# Our life

Reported by Emma, Lauren, George, Corey, Priti and Rachel.
From Carswell School

# A note about Hello Abingdon

Moving into a new area can be difficult. You need to find your way around, make new friends and start new topics at school. That's why we thought it would be good for the children of forces' families based at Dalton Barracks to work with local children on a newsletter about Abingdon.

This newsletter has been put together by six pupils from Carswell Community Primary School. From content to format and printing, the group have made all the decisions and done all the work – in just six two-hour sessions. In the course of this, they've used classroom skills, including literacy and I.T., life-skills like team-work, responsibility and working to deadlines, and learnt a lot about their community. We hope you'll enjoy reading the results.

This project has been organised by TrinityLearning, an initiative of Trinity Church in Abingdon, and is one of a series of projects aimed at helping to improve the quality of life in Abingdon schools.

For more information on TrinityLearning and its activities, contact:

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Community Covenant

Thanks to an award from The Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme, 500 copies of this magazine will be distributed free in Abingdon and at Dalton Barracks.

*We are a group of students from Carswell Primary School and we are doing a project called Hello Abingdon. We decided that our amazing project would be about life as an army kid and being friends with an army kid. We chose... Mark Sheif for an interview. Mark is a Community Liaison Officer at Dalton Barracks.*

**We asked him how long he had been in the army, what different jobs he has done and to describe what his job is now.**

He said he joined the army on October the 31st 1989 so nearly 24 years ago. He joined the Royal Signals at the age of 16. He went to Army College. When he trained he worked with secrets in secret places and with high tech equipment. His last job with the Royal Signals was in 2001 when he worked with NATO dealing with nuclear weapons. Since then he worked with Logistics in accountancy. He was promoted to work in welfare. By then he had a lot of experiences and had often helped people who were experiencing problems. Now it was his job. He runs youth club, he also helps people experiencing domestic violence. He also talks to soldiers who have seen lots of horrible things and want or need to talk about their experiences. He helped them get them the help they needed. He said that he is lucky because he sort of created the job he does.

**We also asked why he wanted to be in the army.**

Lots of his relations have been in the army so he grew up hearing about it. He can trace his relatives back to the Crimean war his granddad's granddad was in the Charge of the Light Brigade. His granddad talked a lot about ww2; he was a prisoner of war. He was in a concentration camp and was forced to march from Belgium to Poland. He told him lots of cool stuff and told him how to make a radio in a match box. He thought being in the army sounded like a really big adventure and he did do lots of great things like rock climbing and skiing. He has climbed Ben Nevis and skiied in Dolomites. Other relatives were in the army. One had been in the Falklands and these tales inspired him to join the army. He also wanted to go to college and learn a trade. Particularly to do with communications… that computer industry was really growing.

**We asked Mark how he adapts to his environment when he moves base or when he has to go away on exercises or go to a war zone.**

He asked the children how they do it and it's actually the same way as him. He said that when going into a new scenario you go slowly, try to blend in and not be too extravagant, false or in the face. He sees how a place works and how he could fit into it. Only when he is confident and comfortable does he begin to have his voice and do things. First impressions count. When he's in a war zone he makes sure that he's got everything he needs to survive with him…that includes sweets in his pockets. He prepares mentally and physically. More sweat … less blood put 100% effort into preparation and it will payback 150%. Also he never had his weapons less than arm's length away from him.

**Next we asked Mark what were the best bits about his job.**

He told us the best bits were meeting lots of lovely people and trying to help them. He gets them into conversation trying to talk about their worries and difficulties and providing them with the support they need. He likes being part of a team and living like a family when he's on manoeuvres. He has been in the army for a long time and it seems to us that he doesn't regret a minute of it.

**Reported by Corey and George**

**Everyone asked Mark what were the worst bits of his job.**

He said that it was really upsetting when he has to meet people who have problems that had gone too far to solve effectively. If people came earlier he would have been able help them. If they leave it too late then the problem gets much worse. He also said that it's not good to see a child missing their parents, bottling it up, not being able to talk about it because it can cause many problems and unhappiness.

