

Devon Twinning Circle



Home from Home

Spring 2024

The next Devon Twinning Circle meeting will be a General Meeting, hosted by Braunton Twinning Association, on Saturday 27th April at 2 pm in St Brannock's church rooms, Church Street Braunton, EX33 2EL.

St Brannock's Church Rooms, Braunton can be accessed from the A 361 Ilfracombe Road. It is only a few metres from the main road in Church Street, on the east side of the A 361. There is limited space in the car park but plenty of on street parking available.

The lunch, served at 12:30, will be cottage pie and vegetables followed by a selection of desserts at a cost of £12 per person. A vegetarian option will be available; please mention this if required when booking.

Please contact Pat O'Hare on 01271 813534 or by email to pohare@photons.plus.com to book your lunch **no later than April 5th** and pay by BACS to Braunton Twinning Organisation, 20-68-15 account no. 53120406 with reference your name and association. If unable to pay by BACS, our hosts will accept payment on the day, but you do need to book. Please let Pat know of any specific dietary requirements.

Following the meeting there will be a speaker from a North Devon charity, Chemohero.

It is a quiet time of the year, but with the longer days, I hope you are all now planning your meetings, overseas visits, and fundraising events.

Dennis Knowles has recently stood down from Twinning and Josie Mardon's article champions his contribution to DTC for many years.

Also included in this newsletter are a couple of articles on recent fundraising events. I hope it is a catalyst for other twinning associations to produce similar articles to provide an insight on what ways you raise your funds.

Articles are invited for anything relevant to twinning – how you undertake your fundraising, some historic stories and/or photographs from years gone by or just something you think will be entertaining or useful.

Remember you will be entered into the Monica Saunders Competition and could win £50 + another £50 if judged the overall winner of the year.

Please keep the articles coming.

Please send articles, reports, photographs by email to babenton52@gmail.com

Or by post to Mr B Benton, 5 Silver Street, Bampton, EX16 9NR

Dennis Knowles

DEVON TWINNING'S GIANT AND STALWART

Maurice and I were delegated to be Exeter's reps on the Devon Twinning Circle Committee in 2007. A very new experience for both of us. We had no idea about Twinning then as we had only been members of Exeter Twinning Circle for a few months.

Dennis was a mine of information. He was very knowledgeable about all things Twinning and we sat in awe of his contributions to each meeting. At that time, he was the Insurance Officer and amongst his many tasks, Dennis arranged a special rate for Twinning groups to use for their overseas visits.

So many associations took advantage of his amazing deal and travelled safely and securely each year, knowing they were fully covered and protected.

As the years sped by, we realised that Dennis was a font of all knowledge, and he was always there to answer questions and solve problems. He had a wonderful sense of humour and was very kind and considerate to all members. When illness hit James Stewart's family followed all too soon by James's illness and death, Dennis was there to step in and take over the reins of Treasurer. This was immediately followed by HSBC rearranging all association accounts, freezing DTC's money in the process. Never to be defeated, Dennis moved our funds from bank to bank. During this time, I became Chair for the year and was fully aware of the hard work and stress caused during this time.

Dennis supported every event and after his marriage to Pauline they both worked very hard for DTC.

I cannot stress enough what a privilege it has been to have known and worked with such an honourable giant of a personality. Dennis has been a loyal friend to Twinning and his contribution is greatly valued. I am proud to say he is my friend and hope the dedication he gave to DTC will continue through the years.

Josie Mardon

DTC committee member and Past Chair

Devon Twinning Circle Website

<https://www.devontwinningcircle.com>

The website is undergoing a Spring clean, and the information is being brought up to date and tidied up a little.

After several hours of surfing the internet and searching Facebook, the links to twinning websites and Facebook pages have been added to the DTC website so anyone accessing the website can see what is going on across all twinning groups.

The links can be found under the "Page under Construction".

If you have any issues with the links or prefer them not to be shown, please let me know.

Some of the information on these links is out of date so I hope this is a catalyst for you to also bring your information up to date.

It would be extremely valuable if you let us know what you want to see on the website.

