

ABTALK



News from Abthorpe

February 2012

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Back in 2006 South Northamptonshire Council carried out a survey to determine if there was a need for affordable housing for people with strong local connections to Abthorpe. This would enable them to continue to live in the village once they needed their own home. The survey showed the need for some homes but not enough to justify a development. But as the nearby villages of Wappenham, Bradden and

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Slapton had similar requirements proposals were drawn up for one scheme to serve the needs of all four parishes. A site in Brackley Lane on the corner with Wappenham Road was put forward and after a long gestation period a formal planning application was recently lodged on behalf of the housing trust which will manage the homes.

The original plans raised some objections and revised plans were put on display in the Old School on 25th January. These showed a close of nine units: four flats, a bungalow, three two-bedroom houses and one three-bedroom house, with 15 parking spaces. The Parish Council has raised concerns that the number of parking spaces is inadequate and will add to the general pressure on space in the village.

DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Plans to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee are advancing well. The focus will be a Big Lunch on the Green on Sunday 3rd June starting about noon. The aim is to make this as easy to organise as possible. There will be no tickets or advance booking. Everyone should just turn up with their own food, tables, chairs, etc (although there will also be some provided) and have a neighbourly lunch together. There will be the usual bar and a couple

of BBQs available if anyone wants to cook a burger or sausages. The village green and adjoining road will, of course, be closed to traffic.

Everyone is encouraged to wear something red, white and/or blue. The theme will be continued in a hat competition for the children, bunting and whatever else can be dreamt up. There will be lot of games on offer to entertain adults and children alike.

As mentioned in the last issue, children in the village will each be given a Jubilee mug. To record the event a group photograph of the children with their mugs is being arranged for Saturday 2nd June on the Green, so do keep half an hour spare from 2pm that day. At the same time we will be setting up marquees, tables, etc so help with that would be very much appreciated.

One of the central attractions of Sunday will be a display of photographs depicting Abthorpe over the 60 years of the Queen's reign. If you have any photos which fit the bill please either drop them in to Eric Malcomson at 2 Wappenham Rd or email them to him at eric.malcomson@abthorpe.net. If they are put in a labelled envelope they will be safely returned.

And of course no celebration would be complete without a large cake and toast to Her Majesty.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

Casting our minds back to the end of last year nine teams filled the pub for the Christmas quiz. Competition was therefore fierce, so congratulations to Waterloo - all ABBA fans, one assumes - who donated the winning total of £115 to Crisis. The January quiz again raised a superb total of £100, donated by the Barflies to Marie Curie. They galloped up at the end to beat six other teams. The next quiz will be on Tuesday 28th February. Do come along; you'll be made very welcome

It's good to hear that Steve and Sian are reporting a string of successful events, from the Christmas menu through to the special Burns Night supper. And of course the now well-established ritual of roasting one of Rob's lambs on New Year's Eve accompanied by a band went down well.

Valentine's Day is being celebrated in the restaurant on Saturday 18th February (the 14th has already been hijacked for a private party) with a special 'round the world tapas', a free glass of bubbly and live music.

Mothering Sunday is on 18th March and it would be a good idea to book in good time for this popular menu, this year a special three courses for £17.95.

The tapas evening continues

each Wednesday, and as well as the take away fish and chips on Friday evenings from 4.30 to 8.00 Steve and Sian are introducing their distinctive version of the 'steak night': a half price starter and dessert, a choice of three different steaks (vegetarian option) with vegetables and sauces, and drinks included to the value of £6 - all for £17 per person.

All the information relating to the restaurant can be found on their new website: newinnrestaurant.co.uk, or email Steve at steve@newinnrestaurant.co.uk.

ABTHORPE BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

The ABbA AGM was held in the pub on 31st January. The statutory business of the Association was conducted with his usual swift efficiency by chairman, Eric Malcomson. Following a relatively quiet year the finances are sound, and the £60 annual subscription will remain to keep the coffers at an acceptable level.

