

Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



Newsletter

October 2023

Guest Editor: Nick Marsh

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From the Editor

The days are drawing in, the weather has become decidedly autumnal, the temperatures are dropping and the leaves are just beginning to take on a hint of their autumn colours - this means it's time for the Abingdon and District Town Twinning Society to start its winter and autumn programme!

We kicked off with our Annual General meeting on September 21st, where we heard a summary of last year's activities as well as details of our very exciting programme of meetings and trips for the next few months.

There is a French games evening hosted by Richard Smart, a pétanque taster session at Wallingford, a guided St Edmund tour of Abingdon by Anne Dodd, and trips to Lucca, Argentan and Germany. Further details can be found in this newsletter. Also included in this Newsletter are full details of our programme for the whole of the 2023/2024 season up until next summer, so that you can reserve the dates in good time!

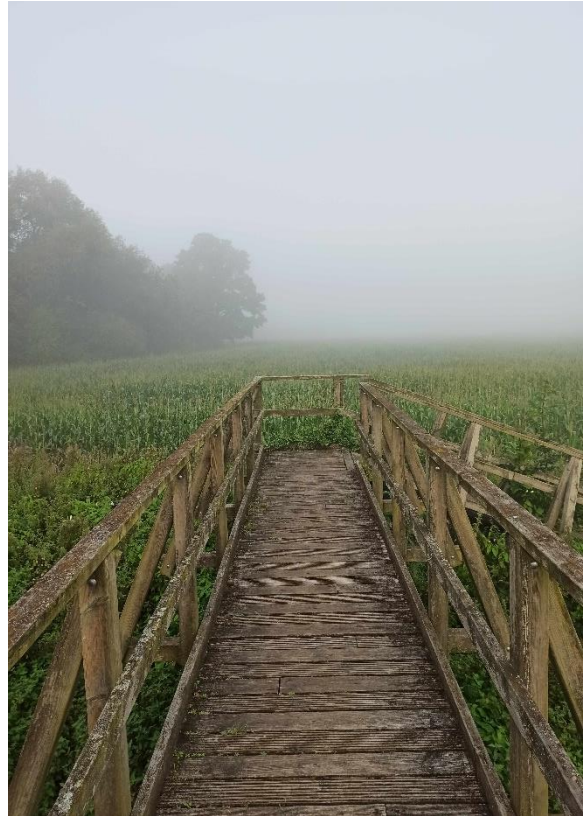
Like any society, ADTTS depends on its members to be able to put together an active and varied programme, and to this end a committee is elected by the members, and the Committee can also co-opt members onto the Committee, so if you, as a member of the Society, would like to join us and help in contributing to the life and future of the society, please let us know. Currently we are in particular need of a Secretary to help keep the wheels turning and to keep track of things, this is a hugely interesting task and does not involve a huge amount of work.

Our Treasurer and Membership Officers, Ian and Rosemary Jardine, who have done such a sterling job over many, many years have indicated that they would like to take things a little easier, so if any of you would like to take on those roles you would be very welcome!

The next item on our autumn programme is a French Games Evening on 19th October, hosted by Richard Smart. Having attended many of Richard's games evenings over the years, I can assure you that you will have a very good time indeed - please read the details in this Newsletter - but rest assured, having a good knowledge of French is certainly not a prerequisite for this evening, whatever your level (or lack of level) you will enjoy it!

Have a wonderful autumn and we look forward to seeing you on Thursdays at our meetings at Preston Road Community Centre, as well as on the various trips and outings we have arranged.

Nick Marsh
Editor



Forthcoming Events (September - December 2023)

Thursday 5 th October	Afternoon "St Edmund" Guided Walk 4.00 pm
Monday 9 th October	Pétanque Taster Session 2.30 pm Wallingford
12 th – 16 th October	Church Twinning visit to Argentan
Thursday 19 th October	French Games Evening 7.30 for 8 pm PRCC
Sunday 12 th November	Remembrance Sunday Wreath Laying 10.50 am The Square
Thursday 16 th November	Evening Meeting – The Romantic Road 7.30 for 8 pm PRCC
Saturday 18 th November	Barn Dance 5.30 pm Trinity Church Hall
Sunday 17 th December	Christmas Lunch 12.30 pm Hilton Garden Inn
Thursday 21 st December	Evening Meeting "Would I Lie to You" 7.30 for 8 pm PRCC

Thursday 5th October 2023: "St Edmund" Guided Walk 4.00 pm outside Abingdon Museum

Edmund of Abingdon, born in the 12th century, is arguably Abingdon's most nationally important son, but is not well known in the town of his birth. He became Archbishop of Canterbury, had struggles with the king, like Thomas A Beckett, and is buried in France. On Thursday 5th October we shall meet at 4.00 pm outside the museum in the Market Place. **Anne Dodd** will lead a walk in the centre of town to places connected with Edmund. The walk will be no more than an hour, with stops en route. There will be no charge.

