

Summer  
2021

Edition 8

---

## Contents

From the editors

Parish Council news

Green church

Memoirs and memoir  
writing

Ping pong and a pint

County Councillor's  
report

Bird watching notes

Wildlife around our  
parish

Church Beyond the  
Walls

Village Hall news

Wor Bella project

---

# *Rennington and Rock Community News*



## From the editors

Hello and welcome to the Summer 2021 edition of Rennington & Rock Community News. In response to reader demand, R&R News is back in print and in A5 size format.

During the pandemic, 4 editions of the newsletter were published in digital format only, and circulated on request by email and posted on the websites of both Rennington Parish Council and Rennington Village Hall.

Now that life is creeping back to something like 'normal', and access to printing companies eases, this latest edition of returns to full colour print, and in a reader friendly size, that also makes hand delivery to every private and business address in the parish easier.

The newsletter again brings together a mix of regular and new contributions. The editors are always looking to broaden the content and encourage readers to come forward with ideas for future editions. So, if you have a story, anecdote, poem, announcement, etc. that might be of interest to the community, please let us know.

Would you like to volunteer to help produce, edit or deliver the newsletter? The editors are keen for others to share this community work and help secure its long term future.

Stay safe and well.

Jane and Robert Dixon, Editors

## Parish Council news

Following the May 2021 local elections, five councillors were elected unopposed to serve for a period of four years. A sixth councillor was subsequently co-opted to the council at the June meeting. Contact details of all councillors can be found on the Parish Council website: [www.northumberlandparishes.uk/rennington](http://www.northumberlandparishes.uk/rennington) or by email request to the Parish Clerk at: [renningtonpc@gmail.com](mailto:renningtonpc@gmail.com)

Vacancies still remain for four more councillors. The council is keen to consider additional candidates for co-option and would ask anyone interested in the role to contact the Parish Clerk, or any councillor, for information about the role and the few qualifying rules that apply.

### Parish Council responsibilities

The Parish Council has a responsibility to represent the interests of local people and to influence other public body decision makers in planning and implementing improvements to the quality of life and environment of the parish. The council is accountable to the electors of the parish and its meetings are open to the public except in exceptional circumstances. The time, place and agenda of meetings are posted on the council website and village notice boards (one each in Rock and Rennington) at least three days in advance of meetings, and the council allows parishioners to address meetings on any issues that concern them. The minutes of meetings can be found on the council website and can be seen by request to the Parish Clerk. After a period of ZOOM meetings due to COVID-19 rules, council meetings have now returned to the Rennington Village Hall venue.

### Rennington North Farm development

One long standing agenda issue for the council is the housing development at North Farm, Rennington. Many variances from the original planning application have been sought by the site owner, and their appointed developers have on various occasions proceeded with site preparation and build activity in conflict with conditions placed upon them in planning authority decisions. Matters relating to the conversion of Grade II listed farmstead buildings and to the new-build properties and landscaping remain undecided (at the time of writing) in planning approval terms. Parish Council and widespread community objection has been cited as the reason to refer the matters to the North Northumberland Area Council for decision. It is expected that the case will be heard at the NNAC meeting scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> July. In the meantime, the Parish Council continues to press the case for non-approval through direct engagement with both the planning authority and the site owner.

### Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning gives local communities direct power to develop a vision for their neighbourhood and shape development and growth of their area. As of the 15<sup>th</sup> June, Northumberland County Council has designated the Civil Parish of Rennington as the 'Rennington Neighbourhood Area' for the purposes of neighbourhood planning. Under the sponsorship of the Parish Council, the group of parishioners and parish councillors already working on the project will become a formal working party tasked with leading the work needed to develop the plan over the next two years. Community involvement and consultation will be key components of the project and this will begin with a 'drop-in' community event to introduce the project. This is being planned for September. Invitations to the

event in Rennington Village Hall, and a first consultation questionnaire will be delivered to all parish residences approximately two weeks in advance of the 'drop-in' date. Please let us know if you would like to help develop this important project. The Parish Council will, in the coming months, seek further opportunities to directly engage with the wider community and to provide easier access for residents to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and concerns about parish matters. The Parish Council can be contacted via email at: [renningtonpc@gmail.com](mailto:renningtonpc@gmail.com)

Robert Dixon, Chair, Rennington Parish Council

## Green church

As part of the Alnwick Deanery Environment Group All Saints Church, Rennington, is trying to make the church more wildlife and eco-friendly.

As a first step it is hoped to make some small changes in the churchyard. Following comments that those looking after graves have to carry their own water, it's planned to install a water butt in the corner near the War Memorial (who knows, this might even encourage some rainfall, much needed as I write this but maybe not welcomed by all!) [Note from the Editor - it did!]

