

AbingdonNews

Welcome back



This beautiful rainbow appeared over Big School last term and was a timely reminder of how much we have to be grateful for. We are very thankful to key workers and to the scientists who helped to make the return to school on 8 March a reality. We welcomed the sights and sounds of students and staff once more bringing the campus to life. We have all learnt to fully appreciate the camaraderie and routine that school brings.



Message from the Headmaster



We all heard the news on 4 January that we'd been dreading; another period of lockdown, another spell of remote working. Once again though, the Abingdon community collectively brushed itself down, took a deep breath and launched itself back into online lessons, assemblies, tutor periods and Other Half.

A highlight of this third lockdown was our Giving Day, which celebrated the 150 years since we moved to our current site next to Albert Park. Coordinated from the eerily empty school site, various 150-related challenges served to bring our global community together, such as 150 bicep curls from Hong Kong, keepie-uppies from gardens in Oxfordshire, sit-ups from bedrooms in Berkshire, and so on. I was thrilled to be able to get events underway by ringing the School bell in Big School for the traditional 63 times, before handing over to campanologist supreme Mr Jenkins who took us all the way to 150.

The Giving Day was focused on raising funds to support our ambitions for our bursary programme so that we can double the number of students receiving financial assistance. We were delighted with the response and the number of parents, OAs, governors, members of staff and friends of the School who stepped forward to contribute. It sets us firmly on the path to fulfilling our goal of making an Abingdon education available to more young people, regardless of their financial circumstances.



Back at school in the sunshine

The Lower School Assistants kept in regular contact with lower school pupils during lockdown via Zoom, but it was great to see them back on proper duty in school, organising football and table tennis at lunchtime in the glorious sunshine.



MUN Model United Nations

At the end of February, ten students took part in the annual Magdalen College School MUN conference online. Abingdon won the Best Delegation Award, for the fourth year in a row, this time representing Japan. Pictured are Robert Sagar and Louis Bhatia receiving their MUN ties for achieving Best Young Delegate Awards. Sixth former, Jonathan Ferry, who has been teaching the third year delegates MUN skills since September, presented the ties.



Rodolfus Choir

Congratulations to music scholar, Oliver Simpson, who took part in the Rodolfus Choir's virtual Christmas celebration, which was broadcast nationally on YouTube in December. The Rodolfus Foundation is a charitable organisation that gives choral opportunities to talented young singers on the brink of a choral award or prior to a professional career.



CAD skills aid horsebox for the disabled

Fourth year Toby Lee turned his DT skills to very good use by making a valuable contribution to a scheme for disabled horse riders. The Happiness Horsebox CIC is designed with a large hydraulic wheelchair lift so disabled people can be transported with their horses (and also use the ramp to mount the horse safely). Toby helped to raise funds to build the horsebox by creating the visuals using CAD to show investors and potential users.

Poem for my Grandfather

Keeping your chin up is an easy thing
To say but not to do in real life.

Grey thoughts like foggy mornings cloud your mind,
But hope is breaking through the clouds like dawn,

And dappled light appears in your mind,
And soon the light will burn the grey away –
The everlasting war of hope and fear,
The fate of hope is cradled in your arms.
So keep your chin up high for dawn will come.

Photo: Simon Berger

In a recent school blog from English teacher, Andrew Jamison, abingdon.org.uk/blog/what-good-is-poetry, we were encouraged to think about the relevance and worth of poetry. In keeping with this, first year Bertie Smith shared this poem that he wrote for his grandfather, who he was unable to see during lockdown. It is a wonderful illustration of the beauty and value of poetry for all age groups.

World Book Day

This year, World Book Day looked a little bit different, with students taking part in a variety of virtual activities from writing workshops to scavenger hunts.

The celebrations began at the start of the week, with the launch of the Book Review and Book Cover Design competitions. Students were tasked with writing a review of a book they recently read, one they loved, or even one they hated! For the Book Cover Design competition, they were asked to design a new book cover, either because they fell in love with the book, or because they didn't like the way it currently looked. We had a wide range of submissions for both competitions.



Lower School Scavenger Hunt

As part of World Book Day, lower school pupils enjoyed a literary themed scavenger hunt. They had to look for ten objects around their house that linked to a particular book, then send a picture of themselves and their guess for which book it was. The first years were hunting for *Alice in Wonderland* themed items, and the second years got into the world of *James Bond*. Great fun was had all round.



Virtual Writing Workshop

Students from the Third Year attended a virtual writing workshop with YA author Martin Stewart (*Riverkeep*, *The Sacrifice Box*), who showed them how to carefully craft their characters and avoid writing about sequences of events. The students were highly engaged and asked some great questions, and had particular fun writing dialogue and guessing who the characters were.



Covid-19 testing

As part of the measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, nearly 1000 students were tested over the weekend of 6 and 7 March before returning to school on 8 March. This was quite a logistical challenge but with the aid of an online appointment system and digital consent form the testing went smoothly. We are very grateful to all who helped out from setting up the logistics to our parents bringing their children to school. Particular thanks go to our Healthcare team for their efficient and professional approach to running the testing centre.



Senior Maths Challenge

Over 80% of the students taking the Senior Maths Challenge achieved a certificate at the Bronze level or above, including 15 gaining the hallowed Gold certificate – placing them amongst the top 10% across the country.

Ashwin Tennant and Max Williams were outstanding. Ashwin missed out on a perfect score by a single question, whilst Max achieved an astounding perfect score.

11 students qualified for Senior Kangaroo, placing them in the top 6000 scorers across the UK. It was great to see Scott Yap and William Meng achieve a Merit for their superb performance in this follow-on round.

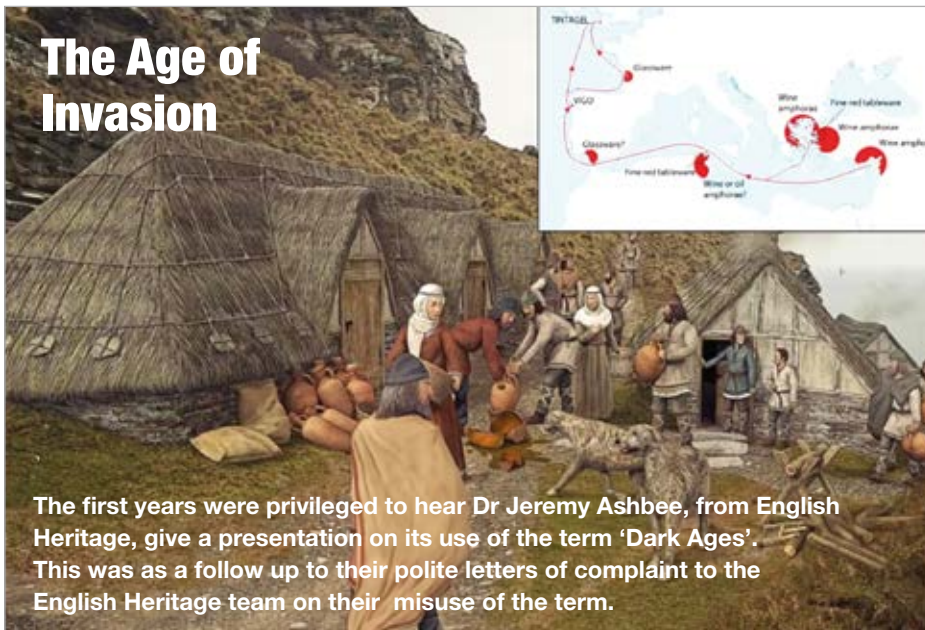
British Mathematical Olympiad

In other news from the Maths department, congratulations to Winston Li, Ashwin Tennant, Max Williams and Jeroan Yip who qualified for the first round of the British Mathematical Olympiad.



