



# ALX T ABT A

*News from Abthorpe*

*November 2010*

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There has been quite a break since our last issue - the editors seem to be taking longer and longer holidays. Some of our items, therefore, will get you casting your minds back to those warmer days and lighter evenings, not such a bad thing just as the clocks have gone back and thoughts are turning to Christmas. But first, the most important question: would you consider serving on the parish council?

### **PARISH COUNCIL VACANCY**

There is currently a vacancy on the parish council, for which the council has the power to co-opt. The parish council is responsible for some local services, such as street lighting, but more usefully it is the most local part of 'local government' and is consulted on a wide variety of subjects to look after the interests of the village. The council meets once every 6 weeks on a Monday evening. If you are interested, please contact the Clerk, Bob Carter, on 857753 or email [parish.clerk@abthorpe.net](mailto:parish.clerk@abthorpe.net).

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## ELECTORAL ROLL CANVASSERS

Electoral Services Officers from South Northamptonshire Council are currently undertaking their annual canvass of properties to update the Electoral Roll, by conducting 'door to door' visits across the district. Up until Sunday 21 November between 9am and 8pm staff will be visiting properties that have not returned their electoral roll forms. All staff will hold photographic ID badges and will be wearing high-viz jackets. Should anyone wish to confirm the legitimacy of the visiting Electoral Services Officers, please call the Electoral Services Office on 01327 322121. although this service is only available between 9am and 5pm.

The police are taking this opportunity to remind everyone of some general doorstep advice: 'If you're not sure don't open the door'. If you are unsure of someone's identity ask them for their name and company, close/lock your door and then call the company from an official number in the phone book. If you are still unsure do not let them into your house. If you are concerned about a caller at your door or suspect that distraction burglars or rogue doorstep traders are operating in your community, please call the dedicated Doorstep Crime Action Network (DAN) number 0345 23 07 702.

## NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

Christmas is fast approaching when thinking of celebratory meals, and Andy has published his Christmas menu, available from the pub or at [www.newinnatabthorpe.co.uk](http://www.newinnatabthorpe.co.uk). The bar will be open on Christmas Day lunchtime for that pre-dinner drink.

And New Year's eve will be celebrated in style as always at the New Inn with a live band and the usual celebrations.

The monthly quiz evenings have continued throughout the summer with good attendances and money being raised for charity. In October Louise and Andrew Gough donated the evening's proceeds to Help for Heroes. These light-hearted events continue with the next quiz on Tuesday 16 November at 8.00pm (with supper), and a Christmas special on Tuesday 21 December.

*Back in August, Rob Smith had arranged an outing to the Hook Norton Brewery. John Riches joined the merry band of locals and his report captures the essence of this intrepid expedition:*

**"Operation HNB:** The village was scoured for volunteers to take part in an operation to the far north. At an early stage in the planning of the potentially hazardous mission it was gallantly decided that the group would be men only.

"Steve Andrews, with experience of serving his Queen and country far behind the iron curtain where he continued to send important signals back to the UK, was to be in command of the expeditionary force.



"At 09:00 hours on the appointed day the 13 volunteers were full of trepidation as they gathered at base camp in the pub for a final briefing session. Steve, believing that an army marches best on its stomach, had arranged for Andy Houghton from base camp's catering corps to serve up a substantial breakfast of eggs,

bacon, sausage, baked beans, tomatoes and toast that would surely energise our boys.

"At 10:00 hours precisely transport arrived with SMS emblazoned on the sides - surely meaning Steve's Militia Services? After mounting, the vehicle set off for the far north - of Oxfordshire, where the target of operation HNB was located. After a quick recce the volunteers split into two platoons for the final strenuous push to the summit of their desires - The Hook Norton Brewery.



