

Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



Newsletter

February 2026

Guest Editor: Nick Marsh

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Chairman's Message

Do you know that there 30 people living in Abingdon right now who have been inside the White House in Washington DC? Yes, 30, and probably before Donald Trump ever set foot in it! The opportunity came thanks to our friend Al Bradley and his best friend from his 'troop of kids' Rick Boucher who grew up and still live in the 'quiet and peaceful town' of Abingdon, Virginia.

We met Al and Rick here in our Abingdon when they visited to discover something about their 'sister city'. An invitation to their town ensued. I think they were hoping about ten of us would make the trip, but rose to the challenge when nearly 40 of us accepted the invitation. An invitation to visit us followed and then some while later a personal invitation to Howard and me to join Al, his wife Leslie and Rick and his wife Amy, visiting their favourite part of the US, New Mexico.

We rented a traditional adobe together in Santa Fe and would go out for breakfast each morning. No bacon and eggs but chilli in every dish we ate. It was Georgia O'Keefe's country, a mecca for artists. Back at our adobe I remember sometimes we had to creep around because Rick was the Congressman for Virginia and would be doing live radio broadcasts. I vividly remember thinking at the time 'I am creeping around because of Twinning!' You just don't know where it will lead!

I am delighted that Al has now written a piece for our newsletter about his town Abingdon in Virginia, together with some lovely photos. Reading it brought back more memories for me, one in particular that stands out. Howard and I were staying with Al and Leslie and were going out for the day in the car.

We got to the end of the block and I realised I had forgotten my camera so asked if we could go back and pick it up. Al duly turned the car around and drove back to the house, stopping outside. I expected him to get out and open the front door for me. Instead, he sat there. I did too in an awkward silence waiting. Finally, I tentatively asked if I could have the key to let myself into the house. 'Oh no' he said, 'we don't lock the door'. This response was so totally different to what we were led to believe about crime and gun culture in the US. Another insight you only get from Twinning.

We would like to run a similar feature in future newsletters about our twin towns and sister cities. This newsletter goes to all our towns and can be shared even wider. So not just our twins and sisters but others too. For example, Colmar is also twinned with Eisenstadt in Austria, Princeton in the US, and Györ in Hungary. It would be fascinating to hear about those towns.

Finally, a big thank you to our quiz masters for another splendid evening, and huge congratulations to the winners. The crisp round was disgusting though! We would have really needed some chocolate to take the taste away.

Stella Carter

Chairman

Forthcoming Events in 2026

Saturday 28 th February	Church Twinning Barn Dance – Trinity Church Hall
Saturday 9 th May	Dinner to Celebrate Europe Day
Sunday 8 th November	Laying of Twinning Wreaths on Remembrance Sunday

Other events in the programme are not yet scheduled, but they include a Wine Tasting, a Treasure Hunt, a Games Evening and the Garden Party, not forgetting the Christmas Lunch.

The programme may also be found on the website at
<https://www.abingdonandvaletwinning.org.uk/future.htm>.

The website also has reports, with pictures, of all twinning events going back to 2007. To save typing the full domain name, the address of the website may be shortened to
<http://adts.eu/>.

Evening Meeting: Barn Dance – Trinity Church Hall

Church Twinning Barn Dance. Fancy a knees-up, a ploughman's dinner and fun company? Abingdon Church Twinning is organising a Barn Dance fundraiser on Saturday the 28th of February in Trinity Church Conduit Centre. Alan Fisher from Abingdon Baptist will be the caller, and all proceeds will support church twinning. Limited spaces! Put on your dancing shoes, and get your tickets from your Church Twinning reps.

Past event: The Annual Quiz

This was vintage, twinning entertainment!

Brian Read and Peter Dodd had once again put their brains together to produce one of their challenging and entertaining quizzes – and this one was no exception and well up to their usual high standard.

The first challenge was to choose a name for their team (eight letters, a vegetable or flower). A task already proving almost too much for one group who seemed unable to count to eight, and had to change their name. While some teams were struggling with the thinking up of vegetable and flower names, and simultaneously using fingers to count out the letters, other teams set to solving a sheet of dingbats (those annoying combinations of artistically placed and sized letters and/or numbers, which can be solved to give a related word or phrase).

