

# ABTALK

*News from Abthorpe*

*July 2021*



## Parish Council News

Mike Greenhalgh

### *Local elections: 6th May 2021*

Unfortunately the Parish Council did not have enough candidates to force an election. With both Keith Fenwick and Alex Hammon resigning we needed two replacements. I would, on behalf of the Parish Council, like to thank them both for their contributions, especially Keith who has been a Councillor for the best part of 35 years, making a huge contribution to the village and sorting a large amount of Parish Council business. **Thank you Keith - your hard work has been very much appreciated and you will be greatly missed.**

We are very pleased to say we do have one new Parish Councillor - Emily Hayward-Humphrey who was welcomed at the last Zoom meeting in May.

We are still one Councillor short so if anyone is interested and would like to find out more please contact any of the present Councillors or our Clerk Tina Emerton.

### *Meetings*

Starting on 28th June the regular meetings of the Parish Council reverted to being held face to face in The Old School starting at 7:45pm. Social distancing still needs to be observed by all.

Members of the public are welcome to attend and will be given a chance to speak, and bring up issues they are concerned about. Please do come along.

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*If you would like to contribute to Abtalk or comment on any issues, please contact Alison Robbins: [robbins@abthorpe.net](mailto:robbins@abthorpe.net); 01327 857795*



## *Litter pick*

A village litter pick took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May, with about a dozen villagers joining in. We were joined by our MP Andrea Leadsom who had promoted the idea and organised equipment to be loaned to us from West Northants Council.



*MP Andrea Leadsom with Litter Pickers*

A number of bags of rubbish were collected, and the general feeling of those participating was that it had been well worthwhile and should be repeated. Hopefully, with a little more advance publicity more volunteers will participate next time.

## **Dog bites**

We are a dog-loving nation and to many of us our dog is a much loved member of the family and a wonderful companion. However, the following useful and informative article researched by Rachel Stevens is a salutary reminder that with dog ownership comes responsibility.

Nationwide, dog bite hospital admission rates across England tripled in adults between 1998 and 2018. Emergency attendance for dog bites to children was also observed to be three times higher than expected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over recent months, there has been a growing

number of reports of dog attacks on people and/or pets and livestock in and around Abthorpe.

Under the Dangerous Dogs Act (2014), it is a **criminal offence** for a person in charge of a dog to allow it to be '**dangerously out of control**'. This could include:

- Causing injury
- Giving someone reasonable apprehension to believe that it might injure them
- Attacking someone else's animal
- An owner thinking they could be injured if they tried to stop the dog attacking their animal.

The Act covers incidents occurring in both public spaces and on private property. A failure to control your dog could result in a fine, a ban on future dog ownership, destruction of your dog or even imprisonment. Police or an appointed local authority have powers to seize a dangerously out of control dog in a public or private place.

As a responsible dog owner, please:

- Socialise your dog and train them with positive, reward-based training methods.
- Ensure your dog responds to basic commands so that you can keep them under reasonable control.
- Consider how your dog greets other people and/or pets and ensure they are managed appropriately. Not everyone will view a dog jumping up at them as friendly or desirable behaviour.
- Be aware of other dogs and keep your dog close to you if you see unfamiliar dogs and/or people.
- Keep your dog on a lead near children and pets.
- Keep your dog on a lead when walking through fields containing horses and livestock – remember that a farmer is allowed to kill

your dog if it is worrying their livestock. (However, it is recommended that you release your dog if cattle or any livestock start behaving aggressively).

- Ensure your house and garden are safe and secure to prevent injury to authorised visitors such as postal workers and utility providers.
- Look out for signs of aggression in your own and other people's dogs and try to remove yourself from the situation before it has a chance to escalate.
- Familiarise yourself with the Canine Ladder of Aggression for further information on how a dog can react to stress or threat (<https://ontariospca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Canine-ladder-of-aggression.pdf>).

If you encounter a dog that is out of control:

- Report the incident to the police immediately.
- Walk away calmly but quickly and try to put a visual barrier (gate, fence etc.) between you and the dog.
- If your own dog is being attacked, it is not advisable to try and intervene, as you could sustain serious injuries. Instead, do your best to distract the other dog and call your own dog back to you.
- Seek veterinary advice without delay - dog bites can cause infection as well as significant external and internal injury.
- If you are injured, seek medical attention ASAP.
- Attempt to identify the owner and obtain their contact details, together with the details of any witnesses.
- Take photos of any visible wound(s) sustained by you and/or your dog as soon as possible.

