



ABTALK



PARISH COUNCIL

Our new clerk, Tina Emerton, is settling well into the job, although she finds the bureaucracy of public bodies a contrast to the business world where big decisions are made without mounds of paper. She has already been on a two-day training course and so is well placed to keep the councillors on the straight and narrow.

At our meeting on 16th October the current year's finances were reviewed. Expenditure is within budget overall. The external Audit for 2016-17 has been passed with one qualification because the Risk Register was not reviewed during the year. We were one meeting late.

We have recently authorised two substantial items of expenditure. For some time the village green mower has been showing its age. It was only kept working this year by surgery on the deck. So we have bitten the bullet and purchased a new mower, a Husqvarna Rider 214TC which has just been delivered, using the money from the solar farm at Handley Park. The old one served us for about 15 years, so this one should still be going in the 2030s.

The first phase of street

light replacement has also been authorised, funded by a grant which was arranged late last year. This involves replacement of the present sodium lamps, which are no longer repairable, with LED lights. The first phase, which will be partly funded by solar farm money, will see the lights in Wappenham Road and Brackley Lane replaced. Next year the remaining lights will be replaced.



The new mower arriving in Abthorpe

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The new lights will be on the same poles as the present ones.

SNC is currently consulting on the draft Local Plan which covers the period 2011-2029. Over this period 2,360 houses should be provided in the district. Five areas are listed for the main expansion of housing, the nearest to us being Silverstone and Towcester, while modest development is allowed in larger villages. As far as Abthorpe is concerned it remains a Small Settlement where development should be restricted to the existing boundaries. That means that the current Village Envelope is retained and that there are very few opportunities for the construction of new houses.

Ten key objectives are identified in the plan, including facilitating economic growth, delivering new employment opportunities, providing a range of new housing scaled to meet local need, ensuring the sustainability of rural communities and protecting the natural environment.

The draft document is lengthy and needs perseverance to read it all. It can be consulted on SNC's web site - search for Draft Local Plan. Comments are encouraged but must be made before 10th November. The Parish Council will comment to support the retention of the proposed wording on housing and support for smaller villages. Feel free to make your own comments.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

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Christmas is coming and the New Inn is gearing up to celebrate. The bar will be open from 12.00 to 2.00 on Christmas day as usual. The festive menu is out with options ranging from one course for £11.95, two for £14.95 or three for £17.95. It will be served from 1st to 24th December, Wednesday to Sunday. So popular has the restaurant become that booking for this is recommended as soon as your plans are made. Indeed booking in general is a good idea. For instance the themed evenings on the last Friday of each month seem to have caught the imagination and fill up quickly. November's offering is a Caribbean fusion of Creole, Cajun and Latin, with December being a taste of India, a break from festive fare. As yet we don't know what themes are in the offing for the new year, but they will continue from January.

Still on the popularity topic, the restaurant is now open on Tuesday evenings (although not lunchtime that day). And Sunday breakfast is served from 9.30 to 12.00, a relaxed way to start a lazy day. Further into the new year a special menu will be created for Valentine's Day. And just an idea at the moment, but what about a Mad Hatter's Teaparty? Sounds interesting.

The quiz evenings on the last Sunday of the month have now been running for quite a few years, a light way to ease into the working week while raising prodigious amounts of money for charity. In fact, totting up how much has been donated to charities since its inception has produced a remarkable total of £9,950. With November and December to come the £10,000 will easily be surpassed this year.



Hannah and Josh in their classy staff T-shirts

August bank holiday attracted another good crowd, so good that no-one can remember the winning team or their chosen charity. Can anyone help us out? In September a new quizmaster, Robert Miles, successfully joined the crew so there are now four quizmasters to try and baffle the teams. Tows Tourists won that evening offering the £120 raised to Cancer Research. And so to October, and Touring Tows (are they trying to disguise their brilliance?) were again successful with Cancer Research benefitting by £140. November's quiz will be on the 26th, with a grand Christmas event on 17th December.

And don't forget the open mic sessions from late afternoon on the second Sunday of the month, now attracting some rather good talent.

OUR LOCAL RAILWAY LINE

Not many people will remember trains on the railway line which ran from Towcester to Banbury because it closed in 1951. But for those interested the first of two volumes on the history of the line and the associated lines to Blisworth and Stratford-upon-Avon was published recently. The author, Barry Taylor, grew up in Northampton and so knows the area.

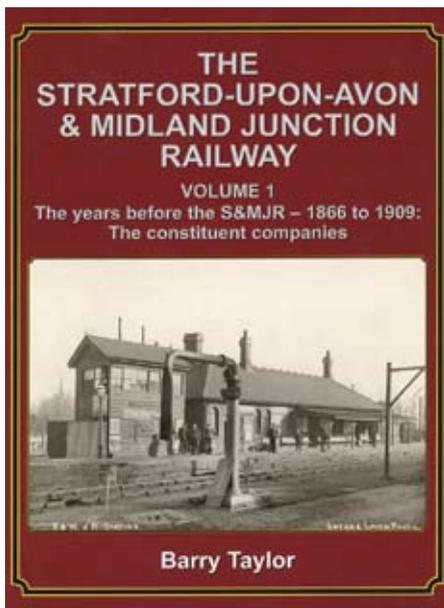
If you thought that Victorian railways were all profitable, our local railways followed a different path. The line from Blisworth to Banbury was promoted to carry iron ore from the Northamptonshire mines to South Wales and bring coal back but it never got further than Banbury so had to eke out its existence handling what local traffic was available. The longer line from Towcester

to Stratford was even less successful and closed for eight years from 1877. Eventually extensions at each end did create a through route for goods traffic, which at one time included bananas from Bristol to London.

