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AbingdonNews



Improved facilities usher in a new era

This autumn has seen the opening of our newly renovated and extended boarding accommodation as well as a new dining pavilion.

Message from the Head

Fifty years ago the Sydney Opera House was finally completed. It was over ten years behind schedule and a whopping 1,357% over budget. When construction started, the engineering techniques did not exist to cope with such an unconventional shape and the unusual forces that it generated. However, this spurred the constructors to new heights of innovation and the result is a building known the world over, presenting a fresh and memorable symbol of Australian confidence.

Earlier this term, I reflected in a Middle School assembly on the construction of the Sydney Opera House and the power of our built environment to inspire us. The topic came to my mind as we have recently seen some significant developments to our facilities at Abingdon.

You can read in this edition about the new extensions to Crescent and Austin Houses, which do not just provide vastly improved accommodation to our boarders, including break-out spaces, kitchens and study spaces, but also feature comfortable communal areas where day pupils and boarders can mix and socialise together. These extensions are bright and airy and offer wonderful views across the school.

Our new dining space, known as the Pavilion, has relieved the pressure on our existing facilities and cut down the length of queues of pupils waiting for lunch. It is great to see students taking longer over their meal and enjoying one another's company. The Pavilion has also ensured that we can offer a much more spacious and modern foyer space when the Amey Theatre is in use.

It would be grandiose to compare our new facilities to the Sydney Opera House - and we certainly haven't experienced the same delays and overspend - but we are definitely proud of our new signature buildings and relish the impact they are having on our daily lives in school.



Getting ready for a new school year

A good number of the pupils joining Lower School this year came into Abingdon for 4 days at the end of August for the annual multisport camp. They enjoyed trying out a wide range of activities in the Sports Centre, while also getting to know some of their new classmates in advance of the start of term.

Sailing success

Congratulations to Alex who achieved 20th/196 in the recent sailing world championships. He has also achieved 2nd in the youth category.



Capsize and rescue training



Introduction to Paddlesports got off to a great start in September with some capsize and rescue training. Xavi, an experienced 4th Year paddler, was happy to demonstrate being a capsized casualty so that everyone could practise their rescuing skills.



John Locke

Congratulations to Gordon, who has been named global finalist in the John Locke Institute's essay competition (Law category) for his essay 'Suppose you were contemplating, in violation of the rules of this competition, submitting an essay written for you by AI. What would be the difference between such an act and ordinary attempted theft?'. Gordon was invited to a weekend of lectures and college dinners, culminating in a presentation at the Sheldonian and a reception at the Ashmolean Museum.



Be More Griffen

This year's Be More Griffen campaign was launched in Lower School in September. The 1st Years spent the morning in a series of lessons designed to help them develop key study skills including how to respond to feedback, how to get organised with homework, and how to set meaningful goals. They were then joined by the 2nd Years in the afternoon for a talk from paralympian Talan Skeels Piggins who told the truly inspiring story of how he overcame a motor accident that left him paralysed from the chest down to compete in the 2010 Winter Olympics in a sit-ski and to become the first paraplegic to compete against able-bodied racers in solo motorcycle racing.

Sandhurst in sight

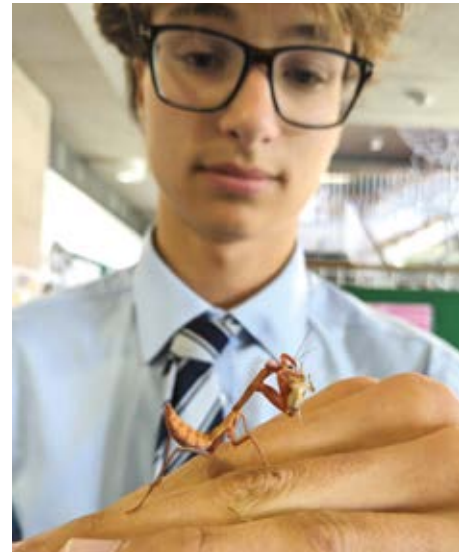


Congratulations to Zach and Jay, who have been awarded a prestigious Army Scholarship, guaranteeing them a place at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Both students competed against over 100 different candidates in a rigorous selection process involving an interview, essay and 2 day assessment testing physical fitness, problem-solving, leadership, and team-building skills. This makes 7 army scholarships awarded to students from Abingdon CCF in as many years. Both Zach and Jay talk about the opportunity the CCF has given them to practise leadership and communication skills, responsibility and time management.



Team building morning

Our 1st Years enjoyed a teambuilding morning one Saturday in September. Tasks included solving tangrams, donning blindfolds and deploying a giant parachute, as well as taking on the marshmallow challenge - all in order to develop their communication skills. The event was followed by a lunch for parents in the Hospitality Suite.



Studying ferocious predators

Students in the entomology club have been working hard to look after their praying mantises. This Timor shield mantis, *Rhombodera kirbyi*, a ferocious predator from Timor in southeast Asia, can be seen devouring a live cricket.



Striving for silver

In September, 7 teams completed their Silver Duke of Edinburgh practice expedition to the Peak District. The weather was mixed and the students coped well with the changing conditions. Many groups climbed the famed Kinder Scout and Mam Tor, while others enjoyed the rocky moorland along Stanage edge. The teams will now start to prepare for their assessed expedition to the Brecon Beacons in summer 2024.

AbingMUN

At the beginning of November, we hosted over 100 delegates in the Amey Theatre for a weekend of high quality, fruitful debate in the largest AbingMUN conference for 5 years. It didn't take long before all committees were in full flow, tackling riveting, challenging topics including The Russia - Ukraine war, The Nagorno - Karabakh issue and the question of the use of biological weapons in warfare. Delegates displayed excellent knowledge of current affairs and gave committees countless resolutions, providing sensational solutions to conflicts faced by many around the world today. Overall, a great weekend packed with memorable moments, laughter, learning and, most importantly, unity between schools and students.





Lending a helping hand

The new Lower School Assistants have been doing a great job of helping the youngest members of the school settle in. As well as helping out on 1st Year induction day, they have been attending Lower School morning tutor periods once a fortnight to have discussions with the pupils about how things are going and have been organising a range of fun activities for them every Tuesday lunchtime.



Celebrating National Poetry Day

On 5 October, we celebrated National Poetry Day with a whole school poetry writing competition. Well done to all the students, and in particular to winners William, Jack, Edward, Ben, Piers, Sze Long, Arth and Tristan. In addition, the poet Peter Robinson, a Professor of English from the University of Reading, came to read from his work and talk to students about his life as a writer. It was an inspirational event which provided a great insight into the journey of a writer's life, and proved a great way to celebrate National Poetry Day.

Classical musings

Ahead of the half-term classics trip to Italy, students (and their parents) were given the opportunity to hear an evening talk from visiting speaker, Dr Paul Roberts - research keeper of the department of antiquities at the Ashmolean. Dr Roberts spoke about Pompeii, Herculaneum and Rome, exuding great knowledge and enthusiasm when describing the beauty and interest of the sites and objects that will be visited on the trip. His talk ranged from the obscure (Hadrian's study at his villa, only accessible by drawbridge), to the poignant (the casts of bodies at Pompeii, preserved in the moment of death).