However, under Any Other Business, members heard details of the efforts the directors have made to resolve the problem of relatively low speeds obtainable in Abthorpe which are beyond their control and completely governed by the speed of the BT ADSL lines. There are various options on the horizon, but the one that gained the approval of members to continue

exploring in greater depth was a bid to access Government (our?) funds via a DEFRA project entitled Rural Communities Broadband Fund. An expression of interest has been lodged, backed by Northamptonshire County Council and our MP, Andrea Leadsom, as well as the communities in Wappenham, Weedon Lois, Weston and Slapton. They would all be part of the proposed Tove Valley Communities Superfast Broadband. It will be known by the end of March whether the ABbA bid has passed

the first hurdle, but in any event the directors are to be congratulated on the work they have already put in to bring the best service available into Abthorpe and extend it down the Tove valley. The potential for speeds of up to 100 Mbps is galvanising everyone involved.

THE VILLAGE FUND

The Village Fund invited some new people to the Christmas lunch at the pub this year, swelling the numbers to 21. A delicious traditional meal



Melanina Giuliani Glenda Holton and Ruth Charles enjoying their Christmas lunch at the pub

was prepared by Steve the chef and served by Sian with help from Pam Watkins, Rachel Charles and Jan Miles. The Fund committee would like to thank Rob, Steve and Sian for their generosity and the warm welcome they gave everyone.

The Fund will continue to support the fund raising for the Old School, and plans another lunch next Christmas.

SNVB'S VILLAGE NETWORKS PROJECT

Abthorpe and other villages across South Northamptonshire will be the winners as the result of a successful bid for new project funding to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities fund by the South Northants Volunteer Bureau.

The project will connect residents with professional support and advice on issues that matter to them. The concept is based on valuable feedback received from a range of community and voluntary groups and parish councils. The top three were the need for benefits advice, support for job-seekers and debt advice.

SNVB has a modern mobile exhibition unit which has on-board internet access, computers and a library of information, as well as a meeting room for residents to receive confidential advice from

leading experts. See next paragraph for contact details.

MINIBUS AND DRIVER FOR HIRE

As part of the above project there is a new 16-seater minibus which, apart from being used to help transport residents to the mobile unit or services and support, can be hired with a driver by local groups. Nick King, the project coordinator, can offer more information: nick@snvb.org.uk; 01327 358264; www.villagenetworks.org.uk

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST NEWS

Our 34 shoeboxes, collected for Operation Christmas Child, were sent to Kyrgyzstan, which is a picturesque former Soviet Union country in central Asia. The population is amongst the poorest in the region, living in a mountainous country with a predominantly agricultural economy. Violence broke out in June 2010 between ethnic groups in the south, with hundreds killed and hundreds of thousands temporarily displaced. At the time of writing the temperatures are between -2 and -16 degrees so all the woolly hats and gloves in our boxes will have come in useful.

On Saturday 17th March drop in to 2 Wappenham Road from noon to 2pm and enjoy a simple lunch of home made soup after doing

the shopping or a morning spent in the garden. If you are not keen on soup, let us know or bring your own sandwiches and come for a coffee and chat. All money raised will go to Christian Aid.

Barbara Malcomson 857066

The next service will be Holy Eucharist on Sunday 26th February at 9.15am. Mothering Sunday will be celebrated with a lay led 'service with a difference' at 10am on 18th March suitable for children and adults of all ages.

Other forthcoming services are: Sunday 25th March, Holy Eucharist service at 9.15am; Maundy Thursday 5th April, Holy Eucharist service for The Last Supper and Watch starting at 7.30pm. All are welcome and you can leave when the service ends or stay for as much as you wish of the Watch which continues until 10pm.

Easter Sunday is on 8th April when the Holy Eucharist service will be at 11am. Sunday 22nd April will also be a Holy Eucharist service at 9.15am. Everyone is very welcome to any of these services.

The annual church spring clean takes place at 10am on Saturday 31st March. It is a very friendly morning and is always finished by noon. Do come along if you fancy a bit of exercise and chat whilst you work or over coffee.

