

ABTALK



*News from Abthorpe
October 2026*

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Our 'duties' as a council are many and varied, and whilst we would like to just concentrate on internal village matters, much of our time is occupied with issues and events happening outside our parish, yet impacting us here in Abthorpe. The last few months have been no exception in that regard.

We have renewed our objections to the revised Shacks Barn development, stressing two major harms: traffic impacts and visual intrusion. The road layout would force more vehicles onto the already congested A413 through Silverstone, driving even more motorists onto narrow rural lanes that cannot safely handle heavy or high volume traffic. These rat runs, especially through Abthorpe and its hazardous crossroads, have already caused frequent accidents and severe deterioration of the Abthorpe to Silverstone road. Any further increase linked to Shacks Barn would worsen congestion, road safety, and infrastructure damage across nearby villages.

The proposed 15 metre high buildings remain excessively tall, rising above the Yardley Whittlewood ridge tree line and impacting views from Abthorpe. Such large-scale structures contradict the site's original designation for small and medium sized businesses and would harm the rural landscape.

Finally, we reiterated that Towcester's historic environment, continuously occupied since the Middle Stone Age, is being eroded by developments like Shacks Barn, which offer little economic benefit to local residents. With unemployment already low and businesses relying on imported labour, the development risks reducing the area's amenity value, discouraging visitors and shoppers, and ultimately harming the local economy.

The Grand Prix has come and gone for another year, and it was perhaps less disruptive than in recent years. We held meetings with the Circuit in the months leading up to the event and the points we raised were by and large taken on board. Last year there was significant congestion at the crossroads but this year that was much better. There were certainly fewer buses and taxis coming through the village as the Circuit had emphasised the prescribed routes more effectively. The new "bollards" meant that parked vehicles couldn't obstruct the line of sight for vehicles turning towards Towcester. We need to thank all those who moved their cars away from Wappenham Road on Sunday which meant there was nothing to prevent vehicles moving smoothly through the village. That helped reduce congestion back at the crossroads but may have led to would-be 'Le Clercs'

driving a bit too quickly through the village! Thanks also to Highways who pulled the right strings to get the open drain on Wappenham Road fixed. We have a meeting with Silverstone in the New Year to start planning, when we will emphasise again that the village does its bit to make the Grand Prix a success, and we would all appreciate some recognition of that.

On the subject of fast cars, we have ended our Community Speed Watch for this year, but we will start up again next year. WE COULD REALLY DO WITH MORE VOLUNTEERS PLEASE!! If you are interested, please contact Lynn Neasham, the Parish Clerk: clerk@abthorpeparish.gov.uk. This year we clocked around 70 cars speeding through our village, at a mean speed of 37mph.

The sharp-eyed among you will have noticed the beautifully refreshed village sign on the Green, as shown on this issue's front cover. We have to thank many for their help in achieving this, but especially Barry Haycock, Vic Deane and Paula Le Baigue, for getting the sign off its post (it's really heavy), sand blasted, completely repainted and put back up.

Thanks as well to WNC Highways for clearing/widening the pathway on the south side of Wappenham Road from Brackley Lane heading west. It is much easier and safer to walk along there now. We will see if they can do the same for us with other paths in the village, perhaps around the Green and the church. Let us know if you have any candidates!

The next Parish Council meeting is to be held in the Old School at 7.15pm on Monday November 23rd.

And finally....IF THERE IS CHRISTMAS STUFF IN THE SHOPS IT'S NOT TOO EARLY!!! In keeping up with Abthorpe tradition, we are planning to begin our Christmas celebrations with the lighting of our village Christmas Tree on the Green on 6th December at 4.30pm to the accompaniment of one or two carols, followed by some refreshments and some more carols in the Old School. See you then!

OLD SCHOOL NEWS

The summer has been busy for the Old School.

The latest village book, previewed in the June edition of Abtalk, was launched earlier in the summer. Titled *A Village of Peculiar People: Tales, Myths and Characters from Abthorpe's Past*, it is a fascinating and well-researched record of the lives of some of Abthorpe's former residents. If you don't yet have a copy, message Lynn at oldschool@abthorpe.net to reserve one. The book costs £10.

