

# ABTALK



## **PARISH COUNCIL NEWS**

The Parish Council held its Annual General Meeting on 7th May. The line up remains the same. I continue as Chair, with Tim Humphrey as Vice Chair, and councillors Rachel Stevens, Fi Noble, Chris Zacher, Mike Greenhalgh and Allan Davidson. Lynn Neasham remains as Clerk, whose organisation and dedication underpins everything we do. All councillors extend their sincere thanks to her.

Our Ward Councillor, Charles Manners, has confirmed that Abthorpe is classified as an "Other Village" in the Local Plan, meaning only small scale development within the existing village confines is expected. The Parish Council continues to seek clarity from WNC regarding land south of the village purchased by Crown Events. A site visit took place in March last year, followed by an enforcement notice, but we have yet to see any meaningful response from the landowner or their agents.

On 21st May we held our Annual Village meeting, when all the local organisations update us on the previous year's comings and goings.

We had a report from PCs Matt O'Brian and Sam Dyson on Policing and Community Safety. The key messages were that residents should continue reporting crimes – even when outcomes aren't fed back. Multiple reports often contribute to successful prosecutions – small nuggets of information can build into a bigger, clearer picture. Matt also told us that police will hold surgeries here in the village on a regular basis.

Your Council has spent much of its time on issues of village infrastructure and maintenance. Keeping our village neat, tidy and safe seems to be important to most of our residents. Our annual litter pick in April produced seven bags of rubbish and filled half a car. Thank you to all who helped. Thanks also to Tina and Steve Clews, who have transformed the old well area near the church into a beautiful 'garden', replacing the previous nettles and brambles.

Last year the Northamptonshire Immediate Justice Programme helped clear paths and verges in the village; we are working to get this support reinstated. We hope this can help get the footpath along the eastern end of Wappenham Road widened to make it more accessible.

The village noticeboard has been beautifully refurbished by Julien Dumas and Tim Humphrey. It does look great. The village sign on the Green, now 25 years old, will also receive a much needed refresh in the near future. The new kerbing along the Green has settled in well and has stabilised the



area behind it. The village defibrillator has been replaced with a supported model and its home, the old phone box, has been refurbished, now with lighting and new signage.

A rota continues to keep the village green mown, but the verges on Brackley Lane and Wappenham Road receive less attention. If residents there are interested in forming a mowing rota, the Parish Council can provide a suitable mower and cover fuel costs. Please contact the Council if you would like to be involved.



On a similar theme of involvement, the Ability bus has lost its funding, so TADD (Towcester Area Door to Door) is seeking volunteer drivers. If you can volunteer, please contact Lynn Neasham. TADD provides transport to and from medical appointments and access services.

From a safety standpoint, Rachel Stevens updated us on the Speedwatch programme in April. We had more volunteers than in the past, with the new camera equipment much easier to use. We ran 15 sessions in total, with 56 cars recorded in total range 35-45 miles per hour with a median speed of 42mph, and the

top speed recorded of 45mph. We will be scheduling more sessions soon so if you want to join in, please contact Lynn Neasham.

Since last year's village meeting, the Council has been exploring a traffic focused number plate recognition CCTV system to record vehicles entering and leaving the village. This is the type of system preferred by police. We have agreement in principle for camera locations and are now working through the technical and data governance requirements. Access to recordings would be strictly limited to law enforcement, with defined data retention periods.

Following last year's Grand Prix, the Parish Council is arranging a further meeting with the Circuit. We will request coned verges near the crossroads during the event to avoid the delays and congestion of last year caused by buses and taxis picking up passengers. We will also request free passes to lower level events as a goodwill gesture for residents.

And finally, as a permanent recognition of part of our village heritage, a Blue Plaque has been installed on the Old School commemorating Jane Leeson, who founded the village's Free School in 1642 at the age of 80. Now our village hall, it served as a school until 1959 and remains central to community life. We should all thank Alison Symmers for leading our nomination, and for all the work that she and her team of volunteers have undertaken to collect, review and catalogue the Abthorpe Historical Archive which now lives in the Old School.

Our next PC meeting is on 22nd June.

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## **NEW SIGNAGE – SAFER ROADS?**

The new signs springing up in the village are a welcome sight. The photo on the cover shows the new 40mph speed restriction which now applies from the village to beyond the crossroads. It will hopefully make the crossroads less hazardous and lessen the likelihood of any more of the serious accidents we have witnessed in the past. The 20mph Advisory Speed Limit for Wappenham Road is again a hopeful sign of safer conditions for Abthorpe residents, particularly those with children.

