



News from Abthorpe

June 2019

It's difficult to believe that *Abtalk* started in 2005, which means that I will have been producing it for 15 years come December. It had an ambitious start with four pages. We then warmed to the concept and the newsletter has steadily grown like Topsy over the intervening years. And what a pleasure it has been, meeting so many people in the village and being part of the community here. No wonder we got carried away with our own enthusiasm and ended up with a publication which at times topped 28 pages.

Keith Fenwick has been a great help with writing some pieces and ensuring the pictures print as well as possible. Then two years ago Alison Robbins joined us to bring her writing skills and enthusiasm to make it even bigger and better. Latterly Clive Estall has joined the team.

I have now decided that it's time to hand over the reins. It's a great opportunity for a new approach, which is never a bad thing after so many years. With that in mind we are looking for someone (or more than one) to

take over and make *Abtalk* their own, with great support from the existing editors.

If this stirs your interest just a little, do give me a call so that we can have a chat. I have been told that the newsletter is enjoyed by quite a number of people so it would be a shame if it had to come to an end.

Jill Tolson
01327 857320

PARISH COUNCIL

Keith Fenwick

The Parish Annual Meeting on 20th May was not well attended but it did hear reports from various village organisations. Marna Perrigo provided a summary of activities over the last year. The loss of the bus service was initially expected to cause hardship but in the event those who relied on it have made alternative arrangements.

Renovation of the church wall and adjacent pathways has taken place, and repairs to some damaged stones and degraded mortar are still to be done. Further work will be undertaken this year on other footpaths in the village, particularly

from the Green to School Lane and on Wappenham Road. The bench on the Green, gifted to Abthorpe in 2003, has also been refurbished, and there are plans to repaint the telephone box. All this work is being undertaken from the benefits of the Solar Farm grant.

The precept for the current year is lower than last year but finances remain healthy, as shown by the detailed accounts presented to the meeting.

Most of the other reports to the meeting are covered elsewhere in *Abtalk*. Our path warden, David Robbins, reported that maintenance of stiles continues to be his main task. He holds spare footboards for the stiles.

The previous week the Parish Council held its AGM. Marna Perrigo stepped down from the chairmanship and resigned as a member of the Council. This has created a vacancy which has been advertised. Merrilyn Berry took over as chairman but has since decided to step down from the council. A new chairman will be elected at the meeting on 1st July.

Editorial Team:

<i>Jill Tolson</i>	<i>jill.tolson@abthorpe.net; 857320</i>
<i>Keith Fenwick</i>	<i>keith.fenwick@abthorpe.net; 857083</i>
<i>Alison Robbins</i>	<i>robbins@abthorpe.net; 857795</i>
<i>Clive Estall</i>	<i>greenman955@yahoo.co.uk; 07810 483761</i>

PARKING

It was very remiss of the people who built houses in the village in earlier centuries not to foresee the advent of the car and build garages for them. Well, now we couldn't live here without them, especially since buses seem to have disappeared.

So, we're stuck with the situation we've inherited, and all we can do is be as considerate as possible about where we park, making sure people can walk by on the pavement and keeping clear sight lines at corners and junctions. Or, course, we could go back to horses and bicycles.....

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

You may recall the New Inn was entered for the Rural Oscars run by Countryside Alliance. Well, our pub is the regional winner for the Midlands and now goes on to compete in the finals. The judges' comments on awarding the New Inn this accolade were spot on: "Rob and his staff at the New Inn always go the extra mile in making this pub the hub of this rural community, from fundraising and community events to running customers home if they inadvertently have had too good a time. Their principles are quite clear - a friendly welcome with great food and drink ensure their customers leave happy and return time after time."

The finalists now go on to a reception in the House of Lords on 19th June. So Rob, Lyn, Sam, Hannah, Stuart and Josh will be dressed in their finest, enjoying a day out. The very best of luck to them, and we'll hope for some good pictures in the next issue.