On a balmy summer evening in July, Emily and Tim Humphrey kindly hosted our Summer Sundowner. Their garden was packed with villagers enjoying each other's company as well as the offerings from the bar and tables laden with delicious food, all made by willing 'chefs' in the village. The entertainment continued well into the evening – for some – as England were playing Norway in the World Cup and the match was ingeniously projected on to a house wall!



We have held a couple of weekday lunch events: the first, in July, offered Cheese and Ham Plates whilst, more recently in September a Burger lunch was provided. The next weekday lunch is planned for Friday 27th November so please keep the date free for some festive fare.

We see the return of the Art Exhibition on 24th and 25th October 2026, 10.00am to 4.00pm, at the Old School. It should be a wonderful exhibition, definitely worth a visit. More details are to be found later in this magazine.

November 14th, sees the return of BINGO to the Old



Join us for an evening of fun, food, and prizes!

14th November 2026
Bar opens at 6:00 PM | Eyes Down at 6.30pm
At Abthorpe Old School

TICKETS: £15.00
 Your ticket includes:
 • Supper
 • A complete book of bingo sheets (10 games total) 🎲

Additional bingo books and dabbers will be available to purchase throughout the night. Cash and card accepted.

Prizes for Line Win and Full House
Plus a Bingo Number Lottery

Pre-booking is highly recommended for catering purposes

📞 **BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW:**
LYNN NEASHAM 07767 082594 JILL GREENHALGH 07717 887787
 OR
 Tickets will be sold door-to-door
 OR
 Tickets can be reserved via email
EMAIL : oldschool@abthorpe.net

PROCEEDS TO BE SPLIT BETWEEN THE OLD SCHOOL AND THE CHURCH

School. Details opposite. If you are interested in coming, drop a message to oldschool@abthorpe.net.

November 20th 2026: it's a Friday and it's a Coffee morning at Fi Noble's (48 Wappenham Road).

As ever, thank you for your continued support. The Old School committee does appreciate it, and is very open to new ideas and suggestions, so please let us know. We are hopeful of hosting a Quiz in 2027, the lunches will continue too, and plans in the pipeline include another Bridge Night, a Fish and Chip supper (if we have the numbers and can secure the van), and an event, Abfest, on the Green on June 12th.

CHURCH NEWS

Our monthly church service takes place at 10.00am on the third Sunday of the month. All are welcome to attend.

We held our Harvest Festival Service on September 20th. The church window sills were full of flowers, fruit, vegetables and other produce donated by villagers. The perishable items were later taken to the Hope Centre in Northampton and the non-perishables to Towcester Foodbank.

The evening before we held our Harvest Supper in the Old School. Thirty Abthorpe residents enjoyed a Ploughman's supper of jacket potatoes, cheese, gammon and salad followed by a choice of fruit crumbles. All enjoyed this traditional celebration.

At the end of July we held a Cream Tea afternoon with home-made scones on offer served with jam and clotted cream. Thank you to all who gave us their support and helped with our fundraising.

Our monthly Tea & Piece afternoons continued throughout the summer but have now come to an end until Spring arrives. These afternoons attract a regular group of residents but also visitors who take the opportunity to pop into our lovely church for a cuppa and a piece of home-made cake.

We are very grateful to all the volunteers who cut the grass in the churchyard and to Steve Noble who looks after the churchyard extension with such care. And thanks are extended to those who unlock the church each day to allow anyone to come in for a quiet moment or just to look around. Once British Summer Time ends the church will remain locked during the day but anyone can contact the PCC to ask for access.

Thank you to those residents who regularly put food items in the tub to be taken to the Foodbank. The total amount of food donated since May amounts to 26.7 kg. The tub will now move out to the porch from the back

of the church. Current items that the Foodbank is particularly short of are: sugar, longlife fruit juice, instant coffee, savoury biscuits/crackers, washing up liquid, laundry detergent, toiletries for men, women and children – and carrier bags.