But it goes without saying that the roads are only safer if we all stick to the limits!



## OLD SCHOOL NEWS

Together with Cllr Berry and Alison Symmers, we were at Northampton Museum for the official launch of the Blue Plaque awarded to Jane Leeson, which now proudly adorns the Old School for all to see. Alison gave a very eloquent and lovely speech on the history of Jane Leeson and the Old School. Booklets are available at the museum on the Blue Plaques presented.

The Archive group meets regularly at the Old School. Contact [archive@abthorpe.net](mailto:archive@abthorpe.net) for more details or if you want to see the archive.

Our thanks to Fi Noble who, in March, hosted and provided a selection of delicious soups for one of our customary Old School weekday lunches, with the



*The unveiling of the Blue Plaque was attended by two former pupils of the school.*

added attraction of chocolate brownies for dessert. Our funds increased by £172.24; thank you Fi.

The following month, Sarah Jones was the host – this time in her own home – when all were invited to sample savoury bites and cake from late morning through lunchtime. Jill Greenhalgh was the lucky raffle winner, taking home a garden hamper. Thank you for your support, Sarah, which raised £325.17 for our funds.

This event was followed by a successful Toasties Lunch in May, when it was fine enough to sit outside in the Old School courtyard and catch some lovely Spring sunshine. It was very successful and raised £155.84.

The photograph below shows that the Old School is not just a venue for fund-raising but also one for special occasions. On a significant weekend in May, our wonderful 'village hall' was transformed into something quite special that easily rivalled many local venues at a fraction of the cost and with the advantage of being close to home. Think about it for your next special occasion!

Lunch and Launch was on June 6th. Baguettes, strawberries and cream and Pimm's were on offer. The launch was for our latest book on Abthorpe, *A Village of Peculiar People*. More details on page 8.



*The Old School in May set up for a party of 60.*

## What's Next

July 11th, we have a summer sundowner at 40 Wappenham Road, with our hosts Tim and Emily. Savoury bites and more. A bar will be available, with a chance to enjoy the summer sun and relax in the garden. If you can let Tim, Emily or Lynn know you are coming, we would appreciate it. If not, see you there.

The Old School is planning a night of entertainment on 14th November, no details yet, but watch this space.

If anyone would like to host a coffee morning or similar event on our behalf, we would be very grateful. Please get in touch and we can go from there. Further lunches will be happening over the summer, no fixed dates yet, but check out the new refurbished noticeboard.

Plans are in motion for a Village Safari Supper. We are looking at 5th September or 12th September, whichever date is the most popular. For those who have not enjoyed a Safari Supper before, hosts provide one course for 6 or 8 people. Everyone is in a different group for each course, so you have the chance to meet many villagers. We all get together at the start and the finish. The event is self funding, the ticket cost covering food and wine. It is a great way to socialise. If you are interested or would like more information get in touch and indicate which dates suit and whether you can host a course - contact

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**SUMMER SUNDOWNER**  
**11<sup>th</sup> JULY 2026**  
**FROM 5.00PM until .....**  
**ENJOY A SUMMER EVENING SOIREE AT**  
**40 WAPPENHAM ROAD**

**OUR HOST'S**  
**Tim & Emily**  
**On behalf of The Old School**

**Have a glass of Pimm's - or maybe two,**  
**With plenty of other drinks waiting for you.**  
**Enjoy a light supper, a nibble or few,**  
**And soft drinks aplenty for**  
**guests old and new.**

**A licensed bar will be open all night too**



## A VILLAGE OF PECULIAR PEOPLE

*Abthorpe is a village of peculiar people,  
A drunken pastor and a wooden steeple.*

This rhyme was written about Rev. Pryce Jones, the schoolmaster and vicar of Abthorpe from 1793 to 1829, who was notorious for various reasons. The rhyme explains the title of the latest book by Alison Symmers and Jill Tolson which was launched at the Old School on 6th June.

