

# ABTALK



*News from Abthorpe  
October 2019*

*Personal message from Jill Tolson*

After 15 years of producing *Abtalk*, all good things must come to an end, and this will be my last issue. It's time for a change and I wish Alison Robbins and Tricia Holmes enjoyment in making the newsletter their own. Keith Fenwick will still be involved to give a guiding hand. I would like to thank everyone for their support over the years, in particular John Riches who has been a mainstay in seeking out interesting happenings in the village. Small as the community is, it's impressive how much is going on.

**PARISH COUNCIL**

*Keith Fenwick*

Mike Greenhalgh was elected chairman at our meeting on 1st July and we welcomed two new councillors, Chris Zachar and Rachel Stevens, who were co-opted to fill the vacancies. They will serve until the next elections which will now be held in May 2020.

The Council's finances remain in very good shape, especially as we receive a grant from the solar farm near Towcester. Part of that money this year has been given to the Old School to meet the unexpected cost of roof repairs, which had already

been undertaken, and the cost of soft furnishings.

The work to tidy up the paths around the village green has continued, with the path near the Millennium sign now looking very smart. More will be done in due course. The telephone box has received a new coat of paint, thanks to the voluntary effort of one of our newer residents, Steve Marshall.

Parking was mentioned in the last issue of *Abtalk*. As a result one parishioner drew attention to the problem of parked cars near the junction of School Lane and Wappenham Road where the road is very narrow. If cars are parked there, emergency vehicles cannot get by. So please observe the No Parking notice on the adjacent wall. We have approached the County Council about getting double yellow lines at that point, but it appears that the consultation and legal processes involved take up to 12 months.

The safety of the crossroads on the Towcester side of the village has also been raised, but again the County Council has not responded favourably to the suggestion of major improvements, such as a roundabout. But we will continue to search for

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simpler methods of reducing the risk of accidents.

We have always encouraged parishioners to attend our meetings and given them a chance to bring up any matters of concern. As a result of advice received, we are making a slight change in that a slot of 10 minutes will be close to the start of the agenda. This will enable councillors to discuss any points raised, although as always substantive decisions can only be made when an item is placed on the agenda before the meeting. The next meetings are scheduled for 4th November and 16th December.

## **GinFest 2019**

On a thankfully dry and, on occasions, sunny Saturday in early September, the second GinFest took place on the Green. This modern take on the traditional village fete was once again very well supported by both residents of Abthorpe and some from further afield – one couple from Crick just happened to be passing, saw the signs advertising the event, decided to have a quick look – and stayed for 3 hours. The gin-tasting was particularly popular with 12 different gins, including such delights as Tarquin's British Blackberry, New Town







Mango and Cucumber, and Alfred Button Lemon Sherbet, to sample.

But there were many other attractions too. Bunny Hutchings and his team had many satisfied customers at the Pig Roast, the Tea and Cakes tent did a brisk trade, and the children were well catered for with a Lucky Dip and some high-quality Face Painting. Perennial favourites such as Liz Haycock's Tombola, a Raffle with fantastic prizes, and a bar all added to the atmosphere, and the arrival of Dave Cambray's steam-driven Little Giant traction engine caused quite a stir. Keeping us all entertained was Terry's wonderful singing of many old favourite songs from the 60s and 70s.

This highly successful and enjoyable day could not of course have taken place without the inspiration and hard work of the GinFest team and the many other volunteers who all played their part – there were marquees and gazebos to erect (and indeed to re-erect thanks to gusty winds the night before), chairs and tables to move, hay bales to transport, cakes to make, raffle prizes to be begged for, and many more tasks. It was a true community effort – and all the better for that. And the culmination of all this was a hefty £2,567 profit – what a result!



*The GinFest in full swing*

*On the previous page Dave Cambray shows off his quarter scale working steam traction engine*

*On the left Bunny and his pig roast team - Sam Smith and Bernard Humphrey*

*Right: Trying the Lucky Dip*  
*Below: Gins on display*



## OLD SCHOOL NEWS

The Committee has not been resting on its laurels after the GinFest and is planning more social events for villagers to enjoy during 2020. But before then there will be a welcome return of the Truckers' Breakfast on Sunday 3rd November. The usual appetising English breakfast will be laid on from 8.45, last orders at 10.45, with endless cups of tea and toast. Small breakfasts are £6.50, large £8.00. These have become a pleasant way to start a lazy Sunday, chatting to friends and neighbours.

There are a number of interesting plans in the pipeline for next year, which include a games – of the board variety – afternoon, and the tantalisingly named 'Ritz with a Twist'. Full details of these will be developed shortly. And firm fixtures will be a quiz night, a race night in the autumn and another opportunity to sample the Truckers' Breakfast. Sprinkled between these events will be coffee mornings, which have proved so successful when being held at the weekend. If anyone fancies hosting one, please email [oldschool@abthorpe.net](mailto:oldschool@abthorpe.net).

