

Twinning in East Cheshire - The Crewe and Nantwich Twinning Association

Twinning

The concept of twinning European towns was born out of the desire for a durable peace after two bloody wars in half a century. It has now matured into a powerful mechanism for economic and social cooperation and personal enrichment whilst encouraging a respect for individual differences and aspirations. Over 15,000 twinning agreements exist across Europe and many towns in 48 of our counties and unitary authorities participate. Within Cheshire there are at least 8 towns which have been involved in twinning or friendship agreements.

Twinning in Crewe and Nantwich

Twinning has had a long and successful history in the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich. Crewe was one of the first towns to become involved and in 1957 Crewe and Mâcon in France signed their twinning agreement. The 50th Anniversary was recently celebrated with events in Mâcon and the Borough. There is also a 17 year twinning link with Bischofsheim in Germany and a recent friendship agreement with Dzierżoniów in Poland. Over the years there have been many opportunities for Borough residents to experience different aspects of European life including choral societies, schools, fire-fighters, football clubs and girl guides. Many families and organisations in our twin towns have similarly had the opportunity to experience British hospitality from Borough residents and learn something of our way of life.

CANTA

The organisational arrangements for twinning vary across the UK. Some town or borough councils organise twinning directly. Others have looser arrangements. Twinning in Crewe and Nantwich started in 1957 as a council initiative but in 2003 it was decided that twinning would be best served by devolving the day to day organisation of twinning activities and hosting arrangements to a group of committed volunteers. Thus CANTA, the Crewe and Nantwich Twinning Association, was born. The Council provided a basic grant and gave support and additional funding for official activities. Their involvement was particularly useful as Mâcon and Dzierżoniów town councils are directly involved in twinning and the Bischofsheim town council takes twinning very seriously. The continuing involvement of the Council also gave its members and officials the chance to meet their counterparts and to pursue initiatives that furthered the aims of the Council. Information about CANTA, its constitution and current activities is available on the Association's web site: www.canta.org.uk.

The Future:

Continuing Council Links

We welcome the new Authority's commitment to supporting voluntary organisations and community groups and note the valuable role that the Cheshire East Congress will play in representing and coordinating their activities. However we regard the current direct official council involvement as a very important element in our activities as well as being mutually advantageous and would wish this supportive role to be taken on by the new Authority. This would include a designated representative and recognition of the role of the Council in twinning in its publications and on its website. We would hope that the Council would coordinate and continue to support all other twinning activities within East Cheshire.

Activities

CANTA is proud of the expertise it has built up and the links it has forged. It is conscious that it also served the communities within the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich as well as the two individual towns. Consequently it would welcome cooperation with the neighbouring towns and parishes in East Cheshire who have no formal connections with European towns. In July we will take the first intake of students for an annual English language summer school, which we have developed in collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University. CANTA is particularly keen to expand its support for youth sport, such as football and rugby team visits, and other educational activities. With any youth activity the official links with the East Cheshire Council will add reassurance in this difficult area.

Funding

CANTA raises a proportion of its budget from a subscription and fund raising activities. However the main efforts of the volunteers who run CANTA are devoted towards promoting twinning and these sources of income, less than 10% of the total, can only supplement a twinning grant from the East Cheshire Council.

The Budget:

Expenditure falls into three broad categories:

- Active promotion of twinning and support for reciprocal visits.
- Expenditure related to official visits, supplemented by Borough Council direct funding
- Running Expenses

All visits by CANTA members are self funding except when on official duties.

During the lifetime of CANTA expenditure related to official visits has taken a large proportion of the budget due to the important commemorative activities and the adoption of Dzierżoniów as a friendship town. It is anticipated that in future the majority of the budget will be devoted to the active promotion of twinning activities. Running expenses have been kept below 5%.

As CANTA continues to develop its range of activities it may need to ask for additional funding. It should be noted that funding currently remains at the level set in 2003 despite the inclusion of Dzierżoniów. We would hope that the East Cheshire Council will also continue to support us in representing the interests of the area in our twin towns and in welcoming our official guests.