

ABTALK



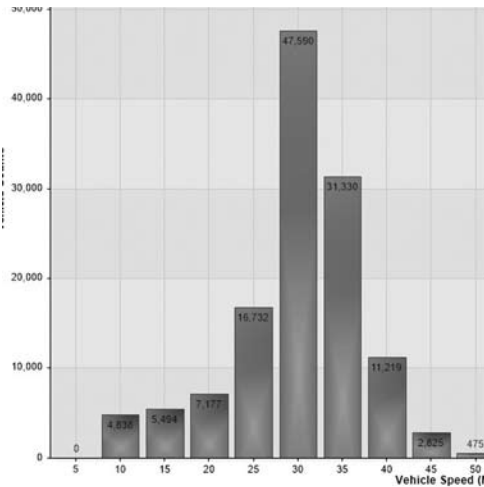
PARISH COUNCIL

Mike Greenhalgh

The Council has continued to meet at six-weekly intervals via the Zoom platform. The main issues that have been discussed concerning the residents of Abthorpe and the Council are detailed below.

Speeding

The Council continues to monitor and push for better compliance with the 30mph speed limit through the village. Data collection from the speed signs (see graph below) has revealed that recently, although the average speed of vehicles going through the village was 30-31mph, there were significant



numbers over 35mph and even 40mph. The Speed Enforcement van has also been out recording a similar average, but on their last visit only recorded one vehicle doing 35mph.

We are continuing to work with the Speed Enforcement Team to try and reduce speeds generally. As reported previously the Community Speedwatch scheme, which would entail residents getting involved with regular monitoring of speeds, is not possible at present due to the current pandemic.

Parking on the Green

At the Council meeting in January it was decided to purchase some wooden posts with reflectors to encourage everyone not to park on the Green. These were placed along one side of the Green in mid-February. There have been a number of comments - mostly positive - about them on the Facebook page. Taking into consideration these comments and following a good discussion at the February Parish Council meeting (with eight members of the public present), it was decided to use a further six posts to mark the corners of the Green on either side of the diagonal roadway. Again these posts are to encourage drivers to stay

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off the Green.

Lack of parking in the Green area has also been discussed. Unfortunately there does not seem to be any simple solution to this increasing problem. Any ideas which could be considered should be relayed to the Clerk or any of the Councillors.



Census 2021

Every ten years the census takes place in England and Wales, providing insight into the people who live across the country and what their lives are like, and 2021 is census year - Census Day being on Sunday 21st March. Further information about the census appears on page 4.

Dog fouling and behaviour

A reminder that all dog owners must be responsible for their dogs at all times, keeping them on leads when appropriate, and paying particular attention when there are children or livestock nearby.

The longstanding issue of dog poo was discussed again. There are many dogs in the village and we are fortunate to have a lot of footpaths to walk and enjoy. Collecting your dog's poo is encouraged at all times, particularly on the pavement or roadside and

even in the countryside. Not only is it unpleasant to step in, it also poses a significant health risk to humans and a risk of disease transmission to other pets and livestock. So bag it and take it home, please: be a responsible owner.

If you see bright paint around the village, do not be alarmed. It is highlighting dog poo to remind us all to continue to 'bag it'. The paint is non-toxic and also bio-degradable. It has been remarkably successful in reducing dog poo in some villages. We hope it works here.

Parish Council Elections 6th May 2021

After last year's local elections were postponed due to the Covid pandemic, they are now due to take place on 6th May 2021.

Abthorpe Parish Council will be having our election on that day, which will be contested if there are more than seven nominations.

With a lot of people joining the February Parish Council meeting, there are perhaps some who would like to consider becoming a Parish Councillor.

If you would like more information, please contact our Clerk, Tina Emerton (email: abthorpeparishclerk@gmail.com) or go to our website: abthorpe.ukparish.org. Closing date for submission of nomination papers is 8th April at 4.00 pm.

'Freedom' of the village

The Parish Council approved a policy at the February Council meeting to award the 'Freedom of Abthorpe Village' to those worthy of the highest honour a village can bestow.

The criteria, procedure and arrangements for the Granting of Honorary Freedom will be available shortly on the Parish Council website at abthorpe.ukparish.org, including a nomination form. Each nomination has to be sponsored by a present member of the Parish Council.

To maintain the value of this prestigious award it should be used sparingly and not bestowed too frequently.

Our thanks go to Wappenham Parish Council who initiated this award a few years ago and have helped us with the setting up of our own.

Time for a Change

Keith Fenwick

You will notice from the preceding item that Parish Council elections are due in May. There will be at least one vacancy as, after 34 years, it is time for me to give up before I lose any more marbles. I have greatly enjoyed my time on the Council, during which there have been many changes in the village, reflecting changes in the wider world. When I arrived, there were still several people who had lived here for many years. But more houses have been built and families have settled

here, bringing new life and especially more young people to the village. And of all the problems which the Parish Council has had to deal with, one has come up year after year - dog fouling! So from April onwards, please don't come to me with your problems, but direct them instead to a member of the Parish Council.

Editorial note: *I am sure Abthorpe villagers much appreciate the many years of service Keith has devoted to Parish Council matters and join us in saying a big 'thank you' to him.*

CENSUS 2021 IS ON ITS WAY

What is the census?

