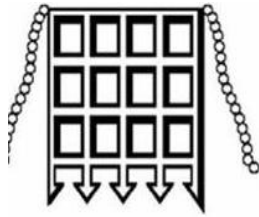


# ROMSEY TWINNING



## NEWSLETTER

*Christmas 2024*

[www.romseytwinning.org.uk](http://www.romseytwinning.org.uk)

### Welcome

to the Christmas edition of the Romsey Twinning Newsletter in which we look back on the past year and forward to what we hope will be a busy and enjoyable 2025. This edition features a report on our autumn visit to Battenberg as well as an absorbing account by a Romsey resident in which she describes a journey to trace ancestral links in the area around Paimpol. I hope you enjoy reading these and the other items. With all good wishes for a happy Christmas and a peaceful and fulfilling New Year.

*Roland Matthews, Chairman*



## September social event

On a fortunately bright and dry mid-September morning, we held an informal get-together in Romsey Memorial Park. We met at the Park Café for coffee, cake and chat and it was good to welcome both old and new members as well as some committee members, partners and family. It was a very pleasant morning, as well as being an opportunity to publicise Romsey Twinning to other Park users who saw our banner. We hope to run this event again in the spring, and will look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. Check the [website](#) where the date will be published in the new year.

*Judy Phillips, Secretary*

## Paimpol

It will be Romsey's turn to visit Paimpol in 2025, dates for which are currently under discussion. We hope to be able to provide further information in the New Year.

*Karen Bolton*

## Treviglio

We await the visit of our friends from Treviglio in the New Year. They will be arriving on 27<sup>th</sup> February and staying until 3<sup>rd</sup> March. The full programme for the visit will be available from Phil Thomas in due course.



## Battenberg

Romsey Twinning visit to Battenberg, Friday 4<sup>th</sup> to Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October

The pandemic had intervened to make it a gap of 5 years between visits for Romsey Twinning to its twin town of Battenberg in the Hessen region of Germany.

After an early but not uncomfortable start from Southampton Parkway Airport on Friday morning, the group left for Battenberg via Schiphol airport and were collected from Frankfurt Airport in the twin town's 'Bürgerbus', arriving early enough in the afternoon to enjoy traditional 'Kaffee und Kuchen' (coffee & cake) with their hosts, or a stroll around the town.

A full day's programme was organised for Saturday in the nearby town of Frankenberg. The day began with an organ recital in the Liebfrauenkirche, followed by a tour led by an energetic and fearless guide who led us up the church tower to the internal space between the roof and ceiling of the church. The tour included a walk around the



upper parapet of the spire – people must have been a lot smaller in those days and there were some narrow squeezes at some points!



We were lucky enough to be able to enjoy a picnic in the sunshine on the Burgberg and then met up at the historical Rathaus (Town Hall) in Frankenberg for a tour of the city walls. We were taken to the 'Witches Tower', from where we had excellent views of the town and surrounding countryside, including a distant view of Battenberg.



The remainder of the afternoon was spent with hosts – some people continued with their promenade around Frankenberg, others went to the agricultural fair at Battenfeld where they were treated to a mini Romsey show, encountering the strange looking Zebe Caucasian cows. A number of members enjoyed family celebrations, reminiscing over the years of their contact with our Battenberg friends.

The evening was spent with hosts, some meeting up with other families to enjoy Oktoberfest at home, others at the Alt Battenberg Gasthof for a restaurant meal.

On Sunday morning the group assembled at the newly renovated Town Hall as guests of the Bürgermeister, Christian Klein. The day was spent with hosts with visits to the Edelstein Schleiferei near Bad Wildungen, Schloss Braunfels near Wetzlar and the Botanical Gardens in Marburg.



We all enjoyed our final group dinner on Sunday evening at the magnificent Sauerländer Hof in Hallenberg before our return to Romsey on Monday morning.



*Debbie Evenhand*

### Website

Our twinning website has been running for some months now and we hope you are enjoying browsing it. We continue to make adjustments as necessary, adding photos from recent visits to Battenberg and other twinning news. We are really proud of how it looks and are keen to hear your views. Are there any areas we have missed that you would like to see? Do you have any photos of past visits or events we might be able to include? Please send any items to [romseytwinning@gmail.com](mailto:romseytwinning@gmail.com)

