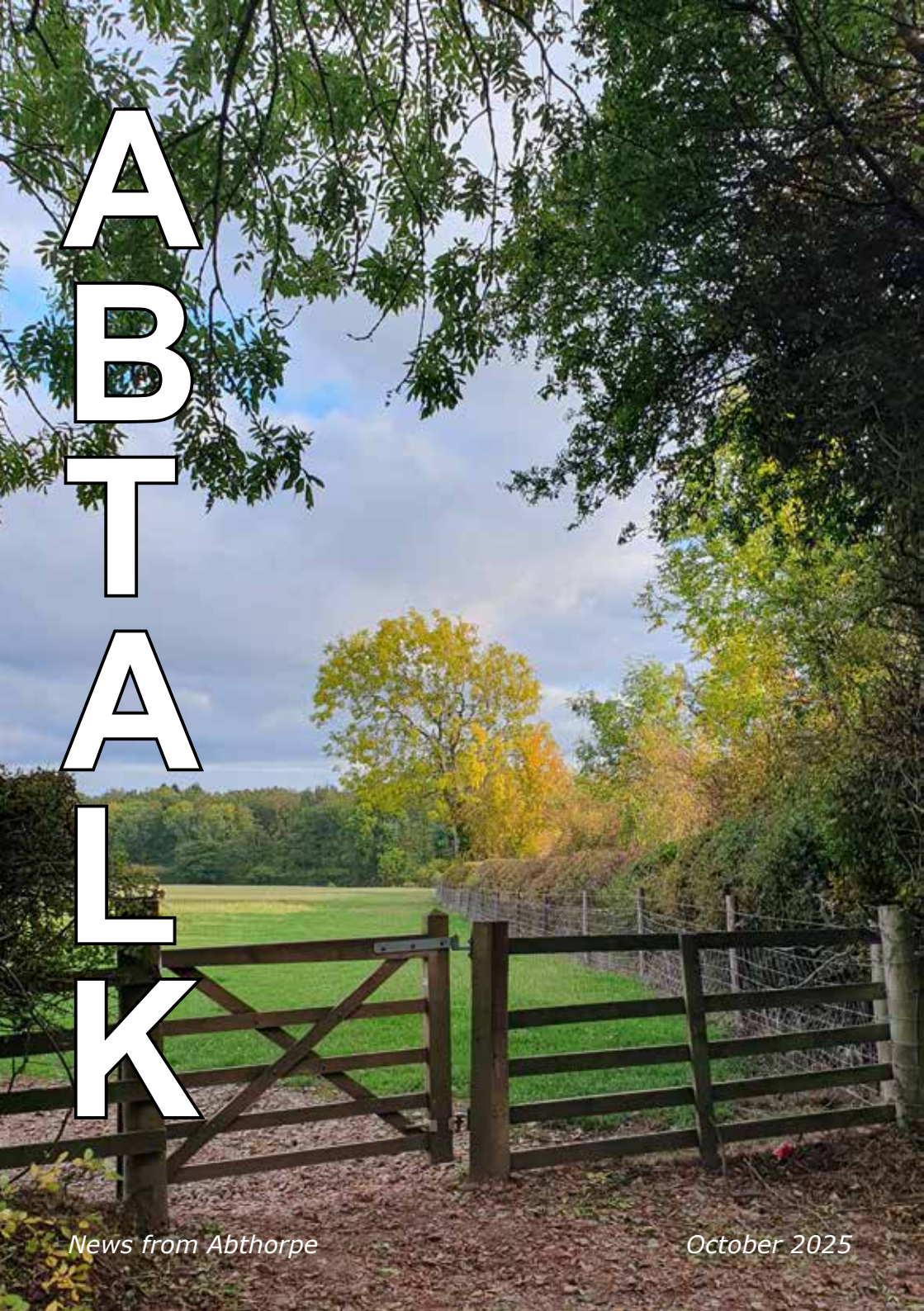




ABTALK

News from Abthorpe

October 2025

REPORT FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL - PHILIP BERRY

We were very disappointed that the police did not send a representative or report to our annual village meeting in May, but when we raised this with the Chief Constable, we received a swift response and apology. Inspector Johnny Davies-Lyons attended our August meeting and gave us a frank review of policing in this part of the county. That meeting was attended by a dozen or so parishioners who were able to ask questions of our guest. I think the audience began to understand the complexity and difficulties facing the local police team.

