



# ABTALK

*News from Abthorpe*

*September 2013*

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## **FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The Annual Parish meeting back in May is, indeed, a long time ago, but a couple of points worth noting that were presented at the meeting: the parish finances are in good shape showing a credit total of £10,019 (£8,627 last year) which has allowed the precept to remain the same for the past two years.

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### *Speed Signs*

In an effort to curb the excessive speed of some vehicles through the village we are purchasing a speed indicator sign which will show the speed of an approaching vehicle. In addition it will show SLOW DOWN in red if the vehicle is exceeding 30mph and THANK YOU in green if below the limit. There are no flashing lights.

The signs are 450mm by 650mm and will be rotated between two positions. One is on the first lamp post coming into the village from Towcester and the other is on a new pole on the verge near the exit towards Wappenham. The signs will be pointed in both directions at different times so as well as warning drivers coming into the village, it will try to slow down those speeding out of the village. It is expected that the signs will be erected early in October.

### *Dog Fouling*

Once again, and for some inexplicable reason, someone is gathering up dog mess in plastic bags and then dumping the plastic bags. Plastic bags take even longer to degrade. BAG IT AND TAKE IT HOME.

### *Morning Noise*

Many working people enjoy a lie-in on Sundays and bank holidays. Recently the Parish Council received

a complaint about the disturbance caused by lawnmowers and other noisy machinery with the request that noise be avoided before 10am on those days. So please think about your neighbours early in the day.

### *Snelson's Orchard*

The housing is now complete and residents are beginning to move in (*see People section*).

### **FILM ABTHORPE**

The film evenings are a pleasant diversion as the evenings pull in. Following *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* on 26<sup>th</sup> September, two further dates have been fixed to put on the calendar: 24<sup>th</sup> October and 28<sup>th</sup> November. December will film-free, but showings will start again in January.

### **OIL BUYING SYNDICATES**

With winter fast approaching minds are turning to the costs of keep warm. With no gas in the village many rely on expensive oil. Oil-buying syndicates can negotiate better deals than households by bulk purchasing.

There are two operating locally: the community-based countywide syndicate run by Northamptonshire ACRE. More details: Village Networks (nick@snyb.org.uk or 353321), www.northantsacre.org.uk. The

other is YOBCO, a village buying group based in Yelvertoft to which quite a number of villagers belong. It has been run by David & Sue Nicholas for a number of years now, and offers email alerts when prices are good and worth topping up a tank, and deals on boiler servicing, etc. Information: 01788 824236, [www.yobco.co.uk](http://www.yobco.co.uk)

### **SEVEN FOR A SECRET**

Paper girl Kat is carrying on a family tradition, not just in delivering the morning news but also as a bass player in a successful local rock band, Seven For A Secret. The band has played before at the New Inn when they were starting to find their feet, and they hope to appear there again in the future. They were recently honoured with an invitation to appear at Twinfest alongside bands from Northampton's twin towns of Poitiers in

France and Marburg in Germany, and gave a sterling performance on the bandstand in Abington Park. Congratulations to Kat and her friends in the band.

### **TRACING FAMILY ROOTS**

John Perkins of Stratford-upon-Avon was recently browsing the internet and came across details of the CD about Abthorpe that was collated to celebrate the millennium. John's grandfather, Robert Henson, owned Abthorpe shoe factory (opposite the pub). Robert lived in the village until his death in 1955. John Perkins provided some fascinating family and historical insights into the life of the village that particularly may interest older members of the local community.

Robert Henson's daughter Violet Doreen was John's mother. She and



*Seven For A Secret  
(picture courtesy of  
Mandy Donneky of  
GlamDiva.co.uk)*

all her siblings attended the former village school. She was brought up by her aunt Elizabeth Hinds because her mother had contracted milk fever following the birth of John's uncle Leslie Henson in 1908. This apparently necessitated placing her in an institution for the remainder of her life. Those were the days before the National Health Service and to pay for the institution's fees the shoe factory had to be sold.

John was finding the articles relating to Abthorpe school on the disc particularly interesting. He remembers seeing Miss Abberley the Headmistress in her garden when he visited his grandfather to enjoy a meal of new potatoes and peas that he'd grown on his allotment just a short cycle ride away from the village (now Mini Farm).