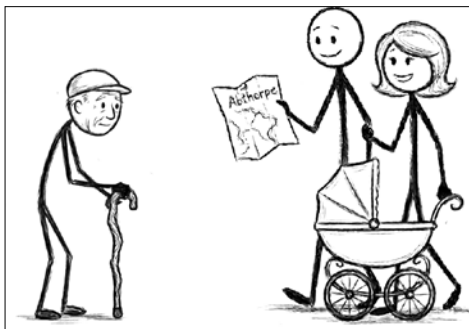
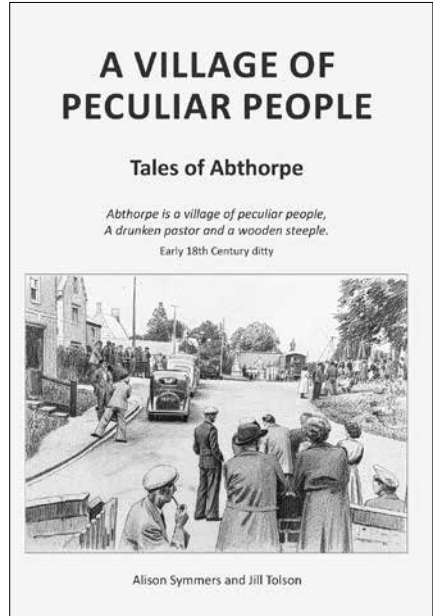
The authors explained that when they wrote their first book *The Free School in Abthorpe*, they garnered a lot of other stories. They were keen not keep these lovely tales to themselves, but that they survive and were passed on, and so began this book.

The book is structured with a separate section on various houses in the village and its surroundings which are linked to relevant stories. They are arranged as a walk around the village starting at the Old School on one corner of the Green, but there is no need to follow that order. The archives have been scoured for suitable photographs and a coloured map in the centre pinpoints all the houses.

As well as photos, the book is enlivened by little sketches of people enjoying reading the book as they wander around the village.

There is a health warning – some of the tales may be exaggerations or tall tales. But almost all of them are true, or have a kernel of truth.

The book costs £10 and is available from the Old School Committee. Contact Lynn Neasham, [oldschool@abthorpe.net](mailto:oldschool@abthorpe.net).





*This photograph appears in the book in the section on Shunpikers, which was built as two cottages and converted to one in 1951. On the right is a pair of three-storey cottages built in 1856 which have since been demolished, while on the left is Forge Cottage, which features in a separate section.*

## **CHURCH NEWS**

**Services:** We hold one regular service a month. This starts at 10.00 am and lasts for an hour. It is held on the third Sunday of the month. Everyone is welcome. It is a traditional service of hymns, prayers, readings, a sermon and taking the sacrament. If anyone feels they would like something different, please let one of the PCC know – we are open to ideas! Jill Greenhalgh is our Church Warden, Gail Coombs is Secretary and Alison Robbins is Treasurer: [jill.greenhalgh@abthorpe.net](mailto:jill.greenhalgh@abthorpe.net); [gail.coombs@abthorpe.net](mailto:gail.coombs@abthorpe.net); [robbins@abthorpe.net](mailto:robbins@abthorpe.net).

**Church Opening:** Thanks to a group of village volunteers, we open the Church every day during normal working hours for the duration of British Summer Time. All are welcome to enter the church for a moment of quiet reflection.

**Tea & Piece:** Once a month – normally the third Sunday – we invite villagers and visitors alike to partake of afternoon tea in the church café area from 3pm until 4.30pm. Cakes are homemade and are available as take-away if you prefer (but please bring a container if possible).

**Food Bank:** at the back of the church there is a large plastic box for donations to Towcester Foodbank. Currently, food items in greatest demand are: savoury crackers, tinned custard, tea bags and coffee, but equally important are non-food but essential items like washing-up liquid, laundry detergent, size 6 and 7 nappies and carrier bags or bags for life. So far this year we have contributed 36.5kg of food.

**Churchyard:** We are hugely grateful to all those villagers who form part of the churchyard mowing rota. With its central location in our lovely village, the need to keep the churchyard tidy is recognised and your willingness to help us is invaluable. We do keep one section of the churchyard un-mown to provide a vital habitat for pollinators. Earlier in the Spring, we had a more general Churchyard Tidy-Up morning and it was heart-warming to receive a good deal of support.

**Tote:** Recent winners of the Church Tote have been: in February, Monica Plant and Alun & Rachel Stevens (winning £117.50 each); in March, Allan Davidson and Tim Newton won £116.25 apiece; in April it was the turn of Paula Le Baigue and Lucy Jones to win the same amount, and in May, Rachel Hulbert and Arthur & Sian Young each became £117.50 better off. Remember, if you wish to join the Tote or to add an extra set of numbers or just for extra information, the person to contact is Richard Tomalin (01327 858316, richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net).



*New tables in the New Inn*

**Fundraising:** Keep your eyes peeled for details of a Cream Tea event later in the summer which we will advertise via the village Facebook and flyers through your door. There will be the opportunity too to pick up some paperback book bargains (donations of books you no longer want would be much appreciated). Our Harvest Supper will follow as we move into Autumn.

## NEW INN NEWS

Our village pub restaurant is having a make-over with bespoke new tables and fresh paint and décor to make it even more welcoming.

