

# COMBERTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION

## Chairman's Report for AGM - Friday 7th June 2024

### Introduction

This year of 2024 is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our twinning with Le Vaudreuil, and we have welcomed a French contingent recently to celebrate this continuity. However, 2024 has been my eighth year as chairman, and I will be retiring at this AGM – it is time for someone else to lead the association.

### Twinning Visits from France

The original plan was for the French to come to us in Autumn 2023, but they had difficulty finding a suitable date. Instead, they rearranged for Spring 2024.

A group of 23 French from eight families visited us for the weekend of 3/4/5<sup>th</sup> May 2024, and were hosted by local families from our association. We got together on the Saturday evening for a Ceilidh and bring-and-share supper at Meridian school, which was energetically enjoyed by both French and English. Thanks go to Barney for arranging the Ceilidh band. Also on the Saturday, we were provided tours of the Barton garden of Dr Meredith Belbin, who (introduced by Malcolm Wright) had generously given us a donation of £1500 to help celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

As the visit weekend was a bank holiday and also exam term in Cambridge, we had some difficulty in finding a venue for such a celebration, but John de Bruyne (a friend of Godfrey and Pauline Curtis) generously offered use of Anstey Hall in Trumpington. Organised and guided by Ailish Meadows we chose Tom's Kitchen as caterers. Anstey had not been used as a venue since Covid, so there were some ups and downs! However, it all came right in the end, and on the Sunday lunchtime we had a Prosecco reception in the library, roamed the ground floor (with moose head, old motor bikes, etc) had group photos on the patio with the hall and wisteria as backdrop, and lunch with wine in the quirky splendour of the function room upstairs. In all, a memorable event!

### Twinning Visits to France

We had been to Le Vaudreuil in Spring 2023 (see previous year report), and now plan to go in Autumn this year – the weekend of 20/21/22<sup>nd</sup> September. We are getting quotes for costs of Channel crossing and coach (which have risen sharply), and will be asking soon for members who want to come. Put it in your diaries!

### Social Events

We again held a quiz fund raiser in November, a BBQ at Manor Farm in June (thanks to Godfrey and Pauline), and a January bring-and-share party, which was moved at short notice to Birdlines Manor – many thanks to Ruth Colenso and James Gilbert.

We will meet again on the 13 July (Bastille weekend) for a BBQ at Manor Farm – thanks to Curtis family. Hopefully the quiz will be on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November, but now need a new quizmaster as the previous one has retired – start planning a team!

## Fund raising and Finances

Despite the generous donation by Dr Belbin mentioned above, we have had no general grants, and the costs of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary weekend mean that we are not wealthy – see the Treasurer's Report. A special thanks go to our new treasurer Iqbal Vohra, who has after considerable hassle managed to sort out our banking signatories and online access, plus dedicated email accounts for the officers.

## Constitution and policies

There were no changes to our constitution or 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 for the twinning in Contact and other nearby village magazines to keep the association known. We also twice put A5 flyers through the doors in the new Birdlings development. We had a presence at Church Fete and Village Hall fairs.

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 the May visit.

## Membership and Future

Like many village associations, we struggle to maintain membership, particularly lacking new young members as existing members age. Our French equivalent also has major difficulties in getting enough member families to host us and to visit. However, the twinning currently continues with our visit to them planned for later this year.

## 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. Over to the next chairman/chairwoman and their committee, to plan for the future of the association.

*Paul Hardy, 18-May 2024, for AGM on 7-Jun-2024, amended 7-Jun-2024 to correct visit date.*