*Karen Bolton*

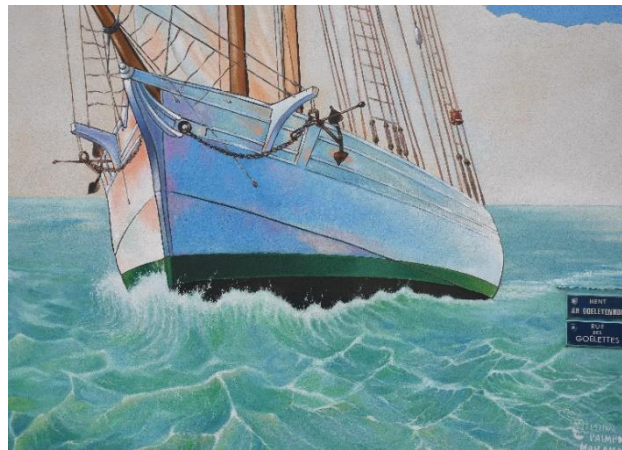


**In August I was fortunate enough to meet Sally Whatmore, a Romsey resident, who was keen to share her memories of an enjoyable trip to Paimpol in June 2022.**

A few memories from a visit to Paimpol en route to Perros-Guirec for our Brittany holiday.

Having taken the overnight ferry from Portsmouth to St. Malo, we had an early start on virtually traffic free roads, we stopped off at a delightful little town, for the first of many tasty breakfasts of fresh croissants and coffee – now we were truly on holiday.

Back on the road we took a leisurely drive through the beautiful countryside of Brittany, arriving in Paimpol just late morning. Parking was a bit of a challenge, but we managed to squeeze into a slot in a semi-circular carpark, in the Reu des Goellets; opposite the car was an amazing huge mural on the side of a house of a sailing ship.



We walked through an arch onto the quayside where many choices of restaurant and bistros for coffee, we sat and watched a group of 22 folk enjoying a celebratory lunch and the sight of their food was mouthwatering.



After coffee we strolled around the harbour, where Ian was in his



element with his camera...

Next, we strolled through the town, enjoying the variety of shops, including an eye-catching display of a pink anorak, displayed on a mannequin but with the very unusual sight of a large head of a seagull! We walked through the town and all the interesting little side roads, finally selecting a bistro close to the square for our long leisurely lunch. As always, the warmth and friendliness of the Breton people were charming.





## Family tree research

In subsequent conversation with Sally, she explained that her family came from the area around Guingamp, not far from Paimpol. She was kind enough to share the story of her trip to find out more details with her cousin. Here is a precis version of her story...


“Our journey began in St. Brandan, a small hamlet in Brittany, where our grandfather Charles Marie Dutertre was born on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1888.

Neither my cousin nor I had been to St. Brandan before and this visit had been planned for a long time. The journey took about 90 minutes, through beautiful Brittany countryside and had it not been for the Satnav telling us we had arrived at our destination, we would not have known, as there were no signposts. There were a few very modern houses being built in a field, but that obviously was not the area we were looking for. We carried on towards the church, where we parked up and had a stroll around. All was silent, nobody to see and the few houses were all locked up. We walked slowly around the church and looked at the war memorial; my cousin Jenny pointed out the first name on the list of those that had died during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War; it was Le Mercier, my maiden name, which was truly a surprise/ After that we went down some steps towards a group of houses, all constructed from granite, very much like the old farmhouses in Jersey; the whole atmosphere seemed surreal. Jenny and I sat in the sunshine on a bench, talking about my few memories of Papi.



Directly opposite the front of the church was a comparatively new building which was the Mairie (Town Hall). Jenny suggested that we could go in to ask if they had any records dating back to 1888; however it was 11.45am and we knew that they would shut at midday. So, together with our partners Ian and Clive, we walked across the road and rang the bell to be let in. It was a squash in the small lobby as we waited to be allowed in between two sets of doors – obviously security has even come to this quiet little hamlet in the middle of the Breton countryside.





