

AbingdonNews



The Griffen Challenge

Several of the first years undertook an optional challenge over the summer to create a piece of artwork featuring the Abingdon griffin. Entries were very imaginative and diverse, ranging from a piece of beach art to a lino print, and from an engraved coaster to some rum and raisin fudge. Particular congratulations go to Frederick Mellor for this striking oil on canvas which was the winning entry.



Message from the Headmaster



In his *Letters to a Young Poet*, the German writer Rainer Maria Rilke urged his friend 'to have patience with all unsolved problems in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms, or books that are written in a foreign tongue'.

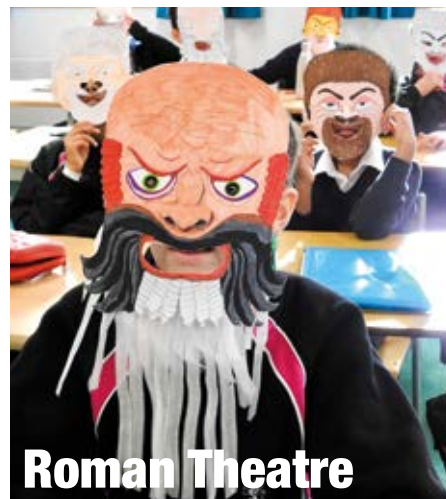
This is an approach that I hope we nurture at Abingdon. We want our students to understand that there are not always simple solutions but instead sometimes we need to embrace and enjoy complexity.

It has been such a relief this term to all be back together on the school site and I've particularly enjoyed being able to drop into lessons again to observe the boys go about their learning. In such strange times, we've all relished the sheer normality of timetabled lessons. It is always uplifting to see teachers engaging with their students and challenging them to extend themselves.

The intellectual curiosity that the boys bring to school creates a real buzz and we aim to inspire them to explore their ideas and indulge their thirst for knowledge both within and outside the curriculum. This creates a stimulating culture of academic enquiry, cultivating lifelong skills while building a powerful base of knowledge that can underpin future study and careers, while at the same time ensuring that Abingdon is an exciting place to study and work.

Faringdon Lodge opens

The new facilities in Faringdon Lodge which opened this September look fantastic. Boys and staff are delighted. The three-story building which is connected to the Science Centre is 'home' to two new houserooms for O'Doherty's and Donnelly's and for the Computer Science and Business and Economics Departments. It also houses the Faringdon Lodge reception and the Second Hand Uniform shop. The building looks over Waste Court with lovely views from the balcony on the first floor.



Roman Theatre

First years have been learning about Roman theatre in their Latin lessons and were encouraged to create and wear a rather different type of face covering!

First Prize and a day at The Fat Duck

Congratulations to Alexandre Peuch in the Lower Sixth who came joint first in the Royal Society of Chemistry's Chemistry / Food Science Communication



Competition 2020. His prize is an exciting day in the development kitchen at Heston Blumenthal's, The Fat Duck.

European Day of Languages

Although the annual joint dinner with St Helen's was cancelled this year, the School still managed to celebrate European Day of Languages in style. Pupils were treated

to an online chapel service led by Middle Master Andrew Crisp, during which boys and staff could be heard speaking in a variety of languages. The message was simple: we need a global effort from people of all nations to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Boys also enjoyed an escape room activity with their tutors where they had to tackle language-related questions in order to crack the code. Teachers entered into the spirit of the day, wearing badges with 'hello' translated into a variety of languages from Tok Pisin to Georgian and everything in between.





First Years' First Week

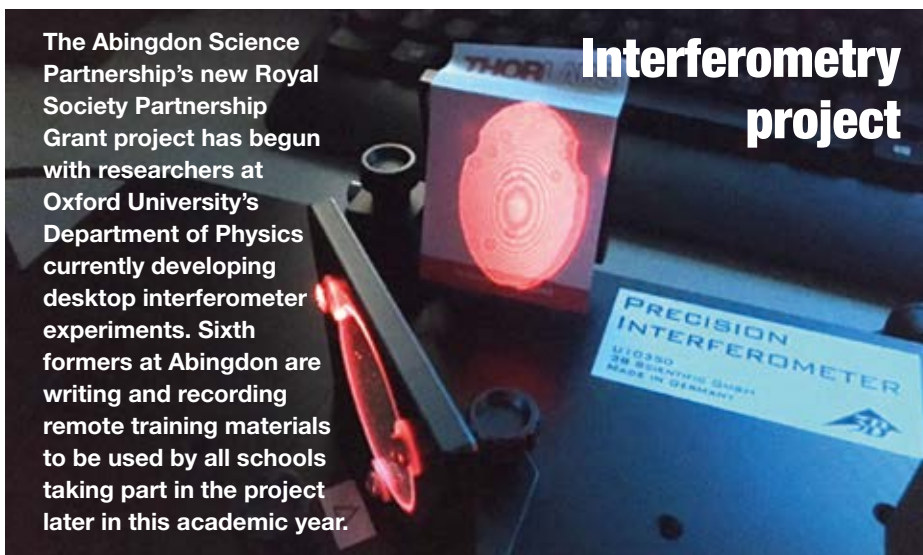
The first years have settled well into life at senior school, enjoying the Lower School Houseroom, making a great start in lessons, and getting stuck into a wide range of Other Half activities. Here's what some of them said at the end of their first week:

- “ My first week at Abingdon has been one of the best weeks of my life. I was very excited and a little apprehensive at first but once I started lessons, I felt at home. I have already learnt a lot of new things and I am exploring many new subjects that I have never been taught before. ”
- “ I found my first week at Abingdon fabulous. I really enjoyed the academic bits especially the Latin and meeting Cerberus the canis. I also really enjoyed the Other Half activities we got to do and my favourite was the swimming. ”
- “ All of the teachers have been very nice and made me feel very welcome. ”
- “ I have really enjoyed my first week at Abingdon. The sausage rolls were huge! ”



Peterhouse's Vellacott History Prize

Johan Nerlov in the Upper Sixth has won the prestigious Cambridge University Vellacott History Essay Prize. This is one of the most competitive pre-graduate essay competitions in the country. The standard of entries was high, but the judges said that Johan's essay stood out for its clarity of argument, stylish prose, level of research, and originality of thought. Johan picked up £75 and was invited to attend the Peterhouse Virtual Open Day.



The Abingdon Science Partnership's new Royal Society Partnership Grant project has begun with researchers at Oxford University's Department of Physics currently developing desktop interferometer experiments. Sixth formers at Abingdon are writing and recording remote training materials to be used by all schools taking part in the project later in this academic year.

Interferometry project



Cosmic Mining

As members of the Other Half Physics Factor Research Club, sixth formers Ashwin Tennant, Scott Yap and Ivan Gabestro joined the Institute for Research in Schools Cosmic Mining project, assisting astrophysicists in identifying targets of interest for NASA's James Webb Space Telescope to be launched in October 2021. The boys had to learn the principles of spectroscopy as applied to the analysis of star and galaxy composition, then pass several tests to demonstrate their competence before being allowed to analyse previously unseen data sets.

Having completed their analyses and received positive feedback on their results from the science team, they wrote up a report on their work and recorded a remote presentation which can be viewed on the Abingdon School YouTube channel.

