

## **Annual Twinning Report to Shipdham Parish Council**

I apologise for not attending the parish AGM in person but we are currently in the middle of our biennial twinning with our French partners from Noyant la Gravoyere. This year we are hosting 43 people from France and we are in the 29<sup>th</sup> year of our twinning, making us one of the most successful twinning communities in Norfolk. The French party arrived by coach today (29<sup>th</sup> May) and we have a full programme until they depart on Sunday. Our two main events are the social evening with a meal and dancing at the school for more than 100 people and a 4 hour boat trip on the Broads with a live jazz band and buffet to enjoy whilst we take in the views of the beautiful scenery and wild life. Other less formal events take place between many of the hosting families, therefore, hosts never need to feel isolated.

The French village of Noyant la Gravoyere is more adventurous than us with their twinning and also have twinning links with Supplingen in Germany and Dudar in Hungary. In the past we have been invited to attend ceremonies involving these other villages both in France and also in Germany and Hungary. Last year we joined in with part of the carnival week in Supplingen which was our second visit there, the first to celebrate the millennium. Consequently, we also have a small party of 11 people from Germany joining our twinning celebration this year. One thing I need to say is that our resources could never support a second twinning as our fund raising is difficult enough as we pay for all French involvement in organised outings and meals; this is reciprocated when we go to France.

The twinning is not just meeting each other once a year. Last year we had a young lady from Shipdham join in with a youth twinning program in Supplingen, previously we have had 2 young people from Shipdham join youth from Noyant la Gravoyere to carry out a project to build a school in Mali, one of Africa's poorest countries, and their experience shaped their future. People from both countries meet on holiday and other young people have enjoyed work experience in both countries. Last year a party from Shipdham attended a dedication ceremony to unveil a memorial to a mining disaster in Noyant la Gravoyere that happened when it had active slate and iron ore mines.

Finally, I wish to thank the Parish Council for their donation to pay for the reception when our visitors arrive. Our twinning is a formal arrangement recognised by the EU, hence we normally have a member of the parish council to give a welcome to our visitors to Shipdham. Last year Paul Chubbock also made a special journey to Noyant la Gravoyere and was warmly received as the "mayor" of Shipdham. I look forward to this cooperation continuing.

John Doel  
Chairman of Shipdham Twinning Association