## Church News

### *Services*

We have, for the time being at least, settled into a new routine of services. There is a live service which anyone can attend every Sunday of the month at **one** of the 5 churches in the Benefice in turn i.e. Abthorpe, Paulerspury, Silverstone, Slapton or Whittlebury. These are Holy Eucharist services and they take place at 10.00 am. It is best to email Rev. Paul ([revpaulmcleod@btinternet.com](mailto:revpaulmcleod@btinternet.com)) to book a pew space before the day if you wish to attend in person (we still have to observe Social Distancing and to wear face coverings). However, all these services are also streamed live via Zoom so there is space for all to 'attend' in one form or another. In church, we are still not allowed to sing but Elizabeth, our organist, plays each verse of every hymn, so those at home can warble away, whilst those in church can enjoy the music (and hum silently!).

To access our worship please use the following link or the Meeting ID and Passcode below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84207775477?pwd=SjBPYlhQ0NrSVlrb2VZQmYzTm51dz09>

Meeting ID: 842 0777 5477

Passcode: 407786

For those without internet, you can telephone in to join the service. Simply ring one of the following numbers, key in the Meeting ID and then the password.

0203 481 5240 United Kingdom; 0203 051 2874 United Kingdom

0131 460 1196 United Kingdom; 0203 481 5237 United Kingdom

### *Other Services*

Our innovative Worship Team are aware that many people are not attracted to a traditional Holy Eucharist service so have come up with various other forms of worship spread across the five churches of the Benefice. In recent weeks there has been a Sun Up service on Easter Day

in Whittlebury, a Happiness Worship and Church Picnic in Silverstone, an outdoor service in Slapton and a Pet Service in Paulerspury. The latest 'different' service was a Hymn Sandwich event on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July in the churchyard in Whittlebury. This was a picnic event interspersed with songs old and new, chosen randomly by our new curate (see later).

On Sunday August 1<sup>st</sup> at midday in Abthorpe, either in the church or churchyard [depending on weather/singing rules] we hope to be able to have a service in the style of the Taizé Community, with the singing of chants, a short Bible Reading and a period of silence for prayer and meditation – in modern parlance, a sort of 'mindfulness half hour'.

We are also planning for a Family/All Age worship service on 5<sup>th</sup> September at 11:30 a.m. This will be a service with the theme of New Beginnings, since children and young people will be going back to start a new academic year, plus we have our new curate and, in addition, we will be planning for the post-pandemic worship programme in the Benefice. This will probably be in Silverstone churchyard unless permission has been given for singing indoors.

### *National Day of Reflection*



You may remember that back in March a National Day of Reflection was announced on the official first anniversary of the start of the Covid-19 epidemic in the UK. Villagers were encouraged to tie a ribbon on the porch or churchyard gates in memory of those, known or unknown, who had died of this devastating virus. A good number of ribbons appeared – of many different hues and patterns – and were left on view for a month as a visual reminder of the loss and grief suffered by so many. What has happened to those ribbons? It was decided to use each

and every one to create a rosette with a silk daffodil at the centre and this can be seen on the table at the back of the church.

## **An Introduction to our new Curate: George Frost**

### *George on the family farm*



“Born in 1995, I was brought up on the family farm in West Northamptonshire. My mother’s family were sheep farmers on a few hundred acres near Teeton and it was there that I spent most of my childhood, learning to ride, drive and muddle through. It gave me my abiding love of the outdoors, a passing

knowledge of sheep, cattle and dogs, and the ability to make and repair almost anything.

“From the age of 11, I began regularly attending Sunday services at St James’ Church, Hollowell, but it was when I was in the Sixth Form at Guilsborough College that I unexpectedly felt a calling to ministry, which surprised me greatly. To explore this I switched from my intention of studying Law and instead was accepted to study Divinity at Aberdeen University. After graduating from there with an MA in 2017, and confirmed in wanting to become a priest, I enrolled on a Ministry Experience Scheme and spent the next two years living and working on the Isle of Man. This was a very new experience for me and a major learning curve but one that I greatly enjoyed after four years of academic study.”



"I should probably mention at this point that, despite the Isle of Man being the home of the TT, and Silverstone being the UK centre of motor racing, I have no interest in motor sports but seem fated to follow them wherever I go with the Church!"