The Stratford-upon Avon & Midland Junction Railway, volume 1, is priced at £25 and is published by Black Dwarf Lightmoor: www.lightmoor.co.uk. The museum at Towcester may have copies for sale.



Wappenham Station after the track was lifted. The tree on the right is beside the road to Wappenham. in the far distance is the bridge carrying the road to Slapton.



TOVE VALLEY BROADBAND

There is not much to report since the last issue except that there is a nice new software tool to monitor the network which helps in tracking down problems, and a few more members have been connected. While the area of coverage is not able to be expanded recurring requests come in from people in isolated properties such as farms and whenever possible they are connected. These are the most difficult places to serve over other means; telephone lines are too long and satellite connections too expensive. So once again, Tove Valley Broadband comes to the rescue.

Given how well the service is

settling down, we thought it timely to reprise the story of this ground-breaking venture, acknowledging how fortunate we are to have such a group of technically proficient and energetic volunteers. Eric Malcomson, the inspiration behind the service, has provided a potted history:

Abthorpe Broadband Association Ltd

from dial-up to ultrafast : The ABbA Story

Once upon a time the telephone lines in Abthorpe rang out with a very weird message which went something like: brr-brr brr-brr click ker-ching ker-ching buzzzzzzzzzzzzzz and we were connected to the internet on a dial-up line 50,000 times slower than today. That was 15 years ago; how things have changed.

This is the story of Tove Valley Broadband which started with an idea in my head and developed, with lots of people's help, into a full-on 1,000Mbps service from our area direct to the heart of internet connections in London.

Back in 2002 Abthorpe did not have 'always on' connections to the internet and there were no plans for BT to provide broadband services. So I invited others in the village to participate in an experiment. The plan was to link to Belgium by satellite to give us 1Mbps (50 times faster than the speed over the telephone lines) and share the service and the cost with others by using WiFi over the roofs of Abthorpe.

Armed with bits of string, 'rubber ducks' and an aerial made out of a whisky tin we experimented up and down the main road to see how far we could get the WiFi to give reasonable results. We were surprised at how good a connection we could maintain, even delivering a decent service to Wappenham using a mesh 'dish'. Some of the ABbA Team* became experienced radio engineers whilst others took on the legal, financial and marketing aspects. Keith, Richard and I discovered more bedrooms whilst surveying and installing the radio receivers than in all our previous existence.

A satellite dish and server were installed in the loft of Richard's centrally located house on Wappenham Road and a wire strung between his house and Mike Greenhalgh's next door. This gave us the height we needed to

* *The team, past and present: Phil Berry, Dave Cunningham, Keith Fenwick, Eric Malcomson, Keith Plant, David Symmers, Richard Tomalin, Peter Watkins.*

run a WiFi link across to Phil's house on the Green. We could now relay the service to the majority of the village, and within weeks we went from 16 to over 40 members. Within four years increased membership meant we could slash our initial charges of £25 per month to just £5.

In the period 2010 to 2013 the demand increased rapidly and the network began to show signs of strain. We had to make a decision: should we pull out of providing broadband as a community service – leaving people to the mercy of BT – or seriously look at what could be done. The problem was how to provide sufficient 'backhaul' bandwidth (the last link to the internet) to share between our



The satellite dish being installed.

members. The answer was St Loys School in Lois Weedon which had a fibre-optic broadband service. We persuaded the Board of Governors and parents that our radios, mounted on the school chimney, were 'safe' by undertaking microwave surveys inside and outside the school using calibrated sensors. Essential also to our plans was the use of Wappenham Church to relay our signals throughout the valley, enabling us to reach Weston, Lois Weedon and Slapton as well. Peterborough Diocese was very cooperative as was the incumbent, the Rev Will Adams. I gate-crashed coffee mornings and Parish Council meetings to spread the word and by the time we needed to press the button we had more than 100 promises to take up service.

So 2013 saw our 100Mbps fibre-optic line into the school and radio links from the school via the church to the other villages running in good order, and becoming increasingly popular with villagers. But ironically we became the victims of our own success as the promised 100 memberships were soon passed and the network began to saturate causing loss of performance.....a new plan was needed.

Laying the fibre optic cable across the fields.

It was decided once more to upgrade the project, this time by laying our very own fibre-optic cables between the villages and leasing our own fibre-optic connection to the internet exchange in London Docklands.



Cue the EU, the British government, the Rural Development Fund and Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) which contained a budget for the roll-out of 'superfast' broadband to rural areas. After a long and painful period of negotiation we were delighted to receive a grant to meet half the costs of upgrading our system to provide superfast broadband.

The total project costs reached £250,000. Was this just a step too far?

Getting approval and written consent from farmers and land owners to dig up their fields became a necessity as did the need for loans from members (now 200-strong) to provide £174,000 working capital. DEFRA, now in charge of funding, took the hint that harvest time was a window for digging up fields that we could not afford to miss and gave their approval (plus a grant of £108,000) and the contractors were called in the summer of 2014.

There were a few hiccups along the way but we opened the new ultrafast network in June 2015. To make the finances work, we needed 300 members by March 2016 and we got just under 500. Our membership is now 600.

Due to our brilliant internet connection, not only householders but also a number of companies benefit from our service boosting the local economy. There are two telephone support outfits in our area reliant on their internet connection, for example. Indeed, a large percentage of ordinary members

now use broadband telephone services and pay no more than £28/month for all phone and internet use with no restrictions.

Now for some impressive statistics: the fibre-optic cables connecting Bradden, Abthorpe, Slapton, Wappenham, Weston and Lois Weedon to Wappenham Church run at 2,500Mbps. Individual radio connections run up to 100Mbps. The cable to London runs at 1,000Mbps. At peak times around 10pm we have occasionally reached 60% backhaul capacity. The average consumer's download speed for our service is 78Mbps compared to the UK average of 13Mbps. In 2015 the fastest speed for internet connection per country went to South Korea with 20.5Mbps. 100% of our members have speeds over 15Mbps - only 28% of UK connections achieve this.

