



Home from Home



Number 19

The Newsletter of the Devon Twinning Circle

April 2008

From The Chairman

Stewart Plays Gorodki.

In 2006 my wife and I were invited to accompany the **Exeter** Twinning Association on their annual visit to Yaroslavl, their twin city in Russia some one hundred and sixty miles north of Moscow; it proved to be a most enjoyable experience lasting a whole week which our hosts filled with a most interesting and varied programme. I will mention just two activities, of many, which gave particular pleasure.

One excursion was to the town of Danilov a few kilometres to the north of Yaroslavl where a large group of young teenagers, mainly girls, all dressed in beautiful traditional costume entertained us to an open-air programme of singing and dancing; it was clear that they enjoyed performing for us and it mattered little that we couldn't understand the words of the songs. The performance was preceded by the offering of a large cake for us, their guests, as a mark of hospitality. A slightly smaller group of teenage boys, also in costume, played various instruments ranging from the piano accordion to the balalaika, the spoons, drums and skiffle board. All this was beautifully performed and with obvious pleasure and goodwill.

A delightful experience, among many.



Later, still in Danilov, we were taken to the local football stadium where, to the side of the main pitch, were laid out two small concreted "courts" about three metres square with various markings on them. We were invited to indulge in a game of "gorodki" which, roughly translated, means "little towns/cities". In the middle of each "court" was a carefully arranged pile of seven pieces of wood each about thirty centimetres long. The player was provided with a piece of wood as thick as a cricket stump but a metre in length and ringed with bands of metal which made it quite heavy.

The object of the game was to hurl this "weapon" at the pile of wood in an endeavour to knock all seven pieces off the "court" in as few throws as possible. But... in the next round, the seven pieces of

wood were then dispersed to other designated positions on the "court", like the four corners as well as the centre, which required far more throws of the "missile" to knock them all off the "court". The winner was the player who completed the game in the least number of throws. I hope that is clear!

It would seem that the game wasn't played that often in Danilov because a team of four lads had had to mow the long grass from around the courts especially for our visit...or perhaps it was out of season! These same lads, very willingly, acted as instructors for our feeble efforts at the game.

These little insights and many others are the stuff of Twinning. Long may it be so.

Stewart Philp

Plymouth – Novorossiysk Twinning Panel sent us its newsletter with a rather attractive menu and an invitation to select one's meal from it. Sadly, it was not actually offering us here a meal and, anyway, it was news from last December.

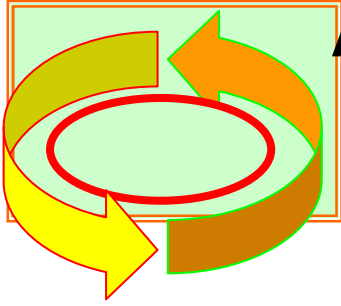
One of the snags of having a deadline for "copy" is that some of our news inevitably arrives just as we have gone to press. (We don't actually press anything with an inkjet system, but you can't say '-go to squirt' – can you?) It means that some items in our own Newsletter are about three months old.



Apart from the Annual Dinner, the P.N. members have a programme that is less conventional than for most of us.

Their connections with Novorossiysk now include obtaining a CD of the music of their string orchestra, plans for a schools connection with Plymouth children, talks and demonstrations by doctors concerned with children's ailments, cultural exchanges by both cities and English language courses for Russian teachers.

In case you wondered, they do express special thanks to one member who has worked very hard; Nicholas Boggis-Rolfe speaks Russian.



Around The Circle

The Other Newsletters

Bow and District Twinning Association signed their Twinning charter thirty years ago with (wait for it!) the Jumelage of St. Martin de Bienfaite la Cressonnière, so they have been busy making plans for the celebrations when the French come to Bow. There will be a signing of a 30th Anniversary Charter and they have even found a new Chairman who happens to speak French! We reckon that if they can all say “St. Martin de Bienfaite de Cressonnière”, then they can all speak French. The signing of the Charter will take place in the local school, so the children will get a good look-in on the ceremony.

Una Hobbs tells us that they are taking their guests to Plymouth to see the aquarium and, later, to the local Inn to enjoy Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pud. (Not fish and chips then?) This will be followed by a “traditional dessert”, but she didn't say what dessert they think is traditional! There is a great deal of fund-raising activity going on now.

Dolton & District Twinning Association held a Paté and Pudding party on 2nd February. If you went to this, we hope you let them know you were coming. It seems they have previously been almost out of food because numbers were unexpectedly high. The main visit was to Amfreville in March, but they are getting the volunteers together for an invasion by some French children in June.

They have a French teenager (female, 16+) who would like to spend the month of August with an English family to improve her English. She has some sort of exchange in mind, but anyway she would be happy to help with small children. Contact lisa.newson@gmail.com

Morchard Bishop & District Twinning Association does its newsletter as the Morchard Messenger. They are off to St Gatien des Bois in Normandy in May and have decided to do it in a carshare convoy, so eight drivers have been instructed and drilled for the journey.

