

# WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION OF ABTALK: OUR 'LOCKDOWN' ISSUE

This issue is inevitably rather different in content from usual but we hope you will enjoy reading it. We are grateful for the various contributions provided by a large number of villagers – some photographic, some written, some amusing, some thoughtful. We are very much aware that, whilst lockdown provided many of us with the opportunity to enjoy a less frenetic lifestyle in placid surroundings and wonderful weather, others may have felt anxious, isolated or unsettled. Equally, many of you have had to endure the frustrations and limitations of working from home or being home-schooled and others face uncertainty in terms of future employment and financial security. Some of you have been key workers and have worked long hours in unfamiliar circumstances. We dedicate this issue to all of these people. Every one of you deserves our thanks and our Thursday evening applause was not just for the heroes of the NHS but for all of you as well.



*News from  
Abthorpe  
June 2020*

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Since the last edition of ABTALK so much has changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Local elections were postponed until next year. Parish Council meetings have been held remotely via the Zoom platform. Many volunteers within the village have come forward to help vulnerable people obtain their groceries and/or prescriptions. The precept remains unchanged at £4000; this is the money we all pay for the Parish Council via our Council Tax.

Zoom meetings have been held instead of the usual meetings, but it was necessary to cancel the Annual village meeting. The usual reports from organisations associated with Abthorpe have been collected and are available to view on the village website. Thank you to all those who contributed with their reports.

The Parish Council AGM was held last month. The Councillors remain the same, with the only change seeing Keith Fenwick stepping down from the position of Vice Chairman to be replaced by Fi Noble. The Council at this meeting re-adopted the usual code of conduct and Abthorpe constitution as well as other documents concerned with the running of the Parish Council.

Village tidiness, speed through the village, and Neighbourhood Watch remain important issues for the Council. The wall around the churchyard was re-pointed in late May. The Council has agreed to continue the Village Green project, keeping the paths and surrounds tidy and weed free. This is paid for from our share of the Solar Farm money which has made a big difference to what the Parish Council can afford to do. Abthorpe now has speed signs at each end of the village which should help in reducing the speed of those driving through the village.

There is a waterlogged area on the Green in front of The Old Bakehouse. This has been present for some time and is clearly not going away, despite the recent dry spell. We have asked Anglian Water to investigate and are awaiting their report. If this is nothing to do with Anglian Water then it is likely there is a blockage in the old spring-fed village water supply which would need investigating.

**In the meantime please be very careful around this area.**

## 500 Words

As an introduction to the main theme of this issue, here is an article by Hilary Estall (Business Continuity and Risk Consultant and Abthorpe resident) written in February 2020 when the world looked very different and we were just waking up to what might be to come:

"I may be over 13 years of age but here is my own entry into this year's BBC 500 Words competition...

"This year's bleak mid-winter is more "bleak" than "winter". Never ending wind and rain with the on-trend naming of storms we are now so used to. When will we see Storm Esmeralda, for I believe the next one will be named after a female's name beginning with E? I look out of my window as the wind cuts through my 100 year old pine tree and I anxiously await its demise, most likely falling directly onto my house. I shut the curtains, turn on the TV and lose my thoughts in an episode of Death in Paradise. Oh, the sunshine and turquoise sea! For a moment, I am transported across the world to paradise and then I remember, this make-believe island has to be one of the most murderous tropical destinations in the world. My thoughts return to matters closer to home.

"We're leaving the EU and have now entered the trade deal war zone. I've read that European cheeses may be impacted. Apparently the UK's biggest cheese import is Irish Cheddar.

On top of that, wine is Britain's most valuable food import at £2bn a year. There goes my cheese and wine parties up in smoke...or perhaps not. We're an enterprising and artisan lot in Great Britain and already produce fine, quality products, including cheese and wine, so perhaps my version of Abigail's Party is safe for another year. Hoorah for British producers and their entrepreneurial spirit! As for me, the shed is filled with toilet rolls, so I'm not bothered. Bring it on!

"There's a virus going round. That's on top of seasonal flu. It's a balancing act. Do I pop to the local shop or risk the supermarket? Can I hold my breath for the entire supermarket sweep? I've been practising but it's not looking good. I reckon I'd get past the fruit and veg section and up to the books and magazine shelves before expiring. Well, at least I'd have something to read and a carrot to gnaw on... but we're being told not to worry, yet, so I'll continue as normal and just practise my shallow breathing technique in the shower. It could be worse, I could have gone on a cruise...

