

Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



Newsletter

June 2023

Guest Editor: Brian Read

In this edition:

- From the Chairman
- Forthcoming Events – Evening Garden Party / Canoe & Bike Camping
- Recent Events: "Drayton in the Past" - Andrew Bax
- Recent Events: Europe Day Dinner
- Invitation to Schongau for a Twinning Weekend over May Day
- The Pillars of Sint-Niklaas
- Contact details

From the Chairman

I have had a Dutch friend staying with me for the past week, a family friend with a history going back to WWII. We have done so much over the years with our Dutch family, so we were amazed that Annette had never been to Abingdon.

The weather has been beautiful this past week as we set off to discover Abingdon. I don't know who has enjoyed it more; Annette seeing the town for the first time, or me, seeing it through fresh eyes.

The Ock river walk was a delight, the bright green of spring, and so peaceful, it was difficult to believe we were so close to the town centre. St Helen's church was open and a very kind man gave us a fascinating and comprehensive talk. Just as we were about to leave, Susan turned up and treated us to a visit to the bell tower, a first for me.

East St Helen's Street was looking particularly festive with flags and bunting reminding us of the recent coronation. There were information boards to read as we made our way down to the river and to the lock. The Thames was a hive of activity and we talked to several boat owners. A grey wagtail, yellow in colour, sat and preened above the weir and two herons along the river bank gave us lessons in fishing. Waitrose were selling British strawberries for us to take home and the cafes in the market square were selling hundreds of coffees to customers enjoying the sun in the shade of the "museum on stilts". We wandered home through Albert Park enjoying the vast number of different trees there and particularly the laburnum now in full flower. Bowlers in white were playing on their green and children were playing in the park.

This is our Abingdon-on-Thames. Aren't we lucky! The thing is, we are very happy to share it. So, if you are reading this in one of our twin towns, please come and visit. You don't need to wait for an official invitation or for a group visit to be arranged. Just let us know you are coming and we will be delighted to give you a tour of our historic town, offer you a meal and even a bed for the night. Please come!

Stella Carter



Abingdon Market Place on the morning of the Coronation

Forthcoming Events

Friday 23 rd June 2023	Garden Party – 7.00 pm Longside
11 th – 17 th July 2023	Visit to Argentan for Bastille Day Celebrations
24 th – 30 th July 2023	Canoe/Bike Camping along the Thames
31 st August – 4 th September	Twinning weekend in Sint-Niklaas

Friday 23 June 2023: Evening Garden Party

For our last event before the summer break, members are invited to the Midsummer Garden Party at Michael Matthews' at 7.00 pm on Friday 23rd June. We look forward to enjoying Michael's lovely garden, getting together with sparkling wine, soft drinks and canapés.

We shall need to have a good idea of how many will be coming, so please let Rosemary Jardine know **before 15th June** if you can make it.

There will be a charge of £5 per person and it would be helpful if you could let us have payment in advance by sending Rosemary a cheque made payable to ADTTS or by making a BACS payment to Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society, NatWest Bank, sort code 60-01-01, account number 08616752, with your surname as the reference.

Michael's address is: Longside, Tatham Road, Abingdon OX14 1QD.

Rosemary's address is 80 Baker Road, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 5LJ, tel. 01235 539291, email treasurer@adtts.eu.

We look forward to seeing you there.

24 – 30 July 2023: Canoe/Bike Camping

As in previous years, we shall be hosting visitors from Argentan for canoe and bike camping locally along the Thames. The dates are 24th to 30th July, camping two nights in Oxford and two nights in Abingdon for a mix of French and English participants.

The programme is:

24th July: arrive

25th: paddle and pedal to Oxford campsite via Sandford, set up camp

26th: explore Oxford by bike and canoe

27th: paddle and pedal back to Abingdon lock and set up camp

28th: explore Abingdon by bike and canoe

29th: pack away

30th: return home

HELP!

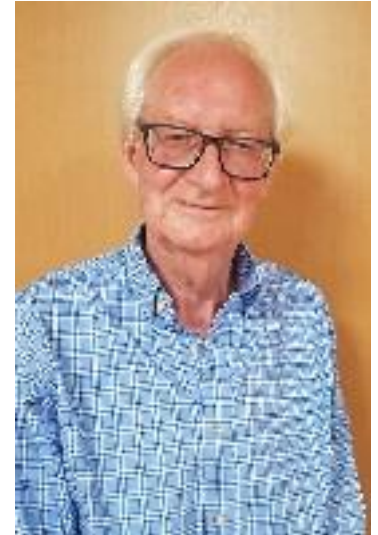
The organiser, Richard Smart, writes:

On 25th July I have 10 French teenagers and 3 adults coming over to go cycle/canoe camping. They really want to meet English speakers as well as have fun camping, canoeing and cycling so I am looking for people who might like to join us either going upstream to Oxford, exploring Oxford, coming downstream to Abingdon, exploring Abingdon or even just having a meal together. They are very pleasant and polite teenagers and good company so if you think you might like to join us in any way then please contact me, **Richard Smart** on 01235 523324 or dickcsmart@gmail.com.

Recent Events: "Drayton in the Past" - Andrew Bax

Thursday 18 May 2023 - at Preston Road Community Centre

Before he began talking about Drayton, local historian, published author and beekeeper, **Andrew Bax**, mentioned the story of Mrs Icolyn Smith MBE, an iconic and charismatic Jamaican lady who set up a charity soup kitchen for the homeless in Cowley some years ago. There is a tenuous link between her story and that of Drayton – the excellent computerised database(s) available in Jamaica, which Andrew used to tell her story compared with some of the older and more labour-intensive sources of information required to get information about Drayton and its past.



