



ABINGDON

From the Headmaster: M. Turner, M.A.

Newsletter 7 – 2009-10

April 2010

Dear parents

After my ‘disruption, disruption, disruption’ salutation in January we were hoping to start this term with a minimum of fuss. Sadly the tectonic forces regulating Eyjafjallajökull’s belches, and a desertion of common sense in the upper echelons of decision making, combined to create travel chaos. It was a powerful reminder that we are a truly global community, to have reports that the return to School had been disrupted for 74 pupils from approximately 20 countries. Staff also seem to travel to all corners of the planet in holiday time; seven were delayed.

All that notwithstanding, we are back to routine with a sense of growing expectation as large numbers of the School ready themselves for the final run-in to the exam season.

On Friday 23 April, both the size and ‘close-knit’ nature of the Abingdon community were very much in evidence as approximately 1000 bodies were marshalled onto a gantry for the quinquennial photo – the last one being to celebrate the 750th anniversary in 2006.

Election fever is also running through the school. In line, I suspect, with national trends, there appears to be more interest in what is going on than one or two previous campaigns I can remember. The majority of the upper sixth will be able to exercise their electoral rights both in the real ballot box and in a mock election we are running internally, to encourage all to recognise the rights and responsibilities that go along with the privilege of living in a democracy. This was a point sharply reinforced for me during a talk by Michael Giedroyc at the Edmund Society on ‘Life in the Siberian Labour Camps’, about his family’s struggle for survival in a Stalinist Siberian forced labour camp. Powerful stuff indeed!

Many congratulations to Mr Kevin Carson and his wife Sarah, on the birth of a daughter, Greta, on 28 April.

Chapel windows. Before term officially started it was wonderful to welcome approximately 100 guests to the School to celebrate ‘Beauty in Worship’ in a chapel service designed to allow Nicholas Mynheer, an eminent stained glass window artist, to outline his vision for the completion of our plans to create a new series of stained glass windows to complement the wonderfully vivid Trinity windows commissioned to celebrate the centenary of the dedication of the Chapel.

The response to our Chapel window appeal has been most encouraging, to the point that we can commission the next two windows in the series. We hope to be able to complete the project to the glory of God, an encouragement to boys to think, and to beautify the Chapel building by the end of the year.

Academic matters

Revision leave. Parents are reminded that the dates for revision leave were given in my last newsletter. If a fifth, lower sixth or upper sixth form boy has a public examination in the afternoon outside the dates for revision leave, he may be excused lessons during the morning. A fourth former with a public exam in the afternoon may be excused lessons after break. If he is on the premises he must report to the room(s) designated by the Director of Studies for revision. Boys who have a morning examination are expected to attend school for the whole of the previous day, for both lessons and Other Half. All lower sixth formers should return from study leave on Monday 14 June, when A2 teaching begins.

Teaching will finish for the upper sixth at half-term, but A level examinations run on until nearly the end of term. Saturday 3 July, however, is Prize-Giving, and the day on which we ceremoniously bid farewell to this year's leavers. So that we can do things in due style, boys in the Upper School will be required on that day to wear full school dress – suits with white shirts and polished shoes in every case. Boys in the Middle School are excused attendance on this morning unless, of course, they are directly involved in the proceedings as choristers, prize-winners or other necessary performers.

Book collection. Every year much unnecessary angst is caused by boys not returning academic text books that the school has loaned them, resulting in unwanted additional charges on parental bills. Boys will be given ample notice of when and how to return books and this advice will be given to them in assemblies, sent directly to them via email and published on the school's website. It would be very useful if we could have parental support in maintaining this system – missing books are reordered by Heads of Department at the end of term and it is therefore not possible to give refunds for books that are returned late, given the cost of replacing them has already been incurred.

Academic help for fifth years during study leave. To enable boys to resolve any outstanding problems, a programme of tutorials has been arranged during the two weeks before half term. Fifth year boys will shortly be given a list of the teachers who will be offering help during each timetabled period. This information will also be available in the news area of the website. It should, therefore, be possible for a boy to fill an eight period day at school, moving from one room to another, working quietly in a classroom, and receiving help in the great majority of his subjects, if needed. We hope this may also prove useful for the occasional boy who might find that motivation to revise may begin to flag, and who would benefit from a structured day. Rooms will also be designated for supervised silent study.

