

ABTALK

A landscape photograph showing a large, leafless tree in the background, a dirt path leading through a field of tall, dry grasses, and a cluster of small white flowers in the foreground. The sky is overcast.

News from Abthorpe

February 2025

Parish Council News

From Phil Berry, Parish Council Chairman

We held a PC meeting on 13th January, when a number of the issues that were mentioned in the last Abtalk article were on the agenda again.

We at last know that a Planning Contravention Notice has been issued for the unauthorised development taking place at the old open shed in the field south of the end of Withymore Lane. The PCN was issued on 30th January by WNC and the owner has recently been in contact with the Principal Planning Enforcement Officer at the council. The owner's response should be returned to WNC before 20th February 2025. When it is received with the relevant information, WNC will be able to decide what, if any, enforcement action will be necessary.

The DHL development proposed for the land on the A5 just north of the Bell Plantation is going to appeal (WNS/2021/1819/EIA). The Public Inquiry will commence on Tuesday 18th February 2025 at 10.00am in The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester. It will probably last 2 weeks. Anyone may attend but it is anticipated that there will be significant interest in the appeal and that public attendance may be high. If you want to attend the advice is to arrive 15 minutes beforehand. The inquiry is being live streamed for its duration and can be viewed on West Northamptonshire Council's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@WestNorthamptonshireCouncil>.

"Save Towcester Now" is the local campaign group that is fighting this development on behalf of all the local communities. They were instrumental in getting the initial proposal turned down and are continuing to fight against the development through this appeal process. To fund their work they are looking to raise £20,000; your Parish Council unanimously agreed to donate £500 to the cause.

The construction of the Relief Road Roundabout on the A43 has had all sorts of knock-on effects on the traffic in our area. There has been chaos in Silverstone along the "old" A43, delaying school buses and the school run, making the pedestrian journey to school much more hazardous. Other vehicles are using the Silverstone to Abthorpe road as a rat run, trying to avoid the congestion. We all know how narrow and potholed that road is. You may have seen that there is a planned road closure to repair some of the road surface. We have asked for clarification about the extent of the repairs and how effectively the closure will be signposted, particularly now there is much more traffic on the road.

Sadly we suffered some vandalism in the village in January. We knew very quickly who was involved and the youngsters were quickly made aware that youthful high jinks can go too far. We have been in touch with the local community police, but, as the Council has received a letter of apology from the four youngsters concerned and the damage has all been repaired as well as a meaningful contribution having been made to the PC, we agreed we would not pursue matters further.

The next PC meeting will be on Thursday 6th March at 7 pm.

2025 Local Elections

On 1st May this year you will be able to vote for candidates to fill all of West Northamptonshire Council's seats (the elections will elect 76 councillors to represent 35 wards) and all Parish Council seats (if contested). If you feel you want to put your name forward to be a Parish Councillor or simply wish to speak to someone about the role, please contact the Parish Council Clerk, Lynn Neasham at abthorpeparishclerk@gmail.com. The election process does not kick off until 14th March, so you have some time to think about it.

An Archive for Abthorpe History

We are looking to set up an historical archive for Abthorpe. The idea is to have a safe archive-quality storage place for historical documents, photos etc. relating to Abthorpe so that they are not lost and future generations can enjoy them. Maybe there's an old house deed; a letter relating to something that happened in the village; a copy of a record or map; an old photograph showing the village as it used to be – in fact anything that 'should stay in the village'.

As a start we'd like to gain some idea of how much there might be and whether anyone would be interested in helping to catalogue and archive it. If you might have something to donate or would just like to find out more contact either Alison Symmers at symmers@abthorpe.net or Lynn Neasham at abthorpeparishclerk@gmail.com.

Old School News

We had a lovely turnout for our recent Jacket Potato lunch, thank you! It was good to see a nice mix of villagers – both work-at-homers and retirees. We are planning on holding the lunches a bit more regularly this year, with our next one being on Friday 7th March. It will be a soup lunch with a sweet treat too.

The old school AGM is on Monday 3rd March at 8.00 pm. We are always looking for volunteers to help with events and functions, and potentially new committee members. If this is something that may interest you please email Jan or Lynn at oldschool@abthorpe.net.

