



Newsletter

October 2020

Guest Editor: Nick Marsh

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Chairman's thoughts

Autumn, 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness'. So wrote John Keats, one of our romantic poets as he wandered through Winchester's water meadows. Winchester is only an hour from Abingdon, so look out for more in a future edition of '100 days out from Abingdon'.

As I planted daffodil bulbs this morning, inspired by the poem I thought about the autumns I have experienced in our twin towns. The vineyards around Colmar, using every tiny patch of land. The apple harvest in Normandy and the promise of cider and calvados. I remember 'helping' with the olive harvest on a farm outside Lucca and driving in the middle of the night to get the harvest pressed into oil. A single light in the distance and a thin plume of smoke showed where were going. Keats would have put it better! I am sure those of you who came with me to Abingdon, Virginia, will remember the pumpkins on the stoops, the fronds of the corn on the cob, all building up for Halloween. Then a year ago Howard and I were in Thames, New Zealand. The daffodils were almost over there but the tulips were coming into their own. So, what about the harvest here? Many of us have had more time to tend our gardens and to pick our produce and so I am sure our freezers are full and our shelves display jams and jellies and relishes.

I do have a plea though. Howard and I have a good crop of grapes, probably 60 or 70lbs, so more than the Bothy vineyard. They are ready, about three weeks early. Would anyone like them to make into wine? Please let me know if you or someone you know would like them as soon as possible. I can pick them.

Take care everyone.

Stella Carter Chairman ADTTS

To All Members of Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society (ADTTS)

Preston Road Community Centre began to reopen and we planned to hold our AGM there at the October evening meeting. However, the new Covid-19 restrictions mean that we should not now hold our meeting at PRCC as usual.

We shall now arrange to hold the AGM online using Zoom. Please note the date. Details of how to join the meeting will be circulated to members and the papers for the meeting will be available beforehand. Although such an online meeting is restricting (no socialising or refreshments!), we hope that members will participate. We want to keep in good contact with members in these unusual times. Everyone who joins the meeting will have the opportunity to speak (ideas, news, questions, concerns, ...).

Overleaf you will find the formal notice of the meeting. The business should be straightforward, though we would like to elect a new secretary to replace John Smith.

The AGM of ADTTS will be held Online via Zoom on Thursday 15th October 2020 at 8pm

Nominations for ADTTS Officers and committee members should be with the chairman one week before the meeting. As also should notice of any other business to be taken at the meeting.

Agenda

Apologies for absence
Minutes of AGM held in September 2019
Reports by ADTTS Officers – Secretary, Treasurer, Chairman
(Copies of the 2019 minutes and officers' reports will be available in advance of the meeting.)
Election of Chairman
Election of Officers – Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer
Election of Committee members
Appointment of Accounts Examiner for 2020/2021
Plans for future meetings
Any other relevant business

Stella Carter, Chairman ADTTS
chairman@adtts.eu

Forthcoming Events

Due to the current Covid-19 situation, many of our forthcoming events have been cancelled. Others are awaiting further clarification.

Thursday 15th October	AGM (Zoom meeting)
Thursday 19th November	Evening Meeting (awaiting clarification)
Sunday 20th December	Christmas Lunch – Hilton Garden Hotel (awaiting clarification)

Recent Events

Tour of the Bothy Vineyard

Thursday 10 September 2020 - at [Bothy Vineyard, Frilford Heath](#)

Due to the Covid virus delaying visits, our eagerly awaited trip to the Bothy Vineyard, in Frilford Heath, finally took place on the 10th of September. Nineteen of our members enjoyed a tour of the vineyard and sampled several delicious British wines, sitting in the sun, on a warm afternoon, with our excellent hosts Sian and Richard.

After all our wine tasting, we managed to negotiate our way to the Dog House next door for a very enjoyable meal.

Both establishments clearly had in place compliant hygiene and social distancing measures, to make sure everyone felt welcome and safe, and as far as I know, everyone was very happy with this.

Nikki Henton



Despite Covid restrictions **Nikki Henton** arranged for 19 members (no, the number is not significant!) of ADTTS to visit the Bothy Vineyard (www.bothyvineyard.co.uk) at Frilford for a late afternoon tour and wine tasting. It was good to get out and meet friends again, even though we were well spaced and often masked.

