

ESU Loire Valley visit to the Chateau de Gizeux Saturday 6th July 2013

Gerald & Lotte Dobbs



A wonderful visit on a beautifully warm and sunny day, the Chateau de Gizeux looked an absolute picture as we drove up the long straight approach. Home to Stephanie De Laffon, her husband and 6 children, the chateau has been in her husband's family for some 200 years, and is very much a working family home. The young couple are passionate about the chateau and its history, and are equally dedicated in their quest to restore it to its former glory.

Stephanie herself was our tour guide. She did not hurry our visit, and shared her love of the chateau and knowledge of its history with us in very good English. Perhaps the centre of attraction is the Long Gallery with its treasure-trove of wall paintings dating from the time of Louis XIV. Hidden from destruction by the French Revolutionaries behind false walls built by the local villagers, these paintings remained undiscovered until some years ago. Now fully revealed, they show signs of severe water damage and are badly in need of restoration - and badly in need of sponsors for such restoration.



A brief wine-tasting followed in the cellars, with stories of French Resistance fighters hiding there under the noses of the enemy occupying the Chateau directly above. Then lunch in the dining-room of the Chateau. A delightful assortment of cold meats, salads and cheese, prepared by Stephanie and Astrid who is currently working in the chateau as a personal assistant, was accompanied by more of the wine we had tasted earlier - a Bourgueil bottled especially for the chateau.



If you've never visited the Chateau de Gizeux, we hope this piece will whet your appetite. We, most certainly, will visit again. Very many thanks to Lynn Turnbull for organising the event, and to Stephanie and her family for their time and hospitality.