



Newsletter

March 2021

Guest Editor: Brian Read

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A Roadmap to the Future

A year ago, we had no idea of how our world would be about to change so dramatically. Looking back at the March 2020 Newsletter, we see that we had a full programme of events planned: the monthly evening meetings, the Europe Day meal, summer drinks party, visits from and to Argentan, the canoe camping weekend and our flagship Twinning Week. All these had in turn to be cancelled as we gradually appreciated the impact of the pandemic.

Most immediately last March, many of us were looking forward to a twinning trip to Lucca at the beginning of April. Travel and accommodation were booked. The programme of activities featured the garden festival. However, the news coming out of Italy in early March was concerning. The disappointing decision was reluctantly taken to cancel our visit. In the event, the airline cancelled flights and we were refunded. Perhaps we can reschedule the visit to spring 2022?

However, by summer things were starting to look more hopeful. The July Newsletter headlined "Abingdon Slowly Unlocking". We dreamt of a haircut and a pint in a pub garden. We made tentative plans for evening meetings in the autumn with the limited reopening of Preston Road Community Centre. In August, the government bribed us to eat out! The first ADTTS event, a visit to the Bothy vineyard was an enjoyable success. But this proved, too, to be the last time we met together before another lockdown.

The November Newsletter, "Abingdon Facing the Second Wave", recorded that, with the second lockdown, hopes of meetings died (PRCC had to close) and Christmas lunch was cancelled. We did finally embrace Zoom and held our AGM online. Overall, 2020 was a lost year in many ways, including for twinning. Though one positive outcome was the much-enhanced monthly Newsletter and increased news and dialogue with our twin towns. Zoom meetings with European participants have been great!

What now? Prospects for the future are encouraging. The current third lockdown seems to be working, though there is a way to go yet. Most members have been vaccinated. That's far from total protection from the virus, but should prevent any serious illness. The government's roadmap gives a definitive vision, even if it will be a long haul. It means no haircut or pint before mid-April. Certainly, no holidays abroad will be allowed before 17th May at the earliest. Even then, will other countries be safe and willing to accept visitors? Nevertheless, perhaps we can really consider arranging twinning visits this autumn? Let's try! Meanwhile, for now it looks like we must continue to hold our monthly meetings on Zoom. One thing that we should be able to look forward to, when all legal restrictions are lifted, is a celebration garden party in June.

Brian Read



Forthcoming Events

Due to the current Covid-19 situation, we are unable to plan our usual full winter programme.

Thursday 18 th March	Evening Meeting – Abingdon Liveable Streets
Thursday 15 th April	Evening Meeting – Quiz
Sunday 9 th May	Europe Day

Evening Meeting

Thursday 18 March 2021 – 8pm Online by Zoom

This month we address our environment when local activist Robin Tucker will give a talk entitled, **"A future cycling and walking network for Abingdon – where and why?"**

Robin is Chair of the Oxfordshire Cycling Network and a founder member of Abingdon Liveable Streets, the group that developed the plan for Abingdon. He is also a member of Abibike, Abingdon Freewheeling, Abingdon Carbon Cutters, Cycling UK and The Ramblers, so happy to give local and national views on cycling and walking, and the benefits they can bring to individuals and to society.

Members will be emailed instructions to join on Zoom.

Richard & Anne Smart

Evening Meeting

Thursday 15 April 2021 – 8pm Online by Zoom

Our annual quirky quiz returns! Arm yourselves with pencil and paper and be prepared to be both educated and baffled. This year the evening's fun will, of course, be on Zoom. Members will be emailed joining instructions a few days beforehand.

Peter Dodd & Brian Read

Spring Flowers

Periwinkle & Snowdrops

(Nick Marsh)



Recent Events

Evening Meeting - Colmar

Thursday 18 February 2021 – Online by Zoom



On Thursday 18th February there was a joint Zoom between Colmar and Abingdon twinning groups. The main emphasis of the evening was to wish Ian and Angela Waterhouse good luck in their relocation to the north of England to be nearer their son and family, and to share reminiscences of our various visits to Colmar.

