

# MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 25 - January - February 2024



Welcome to the first newsletter of 2024. I hope you enjoy reading it. If you know anyone who would like to be added to the email list, or who would like a paper copy, please get in touch via [contehjean@gmail.com](mailto:contehjean@gmail.com)

As the severe cold snap of the past week eases, it seems that we're returning to the same wet and windy weather that we had for weeks before Christmas. But if you happen to be a marmalade maker, your kitchen may be filled at the moment with the warm scents of seville oranges bubbling away on the cooker, a cheering experience on a dark afternoon.

Over the past couple of months, **Matfen village hall** has been the venue for – among other things – special events such as a film show, a quiz, and a skiffle group. And regular users of the hall are still going strong.

Fitness expert, **Jo Stichbury**, is in Matfen on Mondays running two popular classes; *Feel Good Pilates* at 8.45 and *Legs, Bums and Tums* at 9.30. She can be contacted on [jostichburyfitness@gmail.com](mailto:jostichburyfitness@gmail.com) or **07855 247063** for further details of the classes she offers in Matfen and also those in Dalton, Ovingham and Newton and Bywell.

**Andrew and Harry's Karate** runs on Fridays from 6-7pm. The club were represented in December at the Seiken Ryu

Karate Association inter-club competition in Prudhoe, where members from all of the SRKA clubs in the region took part in a kata and sparring competition. Andrew and Harry are delighted to announce that two of Matfen's members, Abigail Tait and her dad Neil, carried off well-deserved trophies in the kata section.

As the club enters its 12th year at Matfen, Andrew and Harry would like to thank everyone for their continued support over the years. They'd love to see the club grow this year, and welcome all new students – there are family discounts and the first lesson is free!

Classes resumed in 2024 on January 12th, in Matfen village hall at 6 pm and run every Friday. Just come along, or you can contact Andrew/Harry via [Matfen.srka@gmail.com](mailto:Matfen.srka@gmail.com)

The village hall can be hired for private and community events. You can find out more, and make a booking by email: [matfenvillage@gmail.com](mailto:matfenvillage@gmail.com) or you can phone: **07817 375237** or get in touch via the website at:

[www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall](http://www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall)

**Great Whittington and Matfen WI** resume their regular monthly meetings on **Tuesday February 6th 2024, at 7.30pm in Matfen village hall**, starting off with a talk on 'Female Autism' by Ellie Rose Guillory. As well as the monthly meetings, there are regular walks, lunches and trips out to places of interest. New members and visitors are always very welcome – just come along on the night or contact [contehjean@gmail.com](mailto:contehjean@gmail.com) for more information.



## *The Community garden: January notes from Liz Bishop*



Matfen church spire beyond a snowy paddock, photographed six years ago, continues to mark the village after the renovations last year. Snow is forecast again and our weather continues changeable. In the community garden, wind-blown leaves are piled against the boundaries. As warmer, drier conditions arrive the leaves will be added to the compost heap to allow new plant growth.

Gradually, new growth will begin. The snowdrops gifted to the garden last year are already emerging near the chestnut tree. As the leaf piles are tidied, more bulbs will soon show their spring flowers.

In a month or so, spring tidying can begin. Dead stalks and foliage can be removed; the buddleias – some given, some self-sown – can be pruned to produce new growth; and the rambler roses and hawthorn along the memorial wall will be trimmed and shaped.

Last autumn, the 'snowberry' hedge along the south wall was cut to slope towards East Close. It's hoped that this will improve vehicle/pedestrian visibility at that corner. No nests were found in the hedge so a summer trim of new growth is feasible, usually undertaken by Matfen Estates.

Where there are sheltered conditions – cold frame, greenhouse, window sills – seed sowing can begin. Sweet peas are already growing well: more meadow flowers and some bee-friendly seed balls will be set into small pots and transferred into the garden

later in the year. Any spare seedlings from village gardens will be welcome as are extra pieces of trimmed plants.

Snowfall in our village landscape would be seasonal and welcome for the new visual world it creates. Tracking movements of small creatures is interesting. Sedums in the garden become white powder-puffs and snow on twigs and branches outlines tree profiles. As this new year opens, if anyone notices interesting features and changes in the garden, why not get in touch with the newsletter, via [contehjean@gmail.com](mailto:contehjean@gmail.com), so they can be included in future editions.

You may remember reading in Newsletter 23 about the **Matfen School reunion** that took place last July in the coffee shop, when 17 former pupils and their spouses came together to reminisce about their school days. It was all a great success, and organiser **Betty Renwick** wants to find out if there is interest in planning another one this year. If you'd be interested, get in touch with Betty on [b.renwick108@btinternat.com](mailto:b.renwick108@btinternat.com)

### ***Some news from GO Local Food: new ways to become a crop sharer ... what do you think?***

Here we are in 2024 and the beginning of a new growing year – is there ever an ending and beginning to growing? 2023 was tough and along with all other farmers, we are hoping for a better year ahead. You can read more about it on our website:

<https://golocalfood.org.uk/news/>

***What's not to like*** ... locally grown seasonal (and very tasty) veg for 50 weeks of the year? We have been talking to lots of people about how we can reach more folk who'd like to join us. Our current collection point is Ovington and for some people this is one journey too far. As a result we are exploring the possibility of more local collection points (such as Hexham, Prudhoe, Ovingham and Matfen) and doorstep delivery.