A classical adventure

Over half term, 58 pupils and 6 staff travelled to Rome and the Bay of Naples. Highlights included visiting the richly decorated houses of Pompeii; seeing world-famous sculptures in the Capitoline and Palazzo Massimo Museums; walking in the underground warren beneath the amphitheatre at the centre of Spartacus' uprising; and enjoying the warmth of the late afternoon at the Canopus at Hadrian's Villa. With great food, warm weather and fantastic sights, it was a memorable trip.

Ushering in a new era

This autumn has seen the opening of newly renovated and extended boarding accommodation in Crescent House and Austin House. Enhancing the experience of both our day and boarding communities, the newly created purpose-built accommodation includes new House rooms; kitchenettes; dedicated study areas and, for Sixth Form boarders, single bedrooms.

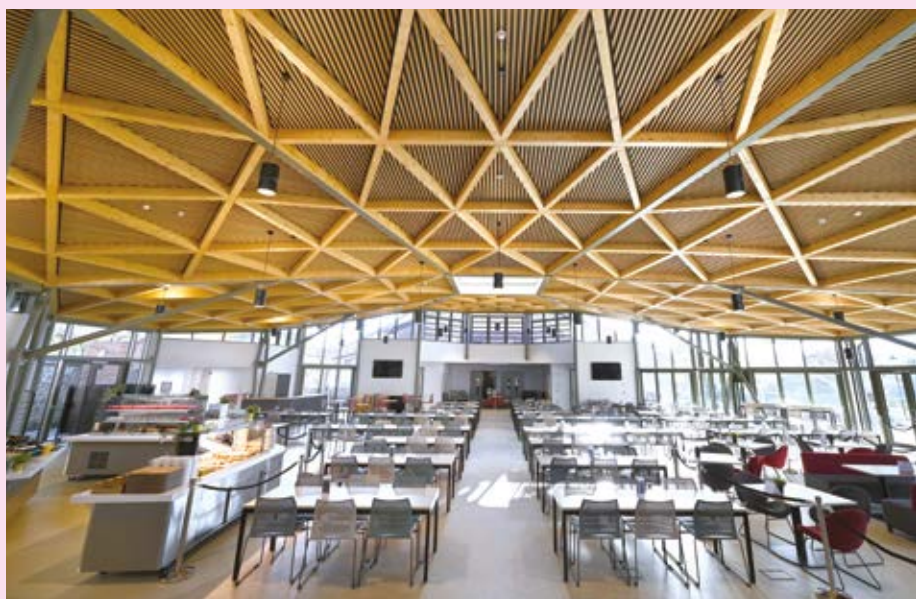
The term has also heralded the opening of Abingdon's state of the art dining pavilion. Multifunctional in purpose, it houses a student café, additional dining space and will be used as an event space, both for independent functions and Amey Theatre productions.

Michael Windsor, Head of Abingdon, says of both projects: "We set out to raise the standard of our provision and I believe that is exactly what has been accomplished.

"Day and boarding students in Austin and Crescent Houses are enjoying the bespoke spaces which have been designed for 21st century living and with the student in mind - whether for socialising, relaxation or independent study.

"All our community are benefiting, either directly or indirectly, from the additional and impressive space which the pavilion has created – whether it's a quicker and smoother lunch service in our original dining hall; a student enjoying a break-time snack in the café; or a member of the public attending a theatre performance.

"Where possible, each building has been constructed with sustainably sourced materials and heated with air source heat pumps. It is an exciting time for our entire community and never a better time to be at Abingdon."





Lower School celebrate diversity

Our pupils in Lower School have been investigating their heritage this term. During one of their mentoring sessions in October, the 1st and 2nd Years interviewed each other to find out more about what they knew about their family heritage before writing postcards to explain what they knew. These were then pinned onto a world map in the Lower School common room - showing the amazingly different and widespread connections our pupils have from Uxbridge to Uzbekistan and Kenya to Kyiv. Learning more about each other is a key part of mentoring and, as we discover more about our own heritages, pupils will see that we each bring a wealth of knowledge to share.



Thinking supper

Lower School enjoyed a Thinking Supper in October as academic award holders met some of their peers from St Helen and St Katharine for an evening of discussion and debate over supper. The task was to write a letter to the Secretary of State for Education outlining the one change that schools could make that would have the biggest impact on global warming. The letters were read out at the end of the evening and contained plenty of thoughtful and well-researched points including making greater use of 2nd hand uniform shops, more solar panels and moves to decrease food waste in the dining hall.



Lower School pupils from Abingdon and St Helen and St Katharine enjoyed a joint quiz night on 30 November, answering questions on geography, maths, movie soundtracks and even the cross-sections of chocolate bars! Congratulations go to Ethan, Patrick and William who were members of the winning team.

Oh no they didn't!

This year saw the return of the staff pantomime in the aptly named Abingdon Mayhem, written by the Pupil Voice crew and performed on 14 December. The plot had a definite Abingdon school focus and was well received by the audience. All proceeds raised are going to charity.

Lacrosse



Our sixth formers had great fun celebrating St Kate's Day with their counterparts at St Helen and St Katharine with the annual Lacrosse match. Sadly, it was not their year with the final score 5-2 to the girls.

Carol service

On the last day of term, students and staff gathered for the annual Christmas carol service. Held at St Helen's Church and officiated by the Reverend Steer, the service included festive readings and rousing carols.



Moldovan arts and crafts

One of the young Moldovan volunteers who worked with a group from Abingdon to run summer camps for Moldovan children this year has continued to make a difference to others since our visit in July. With some financial support from Abingdon and advice from our partner charity Agape, Iulita has started running a weekend arts and crafts session at her school which has been proving very successful. Iulita also produced special friendship bracelets in the Abingdon and Moldovan colours for all the sixth formers who went to Moldova which are now being very proudly worn by the recipients!



At the end of term, the bellringing club got into the festive spirit by ringing some Christmas carols on handbells in their final session of the year.



Visit to the Royal Geographical Society

In November, 38 of our upper sixth geographers travelled to the Royal Geographical Society for an A Level study day. Over 600 students in total were in attendance to listen to a series of lectures covering a wide range of the content covered in the A Level course. It was a valuable day and a great experience for our Geographers.

Charity pool tournament

Over the last few weeks of term, the annual Lower School charity pool doubles tournament took place to raise funds for the school's Moldova Project. Mixed 1st and 2nd Year teams took each other on in the pool stage, aiming to win as many games as possible, before the semi-finals and grand final in the last week of term. The final was a very close affair with all 4 players potting some great shots, but the trophy went to Angus and Euan.



Young Enterprise Christmas Fair

On 25 November, our Young Enterprise team "Vividify" attended the Christmas Fair at St Helen and St Katharine. The fair was well-attended and the team had considerable sales success selling out of their coffee coasters (made using upcycled plastic sheets and manufactured in the DT workshop) and most of their passive amplifiers (made from upcycled pallet material). The team received very positive feedback for their products, display stands and sales pitches and are now busy collecting more bottle caps and lids to feed into the process.



Boarders litter pick for their DofE

As part of their service activity for their Duke of Edinburgh award, a group of 4th Year boarders have been litter picking around Abingdon. Throughout the course of the next academic year, the students will go out on most Saturday mornings to tidy the environment in an activity that supports Abingdon's mission to act as a One Planet School.