Also we would like to get some idea of the wildlife (plants, animals, fungi) already found in the churchyard so if anyone would like to report what they see either whilst passing casually or by undertaking a short survey (maybe with grandchildren who might love a bug /bird/plant hunt) it would be lovely to get your results. They can be emailed to: [renningtongreenchurch@gmail.com](mailto:renningtongreenchurch@gmail.com)

To encourage wildlife we hope to put up some bird and bat boxes and some bug hotels. If you would like to sponsor or provide one, all contributions would be most welcome. Maybe younger members of families would like to provide customised accommodation. Any contributions can be left by the door to the church, and please leave contact details if you would like feedback on occupants, although this may be rather late for this year. Also we hope to develop some wildflower area to help the bees and insects.

If anyone has any other suggestion as to what else could be done please do let us know at the email address given above, and of course, any help would be gratefully received. The church is there for all of our community.

Hilary Walls (Eco-church representative, All Saints, Rennington)

## Memoirs and memoir writing

James and Sue Elliot have had a little cottage in the village for the past 9 years and enjoyed participating on many occasions in the Scarecrow Festival. Between them, they have recently published three memoirs:

*Troubled Times: an Englishman in Northern Ireland* recounts James' experiences during a dark and dramatic period of recent history. He studied Geography at the Queens University, Belfast, arriving in October 1970 just as the worst of the violence was about to begin. James describes what it was like living as a student at that time, when the IRA's bombing campaign and events such as the introduction of internment (August 1971), Bloody Sunday (January 1972) and the Ulster Workers Strike of 1974 took place. He discusses

how these events impacted on his life and those of his friends and acquaintances. Despite the 'Troubles', his experiences were by no means all danger and despair, they included a typical student life of intense study intermixed with equally dedicated, possibly dissolute, enjoyment.

After a summer working in the United States selling ice-cream, he returned to the Province in January 1975 to work as a library assistant for the Belfast Education and Library Board. He describes what it was like living and working in the city under such extraordinary circumstances, and how he had several "close shaves", narrowly escaping a bomb blast and managing to avoid having his car hijacked. James also spent some of his spare time writing for an independent political review magazine, *Fortnight*, for which he contributed the occasional book review and a summary and diary of the preceding two weeks', often bloody, events. *Troubled Times* concludes with James' reflections, at various key points in time, on later developments such as the peace process, and the changes he found on his subsequent visits to Belfast, the last being in September 2019.

*One Family, Two Wars* is a historical record of the wartime experiences of two generations of Sue's family. Her grandfather served in the Royal Field Artillery as a gunner and was gassed at the battle of Ypres, her father was a high grade clerical officer in WW2, her mother was a postmistress in South Wales and often delivered the post three times a day, her aunt Gwyneth nursed in two London hospitals all the way through the Blitz, and her uncle fought in the Italian campaign. The memoir includes diary entries, letters, newspaper cuttings, photographs and Susan's own poetry and personal reflections.

*Nurse: A Life in Service* is an account of the late Gwyneth Thomas' nursing career between 1927 and 1969, which Sue has edited and compiled on her aunt's behalf and according to her wishes. The memoir exemplifies the invaluable role nurses play, which one politician recently described as "*the bedrock of health care*". The story takes the reader from Gwyneth's training in an isolated fever hospital in Chippenham through six different London hospitals. Also it includes her war diary, the original being lodged in the Imperial War Museum. Six months before she died at the age of 92, Gwyneth appeared in a TV documentary reading extracts and describing experiences with confidence and humour. Sue places the memoir in the context of the 2020 pandemic, drawing some interesting parallels and including some historical detail. The book is dedicated to NHS staff.

This husband and wife team would be delighted to present to you an evening of memoir writing, to introduce these books, and for anyone interested, the opportunity to look at the processes involved. A provisional date for this event is 23<sup>rd</sup> September in the Village Hall.

James and Sue Elliot

## Ping pong and a pint

All being well (and I hope you are all well as well) we shall restart the table tennis at 19:00 on Tuesday 7th September in the Village Hall and every Tuesday thereafter unless other circumstances preclude it. New members will be very welcome and you don't need any particular equipment. It's all very informal, no leagues, no committee, no fancy rules (other than non-marking shoes without

nails), no stilettos, no age limits, and no formal dress code. Just come along with £3 and enjoy yourself. It doesn't matter how good or bad you are and it will certainly tone up your reactions. Friends are welcome too, even from places as far away as Embleton. The pint at the end is not compulsory but usually very welcome after a hard session pinging and ponging. Hope to see you soon. For more information call Mike Joyce on 01665 572406

Mike Joyce

## County Councillor report



### Northumberland homes to receive free energy efficiency boost

More than 300 households in Northumberland could soon be offered free energy efficiency improvements to their homes in a bid to help reduce fuel poverty and tackle the climate emergency.