### **OLD SCHOOL UPDATE**

The first phase of the project to give a new lease of life to the Old School was completed in the summer. The kitchen was refitted and the small



*Lynn Neasham gets to grips with a shotgun at the clay pigeon shoot*

room decorated and recarpeted. The whole of the hall was professionally cleaned at high level. The total cost of the refurbishment was £12,968, paid for from all the fundraising efforts and the generous donation from the old tote committee.

There was an afternoon tea to show off the works and to say thank you to the village for their support. This produced some more donations totalling £127.29. Thanks to Robert Miles for designing the kitchen and to Steve Gray for his magnificent work in doing the fitting and all the decoration.

Other contributions to a successful year were the plant sale, the fish and chip supper on the Green and

the clay pigeon shoot. The plant sale together with the refreshments and raffle made £591.50. Although there were slightly fewer plants they were of a very high quality. Thanks to all who grew plants, particularly Janet Dancer who spent all winter nurturing seedlings.

The fish and chip supper on 22<sup>nd</sup> June fared better with the weather this year, once you were snugly inside the marquee, and was another of those events typical of English country life bringing so many villagers together. The fact that it added £726.66 to the fundraising total was a bonus. The weather for the recent clay pigeon shoot was not quite as sparkling as last year. However, interesting stakes competed for between the expert shots, the sausage and bacon BBQ along with the addition of £293.15 to the coffers brightened the smiles. Many thanks to Clive Wright for organising the shoot and for his expert and patient tuition of the novices.

In terms of future fundraising events to finance Phase 2 of the refurbishment project - this time the toilets - the committee is planning a race night on 2<sup>nd</sup> November and a weekend breakfast at the end of November. The popular coffee mornings are set to return and hosts are always being sought. If

anyone feels they could have a coffee morning in their home please contact Janet Dancer on 857650.

The departure of Jules Dyckhoff to her new life in France has left the committee bereft of a chairperson. Richard Gladdle has generously stepped in as temporary chair and it is hoped to appoint permanently to this post at the AGM in the new year. Everyone would like to thank Jules for all the hard work she put in over the years; she will be (and is already being!) sorely missed. Jan Miles has taken over the bookings for the Old School so please contact her on 857427 or email [jan.miles@abthorpe.net](mailto:jan.miles@abthorpe.net) to book the hall.

### **WALKING AND CYCLING MAPS**

There are a number of useful local maps which have been created by South Northamptonshire Council and can be downloaded from [www.southnorthants.gov.uk/walking](http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/walking). The series is 'Walk, Eat and Drink in Southwest Northamptonshire' and features 15 walks and 3 cycle routes in this area, including a circular one from Abthorpe to Wappenham.

Also of interest is a very good downloadable booklet on the history and art of the area at [www.southnorthants.gov.uk/2647.htm](http://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/2647.htm), choose the icon: A District Steeped in History.

## CYCLING FOR PARKINSON'S

Dr Mike Greenhalgh had a vision to lead a group of family members and friends on a sponsored cycle ride from his Medical Centre in Greens Norton to Paris. He anticipated raising around £5,000 for Parkinsons UK. Now that the ride has taken place he is amazed



*Mike with the team preparing to leave Greens Norton.*

that his team has amassed over £30,000 and the money's still coming in! He wishes to thank everyone who sponsored and supported them.

There were 16 relatively inexperienced cyclists in the team which included his children Kate, Rob and Nick, his identical twin Bill and elder brother Nigel. Mike's wife Jill and friend Kim drove the back-up van.

The first overnight stop was at High Wycombe, then it was on into London using the capital's excellent cycle routes via Buckingham Palace to 10 Downing Street where there were brief stops for photos. The second night was spent at Croydon which was reached via Tower Bridge and a superhighway cycle route. A tough ride which included mounting Ditchling Beacon took them to the south coast for the third night before they embarked on the Newhaven to Dieppe ferry. Once in France



they sped south towards the French capital riding along an Avenue Verte constructed on a disused railway track. By the Wednesday having been very well looked after by French hoteliers en-route, they arrived at their destination – the Eiffel Tower in the centre of Paris. That evening, in a restaurant close to the Gare du Nord, they celebrated their success and Mike was presented with a bottle of Bollinger signed by all the participants. He in turn gave each member of the team a miniature model of the Eiffel Tower as a souvenir of their life enhancing trip.