"Since being recommended for Training for Ministry by the Bishop of Peterborough in 2019, I have completed 2 years training at Cranmer Hall Theological College in Durham and was ordained as Deacon on 27<sup>th</sup> June at Peterborough Cathedral. I will shortly be moving down to Silverstone and look forward to meeting you all there".

### *Tote Winners*

Since the last issue of Abtalk, there have been 4 sets of Tote winners: in March Rona Cambray won £277.50, in April it was the turn of Keith Fenwick who won £280, while in May the winner was Linda Whitfield who has opted to keep on her mother Janet Abbott's tote membership jointly with her sister and was rewarded with a win of £282.50. June's Tote winner, drawn in Richard and Carolyn Tomalin's beautiful garden on Open Garden Sunday, was Mrs A. Hitchings who also won £282.50.

## **News from the New Inn**

The message from the New Inn team is that they are raring to go and as restrictions are gradually eased they are ready to recommence the various activities and special events that have proved so popular in the past. So keep an eye on the Abthorpe Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/abthorpevillage>) as well as the New Inn website (<https://www.newinnabthorpe.uk>).

The monthly chef's table event, for example, which is held on the first Sunday of the month, has recently re-started and, as the following review suggests, customers were not disappointed:



“Visited (the New Inn) for the Chef’s Table in June and can’t recommend it enough. Really good food, well chosen wine, friendly and welcoming staff and incredible value. Already booked in for the Chef’s

Table in August and hoping to visit to try a Sunday roast before then!”

A brand new Specials Menu has just been announced with a wide range of dishes using fresh Billingsgate fish, as well as meat and vegetarian options to suit everyone’s tastes. Full details are available on the village Facebook pages.

Another recent re-starter is the Open Mic session which takes place from 4 pm on the second Sunday of the month. If you care to go along you will



enjoy a family-friendly atmosphere and may be surprised by the quality of some of the singing.....and there’s a free drink for performers!

The ever popular Sunday Lunches which continued to be delivered to your door

throughout the lockdowns are now available once more at the pub. Families are particularly welcome and meals are now served from 12 noon until 5 pm. It is best to order before hand (01327 857306) but walk-in customers can often be accommodated.

And those villagers who enjoy the New Inn Fish Box may be interested to know that it can now be customised to include just your favourite fish fillets from the selection on offer.

## **Old School News**

The only fundraising event that was possible during the spring was the Plant Sale which took various guises. Thanks must go to Bill and Chris Lamb who once again came up trumps with their supplies of top-quality, professionally nurtured plants. In its first incarnation the event took the form of 5 weeks of online sales with customers making their choices electronically and then collecting their selection from the Old School. On Sunday May 23<sup>rd</sup> there followed a more traditional opportunity to browse and purchase plants in the Old School courtyard, and swift on its heels came a 'Spring Sale' week. Abthorpe gardens are now showing the results of all our choices.

With the last of the lockdown restrictions still in place and several weeks of uncertainty ahead of us, the Old School committee does not yet feel confident of organising any other fundraising event in the near future. However, as soon as it is feasible to do so, their planning hats will be donned so keep looking at their website to see what the coming months may have in store.

### *Updating the building*

The extended enforced closure of the Old School has not been a wasted time for the committee who have organised considerable improvements to the small room. The plaster below the window level has been replaced, the room has been redecorated, new blinds fitted to coordinate with those in the larger room, and a new curtain hung to conserve heat and cover the storage on the mezzanine floor. The result has given the room a new lease of life, making it even more attractive to use.



*Upgraded balustrade, door and windows*



*Smart new blinds at the windows*

The small room is not the only part of the Old School to receive attention during Lockdown 3. As reported in the last edition of Abtalk, the courtyard has had the gravel part replaced with setts to match the existing ones, and the overall effect has created a pleasing, cohesive space suitable for many events. It was particularly useful for the wedding reception held at the end of May.



If you are thinking of hiring the Old School and would like to see the improvements for yourself, please email [oldschool@abthorpe.net](mailto:oldschool@abthorpe.net) to arrange a guided tour.



*A stunning venue for a wedding*

### *The history of the building*

An exciting moment occurred during the refurbishment of the small room. In the book *The Free School in Abthorpe* there is discussion that the front middle window of the original school almost certainly replaced an original doorway. Now it's confirmed. When the plaster was removed from the front wall evidence of that doorway was revealed.



