

Town Twinning Annual Report 2026

Another year has somehow slipped by and it is time for me to report on our activities since this time last year.

The first event in September last year was a visit to Ware by a small group of our Town Twinning friends from Corneilles. They wished to stay at the Premier Inn , and were greeted and welcomed there by John Sharples, Christine Smith and me. Christine then hosted a traditional afternoon tea. In the evening we had an enjoyable meal at the Neelakash. As the weather was somewhat unsettled, we had hoped for the best and arranged a visit to the Henry More Studio and Gardens. Fate was on our side and it was a really beautiful, warm and sunny day. I did not go to this, but I have been there several times and seeing his statues in that idyllic setting is a wonderful experience. Some years ago we had taken our friends from Wulfrath there. Our visitors had free time in the afternoon to browse and shop in Ware. In the evening Bernadine kindly hosted a Fish and Chips Supper. Sunday morning was free for our visitors and we had a delicious lunch at Belinda's before our friends departed early in the afternoon. I should like to express my thanks to all who helped us that weekend and especially to the ladies who hosted events. I wish I could have done more to help.

I now come to something that did not happen. You may recall that I reported on a Wine Tasting Evening and said that the committee would be considering repeating this. Whilst the evening had proved popular, enjoyable and financially successful, the committee was disappointed in that none of the attendees had expressed any interest in Town Twinning or membership. Organising such an event is quite involved and, as the committee did not feel the need for fund raising, it was agreed not to go ahead.

In December, once again thanks to Christine and Belinda, we entered a Town Twinning tree in the Leaside Christmas Tree Festival. Getting the tree, setting up and decorating always falls to these two stalwarts as some other committee members are in Wulfrath for the Weihnachtsmarkt.

This leads on naturally to a report on the Christmas Market in Wulfrath. For some years Janet has gathered together two teams to attend the Market and work on our stall there – actually a hut. Janet liaises with our German friend, Peter, who is veery helpful in buying our alcohol. Janet also sources and buys the English items which she takes to the Market. These vary, but include packets of shortbread, which have proved to be very popular, and small flags. After taking a couple of years to get back to normal after covid, the Market is in full swing. Working on our stall is tiring but enjoyable and German people like to go to the stall to speak to those working on it. Many Germans, of all ages, have been to Ware at some stage in their lives because of the annual

swimming gala. Over the years the stall has changed significantly. It started as a sherry stall but now has a variety of drinks, including coffee. This is good, because the German police are very hot on their drink drive laws, in past years car drivers dared not even sample our alcohol. The success of each year's Market depends to an extent on the weather. Our team last December had mixed weather but our stall was financially successful. This is important to us, because the profit from the Market is our main source of income, which enables us to pay for our activities and give grants to organisations such as the Swimming Club. Without Janet organising the teams, this would not happen.

Another natural progression, this year the 50th annual Swimming Gala took place in Ware – thankfully the former Fanshawe pool was available – on a very hot day just after Easter. Our then Mayor, Cllr. Graeme Hill, attended and said a few words, Christine and I were also there.. We all left at the same time, about halfway through. The competition was terrific. When we left Ware were ahead by a tiny margin, but they won with a bigger majority. Congratulations to all!

During the year Ware was approached by a small town/village in Spain which expressed a wish for twinning with us. It appeared to be an extremely small place with no matching features and they had possibly contacted us because of Ware's convenient nearness to Stansted Airport. We declined the invitation and informed the Town Council accordingly.

At this meeting last year we discussed subscriptions. The committee has discussed this further and the item is on our agenda this evening.

We have a website which was set up and managed for us, by Ron Baber. He no longer wishes to do this, we need someone to take on this task. Your committee thank Ron for his help with this. Please do let us know if you have the necessary skills and are willing to do this. Once again, many thanks to Ron.

We are pleased to tell you that the Town Council has arranged for the re-signing of the Pledge of Friendship with Cormeilles-en-Parisis to take place here over Carnival weekend. Report on this at next year's AGM.

Finally, may I repeat my thanks to all the committee members and friends who have worked so hard throughout the year. One I have not named is James Jarvis who keeps us in line with his meeting minutes and agendas. Thankkyou all.

Phyllis Ballam

June 2026.