



The Abbey



# Gateway

7 May 2021

Oxpire Book Club - Nature at Nursery - Alumna of the Week

## DofE Award/Outdoor Education News

It has been a busy week for the students participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and in our Outdoor Education Programme.

Inclement weather hasn't stopped Abbey students from taking part in a host of activities. Upper IV and Lower IV enjoyed paddle boarding at Dinton Pastures and on The Thames despite the chilly conditions,

Congratulations to Lower VI walkers for completing their Silver DofE expedition - now it is time to finish off their full Silver Awards. Part of their expedition was enjoying the North Wessex Downs.

Lower VI Gold canoeists improved their skills and technique on The Thames as well this week, canoeing from Abingdon to Reading, during their Practice Expedition.

Even a windy day didn't deter Lower IV watersports - using rafted canoes was the only way to make progress down the Thames. Well done to all involved.

Further congratulations go to Charlotte Smith who has recently achieved her Gold DofE Award.



## Heads Connected: The Power of Voice

The rhythm of our world beats faster and faster. We live in a society where social constructs expect us to conform to the expectations of a 24/7 presence. Little time appears to be available to pause and think about what we are saying, with life requiring us to communicate seemingly constantly.

From the sharing of stories in Nursery, to our Sixth formers' debating and public speaking events, our students' voice is our most crucial instrument of expression. We nurture a school environment where we quickly and confidently learn that the world judges us by our voice. But also that we as educators, take notice. It informs our best practice, reminding us that at the heart of any learning environment is an openness to the regular, restless nudge of the student community. Our school's progress depends upon it.

[Read more](#)

## Chess Success

In the latest online Chess tournament for secondary school girls' teams last night The Abbey team came 2nd out of 34 teams from around the country.

We were 6th the first time we entered and 3rd last time so who knows next time... Our team is very young, Lower V and below, which augurs well for the future.

Special mention this time should go to Radha (Lower IV) who was the 2nd best player in the tournament.

**Mr Hills**

For weekly events and reminders, please go to your [My School Portal account](#)

This week's Heads Connected: [The Power of Voice](#) by Nisha Kaura



## Scholars Oxplore Book Club

Last week, several of the Academic Scholars from Upper III, Lower IV and Upper IV participated in an Oxplore Book Club Live session via Zoom, listening to poet Mary Jean Chan being interviewed by Bhagya Casaba Somashekar, a DPhil student at the University of Oxford.

Several of our students' questions were answered by Mary Jean, including Hannah's question about her choice to write in English, her second language, rather than Chinese.

Hannah says, 'It was interesting to hear all about writing poetry from a poet directly and I found some of her tips really useful.'

Meet our guest speakers



**Mary Jean Chan**

in conversation with  
Bhagya Casaba Somashekar



I found it very interesting that she was bilingual and chose English as her creative language although she used Chinese to help her language: For example the word snowflaker as the direct translation of snowflake.'

Dr. Bellamy

## Sport is Back

The PE department is delighted that our sports provision is back up and running this term.

We are pleased to be running a range of recreational clubs, such as rounders and lacrosse.

For the first time this academic year, we have a number of fixtures in place for various age groups; including cricket and Aegon tennis.

Students have enjoyed developing their bowling and batting skills in preparation for league and friendly competitions.

Our tennis squads have been working hard so far this term, including before school sessions with our tennis coach, in readiness to compete against other schools - we have our fingers crossed for the weather.

Athletics club is also up and running for different age groups on two evenings after school; we have so far seen good numbers and would encourage all students to get



involved in trying a range of events, such as hurdles and high jump!

We look forward to seeing even more students attend as the term continues.

Miss Appleby

## Nature at Nursery

Over the past few weeks the Nursery children have been eagerly exploring our natural world as part of their learning about how the world works.

They have planted radishes, carrots and strawberries in our garden, and are enjoying watching the butterfly life-cycle in action with our very own class caterpillars!

This week, we welcomed tadpoles to our classroom, who we are going to care for as they transform into frogs.



Fun fact: Did you know that when pond weed is not available, tadpoles like to eat boiled lettuce!