The ever-popular quiz, held on the last Sunday of the month, has again been raising astonishing sums for charity – the prerogative of the winning team is to choose the charity which receives the money raised. On 24th February Four Counties sent £210 to Riding for the Disabled. The following month's quiz, held on 24th March to avoid mother's day, was won by Then There Were Three who chose the Air Ambulance to receive the £167 from the evening. In April, the Bar Flies overcame all opposition sending £152 to Macmillan Cancer Research. And to bring us up to date, Tows on Tour were again successful on 2nd June (delayed so there was no clash with a great May Bank Holiday shindig and BBQ) selecting Guide Dogs for the Blind to receive £155 from the night. If you fancy a light-hearted social evening come and join the quizzing on 30th June.

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

The new extension, comprising ladies' and disabled toilets and an enlarged dining space, is well under way and due to open in a couple of weeks or so – but where will the dartboard end up? The next phase, enlarging the kitchen, can then start.

In the meantime, Steve has introduced the summer menu which includes a good selection of fresh fish, collected direct from Billingsgate. And if summer ever arrives, watch out for the BBQ springing into life.

Thinking of summer, AbFab is about to hit the New Inn. On 20th July there will be a festival of music from a number of bands and a pig roast. Fun for all the family.

REMEMBERING JOYCE RICHES

John Riches, with his children Jane and David, invite you to a brief Memorial Service at Abthorpe Church on Saturday 6th July at 10.00am when Joyce Riches' ashes will be placed in the Garden of Remembrance.

You are also invited to 12 Wappenham Road immediately after the service for a cuppa. Please let John know if you are able to attend so that he can have enough service sheets printed and crockery available. Dress is informal.

01327 857703

john.riches@abthorpe.net

WHAT OUR NEIGHBOURS DO FOR A LIVING

As part of our occasional series looking at the unusual ways in which some of our neighbours keep the wolf from the door, Niki Williams has shared her experiences of driving an HGV truck. Lady lorry drivers are still an exceptional sight on the roads but Niki started 26 years ago.

Having left a comfortable life in South Africa, Niki arrived in England as a teenager. Life took its course and once her children were at school she was not enthusiastic about returning to secretarial work. As she enjoyed driving her husband's 7.5 ton van she embarked on HGV training through a government back-to-work scheme then in operation. She passed first time, and was runner up as trainee of the year.

Her first job with Express Tyres, delivering tyres for Landrover was an eye-opening introduction to how she would be treated by some of the male drivers. She was always given the oldest truck to drive and had to work hard to prove to her male colleagues that she was more than capable of doing the job. Niki really enjoyed driving and went on to deliver for Tesco for 16 years where she gained her Master Driver's certificate, a rarity among drivers which can be likened to Advanced Driving for HGVs. Of course being



Niki with Charlotte Rebecca

a woman in a man's world means proving yourself every day, but she won over (most of) her colleagues and now they are friends for life.

Tesco transferred all their drivers to Stobarts, a company she enjoyed working for even though she didn't initially get one of their better trucks. However, going the extra mile on a snowy urgent delivery, she was offered Charlotte Rebecca to drive, the first Tesco driver to be offered a Stobart truck. (As is well known, Stobart name all their trucks.)

But her time with Stobarts was not to last as the Tesco distribution centre closed and she went on to

agency working, among others delivering for John Lewis – "a lovely company to work for", and driving container trucks. But agency work is fickle, being very busy all year but drying up over the Christmas and new year period, which prompted a move to Maritime. Still unusual in being a female truck driver, Niki was looked after very well by her male colleagues.

In a nutshell, the legal limitations on driving are 4½ hours driving then a 45-minute break before another 4½ hours, an extra hour driving being permitted twice a week, with a total of 15 hours a day (including offloading and non-driving) 3

times a week and 13 hours twice a week, all monitored by an unalterable digital tachograph. There is flexibility within the system which, if exercised by employers, can mean little personal time left in a week. With a long drive to work at Maritime the hours were arduous which prompted a move to Faccenda, now called Avara Foods following a joint venture with Cargill's, making it the newest poultry company in the UK.

