



AbingdonNews

Celebration of the Arts



While we were planning our 2020 Celebration of the Arts Festival, lockdown was implemented and, unfortunately, we had to cancel our onsite festival. So we took the festival online. Inside this edition of Abingdon News there are further examples of the amazing artwork created by our students and more can be found on the [website](#).

Steve Lin, Upper Sixth

Steve looked at Flemish artists that celebrated food and world travel. He crushed the fruit in anger to express his disdain about current food and packaging wastage.

Message from the Headmaster



During this time of challenge, my touchstone has been the importance of a sense of community. We have all had the chance to reflect on our local communities and the key - and perhaps undervalued - role that many different people play in holding them together, while we have given thanks to those who have dealt directly with the crisis and reflected on the losses of lives and livelihoods that it has led to.

In normal times, we're used to a powerful sense of community around Abingdon, founded on the time we spend together involved in the many different academic and Other Half activities that create the buzz of a busy and purposeful school, underpinned by our pastoral structures. I've been delighted that this sense of community has been sustained over the past term of remote working, while at the same time looking forward to the physical return of boys and staff in September; it will be a time of celebration.

This edition of Abingdon News captures the creativity and enthusiasm that powered our remote working phase. It includes a couple of longer articles. Our Deputy Head

Academic, Graeme May, reflects on the challenge of devising provisional results for our GCSE and A Level candidates while Nick Knowland, Head of History, looks at approaches to the History curriculum in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement. I hope you enjoy reading the magazine and my thanks go to the editorial team for all their hard work.

As we approach the end of an extraordinary year, I wish everyone in our community all the very best and hope that a restful and enjoyable summer awaits.

Back to School Challenge



2M spent the weekend of 20/21 June travelling the distance collectively to get them all back to School and home again, to raise money for Cancer Research UK. This included a journey to and from Heathrow Airport for our one boy in lockdown with family overseas. The boys cycled, swam, unicycled, walked and clocked up miles on the tennis court too, allowing many fathers to enjoy spending quality time with their sons on Father's Day.

The target distance was 719 miles, and a fundraising target of £2500 which were both exceeded. Tutor, Mrs McRae, and the boys managed over 750 miles and the parents, siblings and friends supporting them travelled over 925 miles.

The boys' [giving page](#) has raised over £3000 with Giftableid.





**ABINGDON
ECO
COMMITTEE**

ECO AWARENESS WEEK
8th - 12th June

Contemplate, consider, challenge...

... our impact on the environment and ecosystem that we inhabit. Lockdown offers a unique opportunity to tackle these important issues. We have joined forces with St Helen and St Katharine school's Eco-Committee to raise awareness across both our communities.



The Missing 2000

This term saw the launch of The Missing 2000 which explores a number of different ways independent and state schools work together to help the most disadvantaged students achieve their aspirations. Abingdon School in Partnership, ASiP, is proud to be represented as one of the case studies and the academic mentoring scheme which is referred to, has now been running for three years and has seen hundreds of students from schools across the town collaborate with one another to help build self-confidence and improve academic outcomes.

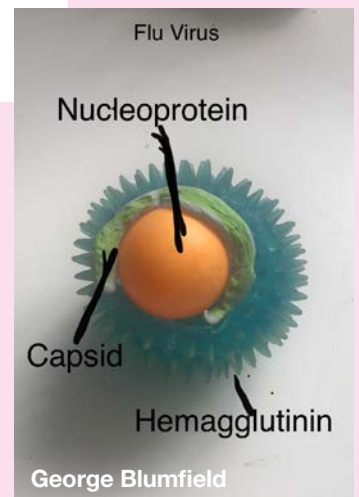
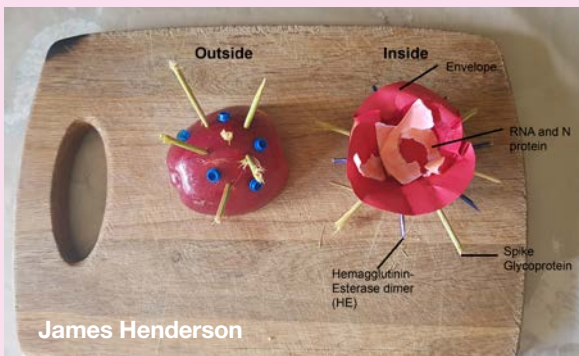
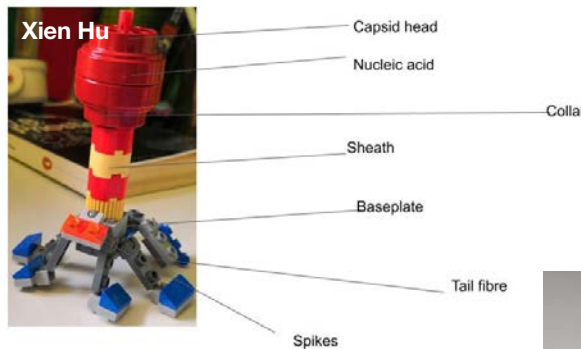
Eco-Awareness

Abingdon and St Helen's Eco-Committees joined forces to run an Eco-Awareness Week in the second half of term. The committees created an 'Eco-Thought for the day' for staff and pupils with video clips, links to articles and challenges to consider. Topics raised included deforestation, bushfires, the impact on cold environments and food waste.