The boys' work was submitted to the British Science Association and each of them received a CREST Gold Award. The boys also submitted an article to the Young Scientists Journal which can be seen here:

<https://ysjournal.com/james-webb-telescope-cosmic-mining-project>

Conflict, Deportation and Exile

Dr Hubert Zawadzki (aka 'Doctor Z'), a former history teacher at Abingdon from 1976–2006, has recently published in paperback, his book which charts Europe's turbulent times in the middle of the last century through the life of his mother. The book can be bought from Mostly books of Abingdon and from Bloomsbury.

Irena Protassewicz, *A Polish Woman's Experience in World War II: Conflict, Deportation and Exile*



Be More Griffen



The first years went off timetable for their Be More Griffen Day in late September. The morning focussed on sessions designed to help the boys develop their organisational and study skills followed by a presentation on the history of the school by Mrs Wearne, the School Archivist, which included an explanation of why the griffen is associated with Abingdon. The day was rounded off with an afternoon of teambuilding activities where the boys had to show a combination of good communication skills and problem solving to meet the challenges set by their tutors.



Prestigious army scholarship

Upper sixth former, Jayden Zamler, has won a prestigious army scholarship which gives him a place at Sandhurst for officer training after completing his university course. The scholarship also provides some financial assistance for his final year at Abingdon and during his degree course where Jayden hopes to study Natural Sciences. This is the fifth army scholarship in the last four years for boys from the Abingdon CCF.

Over 100 candidates competed for the awards during a rigorous selection procedure which involved online interviews and an essay, followed by a two-day assessment. The two-day assessment tested candidates physical fitness, problem solving, leadership and team building skills.

The Periodic Table

Having been inspired by the periodic table topic in Chemistry, third year Aleksandar Ustic, who was following the lessons via zoom in St Petersburg, went out into the city and took a picture of the Mendeleev monument.





Sheffield History Prize

Congratulations to upper sixth formers Mike MacLennan and Archie Malcolm for their excellent entries into the University of Sheffield's History Department essay prize competition 2020. There were a record number of submissions and it was a very strong field. Mike MacLennan's essay on Apartheid in South Africa received one of only two commendations awarded by the judges.

Archie Malcolm was also praised for his essay 'of extremely high quality'. Archie chose to write about the significance of the First World War. He read much of Hobsbawm's Age of Empire and produced a very accomplished piece.



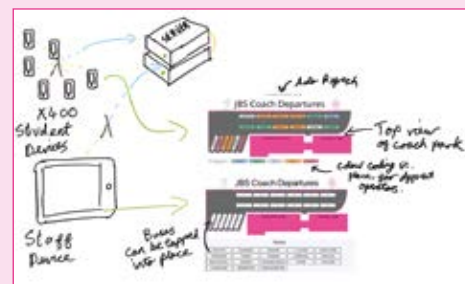
Headhunted

Lower sixth former Harry Watkins has been headhunted by a leading UK designer to join a team looking to design a 3D printer specifically for ceramics. The project aims to have a working prototype and associated exhibition in the UK and Europe by summer 2021.



Upper Sixth design JBS App

Two upper sixth form students, Ben Broadbent and Freddie Nicholson, have successfully developed a bus app for the JBS which helps maintain social distancing as the boys wait to go home. The boys were tasked with developing a digital coach departures board to prevent crowding around the physical board that the boys have got used to from previous years. St Helen's, who share the joint bus service, asked Ben and Freddie to develop a version of the app that they can use.



SCAMPA (Schools Clean Air Monitoring Project in Abingdon)

The SCAMPA project has been of central importance for the Abingdon Science Partnership over the last term, with 13 schools involved, substantial funding from the Royal Society of Chemistry, international collaboration with the University of Chile and local backing from the ATOM Festival and local political leaders. As well as allowing younger pupils to contribute data to a real research project, SCAMPA is giving sixth formers at Abingdon, Radley College and Larkmead opportunities to support them with expertise in GIS, coding and science subject knowledge.



Upper sixth former, Jake Wallis, was instrumental in setting up and evaluating Raspberry Pi air quality sensors for the project. Jake did this work voluntarily during the summer holiday and collaborated with local and international scientists to provide feedback on the sensor data collected.

Inter house public speaking competition



After weeks of selections, each house put forward a speaker and a speech (chosen from history or literature) to be judged by a panel chaired by Triona Admas: a former nun, stage performer and theatrical agent who is now in charge of alumnae events at St Hilda's College, Oxford.

The speeches chosen and memorised ranged from Shakespeare's Hamlet, through Gloria Gaynor's "I will survive" to Winston Churchill's "we will fight them on the beaches". The winning speech came from Lower School, with Harold Lethaby's impressive declamation of JFK's "we choose to go to the moon" speech.

The Rule of Six....

by Mark Hindley, Deputy Head (Pastoral),

A real concern is that part of the new normal seems to be a heightened sense of anxiety. What is the R rate? Am I safe? What will happen to the economy? Will Covid ever end or is it here forever?

As adults we are feeling this anxiety, so it is unsurprising that we are seeing increased anxiety in teenagers as well. How will my grades be calculated this year? What will university look like? Will I ever experience the rite of passages that I expected to - like going to a festival or Freshers' Week? Is our generation going to be left with a crippled economy and unpayable debts?

In the midst of all this worry and concern it is crucial that we keep reminding ourselves and our children of the basics for addressing anxiety. Whatever research one looks to, the same strategies often crop up, so perhaps it is worth reiterating them at a time when we are all concerned with our own mental health and that of our loved ones.

To echo the rule of six that was in place prior to the second lockdown, how about six top tips?

1. Try to stay healthy by exercising (outside preferably), going to sleep early, and eating a balanced diet.
2. Stay connected - talk to each other, listen to one another, and reach out to friends and family.
3. Try to be kind and give to someone else in some way - acts of kindness have been shown to improve mental health.
4. Be proactive - try to do something that gives you a sense of a job well done.
5. Focus on what you can control and accept what you can't. You can't rid the world of Covid, so focus on something that you can do ...
6. Live in the moment - even if that is just breathing to calm yourself - Google 7-11 breathing!

All so easy to say, but in these times of stress and anxiety, much harder to do in practice...



Natalie Hunt – Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

Natalie joins our wellbeing team which is led by the Head of Wellbeing, Paul Gooding. Natalie's background is in teaching, mental health training and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and she will be working with students, staff and parents across Abingdon and further afield to develop a holistic and community based approach to mental health and wellbeing. Her role includes supporting curriculum initiatives and best practice, embedding them within partnership links throughout the town and beyond.



This year's remembrance commemorations took the form of a pre-recorded video that was watched simultaneously by boys, staff and OAs and ended with the two minutes silence and the ringing of the school bell at 11am on Armistice Day. The film brought together the annual CCF parade, the Headmaster's address and the roll call of the fallen read out by the joint Heads of School. It was a moving way to bring the whole school together, albeit remotely, to commemorate this important occasion. The video is available to watch on the school website.



