

MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 35 – September - October 2025



Hallowe'en is just around the corner, and the clocks may have already gone back by the time you read this newsletter – Number 35. There's plenty going on in the community in the Autumn and pre-Christmas season; spooky fun in the village hall for the children on Hallowe'en, Church services in remembrance of those who fought for their country in war, as well as those perhaps closer to home who we've lost in years gone by. You can read full details in the letter, as well as reports of local groups and activities.

Thanks, as ever, to all the regular contributors. New ideas are always welcome; get in touch if you'd like to offer something: contehjean@gmail.com – and happy reading!

Matfen village hall is home to many community activities and events, and individuals and groups can book it in one of these ways:

- emailing: matfenvillage@gmail.com
- phoning: **07817 375237**
- via the website: www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall

There's lots happening with **Matfen SRKA Karate Club** at the moment, students are working hard to learn their syllabus before grading next month and there are a number of students hoping to take part in November's Dan (black belt) grading – good luck everyone!

Special mention also to **Sensei Harry Waters** who, on October 18th, won his latest fight in Muay Thai kickboxing, well done Sensei!

The club meets ever Friday at 6pm (but not on Friday 31st October this year). Come along and have a go! You can contact Andrew or Harry on matfensrka@gmail.com or call on **07775 726 240**

As well as karate, the hall is home to **'Legs, Bums and Tums'** on Mondays, **Pilates** on Wednesdays and Fridays and **Yoga** on Wednesday evenings. Check the website for further details: www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall



Calling all ghosts, ghouls, witches, and wizards ... everyone is invited to **Matfen Spooktacular!**

This Halloween, head to the hall for an evening of fun.

When? Friday 31st October, 6-8pm

Where? Matfen Village Hall

£2 entry at the door (cash or card) but please RSVP so we can cater for the numbers:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/.../matfen-spooktacular...>

Prizes for the best carved pumpkin and costume.

Bar for adults (donations welcome).

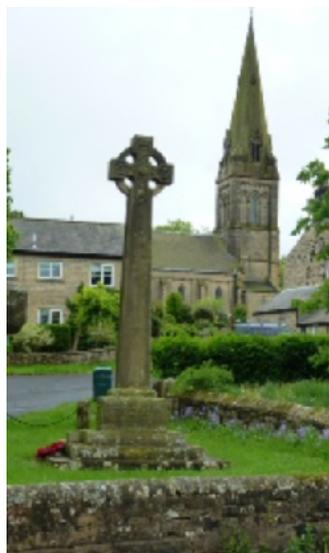
If anyone has any decorations or baking to donate, please email matfenvillage@gmail.com

Matfen Community Time is becoming a welcome and cherished feature of village life. It's held on the 4th Wednesday of the month and it's been wonderful to see people getting together at the first three Matfen Community Times. The next one will be on **Wednesday 26th November, 3-5pm in the village hall**, and everyone's welcome, whether you come alone or with friends, whatever your situation. There'll be tea, coffee, and cake, so come along, take a seat, enjoy the refreshments and be part of the community.



As November begins, we enter a season of remembering – Special Church Services in November

First is the **All Saints' celebration, 10.30am, Sunday 2nd November at All Saints Church, Ryal.**



Then the **All Souls service, 6pm in Holy Trinity, Matfen.** This gentle and reflective service is open to everyone, whether you wish to remember someone who has died recently or many years ago. There will be readings, hymns, prayers, with the opportunity for names of loved ones to be read aloud and the chance to light a candle in their memory. All are warmly welcome to come, reflect, and give thanks for those we love but see no longer.

If you wish to have someone's name read out, no matter how long it is since they passed away, get in touch with Rev Rachel on

r.scheffer@newcastle.anglican.org

On **Remembrance Sunday, 9th November**, there will be a **Holy Communion at 8.45am in Holy Trinity, Matfen** (note the earlier time)

Then, on **Armistice Day, Tuesday 11th November**, we'll meet at **Matfen War Memorial at 10.55am** for the Act of Remembrance.