Delivery of an effective PSHCE programme leads to a more caring and cohesive culture at school says Helen Keevil, newly appointed Deputy Head Pastoral at Abingdon and Designated Safeguarding Lead.

“ There is compelling evidence that when taught well, PSHCE (personal, social, health and citizenship education), helps to keep our young people safe, physically and mentally healthy and prepared for life at school and beyond. After the Black Lives Matter movement and Everyone's Invited, PSHCE became a statutory requirement in all schools, rather than just the independent sector. The significance of this cannot be underestimated. At the time, I was pastoral and mental health lead at Epsom College and despite the fact we already had a comprehensive PSHE offering in place, we felt we needed a full academic review to accurately gauge how these topics featured across our curriculum in order to ensure both that we were compliant but also that we were educating our young people on these really important topical issues. In order to maximise student engagement, I trained senior students to help deliver part of the PSHCE course to our younger pupils in collaboration with a drugs and alcohol foundation charity; explored gender bias in our setting (and in wider society) educating students on consent, sexuality and redefining masculinity in schools; as well as designing a pupil voice survey so that our young people felt consulted and very much an important part of the process. The impact of these initiatives lead to a 24% reduction in behavioural sanctions, fewer incidents

of conflict between peers and a more caring, cohesive culture. It also showed that, whilst we should place value on tradition, we must not be afraid to adapt, evolve and adjust to new priorities. Challenging ourselves and others in the language we use or the approach we take should not be stigmatised but revered as being a natural part of a progressive society. Since joining Abingdon as Deputy Head (Pastoral) in September, I have been so impressed by the polite, articulate, kind and courageous students that I have encountered. Each one is passionate about wanting to make a positive difference to the world. The opportunities to do so, through Abingdon's extensive and enviable Other Half programme, sees its young people actively engage in partnership activities, mentoring, charity fundraising, debating or being part of one of the many impactful committees - such as the eco or equalities committee. Acceptance of individual views is praised within Abingdon and students can feel a real sense of worth from getting involved and seeing that they can make a difference.

“ Of course one of the most topical elements of PSHCE, especially in our post-Covid environment, is the positive mental health of our young people. Worryingly, statistics show that young people are grappling more and more with anxiety and stress. In addition to



the process of adolescence itself, we know that students feel increasingly pressurised as a result of exams, social media, environmental crises and the economic climate. Some of this pressure may also be being felt by the adults in their lives who unwittingly could also be passing on their own anxieties to their children. This means that now, more than ever, schools need to be proactively helping young people with their mental health. At Abingdon, we are fortunate to have a dedicated mental health and wellbeing co-ordinator who delivers talks, advice and strategies - both to students and their parents. We also have an onsite counselling team who are available to the students but also to our staff. My 4 year old dog, Luna, is also a calming influence. Trained as a Pets As Therapy dog, she helps to support students and staff when they are feeling anxious, lonely or sad. She can be found in the library once a week, strolling with me around the school campus during lunch and break times and she is always there to welcome visitors to my study! Finally, students also have the ability, through our extracurricular offering, to take part in activities such as ceramics, drama and yoga which can help individuals to calmly focus, breathe and channel their energy; and our brilliant staff also introduce mindfulness to their lessons. Our hope is that, with this level of support, young people can find the help they need whenever they start to feel overwhelmed.

Fundraising focus



On 26 September, the whole school took part in Abingdon's biennial sponsored walk to raise funds for Thames Valley Air Ambulance and Water Aid. The 10 mile circular route started from school and took in sections of the Oxford Greenbelt Way and the Thames Path. The total raised was just over £31,140.



That takes the biscuit

At the beginning of December, 2nd Year students in the Modern Foreign Languages baking club travelled to Oxford to take part in the Oxford German Network's annual 'Weihnachtspätzchenbackwettbewerb' or German Christmas biscuit competition. Pupils enjoyed taking part in some Christmas crafts and returned home winners of the "Most Creative" category for their biscuits.



John Rayson Award

We are so proud of our 3rd Year student, Anur, who recently used the £250 he won from the John Rayson award (and topped up with additional funds he earned doing chores) to host a drama workshop for differently able children at Kingfisher School, Abingdon.

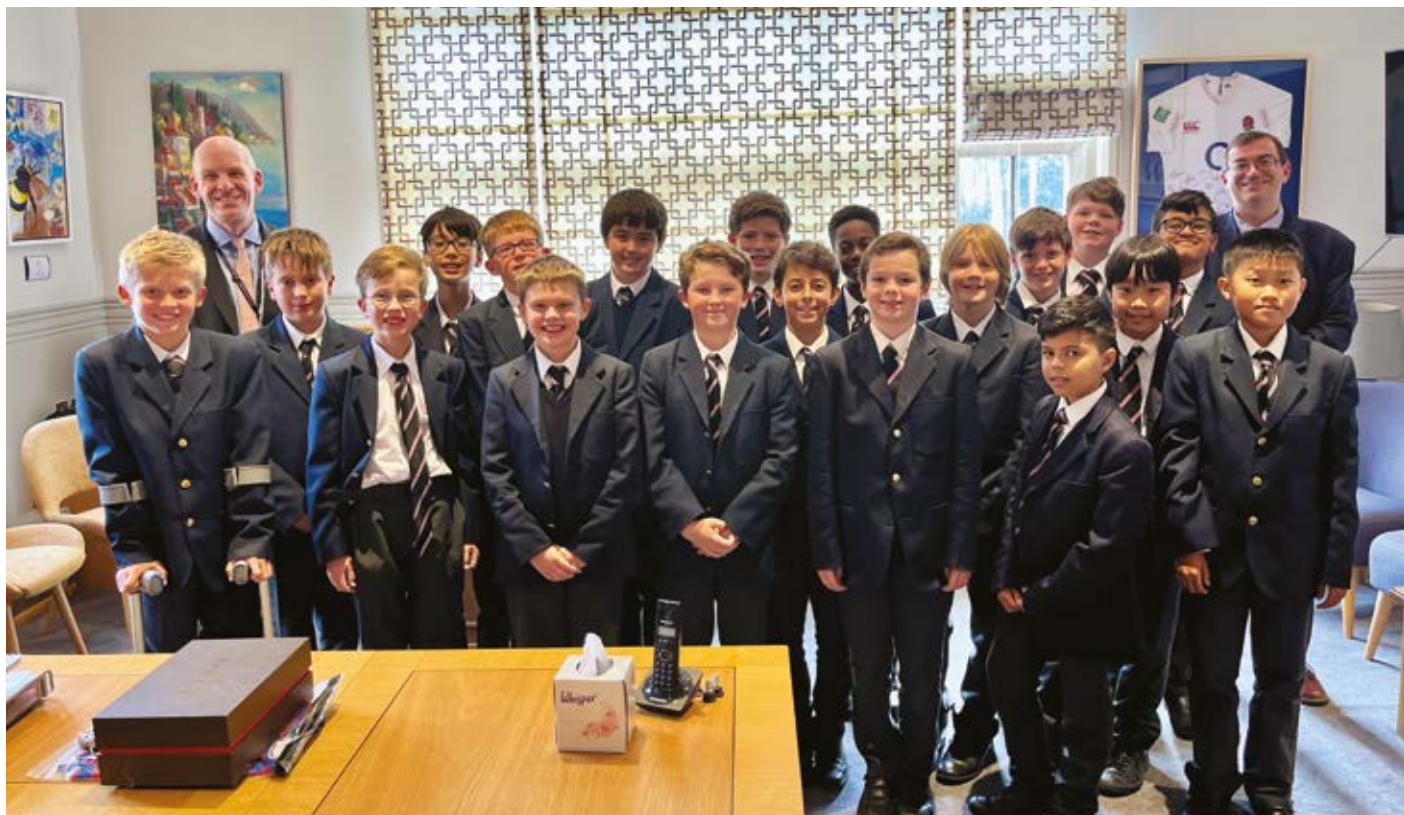
In conjunction with staff from both Kingfisher school and Boost! School of Acting, the workshop saw at least 20 differently able students benefit from a 3 hour workshop, held on one of two days in October. Anur said of the experience: "Drama allows us to express and process our own voices and knowledge. It aids in collaboration and creation allowing participants to share art. In the process, it builds confidence and, more importantly, it is fun. I learned how even with very limited ability to speak or express themselves, children at the workshop were able to engage and have fun. Kingfisher is special for educating children with special educational needs, but also for having exceptional teachers and staff who help their pupils achieve their potential. I am so grateful to Caroline and Tom from Boost! who were a key part of the project, as well as Dr Gardner, Mr Stockdale, Dr Howe, Mr Jenkins and Miss Sharmar for their help in bringing this workshop to fruition and to Abingdon for awarding me the John Rayson award."

