

# Reigate & Banstead Twinning Association

Covering the areas of Reigate, Redhill, Banstead and Horley



## Twinning News 2020/4



### Important (Possible?) Date for your 2021 Diary

✚ Anniversary Visit to Eschweiler-----3 - 6 June 2021

### Message from our President

Greetings to members and our friends in Eschweiler and Brunoy.

As I seem to have time on my hands these days I have been delving into my file of past newsletters. These go back well over two decades. (I joined Twinning in 1996). What a lovely read! So many outings and meetings and suppers and celebrations. Members, past and present, can take pride in all we have achieved.

Most important are the friendships: I truly value these as I know other members do. Next year will be a challenge but I am looking forward to 2021 immensely! It can only be a good one.

I hope everyone reading this has a happy Christmas, albeit a quiet one in most cases!. Our News must be better next year. Keep safe until we meet again.

*As ever - Penelope*

### Brunoy Link

Dear Friends,

Like us our Brunoy friends have just come out of lockdown. Their "confinement" was somewhat stricter than ours and possibly more closely monitored too. They were only allowed one hour a day and only one km from home for exercise and this with a piece of paper to justify being away from home.

Schools remain open throughout this second wave but all children over 6 years old must wear a mask. I am told that the 10 years old daughter of my niece is quite used to it now.

Now, after lockdown, some restrictions have been lifted but bars and restaurants are closed till January 20th next year. There is also a curfew from 9pm till 7am everywhere with the exceptions of Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve for the "réveillons".

As here, the local economy is suffering but many small shops in Brunoy have organised a "click and collect" system as they say in French (!!) with the help of Brunoy Town Hall which advertises the details on its website. The Christmas truce, from December 15th will depend on the daily rate of infection in the country remaining below 5000 and will allow people to travel across France to visit relatives and friends, travel is now limited to a maximum of 20 km from home.

Our Brunoy friends are in a situation very similar to ours and, like us will not be able to enjoy the coming festivities in quite the same traditional way but I am sure that we'll keep in touch and wish everyone :

**JOYEUX NOËL et BONNE ANNÉE**

Monique and Anne

*Monique and Anne*

**Monique Pottage** (Joint Chairman & Brunoy Link)  
and **Anne Miller**

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## Les fêtes en France

At first glance, it may seem that Christmas in Britain and in France is celebrated in very similar ways: Turkey as the favourite meat, Father Christmas coming with presents and the family around an overloaded table. However, there are quite a few small differences. In France most of the celebration takes place on Christmas Eve, c'est le réveillon when most adults and older children will exchange presents though the younger ones will have to wait for Christmas day. A few people will go to church for "la messe de minuit", the church service which, nowadays, is often earlier in the evening.

La bûche de Noël replaces the Christmas pudding and you could not imagine a French Christmas or later a New Year réveillon without oysters. French supermarkets isles, on Christmas and New year eves, are full of piles of oyster boxes. Some of them from Cornish and North Sea ports. No Christmas cards but the usual decorations and Christmas tree and quite often a crèche, the traditional nativity scene with little earthenware figurines inherited from parents or grandparents. The presents used to arrive in a sabot, not a stocking, but clogs have been replaced by a shoe at the foot of the tree. No boxing day, December 26th is a working day.

The New Year réveillon will be mostly with friends and again many oysters will be eaten and champagne drunk. In contrast, the last festivity of the season is on January 6th, la Fête des rois, a family celebration when we eat a special cake, la galette des rois, bought in the pâtisserie with its cardboard golden crown. The crown will go to the person, usually a child of course, who finds the fève, a tiny figurine as small as a 6d coin, hidden in the cake. The "king" of the day may also choose his queen. Don't expect Christmas cards but des cartes de vœux for New Year, they must arrive before the end of January! Or earlier if on line....

**Monique**

Taken on the evening of 2 December 2020 by Michel Lefort.

