

# COMBERTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION

## Chairman's Report for AGM - Friday 2nd June 2023

### Introduction

This has been my seventh year as chairman, and with increasing activity as Covid recedes.

### Twinning Visits to France

We had originally outlined plans to go to France in September 2022, but backed off due to the ongoing (but decreasing) risk from Covid, which meant it would be difficult or impossible to get a sufficient number of English travellers, or of French hosts.

However, we successfully visited Le Vaudreuil this year, for the first time since 2019. We went for the long weekend spanning April into May 2023. We originally had 41 confirmed travellers, but 10 dropped out in the last two weeks due to medical problems, worry over border delays, or expired passports combined with passport office strikes.

We travelled by coach (Neal's) and P&O ferry both ways, and had no significant border delays. The weather was kind, the natives were friendly, and a good time was had by all. Particular thanks to Brian McCabe who organised the coach, but then was unable to come himself.

### Twinning Visits from France

The French had visited us in May 2022, and now plan to come for the last weekend (27/28/29) October 2023. Put that date in your diaries to reserve it to host the French!

### Social Events

For the first year since Covid, we were able to hold our usual social events - the quiz fund raiser in November (thanks again to Peter and committee), BBQ at Manor Farm in June (thanks to Godfrey and Pauline), and dinner at the Pergola in March (thanks to Glynis for organising).

We also held a French cookery demonstration and communal supper in July thanks to Paula Brown, supported by the committee. This cultural evening was the final part of the programme involving the grant we had gained (organised by Brian) just before Covid.

We will meet again on the 15 July (Bastille weekend) for a BBQ at Manor Farm, and for the quiz on 11<sup>th</sup> November – start planning a team!

### Fund raising and Finances

We have received no grants this year, but as outgoings were low, the accounts were still fairly healthy prior to the April trip to France. This made a loss, but we still have some funds to use for the French visit here in October. See the treasurer's report for details.

At the previous AGM, we were having problems getting public liability insurance for the association. We finally took out a policy through Unity, which is the Scout & Guide insurance service, costing £110. Interestingly the underlying insurer is again Ansvar as before, but the description of activities matches us much more closely than when through the previous broker (Access). Note that our insurance has never covered members for travels – families should have their own travel insurance.

## Constitution and policies

We are proposing for this AGM a set of very small changes to the constitution to bring it up to date, particularly in the light of Covid and our use of video conferencing. There were no changes to our policies: Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding, and Data Protection. All these are available on our web site <http://CombertonTwinning.org.uk>.

## Publicity

We have put updates/adverts 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 committee members targeted any new or relevant neighbours.

Personal recommendation is by far the best way of getting new members. Our web site has information and downloadable posters – a resource for all to use. It was updated again this year, in advance of and after the April visit.

We now have a pull-up banner to use at events for publicity – thanks to Ailish for organising.

## Membership and Future

Like many village associations, we struggle to maintain membership, particularly lacking young members. We made a loss on the French trip as we didn't fill the coach. However, we have gained a few new families this year, which is encouraging, and regained another family after children had departed. This helps counterbalance inevitable losses due to aging. Our French equivalent also had difficulties in getting enough member families to host us.

However, the twinning continues with their visit to us later this year. Next year will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twinning, and we look forward to visiting France in the Spring.

## 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, 18-May 2023, for AGM on 2-Jun-2023*