Back in Abthorpe, reflecting on their ride, Mike commented that raising awareness of Parkinsons was the main aim and to get people to realise you can still do quite a lot even though you have it. Mike has!

## NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

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Among the MG enthusiasts gathering for their meeting at Silverstone in June was a group of New Zealanders sampling cider and Hook Norton brew. Alex Direen, one of the Kiwis from Alexandra on the South Island, explained that he was a member of a team of visiting sheep shearers who annually descend on our area from May until mid-July. Kelvin Mainland another of the group related how each year they would remove the fleeces of an estimated 80,000 local sheep, including those belonging to landlord Rob Smith on his farm at Slapton Manor. The shearers are extremely fit 19 and 20 year olds, a necessary requirement as, according



*Visiting New Zealand shearers*

to Kelvin, shearers "sweat in places that you never knew you could sweat from". He estimated that a skilled shearer such as himself could cut the fleece from a sheep in between one and 1½ minutes.

There are ladies in the Kiwi group too. Hannah Moorhouse described herself as a world famous wool roller. Her job is to grab the freshly removed fleece and to roll it tightly ready for transportation. She believed that much of our local Northamptonshire wool goes to China to be manufactured into carpets and slippers.

For some years now these teams of shearers have been travelling to the UK in their home off-season. One regular reminded us that a couple of years ago a team of three was able, in sequence, to shear a sheep, drink a pint of beer and eat a banana in less than one minute. Alex Direen was asked if this year's team was as good as that. He pondered for a moment and then replied, "it all depends how big the banana is".

The new restaurant menu has been launched, which is given an added dimension by the changing blackboard. Chef Steve is putting an emphasis on fresh fish, which is collected weekly from Billingsgate market. The new menu can be seen at [www.newinnabthorpe.co.uk](http://www.newinnabthorpe.co.uk).

The Christmas menu will be available in mid-October and served from the last week in November through the Christmas period. But before Christmas there is bonfire night to celebrate. Thoughts are turning to the best way to do this.

Rob and Steve will be entering two awards in 2014: Rural Community Pub of the Year, and Best Sunday Roast. Watch out for details and don't forget to vote.

New members are always welcome at the two popular pub teams: darts on Monday, and Northamptonshire skittles on Thursdays. And you can always try your luck at the Bonus Ball game drawn each Saturday. Buy a square for £1 and win up to £49.

The Sunday quizzes continue to be popular with generous amounts being donated to charity, the choice of charity being the prize for the winning team. In July No Eye Deer had control of how to dispose of £120, and in August the pleasure fell to Pam's Babes with a total of £125. Both sums swelled the total being gathered by Dr Mike Greenhalgh for research into Parkinson's disease (see *above*). In September, the Westenders won £127 which went to Macmillan Nurses. The next quiz dates are 27<sup>th</sup> October and 24<sup>th</sup> November, with the festive finale to the year on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

**CHURCH NEWS**

Whilst many thousands of people were packed into nearby Silverstone Circuit watching the F1 Grand Prix, a sizable group of villagers sat peacefully in a garden enjoying very warm weather and appreciating the shade of an old apple tree. They enjoyed tea and slices of delicious cakes that had been baked especially for the occasion. Churchwarden Richard Tomalin who organised the event reported that £153.60 had been raised for church funds.

And just a reminder that the church is supporting Towcester Food Bank which has been set up against a background of ever-increasing hardship in the current financial climate. Churches Together in Towcester and the Trussel Trust, an organisation that helps local communities combat poverty and social exclusion, have given active support to the project. By just buying one extra item each week when you go shopping and popping it in the box at the back of the church you can support people who are experiencing a difficult time in their lives. Non-perishable foods such as soups, pasta, tinned puddings, tomatoes, fruits or rice puddings are preferable. Already two crates of food have been sent and the third is filling up. Please join in.

Have you wondered why a ladder has appeared up the side of the church spire? Over the years the wear and tear inflicted by bad weather causes most buildings to deteriorate and the church is no exception. Permission has been sought from the diocese to undertake some necessary maintenance and it is hoped that it will start soon. The steeplejacks will be doing all the work suspended on ropes attached to the very top of the spire.

