



Goring & District Twinning Association



Goring and District's (GDTA's) twinning relationship with Bellême, in the Orne department of Normandy in northern France, dates from 1979.

In that time there have been numerous themed visits between the two communities including cookery, drink, fishing, firefighters, golf, gardens, tennis, schools, U3A, judo, windsurfing, singing, bridge, photography, walking, horses, Edwardian, carnival, food, dance, football, cycling, art, orchestra and mushrooms.

Our communities have exchanged many gifts. In Goring you can see the cockerel weathervane on the roof of the Village Hall, the sun dial on the top of the Royal Mail building and the water tap installed outside the Coppa Club. In Bellême there is a red telephone box and the original community tapestry. In Goring we have "Bellême Mews" and in Bellême there is a "Rue de Goring on Thames".

Over the years GDTA has held numerous fund-raising events, including Las Vegas evenings, wine tastings, quiz nights, gourmet evenings, dance nights and craft fairs.

Our Twinning has had a remarkable journey over more than 40 years, and there have been wonderful links established between our two communities. Numerous personal friendships, which have evolved over that time, remain. Now, though, we have significant challenges.

Brexit has had a huge impact on Twinning. ID cards are generally used by the French for travel throughout Europe and were used for trips to England. Now, a full passport is required. Only about 45% of French residents have passports (many fewer outside the major conurbations) which makes a trip to Goring expensive for individuals. The regulations are also now more complicated for our trips to France as the UK is now outside the EU. These regulations are not new. They have always been in place for non-EU citizens entering France.

The GDTA committee is now too small to arrange visits or fund-raising events. Between 1979 and 2019, there were around 20 committee members at any one time. Now there are two. The twinning committee in Bellême is also undergoing significant change.

Despite these challenges the Parish Council, the remaining GDTA committee and those still involved in Bellême are all committed to keeping the relationship alive. In March 2024 the Bellême twinning committee kindly invited us to Bellême to help celebrate the Carnaval, organised in conjunction with Stühlingen, their twin town in Germany.

For further information please contact: goringtwinning@gmail.com