Use the "Contact Us" link on the website or email me direct on babenton52@gmail.com

Bruce Benton

Crewkerne Twinner's Cycle To Paris

On Thursday 28th September '23 Andrew Winter & Ken Priest set off on the first stage of their mission to meet up with the Crewkerne Twinning Association group at Igny and Bures-sur-Yvette near Paris on Friday 6th October. Being veterans of several French cycle tours, the two friends had decided to travel by bike rather than with the rest of the group travelling by coach. As a concession to the passing years (both being 72 years old) and the requirement to carry sufficient luggage to cope with autumnal weather they elected to use recently purchased electrically assisted bikes.



Train tickets & senior railcards in hand, the two loaded their bikes into the minimal space allocated for bikes on the train to Portsmouth for the overnight ferry to St Malo. Following a change at Salisbury they duly arrived at Portsmouth Harbour with plenty of time for the traditional "Start of Tour" pint of beer prior to making their way in slight drizzle and the gathering gloom to the ferry port.

Of course, suspicious looking characters like these two were picked out by HM Customs to have their baggage searched but following promises to leave bottle-openers and other essential tools with the bikes on the vehicle deck they were finally allowed to board the ferry. Then followed the first navigational challenge of the trip: finding their cabin amongst the maze of corridors & an incomprehensible numbering system! After a decent meal and a rather bumpy overnight crossing they arrived on a somewhat grey & drizzly Friday morning in St Malo for the next stage of their adventure.

For Ken this was almost a disastrous start as in all the excitement leaving the ship, he pedalled off towards the French Customs leaving his backpack behind on the vehicle deck! Fortunately, the situation was quickly resolved by a helpful young French girl in a hi-vis jacket. Finding their way out of St Malo through the morning traffic towards the coast was surprisingly easy and after a brief stop to buy some food for later it wasn't long before the pair found themselves at the western edge of the Bay of St Michel.



The going was easy here and with the weather improving good progress was made along the coastal road towards Le Mont St Michel, stopping only for the obligatory coffee & croissant in a very pleasant roadside cafe. Back on the road it wasn't long before the famous landmark was in sight and a suitable picnic spot found near the visitor centre at Beauvoir.

From here onwards the route was expected to be signposted as they would be following the Veloscenic Cycle Route, but unfortunately the route was obviously intended for the majority of cyclists who would be starting from Paris so many of the signposts could easily be missed travelling in the opposite direction! After a leisurely picnic lunch, they headed off towards the first overnight stop in the small town of Ducey, south of Avranches via a network of country lanes. All the overnight stops had been booked well in advance. This one was at a small but pleasant hotel. The restaurant menu looked rather expensive so a recce of the town for an alternative, although not looking too hopeful at first, eventually found a small creperie that served a good meal.

Saturday morning started with the inclusive buffet-style continental breakfast. Bags were packed and recharged batteries fitted to the bikes before checking-out and heading off in the warm sunshine stopping only to buy food & drink for the day's ride. This was to become an established routine for the rest of the trip.



The second day's ride was a fairly relaxed 35 miles through very rural countryside much of which was along a disused railway track. Redundant track-side buildings from a bygone era were passed many of which had been converted into residential properties, however views of the surrounding countryside were often restricted by trees & high hedgerows. The usual picnic lunch was taken at a conveniently located wooden table & bench and washed down on this occasion with a glass of the local wine.

The overnight stop was to be at a superb Chambres d'Hotes which turned out to be an ancient farmhouse and barn converted to a very high standard. An excellent evening meal was provided by our hosts and after a good night's sleep Sunday morning dawned bright & clear.



The 3rd days ride was a little more 'undulating' and passed through the medieval hilltop town of Domfront which was fascinating – and almost deserted!

A few miles further along the lakeside town of Bagnoles was reached, this was a most attractive and busy town with a casino by the landscaped lake and many up-market shops. However, the road beckoned so pausing only for Andrew to purchase underwear which he had forgotten to pack, they carried on towards the next overnight stop at the tiny, isolated village of Lignieres-Orgeres. This turned out to be a large former priory being run by a young Belgian couple who thankfully provided a substantial evening meal which was served at a Table d'Hotes on the patio. Many of the rooms here had been refurbished but there were many still to do together with a large rather unkempt garden, it was difficult to see how this would all be managed whilst still welcoming guests.

