

Report on the Hurst Green Twinning Associations Activities in 2004/5 to the Hurst Green Parish Council (April 2005)

During the past twelve months the Hurst Green and Ellerhoop Twinning Association has continued to foster strong links between our two communities. Our activities in this period have included:

- Hosting the Germans in Hurst Green with a full programme of trips and social events;
- A trip to the German Christmas Markets with Travelsphere Holidays.
- Planning our next trip to Germany, scheduled for Thursday 26th to Tuesday 31st May 2005.
- A quiz evening in Autumn 2004.

Since my last report the twinning association committee has changed slightly, and now consists of myself as Chairman, Neil Thomas as Vice-Chairman, Karen Thomas as Secretary, and Liz Ripley as Treasurer.

In general the past year has been a very positive one for the association. Between the 20th and 24th May last year we hosted forty Germans, including thirty teenagers. Events during the weekend included trips to Eastbourne and to Hampton Court Palace in London, a boat trip on Bewl Water, a party with disco and live band, a short-mat bowls session and an acoustic evening. The weekend was extremely successful – although this was only possible with the help of our host families and supporters.

We also enjoyed a trip to the German Christmas markets of Cologne in December 2004, and intend to hold a similar visit in Winter 2005.

Fundraising, which is absolutely vital if the association is to continue without external funding has unfortunately been quite difficult this year – with several cancelled events due to bad weather and ill-health. Previously the association has held successful fundraising events in conjunction with other Hurst Green organisations and we intend to continue this in the future.

The European Union funding which we were able to use in our early years is no longer so easy to obtain for a small association like ours. We will however continue to look for external sources of help and support.

Finally, one of our most pressing problems of the moment is recruiting people to come on trips and to host our guests. Whilst the German association is flourishing with a large degree of youth participation, we are finding it more difficult each year to attract new members. We have attempted to reach out to more people through our website and articles in the local press. However this is a challenge which stems partly from a distrust of all things European and a misunderstanding of what twinning organisations really do, and shows little sign of being overcome in the near future.

In conclusion the association has now come of age. Now in its twenty-first official year it enjoys strong support from its current members, and continually seeks to involve more people, whoever they may be. Whilst its long-term future is made uncertain by the challenge of raising adequate funds without external help, in the short-term we look forward to our trip to Ellerhoop in May and the reciprocal visit of

our German friends next year, and invite anybody interested in taking part to get involved.

The full text of my report is available on our website at www.rjnet.co.uk/twining .

Derek Johnson
Chairman, Hurst Green and Ellerhoop Twining Association