

ABTALK



EDITORS' WELCOME

Who would have thought when we compiled our previous edition of Abtalk in May - the 'Lockdown edition' - that we would be in Lockdown 2 as we prepared this final edition of the year? Many of us optimistically thought that the worst was behind us and that we could begin to look forward to a return to normality. How wrong we were! However, 'Looking Forward not Back' is the theme of this issue as we look towards Christmas and hopefully better times to come in 2021. The next edition of Abtalk should be published in February/March so, with this in mind, please let us know about any events or interesting news that you know or hear about over the coming weeks and would like to share. In the meantime, stay safe and look out for each other.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Parish Council have continued to meet every 6 weeks or so remotely via the Zoom platform due to the ongoing pandemic.

Since the last edition of Abtalk we have completed the work to sort out the waterlogged area on the Green. We managed to get the water flowing with the use of rods and, as this seems to have been successful, we then went

on to repair the drain cover which was allowing soil and debris to get into the outflow pipe of the drain, thereby causing blockages.

There has been one change to the Council membership, with David Cambray resigning and, after completing the usual process, I am pleased to say that Max Kellner has been co-opted on to the Parish Council. Hopefully Max will be able to join us at the next scheduled meeting in late November.

Two main issues have been discussed at the last few meetings: firstly, the excessive speed of some motorists driving through the village, and secondly, parking on the Green.

Speeding through the village

This is a long-standing but serious problem, and one which has been highlighted again recently. On two occasions a resident on the Wappenham Road has had her car damaged by cars speeding through the village. In the first incident the mother was helping her young child get into the family car when a car from the Wappenham direction scraped along the side of her car, narrowly missing her son, but causing an injury to the resident's wrist which required attendance at A&E. The child involved would have

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been hit but for the quick thinking of his mother. The second incident saw another speeding car hit and destroy the wing mirror of the same resident's car. This was witnessed by the resident.

The whole issue was discussed at the latest Council meeting with helpful contributions from the family involved and another villager who lives nearby. It was decided to contact the Northamptonshire Police Safer Roads Team to request the presence of the speed enforcement van in the village as a deterrent and to slow vehicles down. It is pleasing to report that the police have already responded to our request, as can be seen in the photograph below.



We also have a group of volunteers ready to be trained on the Community Speedwatch scheme. Unfortunately, as things stand, there is no new training going on because of the pandemic, but we are on the waiting list.

We will see what effect the speed enforcement van has on the problem, but we will continue to monitor this difficult but very serious issue.



Parking on the Green

As the number of cars increases nationally, the situation in Abthorpe is no exception. There has been an increase in the need to park cars around the Green, by both villagers and visitors alike. This has unfortunately led to the occasional disagreement and raised voices.

The problem is not only where people park on the roads, but also the fact that sometimes the grass is used for parking on. This causes a problem for those who kindly keep the grass mown so neatly and of course in wet conditions it will lead to churning up of the grass, which would be a great pity.

We would therefore ask everyone to be considerate and respectful when parking in the area of the Green and under no circumstances to park on the grass itself. Thank you.

Village Defibrillator

Lastly, we are in the process of renewing some of the glass panels in the old telephone box, including extra signs to make it more obvious that it now houses the Village Defibrillator.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY



Is it on? Is it off? Despite initially being advised that the short ceremony planned at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday would have to be cancelled, the restrictions were then lifted and the green light given. It was a moving sight to see so many people standing on the Green, all drawn by a common feeling that - whatever is happening in our world today - we must never forget the debt we owe to those of the past. A comparison was made between our current situation under the threat of Covid-19 and the hardship and suffering endured in the Second World

War, particularly relevant as the village and national celebrations planned to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the ending of the latter were cancelled because of the arrival of the former. Are we being as stoical as those who lived through the war years? Are we rising to the challenge? Are we putting

the lives of others and the needs of the country above our own? These were the questions that were posed. We were reminded too that the Queen, in her address to the nation in May, reiterated the message of VE Day - namely "never give up, never despair". It therefore seemed fitting that, as the ceremony ended, the voice of Katherine Jenkins soared across the Green as she sang her poignant and moving rendition of 'Somewhere over the Rainbow'.