We look forward to paying off all loans in 2018 which will give us freedom to look at what the future holds for ABbA and the Tove Valley Broadband service but for now, pretty well everything is measured in enjoying one of the fastest and cheapest services in the world.

More info in our library at www.tovevalley.com/library.

Acknowledgement: This Superfast project is supported by the Rural Development Programme for England, for which Defra is the Managing Authority, part financed by The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

After last year's success of the Christmas fayre in the Old School, Janet Dancer and her team are busy planning this year's extravaganza on Saturday 2nd December from 2.30 to 4.00. On sale will be handmade Christmas wreaths and decorations, hand-crafted cards and needlecraft, cakes, mince pies, chutney and pickle. Enjoy a glass of mulled wine while browsing for gift ideas while the children are entertained with a free craft stall. Proceeds will be split between Marie Curie, the Old School and the Church.

COUNTY CONNECT

"Northamptonshire County Council is currently consulting on removing all money paid to subsidise public transport. If this proposal is confirmed the County Connect bus service would end during 2018 and it is likely that many rural parts of the county will have either no or limited public transport." That is the first paragraph of a letter sent to local users of the County Connect service - by email. As yet no letter has been received in the post even though it is unlikely all those using the service are ardent email users.

The proposals would clearly have a dramatic effect on the villagers of the Upper Tove Valley, especially the disabled and those without their own transport. The Northamptonshire County Council cabinet member responsible for transport, our own councillor, Ian Morris, stated that this policy was being brought forward with a heavy heart. The financial situation is so severe that they are having to make proposals that they really don't want to make.

When County Connect was first launched it spelled the end of the subsidised weekly service to Banbury and the twice weekly services to Northampton. It was described as an on-demand, no timetable fresh concept designed to take passengers from our local villages to connect with regular bus routes in Towcester, Brackley and elsewhere. Those who use the service are generally very satisfied.

This budget cutting proposal has now been given wider publicity by the local print and TV media, and been

highlighted on social media including Facebook's Towcester Community Page. If you would like to contribute your comments, which must be made by 1st December, email the Council on consult@northamptonshire.gov.uk, or complete the Council's survey. Go to www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk and search for 'budget survey'. The link is entitled 'Phase 1 draft budget proposals 2018/19'.

REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

The informal Remembrance Day Service will be held this year on Sunday 12th November starting at 10.50.



One of the items in the service entitled "Lots of memories - but no hatred" will tell how in 1989 Communist East German citizens Ursula Rambow and her husband Erich, a former German officer at the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942, met our pub landlord Fred Huggins who was a Falklands War veteran. They compared memories. To mark the 50th Anniversary of VE Day in 1995 Fred sent Ursula and Erich a specially brewed bottle of Hooky. But it was never delivered and will be opened at the service. Let's hope it's kept well.

OUR LOCAL FARMERS....

Liz and Barry Haycock have decided to take life just a little bit easier - and who can blame them? Liz and Barry first began farming in Abthorpe 45 years ago, having married and had their new farmhouse built, Highfield, where they still live. They had built up their farm gradually starting with 24 acres along Potlands [the first track on the right beyond Brackley Lane] and gradually accumulating six more plots to make a viable farm of 220 acres of their own land, together with a further 70 acres rented. Although a modest farm by today's standards, Barry and Liz had their work cut out looking after both cattle and sheep, and growing cereals - and also helping out at Rookery Farm in Bradden where

Barry's Dad farmed.

Barry and Liz have seen considerable changes in farming practices since they first moved to Highfield Farm. There is now much more awareness about the impact of farming on the environment and Barry is keen to stress that most farmers love their land and want to do what is best for it. One example of the changing attitude is that all British farms have to set 5% of their land aside as green environmental strips along hedges or around fields to protect the hedgerows and the wildlife. Farm machinery is fitted with special "limiter" attachments to ensure only the land being cultivated is sprayed and no spraying is allowed within 5 metres of any water course.

Other changes observed by Barry and Liz are again typical of what is happening on most British farms. Not only is machinery getting more and more advanced, but it is also getting bigger. When Barry and Liz first started farming the biggest and most expensive tractor that money could buy was a 72 horse power machine that set its proud owner back £1,200. Today, a farmer needs to find £140,000 to buy an up-to-the-minute tractor. All tractors now have cabs because of concerns about the impact of noise levels on their drivers. Cabs cut down noise levels to below 80 decibels, but it

soon became apparent that driving for hour after hour in a cab was similar to sitting in a greenhouse all day, so most cabs are now air-conditioned. Today's tractors are not just more comfortable, they are also considerably larger. Barry points out that the front wheels on today's tractors are bigger than the back wheels of tractors in days gone by.

Talking of size, few of us will have failed to notice how huge some of the combine harvesters are now. Barry's first combine back in 1972 had a cutter with a width of 8ft 6ins (about 2.6m) but the cutter on his present combine is 30ft wide (over 9m) and it is possible to buy combines with 40ft cutters (over 12 metres). Mind you, that would cost you over half a million pounds.

Although Barry and Liz know they have to move with the times and appreciate many of the technological advances that have been made, there is no doubt that farming is now a high-tech business. Most farmers have an agronomist to help them with their decision-making and keep them abreast of all the latest developments. If Barry's tractor breaks down, for instance, he is not allowed to fiddle with it himself but must call out the mechanic to whom he is contracted, and the mechanic will whip out, not a spanner, but



his laptop in order to diagnose and hopefully fix the problem. Since farmers are often practical men used to sorting out problems for themselves and not afraid of tackling repair jobs, this can be rather frustrating at times.