Peer Support Leads training

Around 40 students from Larkmead, John Mason, Fitzharrys, Abingdon School and St Helen's took part in their first Peer Support Lead Training event via zoom. The session was led by psychotherapist and counsellor, Debbie Lee, who focused on helping the Peer Support Leads to listen and talk with students who are struggling, an especially important skill to have at this time.

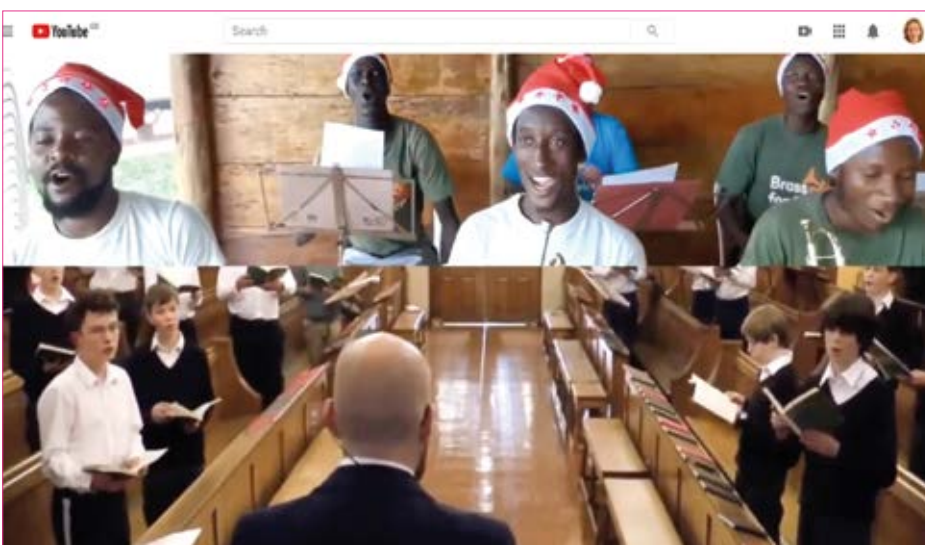
Warhammer

The members of the newly formed Lower School Warhammer Club have been making great progress with the initial construction and painting of their models.



Lower school heroes

As part of their Be More Griffen course, lower school boys discussed the idea of what qualities make a hero and went on to choose a hero for their tutor group. In perhaps a reflection of the issues most important to them at the current time, their choices were a mix of individuals who care for others and for the environment. Framed pictures of the heroes are on display in the Lower School Houseroom.



Christmas Concert

The Christmas Concert moved online this year with year group 'Bubble Orchestras' performing traditional and contemporary favourites. A very special appearance was the partnership with the charity, Brass for Africa, which, thanks to some technical wizardry, saw our Chapel Choir in a joint performance of Away in a Manger with some musicians from Uganda.

Over half term, and to mark Halloween, the Art department challenged Abingdon students to produce a ghostly photograph, by using long exposure techniques, or by overlaying images using apps. The entries received were of an outstanding quality, and the winner and runner up demonstrated an excellent grasp of spooky technique!

Winner: Josh Bromley (2nd Year)
Runner-up: Charlie Adams (3rd Year)

Charlie Adam

Ghouls and ghosts

Josh Bromley



Exploring Russian

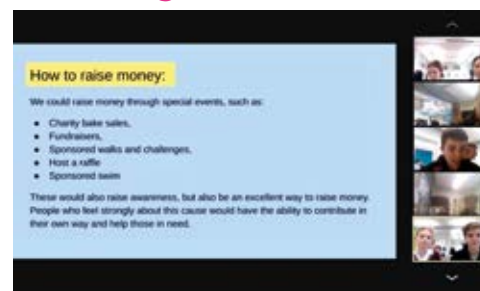
Students looking to expand their languages have been practising their Russian writing and conversation skills as part of the Other Half programme.

French in primary schools

As part of the links with primary schools through Abingdon School in Partnership, a group of fifth year students in Pygott's house, who study French, are making a series of French language learning videos to help support language teaching at Caldecott Primary School. The videos have been shared with other partner schools in Abingdon and the resources are available to anyone through our Abingdon Partnership website.



Thinking lunch



Second years from Abingdon and St Helen's met over Zoom for a Joint Thinking Lunch. In small groups they were asked to think of a cause that they would like to support and then discuss how they would go about promoting it. All three groups gave informative presentations and came up with good ways of letting people know about the work of The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Oxford Foodbank and Children in Need.



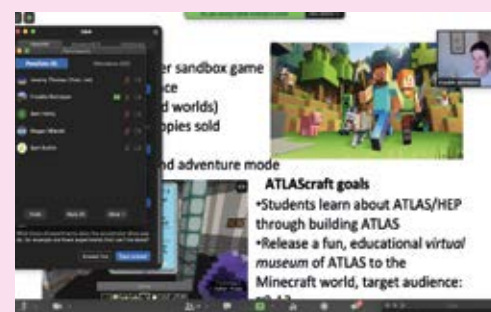
This year Abingdon School's celebration of National Poetry Day moved online, with a virtual open mic, featuring students and staff from across the school community recording themselves reading their favourite poems. The video can be found on the website:

abingdon.org.uk/national-poetry-day-4

The annual writing competition winners were: Samuel Price (Lower School), Alex Heffernan (Middle School) and Cameron Eilbeck (Upper School)

Workshops for Autism Family Support Oxfordshire, AFSO

Over the summer holiday, the Abingdon Science Partnership, ASP, was asked to help provide activities for a programme of regular online workshops for young people supported by AFSO. Impressed by the remote activities developed by ASP staff and Science Ambassadors during school closures, the AFSO staff, and the young people they support, selected workshop topics and ASP delivered three of these during July and August. The most popular by far, with 19 participants, was the virtual tour of CERN and the ATLAS detector in the Minecraft ATLAScraft world. Many thanks to upper sixth former, Freddie Nicholson, for all his support with the workshops.





The unusual consequence of avoiding a garden centre!

Independent Education

We asked parent, Matt Rogan, whose son Conor is now in the Third Year, why his family opted for Abingdon, having had no previous experience of independent education.

Living on the Oxfordshire / Buckinghamshire border, we did not really consider Abingdon School or any other independent school for that matter. Our son Conor successfully made his way through the Bucks 11+, so was eligible for our local state grammar. My wife Claire and I breathed a sigh of relief when the news came through. Conor, the only child in his small class to try the 11+, was principally pleased to be going to the same school as his mates from the tennis club.

A few weeks later, several of that same tennis gang were due to attend a Tennis Camp at the Indoor Centre in Abingdon. Not knowing the area, I'd been looking for somewhere to while away a few hours and discovered the Abingdon School Open Day. Claire was a Primary School Chair of Governors at our kids' Primary School and always keen to gather new ideas. Personally, I far preferred the idea to Plan B, which was to visit a garden centre. On that basis, we signed up, ordered a prospectus and looked forward to a worry-free school visit, safe in the knowledge that Conor's path was already set.

When it arrived, the Abingdon prospectus was extremely impressive. Claire and I imagined all independent schools must produce documents of that ilk. We are both state educated and figured you could not judge a school by its prospectus cover in any case.

