

# BAATALK

## NEWS FROM ABTHORPE

### **NEW HOUSES**

Some of you will have seen a report in the local newspaper in late January giving details of housing sites which have been identified in the area, including a site for 21 new homes in Abthorpe. This is included in the West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. As stressed in the newspaper, it does not mean that there are plans to build this number of houses, or that the site in question will receive planning permission. But the story does reveal some worrying trends in local government. I will try to explain the situation, but first a health warning - what you are about to read may confuse you.

West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (JPU) brings together the planning functions of South Northants and Daventry District Councils, Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council. The West



Northamptonshire Development Corporation is an observer. One of the JPU's tasks is to identify where new houses could be built. The East Midlands Regional Plan published in March 2009 identifies a requirement for 62,125 new homes to be built in West Northamptonshire between 2001 and 2026, of which 13,781 had been built by 1 April 2008. This was the starting point for the assessment which had to show how the remaining 48,344 homes can be accommodated. The JPU did this by looking at sites which already have permission, ones that are identified in local plans, vacant and derelict land and sites promoted by developers. Among those was the area on the east side of Brackley Lane running from Wappenham Road to the existing houses, plus the field behind those houses. This site was offered by a potential developer, with development projected for the period 2011 to 2013. Working on standard rules for houses per hectare gave the total of 21. If you want to see the relevant documents, they are available on the JPU website [www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org](http://www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org).

Now for the complications. Firstly, the site is outside the Village Envelope which, under SNC's Housing Development Policy, identifies where houses can be built. Secondly, part of the site is already being considered for Affordable Housing, which is one of the few categories for which that Housing Policy allows construction outside the Envelope. So where does SNC's Housing Policy stand? If there is the possibility of commercial development on the land, the owner may not be willing to sell at a price which would enable the affordable houses to be built.

The final complication emerged when I attended a meeting about SNC's Economic Development Policy. There it emerged that this policy is predicated on the construction of 330 homes per year in the SNC area. Now, the 48,344 homes in the JPU's plans cover a larger area, but an analysis of the data provide by the JPU suggests that about 30% of those homes will be in the SNC area, or around 1,000 homes per year. I was subsequently told that the extra houses will only be in the area close to Northampton, suggesting that there is no need for all the sites which the JPU have identified.

Now what all this planning will lead to is anyone's guess, but I remain to be convinced that we, who are paying the wages of all these people involved in planning, are getting value for our money.

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**NEWS FROM THE NEW INN***TEL: 857306*

Although dressing up was optional at the Christmas quiz one team really entered into the spirit of the evening. Mary Final and her friends deservedly won the fancy dress prize, while The Runners-Up just scraped home in the quiz itself, donating the winnings of nearly £100 to Shelter. It was a special evening, well supported, with spot prizes for every round.

The regular quizmaster has decided to take a break for a couple of months, but a stand-in has been found who will be presenting the next quiz on 9<sup>th</sup> February. Come about 7.45 for an 8pm start. The modest entry fee includes a hot supper and the proceeds, along with the raffle, make up the prize money which is donated by the winning team to a charity of their choice. Therefore the more who come, the more money is raised.

Make a note of the next live music evening: Easter Saturday, 3rd April.

Andy Houghton was pleased with the response to his Christmas menu and had a busy time in the restaurant. The usual quieter time in January has been boosted by a number of private parties. Andy is planning to introduce a revised menu in the spring.

**CAROL SINGING**

The carol singing around the village in aid of Crisis was a casualty of one of the coldest nights of this long winter. Not only would the singers freeze, but it was thought those visited would be reluctant to leave their cosy firesides and open up on such a night. Plan B was to sing in the pub for unsuspecting drinkers and diners, but even that trade had been affected by the ice and snow. So there was no audience for the eager carollers.

However, the church offered a warm welcome for the service of nine lessons and carols earlier in the month, lit by candles and seasonally decorated with winter greenery. Four children each lit an Advent candle, the fifth being saved until Christmas Day. Villagers both old and young read the lessons, and the service ended with the usual social gathering of chat, wine and mince pies.

