



Abingdon News



Shrek the Musical

This year's joint senior production was performed with enthusiasm and fun by its 36-strong cast, who pushed themselves to ensure all movement, dance, singing and acting encapsulated the magical world of Shrek, Fiona, Donkey and the villainous Farquaad! The technical team did wonders too, with an extraordinary set and flamboyant costumes helping to bring the vibrancy of the show onto the stage.

Message from the Head

Is it possible to disagree agreeably? Social media, rather than opening our eyes to new perspectives, tempts us instead to double down in our own thinking, secure in our echo chambers.

Schools have, therefore, a greater responsibility than ever to teach our students not just how to express their own views but to listen to those of others with courtesy and consideration, even if they might differ from their own.



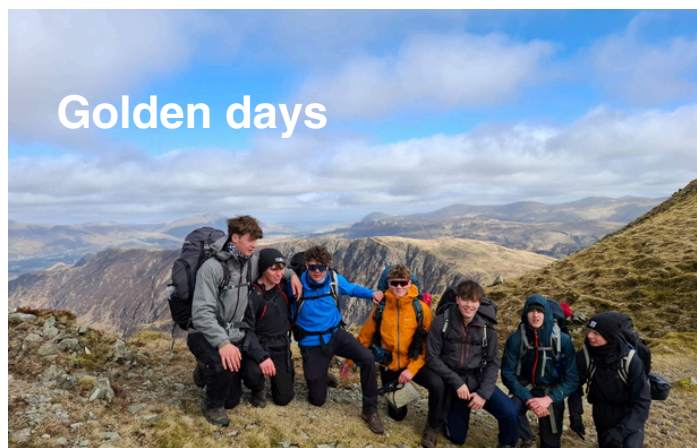
The debating society is a wonderful laboratory where students can develop these skills while thinking on their feet. Led by a committee of Sixth Formers (supported thoughtfully by a member of staff) who devise motions, assign speakers and chair debates, the society meets every week to debate pertinent motions, some light-hearted, many serious. Society members learn the art of agile thinking and how to express themselves with confidence and respect. A junior society embraces the same principles and gives Lower School students the opportunity to prepare themselves for the step up to the senior counterpart.

The Model United Nations (MUN) is another vehicle for our students to engage with global affairs. Featuring individuals from across the year groups, our older students guide their younger counterparts through the potentially arcane world of resolutions, points of order and so on. At a recent event, Abingdon students formed delegations representing countries as diverse as Oman, Russia and Hungary, which they did with distinction, winning ten different awards.

If we need a source of optimism as we navigate these challenging times for our world, look no further.



Four Abingdon students competed in the regional heat of the Royal Society of Chemistry's Top of the Bench Challenge at the University of Oxford's Chemistry teaching lab in January. Using the latest equipment and techniques, which form part of the undergraduate teaching programme, our four students correctly worked out the identities and concentrations of three chemicals in a CSI style challenge. The students were praised for the way they worked together as well as the accuracy of their results, for which they finished just outside the top three.



Forty Lower Sixth students completed their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award practice expedition in the Lake District between 23 and 26 March. Their three day routes in the North Western Fells included ascents of 16 Wainwrights: Hopegill Head, Hindscarth, Catbells and Haystacks were particular highlights. The weather was magnificent throughout. The cool, dry and sunny conditions saw Buttermere and Borrowdale at their very best. All six groups showed team work and resilience in completing the trip. The qualifying expedition takes place in North Wales at the end of June.



Chinese New Year

Third and Fourth Year students celebrated Chinese New Year through hands-on cultural immersion, combining dragon and lion dances with language skill showcases.

Following the dances, students delivered presentations in Mandarin, reflecting on their experiences. One student remarked, "Speaking about it afterwards made me proud of what we accomplished together."

Modern languages dinner

In January, 25 Sixth Formers attended the annual Modern Languages dinner hosted by St Helen and St Katharine. Students enjoyed a drinks reception, followed by a talk by Claire Harbour, who speaks several languages and whose rich and varied career has taken her all over the world, including as General Manager of Louis Vuitton! Dinner and a language-themed quiz followed, with prizes for the winning team.

Visit to Geneva

During the Christmas holidays, 21 A Level Physics students embarked on an exciting three day trip to Geneva, Switzerland. Their adventure began with a delicious group dinner at a traditional fondue restaurant, where they were treated to generous servings of cheese. The first morning featured pre-prepared student presentations on the work of renowned physicists at the History of Science Museum, followed by an engaging scavenger hunt through the city. Along the way, students enjoyed scenic views of Lake Geneva, including a boat trip across the water. The afternoon was equally inspiring, with hands-on workshops at the University of Geneva focused on seismology and rotations. On day two, the group had the privilege of visiting CERN, where they toured the awe-inspiring Large Hadron Collider facilities and delved into the world of particle accelerators. The afternoon included visits to the Patek Philippe Museum and the Museum of Ethnography, before wrapping up with a stroll through the lakeside Christmas market. The final day saw the group travel to the EPFL campus, Lausanne, where they toured the solar park, explored the Swiss Plasma Centre and attended a fascinating exhibition on music and artificial intelligence. It was an unforgettable trip, filled with opportunities to explore cutting-edge physics and engineering.



Christmas gifts

Abingdon's partner charity, Agape, used funds raised by the school to prepare parcels of presents which were given to 100 disadvantaged children in Moldova. A further 350 gifts were also prepared by Agape's partner schools in Moldova - meaning that a total of 450 children benefited from the project.

Nicu Bocaneala, Director of Agape, said: "The Christmas gifts programme generated a real movement among the schools in Moldova! It has cultivated generosity and friendship between children from different localities."



In January, and as part of their study of *Macbeth*, Fourth Year English Literature students witnessed a dynamic and interactive production of the Shakespearean tragedy, performed by the Box Clever theatre company. This was followed by a workshop exploring the ways in which *Macbeth* is influenced to kill, featuring some skilful swordplay from enthusiastic student volunteers!



The annual Lower School inter-tutor group cross country competition took place in the first week back after the holidays. Pupils braved the chilly conditions as they ran two laps around Albert Park and Upper Field. Congratulations to 2H and 1P for being the winning tutor groups and to Freddie and Ben for being the quickest individual runners in each year group with their respective times of 10 minutes 23 seconds and 11 minutes 1 second.



Second Year students who are studying French have exchanged letters with pupils at Collège St Martin near Lyon. They were excited to receive their second letters and wrote replies describing their holidays and what they did at Christmas - giving them an excellent opportunity to practise the past tense.



Parents and staff banished the January blues in a Burns Night supper and ceilidh held in the school Pavilion. The haggis was piped in expertly by Second Year pupil Toby and the *Ode to the Haggis* delivered in inimitable style by one of our parents. Guests then enjoyed a delicious supper before packing the dance floor for the Scottish country dancing.



The Entomology club have been studying the physiology of Jungle Nymphs *Heteropteryx dilatata*. This image shows the compound eye and complex mandibles of this exotic Malaysian jungle inhabitant.