*Evidence of the original front door*





*Artist's impression of what the school looked like in the 1700's*

Further confirmation of the accuracy of the reminiscences came during the work on the courtyard. Several former pupils remembered a wall dividing the playground into boys' and girls' sections. With the removal of the gravel it became clear that the playground was covered in tarmac at one time, and deeper delving revealed the line of the dividing wall running from the large room towards the far corner of the playground, just slightly more angled than shown in the 1940s layout in *The Free School in Abthorpe*.

For those who have not yet read the book, it is available for £8 (the same as the annual salary of the first headmaster) by emailing [oldschool@abthorpe.net](mailto:oldschool@abthorpe.net), or visit the new Old School website, [www.abthorpeoldschool.com](http://www.abthorpeoldschool.com), for more history, forthcoming events and other information.

## Abthorpe Open Gardens June '21



Andrew  
Dancer's  
evergreen  
garden

Tony & Peta  
Travis's formal  
garden



Janet and David  
Dancer's  
vegetable  
garden

Carolynn and  
Richard  
Tomalin's  
restful garden



Bill and Chris  
Lamb's home-  
grown garden



Sian and Arthur  
Young's divided  
garden



Jan and David  
Walsh's Hosta  
dominated  
garden



Jill & Roger  
Tolson's  
inviting  
garden

Monica and  
Keith Plant's  
quirky gravel  
garden



Jill and Mike  
Greenhalgh's  
rose scented  
garden



Marna Perrigo's  
marine themed  
garden



Pauline and  
Gordon Cox's  
white themed  
garden

Mary & Roger  
Bennan's  
cottage garden





## Gruesome Murder in Abthorpe

*Alison Symmers (with help from Mary Hulbert and Jill Tolson)*

The evening of Tuesday 29th January 1833 probably began peacefully in Abthorpe, but suddenly the sound of screaming was heard. Josiah Willson from Slapton, a customer waiting at the Blacksmith's shop (where Forge Cottage is now), ran to the home of Phyllis and William Stokes from where the sound was coming. What he saw in the small dwelling was the stuff of nightmares: John Horne had cut the throat of his wife Ann and had then attempted to commit suicide. The two bodies had fallen to the ground in a pool of blood in which also lay a small child who had been in Ann's arms.

An inquest was held the following day in the New Inn by the coroner, Mr Weston, and a jury drawn from the village. Before hearing from witnesses they visited the scene of the crime in the little house to view Ann's body which lay on one side of the room with her husband who was still alive lying on a bed on the other side. Back at the New Inn, the jury listened to detailed but chilling evidence from the four people who were present when the murder occurred: William and Phyllis Stokes, and John Horne's brother William and his wife who had been visiting that evening. From Mr Parker, the surgeon, they heard in graphic detail the exact nature of the injuries inflicted, <sup>2</sup>that the open razor found on the floor had been the weapon, and that in his opinion John's wounds had been self-inflicted. They also heard from villagers who had run or been summoned to the little house the evening before and from the many others who knew the family.

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<sup>2</sup> For those of a strong constitution these were: "a very extensive wound to the throat, some 6 inches in length and upwards of an inch in depth. The oesophagus, tracheas, and carotid arteries were completely divided." John's wound "presented a frightful appearance. Several small branches of arteries on the left side of the oesophagus, as well as the right jugular vein, were divided and bled profusely. The oesophagus was likewise divided to about two-thirds of its extent, and the cut surfaces were at least two inches apart."

The witnesses said that John was known for having a quick temper and for ill-treating his wife. Ann had gone to her neighbours to escape him earlier that morning and he had come round after finishing work to persuade her to return home. When she refused, he had put his arms round her, kissed her and then drawn his razor across her neck nearly severing her head from her body before using the razor on himself. Mr Parker was rapidly sent for from Towcester but he was unable to help Ann; the wound had caused instant death.



*Scene of a gruesome crime*

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the house where John and the body of his wife were lying. John appeared to be recovering so the coroner, according to the custom of the day, read the evidence to him. He admitted it to be true, answering questions firmly and deliberately. The jury took only a few minutes deliberation before returning a verdict of Wilful Murder against John Horne.

Ann was held by all to be a good woman, industrious and careful. She was buried in Abthorpe churchyard on 1st February by curate Henry Dyke who had, not long before, baptised her children Isaac and Mary in the same church. Her death is recorded in the burial records as 'murdered by her husband'. John died shortly afterwards and was buried on 5th February, his death recorded as 'suicide'.