**We asked Mark what he would do to improve Dalton Barracks for children.**

One thing Mark said was he wanted a skate park for the older children. He had tried before but the army contractors refused. He also said he would try to get decent equipment for older children and teenagers. Mark said that the playgrounds are for civilian children usage as well. As a reporter I think Mark is right as long as they don't damage anything.

**We asked him what he would change if he was a child in the army.**

He said it was really hard to answer because he felt as though he was born a forty year old. He said it must be really hard to listen to their parents' problems. He said it was terrible for them to worry about harm coming to their loved ones. He also thought there should be more opportunities for children to talk about their worries.

**We asked him what he would change if he was in charge of the army.**

He said it was a really hard question (again). Basically equipment is fine. He wanted to change the way the army treats soldiers when they get back from an area in conflict. Physical injuries could be seen and treated but mental injuries are often difficult to spot. He would also improve the housing because the houses on base were built in 30s, 40s and 60s. He said some look shabby and need major updating. As a reporter I think he is right as I live in one!!! And the damage is really bad.

He added that the army is always trying to save money and the housing has to suffer.

**We wondered how the schools could be more aware of what being an army child means and what they could do to help them.**

Mark replied that he thought there should be should be someone at the schools (preferably someone involved in the army) to talk to the children. Schools need to be aware of how they might affect students E.g. the content of a film about WW2 might not affect civilian children may affect army children because it might scare them about their parents going to war zones or some civilian children are just waiting for a reaction which is what brings the reaction on.

**We asked Mark what tips he would give to an army child starting a new school and would it be different for a civilian child.**

He answered he would give the same tips to anyone entering a new environment and they are go there…look what's going on…understand it…try to be a part of it. As a reporter I disagree whenever I enter a new place I always say, "Hello this is me I'm Emma."

**Reported by Emma and Lauren**

**We asked Mark what advice he would give to kids who have parents going to a war zone and we asked what advice he would give to non army friends.**

He told us not to worry even though we will but he said to try not to.

He also said that talking about your feelings is incredibly important. He added that you can talk to him, to your other parent if you have one, other family members, friends or teachers. Mark said we could ask our teachers to come and talk with us and him.

His other advice to non army children was that we will notice if our friends are a bit down. His other advice was to not be afraid to ask what's wrong but if they don't want to talk at that moment, respect that and always be prepared to ask again at some other time.

**We asked Mark if there are any links between the base and the non forces community and we asked if there should be more and why.**

He answered there are but there should be more and that soldiers leave the army all the time and might want to settle locally so they need links and advice on jobs opportunities housing etc.

He added that there are lots of social events such as fun play days, bonfire nights, air shows put on by the army where the civilians are very welcome. He also informed us that the army personnel do go out to join in activities in Abingdon such as boxing and martial arts but sometimes well-meaning people put on things that they think army people would enjoy but these are not always appropriate.

**We asked Mark what he raised funds for and how.**

He replied that he raises money for Youth Clubs, Summer Programmes, one off projects and sometimes he buys something special. He answered that he always goes to the army first justifying his needs.

There are lots of different people with pots of money.

**We asked Mark what physical training the army has to do.**

Mark answered that every year he and the army has a fitness test and if you are over 30 years old you had to do sit ups, press ups and a one and half mile run but if you were under 30 you had to do 46 press ups, 56 sit ups and one and half mile run in 10 minutes. He also said that you had to run 8 miles carrying 35kgs, your weapon and helmet in 2 hours, these weights and times are slightly different for females.

**Everyone asked Mark what does he like about Abingdon town and if people on the base join in town activities.**

Mark answered that he loves Abingdon and the people and if he could stay he would.

In addition Mark added that the people on the base join in the street parties and parties in the park.

**Finally we questioned Mark if he would like to add something to our newspaper.**

Mark thought that it was very nice that the people of Abingdon have accepted the army as valued members of the community and he hopes that this will continue for many years.

Furthermore Mark said that it is only rarely that they are on the receiving end of any nastiness from Abingdon community and he hopes that they would say the same about the army.

