



ABTALK

News from Abthorpe

August 2017

We are delighted that our plea in the last issue for additional editorial assistance was answered by Alison Robbins. Alison has been a great help with this issue and hopefully our approach to arriving at a final publication has not put her off. Our aspiration is to return to a more regular publication schedule but - 'hope springs eternal in the human breast'.....

Editors:

*Keith Fenwick
keith.fenwick@abthorpe.net*

*Alison Robbins
robbins@abthorpe.net*

*Jill Tolson
jill.tolson@abthorpe.net*

NEWS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

The death of our clerk, Bob Carter, at the beginning of May came as a great shock and has meant changes in the way we operate. At our meeting on 15th May Marna Perrigo was elected

as chairman and Keith Fenwick took the role of temporary clerk. The advert for a permanent clerk drew two applicants. Tina Emerton was appointed and she will be taking up her duties shortly.

In the meantime, work must go on. The Annual Parish meeting on 8th May was attended by a small group of parishioners; it would have been nice to see a few more people. The usual reports on village activities were given.

Three other meetings have been held since then, generally involving routine matters such as paying electricity bills. South Northants Homes has lodged a planning application to build a third house on to the pair at 39 Wappenham Road, next to the Old Chapel. We objected to the planned parking arrangements, echoing comments already made by the County Highways department.

The choice of new street lights is still under consideration as they will need to be changed when the orange sodium lights fail and replacements are no longer available. Rather than install new lights in a patchwork we plan to replace groups of them so that lighting will be uniform in each street.

The speed sign does appear to have some effect. It has been at the Wappenham end of the village for some time and will be moved back to

the other end shortly. But still some drivers just ignore it.

And that old hoary subject, dog fouling, will not go away. If you are walking a dog you must clear up any deposits left anywhere in the village. Remember to have that plastic bag with you and dispose of the bag in your black bin.

As a local authority we are subject to rules on 'transparency' and everything we do is in public. All our minutes and standing orders are available on the parish website, as well as details of members and forthcoming meetings, so please go to www.abthorpe.net and follow the Parish Council link for a good read.

Parish Council meetings are held at the Old School starting at 7.45. Forthcoming dates are 4th September, 16th October and 27th November.

THE OLD SCHOOL

The good news is that the grant applications submitted to South Northants Council, the Big Lottery and Tesco Bags of Help for the refurbishment of the main hall have been successful.

However, the Tesco bid now requires your help to get the maximum amount available. From 1st September to 31st October please shop at Tesco and use your blue tokens to vote for the Old

School project; in fact why not start saving your tokens now. Three local projects will receive £4,000, £2,000 or £1,000 depending on their popularity. Obviously £4,000 would be a great boost to rejuvenating this lovely building to benefit the whole village by contributing to new lighting and chairs.

Awards for All is part of the Big Lottery and the Old School has been awarded a grant to replace the heating system. Plans to start the work are underway and it is hoped the new warm hall will be realised before winter really sets in.

The grant from South Northants Council will be used in due course when the main refurbishment takes place.

In the meantime, events continue. There will be a Race Night on 21st October. Tickets will be £5 to include a light supper, with the bar opening at 6.30 for the first race at 7.00. For those unfamiliar with these highly convivial evenings there are nine races shown on video to bet on. Each race is sponsored with the promoter having that race named after them and advertised in the programme. On the evening people can also buy horses and become an owner for that race. As in live racing the excitement rises as the race is run; will you be a winner and go home more prosperous than when you

arrived?

If you fancy having your name in lights (metaphorically), sponsoring a race is the way to do it by getting in touch with Lynn or Jan: oldschool@abthorpe.net.

Before that there will be another Coffee Morning on Saturday 2nd September from 10.30 to 12.30, this time at Elizabeth Cottage in School Lane (see page 17) when you could have an opportunity to ask Leah about the archaeological finds at her cottage. Emily and Tim Humphrey held their coffee morning on the last Saturday in July and it proved a very popular choice of day, hence the decision to hold the next one on a Saturday. Around 40 people turned up and £293 was raised towards the refurbishment. Emily and Tim were delighted to open up their home and garden with the opportunity to meet people who they hadn't met before.

And on a lovely summer afternoon villagers gathered to drink wine and eat some rather nice cheese in Fi and Stephen Noble's garden. The afternoon was enlivened with some guessing competitions: the number of stems of flowers, arranged by Sarah Lawson, the weight of a hamper, and the number of Lego pieces in a model.

If anyone would like to host either a coffee morning or a wine

and cheese occasion, the committee would be delighted to hear from you: oldschool@abthorpe.net.

