

TWINNING INITIATIVE

Minutes of Meeting held in CVC, 19.30-21. 00, on Thursday 14th January 1999

Present:

Angela Ayling
Sheila & Dick Bason
Brenda & Ivan Brown
Ros Clayton (briefly, for item 4)
Marion Fraser
Sarah & David Gordon
Margaret & Paul Hardy
Sandra Hyde
Robert James

Janet & Brian McCabe
Sally Maynard
Barbara & Peter Mitton
Jill Preston
Mandy Ray
Jane & Charles Scanlon
Nerys & Malcolm Wright*

[* Chairman]

Apologies for Absence:

Julia & Chris Hall

1. Welcome

MW welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their interest in the initiative and comments already received.

2. Summary of last meeting

The last (actually the first) meeting was held on 11th February 1998 at the Village College. Nine people attended and another 10 expressed interest but were unable to attend the meeting.

The decision was taken to go ahead with trying to find a twinning partner for Comberton. The preferred areas were Belgium and Holland. A small village of similar population to Comberton, near to a university town (in view of Comberton's proximity to Cambridge) would be ideal. Leiden and Bruges were suggested. The advantage of Holland is that good English is spoken by the Dutch. One or two people expressed interest in twinning farther afield, eg Eastern Europe, but the general feeling was that any partner should be easily accessible in order to involve as many people as possible.

Malcolm Wright, Marion Fraser and Ivan Brown met on the afternoon of 19th February at 9 Kentings, by kind permission of Marion, to complete the application form 'Request for a Twinning Partner'. This was duly sent off to the Local Government International Bureau (LGIB) at the end of February, with a portfolio of information and photographs compiled by MW.

3. Progress to date

A reply was received from LGIB in mid-March stating they had no suitable places in Holland or Belgium, but our details were being displayed on the website of the Association of Flemish Cities & Municipalities. Weeks went by with no response; therefore, it was decided to redirect our attention to France which has numerous places seeking twinning partners in the UK. Details were requested on 4 places: **Le Vaudreuil, Dissay, Murs-Eringe and Chaingy**. These were received on 18th June.

- Le Vaudreuil was considered to be the best choice, for the following reasons:
- It is within an easy day's drive from Comberton (260 miles, mostly motorway).
- It has a similar population.
- It is a well-organised community.
- It has reasonable tourist facilities (restaurants, shops, sports centre, golf course).
- It is close to a number of woods, for walking & picnics.
- It is on the river Eure & close to the Seine.
- It is about 12 miles from the ancient city of Rouen & 45 miles from Versailles.
- It is only 18 miles from Monet's house & garden at Giverny

Murs-Eringe is already twinned with towns in Spain & Romania. Chaingy is in an uninteresting looking area between 2 noisy roads. Dissay would probably not be comfortably reached within a day's drive.

IB reported that he had asked a Dutch friend about possible twinning partners in the Netherlands. Valkenburg, near Leiden, was suggested and IE wrote to their Town Hall. No reply had been received to date but it was understood that, because of current plans to change regional boundaries, it was unlikely that a Dutch partner could be found in the near future. MW had asked a Belgian friend for suggestions, but this proved fruitless.

MW, NW, BB & IB decided to make an informal visit to Le Vaudreuil on 26th/27th October '98. Unfortunately, the person responsible for twinning arrangements was not there, but a long telephone conversation was held with her and a meeting was held with one of her colleagues in the Town Hall. The impression gained was that Le Vaudreuil was interested in pursuing the idea of twinning with Comberton.

MW reported that Le Vaudreuil was different in a number of respects from Comberton; eg in the number of shops, restaurants, businesses and a sizeable industrial area. However, it was decided to pursue the possibility of a partnership. A visit to Monet's garden at Giverny and a further 2 nights spent in Rouen confirmed the favourable impression of the area around Le Vaudreuil.

In the present week, the twinning representative from Le Vaudreuil had telephoned with a request to visit Comberton in the near future (by 3 adults and 3 children under 10!). The weekend of 6/7th March was suggested and this remains to be agreed, as does an appropriate schedule for the visit.

