



Twinned with Chantilly, France

Summer Newsletter 2024 (No 65)

Message from Chairman: Twinning gets off to a flying start!

As you will note elsewhere in this newsletter your committee has been very active in the early part of 2024, sustaining the momentum set last year. Moreover several events are already planned for the rest of this year, starting with a traditional Bastille Day tea on 14th July, details of which are below.

The main recent event saw a seven-strong delegation travel to Chantilly at the invitation of their Mayor. We were extremely well looked after and had the opportunity to ascertain what their future plans for Twinning will be. At the end of 2023 we learnt that the Comité de Jumelage in Chantilly, equivalent to our Twinning Association, was being disbanded. In essence a new Council Committee in Chantilly will organise formal events, town-to-town, while all other events will continue on an informal basis between contacts in France and the UK. We expect to receive detailed confirmation of the position at the end of September.

Our mutual racing heritage has always been the bedrock of our twinning ties, With that in mind we have held two meetings with Jockey Club executives to explore mutual promotion and support activities and have developed a warm relationship.

Our AGM on 4th June was well attended and, having been advised that the choral festival in its current form would no longer take place, the committee agreed to examine ways in which funds set aside for a future festival in Epsom and Ewell might now be used to support a wider range of activities, for young people in particular.

We have worked hard towards renewing the relationship between Twinning and the Council and hope to consolidate this more formally once there is definitive clarification from Chantilly as to the arrangements on their side.

My sincere thanks are due to the Committee for their hard work and support. Thank you all too for your support, with my best wishes.

Nigel Collin, Chair

Splendid visit with ex-Mayor to Chantilly

I was really honoured to be invited to visit Chantilly with the delegation from the twinning committee and the former mayor, Cllr Rob Geleit. It was a special weekend in Chantilly with a flower festival and a wider twinning event with visitors from Epsom and Watermael-Boitsfort, their twin town in Belgium.

It was an action-packed weekend. After travelling via le Shuttle, the weekend started with a drinks reception with the mayor and members of their council on Friday evening. We then started bright and early on Saturday morning with a visit to the horse training facilities including the gallops within their beautiful woodland area.



One of the host families suggested that we should see the nearby town of Senlis and generously took us there. It is a beautiful old town with cobbled streets and lovely old buildings. It is also famous for its cathedral which is renowned in the area for its architecture.

We then headed back to meet the Belgium delegation at Chantilly Chateau. After taking in a selection of the flower stalls and having lunch, we were given a tour of the castle, before heading to the great stables. We went around the horse museum which even had footage of the Derby within their displays, we were able to enjoy a live dressage display and then a beer in the sunshine.

Next stop was the Potager des Princes for dinner. The gardens are incredible with different elements including a Japanese garden, fruit tree orchard, a theatre stage, and a river. It is also home to many different birds and animals which have the run of the place. We were treated to a special display from the peacock and were amused by the rabbits in their own village. We had an amazing dinner next to the water whilst the sun set.

On Sunday, we all met up at the Town Hall, taking part in a musical Chantilly cream whipping competition. We narrowly beat the Belgium contingent, but all had an amazing time. After another lovely meal, it was time to head back.



I would like to thank our hosts for a wonderful weekend and my fellow Twinning Committee members for facilitating the trip, which was a brilliant weekend. I look forward to the chance to go back again.

Cllr. Rachel King

Olympic torch passes through Chantilly

As the start of the Olympic Games in Paris gets close, the Olympic torch will pass through Chantilly on 18th July. The flame will leave the racecourse at 12.06pm and taking the Route des Aigles will arrive at the Chateau at 1.08pm. There must be a Sky or Virgin station somewhere showing it!

In the afternoon Chantilly plans a festival of sports on the racecourse, ending in a special concert in the evening. I am sure visitors to this very special event would be welcome.

French Speaking Competitions

Way back in February and March, the 9th French Speaking Competitions, run in conjunction with Epsom Rotary, were held. Somehow the standard gets better and better year on year, and we were very impressed by the performance of all the students who took part. We



We were also pleased to be able to recruit two new judges – Rachel King and Helen Roberts – from our committee.

