



Ambassador's Activities

2012

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Speech by HE Bernard Emié,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

on the 30th anniversary
of the *Alliance française de Glasgow*

Glasgow, 16 November 2012

Lady Provost,

Baillie Cameron,

Elisabeth Campbell,

Ladies and gentlemen, *chers amis de l'Alliance française de Glasgow*,

It's a great pleasure for me to be among you for the second time in this great metropolis of Glasgow, a major port city famous for, among other things, having been at the heart of the Industrial Revolution. It has an illustrious past, but Glasgow is certainly not a city of the past. For more than 30 years, Glaswegians have been transforming their city, and they've modernized it, as shown by the forthcoming 20th edition of the Commonwealth Games in 2014. This dynamism is also reflected in its three universities: the University of Glasgow, the University of Strathclyde and the more recent Glasgow Caledonian University.

Glasgow – a city of culture, place of innovation and maritime port of entry to Scotland – couldn't fail to get along with Marseille.

The cooperation between these two metropolises, separated by geography but with common characteristics, exemplifies the sharing of wealth and enthusiasm. The finest example of this success is bilateral educational cooperation. The presence of representatives of the city of Marseille and of Aix-en-Provence's education authority demonstrates this real friendship between the two cities.

I thank the *Alliance française*, which, by inviting me to celebrate its 30th anniversary, has given me this opportunity to set foot again in Scotland, which is so close to French people's hearts. Once again I'm receiving a warm welcome, and I thank you all for it.

France has a strong presence in Scotland thanks to the existence of a Consulate General, an *Institut français* in Edinburgh and, of course, the *Alliance française de Glasgow*, a cornerstone of our cultural and linguistic network.

Glasgow's *Alliance française*, like every *Alliance française* the world over, is part of a noble mission: spreading our mother tongue. For all French people, the French language is not

only a means of communication, it's the soul of our culture and our nation's values. As President Hollande said at the recent summit of the International Organization of La Francophonie in Kinshasa on 13 October: "Speaking French is a way of thinking, of looking at the world. It's a message of freedom." So I'm grateful to the *Alliance française de Glasgow* for continuing, through its daily activities, to make our language known and share it, here in the heart of Scotland.

Cultural events and the teaching of the French language are the two central activities of a now well-established and thriving institution. More than 2,500 students and pupils follow French courses here every year. Enrolments are continuing to increase, both among adults and the youngest children. Under the impetus of its young Director, Nathalie Korkmaz, the *Alliance* is proving to be much more than a language centre. Over its 30-year existence, it has developed a broad range of cultural activities: the *Ciné-Club*, the *Café Littéraire*, the *Café Histoire* and the popular wine tastings. Moreover, it gets involved in the city's festivals, such as the Glasgow University Science Festival.

The *Alliance* is an invaluable link in the network of 10 *Alliances françaises* and the two *Instituts français* of London and Edinburgh. My warmest thanks go to this proactive, motivated, friendly and ambitious team for helping stimulate greater awareness of France. They can be legitimately proud of what they've accomplished.

I want to thank the Board of Directors, who, under Elisabeth Campbell's leadership, voluntarily give up their time to making the *Alliance* run smoothly and extending its local reach. We're lucky enough to have eight of the Board's members with us tonight, including three of the longest-serving: Colin Smethurst – a founder member – David Young and Héléne Thomson. My very warm thanks go also to the Goethe Institute, which shares its Park Circus building with the *Alliance*. Thanks to modern, welcoming premises, the *Alliance* has exceptional visibility. As we prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty, what better symbolizes the friendship between France and Germany?

I want to use the *Alliance française de Glasgow* as an example to highlight the contribution made by all the UK's other *Alliances françaises*, which, by their ability to integrate into the communities they serve, project a positive, open image of France. The French Embassy is very committed to developing this network, which is represented this evening by Xavier

Lavry, Director of the Manchester *Alliance française* and Delegate-General of the *Alliance française* Foundation in the UK.

Chère Lady Provost and *chère* Liz Cameron, I can't end this speech without thanking you for your contributions to this magnificent evening, organized in such a prestigious venue. Thank you to sponsors Total and Thales, and thank you again to Nathalie Korkmaz, the organizer of this highly successful event.

Thank you for being so dynamic! Thank you all for your support!

Many happy returns to Glasgow's *Alliance française* – may it have a long life ahead of it!./.