Monday 9th October 2023: Pétanque Taster Session 2.30 pm Wallingford Pétanque Club, Hithercroft

Our second activity of the new season is a taster session in Pétanque. Oxfordshire's only pétanque club is at Wallingford and they have very kindly offered ADTTS a taster session. Two members will be there to take us through the rules and show us how to play. They can lend pétanque balls but if you have a set that would be wonderful. The session will last about an hour and a half and cost £4, paid direct to the club.

This taster session is open to just twelve people, so please phone or e-mail me asap to ask any questions or to book a place. So, where will we go from there?

Maybe join the club, maybe create our own team. Maybe challenge teams from Argentan and Colmar! Who knows!

Please contact Stella Carter, <mailto:bakehouse@supanet.com> 01235 520317.

12th - 16th October 2023: Church Twinning Visit to Argentan

The Church Twinning Group in Argentan, Normandy, has invited members of the congregations of the Church in Abingdon (CiA) to visit them in October (Thursday 12th to Monday 16th). Abingdon and Argentan have been twinned for over sixty years and many firm friendships have been made through these reciprocal visits to each others' homes. If you would like to take part, or are interested to learn more about this visit, please contact your church representative or CiA twinning committee secretary **Eileen Bontempelli** on 01235 526331, or mobile 07821 617333 or email, epkbontempelli@gmail.com.

Thursday 19th October 2023: French Games Evening

7.30 for 8 pm at Preston Road Community Centre

Richard Smart will challenge and entertain us with familiar games - but in French! The games on offer are, French Scrabble, Cheat (Menteur), Happy Families (les 7 Familles), Putin (Poutine) and Nomination Whist (Wist Nominatif). Participants should choose three games out of the five and there should be exactly four players for each game. There will be extras around to make up numbers if necessary. The proceedings will conclude with results, prizes and refreshments.

SCRABBLE

Usual Scrabble rules and if the word is in the dictionary provided without a capital letter or if all agree the word is acceptable

MENTEUR

The aim is to get rid of all your cards. Deal all the cards and sort them numerically. Whoever has the ace of spades starts by putting aces face down and saying what it is. *Un as* or *deux as* etc. The next person can go up one down one or the same i.e., *deux as* or *roi*. If you cannot go you must put any card down and LIE. If you think someone is lying you shout *MENTEUR* and look at the cards. If the person was cheating, they pick up all the cards and you start off with anything you like. If they were not cheating then you pick up the cards and THEY start again. Whoever gets rid of all their cards first is the winner.

VOCABULARY

1 <i>un</i>	6 <i>six</i>	jack - <i>valet</i>
2 <i>deux</i>	7 <i>sept</i>	queen - <i>dame</i>
3 <i>trois</i>	8 <i>huit</i>	king - <i>roi</i>
4 <i>quatre</i>	9 <i>neuf</i>	ace - <i>as</i>
5 <i>cinq</i>	10 <i>dix</i>	cheat - <i>menteur</i>

LES 7 FAMILLES

The aim is to get as many whole families as possible, a family consisting of *grand-père*, *grand-mère*, *père*, *mère*, *fil*s and *fil*le. Deal out all the cards and sort them into families then the person to the left of the dealer, say Pete, decides what he needs to get a full family and says for example NICK, le grand-père de la famille Smart. If Nick has that card, he hands it over to Pete who gets another go where he can ask anyone for a card. When eventually whoever he asks does not have the card, then that person takes over. Once you have a full family you put it to one side. You MUST have at least one member of the family in order to ask other players for the others.

POUTINE Also known as SPOONS

The aim of the game is NOT to be Putin (*Poutine*). If there are four of you playing you put three spoons in the middle of the table, deal out the aces, kings, queens and jacks and try to get four of a kind by passing a card you don't want to the left and receiving a card from the right. The first person to get four of a kind takes a spoon, the other three players then make a grab for the remaining two spoons. Whoever does not get a spoon is P for Poutine. The loser is Poutine.