Final touches have been put to the refurbishment of the main hall with the purchase of 50 new chairs, which fit in the specially designed storage seating, and some new tables bought very reasonably from Greens Norton Village Hall which is closing. So following a

rather expensive year, the Committee is now building up a fund to maintain the fabric of the building against future repairs. This has been aided by the success they have achieved in hiring it out to regular groups and one-off events. In fact, in September there was a party or function every weekend and more importantly everyone who attended was delighted with the facilities.

## CHURCH NEWS

*Barbara Malcomson  
[malcomson@abthorpe.net](mailto:malcomson@abthorpe.net)*

The summer months have been characterised by short bursts of activity interspersed with quieter spells. We have had a further two weddings which were lovely occasions and are described elsewhere in *Abtalk*. We hold just one service a month in the summer with the congregation from all five parishes in the benefice encouraged to worship together in the different churches by turn. As our service times do vary from one Sunday to another this can cause confusion. We are trying to rectify this and our notice board now displays times of services in our church for the month ahead as well as details of what is going on in the benefice. We hope that this will help.

The long growing season does mean of course that there has been more to do outside. The team of people on the mowing rota has done

a splendid job keeping the churchyard in tiptop condition, as is fitting for the church's location in the centre of the village. It has not always been that easy finding time at the weekends to mow between the sharp showers, or during the heat wave and avoiding the times of the weddings. Thank you to all the mowing team and also to Steve Noble who has looked after the churchyard extension for a good few years now. If anyone feels they would like to join the mowing team, please contact me.

We had an audit visit in August from Rev'd Richard Ormston, the Archdeacon of Northampton. Everything he needed to see in the church was easy to find and in good order, thanks to Richard Tomalin's organisation in the past. It was a very encouraging visit and we had some positive comments from him.

In September we were thrilled that, at long last, we have got the faculty to carry out the work inside the church on the north side. A faculty is the permission to carry out work on a church building. We removed the pews on the north side as a temporary measure in November 2015. The space this created has been very useful and it is good that we can now go ahead and complete the work. We know we have a big task ahead, a massive amount of fundraising to do and Richard Tomalin is working hard at getting grants.

Clare Ray and Lesley Dale from the benefice held another children's event in the Old School at the beginning of the school summer holidays. The circus theme was much enjoyed by the children who came. Another event is now being planned for the start of the Christmas holidays based on the Christingle. This will be held in the afternoon of Saturday 7th December in Silverstone Church Rooms and children from Abthorpe are most welcome.

All five PCCs have had meetings to discuss weddings in our churches. We unanimously agreed that if a couple have a qualifying connection to marry in a particular parish church this should be extended to allow them to marry in any of the churches in the benefice. The Bishop approved and we look forward to welcoming two couples from Slapton who will marry in our church next year.

We have had another good summer with our monthly Tea and Piece events. It has been lovely to see some new faces, as well as welcome back regulars. The last of these events took place in October and we will now be taking a break until next spring.

Very recently the church was the venue for another baptism. This time it was the turn of Davey-Bob Fletcher, whose parents live at Mini Farm. His arrival means that he and his older brothers can now field their own 5-a-side football team should they so wish in the future.



The winners of the Tote were Tina and Darren Emerton in July, John Riches in August, Ben and Maisie Holland in September and Keith Fenwick in October. We hope they all enjoy a little spending spree with their prize money.

It would be nice to have a good turnout for our Act of Remembrance. Last year, being 100 years since the end of the First World War we held a very special service, but this year we will be meeting at the War Memorial for a simple 15 minute event, after which everyone is invited into the church for coffee and home-made refreshments.

### **Services for the rest of the year:**

*10th November 10.45am Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial followed by refreshments in church*

*17th November 9.15am Holy Eucharist Service followed by coffee*

*8th December 11.00am Holy Eucharist Service*

*15th December 9.15am Holy Eucharist Service followed by coffee*

*24th December 4.00pm Christingle and Carol Service followed by mulled wine and mince pies*

*25th December 9.15am Christmas Day Eucharist Service*

Once again Mike & Jill Greenhalgh are kindly hosting a pre-Christmas Coffee Morning at their home (Fawe Park, Wappenham Road) from 10.00am – 12 noon on Saturday December 7th. There will be a chance to win a homemade Christmas Cake and Christmas Pudding as well as the opportunity to buy Christmas wreaths and decorations.

The Village Christmas tree will once again be put up in the churchyard. The Christmas tree lighting will take place on December 8th. More details will follow nearer the time.

Reverend Paul has just arranged with Rob at the New Inn that he will lead villagers in the now traditional Beer and Carols evening on Wednesday December 18th starting at 7.00pm.

We will be making the Christingles on Monday 23rd December in the Old School, starting at 10am. Everyone is very welcome to join us – it is a jolly occasion and provides a good opportunity for children to help.

