

MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 21 - May - June 2023



We're well into 2023 now, we've even seen the sun a few times recently. I hope you enjoy reading **Newsletter 21**, which has grown to four pages, in slightly bigger font, to save your eyesight. If you know of anyone who would like to be added to the email circulation list, or who would like a paper copy, please get in touch via contehjean@gmail.com

You have no doubt heard about **Holy Trinity Church in Matfen** having to be temporarily closed because of safety issues with the spire. There are other things that also need funding, and Rev. Rachel has contributed an informative piece to share what's happening and invite donations and support.

King Charles's coronation was celebrated in the community with live-streaming in Matfen coffee shop on the day, then a Big Lunch in the village hall on Bank Holiday Monday. Residents from Matfen joined communities all across the UK to celebrate a moment in history. The afternoon started with a short tree planting ceremony on the village green, led by Lady Anna Blackett. The rowan tree was kindly donated by Matfen Parish Council, chosen because it fits with King Charles's ethos of providing food for the bees and birds with its flowers and berries. Afterwards, everyone retired to the hall for an afternoon of live music, plenty of food and lots of laughs. Special thanks to Lady Blackett and all those who helped organise the event.



SAVE THE DATE - the next film screening in the hall is set for **Saturday, June 10th**. More information to follow, but in the meantime, if you would like to join the film club mailing list please contact Charlie Melville: matfenfilms@gmail.com

And **HUGE CONGRATULATIONS** to locally-based Charlie, who recently won a BAFTA award for 'John and Joe Bishop: Life After Deaf', a documentary she produced and directed. It's available to watch now on itvX.

The village hall building has had different purposes in the community over the years. Along with what is now the coffee shop, it was originally the local school, which closed on 21st July 1972. There are people still living in the area who were pupils there, and one of them, **Betty Renwick**, is trying to organise a reunion, as reported in the last newsletter. She has talked to Lisa at the coffee shop, who has kindly offered to host the reunion there, if sufficient numbers are interested. So, former pupils are invited to meet with their friends, in the school building, on **Friday 21st July 2023, from 3pm**. Please let Betty know on **01661 824095** if you'd like to go.

Matfen Karate Club has been a regular hall user for a very long time. It's a wonderful training ground for young athletes, and leader Andrew is delighted to report that there's been another successful candidate at a recent Dan (black belt) grading, when student Bea Fielding was awarded her first Dan black belt by Chief Instructor Peter Atkinson. Bea has worked exceptionally hard since she started as a white belt, and trained online via Zoom for a year during lockdown. All her instructors are hugely proud of her achievement, and she also looks justifiably proud in the photo, doesn't she? The club meets every Friday at 6pm in the village hall and has a mix of adult and young students. Newcomers are always very welcome - contact: matfen.srka@gmail.com



Fitness expert **Jo Stichbury's** classes are also thriving, on Mondays. There's **Feel Good Pilates** at 8.45am, **Legs, Bums and Tums** at 9.30 and **Body Flow** at 10.15. Jo is a skilled and popular teacher, as a testimonial from Sheila, one of her regular participants shows. Sheila writes, "Jo is an excellent instructor who makes the class both fun and challenging ... she is totally approachable and clearly cares about her members. I would not hesitate to recommend".

You can get in touch with Jo on jostichburyfitness@gmail.com or **07855 247063** - she also offers Indian head massage!

There are lots of regular activities in the village hall, and it can also be hired for private events. Find out more and make a booking by email: matfenvillage@gmail.com or phone: **07817 375237** or via the website, at www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall



Great Whittington and Matfen WI are holding their summer meetings in Great Whittington, as usual, and will be back in Matfen in September. The next meeting, on **Tuesday June 6th**, starting at **7.30pm**. is a practical session on wellbeing, led by local expert, Kathy White-Webster and in July, there's an outing to Floors Castle in the Borders. The WI also organise regular walks and lunches, and visitors and new members are always very welcome - to find out more, get in touch via contehjean@gmail.com