WIST NOMINATIF

Deal out 7 cards each and turn up the top card to see what are trumps. You then predict how many tricks you will win starting with the person to the left of the dealer. If you end up getting what you predicted you get a bonus of ten points so if you think you'll win three tricks and you do, you get 13 points but if you get 4 you just get 4 points. Whoever gets the most points chooses trumps on the next round which will be six each then 5, then 4,3,2,1,2,3 etc. back up to 7.

VOCABULARY

trumps - *atouts*
numbers
clubs - *trefles*
diamonds - *carreaux*
hearts - *coeurs*
spades - *piques*

Should be fun but it would be nice to have an idea of how many people are likely to take part, please let me know!

Richard Smart on 01235 523324 or dickcsmart@gmail.com.

Sunday 12th November 2023: Remembrance Sunday Wreath Laying **10.50 am The Square Abingdon**

It is our practice to invite a representative from each of our twin towns in turn to come to Abingdon for the Remembrance weekend, who will lay a wreath at the War Memorial alongside the one from ADTTS. This year we shall welcome the new leader of the twinning circle in Schongau. The service starts at 10.50 am and all are welcome.

Thursday 16th November 2023: The Romantic Road **7.30 for 8 pm at [Preston Road Community Centre](#)**

In September 2024, ADTTS plans a coach trip to Germany to travel along the famed Romantic Road (*Romantische Straße*). This is a picturesque route of nearly three hundred miles through the forests and mountains of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, passing through attractive medieval towns and villages.

It starts in Würzburg and heads south via Schongau to Füssen, near King Ludwig II's "Disney" Neuschwanstein Castle.

The presentation this evening will describe the Road, together with plans for the twinning trip. Expect appropriately themed refreshments.

Saturday 18th November 2023: Barn Dance **From 5.30 pm [Trinity Church Hall](#) in Conduit Road**

Church Twinning are organising a barn dance. It will be led by Alain Hubert from Argentan and his ceilidh band. Practising the dances will be from 5.30 pm, with the main Barn Dance starting at 7.30 pm.

Sunday 17th December 2023: Christmas Lunch **12.30 pm at [Hilton Garden Inn](#), Marcham Road, OX14 1TZ**

Our traditional Christmas Lunch to be held at the excellent Hilton Garden Inn. Menu choices and more details will be sent out nearer the date.

Thursday 21st December 2023: "Would I Lie to You" **7.30 for 8 pm at [Preston Road Community Centre](#)**

The ADTTS take on this popular TV show!

Forthcoming Events (January - September 2024)

Thursday 18 th January	Evening Meeting – Quiz 7.30 for 8 pm at PRCC
Thursday 15 th February	Evening Meeting – D-Day 7.30 for 8 pm at PRCC
Saturday 17 th February	Coach trip to Portsmouth
Thursday 21 st March	Evening Meeting – Morris Minors in media 7.30 for 8 pm at PRCC
End of March	Visit to BMW Mini Plant in Oxford
11 th – 15 th April	Twinning Trip to Lucca
Thursday 18 th April	Evening Meeting – Oxford's Twin Towns 7.30 for 8 pm at PRCC
End of April	Mayors' Conference
Thursday 9 th May	Europe Day Meal
Thursday 16 th May	Evening Meeting – S Oxon's Blue Plaques 7.30 for 8 pm at PRCC
Around 6 th June	D-Day Commemorations
Thursday 20 th June	Annual Garden Party – 7 pm Longside, Tatham Road
Thursday 18 th July	Treasure Hunt – car tour to find blue plaques
Mid July	Canoe Camping
6 th – 15 th September	Trip along the Romantic Road, Germany

Thursday 18th January 2024: Quiz

7.30 for 8 pm at [Preston Road Community Centre](#)

We start the programme in the New Year with the popular ADTTS Quiz night. After two years of playing the competition on Zoom, last year we re-established the fun of meeting in person. So, let's meet up again! Loosely based on the typical pub quiz, ours is a little idiosyncratic with both mental and physical challenges. Expect questions on Abingdon and some with a twinning or European theme. Maybe there'll be the plasticine challenge or a food and drink round? Come along on the third Thursday in January at 7.30 pm to Preston Road Community Centre. Entrance is £5, including refreshments. There may be prizes?