"Cyber security is on my mind. According to a recent survey (of 307 participants), many organisations don't verify their security is working correctly (35%) and less than half (49%) of organisations practise breach responses. Sadly, that doesn't

surprise me. And what of home users? Don't get me started.

"So, in summary, much as I dream of warm sunshine on my pale wintry body and hope for uninterrupted supplies of cheese and wine, well stocked cupboards and good health, I can relax in the knowledge that my risk assessment is up to date, supply chain verified, the cheese and wine party is scheduled and I won't run short of toilet rolls any time soon.

"Chin chin!"

### **ABTHORPE'S ANSWER TO YEHUDI MENUHIN?**

Louise and David Gough shared this news with us:

"We thought you might be interested to know that our daughter Kat, who is

currently studying Philosophy at Oxford Brookes, is also an accomplished violinist having benefited from the excellent music education facilities provided in Northamptonshire and at our local music centre in Towcester when she was younger.

She has been self-isolating in her flat in Oxford but made good use of her time by recording a violin part for a project by the TV and film composer Ben Morales Frost, called The Lockdown Orchestra, consisting of 150 musicians from all over the world. The piece was specially composed by him to lift the spirits, and can be seen at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akcok8TIK5c>





*Jim and Marion Hyde's Rockery*

## **GARDEN PROJECTS**

Above all else the overwhelming response amongst Abthorpe residents to the enforced lockdown has been "oh well, let's take the opportunity to work on the garden." The fruits of their labours can be seen in the middle pages of this issue, although photographs alone do not really do justice to their efforts, capturing just a snapshot of one aspect of each garden and, of course, not able to portray the sounds and smells of the flowers and insects and birds which form such an integral part of any garden. All of the gardens represented would have been on

show on our Open Gardens afternoon on June 28th – just one of the many casualties of the pandemic. (There is still a hope that some form of socially distanced Open Gardens may be able to take place if government guidance allows, so keep an eye out for further information).

Some residents tackled long-overdue garden projects. Jim and Marion Hyde, for example, sent this photograph of "our 'monument' to COVID-19: a pile of stones has lain at the back of the house for five years so we decided a Rockery would be much nicer than a moss-filled grassy bank".

At the editor's residence, it was decided that the lowest tier of the



*Alison and David Robbins' refurbished ponds*

garden ponds which includes the bog garden had become hopelessly overgrown and silted up. The pond was drained and much of the rampant growth removed to give other less pushy plants the chance to flourish. As the water level dropped we were able to catch the goldfish that had made the daring Niagara Falls style journey from the upper two ponds. To our amazement we caught 42 goldfish in addition to 3 very large Green Tench, an enormous toad and over a dozen frogs, as well as 2 dozen Golden Rudd. An advertisement on the village Facebook page brought a good response and 40 goldfish have found new homes in Abthorpe's garden ponds.

### **GREEN FINGERS AND TIME TO SPARE: A WINNING COMBINATION**

Bill Lamb explains how he and his wife Chris grasped the opportunity that lockdown offered to indulge in their hobby.....

"Good things come from a bad situation. Maybe I'm just an optimist. Things are and will remain different but not all bad. Whilst some villagers have been helping others with shopping or maybe just a chat, our contribution to supporting the community during lockdown is to help raise funds for the Old School.

"My interest in horticulture began with growing tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce for Spitalfield wholesale



*Examples of Bill's produce*

vegetable market at a time before the big supermarkets took over the trade. I did this for 6 years before buying a retail nursery where, for the next 20 years, I grew pot plants, cut flowers, and salad crops that I sold in my farm shop. Chris and I also spent many years visiting Garden shows, specialising in selling planted hanging baskets, but for the last 8 years have concentrated on growing plants to sell at Car Boot Sales locally.

"We had some plants left over having finished with the Boot Sales. Why we didn't just throw them away I don't know but it turned out to be a good thing as we could donate them to the Old School for sale to Abthorpe residents. We advertised via the online village notice board and through flyers and posters and then delivered the plants to avoid any contact.