Barry and Liz have always worked as a team on their farm and it is just as usual to see Liz at the wheel of their Land Rover as it is to see Barry. Amazingly, both Barry and Liz have also given over huge amounts of their time to local issues and voluntary work as well. Liz remembers raising money to have the original toilets built on to the Old School, and, of course, she was for many years a Marie Curie nurse. The annual coffee mornings in October when Liz, with much appreciated help from Barry and her friends, raised money for Marie Curie became a local legend and only stopped two years ago by which time over £100,000 had been raised for the charity. Meanwhile Barry was not just an active member of the Parish Council; he was the Chairman for many years too.

It is not surprising then that Barry and Liz feel they want to slow down a bit. Farming is their life and they cannot imagine life without it but they have taken a few steps to make things a little easier. They stopped keeping cattle a few years ago as looking after cattle is physically very demanding; trying to coerce beasts weighing in at half a ton each is no easy task. Then this year they had their last lambing season. That was a bitter sweet moment. As Liz says, she will not miss the broken nights when she would get up night after night to see if any ewes were in trouble or needing a helping hand, but both she and Barry will definitely miss the joy of helping new life into the world and seeing the yearly cycle begin all over again. Liz and Barry are still intending to keep sheep, but they will now buy ewe lambs rather than breed them themselves, and then sell them on to other farmers for breeding. They will also continue to grow crops but with more of the work being contracted out.

We all wish Liz and Barry a very well-earned 'non-retirement' and we look forward to seeing them around the village – in or out of their Land Rover – for a long time to come. Thank you both for all you have done in the past and for all that you mean to the villagers of Abthorpe.

ANOTHER VIEW OF HARVEST

In September it was a worrying time for our local farmers as the harvest seemed to have ground to a halt. In the fields round Abthorpe the principal arable crops are oil seed rape, barley and wheat. The rape was the first crop to be harvested and this largely occurred without too many problems.

The first part of the cereal harvest took place with only a few delays caused by rain. But, one local farmer exclaimed, once the children went back to school there seemed to be rain shower after rain shower so that the crop never dried out.

A walk into his fields showed where his contractor had cut a swathe of wheat about 30m wide right round the perimeter leaving a huge area of untouched crop in the middle. An idle combine was parked at the edge of the field waiting for the weather to change. He walked across the stubble to the standing crop, plucked an ear of wheat and expertly rolled it in his fingers to reveal the individual grains. They were damp but he was pleased that as yet there were no signs of the

grains sprouting.

He estimated that the contractors with their huge, fast machines could harvest his remaining wheat in just a few hours. But a number of drier days allowed the harvest to be finally gathered in - almost a month later than in 2016.

THE OLD SCHOOL

Holding coffee mornings on a Saturday has proved a winner. Leah Abbott hosted one in September which attracted new people including some from outside the village, and added £150 to the Old School fundraising.

All the tickets were sold for the race night on the 21st October proving how popular this event is, appealing to new people in the village



*Lynn Neasham
encouraging
Dobbin over the
jumps*



as well as the long-established. The excitement seemed to grip everyone from the start – no building up to it. Philip Berry was a master at keeping the evening flowing and encouraging punters to buy a nag or back their favourite number. A pause for supper did not dim the enthusiasm and the evening ended as it had begun full of noise and laughter. £1,193.98 raised was the extraordinary outcome of the evening which made all the hard work by the committee and their helpers worthwhile.

The Tesco blue token scheme ended on 31st October. The calculation as to which charity was most popular has not yet been completed, but the minimum grant is £1,000. Thank you to everyone who participated during their shopping trips.

A large whisky jar is held at the New Inn for customers' odd change, and more recently the disposal of the old £1 coins (and of course the committee is more than happy to

accept old fivers and tenners now!). The bottle is emptied when it is about half full, and this time it was found to contain £110 for the benefit of the Old School.

Looking ahead to the new year the AGM is provisionally booked for Thursday 1st March, a good time to meet the committee and hear about their future plans. No organisation can remain static, and new blood would be welcome to continue keeping the Old School in good heart for the future use of the village. Anyone who could offer just a little time, especially handy men, is very welcome.

Now would be a great time to get more involved as plans are afoot for a #AbthorpeGinFest on 9th June. Although the popular theme of gin will be the central feature, the day

will offer much more and something for everyone.

Meanwhile, events continue with the return of the Truckers' Breakfast on Saturday 3rd February from 8.30 to 11.00. There is also the prospect of a quiz evening in the spring.

POTHOLES GALORE

We often grumble about the state of our local and village roads but it is worth sparing a thought for how things used to be...

Before 1790 Abthorpe roads were either grass tracks running on raised stone 'balks', like the one behind the Stocking Frame, or soft lanes over grass fields, such as the continuation of Brackley Lane to the woods. Abthorpe's road network was very different then. Today's main route through the village linking Abthorpe to Towcester in one direction and Wappenham in the other did not exist at all. Instead, there was a track to Oxbridge from Tinker's Close [cottages in the field below Main Street by the footpath leading to Slapton] which then ran behind the Foscote houses to reach the quarries at the Delf [just before Handley bends] where there was a cottage for the quarryman. This track went no further because Handley Park was a deer park so no public road ran through it. Instead another track, referred to as the Hulcote Road, ran between Foscote cottages

across the fields to eventually meet Watling Street at Spital bridge [now the A5 roundabout]. Abthorpe and Silverstone had no direct connecting road until after 1790 because there was no road from Oxbridge over the crossroads to Silverstone. Instead people used the Stocking Frame track, then went through the wood to get to Challock, finally across another field track to Silverstone. On the west side of the village Potland Lane [first track right after Brackley Lane] was the route to Wappenham. All these village roads were more direct shorter routes for walking than the current tarmac roads. (Only Brackley Lane and the east/west road through the wood are still byways open to all traffic; several others have been downgraded to footpaths or bridleways.)

