

Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



Newsletter

June 2026

Guest Editor: Nick Marsh

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From the Editor

Welcome to the June edition of our Newsletter!

Dear Readers,

As I write this Britain is sweltering under the record-breaking May heatwave with temperatures as high as 34.5°C, almost even too hot to be in the garden! However, I hope as many of you as possible will take advantage of Michael Matthews' kind invitation to hold our annual Summer Garden Party in his beautiful garden in Tatham Road. This will be on Thursday 2nd July at 7 pm. Details on how to book are inside this Newsletter.

Other forthcoming events include a Treasure Hunt. This event has proved very successful over the past two years and plans are afoot for a Treasure Hunt later this summer. We will let members know as soon as the plans are finalised.

Also being considered for later on is a visit to Abingdon Museum and/or the Little Basement Museum. Further information to follow.

This Newsletter also has a report by Neil Hancox on the superb Europe Day Meal held in May at the Bella Napoli Italian restaurant.

Long may the fine weather continue!

Nick Marsh

Forthcoming Events in 2026

Thursday 2 nd July	Garden Party
4 th – 8 th June	Church Twinning Visit to Schongau
11 th – 17 th July	Trip to Argentan for Bastille Day
21 st – 24 th August	Anniversary Visit from Argentan
Sunday 8 th November	Laying of Twinning Wreaths on Remembrance Sunday
Sunday 20 th December	Christmas Lunch

Other events in the programme are not yet scheduled, but they include a Treasure Hunt, and the AGM. 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://adtts.eu/>.

Forthcoming events:

Garden Party at Michael Matthews' house - Thursday 2nd July 7 pm

ADTTS Summer Garden Party
Thursday 2 July 2026, 7 pm
At Longside, Tatham Road,
Abingdon OX14 1QD

We are delighted that Michael Mathews has invited us to hold our annual summer garden party in his lovely garden. Inside if wet.

Do please come and join us and bring your friends and families. Our catering department is already working on plans for the food and the barman has been chosen. He doesn't know it yet!

The cost is £10 a head. Bank details below. Let Susan, our treasurer, have a list of names of people coming before 12th June

We look forward to seeing you all and meeting new friends.

Stella

Send your **payment** (£10 per person) to the ADTTS bank account:

Account: *Abingdon & District Twin Towns Society*

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

with your name as reference.

If you would rather pay by cash or cheque, please arrange directly with the Treasurer:

Susan Read

01235 529779

treasurer@adtts.eu

Treasure Hunt

This popular event will again be held later this summer and is still at the planning stage. Details will be sent to members as soon as they are finalised!

Visit to Little Basement Museum

We are currently looking at the possibilities for another visit to the Little Basement Museum, and will let members know as soon as the arrangements are in place.

Church Twinning visit to Schongau

Our friends in Schongau, Germany, have invited us, together with a group from Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, for a Church Twinning weekend from 4th to 8th June 2026. Accommodation will be with host families.

Contact a church twinning representative for further information.

Past event: Europe Day Meal

Saturday 9th May



photos: Brian Read

About 30 Twin Town members and friends enjoyed an excellent dinner to celebrate Europe Day, appropriately at La Bella Napoli. It was a noisy, jolly occasion where we met old friends and made new ones.

The menu was largely Italian, though I enjoyed Belgian waffles for dessert, all washed down with a large glass of Malbec (oh dear, is that from Argentina – never mind if that is so, it's from across the sea).

Unlike a certain fairy tale character 'carriages for us' were required around 9.30 pm - I think I can say without offence that everyone there was of a 'certain age' when midnight (at least for me) is not so attractive!

As a way of cementing European (and other) overseas friendships I think coming together over food and wine is one of the best. It is far superior to lengthy political perorations. Our thanks to the ADTTS Committee for arranging the event and the staff of La Bella Napoli for making us so welcome and producing such delicious food.

Neil Hancox, 10th May 2026

Invitation to the annual Sint-Niklaas twinning event

We are inviting 4 people to join us this year from: Thursday, September 3 (arrival) to Monday, September 7 (departure). Theme: Cities, their rights, their duties.

Program in a nutshell:

Friday: Visit to Ghent. We leave the well-trodden tourist paths to explore its social history, visiting the famous, recently restored *The Adoration of the Lamb* by the Van Eyck brothers.

Saturday: In the morning, a visit is planned to the newly renovated museum of the cartographer Mercator. In the afternoon, we visit Hulst in the Netherlands.

We will be back in time to experience the hot air balloon spectacle.

Sunday: In the morning is our city walk with a focus on Art Deco. In the afternoon, we have our unbeatable "Game Without Borders," followed by the farewell BBQ.

If you would like to participate, please let Stella know before June 1st.

From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas

Coo coo roo coo coo paloma

My neighbour's house has a bay window. Well, if you can call it that. It is, after all, only one brick deep. Glazed tiles formed a small roof at an obtuse angle of approximately 130°. The space between this roof of the bay window and the gutter is about 30 cm (12 inches). It's in this space that a couple of collared doves have chosen to build their nest. I have affectionately named her Silly and him Daft. I believe it was Silly who determined this location as the perfect spot to raise another grey-feathered family. During the courting phase, she cooed a lot which was instantly followed by Daft, cooing even louder. His little head bobbed up and down fervently, completely in awe of his partner's discovery.