"I've been lucky in my working life

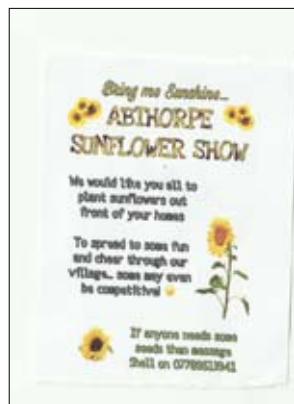
as my hobby became my means of making a living. Now in retirement I am enjoying growing my own vegetables – and, again, any spares can be passed on to the Old School for sale. I've really enjoyed growing for the Old School as I thought the skills I have learnt over the last 46 years had come to an end. One good thing to come out of a bad situation”.

### STOP PRESS

Old School 'Pop-Up' Plant Sale -  
Sat 20th June - to sell off Bill's  
remaining stock.

### “BRING ME SUNSHINE”

What better way to raise the spirits than to nurture seeds into life – especially bright showy sunflowers? This thought inspired Michelle Jackson to post the following invitation through



all our doors in the early lockdown weeks.

A walk through the village reveals many of us have taken up the challenge. Good idea, Shell!

### NIMBLE FINGERS USE THEIR TIME TO HELP THE NHS

Under the leadership of Queen Bee Karen Sakkalli, a group of Abthorpe and other local residents have formed a sewing/knitting bee group making headbands for the NHS. Karen explains how it all started.....

“At the beginning of lockdown, I heard from a friend who had been in hospital with Covid-19. One of the nurses was wearing a somewhat unusual headband. When asked about it, she replied that the elastic on face masks can make your ears very sore when worn all day long. The nurse's Granny had therefore designed a pattern for a headband with buttons which the elastic from the masks could hook on to. My friend Ann-Marie was so impressed by the idea and, wanting to do something to say thank-you for all that had been done for her by the NHS, told her daughter – who works for the couturier Roland Mouret, and so the Sewing Bees was set up to make headbands using Granny Smith's pattern.

“When I heard this, I began to knit manically and even persuaded my daughter, Christabel, to learn a new lockdown skill of crotchet to boost the numbers we could make. Then the light bulb moment occurred. Perhaps others would like to do the same? We could have our own Sewing Bee! I put a post on the Abthorpe Facebook page – the response overwhelmed me. Four

lovely ladies in the village volunteered to man their sewing machines and then we were joined by a Bee from Silverstone. A week later Bees from Middleton Cheney and Farthinghoe joined the hive. Packs of buttons, fabric and elastic are sent to us each week and to date we have sent about

600 headbands to Hive HQ in London. From there they have been distributed to hospitals around the country – including to the world-renowned London hospitals of St Thomas' and St Bart's to the more local Horton in Banbury; from Scotland to the Isle of Wight. Local care homes are also



amongst the recipients as are district nurses, midwives and other health care workers. To date, about 50 Sewing Bee groups have been set up in the country and about 6000 headbands have been made in total. As lockdown eases and people return to work, the need for more helpers increases so if there are any more Busy Sewing Bees out there please get in touch or to find out more information look on Instagram #head\_bands\_for\_heroes or [www.gofundme.com/f/head-bands-for-heroes](https://www.gofundme.com/f/head-bands-for-heroes)."

**STOP PRESS:** A message from Godswell Park Care Home near Banbury: "The headbands have been a great success with our nursing and care team. They are so thankful for this very kind donation which has assisted in making our team feel valued. Please say a huge thank you to your volunteers."

### TIME TO....REDECORATE AND CATCH-UP

With Rose's hairdressing business in Bicester closed during lockdown, and Gary still furloughed, the Freemans have had time to draw breath, make a jobs list and catch up on tasks long overdue (does this ring bells with us all?). They have appreciated having the time to catch up with their accounts and clear out old files, instead of having to do it all at the end of a long day at work. In fact, much though they would both like to be back in their regular employment, they are wondering how on earth they managed to get everything done before and realise that it will be hard to get back to the 'new normality'.

Rose and Gary have used this lockdown opportunity to completely redecorate and deep clean their hair salon (Freeman Hair Studio) and the accompanying photo shows the sparkling end result of their efforts. They have also spent time sourcing masks, gloves and sanitiser in preparation for when they are allowed to re-open.