Those who go on the visits to Brunoy will recognise the Mairie in the background



## Eschweiler Link

Dear Friends

Eschweiler has a new Mayor. Rudi Bertram has retired after more than 20 years' service. German Mayors serve for five years and are elected/re-elected by voters in their area, which shows what a good job he has done! The election was held in mid September; Frau Nadine Leonhardt was elected and will serve for the next five years. We met at Karneval time earlier this year and she knows all about Reigate, as both her children came here through the Barbaraschule/Priory School exchange. We wish her all the best for her time in office and our Mayor has kindly sent a letter of congratulation. One of the last things that Rudi Bertram did before his retirement was to inaugurate Eschweiler's replacement Twinning signs – he was always very supportive and I'm sure this will continue with Frau Leonhardt.



Rudi Bertram

Nadine Leonhardt

Hartmut Froehlich

After our Mosel visit, we were able to catch up with some of the Eschweiler Twinning Committee over coffee and hear what has been going on. Sadly, Karneval next year has had to be cancelled and the Karneval Prinz has deferred for a year. Their plans for next year will depend on how the virus situation develops in all three countries, but we all hope for a meeting before too long.

A very Happy Christmas to everyone.

**Janet Powell**

*Joint Chairman & Eschweiler Link*

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## Mosel Valley visit

Graham and I decided to go ahead with our planned visit to Germany in September – Corona cases are controlled, quite low and less than here. Masks are worn everywhere and tests are easy to obtain. To avoid quarantine we had to drive through Belgium and France without stopping and straight onto the Tunnel, so sadly we weren't able to see any French friends.

We had a marvellous time with Heinz-Michael and Edeltraud Raby, spending a few days in the Mosel valley at Wintrich near Bernkastel (in the administrative district of Wittlich, the German twin town of Brunoy). What a beautiful area – the scenery and autumn colours were magnificent! Mornings were spent walking through the vineyards, which have views down over the river – you were free to sample the many different types of red and white grapes hanging temptingly in the sun.



As it was harvest time, we were fascinated to see the machines slowly moving along the rows shaking the grapes off the vines. On the steeper parts, there is a sort of monorail with a sledge which people use for hand picking. In the afternoon, the Rabys showed us around some of the local attractions of the small towns in this area, some dating from Roman times

At this time of year, several of the wine makers have “pop up” wine bars where you can taste their products and choose from a simple menu – this usually results in purchases to take home! There was a much wider choice than I had imagined – Secco is a sparkling wine, as well as many different grape varieties wine in white, red and rosé, together with some liqueurs and spirits. Luckily, the Rabys have been visiting this area for many years and their friend is a local wine maker who was a treasure trove of useful information as well as delicious wines to sample. Some of you will remember the Eschweiler Twinning group visits we made a few years ago to Reil and to the Ahr – this is a wonderful area and I can't wait to visit it again!

**Janet Powell**

## Hello to our British friends!

Janet asked me to tell you something about traditions in Germany in autumn and winter. There are many holidays during this time, which are especially important for children.

First of all, there's the 11th of November. On 11 November at 11.11 a.m. the carnival season begins.

And it is Martin's day. The legend of Saint Martin from the 4th century tells that Martin was a soldier. On a cold night he met a beggar. Immediately Martin stopped his horse and shared his coat with the sword. He gave one half to the poor man. Shortly afterwards he had a dream and became a monk. The people liked him so much that they wanted to make him bishop of Tours. But he was shy and hid in the goose house. But the geese betrayed him by cackling loudly. So he became bishop of Tours.

Since then people eat roast goose on Martin's Eve. The children make lanterns and gather on the evening of 10.11. for a parade. St. Martin rides in front. The procession parades through the streets, a band plays songs and the children sing. At the end of the procession there is a big fire, often the legend is re-enacted by children. Then everyone gets a baked "Weckmann". In some cities, e.g. Düsseldorf, the children then move from house to house and sing for sweets.

Then comes the Advent season. These are the 4 Sundays before Christmas Eve. We put up Advent wreaths with 4 candles. Every Sunday one more is lit. This tradition goes back to the protestant pastor Wichern in 1839. He wanted to show children how many days there are until Christmas. At that time he placed 19 small and 4 large candles in the wreath made of green fir.