Entry requirements. Parents of boys in the fifth year are reminded that our GCSE requirement for entry into the Upper School is at least three A grades, two B grades and two C grades (this has remained unchanged for a number of years now). The subjects passed at C grade or better must include English and Mathematics. For Sixth Form, it is our general view and experience that boys who get below an A grade for GCSE might well struggle if choosing to pursue that subject for AS level, but this is not a hard and fast rule. Boys who get a B or below in a subject they wish to continue to AS level should correspond with their teachers and/or the relevant Head of Department after results day to ask advice and will have an opportunity to speak directly to Heads of Department on the first day back in September.

Entry to the Middle School is conditional on satisfactory performance in the Lower School examinations and on a generally acceptable record of work and behaviour.

Subject choices. If, at any stage between now and the end of term, a boy in the present fifth, third or second year wishes to alter any of the subject choices which he has so far submitted, he or his parents should contact his housemaster for advice. Any possible changes need to be discussed and agreed with Dr Willis, Director of Studies, telephone 01235 849113, e-mail: peter.willis@abingdon.org.uk

Examinations. Candidates are reminded that they should read the information included in the pack containing their statements of entry and, in particular, be fully aware of the rules and regulations laid out in the 'Notice to Candidates'.

Candidates and parents should study statements of entry carefully to ensure that candidates arrive for the correct session in the day. Candidates should arrive at the exam venue at least 15 minutes before the start. A copy of their personal timetable can be collected from the Exams Office. They should also contact the Exams Office if they have any concerns at all.

Seating plans will be displayed outside the Sports Centre and in the Lower Corridor of Big School in advance. If candidates need to bring mobile phones, they should be clearly marked, so that they can be easily identified following the exam.

Results arrangements. A and AS results will be available from 8.30am on Thursday 19 August in the CMR. GCSE results will be available from 8.30am on Tuesday 24 August (NB change from the usual Thursday for GCSE results this year) in the CMR. Boys can phone in for results from 9.00am via the Exams Office - 01235 849035.

No-one on any other school number will be able to give out results. If boys wish to be emailed with results, they should give the email address they wish to be used to the Exams Office before the end of this term. Any paper results not collected from the CMR by noon on the relevant day will be posted out from the school later on that day.

Chemistry Success at the end of Lent term. Abingdon has maintained its impressive track record with the national BA CREST Awards, gaining another four gold medals. Josh Stedman, Richard Moon, Geoff Penington and David Choy continued the ongoing project for coating plastics with metals for potential application in printed circuit boards. The group managed to achieve definitive proof that silver was deposited on plastics in measurable quantities.

In addition, the Royal Society of Chemistry first round International Chemistry Olympiad took place, and Abingdon achieved four Gold medals and three silver. Geoff Penington, Josh Stedman, Richard Moon and Jeffrey Yu are placed in the top 210 pupils in the country and take Gold medals. Silver medals went to Ulrich Bauer, Chun Chin and Alex Leung.

Further congratulations to Josh Stedman, who has been selected to represent the UK in Japan at the International Chemistry Olympiad in the summer. This is the third successive year that a pupil of the school has been selected as part of the four-strong team to compete on an international stage.

At the prize giving at the end of the Lent term, the following prizes were awarded:

Joshua Stedman	Mathematics	Jack Trodd	Art
Alex Leung	Physics	Euan Campbell	Ancient History
Joshua Bradlow	Chemistry	Thomas Watkins	Latin
Forrest Radford	Business Studies	Alex Muir	Greek and Spanish
Samuel Bowers	Geography	Alec Burt	Economics and History
Chris Green	Design Technology	Caspian Mitchard	Music and Religious Studies

Robert Lloyd	English	Jake Ampleford	Mandarin
Charlie Robertson	French	Tom Lowenthal	Russian
Joe Mason	German		

Fifth year mock exam prizes:

Aslan Sayfimehr	Phelps'
Hussein Ibrahim	School
Andrew Halls	Crescent
Michael Shortis	Boyd's
Matthew Landells	Christodoulou's
Nicholas Krol	Franklin's
Edward Firth	O'Doherty's
Hamish Grant	Webb's
Thomas Salt	Southwell-Sander's
Edward O'Brien	Southwell-Sander's

The following boys won prizes or commendations in the Oxford Classical Association Reading Competition held at Magdalen College, Oxford, and judged by university tutors.

