

WELWYN ANGLO FRENCH TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday October 11th 2023 at the Civic Centre, Welwyn at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

- President - David Nice
Vice Chairman - Graham Howat (in the Chair)
Secretary - Susan Nice
Treasurer - Graham Middleton
Committee members - Linda Curiel , Martin Gerty

15 other WAFTA members including Anne Lloyd who is responsible for WAFTA's relationships with schools, notably St Mary's school.

1 Welcome by the President

David welcomed members to the meeting following what has been an active and interesting year for the Association

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from 6 members.

3 Notification of Items of Any Other Business

None

4 Minutes of the AGM held on 30 September 2022

Approved unanimously

Matters arising

Nigel Jeffery asked about links with schools. He was advised that, apart from St. Mary's, the schools had been unresponsive. We will discuss this further under item 12.

5 Overview of the year ended 31 July 2023

We had Raul's very successful talk on Uruguay; also our annual quiz which was excellent financially though buddies of the quizmaster were the winners. We should maybe limit the prizes next year. The French came here in November 2022 reopening the Twinning Exchange. It was a very pleasant visit, enjoyed by all, and in June 2023 we had a most memorable visit to Champagne sur Oise.

6 Financial Statement

Graham Middleton advised that our income was slightly up on last year. Income from subscriptions was also up, as we gained more members than we lost. Raul's talk and the quiz both made good surpluses. However, our expenditure was higher, mostly because of the need to finance the visit by the French but also because of items acquired in connection with the 50th anniversary, and the books for St. Mary's School. Signs were made for the anniversary which were displayed on the church railings near the entrance. One remains and was later moved to a location on the railings nearer the war memorial. We also had a lot of more recent photos printed for the Street Market. The net result is a deficit of just over £1,600. But we still have a surplus of just over £12,000 so there are no financial problems.

Nigel Jeffery reminded the meeting of the commitment to focus on what used to be the plan, to raise some £4,000 over 2 years to entertain the French when they visit. We have not yet turned that corner and are having less events, We need to focus on the need to raise funds. Graham H said that our objective is to raise a good surplus on all events, though it is easier with some than with others. It was pointed out that we were still suffering from the after-effects of Covid.

7 WAFTA Treasurer Vacancy

Graham Middleton is stepping down; a well-deserved retirement. We had not at that point in time been able to find a replacement.

8 Election of other Officers and Committee Members

All of the other Officers and committee members were re-appointed. There were no nominations from the floor.

9 Independent Accounts Examiner Vacancy

Graham M advised that Mark Slater would also like to stand down. Barry Northrup offered to take this task on, so long as there was no constitutional impediment. Martin advised that there is not, so thank you to Barry.

10 Approval of Subscription Rates for 2023/24

Graham H suggested that it is felt best to leave the rates unchanged at £5 for an individual and £10 for a family as it would require a significant (and probably unwelcome) increase to make any significant financial contribution. We must focus on raising funds through our events.

11 Recent and Future Twinning Visits

We had a very enjoyable visit from the French in November 2022: they much appreciated the outing to Waddesdon Manor. Then in June 2023 we had an excellent trip to Champagne. Our party was smaller than in the past but we were very well looked after.

We expect that that our French friends will come here in May 2024.

Raul suggested that we might attempt to synchronize the visit of our French friends with another Association. This is something that needs both expansion and discussion.

12 WAFTA'S Involvement with St Mary's School, Welwyn

Anne Lloyd reported that a year ago things had seemed very promising. The school choir welcomed the French, and we participated in the Christmas Fayre. We made a donation of French books (as noted in Para 6) which are in use in the library. We were unable to participate in French Day as we had the previous year as it was when we were in France. There is a new Head so Anne will try to meet with him after half term, and with French teacher Libby. Graham H observed that we must try to connect with the school in the most appropriate way.

As regards the other schools, nothing has happened this year.

We need a separate strategy for secondary schools. Nigel Jeffery said he would be happy to contact Monks Walk.

Geoffrey Boardman thought we should consider inviting the French teachers as guests to our wine tasting. We will keep it in mind but we have not held a wine tasting for a while.

Graham H mentioned the problem of education being secular in France – they have a difficulty with St. Mary's being a church school. This has impeded any form of exchange activity between the two schools.

13 Recent WAFTA and Inter-Association Events

Alan Jones told the meeting about the recent inter-twinning pétanque match. 5 Associations took part; Hitchin won. We had two teams and were able to practice at the Bowls Club. One of our teams were the runners up.

Linda Curiel mentioned the inter twinning meetings that had given rise to the Shared Calendar. By this means the associations can see what each other are doing But we need a master class by Abby from Royston who set it up.

14 Future Events – Information and Discussion

There was much discussion and various suggestions were made from the floor, such as a French film; meeting the French at Dover or Calais. Nigel Jeffery could possibly organise a trip to Strasbourg.

We will have a wine tasting and a Christmas lunch. Graham H advised that the programme would be put together in November. We will hope to have a quiz in February or March.

We will hope to have talks. Marion Bolitho thought it was not necessary to always have a French connection to the topic of our talks..

There being no AOB the meeting closed at 8.45 p.m. and was followed by wine and refreshments.