling days are over and that they should resign. I do hope that no one else feels that they should resign simply because they no longer feel able to participate as fully as previously.

In 2008, we had two very successful incoming exchanges from the Sunshine coast of Australia and then from Lake Hartwell USA. Again we all owe a big thank you to Peter and to Carol and Mac. Let us not forget also all those who contributed by hosting, organising other events and in being members of the committee.

Outgoing to Mexico and Arizona

Organising the outgoing exchange to Comitan, Mexico; a few days in Mexico City and then on to Central Arizona, was not without its anxieties. However, once in Mexico, the welcome we received, the generosity of our hosts and the warmth of the people – let alone all the sights we were shown, was absolutely fantastic and an experience we will never forget. The welcome and hosting we received in Arizona was also typical of what we have come to expect in Friendship Force worldwide. Please do look at the Exchange diary which is written by each of those who went and is now on our website (www.ffcornwall.org.uk)

I believe that there was a very important message from this last exchange and one that maybe we have not emphasised enough. This is that hosting itself can be extremely rewarding in terms of making new friends and developing greater understanding. Yet this can all be done at a fraction of the cost and without all the hassle of travel.

For the record, the total cost, door to door and including the extension to Mexico City and a day trip to the Grand Canyon came to approximately £1650 per person, with five nights shared hotel accommodation for a total of 20 nights. This is amazing value for what we all felt was greatly superior to any hotel only trip.

In conclusion, I would like to pay a tribute to our ambassadors. The core of our successful exchanges is the closeness we have in our own club and the way we all look out for each other, including those who join us, when travelling.

The Future

In 2008, we spent money on advertising, Josie gave several presentations on Friendship Force and our trip to Russia and we had a new members evening focussed on our Mexico/Arizona trip.

We are very happy to have attracted some new members (we believe that one potential member believed that we are a dating agency so did not stay!) Despite these efforts, our total numbers have declined to 38 and I suspect that the average age is increasing. We are not alone in this and many, possibly most; UK clubs are in similar situations.

Your committee has formed a small group of Martin, Christine and Maggie to focus on attracting new members and I hope also that some action plan for the whole of the UK can be co-ordinated. We all know, however, that we gain most members by local contacts. Please do all you can to use these – maybe submit something for your village magazine if there is one. If you contact me or one of the above then I am sure that they will help. We are committed by FF rules to use exchanges to attract new

members so again please do all you can to help promote this.

Please try to keep in mind that our enjoyable social activities in Cornwall (thank you, Christine for the lunch) are there because they help us as a club to develop and achieve the real goals of increasing international understanding that we all share and which Jennie emphasised to most of us when we first joined.

UK Conference

This will take place in Wells on the 28th and 29th March and Josie and I will attend.

Membership in the UK as well as participation in exchanges is declining. I have reported back many of your concerns to Atlanta and hope that George Brown will respond to these.

I had requested a workshop on exchange organisation – something which I feel is desperately needed but I am now told that most of the time will be taken up by George Brown telling us about the “New Strategy”. I can only push for future conferences to focus more closely on what really concerns us here.

The reports from all the UK Presidents are supposed to be circulated one month before the conference and I will aim to put these on distribution so that you can feedback comments before the conference itself. I have requested that the contribution from George Brown, the FFI CEO and President, also be included.

Future Exchanges

FF Cornwall alone cannot justify requests for exchanges based purely on its own members. I speak (I suppose that this should be write!) from experience but the struggle to get adequate numbers once we have agreed to an exchange is not something which one can expect a volunteer ED to have to cope with. It is also unfair if we let down a host club by failing to achieve the numbers that they have a right to expect. Hosting is often the first experience of FF in action for new members and it is important that target numbers are achieved.

I am trying to pursue the idea of a western UK region approach to this and form some informal grouping of local FF Presidents to consider ways forward.

Although I made it clear to Atlanta that we did

Committee:

Robin Mather (President)
 Christine Cartledge (Social Secretary)

Margie Lundie (Vice President)
 Maggie Adams

Martin Buck

Shirley Anderson (Secretary)
 Sandra Buck

Iain Fraser (Treasurer)
 John Baughan
 Adrian Sumner

not have enough members interested in a long haul exchange in 2010, we did pass on your vote at the last AGM where Brazil was your favourite. Atlanta has now come back with an initial proposal of two places in Brazil for approximately February 2010. In order to obtain sufficient numbers they also suggest that I both agree to lead it and promote to the whole of the UK. I have not yet agreed to this!

The two places are Cascavel, which is close to the Iguassu falls, and Santo Angelo which is 600km to the south. The initial "thinking" is that one would fly to the falls for a couple of nights or so, then the week with Cascavel and then overland to Santo Angelo, returning to fly out from the Falls one week later. This avoids internal flights which are long and expensive. FFI has not supplied contact details for these clubs but I have written to the addresses which I found on the web – so far with no response. I have also tried to discover which clubs have already visited and have now written to several in the hope that someone will come back with more information. As you can see, there are many questions remaining about this exchange. If anyone has access to a Portuguese speaker, please do let me know.

