



News from Abthorpe

June 2015

PARISH COUNCIL

About 20 people attended the Annual Parish Meeting, including our County and District Councillors and Mrs Julie Letts from Silverstone Schools Federation. Keith Fenwick took the chair and gave the Parish Council's report, explaining that Stephen Noble has a new job which has prevented him from chairing the Parish Council meetings in the recent past. Keith noted that there were no controversial matters during the past year but various

Jill Tolson tel: 857320; jill.tolson@abthorpe.net

Keith Fenwick tel: 857083; keith.fenwick@abthorpe.net

topics had been discussed and some progress achieved. The Speed sign has now been in operation for some time and appears to have an effect in reducing the speed of vehicles along Wappenham Road.

The clerk has scored one notable success when he arranged for Western Power to dig up Wappenham Road to install a new low voltage cable before it was resurfaced! The original plan to send traffic round the Green was thwarted when a large truck was unable to negotiate the corner at the bottom of Main Street. Sense finally prevailed and the diversion sent traffic over Oxbridge, no doubt to the joy of the residents of Slapton.

The suggestion that Brackley Lane was to be resurfaced was met with stunned silence, but then the Clerk pointed out that it was just going to be patched.

This is election year for the Parish Council but only four people were nominated for seven posts. The remainder will be filled by co-option at the meeting at the end of June. Keith thanked all the retiring councillors but particularly mentioned Barry Haycock who has given many years of service.

The Clerk gave the financial report which showed that expenditure had exceeded our income, as a result of which the Precept had been increased for this year to

£3,750. Individual payments are calculated by dividing this between the number of households in the parish. Otherwise the accounts were in a healthy state.

Several other organisations reported on their past year. For the Parochial Church Council, Barbara Malcomson stated that their finances are stretched after paying for work to be done on the tower but they were still able to support various charities. Several fundraising activities were held. Grants were obtained to enable the north path to be remade and the gate sandblasted and repainted. In speaking for the Old School Committee, Jan Miles highlighted the refurbished toilets. There are currently no regular users of the School so more events will be needed in the future to cover its running costs.

David Robbins, the Path Warden, remarked that it had been a very quiet year. Forestry work in Bucknell Woods has had a positive impact on some of the bridleways. The condition of some of the stiles still causes concern. If they are between two arable fields the normal practice is to remove them. David does have some stile sets available if needed.

In Pam Watkins' absence, Jill Tolson reported on the new Neighbourhood Watch alerting service. It has made a good start with 30 people signed up to receive

and report information. Living in a relatively crime-free area, no-one is bombarded with messages but it is a useful immediate alerting system. It would be helpful to have one other person to help Jill as back up to Pam when she is unavailable, and the ultimate plan is to have a wider service to embrace information, such as events, items for sale, etc. You can sign up either at the Abthorpe village website: www.abthorpe.net, or by email to neighbourhoodwatch@abthorpe.net.

Julie Letts told us about the latest developments at the two schools in Silverstone which now have 90 children in the infants and 105 juniors. Standards remain high and both schools continue to provide an engaging and relevant curriculum. Detailed plans are now available for the new school which should open in September next year.

Ian Morris, our County Councillor, described some of the activities sponsored by the County Council. 'Race to the Top' is a strategy to raise educational attainment and make Northamptonshire one of the highest performing counties. An alliance has been formed with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire for development of joint plans for transport, spatial planning and key infrastructure works. This alliance is similar in size to Greater Manchester. Over the next five years £600 million will be

invested in new schools, roads and superfast broadband.

Our District Councillor, Peter Davies, pointed out that South Northants is once again in the top ten places to live in the UK. Although the budget has been in balance for the last six years finances have again been under strain, alleviated by joint working with Cherwell Council. Answering a question from the floor about the inadequate car parking at the new offices/library, Peter said a new car park to provide 175 places is being discussed.

The meeting was asked its opinion on the donations made by the Parish Council and supported continuation of the grants of £50 to each of four local charities and re-imburement of TADD membership fees. The Council is trying to arrange for the wording on the plaque set in to the wall below the War Memorial, which is now Grade 2 listed, to be made good.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

Those of us in the village who are regular pub-goers are well aware of the friendly and convivial atmosphere to be found there. And word is spreading as a number of local groups have decided to make it their regular meeting place for both food and drink, as well as a number of one-off parties.

A new summer menu has been

introduced as part of the £10 deal (main course plus starter or dessert). The Sunday lunch of two roasts (12 - 3pm) also comes under the £10 deal, so Chef Steve is gearing up for Father's Day on 21st June.

Take away fish and chips is available every evening that the restaurant is open, i.e. Tuesday to Saturday. Other outside catering can also be accommodated. And a couple of BBQs are planned during the summer; watch out for details.

