



AB

News from Abthorpe

May 2008

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held this year on Monday 19 May. Do come along to the Old School at 7.45 to hear what the Parish Council has been doing on your behalf over the past year. Other local organisations will be giving their annual reports.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

Jane and Robbie have planned an exciting charity fundraising bank holiday weekend on 24, 25 and 26 May in support of Shelter, NSPCC and the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. The full programme is:

Saturday 24th

2pm games challenge: pool, Aunt Sally, cribbage

8pm charity karaoke: karaoke with a difference - be there to find out more

Sunday 25th

2pm onwards BBQ, open the box, play your cards right

7pm charity auction: items for auction include 2 x 3-day passes for Silverstone Classics weekend; Xbox 360

Jill Tolson

tel: 857320; jill.tolson@abthorpe.net

Keith Fenwick

tel: 857083; keith.fenwick@abthorpe.net

arcade + 5 games; 2 tickets for Northampton Saints; 6 VIP passes to TENPIN Northampton

8.30pm onwards : music by Jenny Joy & the Jenny Joy Duo

Monday 26th 2pm onwards : Kiddies' mini-treasure hunt; family quiz with questions for all the family; bouncy castle; raffle & name the Bear competition, and much more.

Further information from Jane or Rob on 857306.

Come and support these worthwhile causes by having fun over the weekend.

TOWCESTER'S SCHOOLS

The debate is starting about future school provision in Towcester to cope with the planned expansion of the town. Since 1971 Towcester has grown from a population of less than 4,500 to its present 9,500. By 2021 it is likely to increase to 14,000.

Thoughts are turning to the effect on primary and secondary education of the influx of children from such a growth. With St Lawrence Junior amalgamating with the infants a new site would ideally be needed. If Sponne were to take in the secondary pupils they could see student numbers of over 2,000. Although some large secondaries do operate successfully, a recent study by Teach First, an organisation which places top graduates in tough inner-city schools, argues that such mega-

schools risk having a number of children falling 'under the radar' with all the consequences that can bring. Schools with smaller numbers are generally more successful. So if another secondary school is to be built to complement Sponne, what type should it be? The Board of Education of the Anglican Diocese of Peterborough has aspirations to build a Church of England secondary in Towcester, or should it be an Academy?

Join the debate with John Riches: john.riches@abthorpe.net.

VILLAGE FUND NEWS

The committee has arranged an outing for all the older people in the village to the National Herb Centre at Warmington near Banbury on Tuesday 10th June with and have lunch in its bistro. Over 500 varieties of herb plants are available to delight cooks, intrigue gardeners and fascinate anyone with an interest in alternative medicines.

Planning is going ahead for the annual Fun Day to be held on Saturday 6th September.

VILLAGE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION — BECOME A JUDGE

Calor Northamptonshire Village of the Year is looking for volunteer judges who have some time to spare and would be willing to visit the county's villages. Sounds like a great opportunity to get to know the area.

Anne Millare at Northants ACRE can give you more information on what it entails on 01604 825885; anne.millare@northantsacre.org.uk.

Eco TEAMS

If a group of households (usually 6 to 8) feels moved to take practical action in their everyday lives to reduce their environmental impact, forming an Eco Team seems a useful starting point. These are based on a few simple principles: nobody can do everything, but we can all do something; sharing experiences and ideas gives support and encouragement; small adjustments build into good habits. Past savings by teams have shown reductions of 43% in waste, 9% in electricity and 21% in water usage.

Eco Teams commit to monitoring their waste: electricity, gas (well – not here!), water, shopping and transport. By measuring improve-

ments the group will be able to change its behaviour and play a small part towards a cleaner, more sustainable future.

So chat with your friends and neighbours, and talk to Global Action Plan on 0207 405 5633, or email ecoteams@globalactionplan.org.uk. If you take up the challenge, do let us know how you get on.

TOWCESTER BYPASS

The current proposal, associated with the expansion of Towcester, is that a new A5 single carriageway bypass will be constructed round the south side of Towcester. This will link with the A43 dual-carriageway between the Abthorpe roundabout and Silverstone village. From that link to the Tove roundabout close to the Bell Plantation Garden Centre, the A5 and A43 will share the same dual carriageway.

The junction of the new bypass with the A43 will include a flyover and very short slip roads. Part of this is outside the West Northants Development Corporation area, so a separate planning application has been made to South Northants Council for this element.

The rest of the existing A43 will not be modified. Earlier proposals for 'hamburger' junctions to replace the Abthorpe and A5 roundabouts have been abandoned as, apparently, the hamburger principle is useless. (Don't say anything about what children can



I'm the king of the castle

tell you!) It appears that the Highways Agency is aware of this problem, but it is not clear what can be done about it, or even whether there is the will to do anything. The contact at the Highways Agency is Serena Carmichael, Planning Manager, Highways Agency, C3-5 Broadway, Broad Street, Birmingham. B15 1BL, Direct line telephone – 0121 678 8446, and the reference is P 645465 A43(T) Towcester Vale Application A. Others involved are Matthew Berry, WNDC, Franklin's Gardens, Weedon Road, Northampton NN5 5GB and Jean Morgan at SNC.