Since we are already planning Christmas, it does not seem too early for all of us from St John the Baptist Church to wish you all a Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

### **HARVEST TIME IN ABTHORPE**

As we look around at the ploughed stubble fields and hear tractors rumbling past on the lanes, we are reminded that the farmers' year has come full circle and harvesting





Spanish paella  
being served  
at the Harvest  
Supper ....

.... and being  
enjoyed  
by those  
attending



is now complete. Like other rural communities throughout the country, Abthorpe celebrated this time by holding a Harvest Supper in the Old School, followed by Harvest Thanksgiving in church.

This year, as the date chosen for

Harvest Supper happened to fall on Hispania Day, the traditional fare of pies and crumbles was replaced by Spanish cuisine. Paella and Catalan beef stew were on offer, followed by churros and chocolate dipping sauce, all accompanied by Spanish wines.

Between courses a quiz with a Spanish theme kept diners busy. The change of menu appeared to be well received and all who came enjoyed the gentle atmosphere of this most traditional of celebrations.

The following day the Harvest Thanksgiving service in church began with members of the congregation taking up offerings of produce, whilst Abthorpe farmers Barry and Liz Haycock had, as always, placed a sheaf of corn and a sack of grain at the front of the nave. The service ended with the familiar and much-loved hymn 'We plough the fields and scatter'.

The fresh produce from the Harvest Thanksgiving was donated to the Hope Centre in Northampton whilst the

non-perishable items were taken to Towcester Food Bank.

### TOWCESTER FOOD BANK

We make no apologies for reminding everyone once again about the food box at the back of the church where donations can be made to Towcester Food



**Feeding the Community**

Bank. The church is usually open every day during normal working hours. If you would like to know more about the Food Bank there is a lot of interesting information to be found at <https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/how-foodbanks-work>. A food parcel provides 3 days' worth of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food. It typically includes breakfast cereals, soup, pasta, rice, pasta sauce, tinned beans, tinned meat, tinned vegetables, tinned fruit, tea or coffee, sugar, biscuits and snacks. Currently the Food Bank is very well stocked with pasta and baked beans but would welcome donations of any of the following items: powdered milk, tinned carrots, tinned potatoes, coffee, custard powder and jam.

As Christmas approaches, we have a second food box in church for seasonal donations – but again these must be non-perishable.



## **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RIDE + STRIDE**

This annual event took place on Saturday 14th September. If you happened to be walking near the church on that day and came across a sweaty cyclist or a worn-out walker, the chances are you had just met a Ride-and-Strider. These stalwart folk had chosen to visit as many churches as possible during the course of the day and get sponsored for doing so. On this occasion Abthorpe church had 17 visitors, who were treated to light refreshments before moving on to their next destination – with a precious stamp on their card as evidence of their visit. The money raised by each participant is divided equally between the Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust and a church of their choice. The NHCT uses the money raised to give grants to churches in the county for their preservation, repair and maintenance or improvements. Anyone can take part, and you can choose a route and means of transport to suit yourself, so why not think about it for next year – it is an excellent and original way of getting plenty of fresh air and exercise, enjoying our local countryside and visiting some of our lovely old buildings as well as doing your bit to preserve them for future generations.

## **NEWS FROM THE NEW INN**

After winning the Midlands category of the Rural Oscars organised by Countryside Alliance, Rob and his team set out for the House of Lords in June to compete for the title of Champion of the Pub category in the national finals. That accolade was not to be (although there was some local success with Brackley Butchers winning the Butchery section), but Rob, Stuart, Lyn, Josh, Hannah and Sam had a wonderful day out, with lunch at the Hard Rock Cafe after the



*Sam and Rob on the Throne  
at the Ice Bar*





*With Andrea Leadsom MP on the far right are from L to R: Hannah, Josh, Rob, Lyn, Stuart and Sam*

**Stop Press:** *Congratulations to Hannah on the safe arrival of her second baby son on October 11.*

grandeur of the Houses of Parliament followed by a trip to the Ice Bar. The photos speak for themselves, and Josh has created an album of memories which they will surely be proud to show anyone who asks at the bar.

The AbFab music festival and pig roast in July hit the spot, attracting a large number of people who were well entertained, fed and watered.

The new extension is now complete and adding a surprising amount of space. The kitchen enlargement is pretty much there, making Steve & co's working environment so much easier. Judging how busy the dining is, it all seems to have been worth it.

So Stuart Jones, who does not have too much time to enjoy his cooking skills while running a multi-site restaurant business, has decided to put on gastronomic evenings on the second Monday of each month. The menu will be five courses of his creation and include wine he has selected to complement each course: think Foodie Evening. There will be no table plan; this will be a gathering of like-minded gourmets. At £40 per head, all inclusive, and limited to 24 people it is priced to share rather than make him a rich man. The menu will be revealed when booking and of course allergens will be taken into account.