The charity quizzes continue to be popular and on 29 March the Barflies won, donating the £95 raised on the evening to Help for Heroes. The next quiz was on 26 April when Half Left (the teams do come up with some original names!) sent £135 to breast cancer, in particular to support Jill Geenhalgh's Moonwalk. The last Sunday in May saw 5 Kids + It dominate and the magnificent sum of £170 raised was donated to Riding for the Disabled in Silverstone. It is always pleasurable to see local charities supported, and RDA in particular was thrilled to receive the unexpected donation as they are needing to purchase new helmets. So do consider joining this fun evening on the last Sunday of the month.

There's also live music on each afternoon before the quiz evening, a popular event.

The summer skittles team has

now got under way. It's too early, we're told, to tell how well they're doing! The New Inn darts team continues all summer, apparently playing pretty well.

And all the staff would like to thank Rob and Barbara for the 'Christmas' celebratory trip to Towcester races in May (think about it and how busy the pub is at Christmas!). Decked out in their finery, they all enjoyed a great day out before finishing off in the pub – of course.

BADMINTON

There has been some discussion about starting a badminton session (or sessions) in the Old School. The hall is large enough and some years ago badminton was regularly played there. Various ways of organising it are possible: a children's group, another for adults, or levels of skill.

The first step would be to find out how many people would be interested. If playing casually appeals to you (regardless of ability), do email jill.tolson@abthorpe.net or call 857320, and we can chat about how best to arrange it.

WAPPENHAM WIND TURBINE ACTION GROUP (WWTAG)

We have been reporting on the saga of the planning application to build a wind turbine in Wappenham and the subsequent legal action against the proposal by an action group from the

local community. On 10th March the group was successful in their high court bid to have the application quashed.

An article broadcast on Anglian Television news is at: www.itv.com/news/anglia/update/2015-03-11/community-group-win-legal-battle-against-plans-to-build-60m-wind-turbine/

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

The exhibition is a joint venture between Tove Valley Broadband and the Church, with proceeds going to the church, building on two previous shows in a similar format. It will take place on 13th and 14th June in the Old School. Among the themes of the show will be 'Seasons' with both adult and children's sections. Photographs taken by people of any age are welcome so start selecting your favourite shots which can be brought to the Old School to put up for display from 2 to 5pm on the Saturday. If you are unable to make that day or have any questions, please contact Eric Malcomson (01327 857066; malcomson@abthorpe.net).

The exhibition will open on Saturday evening from 7 to 9pm and drinks and nibbles will be available. On Sunday, the exhibition will open at 2pm with teas and cake served from 2.30pm to 5pm. Hopefully you have already been

taking photographs. If not, you still have time! There will also be a rolling display of old photographs of the Tove Valley area.

VILLAGE GARAGE SALE

Keep the date and spread the word around – September 6th, 2-5pm. This should be a fun afternoon, walking around the village bargain hunting! People selling can put sale articles on their driveway or patio or have a table on the green. It is a great chance to sell all those unwanted objects lying around in the garage, attic or under the stairs. The PCC is organising advertising, parking arrangements and a map showing who in the village is participating. There will be a fee for this which will be decided at the next PCC meeting.

As this is a new event booking in at this stage will really help the organisation, so please contact Jill Greenhalgh if you need any more information or to book your garage or table, preferably by email. jill.greenhalgh@abthorpe.net; 858102.

MEMORIES OF ABTHORPE

Lorna Hooper (nee Blackburn) has recently made contact to show us the lengthy memories she has written of her childhood during the Second World War when she lived in Slapton and together with her sister Leila

attended Abthorpe School. Her memories are absolutely fascinating.

Her father, a meteorologist in the Royal Air Force, was stationed at Silverstone Airfield, now the racing circuit, whilst his wife and family were given accommodation in a cottage at Slapton Manor. She wrote of a happy childhood with total freedom in acres of land. They bred rabbits for the big house and her mother milked the goats.

A small group of Italian prisoners of war settled in the area by the Lasher – a weir on the mill race of the water mill. They gave the prisoners all sorts of odds and ends including old tooth brushes that the POW's cut and melted and made into bracelets and photo frames. Lorna still has a willow basket made by one of the prisoners.

Her time at Abthorpe School was very happy and she still has a photograph thought to be taken in 1940 of the May Queen and her attendants. Lorna would love to know the names of the other children in the photograph. In those days lots of people in Abthorpe kept pigs. Lorna remembers that Mr Foster at number 4 The Green kept a pig and she and Leila took it scraps. When it was killed her mother was given some pork. Every so often the



Abthorpe School May Queen and her attendants c1940. Lorna is second from the left and her twin sister Leila far right. If anyone knows the identity of the other children please contact John Riches on 857703.

Abthorpe children (c1940) wearing some of the theatrical costumes

Pig Man came from Towcester on his bicycle to the New Inn. He killed villagers' pigs and most of the day the smell from the burning straw and oinks of pigs as villagers walked them to the pub will always be a memory.

