

# MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 18 – November - December 2022



Welcome to **Newsletter number 18**, the last one for 2022. Christmas is approaching at breakneck speed, but take a few minutes to pause and read about what's been happening in the community. I was very pleased to receive an email recently from Kaye Forster-Hill from Hamilton in New Zealand, who featured in Newsletter number 14. Kaye's forebears came from Matfen Moorhouses and Ingoe, and some emigrated to NZ in 1911. Kay says she enjoys reading in the newsletters about places which appear in her family tree. She sent a picture taken in October, in the NZ Spring, of a Kowhai tree in blossom – the yellow reflecting the more muted Winter Jasmine in the picture on the left, one of the few flowers still bringing colour to our winter gardens on this side of the world.



In Newsletter number 17, we remembered the death of Queen Elizabeth II on September 8th. You may have known a longstanding member of the Matfen community, **George Russell**, who passed away on the same day. George was 98 years old and

had lived in Peppercorn Cottage on the corner with his wife Edna for over 30 years. Before that, for most of his life, he had lived quietly up at Waterloo Cottages, caring for his mother in her final years. A quiet man, one day, he was persuaded to go to a carpet bowls evening in Matfen village hall. There he met Edna, who ran the bowls club, and the rest is history. George was a WWII veteran but, like many, he never spoke about his experiences in the RAF. He is buried in Ryal Churchyard next to his parents. His date of birth was 11.11.1923 and so the recent Armistice Day would have been his 99th birthday.

It's lovely to think of **Matfen village hall** being the site for a chance meeting that flowered into a long and happy relationship – so, you never know, get along to the next event and see what happens! There's something going on most days with a wide array of fitness classes and community events. Maybe you found some good Christmas gifts and goodies at the second **Matfen Christmas Market** this week, which was a great success.

As well as group and community activities, the hall is also available for private hire – children's parties, christening receptions, family celebrations and so on. You can find out more and make a booking via the website, at [www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall](http://www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall) or by email: [matfenvillage@gmail.com](mailto:matfenvillage@gmail.com) or phone: **07817 375237**.

The **village coffee shop and store** has recently changed hands. Ian and Tracey have departed to enjoy a well-earned retirement after four very busy years, and we welcome the new owner/manager, **Lisa Hardwick**. Lisa took over about a month ago, and is very pleased to be joining the Matfen community. She has already taken part in the Christmas market, hosting some stalls and the tombola and raffle in the shop. You can contact Lisa on [matfenvillagestoreandcoffeeshop@gmail.com](mailto:matfenvillagestoreandcoffeeshop@gmail.com)



The most enduring activity in the village hall, apart from the WI, is **karate**. January 2023 will see the start of the 10th year of the Matfen Seiken Ryu Karate Association club. Originally started by Sensei Andrew Waters, 3rd Dan, assisted by his daughter, Sensei Flora Waters, the classes are now run by Andrew's son, Sensei Harry Waters, 4th Dan, though Dad is still around too! The style is Shukokai karate, one of the four original styles of karate, started by Sensei Tani in 1946.

This has been a great year for the club. It has seen two new black belts and all students have graded successfully multiple times. The leaders are on a recruitment drive, and would love to welcome some new students, both adults and children. The lower age limit is around four years, and there is no upper limit. Your first lesson is always free, so you've nothing to lose!

The club meets in **Matfen village hall every Friday from 6-7pm**.

Matfen SRKA continues to be closely linked with colleagues at Stamfordham SRKA class, run by Sensei Steve Reed, 5th Dan and senior instructor. Lots of members train at both classes. The **Stamfordham class is on Wednesday nights, general class from 6.30-7.30pm and the senior grade class from 7.30-8.30pm**.

Contact **Harry Waters 07775 726 240 or email [Matfen.srka@gmail.com](mailto:Matfen.srka@gmail.com)**. All instructors are DBS checked and insured.



**Freya Renison-Benn** has been running her **Over 65+ class** in Matfen for a few months now. It's quite well-attended, but could do with a few more numbers, there are 12 spaces available. It's a fantastic strength based class that is knee, back and hip friendly, using light weights, resistance bands and chairs. And everyone enjoys a coffee and treat in Matfen village shop afterwards!

The class takes place on **Thursdays from 9.30-10.15**. You can book via the website [www.functionalfit.org](http://www.functionalfit.org) or just come along and pay in cash, £7 per class. Freya's mobile is **07340 569270** if anyone wishes to get in contact.

**Lizzie Scott**, who plays regularly for Matfen women's cricket team, has recently scored a great personal success that can't go unmarked. She has been selected for the Women's U19 England squad for the T20 World Cup in 2023, one of 15 players selected to represent England in the tournament in South Africa from January 14-29. It's a wonderful achievement and opportunity for her, and also something for the village cricketers to feel pleased and proud about. It's a tribute to the strength of **village cricket** in Matfen and the amazing progress of the women's team, as well as Lizzie's own skills and determination.



Preparing for Christmas can be hard work, but **GO Local Food**, are offering a relaxing afternoon at their base in Ovington on Saturday 10th December. They'll be making wreaths and enjoying mulled wine and mince pies and you are very welcome to join – go to <https://golocalfood.org.uk/events/> and email [admin@golocalfood.org.uk](mailto:admin@golocalfood.org.uk). GO Local have been growing vegetables at Vicarage Corner in Matfen for a couple of years now, and you can find details on the website of how to join this co-operative organisation and get involved in reducing food miles and improving the quality of local food.