Niki has been night driving most of her working life, and with Avara it is no different. But the peace of the countryside at night as she visits



Niki with her cargo of chickens

farms as far afield as Gloucestershire and Wales makes for very pretty routes. Manoeuvring a 42 tonne, 4-wheel drive truck loaded with 8,000 birds down increasingly narrow country lanes can be a challenge but one that Niki relishes. The birds are free range in barns, caught by a team of catchers and put in crates shortly before she arrives. She is then responsible for the welfare of the birds in her care and it's clear that she feels that obligation, chatting to them and double and triple checking that they are comfortable! Rather than take her rest periods in a lay-by, these are timed to coincide with her arrival

at a farm. Indeed she is praised by the vets at the processing plant in Brackley for the calm condition in which they arrive.

Each night Niki will make two or three journeys from farm to processing plant, generally one long journey and one or two short, eschewing satnav (which is not fitted to trucks) in favour of her personal map notes.

So, although driving modern trucks is not the strenuous occupation of years gone by, there is still physical work moving crates and climbing into the trailer to keep her very fit. That's why a pint of St Miguel in the New Inn serves her well when she and her partner, Kenny, also an Avara driver, are on their rest days.

ABMAIL

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Email abmail@abthorpe.net to join

TOVE VALLEY BROADBAND

Keith Fenwick

Rather than a simple update on our current service, I thought it would be interesting to describe some of the work involved. No two days are alike. Each day there is a need to check for any reports of problems on our ticketing system. We also have a monitoring programme which reports faults; that is checked and any problems dealt with. This could involve a simple configuration change which can be implemented from the comfort of my home but it is often necessary to contact a member and may involve a visit. Generally the volunteers in other villages can resolve these cases but we have several members who are in remote locations which I have to visit.

Then there are equipment failures. As an example, I was in York a few weeks ago when messages came through that one of our transmitters in Slapton had failed. Nobody was available to do anything immediately but later in the day the transmitter mysteriously came back on line and then failed a second time. What had happened was that electrical work was taking place but when the power was restored the transmitter worked for a few minutes and then failed completely. So replacement was the only solution. Fortunately we hold a spare so that was programmed and the following day a group was

gathered and off we set to collect ladders from the store. But that was the first day the road to Slapton was closed because of a burst pipe, so back through Abthorpe and round the long way. Get the ladders and then on to the fault location. Erect them and then undo the faulty unit. It came off easily but several attempts were needed to get the replacement to fit in its slots. It took an hour and a half but service was restored. There were other problems to deal with that day but eventually we were able to get back home and do some more interesting things.

At the AGM on 26th February the scale of ABbA's activities was spelled out, with 658 members and now upwards of 4,000 devices connected at peak times. Additional capacity is now being explored, alongside the increasing installation of fibre. All the loans have been repaid and the financial state is looking good.

One important point to report was that Eric Malcomson, the chairman, is standing down from that role having served since the inception of the company in 2003. However, his skills and experience will not be lost as he plans to still be involved.

BLAKESLEY SHOW

This year, the 135th running of the Blakesley Show, is on Saturday 3rd August at Longwell, Maidford (NN12 8HH).

PEOPLE

Rachel Hulbert and James Lukaszewicz (or 'Luke' as he is known) were married recently in the village church. Rachel, the daughter of Mary and Mick Hulbert of Brackley Lane, was brought up in Abthorpe and is a member of a family that has a long historic connection to the parish.

Although the sun did not shine for them, it was a very happy occasion. The bride was traditionally a little late but looked radiant as her proud father, looking resplendent in a morning coat, walked his daughter down the aisle. The church looked at its very best bedecked with flowers from Mary and Mick's garden, stunningly arranged by Rachel's cousin Judith.



The packed church included many friends of Rachel and Luke – some from as far back as Rachel's time at Silverstone Primary School and Sponne: all still keeping in touch via Facebook. In addition, there were many mutual friends of the couple. Indeed, it was through mutual friends – twins John and Andy Collins, known to Rachel since primary school – that the couple first met

After the service the bride and groom were showered with confetti as they processed down the church path into their waiting limousine that took them to the wedding breakfast and evening reception at Silverstone Golf Club.