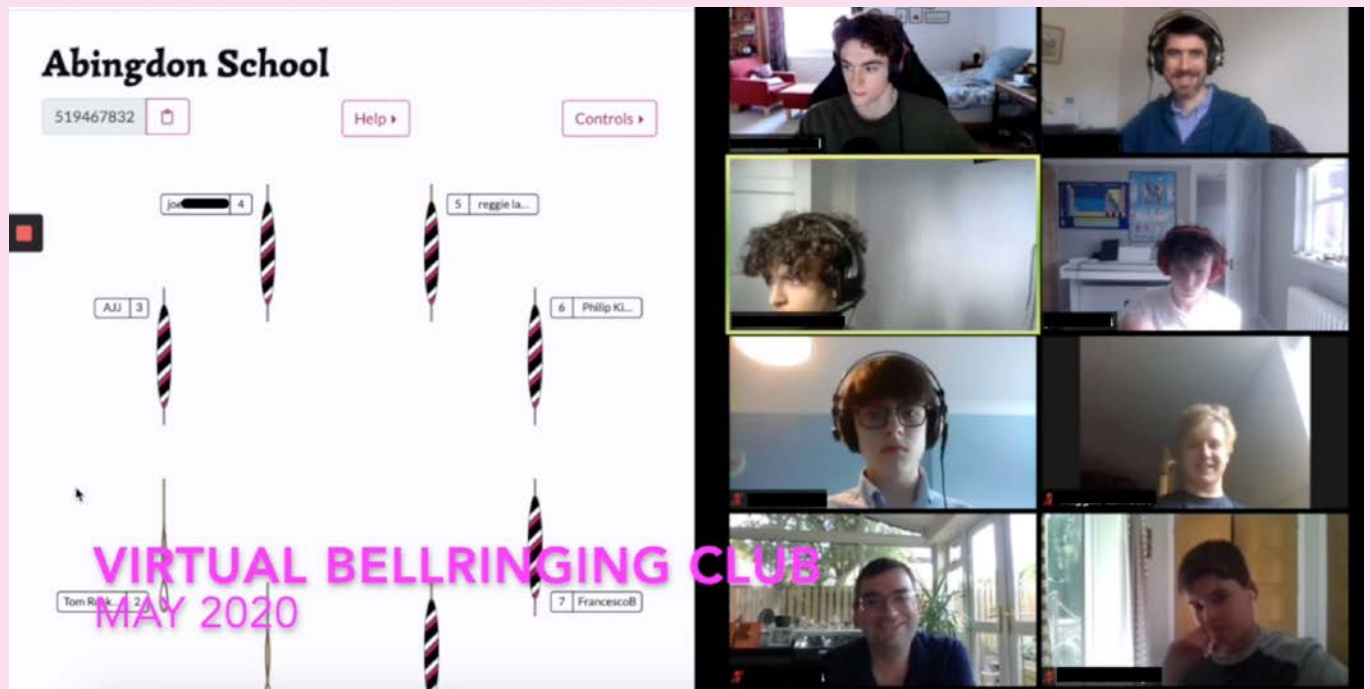
Modelling microbes

Year 1 has been studying microbes in biology and, to finish the topic, they were tasked with creating and making a model to represent an aspect of their learning. Making models is an important part of biology enabling an appreciation of structures in 3D and how structure is related to function. Boys were encouraged to use any available resource at home.



Remote bellringing

The Bellringing Club is undaunted by lockdown, managing to ring remotely with technology coming to the rescue. Watch the [video](#)



Kitchen Chemistry

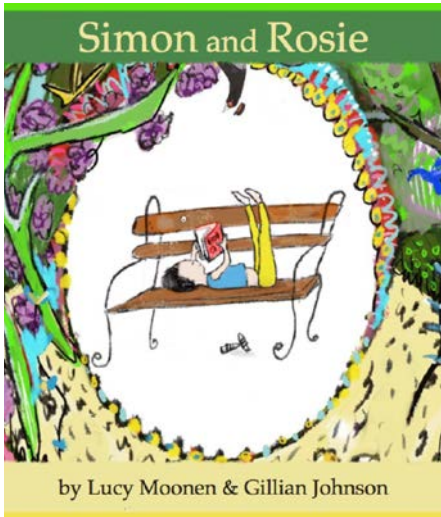
As part of the Acids and Alkalis topic, first year chemistry classes took place in everyone's kitchens as the boys made acid-base indicators from various plants including red cabbage, tulip petals, blueberry juice and red grape juice. The boys had fun finding out which indicator worked best whilst only mildly trashing their parents' kitchens! Red cabbage proved to be the best indicator and many boys rose to the challenge of using various household substances of different pH values to create a rainbow of colours.



Lower School Superheroes

Lower School's Taskmaster Challenge 4 was to "become a superhero and demonstrate your powers". Teleportation proved popular and it was good to see a jedi in impressive form, but the winner was William Lyon aka The Amazing Pigeon Man! Watch the [video](#).





Abingdon's Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning, Lucy Moonen, and award-winning illustrator Gillian Johnson, have put pen to paper to write a book to provide a gentle introduction to conversations about COVID-19 with very young children. *Simon and Rosie* is a tale of friendship, loneliness, imagination and self-acceptance.

The story is available as a free download at www.SimonandRosie.com. A voluntary donation to the NHS is suggested via www.NHSSharitiestogether.co.uk, in recognition of the heroic work it is doing to combat the pandemic.



Cosmic mining

Over the last year, three lower sixth students have participated in the Cosmic Mining Project hosted by the Institute for Research in Schools (IRIS) in collaboration with the James Webb Telescope science team. The aim of the project is to assist the scientists in identifying potentially interesting target objects to investigate in more detail using the enhanced instrumentation available on the James Webb Space Telescope due for launch next March.

Ashwin Tennant, Scott Yap and Ivan Gabestro worked together to learn the methods needed to identify the spectra of various types of stellar objects and then applied these to identification of several training sets of data. The James Webb team then sent feedback and analysis hints from the training sets until the Abingdon team was judged to be sufficiently competent to work on unseen data sets, the ones the scientists are really interested in analysing. Ashwin, Scott and Ivan have produced a video presentation on their project, no mean feat whilst being at home during lockdown in Oxford, Moscow and Hong Kong. This can be viewed [here](#).

**ABINGDON PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOLS
SCIENCE COORDINATORS' GROUP
SUMMER TERM MEETING 2020
START TIME 4PM**

Locked Down But Not Out!

Outdoor and Environmental Learning Opportunities

<p>Speakers:</p> <p>Ian Nutt, Earth Trust Lucy Radford, Sumatran Orangutan Society Sylvia Knight, Royal Meteorological Society Holly Irving, Caldecott Primary School</p>	<p>Dates for 2020-21:</p> <p>Thu 12 Nov – Lessons from Lockdown, a chance to discuss issues and share ideas from teaching science during the lockdown</p> <p>Thu 11 Feb – Teaching physics topics at KS1 and KS2 with Jeremy Thomas, Ogdon Trust Primary Physics Trainer and Institute of Physics Coach</p> <p>Thu 20 May – Doing Science Outdoors, Outdoors?</p>	<p>Please could you complete this online questionnaire for Ian and the Earth Trust:</p> <p>https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PD9RLBT</p> <p>The link will also be in the Zoom Chat box</p>
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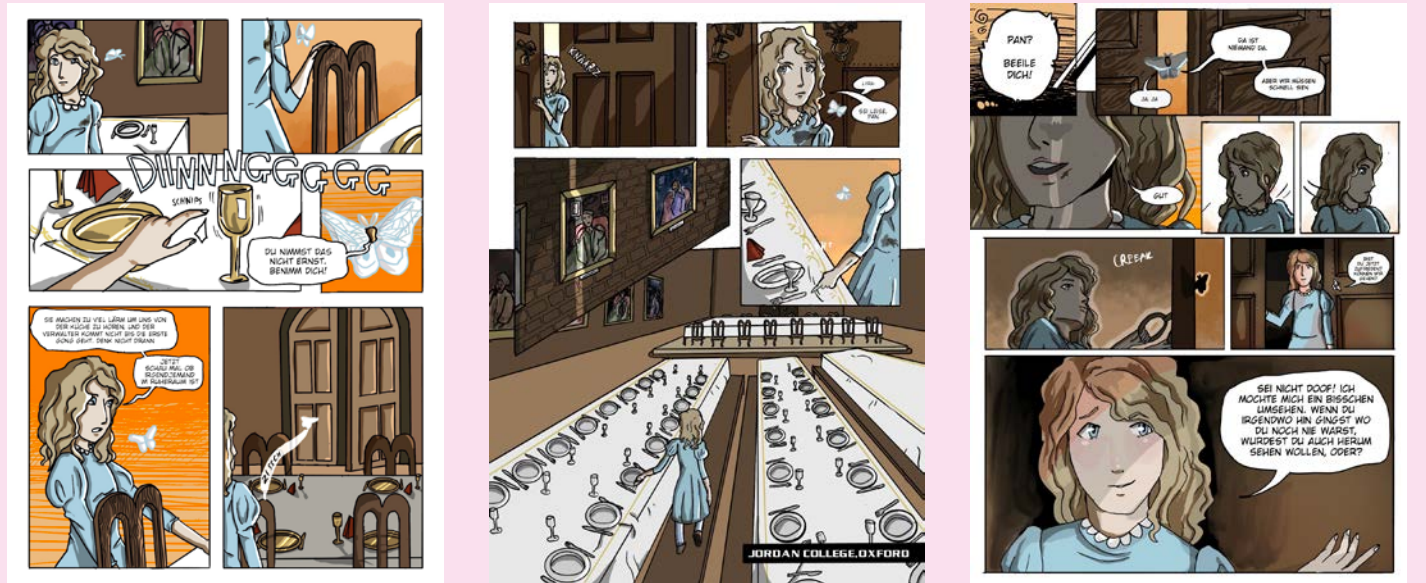
ASP hosts Science Coordinators

