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Epsom and Ewell Mayor leads delegation to Chantilly to celebrate 30th anniversary of twinning

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Epsom and Ewell enjoys a robust, and mutually beneficial, twinning arrangement with Chantilly in France and this year marks the 30th anniversary of the close fraternal ties between the two historic horse racing towns. To commemorate the occasion a 14-strong delegation from Epsom and Ewell, led by the Mayor, Cllr Lucie McIntyre, made the journey to Chantilly for a packed programme of events.

The visit, which was paid for by individual contributions, also included representatives from Nescot and the Jockey Club, four current borough Councillors, three former Mayors and other members of the twinning association, all with varying abilities in speaking and understanding French.

This was Mayor Lucie's first visit to the historic twin town, and she was able to meet her opposite number, Benedicte De Cacqueray, and several Maires-Adjoint (Deputy Mayors). There was a certain poignancy to the visit in that Lucie will be Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's last-ever Mayor following local government reorganisation and the precise future of twinning arrangements between the two towns is under review.

Of the programme of events provided by the French hosts over the weekend of September 11-13, four were horse related, and some not without incident. A morning visit to the training stables of Alessandro and Ilaria Botti was followed by a drive deep into the forest which is criss-crossed with world-class all-weather training runs. Just as the delegation arrived, a jockey fell from a galloping horse but thankfully neither was harmed.

Marin Lecour-Grandmaison Director of France Galop showed the delegation round the Chantilly race course which operates 11 months of the year with 55 race days. Other equine-related highlights included a visit to the Living Horse Museum and the presentation by Mayor Lucie of prizes at the Polo Club de Chantilly, a facility big enough for seven playing pitches.

The Epsom and Ewell delegation also visited the town's Lace Museum, home to some exquisitely beautiful pieces, one of which for example took 20 people a year to produce, as well as the Tennis Club of Chantilly. The agenda also included a trip to the historic St Peters Church, which has strong ties with the anglophone community in Chantilly, and a chance to see a new film on the wartime life of De Gaulle, including his time in the UK.

No trip to Chantilly would be complete without a visit to the fabulously beautiful Chateau and a chance to make Chantilly creme – a task that the Mayor excelled at!

Councillor Lucie McIntyre says, "I was delighted to join the Epsom and Town Twinning Association in celebrating this milestone and thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality provided by our French hosts as well as a chance to see so much of the wonderful town of Chantilly."

While the 30 year anniversary celebrations are taking place in 2026 it was in fact on 30th September 1995 that the Mayor of Chantilly signed the Twinning Charter. However a similar ceremony followed in Epsom in March 1996, signed by our then Mayor, Councillor Cyril Frazer, and this completed the formalities. The Epsom and Ewell Twinning Association was subsequently appointed by the Borough to develop and run the twinning which it has done ever since.

Cllr Clive Woodbridge (RA Ewell Village)

Former Mayor Brian Angus (RA)

The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association

Photo credit: Steve Bridger

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