

HWTA Chairman's Report - January 2010.

Dear Member thank you for attending this Annual General Meeting of the Hartley Wintney Twinning Association.

As you will recall we started this particular term late and my report covers the period from 19th March 2009 to today, although the financial report will cover the period 1st Jan to 31st Dec 2009.

International liaisons were limited during the year, on the home front, we had the pleasure of hosting or facilitating members of our twinning communities on four occasions, namely, Malle based competitors participating in the Hart Triathlon, Malle Veterans FC for a fixture with HWFC, the regular contingent from Malle attending our Village Festival and a multi-international group including twinners from Malle and Saint Savin for the International Walking weekend. The feedback I received indicated that these occasions were enjoyed by all who attended. The committee's thanks go out to the organizers and everyone who supported our guests on these occasions.

By way of reciprocation our only return visit this term was by a hardy group known as the 'Fat Boys' who cycled from Hartley Wintney to Malle to attend the Malle Triathlon. The two hardest of that group also participated in the Malle Triathlon. Congratulations to them all on their achievement.

Although we have no direct involvement, I was pleased to hear that visits between Robert Mays' School and Saint Savin were resumed and note that there were visits by groups in both directions last year.

The prime international activity of this past year has been the development of our contribution towards the Golden Bridge Project initiative proposed in 2008 by the Malle Twinning Association. We were appreciative of the visit by Staf Verheoven and Herman Smolders in March to clarify a number of issues that the project raised. I would, especially, like to commend Gerda Bennett, Cathy Roberts, Dave & Sue Skellern and Steve Sharpe for rising to the challenge and assuming responsibilities for the various sections.

With a disappointing lack of support from the community at large they have achieved much, through their own personal efforts, to present Hartley Wintney in a good light through the exhibits and contributions to the forthcoming exhibition in Malle which will be held in September, and subsequently at exhibitions scheduled to be held in all the twinned communities at later dates. Hartley Wintney exhibition is scheduled for early 2011.

This coming May our project co-ordinators have been invited to attend a symposium in Malle to review and finalize all exhibits to be included in the Golden Bridge exhibition. I also understand that Steve Sharpe's 'music group', along with other contributors to the music project has been invited to attend the premiere of the new European Anthem. This premiere is to be in the presence of members of the Belgium royal family. I would like to congratulate all involved in their efforts to date, and wish them well in their final deliberation in May.

Other events planned for 2010 include a cycle ride from Saint Savin to Hartley Wintney in June and an international Walking Weekend to be based in Saint Savin, in July. For further information on these outings please contact Steve Sharpe or Sarah Beasley respectively, or look out for further details via our website and newsletter. I am also pleased to report that I have recently been advised that Hart Voices are expecting to receive an invitation to the 2011 choir festival also in Malle.

On the social front there have been some highs and lows, which I shall review in chronological order.

As usual the village festival was a great success, how can it be anything else when we are blessed with such beautiful weather and good company, and a great turnout to support our commitment to running the Trappist beer bar, albeit under the customary watchful eyes of a large delegation from Ooste & West Malle.

I do find it a bit of a mystery that we do not participate or make any contribution to the July International Food Festival, in view of our international connections, be that as it may !

In September it was with regret that I had to advise the Parish Council that we were unable to source the Jazz Picnic bar. Although we had members prepared to operate an established one, there were no volunteers to manage the setup. This is a small fundraiser that also give the Association an opportunity to demonstrate its involvement and contribution to village functions, unfortunately we had to default on this commitment. If the new committee wishes to resume support for this event then some repair work may be necessary with the Parish Council.

In October Steve Sharpe, Andrew Morton and others organized a charity dance in aid of the 'Help for Heroes Fund'. This was a great success and raised over £1000 for the charity.

The Christmas Raffle reverted to its pre-2008 format, receiving compliments from a reduced turn out. Thoughts are that a combination of the break in continuity and reduced publicity for this event in 2009 contributed to the reduced attendance at the 2009 event. Controversy over the preferred format of this event, unfortunately, has had a far more damaging effect on the Association than could ever have been expected, but, more about that later.

Finally, last Saturday we held our annual Burns Night Supper in the presence of a sell out attendance. Our thanks are due to our new piper Mr Colin Malam who I hope will be invited to perform for us again at future Burns Night celebrations, Jonathan and Sharron Glen, and everyone who contributed to the organization of the evening under the direction of Gerda, Sarah and Sue.

For the coming year your committee has mapped out a programme of events which will include a Wine/Beer Tasting in April, and a Horse Racing Night in October to compliment all the usual annual activities. I hope that this provisional programme will stimulate continued interest in our Twinning Association and attract new members to the cause.

You will note from the financial report that our funds have decreased over the year, this is the result of expenditure being channeled into a new HWTA storage facility at Eversley Storage Park to consolidate the Association inventory, an improved website to raise the standard of our interface with our partners and the community, and contributions to the Malle Cycle Ride and the International Walking Weekend based in Hartley Wintney. These decisions were taken with a view to rationalize and improve the Association's operations and to acknowledge comments, at the 2009 AGM, of concerns that our balance was unnecessarily high, and, subsequent views that some funds should be returned to the membership through subsidies for authorized activities.

Your committee, joined recently by Estie Jordaan, is pleased to have served you during the past year. I would like to thank them all for the support they have given me through what have been difficult times. 'Your support is very much appreciated, thank you'. As I have previously indicated in my email to you all, I do not feel that I can continue to fulfill the expected remit of the Chairman's role, at this time, and intend to stand down. Regrettably, notices of resignation have also been received from two other members of the committee. Even more regrettably, there were no committee nominations from the membership.

I have always been mindful of the adage 'the electorate invariably gets the government it deserves'. It is a great disappointment to those of us serving on your committee that there does not appear to be sufficient interest in the management of our TA for the 'membership at large' to muster a committee nomination, let alone, a full committee. This is now the third year that this situation has arisen, and I strongly urge all the membership to acknowledge the value of the Twinning Association and the committee, by ensuring it is at least fully staffed throughout each term.

It is a great disappointment for me too have to advise that our President, Jean Amos has also issued a notice of resignation effective from the date of this meeting. To receive a resignation at any time is a disappointment, to receive the resignation of a President carries significant gravitas to warrant comment. Her reasons are personal, but, I believe are sadly related to activities within our Association. There will always be competing views on issues in any organization, but, the value of good management is to mediate and resolve those differences to mutual agreement. It is my greatest regret that, despite my absence, upon

my watch matters appear to have got out of hand to a point resulting in the committee's receipt of a Presidential resignation. May I personally apologise to all for allowing this circumstance to occur. The matter of consideration of a replacement for this post will be the duty of the newly elected committee, at a future date.

In closing, may I say that in my two years as your Chairman I have learned a lot about the value of 'twinning' and as a result it is my intention to continue supporting the Twinning Association when circumstances permit, and maintain the new-found friendships and associations that I have been fortunate enough to make through my role.

I would say though that although I took my appointment, as a compliment, coming without any experience of the operation of this Association/committee was a risky undertaking not just for my part, but, also for the, then, newly-elected committee. A tactic I would not encourage as a means of future recruitment. It is important that every effort should be made for members to experience a general committee post in advance of appointment to an executive position. With that parting thought may I wish those elected to the next committee much success in their endeavours and advise them that if I can be of any assistance in clarifying ongoing issues I shall be happy to put myself at the Association's disposal.

Source: Tony Davies 25th Jan 2010.