There are plans to use one of these evenings to support Millie Wildsmith-Lister's fundraising for her participation in World Challenge. In

addition to school work Millie is one of the waitresses in the restaurant who is embracing the challenge of raising £4,920 to go to Botswana next year to help the local community in one of the villages. She also hopes to assist at a rhino sanctuary. To this end, she is doing the Three Peaks challenge and her dad is running several half marathons helping to add to the coffers with sponsorship – forms available at the bar.

The quiz will not be forgotten in all this jollity, taking place on 24th

November and the bumper Christmas edition on 22nd December. Recent winners have been the Four Counties who sent a sizeable donation in June to the Towcester Food Bank; £147 from the Barflies to Riding for the Disabled in August; and Four Counties trounced everyone again in September, this time donating £160 to the Friends of Sponne School. In October quiz winners Tows on Tour donated £177 to the NSPCC.

And the regular Open Mic sessions on the second Sunday of the month are well worth dropping in to during the afternoon.

### **CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

The Christmas menu, already displayed in the bar, will be served from 3rd to 24th December alongside the specials board.

Christmas Day sees the bar open as usual from 12.00 to 2.00 – no food available.

On Boxing Day the bar will be open all day and a light lunch will be available from 12.00 to 3.00. Friday has the pub and restaurant back to normal.

The restaurant will be open on New Year's Eve from 12.00 to 5.00 and later that evening the usual New Year's celebrations will start, centring on music and a pig roast. For those with stamina, on New Year's Day the bar will be open all day and lunch available from 12.00 to 4.00.

### **TOVE VALLEY BROADBAND - OR 'ALL ON BOARD AND EAGER TO ROCK AND ROLL'**

*John Riches has been a stalwart supporter of ABbA in every respect from legwork to secretary for 16 years but is now leaving the village for pastures new. I have asked John to prepare this issue's contribution, as it is sadly likely to be the last he will make for ABbA. We send John our very best wishes for the future.*

*Eric Malcomson*

It is difficult for older folk to appreciate that people under about the age of 23 have no memories of the early days of our little not-for-profit company that has been very successfully providing us with broadband for the past 16 years.

It has gone down in local folklore that in early 2003 a group of Abthorpe

people were supping their pints of Hooky in the pub and at the same time were bemoaning the fact that the major companies were unable to provide us with the much-needed broadband. So they decided that a do-it-yourself approach was needed. Thus the Abthorpe Broadband Association Ltd (ABbA) was born.

Back in 2003 ABbA had 50 members who 'enjoyed' download speeds of 1 Mbps. But it was better than nothing. As the internet became used for more and more purposes the company's directors ensured that its operational systems kept pace. Recently they have doubled the capacity of our connection to the internet, this being an important and necessary part of most people's lives. They require our system to provide not only e-mails and browsing the internet as in the early days, but also live TV, VOIP telephones, streaming films, social media, access to bank accounts, the ability to pay bills to the milkman, paper boy and window cleaner, and lots more besides.

ABbA aims to give all its members in due course the possibility of receiving their signal using a fibre-optic cable directly to their premises giving speeds up to 1000Mbps. Members with premises in the sector of the village on the east side of School Lane and the north side of Wappenham Road have had the option of FTTP (Fibre To The Premises) for two years or more. Now it has been the turn of another sector that lies on the south side of Wappenham Road and the east side of Brackley Lane. A letter was delivered to all premises in that part of the village and one director reported that there had been a very enthusiastic response and the residents were 'all on board and eager to rock and roll'. A most sophisticated piece of horizontal boring equipment recently laid ducting under the Wappenham Road to house



Celebration dance



the new fibre optic cable in just one morning. Gone are the days of digging a trench across the road! Observing members of the ABbA technical team watched delightedly and undertook an impromptu dance to celebrate.

The cost of installing fibre is expensive. Fortunately ABbA is now a very trusted provider of broadband to our local community and has obtained a government grant from the Gigabit Voucher Scheme that covers all the costs involved. Up to the present time the company has had six grants approved that overall add up to more than £150,000.

So please, next time you log onto the internet remember that we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many visionary, unpaid, enthusiastic volunteers who have made all this possible. Thank you!

## **A FAREWELL FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT AKA JOHN RICHES**

Back in August 2000 I fell off my motorbike at the Handley Bends. Although I received the last rites, thanks to the skills of NHS medical staff, I survived. Whilst I was recovering at home from my injuries, my friend and neighbour, Barbara Malcomson, suspecting quite rightly that I needed something to occupy my time, passed on a letter from our local newspaper *The Advertiser* asking if she or someone she knew was prepared to be a Village Correspondent and report

regularly about the happenings in our village. The rest – as they say – is history.

