

# Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



# Newsletter

January 2026

Guest Editor: Brian Read

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## From the Editor

Welcome to 2026! It's a time to look back and review the past year while anticipating the year to come.

Indeed 2025 has been (as always) a busy twinning year. A highlight was the Mayors' Conference in April hosted by Abingdon Town Council with their leaders invited from each of our twin towns. In parallel, ADTTS entertained representatives from the corresponding twinning societies. The joint venture sought to strengthen links with partner towns.

The winter programme of meetings comprised some favourites, together with enlightening talks on subjects such as local witchcraft and the history and etiquette of afternoon tea. We visited the Little Basement Museum and the Dance Festival promoted by Oxford Twinning. As reported in this issue, the year ended with an enjoyable Christmas meal together.

The core of twinning is visiting and hosting individuals of other towns, making friendships and learning to appreciate foreign cultures. Many of these activities have been reported in the monthly newsletters. We are now thinking about what we can achieve in 2026. We already know to expect a large party in August from Argentan to mark the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of a formal link between the two towns. Both Abingdon Town Council and ADTTS are already making plans for an appropriate hosting programme.

The initiative to list in the newsletter a small selection of the coming month's local events seems to be appreciated. This month, it's worth drawing attention to a live showing on Wednesday 14th January of *La Traviata*. Even though it's an Italian opera by Verdi, rather than "our own" Puccini, expect quite a number of members in the Amey Theatre to see it.

More immediately, the evening meeting in January will be the customary Quiz. Rather different from a usual quiz, it promises to be fun.

We wish all our readers, including friends in other countries, a happy and successful New Year.

*Brian Read*



*The Wharf, Abingdon-on-Thames – December 2025*

## Forthcoming Events in 2026

|                                    |                                                  |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> January  | Evening Meeting at PRCC – The Quiz               |
| Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> February | Church Twinning Barn Dance – Trinity Church Hall |
| Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> May       | Dinner to Celebrate Europe Day                   |
| Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> November    | Laying of Twinning Wreaths on Remembrance Sunday |

Other events in the programme are not yet scheduled, but they include a Wine Tasting, a Treasure Hunt, a Games Evening and the Garden Party, not forgetting the Christmas Lunch.

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### Evening Meeting: The Annual Quiz

**7.30 for 8.00 pm Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at Preston Road Community Centre**

We start the New Year with the ever-popular ADTTS Quiz night. Superficially it resembles a traditional pub quiz but with a few unconventional features. Expect mental and also artistic challenges. There will be a range of question categories, including questions on our local area and also, possibly, some with a twinning or European theme.

In the past there have been plasticine modelling challenges, construction tasks as well as food and drink rounds. What can we expect this year? To find out, come along on Thursday 15th January at 7.30 pm to Preston Road Community Centre. Entrance is £5, to include refreshments. There could be prizes?

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### A little secret

As you are all fervent sport fanatics, I don't have to tell you who won this year's F1 world championship. It was, of course, Lando Norris.

But what you probably don't know is that your champ has Belgian roots and, even better, those roots are in Sint-Niklaas.

His mother is Cisca Wauman, who originates from Sint-Niklaas.

His father Adam Norris suddenly decided, as a young student, to pursue his cycling dream in the cycling Mecca of Flanders. He ended up in Sint-Niklaas. With his modest cycling talent, he didn't win any prizes but instead he conquered the heart of Cisca.

The couple decided to move to Great Britain. They had 4 children and Lando is the youngest. Already at the age of 7 he showed an interest for speed.

He started with go-karting. First on a rented basis, but as he showed real talent his parents bought him a kart and a van to transport it.

In his younger years he came to Sint-Niklaas on a regular basis to visit his grandparents, but now those visits have decreased significantly.

Do I know his family? Not really. You know, there are over a thousand persons with the name Wauman living in our town.

So, it's all about the needle and the haystack.

*Siegfried Waterschoot, Sint-Niklaas*

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## ADTTS Christmas Lunch – 21<sup>st</sup> December 2025

Being an account by your food and restaurant correspondent



About thirty of us met for a most pleasant lunch at the Hilton Garden Hotel in Abingdon on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December.

After circulating with a drink in hand, we distributed ourselves among four tables, carefully placing a card with our menu selection in front of our place, where it was clearly visible.