The popular Saturday morning Truckers' Breakfast will return in the late autumn, with a quiz planned for the spring of next year.



above: Emily & Tim's coffee morning in full swing

right: Darren Emerton is over the moon to win a candle in the raffle

opposite page: Wine and cheese on a perfect summer's afternoon





SEVEN LITTLE MOUTHS TO FEED

The camera set up in a blue tit nest box in the village attracted interest not only locally but further afield in the UK and abroad. After the parents had lined the nest with feathers, moss and other garden pickings, seven eggs were laid between 11th and 14th April. All seven hatched around 3rd May and kept the parents busy providing food for the wide-open hungry mouths. The chicks grew rapidly and became quite riveting to watch. Several people from outside the area got in touch with the Master of the Blue Tits to thank him for the fascinating experience, although watchers were deprived at night when the camera was turned off. One lady was watching even more closely around 20th May knowing that the four which reached maturity were on the brink of fleeing the nest and frustratingly they popped off when her back was turned.

Let's hope we will be privileged to experience a similar opportunity next year.



SOLAR FARM

When a renewable energy project such as solar, wind or hydro begins producing electricity, local communities affected are often entitled to receive payments from the operating company. As Handley Park solar farm, which claims to supply the electricity needs of 2,600 average UK homes (when the sun is shining), is close to our parish boundary Abthorpe receives regular payments. Back in July 2014 when planning permission was sought to build a solar farm at Handley Park the local media reported that Towcester Town Council supported the plans but that the Parish Councils of Silverstone and Whittlebury had raised objections. Abthorpe also objected but only to the access arrangements on grounds of safety.

The Parish Council recently received its latest payment of £3,122.31 from the operator, ReneSola, a leading international manufacturer and supplier of green energy products that is listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

The village green is thought to date back to Saxon times before the Norman Conquest in 1066 and is the focal point of Abthorpe. It must have been thirty years or more

ago when there was a dispute as to who owned the Green. Was it South Northamptonshire Council or Abthorpe Parish Council? At an enquiry local GP Dr Vince Sanger presented the case on behalf of the Parish Council resulting in agreement that the Green belonged to the village. This was great news but since that time mowing has been the responsibility of the village. In the early days this was done by a team of volunteers using push motor mowers but then a 'mower committee' was formed to raise money for a ride-on version which made life easier.

Now that mower is coming to the end of its useful life. The pan is rusting away and although repairs will ensure that it will be able to keep functioning this year, a new mower needs to be purchased. The cost of a 103cm wide cutting width mower is likely to be £3,500. The Parish Council is planning to purchase a new mower next year using funds available from the solar farm at Handley Park described above.

PLANT SALE

The plant sale on 28th May lived up to expectations. Julia Ford-Cordes and Janet Dancer had spread the word well, inveigling lots of gardeners to donate and people to buy the great variety and number of plants displayed in a very professional-



looking layout. The tea and cakes, always a bonus at these events, were very welcome on such a hot afternoon.

Julia and Janet were keen to pay tribute to the generosity of time and dedication to ensuring the sale was a success by everyone who helped out on the day. Plants were donated from Abthorpe, Slapton and also surrounding villages. The sun shone on an enjoyable day and at the end of the afternoon all the helpers and organisers were exhausted but proud and happy at such a successful event. Proof of that success was in the incredible amount raised: £1,740 which was split between three charities: St John the Baptist Church, the Old School and Marie Curie Cancer Care, each receiving £580.

THEY PAID THEIR TAXES TOO!

In modern times we are used to paying taxes but sometimes wish we could go back in time and be free of them. However, even in the 1300s taxes were raised - not just for use in running the country. Every time a King ran short of money, mostly because of fighting a war, he would raise more money to pay for it through taxation.

Research by Stephen Swailes, for example, provides evidence of tax assessments in Northamptonshire in early medieval times. In 1301

tax collectors were authorised by parliament to collect one fifteenth of the value of a person's moveable goods. These were mainly crops and household goods because jewellery, gold, silver, horses, tools of the trade and clothing were excluded. No doubt there was plenty of scope to hide possessions before the valuers arrived. It also probably helped to be friendly with your local tax collector as some were no doubt more honest than others. The list showed that Foscoote was a larger place then with ten people paying a total of £10 compared with twenty eight in Abthorpe paying £34 from wages and goods.

In 1523 a national tax called Tudor Lay Subsidy was raised by parliament to fund campaigns in France. It was a direct tax levied on land and moveable goods and was charged at between 4d and 12d (old pence - equivalent to 1½-5p) in the pound depending whether it was charged on wages, goods or land. By then Foscoote had five people paying a total of £16.0s.7d (£16.03), mostly raised through the taxing of moveable goods. (Since most of the land belonged to King Henry VIII it was exempt from taxation.) There were twenty eight Abthorpe tax payers paying a total of £50.0s.10d (£50.04). Only Ashby owned any land that was liable for taxation, all

the rest belonging to Fermor, Lord of Towcester manor.