My first submission was on 15th March 2001. It was handwritten and was faxed to *The Advertiser's* office. It described how Angela Darling and Fred Huggins were re-elected as church wardens at our parish church – not world-shattering news, but just a snippet about life in a typical small rural community. Since then I have tried to submit a weekly report about happenings in Abthorpe, not only to *The Advertiser* but to other newspapers plus websites that appeared on the scene over the years. I have loved writing my reports and as a result have made many friends across this country and also abroad, including New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United States, Denmark and even Brazil.

But all good things come to an end. My wife Joyce died in October last year and I will shortly be moving to St Albans. "So who will be our new Village Correspondent?" I have been asked.

At the moment nobody has come forward. So, please, if you like writing and are inquisitive – my late wife said nosey – perhaps you could take on the job? I am happy to explain how I operate and help you initially if needed. Please pop round for a chat if you wish. My telephone number is 01327 857703.

## THE HERO CHALLENGE

On Saturday 28th September a good sprinkling of villagers, cameras at the ready, watched from the pavements and verges as over one hundred 'historic' (pre-1986) cars passed through Abthorpe as part



of the Hero (Historic Endurance Rallying Organisation) Events Challenge. Their route had begun at the Bicester Heritage Centre and wound for 140

miles through the country lanes of Northamptonshire and neighbouring counties. Although aimed at novice and intermediate drivers and their crews there was nothing amateurish about how well turned out their vehicles were.



One of the earliest arrivals in Abthorpe was the

wonderful 4.25 litre Bentley Derby dating from 1937, driven by proud owners Emily and Stuart Anderson who returned our waves as they passed through (top picture). Another was the Volvo (lower picture).

Europe's motoring heritage was on dazzling display as Austins and Porsches, Triumphs and Renaults, Saabs and Alfa Romeos (to name but a few) roared (slowly) through our village.

## REMINISCENCES OF SCHOOL LIFE

In February Alison Symmers and Jill Tolson embarked on a quest to discover more of the history of the Old School and in particular what it was like to be a pupil. Over the last few months they have had fascinating chats with a number of people who attended at different periods, spanning from 1924 to when it closed in 1959. How different from modern school life it was then.

For instance, water was collected from the farmyard next door (now Stone Barn) until a tap was installed in the playground in the 1940s; the two rooms were arranged differently as the numbers changed – in 1909 there were 102 children on the roll, down to about 12 before it closed – but always three or four years were taught together in the big room in different blocks; scarlet fever, chickenpox and diphtheria were not unknown; and Miss Abberley, the long-serving and generally fondly remembered head teacher, standing in front



*Abthorpe Old School Reunion*

*Standing from left: Bernard Copley, Brian Sanders, John Dudley, Peter Lawrence, Merrill Mayo, Gwen Blackburn*

*Seated from left: Lorna Hooper, Joyce Dines, Ruth Jessett, Graham Foster*



of the tortoise stove, which didn't do much for spreading warmth in the room. One lady even remembers being called outside to see the R101 airship come over the village in the late 20s.

All these wonderful conversations gave rise to an invitation to everyone who had taken part to revisit the school for tea and more chat. Reunions were made and seeing the school again prompted further memories.

There are still more people's memories to capture and the whole exercise is proving most absorbing.

### **NEWS FROM SILVERSTONE SCHOOL**

Silverstone School has welcomed four new members to the teaching staff for this academic year. It is a new school that continues to grow and as such has spaces available across most year groups, so please spread the word if you know of anyone who may like to join.

The Friends of Silverstone School (FoSS) have had a very successful fundraising year, adding £18,525 to fund various educational experiences such as class trips, workshops and a significant technology upgrade. Additionally they partnered with Silverstone Preschool helping the village raise £1,789 over the year.

The FoSS Christmas Fair will be on 1st December with the usual mix of games, stalls and festive cheer.

### **ART CLASSES AND EXHIBITION**

Paula Le Baigue, Abthorpe's own resident artist, has had a busy time recently preparing for the MA Fine Art Degree show at the University of Northampton. Paula specialises in creating large Oil on Canvas portraits, her work concept being greatly influenced by the styles of Lucien Freud and Jenny Saville. The theme of her entries for the exhibition was to tell the story of women who have been imprisoned, or, in one case, actually hanged, because of causing the death of their abusive partners. The impetus for this was driven by the new legal guidance passed in June 2017 on Coercive Control. Her canvases, as well as being portraits of the women, also try to convey how and why they were driven to commit such crimes and are both powerful and illuminating. Paula was delighted with how many people came to view her work and that of other exhibitors and the many favourable comments that were made.

Now that the exhibition is over and Paula has had time to catch her breath, she will soon be re-starting Art Classes in the Old School. There will be five classes each lasting two hours taking place on Saturday afternoons from 12pm until 2pm, the total cost being £70 which includes refreshments. The first class began on 19th October, and the rest follow at two-weekly intervals on 2nd November, 16th November,



Ruth Ellis - Hanged  
Oil on Canvas, 183 x 141 cm



Sally Challen - Mentally Tortured  
Oil on Canvas, 183 x 141 cm

etc, but you can still join. The theme of this set of classes is drawing pencil on paper and participants need to bring a sketchbook and drawing equipment.

