



ABTALK



PARISH COUNCIL

Much of the time at our meeting on 7th January was taken up by a presentation from Ability Northants, a Community Interest Company which aims to provide bus services in South Northamptonshire to replace those which the County Council is no longer supporting. It is early days for the Company but it has started one service running three times a week from Hackleton to Northampton. Passengers have to be registered to use the service and to book journeys in advance. Fares are charged by distance, but bus passes are valid. Different levels of service are offered, including help with taking shopping to the front door if necessary. Since the loss of the Dial-a-Ride service last summer, some villagers have had to rely on taxis to get to and from Towcester for their shopping. So the main question is whether a service could be operated from this area to Towcester. It would require sufficient demand to justify a 15-seater vehicle, would likely just run once a week and allow a couple of hours in Towcester. The Parish Council will continue to explore this

possibility with our neighbouring villages.

The Council agreed to use some of the grant received last year from the solar farm on clearing the church wall and surrounding footpaths of the growth which has accumulated over the years. As a result the church wall now looks much better. When the weather is warmer, the wall will be repointed to complete the job.

The budget for the coming year was reviewed and allocations agreed. The cost of our street lighting is now lower with the new LED lights. As a result the precept has been lowered to £4,000 for the forthcoming year, a reduction of £300 from last year. This will be reflected in the Community Charge bill you will receive from SNC but no doubt you will not notice it when compared with the increase which the County Council will impose.

The Parish Annual Meeting takes place on Monday 13th May so make a note of that date and come along to find out what the Council and all the other village organisations have been doing over the last year. Our next ordinary meeting is on March 4th.

Front Cover: Midsummer's night dream performance 1926 (top) and Head teacher Miss Abberley and children c.1926 (lower)

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"WE WILL REMEMBER THEM"

On Sunday 11th November 2018, shortly before 11 am, along with countless communities across Britain, the villagers of Abthorpe gathered together in sombre mood. We met on the Green around the war memorial because, of course, this particular Sunday marked 100 years since the Armistice was signed in November 1918, bringing an end to the First World War.

We were reminded that, 100 years ago, Big Ben had sounded in Parliament Square to ring in the news as thousands gathered in Westminster and outside Buckingham Palace roaring in celebration, sparking three days of jubilation across Britain.

In the House of Commons, the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, concluded his address with the declaration: "I hope we may say that thus, this fateful morning, came an end to all wars."

The national mood was not exclusively joyous, however. Wounded veterans, recovering in military hospitals, typically met the news in reflective silence, ambivalent about a victory that had seen so many young lives brutally extinguished.

In Shrewsbury, Susan Owen – mother of the great poet of the conflict, Lieutenant Wilfred Owen – received a telegram informing her of his death at Sambre-Oise in France at the precise moment local church bells rang out in euphoria, an irony as bitter as they come.

Fast forward 100 years, and Abthorpe residents of all ages came together around the war memorial to remember the sacrifices of local soldiers.

This is how Nigel Jones of Silverthorpe recalls the occasion and how it affected him:

My Man Wilfred

On arrival at the Green I was delighted to see young and old paying their respects. As we stood patiently waiting for the proceedings to begin, I was asked if I would read a name off the memorial of one of Abthorpe's fallen soldiers, during the service. His name is Wilfred Knapp. Given this privilege, I thought it only fair to find out a bit more about 'my man' Wilfred. So I thought I would share it with you.

Abthorpe's war memorial is just one of over 5,000 war memorials that were erected in towns and villages nationwide, solemnly recording the sacrifices of local soldiers rather than revelling in glory, monuments that stand today as reminders of the past and warnings to future generations not to repeat the mistakes of history.



This is Wilfred Algernon Knapp

Born July 1890, served in the 6th Battalion The Buffs East Kent Regiment died in action 20th January 1917 (France & Flanders)

The First World War has become synonymous with waste and slaughter. In all, across Europe, about 10 million soldiers died, and a further 7 million civilians, making it one of the deadliest conflicts in human history. Britain lost 886,000 soldiers and no community was left untouched. It is hard to imagine loss on this scale – what brought it home to many of us was seeing the dense sea of ceramic poppies filling the moat of the Tower of London and recognising that each poppy represented the death of a young man. Many others of course may not have lost their lives but were left scarred physically or mentally by the horrendous experience they had gone through.

One way in which we can gain some sense of what this generation went through is to read or listen to the writing and poetry that resulted from the experience. Very movingly, poems by Wilfred Owen and Rupert Brooke were read out. Not for them uplifting words and sentimental songs

KNAPP Wilfred Algernon Private G/13135, 6th Battalion, The Buffs (East Kent Regiment). Killed in action 20th January 1917 in France and Flanders. Born and resident in Benefield, Oundle, Northamptonshire, enlisted Thrapston. Formerly G/12844, 9th Battalion, Royal West Surrey Regiment. Commemorated on ARRAS MEMORIAL, Pas de Calais, France, Bay 2.

glorifying war and revelling in the killing of 'the enemy' – they knew about the brutal realities and horror of war. Poems like theirs might not make comfortable reading, but they should instil in us all a renewed determination not to succumb to hatred or misplaced Nationalism.

