

SWANLEY & DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION

(INAUGURATED 1985)

President: The Mayor of Swanley

ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

2016 - 2017

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Chairman's Introduction

It's my pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Report for 2016/17.

Those present at last years AGM may recall that no one was nominated for the position of chairman. At a subsequent committee meeting, the matter was discussed and it was agreed that I should take on the role of acting chairman for the next year. Your committee has held regular meetings during that time. Cllr John Barnes joined us and, I hope he agrees, has settled in well. I wish to take this opportunity to thank all my fellow committee members for their time and continuing commitment.

I think our activities throughout the year have been well documented in the newsletters; for ease of reference, they are summarised later in this annual account. Copies of our quarterly newsletters are available on the Twinning website (or will be shortly). On a strictly temporary basis, I continued to produce the newsletter and undertook to manage the membership database. These roles are 'up for grabs' as it were – please nominate yourself or ask someone else to nominate you for election at this year's AGM. By the way, if you could take any of the workload from the shoulders of committee members but don't particularly want to join the committee, you would, nevertheless, be most welcome!

As an organisation, it is well known that we have found it difficult to find new members. Our resources are limited and there isn't an overwhelming demand in and around Swanley. That said, we have seven new members, four Town councillors amongst them, and look forward to more joining this coming year. Swanley Town Council has provided us with some very welcome support and publicity opportunities – a chance to address the Town Meeting, a stand at the French Market and a showcase event in the Clocktower Pavilion. True, the response wasn't tremendous but we'll keep trying with the Council's support, assistance and encouragement.

Both our nations share similarities many of which are embedded in Europe. You can include the weather – though the weather in Verrières is generally warmer in summer than Swanley and colder in winter but with global warming that could all change! There are similarities between our towns historically and with the proximity of our Capital cities. Nationally, there are cultural and architectural similarities and differences.

However, during more than thirty years of friendship between our Twin towns, it's proved to be the people who have made it work, not the weather, not national or local politics. Whenever we meet, the atmosphere is genuinely friendly; we have a common purpose to enjoy our neighbours despite some cultural and political differences. Whenever a terrible terrorist attack occurs in Britain, France or elsewhere in the world, we all share the same shock, grief and disbelief.

What about the future? France has a new President, we have a General Election! We already have "Brexit" (wherever that will lead!). We both have the Trump effect (whatever that is!) so who knows what will happen in the future. Twinning worldwide is based on peace, friendship and cooperation - long may it continue!

Toujours, vive le Jumelage!

Roger Bryan.

Secretary's Report

It is with great pleasure that I present the 2016-2017 Annual General Report. This report is a reflection of the Swanley & District Twinning Association's achievements and its challenges from 1st April 2016 and is presented to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Monday, 12th June 2017.

With respect to the day-to-day functioning of the Swanley & District Twinning Association, members of the Executive Committee are chosen not only for their expertise and experience, but also for their dedication as well as resilience and commitment to the ideals of the association.

Every devoted effort to tackling the immediate challenges facing Swanley & District Twinning Association, particularly those that threaten to undermine sustainability of the organisation has been highlighted. New Membership number has improved slightly which is a true manifestation of the dedication, integrity and hard work of the Committee members and especially the Hosting Secretary. Strategic Engagement platform with the public e.g. 'French Market' and 'Discover France with Us' have been prepared and delivered through the tireless efforts of the Committee members. In this financial year, there have been initiatives to provide robust collaboration with local schools that may be interested in the principles of Swanley & District Twinning Association and to attract younger people to Twinning. There are no proposals to increase membership annual subscriptions (currently £10.00 for a family).

The following people were elected to the Executive Committee at the 2016 AGM or at the next committee meeting:

President:	The Mayor of Swanley (Established)
Chairman (Acting):	Roger Bryan
Treasurer:	Audrey Haynes
Secretary:	Brima Abibu
Membership Secretary:	Roger Bryan (Temporary)
Hosting Secretary:	Christine Hudson
Newsletter Editor:	Roger Bryan (Temporary)
Publicity:	Roger Bryan (Temporary)
Website & Facebook Manager:	Roger Bryan (Temporary)
Nominated Representative of Swanley Town Council:	John Barnes
Auditor -	TBC

Swanley & District Twinning Association has struggled financially but was able to work diligently to keep the organisation solvent. Our treasurer (Audrey Haynes), together with the Executive Committee has endeavoured to keep our books balanced. Various members have put in considerable effort to raise funds for the Association and we are grateful for their dedication.

