

News from Abthorpe

July 2010

PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting on 17th May attracted a greater than normal turnout, and prompted some interesting discussion, mainly around the proposed move by South Northamptonshire Council to new offices in the Moat Lane development. The first phase of the development has been opened with a grant of £7m from West Northamptonshire Development Corporation.

At the meeting the Parish Council, the lowest tier of local government with an annual precept of £3,000, reported back to local people how it had fulfilled its responsibilities during the past year. Chairman Keith Fenwick outlined the council's activities that had included street lighting, getting a signpost replaced in Brackley Lane and undertaking a speedwatch survey of vehicles travelling through the village. The telephone kiosk on the village green has been purchased by the parish and local decorator John Underwood

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was commissioned to repaint it. He had gone to great lengths to strip off decades of old paint and replace it with the correct shade of scarlet. The council has commented on numerous planning applications, including proposals for 10 affordable homes scheduled to be constructed at the bottom end of Brackley Lane. A healthy financial balance of just over £11,000 was reported.

Cllr Fenwick thanked his fellow councillors and Gail Coombs who retired as clerk last summer, and welcomed Bob Carter who has taken on the role.

As usual various organisations reported on their previous year's work. Ben Smith, our County Councillor, holds the portfolio for Regeneration and Growth and is also on the Police Committee. One particular item of local interest is that Ben holds an Empowerment Fund of £10,000 which it is in his gift to distribute in £1,000 parcels to any deserving cause. If you have ideas, please contact Ben on 01604 237817 or benz@btinternet.com.

Ashley Warren is our District Councillor sitting on the South Northamptonshire Council and faced most of the questions regarding the Council's potential move. He was unable to give any clear information on future plans, mainly because little has been decided. Planning

permission has yet to be submitted, but SNC seems to feel that having the council offices as part of the plan will encourage other potential investors. Ashley's particular role on SNC is on the Review and Development - Economic and Environmental Committee. He discussed the disquiet over the proposed wind farm of nine turbines at Spring Farm Ridge between Helmdon and Sulgrave to be constructed by Broadview Energy Ltd. A planning application is expected to be made in August or September. The Sulgrave and Weston Windfarm Action Group (SWWAG) has been set up to resist the proposals and has a comprehensive website at <http://swwag.co.uk/> where there are photographs of how the landscape would be affected based on current information. Among many other things, SWWAG has appointed an expert in fighting windfarm proposals to guide them through the stages leading up to their response to the planning application.

The SWWAG committee will be presenting the reasons for their objection to the proposal to Sulgrave Parish Council on Thursday 8th July in Sulgrave village hall. Broadview Energy will be holding a public exhibition of their proposals in Helmdon Primary School on Tuesday 13th July from 4 to 8pm.

Ashley Warren can be contacted

on 01327 354126 or ashley@bellplantation.co.uk.

PC Horner reported that as it is almost impossible to break into cars these days to steal them, thieves are now entering properties to steal car keys. They are particularly targeting high-end cars, and this area has seen its fair share of this latest wave of crime. Generally thieves only search downstairs for keys and will also take credit cards if they are handy. However, in reply to a question, PC Horner did not recommend sleeping with the keys under your pillow! Locking the car in a garage is the best protection.

No enthusiasm was shown by those at the meeting for the resurrection of a village Neighbourhood Watch network. However, more investigation will be made into the information which is available to see if it can be filtered into a format suitable for local distribution.

There followed a series of brief reports from village organisations ranging from the Parochial Church Council, the Old School Committee, the Parish Path Warden, Broadband company and the Leeson Trust.

David Robbins is our Footpath Warden keeping an eye on the local tracks. Indeed, later in this issue you will find a great idea for a walk which may be of interest to newer residents. His plea at the meeting

was for horse riders to keep to designated paths as the damage done during wet weather in churning up footpaths takes a long time to regenerate. If you see anything untoward when you are out walking, please let David know on 857795.

John and Joyce Riches have been supporting Age UK in the village for some years, and would now welcome any help that could be offered, especially in driving. John would be pleased to hear from you on 857703.