KNITTING WOOL NEEDED

Please search your cupboards for any knitting wool lurking there from previous projects. Charity Crafts is a South Northants Volunteer Bureau project which urgently needs more materials. Please call SNVB on 358264 if you can help.

SPEEDWATCH

For many years the Parish Council has campaigned to get various traffic calming measures into the village. The Council has managed to get 30 mph painted on the roads and the 30-mph signs in reflective yellow.

Although these do little to reduce the speed of the cars whizzing through, the Council is restricted in the measures it can put in place. Our road is a relief road for the A43 and there are very few incidents on the road, making it a low priority for any traffic calming measures. The parish has a number of elderly and young residents and we are concerned with them crossing the road safely.

Several years ago 'Speedwatch' was trialled in Whittlebury. The Council reviewed the results and agreed this was a programme Abthorpe should be part of. Residents in the village were asked to support this and several were trained and have used the handheld speed camera equipment. As the Co-Ordinator of the programme I have experienced its success, I see cars

visibly slow down when they see the bright yellow jackets and the signs are up for the period. However, drivers soon revert to their previous behaviour. The speed detector on the road in from Wappenham is also part of this program. It will be left there for a period, then moved elsewhere.

Speedwatch is returning to the village in August and we need



PEOPLE

It was a lovely day when Darren Andrews, Sheila and Steve Andrews' son, and Nic Peters were married at St John the Baptist on Saturday 3rd May. The village congratulates Nic and Darren and wishes them every happiness in the future.



And welcome to two couples new to the village: Claire Lowery and John Underwood have worked hard to update their new home, 32 Wappenham Road. John's skills came into their own during their building work and he has now set up a business of general building, painting and decorating. Claire will be familiar to some children in the village as she teaches at Nicholas Nawksmoor school. She is a keen (mainly veg) gardener and runs an allotment club at school for which she would be very grateful for any donations of child-friendly plants (vegetables, sunflowers, etc). She also enjoys horse-riding and in quieter moments creates rag rugs. John's relaxation, if it can be called that, is downhill mountain biking at which he competes at national level.

Andrea and Graham Lambert have arrived at Forge Cottage on the Green with their two cats, George and Bodie. They have moved from St Albans via Leckhamstead, but come originally from a country background. Both Andrea and Graham work from home with spells of travelling, and are looking forward to making new friends and joining in village life. As Andrea enjoys cooking her skills are likely to be much in demand. She is also another gardener so will share an interest with many in the village.

Our thoughts are with Edmund (Shen) Kendall and Dorothy Swan, both of whom are in hospital.

a few more volunteers. To be a volunteer you need to be able to give up an hour of your time, once or twice a week, for a period of 6 weeks at times to suit you, e.g. before/after work, but you will need to be able to work in 2s or 3s, one to use the camera and one to write the information down, with the 3rd supporting. Full training will be given to use the equipment (this also covers insurance) on Saturday 2nd August.

If you are interested in Speedwatch please contact Gail Coombs, 857901, 21 Brackley Lane by 22nd June. Thank you for your support.

LATEST TOTE WINNERS

The tote is run by the church for the upkeep of the fabric of the building. The winners for March were Dan and Bryony Clarkson who scooped £245. In April Mr E Kendall (Shen) won £245.

EXCITEMENT ON THE TOVE

For the second time this winter the Tove has flooded. Following the flash flood in October, it again rose rapidly on 16 March as seen in this picture



at the Oxbridge where the Tove overran the Abthorpe to Blakesley road to a width of about 100m.

BEFRIEND A CARER

Would you like to join a new band of volunteers who will be trained to befriend carers of Alzheimer's sufferers? It will be either by regular telephone contact or meeting them face to face to offer support, help and companionship. What a worthwhile use of some of your time. If you are interested, find out more from Elizabeth Churchill on 01280 823769 or 07908 458042.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON AND MIDLAND JUNCTION RAILWAY

From the splendid network of footpaths leading from the village we're all familiar with the disused railway line which runs in the Tove valley. The fascinating history of this line can be found at <http://>

www.andythompson.net/history.htm.

To quote from J. M. Dunn, *The Stratford-Upon-Avon & Midland Junction Railway*, The Oakwood Press 1952: 'Its history, in places as elusive as the line itself, is a curious example of the survival of the unfit.' And at <http://www.smjr.info> there's a link through to a recent video superimposing Towcester station as it was on the site's current use – the Tesco supermarket.