Ritangle success

Several teams of sixth form mathematicians took part in the Ritangle competition, attempting to solve all 25 problems to arrive at one final answer. Ritangle is a free maths competition aimed at teams of 16-18 year old students running over approximately 10 weeks in the autumn. Around 900 teams competed and Abingdon was one of only 37 schools who had teams achieving 'unlock stage 3'.



The Age of Invasion

The first years were privileged to hear Dr Jeremy Ashbee, from English Heritage, give a presentation on its use of the term 'Dark Ages'. This was as a follow up to their polite letters of complaint to the English Heritage team on their misuse of the term.

During the presentation, Dr Ashbee talked about how the English Heritage organisation would often use the term 'Dark Ages' to describe the time period of buildings and artefacts they own or manage. The pupils discussed alternative terms such as Early Middle Ages, Post-Roman and Pre-Conquest. One novel suggestion was 'The Age of Invasion'.



Boarders enjoyed their first weekend back at school spending time baking and gardening.



Offline Friday

Third year Crescent students made the most of their "no screen" time on 29 January, with activities ranging from model building to gardening, and from reading to pizza making!

From Conflict to Confucius

The History department was privileged to welcome eminent British historian and political scientist Professor Rana Mitter, to give an online lecture on China from 1919 to the present day. Rana Mitter is Professor of History and Politics of Modern China at the Department of Politics and International Relations at Oxford. He appears on numerous BBC documentaries, including In Our Time, and we were very lucky to hear him speak. We had more than 60 attendees from the Sixth Form, including pupils from some of our partner schools in the area.





University places

Congratulations to all the Upper Sixth who have received and are still receiving offers of university places and further education. We are very confident that, as in previous years, the vast majority of students will get to their first choice. 17 students and OAs have recently received offers from Oxford and Cambridge.

Oxford (12)

Physics, Chemistry, English & Modern Languages, English Language & Literature, Engineering Science (2), Classics (4), Biomedical Sciences, Mathematics

Cambridge (5)

Engineering (2), History, Mathematics, Modern & Medieval Languages

Art at Abingdon

Art continues to grow from strength to strength and students are applying and moving onto some brilliant courses at university including Architecture, Fine Art, Art History and Animation. University applicants have to undergo a series of tasks and interviews and we wanted to share some of the portfolio work from two of our students, Sam Penrose and Alfie Marshall.

Work Experience - CAD Models from Floorplans



Sam Penrose



Alfie Marshall



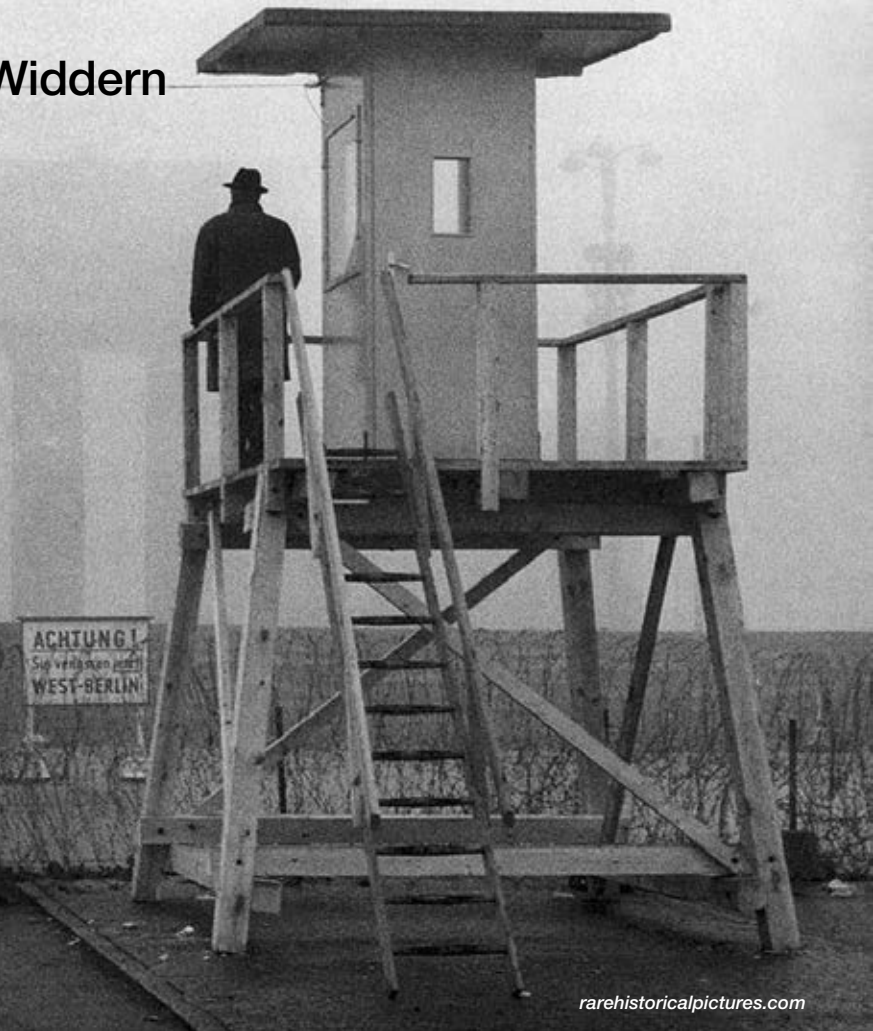
Alfie Marshall

An Interview with Frau Von Widdern

By Arlo Hyman and Jacob Eaton in the Third Year.
The full article was first printed in The Polyglot,
the MFL department's school magazine.

Frau Von Widdern teaches German at Abingdon.
She was born and brought up in Berlin, living there
for 23 years before moving to the UK in 1999.

The Brandenburg Gate is shrouded in fog as a man looks from a watchtower over the Wall to the Eastern part of the divided city on November 25, 1961. The tower was erected by the West German police to observe the Inner-German border.



rarehistoricalpictures.com

What was life like in Berlin before the wall came down?



Frau Widdern as a child
with her sister and parents

I lived on the west side of the Berlin Wall. I was 13 when the wall was destroyed and up until then I hadn't really noticed any of the restrictions. I lived just within Berlin and we had a holiday house by the Baltic Sea in the north. We would go there three or four times a year so every time we wanted to leave Berlin, we had to go through a number of checkpoints in East and West Germany. If you were in any way suspicious to the East German border guards,

they would take you aside and would search your car thoroughly, leaving everything strewn all over the place.

Did you do anything special on the evening of 9th November 1989?

Not in the evening because I was at school on the day that the wall came down, so I heard the news half way through the school day. The next day was a Saturday so we went to East Berlin and it was so weird, so different even though it was just a few kilometres on the other side. I remember the smells were different, the sounds were different even the colours of the buildings were different, people's clothes, people's haircuts. Everything was different.

What was the atmosphere like when the wall had come down?

Because so many friends and families had been separated, initially people were elated on both sides. East Germans wanted to visit West Berlin; many just to have a look. They just wanted to see what the supposed golden West was like and lots of West Germans would hit the cars on the top as a celebration at the borders. There was champagne and lots of partying.

Did your life change due to reunification?

My family life did not change because I had quite a small family, but my school life changed a lot. My school was only 2 km from the border meaning that when the new school year started, we had a completely new form of students who all came from East Germany, whose first foreign language was Russian. They had a Russian teacher and they were two years ahead in Maths and Science; they were absolutely unbelievably amazing.

