

# ABTALK



*News from Abthorpe*

*November 2024*

## **PARISH COUNCIL**

*From Phil Berry, Parish Council Chairman*

It seems rather sad that we reported in the last addition of *Abtalk* that we had been waiting since February for a WNC planning officer to inspect the activity taking place at the old open shed in the field south of the end of Withymore Lane. It continues to still be so! The application for a 'Lawful Development Certificate' was denied, but as yet there has been no visit from the Council's planning department to review what your Parish Council believes is an illegal change of use to this old agricultural cattle byre. Since the development certificate was declined, there has been yet more unauthorised development of the site including two extensions, one of which contains a toilet. There are other unauthorised developments including enclosing what was an open sided structure and building a chimney without approval. We have written to WNC a number of times asking them to review what is happening on the site. Our WNC ward councillor, Dermott Bainbridge, has also been pursuing this on our behalf and we hope that recent changes in the senior personnel in WNC Planning might resolve this long standing issue.

We wrote another strong objection on your behalf to WNC over the proposed warehousing planned for the land next to Bell Plantation on the A5. Our major objections were over the impact on local traffic flows around Towcester on the A5 and A43 (which many of us already experience on a daily basis), but also the impact the development will have on the traffic through the nearby villages including Abthorpe. We suggested that cars and lorries will develop 'rat-run' routes to avoid the congestion which will be exacerbated with the ever increasing traffic on the A43, particularly when the new Towcester relief road opens. We also objected to the overall scale and height of the buildings, and the locational and historic context of the development. This is a strategic development on a non-strategic site. We feel it would be far better for it to be placed in a site of more significance to the transport network and away from one of historic significance. Towcester is possibly the oldest continually inhabited settlement in the UK, positioned as it is on Watling Street which was once considered the de facto border between Saxon and Viking Britain. The planning application also suggested the warehousing would provide significant local employment, but Towcester and the immediate area has very low labour requirements for the type of jobs the site will provide, meaning that labour will need to be bussed in, as is already the case for other employers in the

*Cover photo: The Tour of Britain men's cycle race came to Abthorpe on 7th September. More details on page 10.*

area. Whether our submission was decisive, we will never know, but for now at least, the development has been refused. However an appeal to the Secretary of State is likely, so the battle may not be over yet.

Our last update in *Abtalk* mentioned that Emily Humphrey had resigned from the Parish Council. Two people put their names forward to fill the vacancy, and we are pleased to say (and it is not a dynastic thing) that Tim Humphrey has joined our Council. Since then our Council clerk has told us she is leaving the village, which will be a great loss to us all. Tina Emerton has been clerk to the Council for the last seven years and put in a huge amount of effort to keep our affairs up to date in an era of increasing regulation. On behalf of the Council, I want to thank her for all her hard work and wish her and Darren well when they move to Surrey. However, I am very pleased to say that we have appointed Lynn Neasham to the role of clerk. We know that she will carry Tina's hard work forward.

For some time we have been very concerned with the visibility at, and awareness of, the crossroads just outside the village. There have been a number of accidents there, including one fatality, and we have been pressing to get something done to improve the situation. I'm pleased to say that WNC Highways have now agreed to introduce a 40mph buffer zone approaching the junction which we hope will improve safety.

And finally, a report has suggested that the closure of the road between Abthorpe and Silverstone during the Grand Prix this year significantly improved the traffic movements in and around Silverstone. But it was an inconvenience to us here in Abthorpe, and we are in communication with the circuit to try to secure the same level of compensation that residents of other local villages receive from the circuit. Fingers crossed.

## **OLD SCHOOL NEWS**

**Weekday Lunches:** The first of two pre-Christmas weekday lunches has just taken place. On Thursday 24th October there was a toastie lunch with a choice of delicious fillings plus tea and coffee. The lunch was much enjoyed by a good crowd of villagers; on Thursday 28th November the menu is turkey baps with stuffing and cranberry sauce followed by cake and cheese, again with tea and coffee. The lunches run from 12 noon until 2pm, cost around £5 depending on what you have and we welcome everyone who can come; those working from home, mums and little ones and anyone who spends their days at home.

The turkey lunch will be followed by a games afternoon. Entry is free and anyone is welcome to join us to play cards, board games or dominoes. Please bring your favourite games and enjoy a friendly social afternoon with refreshments.

**Christmas Coffee Morning:** (a joint Old School/Church event) - see page 6 for details.

**Bridge Club:** This meets on Tuesday evenings. It has recently welcomed some new members but there is room for more if you would like to join. It is always a very relaxed and enjoyable evening. Email [oldschool@abthorpe.net](mailto:oldschool@abthorpe.net) for more information.