The hearth tax was introduced in England and Wales in 1662 to provide a regular source of income for the newly installed monarch King Charles II. This tax was levied on each householder according to the number of hearths in his dwelling. The hearth tax records reveal useful lists of names of occupiers as well as owners and can also tell us if a house was enlarged during this period. It can be seen that Leeson House was lived in by Stockley who was a farm manager. The house had only three hearths in 1662 but by 1669 the Leeson trustees had enlarged the house to encourage a good school master, and there were now seven hearths. Mr Nicolls the occupier was wealthy enough to later leave a legacy of money for silver for the church. The Manor lived in by Knight already had four hearths by 1662, whilst Yew Tree House was quite small with two hearths but by 1674 had seven. Mr Pargiter had the other large farmhouse on the Green - it already had four hearths by 1669. By 1674, 27 dwellings in the village with 57 hearths between them were paying the tax but another 36 dwellings were exempt from payment. The occupants paid two shillings (10p) a year for each hearth. Those with only one hearth

were exempt from payment if they were too poor to pay church rates or if the property was worth less than twenty shillings (£1) a year.

Another tax was one which went to the church. This was called a Mortuary and depended upon the value of goods of someone who had recently died (including money in the owner's purse!). Selected villagers would go through a deceased person's house totalling up the value of all moveable goods including stock and crops. If, after allowing for any debts that had to be paid, the value was still over £40, ten shillings (50p) was paid to the vicar. Towcester registers recorded in 1685 that for John Barfoot (Barford) of Foscoate a mortuary of ten shillings was paid. His stock of cows, horses, sheep and hogs were worth £165 and cereals £32, yet the value of his clothes and money in the house was only £10. Like all farmers he could only pay his bills once a year when he sold his stock. Blacksmiths and other tradesmen expected to wait up to a year to be paid.

In 1696 a new tax was deemed necessary to make up for lost revenue as people clipped bits off gold coins. Tiny scales were used to check that coins were the correct weight especially gold guineas which weighed one quarter of an ounce (7g). Guineas were so called as the gold came from Guinea in West

Africa. By 1774 twenty million coins were recalled to make into new guineas. The edges were milled so clipping was more difficult. The Cragg Vale coiners in Yorkshire became notorious for not only clipping guineas but also for forging coins. Local people gave them their guineas which were clipped and returned to their owners (slightly smaller in size) plus a shilling. Meanwhile the coiners would use the shavings to make counterfeit coins (for example, 22 shillings worth of gold to make a forged Portuguese Moidore worth 27 shillings).

The new tax that was introduced and replaced the hearth tax was known as the Window tax. It was a banded tax based on how many windows there were in a house. By 1847 there was a flat rate of two shillings (10p) per house plus 6d (2½p) for every extra window above ten. If you had over fifteen windows, you paid 9d (about 3½p) per extra window, then one shilling (5p) each for those with over twenty windows. People began to brick up windows to reduce the amount of tax they had to pay. The Window tax was repealed in 1851 because doctors said lack of light caused ill health.

Although the farmhouses at Foscoate were not built in the present form until around 1840 they had a large number of windows. In 1772

one farmhouse lived in by Robert Barford had nineteen windows, while the other where Val Barford resided had fourteen. Leeson House inhabited by Revd John Smith had fourteen, the Manor House occupied by farm manager Robert Burnhill had twelve, the Stocking Frame before it was altered had thirteen and the farmhouse in Tinker's Close before it was converted to cottages had twelve windows. The rest of the village houses mostly had fewer than ten. (Tinker's Close no longer exists. It was the area at the bottom of Main Street to the right of the footpath to Slapton directly over the style. Undulations in the field and the remains of a hedge can still be seen.)

All these lists are held by Northampton Record Office either in donated collections or transcripts (see following article).

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY ARCHIVES

We received disturbing news recently that Northamptonshire County Council plans to restrict free access to local archives. It was proposing that in future free admission to the collection would be available only on Tuesday to Thursday mornings and seven Saturdays in the year. At other times there would be a charge of £31.50 an hour.

These archives are a rich source of local information and indeed the author of the historical pieces we publish about Abthorpe makes considerable use of the service in her researches. People travel some distance to avail themselves of this amenity and therefore like to get a full day's work in.