Stella welcomed the group and Howard valiantly managed our mute/unmute occasions; this was no mean task as there turned out to be forty-eight of us.

David Mallen and Marc Lischer did a great job in circulating their members and we were greeted by Madame Michèle Sengelen-Chiodetti, the Deputy Mayor of Colmar in charge of international affairs. It was lovely also to hear of Marie-Louise Vlegels from Sint-Niklaas who was in hospital with a broken shoulder and we send our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

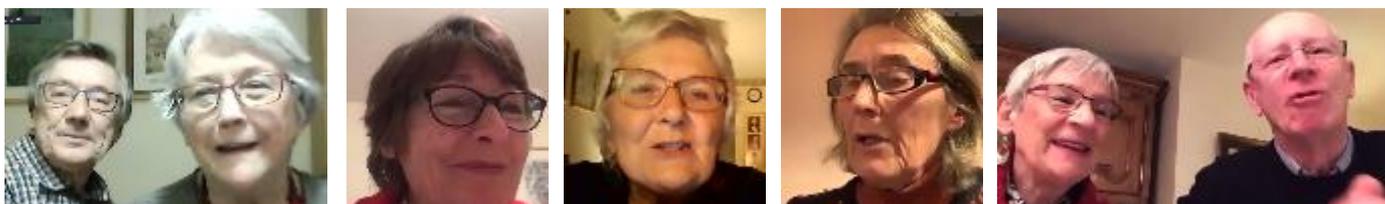
Stella read a greeting to the Waterhouses from Pierre and Ionie Silliere from Argentan.

Ian and Angela recounted their reminiscences from their times in Colmar, followed by Anne Dodd on the language school that she attended, Margaret Hancox's and the walking group, and I briefly recounted my wonderful week walking with Colmar walkers led by Robert Manion.

A familiar theme was the wonderful coffee and cakes that appear everywhere you go in Colmar, a universal theme.

The evening concluded with David and Stella thanking us all for attending and wishing Ian and Angela well with the hope that we might all meet again in person sooner rather than later.

Norma Queralt



100 Days Out from Abingdon - Part 7

Collated by Stella

Britain is a nation of garden lovers. Here are just a few special ones within an hour and a half drive from Abingdon.

61. In order to visit local private gardens buy a copy of 'The Yellow book' from stationers and find when local gardens are open. Usually grouped together for opening days visit a village or a street and marvel at the different gardens usually hidden from view. Each garden promises at least 40 minutes of interest. Some serve coffee and tea and even cake!

62. Oxford Botanic Garden is world class and the oldest botanic garden in Britain. Explore the gardens, sit by the river and watch the punting, or go across the road to hire a punt for yourself. Many of the Oxford colleges also have superb gardens that can be visited at different times. Look out for St John's, St Catherine's, Exeter College, Corpus Christi College, Magdalen College and the War Memorial Garden at Christ Church. All within walking distance of the Botanic Garden.

63. Nuneham Courtney Arboretum (15 mins) is the arboretum for the University of Oxford. Particularly beautiful in spring and Autumn. Westonbirt Arboretum (1hr 15 mins) holds one of the world's greatest collection of trees. Very low key but with some beautiful trees is Albert Park in Abingdon.

64. Visit the world-famous Chelsea Flower Show (1hr 30mins), usually held in late May. Make sure you have tickets though. Hampton Court Palace Show takes place in July (1hr 30mins) and tickets are more easily available.

65. London's Kew Gardens (1hr 15mins) are famed for their glass houses, their seed collection and Japanese pagoda. Lovely places there to get a meal and a wonderful shop. Allow a whole day.

66. Another world class garden is RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) Wisley (1hr 30mins) for horticultural inspiration.

67. The National Herb Centre at Warmington near Banbury (1hr) is a mecca for herbs. Enjoy tea and cake there, maybe infused with lavender. In the summer visit the lavender farms near Snowhill in the Cotswolds (1hr).

