

MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 22 - July - August 2023



Welcome to **Newsletter 22**, where you'll see the village from a rare perspective – the top of the church spire. You can't have missed the gravity-defying scaffolding structure that has been up there for several weeks now, as work goes on to repair the weathervane and make the structure of the tower safe. At the same time as executing acrobatic feats to carry out their work, the contractors have been photographing the village from their eagle eyrie 140 feet above the ground, and you can see the results on the last page of the newsletter. You can also read about some fascinating history that has come to light in the tower, and news of the fundraising campaign under way to raise the huge amount needed to cover the costs of the repairs. It would be great if you could help with that, to conserve the precious treasures in the church that we are currently stewards of.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter. If you know of anyone who would like to be added to the email circulation list, or who would like a paper copy, get in touch via contehjean@gmail.com



Matfen village hall is the venue for a whole list of regular community activities. You can see details on the right of what's on and who to contact if you'd like to know more (with thanks to the village facebook page editor). The hall can also be hired for private events: you can 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

Matfen Karate Club have had multiple successes in recent gradings and now have a few adult new starters too. They maintain strong links with the Stamfordham club and

have quite a few new black belts training with them. If you are a parent wanting

something for your child to do over these long summer holidays, the club offers 2 weeks karate camp every summer at Prudhoe West Academy.

Week 1 - 24th - 28th July

Week 2 - 31st July - 4th August



Karate Camp runs from 9am to 3pm each day, and costs £20 for individual days or £80 for a whole week. There will be an opportunity to grade on the Friday afternoon at the end of each week for those that are ready, and the usual £20 grading fee will apply. Get in touch with Harry on the email above for more details. Beginners are welcome but the classes are starting to fill up so please book in ASAP!

DAY	TIME	CLASS	CONTACT
MONDAY	8.45-11am	Feel Good Monday	Jo Stichbury jostichburyfitness@gmail.com
TUESDAY	7.30pm	Women's Institute 1 st Tuesday of the month (split Matfen & Great Whit)	Jean Conteh contehjean@gmail.com
	7.00pm	Matfen Parish Council last Tuesday of the month Jan, March, May, July, Sept, Nov	Mandy Senior matfenparishcouncil@gmail.com
WEDNESDAY	9.30-11am	Pure Cardio and Pilates	Jill Newton jillie.g@live.co.uk
	6-7pm	Yoga	Ruth Forster ruth@namayay.co.uk
FRIDAY	1-2.30pm	Pilates	Jill Newton jillie.g@live.co.uk
	6-7pm	Karate	Harry matfen.srka@gmail.com
SATURDAY	9-9.45am	Bootcamp	Freya Renison-Benn freyaarenisonbenn@yahoo.co.uk

Community garden: Liz Bishop brings us up to date with a year's developments

A year of work by volunteers in the community garden, at the east end of the village green has brought a lot of changes in the area. Despite some difficult periods of weather, many plants are growing: seeds, weeds, donated plants and the rather energetic boundary hedges.

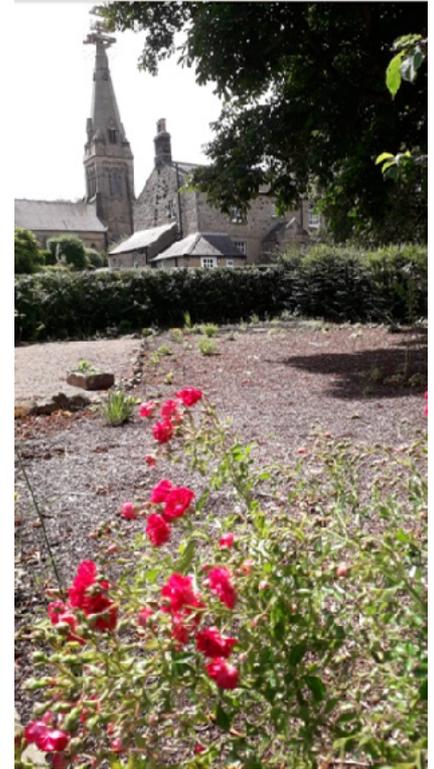
Our newest hedge plants continue to make healthy growth along the north end, towards the log pile and compost heap. In front of the logs near the bird feeder, there are various grasses, wild garlic and ferns.

Aquilegias and Welsh poppies have flowered in several areas and will hopefully set seed for another year. Cornflower, nasturtiums and the rambler rose near the War Memorial are adding colour. Hostas, brunnera and the Ice plant sedum all make impact with their leaves. Come autumn, butterflies and other insects will enjoy the sedum flowers.

Spring bulbs may be resting under the soil now but, whilst weeding to allow new plants space to grow, we came across leaves of geraniums and cowslips, preparing for another season.

As ever, your donations of no-longer wanted plants or leftover seeds are welcome. The year may be on the wane but summer warmth will encourage further growth in the garden. Any ideas and comments are always very welcome – please drop a note in at 1, The Green, or pop by the garden if you see people working there.

