



**FRIENDS OF OIGNIES TWINNING ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF AGM HELD Saturday 12 October 2024**

Present: Derek Thomas, Peter Bloomfield, Susan Quas-Cohen, Sue Hodgkinson, Mayor Stewart & Melissa Gardner
plus Members: Peter Quas-Cohen, Helen Bloomfield, Graham & Val Oakley, Martin & Anne Willey, Ian & Jeanette Hamilton, John Walton & Ginney Priestley, Sue & Jec Jacobs, Luke Johnson, Ian Calvert

1. Notice of Meeting: Sent on 27 September 2024

2. Apologies: Chris Clegg, Catrin Davies, Alison Hales, Jean Todd, Noel & Joan Patterson, Charles, Maureen & Simon Kitchen, Gareth & Kim Flanagan,

3. Minutes of Last Meeting:

Minutes and Treasurer's Report of AGM on 14 October 2023 were posted on the website and no comments received. No comments from the floor, therefore Derek proposed and PeterB seconded to accept the Minutes as Read and Approved.

4. Chair's Report:

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening and thank you for joining us for our AGM.

Having put the challenges of the pandemic well and truly behind us, the only uncertainty as we started the twinning year was whether we would be able to raise sufficient interest to finance, or at least justify the financing of a coach for the visit to Oignies in May.

The number of members actively involved in the Twinning had fallen since the start of the pandemic either through the sad passing of members or hosts or the realisation that for some members, the demands of the twinning weekend was becoming too arduous to contemplate.

In response to this, we announced a new category of social member, for those wishing to continue their support and involvement but without the full commitment to either visit or host.

As the date of the visit drew closer it appeared we may not be able to meet the high cost of hiring a coach with fewer members able to join us this year and our efforts to provide a coach would have failed but for two key streams of additional support. Firstly, we were helped out by a donation from The Mayoral Charities Committee and then of more significance, we also gained some last minute additional support from members who agreed to change their plans of travelling independently and instead make up numbers on the coach to make the trip viable – so, the coach



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booking was confirmed and the trip was on - we made it to Oignies for a wonderful reunion and a great weekend that was enjoyed by all.

The work of the committee never stops... whilst we are putting together the final elements to hosting this coming April we are also assessing how we meet the ongoing challenge of balancing the Association's accounts. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the committee alone to not only plan and organise the visits but to also finance the operation with less than a third of our funds currently coming from subscriptions.

As always - we would welcome any help and ideas from all our members in raising future funds to ensure the ongoing success of our wonderful Twinning.

Before I close, I'd like to thank Peter Quas-Cohen for his support and expertise in scrutinising the accounts and his offer to continue for the coming year. As you are aware, I am not standing for re-election as chair this year so I'd like to thank all committee members past and present for their support and tremendous efforts over the years.... and finally, thank you again for joining us this evening. Vive le Jumelage.

5. Treasurer's Report:

Peter Bloomfield presented the Balance Sheet for 2023/24 showing a healthy balance going forward of £3,335.73. See Attached. These were proposed, seconded and accepted.

The card reader is being used but cash will be accepted.

Deposits have been paid for events of the 2025 to Buxton. BBQ and Treasure Hunt in the Summer produced a good profit and companies who donated prizes will be acknowledged in the programme for next April.

At this point the Committee stood down pending the election of a new Committee.

6. Election of Scrutineer:

Our President, Mayor of High Peak, Stewart Gardner acted as Scrutineer.

7. Election of Officers:



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Committee and Officers below agreed to remain in post. Other nominations were invited but non received. There were two text votes and no objections, therefore to propose and carry the following:

Chair: Helen Bloomfield was nominated and seconded. **No other nominations. Elected unopposed**

Secretary: Sue Quas-Cohen was nominated and seconded. **No other nominations. Elected unopposed.**

Treasurer & Subs Secretary: Peter Bloomfield was nominated and seconded. **No other nominations. Elected unopposed.**

Publicity Officer: Chris Clegg was nominated and seconded. **No other nominations. Elected unopposed.**

8. Election of Committee:

Sue Hodgkinson & John Walton

were proposed and duly elected. No further nominations for Committee Members received.