Of course, the Great War – and the Second World War which followed

only 21 years later – was lived and experienced by millions of ordinary men and women whose experiences were never recorded like these now famous poets. These were our fathers and mothers, aunts and uncles, grandfathers and grandmothers, great uncles and great aunts. All of us will have relatives who suffered hardships, losses, sacrifices or death. It is all of these people whom we commemorated that day, and to whom we were saying “thank you”.

POPPY APPEAL 2018

Abthorpe residents are now very used to a ring on the doorbell or a knock on the door around the end of October or beginning of November to find the familiar friendly figure of Janet Dancer on the doorstep. Janet has been Abthorpe’s ‘Poppy Lady’ for many years tirelessly visiting every house to ‘sell’ poppies and badges for the annual Poppy Appeal. Janet wants to thank everyone for their generosity. Each year the total collected goes up and this year was no exception with the excellent sum of £643.80 being raised, contributing to a district total of £5,711.51.

In addition to the money raised by the door-to-door collection, every penny of the collection made in the Remembrance Sunday service – £298.17 – was sent to the Royal British Legion.

BEER (‘OTHER DRINKS ARE AVAILABLE’) AND CAROLS

Do three consecutive years count as a ‘tradition’? If so, the ‘traditional’ Beer and Carols event took place at the New Inn one evening shortly before Christmas. The Reverend Paul thankfully was in full voice this year although some of those in attendance, well lubricated with pints of Old Hooky, gave him a good run for his money. It was a very jolly gathering with rousing renditions, including impromptu descants, of all the old favourite carols being interspersed with some truly awful Christmas cracker jokes from Paul, none of which mercifully have stuck in the memory. Rob and Stuart generously provided tasty snacks to round off a most convivial evening.

LIGHTING UP OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

After the success of this inaugural event last year, the Parish Council generously purchased a Christmas tree which was erected in the churchyard overlooking the Green. As the sun set and darkness enveloped the village, two burly figures appeared out of the gloom – one dressed all in red and sporting a snowy white beard, and the other a cheery elf. Together they started a countdown, enthusiastically joined by the swelling crowd of villagers. With

the countdown completed, and with just enough of a pause to create a frisson of tension, the tree was suddenly magically lit up to audible gasps of delight from the bystanders. A selection of well-known carols and Christmas songs was sung before we all made our way into the church for mulled wine, hot chocolate, muffins and mince pies. Father Christmas just had time to hand out surprise gifts to



all the children present before slipping away quietly back to the North Pole to carry out his last-minute preparations – thank you so much for fitting in a visit to our little village, FC.

ABMAIL

- Have you got something to sell or give away?
- Have you lost or found something?
- Do you want to advertise a village event?
- Can you offer a lift to a fellow Abthorpe resident?

Then why not join ABMAIL, our village email contact group

Just send an email to abmail@abthorpe.net and you will be added to the distribution list, ensuring you are kept up to date with all the news

WOOL NEEDED

The Charity Crafts volunteers at the Towcester Volunteer Bureau produce handicrafts that are passed on to local groups to sell or that will assist them in their services. They are in need of more wool, even odd bits, to help them with their work. Any contributions can be left with the food box at the back of the church or dropped off at the Volunteer Bureau in Whittons Lane from Monday to Thursday, 9.00 to 4.00.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

Christmas has been and gone, with great fun had at the beer and carols evening on 9 December and a successful pig roast on New Year's Eve.

The quiz in November was won by 4 Counties who donated £158 to Air Ambulance. The Christmas quiz, on 23rd December, was very well attended, with a record £320 raised. The winners, The Great Unwashed, elected to split the money between Katharine House Hospice and a local dog charity rehoming Romanian rescue dogs UK wide.

On Sunday 27th January, 12 teams totalling 60 people attended the quiz, raising £227. Unfortunately, your author lost his notes of the winners and remembers only a slightly sore head the next morning... [Addition from one slightly more

sober editor: a very grateful Miles Frost Fund received the winnings from Tows on Tour. Named after Sir David Frost's son who died of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) without warning, the fund raises money for research and genetic testing of this inherited condition where the muscle wall of the heart becomes thickened. Young rugby players are one focus of the genetic testing.]

If you want to test your knowledge, be at the New Inn for a 7:30pm start on the last Sunday in each month. Supper is included in the £3 per head entry fee. All the money raised goes to a charity chosen by the winning team.

Friday 25th January saw a great evening celebrating Burns Night, with a superb five-course menu served and an enthusiastic reading by Bunny Hutchings of Robert Burns' Address to a Haggis.

The open mic afternoons, on the second Sunday of the month, continue to grow in popularity. Why not pop along and see our local talents perform?

