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# Abingdon News

## A landmark term

Abingdon Rugby celebrated a landmark term of participation and performance, with over 350 pupils proudly taking part in more than 160 fixtures. Our programme demonstrates outstanding depth and enthusiasm, reflecting the best of the School's sporting culture.

## Message from the Head

A highlight of the previous term was hearing a panel of Old Abingdonians (OAs) and current parents sharing the stories of their careers with Lower Sixth students. What united them all in their diverse career choices was their willingness to take risks and embrace challenges. They had not taken the easy option but rather looked for opportunities that would extend and reward them.



This is a mindset that we seek to develop in all our pupils. Our approach to academic life is founded on aspiration and ambition while the breadth and depth of *The Other Half* is designed to provide exceptional opportunities for personal development in its widest sense, building resilience, confidence, leadership skills and the ability to work in a team.

The OA Club Careers Evening is just one component of our *After Abingdon* programme. From their very first year at Abingdon, students are encouraged to think about what the future might hold and what careers might appeal to them. As they move through the school, advice becomes more focused on helping students make informed choices, while also developing key skills, for instance in negotiation or interviewing.

As students move into the Sixth Form, there's personalised advice available regarding university choice, both in the UK and abroad, as well as support for those exploring degree apprenticeships or Gap Years. With this rich programme in place, in alliance with our dynamic and ambitious approach to education, we believe that by the time every Abingdonian leaves us, they do so with a sense of purpose, excited about the future, and ready to embrace the challenges that await.



## Walk this way for charity

On 23 September, our entire senior school community took part in a sponsored walk to raise much needed funds for Homeless Oxfordshire. Each student was challenged to raise a minimum of £25 and the total surpassed £23,000. The ten mile route included sections of the Thames Path and Oxfordshire Greenbelt Way, and provided a healthy and engaging way for students to raise money. Well done to all who took part and in particular to Mr Johnson and the Charities team who co-ordinated the event.

## CCF visit Wellington Barracks

On 8 December, the Upper Sixth CCF visited Wellington Barracks, home to the Household Division, and were hosted by OA Lieutenant Max Martin of the Coldstream Guards. The group received a briefing, viewed military weapons systems, and were instructed on Close Quarter Combat (CQB) drills. The day concluded with a Q&A session, offering invaluable career insight for the cadets.

## Festive fayre

Abingdon students hosted a festive tea party on Tuesday 9 December for local residents. There was a tasty afternoon tea (thank you to our caterers), carols, a quiz and a raffle with lots of lovely prizes.

Our students enjoyed spending time with our guests who remarked on the seasonal atmosphere and had a lot of fun.



## The great outdoors

Between 26 and 28 September, 52 Fifth Year pupils completed their Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award practice expedition in Edale. Highlights over the course of the three days included Brown Knoll, Mam Tor and Crowden Tower, plus Stanage Edge. The weather, although chilly, remained dry only raining heavily at night. The groups showed determination, perseverance and a sense of humour in completing their expedition. The challenges presented provided excellent training for the qualifying expedition which they will undertake in June in the Brecon Beacons.

## Geology field trip

In October, GCSE and A Level geologists visited Man O'War and Durdle Coves to study Jurassic and Cretaceous rocks. At Man O'War Cove, they deduced the younging direction and took dip and strike measurements to correctly conclude the marine sediments showed a cyclical pattern of transgressions and regressions. They admired the Cinder Bed - a highly fossiliferous layer of oysters traditionally marking the boundary between the Jurassic and the Cretaceous. Turning their attention to Durdle Bay, they examined the fault structures, being especially struck by the Purbeck anticline - one of the folds and faults across southern England created by the Alpine Orogeny. The day finished at Lulworth Cove with its famous Crumple (and some hot chips before the journey home).



## Biological insights

Abingdon's two teams - made up of James, Harry, Xien, Kit, Will, Ewen, Steven and Ryan - were placed 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> out of 914 teams nationally at the Cambridge University Biology Challenge. Over four rounds, this event invites students to answer thought provoking questions that challenge them to use their biological knowledge in novel ways. The teams answered questions such as *do behaviours fossilise? Do animals dream? What are hallucinations?* and *how might Santa Claus manage to survive eating all those mince pies?*



## Lower School assistants

The new team of our Sixth Form Lower School Assistants had a very busy first few weeks of term. One of their duties is to ensure all our new Lower School pupils are settling well into life at Abingdon so, as part of the morning Tutor periods and during lunchtime on a Tuesday, they've organised games, a wide range of sports and other fun activities for them. This gives our Lower School Assistants the opportunity to mentor and lead whilst providing positive role models to their younger peers who are given a helping hand at forming new friendships and developing new skills.





## Cheltenham debates

In November, a group of Sixth Form linguists went head to head with pupils from other schools in the annual Cheltenham Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) debating competition. In teams of two, they tackled topics such as *whether the voting age should be lowered to 16*, *whether ChatGPT does, in fact, threaten education* and *whether planes and cars should be banned*.

The Spanish team went through to the final to debate the motion *Spanish food is the best in the world*, but narrowly lost to their opponents.

Special congratulations go to the German champions, Alex and Edmund, who convinced the adjudicators that *you can best learn German from memes and TV series*. Well done to all involved, not just for their contributions to the debates, but also the impressive spirit and generosity they showed their opponents.



## Schools challenge

The finalists from last term's House Challenge competition formed a team to compete in the prestigious Schools Challenge quiz this term, where they were drawn against Brentwood School in the first round. Our team exhibited excellent knowledge on the English Civil War and orthography, but struggled with questions on the Muppets Christmas Carol! Sadly we were narrowly beaten, but look forward to success in the Plate competition.