The census is a series of questions that gives a data picture of British society and this year it will give future generations a fascinating insight into how we lived during the coronavirus pandemic. But, more importantly, it helps the government plan and fund services in local communities. The responses might highlight a need for a new school, increased health care facilities or other services in the area.

How does it work?

Every house should by now have received an Information Pack. This will contain a unique code which will give access to the census form online using any device. The Pack will also explain how to complete the census and how to get help if anyone needs it.

What information is collected?

The census collects information about individuals, their households and their homes. This information is collated and analysed and the first figures will be released next year. Billions of pounds of funding depend on the results of the census.

Is personal information safe?

Yes. Any information that is published following the census is fully anonymised. This year's census records will be held securely and will be released into the public domain in 2121 when they will be available for everyone to read.

Does everyone have to complete the census form?

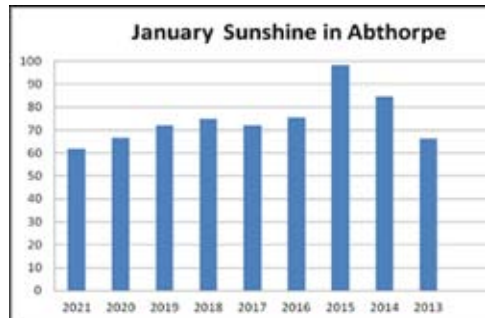
Yes. It's a legal requirement to complete the census. For more information visit census.gov.uk

LOOKING BACK AT JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

Alison Robbins

There is no doubt that the British are obsessed with the weather - but is it surprising when it is so changeable, not just from season to season and from month to month, but almost on a daily basis? What is interesting is how we perceive the weather - whilst one person might remark on what a cold and dull few days we have recently experienced, someone else will cheerfully remark 'at least it's been a bit brighter lately!' Of course, the amateur meteorologists among us will have been taking and recording

measurements and can offer more objective remarks and make more realistic comparisons with previous years.....



January 2021 matched our mood - sombre, grey, wet, endless. As the graph shows, it really was a profoundly grey month. There was also rain and lots of it. So much so that the fields got very very soggy and very very muddy, and then they flooded, as the ground found it could not take any more. The photo below shows an interesting geographical phenomenon - one which many of us will remember from doing Geography O Level (oldies) or GCSE (youngsters): yes, a real life ox-bow lake!



As a former Geography teacher I cannot help but point out that this is actually rather unusual. In their natural state most rivers, given a chance, will meander in big curves - it's what they do. The bends get more and more sinuous until one day - nearly always in time of flood - the river has the power to break through its banks and flow straight on. This is what has happened at some point in the past here. The original meander is then left deserted by the river and forms a horseshoe-shaped lake which, because it no longer has the river flowing through it, gradually fills in with silt and vegetation and ultimately disappears. What is unusual here, is that the straightened river has overflowed its banks and gone back to its original course - so the ox-bow lake is making a come-back appearance, albeit not permanently!

February may not have been as wet as January, but it still lived up to its name of 'February Fill Dyke', an expression which comes from this rhyme that dates back to the 1600s:

*February fill the dyke,
Be it black or be it white;
But if it be white,
It's the better to like*

It suggests that February is traditionally a very wet month, often the precipitation falling as rain ('black') but sometimes as snow ('white') which fills the ditches and low-lying ground. This year we did indeed have several



falls of snow. The photo (above) shows tyre tracks in the snow picking out the medieval ridge and furrow system seen in so many of our local fields.

The painting on page 7 is one by Benjamin Williams Leader and is actually entitled February Fill Dyke. It was painted in 1881 and captures well a typical February rural landscape and sky. Many of us have slogged through such muddy fields and flooded lanes on our daily exercise!

In the painting the wet ground is being warmed slightly by the late winter sun. Leader has humanised



the scene by adding a couple of children and their dog heading home through pools of water on the muddy path. Ahead of them, the farmer stands at the gate and we can see a woman in front of the cottage busily collecting firewood. This is what we experience when we go for a walk in the countryside around Abthorpe on a wet February afternoon. The afternoons are still short and darkness is rapidly approaching. It is time to get back indoors to the safety and warmth of our homes and a nice cup of tea, which will banish the lingering thoughts of what lies outside. It is the type of day when the cold and dampness moves stealthily into our bones. Yet having said all that, is there not still a beauty to the landscape?

Some Abthorpe residents took the opportunity to display their creative sides as shown below.



THE YEAR MARCHES (DAWDLES?) ON

Am I alone in thinking that time has been passing very slowly since Christmas? But, after a long grey wet January and a cold February with bitter easterly winds, we have made it to March. So is Spring just round the corner? March can be a fickle month - a no-man's-land between Winter and Spring. Full of hope and frustration, March is tempestuous and teasing, as the following words from authors and poets over the years have observed:

The 20th century American naturalist Hal Borland personified March with these rather lovely words *'March is a tomboy with tousled hair, a mischievous smile, mud on her shoes and a laugh in her voice.'* While, in the previous century, our own Charles Dickens in *Great Expectations* emphasised the contrary nature of the month: *'It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.'* In the same century, the American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson echoes this theme, but goes further by suggesting that such contrasts are reflected in our own lives: *'Our life is March weather, savage and serene in one hour.'* But then poets do tend to be rather moody, don't they?