Northumberland County Councillors have formally accepted a government grant for up to £3.4M and approved the installation of carbon reducing technologies into 200 private and 140 council owned properties.

The work will be carried out on properties that hold Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of 'D' and below to help these homes move to band 'C' and above, lowering utility bills and providing additional disposable income to those households.

To be eligible, you must:

- Own your home

- Have a household income below £30,000
- EPC rating D, E, F or G

Eligible households will be able to apply for the full cost of these works which will be installed by E.ON, but residents do not need to be an existing E.ON customer to benefit from the scheme.

Construction and retrofitting activities are estimated to be completed by end of September 2021.

This investment has been awarded by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as part of their Local Authority Delivery aspect of the Green Homes Grant. The Green Homes Grant voucher scheme offers households funding of up to £5,000 to cover two-thirds of the costs towards energy efficiency improvements to their homes, with low income households offered vouchers to cover full improvement costs under £10,000.

Residents can apply online by visiting:

[www.eonenergy.com/home-heating/green-homes-grant](http://www.eonenergy.com/home-heating/green-homes-grant) or by

emailing: [GreenHomesGrant@eonenergy.com](mailto:GreenHomesGrant@eonenergy.com) with their contact

details, and a member of E.ON's customer services team will be in

touch. Alternatively, residents can call the E.ON Green Homes Grant team on 0333 202 4820. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

To find out more and to read the Climate Change Action Plan for

2021-23 visit: [www.northumberland.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/climatechange)

[Consultation helps to shape future library service](#)

Northumberland residents' views on the county's library service are helping to shape its future, following an extensive consultation.

The consultation was carried out between December 2019 and March 2020 with more than 5,000 people, both library members and non-members, responding.

The findings of the consultation have given a clear insight into the views of not only residents but also staff and stakeholders on the strengths of the service, and areas for improvement.

The County Council will now use the robust consultation to build a library service to meet the current and future needs of residents, developing a strategy for delivery.

The self-completion survey was carried out both online and in paper format. It was supported with information drop-in sessions and telephone interviews.

The results from the different consultation exercises across all audiences demonstrate the important role the library service plays in the lives of the Northumberland residents, in particular amongst the county's population of older persons and those who use the service regularly.

In addition to the provision of books, computers and resources, the value of the library service is that it provides a safe, inclusive, social space which is free to all members of the community. The key findings of the survey showed that:

- 88% of respondents rated the service as either excellent or good
- A third (34%) of respondents visit the library as part of their daily or weekly routine
- For 1 in 10 library users, the library is the main way that they access computers or the internet, and this rises to 46% of those who are out of work and looking for work.
- Three-quarters of library users with a child under the age of

11 visit the library to spend quality time with their children.

- 85% see the library as a space the community can use
- Over 90% of respondents agreed with the following statements:
  - The library staff are helpful
  - I feel welcome in my local library
  - My local library is a pleasant place to visit
  - The staff at the library are knowledgeable
  - It is easy to access my local library

Building on the findings of the consultation, a redesign of the service was approved by the County Council's Cabinet.

This will include establishing 5 Hub Libraries, serving each locality area. These would be based at Berwick, Blyth, Cramlington, Hexham and Morpeth. The hub libraries would co-ordinate provision based on local needs and demands in each area. Each hub would have flexible community space, offer the full range of IT resources and an events programme suited to the area.

As well as the hub libraries it is also proposed the service will further improve its digital offer. During the COVID-19 pandemic the library service has responded with an enhanced digital offer for members, including an extensive online library, as well as the development of virtual groups, events and activities which are helping to tackle loneliness and isolation, and the introduction of a Digital Helpline for anyone in the county to use. The establishment of the library hubs will allow more understanding and better co-ordination of what provision is needed in each area. Self-service kiosks will now also be rolled out into more libraries, a project which had to be delayed due to COVID-19.

## Growing Up in Northumberland publication



Young people with special education needs and/or disability who are growing up in Northumberland can now access advice and guidance to help them get prepared for the next stage in their lives.

From around the age of 14, young people, along with their families, peers, and teachers, start to talk about what they may want to do when they 'grow up', and it is around this age that they'll start to plan for those next steps.

Northumberland County Council, in partnership with Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group and Northumbria Healthcare Trust, have pulled together a *Growing Up in Northumberland* booklet to help support those decisions and help young people, their families and carers consider all the things they need to think about and all the avenues they can take.