*Graham Lambert and Rob Smith enjoy at joke.*

"The experienced professional guides soon explained the history of the brewery which was founded in 1849 when young Queen Victoria was on the throne. England had

endured Magna Carta, the Wars of the Roses, the Reformation, Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarians, the Restoration of the Monarchy and was well into the Industrial Revolution when John Harris set up his brewery in the village of Hook Norton. After centuries of tempestuous history the locals were ready for a few decent beers. Our boys, by the time they had completed their examination of such a fine example of a Victorian tower brewery, sampled each of the beers the brewery produces and looked at the draught horses, their energy levels were drained. So a strategic retreat was made to the Sun Inn for lunch. Refreshed the mission headed back to cross the border into Northamptonshire. After such an exhausting day there were doubts whether our adventurers would make it back to base camp without further supplies. Steve had anticipated this and had arranged a stop at Hooky pub, the Three Cones in Thorpe Mandeville, for further refreshment.

"One villager who saw the volunteers quietly return stated that they were obviously tired but elated by the success of their mission.

"Debriefing took place back in base camp and it was unanimously decided that Steve really could organise a booze-up at a brewery and that he deserved a medal."

The real life of Jackie Ayre, who helps Andy in the restaurant, came to light recently when she returned from an absence to reveal that she had been presenting a paper to a conference of the International Society of Augmentative Alternative Communications in Barcelona. Needing to be enlightened, Jackie explained that she works for a charity called Ace Centre based in Oxford which helps disabled people who have complex communication needs to 'talk' using computer technology. Many people will be aware of Dr Stephen Hawking the theoretical physicist who suffers from muscular dystrophy and uses a computer based 'talking device'. Jackie and her colleagues use similar technology to teach people, especially children, who can use slight movements of their heads or eyes to operate a computer so that they can communicate with other people. Jackie and her colleagues had been sharing their experiences of using 'eyegaze', a relatively new technology that allows severely disabled people to manipulate a computer. Eyegaze benefits a variety of people who have no other way of controlling things in their world.

In appreciation of Jackie's work perhaps Ace Centre would be a worthy beneficiary of the quiz winnings one month, especially as their funding is in some doubt

following the government's spending review. More information: [www.ace-centre.org.uk](http://www.ace-centre.org.uk)

### **CAROL SINGING**

And with Christmas in mind, carol singing round the village will happen again this year on Wednesday 22nd December. Bring your voice (whether in tune or not) and a torch to The Old School at 6.30 for a light-hearted singing jaunt round the village. In previous years villagers have donated generous sums to Crisis (for the charity or to get the singers to go away has yet to be fathomed). This year's charity will be decided by those who take part, but a warm welcome awaits at the pub to finish off the evening.

### **VILLAGE FUND NEWS**

Back in July at the beginning of the school holidays an afternoon of fun and games were organised on the green. With the roads closed the

children (of whom there are an ever increasing number in the village) were able to ride and play in freedom. Some children emulated the Tour de France and chalked pictures or messages on the tarmac. Games from giant chess to skittles were laid out on the grass, and many of the children participated in the observation quiz around the village.

The afternoon gave way to early evening and the arrival of the fish and chip van and the opening of the bar. The weather was kind, always a bonus for the organisers, and the whole event was much appreciated as another opportunity for the village to get together.

And you will all have received the flyer with details of Cameo Opera's



*Glenda Holton, Bet Rush and Rene Balderson ready for fish and chips*

visit on Saturday 27 November. Tickets are selling fast and either Jan Miles (857427) or June Willsher (850575) can tell you if there are any left.

The Fund is hoping to arrange a Christmas celebration for the older residents of the village, and we should again be seeing the lit Christmas tree on the green.

### **DOG MESS**

Regrettably we must return to this old subject, as several deposits have been found on the village green recently. This is particularly of concern as it is our children's playground. Many of you will have seen the case recently of a young girl who has lost the sight in one eye due to the disease passed on by dog mess. We do not want that to happen here. Even in the fields, sheep can be fatally affected. So please ensure that any mess left anywhere in the village is promptly removed. This is not only a legal requirement, but a moral duty to protect the health of all the village children.

### **MARIE CURIE COFFEE 'DAY'**

The annual fund raising event for Marie Curie Cancer Care organised by Liz and Barry Haycock, and their many helpers, was as successful as all previous efforts and has again raised something over £5,000.