STOP PRESS: Donations made to the British Legion amounted to £469.00!

Right: Mike Greenhalgh lays wreath on behalf of Abthorpe residents

Left: Villagers observing social distancing at the Remembrance ceremony

UPDATE ON ABbA

ABbA, or TVB as most people know it, continues to be supported and run by a very special group of volunteers without whom it would not function.

Given the situation we have all encountered this year, the main focus has been keeping all the systems running smoothly and reliably in spite of the approximate 30% increase in network traffic due to home schooling and working from home.

The TVB team has managed to increase the fibre optic coverage to approximately 25% of the village with plans for more next year; the wireless side of the network is also being upgraded for improved reliability and capacity.

Getting the Church services online and more accessible has also been a significant and noteworthy achievement.

Please continue to use the ticket system to feedback any problems and the TVB volunteers will do their best to resolve these as quickly as they are able.



SOMETHING FISHY IS GOING ON IN ABTHORPE

While most of us are slumbering peacefully - it is 2.00 am in the morning, for goodness sake - the intrepid entrepreneurs from the New Inn set off for a weekly trip to our capital city. Why? Well, one of the ways Stuart and Rob and the team have diversified their trade this year is by the sale of Fish selection boxes: 5 generous two-person meals of beautiful fresh salmon, sea bass, haddock/cod, bream and king prawns delivered to your door for just £30. So, where do you go to buy fish? Billingsgate of course! Here's an account of what awaits those who venture there.....

Your first impression on arriving at the famous Billingsgate Fish Market in London's Isle of Dogs is "wow - it's vast!" For indeed it is, covering as it

does a huge 13 acre site. On entering the building you are faced with the largest internal fish market in the UK, one that sells up to 35,000 tonnes of fish a year (that's a heck of a lot of fish!). Ahead of you are 98 stalls spread out as far as the eye can see. At first it is rather an overwhelming experience. The smell of fish is ever present, unsurprisingly, and it's wet, very wet indeed.

The movement inside is matter of fact and urgent. Jobs need to be done, and fast. Pallet trolleys race by, followed by tough men in wellies. "Legs!"- that's Billingsgate Market speak for "Oi, move out of the way!" The first rule of the market is watch out for the guys pulling big trolleys laden with boxes of seafood.

There is a lot of shouting and shrill ringing of phones, deals are being struck, and fish slapped and slipped

into boxes. Occasionally a bucket of water is chucked down the concourse to wash everything down. Prices are scribbled on boards and white-coated merchants stand in front of them wrapped underneath in warm fleeces and wearing beanie hats. Unflattering stark bright lights add to the feeling of urgency, jolting you wide awake - even at the ungodly hour of 4.00 am. Yes, while most of the capital is asleep, in here it is all go.

Within a couple of hours the market is mostly finished, the floors washed, the pallets stowed. Fish have been piled into the back of vans and are being whizzed to restaurants, hotels and chippies. However, before they leave, many customers manage to slip in a visit to Piggys, the little café at the entrance where the favourite is a bacon and scallop roll with a mug of tea. Perfect!

*Early morning
scene at
Billingsgate
Fish Market*





WAITROSE FACES STRONG COMPETITION FROM... ABTHORPE VILLAGE SHOP??

Once again, the New Inn has come up trumps! In the space of just four days, what began as a "hey, what about if we...." became a reality as our favourite local turned itself into a village shop. At 9.00 am on Saturday 7th November the first customer bought a beautiful fresh cabbage, a flagon of Hooky and three or four grocery items, and Lynn and the team's first day as shopkeepers had begun.

