



ABINGDON

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

21 November 2014

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

We are now well into the second half of the Michaelmas term and it won't be long before we are enjoying the lead up to Christmas at Abingdon. This year we are holding a school Carol Service on Monday 8 December at St Helen's Church which will be an enjoyable addition to the many Christmas events.

We welcome the following new colleagues into our Housekeeping department this month: Mrs Betty Davies, Mrs Lesley Meason and Mrs Deborah Russell.

We congratulate Mr and Mrs Ben Whitworth on the safe arrival of baby Laurence, and Mr and Mrs Richard Taylor on the safe arrival of baby Arran.

The reports from the trips over half term are a fantastic insight into Abingdon. The range of activities, the enthusiasm of those - staff and boys - involved and the determination to make the most out of the opportunity is a superb reflection of the School. I am fully aware of the privileged position of being able to afford to do these things but I am confident that the boys also appreciate this and seek to make the most of these wonderful opportunities. Young linguists were in Spain visiting our exchange school and spending time with Spanish families. The rowers were training and competing in Philadelphia, the Gold DofE sailors successfully completed their expedition from Plymouth and the rugby squads, from a wide range of age groups, were competing on various tours throughout the UK. 81 classicists from the Second Year to Upper Sixth were visiting the sites in Rome and the Bay of Naples and a group of 12 sixth formers were trekking in the Annapurna region of Nepal, white-water rafting down the Seti, exploring the Chitwan jungle and visiting Kathmandu. How I envy them!

Closer to home, sixth form physicists visited the JET Fusion Reactor at Culham and the Diamond Light Source and one of our fourth year Young Enterprise teams, 'Be.spoke' joined sixth form business studies students at the EntrepreneurLIVE! conference in Birmingham. At the conference, Be.spoke were awarded first prize in the Bin Business Challenge: very well done. Congratulations also to James Rice, Alastair Smith and Gordon Wai whose high standard of work was recognised at this year's Science Oxford's Young Scientist of the Year Awards. John Cheung and Aim Wonghirundacha continue to enjoy success with their debut film "Blindside" which

Abingdon School, Park Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1DE

Tel: 01235 521563 Fax: 01235 849079

www.abingdon.org.uk

was screened at the Future of Cinema Festival in Michigan; the first time an AFU film has been screened in the USA.

At school we have welcomed many visitors who have shared with us their expertise. Professor Colin Mayer addressed the Economics Society discussing his new book, "Firm Commitment: Why the corporation is failing us and how to restore trust in it", Jez Butterworth, playwright, was the guest of honour at the Literature Society's annual dinner and Melvin Burgess, the award winning author, led a creative writing workshop for third and fourth year boys. The Lower School was treated to a fascinating presentation from naturalist and photographer, Matt Clarke and the Edmund Society welcomed Professor Alister McGrath to discuss the nature of the relationship between science and religion.

We were very privileged to have the eminent military historian Professor Gary Sheffield give a fascinating WW1 Centenary lecture to an appreciative audience in the Amey Theatre last night. Many of you will also have enjoyed OA David Mitchell's return to Abingdon the previous week. I am immensely grateful and cannot emphasise enough the importance of outside speakers who are often leaders in their field. Why else would sixth former James Anderson-Besant be inspired to invent a trumpet out of a length of plastic hose and a funnel? (Do take a moment to have a look, it's surprisingly effective!) I can't imagine it would have happened without the visit from renowned trumpeter Crispian Steele-Perkins who entertained us just before half term.

Last week the Music Scholars' concert saw our senior musicians impress with woodwind, brass, strings and piano and we welcomed the return this week of internationally acclaimed violinist Leon Chilingirian for a masterclass.

The half term rugby competition and training reaped dividends with good 1st XV wins against Eton and in our inaugural fixture against Rugby. Commiserations to the 2nd XV whose disallowed try in the final moments meant a narrow defeat against Eton. The 4th XV had an absolute stormer against Rugby from all accounts and the U16 Bs, U14 Ds and U13 As remain unbeaten this season, very impressive. Peter Coke, our Director of Rugby, does a great job with his weekly round-up of matches, which you can read on the website. In other sports news, the Fencing Club has added Charterhouse and Bradfield to their very impressive unbeaten run, the Badminton team beat Bromsgrove and the Chess Club's City 4 team has won four of their first five matches in the Oxford and District Chess League.

At our Remembrance Day assembly, which is steeped in tradition, the names of Abingdonians who gave their lives in the two World Wars are read out; the Chaplain's focus this year was on a special photograph taken from the archive. It shows 21 rowers, boys and OAs of the time, about to embark on the annual boat race. Four years later 9 of the 21 would be dead, barely older than our sixth formers. The occasion was, as ever, sombre and respectful as today's boys gain an understanding of the enormity of these events in the life of Abingdon at the time.

The CCF then conducted the Remembrance Parade with professionalism and self-discipline. Before half term the CCF celebrated its centenary at Abingdon School with a dinner, welcoming back 69 OAs and current and former members. It was a lovely occasion and I was delighted to receive many letters from OAs complimenting the boys on their behaviour, attitude to life and ability to communicate.

The lower sixth November tests are underway as I write. This is an important opportunity for the boys to take stock of progress made during these crucial early weeks in the Sixth Form. I hope that they will go well for the boys.

Meantime, interest in the School from prospective pupils continues unabated. Staff have been interviewing boys hoping to enter the Third Year in September 2015. The Michaelmas term is always very busy with the recruitment process and things are looking very buoyant indeed for our school next year.

I hope that everyone is enjoying the routine of school life and feeling positive about their life and work here.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Felicity Lusk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative initial 'F'.

Felicity Lusk