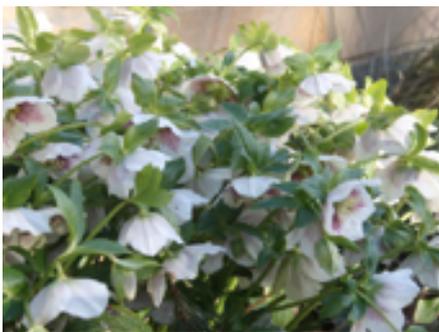


MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 14 - March - April 2022



The winter flowers have been brightening up gardens and greens for a little while now, and new-born lambs are taking their first shaky steps in the fields. Spring is definitely on the way. Welcome to the second Matfen Community Newsletter of 2022, which brings news and views from the community, as well as reminders of our links with the wider world. I was very pleased to receive an email from a lady in New Zealand, who is a reader of the newsletter – more below. A less happy link, but one that affects us all, is of course the current unending news from Ukraine and of the innocent people suffering there: there's information below about how you can join others in the community to help by sending relief and support. And, if you suffered power cuts in the recent storms and are still waiting for compensation, here's a message from our MP Guy Opperman:

If anyone was off power for more than 48 hours by reason of Storm Arwen or subsequent storms this winter, then they are entitled to compensation. Guy Opperman has helped hundreds of locals with claims and can be contacted at Suite 2, St Matthew's House, Haugh Lane Industrial Estate, Hexham NE46 3PU, or by phone and email on 01434 239 205 or guy.opperman@parliament.uk.

On the topic of the recent storms and the issues that some residents faced, the **Parish Council**, in collaboration with the church, the village hall and the County Council, are developing a Community Plan to be prepared to assist where possible in any future events where life may be compromised through lack of power, water and so on. Once the plan is agreed and finalised, it will be circulated in the parish so that everyone knows who to contact in an emergency. Any thoughts or suggestions as to what would be helpful can be passed on to the PC via matfenparishcouncil@gmail.com.

The next **Matfen Parish Council** meeting will be on Tuesday, March 29th, in the village hall, beginning at 7 pm. As usual, the meeting is open to all residents of the parish, and the agenda will appear on the PC website: <https://www.matfenparish.org>

Sadly, because of numbers, Cliff has taken the decision not to continue with Zumba in **Matfen village hall**, but Karate is still going strong:

Matfen and Stamfordham karate club students took part in a grading on March 6th, with an excellent turnout and a very high quality of performance (see the photo on page 3). The students all achieved their next belts and leader Harry hopes to be putting more students forward for their black belt grading this year. New students are always very welcome. The club meets every Friday from 6-7pm in Matfen village hall. Please contact Harry Waters if interested, on 07775 726240.



Other upcoming activities in the hall include a **Quiz with food** in aid of the village hall and the church on April 2nd, which is currently sold out, but get in touch via matfenvillage@gmail.com if you're interested in going, as there may be returns.

Plans are also under way for celebrations in the village on Saturday, June 4th for the **Queen's Platinum Jubilee**. There'll be music, food, traditional games and races and a duck and boat race on the watercourse – see the poster on page 3 for more details. There's also going to be a display of memorabilia from previous Royal Jubilees and royal occasions – more information available via the village email: matfenvillage@gmail.com

And don't forget that the hall is available to book by groups or private individuals, and you can book via the website:

www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall, or by email: matfenvillage@gmail.com or phone: **07817 375237**.



Susan the Barber is still offering a welcome regular service to the community, on the first Monday of every month. She does haircuts for all – you can book via Susan's facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/thebarberbushexham>, or call **07712 609057**. Susan parks her bus by Dulcissima (aka Matfen shop), so you can always pop in for a tea or coffee while waiting for your appointment.

And isn't it great that we have **Dulcissima** on the doorstep? Since the re-opening in November, the store and coffee shop has been serving great breakfasts and lunches every day and putting on regular Friday evening meals. And, they've scored another success in British Pie Week (7-13 March) – they've won a silver award with their smoked haddock, leek and cheese pie! All freshly made on the premises. Well done, Ian and Tracey.