The ASP hosted its first ever remote meeting of the Abingdon Partnership of Schools Science Coordinators' Specialist Group. The theme, which had been decided before this academic year started, was, rather ironically, Outdoor and Environmental Learning Opportunities. However, one of the positive benefits of remote meetings is that they can attract a larger number of participants and speakers from further afield. On this occasion there were 19 participants from primary and secondary schools in Abingdon and from as far afield as Blackburn and Portsmouth.

County Winner – Poetry by Heart

Congratulations to lower sixth former Kit Matthews who won the Poetry by Heart county competition. Kit performed an extract from Milton's Paradise Lost and impressed the judges by his mature and intelligent interpretation. Watch the [performance](#).





Dark Materials in German

As a language project, first year pupil, Samuel Price, has been adapting Philip Pullman's *Dark Materials* into a beautiful comic book with German speech bubbles.

A group of keen linguists has also begun learning Russian on Wednesday afternoons as part of the Other Half programme.

Donnelly's vegetarian week

Donnelly's House has been thinking about their impact on the environment and the third year tried a vegetarian week including cooking a vegetarian pasta dish for their families. The boys also thought about where our food comes from and what they can do as a House to reduce their environmental impact.

Other entries



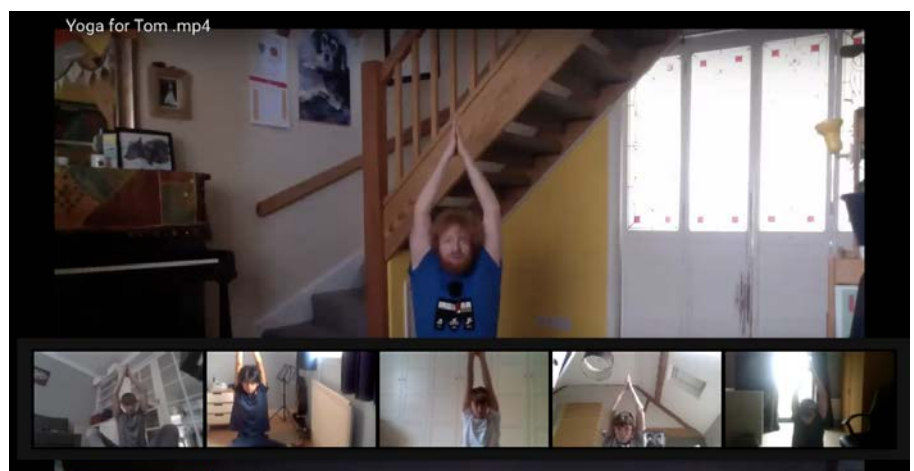
Round 7 – Logos



Lower School ASPA quiz

Over 60 lower school families joined Zoom for an ASPA quiz night. Hosted live by quizmaster, Mr Jenkins, the teams tackled a series of fiendishly difficult questions on topics as diverse as famous movie lines, Abingdon anagrams, and chocolate bars! Two "bonus breakout room rounds" allowed some socialising between the families. Congratulations to The McRae-zies who narrowly pipped The Brinsons to victory by 1 point.

The Donnelly House boys also had the opportunity to connect with themselves, and each other in a morning's yoga and meditation class, under the guidance of Mr Barnes. It provided a different and beneficial start to a day of virtual learning.



Prize Giving and Leavers' Service

On Saturday 20 June we held our annual Prize Giving and Leavers' Service, which this year merged into one Zoom Webinar, given the current restrictions. Prize Giving is enjoyed by the leavers and prize winners and their parents, the staff and governors of the school, and also many prize donors.

We said a final warm goodbye to our upper sixth leavers, and marked their many and varied achievements; this year the leavers have missed many of the traditional end of year events, and so Prize Giving was a very special milestone.

Speakers were Professor Mike Stevens, Chairman of Governors; Mr Mike Windsor, Headmaster; the Revd Dr Simon Steer, Chaplain; and the two retiring Heads of School, Jimmy Strainge and Louis Renouf. Mr Dawswell, Second Master, read out the prize winners and their citations.

The Chairman of Governors thanked all the staff and boys for their hard work, creativity and resilience in dealing with the very particular challenges of this academic year. He highlighted the importance of courage when faced with difficult times.

The Headmaster reflected on the experience of living through pre- and post-Covid, and particularly on the experience of the leavers. He said how he hoped that all our leavers move forward with an optimistic and confident view of their future. He gave thanks to those members of staff leaving Abingdon at the end of term, and particularly to Jenny and Ian Fishpool who between them have given 67 years of service to the School with roles including, between them, Head of Department, Housemaster, Professional Tutor, Senior Teacher, and CCF Officer.



Heads of School with the Headmaster

Speaking about his time at Abingdon, Head of School, Jimmy Strainge said:

'I would not change a single thing about my journey through Abingdon - not even the somewhat unfair home straight. Every single achievement, obstacle and relationship has played a key role in who I am today and it's safe to say I have come quite a way since that first day of Third Year all those years ago.'

And fellow Head of School, Louis Renouf concluded:

'I have absolutely loved my time at Abingdon. I knew how great it was whilst I was there, but now I have left, I look back with an increasing sense of gratitude and pleasure. Strange as it seems, I would be happy to do it all again so I could do all the things that I didn't do the first time round.'

View the Prize Giving [video](#).

The boat plane car machine



Josh

There is a snorkel sprouting out of the back of the cabin so that the person inside can breathe when the craft is completely submerged in water. It has a wide wingspan so that it can stay in the air with its size and has large wheels so that it can cover large off road distances quickly. The Tires can be used to keep the craft afloat and the propeller in the back helps it move

Benjamin Byrne

This plane is designed to be stealthy and quick through air. Instead of wheels, it has skis so that it can land in cold and snowy places! The skis also act as a buoyancy aid so that it can land and take off on water safely.