A couple of years ago the Old School was transformed into an art gallery. We would like to welcome local artists to exhibit their art on a monthly basis, for everyone to appreciate their art and perhaps make a few sales! Please get in touch with Lynn (lynn.neasham@abthorpe.net) to discuss the finer details. The next month available to exhibit will be April 2025.

Forthcoming Village Fundraising Events

A number of fundraising events are in the pipeline, the majority of which are being organised jointly between the Old School and the Church, a collaboration that helps both organisations as well as spreading the work load. Hopefully too, this fosters the idea that we are all part of the same village and, whether we are church-goers or not, we value the historic and cultural heritage that the church represents

and, at the same time, recognise the importance that the Old School plays in fostering a sense of community.

Race Night: a Race Night is planned for Saturday April 5th. Tickets are available now for this very popular event. If you are someone who likes a little flutter on the Grand National, you will love this event. We have our very own version of Peter O'Sullivan to raise the excitement levels to fever pitch. A supper of chilli and jacket potato (vegetarian option available) is included and a bar will be provided during the evening.

Bridge Evening: On the evening of Thursday April 8th, a Bridge Evening is planned for those who do more than play Solitaire online. Tables of four will compete tenaciously for victory, whilst a wholesome Cottage Pie supper (or vegetarian option) will be served to keep mental faculties sharp. The flyer gives details of how to reserve your tickets – it is advised to do this as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

Spring Brunch: Following the success of the Harvest Brunch in the autumn, a similar event is planned in the Old School for Saturday 31st May. This time the event will run from 8.30am until 12.30pm so choose a time to come along that suits you. There will also be a 'Family Ticket' available so why not give the children a final Half Term treat?



ABTHORPE VILLAGE RACE NIGHT

Become a racehorse owner for the evening or just have fun

WHEN
Saturday 5TH APRIL 2025

WHERE
The Old School, Abthorpe

Bar opens: 6.15 pm
First Race: 7.00 pm

Tickets: £7.50
to include Chilli & Jacket Potato

Tickets from Alison, Jan, Jill or Lynn or email ofdschool@abthorpe.net

ALL PROCEEDS ARE FOR THE FABRIC FUND
OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND THE OLD SCHOOL, ABTHORPE



ABTHORPE BRIDGE EVENING

TUESDAY 8TH APRIL 2025

6.30PM FOR 7.00PM start

At

The Old School, School Lane, Abthorpe

Tickets £25 **SUPPER AND WINE INCLUDED**

RESERVE YOUR TICKETS WITH

JILL GREENHALGH jill.greenhalgh@abthorpe.net	KAREN MCKAY kck364@icloud.com	LYNN NEASHAM lynn.neasham@abthorpe.net
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PAY BY CASH, BANK TRANSFER OR CARD

ALL PROCEEDS ARE FOR THE FABRIC FUND
OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND THE OLD SCHOOL, ABTHORPE

We are looking at holding a **village event** on Saturday 6th September on the Green. We would like to set up a working party of volunteers who would be willing to help in the organisation and planning of a community event with something for the whole family to enjoy. We need fresh ideas and extra manpower so please consider getting involved. If interested, please contact oldschool@abthorpe.net or speak to Lynn, Jan, Alison or Jill.

Church News

Christmas may now be a distant memory but it is worth noting one or two highlights of the season. We began our celebration with a festive Coffee Morning at the start of December, with, unfortunately, an unwelcome guest in the form of Storm Bert. Although this led to the cancellation of Berties of Braden setting up a stall, the event was still well supported by the more intrepid Abthorpe residents, and profits, shared equally between the Church and the Old School, amounted to £348 each. In addition to a wonderful array of cakes and savouries to enjoy, there was the opportunity to take away produce for home consumption as well as a raffle with the chance to win one of many outstanding prizes. We are immensely grateful



Preparing the Christingle oranges on 23rd December.

to all those villagers who generously donated produce or prizes and made it such a joyous village event.

On the day preceding Christmas Eve, an excited and expectant group of children and accompanying adults met in the Old School to make Christingles. It was delightful to see the concentration on the children's faces, as they quickly settled down to their task and 50 Christingles were soon being taken up to the church ready for the following day's big event. The Christingle/Carol Service proved as popular as ever, with all the pews filled with families, the climax of course being the singing of *Away in a Manger* by candlelight. Mulled wine and mince pies were enjoyed by all after the service – what a perfect start to Christmas.