Everyone is very welcome to all of these gatherings.



And dates for your diary: on **Thursday 27th November, 6-8pm, the Carols and Christmas Light Switch-On at the Robin Hood Inn** will take place – the first chance of the year to sing carols together and marks the start of the Advent and Christmas season.

The Christmas season starts in the churches with a **Candlelit Advent Carols and Readings Service at 6pm** on **Monday 1st December in All Saints Church, Ryal.** It will be an especially joyful evening as Revd Rachel Scheffer will be commissioned as Area Dean of Corbridge during the service.

Families are warmly invited to our **Advent Afternoon Church at 4.30pm on Sunday 14th December in St Mary's, Stamfordham** – a relaxed, creative service for young families.

Look out for more festive season details in the next newsletter!

Great Whittington and Matfen WI



The next meeting of the WI is on **Tuesday November 4th, 7.30pm in Matfen Village Hall.** The talk will be given by **Iain Chisholm from St John's Ambulance**, explaining how **Bystanders Can Be Lifesavers.** Then there'll be the usual tea, cake and conversation. As well as the regular monthly meetings, held in either Matfen or Great Whittington, the WI has a Book Club which meets every six weeks or so to talk about a book chosen by the someone in the group; there's always a lively discussion! The group also organises walks, lunches, outings and other activities. New members and

visitors are always very welcome – to find out more, contact **contehjean@gmail.com**

Matfen Book Club

The Matfen Book Club is just starting its second year after a very interesting first year of meeting every six weeks or so to discuss a wide range of books including memoir, true crime, family history and a wide range of novels from American classics to recent political thrillers. The plan is simple – every member chooses a book, and convenor, Jenny Osborne, puts together a timetable. The next book is a recent novel, set in the heat wave of 1976, called **'The Trouble with Goats and Sheep'** by **Joanna Cannon**, and the group will be meeting on **Thursday October 30th at 7pm.** It doesn't matter if you haven't read the book, come along to see if you'd like to join in. Get in touch with **Jenny** on **jennyosborne196@gmail.com** if you want to know more. All newbies very welcome.



Autumn Migrants – Alan Todd

With cooler days and falling leaves, our Swifts, Martins and Swallows have already headed to warmer climes after a successful breeding year. While awaiting the annual influx of wintering Redwing and Fieldfare, settled now on crops of winter wheat or golf fairways are smaller Gulls: Common and Black-headed (from the Scottish Highlands, Scandinavia, even Eastern Europe). These migratory routes are deduced by bird 'ringing' studies: such as my discovery of a colour-ringed Black-headed Gull feeding at Tyne Green in early 2019, which originated from Stavanger, Norway!



On the left:

Spring plumage adult Common Gull in the Scottish Highlands
© P. Parker

On the right:

Winter plumage adult Black-Headed Gull – at Whitley Bay!
© A. Todd



Recent notable sightings:

Kearsley – Two juvenile Whinchats: perching 'flycatchers' that pause migration to refuel between upland breeding sites and Mediterranean wintering grounds.

Kirkheaton – Jack Snipe: A rarer cryptic Eastern European wader, which bounces as if on springs when seen walking or feeding at vegetated pools. More often accidentally flushed from an observer's feet – as was this one!

Great Whittington – Two Greenfinches with beak lesions. Possibly Avian Pox? Refer to Avian Pox in 'Disease Factsheets' on the following link: <https://www.gardenwildlifehealth.org/garden-wildlife/>

Preparations for Winter in the Community garden – notes from Liz Bishop

Tree leaves changing colour, leaves on the ground, hedge cuttings to be tidied – Autumn is with us.

Plants in the wrong place or grown too big for their positions? – your garden rejects are welcome in the Community garden. A recent generously full bowl split into six separate plantings. Thank you!



Recently on a late summer Sunday, there was a well-supported run along local roads. Participants registered in our village hall and visiting child and dog minders enjoyed coffees from the shop. Grandparents from Wooler brought two youngsters to the garden where chestnuts were collected and ladybirds sought.

