

# Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



# Newsletter

September 2023

Guest Editor: Brian Read

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## From the Chairman

What a turbulent summer the world has experienced weather wise this year. There have been so many devastating fires in Canada and Hawaii and in so many parts of Europe, whilst here at home all our activities have been centred around keeping out of the rain. Although we tend not to think it, we really are the lucky ones.

Many of you living overseas may not know that Abingdon hosts one of the biggest firework displays in the country at the end of August each year (a date for your diaries?). It signals the end of the summer school holidays and the start of the new academic year in September. Our committee members have met several times over the summer and have put together an exciting programme of meetings, trips and other opportunities for next year. Our AGM is on Thursday 21 September at 7.30 for 8pm. Please come and hear about planned trips, pétanque and much more!

It is always good for any society to have new members on committees. Do please think about joining ours. They are the most interesting I have ever been on (maybe that's the wine talking). If you would like to know more, please contact me to talk about it.

Looking further ahead to November 2024, we know Lucca will be commemorating the 100th anniversary of the death of Puccini. We will look forward to hearing more about that and perhaps holding our own celebrations of his life.

See you on 21st September!

*Stella Carter*

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## Membership Subscriptions 2023/2024

**Subscriptions are now due for the year starting 1st September.**

**The amount is £7.50 per person or £15.00 for a couple.**

Payment can be made by Bankers Order, cheque or by BACS to

ADTTS bank account: National Westminster Bank plc, Market Place, Abingdon

**Sort Code:** 60-01-01      **A/c No:** 08616752      **Ref:** Mem + your last name

Many of you have standing order arrangements. If you do, it would be helpful if you could check that you have uprated the amount to the current rate.

*Rosemary & Ian Jardine*

*80 Baker Road*

*Abingdon*

*Oxon*

*OX14 5LJ*

*01235 539291*

*mob 07768 054221*

[\*ian@ianjardine.co.uk\*](mailto:ian@ianjardine.co.uk)



*Abingdon Local Excellence Market*

## Forthcoming Events

31 <sup>st</sup> August – 4 <sup>th</sup> September	Twinning weekend in Sint-Niklaas
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> September	Annual General Meeting at Preston Road CC
12 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>th</sup> October	Church Twinning Visit to Argentan
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> October	Evening Meeting
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup> November	Remembrance Sunday Wreath Laying
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> November	Evening Meeting
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas Lunch
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> December	Evening Meeting

### 21 September 2023: Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will take place at Preston Road Community Centre on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September. We expect a report on the past year and, more importantly, presentation of the full programme of meetings and visits for 2023/24. It will also be an opportunity to hear about the twinning weekend earlier this month hosted by Sint-Niklaas. Expect preliminary announcements of proposed visits next year to Lucca and Schongau.

All members are welcome to this event and to meet up with each other after the summer break. Refreshments will, as usual, be provided.

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### **Madama Butterfly on the Lake**

**Thursday 7 September 2023 – Abbey Cinema 7.30pm**

Many members take a particular interest in the operas of Lucca's famous Giacomo Puccini. There is an opportunity this month to watch a performance of his *Madama Butterfly*. On Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September, the Abbey Cinema will be showing a spectacular outdoor production on Lake Constance in Austria, directed by Andreas Homoki. See <https://www.cinematlive.com/event/madamabutterfly>.

The broadcast is in Italian with English subtitles. For details and to book tickets, go to <https://theabbey.ac/web?film=64c14b9425978a68b816b708>.

Looking ahead to next year, the Abbey will be showing a production of *Madama Butterfly* from the Royal Opera House on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024. <https://theabbey.ac/web?film=64dcd02e5f386474da0bccb8>

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## Trip to Argentan for Bastille Day

**Tuesday 11 July – Monday 17 July 2023**

Pete and Anne Dodd went by car on the 12th and were hosted by their old friends the Chuquets, James Wigmore went by train on the 14th and stayed in a hotel. Anne-Marie, John and I planned to cycle to Basingstoke and go by train from there to Portsmouth for the night ferry to Ouistreham.

**11.7.23** Anne-Marie, John and I met at Abingdon Market Place at 9.00 am and set off by bike. Morale was high and we passed without mishap through Wantage, over the dreaded Chain Hill and into Newbury where we stopped for a rest and a bite to eat. For me Newbury to Basingstoke was the worst stage, the roads are small yet packed with speeding lorries and cars. We had no trouble getting a train and arrived in plenty of time to get to the terminal, have a meal and join the queue with other bikers to get aboard. We put down the arms of the seats in the salon and tried to sleep but the salon was quite cold and apparently the cabins are too hot!

