

Devon Twinning Circle



Home from Home

Spring 2022

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It has been almost two years since our last newsletter, Covid meant that we were all restricted in almost every thing, everyone had to make adjustments. I personally spent my time gardening something which I have always enjoyed, emptying cupboards and throwing out half of what I never knew I had, doing jig-saws, which I admit I have become hooked on, getting most of them from Charity shops and getting cross when there is a bit missing, spending ages looking for it, sometime I find it some times I don't. Life is now slowly returning to normal and some Twinning Associations are starting to fuction again. My own Tiverton held our first event last September a Harvest Lunch followed by an Auction, it was well supported (39 members attending) and the atmosphere was wonderful, everyone was pleased to be comuncating with each other. We have continued to hold a Sunday lunch each month since having a different kind of meal each time the May one was a French meal, held as our French

visitor from Chinnon who were invited to come in May decide that they would give it a miss due to Covid and the fact passports were needed, shame but Tiverton are visiting Hofheim, our Germany town at the end of this month flying from Heathrow, 25 members have booked.

Please send articles, reports, photographs by Email to: Jeanaplin@live.co.uk
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Monica Sanders Trophy – Award – Summer Newsletter

We would love to hear from those Association's, and there are quite a few, that have NOT as yet sent in an article for the newsletter and a chance to win the £50 + maybe another £50 + being presented with the cup for the best article during the year.

Come on let's be 'earing from you

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Next General Meeting is

Exmouth Twinners help their German friends

Creating and developing friendship between communities on both sides of The Channel is the whole purpose of town twinning so, when Exmouth Twinning Association members heard about the devastating floods in Germany last July, the first thought was 'How can we help our friends?'

Langerwehe, Exmouth's twin town, escaped the very worst of the flooding but its surroundings were severely damaged and the Ahr Valley, a beautiful area we have visited on twinning trips, was almost destroyed with serious loss of life.

Since Covid had caused the cancellation of the past two years' twinning trips there were unused funds in the bank, so the unanimous decision was made to send £2000 to the German Twinning Association for them to distribute as they saw fit.

We now know that 800 Euros each went to the funds for families in Langerwehe and in nearby Inden, to help those who had been hit particularly hard by the floods. The Mayor of Langerwehe wrote – *'Dear Friends from Exmouth, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for your commitment to our region and for your generous donation towards helping citizens of Langerwehe who have been particularly affected by the recent floods.*

The Mayor of Inden expressed his sincere gratitude saying how much he and his fellow citizens appreciated this overwhelming symbol of solidarity. He said he had not really expected that help would come from England after Brexit, but our generosity had shown him how strong the personal twinning links are and how resilient against political decisions.



Peter Trarbach outside his house in Dernau.

In the Ahr Valley part of our gift was given to Peter Trarbach and his family, who lost all their personal belongings in the floods. They had to shelter in their attic to escape the flood water and their house was devastated inside. In the picture you see Peter in front of his house on the day he was given the money. He later wrote in his letter of thanks -

*'Dear members of the Exmouth Twinning Association,
We would like to thank you very much for the generous donation of 800 € During the flood waters on July 14, our entire house was destroyed We would like you to know that your unexpected money gift has brought us great emotional comfort and is helping us to cope with this terrible natural disaster.'*



Destroyed railway track along the Ahr Destroyed stone bridge along the Ahr

Exmouth twinningers were very pleased to hear such positive responses to their donation which has not only provided practical help but has also reinforced the strong bonds of friendship that exist between our two towns.

After two years of Covid related disruption of our twinning visits, Exmouth twinningers are looking forward to renewing those friendship bonds as they welcome their German friends back to Devon in July 2022 for a belated celebration of 35 years of the twinning link. They will also be visiting their other twin town, Dinan in Brittany, during June.

Maggie Gingell

Exmouth Twinning Association



BAMPTON TWINNING ASSOCIATION VISIT TO VILLERS-BOCAGE 2022

Since our last trip, the requirements for entering France had been revised. We needed to have an up-to-date passport (with slightly revised rules on expiry), proof of travel insurance, a Covid travel pass and details of where we were staying. The latter item on the list was concerning, however, two days before travelling, I received the information from the French Jumelage President with details on our cultural visit, listing all the French hosts and their visitors.

