



ABTALK

News from Abthorpe

March 2008

NEWS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

The precept for the coming year has been set at £3,000, a reduction of £500 from last year. While many costs, particularly street lighting, are rising, the Council has a considerable sum in reserve as a result of not proceeding with the new burial ground, so is able to make a modest reduction in the income it needs.

ABTHORPE CHURCHYARD EXTENSION

All villagers will be aware that there has been much discussion during the past few years regarding the closure of the churchyard extension and the provision of new burial space.

The PCC petitioned to close the churchyard because it had become impossible to guarantee that empty spaces were available when required. The issue of re-use of the existing churchyard has been mentioned. It is indeed possible to do this in certain cases, in particular where the plot has not been used for 100 years and does not have a gravestone. However, this can only really apply where the previous burials have been deep (ie 'six feet under'). Current regulations stipulate that burials must

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Photo courtesy John Riches

be at least two metres deep but this has not always been the case. It appears that many of the burials in the Abthorpe churchyard extension have been very shallow and if, while digging a grave, human or coffin remains are found within a foot or two of the surface it is impossible to proceed. In fact this has happened in Abthorpe with the situation occurring where several attempts have had to be made to find a grave space required for a burial, even on the day of the burial - a distressing situation for all concerned. This is the reason that the PCC petitioned for closure of the graveyard.

The Parish Council attempted for two or three years to obtain space for a new graveyard for the village but for a variety of reasons this has now been shelved.

Liz and Barry Haycock held a fundraising event at the time when it seemed that the village would need to find funds to purchase some land for a graveyard. Now, with no immediate prospect of a new graveyard, Liz and Barry have handed the funds from that event to the church. The PCC was eager to use this money for purposes connected with the provision of burial space in the village and so decided to commission the digging of a series of test graves with the aim of finding space that could be reasonably guaranteed to be usable.

We are delighted to announce

that this has now been done and eight new plots have been identified in an area of the churchyard extension. This is in addition to the plots already reserved. Based on our current usage this should provide burial space for the village for a considerable number of years. Of course, there is also plenty of room in the Garden of Rest in the churchyard for the burial of ashes.

The formal request to close the churchyard will expire at the end of March 2008.

If you have any questions about this, please contact one of the churchwardens or Canon Bridget Smith on 857996.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

The sad headline news from the pub is the Jane and Robbie will be leaving us. They have given in their notice and will probably be leaving in July; more to come in the next issue.

But in the meantime, events continue with the annual Abthorpe - v- Blakesley Games Day Challenge on Easter Sunday, 23 March. Starting at 12.00, come and support your village and join the fun: Aunt Sally, darts, jenga, dominoes, etc. Assuming the weather is fine, there will be a bouncy castle for the kiddies.

On 8th June Abthorpe Occasionals cricket team will be called on to represent their village at the annual cricket match against Blakesley. More details to follow.

NEW YEAR'S DAY VINTAGE CAR GATHERING

Traditionally nothing much happens in Abthorpe on New Year's Day. However, this year much to the open-mouthed amazement of the sturdy local yeomen and their ample-bosomed womenfolk a procession of ancient and decrepit apparitions appeared out of the morning mist, either driving or passengering equally ancient and decrepit motor cars.

Soon some 40-odd cars disported themselves on and around the village green, ranging from a sublimely super-patinated Humber, a very British Crossley, to the outrageous single seat Cirrus-engined Lea Francis. Playing the numbers game, Riley and Lea Francis tied on four each, while marques ranging from Austin through to Wolsley were represented.



At the Inn on the Green, Jane was serving foaming pints of Hook Norton straight from the aluminium and quite early on reported to be well into a



second barrel. Bunny was cooking gourmet burgers and sausages as fast as he could for the ravening horde, so much so that the only sustenance latecomers could find was the odd morsel stuck to the grill.

Just after noon Helios rode his chariot across the southern

sky confirming that the sun doesn't only shine on the righteous. Heavy social intercourse among the throng was the order of the day. By mid-afternoon most pilots and their crews, being well fed up and pleasantly drunk, and with cheery cries of "Next year then?", began to wend their way home in the gathering dusk. By the stroke of four from the church clock Abthorpe returned to its customary slumber.

SILVERSTONE SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Silverstone Schools are seeking a volunteer foundation governor who ideally should represent the C of E beliefs, although this is not an essential criteria. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Sheila King, Chair of Governors, on 860616.

