



ABINGDON

From the Head: Miss O.F.S. Lusk, B.Mus

Friday 24 February 2012

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Boys and Governors,

We are now half way through the academic year and time is slipping by very quickly indeed. I hope that everyone is enjoying their association with Abingdon and being part of this dynamic, purposeful community.

Since the beginning of term we have farewelled the following colleagues:

Mr Daniel Bond, Sports Assistant, who is now working with Oxford United.
Mrs Leanne Brown, Accounts Clerk, who moved away from Abingdon.
Mrs Pat Dry, Housekeeping, who has retired from her job.
Dr Silvia Elsner, School Counsellor, has taken a full time position at Oxford University. I am enormously grateful to Silvia for expanding our counselling service and for all the help and support she has given the boys.
Mrs Diane Harrison, Housekeeping, who has retired.
Mrs Helen Lamb, Bursar's PA, who has moved to a new position.
Miss Heather Nichol, Science Technician, who has gone to University.
Mrs Joanne Somerville, Housekeeping, who has resigned.
Miss Katie Strube, Sports Centre, who has relocated to Scotland.

We welcomed those who have joined this term:

Mrs Alexia Severis – School Counsellor (from 29.2.12)
Mrs Fiona O'Regan – Bursar's PA (temporary)
Mrs Sarah Ramsey – Registry Admin Assistant (temporary)
Mr Lawrence Pacey - Sports Centre Duty Manager
Miss Emma Chambers - Lifeguard
Mrs Emma Donovan - Cleaner
Mrs Lesley White – Cleaner

Mr Ken Morris has now been appointed as a porter.

Warmest congratulations to Mrs Jo Allen on the birth of her son Joshua.

The UCAS process is well underway with offers coming in thick and fast to a very talented year group. There is a way to go – and some serious hard work – before offers become a reality in the summer but, if past years are anything to go by, our

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leavers will move on to a very impressive list of universities. A full breakdown of the 2011 destinations and courses can be found on the website www.abingdon.org.uk/university_destinations.

The number of Oxbridge offers for 2012 is excellent with 13 offers at Cambridge and 9 at Oxford. Subject choices are very varied and this is a reflection of Abingdon's well-rounded curriculum with high standards across the board. Around 40% of those who applied to Oxbridge received offers which is tremendous.

There are so many opportunities at Abingdon - not only academic - and I would encourage all boys to take full advantage of the activities and interests available. In later life such a plethora of choice and accessibility is much harder to find. The range is remarkable from dog sledging in Sweden and Roman re-enactment with Legion XIII (XIII, not XIV, this is early Roman!), to competing in the National Maths Challenge Final (our senior team came a very credible 12th out of 63) and taking part in a strings masterclass with the internationally renowned Chilingirian Quartet.

The Abingdon Film Unit has won yet more accolades with James Yan's 2011 film *Inside* picking up the prestigious "Best Fiction Film" Award at the Future Film Festival in London this week. The animated film *The Art of Crime* has also been shortlisted at the 2012 Animex Awards.

The debaters competed in the Rotary Youth Speaks competition (Thomas Munro, Edmund Cornforth, and Michael Bicarregui) and the ESU Mace Debating Competition second round (Will Hewstone and Laurence Copson). Abingdon also hosted a round of the Oxford Union Schools Debating Competition, welcoming 56 debaters from ten schools and a team of Oxford University judges. Will Hewstone and Laurence Copson were one of only four teams selected to progress to the finals day at the Oxford Union in March.

Abingdon's chess teams are performing exceptionally well in the Oxford and District Chess League with Edward O'Brien, Alexander Lee, Omri Faraggi and Edward Reynolds the leading points scorers. Lower School chess players Ray Ren and Joseph Truran have been playing County Chess for Oxfordshire and Ray Ren was awarded Oxfordshire's "Player of the Season" medal. Joseph Truran also earned a top performance award. During half term ten Abingdon players competed very successfully at the Wiltshire Junior Open Chess Championships.

Our sportsmen continue to excel with hockey successes including 22 players selected to train at the Junior Academy Centres (JACS) and the U14 and U16 teams winning the County Championships and so progressing to the Regional competition. In the U14 county tournament, Abingdon won the title for the second successive year without losing a match! In the Independent Schools Hockey League, ISHL, Abingdon U15 A are looking good at the top of the table. We wish them luck with the regional hockey rounds and the remaining fixtures in the ISHL.

