

# Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



# Newsletter

February 2024

Guest Editor: Nick Marsh

## **In this edition:**

- From the Editor
- Forthcoming Events: D-Day – Portsmouth – Morris Minors – BMW Plant - Mayors' conference
- La Fête de Normandie and other Argentan connected events
- Past Event – Quiz
- From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas
- Floods in Abingdon
- Contact details

## From the Editor

Dear Members,

The days are gradually getting lighter and as the evenings gradually become longer we can see more clearly the exciting programme we have ahead of us in the next few months!

There are possible trips to Portsmouth, the Mini Plant in Oxford as well as a Mayors' conference in Abingdon, in conjunction with which we will be able to witness the unveiling of the Twin Towns signpost outside the Guildhall, and that's just our local events!

Further afield we have opportunities to visit Normandy, for the really excellent celebration of Normandy food and drink specialities in Argentan on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> March, at the Festival of Normandy. A trip to Lucca is planned for 11<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> April, coinciding with the 100th anniversary year of Puccini's death, to which members are welcome, as well as an exciting adventure along the Romantic Road in South Germany. Please get in touch for more details on how to participate in these.

Closer to home we have a full programme at Preston Road Community Centre with a talk on February 15<sup>th</sup> by Mark Lane from Argentan on the D-Day landings in Normandy, and on the 21<sup>st</sup> March we will have an interesting talk on the iconic Morris Minors in the media by Morris Minor enthusiast and owner, Ann Ford. Both evenings promise to be fascinating.

We look forward to seeing you at some, if not all, of these events!

Nick Marsh  
Editor

## Forthcoming Events (February - March 2024)

Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> February	Evening Meeting: D-Day - PRCC
Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> February	Coach Trip to Portsmouth to be confirmed
16 <sup>th</sup> - 17 <sup>th</sup> March	La Fête de la Normandie - Argentan
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> March	Evening Meeting: "Morris Minors in the Media" - PRCC

## Evening Meeting – D-Day in Normandy

### Thursday 15 February 2024 - 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.

He will discuss the Deception Plan created and implemented by the British Intelligence. This talk is designed for both people who know nothing or next to nothing on the subject, and also for those who know a lot about the subject already.

Entrance is £5, including appropriate refreshments. All welcome

---

## Coach Trip to Portsmouth

### Date to be confirmed

A day out from Abingdon by coach will take us to Portsmouth to visit the D-Day Museum there. It is also an opportunity to visit the dockyards, Spinnaker Tower, etc.

---

## Evening Meeting - "Morris Minors in the Media"

### Thursday 21 March 2024 - 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, Morris Minor owner and enthusiast, will come to give a talk on how the cars have played a significant role in TV and film productions.

---

## Group visit to the BMW Mini Plant in Oxford

ADTTS is hoping to organise a group visit to the BMW Mini Plant in Cowley, Oxford. Group tickets booked in advance are quite difficult to get hold of, so our Chairman, Stella, has volunteered to keep a watching brief on their booking website to see if she can get 15 tickets with at least 2 weeks notice. As soon as she is successful, all members will be sent an email inviting them to apply for tickets, and these will be allocated on a First Come First Served basis.

---

## Twinning Trip to Lucca

### 11 - 15 April 2024

We had planned a visit to Lucca in April 2020, but it was abruptly cancelled due to the pandemic. ADTTS is now organising a replacement trip for the small group to visit Lucca from Thursday 11th to Monday 15th April 2024.

---

## Mayors' Conference

### 5 - 8 April 2024

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. In parallel, ADTTS invites representatives of the corresponding twinning societies for the weekend and for their own conference. It will also be a suitable opportunity to inaugurate the new twinning signpost. The invitations have been sent out and we are awaiting responses. **If anyone is able to host one or two of our visitors for that weekend, please let us know.**

---

## La Fête de la Normandie and other Argentan events

### 1. LA FETE DE NORMANDIE

Argentan jumelage would like to invite two people to take part in the festival of Normandy on the weekend of 17-18 March. I went last year and I can say they really look after you. I went for more than the official two nights and ate and drank masses as well as seeing a lot of interesting sites.