**SOUTH NORTANTS 50+ FORUM**

The Forum was launched in Towcester in November when over 80 people attended and took part in a singing workshop, Wii Fit demonstration, refreshments and a prize draw. The next meeting is at Brackley on 16th February at the Baptist Church, Waynflete Avenue, between 2pm and 4pm. Contact South Northants Volunteer Bureau, 01327 358264, for more information.

**SNOW IN ABTHORPE**

We all experienced the prolonged snow in different ways, from delight to total frustration or just resigned acceptance. However, it did bring out the creative side of some of our young people and a selection of their talent is pictured.

Despite the difficulties, thanks are due to everyone who kept services running, from milk, post and newspaper deliveries to many instances of neighbourly assistance.



*Loch Ness Monster - Eleanor Gough, assisted by her sister Katherine, Angus and Hugh Dyckhoff.*

*Igloo in Brackley Lane*



*Sitting Cat and his Mouse - Alice Green's creation*



## COMPOSTING BIN OFFER

To encourage recycling, reduced price compost bins are again available under a new scheme from South Northants Council. There are two Compost Bins, 220 litre and 330 litre, at £7 and £10 respectively instead of £39 and £49. There is also a kitchen composter which converts all food waste. For £15 you receive two containers and a Bokashi Bran activator. The containers hold 18 litres and are used in turn, one to collect food waste and the other to process it, which takes about 14 days. Finally there is a Wormery, consisting of several trays stacked one on top of the other. The worms eat kitchen scraps and leave behind a nutritious compost. Wormeries are advertised as being great for kids (not sure if that means they turn kids into compost!).

The availability at reduced prices is for a limited quantity only, so get your orders in quickly. The best way online: [www.northants.getcomposting.com](http://www.northants.getcomposting.com), or you can call 0845 130 6090.

There is a standard £5 shipping charge per order.

## NEWS FROM ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

Remedial work to part of the floor of the church has now been completed. The floor timbers were known to be suffering from rot, but this seems to have advanced rapidly and it therefore became necessary for F King & Sons to get to work fairly quickly. The work

is likely to cost more than £10,000 and the PCC will have to take a loan to cover the repair costs. Maybe some village fund raising could be organised to help?

Recent tote winners are: Bob Salmons who won £222.50 in November, and Sarah Burch the same amount in December. In January success went to Liz Haycock whose winnings were £207.50.

And a note of forthcoming services:

- Holy Communion - Sunday  
28th February - 10.00am
- Mothering Sunday service -  
Sunday 4th March - 10.00am
- Holy Communion - Sunday  
28th March - 10.00am
- Holy Communion - Easter  
Sunday 4th April - 9.00am

A visit to the church by The Watling Singers was a very pleasant precursor to Christmas, when their leader, Ian Smith, and 16 choir members performed a concert of Christmas music. The programme was wide ranging from modern pieces to those whose origins have been lost in the mists of time. And, of course, this being a church social occasion, the welcoming wine and mince pies during the interval gave the audience a chance to chat with one another as well as the singers, all of whom are local and the majority having been with the choir for a good many years.

A special collection was made at the service on 31 January for the Haiti disaster appeal and £290 was given by parishioners.

### **SILVERTHORPE AQUATICS**

A little while ago we featured Mark Brereton's nursery in 'What our neighbours do for a living'. It's good to be able to add a corollary to the story, as Mark's success has meant a move to Greatworth to accommodate his ever-growing business. Apart from three large greenhouses he, with his wife Linda, his father and colleague Paul Ward, now serves a thriving online market. They are creating a website, [www.Silverthorpe.co.uk](http://www.Silverthorpe.co.uk), which goes live on 15<sup>th</sup> February.

### **GRAND PRIX**

The good news that the Formula 1 grand prix has returned to Silverstone has now been confirmed. The race will take place on 11<sup>th</sup> July. But the bonus, for race lovers and local businesses alike, is that the Moto grand prix, brought to Silverstone to replace the Formula 1 circus, is also to be retained. The bikes gather for their race on 20<sup>th</sup> June.