Following a successful petition against the charge, NCC "has reviewed its decision to change opening hours at its archives and heritage service after listening to the views of its regular users and supporters. The archives service will now be open for free access on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm and the first Saturday in each month, 9am to 1pm. In light of financial pressures and reducing visitor numbers, there will be a review of the service ahead of the next financial year as part of the budget setting process and this will include a full consultation around any proposed changes".

Let's hope this excellent depository of local history, at often from donors who freely offered their documents for others to learn from, remains available either at no or significantly less cost than that proposed. The archive is at Wootton Hall Park, Northampton, NN4 8BQ. Details on the County Council website.

BIKESAFE2017

Organised by BikeSafe and Northamptonshire Highways, this is a policed motorcycle initiative run by most forces throughout the UK. This year it is coming back to Northamptonshire at Rockingham Circuit in Corby on Saturday 19th August from 10.00 to 5.00. Entry and parking is free.

It is apparently the biggest such event in the country for anyone with a love of wheels: cars, motorbikes or cycles, with demonstrations, stunt riders and participative activities for all ages, including a chance to drive a lorry around the circuit. There is a police-assessed ride and track experience which can be booked at www.bikesafe.co.uk, which is also the address for full information.

This Muntjac was caught taking lunch in Keith Fenwick's garden last April. The rest of the plum tree has survived.



NEW INN NEWS

The significant sums of money raised at the monthly quiz continue to amaze, and indicate how popular these light-hearted evenings are. In April the winners were No Hoppers (again - and still without a more appropriate name) who chose Macmillan to received £177. No Eye Deer were surprised to end up victorious in April thanks to two dark horses from Wappenham who joined the team for the evening. £175 was donated to the National Ankylosing Spondylitis Association in memory of Bob Carter (see People).

June was Not Abba's turn to select Willen Hospice as the recipient of the £100 raised in memory of a family member. The last Sunday in July clashed with the Silverstone Classic so the quiz was rested until August when it will be on Sunday 27th to brighten the Bank Holiday. It will then follow the pattern of the last Sunday evening of each month.

After the legendary Fred Huggins retired from being the New Inn landlord in the early 2000s, there followed a period of some instability at the pub as landlords and landladies came and went. When our current landlord Rob took over at the New Inn, some of us wondered how long he would last too. We need not have

worried. On July 22nd we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Rob becoming our landlord, and what an incredible success he has made of the venture. To celebrate the achievement, Rob hosted a party for the local clientele. It was a wonderful celebration with bands playing throughout the day, followed by dancing and a pig roast in the evening. With his usual modesty, Rob expressed surprise at how many people turned up and thanked everyone for the support shown to him over the last ten years. In turn, we all want to thank Rob for his commitment and hard work in turning round the fortunes of the New Inn to make it once more the focus of village life for so many of us.

A couple of weeks earlier, on 14th July, the Royal Oak Morris dancers from Eydon again had a dance-out at the pub. Their repertoire, which was performed to an appreciative gathering of customers in the large gazebo set up in the garden, included dances from Cotswold villages with a particular focus on Badby, the closest village where a traditional Morris



A picture taken in poor light but the joy of Peter Watkins, Darren Emerton and Bill Lamb boogying to the Night Howlers is clear



team is known to have existed. Unlike Brackley Morris Men which has records dating back to the early 1500s and is thought to have existed in the 1300s, the Royal Oak side was formed in the spring of 1985 to dance at the Eydon village fete. Nina Turner, the then landlady of the Royal Oak pub in that village, said that if she wasn't in the side none of the men would get served! So right from the start both men and women danced together. Although it started as something of a joke the dancers enjoyed it so much that they have kept going for the past 32 years. The

dancers' visit was much appreciated and they certainly deserved their celebratory pints of Hooky.

The New Inn restaurant continues to thrive. Our new chef is Steve Claridge - he may be new to the New Inn, but he has 21 years' experience as a chef - and he is ably assisted by Josh Woodcock, the restaurant manager, and Ben McDonald, another chef. Steve and the team are delighted at how well everything is going. You only have to pop your head round the door on a Friday or Saturday night to see this for yourselves. In fact it is

worth noting that on these nights it is advisable to book. As well as serving more traditional Pub Grub, there is always an extensive Specials board too. With the addition of an outdoor BBQ, even more choices are being opened up. The Sunday breakfast from 9.30 - 12.00 is proving popular, as are the Friday themed evenings. Plans for these for the rest of the year are:

25th August - South American BBQ
Smokehouse night (a smoker is being brought in for the occasion)

29 September - Tapas-
Mediterranean evening

27 October - Taste of the
Caribbean (a fusion of Creole,
Cajun and Latin American)

24 November - Local game dinner

29 December - Taste of India (no
turkey in sight!).

If you don't want to be disappointed, book a table before you come.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST NEWS

Barbara Malcomson

Our Tea and Piece monthly summer Sunday afternoon teas have been successful and the last one will be on 20th August. We have decided to cancel the one planned for September

as we will be serving tea and cake at the Garage Sale. Thank you to everyone who has supported these. We did think that we would not have many people at our July tea as it was the afternoon of the Wimbledon men's finals and Silverstone Grand Prix, but it turned out to be our busiest.