In December Graham Foster won £232.50 on the church tote. Peter Newcombe was successful in January, when the pot was £230. Over the last nine years the tote has raised more than £26,000 for the upkeep of the church building, a prominent part of the village architecture.

INITIATIVE LAUNCHED TO HIGHLIGHT CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE

'One Punch One Life' is a partner-ship initiative between Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire Education and Work Service at Connexions, the Arson Task Force and the Fire and Rescue Service and is aimed at reducing violence.

A short film has been produced to support the project based on the manslaughter of Stuart Martin which occurred in Wellingborough town centre on Saturday 19th June 2010. It shows the tragic consequences of a single violent act that changed lives forever.

Although primarily aimed at secondary schools, if anyone is involved with a group whom they think might benefit from discussion around this subject, the film is available by contacting Shaun Johnson on 01604 797163. It can be viewed in the Operation Nightsafe section on the Northamptonshire Police website: northants.police.uk

PEOPLE

Congratulations to Lucie Scriven and Paul Grimes who chose New Year's Eve to be married at St John the Baptist. They walked from their home, Stone Barn, to the church, a delightful old country tradition, watched by villagers who had gathered to wish them well.

After the service the whole party walked back to the Old School which had been beautifully dressed inside and out for the reception, finishing off the celebrations with fireworks at midnight to welcome the new year and their life together.



Jack Alexander Hammon was recently christened at a combined baptism and Holy Communion service. The ceremony was witnessed by his parents Katie and Alex and a large gathering of family, friends and regular members of the congregation. After Jack's godparents had pledged to support the child the Rev'd Paul McLeod held baby Jack in his arms and baptised him with water that had been specially

warmed. Jack took it all in his stride and made not a murmur even when he was paraded up and down the aisle to be welcomed into the church by the congregation.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING CAROL SINGERS

On 20th December a nucleus of a choir met outside the Old School, but were mystified to find that the carol singers had disappeared. They were sought all around in the village: in the church, in the pub, under the Christmas tree, but no-one looking remotely like a carol singer could be found. And they never were. Will they reappear in time for next Christmas?

FILM ABTHORPE

The folk who braved the cold and the scepticism about the latest offering from Film Abthorpe, *Lagaan*, universally agreed that it was a film well worth investing the time in. It

stayed in their thoughts long after the evening had ended.

The next programme will be on Thursday 23rd February with a return to an old classic, *The Italian Job* - the original version starring Michael Caine with his inimitable catch phrases. Hopefully there will be time to show the out-take of the dancing Minis scene.

ABTHORPE SCHOOL

Jane Leeson was a spinster who inherited a house and farm in Abthorpe in 1598 from her mother, Avice. The will was noncupative (spoken) and it was said that Jane's brother begged his mother to leave everything to him. Her mother refused saying that it was Jane's



The recent snow again brought out the creative side of the village when this appealing walrus appeared in Wappenham Road

money that had kept the farm going. Jane wrote her own will in 1646, not bequeathing her property to her relatives but to a charity which was set up to provide an income and teacher for her free school, which she had built in the village in 1642. (The trust also made charitable bequests to local villages.) She stipulated that the original building should have an upper floor where the master was to live so long as he had no wife. At the time she must have thought the income from the farm would be sufficient for all costs.

In 1737 when Abthorpe wanted to change from being a hamlet attached to Towcester to a parish with its own church there was no income to provide for a vicar. Although Jane did not mention the church in her will, the Leeson trustees agreed to change the charity so that as long as the vicar agreed to also be the school master he could live in Jane's house and have the surplus income from the farm.

The trustees kept to the rule. In 1819 the Rev'd Pryce Jones was found to be incapable of teaching through intemperance (as already explored in the September 2007 issue of *Abtalk*) and the trustees withdrew his pay for ten years. By October 1858 the Rev'd Smythe, as new vicar, took scripture lessons to continue this duty of teaching in the school.

