

Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society



Newsletter

July 2026

Guest Editor: Brian Read

In this issue:

- From the Editor
- Forthcoming Events in 2026
- Weekend trip to Sint-Niklaas 28th - 29th November 2026
- Church Twinning Visit to Schongau
- A Surprise Twinning
- What's On in Abingdon in July
- Twin Towns Calendar for 2026
- ADTTS Contacts & Membership

From the Editor

"Phew! What a Scorcher!"

The recent uncomfortably hot weather brings to mind the above classic tabloid headline from the summer heatwave of 1976. However, the forecast for the Garden Party on Thursday is for a pleasantly warm evening. We look forward to welcoming fellow ADTTS members to enjoy prosecco and canapés in Michael Matthews' lovely garden.

The main news this month is the announcement from Nick Marsh of a pre-Christmas weekend coach trip for members, families and friends to Sint-Niklaas, our twin town in Belgium. There was a similar, highly successful trip in 2019. (See the report in the December 2019 newsletter and on the [website](#).) Register your interest now!

The twinning group from the Church in Abingdon continues its programme to pursue and develop links with their counterparts in our twin towns. Last month they were invited, along with a group from Sint-Niklaas, to a twinning weekend in Schongau. We are pleased to have a full report of what was a very successful visit.

Contributions about twinning from members are always welcome. Many towns in England have such links, but we have an interesting piece from Ruth Sillitoe, who on holiday came across a particularly poignant relationship arising from wartime occupation.

Further afield, we have news about Abingdon's Friendship Link with the town of Thames in the Coromandel district of New Zealand. Their Mayor, Peter Revell, together with his wife are spending four weeks in July visiting England. They intend to visit Abingdon sometime and we look forward to welcoming them.

Brian Read

Forthcoming Events in 2026

Thursday 2 nd July	Garden Party
11 th – 17 th July	Trip to Argentan for Bastille Day
Thursday 13 th August	Treasure Hunt
21 st – 24 th August	Anniversary Visit from Argentan
24 th – 28 th September	Weekend Visit from Colmar
Sunday 8 th November	Laying of Twinning Wreaths on Remembrance Sunday
28 th – 29 th November	Weekend Trip to Sint-Niklaas
Sunday 20 th December	Christmas Lunch

Other events in the programme are not yet scheduled, but they include a Wine Tasting and a Games Evening. 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/>, or simply type adtts.eu into your browser.

Weekend trip to Sint-Niklaas 28th - 29th November 2026

ADTTS is organising a 2-day weekend coach trip to Sint-Niklaas on the 28th/29th November 2026.

The highlights of the trip include the chance to visit a chocolatier, the House of St Nicolas (Huis van De Sint) in Sint-Niklaas, as well the famous Christmas Market in Bruges.

Each year, during the lead-up to St Nicolas Day (6th December), the town of Sint-Niklaas celebrates this by transforming their museum to "The House of The Saint", which is dedicated to the story of St Nicolas. It is a huge attraction for children in Belgium, who come from all over the country to visit it, and the St Nicolas in residence.

We are taking a coach over there, leaving Abingdon early Saturday morning, staying at the comfortable 4-star Hotel Serwir, and will arrive back at about 8 pm on the Sunday evening.



House of the Saint

The initial itinerary is as follows:

Saturday 28th November

- 05:30 Depart Abingdon for Euroshuttle, Folkestone
- 09:50 Shuttle crossing
- 11:15 Depart Calais (timings are local, 1 hour ahead of UK time)
- 13:15 Arrive Sint-Niklaas, Hotel Serwir
- 14:30 Visit to Chocolatier in Sint-Niklaas, watch a master chocolatier at work
- 16:00 Opportunity to visit The House of the Saint
- Evening free in Sint-Niklaas, shopping, restaurants, cafés, etc.



Canal boat ride, Bruges

Sunday 29th November

- 09:15 Depart hotel for Bruges after superb buffet breakfast
- 10:15 Arrive Bruges, visit Christmas market, opportunity for horse and carriage tour, canal boat ride.
- 15:15 Depart Bruges for Calais and Shuttle (supermarket stop for Xmas shopping)
- 17:30 Arrive Folkestone, depart for Abingdon
- 20:30 Arrive Abingdon



Carriage ride, Bruges

All timings are approximate at the moment and are subject to fine-tuning.

Accommodation:

Bed and breakfast in the 4-star Hotel Serwir, Sint-Niklaas, in twin/double/family rooms.