We are hoping to run a Winter Warmer evening sometime in the New Year. Details will be on Facebook, the village notice board and the notice board on the Old School gate. Yoga and Pilates classes continue to run regular sessions. Details are on the diary sheet on the gate or contact the Old School by email.

## CHURCH NEWS

**Water in the Church:** This heading looks alarming, and, given the amount of rainfall we have had this autumn, unwanted water in the church from a leaking roof was certainly not beyond the bounds of possibility. However, in this case, the water in question was very much welcomed. After months of wrangling with Anglian Water, we have finally been connected to the village drainage network and, for the first time in the Church's long history, water (both hot and cold) is now available on tap in the newly revamped North Aisle. We are extremely grateful to all those charitable institutions who have helped us financially to complete our much delayed project. We hope all villagers will feel that the money was well spent and will take the opportunity over the coming months to come into the church to see the improvements for themselves.



**Tea and Piece:** The last Tea and Piece afternoon of the year has just taken place with a record number of villagers stopping by for a cuppa and a slice of homemade cake. We will restart the events in the Spring when the warmer weather returns. These take place in the church on the third Sunday of each month from April to October between 3.00pm and 4.30pm and are an excellent way to meet other villagers in a friendly and informal environment.

**A huge thank you** is due to all those of you who have given the church support in various ways over the year, either by attending our fundraising events, mowing the churchyard, opening up the church during the week or being a participant in the Tote. We are a very small PCC – about to become even smaller with our Secretary Tina and Church Warden Darren moving from the area – so any support is most welcome and truly appreciated.

**Tote winners:** If you are new to the village, you may not know about our Tote, the money raised from it going entirely towards the upkeep of the fabric of the church. Please do join and not only do your bit to help keep our lovely church in good repair, but also give yourself a chance to become one of our two monthly winners. Recent winners have been:

June: Stephen & Fi Noble and Graham Foster (£122.50 each)

July: Maisie & Ben Holland and Rob Balderson (£121.25 each)

August: Rob Balderson and Arthur & Sian Young (£120 each)

September: Phil Pratt & Marie McLean and Julia Cordes (£120 each)

October: Tricia Holmes and Julia Cordes (£120 each)

**Church Opening/Food Bank:** Now the clocks have gone back and we are into shorter, colder days, the church will only be opened on request (Jill Greenhalgh: 07717 887787; Alison Robbins: 07814 474047) or for actual services. The box for Towcester Foodbank donations will therefore move to the North porch. Current items in need are: Tinned meat in sauces, long life orange juice, jams/spreads, biscuits (savoury and sweet), coffee, teabags, long life milk, rice and pasta, tinned vegetables (peas, carrots, sweetcorn), nappies (particularly sizes 5 and 6), hot chocolate, shower gel, deodorant.

With the approach of Christmas, an extra box is now in the porch to accept festive fare. Please be generous and donate something extra to help those considerably less fortunate than ourselves. The Foodbank likes to have these donations in plenty of time for distribution before Christmas so don't delay!

**Harvest:** To celebrate Harvest this year we moved away from a traditional Harvest Supper and instead held a Harvest Brunch. Forty villagers partook of an array of offerings including home-made granola; fresh fruit with yogurt and local honey; sausage, egg and bacon baps; croissants and Danish pastries; and not forgetting toast and marmalade to fill any gaps! There was also a home-made produce stall for folks to take pickles, jams, pies and crumbles home with them. It was a lovely community event which we hope to repeat in the Spring, so if you didn't make it this time, please come next time. Children are very welcome.

**Remembrance Sunday:**

There will be the usual short Act of Remembrance on the Green on Sunday November 10th starting promptly at 10.50am to which all are most welcome. This year we will be particularly remembering the events of D-Day 80 years ago.

**Christmas Coffee Morning:** organised and

run in conjunction with the Old School. A very popular event to be held in the Old School on Saturday 7th December. This will be both an 'Eat In' and 'Take Away' event with cakes and savouries to consume while you are there but festive fare to take away as well. In addition, following a successful visit from them last year, Berties from Bradden will be laying out their wares for you to buy some Christmas gifts.

**Carol Service with Christingles:**

this will again take place on Christmas Eve at 4 pm in the church. This is one of the highlights of the year and it is a joy to see the church packed with villagers with their families and friends. We will be making the Christingles in the Old School on Monday 23rd December from 9.30am and always welcome help from the younger members of the village.



**Remembrance Day Ceremony**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November at 10:50**

This year there will be a short ceremony at the War Memorial on Abthorpe village green.

It will include the Last Post, Reveille and reading the names of the fallen.