Planning permission for the proposed extension has been approved and work should be commencing in Spring. The extension comprises new ladies' toilets and an enlarged kitchen which will no doubt be appreciated by Steve, the chef. There is also a new menu,

with lots of fresh fish sourced from Billingsgate Market in London.

RURAL OSCARS

Our New Inn has been nominated by local people for the Countryside Alliance's annual awards. The awards are now in their 14th year and our local hostelry is one of four regional finalists to be chosen in the Midlands' pub category. After the skills, produce, tradition, enterprise and the people behind these businesses have been judged, the champions will be crowned at the House of Lords in June. If hopefully our pub wins this category nationally, locals are already asking who will wear the crown?

VOLUNTARY DRIVERS URGENTLY NEEDED IN ABTHORPE

TADD is a long-established local charity operating a door to door community transport service for the people in the SNC area. The service enables members to attend medically related appointments and services, is affordable and allows them to retain independence in the absence of suitable public transport and avoid reliance on family, friends and neighbours.

For the first time in over 30 years the charity has a waiting list of over 100 for membership due to a shortage of volunteer drivers. There are a number of areas and villages in the TADD catchment area, including Abthorpe there is a shortage of drivers, which means drivers have



Recently seen during the road closure to Silverstone. What is the difference between Diversion and Diverted Traffic?

to come from much further afield. This goes against the principle and cost-effectiveness of volunteering to support one's local community

Drivers need to have access to a car, be available on a fairly regular basis for a minimum of half a day a week and complete a DBS check. Mileage is reimbursed at the HMRC rate, insurance premiums are not affected and journeys are allocated weekly by mutual agreement.

To learn more about volunteering for TADD visit www.towcesterareadoor2door.com or email volunteer@towcesterareadoor2door.co.uk

CHURCH NEWS

Barbara Malcomson

During the last two months of 2018 our church went from a time of Remembrance, then through a time of expectancy and waiting through Advent and finally a time of joyous celebration at Christmas.

The Remembrance service to commemorate the end of WW1 started at the War Memorial where the chairman of our Parish Council, Marna Perrigo, laid a wreath on behalf of the village. We then went into church where Alison Robbins led a very moving service. In the evening we met again outside church to join in the national celebrations of The Last Post and WW1 Beacons of Light where our beacon joined over 1,000 across the country. We joined the Ringing Out for Peace when John Riches rang our church bell 100 times and was accompanied by both adults and children ringing bells of all shapes and sizes which they had brought with them. We raised a toast to 'Peace' with a glass of bubbly. Both of these events were well attended by a large cross-section of villagers which was lovely to see.

Our Christmas celebrations started with a successful coffee morning/bring and buy sale held at the home of Jill and Mike Greenhalgh which raised the fantastic sum of £621 for the church. The next day Tina Emerton organised the celebration of switching on the village Christmas tree lights and in the following week our Vicar Paul led 'Beer and Carols' at the New Inn (*see earlier article*).

The church was packed for a memorable Christingle and Carols service on Christmas Eve and beautifully decorated with greenery and candles. It was a moving moment when we all sang 'Away in a Manger' by the light of the children's Christingles. Christmas was truly beginning! The Christmas Day service, another lovely event, was well attended.

Benefice Epiphany Event: On January 3rd Clare Ray our Benefice Reader

and Lesley Dale from Paulerspury organised a children's Epiphany Event in our church with help from other adults in the benefice. The theme was Epiphany and the Kings arriving to see the baby Jesus. The children made crowns and wrote messages to hang on a tree in church. These messages were really interesting and told us what gifts they would bring the baby Jesus if he was born now. With the Kings coming from the East the children made their own version of Turkish delight and they had also brought gifts for the food box in church. The event ended with a short act of praise and it looked as if the children had really enjoyed the afternoon. Sadly, no children from our village joined in, but look out for information on any future events.

Tea and Piece 2019: We will be repeating our monthly Tea and Piece afternoons throughout the spring and summer. Our first will be a Pancake Tea on Sunday 3rd March in the Old School from 3 to 4.30. All are very welcome and we would love to see you there. There will be some simple children's activities.

The other dates for this year are: 14th April, 19th May, 16th June, 21st July, 18th August, 15th September, and 20th October. Come along to the church and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and a piece of homemade cake.

Church Electoral Roll 2019: Every six years the church has to prepare a new Electoral Roll and 2019 is one of those years. Thank you to everyone who has been on our present roll and supported the church. All of us on it and anyone wanting to join now needs to fill in a form to be on the new roll. Jan Miles is our Electoral Roll Officer and she will be contacting people. Forms are available from Jan (jan.miles@abthorpe.net) and at the back of the church. Being on the Electoral Roll entitles you to vote at the election at the Annual Church meeting. Please do contact me if you want more information.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting: Our meeting this year will be held on Tuesday 23rd April at 7pm in the Old School. Everyone is very welcome. Sadly, this year we will be losing our churchwarden Richard Tomalin as he has decided to step down after 20 years as a Member of the PCC and 13 years as churchwarden, working on his own as sole churchwarden for most of the past five years. He was also Treasurer during his time as a PCC member. He has worked very hard in keeping the church in the good order it is today and has overseen many projects including running the tote. We shall miss him on the PCC although he is continuing to support the church.