The point was made by the meeting that the police do not always report back to victims when successful prosecutions have been made and this can lead to people being reluctant to report an incident. The inspector urged everyone to continue to report crimes as many reports feed other investigations. As the inspector said in the meeting, if four people are the victim of burglaries over a month and they can only get one through court to conviction, the other three probably played a big part in catching the offender and bringing them to justice. All reports help!

I would also like to encourage you all to sign up to Northamptonshire Talking, a free messaging service from Northamptonshire's Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and other partner organisations, providing news and updates on policing matters that are relevant to you.

In July we met with Silverstone circuit to discuss how this year's Grand Prix had impacted our parish. They were pleased with the traffic flows to and from the circuit, we were less so. They had 500,000 visiting across the whole meeting, with 125,000 transferred in via park and ride, 50,000 on the Sunday alone; that's more than double last year's park and ride figures. However, our complaints were that the traffic management measures effectively isolated us from the rest of the county and beyond. As early as Friday we had reports of tradesmen and delivery vans being unable to get to our village. Our village roads were clogged by cars, busses, HGVs and other goods vehicles trying to find ways around the road closures. The crossroads was chaotic. Then on the Sunday with all the traffic leaving the circuit and the campsites, it was carnage. In addition to the vehicles leaving the circuit, pedestrians were walking all the way to Abthorpe to meet taxis parked on the roadside. It was taking 30 minutes to get through the crossroads for cars coming from Towcester, not helped by the two accidents that occurred there. We did urge the circuit to consider the impact

on the local road network generated directly from the traffic management plans that are implemented. In the past the verges of the roads leading to and from the circuit have been coned off, to avoid waiting and parking and we will be suggesting that this is adopted in Abthorpe next year. We have another meeting scheduled in the New Year and also suggested that free passes to the circuit for the lower-level events might go some way to placating our residents.

There are a few on-going issues to update you on:

- We will be replacing the defibrillator housed in the old phone box on the village green. While it is still operational, it is no longer “supported” and a new one is on the way. If you need to use it, get someone to rush to the green with their phone and follow the instructions on the unit. It can save lives!!
- Outline planning has been applied for (2025/3808/PIP) two houses on the land on Brackley Lane south of Snelson’s Orchard. It will be discussed at our next PC meeting at 7pm on 10th November. You are welcome to attend.
- We have been alerted by WNC that they are starting work on a new local plan. Previously SNC and WNC believed that housing development should be concentrated on the major towns, but it is likely that in future, villages like ours will need to bear some of the development. More on this when we get into the planning process in more detail.
- It has finally been agreed that a 40mph speed limit will be in place on all the roads as they approach the Abthorpe crossroads. Hopefully the restrictions will make the junction safer.

Freedom of the Village of Abthorpe Awarded to Keith Fenwick

Your PC is proud to confer the Freedom of the Village to Keith, whose decades of dedicated service have profoundly impacted the community. Since moving to Abthorpe in 1983, Keith has immersed himself in village life—serving on the parish council from 1987 to 2021, including multiple terms as chair, and maintaining the village green.

A passionate railway enthusiast, Keith has authored respected books and edited magazines, while also contributing locally as editor of Abtalk and Secretary of the Jane Leeson Trust. His fundraising efforts have supported numerous village initiatives, including the Millennium celebration and the Church Fabric Appeal.

Perhaps Keith’s most significant contribution has been through the

Abthorpe Broadband Association (ABbA), where his technical expertise and tireless volunteerism helped bring wireless and fibre internet to over 700 homes across the Tove Valley. He also organized and safeguarded volunteer teams supporting broadband installations.

Keith's unwavering commitment, energy, and generosity have enriched Abthorpe and its surrounding villages, making him a truly deserving recipient of this honour, which was announced at Harvest Supper.

You can see the full text of his contribution to our village and parish on the Parish Council website.

OLD SCHOOL NEWS

September Shindig

What a wonderful Shindig we had! The weather was kind, the support from the village was great and there was a tangible community feeling. It was so rewarding to see such a mixture of families, young people and those not so young just enjoying being together: this is what living in a village is all about. The photos show participants of all ages and abilities taking part in the ceilidh with the entertainment continuing into the evening with some



lovely singing by Antony Wolfson. Steve Noble led the BBQ team while members of the PCC and the Old School committee provided the accoutrements and the cheesecakes that followed. No-one went hungry!