As the newsletter goes to print, we do not have the full detail. At this stage we'd like to know if you would be interested in either a more local collection point or a delivery option. We'd really like to know what you think and if you'd be more likely to join us if these options were available ... email us with your thoughts, via [admin@golocalfood.org.uk](mailto:admin@golocalfood.org.uk) and be the first to know about new developments. Many thanks!



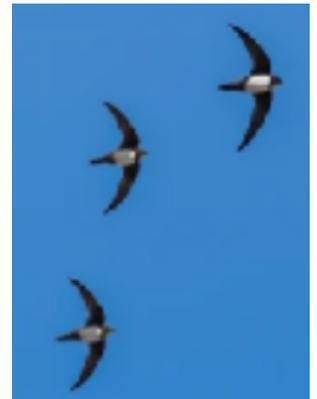
## News from the PC

The next **Matfen Parish Council meeting** is coming up on **Tuesday January 30th** in the **village hall, 7-9pm**. The meeting is open to all residents of the parish, and anyone can raise matters of concern to the community if they attend. The agenda will appear soon on the PC website: <https://matfenparish.org>

Ongoing items that may be of interest or concern to community members include the future of the **Black Bull pub** in Matfen, which has been closed for a while because of staffing issues. The PC made an application to register the pub as an asset of Community Value, but this was rejected because there was no evidence of interest from a community group. So, if you feel it's worth starting or getting involved in a group to help support and save the pub for the community, making your interest known to the PC would be a good start.

Issues in Ryal around unauthorised uses of land have been a concern of the PC for a while. It seems as if a resolution is coming; more information may be forthcoming at the meeting.

Also, **PC Chair**, Sarah Greaves, has four **swift boxes** to pass on to residents who are keen to support the project offering homes to swifts, and have a suitable place for them – about 15 feet (5m) from the ground on a vertical wall with an unobstructed flight path. If you think you can help or already have a box and would like an additional one, get in touch with Sarah on [sarah.a.greaves@googlemail.com](mailto:sarah.a.greaves@googlemail.com) and you could have the box in place for the swifts arriving in the Spring.



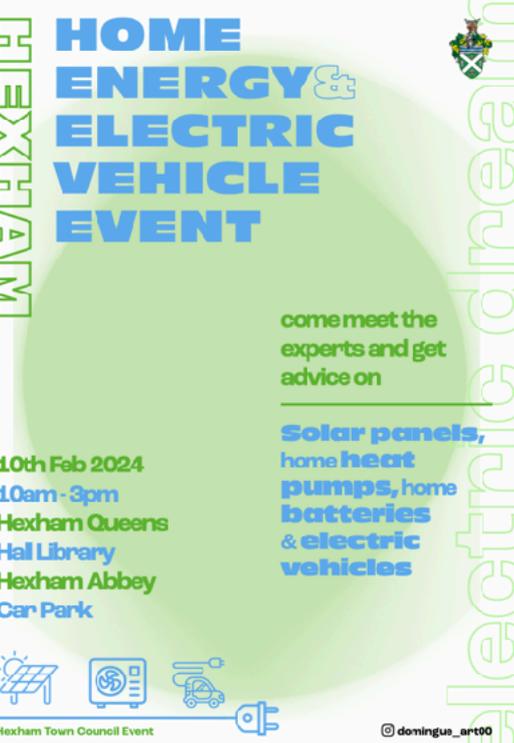
The latest **Community Action Northumberland** Cosy Winter newsletter for Warm Hubs users is out now, and will be of interest to anyone keen to reduce energy use in their home. As ever, it contains lots of useful information on energy matters that affect us all, including:

- Taking a meter reading - why and how
- Should I switch to a fixed energy tariff?
- Understanding the Energy Price Cap
- Energy monitors
- Economy 7
- Winter fuel payments and support for bills
- Guide to renewable energy in the home

You can access the newsletter via <http://ca-north.org.uk/news/cosy-can-newsletter-for-warm-hubs-users>

There is also a **Home Energy and Electric Vehicle Event** in Hexham on **February 10th, 10am-3pm** at the **Queens Hall Library** in Hexham.

Come and meet the experts and get advice on solar panels, home heat pumps, home batteries, and electric vehicles.



And there's a **CAN conference**, which is being organised by **Sustainable Haltwhistle:**

**Tyne for change – River Health and Community Action**

**Thursday February 29th, 10am - 4pm**

**Haltwhistle Community Hub, NE49 0AX**

It's a one-day event which will look at river health and community action across the Tyne Valley and beyond, including the effects of sewage spillages on river health and biodiversity.

