



Newsletter

October 2025

Guest Editor: Nick Marsh

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From the Editor

After a remarkably long and very warm summer the mornings are getting darker and colder, the weather forecasts tell of forthcoming frosts, rain and storms, the nights are drawing in, and this cycle will continue until the winter solstice, the day of the year with the fewest hours of daylight, December 21st. After this date the process once again reverses as days begin to get lighter and lighter until midsummer.

However, despite the days getting darker, for us twinnings they will be brightened by the new 2025/2026 Twinning Season, which kicked off with the AGM on 18th September, and promises a host of enjoyable events to come. Our next event being the wine tasting on 16th October featuring wines from our twin town regions, organised by Majestic Wines.

Our programme for this Autumn, in addition to our regular monthly meetings, includes our popular Christmas meal get together at the Hilton Hotel. This coming year will see activities with Argentan, including outdoor activities for young people and the Bastille Day celebrations, and a French exchange for younger people. Other exciting news is that one of our youngest members, Mark, has volunteered to start an Instagram page and a social media account with photos!

Church twinning is also active with a visit to Sint-Niklaas planned for 2nd - 6th October, and a barn dance planned for February. Activities are also being planned to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the birth of St Edmund.

This Newsletter contains a report of the AGM, and of the excellent Treasure Hunt around our local villages and a preliminary list of events for the next few months, as well as a special report from our Sint-Niklaas correspondent, Siegfried Waterschoot on their recent twinning weekend.

Nick Marsh
Editor

Forthcoming Events (October 2025 – December 2025)

2 nd – 6 th October	Church Twinning visit to Sint-Niklaas
Thursday 16 th October	Wine Tasting at PRCC
Thursday 20 th November	Evening meeting at PRCC
Sunday 21 st December	Christmas Lunch at the Hilton Garden Inn

Membership Subscriptions 2025/2026

**Subscriptions for members for the year to August 2026 are due.
The current rates are £7.50 per person or £15.00 for a family.**

They can be paid with a Banker's Order. A Banker's Order form can be found on the ADTTS website (www.adtts.eu) under Contacts. If you already pay by Banker's Order, could you please check that you are paying at the current rate.

Payment can also be made directly to our Bank account by BACS to:

National Westminster Bank plc, Market Place, Abingdon
Account: Abingdon & District Twin Towns Society
Sort Code: 60-01-01 **A/c No:** 08616752

Please use your name as a reference.

Payment by cheque, payable to ADTTS, should be sent to: Susan Read, Treasurer.

Evening Event – Wine Tasting

Thursday 16 October 2025 – 19:30 for 20:00 at PRCC

Organised by Majestic Wines, this wine tasting will feature wines from the regions of our twin towns. Appropriately themed refreshments will be served.

Treasure Hunt

Wednesday 10 September 2025 (Postponed from 17 July)

Following the success of last year's treasure hunt, Stella, Howard and Peter devised a new one for this year, all based on churchyards in some of our pretty villages in the south of the county.

The Treasure Hunters, numbering around 30 in a variety of cars met in Waitrose car park, at 5pm on Wednesday 10th September and were handed a sheet of clues.

Off we set, each car planning its own route around the villages, many were stymied by extraordinary traffic jams around Sutton Courtenay and Steventon, following the sudden closure of the Drayton Road due to a gas leak. The weather conditions also presented challenges, with driving rain and strong winds, delays were also caused by accidents on the country lanes.



Harry, Alison and Dave



*Fr. Matthew Topham telling us
about East Hendred and the Dame*

However, many interesting church graveyards were visited, including All Saints Church in Sutton Courtenay where Eric Blair aka George Orwell is buried, St Andrew's Church in Letcombe Regis where a Maori captain was buried, and St Mary's Church in East Hendred where a Dame was buried.