Lego Architecture Club

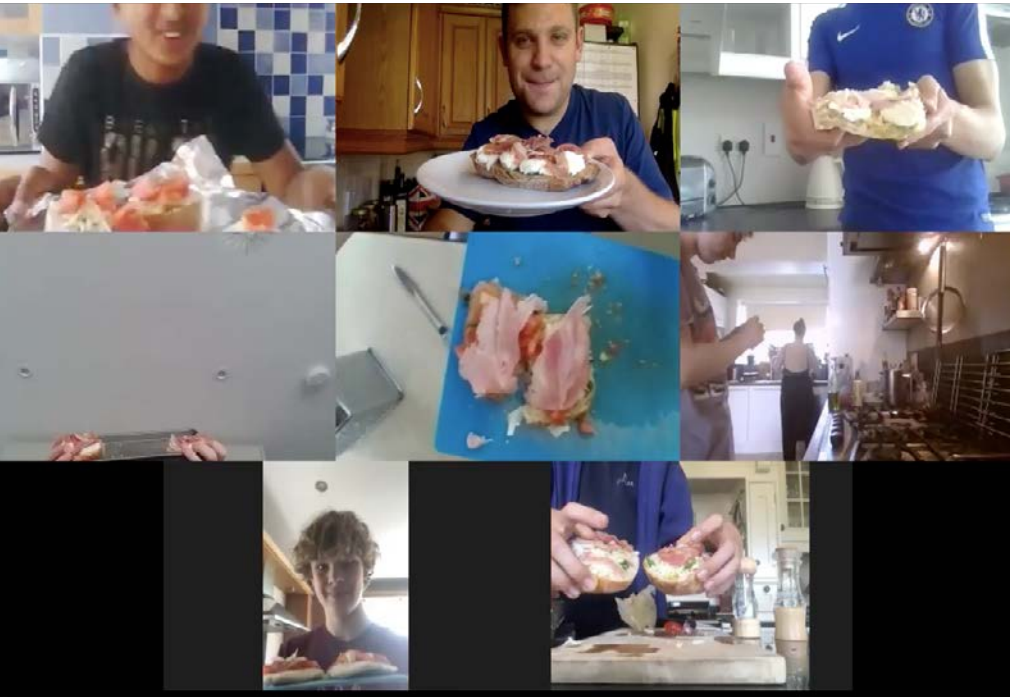
During lockdown upper sixth former, James McRae, has taken a leading role in the Club and has been setting the boys' tasks. Although restricted to Lego builds rather than architecture, due to the limited Lego boys had at home, the builds were nonetheless very creative.

Bertie Bellman



Here are a bunch of lego soldiers fighting for the precious ores and diamonds, which is on the top of a high pyramid.





Bruschetta Tutorial

Mr Phillips' third year tutor group took part in a live cook a long in tutor period. They made a parma ham, mozzarella, basil, tomato and garlic bruschetta together, with some very inventive substitutions for unavailable ingredients!

Inventive Lower School

The final Lower School Taskmaster Challenge of term was to make and demonstrate an invention. Joint winners were Benedict Donald for his water pistol washer up and Matthew Stone for his sibling swapper.

Watch the [video](#).



Tasty Pre-U French lessons

Fifth year boys enjoyed making and sampling macarons de Saint-Emilion in their last French lesson as part of their introduction to Pre-U French. Beating egg whites proved to be quite a challenge for some, but in the end, they all did a very good job and enjoyed eating their home made "macarons" with their family!



Second year drama

Second Year boys have been studying the work of Frantic Assembly and DV8 in drama lessons, and have been creating physical theatre pieces inspired by their work. Watch the [video](#).



Countdown Champions

Teams from each of the lower school tutor groups battled it out in the annual Countdown Challenge, demonstrating their skills with letters and numbers. The grand final saw first year champions 1J take on second year winners 2P. In a very close contest, it was still all to play for when it got to the final conundrum. 1J proved that little bit quicker on the buzzer and were crowned the victors for 2020.



The COVID results - GCSE and A Levels 2020

by Graeme May, Deputy Head Academic



Abingdon's move to being a fully online venture was remarkably swift and, as some parents said to us, seemingly achieved with the wave of a magic wand over one weekend. Of course, like the magician's trick, there was a tremendous amount of preparatory work, which started for us back when the idea of school closure was still being loudly pooh-poohed by some. And there should be no underestimation of the amount of additional work and energy it has taken to sustain the quality of provision over the whole of the summer term. But it is a sign of the quality of Abingdon's teaching staff that the feedback from parents and students has been so strongly positive and, like the crowd cheering at the side of a race, the effect of that support on the morale of staff has been tangible and very gratefully received.

However, just doing the teaching, tutoring and what Other Half it was feasible to undertake, has been only part of the story this term. Because there was the little matter of deciding every GCSE, A Level and Pre-U grade for each of our students...

I've been in teaching long enough to remember the several pros and cons of Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) because, when I started teaching, English GCSE grades were awarded entirely on coursework performance. So, it was with some awareness of the problems and pitfalls that Abingdon has just undertaken the process, at relatively short notice, of submitting all grades at all levels on effectively the same basis as we used to award English. Technically, of course, we haven't 'awarded' the grades - only exam boards can do that - and our CAGs are currently undergoing a statistical process with the boards who may make different decisions as to where to draw grade boundaries. What the boards won't do, however, is alter the rank order that we have given them and it was therefore the issue of ranking that took up the bulk of the time that Heads of Department spent on this process over the first half of the summer term.

Fortunately, we had two robust pieces of data from which to begin the process, as both 5th and U6th groups did a summer exam last year and then mock exams this year. Using those results gave us as good a starting point as anything, though they were far from being the end of the story. We then added into the recipe the reliable data we also had for each subject. That included such things as marks for coursework where that had been completed, the actual GCSE orals for MFL subjects, other cohort-wide testing that may have happened outside of formal internal exams, in-class testing conducted by class teachers and, where it could be reliably gathered, data from work done during the first weeks of the summer term. Having spent 90% of the time working on the rank order, we then applied to the current cohorts the historical grades profile for each subject to suggest where to draw grade boundaries.

It was a painstaking process that involved, if you were to total up all the individual hours spent on it by teachers and Heads of Department, several hundred hours of work - work that we would usually have been handing over to the exam boards to do. Writing now that we have submitted what adds up to nearly 2,400 individual 'results' to the exam boards, I can say how immensely proud I am of Abingdon's teachers, and particularly Heads of Department, for the way they rose to the occasion and put the work in to try to make our submission as robust and fair as it could be. It's not necessarily something I'd ideally be wanting to do again, but I do feel very strongly that our detailed knowledge and experience was applied from a sound foundation in evidence and data to produce a fair and secure submission to the exam boards.

I have no doubt that some students will feel they could/would have done better than the grades they receive in August and that some will feel they have benefitted from their results being decided this way. We know that's inevitable but it's no different from the way each 'normal' August some students have always felt that they were not well served by the exam system and some surprise themselves (and us!) by how far they've apparently leapt between the end of formal teaching and the actual exams. We stand ready now to see what the exam boards do with our suggested gradings and, like everyone else, we have to wait until August to know that outcome. At least, for anyone who feels dissatisfied with grades that this system produces for them, there should be an opportunity to 'prove them wrong' in the autumn.

Further details on how predicted grades were evaluated can be found [here](#).



Pastoral Life in Lockdown

by Mark Hindley, Deputy Head Pastoral

It seems aeons ago that none of us had heard of Zoom, when flying abroad was something taken for granted, and when no one had spent an evening doing a virtual pub-less quiz. When lockdown came, a key issue for us all was how we could stay connected with our pupils, and ensure that they felt supported while history unfolded around them.

It was for this reason that going online for lessons was accompanied by a robust programme of pastoral care. Every day tutors see each of their tutees for registration via a Zoom video link, enabling staff to ensure students

are coping, and to encourage the boys to feel connected with each other, with staff, and with the school. Tutors also have weekly one to one catch up chats with their tutees. Assemblies and Chapel have carried on, and there have been all sorts of initiatives to bring boys in the houses together – whether that has been virtual pizza nights, online horse racing, or even running around the world.