*Freeman Hair Studio*

### TIME SEEMS TO HAVE STOOD STILL – YET FLOWN PAST

Barbara Malcomson shares some memories of how she will remember Lockdown 2020:

"Where have the last ten weeks gone? Like most people, we have spent many hours in the garden and had time to relax in it too. We have Zoomed and Skyped family and friends

and learned how Spain, Australia and Singapore have managed COVID-19 from those we know living there. I have also Zoomed in on and enjoyed the weekly online church services.

"Our son has performed some virtual rock music gigs to keep himself sane and it was a treat both listening to and dancing to his music for the first time in years! Perhaps I should have been more tolerant of the noise

of the base guitar thudding from his bedroom all those years ago. We have enjoyed having time to listen to other music too and I have done some housework tasks to the sound of Queen songs – but no, I have not vacuumed to 'I Want to Break Free'!

"Lockdown has given me time to spend on crafts and finishing off uncompleted projects:



"As a proud Vice President for Girlguiding in the county, I have enjoyed seeing what the leaders and girls have been up to and have been joining in a few of their online activities. Our summer adult camp will now be 'virtual' with a theme based on the WW2 Home Defence Guide badge. (I wonder if the Queen took that badge.) I feel we may be a bit like Dad's Army! It will not be quite the same as chatting and laughing with friends as we eventually drift off to sleep under canvas but we are all getting used to doing things a bit differently this year."

## **LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN - THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT**

Some residents – particularly those working with livestock or on the land – have had fewer disruptions to their daily lives than others perhaps, although even they have been affected by these strange times. Here is an account from horse breeder Caroline Brocklehurst about life in lockdown at their stud:

"Despite the lockdown, foaling and getting the mares covered again has carried on much the same as usual here at Charlock as this is always our busiest time of the year. We have foaled down 17 mares this year producing 13 fillies and just 4 colts – ideally one would have liked it the other way round – but all healthy, which is what really matters. The Stud Book does not allow artificial insemination for thoroughbred mares that produce racehorses, so natural coverings continued throughout lockdown but with strict controls; it was very strange travelling to Newmarket and





beyond on empty roads, in fact a pleasure and on one occasion going just over 4 miles on the M1 without seeing another vehicle, which was a little weird but cut down travel time enormously.

"In normal circumstances we would take the mare with her foal at foot off the lorry and into the covering shed at the stud where the chosen stallion stands, but this year we had to remain in the cab whilst the stud staff took the mare and foal off and we just hoped that she got covered by the

right stallion! The vet and farrier have continued to visit, which has given us a link with others and maintained a notion of some sort of normality despite our latex gloves and masks.

The photos show one of our mares with her new foal and Merlin, a Welsh Mountain pony stallion, who is our teaser and the busiest boy on the farm; poor fellow sees no real action until he goes to the Fens for the next 6 months and actually gets to cover other pony mares but he is vital in letting us know when our mares are coming into season and when they are ready to visit their selected thoroughbred stallion."

### **UNSUNG HEROES: PART 1**

Caroline goes on to give details of the work of St John Ambulance with which she is involved. It is heartwarming but humbling to read about these fantastic volunteers:

"I chair the fundraising committee of St John Ambulance here in Northamptonshire and because they have been unable to earn income from providing First Aid at theatres, football matches, literary festivals and other fund raising events, they are as a result desperately short of funds; despite this, Heidi Doggart and her team in Northampton have been providing two fully staffed ambulances a day to assist the NHS

transporting Covid-19 patients to and from hospital, nearly 1,800 hours of voluntary staffing in hospital last month, 100 volunteers a day visiting homes to provide First Aid to those too nervous to visit A & E and whose doctors' surgeries are closed. St John Ambulance hasn't been this busy since WW2 and many of its volunteers work full time for the NHS or East Midlands Ambulance Services and then give up their own time and are amongst the unsung heroes of the current crisis. Should you wish to help, please text SAVE7 to 70577 to donate £10 or you can donate via their national website [www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)."

