

ABTALK



News from Abthorpe

May 2010

PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

This meeting, to which everyone in the village is invited and encouraged to attend, takes place on Monday 17th May at 7.45pm in the Old School. The usual reports will be given by various organisations connected with the village. Both the County and District Councillors will be attending along with representatives of the local police and Silverstone schools.

I will be reporting on behalf of the Parish Council and, not being a politician, am not going to give all the details in advance. However, I will describe our achievements during the year, even if the most visible examples are small ones

such as the new seat on the green or painting the telephone kiosk, which we now own.

We do spend some time trying to get changes made, not always with success. Road safety has continued to concern us, particularly along Wappenham Road, but we have not been able to achieve any real improvement apart from some new signs. The way the road and adjacent houses are positioned makes it difficult to find an acceptable solution.

This year we slightly increased our precept. The level was set to cover all our anticipated expenditure during the year without digging into our reserves.

One planning application continues to concern the council, that at Mini Farm on the Bradden Road. This is currently occupied by a Traveller and his family and is the subject of a retrospective application. The Council has objected on the grounds that it contravenes several of the District Council's planning policies and is also unsanitary. The application is due to be considered on 13th May so I will be able to report the outcome at the meeting. As the planning officer has recommended acceptance for a period of three years, we will try to seek re-assurance that this will not set a precedent.

The public consultation for the scheme for 10 affordable homes in Brackley Lane took place in March. Nothing further has been heard since then about when this will proceed or how our comments, particularly relating to access, will affect the plans.

The meeting is your opportunity to question the Parish Council and any of the other people who give reports, so do come along and voice your opinions. (Keith Fenwick)

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Several years ago we had an active Neighbourhood Watch scheme in the village. The scheme enabled details of any suspicious activities to be passed on to the police and details of local crimes to be circulated. It relied on manual distribution of items of local relevance which, today, is no longer workable. But there is still a great deal of information on crimes available which could be filtered and distributed by email and/or word of mouth. Would you be prepared to join a group of volunteers doing this? This proposal will be discussed at the meeting on 17th, so please come along to give your views and see if you can help.

Editors

Jill Tolson jill.tolson@abthorpe.net; 857320

Keith Fenwick keith.fenwick@abthorpe.net; 857083

COUNCIL OFFICE MOVE

Following a packed meeting at the Town Hall on 15th February, many questions over South Northamptonshire Council's proposed office move from Springfield to the regenerated area of Moat Lane remain unanswered. One in particular is the anticipated energy saving of £200,000 a year. As the current energy-inefficient council offices only cost £480,000 a year to run, it is indeed a spectacular prediction.

Ashley Warren, our District Councillor, plans to attending the annual meeting on the 17th. It would be an interesting question to pose.

GOOGLE DISCOVERS ABTHORPE

Following the recent somewhat controversial Google Streetview project, Abthorpe can now be seen at street-level view as if you are walking around the village. Find how your home looks at: <http://maps.google.co.uk/>. Enter 'Abthorpe' in the search box, and under the 'more' tab below, select the Street View option. But did you cut your grass before the camera car came by.....?

The controversy referred to above relates to the privacy factor. A statement from the Information Commissioner's Office says:

"Following publicity about vans collecting images of streets preparatory to the future launch of the Google Streetview service in the UK, the ICO had a further meeting with Google to understand the steps they are taking to address privacy concerns. We are satisfied that Google is putting in place adequate safeguards to avoid any risk to the privacy or safety of individuals, including the blurring of vehicle registration marks and the faces of anyone included in Streetview images.

"Although it is possible that in certain limited circumstances an image may allow the identification of an individual, it is clear that Google are keen to capture images of streets and not individuals. Further there is an easy mechanism by which individuals can report an image that causes them concern to Google and request that it is removed.

"Images are not 'real time' and there is a delay between taking an image and its publication so that it could not be used to make decisions about an individual's current whereabouts."

HOME SAFETY SCHEME

Safe 'n' Sound is part of the national Home Safety scheme and will be hosting an event in Yardley Hastings Memorial Hall on Tuesday 25th May. You can obtain advice from the police, fire service, health workers and others on safety in the home.

