

COMBERTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Report for AGM - Wednesday 16th September 2020

Introduction

This has been my fourth year as chairman, and an unusual year because of the Coronavirus pandemic. The AGM was postponed while we resolved whether to hold it virtually, postpone, or skip a year. We decided on a hybrid (Zoom/physical) meeting in September.

Twinning Visits to France

We made a successful visit to le Vaudreuil for 20-22 September 2019, by coach and Eurotunnel as usual. This was to reciprocate the French visit to us the previous April, when we had hosted them at Girton College. Arriving in Le Vaudreuil we dispatched to our hosts. Next day we enjoyed a mini cruise on the Seine, in excellent weather.

In the evening, we had a Karaoke evening with an excellent shared buffet supper in the old hall - a slightly surreal experience for some but the children (and some adults) joined in with great enthusiasm. Dress code was 'something abnormal in the outfit', which prompted some surprising displays! On the Sunday we met for lunch at the golf club, with speeches, champagne and a cake to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the twinning. A good time was had by all.

Although we have no full trip to France in 2020, we mooted a smaller excursion in the autumn by private car, to coincide with the French holding one of their literary walks – "In the steps of Guy de Maupassant" on 4th October. Although the French are currently expecting their walk to go ahead, and would welcome visitors, Coronavirus uncertainties make us unlikely to travel.

Twinning Visits from France

The plan was for the French to come to Comberton the weekend of the 8th May 2020, which was the 75th anniversary of VE Day. However, this was overtaken by the travel restrictions of the Coronavirus pandemic and had to be cancelled. We hope just to postpone by a year, and have pencilled in the dates of 14, 15 and 16th May 2021 for their visit. This suits them as it follows their bank holiday of Ascension Day on the 13th. However, Coronavirus may well lead to that date being deemed premature – time will tell.

Social Events

Our annual barbeque was again hosted in the delightful gardens of Manor Farm by Godfrey and Pauline, on the 7th July. Thanks to them, and to all the committee that organised and prepared food. We were again invited there this year for our BBQ, but that, like most social events, has had to be deferred due to Coronavirus.

Our main fund raiser was the quiz, again ably organised in November by Peter Mitton, although the number of teams was still less than historically – we need to spread the word about this event by word of mouth and get more groups involved.

Instead of an annual dinner, we again were kindly invited by Brenda Brown to a New Year party at her house in January, with shared food and music. This was a very enjoyable evening, which was appreciated by the many attendees.

Fund raising

During the year, we have tried to raise funds for the association by applying for grants. Brian and Malcolm have worked hard with some success. Thanks go in particular to Brian for successfully applying for a grant of £500 from Cambridgeshire Community Foundation.

Constitution and policies

This year, I have amended the CTA Safeguarding and Equality procedures, to bring them up to date, and comply with the comments from the Community Foundation – e.g. The Safeguarding policy now addresses the Care Act 2014 and refers to Adults at Risk rather than Vulnerable Adults. Our Equal Opportunities Policy now includes a reference to the 2010 Equality Act and the nine protected characteristics. There have been no changes to the constitution this year, although a review may well be in order in the light of the Coronavirus restrictions.

Publicity

On the publicity front, we have had text adverts for the twinning in the village magazines of many of the 11 surrounding villages which feed Comberton Village College. Paula Brown has done good publicity at Cambourne, and Ailish Meadows created and ran an advert in the Coton newsletter and Grantchester magazine. Caroline Mulderij produced an article for Comberton Contact about our visit to Le Vaudreuil.

We had a stand at the Church fair, and at the Village Hall Christmas and Easter fairs, but without any direct recruits. It is however important to keep the existence and activities of the twinning known round the villages, so attending these events is worthwhile.

Personal recommendation is by far the best way of getting new members. We have a web site – see <http://CombertonTwinning.org.uk>, with information and downloadable posters – a resource for all of you to point your friends at. It was updated again this year to include pictures of recent twinning events.

To justify Brian's grant application to CCF, we agreed to run a community workshop/French breakfast with coffee and croissants, organised by Caroline Mulderij. This will include activities for children and also for adults to improve confidence with speaking French. A date was set in September, but is currently suspended due to Coronavirus, and it will move to next year.

Future of the Twinning

We are still struggling to recruit and maintain enough members to keep the twinning viable into the future. Slightly to our surprise, our French equivalent is also having difficulties in getting enough members involved in trips to Comberton.

We currently aim to continue the twinning from next year with one visit a year instead of two, so to welcome the French in 2021 and going to France in 2022, but your opinions on the future of the association are requested – there is an agenda item at the AGM for this, or by email.

Thanks

A big thank you to all my committee – nothing would happen without them! Thanks also to all of you members, for hosting visitors and supporting the twinning association.

Paul Hardy, 1-July-2020, revised 31-August 2020, minor edit 16-September 2020