As well as putting in place this support framework, everyone has been encouraged to look after themselves and keep their Other Half going. Tutors have been asking boys to get outside,

to help others, and to try something new. Building independence and resilience have been the watchwords of lockdown.

Remote education is no replacement for the experience of being surrounded by the buzz of school life, bumping into peers and staff, being physically in the classroom, and being able to walk next to someone and share an emotion. However, there have been silver linings that we will take out of the whole experience: one of these is that the shared sense of displacement between staff and pupils has helped to build even stronger pastoral relationships.

Youth Mental Health

Head of Wellbeing, Reverend Paul Gooding, was recently interviewed by local clinical psychologist, Dr Rebekah Tennyson, for an episode of the mental health podcast 'A Drop in the Bucket'. He spoke about the importance of helping students with their mental fitness, including the role of Youth Mental Health First Aid courses which have been made available to teaching staff at Abingdon School and across the local partnership schools. The episode is available from Monday 6th July through Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Stitcher, as well as at dropinthebucket.buzzsprout.com.



Lower School Exhibition

Lower school boys held an online exhibition with their tutors in which they showcased a piece of academic work or something that they have done in the Other Half that they are particularly proud of. A very wide range of subjects and activities was discussed and it was particularly encouraging to see so much creativity and reflective writing on display.



Extreme housework

Lower School Taskmaster Challenge 5 was to demonstrate an extreme form of housework! Congratulations to Ned Coombs for his winning entry. Watch the [video](#).



Slowing down the Lower School

The sixth task master challenge for the lower school boys was to "do something really cool in slow motion". Congratulations to Matthew Stone for his winning entry, an impressive reverse egg drop! Watch the [video](#).

ASiP Peer Support training

Fifty lower sixth students from John Mason, Fitzharrys, St Helen's and Abingdon met for an ASiP Peer Support Lead virtual training session with Debbie Lee from King Alfred's Academy, Wantage. The training involved looking at listening skills and ideas around the impact of school closure on loneliness. Members of staff were enormously impressed with the contributions from the students and the excellent quality of training from Debbie Lee.



ABINGDON SCIENCE PARTNERSHIP

Primary Science Club continues undaunted

The team of Science Ambassadors, who faithfully run the Primary Science Club for local children every Tuesday in term time, has continued with determination to bring fun science to their customers, lockdown or not. They continue to meet remotely every week, discussing and allocating tasks, testing activities and then writing up instruction sheets to be shared via a dedicated Primary Science Club page on the [Abingdon Science Partnership website](#).

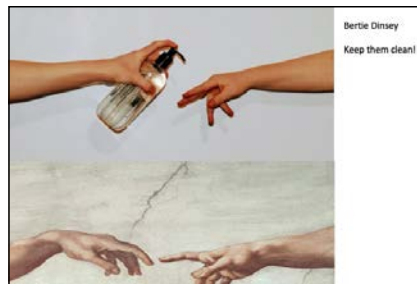
O'Doherty's Photo Competition

Boys in O'Doherty's House have been set a weekly photo challenge during lockdown. Themes have ranged from 'animals' through to 'colourful' and boys have taken some outstandingly well-composed and exciting photos. There has been a winner and prize each week and Mrs O'Doherty hopes to collate all the photos into a photo book at the end of term.



The Art Lockdown Competition

The task was to recreate a copy of a famous painting in photographic form. Students could express how living in these unusual times feels in their work. The competition encouraged the boys to have fun with photography, drama and art history. Take a look at other fantastic copies [here](#).





Adopting a Panda

Lower school boys have been earning lots of Other Half and academic 'Praises' this term but have not had the chance to collect their usual edible rewards in assemblies. As an alternative, they were given the option for a 25p donation to be made to the World Wide Fund for Nature for every Praise they were given. So many of the boys were keen to do this that over £60 has been raised since the start of lockdown, enough to adopt an animal. All the boys have voted and decided to support a Giant Panda with their donation.



Gardening Delights

Third year gardeners have been developing both their horticultural and photography skills this term, with some beautiful results.



Congratulations to the following prize winners:

Lower School -

1st prize: *Remember to get the shopping* by Pranit Narain (2nd Year)

Highly Commended: *The Day of the Pandemic* by Fynn Ratcliffe (1st Year)

Middle School -

1st Prize: *The Square* by Oliver Clark (3rd Year)

Highly Commended: *Thankful* by Callum Aiken (4th Year),
Vixen by Alasdair Emmett (5th Year)

Upper School -

1st Prize: *Coronavirus, Teenagers and Mental Health* by Patrick Heath (U6)

Highly Commended: *COVID* by Sam King (L6)

Ta-da!

The seventh lower school taskmaster challenge was to camouflage and then reveal yourself. Congratulations to Tom Saunders for his ironing board-based winning entry. Take a look at the short but entertaining **video**.



Abingdon School
Online Open Morning
Saturday 3 October
10.30am-11.30am

Sixth Form
Online Open Evening
Tuesday 13 October
6.30pm

Black Lives Matter

and the Abingdon School History curriculum

by Nicholas Knowland, *Head of History*



BLM emerged as an organised movement in 2013, following the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 by police in the USA, and it favours non-violent civil disobedience, principally against police brutality towards African-American people. It is worth remembering, however, that the overall Black Lives Matter movement is a decentralised network that attracts support from a vast range of groups. Since the murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, awareness of the

Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has rocketed on a global level. This includes sister movements in the UK. Interestingly, in 2017 the UK government published an independent report into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system. Many, or most, of the recommendations are yet to be actioned. So this particular issue rumbles on, and the recommendations in that report are as yet unattended to. While the BLM protests have rightly drawn attention to the issue of police brutality towards black people in America, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on black and Asian communities has simultaneously shone a light on the broader, grave inequalities that are woven deep into the fabric of UK society and its institutions (as well as those of other nations).

As images of protestors taking to the streets during a pandemic adorned our televisions in June, a national, and international, debate about systemic inequalities that hinder the chances of BAME communities was reignited. One strand of the debate made front-page news when statues were either torn down, or taken down, across European cities. These included that of Edward Colston, in Bristol, King Leopold II in Antwerp and many Confederate statues in the USA. The movement to move the statue of Cecil Rhodes outside Oriel College, Oxford University, into a museum also gathers pace; this is yet another contested issue. Apparent acts of 'retaliation' have since been perpetrated in the following weeks, with black actor Alfred Fagon's statue in Bristol being covered in a corrosive substance and two headstones marking the grave of a man born into slavery were smashed, with a chalked message nearby declaring: 'Now look what you made me do. Stop protesting...put Colston's statue back or things will really heat up.' Of course, the protests will not stop. And in a country where free speech is treasured, they should not and perhaps will not stop. Nor will the national conversation about statues, what history is, what school history is for and how school history curriculums should be shaped.

Teaching black history properly means we are delivering an intellectually rigorous curriculum that is true to the historian's craft.

History departments across the country are continuously engaged in good, intellectually rigorous dialogue about how to construct a curriculum. There are many constraints placed upon history teachers at the national level: the fact it is not a compulsory subject to GCSE and limited timetable space are just two of them. Black history is already integrated into the Abingdon school curriculum, notably in the Second Year and the Third Year. We look at African kingdoms pre-colonisation, black Tudors, the important role of Equiano and other black abolitionists in the move to abolish the slave trade and the crucial role of black soldiers in both World Wars. Should we do 'more'? Yes, but the questions are 'how?' and 'why?', rather than solely 'what?'

