



News from Abthorpe

December 2008

PARISH CLERK VACANCY

Gail Coombs, who has been the Clerk to the Parish Council for several years, is giving up the position next March. We are therefore looking for someone who would be willing to take on this useful role in the village. It is a paid position requiring one to three hours work each week.

The main duties of the clerk are to record and implement the decisions of the Council and to advise it on procedural matters. Meetings are held every six weeks, plus the Annual Parish meeting in May. The Council spends about £3,000 each year, the main items being street lighting, the maintenance of the village green and the clerk's salary, currently £750. The Council is also consulted on a wide range of issues. Local planning applications are the most important, but the other tiers of local government, health agencies, police, etc., all send us information. The clerk has to present these to meetings and ensure a response is given when appropriate.

The clerk will need to have access to computer facilities for email, preparation of the minutes and letter writing.

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

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

The Parish Council is a statutory body and the Clerk is also responsible for keeping the accounts and submitting them annually to the auditors. Training is available for new clerks.

If you want to find out more talk to any of the Parish Councillors or to Gail (857901, evenings only), or come along to the next meeting on 8th December, in the Old School at 7.45pm.

CAROL SINGING

Lusty voices, in tune or not, are required for a happy band of carol singers who will be touring the village on Thursday 18 December. Last year £160 was raised for the charity Crisis – mainly, it is suspected, from beleaguered residents to make the singers go away. It's all in a good cause and will end with a warming chorus or two at The New Inn.

Do come and join in – starting at 6.30 from The Old School.

NEW YEAR'S DAY ON THE GREEN

The Vintage Sports Car Club visited Abthorpe for their New Year's Day meeting for the first time this year, and were so enamoured of our village setting that they will be returning on 1 January 2009 from about midday. It is a closed event for vehicles, but everyone is welcome to come and browse round the amazing range of mostly pre-war cars and talk to their

enthusiastic owners. Which one would you take home?

An added attraction is the Pub on the Green and barbeque, all provided by The New Inn.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

Sam, Barbara and Rob are now settling into their new venture which somehow they manage to fit in alongside the farm and bed and breakfast businesses in Slapton. Having frequented the pub over many years, they were keen to see it rejuvenated (reminiscent of that old advertisement: he liked the product so much he bought the business). And just how pleased the village is to have them is demonstrated by the numbers of diners and drinkers attracted back to the pub.

The chef specialises in serving pork and lamb from their own farm, and their beef will be joining the menu in January. A four-course Christmas menu is on offer from 3 – 23 December, so if you haven't already sampled the restaurant this may be the perfect opportunity. Or if you want to arrange a special party, they will happily discuss catering and other arrangements; Sam's training in event management will come into its own.

Although the bar won't be open on Christmas Day, it will be in full swing on Christmas Eve and again on Boxing Day for lunch. And New

Year's Eve celebrations will involve a pig roast and live music.

The New Inn phone number is 857306.

WHAT VILLAGERS DO FOR A LIVING

Probably unknown to many of us is Mark Brereton's organic aquatic nursery near the mushroom farm on the Silverstone road. Although he grows a variety of underwater and water-loving plants, his first love is water lilies of which he grows 35 varieties – from very large to pygmy. Mark's favourite is called Aurora, a lily that changes colour throughout its flowering life.

After leaving school in North Lincolnshire, Mark worked at a fresh water fish farm where he became interested in aquatic plants. Nine years ago he set up in Abthorpe with the assistance of his dad, a qualified plumber, who undertook much of the plumbing work to connect his

extensive pond network to the water supply. He now has a flourishing business mainly supplying garden centres and nurseries, but if members of the public would like to visit the ponds he is happy to show them round by appointment and share his extensive knowledge. He is setting up a show greenhouse which will be at its best from April to September.

He uses a particular organic fertilizer which can only be bought wholesale in full pallet-loads. It goes such a long way that this lasts him at least a year, and he therefore sells small quantities at cost to visitors.

Mark can be contacted on 07764 245015.

MOBILE LIBRARY

A reminder that the mobile library visits The Green every three week on Monday from 1.40 to 1.55pm. It's an impressive service bringing books,

CDs, audio books and anything you would like to request pretty much to your door. Each van has access to the library catalogue so that staff can check the availability of titles from the full range of stock in other Northamptonshire libraries. It's next dates in Abthorpe are: 15 December, 5 and 26 January, 16 February, 9 and 30 March.



Mike tending his crop.

ABbA AGM

The annual general meeting of Abthorpe Broadband Association was moved to the New Inn this year, a convivial place for members to come together, swiftly conduct the business of the meeting and continue socially with nibbles and a drink.

