



ABINGDON

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

12 December 2014

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

Christmas is upon us after a very full and busy Michaelmas term at Abingdon. I hope that everyone is enjoying the various Abingdon Christmas touches, all those Christmas trees dotted around the school, and the mince pies which have made an appearance during this final week.

The end of term festivities have been manifold beginning with the joint St Helen's and Abingdon Celebration of the Messiah. Pupils, staff, parents and friends of both schools, accompanied by a joint orchestra, performed beautifully. Impressive solos from Hugh Cutting, Mitchell Keely and Tom Keogh, and superb accompaniment from James Anderson-Besant. The girls weren't bad either! This week we have had carols at every opportunity with services for parents, boarders, Houses, the Lower School and finally the School Carol Service today. It certainly leaves no excuse for not knowing the words!

The Christmas concert in the stunning venue of the Sheldonian was a real treat. Not least because it featured the debut of our new (to the school) grand piano, funded very kindly by sales from the Second-hand Uniform Shop. In other celebrations the boys entertained Abingdon residents at the Christmas Tea Party with a quiz and raffle, ably accompanied by our Brass Band and the Abingdon Academicals.

One of the highlights of the past few weeks has been the topping out ceremony for the Science Centre. We celebrated the construction reaching its highest point and I really look forward to seeing the progress over the coming months. In other news we welcomed Professor Gary Sheffield for a fascinating centenary lecture on WW1. An engaged audience had some thought provoking questions and it was a very informative evening. It also provided an opportunity to view the third year pupils' reflections on WW1 - in a matchbox - in a display in the Amey Theatre foyer. They are very creative, drawing inspiration from their own research and using all sorts of materials from mud to wire. Each time I popped in for a few minutes viewing the exhibition, I saw something new in these extraordinary creations. I hope that these gems make their way home.

Besides the performance of the Messiah we have also enjoyed a joint third year production with St Helen's of *As You Like it* and the Lower School's joint Modern

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Foreign Language Club presented their home made Plätzchen to be judged (favourably) at the Oxford German Network Christmas Evening.

Six physicists from the Fifth and Sixth Forms took up an exciting opportunity to 'debate over lunch' with the All Party Parliamentary Engineering Group at the House of Lords. Ben Ainslie and his Technical Director also gave a presentation about their ambition to bring the America's Cup back to Britain. In a slightly less demanding challenge we welcomed six primary schools to work alongside Abingdon sixth formers to design a new healthy soft drink. Great fun was had by all and I was particularly impressed by the standard and creativity of the product designs the pupils created.

Congratulations to the boys who represented Chile and Egypt at the annual Model United Nations, MUNTH, conference last month. The boys picked up several awards for their debating skills. Congratulations also to Wilfred Wong who was runner up in the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire's Law Essay Competition with his essay discussing: "Are we a Christian country? Religious Freedom and the Law."

Our annual chess simultaneous display saw the School's chess coach, Grandmaster Peter Wells, win all his games against 18 boys and two staff – Peter is obviously still keeping a few tricks up his sleeve! Peter was impressed by the opposition, particularly Rafi'i Al-Akiti and Ray Ren. Abingdon's team in the Oxford and District Chess League defeated two teams within the space of a week to put them at the top of the table, mid-season, with six wins and only one loss.

This term has seen some tremendous sporting achievements. On and in the water we congratulate Tom Digby and Adam Teece who won the first long distance junior trial for the GB Junior Rowing Team, and Max Townley and Calum Farwell who came eighth. In the Bromsgrove swimming relays our U18 team finished first in the Freestyle final and second in the Medley final and our U15 squad finished second and fourth respectively in their finals.

The fencers had a very successful Southern Region Age Group Competition, where the U14 Epee teams won gold and bronze and the U18 Epee team also won bronze. Congratulations to Aaron Mara, William Lebeau and Theo Zamani who have been selected for the U13 Independent Schools Football Association South Central Development Squad. The boys will have the opportunity to compete at the Gothia World Youth Cup in Sweden in July. The senior football squad have been preparing for next term, working alongside Oxford United's players and performance analyst. Also looking forward to the rest of their season, the Cross Country Club has had some excellent early fixtures with the A and B teams coming third and seventh in the St Albans relays and first and second at Harrow.

The Rugby Club has seen some impressive rugby in all year groups. The seniors and U15s reached the County Cup finals and the U16B team enjoyed an unbeaten season. The 1st XV finished seventh out of the top 100 rugby-playing schools in the Daily Mail Trophy and has been very successful, winning local derbies against Radley College and Magdalen College School and in the inaugural fixture against

Rugby. In addition, they recorded their first ever win against Eton College. Many congratulations.

It has been a very productive term at Abingdon both inside and outside of the classroom. Do take a moment to have a look back at the term in pictures on our website.

There have been numerous parents events this term, most recently the Rugby Leavers' dinner and FASBC's undoubtedly competitive and highly enjoyable Quiz and Curry night back in November. The School is very fortunate to have such a supportive parent body. Whether it's ASPA, FASBC, the Music Society or Touchliners, they all do so much for the School. Besides offering a forum for parents to meet and to enjoy the school community they also raise very valuable funds for which I would like to thank them. ASPA's contribution to the Annual Fund will help to finance a range of projects from fencing to the history magazine. Also many thanks again to the Second-hand Uniform Shop for the aforementioned new school piano and hockey goals. The Annual Fund is ongoing and the support of parents, friends and the community is very much appreciated.

Over the holidays the lower sixth linguists have a French exchange to Metz, hockey players are on a pre-season tour to Barcelona. Some of the rowers, footballers and hockey players are training here at Abingdon. I am sure there will also be plenty of time to enjoy the celebrations and to have a well-earned rest and to recuperate.

It just remains for me to thank the staff, boys, governors and friends of Abingdon for all that you do to make the School the place it is. It is very much appreciated. I hope that you've enjoyed your association with Abingdon this term, in whatever capacity. A very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Yours sincerely



Felicity Lusk