Immediately on arrival at the Open Day we knew something was very wrong. Or very right. The Admissions team remembered our names without checking their list. Not only did our guides answer our questions, they asked us questions, too. Not only interesting but interested. They knew lots about areas of school life they were not personally involved with and felt like the kind of boys Conor would get on with. I met several teachers who had the style I always loved to be taught by – smiles on their faces, teaching out of passion not obligation.

“ I met several teachers who had the style I always loved to be taught by – smiles on their faces, teaching out of passion not obligation. ”

Claire and I both knew what this meant – we had to show Conor the school. When we took him along a few weeks later, he said to Claire, 'Mum, it just feels warmer.'

The following September, Conor duly joined. At 68 boys, the Lower School class of 2018 was bigger than the entire village primary school Conor had left behind. Of course, that brought transitions. He'd never learnt Latin, played rugby, or played chess against boys who had more than one set of tactics.

While all three of those made his head hurt at times, the school intuitively knew how to provide high support at his times of high challenge.

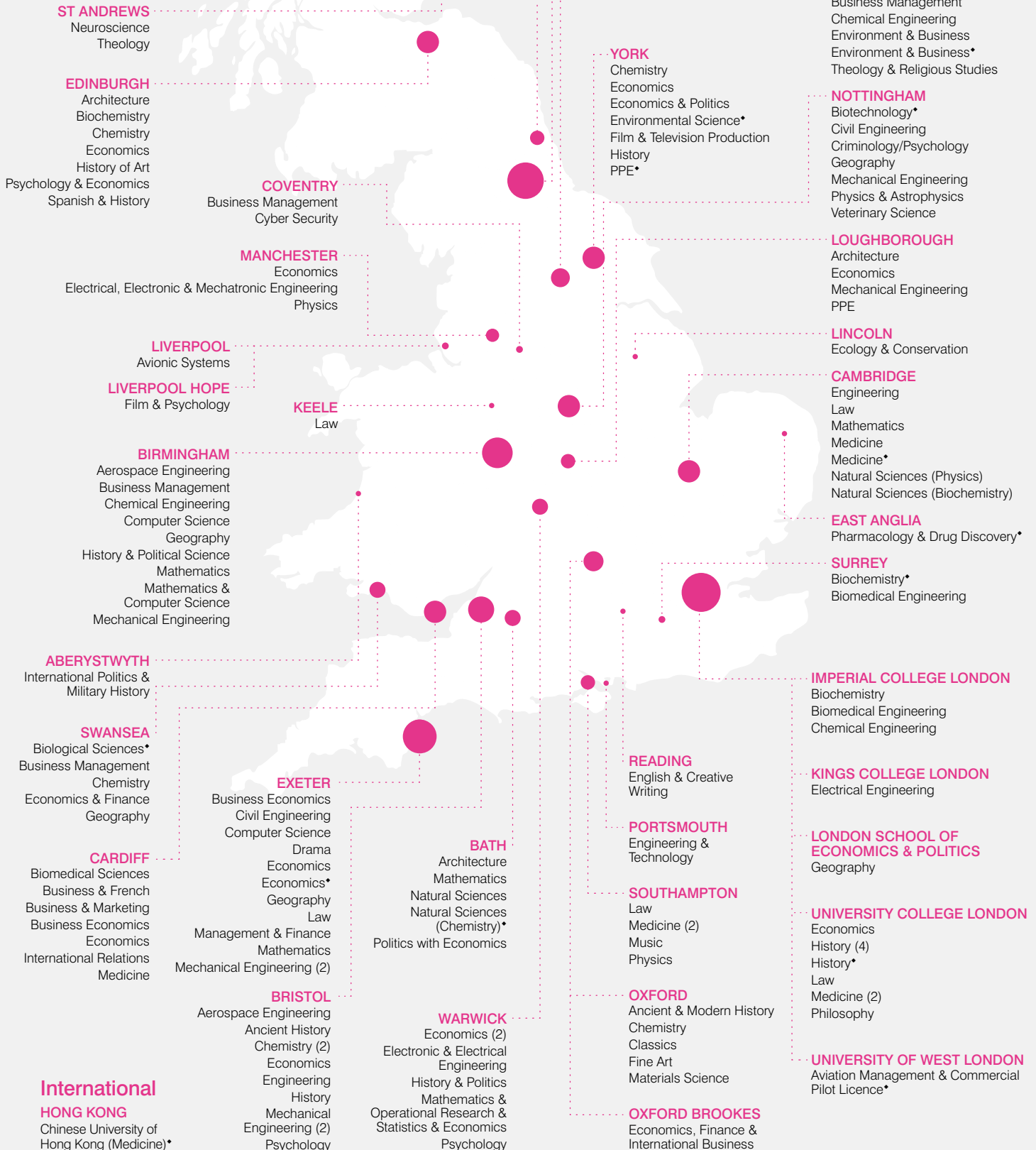
It took me personally a while to get my head around our choice for independent school. Conor less so. The School focuses not only on what you achieve, but how you do it.

Implausible as it seemed three years ago, I can now imagine him touring parents around Open Days one day, maybe even swaying another poor soul who was initially only there to avoid a trip to the garden centre. Showing others the same warmth many showed him. Not only interesting, but interested.

Leavers' Destinations 2020

The list of university destinations is correct as of mid September 2020: it refers to university places secured by those who applied in the 2019-20 UCAS application cycle. Where known, we have also included places won outside the UCAS system. We hope the list demonstrates the range of universities and courses for which Abingdon pupils are accepted. The number in brackets refers to the number of boys taking that course if more than one.

*(place deferred to 2021)



44

Oxbridge
places over
the last
three years

Although their time at Abingdon came to an end in rather unforeseen circumstances, the 2020 sixth form leavers can be proud of their achievements, not least the places they have gained at university. 97% of boys who applied to UK universities were successful. Durham proved the most popular destination, closely followed by Oxbridge, Exeter, UCL, Bristol and many other Russell Group universities. It was rewarding to see that several boys followed a road 'less travelled by', opting to attend universities that specialise in their chosen subject.

These include Lincoln for ecology and conservation, UEA for pharmacology and drug discovery and the University of West London for aviation management and commercial pilot licence. Once again, STEM subjects topped the bill with 28 boys pursuing degrees in physics and engineering, 20 in biological and chemical sciences, 11 in maths and computer science and 8 in medical sciences including 7 studying medicine. Illustrating that Abingdon is a school where the humanities, arts and social sciences also

thrive, boys have chosen to study economics (15), business and management (11), geography (9), history (15) and law (5), with the remainder choosing languages, philosophy, PPE, politics, international relations, theology, anthropology, architecture, music, film, art and drama. It is extremely rewarding to see boys achieve their individual goals and that they have the confidence to pursue undergraduate degrees that will provide them with the necessary skills and experience to follow their chosen career.

