



DEVON & SOMERSET TWINNING CIRCLE

HOME FROM HOME

Autumn 2025

The next meeting of Devon & Somerset Twinning Circle will be the Annual General Meeting, hosted by Tiverton Twinning Association, on **Saturday 18th October** at 2 pm at Halberton Village Hall, EX16 7AF.

A three-course home-cooked lunch of mackerel pâté, chicken pie with tarragon and vegetables, blackberry and apple crumble or M&S chocolate cheesecake will be served at 12.30 pm at a cost of £15 pp.

Please send your booking for lunch no later than 14th October either by email to jeanaplin@live.co.uk with bank transfer to Tiverton Town Twinning Association, 52-30-17 acc no 32108559 with reference your name and association. Alternatively, by cheque to Jean Aplin, 13 Crowden Crescent, Tiverton EX16 4ET. Please make your cheque out to Tiverton Town Twinning Association and mention the name of your association with your booking.

Please let Jean know of any specific dietary requirements.

Directions to Halberton Village Hall

From the M5.

Leave at Junction 27 and follow the A361 North Devon Link Road for only about ¼ mile, taking the first exit to Sampford Peverell.

Follow this road through Sampford Peverell and continue until you reach Halberton.

The hall is on the right-hand side of the road, car park is behind the hall.

From North Devon via the A361 (North Devon Link Road).

At the Tiverton roundabout go straight ahead on the A361 dual carriageway to leave at the next exit.

Turn right at the top of the slip road to cross the A361, go straight on at the roundabout by McDonalds, and turn left at the next roundabout.

Follow this road, passing Blundell's School, until you come to Halberton.

The hall is on the left-hand side of the road, car park is behind the hall.

This newsletter contains

- A consideration for twinning groups who might be interested in sharing the travel arrangements to help reduce costs.
- Instow are offering to share policies.
- What is Public Liability?
- Exmouth twinner shares some memories.
- Gifting – a problem?
- Ilfracombe's visit to Normandy.
- A French newspaper report on the Braunton visit.
- A reduction in Brittany Ferries cost for coaches with 40 or less passengers.
- A timetable for EU entry/exit system.
- Mondeville visit to Northam.
- Fritzlar visit to Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge.
- Hofheim visit to Tiverton.
- An artistic link between Exmouth and Dinan.
- Women's Rugby World Cup to Exeter!
- International Day of friendship, in Bad Homburg
- Twinning differences across countries
- Musique Sans Frontières

Contributions to the newsletter

Articles are invited for anything relevant to twinning – how you undertake your fundraising, some historic stories and/or photographs from years gone by or just something you think will be entertaining or useful.

Remember you will be entered into the Monica Saunders Competition and could win £50 plus another £50 if judged the overall winner of the year.

Please keep the articles coming

Please send articles, reports, photographs by email to babenton52@gmail.com
Or by post to Mr B Benton, 5 Silver Street, Bampton, EX16 9NR

Sharing Travel Costs

Northam Twinning Association is due to visit Mondeville next May. We now only visit each other every other year due to decreasing numbers and lack of new members. Similar story to so many twinning associations.

This year Mondeville visited us and, to keep their costs down, the joined with another French group who were coming over at the same time to visit Holsworthy. Next year I know that our numbers will probably not allow us to justify the hiring of a coach to go all the way to France and back. Our members do not want to travel as foot passengers on the ferry as this means they have to take care of their luggage and, quite frankly, as the average age of participants will be about 75+ I fully understand.

We are keen to investigate the possibility of joining forces with another group from Devon/Somerset, who might be interested in sharing the travel arrangements in the same way that Mondeville did this year.

For your information the dates are Thursday, 14th May to Monday, 18th May 2026.

Lesley Shaw

[Editor – If more groups wish to pursue this idea, I will set up a page on the website with details of visits. Email your details to me.]

Policies

Last November, Instow Twinning Association approved a number of Policies (that they had worked hard to develop). Thanks to Ilfracombe for sending an outline of their Safeguarding Policy which was started with as a template for that specific policy.

Policies developed: Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, GDPR, Avoidance of Bullying and Harassment

If other Twinning Associations would like the Policies, please email

instowtwinning@btinternet.com

Twinning Circle Public Liability

Hello All,

I keep getting asked many questions about the Public Liability Insurance offered by the Twinning Circle.

Public Liability Insurance is protection in case of accidental harm to a member of the public and damages to their property.

For instance, if you hold an event and a person gets injured because of negligence on the part of your group then you are covered. It does not cover you in an event held by another group or company. These events are covered wherever you hold them including abroad. However please bear in mind that if your twinning host have organised the event then they are liable, and you cannot claim on the Twinning Circle Public Liability insurance.

I have also been asked about supplying a health and safety form which was proving rather difficult but think the link below may help.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>

I would highly recommend that everyone takes out travel insurance before going on a trip. I appreciate as we get older the price increases but so are our risks of illness and accidents.

