



Home from Home



Number 14

The Newsletter of the Devon Twinning

Circle

January 2007

How many Kinds?

Your editor was introduced to Twinning almost by accident. The introduction was over twenty-five years ago and it still registers firmly in the memory.

What most impressed us was the friendliness of our hosts. They had, after all, invited into their home a couple of people who were not only complete strangers, but foreigners as well. We got along very well. Subsequently, the original (French) hosts were unable to return to visit us, so, in our turn, we found ourselves inviting a different couple who were also complete strangers to us and foreigners to boot. It is a good way of making friends and it encourages international understanding. So that style of friendship is our way of thinking about Twinning.

There are other forms where, for example, just a few members travel to another country with some sort of humanitarian objective in view. Plymouth and Exeter both have such an arrangement with Russian towns. (Novorossisk and Yaroslavl) Some groups simply do not travel, but they maintain contact with (some-times) quite remote places for different purposes.

Some contacts are based on formal, civic contacts, some on sports and a competition, some on the interests of children in schools; and so on.

All this idle musing arises from the sudden increase there has been in requests from other countries for twinning contacts with Devon. The county response really has to be; "Sorry, we don't have any more towns or villages to start Twinning; we are full." – but one might wonder if this is absolutely true. Certainly, we have over a hundred connections, mostly of the family and domestic kind, but do you know of villages or even suburban regions where no-one has taken the chance of a twinning contact?

Maybe existing twin-towns have folks who would be glad to take on an additional "type" of partnership and do everything in a different way; helping a special hospital or children's home or just running an organised system of pen-pals.

Well, it's worth thinking about. There will be more requests for Twinning from around the world.

Hungary Experience.

County Cllr. Brenda Taylor and husband John have been members of Exmouth TA as long as we can remember. In fact, the traditions of the group are very much founded on their early work in two longstanding twinning connections. Their civic connections gave them the opportunity to visit Pecs (pronounced PESH we are told) in Hungary and they wrote up a report on their experiences.

Baranya is the name of the county where you find Pecs. There has apparently been some link between Baranya and Devon for about twenty years. (Some of us never knew that!) John and Brenda say that they found the city very different from their preconceived ideas. Pecs has the largest and oldest university in the country where they do everything from medicine to engineering. Famous Hungarian names include 17 Nobel Prize winners, Franz Liszt, Laszlo Biro, Bela Barney (He of the VW Beetle), Geon Rona and Reno Rubik (He of the cube).

John gives a detailed history of the country which is too long to offer here. However, they visited several wineries, presumably with a tasting at each one, and they also went to a pottery producing good porcelain. But how, asks Brenda, do you bring it home on a plane?

Opportunities to improve standards in all directions seem to have been evident. The Devon contingent was cultural in nature, but others from Cheshire were on their annual visit to forge business links. The Hungarians see their joining with the EU as a chance to develop more twinning links, even if they do all have bushy moustaches. (OK girls; only the men.)



How Many Links Make a Chain?

If we were able to establish all the links that are requested by folks from mainland Europe, we should have a chain big enough to stop Britain from floating away. Members of **Exeter Twinning Circle** recently returned from Rennes where they had celebrated their 50th Anniversary of Twinning between the two towns. (With Exeter and Plymouth both now going for 50 years. (1956? Was it a good year?). Whilst they were there, a representative from **Chantepie** (an outer suburb of Rennes) asked if there was a chance for a link with a Devon town. They have a population of 8,500 and they have a well-presented booklet about the town which they gave to John Sparks, Exeter TCs Secretary. It came with a good translation and some other information. John can pass it on if you are interested. He is at jandas@blueyonder.co.uk

Ideas



members something stimulating to entice them from their niches in this large county.

We want, he said, to bolster the content of our meetings with an interesting speaker on things “at least vaguely European” and not necessarily French. It is proposed to invite at some stage a South-Western MEP and someone from Radio or TV. Other suggestions would be welcome

Totnes did a good job in showing us round the town and then finding Anne Ellis to give us a talk on French in the Primary Schools of Totnes. Thanks go to Peter Hunt for his excellent hosting of the meeting.

Information and Suggestions

At the Last meeting...