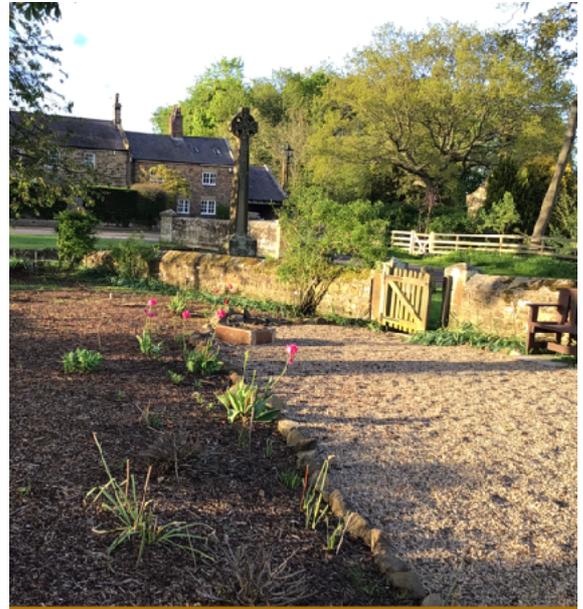
Liz Bishop's photo of the Community Garden shows the lovely evening light, as well as the recent developments:

April showers bring May flowers and there have been some deluges. But the days are longer and warmer and there is growth in all our gardens. Hosta leaves, bluebells, tulips, and various grasses are showing in the community garden. Sir Hugh recently saw the work done over the past year and seemed pleased with the development.

In recent weeks, aquilegia, sunflower, marigold and meadow flower seedlings have been placed in different areas. More seeds have been sown directly onto bare soil and some under the bark ground cover. These include corn marigold, corncockle, field poppy, cornflower, and love-in-a-mist. A few weeks and we can hope to see some colours on show.

The new hedge plants have settled well, and some of their tubes will be removed to allow leaves and branches to spread. The central crab apple has blossom on last year's growth and new branches at its top. A transplanted woody fuchsia base is showing new budding. Other perennials donated from local gardens are also showing growth.

It is good to chat with people passing and with those who come into the garden; and to know people are enjoying a chance to sit in a peaceful place. There is a handy litter bin for any rubbish. Round stepping stones are a recent donation and plants continue to arrive. Thank you to everyone for showing interest, and for the continuing help and gifts.



Matfen Parish Council and County Council News

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in Matfen village hall on **Tuesday 30th May at 7pm**, and will be followed immediately by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. The current chair, Keith Mavin, is stepping down, so a new chair will be elected. Residents of the parish are invited to attend and may speak and make proposals on any matter relevant to the parish.

Ingoe councillor, Sarah Greaves, shares news from Community Action Northumberland (CAN):

In April Andy Dean from CAN talked to Tynedale Forum of Parish Councils about the matters that CAN may assist with for local councils and he also summarised specific projects that are ongoing or will be, with respect to Community Halls. CAN works closely with the National Association of Local Councils, (NALC).

A lot of projects are related to the issue of fuel poverty in our region, which was evident before the current economic problems. CAN provides support on energy along with the CAB in the region. There is a Domestic Carbon reduction project for off grid areas. Brian Watson, householder advisor, will give talks and advice to local councils, so we could perhaps arrange for him to come if this is something people would be interested in. If you are considering installing heat pumps, and would like to know more about their efficiency, it is possible we could ask Andy to talk about this at a future meeting. Get in touch via the Parish clerk on matfenparishcouncil@gmail.com if you'd like to know more.



Northumberland County Council Climate Change Team have case studied a local co-operative project, **GO Local Food**. They have a 2-acre site which they are working to develop on Vicarage Field, just on the bend going out of the village towards Stamfordham. Follow the link to learn more about this great co-operative project, which is passionate about reducing food miles, and share with others who might be interested in what they are doing: <https://youtu.be/KnIt5IUDBIM>

Did you know...? successful ageing, "includes physical exercise, continual learning, social contact, natural daylight, the need to belong" – GO Local Food offers all of this!

The project has been selected as one of '50 innovative North of Tyne businesses aiming to create impactful and scalable solutions to some of the most pressing challenges in our region.' A grant of £5,000 awarded by the **North of Tyne Combined Authority**, will help to acquire new market gardening equipment to support growing and land tasks, and this will assist our volunteers and workshares to age successfully!! For lots more information, go to www.golocalfood.org.uk where you can also find out how to join this innovative co-operative group.

Sarah Greaves's Swift Boxes project is taking wings:

Eleven swift nesting boxes have been distributed in Matfen, Stamfordham, Ingoe and Kirkheaton. And there are more available, free of charge. Swifts nest in colonies so the more we can put up locally, the more likely we are to attract them to the area.

It's been really encouraging to hear that swifts are regular visitors to the area, and we hope to be able to record more sightings. The hour before dusk is a good time to see swifts, as breeding pairs return to their nests to rest for the night and feed their chicks. A pair of swifts will gather 20,000 aphids, midges and other insects per day on the wing, to feed their nestlings.

They leave us, with their young, in August, and all being well, return to the same nest the following year.

