

Garthorpe and Fockerby Village Newsletter

January 2022 email me at garthorpefockerbynews@gmail.com

Happy New year to you all.

This is the second year we have had a newsletter. Unfortunately, we still have a pandemic and the original newsletter was to look forward to the world opening up! We all live in hope.

Firstly, I think it's right and appropriate to thank everyone who helped with the village events throughout the year for their time and energy. We were extremely lucky to have any events to look forward to in 2021, let's make 2022 outstanding.

I would like to express thanks to all the volunteers that contributed to the many Christmas events, without them there wouldn't have been any events at all!

Thanks to all Elf 1 & Elf 2, (we know who you are). They always organise & put the tree up at the village hall, and to all the events organised and carried out by the village hall committee especially hosting the children's party and On Your Doorstep.

Many thanks to David and Susan for arranging many events at St. Mary's church. Again, without their input and dedication we wouldn't have a church or facilities.

Thanks to friends of Garthorpe and Fockerby without the team of volunteers we wouldn't have Pantry in the Isle, the annual Christmas event, village Christmas lights and many more events.

Let's look forward to the year ahead, and if you can help, please do.

I have had many conversations with Ron Gilleard about his recent trip to Italy and Amazon Bridge. Ron has written a fantastic piece about his dad, Joe Gilleard's experiences. This first part sets the scene and explains the background to the Amazon Bridge.

News from the Parish Council

The parish council minutes are on line www.garthorpeandfockerbypc.org.uk

and I am not permitted to replicate them here. Next meeting is 31.1.2022.

The Clerk to the Parish Council has no updates this month. I've checked the road closures and none appear to affect this village.

SSE Keadby Wind Farm Community Fund provide £1500 to the parish council, as from 1 April 2021, support small un-constituted groups with a micro grant of up to £300, this is for projects that will enhance the quality of life for local residents. All grants which will promote community spirit and encourage community activity. It is not available for constituted groups or where SSE funding is already been accessed. If anyone would like the application form and list of Do's and Don'ts then please email the Clerk, clerk@garthorpeandfockerbypc.org

Please consider if you could benefit from this funding, it's easy to apply for and has helped produce this newsletter, don't waste this resource, take advantage whilst it is available.

News from the village hall 6.1.22

The next “**On Your Doorstep**” talk at the Village Hall will be:

“**Scunthorpe United – Then and Now**”

Thursday 3rd February

John Staff, author of the much-acclaimed book “**The Official Centenary of Scunthorpe United**”, is teaming up with **James Moody, Supporters’ Liaison Officer** to tell us about the history of the Club and contemporary issues in football including youth opportunities and community activity. Aspiring players in the village, secondary age or older, and their parents are especially welcome!

Doors open at 7; talk starts at 7.30; £2 including refreshments.

For anything else about the Village Hall, visit our [Facebook](#) page, or [email](#) us, or telephone **01724-798699**, or speak to any Committee member: **Jonny Martinson, Sammie Simms, Jo Smith, Sam Peel**

Classes in the Village Hall

The classes are beginning to recommence

SerpaFit started on 4.1.2022

no confirmation dates about yoga

Pantry on the Isle 6.1.2022

Playgroup on 13.1.22

Victoriana’s April 2022

Mobile Library 14.1.2021 @11.35-11.50am at Margrave Lane

11.55-12.15 at the Bay horse.

Other Village News

Local Government update

The parish council meeting took place on the 21st of December 2021. Parish council meeting held on Zoom 3/11/21 was not

legal as the Chair and Clerk do not hold devolved powers. (Agenda can be seen on the parish council website)

Councillors John Briggs and Julie Reed send their festive best wishes.

Precept 2022

The council voted on whether or not to raise the precept element of the council tax - the majority vote was for it to remain the same for another year.

A budget was put forward and discussed:

Cemetery maintenance £1500

Admin/ Printing £200

Clerks’ wages £2200 per year

Website costs £200

Highways verges and small open spaces grass cutting £3690- refunded from NLC

Playing field £1000

Parish Paths £564- refunded from NLC

Donations £600

ERNLLCA membership £350

Audit costs £350

Dog bins £0

Sundries £800- e.g. commercial bin, computer /laptop if needed

Noticeboards £0

PBL loan £760

Insurances £450

This was agreed by the council and the small shortfall would be covered by the council if needed.