## There be dragons

Warhammer Club continues to be a very popular *Other Half* option for Lower School pupils with some enjoying building and painting the miniatures and some getting stuck in with battles. This term has seen a breakaway faction, led by Dungeon Master (DM) in chief Austin, starting to play Dungeons and Dragons. Austin has done a great job of teaching the basic rules, designing campaigns, and training up apprentice DMs.



## Marking the Battle of Britain

Four senior cadets, Max, Harold, Harry and Fynn, as well as Major Lee Edwards and Lieutenant Colonel Rebecca Cottam, were invited as guests of Tony Edwards (OA 1962) to a Battle of Britain 85th anniversary dinner held on 10 September at the RAF Museum, London. Fynn read a poignant vignette about three Battle of Britain pilots, made more touching by the fact that he is the same age as one of them.



## Arkwright Engineering Scholarship

Congratulations to Lower Sixth Former, Mark, who has been awarded a prestigious (and highly competitive) Arkwright Engineering Scholarship. This will entitle him to a financial award of £250 per annum over a two year period, access to exclusive enrichment experiences, mentoring from an industry expert and the chance to develop crucial engineering skills. A great achievement.



Third Year Mandarin students enjoyed an immersive cultural lesson, exploring Chinese traditions and making moon cakes for the Mid-Autumn Festival. They learned the festival's history, related vocabulary, and fascinating legends. This included how the moon cake symbolises the harvest, selflessness, and bravery.

The experience offered a delicious, deeper insight into Chinese culture and language.



Students in the entomology club got up close and personal with this tailless whip scorpion *Damon johnstoni*. These impressive creatures are non-venomous predators and are native to West Africa. Pupils learnt that they only use six legs for walking and that the remaining front pair of legs are modified for use as antennae-like feelers, with many fine segments giving the appearance of a whip. When a suitable prey is located with the antenniform legs, it seizes its victim with large spines on the grasping pedipalps, impaling and immobilising the prey before devouring it.



In the lead up to Christmas, our Young Enterprise team had great selling success at the various School Christmas Fairs they have attended. Team *Arbo* sold out of their upcycled products, made from old pallets and bottle caps, and manufactured in the School's Product Design and Engineering Department. Having undertaken a comprehensive market survey to assess what would sell well, they created products including coffee coasters, serving dishes, passive amplifiers, and bird and bat boxes.

The team received very positive feedback for their products, display stands and sales pitches. It was a good start to the festive session, and they are hoping to generate more stock to enable them to attend other fairs in the new term.



## An update on our move to co-education

It's almost two years since we announced we would be welcoming girls to the Sixth Form and First Year in September 2026. We've been busy putting our plans in place to ensure both girls and boys will benefit from the change. The move to co-education is beginning to feel ever more real, with a strong numbers of girls having accepted Sixth Form places for 2026 who can now start looking forward to their move to Abingdon in earnest.

This group has already shared their news with their friends and we're opening up another round of admissions next term to give others an opportunity to apply. We're also soon going to be contacting our new Sixth Form girls to understand their wishes and preferences better as we prepare their sporting programme for September and beyond.

We want all our students to enjoy the benefits of physical exercise and to leave us with habits that will stand them in good stead in later life. Our sporting programme for girls will therefore match the nearly 30 sports we currently offer, including dance and netball, which were launched as options in September and which students are already enjoying.

We're also seeing growing numbers of students enjoying the extended facilities in our new Athletic Development Centre, which includes a spin studio, while the High Performance Centre provides space for more specialised work on Strength and Conditioning. A new multi-use sports area is being created for netball, tennis and basketball, while we are also embracing the rising popularity of padel, preparing a planning application for three covered courts at Tilsley Park. We will also be



launching a new timetable in September 2026 to ensure that students can make the best possible use of our facilities.

After careful consultation with the School Council, we've designed and commissioned new uniforms which will look smart and stylish. We're reviewing our sports kit too, to make sure that all our students feel comfortable and confident as they get their exercise fix.

We've been keeping our current pupils updated about these changes with a series of assemblies, while we've continued our programme of staff training where we're sharing the best of what we've picked up from our many visits to co-ed schools so that we can ensure that all our students feel a strong sense of belonging from day one. Exciting times at Abingdon - watch this space for further updates!

*By Mike Windsor, Head*





## Fourth Years get the wooden spoon...



..as coaches are crowned champions

The annual boat club quiz returned on 15 November, featuring nine teams made up of parents, student rowers, and their coaches in a hotly contested and fun-filled evening organised by the FASBC parents.

The competition included a challenging team prize for creating a quad out of tin foil. While the Upper Sixth built a clever boathouse replica, the Fourth Year won the round by building a near full-size boat, complete with blades, around four chairs, and actually rowing it!

After a delicious curry supper and eight gruelling quiz rounds, the winners were announced:

- Wooden Spoon: The creative Fourth Years
- Highest Scoring Rowers: The Upper Sixth (who quickly devoured their Heroes prize)
- Overall Champions: The Coaches who successfully reclaimed their title, thanks to Mr Earnshaw's unexpected expertise in film quotes and music.

Thank you to everyone who attended, the caterers, and the FASBC for facilitating a fantastic and inclusive evening. Until next year!

## Abingdon News



Animal Farm

The Middle School production - an adaptation of George Orwell's classic *Animal Farm* saw a record number of students auditioning, 30 being cast on stage and nearly 20 working behind the scenes. The set design, sound, lighting and costumes blended man and beast, and created a stark atmosphere. The success was a true collaborative effort, with the dedicated cast and crew pouring their energy into the performances. Well done all.

## Young Economist of the Year

The annual Royal Economic Society's Young Economist of the Year (YEOTY) competition challenges bright young minds to apply complex economic concepts to real-world scenarios. Achieving 'highly commended' for their podcast *how can economics explain the high price of super cars*, a group of Abingdon Sixth Form economists, together with students from St Helen and St Katharine, examined concepts including supply and demand, price elasticity, scarcity and brand signalling. Well done to Oliver, James and Beany.