Lorna and her family later moved to number 2 The Green. She can't remember who lived in number one but after the war Alberto, who had been a POW in Slapton, came to live there. He later brought his wife Melanina, who didn't speak a word of English, but Lorna's mother helped her. (Amazingly Melanina still lives in the same house!)



In 1941 coming home from school one day there were a lot of people in the house and her mother was sobbing. She had received a telegram to say that her father had been lost at sea. He had been posted to Gibraltar and his ship HMS *Aquila* left Milford Haven in a convoy. It was attacked by Admiral Dönitz's pack of U boats. There were only 15 survivors. Their father was presumed dead for five years before their mother received written confirmation and medals.

Life changed dramatically for Lorna and Leila after that. If anyone would like to read the complete memories that Lorna has written please e-mail john.riches@abthorpe.net or call 857703.

WAPPENHAM BEER FESTIVAL

27th June sees the second beer festival at the Village Hall in Wappenham, from midday to late in the evening. If you purchase tickets before the event you get 2 pints and a burger for £6. There will be 12 real ales, six ciders, wine and soft drinks. A number of bands will be playing during the day: Halcyon Days, Yellow Dog Blues Band, Shattered Timbers, Rhiannon, The Rock School (who will be providing 4 bands playing short sets) and Off The Hook.

Proceeds will go to the Friends of St Mary and the Village Hall, with a donation to both Cynthia Spencer and Katherine House hospices. Tickets are available from michael-payne@talktalk.net; 860373

DON'T 'KILL WITH KINDNESS'

Generous shoppers in Northampton town centre are being asked not to 'kill with kindness' by giving money to beggars.

The 'killing with kindness' campaign is supported by Northamptonshire Police, Charities from Oasis House, housing support, Northampton Borough Council and the Bridge Project. It aims to highlight the concern that gifts of money to homeless people are likely to be used to fuel a drink or drug habit.

Members of the public will be urged to consider giving a donation to charities which work with people providing essential life skills and support, to introduce them back into society and ultimately a better quality of life.

NEWS FROM ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Barbara Malcomson

Our Annual Church meeting took place on 23rd April and Richard Tomalin was re-elected as churchwarden. Alison Robbins, Jill Greenhalgh and Barbara Malcomson were also re-elected on to the PCC. Barbara

remains as secretary and Alison as treasurer. We can have up to 6 PCC members, two churchwardens and one Deanery representative. With just 3 PCC members, one churchwarden and no Deanery rep, it does make us a very small PCC, so if anyone wants to join us please let me know.

Easter Sunday in Abthorpe this year seemed to have an extra sparkle! We were pleased to welcome more people than usual to a lovely Eucharist service. The church, which had been spring cleaned the previous Saturday, was beautifully decorated and the lovely weather just made the whole day extra special. Thank you to everyone who helped clean and decorate the church and to Richard who got the Easter eggs.

Did you know that our church is open every day? We must be one of the few churches around lucky enough to be able to keep it open. Please feel free to come in for a quiet few minutes to sit or have a look around it – we have a guide at the back of the church. Thank you to people who are on the rota to unlock and lock up the church and also to everyone who helps in any way with looking after the church and grounds.

Church path: Our new path was put down at the end of last year and we are now in the process of putting the finishing touches to it. The gates

on the north side have been sandblasted and repainted, and the stone around the gates has been repointed. We have two new lanterns. One will be put in the arch above the gate and one outside the church building. These will be electrically powered and will make it much safer coming to and from the church in the dark.

Churchyard mowing: We have a loyal band of volunteers who mow the churchyard grass during the summer and for this we are most grateful. Having the centre of the village looking spick and span is a positive thing for us all. However we do have a few vacancies in the rota and it would help a lot if one or two more people could volunteer. All it entails is mowing the churchyard grass twice a year - it takes about an hour and a half. Not an unpleasant task really. If you are interested in helping please contact Richard Tomalin on 01327 858316 or richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net. Thank you.

Tote: Recent tote winners have been Simon and Laura Boardman who won £212.50 in March and Nick Green won the same amount in April. May's total was also the same, going to Bunny Hutchings.

Future Sunday services:

June 14th	11am	Holy Eucharist
June 28th	10am	Holy Eucharist - Patronal Festival celebrating the birth of John the Baptist
July 12th	11am	Holy Eucharist
July 19th	9.15am	Holy Eucharist
August 9th	11am	Holy Eucharist

Messy Church: This has been going for a while now in the benefice, on the third Saturday of the month at Whittlebury Church Rooms from 10am to 11.30am. It is led by Rev'd Graham Buckle and aimed at families. I have been a few times and it is great fun. Contact me if you want to know more.

857066; malcomson@abthorpe.net

WALKING FOOTBALL COMES TO SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

When the sport of Walking Football was featured in a television advertisement for a high street bank attendance doubled in no time and Towcester now hosts the 12th group in Northamptonshire.