**Reported by Priti and Rachel.**

# THOUGHTS….

I've been an army child for nine years and I've moved four times. I've sort of got used to it but it still scares me when my dad is away. Saying goodbye to my friends makes me heartbroken and it's only just healed when I have to say goodbye again. I'm not just scared but I also miss my daddy so much that I cry

As an army child I think that teachers need to understand how it feels when a parent goes away. It's scary, sad, and mean and it feels like no one's there to support you. It is really hard to concentrate at school or at home because you know that your dad or mum is in danger. It might be a good idea for the teachers to have a lunch meeting with army children and their friends to talk about their emotions

When I leave I sometimes have contact with my friends but I still miss them.

I think that schools should support kids when moving to another school by telling them stuff to think about the future rather than the past. I also feel it would be a good idea for them to find out more about what I'd studied before so that if I'm studying the same subject I could do it in a different way

My favourite place is Fiji because that's where my family and friends live and I really miss them and I think that they also miss me as well.

I think that the kind of support I would like to see is that the army children should have a club and in that club the kids talk about their feelings and they try to have fun and to get their mind off the horrible things they think and I also think that the kids should talk to their friends and maybe invite them to a sleepover to look after them.

On the football field at the barracks there are teenagers who are always drinking and throwing bottles around. It means me and my friends can't play football and I would like Army Welfare to move them out of the park and make them understand what they're doing wrong.

My favourite place is Hong Kong because they have enormous buildings, beautiful views and some of my family and friends live there.

I think that people need to remember that army kids are still the same as other kids and when their parents go away that they are still the same as non-army kids and should be treated with the same respect as other kids. Sometimes I feel that army kids are too protected and as a friend I am not always allowed to talk about things that I would to a civilian friend who was experiencing bad times. I just need to think about how I say what I want to say to be supportive.

The way I contact my parents when they're away I sometimes text them, call when I need help with homework or other things and sometimes I go on Facebook.

When I leave a place I sometimes have contact with my friends but some of my friends feel so far away when they're not here and some of them are far away when they are.

I wish they knew how hard it is when a parent goes away, they could die out there and teachers don't sympathise with the army children as much as they should.

My dad has been to Cyprus for a few months, mummy is leaving in March and is coming back in October. Dad has been to Germany for four years and he came back when I was almost five.

Out of all the places I've been Dalton Barracks is the worst because it has nothing to do and it's boring

When my friends go it breaks my heart I had a friend called Crystal she only stayed in each country for two years I met her in year 1. She was my best friend she left in year 3 and a part of me left with her. Sadder still I lost her contact details

I think that army kids change when one of their family members go away in the case that they are more vulnerable. If you mention one of their family members they don't want to hear it. It is as if they are trying to block out the fact that they're missing their dad or mum.

# SAYING GOODBYE

I miss you
My army friend
You're leaving
Thinking about you every day
You're leaving
You're my friend
I miss you Dad
Thinking about you every day
You're leaving
Whenever I say goodbye I know I am going to cry
My heart is broken when you go
I always remember you
I will always love you Dad
I want to see you again, all the time
I always remember you
Thank you for everything.
You are the best
I won't forget you ever
You always go that extra mile
I wish you luck and try to smile
I will love you till the end
Your chair is still cold
I love you
Miss you Daddy.