The range of produce is impressive. There are fresh fruit and vegetables sourced locally from Duncombes in Helmdon and others, fresh meat from Brackley award-winning butchers

Sam, Josh and Lynn all ready for customers

Smith and Clay, as well as lamb from Slapton, and Billingsgate fish. Also available are essential groceries, fresh milk, eggs and cheese, and, of course, wine and beer. In addition, freshly made ready meals and handmade





Stuart displaying his goods

desserts and other sweet treats can be purchased.

Smiths Store, as it is officially called, will be open every weekday from 8.30 am until 7 pm and at the weekends from 8.30 am until 5.30 pm on Saturday and from 10.00 am to 5.30 pm on Sunday.

For the duration of Covid-19 restrictions, a strict one-way system will operate with customers entering from the side door and exiting out of the front, and only 2 people will be allowed in at a time. Customers must wear face masks and are asked to use the hand sanitiser as they enter.

CHRISTMAS IS NOT CANCELLED – IT’S JUST DIFFERENT THIS YEAR

Many of the traditional events associated with the weeks leading up to Christmas will have to take on a different format this year but that doesn’t mean they are not happening. Be ready for the following events:



Beer and Carols

No queuing at the bar, no Standing Room Only, no groups singing at different speeds. Instead you can join Rev Paul and other villagers via the 2020 phenomenon of Zoom from the comfort of your own homes. Piano accompaniment (in the loosest possible definition of the term) will

be provided by Elizabeth Smith from her home in Towcester and the Rev Paul will arrange for the words of the carols to be displayed on your desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile for you to sing along to. Since all participants will be 'muted', those of you who are a little self-conscious about singing in public can sing as lustily as you like with no-one able to hear you except other members of your household! The Rev Paul has promised, by popular demand (who are these people?), to intersperse the carols with his seemingly inexhaustible supply of truly awful Christmas cracker jokes. As Rob has normally been very generous in supplying snacks at these events, perhaps it would be a nice gesture to support him by buying bottles of beer and wine from The New Inn in advance?

So... a date for your diary:
Thursday 17th December at 7 pm
online only via Zoom

The Meeting ID and the Passcode for this and for the following Zoom invitation events are:
Meeting ID: 332 785 8101
Passcode: 834545

Please note that the maximum number of screens that can be opened for a Zoom event is 100 (although a whole household can just use one screen) so don't leave it until the last minute to join.

Carol Service



Since singing is still not permitted in church buildings, this will be an **online service only**. It will be on **Christmas Eve** as is traditional in Abthorpe, but will be held **at 6pm** rather than the usual 4 pm. Again, the Rev Paul will lead the service via Zoom and the words will appear on screen, so all you have to do is provide the refreshments for yourselves - mulled wine and mince pies would be the traditional festive fare at this event, but hey..... you can have whatever takes your fancy!

Doorstep Carols



Remember how, back in the first Lockdown, every Thursday evening at 8 pm we came out of our front doors and clapped the NHS and key workers? Well, since **Christmas Eve** happens to fall on a Thursday this year, we are suggesting that we all stand on our doorsteps (suitably attired in Christmas jumpers and Father Christmas hats and bedecked with tinsel, if you like) **at exactly 8 pm** and sing two carols - as near in unison as we can! The first carol will be 'Away in A Manger' and the second 'Silent Night'. For your convenience the words are reproduced on page 13.

AUTUMN IN ABTHORPE





Photographs by David Robbins



*Yellowhammer seen
in Abthorpe garden in
November*



Christmas Eve 8pm: Carols from your Doorstep

Away in A Manger

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet
head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down
where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from
the Sky,
And stay by my side until morning is
nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to
stay
Close by me for ever, and love me, I
pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender
care
And fit us for heaven, to live with Thee
there.*

Silent Night

*Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is
bright,
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy Infant, so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in
heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night! Shepherds
quake, at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Saviour is born. Christ the
Saviour is born.*

*Silent night, holy night! Son of God,
love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth. Jesus, Lord, at
Thy birth.*

Christmas Day

For those who would normally attend Church on Christmas morning, there will sadly be no service in Abthorpe, but the service for the whole benefice (ie the parishes of Silverstone, Abthorpe, Slapton, Whittlebury and Paulerspury) will take place at St James the Great church in Paulerspury, this being the largest of the five churches. Places will be limited due to the need for social distancing, so if you would like to attend you need to e-mail Rev Paul:

revpaulmcleod@btinternet.com and book a place. These will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. The service will begin at 10 am. For those who wish to celebrate from home, the service will be streamed live via Zoom. Since the service will also be recorded you can access it via YouTube or Facebook at a later time, if you so wish.