This has been a special year for acknowledging Liz's amazing contribution to the charity for which she used to work as a nurse. From their first coffee morning in 1983 raising £110 she has gone on to contribute over £70,000 to the charity's funds. Although a little belated, Liz and Barry were presented with an award for 25 years of fund raising during this year's event.

This followed on from an invitation to a Buckingham Palace garden party in 2008, a visit to Downing Street to receive congratulations from the then prime minister, Gordon Brown, and a citation at the Institute of Fund Raising national awards ceremony for being the longest serving Marie Curie nurse in Northamptonshire. All these honours could not be more deserved.

### **MONEY ADVICE SERVICE**

South Northants Council is offering advice to anyone who has money concerns or needs practical financial planning advice. The advice is free and confidential and is available to anyone living or working in the area, not just those in SNH houses. Specific examples of advice include debt, money management, welfare benefits and help in completing the necessary forms. If you feel you could benefit, contact Bob Wingerath on 01327 322393; bob.wingerath@southnorthans.gov.uk

## **PLANNING DECISION**

A planning application has been approved for the construction of a new house at 43 Wappenham Road. When commenting, the Parish Council had no objection to the development as such, but were concerned about access because of the restricted vision around the junction with Main Street.

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS**

Upholstery classes are held in the village hall at Wappenham most Thursdays from 6 to 9pm. If you are interested to see what they do and would like to drop in, call Dianne Walsh on 860516 to check times and for more general information.

And if you've had a hankering to learn a brass instrument, Keith Muggidge may be the person you need. An experienced player and teacher (fully CRB checked), Keith is on 07803 507141, muggers@mac.com

## **'DISCOVERING THE PAST' - MAJOR HERITAGE PROJECT COMES TO ABTHORPE**

*Stuart Taylor is the project manager of The Rose of the Shires project and offers this background. Stuart's piece is followed by some observations on the latest walk around Abthorpe.*

Over the past few months Abthorpe, as part of the Whittlewood area, has been involved in a major Heritage Lottery funded project that is being delivered across Northamptonshire. The 'Rose of the Shires' project, managed by Rockingham Forest Trust, is working in six areas of the county over a three-year period involving 30 villages in discovering more about their buildings and historic landscapes.

Events for the Whittlewood villages began with two illustrated talks in Syresham village hall. The evenings looked at Northamptonshire customs, characters and village life, traditional building styles and how the local landscape has dramatically changed over the past 700 years. The project uses unique historic mapping that has been produced for Northamptonshire showing the open fields, enclosures, woodland and villages of previous centuries alongside today's environment.

In June the project provided a coach and took people out to look at some of the evidence that remains from the area's past. Leaving from Syresham the bus stopped off at various points around Abthorpe, Pury End and Paulerspury; access on to private land had been organised and the group was able to see the earthworks of former buildings at the deserted village of Charlock, ridge & furrow systems and the major

changes caused to the landscape through enclosure. During the walk around Abthorpe the groups used copies of historic documents and mapping to see how the buildings and surroundings of the village have changed over the past 200 years.

A few weeks later the project provided a morning at the Northamptonshire Records Office: the group was shown the range of maps and records available and how these can be used as part of the research process. People then had the opportunity to work with documents specific to the Whittlewood area.

The project provided another two local heritage days during September. The first of these took groups around Syresham and Paulerspury studying the history and architecture of their churches and walking around both villages to identify significant unlisted buildings. A week later there were morning visits to Alderton, Whittlebury and Silverstone churches whilst the afternoon was spent looking at the church and the unlisted buildings of Abthorpe. (See below for more detail on this walk.).

In October there were a further two days of heritage activity for Abthorpe and Paulerspury. Small groups were taken around the paths and fields of the villages and shown how to assess the survival of historic features and enclosures, hopefully leading to a few people carrying out follow up activities and gathering more information for the project. During October and November there is also going to be an ongoing study of local census information from 1851 and 1881. Combining the records of occupations in the villages with historic mapping will help to identify surviving buildings/outbuildings that were originally used in local trades and industry such as lace making.