68. In the Cotswolds there are many lovely gardens. Visit Bourton House Garden at Bourton on the Hill (50mins) for a truly gorgeous garden of just three acres. Also visit Sezincote, on the edge of the same village for an Indian experience.

69. Hidcote Manor Gardens (1hr 15mins) are also outstanding. Created as series of 'rooms' it is easy to spend a whole day there.

70. Waterperry Gardens (40 mins) were created as classrooms for female horticultural students. Now open to the public the daffodil collection in spring and the herbaceous border are particularly fine. Go on the website and sign up for a day's course in something horticultural. There is also a very fine cafe and gorgeous shops.

Watch out for Part 8 in a future edition!

Didcot - Twinned with Meylan (France) and Planegg (Germany)

Continuing our series of articles about twinning by other towns in the local area, this month we feature Didcot. **Axel MacDonald** tells us about their two twin towns.

At first sight it is not obvious what links Didcot (Oxfordshire) with Meylan (Isère) or how they come to be twinned. Didcot lies in rolling farmland between the Thames valley and the Berkshire Downs, and started life as a railway town. Meylan, in the Isère valley lies between the massifs of the Chartreuse and Belledonne, has its origins in farming. What these communities share is a high concentration of world class science research facilities, providing excellent employment prospects, but putting pressure onto the housing markets in both regions. Twinning has allowed us to compare how such pressures are mitigated in France, Germany and the UK which, while highlighting differences in local government in the two countries, provides new insights. Twinning, however, is mostly about people not institutions.



Visiting Meylan, we've seen the stunning and sometimes harsh beauty of the mountains and learned the fascinating history of the nearby town of Grenoble. The Meylannais delight in south Oxfordshire's open views across the countryside, our thatched cottages, village pubs and the chance to visit Oxford. Our hosts have shown us the home of the Chartreuse liqueur, walnut production, vineyards, caves and a hydroelectric station (to mention a few) while we have proudly shown off our Steam Railway Museum, iron age hill forts and visited a beekeeper and vineyards. Our most bizarre twinning experience? It has to be 'competitive

folk singing', when residents of the two towns, after an excellent dinner with copious wine, serenaded each other in turn with their favourite traditional songs. As befits a twinning event, the outcome was a draw. We were due to celebrate 21 years of being twinned with Meylan in 2020 but this had to be cancelled. We are now hoping that a party from Meylan will be able to come to Didcot this September.

The same links that bind communities in Meylan and Didcot are also true for Planegg (Bavaria). In fact, Planegg and Meylan have been twinned since 1987 and both towns were delighted when Didcot completed the triangle in 2013. Planegg is a picturesque small town on the banks of the Würm river a few miles southwest of Munich, known as being a concentration for Biotech companies. It has its own brewery, a castle and a famous church. Visiting groups have taken trips into the nearby mountains, done a tasting tour of Munich, seen inside Munich's famous Town Hall and taken part in the world renown Oktoberfest.





It is quite a challenge keeping up with two twin towns. We have found that we can sustain only one visit each year, meaning that it takes four years to complete a cycle of trips. Our interactions take place in mid-September, which suits the schedules of our 'twins' who both have links with other towns. Unlike many twinning trips, we do not all necessarily travel together. Whilst flying to Lyon is preferred by most people for visiting Meylan (there is a regular bus service from the airport to Grenoble) others prefer the Eurostar either via Paris or Lille and on to Grenoble by TGV. Flights to Munich are possible from a number of

different airports, and travellers choose based on times of flights and cost.

Our twinning association's aims are to highlight our links with these two fascinating towns, and to encourage interactions between their communities. Local primary schools have had exchanges and there have also been youth visits, art exhibitions and shared musical performances. Along the way we learn about how ordinary people live their lives and make lasting friendships.

For a summary of the twin towns in the Vale of White Horse, see adtts.eu/vale.htm.

January Snow



Letter from Lucca

Spring is finally in the air!

In the last 7 days the weather has definitely improved. We benefit from early spring temperatures and in the last 2 weekends I have got into the habit of cycling in the surrounding nearby Lucca.