Meanwhile, William Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale* reflects on how those wonderful yellow harbingers of Spring can lift our hearts and make

March days a joy:

*'Daffodils,
That come before the swallow
dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.'*

Much more recently Jean Hersey views March as a month involved in a tug-of-war between two seasons with Spring only eventually gaining the upper hand, and acknowledges that we are having the same feelings ourselves: *'In March Winter is holding back and Spring is pulling forward. Something holds and something pulls inside of us too.'* And fellow American and contemporary, Lewis Grizzard cautions that Spring only really arrives once March is past: *'Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn.'*

The (almost) final word has to go to Garrison Keillor who, it is clear, is not really that keen on the month of March: *'March is the month God created to show people who don't drink what a hangover is like.'*

But bit-part actor Loki (well, you try to find a tame lion in Abthorpe)



suggests the well-known saying 'In like a Lion, out like a Lamb' is the most relevant adage for the month of March



ABTHORPE BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

Tim Newton

ABbA continues to be supported and run by a very special and dedicated group of volunteers without whom it would not function.

During the current lockdown we have restricted our site visits to essential only, so we have lots to do once we can continue with system upgrades, but have been remotely supporting, as well as working on planning, from home.

The amount of data being used at peak times has doubled in the last year! You may remember we increased our capacity at the beginning of 2020 and now we have to consider increasing again with a degree of future-proofing included.

We have been working on the best ways to improve the service and the next important milestone will

be a bigger main supply (known as Backhaul). This, along with some more fibre works, will make the system more robust.

As we all know, nothing is free and the requirement to add VAT to the business in 2019 has pushed up our costs. We delayed any increases last year but need to apply them this year; details have been circulated to all members. We still believe this to be very good value for money and significantly cheaper than any other providers.

Please continue to use the ticket system to feedback any problems and we will do our best to resolve.

THE TALLISKER WHISKY ATLANTIC CHALLENGE: DECEMBER 2020 - JANUARY 2021

In the last issue of Abtalk we included an article about an epic challenge that Abthorpe resident Keith Burnet was about to undertake: namely, rowing across the Atlantic ocean with three friends. Keith summarised the completion of this challenge as:

- 256 x 2 hour rowing shifts and 42 days later - mission accomplished!
- Friendship and inspiration in spades
- £150k raised for charity
- 3000 miles of ocean rowed

Keith gives more detail of this amazing adventure:



Getting to the start line - it wasn't just 42 days at sea, this was an 18-month journey, a lot of training, planning and courses on things like navigation and sea survival. We had a regime of solo indoor training as we were only able to spend five days together in the boat before the race because of COVID restrictions and our different locations around the world. We were winging it to start with, but we never felt unsafe, we never felt scared and we never doubted that we were going to pull it off.

The start - it was total amateur hour, as we rowed out with our oars clanking together in an uncoordinated fashion. The onlookers must have thought 'who are these jokers?' We were total novices about to row across one of the most hostile oceans in the world.

The first 48 hours were really brutal: the toughest mental and physical

experience of my life. A combination of losing sight of land, the realisation we were not going back and were out here for 5-6 weeks or more, plus trying to acclimatise to the daily routine of 2-hours on, 2-hours off. I was also terribly seasick - literally ten times a day for the first couple of weeks.

My daily six shifts were 7-9am, 11am-1pm, 3-5pm, 7-9pm, 11pm-1am, 3-5am. You never got two hours sleep in the off shift because you had to eat and admin yourself and the boat, so I reckon I got a total of three or four hours sleep a day. However, it was amazing how quickly we all fell into the routine of just learning to survive 24/7 in a 28-ft rowing boat.

Learning to row the Atlantic - each day was a learning experience, as we tried to find ways to make the boat go faster. We were too heavy; we had too much food; we had the wrong food; our weight was being carried in all the wrong places; our navigation skills were rudimentary; we were off



course. But every day we found a way to get better and better until we were regularly doing 80+ miles a day.

Our spirits sank to their lowest a couple of weeks in when we hit head winds and had to put our parachute anchor out. We couldn't go anywhere and the realisation that it was going to take three or four days longer than we had anticipated was hard to take. The weather was not our friend for most of the race and we really felt we rowed every inch of the crossing.

The night rows were also tough. When you're getting out of your cabin and there are no stars, you can't see the difference between the sea and the sky. It's as if you've stepped into a black box. You can't see the waves and then you just get smashed by one. It felt like blind-folded white water rafting, bumper cars, and turbulence in a plane all rolled into one. The waves were massive; we were rowing backwards and it was like a double-decker bus coming at you. Where we got real speed was when we surfed down the waves and if we caught it right, we could get up to 12 knots (14mph).

Our planet - one of our biggest pleasures was having a ringside seat in a small rowing boat watching our incredible planet in action. Seeing first-hand the 100ft sea swells and

30ft waves the size of an apartment block going up and down over and over again, the 30-knots gusts of wind, the intense rain squalls, the sunrises, sunsets, the many different faces of the moon, the constantly changing state of the sea, the multiple shooting stars and the amazing wildlife.