The Pledge to Pray day when the benefice held a prayer walk through the parishes was a really lovely day. We started off at Slapton with a short service and then walked to Abthorpe, Silverstone, Whittlebury and finally to Paulerspury. The weather was perfect and as we passed we discovered little bits of villages we did not know. Rev'd Paul led us in a short service at each church and it was nice to chat to people from other churches as we walked along.

Congratulations to our recent Tote winners who are Jill and Roger Tolson in April, Mrs Webster in May (yes, two months out of three), Janet Dancer in June and Lucy and Paul Grimes in July. Each of the winners became better off by £202.50. Thank you to everyone who supports our tote.

We have recently purchased a replacement mower for the churchyard grass. The old one had been a bit of a struggle to use and the new one is a big improvement.

We appreciate all the help we get from the people on the mowing rota to help keep the churchyard looking so good. If you think you could spare some time and would like a bit of exercise, please think about joining the rota.

The food bank box at the back of church is still making its regular trips to the Towcester Food Bank. At the moment they are wanting tins of baked beans, sugar, vegetables, soup and tinned fruit. Small bags of sugar are particularly welcome and Waitrose has started stocking these. The church is open during daytime hours every day if anyone wants to drop anything into the box. Thank you to all who continue to support this.

You will have recently received a flyer about our Garage Sale on 24th September from 2 to 5pm. We hope you have had a good clear out and have lots of things to sell. If you would like to take part you will need to book your driveway with Jill Greenhalgh by 26th August; contact details: 01327 858102 or jill.greenhalgh@abthorpe.net. The cost is £15 per driveway and teas will be available in the Old School during the afternoon. The previous sale in 2015 was a very successful afternoon. The event will be well advertised so we hope we have lots of potential buyers

visiting the village.

Our Harvest weekend will be on 7th and 8th October, with Harvest Supper on 7th October, 7pm for 7.30pm, and the service at 11am on the 8th. Produce donated at the Harvest Festival will once again go to the Hope Centre in Northampton.

Please note that we have just one service in September:

Sunday 17th September
Holy Eucharist at 10am

Sunday 8th October
Harvest Festival, 11am

On Sunday 15th October at 9.30am Bishop Donald will be taking a benefice Confirmation in our church, which will include the sacrament of Confirmation. Everyone is very welcome at all our services, including this one.

If you would like any further information, please contact me on 01327 857066 or malcomson@abthorpe.net.

MOBILE SHOP

Mumfords of Culworth are now visiting Abthorpe each Tuesday stopping on the Green at about 12.30. They carry a range of fresh meat, homemade sausages and burgers, and also offer fruit and vegetables, eggs, cheese and basic groceries.

TOVE VALLEY BROADBAND

Keith Fenwick

With over 600 members, although a few are still waiting to be connected, operating the network now takes more time than ever. It is surprising the problems which arise. Trying to find out whether connection problems are in our network or in the home often involves a bit of detective work; quite good fun when you can sit at home and do it remotely, but frustrating if a visit is needed and you have something else you want to get on with.

The network has been working well (touch wood!) with no major outages. A few improvements are planned to ensure that we have adequate capacity to meet demand. And we continue to get requests to extend our area of coverage, requests which we turn down. We have enough to do supporting our existing network.

If you have not yet become a member and want to do so, just go to www.tovevalley.com and register. You will not get any faster or cheaper service in Abthorpe.

THE ABTHORPE ROUNDABOUT

In May Bam Nuttall issued an open letter about the completion of the roadworks which have at least put Abthorpe on the map.



Broadband installation in action at Lower Green, Woodend with Keith Fenwick and Tim the cherry picker driver contending with high winds and occasional shower.

“We are pleased to inform you that we have recently completed improvement work at the A43 Abthorpe Roundabout. The entire project team would like to thank all local residents, travelling public and local authorities for your patience during the construction work. We have worked hard to minimise disturbance and finish this work as quickly as possible. We recognise that roadworks can be disruptive, for which we offer our sincere apologies.

Thank you for your patience and feedback throughout the project.