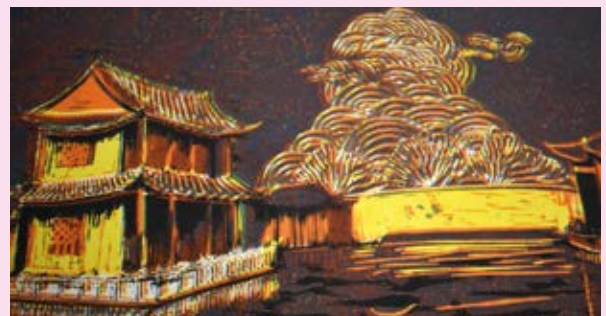


Art exhibition

Following the publication of public exam results in the summer we are now allowed to showcase some of the excellent A level art from our upper sixth students. More examples of their artwork can be seen on the website abingdon.org.uk/sixth-form-art-online-exhibition



Artworks by:
Archie Turnbull
Harry Baston-Hall
Steve Lin



Celebrating 20 Years of the Moldova Partnership

by Adam Jenkins,
Master in Charge of the Moldovan Project

Abingdon's partnership with *Agape*, a charity based in Moldova working with poor and disadvantaged communities, celebrates its twentieth anniversary this term. It is a partnership that has seen numerous fundraising events organised at school over the years and nearly £85,000 raised to support *Agape's* work, but it is a partnership that is about far more than just raising money and which has been of incalculable worth to both sides.

Most people in the UK would not be able to place Moldova on a map, and yet well over 150 Abingdon pupils have visited it in recent years and there are many pupils in Moldova who know all about Abingdon School. In 2003 we took a small group of pupils to Moldova to find out more about how our donations were being used by *Agape* in what was almost certainly the first ever visit by a UK school to the country.

One of the highlights of the trip was spending time in some of the local schools, giving the Moldovan children the chance to practise speaking English. A particular memory that stands out is attending a concert at one of these schools that had been put on in our honour and gradually realising as it went on that we would be expected to "perform" something at the end of the concert – a rapidly formulated battleplan led to the Abingdon boys singing the rather eclectic mix of *Away in a Manger*, *God Save the Queen*, and *Old MacDonald had a Farm* (the latter with considerable audience participation for the animal noises)!

Since then trips to Moldova have focussed on organising summer camps for children from Ialoveni and the surrounding villages. Abingdon sixth formers have taught English lessons, organised art, drama and music sessions, led film-making and photography workshops, and run lots of sporting activities, even managing to successfully introduce the concept of cricket to Moldova.

The benefits to the Moldovan children we have run the camps for and to those families and schools who have benefitted from the financial donations we have made, are obvious, but the benefits for the Abingdon boys have also been considerable. They have, of course, had to develop their communication and leadership skills in order to run a successful activity session with a group of Moldovan children. They have also had to push themselves out of their comfort zones on a regular basis, especially during the annual ritual by which they attempt to dance the Moldovan hora!

But it is also the case that many of the boys who have travelled to Moldova have got to know themselves better on the trip and questioned what really matters to them – seeing how generous Moldovan families are with what little they have is a very eye-opening experience. And observations such as a Moldovan boy, so proud of the paper aeroplane that he has made and decorated that he keeps it with him every day for the next week certainly makes you question whether you really need to have the most up to date bit of technological kit.

As part of an Abingdon education, we should be encouraging our very fortunate boys to see themselves as people who must try to "make a difference", both while at school but also in their later lives. The Moldova Project has certainly seen pupils do that for the last 20 years and proven that it is often when we are making a difference to others that we also make a big difference to ourselves.





Fundraising for Moldova

Agape, our partner charity in Moldova, has been working hard during the pandemic to make a difference to those Moldovan families who are most in need of support. Children without access to technology have struggled to get any form of education since schools were forced to close and many families have not been able to buy the supplies they need. Using money raised by a group of sixth formers through a sponsored event last term, Agape has been able to support 100 families in five different villages with school equipment, cleaning and hygiene supplies, plus some smartphones to enable children to connect to their online lessons.



Abingdon Edge is a new initiative set up by a partnership of five schools in Abingdon to design a program of activities aimed at developing skills that will help students to be successful employees, as well as thoughtful, kind and self-confident individuals. The schools involved are: Abingdon, Fitzharrys, John Mason, Larkmead and Radley.

The program of activities give students a variety of opportunities that will not only help them academically but also develop skills such as communication, collaboration and creativity as well as promoting a sense of civic pride. The first activity is Academic Coaching involving Year 12 students learning key communication and leadership skills so that they may coach Year 9 students.

Awards for the Lower School

The Headmaster met with lower school boys to congratulate those who have received Head's Praises in the first half of term and to hand out prizes to those first years who did particularly well in elements of the entrance exam process.



Roman Models & Mosaics

Although unable to visit Fishbourne Roman Palace last summer the second years created an impressive range of mosaics and models, inspired by the palace and constructed of materials including shells, stones, pebbles, card and porcelain.

Samuel Price received a Head's Praise for his copy of one of the panels featuring a peacock from a floor dedicated to different birds at Italica in Spain, birthplace of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian.

Summer research projects



The best of the Middle School Scholars' summer research projects were showcased in the Amey Theatre, with parents watching online via the livestream. The fourth and fifth year academic scholars gave detailed and well delivered presentations on a wide range of topics from Why We Laugh to Cartography through the Ages. The event was a great example of the independence, inquiry and initiative which is promoted through the scholars programme.



GCSE Art

Fourth year artists have begun their GCSE course, and due to coronavirus, the exam board has restructured the way students submit their work. Digital sketchbooks are the new format and have introduced the challenge of promoting mediums that are



more suited to online working. This has forced the year group out of their comfort zone to produce some brilliant artwork, with boys taking the opportunity to improve their photography skills and take stunning pictures with the subject matter inspired

by the work of artist Sarah Graham. The theme of confectionery has stayed constant, with some students choosing to work in more traditional mediums of oil pastels and pencils to create sustained pieces in bold colours.



Photographic competition winner

Congratulations to fourth former, Alexander Lees, for this excellent photo, titled: School's closed, a new light on lockdown learning - which won the Newbury Weekly News #oneshot_oneworld photographic competition earlier this year. The competition, which had a strong number of entries, asked for an image illustrating how people were coping, what they were doing or what the lockdown meant for them. Alexander was very pleased with his prize, an iPhone SE.



Demos from the Bass 'Master

The Headmaster dropped in on first year music lessons this term to share his love of bass and to encourage boys to take it up. Many of the pupils were unaware that Mr Windsor is an accomplished double bass player who, as a teenager, played in the National Youth Orchestra and went on to develop his jazz bass playing at university, including the bass guitar.

Mr Windsor improvised a solo explaining the role of a bass in the rhythm section before picking up his guitar and playing a few riffs, for boys to identify. The boys enthusiastically took up the opportunity to try the double bass.



Maths Week England

Boys from all year groups pitted their skills against the tricky challenges provided by the Maths department. They tackled Decision Maths through Mr Cook's perplexing problem to find the most efficient route around the area of Norfolk. Other activities included a crossnumber puzzle designed by a group of upper sixth, interactive online lectures from Maths Week England, producing short video documentaries on favourite unsung heroes of Mathematics and a topical project for the Sixth Form Maths Enrichment group, who looked at the mathematics of mask-wearing in relation to slowing the spread of COVID-19.



International Men's Day

Two of our upper sixth ASiP Peer Support Leads, Karum Sangha and George Siriwardene put together an impressive and thought provoking presentation for the Middle School focussing on the evolving nature of masculinity and the importance of young men seeking emotional support when necessary.



