

**ROMSEY TWINNING
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**FRIDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2024, 7.00PM, COURT ROOM, ROMSEY TOWN
HALL**

The evening began with an illustrated talk by Janet Cairney who presented the results of her recent research into the political and religious exiles from post-Revolutionary France who found refuge and settled in Romsey – “The French in Romsey 1792-1805” - and this was followed by light refreshments before the business of the meeting began.

MINUTES

1. The Chairman (Roland Matthews) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

2. PRESENT:
John Parker (President and Town Mayor, also Treasurer), Roland Matthews (Chairman), Judy Phillips (Secretary), Karen and Bryan Bolton, Neil and Kathrina Gwynne, Mike and Jane Bull, Phil and Kathy Thomas, Ann and Robert Le Grice, Debbie and Richard Evenhand, Ian and Vinny McLean, Mike Phillips, John Mason, Angela Bernhardt, Julie Brinton.

APOLOGIES:

Denise and Chris Amery, Pat Boniface, David Chillingworth, Richard and Sylvia Croxall, Lesley Fuller, Steve Hunter, Malcolm and Jane Kaill, Gill and Bruce Maddick, Liz Morley, Tessa Parker, Christine and Mike Tresise, Gill Watkin.

3. Minutes of the last AGM

The Minutes of the last AGM (Wednesday 27th September 2023) were said to be a true record. Proposed by John Parker, seconded by Karen Bolton.

4. Matters Arising

Roland reported that sadly the suggestion that the key Twinning charters might be displayed in the Town Hall in the Mayor's Parlour had been refused, and the offer of a small space in a corridor at the rear of the building was not considered suitable by us. However, John Parker agreed to enquire again as there was now a new Chief Officer in post. Mike Bull made the point that it was disgraceful that the town cannot display our key Twin Town documents somewhere.

5. Reports on activities with our Twin Towns:

a) Paimpol Karen Bolton gave the report.

A total of 22 visitors, including the Mayor and her family, came from Paimpol from 30th May to 3rd June. On Friday morning the Town Hall hosted a reception by the Mayor and team and this was followed by a well-received tour of the town given by Bob Heather. The group visit on Saturday was to the D-Day Museum at Southsea which was most informative and enjoyable. The group meal was held that night as the Paimpol Mayor had to return the following day, and everyone agreed that Awbridge Village Hall was a lovely venue. The food included locally supplied Chalk Stream Trout and meals by the Cook Shop, and Bryan Bolton and

the kitchen team worked hard to produce and clear away the meal. There were speeches by our Chairman and by Fanny Chappe (the Paimpol Mayor), and entertainment was provided by Brian Budden on the keyboard, with everyone joining in the singing of French and British songs. Sunday was spent with hosts and then early on Monday morning the guests departed with fond farewells. Karen thanked Denise Amery for all her advice and assistance during the planning and running of the visit as it was her first time as co-ordinator. John Parker was pleased to add that the visit was well within the budget we had set. No dates have been fixed yet for our return visit.

Karen mentioned that Cupernham Junior School was maintaining the links which had been established with schools in Paimpol, and that she would be assisting with this work.

b) Battenberg Debbie Evenhand gave the report.

Debbie began with the visit to us by Battenberg in late October 2022, the first visit since the pandemic. A total of 16 guests came by coach, arriving late on Friday evening. The group outing on Saturday was to Whitchurch Silk Mill, with English and German guides, followed by lunch in the café there. A group photo was taken there in the sunshine, which was just as well since the other group photo (next to the Battenberg Close road sign) was in torrential rain! The rest of Saturday was spent with hosts. On Sunday morning everyone assembled for the photo at Battenberg Close, then in the evening the group meal was held at The Empress of Blandings pub at Copythorne. John Ray (Mayor) and his wife, Rose, joined us at this event. After another successful

visit our guests departed very early on Monday morning. Their coach had been able to park very cheaply at the Rapids during the weekend.