As always, Rambles continue to be the most organised and popular event for many of our members. Their annual calendar of events is already out and regularly published in our Newsletters.

There is substantial need to encourage members to attend the Forum. However, this year the Annual May Exchange visit was very successful. The reception on Saturday 29th April 2017 went well.

The trip to Waddesdon Manor on Sunday, 30th April 2017 was successful and so was the 'Full English Breakfast' on Monday 1st May 2017, which was splendidly laid out and enjoyed by all. Moreover, the RUNGIS came back with good news and confident that they and their potential Twinners will now progress on as the groundwork has been done.

Our Newsletters have been sent electronically to members, thanks to Roger Bryan. The Association's website is undergoing a transformation and Roger is working hard to sustain a robust and modern website for Swanley & District Twinning.

Over the past year, several attempts on consultation to review our 'Service Level Agreement' with the Swanley Town Council remain deferred. Members of Swanley & District Twinning Association have worked diligently together to find the right balance between effective functioning and the support we receive from Swanley Town Council. As such, it is expected that this relationship will continue and flourish going forward.

Having completed more than five years as Honorary Secretary in March 2017, I continue to look forward to supporting and enhancing the work and profile of Swanley & District Twinning Association during my tenure and feel privileged to be part of this unique organisation. I am especially indebted to the members of the Executive Committee for their commendable dedication to the sustainability of Twinning. We still have room for new members on the Executive Committee if you would like to be part of this unique success story. My vision of Swanley & District Twinning Association is that of a 'Brighter Future' and I look forward to another fulfilling year ahead.

Brima Abibu, Secretary.



TREASURER'S REPORT

The Accounts and Summary for the year to 31st March 2017 are shown on the following two pages:

Swanley & District Twinning Association

Accounts to 31st March 2017

	<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>PAYMENTS</u>	<u>CR BALANCE</u>	<u>DR BALANCE</u>
<u>MAY VISIT 2016</u>				
English Receipts	£1,045.00	-	-	-
Euros	-	£1,056.98	-	-
Gifts for French	-	£124.81	-	-
	£1,045.00	£1,181.79	-	(£136.79)
<u>MEMBERSHIP FEES</u>	£290.00	-	£290.00	-
<u>SWANLEY TOWN COUNCIL</u>				
Grant received	£250.00	-	-	-
Refreshments - promotion	-	£4.75	-	-
Printing	-	£25.89	-	-
Insurance	-	£212.50	-	-
	£250.00	£243.14	£6.86	-
<u>COMMITTEE EXPENDITURE</u>				
Flowers - Mr & Mrs Stratford	-	£24.98	-	-
AGM - Refreshments	-	£18.85	-	-
AGM - Room Hire	-	£30.00	-	-
Royal British Legion – Poppy Wreath	-	£20.00	-	-
Grant - Mrs Hudson	-	£50.00	-	-
	£0.00	£143.83	-	(£143.83)
<u>SOCIAL COMMITTEE</u>				
Christmas Dinner at Castle Hotel	£591.00	£539.00	-	-
	£591.00	£539.00	£52.00	-
<u>FORUM DES ASSOCIATIONS</u>				
Ferry - Grant from Committee	-	£100.00	-	-
Travel Expenses	£93.36	£93.35	-	-
Refreshments	-	£19.30	-	-
Donations received	£44.92	-	-	-
	£138.28	£212.65	-	(£74.37)
<u>INTEREST RECEIVED</u>				
	£0.03	-	-	-
BALANCES	£2,314.31	£2,320.41	-	(£6.10)

Swanley & District Twinning Association

Accounts to 31st March 2017

	<u>CR</u>	<u>DR</u>	<u>BALANCE</u>
<u>BALANCES at 31st MARCH 2016</u>			
INCOME	£4,144.59	-	
EXPENDITURE	-	£4,212.87	(£68.28)
BANK & SAVINGS ACCOUNTS			
Business Premier Account	£101.77	-	
Community Account	£328.56	-	
National Savings *	£0.07	-	
		-	£430.40
<u>BALANCES at 31st MARCH 2017</u>			
INCOME	£2,314.31	-	
EXPENDITURE	-	£2,320.41	(£6.10)
BANK & SAVINGS ACCOUNTS			
Business Premier Account	£101.80	-	
Community Account	£322.43	-	
National Savings *	£0.07	-	
			£424.30
* Note: This account closed May 2011.			

Examiner's Certificate:

I have examined the Income and Expenditure of Swanley & District Twinning Association from the records given to me and I am satisfied the above accounts are in accordance with the information supplied.

