

Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



Newsletter

November 2023

Guest Editor: Brian Read

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From the Editor

At the Society AGM, we announced the programme of events for the coming year, with a full list in last month's Newsletter. This month we feature reports of the first of these events. Read about a most informative guided walk around Abingdon learning about the life of our local Saint Edmund in the twelfth century. Then, perhaps in preparation for future forays across the channel, some members benefitted from a practical education in the popular French recreation of pétanque or boules. More continental culture followed with a fun evening of games played (more or less) in French.

Looking ahead, our attention this month will turn to Germany as we shall spend an evening learning about the famous 'Romantic Road'. A trip along it passes through many attractive and interesting places. Then, via Schongau, the route culminates with the three Bavarian castles of King Ludwig II.

Church Twinning in Abingdon continues to be active. We have a report of their recent visit to Argentan. In return, they are hosting musicians from Argentan for a French bourrée workshop. This is a prelude to a dance evening of both bourrée and barn dancing. This promises to be popular, so get your tickets now!

Most importantly, it's time to book your places at the annual Christmas lunch. Although it seems a little way away still, it's actually next month, so don't put it off, but do get on with your menu choices and making payment. This is always an enjoyable occasion.

As the Society's programme unfolds, we look forward to the opportunities to meet with each other and pursue a twinning theme. In 2024, contact with friends in our twin towns will be on the agenda. We are now planning trips to Lucca and to Germany (including Sint-Niklaas and Schongau) and hope to participate in the big anniversary of the Normandy landing in June and the Puccini anniversary later in the year.



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



Forthcoming Events (September - December 2023)

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|------------------------------------|---|
| 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 | Church Twinning Bourree and Barn Dance – Trinity Church |
| 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 |

Remembrance Sunday Wreath Laying

Sunday 12 November 2023 – The Square 10.50 am

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 Doris Kueter, who is the new leader of the twinning circle in Schongau. The service of remembrance starts at 10.50 am and all are welcome.

Evening Meeting – The Romantic Road

Thursday 16 November 2023 – Preston Road Community Centre 7.30 for 8 pm

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 mile through the forests and mountains of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, passing though 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 genesis of the Road and describe some of the places of interest on the route. It will cover the story of 'mad' King Ludwig and his much-visited Linderhof Palace (*Schloss*), Hohenschwangau Castle and Neuschwanstein Castle.

Expect Bavarian themed refreshments.

Christmas Lunch

Sunday 17 December 2023 - Hilton Garden Inn 12.30 pm

We look forward to the popular date in the calendar when we shall be able to meet socially for members to enjoy our annual Christmas lunch. Following last year's successful occasion, we plan to hold it on Sunday 17th December, again at the Hilton Garden Inn, Marcham Road, OX14 1TZ. There will be a non-alcoholic welcome drink, followed by a three-course meal. We shall have a private room for our meal and there is plenty of parking at the hotel.

Members have been sent full booking details. The deadline for responding is **Saturday 18th November**. Contact Peter Dodd (01235 525997 or email peteranne@aol.com).

Bourrée and Barn Dance

Saturday 18 November 2023



French Bourree Dance Workshop then Bourree & Barn Dancing

**Saturday November 18th 2023
The Conduit Centre (Trinity Church), OX14 1DB**

**Bourree workshop 5:30-7:00pm
Dancing (Bourree and Barn) 7:30-10:00pm**

60 Individual £10, children free
Tickets include a light buffet, after workshop and mid-dance
Wine, beer & soft drinks are available, monetary donations welcome

Church Twinning are organising a barn dance on Saturday 18th November 2023 at Trinity Church's Conduit Hall. It will be led by Alain Hubert and his ceilidh band from Argentan.

The evening starts at 5.30 pm with a workshop to learn the bourrée dance steps by the bourrée band 'Natalan'. The main bourrée dance session will be from 7.30 to 8.30 pm, followed by an English barn dance from 9 to 10 pm. Refreshments will be available on the evening. Tickets are £10 per person (children free) and there are only a limited number.

For more details or to book tickets, please contact Eileen Bontempelli at epkbontempelli@gmail.com or 01235 526331, or ask a church twinning representative.

Around this event, Church Twinning will run a normal long weekend programme (16th – 20th November). People from all twin towns are invited and offers of family hosting or meal hosting from people locally are most welcome.

Forthcoming Events (January - September 2024)

For details of all the events arranged so far for next year, see the [October Newsletter](#).