Commendations were won by: David Mears, George Ruck and Anthony Lloyd

Second place prizes were won by: Sam Wright, Joe Ereaut, Olly Jackson, Ben Nabnian, Thomas Kelly, Tom Salt

A first prize was won by Richard Slade for his performance of Medea's speech in Euripides' play

Congratulations to all the boys on their achievements.

Art and Design and Technology Exhibitions. This is the event of the year for the Art and Design departments. Painting, printmaking and graphic design by this year's upper sixth and fifth form artists and designers will be on display throughout the Arts Centre. As usual there should be an impressive display of work across a wide range of media: painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking and graphics. The exhibition of upper sixth work will be on for some time but this will be the only opportunity to see the GCSE displays. On display in the refurbished and expanded Design and Technology Department will be practical pieces of work produced by GCSE and A Level pupils. Projects include contemporary furniture, sports equipment and a variety of imaginative pieces of product design. All are welcome.

Spanish Trip to Cuba. The group arrived into Cuba after a long flight and immediately had to go through a hostile set of border controls, before collecting their bags and heading towards their accommodation. They were immediately struck by the heat, the under-developed nature of the country and the significance of the revolution figures Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, who seem to be depicted in murals on virtually every street corner.

They stayed with two very hospitable Cuban families in two separate houses in the Havana suburb of Vedado; cooking two meals a day for the group of eleven was no mean feat! From 9.30 to 1.00 every day they had lessons at the Sprachcaffe in Havana, a languages school where they covered all of the major grammatical points of their exam syllabus as well as learning about Cuban culture.

In the afternoons they went into Old Havana, and saw the world famous cigar factories, the Revolution Museum and a cannon procession at El Morro, a former fortress. The salsa lesson was a

particular highlight for the group, in which everyone seemed to master the basic steps, and on Saturday and Sunday they enjoyed perfect weather on the beach to the east of Havana.

CCF Easter Camp: A hundred participants made this Easter's CCF Camp on Salisbury Plain the largest ever. A new programme was in place this year, which went very well due to the hard work of cadets, NCOs and officers. They were assisted this year also by a large number of regular soldiers and airmen as well as serving OA Flight Lieutenant Paul Tolley RAF. Challenging weather conditions made the training and indeed the parade emotional at times, but the cadets soldiered on nevertheless. The passing out parade was taken by Lt Col Andy Rudd RE, who was extremely complimentary.

First year trip. During the last week of the Easter holidays 51 first years and five members of staff travelled to the PGL Little Canada centre on the Isle of Wight for the annual adventure trip. Activities included quad biking, abseiling, climbing and archery. A new activity this year was All Aboard, in which a team of three boys had to help each other climb up a telegraph pole, stand on a small platform on the top, and then lean out! The boys all had an enjoyable time, pushed themselves out of their comfort zones, and developed their team-building skills.

Second year trip to Brecon. The trip went well. The boys enjoyed the usual range of outdoor activities, and the vast majority of the boys behaved themselves impeccably. They were often out in very challenging weather, especially on the mountains where several groups encountered heavy snow and 'white out' conditions.

Trip to Provence. This year's French exchange was another tremendous success. Twenty-seven boys spent the first week of the Easter holiday with French families in Aix en Provence in the south of France. They proved to be an exceptionally cheerful, courteous and focused group of travellers, who attracted numerous complimentary comments both for their impeccable behaviour and the intelligent questions they asked the French guides (in French!). Cultural visits included the Roman amphitheatre at Nîmes, the Pont du Gard, the Villa Ephrussy de Rothschild, the Stade Vélodrome (home of Marseille football club) and a confiserie in Aix.

Drama and Film news. Congratulations to Nicholas Williams in L6 who has been offered a place in the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain: a place in the NYT is a very significant achievement.

Congratulations also to Matthew Choi, Simon Lam and Will Abell, whose 2009 AFU documentary, *The Sacrifice*, has won an award at the Think Festival in Hong Kong, an event sponsored by the Wiseman Educational Organisation. We hope to be able to make some sort of presentation to the filmmakers at the inaugural Film Unit Dinner which takes place on Friday 14 May and brings together past and present members of the Unit with film and television professionals.

Not to be outdone, the sixth form Drama and Theatre Studies students from Abingdon and St Helen's have their third annual Drama Dinner on Friday 21 May. Once again, we look forward to welcoming professional actors, directors, producers and playwrights to share a meal with our senior thespians so that those who are keen to explore routes into professional theatre can benefit from their experience.