**12.7.23** The café in the terminal had not yet opened so we set off by bike to Benouville or 'Pegasus Bridge' as it is known to tourists. The first part of France to be liberated on D-Day. There are two famous cafés on the same side of the canal but different sides of the road. *Les trois planeurs* (the three gliders) behind which the three gliders landed on marshy land in silence in the early hours of 6th June 1944. The other café, called Pegasus Bridge Café, sells war souvenirs and basically makes the most of the fact that it was the first part of France to be liberated. I believe for many years any British customers received VIP treatment. We went there for a much-needed breakfast and as we were about to leave, I noticed my water bottle was nearly empty so I went back in and asked for some tap water. The cold 'NON' I received in reply shocked me and made me see the 'we will never forget' posters dotted around in a different light.

We continued on our journey through Caen but we could not agree on a route out of Caen and I now believe my map reading skills leave a lot to be desired, but eventually we got to Falaise where William the Conqueror was born and had a coffee with Kat, a twinning friend who would be coming canoe camping with us later in July. We were running a bit late so we decided to take the more direct D Road rather than the more scenic roundabout route to Argentan. It was not very pleasant but we got to Bernard Plessis's house by 6.00 pm, where we met up with Guy Frénéhard and Marie-Lise Marie, the other hosts. We freshened up and met up again later at Marie-Lise's house where we had a sumptuous meal (as is always the case) and played table tennis and table football before getting a good night's sleep.

**13.7.23** Argentan council have two minibuses which local associations can use for very little so we went with many Argentan twidders in a minibus and a classic Renault 4 to Arromanches, where there is a new D-Day Museum and you can see the remains of the Mulberry harbour. I think we in UK tend to forget about WW2 but in Normandy there are constant reminders of it and the museum at Arromanches is a very moving reminder of the horrors of war. After a very pleasant picnic we went to Colville by Omaha beach where there is an American museum and cemetery. Again, a very moving reminder of the horrors of war.

In the evening we had another sumptuous meal including my favourite merguez sausages at the Frenehards house where we sang some drinking songs before staggering off to bed.

**14.7.23** The Bastille Day celebrations take place in *les Patures*, an area of reclaimed marshland round the river Orne. I popped in to see Pascal Laroch, an old friend whose love of cycling has been severely curtailed by heart problems. We then went to the war memorial for speeches and a parade down to the Patures for the '*aperitif citoyen*' where the council provides drinks and nibbles for anyone who turns up. We then had a bring/share picnic followed by free time to chat and wander about. In the evening we had another sumptuous meal chez les Chuquet followed by the famous Bastille Day firework display, which some of saw from the garden of Alain Hubert, the musician offering us a barn dance in November.

**15.7.23** After a free morning we went by minibus and 2CV to Crevecoeur, a sort of manor house, museum, village, chateau showing how people used to live and how language and customs evolved. Very interesting. In the evening we met up in a restaurant where we met up with James Wigmore of Abingdon Liveable Streets who had arrived that morning and was due to go home on the night ferry the next day. It was a shame he did not have time to get to know people better. Our hosts would not let us pay the bill so eventually we compromised and paid 2/3rds.

**16.7.23** Anne-Marie had arranged for Alain Hubert to take her by car to Caen where she would meet me and John at 6.00 ready to cycle the rest of the way to Ouistreham. John and I set off just after 9.00 and with me keeping my mouth shut and not interfering in John's navigation, we were in Caen by 1.00. We had some lunch then John read his book and I walked to the Abbaye aux Hommes to look at William the Conqueror's tomb. Apparently when he died his body was in the church but nobody wanted to bury him so he swelled up and eventually burst like a balloon with such a loud bang they thought they were under attack. At 6.00 Alain turned up with Anne-Marie and we cycled to Ouistreham where we had a meal before boarding, searching in vain for James and trying to sleep on reclining seats.

**17.7.23** After a pleasant breakfast at Greggs we got on a train to Oxford but it was so crowded with people and bikes that eventually John and I were asked to get off at Reading where we immediately found a train with lots of room and had a nice comfortable ride to Didcot from where we cycled home.