On 7th January the LGIB sent MW an additional suggestion for a twinning partner; **Verton** in Northern France. Its advantages are:

- It is only 40 miles from Calais.
- Its population is very similar to Comberton's.
- It has a good community spirit (several festivals held each year).
- It professes to be keen on developing its tourist facilities.
- It has a number of shops (baker, antiques, bric-a-brac, etc).
- It has a camp site, gites & B & Bs.
- It has some sporting facilities.
- There is a 14th century church.
- It is only about 4 miles from the seaside resort of Berck-Plage
- The ancient town of Montreuil is only about 6 miles away.
- Le Touquet is 8 miles north, Abbeville 23 miles south.

There was general agreement that Verton should be considered as an alternative partner to Le Vaudreuil.

JP pointed out that CVC was already twinned with a school in Guerande in southern Brittany and there could be advantages in extending this partnership to include the town as a whole. It was only 3 miles from the sea at La Baule and about 40 miles from the city of Nantes. Some of those present knew and liked the area and it was agreed to consider this suggestion further. MW will speak to Catherine Jenkinson-Dix at CVC regarding this possibility.

4. Aims

Cultural exchanges between partners were seen to be the main aim of twinning, in order to further knowledge and understanding of similar communities in different parts of Europe and to form friendships which could be pursued at an informal level, in addition to the more formal exchange visits between partners.

5. Activities after twinning

MW explained that once an agreement had been reached between 2 partners there would need to be formal twinning ceremonies in both places to confirm the arrangement. Representatives of the various sections of each community would need to be present, eg the Parish Council, the schools and College, churches, sports clubs and other associations. Entertainment by, eg schoolchildren, the Meridian Theatre and local orchestras & choirs would help to make this formal ceremony enjoyable. Where possible, it was expected that visitors from a twinning partner would be accommodated by members of the visited community.

Ros Clayton joined the meeting briefly and was sounded out about the possibility of extending CVC's link with Guerande. She could see no objection to this suggestion, but pointed out that the College already had a full programme of exchanges with this partner and another in Germany, therefore staff could not take on responsibility for any further exchanges with schools in whatever partner Comberton chose. It was suggested that Meridian Primary School might become involved in children's exchanges, although they have no such policy at the moment. Private exchanges between children in

Comberton and Guerande were, of course, possible in addition to those arranged by the College.

MW thanked RC for leaving her other meeting to join us and also for allowing us to meet in the College free of charge.

6. Funding & Support

RJ explained that limited funds could be made available by the Council to cover certain official aspects of the twinning arrangement, eg helping towards the initial twinning ceremony, the erection of twinning notices at the entrances to the village and certain expenses incurred by official visits. The upper limit of support is £1000 and expenditure would need to be approved by the Parish Council. MW explained some of the rules for obtaining grants towards twinning expenses. Visits by 10 or more people from one partner to another, where the places in question were more than 250 km apart, were eligible for a grant. An essential requirement was to apply for such a grant 3 months in advance and the application had to be submitted by the potential *partner* of the visiting community! A straw poll produced names of 10 people who expressed interest, in principle, of participating in an initial visit and these were recorded by the Chairman.

7. Next step

The priority is to make arrangements for the proposed visit by representatives from Le Vaudreuil. It was agreed that a committee should be set up to deal with this and other immediate matters. It was also agreed that consideration should be given to the relative merits of Verton and Guerande as twinning partners, for comparison with Le Vaudreuil and also as alternatives if Le Vaudreuil considered Comberton to be an unsuitable partner for them.

8. Formation of committee

The following people volunteered/agreed to serve on the committee:

Ivan Brown	Janet McCabe
Marion Fraser	Peter Mitton
Paul Hardy	Malcolm Wright

The committee will hold its first meeting on: Tuesday 2nd February, 19.45hrs, at 15 Kentings, by kind permission of Margaret & Paul Hardy.

The main purpose of the meeting will be to discuss how to handle the visit by representatives from Le Vaudreuil, if and when it occurs.

MW offered his apologies as he will be in South Africa at that time. PM will also be on holiday and apologised for absence.

9. Any other business

There was no other business, but those present were invited to examine the range of literature about Le Vaudreuil and Verton assembled by MW and the photographs he had taken of the former, plus recent photographs supplied by the latter.

The meeting closed around 21.00hrs.