After 2 false starts, in 2020 and 2021 for well documented reasons, 24 twinningers set off from Bampton at 6:15am on Friday morning, 29th April. The evening before, we had been informed by Brittany Ferries that our planned 8:30am ferry from Poole was delayed until 11am. It did allow an extra couple of hours in bed, but it meant our planned visit to Bayeux in the afternoon was cancelled and our arrival in Villers-Bocage was delayed from 6pm to 8:45pm resulting in the postponement of our welcoming reception.

The ferry departed at 11am with our 22 members of the association. You may have spotted a difference in the numbers as we had to leave a couple on the quayside because one of them didn't have their Covid Travel pass.

When we arrived at Cherbourg, two police officers boarded the coach and asked for our passports, nothing else, just our passports! They took our passports away and stamped them.

On arrival in Villers-Bocage, what was left of the evening, was spent with the individual families, enjoying their food and drink, and catching up on 3 years of news.

On Saturday morning, both sets of twinnings set off from Villers-Bocage to Michaudiere farm, a 50-mile drive south. La Michaudiere is a family owned and run attraction in the Southern Normandy countryside. Dedicated to the working horse, the old buildings house various displays of artifacts and items of interest from yesteryear. We wandered round the gardens, where there were a lot of some quite quirky sculptures to be seen.



In addition, there were several traditional outdoor games which kept us entertained until we watched a 20-minute documentary from the 1930s about hand-making a large carriage wheel. It was then time for lunch. We went inside the rustically styled restaurant for a traditional Normandy lunch. Aperitif first (pommeau or kir), then starter (a fish or meat terrine) along with unlimited wine and cider. Main course was ham (more like lean pork steak), mashed potato with a pommeau sauce. Then a small glass of calvados to burn a hole for what followed - cheese and salad, crème aux oeufs maison, coffee and more calvados.

Then the highlight of the day, the horse show. We were treated to a wonderful display of stunningly lovely animals going through their paces, from a chariot pulled by four horses abreast as in Roman times, to the charm of a little donkey shay. The whole 80-minute show of heavy horses, ponies and donkeys was thoroughly entertaining, an absolute joy. We were seated in a covered seating area outside and the show consisted of a demonstration of what these magnificent horses can do other than just pulling ploughs. A team of riders demonstrated their equestrian skills, standing on the backs of the horses at varying speeds, including full gallop - if these had been war horses on a mediaeval battlefield, they would have been terrifying! Teams of two, three or five horses showed their manoeuvrability pulling chariots and carriages. There were moments of humour too provided by a donkey, miniature ponies, and baby goat. There was one final surprise when a very large bullock came racing through with a young lady in the saddle!



We were sent on our way with a choice of cider, wine, or soft drinks, and buying opportunities. An excellent day out.

On returning to Villers-Bocage, we had an hour to relax before getting changed into our glad rags for a dinner dance at the local hall. The music was provided by Les Ecrrouettes, who entertained us with traditional folk music, mainly from Ireland and France. A glass (or two) of sparkling Saumur wine was the aperitif. ahead of a delicious meal, and more wine, that carried on well into the night. After a few drinks, a few of the Bampton members took to the stage to give us a rendition of the 'The Fields of Athenry'.

Sunday was a more relaxing day with our host families.

Some families joined together for an afternoon BBQ with fine food, drink and conversation. An impromptu game of boules resulting a victory for the English.

Our Chair was taken on a tour of the local countryside, passing through many small agricultural villages, a great wheat growing area coupled with oil seed rape and of course a great many dairy herds vital for the production of FROMAGE!!!! A stop was made at the delightful small town of *Beaumont-en-Auge, the birthplace of M Laplace, a famous French physicist and philosopher, and a friend of Robert Newton*. After a tres bonne crepe for lunch, at the Normandy Café in Pont-l'Évêque, they were making their way back to the car when they spotted a blue deux chevaux. The car owner was the farmer from whom we had driven a fleet of deux chevaux in 2016. On checking the 2016 photo on the phone, it amazingly, was the same registration number as on the one in front of them, it being the very car they had previously driven!