There is no Margarita treading the grapes here. Once picked the fruit is macerated mechanically, separating skins and pips from flesh and the resulting pulp pressed to extract the juice before yeast is added and the liquid transferred into one of eight or so large stainless-steel tanks to ferment. Various types of grape are used. For red wine the grape skin and juice are kept in contact for a much longer period than for white.

In reality the process is much more complicated. The bouquet of a wine, (a hint of blackcurrant, etc.) comes from a complex interaction of a specific type of yeast with the grape skin. During fermentation the tanks have to be cooled, as the temperature can rise to 30°C but if the temperature drops too low the fermentation rate is affected. Later proteins which are produced must be removed to stop the wine becoming cloudy. The residual pulp is used for compost.

When fermentation is completed the wine is bottled and corked. Nowadays the vineyard has a power corking machine which makes the task much easier. The cork used is made from recycled and reconstituted cork produced in France. Natural cork, rather than a plastic substitute or a screw cap is preferred as a seal for ecological reasons and because it allows oxygen to diffuse into the wine. The original screw caps were not successful because the lining of the cap stopped the oxygen diffusion. A cork costs about 25p as against 20p for a screw cap.

The production process is checked by wine inspectors who, we were told, found fault one year with the labelling.

Although the full address was listed, the lettering UK was missing. Customs and Excise check on the strength and quantity of wine produced. Duty is about £2.00 per bottle. An area of dispute between the two bodies is the amount of wine in a bottle, too little and you are failing the customer and too much and you are defrauding the tax man, so filling the bottles calls for careful quality control.

Interspersed with all this technical information we sampled a sparkling red, three whites, a rose and a red. This



accounts for my, no doubt, dubious account of the overall production process!

The vineyard, with about three acres of vines, was established in 1978 by the Fosters, and has been in the hands of the present owners for about 20 years. The sandy soil is warm and drains well though the aspect of the site is not ideal. Warmer winters cause problems because the vines produce shoots too early. A late frost in May this year effectively wiped out all the grapes and there will be no harvest/vintage for 2020.

Vines are produced on different types of root stock, more compact for white varieties and taller and thinner for red grapes. A method of replacing old vines is to train a branch to root. We saw several successful instances of this. There are two areas of land left for wild flowers, though these are largely over by September.

Birds also like the grapes and various methods are used for scaring them off. I particularly liked the two, very realistic, red kite/hawks that were tethered to poles and floated in the wind. It took me several minutes to realise that they were not real. The methods used for scaring must be varied as the birds get used to them.

The work involved in looking after the vines, harvesting the grapes and producing the bottled wine is considerable and volunteer working parties are used for many of the tasks.

This was a most interesting and revealing tour and we thank Nikki for organising it and **Sian and Richard Liwicki** who run the Bothy Vineyard for describing the complexities and difficulties of running a successful business.

Later we retired to the Doghouse for a pleasant dinner. Alas as I was driving, I had to stick to water and coffee.

Neil Hancox



100 Days Out from Abingdon - Part 2

Collated by Stella

Walks:

12. Abingdon is also on the Thames Path. Walk the section from Abingdon to Oxford, have lunch in the Head of the River and then take a bus back or Salters steamer in the summer.

13. The Ridgeway Path is 137km long and runs within 10 miles of Abingdon. Walk a part of it for a feel of how rural Oxfordshire is.

14. Drive to nearby Sunningwell (5 mins), park near the village hall and then walk up on Boar's Hill for wonderful views of the 'city of dreaming spires'. This is where Matthew Arnold would write. Take a picnic as there is nothing up there but birds, and bluebells if you go in the spring. Allow 3 hours.

15. If you have read "Larkrise to Candleford" follow a walk from Cottisford to Juniper Hill in the footsteps of Flora Thompson. (45 mins by car)

16. Stoke Row and the Maharajah's well. (45 mins by car) In 1863 the Maharajah of Benares gave the village of Stoke Row in the Chilterns a well so that they could have clean water. Walk between the well and Nuffield Place, the home of William Morris who started the car factory in Oxford, hence Morris Oxford cars. Have lunch in the Crooked Billet pub, as seen on Midsummer Murders.