We heard that the Devon Twinning Circle has had a couple of enquiries about Twinning insurance from the Taunton area of Somerset. (Ah! Them’s furinners then!) --but the meeting agreed that twinners from neighbouring counties could be associate members and we could then extend our insurance links and facilities. Dennis Knowles, our Insurance Officer, is willing to do this, so he will follow up these enquiries.

Dennis, incidentally was asked to address a large meeting at Coventry on the subject of Twinning Insurance. He was unable to go, we heard, but we note with pride the way we – and Dennis in particular – can put another feather in our caps as an authority on the insurance thing.

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Money for Money?

It was reported that Totnes had appointed an expert to see through their application for an EU grant. The fee for a successful job would be £500. The meeting (at Totnes) considered the possibility that the DTC might commission such an “EU Grant Supremo” to mastermind applications from any of our member Associations. The matter is to be raised at the next meeting of the committee.

There are differing views on this subject. Clearly, it would be beneficial if a specialist could win more money for our members. If the application were not successful, there would still be a fee of some kind. But, on the other hand, one can argue that if some Associations can do it successfully, then so can the rest if the conditions are right. Would the supremo still encourage an application if he thought the chances were low? There will be more on this!

Monica Money.

The meeting in October heard that the committee has agreed to make the Monica Saunders Trophy even more valuable. The prize for the best report on activities to promote Twinning is now to be £150. This should be worth the effort, we think.

Speakers at Meetings?

Our Chairman has expressed the view that our meetings can be “a bit unappealing” if all we deal with is “business”. It would be nice, he suggests, to offer

How about China?

We heard that the increasingly prosperous city of Luohe in the Chinese province of Henan was looking for a Twinning contact in Britain. It would offer industrial, civic cultural and social contacts for a suitable town over here. The feeling was that it was beyond our normal scope except, perhaps, for Exeter or Plymouth. There are obvious problems related to distance and language, but we suspect that even our two biggest cities in Devon might not match the rush into industrialism now evident in China.

It raises the question of what forms a “twinning” can take. There are certainly different kinds of activity, but our contacts are mostly social and cultural. What does an industrial twinning do?

By the Way ---

We pass on a lot of requests for links with other towns. If you do follow up any of them, successfully or not, would you let us know please?

Information and Addresses: - Grants.

The DTC has heard that at least two Associations have received grants this year despite the news spread earlier that none would be available. Both Rob Hooper and Phil Griffiths have suggested that we give you the Brussels website address to get the full application form for a grant.

NOTE that there is an underline in the space between the *meet* and the *en.html*. Here it is:-

http://europa.eu.int/comm/towntwinning/call/meet_en.html

NOTE ALSO that this Newsletter may now be viewed on the DTC’s website at:-

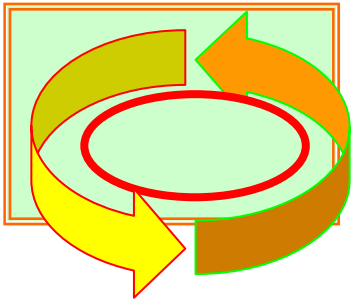
<http://www.devon.gov.uk/twinning.htm>

Buses again.

“We have always used a local firm, Swards, who provide comfortable transport and competent, responsible drivers at a competitive price.” It sounds as though **Exminster** are pleased with their service.

Help!

There hasn’t been much space for our little pictures this time. Their only purpose is to pretty things up a bit, but they add some interest for slow readers! The problem is that we are running out of suitable images for our various topics. They are called “Clip Art” on the computer (as many of you know) and they come from America, so, although we have a lot of them, they do show up the fact that America has a different culture from us. If you know of a source of Clip Art which is British (or even French or German), we should like to know please. Thanks.



Around The Circle

Our Next Meeting;

The next meeting is to be at **Teignmouth** on **Saturday, 20th January, 2007**, Please ask your secretary for details.

Ken Wills Honoured.

A lovely and very moving letter has come from Una Hobbs. She reports on the visit of **Bow and District** TA to St Martin de Bienfaite la Cressonnière, from whence they went on a trip to Arromanches, then did some of (dare we say it?) the usual things until the evening when they were asked to gather in the village square.