Colonialism as a concept triggers deep emotional and intellectually valid responses across the political spectrum. For many, the 'great age of imperialism' precipitated phenomenal advances and it is seen as an era synonymous with engines of progress, notably commerce and free trade. However, it is also vital to reveal the damaging effects of colonialism including its legacy on race relations and the way in which 18th and 19th century slavery created racial hierarchies. The argument that 'slavery has been around for centuries, so what is the fuss?' is facile. The term 'slave', of course, finds its origins in the word Slav, a term that has a contested etymology but is associated today with peoples of eastern Europe. It would be a leap to contend that Muslim-Slavic relations shape race relations in, say, modern Spain were we to look back on the legacy of Muslim rule in Al-Andalus. The position of black people in the UK is a live issue with a complex and directly relevant recent history. However, by focusing exclusively on issues of exploitation and subjugation we do a disservice to black history. That is why engaging with organisations such as Justice2History and AfricanKingdoms.co.uk is important - teaching pre-colonial African histories, for instance, tackles the myth that African histories are the history of slavery, primitive cultures and backwardness. Furthermore, many African societies showed dynamism and initiative during colonial times. The narrative is not one simply shrouded in hapless victimhood and oppression. In addition, although exploitation is a consistent theme in colonial history, there are other strands to many empires across history - we could include the Mughal Empire here (which pupils study in the Second Year at Abingdon) - and exploring these tackles the reductionist analysis that empires are exclusively a history of exploitation.



Interestingly, at the time of writing this piece, the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has pushed back on calls to decolonise the curriculum stating that “we should be incredibly proud of our history because time and time and time again, this country has made a difference and changed things for the better, right around the world”. This strikes right at the core of what school history is for and this statement is one that sits uncomfortably for many. Politicians have often failed to distinguish between history and memory. In 2013, then Education Secretary Michael Gove was forced to backtrack on his initial proposals for a new history curriculum with the draft stating its purpose was to investigate ‘how the British people shaped this nation and how Britain influenced the world’. Simon Schama, his curriculum adviser, criticised this for intellectual, less moral, reasons, arguing Britain was also shaped by the wider world. Gove did argue for some inclusiveness, but he was not helped by PM Cameron’s statement that history should tell ‘our island story in all its glory’. The draft was ultimately redrafted. Yet history is not simply an alternative parade of heroes of the left, from the Levellers to the Tolpuddle Martyrs, to Keir Hardie and Aneurin Bevan. As Professor Richard Evans of Wolfson College, Cambridge, puts it, ‘this kind of approach shows a crass failure to understand what history is about’. He continues that ‘nor is

history a matter of awarding ticks and crosses to the people of the past, canonising some as heroes and damning others as villains. Arguing about whether the British empire was a Good Thing or a Bad Thing is puerile and has nothing to do with the serious study of the past. Of course, we need critical and enquiring study of the British empire in our schools. But the aim should be to understand it – why it came into being, how it sustained itself for so long, and how it came to an end (and yes, what role slavery played, and why it was abolished) – not to praise empire on the one hand or damn it on the other.’

History is an academic discipline and teaching it means that we help our students to read historical documents in a critical fashion, assess interpretations and processes. That means a breadth of history, warts and all. A narrow curriculum means we are not teaching history, but rather a tapered view of the past that obfuscates the wonderful complexities of the very discipline of history. Thus teaching black history properly means we are delivering an intellectually rigorous curriculum that is true to the historian’s craft. That, in my view, is the very best reason for moving beyond a Eurocentric history curriculum.



Run the world update

Eight weeks ago the Abingdon community set themselves the challenge to run the circumference of the world (40075km) in the hope it would inspire people to keep moving during the lockdown period. The Strava club started with just 20 runners but has now grown to over 200 members. It has been fascinating to learn about places along the route, both of the natural world as well as the history behind some of the oldest trade routes known to man. Having run 19,626km at the time of writing, we now find ourselves island hopping through the Philippines.

Abingdon Music and Drama

Looking back on Musical Activities in 2019-20

The year started with the still vivid memories of our Far East Tour to Japan and Hong Kong - a remarkable experience for the 75 boys - homestays with Japanese families, joint concerts in Tokyo and Nagoya, new-found and lasting friendships forged with the pupils of the Toho High School marching band.

Highlights of the Michaelmas Term included the House Singing Competition, a memorable joint Evensong with the choir of Merton College, Oxford and a Chapel Choir trip to sing at Mercers' Hall. We had masterclasses for pianists and cellists, a JCS concert - Norwegian composer, Gjello's, *Sunrise Mass* - and the Christmas Concerts, featuring the beautiful playing of Alex Glover in the *Bruch Violin Concerto*.

The Lent Term will be remembered in particular for the outstanding Singers' Opera Masterclass and Workshop, a Jazz alumni event with musicians, past and present, and the concert of the Martin Speake International Jazz Quartet. The lockdown came the day after our cancelled Spring Concert, though we were still able to rehearse, film and broadcast the *Elgar Cello Concerto* (Joe Bradley) and the *Chopin Second Piano Concerto* (David Bicarregui).

In the summer we shifted gear to maintain the momentum of the majority of lessons and ensembles online, sometimes sharing performances with the Abingdon community. Simon Currie's "remote band project" ensemble performance gave

us cheering news over Easter, showing the jazz musicians on mobile phone recordings, edited and mixed. Academic teaching required new teaching and learning skills, bringing often unexpected and inspiring results.

Whilst we regret the loss of those end of year musical rites of passage – the final concerts and concertos, the Leavers' Service, the planned musical riverboat cruise, it has been heart-warming to see the cheerful resourcefulness and resilience of our teachers and their pupils as they have continued their work online. We are looking forward to resuming our activities when we return to a new but different normal when we can once more share the joy of making music together.

Lower School Gala Concert - with a difference...



The Remote Lower School Gala Concert was an Abingdon first with the lower school students demonstrating their artistic vibrancy and many of them putting together fantastic performances. The recitals included a kazoo quartet, playing glasses, self-made music videos, classical performances, self-made rock bands and the ever popular House Singing Competition 2019 winning performance.

It has been really heartening to see so many of the Lower School continue to use music as an artistic outlet. It is testament to their dedication and enthusiasm for musical performances that they took it upon themselves to practise, record and submit these performances, and for that they should be applauded. Watch the [video](#).

Learning the harp

First year pupil, Mark Hanlon, took up the harp six months ago and in this video you can hear him playing *Home at the Hearth* by Ailie Robertson. Mark is the third Abingdon pupil to have taken up the harp thanks to the initiative and kind financial support of David Allen, OA. Our aim is to have a harpist in each of the seven years of the school. Watch the [video](#).



Tchaikovsky's Canzonetta

Congratulations to Boco To for his fine performance in this video of Tchaikovsky's Canzonetta from the Violin Concerto, which he recorded at home in Hong Kong. Mrs Pringle, Boco's violin teacher, said, 'I made MP3 accompaniments for pupils so that they can practise and play along just as in lessons - and learn another skill of listening even more intently'. Watch the [video](#).