Where did the murder take place? All these years later it is difficult to be certain, but there is a strong likelihood that William and Phyllis Stokes were living in one of the cottages off School Lane. Unfortunately it is impossible to determine which one was John and Ann's home. Ann was reported to have been visiting her 'neighbour' but that did not necessarily mean 'next door'. It is possible that they did not live in one of the School Lane cottages, but in the poor parish dwelling at the rear of the Bakery on the Green.

An article appearing in the press 30 years later, in 1864, recited an epitaph taken from a tomb stone in Abthorpe churchyard which read:

"In memory of Ann Horn, who was murdered by her husband John Horn on Tuesday evening January 29th 1833":

All you that do these lines behold,  
Look to your souls in time.  
Lest you, like me should murdered be,  
And die before your time.

Ye husbands, now in pity look,

Upon your tender wives,  
Unless the blood, like mine, to God  
Aloud for vengeance cry.

Behold your tender children dear,  
Before you are bound in thrall,  
Lest they, like mine, should orphans be  
And have no friend at all.

Alas ! How sudden was the stroke -  
How soon our friend did fall!  
She had not time to speak a word,  
Nor on the Lord to call.

And now I hope she is at rest  
On Canaan's peaceful shore:  
I hope, at least, we shall meet -  
Then we shall part no more"

Sadly, despite a careful search of the churchyard we have been unable to identify Ann's grave.

## **Plum Pudding.....are we finally getting somewhere?**

It may be less dramatic than Eastenders or Coronation Street but Abthorpe's own soap opera concerning Plum Pudding just keeps going. In May the signs went up advising us that yet again the road to Towcester was to be closed for 3 days while work was carried out to try and sort out the worsening situation of water flowing out on to the road. In the winter, this water turned to ice which on at least two occasions caused vehicles to skid off the road. Nearby residents looked on with some scepticism – we have been here several times before after all. Those of an engineering bent will be interested to know that the workmen had been instructed to

make what is known as a French ditch. You want to know more? Ok, so a French ditch is a large channel with a perforated pipe at the bottom that is then refilled with large stones or aggregate. Plum Pudding does not have a single source but seeps out in many places. The spring water drains quickly down through the large stones and then through the perforations into the pipe. This leads the water down the side of the road where it feeds into the existing under road duct. However, what was rather different this time was that, because of the existence of a fibre cable (not AbBA) along the verge, the ditch was excavated not by diggers which might have damaged the cable but by a vacuum tanker which *sucked* it out. And, what's more, early signs suggest that this time it might actually have worked.....?



*The vacuum excavation lorry*

## Rose of Northamptonshire Award

Last October Northamptonshire County Council, alongside the High Sheriff's office and Lord Lieutenancy launched its own award scheme as



part of the Unsung Heroes initiative, the 'Rose of Northamptonshire' award.



In the words of James Saunders Watson, the Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire:

*"There are very many people who during the pandemic have consistently put the needs of others ahead of their own, keeping communities connected and supporting the most vulnerable members of society. The 'Rose of Northamptonshire' awards have been launched so that the people of Northamptonshire can recognise and thank them."*

Whilst Cllr Matthew Golby (Leader of the Council) adds:

*"With the COVID-19 crisis impacting on so many county-wide it is crucial that we pause to take note of those doing exceptional work that hasn't yet been acknowledged. This award from the public helps put a spotlight on those people and lets them know they have the support of the whole of Northamptonshire".*

And guess who won one of these coveted awards? None other than Abthorpe's very own Bring Me Sunshine volunteers! Claire Zachar accepted the award virtually on behalf of all members of the group and had this to say about the virtual event:

"The ceremony took place on 31st March at 6pm. It was humbling to hear all the stories of so many people who selflessly dedicated so much time during lockdown to benefit the local community. We were honoured and very grateful to not only be nominated but to be awarded beside those who have achieved so much during such a difficult time. The Bring Me Sunshine group will be meeting soon for a drink in The New Inn to toast the award and to say thank you to each other for the support we were able to give the village during the pandemic."