Here are few companies Which recommend.

<https://www.saga.co.uk/travel-insurance>

<https://www.staysure.co.uk>

<https://insureandgo.com>

Happy fund raising & travels.

Claire Benton

Memories from an Exmouth Twinner

Many years ago, we joined the Exmouth Twinning Association. The town is twinned with Dinan, Brittany, France and Langerwehe, Rhineland-Westphalia, Germany. Normally each year there are two visits. One year, members go to France and the Germans come to us. The next year the group goes to Germany and the French come to us.

These are some of my memories of visits.

We had only been to France once before and here we were, getting off the coach with the other Exmouth Twinners and wondering who we would be staying with in Dinan. It turned out to be Louis and Bernadette. They live in a lovely old house, near the town centre and just outside the ancient town wall. The family had three children. Maxime, the youngest, could not understand why we did not speak French. Louis was the arch typical Frenchman, speaking no English and with a cigarette always on his lips. Bernadette was tall and slim, a musician in the town orchestra and a singer in the choir. We got along fine with them and have become firm friends over the last thirty years.

On our first visit a dinner and dance was laid on for the group at the Theatre Jacobin. In England there would have been the meal, the speeches and then the dancing. In France they were all mixed up. First there was food, then dancing, more food, a few speeches a bit more dancing and so on. Coffee was served about 1 a.m. I cannot dance and, at that time, spoke very little French. So, there I was, dancing with Bernadette and chatting to her in voluble French. That is what too much wine does to you.

Walking home Bernadette suddenly said “icy” and took us through a door into the local school. We ended up with a sociable group in the headmaster’s study, laughing uproariously at jokes in French that we did not really understand. Madam Mitterrand, wife of the President had visited the school and the chair in the study she used was known as her chair. Not knowing that, Maggie sat on it.

We are not sure what time we got home, but we were up in time next morning to get the coach for our visit to Cap Frehel. On the coach we were warned that the toilet facilities on Fort la Latte, perched on an island out in the sea, were a little primitive. A French euphemism for a WC translates as ‘sitting on a draft’. So, when we got there, we all queued to use the toilet. Sure enough, there was a long drop going right down to the sea with waves splashing in at the bottom of the hole.

Then we went to a large Manor House for coffee. The people there were trying to arrange an exchange visit, for their grandson, with an English boy. Our Fourteen-year-old son was with us, and he fitted the bill. Thus, it was that he spent part of his summer holidays on a beach in Brittany, learning to sailboard and having a wonderful time. What the French lad thought of our humble abode in Exmouth I do not know, but he seemed to enjoy his visit.

Dinan still has the Moyen Âge fortified wall around the town in case the English Kings ever decide to invade again. Inset in it is the impressive Fortress Duchess Anne. The town centre, with its narrow streets and old buildings is a very suitable settings when, every other year, it has a weekend festival, the ‘Fete de Rampart’. The entire town becomes medieval again. You feel right out of it if you are not in period costume.



When the Exmouth twinnings went they became the 'Famille de Dinan de Angleterre', who held lands around Lympstone, granted to them by William I after the conquest. We marched as such, in costume, in the evening defile around the streets. So it was that I marched around a French town carrying a banner while wearing tights, a mini skirt, and a beard.

Part of the wall and fortifications, the Jardin Anglaise, has a magnificent view down to the River Rance and the quayside. A road crosses high above the river on a viaduct. Boat trips and riverside walks are available and there is an Abbey to explore on the other side of the river.

It was believed that there was a dungeon under the Fortress Duchess Anne, but nobody knew where. Then some workmen found it, but it was outside the wall. We had an invitation to inspect it, which meant going down a small hole on a precarious builder's ladder. I got to the bottom and looked at the cramped, dank chamber with a stone slab for a bed. Then I saw a pair of lady's legs coming down the ladder. When the rest of her followed I saw that it was Maggie, my wife. I had told her that she would not be able to go down and she had decided to show me that she darned well could!

On another visit an attempt was made to teach our hosts to play cricket, while they took some of us to play Boule Breton. This is a cross between marbles and bowling. Played with balls slightly bigger than tennis balls the idea is to get as close as possible to a target jack (cochonnet). Knocking your opponent's balls out of the way is part of the game and as far as we could gather the scoring was based on who could get twenty-one points. As they invariably beat us, they were probably better at counting, especially in French.

Many more things have happened to us during our visits. The midsummer night is when all round the streets there is music from groups, anyone who wants to perform. There is anything from R & R to Mozart, by way of jazz, choirs and the town band.

There was time we took our bicycles and, after the twinning weekend, we rode along the tow path nearly to Rennes and back. One year our Chairman planted an oak in the Jardin Anglaise. Unfortunately, he got his French mixed up and, instead of a chene he planted a chevre. He said that he was confused. So was the goat. We still love the old town, with its narrow streets, overhanging buildings, and pavement cafes.