Was there a big difference in lifestyle between East and West Berlin and was it difficult for the two sectors to integrate?

Once the wall had fallen the differences were not as big anymore. With time, many argued that the West had usurped the East which had an impact on the self-confidence of the people who had lived in the East. I think if you went to Berlin today you would not see the differences anymore. However, if you speak to people of my parents' generation or even my sister's generation, they will often still talk about East Germans and West Germans. They still have strong biases and prejudices against the East German people.

School magazines

With no fewer than 11 Other Half activities dedicated to writing and journalism, student led publications thrive at Abingdon. This term saw the publication of three very impressive departmental magazines.



The History department's topical magazine is very impressive. Edited by upper sixth former Johan Nerlov, copies are available from the department.



The latest edition of the *Polyglot* magazine from the Modern Languages Department is out now. The theme is Revolution and thanks go to all who contributed and in particular sixth formers, Jakob Hobbs, Billy Backhouse and James Healey.



The School's new science magazine launched its inaugural edition this term. Copies are available from the Science department.



RAF Engineering Scholarship

Congratulations to Hal McLaren on receiving a prestigious RAF Arkwright Engineering Scholarship. The Scholarships are awarded nationally, to a select number of students who show an aptitude for engineering, and are in recognition of outstanding potential as a future engineer. Hal undertook a rigorous selection process and performed exceptionally well in order to be awarded "The Royal Air Force Arkwright Engineering Scholarship".



Abingdon snowmen

Early in the term, the lower school pupils rose admirably to Mr Jenkins' challenge to take a winter-themed photograph or to make a snowman.



Photo Phriday

In a weekly event dubbed "Photo Phriday", Mr Price's tutor group gathered on Zoom having met a challenge for a Zoom group photo. Challenges included wearing an item of kitchenware and looking very blue!



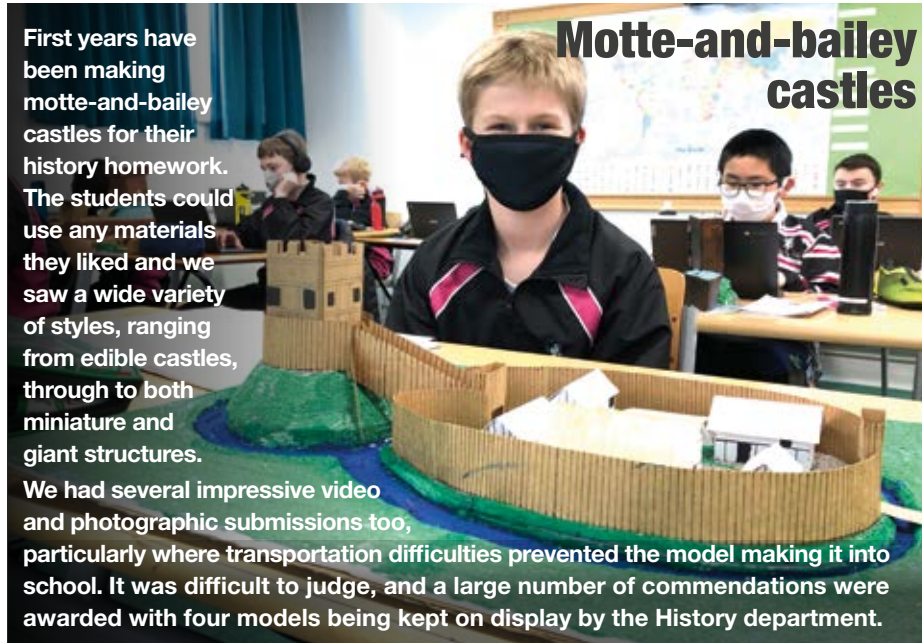
Learning to cook

During lockdown Mr Bignell, Director of Sport & PE, ran live '20 minute meals' cookery sessions where he taught students to cook healthy meals. The students were provided with an ingredients list a week in advance and then followed Mr Bignell over Zoom to prepare the meal in 20 minutes.

Border's Bake-off

Third years in Border's House tested their baking skills in tutor time making a Victoria sponge under competition rules during Zoom. Results looked very impressive!





Motte-and-bailey castles

First years have been making motte-and-bailey castles for their history homework. The students could use any materials they liked and we saw a wide variety of styles, ranging from edible castles, through to both miniature and giant structures.

We had several impressive video and photographic submissions too, particularly where transportation difficulties prevented the model making it into school. It was difficult to judge, and a large number of commendations were awarded with four models being kept on display by the History department.



Young Enterprise

Two of the School's Young Enterprise teams presented their projects to an online Dragons Den style event, hosted by Young Enterprise. This was for schools in the Oxford region and each team had ten minutes to answer questions from the panel. Both teams were questioned on aspects regarding sales, use of social media, overall strategy, sustainability and how they responded to the ever-changing national situation.

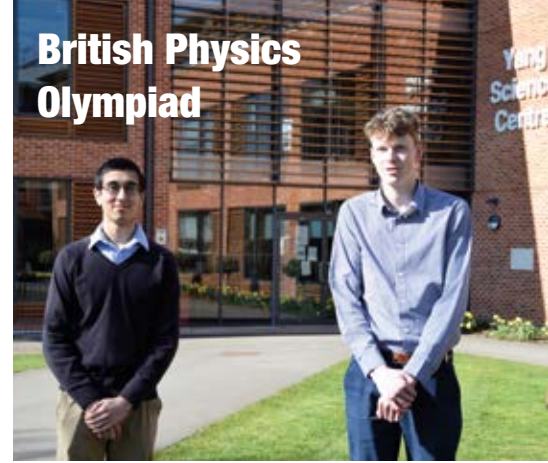
Each team was commended on their work and we await the results!



Spanish online influencers

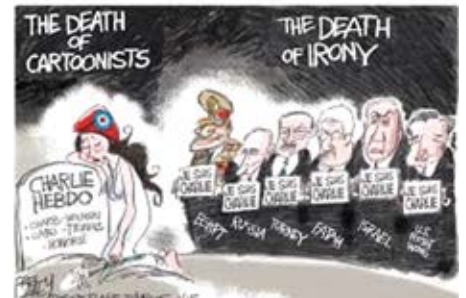
Lower sixth students studying Spanish enjoyed becoming an online 'influencer' for a day, recording video adverts to practise their language skills. You can watch the videos in the news section of the website.

British Physics Olympiad



Abingdon enjoyed outstanding success this year in the Physics Olympiad which is an exam-based competition for upper sixth physicists. Ashwin Tennant and Will Taylor achieved the gold award putting them among the top 100 students nationally, out of about 1600 entrants, and earning them a place in Round 2, where a spot on the national Olympiad team is up for grabs. Six students received the very impressive silver award and a further eight the bronze award and commendations.