Mrs Kellow

## Rainbows Gold Award



Katherine in Upper Prep has recently become one of the first Rainbows in the Reading District to receive her Gold Award.

During lockdown she attended virtual Rainbows meetings and earned lots of interest badges to achieve the award.

The District Commissioners paid her a special socially-distanced visit to present her with a badge and certificate, and to listen to her make her promise.

Leading up to the ultimate Rainbow Gold award, she has already earned all six of the theme awards and 52 badges during her time at Rainbows.

Katherine comments, "I really enjoyed my Rainbows activities," she continued to explain, "I worked very hard to earn each badge at meetings and at home. To be awarded an interest badge you have to complete three challenges and present to the leaders and girls in your unit."

Katherine is looking forward to moving on to Brownies in the coming September.



## Alumna of the Week: Victoria Savage (2010)

Victoria Savage left The Abbey in 2010 to follow her dream of becoming an Architect. After 8 intense years of studying, Victoria is now enjoying the projects she is involved in as well as winning New Professional of the Year in 2019.

### 1. When did you leave The Abbey and what are you doing now?

I left The Abbey in 2010; I am now an Architect working for the Cardiff studio of global practice IBI Group.

### 2. What do you miss the most about The Abbey?

The learning and the laughter! I miss being taught by teachers who were both passionate about their subjects and passionate about doing the very best for their pupils, as well as laughing everyday with my friends.

I miss being in lessons with my twin sister Katherine too after we completely coincidentally chose all bar one of the same GCSE subjects and so had the joy (for us - probably a headache for our teachers!) of being a double act in many of our lessons.

Love of food was also a big bond within our year group and so I have very fond memories of the scrum in the lunchroom when seconds of banoffee pie were announced, or how early the queue would start outside the Sixth Form lunchroom to be first in, not to mention the incentive to join General Knowledge Club being the treat of baguettes to eat while we quizzed.

In general, it was really affirming to be in an environment where it was always girls on top, with no limits as to what you could achieve. If any of my teachers are reading this then I would love to thank you for all that you did for us; none of

it was wasted and I can still remember things I memorised in class for my exams thanks to your commitment.

### 3. What would you say is your biggest achievement?

This probably sounds really boring but actually just qualifying as an architect remains to date my biggest dream realised; it's hard to explain the thrill of introducing myself as an architect or seeing it written after my name in my email signature, after nearly a decade beforehand of saying I was studying to become one.

I got my offer to study at Cardiff Uni on 03/03/10 and qualified as an architect on 06/06/18 - exactly 8 years, 3 months and 3 days later and made up of 7 years of intense study and work in practice, with 1 year out to volunteer for my church also thrown in.

In 2019 I was even nominated to Constructing Excellence in Wales for the award of New Professional of the Year, which I was both surprised and honoured in equal measure to go on to win. I keep my award on my desk to remind myself that dreams really can come true, and hard work can eventually be rewarded, even if the journey isn't always as smooth as we imagine. As a Christian, this accolade remains a fantastic touchstone to thank God for sustaining me through my studies and look back on the years of hard graft that by His grace have now come to fruition.

### 4. What advice would you give to current students?

Make the most of every day at The Abbey - don't wish away your time, whether you are in the early years wishing you were older, or in sixth form wishing you were already at uni, because you don't get



these moments and memories again. The friends I made at university have ebbed and flowed but my friends from The Abbey are my friends for life and have remained a constant source of support through both highs and lows.

## Charity Walkers

On Sunday 9 May 2021 my friend and I are participating in a walking marathon called Walk With Me 2021 around Oxfordshire to raise money for multiple charities, most of them either for research into, or care for cancer patients.

I am trying, in addition to raise as much money as possible for these causes as I know several victims and survivors of cancer and would love to do what I can to

help these fantastic charities to improve their care and research.

I have already received a few donations and the more the merrier. 100% of donations will go to this year's chosen charity: Maggie's Oxford. This is a charity that has been particularly struck by the hardships of the pandemic and works tirelessly to support and care for cancer patients and their families.

All donations will be absolutely invaluable, and thank you on behalf of myself, Maggie's Oxford and all my fellow walkers for any donations that you make!

[Make a Donation](#)  
[Walk with Me](#)  
Annabelle