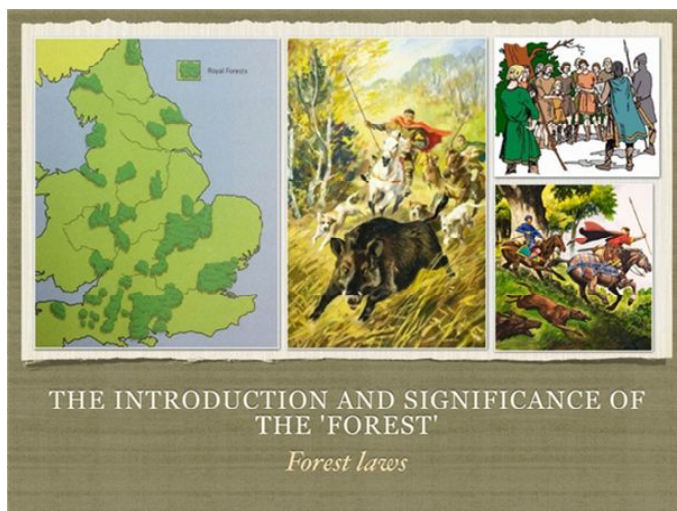
A photograph of the certificate is shown below and is now on display in the Old School. Congratulations to you all and thank you from all Abthorpe's residents.



## Bucknell Wood - Part 2

*Alison Symmers*

In part 1 I wrote about medieval forest management in Bucknell Wood but that is only part of the story. Royal hunting grounds had existed in England before the conquest, but the term 'Royal Forest' was brought by the Normans: this was a territory of woods and pastures belonging to the Crown within which the right of hunting was reserved for the king or his designees and where the deer and other 'beasts of the chase' were afforded safe protection. Whittlewood Forest which included Bucknell Wood was just such a royal hunting ground.



The Anglo-Norman kings' Forest Law was a separate legal system with its own courts and officers and it was their responsibility to protect and preserve the "*venison and vert*" for the King's pleasure. (Venison referred to beasts of the chase and included red deer, fallow deer, roe deer and wild pigs; vert referred to the green undergrowth that was needed to feed the beasts of the chase). The master foresters and their teams of

verderers, regards, and stewards, were responsible for the protection of both the game and the trees and for regulating the grazing. They also had to keep financial books as Forest Law was a significant source of income for the Crown. Fees were charged for all uses of the forest and those who transgressed (for example by poaching wildlife, killing a deer, or, without permission clearing wood, grazing more cattle than permitted or keeping hounds) could expect to be punished. This was swift and brutal and ranged from fines to, in the most severe cases, death. Unsurprisingly, the forest laws were extremely unpopular with the local people who couldn't continue the way of life that had existed prior to Norman rule. They were not allowed to protect their crops by fencing, they could not use the timber from the woodland for building houses and they were not allowed to hunt game to provide food for their families. They also faced severe restriction on the availability of fuel as the underwood was also protected and even the collection of berries was forbidden.

Although it was probably named after Wielsa, a Saxon Lord, the first mention of Whittlewood Forest was in 1130 when it was recorded as "Whittlewuda" in a decree from Henry I to the landowners and their foresters requiring them to allow the monks of Luffield Priory access to the Forest. Towards the end of the 13th Century, disafforestation began when landowners gave the King a payment to remove a piece of land from a royal forest and its forest law. As a part of this growing trend, probably in 1286, the whole of Abthorpe parish was detached from Whittlewood Forest. Not that the disafforestation made any real difference to the villagers who might occasionally poach, fell timber or allow their animals to graze - the penalties were often the same, just applied by the landowner. Neither did it mean the noblemen could do what they wanted with the land - they still had to gain the king's permission. A document from Edward I in 1298 allowed landowner Hugh De Vere to sell timber worth 100 marks from the wood prior to his departure overseas in the King's service. And it is in this document that 'Bucknell Wood' is recorded by name for the first time, although it is likely that the origin of the name itself is based on the Saxon word 'boc' meaning free land.

## Open Gardens

Abthorpe gardeners certainly came up trumps for the village Open Gardens afternoon held recently on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June. The sun may not have been shining but the rain, chilly breezes and grey clouds of the previous few days had mercifully disappeared and the conditions were ideal for people to wander leisurely through the village. A total of 13 gardens were open for visitors and what a variety there was: formal and ornamental gardens, colourful cottage gardens, quirky themed gardens, some large with expansive lawns, others small with every inch of space carefully managed. The weeks and weeks of planting, nurturing, weeding, trimming, grass and hedge cutting and myriad of other tasks finally paid off. Nearly 200 people came to view the gardens, many from surrounding villages (at one stage there were up to 50 cars parked in Sian and Arthur Young's paddock) and there was a great sense of well-being and appreciation of Abthorpe's surroundings and obvious community spirit.



