



The Abbey



Gateway

1 April 2022

Hairspray - Jo Trott Lecture - Inspiring Art

Everyone's Invited Podcast and Symposium



The Everyone's Invited website is focused on exposing rape culture through "conversation, education and support."

Despite its recent founding two years ago, June 2020, this movement has gained enormous traction, illustrating the importance of a safe platform for survivors to share their stories completely anonymously. Indeed, the act of sharing their story with Everyone's Invited is an attempt to give survivors a sense of catharsis, empowerment, and a feeling of community and hope.

We have started to tackle the 'normalisation of sexual violence and abuse' by getting students talking. Last month The Abbey and Reading Boys School recorded a podcast where they discussed what Everyone's Invited meant to each of them, and how a greater understanding could evolve going forward. Discussions continued between our Sixth and Fifth forms and last Friday we had our inaugural student discussions between the

Reading Boys School and our students. We did a switch whereby half our Sixth Form visited Reading School and vice versa.

The groups were engaged, information was shared and the conversations were productive. Some of the content discussed included how we might respond to real issues faced by girls and women.

A comment from one of the boys illustrates the purposeful conversations; 'The conversation then flowed naturally away from the prompts and discussing the unique issues that girls and women face in today's society. We touched on a variety of these, from the gender pay gap to sexual violence against women, and the actions that we, as men, could take to prevent these from occurring. Overall, I think the experience was very enlightening and sobering for many of the Reading Boys involved, particularly the extent to which these problems affect the women around us everyday.'



Heads: Connected

The power of hope

"The last two years" is a phrase we read, hear, think or say a lot at the moment. As we reach the end of our Spring Term, it's hard not to think about these same months in 2020, as we witnessed the outbreaks creep closer to home, and wondered just how big a wave was about to crash over us.

The pandemic is by no means over, but we might just be through the worst. It feels as though we're emerging, blinking into the sunlight, wondering what's been lost, what's changed forever, and what is new.

[Read more](#)

Podcast With A Cake

It was a tearful finale to season one of Podcast With A Cake this week, as the podcasters recorded their final episodes before leaving to go on study leave.

In a special double recording, the first episode focuses on life after death, and the participants all shared their personal views on this emotive topic.

The second and final episode was a reflection of their time on the podcast, and chatting through the highlights and things they learned along the way.

These episodes is available on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcast](#), [Castbox](#), and [Amazon Music](#).

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

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



Hairspray!



Have you still got the beat? For anyone lucky enough to have seen one or more of the four performances of Hairspray, they will still be smiling from the feel good factor created by this outstanding production.

Sell-out audiences enjoyed a school production worthy of a much bigger stage - and showcased a number of students who would not look out of place in the West End. There was also a matinee performance on Saturday for the understudies that ensured the whole team were involved in a live performance across the three days.

The show culminated in a fabulous final night which saw Miss Elliott (Director) and Ms Bilkey (Musical Director) receive a well-deserved standing ovation, alongside the cast and crew.

Congratulations to everyone involved - it was a stunning production and showcased the enormous talent we have within The Abbey community. We will let the pictures do the rest of the talking...



IB Visual Arts Exhibition



Over the last two weeks Upper VI IB Visual Arts students held an art exhibition at the Turret House Gallery.

Focusing on themes such as Identity, Relationships and Decay, students created artwork with a wide variety of media including drawing, painting, printmaking, textiles, photography, Photoshop and mixed media.

This resulted in an exhibition that was extremely interesting and thought-provoking.

The exhibition was the culmination of eighteen months of hard work by the students.

The Art department is extremely proud of the work they produced and it was wonderful to have the opportunity to celebrate the exhibition at the private view with the students' friends and family.



Gardening Club

Over the last few months at Gardening Club students have been busy growing a variety of flowers and vegetables. In recent weeks it has been lovely to see the daffodil and tulip bulbs planted back in the autumn come into bloom and add a splash of colour to the school.

We have also planted garlic, shallots, spinach and radish, that with students' care are growing well in the vegetable patch and the plan is to use the produce we grow in the school kitchen.

Earlier in the year we planted tomato seeds and grew so many plants that the students decided to hold a plant sale to raise money to help people in Ukraine. The sale was really successful, raising £41.10.



Moving into the Summer term we have plans for further plant sales, caring for the

house flower beds and developing a green area by the library.

Cricket

Following the Easter holidays, we'll be commencing our summer activities; hopefully, alongside some sunnier weather!

Cricket is one of the fastest growing sports for females, and cricket has been offered at The Abbey for many years. Last year, despite Covid, we saw a large numbers participate in our cricket clubs and playing in recreational games.

This year we are pleased to announce a partnership with Wokingham Cricket Club. This is a fantastic opportunity where we can utilise their cricket pitches and net facilities. After school training will take place at Wokingham on Mondays after school, between 4.20pm and 5.30pm.

We are very excited to continue developing the opportunities for cricket at The Abbey and everybody, regardless of their cricket experience, is welcome to attend. Coaching will be provided by Dan Housego (an ex Gloucestershire and Middlesex top order batsman), and his team, with whom we are excited to be working at Wokingham.

A sign up sheet will be on display on the cricket notice board each week - students must sign themselves up each week in order to attend!

Dan Housego is also offering Easter holiday opportunities, which include 1:1 sessions.

These are suitable for all ages and are open to all. If you would like any additional information regarding the camps, please contact Dan Housego directly: <https://www.danhousegocricketcoaching.com/>

Getting To Know You: Desert Island Discs



This weekly feature gives us a little insight into The Abbey staff, and our next Desert Island Disc 'castaway' is Annabel Mears, Human Resources Administrator.

