

September 2024 | No. 67

# Abingdon News



## On the right track

In July, ten silver level Duke of Edinburgh teams completed their assessed expedition to the Brecon Beacons. Conditions were mixed with the rain and low clouds making navigation on the last day a challenge. Many of the teams made it to the top of the highest mountain in Wales, Pen y Fan, at 886m giving them commanding views of the Brecon Beacons and surrounding countryside.

## Move to co-education

Renowned for high academic credentials, formidable cocurricular programmes, and a focus on individual care, the Abingdon Foundation continues to be both successful and oversubscribed with the number of pupils having increased by a quarter over the past 15 years. Much of this success is attributed to the delivery of a balanced education, which focuses as much on academics as the development of skills and character. In May 2024, the Abingdon Foundation announced its decision to move to co-education. In this interview, Head Mike Windsor explains more about the rationale behind the decision.



### Why co-education, why now?

“One of our main roles as educators is to ensure our pupils are ready for the world which awaits them. We’ve always worked hard to consider different ways to make sure our pupils are prepared for this. We want the education we deliver to be reflective of today’s modern society - one in which equal opportunity is promoted; and both girls and boys are as ambitious as each other; as well as being in control of their own future success. Our decision to move to co-education has been driven by the belief that the best way to provide diversity of perspective and life skills is to educate our young people alongside one another.

“We are really proud of what we offer through an Abingdon education - high academic achievement, formidable Other Half provision and strong individualised pastoral care - and we want to open that up to both girls and boys.”

### What impact do you believe the move to co-education will have?

“We see both girls and boys contributing to all aspects of school life and we do see a stronger, better Abingdon emerging as a result of this move. What we don’t see

changing are our core values: our promotion of intellectual curiosity, our commitment to an education that produces well rounded people with a variety of interests and our outstanding pastoral system that ensures all pupils are known individually and have the level of support and encouragement that will best serve them.”

### Do you see any challenges to integrating girls and boys?

“We take our responsibility for pastoral development very seriously - all our students are treated as individuals and all our staff are committed to ensuring this is the case. It is important to us that all pupils feel at home from day one. Many of my colleagues have taught in a number of different settings so we are fortunate that we have plenty of experience to draw upon. This in turn will help inform and guide our decision making as to what is needed to make this move a success - including a review of our curriculum (both academic and cocurricular), the structure of our day, training, changing rooms etc.”

### What is the timeline for the move to co-education?

“Abingdon Prep School will admit girls to its Pre-Prep from this September; and to Years 3 to 6 from September 2025. Abingdon Senior School will admit girls to its First Year (Year 7) and Sixth Form (Year 12) from September 2026.”



## Message from the Head

One thing we are inordinately proud of at Abingdon is the strong parental support which we enjoy. I'd like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all our parent associations - from the Hockey Griffens, the Rugby Touchliners, the rowing FASBC, the football Boot Room, the Music Society and formerly ASPA. The events they arrange for the mutual benefit of parents and students is greatly appreciated by the School and the summer term is, of course, an especially busy one for them all. It is a special time of the year, a time of endings and beginnings.



The Upper Sixth brought their time at Abingdon to an end following their A Levels with the Leavers' Ceremony and Service when we marked their collective contribution to the School with moving speeches as the departing Heads of School reflected upon their experiences and we enjoyed some wonderful music from a very talented year group. The Griffen Ball allowed students and parents to celebrate in style as they turn the pages to a fresh chapter in their lives. At the same time, we welcomed our new pupils for induction events so that they could begin to navigate their way around the school site and get to know one another. Their sense of excitement about starting at Abingdon was palpable and I look forward to welcoming them to the School in September.

This term has marked another important new beginning for the School with our announcement that we will be welcoming girls into the First Year and Lower Sixth from September 2026. Our preparations for this exciting new chapter in Abingdon's long history are well underway while we continue to focus on ensuring that our current pupils can benefit from an outstanding education. Exciting times lie ahead.



Five teams completed a gruelling Gold Duke of Edinburgh practice expedition in the final weekend of the Easter holidays. The teams coped well with the foul weather and very high winds. One team even managed to cross the Carneddau mountain range including Carnedd Uchaf at 925m. The teams then went on to successfully complete their Gold assessed expedition to the Rhinog mountains in June. They remained in good spirits as they navigated through this remote and challenging part of the Snowdonia national park. Congratulations to them all.



In June, some of our Lower Sixth Chemistry A Level students enjoyed a visit to the University of Southampton. They worked in the undergraduate teaching labs, where they used a rotary evaporator and successfully isolated some triglyceride, extracting it from nutmeg. This was confirmed by thin layer chromatography and by using melting point analysis. They were also shown around the chemical engineering lab, where they saw a bioreactor - a device which provides a controlled environment to cultivate products from plants, animals and bacteria. An informative day.

# Abingdon News



## Adventure in the air

Fifty three members of the First Year travelled to PGL Liddington during the Easter break for the annual adventure trip. Despite weather conditions that included snow, thunder and lightning, and plenty of rain, everyone enjoyed the wide range of activities on offer, developing their communication and teamwork skills. Highlights included the Giant Swing, Jacob's Ladder and Archery Tag.



## Canoes and all

A four day Duke of Edinburgh Gold canoeing practice expedition took place in April on the Oxford Canal and Kennet & Avon Canal. Participants learned how to paddle their canoes efficiently and work as a team to navigate locks and negotiate tricky waterways, all the while taking in the stunning scenery and wildlife that surrounded them. This was useful preparation for their final assessment expedition which took place on the River Wye in July.

## Highly thought provoking

In April, the Philosophy and Theology department welcomed Dr Baker-Hytch from Oxford University. His lecture on the 'Hiddenness of God' and how to respond to this issue from a theological and philosophical perspective, was well received. The students asked plenty of interesting questions and Dr Baker-Hytch remarked on the academic rigour they brought to the lecture.



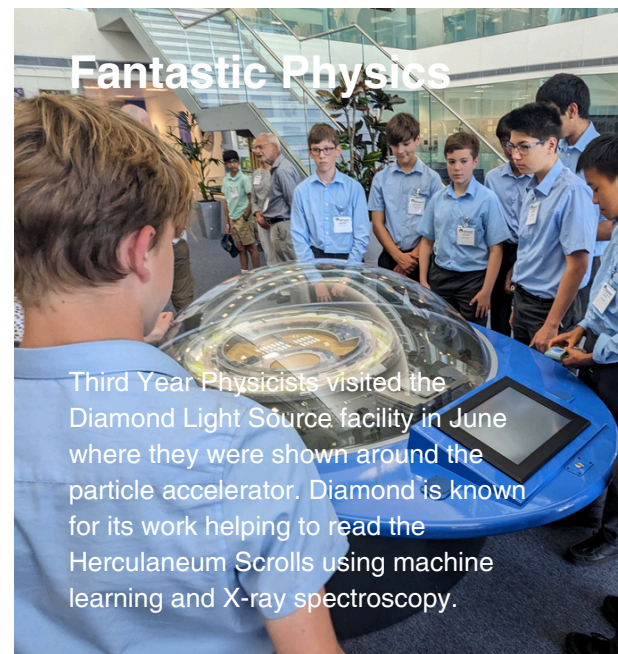
## Silversmithing

Mastering the skills involved in working with silver, Lower Sixth students Eric and Sasha pushed themselves to create this set cabochon stone ring and interlocking Russian wedding ring illustrated above.



## OxBright Essay winner

Many congratulations to Lower Sixth student, Philip, for winning the OxBright Essay competition (Geography category). He produced a well evidenced essay on 'How collaborative research by geographers can combat climate change'.