Thank you to everyone for all your support; the events on the Green would not happen if we didn't have the volunteers who turn up to put up marquees, set up the chairs and tables – and take them all down again afterwards!

Although this was primarily designed to be a community event, we also raised over £1000 which has been split between the Old School and the Church.

Forthcoming Events

We have a few events to look forward to at the Old School. The next lunch will be a Festive Hotpot on 28th November 2025, 12.00-2.00pm. The lunches will be back in 2026: let us know your favourite and we will bring it back next year.

On 1st November, the Old School will be hosting the Abthorpe Historical Archive group. Alison Symmers and the group will be giving a talk on the archive, and its contents, and lots more! The tickets are £15 which includes the talk and supper of chicken casserole followed by bread and butter pudding (vegetarian option available - just ask).

A bar will be available. Please reserve your tickets early, as numbers will be restricted – email to oldschool@abthorpe.net or message Lynn Neesham or Alison Symmers. Any profits raised are for the Abthorpe Historical Archive.

Thank you for your continued support. Abthorpe Old School Management Committee.

CHURCH NEWS

Harvest Festival and Harvest Supper: The church looked lovely for our Harvest Festival service on Sunday September 21st, with flower arrangements and produce adorning all the window sills. Thank you to all who contributed. The produce was later delivered to Towcester Foodbank and the Hope Centre in Northampton. The photo



shows Barbara Malcomson and Julia who works at the Hope Centre with the produce we donated.

Then on Saturday October 11th we held our Harvest Supper in the Old School. Rev. Paul started the proceedings with Grace and a Thanksgiving prayer, and we then partook of traditional Harvest fare: Pies (Shepherd, Cottage, Fish and Veggie) and Puds (a variety of fruit crumbles). As usual, it was a most pleasant and convivial evening enjoyed by all who attended.

Parents & Pre-Schoolers Coffee Morning: On the morning of Saturday September 10th we invited all Mums and Dads in the village who have pre-school children to meet together in the café area of the church for a couple of hours of play and chat, with coffee and biscuits also on offer. We were pleased with the response and it was good to see phone numbers being exchanged and requests for the chance to do something similar again. We will certainly do so.

Tea & Piece: Our monthly afternoons in the church café offering a cuppa and a piece of home-made cake have continued throughout the summer and autumn but we now close down these events until the spring. The final one, on October 19th, is rather different to the others as we offer a complementary thank-you to all those churchyard mowers, church-openers and others whose help throughout the year is so much appreciated.



Church Tote: The church tote is the biggest contributor to church funds and the money raised is devoted only to the upkeep of the church building – and of course the prize money for the lucky winners! These are: in June, Ian & Sue Atkins and Lynn Neasham, £115.00 each; in July, Jan Vanson and Melanie Dennison, £115 each; in August, Sam & Tom Bardsley and Nick Greenhalgh, £117.50 each; in September, Marna Perrigo and Tricia Holmes

each won £117.50. If you don't already belong to the Tote, please think about doing so – contact Richard Tomalin (01327 858316, richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net).

Churchyard walls: Those of you who pass regularly through the centre of the village will no doubt have noticed that the churchyard walls are bulging rather alarmingly in a number of places. This is now becoming a worry since one of the walls is immediately adjacent to the pavement on Main Street. We are currently applying to the Historic Churches Trust to see if we can get a grant towards their repair, but this will not fund the total cost which runs into several thousand pounds for each of the two main sections needing attention. All the more reason why we ask you to join the Tote!

Remembrance Sunday: Following what in recent years has become the norm for Remembrance Sunday, there will again be a short 15 minute ceremony held on the Green adjacent to the war memorial on Sunday November 9th. This will begin at 10.50 am and all are welcome, children and adults alike.

Plans for Advent and Christmas: On Friday December 5th there will be our traditional lighting up of the Christmas Tree so everyone is



invited to gather on the Green to join in the countdown and sing a few Christmas songs and carols. This year our voices will be boosted by members of the Greens Norton Choir, some of whom live in Abthorpe. Following this, we will all troop into the warmth and dry of the church to warm ourselves with mulled wine or cocoa and some Christmas fare. The singing may then continue apace.

Of course, on Christmas Eve at 4 pm the most popular church event of the year takes place with the Carol and Christingle Service. Don't miss this perfect start to Christmas. A day or two prior to the service we will meet in the Old School to make the Christingles – any child of any age can come along to help as well as Mums and Dads. Full details will be posted nearer the time.