Scientific aficionados

Congratulations to the 19 students who entered the UK Biology Olympiad. Between them, they won six Golds, five Silvers, two Bronzes and one Highly Commended. Gold winners progress to the next stage of selection for the UK Biology Olympiad team!

Joining the debate



A team of debaters took part in the regional qualifiers of the Oxford Schools' Debating Competition on 6 February. Fifty teams battled it out and, after two gruelling rounds, Isa and Will reached the top three and selection for the finals in August!



My Mission

First Year pupils have been having 'My Mission' lessons this term with Head of Career Guidance, Mr Triff. The children were challenged to select nine values which meant something to them from a list of 50. They then had to cut those down to the most important five and use them to write a mission statement. One pupil said: *"My mission is to have a happy, loving family, and to give back to my parents. I would like to keep changing as a person and be someone that people can trust."*



Go club

On 1 February, the Abingdon Go Club went on its first ever excursion, with nine students from the senior school and one from the Prep entering the London Youth Go Tournament. For most, this was their first experience of playing in a tournament. There were some tough opponents but everyone played well and learned a lot from the competition. Particular congratulations to Clarence (Year 6) who won four of his five games and received a prize; and to Oscar (Fourth Year) who, up against some strong opposition, just missed out on a top three position.



When in Rome...

Ben Kane, top 10 bestselling author of fiction set in the Roman world and beyond, visited Abingdon on Friday 21 March to give talks to students from the First Year through to the Fifth Year. Ben enthused students with his incredible knowledge of the Roman army, Hannibal's campaign against Rome in the Second Punic War, and his reflections on who would win between a Greek phalanx and a Roman legion (based on analysis of the Battle of Cynoscephalae)! As usual, Ben turned up in his Roman soldier's kit and, with an entire goody bag of replicas, from chain mail to oil lamps, which the students really enjoyed.

Single-sex vs co-ed: a view from 2025

Founded in 1256, Abingdon School is one of the oldest in the UK - and it has been an all-boys school for all of its 750 plus years since that point. With such a history behind it, one might expect it to be steeped in tradition and very reluctant to contemplate change. And yet, in May 2024, the school made public its plans to start accepting girls from 2026 (and indeed, girls have already started arriving in its prep school).

There are multiple reasons for this move but concern about the prospect of falling pupil numbers is not high. Abingdon has been consistently over-subscribed and maintains long waiting lists for places. So what is the rationale behind the change?

The first thing to know is that Abingdon has never made a big deal out of its single sex status or suggested that it felt that 'single sex is best'. If you look at any of its marketing and publicity for at least the past 20 years, it talks about being highly academic, about its enviably wide co-curricular offering and about its excellent pastoral care: you won't find it championing the idea that boys-only is better. Its teachers don't believe that boys and girls learn in distinctly different ways. Differences in 'preferred learning styles' are as observable across the individual sexes as they are when you look at both sexes put together.

When asked why it has kept all-boys up until now, it points to three things. Firstly, as an oversubscribed school, the impetus for change has been on a gentle build, with an argument of "don't fix what isn't broken". Secondly, its partnerships programme and liaison with St Helen and St Katherine have provided some co-ed opportunities for pupils. Thirdly, the benefits that come from the simplicity of boarding and sports arrangements for only one sex.

However, the feeling that Abingdon's single sex model is appears old fashioned and not suited for the 21st Century has been increasing for more than a decade. Single sex education was born in an era when the expectations for the sexes were vastly different and opportunities for men and women, mismatched. Thankfully today, things are different and Abingdon believes the education it provides should reflect that. People learn about themselves and the world in relation to each other, so it would seem odd that girls and boys are separated from one another during a crucial period of

their adolescence.

The changes Abingdon anticipates are all positive - as cultural diversity and enrichment tends to be. The school's amazing educational offering will be available to the other half of the population (i.e. the girls) and those girls will bring with them an exciting difference of viewpoint and approach which will make the educational experience deeper.

There will still be a place for single-sex education in the UK, though it will probably become the preserve of the all-girls schools. Despite educational research suggesting that, when you filter out for differences in things like socio-economic background, there is effectively no difference in outcomes for pupils in single sex schools versus the co-educational ones, many schools (and parents) nevertheless continue to believe there is a difference. Abingdon has done its research on this issue and points to pieces of work like the Alan Smith report for HMC in 2006 that concludes with this telling final sentence, effectively debunking the notion girls and boys necessarily do better if they are separated:

"There are excellent single-sex schools and excellent co-educational schools. Our conclusion is that they are excellent for reasons other than that they separate, or bring together, the sexes for their education."

Abingdon has considered the argument that girls are put off from taking STEM subjects in Sixth Form if they come from a co-ed background but, the research does not back this up when considering high-ability pupils. A study by the Institute of Physics, identifies that there is a large difference observed when considering girls of all abilities, when just the top band of GCSE achievement is considered, the picture is rather different. In other words, academically selective co-ed schools - such as Abingdon - will be places where girls feel empowered to study STEM subjects if that is where their interests lie - just as is the case for boys.

In conclusion, Abingdon is tremendously excited about the richness and diversity that the arrival of girls will bring.

Trip to Oxford



Boarders visited the Ashmolean Museum in February and enjoyed the culinary delights of Oxford afterwards.

Abingdon News



On 19 March, the Investment Trading Club hosted the second annual stock pitch competition. Organised by Fifth Year, Dylan who displayed outstanding leadership skills in planning and delivering the competition, over 20 students, from Third Year to Sixth Form, pitched their proposed 'Best Stock to buy' to a team of expert judges. Congratulations to Fifth Year Jao who won, followed by Fourth Year, Matteo and Fifth Years Chetwin and Bosco.

Taking stock

In February, First Year pupils enjoyed spending time on the double decker bus run by the charity *I Can and I Am*. As well as learning how to make a very tasty pizza, they spent time chatting about what they considered their strengths to be, what they need to spend time doing to improve their wellbeing, and how they can keep their "balloons of self-belief" inflated.



I can and I am



Colourful chemistry

A group of Fourth Years tackled some A Level chemistry and took their chance to use some impressive pieces of equipment. They learned about the origin of colour in transition metals and how to see the colour of the complexes using a UV-Vis spectrometer. Well done.

On 21 January, 160 pupils, parents and staff attended the inaugural Duke of Edinburgh Award certificate presentation. Presented by Richard Askwith, author of *Feet in the Clouds*, who gave an inspiring talk on the demands and joys of fell running and highlighted the significance of the DofE Award in providing unforgettable experiences that facilitate personal growth. He was then interviewed by *The Martlet* editorial team and also gave them tips and advice for improving the publication.



DofE Award



Chinese wonder

Third Year History and Mandarin students visited the British Museum and Chinatown in February on a rich cultural experience. Students delved into diverse exhibitions at the British Museum including ancient calligraphy, bronzes, sculptures, porcelain, and jade pieces, unlocking the secrets of Chinese characters and history and truly feeling the connection between past and present. Then, they headed to Chinatown for a traditional banquet featuring Chinese cuisine from various regions. This delicious feast was a practical application of their language skills, as they ordered dishes and interacted with restaurant staff using the Mandarin they have learned. To cap off the day, the students enjoyed shopping in Chinatown, using Mandarin to communicate with shop keepers and to make purchases.