Ideally they would like names by early February so they can arrange accommodation. Please let me know if you're interested

## 2. JOUR-J (D-DAY)

I have not had an official invitation to this but have invited myself and will be in Argentan staying with friends and celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day with our Norman friends. If you wish to know more go to [www.normandie-tourisme.fr](http://www.normandie-tourisme.fr) or [Emailing@normandie-tourisme.fr](mailto:Emailing@normandie-tourisme.fr)

## 3. CANOE/CYCLE CAMPING

The last two summers have seen French teenagers coming over from our twin town, Argentan with two mums to do cycle/canoe camping in Abingdon and Oxford. This year we hope to make it a reciprocal arrangement with exact dates still to be confirmed but something like this:

Tuesday 30 July - up to 14 participants arrive in Argentan and overnight with a host family

31 July - 3 August explore the Argentan area by bike and canoe camping with French teenagers, spend the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> with a host family,  
4 August Return to Abingdon

Thursday 29 August : The French come over to Abingdon. Probably two mums with their own teenage children and some of their teenage friends, maximum 14 people. Spend the night with a host family

Friday 30 August : half on bikes half in canoes we pedal and paddle to Clifton Hampden for a picnic lunch then swap, paddlers become pedallers and vice versa. We then continue downstream to Wallingford where we camp for two nights.

Saturday 31 August: Explore the area by bike and canoe, swapping after a picnic lunch

Sunday 1 September: Return UPSTREAM to Abingdon and camp at Abingdon lock

Monday 2 September: Explore Abingdon, pack up and spend the night with host family

Tuesday 3 September: Return to Argentan

Nothing is set in stone but we will probably go by train to Portsmouth, get the afternoon ferry to Ouistreham and be met by the Argentan minibus or some private cars to take us to Argentan.

I am looking for adults and teenagers who would like to take part in either or both of these adventures. You do not need to be an expert canoeist or cyclist but you should be prepared to camp, sleeping in a tent on an airbed or thin mattress.

When they come to us, we provide all the bikes, canoes and camping gear apart from sleeping bags and when we go there, they provide it all.

I am also looking for host families to take up to 3 teenagers and/or adults for the nights of 29 Aug and 2 Sept. Anyone who wishes to join us for a bit of cycling or canoeing just for a short period of time, will also be welcome.

I have not yet been told any details of the French programme but it will almost certainly include exploration of the Orne river and maybe La Suisse Normande.

This is still in the planning stage but if you think you or someone you know might be interested, please contact me on 01235 523324 or [dickcsmart@gmail.com](mailto:dickcsmart@gmail.com)

Yours  
*Richard Smart*

---

## Past Event - Evening Meeting - Quiz

Thursday 18 January 2023 - at Preston Road Community Centre



Our genial quiz inquisitors, to borrow a phrase from TV or radio from way back yonder, Peter Dodd and Brian Read, subjected the brains of 20 or so enthusiastic twin towners to several rounds of memory testing questions. For good measure they also threw in a couple of tasks requiring digital skills / judgement and one needing basic arithmetic. Yes, we all survived, just.

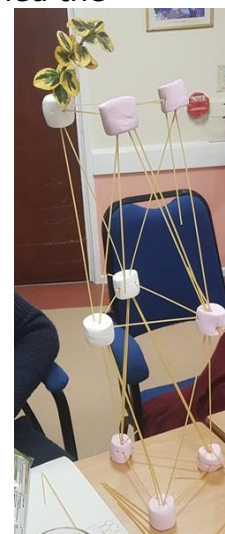
The evening opened with a very pleasant announcement, one of our members, Margaret Simpson, had received the MBE in the recent honours list.

And then it was eyes down, pens at the ready, did you hear that, adjust hearing aids, and the answer is...

To keep us occupied throughout the evening we had to guess the second most populated city in a list of European countries. In one or two cases I didn't know they had second cities, and there were several more that caught us out. While we argued about this and tried to figure out the distance involved if a journey at 20mph took 10 minutes longer than one at 30mph, we answered questions on Abingdon local history, twin towns geography, a most testing session on what premises were below various shots of the Abingdon skyline (I named the Town Hall three times with shots of the Alms-houses) and more.

In the middle of this miscellany each of the teams was given a pack of spaghetti, a pack of large marshmallows and a sprig of greenery and told to make a tower to represent the one in Lucca. Spaghetti sticks are brittle, marshmallow sticky and the results often collapsed. Nevertheless, one team managed an impressive 17 inches, or thereabouts before the inevitable downfall. Afterwards those of us so inclined started to eat the marshmallows, though I found the lack of a chocolate coating made them less appetising than anticipated.