The festival of lights

In the lead up to Diwali on 12 November, Lower School students, Arjun and Krish put together a video to share with their classmates on the Hindu festival, its history and how they and their families celebrate.

Making an entrance!

Just before half-term, the Head presented those of our 1st Years who had performed particularly well in an element of their entrance exam, with a book token. **Well done all.**



Christmas jumper day

On the final Tuesday of term, staff and students ditched their regular winter woollies to wear their favourite Christmas jumper in order to raise money for the school's two nominated charities.



Abingdon News is changing

Since its inaugural issue in the Lent term of 2003, Peter Greenland (parent of 2 OA's) has been responsible for the design and production of Abingdon News. Now, after 20 years, we are moving the production of Abingdon News in-house but we will always be very grateful to Peter for his creative ideas and support in producing our termly publication. Thank you Peter.



15 minutes

with Richard Stafford,
Director of Music at Abingdon School.



“ I think I was six when I first fell in love with music. My parents had taken me to see an African drumming concert and I was wowed - by the costumes, the bright colours, the movement and the sound - it was all just really exciting. The whole sense of performance was captivating and actually led to me changing schools!

“ At seven, I auditioned, and was accepted, as a chorister to Jesus College, Cambridge. This gave me a wonderful start to my musical journey, providing a foundation to my musical education, an education which was further extended and enhanced when I went to senior school, where, as a music scholar, I was expected to dedicate 35 hours a week to music in all its various forms. For me, that involved singing each day as well as continuing to play the piano, the clarinet and the bassoon. I know that sounds like a lot, when taking other school commitments into account, and it probably is but, on the upside, I learned (very quickly) how to manage my time effectively and be organised. I went on to read music at Oxford where both challenge and expectation was extremely high, standing me in

good stead for the rigours of a fast paced working life. Whilst each of my peer group came from different cultural and social backgrounds, each of us shared the collective desire to be the best we could be and were dedicated in our studies to ensure we achieved that. It is also remarkable how many musicians there were in college too!

“ I had never really known what career path I would take - I just knew it had to involve music and sport, if possible, with equal measure. It was actually the father of one of my fellow undergraduates at university who suggested teaching might be a suitable career path. So, I decided to give it a trial run, taking a post at a school in New Zealand, where I helped in the music department and coached sport. Loving cricket as I do, I was particularly pleased that my year teaching in Australasia coincided with England's win over Australia in the Ashes 2010/11 series - which I was lucky enough to be able to go and watch!

“ I went on to do a Masters at Durham and then started working at Brighton College where I started as a Teacher of Music and went on to become Head of Academic Music. Having been educated in the independent sector, I definitely had a preconceived idea of what might be involved. The message that really came home to me was the incredible level of opportunity available to those who are lucky enough to receive an independent education - myself included. As a teacher, it is incredibly

rewarding when students grasp these opportunities and make the most of them. Conversely, it can be frustrating and sad if a student with potential doesn't make the most of every opportunity afforded to them, so I would encourage everyone to actively and purposefully find their niche in whatever aspect of wider school life that is. I am sure we can cater for it.

“ When it comes to music, there is so much to be gained. Yes, it takes perseverance, discipline and dedication but the rewards and lessons for life beyond school are plentiful. Collaboration across year groups provides mentoring, leadership and team building opportunities; the dedication requires organisation and time management skills; performing helps with confidence and presentation; and the emotive nature of music ensures individuals are in touch with their emotions and provides them with a stress release which, in these days of ever greater awareness of mental health, we know to be so important. Of course, hopefully it is fun too!

“ So when it comes to my vision for the music provision at Abingdon, it is quite simply 'music for all'. Each and every one of our students has the ability to engage with music in the fashion they see fit and it is our responsibility to make that happen. We need pupils to trust in our offering - it will require commitment but, hopefully, the long term reward will be well worth it and they will have cherished memories that they can look back on fondly!



The annual House singing competition took place on 11 October and it was a great privilege to welcome Ralph Allwood to judge this year's competition. Each House provided dynamic and energetic performances but there can only be one winner. Joint 3rd was awarded to Pygotts and Crescent, with Stockdale's taking the runner up spot. However, it was School House, with both a committed and unified performance who took the accolade of House Singing Champions for 2023!



On 3 November, we welcomed concert violinist and Head of Strings at the Glasgow Conservatoire, Professor Andrea Gajic, to school for a violin masterclass for 5 of our top violinists. Opening with a performance of *Carmen* by Sarasate, she wowed the audience with her amazing sound and technique. It was then the students' turn. Professor Gajic was incredibly impressed by the quality of playing and level of engagement but she was also constructively critical about some aspects of each individual performance. Our violinists responded positively and there was a noticeable improvement after each critique session.



Remembrance concert

On Friday 10 November, the school continued their commemoration of Remembrance with an evening concert, held in the Chapel. Featuring readings, solo instrumental works, vocal repertoire and items sung by the Chapel Choir, everyone agreed it was a varied and beautifully delivered event. The Chapel choir sang with subtlety and nuance with the emotion of movements from the Faure *Requiem* contrasting with the moving settings of Parry's *Crossing the Bar* and Guest's *For the Fallen*. Other items included songs from Alexander and Joanna L'Estrange's *Freedom*, whilst there were notable instrumental performances from the String Quartet playing Puccini's highly charged *Crisantemi*, a bagpipe solo alongside 2 piano solos from Samuel and Thomas. Throughout the concert, a series of readings were eloquently and sensitively delivered by a range of pupils across the full spectrum of the school. Finally, there was the opportunity for solo vocal performance with a number of songs by Gurney, Finzi, Butterworth, Quilter and Rutter completing the programme.