Unfortunately, age and medical condition now means going is impossible for us. We remain social members of the twinning and still have the memories of the happy times spent in the town and the many good friends that we made there.

Jim Beed

The problem of gifts is tricky.

The Exmouth Twinning Association decided to change the exchange of civic and Association gifts. This was prompted by the increasing cost, what to do with items received and was really brought home to us when Exmouth Town Hall was refurbished and we were given back many of the previously donated gifts. We held a silent auction amongst ourselves which raised money for our Association and stopped too many items going to land fill. We agreed with our local Council and respective twinning partners that we would make a donation to a worthwhile cause of the receiving hosts choosing. We have given money to women's refuge, rehabilitation schemes, recycling projects, the local school's music department and similar. In return we have requested that their donation has been given to cancer charities, the local Foodbank, drop-in centre for the homeless and the like. We match the money that our Council donate and hand over the euros at our shared reception. We ask for a representative from the recipient to accept the money. This has not been without its own challenges. The gift is often towards the end of a lengthy reception where translation of the speeches has taken place, and everyone is becoming restive. The person receiving the donation may not speak another language and will launch into a 20-minute talk in English or may request a very long translation. To try and manage this we know ask for information ahead of the visit that we translate and put in our visitor's pack. We then ask that they accept the money and assume that everyone has read the information and explain that a handshake and smile is all that is really needed. The presentation makes a very good photo opportunity for the local paper.

For our 40th twinning anniversary with Germany we debated how to mark the occasion and given our finances we did not want to spend money on an object, individual presents would be too expensive etc. so we took a large traditional decorated fruit cake. The crest of the two twin towns was copied onto an icing transfer and cost £9.50. There is an excellent shop 'The Cakery' in St Thomas in Exeter who provide this service. The overall cost of the cake was £60, and we transported it with care in the luggage section of the coach. I provided an ingredients list in English and German as there were some potential allergens such as dairy, eggs, flour, nuts and the like. The cake (from my Christmas cake recipe) went down really well with those present and the remainder was taken to be presented and enjoyed at their next twinning meeting. The cake gave everyone the opportunity to enjoy the gift.

Sue Moreton
Exmouth Twinning Association
August 2025

Chateau Life for Ilfracombe Group in Normandy

Normandy chateaus, a procession of giants and a museum of the region's only coal mine were among the highlights of the Ilfracombe/Ifs French Twinning Association's recent trip across the Channel.

The group of 18 spent four days with their host families in Ifs, a suburb of Caen, seeing the sights and meeting up with old friends. Some members of the group have been visiting their hosts and welcoming them to Ilfracombe for over 30 years!

"We always look forward to meeting up and to living a slice of real French life," says Terrena Howse, the Association's Chair. "Twinning is a unique way of spending time in France - and then the following year showing our visitors the best of North Devon. This year's trip was all the more special as it coincided with the 80th anniversary of VE Day celebrations."



The first day in France ended with street celebrations and parades in Caen to mark the city's 1,000th birthday – featuring giants, dancing, music and fireworks.



Other events included a Civic Reception hosted by the Mayor of Ifs, a fascinating insight into life down a mine between the 18th and 20th centuries at Molay-Littry, and a guided tour of the Chateau of Vendevre by today's descendants of the family who had it built 275 years ago.

Individual visits were made with our families to Bayeux, with its famous tapestry, cathedral, and the Bayeux War Cemetery, the Mémorial de Caen museum dedicated to D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, the Butterfly Farm at Honfleur, the Forêt d'Ifs, Caen market, Arromanches, the Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery and Juno Beach.

"There's so much to see and do during these get-togethers – and we're looking forward to having our French friends back in Ilfracombe next year," says Terrena.

The Ilfracombe/Ifs French Twinning Association welcomes new members and can be contacted through their Facebook page -

<https://www.facebook.com/Ilfracombetwinningassociation>

Below is a translated article (which appeared in a Plouescat newspaper) regarding 50th anniversary celebrations in May this year.

THEY DISCOVERED BRAUNTON, AND FRANCO-ENGLISH FRIENDSHIP

The Branton/Plouescat twinning committees have a tradition of inviting students to join them on their annual visits. This year it was Leo Pinvidic and Matthieu Seite who were selected by their respective schools.

In February 2025 Patricia Choquer, President of the Twinning Committee for Plouescat/Branton, messaged the heads of our two secondary colleges to invite their choice of student who merited joining the twinning trip to Branton from 28th May to 1st June.



Léo Pinvidic et Matthieu Séité, entre les présidents des comités de jumelage, Andy Dickinson, de Branton, et Patricia Choquer, de Plouescat, lors de la soirée de fête du cinquantenaire, à Branton.

A TRADITION SINCE THE BEGINNING

The students selected were Leo Pinvidic and Matthieu Seite, from respectively the third levels of the College St. Joseph and the College of Kernic Bay.

