

10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BRIDGWATER-MARSA TWINNING.

On Monday 25th April we celebrated 10 years of our twinning with Marsa- we believe we are the only English Town twinned with a Maltese one. Bridgwater is a town in Somerset, England which is in the beautiful south west of the country.

The day was the end of a very busy weekend when Bridgwater celebrated events with the other 4 towns we are twinned with La Ciotat (France) Homberg (Germany) and Uherske Hradiste (Czech Republic) and Priverno (Italy) we had a skittle evening at a local pub called The Bridgwater Squib (this a very special firework unique to Bridgwater Carnival) where food was provided by our Mayor, we also held a raffle for the Mayors charities .A day in the Town Hall where we all had displays of our twinned areas opened by the Mayor Mr Leigh Redman. In the evening we had a musical evening at the Bridgwater Arts Centre which was the first Arts Centre in England. We had a massive surprise when the Mayor of Marsa suddenly appeared; Mr Francis Debono had flown into Heathrow, London and then by train and taxi to Bridgwater- he could only stay for 36 hours due to work commitments but he was present 10 years ago for the formal signing in Bridgwater. It was very much appreciated for his commitment and dedication to the twinning between our 2 towns

The show started with the German guards in full old uniform who escorted the Mayor on Stage to open the show, we had songs from the French and the Czech. We had asked to be able to present a gift to commiserate the anniversary and were able to do this to Francis Debono with Dominic and family present. We were given a lovely plaque from Marsa again to commemorate and the Bridgwater Mayor was presented with the same plaque but in the presentation box was a picture of the original signing. The Maltese section was song and dance in National costume by Marsa Councillor Dominic Spencer, his wife Claudette and their two girls; it was finished by the Maltese National Anthem which the whole theatre stood for. There was a standing ovation.

We then had a local band on stage (Red Smed) which included Councillor Brian Smedley (Leader of Bridgwater Town Councillor and the Town Twinning Forum) who had arranged the whole event and the evening finished with an Italian rockabilly band called After Dark who had people up and dancing, a great evening but the amateur stars of the show were the Maltese children from Marsa. The whole event was videoed by a local photographer

On Monday 25th April we held our special day. 10 years after the formal signing here in Bridgwater in 2006 when Mr Francis Debono (Marsa Mayor) and Mr Adrian Attard (Marsa Council Executive Secretary) had travelled here for a few days, Mr Bill Monteith was the Mayor here then (our Mayor changes on a yearly basis) Bill joined us at Cannington.

One of our members Joseph Abela who has retired to Bridgwater from Malta had grown the Maltese National plant Widnet IL –Bahar (The Ears of the Sea) and it needed a suitable environment to flourish. We decided to approach the Walled Gardens of Cannington which

includes a very large greenhouse with different atmospheres including a Mediterranean area. (The Gardens are in Cannington College which is part of Bridgwater College) They were happy to accept the plants and were happy to accommodate our celebrations offering great help.

There were some 30+ people present, members of our twinning association, the Deputy Mayor of Bridgwater Alex Glassford, the head of Bridgwater Town Council and organiser of the Bridgwater Town Twinning events Brian Smedley, the Guest of honour Marsa Councillor Dominic Spencer, his wife and children, Marsa residents Frank and Maria Spencer, members from our other twinned towns and officials of Bridgwater town council. There were also previous Town Mayors including Mr Bill Monteith who had been our President for their time in office. Also there were other family members.

Our Chairman Mike Grabner gave a speech thanking those for their help and asked Dominic to officially dig and plant the plant using a spade that had only been used only once by Royalty- the Earl of Wessex HRH Prince Edward when the gardens were reopened to the public several years ago. The spade was then wrapped in bubble wrap and stored for further VIP use. There was great applause and much photography!

After people had walked around and enjoyed the beauty of the gardens a wonderful typically Somerset Cream Tea was enjoyed by all which was provided by the College, a fitting end to a lovely afternoon to celebrate a very special event in our history.