German exchange

Over half-term, 16 Fourth Year Germanists stayed with their German exchange partners' families to experience everyday life in Germany. They attended a variety of lessons in German and also had a good amount of the day at their own disposal for activities and socialising. Other highlights included visits to the Dortmund football museum and Nixdorf computer museum. The students returned home with greater German fluency and range of vocabulary - it was a real success.



Ready for the South Pole

Lower School pupils had a truly inspiring afternoon in January when they heard from Al Sylvester, who led the RAF's first unsupported attempt on the South Pole. Al spoke about the challenges of life in Antarctica and talked movingly about how he overcame the disappointment of not quite achieving his goal, while also dealing with the impact of frostbite on his return home. He also gave one lucky First Year the chance to dress up as a polar explorer on the Amey Theatre stage!



Work exhibition

Lower School pupils enjoyed discussing a piece of work that they feel has gone particularly well in the second Work Exhibition of the academic year. It was great to hear them talking about the hard work they have been putting in and to see the very obvious pride they have in their achievements.



Urban fieldwork

In March, over 100 Fourth Year students undertook urban fieldwork as part of their Geography GCSE course. Students conducted interviews with members of the public and collected data on environmental quality and footfall to gauge the recent changes to Oxford city centre.

International women's day

To mark International Women's Day on 8 March, Abingdon School hosted an event at the Amey Theatre on 5 March to recognise and appreciate the diverse talents and contribution of women. Attended by staff, students and visitors, the evening featured talks from guest speakers including Dr Hashemi, a senior research fellow in health sciences; Dr Moghadam, one of the founding members of the 'One Million Signatures' campaign in Iran; Dr Aghtaie, a senior lecturer in gender and violence at the University of Bristol; and women's rights activist, Dr Besarani. Event organiser and teacher of Maths at Abingdon, Behnoosh Sabah said: "It was a great honour to hear about the life, work and experiences of so many esteemed women."



Bellringing

Members of the school bellringing club rang the bells of St Helen's Church on the final day of term as their fellow pupils were arriving for the annual Commemoration Service. With help from some of the local ringers, they rang rounds on the full ring of 10.



Sowing seeds

Students took advantage of the March sunshine to sow a selection of wildflower seeds - which they hope will help attract pollinators.



Flipping good fun

Community Service volunteers entertained residents at Old Station House care home with some pancake races on Shrove Tuesday.



Coastal curiosity

This term, GCSE and A Level Geology students explored Somerset's coast, analyzing Carboniferous and Triassic periods. At Middle Hope, students deciphered undersea volcanic eruptions and lava flows within limestone strata. At Clevedon, the objective was to make a geological map, a task made more tricky by the complex geological structures on show. Many thanks to the Secondhand Uniform Shop, who funded the trip.



Breaking ground

In February, Abingdon's Geology students visited Oxford, exploring the "Breaking Ground" exhibition. They learned about dinosaur trackway discoveries and the Cambrian explosion, examining preserved fossils like trilobites. Researchers presented on microfossils and amber, demonstrating mass spectrometry techniques. The day highlighted Earth Science research through lectures and hands-on activities.



Sweet as honey

On 27 March, local apiary expert and bee-keeper, Dave Busby delivered the first bee hive to Abingdon School, along with its 30,000 little buzzing inhabitants! A keen group of students and staff, interested in discovering more about the art of bee-keeping, were there to learn more from Dave, who will regularly visit and manage the hive to make sure the bees stay fit and healthy.

Fun Bee fact: The Queen Bee can lay 200,000 eggs in one summer between the March full moon and the September full moon.



Model United Nations

In March, 29 students attended the Model United Nations conference at Magdalen College School - for many, their first conference outside Abingdon. Against some stiff opposition, a number of our students won some individual awards including Joe (China on Human Rights) Best Resolution; Jacob (Nigeria on Human Rights) Best Delegate; Billy (China on DISEC) Best Delegate; Jacob (China) Best Resolution and Best Delegate. A superb effort and many congratulations to all those who took part.

Hydroponics comes to Abingdon



Students have upcycled guttering and constructed stands in their Product Design lessons to create their own hydroponics system! This eco efficient way of growing plants allows water to be used more sparingly and, because plants are grown vertically, means more can be produced over a small area. Hydroponics is likely to play a significant role in helping to feed the population in the future, especially with increasing demands on the land and the students are really keen to learn more about it.



Lower School Warhammer Club pupils have taken part in a miniature painting competition - congratulations to Ben for winning the trophy for his very detailed painting of a Necron warrior. The club now has an extensive range of models which can be used to create battle scenes.

Debate and discourse



On 21 March, 15 students travelled to Haileybury to participate in three days of rigorous debate and discourse at the UK's largest Model United Nations (MUN) conference. Abingdon delegates - representing the Russian Federation, Hungary and Oman - displayed tenacity, confidence and skill winning four highly commended delegate awards, four distinguished (best) delegate awards, and two highly commended delegation awards. Lower Sixth former, Nathan, was also commended for chairing the Disarmament and International Security Committee. Very many congratulations to all who participated.

Civil War breaks out at School



Second Year history pupils were treated to an English Civil War living history morning in March to tie into the course they are studying: *Who made Britain - rulers, religion or rebels?*. They engaged with the ideological causes behind the war as well as battle tactics, daily life for soldiers and some riveting displays from the reenactors. Much fun was had by all!

Boat Club dinner



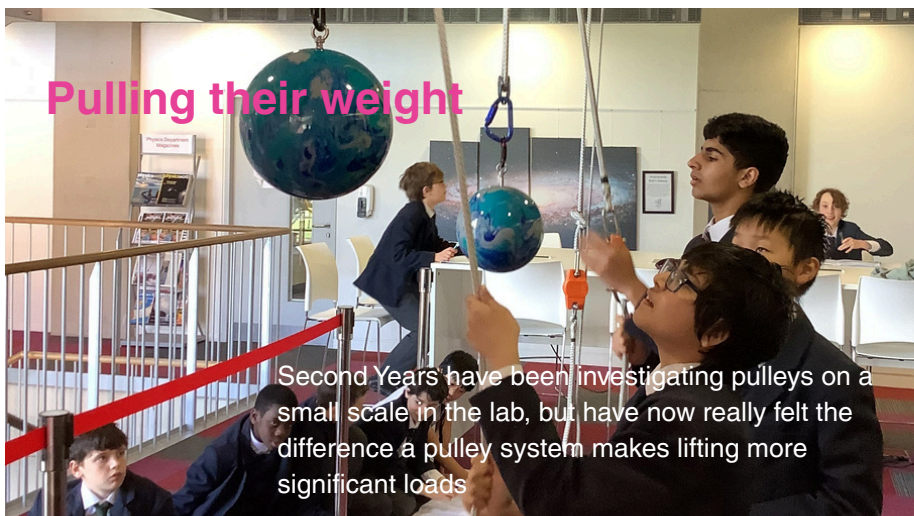
After a block fixture against Radley on 1 March, the rowers, parents and coaches gathered in the Pavilion for the annual Boat Club dinner. This year, we were privileged to welcome back former Captain of Boats, Head of School and, recent Paris Olympic Gold Champion in the Men's 8+, OA Tom Digby as our guest speaker. Tom shared his journey from a not very sporty 13 year old to Olympic champion and all the lessons he learned along the way. Truly inspiring for our current rowers and a huge thank you to Tom for all the time he spent chatting to our students throughout the evening. Another fantastic event and many thanks to the FASBC for all the hard work in putting it together.

