

ABBOTSKERSWELL TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 6th January 2018

Present: Julie & Ian Arrow, Linda Banks, John Brench, Jenny Brook, Andy Champion, Dorne Cornelius, Sandra & Kevin Eales, Joe & Kathy Hayes, Jane & Garry Kendall, Alan & Ann Kitchen, Franz Kunst, Di & Bill Lewis, Brian Mackness, Pam & Dave McNee, Ann-Marie Pickerill, Linda & Mike Rawlins, Di & Terry Reed, Celia & Andrew Rose, Anne Sercombe, Richard & Rosemary Whiffin, John Whitehead.

1. Apologies

Fernley Beer, Ced & Viv Bell, Jenny & Derek Bellotti, Gill & Gordon Bradford, Sue & Brian Brench, Joe & Liz Clowes, Jenni Eyles, Sheila Hart, Liz & John Haysom, Christiane Kunst, John & Christine Lewis.

2. Approval of Previous Year's Minutes

The minutes were approved.

Proposed: Richard Whiffin Seconded: Celia Rose

3. Chairman's Report

Two years ago when accepting the role of Chairman I reminded us all of the aims of our Association:

"To promote and foster friendship and understanding between our Twinning communities. This is to be achieved by encouraging visits and the development of personal contacts, and by so doing to broaden the mutual understanding of the cultural, recreational, educational and commercial activities of the linked communities."

To this end I set out five challenges. How far have we been successful?

School Developments

Our links with the school have been excellent. Over the last two years members have been actively involved within the school working closely with groups of children promoting the French language and culture. This collaboration led to a highly successful Salon du Thé held in the school in March to which parents, members and villagers were invited. In 2016 when the French party came to Abbotskerswell we included as part of their programme a visit to the school where they had a tour and were served refreshments by children. Our visitors were impressed by the confidence with which the children engaged in conversation. Tim Hughes, the Head, has been a great supporter of our project and he personally took a group of children to France in 2016. Last summer Murielle Hauvel reciprocated by bringing a group of French children to Abbotskerswell. Julie Arrow and Liz Clowes in particular helped arrange a programme of events to support the visit and those who took part can vouch for the

enjoyment that was had by all in both communities. While the intention is to take a further group to France in 2018 there have been some administrative issues that have placed this in jeopardy, though I hope the Association will continue to support and encourage this project.

Changing Expectations

I have been told by some long-standing members that Twinning has achieved their goals of making lifelong friends with people in France. This is commendable but I believe that we fall short if this is our only aim. As I said two years ago I believe that for our association to continue to be relevant we need to promote the values of Twinning, an understanding and appreciation of another culture. National and international events of the last two years have only convinced me further that to prevent the polarisation of groups within many societies, not just our own, we have an important role to play. While we have continued to enjoy meeting socially for our evening meals and these play an important role within the village, we have also engaged more with the local community. Not only have we worked with the school and held a crepe stall at the fete, but we organised a village outing to the Lost Gardens of Heligan. Despite a grey day and a heavy downpour during the afternoon we received many appreciative comments. We have also held open outdoor events in the summer – the walking treasure hunt for families and the garden party at Brian's when we invited a range of guests to join us. As a result we welcomed some new members to the Association including two new family associate members. This has shown that with a slightly different approach we continue to be a significant presence within the village.

Inclusiveness

We all recognise that as the age profile of the association has risen for health or family reasons numbers have fallen away at the meal evenings. Inevitably this has meant fewer people to coordinate and help with cooking the meals. However I would like to thank all those who have provided us with excellent meals on every occasion. It is no mean feat to cook for large numbers but it is great to see the way everyone pulls together to ensure we maintain standards. We always need volunteers to cook and Rosemary will be coming around during the evening to ask for help for 2018. It has been encouraging to see more of the men taking responsibility and this was one of the challenges I put forward. Another was to make our evenings more welcoming for single members and it has been gratifying to see them present and enjoying themselves on a far more regular basis. I had hoped we might have a more varied programme of evening entertainment to which non-members could be invited thus encouraging new members to join us. We have had an antiques evening and a musical evening led by Hugh Edwards this year which were well received but more often than not we have relied on our own members to provide entertainment through quizzes, Call my Bluff and the Trafalgar Night. My thanks to those who have made these evenings fun, but I regret we have not been more expansive appealing to a wider audience. Having said that we have welcomed several new members to the Association and we are delighted to have you on board. Having attended 3 Devon Twinning Circle meetings in my time as Chairman (which those who have ever been along will know are less than inspiring!) I can assure you that we are one of the most thriving Twinning Associations in the County. The fact that we had record numbers attending the Christmas Dinner at Dainton only demonstrates that at the heart of the Association is a bond of friendship and a sense of belonging to something of value.