Signed: Date:

The Exchange Weekend 2017 – the Chairman’s Breakfast Speech!

Addressed to the Mayor of Swanley, Madame President, ladies and gentlemen, friends – new and old, old and young - from Verrières le Buisson and Swanley and the representatives from Rungis.

We welcome all of you and are especially delighted to welcome the families and younger people for they could play a pivotal part in the future of Twinning. We hope you found the time shared, between hosts and guests, was the most enjoyable part and that you will all want to do it again.

We have been very fortunate with the weather, nevertheless, our annual exchange weekend always seems too short, never enough time to do everything but we hope you have been looked after well and have enjoyed the programme of the last couple of days. From the reception on Saturday, our trip to Waddesdon yesterday and this morning’s breakfast, all have passed smoothly. Huge thanks must go to Chrissy, our hosting secretary and diligent organiser.

Yesterday was an exceptional day. Waddesdon Manor was a revelation for me and, I imagine, to all those who hadn’t been before. It’s a magnificent manor house built in the style of a French Chateau, containing many unique treasures and works of art - a little like Chantilly but with exotic birds in an aviary instead of horses!

Twinning was founded on peace and friendship and, happily, it remains so; unfortunately, today’s generations have so many other distractions away from meeting and enjoying time with our culturally diverse neighbours in Europe. We shall continue to try to reverse that trend! Ours are not grand towns; they are not large, they are not famous, they are not known worldwide but we are two great towns with the special bond of Twinning for the past 32 years!

Thank you to the Mayor of Swanley and to Swanley Town Council for your continuing support and to everyone involved this weekend; thank you. Good health and happiness for the future and long live our friendships and Twinning!

Roger Bryan.

PS. Chrissy, in particular, has given a helping hand to the town of Rungis in their bid to find a suitable twin town in England. The news is that the initial discussions between Rungis and Stansted Mountfitchet in Essex were positive!



The Exchange Weekend 2017

A review by Christine Hudson.

“Another lovely weekend – I’m so glad it went well” My thoughts as we waved goodbye to our French friends at Ebbsfleet on Bank Holiday Monday, after that superb Breakfast together at the Alexandra Suite.

My role as Hosting Secretary was rather challenging this year as we welcomed so many new folk to Swanley – we had 2 new families to accommodate – each with 3 children – and 2 new couples, not to mention our visitors from Rungis who were here to explore the possibility of a new Twinning exchange with Stansted Mountfitchet in Essex.



I am very grateful for all the help I received from our Chairman, Roger, and our Treasurer, Audrey, in putting another successful weekend together for our visitors.

Waddesdon Manor was wonderful – the vista down the avenue to those massive “candlesticks” made up of empty Chateau Lafitte bottles was such a surprise. There was so much to delight in inside and the Italian chandelier made up of broken crockery and cutlery was such fun and was captured on several cameras in our party! Our large party at lunchtime was obviously a challenge for them, but when the food did arrive it was good and we still had time to wander the gardens outside afterwards before our journey home.

There was a little more time in a more relaxed programme this year to spend with our guests in a family setting and I know the various get-togethers in several homes on both Saturday and Sunday evening were enjoyed.

I hope the folk from Rungis got a taste of what twinning means to us. We rejoiced with them on Monday morning to learn that their reconnoitre and meetings at Stansted had gone well, and we look forward to helping them in any way we can to make the new “Jumelage” a successful reality.

Christine Hudson

The Exchange Weekend 2017

An encouraging letter received from Verrières le Buisson.

First time in Swanley, what a magnificent experience...!

Last weekend of April, taking the Eurostar from Paris to Ebbsfleet. The five of us, my wife Florence and our three boys, Tanguy, Jonathan and Marco, are awaiting our visit to Swanley. After a warm welcome at the railway station, we went off to the City Hall for the first exchange with the hosting families and what an honour to meet the town mayor, Mr. Laurence Ball in person!

We stayed with the Abibu family and in the evening we enjoyed a five star dinner, during which we talked a lot and exchanged our experiences between French and English (and Sierra Leone) culture. Both adults and children spend a wonderful evening and our hosts were more than generous with us.

Next morning, we took off on a specially chartered coach with great number of our hosting families to visit one of the remaining of French luxury in Kent, the splendid Waddesdon Manor - part of the National Trust - and it's great variety of art and historical contents.

After a very interesting visit, guided by audio phones in both French and English languages, the stomachs were really feeling empty and a very appetizing lunch was shared in the ancient kitchens of the Manor.