‘Beware’ horse signage has been agreed by North Lincolnshire Council and suitable locations are being sort, councillor Paula Woodhouse has taken and is taking the lead on this topic.

The council has received an application to fill the vacancy on the council, this person will represent the community on the council and officially this will be voted on, at the next meeting.

Parish grass cutting and public footpaths-

Tender will be advertised as last year's contract was for one year only- this will be on the parish council website under job opportunities.

£50 was given to each of the three volunteers with regards to the grass cutting of the parish park.

Next meeting will be **31st January 2022** at 7.15pm at the village hall- 15 mins before the 7.30pm start is allotted for questions from parish residents. All residents are invited to attend and or pose questions.

Friends of Garthorpe and Fockerby

Friends of Garthorpe and Fockerby want to thank everyone who came and supported the Christmas Event and we hope covid permitting to be able to do more this year.

Friends of Garthorpe & Fockerby are a part of the fantastic Lincs Lotto, which is a weekly lotto costing just £1 per ticket which gives you chance to win a massive £25,000. AND for every £1 you spend the village gets 50p per week to put back into our local community. There are also smaller prizes to win too and many in the draw often win prizes ranging from £25 plus. You can find out more, sign up and support us here -

<https://www.lincslotto.co.uk/support/friends-of-garthorpe-and-fockerby>.

We have had several local winners too.

Pantry on the Isle

5*rating for hygiene

We hope you all had a festive break and a happy new year!

Pantry on the Isle returns on the 6th

January 2022 - Collection times 5-6.30pm.

Thanks to the volunteers who are helping to sort, pack and support the scheme.

Currently we have 3 spaces available for anyone wanting to join.

Christmas week was a bumper box including chocolate and other festive treats.

Please contact Jeni on 07980310312 if you are interested in taking part in 2022.

Volunteers are needed, if you can help, please contact friends of Garthorpe and Fockerby by emailing direct or messaging through social media, or speak to us on Thursday when we are at the village hall.

Benefit for all cannot be reliant on the few! Please help if you can.

Victoriana's

It will re- open in April 2022. Victoriana's staff would like to thank all residents for their support over the past months.

St Mary's Church

David and Susan Graham are always grateful if you could offer any help at any of their events.

Garthorpe and District Royal British Legion

Garthorpe and District will be holding some events in 2022 and the first being The RBL big breakfast in March and the plant sale combined fund-raising event with St Mary's in April/May.

Incredible Edibles

We have passed the shortest day and are now winding our way towards SPRING 2022!! With Covid at an all-time peak we are all wondering what this year holds for us.

But let's look back to the end of 2021 and some of the events that took place. In

December we held both a Wreath Making workshop and a Tile making workshop, both of which were well attended. The wreaths were made of natural foliage and looked superb. Some were given as a present to friends and family. There have been a few of these wreath making workshops in the villages during November & December resulting in many beautifully adorned houses this year. It is fabulous that people are meeting new friends as a result of these workshops and may the sharing continue into 2022 and beyond.

We also held a tile making workshop during December with some really beautiful results. Continuing with the craft theme we are holding a Willow Weaving workshop on 15th January which I will tell you about in the next issue. The cookery sessions will continue, the first one being on 21st January – the theme has not been decided as yet but could be foodie makes for Valentines day. Watch this space.

Future forays

Jan 15th 2022 Willow Weaving 10am-4pm with lunch included. Venue to be arranged so watch this space.

As always to contact Incredible Edible call Georgina on 07901165349. This can be done by a phone call, via a text or on WhatsApp. Posters are displayed in each village advertising our Incredible Winter events.

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Please could you send me any contributions by **the last day of the month**. the cut off time is 2pm.....

The information is correct at the time of writing this , please check any websites for further information.

Again thanks to Jiggy Lloyd, David Graham, Emma Davies, Incredible edibles and Ron Gilleard

Memorial.

Part 1.