## Fantastic Physics

Third Year Physicists visited the Diamond Light Source facility in June where they were shown around the particle accelerator. Diamond is known for its work helping to read the Herculaneum Scrolls using machine learning and X-ray spectroscopy.



## Fun in France

Fourth Year students travelled to Lyon over the Easter break. They took part in language lessons and stayed with local families which helped them make progress with their French. Afternoons were spent exploring the many sites around the city including the Fourvière, the famous Traboules in Vieux Lyon and the Olympique Lyonnais football stadium. It was a great trip, thoroughly enjoyed by all.



## Marketing in Marcham

Lower Sixth business students Oliver and Max have completed a marketing project for Marcham Community Centre. Taking into account the challenges faced by the Centre, they devised a comprehensive marketing strategy aimed at maximising the Centre's potential, boosting revenue and ensuring its sustainability going forward. Jim Asher, Trustee Director and Chairman of Marcham Community Group, said: "Having Abingdon School involved with our local community facility project has given us much to consider as part of our long term planning. Great work, much appreciated by all."

## Battlefields trip

On 10 April, Fifty one students and five members of staff visited the Battlefields of the First World War. Accompanied by two guides from Anglia Battlefields Tours, the various sites were brought to life and really helped the students understand the war. Highlights included the chance for two students to visit family gravestones, paying respects to OA's at Pozieres Cemetery on the Somme and laying a wreath at Tyne Cot Cemetery on the final day. It was a very successful trip.



## Community service tea party

Our community service volunteers have been getting to know some of our local residents throughout the course of the year and, in July, were delighted to welcome them into School for a lovely afternoon tea. Held in the dining room, our Third and Fourth Years and Sixth Formers served strawberries, sandwiches and cakes amidst some lovely piano playing by Thomas and Richard.



## Team building in the Brecon Beacons

Thirty eight members of the Second Year spent the final week of the Easter break exploring the Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales. Under the expert instruction of staff from Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre, they went caving, climbing, canoeing and kayaking, and mountain walking, as well as tackling a gorge walk on the final morning where they walked under waterfalls and slid down riverbeds. A great time was had by all with everyone ending the trip feeling that they had been challenged to push themselves physically, while enjoying the company of their friends in beautiful surroundings.

# Abingdon 2024 Leavers



On 10 May, we bid farewell to our Upper Sixth students and welcomed them into the Old Abingdonian Club. To mark the milestone, yearbooks were handed out and a special graduation ceremony was held in the Amey Theatre followed by a final photo of the entire year group. The morning was rounded off with ice-creams on Upper Field, a service of reflection with rousing hymns in the Chapel and a delicious barbecue lunch before all then departed.



## 2024 Results

Michael Windsor, Head, said of the results: "I'd like to congratulate all our Upper Sixth leavers and our Fifth formers on these excellent results which are a testament both to their hard work over the past couple of years; and to the dedication of our staff who have supported them along the way.

"Our students can take pride in their achievements and, whatever their next steps, I know they will show the same aptitude and high level of commitment to them as they have shown in their recent exams."



### A Levels

Grade	A Level passes
A* and A	68.8%
A* to B	89.2%
A* to C	96.7%

43.7% of students achieved A grade or above in all their subjects, with 21 students achieving straight A\*'s.

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)	
A* to B	96.6%

### GCSEs

Grade	GCSE passes
9	43.8%
9 and 8	69.8%
9 to 7	85.7%
9 to 4	99.7%

### Leavers' Ceremony

We were delighted to welcome our Upper Sixth leavers back to School on Saturday 25 June for the Leavers' Ceremony and Prize Giving.

The morning started with a Service in St Michael and All Angels' Church and was followed by the Prize Giving Ceremony in the Amey Theatre.

Parents and students then celebrated together in Lacies Court Garden.

This was followed, a week later, by the Griffen Ball which took place on Saturday 29 June. Staff, students and their parents enjoyed a delicious supper, listened to a live band, had the opportunity to dance or, if preferred, have a go on the dodgems. Everyone seemed to have a ball!



Visit to Caerleon

In May, Second Year pupils visited the remains of Isca Silurum Roman fort in the modern town of Caerleon. They explored the impressive amphitheatre and learned about everyday life for the soldiers.



## First Year Trip to Hengistbury Head

Geography students from our First Year enjoyed a visit to Hengistbury Head on the south coast in May. They conducted some coastal fieldwork and discussed the importance of the coastal defences along the beaches to combat longshore drift. Finishing the day with an ice-cream on the beach was probably their favourite bit!



Joint thinking supper

In May, the last joint thinking supper of the academic year took place. Lower School academic award holders and pupils from St Helen and St Katharine had to work out the lowest possible speed a model car on a Hot Wheels Track can complete a full loop-the-loop. Congratulations to Alex and Rafiq who were part of the winning team.



Bonne chance!

In the weeks leading up to half term, Upper Sixth linguists enjoyed farewell dinners in restaurants in Oxford and Abingdon. It was a great opportunity to congratulate them on their hard work and to celebrate their achievements. We wish them all the best of luck for their futures.

## Spirit of adventure

Over a hundred students completed their Bronze expedition to the Wiltshire Downs in June. The conditions were perfect for hiking with cool temperatures and excellent visibility. The challenge was tackled in good spirits and students enjoyed seeing neolithic monuments at Avebury and famous white horse hill figures.





## Sporting fun

In May, Lower School tutor groups faced each other across the table tennis table and in water polo for some sporty inter-tutor group competition. 1V won both pursuits, with 2M and 2P overall winners for water polo and table tennis respectively.



## Raising funds for Moldova

The Sixth Formers taking part in this year's Moldova Project trip in the summer holiday undertook a sponsored challenge one weekend in May to raise funds for our partner charity Agape. Using equipment in the Sports Centre they travelled a collective distance of 398km, the distance that the River Dniester flows through Moldova. It was a great example of teamwork.



## Feeling sporty

The bright sunshine at end of April allowed the Lower School Assistants to spend lunchtime organising lots of different outdoor sports and games for the younger pupils. These included kwikcricket, frisbee, spikeball and molky, a Finnish throwing game. Everyone had a really good time.

## A big hit with borders

A group of eighteen boarders spent an exciting day at the Oxfordshire Shooting School to take part in a number of activities, including archery, air rifle shooting and clay shooting. One highlight was the chance to shoot a 19th century muzzle loading hammer gun, giving a glimpse into historical firearms. The students enjoyed the hands-on experience and the chance to learn new skills in a safe and controlled environment. To give an element of friendly competition, the scores over the day were added up with Clement emerging the winner. He was presented with a commemorative hat, marking his achievement.





## Needing to cool off

There's nothing like a good old fashioned water fight to let students blow off some steam and so it was on a warm Saturday evening that the perfect opportunity arose for Austin House boarders to test out the new water cannons.



## Sustainability takes centre stage

In Mandarin, sustainability and fashion came together as Third Year students designed unique outfits using recyclable materials. With creativity and environmental consciousness in mind, they confidently showcased their creations in a mini fashion show conducted in Mandarin. Then they transformed their experience into high-standard news reports.



## BMX

In June, Lower School enjoyed workshops with former BMX World Champion Mike Mullen. He skilfully led the sessions, gradually building up the complexity of the tricks, and, by the end of their hour with him, everyone was completing stunts that initially seemed impossible. It really was an amazing two days of the Be More Griffen spirit fully on display.



## James and the Giant Peach

This year's Lower School Production was performed for two nights in the Amey Theatre by First and Second Year pupils. The audience was transported on a magical journey with James and his weird and wonderful friends as they set off inside a peach on an extraordinary adventure. The Director said: "The rehearsal process was nothing short of a whirlwind of laughter, chaos, the occasional foghorn, singing, flying and metamorphosing! The cast worked tirelessly on bringing the production together and demonstrated a remarkable commitment - I could not be prouder of them. Very many thanks to all who came to support the performance.'