*Plants for sale*

In addition to viewing the gardens, visitors had the chance to buy top-quality plants from the Old School courtyard, mostly supplied by former professional horticulturalists, Bill and Chris Lamb, but augmented by contributions from other village gardeners.



And what better way to sustain oneself during the afternoon than to partake of a delicious Cream Tea? All the scones were home-made by village volunteers and the ladies inside the Old School were kept very busy serving their customers both inside and out on the Green.

Not only was the afternoon deemed an unqualified success in terms of the pleasure it gave to so many local people but financially it exceeded all expectations too. In total a profit of over £1800 was raised which will be split between the Old School and the Church.

The lucky winner of the very desirable raffle prize was a visitor from Greens Norton, Nina Woodhouse. Nina was thrilled to be told she is the lucky recipient of 2 season tickets for Evenley Wood Garden, a beautiful 60 acre Private Woodland, just south of Brackley.

## **A Unique Cow called Grace**

Long time Abthorpe residents Caroline Kellner and husband Martin are the owners of a rather special cow. Grace, or to give her her full pedigree name, Thurlow Grenadiers Grace 4<sup>th</sup>, is, as far as anyone knows, the only surviving 'original population' Guernsey cow in the world. All other Guernseys alive today are descended from cows which have other genetic influences dating from the 1960s. These cattle are generally bigger and rangier than the original Guernsey and have lost some of the qualities which made the breed so special.

The Guernsey was famous for its rich and flavoursome milk but traditionally had several other good qualities: it was long-lived, calved without difficulty, grazed well and – being relatively small-sized – was an efficient milk producer.

Many years ago Caroline's father, Harold Howse, was a Guernsey specialist breeder, managing the Seacourt Herd at Botley and supplying milk to a

large part of nearby Oxford. When young stock were moved to Menmarsh Farm in Stanton St John they became the Menmarsh Herd and Grace is a direct descendent of this herd.

Caroline and Martin are working closely with the English Guernsey Cattle Society in the hope that they can re-create this original breed here in the UK. Caroline's father had the foresight to store frozen sperm from his Guernsey bulls and this has recently been used to impregnate some cows elsewhere in the UK. Their calves, soon to be born, will have a higher proportion of purebred genes which in turn will be passed on to succeeding generations.



Grace, who is now a rather elderly lady of 21, is quietly seeing out her retirement in an Abthorpe pasture. When the day comes that she passes on, it is hoped to clone new Guernsey cattle from her DNA. So let's hope that the wonders of modern scientific knowledge could yet see the return of the iconic, purebred, old-fashioned Guernsey.

## **Abthorpe Weddings**

Who cannot feel for all the brides and grooms over the past 18 months who have struggled to arrange, re-arrange, and often re-arrange again their weddings in the face of the ever-changing restrictions imposed by Covid-19? Both couples below have had roller-coaster rides before finally getting to the Big Day.

*Tom Gladdie and Jess Wong:* Their recent wedding was the 5<sup>th</sup> attempt by Tom, son of long-term Abthorpe residents Richard and Fanny, and his bride Jess to tie the matrimonial knot. Originally their plan was to get married last year in Majorca but when that proved impossible they switched the venue to Abthorpe, but have had to postpone their chosen date several more times until finally on May 29<sup>th</sup> their wedding took place. They were married in Plumpton Church but held their reception – restricted of course to just 30 of their closest family and friends - in the Old School which looked absolutely stunning. Tom and Jess travelled down to Cornwall after the wedding for a mini-moon but are now back in Abthorpe staying with Tom's parents until they are able to move into their new flat in London.



*Thomas Miller and Agatha Fielder:* Again the wedding of this bride and groom was originally planned for last year, was postponed until early June this year and then delayed again to July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Although some restrictions

have remained in place, they felt they could not wait any longer to celebrate their very special day – and who can blame them? Tom, son of Slapton residents Mary and James, and Agatha are the first couple to be married in Abthorpe church since 2019 and as the bells rang out to announce that they were finally man and wife, all the obstacles and frustrations that they had faced to get to their wedding day were forgotten.



We wish both couples every happiness in their married lives together.