The subsequent rounds were competently presented by the Quizmasters with the aid of overhead projection. Rounds included pictures of little-known features of Abingdon and where



The winning team, Nikki, Howard, Phil, Nick, Connie, Stella

they were located, some numerical challenges, general knowledge, geography and even a tasting round, where contestants had to taste a variety of flavoured crisps and guess the name of the flavour – including lobster crisps, and even beef and horseradish!

To give a flavour of some of the questions:

1. Which of these towns is Sint-Niklaas nearest to – Brussels, Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent?
2. What is the motto on the Abingdon coat of arms?
3. What was the traditional industry in Argentan?

(Answers at bottom of article)

A hugely entertaining quiz, and thanks to Peter and Brian for organising it.

Thanks too, to Nikki and Susan for delicious refreshments, including mulled wine.

The winners were the Daffodil team: Stella, Howard, Phil, Connie, Nikki and Nick.



Answers to Quiz questions: 1. Antwerp 2. Faith and Industry 3. Lace Making

Nick Marsh

Abingdon, Virginia, by Al Bradley

You, gentle reader, may wish to refer to a map of the US to find a most interesting area near where the states of Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky and North Carolina all converge that is the heart of the Appalachian Mountains Region. We exist in an area between Roanoke, Virginia and Knoxville, Tennessee that is unknown to many even in this country. There are no really large cities here, but quiet, peaceful towns and LOTS of mountains.

Our little town of Abingdon in Virginia lies within the western remnants of the famous Shenandoah Valley, ringed by hills and mountains at an altitude of about 2,500 feet above sea level. Here we are largely sheltered from the worst of storm events that occur around us and here we lead our quiet and peaceful lives. Well, mostly - we do have our disagreements!

Abingdon in Virginia is a relatively old town with structures that date back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We protect those buildings in our historic district and even some of the newer structures as well. We are a small town of some 9 square miles

and around 8,500 souls reside here. Where did the name "Abingdon" originate? No one knows for certain the answer to that, but the most reasonable one came from our long-revered historian Lewis Preston Summers. Summers suggested that after the County here was established by the Virginia Legislature in 1776 and named in honor of George Washington, so the town may have been named in honor of his wife Martha, whose home diocese in northern Virginia was called Abingdon.

As suggested above, we live mostly peacefully here and crime is not a major problem for our residents. When I grew up in Abingdon, my troop of kids and I played in the yards and gardens all over this neighborhood and we knew that none of the houses in this neighborhood were ever locked (with the exception of the house belonging to Mr. Brown, the banker, who lived up the street). That was the norm here and still remains that way for the most part. I have a rather expensive barbecue grill called a "Big Green Egg" that sits untethered on my front porch and has done so for four years without being disturbed except by me when I feel the need to sacrifice a chicken or a steak.

We work primarily in management positions (12.4%), but also retail and wholesale sales occupations (11.5%), food preparation and service (8.23%), Office support (9.55%) and in education-related occupations (7.47%).

[Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/abingdon-va>]

We have our amusements, also. Since 1933 our town has been blessed with a repertory theatrical performance venue, the Barter Theater, which offers live performances of plays daily. There are hiking, biking and equestrian opportunities galore as well. I personally helped to create the 34-mile Virginia Creeper Trail which converted an old, abandoned railroad into the mountains from Abingdon into a multiuse trail for all users here. The trail is openly used by all groups and allows limited use of motorized wheelchairs and bicycles but is otherwise restricted to non-motorized usage.

Our remote location makes Abingdon, Virginia a bit of a challenge for an international traveler to reach. The closest commercial airport is Tri-Cities Airport in Tennessee which is a 35-minute drive away. Also, the Roanoke, Virginia Airport and Knoxville, Tennessee Airport are each about 2 hours' drive from us. The Charlotte, North Carolina hub airport is a 3-hour drive from Abingdon.

Now that you have had a look at Abingdon, Virginia, USA we welcome your visits at any time!