Soon, they started building a nest. As you probably know, a pigeon's nest can hardly be called a work of art. At best, it is a collection of twigs in a loose arrangement. Now you picture this: a fairly steep angle (130°), smooth ceramic tiles, and loose twigs. Not an ideal combination for a stable home.

Regally, Silly sat at the top of the inclined roof, waiting for her mate to show up with a twig. Every twig was thoroughly inspected. If it wasn't good enough, she chucked it down the abyss with a flick of her beak. Daft wouldn't think of bringing one of the rejected twigs back to her attention. I've concluded there must be a three-second rule for nesting twigs, too. After a week, my neighbour's pavement was scattered with enough rejected twigs to build at least three more nests. And then it went on for four more weeks. It was like watching a winged Sisyphus pushing the boulder up the hill, over and over again.

Euphemistically speaking, you could say it was a work in very, very slow progress. To their credit, they kept going no matter the challenges they faced, including blustery winds that destroyed their construction twice. Still, after weeks and weeks of doing the same thing and expecting a different result, you could say there is a fine line between perseverance and stupidity.

Now, were they able to complete it? I don't know. We left on holiday to France, so my expert evaluation of the pigeon nest project will have to wait until I'm back home. Nevertheless, my expectations are low, if not non-existent.

From Herman Cole in Sint-Niklaas

May I bring a suggestion for a **Cultural Autumn Twinning trip to ... London**

Our son Thomas – historian and a great guide for Ghent and other places – told me about what quite soon is going to happen at your National Gallery:

the first ever exhibition of **the portraits of the Netherlandish painter Jan van Eyck** (active 1422–1441) ... Mind: **Flemish painter.**

www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/van-eyck-the-portraits 21 November 2026 – 11 April 2027

Works from Vienna, Berlin, Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu Romania and so on

Why *Twinning*? You may say ..

- www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-the-arnolfini-portrait Because the painting of a **Lucca** couple working in Brugge will be on show. It already is now and has been a very long time ...

- Because the famous Ghent Altarpiece of Van Eyck can be seen after a 30-minute train ride from **Sint-Niklaas**.

Best wishes

From the National Gallery site:

*For the first time in history, see all of Jan van Eyck's portraits together. Only once, only at the National Gallery. Portraiture as we know it begins with van Eyck. His vision and skill launched painting into a new era of unrivalled realism. Watchful eyes, a hint of stubble, wrinkles, flushed cheeks. Van Eyck captured his subjects in all their intimate details. Though these people sat for their portraits 600 years ago, they feel alive today. **'Van Eyck: The Portraits'** brings together from across Europe all nine of the artist's known painted portraits, making up half of his surviving works worldwide.*

Breathing life into van Eyck's world, the exhibition introduces the men and women he spent his life around. They are not kings, queens and aristocrats; they are successful craftsmen, merchants and the artist's relatives. This is a story of people. This is the moment when access to art widened. Precious and fragile, van Eyck's paintings rarely travel, including 'The Arnolfini Portrait'. This is one of the most popular paintings in our collection and has only ever left the Gallery once in over 100 years. The exhibition marks the first and only time these works can be brought together. And this incredible display can only happen here, at the Gallery.

Hosts needed for visitors from Colmar

A group from Colmar is visiting Abingdon in September. There is still a need for some host families. Please contact Norma Queralt if you can offer accommodation.

What's On in Abingdon in June

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.

