



News from Abthorpe December 2015

ABTALK

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PARISH COUNCIL

Mini Farm: The planning application to double the number of pitches on the site has aroused considerable opposition. A defect in the application has been found as a result of which it has been resubmitted and will not be considered by the

Planning Committee of SNC until December. While there is some local support for the application, there are a large number of objections, including legal arguments which will no doubt take the District Council some time to consider. See page 19 for a longer article on this subject.

Village Defibrillator: The PC is still investigating the proposal to purchase a defibrillator for use in the village. We have identified possible sources of grants and are following these up. There is also a concern that the defibrillator will seldom be used and that, if it is needed, it will be difficult to identify, locate and get it in use in time to make a difference. Recent revelations concerning the way the ambulance service treats the availability of a defibrillator in calculating response times will need to be taken into account.

Transparency Code: For years we have objected to the need for both internal and external annual audits, given the cost of them. New regulations are now in force which remove the need for an external audit provided we publish specific documents on line. These include meeting agendas, minutes, any papers presented to meetings, annual accounts, internal audit results, etc. These documents will now appear regularly on the Parish Council page on www.abthorpe.net

so you can see for yourself that we are behaving properly. If you are not able to access the Internet, the documents can be inspected by arrangement with the Clerk, Bob Carter, tel 01327 857753.

THE OLD SCHOOL

Another successful Truckers' Breakfast was enjoyed by about 70 people on 21st November, raising £280. The quality of the food was first class and deliciously cooked by ladies of the management committee. What a convivial way to set ourselves up for the weekend.

The programme for 2016 is being considered at the moment, so the committee would be delighted to hear of any ideas you may have for an event.

The Christmas coffee morning is on 3rd December at 35 Wappenham Road starting at 10.00 and there will be a winter social evening on 30th January. A programme of coffee mornings and truckers' breakfasts is being planned for 2016. And a reminder to start planting or at least thinking about plants that can be ready for the popular plant sale on 22nd May.

The AGM is being held on 20th January at 8.00pm, so do go along to hear what the committee has been up to over the last year and their future plans.

(Right) Tucking in to a hearty breakfast.



(Below) Lynn Neasham taking a 'selfie' of the cooks. From the left Fi Noble, Sarah Lawson, Janet Dancer and Jan Miles.



revelries of seeing the new year in.

Stay up or start again on New Year's Day to welcome vintage cars on their return to the pub car park. They will be arriving at any time from about 11.00am. This is a chance to view a unique collection. Bar food available; bring your camera!

Rob has decided to extend the days when food is available. It will now be open on Monday and Tuesday evenings (although not lunchtimes).

Going into the new year, 25th January is Burns Night when the menu will appropriately reflect the occasion. Then don't forget there are other red letter days, such as Valentine's Day in February.

THE NEW INN NEWS

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Christmas is fast approaching and a celebratory meal at the pub would take advantage of their special menu of six courses for £25.95. On Christmas day itself the bar will be open from 12.00 - 2.00. Then the next celebration will be New Year's Eve, a popular place to join in the

On the third Sunday of each month The New Inn Blues Club will meet from 4pm. Amps, mics and speakers are all provided, so all that's required are the musicians to make the sound. Spread the word.

October's quiz was won by West Enders, whose magnificent haul of £185 went to the Marie Curie fund, helping Liz and Barry reach their target (see p.16). In November the Tovians sent their winnings of £160 to Cynthia Spencer House Hospice. Come and join the Christmas quiz (with a difference) on Sunday 20th December at 7.30. Brains not required, a light-hearted approach is.

POPPY APPEAL

Well, congratulations to Abthorpe! This year's collection for the work of the Royal British Legion was the best ever, raising £563.38, an astonishing increase on just over £400 last year. In addition another £59.22 was collected at the New Inn.

VILLAGE WEBSITE

There is a lot of information on the village website at www.abthorpe.net, including an events calendar although at the moment this section is not well used. It would be good to have this populated with everything that is going on in the village so that it became the regular place people within and outside the village to

look at. As editors, we are happy to start the ball rolling by uploading *Abtalk's* diary information, but would encourage organisers to regularly add to it as soon as dates are known. Please email Richard Tomalin (richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net) for login details.

On the website you can sign up to receive Abthorpe Alerts, a two-way information exchange linked to Neighbourhood Watch, where we can look out for our neighbours and forewarn about anything untoward that is noticed locally.