As the 'Rose of the Shires' completes its work with Abthorpe and the other Whittlewood villages it will produce a detailed report on the area's historic landscape and character, along with recommendations on how these can be managed and conserved. The report will be adopted into Northamptonshire's Historic Environment Records and used to inform local planning and decision making in the future

On Saturday 25 September ten parishioners joined the walk around the village to look at some of its architectural features and to develop our knowledge of our landscape, social, built and geological heritage, and at the same time help to ensure the conservation of significant buildings and other features.

The walk around Abthorpe was led by Dr Peter Hill who is an authority

on historic buildings, particularly churches. Although the church was almost completely rebuilt in 1870 some mediaeval fragments remain. The architect responsible for the rebuilding in Victorian times was Ewan Christian, one of the foremost ecclesiastical architects of the that age. Moving on to the old school and the commemorative plaque, as seen in the photograph. it was suggested that the wording 'Honour the King' could have been dangerous in the middle of the Civil War. The mixture of sandstone, ironstone and brick was a feature of some houses. Of particular interest were the coping stones on the wall of Yew Tree Cottage which almost certainly came from the original church, and the small building in the garden of Stone Cottage whose bricks were hand made.

And most recently four areas of the landscape have been surveyed comparing the state of current hedging and trees with that recorded on a map from 1660, and also land use: either pasture or arable. A number of hedges have disappeared as fields have been enlarged, but a surprising amount of the local farmland is as it would have appeared to our predecessors who worked the land all those years ago.

### **ABTHORPE'S SILK INDUSTRY**

*Following the Heritage Project described above, an interesting article by David Saint on a related theme of 'Abthorpe past' appeared in the Northampton Chronicle and Echo last month. We are grateful to the editor for permission to reprint extracts.*

Once upon a time there were two pubs in Abthorpe and Jim Hinson was landlord of one of them. He was a busy chap: he was also a wheelwright as well as being a brick and tile maker. His pub was called 'The Stocking Frame'. The pub closed in the 1950s but the building still carries the name proudly. It had its unusual name because Abthorpe was famous for the manufacture of silk stockings.

One house in the village even had a complete wall of window to maximise on light for the stocking makers. You can still see the house and the wall where the windows have been bricked up.\*

But by Jim Hinson's time, in the 1870s, the industry had all but disappeared and only two men were engaged in it. John Capern was a stocking weaver and John Needham was a framework knitter. Most of the villagers had gone over to the more profitable shoe trade as well as lace-making that was, at the time, a big cottage industry in Abthorpe. Silk stocking-making moved

briefly with the Sherriff family to Middleton Cheyney, but later in the century it went forever out of the county to Leicester where hosiery was already big business.

But Abthorpe was not alone in concentrating on making silk stockings. Way back in 1277 Adam le Hosier was making them in Northampton. By 1734 they were being made in Weedon and by 1800 in Daventry. Silk weaving flourished throughout the 18th and 19th centuries first in Desborough and then in Rothwell and Kettering where silk was used to make velvet, satin and quality plush for silk hats. Towcester and Maidford had thriving silk industries too.

Back in the Middle Ages, Northamptonshire had an important business in the weaving and selling of woollen cloth. This declined only to return in the 1700s for a bit of a boom that lasted for nearly two hundred years. During this period in Desborough, Rothwell, Kettering and surrounding villages the textile industry had been second only to agriculture as the main source of employment. This was mostly still wool, but also hemp and flax were used for weaving until this gave way to silk. But the industry disappeared in 1868 when operatives and the factories in which they worked changed over to boot and shoe making that came to dominate in the county.

The silk industry in Weedon is especially interesting. In the 1771 Militia List James England was entered as a silk weaver and seven men as journeymen silk weavers. James England was a rotter and *The Northampton Mercury* of 6 April 1772 recorded that he had stolen over a thousand pounds worth of silk. He had been held in temporary custody at the Saracen's Head in Daventry from where he escaped. He had owned a large silk factory at 7-13, New Street in Weedon and was a wicked employer as well as a crook. A contemporary Weedonian, Benjamin West, described England, in a lengthy poem, as a tyrant, a wretch, a worm and a monster. Children in his employment were virtually imprisoned and treated harshly. They would have worked long hours and done menial, often dangerous, jobs.