Like last year, the treasure hunt finished at The Wheatsheaf in East Hendred at 8pm, in time for dinner, where we enjoyed a superb meal, with extremely large portions, which was followed by the counting of the marks and the prize-giving ceremony. During the counting

process we were lucky enough to be overheard by Fr. Matthew Topham, priest of the Roman Catholic St Mary's Church in East Hendred, who then gave us a most interesting talk on the church and on the history of the Dame in the graveyard, whose gravestone was the subject of one of the challenges. "Dame" being the honorific for an English Benedictine nun. First Prize went to new members Alison and Dave, who scored maximum points.

A huge thank you to the organisers for putting together such an interesting and enjoyable challenge

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Evening Meeting – AGM - Thursday 18th September

Thursday 18 September 2024 - at Preston Road Community Centre

Members of the Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society (ADTTS) returned on Thursday 18th September after the summer break to Preston Road Community Centre for the first meeting of the twinning year. As usual this was the Annual General Meeting. It provided an opportunity to review the past twelve months, to elect officers and committee, and to consider plans for the coming year.

The Society's Chairman, Stella Carter, welcomed to the meeting the Mayor of Abingdon Cllr Rawda Jehanli. Norma Queralto agreed to take the minutes. The business followed the usual format and was despatched thoroughly, but efficiently. The papers for the meeting had been available on the Society's website for members to see in advance.

Stella Carter, in her Chairman's report, described events from twinning during the year. Moving on to the future, Stella outlined the draft programme for the coming year. An interesting series of monthly meetings is planned, as well as the customary Christmas Lunch, Europe Day Meal and summer Garden Party.

The Mayor took the chair for the elections. The meeting was happy to re-elect the present Chairman and Vice Chairman and committee. The Society continues to lack a Secretary. Susan Read was elected Treasurer.

In her address to the meeting Mayor Rawda Jehanli thanked the ADTTS chair and committee for their work in helping to raise the awareness of twinning amongst the people of Abingdon. In particular the Mayors' conference held earlier in the year which she felt had been a great success in promoting the town of Abingdon and of its citizens.

Maggie Greaney reported on a successful Church Twinning year and on the activities and events of the coming year.

Richard gave a brief summary about twinning activities with Argentan this year, and on a French exchange being planned, which he is helping with. There was a general discussion at the end over improving communications with youth in the town and one of our younger members Mark McMarrick has volunteered to start an Instagram page and a social media account with photographs. Another suggestion was that someone should go round local groups alerting them to twinning, and Howard felt he could undertake that.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm and was followed by wine and cheese.

From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas

Being in charge

Since the participants of Abingdon couldn't make it to Sint-Niklaas, Nick asked me, with a pleading voice, if I could write an article about the twinning event. A kind of personal reflection, as it were.

Thursday.

First, I took a look at the weather forecast. Considering the balloon festival, it looked almost perfect. The wind was behaving, the day was to be sunny, and there was neither rain nor cloud at the horizon. Except for the evening, everything was going to be perfect.

In the morning, I received an urgent telephone call: The Abingdon delegation couldn't come. I immediately contacted the host family, but they were already notified by Richard.

A nice start of events. I knew I would have to explain a lot in the evening in different languages.

That evening at our meeting point, the different delegations dropped by as well as our mayor. The welcome speeches were made, the mayor received the gifts, and everybody had a good time.

Friday

I drove our minibus to our meeting point. Everybody was on time, except for the Italians. Their host gave me a call that they would drive straight to our destination: the left bank of the river Scheldt in Antwerp. Here started the walk through Antwerp, with a short stroll to the pedestrian and cycle ferry to get to the other side of the river. Our visitors were treated with a stunning view of the skyline of the centre of Antwerp.

After setting foot on the quay, we continued our journey, visiting the tourist centre in Antwerp castle. We strolled to the market place, admiring the old houses and town hall. Onwards to the next monument, the Bartholomeus church. A former Jesuit church built in a strictly Baroque style.



We continued our route, along some roadworks, to the next hidden gem: the Sint-Niklaas square, tucked away by an arched passage. A statue of Saint Nicholas sits on a pillar in the middle of it. Next stop, with great luck because normally it is only open at weekends, was the "Handelsbeurs" (photo: David Dykmans), the stock exchange during the golden age of Antwerp. It burned down and was rebuilt as a ship exchange in neo-gothic style, neglected almost to disrepair, and recently restored to its former glory and transformed into an event hall.