In addition, Paula is running a 2-day Portrait class Oil on Canvas on 20th and 21st November from 10.00am to 3.00pm each day. The cost of this is £120.

All skill levels are welcome on both courses, so come along and release the inner artist in you! To book a place or to find out more, contact Paula at paulalebaigue@gmail.com or on 07738 561341.

## **A VERY NASTY BUSINESS**

As many of us have heard, there is a new and particularly unpleasant crime being carried out right on our doorstep with sheep being killed and butchered in their own fields under cover of darkness. The police believe that markers are being put on the perimeter fences and gates of sites which the perpetrators plan to target. Farmers have been asked to watch out for any such marks. However, some excellent news recently emerged that three Birmingham men have been arrested and charged with conspiracy to steal over a series of illegal sheep butchery offences after officers responded to reports of an offence in progress and stopped a vehicle on the A14. Let us hope that we have now seen the end of this gruesome and upsetting crime.

## **M O R E P O L I C E F O R NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

It has just been announced that Northamptonshire Police will be funded to recruit 57 additional officers by the end of 2020/21 in the first stage of the Government's uplift of police numbers. These 57 extra officers will be in addition to the 200 new officers that are currently being recruited as a result of the local council tax increase.

Further information on how to apply is available at [www.northants.police.uk/policeofficer](http://www.northants.police.uk/policeofficer).

## **KNITTERS NEEDED**

Following an appeal in May from the Domestic Abuse Prevention and Investigation Team (DAPIT), volunteers from across the county have been busy knitting, and as a result have so far donated more than 800 knitted bears.

When attending incidents at an address where there are children, police officers are being encouraged to give 'Bobby Buddies' to a child to offer some comfort at what can be a very confusing and frightening time for them.

To ensure there is a 'Bobby Buddy' available for every young child who needs one, the DAPIT need more knitters. So if you're an expert with a pair of knitting needles or know someone who would like to help, please email [Rachel.Percival@northants.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Rachel.Percival@northants.pnn.police.uk). A pattern will be supplied.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY PAYS OFF

Abthorpe Parish Council has benefitted quite significantly, both financially and environmentally, from the construction of the Handley Park solar farm adjoining our parish. Along with other parishes adjacent to the site, Abthorpe has received a share of the profits – to be precise, in the 3 years that have elapsed since the solar farm began producing green energy, we have been the recipient of no less than £9,350.

This very welcome extra income has allowed the Parish Council to fund, in addition to its statutory duties,

such extra activities as the repair of the church wall, the installation of new street lights and the upgrading of footpaths around the Green and the church.

## NEW ELECTRICITY POLE OR WOT'S GOIN' ON 'ERE THEN?

To the mechanically minded it was poetry in motion; to the scientifically minded it was all about power distribution; to children it was "a digger!"; to the rest of us it meant a slight disruption to our daily routine in order that a faulty pole at the junction of Main Street and Silver Street carrying overhead electricity







*A participant in the Cobblers Classic rides at speed as he nears the finish in Turweston Aerodrome*

wires was replaced by a new one. The skilled engineers worked quickly and efficiently so that those who had temporarily lost their electricity supply and internet connection were not inconvenienced for long.

### **COBBLERS CLASSIC SPORTIVE**

*John Riches*

Early one Saturday in October a steady stream totalling over 800 cyclists descended the hill on our Silverstone Road and at Abthorpe Crossroads a marshal directed some to the right and others to the left to pass through our village. All were taking part in the Cobbler Classic Sportive – a ride organised by Cycling Events UK that starts and finishes at Turweston Aerodrome. Three categories of this riding challenge were available for

entrants: 'Short' where riders are asked to pedal 26 miles, 'Standard' 61 miles and 'Epic' 103 miles - that is a serious day's cycling with entrants pedalling as far west as Napton-on-the-Hill in Warwickshire.

The entrants were young and old, female and male, very fit and less so. But all looked capable of

achieving their goal. It is emphasised that the event is non-competitive, but as people like to know how well they had ridden, each carries a chip in their compulsory helmet.

The entrants in the Short event completed their ride in 1½ to 2 hours. Those going for Standard took up to 5 hours, whilst in the Epic section the very fit managed the 103 miles in 6½ hours, although some took up to 9 hours or longer. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves and the event was very well organised with clear signage, and help available from the company's support vans and paramedic motorcyclists.

The Cobbler Classic Sportive seems to have become an annual event for Abthorpe and the surrounding villages. Long may it continue.