Debbie went on to report on the recent visit to us by our Battenberg Twinners. On the morning of Friday 4th October the majority of the group of 10 flew from Southampton Airport via Schiphol to Frankfurt (two members flew direct to Frankfurt and one travelled by rail). The Southampton flyers were met by Fred Inacker in the town's Bürgerbus, who drove them to Battenberg where members arrived to meet their hosts early enough to allow still for walks, chats and of course Kaffee and Kuchen. The following day consisted of a full programme in the nearby town of Frankenberg. Members were treated to an organ recital at the Liebfrauenkirche, followed by a tour up the church tower to the internal space between the roof and ceiling of the church and a walk around the upper parapet of the spire – a narrow squeeze at some points! After a picnic there was a guided tour around the old town and its walls, and the rest of the afternoon was spent with hosts. Some guests were taken to the agricultural market at Battenfeld where strange-looking Zebu Caucasian cows were an unusual sight. Other members enjoyed time at home with their hosts, celebrating birthdays of grandchildren which brought back memories of the time they had celebrated the actual children's birthdays! Saturday evening was spent with hosts, with some members meeting up with other families. On Sunday morning there was a reception hosted by the Bürgermeister of Battenberg, Christian Klein, and a tour of the newly refurbished Rathaus (Town Hall). The rest of the day was spent with hosts and various visits and activities were enjoyed.

We all enjoyed the final group dinner on Sunday evening at the magnificent Sauerländer Hof hotel in Hallenberg. Following farewells on Monday morning, we were taken by minibus to Frankfurt Airport for the return trip to Southampton.

Debbie mentioned that Battenberg had expressed the wish to come to Romsey earlier in the year next time, rather than in October.

c) **Treviglio** Report given by Phil Thomas

A group of 19 went to Treviglio in April, the majority by air to Bergamo and a couple by train. The group included some new visitors, including Karen Bolton's mother! After the transfer from the airport, we went to the welcome dinner which was held at a venue in a business park where a community initiative has volunteers providing hot meals for those in need. On Friday morning there was a reception in the Town Hall then a visit to the Vertical Museum (housed in the Bell Tower). This was followed by a visit to the new Polyptych Museum, the new home for the town's greatest treasure, the fifteenth-century Polittico di San Martino. In the afternoon we went to the SAME tractor museum and also viewed the Giardini di Romsey. On Saturday there was a full-day visit to Monza, including a tour of the Villa Reale and the historic centre, then on Sunday evening after a day spent with hosts the farewell group dinner was held in the beautiful surroundings of the Villa Malliana in the countryside outside Treviglio.

The return visit by Treviglio has been set for 27th February to 3rd March 2025, and as on their last visit to Romsey is expected to include their Mayor.

6. Treasurer's Report and presentation of Annual Accounts (attached)

John Parker explained that the turnover varied from year to year depending on the number of inbound/outbound visits and how payments were made. At present the income up to 30th April 2024 was £3,002.45 and the expenditure was £3,800.82. The association had done well during the year keeping expenditure under control, and he saw no need for concern in the accounts. He was not proposing to change the annual subscription at this time. Roland Matthews explained that the figure for Stationery and Admin was high (£355.25) because it included a donation to Hampshire Record Office of £350 at the time of depositing our records there. John hoped that this sum could be recouped from some other funding source or sources which he would continue to investigate. Julie Brinton proposed acceptance of the accounts and Bryan Bolton seconded it.

7. Membership

John Parker reported that whilst numbers do fluctuate, depending on whether the Mayor is already a Twinning member or not, the overall rate of membership is in decline. We have had some new members, including Vinny and Ian McLean who it was a particular pleasure to welcome to the meeting, but more new members were needed as always. In answer to a question about how they had found out about Romsey Twinning they said they had known about twinning from where they had lived previously, and they

had also seen articles in the Romsey Advertiser. Kathrina Gwynne, a new Committee member, has taken up the role of New Member Liaison. The Committee would continue to explore ways of recruiting new members.

8. Chairman's Report

As you have already heard the past year has featured a full range of twinning visits, including two to Europe and two to Romsey. I would like to record my thanks to our three country co-ordinators – Karen Bolton, Debbie Evenhand and Phil Thomas – for their commitment and hard work organising these visits. Every exchange visit throws up new challenges. The fact that they generally run as smoothly as they do is a testament to their resourcefulness and efficiency.

Numbers participating in these visits do vary quite considerably. We had 18 visitors, for example, when Paimpol visited us in May, whereas last year just 11 came from Treviglio on their visit for the Beggars Fair weekend, and our most recent visit, to Battenberg last weekend, had 10 in the group. Maintaining three partnerships as we do presents its challenges; travelling does not get any easier, and certainly no less expensive, in terms of both cost and time. And with a broadly static membership active support for the exchange visits from our end seems to fall on ever fewer shoulders. It may well be that we need to review the pattern of those visits in order to secure their future; for example, considering introducing a gap year in the pattern of alternating visits, or otherwise increasing the intervals between them. In considering this I appreciate that we have to recognise and balance the differing needs and aspirations of our twin towns: Paimpol and Battenberg, with over 60 years and nearly 40 years of partnership respectively, and Treviglio with just 10 years.