NEWS FROM THE NEW INN

New opening hours are being trialled at the New Inn with the pub opening at 5.00pm on weekday evenings. The bonus is the 'early-doors' prices which extend to 7.30pm.

The beer tasting evening in early April was interesting, starting with a talk from Duncan Collins, retail manager of Hook

Norton Brewery, which included a brief history of the firm: Back in 1849 John Harris and two of his sisters set up business in the Oxfordshire village of Hook Norton to convert local barley into malt for brewers. But close to their premises they

discovered a wonderful supply of fresh liquor, the name that brewers insist on calling water. So they decided to brew their own beer. Now 161 years later their Hook Norton Brewery is still thriving as a family business with James Clarke the great, great grandson of the founder as Managing Director. A description of how the beer is made was followed by sampling of the range of contrasting beers on offer, accompanied by a selection of snacks to bring out the best of each flavour. Everyone was urged to ask

themselves: "Does it look right, does it smell right and does it taste right?". Judging by the success of the evening, those three tests were passed.

Grand Prix weekend is fast approaching and the pub will be responding with its usual long opening hours. The restaurant will be in full flight, although the choices on its



constantly evolving menu have still to be released.

The monthly quiz evening continues to be well-supported. The February winning team, Barflies (below), won £63 which was donated to the Cynthia Spencer Hospice.

5-Again, the Watkins family team with Jan Miles, is becoming a regular winner – well, two in succession – last month donating the prize money of £110 to the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, and this month to the Explorer Scouts to support two scouts who each have to raise £2,100 to

attend next year's world jamboree in Sweden.

Dates have been set for the rest of the year, the next few being 15th June, 13th July and 3rd August. So do make a note on your calendar and come along to these light-hearted evenings, with supper included. The rest of the year's fixtures are available from the pub.

The darts team has had a very good season. With only three more matches to go they are near the top of the Village Darts league. And the skittles team is also doing better than expected. They will soon be swapping the winter schedule for the Daventry summer league.

NORTHANTS 50+ NETWORK

A roadshow will be held at Lings Forum Centre, Weston Favell, from 1pm to 4.30pm on Wednesday 23rd June. You can sample various activities, hear about local groups or find out how to stay healthy. There are free taster sessions of tai chi, dancing, indoor curling and bowls, a gardening demonstration and over 40 stalls.

ROADSIDE ART

The somewhat ironic pictures published in our last issue were intended to draw attention to the unacceptable amount of rubbish polluting our verges, especially near the Macdonald's roundabout.

South Northamptonshire Council is responsible for clearing this particular

road, which is subject to a variable schedule of litter picking rather than a regular planned timetable. Whether it was the prompting telephone call to the Environmental Services office or a very happy coincidence, the road from Towcester to Abthorpe is due to be cleared this week. The Council does agree that litter attracts litter in the same way as graffiti, so let's hope that once it's cleared it will stay pleasant for the summer at least.

But some rubbish can attain an historic status, such as the bottle found recently by Rob Capurro while out walking. It was embossed with the label W Blencowe & Co Ltd, Brackley and still had the hard stopper inserted. On investigation Rob discovered that Blencowe's ceased to exist when it was acquired by Hall's Oxford and West Brewery in 1925, and therefore it seems there is a good chance that Rob's bottle is at least 85 years old. Northampton Records Office documents show that back in 1925 The New Inn here in the village was part of Blencowe's estate with Charles Thomas Smith as the landlord, evidenced by the photograph currently in the pub. Hook Norton Brewery



bought five of Blencowe's pubs back in 1925 for a total of £3,175 but it is uncertain whether our pub was one of them. Now how did that bottle come to be in Brackley Lane undiscovered for all those years – and more interestingly, how did it get there?

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCH

The search for a new priest goes on. Canon Bridget Smith retired in March last year, and although the advertised post attracted some interest from several people this did not turn into actual applications. Further advertising was carried in the *Church Times* in April and is also to be included in a major motor sport magazine in the hope that the vacancy will be brought to the attention of a priest who is not actively seeking a move but who may be attracted by the inclusion of Silverstone Circuit in the parish. The benefice, which covers Abthorpe, Paulerspury, Silverstone, Slapton and Whittlebury, has close links with the circuit. Bridget regularly organised

chaplaincy functions at major events such as the British Grand Prix and led a "God slot" on Radio Silverstone on race days.