You can also receive a colour version of *Abtalk* electronically by signing up on the website.

TOVE VALLEY BROADBAND

The team has as usual been busy over the last few months. In fact, supporting our network is becoming more time consuming. Just as one problem is solved, another comes along. Extensions to the network have been made to serve some of the outlying farms and other groups of houses around the area, the places where BT service can be poor because of long telephone lines.

Eric Malcomson appeared on the BBC television programme 'Rip Off Britain' on 20th October. This was during a week when all the broadcasts were live. He found it an interesting experience, although scheduling pressure on the day

Eric at the House of Lords

meant that his time on air was cut down. He was quietly chatting away to Julia Somerville when she turned to the camera and they were on air. The theme on that day was broadband speed. Eric was able to explain how Tove Valley Broadband had realised its project by voluntary effort and government grant and offered encouragement to other groups to do something similar. His best advice was to 'get off their backsides and get on with it!' Eric was followed by a senior BT manager who had to admit that he only got 1.5Mbps where he lived in Cornwall.

And more national recognition of TVB came when they were runners up in the prestigious national NextGen award for Rural Networks, the award being presented at a House of Lords dinner on 5th November by the Earl of Erroll. Eric reports that for a time they were locked into the Palace of Westminster because of demonstrations in the streets around Parliament Square but really, what was expected on Guy Fawkes night?

The AGM is on Wednesday 27th January. Details will be sent out shortly to members.

**ST JOHN THE BAPTIST NEWS**

Barbara Malcomson
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If you have been out and about in the centre of the village during the evening recently you may have noticed that the final work has been done on the church path on the north side and that the lighting is now working. It still needs a bit of adjusting so that most of the path is lit when people start walking up it, but does not light up at every movement on the village green

Regular services are 11am on the second Sunday of the month and 9.15am on the third Sunday; both are Holy Eucharist. Information on services can be found on the notice board outside church and on the Whittlewood benefice website, www.whittlewoodparishes.org.uk/

Remembrance Sunday: John Riches took a much appreciated service with a difference this year. The talk which

Joyce Riches gave was very moving and there was a good attendance. The collection from the service went to the local British Legion.

Concert in Church: As a start to the lead up to Christmas we are holding a concert in church on Friday 4th December at 7.30pm. The Greens Norton Community Choir are coming to perform and there will be light refreshments provided in the interval. The whole evening is free, so just turn up and enjoy it. There will be a collection for the Hope Centre in Northampton during the evening.

Pew Removal: The concert will be the first opportunity for us to see if the new space we now have on the north side of the church works. We have removed most of the pews on this side which gives us a flexible area for activities such as serving refreshments. The removal at the moment is temporary until we decide if it works but we are planning to make it as attractive as possible during this time. The pews were taken out on 7th September and are being stored safely.

Foodbank: In the period 12th October to 2nd November Abthorpe collected the largest ever single consignment to the Foodbank. There is now a Christmas Goodies box in the church for anyone who would like to donate treats. Thank you to everyone who has donated during this year and a big thank you to John and Joyce Riches for taking our food into the food bank.

Tote: Congratulations to Keith and Monica Plant who won £200 in September and to Lorraine Salmons whose October winnings were £202.50.

The PCC of St John the Baptist Church wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful 2016. Thank you to everyone who helps in any way to support us in the work of the church, to keep this significant village building in good repair and the outside looking good.

HEATING OIL

As oil is used extensively in the village many of us are subject to the vagaries of the oil price which, 3 years ago, was hovering just below 70p a litre. It is therefore worth noting that a local oil-buying consortium, Yelvertoft Heating Oil Buying Group (YOBGO), is currently buying at under 30p a litre.

If you would like to join the scheme there is more information on 01788 824236; www.yobco.co.uk

PEOPLE

In our last issue we said a few last words about Bob Salmons, a long time village resident. We have received this fuller version of Bob's life which makes interesting reading of a time fast disappearing:

Bob Salmons' funeral service was beautifully led by Peter Byng a lay Reader of the Whittlewood Benefice.

Bob's niece Lorraine, nephews Terry, Peter and Roy and Terry's wife Christine gathered with a large group of friends to say farewell to a real gentle man who had lived in our village for the majority of his 88 years.

