

HWTA NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2005

Hartley Wintney
twinned with



St Savin (France) & Malle (Belgium)

Chairmans Report

Firstly, may I apologise for the late arrival of this, the first Newsletter of 2005. Much has happened already this year in the form of the Bridge Tour to Malle and the Twinning visit to St Savin as well as a very successful Burn's Night, Beer Tasting and Barn Dance. We have also hosted the usual contingent of Triathletes from Malle for the Hart Triathlon as well as the traditional group of Beer Sellers from Malle to help sell/drink the Westmalle Tripel and Trappist at the Hartley Wintney Village Festival. All the above events have been a great success (reports appear elsewhere in this Newsletter) and have further spread interest in Twinning. Many people have contributed to these events and our thanks to all of them. It is nice to see more and more people willing to get involved in organizing and helping to run the events and I hope this trend will continue. Your Committee are extremely busy professionals in the main with great demands on their time and your help is vital to the success of our programme.

In September 2006, we plan to host an International Twinning Weekend with visitors from Malle, St.Savin, Heusenstaam and possibly Poland. Planning for this event is underway but we are open to ideas and suggestions for the weekend. We will need a lot of hosts for the event and would ask all those interested in hosting to respond to requests that will be made around the end of this year.

We have also had to say goodbye to Tony Bray & Tessa Sanderson who have moved back to Scotland. Tony was an excellent master of ceremonies often raising the atmosphere at many of our events with his enthusiasm, wit and understanding of his diverse audience. He will be missed greatly and is a tough act to follow, but we welcome Andrew Morton onto the Committee to replace Tony. Tessa was our Newsletter Editor and made a huge contribution to the recent glossy editions that you have received. You will see from this edition that not all of us can match her artistic talent.

However, perhaps Tony & Tessa's greatest effort was the organisation of the itinerary and route for the recent trip to St Savin and the trip to Ypres last year. Tony made these trips very enjoyable through his planning and commentary. We thank them both for their hard work for the Twinning Association.

Steve Ayres

Barn Dance

May 2005 saw our first barn dance for a number of years – and it was well worth waiting for. Around 90 people packed into the Victoria Hall to listen to the music of The Bismarcks and to dance (well manoeuvre!) to the instructions of caller Norman Pottinger.

As the night went on the dances seemed to get more complicated – or was that just the Hogs Back TEA taking effect? A good time was had by all, especially when an excellent supper, provided by Sue Skellern and Ann Young, was served. Thank you to all who helped with the event and to all who came. We hope you enjoyed it and we won't leave it so long before we have the next one!

Dave Skellern

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Bridge Tour to Malle 15th – 17th April 2005

Experience so far has confirmed to me that twinning trips are often an adventure, and for some, a journey into the unknown. Previous experience of this sometimes hazardous and peculiar activity was denied to the other 7 members of our party. However they were all desperately keen and willing participants. Most of the party set off in two cars on Friday morning, and immediately ran into an M25 accident stoppage. Nevertheless, we arrived at the Eurotunnel check-in the statutory 30mins before departure. A potentially expensive matter of our allegedly (free?) booking was in due course resolved with the help of Steve Ayres and the goodwill of the Eurotunnel staff, though their computer insisted on a payment of 1p per car before releasing our return tickets. So we left 30mins late, but with time for a sandwich and a coffee. Despite some hold ups on the Antwerp Ring road our arrival in Malle was only 35mins adrift of our intended arrival time of 6.30.

Unfortunately, there had been a misunderstanding between their bridge club and Twinning Committee about accommodation, so we were hosted in a small hotel only 10mins walk from the Westmalle Townhall. Next door to that is the Fire-station, where the friendly social room was our first meeting place with some famous twinners, such as Jan Van Roey, Staf, Gabriel, and my friends Rob and Carina, together with a few of the bridge people. After some introductions, we were ready for the excellent beef stew, salad and fries prepared by the ladies. The newcomers were soon in more relaxed conversation with the Belgians. It was also their first exposure to Trippel and Trappist beer, always a good encouragement to talking, and perhaps it also helps our enthusiastic hosts.

Saturday morning found us visiting the Trappist Abbey, followed by a climb up into the workings of the Windmill and finally, a most interesting complete conducted tour of the castle. Ramonda from their twinning committee explained how it was that the plain `modern' side was actually the older. She also demonstrated the progress in their huge on-going work of restoration. We marvelled at their determination to make such a wonderful community project out of what had been just the ruined servants quarters of the original castle.



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Bridge Tour to Malle (cont)

To prepare us for the rigours of the afternoon ahead, we were taken to lunch at 'De Poliander', a modest but highly recommendable restaurant in Oostmalle.