Later on the same evening, a Midnight Mass was held to see in Christmas Day – a change this year from having a service on Christmas morning. Feedback on this new venture is welcome.

AGM: This will be held in the Old School on Tuesday 25th March at 7 pm. Jill Greenhalgh is to be our new Church Warden and Gail Coombs the new Secretary, following the departure of Darren and Tina Emerton. Alison Robbins remains as Treasurer. Our thanks to Darren and Tina for their contributions to the running of the church over the past two or three years. We wish them well as they move to Surrey.

Tea & Piece: Our monthly Sunday afternoon Teas re-start after our winter break on Sunday March 16th. These take place in the church 'café' between 3pm and 4.30pm. Please come along and enjoy a delicious slice of home-made cake and a hot drink – and a chance to meet and get to know your neighbours. There will not be a Tea & Piece afternoon on April 20th as this is Easter Day, but future dates will be on May 18th, June 15th, July 20th, August 17th, September 21st, and October 19th.

The Tote: A number of villagers have moved out of Abthorpe in the last few months with the result that there has been a fall in membership of the Tote. For those new to the village or those in the village who are not members, we ask you to please consider joining. Half the money raised each month is divided between two prize winners. The other half is used for the upkeep of the church building. We receive no other money from any source for this purpose so your support is absolutely vital. Membership is just £5 per month. If you would like to join, please contact Richard Tomalin (richard.tomalin@abthorpe.net) or a member of the PCC (abthorpepcc@gmail.com, robbins@abthorpe.net, jill.greenhalgh@abthorpe.net).

Recent Tote winners have been: in November, Tracey & Roger Benham and Phil & Karen Jones who each won £118.75; in December, Jamie Cordes and Carolyn & Richard Tomalin who each won £117.50; and in January, Rob Smith and Nick Greenhalgh who each won £108.75.

Church services: We have just one service a month, on the third Sunday starting at 10.00 am. Anyone – of any age or religious background – is most welcome to come along whether you wish to take Holy Communion or just sit and listen. Coffee and biscuits are provided after the service. Our next service will be on Sunday March

16th, with an Easter Day service on April 20th, the May service taking place on 18th, and the June one on the 15th.

As some of our congregation come from other villages and some have mobility problems, it would be a great help if parking spaces could be made available on the third Sunday in the month when there is a service. It would only be for a maximum of 2 hours - from 9.30 to 11.30 am – but would make life much easier for some.

Mowing the Churchyard: A rota will soon be sent out to all those wonderful volunteers who have agreed to do their part in keeping the churchyard grass cut. If you have not yet been approached but would be happy to be included on the rota, please contact David Robbins (dave.robbins@abthorpe.net). You will only be asked to cut the grass twice in the course of the year! Once again this year, one section of the churchyard will not be mowed, as we wish to encourage the growth of wild flowers and grasses for the benefit of our threatened insects.

Candles for Ukraine: Thank you to anyone who donated their candle stubs after the Christmas season. These have now been taken to a collection point in Swindon where they will be melted down and refigured for use by both soldiers and civilians when there is no other form of lighting, heating or even cooking. The lady who took the candles reported that it was humbling to see what can be achieved in an old, cold industrial unit with primitive facilities and to hear how much of a difference these candles can make to the lives of those about to enter (on February 24th) their third year of resistance to Russian oppression.

Some of the candles are substantial enough that they will not be melted down as



their size makes them very useful for when a good level of light is required, such as in a hospital. Of the remainder, some of the smaller unused candles will be sent out to Ukraine as they are, while anything blue or yellow will be melted down to make new candles representing Ukraine's flag and sold to raise fund. Everything else will be melted down to produce candles that will burn for 4/5 hours – made by rolling up corrugated cardboard and inserting it into a food tin. Three cardboard wicks are then inserted into each one and the tin filled up with melted wax, as seen in the photo on the previous page. The photo of a Ukrainian soldier in a trench warming his hands over one such candle needs no words.

Food Bank: Thank you to all who routinely donate to the Towcester Foodbank tub situated in the church porch. Currently, items particularly in need include: tinned potatoes, tinned vegetables,

baked beans, tea, long-life fruit juice and fruit squash. At the moment, however, the Foodbank is well stocked with sweet biscuits, tinned tomatoes, tinned soup and cereal.

