

Bridgwater-Marsa Twinning Association

Minutes of meeting 25/02/2016

Present- Steve and Stella Austen, Barbara and Gordon Taylor, Steve and Pat Morgan, Mike Grabner, Tricia Brown, Helmi Holder-Wolf, Chris Hewitt, James Morgan. Guests Rachael and Fay Wise, and staff from St Mary's School Dawn Fothergill and teacher Christine Homewood.

MG welcomed all and handed over to Scout Rachael Wise (who we had made a donation to her fund raising to enable her to go the World Jamboree in Japan 2015) who gave us a very interesting talk and presentation about her long journey and the wonderful experiences of the Jamboree and her home hospitality when she stayed with a Japanese family. She then answered many questions. **MG** thanked Rachael and Mum Fay for coming.

Apologies- Di Grabner.

Chairman's report-MG Thanked **Steve A** for arranging us the entrance to the Parlour, and the Mayor and Council for the use of the room. He felt that we had all enjoyed the meal at the Green Olive and the atmosphere- all agreed **BT** said she would certainly go again.**HHW** apologised for forgetting the photos she had taken. **S and SA** had been to the Civic Service and enjoyed it. There were some very good local singers; Emma Britton (local radio presenter) read some poems. Councillor Brian Smedley did in his own style a presentation about Bridgwater's history. The event was well attended and there was tea and many cakes after.

MG explained that the Twinning Forum event will be on 23rd April and the 10th Anniversary of our Twinning with Marsa was signed on 25th April 2006 here in Bridgwater and we need something special to celebrate. **MG** asked **PM** if she had sent an invite to the Mayor Francis Debono- she had to him and the council.**MG** suggests she sends another personal one to Francis and his wife Carmen. He explained to those who have not met Francis that he has been Mayor for many years and has been very proactive with the twinning – he is a leading light in Marsa .We have been privileged to be included in many civic and personal events including his daughter's wedding.

Vice Chairman's report-JA explained how passionate he is about the 10th Anniversary as he feels it is an epic celebration. He asked if **PM** has had a reply from Dr Stefan Buontempo who is the Minister for Culture but she had not. She explained that Councillor Brian Smedley had sent an official Bridgwater Council invitation and **PM** had emailed again but no one had heard. **JA** explained that he had raised the Maltese National plant called Widnet il Bahar here and acclimatised it but to flower it needs a greenhouse. **JA** tried to teach us how to say the name in Maltese! He would like some others in the group to take his extra plants- **PM** offered as did **MG**.**PM** will explain what is to happen in her report. **JA** said they are easy to propagate- **BT** suggested the Walled Gardens may do this. He also explained about an email he had received that he shared from Dr Raymond Xerri who is the Director of The Directorate for Maltese Living Abroad within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Malta who wanted to receive information about us- he suggested newsletters but after discussion it was suggested we send him our web address so he can see what we have been doing over the years and then send him our minutes. **JA** will contact him with a reply.

Secretary's report- PM a successful evening at the Green Olive as **MG** had said, 14 of us were there and we were pleased to have Alex Glassford our Deputy Mayor join us and our President from 10 years ago Pat Parker who signed our Twinning Agreement in Marsa 10 years ago when he was Mayor, he was joined by his wife Jennie. They are thinking about visiting Malta this year.

PM has been trying hard for some time to contact the Walled Gardens of Cannington about donating the plant **JA** has grown. After many emails to them and different addresses of Bridgwater College I had spoken to Brian Smedley at a Town Forum meeting and he would contact Peter Grainger through Sedgemoor District Council. After the meeting Councillor Diogo Rodridues offered to speak to his father in law Simon Grundy as he works in the College in that area. The following morning I received a phone call from Jayne Alcock from College who explained that the Walled Garden email address was not working she followed it up with an email. I replied and now our contact will be

Lisa Tucker. We were asked if we would like a tour of the gardens and refreshments when on 25th April we donate the plant as part of our 10th anniversary celebrations as they will be very happy to accept and care for the plant. It was decided we would and **MG** explained to those who were unaware of the founder of the Twinning that Steve Gill was the person who had, and explained how it had happened. It was decided that we should invite Steve to the Walled Gardens- **PM** will do.

