Chairman’s Report 2022

When I gave my last Chairman’s report in 2019, we had no idea what was about to happen or how long our lives would be disrupted. The 2019 AGM which we followed by a wine tasting seems almost like another lifetime.

However, the last two years have not been a complete blank and as things started to get back to a small semblance of normality, we have managed to hold a couple of events, organised to take place outside to ensure we complied with any restrictions.

In late August 2020 Andy and I hosted a picnic on a day when the weather was a bit uncertain but for the most part the rain held off. Those who came felt it was good to have the opportunity to meet up.

At the end of October, we also had a very successful, if not all that well attended Halloween social. The organising committee – Heather, Vicky, Chrissy Pam and Gerry had pulled out all the stops to make the late afternoon/evening event really enjoyable with mulled cider, crepes, lantern making and a treasure trail around a ‘haunted’ Halloween trail on the land owned by Mike and Chrissy Odams who kindly hosted the event. Getting into the spirit of things there were some fantastic fancy dress costumes. My thanks to the organising committee for their enthusiasm that made this so enjoyable.

We also almost made it to Hédé for the Christmas market! Nick was all set to go taking goods donated by Chrissy and Mikes business, when Omicron struck. Fortuitously as it turned out Nick decided not to go. We had however already handed over a stock of Christmas crackers purchased in sales after the 2019 market. We gave them to Hédé Twinning to sell to raise funds.

The final attempt to hold an event this year was just after Christmas when Vicky organised a walk for us. Unfortunately, the weather was against us with torrential rain. However, there were eight of us including members Graham and Pat and their dog Molly who braved it but, discretion being the better part of valour, we decided to shorten it and return for coffee and cake instead.

The main thrust of my report is wanting to look forward. There are some signs that things are improving and I hope that Twinning as an organisation can be reinvigorated. It is of course much more than an organisation just about Twinning although that is of course the focus. We are however a community organisation and it seems that sadly some community organisations have not survived the pandemic. I don’t believe this will happen to us.

Of course, there are some particular issues for us in organising Twinning visits with changes to entry requirement documents and the lack of cheap flights but I hope with a reinvigorated organisation here and the support and enthusiasm of our friends in Hédé we will before too long have some formal exchange visits. In the meantime, given the current uncertainties the Committee have decided that for this year we should invite our friends in Hédé to visit us on an informal basis providing circumstances permit. We are going to suggest that if anyone wanted to come, they might like to come either to join in with the Jubilee celebrations on 2nd June and the weekend holiday, for the village gardens open event taking place over the weekend of 18/19th June or indeed at a time of their choosing. It was felt that this would be easier to manage than trying to host a large number of people and needless to say hosts would only be those feeling happy to have visitors. I have written to Janine along these lines but if you are in touch with friends in France, please also pass on this message to them.

In terms of the Jubilee weekend all village organisations are being invited to participate in the event on 2nd June and we are hoping to have not only a publicity stall but also perhaps participate as a Twinning team in team events such as the tug of war – more about this nearer the time.

Before then however we are going to repeat the walk on Saturday 19th February . French onion soup will be on offer afterwards. Full details will be sent out again just beforehand. We are also planning another Twinning event around Easter with a decorated biscuit workshop for all to join in – again more details nearer the time.

I started this report thinking I wouldn’t have much to say! I am pleased that even at a time of restrictions, as an organisation we are still going. I think we all feel that now more than ever we need to reconnect and reach out to our friends both in our own communities and also in Europe and your support will help us do that.