Ian Murphy visits School



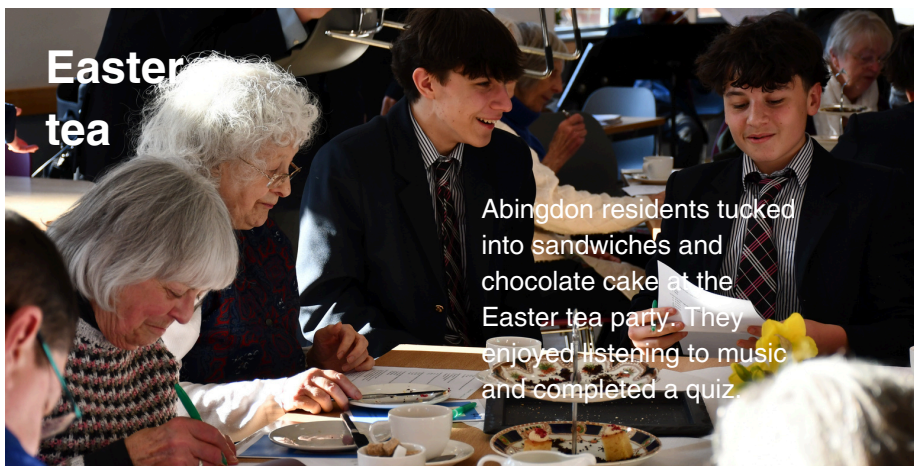
In March, we welcomed the internationally acclaimed artist, Ian Murphy to Abingdon. He worked with many of our art students to give them valuable insight into their GCSE work and to inspire a deeper appreciation for the media they are using in their architectural projects.

Pulling their weight



Second Years have been investigating pulleys on a small scale in the lab, but have now really felt the difference a pulley system makes lifting more significant loads

Easter tea



Abingdon residents tucked into sandwiches and chocolate cake at the Easter tea party. They enjoyed listening to music and completed a quiz.



Reaching for the sky

On 9 March, a group of our boarders visited Northway climbing centre in Newbury. Keen to try out a new sport, they spent time with instructors in two small groups, learning how to belay and practising their skills on both bouldering and roped problems.



Getting revved up

On 13 March, Product Design and Engineering scholars visited the BMW Mini plant in Oxford, where they witnessed the advanced manufacturing processes behind the iconic Mini cars. This provided valuable insight into cutting-edge automotive design and engineering. Scholars were able to explore the intricacies of assembly lines, learn about the latest technologies, and engage with industry experts in this hands-on experience.



To be, or not to be?

On 11 March, Sixth Form English students travelled to Stratford-upon-Avon to visit Shakespeare's place of birth and to see Rupert Goold's production of *Hamlet* at the RSC. The Upper Sixth spent much of the time taking notes for their impending A Level; whilst the Lower Sixth watched with bated breath. The eventful and tumultuous ending, in which much of the cast slipped down the tilted ship, resulted in a standing ovation from the audience. It was a very memorable day.

Challenging maths

Congratulations to Quinn, Albert, Owen and Tomi who have qualified for the final of the Junior Mathematical Challenge after winning their regional heats. The competition encourages mathematical reasoning, precision of thought and fluency to make students think. We can't wait to find out how they get on in June.

Geography quiz

Four teams of geographers across First to Fourth Year took part in the Geographical Association Worldwide Quiz. Rounds ranged from 'naming geographical landforms' to 'geography in the news'. All teams performed exceptionally well, and our Third Year team emerged victorious in the senior competition. The First Year team came 3rd in the junior competition, while the Second Years won the 'scenario round' of the quiz. Well done to everyone who took part!

Abingdon Music



In January, the Chapel Choir sang wonderfully at Winchester Cathedral, with the canticles being *Noble in B Minor* and the anthem Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine*.

House ensemble

Diverse musical styles were on show in the House ensemble competition this term. Well done to Crescent who won with a lively rendition of *All of Me*.

Solo platforms

Audiences have been captivated this term by a wide range of solo platforms. Each has highlighted the skill, musicianship and talent within our student body - both in terms of singing and playing.



The Spring Concert in March showcased an impressive range of talent, with something for everyone. There were performances from the percussion ensemble, the Chamber Orchestra and the newly formed Jazz Band in the first half, with the second half focusing on the two main school orchestras - Sinfonia and the Symphony Orchestra. Holst's *Jupiter* was a joyous end to the evening.



On 21 January, over 100 musicians from a number of Prep schools were welcomed for a day of music making. Following a series of sectional rehearsals, the musicians combined for an afternoon concert to showcase the music that had been learned and rehearsed.



On 14 March, Claire Hobbs adjudicated the competition for students from Grades 6 to 8. Josh was awarded Young Musician of the Year for the intermediate category. A week later, on 21 March, Richard Coppack, Director of Music from Elstree, adjudicated the junior competition, for those up to Grade 6 standard. This time, it was Benji who was awarded the title in the junior category.

Concerto concert

On Sunday 23 March, nine students performed solo concerto movements with an orchestra made up of local professional musicians and other talented pupils. Featuring challenging pieces, including Neruda's *Trumpet concerto* and Beethoven's *Triple Concerto*, each performed with skill.



Cello masterclass

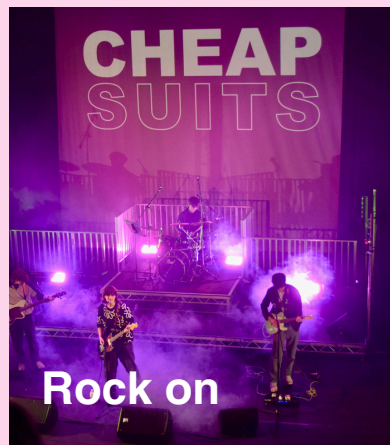
In February, chamber musician, recitalist and orchestral principal, Leo Popplewell, shared his wealth of experience with the cellists at Abingdon. The Cello ensemble played Klengel's *Hymnus, Op.57* which was followed by five individual lessons, with students playing repertoires by Brahms, Haydn, Rachmaninov and Shostakovich. Leo shared technical ways of making the instrument sound better and delved into the mood and interpretation of the pieces, and each student improved significantly through each of the lessons.



Life is a Caberet, old chum

The second annual Cabaret took place on 8 March. Pupils, parents, governors, and musicians gathered for an evening of unforgettable jazz. Led by Simon Currie, the Big Band took centre stage in an evening filled with music, songs, and lively commentary from comperes Felix and Falkie. Guests were treated to a delicious two-course supper during the interval. It was a night to remember for all.