# Bases and Places Wordsearch

| A | F | Z | G | S | J | U | S | D | N | A | L | T | O | C | S | I |
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| O | A | K | J | D | S | A | H | W | V | N | D | H | A | F | E | R |
| A | R | F | P | O | E | Q | W | V | B | X | B | N | J | U | L | A |
| L | V | I | G | E | R | M | A | N | Y | Q | B | I | U | P | S | Q |
| S | S | J | N | H | O | N | G | K | O | N | G | A | Z | E | I | S |
| L | C | I | K | O | A | Q | P | H | C | B | P | S | D | R | D | C |
| B | I | Z | X | L | A | N | E | P | A | L | O | Y | D | O | N | L |
| D | J | D | S | L | S | A | I | G | K | L | M | N | B | P | A | M |
| K | N | K | H | A | S | R | D | S | Q | W | H | I | J | A | L | N |
| W | Y | A | I | N | O | P | T | A | T | W | A | S | D | G | K | V |
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| E | S | K | J | G | P | T | A | J | K | A | N | L | L | I | A | Y |
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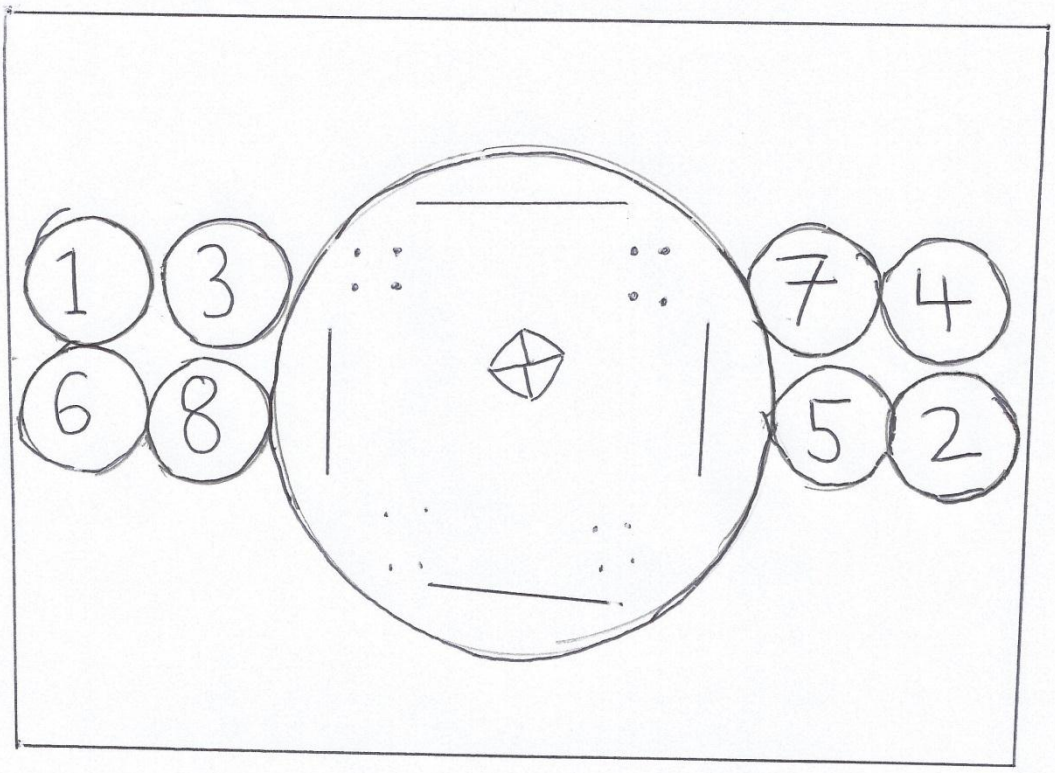
Afghanistan Falkland Isles Canada Fiji Hong Kong

Iraq England Nepal Germany Scotland Singapore

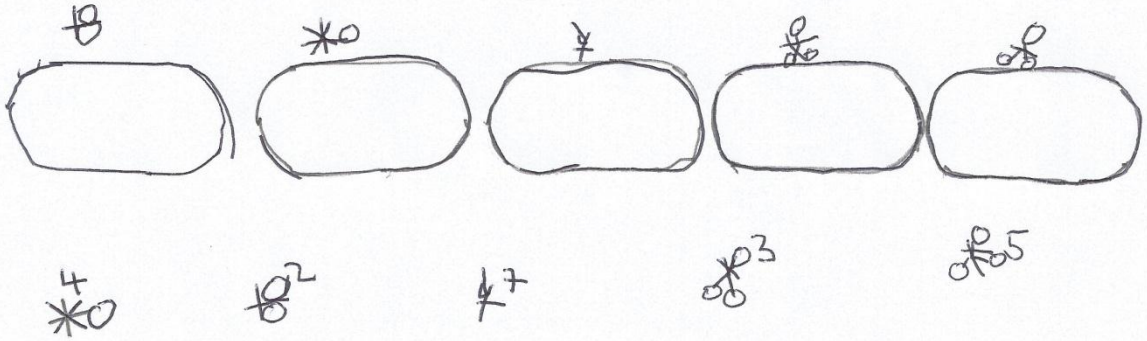
Cyprus United States Holland

By Priti and Rachel



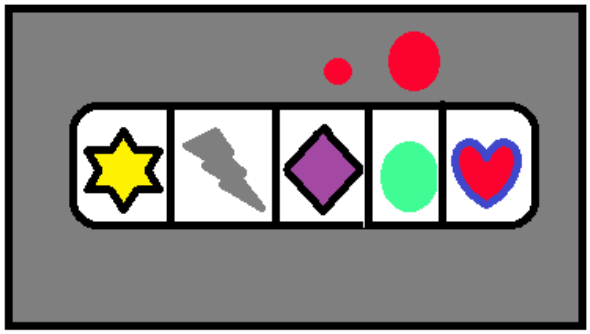

Quick,! you must crack the code and deguse the bomb.