But there is more

Lighting up of the Christmas Tree

Government restrictions allowing, we are hoping to have a short festive event on the Green when the Christmas Tree lights will be ceremoniously switched on (ok, so it's not exactly Regent Street but we do our best) and villagers can enjoy a warming cup of cocoa or mulled wine and partake of a little Yuletide fare while Christmas music plays in the background. The date for this is pencilled in for **Sunday 13th December at 4 pm**. Please bring your own mug, dress up warm and come along!

Christingles



Many of us, particularly (but, let's be honest, not exclusively) the children, love the tradition of receiving a Christingle, normally at our

Christmas Eve carol concert. This year we are hoping to provide the means of making Christingles in your own home. The intention is to set up a collection point in the church porch where you may come and collect Christingle bags containing all the necessary items. This will be on the morning of **Saturday 19th December from 10.00 am until midday**. A collection bucket will be available at

the bag collection point for donations to the Children's Society. There will then be an **online Christingle Service**, which you may tune into so that you share the lighting of the Christingles with others in the parish and beyond. The service will be the same day **at 4 pm**.

Posada

Throughout Advent we will have Posada online appearing each day on our Facebook page, 'The Whittlewood Benefice'. Follow Mary, Joseph and the Donkey on their journey around our villages leading up to Christmas Day.

A Letter of Encouragement from our Rector

"We move on towards the great festival of Christmas. This is normally a time for our communities to come together for celebration and rejoicing. In 2020 things will be a little different, but this doesn't mean we need to celebrate less for there is still a great deal to celebrate.

As a Christian there is the joy of the commemoration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, yes, the child whose birth is celebrated is the Christ in Christmas!

In our communities we have seen so much change over this past year, some challenges and difficulties, sadly much grief and damage to the health, both physical and mental, of people we know and love, also to those we don't know, but who are still important.

Many of us have had to learn new ways of being. We've had to cope with Zoom or other platforms as we work or communicate from home and to use social media to help us keep in touch with one another.

I do not know how you will observe this festive season. I will be worshipping Christ Jesus, leading Christians in this, but in ways we might not have imagined possible this time last year. I also hope to spend time on the phone to my family, open a present or two and then share a Christmas meal with my wife Sue.

Whatever way you follow through this time of year, whether you are a believer in Christ Jesus or not, may you find a way to reflect on the positives of your life and experiences of this year. Find a way to recognise how wonderful you are, you are here and that is an amazing achievement. Have a care for those who struggle and, if need be, grieve for those who



Rev'd Paul spreading Christmas joy

haven't made it.

There is a wonderful sense of goodwill, generosity and hope that I pray transcends all the challenges of this year, or indeed of negativity, that we can choose to allow into our existence.

Perhaps the easiest way of expressing this is, choose life! Let life be good."

KEITH'S GREAT ADVENTURE

Abthorpe resident, Keith Burnett, is all set to take part in what he rightly calls 'a challenge of a lifetime'. The Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge is the world's toughest rowing race - over 3,000 miles unaided across the Atlantic Ocean. Many more people have reached the summit of Everest or travelled into space than have successfully rowed an ocean.

Next month, Keith and three friends will set off in their boat, 'For a Fitter Planet', from La Gomera, one of the smaller of the Canary Islands, with their sights firmly set on reaching the shores of Antigua in the Caribbean.

