

Chairmans report 2023

I always have to check back in my diary to remind myself of events we have held over the past year. I am pleased to say that thanks to you, our members, and the work of your committee we continue to have regular social events which has meant that unlike many other groups we have continued to thrive despite the difficulties covid put in the way.

One regular event that perhaps goes unreported is the monthly French conversation group. Meeting usually on the first Tuesday of the month we aim to chat in French for approximately an hour and a half. The topic can be anything we care to talk about and we have benefited in the last year from having Francoise a native French speaker (and Twinning member) join us. Anyone wishing to come along please let me know.

Turning now to other events - we decided that since film nights were quite popular and an easy to organise get together, we would invest in buying a projector. We have now had two screenings using this and plan to hold more before long. Our thanks go to Jacky Bradly for providing the venue for this in her barn.

Walks have also proved to be popular. The first in April was on a lovely spring day and we were able to sit outside in the sun at the Bell in Rickinghall. Thanks to Gerry for organising this. Unfortunately, a walk he organised later in the year in November had to be called off due to flooding. He hopes to do another one in the spring.

Vicky and Tim organised an evening walk in late summer on The Ling to try and track bats. Tim also did some moth trapping and we were treated to seeing not one but three specimens of a beautiful and impressive moth, Clifton Nonpareil (also known as the blue underwing). My thanks to them too for organising this.

In terms of more organised social events, we celebrated Bastille Day with a meal of tartiflette and live music at the village hall. This was much enjoyed by everyone who attended and my thanks to everyone who helped with its organisation.

In September a small group of us visited Badbergen in Northern Germany. They have been keen to invite us and invited us at the time the French had also been invited. In the event none of the Jumelage members visited but 8 of us went and had a lovely time (More about this in a minute).

Just before Christmas our Christmas social was held at Batteleys Cottage where we all enjoyed pizza and vin chaud. The torrential rain in the morning didn't deter anybody but, in the event, we were able to be inside in the main.

The final activity of the year was the Christmas Market in Hédé Bazouges. It was not organised by the Jumelage this year but they joined in with another organisation on 16th December. Although none of our members were able to go, we sent over Christmas crackers, marmalade and the little felt mice that Chrissy Odams and Mike kindly donate. Liz Halifax President of the Jumelage sold the items on our behalf. My thanks to Nick Beasley for dropping off the goods to Liz in advance.

Turning now to the current state of play with our French partners and with Badbergen. Liz Halifax who many of you know took over as President in the Autumn and I am in fairly regular contact with her. She is trying hard to reinvigorate their membership.

We have discussed a visit by them in May or July and I am pleased to report that a small group of 14 (possibly 15 will be coming on 8th to 11 or 12th May. There will be two families of 4, 2 couples and 2 singletons.

I am pleased that Liz has managed to drum up some support in Hédé and hopefully if the visitors take back enthusiasm it will encourage others there to join in.

We have talked about a possible link with Tinténiac and I have discussed this with Liz. I made contact with the Tinténiac's former secretary early last year and they expressed an interest. The Hédé Bazouges Jumelage has also been in contact with the Tinténiac Jumelage and as long Hédé Jumelage is in existence I feel I need to leave them to discuss any possible link up themselves. I do not wish Hédé to feel they are in any way being usurped. We can revisit this in the future if it seems desirable.

As far as Badbergen is concerned – as you are aware a group of 8 of us visited Badbergen last September. The Hédé Jumelage had been invited too but in the event nobody went.

We were hosted for a long weekend in the usual style of a Twinning weekend and made to feel very welcome. Talking to Uli their President it was apparent that they were keen to formalise a twinning arrangement with us. They have the 850 anniversary of the founding of Badbergen in 2025 and have suggested that if we wish to proceed with a formal arrangement we could sign a charter during their celebrations.

We do of course need your agreement to this and we also need to change the constitution to allow this to happen. I and the committee have discussed at length the detail of the constitution and in order to future proof us as an organisation we are proposing a number of changes to the wording which we will discuss in detail shortly. (Badbergen would also need their members to agree to a constitutional change and have an AGM in March when they could agree this).

I know that many if not all of us regret no longer being closely allied to the European Union. Keeping and possibly extending twinning links seems to be a good way of ensuring European friendships do not go by the board.