So even though silk has a genteel ring to it, its manufacture here in Northamptonshire was a far from gentle industry.

\* This naturally provoked local musings, as no-one could think which house David was referring to. He came to Abthorpe in the 1990s when he was presenting the afternoon programme on BBC Northampton and when asked about the wall of windows he remembered his visit: "We had some villagers who hosted us and led us to the points of interest. We parked in the pub

car park and roved around the village with a tape recorder and 'dropped' recorded inserts into the live show, as well as talking to guests on site, as it were. We were taken to the house with the wall of windows. I wish I could remember who it was and where the 'mystery wall' was. I distinctly remember seeing it. There is no way that it has been demolished, there would have been an outcry." David went on to offer a prize for the solution to the mystery in the shape of his book *Northamptonshire Tales of Mystery and Murder*.

So the hunt for the answer was on. And the solution was easily found by asking Rene Balderson, a lady born and still living in the village. It was identified as David Hughes's home, The Cottage, on the junction of Main Street and Church Lane, which was restored by Bob Cook the previous owner as some of the walls were very dilapidated. The wall of windows faced north on to the church.

Hopefully Mrs Balderson will have received her prize by now.

## **HOME HEATING OIL**

With the steep rise in oil prices in the last year it seems timely to remind everyone of YOBCO (Yelvertoft Oil Buying Consortium) which started over 25 years ago when 20 neighbours got together to purchase heating oil. Over the years the scheme has grown in numbers and expanded geographically. The combined buying power means the best possible bulk discount prices can be achieved; and they do always seem to be cheaper than other oil suppliers. There are other benefits too. Find out more at [www.yobco.co.uk](http://www.yobco.co.uk); 01788 824236.

## **FROM OUR RECENTLY-ELECTED MP**

*Andrea Leadsom contributed this piece for the voters of Wappenham, but as she also represents Abthorpe her thoughts are reproduced.*

"I am delighted to be your new Member of Parliament. It is a great honour to be the first MP for South Northamptonshire - I am really looking forward to the challenge and thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you.

It has been a hectic first few months trying to get used to the rules and conventions, getting lost around the Palace of Westminster and hot-desking in committee rooms while I wait for a permanent office to become available.

On Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June I was able to deliver my Maiden Speech in the House of Commons during the Budget debate. I have made plenty of speeches over the last ten years but nothing has ever been quite as intimidating as standing up to speak for the first time in the Chamber.

In a very busy week I was also elected by Conservative MPs to the Treasury Select Committee, which examines the expenditure, administration and policy of HM Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs and public bodies such as the Bank of England and the Financial Services Authority (FSA). At this crucial time for the British economy, the committee has an extremely important job to do, and its reports are well-respected by many financial institutions, as well as the Treasury. I am sure I will be far busier now, but I am looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

I have really enjoyed the first few months as the new MP for South Northamptonshire. I am committed to protecting and promoting the interests of local people and I hope that, whoever you supported in the election, you will feel able to contact me if you feel I can ever be of any help. I will have monthly advice surgeries around the constituency;

please call my office on 01604 859721 for an appointment, or have a look at my website, [www.andrealeadsom.co.uk](http://www.andrealeadsom.co.uk) for dates of advice surgeries and 'drop in' stands at the Towcester and Brackley Farmers' Markets. Email: [andrea.leadsom.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:andrea.leadsom.mp@parliament.uk)

### **CHURCH NEWS**

The long wait, since February 2009, for a new rector for the Whittlewood parishes of Abthorpe, Silverstone, Slapton, Whittlebury and Paulerspury has finally come to an end. The Rev'd Paul McLeod's first service at Abthorpe will be Holy Communion at 9.15 on Sunday 28 November. Everyone is invited to join in this special occasion



and welcome Paul. Paul is a keen follower of motor racing, drawn to this home of the sport from his previous parish of Newbiggin Hall in the Diocese of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, an area in which he grew up and has lived for many years. His wife, the Rev'd Sue Faulkner, has been appointed priest-in-charge of the nearby Knightley Parishes (Badby, Newnham, Charwelton, Fawsley & Preston Capes).