Cost:

We envisage the cost to be approx. £165 per person, and for children sharing a room with parents approx. £155. (Entrance tickets for the House of the Saint approx. €20). The cost is not yet finalised, and may fluctuate slightly depending on exchange rates.

We anticipate that the places may well be taken up very quickly, so if you are interested, please let Nick Marsh know as soon as possible (nickqgmarsh@gmail.com) tel 07745 440047.

Church Twinning Visit to Schongau

Thursday 4th June to Monday 8th June 2026

Margaret Ellwood (All Saints' Methodist Church), John Clare (St Michael's), Hildegard Hyde (St Nicolas') and Maggie Greaney (Trinity Church) were all relieved and delighted to take off for Munich only slightly late due to a raging thunderstorm over Heathrow, after days of wondering whether our flight would be cancelled like many others. We were met at Munich airport and taken to Schongau by car as major works on the railways around Munich would have meant a fraught journey for us on three trains plus some bus transport between sections of these workings. After coffee and cake, we all went to our hosts to spend the evening eating and chatting.

Next morning we all met up at the 'Rathaus', along with 5 visitors from our twin town of Sint-Niklaas in Belgium. We were welcomed to Schongau with a champagne reception hosted by the new Mayor and many of the Schongau people who are involved in twinning and church twinning.



We were driven to Hoher Peißenberg, which is a large hill not far from Schongau on top of which is a large ancient church, café with terrace overlooking the Alps and the oldest weather station in Germany. After looking around the old church we met a Guide from the Weather Station who was so enthusiastic about his subject and showed us all the instruments outdoors using the old methods alongside the new equipment, which is now linked electronically to weather stations throughout Europe, Russia and USA. Now they are monitoring the ozone layer, ocean temperatures, re-afforestation and the general wellbeing of our planet. A coffee and Appel strudel on the terrace overlooking the mountains, was appreciated by everyone after having to concentrate so hard with so much information.



We all met again by the tourist office in Schongau at 8 pm to have a guided walk around and within the old town walls with the medieval night watchman armed with halberd and lantern and with his wife. In bygone days he would have locked the town gates and checked for unguarded fires as the town was seriously engulfed by fire many centuries ago. Like our town crier he shouted and sang at various points on the route. Our first stop was by the new twin town signpost before heading towards the old monastery where the original beer of Schongau was made. As we went around the town gates and watch towers we stopped by several ancient hostelries with interesting stories attached. Beer and wine were sampled and tales of old were told as darkness fell.



On Saturday morning we were collected by town twinning volunteers and taken to a mining museum set in the grounds of an old coal mine at Peißenberg. An extra bonus for us was that a vintage car rally was also taking place within the grounds that day. We enjoyed seeing a huge variety of old mainly American monstrous vehicles. The original Fiat 500 and Mini look so tiny beside the modern versions. After a very interesting visit to the museum where we heard that this coal mine had at its peak employed 3000 staff underground and 1000 above ground, we donned helmets and were taken into an old mine shaft to see how life must have been like.



Next stop was an alpine type farm/cheese producer with a wonderful view over rolling meadows. Cow and goat bells tinkled in the background as we enjoyed a platter of locally made cheeses and sausage. We then said our goodbyes to two of the Sint-Niklaas guests

who had to return to Belgium for work on Monday morning. A musician playing a zither and singing Bavarian folk songs kept us at the cheese farm longer than we thought as we listened to his music, which was very jolly.



On Sunday morning three of the visitors went with hosts to the Catholic Church, three went to the Lutheran church and one went to an Evangelical church. In the afternoon the Lutheran church hosted a delicious tea with homemade cakes for all the guests, hosts and friends who had visited Abingdon or had been involved with twinning over the years. It was good to meet people who had been to Abingdon on various church twinning visits, the Town Twinning Language week or town twinning visits. The lady who had acted as the wife of the Night watchman turned up at the end of the teatime to escort us around the town once more telling us more of the history. In the grounds of the old monastery there were 63 rose bushes with name tags on them to represent the names of 63 women who had been put to death as witches between 1589 and 1592. All this was because they knew about herbal remedies and cures for various ailments.



For our last evening together a large group met at the boathouse restaurant on the River Lech. Traditional Bavarian food was eaten and the musician with the zither came to join us armed with printed sheets of his songs for us to join in. Farewell speeches were made and gifts given with promises to meet again. Karin Toth and Irene Lederle were especially thanked for planning and co-ordinating a successful visit.



The organisers Karin Toth (left) and Irene Lederle (right) and the twin towns crests on the maypole

On Monday morning we were driven back to Munich Airport in comfort after a most enjoyable weekend.