## PLUM PUDDING IS ON THE MENU ONCE MORE

For those new to the village, Plum Pudding is the unusual name for the fresh water spring that rises just outside the Towcester end of Abthorpe. Although much scratching



of heads, consultation, measurements and repair work have taken place at the site in recent years, Plum Pudding refuses to be permanently contained in the culvert taking it under the road. As winter approaches, Abthorpe residents are reminded that the wet road could become icy so extra care should be taken.

## ARE YOU A CONFIRMED BOOKWORM..... OR A LAPSED ONE?

Northamptonshire Libraries, a division of Northants County Council, has just launched an exciting challenge aimed not just at those who love reading, but more particularly at those who used

to read a lot but somehow seem to have got out of the habit, or those who never really got into the habit but now feel they would like to.

Do you fit into one of those categories?

'For the Love of Books' aims to encourage us all to rediscover the pleasure that can be gained

from settling down to read or listen to any book of our choice.

To accept the challenge, all you have to do is pledge to read at least 25 books between now and the end of September 2020.

Follow this link to find the simple form to fill in, which also allows you to be entered for a prize draw and the chance to win an iPad: <https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/library-service/Pages/for-the-love-of-books.aspx>

## PEOPLE

### One wedding, one dog, two cakes

The date is the first Saturday in August, the time is early in the morning, the setting is Oxbridge Meadows. Enter one man, Bunny Hutchings, and his dog. Bunny has arisen early in order to begin roasting the hog ready for a wedding celebration. The marquee has been erected some days before, the tables laid out, the decorations complete. Bunny sets about his work aware that everything must be perfect for this special day. Elsewhere the bride Jessica Townsend and her groom Chris Davies are beginning to make their final preparations for their big day unaware of the drama that is about to unfold.....



With the hog roasting nicely on the spit, Bunny takes a moment to look around. Where is his canine companion? Bunny whistles and calls. No dog appears. With rising alarm, Bunny shouts louder. Still no dog. Now seriously concerned, Bunny pops his head into the marquee and a look of horror crosses his face. A sheepish doggy face, covered in butter icing and cake crumbs, turns slowly to look at his master – he has found the wedding cake and, boy, does it taste good.

Fortunately no-one was around to hear and record what Bunny said at this point, but we can guess he did not say “Bother”. Taking a deep breath he phones Katie, Jess’s mum, and breaks the news. She does not say “Bother” either. However, a rescue plan is necessary and what a rescue

it was! In the space of just 3 hours Elise, a friend of chef Paul's wife, became the heroine of the day baking and fully decorating a replica cake, and there it is sitting on its stand when the newly married couple and their guests arrive – blissfully unaware yet of the drama that had been playing out while the wedding service had been taking place.



The half eaten cake

### Yet More Nuptials

Harriet Sharman and Jeremy Pope, affectionately known as Ratty and Jezza, were married in our parish church in August by the Rector Paul McLeod. Jeremy, the son of long term Abthorpe residents Helen and Tim Pope, was brought up just a stone's throw from the church and spent all his childhood years in the village.

The church was packed with family and friends who came to witness a truly memorable occasion. Jeremy sat anxiously at the front of the





nave with his best man, brother Patrick, and waited for Harriet and her five bridesmaids to make her way down the nave.

With the ceremony complete Jeremy and Harriet processed up the aisle and out into the sunlight to be surrounded by happy family, friends and villagers. Once photographs had been completed Jeremy led his new wife to a waiting vintage Austin Healey sports car and drove her off to the reception in a marquee close to Oxbridge.



Leah Abbott and Arthur Adrada of Elizabeth Cottage, School Lane were married on 21st September in the beautiful chapel at Exton Hall in Rutland. All their family and friends gathered from far and wide: the US, Spain, Belgium, Denmark and of course the UK, and continued the celebrations at a reception at Oakham Castle.

Congratulations to them, and we wish them much happiness.

### **Star performers**

Proud Abthorpe parents Lynn and Steve Neasham were over the moon when their daughter Grace was awarded a Bachelor of Science with



*The Neasham Family*

Fi and Steve Noble were equally delighted when their daughter Katie graduated in September from Harper Adams University as a Veterinary Physiotherapist having completed 4 fantastic years as a student. Since graduating, Katie has been approved as a member of the National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists and also the Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners. She has subsequently set up her own mobile practice treating mostly horses and dogs, although she is qualified to treat any animal. Well done Katie.

First Class Honours in Economics from Manchester Metropolitan University this summer. The photo shows Grace with her parents and sister Laurie at the graduation ceremony. Grace is now embarking on her Masters degree at the same University and when this is completed in a year's time hopes to go travelling and continue with her ski coaching career. Well done Grace.



*Katie Noble*

## Surprise Birthday Party

Darren Emerton celebrated his 50th birthday in memorable style. Wife Tina had been planning a surprise party all year and despite inviting 80 guests managed to keep it a secret despite everyone's best efforts (inadvertently) to scupper her plans. Thinking he was going to a cheese and wine evening at the Old School (with the help of friends in the village), he walked in on a cheering crowd of family, ex-colleagues from the police, fire and ambulance services, and friends from all parts of the country. Bearing in mind that at one time in his working life he served with the police, the general consensus was that it was a good job he hadn't been a detective. An excellent and memorable weekend.