Stella started the proceedings with an update on the health of Michael Matthews, a past stalwart of twin towning, and then a fulsome tribute to 'Our man on the buses,' Peter Dodd. I should explain, that apart from organising today's lunch, Peter is a tour guide in Oxford and has recently featured in a video advert to be seen on the X2 and X3 buses, where we see a group of tourists and, to one side, their guide, Peter.

We started with an icebreaker, not the nuclear-powered Arctic variety, but a list of fifteen questions of a twinning nature to be shared with the persons on either side. In most cases these fellow guests were sufficiently well known that this introduction was not needed.

So, let's pull our crackers. A simultaneous action, of considerable dexterity, around the table, led to a satisfying 'baaang' and an avalanche of paper hats, jokes, a quiz, warnings about health and safety relating to this Christmas activity and the information that the crackers and contents were made entirely of recycled paper and NO plastics. I was informed that potentially One Million pieces of plastic had been prevented from going into the oceans by substituting sundry plastic knick-knacks in our crackers with a Christmas quiz. This is an interesting and meaningless statement, as it stands, worthy of any politician.

Our thirst quenched with wine and beer, the starters arrived to be followed by either a traditional plate or vegetarian offering, as well as something for the piscatorially inclined. (My spell checker didn't like this word, but I maintain it is correct – languages evolve). Finally, some delicious puddings/sweets/desserts/afters, mince pies and 'help yourself' to coffee.

In the midst of all this a HO HO Santa and a fetching elf, dressed in green with blonde plaits, appeared to remind us that Christmas Day was approaching quickly.

This was, as usual, a most enjoyable occasion, a chance to meet old friends, and make new ones. Our thanks to Peter Dodd for organising the lunch, Stella for her introduction, and the staff of the Hilton for looking after us with efficiency and cheerfulness. But mainly to you all for coming along.

Neil Hancox, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2025

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## Invitation to Twinning Day - Europe's day - Vivi Lucca

*Along with other twin towns, ADTTS is pleased to receive this attractive invitation from Lucca to a twinning weekend planned around Europe Day in early May. We hope to learn more about the Vivi Lucca programme, in particular of this event and what is involved. Meanwhile, if you might be interested, do talk to our Lucca liaison, Elio Astone (07801 260262, [elioastone@outlook.com](mailto:elioastone@outlook.com)). An opportunity to visit Lucca is always welcome!*

Dear friends of the sister cities,

We are pleased to invite you to a special event dedicated to promoting our activities: the Twinning Day, which we will organise on the occasion of Europe Day.

We are considering scheduling the event around 9 May; therefore, we kindly ask you to inform us of your availability, so that we can agree together on a final date.

In view of the event, we would be very pleased to welcome to Lucca a delegation of 2 or 3 representatives from each twin town, so that they may actively contribute to the programme and participate as key protagonists in the day.

The event will be designed with particular attention to youth participation, although we wish to emphasise that everyone is of course warmly welcome.

We propose an overall 4- to 5-day twinning activity, allowing the delegations to visit Lucca and its surroundings at a relaxed pace.

For organisational purposes and in order to prepare the funding application through the Vivi Lucca programme, we kindly ask you to let us know as soon as you can what you would like to find upon your arrival for the set-up of your stand (informational materials, printed materials, flyers, etc.).

We would also be happy to assist you in finding the most convenient and economical travel options.

We would be grateful to receive your feedback at your earliest convenience, and we sincerely hope to welcome you to Lucca to celebrate together the value of European twinning.

Iacopo,

secretary - Twinning Lucca



## What's On in Abingdon in January

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.

