



ABINGDON

From the Head: Miss OFS Lusk, B.Mus

8 July 2016

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

The academic year has drawn to a close after a very full and busy summer term.

We welcome the following new staff to the School this month: Mr Nicholas White, Maintenance Helpdesk Operator; Mr Steve Westwood, ICT Support Analyst; Mr Wayne Baker, Residential Caretaker and Maintenance Technician; Mr Christopher Hardy, Deputy Estates Manager. I wish these new colleagues well for their time at Abingdon.

I congratulate Mr and Mrs Matt Kendry on the arrival of baby Arthur this week.

A number of teaching staff are moving on to pastures new at the end of this term.

Nearly 20 years ago Jo Willis-Bund came to Abingdon to do her long PGCE placement, and for this last year she has been helpfully teaching part-time in the English department. This followed a stint at Reigate Grammar. Colleagues look forward to seeing her in the years ahead as she continues her association with Abingdon as a parent.

When Ed Swanwick returned to the UK from running a boarding house in Australia, he quickly set about working closely with Mark Hindley to ensure we were ready for the forthcoming ISI inspection. Together with the other boarding housemasters and his team of tutors, he helped ensure that the recent inspection had such a positive outcome. He has been committed to rugby as a senior coach. Now promoted to be Pastoral Deputy Head at Clifton, we wish him well in this challenging role.

Since Raj Ghosh came to Abingdon for his first full-time teaching post four years ago he has shown commitment in many areas of school life. A three-term sportsman who has been a dynamic live-in tutor and recently an Assistant Housemaster, he will be leading the Geography department at Rugby School, I'm sure with the same vigour.

Under Nick Fieldhouse's direction the Economics and Business Studies department has continued to thrive and expand. Young Enterprise, formerly done by lower sixth formers, has taken off as a fourth year activity and has been hugely successful

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

Tel: 01235 521563 Fax: 01235 849079

www.abingdon.org.uk

under his direction. With his team of enthusiastic external advisers, staff and boys, various awards have been won by the fledgling companies. Early on in his time he agreed to run the Fencing Club - an area in which he had no expertise - and that has flourished too. Nick has also been an assiduous live-in boarding tutor. He leaves to join Senior Leadership Team at St Dunstan's in South London. We look forward to hearing of success in the changes he brings there.

Five years ago Tamara Christodoulou came to Abingdon to teach Physics, coach rowing and be involved in boarding. Returning part-time after the birth of Alexander, she now leaves for Wellington College, with Alexis, to tutor in the boarding house Alexis will be running.

At the end of the recruitment cycle in 2010 we were fortunate to secure Peter Coke to be Director of Rugby and to be a member of the PE department. So much has happened since then. Peter has been much involved in Touchliners over the years; tours have been organised successfully, and we have been able to strengthen our fixture list. Boys have progressed in significant numbers to play at higher levels of the game. We keep hearing of the boys' success after they have left school, too, and we hope to hear more. We wish Peter all the best as he moves to Sedbergh School in Cumbria.

If you read the local press you may recently have seen an article featuring Rachel Yarrow, her husband and their goats, which are the source of the cheese they are making. Rachel kindly stayed on part-time this year after successfully leading the English department. As well as developing what happens in the classroom, the range of Other Half opportunities in literature and journalism has grown significantly, with the canine resident of Lacies Court featuring regularly. We wish Rachel every success in her venture.

Recently we have been preparing for the arrival of a new management information system, and John Winters has been central to that. For much of the last eight years he has been second in the maths department, where his keen attention to detail and organisation has been much to the benefit of this large and successful team. Much appreciated, too, has been his willingness to help out in whatever way he could - not least driving minibuses to pick up early morning arrivals at Heathrow. He returns to an earlier career using all his technical skills.

For much of the last dozen years Alexis Christodoulou has led our thriving and expanding Cross-Country Club. Rigorous in his approach to this sport, boys have benefitted from his advice and been devoted to their running. As well as teaching Maths he has run his day house well, and now leaves to lead a girls' boarding house at Wellington.

When Andrew Hall arrived at Abingdon, a new sports centre was only a wild dream for the senior leadership team. Soon after the extension to the Amey Theatre was completed, we were ready to build the vast sports complex. Andrew and his team were at the heart of the proposal, and we are now reaping the benefits. He was also central to the Tilsley Park development, and his team has worked to improve

significantly the quality of the coaching offered to boys, and the breadth of sports they can play. We see this throughout the year, notably in the Lent term with huge numbers of boys representing the School at hockey, rowing and football as well as in other areas. We have been privileged to be involved in supporting the charity “Blue Skye Thinking” which Andrew and Sally set up in memory of their son Skye. I wish Andrew and his family all the best for the move to Dean Close where he is to be Deputy Head: Operations and Co-curricular.

Finally we say farewell to Alison Quick, who worked with me at Oxford High, and who was here when I arrived six years ago. Working part-time - always a tough call for those involved in the all-consuming world of drama - we have all much enjoyed the fruits of her creativity and drive, melding together the talents of Abingdon boys and St Helen's girls. We wish her well in her retirement.

Many congratulations to third year student, Joe Bradley, on winning the prestigious Young Walter Scott Prize in its inaugural year. Joe collected his £500 travel grant at the Borders Book Festival where he enjoyed a weekend meeting well know writers. Joe's story, *A Most Unusual Childhood*, is set in China during the Boxer Rebellion and features a family of English Missionaries. It is based on Joe's own great-great-grandparents. What a tremendous achievement.

Our highly successful Young Enterprise team, Wabi-Sabi, took part in the national final of the competition this week. At the time of writing they are still competing so I wish them luck and very well done for the their tremendous performance in the competition to date.

Eleven lower sixth economists have had their entries to the Deloitte Sixth Form Essay Competition selected as finalists from hundreds of entries across the region. Congratulations to all the boys.