Keeping up with the theme of it being very much a family occasion, the wedding cake had been made and iced by Mick Josephs, partner of Rachel's brother Richard. Many hours of patient and delicate work went



into its production, particularly the flowers which were all made by hand. The result, as the photo shows, was quite stunning with the cornflowers and daisies perfectly matching Rachel's bouquet.

Rachel and Luke had a few days in Warkworth in Northumbria for the honeymoon where they enjoyed lovely weather.

(As an 'icing on the cake' aside, news has just come through that Luke has been given the medical all clear after his cancer diagnosis. Rachel and Luke, Mary and Mick cannot praise too highly the expertise of Leicester and

Northampton hospitals. They are also extremely grateful for the care shown by Luke's personal Macmillan nurse. Assigned by the hospital, she liaised with the hospitals, helped with all queries and kept Luke calm. As Mary says "Three cheers for the NHS - it still comes up trumps".)

A warm welcome to Jan and Robert Mawby who have moved to Ivycroft in Silver Street from Pattishall. They previously lived in Cornwall but came to this area after their grandson, Austin, was born. Cornwall is quite a journey from Northamptonshire and they concluded they wouldn't have too much opportunity to enjoy watching Austin grow up unless they came nearer. And with Jan and Robert, Ruby the cockapoo, two cats and a tortoise have also made the move to Abthorpe.

Jan works for a private dentist in Milton Keynes, while Robert specialises in antiques with Humberts the auctioneers, a subject which also provides him with an absorbing hobby.

Rachel and Alun Stevens who moved into the village a couple of years ago are thrilled to let us know of the safe arrival of their first baby: Elliott Peter Stevens. Elliott was born at 06.49 am on Saturday 23rd

February at Northampton General Hospital weighing 6lb 9oz.

Elliott proved himself to be a very considerate baby from the start by arriving only 2 days after his due date, with the birth itself proving to be textbook, relatively quick and without complication. However, the experience was somewhat more eventful than this suggests as on the night of Elliott's arrival, Northampton General Hospital declared a state of emergency and had to temporarily close due to a major power cut and generator failure. As Rachel, in the last stages of labour, arrived at the General with Alun in the early hours of that February morning, the hospital was in complete darkness, with the only light source provided by the midwife's phone!



We extend a warm welcome to Maisie and Ben Holland who moved into 8 Wappenham Road in February. Ben is a computer programmer who has just started a new job in Wolverton but he and Maisie were keen to live in a village and felt that Abthorpe fitted the bill very nicely. Maisie works from home and is employed as a medical writer, for example writing up the results of clinical trials. The other member of the family is their brown Bengal cat called Loki who is beginning to enjoy his new life in the country.

Both Ben and Maisie enjoy walking and cycling and Maisie, who is an enthusiastic amateur flautist, has recently joined a wind band in Milton Keynes. Ben has gardening in his blood as his grandfather was a plant breeder and he is very keen to start growing fruit and vegetables in their back garden, although, under some pressure, he has agreed that a small patio for sitting and relaxing is also to be incorporated into the garden design. Ben and Maisie are looking forward to joining in social activities in the village, and have already taken part in some of the monthly quizzes at the New Inn.

ART CLASSES

Paula Le Baigue has started Saturday morning art classes at the Old School. The first five sessions went so well that another five are planned from 22nd June to 24th August inclusive, from 10.00 to 12.00. Anyone wanting to join will be very welcome at any of them; you don't need to have done the first five as everyone is working at their own pace. Paula will get you started, with her usual enthusiasm and encouragement, whenever you join.

So popular are the sessions that a two-day event on oil painting will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday 23rd and 24th July, 10.00 – 3.00. This may well suit those who find the weekends more difficult.