#### OBSERVATIONS

Again, overwhelmed by the generosity and hospitality of our French friends, I hope we can make them feel as welcome when they come to us on 24th July. Also, the idea of the council lending minibuses to local associations and providing drinks/nibbles on the national holiday is an idea well worth imitating.

*Richard Smart*



*Les 3 Planeurs*



*Pegasus Bridge (boycott café)*



*Mulberry Harbour*



*The new D-Day Museum  
Arromanches*



*Omaha Beach*



*Argentan Church*

# Canoe/Cycle Camping 2023

## Monday 24 July – Sunday 30 July

The plan was to have half of us in canoes and half on bikes, to paddle and pedal to Sandford where we would have a picnic then swap canoes for bikes and continue to the Oxford campsite. The cancellation of Eline meant that I had to go the whole way by canoe. We would spend the 26<sup>th</sup> exploring Oxford on foot, the 27<sup>th</sup> returning to Abingdon, the 28<sup>th</sup> exploring Abingdon in the morning and canoeing in the afternoon.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

ME, RICHARD SMART a 71-year-old has been who should know better than to think he can keep up with teenagers. One thing I did say to them is that as you age you tend to regret the things you could have done and did not do, rather than the reckless things you did.

MARIE-LISE MARIE, an English teacher and mum who came to last year's catastrophe.

CATHERINE HAMELN, another teacher and mum who came last year and still wanted to come again.

OCEANE An 18-year-old student whose English is not great but the fact that she is 18 means she counts as an adult.

ELINE A girl from Colmar who heard about the trip, signed up for it and dropped out at the last minute.

SIMON Marie-Lise's son who made my day when he called me a 'salopard' when he caught me cheating at cards.

LUCAS Simon's close friend and a bit of a ladies' man.

EMILE A newcomer and a member of Alençon running club, he came 6<sup>th</sup> in the Saturday Park Run.

ROMAINE Could not come last year but she loves the UK and the English language, hopes to be an English teacher.

LOUISE came last year and must have enjoyed it.

MATEO When he introduced himself, I heard 'Macdo' the slang word for a MacDonalds, so that is what he became known as.

NOLAN Kept me amused by capsizing 4 times.

ROS, STEVE AND VIV, three friends who kindly offered to host French visitors.

JEN, DAVE, ANDY AND ALISTAIR provided the canoes and accompanied the canoeists.

JOHN, ANNE-MARIE AND PETER accompanied cyclists.

**Monday 24 July** I went with the coach to meet them off the 14.00 Ouistreham-Portsmouth ferry. We assembled chez Smart, chatted, played games and waited for hosts to come and pick up their guests, take them home, feed them and put them to bed.

**Tues 25 July** Some came to my house and some met us at Abingdon canoe club, half of us set off in canoes and the other half on bikes intending to have a picnic together at 1.00 at Sandford Lock. It took us 45 minutes to get through Abingdon Lock which meant we were an hour late for lunch after which we proceeded to the campsite. Jen locked up the canoes and almost immediately the cyclists arrived followed by Nick with all our camping gear. We all mucked in putting up tents, blowing up airbeds and deciding who would sleep where. Having said thank you and goodbye to Jen's group, the cyclists and Nick, we had a 30-minute walk to Chutneys, the Indian restaurant in Oxford which we had booked. We were all very hungry but I was still amazed at how much these teenagers can put away. Every time I looked up, they were shovelling it away, especially Emile, one of the skinniest in the group. After a much-needed copious meal, we headed back to the campsite. I was exhausted and longing

for a good night's sleep. The teenagers, however, stopped off at the Hinksey playground for a relaxing play before bed.

**Wed 26 July** I do not think anyone slept well because the site is very close to a railway line and a recycling centre so it was very noisy. After a fry up breakfast the kids walked and we oldies cycled into Oxford, spent an hour or so at the Ashmolean, had a picnic there and then got a message from Pete Dodd suggesting a tour of some colleges, so we met him at St John's, then went to St Edmund Hall which reminded me of something which I find quite interesting. My parents were both from poor backgrounds and won scholarships for Teddy Hall and St Hugh's during the war! They must have both been frighteningly brainy. Where did they go wrong with their children? They met when my mother was giving a talk in German on German literature, my dad was in the audience and afterwards approached her and invited her to come to Teddy Hall for tea.

'No I would not' was her indignant reply 'what kind of a girl do you think I am?'

'Well, we've got tinned salmon and chocolate biscuits', replied Dad.