In consultation with 100 children and young people in years 9 to 12, plus a number of parents, the booklet has been developed to incorporate a variety of key areas such as independence, friendships and relationships, education and training, money, getting around and support available.

Whilst the *Growing Up in Northumberland* booklet has been created with young people with special educational needs in mind, it can be beneficial for all those in year 9-12 as they too begin those vital conversations.

## New online fitness experience launched

Active Northumberland has launched a new online fitness experience which brings professional group exercise classes to your home.

With the help of the latest technology, the new Active at Home sessions allow you to join the fitness team at Active Northumberland for your favourite exercise classes either live or on-demand. The monthly subscription of £7.99 offers fantastic value for money, launching with over 20 live classes a week and access to workouts you can do at any time, delivered by Active Northumberland instructors.

Classes include Yoga, Pilates, Les Mills Body Combat, Body Balance and Body Step, HIIT and Zumba so there is something for everyone. For further information on timetables and how to join go to:

<https://bit.ly/ANactiveathome>

#### Northumberland says 'Thank You' to its volunteers

Cllr Wendy Pattison, cabinet member for Adults Wellbeing at Northumberland County Council, said “Working together with the voluntary and community sector across Northumberland has been a privilege and has strengthened the support we are all able to offer our communities. We, along with our partners, have been astounded by the influx of interest from people from all sections of our communities who offered their support and given their time to help others during the pandemic. It has been a heartening experience and we are truly grateful for the many offers of support as well as the continued support of the volunteers that have been with us for many years, even if they have been unable to actively volunteer during the crisis.

We would like to thank all those registered as volunteers with us, as well as the many voluntary and community groups throughout Northumberland who, along with their volunteers, have supported communities across the county and we look forward to continuing working with them all in the future.”

## The Queen's Green Canopy

The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative is encouraging everyone to mark The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 by planting trees. Wherever you are in the UK, you can plant a tree to celebrate The Queen's 70 years of service to the nation.

The Queen's Green Canopy will create a network of individual trees, avenues, copses and whole woodlands in honour of The Queen's service and the legacy she has built.

This will create a green legacy of its own, with every tree planted bringing benefits for people, wildlife and climate, now and for the future.

Any trees planted from October 2021 to the end of the jubilee year in 2022 can be part of the QGC. Tree planting season is October to March. This is when roots are dormant and new trees will have the best chance of flourishing. Why not use the summer months to plan your planting and arrange a day of celebration.

## Connecting talent to opportunity in Northumberland

Investing in the future of Northumberland's children and young people remains a top priority for the County Council with further opportunities being opened up through pioneering EdTech platform globalbridge.

Founded in Northumberland, globalbridge is working with education and industry across the UK, levelling the playing field of opportunity for school and college leavers. It is a digital platform that seeks to connect talent to opportunity.

Built by teachers, it provides young people with a multi-media driven e-portfolio to evidence their knowledge, character, skills and achievements beyond just their school grades alone. Connecting young people and education with employers, apprenticeship

opportunities and universities, it provides a pathway to bright futures in employment, education and training.

The globalbridge platform can be built into a school's curriculum to help young people build an evidence portfolio of their skills, talents and achievements. Schools can work with their students to access the right opportunities for them, along with digital resources and engagements with providers in further education (FE), higher education (HE), and industry. Students can upload their information to the platform, their education portfolio, along with extra-curricular activities and interests, to more effectively evidence the whole person. By uploading media to the platform, businesses and universities will be able to link with those of similar interests and offer opportunities suited to the student.

Safeguarding has played a key role in ensuring this platform is fit for purpose giving teachers and parents access too.

Northumberland businesses also get a chance to link up with students on their doorsteps. As part of the package those that sign up to the platform will get three free opportunities to link up with students for work experience, apprenticeships or jobs. This creates a hugely exciting opportunity for the region to be the first council to create a digital network connecting education and industry, and more specifically, talent to opportunity.

Ben Mason, Founder and CEO of globalbridge, said: "globalbridge is excited to be working with schools across Northumberland. As an education technology platform founded in the region, globalbridge enables young people to evidence the knowledge, character, skills and achievements beyond grades alone. Evidencing talent beyond or in support of written applications is vital, especially when connecting talent to opportunity in a post-COVID digital world. It is

fantastic to be working with a forward thinking, innovative council to provide such a platform for young people across Northumberland.”