For those of a certain age there is the Senior Citizens Lunchtime which takes place from Wednesdays to Saturdays from 12 noon to 3 pm. One course meals cost £9.95, two courses £12.95. The choices on offer:

- Homemade Soup & Chefs Bread
- Pate, Pickled Vegetables & Homemade Bread
- Hand Breaded Mushrooms with Garlic Mayo
- Ham, egg & chips
- Penne white wine mushroom pasta
- Toad in the hole with veg and onion gravy
- 5oz Rump steak with fries and accompaniments
- Battered haddock, chips and mushy peas

- Duo of soups & Duo of breads

We are dog and wheelchair friendly, and no ID required! Bookings - 01327 857306

Why not come along to a Tapas Tuesday evening for something a bit different?

**Special events:** In addition to these regular events, the New Inn prides itself on providing something a bit different for special days or just for a change. Three such occasions are coming up, and more are undoubtedly planned. The first



of these is Fathers Day on Sunday June 21st when the New Inn offers the following invitation: "Let us get your dad a pint of our Ironstone locally brewed lager absolutely free on us as part of his very special day; we are also offering our Sunday roast, pub classics, steaks and desserts".

The following Saturday, June 27th, there is Live Music on offer with Cactus Rose playing Country music.

And on 4th July, there is a Moroccan BBQ to look forward to.

**Quiz Night:** And let us not forget that on the last Sunday evening of the month there is Quiz Night when teams from Abthorpe and beyond compete with enthusiasm and a small degree of competitiveness to become

the winners – and then generously donate their winnings to a charity of their choice. On both occasions in February and March, the winners were the Six Counties team, who decided to donate the money raised to the Wellbeing Café in Towcester and the Cynthia Spencer Hospice respectively. In April the convincing winners were the Barflies team who donated their prize money to Towcester Foodbank. The latest Quiz Night took place on the last day of May when the winning team were the No Hoppers who made a donation to the local Air Ambulance.

### **(AN IMAGINED) OBITUARY FOR MISS JANE LEESON**

Written on this 28th Day of May, in the year of Our Lord 1648.

It is with regret that the Death of Miss Jane Leeson, Spinster of the Parish of Abthorpe in Northamptonshire and in her Eighty Eighth Year, is hereby announced. The Deceased was born at Frankton near Coventry Town but moved to Abthorpe when her Mother inherited her late husband's property in that Village. Mr Leeson also left a large Legacy of £100 to his only Daughter – an unusual Bequest for an Unmarried Daughter, it must be said. The aforementioned Daughter, Miss Jane, purchased the large House from her Mother, becoming a Woman of Property and causing understandable Outrage from her Brothers. Purchase of nearby Farmland then ensued – it



can be hazarded that her tenant Farmers thought it rather odd having a Miss as their 'Landlord.'

Miss Leeson, although held in certain Respect, was a determined and rather forthright Woman not averse to shunning the accepted Etiquette and Mores of her class. She showed a deep Concern with the Plight of the Poor, particularly poor Children. She believed strongly, misguidedly in the eyes of many, in the value of Education to improve Life Chances. To this end she initiated the Teaching of the Poor Children from Abthorpe and Foxcoate, initially in her own Home, but then in 1642 she took the extraordinary Step of building a proper School on the adjacent Land. She insisted the Building be made of Stone so that it would endure and remain a "Free School for the Poor for Ever". In another eccentric Gesture, she personally paid the Salary of the Schoolmaster during her lifetime.

Miss Leeson's Last Will and Testament aims to ensure that her Philanthropic Work will continue long after her Death. It establishes a Charitable Trust to continue to pay the Schoolmaster's Salary and also to provide Relief for the Poor of Abthorpe and other surrounding Villages and Towns. Her Will specifies that the Schoolmaster is to teach Poor Children free of charge and that he can live in the Schoolhouse provided he has no Wife or Children residing with him.

A peculiar Woman indeed. Will her Legacy live on? Only Time will tell.

## **OF LOCAL INTEREST**

We received this email from Natasha Ackerley recently and thought it might be of interest to some villagers. Natasha works for a local business that provides support services to residents in our neighbourhood:

"POPIN Home Support provides companionship services to adults requiring assistance to maintain independence, wellbeing, and quality of life within their own homes and local communities.

"The business offers personalised support tailored to individual needs. Services may include social interaction, assistance with daily routines, meal preparation, light household duties, shopping, appointment accompaniment, community access, and other non-personal care assistance intended to promote independence and reduce social isolation.

"To discuss the ways in which we can help, please call us on 07438 792953."