At the time of going to print it has not been confirmed when our Christmas Day service will be but we will send round a flyer with all dates and times of Christmas events nearer the time.

NEW INN NEWS

Pub Quiz: This popular event is held on the last Sunday of each month starting at 7.30 pm. Teams of up to 6 people compete, with the winning team naming a charity of their choice to which they donate their prize money. A sausage and chip supper is provided as part of the deal.

The winners of the June Pub Quiz were the Westenders who chose Sarcoma UK as their charity. Benefitting from the weather it was the first Quiz to be held solely outdoors. The winner of July's Quiz were the No Hoppers. Their charity was the local Air Ambulance. In August the No Hoppers won with the money going to the RNLI and in September the quiz was won by the Weston Wozacks who gave their money to a Dog charity.

Chef's Table: The next gastronomic evening will take place on 13th November. The meal comprises a 5 course taster menu with accompanying wines. The cost is £55 per person. Booking is essential.

Festive Menu: This year's festive menu has just been announced. It will be available from 26th November until 26th December. (On Christmas Day itself, the New Inn just opens for drinks between 12 and 2 pm). To avoid disappointment it is advised to book early on 01327 857306.

And the celebrations continue into 2026 with New Year's Day Special Brunch (Alfresco): 9.00 – 11.15 am

•Full English Breakfast - £12.00

- Big Daddy Belly Buster - £18.95
- Kids Choose Any 4 - £6.00
- Pancakes Biscoff / Banana & Nutella - £6.00
- Eggs Benedict - £9.95
- Homemade Sourdough, Smashed Avocado & Poached Egg - £9.95
- Billingsgate Smoked Kippers In Butter - £10.95
- Barista Coffee - All £3
- Fresh Pressed Juices - All £3

*** 10 PERCENT OFF FOR ABTHORPE VILLAGERS ***

FESTIVE MENU

Crispy Panko Breaded Brie Served Mulled Spiced Cranberry Sauce
Green Pea & Ham Hock Terrine, Pickled Vegetables, Butter Crostini & Smk. Black Garlic Gel
Baked Whole Fig, Goats Cheese & Buckingham Honey
Winter Vegetable Soup, Pearl Barley & Cheese Crouton

Roast Norfolk Turkey Breast, Pigs In Blankets, Cumberland Stuffing, Candied Fresh Cranberries & Red Wine Roast Gravy
Tender Slow Roasted Beef, Roasted Onion & Chestnut Sauce
Billingsgate House Cured Poached Salmon, Citrus Crust & Salsa Verdi
Home Smoked Belly Of Pork, Sweet Potato & Caramelized Sweet Onion Mash
Butternut Squash & Pearl Onion Tart Tartin Served With A Sweet Cider Sauce (V)

Roast Carrots & Parsnips, Saute Brussels With Bacon, Seasonal Greens & Roast Potatoes

Irish Cream & Biscoff Cheesecake, Black Cherry Compote & Vanilla Cream
Tiramisu & Muled Wine Winter Berries
Traditional Christmas Pudding With Brandy Sauce
Raspberry Creme Brulee & Homemade Cantucci
Chefs House Cheeseboard With Fruits, Chutney & Crackers
(Supplement £4.50)

1 Course - £17.95 / 2 Courses - £24.95
3 Courses - £30.95

Childrens Meals
1 Course - £9.95
2 Course - £13.50
3 Course - £17.50

Book Now - 01327 857306

OTHER VILLAGE NEWS

Sarah Lawson

On June 23rd 2025 at the age of 65 years, Sarah died peacefully at home, as she wished, from complications of multiple cancers over the past 12 years.

Sarah, along with her husband Mark, moved to the village of Foscote in 1997. She was the mother of William, Anna and Ben, Granny Saz to James and Isla, and mother-in-law to Row and Dan.

Sarah always lived life to the full – she loved her family, house, garden, dogs, hens and her many friends. She also enjoyed many hobbies such as reading, tennis, crosswords, sewing



and knitting (including making outfits for her grandchildren) as well as flower arranging.

Before starting her family, she had been a sub-editor at *Financial Weekly* and then *The Independent*, and throughout her life read avidly. She was the founder member of the village Book Club, which continues to meet regularly.