On 12 March, the Amey Theatre came alive with the thunderous energy of the annual Rock Concert. Student bands took to the stage to deliver a thrilling mix of music. Headline act *Cheap Suits*, featuring Felix and James, performed a set of original songs from their recently released EP *Kiss Up*. Congratulations to all.

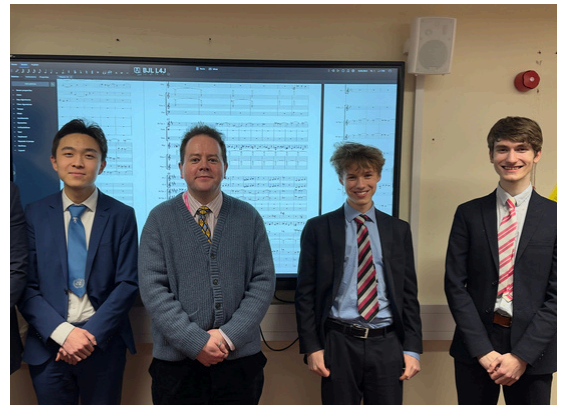


Rock on



Chamber music

The annual Chamber Music evening featured a diverse range of ensembles, showcasing the skill and versatility of our students. Performances included string quartets, woodwind groups and trios, as well as an impressive 16-cellist ensemble and a clarinet group. The evening was a testament to the high musical standards upheld at Abingdon. Well done to all involved.



Highly composed

David Bednall, the well renowned choral composer whose works are regularly broadcast on Classic FM and across BBC Radio 3 and 4, visited Abingdon in February to work with our student composers in a workshop and masterclass. Our students gained great insight and confidence from the session, learning to really exploit the various colours of the forces that they are writing for.

Abingdon School in Partnership



Multi-sports club

Year 5 and 6 pupils from local schools have been enjoying sessions at our primary multi-sports club each Thursday this term, run by Lower Sixth students and staff from Abingdon. The Abingdon students reacted and adapted well to the challenges of managing large groups and the sessions have been fun and engaging. The primary school pupils have worked hard, listened, practiced various skills and, most importantly of all, have really enjoyed themselves!



Workshops in a Box

Workshops in a Box is a new initiative from Abingdon Science Partnerships. It enables staff from local primary schools to book a workshop box, within which can be found specialist science equipment and activities. This enables them to confidently deliver science lessons within their own school setting and at their own pace. It also helps ensure continued access to science resources in the event they are unable to book one of our many onsite partnership workshops. Seven boxes are available on topics including magnets, electricity, sound, forces, light, rocks and fossils.



Help with the future

Around 800 secondary school students attended the annual Abingdon Careers Convention at Abingdon on 13 March. Young people heard from professionals across a range of sectors, gained an understanding of the different routes into employment, met apprentices, and were given advice - on career guidance and CV writing. We are grateful to the local businesses and many parents who helped facilitate such an informative evening.



Mandarin club

On 11 March, four Third Year students accompanied Ms Zhang to Carswell Primary school to run a Mandarin club. The session saw Carswell pupils develop new language skills and our own Abingdon students hone their own abilities in communication, leadership and teamwork as they came up with new ideas and incentives to test learning and maintain engagement. It was enjoyable for all.

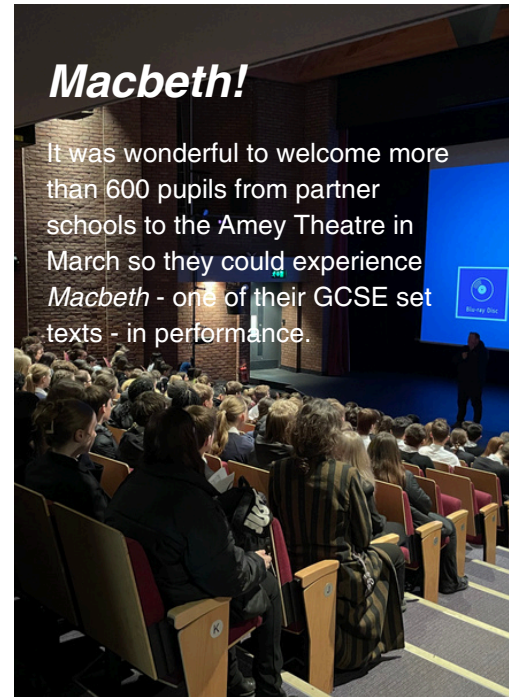
Abingdon School in Partnership

AFU in 2025



The AFU filmmakers have been busy capturing content for their 2025 productions. Topics are both fascinating and wide ranging including the regeneration of a nature reserve; an interview with Dr Pienkowski about the reintroduction of red kites; sights and sounds of a Cotswolds nature trail; a classic car rally; and a behind the scenes look at an Oxford United game.

Macbeth!



It was wonderful to welcome more than 600 pupils from partner schools to the Amey Theatre in March so they could experience *Macbeth* - one of their GCSE set texts - in performance.

In March, we held a successful parent seminar on '*How to talk to your children about drugs?*'. Its aim was to equip parents with the tools to confidently be able to foster open and honest dialogue with their children, and navigate difficult conversations surrounding substance abuse. Led by student Peer Support Leads, it offered insight into the latest information on drug awareness, focusing on understanding the pressures young people face today and emphasising the role of empathy and understanding in encouraging healthy decision making.



Let's communicate

In February, we hosted 45 primary school pupils at our *Let's Communicate* morning. They participated in workshops on body language, sign language, linguistic puzzles, Mandarin and French. Our primary school partnership ambassadors helped them complete the activities and entertained them during the refreshment break. We were impressed by how enthusiastic and engaged all the primary school students were. Everyone seemed to have a very positive day.

Budding film makers

On 18 March, 15 enthusiastic and talented Year 8 to 10 pupils from Larkmead gathered to shoot two short fiction films. Led by Mr Taylor, each film took account of the school setting, and required students to either act or operate camera and sound equipment or both! Next term, their films will be fine tuned, in time for a screening of the finished films at Larkmead in the summer.

Abingdon Sport



On 1 March, the cross country club travelled to Leeds to compete in the English Schools National Cup final. The pinnacle of team racing, all of the best schools in the country were in attendance. The senior team performed bravely despite injury and came 15th overall; with the intermediate team coming 16th overall. It was a great experience and our runners are even more determined to do better next year.