Thursday 15th February 2024: D-Day

7.30 for 8 pm at [Preston Road Community Centre](#)

In preparation for the D-Day commemorations in June for the 80th anniversary of D-Day, Mark Lane will come from Argentan to give a talk about D-Day, including about the enduring effect of the invasion on the inhabitants of Normandy.

Saturday 17th February 2024: Coach Trip to Portsmouth

Morning start, pick up point and time to be announced

A day out from Abingdon by coach will take us to Portsmouth to visit the [D-Day museum](#) there, and also the opportunity to visit the [dockyards](#), [Spinnaker Tower](#), etc.

Thursday 21st March 2024: "Morris Minors in the Media"

7.30 for 8 pm at [Preston Road Community Centre](#)

Morris Minors are of particular local interest as the cars were assembled at the MG factory in Abingdon.

Ann Ford, an owner of a Morris Minor and enthusiast, will come to give a talk on how the cars have played a part in TV and film productions.

End of March 2024: Group Visit to the BMW Mini Plant in Oxford

Travel details and time to be announced

11th – 15th April 2024: Twinning Trip to Lucca

Travel details to be announced

We had planned a visit to Lucca in April 2020, but it was abruptly cancelled due to the pandemic.

ADTTS is now organising a trip for a small group of 15 to 20 people to visit Lucca from Thursday 11th to Monday 15th April 2024.

Any members who might be interested in going and wish to be kept informed should tell Ian & Rosemary Jardine at ian@ianjardine.co.uk.

Thursday 18th April 2024: Oxford's Twin Towns

7.30 for 8 pm at [Preston Road Community Centre](#)

Oxford has [international links](#) with seven twin cities. Representatives from Oxford twinning will tell us about some of them.

End of April 2024: Mayors' Conference

Details to be announced

Abingdon Town Council will take its turn to invite all the mayors of our twin towns to a conference to strengthen links and address issues of mutual interest.

It will also be a suitable opportunity to inaugurate the new twinning signpost.

Thursday 9th May 2024: Europe Day Meal

Details to be announced

As is our custom, we shall mark Europe Day by meeting to enjoy an appropriately themed meal together.

Thursday 16th May 2024: Blue Plaques of South Oxfordshire

7.30 for 8 pm at [Preston Road Community Centre](#)

Marie-Louise Kerr, local historian and "[Curator Without Museum](#)", will tell us about famous (and infamous) local people and the stories behind those blue plaques.

Around Thursday 6th June 2024: D-Day Commemorations

Details to be announced

Argentan will be inviting some members to attend the commemorations for the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

Thursday 20th June 2024: Annual Garden Party **7.00 pm at Longside, Tatham Road, Abingdon OX14 1QD**

Members are invited to the Midsummer Garden Party hosted by Michael Matthews. We look forward to enjoying Michael's lovely garden, getting together with sparkling wine, soft drinks and canapés.

Thursday 18th July 2024: Treasure Hunt

We plan a treasure hunt in cars around south Oxfordshire, searching for blue plaques, with supper at the end.

Mid July 2024: Canoe Camping

Twinnings will be invited for the annual canoe / cycling / camping along the Thames.

6th – 15th September 2024: Trip along the Romantic Road

We are planning a 10-day trip from Abingdon by coach via Sint-Niklaas to Würzburg in Germany. We then follow the Romantic Road to arrive at Schongau for a short stay. From there we can visit Füssen and Neuschwanstein Castle. Friends from our European twin towns are very welcome to join us. Let Stella Carter (bakehouse@supanet.com) know if you might be interested in going.

Recent Events: Annual General Meeting

Thursday 21st September 2023 – PRCC

Despite the heavy rain, a good number of members came for this year's Annual General Meeting. Unfortunately, the Mayor was unable to attend at the last minute. Her part in the meeting was ably filled by senior councillor and past Mayor, Lorraine Oates. Also, at short notice, Anne Dodd agreed to take the minutes.

The business of the meeting proceeded smoothly. The agenda and officers' reports had been available on the Society's website for members to read in advance. In her report, the chairman, Stella Carter, emphasised the value of twinning, including, not least, its economic benefit to the participating towns. Ian Jardine presented the healthy accounts. He particularly expressed appreciation for the diligence and helpful advice from Bruce Hunt who examined them.