Mrs Letts, head teacher at Silverstone Schools, had always come in person in the past to give a report, so it was a surprise that she did not turn up this time. All was explained a week later, when she came to the next ordinary Parish Council meeting - not for the first time has someone been confused between the Parish Annual Meeting and the Parish Council AGM - the latter is only concerned with the election of chairman and vice chairman for the coming year and with adopting standing orders. So herewith are some extracts from the report which Mrs Letts had prepared:

Pupil numbers have remained around 80 in the Infant school with Year 1 at its maximum of 30 and 96 in the Junior School, where attendance has been rising in recent

years. As budgets for both schools are fairly healthy, staffing levels have been maintained. Mrs Tyrrell, the Deputy Headteacher of the Junior School, is leaving in July after 24 years of dedicated service. The Friends Association continues to be very proactive with both fundraising and social activities.

Major events during the last year have included an Ofsted inspection of the Junior school in March. This was very rigorous, so it was pleasing to be classed as good with outstanding aspects in behaviour, safeguarding and attendance. Following this was a denominational inspection, a requirement of Church of England control. This was classed as good in all sections. Residential visits were undertaken by years 3 to 6 of the Junior school. During the year, each child at both schools has had five sessions at the Forrest School, using the school grounds, the Pocket Park and Hazelborough Woods.

PARISH COUNCIL

At the regular meeting on 24th May, the existing chairman and vice-chairman, Keith Fenwick and Ian Dyckhoff, were re-elected.

The Auditor's report was discussed. This showed that the Council are not following correct procedure in a number of minor matters, for instance agendas are

not signed by the clerk, and remedial action was agreed.

The planning application for Mini Farm had been discussed by the District Council but a decision deferred for a site visit. Subsequently, the District Council deferred their decision again due to impending changes in government guidelines.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCH

Interviews for a new vicar took place on 21st June. Unfortunately, as we have been without anyone in post since Bridget's retirement in March last year, the outcome was inconclusive for the time being. In a statement the Archdeacon said:

"The Diocese practice is to maintain silence about the outcome of interviews until a definite announcement can be made. If the position is to be re-advertised, this would likely be made known fairly quickly. Any appointment, however, takes time to confirm since the successful candidate is given a short time to reflect on the offer and to tell his/her existing congregation, while there is also the inevitable delay caused by the necessity to go through the process of the criminal records check. Tedious and frustrating it may seem, but it is what we have to live with in this day and age."

An announcement will be made, by flyer or email, as soon as there is more news.

The old churchyard surrounding the church is mowed weekly during the season by a team of residents who have freely offered their services (or been coerced to join the rota). Heartfelt thanks are given to all of them for their work.

The winners of the May tote were Joyce and John Riches (£212.50), and in June Liz Haycock won £210.

Sunday 20th June saw perfect weather for the Open Gardens organised by the Church, for which over £700 was raised. More than 150 visitors toured the seven very different gardens, shown at their best in the sun. And of course the teas and cakes served on the lawn at

Leeson House did a roaring trade.

Richard Tomalin thanks everyone who helped make the event a success, in particular the gardeners who put so much work into making their gardens ready:

Mrs and Mrs David Dancer
35 Wappenham Road

Mrs and Mrs David Darling
Leeson House, The Green

Mr David Hughes
The Cottage, Church Lane

Mr and Mrs Bob Jones
Cereto Cottage, School Lane

Mr and Mrs Steve Neasham
Orchard Cottage, Main Street

Mr and Mrs Keith Plant
The Pytles, Wappenham Road

Mr and Mrs Arthur Young
Stone Cottage, Main Street



*Visitors enjoying
Keith and
Monica Plants'
garden in
Wappenham
Road*

Stone Cottage garden, Main Street



SPEEDWATCH

The most recent period during which the Speedwatch cameras were in the village bagged a reasonable haul of drivers exceeding the speed limit. It's astonishing that even when drivers see the operators, very prominent in their fluorescent jackets, and the camera some still don't slow down. The police have taken the information gathered and sent warning letters to those being particularly flagrant with the rules.

It's heartening to note that few recalcitrants actually came from the village - but there were one or two!

Statistics from the September/October 2009 session show that 52 letters were sent out, two to local residents.

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

The directors of ABbA are organising a photographic exhibition for three days at the end of this month in the Old School. The aim is to give everyone a chance both to show off some of their photos and to see what other villagers have created. There are no prizes but it should be a good way to get together. The exhibition is spread over three days, starting with set-up on the evening of Wednesday 27th July from 6pm and then will be open to everyone from 7pm until 9pm. The exhibition will continue on Thursday and Friday between 2pm and 4pm, then 7pm and 9pm.