For more information head to <https://www.myglobalbridge.com>

Wendy Pattison, County Councillor

email: [wendy.pattison@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.pattison@northumberland.gov.uk)

mobile: 07779 983072 Facebook: Cllr Wendy Pattison

## Bird watching notes, summer 2021

Writing this on the day which was to have been the end of lockdown we are at a hiatus in the avian world. The Spring migration is over, the birds which overwinter here such as the migratory geese, wildfowl and waders have moved North to their breeding grounds in Iceland, Greenland, Northern Scandinavia and Svalbard. In their place have arrived the species which overwinter in Southern climes, such as the swallows, martins and swifts, the warblers and other passerines (perching birds). Migration this year was a little late, probably because of the very cold weather and sustained Northerly winds in the UK during April. Once these birds arrive however they move into a very rapid period of nestbuilding, courtship and breeding. Many species now have youngsters and it is common to see fledglings begging for food from the parent birds in the garden. Some, such as the sparrows, will have two or even three broods. The breeding cycle of these birds is however determined by many factors, one of the most important of which is the availability of food when the chicks hatch. It appears that this year the blue tits have done badly because the caterpillars which the parents usually

feed them on didn't hatch when expected because of the cold, wet, conditions in May and it is reported that a lot of blue tit chicks have perished as a consequence. Ground nesting birds such as lapwing have also been adversely affected by the cold early Summer weather and this has also been bad for the vole population, with only small numbers around, particularly compared with last year's bumper vole numbers. Tawny owls breed early in the year (typically March) and voles are a very important food source for their young. This year a lot of tawny owls have laid only single eggs and many of those have not resulted in fledged chicks due to starvation. Barn owls breed a little later in the year and indeed may lay eggs right through until the late Summer, it is to be hoped that they will do better than the tawny's due to the better weather conditions more recently.

Many people ask me where to go to see birds in Northumberland. With the exception of heavily protected species such as Hen Harriers there are many places within an easy drive of Rennington where unusual birds can be readily seen on public land.

One of the consequences of climate change is that many birds previously confined to Europe or Southern England are venturing further North. Little egrets, for example, used rarely to be seen in the UK but are now commonly sighted, for example around the Holy Island causeway.



Little Egret



Great White Egret

Its larger cousin, the Great White Egret, is also seen less commonly. This one put in an appearance at the bird hide at Newton before the pandemic. It is a similar size to the common Grey Heron.

Avocets have gradually been moving further Northwards and this year there are pairs attempting to breed at Cresswell pond, Druridge pools and on the shallow pond at the back of the Ship Inn at Newton.



Avocets

In the Summer inland birds are more common than at other times of the year. Curlew and lapwing breed on the moors and in deciduous woodland it is possible with patience to see pied and spotted flycatchers and redstarts.



Common Redstart



Pied flycatcher

Despite lockdown therefore it is possible to get out and about in the amazing place where we are so fortunate to live and to enjoy the always changing birdlife.



Spotted flycatcher

With thanks to Peter Fawcett for some of the photographs.

Tim Walls

## Spring wildlife around our parish

### In my garden

Spring birdsong seemed to start a little earlier this year, perhaps due to better weather in February or perhaps the earlier return of song thrushes helped start all? The robins were vocal very early as we slowly edged out of winter.

There was a marked influx of birds appearing throughout March with several greenfinches, chaffinches, goldfinches together with many sparrows and dunnocks. The blackbirds established their territories in readiness for nesting as did thrushes. A mistle thrush seemed to be searching the garden though moved on after a few days.

From the second week in March, I found hedgehog scat beneath my orchard trees, but did not see the first hog until the first week in April, with a second smaller hog, probably born late last summer or in early autumn, appearing over several days during the following week.

Throughout March a pair of mallards visited the burn in late evening, usually at dusk. On surprising them one morning they simply flew over the roadside hedge and dropped into the churchyard. They did not seem to raise a brood, perhaps the hedgehog intervened (it took two clutches of eggs laid by my ducks!).

Siskins were to be seen in March and through April, feeding at feeding stations. I still see the occasional male siskin and hope that they might be breeding.

Goldfinches arrived and are now present in good numbers again this year. Their nests are usually very well hidden by leaves, even when sited on the very tip of branches.

Towards the end of March and into early April, I found 3 dead chaffinches each without any signs of injury. Throughout April and May several neighbours told of finding more dead chaffinches together with dead greenfinches and goldfinches. Sadly, it looks like they may have died of a virus infection, as by then they ought to have found adequate food. None of the birds showed any obvious signs to indicate a possible cause of death.

Bullfinches continued to visit my garden throughout the spring and again have dined on the buds of my damson and plum trees and later stripping each tree of most of the blossom. A pair of bullies have stayed and still visit most days, suggesting that they could be nesting close by.

On 29<sup>th</sup> March I spotted a chiffchaff searching through the buds and lichen in my apple trees, the first passerine arrival in my garden.