## Sustainability Day

On 20 May, Third Years took part in a Sustainability Day. One Planet Abingdon and Enso Energy gave a talk; students were shown the biodiversity sites around the School; Lower Sixth Psychology students led sessions on techniques to encourage behavioural change and there were activities on how sustainability could be improved.



## Warhammer

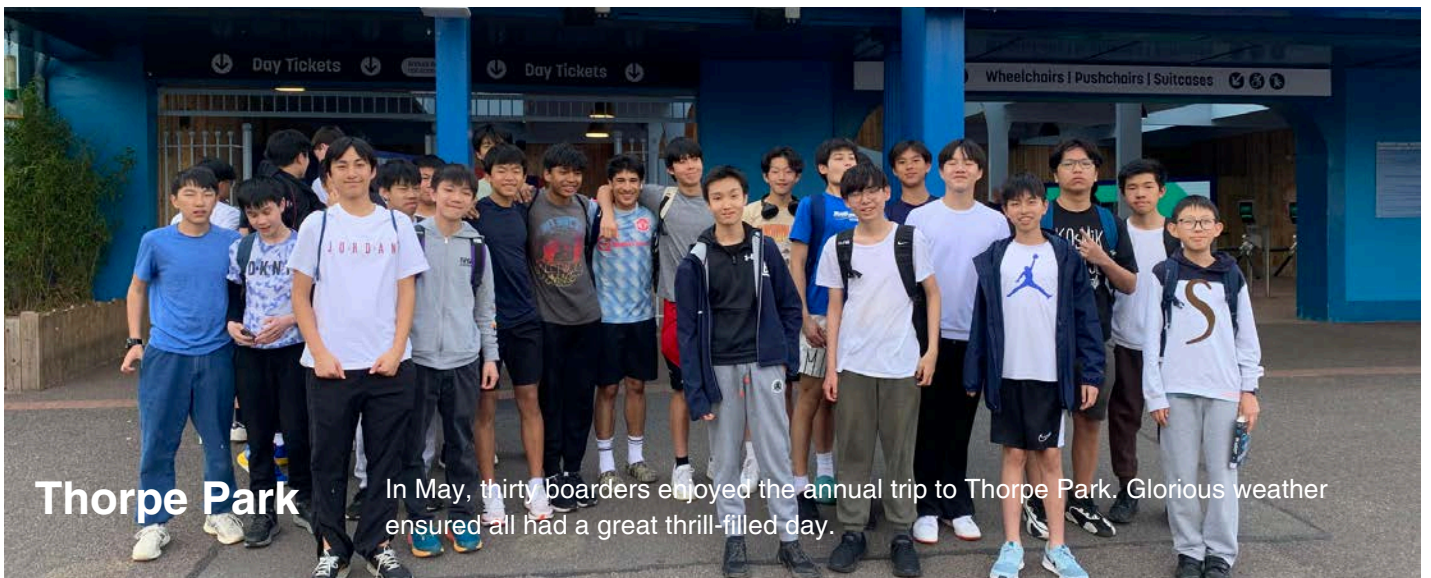
Members of the Lower School Warhammer Club have been painting a range of miniatures this term and the results were judged by Mr Price. There were several high quality entries but the trophy went to Mark for his space marine model.



## Thank you or well done

To build on the recent visit by the I Can and I Am bus during which Lower School talked about keeping their balloons of self-belief inflated, a new system has been introduced to the Houseroom to enable the pupils to send postcard messages to each other to say "thank you" or "well done" for something.

Some of the Lower School prefects opened the box in which the messages had been posted and took responsibility for delivering them to the recipients.



## Thorpe Park

In May, thirty boarders enjoyed the annual trip to Thorpe Park. Glorious weather ensured all had a great thrill-filled day.



On a sunny Friday April evening, the students from School House enjoyed a football and pizza social on the MUSA. This is an annual event which, this year, was enjoyed by over sixty students. It was a perfect way to relax at the end of a busy week and bid good luck to Fifth Year and Upper Sixth students as they prepared to go on exam leave.



Nineteen groups completed a challenging Bronze Award training expedition in April. It proved to be a steep learning curve but good preparation for the assessed expedition to the Marlborough Downs later in the term.



Quinn, David and Ben travelled to the regional finals of the Modern Foreign Language spelling bee at Southampton University on 2 May. They valiantly spelled away in German with the clock ticking. Congratulations to them all and especially to David who secured a spot in the final which took place on 1 July in Cambridge.



## Scholarly learnings

In June, Fourth Year scholar's visited the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, where they looked around the world famous Mary Rose, had a boat trip around the harbour and toured Nelson's flagship HMS Victory. Everyone enjoyed the day.



## House challenge

The House challenge is a general knowledge competition based on the long running TV series University Challenge. Throughout the competition the standard was very high and, following some tense knockout matches, the two teams left standing were Stockdale's and O'Doherty's. Halfway through the final the scores were level but, following some high scoring sets of bonus questions, Stockdale's ended up winning by 22 to 10. Congratulations to them.



## Big Paddle Clean Up

In June, two teams of Fourth Year students completed their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh assessment expedition on the River Medway, Kent. The many canoe shoots provided great excitement (except perhaps for the pair who capsized and had to be swiftly and safely rescued). Both groups then participated in Paddle UK's Big Paddle Clean Up where they litter-picked nearly 30km of the stretch. Well done all.



## Leadership afternoon

On 24 May, our Fifth Year students participated in an afternoon designed to enhance their understanding and application of leadership skills. Students were divided into groups and took part in a number of activities. These included decision-making and organisational tasks, public speaking and teamwork exercises. Each challenge was specifically designed to improve different aspects of leadership, helping to build confidence and learn how to lead and collaborate effectively with others.

## 1563 and all that!



Following an excellent introductory talk from School archivist Mrs Wearne, the First Years spent a June afternoon on a walk into town to visit sites connected with the history of Abingdon School, including the old schoolroom, St Helen's and St Nicolas' Churches and Abingdon Museum. They now know why 1563 is such a significant date for Abingdon School and why we spell Griffen with an "e"!

# Abingdon News



## Ideas bearing fruit

In June, Mike Windsor broke the ground as we joined the Boarding Schools Association (BSA) Orchard project. The initiative set up in 2014 is supported worldwide by over a hundred boarding schools. It seeks to raise environmental awareness by encouraging students to plant fruit trees and today it is the largest global orchard by distance.



## Une vie de Chat

A group of keen Lower School linguists enjoyed a screening of the Oscar nominated animation *Une Vie de Chat* in June. Pupils really enjoyed how the film was both moving and humorous and found it helpful in being able to extend their knowledge by learning some new French expressions as well.



## Pool tournament

The annual Lower School pool tournament culminated in the Grand Final, held in June. First Year winner Fergus took on Second Year champion Nadim in what was a very tense and nervous match. Nadim took an early lead managing to hold on to the overall Lower School crown.



## Stock pitch competition

On 14 June, the Abingdon School Investment Trading Club hosted a stock pitch competition. Over twenty five students pitched their proposed 'Best Stock to buy' to a team of expert judges. The winners were Chetwin and Ryan (both Fourth Year), who each won a £50 Amazon voucher. Congratulations also to Clement and Luke in the Lower Sixth who were runners up. Well done to all who took part and many thanks to student organisers, Dylan and Gordey.