Each code represents a number, there are five numbers to crack, good Luck.



By Corey

Can you defuse the bomb? Decode the symbols on the bomb to help save the nation.



By George

# Metal Maze

Your Dad is stuck in enemy territory guide him through the desert metal maze. Oh and avoid the enemy.

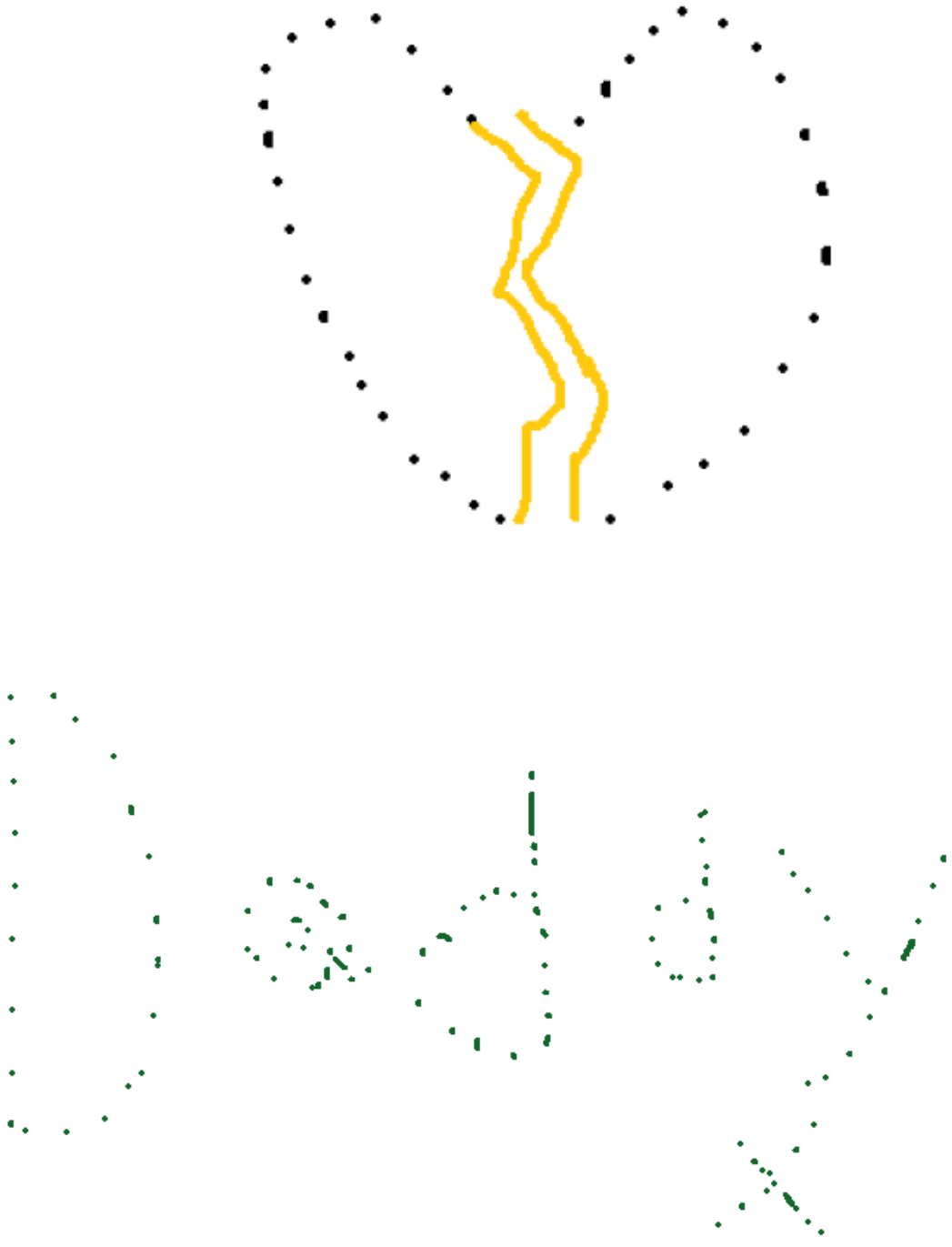
Rules

You can only go straight over bridges.