## November

Lower School pupils learned about Movember and key men's health issues, including mental health, cancer and general wellbeing. To help start conversations, they designed colourful moustaches to show support and raise awareness. The activity encouraged pupils to think about these important topics and how they can support themselves and others.





## When in Greece...



Fifty three pupils enjoyed a successful tour of mainland Greece over half term. Unseasonably warm and sunny weather made for stunning views and an azure background to the bright marble monuments of the Acropolis. Pupils visited the battlefield of Marathon, the oracle of Delphi and the site of the original Olympics where they were able to appreciate the dramatic setting for crucial events of Grecian history that reverberate in the present.

Talks and dramatic performances by Sixth Formers helped bring to life sites going back as far in time as Mycenae, while the crowds in the theatre at Epidaurus were entertained by Firth Year pupils reading their GCSE set text *Medea* by Euripides.

## Rivers fieldwork trip



In October, 126 Fourth Year students undertook the rivers fieldwork part of the GCSE course. The trip aimed to show how river characteristics change as they go from the source to the mouth of a river. Students collected data on the width, depth and velocity of the River Ock in order to calculate the discharge.

## Work exhibition



First and Second Year pupils had the chance to show their classmates a piece of work which they are particularly pleased with and why at the first work exhibition of the year in October. Well done everyone.



## Toy drive

Lower School have responded superbly to this year's toy drive to support the work of The Salvation Army with a very large box full of presents. This has now made its way to local families in need. A big thank you to all those who donated.

## Scholarly research

In November, our Fifth Year scholars visited Oxford. The day began with a tour of New College, which was hosted by two recent OAs. This was followed by a session about astrolabes at the History of Science museum. After lunch, the scholars investigated African Kingdoms at the Pitt Rivers museum where they were also allowed to handle some of the historical artefacts. The day concluded with the students completing their own research at the Ashmolean.





## Bringing ancient history to life

The Fourth Year and Upper Sixth Ancient Historians recently visited the British Museum to see the material evidence from ancient Persia (part of the GCSE course) and the Parthenon sculptures (part of the A Level course). Among the highlights were the Cyrus cylinder and the Parthenon frieze, both examples of masterful propaganda, trumpeting the enlightened kingship of the Persian king, Cyrus on the one hand, and the triumph of democracy over Persian barbarism on the other.



## An update from Moldova

Thanks to generous support, Abingdon's partner charity, Agape, has completed impactful projects in Moldova to improve the life of young people there. This includes donating books and school supplies (including 90kg of no longer used old style Abingdon sports kit) to over 100 families; providing food packages to 20 families belonging to the association of the blind; and providing two sets of robotic equipment for the inclusive education unit at one of the schools for those with special educational needs.

Agape also ran a successful holiday camp for younger children, continuing the work started by Abingdon students over the summer.



## Trip of a lifetime

Twenty students, from the Fourth Year to Upper Sixth spent half term on an action packed nine day China cultural tour linked to their Mandarin and History courses. Highlights included climbing the Great Wall, cycling the historic walls of Xi'an before seeing the Terracotta Warriors, and observing red and giant pandas. Students travelled via 350km/h high-speed rail and explored iconic Beijing sites like the Forbidden City. They immersed themselves in the culture, practicing Mandarin and enjoying local delicacies like Peking duck and hot pot. The trip was described by parents as a "trip of a lifetime" and by students as "eye-opening" and "incredibly good fun".

## Remembrance

On 11 November, the whole school came together to mark Remembrance, paying tribute to those have given their lives in conflict and, in particular, Old Abingdonians who made the ultimate sacrifice. The CCF lead the parade, the last post was sounded and a two minute silence was observed.



# Abingdon Music



Lest we forget

In November, we held a Remembrance Concert at Dorchester Abbey to commemorate those lost in conflict. The Chamber Orchestra, directed by Mr Popplewell, opened with *Air* from Grieg's *Holberg Suite*. From the back of the Abbey, the Chamber Choir performed poignant tributes including Elgar's *They are at rest*, with the Chapel Choir trebles singing a moving rendition of Binyon's 1914 poem, *For the Fallen*. The second half saw a performance of Fauré's iconic *Requiem*, supported by the Chamber Orchestra and organ and beautifully cohesive singing from the choir and soloists.



A big brass band

On 14 September, we welcomed the Wantage Silver Band to school for a series of workshops and an afternoon concert. Thirty pupils were treated to a range of instrumentally specific workshops, learning about instrumental technique alongside the repertoire for the afternoon concert. Our pupils were then able to experience the majesty and force of a Brass Band as they joined forces to play a number of items in the afternoon concert. This was a wonderful local collaboration with incredible musicians, leaving both pupils and audience spellbound.



The Queens' College

On 29 September, the Chamber Choir returned to the Chapel of the The Queens' College in Oxford to sing choral evensong in their first performance of the year. It was a busy service, opening with Gibbons' *Almighty and everlasting God* as the introit. Following responses by Ayleward and a psalm, the choir performed Purcell in *G Minor* as the canticles. There were lovely solos from Alexander, Tom, and Micky. Our anthem for the evening was Wesley's *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace*, a gentle and reflective piece sung with clarity and nuance. Following a brief Homily from the Chaplain, there was time for the hymn *Angel Voices ever reigning*. A wonderful experience.



Mastering the violin

Before half term, we hosted an inspiring violin masterclass with the internationally renowned concert violinist and educator, Ning Kam. Four talented violinists performed and received personalised guidance. Kam's unique, highly interactive approach used insightful questions to challenge students to think critically and unlock new levels of expression. The evening culminated in a fast-paced group session on efficient learning and a stunning performance by Ning Kam herself, leaving all participants deeply moved and inspired.