Fundraising is an ever permanent item on the PCC agenda and without the Tote's regular income we would not be able to maintain the church in reasonable condition. If you would like to join the Tote, please contact Richard Tomalin on 01327 858316 richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net. Recent winners have been Tricia Holmes and Allan Davidson in June, Marion Webb and Sara Tate in July, David Dancer and David & Sylvie Coleman in August and Steve Neasham and Melanie Dennison in September. All won £117.50.

We will be collaborating with the Old School to host a Bingo Night on Saturday November 14th (see poster for details).

"Lest we forget"....There will be the usual short Remembrance Sunday event at the War Memorial starting at 10.50 am on Sunday November 8th. Please do come along.

Details of Christmas events and services will be delivered door-to-door in December.

NEW INN NEWS

Quiz: This ever popular event takes place on the last Sunday of the month with groups coming together from Abthorpe and surrounding villages to compete for the honour of coming first. Recent winners have been, in June, 5 Counties who donated their prize money to Towcester Foodbank; in July the Barflies came out top and their chosen charity was Harry's Rainbow, a charity based in Milton Keynes which supports bereaved children and their families; the August and September winners were once again 5 Counties but competing this time as O.U.R. Awful. The prize money was donated to the local Air Ambulance.

Country Themed Evening/Tribute to Dolly Parton: On Friday 13th November the New Inn has a Country Music themed evening with guests being encouraged to wear something appropriate or even attempt a Dolly Parton look. Food is in the style of Tennessee Smoke House Platters so it should be a great evening. Tickets are already sold out but there is a waiting list in the event of someone unable to make it on the night.

Pie Night – don't forget that it's Pie Night every Monday. For just £10 you can choose your pie, choose your veg and choose your mash.

Signature Sharing Board: For that special occasion the New Inn really pushes the boat out with a signature Surf and Turf sharing board. Chef brings together the best of Billingsgate, perfectly cooked British fillet steak and all the trimmings and sauces to create an exceptional platter. The cost is £75 per couple and you can opt for two medium glasses of wine for just £5 extra.

Taste of Italy Tuesdays :

Sadly, as summer is now becoming rather a distant memory, Tapas Tuesdays have had their final outing. But not to worry – they are to be replaced by Italian themed meals from October 13th. "Ottimo cibo, buon vino e servizio con il sorriso."

Christmas at the New Inn: the menu has just been made public – it looks great and is available from 1st December until Christmas Eve.



ART EXHIBITION

Over the weekend of October 24th/25th there is to be an exhibition of painting and ceramics in the Old School showcasing work by a number of local artists:

Judith Hamilton: Judy runs Soft Pastel, Oil and Watercolour workshops, and, in her garden studio, also gives one to one student tuition. Judy has been painting for 35 years, and her inspiration is still, and always will be, the natural world. Her paintings aim to show the viewer the beauty of nature and to inspire us all to take care of it.

Helen Oates: Helen has been a practicing designer for 40 years including the designing of museum interiors, notably the National Air and Space Museum in Washington and the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo. In her paintings, Helen favours a more abstract approach using dominant bright colours and texture.

Sabari Sen: Working in both oils and mixed media, Sabari brings a rich and versatile perspective to her creative work. Her background as an animation artist and graphic designer has deepened her understanding of visual storytelling.

Sabara's ceramic works aim to blend vivid aesthetics with the functional grace of everyday objects like plates, vases and jars. Drawing inspiration from her lifelong engagement with both Eastern vibrancy and Western elegance, she creates pieces that feel timeless, tactile, and deeply rooted



Paula Le Baigue



Helen Oates



Sabari Sen



Paul Wharton



Judith Hamilton



Roy Holding



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W: <https://paulwhartonartist.com>

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W: <https://royholdinggallery.com>

in tradition—yet effortlessly modern.

Roy Holding: Roy is a highly regarded full-time artist, whose bold and adventurous use of colour and texture brings to life the dramatic rural and mountain landscapes found in remote parts of the British Isles, and across the hills and valleys of Europe.

Roy exhibits throughout the UK, with his works in many private collections across the country and around the world; he is accomplished in many styles of painting and more recently has been exploring texture and collage using materials such as handmade papers and natural fibres.