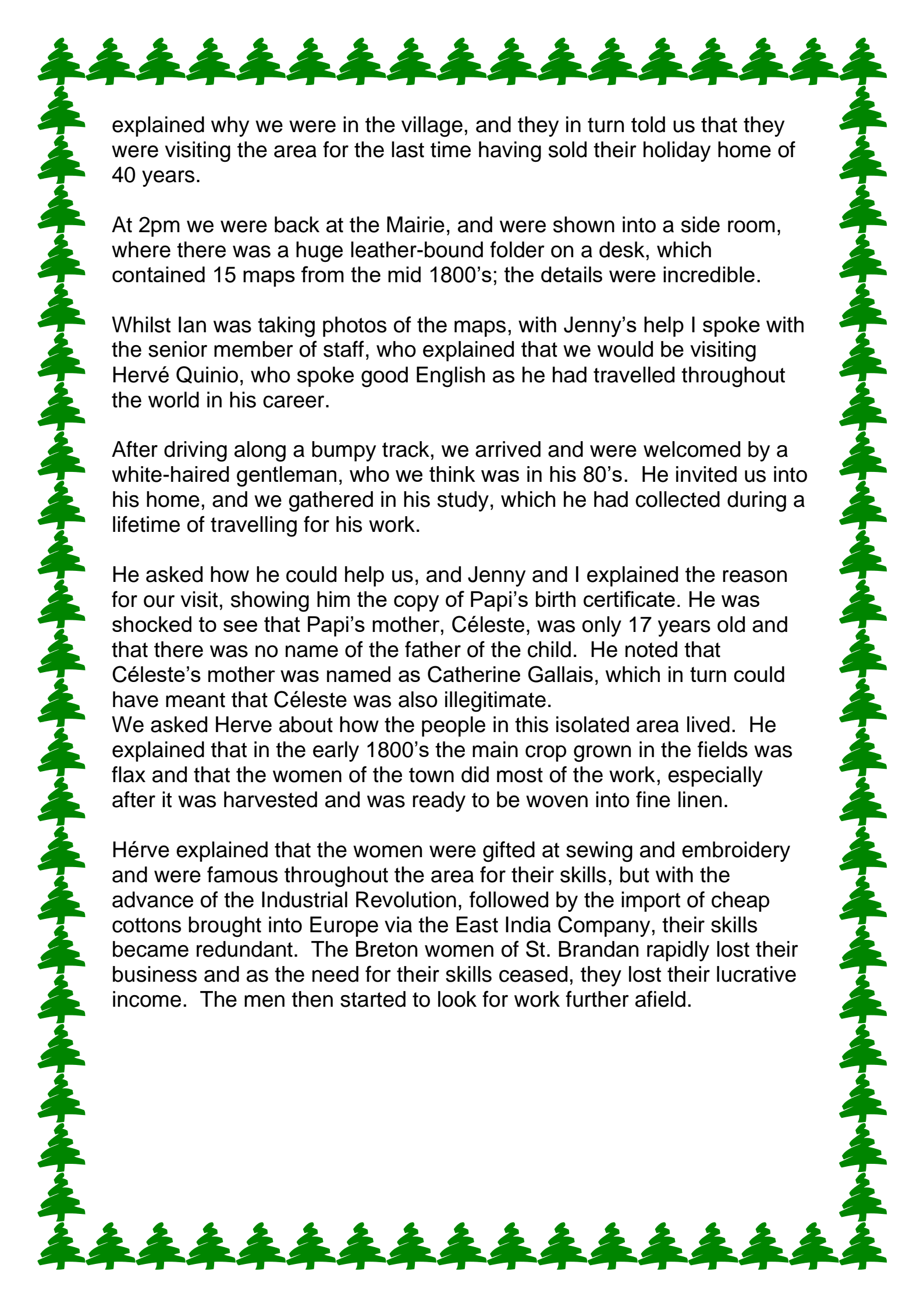
Jenny spoke to the two young employees in the reception, explaining why we were visiting the area and asked them if they would have any records dating back to 1888. In a matter of minutes, one of them returned with a small book in her hand, it was bound in dark green leather. She asked for Papi's exact date of birth, she then carefully turned the pages until she smiled and placed the book on the desk, and we were looking at our grandfather's birth certificate. I came out in goosebumps, and both Jenny and I cried, it was such a surreal moment both exciting and yet so poignant.

We asked if we could have a copy and one was immediately provided free of charge – she said that they were so pleased to have been able to help us. As I looked at it, I could see that Papi's mother and grandmother had both been present at the time of the registration as they were named but their 'signature' was an 'X', indicating that they were both illiterate. This didn't come as a surprise, as I knew that Papi was also illiterate; he had never been to school.

However, there had to be two witnesses who knew both Papi's mother and grandmother and were able to attest to who they were and, of course these witnesses had to be literate and able to sign their own names. The first witness was a gentleman, who was described as a labourer, whose name was Joseph Le Mercier aged 59 – once again I was astonished to see my maiden name. I am certain that none of my family had any idea of that fact. The strange thing is that my father's family had no links to Brittany; so, I imagine that both Dutertre and Le Mercier are quite common names, like Smith and Jones in England...

Ian asked if there were any plans or maps of the area in the 1800's, at which point another lady joined in the conversation. She said there were maps, and that she also knew of a local historian, who she would ask if he could meet with us in the afternoon! As they had to close for lunch she said that if we returned at 2pm she would have some maps for us to look at and hopefully would have arranged the meeting.

Over our picnic lunch we took time to discuss what had just happened in the Mairie, then drove a couple of miles up the road to Plaintel, as we had also learnt that Papi's grandmother lived in that town. It was a bigger place than St. Brandan and a nice little town, so we strolled around and enjoyed a drink in a tabac. Weirdly just outside the tabac, we saw an elderly couple get into a car which had a Jersey registration number – I should add here that I was born in Jersey. I couldn't resist taking the opportunity to speak to them. I introduced myself and



explained why we were in the village, and they in turn told us that they were visiting the area for the last time having sold their holiday home of 40 years.