Barbara Malcomson, Alison Robbins and Jill Greenhalgh are likely to be

the remaining members of the PCC and we will do our best to keep the church building in good condition and support the worship, whether it be at our regular services, weddings or funerals. We have always appreciated the help and support we have from the village and we hope that shall continue in what we suspect is not going to be an easy time. Do pop along to our Annual meeting on 23rd April and find out more about the church.

Church services: Our normal services are at 11am on the second Sunday of the month and 9.15am on the 3rd Sunday. On Palm Sunday there will be a benefice service in Silverstone starting at 10am which will include a procession. Our Easter Day Service will be at 9.30am. The notice board on the north side of the church has more information on services around the benefice.

Church Tote: Thank you to everyone who supports the tote. Recent winners have been David and Alison Symmers in November (£200), Bridget Burnet in December (£197.50) and Fi and Stephen Noble in January (197.50). If you would like to join the tote please contact. The cost is £5 a month with half of the money going to the church and the rest given as a prize to the winner. The money received by the church is ring-fenced solely for maintaining the fabric of the building.

VILLAGE CLEAN UP

Saturday April 13th : 10.00 – 12 noon

Everyone is welcome to come along and help tidy up around the Green and the churchyard – just bring along tools and give as much or as little of your time as you can.



More hands make light work

Coffee and Hot Cross Buns
will be provided in the Church

Food Box: Another thank you to everyone who contributes to the Towcester Food Bank box in the back of church. Our last donation on 11th January took our total since we started the box in church to 1,504kg, which is amazing. It is only through the generosity of the people of our village that we are able to give this support.

Can you help? We have a church cleaning day twice a year and our next one will be on Saturday 13th April from 10am to 12. We are also planning to do some work in the churchyard. We would love some help. Bring a piece of equipment that you are happy to use and join us. Refreshments will be provided including hot cross buns. We would also like to have more people on the mowing rota for the church. It is a job for the growing season months and the more people we get, the easier it is for everyone. Please contact me if you want to know more: Barbara Malcomson 01327 857066; malcomson@abthorpe.net

SAFARI SUPPER

The popular safari supper is set to make a return this year. A date has yet to be set but it will be between late May and early July. Tina Emerton (tinaemerton1@gmail.com) would like to know if you are interested and what your preferred date is.

TOVE VALLEY BROADBAND

Eric Malcomson

Abthorpe Broadband Association (Tove Valley Broadband) has a drop-in session at Abthorpe Old School from 5pm on Tuesday 26th February – come and discuss your problems with our experts. Home WiFi, security, internet telephone and TV, streaming films, email, websites and all sorts can be covered. This session is followed by our AGM at 7.30pm when, in a short meeting, you can hear about our progress and plans for the future of the network. You do not have to stay if it is of no interest to you.

It is interesting to look at how traffic on the system has grown over the last year. It does seem that members are making more and more use of the internet. We have made enhancements to our network to meet this growth and improve performance but soon we will have to take the plunge and get more capacity on our main internet link. Taking all this work into account, there is plenty to keep the volunteers who run the system busy.

Back in early December Abthorpe experienced an unexpected breakdown in its communication with the rest of the world. Investigations proved the cause was down to a local resident, who has owned up and with humility written us this apology:

3rd December 2018

Dear Abthorpe,

My name is Hamish Berry and I live at Spring Meadow Farm in Abthorpe. My 'daddy' said that I needed to tell everyone what I did today. I am an eight month old black Labrador, and like most Labradors I am motivated by two things: water and food.

At lunchtime my 'mummy' had left me on my own in the garden, but I got a bit bored. I decided I would carry on investigating daddy's watering system. During the summer I found that if I chewed the pipes, water came out. A wet Labrador is a happy Labrador, so chewing the water pipes seemed like a fun thing to do. Disappointingly no water came out of the first pipe so I tried another one, which I'd heard was full of fibre. Fibre is food right? And food that's good for you as well. I bit through the pipe but there was no food inside, just some sort of string. That's when mummy found me and got a bit cross. "Just wait till your father gets home!" Then she said something about not being able buy any Christmas presents. Apparently the internet had stopped working, whatever the internet is.

A bit later Uncle Peter and Uncle Eric came to the house and started fiddling with the pipe I had chewed. I didn't really understand what they were doing but I tried to help as best I could by chewing their ears when they bent down. When daddy got home he told me I was naughty, and I wasn't going to get any pocket money AGAIN this week. I hear the 'naughty' word quite often. For a long time I thought it was my name and I never ever seem to get any pocket money.

I wonder what I can find to do tomorrow. Maybe it will not be naughty and maybe I will get some pocket money. I need it to buy mummy and daddy their Christmas presents.