Today there are only 4 candles, but instead of the small candles children get Advent calendars with doors for each day, filled with sweets. During the Advent season, biscuits and stollen are baked for Christmas. There are also special Advent songs.

On December 6 this the feast of Saint Nicholas. He was born in the 3rd century and lived in what is now Turkey. Many legends are told about him. All have in common that he gave his inherited fortune to people in need, especially children. He later became bishop in Myra.

On the evening of December 5th, the children clean their boots especially clean. Then they put them outside the frontdoor. At night, St. Nicholas fills them with apples, nuts, sweets or other little things. Because he has so much to do, he often messes up the boots or puts them somewhere else. The children have a lot of fun searching. Sometimes a Nikolaus comes to the school classes and the children recite a poem or sing him a song. Then they get a chocolate Nikolaus. December 24th is Christmas Eve. In the afternoon people go to the churches for the service. German Christmas carols are very solemn. A nativity play is performed for children. Afterwards people go home and give presents to each other, especially to the children. Everyone is dressed up festively. People eat together, talk, play games. It is a quiet, contemplative evening. There is a Christmas tree in the room, which each family decorates individually.

The Christmas tree is of pagan origin, which found its way into Christianity. The green of the fir tree stands for new beginnings, just like the birth of Christ. In the past, apples were always hung on the tree. The apple was the symbol of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. And through the birth of Jesus a new beginning followed. Christmas tree balls still remind of apples, specially the red. The first tree decorated with apples and nuts was probably placed in Strasbourg in the 17th century. In the 18th century candles were added. The Christmas tree decorations today are inexhaustible. In many houses as well as in churches a nativity scene is set up. Francis of Assisi is regarded as its author. At that time he put up a living nativity scene in the forest.

On the 1st holiday people visit each other within the families, on the 2nd holiday people usually meet friends.

31st December is New Year's Eve. This is often celebrated with friends and also relatives. Mostly it is a party with good food and drinks, music and dancing. There are also typical New Year's Eve games like lead-pouring. With this one wants to look into the future. Some go out for a festive meal in a restaurant, others go to the theatre or opera. At midnight you toast with a glass of champagne and wish all the best for the New Year. Before the climate debate, you could admire great fireworks, but now there are fewer of them. There are church services at the end of the year as well as on New Year's Day. On the 1st January we mostly meet with friends and relatives or send New Year's greetings by telephone.

For the Advent season I would like to wish our British friends all the best, above all stay healthy. Be sheltered, so that we can meet again soon.

***Warmest greetings Ute***

## Quiz

Hello everyone, and now for something different as our usual quizzes go. Attached to this newsletter is a 20 question quiz all pertaining to Christmas. One of my friends, Jo, who is also a member of twinning kindly compiled this. As you can see I will be collecting the answers for marking.

Now, please note .....

- \* Google or other 'help' sites are prohibited, ie no cheating!! 
- \* A small prize will be awarded to the winner. Judge's decision is final.
- \* Entries to be received by 19 December, and winner will be announced new year's eve

*Ena Bishop*

## Treasurer and Membership

### • Accounts and Membership

There has been little movement in the accounts in 2020 due to the limitations on activities brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic. The Association has certain fixed costs such as insurance, website hosting and secretarial expenses. We rely on membership subscriptions to cover all these costs and also contribute towards twinning events which of course have not happened this year. Equally, apart from early in the year, there have been no fund raising activities. The future for any fund raising events and activities must be in doubt at this time so we are thankful for members' continuing support and look forward to subscription renewals in January 2021. subscriptions.

*Robert Bogin*

## New Member:

A warm welcome to:

😊 Philip Ireson

## Obituary

### Paul George

We are sorry to report the death of Paul George, a long time member. He and his wife, Anita, used to attend many social events but for a number of years Paul was too unwell to support our activities. Paul was Welsh and Anita is Swedish, a good twinning blend!

Our thoughts go out to his children and grandchildren at this very sad time.

*Penelope*