'Really oh well in that case I'll be there' was her answer, which just shows that the way to a woman's heart involves fish and chocolate.

After Teddy Hall we all had free time so I went to the library for a snooze behind the paper in a warm place while the others went shopping. Later we all met up at the library, read for a bit and then as the skies darkened walked to Bella Italia for our dinner. After a lovely meal we came out to heavy rain. I felt so sorry for the youngsters walking back in the rain as we sailed past them on our bikes! We all had a fairly early night.

**Thursday 27 July** It had rained hard during the night and the large tent which I had borrowed but had not checked beforehand turned out to be very leaky. The good news, however, was that I was not in that tent but two of the boys had a sleepless night with rain dripping down on them all night. After a fry up breakfast, we packed everything away, Nick came to take all our gear. Jen's group arrived to accompany the canoeists and Peter Dearlove arrived to accompany the cyclists to Sandford Lock for a picnic together. What could possibly go wrong? We canoeists got there in good time and I got out to help everyone disembark. Louise had got out so I got one end of her canoe and without looking gave it as powerful a yank as an old has-been can and did not notice that Nolan had stood up. He sat down again, lost his balance and capsized the canoe in a few feet of water. There is nothing funnier than seeing someone capsize so I sniggered inwardly while apologising profusely to Nolan. He was very gracious and said that's OK, I'll get my revenge. But I didn't do it on purpose, I said, nor will I he replied menacingly. The cyclists, should have got there a long time before us, however because they made such good time, they decided to go a bit further to Radley Lake, lock up the bikes and have a nice walk. Peter insisted on locking all the bikes together with his combination lock but at the end of the walk he could not free the bikes so either he had the wrong number or, as he claimed, there was a problem with the lock. He had to phone for help from his family and cut the cable on his lock but eventually we all arrived at Abingdon Lock and set up camp, this time without the leaky tent. We then walked to the Broad Face for a lovely pre-booked dinner.

**Friday 28 July** After a fry up breakfast of Cumberland sausages, which Kat described as 'degueulasse', we spent the morning on a walking tour of Abingdon, meeting up back at the lock for a picnic. At 2.00 Jen and Dave arrived to give us some canoeing. The plan was to shoot the Ock weir and go up the tunnel known as the Spider Tunnel, which goes under Stert Street for a few hundred metres. I had the following conversation with Louise

Louise - Pourquoi il s'appelle le tunnel des araignées, il y a beaucoup d'araignées la?

Richard - Non il n'y en a pas, les rats les ont mangées.

Louise - AAAAAAHHHH!

We paddled up the lower part of the Ock, took our boats out and one by one relaunched them into the higher part prior to shooting the weir. I watched from the bridge hoping to see a few people capsize. Each time someone made it I uttered a disappointed 'zut!!!', so it was obvious I was praying for people to capsize. When it came to our turn in a Canadian, I could feel the crowd willing me and Romaine to capsize, which we very nearly did but just managed

to right ourselves and everyone was very disappointed. Only four people did capsize and I was devastated to miss two of them. Most of us then went up the Spider Tunnel one at a time with a torch. Initially Romaine said I should go up it alone but I am glad to say she changed her mind and found it quite exciting. We then returned to camp and got ready for dinner at the Dil Raj at 7.30. The youngsters left the restaurant fairly early to play in the playground and I walked back with Marie-Lise and Kat. We had learned that one of our visitors had not done a poo since arriving in Abingdon so we tried to compose limericks in French and English to illustrate this problem. I composed:

Une semaine entière en juillet  
Je n'ai fait que peter  
'Mangez des fruits'  
Ont dit mes amis  
Mais ça me fait vraiment chier

The French adults quite enjoyed this.

**Saturday 29 July** The Park Run was taking place as we were preparing breakfast and packing up. Emile, who is a member of Alençon Running Club, decided to take part before breakfast and came SIXTH beating James Wigmore fairly decisively and the Dodds by miles. After breakfast we packed everything away and Nick and Stella arrived to take it all to my house. We had a picnic in my garden then the visitors went shopping or sightseeing or stayed behind to play table tennis, boules, darts or pallets. Between 5.00 and 6.00 the hosts came for their charges. Anne and I fed our guests and they went for a walk before an early night.

**Sunday 30 July** 5.30 am we met the Pearce's coach outside OLA and said goodbye. We hope to do some kind of exchange canoe camping next year because although it is exhausting it is so exciting and the French participants are so kind and such fun.