ABTHORPE STATISTICS

Some interesting numbers have come out of the 2006 housing needs survey. At that time – and it's doubtful things will have changed much since then – there were just over 290 inhabitants living in 132 homes. The range of properties spreads fairly evenly through the Council Tax bands: A – 2; B – 25; C – 18; D – 26; E – 22; F – 14; G – 22; H – 3. Interestingly Wappenham is slightly smaller than Abthorpe, with 125 homes and 269 inhabitants; Braden's population is about 184 in 60 homes; and Slapton has 36 homes occupied by about 90 residents. At the time of the survey, statistics gleaned from those who responded, which was 63 of the 132 questionnaires distributed, 56% of Abthorpe residents had lived in the village for more than 10 years; 22% between 5 and 10 years; 17% between 1 and 5 years; and 5% less than a year.

PHONE BOX ON THE GREEN

British Telecom has informed the Parish Council that they are considering removing the phone box



from Abthorpe as part of a general review of phone boxes. It appears that little, if any, use has been made of the phone box for a long time; in any case it no longer takes money and requires a card to operate it. The Council's view is that there is no reason to retain the facility. However, BT is being asked if the phone box itself can left in situ and maintained by the Council as a feature of the

village green. What are your views? Come to the Annual Meeting next Monday or talk to any Councillor.

NORTHANTS TOURING ARTS

Northants Touring Arts is a collaboration between New Perspectives Theatre Company, the Arts Council, NCC, and local councils and cultural community partnerships in East Northants. They take theatre, for adults and children, music and dance to rural communities across the county. On Saturday 7 June, 7.30 Wappenham Village Hall (860073) or Saturday 31 May at Paulerspury Village Hall (811304), 'The Farm' by Richard Benson, will be performed. It is the story of one family and the English country side

There is a broad programme extending to other village venues; for the full programme go to www.northantstouringarts.co.uk where you can also join the mailing list.

WINTER GRITTING

Following the acceptance of the NCC budget, winter gritting will be improved from next year. Every village will have at least one gritted route in and out of the village.

Let's hope for a mild winter to save on the budget.

SOUTH NORTHANTS COUNCIL TAX

On challenging SNC about the rather large sum of £350,000 'to implement

a new organisation design' I received this helpful response:

"The item that you refer to relates to an earmarked budget set aside to take a detailed look at South Northamptonshire Council's structure and make sure it is 'fit for purpose' to meet several new challenges.

"The new organisation design also reflects the concerns of councillors and senior managers that the Council has become too lean to respond to all the current pressures on it.

"The proposed new structure will give more capacity at senior level and co-ordinate and strengthen policy work across the council. This is particularly important as we are in the country's fastest growing growth area.

"More specifically, it was deemed necessary to restructure the organisation of the Council for several reasons. These included:

- The transfer of our council homes to a housing association which took place in March 2008
- The changing agenda put on local government from central government
- The fact we are in a growth area
- The need for more officers to deal with partnerships and working in the community
- The ongoing development of our Customer Contact Centre programme

"I trust this clarifies the position for you, but if I can be of any further assistance to you regarding this or any other matter please do not hesitate to contact me."

I can't really say I'm any the wiser.

Jill Tolson

RUN FOR THE CHILDREN

This is a fun fitness initiative for children, parents, friends and families featuring a series of 3km fun runs with no age limit. The Towcester run is being held at the racecourse on Sunday 22 June, starting at 11am for the fun run (or skip, or hop) and you can also cycle, starting at 12 noon – or if you still have energy jump on a bike after you've done a lap on your feet. Pit yourself against Swifty the Hare and see who comes off best.

<http://www.runforthechildren.co.uk/> for all the details.

BUCKNELL WOOD CAR PARK

Ian Morgan, the Assistant Scout Leader at Greens Norton, regularly takes scouts to Bucknells Wood, a Forestry Commission property, for field craft and adventure exercises. It is also well-used by walkers and riders from the village.

Without any consultation, the Forestry Commission has closed the car park off the Silverstone Road as it is

unable to afford the cost of repairs. This is despite making a large investment in facilities at Hazelburgh Wood. Both Silverstone and Abthorpe Parish Councils are objecting to the loss of this facility, pointing out that it goes against all the attempts to open up the countryside.

Kevin Stannard the Commission's Forest Management Director for the Northamptonshire Area can be contacted on 01780 444920 if you feel strongly about the loss of this amenity.

And, although unfortunately we can't print in colour, the bluebells were absolutely splendid this year.

LATEST CRIME REPORT FROM NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE

In the past year (to 31 March 2008) Northamptonshire Police has seen total crime drop by 3.5%, or 2,318 fewer recorded crimes, on the back of a 3.1% decrease in crime the



previous year (06-07). All crime has now reduced for 4 consecutive years. 2007-08 totals are 19% lower than in 2003/4, with our area, Northamptonshire West (covering Northampton, Daventry and South Northants) recording 1,244 fewer crimes (a 3.4% drop).