Evensong at St Michael's

On 22 November, St Cecilia's (the patron saint of music) Day, it seemed fitting that the Chapel choir would sing their termly evensong in St Michael's Church in Abingdon. For many of our choristers, this was their 1st experience of this reflective service. Pieces included Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Call*, Stanford's *Psalm 150* (accompanied on the organ by Philip), Stanford's *Evening Service* in Bb, Howells' *Like as the Hart* and Bach's *Trio Sonata No. 1 in Eb Major*. The choir coped with the challenging long phrases brilliantly alongside singing with clear diction and balance.



Piano Masterclass with Anthony Williams

On 27 September, we welcomed concert pianist, lecturer and adjudicator, Anthony Williams, to join our pianists for an evening masterclass. With a varied performing and educational career, Mr Williams was able to give the pupils technical and interpretative advice on their performances, making clearly tangible changes to their performance in a matter of minutes. It was a wonderful evening for the pupils who were able to use the various pianistic, gestural and interpretative suggestions of Mr Williams providing them with a wonderful springboard to further develop their piano playing in the coming months.



In November, 4 organ pupils gave a short and varied lunchtime recital to showcase their hard work and progress this term. The programme began with Henry Purcell's *Air*, played confidently by Harish; followed by Charles Wesley's imposing *Larghetto* from *Enoch*. Samuel then played the *Kyrie*, by Frescobaldi and Boëly and Bach's *Nun ruhen alle Wälder*, before Philip concluded the programme with Thalben-Ball's *Elegy* and the 1st movement of Bach's *Sonata no. 1*. It was lovely to hear such assured performances.



Senior Solo Competition

The fiercely anticipated Senior Solo Competition took place on 2 November and it was a complete pleasure to welcome educationalist, composer, teacher and author, Paul Harris to adjudicate this year's competition. With a range of music from the Baroque to contemporary across a breadth of disciplines including bassoon, voice, flute, violin and piano, this was a wonderful evening of music, showcasing the strongest musicians of the school. Paul Harris commented on the dedication to the interpretation and delivery of the music performed throughout the evening alongside praising the technical demands evident in each performance. As ever with such an evening of musical competition, there were confirmed winners and Paul praised Branden and Anson with highly commended performances. 3rd place was awarded to Ben whilst Louis was placed 2nd and Ryan (for showcasing both his technical capacity and musicianship in the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto) was awarded 1st place.

Abingdon School in Partnership



AFU celebrates 20 years

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Abingdon Film Unit, students and staff from Abingdon, Fitzharrys, Larkmead and St Helen and St Katharine travelled to the British Film Institute, London on 13 September for a reception and film screening. This featured 9 new student films and a retrospective film created by tutors, Colin O'Toole and Jeremy Taylor, containing previously unseen footage from 2006, Wednesday afternoon workshops, "film pitching" sessions, a camera and sound training trip to Dungeness, and clips from some of the 200+ AFU films that have been made since 2003. At the end, AFU alumnus and professional filmmaker Will McDowell spoke about the impact the AFU has had on many of those who have been a part of it. All in all, it was a memorable and happy occasion, made possible through the generosity of the OA Club.



New Peer Support Leads undertake core training

On 3 October, 72 students made up of our PSLs and upper sixth from the OX14 Learning Partnership attended a core training session at Fitzharrys. They participated in work on common scenarios and used role play to learn listening, communication, mentoring and safeguarding skills. These will be used to support the mental health and wellbeing of younger students within school and across our Abingdon community.



The ASP Motorsports Club, with members from Abingdon, Fitzharrys and John Mason schools, had a very productive session working on design and development plans with Ollie and Zaak, undergraduate engineering placement students at GKN Automotive's Innovation Centre in Abingdon. The Club is now split into 2 teams, a blue team continuing with development work on last season's successful Fitz24 electric racing car, whilst the red team has begun work on renovating a 2nd car, aptly named the Red Kite. Under the guidance of Ollie and Zaak, the teams worked on plans for bodywork designs and materials and improved power control systems for the 2024 racing season which begins in May. It was really inspiring to see the pupils from across the schools working constructively with each other as well as with the young engineers working at the forefront of automotive technology innovation in Abingdon.



In November, over 70 students from 5 schools across Abingdon came together for a business language challenge. Students formed mixed school teams to take part in a variety of activities based around marketing and selling Jelly Babies. After initial icebreakers, teams began by creating a trade stand for their sweets as well as a flyer, all in their chosen foreign language. A highlight of the day was filming a short advert and making a phone call to a business representative for a large supermarket chain. Students enjoyed meeting new people and brushing up on their presentation skills, as well as using their language knowledge to complete the challenges - as many as 97% said they would recommend the day to a friend! Well done to all who took part.



And... action!

Michael Bicarregui (OA) visited Abingdon in November to train our student primary school partnership volunteers in the art of Stop Motion. He and the volunteers then ran a workshop for Thameside primary school pupils so that they can create their own short animated films.

Over the course of the next academic year, 3 dedicated events (InspirED, Supported and ChallengED) are being held to celebrate the 2 year anniversary of the formation of the OX14 Learning Partnership, and to broaden the scope, impact and understanding of partnerships. InspirED took place on 7 November. It took the style of a series of inspirational 'Ted Talks' and speakers included Ilan Lassman of UCL, Emmy O'Shaugnessy from Oxfordshire Youth, Nancy Mudeny Hunt of the Nasio Trust, Southampton football legend Franny Benali and Ely Lassman from the educational charity Prometheus on Campus. The event was rounded off by upper sixth students from each member school talking about how they have overcome some of the challenges they have faced.

Humanities workshop

Year 3 and 4 pupils from Carswell Primary School were greeted by a Roman soldier at our humanities workshop in September. They had fun investigating a Victorian crime scene, discussing philosophical beliefs, discovering different types of rock and learning about the army in Ancient Rome. One pupil said that 'It was the loveliest day ever!'

Abingdon science partnership reaches for the stars

Run by our staff and over 40 of our student science ambassadors, our Primary and Saturday science clubs have offered an exciting new workshop this term. Called Rocks, Soils and Fossils, it covers the KS2 curriculum but uses resources and equipment usually only available in a secondary school science lab. In addition, our new Astronomy Ambassadors have been busy assisting with our Other Half GCSE Astronomy group and with evening trips to our inflatable planetarium from visiting groups such as the Scouts.

Festive film

It's been great to welcome 17 new students from Larkmead and Fitzharrys to the AFU, all of whom were challenged to create a short film by Christmas.

It's a wrap

This term, over 100 students from around the OX14 Learning Partnership have been attending a new round of workshops run by the Oxfordshire Academy of Broadcast Journalism. The brainchild of professional broadcasters Olly Hogben and Blythe Lawrence, it provides some fantastic opportunities for the next generation of broadcasters!



Scary stuff

On 31 October, our community service volunteers took the opportunity to participate in some spooky games to entertain the residents at the Old Station House. They joined residents for a quiz, bobbed for apples, became 'mummies' tied up in tissue and tried to pin the cat on the witch's broom in a Halloween version of blind man's bluff. Everyone had a spooktacular time!