The Harvest Festival weekend organised by the Parochial Church Council was a delight. On Saturday evening villagers, including four local farmers, packed into the Old School to enjoy a wonderful variety of seasonal foods. A Fairtrade quiz complemented the festivities.

The informal Harvest Festival service on the Sunday morning was led by Jan Miles with support from other members of the congregation. An audio-visual display about Fairtrade foods emphasised how our shopping habits help to better peoples' lives in many parts of the world. During the service Katie Noble and Hannah Wright pushed a shopping trolley the length of the aisle to collect Fairtrade gifts from members of the congregation. These, plus other donated produce, were taken to Northampton Soup Kitchen after the service.

A Remembrance Day service was held on Sunday 14 November, lead sympathetically by John Riches. It was personalised to the village by contributions from retired Major Stephen Noble, who remembered two colleagues killed in action in Basra and Sangin. And Rene Balderson spoke of Harold Matthews, her cousin who lost his life at age 21 during WWII and is buried in the churchyard extension. More details of this moving service can be found on the Abthorpe website or in the *Northampton Chronicle and Echo*.

There have been four tote winners since our last issue. July: Chris Scrivener (£222.50); August: Rob and Barbara Smith (£222.50); September: Phil and Merrilyn Berry (£222.50); October: Sara Tate (£225.00).

A welcome return of the Watling Singers has been booked for Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December at 7.00pm. Their Christmas concert last year attracted a full house so by mutual agreement they were delighted to arrange a return visit. The Singers are based in Weedon and have performed locally over many years. Tickets at £5 each are available from Richard Tomalin (858316) and David Hughes (858060).

And in preparation for their arrival the church will be given its periodic thorough cleaning between 10.00





competition. But as a flavour of the range of offer, in Abthorpe Life Tony Abbott displayed a series of pictures illustrating Bucknell Woods during the different seasons of the year. There were pictures of muntjac deer in village gardens, the Haycock's sheep, a family of foxes playing alongside a garden shed and of course many pictures of birds. The organisers were quite convinced that a particularly beautiful green woodpecker had been flying round the village gardens to pose especially for the exhibition.

Paul Mabbott, a self confessed bugs man, whilst staying at a house in Main Street, took close-ups of flies and caterpillars and sent his prints to the show.

Audrey Dancer's selection of black and white photographs from her family archives attracted a lot of attention. Her late husband Tony was a driver with Northampton

Transport, the former council owned bus company. Rosemary, Audrey and Tony's daughter, was pictured on her 21st birthday having just successfully passed her public service vehicles driving test sitting behind the wheel of a number 14 double decker with her admiring Dad looking on.

The children's section was amazing! Eleanor Gough's after dark picture of her Abthorpe snow monster on the village green caught using flash photography was wonderful, whilst her sister Katharine's computer manipulated poster-photos were highly effective. In the Further Afield class one photograph whimsically showed Wappenham's village sign. Roland Huggett's two stunning views of Astwell both in summer and in the deep snow of last winter were produced unusually for this era using film rather than digital photography. Keith Fenwick, a keen railway photographer, entered pictures showing steam trains in the Rockies and South Africa. Lee Foxon, a plumber who was working in the village at the time of the exhibition, is a keen motor sports photographer; one of his outstanding shots depicted driver Colin Turkington in his race gear. Lee's silhouette of his two young children playing in the advancing waves at the seaside was truly memorable.

## PEOPLE

There is no prize for spotting the deliberate mistake in the last issue: Karen and Michael Sakkalli live at 3 The Green, not no.2. Apologies to them.

In the July issue we reported the success of Sharon Wooller and her team-mates, Jean Pownall-Davies, Chris Cross and Val Jefferies from the Byfield Bowls Club, in winning through to represent Northamptonshire in the national finals. Consequently on August 1st the ladies went on to compete at the All England Championships at Leamington Spa. Having easily beaten Lincolnshire in the first round, they subsequently lost to Buckinghamshire by just two shots in the second round. However, Sharon and her team mates received their coveted Leamington Badges.



