

ROMSEY TWINNING



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2025

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Welcome to the Summer edition of the Romsey Twinning Newsletter

This bumper edition includes accounts not only of Twinning visits to Paimpol and from Treviglio, but also opportunities enjoyed for nurturing friendships both near and far. Highlights include a trip to the Festival du Chant du Marin by our chair, Roland Matthews, which happened to coincide with the 65th anniversary of our link with Paimpol.

We hope you enjoy what you read here. This is your newsletter too, so we would welcome feedback and suggestions for other topics and articles we could include. The next edition will appear at Christmas. Please send contributions to romseytwinning@gmail.com.

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Visit by our friends from Treviglio, 27th February – 3rd March

In the spring, we were pleased to welcome a group of 10 visitors from Treviglio. Arriving in beautiful sunshine on Thursday February 27th, they enjoyed a packed programme of activities.



On Friday, they went on private visits to a variety of well-known locations in the area, including Stonehenge, Salisbury and the Purbecks.



The evening saw a more relaxed, albeit slightly daunting, prospect of an Anglo-Italian quiz held at the Nightingale pub in Romsey. On the Saturday we gathered as a group to visit the Roman Palace at Fishbourne, followed by a guided tour of Chichester.



Our traditional leaving dinner was held on the Sunday evening at the Mortimer Arms in Ower. About 30 people gathered to enjoy local food and to reflect on what they had done over the weekend. In his speech,



Gian Battista Scrivanti, leader of the “Amici di Romsey”, made the following observations: “It is our responsibility to remind people that town twinning is not just about ceremonial visits or formal agreements. It is about real human connections. It is about the friendships that are formed, the experiences that are shared and the lessons that are learned in a world where misunderstandings

often lead to conflict. These connections are more crucial than ever.”

On the last day our guests were invited to a civic reception at the Town Hall, hosted by Romsey Mayor Cllr John Parker who is of course our Treasurer.

Phil Thomas



Romsey visit to Paimpol 22nd – 26th May

A group of 15 Romsey twinnings took the early ferry from Portsmouth for our visit to Paimpol, 4 of them joining for the first time. We were met at Caen-Ouistreham by our friends in the municipal minibuses for our transfer to Brittany, where we were greeted on arrival by other Romsonians who had travelled independently, and our friendly hosts.

A relaxing evening with hosts after the early start was welcome, and on Friday morning we reconvened at La Vallée des Saints for the first group visit. The [Vallée des Saints](#) is an evolving art installation near Carnoët (Brittany), which currently has 190 statues of predominantly Celtic



saints. The project was started in 2008 and aims to have 1000 statues once completed, and sculptors create these works of art from granite on site.

After lunch, twinnings and hosts visited the site at

leisure in glorious sunshine. There was certainly plenty to learn and it's quite a novel place to visit. Friday evening was spent with hosts, many families teaming up to share meals together.



Saturday was a free morning, followed by a range of optional activities including a guided tour of Paimpol, and an outing to the Chateau de la Roche Jagu, a medieval castle with beautiful gardens overlooking the River Trieux.



Rendezvous at the town hall at 5.30 for the traditional 'Pot d'amitié' (Welcome drink), where we were welcomed by Mme Fanny Chappé, the town's mayor, alongside representatives of



Paimpol's other twin towns Vermilion (USA) and Grundarfjörð (Iceland). Warm words of friendship were exchanged by Jean Luc Glory and Roland Matthews, respectively Chairs of twinning in Paimpol and Romsey.



Formalities concluded, a short walk across the road to the Salle Feutren where a delicious meal had been prepared by a member of their committee. As always there was lots of fun and laughter shared amongst the group, and after a final distribution of the washing up, everyone headed home.

The Sunday morning group visit was to the Moulin du Craca, a restored windmill on the Route des Falaises just outside Paimpol. Enthusiastic volunteers showed us the windmill and explained its importance in the local area. A more beautiful spot would be hard to find, overlooking



the Ile de Bréhat and the rugged coast.



The remainder of the day was spent with hosts, with some hardy souls being treated to an initiation into 'longe-côte', a sport involving walking in the sea along with other exercises. It was great fun and the sea was lovely!

A final farewell at Paimpol railway station on Monday morning was our last appointment, with lots of memories to bring home to Romsey and promises to meet again soon.

Karen Bolton

A personal recollection...



Tessa and I first met Fanny Chappé (Mayor of Paimpol) and her family when she came over with the Paimpol twinningers in 2024. I was Mayor of Romsey at that time so treated our visitors to a tour of the Town Hall, dressed in my full ceremonial robes. You may recall the drawing of me that the Mayor's daughter, Clementine, drew during our celebration dinner. It was published in our Summer 2024 newsletter.