Unlike other birds they leave no mess and make little noise inside their nests. They are the perfect neighbours! So please get in touch with Sarah Greaves (sarah.a.greaves@gmail.com) if you would like to take one or preferably more boxes. Just a reminder that the boxes need to be sited about 5 or more metres high, with a clear route to entry.



History Corner

Sally Urwin has been looking into local census information:

The 1841 census is the first modern UK census to record the details of every person and household in Britain, and the earliest census that has survived in its entirety. Readers might be interested in the West Matfen 1841 census, where there are 64 names altogether. It gives the head of each household (but not the name or number of the house, unless it's an outlying farm) and their occupation. It's fascinating to note how many descendants of these families still live in the area today. If anyone lives in the local area and wants a short overview of their family history, Sally has access to newspapers and family history data and she's happy to do this for you – you can contact her on sal.urwin@gmail.com

To whet your appetite, here's the first half of the census list. Maybe your family name is here. It's also a very interesting list of occupations of the time. The second half will, space permitting, be in the next newsletter.

William Ainsby	Agricultural labourer
William Angus	Farmer
James Archer	Joiner
Thomas Archer	Carpenter
Matthew Armstrong	Agricultural labourer
John Barns	Weaver
Henry Bell	Shoemaker
John Bell	Agricultural labourer
Robert Bell	Mason
John Best	Agricultural labourer
Sir Edward Blackett	Gentleman living on own means
John Boulding	Head Groom
Thomas Burnhope	Miller
Isabella Codling	Letter Carrier
Robert Codling	Agricultural labourer
John Davidson	Farmer - Low Hall

Jane Dixon	No occupation listed
Joseph Dobson	Farmer
Thomas Dobson	Butcher
Thomas Dobson	Shoemaker
John Dodd	Joiner
William Dodd	Agricultural labourer
Thomas Elliott	Gamekeeper
Smith Errington	Agricultural labourer
George Fenwick	Agricultural labourer
George Forster	Land agent
John Hall	Agricultural labourer
James Harll	Blacksmith
Robert Harll	Agricultural labourer
Ann Hedley	Straw Hat Maker
Lionel Henderson	Gamekeeper
Thomas Hindmarch	Agricultural labourer

Holy Trinity Church, Matfen - the latest from Rev Rachel

As many of you will now know Holy Trinity Church and Churchyard is temporarily closed until further notice.

An inspection of the spire has shown that there is serious corrosion to the metal pole that secures the weathervane to the top of the spire, which requires emergency repairs.

The greenery growing from the spire is not causing safety concerns but will be removed at the same time as the spire repairs.

The emergency repairs are going to cost in the region of £68,000 to simply get the church back open and there is a lot of further work needed on the church at this time. We are currently getting quotes for this work and it is likely to be over a further £50,000.

In the weeks since Easter we have already managed to raise just over £21 500 through generous donations from individuals, a wonderful afternoon tea at Matfen Hall and support from the Harrison Foundation and Northumbria Historic Churches Trust.

The PCC (church council) are still applying for grants but there is a long way to go.

How can you help?

We would be incredibly grateful if you can do any of the following to help your local church:

- Please donate using this link (any amount small or large would be gratefully received). <https://givealittle.co/campaigns/bd32617d-0384-4e06-8d90-3611e06342ac>
- If you are unable to donate at the moment we would be incredibly grateful if you felt able to share our donation link on your social media channels
- Or maybe you could think of a sponsored event or challenge you could do to raise awareness and money for the projects.

We are also trying to install water to the church so we can have a servery kitchen and toilet. This will help make the church building more suitable for the 21st Century and better for community events. We already have a legacy of £48 000 towards this project.

We have also been grateful to receive a legacy from Anna Cowperthwaite. This has been used to install a water butt into the churchyard so that families visiting graves can fill containers, to water flowers they are placing at their loved ones graves. The remainder of the legacy will go towards our current fundraising campaign.

Matfen Parochial Church Council apologises for any inconvenience caused by the temporary closure of Holy Trinity Church and Churchyard and we look forward to being able to welcome everyone back once it is safe to do so.

In the meantime, church services will be in All Saints' Church, Ryal. Please check the noticeboard for details of dates and times or email r.scheffer@newcastle.anglican.org to receive the Church News email.

Churchwardens:

Carole Alcock 07368 477968

Struan Wilson 07799 267269

And, finally ... many thanks, as ever, to Rev Rachel for distributing the newsletter by email and to all the contributors. Any comments, suggestions and contributions for future newsletters are always very welcome: get in touch via contehjean@gmail.com