Reassuringly, the present officers and committee members were all re-elected. (See the website for details.) The long-serving joint treasurers announced that this would be their last year, so replacements should be sought. The vacancy for a secretary still needs to be filled. Any member interested in the work of the committee was invited to attend a meeting.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the draft programme for the coming year. The chairman and committee had been busy putting together a comprehensive list of monthly evening meetings, plus other events, making twenty-five dates in all. Of particular interest were the planned visits to our twin towns: to Lucca next April and in September to Germany's Romantic Road, incorporating time in Sint-Niklaas and Schongau. Celebrating the eightieth anniversary of D-Day in June will add to the visits to and from Argentan. Details of the programme will be on the website and in the newsletter.

Four members were just back from a twinning weekend in Sint-Niklaas. We heard a brief account of how they and representatives of the other twin towns enjoyed extensive

guided tours of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco architecture in Brussels, Antwerp and, of course, Sint-Niklaas.

The last agenda item was a report by Richard Smart on the activities and plans of the Church Twinning group. These include a trip next month to Argentan, a barn dance in November and a visit from Schongau next April.

In any other business, the importance was advocated of publicity and of the Society engaging more broadly with other organisations in the town.

The evening concluded with members informally socialising over cheese and wine. Nikki Henton had prepared some appropriate cheeses: Bavarian smoked cheese, Italian dolcelatte, French camembert, together with Ardennes pâté.

Brian Read

Church Twinning – further information

October 12th -16th 2023 - visit to Argentan to celebrate 20 years of Church Twinning - 8 people are going by minibus to the Portsmouth ferry, then as foot passengers and collection by our friends in Argentan.

November 16th -20th 2023 - invitation to Argentan, Schongau and Sint-Niklaas for a long weekend visit centred around NATALAN, an Argentan band providing French Bourree dancing. On Saturday 18th November in the Conduit Hall, Trinity Church, it starts with a Bourree Dance Workshop, 5.30-7 pm, followed by a light buffet, then Bourree Dancing from 7.30-8.30, break for refreshments and is completed with an English Barn Dance, 9-10pm. Limited tickets, £10 adult, children free, available from Church Twinning committee members (Maggie, Maurice, Richard, Anne Dodd and Eileen, etc.).

After Easter in early April 2024 Schongau are invited here for a long weekend visit.

Twinning Visit to Sint-Niklaas, September 2023



Each year at the beginning of September our Twin Town of Sint-Niklaas in the northern, Flemish speaking part of Belgium commemorates its liberation by troops from the UK and Poland at the end of the Second World War. The commemoration encompasses memorial services, the awarding of a Peace Prize to a citizen who had made of notable contribution to the town, and in the very extensive Market Place, parades, a firework display and a spectacular display of hot air and helium balloons over the whole weekend.

This year, as in the past, their local Twinning Association invited four people each from Colmar, Lucca, Schongau and Abingdon to join them for Twinning Weekend. Alongside the annual celebrations the local Twinners put on an interesting programme of architectural visits and games.

So, on the last day of August, Ian & Rosemary Jardine and Peter & Anne Dodd set off with an early start from St Pancras on the Eurostar to Brussels. It was a very straightforward journey, and we were in Brussels in time for coffee and croissants. Another train journey took us to Sint-Niklaas by late morning being met by our host families.

The Sint-Niklaas team were very pleased that representatives from all the twin towns, Abingdon, Schongau, Colmar and Lucca were coming to the themed weekend of Art Nouveau & Art Deco. We met together for a welcome drink that evening but it was an early night as tomorrow would be a busy day in Brussels - and so it was!

We were all back on the train to Brussels by 9.00 am and it was pouring with rain with the streets awash. There was some delay on the trams because of the weather but we eventually caught a tram to see the Maison Hannon. This beautiful Art Nouveau house had only been opened to the public this year after extensive repairs and decoration as at one time when Art Nouveau was not so popular. It had been occupied by squatters and had got into a very poor state before being taken over by the authorities. This visit was followed by lunch at an Art Nouveau restaurant and then a journey on the metro to see Victor Horta's house which was wonderful. A beer break, another tram ride, another metro journey and eventually the train back to Sint-Niklaas where we arrived back very tired after such a long but interesting day and the weather turned fine for the rest of our stay.