Patricia explained

‘Inviting students to join us is a tradition since the first days of twinning. Establishments are free to choose the students who most deserve the recognition.’

Following advice from members of the twinning group the students prepared to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Twinning. Leo and Matthieu became remarkably well integrated into the group. They had separate host families, and lodged alongside two other members of Plouescat twinning, which was an excellent combination. Neither student had been to the UK before.

THE PRACTICAL SIDE, FRIENDSHIP AND CULTURE.

Regarding the practical side of speaking English Matthieu and Leo confided that on day one they ‘understood nothing’, ... then they became reassured to ‘speak a bit of English’. Progress was so good that they both made a short speech in English at the official anniversary dinner.

On the cultural side the two boys loved the visit to the medieval site of Tintagel, learning about the legend of King Arthur. They also have strong memories of their first English breakfast, with sausages, fried potatoes, bacon, toast and fried eggs.

The trip gave them a taste to try different things. Leo declared that ‘I would like to visit the cities of the UK’

Regarding friendship the students said ‘ twinning is just like one big family’. Matthieu and Leo will rediscover the family ambience in May 2026 when the English visit Plouescat, equally traditionally accompanied by their two students.

Linda Norris

£ GENERAL GROUPS RATES

Prices per crossing & per vehicle



UK – France

Low season – 03 November 2025 – 27 March 2026 & 31 August – 01st November 2026

	Group	Coach or Minibus	Mini-break (max 4 nights in France)	5+ nights in France or one way
In one vehicle	Small group	Up to 25 pax	Up 10m	413
	Medium group	Up to 40 pax	Up to 14m	723
	Standard group	Up to 59 pax	Up to 14m	1116
	Large group	60+ pax	Over 14m	1364
	Foot passenger (Price per person)			19
	Pax + bicycle (Price per person)			30

Mid season – 28 March to 30 June 2026

	Group	Coach or Minibus	Mini-break (max 4 nights in France)	5+ nights in France or one way
In one vehicle	Small group	Up to 25 pax	Up 10m	493
	Medium group	Up to 40 pax	Up to 14m	863
	Standard group	Up to 59 pax	Up to 14m	1332
	Large group	60+ pax	Over 14m	1628
	Foot passenger (Price per person)			22
	Pax + bicycle (Price per person)			33

High season – 01 July to 30 August 2026

	Group	Coach or Minibus	Mini-break (max 4 nights in France)	5+ nights in France or one way
In one vehicle	Small group	Up to 25 pax	Up 10m	573
	Medium group	Up to 40 pax	Up to 14m	1003
	Standard group	Up to 59 pax	Up to 14m	1548
	Large group	60+ pax	Over 14m	1892
	Foot passenger (Price per person)			26
	Pax + bicycle (Price per person)			37

Extras and Additional Information

Driver(s) included in group capacity.

Coach driver meals : 20% discount on public rates

Drivers cabin price : 50% discount on public rates subject to availability.

Empty coach : Prices below

Exclusive Use of Group Seat Lounge on day crossings : School Groups only : **£235.00 per lounge per crossing.**

Subject to availability and excl Guillaume de Normandie and the St.Malo ships.

Luggage Trailer (Portsmouth Caen route only) **£100.00 per trailer per crossing.**

For the composition of the group : Adult = 16 years +, child = 4-15 years, School/ youth group child = 4-15 years

Fares applicable to groups of 10 or more travelling together with the same ticket.

All fares are net and subject to Brittany Ferries General Conditions of Sale. We reserve the right to modify or withdraw these fares at any time. EU Emissions Trading System surcharge (ETS) not included in these rates.

15% discount on cabin prices will be applied.

25% discount on cabin prices on Guillaume de Normandie and St Malo ships (School Groups only)

UK/FR (£) - Public Cabin prices				
Description	Night crossing		Day crossing	
	From	To	From	To
Club 4 (outside)	89	139	36	66
4 Berth, Shower, wc (outside)	71	109	32	55
2 Berth, Shower, wc (outside)	50	88	27	43
4 Berth, Shower, wc (inside)	64	98	27	49
2 Berth, Shower, wc (inside)	44	76	22	38
Seat in a lounge	5	5	5	5
Single Berth (Pod)	12	12	12	12

EMPTY COACH PRICES - £		Channel
Low season	Standard coach	402
	Large coach	492
Mid season	Standard coach	480
	Large coach	587
High season	Standard coach	558
	Large coach	683

NB/25/06/2025

[Editor – note the new category of “Medium Group” for a reduced coach price if not full]

European visa waiver: when must I apply for an Etias and how will travel from the UK work?

British travellers should prepare for is the introduction of the European Travel Information and Authorisation Scheme (Etias), otherwise known as a visa-waiver scheme. When it kicks in, which is not expected until late 2026, holidaymakers will need to apply online and pay a fee of €20 (around £17) before travelling. The authorisation is expected to be valid for three years, or until your passport expires.

