

CAEN AND CHEESE
A REPORT ON THE SEVENTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON FIBONACCI NUMBERS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS

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Over 90 Fibonacci scholars, many with family members, from over a dozen countries joined together at the Université de Caen-Normandie, in Caen, France to share their current research projects, renew old friendships and form new ones, during the week of June 27 - July 2, 2016. Unfortunately, several regular members whose presence was joyously anticipated were unable to attend for various reasons. But the thoughts of their Fibonacci friends were with them throughout the Conference.

After Monday morning coffee, croissants and schmoozing followed by a welcome to the University, the excitement began with 15 entertaining and informative talks. In the evening, members, et al met in the room where Benedictine monks dined on special occasions at city Hall a.k.a. the Hotel de Ville for the most incredible wine and cheese tasting social imaginable. Normandie is truly cheese heaven!

Tuesday found the group enjoying another 10 presentations and the first of two problem sessions. This was followed by an open session where a trio of fascinating displays of clever expertise enthralled a huge audience of members, students and interested locals.

The first, *De Hanoi à Londres, aller et retour* (A round trip from Hanoi to London) based on a 19th century scientific game of Lucas by Andreas Hinz, assisted by Paul Young was delivered in French for the benefit of most of the audience members.

Second came a dazzling exploitation of the number 2016 by Ron Knott. Oohs, ahhs and laughter surrounded the many imaginative surprises in this demonstration.

Finally Art Benjamin mesmerized onlookers with his brilliant skills at mental calculations, often beating the calculators and computers in the room. Watch out Watson! Many Fibonacci members have seen Art perform in the past but he cleverly introduced something new (involving cards) in this latest delivery.

Wednesday morning found everyone listening to the Édouard Lucas Memorial Lecture by invited scholar, Jean-Paul Allouche, speaking on variations of the Fibonacci binary sequence. This was followed by another 3 talks and the group photo.

It was tourist time in the afternoon. Two groups had a guided tour of downtown Caen and visited the Château du Caen where the guide provided information on history, art and architecture of the castle and surrounding areas throughout several centuries. The third group, consisting of F_7 attendees explored the *Abbaye-aux-Hommes* where they viewed the tomb of William the Conqueror in the Church of St. Etienne where he was interred. They were provided with a plethora of historical facts and entertaining anecdotes by their informative guide.

The tours all concluded in back of the *Abbaye* for sweets, stimulants and more schmoozing before going off to explore Caen and select one of the many enticing restaurants of the city serving not only French cuisine but that of other countries around the world.

Thursday it was back to serious business as 17 more interesting talks were given. That evening it was Banquet Time! After a somewhat adventurous and circuitous bus journey,

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arrival at the *Pont de Coudray Auberge* was achieved. Then the feasting began! More wines, cheeses and sweets along with sides and a dinner of cod. Another bus trip back, not without some interest as a low bridge challenged the busses dimensions. But prevail the bus did with considerable help from our host, CB, displaying engineering skills few knew he possessed.

Another 9 papers were presented Friday morning and in the afternoon the Bruckman prizes were awarded: Márton Szikszai from Hungary for his 2014-15 paper in the Quarterly and Maciej Gawron from Poland for the best Conference talk. Finally 4 more talks and the second problem session ended a wonderful week of mathematics.

But there was more to come as many attendees went on the Saturday excursion. There were five main stops on the tour: Pointe du Hoc, the Omaha American cemetery, the harbor Port-en-Bessin for lunch, the circular movie theater in Arromanches and Bayeux.

Greeting the group at Pointe du Hoc was a jolly rain shower but everything involving WWII was very impressive and very moving, viewed from the 100 foot cliff overlooking Utah and Omaha Beach that the rangers climbed on D-Day where the Germans were heavily entrenched. The visit to the American Cemetery and Memorial for the dead from Omaha Beach with the field of crosses and the movie of five dead soldiers at Omaha beach was very sobering. A 19-minute 360 degree film showing the 100-day liberation of France was viewed. At Bayeux there was a medieval festival in progress with participants running around in various costumes. Many anecdotes could be recounted, but let those attending relate them to their friends and colleagues.

Finally, alas, it was time to bid au revoir to France, vowing to meet again in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2018.

Christian Ballot and his team deserve kudos galore for a superbly organized and efficiently run conference. Thank you for everything!

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