

**Minutes of the Mériel and Llanwrtyd Wells Twinning Associations’
Joint Meeting
Held Saturday 14th May 2022 in the Mayoral Chamber
Mériel
Commenced at 11 a.m.**

Present:**Llanwrtyd Wells****Mériel**

Jim Davies (Mayor)	Jerome Francois (Mayor)
Bryn Davies (Chairman)	Madame Nadege Magne
Mrs Jacquie Brown (Secretary)	Eric JeanRenaud
County Cllr Peter James	Frédéric Lafargue
	Madame Dominique Touron
	Madame Claude Couet
	Richard ? (PA to the Mayor)

Action**1. Welcome**

1.1 Jerome Francois had recently taken up the position of Mayor of Mériel, and he welcomed everyone to the Official Meeting, on the occasion of the visit of Llanwrtyd Members over the weekend of 12th to 16th May 2022. He hoped that the strong bonds between the two towns would be further strengthened by the visit and old friendships strengthened and new friendships formed. Jacquie Brown was asked to take notes of the meeting for Llanwrtyd Wells.

1.2 Jerome stated he was deeply moved to be in the position of having happy memories of his time spent in Wales since 1979 and also his older children having special links with Llanwrtyd after spending holidays and working in the town. He hoped that these links will continue for his younger children. As Mayor, he would like all Mériel children to experience this link, which is so important for them, despite the difficulties with legislation. In this regard we need to overcome the legal difficulties and keep the spirit of the Twinning alive for the children.

BD**2. Llanwrtyd Wells**

2.1 Jerome stated that he was amazed at the capacity of Llanwrtyd to overcome difficulties such as shops closing and the economic situation during Covid and their capacity to attract new people. He cited as an example the Man v Horse Committee of approximately 30/40 people working together to do things for their town. He stated that Mériel with 6000 residents cannot raise the equivalent of around 600 residents to come together to help with projects.

3. Future Possibilities in Mériel and Llanwrtyd

3.1 Jerome stated that the previous Mayor Jean-Louis Delannoy had done a very good job, completing 6 tours of duty of 4 years each for Mériel which was tiring. He would like to find young people to boost exchanges. Jerome did not know yet if a new Twinning Committee will be formed soon or if the Twinning will stay as part of the Mairie.

- 3.2** He would like to concentrate on tourism in Mériel as it is situated between the touristic areas of the Van Gogh area at Auvers sur Oise and Ile d'Adam. He would like to promote the wildlife, the Abbaye du Val, Museum and Espace Rive Gauche – assets that could bring people in. There is a big motivation to develop the town. He explained as Mayor, he has a big legal obligation to build more houses etc. Obviously our two towns are very different and Llanwrtyd cannot be expected to host the same number of young people as Mériel and they would need to decide what is possible between the two towns.
- 3.3** Jim Davies explained that his year of office as Mayor ends next Wednesday. He will possibly return to the post after the AGM on 18 May 2022. Obviously his post is part time and very different to Jerome's which is more full time and covers a wider remit. Bryn Davies is the father figure of Llanwrtyd Twinning. Peter has been High Sheriff of Powys (the Queen's representative) until recently and was elected last week as the Town's County Councillor to Powys County Council and he is committed to the Twinning. There is a problem with regard to hosting children in a large group and information will need to be sought to help with the restrictions on hosting children. It was suggested that it might be possible to move forward by encouraging French and Welsh family friendships.
- 3.4** Jim explained that due to Covid Lockdown there were new families who had moved to Llanwrtyd and new incomers need new ideas as it has proved difficult to get new people to engage. He mentioned a new project of an old chapel being converted into a Music Centre as a Centre of Excellence. This is being led by the son of Margaret Watkins. There will be a variety of different genres: Pop, Rock, Classical, Choral, Country and Western etc. The Twinning is still strong and wants to be part of Mériel, but it is difficult to attract young members. There have been four new members to the Twinning this year.
- 3.5** There has been a new headteacher at the school who is responsible for two primary schools and since the lockdown the school children have not taken part in events and remained in a safe bubble. However, Jim agreed to invite the headteacher to a meeting, together with another Town Councillor (Mrs Linda Pace-Avery) who is also a School Governor, in order to discuss ideas with her and to see what connections could be made in future. There are several associations in Llanwrtyd (e.g. gymnastics, walking groups, cycling etc). Jerome said that he would make a list of activities in Mériel in order to place compatible families together in Llanwrtyd.
- 4. Twinning Agreement**
- 4.1** Jim Davies explained that there is a signed agreement between the two Councils, however, unlike Mériel, Llanwrtyd Twinning Association works on behalf of the Town Council and feeds back regularly on their activities. They raise funds as (apart from a small grant received by the Council) they have no income.
- 5. County Councillor**
- 5.1** Cllr Peter James said that the welcome received by the Llanwrtyd party from everyone in Mériel had been heartwarming.

PJ

JD

JF

He stated that he sees his job changing in society and young people now use computers and Facebook etc. In his new role he will be working with schools and the community. Having known each other for such a long time, he felt it very important to maintain friendships for all age groups and he would be fighting to keep the twinning connection strong within the Council and the wider community, branching out to local villages around Llanwrtyd.

5.2 Although Llanwrtyd has a school for children aged 4-11 years, he will make sure the High School in Builth Wells (for ages 11 – 19) are also connected to the Jumelage.

5.3 He thanked Jerome and his staff for working so hard to put together such a fantastic programme for the weekend of the visit.

6.2 Peter also mentioned that there are several older members in Llanwrtyd and Mériel who are very interested in the Twinning and they should be given some way of keeping in touch as they are no longer fit enough to travel to take part in the visits. Peter requested a list of past and present members with contact details to enable this to happen.

JB

7. Businesses

7.1 It was mentioned that large companies are now buying farms in mid Wales and planting fir trees in large numbers. The Town Council are working with these companies to try and get some financial support for organisations in Llanwrtyd such as the Twinning Association.

7.2 There have been some other new developments in Llanwrtyd:

- new bike and walking trails,
- a new Heritage Centre,
- Dolwen Field Sports Project. Jim Davies had donated a wooden chair and Peter suggested having a park bench with a plaque saying: "Donated by Llanwrtyd/Meriel Twinning". This might raise interest in the Twinning with both residents and visitors to the town.

8.1 The Manor Adventure Holidays

Jerome said that the visit of French children to the Manor Outdoor Activity Centre at Abernant had been a great success. He had been in touch with the Manager Peter Griffiths and would contact him again to see if there would be a quiet time to bring a party to visit again, and perhaps the Llanwrtyd children could join in with the children from Mériel. Jerome will ask Dominique Touron to organise this,

JF

9. Accommodation

9.1 It was noted that there is a variety of new visitor accommodation in Llanwrtyd for families wishing to visit from Mériel, e.g. camping facilities near the Cambrian Mill and two new gites near St David's Church.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Twinning Committee were invited to a tour of the new Meriel Library led by the Librarian Arnaud at 4 p.m.

10.2 There was no other business.

11. Closure of the Meeting

- 11.1** Both Mayors thanked everyone for attending the meeting. All Llanwrtyd guests and their host families were invited to join the Committees after the meeting at the Mairie to enjoy champagne and canapés, when gifts were exchanged between Llanwrtyd and MeriéI Councils and the Llanwrtyd Wells Twinning Association.
- 11.2** The meeting closed at 12.10 p.m., followed by a tour of the building.