Lucky tote winners won £210 in March, and £212.50 in April.

FILM ABTHORPE

Following on from *Passport to Pimlico*, *The Last of the Blonde Bombshells* went down well. The cast of high-profile women actresses was excellent and Judi Dench gave her usual quality performance in a light, amusing film. Although set in modern times, the flashbacks to the 1940s and the dance music of the war era were evocative.

The next evening has been arranged for Thursday 20th May when the chosen film will be *An Education*, a recent film, but set in the early 1960s, an era many of us can relate to. It comes highly recommended and is Oscar-nominated, starring Carey Mulligan and Peter Sarsgaard. So do come along at 7.30 for a friendly and relaxing evening.

Abthorpe Open Gardens

Following the success of two years ago, this event is to be repeated on
Sunday 20th June

Seven gardens will be open from 2.00 – 5.00pm

Tea and homemade cakes will be an eighth highlight of the afternoon

All funds raised are in aid of St John the Baptist

VILLAGE FUND NEWS

You will all have had the flyer for the Barn Dance at Highfield Farm, courtesy of Liz and Barry Haycock, on Saturday 12th June starting at 7.00pm with Bricks and Brussels providing the music. Tickets are available now from Jan Miles (857427 or jan.miles@abthorpe.net) at £10 for adults, £5 for children, including supper.

The fish and chip supper and quiz was very successful raising £500 for activities for people in the village. In fact it was so popular that unfortunately some people had to be turned away, so early booking next time would be a good idea.

And the return of Cameo Opera will be on Saturday 27th November in the church. More details in due course.

INVITATION FROM WAPPENHAM CHAPEL

Wappenham Chapel invites all ladies to join with them for a service followed by tea and cakes on the second Wednesday of each month at 2.00pm, beginning on 9th June. A visiting speaker will give a short address to each meeting, and everyone will be made very welcome. Transport can be provided; please ring 01327 351292.

ELECTION RESULTS

The interesting(!) outcome to the election is well known by everyone, each of whom will have their own opinion. The results for our new

constituency of Northamptonshire South were unsurprising even given the boundary changes.

Andrea Leadsom won for the Conservative with 33,081, a slight increase on the previous election (notionally, because of the boundary change); the Liberal Democrat Scott Collins was second with 12,603; Matthew May, Labour, 10,380 which was quite a drop; Barry Mahoney, UK Independence Party 2,406; Tony Tappy, English Democrats 735; Marcus Rock, Green 685. Andrea Leadsom's majority was 20,478 on an increased turnout of 73%.

'OFF-KEY SINGERS'

An interesting idea has been launched in Greens Norton to encourage people who have little or no singing ability to be trained by a professional tutor and have fun doing so. The brainchild of Jonathan Kingsleigh-Smith, the group meets each Friday evening in term time from 7.30 to 9.00pm in the Village Hall. The idea is to have 'serious fun' while gaining confidence to participate in any situation requiring singing, rather than miming which many 'non-singers' resort to. The pre-requisite is that you do not already sing like a canary. The group sounds extremely friendly and a safe environment in which it is OK to be off-key!

If you are interested, do give Jonathan a call on 352394. He has secured a grant towards the cost of the

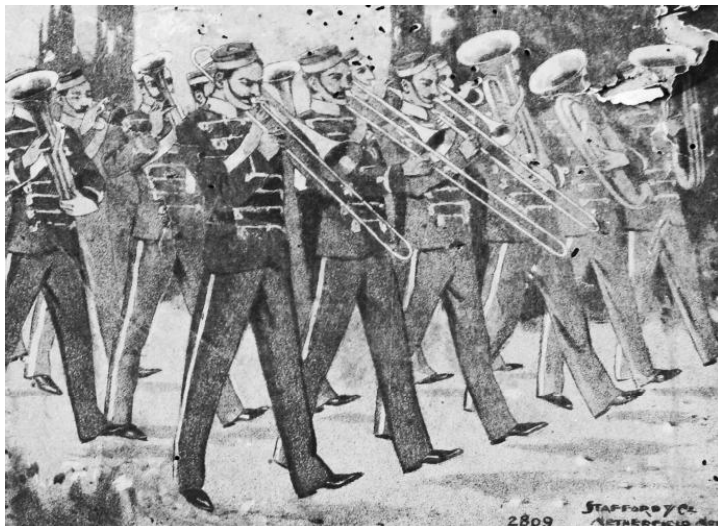
tutor and only asks £1 per session. The first is a taster, after which you will be asked to pay for the term whether you are able to attend or not, so that a fund can be built up to replace the grant when it runs out.

