



The Abbey



# Gateway

21 January 2022

Nursery Exploration - History Trip - Wonderful Wednesday

## Musical Moments



Lower III kickstarted our Musical Moments for 2022 on Tuesday morning. For the first time at one of these events we were entertained by a student who played the guitar and sang a song from 'Mamma Mia' at the same time.

We also enjoyed a piece of Bach on the piano, were entertained by a violinist

playing from memory and then concluded with a lyrical performance on the flute.

Musical Moments take place regularly during the school day and are open to Lower I to Lower III a year group at a time. Might it be you next?

Mrs Herd

## Heads: Connected

### Leading the way

What do we know about the best schools in the country?

Well, the first thing we know is that this question is flawed. Schools are complex living institutions and any narrow comparative measure - particularly the absurd simplification of league tables - is misleading.

Much worse: it is damaging to the young people whose efforts in exams are so crudely tabulated.

[Read more](#)

## Brew Monday



This week at Seniors we celebrated Brew Monday - an idea originated by The Samaritans, reminding us all to reach out for a cuppa and a catch-up with the people you care about.

The third Monday in January is sometimes referred to as 'the most difficult day of the year' and 'Blue Monday' but why should a calendar tell us how to feel? This is why Brew Monday is celebrated so you can reach out and connect with family, friends, colleagues and loved ones.

We can always make time for a brew and catch up and show each other that we care and are there to listen, whether it's herbal tea, black coffee or juice. As you can see, staff embraced the day with gusto!



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

This week's Heads Connected: [Leading the way](#) by Will le Fleming



## Lower VI History Trip to London



**One trip, two accounts. The recent History trip to London was reviewed by two Lower VI History students - Hana and Siena.**

### Hana

On 11 January, the A Level History students went on a trip to London to further our knowledge and understanding of the Tudor period, specifically the complex relationship between Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots.

After arriving in London via train, the first place we visited was the magnificent Westminster Abbey. Filled with rich history, we explored the intricate sculptures and tombs, admiring the skill and splendour of the designs that reflected the power these two women held in a time predominantly led by men. To me, this served to emphasise the importance of these two women and the respect accorded to them in British history.

A factor that was personally interesting to me was that Mary Queen of Scots, some would argue the lesser of these two women, was commemorated with a larger tomb than Elizabeth I. Commonly remembered as a traitor, it's easy to forget that as cousins when Mary first fled to England in 1568, Elizabeth welcomed her and they attempted to meet before the plan was shut down by their advisers. I felt that Elizabeth's guilt came through in the form of this tomb to respect Mary as Elizabeth's closest living family and a member of royalty.

Following this after a small break for lunch, we travelled across London to visit the British Library and their exhibition: 'Elizabeth and Mary, Royal Cousins, Rival Queens. This exhibition formed the most interesting and engaging experience of the trip from which I learnt a lot.

Breaking down these women's troublesome relationship through their

own words displayed in the forms of contemporary writing, which dominated English and Scottish politics for decades, revealed the conflict surrounding the two and the battle they fought for dynastic prevalence. It covered their intricate tale in detail, supported with portraits, interactive audio and more.

Thank you to the History department for planning this trip to enable us to further enrich our knowledge of Tudor history further!

### Siena

On Tuesday 11 January, Miss Burrows and Mr Hawkins took me and the other Lower VI Historians to London for the day, a trip we were all looking forward to, and it did not disappoint! We arrived at Paddington and walked to Westminster Abbey, taking in the sights as we looked around, Big Ben and Parliament to name a few.

We embarked on a self-guided tour around the Abbey and were amazed by not only the beauty and intricacy of the tombs but also the wide range of important historical figures that lay there including Henry VII, Edward the Confessor and Stephen Hawking. At this point in the day sustenance was needed, McDonald's was enjoyed and then we focused our attention on the next event, the British Library.

We were lucky enough to visit the 'Elizabeth and Mary, Royal Cousins, Rival Queens' exhibition, a greatly enriching and fascinating experience! We left feeling our knowledge had been improved and enhanced; was a very successful excursion.

It was highly refreshing to strengthen our understanding and stimulate our knowledge in a fun and engaging way, and overall everyone thoroughly enjoyed the great day out!

## Sculpture Exploration

Nursery have been investigating the work of Andy Goldsworthy as part of our 'How We Express Ourselves' theme. Natural materials feature in this sculptor's work and so we decided to experiment with wood, pebbles, shells and even ice to make our very own masterpieces.



On a visit to Abbey Gardens the students noticed that there is a colourful sculpture featuring many bottle tops, made by former Lower Prep students. What an exciting discovery! They also spotted other sculptures around the playground.