As the name suggests Walking Football is a slower paced version of the game, on smaller pitches and with plenty of breaks, but still gives a good low impact workout. The local session takes place outdoors on a 3G astroturf

pitch at Towcester Centre for Leisure, Springfields every Thursday between 10.30 and 11.30. Sessions cost £4 which includes a free drink at the TCFL café afterwards. For more information call 322480 or email dan.moores@serco.com.

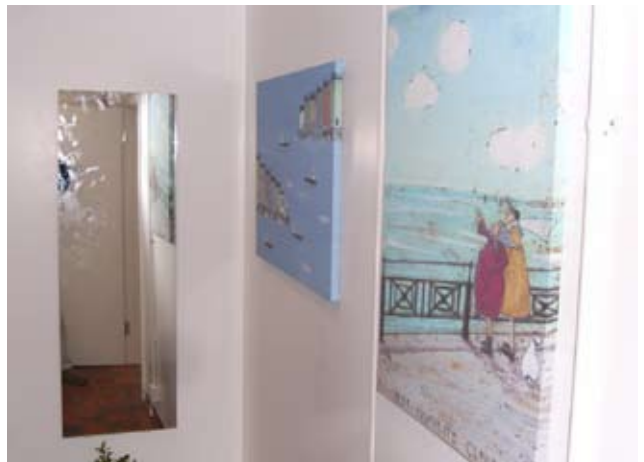
OLD SCHOOL

CS Construction of Towcester have now completed the latest updating at the Old School. The committee unveiled the new toilet facilities on 12th April with a free drop-in tea party for villagers to thank them for helping to raise the £24,000 needed to complete the project. The committee was delighted to see so many people enjoying tea, cakes and a chat. The finished project has met with universal approval.

One disabled person who was able to turn his electric mobility vehicle full circle in the disabled toilet stated that it was excellent. The ladies' toilets were deemed pristine and decorated with tasteful, thoughtfully chosen pictures, whilst the gentlemen's facilities are a huge improvement.

Now that the toilets, kitchen and committee room have been completely refurbished thoughts are turning to the main hall, the refurbishment of which is the final phase in the internal rejuvenation programme. Funds are somewhat depleted after the last projects, so fundraising will continue and hopefully there will be further grants to help.

So the first event to start refilling the coffers was the plant sale, and what a success it turned out to be. The sun did shine eventually on what looked like a proper nursery given the number and quality of plants which had been donated. Thanks go to everyone who took the trouble to contribute plants, and particularly to Len Bodily who always donates lovely plants and flowers year on year. And who would believe that £1,006 could be raised from such an



Decoration in the ladies' loo



event! That really does demonstrate the quality of the plants on offer and the continuing generosity of the people of Abthorpe.

The next event is the fish and chip supper on the Green on Saturday 20th June, and volunteers are needed to help put up the marquee as some of the usual strong arms are away. The keg of Hooky beer is on order as is the sunshine. You will have received a flyer about the event and tickets are now on sale from Jan Miles (jan.miles@abthorpe.net; 857427) or Lynn Neasham (lynn.neasham@abthorpe.net; 858870) if you miss the door-to-door sales

If the supper does well, the fundraising will be in excess of £20k over the five years of effort to improve the Old School; it is £19,435 at the moment. The Committee would love to hear any ideas for fundraising. If there is something that they haven't had for a while or a new idea, let us know (using the contacts above).



Abthorpe Nursery!

The hard working Committee deserves a vote of thanks for all its efforts to make the Old School such an engaging meeting place.

WINGS FOR LIFE WORLD RUN

The international Wings for Life run swept into Abthorpe on 3rd May accompanied by helicopters, television cameras, double-decker buses, mobile toilets, a feeding station, marshals and a good crowd of local people. Simultaneously at 35 locations across the globe more than 100,000 athletes, both able and disabled, competed to raise money for those who can't run because of spinal injuries. The British runners began their race at Silverstone Circuit to see who could run the furthest before the chase car caught them.

Thomas Payn won the British male category running 61.09km, placing him 42nd in the world. Kate Carter was the leading female running 34.73km and coming 115th overall. The Winning man in the world was Lemawork Ketema from Austria (79.9 km), women's winner was Yuuko

Kate Greenhalgh on her way at Silverstone Crossroads



Watanabe from Japan (56.33).

EVENTS TO SUPPORT THE AIR AMBULANCE

Local Open Gardens

Gardens in various local villages are being opened to support the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance. The entrance is £5.00 per person to include light refreshments (2.00 - 5.00). A few dates still remain:

- * 17th June: Three Ways House and Brampton House, Everdon
- * 23rd June: Fellyard and Sowbrook House, Slapton
- * 30th June: The Old Rectory and Bengal Manor, Greens Norton
- * 7th July: Versions Farm, Turweston

Dragon Boat Race 2015, Sunday 19th July at Billing Aquadrome

All you need to take part is a team of 10 rowers and 1 drummer! Or go along to watch the fun. All the information is at www.rotarydragons.org.uk/

FILM ABTHORPE

Unfortunately Pam Watkins has decided to give up running the film evenings. Unless anyone volunteers to take over (not an arduous task), Film Abthorpe will cease.