An addition to the building doubled the size of the school in 1866 to accommodate an increase in the number of children who now also came from Slapton and Bradden. In 1872 after a visit from HM Inspector of Factories the Workshops Act was enforced and girls from lace schools went half time to school. However, their attendance was irregular as was that of other children helping with the potato harvest, and average attendance dropped from 66 to 40 that September.

On the surface the charity acted as before but a number of vicars did not put the school before their own interests and repairs were not always done with consequent suffering to the children. Mr Ashwin in 1926 complained that the vicarage (now Leeson House) cost too much for upkeep so he moved to Syresham.

The Abthorpe school log book (document SLB/1 held at Northampton Record Office) shows that an HMI Inspectorate report in 1909 demanded better warming of the room, and that the cloakroom for infants and girls was not very satisfactory being badly ventilated and built inside the infant room. "It's top is a receptacle for accumulation of dirt and lumber." A similar

report in October 1925 showed the school was cold, "temperature at 1.15 pm only 43 degrees fahrenheit. Children did P E to keep warm. No fire, temperature in long room only 39F".

The faults were recorded in a Department of Education report which put Abthorpe into list B, 'Schools which ought not to be recognised in their present condition.'

At the time of this report there were 85 children on the roll. Lights were defective in both rooms, windows were too small, ventilation inadequate, heating was unsatisfactory judging by temperature records, boys' cloakroom was a damp dark wooden outhouse, no washing accommodation and no drinking water were available on the premises. The playgrounds were much too small with a large chestnut tree in the centre of the boys' playground.

School photo circa 1948/1950



Back row: Peter Snelson, Mary Barford, Jane Salmons, Angela Lawrence, Winston Hale. Middle row: Michael Hall, Rosie Hayward, Ann Bearman, Nancy Manders, Josie Bearman, Owen Wilks, John Dudley. Front row: Michael Bayliss, Joy Gell, Michael Bearman, Sheila Billing, Betty Wilks, Richard Boughton

The offices (bucket toilets) were in very poor condition and there was no accommodation for the teachers.

All through the 1930s the head mistress requested repairs to windows. Notes from her to the chairman of managers were ignored. Specifically on 9th January 1939 she complained of seven broken windows making the school cold, and these, some of which had been broken for months, were finally repaired on 31st January. From time to time the children were even sent home because it was so cold.

There was some improvement to school conditions when electricity was installed in 1934. A wireless was presented by the BBC in 1937 and water closets installed in 1949 using water piped from the village water supply to the adjacent farmyard (now Stone Barn).

By 1928 25% of the children were from Dr Barnados. They boarded in the village and were fostered with families until they were twelve years old when they went back to Dr Barnados to be taught a trade.

The recording of illnesses, although noticed quickly, showed that there were serious germs about all the time. In 1909 teacher Miss Connors was away for seven weeks with typhoid. The school was closed for three weeks in 1919 because of diphtheria. In June 1928 eleven Bradden children stayed away because of a scarlet fever scare. Several children contracted diphtheria in 1931, it being recorded that Timothy Holton and May Summers swabbed positive for diphtheria. And diphtheria was once again on the rampage in 1942 when the school doctor inoculated children against the disease. And in 1953 Peter Hibberd from Bradden died from polio.

The school was closed in December 1959 meaning that the charity conditions needed to be rewritten, but the trustees did not notify the change to the charity commissioners. The requisite number of six trustees had dropped to three with none having any connection to the village. It was not until parishioners wondered where the money was going that it was found that in 1987 the then vicar was still receiving it. The Charity Commissioners stepped in and rewrote the rules. As a consequence no money could be allocated for school repairs as they said that the use of the building as a nursery school did not qualify. From that time it has been the responsibility of the village to keep the school in good repair for as long as they wish to continue using it as a village hall.

OLD SCHOOL FUNDRAISING

The above article explains the background to why the Old School now needs to raise substantial sums to upgrade the toilets and kitchen. The Committee's AGM was held on 9th February when more was learned of the current situation, not only on the proposed building work but the running of the Old School generally.

