Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society

Newsletter

December 2025

Guest Editor: Nick Marsh

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Chairman's Message

I was sitting in my motorhome on a campsite in York on Saturday evening when a message came in from Nick our editor asking if I would like to send Christmas greetings to everyone in our twin towns. To be honest I wasn't feeling very Christmassy. The rain was hammering on the roof of the van and it had been too wet and wild to venture into York to see the lights. In addition, I have lost two friends in the last month and am acutely aware of how much their families will be missing them this Christmas. For many people and for many reasons this won't be a time of laughter and friendship.

However! Unable to venture out gave me time, helped by a nice bottle of French wine, to remember fabulous Christmas memories of our twin towns. Howard and I together with the Chairman of the Vale went to Colmar one year to turn on the Christmas lights. Colmar, is there anywhere more beautiful in the world than your town at Christmas?

One Christmas Peter and I had a stall in the Christmas market in Argentan. We were selling Christmas cards, but I think we would have done better selling crackers, an English tradition you don't seem to know. Argentan, that was such good fun! Just before covid hit Nick took a coach load of us from Abingdon to Sint-Niklaas. The great man was at his home there and welcomed us all in English. My two young grandchildren were most impressed by his toilet *(See Siegfried's article, Ed.)* as well as our lovely Belgian friends who brought them chocolate and other treats. Nick, we are trying to persuade you to organise another trip for next Christmas.

Then covid came and in 2020 we spent Christmas in 'bubbles'. Phil and Connie, friends we had made through Abingdon twinning were not in our bubble so not allowed in our home. They came though, wrapped in thick coats and scarves and we had a Christmas Eve dinner in the garden, with the chiminea and blankets to keep us warm and an outdoor Christmas tree to set the scene. That was very special too.

St. Nicolas in Sint-Niklaas

Coming right up to date, this Friday evening I enjoyed my first glühwein of the season with Lavinia and Keti from Lucca together with Elio. They have been here for a long weekend hosted by Brian and Susan. We were in the Christmas market in Broad Street in Oxford prior to taking the girls to a concert in Worcester College chapel followed by prosecco in the cloisters. This is a new and very special memory.

Schongau, I am sorry we haven't Christmas memories shared with you and really sorry that due to that strike we didn't make it to see you in the summer. Abingdon, Virginia, I have very happy memories of visiting you, but pumpkins were decorating the houses as it was close to Halloween. And Thames, I have never spent a Christmas in New Zealand, in the sun. However, I am sure my brother will be down at Pukorokoro Miranda over Christmas, so if you are there call into the centre and ask if Adrian is around and say hello. So, wherever you are, I do send you all good wishes for a happy and a peaceful Christmas and I hope you will make happy memories of your own.

Stella

From the Editor

Christmas is just around the corner. The shops are now full of Christmas decorations, the pubs and restaurants seem full every evening with groups of people celebrating their office Christmas parties. Different clubs and societies are also represented, and our Twinning Society will also be joining in the festive fun – we will be celebrating with our Abingdon and District Twin Towns Society Christmas Lunch on Sunday 21st December.

Abingdon Market Place café

To immerse yourselves even further into the Christmas Spirit, why not try baking some special Christmas cookies? Doris Küter in Schongau has sent us an article specifically for the December Newsletter which Brian has very kindly translated. We are delighted to receive her seasonal contribution for a delicious sounding Christmas cookie recipe and we hope that many readers might like to try the recipe out!

This Newsletter also contains a report on the Remembrance Sunday events, and Richard has written an article about the superb Multilingual Games Evening in November. There is also a fascinating report, sent in by Maggie Greaney, about a picture in Abingdon Museum of St Helen's Church and Wharf. Brian has contributed a report about some guests from Lucca who have enjoyed some time in Abingdon.

Town Hall and Christmas Tree

Siegfried from Sint-Niklaas brings us excellent news! The Holy Man himself will no longer face eviction from his traditional home in the city.