*A bemused Darren thinking 'Wow, what are you lot doing here?'*

## Farming Success

Very many congratulations to Barbara Smith and her daughters, Sam and Jo, of Slapton Manor Farm on winning the British Farming Awards Diversification Innovator (Small category) for 2019.

The judges were particularly impressed with the way the family is working together to run multiple and diverse enterprises and therefore securing the long term future of the farm. Originally a dairy farm, after giving up cows they put their energies into developing a healthy bed & breakfast business, a wedding venue and vehicle storage. However their focus remains the farm and their 700 ewe flock made up of pedigree Texels, Abermax and commercial lambs.

On winning, they said: "We are absolutely delighted, but completely overwhelmed to have won the award. It was so unexpected. Family is at the heart and soul of our business and is why together we



throw everything into it. Awards like this recognise the hard work those in the industry put in. People have to think outside the box during the challenging times we face, but it is rewarding to have an event like this”.

*Picture courtesy of Farmers' Guardian and British Farming Awards*

### **Abthorpe has its own Greta Thunberg**

One Friday in July 16-year-old Abthorpe girl Martha Gray set off for London to take part in the Youth Strike 4 Climate march in Central London. Martha feels passionately that young people should be deeply involved in the campaign inspired by the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg. She and many young people like her consider that governments are not taking enough action to combat climate change.

Once in London, Martha and a number of local friends headed for Parliament Square close to both 10 Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. Martha was most impressed with the turn-out. There were thousands of young people gathered in the Square plus lots of parents with younger children. Many carried home-made banners as did Martha, although it was soon destroyed by the torrential rain. Despite the downpour her spirit was certainly not dampened.

After safely arriving back in Abthorpe Martha commented that she



really enjoyed the protest strike and feels inspired to encourage other young people to take action. Her message is simple: "If you believe in what we're standing for, I would say definitely go on a march. They are happening all over the country, including Milton Keynes".



### **FUTURE OF ABTALK**

The Editorial Team will greatly miss Jill's input and dedication. Her 'retirement' leaves a big hole in the data gathering process.

CONSEQUENTLY WE NEED YOUR HELP IN LETTING US KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN ABTHORPE. Is there a significant event you know about? Have you taken an interesting local photo? Have you got new neighbours? We can't continue to produce this magazine without your contributions. So please contact any of us as below:

Alison Robbins                      robbins@abthorpe.net; 857795

Tricia Holmes                      tricia.holmes@abthorpe.net; 358491

Keith Fenwick                      keith.fenwick@abthorpe.net; 857083

**DIARY (CONTINUED)***Saturday 14 December*

Art classes, The Old School, 12.00 – 2.00

*Sunday 15 December*

Holy Eucharist Service, 9.15, followed by coffee

*Monday 16 December*

Parish Council meeting, The Old School, 7.45

*Wednesday 18 December*

Beer and Carols, 7.00, the New Inn

*Sunday 22 December*

Charity Quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

*Monday 23 December*

Christingle-making, 10.00, The Old School

*Tuesday 24 December*

Christingle and Carol Service, 4.00, followed by mulled wine and mince pies

*Wednesday 25 December Christmas Day*

Eucharist Service, 9.15

New Inn bar open, 12.00 – 2.00

*Thursday 26 December Boxing Day*

New Inn bar open all day, light lunch 12.00 – 3.00

*Tuesday 31 December New Year's Eve*

New Inn restaurant open 12.00 – 5.00; evening celebrations

*Wednesday 1 January New Year's Day*

New Inn bar open 12.00 – 4.00, lunch available

## DIARY

### *Saturday 2 November*

Art classes, The Old School, 12.00 – 2.00

### *Sunday 3 November*

Truckers' Breakfast, The Old School, 8.45 - 10.45

### *Monday 4 November*

Parish Council meeting, The Old School, 7.45

### *Sunday 10 November*

Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial, 10.45, followed by refreshments in church

### *Saturday 16 November*

Art classes, The Old School, 12.00 – 2.00

### *Sunday 17 November*

Holy Eucharist Service, 9.15, followed by coffee

### *Sunday 24 November*

Charity Quiz, the New Inn, 7.30

### *Saturday 30 November*

Art classes, The Old School, 12.00 – 2.00

### *Sunday 1 December*

Silverstone School Christmas fair, 12.00 – 4.00

### *Saturday 7 December*

Coffee Morning at Fawe Park, Wappenham Road, 10 – 12 noon  
Children's event, Silverstone Church Rooms, 1.30 – 4.30

### *Sunday 8 December*

Holy Eucharist Service, 11.00  
Christmas tree lighting on the Green, 4.00