Maggie Greaney

A Surprise Twinning

We were recently on holiday in Jersey. While there we visited the "Occupation Tapestry", a project which commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the liberation of the island at the end of the second world war. Nazi forces invaded the island in 1940, and there was much hardship, hunger and resentment that Britain did not rescue them. 2000 British born residents were deported to an internment camp in Bad Wurzach in Germany and lived there for the rest of the war.

The tapestry was a huge undertaking, twelve panels created and worked, one in each of their twelve parishes, each one illustrating a different aspect of the Occupation. Apparently nearly every resident put in at least a stitch but the main sewing was carried out by regular teams. Jersey people had never spoken to one another of their wartime experiences, but as so often happens when people work together, they began to talk of that time and much healing happened.

Then in 2002, 60 years after the Occupation, the capital town, St Helier twinned with Bad Wurzach and there is still a flourishing link between the two places. See <https://www.sthelierbadwurzachpartnerschaft.com/>.

Ruth Sillitoe

(Bad Wurzach is a town with a population of about 5000, located in the south of the state of Baden-Württemberg, not far from the Bodensee (Lake Constance). It is a spa town, gaining the predicate *Bad* in 1950.)

What's On in Abingdon in July

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

1 st July 7:30 – 9:30 pm	The King's Head and Bell	<u>Abingdon Speakers' Club</u> <i>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>
2 nd July 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> <i>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/awkward-actors-present-how-awkward-improv-comedy-show/e-xmklmx 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</i>
4 th July – 27 th September 10:00 am – 4:00 pm	Abingdon County Hall Museum	<u>Exhibition: SAXON Abingdon</u> <i>Following on from last year's Roman exhibition, we will continue the story of the Abingdon area and its people through the Anglo-Saxon period and give a more detailed context to the significant Anglo-Saxon artefacts in the Museum's permanent display, such as the rare 7th century gold ring with glass bead decoration. Excavations have uncovered much about the Saxon's presence in Abingdon, for example the discovery of a Saxon cemetery on Saxton Road. The exhibition looks at the archaeological evidence and takes a closer look at people's lives here in the early medieval period. FREE Admission</i>
4 th July 2:00 - 4:30 pm	Brightwell- cum- Sotwell	<u>Traditional Village Fete</u> <i>This very traditional village fete will be held in the gardens of Sotwell House at the very centre of the village. It has glorious formal topiary, an orchard, a tennis court and even a moat with ducks! Luckily, you will find it easily in this warren of a village because all you need to do is find the fabulous Red Lion pub on Brightwell Street OX10 0RT and follow the bunting. All the proceeds go to support clubs and societies in the village.</i>

4 th July 3:00 – 5:00 pm	St. Swithun's Church, Kennington	<u>Kennington Chorale Summer Concert</u> A fun, nautically themed concert in aid of the RNLI - free entry - donations on the day. Free
9 th July 6:00 – 7:00 pm	Abingdon Library	<u>Author Event with Nikki Thornton</u> Come to the library to hear local author Nicki Thornton talk about 'The Unstoppable Rise of the Amateur Sleuth – how Agatha Christie still influences writers like me'. In the fiftieth year since Agatha Christie's death, be ready to celebrate favourite novels, tropes and some of the authors the Queen of Crime continues to inspire, plus find out about Nicki's new book Who Shot Jackson Brodie? Tickets £2 inc. a free welcome drink, available from Abingdon Library.
15 th July 7:30 – 9:00 pm	Abingdon Baptist Church, 35 Ock St	<u>Practical Wildlife Gardening (Talk)</u> Practical Wildlife Gardening – a talk by Dr Stephen Head: Founder Patron of the Wildlife Gardening Forum
18 th July 12:00 – 8:00 pm	Coxeter House, Ock St.	<u>Abingdon Distillery 7th Birthday Party</u> It's our 7th Birthday Party open day – We will be opening the bar & distillery all day to celebrate from 12pm through till the evening. Come join us for a drink & take a look around the distillery. Expect plenty of G&T's, a summery cocktail selection, pizza oven on the terrace & good vibes! And we may be bringing back a limited edition or two from the past for one final run... Free to attend, dog friendly.

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.

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

ADTTS Contacts

Chairman
Stella Carter
The Old Bakehouse
2 Winterbourne Rd
Abingdon OX14 1AJ
01235 520317
chairman@adtts.eu

Membership
Rosemary Jardine

80 Baker Road
Abingdon OX14 5LJ
01235 539291
membership@adtts.eu

Secretary
Elio Astone

07801 260262
secretary@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. 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.



A hot June day in Abingdon (photo: Susan Read)