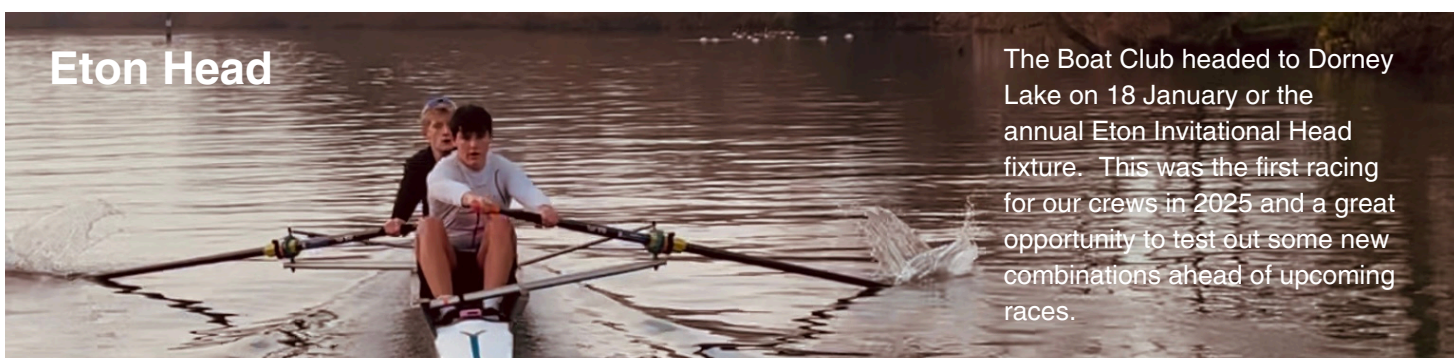
It was an historic top 20 finish for Abingdon's 1st VII rugby team at the Rosslyn Park National Schools Sevens tournament in March. The U14s and U16s also took part, with the U16s winning two group matches. Hooray!



Abingdon crews excelled at the Junior Sculling Head. J16's quad placed 10th out of 45; J15's octuple finished 4th; J14's B and C octuples placed 14th and 23rd respectively, with the B crew being the fastest B boat. J14's A and B quads won gold and bronze medals, finishing over 30 seconds ahead of the next fastest crew. A great end to the winter season!



In January, our U14 and U16 badminton teams competed against Woodgreen and Magdalen College School (MCS). The U16 team secured a victory over Woodgreen but narrowly missed out against MCS. The U14 team won their age group with an impressive nine victories out of 10!



The Boat Club headed to Dorney Lake on 18 January for the annual Eton Invitational Head fixture. This was the first racing for our crews in 2025 and a great opportunity to test out some new combinations ahead of upcoming races.



Towards the end of term, Lower School pupils competed in an inter-tutor hockey tournament at Tilsley Park. In the First Year, 1P won both A and B strings, followed by 1C and 1M. Second Year saw 2H victorious in both strings, with 2G 2nd and 2V 3rd.



Quintin Head

Racing in 2025 kicked off on 25 January with the first major head race of the year - Quintin Head. This gave our crews a chance to test themselves against a lot of the top crews in the country as well as put in some practice in London ahead of the Schools Head of the River. Abingdon had four crews racing with the 1st VIII coming in 6th out of 33 crews and the J16 A boat finishing 2nd out of 12.



On 29 January, the senior cross country team ran in the 53rd King Henry VIII Relays. The six leg, 3.7km course is run on mixed terrain around War Memorial Park in Coventry. Abingdon's team was hoping to improve on its 3rd and 2nd place finishes from the past two years but, against a tough opposition, finished 6th overall. The race goes up in quality each year, attracting overseas' teams and those made exclusively of sports scholars.



On 11 February the cross country club travelled to Radley College for their annual relays. There were a number of excellent legs run over the muddy two mile course and it was an excellent final tune up race ahead of the ESAA national cup final in March. The Seniors were narrowly beaten into 2nd by Eton and a very young Intermediate team was 2nd to Coppers Company and Coborn School.

Abingdon Sport



On 21 March, 14 Lower School pupils participated in a tournament organised by TrySport and England Touch Rugby. Core elements of the game: progressing up the pitch, agility and movement, and the "roll ball" were introduced in workshops, culminating in a series of small-sided games and then some matches. Narrowly missing out on the final, five of the 14 pupils were nevertheless invited to join the England Rugby Touch development pathway – a fantastic achievement.



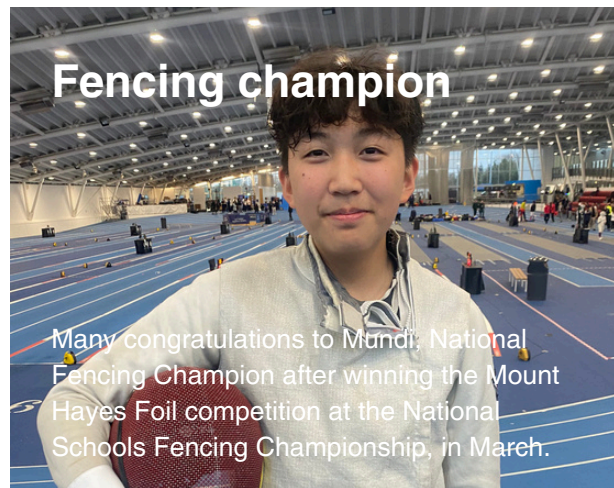
On 17 March, 12 students from Abingdon attended the annual Independent Schools Climbing Competition at the White Spider centre in London. It was an intense day, with six hours of climbing a mixture of top-rope, lead and boulders. All of the climbers did a fantastic job, gave everything their best effort and had a great day out, meeting like-minded peers from other schools. Our A team achieved an excellent 6th place out of 37 teams. A special mention should go to Fifth Year, Daniel, who achieved 1st place male in all three disciplines across all the age groups, despite being a Junior. Well done to all our climbers!



Very many congratulations to the Under 16 Squash team who emerged as Plate Champions from the National Squash Finals in March. Their achievement is a testament to their dedication, hard work, character and integrity.



Having reached the South Central regional finals, the U14 A Badminton faced tough opposition just missing out on making it through to the national stage. Their determination and skill were evident throughout the competition.



Many congratulations to Mundi, National Fencing Champion after winning the Mount Hayes Foil competition at the National Schools Fencing Championship, in March.



Schools Head of the River

The Schools Head of the River presented a formidable challenge, with Abingdon's junior rowers aiming for top rankings. Senior crews, navigating a difficult term, finished respectably. The J16 crews demonstrated strong form, with the B eight securing 6th and the A eight narrowly missing a higher placing due to an on-course incident. The J15 squad delivered exceptional results, with all three eights achieving top-six finishes, highlighting their considerable potential. The event, a culmination of winter training, showcased the rowers' dedication, skill, and resilience. The impressive performances underscored the squad's depth and ability to compete at a high level. The team now looks ahead to the regatta season, poised for further success after a productive winter of training and competition.



Charity football

Twelve Lower School teams took part in a football tournament towards the end of term to raise much needed funds for Meningitis Research. After a series of exciting matches, the final came down to a penalty shootout. The Second Years were victorious but, with £240 raised, everyone felt like a winner.



Rugby scholar

Congratulations to Gloucester Academy player Jacob who has won a prestigious rugby scholarship to Brunel University. This partnership with Ealing Trailfinders merges high-level sport with academics.

Abingdon Prep



Hockey report

U8 to U13 hockey teams had an exciting start to the season and have shown great progress in skill development, mastering new techniques and competitive spirit. They have represented the school at county level and at the IAPS championships which has helped improve their tactical awareness (our U11s were even lucky enough to meet double Olympic medallist Giselle Ansley!). Many congratulations to the U12s who finished 3rd at the county tournament.