Clearly this is a major expense and the church tote will provide a large contribution. Which leads neatly on to the most recent tote winners: In April, Barry Haycock won £230 and in May Rona Cambray's numbers were successful (£227.50). In June Jan and Lianne Powell won the same amount, July was the turn of one of the editors (JT☺) and August saw Bridget Burnet scoop £225. Thank you to everyone who supports the tote and good luck in future draws.

A 'newspaper' recording the church's mission in Abthorpe was produced for the recent Patronal Festival service. There are still some copies in the back of the church for anyone interested.

At the Patronal Festival service Rev'd Paul McLeod introduced and dedicated a stunning new purple



*Detail from the chasuble presented to the church. A chasuble is the outermost vestment worn by clergy for the celebration of Holy Communion.*

chasuble and four clerical stoles that have been presented to the parish by local families in memory of loved ones.

The Harvest Supper this year will be on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October at 7.00 for 7.30pm. Flyers have already gone round the village. Someone will call to sell tickets or contact Richard Tomalin (858316). The Harvest Service will follow on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October at 10am. This will be a lay-led service for all ages and families are welcome. Come and find out what this year's topic will be; last year it was all about water.

It is Abthorpe's turn to host

the area British Legion act of remembrance this year so a good attendance is expected on 10<sup>th</sup> November. The service will follow the familiar format of the two minutes' silence, last post, reveille, parade of colours, national anthem and hymns.

Operation Christmas Child is the world's largest children's Christmas project run by Samaritan's Purse. The idea is to fill a shoebox with gifts for a child who has very little and the church is taking part again this year. Information on what to put into a shoebox is in the back of church and if you would like to know more either pick up a leaflet or contact Barbara Malcomson (857066). The boxes will need to be gathered at church on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October 9.30am to noon (there is a service at 11am that day) or contact Barbara if you want them to be collected. They will be sent on their way at the service on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October.

Reverend Graham Buckle is organising a Holiday Club on Monday and Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October (half term) from 9.30am to 3.30pm at Paulerspury Village Hall. Any children in the Benefice between 5 and 11 are welcome to come. There will be a mixture of crafts, games, story telling, singing and lots of fun! Children will need to bring a packed lunch; drinks will be provided. If

you want to know more or would like a registration form, please get in touch with Graham on 07901 660593 or contact Barbara Malcomson on 857066, malcomson@abthorpe.net.

Looking forward to Christmas, there will be a concert with the Watling Singers on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm. Book the date in your diary. Tickets will be £5. An advanced date for your 2014 diary is May 14<sup>th</sup> when the John Cleveland Band is returning for a concert in church.

Anyone who has lived in Abthorpe for 10 years or more will know of Reg Chapman. He lived in the thatched cottage on the Green. In his retirement he wrote a book detailing the history of Abthorpe. He was very generous in giving copies of his book to people he met and one recipient was the matron of Duncote Care Home while he was there. This lady wishes to give this book to anyone who would be interested. So the first person to contact Richard Tomalin on 858316 or richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net (with maybe a donation for the church?) gets the book. Be prepared: it's a stiff read!

You may or may not realise that the church is kept open every day during the main daylight hours. A team of volunteers from the village has done this reliably for many years now on a monthly rota. Recently some people who volunteered have

left the village and there are gaps on the rota. It would be good to have some more people willing to help out in order to be able to keep the church open in the daytime. Please contact Joyce Riches on 857703 if you feel this is something you could do.

In a similar vein, we will be asking for anyone prepared to mow the churchyard to volunteer in the new year. It's just twice or three times during the summer.

### *Church Services*

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October

10am: Harvest Festival  
lay-led Family Service

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October

11am: Holy Eucharist

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October

9.15am: Holy Eucharist

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November

10.55am: British Legion  
Remembrance Service

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November

9.15am: Holy Eucharist

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December

11am: Holy Eucharist

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December

9.15am: Holy Eucharist

Christmas Eve

4pm: Carol Service

Christmas Day

9.15am: Holy Eucharist

Everyone is welcome to any of these services.