And so to the bridge. Somewhat to our surprise, we found ourselves in the usual meeting place of the Malle Bridge club, which is a café. There, to the gentle click of snooker balls and the murmur of conversation at the bar, we settled to our task of Duplicate bridge. We used English cards and identical bidding boxes to our own at home, and were not too intimidated by their 'Club Squeeze' convention, thanks to Tony Bevis and Bryce Neilson's explanation earlier over breakfast. The bar people came round at regular intervals to take our further orders for coffee, beer, port (Gabriel's favourite tippie), etc. This service we shall strongly recommend for our Hartley Wintney club. To everyone's great relief, the whole affair was conducted in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, though it was somewhat smokey in parts. Satisfactory explanations were given and received on both sides concerning conventions, and the afternoon went off very well.

Back at the hotel, we ran over the events of the day, and compared notes on the afternoon's play, but briefly, as it was necessary to change for a candle-lit supper at the castle. A great table had been laid in the hall where we had the Polish Twinning induction last year, and the ladies once again excelled themselves in preparing a wonderful meal for us to share with the Twinning Committee. We all felt a great sense of privilege in the enjoyment of an evening in the company of, and provided by, these hard-working people who seem to have such a rich fund of culture and friendship, which they have made for themselves but seem so willing for others to enjoy with them.

No time for a Sunday morning rest, but another session of bridge awaited us at the café at 9.30. This time we were simply joining in their regular club meeting. Several of their best players had been away on Saturday at various competitions, which was just as well for us, when we came to learn our results from the previous day at the end of the morning. Bryce and Tony did very well in coming second (out of the 12 pairs), while the Dallings came 6th; Lorna Crawford and Ron Ayton came 9th, and Dennis Shepherd and I also finished the course. Similarly, our best two pairs featured quite successfully on Sunday morning. It was now painfully clear what a formidable foe we had taken on.

The Mayor Harry Hendrickx presented results and was sympathetic to the visiting team. They were reasonably modest in victory while we succeeded somehow in holding back our tears. Porters in Hartley Wintney had provided me with a good pewter tankard, which Dennis had got his neighbour, a jeweller to engrave. I handed this over, and we hope it will become the trophy for future matches.

Geoffrey and Elizabeth had been sent off to catch their train, and after another, this time lighter lunch at 'De Poliander', we came back without incident or delay to Hartley Wintney. The Belgians seemed quite keen to give us a return match, so hopefully another bridge between the communities has been established.

Bill Hudson

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Hart Triathlon

Once again five triathletes from Malle along with their driver Rob joined us for the Hart Sprint Triathlon on 2nd May. This year, for the first time, they arrived on Saturday to stay for two nights, so Sunday morning was spent cycling round the triathlon route while we enjoyed a lazy afternoon taking refreshment outside the cricket club pavilion. Saturday and Sunday nights were spent 'hydrating' at the Wagon!

The day of the race dawned brightish and not too warm – pretty good conditions for a swim, bike and run- and from about 10am to 12 noon our intrepid local and international competitors commenced their 400m swim, 20km bike ride (passing through HW) and 5km cross country run. There were no major mishaps although Malle's star competitor, Wim van Dyck, collided with other competitors both in the pool and during the run. Wim still managed to finish in 26th position. Meanwhile Chris Roberts found himself riding with a chapter of Hells Angels!

Unfortunately regular competitors Mike Cloke and Cherylle Ayres were absent through injury, but those who took part achieved excellent times with many personal bests recorded. Many thanks to Cathy and Chris Roberts for the post-race lunch and for hosting Wim too. Thanks also to Bernard and Carmel Hays, Shirley and Chris Wilkins and Steve and Cherylle Ayres for hosting our visitors.

Dave Skellern

HOSTING

We now have very active links with our friends in St Savin and Malle and, in September 2006, we will be hosting an international twinning event. To keep Hartley Wintney's twinning aspirations alive we need to have a large pool of members who are willing, in principle, to host visitors. If you would like to be contacted when hosts are required please contact Fiona Pinteau on 01252 843373 to let her know. There will be no obligation or pressure placed on you at any time.

FUTURE EVENTS

Race Night – Saturday 15th October at 8pm in the WI Hut. Tickets available from all Committee Members

Gourmet Raffle – Saturday 26th November at 8pm in the WI Hut

Christmas Sing Along – Date to be fixed in December, venue will be WI Hut

Burn's Night - Date to be fixed in January, venue will be WI Hut

IN THE NEXT EDITION

Report from the Piscine Party

Report from the "Second Opinion" Gig

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Twinning Visit to St Savin

On Thursday 28th April a group of 36 Twinners left for a six day trip to St Savin, a beautiful small French town just south of Poitiers in west-central France. Several were going for the first time, many more to visit old friends. After nearly 25 years of twinning some very close friendships have formed. Following a five-thirty start breakfast was served on the coach when we arrived at the Tunnel (croissants, of course!). Because it is such a long journey, we over-nighted at Versailles, taking the opportunity to visit the palace and its magnificent gardens, and to enjoy a wonderful French meal. The weather was kind and aided our sight-seeing.