In pairs or threes they will row 2 hours-on, 2 hours-off, 24/7 for up to 40 days. They will endure extremes of weather, giant waves, physical and mental exhaustion, sun exposure, salt sores and nutrition deficiency.

One might well ask why would anyone want to take on such a monumental feat of endurance? Keith explains: "We are four great friends for whom this challenge indulges our

What are you having for Christmas dinner this year?

Surprising as it may seem, even in this relatively affluent area, some people don't have enough food to eat in normal times - let alone Christmas. Covid is making things even more difficult this year.

Unfortunately, we are not able to have a Foodbank collection box in the church this year—not even in the porch.

So we thought that we would put the box for Christmas specials in our front porch at 15, Wappenham Road.

Please take a look at this list and buy just one thing extra the next time you go to the supermarket.

Then just pop to our house and you will find the box ready for your donations.

**Richard and Carolynn
Tomalin**



Christmas Shopping List

Please buy an item from this list for the foodbank

- Mince Pies (*only a few*)
- * Tinned Ham
- * Christmas Pudding
- * Christmas Cake
- * Box of Biscuits
- * Children's Selection Box
- * Box of Chocolates
- * Large Bar Chocolate (150/200g)
- * Snacks & Nibbles (*e.g. peanuts*)
- * UHT Milk
- * Long life Fruit Juice
- * Cordial/ Squash

Thank you for your support

The box of Christmas goodies will have to be taken to the Foodbank by the middle of December.

Why not buy an extra item each week?

Please note: The closing date for adding items is 6th December

*Keith Burnett is pictured here
with his wife Bridget and sons,
Archie and Harry*

shared passion for competition and adventure, but more importantly, we are committed to raising maximum funds and awareness for two fantastic charities, which are close to our hearts: ShelterBox and WORKOUT FOR WATER.

"Our boat is a Rannoch R45 - the fastest ocean rowing boat in the world. She is 26ft long and weighs in at 1.4 tonnes (excluding oarsmen). There are two cabins (one at each end) each measuring around 6ft in length - leaving very little space for four rowers to catch 40 winks."

Keith says that he has always been very keen on sport and fitness and has spent his entire working life involved in this passion, now being the CEO, Global Markets for Les Mills International, the global fitness giant from New Zealand.

Keith continues:
"I played rugby to a high standard but was never quite good enough to avoid several major injuries. Since giving up rugby, I have enjoyed pushing myself in any physical challenge that has come my way. I have



run multiple marathons around the world, including the hardest race on the planet, the 'Marathon Des Sables' (MDS) in 2010.

Keith is a committed family man and says he is very grateful for the support of his wife Bridget. "I am on this mad adventure to inspire my two boys, Harry (18) and Archie (16), to be brave, dream big and to understand that anything is possible with passion, positive attitude and determination."

If you would like to learn more about the charities the team are



supporting and would be happy to sponsor Keith and help raise money for these very worthwhile causes, you can follow this link <http://fitterplanet.co.uk/>.

So, all that remains to be said, is "Good Luck, Keith and the team. We wish you all the best on your incredible adventure."