She also enjoyed bridge which she excelled at – everyone wanted to partner her! More surprising to most of those who knew her was the revelation in the eulogy at her funeral that she was one of the world's most successful players at Fantasy Football, winning the family league every year despite having started with no interest in the sport.

Despite living just outside Abthorpe, she always supported village events and was on the Old School Committee until health problems forced her to step down – her delicious chocolate cakes were always much appreciated at coffee mornings and other social events.

The church was full on the day of her funeral with her family and many friends celebrating and giving thanks for her life – the church was full of flowers which Sarah so loved, many of which were from her own garden.

Together with her family, Sarah's legacy is the 1,000 tree wood which she planted at home.

She is sorely missed. RIP Sarah.

Angela Darling

Abthorpe church was packed on 14th July as we said farewell to Angela Darling who died in June at the age of 87. Angela and her husband David came to the village in 1966 when they purchased Leeson House and remained there until shortly after David's death in 2012. Angela was involved in many aspects of village life. For many years, the church fete was held in the gardens of Leeson House. She was a strong supporter of the church and served on the PCC and as Church Warden for many



years. And she produced a legendary fish pie for Harvest Suppers. Our sympathies go to her daughters Melanie, Annabel and the rest of her family.

BEDLAM TALK

On Saturday October 4th Slapton resident Stuart Bell treated us to a most interesting talk in the Old School on 'Bedlam' – an unusual topic for a talk and Stuart's audience were intrigued to know what exactly it would be about. Stuart was one of a long line of 'Masters of Bedlam' but fortunately escaped the fate of at least one who was executed for High Treason!

So to clear up any confusion, the term 'Bedlam' – which has become a universal byword for chaos and disorder – is simply a contraction of 'Bethlehem', as is 'Bethlem', the name by which the hospital has come to be known.

So this was a talk which explained how the original Bethlem Royal Hospital began, and how not just the building and the location of the hospital changed through the centuries, but also how attitudes towards, and treatments for, mental illness changed as well.

Here are just a few facts we learned:

- 1) The Bethlem Royal Hospital was founded in 1247 and is believed to be the oldest institution for mental illness in continuous existence in the world.
- 2) It was founded as the Priory of St. Mary of Bethlehem, which was originally the London outpost of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.
- 3) Over the last 778 years it has had four sites: the first is now Liverpool Street railway station; the second was next door in Moorfields; the third is now the home of the Imperial War Museum near St George's Circus – still using some of the original hospital buildings; the fourth, still used today, is in West Wickham in Bromley.
- 4) 'Bedlam' became widely known because



the hospital was set as a scene in several plays written by contemporaries of Shakespeare, and in Hogarth's pictures depicting 'The Rake's Progress'.

5) Two giant statues which stood on the gates of the second Bethlem depict 'Raving and Melancholy Madness'. One is said to be modelled on Oliver Cromwell's porter Daniel, who was a patient. They are both now in the Museum of the Mind at Bethlem Royal Hospital which has a remarkable collection of archives, artefacts and artwork showing the story of the hospital and of mental healthcare over the centuries.

FOOTPATHS IN ABTHORPE

We are fortunate to have a number of footpaths in and around Abthorpe and we also have a Footpath Warden in the form of David Robbins (dave.robbins@abthorpe.net). If you notice a stile that is broken, a particularly overgrown path, a path through a crop field that has not been sprayed (the paths are supposed to be 1 metre wide), or any other issue then please either speak to or email David or get in contact directly with the Fix MyStreet website (<https://fix.westnorthants.gov.uk>). It may not happen instantly, but things do get done. For instance, those of you who have for a number of years struggled through the gateway at the end of Hogs Lane due to the deep and very muddy puddle/quagmire will have noticed that it has now been filled in, making life much easier as shown on the front cover.

DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 19th October	10.00am	Church	Holy Eucharist
Sunday 19th October	3.00-4.30pm	Church	Tea and Piece
Sunday 26th October	7.30pm	New Inn	Quiz Night
Sunday 9th November	10.50am	The Green	Remembrance service
Monday 10th November	7.00pm	Old School	Parish Council Meeting
Thursday 13th November	7.00pm	New Inn	Chef's Table
Friday 5th December		The Green	Christmas Tree Lighting
Sunday 16th November	10.00am	Church	Holy Eucharist
Sunday 21st December	10.00am	Church	Holy Eucharist

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