We definitely took the scenic route! We saw several orca whales and on the penultimate day, one came within 15 metres of the boat with her baby. Another day, we saw the fantastic sight of three rare minke whales. We were also regularly slapped in the face with flying fish; we saw dolphins and once I saw a marlin flying out right next to me chasing a smaller fish across the water.



The Finish - seeing land again after 6 weeks was a huge moment for us but that was nothing compared to crossing the finish line and rowing into English Harbor. The Antiguan Coastguard escorted us in with a flotilla of other



small boats. The atmosphere was incredible and totally overwhelming. It is a moment in time I will never forget with supporters, friends and family on top of the cliff cheering and all the super-yachts sounding their horns. As well as my wife Bridget, it was a nice surprise to see both of my boys, Harry and Archie, who had managed to make it out to Antigua, despite the lockdown challenges in the UK.

My Highlights: the team - we got on that boat as good mates and stepped off it as even better mates; the finish; 100ft ocean swells and 40ft waves; the night sky, shooting stars and sunrises/sunsets; the whale super-highway; Roxy and Randy, the birds who loyally came to see us every day; New Year's Eve celebration; Atlantic Radio and messages and support from friends and family; the 7-9pm shift; the 80-mile days.

Lowlights: the sea sickness; nodding off rowing; burnt eyeballs; para-

anchor; the fish 'shooting gallery'; my backside; my hands; my hip flexors; the weather; the food; 3-5am shift; the monotonous routines; 30-mile days.

Most valuable items: Sudocrem (nappy rash

cream), my headband (the envy of my team-mates), my home-made seat pad, my \$5 electric fan (my cabin was like a sauna).

Most useless items: sickness pills/patches, my diary (blank), the food - I lost 17kg/38lbs in weight, total loss for the FAFP team was 54kg/119lbs! I do not recommend this as a method of dieting - we were burning 8-10k calories per day, but I was struggling to get 3k calories per day into my body.

Lessons learnt: it is the Atlantic, you are not the boss, just row harder; focus on your own contribution and accept everyone else's will be different; sometimes it is better to just say nothing.

Thanks a Mil to everyone who has very generously donated to our fundraising efforts. By the time we reached the finish line, we had already raised more than £150,000 for our nominated charities: Shelter Box,



which helps the 88 million people homeless in disaster zones throughout the world, and Workout for Water, our UNICEF charity bringing fresh water supplies to villages in East Africa.

Donations - it's still not too late to contribute via www.fitterplanet.co.uk

CHURCH NEWS

Sunday Services

It will not have escaped people's notice that the church has been closed for many weeks but that is not to say that services have not continued. Every Sunday at 10.00am there is a Zoom service which is well 'attended' by people from Abthorpe and others across the Benefice - indeed, there is a lot to be said for 'going to church' from the comfort of one's own home! If you would like to join the service the relevant codes are: Meeting I/D: 842 0777 5477, Passcode: 407786.

Lent

As of Wednesday 17th February (Ash Wednesday), we have entered the season of Lent which lasts for six weeks until Easter, which this year

falls on Sunday 4th April. There will be a Lent course running on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm throughout Lent, again on Zoom, based on The Letter to the Hebrews. Our Bishop, The Rt Revd Donald Allistair has produced seven videos with his reflections on this letter and we will be using these, along with some Lent Course notes. Everyone is of course welcome to join - the Meeting I/D is 880 1644 0872 and the Passcode: 834545.

Mothering Sunday

Midway through the season of Lent falls Mothering Sunday which this year is on Sunday 14th March - we are planning to hold a special All Ages service on Zoom at the usual time of 10.00am and using the normal Sunday codes to log in. This will be a very informal service with activities for children to participate in. More on the History of Mothering Sunday follows later.

A Benefice Charity

It has been decided to support a local charity during 2021 with individual parishes doing what they can to raise donations. The charity is Northampton-based Baby Basics which aims to distribute Moses baskets filled with essential items to vulnerable and disadvantaged mums and their newborns. The pandemic has seen a surge in referrals to the charity and they are struggling to meet demand.

More details on fundraising events will follow, but if anyone wants to donate individually to the charity the link to follow is localgiving.org/donations/babybasicsnorthampton.



Bows and Bells/Beaus and Belles

There are three weddings planned in the church in the coming months. Firstly, on Saturday 15th May, Helena Pope is marrying fiancé Billy, followed on Saturday 5th June by the wedding of Thomas Miller and Agatha Fielder. Later in the summer on Saturday 17th July, William Hine and Alexandra Hopkins will be tying the matrimonial knot. As well as offering congratulations to all these couples, we also send best wishes to our landlord Rob's daughter, Jo Smith, who will be marrying fiancé Daniel Bower on 15th June in St Botolph's, Slapton.

The Tote

Lucky winners recently have been Mike Matthews who won £270 (November) and Merrick Loggin who won £267.60 in December, while Tina and Darren Emerton received a cheque for £270 in January, and in February Robert Balderson won £275.

There was a very good response to our appeal for more people to join the Tote to help raise desperately needed funds for the upkeep of the church, hence the prize money has gone up considerably. If you would like to join the Tote, please consider doing so, if you want to increase your chances of winning by buying a second set of numbers, please contact Richard Tomalin on 01327 858316 or by email at richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net.

