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New priest

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S&W NEWS

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The Entente Cordiale

As work was going on in Wansford, Richmond, London and Gloucestershire to establish Pte Henry Parker's place in the First World War, the Yorkshire Regiment and our village community, the parish council's French counterparts on the Somme were working equally hard to ensure that all went well at the military funeral at the Warlencourt British Cemetery.

The mayor of Warlencourt-Eaucourt (population 155), Lucien Guise was liaising with various French authorities, the Ministry of Defence Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) and Lord Ed Llewellyn, British Ambassador to France, so that this son of Wansford could have a fitting and dignified service and, at last, be laid to rest with his fellow First World War comrades.

Bev Simon, of the JCCC, said: 'M le Maire had to attend meetings at a very high level when planning started way back in October 2016. He volunteered his village hall, chairs, etc and manpower was provided from his village. It was also an enormous occasion for them to have the Sous-Prefet present and the British Ambassador. I think it was probably obvious from his speech, but the village was



immensely proud to support the burial and to open its doors to us. Personally, I could not thank him enough as I felt this tiny village had responded so positively when we had descended upon them!

At the reception at the Warlencourt Mairie following Pte Parker's funeral, upon hearing of the memorial service scheduled to take place in Wansford the following week, M Guise, a non-English speaker who had never before visited the UK, indicated that he wished to attend.

So with the great help of the JCCC and in the course of just a few rushed days, the details were arranged and the parish's first ever civic visit was sorted.

Villagers and church mem-

bers, having already given time, talents and a great deal of effort to make sure the Pte Parker's memorial service and the English reception was a success, then rallied round with time, language and culinary skills, to welcome and help entertain M le Maire and his partner, Isabelle, throughout the weekend, starting with a hurriedly arranged meal at The Trout and carrying on from there. At a gathering on the Sunday evening, parish council chairman Ian Lambie presented M and Mme Guise with a painting of Wansford Church, as a reminder of their involvement in the Henry Parker story and their visit to East Yorkshire.

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Ian would like to thank everyone involved in the weekend in any way. He said: “My memories of the weekend for the memorial of Pte Henry Parker will never fade., not only for the remembering one of Wansford's own, but also for how our village pulled together to make our first foreign dignitaries M le Maire and his partner, Isabelle, most welcome despite the language barrier. My personal thanks go to all those who translated, those who gave their own time over the weekend to show great Yorkshire hospitality, and lastly to Jill and Keith Pick for hosting our guests.’