**ABbA***Keith Fenwick*

Superfast Broadband became a reality in Abthorpe at the beginning of June. Once again we have shown that local effort and determination gets things done. The faster speed gives many benefits. Sending photos is simple, Skype works properly and you now have reliable access to on-demand TV services such as Y-View. Sales of Smart TVs have increased as they can now be directly connected to the Internet. The new radio equipment which distributes the service around the village has also proved much more reliable and manageable than the old equipment. We have also developed our support services and introduced a telephone answering service for reporting faults. Currently we have about 165 households connected to the service in Abthorpe, Slapton,

Foscote, Wappenham, Lois Weedon and Weston. This is more than we had expected at this stage and has involved a lot of hard work from all the volunteers down the valley.

Our finances are healthy. Over the next few months, we will develop our plans for providing fibre links between the villages using the grant from Defra and the funds we have accumulated ourselves.

If you are still not signed up for the service, just go to [www.tovevalley.com](http://www.tovevalley.com) and register. Once you have paid your initial membership fee of £100, which goes towards paying for the distribution system, one of our volunteers will get in touch to discuss



*The launch of the service ten years ago (left) and the installation of the new service (above) both commemorated in cake*

*The new service launched by  
Andrea Leadsom MP*

how to install the equipment. We can usually get you connected within a few days. You will then have to pay £75 for your radio receiver plus yearly fee of £120. That gives you unlimited downloads. And support comes locally.

Our efforts have now been recognised nationally. Our local MP, Andrea Leadsom, entered Eric Malcomson, Chairman of Tove Valley Broadband, in Talk Talk's Digital Heroes award. This is run on a regional basis, voted on by the public. Eric has won the award for the East Midlands region and will receive £5,000 for the benefit of the community. Eric has been invited to attend the national finals which will take place in the House of Commons next month where all the 12 regional winners will be judged by a panel that includes Talk Talk Chairman Sir Charles Dunstone, UK Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox and *Mirror* Editor-in-Chief Lloyd Embley. The panel will decide who is to be named the nation's 2013 Talk Talk Digital Hero. The overall winner will receive an additional £5,000 towards their project. The organisers of the presentation ceremony will



be commissioning a film about our broadband project that first began more than 10 years ago over pints of Hooky in the New Inn. The film will be shown at the ceremony and afterwards will be available for local people to view.

### **MARIE CURIE CANCER CARE**

For the umpteenth year, Liz and Barry Haycock are running their annual fundraising event at Highfields Farm on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October. There will be a variety of sales stalls plus raffles so come and do some early Christmas shopping. Last year, £5,027 was raised, so that is the target to beat.

## PEOPLE

Audrey Dancer celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday by hosting a wonderful party for over 70 people at the pub, including her children Rosemary and David, daughter-in-law Janet, three grandchildren and two great grand-children. Audrey has lived in the village all her life. She was born in The Cottage off School Lane, the



youngest of seven children. Unfortunately her elder sisters Gladys aged 96 and Alice who will be 106 in October were unable to be present. Everyone at the party drank a toast to Audrey, a wonderful lady and village character.



Afterwards Audrey and her family expressed their thanks to her relations and friends for helping to celebrate the event. Audrey was grateful for the many cards of good wishes, flowers and presents. She added special thanks to Rob and

Barbara, Steve the chef, Lyn and the washer-up at the New Inn for all their hard work. It was a great day.

On Sunday after the morning service the Rev'd Graham Buckle presented Audrey with a magnificent bouquet of flowers on behalf of the local congregation.

And the celebrations went on. Audrey adds: "on August 14<sup>th</sup> I went to a lovely cream tea down in the Cotswolds along with my immediate family. It was great and a nice surprise. So my thanks to all concerned who organised this for me".

Many congratulations to Katie and Alex Hammon who are celebrating the birth of their third child Maximilian (Max) Walter, born on 18<sup>th</sup> September weighing 8lbs 13oz. Daughter Scarlett is being surrogate mum with cuddles galore, whereas other son Jack is not yet quite so sure what's arrived in his world.



Mark Wardley and Shannon Saby have recently moved to 26 Wappenham Road. Mark is a solicitor who works in Loughborough and Shannon's journey to Luton and Dunstable Hospital where she is a doctor meant that Abthorpe was a fair compromise for travelling to work.

Mark has a keen interest in sport, particularly swimming and squash. And although her work leaves little leisure time, Shannon enjoys playing the piano. But they will be finding time to prepare for their wedding next summer.

