



PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

There was a larger presence than usual at this year's meeting which took place on 21st May. Barry Haycock reported on the work of the Parish Council over the last year and the Clerk presented financial information which showed that the bank balance remains very healthy, including a reserve intended for the purchase of the new burial ground.

The usual reports were given by local organisations. Once again, we heard an enthusiastic report of progress at the Silverstone Schools which many of our younger children attend. Although still on two sites, the Infants and Junior schools operate as one. Our County Councillor, Ben Smith, found time in his busy schedule to give us an update. We had already heard from one of our local police team that crime in the area remains low, but Ben Smith, who also sits on the Police Authority, pointed out that policemen on the ground are few because of the general underfunding of the service.

The proposed burial ground on Silverstone Road was discussed. The Parish Council had previously decided to recommend that this scheme be abandoned because of the limited demand for burial in the parish, the cost of setting it up and the concern that planning permission may not be obtainable. No parishioners at the meeting

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put forward any opposing view. The Parish Council will now consider how the funds which have been accumulated for the purchase of the burial ground can be used to the advantage of the parish.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The May elections did not produce a vote as had been hoped. The Council members are now: Barry Haycock, Chairman, Dave Cambray, Ian Dyckhoff, Keith Fenwick, Mary Hulbert, Bill Kendall and Jo Sharp.

ABTHORPE -V- BLAKESLEY CRICKET

This annual encounter took place on 3 June at Blakesley and was a real cliff hanger. It was an epic attempt by the Abthorpe (occasionals, in photo) to overcome Blakesley (professionals), and the result came down to the last ball of the last over. It might not have been a glorious victory, but who could have foretold a draw at 142 runs each after 20 overs. There was no dispute over who was named Man of the Match: Mike Greenhalgh produced some splendid bowling, was top scorer and held a magnificent catch.



ABTHORPE BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

The throwaway comment in the last issue about ABbA being the cheapest provider in the world was prophetic. At the recent AGM it was announced that for the next year at least the monthly payments would be ... zero. Everyone benefiting from this superb service congratulates the officers of the Association, Eric Malcomson, Keith Fenwick, Richard Tomalin and Dave Cunningham, for the work they continue to put in to ensure our stable connectivity to the outside world.

NCC PLAN FOR 'PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST'

This new plan brings together all Northamptonshire County Council departments to help users find services and have their enquiries answered in a timely way. It is the first time that the Council has approached customer service in this

way, and it is in response to the need to improve what they acknowledge is a very low starting point. The plan is at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Democracy/Customers; email ics@northamptonshire.gov.uk or tel: 01604 237244. It includes an interesting plan of action with deadlines – worth monitoring if you feel you have had poor service from the Council in the past.

TOWCESTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Keith Fenwick recently attended an exhibition on the expansion of Towcester, an overview of which is noted here.

The plans for 3000 additional homes on the south side of Towcester identify separate areas for housing, school, health services and local centre. A separate area for employment aims to provide one job per new house.

The A5 bypass, which will be single carriageway, runs from the A43 at the point between the Abthorpe roundabout and the Buckingham road junction where there is currently a lay-by. There will be a flyover here for bypass traffic. There are then two intermediate roundabouts on the bypass to give access to the new development plus a third roundabout where it joins the A5, at the Stoke Bruerne/Whittlebury turn.

Improvements will be made to the Abthorpe and Tove (i.e. A5) roundabouts by converting them to

'hamburger' junctions: the main traffic will flow straight through the present roundabout. What is left of the roundabout will be used to queue diverging traffic. Traffic lights will be provided to control all traffic.

The timescale is for the planning application to go in later this year with a decision expected to take 2 years. Work would then start in 2010, the bypass being part of the first work and completed about 2012. The Abthorpe roundabout would be improved early in the period, but the Tove roundabout would have to wait for the completion of the bypass, as the "hamburger" solution only works where the predominant traffic is on one route.

There is more information at www.futuretowcester.info/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx, including a detailed map.

ABTHORPE VILLAGE FUND

Following June Willsher's resignation as Chair of the Village Fund, Francesca Wright has volunteered in her place, with Tim Pope continuing as Treasurer and Jan Miles as Secretary. June has agreed to be Vice-Chair, helping out as her commitments allow. It was her inspiration that started the Village Fund and we are all grateful to her vision and contribution to the life of the village.