The Licc

Fourth year, Jake Morris, enjoyed experimenting with the Licc. The Licc is a short syncopated loop regarded as "the most famous jazz cliché ever". Using it as the repeated loop for the main section of the piece, Jake assembled several instrumental parts on top of it, made up of drums and some vibrant resounding chords. He then improvised a melody on the keyboard using a reverberating piano sound. Jake assembled the arrangement on Ableton Live. Listen [here](#).

Here comes the sun

As part of the Celebration of the Arts online festival, Gospel Choir had a virtual gathering to perform 'Here comes the sun'. Listen [here](#).



Duet with a difference

Jamie Kilroy in the Third Year, filmed himself twice playing his clarinet, using a phone and iMovie, and stitched the clips together. It resulted in this charming duet of Schubert's *Wiegenlied*.

Listen to the [duet](#).



Drama

First and second year boys have been working on creating a diary entry as a character from a short scene they wrote themselves. They then performed these in character and recorded them, using some excellent costumes, props and special effects.

Third year boys have been thinking about what makes good playwriting, and taking inspiration from theatre companies who have adapted their usual craft for lockdown, through doing things such as comedy sketches online. They have written their own plays and comedy sketches and filmed themselves performing them.

Watch the [video](#).

Abingdon Sport

Staying active

Since we have been remote learning the Sport & PE Department has been encouraging all boys to #StayActive and although there are lots of live Zoom lessons and sport specific tasks being set, we are also encouraging the boys to go beyond the 'new normal'.

Each week boys have been submitting short videos of their sporting exploits. This **video montage** shows just a few of the activities.



Global Running Day

Elliot Birkbeck, who teaches athletics and cross-country, set the standard for the Global Running Day on 3 June running 50km from his home to Henley. Elliot reflects on the challenge [here](#).



Director of Rugby, Matthew Gold, has been honing his podcasting skills and in this edition he interviews England and Abingdon Fly Half, Charlie Atkinson who shortly begins a three-year professional contract with Wasps Rugby. Charlie leaves school this year having played in the 1st XV for the past two years and was Vice Captain last season. Charlie toured South Africa with England Rugby U18s. Topics discussed include: Charlie's rugby pathway, overcoming challenges, sacrifices, managing academics and rugby, and school memories.

Listen to the podcast.

Sporting simulations

During the first stage of lockdown, when sport was only allowed from home, two lower sixth formers found inventive ways of practising their hobbies. View the **video**.



Lower School sports day

With lockdown preventing the lower school boys gathering for sports day, the PE department organised a Virtual Garden Games live via zoom.



After a few personal words of encouragement and inspiration from former British long-distance runner Paula Radcliffe (MBE) all the boys competed in six events: a cereal box jump, throwing & catching tasks, a standing long jump, shuttle run and the grand finale a toilet roll keep-up challenge. All the boys gave it their best efforts, providing plenty of fun and encouragement for each other along the way. It was fantastic to see both the friendly competitiveness but also the level of enthusiasm and camaraderie. The overall results saw 1J and 2P narrow victors in the separate year group competitions.

Geraint Jones talks to the Lower School



Lower school cricketers enjoyed an online Q&A with ex-England cricketer, Geraint Jones MBE. Over 130 lower school boys and staff had the opportunity to ask questions about the sport and the most memorable moments in Geraint's illustrious career, including 'that catch' in the 2005 Edgbaston Ashes Test. Geraint also shared technical advice and a few wicket keeping drills that the boys could replicate at home. [View the Q&A.](#)



Middle School Sports Day

The Middle School Sports Day also took place via zoom this year. The third year event was unfortunately hit by the weather, so had to be adapted at the last minute into the "Indoor Games" but this didn't deter from the enthusiasm and energy on show. It proved a very even contest, with the event winners being shared around: Austin won the Target Throw and Standing Long Jump; Border's the Cereal Box Jump; School House the Shuttle runs; James' the Catching and Franklin's the Keepy Ups.

Consistency across the disciplines proved decisive though as O'Doherty's took the title just ahead of School House in 2nd with Border's and James' closely behind in joint 3rd.

The fourth year event was an equally enjoyable and fun afternoon. It proved to be a slightly more one-sided affair in the end with O'Doherty's dominating most events, however School House came out on top in the Target Throw and lots of excellent individual performances were recorded throughout the afternoon.

Well done to all the boys who took part.



Harry Wildgoose - 2nd Year

Celebration of the Arts

The festival of the arts was planned to showcase Abingdon's art, music and drama. Unfortunately the lockdown put paid to the physical festival so a taste of music, drama and art that would have been celebrated is now on the [website](#) and throughout this edition of Abingdon News.



Steve Lin - U6th

Toby Hammond - 4th Year



Louis Chan - 4th Year

Luc Tucker - 5th Year Pre A-level
Tin of Beans



Ethan Chen - 5th Year Pre A-level





Close Up Drawing
Cross section of my pencil
Leon Guan 4th year



Freddy Chelsom - 4th Year



Joshua Broadbent - 5th Year Pre A-level



Oliver Pritchard - 4th Year

Sam Penrose - L6th



Thomas Owen - L6th
Casting Experiments

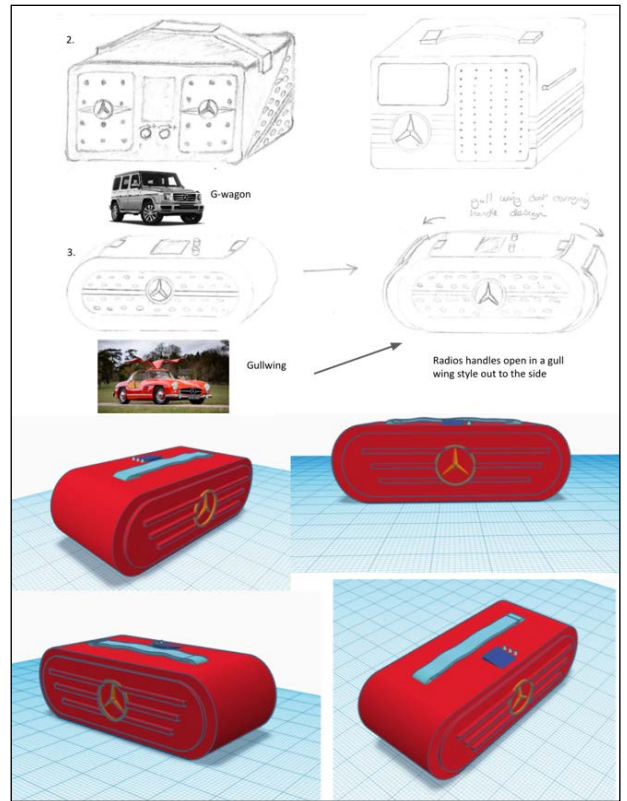


Abingdon Design and Technology

Although the delivery of a practical subject in lockdown has had its challenges the boys have risen to the occasion and shown some great innovative ways to develop and model in 3D along with exploring the CAD software.



The upper sixth students were challenged to model a 'design classic' to support their designers and design movement topics.



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2 integrated spaces for all iPhones with wireless charging built right in. Gives you the power to be you all day long and charge anytime. Fast.



