

Winter
2022

Edition 10

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Rennington and Rock Community News



From the editors

Hello again and welcome to the Winter 2022 edition of the R&R Community News. We are pleased to say we have some new contributors in this edition and we hope you enjoy reading their articles. Also our thanks go to our two new advertisers. Without them, and the continuing financial support from the Parish Council, we would not be able to continue to produce this newsletter. Since our Autumn edition the landscape of Northumberland, including our parish, has drastically changed forever due to the forces of nature. Last November Storm Arwen wreaked havoc, bringing down thousands of age-old trees, power lines, walls, fences, roof tiles etc. Power outages in several areas lasted for many days. Some of us were able to heat water and cook meals on top of our wood burning stoves, our Girl Guide and Scout training standing us in good stead. Others were helped by the generosity of neighbours and friends. Thank you to all those that came to the rescue.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition. Happy New Year everyone.

Jane and Robert Dixon, Editors

Parish Council news



Responding to emergencies

The recent winter storms have shown that we are all vulnerable to extreme weather events, and remind us that such happenings are expected to become more frequent due to the consequences of climate change.

In response to the storms, many residents throughout the parish volunteered in countless ways to help the community recover by clearing roads, lending

equipment, or providing hot food and showers to people without power and water. The response was largely spontaneous and very welcome indeed.

Across Northumberland, local communities are now reviewing their responses to the storms and asking the question ‘can we do better next time.’ The Parish Council is seeking to survey residents’ views on resilience and how people feel in terms of preparing for future emergencies, and what extra support, if any, the Council might provide. The survey forms are being delivered with this newsletter.

Please complete the survey, your response will help the Council understand what needs to be achieved in keeping everyone safe in any future emergency.

Rennington North Farm Phase 2

The concept of a Phase 2 development had been discussed between Northumberland Estates and the Parish Council over several years before outline proposals for 19 residential properties (six of which would be ‘affordable’) were drawn up. This proposal, along with public access orchard and woodland spaces, was presented at a public meeting in January 2020. The development would be positioned northeast of the Phase 1 development and sharing the same access from the C73 road.

As reported in the autumn edition of this newsletter, the NCC Planning Authority responded negatively to a subsequent Northumberland Estates pre-planning enquiry in respect of a proposed Phase 2 development at North Farm. The submission had not been shown to the Council in advance.

At the invitation of Northumberland Estates, the Parish Council has now reviewed the submitted proposal for a development of 27 residential properties (8 of which would be ‘affordable’) and retaining the orchard and woodland space, along with the Planning Authority’s response. The Council has responded to Northumberland Estates indicating that it does not intend to support the Phase 2 proposal as submitted.

Please go to www.northumberlandparishes.uk/rennington/documents and search Minutes of EGM 20th January 2022.

Robert Dixon, Chair, Rennington Parish Council

Neighbourhood Development Plan - An update

Once again, thank you to everyone who completed the survey. A summary of the responses has been published on the Parish Council's web site (www.northumberlandparishes.uk/rennington/documents).

The next stage in the process is to employ a planning consultant to help analyse the feedback from the drop-in event and the questionnaire to formulate draft policies that we can then share with you and get your comments.

To be able to employ a planning consultant, we need to apply for grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). They are in the process of finalising the spending review which will allocate funds for Neighbourhood Plans. Until this process is completed we can't apply for grant funding - we'll just have to be patient!

Stephen Baggott, Chair, Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Church news



Services at Rennington are taking place as near normal as possible now. They are at 10am on the first and third Sunday of the month. Unfortunately, Rock Church remains closed due to failure of the electrical system.

Our Crib & Carol Service on Christmas Eve was well attended with 50 adults and 19 children. Many of these came from Alnwick and elsewhere.

We no longer have the services of David Head as Organist, and have been unsuccessful in replacing him. Therefore we have purchased a Tablet and Echo speaker to be able to provide music for our services. The money for this was raised through supporters using Easyfundraising for online purchases. Thank you all.

Our Associate Priest, Rev. Ian Chadwick, is retiring from his post in March but he will still be available to take some services in the Parish. Our Church Warden, Paul Weston, is retiring from his post in March and his wife, Judy, is also retiring from her post as the PCC Secretary at the same time.

Our new kitchen area has been completed, though still without drainage & water supply. The Church Noticeboard has been erected near the gate. If anyone has any community information they wish to display, please contact the Church Warden. Judy Weston has a number of insulators for sale taken from the old electricity poles in the village last year. They are dated 1936, have the Buller mark, and will make good candle holders or paperweights. A number have already been sold through E-bay to collectors. Pictures & details are displayed on the Church Noticeboard. All funds are put towards Church expenses. The churchyard is looking a little tidier now that NCC have been mole-catching. Thank you to all who have helped make the churchyard look tidy by removing old wreaths and dead flowers from relatives' graves and memorials. Once again, thank you to Brian Connolly and Neil Cockburn for keeping the church clock going, and thank you to Kevin Burdett and Brian Connolly for removing the overhanging branch from the sycamore tree, which snapped off during Storm Arwen.