Until 28 th June 10:00 am - 4:00 pm	Abingdon County Hall Museum	<u>Exhibition: MGA 70</u> <i>Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the MGA, one of the most successful MG models, this exhibition looks at the development of the design, the influence of speed-record breakers and experimental prototypes, and it shines a spotlight on Syd Enever, the 'father' of the MGA. With memories of the MG factory still present in the town, we hope that this will be another MG story of interest to local people and to MG enthusiasts who visit us from around the world. To bring the story to life we will display MGA-related artefacts courtesy of the MG Car Club as well as the Museum's collection of MG models through the ages, from the very beginning to the 21st century. The MGA exhibit will run at Abingdon Museum until the end of June 2026.</i> <i>Be sure not to miss it! FREE ADMISSION</i>
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3 rd June 7:30 – 9:30 pm	The King's Head and Bell	<u>Abingdon Speakers' Club</u> 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.
4 th June 8:00 – 10:00 pm	The Topsy Mercer, 22 High St. Abingdon	<u>Awkward Actors present: How Awkward (Improv Comedy Show) Unscripted Laughs powered by your suggestions</u> Join us for a show of improvised comedy and drama with the cream of the Awkward Actors squad. Upstairs in the Topsy Mercer Show starts 8 pm Doors 7.30 pm Tickets £5 Book here: https://www.ticketsource.com/awkwardactors/ Based on your suggestions, you'll see scenes, sketches and stories, all made up on the spot, off the cuff, on the fly. Yes, it's unscripted spontaneity – and a uniquely exciting and hilarious show every time. Sign up to the Awkward Actors mailing list to receive further updates and more improv info here: https://mailchi.mp/impro/awkward-actors We hope to see you soon and, until then, stay awkward! £5
4 th June 7:00 – 10:00 pm	Amey Theatre	<u>NT Live: The Playboy of the Western World</u> Nicola Coughlan (Bridgerton) joins Éanna Hardwicke (The Sixth Commandment) and Siobhán McSweeney (Derry Girls) in John Millington Synge's riveting play of youth and self-discovery. Pegeen Flaherty's life is turned upside down when a young man walks into her pub claiming that he's killed his father. Instead of being shunned, the killer becomes a local hero and begins to win hearts, that is until a second man unexpectedly arrives on the scene... Filmed live on stage at the National Theatre, Caitríona McLaughlin directs this darkly funny tale full to the brim with secrets. This production has an approximate running time of 150 minutes. This production has been rated 12 (tbc) by BBFC. £13 - £15
4 th June 7:00 – 10:30 pm	St Helen's Church	<u>True Foxes with support from Painted Sky</u> Having performed over 700 shows they are quickly gaining recognition in the UK and beyond. Following the release of their debut album 'Howl' in March 2024, the duo have been featured on numerous international radio stations, being named as Americana Album of the Month on The Country Mile Radio and UK Country Radio and have received glowing reviews from AmericanaUK, Rocking Magpie, and Fatea magazine. With extensive airplay across the UK and internationally, including recognition as BBC Artist of the Week across 8 territories, True Foxes continue to captivate audiences. Support is from siblings Holly & George Brandon aka Painted Sky. £15 - £17
6 th June 7:30 - 9:30 pm	St Helen's Church	<u>An Evening of Musical Genius</u> Come and enjoy the Hurst Ensemble (Peter Foster, piano, clarinet), Sarah Eaton and Emmeline Bryant (violins), Sarah Coatsworth (Viola), Fiona Hedges (cello)) perform Mozart's clarinet quintet in A Major and Brahms' piano quintet in F minor. The building is fully accessible and there will be refreshments available. £12 - £16

6 th June 8:00 - 11:00 pm	Amey Theatre	<u>WCB Comedy with Headliner Ed Byrne</u> WCB Comedy lands in Abingdon for the very first time – and we're not messing about. After years of sell-out shows across East Anglia, WCB Comedy brings its proven, no-nonsense comedy nights to Abingdon with a line-up that's absolutely stacked from top to bottom. £25 <u>https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wcbcomedy/wcb-comedy-stand-up-in-abingdon-with-headliner-ed-byrne/e-pdkvza</u>
10 th 11 th 12 th 13 th June 7:30 – 9:30 pm	Unicorn Theatre	<u>The Merry Wives of Windsor (Abingdon Edition)</u> Merry Wives is a hilarious tale of two clever women who team up to prank a boastful, broke knight trying his luck with both of them. It's a light-hearted romp, where wit and community spirit triumph over male ego and jealousy. "Abingdon Edition"? This will be the last play at the Unicorn before it closes for its big refurbishment, so we're giving it an Abingdon setting! £14
25 th June 7:00 – 10:00 pm	Amey Theatre	<u>NT Live: Les Liaisons Dangereuses</u> BAFTA Award-winner Lesley Manville (Phantom Thread) joins Aidan Turner (Rivals) in a striking new staging of Christopher Hampton's celebrated adaptation of the classic novel, where among the glittering salons of the super-rich, one misstep can mean ruin. Marquise de Merteuil is a master in the art of survival. Alongside the magnetic Vicomte de Valmont, they turn seduction into strategy and weaponise desire. But when their alliance collapses into rivalry, the battle between them threatens to destroy everyone in their path. Filmed live on stage at the National Theatre, Marianne Elliott (Angels in America) directs this thrilling game of love, lies, and social warfare. This production has an approximate running time of 150 minutes. This production has been rated 15 (tbc) by BBFC. £13 - £15
26 th June 7:00 – 8:30 pm	St Michael and All Angels' Church	<u>Albert Park Singers Summer Concert</u> Albert Park Singers are a local community choir. Our summer concert is on Friday 26 th June. Free Admission. Donations on the night for Sobell House Hospice and St Michael's Church. Free
27 th June 10:30 am And 17:00 pm	Abbey Gardens	<u>Fun and Music in the Park</u> Get ready for an unforgettable Fun and Music in the Park, FREE during the daytime with lots of activities for all ages including inflatables, DIY Face painting, Arts and Crafts and Make your own music! We also have some fantastic live performances up until 5pm. From 5pm join us for live music and brilliant company in the Abbey Gardens for the ticketed Music in the Park 2026 – a night packed with legendary sounds and festival energy. 🎵 Main stage kicks off at 5:00 PM! Arrive early and soak up the atmosphere in our beer tent, where a hand-picked selection of fantastic local artists will be warming you up with live music before the headline acts take over. 🎧 Live bands • Cold drinks • Open-air setting • Amazing atmosphere Bring your friends, bring your dancing shoes, and get ready to sing, sway, and rock the night away 🎶 🌟 10:30 am – Free 5:00 pm - £15

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/

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