Bob was born in Blakesley in February 1927, the youngest of three boys. He attended Blakesley village school and left at the age of 14 to work for the Bartholomew family at Blakesley Hall. In his book *Beside the Crooked Brook* author Doug Blake described how it was Bob's daily task to visit the village post office at 8.00am to pick up the mail and to then run down the hill to Blakesley station on the old Stratford-on-Avon and Midland Junction (SMJ) section of the London Midland and Scottish Railway, to collect Mrs Bartholomew's morning newspaper. In the evening he would meet the 7.30 train to collect the evening papers and very often he could be seen waiting for the arrival of the 4.30 to collect a consignment of fresh fish from Arthur Baker's fishmongers in Towcester.

As a result of constantly going to the station Bob became very interested in trains. The SMJ Society records in an article on its website that station master Eddie Blandford exclaimed to Bob that: "You have to spend so much time down here, you might as well work for the



railway!" So Bob gave it his consideration and successfully applied for a job as a porter at Towcester station. He swept waiting rooms, cleaned toilets and delivered parcels in town. He must have impressed his supervisors as he was selected for training as a permanent signal man at Blakesley. The Second World War had just ended and as there was a lack of trained personnel Bob often had to work 12-hour shifts. Although it was arduous it was interesting especially when mysterious munitions trains passed during the night en-route for Kineton Depot.

How did Bob come to live in Abthorpe? Well, one Saturday in 1946 when he was 18 Bob walked over to Woodend to meet his friend Len Bodily. They planned to attend a dance in Abthorpe but on the way they dallied at the Royal Oak pub in Slapton and then after a pint or two walked through the fields towards the dance venue. At the bridge across the River Tove they met two young ladies called Kath and Betty. Romance ensued and Bob married Kath and Betty married Len. Bob and Kath spent their honeymoon in Torquay and as a railway employee he was able to obtain a privilege ticket. Both couples remained friends throughout their married lives here in Abthorpe.

Bob realised that all was not rosy with the SMJ. When passenger trains ceased he knew that further cuts were on the way and it was time to get out. He was offered a job working with a tarmac gang for a company called Adsfeltic that specialised in major road works. He worked on the M1 motorway when it was first constructed

Sadly Kath, Bob's wife, died in 2011. He was much admired for the way he cared and nursed her during her long illness.

Bob's family have many happy memories. His niece Lorraine remembers that he was like a second Dad - always interested in what she was doing and giving good advice, especially on gardening. She remembers that as a small child she used to sit on Bob's lap, mess up his curly hair and then comb it. He would sit patiently while she did this over and over again. Nephew Peter remembered that Bob was always mad on sport. When local milkman Ted Bearman invited Bob, his nephew Peter and friend Barry Kelcher to take part in a six-a-side cricket tournament in Banbury they played as "The Bottlers" and went on to win.

Some years ago nephew Peter and his wife Pauline took Bob and Kath for a surprise lunch on the steam train that operates from Loughborough to Leicester North. On their return to the station they arranged for Bob to see inside the signal box. Bob was duly impressed and was inspecting the machinery when a train passed by. Kath instinctively ducked down so that she couldn't be seen from outside. Seeing the puzzled looks on their faces, she explained to much laughter that she used to visit Bob at his signal box when they were courting. That was not allowed by the rules.

Bob left the church accompanied by one of his favourite songs *Chattanooga Choo Choo* to be buried with his wife Kath in the churchyard extension. After the service mourners gathered in the pub for refreshments and to exchange memories of Bob - a truly gentle man

Alan and Catherine Eastwood were married recently at Abthorpe church. Alan, who has lived for many years in Foscote, explained that he had met Catherine whilst he was working as a ski instructor



in Austria. At that time she was living and working in Hamburg. At the end of the skiing season he visited her there and a short time later she moved into Foscote to be with Alan. Their son Matthew came along and the couple became engaged to be married in 2007. One thing and another delayed their wedding. They had discussed tying the knot in a number of exotic places but eventually decided that Abthorpe parish church was just the right place

for the ceremony. During the signing of the register Matthew, a pupil at Sponne School, played *Walking in the Air* on the flute, generating spontaneous applause.

As Catherine and Alan stood on the steps in bright sunshine they will always remember their happy, traditional wedding ceremony.