Music:

Where is the love - Black Eyed Peas
This song is simply an old school banger.

I am woman - Emmy Meli
Celebrates how great women are!

Flowers - Sweet Female Attitude
This song gives me ultimate good summer vibes.

Dancing in the moonlight - Toploader
It brings back memories from being in dance school and has always just made me smile

Party in the USA - Miley Cyrus
Best road trip sing-along song.

Don't stop me now - Queen
This song brings back such good memories of when I was 8 and my family and friends went to Cliveden Rocks; it rained the whole time but it didn't make a difference as we had the best evening, dancing and singing along to the Queen and Abba tribute bands.

Dancing Queen - ABBA

Mamma Mia is my all time favourite film and this song has always resonated with me and made me dance and sing (badly, I will add).

Reach - S Club 7

I remember performing this song in my grandparent's living room, giving all my family a good laugh.

Book

If I could take any book, I would choose Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone as I was brought up loving all the movies and I have never taken the opportunity to read any of the books.

Luxury item

My luxury item is sad but it has to be my phone; it keeps over 11,000 pictures and videos of all my amazing memories from all the years and to me that's priceless.

Charity Prefects

This year has gone by so quickly and we can't believe it is nearly over! One of the definite highlights of our year as charity prefects was the chance to host the recent Sixth Form Charity Dinner and quiz.

The evening was great fun and everyone enjoyed dressing up, eating delicious food, attempting to answer quiz questions and fundraising for all of our school charities.

It was especially wonderful to learn more about the work of one of our chosen school charities - Reading Education Centre, an independent school run as a partnership with the national children's charity 'Transforming Lives for Good'. We are delighted with the success of this event.

There have been many dress up days this year with various different themes. Most recently, over £2,000 was raised for Berkshire Women's Aid. Our final dress up day is today, Friday 1 April, raising money for UNICEF working with those affected by the conflict in Ukraine - so the theme is blue and yellow!

One of the first collections which we organised was for a charity recycling old textbooks and giving them a second life in schools in developing countries.

This involved collecting a variety of unused textbooks from various departments and package them up into boxes of 25 kg ready for collection.



We also coordinated with Amnesty International club to organise a collection for the local women refuge. We organised a similar collection style bank for the Ukraine crisis (collecting rucksacks, clothes and sanitary items) and for our local Food Bank.

All these events have involved raising awareness and bringing together the school community to help fight injustice in the world.

We're thankful for the support of our wonderful Abbey community, both students and parents.

We hope to have inspired and encouraged the younger years, whilst helping our community on a local, as well as more global scale.

Mirabelle, Alice, Elizabeth, Caitlin and Lily-Sofia, Upper VI

Dragons Topic

Lower Prep explored the reptile artwork of Tim Jeffs during their topic on dragons. They then designed their dragon's eye using imagery, thinking about pattern, shape and form. They moulded eyes and the surround of the eye from clay and used different materials and tools to create the scales and wrinkles.



Once the eyes had dried they used oil pastels, as single colours and then explored the effectiveness of blending two colours. The eyes are now proudly on display with their handcrafted dragon eggs!

Mrs Hurley & Miss Boucher

Jo Trott Memorial Lecture



Abbey Alumna & immunologist, Dr Amy Flaxman (2004) delivered the annual Jo Trott Memorial Lecture, on Monday 25 March. Dr Flaxman, worked on the development of the Oxford Astra-Zeneca COVID-19 vaccine with the Jenner Institute. The audience, which included Abbey students, medical professionals and the High Sheriff of Berkshire, was taken on a journey from disease diagnosis to vaccinating the world.

Dr Flaxman, who was taught by Jo Trott at The Abbey, told the audience that she "liked being in a lab, liked biology and wanted to make an impact in medicine". She certainly did!

Amy's post-doctoral research focused on malaria and outbreak pathogens such as Ebola and MERS. She is now continuing her research working on immune responses to Covid-19 vaccination, leading the lab team carrying out antibody testing post-vaccination. She is investigating how antibody response varies according to

different doses of vaccine in different age groups and the impact of booster shots.

Head Girl and future medic, Bhaavya was inspired by Dr Flaxman's talk and said 'the recent pandemic has affected all our lives in one way or another, especially those involved on the front line. Listening to Dr Flaxman's inspiring and enlightening speech on vaccines and the impact they have, made me realise how we can use our passions and interests to help make a change in the world.

"As an aspiring medic, I found it particularly fascinating at how medical ethics and vaccine manufacturing have such a strong link. Dr Flaxman's experiences have certainly made me think about the world we live in from a different perspective and I learnt a lot about how pandemics and epidemics around the world are tackled. It was definitely an honour to hear Dr Flaxman speak and her achievements have inspired me to try my best to help people in the future."

Upper Prep Inquiry



The Upper Prep students have been inquiring into Where we are in Place and Time, by exploring different homes around the world.

They spent time exploring different resources that are needed to build a home, the various family lifestyles, as well as factors that influence homes and where people live.

During art lessons, students were influenced by Laura Jordan's art involving city-scapes, and they transferred their knowledge into a collaborative art piece of our Upper Prep Community.

Students had the opportunity to create their own house for their community using Batik and collage, using a variety of different materials. We love seeing each student's unique creativity shine through in this art piece.

Ishita, Kanvika and Saanvi noted that they loved painting using the primary colours, whilst Zifei, Camilla and Lara enjoyed sewing some of their material onto the Batik.