

Ashchurch brownies win science fair competition

Girls from Ashchurch brownies won the science fair at Cheltenham Science Group's new science centre on Saturday 18th March by explaining how pond skaters move using surface tension.



The winning team with the judges

Back row: Steve Mitchell, Lady Bathurst, Prof Adam Hart, Alex Chalk MP

Front row: Sue Haines (Brown Owl), Tomi Osunsanmi (9), Ava Holden (8), Eva Messenger (8), Aoife Brady (7), Di Paton (Snowy Owl)

This term, five Brownie units from Cheltenham, Birdlip, Bourton-on-the-Water, Fairford and Ashchurch have been taking part in a project organised by Cheltenham Science Group in partnership with Girlguiding Gloucestershire. It began with an evening of fun hands-on science activities. The girls experimented with harmonicas, investigated chromatography and modelled lungs. Then they had to come up with their own science demonstration. Following heats within their own pack, five teams qualified for the grand final that was held in Coronation Square during British Science Week. The girls explained their experiment to a judging panel including Prof. Adam Hart from the University of Gloucestershire, Countess Bathurst, High Sheriff of Gloucestershire, Steve Mitchell from Business in the Community and Alex Chalk MP.

Before the event, Diane Paton from Ashchurch brownies said, "We are very excited about this and the girls have been working hard on their experiments." The girls explained how pond skaters move across the water by using a paper clip to demonstrate surface tension. The judges thought it was an original idea and were impressed that the whole team were involved in the presentation. Lady Bathurst announced that this was the overall winner as it was the experiment that had taught her some new science.

Prof Adam Hart from the University of Gloucestershire was really impressed by all of the entries and said the science was amazing.

Dr Lucy Clarke from Emmanuel brownies in Cheltenham says, "The girls have absolutely loved doing the science experiments." Their entry to the final was an exploding rainbow. Birdlip brownies showed us how to clean copper coins and Bourton brownies created and painted a fantastic volcano so they could show off how vinegar and bicarbonate of soda react.

Annette Stannard from Fairford brownies thanked Cheltenham Science Group and said, "It has been a great experience for the girls and for the leaders and I think we have seen the girls get so much out of it that we are inspired to do more in the future, especially when we can go outside and do things that might fizz over inside! So thanks for inspiring us."

Kirsty Watson, director of Cheltenham Science Group, said, "I have been overwhelmed with how hard the girls have worked to research, prepare and perform these science demonstrations. It is so inspiring to see their enthusiasm and I look forward to inviting each of the units to the science centre when it opens fully so that we can continue to engage the girls with science, technology, engineering and maths."

The competition was funded by a £1000 grant from the British Science Association as part of British Science Week. The second phase of the project will see each of the 5 packs visit the science centre in Coronation Square once it has been populated with exhibits. The Cheltenham Science Group team will also run a training session open to all Girlguiding leaders to embed STEM activities into the Brownie programme.

-ENDS-

Contact information

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Notes to Editors**About Cheltenham Science Group:**

Cheltenham Science Group is a community interest company that is inspiring a new generation to love science, technology, engineering and maths. In January, we got the keys to an empty retail unit in Coronation Square and we are now transforming it into a hands-on science centre thanks to support from Spirax Sarco, a local engineering company.

In February half term 2017, we paused the renovations and opened the doors to our science centre for the first time. 154 people visited the free event in just 3 days showing that there is an appetite for hands-on science in the town. We hope to complete the refurbishment and open fully by Easter. We have also been expanding our primary school outreach and have already visited 8 different primary schools during the spring term.

During British Science Week (#BSW17) we also held events at Up Hatherley and Bishops Cleeve libraries and visited Steam Mills Primary School. Find out more here:

<https://storify.com/cheltscigrp/british-science-week>