GRAND PRIX WEEKEND ACCOMMODATION

As you may be aware, accommodation around Silverstone Circuit is in very short supply. If you would like to consider offering bed and breakfast for visitors to the meeting there is a locally-based website which publicises accommodation in homes which are not necessarily professional 'B&Bers'. Have a look at www.trackrooms.co.uk. It also covers other event weekends at the circuit.

ABTHORPE PAST

A piece that John Riches contributed to the *Chronicle & Echo* has stirred memories, much as the old bus did in our previous issue. Ivor Floyd of Silverstone started it all off with mention of a poster given to him as a souvenir by Eric Snelson advertising the fifth annual brass band competition to be held in the Vicarage gardens (now Leeson House) on 4th October 1902. There was a record entry of 12 bands and the judge, Mr J.E Fidler of Earls Barton, had to decide who won prizes totalling £15 – a lot of money back in those days. The gates opened at one o'clock with the competition starting at 1.30pm sharp! Admission was 1/- (one shilling) although after 2.30 it dropped to 6d (six old pence.) Children entered for half price. Solid silver medals in a case were presented to the



best soloists on the cornet, euphonium and trombone. A special prize of £1 was given to the best turned out band. Tea and refreshments were supplied by Mr J Douglas of the Compasses Hotel in nearby Silverstone and Mr Arthur Chapman. The winning band had the honour of playing for the dancing after

the contest in the evening.

Which of the 12 competing bands won the competition is not now known. But as a photograph was taken of the Abthorpe band around that time and found its way onto the celebratory Millennium disc



there's a good chance that our boys did well.

Mrs Olive Holton of Helmdon subsequently got in touch to say her late husband, Dick, had told her tales about the band. It won a competition and marched in triumph from Wappenham railway station up the hill into Abthorpe. Mrs Holton was aware that the band was still playing in 1930, and probably ceased to exist at the outbreak of the Second World War, but it would be interesting to learn if there is any evidence to support this theory. Some of the members later joined the Towcester band.

Mrs Holton was able to name all of the bandsmen. They were: Ernest Rush, Bill Bates, Charles Henson, Joseph Snelson, Fielding Child, John Barrett, Bill Bates, Bill Timms, Frank Middleton, Bill Kendall, George Snelson, J Kendall, Bill Foster, Harry Barrett and Charlie Foster – many surnames still familiar in the village today.

HIGH SPEED RAILWAY LINE

When the proposals for a high speed railway line from London to Birmingham were published earlier this year, everyone concentrated on the preferred route which runs via Brackley and then towards Banbury and misses the Abthorpe area completely. However, one of the alternatives which was considered and is described in some detail, runs to the east of Silverstone, close to Foscoate, between Bradden and Slapton and then west of Blakesley. The Government's White Paper makes clear that this route is not preferred as it involves a 22km tunnel under the Chilterns (the length of tunnelling out from London would

PEOPLE

John (Bill) Kendall died on 11th May. He had been living at Ridgway House in Towcester after suffering a stroke three years ago. Despite that, John's mind was still as active as ever and he continued to take an interest in what was going on here. He remained a parish councillor, having served since 1966. So, as well as being Abthorpe's oldest man, he was also one of the longest-ever serving councillors.

Known to his family as John, but Bill to everyone else, he was born and bred in the village and retained the lovely, attractive local accent that is fast disappearing. He attended Abthorpe village school and remembered a host of detail about those happy days before the Second World War, including the time when he kicked a ball through one of the school's windows and as a punishment was forced to walk round the Vicarage garden each playtime for three weeks.