## UNSUNG HEROES: PART 2

Eric Malcomson reminds of us the tireless work of those who have, behind the scenes, made it possible for us to use the technology which has been such a boon during the weeks of lockdown:

"I thought I would just pen a tribute to the broadband volunteers – keeping the network running for the members despite the strain on it due to home working, home schooling and Zoom meetings a-plenty. We encourage you to talk over any issues you may have through the help line system which is regularly monitored and should prompt a response very quickly. There are also documents to help you in the [tovevalley.com/library](http://tovevalley.com/library).

"The pictures show Tim making fibre



connections for Brackley Lane and the excavation work. We are expanding our fibre network using government grants which provides very fast and reliable internet connections for the lucky few and boosts our radio access points so that your wireless connections improve."

**So, thank you to Tim, Richard, Peter, Keith and, of course, Eric himself.**



## VIRTUAL OPEN GARDENS

We are treating our readers to colour pages showing the village gardens that would have been open to the public this month



*Above - Jill and Roger Tolson*

*Top right - Janet and David Dancer*

*Middle right - Mary and Roger Brennan*

*Right - Eric and Barbara Malcomson*





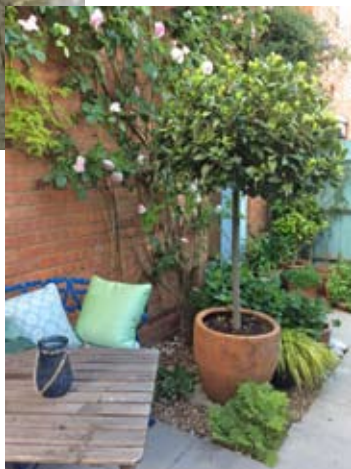
*Top left - Lynn and Steve Neasham*

*Above - Merrilyn and Phil Berry*

*Bottom left - Andrew Dancer*

*Bottom right - Alison and David Symmers*





*Top left - Pauline and Gordon Cox  
Top right - Jan and David Walsh  
Above - Richard and Carolyn Tomalin  
Right - Marna Perrigo*



*Sian and Arthur Young's garden and flowers.*



*Peta and Tony Travis*



*Mike and Jill Greenhalgh*

## CHURCH CLOSURE

It will not have escaped most people's notice that our church is closed and is likely to remain so for some time to come. Some villagers might be wondering why they cannot go into the church either to pray or simply to sit in a beautiful and peaceful place, so some clarification might be a good idea.

From the start of lockdown the only people given authority to enter the church were Church Wardens (or, since we have none, a member of the PCC). This was specifically to enable them to check that all was well and a visual inspection of our church is indeed carried out each week. Although Rev Paul is now allowed into the church, either for private prayer or to take a service (alone) for broadcasting, he,

*With thanks to the Parish Council for repointing the Churchyard walls, and to our mowing volunteers*



like many other priests, has decided not to do so until we are able to have proper services with a congregation again.

Of course, our churchyard and churchyard extension are open and have seats for contemplation and prayer. Both are beautifully maintained by a rota of volunteers so please do take advantage of these tranquil places (remembering, of course, about social distancing and the need for hand hygiene).

However, although our church is closed, services have been taking place regularly through the magic of Zoom, with the live service being recorded and put on Facebook and YouTube. The response, far from being half-hearted with dwindling numbers, has been extraordinarily positive.

Each Sunday at 10.00 am the Rev Paul welcomes us to a short benefice-wide service – but only once he has muted the excited voices of residents from all 5 villages as they see and greet each other on their screens. Various volunteers play

their part in leading readings and prayers, whilst our Readers Clare Ray and Lesley Dale or Rev Paul give us their thoughts using images or props, courtesy of the internet. Elizabeth Smith plays the hymns on her piano from her home in Towcester, and we individually sing along – thankfully the cacophony of voices all singing at different speeds is tactfully muted. Although the underlying tone of the service is reverent, it is also informal, fun, friendly and joyful. If you would like to be invited to join the service, please let Barbara Malcomson know ([malcomson@abthorpe.net](mailto:malcomson@abthorpe.net) or 857066) so she can send you the link. It is also possible to telephone into the service if you do not have access to the internet.

We do not yet know when the church will re-open or what form the services will take when it does. Lockdown is forcing us all to reconsider what is important to keep and what has had its day. We have moved from 'Odeon Church' (showing only at a set time on a set day with a set format) to 'Netflix Church' (log on anytime from wherever you happen to be on any day you choose). Not surprisingly, Netflix Church is proving a very popular model (not just here in the Whittlewood Benefice but across the whole of the UK) with those who are unlikely to ever walk through our (currently locked) doors and walk into our cold character-forming buildings. We have an opportunity for change - and a challenge.