*Richard Smart*





## Activités du jumelage Abingdon-Argentan de Juillet 2023

Marie-Lise Marie from Argentan took part in both the Bastille Day visit and the Canoe-Camping. She writes:

*Dear twinning members,*

*Please find enclosed my report in French of our twinning activities in Argentan for Bastille Day and in Abingdon for the camping canoe cycling trip.*

*These events have been memorable and we all had a great time!*

*I would like to thank everybody very warmly for their efforts and contribution in both cities. This has been again great team work and has confirmed our strong friendship.*

*Best regards to you all,*

*Marie-Lise*

Her entertaining report is best appreciated in the original French. (Indeed, Google Translate struggles!)

### Du 12 au 17 Juillet à Argentan pour le 14 Juillet (et les Arts j'entends)

**11/7** : les Dodds arrivent en voiture chez les Chuquet (« chouquettes » avec l'accent anglais)

**12/7** : Les cyclistes (Richard Smart, John Page, Anne-Marie Dunn) arrivent à vélo à Argentan, cette fois sans faire de détour inopportun à l'exception de celui choisi par Richard à la terrasse d'un café Falaisien.

Je m'explique : Catherine Hamelin avait convenu avec Richard qu'elle attendait les cyclistes à Potigny pour faire la route avec eux jusqu'à Falaise et boire ensuite un verre chez elle. Seulement voilà, les cyclistes n'arrivèrent jamais au lieu dit. Renseignements pris, les 3 compères étaient assis à la terrasse d'un bar à Falaise.

Trois options possibles pour expliquer ce quiproquo :

1. Richard n'a pas compris le français (patoisant manchot) de Catherine
2. Les cyclistes ont eu peur d'être distancés par Catherine **en** (pardon my French : « à ») vélo électrique (complexe de nombreux hommes à vélo non assisté à l'ère de l'électrique, selon les informations dont je dispose),
3. Catherine ne les a pas vus, absorbée qu'elle était par sa BD depuis 45 minutes sur le porte bagage de sa bicyclette à assistance électrique.

Selon l'avis du narrateur néanmoins, la raison la plus plausible est que les anglais auraient tout simplement pris la poudre d'escampette en arrivant à Potigny, ayant à ce moment là le vent dans le dos. Bref, Pétard, ils ont filé à l'anglaise, quoi !

Le soir venu, avant que les collines normandes n'envahissent les rêves (cauchemars) agités de nos (redevenus) amis anglais, un petit repas\* dans le sous sol de la maison des Marie, quelques parties de Ping Pong et de baby-foot\*\* (traduction du mot anglais « table football ») ont occupé nos convives ivres de fatigue, mais aussi de vin rouge et de pommeau.

\*étaient présents Carine et Frédéric, les Lecrosnier, Anouk Alexandre, les Frénéhard, les Plessis, et nos cyclistes de GB (Gross Beef Land)

\*\*pied de bébé en anglais/ nom possible aussi pour un petit indien d'Amérique

**13 Juillet** : Ce matin là, le Mont Saint Michel et ses milliers de pèlerins ayant eu raison de nous et de nos ambitions de sortie lointaine, les minibus du PL et la magnifique 4L de Alain Hubert prirent la route pour Arromanches.

Son musée restauré, ses magnifiques paysages chargés d'histoire et de vent ce jour là nous ont appris à nouveau à la fois la petitesse de l'homme face aux éléments naturels et son ingéniosité dans l'adversité. Un pique-nique sur les hauteurs a rassasié ensuite les troupes, pas fâchées de se sustenter.

Nous nous sommes ensuite rendus au cimetière américain de Colleville où Mark, non sans émotions, nous a narré de nombreuses petites histoires tragiques de la grande Histoire de la 2<sup>e</sup> Guerre.

A la nuit tombée, rires et chants ont animé la soirée BBQ comme à l'accoutumée chez les Frénéhard et « Hey Jude » a retenti comme un chant d'amitié franco anglais. Puis la Marseillaise revisitée de Richard et les chansons de Renaud se sont imposées naturellement avant que le Marchand de sable ne passe.