Primary Business Challenge

On 21 November, 4 primary schools came into Abingdon to take part in a business challenge. Working with our current upper sixth business students, the children were asked to come up with a concept for a Christmas snack and to market it. All teams presented some excellent ideas to the panel of judges, made up of Abingdon's Economics Department. The children honed team working, presentation and basic business skills and had a really positive day.



A slam dunk!

Abingdon's U18s have had a fantastic start to the basketball season, showing great determination, team spirit and skill with notable wins against Radley (69 to 32), Stowe (48-42), and Radley (41-35). Well done to all involved especially to the captain Matthew for his leadership skills both on and off the court. We have great strength and depth in the club in the lower years which bodes well for future seasons too.



Abingdon Squash Success

This has been Abingdon's busiest squash term ever, and our most successful; we have remained undefeated through our entire fixture list! We have beaten Stowe (twice), St Edward's, John Hampden Grammar School (twice), Cheltenham, Marlborough, Radley (twice) and Bloxham (twice); and we drew 3-3 with Eton. We also won our group qualifying for the National Schools' Championship. We have an exceptional 1st team, and also a number of talented juniors coming up through the ranks. We look forward to the next round of the National Schools next term. Thanks as ever to our brilliant coach Ben Rosec.



Cross Country

The cross country club has gone from strength to strength this term. The quality of training has increased thanks to coach Dan Studley and we've seen good performances from all age groups. We have a very promising Junior team led by Daragh and a good influx of keen 3rd Years. Both Junior and Intermediate teams qualified for the regional round of the ESAA Cup, finishing 4th and 5th respectively. In December, our Senior team placed 5th in the ESAA National Cup final, with Quinn winning individual silver (his brother Rowan (OA 2022) represented Great Britain at the European Championships in Brussels).

Rowing

Owing to unseasonably bad weather, much of our time this term has been spent training indoors. Nevertheless, we have managed some positive outcomes. At the beginning of October, the J15, J16 and Seniors raced at Reading Small Boats Head and, after some good performances, managed a total of 8 category wins. We have also heard that 8 of our rowers have successfully achieved the 2k and 5k ergo times, qualifying them to attend the Great Britain team trials in February and wish them the best of luck.



Rugby

Throughout the term, an impressive total of 390 pupils proudly represented Abingdon in more than 175 exhilarating rugby matches. The season kicked off with the Lower School having 2 intensive weeks of training and the senior rugby team with an unforgettable tour to South Africa. Here, they played 4 action-packed games and also had the opportunity to indulge in some thrilling outdoor adventures, including game drives.

The season began on a high note with matches against Magdalen College and St Edward's, followed by the 1st block match against Stowe. The club's hard work and dedication shone bright, and it was a momentous occasion when we had the 1st U16 D XV match for 8 seasons. Abingdon played with unwavering determination before the half-term against Cheltenham, RGS High Wycombe, and had a successful U14 half-term tour to Sussex.

After the half term break, the team went head-to-head with Eton, Radley, RGS Guildford, Marlborough, and Bedford, displaying remarkable progress and noteworthy performances.

The season was a great success on so many levels, and there was much to celebrate throughout the year, culminating in 3 award evenings to recognise and celebrate the team's achievements and individual accomplishments.



Following on from winning the Oxfordshire League in the summer, our U14 and U16 teams moved onto the regional knockout rounds this term. Both teams overcame the champions of Northamptonshire before going on to face the champions of the West Midlands and Warwickshire respectively. Our U14 team succumbed to a strong KES Birmingham side but their progress still places Abingdon in the top 30 schools in the country within their age group. Meanwhile, our U16 team overcame Rugby School, to secure a place within the top 16 teams in the country and went on to compete in the final 4 of the LTA Midlands region school tennis competition in November. Facing Ellesmere College in the semi finals, all 4 players won both their singles and doubles matches comfortably, progressing to the final against Repton. Unphased by Repton's reputation, Abingdon won both doubles matches and 3 of 4 singles matches to defeat the Repton team 5 sets to 1, securing their place in the national finals and as one of the top 4 tennis school teams in the country in this age group. Congratulations to Sam, Matt, Cyrus and Dan who went on to compete in the national finals of the LTA schools tennis competition at the Bolton Arena. This was a great opportunity to test themselves against the 3 best tennis schools in the country and play against a number of players ranked in the top 10 for their age group nationally. Our players all represented the school impeccably but unfortunately came up 2nd best in most matches.



U14 Rugby Tour to Sussex

Over half term, the U14 Rugby A and B squads embarked on an exciting tour of Sussex, where they participated in matches against Hurstpierpoint College and Seaford College. The matches proved to be a challenging yet rewarding experience for the pupils, who demonstrated exceptional sportsmanship and teamwork both on and off the field.

In addition to the matches, the tour provided a diverse range of fun activities aimed at fostering camaraderie and team spirit. The pupils engaged in activities such as Laser Zone, Jungle Crazy Golf, and Ten-Pin Bowling, which helped them unwind and relax between matches.

The highlight of the tour was the visit to Brighton Pier, where pupils indulged in traditional seafront amusements and treats, enabling them to spend quality time together and creating wonderful memories.



Rugby masterclass

This term, Gloucester Rugby's number 8, Jack Clement, visited Abingdon to help coach our U16 age group. The A and B team forwards received a masterclass in maul attack and defence, while our U16 C and D focused on the contest in the tackle area. Pupils had the opportunity to ask Jack questions and gain valuable insight into the life of a professional player. We extend a big thank you to Jack and wish him the best of luck with the remainder of the season.



Swimming

On 29 November, the junior, intermediate and senior team travelled to Warwick to compete at the annual 'Warwick 100s' gala. The junior team, many of whom were competing for the 1st time, put in a great effort, while the intermediate team managed to claim 2nd place. Our U18 team shone, placing 1st comfortably with many impressive swims. Overall, the school placed 2nd across all age groups and only 5 points behind 1st. Congratulations to all that competed, with special mentions to Ethan, Ralph and Can winning individual events at the gala.



Badminton

Our Badminton players have shown a huge amount of skill this term, playing some high quality matches with determination and strong performances. They have fared well against other schools in competitive fixtures; progressed to the South West Regional round 4 in the Victor Sports national tournament; and narrowly missed out in winning the trophy to Sankey's academy in our inaugural 8 team tournament. We are especially proud of Gordon and Thierry who are now U19 open doubles champions for the region.



Throughout the week commencing 6 November, pupils remembered those who sacrificed their lives or have made significant contributions to the defence of our country and its values.

A series of assemblies was held and the children also examined war and Remembrance through the lenses of poets including Binyon, Brooke, Owen and Armitage. The week culminated in a service of Remembrance on Friday, where our entire school community came together to remember all those who made the ultimate sacrifice, including former school pupils.



The Festival of Lights

In November, the Prep School welcomed two visitors to Reception - Chair of Governors, Professor Mike Stevens and Rupal Gupta who came in to talk to the children about the celebration of Hindu Festival of Lights, Diwali. There was music, dressing up, special food, Rangoli patterns (including those done by Professor Stevens!), glitter, glue and diva lamps being decorated. Thank you to our visitors - we really enjoyed having you with us.



