

MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 29 - September - October 2024



Schools have been back for a few weeks, and there's a definite chill in the air, after our rather mediocre summer. Harvesting is well advanced – all signs that Autumn is here. Welcome to Newsletter Number 24, the fifth in 2024: don't say it too loud, but the next one will be the pre-Christmas edition! In this edition, there's information about a new club in the village that may appeal as winter draws in and staying at home and reading feels like an appealing prospect. Thanks go, as ever, to all the regular contributors. There's always space for more, so get in touch if you'd like to offer something, via contehjean@gmail.com. Happy reading!

Matfen village hall is home to many community activities and events, and individuals and groups can book it by email: matfenvillage@gmail.com or phone: **07817 375237** or via the website at: www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall

Rachael Dempsey is still on the lookout for volunteers to help with all the jobs connected with running and maintaining it, so if you think you'd like to help, get in touch through one of the means above.

Matfen Karate Club continued to run throughout the summer, with dedicated students enjoying the opportunity to learn new skills not often taught during term time – particularly popular was attacking the Sensei whilst he wore body armour! Classes are now in full syllabus mode, and students are working hard towards their next grading in November. The club has a good age range of all abilities and they're always delighted to see new members: the first lesson is free. As ever, they are to be found at the village hall at **6pm every Friday**. You can contact Andrew/Harry via Matfen.srka@gmail.com



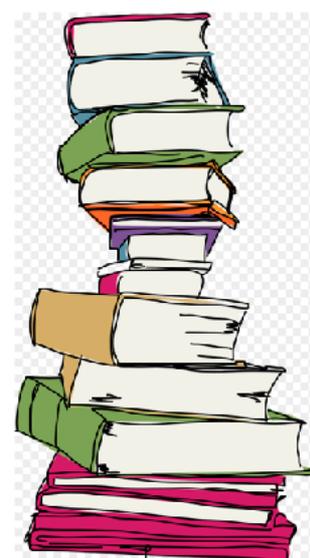
There's also **Body Flow and Fitness** with Jo Stichbury on Mondays from 9.30-11am:

jostichburyfitness@gmail.com

Pilates with Jill on Wednesdays from 9.30-11am and Fridays from 1-2.30pm: jillie.g@live.co.uk

and **Yoga** with Ruth on Wednesdays from 6-7pm: ruth@namayay.co.uk

The Hall is now the venue for a new **Book Club**, the brainchild of **Jenny Osborne**. Being a newbie to the village, and as the nights start to draw in, she wondered if a book club might be a nice way to meet people, make friends and get fellow bookworms together over a glass of wine or a cuppa. The inaugural meeting was held on September 5th and eight interested local residents chatted about some of their favourite books together with potential future reads for the club to undertake together. They picked an eclectic mix of books and genres to explore, which will keep the club going for a year, reviewing a book every 6 weeks. The next meeting will be on **Thursday October 17th** when **'The Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man'** by **Siegfried Sassoon** is the first book to be discussed. If anyone would like to read along with the group, please do and feel free to come along on the **17th, 7-9pm** to share your thoughts. Alternatively if you would like a full list of the books the club will be reviewing over the next year please contact Jenny via email. There is no obligation to read every book or attend every meeting. Everyone will be made very welcome: **Jenny Osborne: jennyosborne196@gmail.com**



Great Whittington and Matfen WI are moving over to Matfen for their winter programme, with the first meeting on **Tuesday October 1st, beginning at 7.30pm**. The speaker will be Peter Rooney, who will be talking about and teaching us some Makaton, the signing system which is so useful for communicating with children with special needs and others. As well as our monthly meetings, we organise walks, lunches, theatre visits and more. New members and visitors are always very welcome – please contact contehjean@gmail.com for more information.

The first **Matfen Fete** for six years, which took place in July, was very successful, bringing the community together and raising **£2,558.52** on behalf of Holy Trinity Church, Matfen. The organisers would like to thank everyone who helped in many different ways, both in the running of the event and coming to the green on the day. Thanks also go to Matfen Parish Council who donated £350 towards the cost of running the event; Matfen Hall Hotel who baked the scones for the teas and the team from RHI Industrials who helped set up the stalls. And thanks also to everyone who donated raffle prizes. There were some wonderful prizes and the raffle was a huge success, contributing £1,306 towards the funds raised. Next year's fete is already at the planning stage, so save the date – **Saturday July 5th, 2025.**

Harvest Festival This year has been very challenging for many farmers and those whose livelihood relies on good weather patterns. So the church has decided not to have traditional Harvest Festivals at Matfen and Stamfordham this year. Instead, there will be one event at Stamfordham, **20th October 11.30am**. There will be one or two Harvest hymns (it wouldn't be this time of year without them), a reading and some appropriate brief prayers, then the primary focus will be a community lunch in St. Mary's Church Stamfordham, with food and drinks provided by the church community. This is to say thanks to our farmers and community for keeping going through this very challenging time: the work you do is extremely important. Please let Revd Rachel know if you are able to come, so there are enough food and drinks. Everyone is very welcome, it's not just open to farmers and those who work on the land.