## Engineering visit to London

In June, 18 Lower Sixth prospective engineers travelled to London to visit Kirkaldy Testing Works. They saw vintage testing machines, measured Young's modulus of materials, Measured hardness of steel with Brinell's hardness tester as well as the dynamic pendulum measuring toughness of samples. After lunch, they examined the Millennium Bridge looking at the retro-fitted dampers that cured its resonance problems.



## Recycling champions

Our Eco Committee has been busy encouraging fellow students and staff to recycle empty pill packets this term. To date, they've collected over 3,500 blister packs. These have to be recycled separately to other recyclable waste. By collecting them and taking them to the local pharmacist, our students have managed to recycle 7kg worth which might otherwise have gone to landfill. Now that's really something to be proud of.



In June, Geography A Level students collected the necessary data for the completion of their projects. Human geographers visited Wrexham and Birmingham; with physical geographers heading to Llangollen scree slopes, Criccieth beach and Harlech sand dunes. Everyone enjoyed a trip up the Nant Ffrancon Valley to see some spectacular glacial landforms left after the last glacial maximum 25,000 years ago.



## Parent quiz

On 10 May, ASPA hosted a parents quiz night in the School pavilion for some quizzical and competitive fun. With five teams in attendance, it was described by one of the guests as "the best quiz I've ever attended".

## Dragon boat festival



Fourth Year students joined in the celebrations of this traditional Chinese festival in June. Working alongside students from St Helen and St Katharine, they participated in cultural and linguistic quizzes; crafted their own dragon boats; took part in Pitch Pot - a game dating back over 2,000 years; and made the traditional food Zongzi. It was an afternoon which blended history and culture in a modern day context.

## Let's debate



Lower School pupils from Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine enjoyed meeting up for a joint debate on the evening of 24 June. The proposal that community service should be compulsory was proposed by Abingdon. After excellent speeches on both sides, and some interesting points from the floor, it was narrowly defeated. A quick balloon debate in which everyone had to argue why a randomly assigned piece of clothing was indispensable followed and the evening concluded with a barbecue.

# Abingdon News



At the start of the holidays, fifteen Sixth Formers and two members of staff travelled to Moldova and Romania where they organised summer camps with a wide range of activities for local children. One Sixth Former said: "The experience massively surpassed my expectations. Saying goodbye was very emotional on all sides, but it allowed me to really put into perspective how much of an impact these children have had on my life as well as on everyone else's in the group."



## Try this on for (cap)size?

Over four days towards the end of term, eight Lower Sixth students completed their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Canoeing Assessment Expedition. Starting at Abingdon's boathouse with a quick capsize and rescue refresher (a prudent move in hindsight as one pair did capsize on day one but didn't let it dampen their spirits!), the main expedition began at Locksters Pool, Herefordshire. Students paddled the River Wye for approximately 110km via Bycross Farm (where they stopped to watch the England football match), Lucksall Park, Ross-on-Wye Rowing Club ending in Monmouth, Wales. The record breaking team started their final day at 4.25am to ensure they would see a (damp) sunrise and finish the day by 10am! They all passed with flying colours.

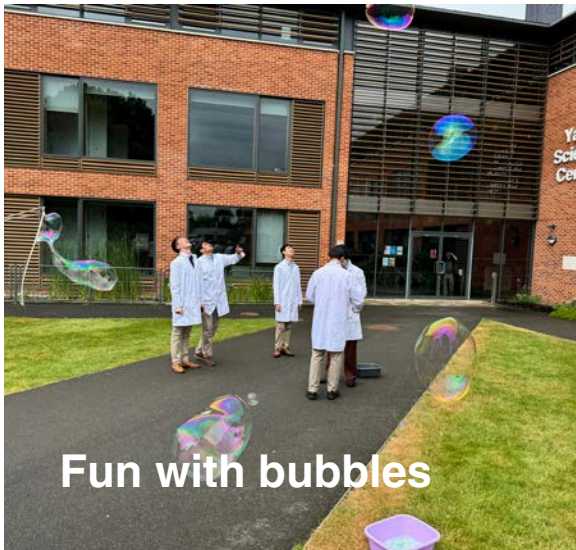


Lower School pupils and their parents gathered in the Amey Theatre on 2 July for the end of year Be More Griffen celebration. After an excellent talk from adventurer chef Mike Keen on his time in Greenland exploring the impact of climate change while eating an Inuit diet, the end of term prizes were handed out. Presentations from each of the Second Year tutor groups followed, including an imaginative formation of the GRIFFEN from 2P, and a photo montage celebrating their two years together - we wish them well as they move into Middle School.



On 4 July, our student led DEI committee hosted 'Culture Day' - a day in which individuality was celebrated. Students enjoyed a barbecue lunch and came to school dressed in clothes they felt helped to identify them as an individual - whether that was a favourite football shirt or traditional dress.





## Fun with bubbles

Lower Sixth chemists have been exploring the intermolecular forces that create bubbles holding an impressive exhibition at the end of term to showcase the science behind giant bubbles.



## Pulling their weight

Tug of war, tennis, biathlon, swimming, cricket, countdown and reading were amongst the challenges in the Lower School inter-tutor competition at the end of term. First places were awarded to 1G and 2P - congratulations to them.



## Biology field trip to Mexico

Twenty eight students visited Mexico in July surveying wildlife to add to a biodiversity study and completing a tropical marine ecology course.



## Thank you SUS

The Second-Hand Uniform Shop (SUS) gave a generous donation of £1,000 to each House at the start of the academic year. Lower School has used this money to buy a blu-ray player, a set of chess clocks, new magazine racks and wall decals for the reading corner, a book stand to allow tutor groups to take it in turns to recommend their top five reads, and a set of cameras that will be used to set up a new photography club next term and taken out on Lower School trips. Lower School pupils are very grateful to SUS for enabling them to improve their facilities in this way. Thank you SUS.

## Shining in journalism

In July, The Martlet team attended The Shine Media Awards in London. This national competition for student newspapers was judged by a panel of industry experts including editors at the Daily Mail, Independent and ITN. The team were highly commended in the Best Newspaper and Best Front Cover categories and won Best Print Publication. 2024/25 editor, Tristan, also won Writer of the Year Non-Fiction and Scoop of the Year. His interview with a young asylum seeker facing deportation was described as 'Boundary-breaking and powerful.' Well done all.

# Abingdon Music



## Evensong at Winchester Cathedral

On 15 May, the Chapel Choir sang evensong at Winchester Cathedral. Following a brief tour of the magnificent 14th century Cathedral and a rehearsal in the Quire, the Choir opened the service with *Ayleward Responses*, then singing the Psalm with great clarity and diction. *Wood in Eb, No. 2* were the chosen canticles for the service whilst the Choir sang Ireland's *Greater love hath no man* with wonderful intensity and nuance. A special mention to Luca (Second Year) and Ed (Upper Sixth) for their solos.



Our first Piano Extravaganza was held in June. Over fifty pianists showcased a wide variety of repertoire over the course of the afternoon, before embarking on an evening of music making. This featured solos, duets and multiple pianists. The evening ended with eighteen pianists and thirty six hands playing *Thunderbirds* on six pianos, entralling the audience. A fun evening for all.

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On 14 May, four of our advanced clarinet pupils had masterclasses with one of the UK's leading clarinetists.

Peter Sparks is co-principal clarinetist of the English National Opera and professor at the Royal College of Music. He gave Adam, Jerry, Hayden and Anson invaluable advice both about the repertoire they each performed and also on how to treat their instruments and reeds better, in order to improve their sound. He even gave a demonstration on how to flatten the reeds against a window. He involved the audience as well and it was impressive to see how each student improved throughout their lesson.



