

## Vermeille International Presidents Report 2020

In my last report in January 2019 I outlined how the Association has developed since its beginnings from an initial group of 4 to around 200 members from 22 nationalities. In five years we had developed a varied and active social programme and had distributed over 15000 euros to a wide variety of causes both here on the Cote Vermeille and abroad.

Over the course of 2019 our programme of activities has continued, with the Winter walk, the Art Exhibition, the Summer picnic and the monthly "Last Wednesday" aperos becoming a regular fixture in members' diaries. A highlight this year for me was the Anniversary meal at Val des Pintes, featuring both an excellent classical guitarist and a paella weighing 22 kilos! Probably the most exciting event was the Fete des Vendanges on the beach at Banyuls sur Mer. Strong winds had whipped up a very lively sea, and the 35 or so who arrived by boat had a wild ride, with several of them coming ashore soaking wet.

The management committee of the association has met five times over the year, keeping a close eye on the finances, the membership list, and our social programme. As President I owe them all a debt of gratitude. They are all busy people but continually find the time to write letters, translate documents, balance the books, update the website and membership list, attend meetings and do the washing up once everyone else has left. We have tried in particular the year to develop our links with other Associations which share our values. We have had recent meetings with Solidarité Pyrennees, who work with the homeless and refugees, including the Refuge St Joseph in Banyuls; and with the local president of the Resto Coeur, which run a food bank and advice centre for families in need; and the President of l'Enfant en Majuscule who work for the rights of children in our communities. Closer links with other Associations allow us to identify ways in which we can help. Two examples might be the donation we approved recently to provide technology for a storytelling programme for young children in Banyuls, and the help we gave with the Resto Coeur Christmas party in the presence of Father Christmas himself, involving both food for the children and offering free rides on the merry go round. Thanks to the generosity of our members I can reveal that the total money we have donated to charities since 2014 is now in excess of 20,000 euros.

Sadly this year we have lost three of our members Francois Pacqué, Martyn Haig and Jackie Cucciara. We send our condolences to their family and friends.

In the management group discussions recently have been about whether to make changes to keep our summer art event fresh and interesting and also whether to look again at our policy for donations. We shall be asking the members for their views tonight, and we are always keen to receive new ideas for activities and for those who need our help.

Finally I would like to thank the Mayor of Port -Vendres and his team for all their help and support, and as always the members themselves for their enthusiasm and their generosity. Bonne Année et meilleurs vœux to you all.

David Cadwallader      Vermeille International