Thirty or so members of ADTTS, then had a fascinating insight into the history of Drayton, which was in Berkshire but since 1974 has been in Oxfordshire. Drayton, the name possibly means 'a farm near a place where timber was dragged up a river,' has a long history, from Neolithic and Roman times, a mention in the Domesday Book, for the last 700 years part of the land holdings of New College, Oxford and now the 'host' of a lot of new houses. Prior to the second world war the population was ~700, now it is ~3000.

Andrew started researching the local history intensively during the Covid lockdown. He began by trying to find other Draytons, named by someone from the village who had moved elsewhere. These included one tenant of Drayton Mill who emigrated to Michigan in 1835 and founded Drayton in the USA, now Drayton Mills, another who went to Australia, and several in the UK.

How did Drayton care for its poor? The poor and destitute had in the past been helped by monks but after Henry VIII's depredations the responsibility passed to local communities, until the system was overwhelmed by the industrial revolution and soldiers returning from the Napoleonic wars.

In the 18th century a new vicar of Drayton was appalled to find that 70% of his flock were born out of wedlock. In attempting to save their souls he neglected his temporal duties and was soon on his way. In 1780 there was a disastrous fire which resulted in much of the High Street being destroyed. Amazingly a national appeal brought in ~£3000 (or over half a million pounds today). Part of this money was used to build dwellings on the site of the present almshouses. These were improved in the 1930s and then subsequently until they were demolished in the 1970s. New bungalow type almshouses were built in their stead. Andrew contrasted the attitudes of the earlier inhabitants, who were happy with what they had, to today when it is difficult to find people who want to live in this sort of accommodation!

Although farming was a mainstay of the community and local employment, in the early 19th century a brick works was opened. Output was used locally and exported via the nearby Wilts and Berks canal. In 1920 a worker earned 12/- to £1 per week. The works closed towards the end of the 1970s/80 and new houses were quickly built on the site.

There was much more in Andrew's talk – his exploits in getting to read the appropriate documents in the New College archives for instance and even a photograph of a brick tombstone.

A most interesting and informative presentation. Thank you, Andrew.

And, as always, our thanks to Howard for running the 'bar' and Nicky and helpers for providing some delicious baguette and pâté, and other nibbles.

Note: more details of Mrs Icolyn Smith are available in Andrew Bax's book '*From Coolshade to Cowley Road*', and further information about Drayton and its history in articles, many by Andrew, in the magazine, '*The Drayton Chronicle*.'

Neil Hancox, 19 May 2023

Recent Events: Europe Day Dinner

Tuesday 9 May 2023 – at The Cosener's House, Abbey Close, Abingdon

Each year, we look forward, in common with our friends in the twin towns, to our annual celebration of Europe Day by enjoying a meal together. After a successful post-Covid gathering last year, we returned to The Cosener's House in Abbey Close, which provides an excellent venue. After a welcome with a fruit cocktail, forty-three of us sat down to enjoy a good meal in the company of other members. We arranged a special menu designed to reflect our links with the four countries of our Twin Towns. We thank Gloria for making all the arrangements.



The new twinning shield added to the Schongau Maypole

Invitation to Schongau for a Twinning Weekend over May Day

Up to four visitors from each of their twin towns were invited to Schongau to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of twinning. Norma, Susan and Brian represented Abingdon. Norma travelled by plane to Munich, then train. Susan and Brian travelled all the way by train.

On the arrival day, a Saturday, the host families entertained their guests.

On Sunday morning there was a visit to church for those who wished and, in the afternoon, Herman Cole gave a brilliant talk, while his wife Mia exhibited some of her lovely art work. After the talk in early evening, the hosts and friends provided a wonderful buffet.

On Mayday, the erection of the Maypole (*Maibaum*) took place just outside the city walls. A fabulous feat of engineering saw the 34-metre-high pole raised up. The group went afterwards to a reception at the museum featuring cake and wine. Many of the guests and local population wore traditional costume.

The next day saw a guided tour of the town and church, followed by a lovely concert featuring singing and a trumpet. The farewell evening event was a meal at a local restaurant serving traditional dishes.

A wonderful time was had by all and we hope for more contact very soon.

Norma Queralt

It was indeed a highly successful and enjoyable twinning meeting with the opportunity to meet some old friends and make new ones. Hugh thanks for organising everything so well must go to Evelyn Schmidbauer and her colleagues from the Schongau Circle of Friends (*Freundeskreis*). The high point of the programme in Schongau was the erection outside the city gates of a maypole. This special event for Schongau happens only every five years. Unfortunately, the rainy weather meant that the planned parade had to be cancelled, but the traditional Bavarian Hymn was still played!

Brian Read



Group photograph at the reception in the Town Hall. (Photo: G Kelz/Schongau newspaper)

The Pillars of Sint-Niklaas

Most of the visitors of our town, certainly have noticed that ugly scar of the railway on pillars that cuts through the north of the town.

This hideous concrete grimace with thirty-three pillar teeth is sitting there since 1973.

Over the years the weathering hasn't done it any favours.

Some years ago, Project 33 was started. The idea was to ask artists their thoughts about how to spruce up the pillars and the spaces in between.

They had to give their impressions on how to turn the site into an eye-catching, mesmerizing, arty, green space. Two of them, the visual artists **Elise Eeraerts** and **Roberto Aparicio Ronda** had the idea to design 10 artworks, partially made with bricks.



They are asking the citizens of Sint-Niklaas to: **“Hun baksteentje bij te dragen.”**
To contribute their brick stone. To contribute one's mite.

You can participate in a workshop to learn how to make bricks with a wooden mould to help make the total of bricks needed.

The clay is local and the bricks will be baked in a nearby kiln.

(To be continued)

Siegfried Waterschoot, Sint-Niklaas

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

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)

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