Here is the timeline of the essential roll-out:

- **12 October 2025:** EU Entry/Exit System (EES) starts across at least 10 per cent of frontier posts, with central registration of people crossing the border in or out of the Schengen Area. But the biometric elements – face and fingerprints – will not be mandatory for the first 60 days; it may be that some states do this anyway. Passports continue to be stamped.
- **December 2025:** Biometrics become mandatory at frontier posts operating the EES.
- **January 2026:** By now, “member states should operate the Entry/Exit System – with biometric functionalities – at a minimum of half of their border crossing points”. In other words, a majority of visitors are likely to experience “double red tape”: providing EES biometrics but continuing to have passports stamped as well.
- **9 April 2026:** Roll-out of Entry/Exit System should be complete. Only when the EES is running flawlessly across Europe will passports stop being stamped.
- **October 2026 (or later):** Etias may finally come into play

Mondeville Twinners Visit Northam May 2025.

On Thursday, 29th May Northam Twinning Association was delighted to welcome to Northam, for their bi-annual visit, members of Mondeville Twinning Association with whom they have been twinned for 51 years.

The group arrived towards the end of the morning having taken the overnight ferry from Ouistreham to Portsmouth where they boarded a Street's Coachways coach to make the onward journey to Northam. This year they shared the coach journey with another twinning group heading for Holsworthy. Twinning numbers are fewer than they used to be and so sharing the cost of the coach makes good sense. It was wonderful to see all our friends again, just under a year since we visited them for the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

This year the visit was a day shorter than usual as the group from Holsworthy had to return to France by Sunday evening. This meant that the usual day trip had to be forfeited. Thursday afternoon and evening were spent 'en famille' giving those from Mondeville time to recover from the journey.

Friday, the day that would have been given over to the day trip, was free for the Northam families to choose what to do. The weather was kind and many families took their French friends to Arlington Court for the day. Others went to Clovelly and Hartland, some went on a day trip to Exmoor, taking in Dunkery Beacon, Lynmouth and Lynton and the Valley of the Rocks.

In the evening many of the group met up for dinner at The Guillemot in

Westward Ho! What did they choose to eat? Why Fish and Chips of course!

Saturday was the day of the official luncheon which this year was held at Moreton House, a beautiful Georgian Manor near Bideford. Not only was the group very impressed by the beauty of the house and gardens but also by the wonderful food prepared by South-West Caterers.

Following luncheon and the official speeches and toasts, there was a brief discussion about proposed dates for Northam's visit to Mondeville in 2026. Mondeville Twinning Association kindly brought a gift of delicious French Champagne for Northam Twinning and we assured them that this would be greatly enjoyed at one of our many social events in the future.

On Saturday evening Northam Twinning Association's Chairman, Mr Keith Lane, and his wife who is also Treasurer, invited everyone to a summer evening of relaxed 'nibbles and drinks' at their home. It was a lovely evening, despite not too friendly weather (!), and it really rounded off a lovely few days.

The group departed just after 8am on Sunday. It is always sad to see them go. Many of both Twinning Associations have been twinning for all 51 years. When will we next meet up? Well Northam Twinning is planning to visit Mondeville towards the end of May 2026, 14th to 18th to be precise. Much work has to be done to plan the trip. Our numbers will be fewer than they used to be. Tempus Fugit and the sad reality is that younger people are not interested in 'twinning', so the numbers of those we have lost are not being made up by new members. We will work hard to ensure that the trip goes ahead.

A good time is guaranteed

VISIT FROM FRITZLAR TO BURNHAM-ON-SEA & HIGHBRIDGE 2025 TO CELEBRATE 36 YEARS OF TWINNING

This Summer “old” friendships were renewed and new ones made, when we welcomed 17 German guests from the Fritzlar area to Somerset. Much of their programme was based in the locality, so that members and friends could also join in. This included a day at the Avalon Marshes exploring the countryside paths in the sunshine, lunch, and a guided tour of the Archaeological Site and Museum, followed by a wonderful BBQ at the Queens Arms, Bleadon, and, on their final day, a presentation in the Community Centre by a local Historian, and the chance to see the newly opened Archives, fortified with Coffee & Cake.

As a complete contrast, their day out took them across the Severn Bridge into Wales, (clearly visible from our beach), to the Royal Mint - something none of them had experienced before. In the evening, following a Fish & Chips Supper, they were entertained by a local Choir, The Serendipity Singers, who sang a mixture of songs in German, as well as English, and had come prepared with Song Sheets for us all to join in later on.

At the Farewell Evening at Brean Country Club, local Musicians featured once again, when “The Accidentals”, a Woodwind Group from the King Alfred Concert Band, played quirky arrangements of tunes from the Classics to Traditional Folk Songs. There was also a Three Course Dinner and the presentation of gifts.