### **WINTER VISITORS**

Fieldfares and redwings are regular winter visitors from Scandinavia to the village but this year they have stayed longer than usual. Both members of the thrush family, the redwings are the

smallest of the species and this year have been tempted to look for food in gardens rather than staying in the open fields where they normally roam. Eric Malcomson spotted one close to this home eating the snow-covered sloes in the hedgerow.

And a welcome visitor to Dave Cunningham's garden was a great spotted woodpecker, spectacular for its black and white colouring and bright red markings. What a time for his camera to run out of battery.

### **FILM ABTHORPE**

In mid-November the showing of *Cinema Paradiso* was not as popular as some other evenings had been; possibly the sub-titles of this Italian film were not so enticing. However, those put off missed a wonderful, tender film.

The latest offering, *The Reader*, probably could not have been described as 'enjoyable', but was certainly thought-provoking, and attracted a large turn-out. The accompanying short of a group of children visiting London in the 1950s took many back to their young days: the cut-glass accent on the commentary had a value all its own.

The general consensus was that a more light-hearted choice was needed for the next one, so *Passport to Pimlico* has been selected for Tuesday 23 February - 7.30pm at the Old School. It is one of the famous Ealing



comedies made in 1949 about a community in central London which declares itself independent from the rest of the UK and its laws, taxes and post-war restrictions.

### **ANYONE FOR BADMINTON?**

There is a determined drive by Badminton England to increase participation locally. To that end, Ed Reeves, the Badminton Development Officer, has arranged several opportunities to play. (There is already a successful youth programme which has about 70 youngsters playing.)

A new coaching session is starting on 10<sup>th</sup> February for 10 weeks, 10am to noon at Towcester Leisure Centre. There is no need to book; turn up and play.

Already started are 'pay and play sessions' (no booking required) at both Towcester and Brackley where an instructor is available to give advice and guidance but no structured coaching. These are more of an opportunity to play badminton, meet new people and have fun. Towcester is Thursdays for adults (7-9pm) and Sunday for families from 9am to 10.45; Brackley Tuesday for adults (7-9pm) and again Sundays for families, 1-3pm; £4.50 a session or £3.50 if you hold a Leisure pass card. If you are interested in any of the above and want more information, do give Ed a call on 07921 289619 or email [EdReeves@badmintonengland.co.uk](mailto:EdReeves@badmintonengland.co.uk).

### **VILLAGE FUND NEWS**

At the AGM on 19 November there was a change of officers: June Willsher returns as Chairman, Tim Pope continues as Treasurer and Jan Miles as Secretary. Other members of the committee are Lynn Neasham, Fi Noble and Francesca Wright.

On 17 December 14 older residents were invited to lunch at the New Inn. June and Jan organised a traditional Christmas meal, assisted by Jan Vanson and Pam Watkins acting as willing waitresses.

The next event will be on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February with a return of the quiz and fish and chip supper. Early booking of your fish and chips is necessary so that the visiting van can bring the correct number. For that reason no late orders can be taken, but latecomers are welcome to join the quiz. Those who enjoyed the supper last year can testify to the superb quality.

Jan says that the Fund is reviewing its list of those who previously expressed a willingness to help out at events and will be contacting them shortly. Anyone else who would like to become involved, please contact Jan on 857427.

The good news for those who enjoyed the visit of Cameo Opera last year is that they have agreed to perform again in the village in November.

**APPEAL FOR WITNESSES**

During one night over the weekend of 15/16 January, damage was caused to Mary Final's car, a white Suzuki Vitara, when parked outside her house in Stanhill Row. The police are appealing for any witnesses, so if you know anything please contact them on 03000 111 222.

**TELEPHONE KIOSK**

The planned painting and renovation of the phone box on the Green will be getting under way when the weather improves sufficiently, but the use to which it is should be put is still under discussion.

**ABbA**

There was a good attendance at the AGM held in the pub on 12<sup>th</sup> January. Eric Malcomson reported on the developments over the last year, which mainly ensured that the equipment continued to perform and to eliminate the disruptions which occur from time to time. A lot has been learnt about these problems but efforts will continue to improve reliability.