There have been a flurry of new people moving into the village and we extend a warm welcome to them all.

After a long search for their perfect home, Lucy and Paul Grimes have settled at Stone Barn in School Lane with Hettie, who is 11. More congratulations will be on their way in February with the arrival of another son or daughter.

Laura Middleton and Marco Bacic have arrived at Yew Tree Cottage prior to their marriage in the village church in March next year. Part of Laura's work is at Helen & Douglas House children's hospice in Oxford. When Marko escapes from his role as an engineer with Rolls Royce he enjoys gliding, flying from Bicester.

**PEOPLE CONTINUED**

And Tina and Tony Bacon have moved from Milton Keynes to the Toll House, with their two children, Hayley who is 16 and Jake, away at university in Reading. They also have a horse, living at Rignall Farm, with whom they hope to do dressage in the coming months. Tony is a journalist (a potential new newsletter editor!?), while Tina specialises in looking after the hairdressing needs of the elderly.

Welcome also to the new residents at 28a Wappenham Road. Hopefully we can catch up with them before the next issue.

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE  
CAMPAIGNS**

Operation Nightsafe targets alcohol abuse, sending a strong zero-tolerance message. The campaign supports a wider multi-agency county alcohol harm reduction strategy to raise awareness that officers are clamping down on violence, disorder and under-age drinking. Amongst other initiatives Officers conduct intelligence-led visits, targeting licensed premises suspected of committing offences and breaching the conditions of their licence. It is primarily focused on town centres and other areas with a 'night-time economy'.

Operation Guardian has reached its first anniversary. More than

1,500 people have been arrested in connection with serious acquisitive crime (robbery, domestic burglary and vehicle crime) since the start of the operation, and officers across the county have embarked on regular high-impact days, involving the execution of warrants and drugs raids and the recovery of drugs and stolen property. Even headquarters and back-office staff have been out on the ground supporting local colleagues, as well as increasing numbers of the public. These types of crime are down by around 20% during the last year, which translates into 2,500 fewer victims. The operation will continue throughout 2011. More information: [www.northants.police.uk](http://www.northants.police.uk)

**FILM ABTHORPE**

After an extended summer break, Film Abthorpe returned with a different offering from previously: the music and dance of *Chicago*. The next date has been set: 9 December when the main film will be *The Kite Runner*. It seems many people have read the book but not yet seen the film, so here's the opportunity. Everyone is welcome to come along to the Old School at 7.30pm, clutching drink of their choice.

**WAPPENHAM SHOP**

Being without a shop in the village, the post office at Wappenham was a great asset to many in Abthorpe. It is therefore sad to see it having to close its doors at the end of November, a casualty of the continuing decline in rural businesses. Evelyn and Tony Rist are retiring, having battled for some years to keep the business's head above water. It will be interesting to see if there is any appetite in the village for moving the post office business to another venue - or perhaps to Abthorpe?

**REMOVAL OF ELECTRICITY POLES**

The metal electricity pole outside Stable Cottage at the corner of School Lane and The Green has wasted away and needs to be removed. It cannot be replaced in its present

location as current regulations require much larger foundations, so it and the adjacent poles on both sides are going to be removed and the cabling placed underground. Underground feeds will be taken to the houses served by these three poles. Householders involved with be contacted. This work is expected to commence on 29th November and take three weeks. Running the cable along The Green will not cause too much disruption but it will have to go under the pavement in School Lane and to give the workmen adequate protection, traffic lights will be in operation. There will be a general interruption to the supply to the village for two periods of 4 hours each once the new cable has been laid to enable it to be connected; this will be advised nearer the time.