Nick Marsh

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| 1 <sup>st</sup> January<br>11:00 am -<br>1:00 pm                               | Market<br>Place                   | <a href="#"><u>Boundary Walk</u></a><br><i>Come &amp; join Councillors for the New Year's Day Boundary Walk. Wear Abingdon Town Colours and you could win a free hot drink.<br/>Meet 11.00 am at the Market Place (approx. 2 hours)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> January<br>7:30 – 9:30 pm                                      | The King's<br>Head and<br>Bell    | <a href="#"><u>Abingdon Speakers' Club</u></a><br><i>Do you want to improve your <b>public speaking</b>? Join us and learn how to be a better communicator. Toastmasters is a nonprofit organization that operates clubs worldwide for the purpose of helping people develop communication, public speaking and leadership skills.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> January<br>10:00 am<br>–<br>29 <sup>th</sup> March<br>4:00 pm | Abingdon<br>County Hall<br>Museum | <a href="#"><u>Exhibition: South Indian Years – The Art and Poetry of Oswald Jennings Couldrey</u></a><br><i>Oswald Jennings Couldrey is Abingdon's best-known twentieth-century artist. He was born into a local family of seed merchants and agricultural suppliers, which for several generations had included musicians, scholars and teachers, especially at Abingdon School, then Roysse's School. Oswald went up to Pembroke College, Oxford as an Abingdon Scholar, then gained a teaching qualification and entry to the Education Service of the Indian Civil Service, living and working in India from 1909-1919, for eight years as Principal of the Rajamundry College of Art in Andra Pradesh. This exhibition shows painting made during these years, complimented by examples of his poetry. FREE ADMISSION</i> |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> January<br>6:45 pm                                            | Amey<br>Theatre                   | <a href="#"><u>RBO Live: La Traviata</u></a><br><i>At one of her lavish parties, celebrated Parisian courtesan Violetta is introduced to Alfredo Germont. The two fall madly in love, and though hesitant to leave behind her life of luxury and freedom, Violetta follows her heart. But the young couple's happiness is short-lived, as the harsh realities of life soon come knocking.<br/>As intimate as it is sumptuous, La Traviata features some of opera's most famous melodies, and is a star vehicle for its leading soprano role sung by Ermonela Jaho. In director Richard Eyre's world of seductive grandeur, the tender and devastating beauty at the centre of Verdi's opera shines bright.<br/>This event will be streamed from the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. £14 - £16</i>                           |



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| 22 <sup>nd</sup> January<br>7:30 – 9:00 pm        | Abingdon Baptist Church    | <a href="#"><u>Getting Abingdon Moving (Talk)</u></a><br>CYCLING & WALKING ROUTE IMPROVEMENTS COMING TO ABINGDON AREA IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS. With Robin Tucker of Abingdon Liveable Streets (co-chair of Coalition for Healthy Streets & Active Travel in Oxfordshire)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> January<br>7:00 pm               | Amey Theatre               | <a href="#"><u>NT Live: Hamlet</u></a><br>by William Shakespeare, directed by Robert Hastie<br>Olivier Award-winner Hiran Abeysekera (Life of Pi) is Hamlet in this fearless, contemporary take on Shakespeare's famous tragedy. Trapped between duty and doubt, surrounded by power and privilege, young Prince Hamlet dares to ask the ultimate question – you know the one. National Theatre Deputy Artistic Director, Robert Hastie (Standing at the Sky's Edge, Operation Mincemeat) directs this sharp, stylish and darkly funny reimaging. £13 -£15                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> January<br>10:00 am – 12:00 noon | Fitzharrys School          | <a href="#"><u>Fitzharrys Giant Jumble Sale</u></a><br>Bag a bargain at our upcoming Giant Jumble Sale in aid of Fitzharrys School! We have a large hall for easy browsing and plenty of free parking available on site. Items will be priced to sell so don't miss out! Good quality donations welcome between 9-10am. Refreshments available. Cash only. Thank you for your support.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> January<br>11:00 am – 2:00 pm    | White Horse Leisure Centre | <a href="#"><u>Walking Sports Festival</u></a><br>Join us to have a go at a range of activities at White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre completely free of charge. You can choose whichever activities you would like to take part in or join us for the whole event. Sport sessions will be facilitated by local groups or leaders.<br>Walking netball (Improver) 11.00 – 11.45<br>Walking netball (Beginner) 11.45 – 12.30<br>Walking football 11.00 – 12.00<br>Walking cricket 12.00 – 14.00<br>Walking tennis 12.00 – 13.00<br>Walking basketball 13.00 – 14.00<br>You can book the sessions via the Better UK app or online 5 days in advance, alternatively our staff can support you with the booking in centre or via <a href="mailto:whitehorse@gll.org">whitehorse@gll.org</a> . Please note that spaces are limited in some activities. |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> January<br>6:00 – 7:00 pm        | Abingdon Library           | <a href="#"><u>Crime writer Simon Mason in conversation with Eve Smith</u></a><br>Simon Mason's critically acclaimed DI Ryan Wilkins Mysteries, have received numerous accolades and endorsements from writers such as Stephen Fry, Mick Herron, Ian Rankin and Clare Chambers. The much-anticipated fifth book in the series, The Dangerous Stranger, is coming out in March and Simon will be in conversation with thriller writer Eve Smith on this, as well as his highly successful Finder Mysteries series. Tickets £2, including a welcome drink, are available from Abingdon Library, by calling 01865 815005 or email <a href="mailto:abingdon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk">abingdon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a> .                                                                                                                       |