The second half of the proposal is for two incoming exchanges – from Manitoba, Canada to Cornwall and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, in April and from West Alajuela, Costa Rica, to Cornwall and Hertfordshire, in September. From contact with FF Los Angeles, I learned that this Costa Rican club cancelled their trip to LA this year for economic reasons so again, we will have to see what happens.

I have written to Manitoba to tell them more about us (having our website is very useful in this) but I am still trying to find an address for the Costa Rica club. So far, I have found out very little about the Brazilian clubs but many of you will remember the excellent relationships built up from previous exchanges with Brazil.

Participation in Exchanges is really what we are all about so please do think very hard about whether you feel able to support the outgoing exchanges and to host or day host the incoming. I must stress that nothing is yet fixed but we must provisionally accept or not by 16th of March. Therefore please expect to be contacted by a member of the committee very shortly. The proposed outgoing dates are only one year ahead so we will need to act quite fast. I can only guess at costs but it would not be unreasonable to take the costs of the last exchange as an example and maybe even slightly less.

Other UK Outgoing Exchanges

It seems that some UK clubs agree to exchanges without properly consulting with their members and then find that they do not have the people to fill them.

This results in my receiving emails asking me to distribute details in case you wish to participate. I have therefore clipped a list from FFI of exchanges going out from the UK. Some may no longer be active and some may be full but let me know if

you would like contact details. Note that the dates are both in American format and only indicative:

Isle of Wight, UK to China	04/16/2009
Somerset, UK to Gelsenkirchen, Germany	05/01/2009
Bristol to Urla, Turkey	05/15/2009
Cornwall, UK to Tallinn, Estonia	06/01/2009
County Durham and Oxfordshire, UK to Biarritz, France	06/11/2009
Cardiff, UK to Hamburg, Germany	06/30/2009
Derbyshire, UK to Varel, Germany	07/01/2009
Leicestershire, UK to Haliburton Highlands and Penticton-Okanagan, Canada	09/01/2009
Hampshire, UK to Colonial Carolina, USA	09/01/2009
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne to New Hampshire Seacoast and Dubuque, USA	09/01/2009
Devon, UK to Nagasaki and Ota-Gunma, Japan	10/01/2009
Isle of Wight, UK to Lima, Peru	10/01/2009
Northumbria and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, UK to Nairobi, Kenya	11/01/2009

For security reasons, I have not included the contact details but Shirley or I can let you have them.

However, as I have already written, this situation of each club struggling for ambassadors is not very satisfactory and I hope will be addressed in future as it could result in a member's own club failing to obtain enough ambassadors for the exchange for which it applied.

AGM and Constitution

Your committee has already fixed the date as Sunday 18th October. Exact details will be supplied later.

FFI requires us to have a written statement on the entitlement of ED's to any financial advantage. Your committee agreed that this statement should state "ED's may receive the reduction in FFI administration fees, as stated in the 2009 Club and Exchange Policies. No additional advantage shall be allowed and any non-itemised costs beyond £5 per ambassador must be authorised by the FFC committee". You are formally notified that this is proposed for incorporation into our constitution at the AGM.

Events Diary

This is attached as a separate page. This time, more of the information on the events is in the diary. Christine is our social secretary so please contact her or Shirley, our secretary, for more information.

Robin

Website

Our website at <http://ffcornwall.org.uk/> is constantly being tweaked and modified, but in order to attract people to return, the content needs to be fresh and lively. I am aware that some parts need to be fairly static, but the more the homepage changes, the better. In this, I am reliant on input from all of our members, so if you fancy telling a story which will be read world-wide, or have a favourite photograph or video which you could share, I would be delighted to hear from you.

We have about 100-120 new visitors to our site every month and this is the main "shop window" for our club. So far this month, our 77 visitors came from the UK, Germany, Australia, USA, Mexico, Croatia, Japan, Ireland, Netherlands, Georgia and Belgium. *Martin*

Incoming short Exchange

We are expecting around 16 members of the Friendship Force of Limbourg, Belgium for four nights – 11th to 15th July. This will be the second leg of their exchange, having first spent four nights hosted by FF Somerset. As yet Limbourg have not finalised the best means of travel. We are liaising closely with FF Somerset to arrange pick up and hand over points.

In the meantime, Margie will be requesting hosts for the visit. Please let her know if you are able to help in any way. There is a possibility that we can arrange a function involving a get together with Somerset when we meet up. Maggie and Shirley will assist in the planning of the programme, of which we will keep you informed. *Margie*

Outgoing to Tallinn, 29th May to 5th June

Great news, Jennie is joining us so that makes 17 in total, 14 from our club plus Doreen Blezard from Newcastle FF and Sharon and Malcolm Blake, whom some of you know, from Somerset. This could be an excellent introduction to FF for any new members and there may be space for a few more.

The weekend that we arrive is the start of a festival of music and dance called "Old Tallinn days" this is held in outdoor venues in the old quarter of Tallinn. Also planned is a trip to the Lahemaa national park, an area of forest, sandy beaches and rocky headlands on the north coast. At possibly additional cost we can visit some smaller towns such as Parnu and Haapsalu on the western coast and Viljandi on the shores of Lake Viljandi.

Iain