## Festive music making

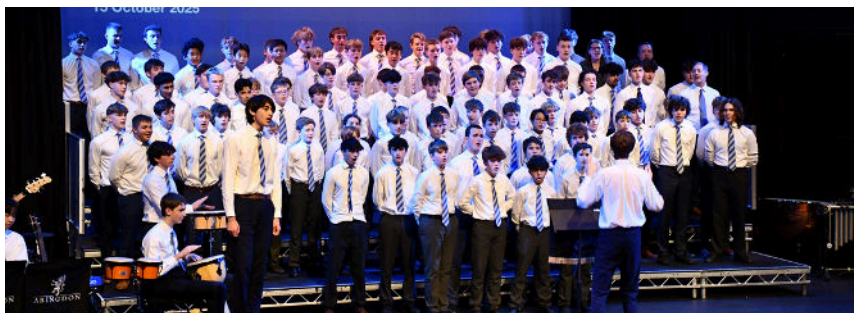


Towards the end of term, there was a series of Christmas concerts, showcasing the outstanding breadth and joy of music-making and singing at Abingdon across all age groups. These culminated in the annual Carol Service held at St Helen's Church on the final day of term.

## Open mic night



In October, we hosted the first Open Mic Night of the year, featuring a variety of bands and solo vocalists from the Lower School through to the Sixth Form. Performers presented an eclectic mix of music, ranging from The Beatles to Oasis, in the relaxed and welcoming setting of the Pavilion.



## House singing

The annual House singing competition returned on 15 October, featuring songs from Disney to Stevie Wonder. Everyone gave it their all but it was Franklin's who impressed guest judge Alex Tester (Assistant Head Co-Curricular, St Edward's) to win with their musically impressive, four part harmony arrangement of *Circle of Life*. Defending their crown from last year, Ley's took 2nd place with Pygott's securing 3rd. The competition showcased outstanding musicality and energy.

## Abingdon Music



## What a hit

Lower School enjoyed an excellent lunchtime concert in one of their assembly slots on Friday 14 November. There were a wide selection of solo items, a set from the Second Year band *Stereoface* and a rendition of the Star Wars theme by the Lower School Orchestra that went down very well with the Head of Lower School...!



## Holywell Music Room

On 2 October, pupils returned to the Holywell Music Room to give an evening concert of solo and chamber music. This iconic venue, thought to be the first custom-built concert hall in Europe, provided pupils with the opportunity to enjoy a wonderful setting and acoustic. They didn't disappoint, performing a wide range of repertoire including Marimba concertos, art song, unaccompanied Bach and Romantic piano music, showcasing brilliant technical and musical craft.



# Abingdon School in Partnership

## Careers in the creative industries

Co-hosted by Abingdon and held towards the end of term, the 'careers in the creative industries' after school event saw over 200 Year 9 to 11 students from every secondary school within the town learn more about how they can turn their creative passion into a career.

The event was designed to raise awareness and understanding of a diverse range of creative fields. Attendees chose three sessions to attend, each led by one or more volunteers working in a creative field including Visual Arts, Built Environment, Heritage and Culture, Design and Communications, Media and Broadcasting, Digital Animation, Performing Arts, and Style and Fashion.

We are grateful to the 20 volunteers made up of professionals, alumni, parents, and local employers, who made the event possible.



Over 75 students from five schools took part in the business language challenge before half term. The full day event was an opportunity for linguists from across the town to work in teams on a range of business tasks. Organised by Abingdon's modern foreign languages department and led by external group 'Business Language Champions', the day consisted of fun and hands-on activities using the chosen language for each team. The highlights were creating an advert for a famous confectionary brand, pitching to the judges and making a trade stand.



On 12 November, a group of Second Year pupils joined 90 other students at the ChallengED event. They enjoyed a morning of creative problem solving and engaging STEM tasks, working together in mixed school teams to design space elevators and racing cars out of different materials. This event forms part of a wider calendar of partnership events and was an excellent opportunity for students to develop vital skills including teamwork, communication, critical thinking and leadership.



## Pride social

In October, pupils from Larkmead, Fitzharrys, St Helen and St Katharine, Radley and Abingdon School came into school for the first OX14 Pride Social of the year. Pupils enjoyed a selection of boardgames, pizza, cookies and drinks in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Then on 17 November, pupils enjoyed a zine making workshop with external experts on hand to help.



# Abingdon School in Partnership

## OXCOP

Students from Abingdon and three partner schools participated in OXCOP, a COP-style climate debate event at the Oxford Town Hall.

Teams represented their chosen countries and mirrored the COP-30 agenda, collaborating on climate solutions, refining public speaking and collaboration skills, and gaining experience as COP ambassadors.

## Latin

As part of our Partnership programme, we offer students from local schools the chance learn Latin to GCSE level. These young students learn in only two years what the majority of students cover in five. Their results this summer were particularly impressive and a testament to their dedication and hard work, as well as the excellent teaching and support of Abingdon's own staff.

## Peer Support Leads in action



Our Peer Support Leads (PSLs) are now fully embedded in their mentoring role, offering crucial support to students through one-to-ones, assemblies, and presentations on topics like Anti-Bullying. This term, PSLs attended valuable joint training on 'Managing Anxiety' and 'The Teenage Brain.' This award-winning programme offers enhanced pastoral support, benefiting both Abingdon students as well as students from all other partnership schools.