More questions and then the final test, two plastic containers, one half full of pasta twists (can't remember the proper name) and you had to put 100gr into the empty container. Showing our culinary judgement, our team, the Turnips, managed 102 gr. We also triumphed by giving the correct diameter of the inner cardboard cylinder of a toilet roll (35mm, in case you wondered). Despite this breadth of knowledge, the Turnips and several other vegetable teams were squashed by the Squashes, who were 15 points ahead of the rest of us.



TEAM	TOTAL	ROUNDS				
Squashes	75	15	14	14	17	15
Sweetcorns	59	16	16	10	9	8
Mange Touts	60	8	14	16	11	11
Courgettes	59	12	11	10	12	14
Turnips	61	10	14	8	15	14

Afterwards, to rejuvenate our tired minds, Susan, Nikki, Margaret and Stella plied us with Gingerbread biscuits, stollen, mince pies, almond cream tart\*, biscuits and mulled wine. Never mind the questions, enjoy the sustenance.

\**Galette des rois*, a popular French Epiphany dessert

Neil Hancox, 19 January 2024

## From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas

### FINDING THE ROOTS

Last year, I came across an article which claimed that a cricket-like game used to be played by Flemish peasants. A historian had found it in the background of the painting "The Harvesters" by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, painted in 1565.

Indeed, in the back centre of the painting, you can see people playing a game.

Soon, the historian was overruled by some colleagues, stating the people were playing a game of "*gansgooien*", goose throwing.

I'll spare you the details on what this game entailed. Although, you can imagine that the geese were on the short end of the proverbial stick.

Goose throwing or not, I was triggered. I wanted to find out more about the English Pinnacle of Sports. During my research, I discovered that in almost every article they agreed that the oldest written mention of the game was in 1598.

They also agreed that it appeared in the United Kingdom in Kent, Sussex and Surrey. They also agreed that it was a child's game that evolved into a game for grown-ups.

What they didn't agree on, was where its roots were.

A possibility is, that it was brought to England by Flemish immigrants in the 15th or 16th century. As highly skilled weavers, us Flemish, were very much in demand at the time. These Flemish immigrants played a game that was called "***crick ketsen***". In old Flemish "*crick*" means stick and "*ketsen*" means to hit.

Now, don't try to be a smart aleck and throw these words into a conversation with Flemish people. Over the centuries their meaning has evolved, namely "*crick*" is now "*Krik*" which is a jack and "*ketsen*" now means to ricochet.

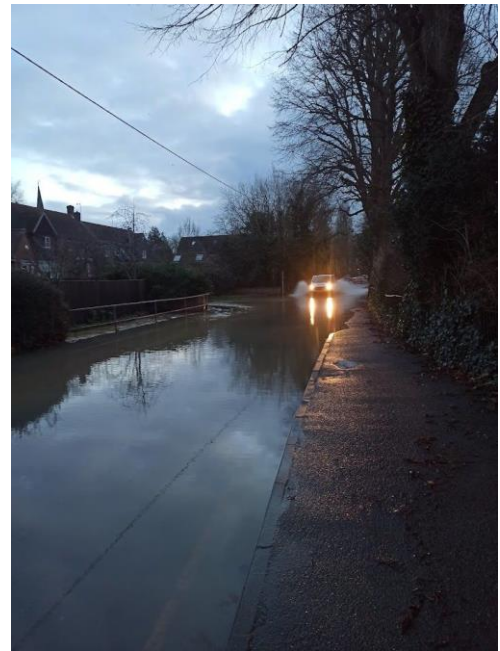
(As a sidenote "*crick*" has evolved into "*stok*", "*ketsen*" into "*kaatsen*", but neither the word nor the sport "*stokkaatsen*" exist.)



Although this game supposedly has its roots in Flanders, I still don't have a clue what is going on during a game of cricket. For ages now, friends of mine in Abingdon have promised to take me to a game and explain everything there is to know about it. I look forward to this moment of clarity. Alas, until then I'll remain clueless and as always, bored to death within 5 minutes.

---

## Floods in Abingdon in January



---

## 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)

*Non-members of the Society are also welcome to receive copies of this monthly newsletter. Just email your request to [newsletter@adtts.eu](mailto: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](mailto:newsletter@adtts.eu). (No publication in August)*

*Keep right up to date by going to [www.adtts.eu](http://www.adtts.eu).*

---