In the past year we have held two Quiz Nights. The first was last October in our usual autumn slot. This particular night will be lodged in the memories of those who attended because of the unexpected and last-minute change of venue. Unable to gain access on the night to the Dr Peter Centre we were saved by the quick thinking of Mike and Judy Phillips who were able to secure us the use of the Woodley Scout Hall instead. A brisk re-location followed and the curtain went up on the Quiz barely a half-hour later. This year we decided to try a different time of year for the Quiz, holding it in the middle of May, this time back at the Dr Peter Centre without any problems. Thanks go as always to our Quizmaster, Mike Bull, for devising the quizzes and presiding over proceedings.

In March our Annual Dinner at the White Horse in Ampfield was attended by nearly 30 members. The food and service were well received and I think this is a venue we are likely to use again in the future.

With both the Quiz and the Annual Dinner having been held in the first part of the year we thought it would be good to offer members a chance to meet up informally in the autumn so we arranged an informal gathering for members one morning in the middle of last month in the Memorial Park. The café was open and the weather was fine, luckily. Although the turnout was not huge we think that it was appreciated by those who did come and we will look at arranging another meeting in the spring.

The undoubted highlight of the past year has been the launch in the summer of our own website <https://www.romseytwinning.org.uk/> Ever since the demise some years ago of Romseynet Romsey Twinning has lacked an online presence other than on Facebook. In spite of the range of social media now available it was felt that a website was still an important and necessary tool. We decided that we would create a

website ourselves and used a recognised website builder. A small working group met on numerous occasions over the year, looking at the sites of other twinning associations and taking professional advice as required. If you have not yet looked at the website please do so and let us know what you think. We are not claiming that it is perfect and there are undoubtedly modifications to be made but we do think that it is a good advertisement for the association and it is well designed to do the job we want it to do. We know that we have some work to do to make the site more accessible on search engines and browsers but our hope is that in time the website will develop to be the first port of call for anyone wanting to find out more about Romsey Twinning.

My special thanks go to the members of the working group, Karen and Bryan Bolton and Julie Brinton, for their enthusiasm and commitment to the project and for seeing it through to its launch.

On a sad note I want to mention here the deaths during the year of Sally Dickens and Mavis Chapman, two loyal and long-standing members of Twinning in earlier years. The association would not have flourished without the commitment and interest shown by members such as Sally and Mavis and we remember their contributions fondly. Mavis Chapman died only last month and there is a celebration of her life next Wednesday the 16th at 10am in Romsey Abbey to which all are welcome.

The Committee has met 5 times and I would like to thank the members of the Committee as well as my fellow officers for their help and support over the course of the year.

Mike Bull proposed the acceptance of the Chairman's Report and Kathrina Gwynn seconded it.

9. Election of Officers and Committee Members

All of the current officers (Roland Matthews – Chairman, Denise Amery – Vice Chairman, John Parker – Treasurer, Judy Phillips – Secretary) were willing to stand again. Bryan Bolton proposed the motion to accept, and Neil Gwynne seconded it.

All of the current Committee Members (with the exception of Ann Le Grice who is stepping down as a result of ill health) agreed to stand again. The Committee consists of:

Angela Bernhardt, Karen Bolton, Debbie Evenhand, Kathrina Gwynne, John Parker, and Phil Thomas.

Julie Brinton proposed the motion to accept the re-election of the Committee en bloc, seconded by Jane Bull.

10. Confirmation of Patron

Countess Mountbatten has confirmed she is willing to continue as our Patron. John Mason proposed the acceptance of this, seconded by Mike Bull.

11. Future events

Our next event is a Skittles Evening on 1st November at the Ship Inn, Redbridge. This is open to all members and their guests.

Jane Bull is trying to organise a choir link with Treviglio for 2026 (the next Romsey Festival). Neill Gwynne asked if the Italians would be coming here and Jane explained that it would be both ways.

12. Publicity

Karen Bolton underlined the great work that had been done to create the association's website. She asked for more photos from members for the website and for the next newsletter which would be issued in December.

John Parker said he was going to add links to our website from the Romsey News and Information Facebook site.

13. Any other business

John Parker had had an email from some local cyclists who had been in Treviglio and hadn't seen any sign of Romsey's partnership with Treviglio. He had replied with a photo of the Giardini di Romsey and suggested that Kathrina contacted the cyclists to invite them to join Romsey Twinning. It seemed that there was not the same practice of displaying town twinings on road signs in Italy, as there was in the other countries.

Roland Matthews thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 9.18pm.