Just in case anyone gets lost, they had some French Conversation Group meetings starting in February. One wonders which specific conversations were considered most important. (Ou est St, Gatien?)

South Molton Twinning Association has sent us its neat little newsletter as usual. They seem to be busy there; we have noticed that newsletters tend to give information that could be under a few specific headings:

Visits. (either way),
Meals together (any excuse will do),
Social and fund-raising,
(Walking,
Sport,
Market,
Wine-tasting,
Talks & Quizzes and
AGM.)

A few members organise concerts, but our list shows the more general trend as displayed by South Molton. The point is that these activities could be few and far between, but S.M. keeps its members busy. The newsletter is a programme of events during the coming year and they even have to change the date of one item to fit it all in.

They are trying to reconnect with Bad Bevensen as their second twinning partner, but there is some lack of enthusiasm so far. There is a school connection and it is hoped that enough parents might attend an April meeting to get things going.

Their visit from Livarot is in May. It surprised us to read that the visitors seem to be expected to arrange (or at least request) their own ideas of where they might visit on Friday. “As yet we do not know what our visitors intend to do during the day on the Friday - -- they normally have somewhere in mind to visit, but no doubt they will let us know nearer the time.” -- Not too near, we hope; there are things like booking food and transport.

Brixton Twinning Association sent us a sad letter when Sally Axell wrote to say they no longer needed the Newsletter. We asked Sally to give us some idea of the problems, so she wrote again, explaining that although they started enthusiastically about 15 to 20 years ago, interest in twinning had gradually dropped off. They had involved several local villages and arranged visits by the Gun Club, some of the local footballers and the Royal British Legion. It all seemed to be going well, but the committee eventually found themselves to be rather on their own and so have now given up. Sally says that the same thing seems to have happened at Poullaouen and so they have stopped the reciprocal visits. A few of the members still keep in touch with their friends and see them from time to time.

We are sorry, Sally, to read the news and also sorry to have confused Brixton with Brixham. (One must never do that! They are different places!) We recall that Newton Poppleford had a similar problem (not with the confused names!) and we wonder what happens in a community that spoils this sort of social friendship.

Bude-Stratton Twinning Association sent us their newsletter in January. (Hey! Aren't they . . . ?) Yes, they are in Cornwall, but they are associate members of the DTC and it was nice to hear from them. They are somewhat pleased to have had an ambitious programme last May which “worked like clockwork” and was very successful. Events were reported in newspapers on both sides of the channel; in Bude and in Ergué. (cont'd) →

Ideas

And Information

—> They say they have a small membership, but they seem to be very active. Their newsletter gives information about a reunion (bringing photos of the last visit), participation in the Bude Carnival that raises a bit of money, sponsored walks in the Great Atlantic Charity walk, French interest in the Cornish language and also involvement with Bude Canal Day. Good luck to you at Bude!
(Judging from the photos, they do a lot of cycling down there.)

The January Meeting.

As most members will know, the committee always meets in the morning before lunch, then the main meeting is in the afternoon. Those who attend both meetings recognise that most matters discussed by the committee are explained to members at the main meeting. Your reporter makes his notes and finds that, since he doesn't want to repeat items as he scribbles during the second session, there are few new things to record. However: -

Insurance Payments. Dennis Knowles made his usual request for you to send all insurance cheques to him, but to make out the cheques to Zurich. We fear that, sooner or later, he is going to run off with a handful of cheques made out to him personally. The snag with this is that we shall have to find another Insurance Officer.

Who comes to Meetings? Our Chairman was concerned that some Associations had sent apologies for absence (from DTC meetings) because "no members of our committee are available." ALL your members are invited to attend and to represent your Association. Please let them know about meetings.



DTC Information File. A few Associations still have not received their folder of information about the DTC and its activities. Stewart explained that he was trying to ensure that every member had one.

Where do They Stay? The University of Exeter has lots of accommodation to let during the vacations. If you know of situations where any of your fellow Twinners are looking for rooms for a few nights, you can get information from the organiser; Catherine.jane@exeter.ac.uk or ring 01392 262030.

You want to Tell Us? There was a time when Associations were invited, at the end of each meeting, to tell us about their activities. Sadly, this made the meeting last much too long, so we asked everyone to report only if they had something specially interesting to say. This seemed to make for even longer meetings, so we have reluctantly taken this item off the agenda for a good many meetings. Now the committee has decided to ask you to declare in advance if you would like to report on your work. This means that it will be easier to plan the meeting and also force members to think about it before the meeting!