One of our twinnings, on his first visit to Villers-Bocage, after a morning at Caen market, was taken on a tour of the Omaha and Juno beaches and Arramanches-les-Bains. Colin took time for a photographic opportunity.



Another family were taken to Ile Tatihou for the kite festival. The island is home to a maritime and sea-life museum, botanical gardens, a beautiful bird reserve and the UNESCO-listed Vauban tower.

In the evening, we all joined together in the local hall, for a leisurely buffet and drinks with speeches from Brian Smith (Chair of Bampton Twinning) and Evelyne LeSavage (President of Villers-Bocage Jumelage). The stragglers left at the end of the evening were treated to Liqueur 44 which had been prepared by Evelyne's husband who sadly died a month before our visit.



“The Liqueur 44 is a Calvados-based liqueur, very sweet, and it can be enjoyed perfectly as a digestive. The origin of its name derives from the fact that each ingredient is added in portions of 44, that is to say, 44 sugar cubes, 44 coffee beans ... starting with the orange to macerate which must have 44 holes. Then left for 44 days, but shaken daily.”

11am Monday 2nd May, we bid 'Au Revoir' to our generous hosts, stopping at a hypermarket to stock up on wine and delicacies 'Francais' and taking in lunch before catching the 6:15pm ferry for our planned arrival back at Poole at 9:45pm. Unfortunately, at the time of departure, we were informed there was a technical problem which went on late into the evening. Around 9pm we were offered free water, then an hour later free hot drinks. As time moved on, we were informed that the arrival time in Poole would be 7am Tuesday so everyone was handed an emergency sleep pack (blanket, eye mask etc) and the twinnings bedded down best they could. Prior to arrival we did get a free breakfast!

Now we are planning and fundraising for next year to return the fabulous hospitality we just so much enjoyed.

Bruce Benton – Secretary

Ottery St Mary Twinning celebrate 45 years friendship with France and Germany.

Ottery St Mary Twinning association has been established for 45 years this year, during this time we have formed very strong relationships with our French partners in Pont L'Eveque a charming rural town, steeped in history situated in the Calvados region of Normandy and Ilsfeld in south west Germany close to Stuttgart, a wine growing area. This bond is still very strong, we are currently organising a visit to Ilsfeld, Germany in May 2022 and preparing a really warm welcome to our guests and friends from Pont L'Eveque, to Ottery in spring 2022 – you are welcome to join us.

Ottery town council together with local businessmen and schools formed a steering committee in 1975 with the Charter being signed with Pont L'Eveque in 1977 and then a few years later we were linked with Ilsfeld. Since these early days our friendship with both our European partners has gone from strength to strength.

The practice of Twinning took off in earnest after the second world war – a true post war spirit of reconciliation developed throughout Europe and those ties still stand strong today in the Twinning Association throughout the UK. The ties enable families to explore different cultures, influences and commonality.

We exchange annual visits with our Twinning partner, each of us enjoying the warmth of a true friendship and sharing the delights of our region during our visits, our guests are always delighted with the beauty and charm of the stunning east Devon region.

During our visits, we arrange hosting for our guests in the Twinnings family homes and several trips and entertainments, there is a small committee who plan the exchange visits; funds are raised by organising local social activities throughout the year to enable us to give our guests a weekend to remember, likewise our visits to Germany and France have always been a real treat, due to the warmth of the welcome and hospitality during our visit.

Does Twinning work today – just ask the many people who have enjoyed the fun, activities and visits to France and Germany over the last 45 years and you will be assured, that yes it does

The next meeting will be hosted by Bideford Association. It will be **on Saturday 23rd July** and will include a session when we can look at the problems faced by Twinning Associations at the present time and consider our vision for the future. We hope you will be able to join us, so book the date now.