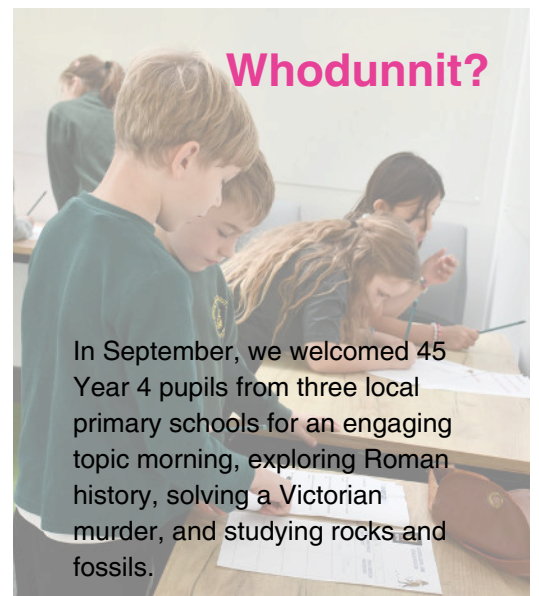
Over 35 pupils from six primary schools joined our A Level Business students for our annual Primary Business Challenge. Mentored by the older students, the young entrepreneurs designed the ultimate festive treat, developing the product, packaging, marketing, and presentation.

## UK space design competition



In November, the Abingdon team competed in the regional heat of the UK Space Design Competition at Oxford Brookes University. Their task was to design a cargo ship capable of transporting goods around the inner solar system. The standard was incredibly high, with pupils specialising in departments such as orbital mechanics, finance, CAD, and psychology. Although the team was not successful in progressing to the national final, their proposal was impressive, and we are very proud of them.

## Whodunnit?



In September, we welcomed 45 Year 4 pupils from three local primary schools for an engaging topic morning, exploring Roman history, solving a Victorian murder, and studying rocks and fossils.



# Abingdon Sport



Abingdon Badminton had a busy and competitive term, with all age groups showing great commitment and improvement. The senior squads faced tough opposition from Magdalen College School and Harrow, showing excellent rallies and raising their standard, and secured a well deserved win against Wellington College and St Edward's, showcasing their depth and composure. Meanwhile, the U16 and U14 teams secured strong victories in the 2nd round of the Victor School Sports Cup. These wins secure their places in the national competition's 3rd round.



Before half term, our climbing squad travelled to Southampton's Parthian climbing wall for the Southern Schools Climbing Competition. Tackling 15 boulders, six auto-belay routes, and three difficult lead routes in a tight three hour window, the 12 climbers showed impressive stamina after six weeks of focused aerobic training and took overall 1st place out of 26 schools.



## Success on the water

The boat club enjoyed a fantastic first half of term with excellent weather and river conditions, allowing students to hone their skills in small boats before testing their early season form. At Wallingford Long Distance Sculls in September, the J16s raced singles and doubles, showing encouraging performances. The Reading Small Boats Head saw J16-J18 athletes race pairs and fours. Well done to Xav and Arran; Will and James - the fastest J18 pair, and Will, James, Hector and Sammy who won the J18 fours.



## Inter House competitions

On 10 December, students took part in a variety of sports for our annual inter House competitions. Whether swimming, playing table tennis, chess, badminton or rugby, good competitive fun was had by all.



## Junior Fours Head



After a fantastic term of rowing, the senior rowers raced at the inaugural Junior Fours Head of the River on Friday 14 November. Despite the torrential rain, the river conditions were surprisingly good for the Tideway and this meant the crews enjoyed a great day's racing.

Abingdon had six crews racing in a mix of coxed and coxless fours as well as coxed and coxless quads. Having spent the past few weeks in the boats there were some really encouraging results. The highlights were two 2nd place finishes for our J16 coxed quad and our J18 coxless four.



## Rutherford Head

Three eights took the trip up north for a weekend of racing and training on the Tyne at the end of November. Rutherford Head is the biggest Head in the north, and features some of the top university clubs in the country.

The squad brought home wins in the J18 4+ and J18 8+ as well as the 1st VIII mixing it in with the university crews near the top of the timings. Then, before heading home on the Sunday, the squad had a fantastic training session rounding off a really productive weekend away with the team.



## Cross country team finishes term as a top 10 national school

The Cross Country club have had a superb season, securing victories and top finishes. At the Eagle Relays on 20 September (4 x 3km), the three Senior teams achieved a clean sweep of the medals, with co-captain Ralph running the fastest time of the day - 9:38. The Intermediate team also impressed, finishing 2nd, thanks in part to Harry's superb 10:30 leg. This momentum carried through to the English Schools Cup regional round on 4 November where both the Intermediate and Senior teams secured dominant wins. Daragh (2nd) and Edward (3rd) led the Intermediate performance, while the Senior team showcased its remarkable depth, ensuring all counting runners finished between 7th and 13th place. Both progressed to the final on 6 December at Princethorpe College. Against 27 other teams, the technical and hilly course was wet and muddy. The Intermediates battled hard to secure a team 17th. The Seniors ran a tactically excellent race with Harry leading the team home in 33rd, and captain Ralph close behind. Fast finishes from Hugh and Quinlan pushed the team up the field for a 10th place finish, with Peter and Isam taking places from rival teams - a serious achievement and reward for four months of hard training.





## Crowned National Climbing Champion

Many congratulations to Lower Sixth Former, Daniel, who has been crowned National Climbing Champion.

Daniel competed in four regional rounds throughout September and October to earn his place in the national finals of the BMC Youth Climbing Series which took place in Manchester over the weekend of 29 and 30 November.

Up against 26 others in his category, he achieved 1st place in the U19 M category, almost 30 points clear of 2nd place. He achieves this on the back of two previous 3rd place finishes in the competition in 2023 and 2024.

On Thursday 27 November, 13 students in the development squad travelled to Winchester College for a friendly climbing match at their new wall. Students had one hour to complete as many top rope climbs (of varying difficulty) as possible. They were also challenged to do as many climbs as possible in three minutes. Well done to Fifth Year Alex who achieved the highest Abingdon score and to Winchester - the overall winners.