Dave Cunningham reported on the financial position. With little income in the past year, the funds available have decreased to the minimum necessary and therefore it was proposed to re-introduce charges, at the rate of £60 per year. This still compares very favourably with alternatives. After some discussion the meeting accepted this. Members agreed to pay £60 per year per household from 1st March. The reserve fund would continue to be used to improve the equipment in use.

ABbA has been in operation now for seven years and is still being run by those who set it up. An appeal was made for new blood to help with the operation.

After the meeting closed those present were able to discuss their problems informally, helped by the excellent food put on by Andrew, the chef at the pub. Maybe that was the reason for the large turnout.



One idea found by Louise Gough came from Westbury-sub-Mendip who similarly have bought their box for £1 from BT and turned it into the country's smallest lending library. The stock of 100 books is provided by villagers who swap ones they have read for those they have not. It's turned a piece of street furniture into a community service in constant use

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

There is still nothing further to report on the retrospective planning application for the caravans on Mini Farm; it is still being considered.

Willow Tree Cottage, next to the pub car park, has applied for permission to add an extension to which the Parish Council had no objections.

## **COUNCIL OFFICE MOVE?**

A recent decision which will hit us all was made by South Northamptonshire Councillors who voted in a closed session in January to relocate their offices to the middle of Towcester to be part of the Moat Lane regeneration area. One could argue that their current purpose-built offices with plenty of parking is, on the face of it, a better site. The predicted energy savings are suggested as £200,000 a year (what is their total energy bill?!), but no mention is made of the costs of making such a move and constructing the complex which will include a public conference centre, Registrar's office, library, office space, and access to Northamptonshire County Council and other services.

Recognising that there is some public disquiet about this decision, a public meeting has been arranged for 15<sup>th</sup> February at the Town Hall from 7.00 to 9.00pm.

The District Councillor for our Washington Ward, Ashley Warren, is always invited to the Annual Parish Meeting. It will be a good opportunity to quiz him further on the rationale behind this decision. In the meantime views can be expressed to him via email: [ashley@bellplantation.co.uk](mailto:ashley@bellplantation.co.uk).

## **WANT TO BE SPECIAL?**

If so, becoming a Volunteer Police Officer (Special) with Northamptonshire Police might be just the answer. Special Constables are valuable members of the policing family. They have the same powers as regular officers and get involved in all aspects of police work, in particular working alongside regular officers and PCSOs as part of our Safer Community Teams. So, if you're looking for a new challenge or perhaps want to give something back to your community,

you could be exactly the person Northamptonshire is looking for. If you are over 18, able to volunteer for a minimum of four hours per week, and would like to find out more about becoming a Special, contact Lizzi Betts on 03000 111 222 ext 2098 or e-mail [recruitment@northants.police.uk](mailto:recruitment@northants.police.uk)

### **MORE MEMORIES OF ABTHORPE PAST**

John Riches has recently been contacted by Mr Brian Holloway of Cogenhoe with recollections, stirred by John's mention in his column of pints of Hooky at The New Inn. In about 1954, Brian and a friend used to travel by United Counties bus number 344 to Wappenham. On their return journey they caught Walt Lawrence's Bedford OB coach as the UC bus only travelled as far as Abthorpe where it turned in the former pub, the Stocking Frame. Two years later Brian started work for Northampton Transport only to discover that one of his colleagues was Pat Billing who lived at the Stocking Frame, although by that time it had closed as a pub. Brian was later a guest at Pat's wedding when their transport was not one of 'Nuttie' Basford's lovely Albions, but a coach from a family friend called Jack Jeffs who had recently started in business on his own and brought along his Bedford coach. It's good to know that Jeffs Coaches is still going strong.



### **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE CONSORTIUM**

Just in case there aren't enough quangos and committees, along comes another one: the Northamptonshire Infrastructure Consortium, aiming to 'improve, develop and deliver high-quality services for frontline organisations in Northamptonshire'. Its remit is to build a strong, highly-skilled and resourced third sector and it has been looking for representatives from this area to serve on a number of advisory panels. Although the closing date for applications has passed, if you work for a voluntary or charity organisation undoubtedly the NIC would like to hear from you: 01604 637522; [www.niconsortium.org.uk](http://www.niconsortium.org.uk).