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GRIVEL
ROCKFAX SPEAKER

FEATURING
IP67 WATERPROOFING - 3MM SHOCK
ABSORBING BUMPER - BLUETOOTH 5.0 -
360 DEGREES AUDIO - 12 HOURS BATTERY
LIFE - CARABINER HOOK



The fifth year boys started to prepare for the A-level product design course by analysing the brand identity of some of their favourite companies. They then had to identify a gap in their product line and develop a potential concept for a 'Dragons Den' style launch.



EXISTING PRODUCT RESEARCH - RESEARCH HOW CARDBOARD IS BEING USED INNOVATIVELY IN THE MANUFACTURE OF PRODUCTS?



ERGONOMIC RESEARCH - HOW BIG ARE SEATS? PHOTOGRAPH AND MEASURE A RANGE OF SEATS AND CHAIRS IN ORDER TO DETERMINE HOW BIG YOUR DESIGN NEEDS TO BE?



HEIGHT: 91.5CM
 WIDTH: 40CM
 DEPTH: 50CM
 HEIGHT OF SEAT: 64CM



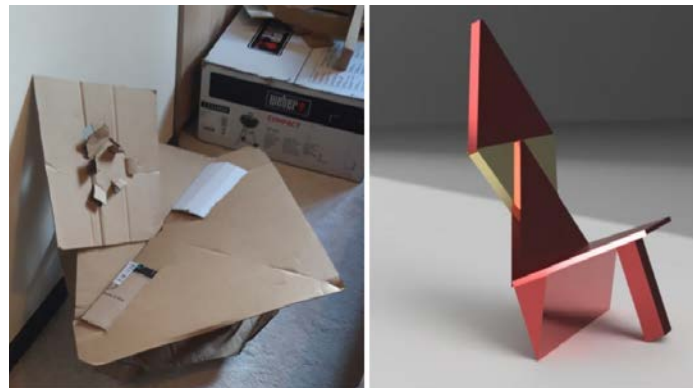
HEIGHT: 85CM
 WIDTH: 36.5
 DEPTH: 40.5CM
 HEIGHT OF SEAT: 43CM



HEIGHT: 107CM
 WIDTH: 65CM
 DEPTH: 63CM
 HEIGHT OF SEAT: 52CM



The third and fourth years have been designing and manufacturing cardboard furniture that had to hold their weight, although several decided to let others be the test pilots!



The lower school boys were challenged to model and manufacture cardboard mechanisms. Jonny Noctor produced an impressive piece of automata. Watch the [video](#).

Until we meet again - thank you virtually

At this time of year we usually enjoy thanking in person many of you who support Abingdon over the school year. Whilst COVID-19 has prevented this, you can still hear the Headmaster giving his annual Garden party address [here](#). As the great lady said, 'we'll meet again'.



As you can see from the impact summary here, Abingdon's community gives incredible support to all areas of school life and we are grateful for your generous donations and for the time you have given.

Thank you:

- to our **parent community** who run the Music Society, Touchliners, FASBC, Football and Hockey Committees and our uniform shop. Your commitment enables Abingdon boys to experience the rich and varied Other Half activities on offer.
- to the **OAs** who provide friendship, careers support and a lifelong network to Abingdon leavers.
- to our **donors**, whose committed support is making it possible for us to widen access to an Abingdon education for more boys. Thank you also to those parents who have chosen to support hardship bursaries for current Abingdon families during this pandemic.
- to **everyone who donated** in advance of our first Abingdon Giving Day which was scheduled to take place on 18 March but unavoidably postponed. We are delighted to advise that this event will happen later in the year and we look forward to sharing the date with you shortly.

Interim Impact Report Summary September 2018 - June 2020

50
legacies pledged

More than
£48,000
raised for external
charities by pupils
and staff



More than
980
hours of volunteering for careers
guidance events



over
£413,000
of individual donations



13
members of
staff volunteer
as school governors in their
communities



£225,000
of pledged legacies and grants

From September 2020
59 boys*
(6%) on bursaries including
16
full bursaries

19,000
pupil experiences



*towards our goal of 105 bursary places (10%)



1563 Society

Lockdown Afternoon Tea,
Friday 3 July - together yet apart

1563 Society members were treated to a cream tea at home, supplied by local UK businesses close to their homes. Lockdown has meant frustrations and social isolation for many, chatting to our members we have heard of missed times with grandchildren and the company of other people. We also heard stories of kind neighbours and devoted sons and daughters, bringing supplies and a smile to those most vulnerable. We look forward to sharing photos of our lockdown 1563 Society tea.



OA Club

The OA Community during COVID-19

It has been wonderful to hear of the work that members of the OA community have been doing during the COVID-19 pandemic in innovating, researching and leading the way.

Giles Bond-Smith (1992), Consultant HPB, Trauma and Emergency Surgeon: 'Surgical attendances have reduced dramatically but those patients that have attended have been clinically more unwell than we'd expect.'



Bradley Rowe (1987), Dentist: 'PPE shortages have driven prices to a stratospheric level. Protecting our staff and families while taking care of people is the goal.'



Professor Martin Landray (1987), working alongside **Professor Richard Haynes (1994)**, is the Deputy Chief Investigator on the Randomised Evaluation of COVid-19 thERapY (RECOVERY) trial. They have found evidence to show that 'Low-dose dexamethasone reduces risk of death by one-third in COVID-19 patients on ventilators and by one-fifth for patients requiring oxygen alone.'

Conor Marnane (1987), Head and Neck Surgeon: 'The ENT ward has become a 'Covid step-down ward' and as we are responsible for its day-to-day running, this can be challenging – it's been a long time since I've done any general medicine!'



Jonny Donahoe (2001) and **Paddy Gervers (2008)**, also known as *Jonny & the Baptists*, hope to help struggling independent arts venues during the lockdown and cheer up the nation with musical brilliance and thought-provoking lyrics. At a socially responsible distance from the basement of their local out-of-action pub, the pair will perform a different version of the hit show, *Love You & Hate Covid*, tailored to each town they are virtually 'visiting' via the power of live streaming. Tickets can be found online at jonnyandthebaptists.co.uk.



Simon Evans (2002), director and theatrical powerhouse, has been busy during lockdown writing and featuring in his brilliant debut TV series *Staged*, featuring David Tennant and Michael Sheen. All episodes are available on BBC iPlayer.



2020 Leavers' Graduation

On Friday 19 June, Abingdon's 2020 leavers experienced a different kind of welcome to the OA Club. This milestone webinar commenced with addresses from the Headmaster, the OA Club Chairman, Ken Welby (1984) and the OA Club President, David Lindgren (1993). We were delighted to welcome Jonny Prest-Smith (2010) as this year's guest speaker who spoke honestly about feeling he was an 'average Abingdonian', until recognising that Abingdon School does not build average.

Forthcoming Events

The safety of our community is our top priority. As a result, all events previously advertised are postponed until further notice. Details about a number of online events will be communicated in due course. We look forward to gathering our OA community once again, when it is safe to do so. For the most up-to-date information, please check the News and Events pages on the OA Club [website](http://www.abingdon.org.uk).

Despite lockdown, it is clear that our OA community is still thriving, in many new and different ways. If you've been on the frontline during the crisis, or if lockdown has allowed you to begin a new venture, be it business or personal, we would love to hear from you to include in the next edition of the *Griffen*. Email bethany.summers@abingdon.org.uk