As part of the work we have installed a new traffic signal system to help traffic flow more smoothly and predictably through the junction. This is to help ease congestion at this location and improve safety. Over the next few weeks our traffic specialists will monitor the traffic and carry out fine tuning of the signal system. We have also resurfaced the road with a newer, quieter material. This will give smoother journeys and reduce the need for emergency repairs in the future.

To begin main construction work we had to carry out some major vegetation clearance around the junction. We don't like to remove trees and vegetation but this work was necessary to allow us to widen the carriageway and install measures to reduce noise. We have planted additional trees as part the work.

We would happily welcome any feedback to help us improve how we deliver future schemes. To provide this, please fill in our survey at: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RLTTP3L."

Do You Have Musical Prowess?

Brackley & District Band is keen to attract new talent. They describe themselves as a friendly, sociable

and hardworking brass band which performs at local and national events as well as taking part in competitions. They also have a development band which offers everyone, young and old, the opportunity to learn and take part. New brass and percussion players of all standards are welcome and they will provide instruments where possible. Their own club premises with a large rehearsal space, bar and darts team is another attraction. More information: www.brackleyband.org.uk or email info@brackleyband.org.uk.

ABTHORPE PARTY PLANNERS

Unfortunately the party on the Green arranged for 26th August has had to be cancelled, but plans are still afoot for next year's Safari Supper scheduled for Saturday 19th May.

MOBILE SIGHT CENTRE

Northants Association for the Blind's information van will be coming to Towcester on Wednesday 6th September. It will be in Waitrose car park from 1.30 to 3.30.

ELIZABETH COTTAGE

Elizabeth Cottage in School Lane was built over three different centuries: the 1700s, 1800s and 1900s. Now, explains the present owner Leah Abbott, she is bringing her home into the 2000s with the aim of keeping



hillside. Two of these points can still be seen - one in Brackley Lane and the other on the village green. But before that local system was built villagers must have had to rely on water from wells and small underground tanks that were connected to the gutters of their buildings. It is presumed that the tanks found at Elizabeth Cottage are some of these.

THE ABTHORPE MILLENNIUM DISC GOES VIRAL?

Back in the year 2000 the village had a number of millennium projects that included restoring

the charm and character that it is so abundantly full of. The builders have not only found buried artefacts amongst the rubble that includes an ancient bottle with not even as much as a chip or crack, but they have uncovered not one, but two old Victorian water filtering systems embedded in the cottage's yard.

Before mains water reached our village, Abthorpe had its own fresh water supplies pumped to water points from a spring on the

the church clock and distributing a computer disc about the village's history to every home in the parish. Remember that back then - a mere 17 years ago - broadband as we know it did not exist and access to what most people then considered to be the new-fangled internet was through a dial-up system via the telephone lines. Now that disc will shortly be available on the internet for the whole world to see. It makes fascinating viewing.

The introduction is by journalist Mark Lawson, a local resident, who gives an excellent resumé of the disc's contents and invites the viewer to indulge in a bit of time travel to see what Abthorpe was like in times gone by. Fascinating documents such as Jane Leeson's will can be seen, in which she bequeaths money to build a school in the village and to help the poor. There are some wonderfully evocative old black and white photographs - one taken in about 1860 is of the church minus its tower. Others show weddings, the village school, the brass band and the 1906 football team. More recently there are local newspaper cuttings including one of the 1979 Country Fayre when £2,000 was raised. Perhaps best of all is a photograph taken on 5th September 1999 from a cherry-picker parked on the Green of most people in the village. If you can't recognise everyone it is possible to hover the mouse over the head of each person to reveal their identity.

The online disc is a real treasure trove and it is well worth spending half an hour exploring the Abthorpe of yesteryear. To see the disc go to the Abthorpe village web site: www.abthorpe.net. It will all be available later this month.



From the left, Mrs Polly Townsend, Stella Adams, Ada Hopley, unknown, Mrs Robinson taken in the early 1900's. Were they showing off their Easter bonnets?

PEOPLE**BOB CARTER**

His many friends in the village were shocked and saddened by the death of Bob Carter in early May. Bob had a wide circle of friends in the village and the area, was Clerk to the Parish Council and an active Rotarian.

Bob, who had just celebrated his 70th birthday, was born in Greenwich, London. A family move to Ashford, Kent, in 1963 led to Bob joining the GPO as an apprentice engineer - known in those days as a



Youth in Training (YIT). He did some of his training at Bletchley Park and would tell tales of how the apprentices nearly wrecked the huts. He spent most of his working life with the GPO and later British Telecom, in the meantime marrying Jenny and bringing up two children, Christopher and Debbie. The family came to Abthorpe in 1991 when Bob's office moved from the City of London to Milton Keynes.