The summer term sees an exciting crop of drama and film events. Do consider joining us for one or more of these if you can. *Stepping Out*, Sunday 9 May 4pm, Amey Theatre, Tickets £5. A new event for Abingdon - the inaugural show by the Abingdon Dance Project, a group of senior pupils from Abingdon and St Helen's that bears a striking resemblance to the cast of *West Side Story*, who wanted

to continue working with OA dancer and choreographer Matthew Hawksworth. Sharing the bill will be another group - an all-star collection of professional dancers from London assembled by Matt - as well as some brave souls from the Common Room who have agreed to take part in what is clearly the cultural event of the year - the Common Room Come Dancing Competition, at the Amey Theatre on Sunday May 9 at 4 pm. The show aims to raise funds for the school's Moldova Project, as well as the development of dance and film projects run by the drama department. For tickets for this and all other drama and film events, please contact Mrs Hart, the Arts Centre Secretary on 01235 849002 / arts.sec@abingdon.org.uk

The Film Unit's seventh annual screening of new work takes place in the Amey Theatre on Wednesday 19 May at 7.30pm. This will be parents' first chance to see *One Foot on the Ground*, the half-hour documentary about Moldova made by sixth formers Matthew Copson, Tom Bateman and Will McDowell which premiered at the National Film Theatre in London in March. Also screening will be a mix of shorter documentaries and animations produced by this year's budding Bertoluccis. Tickets for this event are free, but there will be a retiring collection in aid of future film projects, which include ideas for documentaries in the West Bank and the Falkland Islands.

In June, the much-anticipated middle school production of Marlowe's classic *Dr Faustus* finally takes to the Amey Theatre stage, having fallen victim to January's blizzards. Third and fourth year pupils take their place alongside their contemporaries from St Helen's for Mr May's radical take on the Faust story, in which a man sells his soul to the devil for power and knowledge. The show takes place on Tuesday and Wednesday, 29-30 June and Thursday 1 July at 7.30 pm in the 'studio-on-stage' configuration of the Amey Theatre stage.

Music

The music department has planned another full programme of events for the coming term. Please refer to the Director of Music's Newsletter and Summer Term Music Calendar for further information and please join us to celebrate one of the most gifted musical upper sixths of recent years.

Sport

Athletics. The U17 team won at Marlborough on Saturday 24 April. The result bears tribute to commitment to excellence by all members of the team, many of whom were competing a year up. It is the Club's first match victory since the Pritchard years of the 1980s. The U19 team came second to Marlborough, also their best result of the modern era, and was noteworthy for the depth of ability that we have often lacked in the past. The U15 age group were represented by a handful of athletes, who punched well over their weight, with Nick Boreham's 25.4s in the 200m the most notable performance.

Cricket. After an incredible 2009 season the 1st XI cricket team have started the 2010 season in positive fashion following a successful pre-season in Dubai. In the first week of term they amassed a War Memorial Field record 363-3 against King's Bruton with upper sixth student Joshua Smith making an excellent 161. Team Captain Nathaniel Watkins also chipped in with an elegant 96 as well as James Edwards reaching his half-century (51 not out). The side then bowled and fielded with real intensity to dismiss their opponents for 73 and a 290 run win.

After this display the 1st XI hosted Stowe at the War Memorial Field. On the new and improved pitches the boys put on a competitive 231-6. Skipper Watkins again led from the front with a fine century (101). Despite a scare near the end the boys grounded out a nine-run win.

After the Stowe victory the boys were soon back in action in the regional round of the new Wisden Schools National 20/20. Despite being put in a very competitive group with hosts Bradfield College, Lord Wandsworth College and Portsmouth Grammar School, the boys cruised through with two comfortable wins. A very pleasing start for the side, who have a busy summer ahead of them.

Reading Half Marathon. On 21 March Mrs O’Doherty and 11 boys in the Upper Sixth ran the Reading Half Marathon in order to raise money for charity. The group was supporting 3 charities - Helen and Douglas House, Sue Ryder Care and The Rosebank Charity, and has so far raised approximately £3,600. Training started back in November, although the bulk of it took place during February and March. Snow disrupted the training plans but everyone soon got back into a training regime. All of the boys were running their first half marathon and indeed some of them had never really run long distance before, so this was a real test of motivation. During the tough times the thought that they would be helping to make someone else's life better, spurred them on. Everyone completed the race and the group’s fastest time was 1hr 33mins (Chris Burgess), which was very commendable for a first attempt.