The newly elected Chair and Committee reconvened.

New Chair's Acceptance:

Good evening everyone.

I am honoured to stand in front of you all today as the new chair of our amazing association. Firstly I'd like to express my gratitude to Derek, who has been at the helm for many years steering us with his dedication for this very special cause. Derek, I will try and build on the foundation that you have laid.

We are all here because we believe in the importance of fostering friendships across borders, of celebrating the rich cultural ties between Buxton and Oignies, and of keeping this connection vibrant for future generations. I know that it will be a big undertaking and I am excited for the journey ahead. I very much look forward to working with each and every one of you to continue the work which goes on year upon year behind the scenes.

Twinning isn't just about the formalities or the exchanges. It's about the friendships we have built, the understanding we have nurtured and the shared experiences that we enjoy. The world we live in sometimes



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feels very divided so our friendship with Oignies reminds us of our shared humanity. The twinning must continue. To bring us together, foster understanding and hopefully create opportunities for collaboration in the future.

I'd also like to acknowledge that we wouldn't be here today without the efforts and support of the committee and members past and present. The dedication, ideas and support have been and will hopefully continue to be the friends of Oignies lifeblood. We have so much to look forward to as we maintain the ties with our friends in Oignies and explore new ways to develop the twinning experience.

So, while I step into this role with a sense of responsibility and trepidation (!) I do so, hoping that I can count on the strength of this great group of people. I look forward to continuing Derek's legacy and to lead us into the next chapter.

Thank you Derek and thank you everyone for your support and trust. Let's continue to make the friends of Oignies a twinning association that we can all be immensely proud of.

Thank you
X

... so, in my capacity as chair

The Dickensian market is Saturday 23rd November. 10.00 am until 4.00 pm

Please, if you have anything "gift wise" or unusual - not bric a brac please but tasteful items, which would like to donate we would be grateful.

I'd also like volunteers to offer their services to help on the stall during the day please.

We all enjoy our visits to France and when our French friends come here we have a brilliant time. It doesn't organise itself and the money doesn't miraculously appear to fund it all. We need to do fundraising throughout the year. I need your support please.

In the depths of Buxton winter, Malcolm has very kindly agreed to do a beetle drive. We haven't got a date yet but again, please come, support and have a good evening and hopefully we will raise money.

Next summer (!) we will be having an Alice in Wonderland croquet, games and afternoon tea event. Once more... please come and support us.

9. Annual Subscription:



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As outlined in Item 9 in the Chair's report included in the Notice sent out prior to the meeting, in order to continue to balance running costs and the cost of entertaining between fundraising and subs, the Committee propose an increase in subscriptions from £30 to £32 for the year 2025/26 to commence on 1st September 2025. Children under 18 will continue to be free.

The proposal to increase annual subscriptions to £32 was put forward and seconded. A vote of those present were all in favour. The Motion was carried therefore the annual subscription for 2025/26 will be £32.

10. Election of Accountant:

Peter Quas-Cohen had again volunteered to stand as independent accountant.
Those present and text votes in favour. The proposal was carried.

11. AOB: No items received on line.

- i) Peter Bloomfield advised of the proposed changes to the Articles of Association following the introduction of an Associate Membership category at an Annual Subscription of £10. Members in this category will not host or travel to Oignies. This was proposed by Derek and seconded by Luke Johnson. **This was voted on and the Motion was carried unanimously.**
- ii) Ian & Jeanette Hamilton will promote Friends of Oignies at a Language Circle event on 22 October at the Cheshire Cheese
- iii) Dickensian Market on 23 November in the Octagon – donations needed and John Walton and Jeanette Hamilton volunteered to help on the stall;
- iv) Other proposed events: A Beetle Drive in February and an Alice in Wonderland Afternoon Tea at Buxton Croquet Club.
- v) It was suggested that we approach The Bingham Trust for future funding.

Helen thanked all present for their attendance and involvement in the meeting. The Minutes will be posted on the website in due course. Meeting Closed.