It was started quite a number of years ago with *Brief Encounter*. Following a visit to the theatre in Northampton where the play was on, a couple of villagers thought that other people probably hadn't seen the film (even though everyone thinks they have). Film Abthorpe was born. Over the years a wide variety of films has been chosen, but all good things run their course.

If you enjoy the relaxed nature of seeing films in a community setting Rural Cinema organises showings in various villages across Northamptonshire. For instance, there are films in the next couple of months at Blisworth, Culworth and Brackley. Although the admission charge is less than the mainstream cinemas, it is more than the free evenings from Film Abthorpe! Check www.ruralcinema.net for their calendar.

BLAKESLEY SHOW

In its 131st year the show is moving to Blakesley Heath Farm in Maidford on 1st August. Blakesley is a traditional rural show with around 65 showing classes for cattle and sheep, 70 horse classes, including private driving with a gymkhana which is always well supported by young riders, and a small section for roots and corn exhibits together.

The full show schedule can be found at www.blakesleyshow.co.uk

SHOEMAKERS IN ABTHORPE

We take it for granted that the residents of Abthorpe have many trades and occupations. It would be interesting if everyone not only introduced themselves by name but also by occupation. Transport has changed everything; the building of the local rail line in 1872 released people from having to work within walking distance of home. This lack of mobility had meant that each small village had predominant occupations: Silverstone, Syresham and Whittlebury were inside Whittlewood forest so were occupied in timber felling and clearing undergrowth or making hurdles and gates. They were so self sufficient they did not need to mix with people from other villages.

Abthorpe residents did not have such opportunities and were restricted to working on the land.

However, by the 1600s a new trade had arrived. The Knight family of Slapton had been tanners from the 1500s, and like most skilled workers such as framework knitters and blacksmiths the families kept their skill within the immediate family.

In his 1559 will William Knight of Slapton left 'to Chapel of Saint John Abthorpe twelve pence and to the poor of Abthorpe 12 pence', with a similar amount for Slapton poor. At same time he left ten shillings to repair the highways, which was a lot of money then to be used on road repair when every village had their own highways overseers who instructed people to spend free time in maintaining the roads within their own parish. He must have believed that the condition of the roads was very important for his business. One of the Knight sons bought land at Abthorpe, east of the village. It had a good supply of running spring water which was needed when he started up a tanyard. For many years the field was known as the Tanyard although more recently it has been called Deep Meadows. All necessary materials could be obtained locally: cattle hides and oak bark; the hides were soaked in pits of water containing the oak bark. The tanning trade was lucrative, the Knights became wealthy through their trade, buying land in Wappenham, Slapton and Abthorpe, as well as leaving charity money to Wappenham to educate boys. The house at Slapton called Fellyard is on land which was once part of the Knight's tanyard.

Fell mongers dealt with raw sheep skins and cattle hides before they went for tanning. The raw skins were soaked in a pit containing a lime solution [calcium hydroxide] so that the flesh would plump up for splitting and the hair or wool could be scraped off before being passed on to the tanner. When tanning became industrialised such scrapings, known as fleshings, were sold to make commercial gelatine. That trade declined after the 1950s.

Once there was a ready supply of leather the shoe making became a cottage industry as it could be carried out in the home with very few tools. The skill was passed down the generations so people were no longer reliant on farm work. However, there was a need for better transport before the trade could change from a cottage industry to a factory business. Demand increased as boots and shoes could be sold elsewhere. After the local railway opened they could be taken to Wappenham station to be transported via Blisworth to Northampton for sale. The initial trade was by individuals working in their houses where they made the shoes from scratch. The upper was shaped over a last held between a man's knees then the sole was nailed on. The cutting of the uppers was skilled as the more that could

be cut from one skin the more profit made. Fine leather was from calf skins whereas the thicker hides were sliced into grain and splits which were not so waterproof. Later in factories these splits would be printed to give the impression of being grain leather.

Abthorpe shoe makers often worked in small groups in sheds in their gardens. They kept warm with leather scraps burnt on tiny stoves which also heated the glue pots used for part of the construction but the conditions were so unhealthy that many had TB, passing it between work colleagues who then passed it on to their own families.