17. In late January and February wrap up warm and enjoy a snowdrop walk. Most famous are Colesbourne (1 hr) and Great Shefford (45 mins). Finish with lunch in a village pub.

18. There are over 200km of walks in the Chiltern Hills (45 mins). The Ridgeway Path finishes at Ivinghoe Beacon. Choose a walk and watch the superb red kites that have been successfully introduced into the area.

19. From April to August visit Warburg Nature Reserve at Bix near Henley (50 mins) to see wild orchids and butterflies.

20. Abingdon itself has some beautiful walks. Follow the River Ock as it meanders through the town joining the Thames. See St Helen's church with its painted ceiling, then walk up East St Helen's Street with its mediaeval houses. See the site of the Abbey and follow the River Thames down to the lock. Walk across the weir and up the backwater to the town centre.

Watch out for Part 3 in a future edition!

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor

Congratulations on the way that the Newsletter is expanding. The last edition was splendid. Now that not only here in Abingdon are we suffering from isolation but it is also affecting all of our overseas connections and the Newsletter is an excellent way of keeping in touch with all our contacts. I was particularly interested to see that the Mayor of Abingdon Va. had written. I still have vivid memories of our visit to Abingdon twelve years ago (my how time flies) when we were so hospitably welcomed by all our American friends. It was a period with many similarities to today, major financial concerns and a hotly contested Presidential election looming. We all look forward to better times when we can again meet up with all our friends throughout the world. In the meantime, the Newsletter keeps us connected.

Michael Matthews

Our Members' Lockdown Activities

In our last issue we asked you to send in photos of what you have achieved/made/created during lockdown. Huge thanks to our contributors for this month's selection. Please continue to send in any contributions, these could be artwork, ceramics, painting, pottery, flowers or vegetables people have grown, garden building projects – anything at all really, and a little story behind them perhaps. Contributions to: nickqgmars@gmail.com.

From Norma Queralt

During lockdown we had a family art zoom, grandparents down to a five-year-old. Our themes included, chickens, something made of a plastic bottle, a favourite book, design some wrapping paper and something made from wire. If the entry had star quality the person could choose a fabulous prize, a pizza takeaway etc. Here are some of our entries:



From Stella Carter



Needlepoint cushion

This needlepoint cushion which I designed in the style of an artist I met called Inger Jerby in New Mexico, USA, has a surprising back story linking it to Twinning. My business is holiday letting, here and on the Isles of Scilly. A number of years ago I took a booking from two friends who were coming to London for a conference and wanted to follow on with a week in Abingdon, as they lived in Abingdon, Virginia, USA. I was delighted to welcome them. It turned out that Al was the Town Planner for Abingdon and Rick was the Congressman for Virginia.

We became friends and it prompted us to rekindle the 'sister city' relationship with our two Abingdons. After all, Virginia Way is named after Abingdon, Virginia. Abingdon, VA invited us to help celebrate their 130th anniversary of the founding of the town. I think they expected a party of ten, but we were 40! Howard and I stayed with Al and his wife Leslie, and they and the people of Abingdon gave us the most wonderful time. Rick also hosted us and when we moved on to Washington DC, arranged for us all to visit the White House, a privilege few Americans have had. We were very, very, lucky. Al and Leslie had often talked about their favourite state in the US, New Mexico and five years ago invited us to join them and Rick and his wife Amy for a holiday in the State. Howard and I flew to Dallas, picked up a red Mustang Cabriolet, and drove part of Route 66 down to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Our friends had rented an authentic adobe and we spent a wonderful week together. Rick was still a Congressman so sometimes we would all have to creep round the house as he shut himself away in his bedroom to do radio interviews (a bit like now, but our politicians all choose bookshelves)!

Al and Leslie took us out and about showing us their favourite places. We went to Los Alamos, which, subsequently we found out, many physicists living here have visited for work. The landscapes were stupendous. One day we stopped to view a river scene and found an artist painting it. We got talking and she gave us her card with directions to her studio. We visited later in the afternoon and talked to her assistant. There were some wonderful pieces we would have loved, but way beyond our pocket. So we settled for a poster to be mailed to us. When it arrived, Inger had made the connection and written a personal message to us. It is now framed and hanging on our living room wall and has just been joined by the needlepoint cushion which I was able to finish during lockdown. The moral of the story: embrace Twinning, for you never know where it will lead!