I'm sure that those who visited Lucca in the past, recognize the Aqueduct of Lucca that is not as ancient as the Roman period; on the contrary, it was built in the mid-19th century to give Lucca fresh running water. *(photo below right)*



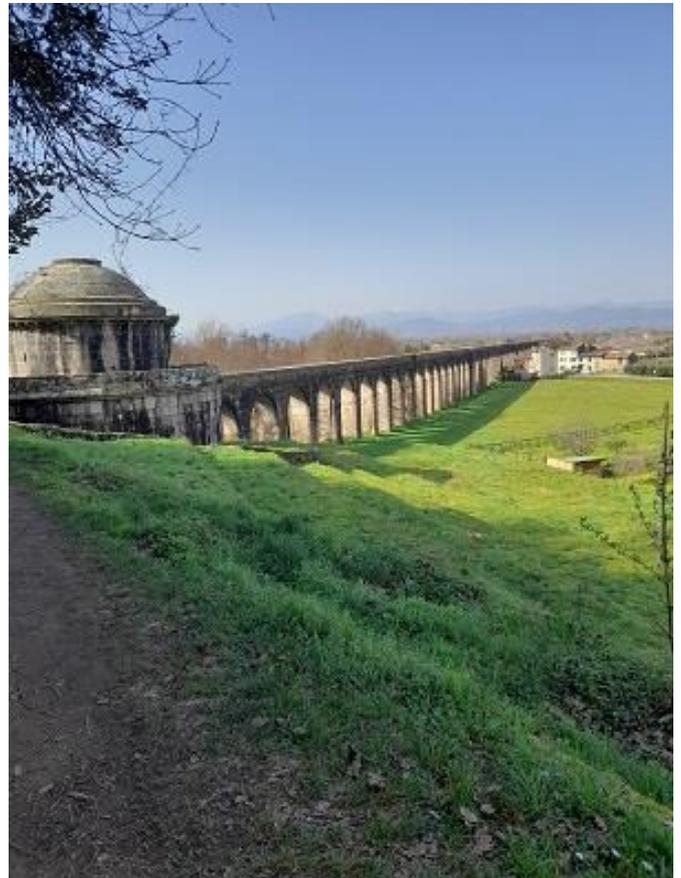
The water comes down from the surrounding hills and is conveyed in a water collector system a little further up from the aqueduct called ALLE PAROLE D'ORO (The golden words) as you can see from the photo. *(photo below left)*

While riding upwards on the hills I found a last sign of winter: hellebores, gorgeous green hellebores that grow wild also in some ancient gardens near my house.

Next Sunday I'll be visiting the Camellietum at Sant'Andrea di Compito. Stay tuned! New photos on arrival!

Stay safe, but don't stay always at home.

Maria Curto



Don't call me names

Siegfried Waterschoot from *Sint-Niklaas* has contributed his musings on the curiosities of British menu nomenclature.

Some days ago, I heard the following on the radio:

"Due to the Brexit, the British fishermen have to refocus on the domestic market. The hassles at customs, to be able to sell on the continent, take a lot of time and fish doesn't get any better with every hour of waiting. The British public are barely aware of the existence of other species of fish in their seas besides cod or haddock. And it doesn't help that they have such unappetizing names."

I can't blame you.

Coalfish. Just the thought of charcoal gritting between your teeth. And how does a *megrin sole* look on the menu. It gives you the shivers.

I don't know about you, but to me *monkfish*, sounds definitely ascetic. We may have to visit a "chippy" afterwards to satisfy our hunger.

Imagine, you're being served a *spider crab*, creepy indeed. Or a *dogfish*. Is this a part of a dog's dinner or are you being served a fishy version of your favourite pet on a plate?

And how about a *pouting*. What's there to pout about? The taste, the amount of bones?

In the same radio programme, it was said that a Cornish lady suggested to rename those fish in a more culinary friendly way. She would turn the megrim sole into *Cornish sole* and the spider crab into *Cornish king crab*.

With a coastline of over 2200 miles, I think the options are plenty.