This month's photo of the community garden shows the colourful rambler rose and the church spire with its crow's nest of scaffolding.



Great Whittington and Matfen WI recently had an outing to Floors Castle in the Borders, which 20 members and friends thoroughly enjoyed; beautiful venue and setting, perfect weather and friendly company – what more do you need?

The next regular meeting is on **Tuesday August 1st, 7.30pm** in Great Whittington village hall. As well as the usual refreshments and social time, there will be a presentation by Catherine Hadall from the RVI, on the work of the Burns Unit and recent developments in their project in Tanzania.

And **SAVE THE DATE!** The WI will be looking for some help when they head back to Matfen village hall on **September 5th**. They are planning a Murder Mystery evening, and will need some 'detectives' to help solve the murder most foul that will happen in front of your eyes, should you choose to accept the challenge. There'll be a glass of wine and refreshments to keep you going as you work to solve the mystery – more details on the village facebook page nearer the time. New members are always very welcome in the WI; to find out more, get in touch via contehjean@gmail.com

Matfen Parish Council and County Council News

The next Parish Council Meeting is coming up in **Matfen village hall on Tuesday 25th July at 7pm**, with newly-elected Chair, Sarah Greaves. Residents of the parish are always welcome to attend, and to raise issues and make suggestions on any matter relevant to the parish.

Sarah's swift box project, mentioned in previous newsletters, has been a success, and she is hoping that another local building will become home to some special swift boxes; as repairs to the church tower are completed, wouldn't it be great to have swifts nesting up near the cockerel on the weathervane? Watch this space for more news

Northumberland County Council produces a monthly email with news of their climate change projects and other community issues. You can get on the mailing list via communications@northumberland.gov.uk.

Something that may be of interest as the school holidays arrive is the activities available for families provided by the council, with lots of support for children on free school meals – find out more on <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2023/Jul/Support-continues-for-families-this-summer.aspx>



History Corner

Here's the second half of the 1841 census for West Matfen, provided by Sally Urwin. This was the first modern census to record the details of every person and household in Britain. There were 64 names altogether on the West Matfen part. It gives the head of each household and their occupation, and the two 'William Robsons' are not a misprint! Sally has access to newspapers and family history data and she's happy to check yours out for you – you can contact her on sal.urwin@gmail.com

Joseph Hut	Mason
Ebenezer Johnson	Gardener – Garden House
William Jordan	Agricultural labourer
Edward Laing	Agricultural labourer
Margaret Millburn	Innkeeper
Dorothy Moor	No occupation listed
John Oliver	Agricultural labourer
John Ord	Farmer – Corneyside Farm
Charles James Rice	Doctor
John Richardson	Agent
Roger Richardson	Farmer
Elizabeth Rington	Field Labourer
Alexander Robinson	Besom (brush) maker – Waterloo Cottages
George Robinson	Agricultural labourer
Isabella Robson	Cartwright (widowed)
Leonard Robson	Joiner

William Robson	Agricultural Labourer
William Robson	Agricultural labourer
Isabella Rochester	No occupation listed
Joseph Rochester	Shoemaker
William Rochester	Agricultural labourer
Robert Sample	Joiner
William Sample	Land agent
William Smith	Mason
John Soulsby	Tailor
George Stevenson	Agricultural Labourer
Elizabeth Sweetman	No occupation listed
George Tailford	Farmer – Delaw Farm
Joseph Todd	Farmer – Standing Stone Farm
Richard Urwin	Blacksmith
William Wardle	Cartman
John Reid	Shoemaker

Latest news from Rev. Rachel about the repairs to the weathervane in Holy Trinity Church Matfen:



No doubt many of you have noticed that the work on the spire of Holy Trinity is well underway. We hope you enjoy some of the photos included in this newsletter. The picture on the left has a bit of an interesting story: the cockerel was hit by two no.303 bullets believed to have been fired by soldiers from the Lancashire Regiment who were billeted in the village and at the Hall in 1940 (following evacuation from Dunkirk, it is said). They certainly wrote their names up the tower in various places, presumably while on guard duty in the tower. The bullet holes and the names in the tower will be left as a record.

We are still many tens of thousands of pounds short of what we will need to complete all the work needed on Holy Trinity Church. We would appreciate any support you feel able to

give (whether that be through a donation or promoting the work that is being done and the fundraising campaign). Thank you for the generous donations and grants received so far, we have wonderfully managed to raise £24,586.25 to date.

Should you wish to help with our appeal to restore the Spire and Weathervane, please scan the QR code for our GiveALittle page.

Or <https://givealittle.co/campaigns/bd32617d-0384-4e06-8d90-3611e06342ac>

Many thanks, Brigid Dennison PCC Treasurer, e.mail: matfencptreasurer@gmail.com



And here are some of the stunning photos taken from the top of the spire by the contractors, Les Neil, Northern Steeplejacks.

The first one is to the north, with the village green, and Blackett Cottages and The Oaks in the background.



The second photo looks towards the east, showing East Close and the road towards Stamfordham.

The last one, below, shows the view to the west.



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