Supporting each other

As part of the peer support lead and Partnership mentoring programme, in November students from Abingdon Senior School visited Year 8 pupils for a mentoring workshop. Pupils were asked to consider body language, eye contact and empathy when in conversation with each other and were taught valuable listening skills. Working in groups, they used a phrasebank of open-ended questions and supportive comments to talk through how they might help a student in a number of common scenarios focusing on friendships, school work, sport and confidence. Year 8 will now use these skills to establish their own mentoring programme and help younger year groups at APS.



Cross Country News

It's been a busy term for the cross country team who have raced at The Manor, St Hugh's and Stowe for the regional round of the English Schools Cross Country Cup Competition. Highlights included a 3rd place finish for the U8 team at the St Hugh's Relays as well as the U13 team securing their place at the ESAA National Final, with James winning the regional event at a cold and challenging course at Stowe School.

Well done to everyone involved.

Football

What a fantastic season it's been for our Prep School football...

Our U11s reached the quarter final of the regional IAPS competition, before being knocked out by a last minute goal in stoppage time against a strong Downsendside.

Our U13s won their regional heats to qualify for the national finals. Here they reached the quarter finals of the IAPS plate competition which took place at Summer Fields in November. Despite not advancing further, it was an excellent opportunity to learn how to play and adapt to the demands of tournament football and a fantastic chance to play against some high calibre opposition.

Finally, many congratulations to Josh, Benji, Will M, Trystan, Oliver, Will B, Carter, Will A, Jack, Jed and Becket who have been selected to play in the Prep School Lions squad. The pupils had to battle it out against over 600 students to be selected and we would like to wish them the best of luck for the upcoming season which will see them play against district teams and academies, as well as have the chance to represent England at the Gothia Youth World Cup.



Eco group

Before half term, our Eco group met with our Director of Estates, Mr McKenna, to talk about the possibility of installing solar panels for cleaner, renewable energy at the Prep School. The pupils were presented with a challenge: they were given maps showing possible roof spaces which could accommodate solar panels and asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each site. The children reflected on the angle of the sun, any overlooking obstructions, how well used the area was in terms of construction, as well as whether the roof was strong enough to sustain the panel weight. They then presented their findings to Mr McKenna who was very impressed with the careful consideration and reasoning behind their recommendation to build the panels in 'location 3' and discussed when this could realistically happen for the school. This has been a super activity giving the Eco group insight into how planning decisions and processes work, as well as time frames and varying constraints.



Abingdon selects Tumblebug's Ecobot to manage its food waste

From Spring 2024, we will be using an Ecobot food waste drier to manage our food waste on-site.

The investment will see waste shredded and dried overnight which will reduce the output by 90% and will be used to propagate plants around the school's sites, boosting biodiversity and lessening the waste sent to landfill.



Focus on Sustainability

As we approached COP28 in November, staff and students from around the Foundation focused further on environmental issues and the part our schools can collectively play to help reduce climate change.

Our aim at Abingdon remains to keep sustainability central to everything we do and, using the adaptable one planet living framework, our sustainability initiatives between January and April alone enabled us to cut our carbon emissions by 100 tonnes.

At the beginning of September, we launched an inter-house Green competition, whereby students in each House get awarded points for their sustainability actions. The hope is that this will encourage all our students to develop good habits so that being sustainable becomes a natural part of everyday life. The competition will be complemented by other sustainability initiatives throughout the year, many of which are already underway.

Most recently, students and staff have been participating in Switch Off Fortnight, which ran from 13 to 24 November. Whilst Abingdon has invested in the installation of sensors in many of our buildings which automatically turn lights off if a room is unoccupied; there was an additional onus on further encouraging staff and students to turn lights out when leaving rooms or if they saw an empty room with the lights left on!



We know that food production requires significant resources including land, energy and water. According to statistics from the charity, Wrap, 25%-30% of total food produced across the globe is lost or wasted, which is why one of our main focuses at Abingdon is how to measure food waste and then implement ways of reducing it.

Together with our catering partner, Sodexo, we have been working on food waste reduction through our clean plate challenge which centres around the principle of taking the food you want, eating what you take, and thus reducing waste to save the planet. Sourcing seasonal produce from ethical, local producers and sustainable sources can also be a great way to help tackle climate change; and our catering team takes great care when planning our menus and choosing their suppliers.

Then, there are the more subliminal, but no less important, tasks such as our 4m long bug hotel to boost biodiversity; recycling pill packets and batteries; and litter picking as part of the Million Mile Clean. All these initiatives are suggested, and undertaken, by our students. Our management team take their responsibility equally as seriously, constantly reviewing how much energy we are using and looking for alternative ways to power and heat our buildings. This includes the use of solar panels to our sports centre and boarding houses and air source heat pumps to heat our dining pavilion.

We also realise the importance of collaboration within our community. Our valuable work with the OX14 Learning Partnership has historically led to an Eco forum with a manifesto formulated on how we can work together to combat climate change. We are currently encouraging students and staff to participate in completing the Climate Justice survey run by The Green Forum, which is a collaboration of individuals and organisations in Abingdon with a current focus on Climate Justice.

Head of Abingdon School, Michael Windsor, says: "As educators, we recognise our role in shaping future generations. We want our students to understand the challenge of climate change and have the tools with which to make a difference. By committing to improve our sustainability, we are doing what we can now to ensure our students inherit a planet in which they, and their children, can live and thrive in the future."

Connecting parents, supporting school life New volunteers needed!

Dear Fellow Parents,

I hope that you all had an enjoyable Christmas break and welcome back to the new term.

This term, we have the Burns Night Supper and Dance, it will be our first major event of this nature and scale for many a year, and the first to be held in the new pavilion. I look forward to seeing many of you there. In the summer term, we will be holding our quiz again – so start thinking about putting a team together...

ASPA is the school's main parent association; it invites every parent to be a member and we focus on connecting parents and supporting school life. We are organised and run by a willing band of parents who make up the ASPA committee and we try to get representation from all year groups. This last year we have once again started our in-person meetings and organised several parent activities. The committee is looking to fill the current vacancies it has, as there are several members whose children are now in the sixth form and will shortly be leaving school. Could you spare a few hours a month for a meeting, eat cheese at a cheese and wine evening, suggest a quiz question or attend a Burns night to watch the haggis be piped in? If you have time, energy and ideas, please consider putting yourself forward via aspa@abingdon.org.uk - I look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes

Richard Stone, ASPA Chair



Cheese and Wine nights

The Cheese and Wine evenings for parents of pupils in the Lower School and 3rd Year were held in November. These evenings, which ASPA funds to enable new parents to



meet each other, were each attended by about 40 parents. There were many new connections made and early experiences shared. Names were put to faces and the conversation (as well as the wine) flowed!



ASPA contribution to CCF

Work has been ongoing to the area outside the CCF and is due to be finished in early 2024. Most recently, red, white and blue bulbs have been planted; the wall art has been attached and the 6ft 'Tommies' put in place. We can't wait to see the end result.



Burns Night Dinner



We are delighted to be hosting a Ceilidh in Abingdon's new pavilion on Saturday 27 January 2024. As well as a three course dinner, we have a fantastic live Ceilidh band and 1st Year pupil Toby will ceremoniously be piping in the haggis! Tickets are priced at £45 each and available from the Amey Theatre Box Office.