The three officers and five

committee members organised an open session on 26 June to give details of what is being planned and to enlist support. It was attended by seventeen villagers. As if to disprove the old adage about not volunteering for anything, several willing helpers were identified together with their particular skills to help with both the village fun day and with other events. The only event for which nobody volunteered was an over-10s party. If you were unable to attend and want to help, get in touch with any of the committee members.

Whist drives have now started monthly on Saturday afternoon at the New Inn, courtesy of Jane and Robbie. As envisaged, they are light-hearted and non-competitive, a good opportunity to exercise the brain and the tongue. We play singles rather than pairs so you only have yourself to blame for a poorly played hand, and the tea and home-made cake is a welcome break part way through. First and second prizes hardly match the 'fur and feather' of years ago, but some special biscuits and local organic eggs at least mean the victors carry some spoils home. Audrey Dancer has prevailed at each of the two sessions held so far - and we won't mention where the wooden spoons have ended up: suffice to say they both reside in the same household. All are welcome, so do come and join in. Prior knowledge of

the game is not necessary; there are plenty of willing teachers. The next date is Saturday 21st July at 2.00pm.

Many thanks to Philip Berry for conducting us through an evening at the races recently. It was its usual noisy success, an enjoyable evening with the added bonus of swelling the coffers of the Fund by about £700.

More recently a party of 23 village folk embarked on a 'mystery' outing to pick strawberries and have a relaxed lunch together. Its success, with little cost to the Fund, encouraged the Committee to consider an annual summer excursion.

LOCAL HISTORY

Marcus Botterill has emailed to invite local people to provide some historical information about Abthorpe for a new website documenting the history of Northamptonshire. The project was started in November last year to remedy the omissions he perceives in many books on the county which miss some of the hidden treasures of our villages, of which there are over 200. The site is in its infancy but is growing quickly. The entry for Blatherwycke gives a flavour of how it will look.

Marcus has been researching Abthorpe already but is looking for more information generally, and specifically about Jane Leeson and John Nicholl; also information on

Barnardos, particularly the name of the headteacher who actively supported the taking in of orphans by local Abthorpe residents (and even better to be put in touch with one of the boys).

The site is developed alongside Marcus's day job (and not as a profit-making venture) so any help you can give would be gratefully received: www.northamptonshire-history.org.uk/abthorpe

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

All systems are gearing up for the Grand Prix weekend, 7/8 July. There will be entertainment to accompany the event, particularly a pig roast and singer on the Saturday evening.

Children's play equipment has been installed on the garden at the top of the car park: swings and a slide, to be joined occasionally by a bouncy castle.

And the Government's smoking ban comes into effect on 1 July. There will be a designated smoking area outside at the rear, but definitely none in the children's play area or outside the front of the pub. No doubt it will take a little getting used to for dedicated puffers.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH NEWS

Six very different gardens dotted round the village and on the Silverstone Road were open in aid of the church on Sunday 17 June. The weather was benevolent if not flaming, people turned out in their flocks, the ladies serving tea were rushed off their feet and the whole event was a great success. In all £807 was added to church funds.

You may have noticed that the two felled limes in the churchyard have been replaced with sturdy young saplings. The deliberation that went on behind the selection of variety was clearly wide and deep, involving the Arboricultural Officer for SNC, the Archdeacon of Northampton and the Parochial Church Council. An established English species it had to be and the winner was the grey alder (*alnus incana*) introduced in 1780, fast growing and tolerant.

Latest church tote winners are: Rona Cambray (£250) in April, and Dave Webb in May.

The annual Pig Roast will be cooked up at the Old School on 15 July. Tickets will be available at your door from 2 July. As last year, these will be by gift-aid donation, with a suggestion of £7.



Grey Alder

PEOPLE

News which arrived just too late for the last newsletter was the sad death of Nellie Hughes at the amazing age of 99½, surely the oldest inhabitant of the village. Mrs Hughes was Olwyn Berresford-Linnell's aunt, and she had spent her last three years in Abthorpe having moved from Birmingham where, during her working life, she had been a dress designer. She is much missed by her family.

It seems as if babies are everywhere and many congratulations are in order: Bryony and Dan Clarkson, Finn and Scarlett welcomed Madeleine to their family. They have moved temporarily to 8 Wappenham Road (Pam and Ray Burrell having moved to Silverstone) while work is being carried out at Stone Barn. Then Lucy and Carl Brennan's daughter Lily arrived to join Jack; and Kelly Matthews and Nigel Bass have a second daughter, Abigail, as playmate for Charlotte. And yet another babe is due imminently to John and Catherine who have moved into the White Cottage. Hopefully we shall have a parade of pictures and more details next time.