Philip Rohr House Photo property of Byrum Geisler, Esq. Used by permission



*Main Street, Abingdon, Va
Photo property of Byrum Geisler, Esq.
Used by permission*



*Washington County, Va. Courthouse
Photo property of Byrum Geisler, Esq.
Used by permission*



Black Dog Tavern Photo property of Byrum Geisler, Esq. Used by permission



*St. Thomas Episcopal Church Photo property of Byrum Geisler, Esq. Used by permission
Note: This church is located on Main Street in Abingdon, Virginia. The building was completed in 1925 after fire destroyed the original frame church building in 1924.*

From the Oxford-Leiden Link

Come and join us! The Oxford-Leiden twin city link has been spreading friendship for 80 years and you can become part of it too. If you are a member of a sports, leisure or cultural organisation and would like to meet a similar Dutch group, we can help put you in touch.

Thousands of people in our two cities have taken part in exchanges over the years and you, as individuals or with members of your group, can add to that number. Exchanges can take place at any time of the year, whenever it suits you. We can help you with arrangements.

We organise two special events a year, around our respective Remembrance Days. In May, an Oxford delegation, usually led by the Lord Mayor, visits Leiden to lay wreaths in memory of our war dead and, the following day, to enjoy Dutch Liberation Day, celebrating the country's freedom at the end of the Second World War.

In November, a Leiden party, including the Burgomaster, visits Oxford to take part in our Remembrance ceremonies around the Oxford-Leiden mosaic in Leiden Square in the Westgate Centre and in St Giles. If you would like to be part of one of the UK's longest twin city links, get in touch. Friendship between nations is increasingly important in our troubled world. Contact us at:

OXFORD LEIDEN LINK

Chairman: Malcolm Ryder, 07798 880986 or email malryder@aol.com

Vice-chairmen: Bill Pinkerton, 01993 882300 or email bill_pinkerton@email.com / John Chipperfield 07519 600 444 or email mjpchipperfield@yahoo.co.uk

Secretary: Jo Hawtin, email jo.hawtin@ntlworld.com

Facebook address:

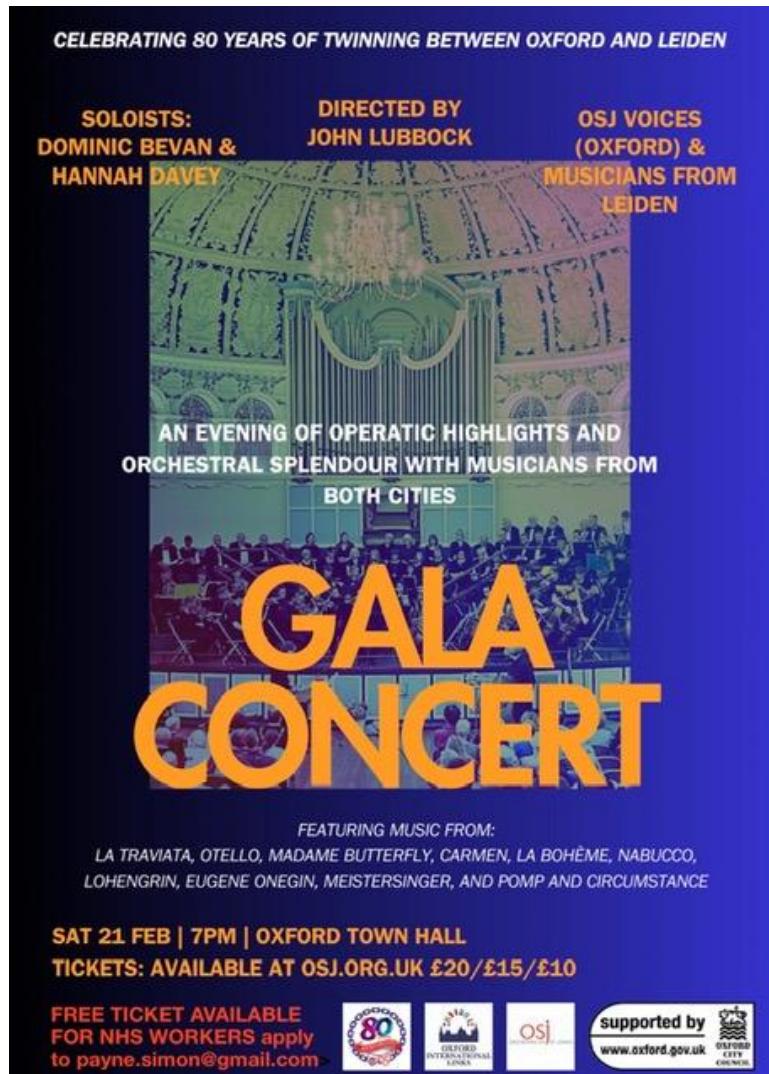
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1100596293674683/>

Oxford Leiden Link have a Gala Concert on Saturday 21st February

Tickets from: <https://rb.gy/odyunj>

I enclose a copy of the 80 years Gala Concert poster for you and a friend, hope to see you there.