On 30<sup>th</sup> March I spotted one of the larger bat species, though it was too dark to try and identify. Later, in April, pipistrelle bats emerged and then not seen again until warmer temperatures arrived. Now there is a lot of bat activity on most evenings.

1<sup>st</sup> April brought a large hedgehog, possibly a sow, foraging beneath shrubs. Unfortunately, I have not seen it since and have not found fresh scat to indicate that it is still about.

Robins have nested in my woodshed again, the first brood of 3 fledged in the last days of April. The female laid again in the same nest and then raised 4 youngsters, each leaving the nest and are now scattered around my garden.

Interestingly, on cultivating for planting veg, 3 robins immediately started hunting over the newly worked soil. As robins are very territorial, with males usually fighting to defend 'their patch', it leaves me wondering whether the threesome was one male with two females!

The cold northerly weather seemed to delay migration this year and although chiffchaffs appeared in March, swallows were late to arrive, with the first to appear in my garden on 15<sup>th</sup> April. However there were reports of swallows being seen earlier elsewhere. The house martin arrival followed though it was almost May before most of the swallows arrived. The swifts were later still and are noticeably fewer in number.

I think the blue tits nested too early and hatched their eggs before the weather was warm enough for many caterpillars to be available. I have not seen any young blue tits yet. The pair in one of my nest boxes were feeding young though I have not seen them perched around as they usually do. A pair of coal tits are now gathering grubs, so seem to have fared more successfully, as have great tits, that have nested later.

Wood pigeons have bred early, and several young are about.

However the collared doves seem not to have young, though these

are often taken by sparrow hawks as they leave the nest. One dove kindly came down my chimney flu and 'helped clear some soot'! A pair of wrens entertain me daily and as usual the male built more than one nest for his mate to choose the best. She chose a nest interwoven around a cable from a yard light located in a sheltered position beneath the eaves. They have raised a brood but I do not know how many young they had. The nest was so full that 2 fell out to their death and a week later I surprised the remainder flitting. I counted 5 though some had actually gone before I started counting them. The youngsters have stayed within my garden and are scattered about for safety.

On 9<sup>th</sup> May a male blackcap hunted through the apple trees and in the afternoon a female joined him. They soon started gathering nesting material though were 'buzzed' by a female sparrow hawk and sadly I have not seen either since.

Also on the 9<sup>th</sup>, a female orange tip butterfly was feeding next to the burn. The following day a male orange tip was on the same plant. They are about the earliest of butterflies to emerge from chrysalis and only live about 18 days so must mate and lay eggs very quickly. They herald summer is coming and I looking forward to spotting these again next year.

Unfortunately though there seems to be a significant reduction in bee numbers this year so far.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May a spotted flycatcher arrived, returning to last year's nest site. A mate also arrived, and both have prepared a nest.

A toad appears on most nights and seems to like sitting on my drive beneath the outside light, perhaps catching moths attracted by the light or perhaps just seeking slugs.

On 10<sup>th</sup> June a young spotted woodpecker was clumsily flitting around in my apple trees. The male parent is seen daily so I expect the young are now concealed high in the tree canopy, as in previous years. The spotted woodpeckers usually have 4 young with each parent taking 2 to raise in different locations.

Several young fledglings can be seen now, with blackbirds and song thrushes scattered around under shrubs for protective cover.

Pied wagtails have been feeding youngsters for several days now, though they have not nested in my garden.

A moorhen successfully hatched her brood though immediately moved off to hide her young in clumps of marigolds growing along the margins of the burn upstream of my garden.

Young starlings have been seen for several days now and their numbers are building up to form a big flock. They can be seen regularly at dusk searching for a safe roost site.



Photograph courtesy of Ruth Vaulks

On 21<sup>st</sup> June the swallows nesting over my coal shed door hatched their clutch. I look forward to seeing how many young they have as the late migration may have affected early breeding.

### In the Parish

Barn owls can be seen regularly as dusk approaches and they start hunting. The owls should have growing broods by now and usually this results in both parents hunting earlier in the evenings and over greater areas.

Mallards can also be seen flying to feeding areas, as the evening turns to dusk. Perhaps these are unpaired male birds?

Resident greylag geese are quiet now as they have young and seek to not attract predators. Additionally, the adult birds will be in moult and flightless.

A skein of resident feral Canada geese have been seen several times in May, flying over the parish to seek feeding or resting places.

Throughout April young leverets could be seen feeding in the arable crops. Now they are concealed by the height of crops and are only seen when venturing onto the highway.

Roe deer could be seen earlier in the spring as the mature deer 'pushed out' the yearlings to regain their favoured territory in preparation for females kidding and the older males securing their ground and females.

