

Minutes of Witney and District Twinning Association

Tuesday 13th May 2025 at 7:00pm

Present:

David Bates (Chair and minute taker), Hilary Warner, John Thornton, Mike Breakell

Apologies: Owen Collins, Andy Wolf, Rachel Crouch, Mark Pengelly.

Hilary Warner advised that she will be standing down from the committee but will be available to work on specific pieces of the work for the Twinning Association if time permits. David thanked Hilary for all her input to the Twinning Association and particularly for the large amount of work she put in to make the Twinning anniversary trip to the Kings school a success.

1. Review of Anniversary weekend

Friday AM: School Visit

Hilary advised the visit went very well but involved her in a lot of prep for beforehand. The two school groups were very enthusiastic.

Learns- may have been better to limit the visitors to 2 per class.

Definite scope for the further contact in the future with Kings school though Hilary advised from her experience families are less open to hosting than previously. The use of the Adventure plus youth facility (nr Clanfield) may be an option for future. Kate and Sabine visited Saturday PM. Kate mentioned her Mayor (Le Touquet) is keen for their Youth Council to visit

Friday lunch: Blanket hall

Meal a bit smaller than anticipated (John) but otherwise an excellent visit and owner Richard's enthusiastic and humorous presentation went down well. Great to enjoy the upstairs room. David has sent a thankyou card to

Friday PM: Formal signing

A very special occasion and impressive prep, hospitality and ceremony laid on by the Town Council. Thankyous sent. Great to have Andrew Carter speak as a Mayor from the beginnings of Twinning and good to have other Councilors including the Mayor (who spoke) and Leader. And also Deputy Lord Lieutenant Ron Spur (who also spoke), as the Kings representative

Speech on behalf of the Twinning association by David.

The cake looked fantastic (thanks to Andy and Palace cuisine) and thanks to Town council for pulling out various past artefacts from Twinning

The formal re-signing documents looked good though some (? number) errors noted which had to be corrected.

David has sent copy on the occasion plus photos to the Witney Gazette (the story was carried in their online version)

Big thank you to Graham Warner who took pictures over the weekend (& used for the Gazette article)

Friday eve: Beer Festival

John reported this went well with a nice, relaxed feeling. Not many food options though so fish and chips enjoyed as the group went on further drinks after the event ended at 9

Saturday AM: Witney Museum

A good visit. Thank you to Rachel for organizing. Enjoyable talk though the size of our group made it difficult to hear and manage at times. Much appreciated the refreshments and food kindly laid on by the Museum

Saturday lunch: Fire station.

Impressive organization and presentation by Witney Fire Station. Thankyou Hilary for organizing. Their team turned out in full uniform and gave a full and interesting talk. Using the fire hoses was much enjoyed. Conversation re possible exchange visit in future though Station has limited time resources to organize

Saturday PM Beer Festival

John reported this went well- thanks to John for finding a good space and food to enjoy. Accident on the A40 and traffic jams delayed members of Hilary's language group attending

Saturday PM Cotswold tour

Hilary and Graham took Kate, Anthony and Sabine to the Adventure plus youth facility to have a look round. David met them there and then took them on a 2-hour tour of Cotswold villages _ Filkins, Shilton. Burford, Taynton, Barrington, Swinbrook, Asthall, Minster Lovell and Crawley included.

Time was limited- be good to have had some more time for a stop and deeper explore (though the traffic jam through Burford gave time for detailed looking and enjoying!)

Saturday eve Anniversary meal

Compliments to the Windrush pub for an excellent meal and service provided by their young staff team. Thankyou email sent- and thanks to Andy for arranging. Carvery and desserts much enjoyed. There were 27 of us on a long table. Staff showed flexibility and good management particularly as some of our group were delayed in arriving.

Learns- May have been better for 4 or 5 large tables to enable better mixing between our Twinning guests and those from the Witney Twinning group?

General Feedback received.

David sent an email to Sabine (German group lead) and Kate (French group lead) thanking them for coming and checking on whether there are things they particularly enjoyed/ would like do more of or things they'd like to see included for future visits- plus general feedback.

Responses received are as follows:

From Sabine (Unterhaching)

"We had a wonderful time with you and thank you for that.

I am also very pleased that we want to extend the contact between the twin towns.

We currently have contact and exchanges between the Lise-Meitner-Gymnasium and Woodgreen School. The The Kings School is very interested, and I would try to establish contact with our primary and secondary school. Unfortunately, I haven't had the time yet, sorry....

From Kate (Le Touquet)

"Well thank you to you and all the team for a wonderful week-end. Witney is home from home for me now but I was delighted to share it all with Anthony, our town councillor.

As always, Witney hospitality was outstanding and it was wonderful to catch-up with old friends and new, especially your German twin town!

.....you'll be receiving a mail shortly concerning the upcoming trip by our Youth council to Witney. Yes, we've invited ourselves ! And we need your help !

It was great going to the school and I hope we can capitalise on that link.

Fabulous to see friends from John's street and there may be ideas to work on there with the folk music group !!

We loved the guided visit of picturesque Cotswold villages courtesy of David's taxi service !

Also, we absolutely need to sort out à visit with Owen and Lucy and yourself David so that you can see Le Touquet. There is the re-opening of the refurbished town hall on Friday 27th June but I am unfortunately unavailable the rest of the week-end.

Another exciting date would be the week-end of 20th September when we are celebrating the centenary of The Caddy with various events. Look out for another mail later on today!

Thankyou once again for a memorable visit to Witney"

2. Basketball and Chess links- facilitated links over weekend

Following the previous article in the Witney Gazette announcing the Anniversary weekend, the Twinning Association received the following emails:

Firstly, from Gary Hogan keen to organise a Chess tournament with our twin towns. David spoke to Sabine about- she has a Chess contact in Unterhaching and will put Gary in touch with

Secondly from Gavin Field at Witney Wolves keen to make a basketball link with Unterhaching or Le Touquet. David spoke to Stefan who has now introduced Gavin to his basketball contact in Unterhaching

3. Le Touquet. Airport renaming and Town Hall refurbishment

Rachel will attend the Airport renaming on behalf of Witney Twinning Association and Witney Town council. Ruth Smith, leader of Witney Town Council may also attend

Full details of the Town Hall refurbishment and re-opening ceremony on 27th June awaited. David has indicated he is available to go and represent Witney Twinning Association.

4. **Website and Facebook.** Both need updating particularly in their news and officer sections. Also they lack a link to membership form. Mark has indicated there has been an increase in traffic to our website - he will look to update the sites over the coming weeks.

Meeting closed at 7.40pm