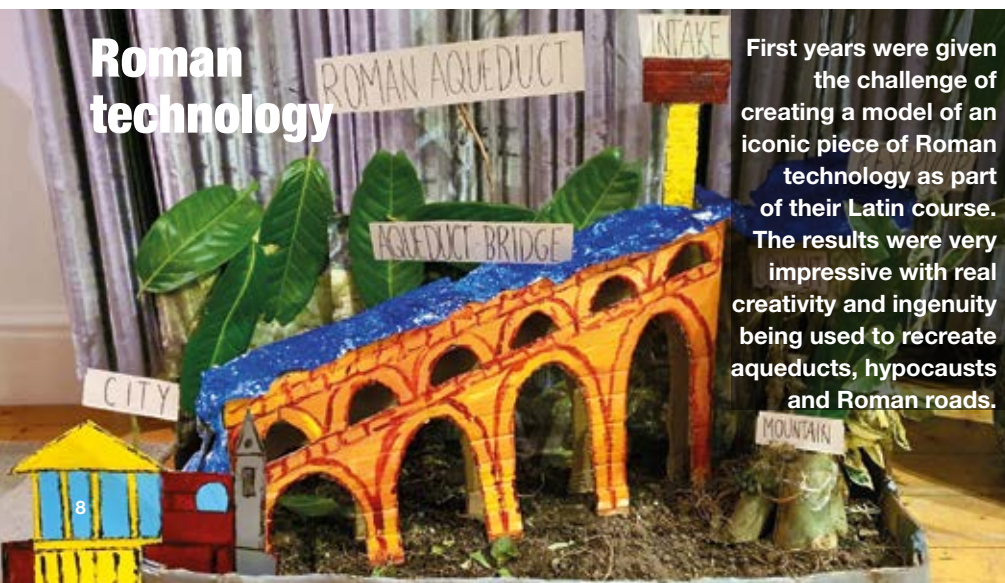
Alliance Française



Lower sixth students studying French enjoyed three Zoom webinars with the Alliance Française in Oxford. The morning began with an overview of French cinema, followed by an informative and lively discussion on freedom of expression in France in the context of Charlie Hebdo. The final session, on pronunciation, saw the pupils in fine voice as they learnt how to vary their intonation of high frequency vocabulary in different contexts. Our thanks go to the Alliance for putting on such an engaging and rewarding programme.



Roman technology



First years were given the challenge of creating a model of an iconic piece of Roman technology as part of their Latin course. The results were very impressive with real creativity and ingenuity being used to recreate aqueducts, hypocausts and Roman roads.



The Schools Clean Air Monitoring Project in Abingdon or SCAMPA

By Jeremy Thomas, Abingdon Science Partnership Coordinator

The 2020 lockdown was challenging for schools, but also demonstrated the strength and resilience of the Partnership programme at Abingdon. One example was SCAMPA. During a conversation on lockdown and improved air quality, ASP Coordinator Jeremy Thomas and Caldecott Primary School Science Coordinator Holly Irving saw an opportunity for pupils to carry out research, develop enquiry skills and communicate science to the local community.

A proposal was submitted to the Royal Society of Chemistry for a Schools Outreach Grant and the bid was successful, allowing equipment purchase and evaluation. Particulate matter (PM) sensors attached to Raspberry Pi microcomputers were tested by sixth former Jake Wallis during his summer holiday, utilising Computer Science A-level skills and adding to data for his EPQ project on air pollution in the UK. Jake logged data via a mapping website so that all schools could see data in real time and wrote a very clear instruction manual for schools to configure and deploy their own sensors.

In September 2020, the project was launched and 13 local primary and secondary schools jumped at the chance to take part. As well as PM sensors, diffusion tubes detecting monthly average levels of nitrogen dioxide were set up at twelve sites. Radley College joined, providing technical support for Radley Primary, and Larkmead sixth formers mentored Caldecott Primary's team. SCAMPA teams at seven primary schools, plus teams at senior schools, Fitzharrys and John Mason, deployed the tubes and collected daily weather data to help interpret the results. The sites are now all up and running and the next stage is to analyse the results.

Abingdon's sixth formers have played an important role, with geographers Will Haynes and Noah Macer using GIS to map diffusion tube locations; Oliver Kirk, Caleb Majjeh and Cameron Eilbeck writing science briefing notes and John Bonchristiano using his considerable programming skills to construct displays of daily PM measurements. Dominic Wood, in the Lower Sixth, will base a new EPQ project on data gathered by SCAMPA

teams, including Ms Alex Von Widdern's third year Environmental Service group and Mrs Rebecca Schwarz's lunchtime science club at Abingdon Prep.

SCAMPA has attracted attention from local politicians, air quality campaigners and scientists, including an invitation to present at the Oxford Air Quality Meeting in January 2021. Professional scientists were impressed by what had been achieved and the potential for engaging schools in further research nationally and internationally. SCAMPA has also demonstrated that teamwork and collaboration are essential in science, with pupils, teachers, ICT and science technicians as well as parents and governors all supporting the project and ensuring its success despite the current, unusual circumstances.



Food bank donation

As School was preparing to open for the start of term in January, fresh food orders had been placed but with the move to online learning at short notice there was a surplus of fresh fruit and veg that couldn't be used. Our ever-resourceful catering team from Sodexo contacted the Oxford Food Hub which supplies free food to about 150 local registered charities and community groups. The fresh fruit, vegetables, yoghurts and eggs were all able to be used in the local community.



Medea

Classicists gathered in the Amey Theatre to watch the National Theatre's recent production of Euripides' Medea. Prior to this, Anthony Bracey OA 'returned' to school via Zoom to describe the original setting of the drama over 2400 years ago in Athens, just as the city was about to embark on a 30-year long war.

Applying D&T to help arthritis

Students in the First, Second and Third Years have been learning about re-designing household objects to make them easier for people with arthritis.



Joint Literary Society: Annual American Literature Lecture

The Joint Literary Society from Abingdon and St Helen's was treated to a fascinating lecture from OA and Senior Lecturer in American Literature at Oxford Brookes, Dr Niall Munro. Dr Munro explored the connections between John Steinbeck and F Scott Fitzgerald, in the lecture entitled 'But you can repeat the past: the 1920s and 30s in today's America'.



Reusing dirty water

For this term's Crest Award project, two members of the Lower School Crest Science Award Club have been investigating methods to filter dirty water for hand washing in remote communities. The activity is based on the Practical Action development charity's Ditch the Dirt and Stop the Spread campaign. Balraj Purewal and Charlie Scott combined both activities and added ideas of their own in order to design a complete water collection and filtration system.

Creative demography

The third year students studied demography in geography this term and in their first online lesson, Mr Pygott's students constructed world population graphs using household items.



In Focus: International Day of Women and Girls in Science



International Day of Women and Girls in Science

The School marked the day by featuring sixth former Euan Baldwin's EPQ entitled 'Why we should strive for gender equality in physics: looking beyond the moral imperative'. Euan researched his project and interviewed two female physicists, both experts in the field of gender equality in physics. Euan was able to identify important reasons why the moral imperative is not the only reason that physics would benefit from gender equality. Reports cited in his project show clear evidence of improved productivity, more diverse thinking, greater innovation and greater societal impact from more gender-equal research groups. Female scientists are also more likely to engage in outreach activities, publicising the work they do and thus engaging and motivating the next generation of scientists.



Photography competition success

Alexander Wakefield in the Fourth Year has had one of his photographs placed runner up in a national competition to design the front cover of a catalogue for Specialist Crafts Art Supplies. The photo was inspired by artist Andy Goldsworthy. Alex received £50 and will have his work displayed in the company's advertising campaign.

Les fêtes françaises

Fourth year students learning French have been studying the seasonal festivals Mardi Gras et la Chandeleur. They enjoyed researching and then creating presentations on a range of French festivals.

Pupils in the First to Third Years rose to the French department's crêpe flipping challenge for Chandeleur, celebrated on 2 February. There were some particularly impressive acrobatic flips, and a range of delicious toppings.