Here, as Una tells us, “--the President of the Twin Villages Association asked Ken’s widow, Betty, to unveil the plaque, thus revealing that the square would now be known as **Place Kenneth J. Wills.**”

This seems to us a great honour and a fine recognition of the work done by Ken to promote all aspects of the Twinning friendship.

Bow has other ideas for fund raising; this year saw their second dog show with 131 entries, also they have really lashed out with their cookbook; it has 124 recipes, all of which have been translated into French. Copies (in English we guess) are available at £4.94 each from Una on 01363 82557.

Alternative Kinds of Twinning.

We mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter that there can be different kinds of Twinning. Most of us are used to the domestic host/guest kind of visit with some organised visits to places of interest and various sorts of “get-together”.

Plymouth Twinning Panel obviously take along the same spirit of cooperation, but they manage to do it differently. We reported last time that the Plymouth Maids dance group were taking along their husbands, but the 6-page report of the visit to **Novorossisk**, recorded by Tony Morrell, shows that there was more than just dancing. Clearly, we cannot even summarise such a document in this short Newsletter, but the party stayed for nearly a week just outside Novorossisk in a Holiday Camp hotel which was more like a YHA Hostel of 50 years ago in this country. The visiting party consisted of six officials of the Civic group, six members of the Twinning Panel and 23 dancers-plus-husbands. A very busy itinerary was planned. In some cases, the party divided according to the special interests of the members. Even so, there was more planned than could be achieved in the time and, sadly, the “Maids” lost some of their dancing time.



Visits were made to a shipping company, a school of dancing, a nearby seaside resort, some local museums, a champagne vineyard and the City Hospital. Other events included official receptions and memorial services, a visit to the Public Transport Depot, dancing by the Plymouth Maids and a special visit to the local Orphanage.

We suspect that the party was rather tired on the return journey!

This was the celebration of the **50th Anniversary** of the friendship link between the two Cities.

Les Hommes Morris.

Rosemary Shute reports that Normandy has just been invaded again, this time by **Northam** Town TA. With 27 members, they also took along their Mayor for the first time and also eight of the Phoenix Morris Men. They danced at the local fair and it seems that they were very popular in the town. There must be something about dancing and Twinning! How many dancers are there in your Association?

They also went to Fougères and enjoyed some of the history there. The weekend festivities were also enjoyed by a group of 25 Germans from their twin town of Buddenstedt, so it was quite a party! How do they manage the accommodation?

Albert Hall Show Band.

Well, if you can’t dance, perhaps you can play music! Alan Gracie has written about the most musical set of



activities we have seen in a newsletter. Most impressive is the visit of the Albert Hall Show Band of **Barnstaple** to spend a week playing to packed houses in the twin town of **Barnstable** in Massachusetts. (We have checked our spelling) It had to

be explained that Albert Hall is the name of the leader, not of their place of performance. The band was a great success; the local newspaper, the Barnstable Patriot, reported “The British have Landed”.

The Band was partly financed and supported by the local Hyannis Rotarians. They had a good time, managing to do some whale-watching on the way home.

Barnstaple Ladies Choir and the Male Voice Choir have also been doing some cooperative twinning. The ladies had the Uelzen Barbel-Grosse Choir over for a joint concert. They also managed a trip to Bath and a grand farewell party. The men went to Uelzen in October to do joint concerts with two German choirs and to have a few guided tours of the region.

Supremely Silly Evening.

Well! What a nice way of inviting folks along to the Beetle Drive at **Ottery St. Mary** in October when Sylvia Gehring, in their informative newsletter, said “This promises to be a supremely silly and very social evening – for the whole family.” We hope it went well. They do get around. Apart from beetles, they also offer crêpes at fêtes in the region and in July raised over £200. We haven’t heard how much the beetles made.

There was dancing in Bicton College with the Exeter Morris Men when their twinneders from Pont L'Evêque came over. The visit to Ilsfeld in Germany was a bit damp, but they had a good time. By the way, they went by air. There are several groups, Mike, who would like to know about the economics of taking a flight. Mike Painter is the Chairman, so if anyone wants to ask him about it, try to get him on 01404 815699. It seems that there were 50 travellers, they took a coach to Heathrow and flew by BA. The timings were good and convenient.