VILLAGE GREEN MOWING

Looking to the immediate future, we will have to start mowing the village green again soon. A couple more volunteers are needed, so if you fancy trying out the ride-on mower get in touch with Keith Fenwick (857083). You do need to hold a full driving licence.

RECENT PLANNING DECISIONS

Planning permission has been given by the District Council for the construction of four houses on the north side of Wappenham Road on the empty plots near the brow of the

hill. Permission had previously been given for one house on that part of the land at the back of Forge Cottage, but this has now been replaced by a single development for the whole site, taking in the top part of The Old Bakehouse garden.

The four properties form a neat row of houses, one with 2 bedrooms and the others with 3. Although off-road parking is included, the Parish Council objected because it expects that some vehicles will be parked on the road, exacerbating the problems caused by the adjacent properties where there is no alternative to parking on the road.

The current policy under which development is controlled, known as the Local Plan, is being replaced over the next few years by a Regional Strategy and a Local Development Framework. A number of new documents will be prepared to support this, for which South Northants and Daventry District Councils have joined with Northampton Borough and Northamptonshire County Councils to prepare a single set of policies. As far as Abthorpe is concerned this may not have any great impact. At present only limited infill is allowed with no development outside the defined boundary of the current houses. However, since Daventry district does not use this concept of 'village line', an alternative policy may be adopted.

Current discussion is about

PEOPLE

Welcome to Andy Mallon and Sharon Wooller who have moved into The Cottage in School Lane from Eydon, following Nigel and Kelly's move. Sharon works in Milton Keynes and Andy in Brackley; both like village life.

where expansion should take place and how to relate it to available local services, a policy known as 'clustering'. This should mean little change to the present character of our village, with our reliance on Towcester to provide most needs.

ASK YOUR MP

Our local MP, Conservative Tim Boswell, holds regular Advice Centres where you can discuss any matters you'd like him to take up. They are held on Fridays between 5.00 and 7.00pm. Ten-minute appointments may be booked by calling 01604 859721.

Dates for those in Towcester are 28 March, 9 May, 4 July, 10 October. Other dates are available at Daventry.

CONSULTATION ON NCC BUDGET

The draft 2008-9 Northamptonshire Council Council budget is available at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk for comment. The Government funding allocation has not been generous, being the lowest settlement for any county council in the East Midlands despite Northamptonshire being one

of the fastest growing counties in the country.

A new feature of online consultation is the 'budget simulator' which allows you to test choices about Council spending and the impact of those choices on different services. It's at www.budgetsimulator.com/northamptonshire.

RECENT TOTE WINNERS

The December tote winner was Edmund Kendall (Shen) who won £247.50. The January draw of £245 was won by Mrs Webster of Slapton Lodge, and in February Jamie Cordes scooped £245.

LOCAL ARTS EVENTS

South Northants Council promotes various arts activities through its Arts Development Officer, Sue Carverhill.

Coming up in the immediate area are:

- 1 - 29 March: Claire Warner watercolours exhibition at Towcester Library
- 8 March: Peterborough Cathedral Choir concert in St Lawrence Church, Towcester, 7.30pm
- 12 March and 30 April: Poetry for

pleasure at Towcester Library,
7-8pm

16 March: Towcester Choral Society
Palm Sunday concert, St
Lawrence Church, 6pm

29 March – 3 May: Sarah Harris
painting exhibition, Towcester
Library

19 April: Towcester Studio Band
concert in St Lawrence Church

There is a range of other events
in the wider South Northants area;
01327 322334 for all the details.

Six new sculptures in Salcey
Forest particularly caught the eye.
Figures and forms have been
sculpted to fit the natural
surroundings by Linda Johns as part
of the ever growing Art Walk. Then
in May, weather permitting, a group
of figures made from pine needles will
be installed and allowed to decay
back into the forest. More
information at www.lindajohns.com.

DOG FOULING

Once again, we have to return to this
subject since more purple plastic bags
containing dog mess have been
spotted on footpaths around the
village.

Remember it is your responsibility
to clear up and remove any mess left
within the village. Take it home and
put it in your dustbin. Outside the
village it is a good idea to remove
any dog mess on footpaths where
people could tread in it, but out of
the way it can be left to decompose.