Nick Marsh

Forthcoming Events (December 2025 – March 2026)

Sunday 21st December	Christmas Lunch at the Hilton Garden Inn
Thursday 15th January	Evening meeting, Preston Road
Thursday 19th February	Evening meeting, Preston Road
Thursday 19th March	Evening meeting, Preston Road

Future event

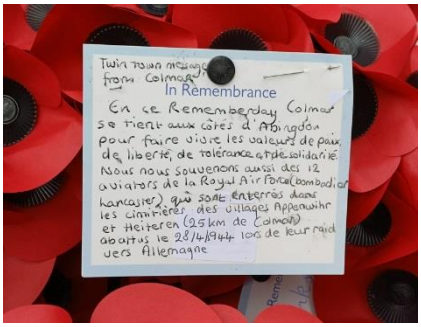
Christmas Lunch: 21st December

12.30 for 1 pm at Hilton Garden Inn, Marcham Road, OX14 1TZ

A popular event in the calendar is the Society's Christmas Lunch. This year it is on Sunday 21st December at the Hilton Garden Inn (near Tesco). Members and their friends are very welcome to join this annual event. The deadline for tickets is already passed, but please contact Peter Dodd (peteranne@aol.com) to check if there have been any cancellations.

Past events

Remembrance Sunday - Sunday 9th November 2025 - The Square



Each year, the Society lays a wreath at the war memorial in Abingdon on behalf of twinning, together with a wreath specifically recognising participation in remembrance by one of our twin towns.

Remembrance Sunday began with the civic service in St Helen's Church. From the church, everyone processed up West St Helen Street to reach the war memorial for the traditional short service of remembrance. Our chairman Stella Carter laid a wreath from ADTTS, while Norma Queralt laid a wreath carrying a message from Colmar.

After a break for the mayor's reception or for coffee, Nikki Henton had arranged a traditional Sunday lunch at the Crown & Thistle for ADTTS participants.

For an excellent report of the ceremony at the war memorial, see the Abingdon Blog.

Multilingual Games Evening – 20th November 2025

The plan was for people to have fun playing a variety of games in all five languages of the twinning society so we had one table for Scrabble in French, Cheat in German, Happy Families in Flemish, Spoons in English and Whist in Italian. Instructions and vocabulary were provided for each table and I left it to the participants to sort themselves out. Some games can only have four players but others are more flexible.

It was a bitterly cold evening so we were not surprised that only about 20 people turned up. It was quite noisy at times which is a good sign, it indicates that people are enjoying themselves. We played each game for about 20 minutes only and waited till the end for chat, drinks, nibbles and prizes of French wine for scrabble, a German toy tortoise for cheat, Belgian chocolates for Happy Families, local beer for Spoons and an old packet of spaghetti well past its sell by date for Whist.

I enjoyed it but then I love playing games even when I do not win.

Richard Smart

Weihnachtszeit – Christmas Recipe

From Doris Küter in Schongau

Christmas is just a few weeks away. And it's the time to gather at home and celebrate family traditions. Of course, *Plätzchen* ("Christmas Cookies") are an essential part.

The classics in Germany include: Vanilla Crescents, Shortbread, Coconut Macaroons, Cinnamon Stars, Gingerbread, and many more.

I'd love to share one of my favorite recipes with you:

Spiced Butter Cookies

Ingredients for about 80 cookies

For the dough:

300g flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
75g sugar
3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground cloves
150g cold butter
3 egg yolks
2 tablespoons cream

For the glaze:

100g powdered sugar

For decoration:

Blanched almond halves or sugar sprinkles

1. Mix the flour with the baking powder, sugar, and spices. Cut the butter into small pieces and add it to the flour along with the egg yolks and cream. Knead all the ingredients together to form a smooth dough. Wrap the dough in cling film and refrigerate for about 30 minutes.

2. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Preheat the oven to 200°C. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the dough to about the thickness of the back edge of a knife (2 mm to 3 mm thick), cut out small cookies in various shapes, and place them on the baking sheet. Bake the cookies in the oven (middle rack) for about 10 minutes, until lightly browned. Let them cool on a wire rack.