Easyfundraising

Please support St John the Baptist Church Abthorpe on #easyfundraising. You can raise FREE donations when you shop online with over 4,400 retailers. It's simple and only takes 2 minutes to sign up! This will make a BIG difference during this difficult time. Sign up at:



NATIONAL DAY OF REFLECTION - 23RD MARCH

Following a move by Marie Curie, a National Day of Reflection is being planned on the official 1st anniversary of the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK. The nation is to be asked to come together and reflect on our collective loss, support those who have been bereaved and hope for a brighter future.

We are suggesting that you might like to tie a ribbon (of any colour) on the bird screen or gate of the church. If the ribbon is for a particular person, lost to Covid-19, you might also like to attach a luggage label with that person's name on it.

The ribbons will be left there until Saturday 1st May and may later be used to make a collage or art piece.

THE HISTORY OF MOTHERING SUNDAY

Mothering Sunday is also called Mid-Lent Sunday or Refreshment Sunday, as it occurs halfway through the penitential season of Lent and is a day when fasting was 'eased'. Its association with mothering goes right back to the Middle Ages as the texts read during the Mass on this day include several references to mothers and metaphors for mothers. In addition, the Gospel reading for the day is the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, which led to the association between Mothering Sunday and the 'Gifts of Mother Earth'.

Inspired by the Psalm chanted during the Mass 'We will go into the house of the Lord', medieval people began to make processions to their local 'mother church' on the day, typically the local cathedral. These could sometimes become unruly, as recorded by Robert Grosseteste :

'In each and every church you should strictly prohibit one parish from fighting with another over whose banners should come first in processions at the time of the annual visitation and veneration of the mother church.'

The tradition of visiting the mother church on this day (as opposed to weekly visits to the local parish or 'daughter' church) continued over the following generations. Anyone who did this was commonly said to have gone 'mothering', the term 'mother' referring to the church not a maternal parent. By the 16th century this observance was extended to visiting one's mother to get her maternal blessing which symbolised the pilgrimage to the mother church. The gatherings reunited families and gave children who worked as domestic servants, or as apprentices away from home (from as early as ten years old), the opportunity to have the day off to join their family and see and honour their mother.

As we entered the 20th century, the tradition became less popular and the day of celebration was in danger

of dying out. However, the outbreak of the Second World War caused a revival. In particular the American and Canadian soldiers felt a crucial need to give thanks to their mothers whilst away at war and the popularity of celebrating Mothers Day surged (although in the US this occurs on the second Sunday in May). The Brits and other Europeans followed their comrades so that by the 1950s, the occasion was celebrated across the British Isles, the Commonwealth and Europe. In modern Britain, 'Mother's Day' has become a more popular term for Mothering Sunday and, due to American influence, is now a major commercial event, but in the UK it continues to be held during Lent.

Flowers, Cakes and Buns

Because of the day's association with the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the reprieve from fasting, various types of cakes and buns have long been made for Mothering Sunday as gifts to mothers. Traditionally mothers were presented with a posy of wild flowers and with a Simnel cake. Such a treat midway through Lent was greatly looked forward to.

*'She who would a Simnel make,
Flour and saffron first must shake,
Candy, spices, eggs must take,
Chop and pound till arms do ache;
Then must boil, and then must bake
For a crust too hard to break.*

*When at Mid-lent thou dost wake,
To thy mother bear thy cake:
She will prize it for your sake.'*



Nowadays, instead of enclosing the cake in pastry (pie crust) we top it with a layer of marzipan with another layer in the middle. The top is decorated with 11 balls of marzipan representing the 11 disciples - but there is not one for the traitor Judas!

In some areas, especially around Bristol, Mothering Buns remain a specialty for Mothering Sunday; these 'plain, yeast-leavened iced buns' were traditionally eaten for breakfast. They used to be decorated with caraway or aniseed, but today hundreds and thousands are used. Paul Hollingwood includes this recipe for Mothering Buns in his recipe book 'British Baking':

MAKES 12

FOR THE BUNS

500g strong white bread flour

1 tsp salt

50g caster sugar

7g sachet instant yeast

50g unsalted butter, diced and softened

300ml water



FOR THE ICING

200g icing sugar

2–3 tbsp water

METHOD

1. Put the flour in a large bowl. Add the salt and sugar on one side, the yeast on the other. Add the butter and three-quarters of the water, then turn the mixture round with the fingers of one hand. Add the remaining water a little at a time, mixing until you have taken in all the flour and the dough is soft and slightly sticky; you might not need all the water.

2. Oil the work surface to stop the dough sticking. Turn out the dough and knead for 5 mins, or until smooth and no longer sticky. Lightly oil the bowl, return the dough to it and cover with cling film. Leave to rise for at least an hour, until doubled in size. Line 2 baking trays with baking parchment.

3. Scrape the dough out of the bowl onto a lightly floured surface and fold it inwards repeatedly until all the air has been knocked out and the dough is smooth. Divide into 12 pieces.

4. Roll each piece into a ball by placing it into a cage formed by your hand on the work surface and moving your hand in a circular motion, rotating the ball rapidly.

