



ABINGDON

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

Newsletter 9 2009-10

July 2010

Dear parents

Over the course of the last few months Elizabeth and I have attended innumerable farewell events, that have ranged in scope from a small informal gathering over a glass of wine to grand 'special occasions' such as the Sheldonian Concert. At all of them we have thoroughly enjoyed the chance to reminisce with friends and reflect on eight and a half very happy years at Abingdon School. Many thanks for your support over that period and for a wonderful collection of leaving presents.

Last Saturday's Prize-giving provided the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Abingdonians as individuals and the School collectively. Our guest of honour, Master Mercer Mr Bill Scarborough, made specific mention of the high levels of achievement that he witnessed in a vast range of subjects and activities. My congratulations go to all who were allocated prizes and awards.

In my very first newsletter to you all in January 2002, I wrote "Abingdon is indeed an excellent school, achieving high standards across a very broad range of areas both academic and extra-curricular. As I mentioned in my first Assembly, all this is, of course, very disappointing because any new Headmaster wants lots of obvious opportunities to make dramatic improvements!"

Almost nine years on, my opinions have not altered. I should like to pass on my thanks to all those parents, staff and boys, the main legs in the educational tripod (much vaunted at parents' receptions) for providing such a stable platform.

Collecting Statements of Results. The Charles Maude Room will be open for collection of the A and AS level statements of results on Thursday 19 August at 8.30 am. The Charles Maude Room will be open for collection of GCSE statements of results on Tuesday 24 August at 8.30 am. The results will be available for collection until 11.30 am on both days. A number of members of staff will be present to offer congratulations and advice if needed.

For A level candidates needing post-results services urgently and for requests of photocopied scripts, the Exams Office will be open from 9.00 am until 12 noon on Thursday 19 August, Friday 20 August and Monday 23 August. Candidates should bring a cheque book with them. All other post-results services will be dealt with at the beginning of the Michaelmas term.

A sheet explaining the post-results services available will be included in the results pack. Candidates who are going to be on holiday overseas may leave an email address with the Exams Office. Candidates on holiday in the UK may 'phone in for results, but should be aware that the lines are going to be very busy:

01235 849035 Exams Office

Early applications to university: Oxbridge, medicine and medically related courses. In the cycle of applications it is essential to make application to Oxford, to Cambridge and to all medically related courses by 15 October in the year preceding entry. One reason for this is that virtually all these courses are subject to interview, which results in a major logistical challenge for the institutions involved.

On Wednesday 16 September we are fortunate to have two speakers who will take us through these procedures.

Mr Mike Nicholson is in charge of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Oxford. He will talk in the Amey Theatre, starting at 7.00 pm. He will talk for about 40 minutes and leave about 10 minutes for questions. At 8.00 pm he will be followed by Ms Martha Hebblethwaite, who is in charge of Student Recruitment at St George's, University of London. St George's has recently agreed to merge with Royal Holloway, University of London, and so this is an exciting time for both. Ms Hebblethwaite will be talking about applying to medical school as viewed from St George's point of view. She too will talk for about 40 minutes and then allow time for questioning.

The intention is to make the talks available to boys and parents of the new Upper and Lower Sixths, as they will then be. There is a deliberate break of 10 minutes to allow people to come to the talk of their choice, though, of course, people are very welcome to come to both, if they wish.

Staff moves. This year we see the departure of several members of Common Room. Cherry Briggs moves on to become teacher of Biology and coordinator of general science at the British School of Colombo in Sri Lanka. Gareth Callan is to further his experience in the Chemistry Department at St Peter's School in York. Rod MacDonald leaves to take up a teaching position at St John's School in Johannesburg. Dan Smith moves on to Manchester Grammar School.

Several staff leave to take on significantly greater responsibility elsewhere. Simon Balderson moves on to become head of ICT at Shiplake College. Celia Shephard takes over as Head of the English Department at Durham School. Owen Cobbe, Director of Rugby, translates to become Assistant Head of Sixth Form at Mount St Mary's College in Derbyshire.

There are a number of members of staff whose roles have meant that I have spent a significant amount of time in discussion and planning. William Phelps joined us as a teacher of Religious Studies in 1998, but has been best known as the housemaster of Phelps' over the period 2001-10 and latterly as our Senior Boarding Housemaster. He has been lured away to be head of the development and expansion of the British International School of New York.

Alun Watkins takes over the headship of Victoria College, Jersey. In 2005, after a successful stint as Upper Master, Alun was appointed as Deputy Head Pastoral, to supervise and reorganise the pastoral structure within the School. In that role, he has been quite simply a colossus. I am most grateful to him for his support.

Art. Upper sixth and fifth form artists exhibited their work just before half term, and the lower sixth more recently. The exam moderators were most complimentary and signalled the variety of work as one of the department's strengths. With sculpture based on a Russian doll, painting and sculpture reliefs inspired by architecture, animation, print-making, graphic design as well as drawing and painting, the shows were very diverse. The upper sixth was a particularly strong year and we congratulate the following for gaining places to study on foundation courses in art and design: Matthew Copson (Camberwell), Stuart Lonergan, Charlie Floyd, Henry Dunbar (all to Brookes) and Alistair Nicoll (Totnes and who also has a place to read architecture). A further four students (Benedict Edwards, Matthew Hinkins, Kenneth Chow and Anthony Grieveson) have places to read architecture.

Community Service. On 29 June residents of Abingdon were invited to a tea party in the school dining room. Master of Ceremonies Charlie Beirouti introduced musical entertainment from Mr Pope and David Mears, and a comedy show from the Drama in the Community group. The Headmaster thanked the guests for their support of the School during his time here. After strawberries and scones, the ubiquitous quiz and raffle ended a most enjoyable afternoon.