So, who was responsible for the upkeep of these early village 'roads'? Before the Abthorpe fields were enclosed in 1826 people had strips of land side by side in large open fields. Each parish was rather more self-sufficient in those days – they had to be. However, they were still answerable to their local Lord of the Manor. Each year a group of representatives from the village known as a 'jury' went to their local manor court. Abthorpe belonged to Towcester Manor under the jurisdiction of the Fermor family and these courts were held at the George

Inn at Fosters Booth, probably because, being situated on Watling Street, it was easily accessible for all the surrounding villages at all times of the year. (Foscote, on the other hand, was part of the Manor of Alderton under the Dukes of Grafton). At the court, officials were elected for each parish. It was the job of these officials to ensure that the field rules decreed by the court stating how the open fields should be farmed were followed. However, there were no specific rules laid down for the upkeep of the roads. This therefore became the responsibility of the village overseers [equivalent to a parish council]. Money was raised from a rate on local land owners which was altered according to how much was needed each year. The necessary manual labour was provided by all able-bodied people in

the parish, unless they contributed in other ways by providing money or horses and carts. Each person had to labour for a certain number of days a year. In Towcester, for example, records show that in 1668 eighty-five people including widows had to each spend six days collecting stones for repairs, while a further 15 men provided teams of horses for a total of 96 days.

So much for the village roads, but as we know we have a major road running close by which would have been known and used by Abthorpe residents of the past. This was Watling Street, perhaps better known to most of us as the A5. The section of Watling Street running through Northamptonshire between Old Stratford and Crick (sometimes called the Chester Road) was one of the earliest toll or turnpike roads in

Current potholes in Brackley Lane. The diagonal across the road is where it was dug up for electricity or water supply to the houses on the left which were built in the early 1970s.



the county, construction starting in 1709. Money to build the toll roads was raised initially by shareholders with labour being provided from local villages and the men being paid for each day's work. An account book for William Ives JP who lived at Bradden showed the road was maintained by the tolls from the turnpike gate at Old Stratford. When the toll road was completed, it must have seemed like the M1 did to modern users, providing fast travel to London. But of course in the 1700s it was by stagecoach and horses, the latter being changed regularly at coaching inns along the route. Robbers were rife especially for those lone travellers on horseback with no protection from the stagecoach drivers. In 1675 Foscoote farmer John Barford was robbed at pistol point of £9, but the robbers were caught and brought to justice at the Bedford Assizes.

If we move to more recent times it is fascinating to see how things have changed and are still changing as regards maintaining our village roads. In 1946 ten council houses were built in Brackley Lane after the RDC (Rural District Council) compulsorily purchased a small field from old Tom Barford at the cost of £25 a plot, and Brackley Lane was given a concrete road surface. Meanwhile around the Green the paths and roads were regularly top dressed, a necessity as the paths

ran with wet tar in the hot summers and children going to school got it on their shoes and clothes requiring home remedies of lard and petrol to remove it.

Each village had its own roadman, paid for out of parish rates, whose job was to carry out maintenance on roads as far as the parish boundaries. Mr Redfern [Bob Salmons' father-in-law] could be seen every day with his barrow, digging out grips, cutting back grass from paths or doing small repairs. Once he had retired the tarmac path from Abthorpe to the allotments at the crossroads disappeared under the encroaching grass and a good path was lost for ever. In Mr Redfern's time there was no flooding off the fields across roads because the farm ditches were cleared by hand allowing road water to drain away quickly through the grips. When the number of farm workers dropped individual skilled Irishmen would come from Northampton to do hedging and ditching all winter, paid by the chain (22 yards - about 20 metres) which both man and farmer would pace out separately before agreeing whose steps were most accurate. As the farmer held the cash he normally won. With less water on the roads (and considerably less traffic) were potholes less common a generation or two ago than they are today?

So next time you swerve to

avoid a pot hole, be it in Brackley Lane, on the road to Silverstone, or elsewhere, take time to remember the labourers of the past who kept our local roads in good condition through hard manual labour. Maybe things are not so bad after all....

HALLOWEEN ANTICS IN ABTHORPE

It's that time of year again....31st October saw a good number of houses in the village featuring carved pumpkins and various other spooky items in their doorways. For

the Zachars it was the first time out Trick or Treating and they were joined by the Colletts for a tour of the village. The children looked great in their costumes and make up and the new addition to the Zachar family, Jasper the dog, managed to look very spooky even without a costume. Claire Zachar writes: "As a parent who hadn't had such great experiences of trick or treating as a child I was really impressed by how much effort everyone made around the village. Bowls of goodies were left out for the children and those



Benjamin and Thomas Zachar, Louis and Darcey Collett, with Jasper

who answered their doors really got into the spirit of it - pardon the pun.... Thank you Abthorpe for making our children's first experience so much fun!"

MILLENNIUM DISC

We mentioned the Abthorpe millennium disc in the last issue, and it is now fully live on the village website, www.abthorpe.net, where there is a link from the front page.

Eric Malcomson has been instrumental in guiding this whole project and also making it functional on the website. Additional contributions of photos, anecdotes, etc would be more than welcome to augment and update an already fascinating glimpse of the history of Abthorpe. They can be passed to Eric via contactus@abthorpe.net on the website.

To whet your appetite two of the photographs from the CD have been used on the front cover of this issue. The view of Wappenham Road looking towards Brackley Lane, Main Street and Towcester was taken in the period 1900-1919. The girls playing netball outside the Old School dates from 1922-23. What were the boys doing during this lesson?

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Barbara Malcomson

You may have seen the Bishop of Peterborough, the Rt Revd Donald Allister, walking through the village recently. We hosted the benefice confirmation service on October 15th led by the Bishop. There was just one candidate for confirmation and she came from Paulerspury. It was a lovely service followed by refreshments and time to chat with both the Bishop and our Rector Paul McLeod.