A special invitation is extended to all the older people in the village to come along on Thursday afternoon

to see the photographs and have a good natter. Tea or coffee and cakes will be provided.

We had a successful exhibition of photos several years ago so hopefully this one will be just as popular and give you some ideas for taking that master shot when on holiday.

And here at the *Abtalk* international media hub, we are on the hunt for village photographs suitable for the front page of our world-renowned publication. Pictures need to work well in black and white as printing in colour would be considered profligate in this austere age. Please send your masterpieces to either editor. Many thanks.

VILLAGE FUND NEWS

Unfortunately the barn dance, planned for 12th June, was a casualty of the World Cup, coinciding as it did with England's first game. In retrospect, it may not have been such a necessity to cancel it, but back then hopes were high.

However, to compensate the Committee has arranged a village event for 24th July, with games for the children starting at 4.30 (the road will be closed from 1.00). There will be a bar either on the green or in the Old School if it is wet. The evening will be just a social gathering with fish and chips available at about 7pm to 7.30pm. Tickets for these must be

ordered and paid for by Monday 19th July. This is really important as the fish man only brings the amount of fish required. Anyone can order fish and chips and eat them on the green or take them home if they wish.

Two marquees are planned so that numbers are not restricted. As Jan Miles says: "we have not got too much organised activity hoping that it is a lovely evening and people can just sit around and talk to others. We have contingency plans if it is wet."

For more information and supper tickets, please call Jan on 857427.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE STATISTICS

Northamptonshire Police believe they are getting results, the belief supported by the following statistics:

- > 284 arrests with the help of police dogs
- > 943 suspects for house burglary
- > 562 incidents dealt with in the Force helicopter
- > drugs seized with a street value of over £4m
- > £1.4 million of criminal assets retrieved
- > 95% of 999 calls have been answered within four rings.

More information at www.northants.police.uk or call 03000 111 222 to speak with a local officer.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

Friday 2nd July saw 26 teams each of three people competing in an outrageous contest to shear a sheep, eat a banana and drink a pint of Hooky. Now who thought that one up?

It was prompted by the close of the shearing season when the New Zealand shearers, who regularly come to work in the UK during their winter, can finally relax. The season starts on 1st May and was completed early this year due to the warm dry summer. Sadly the competition had to be curtailed due to a technical hitch: there were more sheep, more pints, but the bananas ran out. Incredibly the winning time was 58 seconds.

The last monthly quiz, held on 15th June, was the usual light-hearted affair. However, the winning team, The Silver Street Strollers composed of Dave and Chris Cunningham and Jane and John Sandford, were delighted to have raised £90 for the Algernon Trust in Whittlebury. The next quiz is on Tuesday 13th July.

An unexpected visit from Royal Oak Morris, a group of morris dancers based at the Royal Oak in Eydon was a highlight of one Thursday evening in June. Unfortunately without advance publicity it was enjoyed only by the regulars who dropped in that evening. They were joined by Stony Steppers, a traditional clog dance group from Stony Stratford.

For those lucky enough to catch

Morris dancers relaxing after their exertions





Andy's mobile garden

some of the performance it was a rural summer entertainment of skill and musical virtuosity, particularly on the melodeons (a type of accordion), the mandola (tenor mandolin) and bodhrán. The dancers and musicians clearly enjoyed any opportunity to perform and hopefully will return.