Plans for the 2nd Town Twinning Forum -on Friday 22nd there will be a Skittle evening at the Bridgwater Squibb in West Street starting at 7.30. The Mayor will donate money for food and there will be a Raffle held (All twinning groups to provide prizes), the proceeds to be donated to the Mayors Charity. Saturday 23rd in the Charter Hall in the Town Hall the 5 twinned groups will promote their countries and towns. We are hoping to be able to have flags decorating the outside and hope for an improved footfall from the successful event last year. The 23rd April is also St George's Day. In the evening there will be a musical event in the Arts Centre when our twinned groups will entertain- Dominic, Claudette and their 2 girls will perform and others. There is also a local band and an Italian one. **PM** has contacted the Malta Tourist Office and Victor who has always been very helpful over the years will send information nearer the time.

PM gave the contact information to the staff from St Mary's School about San Gorg Preca College which is Marsa Primary – **PM** explained that Dominic's girls go to this school. Christine explained that it may take time to start up a link especially when **PM** explained the Maltese school holidays. **CH** explained that there was a huge amount of work that the teachers have to do and that there would be no real time in a school day to do any extra but felt it could be a lunch time club that would be open to all the children. **PM** offered to give a talk to the children when and if it could be started as she has done this in the past. They will make contact with the Headmaster in Marsa. They also explained that they would not be able to attend many meetings due to volume of work –**PM** gave them her contact details and asked them to keep us informed. We thanked them for attending but as they had not been home since they left this morning they were excused

JA asked if **PM** had heard back from DR Stefan Buontempo after she had emailed him- she had not nor had the head of Bridgwater Town Council Brian Smedley who had sent an official invitation when asked by Dr Buontempo. **PM** had also emailed again and sent the last Minutes but no reply. She had also informed Councillor Dominic Spencer but he was unaware of anything. The plans for Dominic and family are that they will arrive on Thursday 21 April early afternoon and return early morning on Tuesday 26th.

PM wondered if we should contact Harry Mottrum a fairly new reporter for the Bridgwater Mercury who holds a weekly surgery in Angel Place as he has written some very good and interesting articles about the town. **MG** had also thought about this and will go to a surgery and **PM** will email him.

We have a credit note from the Taste of Malta who we used last year and she wondered if as we are not doing food as such this year we could get some Kinnie. **SM** will look into it.

Treasurer's Report- **SM** said we have £758.87p in credit after receiving £10 subscriptions, paying out £109 wine and drinks at the Green Olive for our "Christmas" meal and £36 for Sitemaster which is an increase for our web site also some secretarial items. **SM** also pointed out we will need funds for the Plaque needed for the plant in the Walled Garden to celebrate who planted it. **JA** suggested we visit there and **PM** will arrange for a visit late March/early April to see where it will be planted.

Membership secretary- **TB** was pleased to have been able to invite the staff from St Mary's after visiting the school many times and as she lives so near she can go into school anytime we need her too. **MG** thanked her for her hard work although she was disappointed that her neighbours who had had a good time on their recent visit did not want to attend meetings at the moment

Any other Business- **MG** asked for comments. **HHW** will be away but back for 23rd. **B** and **GT** may be doubtful as their son has a special birthday the weekend of the Forum event. **S** and **SA** were pleased to be able to attend and **PM**

pointed out that she had tried to avoid Hamp meetings which they thanked her for- they were also thanked for offering to close the Mayor's Parlour. **SM** asked if we knew if Marsa had anything planned for the 10th Anniversary but we had not heard anything. **Chris H** wondered if it would be a good idea for a gift to celebrate to send back to Marsa it was agreed that some glass with Town Crest etc maybe an option. **SA** pointed out that Wilkins had a template of the crest as they had done a piece for Councillor Ken Richards that the council presented to him after his years of service and 5 times a Mayor over many decades. **BT** also had contacts for a local glass engraver and a contact for Bristol Blue Glass. **MG** will investigate.

Date, Time and Place for next meeting.

As the Mayor was not present with the Diary

PM will contact his PA to ask for a meeting the week beginning 11th April avoiding certain dates.

Will contact all when arranged.