Inter year group sport

The first weekend of inter year group rugby and cricket matches saw a lovely sunny day with over 300 boys playing across both the morning and afternoon. On the School's main site the third years got to grips with the RFU's Ready4Rugby game whilst the sixth formers graced Waste Court in superb style with good handling and support lines on show. Over at Cox's Field the Lower School, Fourth and Fifth Years played some excellent T20 cricket with some impressive batting and bowling by many.



Touch Rugby

On the Saturday before half term all the boys involved in the Rugby Club had the opportunity to play in internal touch rugby matches. Close to 300 pupils from U12 to U18 signed up to play and the fine weather contributed to a wonderful atmosphere around campus. The focus of the first half term was on core skill development and this was very much in evidence, with lots of high tempo matches, lovely handling skills and close support play.

Multi-sport activity camp

Thirty-six of the new first years spent four days in school before the start of term at the annual multi-sport activity camp, enjoying a wide range of different sports under the guidance of members of the PE Department.



Sporting options for Lower School

The Thursday lunchtime Other Half slot provides lower school boys with the opportunity to try out a wide range of sports. This term's options included basketball, cross-country, fencing, golf, hockey, squash, swimming, table tennis, and tennis.



Cycling success

Second year Dan Phillips, who rides for Worx Bikes, came first in the U14 boys category in the Newbury Velo Walbury Hill Climb in September. Dan went on to compete in a national trophy cyclocross race where he came 19th out of 34 in very tough conditions at the Westmorland County Showground in Milnthorpe Cumbria.

Abingdon Music



Lower School lunchtime concert

Solo instrumentalists and three ensembles, Junior Strings, Lower School Band and the Open Mic Group, enjoyed the opportunity to perform on the Amey Theatre stage. They gave excellent performances including renditions of 'Jingle bells', 'And when the Saints', the Star Wars theme, and, in a definite first for a lower school concert, an impressive display of rapping skills.



Solo Concert Platforms

After a gap of six months, the first solo concert platform of the year celebrated the return of solo performance in school in style. It was wonderful to hear our musicians live and we had the pleasure of 16 excellent solos from a range of talented musicians representing woodwind, brass, strings and piano. Although we were not able to have an audience, we set up a livestream so that parents could be part of the event.



At the second solo concert platform in November we heard a further 15 excellent solo performances from boys in the First Year through to the Upper Sixth.

Woodwind Masterclass

We were delighted to welcome back to school the phenomenal teacher, writer, composer and clarinettist, Paul Harris, to work with six of our senior woodwind players from the Third Year to the Lower Sixth. We were treated to a wonderful range of instruments – a flute, an oboe, a clarinet, two bassoons and a saxophone.



Chilingirian masterclass

This year's violin masterclass, once again given by Levon Chilingirian, offered six of our senior violinists the opportunity for a public lesson in front of fellow players with a world-class violinist.



Senior competition

This year saw some 'stratospheric' performances according to adjudicator, Richard Poyser from d'Overbroeck's. The senior section was for post grade 8 musicians and included piano, cello and woodwind. Congratulations to Oliver Simpson who picked up first prize amongst a very strong field.



Instrumental solo competitions

Intermediate competition

This showcased the talents of 13 of the School's intermediate musicians, five pianists, four woodwind and four string players. The competition was judged by Richard Stafford from Ardingly College who congratulated all the performers and selected Laurence Peverall as the winning musician.



Junior competition

Sean Fitzpatrick, Director of Music at Abingdon Prep, had the difficult task of judging 11 very strong performances on a range of instruments, including woodwind, strings and piano. There was very little to separate the musicians but in the end, David Hrushovski was rewarded with the cup for some very beautiful clarinet playing in Tartini's *Concertino*.

AFU new film screenings

"It's film, Jim, but not as we know it". That echo of a Star Trek catchphrase seemed as apt a sentiment as any at the launch of the AFU's first ever online screening.

It was a markedly different atmosphere from the usual AFU annual screening that fills the Amey Theatre with a lively and appreciative audience. The online event brought together five debut screenings: Alexander Lees' passionate *Love Letter to The Watermill*, Oli Clark's *Troubled Waters*, Harry Litchfield's *Mama Uganda*, Alex Heffernan's *Upriver*, and Oliver Millbourn's *Numpie*.

The screening concluded with the presentation of one of two awards in memory of the AFU's legendary co-founder, OA and renowned documentarist Michael Grigsby. The "Spirit of Grigsby" Award, which recognizes one or more filmmakers who have shown the kind of precocious talent Grigsby himself demonstrated as a boy at Abingdon, was presented jointly to Alex Heffernan and Oliver Millbourn.



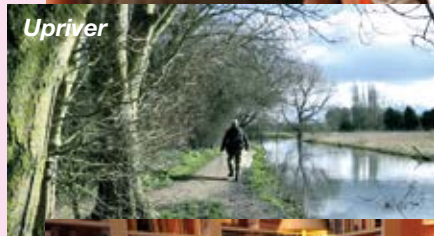
Love Letter to The Watermill



Troubled Waters



Mama Uganda



Upriver



Numpie

This term, fourth year pupils enjoyed the new Other Half drama club, *Page To Stage* which looks at the theatre making process. The club gives boys the opportunity to work as actors, directors and designers creating live performance. Students were busy directing each other in Shakespearean duologues which were recorded to show to parents.



Senior Drama

The Upper Sixth are excited to be working on a production of Andrew Bovell's "Things I Know To Be True", which will be performed in February.

I was there

OA works with BBC

Congratulations to OA and AFU alumnus George Cowie and his company Superfolk Films on producing more than 60 short films in collaboration with the BBC for a series called *I Was There*, in which George and his team recorded interviews with survivors of World War Two.



Pink Mist



Fifth year actors entertained audiences from the comfort of their own homes with an online screening of Owen Sheers' *Pink Mist*, a verse-drama about three young soldiers from Bristol who are deployed to Afghanistan. Within a short space of time they return to the women in their lives (a mother, a wife, a girlfriend), all of whom must now share the psychological and physical aftershocks of their service. The cast worked hard since September to bring the world of the play to life and the commitment they showed to the physical and vocal demands of this lyrical verse drama was truly impressive.

Science

Back in the lab the boys have been studying photosynthesis.



Year 8 took their biology lesson outside learning to use keys to identify trees.



Year 7 thoroughly enjoyed outside learning when they could, here they are investigating the effect of exercise on heart rate.



Trips

Year 4 made the most of the glorious weather on their Ridgeway walk finishing at White Horse Hill which afforded some stunning views across the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Year 8 had an action-packed day at the Natural History Museum in Oxford learning about classification from the museum staff and studying the exhibitions.



Reception relished their first school trip to Cogges Farm – exploring the farm buildings, house, and the playground. They learnt how bread is made, hunted for eggs and were a very receptive audience for the puppet show.

Year 5 and 6 Art Club experimented with making marks, or zentangles, to create patterns using the portraits of some very famous artists. Much fun was had when restyling the hair of Van Gogh and the Mona Lisa, complemented in bold backgrounds using a specialist gouache matt paint for instant drama!

Zentangles





Sport

The boys have embraced a selection of sports this term with cricket skills being honed in the first half of term and rugby in the second, alongside their swimming and PE lessons. The Other Half provides a wide range of additional individual and team sports from archery and dance to table tennis and just about everything in between!