Latterly he was responsible for slimming down various parts of BT's operations and in due course the turn of his own department came. But he kept himself busy with local jobs, including Brackley Vision where he oversaw the move of the Brackley war memorial and the building of the Piazza which is now the focal point for many of the town's events. Bob and Jenny also enjoyed travelling and he would often tell stories of their experiences such as getting lost in

PEOPLE CONTINUED

the Sahara desert, quad biking in Egypt, elephant and camel riding, staying overnight in a Bedouin tent and negotiating the traffic in Saigon amongst many of his adventures.

Bob was very proud of his children's achievements and his four grandchildren, Alexander, Isabella, Paige and Chester. Affectionately he was named by the youngest members of the extended family as 'Uncle Silly Bob'.

And it was jokes for which Bob will be remembered. He had the knack of telling humorous jokes and stories, either thought up before or realised on the spur of the moment. Some (maybe too many) were corny and many were repeated (again and again). Some could only be related to male friends in the pub. But there was always smiles and laughter when Bob was around and his kindness, friendliness and helpfulness will be greatly missed by us all. When thinking of him please remember these words:

*Feel no guilt in laughter, he'd know how much you care.
 Feel no sorrow in a smile that he is not here to share.
 You cannot grieve forever; he would not want you to.
 He'd hope that you could carry on the way you always do.
 So, talk about the good times and the way you showed you cared,
 The days you spent together, all the happiness you shared.
 Let memories surround you, a word someone may say
 Will suddenly re-capture a time, an hour, a day,
 That brings him back so clearly as though he were still here,
 And fills you with the feeling that he is always near.
 For if you keep those moments, you will never be apart
 And he will live forever locked safely in your heart."*

A poem by an unknown author

PEOPLE CONTINUED**BETTY BODILY**

Sadly, Betty Bodily a very long time resident of the village has died at the age of 88. Looking back over her long life, her son Peter recalled that Betty was born in Birmingham to George and Gladys Cann. Her beloved father, a policeman, died as a result of events during the Second World War so Betty and her mother moved first to Slapton and then to Cadogan Place in Abthorpe where they kept pigs.



Betty and her close friend Kath Redford occasionally saw Len Bodily and his friend Bob Salmons near the New Inn in Abthorpe. Love blossomed and soon Len and Betty, and Bob and Kath were engaged. Betty and Len were married in Abthorpe in 1949 and went to live for a short while with Len's sister Violet and her husband, then into their own new house in Woodend where their son Peter was born. But it was decided that the young family would move in with Betty's mum in her new house in Brackley Lane to help out. That was Betty and Len's home from then onwards. She and Len had their second child Carole a few years later.

PEOPLE CONTINUED

Betty was a caretaker at Abthorpe Primary School once her son Peter was at school there and later worked at the Towcester shoe factory.

Betty was a loving, compassionate and strong woman. Her three main motivations in life were family, marriage and community. Her only two 'vices' were chocolate and the occasional small glass of Bailey's.

Betty's son Peter remembers the strong community spirit that existed among all the families in 'the Lane' – Balderson, Bunting, Bodily, Kendall, Snelson, Rush and Dancer, with everyone in and out of each others' houses giving friendship and support when needed. He remembers when the butcher's van would arrive and he would run out with Betty to get his favourite lump of raw suet! The men would arrive home together and Betty would have Len's tea ready...after he had kicked a ball around with Peter for a while. Even once Peter had left home for university and then work, Betty's generous hospitality became legendary and friends would come home with him for the weekend in the assurance that they would be provided with a huge meal for free.

Family and her marriage to Len were everything to Betty. The ones who really mattered were Carole and Peter, their partners Virginia and Colin, the grandchildren Sam and Alex, and the great grandchildren. Sam's twins Jacob and Zachary were the apples of Betty's eye and gave her and Len much joy and relief as their health declined.

The defining part of Betty's life though was her marriage to Len. They adored each other, helped and supported each other through all those 68 years. Indeed Betty fought illness with conviction and through pain to be there for Len: that was her job in life, and everyone knew it.

PEOPLE CONTINUED

PETER BYNG

The funeral of Peter Byng took place recently in his home village of Silverstone. Peter was a good friend to many in Abthorpe. In his capacity as a lay Reader in the Whittlewood Benefice he quietly, unobtrusively but very compassionately led services, including funerals, visited sick parishioners and supported our congregation whenever he could. He will be sadly missed.

The baptism of baby Chester Robert Carter-Hughes son of Debbie Carter and Adam Hughes, grandson of Jenny and Bob Carter took place on 9 July. At the font just inside St John's south door the Rector Rev'd Paul McLeod gathered young Chester in his arms, baptised him and welcomed him into the church.