The not-for-profit community-owned company has now provided high speed wireless broadband to Abthorpe and Slapton since the spring of 2003. Eric Malcomson, the chairman, reported that despite one or two challenges in the shape of weird WiFi connections the company had enjoyed a stable year. Experiments are continuing with new equipment and there was confidence that any minor difficulties would soon be overcome. And the best news of all was that the service would continue to be free to members for the coming year.

As the current directorial team are doing such a good job they were re-elected to their posts: Eric Malcomson as Chairman, David Cunningham as Finance Director, Keith Fenwick and Richard Tomalin as Directors.

Two suggestions were taken up: to organise another digital photography exhibition in the new year; and to hold informal courses to allow people to improve on their existing skills, at whatever level, in sending emails, accessing the Internet, etc.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCH

Canon Bridget Smith has recently announced her retirement in March next year, when she plans to move to Southwell near Nottingham. It seems no time at all since Bridget came to St John the Baptist, although in fact she has been here for 13 years. The Whittlewood Benefice has grown to include Abthorpe, Paulerspury, Slapton, Silverstone and Whittlebury. She will be much missed by parishioners in Abthorpe.

The church tote continues to flourish and the latest batch of winners were Mrs Webster in September (£250), Chris Scrivener who landed £245 in October and Bernie Heriot (£247.50) in November. Richard Tomalin explains below what the money is raised for and the most recent uses to which it has been put:

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who subscribes to the village tote each month. As most people know, the money raised via the tote is reserved strictly for the maintenance of the church building, which is a constant drain on our finances. Without this regular income we would find it very difficult to keep the building in reasonable shape for future generations.

"Many people assume that the churches in every English village are somehow maintained and preserved by a combination of Government, Church, English Heritage and Lottery

PEOPLE

Welcome to Charles Edwards and his family who have arrived at Stable Cottage.

We were sorry to say goodbye to Debbie and Colin Thorne who have returned to Marston St Lawrence after a couple of years in the village. We look forward to welcoming their tenants at 1 The Green who will be arriving in time for Christmas.

The new house that Tony and Nicola Howes were having built at Hayes farm is complete and they were able to move in the late summer.

Welcome to Karabo Galetlole and Makgotso Maiko who are temporary residents in the village as guests of Liz and Rob Capurro. Karabo and Makgotso, who are both 15, are over here to take up Richard Branson (a former pupil) scholarships at Stowe School for a year. In South Africa, their home country, they attend the Dominican Convent in central Johannesburg. They board at Stowe school during term time, but come to Abthorpe on long weekends and exeats. Although looking forward to flying home for Christmas, they are thoroughly enjoying the educational and social experiences of being at Stowe.

funding, etc. This is quite wrong. All the money to maintain our church building has to be raised by us here in Abthorpe - a scary proposition. We are very fortunate to have such a generous and committed village population to help us in this task, and that help is recognised and we are grateful for it.

"In the last couple of years (after the main restoration work of 2002 - 2005) we have been able to keep on top of most of the work needed, including rebuilding the north gate steps, providing a new gutter, downpipe and bin area by the tower and having some important electrical work carried out. We have just recently had all the electric heaters in the church replaced, as they had gone well past their sell-by-date and were on the verge of becoming dangerous.

"We are now faced with a fairly big job to investigate some rotten timbers under the pews and we are hoping to be able to carry out some work on that in 2009. So thank you again for your generosity.

"If anyone who is not in the tote would like the opportunity of a chance of winning £250 each month and helping to preserve our heritage at the same time, please let me know. It's much better odds than the lottery!"

Contact Richard on 858316.

WHAT AN ACHIEVEMENT!

Elizabeth and Barry Haycock have for many years opened their home on the last Thursday in October to host a coffee day to raise money for Marie Curie Cancer Care. Liz has a close association with the charity as she was a Marie Curie nurse. Earlier this year their fund raising achievements were celebrated when they were invited to meet the Queen at Buckingham Palace and Gordon Brown at Number 10 Downing Street. But they refused to rest on their laurels and this year, with the help of their many friends and neighbours, their home was once again full of stalls selling gifts and good things to eat.

Marea Roberts, the area fund raising manager for Marie Curie Cancer Care, was helping to sell fruit and vegetables and at the same time explaining that everyone present was hoping that Liz and Barry would break the £60,000 barrier on the 60th anniversary of the charity's foundation. (It was founded in 1948, the same year as the NHS.) After the event was over Liz was delighted to announce that £7,020 had been raised. Thanks to a lot of very generous people the £60k barrier had indeed been broken, and latest estimates put it nearer £70,000.

ABTHORPE'S RUNNERS

Abthorpe seems to breed sportsmen of ability, and just recently the serious

runners have had great success.