Paula Le Baigue; Paula enjoys experimenting with art materials and subjects but always returns to her love of portraits using oil paint on canvas, relishing the challenge of capturing the character of the person through their eyes. Her abstract work portrays her passion for experimentation and finding beauty in decay.

Paul Wharton: Paul's landscape and seascape oil paintings have a loose yet bold and vibrant feel with his signature palette knife style. Inspiration comes from the rugged coastlines of Northern England and Scotland where the skies, cliffs, working boats and lure of the sea often meet to create dramatic and foreboding landscapes, balanced by the more serene and peaceful landscapes of Norfolk and Suffolk. His oil paintings aim to capture the ever-present beauty of our changing landscapes.

HUNGRY VISITORS

Carol and John Cummins were taken by surprise one hot August late afternoon to step outside their back door and come face to face with a young, and very hungry, small hedgehog who was fearlessly tucking into their cat Beano's saucer of food. They realised the hoglet was slightly injured so put food out again the following and subsequent evenings to help its recovery. A few days later, it was joined by a second young hoglet and then by an adult – presumably their



mother. It is now a daily evening routine for Carol and John to put out a dish of hedgehog kibble and wait for their guests to arrive and enjoy their dinner.

WEDDING BELLS

Our church was the venue for the wedding of Iona James and George Kelsey on Saturday 3rd October. Iona's parents live in Slapton but St. Botolph's was a little too cramped for the number of guests so St. John the Baptist was selected instead. The church looked stunning with magnificent flower arrangements, the beautiful red and pink dahlias having been grown by George's mother on her farm in Kent. These also featured in the bride's bouquet. We wish Iona and George many years of happiness together.



THE LOST VILLAGE

On Saturday October 10th a fascinating talk entitled "The Lost Village" was given by Northamptonshire author Richard Askwith. This fund-raising event organised by Slapton PCC was followed by wine and a varied and exceptional selection of canapés. Richard has published several award-winning books, in addition to earning a living as a journalist for newspapers such as *The Independent* (where he was executive editor) and *The Times*.

His book *The Lost Village* describes an evocative journey undertaken nearly two decades ago in search of old-fashioned villagers with lives rooted in the landscape and the past: the marginalised survivors, as Richard sees it, of a vanishing rural England that we forget at our peril.

In his talk Richard compared the lives, wealth, values and expectations of the "incomers" who have flooded into England's villages (and that includes the majority of Abthorpe's residents of course) with those he encountered and whose stories he recorded. These were people whose lives were deeply

connected to the countryside, who knew their worth but increasingly the world around them didn't. Richard feels strongly that these "marginalised English people" that he met and wrote about 20 years ago remain unseen and undervalued. There are fewer of them now of course, but they still have something to teach us and deserve to be heard. They were witnesses to a fading version of English rural life – now barely visible – that was worth something.

Richard stressed that not all the views these 'old' villagers expressed are right or that we should model our lives on theirs; or that the rural life that they recall was necessarily better than what the future holds for us. After all, the old rural ways were often harsh and sometimes cruel. Yet we can still learn from those who remember them – learn, empathise and admire.

DIARY OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS			
Sunday 18th October	Holy Eucharist	10.00am	Church
Saturday/Sunday 24th/25th October	Art Exhibition	10.00 – 4.00pm	Old School
Sunday 25th October	Quiz	7.00pm	New Inn
Sunday 8th November	Remembrance ceremony	10.50 am	The Green
Saturday 14th November	Bingo Night	6.00pm	Old School
Sunday 15th November	Holy Eucharist	10.00am	Church
Friday 20th November	Coffee Morning	10.30am (tbc)	48 Wappenham Road
Monday 23rd November	Parish Council	7.15pm	Old School
Friday 27th November	Weekday Lunch	12.30pm	Old School
Sunday 29th November	Quiz	7.00pm	New Inn
Sunday 6th December	Lighting of the Christmas Tree	4.30pm	The Green & Old School
Sunday 20th December	Holy Eucharist	10.00am	Church
Friday 24th December	Christingle & Carol Service	4.00pm	Church

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