In our last issue we welcomed Emily Hayward and Tim Humphrey to the village on the eve of their wedding. Mr and Mr Humphrey tied the knot of 26th September. Congratulations to them both.



There have been more new arrivals in the village. We would like to welcome Kerry and Meriel and their children Megan and Jack who are renting Phil and Tricia Holmes' house in Brackley Lane for the next 18 months while Megan finishes her education locally. Both children are horse fanatics.

LITTER ON THE A43

Many of us will have noticed the amount of litter which collects on the A43. While the central reservation can only be cleared with permission from Highways England and require costly lane closures, the lay-bys may be freely cleaned up by South Northamptonshire Council.

As the number of trucks staying in lay-bys overnight increases, so does the litter. 28 double framed units, capable of holding two wheelie bins, are being installed along the length of the dual carriage. Some lay-bys will require more than one unit and the entire South Northants stretch of the A43 will be covered over several phases.

A43 ABTHORPE ROUNDABOUT

A further update to our piece in February this year came at the recent exhibition in Towcester to allow the public to look at and comment on plans for the improvement of the roundabout close to McDonalds. It was attended by many local people. The roundabout suffers from congestion in peak periods and the junction layout is no longer adequate for current traffic volumes. These are set to increase even further once the A5 is diverted round Towcester and large new housing developments in both Towcester and Silverstone are completed.

Although new traffic lights are to be installed in a layout similar to that completed on the A5/A43 junction no lights are planned for the Abthorpe road. The other lights would provide windows of opportunity for motorists to get out of our road. Drivers heading towards Towcester would immediately face traffic lights actually on the roundabout where it is joined by the southbound A43.

Answers to the questions raised during public event have now been published. A few of those more relevant to us are included below:

Concern on lane 4 turn to Towcester A number of comments have been received regarding the A43 Northbound and right turn approach to Towcester. The team is currently investigating these in more detail. This will require site investigations and discussions with Northamptonshire Police. Further updates regarding this matter will be included on the Highways England website in due course

Non-signalised (can that really be a word?) arm of roundabout Customers on the non-signalised arm of the roundabout will be given opportunity to enter the junction during the delay when other lights on the circulatory are on red. This window of opportunity can be adjusted if the demand is higher than anticipated.

Why isn't there a flyover instead? A grade separated junction would likely cost in excess of £100 million. A flyover would also require extra land and full environmental assessments which means that this is beyond the scope of the present scheme.

Have you considered using yellow boxes and speed humps? Yellow boxes require approval and enforcement from the Police. At this stage we are not able to implement yellow box junction markings but will consider their use in the future if necessary. Speed humps cannot be used on a 40mph road and are not an option we can consider.

Where will the south relief road join? The relief road will join the A43 around 1km south of the Abthorpe roundabout; the new junction will be just beyond Buddies Diner, opposite the layby on the northbound carriageway.

This £7 million scheme is scheduled to start in January 2016 and should be completed 16 months later. As the improvements will be very close to people's homes much of the reconstruction will take place during the day. Our access road to the A43 will temporarily become single lane running from 8am to 8pm. The agency admits that the works will cause delays.

Updates on the scheme and full plans can be found at www.highways.gov.uk/roads/road-projects/a43-abthorpe-roundabout-improvement-scheme/

CHRISTMAS DINNER - TURKEY OR FAT MUTTON?

Nowadays turkey forms the basis of the normal Christmas dinner. In Victorian times according to Charles Dickens it was more likely to be goose, but in the mid-1800s poorer people were grateful for fat mutton, mostly thanks to a breeding programme by Robert Bakewell which was taken up by a local farmer Val Barford living at Foscoate. He became well known for his sheep by breeders across the world, especially in New Zealand. There a breeding programme had been established by the sons of English farmers who emigrated because there was not enough work at home to feed their typically large families. Barford's methods were even mentioned in an article by Darwin 'The variation of animals and plants under domestication' in which Darwin quotes Val's interbreeding in sheep flocks.