## HONOURS WELL-DERIVED

Audrey Dancer and her daughter-in-law Janet were recently surprised but delighted to receive a letter from the National Chairman of the Royal British Legion Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszely awarding them the Legion's collectors' medal. Audrey has been carrying out house collections in Abthorpe for an astonishing 50 years, whilst Janet has been collecting for 30 years.



The presentation was made to Audrey and Janet at the Christmas dinner of the Wappenham & District branch, a very well-deserved honour.

## PEOPLE

We would like to extend our condolences to the family of Enid Lawrence who was tragically killed at the crossroads in November: her husband Peter and children David, Michael and Ruth, and three grandchildren, Imogen, Bethany & Timothy. Mrs Lawrence lived in Slapton and had celebrated her golden wedding anniversary only days before the accident. Her family has local roots going back centuries and to this day they remain well respected in the area, having been at the centre of Chapel life in Wappenham and Slapton.

Barbara (Bet) Rush from Brackley Lane was seriously injured in the same accident, but such is her inspiring spirit she has made an amazing recovery and is now at Turn Furlong Specialist Centre in Kingsthorpe, rapidly bouncing back in her inimitable way. The photograph of Bet was taken on 15<sup>th</sup> January, an astonishing recovery by anyone's standards. *Late good news: Bet is due home about 8<sup>th</sup> February.*



The village has lost too many of its older members lately, the most recent being Tony Dancer, Elsie Kelcher and John Bunting.

Mr Dancer died at the age of 83, and his funeral at St John the Baptist was attended by a large congregation of family and friends who had braved the freezing temperatures to pay their respects. He was born at Overstone in 1926 the only boy in a family of 7 children. His six sisters by all accounts took great care of him! From his childhood Tony's ambition was to be a lorry driver, interrupted by military service with the Highland Light Infantry.

After service in Singapore Tony returned to civilian life and passed a Public Service Vehicle licence test and drove for Walt Lawrence's company in Wappenham. He later worked for Jeffs Coaches of Helmdon and had the pleasure of driving children from Evenley Hall children's home near Brackley to a reception at Buckingham Palace. Later, Tony became a driver with Northampton Transport, the bus company previously operated by the Borough Council.



For Tony his family was all important, especially his wife Audrey and children David and Rosemary. But it was as a drummer that he became well known in the locality when he joined forces with Tony Allen on the organ to form a group called *The Two Tonys* that Audrey recalled played at many local gigs and pubs.

Mrs Elsie Kelcher, who lived in Abthorpe all her life, died recently at the age of 84. Elsie, the youngest of the four Kendall children, was born in a cottage that formerly stood at the bottom end of Main Street in a part of the village that has been abandoned. Shortly after her birth the family moved to the blacksmith's shop on the village green (now Forge Cottage). She spent her childhood there and attended Abthorpe village school, transferring at eleven to Silverstone secondary school. On leaving school at the age of 14 she became an assistant at Woolworths in Northampton. Come sun or rain Elsie would cycle into Towcester to catch the bus and sometimes arrived at work soaked through. When the Second World War

began Elsie was employed at a clothing factory that set up business in Abthorpe after being bombed out of London. She not only helped to manufacture ladies' dresses but military clothing for the troops. Later in the war she transferred to Groom and Tattersalls foundry and engineering works close to Towcester railway station sited where Homebase stands today. It was very heavy work and her sister Rene recalls that Elsie hated every minute of it. When the war ended Truform took over Abthorpe's factory so Elsie started work there helping to make shoes.



In 1948 she married Blakesley man Eric Kelcher. They had a son, Stewart, and Elsie was content to remain a proud housewife until Stewart grew up. Later she worked for Lotus Shoes in Towcester. She strived tirelessly for our parish church. Together with her friend Kath Evans she organised a cake stall for many years at both the summer fete and the Christmas bazaar. Later with sister Rene she devoted huge amounts of her spare time to making items for a needlework stall that raised a large amount of money to repair and refurbish the church roof.