Although, by the time of our recent visit to Paimpol, I had just passed over the mayoralty, I was treated as though I still was in post. This included Tessa and me being invited, along with our hosts Hartmuth and Sylvie Barché to have dinner with Fanny and her family at her home.

Her daughters, Clementine and Lilas - aged about 7 and 5, ate separately and were then dispatched to bed. Fabien, Fanny's husband,

cooked galette for us (what else?) served with a local but unusual drink of fermented milk, lait ribot – a slightly acquired taste.

Of course, knowing my interests, the conversation included politics. Fanny was born in Paimpol but moved to Lannion (about 35 minutes) and the family home is there. However, Fanny stood for election in 2020 in her birth town of Paimpol as a socialist not expecting to win. The smart bets were on Jean-Yves de Chaisemartin (centre right) being returned for a third consecutive term. Fanny won by 60 votes. This has resulted in some complex family arrangements with the family renting a house on the outskirts of Paimpol while Fabien commutes to Lannion as an elected councillor there.

One of the benefits from twinning, as we do it, is that you get to experience local family life rather than the tourist experience of hotels and restaurants. Long may it continue.

John Parker

65, but a long way from retirement



By a happy coincidence our decision to go to the Festival du Chant de Marin this year meant that we could be in Paimpol for the exact 65th anniversary of the Romsey-Paimpol twinning, a Friendship Pact having been signed by the two town mayors on 6 August 1960. The date was just two days before the start of the Festival, which meant that Jean-Luc Glory (Président of Paimpol Twinning) had his mind on far weightier matters, as mentioned later in the newsletter. I managed to grab him for a few seconds to take this picture in honour of the occasion. (I am holding our copy of the original agreement.) I am very grateful to Jean-Luc for sparing us this moment at such a busy time. It's all the more gratifying to have this record when we remember that the 60th anniversary had to pass unobserved because of the pandemic.

Roland Matthews

Battenberg

We are sorry to report that we are no longer going to be welcoming our friends from Battenberg for their visit from 12th to 15th September, which has been cancelled owing to a lack of numbers on their side.

Debbie Evenhand

Website

The website has been up and running for almost a year now, and we hope you have enjoyed seeing how it is evolving. If you still haven't had chance, www.romseytwinning.org.uk is the address you need.

Please remember that it is **your** website too, so it would be great to hear from you with suggestions about what else you would like to see on it. We'd also really appreciate photographs of your travels if you have the chance to visit the respective areas outside our official twinning visits.

You can send your contributions to romseytwinning@gmail.com – photographs are better sent in a high resolution.

Please note that the Photo Archive in the Member's Area is currently being reorganised, so you may not be able to see all items at the moment. Do keep checking back if there is a particular folder you want to see.

Celebrating Ukraine's Independence Day

Members of the local Ukrainian community have issued an open invitation to help them celebrate Ukraine's Independence Day on **Sunday 24 August in the War Memorial Park**. Ukraine's national day is a public holiday in the country and marks the date when, on 24 August 1991, the country's Declaration of Independence was issued following the fall of the Soviet Union. The focus of the celebrations will be a programme of live music on the Bandstand performed by refugee Ukrainian musicians and singers who have been forced to flee their country after Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

As well as the music, which will feature Ukrainian melodies, folk songs and singers in traditional dress, there will be displays of Ukrainian arts

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and crafts, activities for children, and traditional Ukrainian foods on offer. The event is free and open to all, and funds raised through donations will go towards buying medical supplies for Ukraine.



Beyond Twinning

Twinning has helped to create and develop many friendships over the years, both in our twin towns and locally. Some of us were lucky enough to be able to visit both Romsey Twinning members and friends from Treviglio and Paimpol outside 'formal' visits this summer.

The Evenhands were on holiday in Roquebrune Cap Martin near Menton, so on our vanventure this June we were invited to call in and spend a couple of days with them. We had fun exploring parts of the town even they hadn't seen before, as well as being treated to some delicious local food.

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Our friendship with Treviglio dates back to the school exchange between Romsey School and Liceo Simone Weil, so we were delighted when Patrizia Martini and Massimo Borelli invited us to their holiday house in the hills above Finale Ligure. We had to park our van

in a nearby village as the roads up to the hamlet were a bit tricky, but it was perfectly safe in the town car park. We spent a lovely weekend exploring the area with them, visiting the medieval town of Finalborgo and walking up to the Cascade delle Libellule Blu.

When the same friends, along with Gian Battista Scrivanti and Maria Pia Bornaghi, came to the London area to dog sit for other twinning friends, we joined them again for a typical Sunday pub lunch at Shepperton.