Plastic bags, of course, will also
decompose, but they might take
several decades to do so. Do we
really want to see them for all that
time?

ATKINS LOOSES COUNCIL ENGINEERING CONTRACT

Atkins has been a familiar name
particularly associated with local
highways matters, but its tender for
the new ten-year contract has been
rejected in favour of May Gurney-WSP.
The change will entail considerable
work, as a large number of Atkins'
staff transfer to the new company,
which is gearing up to take over on
29th March.

CHRISTMAS CAROL SINGING

It does seem a long while ago, but a
big thankyou to everyone who
supported the carol singing on 21st
December: both the singers and
those who had to listen. It may have
been a triumph of enthusiasm over
talent, but the result was a very
generous £160 raised for Crisis.

SLAPTON PRE-PREP SCHOOL IS CLOSING

A message from Mrs Prue Young

After 21 happy and successful years
the school at Slapton will close on July
4th at the end of the Summer Term.
We have decided not to sell the
business, but to close it and remain
living in Slapton for the foreseeable
future.

All the contents of the school,

including furniture, PE apparatus, teachers' desks, little-used Dell laptops and much more will be available for sale by private arrangement. If anyone would like to view any of these articles, or enquire about others, please feel free to contact me either at school (8.30am – 4.00pm) 01327 860158 or at home (evenings) 01327 860270.

PROTECT YOUR ELECTRONIC STUFF

It's worth remembering that valuable electronic items such as mobile phones, laptops, cameras, sat navs or any other item with a serial number can be registered with Immobilise or other secure personal property register organisation. www.immobilise.com is a free service designed to protect your property, greatly enhancing the chances of it being returned to you if it is stolen.

ABTHORPE PAST....

Can you guess the subject of this valuation report written in November 1953?

"... is unoccupied and has been so for about 13 years. It has been an attractive Elizabethan period house with many pleasing features, but it is now almost derelict and it is very problematical whether it is ever likely to find a purchaser for private occupation.

In our opinion it would cost about £4,000 to reconstruct, re-condition, and modernise with the necessary

hot water system, etc. and whether there is such a buyer to be found at the present time to whom the property would appeal to reconstruct it, is quite impossible to foretell."

It is actually for the Vicarage, now Leeson House, and was part of property owned at that time by the Leeson Trustees. The valuation then goes on to describe the adjacent property:

"Tew's Holding. This extends to about 81 acres and includes an old set of farmbuildings (adjoining the Vicarage and the School). There is no house or cottage.

"The farmbuildings comprise a yard, with a large stone and slated barn with main electricity supply, a fairly good cowhouse for 14 with concrete divisions, concrete floors channelled but requiring much to be done to bring up to the standard required by the Milk & Dairies Order."

This just shows how much has changed over the last 50 years or so in the village. How many more houses were empty in the 1950s?

ABTHORPE VILLAGE FUND

June Willsher writes: "We have not filled the diary with dates for the coming year, as we are planning some changes to the past three years. However, we are looking to repeat the outing for the older folks as that was a great success last year. At present we are following up on some different venues, but the

date is in the diary for 10th June. The Fun Day will be taking place again this year and is planned for 6th September.

The bingo and fish and chip supper on 1st March was a great success, and was especially enjoyed by the children who each received an Easter Egg. And finally, a very big thank-you to all who helped during the last year.

FREE INSULATION

People over 70 can now apply to their local council for free cavity wall and loft insulation funded by the CHILLout scheme. The national scheme, spearheaded in Northamptonshire by Daventry District Council, aims to ensure that older people have warmer and cheaper winters. To arrange for a survey or for more information contact the Energy Efficiency Team at the CHILLout scheme on 0800 731 8976.

WAPPENHAM POST OFFICE

Good news! The campaign to retain the Post Office has been a success, Tony and Evelyn have been told formally that it will stay open.

EVENTS

Monday 10 March

Parish Council Meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Sunday 23 March

Easter Sunday service, 9.00

Games Day Challenge, Abthorpe -v- Blakesley, 12.00, the New Inn

Monday 21 April

Parish Council Annual General Meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Saturday 17 May

Plant sale, 9.30 - 12.30, Clarissa House,
High Street, Wappenham

Monday 19 May

Annual Parish Meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Sunday 8 June

Annual cricket match against Blakesley

Tuesday 10 June

Outing for older villagers.

Saturday 6 September

Fun Day on the village green