

There is a soothing regularity in the unfolding of Association Day - now called 'Le Forum des Associations'. On the first or second Saturday of every September, a few of us arrive early to put up our stall. By 8 am, the Platanes is already bustling with activity. Some stands are particularly exotic - the gliding club has a full-sized glider gracing the Platanes, the first aid brigade has a manikin on display and later in the day will give some alarming demonstrations of road accidents. Ours is a more straightforward stand. The traditional banner can be seen from afar. In recent years it has been embellished with flags showing the wide range of countries represented by our members. Over the years we have acquired smart document holders for our various leaflets and this year we added panels displaying our many activities.

Long before the official start of the 'Forum' at 10 am, visitors were strolling by, some from neighbouring stands, others eager to avoid the crowds and noise prevalent later in the day. One of our first visitors this year was Muriel Norwood, daughter of Bob Norwood, who was President of the Franco-Brits back in 1999. We were very pleased to give her a panel featuring her father at one of the first 'Galette des Rois' events. Later in the morning we were also honoured by the visit of Sir Christopher MacRae and his daughter. He agreed to participate in a group photo.

The Mayor and various councillors did their traditional round of the stands, finding an encouraging word for each association. By 11 am we were busy explaining our activities to visitors and taking down email addresses. Despite our efforts to ensure that these addresses are legible, there are always a few that remain indecipherable. As well as new people showing an interest in the association and regular members dropping by to say hello or to help for an hour or two, we were pleased to welcome back a couple of members we had not seen for several years and who have since rejoined the association.

There was a lull at midday, which gave us the opportunity to visit other stands and make valuable contacts. Then it was back to business with a new team of helpers for a busy afternoon. At around five pm, things started slowing down and some stands were packing up. It was at this point that Marie-Claire Balog arrived, full of new ideas for the association. She not only suggested coffee mornings, but offered to hold them in her home. She also told us about a flower arrangement project. And so the day ended, this year marked by the surprise visits of Muriel Norwood, Sir Christopher MacRae and Marie-Claire Balog, who has now joined the association and hosted a first, successful coffee morning. The framework of Association Day does not change but each year brings its surprises and has a particular flavour. This year the impact of forty years of existence was prevalent.

Many thanks to all those who helped put up and take down the stand, to those who dropped by and to those who talked so convincingly to visitors, bringing new members to the association.