Alternatively, look online at the ADTTS website. The full programme may be found at <http://www.abingdonandvaletwinning.org.uk/future.htm>.

The website also has reports, with pictures, of all twinning events going back to 2007. Note, that to save typing the full domain name, the address of the website may be shortened to www.adtts.eu. (Indeed, even the ubiquitous 'www.' may be omitted.)

Church Twinning Visit to Argentan - October 2023

TO CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF CHURCH TWINNING

The theme of the weekend was peace after conflict and how can we maintain peace in our communities. Our group from Abingdon comprised 2 from All Saints church, 2 from St Edmund's, 2 from Abingdon Baptists, 1 from St Helen's and 1 from Trinity. Three Christians from Sint-Niklaas, our twin town in Belgium, also joined us so that the visitors to Argentan were 11 in total.

We left Abingdon at 4.30am Thursday 12th October to travel to Portsmouth, then on to Ouistreham, the port for Caen by ferry. On arrival around 3.30pm we were met by a mini bus from Argentan town and taken immediately to Ver-sur-Mer to visit a new [British Normandy Memorial](#), the maintenance of which is funded by our government. To see the names of 22,442 British forces from air, sea and land who perished in the battle of Normandy inscribed on the pillars of the memorial was a thought-provoking start to our weekend. By now it was almost 6pm and we were taken at last to Argentan where there was a welcome reception at the church of St Germain in the town centre. After the reception we met up with our host families for the weekend and around 8pm all went off for dinner and bed exhausted after a very long day.

On Friday we were up and away early with two town minibuses and many friendly guides and hosts from Argentan to visit first the British War cemetery for World War 2 at Bayeux, which is the largest in Europe. It was sobering to see so many graves of young men aged in their late teens and early twenties, but also to see so many graves inscribed 'known to God'. A quick visit to Bayeux Cathedral with its connection to William the Conqueror was followed by a really good three-course hot lunch at a Benedictine monastery. After lunch we went to see the Bayeux tapestry which tells the story of the Battle of Hastings which took place on 14th October 1066. We were there on 13th October 2023 almost exactly 957 years later after war was followed by peace before another war and so on over the centuries. After seeing the tapestry, we went into a warm comfortable film room to watch an account of the making of the tapestry in English, but I think we all fell asleep so most of us stayed on to watch the French version and were surprised to see how much we had missed the first time!



The Abingdon group outside Bayeux cathedral



Hosts, guests and drivers etc. beside the Abingdon chapel in St Germain

The programme for Saturday was following the route of August 1944 which finalised the Battle of Normandy and brought about the end of the war in Europe. Our first stop was at Tournai-sur-Dive where the Parish priest Abbot Launay had a sheet attached to the top of the church spire by way of a white flag. His flag proved to be ineffective so he set out in search of the Allies. When he returned to Tournai with a lone Canadian soldier, they took 300 Germans prisoner in what was to become the courtyard of surrender. The signal was given, and in the afternoon a further 1500 German soldiers surrendered on the same spot. The battle was over. The memorial at Montormel overlooking the valley of the river Dives showed us how the battle of Normandy was finally ended. Everywhere the memorials indicated that

because now there was peace never again would such atrocities occur. It was ironic therefore that we had just arrived for a peace weekend when the Israelis and Hamas were between them causing more carnage and destruction.

On Saturday evening we were in the audience at a choral concert in St Martin church in Argentan where the acoustics were so good. The singers in this group were on tour from Cranbrook in Kent and were superb, but were really surprised to find so many people in the audience who spoke English so well!

On Sunday we all reported to St Germain church in the centre of Argentan for the 11am Mass. The twinning banners of Argentan and Abingdon were paraded and displayed on each side of the altar as the entry hymn was being sung. Maurice Tubb read a lesson in English while Margaret Elwood and Elizabeth Simpson both read two of the intercessions in English and one of the Belgians read another intercession. The priest also briefly summarised his homily in English. At the end of the service the banners were returned to the Abingdon side chapel and hosts, guides, drivers and guests all had a group photo taken beside the Abingdon chapel with the beautiful altar piece carved by Gerald Field from the Baptist church and given as a gift from Abingdon in October 2003.