Love from Hamish

ABTALK'S NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL READERSHIP

Abthorpe may be a small village but its connections spread far and wide. Back in August Linda Burridge got in touch to share some memories of Abthorpe after she had read *Abtalk*. Linda has now moved back to Northampton from Leicestershire:

"Its lovely to read the Abthorpe Newsletter. I used to live in Slapton so I know a lot of the people you mention, most recently Melanina Giuliani. I used to go to Friday night youth club and recall being there the day Kennedy was assassinated. I attended many events at the school and I recall swingboats to celebrate Abthorpe Feast and the Brass Band on the Green.

Nobby Coles was the landlord of the New Inn and I had my first gin and orange there. It was a meeting place for the local youth as it had a juke box. We used to walk back to Slapton after closing time across the fields which was quite an experience when the field was full of cattle. You soon learned to negotiate the bridge plank across the river to the Mill.

We spent many a day walking along the old railway line to Greens Norton or Wappenham where my grandmother, Mrs Haynes, lived. We also walked to Woodend to see Janet and Jackie Balfe's grandmother with my brother David. Many an hour was spent dragging wood for bonfire night with Lassie, the Balfe's alsatian, who was our protector when we disappeared off for the day, which was most of the summer holidays and weekends, only coming back when we heard Jackie's Dad's motorbike as he came home from his work at Plessey. This meant a cooked evening meal we must not be late for.

We often played cricket in the field at Slapton and most people would join in. Good times. Jackie and I used to walk back from Towcester after working and college in Northampton whatever the weather and we had our fair share of frights sometimes not getting home till 9.30 or more at night. I see transport for the villages is still no better. Chris Rush from Abthorpe was very kind regularly giving us lifts."

And Joyce Larsh reads about the village in Ontario, Canada. Joyce writes: "Simon Pont lived in your lovely village a few years ago and he gave me this information in order for me to receive every edition of *Abtalk*. I really enjoy reading about your village. I was raised in a small village and can identify with your neighbours and activities. One day I hope to visit."

Many readers may remember Simon Pont and his family who emigrated to Canada. Among other contributions to raising money for the fabric of the church, Simon did a sponsored cycle ride with his son through France.

WELLBEING ACTIVITY MAP

South Northants Council has launched a Wellbeing Activity Map as an online resource for residents to get active, creative, learning. No single activity charges more than £5 per hour and many are actually free. All the activities included are open to beginners. The map continues to be populated so if you know of any leaders who may be interested in promoting their activities they can email wellbeing.map@Cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

THE OLD SCHOOL

The committee has welcomed Lucy Jones to swell their ranks and bring her experience to all that they do. With the reopening of the main room the committee is not resting on its laurels and a number of social events are planned:

Sunday 24th February sees the return of the Truckers' Breakfast in a change from the usual Saturday. Come along any time between 8.30 and 11.00am for a traditional full English, endless cups of tea and a natter with your neighbours.

The AGM will take place on Tuesday 5th March at 8.00pm.

Another ever-popular evening is a village quiz on 9th March when you can test your knowledge, or skill at guessing. Come at 7.00 for a 7.30 start with a team, maximum size 8, or just turn up and join in - a good way to make new acquaintances. Tickets are £7.50 to include supper, and of course the bar will be open.

The bridge evening is also set to return on Thursday 9th May.

More coffee mornings are planned, with dates still to be confirmed. Flyers for all events will land on your doormats in good time.

And the GinFest makes a very welcome return as a great village event on Saturday 7th September.

There will be another bridge evening and coffee mornings, with dates still to be confirmed. Flyers for all events will land on your doormats in good time.

VILLAGE SUPPER

As we all know the Old School has been closed for some while undergoing extensive refurbishment and redecoration. Tantalising glimpses through the windows have whetted our appetites as to what has been going on. On the evening of Saturday February 2nd it all became apparent and what a

revelation it was. The whole village was invited to a 'bring a plate to share' supper and many took the opportunity to go along to the Old School and were amazed at the transformation. Gone were the scruffy walls, the faded and stained floor, the dingy corners and the poor acoustics. Instead we walked into a bright, fresh, uncluttered and welcoming room. We were all treated to a celebratory glass of fizz as we arrived and there was an excited buzz of conversation as we all took in the changes. What became quickly apparent was how sympathetically the 'new' blends with the 'old'.

Richard Gladdle, chair of the Old School Committee, stressed that the three years of work that preceded the evening was a joint effort by many in the community. First and foremost, the fundraising target could not have been met without the involvement of all in the village who enthusiastically support the different events organised. But it is often the work that goes on behind the scenes that is key to a successful outcome and the tireless efforts of Jill Tolson and Lynn

Neasham in planning and developing the design brief, pushing through grant applications, organising the financing, and managing the project are hugely appreciated.

We were fortunate to have an excellent local team of craftsmen managed by the building contractor, Simat Ltd, undertaking the project and their courtesy, professionalism and high standard of workmanship could not be criticised. Simon Hemmings was the builder and project manager, and he was ably assisted by electrician Mat Mumford, joiner Kevin Weakley and decorator Gary Lake. It was good to see Simon and his wife Jackie at the supper and he must have been very pleased with



Curiosity! What are they doing in there?



the appreciative comments made.