## THE TOTE

Lockdown has had the unusual effect of necessitating that the monthly draw for the Tote winners, which would normally take place at the New Inn, now happens as a live broadcast on the village Facebook site. But instead of Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot or Merlin rolling out the winning numbers, we have Richard Tomalin: oh well!

Since the last issue of Abtalk in mid-February, there have been 4 winners, all of whom have won approximately £200. These are Jenny Carter (February), Rona Cambray (March), Maisie & Ben Holland (April) and Jill & Roger Tolson (May).



If any villager would like to join the Tote, or wishes to increase their chances of success by buying another pair of numbers, then please contact Richard (richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net). With no services providing offertories, and no fund-raising activities possible, we are extremely grateful that half the money raised by the Tote each month is available for the upkeep of the church.

### WHAT'S COOKING?

Many of us have passed the time on some of those slow days of lockdown unleashing the cook/baker/home brewer within us. The mysterious disappearance of flour from the shelves of our supermarkets did not daunt the intrepid entrepreneurs of Abthorpe. By fair means or foul (sorry, girls, we know it was all legit) flour was procured from source, advertised on the Village Notice Board and distributed to very grateful householders. Baking commenced and, as someone remarked after their daily exercise, "fitter, but fatter"!

Not being the season for the typical soft fruit associated with jam-making, we looked in our gardens for alternative produce and came up with.....



rhubarb – and plenty of it. Although one can never really tire of rhubarb crumble (which seems to take men of a certain age back to their childhood years), the glut required further action. The Noble family dug around and came up with a recipe for Rhubarb Curd which was an instant winner.

Delicious with a bit of Greek yoghurt and strawberries, or mixed with a bit of cream for the meringues you have made with the surplus egg whites, or delicious just spooned out of the jar!

#### Rhubarb Curd

800g rhubarb (4cm chunks)  
350g caster sugar  
6 tbsp orange juice  
5 tbsp cornflour  
6 egg yolks  
50g butter  
A little pink colouring (optional)

1. Roast rhubarb, 100g sugar and orange juice at 170 degree fan, Gas 6 for 25 mins
2. Blend rhubarb into smooth puree
3. Whisk/stir continuously puree, egg yolks, sugar and cornflour over low heat until thickened
4. Add butter and pink colouring and boil for 1 min
5. Sterilise 4 jars in oven for 5-10 mins
6. Pour in curd and lid
7. Store in the fridge

Others went into the mass production of rhubarb and ginger jam and more than one household has used those gorgeous pink stems to make rhubarb gin.

Meanwhile as the May blossom fades and the elderflowers appear, time to make that cordial....

And talking of looking for flour in supermarkets.....

With apologies to Wordsworth

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
Two metres from the madding crowd  
When all at once my name was called  
To enter Waitrose hallowed hall*

*This was the pensioners' special hour  
I'd gone to get a bag of flour  
But I forgot, when through the door  
What I had gone to Waitrose for*

*The Waitrose staff are extra kind  
I told them it had slipped my mind  
They asked what else I had forgot  
They clearly thought I'd lost the plot*

*I phoned my wife again to ask.  
She reminded me of this special task:  
'I need some flour to bake a cake  
with all that cream you made me take'*

*'Ah yes, I recall', I had to lie  
I dared not ask what flower to buy  
But then I saw them next the tills  
A bunch of golden daffodils!*

Poet Unknown

## THE NEW INN'S NEW VENTURE

Many of us have sorely missed popping round to the New Inn for a drink, to enjoy a meal, to meet up with friends and neighbours, to take part in the monthly quiz and to be given that lovely welcome from Rob and 'the team'. But whilst most of the bar and restaurant staff have had to be furloughed, Rob and Stuart have put in a sterling effort to help support and bring cheer to the community by the provision of a home-delivery service. Fresh ingredients are used to prepare many tempting dishes which can be re-heated in the microwave or oven at home (or put in the freezer for another time).