5. Put the balls of dough on the prepared baking trays, spacing them slightly apart. (They should just touch each other when they have risen.) Place each tray in a clean plastic

bag and leave to prove for about 40 mins, until the rolls have doubled in size. Heat the oven to 220C/Fan 200C/425F.

6. Bake for 10-12 mins, until the rolls are golden and sound hollow when tapped underneath. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

7. For the icing, mix the icing sugar with enough water to give a thick but pourable consistency. Dip each roll into the icing and then into the hundreds and thousands.

Why not give them a go? Next stop.....The Great British Bake Off?

BUCKNELL WOOD - PART 1

Alison Symmers

If anyone has walked recently in Bucknell Wood they will have come across the physical evidence of forest management - felled trees, piles of timber and even more mud than the weather is providing. But a dog walk the other day got me thinking - what was forest management like in the days when it was part of ancient royal Whittlewood Forest? A quick look online and I had more information than you could shake a stick at!

Over half of the area of Northamptonshire was covered by royal forest land which joined Whittlewood with Salcey and Rockingham Forests in an unbroken band across the county. However the term 'forest' did not solely mean the wooded area, but an area in which forest law applied.



It consisted of blocks of woodland usually called coppices and open spaces of deer parks, enclosures and assarts (woodland which had been reclaimed to be pasture or arable). Coppices tended to be around 30-80 acres in size separated by access routes (called ridings) and also by open areas or plains. They were normally surrounded by a bank topped with a fence which was intended to keep the deer out during natural re-growth after tree felling. Some banks had permanent hedges but most were topped with a 'dead hedge' of tree loppings. Cattle from open field villages were allowed common grazing

in the forest coppices and plains, but the right did not extend to swine.

Documents dating back to the time of William the Conqueror, William Rufus and Henry I, show that medieval nobles practised conscious forestry management to balance both short- and long-term demands for woodland resources. Wood was a staple need for cooking and warmth but was also in high demand for building and so the Anglo-Norman system practised wood conservation in ways that enabled it to be collected for daily use without extensive tree clearance. They particularly used 'coppicing' and 'pollarding' mixed in with

larger stands of trees designated for construction timber. Coppiced trees were cut approximately three feet off the ground to create a sprouting stump which meant more young growth in a comparatively small area and also provided cover and breeding grounds for chase animals. These were cut in rotation after about twenty-one years and were then enclosed for seven years to exclude deer and commoning cattle. Pollarded trees were cut higher on the trunk so that the young sprouts were out of reach of grazing animals.

An enquiry to the Forestry

Commission about the recent operations in Bucknell Wood ascertained that it is divided into two management areas with each area surveyed roughly at seven-year intervals to see if thinning or felling operations are appropriate. The different woodland coupes are surveyed and a prediction of the volume of timber each coupe will grow each year is calculated, taking into account species, density, height and girth of trees. The aim is to maintain a forest with a good diversity of species, age and height structures as well as open space, which should sustain a range of habitat types, allow wildlife to flourish in the new light and disturbed ground, and also provide sustainable products for the timber industry. Overall it's probably not so very different from the principles behind medieval forest management.

(The second instalment of Alison's article will appear in the next issue of Abtalk)

NEW INN NEWS

Hats off to our friends at the New Inn who are constantly coming up with ideas to serve the local community, despite all the

restrictions that are making their livelihoods so precarious. They really do deserve - and need - our support.



Many villagers, both from Abthorpe and from the surrounding villages, are doing just that. The 'Celebrate-at-Home' Valentine's Day package, for example, was fully booked - and what fun it was!

In addition to one-offs like this, a hot food takeaway service operates out of The Kings Head in Syresham with free delivery within a 12-mile radius, so including Abthorpe. The weekly trips to Billingsgate fish market continue, so why not take advantage of a fresh fish box delivered straight to your door. To pre-order either of the above, phone 01280 630010.

And don't overlook the chance of having a freshly prepared traditional Sunday Roast dinner followed by a handmade dessert, also delivered to your home - all you have to do is heat it up. Finally, if you care to visit <https://foodinabox.co.uk>, you have the option of choosing from a variety of meals from their Heat 'n' Eat in a Box menu.

THE OLD SCHOOL

Lynn Neasham and Jan Miles

Not surprisingly, no social events have taken place for many months now, but let's hope things will change as the year progresses. A village event is definitely on the cards - but what, when and where remains to be seen.

The AGM has had to be cancelled but, for those wishing to view the minutes from last year's AGM and



**VALENTINE'S DAY COURTESY OF
THE NEW INN -
WHAT'S NOT TO**



this year's report and accounts, these are available on the Old School Facebook page. If anyone would like a paper copy, please email oldschool@abthorpe.net and we will arrange for them to be delivered to you.

Please note that we have a new website: www.abthorpeoldschool.com. If you visit the website you will see that there is a dedicated Events page, so when we are finally in a position to hold events once more this is where details will be found.

As advertised in the last issue of

Abtalk, newly fledged authors Jill Tolson and Alison Symmers have written a fascinating account of the history of the Old School. There is a link on our website and Facebook page, if you would like to purchase a copy or, alternatively, just email oldschool@abthorpe.net to place your order. All profits from the sale of the book are being donated to the Old School. A review of the book can be found on page 22.