Following their visit to Somerset, when we enjoyed many opportunities to connect and share experiences, our German friends spent 2 nights in Canterbury and the Kent Coast, before returning home.

Twinning ties grow stronger as German visitors tour Tiverton

Tiverton has rolled out the welcome mat for visitors from its twin town of Hofheim, with civic leaders marking 45 years of friendship and cultural exchange between the two communities.

The Deputy Mayor of Hofheim, Daniel Philipp, led the German delegation during a five-day visit to Devon, which took in some of the region's most scenic spots, including the Beer Quarry Caves, Sidmouth and Dunster Castle. The trip ran from Thursday, July 3 to Tuesday, July 8.

Speaking during a welcome event, Tiverton Mayor Neal Davey said it was a "great pleasure" to host the group. "You are always very welcome in Tiverton," he said, adding that he had enjoyed a warm reception when he visited Hofheim the previous year. "I wasn't expecting to still be mayor when you came over, but it really is a pleasure to be here with you today."

Neal also highlighted the full programme planned for the visit, including a free day to explore on the Sunday, an evening event at Thorverton Farm Shop, and a farewell dinner at the golf club.

Daniel stepped in for Hofheim's Mayor Christian Vogt, who was unable to attend due to other commitments. Offering thanks on behalf of his fellow travellers, Daniel said it had been an eye-opening first visit to Tiverton and Devon. "After my first impressions, I can assure you that it will certainly not be my last," he said.

He praised the hospitality of the hosts and reflected on the enduring importance of town twinning. "Many deep friendships have developed during this time," he said. "We have laughed a lot, sang a lot, and even had a few drinks. The idea of twinning, of exchange, of getting to know each other, of understanding each other was realised between Tiverton and Hofheim."

Adding a literary twist to the group's tour, Daniel noted that famous writers including Conan Doyle, Jane Austen and JRR Tolkien had all spent time in Sidmouth. "Our stay wasn't quite as dramatic as Jane Austen's, and not quite as productive as Tolkien's, but it was interesting too," he joked.

The two towns have been twinned since 1979, with regular exchange visits helping to forge lasting bonds between families and friends across borders.

HIDDEN BENEFITS OF TWINNING

EXMOUTH IS TWINNED WITH DINAN BUT FRANCIS DANBY ARA (1793-1861) CREATED A LINK BETWEEN EXMOUTH AND DINAN MORE THAN 150 YEARS AGO

The artist whom many Exmouth people associate with the town is Francis Danby ARA (1793-1861) - after Turner's death, he was "regarded as the sole remaining exponent of 'poetic' landscape". He lived in Exmouth from about 1845 until his death in 1861, though he had visited the town to paint many years earlier. He was "attracted to Exmouth not so much by its charms of climate as by its proverbial local advantages for the study of those gorgeous phenomena of sunrise and set which he here learnt so well how to render." Danby lived first at Rill Cottage overlooking the river Exe and later (in 1856) he took a long lease on Shell House on the Maer, where he devoted time to boat building - he constructed his yacht 'Dragonfly' on the Maer. This was not the first vessel which Danby had built; back in 1834 when he was living on the shores of Lake Geneva he had spent the summer building a sailing boat with his sons. He claimed that it was the fastest on the Lake. The innovative design of this boat was commented on by Dr John King at the time: he noted it was "by way of improving of boats used in the place".



Boat-building was also used by Francis Danby as subject matter for his paintings. For instance: in the summer of 1838 he visited Dinan and painted *Boat Building near Dinan*

From 1821 to 1829 Francis Danby exhibited annually at the Royal Academy (RA) and his reputation as an outstanding artist was made. In 1825 he was elected as an Associate of the RA, and having had such success during the intervening years he was confident - in early 1829 - of gaining full membership of the RA. However, in the RA election John Constable beat him by one vote. Danby felt bitter about this rejection. Additionally in the autumn of 1829 he was close to bankruptcy, having been plagued with financial problems for some years, despite having earned large sums of money from his art. Furthermore, his domestic arrangements were becoming complicated. By this time, he had a wife and seven children; in addition, Danby embarked on a relationship with Ellen Evans, whilst his wife formed a relationship with the artist Paul Falconer Poole. The exact sequence of events is difficult to establish but scandalous accusations were made from each quarter.

By December 1829 Danby had fled from his creditors in London to Paris, where he was shortly joined by his mistress Ellen Evans; they then moved to Bruges where a son Frederick was born to them, and they were joined by 4 of Danby's 7 children. By May 1831 the family was living in Switzerland on the shores of Lake Geneva. After a few months of hardship Danby received several commissions which rescued the situation financially and the family moved into Geneva city. However, by 1836 Danby's mistress had died and so had several of his children; he then left Geneva and lived in Paris. Two years later Danby himself was not in good health and his doctor in Paris recommended that he move out of the city; on 26 June of that year Danby wrote that he intended to go to "...the coast of Brittany for the fresh air and sea bathing..." and of course to paint "...I shall there, work from nature, the scenery I am informed is very fine...."