**'SCHOOL OF LIFE' AT NICOLAS HAWKSMOOR SCHOOL**

In the last issue we mentioned the School of Life project, whose maxim is 'age is just a number'. In September they became involved with welcoming the new year six students at Nicolas Hawksmoor Primary School and helping them to take over the care and maintenance of the courtyard, which had been extensively revamped during the summer. Find out more from the project manager Anne Lovely: [alovely@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:alovely@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

## CHURCH CLOCK

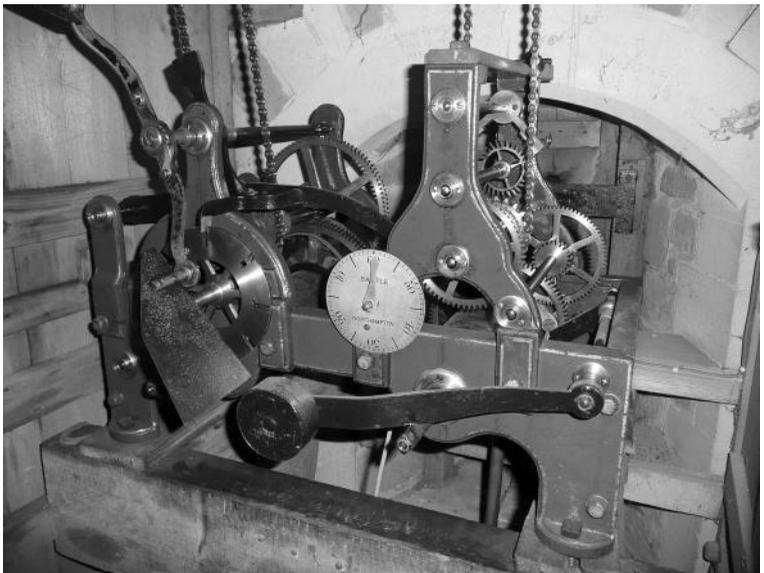
It is now ten years since the church clock was restored. It is a flatbed turret clock, built in the 1870s by Bartle of Northampton who would have assembled it from bought-in components. The clock's movement has a very satisfying soft 'chunk'. It was a later addition to the church as it was built across one of the tower windows. It is rumoured that a previous clerical incumbent painted the clock face which may have been the reason why it stopped working.

After many years (at least 30) of disuse it was rebuilt to mark the millennium. The village Clockmeister reports that after an initial bedding down period it now runs like clockwork(!) and keeps pretty good time for a movement of its age. It was originally hand wound, reputedly by Tom (surname unknown) who was let off work half an hour earlier on a Friday to perform this duty.

Coincidentally the current keeper of the clock lives in the same house. The Clockmeister, who is fascinated by all things mechanical, recounts the tale of when, shortly after the clock had been restored, he went up the tower to see what Fred, the then churchwarden, was swearing at. He obviously expressed too much interest in the clock, was handed the keys and found himself appointed to the task.

For those who think that graffiti is a new phenomenon, the inner walls of the tower would prove otherwise with signatures and dates going back to the early 1920s.

There is only one bell which strikes the hours and is also rung to summon the faithful to services. Its most recent acquisition is a new



bell rope which was hand made in Leicester by Ellis & Pritchard. The 3 foot long red, white and blue sally is a close copy of the original. (The sally is the hand-hold on the end of the rope grasped for hand ringing.)

The next celebration for the clock will be its 150th birthday in 2020. Most definitely a cake is called for.

NB: if anyone is wondering why the Clockmeister is so called, talk to Big John (Riches).

## DIARY

### *Saturday 27 November*

Cameo Opera, St John the Baptist, £15.00

### *Sunday 28 November*

Holy Communion, induction of new priest, St John the Baptist, 9.15am

### *Saturday 11 December*

Church cleaning, 10 -12, the more hands the merrier

The Watling Singers, St John the Baptist, 7.00pm

### *Monday 13 December*

Parish Council Meeting, 7.45pm at the Old School

### *Sunday 19 December*

Carol service, St John the Baptist, 4.00pm

### *Tuesday 21 December*

Christmas Quiz, the New Inn, 8.00pm, £3.00 with supper

### *Wednesday 22 December*

Carol singing round the village, start at 6.30pm at the Old School

### *Christmas Day*

Holy Communion, St John the Baptist, 9.30am

### *New Year's Eve*

New Inn celebrations

### *Monday 17 January*

ABbA AGM, New Inn, 7.30pm