Karen Bolton



Paimpol's glory days as a fishing port may be in the past but the connections with its rich maritime heritage remain as strong as ever, and nowhere more so than at the town's Festival du Chant de Marin, or Sea Shanty Festival. Held every two years since 1989 (except for 2021 when Covid ruled it out), this mid-summer extravaganza serves up a heady mix of seafaring culture and music from a whole host of genres and traditions. In the process a usually quiet and easy-going little coastal town of some 10,000 inhabitants welcomes an audience estimated to reach 170,000 over the Festival's three days, making it now the third largest festival in Brittany.

Having had no lack of encouragement from our Paimpol friends over the years Julie and I decided to take the plunge this summer and experience the Festival for ourselves. The hype was fully justified! We had a wonderful few days immersing ourselves in the sights and sounds of the harbour, crammed with over 200 boats from far and near (even this was a lower number than normal as tidal conditions meant that some of the larger boats were unable to enter the harbour). Pride of place was given to the *bateaux du patrimoine*, the heritage boats: wooden-hulled sailing ships such as the Ruth and the Nébuleuse which had plied the waters of the Brittany and Normandy coasts as working cargo boats. Their arrival

and entry through the harbour gates on the eve of the Festival was one



of the highlights of the weekend. And it was all overseen with admirable sang-froid by our own good friend, Jean-Luc Glory, Président of Paimpol Twinning and my opposite number, who had the unenviable task of ensuring safe moorings for all the boats.

Even Jean-Luc's nerves were strained, though, when the Nao Santa Maria, a 2018 replica from Spain of Columbus's flagship for his 1492 expedition to the Americas, entered port. We watching spectators all assumed that, as the star exhibit on display, its arrival at the end had been planned deliberately to produce a grand finale, whereas it turns out it had been delayed and was supposed to have arrived that morning. So consider one of those tight manoeuvres into a supermarket parking spot, and then imagine doing the equivalent with a wide-beamed 28-metre three-master! Jean-Luc was on board for the docking and whilst his nerves may have been well and truly frayed he told us afterwards that the captain remained as cool as a cucumber throughout.

The assembled boats with their flags and pennants provided a colourful backdrop to a non-stop programme of performances on the quaysides and on five specially built stages, including a *bateau-scène* on a boat itself. There were live bands, choirs, dancers, and all kinds of weird and wonderful street theatre. Sea shanties were a key element of course and included The Silver Darlings from Southend-on-Sea! Breton music and dance featured prominently as well; one of the headliners on the main stage was Alain Stivell, a legend of Breton and Celtic music and, at 81, a formidable performer still. Other big names to feature were Canadian francophone singer Linda Lemay (this edition of the Festival had a special focus on Quebec) and Malian superstar Fatoumata Diawara.



Paimpol is rightly proud of its biennial festival, an extraordinary feat of



organisation which is estimated to benefit the local economy to the tune of 10 million Euros. It is a festival built not only on the goodwill and enthusiasm of its citizens but also on their hard work; 2,100 local volunteers were involved this time, in jobs ranging from ticket sales, entry checks and parking control to catering and waste management. The French have an excellent arrangement whereby the surplus from the Festival is divided up amongst the local associations taking part, depending on the number of volunteer-hours each association offers. The Comité de

Jumelage (Paimpol's twinning association) has been involved in the Festival for several years on this basis; this time Romsey twinningers would have seen several familiar faces doing a brisk trade serving fish and chips to hungry festivalgoers (excellent – I sampled them!). The twinning team had a four- or five-hour *vacation* (shift) on each of the three days, their final one being the last one of all, from 9pm to 1am on the Sunday night. We had to leave Paimpol before this so don't know how it went but it certainly doesn't sound anything like a 'vacation'!

Roland Matthews

Calling all Quizzers - Quiz Night is back!

Our ever popular Quiz Night is back on **Saturday 4 October!**

It will be held in the Crosfield Hall Annexe, starting at 7.30pm.

Once again we are fortunate to have secured the services of our former Chair, Mike Bull, who will have devised a set of entertaining and challenging questions and will oversee proceedings with his customary aplomb. Non-members are always very welcome to this event so please spread the word to your quizzing friends. You can come with your own team of 6, or else teams will be made up on the night. You will find full details on the flyer and booking forms via the links on the Home page of our website: www.romseytwinning.org.uk

This is the association's main fundraiser in the year so we want to see a full house!

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Diary Dates

- 24 August** Ukraine Independence Day celebration. Memorial Park, Romsey 1 – 5pm
- 24 September** Annual General Meeting. Age Concern Hall, Linden Road, Romsey 7pm
- 4 October** Quiz Night. Crosfield Hall Annexe, Romsey 7.30pm