Firstly, we were welcomed to Blenheim School by their new Head of Modern Languages for the Junior and Intermediate rounds. The Senior class was held at Epsom College. On both occasions we were joined by the Mayor and

Mayoress and treated to some excellent refreshments. In the final analysis, this was really Epsom College's year, with some impressive recitations and presentations from pupils from Rosebery, Blenheim and Glyn. Special thanks to the judges who had a very difficult job reaching a decision on the winners of what really was a tough competition.



The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Cllr Rob Geleit together with participants in the senior French speaking competition, and above, judges for the junior and intermediate competition, Christine Rippon, Rachel King and Diana Deavin (photo: Clive Richardson)

Diana Deavin

Picnic in Alexandra Park

Despite the weather, your committee was out there on the 6th May Bank Holiday to promote Twinning. Spirits were high, but flags and bunting were struggling! Thanks to the team and to members who braved the elements to support us.

We attracted a new member or two and entertained some young people with games and a quiz. For adults there was a prize draw and a few more tricky

questions to answer. Luckily the café was ready with hot drinks, soups and crepes to keep us warm, and the Epsom and Ewell Silver Band to keep us cheerful!

There was an impressive turnout of dogs for the main attraction – the dog show – but everyone was somewhat damp by closing time. Our recent record for choosing fine days for our appearances at local events has not been too good, but we are undeterred in our efforts to raise our profile in the local community.



The committee braved the elements to promote Twinning at the Picnic in the Park at Alexandra Recreation Ground, although the Chairman Nigel Collin and Clive Richardson found something to smile about! (Photos Steve McCormick)

Diana Deavin

Bastille Day

The Twinning Association will be organising its traditional Bastille Day celebration on 14th July 2024 from 2.30 to 5.30pm. Please come and join us!

Ros and Richard Godson have agreed to open their lovely garden at 34 Longdown Lane North, Epsom, KT17 3JQ again this year for an afternoon tea. Caroline Baldock, well-known local story teller, who has entertained us with tales of racing histories, will be delighting us again by relating legends from the Bastille.

All we ask is that you please bring a contribution to the food or drink. If you plan to come it would be helpful to confirm by contacting Anne Richardson anne.richardson@epsomtwinning.com

Twining appearances coming up

Look out for us at Epsom Rotary 100th Anniversary Party in Rosebery Park, when we will again be out in force. This will take place on Saturday 21st September from 11am, so please put the date in your diary now. There will be more information and requests for support a little nearer the time, but let's hope the sun will be shining for what promises to be a great family occasion.

Also in the Autumn, we are looking forward to having a stall at Ewell Grove Market again on Saturday 5th October. This was very successful last year and we are hopeful of a positive reception, particularly if we have another Indian Summer as we did when we were there last year.

Diana Deavin

French Conversation Evenings

Since Margaret left for Scotland we have been unable to hold these French speaking Soirees.

We would like to start them up again from September, so are asking anyone who would like to act as a host for some of these to please let Anne know on anne@epsomtwining.com or ring her on 01372 723698.

Quiz Night

It was a gloomy night in March, on Friday 15th, when we set out to hold our regular quiz night. However, from the moment the first quizzers arrived the atmosphere became warm and friendly.

The All Saints church hall in Fulford Road is perfect for such an event, and borrowing the microphone from Epsom Rotary meant that everyone could hear the questions!

Barbara Lewis provided a delicious plateau of finger food for each table catering for all tastes, a much improvement from cooling fish and mountains of chips, and Barry Nash was an excellent Quiz Master who made the evening go with a swing.

In the final reckoning all teams were closely grouped, with the winners overtaking in the final round! Even the team that gained the wooden spoons were pleased to receive their booby prize!

Anne Richardson

Chinese get together

At an Epsom and Ewell Twinning Committee Meeting earlier this year several members expressed a wish for more social events open to Twinning members and their friends to be organised. Suggestions were put forward and Barbara and Martin Lewis recommended The Imperial Oriental Chinese restaurant on Stoneleigh Broadway and consequently a twinning dinner was organised there on 23rd April.

The evening was a great success attracting about 30 Twinning members and friends, and we had a very warm welcome from the staff. A two course taster menu was proposed at a very reasonable price allowing us to sample several different dishes all of which were delicious. A raffle was held to raise money for the Twinning Association. Sadly having suggested the restaurant Barbara and Martin were unable to join us. We hope to organise similar events in the coming year.

