

**ASSOCIATION POUR LA SAUVEGARDE ET LA MISE EN VALEUR  
DU COLLÈGE DE COMBRÉE:  
Annual General Meeting, Saturday 24 March 2018**

**Item 1: Activity and Financial reports**

- **Geneviève Charbonneau** (President) recalled the objectives of the association and presented the agenda and the different activities over the past year.
  - **Annie de la Garoullaye** presented the financial report.
- Both reports were approved unanimously.

**Item 2: Election of Administration Committee**

Geneviève Charbonneau thanked departing members of the Administrative Committee: Guy Bernier, Charles de Danne, and Eric Couderc. She proposed to replace them with Jean Luard, Catherine Petit and Mylène Dupont, and to renew the mandate of the remaining members. This proposal was approved unanimously.

**Item 3: Update on the Association's Current Activities**

With the help of a diaporama, Geneviève Charbonneau recalled the highlights of the year and thanked the numerous organisers and participants for their collaboration. The Leader Project for an itinerary covering four XIXth century heritage sites (Châteaux of Challain, Tressé and Falloux, plus the college) is progressing. The European Heritage Days (JEP) have been a huge success with 150 volunteers participating. Michel Jayat, theatre producer, underlined the need for financial support from the local authorities to allow high quality productions in future years.

The reports were approved by unanimity.

**Item 4: Intervention by David O'Neil, owner of the Chateau de Falloux**

David O'Neil showed a short video on the renovation of the Chateau de Falloux before explaining his interest in the Collège de Combrée. Evoking the charm and authenticity of Haut Anjou and the kindness of the local people, he said that the building for him was an important opportunity to create something to help the region's economy, attract tourists and bring in cultural activities to the benefit of all the inhabitants such as festivals with internationally renowned artists etc. The idea was to create a positive dynamic by beginning with a profit-making activity such as top of the range weddings (using the chapel with its capacity of 300 people, the main quadrangle and the main entrance) in addition to those, of more modest size, in the château de Falloux. Exchanges had already taken place with the owners, the delegate mayor and the Fondation du Patrimoine. The château de Falloux stood ready to help with marketing thanks to their network of contacts.

**A round table: Morning of 15 May:** The next step would be to narrow down the list of projects to the most interesting ones, cost the necessary works and evaluate the financing possibilities, both private and public. This implied a very wide consultation to

ensure the support of all the interested parties. For this purpose, David O'Neil proposed to organise a round table at the château de Falloux (the date of which has since been fixed). All those interested should join the ASMV Collège de Combrée, either by telephone (0633754005) or by e-mail at [combree.college@gmail.com](mailto:combree.college@gmail.com)

### **Item 5: Debate**

During the debate that followed, the following points were made:

**Michel Villedey** (Vieilles Maisons Françaises et Villages de Charme) said how much he welcomed the approach, launched several years ago by Geneviève Charbonneau - now joined by David O'Neil who, although from another country, wanted to valorise the local heritage for everyone's benefit and allow them to enjoy the economic benefits this would bring. It would be necessary to find an appropriate legal structure to mobilise funding. VMF, la Fondation du Patrimoine, the DRAC and the SPPEF could all help with this and collaborate in this superb project.

**Xavier Nérieux** (Société pour la Protection des Paysages et l'Ésthetique de la France) spoke about Combrée, where imagination had triumphed and produced a project given concrete expression by our friends the Americans. *Those who brought the means to relaunch and develop the college should have to pay a purchase price as well. When you have brought up a child, you don't pay the child.*

**David O'Neil** replied on the various points raised, especially on the nature of the project and the different ways of realising it: buying and financing from one's own resources. Given the enormous amount of work involved the purchase cost should be very low, and a staged approach adopted, with distinct stages of work. If the owners insisted on a lease there were others ways of proceeding. Since the initial investment for weddings was relatively small, and the revenue thus generated could allow bank loans, a lease was just about possible to envisage. With the advantages already evoked, and its geographical position ('gateway to the Loire valley') Haut Anjou was a national treasure capable of attracting tourists in search of quiet and security away from big towns.

Others pointed to the possibility of exploiting the 'frontier' character of the region covering four departments (Cycle paths, footpaths, cultural events in common). Other ideas for using the college were put forward: an art centre in collaboration with museums, a training centre, catering activities, a regional Haut-Anjou museum, events such as a large show (on the Vitré model); concerts; art shows; permanent exhibitions (entomological collection already available)etc.

Concluding, **Geneviève Charbonneau and David O'Neil** underlined the importance of local authorities participating in the round table. They thanked M le député Bolo and the delegate mayor M Roux , as well as the presidents of the different associations, for their participation.