## Don't miss a beat

Lower School gathered in the Amey Theatre for the annual inter-tutor group music competition in May. A high level of musicianship was shown by all six groups which saw the pupils sing, conduct and play along to their chosen piece. Mr Stafford had a difficult job as judge, but awarded the cup to 2P for their rendition of *Save Your Tears* by The Weeknd. Well done to all.

# Abingdon Music



Anything but classical

On a warm June evening, as the school term drew to a close, staff and students gathered outside Big School for a vibrant musical celebration that embraced everything and anything that isn't classical. The event featured an impressive lineup of soloists and bands from Abingdon and some of our partnership schools, each showcasing a variety of performances. The talent on display covered everything from The Beatles and Taylor Swift, to original songs by the students. There was certainly something for everyone.



## The Summer Concert

The Summer Concert this year took on a clear theme, 'A Night at the Movies'. As such, each ensemble focused their repertoire on film scores from a variety of memorable and iconic films with some others more off the beaten track.

Each piece accompanied extracts from the relevant film projected up onto the big screen in the Amey Theatre. The students have really enjoyed getting stuck into this repertoire this term which was apparent in the many accomplished and exuberant performances we heard during the concert. Well done to all involved.



## Harry the Piano

In May, Harry the Piano gave a series of masterclasses and workshops followed by a fantastic evening concert. Pupils from the Prep and Senior Schools enjoyed a session on harmony and improvisation, with the opportunity to perform alongside Harry in the afternoon to learn the technique of improvisation. Harry's evening performance was simply awe-inspiring with Anson, Samuel, Thomas and Harrison performing alongside him at the concert.

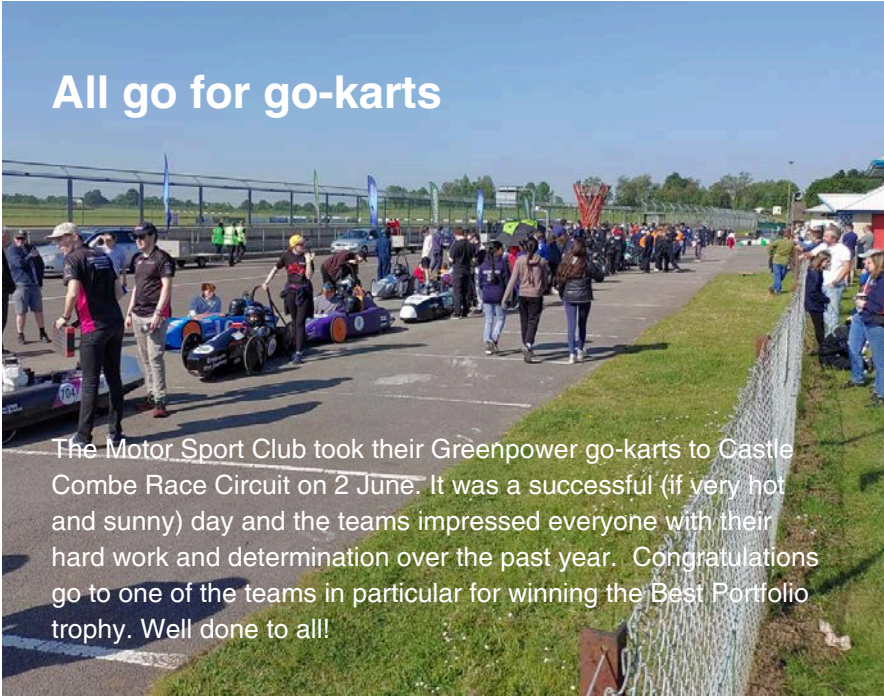


## Singers' platform

Maintaining the tradition of hosting a Singers' Concert each term, our solo vocalists took the stage in the Ingham Room on 20 May. The performance showcased a diverse repertoire, spanning from Handel to Romantic songs, musical theatre and jazz, presented by students from the First Year to the Sixth Form and included a surprise performance from a member of staff. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

# Abingdon School in Partnership

## All go for go-karts



The Motor Sport Club took their Greenpower go-karts to Castle Combe Race Circuit on 2 June. It was a successful (if very hot and sunny) day and the teams impressed everyone with their hard work and determination over the past year. Congratulations go to one of the teams in particular for winning the Best Portfolio trophy. Well done to all!

## Model United Nations



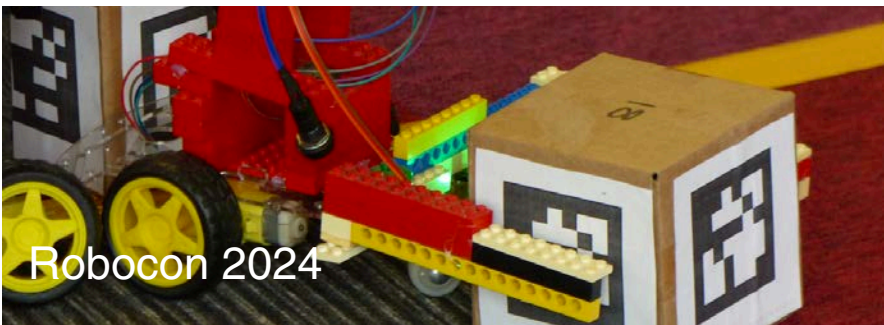
The OX14 MUN conference, held on 2 July saw forty students (including from Kingswood in Bath) to discuss topics ranging from tackling modern slavery; the Yemeni civil war; and the grand Ethiopian renaissance dam.

## ChallengED

On 30 April, over a hundred students participated in a number of collaborative and challenging tasks at a ChallengED event hosted by Larkmead School. The morning was made up of two IBrick challenges which involved designing and testing two brick builds with a focus on teamwork and engineering. Mixed school groups encouraged students to meet new people and take on different roles within their teams.



In July, Year 10 students from five schools enjoyed an exciting practical challenge - to make a clock reaction change colour precisely within 20 seconds. Meanwhile, their Year 9 counterparts researched the Chemistry Nobel Prize, later presenting their findings. What a great way to collaborate and learn together.



## Robocon 2024

In March, students from across the county came together for the Oxfordshire RoboCon finals. Since November, teams have worked to design, build, programme and test their robots and now came the test; how would they perform? Assisted by students from Abingdon who were running the competition, the day was a great opportunity to showcase key engineering skills. Congratulations to all who took part and especially to the winners, Gosford Hill.

## Let's communicate

In May, we welcomed fifty primary school pupils to our Let's Communicate event. They participated in workshops on body language, sign language, Mandarin, German and Italian. Several sessions were run entirely by our student language leaders who were impressed by the primary school pupils' enthusiasm and confidence. In turn, the pupils gave really positive feedback and had a fun day.

# Abingdon School in Partnership



In June, Partnerships hosted an event which focused on five ways to support wellbeing. Over a hundred students from six local schools gathered for a day of collaborative wellbeing workshops and presentations from staff and students. Yoga, crafts and conversations about loneliness were some of the topics covered.



In May, Josh Smalley shed light on the precision and creativity required in baking. Delving into the chemical intricacies of chocolate and caramel, he revealed the alchemy which transforms raw ingredients into spectacular bakes - inspiring interest in both cooking and science from the students.



## It's all in the maths

In April, we welcomed fifty students from seven schools across the county into Abingdon to take part in the live international Naborj Maths Competition. Over the course of two hours, teams were challenged on increasingly difficult questions watching as their scores were recorded against others from across the globe. Well done to all involved and especially to Fitzharrys School who were the proud winners.



## Clubbing together

Our Primary Partnerships club developed a brand new STEM / Construction club for Year 1 pupils at Rush Common Primary School this term. Encouraging the children to think and learn, activities included fun with magnets, making paper aeroplanes, bridge building and Lego marble runs. It was fun and rewarding for all.

