

# Twinning Association of Rushmoor

Despite a disappointingly small turnout, guest speakers Alison Boukhobza and Brian Jupp gave a lively and interesting presentation beginning with a 'tour' of Rushmoor's three twin towns, Meudon, Oberursal and Sulechw.

Meudon is located on a hill south-west of Paris, from which the Seine and Eifel Tower are clearly visible. With its aviation industry and a shared love of rugby, Meudon was the ideal twin for Farnborough in 1972, before the formation of Rushmoor. Recent activities involving Meudon include Aldershot and the participation of Fleet FC's under-15s in a rugby tournament. Meudon was also the end point of a sponsored bike ride to raise money for Farnborough-based Parity for Disability, and provided warm hospitality to all those taking part. Manor Junior School has forged ties with Jules Ferry School through e-twinning and hosted 35 students from Jules Ferry for a day of shared classes and a special bi-lingual assembly. E-twinning is a new initiative, with workshops offered to all schools by the British Council.

Oberursal, dating from the 11th century, lies north-west of Frankfurt and, in 1979, became Rushmoor's twin via a 'dating agency' that matches towns seeking compatible twins. There were objections at first on both sides because Oberursal was the site of concentration camp during WWII and because of the British Army's involvement in Northern Ireland, but these objections have been overcome to make Oberursal the most successful of Rushmoor's twin towns. Rushmoor Male Voice Choir, for example, has linked with Mag'scher MÄnnerchor, who came to Aldershot's Prince's Hall in June to join in the Rushmoor choir's 50th anniversary concert. Farnborough Athletic FC under 12s took part in a tournament in 2010 featuring participants from a variety of countries including Russia, giving them a rare opportunity to mix with children from other cultures. Exchanges have taken place between Farnborough Sixth Form College and Oberursal's equivalent Gymnasium, with students staying with their e-friends' families. The Twinning Association of Rushmoor helped with funding.

Sulechw, in Poland, is a modern town that lies about 100 miles from Berlin in a predominantly agricultural area. Twinning came about through a Ukrainian-born former Rushmoor Borough Councillor, whose only surviving family member lived in the town in the 1980s. Farnborough Sixth Form College also has ties with Sulechw's Lyceum, with whom they put on theatre productions. Language difficulties can be overcome in activities such as mime and maths quizzes. Shuffles Dance Studio travelled to Sulechw in 2008 to take part in their summer festival, and Farnborough British Legion Band went there in the same year.

35 local groups are involved in twinning, covering a wide range of activities including e-twinning, exchanges, events organised by local authorities, exhibitions, post box exchanges and library book sharing. In addition, the Elgar Society provided education packs to each of six schools. Most popular of the annual events are undoubtedly the Christmas Fairs, though Farnborough can hardly compete and Town Twinning of Rushmoor has reluctantly decided against inviting the twin towns this year, considering a table in Princesmead hardly comparable with the extravagant fairs and charming chalets offered by our twins. Both Alison and Brian were interested to hear of The Farnborough Society's vision for a town square and arts complex, both of which would be invaluable for twinning activities.

Town Twinning of Rushmoor has been independent of Rushmoor Borough Council since 2006. It receives an annual grant from RBC, 86% of which goes back into the community, mainly in the form of grants. Funding may be in jeopardy as RBC seeks cuts of 28% over the next four years. The whole town twinning enterprise relies on volunteers and several TFS members offered their services at the meeting.

Moving forward, Town Twinning of Rushmoor has created 5 working groups:

- Youth
- Promotion/Raising Awareness
- Fundraising
- Markets and Events
- Adult Music, Sport and Culture

The priority during these difficult financial times will be on youth. Currently, there are 180 Friends of Twinning, people who have an interest, who each receive a newsletter and notification of events, though they need not attend meetings or give any commitments.

The value of town twinning lies in: helping to understand other cultures, allowing us to be critical of our own, generating ideas, encouraging debate, developing tolerance and debunking inaccurate stereotypes. Above all, town twinning means friends and fun.

Further information is available from: [www.rushmoortwinning.org.uk](http://www.rushmoortwinning.org.uk)

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