Middle school students Jason Ng, James Hogge and David Bunn all received distinctions in the Maths Olympiad with James and David gaining scores in the top 100 in the country, very impressive indeed.

In recent weeks, boys have been walking, kayaking and canoeing as part of the DofE Award Scheme. These are very tough challenges and I am always impressed by the number of our students who participate. Eleven fifth year boys undertook their very rigorous Day Skipper sailing qualification, sailing for a week out of Plymouth, again a very impressive achievement.

In other activities, boarders gave up a Saturday to help paint and decorate Long Furlong Primary School. The boys answered a call for volunteers from Long Furlong's Head who very much appreciated all their endeavours. Third year boarders also enjoyed a trip to Bristol, visiting the at-Bristol interactive science museum and undertaking a spot of shopping.

Following the referendum, 18 lower sixth economics and business students visited London's Silicon Roundabout, Tech City and the Bank of England's Education Centre. The potential impact of BREXIT was much discussed.

Sixth form physicists also took part in an all-party parliamentary debate on the future and developments in artificial intelligence at The House of Commons.

Third and fourth year students learning Chinese Mandarin visited the BFI to learn about the history of mainland China's cinematography including the impact of political and social changes. Mandarin students also enjoyed an unusual workshop with a British Rock Band, famous for their Chinese Music in Asia. Boys practised their Chinese by writing songs with their own Chinese lyrics.

The Lower School has been savouring the end of term with a range of sporting, musical and cultural events. Trips included Hampton Court, where the boys learnt about life at the Tudor Court, and in an action packed, long weekend in Rhineland, they practised their German whilst sightseeing and absorbing German culture. First year students enjoyed a visit to Fishbourne Roman Palace where they explored the site and took part in a workshop looking at Roman artefacts. The Second Years had a hugely popular end of term treat when BMX Halfpipe World Champion, Mike Mullen, held a BMX workshop, kindly financed by the Annual Fund. Lower School musicians impressed audiences at their School Gala concert and the Junior Solo Competition. Congratulations to David Bicarregui who won the latter with a flute sonata by Walckiers.

Michael Stinton, Abingdon's Director of Music, says that 2016 has been one of the School's largest and most gifted musical years with some outstanding instrumentalists and singers. It was lovely to hear many of these talented boys at the year's musical finale at the Sheldonian last week. It was a superb concert with some stunning performances, particularly by our senior soloists, James Anderson-Besant (harpsichord), Leon Wu (piano) and, from the Fifth Year, Robert MacLennan (xylophone). I greatly appreciated the contribution from the Joint Chamber Choir singing two New Zealand Maori farewell songs. Tom Keogh was a fine soloist and the Maori pronunciation was perfect. Thank you.

Another end of term highlight has been the annual Griffen Ball where 450 boys, parents and friends had a fantastic evening, despite the weather at what was a very happy occasion. 70 local Abingdon residents attended the Summer Term Community Tea party, where boys entertained with quizzes and music recitals and played host to a lovely strawberries and cream tea.

The weather has not helped the cricket season this term but there have been some high points. The U15s were crowned county champions and went on to the regional final where they defeated Reading School. Two days later, a trip to Frocester for the last 16 unfortunately resulted in a loss to Millfield on a very wet wicket. This is the furthest an Abingdon U15 team has progressed in the competition. The U14s also reached the final of the County Cup. The 1st XI has had a year of rebuilding, giving young players excellent experience at a high level. Although results have not always been kind the future is looking good for Abingdon Cricket.

At Henley the boys competed well with the 1st VIII having a good win against Norwich before losing to the finalists St Paul's. In the Fawley Challenge, the quad won against King's Worcester and Maidenhead before going out to the eventual winners, Claires Court. Trials for the Great Britain Junior Squad are under way and we wish our rowers well.

The Athletics Club has had a very successful season culminating in a good performance at Marlborough College where both the Juniors and Intermediates came second out of seven schools. The Tennis Club has had a good term with wins against St Edward's, Magdalen College and Stowe, amongst others. The U13 and U15 teams have both won all their fixtures in the county stage of the Aegon competition. In the Old Abingdonians versus the School annual fixture the OAs secured the win in what was a close encounter and as always, a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

There were excellent results at the Oxfordshire County Shooting Championships with Drew Farwell winning the junior trophy and James Magé the Class D winner. In addition, there was a team win for James Hogge, Anthony Yang and James Magé in the Symonds Bowl.

David Bunn continues to excel at orienteering with an excellent performance at the British Sprint Championships. Also impressive was Harry Baston-Hall, who despite being only 14, managed to get a bronze medal at the British Cadet Fencing Championships in the under 17 national competition.

Many of you will be aware that last week Crispin Hyde-Dunn, our Headmaster at Abingdon Prep School, was appointed to the Headship of the Dragon School Oxford, from September 2017. I would like to congratulate Crispin on this tremendous achievement.

Over the last week of term and the summer holidays many boys and staff will be involved in trips out. The myriad of activities include RAF summer camp and CCF adventure training camp, DofE walking in Glencoe, ESSA finals in Birmingham, sailing in Greece, a field trip to India and an expedition to Vietnam. We also welcome our Moldovan partners to school next week. I hope everyone makes the most of these superb opportunities.

May I take this opportunity to thank everyone for the very happy time I've spent at Abingdon over the past six years. It has been the most enormous privilege to be Head of Abingdon. The School is blessed with talented, committed teachers and support staff, the wise stewardship of our Governors, supportive parents and, of course, all our boys. Abingdon is in very good heart indeed, thanks to the contribution and hard work of so many individuals. Thank you, and I wish you all the best wherever life takes you.

Yours sincerely

Felicity Lusk

Felicity Lusk