The new houses known as Snelson's Orchard (and, yes, we have taken an editorial decision to use the apostrophe!) are beginning to greet their new residents.

Nicole McAdams is one of the first to move in along with her daughter Naomi who is 2, and 4-year old son, Kai. Nicole has moved from Towcester into no.3, and is looking forward to getting to know other local mums.

And in no.7 Derek, Lianna and 2½ year old Rosie have arrived from Middleton Cheney. Derek is in the building trade while Lianna works in the laboratories of a chocolate factory - which must make her very popular!

There certainly has been quite a lot of coming and going among village residents lately. The most recent arrivals are Shelly and Stephen Maden who have bought The Cottage in Church Lane. They both work at the University of Buckingham, Shelly lecturing in Psychology while Stephen works in recruitment and marketing. They find the idea of rural life very appealing, enjoying running and walking as they do.

We hope all our new residents will enjoy living in Abthorpe and getting to know the community.

### **WATCH COUNCIL MEETINGS LIVE ONLINE**

Many Northamptonshire County Council meetings are webcast live over the Internet - one use for our new broadband service! They are still available for six months after the meeting.

Meetings currently available for webcast viewing are: full Council, Cabinet, Development Control (Planning), Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel, all scrutiny committees and Health and Wellbeing Board.

[www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/webcasts](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/webcasts)

### **NATURE IN BUCKNELLS WOOD**

As dusk falls a quiet summer's evening is shattered by a harsh barking from the vicinity of the wood, an unnerving sound until one realises it is only a small muntjac deer calling. Some are not much larger than a hare but all are very recognisable by the humped back and canine teeth forming small tusks

hanging from the mouths of the males which also have very small antlers, and all showing white on the underside of their tails as they run. Muntjacs are territorial which is why they have spread so far. In 1946 the foresters Mr Hodson and Mr Blackwell were thrilled to see the first one in Bucknells which over a period of several years had spread as escapees from Woburn Park where they had been introduced from abroad. Now occasionally a female has been seen in various gardens in the village. When a young one has been born the mother leaves it all day alone in deep undergrowth and only returns in the evening to suckle it. The larger ones are dark brown and sometimes as large as a calf. It is thought these may have cross bred with another species as other deer have escaped from captivity: there was a deer park at Litchborough and a commercial deer farm near Whittlebury.

Foxes come and go from the wood. The bloodcurdling screams of a mating pair are enough to scare grown men! Worms and mice are part of their diet and once we watched a young fox cub in Withymore field adjacent to the wood for over an hour trying to catch mice in the long grass by jumping in the air and pouncing, but it never was successful.

Since the advent of myxomatosis here in the early 1950s the population of rabbits has diminished. The disease returns every few years when the numbers of rabbits increase. It quickly spreads and the numbers reduce again. A warren at Cut Throat Lane was decimated and within three weeks the disease had spread to affect all the rabbits in Withymore Lane. It is spread by rabbit fleas and as some rabbits live in open ditches instead of in close proximity in their warrens there are always a few survivors.

Badgers and bluebells go together both liking sandy soil which badgers love to dig up to eat the



*A muntjac deer*

bulbs. They roam a long way when it is dry and they cannot get their favourite food of earth worms. They are also the only animals that can uncurl and eat hedgehogs. They are partial to wasp grubs, digging out the nests which can often be seen discarded in the verges along Brackley Lane. Badgers mark their territory boundaries with dung pits, which makes it especially easy to see what they have been eating when it is undigested crab apples or corn. One dry autumn when they were short of drinking water there was consternation amongst the keen vegetable growers in Brackley Lane when some badgers dug up and ate the root vegetables. Fred Balderson refused to use any of his beetroot which showed evidence of teeth marks!

Bucknells and adjacent Hazelborough are well known for having unusual butterflies. In the 1970s some Purple Emperors were seen flying in a tree in Withymore Lane but next day they had gone, devoured by a hungry bird. Many butterflies go the same way: in a garden on the Green a flycatcher perched on a fence post next to a buddleia bush where in the course of one day it caught every single butterfly except the small white ones. The book *Butterflies of Northamptonshire* by D Goddard and A Wyldes records

sightings in Bucknells of the less common species: Wood Whites, White Admirals, Purple Hairstreaks and Silver-Washed Fritillaries, as well as many common species seen along the open rides. The Wood Whites are diminishing in number and rare enough for a grant to be made available to increase its numbers on a few sites including Bucknells (see [www.butterfly-conservation.org/files/2.bnsummer12](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/files/2.bnsummer12)). One was spotted in the field leading to the wood from Brackley Lane a while ago, so take a walk to look for them and when you are in the wood do not assume you are seeing ordinary common white butterflies: they might be the rare Wood White.