[www.popinhomesupport.co.uk](http://www.popinhomesupport.co.uk)

## **AND SOMETHING FROM ABTHORPE'S VERY OWN TRAVEL COUNSELLOR**

Hello! I'm Claire, and if you live either in or around Abthorpe, there's a good chance you've seen me out and about with Jasper, our Springer Spaniel. We have lived in the village for over 11 years now, our children have grown up here and we are happy to call it home!

After more than 25 years travelling the world as an Event Manager and now as a Travel Counsellor helping people create memorable trips in the UK and overseas, I've learned that a little preparation goes a long way. With the holiday season approaching, here are a few simple tips to help make your travels smoother and more enjoyable.

### **1. Passport validity**

It's surprisingly easy to overlook passport expiry dates until the last minute. For Europe, your passport must be issued less than 10 years before your departure date and valid for at least 3 months after your planned return date. Worldwide, many countries also prefer 6 months validity remaining after your date of entry, so it's always worth checking well before you book, especially if you're travelling with children whose passports often have much shorter validity periods.



### **2. Travel insurance**

Travel insurance might not be the most exciting part of planning a trip, but it can be one of the most valuable. Booking your travel insurance early is more cost effective and provides peace of mind should the unexpected happen, from medical emergencies and unexpected cancellations to lost luggage and travel disruptions.

### **3. Mobile phone roaming charges**

Before you set off, take a moment to check your provider's roaming policy.

A quick review can help you avoid unexpected charges and ensure you stay connected without any unpleasant surprises when you return home.

#### **4. Advance booking for excursions and restaurants**

Popular experiences, attractions and sought-after restaurants often fill up faster than people expect, particularly during peak travel periods. Reserving ahead can save disappointment and give you more freedom to enjoy your trip once you arrive.

#### **5. Finally, airport transfers and logistics**

We often spend plenty of time choosing flights and accommodation, but the journey between the airport and your destination can be just as important. With the introduction of the European Entry/Exit System (EES), allowing extra time for border controls, booking transfers in advance, and planning your return journey to the airport can help ensure a smoother, more relaxed start and finish to your trip. For more information on EES, please refer to: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/eu-entryexit-system>

Travel has a way of broadening our horizons, introducing us to new places, people, and experiences. It's personal to you. The best trips are the ones we return from with stories to tell, new perspectives, and memories that stay with us long after we've unpacked. Whether you're planning a weekend escape or a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, as a Travel Counsellor, I can help. Not only with advice and recommendations on where to go and book it for you, but also make things easy with managing the little details and arrangements that sit behind the scenes allowing you to just literally 'pack and go' with peace of mind. I'll be there if you need support, plus 100% financial protection.

If you know me already, you'll know I like nothing better than a chat, either on a dog walk with Jasper or over a coffee. If you've discovered a hidden gem, had an unforgettable experience, or have a destination in mind for your next trip, I'd love to hear about it and plan it for you. You can find out more about me here: <https://www.travelcounsellors.co.uk/claire.zachar>.

#### **TOWCESTER MIDSUMMER MUSIC EVENT**

Several Abthorpe residents are in the Greens Norton Community Choir which is performing on Thursday June 18th at 7.30pm in the Choirs Extravaganza, part of the Towcester Music Festival. Details and tickets at [towcestermidsummermusic.co.uk](http://towcestermidsummermusic.co.uk).

**DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

Thursday 18th June	7.30pm	Towcester	Choirs Extravanaganza
Sunday 21st June	10.00am	Church	Holy Eucharist
	12 noon	New Inn	Father’s Day Special
	3.00pm	Church	Tea and Piece
Monday 22nd June	7.00pm	Old School	Parish Council meeting
Saturday 27th June	7.00pm	New Inn	Live Music with Cactus Rose
Sunday 28th June	7.30pm	New Inn	Quiz
Saturday 4th July	7.00pm	New Inn	Moroccan BBQ
Sunday 5th July			British Grand Prix
Saturday 11th July	5.00pm	Sundowner at 40 Wappenham Road	
Sunday 19th July	10.00am	Church	Holy Eucharist
	3.00pm	Church	Tea and Piece
Sunday 26th July	7.30pm	New Inn	Quiz
Sunday 16th August	10.00am	Church	Holy Eucharist
	3.00pm	Church	Tea and Piece
Sunday 16th August	7.30pm	New Inn	Quiz
Saturday 5th or 12th September (tbc)			Safari Supper

**Regular pub events**

Monday	Pie Night
Tuesday	Tapas
Wednesday to Saturday	Seniors Lunchtime and Light Bites
Thursday	Steak Night

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