Alan Eastwood, who at 51 has recently competed in his first half marathon, decided that Ljubljana would be a pretty good choice, especially as he would be supporting a Slovenian friend whom he first met many years ago when they were both ski instructors. Alan ran the 21km course in 1:43:36, a pleasing result.

Eileen Vielvoye competed nearer home in the 'Run to the Beat' race. London's first half marathon began and finished at the O2 Arena in Greenwich. Along the course runners and spectators alike were serenaded by a host of live bands and other entertainers whose rhythmic beats gave a festive air to the event. Eileen



A rather wet Eileen

demonstrated how fit you can be in your prime by completing the course in a very respectable time of 2:13:45.

Helen and Tim Pope decided to spread their wings even further than their previous marathons in London, Paris, Rome and Connemara and add New York to their list. Running alongside (well, in the same race) as Paula Radcliffe, they suffered the same tough conditions of strong headwinds and low temperatures. As a result

Paula took 6 minutes longer than planned to complete the gruelling course while Helen and Tim took 12 and 30 minutes longer respectively than they had anticipated. But all that was forgotten when they crossed the finish line in Central Park in respective times of 3:58:13 and 4:32:44.

ABTHORPE VILLAGE FUND

A new committee was elected at the recent annual general meeting – this one not held in the pub.

The recent fish and chip supper went down well. The mobile fish and chip van parked outside the Old School and served up 91 portions, some of which were taken to elderly people throughout the village who had been unable to make it to the hall. Entertainment was in the form of a music quiz, entered into with the

The members from left to right are: Fi Noble, Jan Miles, Mike Partridge, Sarah Varnalls, Kathy Stevens, Russell Varnalls, Andrea Lambert, Tim Pope, June Willsher and Lynn Measham.



usual raucous good spirit of such events. Although winners are not supposed to be important, undoubtedly the team of Louise and Andrew Gough, Mike, Tracey and Jamie of Corner Cottage were suitably satisfied with the outcome.

The Committee is organising a number of events around Christmas: the lunch for the older residents on 18th December in the New Inn; combining with the Church for a Christingle service at 5.00 on the 13th; and on Sunday 21st the younger children (0 – 7) will invade the Old School for their Christmas party prior to joining the carol service in the Church at 4pm. The carol service is always a great village event so do make a point of joining in, and enjoying a little refreshment while mingling with fellow villagers afterwards.

REMINISCENCES OF ABTHORPE LIFE

Mrs Pat Hall has recently provided intriguing memories of her childhood here in Abthorpe between 1948 and 1958. She and her brother Michael both attended the village school when Miss Gilkes was the teacher. The 21 pupils ranging from Reception to Year 6 were all taught together in the large room. Pat chuckles when she describes some of the antics they got up to in those days. As friends of Gwen and Mertyl Webb who lived at Foscode Farm, they sometimes rode on the wheel guards of tractors and, best of all, sat on top of bales as they were being moved back to the farm on trailers. Across the fields towards Slapton was a pool created by the River Tove called the Lasher where all the children would go swimming. The bravest children would jump off the 'waterfall' where the mill race plunged into the river. It was probably only a foot high but was a very macho thing for the boys to do.



Pat's family lived in School House. Next door was Arthur Tew's working farm and the children used to love watching Boxer the horse leading the cows into the milking parlour – now the lounge of Stone Barn. Boxer seemed such a huge horse and if they ever rode him it was like mounting an elephant.

On Feast days, when the village's patron saint John the Baptist was commemorated, the children would be given a tea party close to the churchyard wall.

Mr Davis had a farm





on the village green (now Springmeadow Farm) and she recalls when the pigs were being killed they squealed and their hair smelled as it was singed off.

The Stratford and Midland Junction railway was still operational although her brother watched the tracks being removed when the line was closed in 1951. When they went to the post office (recently reverted to its older name of the Old Bakehouse) or nearby telephone box they were forced to run the gauntlet of free

roaming geese. But the village shop, now Porter House, was Pat's favourite as this was where she used to buy her sweets.

Above left: Pat in happy retirement today

Left : Feast day on The Green

Above: Pat, Michael and Boxer

Right: Pat's family and the Page twins



MINI-BUS SERVICE

As reported in last December's issue (how time flies), a mini-bus service was proposed that would run a frequent circular route five days a week from Towcester via Abthorpe, the Slapton turn, Wappenham, Weedon Lois, Helmdon, Weston, Moreton Pinkney, Canons Ashby, Adstone, Maidford, Blakesley, Woodend, Bradden and then back to Abthorpe before returning to Towcester.