The proximity of the wood affected the growth of Abthorpe and may have accounted for the increase in the size of the settlement in the 1200s. From the publication *Assart Data and Values* by Raftis, 1974, NRO ref lib 696, it is known that the township land was increased by 60 acres taken from Bucknells in 1208 when Geoffrey, son of Peter of Abthorpe, was granted a royal charter to clear 60 acres of woodland. [Assarting is the act of clearing forested lands for use in agriculture or other purposes. It was illegal to assart any part of a Royal forest without permission and the greatest possible trespass as it involved completely rooting up all

trees which cannot then regrow.] The Royal charter granted the land but in return assart rent was paid to the Crown. As it was all cleared and cultivated by hand it was a monumental task but the extra crops grown would have made a big difference to the peasants' lives. In 1209, 36 acres were sown with oats with an annual crop value of fifty shillings. In a later year the whole assart was planted with 25 acres of wheat and 35 acres of oats. An acre was originally designated as the amount of ground a yolk of oxen could plough in a day; Edward I standardised that to 4,840 sq yds.

Only the largest landowner would have had oxen to do the work, otherwise it was reliance on peasant labour. At the time of the assarting all of them had to spend a set number of days working for the lord of the manor even if they had their own land in the common fields. Those that did not own land worked on manor land in return for their tenements. These dwellings, built only of wood then thatched, had enough ground with them to feed a family, so the largest landowner could increase the population by providing the ground and materials for more tenements. The name of the field leading to Wild Lane adjacent to Bucknells Wood is called Cottagers Close. *MEH*

### **CONCERT TO SUPPORT SCOPE**

Musicians from the UK's finest brass bands have come together to form Velvet Brass and will be playing a programme of brass band classics, contemporary hits and jazz in St Lawrence's Church in Towcester on 18<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm in aid of Scope. The brass ensemble from Sponne School will also be appearing.

Tickets (£6 adults, £4 concessions) and information: [muggers@mac.com](mailto:muggers@mac.com); Keith Muggeridge on 07803507142.

### **CARERS WANTED FOR GUIDE DOG MUMS**

Guide Dogs is currently looking for loving, caring homes for their guide dog mums, from which guide dog puppies are bred. In return you will benefit from looking after a well-trained family pet that will readily be accepted into your home; full financial support to cover all feeding and veterinary costs; access to 24 hour support and advice; and the knowledge that you will be playing a crucial part in helping blind and partially sighted people gain independence.

More information from 0845 3727 432; [www.guidedogs.org.uk/guidedogmums](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/guidedogmums).

**DIARY***Saturday 5 October*

Harvest Supper, The Old School, 7.00

*Sunday 6 October*

Harvest Thanksgiving service, St John the Baptist, 10.00

*Friday 18 October*

Concert at St Lawrence Church, Towcester, 7.30 in aid of Scope

*Thursday 24 October*

Film Abthorpe, The Old School, 7.30

*Sunday 27 October*

Charity Quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

*Monday & Tuesday, 28 and 29 October*

Holiday club, 9.30 - 3.30, Paulerspury Village Hall, info: 857066

*Thursday 31 October*

Marie Curie fundraising, Highfields Farm, 10.00 - 3.00 and 4.00 - 8.00

*Saturday 2 November*

Race Night, The Old School

*Sunday 10 November*

British Legion Remembrance Service, St John the Baptist, 10.55

*Sunday 24 November*

Charity Quiz, the New Inn

*Thursday 28 November*

Film Abthorpe, The Old School, 7.30

*Saturday 14 December*

The Watling Singers, Christmas concert, St John the Baptist, 7.30pm, £5

*Sunday 15 December*

Christmas Charity Quiz, the New Inn

*Christmas Eve*

Carol Service, St John the Baptist, 4.00

*Christmas Day*

Holy Eucharist, 9.15