From there we walked to the "Groenplaats" where the statue of Rubens has his residence. We reached it via a passage through the "Vlaaikensgang", a medieval alley. Our guests each received a fresh and crisp banknote of 20€ for lunch at a restaurant of their choice.



Everybody fed and hydrated, we walked by the cathedral, across the market towards our next gem: the Sint-Paulus church. Outside the church, we admired a rather exceptional Calvary Mountain. Inside, the highlight was the exhibition of a painting by Van Dijck and one by Rubens on either side of the main altar. You could admire them both from close up.

From the church, it was a long walk past the university of Antwerp to the "begijnhof", the beguinage. We entered the very quiet and peaceful walled community through a gate and found a garden with fruit trees surrounded by a small cobblestoned road, in turn surrounded by tiny gated houses.

As there are no more beguines, the houses are rented to single ladies. As the sign said at the entrance: No men allowed between 6pm and 8am. During which time the gate is closed.



Feeling very thirsty, a watering hole was found in a nearby square. Internally fortified we set course for the next stop, the Sint-Jacob church. This church still is one of the starting points if you want to experience a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella. This is also the church where Rubens is buried, unfortunately that part of the church is now under restoration.

The journey continued through the centre of Antwerp to the last highlight of this trip, the "voetgangerstunnel", which is the pedestrian tunnel under the Scheldt. This tunnel was dug out in the thirties of the last century, and was a much-needed connection between the two banks of the river. The outer buildings are in the Art Deco style. The stairs are still the original ones made of wood. We walked the 572m to the left bank to find the cars that took us back to Sint-Niklaas.



Saturday

Our guests had a free morning. We drove to the place where the Sunday afternoon and evening events would take place to make some preparations for our "Games without Borders" and the BBQ.

At one o'clock we gathered again to take a ride to the industrialized left bank of the Scheldt. First stop: the ghost village Doel. In the nineties of the

last century this, village was doomed to be destroyed in favour of the expansion of the tidal docks. The village was abandoned and suffered from vandalism. Due to a lack of finance the expansion was abandoned some years ago. It will take many years to restore the village.

Next, we drove to the fortress of Liefkenshoek. In the 16th century this fortress was built for the defence of Antwerp. Over the centuries the occupiers changed several times. It ended up as a quarantine building during the first half the last century for the Red Star Line, the famous ship liner that took immigrants from Europe to the United States.

Thereafter, belonging to the military, it fell in disrepair until it was restored at the beginning of this century. Now it's a small green lung in the middle of the port industry. The permanent exhibition shows the evolution of the fortress.

Of course, there is pub/restaurant where the local beer "Napoleon" is served and -according to the waitress- with extra gunpowder if you want, just to make it a smidgeon stronger. Back to Sint-Niklaas to admire the take-off of the hot air balloons, regular ones and the special shapes.



Sunday



We met at the back of the railway station. Under the expert guidance of Marc, we meandered through the city along some street art, a couple of Art Nouveau houses and a lot of Art Deco houses. We ended our walk in the "Broeders" school, a pinnacle in Art Deco. The official entrance hall takes your breath away. Around two pm, I headed to the venue to make the final preparations for our games and BBQ.



The games consisted of 10 silly games. All our guests received an envelope containing a badge to identify their team and a letter with a cryptic description of the different games. Each team consisted of members of the different twin towns. They had to decide which of their members would participate in a game. If they thought someone would excel in a particular game, they could use a "joker" token to gain double points.



As always, it was a lot of fun, with shouts of joy and despair. Everybody swore they were not at all competitive until it came down to it. In the end there were no losers and only winners.

It was time to join the BBQ buffet and indulge in all the goodies. After everyone was satisfied, we came to the sad part of the evening: the farewell. We were thanked for the wonderful program and our guidance. We thanked them for being such a terrific group that mingled very easily. It wasn't a goodbye, but definitely an *au revoir*.



What's On in Abingdon in October

Here are just a few of the forthcoming events culled from Abingdon Town's events website, <https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/events>.