*Collection in aid of The Royal British Legion*

Christmas Eve at 4:00pm  
**Carols and Christingle Service**

Followed by Mince Pies and Mulled Wine.  
**A lovely way to start Christmas with the family**



**Help to make the Christingles!!**

Please come to The Old School  
9.30am on Monday 23rd December.

*Refreshments and lots of fun.*

**Midnight Mass:** we are breaking with recent tradition this year, and are holding a 'Midnight Mass' instead of a Christmas morning service. The service will start at 11.30pm on Christmas Eve and will see in Christmas Day. We hope this proves popular – and, unless you have children or grandchildren in your house, it will allow you a lie-in on Christmas morning!

Although there will still be a Christmas Tree with lights erected in the churchyard, there will not be the usual carols and Christmas songs being sung (with refreshments following) this year. If anyone in the village is willing to take on the organisation of this, or something similar, then please get in touch with a member of the Parish Council.

## **NEW INN NEWS**

**Christmas Menu:** Just in case it had escaped your notice, the New Inn has proclaimed: THE FESTIVE SEASON IS COMING! They invite us to "join us at the New Inn with family and friends for our fabulous Christmas menu" and add that both small bookings and large parties can be catered for. Booking is advisable: please call 01327 857306.

Welcome, by the way, to new chef Ellen!

**Christmas Sing-Along:** A new venture this year is a sing-along evening of carols and Christmas songs to be held on Monday 23rd December starting at 7pm. This is a family and child friendly event which will be supported by a fantastic local live band, with free mince pies and lots of festive fun.

**Pub Quiz:** On the last Sunday of each month from 7pm, local teams pit their wits against each other with the prize money going to the charity chosen by the winning team. Competitive – yes. Fun – yes!

## **OTHER VILLAGE NEWS**

### **CHURCHYARD TREES**

At several PCC meetings over the past year or so there has been much discussion about the ominous slant to one of the churchyard conifers. The angle of the slant was carefully monitored and no sign of movement detected. However, on the advice of Abthorpe's resident tree surgeon, it was finally agreed that we should have the tree removed, before it caused possible serious damage to residents, their cars – or the village War Memorial. Quotes were obtained, a final decision taken and the removal of the tree planned to take place within the month. Just three days later, on Monday September 22nd, a downpour of biblical magnitude



*Two photographs of the church and village green showing how it has not always been surrounded by trees.*





brought the tree down of its own accord! The tree missed the War Memorial by a matter of inches and thankfully no damage was done to any person or property. Bunny and his team did a fantastic clear-up operation within 2 or 3 days.

Jill Tolson unearthed the old photographs opposite to show how the churchyard has an ever-changing landscape as trees are planted, grow and... fall



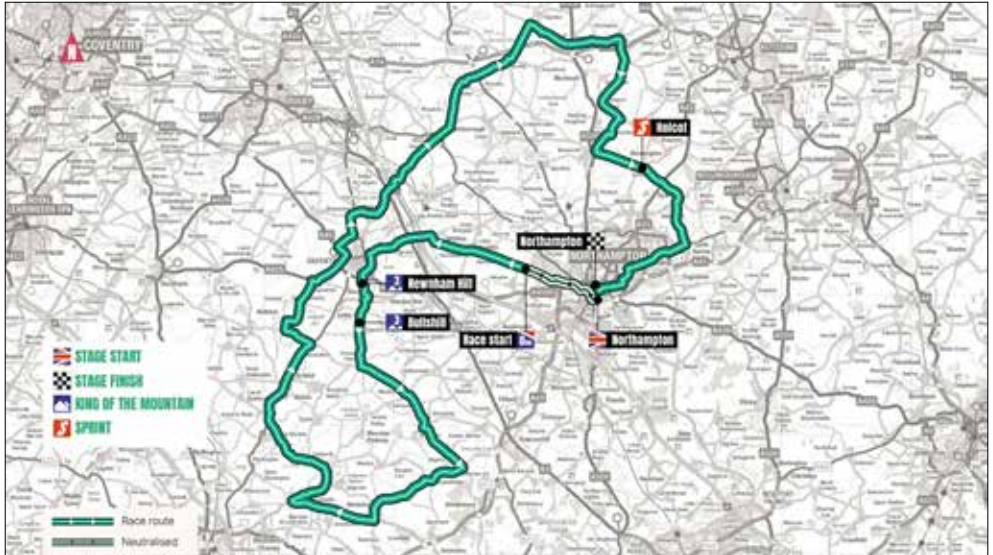
*The fallen tress which almost caught the War Memorial.*

over! What is clear is that in the past it was sometimes not taken into account just how tall a tree would grow with the passage of time!