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| 29 <sup>th</sup> January<br>7:00 – 10:30 pm       | Unicorn Theatre  | <a href="#"><u>Polly Smith with support from Adam Cooney</u></a><br>Performing laugh-out-loud funny songs, parody songs and also heartbreakingly poignant songs, Polly Morris is a whirlwind of entertainment. Her songs have clever lyrics and catchy melodies and with her seventh album of original songs just released she is never short of something new to make you smile. As well as being an engaging solo performer, Polly can often be seen with the Polly Morris Band, which combines fun with musicality and has become synonymous with the phrase "Expect the Unexpected". Prepare to be engaged from start to finish, or as one audience member put it "Polly took me through every emotion I had – from tears to laughter!"<br>Support from Adam Cooney<br>Doors 7pm, music at 7:15pm. £15 - £17 |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> January<br>11:00 am – 12:00 noon | Abingdon Library | <a href="#"><u>Author Talk with Nikki Thornton</u></a><br>Bestselling children's author, Nicki Thornton, has turned to adult crime for her seventh novel: Little Bookshop of Murders. Join her at Abingdon library where she shares why she's now writing for adults, why she loves crime fiction and, after more than ten years of working in bookshops, why she feels a bookshop is the perfect place to solve a crime.<br><b>Tickets are free</b> but booking essential as space is limited. To book contact Abingdon Library, by calling 01865 815005, or email <a href="mailto:abingdon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk"><u>abingdon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk</u></a> .                                                                                                                                        |

## Twin Towns Calendar for 2026

Here we wish to list festivals and events in our twin towns that may be of interest to potential visitors during 2026. Do now please tell us about all the major events for each twin town this year! Use the email link at the end of this Newsletter.

|                               |                              |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ongoing                       | Argentan                     | <a href="https://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/hidden-gems/argentan/events-in-argentan/"><u>https://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/hidden-gems/argentan/events-in-argentan/</u></a> |
| January 2026 onwards          | Colmar                       | <a href="https://www.tourisme-colmar.com/en/whats-on"><u>https://www.tourisme-colmar.com/en/whats-on</u></a>                                                             |
| Until 6 <sup>th</sup> January | Lucca                        | <a href="#"><u>Christmas Market</u></a>                                                                                                                                  |
| Ongoing                       | Lucca                        | <a href="#"><u>Calendar of Events</u></a>                                                                                                                                |
| Ongoing                       | Schongau                     | <a href="https://allevents.in/schongau/all"><u>https://allevents.in/schongau/all</u></a>                                                                                 |
| January 2026 onwards          | Sint-Niklaas                 | <a href="https://www.ontdeksintniklaas.be/en/see-and-do"><u>https://www.ontdeksintniklaas.be/en/see-and-do</u></a>                                                       |
| January 2026 onwards          | Thames, Coromandel Peninsula | <a href="https://thecoromandel.nz/events/events-calendar/"><u>https://thecoromandel.nz/events/events-calendar/</u></a>                                                   |



## ADTTS Contacts

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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](mailto:newsletter@adtts.eu). Back copies are also available on request.

The deadline for copy for the next newsletter is two days before the end of the month. Please send contributions to [newsletter@adtts.eu](mailto: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.

## Membership

To join the Society, apply to the Membership Secretary, Rosemary Jardine.

Subscriptions for the current year to August 2026 are £7.50 per person or £15.00 for a family. They can be paid by cheque, payable to ADTTS, or with an annual Banker's Order, or just directly to our Bank account by BACS, using your name as a reference, to:

National Westminster Bank plc

**Account:** Abingdon & District Twin Towns Society

**Sort Code:** 60-01-01 **A/c No:** 08616752

See the [membership page](#) on the ADTTS website for forms and contact details.



*The Market Place and County Hall, Abingdon-on-Thames – December 2025*