3. Mix the powdered sugar with a little water or lemon juice and brush the cookies with it. Decorate each cookie with half an almond or sugar sprinkles.

Guten Appetit!

By the way, the Christmas market in Schongau takes place from 5th to 21st December 2025.

Doris Küter
Schongau

Picture in Abingdon Museum

Maggie Greaney has sent us an interesting post regarding a picture in Abingdon Museum. The picture by George Vicat Cole is on display on the top floor with the following information:

Study of S Helen's Church and St Helen's Wharf, by George Vicat Cole

George Vicat Cole (1833 -1893) was a Victorian landscape artist. He had no formal training in art but was tutored by his father, who was also an artist. His talent was recognised early, and he exhibited his first works in 1852. In 1853 he had two pictures accepted for the Royal Academy. As a youth he accompanied his father on sketching trips in this country and abroad. During his adult life he lived in London, but often spent summers in Surrey, where he sketched and painted the landscape.

In the 1880s and 1890s he was engaged in a project, commissioned by his dealer, to paint a series of pictures along the course of the Thames. He bought himself a steam launch and travelled in it on the river, stopping to paint where he fancied. He also used the boat for outings and picnics with friends. This picture of St Helen's Church and St Helen's Wharf, a preliminary study for a larger, finished painting, was created in the course of the Thames project. We can picture Vicat Cole, sitting on his steam boat, capturing the view across the river.

The Painting was a gift from Abingdon's Twin Town Sint-Niklaas to the Abingdon Church Twinning Group. Recently the Group transferred the painting to the museum, so it can be shown to the public and preserved for posterity.

Visitors from Lucca

At the end of November, we were pleased to welcome two visitors to Abingdon from Lucca, who came for a long weekend. They were Lavinia and Keti from the relatively new youth twinning group. Their hosts were Susan and Brian, with great logistical support from Elio.

On the Friday, Elio took them to the opening of a sustainable housing development. They were then welcomed by the mayor and were shown round the Guildhall. The afternoon brought a briefing on the One Planet Abingdon environmental initiative. Stella invited them to an early evening choir concert in an Oxford College.

Saturday started with a visit to the Christmas Market in St Helen's Church. Rain limited full appreciation of the town's Extravaganza, but our visitors watched the parade and enjoyed some activities in the Market Place such as the Morris Men and a jazz band. In the evening, after witnessing the switching on of the Christmas lights, Rosemary and Ian welcomed them to an Indian meal.

Sunday morning was an opportunity to experience the English style of bell ringing – rather different from how bells are rung at, for example, St Frediano's in Lucca. Then it was off to Oxford for an extensive walking tour of the city centre in beautiful sunshine. Highlights were visits to Blackwell's bookshop and the Ashmolean Museum.

Although it was only a short winter visit to Abingdon, Keti and Lavinia were kept busy each day and enjoyed a rewarding time.

Brian Read

From Siegfried Waterschoot in Sint-Niklaas

St. Nicolas stays put

Although I announced last year, with a lot of fuss, that the Holy Man would be evicted from his home, he is staying put where he has been for the last 22 years. The new city government has decided against the selling of the venue where the Holy Man's residence is. Instead, they are going to finance the cost of the much-needed restoration of the venue.

In the end, the moving of the house to the Castrohof proved a lot more daunting. What looked like a dream solution ended up in a nightmare. To transform a shell from the 17th century into a comfortable and practical living unit and headquarters in less than a year was a lot more than they could chew. So this, at first splendid, idea was abandoned.

So, in the end, St. Nicolas is more then happy to stay in his comfy residence hosting over 25,000 children each Christmas.