However, I couldn't help myself to invent some options of my own.

What about *cod's cousin* instead of coalfish (they belong to the same family) or the *broad smiling one bone* for monkfish.

How does *sea eel* sound instead of dogfish and *Valentine's favourite* for pouting?

Talking about more friendly culinary descriptions.

Some items on a British menu raise quite a few foreign eyebrows as well.

I know that the names of those dishes are deeply embedded in the British heritage, but you have to admit that reading a menu, for the first time abroad, you would be most apprehensive.

Imagine, in a self-service, you would have "toad in a hole" for as a main and "flies cemetery" for pudding. I can't help myself but to hear a distance croaking of a toad and I'm almost expecting to see a sticky tongue flashing out of the pastry to catch some flies on my cemetery.

I dare you to go to an artisan bakery and ask the baker if he has "spotted dick". You might end up in an article in the local newspaper, titled: Killed by a loaf of whole grain bread.

Do I need to eat "bangers and mash" in a mine clearance suit?

Should I act like a teenage girl meeting her, for that moment, all-time favourite pop star, when I try "bubble and squeak"?

Is there a problem, if I don't like the taste of cloth in my mouth, when I try "pigs in blankets" for the first time?

And why do delicious tasting desserts have to have such unsavoury names like "Eton mess" and "barmbrack"?

It's also very confusing that, in the English language, all desserts are puddings, but not all puddings are desserts.

Here's my take on all this: wouldn't it be easier to name the dish by its main ingredient? "Faggots" are meatballs and a "Welsh rarebits" is just cheese sauce on toast.

Of course, it would take all the mystery away, the poetic freedom to glorify humble dishes. And, of course, also a bit of the fun.

It's just that, describing the main ingredient would help us poor foreign souls a lot to order, want to try and admire those dishes.

Who knows, perhaps the great unsavoury sounding fish crisis of 2021 will lead to a revisiting of all names of dishes on the Great British Menu.

February Floods



Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan Focus Groups

Simon Hills wishes to draw members' attention to the current development by the town council of a neighbourhood plan for Abingdon and invites individual participation in focus groups of interest:

Our Town Council is creating a Neighbourhood Plan and needs your help to make it the best it can be.

The Neighbourhood Plan will take a long-term view of what in our town needs 'protecting' and what could be 'changed'. This plan will be written by the local community of Abingdon, the people who know and love the area, and its creation is being led by a steering group accountable to the Town Council. Upon completion it will be subject to an independent examination and then a local referendum. Should this referendum be successful, the plan has legal force. The local planning authority (Vale of White Horse Council) must then take the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan's policies into account when considering planning issues across the town.

So, the Abingdon Neighbourhood Plan will be a powerful tool to ensure our community gets the right types of development, in the right place, at the right time, and that we can build back better as we emerge from the pandemic that has affected the lives of so many in our town.

While Abingdon Town Council is responsible for the formal process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan it is vitally important that local community groups and residents are directly involved in developing it, including the vision and objectives that will inform the planning policies.

The steering group is very keen to get views from different constituencies in the town, the young, the not so young, those with families, those who live on housing estates, those who live in the town centre.

In the coming month the consultancy supporting the steering group in the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan will be holding themed, virtual 15 person focus groups to gather views and ideas.

Details of all the focus groups are on the town council's web site:

<https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/abingdon-news/abingdon-thames-town-council/neighbourhood-plan-focus-groups>

Those focus groups that might interest members may be **Culture** and **Heritage & the Built Environment**.

The above web page has links to the Eventbrite invitations where you can sign up.

Annual Membership

In addition to nearly all current members who have renewed their subscription, we wish to welcome as new members Gwen Bevington, Sarah Dennis, Hilary Lombard and Leen Van Broeck.

*Rosemary & Ian Jardine,
Joint Honorary Treasurers and Membership Secretaries*

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*The deadline for copy for the next newsletter is two days before the end of the month.
Please send contributions to newsletter@adtts.eu.*

Keep right up to date by going to www.adtts.eu.



27 February 2021