Welcome to Tracey Pounds and Mike Partridge who have moved into Corner Cottage, together with Jamie Pounds and cat, often joined by Maura and Annie Partridge.

And Richard and Helen Taylor decided that Cedar Cottage would give their children, Emma and Ben, more space to spread their wings so have made the move to Abthorpe from Ascote.

Tracey and Phil Holdway felt that Abthorpe and Hillview in particular held more charm than Deanshanger, their previous home, so have arrived with Katie (10) and Emily (8).

Jean Holmes has moved in to 2 The Green with her daughter, Christina, who is in her final year at Oxford Brookes University studying music. Christina plans to teach after graduating. Jean may be a familiar face to many in Towcester as she looks after reception at the Oasis dental clinic.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST

This NHS Trust has moved to the final stage of becoming a Foundation Trust

and, having found its membership is under-represented from our area, is seeking local people to apply. The Trust is the main provider of mental

health, learning disability, sexual health and substance misuse services in Northamptonshire. Membership is open to anyone over 12 who lives in the county. More information from 01536 494806 or FoundationTrust@nht.northants.nhs.uk

MORE INTERESTING FACTS.....

If you were to straighten out all of Northamptonshire's roads and pavements and put them end to end you could travel across the Atlantic – and some..

CHALLOCK STUD

The stud at Challock Farm has had a successful breeding season, despite some very long nights and heart-stopping moments. Between 1 February and 20 May, 7 foals were born. You may glimpse some of them in the fields on your way to Silverstone.

BUS PASSES

The spate of 60th birthday parties this year makes it timely to mention that NCC and SNC are investing more money in the bus pass scheme. It's open to residents who are either over 60 or qualifying disabled, and offers some good deals such as free weekday travel in South Northants after 9.30, all day at weekend and bank holidays, £1 travel on other Northamptonshire buses, extending to some places outside the county.

Sounds like an opportunity for some interesting days out (once you can find a bus). Details:0845 230 0226; locallink@southnorthants.gov.uk; www.southnorthants.gov.uk.

SPLAT – SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR 5 TO 18 YEAR OLDS

South Northants Council has revamped its calendar of activities for children during the summer holidays. The programme looks varied with something for every interest, including circus skills, arts and crafts, puppet-making, singing, making a musical instrument, African dance, drumming and crafts, and street dance. More information from Sue Carverhill, Art Development officer, tel: 01327 322334; sue.carverhill@southnorthants.gov.uk.

REPORTING ROAD DEFECTS

Apart from the Street Doctor, where you can report such problems as potholes, blocked drains and street lights which don't work (www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Transport/PEM; 0845 601 1113) there is another website which serves a similar function, produced by the same group that wrote the No. 10 petition site, www.fixmystreet.com.

And just a reminder.... If you want to look back over previous items in Abtalk, the archive is on the Abthorpe website under the News section.

EVENTS

Friday 29 June - Saturday 14 July

Brackley Music Festival. Full programme: www.brackleymusicfestival.co.uk;
01280 702441

Saturday 30 June

Slapton fete

Saturday 7 July

Pre-Grand Prix Pig Roast and singer, the New Inn

Sunday 15 July

Pig Roast in aid of the church at the Old School. Tickets by gift-aid donations

Saturday 21 July

Whist at the New Inn. 2pm, tea and home-made cake, 50p

Sunday 22 July

Fiori Musicali, Bach and Vivaldi, 7pm at Castle Ashby; 0870 116 2110

Saturday 28 July

Special menu and entertainment to accompany the Classic Cars event, New Inn

Saturday 4 August

Blakesley Show, 9:00 at Hootens Farm

Friday 10 - Sunday 12 August

Flower festival and music, St Lawrence Church, Towcester. 9.30 - 5.00;
01327 350459

Saturday 11 August, 15 September, 13 October, 10 November, 8 December

Whist at the New Inn. 2pm, cake and home-made cake, 50p

Saturday - Sunday, 11 - 12 July

Twelfth Night. Alderton Festival, The Mount (outdoors). 7.30; 01327 811304

Saturday 8 September

Village Fun Day on the Green

Thursday 13 December

Christmas lunch for older residents