Lower School Chess

The annual Lower School Inter-tutor group Chess Tournament took place over Zoom using the chess.com website. After very competitive year group rounds, the final saw first year winners 1M (Alparslan Abdurrazak, James Darbishire and Daniel Harrison) take on second year winners 2H (Xien Hu, Gleb Kuprin and Dhruv Lakhani). In the closest final in living memory 2H were crowned champions, winning 10-9.

Online Other Half

Not to be daunted by remote learning, the Other Half also moved online in January with 108 activities to choose from. Opportunities included diverse subjects from bellringing and Russian to sports psychology, computer game design and cookery.

Chinese New Year Art



Fourth and fifth years studying Mandarin celebrated the new year with taking time away from screens to create some very accomplished Chinese artwork.



Third year pupils had their history lessons brought to life with a First World War reenactor delivering a zoom talk, replete with Tommy kit and weapons.





Supporting Wallingford Food Bank

First year Frederick Mellor, together with his brother and sisters, raised £405 from a charity cake sale for the Wallingford Food Bank.



Studying the rainforest

First year geographers have been learning about the tropical rainforest environment. They have recently completed a project to create impressive 3D rainforest models.



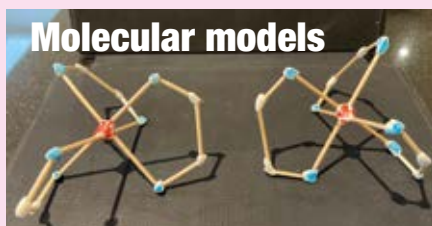
Fundraising for Alzheimer's

Lower sixth student Max O'Brien challenged himself to run 100 miles in three weeks or less in aid of the Alzheimer's Society. The cause is close to Max's heart as his grandfather, Abito, has been suffering from dementia for many years. Max aims to raise £500.00. To support Max, please visit: www.justgiving.com/runfordementia-maxo



Kitchen chemistry

Kitchen staples came to the fore in an online Chemistry lesson on carboxylic acids. Students were able to see the effect of immersing an egg in half a pint of vinegar which peeled the egg by reacting with the calcium carbonate in the shell.



Molecular models

Upper sixth former Rory Mitchell overcame the problem of a lack of a molecular modelling kit at home by creating his own models of transition metal stereoisomers in Chemistry.



The third years have been learning about the structure and importance of biological molecules in the human body. Students made models to show the large complex molecule made from smaller subunits.



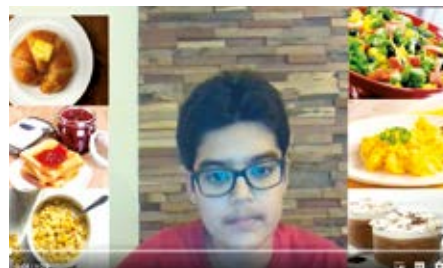
Lower School work exhibition

Lower school tutor groups held an online work exhibition, giving them the chance to display and talk about a recent piece of work that they were particularly proud of to their classmates. A wide range of work was on show, from gladiator projects to 3D models of Iraq, and from Mark Powell-inspired art to persuasive writing in English.



The annual UK Linguistics Olympiad, UKLO, went ahead online this year. There are four levels of difficulty in the UKLO, and 26 Abingdonians were up for the challenge of taking on the highest level; the advanced paper consists of five fiendish problems decoding real or invented languages from a few cryptic pieces of information.

The students pulled off an outstandingly successful year for Abingdon; ten pupils earned awards that placed them amongst the best students in the country. Three of the ten, Charlie Franklin, Joseph Betts and Ethan Walker, won gold awards, putting them in the top 5% in the country. These three go through to compete in the second round, attempting to qualify for the national squad, which will compete in an international competition.



Shakespeare's soliloquies

The first year students have been working on bringing Shakespearean soliloquies to life in drama lessons this term. Videos can be seen in the news section of the website.



A French breakfast

Second year students made Flipgrid presentations in French on what they and their family like to eat and drink for breakfast.

English Speaking Union's Schools' Mace competition.

"This House believes that government economic policy should prioritise the collective happiness and wellbeing of the population over economic growth". This was the topic up for debate at this year's competition where the Abingdon team were up against Aylesbury Grammar School, St Helen's and Radley College in the first heat. The team opposed the motion and gave a strong performance but their speeches went over time leaving the way open for St Helen's to go through to the next round.

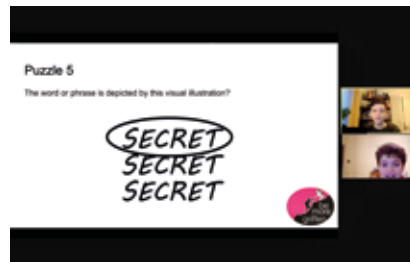
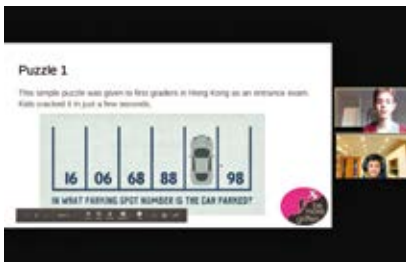
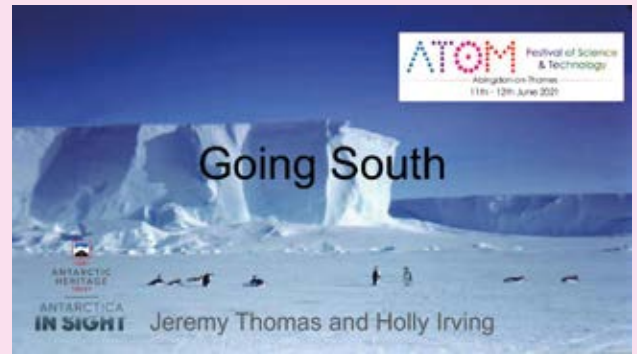
Lower school detectives

Over 80 lower school students enjoyed the chance to test their detective skills in an online escape room activity. Working in small groups in breakout rooms, they had to solve a series of clues to find the perpetrator of a murder and their motive for the crime!



Going South

ASP coordinator, Jeremy Thomas co-presented with Holly Irving, Science Coordinator at Caldecott Primary School, at the Association for Science Education's Annual Conference. Thirty teachers and science educators joined the remote presentation on the 'Going South' Primary Science Fair Project developed by Jeremy and Holly. The project was financed by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the first sighting of the Antarctic continent by Edward Barnsfield and supported by the Abingdon ATOM Festival and the UK Science Festivals Network.



Lower school puzzles

In the first joint lower school tutor period of term, second year mentors met with their first year mentees over Zoom. To mark World Logic Day, they were given some tricky logic puzzles to solve together.

Answers on back page



Delivering Cicero

Students studying Latin in the Fourth Year recorded themselves delivering the opening of one of Cicero's most famous speeches, the First Catilinarian, delivered in the senate in late 63 BC.

AFU film success



Regeneration, an AFU film from 2007 created by OA Freddie Barber, has been selected by Cambridge University to feature in its EU-funded *Dialogue and Argumentation for Cultural Literacy Learning in Schools* (DIALLS) international programme. The AFU was established in 2003 and began by producing purely documentary films, but *Regeneration* was one of the Unit's first hand-drawn animations and saw Freddie working with guidance from award-winning animators including Joanna Harrison and Geoff Dunbar.

OA drama success

Congratulations to former Abingdon drama students Alex Mugnaioni (2007), Steve Hodgetts (2009) and Kit Young (2013) who all appear in high-profile productions on our screens, and to Simon Evans (2002) whose two series of the hit lockdown sitcom *Staged* have won a raft of awards:



After making his National Theatre debut in Dürrenmatt's *The Visit* last March, Alex Mugnaioni plays the role of Paris in the NT's new production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Steve Hodgetts both co-wrote and starred in a 2018 romantic comedy called *Love Possibly*, which has just become available on Amazon Prime.