Click on the links for further information on each event.

And if any of you have an event you would like put in here – please let us know via the email link at the end of this Newsletter.

2 nd October 6:00 - 7:00 pm	Abingdon Library	<u>National Poetry Day Event</u> <i>Celebrating the power of poetry with readings from acclaimed local poets, including Andrew Jamison, Daniel Sluman, Vanessa Lampert, Fiona Perry, and others, as they share selections from their latest works. Also featuring: Peter Adamson, Diana Bell, Madeleine O'Beirne, Sarah Macleod and Paul Gamble. As well as readings from the poets, members of the audience are invited to read out a favourite poem. Tickets £2, including a welcome drink, are available from Abingdon Library, by calling 01865 815005 or email abingdon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk</i>
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4 th October 10:00 – 23 rd December 4:00 pm	Abingdon County Hall Museum	<u>Abingdon 1945 Exhibition</u> 2025 marks the 80 th anniversary of the end of World War 2, and our exhibition looks back at Abingdon in war and peace in 1945. Learn how the war impacted the lives of local people through food shortages, the threat of air raids, war work in the industries, and the influx of evacuees and armed forces personnel. Take a closer look at the roles of women and how they experienced the war and the post-war period. The exhibition also looks at the changes the peace brought, how people celebrated VE and VJ Day, what happened when the soldiers returned home, and how a decision taken in 1945 changed the face of the town with the coming of the 'Atomics'. Free
10 th October 7:30 – 9:30 pm	St Michael and All Angels' Church	<u>Mighty in Power</u> The Abingdon Passion Play are pleased to announce a concert to mark the launch of "Mighty in Power" by David Preston. This concert at St Michael's Church on Friday 10 th October at 7:30 pm will feature songs from the new CD performed by the Northcourt Singers, with soloists Clare Kirk and Camilla Kirk and conducted by Sally Mears. Sally Mears will also be playing her cello accompanied by Paul Herrington – an arrangement of Benedictus from Karl Jenkins The Armed Man. Proceeds will be split between the Church Funds at St Michael's and APP, with the APP portion to go towards funding future APP performances/activities. Tickets are £15 available on the door (cash and card both accepted) – Children Free and all are Welcome!
11 th October 3:00 – 5:30 pm	St Michael and All Angels' Church	<u>Just Jane</u> An afternoon of readings from Jane Austen, with contemporary music and cakes, tea and coffee. No films, no TV. Proceeds to St Michael's church. Tickets £15 from https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing/89882 and on the door. £10 if pre-booked on 01235 525898 and paid for with a Jane Austen £10 note. Under 18s free.
14 th October 10:00am – 16 th November 4:00 pm	Abingdon County Hall Museum	<u>Objects of Significance</u> By Sarah Frodsham. Step into a space where the familiar holds unexpected depth. Objects of Significance invites you to explore the hidden meanings behind everyday items through a curated collection of single objects, each contributed by a local resident. From worn-out clothes to cherished heirlooms, these items reveal emotional layers and personal histories that transcend their ordinary appearance. Each object tells a unique story offering a glimpse into the lives of those who call Abingdon home. Visitors are encouraged to reflect on a singular object from their own lives and the emotions it evokes. By spotlighting these intimate narratives, the exhibition celebrates the richness of lived experience and the quiet power of the seemingly ordinary.
16 th October 7:00 – 10:30 pm	Unicorn Theatre	<u>The Lost Trades with support from Detta Kenzie</u> The Lost Trades are a Folk/Americana group, based in the West Country, with a cool Laurel Canyon vibe. With a sound that is reminiscent of the California folk scene of the late 60s/early 70s, their vocal harmonies have been

