

## Ware Town Twinning Association - Chairman's Report 2024

Another year has passed and so it is time for me once again to report to you what has been happening on the Town Twinning front since this time in 2023.

At that AGM I was unable to welcome in person our newly appointed Town Councillor representative, Councillor Kirsty Taylor-Moran, who had another commitment. I should like to place on record our welcome to her at subsequent Committee meetings and on our trip to Cormeilles. More of that later!

You may recall that, at the end of my last report, I gave advance notice of our next event which was to take place in July when we were looking forward to hosting and entertaining a group of visitors from Wulfrath, including their recently elected Chairman, Otto Schickenberg.

The majority of the group, including Otto, had not visited Ware before. I am pleased to be able to tell you that this visit took place as planned and was enjoyed by all – Germans and English. At this point I should like to thank those of you who were able to host our visitors, particularly the family who acquired additional unexpected visitors – there was a problem with their hotel accommodation – and they were kindly offered a change of accommodation. Apart from that little blip the weekend went extremely well.

Our friends arrived on Friday evening, which they spent with their hosts. On Saturday we showed them around Ware, where they enjoyed some shopping, and the day ended with entertainment and a fish and chip supper at Place House. On Sunday, after visiting Scotts Grotto, they all enjoyed an excellent traditional English roast dinner at The Star in Standon, before departing for home.

During the year we were sorry to hear that, due to business commitments, Otto is standing down as Chairman of Wulfrath Twinning organisations. We have not as yet heard of his replacement.

At the beginning of July we had a stall on Carnival Day, which, although it generated some interest, did not result in any new members. I should like to thank Bernadine who, for various reasons, spent the greater part of the afternoon manning the stall on her own.

We were able, once again, to field a full team for the Weihnachtsmarkt in Wulfrath. Janet and Barry were responsible for organizing the teams, co-ordinating supplies both here and in Germany, and I don't know what we would do without them. As reported last year, the Market is back to normal and our stall was well patronised. Unfortunately, although it was a successful market and takings were good, the profit was not as much as we would have liked, owing, mainly, to the increase in travelling costs, although this was minimised by car

sharing. As you know, profit from the Market is our principal source of the income which enables us to support other Town Twinning events.

At the same time as our volunteers were at the Market, Chris Smith and Belinda Martin once again took on the task of providing and decorating a Town Twinning Christmas tree at the Leaside Christmas Tree Festival, which coincides with Dickensian Evening. Thank you Chris and Belinda for doing this.

Early in March this year Ware was invited by Cormeilles-en-Parisis for a weekend visit to include the formal re-signing of the Pledge of Friendship between our two towns. Unfortunately I was not able to attend, but, by all accounts, it was some weekend!

The hospitality was lavish and the weekend was so busy and interesting, including a hard-hat visit to a Town Council inspired initiative Seine-side development with luxury apartments, restaurants, marina and riverside promenades. The rest of the day included further experiences, a buffet lunch and superb dinner. Sunday saw the formal re-signing event between the Mayor of Cormeilles, Yannick Boedec and the Mayor of Ware, Cllr Tom Day – who gave his speech entirely in French, followed by a buffet lunch and departure for home.

This visit was well attended by Twinners and Councillors alike. Our Council representative, Kirsty Taylor-Moran was there together with the Mayor, several councillors, Town Clerk Terry Philpott and Council Officer Kerry Mavris. The Mayor, together with Cllr Graeme Hill, Town Clerk Terry Philpott and Kerry Mavris cycled back from Cormeilles despite adverse weather and difficult terrain. I did hear that French roads are better for cyclists than our own roads. I believe the Mayor was sponsored for his cycling as part of fund-raising for his charity, Citizens Advice.

At Easter Wulfrath swimming club visited Ware for the annual gala. There was an excellent report on this in the magazine Village Life, which covers the villages immediately to the north of Ware. The format has now returned to normal with a straight competition between Ware and Wulfrath. There were some close fought races, but ultimately Ware won with 172 points to 137. Wulfrath have already invited Ware Swimming Club to visit them for the 2025 gala. 2024 marks the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of both Ware Priory Lido and Ware Swimming Club. To commemorate this a photoshoot took place at the pool with Wulfrath Swimming Club, although the Gala itself took place at Chauncy pool.

In addition to the Gala, the visitors had a very interesting and busy weekend. They visited the London Aquatic Centre to watch some heats of the British Swimming championships and were lucky enough to see Adam Peaty swim 100 metres breaststroke in 57.94 seconds.

Not strictly Town Twinning, but, at the end of April, 40 students from Cormeilles were in Ware for one day. They visited the Museum, where I welcomed them on behalf of Town Twinning. John Wing gave an introductory talk and a tour of the Priory. The remainder of the day they spent at Chauncy School. This visit to Ware and the school had been co-ordinated by Chauncy language teacher Mandy Ambridge to whom we are very grateful. Mandy is an enthusiast for twinning and young people's exchange visits.

We have realised that it is the turn of Ware to host the re-signing of the Pledge of Friendship in 2025. With this in mind, Terry Philpott, Town Clerk, suggested that we set up a joint working group to establish the basic structure of the weekend. The group consists of Terry, 2023 Town Mayor, Cllr. Tom Day, Cllr. Kirsty Taylor-Moran and, on behalf of Town Twinning, Janet Parkin and me. We have had a meeting and it was agreed that Ware should invite Wulfrath for Carnival Weekend in 2025.

I think that is all for now. I hope I haven't omitted anything vital, and once more, my thanks to all those who have helped in any way.

Phyllis Ballam

Chairman

2024