A variety of villagers gave willingly of their time and skills at different times. The new permanent sound system which performed without a hitch throughout the evening was installed by Eric Malcomson who together with others in Tove Valley Broadband ensures free super fast broadband too. Paula La Baigue was responsible for the stunning new blinds at the main windows and the seat cushions, which add a wonderful elegance to the room. Jan Miles and chums on the Old School committee gave many hours of their time in many different ways, not least in organising the evening itself. Roger Tolson was on hand to do a whole

myriad of jobs, one of which was to install a new base for the shed, a task in which he was helped by Phil Berry and Clive Estall. All these villagers often roped in partners and offspring to help out and gratitude in extended to all.

Probably the surprise that drew most comments was the wonderful discovery of a brick built Victorian fireplace that has been carefully restored to form a dramatic new feature in the room, enhanced on this occasion by a lovely floral arrangement provided by Janet Dancer.

What a lovely evening it was. The food was plentiful and delicious, the wine flowed, the generosity of the



village continued with £320 being raised on the raffle, the conversations grew ever more animated and, what is more, the very 21st century, 16mm thick, scientifically-engineered ceiling covering meant that we could all hear each other. Now it is up to the villagers of Abthorpe to make use of and enjoy their splendid 'new' facility.

OLD SCHOOL BUILDING – NOTES FROM A BYGONE AGE

The re-opening of the main hall following its full refurbishment has turned thoughts back to the history of the building. Not only the building itself, but what went on there over the course of the three centuries during which it housed the local school would be fascinating.

Curiosity spawned a search for information, and a new project is underway to document the school, its daily life and more importantly the oral stories and anecdotes of those who attended it. If anyone has any memories to share, please do get in touch (symmers@abthorpe.net or jill.tolson@abthorpe.net).

Already this is proving a substantial task, but as a prelude it can be seen that the latest refurbishment project is only the next stage in preserving this historic building which is listed Grade II. A few notes relating to reports that addressed the state of the building in times past is interesting.

- 1642¹ The school was built by Jane Leeson during the Civil War as a free school for poorer children in the village. She was a spinster who inherited a house and farm in the village in 1598. The original school building was to have an upper floor where the master was to live as long as he had no wife.
- 1646² In her will of 1646 Jane Leeson stipulated that £8 a year should be paid to a schoolmaster to teach poor children gratis.
- 1874³ An extension of a larger school room was added with much higher windows and sloping windowsills (*although Historic England believe this may well have been in 1868*).
- 1904⁴ A report in the Northampton Mercury pronounced that the school was hard up, although there is no detail if this affected the actual building.
- 1909⁵ HMI inspectorate report demanded better warming of the room, and the cloakroom for infants and girls was not satisfactory, with bad

ventilation and insufficient light, being built inside the infant room (now the kitchen). "It's top is a receptacle for an accumulation of dust and lumber". The boys' cloakroom was a damp dark wooden outhouse (probably where there was a coke store at the end of the building, now the extension housing the current toilets).

1912⁶ 100 children on the roll so there were plans to alter and improve the school.

1925⁷ Survey of defective school buildings 1925. Of the Northants schools surveyed Abthorpe came into list B - 'schools which ought not to be recognised in their present condition'. It was at this time it was suggested that the older children, 16 of them, might go to Silverstone School.

The report on the state of the school and the HMI regular inspection reports were meant to be confidential but had to be kept with the school Logbook, so full reports of the teachers' abilities and conditions in the school over the years were included in the Logbook.

The standard of accommodation when these older schools were built, which had been considered satisfactory at the time, did not measure up to the requirements of the 1920s. By 1925 the Abthorpe school was considered to have too little light and ventilation with unsatisfactory heating (on 14th October 1925 the school temperature early afternoon was 43°F [6°C] and only 39°F [under 4°C] in the long room as there was no fire), and there was no drinking water.

The playground was considered to be too small for PE and there was a large chestnut tree in the boys' playground. The current playground was divided into separate ones for boys and girls by a right angle wall at the end of the toilet block (the small building still standing in the yard). The report ignored the fact that the Green and paths were adjacent to the school where the children could play. In the late 1940s all school outdoor activities took place on the Green, including some lessons when the weather was hot.

1934⁸ Electric lights were installed.

1938⁹ The condition of the school premises was a cause for concern by

the School Inspectors. Full reports of the poor state of the buildings were recorded in the Logbook at different times, but by 1939 the head teacher was sending regular letters complaining about broken windows which were all ignored by the correspondent (the vicar). Windows had been broken for several months. In the end the school had to be closed during January because of the cold. Non-consideration of the physical well being of the staff and pupils may have been partly due to the fact that the Leeson Charity rules at that time stipulated that if any of the annual income was left over after the repair of the building then the vicar could keep it.