Rabbits abound once again though in April several young rabbits seemed to be diseased and found dead.

A spotted woodpecker could be heard drumming in the trees behind Rennington Church throughout spring until May.

Oyster catchers can be seen near to Rennington and are likely to have young now. Another moorland edge bird, the curlew, could be heard calling, as it flew over to its nesting site.

A buzzard has been seen regularly hunting the fields to the south of Rennington.

Grey partridges ought to have young and will remain hidden and silent now. Pheasants are also hidden in the summer undergrowth, keeping their broods safe.

The small birds of the hedgerows are careful to keep hidden in the summer breeding season though can be seen if stealth is taken.

Yellow hammers and the occasional linnet have been seen displaying and both singing loudly in the early spring, as you would expect. Again, I look forward to hearing and reading of what others have seen, both in gardens and when out in the parish.

John Watson

## Church Beyond the Walls

Coming together to worship during the COVID pandemic has been a real challenge. From lockdowns when our buildings were closed, to tentative

reopenings after extensive soul searching and risk assessing.

Worshipping with social distancing, without singing, without after church coffee and chat, without everyone feeling able to join us has been hard. But there are rays of light as we start to emerge. The usual forms of worship are beginning to be rescheduled and our regular congregations are starting to return.

At Rock, last October we did a Harvest service with a difference. We have long recognised how hard it is to engage children and their families and were beginning to explore new forms of church - less formal, more accessible, shorter, more participatory. COVID gave momentum to our thinking. Our indoor / outdoor Harvest was a great success. We donned our wellies and coats and went on a churchyard treasure hunt, bringing back the fruits of the harvest as well as the usual tins and packets for the foodbank. After the

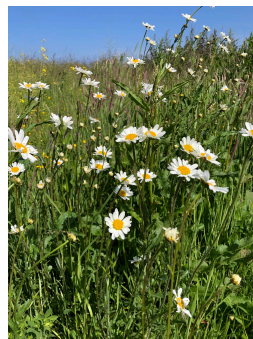


service, the children who were in the same bubble at School went wild on the grass in front of Rock Hall while the adults spent time socially distanced, catching up and enjoying the fresh air. Move forward to June 2021, with restrictions still in place. Our next attempt was Picnic Church, again at Rock on a Saturday afternoon and entirely outdoors. The clue is in the title. Families brought a picnic tea before which we had a simple service with songs and prayers and a focus on being eco-friendly. There were 28 of us from 6 month old twins to at least one over 80 year old. What Church should be - for all ages. We planted sunflowers (a competition for the tallest!) and a bank of wildflowers. Then on socially distanced picnic blankets we enjoyed food and fellowship together while the children did their thing getting nicely revved up before bedtime!! Two things - First: this is how we need to be if we want to be accessible to our communities - Church beyond the walls. Second: the focus on ecological and environmental issues is really important and speaks to all ages. Children have a real concern for our planet and although the things we might do are small, they are important. Watch out for the next 'Church Beyond the Walls' later in the Summer, you'll be very welcome.

Rev Alison



Photographs courtesy of Ruth Vaulks



# Rennington Village Hall News

## SCARECROW WEEKEND 2021 IS

### CANCELLED

Due to unprecedented times we are experiencing with the ongoing COVID-19 surges and restrictions, the Village Hall committee have taken the decision to cancel this year's event once again for the safety of residents and visitors.



### Opening of the hall

The rigorous public health and government guidelines are being followed to enable the safe opening of the hall to groups and activities that can meet the requirements necessary. Most of the regular groups plan to re-start in September and a list of these and their relevant contact numbers can be found on the village hall notice board or on the website at: [renningtonvillagehall.co.uk](http://renningtonvillagehall.co.uk)

If anyone has any ideas for an event or new group at the hall then please get in touch. There is now a designated 'Social Fund' to help with any essential start-up costs so get in touch and apply! Email us at: [renningtonvillagehall@gmail.com](mailto:renningtonvillagehall@gmail.com)

### Dates for your diary

#### **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> August - Welcome Back Evening**

Rennington Village Hall Committee are delighted to be able to welcome everyone back into the hall after a long and difficult period for many. Residents old and new are invited to a Complimentary Pie and Pea Supper. There will be no charge for this event but tickets must be reserved for catering requirements and numbers will be limited by any restrictions still in place.

Please contact: [renningtonvillagehall@gmail.com](mailto:renningtonvillagehall@gmail.com) or telephone: 01665 572166 to book your table. Bring your own booze!