Our Harvest Thanksgiving weekend went well. There was a very happy chatty atmosphere in the Old School on the 7th October as people enjoyed their Harvest Supper, followed by a brief quiet period as everyone tried to get to grips with Richard Tomalin's horticultural quiz. At the Harvest service the following day the church looked and smelled lovely with all the flowers, fruit and vegetables decorating it and the service was a joyous occasion. Our harvest food donations once again went to the Hope Centre in Northampton.

John Riches took the food box into the Food Bank around the same time and so generous are the people of Abthorpe that three trips had to be made in October. There is now a second box at the back of the church for

*Bishop Donald and Lesley
after the confirmation*

'Christmas treats'. Some examples of what could be included are: mince pies, tinned ham, Christmas pudding, Christmas cake, box of biscuits, children's selection box, chocolates, snacks and nibbles, long life fruit juice, cordial or squash. Thank you to everyone who has donated so generously during this year and a big thank you to John and Joyce for regularly taking our contributions to the food bank.

The weather was perfect for the garage sale on 24th September and the tea room in the Old School was very busy. There were not quite so many people around the village compared to 2015 when we had our first sale, but it turned out to be a very successful day, raising £530.

Our 'Tea and Piece' monthly Sunday afternoon teas went well over the summer. It is planned that we will repeat them next summer, so watch out for flyers with more information. The cleared space on the north side of the church has been brilliant for these. We have now received the initial proposals from our architect and we will discuss these at our PCC meeting later in November and decide on the next stage.

Recent tote winners have been Andrew Dancer who won in August and Andrew Gough in September. It looks as if Andrew has been the lucky name for the late summer and early Autumn totes. But not so in October, when Alison and David Symmers struck lucky. Each month the prize was £202.50. Thank you to everyone who has continued to support our tote throughout 2017.



Services for November to March

Sunday 12th November	Remembrance Service	10.50
Sunday 10th December	Holy Eucharist	11.00
Sunday 17th December	Holy Eucharist	9.15
Christmas Eve	Christingle and Carol Service	4.00
Christmas Day	Holy Eucharist	9.30

Services for January, February and March will be on the second Sunday of the month at 11am and the third Sunday of the month at 9.15am. For more information check out the notice board by the north gate of the church. Looking a little further ahead, our Mothering Sunday Holy Eucharist is on Sunday 11th March at 11am.

Rev'd Paul will be repeating his hugely successful 'Beer and Carols' at the New Inn on Wednesday 20th December at 7pm. If you are not able to make this evening, he is also doing evenings at the pubs in Whittlebury, Paulerspury and Silverstone during the same week.

Last year, we held a Christingle Service on Christmas Eve instead of just our usual Carol Service. This was a beautiful service which was enjoyed by all, so we will be repeating it on Christmas Eve this year at 4pm. It really is a lovely start to Christmas. On Christmas Day itself, our Holy Eucharist service will be at 9.15am.

As it is a while since we have had a pancake tea we thought we would hold one on either Saturday February 10th or Shrove Tuesday itself which is 13th February. This falls in half term and there will be activities for children. It would be useful to know which date would suit families better, so please can you let me know at malcomson@abthorpe.net.

And finally, a little information about the Whittlewood Benefice which consists of churches of Slapton, Whittlebury, Paulerspury, Silverstone and Abthorpe. There are a few new initiatives that have been started that may be of interest. These are all based in Silverstone, but anyone is very welcome to anything any of the churches puts on. For more information, the Parish Diary is put up on the notice board at the north side of the church.

For instance, 'Something for the weekend'; Clare Ray, the new Reader in the benefice, is starting a group on a Fridays at St Michael's Church rooms. The first get together is December 1st at 2.15pm. Everyone these days is rushing around during the week to fit in work, family responsibilities and household jobs etc and this will be a bit of time for reflection, to just take a big breath before whatever is happening at the weekend. There will be

refreshments and it will finish at 3pm in time to pick up the children from school.

The Christian Singing Group is not a choir and no experience is necessary. The group will be singing Christian music, some of which may be familiar, some may be new to you. The next sessions will be Tuesday 7th November, Thursday 30th November and Tuesday 12th December starting at 7.30pm at St Michael's.

Bible and Reflection time will again be at St Michael's, meeting at 1pm on Wednesdays. It is a time for some Bible study and reflection, possibly followed by refreshments and time to chat.

Praise Be! is the new benefice magazine which is published every two months. It gives a lot of information on what is happening in the five churches. You can receive it by email or a hard copy. To find out more, contact me on 01327 857066 or malcomson@abthorpe.net.

The Churchwardens and Abthorpe PCC wish you all a happy and blessed Christmas and a healthy new year. A big thank you to anyone who has supported and helped us in any way during 2017. We really do appreciate it.

SAFARI SUPPER

The safari supper will make a welcome return on Saturday 19th May next year so do save the date. As in previous years it will be a jaunt round the village taking each of three courses with a new set of dining companions at a different house. The safari starts with a drinks reception for everyone who then come back together again at the end of the evening for coffee.

If you would like to express an interest now to help the planning, especially if you are able to host a course, please email safari@abthorpe.net.

MINI FARM

When the 2011 planning application was considered at its appeal hearing, the services of a solicitor were engaged to provide legal advice. This was paid for by funds raised by villagers in Bradden.

Legal advice has also been sought for the current appeal and a submission made; you can see this document on SNC's website under Planning. It is the first of four documents marked Appeal Documentation (3rd Party Comments). The legal advice was paid for by various people in Bradden and Slapton. Abthorpe Parish Council is not in a position to contribute towards these costs but contributions from Abthorpe residents are most welcome. If you want to do so, contact Steve Crowcroft, who is co-ordinating the fund

raising, on 01327 860514 or email crowcrofts@aol.com. Consideration is being given to asking the solicitor to appear at the appeal hearing in January. This can only happen if further financial contributions are forthcoming.