Robert Bakewell of Dishley Grange, Loughborough, who lived from 1725 to 1795, made it his objective to improve farm animals to provide more meat. He developed New Leicester sheep. Previously sheep had been scrawny things with not much meat on them, so apart from the wool there was not a good return from them, except for the small amount of meat which people ate. Although most country people had access to a cow for its milk they ate mainly vegetables as meat was so scarce. Most of those who lived in villages were entitled to have some of the open fields in the parish where they could grow crops in strips. The better-off families had small fields called closes where they kept sheep. Before the 1823 enclosure Abthorpe village cows were all kept in one field called Alexander Meadow bordering on the the stream by Silverstone parish boundary, south of Handley barn. One man looked after the cows for all the owners. The open fields method of farming in strips was wasteful as well as time consuming. Once the large open fields

were divided up into smaller fields, everyone who had some land could grow what crops they wanted and keep sheep and a cow. Some bred horses for others to use for transport or farm work.

Foscote water meadows were ideal for sheep rearing as they flooded every year giving good grass. In the 1568 Elizabeth I granted a lease to one of her courtiers, Hickling, to have all of Foscote meadows, along with the adjacent Greens Norton ones, for sheep rearing. Foscote belonged to the Crown but in 1673 Charles II created the Grafton Estate to provide an income after the death of his wife for his eldest illegitimate son, creating a family line called the Fitzroys, Dukes of Grafton. There had been leases granted since James I to mostly absent farmers who sublet the land, but by 1723 the Grafton Estate created leases for local farmers, each farm being about 100 acres which was as large as a man could farm even with many workers. The Barford family managed to obtain a lease through an uncle who had leased a farm at Foscote. He had obtained that lease during the commonwealth period when the Parliamentarians took all royal land and leased it to people with ready money. The civil war was very expensive and once the Parliamentarians had won the war they needed money to maintain an army. Selling off land was a quick way of boosting the coffers. Much Irish land was sold off in this way as well. Once the monarchy was restored Charles II reversed the process in 1661 and land went back to those it had been confiscated from and Foscote once again belonged to the King again.

Breeders were so proud of their fat sheep that they had paintings done of them. The inscription along the bottom reads: "Portrait of a 3 shear Wether (New Leicester) bred by Valentine Barford of Foscote Taken June 6 1807". It is believed that '3 shear' means that it was four years old.



The land was still left to be farmed by the tenants so the same people still farmed the Crown land.

After Queen Catherine's death and when the first Duke of Grafton came of age the Duke's agents started to keep a careful eye on the tenants. If they kept the land in good order and paid their rents on time most families stayed in the same premises; widows were allowed to keep their husband's leases. The Barford family stayed at Foscothe Hill Farm over the generations and also took over Foscothe House Farm, previously known as Green Farm where the old house stood adjacent to Foscothe Green before 1840. The Valentine Barford who lived at Green Farm from 1764 to 1848 became obsessed with breeding good fat sheep based on Bakewell's new Leicester breed. He believed that interbreeding improved his flock and that the feeding regime was important. He therefore advertised them as being from a flock of 71, wintered for 23 weeks on 4 acres of turnips and a little hay, without any oil cake or corn. A six acre field east of Abthorpe crossroads on the same side as Foscothe House was known as Turnip Close. Later his son took their sheep to all the Royal Agricultural shows. Some farmers took their stock to the shows by canal boats as it was the easiest form of transport. The Royal Show was originally held at different venues across the country such as London and Wolverhampton, starting in 1839 at Oxford.

The advantage of Barford's breeding programme was that he rented out his rams so that people could afford to improve their stock without the expense of buying a pedigree ram. In the local area villagers found they finally had a decent amount of fat mutton from one sheep instead of the scrawny sheep they had before.

His son, also called Valentine, took over the breeding programme and still relied on cross breeding. He had a printed pedigree of his father's Foscothe flock:

The Foscothe Flock

The following is a pedigree of the Flock of Sheep bred by me at Foscothe, near Towcester, Northamptonshire, descended from Sheep of the first repute, from the Dishley Flock of Bakewell and Honeyborne, from the year 1783 to 1803 inclusive; through the flock of the late Mr Joseph Robinson, of Wellingborough Lodge, Northamptonshire, who was a Member of the Dishley Society from its commencement in 1783 to 1803 inclusive.