The Iron Man



Year 4 brought the book they are reading by Ted Hughes to life by making fantastic models over half term.

Marshmallow catapults

Years 6, 7 and 8 relived their younger years when they made marshmallow catapults in CDT. Never too old for lollysticks, the boys were aiming high, having a sportsman's competition to reach the CDT room's skylights!



Remembrance

The whole school assembled, as we do every year at 11am on the 11 November, to observe the two minute silence as part of the Remembrance commemorations. Toby in Year 8 played 'The Last Post' on his trumpet, poignantly signalling the start of the silence, which was observed immaculately.

Teeth



Reception learn all about looking after their teeth.

Virtual Christmas Concert

The boys had a fantastic time working towards their first ever virtual Christmas Concert. All year groups sang, with music ranging from favourite carols to popular songs that we all know and love. It was so much fun that even the school staff had their own number. Everyone watching at home could not fail to enter into the festive spirit.



Taking a look at Philosophy and Theology

Why study P&T?

They are fascinating and very topical subjects and help us to develop a better understanding of different world views and philosophies. P&T broaden horizons and provoke intrigue and interest and, unlike many subjects, they are not necessarily exact, there isn't a right or a wrong answer.

Philosophy tries to answer one of the oldest questions in the world: **why are we here?** Even with all the technological advantages of the 21st century there is still an innate human need to know 'why?'. This hasn't changed for millennia. We also examine topics such as consciousness: how we know we exist. Theology covers the major religions and issues from peace and conflict to business and medical ethics. We also look at Philosophy of Religion and Developments in Christian Thought.

What do you hope the boys learn from P&T?

I want the boys to be open minded, to question and develop their listening and debating skills. Our aim is to get boys to form their own opinions and to reason and not to be afraid to change their mind when presented with evidence. Boys also learn to be analytical in how they approach their work and develop their essay writing skills. All of these skills are important in the 21st Century workplace.

How popular is P&T?

P&T is compulsory up to and including the Third Year and around a half of the year group go on to take the GCSE in Religious Studies. In the Sixth Form we offer Philosophy and Religious Studies as separate A levels but you cannot study both. We currently have 12 boys taking Religious Studies and 21 studying Philosophy - so I would say they are popular subjects and for good reason!

Our results are excellent. In 2020, at GCSE we gained 84% 9-7 grades, and in both RS and Philosophy at A level, 80% of passes were A*-B grades.

Can you study P&T as part of the Other Half?

The P&T department is involved in a range of Other Half activities from the Eco Committee to the Christian Society. We also have a departmental magazine, *The Axiom*, that boys can get involved with. We run trips to look at different cultures in places such as Istanbul where East meets West.

Do boys go on to study P&T at university and further education?

Both subjects are a very good foundation for university degrees and are highly regarded. The issues covered by the subjects at A level are very relevant to today's society and workplace. Boys go on to study both subjects as individual degrees and also many related subjects such as PPE or joint honours. They are very good preparation for employment, and careers are wide-ranging from advertising and law (via law conversion) to the Foreign Office. P&T degrees are also held in high regard in the United States.

And finally, what is the answer, why are we here?

There is unfortunately no reason why there has to be a 'why'. A person of faith would say we are here to follow the word of God, an atheist may say to live the best life we can. Ultimately the notion of 'why' is a human construct and not always applicable philosophically, some would say we should just accept that there is no answer. Alternatively, to quote the computer 'Deep Thought' in *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the answer is simply '42'!

Tom Eames-Jones is in his third year as Head of the Philosophy and Theology Department at Abingdon, having previously taught at St Albans School. The department has four members of staff including the School Chaplain.



Connecting parents, supporting school life

Welcome to all the new parents to the school, we so hope your sons have settled in and have found their feet, and welcome to ASPA the Abingdon School Parents' Association, of which you are all automatically a member. A big HELLO to all existing parents, we hope you and your boys are enjoying their journey through the school.

When the committee met for our first meeting in September, over Zoom, we reflected on how we can continue to support the social and networking events for parents throughout the school during this strange time. Our normal, full to bursting, list of dances/ events/ quizzes and much more are paused and the fundraising that goes with it. We realised that face to face events will not be happening for many months and that ClassList would be key in developing social networks. Please do use ClassList to connect to other parents in your class/ year/ house. If you are not a member please email aspa@abingdon.org.uk

However! It is incredibly heartening to see events being organised, even though not face to face. The Lower School held a *Question of Sport* quiz on Zoom, which had a fantastic turn out.

We are also very much looking forward to our next meeting where we will consider projects suggested by teachers in the school, that will enhance the boys educational experience. Look at our webpage for previous awards <https://www.abingdon.org.uk/school-life/parents-associations/parents-aspa/>

How can you help?

If you'd like to help out in any way, even as a one-off, we'd love to hear from you. And if you fancy a role on the committee we are looking for a Vice Chair, and year reps for Fifth Year, Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. Drop us a line at aspa@abingdon.org.uk

Who is currently on the committee?



Bev Gold
1st year



Imogen Scott
1st year



Caroline Elly
2nd year



Fiona Stone
3rd year



Rachel Verow
3rd year



Francesca Del Ben
3rd year

So what does ASPA do? Our objectives are:

- Foster the support and goodwill towards the School and its traditions of governors, staff, parents, old boys and friends;
- Promote social and networking activities for parents throughout the School, including at House and year group level;
- Support the management, Development Office, existing clubs and pupils in the School;
- Promote links between the Prep and Senior Schools.

For a full committee list please see our webpage under school life on the school website.

Siobhan Vinall
Communications



Karen Hope
Chair

Abingdon Development

Afternoon Tea for the 1563 Society

We were delighted to be able to invite those in Abingdon's legacy society to a virtual tea party on Friday 3 July. As we were unable to invite members of the 1563 Society to Abingdon for our annual gathering, we thought we'd bring tea to them. Those who live near Abingdon had their tea delivered by Harriet and Alexa from the Development Office and some members added a bottle of fizz to their delights! If you would like to find out more about the work of the 1563 Society, please contact Harriet Alderman in the Development Office.



Spotlight on supporters

We asked two of our Abingdon families to tell us, in a nutshell, why they choose to support the school.

Gill and James Bowen

What is your relationship with Abingdon School?

James is an OA (2019) and I am a former parent.

What were your reasons for wanting to donate to Abingdon?

Gill - As recognition of an outstanding school; high standards and great values!

James - To encourage learning of English and creative writing in particular.

Why did you decide to support our growing bursary programme with your gift?

We decided to support the bursary programme at Abingdon so that the School could offer more places to bright, talented pupils who might not otherwise have an opportunity to attend. We feel that this can only encourage the atmosphere of excellence and challenge promoted by the School and ensure its future development, reputation and success.

And for a bit of fun! If you could listen to one piece of music or song what would it be?

James: Wagner's *Ring Cycle* and Gill: *Handel's Messiah*.

Terence and Carolyn Libby

What is your relationship with Abingdon School?

I'm an OA (1961) and former Governor.

What makes you want to support Abingdon?