We'd like to thank our 2023/24 Peer Support Leads (PSLs) for all they have contributed towards this year. They have offered invaluable support to younger peers from across our Partnership schools, whilst developing their own leadership, listening and empathy skills. We would also like to extend a warm welcome to our 2024/25 PSLs, each of whom had to pass a rigorous application and interview process. They embarked on their first training session on 18 June where they met other PSLs from across the OX14 Partnership and learned about the role and skills they would need to employ; as well as exploring the importance of safeguarding. Congratulations and good luck.

# Abingdon Sport

## Tennis

It's been a strong term for our senior tennis team. Not only have they reached the 3rd round of the National Cup but our U15s have been particularly successful comfortably winning the Oxfordshire league by a net score of 17 sets for and just 1 against, qualifying them for the regional knockout rounds next term. They have also won the OXIST competition and the U15A team reached the semi-final of the Eton Junior Pairs competition. It was also pleasing to see such strength in depth with our U15B team drawing with Bradfield's U15A and beating Radley's U15A. The U14s and Lower School players continue to improve. We finished the season with strong performances at the MCS tennis festival with Ollie winning the plate and Cyrus winning the final 6-0 6-0; and in the ISTA National Championships, both our U15 pairs reached the final sixteen of the competition.



## A good shot

Congratulations to Will who was selected to represent Great Britain in the U21 category at the Junior Shooting World Cup which took place in Italy in July. Will's recent achievement at a domestic competition, where he hit 115 out of 125 clays, means he's also qualified to represent Great Britain at the ISSF Junior World Championships this September in Peru and we wish him the best of luck.



## Swimming gala

On 18 June, students took part in a swimming gala at Radley. With many of our swimmers on study leave, it was an opportunity for some of our younger and non-club swimmers to shine. The Abingdon team certainly stepped up, winning almost every race and dominating the event. Exceptional performances from Second Years Kaan and James helped score points against much older opposition. The ever mercurial Fourth Year, Jose continued to dominate the 50m butterfly and freestyle events. Justin provided some blazingly fast relay legs and outstanding individual performances to help seal the win. Third Year Luca was equally outstanding in his races and barely rattled against Radley's Sixth Form. He will go on to compete in the British Nationals at Ponds Forge in Sheffield this summer in multiple events, racing against the best in Britain in his age group. Well done to all those who took part.

## Marlow Regatta



On 22 June, the boat club raced at Dorney Lake for the last multi-lane competition of the year. For the senior crews this was the last race in preparation for Henley Regatta at the end of term. Glorious weather provided fast conditions and our crews performed well with the J14s finishing 2nd in the octo and the J16s finishing 3rd in the eights (unofficially setting an Abingdon record of 6:07.6 by a J16 crew).



## National Hockey U16 Plate Final

The U16s capped off a successful season with a trip to the Lee Valley Hockey Centre to play against Bedford School in the Plate final. After a terrific start, Abingdon took the lead through a goal from Casper. Bedford rallied and equalised before half time. Towards the end of a close second half, Bedford scored again and, despite sustained late pressure and a couple of great opportunities, Abingdon couldn't find the equaliser and eventually lost 2-1.



## Radley Relays

On 25 April the athletics club took part in their first event of the season - The Radley Relays - which enabled students throughout all year groups to take part. Overall the event was a huge success with several teams winning their respective relays, with Abingdon winning the final three medley races putting us in 1st place.



## Hockey hotshots

Congratulations to Second Years Charlie, Euan and Charlie who played in the England Hockey U13s Tier 2 final in April with their home club, Wallingford Wildcats. After an unbeaten season, they came up against a tough Folkestone side in the final and did not quite secure a win, but they can be very proud of themselves for winning silver medals.

# Abingdon Sport



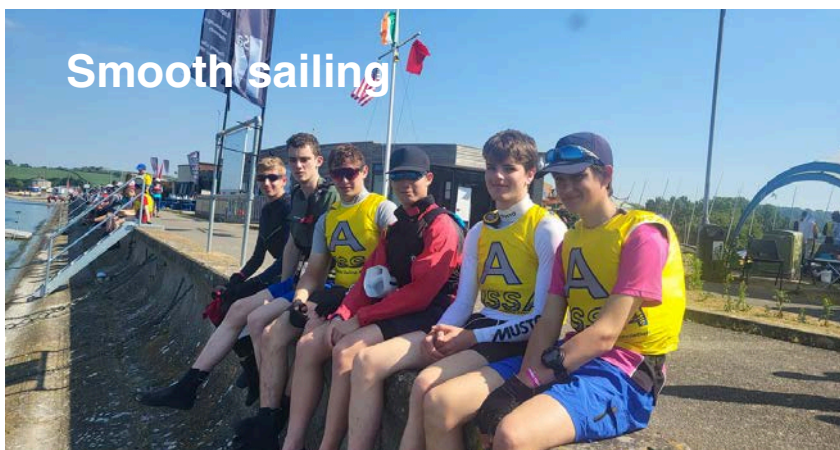
**U12 Country Cricket Champions**

Following a convincing win over MCS in the semi-final of the County Cup in June, the final against Lord Williams' School proved much tighter. Abingdon fielded first with some excellent bowling restricting Lord Williams' to 76 for 7 from their 20 overs with the wickets shared between Thomas (2), Arjun (2) and George, Samuel and Toby (1 a piece). George got the reply off to a positive start scoring 18 off the first 7 balls, but a flurry of wickets found the team in a precarious position at 41 for 6 and then 55 for 7. Arjun, coming in at number 9 to join Thomas, looked to be guiding the team over the line, only to be bowled with 2 runs still required. Number 10 then followed next ball but Toby resolutely defended the remaining deliveries in the over before Thomas capped off a man of the match performance by hitting the winning runs to secure the narrowest of victories. The team now progress into the Regional rounds next year as U13s. We are so proud of them.



## Healthy competition

Lower School enjoyed an afternoon of athletic endeavour at Tilsley Park in the annual inter-tutor group competition. Congratulations to all who took part and to 2M and 1H who were the individual winners.



**Smooth sailing**

Congratulations to our Firefly team who finished 12th in the BSDRA finals regatta at Farmoor reservoir on 26 and 27 June. Given our varied programme focuses on single handed lasers and double handed trapeze sailing, this is an impressive result. Our sailors had limited time to train on fireflies and learn the team racing format. We were pitched against schools who train exclusively in fireflies and had a difficult draw against teams who ended up in 2nd and 3rd position.



**Wimbledon anyone?**

Congratulations to Second Year Cyrus who has won the Play Your Way to Wimbledon U14 County Finals. As a result, he represented Oxfordshire for the second consecutive year in the National Finals this summer, competing against other county winners from across the country.





## Focus and commitment

At the start of the half term break, eleven crews from J14 up to J18 travelled to Dorney Lake for the National Schools Regatta. One of the highlights of the season, it provided fierce competition and super tight racing. With some really good performances, the standout results went to the Fourth Years who came home with bronze medals in both the J15 1st and 2nd eights events, placing them top three in the country. Our first eight went on to qualify for the Henley Royal Regatta in July, making it through two days of races - much to the delight of Abingdon spectators.



## Stronghold Climbing Competition

On 26 June, ten Abingdon students travelled to Tottenham Hale to compete in a bouldering competition at the Stronghold Climbing Centre, alongside participants from five other schools. Despite facing very hot conditions, the students eagerly tackled twenty challenging boulder problems within a two hour window. Their perseverance paid off, securing five out of the six possible male podium spots.