However it now appears to be threatened by budget cuts as described in the following statement from the County Council: "Unfortunately the project has been postponed until early next year as we are reviewing council budgets and as such are unable to enter into new contractual arrangements with the bus companies who can provide the services proposed. We are grateful to everyone who has given up time to attend the consultation events and who contacted us with ideas and suggestion, and anticipate contacting them again in February next year to resume this work."

HARVEST

John Lee, who farms here in Abthorpe, says that in all his many years cultivating in our parish he has never before seen summer weather like that experienced this year. You will have seen his field of barley between the village and the crossroads standing long after normal harvesting time and, in the area down by the Tove, often in running water more reminiscent of a Chinese paddy rather than an English arable field. Fortunately a fine spell of weather allowed the combine harvester to eventually get the crop off.

With this backdrop, the Harvest Festival service drew a packed congregation from across the Whittlewood Benefice to sing both traditional and more modern hymns. Harvest gifts were received, including fresh baked bread, before the traditional harvest lunch was served to 50 diners in the Old School.

PSP ASSOCIATION

And on the subject of carol services, a special one has been arranged at St Lawrence Church in Towcester on 10 December at 7pm. It is in aid of the PSP Association, a Towcester-based charity (which was started in Wappenham by Brigadier and the late Sarah Koe) which supports those with the devastating terminal neuro-degenerative disease Progressive Supranuclear Palsy [PSP], similar in effect to Motor Neurone Disease. Since its foundation in 1994 the Association has helped some 3,000 families, and raised over

£2m for research into PSP. The charity is small and every penny counts, so do come along and enjoy singing for a good cause.

The service will take the form of the reading of six Advent lessons with carols, supported by the very talented Sponne School Orchestra and St Lawrence Parish Choir. Among those reading lessons will be Towcester's Mayor, Councillor Charles Stanger, and two of the PSP's patrons, Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank (recently Chief of Defence Staff) and Sir Michael Carleton-Smith (former CEO of the Marie Curie charity). Tickets are £6 including light refreshments, available by telephoning Debbie on 01327 322410, emailing psp@pspeur.org, or booking online at www.pspeur.org.

FAMILY PHOTO PORTRAITS

On Sunday 14 December there's a great opportunity to have professional family photos taken in time for Christmas, when Jon and Adele will be set up at the Old School. However, they can arrange a different date if this isn't convenient. More details: 855901 or 07799 773739; www.aandjphotography.net

LADIES WHO SEW

Tove Quilters featured in the very first issue of this newsletter in January 2005, so it's a pleasure to mark their 10th anniversary with another mention. They are embarking upon a new programme of stitching that includes workshops in box making, Hawaiian appliqué and contemporary quilting. The group meets in Towcester each Wednesday between 7.30 and 9.30pm during term time. Apart from the tutorials, it's a perfect opportunity to sit, sew and chat. Anyone who would like to join the group can find out more from Joyce Riches on 857703.

HEALTH WALKS

And don't forget that there is a full programme of local Health Walks, probably much needed after the excesses of Christmas to come, at www.southnorthants.gov.uk/leisure_culture/126.htm

Although John Riches declines publicity, we would like to acknowledge our indebtedness to him for providing stories and photographs for the newsletter. For the time being both editors find spare time a rare commodity, and John's contributions are very much appreciated.

EVENTS*Monday 8 December*

Parish Council meeting, Old School, 7.45pm

Saturday 13 December

Christingle Service, 5.00 in the Church followed by refreshments

Thursday 18 December

Lunch for the older residents in the New Inn

Carol singing round the village, meet 6.30 outside the Old School

Sunday 21 December

Children's Christmas party in the Old School, 1.30 – 3.30

Carol Service, 4.00, followed by refreshments

Christmas Day

Holy Communion at 9.00am

New Year's Day

Vintage cars and barbeque on the village green

Christmas carols and pantomimes around the area*Thursday 4 December to Saturday 6 December*

'Cinderella' presented by Helmdon Bridge Players at Helmdon School, 4th, 5th, 6th at 7.30pm, and 6th at 2pm, 01295 768922

Sunday 7 December

Cantatas by Candelight, Fiori Musicali Chamber Orchestra, St Lawrence Church, Towcester, 7.30, www.fiori-musicali.com

Wednesday 10 December

PSP Association carol service, St Lawrence Church, Towcester, 7pm, £6.00, 01327 322410, www.pspeur.org

Friday 12 December

Carols in the Courtyard at Canons Ashby House, 7.30pm, with Consensus Vocalis and instrumentalists from Northants County Music Services, 01327 860044

Saturday 13 December

Christmas carols from the time of Thomas Hardy, performed in costume, with mulled wine and mince pies round the log fire, Aynhoe Park country house, Aynho, 7.00, £15.00, 01327 360931