Introduction:-

On the morning of Wednesday 13th October, 2021, four Englishmen met, as planned, in the provincial Italian town of Cassino, roughly half-way between Rome and Naples. The purpose of their meeting was to finally, after seven and a half years planning, build a memorial to an action, during the Second World War, famous in the annals of the Royal Engineers, but almost unknown to the wider world. Three of the men, now in their mid/late seventies, who had all flown to Italy, were former members of one of the units which had taken part in this action, 7 Field Squadron R.E., although they had not joined that unit until the 1960's, twenty years after the action had taken place. The other man, now in his mid-sixties, was the son of a member of that unit, during the war, (then called 7 Field COMPANY) and had taken part in the action. He had driven to Cassino in his 4x4 pick up, the contents of which confirmed the purpose of the visit. It contained trowels, hammers, shovels, levels etc. All four men were members of the 'Shiny 7 Association', an association of ex 7 Squadron members, 'Shiny 7' being the nickname of 7 Field Squadron/Company, and had long felt that this pivotal action had never received the recognition it deserved, and had a burning desire to build a memorial to the action to, hopefully, raise awareness and the profile of the action, to its rightful place in the annals of the Italian Campaign during the war.

That 'son-of' was me, Ron Gilleard, and my father, who took part in the action, was Joe Gilleard, late of this parish.

This is a brief account of the action.

At 11.00pm on the night of the 11th May 1944, 1600 guns of the 4th British Infantry Division (4 DIV.) began firing on all known German positions along the Gustav Line in the Cassino area. This was the start of 'Operation Honker', the code name for 4 DIV's contribution to the fourth attempt, by the Allied armies in Italy, to break through the Gustav Line, which barred the way into the Liri valley and the road to Rome. It was a very well -prepared defensive line, which the German Army had had months to construct and which ran through Cassino and Monte Cassino, a mountain, topped with a Benedictine Monastery, which rose behind the town, giving the Germans a panoramic view of the valley below, but which had to be breached in order for the allies to drive the Germans out of Italy. Both the monastery and Cassino town, had been reduced to rubble by Allied bombing.

Just south of Cassino, flowing roughly north to south, is the River Rapido, which was in effect the front line, and which had to be crossed by infantry and tanks, if the Allied offensive was to succeed.

The plan was that, as soon as the artillery bombardment started, infantry would cross the river in boats and form a slender bridgehead which would, hopefully, afford enough protection for 4 DIV's three Field Companies, 7, 59, and 225, to build three Bailey bridges across the Rapido to get tanks into the bridgehead. North to south the bridges were codenamed 'Amazon', to be built by 225, 'Blackwater', to be built by 59 and 'Congo', to be built by 7.

This river line was very well defended, and enemy machine-gun, mortar, artillery and sniper fire took a heavy toll on the infantry trying to cross in boats, and those who did manage the crossing took heavy casualties trying to cross minefields etc.

Their losses were enough to make them incapable of providing adequate protection to the engineers on the three bridging sites, which were themselves under heavy fire, and all three sites were abandoned, with no progress made on any of the bridges.

On the 12th May, 4 DIV HQ decreed that a bridge MUST be built “.....AT ALL COSTS” that night, and that all three companies must join forces and concentrate on getting one bridge across. The site chosen for this all-out effort was the ‘Amazon’ site.

At about 7.30pm on the night of the 12th May, all three companies left their forward concentration areas, where they were ‘dug in’, and began making their way to the ‘Amazon’ site, under heavy fire of all kinds. On the way down, walking along country lanes, in the dark, the sappers of 7 Company had to frequently get off the road and lie on the grassy banks on either side, to allow lorries carrying bridging equipment, to pass. On one occasion, the man next to my dad, Joe Gilleard, allowed a lorry to run over his foot, so as to injure himself and not have to go any further. On two separate occasions, before the sappers reached the bridging site, men lost their nerve and started laughing, crying, talking gibberish and became wide-eyed and frothed at the mouth, as fear gripped them. Of course, they were quickly taken back before their fear affected anyone else. When they got down to the site it was being heavily shelled, mortared and machine gunned, and almost immediately, a bridging lorry was hit by shell fire and exploded in a ball of flame, burning furiously for the next hour, attracting even more fire. Fortunately for the sappers, smoke canisters had been arranged along the river bank to screen them in their work, but the Germans still fired into the smoke, causing many casualties.