**LETTER TO ABTALK READERS
FROM OUR MP, ANDREA
LEADSOM**

As the festive season approaches, I hope you all find the time to reflect on the last twelve months and look ahead to the next. For my part, I am incredibly optimistic about what 2018 has in store for us.

The beautiful village of Abthorpe is a place close to my heart – and my home – with the New Inn particularly being a popular destination for me and my family. Pubs play a crucial part in the life of our communities, with each one contributing approximately £80,000 annually to the local economy and providing a valuable source of employment; I am proud to play my own small part supporting our pubs in South Northamptonshire!

2017 has seen progress on a lot of our local priorities. Prior to being elected again as your MP I pledged to push for the early delivery of a relief road for Towcester and I intend to uphold that pledge. Residents of Abthorpe and beyond have made

clear their concerns about the unacceptable levels of traffic in the area. We are well aware that the Towcester Relief Road is the missing piece of the puzzle for our local roads and it has been a long overdue solution.

I recently met with the Roads Minister Jesse Norman in order to highlight the need for the road to be built as soon as possible. He is looking at what support he can give to speed up the process. In addition, I set up a working group with Northamptonshire County Council, South Northamptonshire District Council, the developers and Highways England to aim for the Towcester Relief Road to be delivered as soon as possible. It absolutely remains my ambition to be driving along the new road by 2020.

Another key local issue is our healthcare. We all know that the GP service we have in Towcester and Greens Norton is outstanding; there is rarely a long delay in getting an appointment. I am working with our excellent GPs as well as Nene Clinical Commission Group to explore what we can do to improve our already fantastic local services. Through the expansion of Towcester there is the opportunity to increase the provision of outpatient services, making it easier for people to access all levels of healthcare closer to come.

As ever, if I can be of any assistance on any matter please do not hesitate to contact me via email (andrea.leadson@parliament.uk) or through my constituency office on 01327 353124. I look forward to reporting back to you again in your next newsletter, but in the meantime please do keep up-to-date with my work on your behalf via the blog on my website: www.andrealeadson.com.

CHILDREN'S ART EVENT IN ABTHORPE

Paula Le Baigue, who has a BA in Fine Art and has recently moved to the village (*see People*), is running a free event for children of all ages at the Old School on Saturday 16th December from 10.00 to 1.00.

Called *The Bigger Picture* the emphasis is on bringing the community together by creating a picture which will hopefully be exhibited in Towcester Library.

The children will be mixing their own colours using acrylic paint, drawing a still life with pencil on paper, then painting a section of canvas to be sewn together to create *The Bigger Picture*.

Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Bringing an old shirt is a good idea. To book a free place email paulalebaigue@gmail.com.

THE ABTHORPES IN ABTHORPE

In September an interesting family of eight came to the pub for lunch. The reservation was to be in the name of Abthorpe, "that's my surname", said the lady making the booking.

She introduced the other family members to some of the locals who had pricked up their ears. There were the grandparents John and Kath, their children John, Philip, David and Mark, plus two grandchildren, Elise and Charlotte. It transpired that John's great-grandfather came from Abthorpe and as a very young man, being out of work, walked to Nottingham to try to work in the coal mines. But he was too young and instead worked on building railway viaducts. When he became old enough he got a job down one of the pits.

The family settled in Nottingham and a grandfather kept a pub there called The New Town Inn. Later some members of the family emigrated to Canada where the Abthorpe family is well known in the Ontario city of Thunder Bay. The family had heard of the village a long time ago but had only recently decided to make their first visit to the parish that provided their surname. Indeed a memorable trip.

And if you ask how the family came by their name, nobody knows.

PEOPLE

LEN BODILY

Len, the oldest man in the village, died recently. His family has issued the following statement of thanks:

“Peter, Carole and the Bodily family would like to thank the Abthorpe community for the love, care and friendship that they have shown to Betty and Len. Both in times of good health and more particularly in recent times of failing health the community has reciprocated the feelings that our parents felt for the tight-knit village group. We will always remember your support throughout and the strong presence at the funerals. With much gratitude, Peter and Carole.”



At Len’s funeral his son Peter delivered an emotional eulogy, a fitting testimony to his father’s long life. The following is an edited version:

‘OUR DAD’

Len, was born locally and lived with his parents and Bet, Billy, Phin, Albert, Frank, Maggie, Violet, Fred, Kath, and Ivy. Dad was the youngest and the last surviving of this family group.

Dad started as a farm labourer. He married Betty in 1949, and shortly after that they moved to Abthorpe to live with Granny Cann.

PEOPLE

That was their cherished home until the very end and the spiritual home to Carole and I to this very day.

Dad then worked on the presses at Plessey before moving to Hadsphaltic for a happy, but hard-working, 15 years. He then moved to Atkins and Shaw for four years. These were some of the best years of his life, happy at home, Carole and I growing up and many work friends from Abthorpe (now nearly all deceased) working together throughout those years in the construction industry. Those years were brought to an end by having a serious operation on his overworked back. He finished his working days as a quality inspector at British Timken. He quickly established himself there. When the news of the birth of his first grandson Sam came through during a board meeting the Chairman cracked open a bottle of champagne. Such was the respect for Len.

Our dad was a hard-working, strong, loyal and kind man with true working class family values. He loved his wife, his children, and his wider family. Mum and Dad provided for us to the extent that if needs be they went without to give us what we needed. Both Carole and I vividly remember Saturday tea time. Dad insisted on cooking that meal instead of Mum, always bacon, mushrooms etc... to the accompaniment of Billy Two Rivers, Jackie Pallo and Mick McManus.