**14 juillet** au Plan d'eau de la Noé : l'apéritif citoyen, les commémorations et le pique-nique au bord de l'eau (toujours sous le signe de l'amitié, mais aussi du vent, déchaîné ce jour là) ont réuni nombre d'entre nous et ce fut un succès ! « *Long live Twinning !* »

Un festin chez les Ch(o)uquet's a clôturé la journée. Nul doute que nos amis anglais ont été fort impressionnés du nombre de plats servis par Marie-Thé et Yves, que nous devrions inscrire à l'émission « Un dîner (plus que presque) parfait » !

Parfait également fut le spectacle du feu d'artifice auquel certains assistèrent du jardin d'Alain à la nuit tombée !

**15 Juillet** : sortie Château de Crève Cœur en Auge. Le déplacement se fit en minibus ou/et en 2CV pour le plus grand bonheur de nos amis anglais, qui prirent place dans l'habitacle avec hâte.

Nous avons effectué une visite libre du château médiéval et du magnifique parc arboré puis avons assisté au spectacle des gardes du Seigneur dans la Cour du château. Certains d'entre nous, plus ou moins captivés, tentaient de s'abriter du soleil ou de manger un morceau pendant que d'autres revendiquèrent clairement le droit à la sieste à l'ombre d'un puits, anticipant avec frayeur par la pensée la prouesse sportive du retour au pays des Roastbeefs et du Corned Beef à vélo sur les inévitables collines normandes.

Selon l'adage « Ce que femme veut Dieu le veut », Anne-Marie préféra accepter l'invitation d'Alain Hubert de se rendre à Caen en voiture et d'y rejoindre John et Richard, exténués, mais n'osant l'avouer.

Ce soir là, le Colbert fut à nouveau un lieu de retrouvailles et de festin.

Ce n'est qu'un au revoir, mes frères !

Qui pourra néanmoins percer le mystère de l'invité surprise anglais, prénommé James, qui se joignit à nous et aimait tant Argentan qu'il y fit une visite express ce week-end là (et 12h de ferry) ?

## **Du 24 au 30 Juillet : séjour camping canoë vélo à Abingdon**

Cette année, Richard a limité à 8-10 l'accueil de jeunes français dotés de l'enthousiasme débordant de la jeunesse et de quelques aptitudes sportives.

Et ce fut Louise, Simon, Romane, Lucas, Emile, Nolan, Océane, Mattéo, âgés de 15 à 18 ans qui se lancèrent dans l'aventure en mode SLOW LIFE sur la Tamise ! Ils firent la traversée de la Manche sur le Mont St Michel, jusqu'à Portsmouth où nous attendaient Richard et un énorme car de tourisme (paradoxalement moins cher qu'un mini bus). Puis après une bonne nuit de sommeil, ils naviguèrent 3h durant pour rejoindre la ville d'Oxford en canoë.

Catherine Hamelin et moi avons accompagné le groupe, en reprenant la formule de l'année dernière :

- La première et la dernière nuit ont été passées en famille (par 2 ou par 4), ce qui a permis de dîner et de petit déjeuner en famille et de communiquer avec ses hôtes. A ce propos, Mattéo et Nolan s'interrogeaient non sans quelques inquiétudes sur qui des 2 parviendrait à engager la discussion en anglais !

Merci à Viviane, Steve, Richard et Anne, Ross, qui nous ont si gentiment accueillis chez eux, les ados et nous !

- 2 nuits au camping d'Oxford, un camping qui est aussi joli qu'il est bruyant
- 2 nuits à Abingdon Lock (une des écluses) sur un petit terrain privé où les propriétaires de yachts viennent se relaxer quelques jours et faire griller quelques saucisses.
- Les repas composés de pique-niques et de pub food le soir, et Richard, qui grillait des saucisses le matin. Heureusement qu'on a choisi des saucisses Cumberland (les meilleures, selon Richard), car, elles étaient très, disons...anglaises !!! :)
- Déplacement en canadien (2 par embarcation) et, nouveauté cette année, à vélo. Richard possède un nombre impressionnant de vélos dans son garage, dont un tandem...

Merci à Jen, David, Andy, de nous avoir accompagnés en canoë et d'avoir patiemment relevé Nolan qui chavirait à répétitions !

Merci à Anne de suivre les délires ô combien généreux de son époux qui ressemble de plus en plus à son idole Renaud et sûrement pas à Boris Johnson !!

Ce séjour fut merveilleux pour tout le monde, nous avons bien rigolé à chaque coin de rue quand Richard se prêtait au jeu de se faire filmer : limericks, blagues en français, rire assuré!

