

Ceremony of the 25th twinning anniversary  
Reigate & Bandstead – Eschweiler

Speech of Dominique BAERT  
Member of Parliament- Mayor of Wattrelos

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Mister Mayor, Dear David,  
Herr Bürgermeister from Eschweiler, Dear Rudi,  
Mister President of the Twinning Association of Eschweiler,  
Dear Hartmut, dear Penelope, Janet, cher Jean-Pierre Huile de Brunoy,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends,

Six months after a very pleasant twinning ceremony in Eschweiler, today, it is, if I may borrow a sporting expression, the return match. I remember that during the first-leg match in Eschweiler, the friendliness, fraternity and friendship among peoples had won ! I am sure it will be the same thing today.

Thank you, dear friends of Reigate, dear David, for welcoming us so warmly and introducing us to the attractions of your city and your region.

We, who in the North of France have a reputation -and tradition- of knowing how to welcome and receive generously, we just feel like home here.

Today, we are here to celebrate a fruitful twinning. In Wattrelos we have six sister towns. At the top of them, of course, is Eschweiler, which was the first of all. It was thirty five years ago.

Sincere relationships, lasting between two towns from different countries, represent the most beautiful, and moving thing, in terms of fraternity, international solidarity, mutual understanding and respect as well.

In Wattrelos, a border town which lives also near Belgium, we understood it very early and we wanted to have, as I often say, a **Europe in advance**.

This year we celebrate the 20th twinning anniversary with Köthen in Germany, as well as with Guarda in Portugal. And within two or three years from now, we will do the same with our Hungarian and Polish sister towns, Mohacs and Siemanowice respectively.

During all these years, our youth, our seniors have got the opportunity to know and to discover other traditions, other cultures, other skills, in education, in community, in sport, in cultural life, or in leisure. **And if sometimes we speak with our hands, we talk mostly with our eyes, and always with the heart**. It's obvious : we are members of the same community !

English and German friends, you can be thanked, you can be proud above all. So we are in front of the strength of your relationships, and your strong ties.

Now we are no longer strangers to each other. We have grown together with Eschweiler for so many years, that our citizens are now part of the same family. Regarding Reigate & Bandstead, we have enjoyed seeing each other for a while, since 2004 precisely. First, thanks to the Twinning association, which attracted considerable attention during our Carnival. Let me thank Penelope, Janet and Graham !

But I also remember that in 2009, the musical group The Redhill Corps of Drums and Band put up a much appreciated performance during that carnival. Thanks to them, we set our relationship to music !

The current events on Wattlelos side, are now the school exchanges. Thus in October 2008 a project emerge between our private school L'Enfant Jésus and the elementary school Saint John's of Redhill. A meeting between teachers and directors was held in July 2009, followed by another one in November. Thus a year ago.

And what do you think happened ? Of course : an exchange of students, the first French-English of the history o of Wattlelos, from 29 to 31 March, in Reigate and Banstead – and in the other side, it will take place in Wattlelos next week.

That's what I call **the true Europe** !

That's what I wanted to tell you this morning. I thank you once again for your warm welcome, dear English friends, on the behalf of the people of Wattlelos. And I can also tell you my, our friendly hello to our old friends from Eschweiler, old is not referring at the Birthday of Rudy, nor Hartmut ; but means only how is strong our lasting relationship.

You know it, Ladies and Gentlemen, Damen und Herren, Mesdames et Messieurs, in France, our motto is Freedom, Equality, Fraternity. One can build Fraternity by shaking hands, by working together for the well-being of humanity. During 25 years, you raised Fraternity. **Go on, let's go on together** !

Happy twinning birthday to Reigate & Banstead and to Eschweiler !