

Report on Ballinamuck Essert Twinning 2023

On the 26TH July 2023 a group of eleven youth aged between eleven and fourteen and two leaders arrived in Ballinamuck. They were met by the host families, Enterprise/Twinning Committee and the 1798 Commemoration Committee. After some light refreshments and the introductions, the children returned to host families.

Thursday

On Thursday morning following some very amusing icebreakers the group of Irish/ French started to get to know each other and the programme began with the group divided into three groups

1. Art project with Kevin Flood
2. Irish Music
3. Irish Dance

Everyone got an opportunity to take part in each activity. These activities continued for two and a half hours until lunch time. The children were very engaged particularly with Kevin Flood's piece where he guided them through the process of producing some art pieces relevant to 1798 from emotions/ideas through to a finished drawing on paper. The Irish music /dance was also very important. Each Participant was each presented with Irish tin whistles which they were taught to play, and it formed part of the performance for the final night of the exchange.

After having their packed lunch, a bus brought the group to Derrycassin Wood where the children were able to use up some energy and enjoyed running through the woods.

We are still on day one and the group continued to Granard where they visited Knights and Conquests and the boys in particular really enjoyed this experience and highlighted this in their review. Then followed a lovely meal in The Bailey Café which the children really enjoyed and then back home at 7.30 to host families.

Friday

This began in the morning with the second session with Kevin where they continued to explore and put ideas on paper in relation to 1798 and what it means to people in Ballinamuck and the children also continued with the music and dance workshop

After lunch we organised a walking tour of the village and all the historical sights, guided by Paddy Howe committee Chairman. These sights were undergoing a big face lift in preparation for celebrations in September. We also visited Johnny's cottage and Marian kindly prepared some soda bread on the open hearth. From there the children and leaders got public transport via Warton's bus to Longford for the long-awaited shopping trip. At 8pm that evening the group, host families and friends enjoyed a barbeque in 98 Hall followed by a film.

Saturday

This was Sports Day and all hands on deck at Drumlish Community Centre and Astro Turf for a day of activities and preparation of food (pizzas, scones, pancakes)

Sunday

This is traditionally Family Day in our exchange programme and families are great with coming up with ideas of places to go and things to do. This year it included fishing trips, swimming, hill walking.

Monday

Monday was a day the group was very excited about as it was the trip to Tayto Park. Donnelly's Bus arrived at 8pm. It rained.... a lot... but the group didn't seem to mind. The children enjoyed the experience of being together and it was lovely to see the group integrating.

Tuesday

This was the final day, the finish up of art project and mounting of the art pieces and final performance. In the afternoon we had the traditional Treasure Hunt around the village. The weather was beautiful, and this is always the event that everyone enjoys. In the afternoon the committee prepared Ballinamuck School hall for the final goodbye. Preparations were in place to cater for 80 plus people. The food was all prepared by the committee/ host families in the "bring a bowl" tradition which forms part of our Twinning for past 25 years and there was plenty of food for everyone.

This was followed by the much -anticipated presentation of prizes for the Treasure Hunt and also the performance of dance, music which both French/ Irish had prepared during the week.

The event was attended by parents, host families, people who had helped in any way.

The following morning, we said our goodbyes to Jean Christophe, Lana and the group and all the children were quite emotional. They continue to communicate with each other and are looking forward to our trip in July 2024.

The committee wish to thank the Longford Co. Council for your support and especially for the Kevin Flood project which allowed the French/ Irish children to work on such an exciting project

Ann Carthy

Secretary

Ballinamuck Community Enterprise