Once people realised there was money to be made from boots being sold outside the district a small factory was set up in Factory Lane [renamed Silver Street in the 1970s]. At first it was no more than a collection of small terraced cottages. The work was skilled with more parts in the boots and shoes than are used now. The uppers were cut out by hand with sharp clicking knives, sewn together - this is known as closing - then passed on to another cottage where soles were attached. Attaching uppers to soles with welts between keeps them waterproof. Often nowadays the upper is skived close to the edge then the sole is just stuck on and water soon gets into the joint or the upper pulls away. (Skiving is slicing the edge of the upper with a very sharp knife where it joins to the sole.) Workers took pride in the method of construction. In the Blake method the sole, insole and upper are all sewn together using a single seam which gives a light shoe. Goodyear welted shoes have a long strip of leather stitched to the upper and insole before the sole is stitched on separately, the stitching being visible outside but the main advantages

are that the shoes can breathe better with stitching instead of glueing and soles can be repaired by removing and



Workers at the shoe factory in 1860.

stitching new ones to the existing welts. These may be more expensive but men's shoes made in this way with good quality uppers will last for years. Before the advent of wellingtons it was important to have waterproof footwear. Farm workers wore boots with leather leggings to the knee for protection against the mud and wet grass. However well a boot or shoe was made the surface needed a waterproof coating, and a liberal application of dubbing helped keep the damp out.

The terrace of cottages facing the Green was built with sheds in the gardens by the then owner of the shoe factory. He let them out to families who made parts of boots which were then finished off in the factory, an early form of outworking where the factory owner could set the price of the piece work as he was landlord as well as employer. Later the owners of the factory houses in Silver Street had a proper factory built. Eric Snelson took finished footwear on a hand cart to Wappenham station. When the factory was established some villagers had their own last, a wooden form shaped like the foot over which the shoe was shaped for a personal fit. The last might be hinged so that it could be easily removed after the shoe was finished. It was more of a necessity than a luxury for people, especially children, with non-standard shaped feet.

In the early 1900s women worked all day in the closing room sewing the uppers together by hand. They were overseen by one of the owners, an old lady who, according to her granddaughter Kathleen Henson, would sit making lace amongst the workers to ensure there would be no slacking. The factory was owned by various families, mostly descending through the daughters: Ann Kendall, Lizzie Hindes, Ann Snelson, and lastly Ruby Snelson who rented it in 1940 to Mountwoods who owned a clothing factory in London. They were evacuated to Abthorpe bringing some machinists with them who boarded out in the village. One kept in touch with her friends in Abthorpe all through the rest of her life. As it was war time the factory made clothes needed during that period with Mountwood's agent



Mr and Mrs Samuel Henson, founders of the Abthorpe boot and shoe factory, 1858.

Isaac Bloomberg overseeing the work of making pyjamas and pants.

After the war shoe uppers were stitched there again for J Sears & Co who used it just as a closing room. About thirty local women machine-sewed the uppers which then were sent to Sears factory in Adnitt Road in Northampton where the soles and uppers were assembled for their True Form Boot Company. In the 1950s Sears shut the Abthorpe factory, transferring the closing room to another factory in Brackley – and so ended Abthorpe's connection with shoe making.

Northampton made innovative footwear including those flying boots for airmen which could be cut down to an Oxford shoe to hide their origin if landing in enemy territory. A penknife was secreted inside a pocket within the leg of the boot. In an earlier war, the civil war during the 1640s, the town supplied boots for Parliamentary soldiers.

During the 1960s many well-known Northampton county shoe firms went out of business with the import of cheaper foreign shoes and the advent of the British Shoe Corporation. Charles Clore had taken over Sears in 1953 and by 1956 he had formed BSC which incorporated several shoe shop chains including Manfield, Dolcis and Saxone. Over two decades earlier some larger shoe manufacturers had been beneficiaries to the town. Mr Manfield left his large house and grounds to be a hospital for crippled children in 1924. Another was William Barratt who gave £20,000 to build the Barratt maternity home in 1936. He was a man who remembered his upbringing as one of ten boys whose father had been a Desborough silk weaver. Though the Barratt brothers made a successful business, William and his wife were unable to carry on his blood line but were delighted to be able to adopt two girls. He wanted to help mothers who previously had only been able to have home births. Many of us are proud to be Barratt babies who might not have survived if they had had to be born at home.

There are about thirty shoe manufacturers still in Northampton county including high quality names such as Churches, Barkers, Crockett & Jones, and Loakes. Northampton museum in Guildhall Road (www.northampton.gov.uk/museums) has a specialist collection of 12,000 shoes from all over the world ranging from the flying boots, Egyptian footwear, to an elephant's shoe, along with a comprehensive display of the history of shoe making. An interesting website describes both the museum collection as well as the history of shoe making. See www.claymoorslist.com/portfolios/northampton-shoe-museum.

PARKING AT THE FORUM, TOWCESTER

Well really it's parking in Towcester which is the focus of a parking survey but it has been brought into sharp relief with the completion of the Forum, housing the library and South Northants Council offices, where sufficient parking is sadly lacking. The first part of the survey, which has already closed, was to assess the current and short-term parking needs in the town, as if that's not self-evident. SNC has commissioned WYG to carry out the parking study for South Northamptonshire with a two-part survey aimed at assessing the needs of the planned expansion of the town over the next few years.