Monday morning was the 4th day and forecast to be another warm and sunny day with temperatures reaching 27, this had not been expected in October! One of the longest stages of the trip was to be somewhat convoluted due to difficulty in finding suitable accommodation. Today's picnic lunch was finished off with a refreshing glass of the excellent local cider. The large town of Alencon was circumnavigated via a signposted diversion, however the destination, an isolated converted mill-house was found without too much difficulty thanks to sat-nav. Coincidentally our hosts at the Moulin de Sevoux were also Belgian and provided an excellent evening meal, superb period accommodation and an interesting talk about classic cars of which there were 2 fine examples in the garage.

Day 5 was considerably cooler and started with discovering a flat front tyre on Andrew's bike, it had taken all night to go down so a decision was made to inflate it and hope to continue to the next overnight stop – fortunately this worked out as this was the first and only day there was any rain. It wasn't hard or prolonged, but a couple of stops were made for shelter, the first being in the lobby of a small church and the second was a bus-shelter which also doubled up as a lunch stop - fortunately there were no buses due! The highlight of the day was seeing 3 red squirrels dashing across the cycle track, not an everyday experience in the UK. The rain eased off in the afternoon, so the journey continued to the overnight stop at a terraced townhouse in the larger town of Nogent-le-Rotrou. Luckily there was a secure garage for the bikes, but no evening meal this time. A stroll around the pleasant town with advice from our host soon provided a choice of small restaurants.

Andrew's tyre hadn't gone down much overnight, so after topping it up the decision was made to continue to the next stop which was to be at a working farm. Stage 6 started badly by setting off in the wrong direction on a rather cold and misty morning, fortunately a "gross error check" picked up the mistake and a recalculation soon had them back on track to what proved to be an interesting and scenic stage.



Passing several pretty villages and a large chateau the destination was reached in time to repair Andrew's puncture before dinner. The accommodation here was a very comfortable purpose-built house within the farm complex with its own kitchen, dining room and laundry of which good use was made.

Day 7 started with a good farmhouse breakfast and check of the bikes before setting off towards the city of Chartres with its famous twin-spire cathedral.

This was the largest and busiest town of the trip. Navigation was a bit of a challenge but the cathedral made a good landmark and was well worth the visit. Surprisingly lacking in visitors, the cathedral seemed very quiet, and free to enter in contrast with the likes of York for example.



After lunch and a beer on a park bench the journey continued out of the city towards the final stop at a hotel near Epernon which was reached without incident using cycle tracks alongside busy dual carriageways. Hotel L'Epi was excellent, providing an unused conference room to store the bikes, a comfortable room and a very good value evening meal & breakfast.

The 8th & final stage of the journey, and in some ways the best gave an opportunity to check out the fabulous Château at Rambouillet. The grounds and lake with its fountains are spectacular, not quite on a par with Versailles perhaps, but that's for another tour!

So, onto Bures Sur Yvette, where the plan was to arrive in time to meet the coach arriving from Crewkerne with the rest of the group. Arriving in good time and having found the expected coach arrival point, the obvious thing to do was find a bar with a terrace and enjoy a cold beer in the afternoon sunshine, which after 350 miles on the bikes was felt well deserved. Unfortunately, for various reasons the coach had been delayed by several hours but the hosts from Bures & Igny kindly came to the rescue before they succumbed to the nightlife attractions of Bures Sur Yvette!



VISIT TO BAD HOMBURG 2023. A personal reflection from John Whitton

In the local freebie East Devon "One Magazine" there is an article about the Bad Homburg Boar, a remarkable example of taxidermy presented by Bad Homburg to Exeter in 1990 to celebrate 25 years of twinning links. He is alas not currently on display in the RAMM but this reminded me of the wild boar pate which I enjoyed with my hosts Bruno and Patricia - during my recent visit to Bad Homburg. We haven't had wild boar over here for over 700 years but they're still very much around in Germany and to prove it the pate was from a beast hunted by Bruno! They were super hosts who stepped in to look after me at the last moment as my previous hosts Paul and Anita were unwell, but who I'm glad to say I did see later in the visit. There were 14 of us who set off on the 29th September, including two new members of ETC. Our hosts had prepared a full programme but with some free time and the sun shone for us most of the time. The one exception alas was our river cruise on the river Main at Frankfurt with grey clouds and rain. However, we were in a covered boat and there was plenty to see from the skyscrapers of Frankfurt's financial hub to green banks which were not so far away. Unlike Exeter, where our Lord Mayors are only in office for one year with mainly ceremonial duties, in Germany their mayors are in office for several years and are hands-on administrators. Bad Homburg's Lord Mayor or *Oberbürgermeister* Alexander Hetjes received us at a splendid official reception and dinner at the Casino. Few were tempted to play the tables that evening but it did remind us that, as well as being a spa town like Cheltenham, Bad Homburg also derives a lot of income from officially regulated gambling.