Christine Rippon

Murder comes to Epsom

Following on from their very successful annual collaborations for the French Speaking Competitions, Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association and Epsom Rotary Club decided to host jointly a Murder Mystery evening on 4 May. The murder took place in a French vineyard which set the theme for the evening.

An excellent 3 course French meal was provided by a few hard-working Twinners and Rotarians and we were encouraged to bring disguised bargain basement bottles of French plonk for the non-drivers to try and decide which was the best value – and drinkable! Themed dress was optional but worn by many.



The “cast” came from both camps and were kept in check by our Inspector Clouseau type gendarme. We had a very mixed room of guests, including a table made up of a large group out on a hen night. We never did work out how they found out about the evening but they were very welcome and added greatly to the atmosphere.

After each act we were given questions to ask to try to unmask the villain. Only our Inspector knew the identity of the murderer and, as all suspects sat at various tables for their food, it was fun discussing with them whether they might be the guilty one. We had two of the cast at our table and we spent a long time debating whether one of them might have done the deed, but dismissed them both as they didn't have sufficient motive.

In the end the cheesemaker, who was carrying the victim's baby, was unveiled. She had been on our table and we all, one by one, had talked ourselves out of thinking she had killed her lover. No-one guessed the murderer, which made us all feel a little less stupid!

It was a fun evening, arranged to have a good time and not to raise funds. We all hope the event will be repeated another time. Arsenic anyone?

Barbara Lewis

Welcome back Craig Benton

It is a great pleasure to welcome racehorse trainer Craig Benton back to Epsom, where he truly belongs. I would have ridden out with Craig back in the days when John Akehurst was training, and it is good to have him return here and start training out of The Limes.



You know you have arrived somewhere special as you approach the stables along an avenue of majestic vintage limes. When the now owners purchased the property the stables had fallen into disrepair. The roofs and stable doors and interiors were sadly neglected. A lot of hard work and care has gone into the restoration work.

Craig found the job of taking over the yard from Laura Richardson quite by chance on a social website and jumped at the chance, as did the owners. He was just the person they were looking for and it was clearly meant to be.

Craig was born in 1958 in Durban, South Africa. The son of the champion racehorse trainer, Buller Benton, he grew up imbued with the principles and love of racehorse training and soon became an amateur jockey, winning his first race aged 14. The well-known jockey Michael Roberts was his father's stable jockey and it soon became clear to him that, however good a rider he was, he would never be able to make a name for himself riding professionally because owners would always imagine he would favour his father's horses.



So in 1985 he left for Pleasanton, near San Francisco USA, to train horses. Neither he nor his wife could get a green card, and so staying on in the USA became impossible and he returned to Durban, South Africa, where he successfully took up training.

In 2007 he and his wife visited his wife's sister who lived in Epsom. It was the beginning of another important change in his life. The Derby course touched his heart and he decided to stay. Although he had not ridden a horse for 11 years and was now in his late 40's he rode out for John Akehurst, who was then at Tattenham Corner Stables. In 2009 he was offered a job in Newmarket teaching the apprentices at the British Racing School, as Training Operations Manager. He jumped at the chance and was able to meet some of his heroes including Piggott, Mercer, Eddery, and the lovely Haley Turner. He remembers well his encounters with them and has many a good tale to tell.

In 2012 he was offered the chance to run the apprentice jockey program in Hong Kong, but by late 2022 he had decided to come back to the UK. The move turned out to be perfect timing and the Limes job was offered to him. Curiously, Eric Lin, who is now assistant trainer, had also left Hong Kong and was living in England. The two, who had known each other for 12 years, got in touch and Craig invited him to come and join him in Epsom. So the new team nicely fell into place, and we wish them every success.

Caroline Baldock

Committee Members 2024-2025

Following their election at the recent AGM, your Committee for the coming year includes:

Nigel Collin - Chairman

Diana Deavin – Vice-Chairman and Acting Secretary

Donna Williams – Treasurer

Anne Richardson – Membership Secretary

Cllr Rachel King – Council Nominee

Cllr John Beckett – Council Nominee

Cllr Neil Dallen

Cllr Clive Woodbridge

Peter Hardy

Barbara Lewis

Martin Lewis

Barry Nash

Christine Rippon

Helen Roberts

Caroline Baldock

Our Hon. President is The Worshipful the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell,
Cllr Steve Bridger