<https://www.osj.org.uk/osjevent/gala-concert-celebrating-80-years-of-twinning-between-oxford-and-leiden-at-oxford-town-hall/>



Seeking a Twinning Visitor to Schongau from the Past

ADTTS has been contacted by Schongau about a past visitor. In the nineties, a young student, Kate Hutchinson, spent three weeks in Schongau. Her host family for her visit would very much like to regain contact with Kate. However, they no longer have her address. The last address that they have for her is in Hermitage Road, Abingdon. Also, an old address for her parents is Howard Cornish Rd, Marcham.

Can we help trace Kate Hutchinson? It is now about thirty years ago, but perhaps someone might know her or her family? (It's possible she now has a married name.) If you can contribute any information to help find her, please let me know!

Brian Read (ADTTS-Schongau Liaison) 07903 011813, newsletter@adtts.eu.

From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas

Foodies' paradise

Our national broadcaster, VRT, polled its audience to find "our most loved dish". Listeners had the option to choose between ten carefully selected dishes.

The winner was "**Endive rolled in a slice of ham, submerged in a cheese sauce, and baked au gratin in the oven**".

Yes, I know, endive isn't the most popular vegetable for British taste buds. The most common reaction I got from my guinea pig, a British visitor was: "*It's..different, you know*", leaving the divine tasting vegetable almost untouched on the plate. The accompanying sauce, ham and mashed potatoes went down well, he even went for seconds.

RECIPE Serves 4

Ingredients

8 whole endives
8 slices of ham
50g plain flour
50g butter
At least 500g of grated cheese (Emmenthal, Gruyere or Cheddar or similar)
Milk
Pepper, salt, nutmeg

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 200°C

Cut a small piece from the bottom of each endive.

Cook them until soft to the touch (boiling, steaming or braising)

Drain and preserve the liquid. Protip: put a weight on the endive, to drain it completely.

(Otherwise, the sauce in the oven tray will become watery)

Make a bechamel sauce. Use the drained liquid to give it more flavour. Season with pepper, salt and nutmeg.

Add the cheese gradually until the cheese sauce has your preferred consistency. Keep enough cheese separately to sprinkle on top of the dish.

Butter an oven tray big enough to fit the row of endives.

Wrap each endive in a slice of ham and place them on the bottom of the tray.

Pour the cheese sauce over the wrapped pieces until they are covered. Sprinkle the rest of the cheese on top.

Put in the oven for about 20 min.

Serve with mashed potatoes.



Endive (chicory family)

Ai, Ai, Ai, Ai, AI

Translation ai = ouch

The new Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghent thought it would be a good idea to spruce up her inauguration speech with some highly apposite quotes by some famous people. She asked ChatGPT for some smashing inspiration. ChatGPT delivered in a matter of seconds – the only problem was, it just pulled them out of thin air.

The impressive quotes were neither said, nor written by those prominent people. I know it sounds funny, but I think it's very alarming.

We shouldn't regard ChatGPT as the new knows-everything-bible. It has its faults. It searches for its answers through the data on the World Wide Web; it doesn't assess whether they are right or wrong.

So, you should ask yourselves whether the time you gain by asking ChatGPT for a solution truly compensates for the time you lose by fact checking the answers you are given. This is called the *bungle factor*.

Siegfried Waterschoot

What's On in Abingdon in February

Here are just a few of the forthcoming events culled from Abingdon Town's events website, <https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/events>.

Click on the links for further information on each event.

And if any of you have an event you would like put in here – please let us know via the email link at the end of this Newsletter.