"I think Andy Goldsworthy has built this and he has made a castle."  
Maggie



## Wonderful Wednesday



Wonderful Wednesday saw The Abbey participate in gymnastics, swimming and football against local schools. Well done to all the students involved, and the PE staff for their dedicated support.

### Gymnastics versus St Helen and St Katharine

On Wednesday, we all travelled to St Helen and St Katharine to compete in a friendly warm up gymnastics competition.

After the long bus ride, we were all very nervous but eager to start. The Senior team competed first, performing well rehearsed routines. Although, we were nervous, because of not competing due to covid, we all performed really well.

The Junior team followed with even more brilliant routines. Afterwards we had tea and all felt proud we had done it.

A big congratulations to the individual medal winners: Lottie, Zoe, Jess and Bela and to the squad for winning both the U14 and U19 overall competitions.

We hope we can perform even better at the southern regional competition in February.

**Tiggy and Adele, Lower VI**

### Swimming versus Downe House

As the first gala of the year, I know all swimmers were super excited but nervous!



We all went out hard and everyone swam their very best. The U12 were very speedy and produced some fantastic breaststroke and fly! The encouragement from the team was very loud and supportive which I think really lifted everyone's mood and motivated us to swim faster.

U13 achieved amazing results in the freestyle relay which was extremely close! Lauren (Lower IV) won the 50m individual freestyle by a big margin which was outstanding. The U14 had some tough opponents and the races were very close, with Grace producing an amazing 50m breaststroke, and the mixed relays just getting pipped at the line!

All the swimmers did a fantastic job and I hope to see more people coming to the swim squad and attending galas!!

**Dani, Upper IV**

### Football versus Sherfield

The U12 and U13 football teams both played against Sherfield in a new league that has been set up this year.

Both games were evenly matched with end to end play. The U12 drew 1-1 and the U13's 0-0. We are hoping for a re-match soon!

**Miss Appleby**

## Netball Star



Last Friday, students from both Junior and Senior schools were inspired by meeting Jasmin Odeogberin, a netballer, who has been in the England U21 squad, played in the European Open 2019 and presently aiming to return to the England Senior squad.

She led gameplay sessions with Years 3&4 following a motivational assembly with Year 6 where she was asked lots of questions by inquisitive students and thanked by the Sports Captains. There was a queue at break time for autographs before she headed off to address Senior school students as well.

Abbey students continue to be inspired by Sophie Drakeford-Lewis, who was a rising sports star at the Junior School, and also played at Woodley Netball Club that The Abbey has always had a strong affiliation with.

She was a natural all-rounder from a young age and was a top ranked GB tennis player prior to focusing more on her netball.

Some current students were at the Copper Box Arena this weekend watching her play for the England Roses versus South Africa in the Quad Series, and all the PE Department enjoyed the exciting match on Tuesday against Australia where Sophie and the team excelled in the final quarter to bring about an incredible draw.

Sadly in Wednesday's Final the Australians turned the result around. The next time the teams will meet could well be at the Commonwealth Games, and Sophie, one of the youngest squad members, when looking back at where it all began pinpoints the Abbey Junior PE staff and their recommendations to extend herself at a local club. Could this be any of you in the future, heading along a similar pathway?

## Meet the Peris: Alice Kreckova

The Abbey Music department is very fortunate to be supported by a vastly experienced team of peripatetic teachers.

In this feature, we get to know one of them a little better:

**Name:** Alice Kreckova

**What instrument(s) do you teach?**  
I teach singing and piano

**When did you discover your love of music?**

I remember listening to my father playing piano for me when I was very young. I was told I always sang and danced all the time. It feels like it is part of me; it helps me to stay sane in this fast, busy world.

**What advice would you give to young musicians?**

Open your mind to various music, no matter when it was written or performed. You might be surprised what can speak to you.

Also be patient, take your time, there are no shortcuts. Music is worth your effort. And most importantly, do it for yourself.

**What is your favourite piece of music and why?**

There are so many favourite pieces of music. I always find it difficult to choose. If I had to, it would be Andante from Bach's Double Violin Concerto, Lacrimosa from Mozart's Requiem, and because I love jazz music, Dream A Little Dream of Me - performed by Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong.

**Why?** It simply brings me peace and reminds me to have hope.



**What is your funniest musical moment?**

Probably one of the Christmas choir concerts when I was a teenager when the church bells started ringing. It was at the end of a song so a very nice addition, but we still had to wait for someone to switch them off.

**What is your most memorable musical moment?**

Martha Argerich playing a concert in Prague in 1990.