The afternoon, we spent visiting the gardens and its art statues. Thereafter we took off again by coach to join Swanley.



After again and excellent meal with our hosting family (Rose achieved culinary miracles!), we had a good and well-deserved night's sleep.

Sunday morning, the Twinning association organised a full English breakfast (a real delight!), and Mr. Mayor honoured us again by his presence.

Several speeches, showing the mutual attachment, respect and joyfulness of French and English participants of the Twinning association, closed this weekend, full of cultural, and human exchange within a really friendly and benevolent atmosphere.

After having said 'goodbye & till next year' to our hosting families, the French participants took of on the Eurostar, their minds full of joyful and precious memories. 'Brexit' is not yet for tomorrow since these human exchanges at local level are really rich and interesting for both parties.

We hope seeing you in great numbers next year in Verrières le Buisson, a big compliment for the weekend's outstanding organisation by the Twinning association and many thanks to the hosting families for their kind and most generous welcome!

I would like to thank especially Brima, Rose and James, who made our stay unforgettable. One weekend has been enough to create a mutual understanding and appreciation, and e-mail addresses and phone numbers have been exchanged to follow up this initial coming together.

Long life to the Twinning association, and do not hesitate to participate next year to this very worthy, human and cultural experience!

Merci et au revoir from Erik Feenstra & family, first time Twinning participants.

Thanks so much to the Twinning association and it's members and to our hosting family Brima & Rose who have been lovely and caretaking all weekend long!

Regards from Erik Feenstra.

The Exchange Weekend 2017

And another letter from Verrières!

Jean-Louis Fromant gave me your email address. So I can send you this message.

First of all, my wife Agnès and I we thank you very much for having received us in your house with Jean-Louis and Dominique Fromant. It was very kind of you and we were very pleased to be with you.

You told me you wanted I wrote my impressions because it was the first time I went in Swanley with the twinning Swanley/Verrières-le-Buisson. Here are my feelings.

We truly enjoyed this stay for several reasons. From the chronological point of view, we had the opportunity to know new people from Verrières-le-Buisson we would not have met in other circumstances. We could appreciate the travel with EUROSTAR, for the first time for my wife and only the second time for me. It's comfortable, fast and not too expensive.

It was easy to meet together, English and French, in Ebbsfleet station and to go from there to Swanley. After the reception in Swanley was nice. And we discovered Chrissy's pretty house where we had a very good diner. Personally I understood only nearly 80 % of the interesting conversation between Chrissy, Patricia from Rungis, Jean-Louis, Dominique.

But it's not too bad, I think. I'll do better next time. After a good night, we had the chance to have a good weather on Sunday. We visited with great pleasure Waddesdon Manor whose collections of furniture, paintings... are marvellous.

Then the second dinner and the second night in Chrissy's house were as good as the first ones. On Monday we appreciate a lot the English breakfast we had before going to Ebbsfleet station to take the EUROSTAR. On our return everything was OK. I hope I'll see again people of Swanley, in France or in England.

We thank you again, Chrissy. See you soon.

Pierre Sabatier

A Summary of the Monthly Rambles:

Brief reports for each of the Rambles with some photos have been published in the quarterly Newsletters and are/will be available on the Twinning website:

- April - The Bluebell Walk at Linton
- May – Otford
- June - Shoreham
- July - Farningham
- August - Cobham
- September - Reculver Country Park
- October - Swanley Village
- November - Whitechapel
- December - The Boxing Day Walk
- January 2017 - Gravesend Riverside
- February – Halstead
- March - High Elms Country Park/Cudham

Similarly, the following Social and Civic events have been reported in the Newsletters:

- August - Liz Adams' 90th birthday
- August – Twinning Reunion Lunch
- September - Forum des Associations
- September - A Moules/Frites Evening
- November – Remembrance Day
- December – Members' Christmas Dinner
- January – The Mayor's Visit to Verrières le Buisson.

Roger Bryan

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee wishes to thank all those who have contributed to the production of this Annual Report and the members and friends who have made it possible.

Roger Bryan – Chairman

Audrey Haynes – Treasurer

Brima Abibu – Secretary

Christine Hudson – Hosting Secretary

Erik Feenstra

Pierre Sabatier

Rod Sharman

Jim Dunn

All our friends on both sides of the Channel



Keep up to date with news on our website:
<http://www.swanleytwinning.org.uk>

The website of Verrières-le-Buisson is: www.mairie-verrieres-91.fr

Join Facebook and follow us at: Swanley & District Twinning Association