Nick Marsh

<p><i>1st February 10:00 am – 29th March 4:00 pm</i></p>	<p><i>Abingdon County Hall Museum</i></p>	<p><u>Exhibition: South Indian Years – The Art and Poetry of Oswald Jennings Couldrey</u> <i>Oswald Jennings Couldrey is Abingdon's best-known twentieth-century artist. He was born into a local family of seed merchants and agricultural suppliers, which for several generations had included musicians, scholars and teachers, especially at Abingdon School, then Roysse's School. Oswald went up to Pembroke College, Oxford as an Abingdon Scholar, then gained a teaching qualification and entry to the Education Service of the Indian Civil Service, living and working in India from 1909-1919, for eight years as Principal of the Rajamundry College of Art in Andra Pradesh. This exhibition shows paintings made during these years, complemented by examples of his poetry. FREE ADMISSION</i></p>
<p><i>2nd February 7:00 pm</i></p>	<p><i>Charles Maude Room,</i></p>	<p><u>Guy Cutting Recital</u> <i>Old Abingdonian Guy Cutting returns to Abingdon to give an evening recital of English song entitled 'Whither must I wander? 'Guy Cutting is recognised internationally for his</i></p>

	<i>Abingdon School</i>	<i>compelling performances and refined musicianship, with a particular reputation in the music of J.S. Bach. Equally at home on the recital stage, Guy has collaborated with a number of the world's foremost ensembles and vocal directors. Further information can be found here. This is an evening not to be missed as one of the most prominent OA musicians returns to Abingdon to deliver an evening of wonderful musicianship accompanied by George Ireland, £4:00 - £10:00</i>
<i>4th February 7:30 – 9:30 pm</i>	<i>The King's Head and Bell</i>	<i>Abingdon Speakers' Club Do you want to improve your public speaking? Join us and learn how to be a better communicator. Toastmasters is a nonprofit organisation that operates clubs worldwide for the purpose of helping people develop communication, public speaking and leadership skills.</i>
<i>7th February 7:00 – 10:00 pm</i>	<i>Northcourt Centre</i>	<i>Radley Lakes Trust Quiz Join us for an evening of quizzing and friendly competition in support of the Radley Lakes Trust Tickets are £15 per person: including cheese biscuits and free entry to the popular "Heads and Tails" competition (with a £60 prize!). Pay bar serving alcoholic and soft drinks. To book email info@radleylakestrust.org</i>
<i>7th February 8:00 – 10:00 pm</i>	<i>Courtyard by Marriot, 6 Milton Gate</i>	<i>Abba Duo Join us for an evening of entertainment with the Abba Duo back for the 3rd time. £12</i>
<i>9th February 8:00 – 10:00 pm</i>	<i>Methodist Church Hall</i>	<i>Abingdon Astronomical Society There is a meeting of the Abingdon Astronomical Society on Monday 9th February. Dr Kevin Olsen (University of Oxford) will be giving a talk titled "The Martian Atmosphere, Missions in Use and in the Pipeline, and why it matters" The meeting starts at 8.00 pm in the Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, Abingdon, OX14 2AH. All welcome. Details can be found at www.abingdonastro.org.uk</i>
<i>9th February 7:15 pm</i>	<i>Amey Theatre</i>	<i>RBO Live: Woolf Works Virginia Woolf defied literary conventions to depict rich inner worlds – her heightened, startling and poignant reality. Resident Choreographer Wayne McGregor leads a luminous artistic team to evoke Woolf's signature stream of consciousness writing style in this immense work that rejects traditional narrative structures. Woolf Works is a collage of themes from Mrs Dalloway, Orlando, The Waves and Woolf's other writings. Created in 2015 for The Royal Ballet, this Olivier-award winning ballet triptych captures the heart of Woolf's uniquely artistic spirit. This event will be streamed from the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. £14 - £16</i>