		described as "flawless", "spine tingling" and "magical". There's always a fun intimacy to their live show, and comfortable repartee with each other and treating the audience like a group of old friends. Support will be from Devon based Detta Kenzie. Doors and bar 7.00 pm, music 7.15 pm £15 -17
17th October 7:00 – 11:00 pm	Harwell Village Hall	<u>Katherine Priddy with support from Rowell Road</u> With her biggest headline tour to date selling out most cities and her reputation growing, she was asked to perform on the legendary Later.. with Jools Holland (25th May) on BBC Two. She now returns for the final run of The Pendulum Swing Tour in March 2025. Her live performances are engaging, moving and amusing by turn, delivering original songs with emotional maturity, depth and particularly noteworthy lyrics. Despite the delicate nuances of her sound, Katherine Priddy is not a fragile wallflower, but a determined young woman making her mark. <u>www.katherinepriddy.co.uk</u> Support will be from Roswell Road, who have played in Harwell several times. Doors and bar at 7pm, music at 7:40pm. £22
25th October 7:15 – 9:30 pm	St Helen's Church	<u>Hayden's Creation</u> Sally Mears and the Inauguration Choir and Orchestra will give a performance of the Creation in St Helen's Church, Abingdon – a spectacular piece of music in a spectacular setting and not to be missed! Tickets available from the Bookstore, Ticketsource and at the door. Profits to the church and to the Gerontius Amenity Fund <u>https://www.justgiving.com/charity/gerontiusamenityfund</u>. Interval refreshments. £15 -16
28th October 10 am – 1st November 4:30 pm	Christ Church Barn	<u>Abingdon Artists Autumn Exhibition</u> Abingdon Artists is committed to holding at least two exhibitions each year, one in Spring and the second in Autumn. However, we remain open to the possibility of holding additional exhibitions should opportunities arise. Christ Church Barn, Northcourt, Abingdon OX14 1PL.
28th October - 1st November 7:30 - 10:30 pm + Saturday Matinee at 2:30 pm	Amey Theatre	<u>Hello Dolly</u> A classic Broadway and West End hit! After its recent box office busting return to London's West End, we're so pleased to be bringing Hello, Dolly! back to the Amey Theatre in Abingdon. Hello, Dolly! made its first appearance on Broadway in 1963 and has been a favourite of audiences across the world ever since. Filled with instantly recognisable numbers such as 'Put On Your Sunday Clothes', 'Before The Parade Passes By' and of course, 'Hello, Dolly!' itself. The show tells the Story of Dolly Gallagher Levi, a marriage matchmaker from Yonkers, New York, who is dead set on making a match for herself, She has her eye on Horace Vandergelder, the well-known half millionaire, who really is no match for the determined matchmaker Dolly. It's one of the funniest musical comedies you'll ever see. £11.50 -16.00

Twin Towns Calendar for 2025

Here is an incomplete list of a few major festivals and events in our twin towns that may be of interest to potential visitors during 2025. Do please notify any additions using the email link at the end of this Newsletter.

<i>Until Sunday 14th December</i>	<i>Thames, Coromandel Peninsula</i>	<i>Coromandel Artbeat Spring Festival</i>
<i>Mid Nov – 6 Dec</i>	<i>Sint-Niklaas</i>	<i>St Nicholas House open</i>
<i>14th – 16th October</i>	<i>Lucca</i>	<i>Masterclass in opera singing and Chamber Music</i>

ADTTS Contacts

<i>Chairman</i> Stella Carter The Old Bakehouse 2 Winterbourne Rd Abingdon OX14 1AJ 01235 520317 chairman@adtts.eu	<i>Membership</i> Rosemary Jardine 80 Baker Road Abingdon OX14 5LJ 01235 539291 membership@adtts.eu	<i>Treasurer</i> Susan Read 30 St Amand Drive Abingdon OX14 5RG 01235 529779 treasurer@adtts.eu
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Non-members of the Society are also welcome to receive copies of this monthly newsletter. Just email your request to newsletter@adtts.eu.

The deadline for copy for the next newsletter is two days before the end of the month. Please send contributions to newsletter@adtts.eu. (No publication in August)

The Society's website is <https://www.abingdonandvaletwinning.org.uk/>. This address may be abbreviated to <http://adtts.eu>.

The programme may be found on the website at <https://www.abingdonandvaletwinning.org.uk/future.htm>.

The website also has reports, with pictures, of all twinning events going back to 2007.