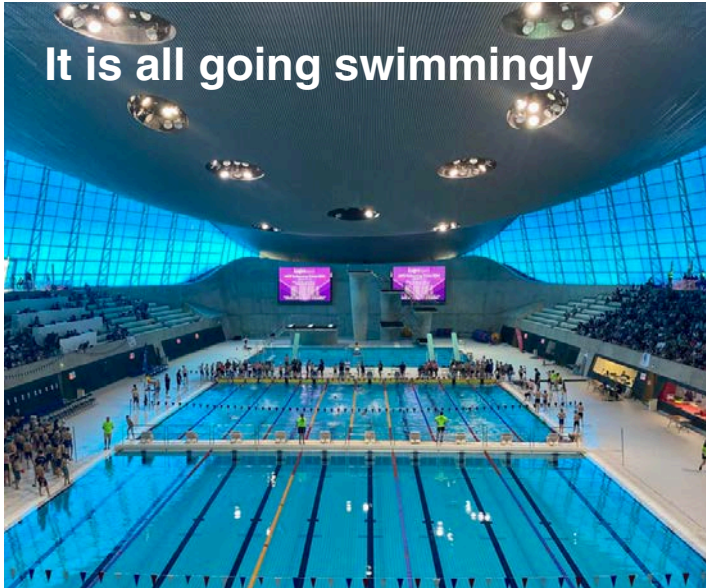
In the Junior category, George (Fourth Year) placed 3rd, George (Third Year) secured 2nd, and Daniel (Fourth Year) triumphed with 1st place by impressively flashing all twenty problems. In the Senior category, Alexander and Jay (Upper Sixth) achieved 3rd and 1st respectively. A huge congratulations to all the competitors for their outstanding performances.

## Bashing the competition



Basher provided great practice for our crews in April. Racing was done over a time trial, followed by side by side semi-finals and finals. Meanwhile, six of our 1st eight took part in the GB Small Boats Regatta in Nottingham, where they finished 9th, 31st and 33rd.

# Abingdon Prep



## It is all going swimmingly

Eight pupils had a fantastic day at the National IAPS Swimming Finals, with the U12s and U13s finishing in 13th and 15th place respectively. There were great individual performances with Satoshi coming 5th in the final of the U13 50m butterfly; and Leone placed 6th in the U12 50m.



## Parents Careers Afternoon

On Thursday 27 June, twelve parents from a broad range of careers came into School to present to Year 8 pupils and to answer questions about their individual professions. The pupils enjoyed finding out about parent's working lives and took great inspiration from the afternoon.



## Getting back to nature

Year 6 enjoyed three days away at a wilderness residential run by The Bushcraft Company in June. From creating their first campfires and cooking their own burgers, to camouflage, concealment and games in the woods, the experience proved to be both stimulating and enjoyable.

With the option of creating and sleeping in a den overnight, many took the opportunity to take on the elements and spent time with friends under the cover of tarp and in the company of all that lived under the forest's canopy.



## Scoring for charity

On a gloriously sunny June day, Griffin House held a penalty shoot out competition against the staff in support of the HEG Community Larder. This fun and inclusive event raised over £100.



## We will rock you

Our Senior School production, held in June at the Amey Theatre, certainly rocked the audience. Our Year 7s and 8s excelled themselves, whether acting, singing or helping out backstage. Rock on!

## Busby's Bees



It was a hive of activity in Years 1 and 2 when David and his bees visited APS. The children could see the bees at work, learned about the different types of bees in the UK, the threats to the bee population and how to stay safe around them. It was a really interesting day.



## Scientific musings

Year 7 enjoyed getting stuck into their owl pellet dissection this term, finding a record number of skulls along with many other bones, mostly belonging to voles and shrews.



## Pre-Prep Sports Day

The weather was perfect for our Pre-Prep sports day on 17 June, as our young athletes took part in a range of activities from sack racing and target throwing, to relay races and hurdles. Everyone cheered each other on in some friendly competition. The afternoon finished with a certificate presentation and a well earned ice-lolly.



## Just like Egyptians

In June, Year 3 visited the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford to support their study of ancient Egypt. The children became detectives for the day, looking for evidence in the galleries which could inform them about life in Egypt so many years ago. They were particularly interested by all the artefacts, the hieroglyphics and the mummies!

## How the Library helps facilitate independent learning

Independent learning, also known as 'self-directed learning' or 'autonomous learning', is vital for academic success and employability. Dr Graham Gardner, Librarian and EPQ coordinator at Abingdon, discusses how the library supports independent learning for young people.



### What is independent learning?

For me, independent learning happens when a student purposefully takes key aspects of the learning process into their own hands. Crucially, it does not mean working alone and with no help; it includes working collaboratively with peers and seeking out appropriate sources of support and advice.

### Why is it important?

Independent learning is associated with a range of benefits, ranging from higher academic performance to greater self-confidence, creativity, flexibility, resilience and awareness of core strengths and important limitations. All of these help students realise their potential (whether that's in an exam, a job, or a relationship); forge their own path in life; and contribute effectively to the society and communities of which they are part.

### How does the library support independent learning?

Abingdon School Library encourages and facilitates independent learning in a number of ways.

Firstly, it offers a learning space designed with students in mind. Consequently, it does not insist that students study in silence. Rather, it is divided into distinct learning zones, ranging from clusters of small circular tables for collaborative learning to a silent study room, so students can choose the most effective approach for them.

The library also enables students to choose from a wide range of learning resources. That includes books - close to 20,000 at the last count - and high quality digital resources that aren't available on the open internet. Access to high quality information resources is integral to the development of independent learning, and I am continuously reviewing, revising and updating the library's provision.

Students can take advantage of numerous charging points, a high speed colour printer - they can even borrow a Chromebook if they forget their own.

Finally, students can seek the help of the librarian (me) and assistant librarians. We work proactively to help them take charge of their own learning. In Lower School, this comes in the form of 'reading and research' lessons but, for older students, my teaching supports independent project work. This includes the A Level Geography NEA, the A Level History essay, entries for external essay competitions and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).

The EPQ, which I coordinate, is a great way for Sixth Formers to develop and demonstrate their capacity for independent learning. Students propose, plan and realise their own project, which will involve either answering a question or constructing an 'artefact'. Students enjoy a lot of freedom and success rests heavily on genuine curiosity, a high degree of self-organisation and tenacity. My role is to help students develop the skills they need, such as for planning their project, finding appropriate resources and writing their research report. These are skills which will serve them well at university and beyond - where independent learning will come into its own.

## Supporting our School community and beyond...

Abingdon School Enterprises Limited, trading as Abingdon Sports and Leisure, is the commercial facet of Abingdon School and plays a pivotal role both in supporting Abingdon School in delivering the very best academic, pastoral, and cocurricular opportunities to pupils but also in assisting with the operational management of the Abingdon Foundation's sport and leisure facilities (including the Sports Centre, Tilsley Park, and Amey Theatre) and various commercial activities.



## Enhancing community engagement

Abingdon Sports and Leisure actively engages with the community by hiring out the school's sports facilities to clubs, organisations, and the public; partnering with external sports camp providers; hosting live screenings and events at the Amey Theatre; and offering courses and academies for boys and girls during school holidays. The Abingdon Sports and Leisure Club membership also provides high-quality sport and leisure facilities, including access to the school gym, squash courts, and various exercise classes, at competitive rates.

## A rewarding term at Tilsley Park

It's been a busy yet rewarding term at Tilsley Park, which hosted over twenty school sports days, including Partnership events, with many parents and guardians cheering on their children from the sidelines. Tilsley Park is always pleased to continue its commitment to offering free sports days to local catchment schools. By inviting young people to experience these exceptional facilities, Abingdon can create more opportunities for them and strengthen its community ties.