From Bettina Buresch, Schongau

Except for the horse these pictures were not contract works. Often someone commissions me to portray a pet as a present. Sometimes I illustrate books. Mostly I'm painting what I am interested in. Then I show my works on my website, Facebook or in an exhibition. People can buy originals drawings or printings on paper to canvas.

As artist I desire to study certain subjects. I'm passionate about describing nature in all its splendour. I'm trying to express the character of the animal, its temper and energy, to show how its fur or feathers feel. I'm using wax crayon, oil pastel, coloured pencils, lead pencil in a mixing technique, sometimes ink and distemper.

A drawing takes me up to three months depending on size, complexity factor and how I can concentrate on my work: often I am too busy dedicating myself to my honorary posts and tend to neglect my artistry. In the long run I suffer from such a situation. In this respect I really enjoyed the lockdown (disregarding the loss of income): no appointments, deadlines, phone calls – just calm and privacy.



Waldrapp



Young Wolf



Roxy



Waterfrog

From Connie Addison

Connie tells us that doing these helped keep her sane during restrictions



News from our twin towns

From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas



Photo: Siegfried's first twinning. The photo was taken on the ferry towards Dover, on the forward deck, just before we were shooed because it became too dangerous, because of the high incoming waves

The most honourable Prime Minister Boris Johnson is heading the country towards a hard Brexit. Of course, it will be the EU's fault. They didn't give in to the cherry picking the British government wanted to do. Anyway, this will lead to severe border controls. Customs will have its work cut out.

This brings me back to the year 1972. My first youth twinning. My first travel abroad. Border hopping to the Netherlands didn't count, because the border is only 10 miles up north. To Abingdon it was. Ten days, for the princely sum of 100 BEF. 2.5€ in nowadays money.

In August we left on the train to Ostend. Conveniently the ferry terminal was in front of the train station. Hopping onto the ferry. Enduring a very choppy sea for four hours. Disembarking in Dover, touching down on English soil for the first time. And no, I didn't kiss it.

During the trip we were politely ordered to find the steward's office to get the disembarkment card. This had to be completed in a very painstaking way. Who you were, where you came from, what your business was in the Empire, how long and where you would stay. The result had to be presented, accompanied with your ID, to the customs officer in charge. We poured out of the vessel, sheepishly following the crowd. We herded ourselves into a massive venue. At the end, half a circle of rostrums, on each side a uniformed man, looking at us like we were all potentially violators of the customs and who knows what else.

Slowly we shuffled towards a randomly chosen rostrum. My turn. Looking up, I handed over the required papers. The officer studied my face, studied the photo on the ID and back again. He looked at me from head to toe. Silence. I gazed black, not knowing what to do. That yes-dear-at-home person in front of me was full of self-righteousness. Here he was in power, it poured out of him and he would make sure I knew it. His mouth talked. I had to gather my senses back, trying to understand what he was saying. He definitely hadn't learned English in my school. I apologised and politely asked to repeat the question. His facial expression turned into a higher scale

of disapproval. He repeated the questions, slow, emphasizing every syllable. Where did I come from, how long would I stay..... I couldn't believe my ears. All the answers, I had written down, an hour ago, on that flipping card he was holding. I certainly didn't change my mind during that period of time.

All of a sudden, I got it. I saw he had just one chevron on his sleeve. That clarified it. The poor chap couldn't either write or read. Murphy's law I explained to myself and smiled understandingly to the officer.

In the end I got all the answers right and I could proceed with the stamp of approval in my pocket. Free to get onto the train to London, free to get the first taste of the UK. The start of my anglophile journey.

October 1st, 2020

Children of mankind rejoice and jubilate! Belgium has a new federal government. After almost 500 days. No, not a new record, a previous government took over 500 days.

A quote of an expert in politics: "Everything that the involved political parties negotiated about now, was already part of the first discussions of negotiation 500 days ago."

Too many alpha males and the urge to profile decided otherwise.

Now let's talk corona.