### **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August - New Film Club**

Thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund and Northumberland County Council Community Microgrant Scheme funds have been secured to enable the installation of high quality audio visual projection equipment in the hall, and to repair and replace the blinds. To showcase this new installation you are invited to a free taster film evening. Numbers will be limited to 30 (the maximum currently allowed indoors at an event) and entrance will be by ticket only. Bring your own popcorn and pop (or booze)!

The film will be for family viewing with a feel good factor, title to be confirmed. If demand is high, there will be a repeat showing at a later date.

The committee are calling for volunteers to come forward to help form a small steering group to learn how to use the AV system and advise on future film choice and organisation. So, all you film buffs out there, this is your chance to shine.

For reservations and more information please contact Laurence on: 0786 669 5850

### **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September - Rennington Village Hall AGM**

The date for this much postponed meeting is now scheduled for Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September at 7pm. Please come along and hear about what has been happening during lockdown and plans for the future.

The committee look forward to welcoming anyone who may be interested in volunteering to join us or helping with organising social and fundraising events.

The present committee consists of the following executive roles which are nominated annually:

Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Other informal roles include:

Hall/buildings management

Bookings/room Hire

Events Organiser

Scarecrow Festival Organiser

Film Club Organiser

Fundraising coordinator

Website and digital communication coordinator

The current committee has been holding Zoom meetings during the coronavirus restrictions in line with government advice. As this has meant postponing the AGM, the annual election of committee members has had to be deferred in 2020.

Rennington Village Hall Committee would like to extend many congratulations to Emma Harrington and Dean Stephenson for their forthcoming wedding on July 23<sup>rd</sup> and wedding reception in the village hall. Emma works at The Grange Care Home and has had to cancel her reception several times due to COVID-19 restrictions. We thank her and her colleagues for all their dedication and hard work throughout the pandemic and wish her and Dean every happiness in their future life together.

Greetings and best wishes to all from the Rennington Village Hall Committee: Laurence Dent (Chair), Hilary Walls (Secretary) , Carole Dent (Treasurer), Jane Dixon, Karl Nielsen, Wendy Swinney, Tim Walls, John Watson

Carole Dent, Treasurer, Rennington Village Hall committee

## Wor Bella project

Ed Waugh is a Northumberland born playwright from Tyneside who has recently written two plays celebrating WW1 munitionette footballers from the north east of England. The first is a story about munitionettes in a Durham factory called '*Howay the Lasses*' and will be staged at the Gala theatre in Durham on relaxation of current pandemic rules.

The second play is called '*Wor Bella*', a one-woman play about Bella Reay who was one of the many munitionettes who played for Blyth Spartans Ladies during WW1. Bella, born in 1900, was a prolific goal scorer.

Both plays relate to the intriguing story of selfless women who worked long and dangerous hours for the war effort but have been largely forgotten. They were not recognised on war memorials and forced out of work when troops were demobbed in 1918.

The munitionettes formed dozens of football teams across the north east and played in front of thousands of spectators. The average gate at Blyth Spartans Ladies matches was 4,000. More than 20,000 people were known to turn up at St James' Park Newcastle to watch all-women games. The tremendous efforts of munitionettes raised money for wartime charities.

'*Wor Bella*' will tour at the end of March and early April 2022.

Premiering at Blyth Phoenix Theatre for three days, it then travels to Hexham Queen's Hall, Alnwick Playhouse, Newcastle Theatre Royal (studio), Playhouse Whitley Bay and Westovian Theatre South Shields.

Ed Waugh has written many other plays that seek to recognise the life and times of forgotten north eastern 'superstars' and works with

other arts organisations in the region to promote local culture.

For more information about the 'Wor Bella' project visit:

[www.worbella.co.uk](http://www.worbella.co.uk) and

[www.wisecrackproductions.co.uk](http://www.wisecrackproductions.co.uk)

*Finally...*

*Would you like to advertise, or add your weblink to our Useful Links section, for a small fee? We are looking to local businesses to promote themselves in the Newsletter to help cover costs and continue its production. If you are interested, please contact the Editors. Thank you.*

Advertising rates per edition:

Whole page     £ 40

Half page       £ 20

Quarter page   £ 10

Copy date for the next edition:

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September

## Useful Links

[www.renningtonvillagehall.co.uk](http://www.renningtonvillagehall.co.uk)

[www.northumberlandparishes.uk/rennington](http://www.northumberlandparishes.uk/rennington)

## Contact Us

### Editors

Jane Dixon

[rennrocknews@gmail.com](mailto:rennrocknews@gmail.com)

Robert Dixon

[rennrocknews@gmail.com](mailto:rennrocknews@gmail.com)

Address

Montagu House

4 Church View

Rennington

NE66 3DG

Phone

01665 577555