As well as the June 4th celebrations, there's another village project in honour of the Queen in the 70th year of her reign:

The **Jubilee Garden Refurbishment** is being co-ordinated by the Parish Council. The aim is to revive the existing site of the 1977 Jubilee garden to the east of the green. The PC is applying for a grant from Northumberland County Council to assist with costs, and is keen to have parishioners involved by sharing their ideas and volunteering to help. If you're interested in this community project, get in touch with the PC through the clerk, on matfenparishcouncil@gmail.com.

One keen gardener, Liz Bishop, has some ideas to turn the garden into **A Peaceful Place** – very appropriate in these troubled times:

Two stones in the often over-looked Jubilee Garden indicate that two trees were planted to mark the first Jubilee in 1977, just 25 years into the Queen's long reign. Forty-five years on, one of those celebratory trees remains (see photo), now in need of careful attention. Some changes in the garden could make it a pleasant and peaceful area for villagers and visitors to enjoy for many more years. Getting rid of the weeds, then keeping them down, and a topping of gravel or bark would allow easier maintenance. Bulbs and flowering plants would be allowed to thrive. Creature-friendly piles of twigs and leaves in the bottom corner would be a happy addition. Nature soon finds new homes, and planting some smaller trees such as rowan or crab apple would bring flowers, fruit and seasonal colour, and more birds to the area. A bench or two along the wall would allow us all to enjoy some peaceful moments.

And two more initiatives, both managed by the PC:

NCC has a **Scams Specialist**, who will be running a **Scams Awareness and Support Programme** over the next two years, aiming to provide practical advice and support, free of charge, to help older people identify potential scams and learn what to do if they are faced with someone trying to scam them. And there'll be support for those who unfortunately do suffer scams. The programme will work with groups and individuals, and is free of charge. The Council can also make home visits or meet at local community venues. Individuals can self-refer, or a professional can make a referral on your behalf. Free call blocker units are also available for those suffering with phone scams or those at risk through reduced cognitive functioning. If you know someone who could benefit from support from the programme, don't hesitate to get in touch:

visit <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/northumberland/> or contact **Sarah Cooper, Project Lead- Scams Awareness and Support Programme on 01670 784 800 option 2** or email info@ageuk-northumberland.org.uk

You may remember mention in previous newsletters about **NCC's Climate Emergency Actions** – indeed, you may even have taken part in some of them. To keep in touch with what's happening, you can access the monthly Climate Change Newsletter, using this link:

<https://app.getresponse.com/view.html?x=a62b&m=BSGr5N&mc=Ce&s=BzEL13V&u=k7i&z=EFLXBZz&> (it looks a bit strange, but it works!).

In the newsletter, you can sign up for a Climate Change Q&A, which is happening in April.



Great Whittington and Matfen WI are meeting in Great Whittington over the next few months and the next date is **Tuesday, April 5th at 7.30 pm**. There'll be a gentle, introductory session on Pilates, led by Pat Waters of Corbridge, followed by refreshments and time to chat. Just come along on the night, or get in touch: contehjean@gmail.com – we love visitors and new members.

Great Whittington village hall is also the local centre for donations for those struggling in Ukraine at the moment. Several loads have already been taken to Prudhoe for their onward journey via the Red Cross, and the needs now are quite specific – nappy sacks, sudocrem, calpol in sachets and anusol cream. There's a box outside the hall for your donations, and you can phone Michele McKenzie, the local organiser, on 07742 730599.

Parents in the community will know of the coming departure of **Claire McKinney**, Headteacher of **Stamfordham Primary School**. Claire has clearly done a fantastic job in the school, and leaving will be a wrench for her. She leaves with the good wishes of the whole community. She sent a heartfelt letter of farewell for the newsletter, but it was a little too long to be included in its entirety, so here is an extract:

I have so many things to be grateful for; not many Head Teachers have the opportunity to get to know and work with an entire community. The warmth and respect we have shared has kept me going when times have been challenging. Your support, your kind words, your prayers and sincere smiles have meant so much. I cannot thank you all enough; without hesitation you took me in and made me feel welcome from the start. Knowing how difficult change can be you have made the experience a joy. You have engaged and voiced your opinions, shared your concerns and worries, and I hope you have found that I have taken the time to listen and take on board what you have said. I will never say I get everything right all of the time but I do strive to do my very best.