On leaving, the young lad knelt on our War memorial steps and said his prayers for the fallen.

Another reminder of past events lies in grass at the playing field. It is the very heavy iron top bar of a previous set of swings. Along its length is "Jubilee E II R 1952 -1977 ", part of which, in reverse, appears in the photo. The Parish Council and the Cricket Club are working together to make the sign into a feature in the garden.

Within the walls, growth in the garden has increased. The crab apple has a good crop of fruit which will be enjoyed as they fall by small creatures and insects. Wild strawberries are creeping freely among the plants and need pulling back in places. Some field flower seeds have shown their faces. Seed heads on other plants will be cut back to limit their spread. Winter will bring its rest.



News from Parish and County Councils:

The next **Matfen PC meeting** will be held on **Tuesday November 25th**, in the village hall, from 7-9pm. The agenda, along with draft minutes from the September meeting, will appear soon on the PC website: <https://matfen-pc.gov.uk/> As ever, the meeting is open to all residents of the parish, and there will be an opportunity for anyone attending to raise matters of concern to the community. For further details, get in touch with the PC clerk, Mandy Senior, on clerk@matfen-pc.gov.uk or phone **07950 297634**

Northumberland County Council: Climate Change Update and News

Every month, **NCC** put out **Northumberland Net Zero**, with updates on their Climate Change Action Plan and related environmental issues and information on events and activities, funding opportunities and lots more. Receive your own copy by emailing climate@northumberland. Here are a couple of highlights from the October newsletter

- **Northumberland County Council's free tree scheme is back again:** residents, schools, community groups and town and parish councils across the county can take part in this year's free tree scheme, and this year more businesses are being encouraged to apply.



You can find further details and apply for your free trees at: <https://tree-scheme.northumberland.gov.uk/SelfService/>

15,000 tree saplings are available to help make Northumberland a greener and cleaner place to live, work and visit. The main condition for applying is that you, or your group or business, are resident in Northumberland. There is a range of different trees and packs available according to the size of space available for planting. Detailed planting and aftercare instructions will be provided. Applicants will receive email confirmation and details of how to collect their trees from a designated collection point during **National Tree Week**, which runs from November 24th-29th.

- **Wheels for All:** this is a new initiative to encourage people of all abilities to try cycling. Funded by North East Mayor Kim McGuinness and co-ordinated by NCC, a pilot project is currently running at the Wentworth Leisure Centre in Hexham. The aim of the scheme is to promote physical and mental wellbeing, encourage social inclusion and improve confidence and independence for participants who may otherwise face barriers to physical activity.



The organisers are keen to hear from anyone who'd like to get involved and would also love to hear from anyone who might have an accessible bike to donate: get in touch on enquirieswentworth@pfpleisure.org

There's no **History Corner** this month, but it will be back in the next newsletter.

Meanwhile, here's a note from **Martin Wintermeyer**, who featured in the newsletter several times last year. He organised a wonderful memorial on October 14th 2024, which was well attended by members of various groups across the whole community. It was to remember two young RAF pilots who lost their lives in a Tornado crash, which happened on that day 25 years earlier, in 1999, when their plane crashed into farmland near Kirkheaton:

Exactly a year ago many of us took part in a beautiful memorial to Sean Casabay and Dicky Wright. So many people made so much effort to ensure that their 25th Anniversary was commemorated in a very appropriate way.

Cadets and staff from Cramlington Air Cadets visited the memorial on the first anniversary of the event. The residue of funds from raising the memorial will be donated to these cadets to sponsor a new cup for Best Community Engagement and subsidise cadets whose families may struggle to send them on activities. I hope you agree that this is an appropriate way to use this.



And finally ... many thanks, as ever, to Revd Rachel for emailing the newsletter out to the whole community. If you know of anyone who would like to be added to the list, or who would like a paper copy, please let me know. Comments, suggestions and contributions for future newsletters are always very welcome: email contehjean@gmail.com The next newsletter will be in the second week of December, so any Christmas-related contributions will be very welcome.