

Entente cordiale

Hands across the Channel

Two camera clubs separated by language and the English Channel but with a shared love of great food, friendship and photography have developed a successful twinning relationship. Photography News caught up with Beckenham Photographic Society and Image'in Périgny over cream teas during a recent visit to London



Words by Sheree Dodd

"Photography, gastronomy and fraternity are the three keys to a successful twinning relationship between two photographic societies, Beckenham Photographic Society and Image'in Périgny," says Sheree Dodd, president of Beckenham PS, "and that is deepening the mutual understanding of how we approach our images."

The growing friendship and shared love of photography culminated in a three-day trip to London in May. This successful relationship is due to the enthusiasm of two Beckenham members - Angela and Roger Ford - who are also members of the Périgny Club. Image'in Périgny invited the then Beckenham president

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Above Members of the two photography clubs saying their goodbyes after three days of great photography and friendship.

Polina Plotnikova to France to discuss an exchange and this led to a swap of images on the theme of 'blue' to get a taste of the different styles, subjects and techniques enjoyed by the two clubs.

Members of both clubs caught the Fords' enthusiasm and the first twinning visit saw ten Beckenham photographers enjoying three days exploring picturesque sites, both coastal and inland, including a glorious poppy field around La Rochelle.

A return visit and further image swaps were arranged. Image'in Périgny invited Beckenham members to show 15 images at its 40th anniversary exhibition in October 2017 and a group of Beckenham photographers judged a series of images sent to them by Périgny.

For the London visit, 17 Image'in Périgny members flew over and enjoyed a busy programme of shooting opportunities around the capital.

"In planning the London programme we wanted to give our visitors some experiences and photo shoots they would not necessarily enjoy on a typical trip to London," says Sheree Dodd. "We started around Beckenham with traditional English scenes: a beautiful landscaped park with heronry (Kelsey Park) and village style churchyard at St George's on Beckenham Green as well as lawn bowlers in full kit. The next day we enjoyed the street art and people of Brick Lane and the South Bank between Tower and London Bridges.

"For the final day we took in some of Westminster's lesser known sights including



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The visit from our fellow photographers was a huge success

the newly-installed statue of Millicent Fawcett - the only woman celebrated on Parliament Square - before a boat trip to Greenwich. Alongside the familiar highlights of the Cutty Sark and the Royal Naval College we shot the Brunel Foot Tunnel under the Thames and the Tulip Staircase in the Queen's House."

Exchange coordinator Angela Ford says: "The visit from our fellow photographers at Image'in Périgny was a great success and they really enjoyed discovering photo opportunities with us in and around London."

Périgny president Michel Bouchet says that the truly interesting element of the relationship between the two clubs is the opportunities it provides for meeting each other. "This allows us to know each other better and promotes friendship. The exchange of images between us allows us to see differences in the way that we approach photography. It is just a feeling, but it seems to us that Beckenham has a stronger focus on selecting images with impact for competition. Périgny is more about the image of the author."



Above Members of both clubs enjoying London's Brick Lane. **Right** PN Editor Will Cheung meets Sheree Dodd (left) of Beckenham PS and Estelle Ducept of Image'in Périgny.

French organiser Estelle Ducept offers her thoughts on what has made this a successful relationship. "Previously Périgny had approached other clubs to create a twinning relationship but these had not succeeded. What has made the difference with Beckenham is that it has combined enthusiasm with opportunities to meet up and build friendships, rather than base the relationship on contests. It is also important

that we have two clubs which share similar high standards of photography," she said. "All in all, it was a tiring but exhilarating three days," said Sheree Dodd, "during which those with limited French/English skills found that could be overcome through the language of photography. When the new club season starts in September we will be looking carefully at future activities to keep our friendship alive."



Contact

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A special thanks to Sheree Dodd, president of Beckenham Photographic Society, for writing this feature and to Angela Ford for contacting *Photography News* with the story. If your camera club has a special relationship with an overseas club, *Photography News* would love to hear about it especially if you have get togethers such as Beckenham's. In the first instance, please email the editor: willcheung@bright-publishing.com