Volcanic rock

As a precursor to Science Week in March, Years 3, 4 and 5 were treated to a workshop from the Earth Sciences Department of Oxford University all about volcanoes.

Pupils handled and identified different kinds of volcanic rock, discussed the different volcano types and discovered what makes a volcano slow or explosive - complete with fun demonstrations! The workshop finished with a fun prediction game where pupils guessed when they thought the volcano (represented by a party popper) would erupt!

Raising money

21 and 22 March were a busy couple of days of fundraising for the nominated School charity, *Down's Syndrome Oxford*, as all the pupils took part in our annual silver coin trail. The children brought in silver coins which they laid on a beautifully coloured poster. As 21 March was also the 14th official Down's Syndrome Day, pupils also came into school in odd socks. Fundraising was further aided by the School's inaugural community Easter Eggstravaganza on 22 March, in which APS pupils and members of the local community came together to complete an Easter trail and meet the Easter bunny. Collectively, the events raised approaching £800 for Down's Syndrome Oxford.



Netball fun



A group of keen Pre-Prep children have been 'sticky-steppy'-ing their way to the Sports Hall to learn some key netball skills. They have shown fantastic control over their footwork and distance from their opponents. They have worked super hard on their shooting skills and have enjoyed learning how the game is played.



World Book Day

Whilst their younger peers enjoyed celebrating World Book Day as their favourite characters, Years 7 and 8 visited the senior school, where they joined First and Second Year pupils to hear from author of the acclaimed novels, *Steady for This* and *King of Nothing*, Nathanael Lessore. Nathanael spoke about reading, writing, stories, the publishing industry and his personal writing journey. After a book signing and meet and greet, the pupils participated in writing workshops.



Awe and wonder

Our Year 5 pupils visited the Natural History Museum, Oxford in March, kickstarting their new Science topic on Evolution and Inheritance.



Young Art Abingdon

In March, Prep School pupils attended an The Young Art Abingdon Exhibition held at Abingdon, organised by our very own Sherrey. The event explored the theme of 'community' and showcased the wonderfully creative art work and sculptures made by children from the Prep School using a variety of media. The competition, judged by Mr Williamson, Head of Art at Abingdon, allowed every child the opportunity to create a piece that had a truly personal meaning to them.

It's all about opportunities

Everyone knows how big a step it can be moving to a new school - particularly at Sixth Form. In this article, we hear from Abingdon's Head Student, Adam, who talks openly about his own journey in joining the School's Sixth Form eighteen months ago.

"I joined Abingdon in 2023 from a state school just outside Oxford. I loved my school and was really happy there - I had great friends, got on well with the teachers and joined a few clubs. It would have been really easy for me to have stayed there for Sixth Form, but at the back of my mind, I wanted to try something a bit more 'out there', something a little different. Life is about taking new chances and opportunities, and I realised that sometimes the best opportunities are in places which can seem scary, or intimidating.

"What initially drew me to Abingdon is probably the same as what attracts anyone who might be looking to change schools for Sixth Form - amazing teaching, the calibre of the sports provision, fantastic exam results, the breadth and quality of the artistic and creative departments - things like that. To be honest, those are the things which should draw you in if you are going 'Sixth Form shopping' as I was, and I think most people would struggle to find another school that excels in so many different areas, as Abingdon does.

"What may be surprising is that it was a fear that I might not fit in which nearly stopped me from applying and, today, I am really relieved I took the plunge and didn't let that get in the way. "Because, when I arrived, I found that Abingdon, as a place, was really quite diverse - definitely not something I had associated with a school that dates back to the reign of King Henry III!

One of the things that makes it so diverse is all the things that are going on - all the activities and clubs which are part of the timetable. That gave me a way in and made me feel like I belonged. That's because, for each activity that exists, there is a group of students who are equally passionate about it.

"Thinking back on what those first few days were like, I remember all the opportunities that were thrown at me - Abingdon knew it would be scary for me to move to a new school (because it is scary moving) and they made it easy to find some of those facilities and services that at



other schools you might have to hunt around for. That meant I could focus on two things - what I wanted to do, and on making friends.

At Abingdon, I found I was surrounded by people who love to be themselves and do their own thing - it wasn't just about rugby and symphony orchestra, because those aren't the only things students who come to Abingdon are interested in. This is part of what made it so easy for me, and others like me, to join Sixth Form from another school. Take Sze long, for example. He's in my Tutor group, produces beautiful pieces of creative writing, and also edits the English publication. Even though English is his second language, he's just got a place at Oxford to read Literature! Or there's Sasha, one of my best mates, who jointly edits the biology magazine, but he also does the silversmithing club and plays dreadfully for the fifth football team. Then, there's Maelo - one of the school's best mathematicians - he is breathtakingly talented and smashes all the competitions and olympiads. All these people who joined the Sixth Form with me arrived at Abingdon and simply did what they loved to do. For me, that's what Abingdon means. That's not to say that only extraordinary people will flourish here but that, at Abingdon, there is this diversity of opportunity and of thought - if you join, you'll take what you're passionate about to heart, you'll find your tribe and you'll get stuck into activities. And that is the best way to make friends.

"So, if you're wondering 'am I going to fit in?', I'd ask 'are you looking for new opportunities?'. If the answer is: yes, I want the opportunity to join a new music club, or try out a new sport, experience an amazing education, make new friends, and do new things that push me out of my comfort zone, then yes, I think you will fit in. In fact, I know you'll fit in because that's what I was looking for, and that's what those friends who joined at the same time as me were looking for. It was all about new opportunities and experiences for us. I know Abingdon will welcome you and be the right place for you, not because of how exciting, diverse, and full of opportunity it is but because of who you probably are: someone else who is looking for opportunity - just like I was!"



Amey Events Centre



SCAN TO JOIN OUR CORPORATE MAILING LIST

abingdon.org.uk/sports-and-leisure

Tilsley Park hosts the IAPS Hockey Festival

In February, Tilsley Park hosted the IAPS Hockey Festival, welcoming over 20 Prep schools for an exciting and action-packed day. It was a pleasure to have GB double Olympic medalist, Giselle Ansley, in attendance as special guest.

Join our corporate mailing list

The Amey Events Centre offers a rich and diverse programme of productions, concerts, lectures, and events throughout the year, while also hosting a wide range of conferences and corporate away days. We invite you to consider the Amey Events Centre as the ideal venue for your next event. Stay connected by joining our corporate mailing list for updates on Open Days and the latest news.



Community engagement

Abingdon Sports and Leisure continues to strengthen its connection with the local community by offering a diverse range of opportunities for people of all ages and interests. By hiring out the school's exceptional sports facilities to clubs, organisations, and the public, Abingdon ensures that these amenities can benefit the wider community.

Beyond sports, Abingdon Sports and Leisure also brings the community together through the Amey Theatre, where live screenings and events provide a vibrant cultural experience. During school holidays, engaging courses and holiday camps for boys and girls are on offer, fostering a passion for learning and development in a fun, supportive environment. Last term saw the Junior Climbing Course (six-week tuition), Abingdon Swim School, and SuperCamps take place. To view and book available courses and activities, please visit abingdon.org.uk/sports-and-leisure.

