

Bridgwater-Marsa Twinning Association

Extraordinary General Meeting

10/01/2018 at 19.30hrs at the Mayors Parlour.

**Present**-Steve and Stella Austen, Ian Tucker, Heather Powell, Joseph Abela, Mike Grabner, Graham Granter, Barbara Taylor, Ivor Barr, Chris Tottle, Malcolm Burge and Pat Morgan.

**Apologies**-Di Grabner, Sonia Tucker, James Morgan, Gordon Taylor, Pat Parker.

**MG** explained why this meeting had been called as due to several circumstances there was a lack of people who attended the AGM. He thanked **GG** and the Town Council for the use of the venue. Introductions were made as 3 new faces were present, he hoped that all had had a good Christmas and wished all a Happy New Year.

**Minutes of last meeting**- The main emphasis will be on our future as there were insufficient numbers at the AGM to elect officers and no decisions could be made. It was felt we had achieved a great deal since we were formed between the members and the council and **MG** outlined it to our new attendees. It was felt that if we were viable then we would need to elect officers. There was a very long discussion. **JA** passionately felt that we had no events at the moment to raise our profile; we need to reach out to the public perhaps a display in the Library entrance, more talks e.g. the U3A (University of the Third Age. Will discuss more ideas later

**Chairman's report**- **MG** very little to report, **PM** passed over Christmas card from our Honorary Vice President Joseph Muscat who he explained is the Prime Minister of Malta and has held the EU President and it was passed around for all to see.

**Secretary Report**-**PM** had emailed the George Cross Association but had no response back. She had contacted the Bridgwater Mercury, Sedgemoor FM and BBC Somerset to advertise the meeting plus about 5 or 6 different Bridgwater Sites on Facebook which generated discussion. She asked Ivor, Chris and Malcolm how they had heard and it was through the Mercury (a bit of a surprise because in the past nothing submitted had been published!) **PM** and **BT** had put our Christmas Tree up in the Methodist Church Tree Festival and it looked as if some of our contact information had been taken. The Town Twinning Forum event will take place on June 2<sup>nd</sup> this year with the idea of a weeklong static display of all 5 twinning groups in the Library Entrance Atrium leading up to and promoting the evening entertainment in the Arts Centre. The idea this year is for one or two performers from each country. **PM** had contacted the Mayor of Marsa Francis Debono and they have no money to send an artist but Caroline Wilkins from the Art Centre had given me a contact for EU monies in Malta for cultural exchanges, **MG** felt sure that Marsa Council (like the others) would be aware of this as when we visited several years ago we had a meeting with their NGO's who were talking about it then. It was asked why we had not accessed EU monies **MG** explained many years ago he went to Brussels and got all the paperwork but there were so many questions that needed to be answered by the council to complete, it was passed to our Town Clerk but nothing came of it.

**Treasurer's report**-**BT** explained that the funds are healthy with no change £651.77p. Need to think how big the account gets as only paid out for the visit when the Marsa Mayors party was here in August. Thanked the council for our annual grant. **BT** felt we need to discuss about subscriptions as

nothing decided at AGM. IT wondered if some could be used to fund a trip from Malta for the Twinning Event.

**Discussion about our Future-GG** felt we need more visits as people are aware of the German and French twinning not so much about Marsa, we had sent a large group of 10 for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Marsa. **Steve A** has been to other group meetings and they have same problem with small membership. When he was Mayor he went to UH (Czech Republic) more business type and school and family centre based. Then Priverno (Italy) again based around school and business. **JA** feels we need a Public Relations Officer to promote ourselves as Brexit is happening it should not affect our friendship, how do we survive? Perhaps go forward with college, education we have tried hard with schools' St. Georges school fell through and St Mary's school seemed keen as did the school in Marsa but despite contacting school and teacher here no reply. Scouts we have had moderate success, football (Marsa has a thriving nursery) but when asked here the local team worried about uninsured foreign teams and were not keen (**SP** pointed out that Marsa should insure their own players) There are now so many rules and regulations that it is beyond our capabilities as ordinary citizens. **IB** is disgusted by the people of Bridgwater for such a poor response. **SA** wondered why Brian Smedley who oversees the twinning has not attended. **GG** pointed out that we and the French are independent of Bridgwater International which **BS** runs and covers the Czechs, German and Italians. He felt that there is so much red tape that it causes many problems. Visitors from all countries are usually the committees and council members; there is too much responsibility for leaders. **BT** asked are people aware of our ethos especially Marsa people aware? We do have problems here with advertising as very often have sent pieces to the Mercury that have not been published so pleased this time that it was and we have 3 people interested.

**JA** has worked ceaselessly to raise our profile especially in Marsa/Malta .He wonders if our Honorary Vice Presidents could be more proactive he had invited our MP to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary planting in April 2016 but was unable to attend. **JA** has met and found MP's in Malta who appeared keen .He had tried to interest a Carnival Club here to send members to Malta's carnival in February but they did not get back to us. We need two way movements so both countries are aware of each others carnival. Marsa has a famous billiard Player who may be encouraged to come here for a show match. We perhaps need to promote ourselves and **JA** is aware of prominent people in Malta who could help us as President. We could take more people to see the plant in Cannington Walled Gardens which **JA** grew and is the National Flower of Malta.

**SA** asked about the group in Marsa, all council based there is not a group like ours although we have good links with the Marsa Historical Group and have visited many of their different groups.

**GG** pointed out that all the other European groups have European monies for twinning but we do not have anything except the council grant here in England. Friendships are more important than Brexit.

**Our Future-MG** asked do we continue, Limp along or suspend? but do not finish as it would be too difficult to start again.

The problems are that what we have tried has not really worked, perhaps we could be link with commercial firms which would need lots of work and ,as we are individuals this may be difficult **IT** feels we need to be more Proactive and look at youth, choirs etc as there are lots of similarities.

**IB** said there appears to be generally problems with interest in most things, everyone here is aware of Malta but who in Marsa knows about Bridgwater? **BT** explained about the Bridgwater Playing Field in Marsa. **CT** felt that we may have a few difficult years but if you drop something you will never get it back. **MC** wondered if we could use the Library to give information about Marsa or a CD and reading resource lending service?

**MG** pointed out that despite huge work the Twinning Forum Event did not really generate new members. **JA** was disappointed that last time we had no power point to run the computer with lots of information about Marsa.

A general consensus of opinion was we continue **MG** handed over the Meeting to our President **GG**.

### **Election of Officers**

**BT** wishes to relinquish her post as Treasurer.

**Chairman-** **IT** proposed **MG** with **BT** seconding. **MG** accepted

**Secretary-** **BT** proposed **PM** with **SA** seconding. **PM** accepted

**Treasurer-** **GG** managed to propose **BT** seconded by **PM** she accepted reluctantly.

**Public Relation Promotion Officer-** **IT** proposed by **GG** and seconded by **SA** the post **will** also try to recruit new members.

**GG** felt that we need membership subscription, a general discussion was held and decided that we would keep the same as £5 for individuals and £10 for groups as it gives a sense of belonging. **SA** pointed out that the PR role will need a budget. **BT** will collect money at the next meeting.

**MG** pointed out that the Twinning Forum may incur some expense but we need to continue as we are part of a large family and it enables us to promote ourselves. **MG** also pointed out when he and **PM** met with **BS** that we would remain independent but could access his expertise it was asked if we could access any monies from Bridgwater International, we were unsure.

**Any other Business-** it was asked how often we visit explained that are visits are mainly private but in 2016 we had a very busy, fruitful civic visit.

### **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> March at 7.30 hrs.**