Social Media

Like many groups we are now much more media savvy. Thanks to Liz for setting up the website and Facebook page and posting messages. These reach far and wide, including members in the French Twinning Association, and help publicise what we are doing. Also thanks to John Whitehead for his regular photographs and features in Abbtalk. At least we are now reaching a wider audience and this hopefully will encourage others to want to know more about who we are and what we stand for.

25 years of Twinning

In May we celebrated 25 years since the charter was signed by promoting the idea of a cultural event in Le Pre D'Auge. Our members took arts and crafts to place alongside those of our French counterparts in a display of the many talents that we share. Also Hugh Edwards rounded up a group to perform some English folk songs, while some members of Tapestry sang some madrigals which were interspersed between the songs of the French musicians, all of which enlivened the evening's entertainment. We also joined in a walk around Le Pre D'Auge but inevitably it rained! However we were not deterred and entered into the spirit of the occasion. The whole event was rounded off by the signing of a charter of renewal which is proudly displayed on the wall here in Church house.

Overall I feel we have met many of the challenges I set out and believe the Association is in good health. This would not have been possible without the hard work and support of the committee. My thanks go to them. A special vote of thanks must go to Richard Whiffin who is standing down from the committee after many years including two as a past Chairman. We thank him for his service and commitment. We have also said farewell to Pam as our washer-up and I made a presentation to her of £100 collected at the Christmas Dinner. She was quite overwhelmed and wants me to express her deepest gratitude for your generosity. Tonight we welcome Natasha as her replacement.

It has been a privilege to serve as Chairman for the last two years and I am grateful to all the members for giving me this opportunity. It is a responsibility for anyone and I am confident that Julie will rise to the challenge and take us forward as she replaces me in the role. I wish her well.

Andrew Rose (Chairman)

Proposed: Jenny Brook

Seconded: Linda Banks

4. Treasurer's Report

In the absence of the Treasurer, Richard Whiffin read the Treasurer's Report:

It's been a pretty good year of fund raising for our bi-annual visit from the French with a profit this year of £1438.75.

This was raised through our monthly events, which averaged a net £101.37 for each of the nine events excluding the Xmas event and the contribution to the French children's visit in June. This compares with the average income from the equivalent events for the previous year of £99.95.

We also benefited once again from an Abbfest grant of £600 from 2016 Abbfest, which was because many Twinners volunteered in one way, shape, or form. Well done to all who participated in 2016 and in 2017 for which a grant of £600 has been given to ATA for the 2017/18 year of account. Please keep the dates of 21 – 23 September 2018 free in your diaries for Abbfest 2018 when your help will be needed once more.

You will see from the next page of this report that our overall income this financial year was £7,874.50 and costs were £6,345.75. This gives that net surplus of £1,438.75.

On 1.12.17 we carry forward a fund of £6,576.47 made up of £311.54 in cash and £6264.47 in money in our bank account. This includes £750 of prepayments for Xmas dinner, which falls in the 2017/18 year of account. So our true carry forward position is £5,826.01. Thus we are in good order for hosting the French next year.

HOSTING THE FRENCH

When we host the French every other year, this costs in the region of £3,750. If you deduct the Abbfest grant, that means we need to raise over £3,000 through our eighteen fund raising events over two years just for hosting the French. Then you need to add the various running costs.

Thus the eighteen profitable fund raising events need to bring in an average net income of £175, compared to the £100 per event that we are raising at the moment.

RECOMMENDATION

My recommendation to the Committee and to the Members of Abbotskerswell Twinning Association is that we increase the cost of meals at our monthly fund raisers to £12.00 per person and continue our marketing push for more members.

I commend the accounts to you.

Liz Clowes, November 2017

The committee have fully discussed the recommendation to increase the meal charge but have decided to recommend to the meeting to increase the annual subscriptions to £12.50 per member and to keep meal costs under review. It is noted that the annual subscription has not been increased for many, many years.

Proposed: Alan Kitchen

Seconded: Rosemary Whiffin

Kevin Eales questioned the discrepancy between the accounts and the Treasurer's report on the amount spent. Richard Whiffin confirmed that it was a typing error on the report and that the Audited Accounts were correct and the amount in the report should have read £6,435.75 not £6,345.75.

