



● From left: Sue Watson, chairman of Kingsclere twinning association, Peter Goff, chairman of Kingsclere Parish Council, Laurent Krif, Cormicy deputy mayor, and Karen Krif-Gente, from Cormicy twinning association
Pic by Sean Dillow

Joy for villagers at twinning link

A KEY step has been taken in forging a special bond between Kingsclere and a village in the Champagne region of France.

Last Saturday, a group of representatives from Cormicy, in the north east of the country, travelled to the borough to sign official twinning documents following a two-year campaign by villagers.

After taking in the sites of Kingsclere and traditional English pursuits, such as cricket and barn dancing, dignitaries gathered at the village's primary school, in Ash Grove, and signed a landmark declaration.

Villagers decided to create a twinning committee more than two years ago and looked for suitable places in France. After a fruitless search, they were told about Cormicy by an ex-pat friend of a committee member who had moved to France.

Following tentative enquiries, representatives from both villages agreed to progress with the twinning scheme.

For Susan Watson, chairman of the Kingsclere Twinning Association, last Saturday was a momentous day. She told *The Gazette*: "We are delighted to be at this stage. It has taken a lot of hard work and planning but to be where we are is a wonderful feeling."

She added: "Cormicy is a beautiful village in the Champagne region. We hope that the twinning will bring more culture to Kingsclere."

By Simon Moss

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Cormicy, a village with around 3,000 inhabitants, suffered damage in both world wars and is a village "rich in history".

Karen Krif-Gente, chairman of the twinning association in Cormicy, added: "There are many similarities between our two villages. We are both in beautiful countryside close to major towns."

She added: "We are very happy to be here to celebrate the occasion."

In September, a group from Kingsclere will travel to Cormicy to complete the deal in France. There, they will be taken on a tour of the Champagne region and will also have the chance take part in a French fun run.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Councillor Cathy Osselton, ward member for Kingsclere, was among the guests who celebrated the twinning ceremony.

She said: "This is a great occasion for Kingsclere, and I hope it will be beneficial for the school. I hope they will take the opportunity to learn a new language and a new culture. This could be the start of exchange programmes which I think would be great for the children."

On Sunday, eight of the members of the travelling party also took part in the village's 5km run.

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