Friday evening saw the first of the hot air balloons as they were "flared" in the Market Square, that is, they were inflated and lit but remained held on the ground. It really was quite a sight.

On Saturday Sint-Niklaas was getting ready for the hot air balloons to fly but we had more Art Nouveau to see and this time it was Antwerp, so back to the station and on the train to Antwerp where Mark gave us a wonderful tour of some of the beautiful houses. Antwerp is a wonderful city and so often missed out by tourists to Belgium.



*Maison Hannon
Brussels*



*Art Nouveau House
Antwerp*



*Art Deco
Sint-Niklaas*

We arrived back in Sint-Niklaas in time to see the hot air balloons rising from the Market Square. There were some amazing designs and the weather was perfect. Back in the Market Square, after dinner with our hosts, there was an impressive firework display.

Sunday was our last day and started with a guided walking tour of the Art Deco houses of Sint-Niklaas culminating in a visit to the Art Deco school and then on to the Town Hall for a reception with the mayor. This turned out to be a much bigger event than we had expected as they were giving a Peace award to one of their citizens and it was followed by a drinks reception.

That afternoon we all went out of town for our fun & games afternoon and barbecue. This is where the planning team led by Siegfried, Felix, Chantal and Marc excelled. They had spent a lot of time setting up games for us to do – a bit like our Task Master - we were divided up into teams with a good mix of people from all the towns and ended up doing things like running with grapes, trying to pot balls into cups and one or two that required flexibility more suited to the 20-year-old Italians than the Abingdon contingent.

All this merriment was followed by a three-course barbecue brought in by professional caterers so that our hard-working hosts could sit down and enjoy it with us.

It was a wonderful weekend and the Sint-Niklaas team are fantastic and we hear that they are already planning for 2024.

Peter Dodd, et al.

Photos: Siegfried Waterschoot, Ian Jardine

From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas

Heritage at last

Already in 2018, a combined effort of Belgium and France to get the Great War cemeteries and memorials onto the list of the UNESCO World Heritage sites was denied by the Committee.

Their main doubt was whether cemeteries and memorials commemorating a war could be considered as World Heritage. They had a hard time finding Peace in the War, even though the concentration camp of Auschwitz and the city of Hiroshima, the first city attacked with an atomic bomb, were already on that same list.

The latest reflections of UNESCO on the topic were concluded at the beginning of this year. They ultimately decided to create a new category. *The open-ended working group on sites of memory associated with recent conflicts*. They stated that the conflict had to have happened in the 20th century and that there has to be conciliation on the sites. Is the story told from all points of view? Is there an educational element? Consequently, this year, Belgium and France, resubmitted the thousand-page dossier, tweaked to comply with UNESCO's comments. Finally, on September 20, the request was granted.

One hundred and thirty-nine sites related to the Great War are now recognised as UNESCO World Heritage.

There are 27 locations, concentrated in the "Westhoek" in Flanders, including the German, French, Belgian and Commonwealth cemeteries and memorials and another 16 locations in Wallonia, the French part of Belgium and 96 locations in France.



Menin Gate



Menin Gate



Last Post inside Menin Gate

It is not an award and it doesn't come with any kind of reward.
It is just an important symbolic and priceless recognition.

Dominiek Den Dooven, scientific employee at Flanders Fields Museum, stated that the region "De Westhoek" de facto, is and always has been World Heritage because it's the burial place of victims from 125 different countries. He emphasised that it was the first time ever the War victims were buried in an individual grave with their name on it.

In a reaction, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission declared they were delighted. "Thanks to the World Heritage Status, the world-wide importance of these Silent Cities is endorsed and the need to commemorate the war victims remains forever." In the margin of this special event, last Monday, September 25, the Last Post was played at the Menin Gate for the 33,000th time.

Played for the first time on 2 July 1928, this everyday-tradition is almost 100 years old. More than ten years ago, a dossier was filed to UNESCO for the recognition of the Last Post at the Menin Gate as Immaterial Cultural Heritage.

Mr. Muttrie, chairman of the Last Post Association, said, that it would be nice to have such a recognition, but they would play the Last Post every day for eternity, nonetheless, as stated in the articles of the Association.

Welcome to new members

We are delighted to welcome 4 new members to our twinning society:

Elio and Tina Astone and **Monica and Sandy Lovatt**

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.*

*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.