Dad also loved his garden and his greenhouses, and the garden always looked colourful and immaculate.

Despite all of this, his family was what he was most proud and protective of. He and mum never failed to support me through university and onwards. Carole stayed closer to home and she was a constant source of joy for them. Her children Sam and Alex and her grand-children Jacob and Zachary were precious to him, especially the little ones during recent times of illness.

Mum and Dad spent much of the last few years helping and looking after each other. Now I am sure that they are together again.

PEOPLE

Vic Deane and Paula Le Baigue have chosen Abthorpe as their new home, recently moving to The Cottage in Church Lane. Although they have been together for ten years they finally decided to marry in May. Vic's arrival in the pub one day resulted in mutual recognition between him and Rob Smith, owner of the New Inn, who reminisced about when they played together as youngsters in Whittlebury and especially how Rob lost Vic's boomerang. Has he been feeling guilty ever since?

Paula is an artist who also makes curtains and soft furnishings. Vic's profession as a precision engineer is carried through to his hobbies, owning a 1931 Austin 7 and a couple of interesting motorbikes. Apart from the enjoyment of refurbishing their cottage, Paula and Vic are already enthusiastically joining in village activities.

Tina and Darren Emerton renewed their wedding vows on 19th August, 17 years (plus one day) after they were married. And what a beautiful service it was, full of love, laughter and happy tears. The party after at the Old School lived up to its billing, the whole day being a memorable event to be treasured for years to come.



PEOPLE

Elsie Anne Partridge was baptised in the village church by Rev'd Paul on 26th August, witnessed by family members who had travelled from far afield. Elsie took it all in her stride and is a delight to her parents, Tracey and Mike. She is equally adored by her siblings, Maura, Annie and Jamie all of whom now live away from



Abthorpe in their university or post-university lives so don't get to play as often as they'd like.

Another new resident is Pip Rainbow who is Karen Sakkalli's goddaughter and has come to live with Karen and Simon at 3 The Green (now also known as Mulberry Cottage). Pip is studying sports therapy at the University of Hertfordshire alongside her internship with Wasps rugby club (lucky lady), and her private practice of sports deep tissue massage and relaxation massage -@p.rainbowMT.

PEOPLE

Gillian Scoble has temporarily moved to Abthorpe from Australia with her daughter, Sarah and granddaughters Maia who is 14 and Sian 12. Gillian explained her reasons for bringing her family to the other side of the world: "We are staying at The White Cottage on Wappenham Road until the end of the year. We came to the UK so that the girls could go to school in England for a term. Sarah was keen for this to happen as her father (my late husband) was English. However, he was from Devon and Sarah wanted to find a location which was semi-rural but closer to London. We know Barbara Smith through my sister-in-law, Brenda, and she helped us find a place to stay which is in a beautiful rural setting, yet close to towns, and a good high school at Northampton.

Special places: Sarah and I went to Stowe for my birthday, which was lovely. The girls are involved in sport, so have visited various places, and enjoyed horse riding, hockey and basket ball. Sarah has helped Barbara with the sheep, and we spent a few days staying at Slapton Manor with its thirteenth century church and lovely cottages. We've visited the New Inn; I've enjoyed the churches, and we attended a harvest thanksgiving meal in the Old School. We also went to Earl Spencer's mansion to look around. Because Abthorpe is so close to London, we've also ventured to Ireland (me), Switzerland (the girls), and Amsterdam (all of us). You are so close to everything!

Special memories to take back to Australia will be of a lovely little cottage, which is like a home away from home, of quality family time spent together, and of the opportunity to attend a different school, and participate in new sporting activities. You have a lovely, friendly community, and it has been great to meet a number of you. The vibrant farming community, the corn harvest and those big tractors rumbling past, are etched in my memory. I'm sure that the girls will return in the future. For me, it's all about the memories. If you fancy a holiday 'down under', please ask Alison Robbins for my email address, and we would be happy to help out.

PS: I won't miss the roundabouts!".

PEOPLE

Sue and Mark Rookley have moved into 29 Brackley Lane. Mark works in Milton Keynes and Sue at Mixbury for a vegan food company. Their main reason for coming here was to enjoy the countryside; they have already been seen walking and running around the fields.

Also in Brackley Lane, Adam and Jacqui have moved to 14 Brackley Lane. Jacqui works in Luton and Adam in Gaydon, so Abthorpe is a happy mid point.

Apologies to Emily and Tim Humphreys: Emily's maiden name of Hayward was erroneously used in the last issue.

DIARY

Sunday 12 November

Remembrance Service, St John the Baptist, 10.50

Friday 24 November

Local game dinner, the New Inn

Sunday 26 November

Charity quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

Monday 27 November

Parish Council meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Saturday 2 December

Christmas Fayre, the Old School, 2.30 to 4.00

Saturday 16 December

Free art event, the Old School, 10.00 to 1.00

Sunday 10 December

Holy Eucharist, St John the Baptist, 11.00

DIARY

Sunday 17 December

Holy Eucharist, St John the Baptist, 9.15

Charity quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

Wednesday 20 December

Beer and Carols, the New Inn, 7.00

Christmas Eve

Christingle Service, St John the Baptist, 4.00

Christmas Day

Holy Eucharist, St John the Baptist, 9.30

Friday 29 December

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

2018

Monday 8 January

Parish Council meeting, 7.45, the Old School

February (date to be confirmed)

Pancake tea

Saturday 3 February

Truckers' breakfast, the Old School, 8.30 to 11.00

Monday 19 February

Parish Council meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Thursday 1 March

Old School AGM

Sunday 11 March

Mothering Sunday Holy Eucharist, St John the Baptist, 11.00

Monday 2 April

Parish Council meeting, 7.45 the Old School

Saturday 19 May

Safari Supper, around the village