THE OLD SCHOOL IN DAYS GONE BY

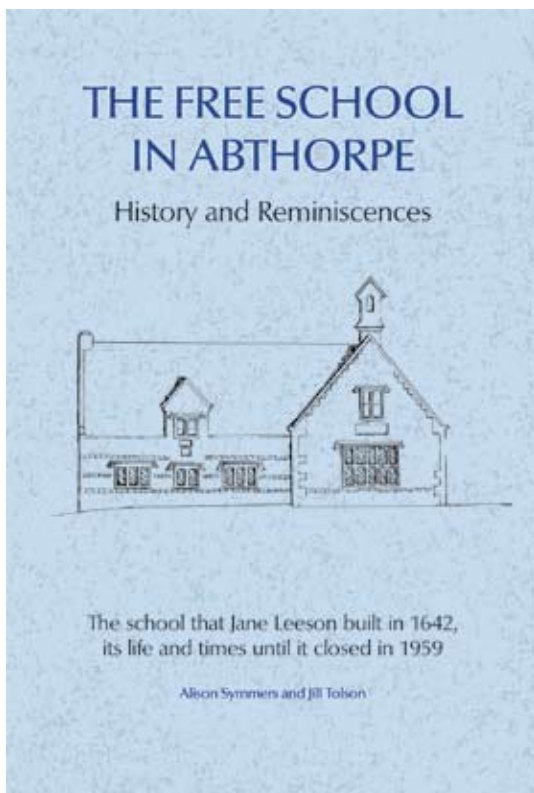
Alison Symmers and Jill Tolson have put together a small book about Abthorpe's unique 17th Century Old School, which is being published in December. The book traces the history of the school from its early beginnings in 1642 and research by the authors reveals the names - and glimpses of the characters - of all the Masters and teachers responsible for the education of our village children over 317 years. In addition, there are recollections from children who attended the school between 1924 to when it closed in 1959 capturing in a very personal way what life in a rural village school was like. Also highlighted in a photographic tour are details of the building itself that often go unnoticed.

Why not buy a copy for yourself or give as a Christmas present to family and friends? It is for sale at £8 - the same amount as the annual salary of the first Master! All profits will be going to the Old

School and copies can be pre-ordered from Lynn Neasham - oldschool@abthorpe.net.

THE 'MAST'ERFUL OAK

Anyone walking, riding or cycling through the local lanes and woods this autumn must have noticed the abundance of acorns forming a thick carpet on the ground. It seems that oak trees are having what is known as a mast year. Every few years these iconic trees of the English countryside produce a bumper crop of nuts in what



scientists have discovered is a very clever strategy to ensure that sufficient acorns survive to ensure the future survival of the species.

Now, you might well ask – if the oaks can do it one year, why don't they do it every year? This is where the trees are really rather cunning. If they always produced a huge supply of acorns, firstly, it would use so much of their energy that it would hamper their growth, but, more importantly, nature would respond by encouraging a population explosion of squirrels and mice and the like that would gorge themselves on the extra acorns leaving few to survive and germinate into next year's oak trees. So, by only having a mast year every so often, it tricks those pesky rodents into keeping their numbers down and then there are not enough of them when the oak trees surprise them with a bumper crop. Clever, eh?

What is more, if only one oak tree opted to have a mast year, the local squirrels, being so full that they just couldn't eat another acorn to save their life, would invite their friends and neighbours over for a feast and soon the surplus would have disappeared and the oaks might as well not have



A majestic single oak clothed in its autumn foliage

bothered.

So, here comes the second part of the cunning plan. The oaks somehow manage to communicate to all the oaks, not just in their local area, but in the whole country, (they really don't believe in doing things by half) and every one goes into mass production at the same time. Oaks 1 – Squirrels 0. Isn't nature wonderful?





'Bring Me Sunshine' are a group of Abthorpe volunteers that came together to support the village during Lockdown 1.0.

Now that we have entered Lockdown 2.0 we are still here to support. If you are self-isolating or can't get out and about for any reason, we can assist with supermarket shopping (over and above what is available in Smiths Local Stores at The New Inn), posting letters & parcels, drop off and collection of prescriptions, general errand running or just to have a chat.

Please feel free to call any of the numbers below*.....

Claire Zachar	07957 643 130
Emily Hayward-Humphrey	07801 030 443
Fi Noble	07734 880 482
Ian Hazlewood	07999 545 970
Julia Ford-Cordes	01327 857 750
Lynn Neasham	07767 082 594
Marc Burgess	07837 769 615
Martha Gray	07342 690 427
Michelle Jackson	07789 513 941
Rachel Stevens	07803 132 922
Sarah Jones	07731 423 251
Tina Emerton	07708 933 968
Tricia Maria Jones	07856 568 740

*Any requests will remain confidential

Thank you to all these kind helpers for their sterling efforts in caring for our village community