



25 years of Friendship across Europe – Music and Dance Extravaganza in Sherborne

A few raindrops did not dampen the spirits of Sherborne Douzelage, who have just celebrated 25 years. The organisation was instigated in 1991 between Granville and Sherborne to promote friendship throughout Europe through exchange visits, cultural understanding and educational projects. There are now 28 countries participating in the organisation and over the years many friendships have been formed with lasting bonds.

The Music and Dance Festival celebrating 25 years comprised workshops and dance classes and dancing in the villages around Sherborne on Friday as well as music sessions in Sherborne pubs. There was a shop window competition and a public opinion survey about traditional dance and about BREXIT. The dancing continued in the streets of Sherborne on Saturday morning, providing shoppers and visitors with a colourful spectacle.

A “Party in the Park” in the Pageant Gardens followed throughout the afternoon, where performers from Latvia, Ireland and the Czech Republic joined local groups, the Wessex Morris Men, The Treacle Eaters, Yetminster Irish Dancers and Mean Feet to give a lively and colourful afternoon to all those who came to watch. There were also food and craft stalls. Although the rain clouds rolled in it was not enough to stop the fun.

On Saturday night the finale was a Gala Concert in the Digby Hall, when all the performers joined forces to give a memorable display of their dancing and singing skills. The brightly decorated national costumes in red green and gold complimented the twinkling feet of the dancers, whilst the Irish group gave a lively, humourous renditions of folk songs.

The newly elected President of the Douzelage, Annigje Kruytbosch from The Netherlands, spoke of the great admiration with which Douzelage is held throughout Europe, mentioning the contribution of Mr Jeremy Barker, who was one of the founding fathers of Douzelage and who continues to play a prominent role in events. The President said Sherborne is a leading light in Douzelage and in the year of the UK gaining many medals in the Olympics, she awarded a medal to each member of the Sherborne Committee in recognition of their efforts. It is the President’s hope that Douzelage will thrive for many more years. The evening ended with audience participation in a final dance.