Valentine Barford

Sheep used in:

1789 *A two sheer by a Dishley sheep, used by Mr Robinson in 1786*

1790 *A two sheer by a Dishley sheep, used by Mr Robinson in 1787- Ironically called Lumber.*

- 1791 *The same sheep as last year*
 1792 *Mr Robinson, A. F. by the Dishley A.*
 1793 *Another son of the Dishley of the Dishley A.*
 1794 *Long Tail, by a Dishley sheep, name unknown to me*
 1795 *A son of A. F.*
 1796 *A son of Long Tail, dam by A. F. -(a sheep of my own), etc....*

All the above named sheep were hired by Mr Robinson, except those used in 1796 and 1799, which were my late Father's descended from the above named, and Lumber 1802.

The following are bred entirely from my own flock, sire and dam, without an interchange of male or female from any other flock,

[then his own sheep pedigree list]

Valentine Jnr continued to breed and show his sheep until his death in 1864 despite his method going out of fashion. He would go to the shows with a pen of his sheep with the pedigree list pinned up saying that unfair shearing [to alter the body shape] deceived the judges as to the quality of the sheep.

Sheep have different names according to district and age:

Tegs are sheep in their second year

Shearling is a yearling sheep before its first shearing

Wethers are young castrated males bred for meat

Mutton is meat from an older ewe or a wether

MEH

BARRY AND LIZ ACHIEVE THEIR TARGET

Thirty-two years ago in 1983 local farmers Elizabeth and Barry Haycock decided that once their harvest was safely gathered in and life was a bit less frenetic they would concentrate their efforts on raising money for the charity Marie Curie Cancer Care. At that time Liz, in addition to her farming duties, served as a Marie Curie nurse to help look after terminally ill patients in their own homes. They decided to have a coffee morning in aid of the charity. They raised £110.

Gradually over the years the last Thursday in October became a recognised social as well as fund raising happening and the coffee morning grew into a 'Coffee Event' that lasted all day. In addition to serving coffee, home-made cakes and biscuits, there are stalls selling local products such as vegetables, honey, decorated eggs, craft work, bouquets and much more besides. Slowly but surely the amount raised increased and their efforts were recognised in 2008 when they met the Queen and again in 2009 when they were

personally thanked by the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

In recent years they have said that once they reached their target of £100,000 they would stop. Last year the total amounted to £96,130 and they and their platoon of local volunteers felt confident that this



year they would reach their target. The money raised in 2015 amounted to an amazing £6,547 bringing their total to £102,677. They thanked everybody who had supported their events over the years, especially their many local helpers, saying, "without them we wouldn't have been able to do it!"

COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Ian Morris, our local County Councillor, will be contributing an occasional report on his work:

As the festive period approaches once more it is hard to believe that I have been your elected County Councillor for approaching three years and I have to say that I am thoroughly enjoying the experience. It is time consuming and often all encompassing but very rewarding.

I sit on a number of committees and working groups including the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and have recently been made chairman of the Development Control Committee, which meets monthly to consider such things as new schools, classroom extensions, and minerals and waste.

I have mentioned the empowering councillor's scheme in the past. This is a fund given to each county councillor for their division, which can be spent on projects of benefit to the community within that division. I have helped Abthorpe with a £750 contribution to a Vehicle Activated Sign, another

towards the Defibrillator. Other awards have been made but there are still some funds left for the current year; please do get in touch if there is a community project I can help with.

As you are probably aware the County Council is under continuing financial pressure and having to make further and deeper cuts to its budgets. This has so far been achievable without affecting front line services but cannot continue and therefore the Council has had to re-think how it delivers its services. This will include the setting up of separate companies to run the services and deliver the essential cuts without damaging them. This is very much a work in progress but will be similar to the model of LGSS, the company that runs many of the backroom services for the Council and provides opportunities to work with other councils on joint procurement, management and staff as well as charging for services to outer authorities and organisations. The Wellbeing Community Interest Company is beginning to take shape and will be the first of the new companies. More details can be found in the document at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk under the Council Plan.

The County has helped 373 local businesses with free start up advice and support since launching its Enterprise Libraries project two years ago. The programme has resulted in 19 new businesses and 25 additional jobs since it began in 2013 and this is expected to increase to 46 new business and 99 new jobs by 2017. This is great news not only on the jobs front but also by providing a special role for libraries.

Those of you who go to Northampton regularly will have noticed that the new County Council building project Angel is coming out of the ground quite quickly and I am assured that it is on time and on budget and will deliver real savings in its first year. This will see the closing and selling of twelve old expensive to run buildings and will bring 2000, plus public sector workers back into the town centre, in itself a significant financial boost. The Council Chamber will remain in the existing building and a use will be found for the remainder.