5. Review of Annual Subscriptions

Following the Treasurers Report the floor was opened up to discuss the recommendation to the AGM for raising membership to £12.50 per person against raising the cost of the meals each month to £12.00 per person. Kevin Eales mentioned that raising the subscription would raise less revenue than increasing the cost of the meal. Linda Banks said that the committee's decision to keep the cost of the meals as is for now was because if we are trying to encourage younger members to attend, who possibly had young children, then it was yet an extra amount to pay each time on top of babysitters etc. Jenny Brook commented that she thought that paying members six pounds per dessert provided was too much. Her suggestion was that receipts were provided for payment. Jenny also commented that it was not necessary for all desserts to be homemade and that shop bought ones were just as adequate. An amended proposal to increase the subscription to £15.00 from 2018 onwards was then put forward by Jenny Brook, seconded by Kevin Eales and agreed by an overwhelming majority.

Di Lewis questioned why the Associate Membership subscription per family was the same price as the Full Members individual subscription. Andy replied that the Associate Membership was for parents with children at the village school who support wider village events organized by the Association and were only allowed one vote per family opposed to each Full Member having the right to vote. This had been agreed in last year's amendment of the Constitution.

6. Election of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Committee

Franz Kunst temporarily took the chair for the election of the Chairman, and Julie Arrow was unanimously elected. Julie then took the chair for the election of the remaining officers and committee as follows:

Position	Name	Proposed	Seconded
Chairman	Julie Arrow	Andy Rose	Linda Banks
Vice Chairman	Vacant		
Treasurer	Liz Clowes	Sandra Eales	John Whitehead
Secretary	Sandra Eales	Andy Rose	Julie Arrow
Committee (elected en bloc)	Linda Banks Andy Rose Rosemary Whiffin John Whitehead	Julie Arrow	Sandra Eales
New Members for 2018	Jane Kendall Andy Champion Anne-Marie Pickerill	John Whitehead Andrew Rose Jane Kendall	Brian Mackness Sandra Eales Jenny Brook

7. New Chairman's Address

Good evening.

Whilst the last 2 years have been building up to this, I can honestly say that I still find it surprising to realise I am now chair of Abbotskerswell Twinning Association. Thank you for electing me. I hope that with support from both committee members and all other members that I will be able to take the Association forward and build on the work of my predecessors.

With that in mind I would like to add my thanks to Richard Whiffin as he steps down as a permanent member of the committee, whilst acknowledging his continued input as Liz's stand-in whilst she goes on her various world tours!

I would also like to give a big thank you from all of us to Andy. He has worked tirelessly as Chair, leaving me very big shoes to fill. Andy, please accept these small gifts as a token of our appreciation. We hope you will be able to enjoy them in your new found leisure - assuming you haven't already more than filled the time you will gain by stepping down!

By now you will have gathered, that I do not have a vice chair. This is obviously a concern to me and means I will be especially dependent on all your support to guide me through the days ahead. I see it as a matter of the utmost urgency that we encourage either an existing or a new committee member to take on this role and help look towards the future of this organisation.

This year's priority must be the visit of our French friends to Abbotskerswell in May. Thank you once again to all those who have offered their hospitality for the visit. We are currently offering to host 36. I have had some thoughts as to the planning of the weekend which I will be sharing with the committee at our next meeting and will obviously share with the whole association once we have made some decisions. I'm sure that as ever, with your help it will be a fun if tiring experience.

I also plan to keep up the links Sandra and Andy have forged with the village school. The future of this association lies in new and younger members with an enthusiasm for learning about French culture and lifestyle, as well as learning the language and sharing friendships. We continue to support the school in its attempts to maintain an exchange with the village school in France.

Finally I would wish to encourage all members, both those here tonight and those unable to be present that we only exist as a twinning association through your continued support, both at our regular meetings and through our contacts with our twinning friends. It is easy to see our aims fulfilled on a personal basis - strong friendships in Le pres d'Auge, Les Monceaux and le Boissier and inadvertently forget the wider aims achieved by sharing in the cultural richness of our twinning exchanges. Of course we must not forget to invite the rest of our village community to come and share in the cultural delights we have on offer.

The next AGM will be on 12th January 2019, when we look forward to seeing you all again, but our next meeting will be on 10th February at 7.30 at Church House, when we hope to see you all again as well as those who have been unable to make it tonight.

There followed a general discussion from the floor. Brian Mackness had a question about the expenditure for the French visit. The response was that the committee agree on a budget, normally between £3,500 - £4,000, for the weekend, dependant on inflation and the number of visitors expected. Di Lewis asked if the committee thought our expenditure was equivalent to what the French spent when we go across to them. Due to no information available from the French, this is something that we were not able to answer.

8. Date of Next AGM

12th January 2019.