

Dear Howick Rotary Club; Tracey; John,

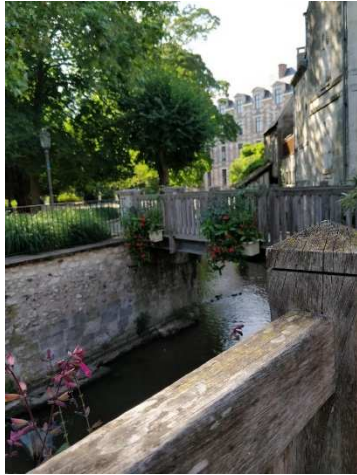
Another month has already passed, and yet it feels like only yesterday that I handed in my last report. So the month started off with a few tears, as we all had to say goodbye to Kaco and Paloma – the two other exchange students in my little city. We all gathered together for a nice last shared meal, but the evening came to an end, as did the journey of all my oldies in my district. It was so amazing meeting them all, and I was sad to let them go, though I am sure life will bring some of us together again in the future. Unfortunately my wound reopened



again as the staples didn't hold all of it together, but despite the little setback in the healing process, and not being able to move much at all during the first half, I still managed to make an amazing few weeks out of my month, starting off with a nice visit to a sunflower field – which had been a dream of

mine for a while, and was a nice little moment to share with my host mum after the hospital visit. The ping pong and monopoly continued, and I also got into doing a bit of painting and drawing thanks to my host mum who came home with a whole lot of painting equipment for me. The next hospital visit arrived, giving me permission to start walking without crutches, so my host dad and I decided to profit by making ourselves a nice visit of the city out of it. We





had a snack from a cute little bakery/tea place to celebrate, and then taking a look around the old church and park before heading back home. Some of my French school friends came and visited me at the house, and it was so good to catch up again – looking forward to going back to school (start September) and hope I'll be able to share some of my classes with them.

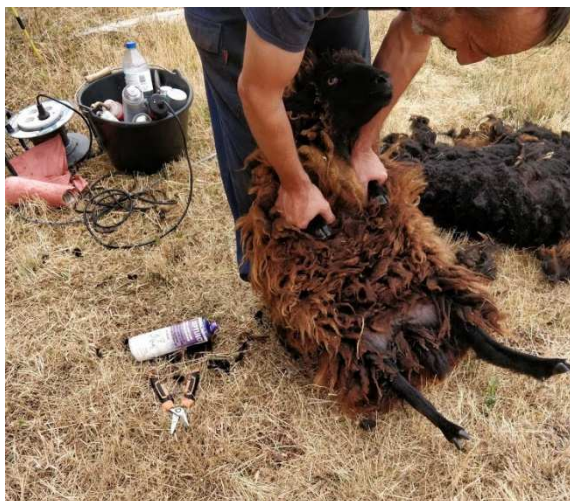
Me and my second host family went to the cinema to watch the Lion King in 3D, I absolutely love the film, and we went to the bar after for a snack which is always fun.

Sable-Sur-Sarthe hosted a festival/concert event, which I got to attend with my first and second host dad, and some guys



from Rotary. We got to see Steve 'n' Seagulls, a rock band, at the end, which was sweet as, and my host Dad bought me their cap which I got signed by the band! Now that it's summer, Sable is alive with flowers and gorgeous colours, and you can't

help but fall in love with the place. We had our 2 sheep shaved which was pretty amusing, and they didn't recognise each other after anymore.





Parce-Sur-Sarthe is also a gorgeous little village near to where I was living, and we managed to take Hookie, the big dog out for a walk in the area there. That evening, my time of changing families arrived, which was quite the emotional moment as I didn't want to let go of this amazing family I had found, and it was especially difficult for me and my host dad as we had both grown pretty close over those last 3 months.



My new family is no less amazing than my last, and I am really enjoying my time here too, though I don't have very long with them as they will be hosting the new arrival from Peru at the end of August, meaning I'll be moving onto my 4th and



last family around the 25th August. My first week here has been going very smoothly,

although we did have our few days of heat waves last week (42 degrees!) so had to stay indoors. We went to the cinema to watch the lion king in 2D (2nd time for me – but just as good), and it got so hot later, that the car stopped working. The rest of the week was filled with walks in the forest, delicious plum and rhubarb tarts, board games, a bit of mother daughter shopping time, lobster fishing, and I

even tried a bit of fish that my host dad caught. First time in over 8 years, so it was pretty interesting...



My host dad, brother and I went to the football game in Le Mans (Le Mans vs. Lens), we were 3 of 18000 spectators, so you can imagine it got pretty loud. Sadly we didn't win, but we still made ourselves a great day out of it. In the evening, I went to a little creperie on the corner of a gorgeous little French street with my host



parents, and we indulged in some delicious home made galettes and crepes with apple cider – a tradition from Bretagne (the part of France where galettes come from). Neighbour meeting, lasagne making, dog walking, more shopping, and a tour of the cookie factory which originates from the city of Sable, my next hospital visit arrived. So I'm kind of famous in the hospital now, I

came in and said my name and they're like – 'ah the New Zealander! Right this way.' I finally got the green light to take off my brace and start bending my leg, meaning we're on the right track again! Me and my second host dad went to the bakery for some cake and hot chocolate/coffee to celebrate after, and it is such an amazing bakery, and one of the things I just love about France –



wherever you are, you can find a bakery with ease. Next week I'll be heading off to Spain with my second host family which is exciting (I didn't get to go on holiday with my third host family because of my leg which was a bit of a bummer, but it was a good choice as now my wound is almost all closed up). Tomorrow I have a little rotary meet up to attend, meaning I'll also get to meet Rebecca, who is the daughter of my first host family who returned from Brazil recently.

Can't say I've had any lows; I am still just so appreciative of this whole experience and all the opportunities I get through Rotary. It's hard to believe that it's already been over half a year that I've been living in France, yet at the same time believable as it feels so natural to speak and think French, and to walk around these streets, bridges, bakeries and shops that seem so familiar to me now. It really does feel like a life in a year – all these experiences and opportunities packed into 12 months, you really don't stop profiting – and I'm sure I'll continue to, even after this incredible dream will be over. I can't even begin to express how much I am getting out of this experience – I left New Zealand as a confident, yet shy and slightly closed off student, but feel like I'll come back as an empowered young adult with a whole lot of experiences under my belt. These experiences we go through as exchange students, they lay the foundation for future successes, if we so decide to use them. Leadership, a deeper understanding of the world around us, self-confidence, maturity, and self-growth, these are only some of the things we get to develop. We may be living just a normal life in a foreign country, but it's the small things that bring us joy – it's the noticing of different trees, of different scents and different bread, different TV ads, landscapes, habits and different goals and dreams. It's walking along those cobblestone streets, with the old-fashioned houses and the village bakery around the corner. All these things, they become a reality, and in living this new life we have created for ourselves – we become one with our surroundings, taking in the sheer beauty of everything we see and experience. Through this, we develop a certain level of independence and knowledge – and take on responsibilities with more ease. So once again a big thank you to the whole team – this exchange has been an absolutely amazing experience for me.

That's it from me for now, I hope you all have a great August, and I'll be back to talk about my adventures next month.

Madita