Kit Young has carved out a spectacular career since leaving school in 2013 landing key roles in thrilling new productions of Shakespeare plays by Nick Hytner at the Bridge Theatre in London, as well as shows at The Donmar Warehouse and the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. Now he is set to appear on our screens as Jesper Fahey in a new Netflix series called *Shadow and Bone*.



The impact of Simon Evans' debut TV series *Staged* continues to resound. Simon seized the moment last April by successfully pitching, writing, directing and acting in the first series of *Staged*, a lockdown drama played out on zoom, and featuring a cast of acting royalty that included Michael Sheen, David Tennant, Adrian Lester, Judi Dench, Samuel L Jackson and Nina Sosanya - all playing versions of themselves as they struggle to keep the theatrical flag flying in the face of the pandemic.

Taking a look at the Drama department

Ben Phillips (OA 2005) and his three brothers all enjoyed Abingdon as pupils and Ben returned to join the Drama department in 2010, becoming Director of Drama in 2018. Ben is also the subject lead at Buckingham University, he is an examiner and trains drama teachers.



What brought you back to teach at Abingdon?

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the school as a pupil and was hugely influenced by the inspirational teachers. The opportunity to return to teach was serendipitous and I jumped at the chance to join a Drama department which is amongst the most professional in any school setting, and which has always been very well supported. The long list of OAs who have gone on to make a career from drama is testament to the School; recently these include Toby Marlow who wrote the smash hit musical *Six* and Kit Young who stars in *Shadow and Bone* on Netflix. Then there are the well-established names such as Toby Jones, Tom Hollander and David Mitchell - to name but a few.

What are you most proud of about Abingdon drama?

It has passion and the teachers are exceptional. Jeremy Taylor was Head of Department when I joined as a teacher and he taught me when I was a student; he imbibed students with his love of drama. At Abingdon we are ambitious, many schools will produce popular classics that work well with a young cast but Abingdon will also try contemporary plays. Putting the first ever amateur production of *Earthquakes in London* on the stage, shortly after it finished its West End run, is a good example. The author, Mike Bartlett, is an OA so that made it very special.

What makes drama an important part of the curriculum and the Other Half?

Drama offers wide-ranging opportunities. It provides different experiences for different pupils, whether you want to be behind the scenes working with technology or whether you want to be centre-stage. The camaraderie is important, working together as a team to achieve a common goal. Drama teaches many transferable skills; teamwork and creativity are important for everyone and the confidence drama can give is hugely beneficial.

How many students study drama at GCSE and A level?

Drama is very popular, it is compulsory to the end of the Second Year and then we usually have four sets in the Third Year. We currently have 27 students studying drama at GCSE and 16 in the Sixth Form where the A level is taught jointly with St Helen's. The collaboration with St Helen's is vital, the girls are very passionate and a positive influence. But it's not all about the curriculum, there are many and varied activities throughout the Other Half and very exciting opportunities with schools across Abingdon as part of our Partnership programme.

Which productions have you most enjoyed?

So difficult to say. *Earthquakes in London* is definitely up there as is *Les Misérables* from 2015. But there is a lot more to come once we can get back on stage in earnest. I want to do something positive and uplifting to celebrate better times – watch this space!



England Rifle Team Selection

Congratulations to Will Shorrocks, Oscar Bennett and Ben MacLennan on being selected for the England B, C and D Rifle Teams, respectively, in the British Schools' Small-bore Rifle Association National Match 2021.



Core Training

Lower school pupils rounded off their first day of remote learning in January with a high energy core sport lesson.

Swimming clean sweep

In January we received the results of the virtual swimming gala organized by King's High School last term. The swim team had met up in their bubbles and recorded times for certain events which they submitted online. Despite the disruption to their regular training due to restrictions and lockdown the squad put in a fine effort and managed to place first in every single event for both the U16 and U18 categories.

Many congratulations to OA (2020) Charlie Atkinson on his selection into the England Rugby shadow training squad for the Guinness Six Nations. Charlie has had an incredible start to his first full year of professional rugby, appearing at fly-half for Wasps, scoring tries, and playing in notable victories over Montpellier and Sale. Being selected for England is a huge achievement and a credit to all his hard work and dedication.



Practising on dry land

Sixth form kayakers, not to be deterred by lockdown, have been developing safety and rescue skills over the past half term.



Returning to school after lockdown, lower school students were very happy to play some team sport together at Tilsley Park.

OA selected for England Squad





International music success

Fifth year music scholar, Oliver Simpson, has won first prize in the 2021 International Music Competition, "London" Grand Prize Virtuoso, in the 13 to 15 age category. The competition is open to all performers in strings, piano, wind and vocal and there were entries from 71 countries across the world. Oliver played Chopin's Introduction and Polonaise Brillante, arranged for cello and piano. The prize gives him a medal and a concert in the Elgar Rooms at the Royal Albert Hall. You can watch the video of his stunning performance on the news section of the website.



Sixth Form Performance Evening

Our second streamed concert of the term, consisted of 11 home-recorded solo performances by sixth form pupils who were helped by 'piano backing tracks' put together by music teachers. Taking part were woodwind, brass, piano, strings and voice and we were particular pleased to welcome sixth formers from Hong Kong.



Solo Concert Platform No 3

Our first concert of 2021 was compiled and streamed with 15 solo performances that had been recorded at home by pupils from Lower School to the Upper Sixth. The concert saw some outstanding performances across a variety of solo instruments. The concert also gave opportunities for several fifth year GCSE musicians to air their solo pieces.



Composing for the harp

Lachlan Keene in the Third Year joined the Other Half activity, Composers' Workshop, and crafted a short piece for the harp which was performed by Olivia Jageurs, a London-based harpist, who has pledged to record any compositions sent to her provided they are under 15 seconds in length.



Fifth Year Performance Evening

The Fifth Year Performance Evening saw 19 excellent solo performances from a wide spread of talented musicians representing all five areas of instrumental teaching in the school – woodwind, brass, singing, strings and piano. The concert replaced the usual GCSE solo performance and it gave the pupils a much wider audience to demonstrate the very exciting talent that we have in this year group.



Solo Concert Platform No 4

Our second concert platform of 2021 showcased 21 solo performances from pupils in Lower School to the Upper Sixth. We were delighted to hear so many talented musicians who have continued to enjoy their music throughout lockdown.

Investigating microbes

We Are!

VIIRIIIS!

Year 5 has been investigating microbes finding out about the different types and how they appear under microscopes. They then went on to design their own.

Virtual fixtures



Physical fixtures may not have been possible last term but that did not deter the PE Department who moved online with virtual challenges against St Hugh's and Beachborough. The boys collectively ran, walked, hacked and cycled 1,395km against Beachborough with over 500 children taking part across both schools.



'The Highwayman'

Boys have been studying the poem 'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyes. They had great fun acting it out in their English lesson. Some of the boys managed to find suitable props for dressing up while others used clever settings on their computer to create their costumes!



French detectives

Pupils in Year 5 became French detectives to solve the mystery of the stolen pains au chocolat. There were ten prime suspects, including Mr Windsor, the Headmaster at Abingdon. The boys listened to the suspects talk and then received police transcripts of their accounts - all in French of course! With the help of clues from the crime scene the boys identified the culprit and celebrated with a French pastry via Zoom!