We still have a supply of our village notelets. Why not purchase some instead of searching for a card on Amazon? Just email for details.

We received a generous and most welcome donation from a local Northamptonshire Trust for the courtyard improvements. Max and his team, Max Kellner Excavations Ltd, carried out the work just after Christmas and the following 'Before and After' photographs speak for themselves. Great job!



Plant Sale

We are currently planning another plant sale with the kind help of Bill and Chris Lamb. It will be along the same lines as last year with items being released for sale and home delivery as and when they are ready, so please look out for details. This will hopefully culminate in a final plant sale in late May/early June; perhaps with a socially distanced coffee morning too!

Book Review

Angela Kelly

The Free School In Abthorpe by Alison Symmers and Jill Tolson

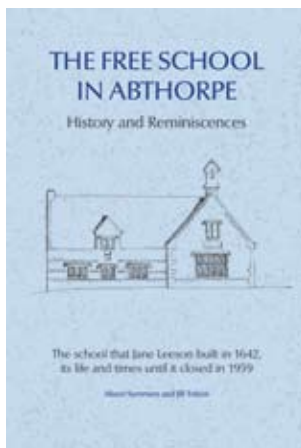
This gem of a document records the life and times of the Abthorpe Free School and the people associated with it since its inception in 1642. It describes how the building was and remains at the heart of village life: initially as a free school for village and local children and, since the closure of the school in 1959, as a community hall.

Backed by their careful and thorough research Jill and Alison, both Abthorpe residents, tell the story of the evolution of the building itself and its philanthropic benefactor Miss Jane Leeson. They give insight into the lives of the village children, teachers, builders, tradesmen and others

associated with the school building, spanning almost four centuries. Especially touching are the personal memories of the school by current village residents.

This was obviously a labour of love for Alison and Jill. Their care and attention to detail has produced an illustrated document that captures a pivotal story of the village, breathing life into a building and the lives of the community it touched.

Footnote: I am not an Abthorpe villager, but have enjoyed book club gatherings at the Old School building and wondered about its history. Now I know.



TOWCESTER FOODBANK

Please think about donating to the Towcester Foodbank. They are desperately short of teabags, loo rolls, sponge puddings, tins of custard and all varieties of pasta sauce.

The easiest way to donate is to add to the donation bins in either Waitrose or Tesco, but Alison Symmers is happy for people to drop items at her house as an alternative. Alison lives at Garblands - first house on the left outside the village as you go towards Wappenham.



PLUM PUDDING SPRING..... AGAIN

Question: How many accidents have to happen until they solve the problem of Plum Pudding?

Answer: More than 2.....

Question: Do they know what they are doing?

Answer: Very questionable!



Plum Pudding spring spills over the left of the road into the village

Just a reminder that Abtalk can be seen in glorious colour on the village website: www.abthorpe.net

THE EMERGENCE OF SPRING

The following photos of Spring flowers were all taken in and around Abthorpe and suggest that Spring is indeed round the corner.



With thanks to everyone who submitted photos - too many to include!



PEOPLE

BOB JONES

Long time resident of Abthorpe, Bob Jones, sadly passed away on 6th December and his funeral was held in the church on 23rd December. Here, his niece Lesley Hopper remembers her uncle.

Bob had lived in Abthorpe since the early 1960s with his wife Tina and they were both well known in the village. They had been married for 49 years when Tina passed away in 2011.

Bob's family moved to Northamptonshire from Birmingham in 1940 to avoid the Blitz and he still had a slight Brummie accent after 80 years.

Bob loved gardening and will be remembered for the lovely hanging baskets which he used to display each summer, continuing Tina's passion for flowers and gardening.

He will be missed by those in the village who knew him.



JANET ABBOTT

We were shocked and saddened to hear that Janet Abbott had passed away on 24th January after succumbing to an aggressive form of cancer.

Due to current restrictions, many villagers were unable to attend Janet's funeral to pay their final respects, so we include here an abridged version of the tribute Janet's daughters, Carol and Linda, paid to their mother:

Janet Monica Austin was born on 19th April 1936 and spent the first three years of her life in Fulham. As war broke out her father insisted his wife and children leave London, whilst he stayed on to work. Initially the

family stayed with Janet's grandfather in Northampton, but soon moved on to rent a house in St James. Janet remembers her excitement when her father would collect her from school on a Friday - but the tearful farewells as he returned to London on Sundays.

Janet recalls having a happy childhood, playing with her friends in the street and nearby park. Her brother David used to tease her mercilessly - however he was also the brother with whom she shared many a giggling fit, which on one occasion led to them both laughing so much they broke the backs off both their chairs. Janet's elder brother Gene was much more of a guiding figure, particularly after their father passed away when Janet was just 11 years old. The three siblings with their respective partners kept in close contact all their lives and regularly spent weekend holidays together over the years.