You can get in touch with Paula on 07738 561341, paulalebaigue@googlemail.com. She has a Facebook page: Paula Le Baigue Artist, and website: paula-lebaigue.co.uk/

NEWS FROM THE OLD SCHOOL

The Management Committee of the Old School continues to plan social events to look forward to.

A coffee morning will be held at the home of Mary and Roger Brennan, The Bakehouse on the Green, from 10.30 to 12.30 on Saturday 29th June.

Then the GinFest makes a welcome return on 7th September. The committee is now in the full throes of planning for it and is in need of some old wooden crates (what do they have in mind, we wonder?). Also help on the day would be very much appreciated for putting up marquees. An extra gazebo or two would come in handy if anyone would lend one; this is during an English summer after all. Please email ginfest@abthorpe.net.

To ward off the onset of winter, a hearty Truckers' Breakfast and chat with neighbours is likely to happen in November.

Recent events have proved popular: the response to the quiz night in March was quite overwhelming, raising £1,035. Everybody had a great evening and there was even a little bit of dancing at the end to test out the new sound system.

The Bridge night in April was another success. A good number of people had attended the previous Bridge event last year and hadn't yet seen the renovated hall. Their reaction was one of delight, and a delight also for the committee as it raised £421.

The Bridge players are not the only ones to react positively to the hall. It is attracting a lot of attention and bookings are building up which will



A packed quiz night

ensure that the building can be maintained into the future. There are regular bookings for Pilates and Fitness. The Art workshops are very successful with another 5 weeks planned and a two day course. Email the old school or Paula for more information – see previous page.



All set up for bridge

SILVERSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL

It's interesting to see what the children at Silverstone Primary have been up to in a busy time. They celebrated World Book Day, dressing up as their favourite character, with Harry Potter being a popular choice. The Life Bus (it really is a bus) provides age-related activities for the children to learn about online safety and personal wellbeing – important lessons to learn.

It sounds as though Sports Week went well with the children being introduced to new activities such as Goal Ball and archery. And children from years 3 and 4 were invited to Sponne School which hosted a Mini Red Tennis Tournament for local primary schools.

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE – PLUS SOME BITS IN BETWEEN *(OTHERWISE KNOWN AS CHURCH NEWS)*

Tea & Piece 2019

We opened this year's round of Tea & Piece events in February with 'Tea & Pancakes' in the Old School to celebrate Shrove Tuesday. Eric Malcomson tossed with panache while the ladies flipped rather more demurely and a good turn-out of villagers (but where were the children?) sampled their wares. Since then we have held 2 or 3 more of these monthly Sunday afternoons in church, and will continue through to the autumn. We have a group of about 15 or 20 'regulars' who enjoy the chance to meet up informally and there is always a friendly buzz of conversation. Encouragingly, at last month's event there were a number of newcomers and the average age of the attendees was definitely lower than normal, helped by a visit from 3 month old Elliott (see *People*), who brought his parents along too, as well as two other youngsters who dropped by on their bikes and took their cake away with them. We hope this pattern of villagers from a broader section of the community coming along will be repeated in our forthcoming Tea & Piece events on July 21st, 18th August, 15th September and 20th October. All are welcome – you don't have to be a church-goer!

Church/Churchyard Tidy Up

On a Saturday morning in mid April a group of villagers met to give the church and churchyard a good spring clean. The men mostly chose to work outside leaving the 'housework' inside to the ladies – nothing new there. Many hands did indeed make light work and in the space of just two hours paths had been swept, winter debris cleared away, the grass cut, 3 car

loads of greenery carried off to the tip, and the freshly swept and polished church interior gleamed and sparkled. Coffee and hot cross buns provided a welcome mid-morning break. Grateful thanks to all volunteers.

Children's Easter Activity Afternoon

On the afternoon of Maundy Thursday a group of a dozen or more children from our neighbouring parishes met together in the Old School for a variety of activities. Peter Coles (our kindly Silverstone farmer) read a delightful version of the Easter story before the children were free to visit various 'stations' to make Easter hats, write a prayer, make chocolate nests, and play games. Hot cross buns were consumed with enthusiasm before the children walked up to the church, bedecked in their festive headwear, and hung their prayers around the pulpit for others to read. It was a very special afternoon and the maturity and behaviour of the children was a joy to see.