Email: r.scheffer@newcastle.angican.org WhatsApp: **07916681128**

What happened to summer in the Community garden? – notes from Liz Bishop



What happened to summer? Last week there was a chilly and, at times, buffeting north wind. Next week the weather map suggests days of sunshine and warmth. Through all the changes, plants in the garden have continued to grow and spread their influence.

In the foreground of Photo 1 (left), two stalks of cherry leaves are sprouting from hidden roots of a long-gone tree. Small white strawberry flowers may not produce berries this year but have plenty of runners to make more plants. On the ice plant, sedum, heads are colouring and will attract insects well into autumn. Our garden space is filling.

Photo 2 (right) shows a flower on an autumn Japanese anemone, plants which soon form cheerful clumps. In the centre, several buddleia shrubs are self sown and may be removed before they shade smaller plants.

Birds, small ground creatures and insects have all been busy in the garden through the summer season, and local cats crouch among the plants stalking their prey.

When soil has been turned, worms and other underground dwellers are very present, keeping the earth in good heart. With cooler, shorter days on the way, the sprays of roses along the Memorial wall will be pruned back leaving hips where possible. The white berry hedge along the roadside will be cut back by volunteers under Parish Council guidance. Weeding will continue and the compost heap needs turning before creatures look to use it for shelter through winter. As ever, donated plants can be found a place to settle in before the cold weather, and all are always very welcome.

Autumn changes to bird life – Alan Todd

Bird migration is well under way. First to leave, by August, were our Swifts towards Africa. In early September, Swallow and Martin families lined up on telephone wires, the former in preparation for a longer flight south. In the coming days, listen and look overhead for skeins of Icelandic Pink-Footed or Greylag Geese on their way to UK wintering grounds. In our gardens: male and female Robins sing to maintain territories into winter – a peculiar adaptation of this species. Joined by Tits, Finches, and late summering Chiffchaffs, they forage for fruit, seeds and insects, meanwhile Rowans are stripped of berries by resident Starlings and Thrushes.



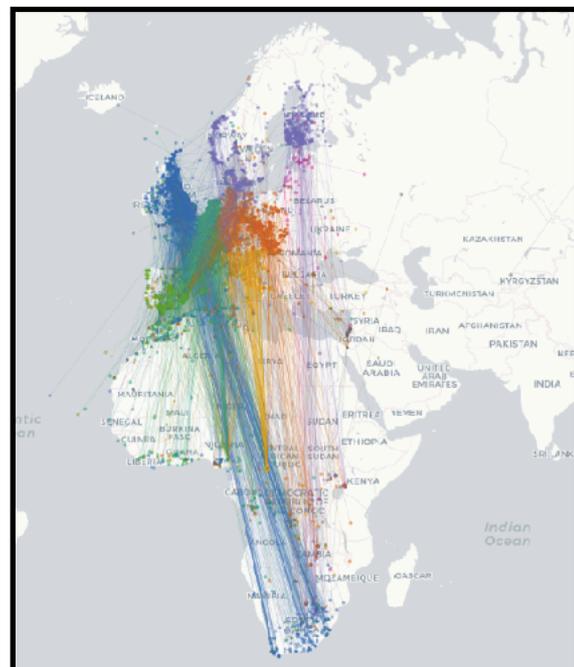


Alan's own charming photo shows the first of two broods of swallows in a local outhouse, and the map here shows Barn Swallow migration routes from Europe throughout Africa. It's taken from:

Spina, F., Baillie, S.R., Bairlein, F., Fiedler, W.,

and Thorup, K. (Eds). (2022). Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas. EURING/CMS.

And it also appears on the migrationatlas.org website, where you can find a wealth of information on 300 bird species and their flyways between Eurasia and Africa.



News from Parish and County Councils

The next **Matfen Parish Council meeting** will be held on **Tuesday September 24th** in the **village hall, 7pm - 9pm**. The agenda will appear soon on the PC website: <https://matfen-pc.gov.uk/> The meeting, as usual, is open to all residents of the parish, and there will be an opportunity for anyone to raise matters of concern to the community. As ever, there will be discussion of issues of direct interest to Matfen residents.