Although plans have been drawn for the work to the disabled toilets planning permission is required before reliable quotes can be obtained from builders. Jill Tolson has offered to take on the coordination of this and the grant funding which may be available to augment the fund raising currently under way. It is planned to complete the kitchen refit in the summer, hopefully with labour from DIY-minded villagers. The safety rail on the balcony will be installed at the same time as builders are on site. The remedial electrical work has been done, and the new wall boards installed; these can be turned to hide the nursery displays when the School is used by others. Crockery and cutlery have been purchased to make up 150 sets; these are available to hire outside the Old School, as are the tables and chairs. They are all obviously included within a hire charge for the

Old School itself. To book please phone Jules Dyckhoff on 858600.

The last year of fundraising has yielded £5,960 to date. Chairman, Jules Dyckhoff, reiterated how extremely grateful the committee is for all the support they have received in many guises. The village always comes up trumps when given a fund-raising project. The total has come from the plant sale (£329), vintage car rally lunches (£409), a bridge evening (£475), autumn fayre (£593), fish and chip supper (£609), quizzes (£1,365), coffee mornings (£1,738 - an astonishing total) and various donations (£442) such as the comedy night at the pub.

Plans for the coming year will range over all the old favourites, including a plant sale which has been fixed for Sunday 20th May.

There are unused funds from when Steve Andrews ran a tote for the Old School, and some of these were donated to buy the new cutlery and crockery. The remaining £4,566 was generously offered by Steve and his other collectors to the committee to be added to the fund raising total. This was very gratefully received by the committee.

David Darling is retiring as Treasurer after 40 years of service. He has been the mainstay of the committee over the years and the

work that he has done on a day to day basis was gratefully acknowledged. Although standing down from the committee he has kindly offered to stay in contact to pass on his wealth of knowledge. The remaining members of the committee were all re-elected, along with three new members. The present committee is therefore: Jules Dyckhoff, chairman, Jan Miles, secretary, Lynn Neasham, treasurer, Janet Dancer, Richard Gladdle, Fi Noble, Helen Pope, Steve Andrews and Tim Pope.

ABTHORPE CONNECTIONS WITH HOLLYWOOD

Peter Ford, the son of Eleanor Powell and Glenn Ford, both significant Hollywood stars of the 30s and 40s, has discovered that his 9th great grandfather on his mother's side was Nicholas Symkins who was baptised here on 7th October 1598.

So why did Nicholas Symkins leave England for America around 140 years before the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States? The years before the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642 was a period of disillusionment. Nicholas was a Puritan. As King Charles I was not sympathetic to these renegades they fled to America. It seems highly possible that Nicholas Symkins travelled to America in about 1636 with a group

of dissenters led by Towcester man Thomas Shepard.

Now Peter Ford is hoping to make the journey to Abthorpe and raise a toast in Hooky to his ancestor, with the promise of a reciprocal cold beer for any Abthorpean visiting Beverley Hills.

SAFARI SUPPER MARK 2

Building on last year's successful stroll around the village punctuated by stops for the next course of dinner, this year's safari will be on Saturday 12th May. As promised a few more elephants have been drafted in to accommodate slightly increased numbers.

For those unfamiliar with the concept, each course of dinner is taken at a different house with a changing set of companions. Starting with drinks for everyone at one venue, guests are then told where to go for starters. At a pre-determined time their host for that course then opens the 'secret envelope' to reveal the location for each couple of their main course. This is then repeated for dessert, with the evening ending by everyone gathering back at another home for coffee. All host venues will be within safe staggering distance in the village.

The success of the whole evening depends on enough hosts coming forward. It may seem at first to be

a daunting task, but on the evidence of last year people had fun thinking up a simple first course, main or sweet for a group (this is not a culinary competition) while enjoying some interesting conversation along the way. And there is quite a lot of experience on hand to guide you through. A generous budget is given to each host for the food, and all wine is provided. Any dietary restrictions are communicated to hosts about two weeks before the event. Eight is an ideal size for each group, although dessert is suited to buffet-style if necessary.