## A thriving Swim School

The Abingdon Sports and Leisure team manages a thriving swim school with some four-hundred children participating in classes on Saturdays and Sundays and during school holidays through intensive sessions. Abingdon Swim School, a Swim England-registered swimming school, teaches all four competitive strokes within the framework of the National Plan for Teaching Swimming. It aims to provide quality swimming lessons in a fun and safe environment, delivered by enthusiastic and passionate swim teachers each term.



## Contributing to School life and its finances

Abingdon Sports and Leisure is designed not only to benefit the local community but also to support other areas of school life, such as the Abingdon School in Partnerships initiative. Finding new, innovative ways of generating revenue outside of school hours also helps to provide additional support for running costs, which helps to keep fees as affordable as possible.

# Abingdon Development



Thanks to benefactor (and Mercer) John Roysse (OA 1500s), Abingdon is fortunate to host an annual lunch for supporters at Mercers' Hall in the City. Guests enjoyed a tour of this illustrious livery company, taking in the stained glass panel of Roysse's coat of arms, presented by the School in 2000, as well as a portrait bought at auction in 2021. The Mercers' are a generous supporter of past capital projects and our Partnership programmes.



## Summer Garden Party

On Friday 28 June, donors and volunteers gathered for the Head's annual garden party. This is an opportunity for us to thank the many members of the Abingdon community who support initiatives such as our bursary programme, boarding project, and other areas of school life.



On 16 April, Robert Pooley, owner of Pooley Sword Ltd., visited with Chris Pickup (OA 1960), retired Army officer and former Regimental Colonel of the Army Air Corps. Robert gifted a stunning ceremonial sword to the Head, to be presented annually to an outstanding CCF cadet. After some sword drill instruction, senior cadets and CCF staff enjoyed lunch in the new Pavilion, then a tour of our CCF facilities. The Abingdon Sword of Honour was then formally presented. Based on a classic infantry sword, the blade is finely engraved with the Abingdon Griffen and the insignia of King Charles III.



After lunch, and addresses from the Chair of Governors and the Head, legacy society members were treated to an historical talk by our Archivist, Sarah Wearne. Sarah brought to life stories of young OAs who served in the Normandy landings. Images of this lost generation were interspersed with original footage and contemporary memories from families, recorded by the Abingdon Film Unit. School tours were followed by a Chapel service led by The Rev'd Dr Simon Steer, during which OAs were invited to share memories of when they were at school.



## OA Golf Day

David Blomley (1976) kindly hosted the OA Golf Day on Friday 10 May at The Springs Golf Club, Wallingford.



## OA Cricket

On Friday 14 June, 11 OAs played against the School's 1st XI on War Memorial Field, breaking for lunch and tea between showers.

## Forthcoming Events

**Wednesday 2 October**

### The OA LGBT+ Evening Salon

The Parakeet, Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2AA

The microphone is on, the piano has been tuned and the drinks and canapés are ample. Join us for an evening salon of spoken word, music, cabaret, comedy and performance, set against the velvet curtains of the Parakeet. All OAs welcome. Should you wish to perform, email:

[oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk)

**Sunday 10 November**

### Remembrance Concert

St Michaels and All Angels' Church, Park Road, Abingdon

Director of Music, Richard Stafford is delighted to invite OAs, alongside partners, to sing as part of the School's Remembrance Commemoration Choral Concert. Following Chapel Choir items, Chamber Music and vocal solos, the Fauré Requiem will be sung. This will be a performance with both organ and orchestra. Register your interest:

[connect.abingdon.org.uk/home](http://connect.abingdon.org.uk/home)

**Friday 22 November**

### Sixth Form Careers Evening

Abingdon School

On Friday 22 November, Abingdon will be hosting its annual Sixth Form Careers Evening. OA volunteers who would like to share advice and expertise relevant to their particular career field are asked to contact the OA Club Office at:

[oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk)



## Henley Royal Regatta

The OA Club welcomed members of the Abingdon community to its Strawberries and Pimm's event at Henley Royal Regatta on Friday 5 July.

## The OA Club Committee

The OA Committee is currently recruiting for new members.

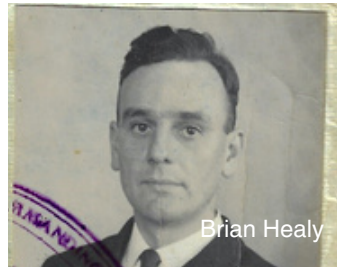
If you would be interested in helping to shape the future of the OA Club, we would be delighted to hear from you.

To find out more, please email: [oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk)

# Abingdon Out of the Past



John Viney



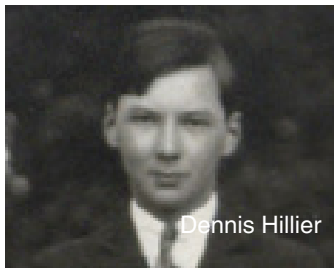
Brian Healy



John Clark



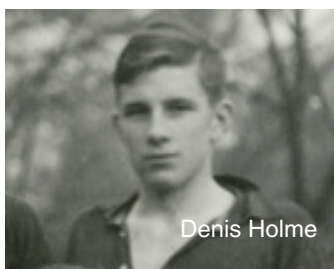
Ian Holland



Dennis Hillier



Bill Giles



Denis Holme



Gerald Cooper

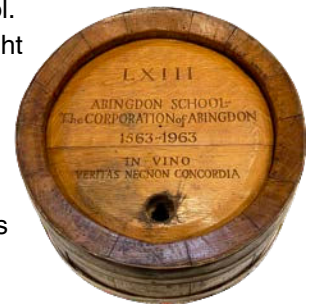
## An OA at the National Gallery



The National Gallery celebrates its 200th anniversary this year. OA William Boxall (1800-79) became its second director in 1866. During his tenure, he expanded the collection to include Michelangelo's unfinished Virgin and Child with Saint John and Angels (c1497), Piero della Francesca's St Michael (c1469), and 70 Dutch masters from Sir Robert Peel's collection.

## Truth and friendship

A piece of the school's past came back into its possession last term – a cask commissioned by James Cobban, Head 1947-70, as part of our quatercentenary celebrations. Cooped by Morlands of Abingdon, filled with sherry by Fergusons of Reading, the cask was rowed up river by members of the Boat Club and the sherry shared with the Mayor and Corporation of Abingdon on the eve of the celebrations. By holding this event, Cobban was consciously echoing the Corporation's gift to John Roysse of a 'hogshead of wyne' following his 1563 endowment of the school. This too had been brought up river by boat. The Latin inscription on the cask, in vino veritas necnon concordia, translates as, in wine lies truth and friendship too.



## Archive website and catalogue

The archive website was launched last term. If you are interested in finding out more about the stories on this page or any other aspect of the School's past, please visit: [archives.abingdon.org.uk](http://archives.abingdon.org.uk)

## Remembering Normandy

Eighty years after the Normandy invasion, we remembered those Old Abingdonians who took part in the campaign. On D-Day (6 June 1944) John Viney led his squadron in an attack on the coastal battery at Maisy. Brian Healy captained a landing craft carrying a commando regiment onto Sword Beach. Gerald Cooper, who taught art at Abingdon, brought in another landing craft. John Clark, serving with the Royal Engineers, landed and was wounded that same day. Ian Holland came ashore on Sword - he was killed the next day. Denis Holme landed on Juno - he was killed on 9 August in Operation Bluecoat. His brother had been killed in May 1940. Bill Giles and Dennis Hillier served in the Royal Armoured Corps, coming ashore on 14 and 16 June respectively. They were killed two weeks later, 29 and 30 June, in Operation Epsom.



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