Polar Safari

Reception boys prepared for their "Polar Safari" by packing suitcases with things that they might need, from rope and a torch, salopettes, sunglasses and teddies, to lip salve, plasters and toothbrushes! They then dressed up ready to go, prepared a passport, learnt how to take a birds-eye view photograph of their luggage and labelled it too!



Relief drawing

In CDT lessons, the boys have been taking the concept of relief drawing into an animal paper collage. By cutting simple newspaper shapes, layering and then exaggerating the features, the animals, from scary sharks to delicate insects, popped out of the contrasting background.



Year 8 Bake Off

In the last week of online schooling Year 8 took on the 'Bake Off' challenge live on Zoom. The boys had an hour to produce a bake of their choice, sweet or savoury. The boys were very imaginative in their ingredients and ambitious with their creations – from sushi, pasties and a variety of biscuits to very impressive cakes.



Boys have thoroughly enjoyed their 'Share a bird' art project inspired by the artist Mark Hearld. Each bird delivered a positive message on their return to school in March. We even had the delight of a real chicken join us for his first art lesson, he was very well behaved too!



Lockdown concerts

The pupils worked very hard on their musical endeavours throughout the term and it was lovely to hear and see the Friday lunchtime concerts during lockdown. Each concert was a compilation of videos that have been sent in by pupils from across the school.

The Masked Reader

Reader - Contestant 5



World Book Day took a different direction at Abingdon Prep this year with 13 members of staff disguising their identities while reading part of a book they had chosen. The boys then had to guess which masked reader was which; not an easy task!

Looking after our wellbeing

By Natalie Hunt, Mental Health & Wellbeing Coordinator

The return to school in March and for the Summer term was warmly welcomed by our staff, parents, carers and students although we understand that this transition can be stressful for some. As we all prepare for the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions, it is worth remembering some simple strategies to look after our wellbeing.

Talk

Make time as a family to share your experiences of the day, reflect on what went well, what has been hard and what you are grateful for. These simple but meaningful conversations help to develop self reflection and gratitude, which are key for positive mental health. Some people find it easier to talk side by side (such as walking) or through doing an activity together.

The Mental Health Foundation has a great resource on talking as a family and Young Minds have advice on starting a conversation with your child.

Keep a routine

A great way to manage uncertainty and change is to keep simple routines at home, such as waking and going to bed at the same time, eating together, playing a game or taking the dog for a walk. These are great opportunities to talk and connect as a family.

Sleep and rest

The return to school will be physically and mentally tiring; it is therefore important to prioritise a good sleep routine and build in moments of rest. Check out Matther Walker's (author of Why We Sleep) TED talk and aim to schedule in time to rest from screens and work.

Limit intake of social media

Choosing to look at the news/social media at limited moments in the day (avoiding first thing in the morning and last thing at night) and turning off notifications are effective ways to manage worry associated with the pandemic.

Manage anxiety/stress

Be aware of increasing stress and anxiety levels throughout the easing of lockdown and find strategies that work for you. We highly recommend the following guides:

Anxiety - a parent guide
by Nicola Morgan

How to stay calm in a global pandemic
by Dr Emma Hepburn

Managing uncertainty in young people -
The British Psychological Society booklet

Life After Lockdown Wellbeing Action Plan
- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust

Don't forget to check out the student wellbeing pages on Firefly, with links to apps, podcasts and organisations to support your mental health and wellbeing.



Connecting parents, supporting school life

We were very excited to meet as a committee in November, virtually, to discuss the awarding of money to projects that will benefit a huge number of students in the school. The money has come from the fundraising efforts that you, the parents, have made.

ASPA AGM

The Annual General meeting of ASPA will be held in May, date to be confirmed. This will be virtual, and all current parents are welcome to join the meeting. We will be discussing the work of ASPA and confirming the roles for 2021/22. We are always looking for new committee members and this is an excellent opportunity to find out more about us.

We awarded the full amount requested to all eight projects, and over the next year we will provide updates through here and the website.

Mineral and fossil samples Geology Club (Other Half)

“ Abingdon’s Geology Club has been purchasing fossils to aid with the teaching of the GCSE geology course. The first fossil to be bought is a 380 million year old Goniatite from the late Devonian Period from Morocco. These were ammonoid molluscs which became extinct at the end of the Permian Period (in the Great Dying) but which developed into ammonites. ”
Mr Pygott



The other projects know how they want to spend their money, and many items have been ordered. A combination of Brexit and COVID-19 and the national lockdown has slowed the process. As a committee we can’t wait to see the outcomes of the awards and the impact on the students.

Computer controlled cutter Design Technology department

On order and is being delivered from Europe.

Timeline magazine (Other Half)

“ Our History Society pupils have already produced and printed the first of the ASPA supported Timeline magazine, and with the award we will be able to do two further editions. ” *Mr McGill*



What has been happening?

We are so disappointed that there are still no face-to-face events, fingers crossed that the government’s road map does take us out of lockdown and to something that we recognise as normal. Looking forward we hope that we will be attending the new parent ‘tea parties’ to welcome new parents of students starting in September, which will hopefully be held in June and early July.

With support from ASPA, Mr Jenkins held a Question of Sport virtual quiz for Lower School in December – great fun was had by all, and there was a fantastic turn out.



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 the Fifth Year, Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. Drop us a line at aspa@abingdon.org.uk

Abingdon Development

Abingdon 150 Giving Day

At 10am on 3 February our inaugural Giving Day went live and what followed was 30 hours of activities, videos, testimonials, energy, intrepidation and giving! Our social media platforms were awash with '150'-themed activities which brought the worldwide Abingdon community together to raise money for our bursary programme.



As Abingdon slept our international community came to life with Nick Drake (OA 1993) surfing 150 metres in Malibu. Activities in Abingdon were a bit less glamorous but great fun and included over 60 pupils making breakfast omelettes in less than 150 seconds with Pete Bignell, Director of Sport. Mr McDonnell, Mr Golding, Mr Birkbeck and Mr Davies cycled 150km in their bubble peloton and Mike Windsor, Headmaster, rung the school bell 63 times with Adam Jenkins, Head of Lower School, topping it up to 150. Even though the school campus was closed the whole community came together and kept the energy going for 30 hours.



£148,000 was donated in support of bursaries by 445 people across our Abingdon community. These vital funds have enabled us to offer more bursary places from September 2021, giving the opportunity of an Abingdon education to more pupils who we believe will thrive here and contribute to the ethos of Abingdon School. Thank you to everyone who took part.



The 1563 Society

Celebrating the first two years

This month marks two years since the launch of Abingdon's legacy society. Since its inception in 2019 we have welcomed over 50 members who have informed us that they have chosen to remember Abingdon in their will. Recent legacy gifts have contributed to various areas of school life, and are fundamental to our future. The 1563 Society meets regularly, albeit remotely during the last year, to reminisce, make new Abingdon friends and socialise with other members and their families. In our 150th year on this site by Albert Park, we have set ourselves a target to increase our membership to 150.

If you would like to learn more about joining our legacy society, our Development Manager, Harriet Alderman, would be delighted to talk to you. You can reach her by email at: harriet.alderman@abingdon.org.uk or by telephone on 07918 746679

Charlie Atkinson (2020)
150 passes in 150 seconds



Nick Drake (1993)
150m surfed on the Pacific



Mike Litchfield (1994)
150 complete climbs of School House steps in 1:54:39



OA testimonial videos inspired support
Tony Edwards (1962) left and Paul Evans (1975) right.



