

COMBERTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Report for AGM - Wednesday 22nd September 2021

Introduction

This has been my fifth year as chairman, and another unusual year as the Coronavirus pandemic continues. The AGM was again postponed to autumn until restrictions eased.

Twinning Visits from France

The plan was for the French to come to Comberton the weekend of the 14/15/16th May 2021 for their visit, postponed from VE Day 2020. However, that was cancelled due to Covid, and the current plan is for them to come to us the weekend of 27/28/29th May 2022. This was reconfirmed by Marie Curial this week (September). She noted that all attendees will now need to have passports, rather than previous use of identity cards

Twinning Visits to France

Our last visit to le Vaudreuil was 20-22 September 2019. To catch up, we could think of going in September 2022, or in Spring 2023. We should discuss this at the AGM.

Their literary walk mentioned at the previous AGM as a possible event for a small-scale visit by some of us was postponed. It now will take place in early October 2021, but Covid has meant that we couldn't envisage organising a presence this year.

Social Events

Covid sadly also eliminated our other usual social events = the quiz fund raiser, annual dinner, and New Year party. In place of the last of these, we held a members Zoom session on 30th January to help dispel midwinter gloom. We were able to chat and to catch up with the state of the twinning, but also various members provided a 'turn', by reading or reciting a poem or extract, playing or singing something musical, or showing photos. Suitable themes were to be anything to do with France or the French, anything Scottish (week of Burns night), or anything relevant to our lockdown. This was a very enjoyable evening, which was appreciated by the many attendees.

In March, Barney released his song in homage to Le Vaudreuil, which had been previewed at previous events.

In July, as vaccination rollout began to put Covid into retreat, our annual barbeque was after a year of absence back on the schedule. It was again hosted in the delightful gardens of Manor Farm by Godfrey and Pauline Curtis, on 10th July (the closest weekend to Bastille Day). Thanks to them, and to all the committee that organised and prepared food. Many commented that it was a pleasure to be together in person after so long.

Fund raising and Finances

As we have had no real outgoings, we have not been actively fundraising this year.

One outstanding matter is the club's insurance, which renewal documents have shown to be unsuitable (liability limits are low and it excludes foreign travel!). This is being renegotiated, but cost is likely to increase significantly.

Constitution and policies

This year, I have reviewed the CTA Safeguarding and Equality policies, to bring them up to date for their three-year refresh – no major changes. I have also added a minimal Health and Safety policy. 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, as we have had no visits and were uncertain about forthcoming ones, we have not done much direct publicity. I did put an update/advert for the twinning in Contact and other nearby village magazines in Nov 2020, and another in Contact September 2021.

We also got a mention in the SCDC magazine which goes to all households. This was an article on “Twin it to Win it”, covering Comberton, Bourn, Shelford, and Foxton.

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 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 2020, but is currently suspended due to Coronavirus, and it will move to 2022.

Future of the Twinning

Covid has compounded our existing struggles to recruit and maintain enough members to keep the twinning viable into the future. Brexit has also hindered. Slightly to our surprise, our French equivalent is also having difficulties in getting enough members involved in trips to Comberton.

However, we currently aim to continue the twinning from next year so to welcome the French in May 2022 and going to France in either September 2022 or Spring 2023, 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, 21-September 2020