Planning is often an issue that comes up in PC meetings, and it can be very controversial. There have recently been two planning developments, one perhaps good news, and the other not so much. The first is the retrospective planning permission granted at Tongues Farm, on the way to Kirkheaton, for their glamping hut, which conforms in every way to NCC sustainability requirements, and which can be seen as a welcome addition to the local tourism amenities.

The other is much less welcome, and has attracted coverage from the local democracy reporter in the Newcastle Evening Chronicle: (<https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/ingoe-houses-approved-northumberland-estates-29929178>).

In spite of objections from a large number of villagers, planning permission has been granted to Northumberland Estates for the erection of two 4-bedroom houses, on the edge of Ingoe village, at the end of the lane shown in the photo. Many believe that this is an inappropriate development, with huge implications for traffic and safety in what has been until now a quiet backwater. Local residents feel their voices hadn't been heard, as they raised many pertinent issues such as access to the site along a narrow lane, the fact that the new development would be outside the settlement boundary and that the new houses would cover a totally different footprint from the existing farm buildings, which will be demolished. In addition, there is a significant population of Great Crested Newts in a pond very near the site, and the risk to them possibly renders the application illegal.



Highlights from the County Council's monthly Climate Change update (you can join the mailing list by emailing climate@northumberland.gov.uk):

North East Community Foundation is a local charity that works to promote awareness and knowledge about climate change and ways of counteracting its negative effects in our communities.



They are making up to £500,000 available to community organisations across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. Examples of activities that would be considered are environmental and climate-related projects; re-wilding programmes; recycling and repurposing project; awareness-raising in communities and improving the energy efficiency of a building. The maximum grant size is £10,000, and the deadline is 31st March 2025. For more information and advice about applying, you can contact **Ross Wilson** (rpw@communityfoundation.org.uk) or **Pete Barrett** (pb@communityfoundation.org.uk)

Memorial to Tornado pilots - Sean and Dicky – 14th October, 10.57am

Sean Casabayo and Dicky Wright were killed when their Tornado crashed 25 years ago on farmland near Kirkheaton, on 14th October, 1999. Timed to coincide with the exact time of the crash, their memorial event will include a parade, an honour guard and a flypast, and will be graced by local dignitaries including the Lord Lieutenant and High Sherriff of Northumberland, and our new constituency MP, Joe Morris.



If you wish to attend, or would like to have more information, please contact Martin Wintermeyer, preferably by e-mail martinwintermeyer@gmail.com or 07792592027.



The first contribution to this edition's **History Corner** is from **Edna Russell**, whose late husband, George, was featured in Newsletter Number 18. George was born on Armistice Day in 1923, and passed away on the same day as the Queen in 2022. His great-uncle, another **George Russell**, is remembered on the War memorial on the village green. This George was born in 1886, and is buried in La Targette British Cemetry, at Pas de Calais in France. He died on June 7th 1917, aged 30, having been mentioned in despatches and awarded the Military Medal. Interestingly, he was not in a British unit, but the Canadian Engineers. There is a hint that, some years before the War, young George had to emigrate hastily to Canada after getting too involved with a young lady in the district.

And here's **Sally Urwin's account of the early history of Matfen:**

The name Matfen first appeared in the Pipe Rolls in 1159 as "Matefen", which means "Matta's fen". There's no record of who Matta is, but according to Stan Beckensall (a prominent local historian) Matta is a Saxon name.

Records from the 13th century reveal that the manor was once held by the influential Fenwick family. During 1650-1700, John Douglas of Newcastle bought the estate and made a drastic decision to depopulate the old East Matfen village, sending the

villagers to farm on other parts of his land. So, the village wasn't abandoned due to the plague but probably due to Douglas wanting to enclose and use the land himself.

The abandoned village is a very atmospheric site. It has a typical medieval layout, with two rows of houses, with gardens/crofts at the back, facing onto a broad village green. There is also an easy to spot "hollow way", (the main village footpath) which now appears as a slightly sunken green lane running between the remnants of the houses. Rig and furrow surrounded the village where crops were grown and fields where animals grazed. The villagers must have walked to church at Stamfordham: recent research shows that this existed in Saxon times. It's amazing to think of all the generations who would have called East Matfen home.

I've marked up the LIDAR image for Matfen - hopefully this is correct, but if anyone knows better, just let me know!

And finally ... many thanks, as ever, to Revd Rachel for distributing the newsletter by email. Any comments, suggestions and ideas for future newsletters are always very welcome: get in touch via contehjean@gmail.com And if you know of anyone who would like to be added to the email list, or who would like a paper copy, please let me know. The next newsletter will be in November.