**Pre-loved Clothing Sale:** For many weeks now, organisers have been collecting clothing of all sizes, shapes, colours and designs that are no longer wanted by their previous owners, but might just be the very thing you have been looking for. Tickets, costing £6, are now available and can be obtained by emailing

finery@abthorpe.net. The sale is taking place in the Old School on Saturday November 16th from 12 noon until 5pm. Do come along - to browse and buy!

<p><b>NIFTY THRIFTY FINERY</b>  <b>ABTHORPE</b>  <b>PRELOVED CLOTHING SALE</b></p>		
<p>Menswear  Ladieswear  Evening wear  Wedding Outfits  Shoes, handbags, belts and beads.  Hats for hire!</p>		<p>Seasalt  Boden  Zara  Hugo Boss  Bradley  Jigsaw  Versace  Topshop  Coast  Next</p>



**Men's Tour of Britain Bicycle Race:** On Saturday September 7th, much to the excitement of most Abthorpe residents, the penultimate stage of the six-day 2024 Tour of Britain Men's bike race was not only routed through West Northamptonshire, but actually through Abthorpe. The 91 mile route was largely along the undulating country lanes that we all know so well but did manage to include two serious climbs – known as King of the Mountains climbs – in the shape of Newnham Hill and Bulls Hill.

The village was out in force as the time approached for the cyclists to appear, preceded by staggering numbers of police motorbikes and support vehicles. We cheered the riders on with enthusiasm as they whizzed past not knowing that the current leader, who was well out in front as he pedalled furiously up Wappenham Road, would actually run out of steam later and allow Frenchman Paul Magnier to win in a thrilling finish.

The only gripe? The television coverage was interrupted by adverts just as the cyclists were approaching Abthorpe and did not return to the race until they were passing through Helmdon! Thanks to Eric Malcomson for capturing the front cover photograph showing the entry into the village.

## VILLAGE WEDDING

After the cyclists had sped through Abthorpe on Saturday 7th September, Anna Lawson married Daniel Beaulieu in a very happy and moving service in the church.

Anna is the daughter of Sarah and Mark, who live at Foscote just outside the village. The church was full of flowers, mostly grown and arranged by Sarah, Janet Dancer and helpers. Anna had six bridesmaids, one of whom was Pauline Florenville, who Anna met at Abthorpe nursery aged 2! Incidentally, Pauline's parents, Claire and Arnaud, who were also at the wedding, converted the old chapel on Wappenham Road in the 1990s. Following the service a reception with dinner and partying was held at Foscote. Sarah and Mark would like to thank everyone in the village who helped make it such a special occasion.



### **CHARITY TRACTOR RUN**

Not to be outdone by those cyclists who passed through our village in September, the route for the Charity Tractor Run organised by Towcester Young Farmers also came through Abthorpe on Sunday October 27th so many of the 40 or more tractors that chugged up Wappenham Road were suitably decorated for Halloween. The event was in aid of Cynthia Spencer Hospice. A good crowd of onlookers waved and cheered them on – a much noisier event than the Cycle race with horns and klaxons blaring and lights flashing but at least it wasn't a case of 'blink and you'll miss them'!

## OLD SCHOOL TALK ON D-DAY LANDINGS

The Old School has been booked on the evening of November 23rd for a talk in aid of Slapton church by Willy Peto entitled "Eighty Years On" about the D-Day landings. Willy's last talk on the Charge of the Light Brigade was very well received and this one should be most interesting due to Willy's extensive knowledge of Military History. He will talk about the enormous effort required but also show how everything went to plan. For further information contact Caroline Coke ([caroline.coke@abthorpe.net](mailto:caroline.coke@abthorpe.net)).

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday November 10th	The Green	10.50am	Act of Remembrance
Saturday November 16th	Old School	12noon–5pm	Pre-loved Clothing Sale
Sunday November 17th	Church	10.00am	Holy Eucharist
Saturday November 23rd	Old School	7pm	Talk on D-Day "Eighty Years On"
Sunday November 24th	New Inn	7 pm	Quiz Night
Thursday November 28th	Old School	12noon-2pm	Turkey Bap Lunch & Games Afternoon
Saturday December 7th	Old School	10.00am–12.30pm	Christmas Coffee Morning
Sunday December 15th	Church	10.00am	Holy Eucharist
Monday December 23rd	New Inn	7pm	Christmas Sing-a-Long with live band
Tuesday December 24th	Church	4pm	CarolChristingle Service
Tuesday December 24th	Church	11.30pm	Midnight Mass
Sunday December 29th	New Inn	7pm	Quiz Night (tbc)
Tuesday December 31st	New Year's Eve at the New Inn – contact pub for details		
Sunday January 19th	Church	10.00am	Holy Eucharist
Sunday January 26th	New Inn	7pm	Quiz Night

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