

Draft Chairman's report 2018 AGM

It is as always hard to believe that a year has passed since I became Chairman of Twinning.

As seems to be generally the case it has been fairly busy for us as an organisation.

2017 was our turn to visit Hédé and on this occasion it had been agreed that we would go in April. I know that some members felt this was early since the previous time we had been in April the weather has been very cold. We were therefore quite a small group of 19.

However those of us who did go were happy to find that the sun shone and we had some glorious spring warmth. Not only were we able to sit outside in the sunshine by the locks for a picnic but also enjoyed walking through the sea 'pieds nus' to visit Le Mont St Michel. On the return journey from visiting the little offshore island our guide demonstrated the quicksand and how one should extricate oneself if necessary. Needless to say the children enjoyed trying but they were not alone with some adult visitors having a go as well. We all agreed that this outing was enormously enjoyable.

Another popular visit was to an oyster farm at Cancale which included oyster tasting.

In between all the visits we were of course wined and dined. At the gala lunch I took the opportunity to present our hosts with some roses. We had realised that we had missed the 25th anniversary of our inauguration. I had chosen some shrub roses called **Friends Forever**, hopefully countering any negative impressions that the outcome of the UK referendum may have given.

I think from the cheers in response our friends were very pleased and the roses have now been planted in front of the Town Hall in Hédé.

During this visit we were also able to get to know better some of the individuals from the German town of Badbergen that is twinned with Hédé. You may recall that some of us had met some of them the previous year in France. There is a hope that we will be able to develop these links on an informal basis and there is an invitation from our friends in Badbergen for anyone wishing to visit. Lynn Clarke visited in July last year and Andy and I are hoping to find the time to visit before too long. If anyone else is interested, please talk to me about it.

There was an additional Twinning visit last year also when a team of young basketball players visited Wortham. My thanks to Judith, Lynn and Nikki for organising the visit, also to Katherine who liaised with the school to arrange matches and Joy and Lyn Pelham Burn who also hosted. It was a very successful visit and has ensured that further points of contact have been developed.

As usual a few of us went to Hédé for the Christmas market and thanks to donations of produce and gifts by members we made a healthy profit to add to our funds. I would like to remind members that it is open to any member to go to France to help with this visit it's not just for committee members. Provided you are happy to help set up the market on Saturday and be there on Sunday to sell the goods the rest of the weekend is usually an enjoyable convivial weekend. We can offer some subsidy for fares but this will depend on the number going and how much profit we make, with the priority being given to the person taking the goods in their car.

In terms of members events we had a cheese and wine event in our garden in May and another social event at Mike and Chrissy Odams when on a rather chilly August evening we enjoyed a meal, some music by Jo and Rob, and dancing .

Our Christmas social this year took the form of a games evening with food provided by the committee. Having broken the ice with some rounds of Beetle mixing up tables as the winners moved on, everyone then went on to enjoy a number of other games including dingbats and a traditional skittle alley.

During the year some members are continuing to develop their French by way of classes or conversation evenings. Of those participating we have some very diligent students some not quite so diligent and some like me who scarcely study at all! My thanks to Lynn Clarke who takes the lead on this.

Hellos and goodbyes.

As you already have heard Dave Long whom has been our treasurer for 4 years has passed on the Barton to Susan Wright. I would like to formally thank Dave for his able handling of our finances over this time and as a small token of appreciation present him with a bottle of wine.

I welcome and thank Susan for not only agreeing to take on the role of Treasurer but actually for volunteering without being asked!

One other goodbye that I must mention comes with the death of Bernadette Sarlat who many of you knew. She was a founder member of Hédé Jumelage and is much missed. As chance would have it, Nick and Frances were in France at the time of her death and were able to attend her funeral on behalf of us all. In December there was an exhibition of some of Bernadette's paintings which we were able to visit while in Hédé for the market.

We have welcomed a number of new members since our last AGM including Steve and Sue Beckett Doyle , Ruth Slack and Faye and John Dunkley.

I hope they have enjoyed their membership so far. For all members there are plenty of ways to become more involved, which include being part of the visit organising committee and if you are able, hosting French visitors and helping to organise social events. If you have an idea for a social event and /or would like to organise something please let us know!

Finally I would like to thank, on behalf of all of you, our committee who continue to support our organisation by getting stuck in and helping organise the events during the year.