The state of our roads continues to be of concern to us all. There is not enough money for all the repairs. The best way to get repairs done is to report and keep reporting any poor roads to Street Doctor via www.northamptonshire.gov.uk. The more often a problem is reported the higher up the priority list it goes. I am also more than happy to arrange a site visit to the village to walk through the problems with Helen Howard, who is the

highways local liaison for the area and more often than not a solution can be found eventually even if there is no specific budget for the repairs.

Next year will see an election for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire. Adam Simmons has decided not to stand for re-election in 2016. This is a very important role within the county and community and could have a profound effect on our policing over the next four years. I would urge you to take time to consider all the candidates and get out and vote!

Can I take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy Christmas and New Year. I am happy to be contacted: IMorris@northamptonshire.gov.

uk; 07710198272; Twitter-Cllr Ian Morris@aussielover100.

ABTHORPE ALERT

The most recent subject of an Alert was a burglary within the village during which John Riches had his very distinctive bike stolen. Happily for him, the thief was apprehended trying to ride this very large steed up from Oxbridge; he has since confessed to this and other burglaries around Abthorpe that day.

If you would like to sign up to receive Alerts, which are also used to report and share anything untoward that's spotted in the village, there is a link to a form on the front page of the village website: www.abthorpe.net.

PC Dan Beach apprehended the culprit who stole John Roake's bicycle but then found himself responsible for returning it. Here he stands beside it after exhausting himself riding it up from Oxbridge.



EXTENSION OF ROMANY SITE

The local Romany families have applied to South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) for planning permission to change the use of some of their land from agricultural to residential for three pitches of one static and one mobile caravan each, a total of six caravans. The proposals include a communal amenity building for toilets, bathroom and laundry facilities.

There has been a great deal of discussion locally about this proposal. The following report gives a flavour of the discussions.

In a long letter to SNC the gypsy families' agent states that the extra pitches would be used to accommodate the present owner's daughter and her two children. They are currently living on the roadside and need a settled site so that the children can be put into school. Additionally the sister-in-law of the owner has recently tragically died and her children have come to live with the family. There are no vacant pitches on authorised traveller sites in South Northamptonshire and SNC has not allocated any land for the provision of traveller sites in its Development Plan. The agent states that in his opinion the proposed site extension would be satisfactorily assimilated into its rural surroundings.

Abthorpe Parish Council met

recently to formulate its opinion. Twenty one people attended the meeting. After hearing their views, the Council agreed to oppose the application. The Parish Meeting at Bradden attended by 24 villagers voted unanimously to object to the application. Whilst there appeared to be a number of reasons why the application should be rejected the Bradden parishioners decided to seek professional legal advice. Villagers may be requested to volunteer assistance if further funds are required.

Northamptonshire Police generally approves traveller sites that are for small family groups of known and named individuals. The site does not generate anti-social behaviour in the vicinity. The Environment Agency has no objection but will carry out an assessment before granting an environmental permit.

A member of the Romany family explained that she was very proud of her gypsy heritage. She admits that now that she has a full time senior management position there is not much time for travelling, but explained that the traditional gypsy skills are dying fast and will have totally disappeared before their children are adults. Gypsies want their children to go to school and on to adult colleges where they can learn skills which will allow them to retain their open air life style.

DIARY

Thursday 3 December

Christmas coffee morning, 35 Wappenham Road, 10.00-2.00

Friday 4 December

Greens Norton Community Choir concert, St John the Baptist, 7.30

Sunday 13 December

Holy Eucharist Service, 11.00

Monday 14 December

Parish Council meeting, Old School, 7.45

Sunday 20 December

Holy Eucharist Service, 9.15

Christmas charity quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

Christmas Eve

Carol Service, 4.00

Christmas Day

Holy Eucharist Service, 9.15

Friday 1 January

Vintage cars, New Inn car park

Sunday 17 January

Start of the New Inn Blues Club, 4.00

Wednesday 20 January

Old School AGM, the Old School, 8.00

Wednesday 27 January

ABbA AGM, the Old School, 7.30

Monday 25 January

Burns Night, the New Inn

Parish Council meeting, Old School, 7.45

Saturday 30 January

Winter social evening in the Old School

Monday 7 March

Parish Council meeting, Old School, 7.45