Pantomime Season.

The last newsletter received before going to press was from John Holman of the **Exeter/Yaroslavl** TA. It asks if members would like to join the Pantomime Team. Better than that; it is a Russian pantomime! We are assured that the story is Russian, but the words will be in English. (Thank you, Exeter, for helping to distribute our "Home from Home".)

It seems that their Russian Spirit concert in July (held at Teignmouth) was a great success. The performers were from both countries and they were thanked for all their hard work. The proceeds from the concert were given to the Northern Crown Foundation. This is a charity which works to improve the lives of children in Russian orphanages.

Triangle.

There is one Twinning Association that really goes to town with its newsletter. All six pages of the news from **Tiverton** are well laid-out and full of photos of all sizes. Yes, they know that it is difficult for some folks to receive lots of photos in colour, but we suspect that they don't send it out by email. The "Triangle" is explained in the headline title of the letter; the three town crests of Tiverton, Chinon and Hofheim are set in triangular form. The articles, mostly about trips and visits are longer than usual so that there is some detail, not to mention the photographs on every page. It would be a fine piece of publicity if only they had given some information about the Twinning Association. How do I join? How much does it cost? Who is the Secretary --- and so on. To be fair, events are advertised and names and phone numbers are given for them. We must mention one item of news which must have originated from the famous village of Mensonge sur Lie; we choose not to believe the story of a new wine for seniors.

"California vintners . . . have developed a new hybrid grape that acts as an anti-diuretic. It is expected to reduce the number of trips older people have to make to the bathroom during the night. The new wine will be marketed as Pinot More."

Dinner and TV.

When "43 tired French Twinneders" arrived at **Sampford Peverell** in July they soon recovered, it seems. They were greeted by Maggie Muggleton, the Chairman of the Parish Council in French, given a brief reception in the Primary School, then taken off by their hosts to get some sleep.

The guests did some touring around, including a trip to the Eden Project. A swift glance down their newsletter spots items like *buffet lunch* and *House of Marbles*, also *large Devon cream tea*, *free day* and even "Official Dinner with TV". This was the time of the World Cup Final.

We noted that there were 17 children in the party (That's more than a third), so at some stages there was a separate programme for them. Kind members arranged for them to meet and play with some of the local English children. Cricket and rounders were mentioned, but not boules!

Wet BBQs, but Good Publicity.

The newsletter that we got from Jane Godbeer of **Axminster** TA recorded the success of a very wet BBQ last May, but it also reported on the Exe Vale Festival of Gardening in June. Ten folks from Douvres arrived in time to set up their stalls and to sell lots of nice things. The next day, the visitors were taken to have a look at some of the local places while some of the TA members looked after the stalls. We are not told if they made a profit for them.

There is a keen Photographic Group in Axminster and they put on an exhibition which was taken to be displayed in Douvres. (Note to all TAs in the county:- There are lots of Photo Groups in the area who would be keen to show their pictures in your twin town. Ask them. You might get some sort of return match.)

Most impressive of the Exminster report was their new publicity pamphlet that, Jane says, had certainly increased interest in Twinning. It was an A4 sheet folded neatly into three. It included a few little eye-catching icons and a couple of photos showing Douvres. One "strip" of the folds was an application form for membership, but we especially liked the headings of the nice, concise paragraphs:-

Who is Axminster Twinned with?

What is the purpose of Twinning?

What do we do?

What else do we do?

What does being a member mean?

What does the Future hold?

It was designed by Caroline Hillyard.

Gourmet Meals and Dirty Dishes.

The visitors from Hillerse who came to **Dolton & District** for their trip were given a great reception at the traditional "Get-Together" in Roland Oxborough's house, but there was a shortage of water (despite the downpour during the event), so the visitors discovered a new British custom called "Take your dirty dishes home."

Needless to say, a good time was had by all. They are doing a Gourmet Meal on the 9th December for £10. It is to be on a Nordic theme.

Shall we all go?

Please send all material to the editor: -
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