There were a great many family members, friends and members of the regular congregation gathered to welcome young Chester into the Christian family.

Introducing Samuel Michael Cockcroft (*photograph opposite*) who was born on 5th August to Drs Kate and James Cockcroft, daughter and son-in-law of Jill and Mike Greenhalgh who are rightfully very proud grandparents. He has even managed to share a birthday with Grandpa Greenhalgh.

PEOPLE CONTINUED

We would like to extend a warm welcome to Ian Hazlewood and his partner Amy who have moved to 27 Brackley Lane, exchanging houses with Phil and Tricia Holmes who have moved to Towcester. Ian works for a bank and Amy for a fine wine company. Part of the reason for coming here is the great countryside for walking their two border collies. We hope they enjoy living here and getting to know the many regular dog walkers in the village.

Welcome also to Sarah Jane Dowding and her fiancé Caleb Bateman who moved into no.2 The Green in mid-June. Sarah is an accountant with the SNC, but all her waking thoughts at the moment are occupied by her imminent wedding, as she and Caleb will be tying the knot on September 14th at Dodmore House. Sarah is keen to join in village activities and says that anyone who wants to drop by and say hello is most welcome to do so. We wish Sarah

PEOPLE CONTINUED

and Caleb a wonderful wedding day next month, and hope the sun shines on them.

Alison and Connor Hambleton and their son Jonny are now really at home at 34 Wappenham Road having been here for about a year; apologies for only just catching up with them. Both Connor and Jonny are very keen on motorsport and in fact 13-year old Jonny came third in the national Karting Championships, with the promise of doing even better next time around. He is clearly a talented lad and has a first session moving up to driving cars in a couple of weeks. Apart from spending time on four wheels, he enjoys playing football and would be very happy to join in any impromptu kickabouts on the Green.

After giving up his job in motorsport to have the time to devote to Jonny's sporting interests, Connor changed direction to working on signage, while Alison is in the food import/export business. And mention must be made of Sooty, their 10 month old super-friendly black cat who has rapidly made herself at home in the village. You'll recognise her by her exquisite bushy tail.

"I do, I do".....again

On Saturday 19th August two Abthorpe residents are looking forward to renewing their wedding vows seventeen years after they first made such promises to each other. It was August 18th in the year 2000 when Tina and Darren Emerton became man and wife in 'the City of the Three Spires' aka Coventry; in fact they were actually married in one of the Three Spires churches, Holy Trinity.

When Tina and Darren decided to settle in Abthorpe a few years ago they immediately felt so at home that they vowed to stay here for the rest of their lives. Although, due to Tina's work

PEOPLE CONTINUED

commitments, they at present spend several days a week out of the village they are always keen to return to Abthorpe at the weekends where they throw themselves enthusiastically into village life. Indeed Darren recently became a Church Warden and it was this that gave him and Tina the idea that they should renew their wedding vows in St John the Baptist Church to give them a closer personal link with the village they have grown to love.

After the renewal ceremony, Darren and Tina are holding a relaxed and informal reception in the Old School where the promise to their guests is 'to eat, drink and have a boogie'. We all wish Tina and Darren a very happy day.

The photos in *Abtalk* do not always print as well as we would like, but just a reminder that they can all be seen on the Abthorpe website - and in colour: www.abthorpe.net/news.

DIARY

Sunday 20 August

Tea and Piece, St John the Baptist, 3.00 - 4.30

Friday 25 August

South American BBQ smokehouse night, the New Inn

Sunday 27 August

Charity quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

Saturday 2 September

Coffee morning, Elizabeth Cottage, School Lane, 10.30 - 12.30

(continued on previous page)

DIARY

Monday 4 September

Parish Council meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Sunday 17 September

Holy Eucharist, 10.00, St John the Baptist

Sunday 24 September

Garage sale, village-wide, 2.00 - 5.00

Friday 29 September

Tapas-Mediterranean evening, the New Inn

Saturday 7 October

Harvest supper, the Old School, 7.00 for 7.30

Sunday 8 October

Harvest Festival, 11.00, St John the Baptist

Sunday 15 October

Confirmation and Holy Eucharist, 9.30, led by Bishop Donald, St John the Baptist

Monday 16 October

Parish Council meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Saturday 21 October

Race Night, the Old School, 6.30 for 7.00

Friday 27 October

Taste of Caribbean fusion of Creole, Cajun and Latin, the New Inn

Friday 24 November

Local game dinner, the New Inn

Monday 27 November

Parish Council meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Friday 29 December

Taste of India - everything non-festive, the New Inn