## Success in the water

Our swimmers excelled at the ESSA National Finals in Birmingham on 15 November. The Senior team (Elijah, Ralph, Ethan, and Monty) finished 7th in the medley relay, breaking the U18 school record. Ralph, Ethan, and Monty now hold school relay records in every age group - a special feat in their final year. The Intermediate team (Clement, Kaan, Alex, and Satoshi) delivered an incredible performance in the medley relay, finishing 4th in the final. Both teams also achieved top 10 finishes in the freestyle relays. The impressive results cement Abingdon's position of strength in swimming.



## Volleyball

Our Volleyball team took part in the inaugural independent schools' volleyball national finals tournament on 9 December at Bromsgrove School. Featuring both boys and girls competitions, a total of 16 teams took part, competing in open age groups. Having worked hard on technique throughout the term, the Abingdon team played a good competition, finishing 6<sup>th</sup> overall.



## A landmark term of participation, performance and pride in Rugby

This term has marked a defining chapter in the story of Abingdon School Rugby. A chapter shaped by record-breaking performances, exceptional pupil involvement, and a powerful sense of togetherness felt across every year group.

Rugby at Abingdon has rarely been more vibrant. More than 350 pupils have proudly worn the Abingdon School jersey this term, taking part in over 160 fixtures across the school. From the youngest pupils making their first appearances to senior players leading with maturity and purpose, the programme has demonstrated a depth of talent and enthusiasm that reflects the very best of our sporting culture. Such outstanding levels of participation underline our commitment to opportunity, enjoyment and character development for every pupil, regardless of experience or ability.

The 1st XV have delivered a season of exceptional quality, achieving the highest win percentage on record for the School. Their performances captured national attention, earning three separate selections in the NextGenXV Team of the Week. A fitting recognition of their skill, discipline and collective belief. The term also brought an exciting milestone with Abingdon School's first-ever live-streamed rugby fixture, enabling families, alumni and supporters around the world to share in the energy and emotion of match day.



A further highlight of the term has been the remarkable level of engagement beyond regular fixtures. More than 100 pupils took part in rugby trips or tours this year, embracing opportunities to challenge themselves in unfamiliar environments, develop resilience and



independence, and form friendships that will endure long after the season has ended. Whether travelling overseas or taking part in domestic development trips, these experiences have strengthened pupils' confidence and deepened their sense of belonging. cornerstones of the Abingdon School Rugby identity.

None of these achievements happens by chance. They reflect the dedication, expertise and enthusiasm of the entire Abingdon School Rugby community. Pupils have trained, competed and supported each other with admirable commitment. Coaching and support staff have provided the knowledge, care and energy that underpin every aspect of the programme. Families and the wider school community have offered unwavering encouragement, both on the touchlines and behind the scenes, enriching the experience for every player.

Abingdon School Rugby has thrived this term in participation, in performance and in ambition. Every pupil who has contributed to the programme should feel proud of the role they have played in a term that will be remembered for its progress, passion and shared purpose. Carrying this momentum forward, we look ahead to future seasons with excitement, confidence and determination.

*By Matt Gold, Director of Rugby*



# Abingdon Prep



Over the course of the term, we have held several Concert Platforms featuring a wonderful array of musical performances by both Prep and Senior school pupils and including piano, drums, oboe and tuba.



All of Pre-Prep did a wonderful rendition of the traditional Nativity story at the end of term. Whether a horse, a donkey, an angel or a King, everyone was a star, each remembering all their lines and singing with gusto.

## Football trip to St George's Park

This term, our U13 football squad enjoyed an unforgettable trip to St George's Park, the home of England's national football teams. The pupils were able to train and compete in world-class surroundings, making full use of the amazing facilities on offer. Throughout the visit, they played some brilliant football, showing real skill, teamwork and determination. Their hard work paid off as they finished the event as Plate play-off winners, a fantastic achievement and a proud moment for everyone involved. It was an inspiring and memorable experience for the pupils - one that will stay with them.

## JEDIs working hard

Our Junior Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) group has had a busy term. Working across various project groups, they created two highly engaging displays - one was a vibrant celebration of clothing from around the world, and the other highlighted where our pupils (and their parents and grandparents) have lived. They have helped with assemblies in which the achievements of older people, Black History and para sports have been celebrated and have steered this term's learning theme on Autism. All pupils had to make sure they knew what JEDI stands for and, as a result of their hard work, were presented with their JEDI badges.





## Building skills for life



Year 5 had a fantastic two night trip to PGL, Liddington at the beginning of term. They were plunged into activities which included archery, climbing, giant swing, Jacob's Ladder, raft building, and orienteering, as well as evening activities like campfire and other games. The pupils were brilliant at helping each other out with harnesses, cheering each other on and working on important communication and team work skills.



The rugby season has begun with great energy and enthusiasm. Our teams have enjoyed two fantastic foundation fixtures against Moulsoford and Summer Fields, as well as U8 and U9 tournaments against St Hugh's, The Manor, Christchurch, Cokethorpe and Hatherop Castle, in which they have showcased impressive effort and determination. It has been wonderful to see the children developing new skills on the pitch while demonstrating excellent teamwork and sportsmanship throughout.



## Natural history comes to life

Year 8 visited Oxford University's Natural History Museum in October where they had a workshop on Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection, and then had some time to explore the museum (and its shop!). During the workshop, they all pretended to be barnacles, and discovered whether they were 'supertasters' or not, and those brave enough could handle the Madagascan hissing cockroaches.



