

## Chantilly Christmas Market 2019

We set off from Epsom early Friday morning having packed the car the previous night. The journey was relatively easy and we only got lost twice!

Our first impressions of the Christmas market were the lights and general 'buzz' as we drove into Chantilly early Friday evening. We drove through the town to our hotel and after booking in, parking the car we set off to find out where we were based in the market. There was an array of stalls all lit up and looking very festive with a vast array of foods and gifts on display. We found Brian and Margaret at our stall near a children's carousel again looking very festive. We helped them finish setting up the stall which didn't take very long as Margaret and Brian had been very busy and had done most of the setting up before we arrived.

We then made our way back to the hotel to enjoy a meal together and plan how the rest of the weekend was to proceed.

The next morning after a continental breakfast we returned to the market.

Our stall was a small wooden hut with just about room for two behind the counter, so a lot of selling was done from the front of the stall. We were along-side the other twinned towns of Watermael-Boitsfort and Überlingen making a small Twinning lane. We were soon introduced to the other twinning representatives and were made to feel welcome.

Soon we became very busy selling our Whisky Marmalade, which was very popular, along with Christmas puddings coming a close second; then mince pies began to sell and all was looking great.

Neil had bought some English beer from a local brewery in Dorking and set up alongside the stall. We had competition from the German wine and Belgian beer and sales started slowly. The sales began to pick up as Neil's confidence in shouting 'Goût' increased. (He was told it was French for taste and it seemed to work!)

Lunch time came and we began to split up as some ran the stall while others went for a wander in the market and had something to eat. During the afternoon and evening all the items were selling well and everyone had a chance to wander round the large variety of stalls.

There was a huge marquee full of food stalls. It had two aisles with stalls on both sides; in total there must have been at least 60 individual food stalls, each one offering something slightly different or unique.

The children's lucky dip was a slow starter with competition from the carousel. The children were more interested in getting a ride but while children had their ride parents looked at the stall and a few had a lucky dip while waiting for their children. Soon Brian realised the potential and began to encourage children to have a go at the lucky dip as

they came off the carousel. Soon Diana was busy wrapping more items to refill the lucky dip bags.

By the end of Saturday we had sold a large amount of our goods and we went away in a cheerful spirit to have an evening meal together and taste the French wine.

Sunday we were back again but it was wet and cold, and sales were very slow during the morning. A group went to church while those remaining stayed at the stall. When they returned we had our lunch shifts.

There were some disappointments as a few brave customers returned to buy some more Whisky Marmalade but alas we had sold out. During the afternoon the rain stopped and the Market began filling up again. The beer was very popular with Richard hosting the tastings and encouraging people to buy.

Suddenly the Market was over and it was time to pack up and return to our hotel for another nice meal with a few drinks.

Overall a great time was had by all.

Ann Dallen – Committee Member