Work began at about 8.30pm and despite mounting casualties, the sappers stuck grimly to their task, despite the shelling, and sniper fire, and machine-gun fire which was sometimes actually passing through the bridge panels. Point 36, a German strongpoint on their side of the river, which, after it’s capture, was found to have no fewer than 13 machine-gun nests, was only 500m away, point-blank range for a German MG 42, which fired 20

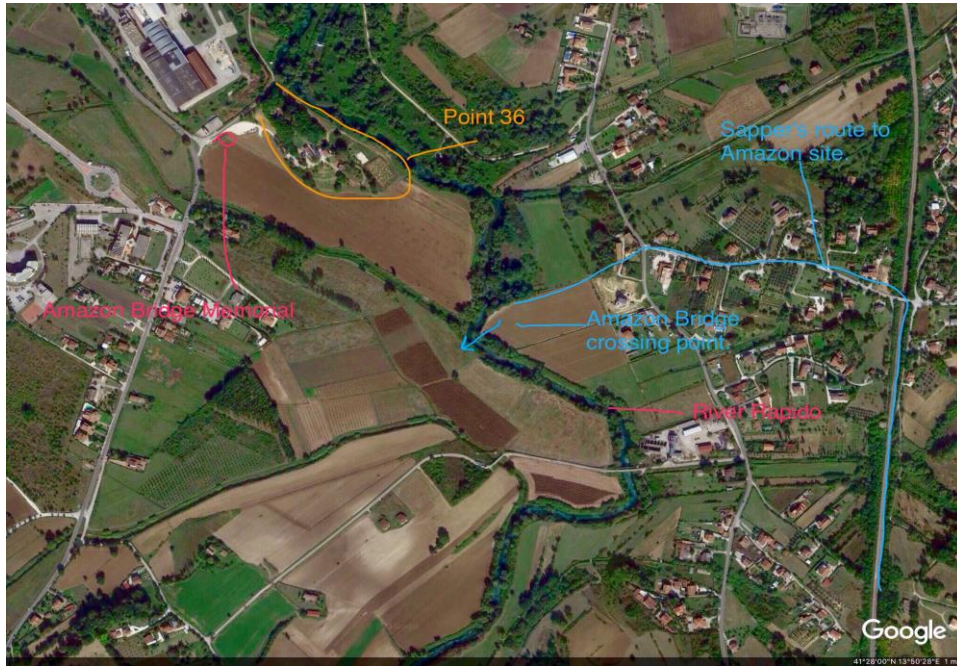
rounds per SECOND. The scene was described by some as like ‘Dante’s Inferno’.

The bulldozer, needed to push the bridge over the river, was knocked out by shelling. Another was brought up, but it seized up, after having it’s radiator punctured by machine-gun fire, with the bridge still 6m from the far bank. So some quick-thinking was required and someone had the idea of getting the leading Sherman tank, of the 17/21st Lancers, whose tanks were queuing up about 200m away, waiting to use the bridge when it was completed, to come forward and push the bridge the final 6m. This was successfully done and the tank-men saved the day.

The bridge was declared open for tanks at 5.00am on the morning of the 13th May, and tanks streamed across into the bridgehead, bringing much-needed support and relief to the beleaguered infantry, who had been hanging on grimly for 24 hours, and over the next 4 days went on to outflank the German Army and oblige them to withdraw from a defensive line that had held up the allied advance since January.

The sappers of the three companies had done the near impossible; built a Bailey Bridge over a 90 foot wide river, at night, under fire. However, they had paid a heavy price with 18 sappers killed and 65 wounded. It had taken the three companies over 8 hours to build a bridge which ONE company was building in 1hr. 40 minutes in training.

The success of the offensive can be attributed to many different actions, fought by many brave men, but few small actions, carried out by small units, can have been as heroic, or as pivotal to the success of ‘Operation Honker’, as the building of “AMAZON’ bridge ‘..... at all costs”. This is the action that we all thought deserved the recognition of a dedicated memorial, and, in 2014, set out to build one.



This is a labelled aerial photo of the Amazon Bridge area, about a mile south of Cassino town, as it is today.

The building of 'Amazon' bridge was immortalised in 1970 when the famous artist, Terence Cuneo, produced this painting of the action, the original of which, hangs in the Officer's Mess at Brompton Barracks, near Chatham in Kent.



In next month's news-letter, if you're interested, read about the actual building of the memorial, from its inception, to the completed structure, and all the trials and tribulations in between.

I hope that you find it interesting, and if so, you might like to search INTERVIEW WITH JOE GILLEARD on YouTube to see Joe, and others, describing the action.

Ron Gilleard