Abingdon Development

Abingdon parents attend a lunch in Hong Kong



On Tuesday 28 November, we were delighted to welcome our current parents in Hong Kong to a lunch hosted by Michael Windsor and Alexa Broad. In the wonderfully festive surroundings

of the Hong Kong Club, 40 parents enjoyed making new friendships and swapping Abingdon experiences. It was also a chance to meet the Head and to hear an update from him on life at school and highlights this term. This memorable occasion was made possible by fellow parent and Hong Kong Club member, Mrs Marie-Anne Kong. It is always a privilege to spend time with our Abingdon community in Hong Kong and we are very appreciative of the support and generosity shown to the school.

Boarding house development

The boarding house development is proving to be popular with many parents and OAs and the school is incredibly grateful for those who have already chosen to sponsor a room in Austin, Crescent and School Houses. As well as individuals choosing to sponsor bedrooms, one of our current families has made a generous gift to enable the school to purchase new pianos for Austin House's new music practice room.



Abingdon Giving Day 8 and 9 November 2023

Thank you so much to everyone who donated on our 2nd Giving Day - together our community raised £103,046, which will support a future pupil at Abingdon and will have an immediate impact.

Many pupils and staff took part in 110 themed activities on the day to highlight the event. These included potting pool balls, slam dunking basketballs, climbing wall ascents, 110 flags quiz, 110 scales on the double bass by the Head and many more - we hope you saw some of them on our social media channels throughout the day.

We were also delighted to work with Charlie Landells (OA 2017) from Hook Digital, who produced three fantastic films which were used throughout our Giving Day. These helped to set out our vision and ambition and helped explain to our community why bursaries are so important at Abingdon.



Hong Kong Drinks

Wednesday 29 November saw a reboot of our OA Club Hong Kong gathering after a hiatus of four years. Head, Michael Windsor, and Director of Development and Alumni Relations, Alexa Broad, were delighted to welcome OAs to the Forty Niner at The

American Club in Central; once again thanks to the sponsorship of Phil Wong (OA 2004). OAs travelled from as far as Adelaide (Justin Chow OA 2018) and from Huizhou (Alexander Anderson OA 2010) to join us. Afterwards, a number of OAs joined the Head at the Shake Shack, IFC, for burgers and night views of Victoria Harbour towards Tsim Sha Tsui.

Guest List:

Alexander Anderson (OA 2010), Angus Chan (OA 2012), Sherwin Chan (OA 2002), Matthew Choi (OA 2010), Justin Chow (OA 2018), Cameron Dewar (OA 2018), Ben Fung (OA 2009), Tony Lau (OA 2005), Jonathan Chun Hong Lee (OA 2020), Brian Lo (OA 2000), Michael Man (OA 2016), Alvin Tam (OA 2020), Calvin Tan (OA 2019), Phil Wong (OA 2004), and wife Brietta Tsang, Thomas Yip (OA 2012).



A Carol Service in the Spirit of James Cobban

"One of my fondest memories of my time at Abingdon is of the evening services taken by James Cobban (OA 1960), especially at Christmas. On these occasions he would read appropriate pieces of writing by, among others, Charles Dickens. He would dim the Chapel lights making for a wonderfully atmospheric moment of peaceful calm, never to be forgotten."

Evoking the spirit of James Cobban's Christmas pasts, the OA Club and Abingdon's Development team hosted a candlelit service of carols and readings from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* on Friday 1 December in the school Chapel. The service was followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the Charles Maude Room.

Sixth form Careers Evening 2023

In November, Abingdon hosted its annual sixth form careers evening, which saw over 40 OAs volunteer to share advice and expertise with pupils.

Charles Lowe (OA 1976) brought the evening to a close with an inspiring speech, referring to his own 'liquorice allsorts' career and reminding pupils that they will not be confined to a single career path. Charles encouraged Abingdon pupils to 'own their career', using the skills and self-confidence that their time at Abingdon has equipped them with.



Webinar on internships with Adrian Mutton and Richard Wright

On 21 November, the OA Club was joined by Adrian Mutton (OA1992) and Richard Wright (OA1992) via Zoom, who both generously shared their time, expertise and experience with fellow OAs. Adrian and Richard expressed the benefits of internships and answered several questions to explain just what an internship entails and why they are so valuable.

Each of their respective companies, Sannam and Roche, have bespoke internship programmes running.

Date for the diary:

17 January - London Drinks, The Royal Thames Yacht Club

Abingdon Out of the Past

Abingdon's Pembroke Connection

Pembroke College, Oxford celebrates the 400th anniversary of its foundation this year, an event made possible by a £5,000 bequest from Old Abingdonian Thomas Tesdale (1547-1610). Tesdale and the Rector of East Ilsley, Richard Wightwick, who in 1623 established an endowment of £100 a year, are now acknowledged as the joint founders of the College.

The money however came with specific conditions: of the College's ten Fellows and ten Scholars all twenty were to have been educated at Abingdon School. These conditions varied over the centuries but the last of the Abingdon Scholars at Pembroke College went up in 1985.



**Thomas Tesdale OA
(1547-1610)**

This portrait, copied from a contemporary portrait in Christ's Hospital, Abingdon was donated to the school in 1763 as part of the bi-centenary celebrations of John Roysse's 1563 endowment of the school.

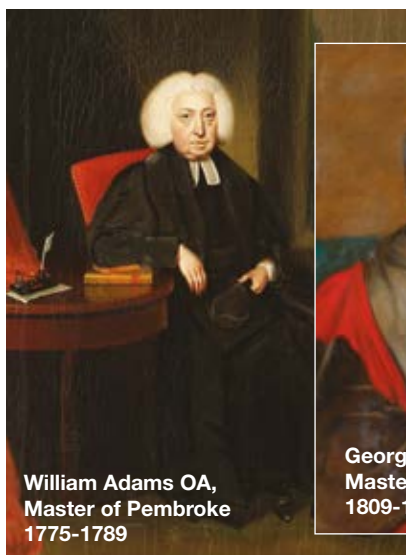
These stained-glass windows were among three sets inserted into the Roysse Room in 1911. The room is now part of the town's Guildhall buildings but from 1563 to 1870 it was Abingdon's school room. Two sets of windows were removed when the Guildhall buildings were extended in the 1970s. They were offered to the school on permanent loan and inserted into what is now the Staff Common Room. This particular set record OAs who were Heads of Oxford Colleges, including the seven consecutive Masters of Pembroke.



The arms of Pembroke College, Oxford on a corbel in the Staff Common Room, the Big School room of 1870. Pembroke's arms can be found decorating the school in several places.

OA Masters of Pembroke College

The preponderance of Abingdonian Scholars and Fellows meant that between 1709 and 1843 seven consecutive masters of Pembroke were Old Abingdonians: Colwell Brickenden, Matthew Panting, John Radcliffe (nothing to do with the hospital), William Adams, William Sergrove, John Smyth and George Hall.



**William Adams OA,
Master of Pembroke
1775-1789**



**George Hall OA,
Master of Pembroke
1809-1843**



**John Smyth OA,
Master of Pembroke
1796-1809**



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