Church opening: Once British Summer Time begins on Sunday 30th March, the church will be opened each day during normal working hours. Anyone may come in for a moment of quiet or peaceful reflection. The Foodbank collection box will be moved back into the church too.

Ride and Stride: Advance warning of an annual event that takes place each September which many people are unaware of. The event is organised by the Historic Churches Trust which encourages people to ride (by bike or horse) or stride (at any speed from a dawdle to a run!) from church to church in their chosen area, raising money through sponsorship. The money raised is then split between the Trust and a nominated church. This year the event will take place on Saturday September 13th, and we would like to invite anyone from the village or beyond



to be part of a walking group and walk between the 5 churches in our Benefice – Slapton, Abthorpe, Silverstone, Whittlebury and Paulerspury. If you are interested or want more details, please contact Jill or Alison. A day of exercise, beautiful countryside and some stunning church architecture.

News from the New Inn

Our favourite local is keeping up its well-earned reputation for serving fantastic food at very reasonable prices. You don't have to have a meal when you visit the New Inn, but you are missing a treat if you don't!

Chef has just brought out a new menu which makes excellent, but not exclusive, use of fish brought fresh from Billingsgate. Fish boxes are also available at £35 which comprise two good sized portions of salmon, sea bream, cod/haddock, sea bass and king size crevettes, although contents can be amended or added to if you wish.

Already this year, there have been some special menu nights and more are planned. On January 26th, Burns Night was celebrated in style with a superb four course meal each paired with a different single malt whisky with explanatory notes on its origin and how it was finished. The traditional menu began with Cock-a-leekie soup; followed by Haggis, Neeps & Tatties; then Slow Roasted Angus Pie & Steamed Greens; and finally Cranachan, Toasted Oats and Raspberry Shortbread – traditional, yes, but there was nothing ordinary about the quality and presentation. The evening was well supported with many of the diners revealing their Scottish roots with a variety of tartans and traditional apparel on view (see photo overleaf). However, the highlight of

New Inn Chefs Specials

Starters

- Billingsgate Crevettes, Mango and Chilli Salsa - £8.50
 Pan Seared Scallops, Served With Romanesco Sauce - £9.00
 Sticky Pork Belly Bites, Soy & Honey Sauce, Sesame Seed - £8.50
 Smoked Haddock Fish Cake, Vegetable Ribbons, Sweet Chilli Sauce - £9.00
 Marinated Mixed Olives, Oils and Toasted Ciabatta - £7.00
 Crab on Toast, Sourdough, Brown & White Crab Meat, Lemon Crème Fraiche - £7.95

Mains

- Whole Roast Poussin, Pea Purée, Wild Garlic Emulsion, Split Peas and Broad Beans - £18.95
 Chilli & Garlic Salmon, Sweet Potato Mash, Buttered Tenderstem - £16.95
 Duck Leg, Puy Lentils, Braised Cabbage, Red Wine Jus - £15.95
 Cab Topped Hake, Potato Cake, Crushed Peas, Lemon Cream Sauce - £17.95
 Beef Stroganoff, Pappardelle Pasta - £16.95
 Beetroot Wellington, Seasonal Vegetables, Mash potato, Red Wine Gravy - £15.00
 Roasted Pork Belly, Cauliflower Purée, Black Pudding Bon Bon, Apple Compote - £16.50
 Mushroom Pappardelle, Creamy Mushroom Sauce, Truffle Oil, Crispy Rocket Salad - £15.00
 8oz Rump Steak 1/2 Lobster Thermidor, Sautéed Mushroom, Baked Tomato, Triple Cooked Chips - £25.95

STEAK MENU

- 8oz Rib-Eye £19.50
 8oz Rump - £16.95
 8oz Sirloin £19.50

Steak Sauces - Peppercorn / Blue Cheese / Dianne / Garlic Butter - £3.50

All Our Steaks Are Served With Whole Baked Garlic Tomato, Sautéed Mushroom, Dressed Salad And Triple Cooked Chips

Please Ask A Member Of Staff For Allergen Information

Please Note Our Fryer Oil Contains Traces Of Soya And Wouldn't Be Suitable For Soya Allergies

the evening had to be the dramatic and heartfelt rendering of the “Address to the Haggis” given by Bunny McHutchins – what a performance!