What else did we do? There was a brisk and enjoyable stroll through the Kurpark with Heidi Delle -and well-done Laura my hosts' daughter who stepped in to translate. We also had a guided tour of Bad Homburg's old castle or *Schloss*. However, it seemed our guide was determined to impart every last detail of her knowledge to us!

On the Monday evening there was an optional visit to the Bad Homburg Observatory set up with astronomical telescopes by a team of enthusiastic amateurs. Fortunately, the sky was clear, and we were able to view Saturn and its rings. Tuesday the 3rd was a bank holiday - German Unity Day - and there was a celebration in the Erlöserkirche (Church of the Redeemer) with speeches by local dignitaries and choral and other musical intervals. Jean Usher, who has sung with Exeter Festival Chorus, joined the church choir on this occasion!

What else can I say? We were of course pleased to have Alison and Brian among us now returned to their native Yorkshire homeland and were also full of admiration for Josie and Maurice's charming nephew Adrian who chauffeured them to Bad Homburg and then took them for a couple of days some 300 miles further on to Salzburg. Thank you, Bad Homburg and Auf Wiedersehen!



NOT SO BAD HOMBURG

Reflections of a renewed Twinner. David Cliffe

A new twinning invitation not to be missed,
Hop on a coach, jump on a plane, bags on our wrist,
Friday our Homburg hosts met us with a warm embrace,
We were then nicely accommodated all over the place,
Our hosts prepared an interesting programme for each day,
It was much appreciated and soon fully underway,
Saturday we visited a historic schloss, with delicious tea & cake,
Then a lovely evening BBQ with recipes we should make,
Sunday a guided tour of Kurpark, followed by Orangerie lunch,
After the music, we departed a replete & jolly bunch,
An evening Casino treat, the Mayor's gourmet dinner & sincere speeches,
Then fun at the gaming tables with smart gamblers & scruffy leeches,
Monday morning mowed the lawn then a tasty lunch sent from Rome,
Visit to a Roman Fort & an evening viewing stars from a dome,
Tuesday a sightseeing visit to Frankfurt's fine festival city,
Markets, museums, music, boat trip, the storm was a pity!
Wednesday we said fond farewells & danke for a great time,
We certainly enjoyed the hospitality, sunshine, food & wine,
But mostly we have all made great new twinning friends,
Clearly, despite Brexit the twinning spirit has no ends!

David Cliffe

October 2023

Tiverton Town Twinning Association

BURNS SUPPER

Our first fund raising event for 2024 was held on Sunday 21st January at Halberton Village Hall. We tend to hold many of our events on a Sunday, as many of our members do not like driving in the dark, and at Halberton as the kitchen there is excellent to work in. We are fortunate to have a band of willing workers who do the cooking, put up the tables and lay them up.

This Sunday we were celebrating Robert Burns Day. Upon arrival you were greeted by tables decorated with blue and white napkins and vases of heather, a welcoming sight. Members picked where they wanted to sit and at one o'clock the piper, dressed in a kilt and playing the bagpipes (well an accordion) marched up and down the hall while the diners clapped to the music. We then listened to the information about Robert Burns.

This was followed by one of our members, wearing a Tam o' shanter (and desperately needing a haircut!) parading the haggis. The haggis was addressed, and with a sword (bread knife) in hand, plunged it into the haggis.



The menu was a traditional Burns meal of haggis, served on a bed of neeps & tatties with a tot of whisky, the tradition being that you pour the whisky over the haggis, some, however, preferred to drink it. A jug of gravy was on the table for those that wanted it. Members brought their own drinks; we just supply the glasses. Pudding was a delightful whisky trifle and seconds were available. Tea and Coffee were served.

At our events we usually hold a draw and being just after Christmas we had a lovely lot of prizes. Mine being the first one out of the hat! Lucky me. We charge £12.50 per person and £1 a strip for the draw. Net profit from this event was just over £300. There were 30 attending.