Danby was very influenced by Turner's work and so he may have decided to visit Dinan because he knew that Turner thought highly of the landscape there; Turner had visited Dinan, and painted in the area, in September 1826. Danby may also have been influenced by the fact that Dinan was a popular spa resort/destination for the English; many visited for health reasons and others settled in the town - they were known as La Colonie Anglaise (see Diane Monier-Moore, *Dinan - The English Colony*). Present-day evidence of the influence of English inhabitants include, Christ Church (Anglican); The Victoria English Club; The English Garden (Rue Victor Basch).

Francis Danby finally returned to London at the end of 1838 and then moved to Exmouth in about 1845.

More information about Francis Danby's painting of *Boat Building near Dinan*:

This is a significant painting for the Exmouth and Dinan Twinning Associations: Francis Danby created a link between the two towns more than 150 years ago.

Therefore - through the Dinan Twinning contacts and subsequent help from the Dinan Library - it was possible to:

- identify the boatyard in the painting as the boatyard of La Courbure at Grillemont in Lanvallay which was very busy around 1838
- discover in the French archives another painting of the same place by an anonymous artist
- liaise with someone in Dinan (Diane Monier-Moore) who was, at the same time, researching the English community in Dinan in order to write a book on the subject: she was very interested and pointed out that Dinan was a famous spa town (reinforcing the point that Danby could have gone there for his health)
- exchange information so that Danby was included in the forthcoming book (*The English Community in Dinan*)
- provide the Yale Centre for British Art (which has the painting in their collection) with the location details of the painting so that they could include it in their catalogue
- incorporate into the following year's twinning visit to Dinan a talk in the library about the English community in Dinan (which of course included Danby)

The outcomes noted above were of great benefit to both Exmouth and Dinan and provide a fine example of one of the hidden benefits of being involved in twinning.

April Marjoram, Exmouth

Exeter Twinning Circle welcomes Women's Rugby World Cup to Exeter!

The 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup was welcomed to Exeter with a ceremony in the Cathedral attended by the Mayor of Exeter and senior representatives of the City. Alan Gilpin, Chief Executive of World Rugby was also on stage. The teams from Italy and France were there, as their first match in the competition were at the Chief's stadium on Saturday 23rd August. They were received to a tremendous rafter-raising cheer and applause from the audience as they entered the cathedral in procession.

Four members of the Twinning Circle were lucky enough to be part of the audience, who were treated to a special performance from the Northcott Theatre Choir. Then the players and coaches from both teams filed up on stage to receive certificates and a framed commemorative poster.



After the formal ceremony in the cathedral the French and Italian players mingled on the green, giving the public chance to see them and speak to some of them. As ETC is twinned with cities in both countries it was of special interest to the twidders attending.

The twinning connection with Exeter was made even more significant when our secretary was talking to one of the Italian players, and discovered that she had a connection to our twinning partners. Although she didn't hail from our twinned city of Terracina (Italian rugby players tend to come from the more northern provinces) it turned out that the Italian no 8 Ilaria Arrighetti actually lives in Rennes, our twinned city in France. She currently plays for Stade Rennais Rugby.

The chance to meet and talk to Ilaria was an added bonus. A charming lady, she has even offered to assist in some way when Exeter twidders visit Rennes next year as part of our 70th anniversary events.

Exeter twidders attending the match will be torn between both Italian and French teams in their support at Sandy Park!

News about Bad Homburg (Twinned with Exeter)

July 30th was the Day of International Friendship in our twinned city of Bad Homburg in Germany! What a brilliant idea. Perhaps we should think about doing something similar in Exeter.

Of course, Bad Homburg has a few more twinning partners than we have. As well as Exeter in the UK, they are partnered with Bad Mondorf in Luxembourg, Chur in Switzerland, Dubrovnik in Croatia, Marienbad in the Czech Republic, Mayrhofen in Austria, Peterhof in Russia and Terracina in Italy. Wow! That's good going. International Friendship is not a meaningless concept in Bad Homburg – it's something to be celebrated, engaging the whole town, both officially and socially.



Homburg Mayor, Alexander Hertjes, celebrating International Friendship Day. Herr Hertjes visited Exeter earlier this year as part of our 60th anniversary celebrations of the twinning between our two cities.

2026 will be the 70th anniversary of our twinning with Rennes in France. Rennes can boast even more international partners than Bad Homburg – 16 in total! The full list of 'sister cities' includes cities in Kazakhstan, Portugal, Czech Republic, Ireland, Germany, Vietnam, China, Belgium, Mali, Poland, the USA, Japan, Algeria and Romania. As well as its namesake Rennes-les-Bains, a thermal spa in the Aude in southern France. Now that's truly international!

Let's show how our friends in Rennes just how important twinning is to us during the celebratory events next year.