An equally special menu was prepared to celebrate Valentine’s Day, available on both 14th and 15th February. There is to be a Fish Night on March 6th and a Mothers Day menu on March 30th. On a smaller scale, during the Six Nations rugby internationals which the pub will screen live, a Half-Time snack of Cheeseburger or Scotch Egg, both with Fries is on offer. And let us not forget that Sunday lunches are available each week between 12 noon and 5.30 pm.

For a rural pub in a small Northamptonshire village, the New Inn is so enterprising and welcoming to all and we should all support it as much as we can. For the special nights, it is essential to book your table in advance (tel: 01327 857306).

Goodbye to Jill and Roger

The photograph below shows Jill (foreground) and Roger Tolson (background) at the Burns Night Supper. Jill is acknowledging her allegiance to the Anderson clan by wearing a full length kilt with matching tartan scarf, and Roger is bedecked with a traditional tam-o’-shanter.

Jill and Roger lived in Abthorpe for 25 years but have very recently moved to Herefordshire to be nearer family. In their time here they have both played a full part in many aspects of village life. Jill was instrumental in the various phases of modernising and renovating the Old School, recognising how important it was to have a communal



Jill Tolson, Helen Green and Roger Tolson at the Burns Night in the New Inn.

village centre. In doing so, Jill became fascinated by the history of the building, particularly when it functioned as a school, and, together with Alison Symmers, produced a small book detailing the evolution of the building and the various characters that lived or worked in it. (This book is still available to purchase). Jill's strong feelings of community also led her, together with Keith Fenwick, to initiate a village magazine – and so Abtalk began! Meanwhile Roger has for many years put his mechanical skills and knowledge to good use as the village 'Clock Meister' regularly changing the hour on the church clock twice a year and ensuring that it keeps good time, stays in perfect working order, and chimes on cue. Thank you both for all you have done for the village and our best wishes to you in this next phase of your life.

Other News

ABILITY is a local not-for-profit bus company which operates a weekly service on a Monday from Abthorpe into Brackley or Towcester. Everyone is welcome on the bus; there are already over 1300 members who range in age from a few months old to over 100 years. The company offers the following services. **SHOPPER:** A flexible on demand weekly service into your local town or direct to your local supermarket **DAYS OUT:** Enjoy a day out at a variety of locations to include garden centres, museums,

Get out and about with

ABILITY 01327 604123

REGULAR LOCAL BUS SERVICE

EVERYONE WELCOME

Join us on some great Days Out!

- Shopper Service
- Different Towns
- Rushden Lakes
- Garden Centres
- Pub Lunches
- Theatre trips

Fares Payable by:
Cash,
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Pre-book your journey

Car Scheme Available

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Join Today
Join on the Website

www.abilitycic.org.uk

or Call 01327 604123

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or major retail outlets. Seasonal trips to Christmas markets, pantomimes and pub lunches are also included.

GROUP TRAVEL: For community groups hire a minibus along with a fully trained driver for your own bespoke day out. Let us know name, destination, number of people and times required, and we can provide you with a quotation.

CAR SCHEME: Use our personalised car scheme to attend appointments at the hospital, GP appointments, opticians, dental and clinic appointments or attend a funeral. Accommodating up to four seated passengers plus one wheelchair passenger, prices on request.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday February 23rd	New Inn	7.00pm	Quiz Night
Monday March 3rd	Old School	8.00pm	Abthorpe Old School AGM
Thursday March 6th	Old School	7.00pm	Parish Council Meeting
Thursday March 6th	New Inn	7.00pm	Fish Night
Friday March 7th	Old School	12 noon-2.00pm	Soup Lunch
Sunday March 16t	Church	10.00am	Holy Eucharist
Sunday March 16th	Church	3.00-4.30pm	Tea & Piece
Tuesday March 25th	Old School	7.00pm	Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)
Sunday March 30th	New Inn	from 12 noon	Mothers Day menu
Thursday April 3rd	Old School	6.30 for 7.00pm	Bridge Evening
Saturday April 5th	Old School	7.00pm	Race Night
Sunday April 20th	Church	10.00am	Easter Sunday Eucharist
Sunday April 27th	New Inn	7.00pm	Quiz Night
Thursday May 1st			Local Council Elections
Saturday 31st May	Old School	8.30am-12.30pm	Spring Brunch

If you think the presentation of Abtalk is slightly different this time, you are correct. It had to be prepared while I was on holiday without the benefit of the master for formatting. KF

Abtalk Editors

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