*3 year old
Lily proudly
wears her
Easter hat*

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

This was held on the Tuesday after Easter. The Reverend Paul thanked Richard Tomalin for all he has done as he is retiring after 20 years of being on the PCC. For a number of years Richard held the post of Treasurer, but this was followed by 13 years as Church Warden - indeed the sole church warden for the past five years. Richard was presented with garden vouchers so that he and Carolynn can enjoy adding yet more plants to their lovely garden. Life without Richard at the helm is going to be tough. We understand that people may not feel able to commit themselves to becoming full members of the PCC, but there are many other opportunities where help and support will not just be welcome, but indeed will be vital if our beautiful church is to remain open.

Church Tote

A question was asked from the floor about how much money 'The Church' has. The Reverend Paul agreed that the Church Commissioners do indeed

own a lot of property and land – consider the prime site that our own church in Abthorpe stands on. However, this does not translate into pots of gold to be handed out to PCCs! Nothing is further from the truth. Every penny that is spent in or on our church and services is raised by the people of Abthorpe. This being the case, we are immeasurably grateful to all Abthorpe residents who belong to the Tote. The cost is just £5 a month with half of the sum going as prize money (approximately £200) to the winner and the other half to the church. In February the lucky prize-winner was Rona Cambray (again – how does she do it!), in March, Rob and Barbara Smith's numbers came up trumps, in April luck was with Julia Ford-Cordes and in May, Clive and Hilary Estall were the winners. The money received by the church is ring-fenced solely for maintaining the fabric of the building.

Church Services

There was a Benefice Confirmation service on Sunday 9th June in Paulerspury led by our Bishop from Peterborough, Bishop Donald. This was why there was no service in Abthorpe that day. There were a good number of candidates which made for a very uplifting occasion. Our next service in Abthorpe will be our Patronal Festival on Sunday 30th June at 10.00am. This will be a Benefice service and it is always special to have our friends from the neighbouring parishes filling the pews. There is just one service in July (21st at 9.15am), one in August (11th at 11.00am) and one in September (15th at 10.00am).

Weddings and Baptisms

A baptism with a slight difference took place on the Saturday after Easter. Phil and Tricia Holmes lived in Brackley Lane for nearly 40 years until their recent move to Towcester. Their daughter Natalie lives in Valencia with her partner Manolo and two boys, Marcos and Lucas. Marcos was baptised in our church four years ago so now it was the turn of Lucas. As the Reverend Paul led the service Natalie did a simultaneous translation into Spanish for the



The Salvador Holmes family – Manolo, Claudia, Marcos, Natalie and Lucas

benefit of Manolo and step-daughter Claudia, although when it came to saying the Lord's Prayer together the Spanish version mingled with the English.

A bit like the irregular appearance of London buses, having had no wedding in our church for some while, this summer we have three. The first took place on May 18th when Mary and Mick Hulbert's daughter, Rachel, married her long term partner James Lukaszewicz (see *People*). On August 3rd, another former Abthorpe girl Jessica Townsend ties the knot, and a fortnight later Tim and Helen Pope's son Jeremy will be marrying fiancée Harriet. We send all three couples our very best wishes.

DIARY

Friday and Saturday, 28 and 29 June

Wappenham Beer Festival

Saturday 29 June

Coffee morning, The Bakehouse, The Green, 10.30 - 12

Sunday 30 June

Patronal Festival, St John the Baptist, 10.00

Charity Quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

Monday 1 July

Parish Council Meeting, Old School, 7.45

Saturday 6 July

Safari Supper, village-wide

Saturday 20 July

AbFab summer festival, the New Inn

Sunday 21 July

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

Monday 12 August

Parish Council Meeting, Old School, 7.45

Sunday 18 August

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

Saturday 7 September

GinFest on the Green

Sunday 15 September

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