Phase two of the study will commence in July 2015. This will review current parking across the district and consider the impact of approved and proposed housing growth to 2026 before making recommendations on how and where improvements could be made. The issue was addressed by both the County and District councillors at the recent Annual Parish meeting and they have promised updates as and when they have more information.

TOVE VALLEY BROADBAND

A surprising number of members gathered on 24th February at the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Abthorpe Broadband Association Ltd that now trades under the title of Tove Valley Broadband. The single item on the agenda was dry old stuff - hence the need for lubrication. Chairman Eric Malcomson explained that under the terms of the Companies Act 2006 all companies are obliged to conform to the act that provides a simpler framework for operations. New articles were being proposed and agreement to their adoption was unanimous. It was uncertain whether the observer from the United States was there to make a report to President Obama about ABbA's operations or whether he just wanted some decent beer.

The project to bring fibre-optic broadband to the upper Tove Valley has been completed. It covers the villages of Abthorpe, Astwell, Bradden, Slapton, Lois Weedon, Wappenham and Weston plus all the outlying properties in-between. They are now able to get unlimited, £10 a month, better than 30Mbps broadband. This latest phase cost £250,000 to implement.

Two inspectors from the Rural Payments Agency of DEFRA visited recently to assess how the £108,658.07 in grant had been spent and to determine whether it provided good value for money. Eric related that the inspectors asked to inspect the 12.5km of blue ducting that was an item on the

*The
Inspectors
call*



equipment schedule. They were told politely that was not possible as the ducting was buried at least a metre underground between the villages. So Eric and his team opened up a few manholes to show the inspectors where the ducting surfaced. They were obviously satisfied as they gave their seal of approval.

The number of members connected and benefitting from the toils of ABbA's volunteers has now passed the 400 mark. Given the number of devices in each household connected to the Internet around 3,000 are using the system at peak times. Yes, he said, there are still jobs to do and yes, there are loans to be repaid. But the infrastructure built should provide fast, reliable internet connections for quite some time to come.

If you have not been connected, but would like to benefit, you can find more details and register at www.tovevalley.com.

ABTALK BY EMAIL

If you would like to receive *Abtalk* by email (in pdf format), there is a link to sign up on the Abthorpe village website, www.abthorpe.net. You will be able to see the photographs in colour and in much more detail. Live links for email and website addresses will also be provided.

PEOPLE

Mrs Ruth Charles, who lived in the village for many years, celebrated her 100th birthday on 30th March. At the age of 85 she arrived in Abthorpe to be with her daughter Rachel and son-in-law Mike. She immediately joined the church congregation and made many friends in the village.



In May 2014 Ruth moved to her present home in Sheffield close to her other daughter Judith and husband Paul. She enjoys visits from her grandchildren, expeditions with the friends of Sheffield Botanical Gardens, shopping and lunch trips. She is a regular worshipper at Sheffield Cathedral which she has grown to love.

Family members and friends, including Abthorpe villagers, arrived in Sheffield from many parts of the country and also from Switzerland, Tanzania and Canada. Judith reminded guests that on her 85th birthday grand-daughter Harriet Matthews had sung one of Ruth's favourite songs, *Schubert's die Forelle* (the Trout), accompanied by grandson David Mabbutt on the piano. On her 90th birthday they performed another favourite, *Summertime* from *Porgy and Bess*. During her 100th birthday celebrations they performed both pieces with a panache and professionalism that had their audience whooping with joy. Judith suggested that Ruth's recipe for a long life was assisted by her daily gin and tonic.

Rachel Charles has compiled a biography of her mother's life. The following snippets reveal what a full and interesting life Ruth has led.

PEOPLE CONTINUED

Ruth was born during the First World War in Bethnal Green, London. Her mother was a nurse and her father Fred Kurz was away fighting in Palestine when she was born. After the war they lived in Sidcup.

In those days there was no chance of higher education for a girl of Ruth's class. She remembers being very proud of her mother on the occasion after church when the doctor's wife offered to see which of her friends could take Ruth on as a maid. "No daughter of mine will go into service," was Ruth's mother's reply. She instead became an accounts book keeper. When Ruth was 22 a new curate arrived at their local church. Edward Charles was very tall and his hair was bleached and his skin tanned because he had just spent a year teaching in Jerusalem. And then there was the motorbike!

They married in October 1938 and whilst honeymooning attended a service at Salisbury Cathedral. The preacher thanked God for sending them Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to save mankind from Adolph Hitler. Charles grabbed Ruth's hand and they walked out! Edward's new curacy in Lambeth gave Ruth opportunities to be active in the local Labour Party. They bought a tandem and pedalled to Smethwick and Sheffield so that Charles could choose between new curacies. In August 1939 they went on holiday to Leningrad on a Soviet cargo boat that left from London Bridge. On their way home they were chilled at the presence of young Nazi soldiers lining the Kiel Canal. The Second World War began a few days later.