The extensive menu includes old favourites, exotic dishes from around the world, as well as vegetarian and vegan dishes, and new choices are added regularly. There is also a good selection of desserts on offer, and the prices are extremely reasonable.

This home-delivery service is available from Tuesday to Saturday - simply pre-order on 01327 857306 or 01280 630010 to place your order (minimum order of £15).

The team is happy to deliver not just to Abthorpe but also to Wappenham, Syresham, Blakesley, Bradden, Slapton, Weston, Foscoate, Silverstone, Woodend, Lois Weedon, Towcester, and Greens Norton. For prices and details of the weekly menu, visit the New Inn Facebook page.

### **HOT MEALS - AVAILABLE FOR HOME DELIVERY**

*Fresh Billingsgate Fish In Batter & Chunky Chips - £7.95*

*Sausage & Chips - £5.95*

*Battered Sausage & Chips - £5.95*

*Pie & Chips - £7.95*

*Portion of Chips - £2.95*

*Mushy Peas - £1.50*

*Curry Sauce - £1.50*

*Gravy - £1.50*

*Southern Fried Chicken in a Basket (5 fillets) - £6.95*

### **STONE BAKED ITALIAN PIZZA**

*Ham hock, mushroom and pineapple*

*Bbq chicken and flame roast pepper*

*Fully loaded pepperoni pizza*

*Vegetable supreme - flame roasted pepper, mushroom, sweet corn and roasted onion*

*£7.95 - 10 inch pizza*

*An exciting range of prepared meals is also available for you to cook at home, such as Pork loin steak, lyonnaise potato, fresh vegetables and a cider and candied apple sauce - £5.95*

**But there is more:** The team also offers a 2-course Sunday lunch, delivered to your door ('10 minutes to the table with no washing up') and are currently planning a special 3-course Fathers Day menu for Sunday June 21st.

And, of course, bottled beer and wine are also available to purchase.

**And finally,** congratulations to chef Steve who took the plunge and got married on 29th February. Best wishes to the happy couple.

### **TWITCHERS AND SPRINGWATCHERS**

Living where we do in the heart of the rolling South Northants countryside, and many of us being blessed with gardens, it is not surprising that, as lockdown has forced the pace of life to slow down, we have had time to appreciate the emergence of spring and the new life the season brings. In particular, with the quieter roads and skies, the bird song has caught our attention and as we have learned to listen and watch, many of us have become captivated by the lives of our avian friends. We have found great pleasure in feeding the wild birds that visit our gardens and some of us have set up nesting boxes - it is a thrilling moment when a pair takes up residence. A nest-cam in the nesting box on the side of Eric and Barbara Malcomson's house



*Parent blue tit with food for chicks*



has enabled Abthorpe residents once again to follow the progress of a pair of bluetits and their young. It is known that at least 2 chicks fledged successfully.

In the neighbouring garden, one of a pair of crows tries to emulate the bluetits' skill on the fat ball feeder but discovers it is not as easy as it looks.

A spotted woodpecker is a regular visitor in David and Alison Symmers' garden and they also had a surprise visit from a sparrow hawk.

*5 chicks in the nest*

But some garden visitors have to be discouraged to give others a chance. Roger Tolson spent many (very many) hours during lockdown designing and building a luxury jackdaw-proof bird feeder (see photo on facing page).



*Above: Crow R: Woodpecker*

Although Jill, his self-appointed marketing manager, says Roger would be willing to take commissions for his soon-to-be-patented design, she feels that the number of man-hours spent on making one would probably put the feeder out of most people's financial reach.....





Plant has relished the opportunity of lockdown to be creative in some interesting and unusual ways. The first two photos show ceramic tiles on which she painted designs using ceramic paint, followed by a clear glaze before being fired at 950 degrees.



### LOSING ONESELF IN ART

Abthorpe is home to a surprising number of both amateur and professional artists, and there is perhaps no better way to pass the time than immersing oneself in producing some artwork. The lack of other distractions and demands on one's time provide ideal conditions too. Monica

Using an entirely different medium, Monica, with additional help from her daughter Sally, produced the artwork shown in these last two photos. She first does a painting on paper using special dyes and then the design is transferred on to material using a hot press.



The material can be used to make soft furnishings, cards and other items.