The next morning we set off again, stopping briefly to look at Chinon, a medieval site associated with Richard the Lionheart, which has a partially ruined but very impressive castle. Arriving in St Savin on the Friday evening we were greeted by our hosts in the town square, followed by a reception and welcoming speeches (cleverly translated by Gerda Bennett). We were quite tired after all the travelling and grateful for our beds that night.

Saturday we spent with our hosts, who showed us many of the picturesque places around St Savin, all in some glorious Spring sunshine. We also lunched well (the first of four huge meals - well for me anyway - that weekend). In the afternoon the local amateur dramatic society 'Les Maillanbus' put on a show of music and readings all associated with the sea. Many of the shanties from the time of the Napoleonic Wars abused the enemy - the English! Although not everyone in the party could understand some of the rather difficult French they all picked up those references. Once again, Gerda Bennett bravely translated some high level cultural vocabulary. Music, of course, is an international language, which meant that everyone really appreciated the event. That evening we ate sumptuously again.

On the Sunday there were more visits the countryside, which afforded an opportunity to walk off some of the lavish hospitality, and to a local chateau of historical interest. That evening there was a formal dinner with many speeches and exchanges of gifts between the two associations. Everyone had a wonderful time. Language was no barrier, such was the warmth of our hosts. It was with reluctance that we left on the Monday morning, although it did allow us some recovery time from the fabulous French food with which we had been plied.

We returned via Normandy, staying in Bayeux, which allowed Twinners to visit the both the famous Tapestry and the D-Day Beaches. Those who visited it were particularly impressed by the 360-degree cinema which so movingly evoked the images of 1944. Bayeux is a very pretty town and a lovely place to wander around.

Setting off on the Tuesday morning we got back to the village around ten o'clock that night. The trip had been a brilliant success, largely due the superb organisation of the committee. Two people deserve especial mention: Tony Bray and Tessa Simpson who acted as tour conductors. Sadly they left the village a only a few days later to start a new life in Edinburgh. They were stalwarts of the Twinning Association and will be deeply missed.

Matthew Bennett

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Village Festival

Once again the Village Festival provided a great opportunity for the Association to highlight the fun and advantages of Twinning. We set up stall to sell the world famous Westmalle Tripel and Trappist (Dubbel) Beer and as usual soon attracted the large crowd of thirsty officianados thanks to our Belgian friends performing their usual welcoming marketing spiel. We had a great day with lots of interest in both the beer and the Association and hopefully we have attracted some new members.

My thanks to all those who helped on the day, our force of helpers for this event has grown to a level now where everyone can take the occasional break to enjoy the festival. It has also made setting up and taking down much easier. Special thanks to Chris & Shirley Wilkins, Steve Sharpe, Dave Skellern, Mike Croxford and Chris Roberts for their hard work during the day which allowed your Chairman some time off to go and track down some wandering Belgians in the Wagon & Horses (Their excuse was that we were so busy they couldn't get a drink!)

My thanks also to Mike Croxford & Lindsay Toomer who drove across with me to pick up the beer just 4 days before the event. As always we also send our thanks to our small band of Belgian "Beer Roadies" for their help in transporting more beer and the Westmalle Tent. Finally, a big thank you to Sue Skellern, Sue's mum Ann and Gerda Bennett for the excellent BBQ hosted at the Skellern's for all our Belgian visitors plus their hosts. It was a marvellous evening and their hard work was very much appreciated by us all.

We had a very successful day and sold sufficient beer to be able to make a £300 donation to the Rotary Club nominated Charities. Don't forget that we will be selling the Westmalle Beer at the Jazz Picnic so come along and have a Tripell!!

Steve Ayres

Malle Triathlon - Three Go Mad In Belgium

On the 17th June Dave Skellern, Andrew Morton & Tim Howard represented the village in the annual Malle (Lollepotters) Triathlon. It was a fraught journey with the Antwerp ring road being dug up so we were running very late. We got to the start 2 minutes late!

The good news was that it had been 34 Deg C in Belgium that day so the lake was pleasantly warm, the cycle and run were not quite so nice though. With much support from all our friends in Malle and Sue Skellern who is now a master of the bike/run change some respectable times were recorded. Dave was 1hr03 and Andrew and Tim finished together in 1hr16.

Despite not troubling the prize giving in the day time the Hartley Wintney posse certainly gave it a good go in the evening in terms of who could drink the most beer competition. The evening saw the appearance of the Malle band who are truly excellent. There are about 10/12 in the band and they play everything from The Police to Springsteen. They also keep going having started at about 10 they did not finish until nearly 2 with only minimal breaks. The good news is that they are coming to Hartley Wintney on the 17th September playing at Victoria Hall. Tickets are £10 and I for one having seen them in Belgium would recommend seeing them – really good fun.

Andrew Morton