Clearly, the Cross-country team's Christmas holiday training in Portugal has paid dividends with a stunning set of results to date. Starting with the Knole Run at the

beginning of January, the A team were 4th out of 56 teams. This was followed by the U19s, U17s and U15s teams all being crowned County Champions and twelve boys qualifying to represent Oxfordshire in the National Schools Finals in March. In the Wellington College Relays, against very tough opposition, the senior team of Thomas Kelly, Stuart Jones, Luke Terry, Jacques Tasker and Alistair Duff beat all other schools by a margin of nearly 3 minutes and the intermediate team of Michael Fabes, Henry Hart, Teddy Curtis, Alex Gatenby and Nat Jones won bronze medals.

The badminton team began the term with victories against Millfield and Cheltenham and our U16 squad of Bernard Ng, Daniel Chen, Adam Uberoi and Gem Vongseenin progressed into the regional round of the National Schools Competition after becoming county champions.

Our swimmers continue to excel with tremendous performances at the Warwick 100 Competition with the team placed 4th overall and wins for Guy Giles, Michael Esnouf and Luke Teh. The fencers also had a very successful Southern Region Championships with Ben Schneider, Herman Chan, Thomas Chan, Bernard Ng and Kit Bowen qualifying for the British Youth Championships in May.

On an individual note, Giles Waterson claimed the U16 Powder Byrne Tennis Trophy at Bisham Abbey in January, beating the No 1 seed in the final. The tournament attracts players from all over the UK and Giles secured the title without dropping a set.

Finally, and I know this isn't the rugby term, but I do want to mention the outstanding performance of our 1st XV reaching the quarterfinals of the Daily Mail Schools' U18 Cup. This is the furthest Abingdon have ever got in the competition and the squad really rose to the occasion with an outstanding second-half performance in the match against Dulwich College. You could not get any closer with a final score of 17-17. The away-team-advantage rule secured the match for Dulwich but did not do it justice!

We are now into the rugby sevens season and our 1st team travelled to Christ College Brecon U18 Sevens Competition and recorded an excellent performance, coming second in their group. Congratulations to Kieran Routledge who has been selected to attend the next England U16 Rugby Camp here at Abingdon, following in the successful footsteps of Tom Kynge and Peter Moore last year.

The Music Department has had a very busy first half of the Lent term with an impressive variety of tuition and performances. Music Scholars and Organists all had an opportunity to showcase their talent at concerts and recitals and the New Year Charity Concert saw some excellent performances from the First, Second and Chamber Orchestras, Brass and Big Bands and Junior Strings. Particularly noteworthy was Timothy Li's solo piano performance with the First Orchestra and the strong leadership of Joe Barber (violin) and the percussion playing of Bruno Rogers and Tom Woods, whose growing ensemble awareness kept the Second orchestra tightly together.

We were very privileged to have Giorgos Konstantinou hold a Piano Masterclass for a number of our talented pianists and our strings players were treated to an inspirational masterclass with the Chilingirian Quartet. These occasions are an invaluable opportunity for our young musicians to understand what it is to play at the top of the profession. Many of us also enjoyed the exceptional chamber concert given by the Chilingirian Quartet just before half term.

I am always very impressed by the effort staff go to to enrich the curriculum at Abingdon, whether it's through visiting speakers, workshops, activities or trips. The Economics Department took 18 students to the 'Your Future in Europe' conference in Paris where they enjoyed some excellent speakers on the European Union and the current economics crisis in the Eurozone. Closer to home our fifth year artists enjoyed the extraordinary objects at the Ashmolean in Oxford as they begin developing ideas for their GCSE exam theme "Ordinary and/or Extraordinary".

In the week prior to half term, the Modern Foreign Languages Department hosted this year's French exchange from Lycée la Nativité in Aix-en-Provence and they are looking forward to the return trip to Aix at Easter. The away leg of the German exchange to Bielefeld also took place this term with a group of 18 boys and 5 girls from St. Helen's.

Whilst many took a well-earned rest at home over half term, some of our staff and pupils ventured further afield; our U15 cricketers toured South Africa, a small group of fifth and sixth formers enjoyed dog sledging and skiing in Sweden and our AS and A2 sixth formers, studying French, crossed the Channel to Paris. In the UK we had boys taking their RYA Day Skipper Qualification in Plymouth and the CCF visiting the Vauxhall Barracks in Didcot. The CCF has always been an integral part of the service sector of the Other Half at Abingdon and this term, for the first time, saw officers and cadets gathered in School for a formal contingent dinner with visiting guest, Lt Col Adam McRae, Commanding Officer of 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment.

We have now embarked on a solid six week stint which will take us up to Easter. With just a very short period in School early next term for the fifth year and lower sixth, it is hoped that these boys in particular, along with the upper sixth, are making the most of what will be an intense lead-up to study leave.

As you can see it is a very busy School and there's something for everyone, both in the classroom and outside, a plethora of enriching opportunities. I hope that everyone is able to take full advantage of what is on offer as well as give something back to the Abingdon community.

Felicity Lusk