

Bere Regis and District Twinning Association
Chairman's Report 2010

Fifty two members of the Twinning Association travelled to Cérences from our village last September, so it was our turn as hosts this year which meant beginning our fundraising in January with a Twelfth Night party where members bring 'gifts' for the raffle wrapped in recycled Christmas paper, it's often a time to recycle some Christmas excesses of chocolates and bath salts!

Further fundraising events during the year have included a quiz night, when not only our brains were tested but also our ability to create plastecine models and guess the celebrity; we held a delightful Sangria and Tapas evening and a summer barbeque, which was traditionally English in terms of murky August weather.

About twenty eight households in and around Bere Regis are members of the organisation with ages of members ranging from one to eighty years and planning for the exchanges begins immediately one trip has finished with the committees on each side of the channel exchanging feedback and providing a mini CV of ages, jobs and interests for any new members who want to join the visits. Over the years family pairings have been remarkably successful and by April when we confirmed the date for the Cérences visit to us, families were already emailing each other as they are firm friends and one of our new twinners had sent and received family photos so that they knew who to expect when the coach arrived. This made housing 52 visitors and their coach driver relatively easy!

Major problems occurred with the closure of the ferry service to Poole which meant that the Cérences Jumelage committee had to re route their coach to Portsmouth delaying their arrival on September 10th until midnight and they then had only 48 hours with us before returning to Portsmouth for the overnight ferry on Sunday. Because the visit was so short we were unable to arrange a group activity other than for the Saturday evening and with over 100 people to cater for we struggle to find a venue locally that can cope with the numbers. Our local publican at The Royal Oak agreed to us commandeering the premises for the evening with a marquee in their courtyard and they did the catering with a substantial buffet and local plum and apple crumble all of which we danced off to music provided by our local band Rapport. The Association funds pay for the evening for our French guests and we offer as much concession as we can for families with children.

We have a growing number of families with young children and this year we involved the Bere Regis school in creating the art work for cloth shopping bags as gifts for each French family.

At 7pm on Sunday the 12th everyone gathered to board the coach while Solange, Olivier and I gathered round a diary with other members of our committees and next year's date was provisionally booked for us to visit Cérences!

By Monday evening the emails had begun to fly between the households...calm crossing, lovely weekend, too short, see you soon, thank you.

We have already made a provisional coach booking for 52 people to travel to Cérences next year and as of this month's committee meeting fundraising events are being planned.

Roger Angel
Chairman.