The St. Nicolas "throne room"

What's On in Abingdon in December

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

1st December *8:00 pm - 10:00 pm*	*Methodist Church Hall*	*Abingdon Astronomical Society* *Beginners Meeting* *All welcome. Meet at the Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, OX14, 2AH* *www.abingdonastro.org.uk*
2nd December *7:00 pm*	*Amey Theatre*	*NT-Live: The Fifth Step by David Ireland* *directed by Finn den Hertog* *Olivier Award-winner Jack Lowden (Slow Horses, Dunkirk) is joined by Emmy and BAFTA-winner Martin Freeman (The Hobbit, The Responder) in the critically acclaimed and subversively funny new play by David Ireland.* *After years in the 12-step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous, James becomes a sponsor to newcomer Luka. The pair bond over black coffee, trade stories and build a fragile friendship out of their shared experiences. But as Luka approaches step five – the moment of confession – dangerous truths emerge, threatening the trust on which both of their recoveries depend.* *Finn den Hertog directs the provocative and entertaining production filmed live from @sohoplace on London's West End. £13-£15 Duration: 100mins (tbc)*
4th December *2:00 pm – 4:00 pm*	*Hilton Garden Inn*	*Mayor's over-75s Christmas Party* *The Mayor's annual over-75s Christmas Party for Abingdon Residents. 4th December 2025 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Abingdon 14.00 – 16.00.* *Food. Entertainment. Raffle. Free tickets* *Tickets from Abingdon Town Council, Information Centre from* ***10 November*** *– open 10.00 – 16.00*
4th December *7:00 pm – 10:30 pm*	*Unicorn Theatre*	*Iota with support from Adam Cooney* *IOTA (Sally Barker, Anna Ryder & Marion Fleetwood) leaves audiences dazzled, with phrases such as 'luscious' and 'beautifully crafted' tripping off people's tongues at the end of a performance.* *Unicorn Theatre, Medieval Abbey Buildings, Checker Walk, Abingdon, OX14 3JB* *Tickets can be bought in person from:* *Frend & Co, 29 Broad St, Abingdon, OX14 3LH - £15* *TicketSource Link - £16.68 including booking fee* *WeGotTickets Link - Tickets £16.50 including booking fee*

5th December *7:00 pm – 11:00 pm*	*Harwell Village Hall*	*Rusty Shackle with support from Craig Joiner* *Rusty Shackle are a six-piece folk-rock band from South Wales.* *They have released five successful studio albums and are an experienced live band, playing festivals and venues around the world since 2010.* *Support from Craig Joiner. £10 -£19* *Doors and bar at 7pm, music at 7:40pm*
6th December *3:30 pm – 5:30 pm*	*St Helen's Church*	*Christmas Day with Abingdon Concert Band* *For this year's festive offering, we invite you to come and celebrate a traditional family Christmas with the Abingdon Concert Band musical family, lead by David Batsman, Musical Director.* *From your first Bucks Fizz to the last game of chess, the favourite Christmas films and televisions, and the necessary walking of the dog.* *Tickets £10/£8, under-12s free, available online or on the door.*
7th December *2:30 pm – 3:30 pm*	*St Helen's Church*	*Cinderella Suite and Mozart with Pavlova Winds* *Cinderella Suite Paul Reade* *Mozart wind quintet after the violin sonata K454* *NB 2.30pm start* *Pavlova Winds* *Jeremy Salter flute, Wendy Marks oboe, Barbara Stuart clarinet, Jenny Morgan horn, Simon Payne bassoon with Malcolm Pearce piano* *£12*
8th December *5:00 pm – 6:30 pm* *11th December* *1:30 pm – 3:00 pm*	*Abbey Cinema*	*RHINO – Eco-documentary* *Following our ongoing collaborations with One Planet Abingdon – and calling all eco-warriors, conservation activists, and anyone passionate about protecting our planet – RHINO is coming soon to The Abbey Cinema in Abingdon.* *This powerful and thought-provoking documentary explores the urgent global struggle to save one of the world's most endangered species.* *Join us for an inspiring screening that encourages discussion, awareness, and community action.* ***Venue:*** *The Abbey Cinema, Abingdon* ***Screening Dates:*** *17:00 MON 08 DEC and 13:30 THU 11 DEC* ***Tickets:*** *From £5.75 Available at www.theabbey.ac*
8th December *8:00 pm – 10:00 pm*	*Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent*	*Abingdon Astronomical Society* *Talk by Lucinda Offer (RAS Education & Outreach Officer) titled 'Sending Humans to Mars and the Mars Society'.* *Meet at the Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, OX14 2AH* *www.abingdonastro.org.uk*