There is plenty of information on the internet to help if you want to hold a Burns meal in 2025.

Jean (Tiverton Town Twinning Association)

Race Night in Bampton

When we were discussing the fundraising events for 2023, it was suggested that we organise a Race Night, based on our previously successful Camel Racing nights.

An ex-twinner, who used to organise Camel Racing to raise funds for us, and for charities here in the UK and Florida, had moved away from Bampton and his camels are now retired in the USA.

The camel racing was based on asking local businesses to sponsor a race (£10) or a runner in a race (£5) which gave us a guaranteed income (£400) with 8 races and 8 runners per race. Sponsors of winning camels were rewarded with a bottle of wine and a chance to win £20 in the last race of the evening, made up from the winners of the initial 8 races.

Two of our group took the initiative, Mike agreed to provide 7 horses by toiling away in his shed at the bottom of the garden, whilst Colin agreed to build the racetrack. The plan was to have 7 races with each race winner entered for a final 8th race.

The race date was set for September and at our meeting in June the twinners were allocated the names of local businesses to be politely asked for sponsorship, collecting their money upfront.

By August we had all the sponsors for the 8 races, and to our pleasant surprise, our Chair had found two additional sponsors who were prepared to put £200 each into the evening.

The race night was open to anyone who wished to attend, so it was advertised in our local community magazine, posters all around the village and on social media. For £10, those attending were supplied with a ploughman's supper, a race card and a free forecast bet in each race.

Bampton Twinning Association Presents

Over the Jumps

COURSE CONDITIONS & WEATHER FORECAST
GOING Firm
Remaining dry all evening



Saturday 30th September 2023

Gates open 6:30, First Race 7:15

Adults £10, Under 18's £5

**Includes a Ploughmans Supper and a
Lucky Number for each Race**

Once we had obtained the sponsors and their names for the horses, it was time to produce the race card (WORD is a wonderful tool) and this was printed by a company in Tiverton.

September soon arrived, and it was time for the twinning team to spring into action as we had about 40 people attending.



Early morning the racetrack was constructed, and the tables and chairs set up.

The ploughmans had to be prepared and of course the bar had to be set up and stocked.

Someone had to manage the box office, collecting the entrance money, and handing out the race cards. Under 18's were charged half-price but not given the free forecast bet.

The Totalisator was set up, 3 twinner taking the bets for the races and the laptop was fired up to calculate the winning dividends (EXCEL is a wonderful tool).

Betting stakes were minimal (10p), but multiples could be purchased.

Prior to each race, racegoers were invited (for a small fee) to become a jockey for each horse in the race, with a bottle of wine for the winner (U18's won a box of chocolates).

The race caller and stewards were in place ready for the off in each race and the barman doubled as the prize giver.

After each race, 80% the money invested was paid out to the holders of the winning bets. Winning odds ranged from 6/4 to the biggest priced winner on the night 17/2.

The evening proved a great success, with one of the main sponsors already looking forward to sponsoring the next race night.

Over £1200 was raised for our funds, which will be used to host our French friends when they visit in 2025. The main profit from the evening came from the sponsorship topped up takings at the bar and the betting.

If you need any help or advice on setting up a similar event, then feel free to contact me.

Bruce Benton

Devon Twinning Circle BBQ – Sunday 11th August

After the successful Devon Twinning Circle BBQ last year we have decided to repeat the event this year.

The venue is again at Uplowman Village Hall on Sunday August 11th with a midday start.

Brian Smith who provided us with a wonderful BBQ last year has agreed to do it again. Delicious desserts will also be provided. We will have some entertainment like last year which helped the different groups to socialise with each other.

To secure a place this year we are charging £5 per person payable to Devon Twinning Circle. This will go towards the food, the venue and a welcome glass of Pimms. Devon twinning will cover the shortfall. As we are only supplying a welcome glass of alcoholic or non-alcoholic Pimms you are most welcome to bring other drinks you may require.

If you could please complete the form below and return to Claire Benton at clairebenton54@gmail.com

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Devon Twinning BBQ

Uplowman Village Hall, 11th August 2024 at 12pm

Please List Names below:-

Contact Email

Telephone No.....

Twinning Group.....

Dietary Needs.....

Cost £5 pp payable to Devon Twinning Circle A/c no. 54819091 sort code 60-21-27

Amount Paid £.....