

**Faversham Town Twinning Association
Annual General Meeting November 10th 2022**

Chair's annual report 2021-22

Following on from the priorities set in last year's AGM, a self nominated team met at No 4 NC Road in early January 2022 and continued through the Spring months with a series of meetings to plan the delayed 60th Anniversary exhibition of Faversham's Twinning with Hazebrouck.

We had 6 months to prepare for the Exhibition scheduled for the week beginning 18th July.

FTTA volunteers Margaret Abram, the then current Mayor, Cllr Alison Reynolds and previous Mayor Anita Walker ably and enthusiastically supported Catherine –Besières-Craddock in our planning task and pointed us in helpful directions of sources of information, including the Faversham Society, retired Headteacher of QE John Blackford, Anne Salmon and others.

We were also guided on the use of the exhibition space by Faversham Town Clerk Louise Bareham.

Visit to Hazebrouck

On 11th April came the highlight of the year. At last seven of us travelled to Hazebrouck to meet up with the relatively new Hazebrouck Mayor and council members. The official greeting was warm and the hospitality generous. The young councillors are clearly determined to bring improvement to their town and keen to share their ideas for change. It was especially appropriate that the then Mayor Alison Reynolds and her consort Dennis Reynolds were able to join us. Hopefully you saw some of the photographs we took of this momentous visit which were sent out after our return.

Thé Exhibition to mark thé 60-61st Anniversary

On the weekend prior to 18th July a small team of members of the FTTA Planning and Management Committee aided by Margaret and Trevor Abram set up the exhibition in the dedicated space of Faversham Information Centre in the Market Place. As part of our drive to involve young people in FTTA activities I had approached the Abbey School (of which the new Mayor Cllr Trevor Martin is Chair of Governors) and we were delighted and impressed by the six Year 9 students that the School's Head of Art Ms Jones had nominated to help us set up the exhibition. They were so willing and creative in their ideas that we watched as they mounted photographs and documents in a most refreshing way. The exhibition opened on a very quiet Monday and even quieter Tuesday following the government's Heat alert on that day. Visitors made positive comments with many recalling past memories of early years of their twinning journeys to Hazebrouck and return visits afterwards.

On Thursday 21st the Hazebrouck delegation arrived to enjoy a day trip to Faversham. Let me read what Xavier Platteau, the Assistant to Mayor Valentin Belleval had to say following their visit. (quote)

Thé Magna Carta exhibition gave a most impressive historical context to the town as did the Guildhall where the Hazebrouck visitors drank coffee, sampled local sparkling wine

and were presented with souvenirs from the Mayor and books of photographs compiled by local resident Nathalie Banaigs.

Above all, the FTTA Planning and Management Committee was extremely proud of the involvement of not only the Abbey School students but the wonderful video produced by pupils in Eastling School, with musical items and a video tour of Faversham as a welcome to our guests. We are incredibly grateful to their teacher Janette Johnson for her hard work and enthusiasm.

In addition, FTTA is delighted that local music teachers Jo Saul and Sarah Thorpe embraced the opportunity to bring together musical pupils from Ethelbert School, enabling them to perform a programme of mostly French musical pieces to the visitors under the arches of the Guildhall. Older student members of the Cupcake Quartet completed the musical welcome which resulted in one of the Hazebrouck party spontaneously borrowing a violin and joining in.

Thanks to the generosity of our Mayor, the visitors were entertained to a good lunch at the Quay restaurant and Steve Craddock conducted a short tour with a pub being the main objective towards the end of their visit.

I should like to record thanks to Town Clerk Louise Bareham and members of her youthful team who were very helpful in our preparation and running of the exhibition; to Margaret and Trevor Abram for the loan of original newspapers and photographs, to Heather Wootton of the Faversham Society who loaned materials and have since offered to house FTTA resources in their archives; to John Blackford former Headteacher of QE and Anne Salmon for lending original musical performance programmes; Julian Saunders for his personal memories of Hazebrouck connections and adventures, and Faversham Rotarians very amusing impressions of visiting Hazebrouck as an impressionable teenager in 1971.

Hopefully we can produce a pamphlet recording the success of the Exhibition and visit of Hazebrouck officials for the archives,

Cultural and social activities

Part of our raison d'être of FTTA is to enable members to experience and celebrate French culture. To this end Trevor Bryans set about hiring the QE theatre and on 10th May the showing of 'Jules et Jim' drew in a very good, and generous audience. It proved a very nostalgic event for some and for those who had not seen it before displayed a particular genre of French cinema that was avant-garde in its time.

Sadly the very well subscribed Dejeuner sur L'Herbe scheduled in a South Road garden for September 10th had to be cancelled at short notice as a mark of respect on the death of the Queen.

Priorities and Proposed Action Plan for the Coming Year

- To develop FTTA as a sustainable organisation within existing limitations.
- To plan through consultation a programme of events in which members will wish to engage and support
- To appoint at least 2 new members to the Planning Management Committee who will share delegated responsibility for developing key aspects of our activities

- To invite members with specific cultural interests to organise events that attract deeper engagement and participation.
- To seek to build links between shared interest groups in both towns eg history, sport, art and other activities
- To actively strengthen links between schools in Faversham and to arrange exchange visits involving parents
- To build on the foundations of musical interests between both towns
- Each town to plant a tree in celebration of their shared commitment to Town Twinning
- To plan opportunities to visit Hazebrouck
- To continue to plan social events with a French theme

Finally, the fact that you are here and that our French residents are willing to share their experiences of living in Faversham indicates that the link between Hazebrouck has been rekindled, must be nurtured and that there exists in Faversham a love of all things French. Please help us maintain that sense of dynamism and openness.

Thank you to all members of FTTA Management & Planning group for all their work this past year.

Richard Shipman our hardworking, efficient and loyal Treasurer and Membership Secretary despite his current ill health

Catherine Bessières- Craddock for all her work in liaising with local schools and communicating with Hazebrouck, not the easiest of tasks.

Trevor Bryans who has opened the door to liaising with QE over school exchanges and cinematographic expert for our film shows.

Chris Oswald- Jones who can sadly rarely attend meetings but is an excellent checker of facts.

Cllr Julian Saunders who remains totally committed to FTTA and its values & is a highly valued member of the team.

Cllr Trevor Martin whose links with the Abbey School and local council are very much valued.

Christine Ford, our highly efficient and accurate recorder of all our meetings and a contributor over and above the call of duty.

As for me I feel privileged to work with the team and commend to you their commitment to volunteering.

Clarissa Hanna, Chair of FTTA 2021-2022