10th December *7:15 pm*	*Amey Theatre*	*RBO Live: The Nutcracker* *The magician Herr Drosselmeyer needs to save his nephew. Hans-Peter has been transformed into a Nutcracker; the only way to save him is for the Nutcracker to defeat the Mouse King and find a girl to love and care for him.* *A flicker of hope comes in the form of the young Clara, whom Drosselmeyer meets at a Christmas party.* *With some magic, a cosy Christmas gathering turns into a marvellous adventure.* *Peter Wright's The Nutcracker has enchanted audiences since its 1984 premiere by the Company.* *Featuring Tchaikovsky's most familiar melodies and brought to life by Julia Trevelyan Oman's exquisite designs, The Nutcracker is sure to be a festive firecracker for all ages.* *This event will be streamed from the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. £14 - £16*
14th December *1:30 pm* *And* *4:00 pm*	*Amey Theatre*	The Snowman Live with Wantage Band Join the award winning, championship section Wantage Brass Band in a family Christmas concert featuring the best festive tunes to leave you feeling more Christmassy than ever before! The concert will centre around a performance of the soundtrack to the 1982 popular short film, The Snowman along to a screening of the film itself. This is a must see for Christmas 2025 and the band can't wait to welcome you to The Amey Theatre, Abingdon for this spectacular festive event! £10 - £15
20th December *4:30 pm – 6:30 pm*	*Market Place*	*Against Breast Cancer's Christmas Event* *Against Breast Cancer new Christmas Carols Celebration on Saturday 20th December, from 4:30–6:30pm in Abingdon Market Place.* *Carols by The Abingdon Rock Choir, mulled wine and mince pies, a memory tree to honour loved ones and a Christmas Card and handmade bauble stall.* *Come along and join us for free and let the Christmas celebrations begin.*
26th December *9:30 am - 12:30 pm*	*Market Place*	*MG Car Club Boxing Day Gathering* *The now traditional Boxing Day gathering of MGs will once again be taking place in the Market Place on Boxing Day morning.* *Arranged, with the co-operation of Abingdon Town Council, by the Abingdon Works Centre of the MG Car Club, the Club currently celebrating its 95th anniversary, this commemorates the world-renowned brand in its spiritual home, Abingdon.*
29th December *10:00 am – 2:00 pm*	*Abingdon Baptist Church*	*Christmas Fayre* *Come and enjoy a warm welcome at Abingdon Baptist Church, Ock Street with lots of gifts and fun.*

Twin Towns Calendar for 2025

Here is an incomplete list of the last few festivals in our twin towns that may be of interest to potential visitors during the remainder of 2025. Do now please tell us about all the major events for each twin town in 2026! Use the email link at the end of this Newsletter.

14th October - 14th December	*Thames, Coromandel Peninsula*	Coromandel Artbeat Spring Festival
Mid November - 6th December	*Sint-Niklaas*	Saint Nicolas House open
22nd November – 6th January	*Lucca*	Christmas Market
25th November – 29th December	*Colmar*	Christmas Market
December	*Sint-Niklaas*	Christmas Markets
5th – 21st December	*Schongau*	Christmas Market
19th – 21st December	*Argentan*	Christmas Market
Ongoing	*Lucca*	Calendar of Events

ADTTS Contacts

Chairman	*Membership*	*Treasurer*
Stella Carter	Rosemary Jardine	Susan Read
The Old Bakehouse 2 Winterbourne Rd		
Abingdon OX14 1AJ	80 Baker Road Abingdon OX14 5LJ	30 St Amand Drive Abingdon OX14 5RG
01235 520317	01235 539291	01235 529779
chairman@adtts.eu	membership@adtts.eu	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*. 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.