Abingdon Development



**Remembering Abingdon -
1563 Society OA lunch reconnects old friends**

Pre-1972 leavers were welcomed back to Abingdon on 12 March where they enjoyed catching up with old friends - some of whom they hadn't seen for 50 years! Hosted by Mike Windsor, Head, and Colonel Chris Pickup LVO OBE, Chairman of the 1563 Society, guests heard of the critical impact legacies have on the school. Chris Pickup reminded OAs how the gift of an Abingdon education had played an influential role in his and their life stories, encouraging them to consider contributing to future generations of OAs through a legacy pledge of their own. The afternoon was rounded off with tours with our Lower Sixth students, showcasing the school in the Spring sunshine.



Celebrating bursaries

On 14 March, we welcomed OAs, parents and governors to our inaugural bursary dinner. They heard first-hand the impact bursaries make on the lives of all students and how anyone in our Abingdon community can play a pivotal role in continuing this legacy of support. Josh Mensah (OA 2023) shared what an Abingdon education meant to him, whilst Natalie-Jane Littler (OA parent) spoke passionately about her decision to support a bursary at Abingdon.

"Without support from the bursary programme, I would never have been able to come to this amazing school, meet these amazing people, become engrossed in the breadth of opportunity that Abingdon has to offer, and to feel like I really belonged." Adam, Sixth Form student.

Find out how you can join Natalie-Jane and others to make the gift of an Abingdon education a possibility for more young people like Josh and Adam: <https://connect.abingdon.org.uk/pages/support-abingdon>.



Boarding supporters shout out - sponsorship plaques on their way!

Thank you to all OAs and parents who have sponsored boarding rooms so far. Your support has made such a difference already - we look forward to seeing the plaques outside the rooms in the summer term.

Named family
plaques are
available for all of
our room
sponsors - please
scan the QR code
for more
information.



Giving Day 5 and 6 November 2025

Get ready for Abingdon's intense and fast-paced worldwide Giving Day...

...The date is fixed and we're warming up for launch!

Save the date for Abingdon's third Giving Day - an online 36-hour campaign raising awareness and funds for our *Seven years to change a life* bursary campaign.

Watch this space and our socials for further details about how you can get involved. Will you be an ambassador for Abingdon this year?

Contact us in the Development team via: development@abingdon.org.uk

Abingdon OA Club



Henley Royal Regatta

Summer Term ends with the annual OA Club Strawberries and Pimm's event at Henley Royal Regatta on Friday 4 July.

A summer of sports

OA golfers, cricketers, footballers and rugby players — and those who prefer to spectate — will be looking forward to a day of sports with the OA Club and wider Abingdonian Community on Friday 20 June.

Professional networking

Members of the Abingdonian Community are invited to an evening of informal professional networking at the Accountants' Hall, London on 29 April. Join us for an opportunity to connect with fellow OAs and parents, and to expand professional networks. For entrepreneurs and those in (or interested in) the fields of finance, investment, insurance, law, technology and hospitality. With thanks to OA Jonathan Grosvenor for facilitating the venue booking.



Reunions and networking

We look forward to welcoming OAs back to School on 7 June for reunions of the Classes of '75, '80, '85, '90, '95, '00, '05, '10, '15, '20. This marks the half century milestone for 1975 leavers and the 25th anniversary year for our 2000 leavers. OAs who would like help in tracking down friends from their year group can email the OA Club office: oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk

Oxford reunion

Representing research across a number of disciplines, Oxford-based OA students had a get-together at the King's Arms in March, joined by teaching staff Chris Burnand and Ian Middleton.

13 June

OA 50s, 60s lunch

This year's OA 50s, 60s Lunch, hosted by OA Roger Havelock, will be held on Friday 13 June at Phyllis Court, Henley-on-Thames. Attendees will enjoy striking views of the River Thames and Chilterns countryside over a drinks reception and lunch. Thank you to OA Tony Edwards for facilitating the booking of the riverside pavilion.

Community hub

Please check the Abingdon Community Hub for up-to-date information and booking links - connect.abingdon.org.uk

Abingdon Out of the Past

Sir Nicholas Winton

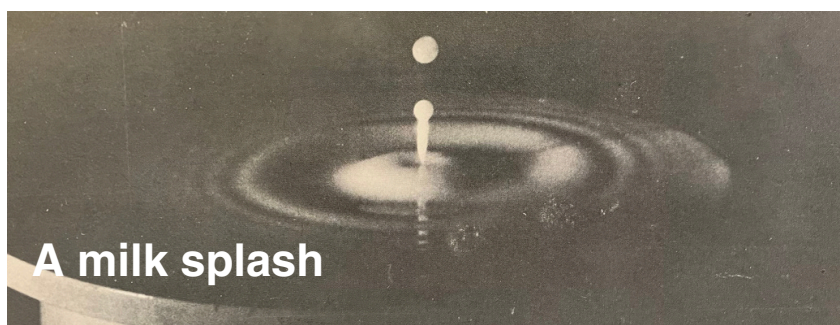


One Life featured the work of the British humanitarian Sir Nicholas Winton (1909-2015) who helped rescue over 600 (mainly Jewish) children from German occupied Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s through what became known as the kindertransport. Sir Nicholas found British homes for these children, many of whose parents subsequently died in the Holocaust. Sir Nicholas's son, Nicholas Winton OA 1970, will be talking about his father's work in the Amey Theatre on Monday 16 June at 7pm. Further details will be announced in due course.

Jewish refugees at Abingdon



In total, Abingdon took seven Jewish refugees from Hitler's Europe. At least one, Joseph Taglicht, under the kindertransport scheme. Like Taglicht, brothers Michael and George Moschytz, also came from Germany. Wolfgang Schafer and Wilfred Olscher came from Austria, and Peter Bodenstein and Harry Baecker came from Czechoslovakia. Writing to the School in 2019 George Moschytz remembered how Abingdon and England had 'essentially saved' his family from the 'havoc and chaos that Hitler brought upon us and our people'.



It may not look particularly impressive but in 1969, this was a famous photograph at Abingdon. Three Sixth Form physicists (Jonathan Mitchell, Roger Plail and Nicholas Winton) had devised their own apparatus for taking high-speed photographs of a milk splash to show how it both forms and decays - something only possible with professional equipment. Their device won them an appearance (and 2nd place) on the BBC's Young Scientist of the Year Competition.



Girls and Abingdon School

The arrival of girls next year might seem to be a radical break with the past but in fact 2026 will see the 66th anniversary of the start of shared drama productions with SHSK, and the 50th anniversary of the start of shared Sixth Form classes. In 1952, Jennifer Pulley sat Scholarship Level chemistry at Abingdon, winning a scholarship to read chemistry at Oxford. But only Lucy Eden has been a full-time pupil, joining the Upper Sixth in 1981. On leaving, she was asked if there was one change she would like to see, and she replied – **become co-ed**.