Mind Changing. We were going to call this "Amendments", but changing minds sounds more interesting. At the AGM, the committee will propose three amendments to the constitution:

1. - To allow two members from the same Association to be members of the committee if one of them is an officer (At present, two members are not allowed from a single Association.)
2. - That the Annual Subscription from 2009 should be £10 per Association.
3. That more publicity should be given to the Monica Saunders Trophy and that it should be advertised again.

One suspects that No.3 is not a constitutional matter, but we could be wrong.

To Caen with Chittlehampton. If you would like a trip to Caen on 1st - 5th May, there may yet be a couple of seats left. Contact Chittlehampton.

Wanna be on Telly? Michael Checker of the BBC is still hoping to do a programme on the visit of a Twinning Group to one of their visits abroad. If you would like to take him with you next time (and a camera crew), let him know. Try contacting Pat Sherwood.

Insured Sheds. Dennis Knowles told us at the last meeting that if you keep your property and equipment in a shed, it can be insured for an extra £52 a year.

Newsletter Editor.
An appeal was made again for some enthusiastic writer to take on the task of presenting this Newsletter once a quarter.



The Next Meeting
Of the Devon Twinning Circle
Is on
Saturday, April 19th, 2008.
In the Village Hall at
BOW
At 2.00 p.m.

Barnstaple goes to Italy, well, to get it right, a bit of Italy came to Barnstaple in February when the town was visited by Sandro Plano, Mayor of Susa with regional President Prof Antonio Ferrentino and Anna Giaccone of Susa School.

Secretary Bryan Gates sent us a fine newspaper cutting about the signing of the new Charter and their hopes for a lasting contact between the two schools. It is good to see the involvement of schoolchildren in this way and we are interested to see how this will develop.



Frances Bell, Assistant Head Teacher at the Newport Community School said "This is a fantastic day for our school and for Barnstaple. Seven years ago, a friend of a friend

mentioned that there was an Italian school looking to form links with a school in England.

"I got in touch with Anna Giaccone, we visited each other's schools during half term and we have been coordinating exchange trips for the pupils ever since.

"A real friendship has grown out of our close relationship. We estimate that as many as 500 families in Barnstaple and Susa have been affected by the programme's success."

Alan Gracie, Chairman of the Barnstaple Twinning Association, said that it was a proud moment for the town which had been twinned for many years with towns in Germany, France and the USA. A group of representatives would go to Susa in April for the "reverse signing" of the Charter. (!?)

Exeter Twinning Circle has managed to put a lot of information on to a single sheet of paper for their newsletter. They joined in the Remembrance Sunday events in 2007. They had a very interesting Christmas party where, we suspect, more happened than was actually reported. The Rotarians of Exeter and Rennes met at Exeter in October where the guests seem to have been well entertained. Rennes won the skittles event. Exeter think they "let" them win out of courtesy.



Their visit to Bad Homburg in November was described as "an extended weekend together making music." Both choirs rehearsed together and later performed together with the Frankfurt Radio

Orchestra. They also sang separately some of their own repertoires.

Apart from trying to get train tickets out of a cash machine and also locking the organist in the church, life seems to have been very busy and thoroughly enjoyable.

Exeter-Yaroslavl Twinning Association do something different in that they have published a recipe for Pryaniki which requires, among other things, 400 gms of "rye flower". We wonder, has something been lost in the translation?

EYTA have somewhat different objectives from most of the Twinning Associations; mainly humanitarian activities designed to help youngsters in Russia. This year, however, they are trying to put together a Teachers' Resource Centre consisting mainly of DVDs and CDs designed for the presentation of language material. They are also planning to offer an annual bursary for one person from Yaroslavl to visit Britain and Exeter.

The newsletter contains details of exchange visits this year and also has three articles by Russian girls and an English boy. Not many of us have that kind of item in our newsletters!

Sorry Folks!

Well, this will be the last Newsletter by your present editor. We feel very sad about it, but time, eyesight and senility are all having their effects, so we must be sensible. We have enjoyed using the editorial "we" and we hope you have found the Newsletter to be of some value and perhaps even a trifle amusing at times.

Our thanks to all those secretaries and others who have regularly sent in their own newsletters and all sorts of other information. To any enthusiast who would be willing to take over the task from now on, you can be assured that there is a steady run of messages and "copy" from all around the county.

As usual, this Newsletter will be distributed by Email to those who like it that way, but the regular distribution is managed by post (courtesy of the DCC) and the services of Rob Hooper and his staff. We (that is: all of us) are grateful for the help.

If you feel that the effort is worthwhile, please give your support to the committee and try to find someone who would be mad enough to continue the work of communication between members.



There is, in our office (the spare bedroom), a sheet of information about how the Newsletter is put together and how contact is made with everyone. The new editor will be a member of the committee and will probably find it useful to attend most General meetings. We also have here a disk of Clip Art pictures which comes in useful when you don't know what else to put on the page. Enquiries and offers from future editors may be sent to Don Leech or to Stewart Philp