We celebrate the differences when we enjoy our twinning events.

Pre-dinner drinks, in both France and Germany I have been offered (and accepted) port as an aperitif. I always offer it with cheese which I serve at the end of the meal rather than between the main dish and dessert as do the French. And I always serve a variety of cheese biscuits, rather than bread, and many excellent British cheeses.

The French have fabulous fresh produce in the supermarkets but also stock an extensive range of tinned vegetables. Friends who live in France use these as they may not live close to the markets and they can be expensive.

Also, when we go to France and Germany, they do not always factor in a coffee break in the morning. I enjoy a coffee break, maybe a hangover from working but that little break often renews my energy. When planning our days out, breaks for refreshments are usually the first question of any venue.

Bottled water, I like it from the tap! I think of all the plastic and how long the water might have been sitting in the bottle in the sunshine. It looks as if there is growing evidence that micro plastics can be found in bottles of water and then in us. Both France and Germany have excellent water purification plants and yet we are often offered bottled water. Using a table jug doesn't need transporting or recycling.

Differences with DFDS and Brittany Ferries. There is a lift and stairs are in the middle of the DFDS ferry rather than the sides as with Brittany ferries. When going on DFDS were given food tokens for a meal and soft drink or coffee. We have not been given the opportunity to experience the new ferries with Brittany Ferry but the DFDS ferry felt fresh and newly appointed.

Sue Moreton (Chair of the Twinning Circle)



Musique Sans Frontières



Gallery Singers are a choral quartet from Devon or, to be more specific, two from Teignmouth and two from Kenton. Each of the singers are heavily involved in twinning, with the current chairs of both the Teignmouth and Kenton Twinning Associations amongst its number. The Kenton duo are also members of the Starcross Twinning Association.

One of the first outings of *Gallery Singers* was performing a few songs in a marquee in the main square of Linkebeek in Belgium during a twinning / jumelage / verzusteren weekend in 2012. Kenton is one of triplets, rather than twins, being linked with both Linkebeek and St Lambert du Lattay in Anjou (France) all of whom meet together for twinning weekends.

In recent weeks *Gallery Singers* have been renewing their links with twinning. First, in May, they performed four songs to entertain guests of the Starcross twinning from Henvic (Brittany). Then, in June, they travelled to Anjou to join forces with a choir from Val du Layon – the linked commune of St Lambert and the neighbouring village of St Aubin de Luigné - for an informal evening of music making. On each occasion their first song was *Bonjour, Hello*, a light-hearted song by Teignmouth composer David Haines, written in Franglais and with which they began their set in Linkebeek in 2012. That song has also been performed previously during twinning weekends in St Lambert, Kenton, Henvic and Teignmouth's twin, Perros Guirec in Brittany, at the instigation of one or more of the *Gallery Singers*.

Twinning is all about the building of bridges between communities and the *Gallery Singers* trip to St Lambert did this in more ways than one. It was a stepping stone in reviving links between Kenton and St Lambert which have creaked somewhat since the 2020 twinning event in Kenton had to be abandoned due to Covid and the consequent loss of visibility and interest in the twinning. It was also part of the bridge building between St Lambert and St Aubin. The host choir has been created as specifically a Val du Layon choir, rather than a choir from either village, and was named *Amis Chemin* as a deliberate play on the words “à mi-chemin” (half-way). They are half-way between the two villages and also “amis chemin” which one might translate as fellow travellers.



Gallery Singers and Amis Chemin in St Lambert du Lattay (10th June 2025)

In the spirit of being *Amis Chemin* (fellow travellers) the musical evening was one of conviviality mixing music-making with food, local wine and socialising. It began with all singers joining together in an ad hoc rendition of *Sumer Is Icumin In* ("Summer has arrived" in modern English) which was highly appropriate for a scorchingly hot day in June. Then each choir sang to the other turn and turnabout, an interval with a buffet supper (*avec un peu de vin*), a few more songs and then *les desserts* (and more wine!).

Gallery Singers complemented the Old English of *Sumer Is Icumin In* by including some medieval French, in the song *Un Gentil Amoureux*, in their contribution to the evening.

Plans are afoot for *Amis Chemin* to visit Kenton and perform there in the near future. *Gallery Singers* meanwhile are considering not only a return to St Lambert or St Aubin but also opportunities to perform in Henvic and Perros Guirec and possibly a return to Linkebeek in due course, each facilitated by the twinning links those towns and villages have with Devon.

Gallery Singers Comprise:

Soprano: Rachael Shearmur (Chair of Kenton Twinning Association and member of Starcross Twinning Association).

Alto: Lorraine Adams (Chair of Teignmouth Twinning Association)

Tenor: Julian Clutterbuck (Member of Teignmouth Twinning Association)

Bass: Richard Walford (Treasurer of Kenton Twinning Association, member of Starcross Twinning Association and author of what appears above)