

SHIPDHAM TWINNING ASSOCIATION

Annual Report to Parish Council 2013

Shipdham has now been twinned with Noyant la Gravoyère for 28 years. Two weeks ago we were in France on our biennial visit. A total of 43 people went on the 5 day visit to Noyant la Gravoyère, 31 by coach which left on Friday 24th May and after a night stop in a hotel in Calais continued on their journey to arrive in our twinned village to a warm welcome and reception with wine and special local cakes. Our own Parish Council chairman, Paul Chubbock, was already there on a flying visit and had made contact with the mayor who had shown him around the village. He was surprised to learn that their village budget for everyday functions is 1,690,000€ with an additional 925,000€ for investment; a little higher than our parish budget. The 5 day visit went very well with a communal dinner and dance, visits to one of the oldest chateau in France which had miles of manmade caves underneath where the village people and all their livestock could shelter during raids and warfare. With restaurant visits, wine tasting and the scenery around the Loire area it was once again an excellent visit. We returned via Cherbourg and on the way we visited the old port of St Malo.

We are now planning the visit by the French for next year. When we go to France we pay nothing towards the visits out or social functions, consequently, we have to do the same and that is why we organise fund raising events. Twice in the past we have managed to get a grant from the EU and we hope to apply again but it is a complicated procedure and the rejection rate is high as more countries join the EU. Our theme this time will be Norfolk farming past and present and have already made contact with Gressenhall Museum and Eastern College who have both shown an interest.

I have stated before that Noyant la Gravoyère is also twinned with a village in Germany and recently a village in Hungary. These villages would also like to twin with Shipdham but we do not have the resources to take on this extra challenge. However, we do have friendly links with them and some of our twinning members have visited Sùpplingen in Germany and Dudar in Hungary. In fact seven members are going to Sùpplingen this August to join the French during their twinning visit.

We have updated our information about the twinning in a new handout to advertise the twinning and we also produce a newsletter to keep interested people informed about our activities. This is sent by email so if anyone is interested let me have your email address and you will be included. Also we have a link from the village web site and this is very useful for disseminating information.

Finally, I wish to thank the Parish Council for their support when the French come here on their twinning visit. They were very pleased when Paul Chubbock attended their arrival reception and welcomed them to Shipdham. The twinning link is officially recognised by the EU and the authorities in this country and the twinning association represents Shipdham in their activities.

John Doel

Chairman of Shipdham Twinning Association