## THE DAILY EXERCISE

*Thoughts from our Parish Path Warden.....*

*'I wandered Lonely as a Cloud.....*

Few can have failed to notice the dramatic increase in cyclists, walkers and runners in the parish over the past weeks, all taking solace in nature and the outdoors, and trying to ease the burden of our locked down lives. Not daffodils, except in the many well tended village gardens, but perhaps bluebells carpeting the local woods, or the swathes of buttercups in the meadows. As Wordsworth went on to write in his famous poem:

*"In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye,  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills....."*

For many it has been a time to investigate some of the best of rural Northamptonshire around Abthorpe. Yet outside of a few hotspots such as Ox Bridge and Bucknell Woods, walk just a few hundred metres beyond our village and you can have the countryside to yourself (plus quite a few sheep). If you have an hour or two to spare then, as I have discovered myself, the local footpath network can take the walker on broad circuits, not just within the parish, but looping through neighbouring villages such as Silverstone, Slapton, Bradden, and even Green's Norton with its pocket park; all within easy reach, and

with the prominent church spires of Abthorpe and Green's Norton as your guide. To describe local walking routes in detail would require more space than is available here, but footpath maps are widely available though the OS, or the South Northants website. The Parish Council and the Path Warden (David Robbins) also hold copies of the local definitive maps.



*David Robbins carrying out some of his duties as Parish Path Warden*



The countryside is varied; with streams, woodlands, pastures, some full of wild flowers at this time of year, and arable fields laid out across the rolling Northamptonshire countryside. So if you haven't yet, get out there and enjoy it, and if you have then I hope you will continue to do so after lockdown is over.

As lockdown restrictions eased up, Nigel and Fleur Jones relished the chance to take their daily exercise on a boat – and of course the dog went too. Here they are paddling on the River Thames through Oxford.



Meanwhile, back in Abthorpe, their son and daughter-in-law, Callum and Hannah Jones spent their first wedding anniversary.....going to the pub for a drink? NO! Going out to a nice restaurant for a special meal? NO! Painting a fence? YUP! Such is life in lockdown.

## VE DAY 75

The cancellation of the long weekend of celebrations which had been a year in the planning was one of the major disappointments of the lockdown. Months of preparation down the drain and the opportunity to get the whole village involved wasted. But were we downcast? Did we sit at home



and sulk? No! We decided to make the best of the situation and do what we could to enjoy ourselves whilst adhering strictly to government guidelines. So out came the flags, out came the picnic rugs and chairs, out came home-made cake and sandwiches, cream teas and something to wash it down with. Some residents dressed up, others dressed down, but what fun it was to spend time with our neighbours after weeks of being secluded.



*Left: Lucy Jones in her Grandmother's 1945 dress*



*Above: Helen Taylor as a Land Army Girl*

*Below and on opposite page: Socially distanced groups of villagers enjoying picnics in the sunshine*





**AND FINALLY**

Tricia and Ashley Jones of Brackley Lane will remember March 2020 for completely different reasons to anyone else in the village, for on March 29th at 3.42 am Sofia Rose Brewer Jones was born. Her six brothers and sisters absolutely adore their new baby sister, and when you look at the photo you can see why. Congratulations and best wishes to you all.



*Sofia Rose Brewer Jones*



*The family Jones siblings from l to r:  
Leo (3), Jack-Dee (6), Tia-Maria (5) with Sofia,  
Mia (14) with Alfie (2) and Sonney (4)*

**OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF**

In the final Pub Quiz before lockdown on February 23rd, the winners were, not for the first time, Tows on Tour. £200 was raised from 10 teams and was donated to the Dogs Trust.

The Leap Year Lunches held on February 29th in support of the Old School raised £243. It was a very well supported and most jolly occasion with 72 lunches made by the girls in the kitchen.

In early March, 3 men spent 4 days digging a trench to take the water from the Plum Pudding spring at the approach to the village. The aim was to direct the water down the side of the road to a soakaway into which they put 2 tons of gravel rather than spilling across it. The boss was sceptical about its chance of success. He was right to be.

Jill Tolson wonders whether anyone has a copy of Reg Chapman's book 'Those I Have Loved' Vol.2? One of the ladies who helped on the Old School Project and whose Dad ran the New Inn for a while and then Home Farm, would love a copy.