<p>12th February 7:00 – 10:30 pm</p>	<p>Unicorn Theatre</p>	<p><u>Hase Waits</u> Hase Waits are an innovative folk music group that are on a mission to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity through their enchanting blend of traditional instrumental music. A variety of instruments that include Low Whistles, Hurdy-Gurdy, Flutes, Fiddle, Guitar, Bass and Percussion, creates a sound which captivates and shows a profound respect for the musical heritage they embody. Their music is made up of traditional music fused with their own compositions. Support TBC Doors 7pm, music 7:15pm £15 - £17</p>
<p>18th February 7:30 – 9:00 pm</p>	<p>Abingdon Baptist Church</p>	<p><u>An Eco-Adventure in the Andes- how extractivism threatens our world</u> A talk by Kate Rawles (Author of KATE RAWLES, AUTHOR "The Lifecycle – 8,000 Miles in the Andes by Bamboo Bike" – copies will be available).</p>
<p>23rd February 8:00 – 10:00 pm</p>	<p>Methodist Church Hall</p>	<p><u>Abingdon Astronomical Society</u> Abingdon Astronomical Society is having a 'Beginners Meeting' on Monday 23rd February. The meeting starts at 8.00pm at the Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, Abingdon, OX14 2AH. All welcome. Details can be found at <u>http://abingdonastro.org.uk/events/test-meeting-2-929-305-530-525-729-798-942-496-626-989-801-819-986-827-230-896-219/</u></p>
<p>26th February 7:15 pm</p>	<p>Amey Theatre</p>	<p><u>NT Live: The Audience</u> by Peter Morgan, directed by Stephen Daldry. Returning to cinemas for the first time in over a decade, Helen Mirren plays Queen Elizabeth II in the Olivier and Tony Award® -winning hit production, directed by Stephen Daldry. For 60 years, Queen Elizabeth II met with each of her 12 prime ministers in a private weekly meeting. This meeting is known as The Audience. From Winston Churchill to Margaret Thatcher and David Cameron, the Queen advised her prime ministers on matters both public and personal. Through these private audiences, we see glimpses of the woman behind the crown and witness the moments that shaped a monarch. Peter Morgan's Netflix phenomenon The Crown was based on this hit play that was captured live from London's West End in 2013 and went on to become one of the most-watched NT Live productions. £13.00 - £15.00</p>
<p>28th February 11:00 am – 12:00 noon</p>	<p>Abingdon Library</p>	<p><u>Author talk with Jim Donahue</u> Join us for a conversation with author and photographer Jim Donahue, where he'll speak about his book The Thames Valley: Past, Present, and Future-A Snapshot of English Life, as well as share photographs he's taken of the area. There will be a Q&A session as well as an opportunity to buy a signed copy of his book. Free tickets available from Abingdon Library, by calling 01865 815005 or email <u>abingdon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk</u></p>

Twin Towns Calendar for 2026

Here we wish to list festivals and events in our twin towns that may be of interest to potential visitors during 2026. Do now please tell us about all the major events for each twin town this year! Use the email link at the end of this Newsletter.

<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Argentan</i>	https://en.normandie-tourisme.fr/hidden-gems/argentan/events-in-argentan/
<i>January 2026 onwards</i>	<i>Colmar</i>	https://www.tourisme-colmar.com/en/whats-on
<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Lucca</i>	Calendar of Events
<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Schongau</i>	https://allevents.in/schongau/all
<i>January 2026 onwards</i>	<i>Sint-Niklaas</i>	https://www.ontdeksintniklaas.be/en/see-and-do
<i>January 2026 onwards</i>	<i>Thames, Coromandel Peninsula</i>	https://thecoromandel.nz/events/events-calendar/

ADTTS Contacts

<i>Chairman</i> Stella Carter The Old Bakehouse 2 Winterbourne Rd Abingdon OX14 1AJ 01235 520317 chairman@adtts.eu	<i>Membership</i> Rosemary Jardine 80 Baker Road Abingdon OX14 5LJ 01235 539291 membership@adtts.eu	<i>Treasurer</i> Susan Read 30 St Amand Drive Abingdon OX14 5RG 01235 529779 treasurer@adtts.eu
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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. Back copies are also available on request. 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)

The Society's website is <https://www.abingdonandvaletwinning.org.uk/>.

This address may be abbreviated to <http://adtts.eu>.

The programme may be found on the website at

<https://www.abingdonandvaletwinning.org.uk/future.htm>.

The website also has reports, with pictures, of all twinning events going back to 2007.

Membership

To join the Society, apply to the Membership Secretary, Rosemary Jardine.

Subscriptions for the current year to August 2026 are £7.50 per person or £15.00 for a family. They can be paid by cheque, payable to ADTTS, or with an annual Banker's Order, or just directly to our Bank account by BACS, using your name as a reference, to:

National Westminster Bank plc

Account: Abingdon & District Twin Towns Society

Sort Code: 60-01-01 **A/c No:** 08616752

See the [membership page](#) on the ADTTS website for forms and contact details.