OA Club Webinars Open to All

The OA Club is keen to offer virtual events that spark interest for our alumni, but also for the Abingdon community and beyond. The Club was delighted to be able to organise two webinars open to all, including partnership schools, local residents and anyone who would find the content valuable.

We're grateful to the OA panellists who took part in two recent webinars - for lending us their time, expertise and experience.

For a link to either of these webinar recordings email oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk

Do look out for further 'Old Abingdonian Talks' in the future.



Old Abingdonians Talk Sport

Sports Broadcaster and OA Johnny Burrow (2014) hosted a panel discussion with fellow OAs and sportsmen Alex Fisher (2007), Graham Scott (1987), Charlie Quarterman (2017), Ollie Cook (2008) and Theo Brophy Clews (2015). Whilst acknowledging the impact that COVID-19 has had on the sports industry, it was a delight to hear of the ways in which our sportsmen have risen to the challenges that the pandemic has presented, their learnings from this unique period of time and their hopes for the future both personally and for the sports industry as a whole.

Managing the Mind in Uncertain Times

The OA Club was delighted to host OAs Dan Knowles (1988), Tommy Nicholson (2015), Sam Murrell (2011) and PJ Appleton (2008) for a webinar in collaboration with Abingdon's Mental Health and Wellbeing department on 20 January. Each OA had something unique to contribute to this important and topical discussion.

“ **Dan** If the NHS could prescribe physical activity and sleep, it would be a wonder drug and the research is very clear on that. ”

“ **Tommy** When the reality doesn't live up to those expectations and the idealised picture that you had, you need to be ready to deal with that and adapt in a positive way. ”

“ **Sam** Recognition and understanding is the first step in being able to deal with worry or anxiety. ”

“ **PJ** Depression can often convince you that you're alone and that's just not the case... opening up to people was one of the most helpful things I did. ”



OA Club Awards

The OA Club runs a small grants programme. Individual OAs can apply for support of a personal or professional development opportunity, or groups of OAs can apply for experiences in sport, music, art, drama and more.

Applications must be received by the OA Club Office no later than 1 May 2021.

For full information, please visit the OA Club website.

Abingdon Out of the Past

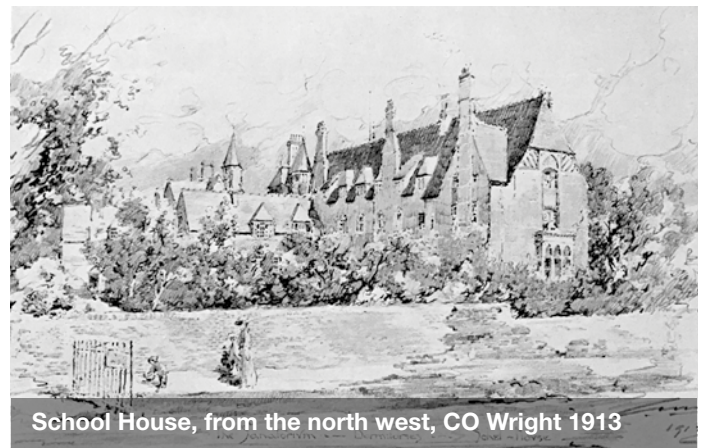
Drawn from the Past

Charles Octavius Wright taught art and mathematics at Abingdon from 1904 until 1931. The school archives have a copy of the maths text book he and fellow maths master, William Arthur Rudd, wrote in 1916: 'Model Drawing Geometrical and Perspective: with Architectural Examples', Wright providing the drawings of the over 300 complex architectural examples. He was a talented artist and the archives also possess several of his atmospheric drawings of the School.

Among Wright's pupils was another talented artist, Ivan Williams OA 1922, who also left behind some of his sketches of the interior of the school. Wright's and Williams' drawings together provide an attractive glimpse of Abingdon School as it was in the early days of the 20th Century.



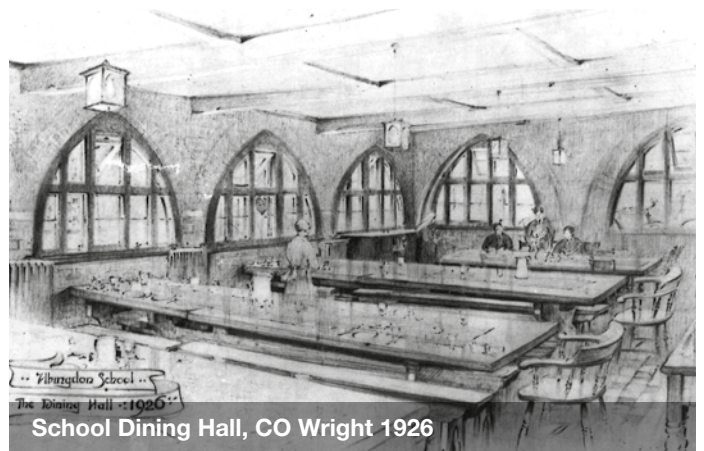
1913 Common Room: Arthur Rudd, Headmaster Thomas Layng and Octavius Wright are second, fourth and seventh from the left.



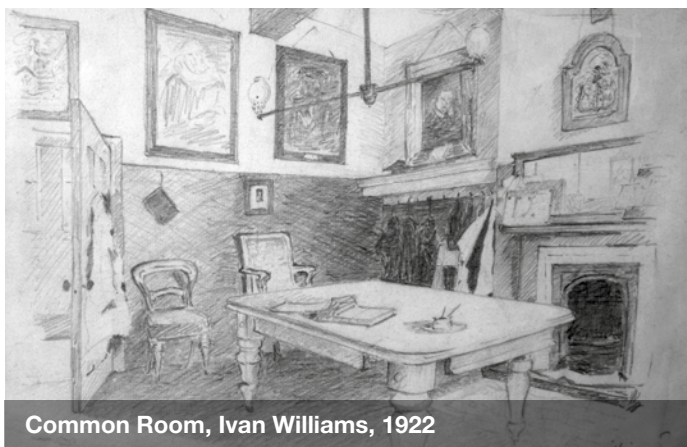
School House, from the north west, CO Wright 1913



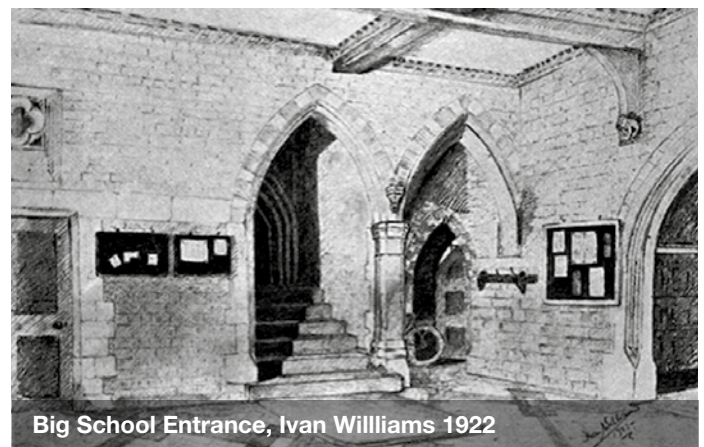
School House from the south west, CO Wright 1913



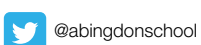
School Dining Hall, CO Wright 1926



Common Room, Ivan Williams, 1922



Big School Entrance, Ivan Williams 1922



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Answers to Lower School Puzzle on page 5:
Puzzle 1 = 87 (look at it upside down to see why!)
Puzzle 5 = top secret
Puzzle 10 = back to square one