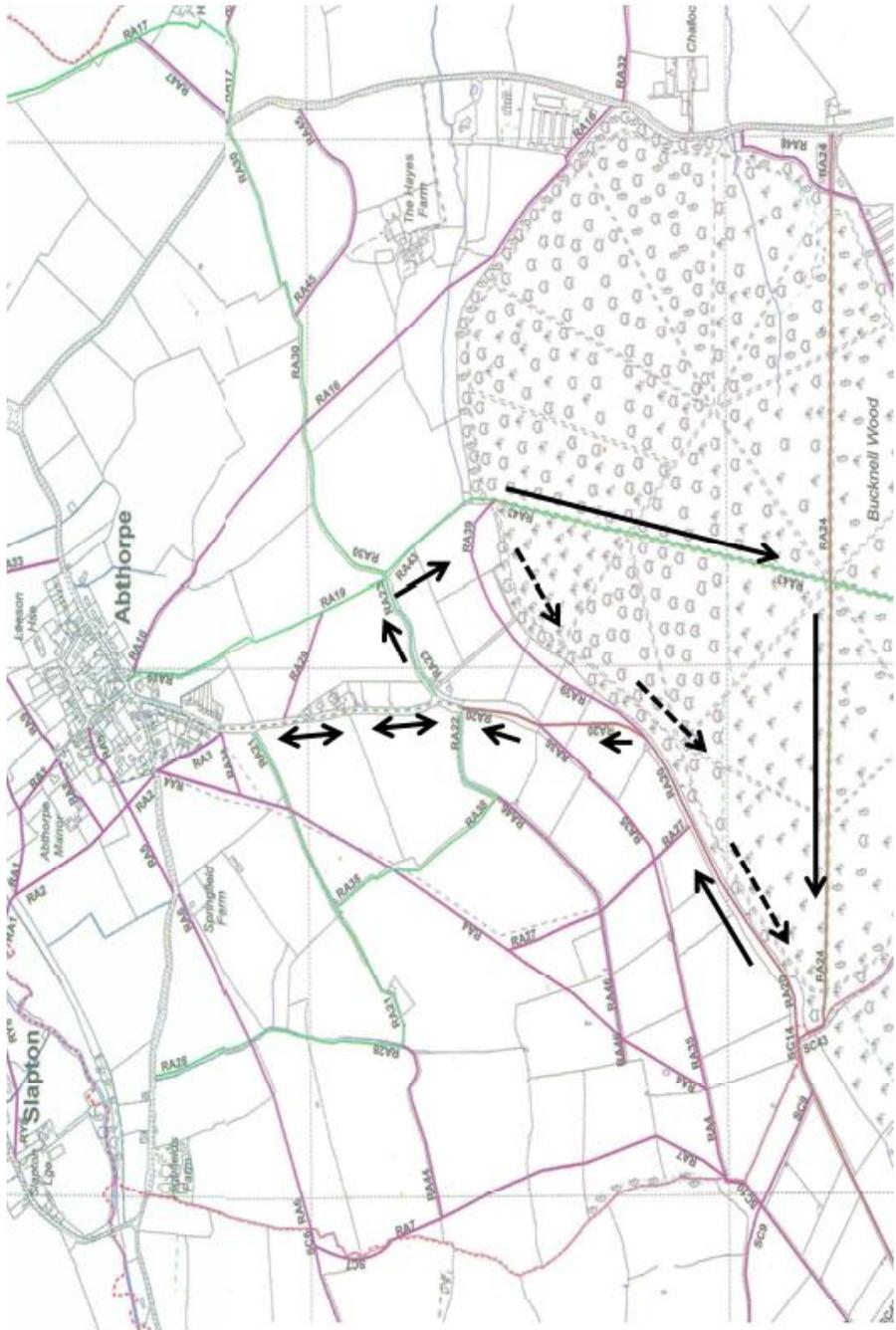
The restaurant is gearing up for the grand prix weekend with fixed time slots for dinner. Andy Houghton, the chef, believes in serving fresh, organic, seasonal food, and even has a mobile herb garden which he nurtures in his garden in Whittlebury and transports to the New Inn when the produce is ready. So tucked round the back of the pub close to the kitchen he has lettuce, parsley, rosemary, horse radish, borage, dwarf beans, oregano, hyssop,

lovage, coriander, courgettes and more. Additionally he grows his own potatoes, strawberries, raspberries, melons and aubergines that find their way into some of his seasonal recipes. It's clear how much Andy enjoys gardening and probably spends as much time growing food as he does preparing it in his kitchen.

FILM ABTHORPE

The Smallest Show on Earth was a fitting finale before a summer break, providing some good laugh-out-loud moments and bringing a smile to everyone's face.

The plan is to resume in the autumn - late September or early October - with a suitably bright and breezy, fairly modern (2003) film



but set in the 1920s: *Chicago* with Catherine Zeta Jones and Renée Zellweger. So if you are enticed to watch it before - DON'T - and come and enjoy the communal experience of an evening with Film Abthorpe.

A WALK IN THE WOODS

Dave Robbins is our Parish Footpath Warden (see report on the Annual Parish Meeting), and is familiar with all our local walks. As part of an occasional series, here he suggests another walk for those people who may be new to the village or who have not yet enjoyed the pleasures of rambling around Abthorpe. A colour map has been included separately with this issue:

There are many footpaths around the parish giving easy access to the local countryside, and through the efforts of local farmers, Northants council, the parish council and others, the rights of way are quite well marked and paths generally accessible.