As you all knew, there was no balloon festival in September. To have some taste of it, the town council had decided, to let fly, from different locations around the town, some balloons with caretakers and nurses as passengers. 350 in total.

Starting from the 23th of September or the 1st of October some corona rules changed.

The bubble of 15 first was first reduced to 5 and then to nothing. It burst, no more bubbles. Every member of a family, at least 12 years old, can have contact with 5 people outside of their household for at least a month. Afterwards you can change. This means that if you think you have found the love of your life on the first of a month and it turns out not to be the real deal, you have to sit it out till the next month.

You have to carry a facemask with you whenever you leave your home. You have to wear it in the moment you enter a shop or an enclosed venue. Also in crowded places outside, like shopping street or markets.

You have always to use your common sense. Therein lies the catch. How common is my sense, yours or theirs?

On top of that, the government stated, that every village, town or city council can make their own rules about wearing face masks. Luckily, in Sint-Niklaas, they decided that the rules will stay the same.

If you fancy a meal, first you have to make a reservation and secondly you have to leave your email address or phone number at the venue so you can be traced should there be a corona issue. A party can contain of a maximum of 10 persons. When seated you can put your mask away. Otherwise it would be awkward, wouldn't it. Masks need to be on while visiting the toilet or when leaving the table to go out for a smoke. The social distancing in cultural events indoors is reduced from 1.5 meter to 1 meter. Cosy isn't it.

To make you all jealous, we can watch a game of football, live. Up till now only for season ticket holders and within all the corona rules, but there you have it.

From now on you can get a tan in a red coloured European country. You're free to go. Upon return you're politely asked to put yourself in quarantine for 7 days. Not 14 days, as it was before. People said that 14 days was too long, they were bored to death.

Oh, and, if it pleases them, could they also please take a covid test.

Our equivalent of your NHS, did note that those who travel to a red region, won't be medical insured.

All of this gives me the creeps.

At this moment people doesn't need "should", "could" or "would". They need a clear line between right or wrong behaviour

If you put the responsibility on 100 individuals you get 100 different interpretations/explanations of the rules they're responsible for.

Sad News from Colmar

David Mallen in Colmar has sent us this sad news:

Hello from Colmar

The Mayor of Colmar between 1995 and 2020 Mr Gilbert Meyer died on Monday – he was 78 years old. He was always interested in what was happening in our twin towns. Since the Spring we have a new Mayor Mr Eric Straumann and we are waiting to see if that has any effect on our Association!

We hope to see you again soon - take care!

Best Wishes

David



Stella Carter and Gilbert Meyer

Stella writes "This photo was taken in January 2016. Francois Hollande, President of France, was in Colmar to open the newly refurbished Unter Linden Museum. Howard and I were invited. I didn't meet the President, but I did meet the Mayor of Colmar, Gilbert Meyer."

Membership Subscriptions for 2020-2021.

Thank you to those many members who have paid their annual subscriptions, due in September each year, by Bankers Order or BACS. We are normally able to collect subscriptions from others at our regularly monthly meetings or social events. Obviously, this has not been possible this year so we would be very grateful if those who haven't yet paid, could pay either by cheque or BACS. Cheques for £7.50 per person or £15 for a family, should be made payable to "ADTTS" and sent to us at 80, Baker Road, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 5LJ
BACS payments should be paid to:

National Westminster Bank Plc, Market Place, Abingdon
Account Name **Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society**,
Sort Code **60-01-01** A/c No **08616752**.
Make sure you include your surname as a reference.

The Committee are very aware of the fact that members have not been able to participate in any activities since March. The committee is looking at ways to restart monthly meetings from November onwards. Because of the disruptions we have suffered, no charge will be made for members to attend monthly meetings until we are able to restart a full programme.

If you have any questions please call us on 01235 53921 or email treasurer@adtts.eu.

Rosemary & Ian Jardine, Joint Treasurers, and Membership Secretaries

ADTTS Contacts

Chairman
Stella Carter
The Old Bakehouse
2 Winterbourne Rd, Abingdon OX14 1AJ
01235 520317
chairman@adtts.eu

Treasurer & Membership
Ian & Rosemary Jardine
80 Baker Road
Abingdon, OX14 5LJ
01235 539291
treasurer@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.

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