## Year 2 visit Combe Mill

Year 2 had a wonderful day at Combe Mill this autumn. They explored the mill, found out about its history and were fascinated to watch blacksmiths at work. In the afternoon, they made beautiful willow bird-feeders and fat balls to go with them. Before going home, they had a sunny walk through the forest, learning the names and features of different trees. Everyone had a great day and we are very grateful to the wonderful volunteers who took their time to show us around and share their knowledge.



## We've Discovered our Other Half:

### The hidden talents that power Abingdon's co-curricular programme

A fundamental part of life at Abingdon is developing skills and talents beyond the classroom in what is known as *The Other Half*. With over 150 activities from board games to Model United Nations to robotics to Young Enterprise, there really is something for everyone. But none of this would be possible without the extraordinary talent of our dedicated staff, who have already discovered their own *Other Half*.

#### Beyond the classroom door

It's a delight to find out exactly what our staff can do. Recently (having worked at the school for over three years) I discovered that one of our Biology teachers is a qualified helicopter pilot, whilst another member of staff is a boatbuilder in her spare time. I wear beautiful jewellery made by one of our German teachers who is a professional goldsmith. I attend yoga run by a Philosophy teacher and circuits run by a female Geography teacher (who is also an ex-GB Powerlifter and England Rugby player). Our female Contingent Commander, has a Meritorious Service Award for the work she does leading our cadet force.

These personal passions aren't kept secret though, they are shared directly with our students and staff. Through activities as varied as the flight simulator club, silversmithing workshops, student yoga, and rugby coaching, our staff don't just support excellence; they also model it.

#### The power of performance and belonging

Music is a key component of *The Other Half*. Many teachers, including our Head, actively role-model participation and support the phenomenal work of our Music department. Our Head of Middle School is a talented clarinetist, and a Deputy Head plays the tuba. Both regularly join the orchestra to play alongside the students. I am equally impressed by the Staff Choir (as someone who genuinely cannot sing!), and it is a pure joy to see staff singing alongside students in the Chapel Choir. The recent House Singing competition showed how music can bring our community together and foster a deep sense of belonging.

#### International excellence in sport

Every Other Half activity is valued, however, sport is clearly an important player in The Other Half timetable.

It is appropriate, then, to mention the incredible talent pool not just within the PE department, but across the entire staff.

We are proud to have nine members of staff (seven female and two male) who have represented their country in sports ranging from volleyball and hockey to rowing and rugby. Additionally, four members of staff have coached international teams. Many others have competed at county and national levels and hold nationally recognised coaching qualifications in diverse fields such as swimming and climbing.

#### The privilege of passing it on

One of the great joys of working at Abingdon has been seeing students in a different light, away from the formality of the classroom and doing something we all truly enjoy. When I started coaching rowing, I was surprised by how much joy I got from sharing my passion for the sport. There is nothing better than the golden moment when you see a student suddenly 'get it' - especially, for me, on a glorious spring day when the boat just flies through the water. At that moment, the rain, cold and flooding of the winter are all but forgotten.

As adults, we continue to discover and nurture our Other Half beyond our school roles. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to not just tell, but show our students why this balance is such an important part of school life - indeed life in general.

By encouraging staff to share their passions, we create a stronger sense of community and belonging, forge powerful small connections between staff and students, and open the door to deeper learning, richer conversations, and greater personal growth - for everyone.

*By Lucinda Powell, Director of Teaching and Learning, Joint Head of Psychology, J14 Abingdon Rowing Coach, and England Commonwealth Women's VIII (2002).*



## An action-packed term at the Amey Events Centre



Wilson-Cook Photography

The Amey Events Centre continues to deliver a rich and varied programme of productions, concerts, lectures, and events throughout the year. In the autumn, we hosted *In Conversation with Clare Balding*, the Oxfordshire Lord-Lieutenant Awards, and the Independents Knowledge Transfer Sodexo networking event, among many others. We were also pleased to welcome several special school community occasions, including rugby dinners, music evenings, and sports celebration events.



## Brand new gym facilities

In September, Abingdon School unveiled a brand new athletic development gym. Located upstairs in the sports centre, the new facility offers members a modern, purpose-built space to enjoy and in which to train. Featuring upgraded equipment, an expanded training area, and impressive views across the grounds, the gym has already received excellent feedback from members of the Abingdon Sports and Leisure Club.

## IAPS Girls' U11 Regional Hockey finals

In October, Tilsley Park welcomed teams from across the region for the IAPS Girls' U11 Regional Hockey finals. They were joined by Great Britain double Olympic medallist Giselle Ansley, whose presence inspired the next generation of female hockey players through her passion, experience, and encouragement.



## The expansion of swim school

In September, Abingdon Swim School expanded its programme to include adult swimming lessons. We believe swimming is a vital life skill for all ages, and our commitment to high-quality teaching, a safe and supportive environment, and expert, enthusiastic instructors has encouraged many adult swimmers to take to the water with confidence.



# Abingdon Development

## Abingdon Giving Day 2025

### 36 hours of fast-paced online fundraising

On 5 and 6 November 2025, Abingdon celebrated its 3rd Giving Day, with Abingdon Prep School kicking off events ahead of time with the Foundation's first-ever sponsored colour run. Chair of Governors James Sporle (OA 1994), Foundation Head, Mike Windsor and Prep School Head, Craig Williams joined our youngest Abingdon pupils on Cox's Fields to run a Mr Motivator-style fun run through explosions of coloured paint. With content shared across Abingdon social channels throughout the 36 hour campaign, the minibus challenge featuring our rowers, rugby players and staff attracted unprecedented interest, surpassing 12,000 views on our social media accounts.

Giving Day resulted in close to 300 individual donations from across the world. Over £85,000 was donated to the Abingdon Foundation, supporting both our bursary campaign, *Seven years to change a life*, and the Other Half programme. Thank you to everyone who took part.