WALK 3 (4-5KM)

Wherever you start from in Abthorpe village Brackley Lane provides a convenient access point to the network of rights of way which link the village and Bucknell woods. This walk describes a simple loop which is but one of them. It is a delightful walk in fields and woodland offering

welcome shade in the summer and woodland flowers in the spring, including the bluebells which, in late spring, carpet the woodland floor on the north side. At the top of the lane, in front of low barns, a bridleway leaves to the left (Hogg Lane) leading to a field gate after about 100m, and a descending path over a grassy field to the right. Two further gates give access to the woods and one of the main woodland rides. There are many permissery paths in addition to the rights of way for those who wish to experiment. Just inside the wood the start of a perimeter track is marked by a barrier to horses to the right. The path is easy to follow, winding its way through the trees around the northern edge of the woods. After 10 minutes or so an intersection of paths is reached; make sure you carry straight on and don't take the broader paths to the left.

For those wanting firmer ground the grassy ride (a bridleway) by which the wood was entered can be followed in a straight line to the south where after about 5 minutes it gives way to a broad forest access road of crushed ironstone. Another five minutes walk brings you to the junction of the main rides; turn again to the right to access another broad ride (designated a green road). Whichever route you follow

you will end up at the western corner of Bucknell Woods, which are left behind though another gateway. Recent improvements to the fences and gates in this area have made access very easy although it can be muddy.

As can be seen from the map there are many possible field routes for the return journey to Abthorpe. To the left the RA4, a long field path directly back to the village, can be reached; however, the simplest route is to turn right and follow a recently improved green lane along a narrow strip of land (RA20, designated a SSSI) with the edge of the woodland to your right. After a gentle downhill amble, fields of pasture are entered over a stile and gate. Going half left across grass, two further gates and you are back that the top of Brackley Lane; familiar ground.

WAPPENHAM NEWS OF INTEREST

Songs for a Summer Evening is a concert being given by Northampton Chamber Choir on Saturday 10th July at St Mary the Virgin church. It begins at 6.30, with the early part arranged particularly with children in mind. The very civilised interval of a Pimms reception follows and the main concert starts at 7.45 with a varied programme from Mozart to Pachelbel via Brian May. Tickets £10 for adults, £3 for children, available

from the shop or 860219.

Other regular Wappenham events are table tennis and short mat bowls, both in the village hall. 861038 for details of table tennis as times vary; Thursdays 2 - 4pm for bowls.

BLAKESLEY SHOW

The show, organised by Blakesley and District Agricultural Society, is a firm fixture in the local rural calendar and this year, its 126th, will be held on Saturday 7th August starting at 8.30am.

It was founded back in 1884 to give local farmers an opportunity to compare their livestock and that remains the principal reason why the show is still organised, and indeed is going from strength to strength.

The show's schedule (at www.blakesleyshow.co.uk) is fascinating and gives livestock enthusiasts opportunities to show off their animals. There are classes devoted to Wiltshire Horn sheep, and Highland, Dexter, South Devon and Aberdeen Angus cattle, and lots more besides. The seven rings on the show ground will be packed with events for equestrian lovers ranging from jumping for children and adults to displays of retrained race horses.

People of more mature years will remember draught horses such as Suffolk Punch, Shire and Clydesdale

PEOPLE

We would like to welcome Karen and Michael Sakkalli who have moved into 2 The Green with their children Christabel and Rupert, lovely whippet, Myca, and equally lovely piano. They have come from Plumpton, so they are already familiar with the area and have friends in the village. Karen is Head of English at Bilton Grange near Rugby while Michael is a fine art publisher based in Oxford. We hope they will enjoy their life in Abthorpe.

Congratulations to Sharon Wooller whose Byfield Club team won the Northamptonshire County bowls semi-final on 16th May. Sharon and her three team members will represent Northamptonshire at the national finals scheduled to be played at Leamington Spa in August where their first round draw is against Lincolnshire. Her participation in the finals means that she will be awarded her county badge. She has been playing bowls for 10 years and in 2009 was part of a team that won the Northamptonshire Ladies' triples league. We wish them well in



ploughing the fields and bringing in the harvest drawing wooden carts and wagons. They can relive those memories by watching the heavy horses in the vintage ploughing field. Crawler tractors and even steam powered ploughing engines will also be put through their paces. There's lots more besides so it promises to be a good day out.