**If you could meet any composer from any point in time, who would it be and why?**

I would like to meet George Frideric Handel and hear and see his operas in real life/time.

Also Miles Davis and Duke Ellington to hear them play live.

## Young Enterprise: Meraki

We are Meraki, a Young Enterprise group wishing to raise awareness for the safety of all women.

Meraki means doing something with soul, absolute devotion and undivided attention, and we hope to do just that. Our product is a necklace, with a uniting symbol, shown as the pendant, supporting the safety of all women.

We aim to create a community where this pendant is known and identified, helping us raise awareness for such a current issue and hopefully allowing people to feel safe when talking about their experiences.



We recently attended a market in the Oracle Trade Fair and won the award for the Best Trade Stand in Reading which we all are very proud of.

If you would like to support us, please visit our website and social media links below, where you can learn more about our journey and you can purchase our necklace! Sania, Managing Director

Instagram - [@ye.meraki](#)

Twitter - [@ye\\_meraki](#)

Website - <https://yetheabbyschool.wixsite.com/website>

Email - [ye.theabbyschool@gmail.com](mailto:ye.theabbyschool@gmail.com)

## Abbey Interludes Recital

This week saw our second Abbey Interludes Recital of the spring term.

Staff and students had the opportunity to witness truly wonderful performances given by Jess (flute), Sabrina (oboe), Natasha (guitar) and Elena (violin). A huge congratulations to all performers, and a very big 'thank you' to Mrs Cornford for accompanying our performers each week.

This event is open to all students at the Senior School, regardless of whether they receive instrumental lessons in school or not, and is organised with the sole aim of encouraging and supporting our musicians to become more confident performers.



## Getting To Know You: Desert Island Discs



This weekly feature gives us all a little insight into The Abbey staff, and our next Desert Island Disc 'castaway' is Michelle Scott: Administration Officer: Examinations

### Music:

#### Hymn to Her - The Pretenders

I first heard this song as a teenager and as I have grown older, it makes me reflect on

my relationships, both as a daughter and a mother.

#### Bridge over Troubled Water - Simon & Garfunkel

It was always playing on my Dad's car stereo and makes me think of him.

#### I Wanna Dance with Somebody - Whitney Houston

This reminds me of school discos, hoping I would get asked to dance by one of the boys from our neighbouring boys' school!

#### Abide With Me - Henry Francis Lyte

This is my favourite hymn and although it is often played at funerals I find it very comforting.

#### I Don't Want To Miss a Thing - Aerosmith

This reminds me of when my son was born and the days that followed watching him sleep.

#### Air on a G string - J.S. Bach

I can never remember what it's called but I love it.

#### Starlight Express - Andrew Lloyd Webber

This is my first memory of going to the

West End and it remains my favourite musical.

#### For My Wedding - Don Henley

My husband secretly recorded this in a recording studio ahead of our wedding. I walked down the aisle to it, not realising it was my husband singing it and not Don Henley.

### Book:

#### Dead Man Walking - Helen Prejean

It tells the true story of Sister Helen Prejean, the spiritual advisor to a death row inmate. It completely changed my opinion of death row as it explores how it affects, not only the bereaved, but the condemned and their family. It is the only book I have read over and over again and it never fails to move me everytime.

### Luxury item:

My rescue Collie-cross, Misty. She is the most loyal and entertaining companion and I would never feel lonely with her around.

## Hockey Progress

Olanna, in Lower III is our Under 11 hockey goalkeeper presently training and preparing for the County Championships next month. She took on the role only this season, yet is already showing considerable potential.

Olanna is a very keen and skilful footballer, but loves all sports and enjoys being Paget Sports Captain. Mrs Barlow had suggested she might like to try goalkeeping and Olanna took to it straight away and hasn't looked back!

Following an initial training session with Senior School players and ex-Junior School goalkeeper, Sophia Zürek (Upper V), Olanna was inspired to join Reading Hockey Club.

Now playing twice a week with specific training, plus outfield play, Olanna is progressing quickly; she hopes to qualify for the Berkshire Junior Development Squad later this year.

She commented, "I aim to be the best goalkeeper I can be, and love diving for the ball". During a recent after-school training session, Olanna quickly demonstrated in the warm-up that she wasn't going to let anything get past her, She also feels well



protected in all the kit so isn't afraid, and continued, "I feel rewarded at the end of a match when it all comes off and I feel free".

Playing at Reading Hockey Club, Olanna is often amongst under 13s and 14s so is

still a little unsure, but working towards the confidence to be calling out to help the defence players and certainly has lots of tips to give our under 11 team with her growing experience. Good luck, Olanna and all the U11 squad!

Mrs Orr