Elsie was a very quiet and modest lady - a lovely person who is sorely missed.

Mr John Bunting died at the age of 84. John was born in Greens Norton where he attended the village school. On leaving school he joined the family's bakery business, A A Bunting, whose shop and bake house was located close to the current butcher's shop. After service in the army during the second world war he returned to Greens Norton to work in the bakery. Unfortunately this affected his health and he was forced to cease baking and obtained a succession of jobs.

John married Margaret in Abthorpe church in 1961 and lived in Brackley Lane where he remained until his death. John is remembered with affection and many local people recall his great prowess as a cook.

And our church saw yet another funeral recently: that of Eryl Sinclair (née Clarke). Her parents were married in Abthorpe church and she was baptised here in 1933. She lived in Hillview. Eryl had travelled quite a lot, living in South Africa for a time. She lately lived in Wales.

We also have an number of new residents to welcome to the village.

Marie Money and Michael Bodily have moved into 30 Wappenham Road (Eileen Vielvoye's house) with their dog, Monty. Marie and Michael were previously in Greens Norton, and have a lifetime's association with the area; indeed, Michael's surname will be familiar to many. When not pursuing his work as a carpenter, Michael is an enthusiastic fisherman. Marie has spread her wings from catering management at the Council to having her own catering van.

Helen and Steve Jones have arrived at Stable Cottage from Bletchley, where Helen still works for the Scripture Union. They were keen to find a rural life to enjoy more walking and the peace of the countryside. Steve's trade is decorating which is centred mostly on Milton Keynes, but no doubt he could be persuaded to work locally if required.

No.26 Wappenham Road is one of the new houses recently sold and has become home to Rebecca and Jamie Lee. They also are seeking a more rural place to live having moved from Collingtree near Northampton. Jamie works as an Account Manager for Belkin, a name familiar to many computer users, while Rebecca travels to Northampton.

And another 'new arrival' is Josh Lambert, born to Andrea and Graham of Forge Cottage on 23 November, at a healthy 7lb 5oz. In Andrea's words: "So far he's a dream; we're hoping that continues 😊".



## CRIMINAL POTENTIAL

It's fortunate we don't live in London where it's easy for the unsuspecting to become unwitting criminals. If you want to dust off your doormat after 8am there's a potential £200 fine under the 1839 Metropolitan Police Act. And you'd be caught under the same act, but with a £500 fine, if you carry a plank across a pavement (beware the Ikea flat pack).

Woe betide anyone going to a fancy dress party dressed as a sailor; the Seamen's and Soldiers' False Characters Act of 1906 could make it an expensive evening with a £500 fine. Apart from only being able to pick up fares when at a standstill, London cabbies cannot take two consecutive days off 'without just cause' (London Hackney Carriages Acts 1843 and 1853). How pleasant to live in Abthorpe.

## ROADSIDE ART

*I'm not loving it*



*Not just a green plastic bag but an M & S green plastic bag*



*Every little doesn't help*



## EVENTS

*Tuesday 9 February*

Charity Quiz at the New Inn, 8.00pm

*Monday 15 February*

SNC public meeting, Towcester Town Hall, 7.00 - 9.00pm

*Tuesday 23 February*

Film Abthorpe presents Passport to Pimlico at the Old School, 7.30pm

*Saturday 27 February*

Quiz and fish & chip supper, the Old School

*Sunday 28 February*

Holy Communion at 10.00am

*Monday 8 March*

Parish Council meeting, the Old School, 7.45pm

*Sunday 14 March*

Mothering Sunday service, 10.00am

*Sunday 28 March*

Holy Communion, 10.00am

*Sunday 14 April*

Easter Sunday Holy Communion at 9.00am

*Monday 19 April*

Parish Council meeting, the Old School, 7.45pm

*Monday 17 May*

Annual Parish Meeting, the Old School, 7.45pm

*Monday 24 May*

Parish Council AGM, the Old School, 7.45pm

*Sunday 20 June*

British Moto Grand Prix, Silverstone

*Sunday 11 July*

British Formula 1 Grand Prix, Silverstone