Merci à Peter Dodd et à sa femme Anne, les gens les plus merveilleux que je connaisse. Peter a pris le temps de nous guider dans les rues d'Oxford, qu'il connaît comme sa poche.

Merci à Peter Dearlove, John Page et Anne-Marie Dunn qui nous ont accompagnés à vélo, à travers les grandes herbes et le long des rives sauvages et fleuries de la Tamise, que du bonheur !

Ils nous ont trouvé des itinéraires BIS et Peter nous a créé des aventures en bloquant son cadenas. Voyage obligatoire alors pour Catherine et moi, après une tasse de thé, dans le combi jaune de 1973, pour aller scier le cadenas !

Au fait, chut... mais 1973 est bien le code de cadenas de Peter Dearlove. Mais selon les dires de la femme de Peter, Valerie, mettez Richard et Peter ensemble, et c'est le désastre assuré !

Bref, une chouette aventure, et nous espérons que des jeunes se joindront à nous pour élaborer un projet d'échange l'an prochain (avec l'accueil de jeunes anglais à pont d'Ouilly pour faire du kayak) !

Again, many thanks to ADTTS, Stella, to Richard, Anne and their friends!

*Marie-Lise*

## Church Twinning Visit to Argentan

**12 - 16 October 2023**

This year our Normandy twin town is celebrating 20 years of church twinning with us. The Church Twinning Group in Argentan, Normandy, has invited members of the congregations of the Church in Abingdon (CiA) to visit them from Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Visitors will stay in host families (unless otherwise requested) and a varied programme will be prepared. French language is not required. Ideally, transport is by private car (sharing spaces) using the Portsmouth to Caen ferry. If you would like to take part, or are interested to learn more about this visit, please contact the CiA twinning committee secretary Eileen Bontempelli on 01235 526331, or mobile 07821 617333 or by email to [epkbontempelli@gmail.com](mailto:epkbontempelli@gmail.com).

## All Change: New Leadership in Schongau

Earlier this year, we reported in the March Newsletter that Ursula Diesch, after many years supporting twinning, is retiring. Her replacement in the Schongau Town Hall with responsibility for twinning is Maximilian Geiger. Alongside this change, there is now new leadership of the *Freundeskreis* (Friendship Circle for twinning).

After so many years of devoted service to twinning in Schongau, Evelyn Schmidbauer has retired from the leadership role. She has made a tremendous contribution to twinning. Indeed, visitors to Schongau from Abingdon always receive a warm welcome. The pictures below are from a gathering to recognise her achievement and mark the handover.

The appointment of Doris Kueter as the new replacement is an excellent choice. She is active in visiting the twin towns and we look forward to her visiting us in Abingdon before too long.

In conveying the news, Evelyn wrote:

*Dear Stella,*

*It's time to say good-bye for me to the friends of Abingdon. I have stopped being the boss of the "Freundeskreis für Städtepartnerschaften" in Schongau after 21 years.*

*June 28th, I have given the responsibility from our circle to Doris Kueter, our youngest member of our circle. Susan and Brian have got to know her May 2023 during the 60 years celebrations. I'm very happy to find a committed and sympatically young lady who will continue my work for the Twinning idea, which is more important than ever.*

*I had been several times in Abingdon and I had found many friends in your lovely town.*

*1990 I had started with the Twinning idea with Ursula Diesch because my daughter Veronica made a school exchange with Abingdon. 33! wonderful Twinning years have passed and now it's time to give the responsibility to the young people, such as Doris Kueter.*

*Many greetings from Schongau and a successful Twinning future!*

*Evelyn Schmidbauer*

To which, she wishes to add, "Without the active support of all our members, the long-standing and lively twinning would not have been possible."



*Maximilian Geiger, Doris Kueter,  
Evelyn Schmidbauer and Ursula Diesch*



*Departure after 21 years*



*Doris Kueter*

*Evelyn Schmidbauer*

*Ingrid Schupp*

*Gabi Kelz*

*Ursula Diesch*

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## **New Twinning Officer in Sint-Niklaas**

In Sint-Niklaas, Luc Peleman, who has for long supported twinning on behalf of the town, has retired. We hear that his replacement in the Town Hall is Maarten Van Houte. However, no further details have reached us.

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*Abingdon Wharf*

## Abingdon School Twin Towns Music Tour – Sint-Niklaas

As reported in the July ADTTS Newsletter, the music department of Abingdon School would be undertaking a "Twin Towns Music Tour" from 4th to 13th July. The School Orchestra of around 60 boys travelled with their teachers by coach on a European tour, giving concerts in Argentan, Colmar, Sint-Niklaas and Paris.