History Corner

A couple of pieces this time – one from our regular contributor, **Keith Atkinson**. But first, one from **New Zealand**, which makes interesting links between Matfen and the country that is probably the furthest away in the world.



Kaye Forster-Hill, who looks great in the photo she sent, recently got in touch. She sent a detailed account, from the 1790s onwards, of her ancestors, who were the Forsters. They were living at Matfen Moorhouses in the 1800s and worked as gardeners for the Middletons. They were involved in shaping the Quarry Gardens at Belsay Hall. Kaye also has connections with Ingoe as her great-great-great grandmother, Barbara Jane Robson, was born at South Hall in 1815. She married into the Forster family. Kaye's paternal grandfather, Robert William Thomas Forster (1858-1954), emigrated with his wife Alice Creeth, of the Isle of Wight, to New Zealand in 1911. They settled in Hamilton in the North Island, where Kaye was born in 1951.

A wander round Matfen churchyard revealed one Forster gravestone, recording Elizabeth Forster, daughter of Bartholomew Heads, who died in 1875, aged 52 years. An interesting connection with Hamilton, NZ also came to light. The first gravestone on the left by the gate (see next page) records the deaths of Audrey Joan Carlisle in 2003 and her husband Brian in 2019, both in Hamilton. Audrey was the granddaughter of Thomas Smith, and it's known that members of the Smith family emigrated from Matfen to New Zealand before the First World War. There are several Smiths in the churchyard. And there's another link to New Zealand: one Jessie Lamb Black, daughter of Craigie and Elizabeth Gray of Church View, Matfen, died there in 1992 and her death is recorded on a gravestone with her parents. I wonder what further global connections may come to light between the Carlisles, Forsters, Smiths and Grays.

A member of the Smith family, remembered on the gravestone by the church gate, is worthy of note. Mary Jane (known as Jean), who died in 1996 aged 94, served on the Parochial Church Council for 75 years – what a wonderful record of service.

And here's Keith's contribution: Readers may be familiar with the photographs taken by W. P. Collier (1875-1937), now in the Collier Collection in the Heritage Centre at Bellingham. This example dates from the early 1920s and is reproduced on page 22 of *Village Photographer* by S. F. Owen (published in 2008). Collier visited his locations by motor cycle and he has parked in front of the Black Bull. Stan Owen tells me that the registration was NL 3770, which dates to no sooner than 1921. By then my grandmother, the Matfen postmistress, had died in 1920 and my grandfather, Jacob Atkinson, was running the post office and the *Anything and Everything* shop next door to the Black Bull. He retired in 1935 and died in Matfen in 1950 aged 87.

And, to close sincere thanks, as ever, to Rev Rachel for distributing the newsletter by email, and thanks also to the contributors to this edition. There was so much to squeeze in this time that there is an extra page of photos to go with some of the contributions. Any comments, suggestions and contributions for future newsletters are very welcome, and if you know of anyone who would like a paper copy, please let me know – you can get in touch at contehjean@gmail.com. The next newsletter will come out in mid-May



And just a quick final message from Rev Rachel about church services for Easter:

Maundy Thursday (April 13th) - Stamfordham 6 pm, Holy Communion with foot washing and stripping of the altar

Good Friday (April 14th) - Heddon 10am or Church on the Green, Stamfordham 11am

Easter Eve - Matfen Village Hall, 7pm for Easter Vigil followed by the New Light Bonfire and Stations of the Resurrection in Holy Trinity.

Easter Day - 9am Matfen and 10.30am Stamfordham

Gravestone in Matfen Churchyard - Carlises and Smiths



Matfen Village Jubilee Celebrations - June 4th



Stamfordham and Matfen Karate Club Grading - March 6th