One person who is extremely busy at the moment is Rev Rachel – but then, when is she not? With her team of skilled helpers, she is organising a whole series of lovely services in our local churches in the weeks before Christmas. They will offer opportunities for the whole family to celebrate and reflect on the Christmas story in different ways, and the posters advertising them are so bright and hopeful that I've added them as a third page. As a quick reference, here are the details of the services:



**Christmas Messy Church – Holy Trinity, Matfen, December 17th, 10-11.30am**  
**Carols by Candlelight – St Mary's, Stamfordham, December 17th, 6pm**  
**Christmas Family Service – All Saints' Ryal, December 24th, 5pm**  
**Christmas Night Mass – Holy Trinity, Matfen, December 24th, 7pm**  
**Christmas Day Service – All-age Holy Communion:**

- **St Andrew's Heddon, 9.30am**
- **St Mary's Stamfordham, 10.30am**



**NCC and Northumberland CAN News:** Community Action Northumberland works with rural communities to support projects around village halls and other local hubs and initiatives. You can find out what they do on this link: <http://ca-north.org.uk/newsletter/archive>. They have been running a heritage project – if that's of any interest to you, get in touch to see if we could get a group together to find out more about the history of our community.

**History Corner:** Keith Atkinson's stint as local history expert came to an end in Newsletter 17, and it's great to have a very worthy successor in local best-selling author, **Sally Urwin**. For her first contribution, Sally has been talking to her father-in-law, **Geoffrey Urwin**. She writes:

My father-in-law Geoffrey Urwin was born at Burnside Farm in 1934 and attended Matfen School until 1948. He has lived in Matfen all his life, is now 87 years old and is sure that he is the only one out of his school year who is still alive and living in this area, although he'd be happy to be proven wrong! The picture is of a newspaper clipping about Mr Richardson when he retired as the teacher of Matfen school in 1944, who taught Geoff. I'd love to know if anyone else has any reminiscences of the village school. Here are some of Geoff's recollections:

His school was in the same building where the current Matfen shop is situated. It had a small lobby cloakroom where the pupils hung their coats and two classrooms, plus the kitchen where the lunches were prepared. The toilets were at the back of the school and the children played in front of the Matfen Reading Room (now the village hall) and on the village green. I asked if anyone fell in the river and he vaguely remembers there being a fence to stop any soggy accidents!

Geoff recalls that during his school career both classes were eventually combined with one teacher called Thomas William Richardson. He says "he was a little man and very dapper, always in a suit and tie. I liked him but he was very strict" Mr Richardson had two assistants - a Miss Southern "very pretty!" and a Miss Mitchell.

Geoff started school at 5 years' old and remembers learning to write his letters on a slate with chalk. As he grew older, he remembers learning his timetables by heart plus arithmetic and grammar.

The teacher used a cane to punish any wrong doing but the only time that Geoff was ever in trouble was for missing school one day to follow the hounds from the Tynedale Hunt.

When Geoff was very small he walked to school from Burnside Farm but he was sometimes taken by pony, sitting in front of his older brother Cecil. Eventually his mum bought him his own bike (it was red and second hand) and he cycled to school and left it during the day at the blacksmith's shop so it didn't get damaged. He remembers that he had to wear shorts even on the colder days and that the classroom had a big square coal fired heater with a wire surround to stop the younger children burning themselves.

Like everyone else at Matfen School, Geoff left at age 14 and whilst some went on to other schools in the area (including Barnard Castle), he immediately started work on his father's farm at Burnside.



**And, finally...** many thanks to all the contributors to Newsletter 18, and huge thanks, as ever, to Rev Rachel for distributing the newsletter by email. If you know of anyone who would like a paper copy, please let me know – [contehjean@gmail.com](mailto:contehjean@gmail.com). Any comments, suggestions and contributions for future newsletters are always very welcome; the next newsletter will come out in the New Year. Have a peaceful and relaxing Christmas.



## Christmas Messy Church Matfen



17th December  
10-11.30am

Christmas Crafts, Story, Song  
and Lunch

Holy Trinity Church, Matfen  
All families welcome

To let us know you are coming  
or if you have any questions  
please email

[r.scheffer@newcastle.anglican.org](mailto:r.scheffer@newcastle.anglican.org)

## Carols by Candlelight

St. Mary's Church,  
Stamfordham  
17th December 6pm  
This is our traditional  
community  
Carol Service  
Everyone is very  
welcome



## CHRISTMAS FAMILY SERVICE WITH CHRISTINGLE

24th December 5pm All Saints' Church, Ryal

This is our very popular all-age Christmas Eve service...perfect for very excited families.



## CHRISTMAS NIGHT MASS

24th December 7pm  
Holy Trinity Church, Matfen

This is exactly the same as a traditional Midnight Mass  
but at a time that is accessible to more people  
Everyone welcome

## Christmas Day Services

All-age Holy Communion will be at:  
9.30am St. Andrew's Church,  
Heddon-on-the-Wall  
10.30am St. Mary's Church, Stamfordham