## Secure your legacy: Join the 1563 Society

The 1563 Society is a group of forward-thinking Abingdon benefactors who have pledged a legacy gift in their will. Members and their guests are invited to an annual lunch held at Abingdon and invitations to special events with the Head. With 63 members drawn from the OA community, their partners, former parents and staff, the Society is keen to welcome new members.

- **Make a significant and lasting impact** on the lives of future Abingdonians and OAs, without impacting your current financial capacity.
- **Be welcomed into** a proactive community of OAs and friends who are deeply invested in the long-term future and historic legacy of Abingdon School.
- **Your legacy** is acknowledged and celebrated in your lifetime.

We warmly welcome new members and would be delighted to have a confidential, no-obligation discussion about the 1563 Society. Please contact Alexa Broad or Harriet Alderman via email: [development@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:development@abingdon.org.uk)





## Sixth Form careers evening

The Sixth Form careers evening in November drew significant support from 57 volunteers (OAs, parents, and local employers) who shared careers insight with 160 students; one of many careers events in the School calendar, enabling students to explore diverse educational and career paths, further cemented after graduation by the valuable one-to-one guidance offered through our dedicated OA mentorship programme.

## Date for the diary

**Drinks Reception for members of the Abingdonian community connected with the military, defence or security services.**

On behalf of Abingdon School, Tony Edwards (OA 1962) would like to invite members of the Abingdonian community connected with the military, defence or security services to a Drinks Reception in London on **Friday 6 February 2026**.

If you are interested in attending, please email:  
**[oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk](mailto:oldabingdonian@abingdon.org.uk)**

## OA Club London Drinks Reception

OAs, former and current teaching staff, enjoyed the OA Club's London Drinks Reception at the Royal Thames Yacht Club in December. This is the largest social gathering in the Club's annual programme of events and was a great success.

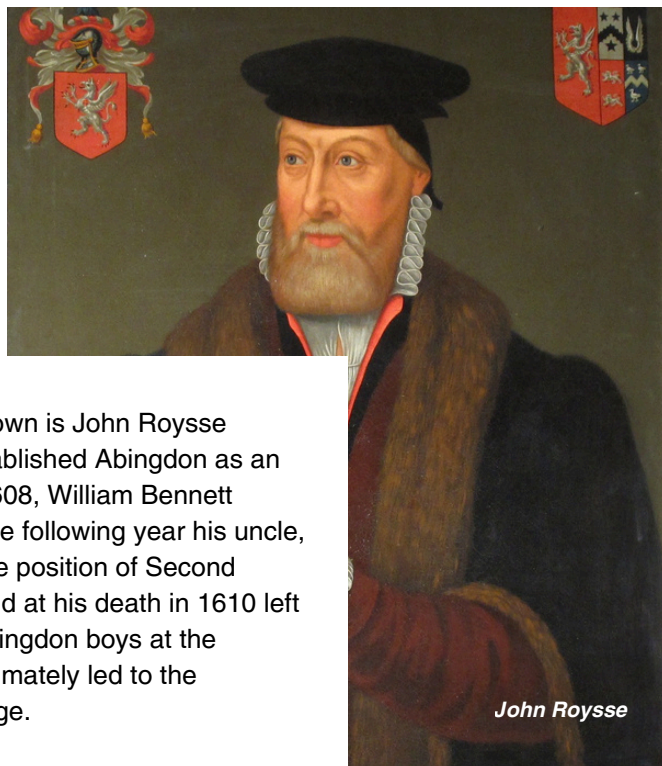




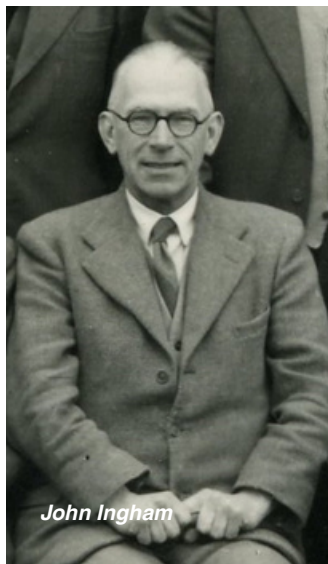
# Abingdon Out of the Past

## Our founders and benefactors

At the end of every Lent term, Abingdon honours its founders and benefactors - but who are they?



Among the many, the best known is John Roysse whose 1563 benefactions established Abingdon as an endowed charity school. In 1608, William Bennett endowed six scholarships. The following year his uncle, Thomas Tesdale, endowed the position of Second Master, the Tesdale Usher, and at his death in 1610 left money for the education of Abingdon boys at the University of Oxford, which ultimately led to the foundation of Pembroke College.



Our scholarships reference Abbot John de Bosneville who in 1256 left money for the support of thirteen poor scholars, and John Blacknall whose 1625 bequest supported the schoolmaster's income. Edgar Summers, headmaster 1870 to 1883, and Herbert Young OA 1868 gave the School Lacies Court to fund the Young and Summers' Scholarship. The Lady Wantage Scholarship acknowledges the generous donations she and her husband made to the School's 1901 extension.



Through Edgar Summers, the School owned the land on which Beech Court now stands, but the Pavilion and the Arts Centre stand on land which was sold in 1950 by the Lady Radcliffe at two-thirds its market value. Even so, without William Rudd, maths master 1904–47, the School could not raise the asking price until he offered to buy Heylyns, which he promised to leave the School at his death. This he did, together with the bungalow he'd built for himself, Rudd's Cottage.



Then there are the Mercers' who bought the old council offices on which Mercers' Court now stands; the Amey family, who financially supported the Amey Hall, and John Ingham, science master 1915 to 1957, whose bequest funded the Ingham Music School. The Ingham Room perpetuates his name. And there are of course many more ....



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