They moved to Edward's last curacy in Smethwick where the night bombing was relentless. They were both air raid wardens and patrolled the streets shooing people into the underground shelters. The worst thing for Ruth was finding the dead body of one of the church's choirmen. In 1940 they saw Coventry burn.

A few months after the war ended there were elections for Birmingham City Council. Ruth stood for Labour in the Kingstanding Ward and won. She became chair of the Arts and Education Committee. After some years Edward moved to St Albans Diocese and in 1968 became Rector of Dunstable. Ruth became a part-time clerk in the

PEOPLE CONTINUED

tax office and also as a judge for "Britain in Bloom" assessing the displays of London boroughs. Whilst Edward served at Lidlington, his last parish, Ruth began work for the Royal Gardeners' Orphans Fund; that involved visiting the families of gardeners who had died leaving young families behind. Ruth continued her political activity and spent some days at the Greenham Common women's peace camp. She remains a member of CND. Her beloved Edward died in 1991 a few days short of their 53rd wedding anniversary.

A rather belated welcome to Sarah Jones who came to Stable Cottage on the Green before Christmas. She has moved from Hertfordshire to work at Leeson House together with her dog Ida, which is pronounced with a long initial E, the name originating in Scandinavia where Sarah worked for some time.

And also to Leah Abbott who by now is well settled in to her new home, Elizabeth Cottage in School Lane, and her job teaching the sciences in Milton Keynes. Leah has had an interesting teaching path leading to Abthorpe via international schools in Honduras, Istanbul and Bangkok, as well as the USA. Leah's American accent belies her only partial US ancestry; her father hails from Leicestershire and enjoys popping back from time to time.

Jane George has just moved from Wappenham to Primrose Cottage in Main Street so is already familiar with Abthorpe. Jane is a beauty therapist and is continuing to build her clientele working from her new home. Ballroom dancing is one of her several interests, so maybe we shall yet have Strictly Come Dancing, Abthorpe-style.

More new recent arrivals are Turrum Mellor-Hughes and Martyn Price who have moved to 2 The Green from Northampton. Turrum is a chef with a children's nursery in Northampton and Martyn's business of scanning and preserving historical documents is in Milton Keynes, so Abthorpe seemed a natural central point for them.

PEOPLE CONTINUED

And last but by no means least, Jess Goodridge and Joe Collier have moved to 31 Wappenham Road, from Towcester and Northampton respectively. They both work for Waitrose (which seems to be a family tradition as Jess's father and sister are both there). Joe and Jess enjoy running, having completed both a marathon and half marathon for charity. However, training is out for the time being as they prepare for their wedding in August.

We would like to acknowledge the unsung contribution that Mick Walsh makes to Abtalk. Mick created the name Abtalk, and designs each of the new covers for us (voluntarily of course). He is a journalist, writer and designer. His book *Brothers in War* is a compelling account of the Beechey family who lost five sons during the first world war, one of only three families to be so devastated by the conflict. He has also written about his beloved Charlton Athletic. His design work can be seen at www.duckcreations.co.uk: mwalsh@duckcreations.co.uk

DIARY CONTINUED FROM NEXT PAGE

Saturday 1 August

Blakesley Show, Blakesley Heath Farm, Maidford from 8.00am

Sunday 9 August

Holy Eucharist, 11.00

Monday 10 August

Parish Council meeting, the Old School, 7.45

Saturday 5 September

Horticultural show and food festival, Lois Weedon

Sunday 6 September

Village 'garage' sale, 2.00 - 5.00

Monday 21 September

Parish Council meeting, the Old School, 7.45

Saturday 17 October

Craft and art market, Wappenham village hall, 2.00 - 4.00

DIARY

Saturday and Sunday, 13 and 14 June

Photographic Exhibition, the Old School, Sat: 7.00-9.00 pm; Sun: 2.00-5.00 pm

Sunday 14 June

Holy Eucharist, 11.00

Wednesday 17 June

Everdon gardens open (see text for details)

Saturday 20 June

Fish & chip supper and bar on the Green, 6.00 for 7.15

Tuesday 23 June

Slapton gardens open (see text for details)

Saturday 27 June

Wappenham Beer Festival, midday onwards

Sunday 28 June

Holy Eucharist, Patronal Festival celebrating the birth of John the Baptist, 10.0

Live music, the New Inn, during the afternoon

Charity quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

Monday 29 June

Parish Council meeting, the Old School, 7.45

Tuesday 30 June

Greens Norton gardens open (see text for details)

Tuesday 7 July

Turweston garden open (see text for details)

Sunday 12 July

Holy Eucharist, 11.00

Sunday 19 July

Holy Eucharist, 9.15

Sunday 26 July

Live music, the New Inn, during the afternoon

Charity quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

More on the previous page