

Comberton Twinning Association

Chairman's Report May 4 2006

We are now in the 7th year of the Association and I think that we are as strong now, if not stronger, than when we formed in 1999. Our membership has been fairly static over the years. We have lost a few members but gained new ones. It was very pleasing that in the last year there have been 15 new members including 4 from Barton and 11 from Comberton. So I think our membership is now at its highest since we started. Some residents said when we started it would never last but we have proved them wrong.

In the last 7 years we have learnt a lot about our respective cultures and at the same time enjoyed ourselves. If I had to single out any one occasion, I think it would be our visit to Le Vaudreuil in 2004 when Chemin de Comberton was officially opened and in the evening, we had the Cabaret jointly performed by Valderoliens and Combertonians. It was my first performance on stage and it showed but I must pay tribute to my fellow performers who put on a great show. Our contribution was produced by Brenda Brown to whom we were most grateful. Thanks to Ivan Brown who videoed it we were able to relive this occasion at our Christmas Party. Probably the second favourite occasion was the lunch at the Meridien School last year when the school caterer provided us with an excellent meal. She also went to a great deal of trouble to decorate the tables with daffodils.

One fairly recent innovation has been our Christmas Party – the first already mentioned and the second last year which took the form of a wine tasting and quiz through the generosity of Waitrose. Our annual quizzes are now established as a regular event. These have always made an excellent profit which has enabled us to subsidise various events and travel to Le Vaudreuil. One year we donated our profit of £700 to the New Village Hall. They have also been very enjoyable occasions. I must mention Peter Mitton who finds us the quiz master each year, Ann Webb and her team who provide the excellent supper and Jane Winney and Nerys Wright who conduct the raffle. Without these three elements we would not make the money that we do or have such a good time. Every year in August we play Boule at the Three Horseshoes which also is great fun. Last year we held our Annual Dinner at Madingley Hall when the attendance was about 80% of the membership. All agreed it was an excellent evening. I have booked to have there again at a similar time this year (28th June)

For the past two years our travel to France for our Annual visit has been subsidised by Eurotunnel who have provided free passage for our coach through the tunnel to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the L'Entente Cordial. This has enabled us, with an additional subsidy from the Association, to keep the cost of travel to the very low figure of £25. Having set a precedent we would like to continue this but all of the subsidy will have to come from our own funds and any grants we may be able to secure. So if we appear to have a healthy bank balance at the moment we will need it .

During the 7 years of our twinning many friendships have been formed and numerous private visits made in both directions. Two weeks ago Eric Bordet and family exchanged houses with Brian & Janet McCabe. I know that the Bordet family received lots of hospitality from our members and I suspect that Brian & Janet received similar in Le Vaudreuil. Last year the Hothersall family exchanged houses with the Thereze family and four of us were invited to a surprise 50th birthday party in May for Gerard Lebeque. So I think you can say that Comberton has done its bit to foster good relations across the channel.

Finally, as some of you will already know , I have decided to stand down as Chairman. I have thoroughly enjoyed the last 7 years but I think it is good to have a change. It is with some reluctance that I do this but I am hoping to remain on the committee if you will have me. I would like to thank all of those who have supported me since we formed the association. Initially Ivan Brown was a tower of strength as Secretary until he stood down two years ago. In the very early days before we twinned Ivan & Brenda and Nerys & I paid a visit to Le Vaudreuil incognito to see whether we liked the place – we did and the following year we twinned. Ivan was succeeded by Mary Catlin who has carried on where Ivan left off and has done an excellent job. From the beginning Peter Mitton has been Treasurer – as an ex-bank manager and a Francophile he was the obvious choice and he too has done an excellent job, not just as Treasurer but in the overall general running of the Association. Ann Webb has had the formidable task of arranging the hosting which sometimes has been difficult when we have had what appeared to be too many guests for the hosts available but she has always managed it. Working at the Meridien school she has been a very useful link when we have wanted to use the premises for an event. My thanks also to the rest of the committee: Brian McCabe who took over from his wife Janet and Dorothy Morison who has fairly recently joined the committee. I mustn't forget Paul Hardy who left some time ago to live and work in America. He was particularly helpful on the publicity side, a job which now seems to have fallen to Brian McCabe. Finally, I must thank my wife Nerys who has supported me throughout my time as Chairman.

My best wishes to my successor and long may the Association continue to flourish.