

# ***Wells Twinning Association***

## **Newsletter – August**

On Thursday 27 July 2017, Richard Hibberd Chairman, Bob Reynolds Treasurer, and Dawn Payne Secretary, represented Wells Twinning Association at the full Wells City Council Meeting to make a presentation on the past, present and future of town twinning as perceived by Wells Twinning Association.

Wells Twinning Association has noticed changes in the way twinning is viewed by our twin towns, and felt that it would be beneficial to present to the City Council how twinning has functioned historically and how the Association viewed changes necessary for it to continue successfully. Richard delivered the presentation, a synopsis of which is included below:-

- **Original Basis for Twinning**

First twinning arrangement was made in 1928 between Keighley in Yorkshire and Poix du Nord in France in order to build relationships between international communities.

It grew rapidly after the Second World War as a mechanism to reduce the possibility of conflict by gaining better understanding of different communities, culture and politics

The growth of the EU has caused another surge in the growth of twinning

We believe that Brexit has reinforced the need to maintain and grow the twinning relationships, and increase the need to build opportunities for populations to better understand and benefit from other cultures.

- **Arrangements entered into with Twin Towns by Wells City Council on behalf of Wells**

Wells first twinning arrangement was entered into with Paray-le-Monial following a casual holiday visit of Wells citizens including Wells City Councillors to that town. A Charter was signed in 1979 formally linking the City of Wells and the town of Paray-le-Monial.

Five years later Wells signed a similar Charter with Bad Durkheim in Germany, which was already twinned with Paray-le-Monial

After a number of attempts the Council set up the current twinning association with a constitution that was approved in 1988. The Mayor of Wells has been the president of the twinning association from its inception and still is. Wells City Council also appoints one of its members to sit on the Twinning Association committee as a full voting member. Initially the City Council made a substantial grant towards the running costs of the Twinning Association but this was withdrawn some

years ago. WTA currently raises all the funding required to run Twinning visits from social activities in the community.

In 2010 the Council signed two friendship agreements the first with a small German town of Bad Berka and the second with Kluczbork in Poland. There has been no contact between Bad Berka and Wells officially since the agreement was signed. However, Kluczbork in Poland has visited Wells and we have visited them. Kluczbork actually believes that it is twinned with Wells.

In 2012 the City twinned with the Comune Di Fontanellato near Parma in Italy.

- **How twinning has been viewed in Wells historically**

Both the Twinning and Friendship Agreements state that the relevant two towns have come together **“to enjoy strong links of friendship and that both of the towns will profit amicably from the agreement in culture, friendship, commerce, trade, entertainment, tourism, sports and pastimes.”**

It is important to remember that the relevant civic structures have agreed to the terms of the charters and that the whole community should be involved rather than just the Twinning Association.

We do not believe that most of these principals have been pursued in Wells in recent years, and that twinning has drifted into a small number of individual friendships making reciprocal visits to each other and the opportunity for some individuals to spend pleasant breaks in our twin towns.

- **How we are viewed by each of the twin towns**

Paray-le-Monial - We have arranged to visit from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> August this year. The major intention behind this visit is to rekindle enthusiasm and rebuild the relationship which has lapsed recently. A party of 26 Wellensians including the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and Cllr Price will take part in this visit.

Bad Durkheim - During their visit to Wells on 16 June, Bad Durkheim committee members expressed strong dissatisfaction with the state of the relationship at present, particularly the lack of community involvement, interchange between the two communities and poor connection between the two Councils. The Mayor of Wells has issued an invitation to the Mayor of Bad Durkheim to visit Wells for this years Carnival. This has been accepted.

Kluczbork – very keen to learn our practices in politics, education, economic and social activities (our recent visit demonstrated how much they have developed since they lifted the Russian occupation but also

how far they still have to go) they are very keen for exchange visits from groups such as teachers, musicians, councillors, trade bodies and young people etc

Fontanellato – very concerned as to how Brexit will impact upon their twinning activity as they rely on the EU for all their twinning funding. They feel that we do not co-operate with them in terms of developing trade and commerce between the two towns.

- **Wells Twinning Association's vision of the future**

In recent years membership of Wells Twinning Association has been diminishing. However, in recent months a noticeable increase has become apparent. Paid up membership now stands at 101. All Twinning Association visits and activities are open for all members of the community to join in. Paid up members receive personal communications and priority when numbers are limited. Membership costs £10 per annum per couple and £6 for individuals.

**Wells Twinning Association has formed a new committee comprised of a mixture of experienced twinners and new members with a view to return to the original objectives of the twinning charters involving the whole community under the leadership of Wells City Council, with the Twinning Association organising, administering and communicating activities.**

We believe Brexit reinforces the need for twinning, and that it should develop into improved inter community contact and further build international cultural relationships.

- **Planned Activities**

The following activities are confirmed for the remainder of 2017.

Fund raising BBQ at Wells Rugby Club 13/08/17 at 1.00 p.m. Tickets cost £12.50 and are available from **Tony D'ovidio tel: 07770 994652** and **Tony Guidi tel: 07976 511680**. All are Welcome.

Visit to Paray-le-Monial – 22 to 28 August 2017.

A delegation will visit Bad Durkheim, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September, to attend the Wurstmarkt including our Mayor and the Chairman of Wells Twinning Association.

A visit from the Mayor and members of the Bad Durkheim twinning association for the Carnival weekend in November.

“A Sunday Lunch with a difference in Godney” will take place on 10/12/17 to raise funds. Tickets will cost £12.50. Further information will be published when available.

- **Potential Activities**

Possible visit from Fontanellato twinning association committee end of September beginning of October

Possible visit from Bad Durkheim in 2018

- **Conclusion**

Wells City Council and Wells Twinning Association in conjunction with our twin towns should plan together a programme of visits to and from each other to enable all involved to allocate sufficient time and to plan future developments.

The Mayor thanked Wells Twinning Association for the enlightening presentation, and agreed to set up a joint project team to shape future twinning policy and plan future twinning programmes. The Mayor asked the Twinning Association to contact the Town Clerk to make arrangements.

If anyone is interested in becoming a Member of Wells Twinning Association, please contact:- Bob Reynolds, Treasure tel 01749 870217 email [rob.reynolds771@btinternet.com](mailto:rob.reynolds771@btinternet.com) or Dawn Payne, Secretary tel: 01749 675858 email [dawn\\_payne@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dawn_payne@hotmail.co.uk)