Most categories of crime countywide have fallen too, including house burglary (down 5.8%, or 228 less offences), robbery (down 15.5%, or 161 fewer offences), vehicle crime (down 11.4% or 1,036 fewer) and criminal damage (down 7.3% or 11,167). The only slight increases were in violent crime (4 per cent or 471 more offences).

However, burglary remains a challenge with 1 in 4 of all house burglaries down to insecurities, so locking up at all times is important. Some people are still leaving valuables, such as sat nav systems, in vehicles which provide rich pickings for offenders, so the message is remove it, don't lose it.

To view crime statistics in detail visit www.northants.police/beatstats.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE DECODED

Atkins has helpfully passed on advice from the Local Government Association published in New Civil Engineer magazine that engineers should stop talking about 'frameworks', 'step change', 'good practice', 'fast tracking', 'initiatives', 'transparency', 'menu of options', 'income streams', 'communicating core messages', 'multi-disciplinary', 'stakeholders' and 'creating sustainable communities'. Instead, helpful alternatives have been suggested such as 'result' for 'outcome', 'plan' instead of 'initiative', 'choices' for 'menu of options', 'cash' for 'income stream', 'people' for 'stakeholders', 'delay' instead of 'slippage'. Finally, according to Atkins, to minimise the public's bewilderment, don't go anywhere near 'level playing fields' and 'community engagement'. No comment.

VILLAGERS AT WORK -

AN OCCASIONAL LOOK AT WHAT OUR NEIGHBOURS DO FOR A LIVING

Rob Capurro sells bridges in Iberia and South America - well, he's really Director of Sales: Spain, Portugal, Latin America & Caribbean, for Mabey & Johnson. Here's his account of one success.

Caroni River Bridge - from UK to Trinidad - again!

Just over a year ago, in January 2007, I was suitably kitted out in 'black tie' and on my way to a gala dinner in London when I received a call from our man in Trinidad to inform me that an old British steel bridge, built across the Caroni River south of Port of Spain in the 1860s, was sliding slowly into the



river as the southern abutment gave way.

Naturally, as emergency bridge specialists we responded swiftly with terms for the supply of a Mabey Compact 200 bailey-type bridge for immediate delivery. In the following weeks it transpired that the collapse of

the southern abutment had been temporarily arrested allowing time for a more permanent solution to be considered. The definitive requirement was finally agreed during March and the opportunity was to be seized, as part of the government's Programme for Upgrading Roads Efficiency, to replace the ancient existing single lane bridge and the adjoining single lane Mabey Compact 200 bridge with a modern two lane solution. Thus was conceived the requirement for the first Mabey Delta Bridge in the Caribbean. Better still, the 81m two lane clear-span would show off the technology of this pre-engineered permanent highway bridge at its maximum single span capacity thus providing a showcase for the whole region.

The detailed negotiation resulted in agreement in May. By 26th June the entire bridge had been manufactured in the Mabey & Johnson factory in Lydney, Gloucestershire and was ready for shipping on 16th July in eighteen 40ft containers,



but shipment was delayed until September to fit in with local arrangements for the construction of approach roads and abutments, etc.

The containers arrived at Port of Spain on 9th October with assembly completed by the 15th. Launching across the river began on 17th October with the Minister himself driving the Caterpillar. Positioning was complete by the 28th and final completion took place on 3rd November.

In short, a team of only 22 people built, launched and completed the bridge in the space of 21 days or 150 hours of work, including 7 days' delay for torrential rain. Very impressive considering the predicted build period was 8 weeks, and even more impressive when you consider that a

similar structure in concrete would take an absolute minimum of 6 months and probably much longer to construct.

It is very satisfying to be able to report a British engineering and manufacturing export success story in the early 21st century, emulating the achievements of our Victorian predecessors and keeping alive our traditional infrastructure-based links with the Caribbean. The government of Trinidad is so pleased with the Delta that further purchases are likely. Meanwhile, and as a further testament to British engineering quality, the old Victorian bridge is still in such good condition that it will be relocated elsewhere in the island and continue to provide a secure river crossing for years to come.

EVENTS

Saturday 17 May

Plant sale, 9.30 - 12.30, Clarissa House, High Street, Wappenham

Monday 19 May

Annual Parish Meeting, 7.45, the Old School

Sunday 8 June

Annual cricket match against Blakesley at Blakesley

Tuesday 10th June

Outing to the National Herb Centre at Warmington near Banbury. Jan Miles 857427

Saturday 2 August

Speedwatch training. Gale Coombs 857901

Saturday 6 September

Fun Day on the village green