Stay on the grey maze tracks. The outside desert is off limits.

By Emma

# Army Dot to Dot



By Lauren and Emma

## New book launched to support children worried about moving home

Moving home can be hard for any child, but for children whose parents are in the military, it can become a regular and unsettling occurrence.

In order to help those children a service wife and mother has teamed up with her sister-in-law to write and create a book.

'Why Do We Have To Move?' has been written by Joy O'Neill from Holton, near Aylesbury, founder of the Service Children Support Network, and illustrated by Lisa Southard, to provide support for any child worried about moving home.

Joy, who is also an early years and primary teacher, university lecturer and researcher, has experienced regular moves with her family during her husband Kevin's career in the RAF.

The story follows Grace who is horrified when she finds out about her mum's new military posting and that she will have to leave her home, school, friends and current life behind.

It is Joy's second book following the publication of *Service Children: A guide for education and welfare professionals* in 2011.

Joy said: "The first book was created as a practical guide for education and welfare professionals.

"Part of the book deals with issues facing children who have to move and how they can be helped to adjust.

"What came out of the feedback and from subsequent conferences we've held is that there is actually a need to provide something that helps the children directly.

"From that I wrote the book and then enlisted Lisa's help to illustrate.

"The children see the move from Grace's point of view and follow her as she copes with the move, starts to feel secure and enjoy her new home."

For more information visit: www.servicechildrensupportnetwork.com

# Events Diary

| Date | Event | Venue | Start Time | Finish Time |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 06/03/2013 | Abingdon Drama Club's 'in the round' staging of Peter Shaffer's Equus Wednesday to Saturday | Unicorn Theatre | 19:30 | |
| 07/03/2013 | How To Be A Winning Wildlife Gardener - Abingdon Carbon Cutters talk by Dr Steve Head | Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon | 19:30 | |
| 07/03/2013 | Anglo-Garman Club talk - all welcome, note new venue | St Ethelwold's House | 19:30 | |
| 09/03/2013 | Fairtrade event | Market Place | 09:30 | 14:00 |
| 10/03/2013 | Abingdon Music Festival's Conducting Masterclass | Silk Hall, Radley College | 11:00 | 18:45 |
| 12/03/2013 | Have your say on the District local plan | | | |
| 13/03/2013 | Give blood - afternoon and evening times available | Peachcroft Christian Centre | | |
| 13/03/2013 | Annual Parish Meeting | Guildhall | 19:00 | |
| 13/03/2013 | Michael Frayn's play Copenhagen | Amey Theatre, Abingdon School | 19:30 | |
| 14/03/2013 | Film Society - Carnage | Abingdon Resource and Well Being Centre | 19:30 | |
| 15/03/2013 | Farmers' Market | Market Place | 08:30 | 13:30 |
| 15/03/2013 | In aid of Comic Relief special coffee morning | St Nicolas Church | 10:45 | 12:00 |
| 16/03/2013 | Abingdon Museum Friends Quiz - and fish and chips | St Helen's Church Hall, Abingdon | 19:00 | |
| 19/03/2013 | Talk - My Gardening Year | Northcourt Centre | 19:30 | |
| 20/03/2013 | Blood Donor session | Abingdon United FC | 13:30 | 15:30 |
| 24/03/2013 | Abingdon Passion Play | Abbey Grounds | 14:00 | |
| 27/03/2013 | Cooking class - wonderful spring and Easter dishes | Guildhall | 18:30 | |

**An initiative of**

**TRINITY CHURCH – ABINGDON**

**Methodist/United Reformed**

**& Member of the Church in Abingdon**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