Here are four pictures taken by Jason Preece of Abingdon School when they performed in the Don Bosco church in Sint-Niklaas.



### Amazing English youth – a report from Sint-Niklaas by Siegfried Waterschoot

Play the theme music of Mission Impossible in your head.

Date: Sunday 10th of July

Hour: 20.00h

Location: hotel Serwir, Sint-Niklaas

Target: the conductor of the Abingdon school orchestra

Mission: make contact and guide the group to the pinnacle of their performances

Sunday evening, after a mountain of emails and phone calls, I finally would meet Michael Stinton, his lovely wife, the accompanying teachers and a lively bunch of pupils.

Supported by a good glass of Belgium Trappist we sorted out the last tweaks in the program of the next day.

The next morning, I rode my bike to the hotel. I would be the living sat nav to navigate the coach through Sint-Niklaas. We arrived at the town hall, safe and sound. The Abingdon group was warmly welcomed by our mayor. Mr. Stinton replied with a sincere thank you for all the efforts of the twinning committee to turn the whole day into an excellent experience.



Finally, on invitation of the mayor, Herman Cole, gave a short explanation how twinning was started in the early sixties.

The invitation to the reception was much appreciated and especially the chocolates and crisps went down very well.

Time for the first performance. Their instruments gathered out of the coach, the jazz section of the school orchestra put themselves in Big Band formation, under the watchful eye of Saint-Nicolas himself.

My goodness! Did they jazz-tooted away. Even though it was noon time during the holiday period in our town, their soulful music, attracted people. Every well preformed piece of Big Band Jazz was introduced in a specific way by Herman Cole, honorary town crier of Abingdon. The gig ended with two encores.

In the early afternoon, the group, well fed and watered, drove to the church where the classic orchestra would put its best foot forward.

In my opinion, the moment the bus parked near the church, it was absolutely mayhem. Instruments being unloaded, moving chairs around in the church, collecting chairs for the musicians from storage, unpacking and putting instruments together, start to tune them, shouted instructions from the teachers. My oh my, good gracious me, it looked like a giant nest of ants.

Then, suddenly, silence. The chaos had evolved into a real classic orchestra. Tuning started; the rehearsal had begun.

At the end of the rehearsal, it was back to the hotel for dinner and getting formally dressed. As the boys had to be dressed to the nines, inspection of the teachers was definitely needed. The lame excuses some of them used! Really, some things haven't changed at all in fifty years. Time was ticking. The boys were dripping into the coach one by one.

In the church, the audience, under which our mayor, was trickling in. The performers took their seats. Herman Cole introduced the conductor, Michael Stinton. He introduced the various pieces throughout the night.

It was a string of highlights of well-known British and French composers. The orchestra changed seamlessly from full form to chamber orchestra and vice versa. The different soloists were impeccable supported by the orchestra.

It was just magical.

Keeping in mind that these were all boys aged between 13 and 18 years, it was mind blowing. The way some of these youngsters were connected with their instrument was moving. The pleasure of playing music together was so obvious.

All credits and praise to Michael Stinton, who did an outstanding job lifting this orchestra to such a high level. The audience was in awe and rewarded the orchestra and its conductor with a standing ovation. We couldn't get enough of it, nor did the orchestra. As the second encore, we were treated to a medley of the conductor's favourite composer, Burt Bacharach.

Thank you, Abingdon school orchestra, thank you Michael Stinton, for giving us an unforgettable evening which we will remember for a long time.

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## Twinnings in Costume



*Colmar Twinning 2022*

*Karin Toft & Doris Kueter  
from Schongau*



*Schongau May Day Twinning 2023*

*Herman Cole & Mia Steel  
from Sint-Niklaas*



*Brian & Susan Read  
from Abingdon*

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## ADTTS Contacts

### *Chairman*

Stella Carter  
The Old Bakehouse  
2 Winterbourne Rd  
Abingdon OX14 1AJ  
01235 520317  
[chairman@adtts.eu](mailto:chairman@adtts.eu)

### *Treasurer & Membership*

Ian & Rosemary Jardine  
  
80 Baker Road  
Abingdon OX14 5LJ  
01235 539291  
[treasurer@adtts.eu](mailto:treasurer@adtts.eu)

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