At 2pm we were back at the Mairie, and were shown into a side room, where there was a huge leather-bound folder on a desk, which contained 15 maps from the mid 1800's; the details were incredible.

Whilst Ian was taking photos of the maps, with Jenny's help I spoke with the senior member of staff, who explained that we would be visiting Hervé Quinio, who spoke good English as he had travelled throughout the world in his career.

After driving along a bumpy track, we arrived and were welcomed by a white-haired gentleman, who we think was in his 80's. He invited us into his home, and we gathered in his study, which he had collected during a lifetime of travelling for his work.

He asked how he could help us, and Jenny and I explained the reason for our visit, showing him the copy of Papi's birth certificate. He was shocked to see that Papi's mother, Céleste, was only 17 years old and that there was no name of the father of the child. He noted that Céleste's mother was named as Catherine Gallais, which in turn could have meant that Céleste was also illegitimate.

We asked Herve about how the people in this isolated area lived. He explained that in the early 1800's the main crop grown in the fields was flax and that the women of the town did most of the work, especially after it was harvested and was ready to be woven into fine linen.

Herve explained that the women were gifted at sewing and embroidery and were famous throughout the area for their skills, but with the advance of the Industrial Revolution, followed by the import of cheap cottons brought into Europe via the East India Company, their skills became redundant. The Breton women of St. Brandan rapidly lost their business and as the need for their skills ceased, they lost their lucrative income. The men then started to look for work further afield.






In Jersey, there was a need for more farm labourers to help with the annual harvesting the of the Jersey Royal potato crop; despite all the local Jersey people being set to work 'in the fields', more manpower was needed and the call went out to Brittany. St. Brandan is approximately sixty miles from the port of St. Malo, and it is probable that the men would have had to walk to the port to get the ferry across to St. Helier in Jersey. The potato season in Jersey is short, probably no more than 6 weeks at the most, and during that time the Bretons would live and work on the small individual farms in the country parishes of Jersey. They were concentrated mainly in Grouville and Trinity as they had the steep 'côtils', south facing strips of land that were ideal for growing this special delicacy.

We were with Herve about 30 minutes, and in that brief time we had learnt so much. Our day's visit to St. Brandan had been incredible. My hope had been to simply stroll around this tiny corner of Brittany and get the feel for where Papi had been born, but in fact, the day turned out to be an unconditional welcome into this small community, and an abundance of information not only about Charles Marie Dutertre, but also the world into which he was born, and an insight into the life of his mother and grandmother.

As we were driving away from Herve's house, Clive commented that not only had we enjoyed ourselves but it was clear that the local people who had helped us had enjoyed themselves too, and the 'visit of the English' would probably be remembered and talked about for a long time to come - especially the two women, who cried a lot even though they said they



were so happy! Clive was right; it was truly a wonderful day to have experienced for the four of us.

Since then, I have received numerous emails from Mme Annick Juno (a genealogist living in St Brandan who Hervé had contacted whilst we were there) who has given me full details of my great-grandmother's life after she moved to Jersey and married Georges Laffoley and went on to have 15 children! I am still in shock from learning I have all these relations that I knew nothing about."

With many thanks to Sally Whatmore for providing the original material.

*Karen Bolton*

### **Skittles Evening**

Members and their guests enjoyed an evening of skittles in early November at the Ship Inn, Redbridge. After four hotly contested rounds, former Chairman Mike Bull emerged as champion skittler. In a final knock-out 'killer' round Phil Thomas proved to be the last person standing. There was plenty of time to socialise, including a meal break during proceedings when a tasty hot buffet was served up in the skittle alley.

### **Subscriptions**

Twinning subscriptions are due each year on 5<sup>th</sup> January. The good news is that I have recommended no change in the rates. Individuals will still pay £10 for a year's membership and families of two or more pay £15.

Many of you pay by standing order which I much appreciate as I don't have to chase you. If you don't pay by standing order, then let me have cash or a cheque made out to Romsey Twinning. Please send it to me at Cornerways, Highwood Lane, Romsey, SO51 9AF.

If you would like me to send you a form to start paying by standing order, then email me at [parkerjsxx@aol.com](mailto:parkerjsxx@aol.com).

*John Parker, Treasurer*



**2025 Diary Dates**

**27 February - 3 March** Treviglio visit to Romsey

**21 March** Annual Dinner, White Horse  
Ampfield

***More dates to be announced.....***

***Romsey Twinning wishes you and  
yours a peaceful festive season and  
a Happy New Year***



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