If you are interested in finding out more about taking part, whether as a host or not, please email: safari@abthorpe.net or phone Andrea Lambert on 857536. This is a social not a fund-raising event and will be priced as such at £17 per person for the evening, wine included.

*Memorial at Woodend,
with thanks to
[www.airfieldinformation
exchange.org](http://www.airfieldinformationexchange.org)*

WOODEND MEMORIAL

A previously little-known event has been remembered with a memorial created in September last year at Woodend. In 1944 a formation of B-17 Flying Fortresses based at Snetterton Heath in Norfolk flew a training mission over this area. In poor weather three of them collided and two crashed leaving 11 servicemen dead; the third managed to limp back to base. The exact spot where the planes came down was not known until last year when a team of archaeologists and aircraft enthusiasts excavated a field in Woodend, just outside Blakesley.

Among the relics discovered was one significant find: a small silver bracelet engraved with the name of



Nicholas Jorgensen, the 24-year old pilot of one plane, which positively identified the formation involved.

The memorial lists the names of those who lost their lives and details the story of their doomed flight. Blakesley resident, Romer Adams, was the prime mover in getting the memorial erected. "Hopefully, in future years when people are passing through Woodend, they'll stop and look at the memorial and those men will not be forgotten."

With acknowledgement to the Northampton Chronicle from whose archives some details are extracted.

ABTHORPE BOOK CLUB

Conveniently named to be contracted to ABC, the book group had their first gathering early in February when 11 people met to exchange their thoughts on two books they had read, and also to begin to shape the way the group would work.

Early decisions were that the group would meet on the first Monday evening of the month rotating round members' homes; books would be set two months ahead; and the tone of the reading and discussion would be light, aided by wine and coffee. Alongside the chosen monthly book a bookbox, made up of favourites readers would like to share with others, is being gathered.

It was interesting to learn of the wide range of genres that everyone enjoyed and the seeds have been sown for a relaxed evening and a fruitful broadening of reading. The next get together will be on Monday 27th February at 27 Brackley Lane, 8pm, when the book under discussion will be *The 5 People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Labom. If anyone else would like to become involved, please email Alison Symmers, symmers@abthorpe.net, or phone her on 857416.

EMAIL SCAMS

There are many email scams floating around the internet with warnings which are more scams. However, occasionally a genuine warning does surface, such as a recent example focused on the census. If in any doubt and for general advice try www.getsafeonline.org.

COMMUNITY MATTERS WINS AWARD

The Community Matters scheme run by Waitrose has donated £10 million to charity since it was set up in 2008 and has been recognised by government for this initiative. Each of three charitable causes receives a share of £1,000 donated monthly by the local store. If you are involved with a group the application process to be included one month is simple and worth investigating.

DIARY*Saturday 18th February*

Valentine's dinner menu at The New Inn

Thursday 23rd February

Film Abthorpe, The Italian Job, The Old School, 7.30pm

Sunday 26th February

St John the Baptist, Holy Eucharist, 9.15am

Monday 27th February

Abthorpe Book Club, 27 Brackley Lane, 8pm

Parish Council Meeting, The Old School, 7.45pm

Tuesday 28th February

Charity quiz at the pub, 8.00pm, £3 including hot supper

Saturday 17th March

Christian Aid Soup Lunch, 12.00 - 2.00, 2 Wappenham Road

Sunday 18th March

Mothering Sunday lunch menu at The New Inn

Sunday 25th March

St John the Baptist, Holy Eucharist, 9.15am

Saturday 31st March

Church spring clean, 10am

Thursday 5th April

Maundy Thursday Holy Eucharist for the Last Supper and Watch, 7.30pm

Sunday 8th April

Easter Day Holy Eucharist service, 11am

Sunday 22nd April

St John the Baptist, Holy Eucharist, 9.15am

Saturday 12th May

Safari Supper

Sunday 20th May

Plant sale for The Old School

Saturday 2nd June

Photograph of village children with their Jubilee mugs on the green, 2pm, followed by marquee set up

Sunday 3rd June

Diamond Jubilee Big Lunch on the green from 11.30am