Rifle Club trip to Stade, Germany. Between 25 and 31 March the Rifle Club went to Stade to take part in an exchange with a German team that has now been running for nine years. The team of ten Abingdonians spent three days training on German ranges and there were also opportunities for tours around Buxtehude, Bremerhaven and Hamburg. On the penultimate day the competition was held, with the German team fielding two teams against Abingdon’s team (and it should be noted that the German senior team was comprised of mainly 18-20 year olds). The results were Stade Senior 4570/4600, Abingdon 4375 and Stade Junior 4344. Abingdon conceded to Stade Senior this year, having previously held the cup for three years running.

Tennis. The Tennis Club have been working hard in the days leading up to the start of term, with this season’s pre-season camp being lead by performance coach Alex Harvey, from the National Tennis Centre. Alex was hugely impressed with the levels of motivation on court and is predicting big things from the club this season.

Tennis Club captain this season is Euan Campbell, who will bring three seasons of experience with him into the 1st VI matches. He will lead a young, but highly talented 1st VI, which includes two fifth year boys, Joel Morris and Jack Wilson, as well as the precocious talents of third year Giles Waterson.

Giles has had a successful Easter period, qualifying to take part in the main draw of a Tennis Europe event and winning the Cheltenham Junior Open tournament. This event attracts 400 entries from the Midlands, South East and South West and he is the first player in the 50 year history of the event to retain his U14 singles title. He also moved up to Rating 6.2 over Easter and will captain the Oxfordshire 14 under team in the County Cup at Edgbaston.

The first fixture against Magdalen College School saw the 1st VI get off to a successful start, winning 5.5 matches to 3.5. Euan Campbell and Sam Murrell played some excellent doubles throughout the day, but it was Josh Ridley and Giles Waterson who really hit form, winning three of their four sets played.

FASSC summer term event. Join the sailors for a BBQ after Friday sailing on Friday 14 May from 5.00 pm at Farmoor reservoir. All sailors, families, friends or anyone interested in the sailing club are welcome. Cost: adults £5, for food and a glass of wine, £3 for children – pay on the day.

To assist with catering please complete the following form by copying the link into your web browser.

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dE1RY3ZqLTMwVTd3RTllUG9PVGvHZWc6MQ>

Registration and Absence. Morning registration is taken by the tutor between 8.35 am and 8.45 am. If a boy is late for School he must register at the Attendance Office (Room B10) as soon as possible after he arrives. If a boy has an early music lesson he should register with the Music Secretary. If a boy fails to register, the School is obliged to ring the parents to ascertain the whereabouts of their son. Failure to do this has led to a number of complications, not least Mrs Bosley having to ring parents only to find the boy is in school. This can set alarm bells ringing with parents. Boys must also ensure that they turn up to register each afternoon.

May I remind parents that if their son is going to be absent, they must let the School know by telephoning Mrs Bosley, the Attendance Secretary on 01235 849031 **Mondays-Fridays**, and 01235 849032 **on Saturday morning**, or by **emailing**: attendance@abingdon.org.uk (and copy the email to their son's tutor), by 9.30 am each morning. Parents should give their son's name and tutor group.

Blenheim Triathlon. You will be aware that Jan Glover, our Development Director, 'persuaded' me to take part in the Blenheim Triathlon to help raise funds for the School's bursaries. I can report that training is going reasonably well, particularly in relation to cycling and running. However, I have not concentrated as much on the swimming element as may prove desirable! I am now armed with the necessary wetsuit – without which I cannot take part – and am doing a little swimming practice each time I capsize my scull on the river whilst training for my row from Abingdon to Henley. I can happily report that I am now well rehearsed in the capsize drill. The triathlon, however, is a challenge (400m swim, 10km bike ride and 2.5km run) which I fully intend to complete and I hope many of you will feel minded to support me by contributing to the School's bursary fund. I know you will be pleased to hear that we have offered a full bursary to one boy, from September 2010, which will be funded by the generosity of our donors. Some of our supporters are choosing to contribute on a regular basis by standing order and this is a wonderful way of giving. Even a small amount per month can make a very big difference if enough people choose to do it. Please do contact the Development Office if you'd like to give in this way, or you can make a one-off donation online at <http://shaping.abingdon.org.uk>

Abingdon News has been distributed this week, and parents should expect a hand delivery of it from their son.

Yours sincerely,

