

COMBERTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Report for AGM - Friday 10th June 2022

Introduction

This has (I think) been my sixth year as chairman, and a year with more hope as the Coronavirus pandemic recedes. After two years of autumn AGMs, we return to the more usual May/June timeslot, so this report covers a short year.

Twinning Visits from France

After two postponements, a group of 28 French from 11 families came to us the weekend of 27/28/29th May 2022. Numbers were lower than previous because of Covid fears combined with Brexit hassles - attendees now need passports, rather than previous use of identity cards.

With Covid in mind we didn't arrange any indoor events, but Godfrey and Pauline Curtis kindly offered the delightful gardens of Manor Farm for a BBQ on the Saturday evening. Thanks go to them, and to all that prepared food and drink and entertainments for what was a memorable and enjoyable evening.

Twinning Visits to France

Our previous visit to le Vaudreuil was 20-22 September 2019. Before Covid we had planned on going alternate years, but there is a wish to go this year to catch up. So, we are invited and currently planning to go to Le Vaudreuil for the last weekend (23-25) of September 2022. Numbers look a bit low but sufficient to go ahead. Do tell your friends and neighbours and suggest that they come!

Social Events

Covid fears sadly eliminated our usual social events = the quiz fund raiser, annual dinner, and New Year party. We did hold a New Year Zoom party in mid-January to dispel winter gloom, with a mixture of humour, music and theatrical turns.

We also had a BBQ last year at Manor Farm in July, on 10th July (the closest weekend to Bastille Day), but that has already been covered in the delayed 2021 AGM.

Fund raising and Finances

As we have had no real outgoings prior to the May visit by the French, we have not been actively fundraising this year. We hope to deploy some of the £500 grant from the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation against the costs of the visit.

A still outstanding matter is the Association's insurance. Our previous insurer changed the policy not to cover any aspects related to foreign travel after Brexit. We have currently taken out an enhanced policy to cover us in the UK, but not in France (at £90 + £30 brokerage). We may have to accept the small risk on the officers of being sued for negligence, unless we can find a suitable policy at acceptable cost before September – if anyone has a tame Insurance broker who could advise us then let me know. Note that our insurance has never covered members for travels – families should have their own travel insurance.

Constitution and policies

There have been no changes to the constitution or policies this year, although a review may well be in order in the light of the Coronavirus restrictions.

Publicity

On the publicity front, we have put an update/advert for the twinning in Contact and other nearby village magazines to keep the association known. We also put A5 flyers through the doors of all the occupied properties in the new Birdlines development, and other committee members targeted any new or relevant neighbours.

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 twice this year, most recently after the May visit.

We had a twinning stall at the Jubilee celebration – thanks in particular to Brian and Glynis for organising in my absence, and other committee members for holding fort.

Future of the Twinning

Unless drastic changes happen, we must accept that the heyday of twinning is passed. I got confirmation from the Local Government Association that post-Brexit there is no-one at any level of government promoting or supporting twinning. Covid has compounded our existing struggles to recruit and maintain enough members to keep the twinning viable into the future. Our French equivalent is also having difficulties in getting enough members involved in trips to Comberton.

However, we currently aim to continue the twinning with a visit later this year, and presumably a return visit next year, 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, 08-June 2022