

BOX PERSON OF THE MONTH

ALAIN ESNAULT



As you may be aware, Box is now twinned with the town of Sorigny in the Indre et Loire, France. I was fortunate enough to be able to go to Sorigny for the second part of our Twinning ceremony in March this year. During our stay I met some wonderful people, most of whose English was an awful lot better than my French! The Box Twinning Committee thought it would be lovely to introduce some of them to you by writing about them as 'person of the month'. The obvious choice to begin with was the Mayor of Sorigny, Alain Esnault. Alain is a well known and respected character in Sorigny and is involved in most of what happens there; he is also an entertaining person who enjoys a joke.

Alain was born in 1951 in the small village of Avoire en Sarthe in France, one of six children. When he was eight his family moved to the neighbouring village of Montbazon en Indre et Loire, where he attended the local school. At secondary age he then moved to a school in the city of Tours, where he stayed until he was 18. After school, as was the requirement then, he did a year's national service which he mostly remembers as having been a 'good time'.

After his national service Alain went to university and gained a BAC in biochemistry. With his new qualification he went to work for INRA (the French National Institute for Agricultural Research) in an agricultural research laboratory in Nouzilly about 45 minutes away from home. Here in 1975 he met his wife Evelyne, who was working in the same laboratory. It was not long before they were married; they went on to have three girls and now have three grandchildren.

Eventually Alain had to leave the laboratory to take over running the family road-building business, which he did until he retired at 61.

Alain's political career began in 1989, when he was elected as assistant to the mayor in his then home town of Chambray les Tours. He kept this post until 2001, when he stood for election as mayor of Chambray and sadly lost. He then took a break from politics, during which time he moved to Sorigny. In 2008 he decided that the time was right to get involved with politics again and so he stood for mayor of Sorigny. This time he finally achieved his lifetime ambition of becoming a mayor, a post which he has held ever since.

In Sorigny he now holds two positions- he is both the mayor for the town and has also subsequently been elected as the president for the area. In France local mayors are elected primarily for who they are rather than any political affiliation. Alain says that he is passionate about being mayor as he feels he can make a real difference. He also says as mayor it is important that you like people.

The area or commune consists of 22 different towns, each of which will have their own mayor who elect and then report to the president. The area Alain is responsible for encompasses 52,000 people. The office where he works from is called the Mairie and he has working with him five assistants and 19 sub-committees. The Mairie has a much broader remit than our Parish Council: Alain is responsible for most things within the local community, including planning, schools, roads,

youth activities, weddings and - if they had one - he would also be responsible for the local police force. He employs 30 staff, which includes the teachers at the school, and his office also has to arrange cover teachers if people are off sick etc. To do this he manages a €2 million budget plus a further €1 million for investment in the local community. Alain finds that the role of mayor is more than full time. However, when he does get time off he likes to spend it fishing, hunting and going to the cinema. He used to love travelling and they have a camper van but he says that sadly he now seldom has time to use it.

He is passionate about the Twinning ('Jumelage' in French) with Box as he sees it as a way of building up links between communities which he feels is particularly important for children and young people. At the twinning ceremony in Sorigny Alain gave an inspiring speech about the importance of links between the two communities anti so I would like to end with some words from the speech:

"For me, a twinning is the main key to unlock and open doors on different perspectives, allowing real human feelings to emerge: friendship, trust and above all mutual esteem, feelings that pave the way to a grounded fraternity among mankind.

In a family, twins are bound to each other and grow up in both complicity and understanding, no need for them to share a word. They are connected in thoughts and wishes. I do hope we will grow up likewise, our two communities moved forward by the same spirit of brotherhood.

'Friendship, fraternity and mutual aid' are the three expressions to seal and found our Twinning Charter.

I dare say that you and we are sharing the same ideal!

Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, we are proud to work towards strengthening our links and profitable collaborations. Our future exchanges will then get the chance of growing up more stable and energetic. Like many other Twinning throughout Europe today, this one will help us do our bit in establishing peace, a peace that needs to be cherished and protected, for it is vital for everyone. Friendship and general interest are to be placed far above any political or personal interests or considerations.

Alice Kemp