Mihai Clapaniuc and Ulrich Bauer, Upper Sixth boarders, received the Mayor's and Rotary Prizes for Service at the recent Prize Giving ceremony and they have been outstanding contributors to the Community Service scheme during their time at Abingdon.

Drama. The Middle School production of *Dr Faustus* sent welcome shivers down the spines of its audiences on three hot nights at the end of June, bringing down the curtain for another year on the drama department's annual programme. Directed with imagination and flair by Graeme May, and featuring an ingenious set by Amey Theatre supremo Rory Fraser Mackenzie, the performances starred Abingdon's first drama scholar Joe Westcott in the title role, who was ably supported by Toby Marlow, Kristian Wood, Tom Sishton, Humphrey Thompson and Max Robinson. The staging gave punters the heady sensation of sitting on the Amey Theatre stage, bringing them closer to the action with its pyrotechnics, secret doors and mirrors, and a host of other theatrical delights. Congratulations and thanks to all concerned. I am delighted to be able to announce that next year, we will be able to offer two joint productions at this level, one for third years and one for fourth years, thereby increasing the number of performing opportunities for our middle school pupils.

Music

1. Big Band Festival - 18 June. This event featured jazz musicians of all ages and all levels, including players from The Manor and Abingdon Preparatory Schools, Abingdon's excellent Big Band and professional players from the Oxford-based *Big Colours Big Band*. This gave everyone involved a chance to hear top class playing, and certainly inspired many younger players. Our sincere thanks go to Simon Currie, our Big Band leader, for his input and direction of the highly enjoyable and educational event.

2. Sheldonian Theatre Concert - 25 June. Thank you to all those who were able to attend a flurry of music events at the end of term. These included the end of term concert at the Sheldonian Theatre on Friday 25 June, an event that showcased the many talented musicians that we have in the school and amongst the leavers, in particular. Particularly notable was the outstanding performance of Adrian Lo in Tchaikovsky's moving Violin Concerto.

3. Lower School Gala Concert - 5 July. On the last Monday of term, we were treated to an excellent concert given by members of the Lower School. The standard was reassuringly high - just what was needed to inspire hope for the future, given the outstanding quality of our musical leavers this term. The orchestra was confident and balanced in music by Verdi, Tchaikovsky and Woodhouse. The first year choir was splendid and both Lower School strings and the African drummers achieved an excellent standard. There were many solo performances to savour, too - the first year sported some individuals who will be ones to watch in the future, notably Leon Wu, Anthony Bracey and James Anderson-Besant.

4. Big Band CD Recording. This week the Big Band, at maximum strength, recorded its second CD - look out for it next term. Simon Currie and Andy Bush were delighted by how it all went. It should make a wonderful Christmas present!

5. Orchestra and Big Band travel to USA 2-10 April 2011. It is very good to hear that some 64 boys have already signed up for the music tour next year to Boston, New York and Washington DC in April next year. We are keen to explore contacts there and if anyone feels they can assist in this enterprise, please contact The Director of Music at michael.stinton@abingdon.org.uk

6. Music Calendar next term. Please find attached the music calendar of next term's events.

Sport

Athletics. After a strong performance at the county ESAA Track and Field Cup, Abingdon U16 team travelled to Tipton with a clear target: to do their best. Two weeks' careful preparation, with the support of outside coaches Kevin O'Hara and Alan Lerwill, meant the team had done all they could to be ready.

Some fine sprinting by Niall Keown and Patrick Sardeson set the team up for a good final, though the most successful track event was the 80m hurdles, with Kieran Boddington (11.6s) and Charlie Stenton-Putt (12.6s) winning 49 points. In the field Nick Boreham topped the points with the shot (12.60m, 24 points), with Charlie Stenton-Putt (1.65m high jump), Niall Keown (5.78m long jump) and Patrick Sardeson (39.56m javelin) not far behind. The discus throwers kept the team's chances up with Azarel Adebajo and Christopher Tayler both scoring well (27.46m and 25.86m respectively). The other members of the team all did their bit with Charles Kruczko-Cousins, Jamie Aspinall, David Jorgensen, Mathew Hartshorne, Jacob Templeman, Thomas Fabes and George Stoneham all getting valuable points.

In the end the team added 41 points to their previous total, achieving as much as anyone could ask for, but it was not enough to catch the teams in front, with the winners, Northampton School, well ahead on 476 points. Still, it all bodes well for next year's U17 team and for the future of athletics at Abingdon School.

Peter Barnshaw competed for the Oxfordshire Schools Intermediate boys team in the ESAA Combined Events Regional Final at Kirby-in-Ashfield in Nottinghamshire on 26-27 June. He came first with a score of 4495, setting personal bests in long jump (6.11m), high jump (1.77m), shot (9.61m) and Octathlon. The Oxfordshire team came first and now go forward to the ESAA Combined Events National Final at Stoke in September.

Swimming. On 27 June Harry Williams took part in the Henley Swim. The race starts at 4.30 am and is a 2.2 km upstream swim following the Henley Regatta course. Harry isn't a club swimmer, so to enter the event and complete it in 44 mins 54 secs is a real triumph and an impressive use of his post-GCSE relaxation time (as context, times ranged from 25 minutes for the elite triathletes to 1 hour 17 mins). He came sixth in the junior category which was won by a boy from the Radley College team.

Ski Tour. There are still five places left on the ski tour, which will be 15-23 December in Panorama, British Columbia. Email alf.mansfield@abingdon.org.uk for more information.

I know that Elizabeth wishes to join me in sending very best wishes to all members of the broader Abingdon community, and to all Abingdonians for a bright and successful future.

We are most grateful for your company along the roads we have travelled together.

Ingredere ut proficias.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Mansfield', with a long horizontal line underneath it.