Janet attended 'Jimmy's End' infant school and after passing the 11+ went on to the Girls Grammar School. She and her best friend Joyce Goode, latterly



Bedford, enjoyed their teenage years together, having Saturday jobs in Woolworths, attending Abington Church, its social events and teaching at the Sunday school there - the church that one day Janet would be married in. Janet caught the eye of a member of the congregation in church one day, who reported to his family that he had seen a very fine young lady at the service, who would make the perfect wife for his son - some years later that man did indeed become her father-in-law!

Upon leaving school, Janet went away to college to start teacher training, but during the first few months became ill with TB and ended up spending a year in hospital. After that she gave up the idea of teaching and instead started work as a sales assistant at Knights the Jewellers in Northampton town centre. Her colleague and friend June Hunter was then courting a police constable, Norman Cooper, who would often drop in to the shop with his Beat buddy Bud otherwise known as Tony Abbott. Although at first Tony was a bit too much of a joker for her, Janet gradually fell in love with him and they married on 26th March 1960. Janet and Tony were absolutely devoted to each other for the next 58 years. When Tony passed away in 2018 Janet was heartbroken and missed him terribly.

After their wedding, whilst waiting for their first home to be built, Janet and Tony stayed with Tony's parents. It was a tough start for Janet, feeling she needed to prove to her mother-in-law that she was a good wife to Tony, but also feeling quite unwell in those early weeks. Morning sickness was the issue and Carol arrived just 9 months after the honeymoon. Her arrival may not have been what they had planned, but she couldn't have been more loved and just under four years later the family unit was complete when Linda arrived.

Once both girls were settled at school, Janet started a part time job as a dinner supervisor at a nearby school for handicapped children. Later, she moved on to a job as a sales assistant at Sanders the Jewellers in Abington Street.

Once the girls had left home, Janet and Tony downsized to a bungalow in Dallington. During the 12 years they were there, they witnessed both girls getting married and to their delight the arrival of four grandchildren: firstly twins Robert and Emma and then later Georgina and Harriet.

Over the years Janet and Tony had three dogs who gave them the excuse to explore the Northamptonshire countryside. They became drawn to the idea of moving to a village and Abthorpe caught their eye. Although they had lived in the town all their lives, Janet and Tony took to village life immediately, getting involved with local events and supporting older members of the community. They really appreciated their good neighbours and Janet formed some very close friendships. A trip to the garden centre with Marna, even when they returned empty-handed, was a great source of pleasure for her.

Janet's garden was her haven - never more so than over the past year. She delighted in having wildlife visit: the birds that nested in the gazebo or splashed about in the bird bath and the hedgehogs she and Janet (Dancer) adopted throughout the summer months.

Janet enjoyed the simple pleasures in life: jigsaws, drawing and painting, visits from the grandchildren, teaching them to play Rummikub, playing cribbage with Tony, attending local ballet and theatre productions, watching Shirley Bassey and Andre Rieu concerts, and spending time in the company of friends. She and Tony particularly enjoyed going on holiday to Southwold, especially when they were accompanied by their grandchildren.

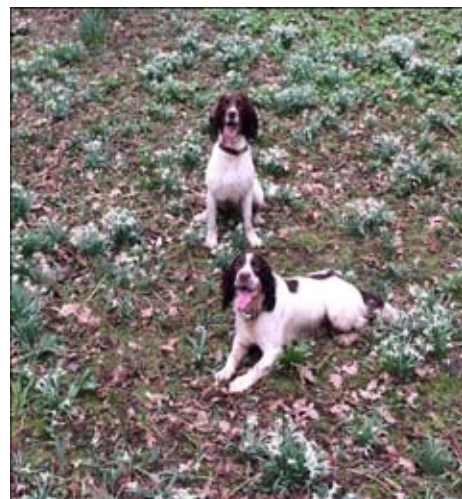
Just last year Janet was thrilled to become a Great Grandmother with the arrival of Amelia. The joy that Amelia gave Janet throughout her last year is a great comfort to Carol and Linda now as they grieve their loss.

Linda and Carol were fortunate to be able to spend some time with their mother during her last few days. Janet said how lucky she was to have such good friends as well as a loving family. They told her the reason she had such good friends was because she herself had been a true friend to so many over the years.

Carol concluded her tribute with the following poignant words: 'And so, at 9am on 24th January, with a recording of birdsong playing by her side and with Linda and I wrapping her in the love that we and all her family and friends had for her, the loyal, kind, caring, loving, Heart of our family slipped away to be reunited with Dad'.

LAUREN AND GEORGE LANCASTER

We extend a warm welcome to Abthorpe newcomers Lauren and George Lancaster who 'chose' the end of January to move house! Lauren and George and their nearly 2 year old son Freddie have moved into The Pines in School Lane as new neighbours for Sheila and Steve Andrews. They share their new home with two Springer Spaniels called Doogle and Sonny. Whilst Lauren is a self-employed



accountant, George works as an Assembly Technician at Mercedes F1 in Brackley. The couple are already settling into village life as the New Inn helps meet their requirements for enjoying good food and wine and the surrounding countryside is the ideal environment for both running and dog walking. We can assure Lauren and George (and Freddie, Doogle and Sonny) that if they are already enjoying life in Abthorpe at this time of year and under these restrictions, they will love it in the months ahead!

We welcome any other newcomers to the village. If you wish to introduce yourselves to us via Abtalk, let us know - we would love to hear from you.