

## NewsFeature

Hester Hand,  
Friends of  
Abingdon  
Civic Society



CIVIC  
PRIDE

## Time to find a club that floats your boat or is your cup of tea

**T**HIS weekend is the bi-annual Clubs and Societies Day; a great time to showcase the amazing range of volunteer-run activities in Abingdon.

The different groups provide facilities for people of almost every age and interest. The town website has details of about 80 groups, but there are probably many more.

About a quarter are sports and dance groups, for young people or adults, covering everything from korfbal to rowing, Scottish country dance to belly-dancing, bowls to fencing, as well as all the more mainstream sports.

There are craft and hobby groups, from photography to knitting, gaming to flower-arranging, and Chinese brush-painting to woodcarving. For those who enjoy performing, at any level, there are choirs, bands and music ensembles, plus amateur dramatic groups.

But there is also plenty of choice for those who don't want to be active participants: some groups are largely social, including those providing support to young parents, people with memory problems, people new to the UK, etc, and there are others who organise talks on science, the arts or history, a film society for non-mainstream films.

There are groups focused on improving the social and physical environment. These usually combine talks and awareness campaigns with lobbying authorities and undertaking practical work, whether it be physical – litter-picking, clearing overgrown areas – or social, providing venues for people in need of company or an understanding ear.

With media attention on problems facing young people, youth groups are particularly important. Abingdon has a good range of Scouts, Guides, Cadets, etc, but they can't run without adult volunteers. This can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience, and looks good on a CV!

The common theme of these activities is that they are fun; although different people would enjoy different ones. Whether you just want to be informed or entertained, or pursue an interest or hobby, keep fit, help others or campaign, Abingdon's voluntary groups can provide something for you. We should be enormously proud of what they do.

People do not always realise how many major events are entirely run by volunteers. Starting this weekend with the ATOM Festival and finishing in December with the Extravaganza and the Beer Festival, there is a big volunteer-run event pretty much every month. Even Fun and Music and in the Park, run by Abingdon Town Council, rely on many hours of work from the volunteer town councillors.

Visit the Guildhall, Abingdon, on Saturday, 10am and 3pm, or see [www.abingdon.gov.uk/partners/community-your-abingdon](http://www.abingdon.gov.uk/partners/community-your-abingdon)