1949¹⁰ The bucket toilets (housed in the small building in the playground) were converted to water closets using water piped from the village water supply to the adjacent farmyard (now Stone Barn). Mains water did not come to the village until the early 1970s.

1959¹¹ By the time the school closed in December 1959 there were only about 21 children on the roll.

Notes

- 1 Date stone on building
- 2 Will of Jane Leeson
- 3 School Logbook and see Abthorpe Millennium CD: www.abthorpe.net/2000CD/abthorpe
- 4 Northampton Mercury, Friday 29 April 1904
- 5 Northampton Record Office SLB/1
- 6 School Logbook, NRO and see Millenniumm CD
- 7 Northampton Record Office ZB86/39
- 8 School Logbook, NRO and see Millenniumm CD
- 9 School Logbook, NRO and see Millenniumm CD
- 10 School Logbook, NRO and see Millenniumm CD
- 11 School Logbook, NRO and see Millenniumm CD

For further articles about the history of the Old School, see *Abtalk* February 2012, p.8 and September 2015, p.11

OUT AND ABOUT

Canons Ashby has many events throughout the year for the whole family if you enjoy getting out, starting on 16-24 February when there's a Muddy Explorers' trail for this squelchy time of year. More information: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/canons-ashby

WAPPENHAM STATION

Many of you will know of the old railway line from Blisworth to Banbury which runs just north of the village. The footpath to Slapton crosses the trackbed. The closest station was called Wappenham but it was just beyond the Slapton turn, so was closer to Slapton and Abthorpe than Wappenham. Wappenham would have been better served by a station near the Lois Weedon road which crossed the line on a bridge. Abthorpe could then have had its own station much closer to the village. But Victorians did not think like that; people were expected to happily walk a mile or more to the station.

The remains of the platform can be seen today close to the road to Wappenham where it takes a sharp left-hand turn. There is a barn for hay storage beside it. The line closed in 1951 and the track was lifted in 1955, when the photograph below was taken. This shows the remains of the sidings, which were just east of the platform, where there is now a house.

The line was never very busy. For many years there were just three trains each way daily but this was reduced to two when buses started operating locally. But at least there was a daily service, unlike the buses which, even in the 1950s, only operated on three days a week.

If you want to know more, the second volume of Barry Taylor's book *The Statford-on-Avon & Midland Junction Railway* has now been published by Lightmoor Press.



PEOPLE

TONY ABBOTT

The chapel at Northampton Crematorium was packed to overflowing with the family, friends, former police colleagues and villagers who had come to pay their respects to Tony Abbott, a retired police officer who had lived in our village with his wife Janet since 1999. A Northamptonshire Police helmet was proudly laid on Tony's coffin that had been covered with a police shroud.

The simple but very impressive Humanist funeral service was led by Steve Church.

In a memorable eulogy Steve outlined Tony's life of service to his community.

Anthony Charles Abbott was born in Northampton during 1934. He attended Far Cotton Infants School and there befriended Norman Cooper who became a life-long friend. Norman attended the funeral service. Tony grew up during the war years when family holidays were a rarity. After leaving Secondary School he went to Northampton Technical College and had a number of jobs before embarking on the life-changing experience of National Service where he joined the Grenadier Guards. Wearing his splendid uniform, that included a big bearskin, he spent time guarding the crown jewels at the Tower of London and also at Buckingham Palace. Tony loved that part of his life and felt that it gave him discipline, a sense of order, and the direction that he needed.



It was no surprise that in 1954 Tony joined Northampton Borough Police Force and in no time was walking his favourite beat: Northampton Town Centre. He felt his role, especially after he was promoted to sergeant, was a simple one – to help and protect the people of Northampton.

Tony was nicknamed 'Bud', and became the perfect role model for aspiring young police cadets. Bud Abbott was the policeman's policeman!

A momentous turning point in Tony's life took place when his friend Norman Cooper obtained four tickets for the Bertram Mills Circus on Northampton Racecourse. They invited two girls to join them who worked in Knight's the Jewellers just off the Market Square. One of the girls was named Janet Austin and in March 1960 Tony and Janet married at Abington Church.

Tony became the proudest Dad in the world when his daughters Carol and Linda were born and cherished family life, especially sea-side holidays where he indulged in his life-long passion for swimming.

In 1984 aged 50, Tony retired from the police service and undertook a number of jobs, none of which particularly suited him until he became a driver for Age UK ferrying elderly clients from their homes. In 1999 Tony retired for good and he and Janet settled in Abthorpe. In our village he spent much time helping people – especially the elderly.

Tony's chief interest was swimming. He became Secretary and latterly Chairman of Northamptonshire Life Saving Society. He performed judging duties and presented awards at school life saving competitions. Tony always loved dogs – hence his support for the Dogs' Trust.

Steve Church who delivered the eulogy concluded: "So ended the life of a truly wonderful man – one of life's enhancers. A man who was hard-working and principled. A man with a terrific sense of humour and capacity for warmth. A man with a passionate love for nature. But Tony was a man who, above all things, cherished the company, the affection and the love of his family and his friends."

