

AUTUMN TERM NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2008



The Evolution of an Idea

On 26th November 2008 I embarked upon the most exciting journey of my life, one which will also hopefully be the start of a marvellous adventure for Wolstanton High School.

Ever since I was a little boy I have been fascinated by being a part of Europe. I've tried to travel to each country to find out all about their history and their way of life. I was lucky, my parents took me to Spain, Austria, France and Italy whilst I was still at school so I got to practice my French first hand, marvelled at the different toys that there were in the shops overseas and began to collect some. Tasted my first croissant in Paris and my first slice of pizza in Milan. Europe still fascinates me now and I take every available opportunity to travel there whenever I can. Nothing broadens the mind more than travel.

Imagine my joy when Mrs Cooper asked me to travel to Italy last month to find us some European schools to work with! As a result we are now involved in something called a *Comenius Project*. The funding comes from The British Council, with the sole intent of fostering active partnerships between educational establishments in different countries. Through shared aims and within a common vision, we can assist each other to improve our understanding of not just our teaching and learning, but each others traditions and ways of life. Ultimately pupils at Wolstanton High School should end up knowing more about what it is like to go to school in France or Germany than they do about other schools 'this side of the D-road!'

I arrived in Turin, in northern Italy, with my head brimful of ideas from teachers and pupils about what we could achieve. The possibilities seemed endless. There were 74 other delegates at the conference from 18 different countries. Their heads were also full of ideas. I was completely overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and friendship on display. Our first get together was a European buffet. Each of us took local produce that our country or region had to offer.

Naturally I took some oatcakes. The atmosphere resembled the back stage area at the Eurovision Song Contest, where all the flag waving and banter goes on as the scores come in. We were all strangers, all eager to learn about each other and make new friends. It was during this melange of marzipan and reindeer meat, brioche and Bakewell tart that my ideas began to crystallize. The one thing that seemed to bind us together, that we had even used to represent our identities to strangers, was food. We can learn about each other through food!

Finding partners then became much easier. By 4pm the next day, one had become five and our ideas became a common goal. Birgit from Germany, Maritta from Finland, Jean-Jacques from France and Dina from Spain. All five of us were committed towards a joint project that explored how globalisation was slowly eroding national feeding habits and contributing not just towards a climatic calamity, it was destroying local farms and economies as it ruins the health of our nations. *Restaurant Rendez-Vous* was born.



Jean Jacques
Mugnier

Jean-Jacques Mugnier, our partnership co-ordinator, is the Headteacher of a school of gastronomy and cuisine in Northern France. The plan is that a group of his students will visit each school in the partnership over a two year period, sharing their culinary skills. In preparation for the visits, we will exchange recipe ideas, e-journals and dietary data that will form the basis of topic work in Maths, English, History, Geography, Science and MFL lessons. In fact, the work on globalisation will permeate almost every aspect of the curriculum. Only food could really unite us in this way. The opportunities for staff and pupils alike are endless. Five exchange meetings (*rendez-vous*) involving staff and pupils from all of the schools are now being planned up until May 2011. I have to stress this is all still very much in its infancy. Throughout the winter I will be working hard behind the scenes with our partners to secure funding and go ahead with the project. Our humanities status, and the enthusiasm of everyone involved will hopefully help considerably.

Our pupils need to be effective participators, they need to be able to function as part of a team and use thinking skills successfully. We can learn so much from this project. The team we have in place, or 'the family' as others have called it were just names on the Wednesday, by the time we left on Sunday morning there were hugs and kisses, even the odd tear. Something marvellous had happened that will now snowball and take on a life of its own. Over the next few year many more friendships and alliances between young and old will happen. More and more people will get involved and start to cherish memories of first times abroad with new tastes and experiences. True lifelong learning.

It's been so exciting, watching the evolution of an idea and this is just the beginning.



Clinton Roger Lakin (Enrichment Coordinator)