Bill left school in 1937 and found work as a lad porter at Towcester Station where Tesco's store now stands. That began his life long career and love of railways. Apart from a short period in the RAF during the war, he continued working on the railway until he retired in 1986, mainly as a signaller. But that meant moving to different stations in the area as lines such as the Great Central closed or new signalling systems were introduced as on the electrified line through Blisworth. Still, he was able to finish his working life in a traditional mechanical signal box.

Bill moved with his mother into one of the first houses to be occupied in Brackley Lane, in 1946, and continued to live there until his illness. His garden and hedge were always immaculately kept. Bill took a keen interest in local affairs. Hardly a Parish Council meeting passed without him raising one or two points of concern which had been brought to his notice. Everyone knew that he could be relied on to get problems sorted out.

Bill, a bachelor, is survived by his sister Rene. Our sympathies go to her and all her extended family.

PEOPLE (CONTD)

The latest couple to have discovered Abthorpe are Lisa Baldwin and Simon Coe who have moved into 26a Wappenham Road. They are already familiar with the area having moved from Towcester, but prefer the distinctiveness of a village and the good walking that's on the doorstep. Lisa runs her own company based at Caswell providing marketing services for western companies in China. Although Simon's main business is exhibition management – he is show director for the Boat and Caravan Show – he has an interesting new venture providing multi-media centres for caravans, boats and horse boxes. We hope they will enjoy living in Abthorpe.

be similar to that under the Channel) and does not allow Heathrow airport to be served. It is also clear in the White Paper that the public consultation will not involve either this alternative or one other which was also developed. The plans prepared for the preferred route are to a much greater level of detail, so it is clear that the route through Abthorpe parish is not being taken any further.

The White Paper was, of course, issued by the previous government. What difference our new coalition will make is yet to be determined. Serving Heathrow was a significant part of the Conservative's support for the project, but whether the project will even survive the difficult economic times to come must be in some doubt.

U3A COMES TO TOWCESTER

The University of the Third Age started life in France in 1972 and the germ of the idea quickly spread to the UK.

On 28th April, a group whose interest had been sparked by the thought of a local branch met in Towcester. Rachel Charles has reported enthusiastically on the meeting: "Ninety three eager learners came along to hear how the U3A works and to decide whether it would work for them. The speaker sent from head office - impressively a specialist in mediaeval English while in her second age - explained that the point of U3A is to bring together people who want to pursue a mutual interest or area of study and then to help them to do it. Our interests could be anything from the traditionally academic, such as language learning, through the practical, such as gardening, to the frankly recreational, such as bridge. Once interest groups have been identified and made known to each other, they themselves decide how to go about learning. This might be going to each others' houses in turn to listen to language tapes, hiring a

tutor for a course of lectures or renting a workshop. U3A helps with access to a wide range of learning resources, including Open University materials, and with advice when needed. It sounded marvellous, but would there be enough of us to make a Towcester branch viable?

"We were excited. We handed in our lists of two or three most wanted interests and waited for head office to speak. Yes, we had met the numbers criterion with lots to spare. And it was clear that many interests had enough devotees to have groups running within a few weeks. Languages topped the list - especially Spanish - and local history, family history, wine tasting, bridge and architecture were among the many others."

A steering committee met last week to start organising, and there will be a meeting for everybody to start up the interest groups on 26th May in Towcester Town Hall at 2.00pm. The subscription is £15 a year. Denise Rowe on 01327 350405 can help with further information.

EVENTS

Monday 17 May

Annual Parish Meeting, the Old School, 7.45pm

Thursday 20 May

Film Abthorpe: *An Education*, the Old School, 7.30pm - free

Monday 24 May

Parish Council AGM, the Old School, 7.45pm

Wednesday 26th May

U3A inaugural meeting, Towcester Town Hall, 2.00pm

Saturday 12 June

Barn Dance at Highfield Farm, 7.00pm, £10/£5 including supper

Tuesday 15 June

Charity Quiz, The New Inn, 8.00pm, £3.00 including supper

Sunday 20 June

Abthorpe Open Gardens, 2.00 – 5.00pm

British Moto Grand Prix, Silverstone

Sunday 11 July

British Formula 1 Grand Prix, Silverstone

Tuesdays 13 July and 3 August

Charity Quiz, The New Inn, 8.00pm, £3.00 including supper