CHRIS RUSH

We are sad to share the news that Chris Rush died in December.

Chris grew up in Brackley Lane, where his mum, Barbara (Bet) still lives. As a small lad he would sit on his Grandad Charlie's lap while he worked on the land, guiding his horse-drawn hay rake.

He went to Abthorpe school before passing his 11+ and moving on to Towcester Grammar. An apprenticeship with Airflow Streamlines in Northampton followed before Chris's range of skills found an outlet in motorsport where he worked for teams such as Leyton House, Simtek and Arrows.

Among his enjoyments in life, rugby and scouting came high on the list. After playing rugby at Towcester Grammar he continued his association with the Towcestrians supporting and encouraging young players.

Chris's keen interest and dedication to the Scouts continued to gain pace and he would often take his troop camping to some of his favourite destinations: Wales and Somerset. He was deservedly honoured with a medal and signed certificate from the Queen, becoming a Queen's Scout.

In what remained of his spare time Chris enjoyed meeting his many friends over a pint or three in the New Inn or the Brave Old Oak in Towcester.

As the years passed Chris took a lot of pleasure from his garden and in return for Mum's cooking would spend hours tending her vegetable patch and adding colour to her garden with fuschias and dhalias.



Come 1991 Chris met an attractive lady, Mary, and before long they forged a very close and loving relationship. As Mary lived near Leighton Buzzard they could only spend their weekends together so during the week Chris's phone bill took a bit of a pounding.

In 2008 Mary retired from her job as a carer and a couple of years later Chris began reducing his hours before retiring from Austrian-based Pankl Racing Systems. Now there was more time for gardening and visiting National Trust and English Heritage gardens with Mary and dogs Mim and Pip. However from 2010 onwards Chris's health deteriorated and although he recovered another blow fell in 2015 when Mary was diagnosed with cancer. This time it was Chris's turn to care for her with great love and devotion. The final twist came when Mary began to recover but Chris himself was found to be suffering from cancer.

In June Mary and Chris made a final trip to his favourite cottage, getting out as much as possible with Mim and Pip. He finally slipped away peacefully on 19th December.

Chris was an easy-going, kind man who loved animals and people, always ready to help anyone in need. And according to Mary he could talk the hind legs off a donkey. He will be very deeply missed.

On a happier note, Karen Sakkilli and Simon McKay were married on Christmas Eve in the barn at Slapton Manor. Returning to their home, Mulberry Cottage on the Green, the reception was held in a large marquee constructed over the whole of their back garden with a distinctly arcadian motif. Our best wishes to them for the future.



Ian and Amy Hazlewood who live at 27 Brackley Lane have had a wonderful start to 2019. On 23rd January they became parents for the first time. Amy did not have an easy time and had to spend several days in hospital but Katie Annabelle finally arrived at 6.41 am weighing a very healthy 8lbs 1oz. The photograph on the right showing the happy and relieved parents with Abthorpe's newest resident says very clearly "it was worth it". Congratulations to Ian and Amy and a big welcome to baby Katie.



And how nice to be able to report another new baby in the village: Blossom Esme Victoria, born to Sarah and Caleb Bateman of 2 The Green. Blossom, named after a wonderful honeymoon in Japan to see the famous cherry blossom, arrived on 9th January, weighing 7lbs 13oz. Sarah and Caleb have family living locally so there will be many willing babysitters on hand for cuddles. Congratulations to them all.

We reported in the last issue on the sad death of Joyce Riches. Donations in her memory were made to Crisis, and her family would like to thank everyone for their generosity in contributing to a wonderful total of £1,217.60.

DIARY*Sunday 24 February*

Truckers' Breakfast, the Old School, 8.30 – 11.00

Tuesday 26 February

Abthorpe BroadBand Association (Tove Valley Broadband) drop-in session, the Old School, 5.00

Abthorpe BroadBand Association AGM, the Old School, 7.30

Sunday 3 March

Pancake Tea, the Old School, 3.00 to 4.30

Monday 4 March

Parish Council Meeting, the Old School, 7.45

Tuesday 5 March

Old School AGM, the Old School, 8.00

Saturday 9 March

Village Quiz, the Old School, 7.00 for 7.30

Saturday 13 April

Village and church clean, the Green and church, 10.00 – 12.00

Sunday 14 April

Tea and Piece, St John the Baptist, 3.00 to 4.30

Tuesday 23 April

Annual Parochial Church Meeting, the Old School 7.00

Thursday 9 May

Bridge evening, the Old School

Monday 13 May

Annual Parish Meeting, the Old School, 7.45

Monday 20 May

Parish Council meeting, including AGM, the Old School, 7.45

Sunday 19 May

Tea and Piece, St John the Baptist, 3.00 to 4.30

Sunday 16 June

Tea and Piece, St John the Baptist, 3.00 to 4.30

Sunday 21 July

Tea and Piece, St John the Baptist, 3.00 to 4.30