BALL BY BALL COMMENTARY

Northampton Association for the Blind launched their Ball by Ball cricket commentary service in 2008 and are trying to make this facility known to as many potential listeners as possible.

The remaining games in the Twenty/20 season are 9th July at Warwickshire starting at 6.50pm,

Sunday 11th July Nottinghamshire
3.00pm, Thursday 15th July
Lancashire 6.50 pm.

There is free admission to any carer with a registered blind person. Free receivers are available at the club shop. For more information on these or future games, contact John Wood at NAB on 01604 719193 or Ray Foster on 01604 881532.

LOST AND FOUND

Those not on the Abthorpe broadband network would not have followed the little saga of Guinness, the Sandfords lovely all black cat which recently went missing from Willow Tree cottage in Silver Street. A plea was sent out to search outbuildings for him. But the tale ended happily with him returning home, thirsty and hungry. So what had he been up to in the intervening time?

TOWCESTER RECYCLING CENTRE - NEW OPENING HOURS

The opening arrangements have been changed and the centre is now closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. However, hours are extended on other days: 8am to 8pm from April to September and 8am to 6pm from October to March. Hours at other Centres have also been changed, with some closing on different days.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WELLBEING

A very interesting idea is being hatched by the Northamptonshire Adult Learning Service and the NHS. A national website is being put together to gather information on classes, clubs or groups so that people reaching a change point in their lives can be encouraged to try



*Guinness (on
the right)*

something new. Changes such as redundancy, children leaving home, bereavement, etc. can leave people feeling unfulfilled and under-valued. By having the choice to branch into something new they can also establish an informal local support network.

If you run or are involved with a local group, class or club do get in touch with the Adult Learning Service at customerfeedback@northamptonshire.gov.uk. There is also a call for members of a steering committee to put the plan into action. There is a good video describing the scheme at www.nals.org.uk/video/

SCHOOL OF LIFE - 'AGE IS JUST A NUMBER'

The School of Life is a programme to promote the exchange of skills between young people under 25 and those over 50, by sharing skills and interests across the generations. Older people may share with young people skills that they are not taught in school or perhaps at home, such as decorating, putting up a shelf, how to budget, to grow vegetables and how to tinker with a car. In return, young people can show older people how to use a mobile phone, use eBay, keep fit using a Nintendo Wii and how to use a digital camera. And both age groups can share their

hobbies.

The project is being piloted in Northampton, Wellingborough and South Northamptonshire until March 2011, lead by the Northamptonshire Library Service partnering with local groups including South Northants Volunteer Bureau.

For information contact Anne Lovely, School of Life Project Manager, Kettering Library, Sheep Street, Kettering, NN16 0AY; alovely@northamptonshire.gov.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

1. Towcester is the oldest town in Northamptonshire. Many of the buildings are Grade 2 listed and the entire central area is designated a conservation area. The parish church of St Lawrence, built on the site of an important Roman building, dates from Norman times and possibly earlier. Nearby, in a defensive position by the river Tove (Moat Lane), is the castle motte.

Towcester has always been an important stop for travellers, with around 20 coaching inns in the town in the early 19th century, one of which, the Saracens Head, played host to Charles Dickens. The 16th-century inn was then immortalised in 'Pickwick Papers'.

2. Abthorpe and Wappenham shared a station which opened to goods

traffic in August 1871 and passenger trains the following June but closed with the rest of the line in the early 1950s.

The picture shows where the platform was, near the cattle shed on the Wappenham to Abthorpe Road.



DIARY

Saturday 10 July

Music for a summer's evening, Wappenham Church; tickets from Wappenham shop

Sunday 11 July

British Formula 1 Grand Prix, Silverstone

Monday 12 July

Parish Council Meeting, Old School, 7.45pm

Tuesday 13 July

Charity Quiz at the New Inn, 8.00pm, supper included

Broadview Energy public exhibition of their wind farm proposals, Helmdon Primary School, 4 - 8 pm

Saturday 24 July

Village social event on the Green/Old School; 4.30 onwards

Wednesday 28 - Friday 30 July

Photography Exhibition, the Old School, afternoons and evenings (see article)

Tuesday 3 August

Quiz at the New Inn, 8.00pm, supper included

Saturday 7 August

Blakesley Show, Hootens Farm, from 8.30am

Saturday 4 September

Wappenham Village Fete