Gerald Field's carving



The farewell evening meal on Sunday evening



In the afternoon many of us took the chance of some free time to explore the old town following a leaflet from the tourist office called 'Argentan step by step'. In the evening we had a farewell meal altogether with friends from Amities Internationales and Cercle Jumelage Europe Argentan, Sint-Niklaas, hosts, drivers and the two priests from the church in Argentan. Slides were shown of many well-known parts of Argentan before the war, after the bombing and now after the reconstruction. Some 84 percent of Argentan was destroyed during the battle of Normandy. Several people spoke about promoting peace in our time. We were only informed about this on the evening before we left for France so we managed to gather a few ideas about the various outreach groups in Abingdon while we were on the ferry. Claudette Denis, the native French speaker in our group, translated it for us and Margaret Hancox delivered our speech after the dinner. One of the priests stressed how Peace must be worked for and that we must pass the baton on now to the younger generations.

On Monday morning our drivers were at our disposal again to take us back to Ouistreham but they left Argentan early so that we would have time to go to Pegasus Bridge and learn about the amazing method of capturing the bridge from the Germans, disarming the equipment in place to blow it up and holding it so that the Allied troops could cross the river Orne and on to Paris. To see the bridge actually opening and closing to allow a boat to go upstream completed the experiences of a memorable but thought-provoking weekend.

Much thought and effort had been put into making this twinning weekend such a success. To Ionie Silliere, Anne de Gouville and hosts from Amities Internationales, Marie-Lise Marie from Cercle Jumelage Europe Argentan, Philippe and Thierry our drivers and all the members of both twinning groups, old and new who contributed with food, cider and their time over the weekend we want to say a huge thank you. We had a really memorable weekend and despite the theme a lot of fun and laughter.

Maggie Greaney

Past Event - **Afternoon "St Edmund" Guided Walk**

Thursday 5 October 2023 - around the centre of Abingdon



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 à Becket, and is buried in France.

On Thursday afternoon 5th October, a group of eleven members and friends met outside the museum in the Market Place. Anne Dodd led a most informative walk in the centre of town to places connected with Edmund. This was another welcome opportunity to discover more about Edmund as Anne previously did this guided tour in July last year. (See the report of 2022 events on the website or the September 2022 Newsletter for full details.)

Brian Read

Past Event - **Pétanque Taster Session**

Monday 9 October 2023 - at Wallingford Pétanque Club, Hithercroft



Our second activity of the new season was a trial session of Pétanque.

Oxfordshire's only pétanque club is at Wallingford and they very kindly offered ADTTS a taster session. The club has its own splendid boulodrome and is very active with over seventy members. It competes in the Thames Valley league as well as national events.

On a sunny afternoon, six ADTTS members were greeted at the Wallingford Sports Park by Sarah, Bridget and Peter from the club. They were there to take us through the rules and show us how to play. After instruction on how to best throw, we split into two teams and with expert guidance played a game, learning the rules and tactics as we progressed. It's a mix of mostly skill, some luck (and sometimes frustration). The afternoon ended with drinks all round sitting in the sunshine outside the posh club house.

So where will we go from here? Maybe we can create our own team and challenge teams from Argentan and Colmar!

Brian Read

Past Event - French Games Evening

Thursday 19 October 2023

For the Thursday evening meeting in October, 14 hardened gamers, though not of the electronic variety I imagine, met for an ADTTS 'Games Evening', organised by Richard Smart.



On offer were, cheat, bidding whist, Scrabble, en Française, Happy families, ditto and Spoons. I had never come across the latter before and in a way – a very remote way - it reminded of Musical Chairs. Although played with cards, the principle was the same. When the first person had collected four cards of a kind, he or she grabbed a spoon. The other three players then competed for the two remaining spoons. The one who missed out received the first letter, P in this case, against their name. You get the idea. When one player had accumulated POUTINE, the game was over. You then either moved onto the next offering – say Happy Families or went to get another drink to calm your nerves.

I lost at Spoons, chatted over Happy Families, as there were only two players and tried to shine at Scrabble. Alas my attempted rendition of English words with an added e on the end (wax and waxe for example) did not meet the requirements of the French dictionary, fortunately at hand to settle any disputes. My final score, allowing for the fact that I had a collection of ws, xs and js, was -9.

All this intellectual effort was helped by a glass of wine and at the end complemented with slices of baguette (or the British version thereof) covered with soft cheese, or pâté, including the mushroom, vegetarian, variety, to restore our energy levels – they say the brain requires a lot of calories to function properly.

Our thanks to Richard for organising the evening and providing the games, Nick for tending the bar and Nicky and Susan for providing the refreshments.

Neil Hancox 22 October 2023

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.