I feel that I am fortunate to have attended Abingdon when it was a Direct Grant School, under the inspiring headship of Sir James Cobban, one of the great headmasters of his period.

As long term supporters of Abingdon what particularly inspired you to support Abingdon's partnership programme?

I decided to support The Abingdon Partnership programme because it helps the School to maintain and develop its relationships with its local constituency, which was very much a feature of the Direct Grant system. We are delighted at the initiatives which Abingdon School in Partnership (ASiP) has launched with other local schools, not least in non-academic fields and life skills, which is evident, for example, in the provision of music education and peer-led mentoring. It is an important aspect of the charitable mission of the school.

Finally, for a bit of fun! If you could listen to one piece of music or song what would it be?

Carolyn's choice of music would be the *Pie Jesu* from Faure's *Requiem* and I would choose pieces from the *English Folk Song Suite* by Vaughan Williams.



The Future Together

Giving Day
3-4 February 2021

Abingdon's Giving Day

Support our growing bursary programme

We are delighted to let you know that our first ever Giving Day, originally planned for March 2020, has now been rescheduled and will take place on 3 and 4 February 2021. Abingdon's Giving Day is a 30-hour digital fundraising and awareness campaign. The ambition of Abingdon Foundation is to double the number of bursaries we offer and Giving Day is a very important step in raising awareness and support for this aim. We want to inspire the whole Abingdon community to get behind this initiative - save the date - it all starts at 10am on Wednesday 3 February.

If you would like to be an ambassador and help share our messages, inspire others to give on the day by becoming a matched funder or would like more information please visit:

www.150givingday.abingdon.org.uk

or contact Harriet Alderman, Development Manager, at

harriet.alderman@abingdon.org.uk

Tel: +44(0)1235 849107.

OA Club Online Success



Abingdon Arts Forum

Abingdon Arts Forum is a new initiative from the Old Abingdonian Club and Abingdon Arts Partnerships. In a series of recorded interviews conducted by pupils from schools across Abingdon, alumni of Abingdon, Fitzharrys, Larkmead and John Mason Schools working in the arts will be invited to reveal the highs and lows of their careers to date, reflect on the skills and attributes required to survive in the arts, and – crucially – offer ideas for ways in which the arts community can adapt and respond in the face of the pandemic. The events are free to watch online, but there are opportunities to make a donation to a relevant charity working to support artists at this challenging time.

Director, writer and actor Simon Evans (2002), whose BBC TV / Netflix series *Staged* became one of the sensational successes of lockdown, kicked off the series in November. He was interviewed by John Mason / Larkmead drama and film student, Gena Clarke, and you can watch their conversation on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30cniTHE41Y&feature=youtu.be>.

In the second of the series held on 10 December, John Mason alumnus and Downton Abbey actor Charlie Watson, joined us and you can watch his conversation here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vxb-kZo7www&feature=youtu.be>



Neil Carson (1994) Webinar

We were grateful to Neil, CEO and Co-founder of Yellowbrick Data, who spoke to Abingdon sixth formers and OAs from California via Zoom on 10 November. Neil spoke about his journey 'From Software Engineering to Venture Capital in Silicon Valley', from the world of UK start-ups in the 1990s, to US immigration, life and culture in Silicon Valley, career paths in computer software and hardware, venture capitalist firms, IPOs and acquisitions. You can watch Neil's webinar on YouTube <https://youtu.be/Pb795yeOFTY>

Archive Webinar



The OA Club was delighted to host School Archivist, Sarah Wearne, as she presented a webinar entitled 'What a Difference the Years Make! Abingdon School 1870 – 2020' on 8 October. The past 150 years have seen enormous changes at Abingdon, not only to the buildings, nor just in pupil numbers, but in the way we think, dress, study and play. Using the School's vast archival collections, Sarah showed what a difference the years have made.

We were delighted that over 100 Old Abingdonians, friends of the School, current pupils, parents and staff were able to join us live. The warmth of feeling that Sarah elicited through her informative and emotive lecture was evident. Her concluding remarks caused us to reflect on the part that we all play in Abingdon's history, no matter how small the contribution we each make, to an institution such as Abingdon School (or Roysse's if you prefer).

You can watch the webinar on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJpKIF9ahrc&feature=youtu.be>

Abingdon School 1870 to 2020

– what a difference the years make!

2020 marked the 150th anniversary of the School's move to Albert Park. Last January's Abingdon News showed just how far the buildings and grounds have expanded over the years, this January's gives a glimpse of how far our ways of life have changed.

Clothes

There was no school uniform until 1930. Originally boys wore their own clothes, except for the Bennett Scholars who wore mortar boards and gowns. A uniform cap, black with cerise cording, was introduced in 1897 otherwise a series of regulations outlined what was and was not permissible: 'no novelties in any kind of dress may be introduced without leave'; 'all trousers must be ordinary width'; 'plus fours must not be worn without written permission from the Headmaster'; 'no scent or pomade or, except sparingly and occasionally, hair-oil may be used'. Finally, and rather strangely, 'Pants must be worn by all boys winter and summer unless they get a written leave from the Headmaster'.



1926, the boys are dressed formally but not uniformly

Meals

At one time, only the boarders ate at school. Until the early 1950s, dayboys either went home for lunch or brought their own. In 1926, the area beneath the Big Schoolroom (now the Staff Common Room) was converted into a dining hall. Not only did boys have to eat what they were given but the rules emphasised how very different mealtimes were from today: 'At breakfast, dinner and tea the Dining Hall door will be shut two minutes after the entry of a master'; 'No boy may take or touch anything on the tables till grace has been said'; 'Boys must remain in their seats during meals ...their jam etc will be brought to them by the maids'.



Lunch in the Dining Hall in the early 1960s

Electricity



Gas mantles can be seen in this 1910 image of the art room

Electricity was installed throughout the school in 1925. Until then gas was used to light rooms, as well as candles. The latter only under strict control as the rules made clear: 'Prefects alone are allowed candles. Candles must be used in the covered lanterns supplied by Matron. The only position in which these lanterns may be placed for use at night is on the top of the washstand. Where there is no washstand the lantern must be placed in a position approved by Matron'.



Ivy Sheldon Peach

Female Staff

Not only do women make up more than a third of today's teaching staff but Abingdon was the first all-boys public school to appoint a woman as its head. However, for many years Miss Ivy Sheldon-Peach, appointed in 1920 to teach class singing, was the only woman on the staff, and even as late as 1996 there were only eight. Attitudes to women have changed hugely over the years as past Debating Society motions show: February 1907, 'This house approves of a system of female suffrage', defeated; March 1958, 'This house believes a woman's place is in the home', carried.



Bathing place on the river in the 1920s

Bathing

The School got its own swimming pool in 1960. Before that the boys used St Helen's, and before that the town's swimming facilities – the river. But views on bathing have changed over the years. In 1891 the master in charge of cricket could state, 'Without doubt, bathing makes one slack and unequal for an afternoon's hard work in the cricket field.' It was believed to affect exam performance too, hence the 1926 rule, 'Certificate candidates will not bathe in the early morning during the examinations.'

And finally ...

Has illness ever before caused the School to close? Yes, Scarlet Fever more than once in the 19th Century, and influenza for two weeks in 1918.



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