Paul Weston, Church Warden



AN AMAZING CUP OF COFFEE IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK!

The Guru Coffee Co. is based in Embleton and has around 18 different and delicious Arabica coffee's on offer!

Roasted to order from raw green coffee beans here in Northumberland. We source coffee from ethical and sustainable farmers, that promote good working conditions, invest in education and housing and that use techniques that have a low environmental impact.



The Guru Coffee Co. is proudly a part of Produced in Northumberland.....



You can order your delicious coffee online at www.thegurucoffeeco.co.uk

We can prepare your coffee to your perfect brewing preferences, whether whole bean, coarse ground, medium ground or fine!

LOOK OUT FOR THE MOBILE GURU COFFEE BAR AT EITHER BAMBURGH OR ELEANOR'S BYRE FOR LOCALLY MADE CAKES, DELICIOUS COFFEE AND LOOSE LEAF TEAS!



All about coffee

Coffee: Genus - Coffea

Coffee, a simple to prepare drink that is enjoyed all over the world, but this delicious pick me up beverage is remarkably delicate, both as a plant and a drink. Coffee grown on the same farm can taste dramatically different year after year. Changes in conditions during growing, harvesting, processing and shipping can affect the various qualities of coffee.

The three main species of coffee grown for drinking purposes are Arabica, Robusta and Liberica. Arabica makes up for nearly all of the specialty coffees available from specialty coffee roasters.

Minerals and nutrients in the soil are absorbed by the coffee plant and in turn affect the flavour, body and acidity. Coffee grown in volcanic soils will taste very different from coffee grown in clay-rich and limestone soils. Also the plants require a perfect balance of sunlight, rain and temperature to produce high quality beans. Coffee grown in the shade of a forest canopy or high mountainside protects the plant from the harsh heat of the sun and the cooler temperature allows the coffee cherries to ripen more slowly, therefore developing a fuller flavour.

Roasting the raw green beans changes the flavour dramatically. The same coffee beans will taste very different at a lighter roast than a medium or darker roasting level and it is down to the experience and expertise of the roasters to make note of each bean's perfect roasting profile. For some roasters, this is a very closely guarded secret!

Coffee lovers choose their coffee for the flavour as well as the caffeine kick that they might need to get through the day ahead. However there is a common misconception that a darker roast coffee contains more caffeine because of its richer darker colour and flavours.

The roasting process

A lighter roast coffee retains more natural moisture, a thinner body and more

fruity, citric acidic notes. It also contains a higher level of caffeine due to the lighter roasting process. With a medium roast coffee, the sugars begin to caramelize and more of the natural oils are released from the bean, allowing for more rich fruity, mocha and caramelly notes to emerge. With a darker roast coffee, the flavours that emerge are rich dark chocolate, subtle smokiness and rich ripe fruits and molasses to name but a few. The caffeine content will be less due to the higher roasting temperatures, but the coffee will be richer and darker. When it comes to tasting notes, coffee is as complex as the world's finest wines!

Facts about coffee

- Coffee is the second largest trading commodity after oil
- Over 2 billion cups of coffee are consumed worldwide every day

The Guru Coffee Co has 19 different Arabica coffees to choose from. Why not take a look at the website www.thegurucoffeeco.co.uk We are a local, small independent business.

Ian Wood

County Councillor report



Northumberland Communities Together

Northumberland Communities Together are available to keep you and your community safe and well. If you or anyone in your family needs a bit of extra support please get in touch. If you're having a difficult time or struggling at the moment we'll find you support and connect you with people in your area.

Phone the Northumberland Communities Together Response Hub on 01670 620015 9am-6pm, 7 days a week or email: NCT@northumberland.gov.uk

- Has your financial circumstances changed with reduced hours, redundancy or benefits
- Worried about staying warm, winter bills and financial pressures - we will work with Citizens Advice Northumberland to connect and support you and your family
- If you, your family or neighbour needs a bit of extra help, please get in touch and we will find the support that is right for you
- Feeling lonely, overwhelmed or struggling with mental health
- If you don't have family or friends nearby, please contact us and Communities Together will assist you.
- Worried about someone experiencing domestic abuse or concerned about a neighbour. Call us on 01670 620015 we are open 7 days a week from 9am until 6pm.

New Covid campaign featuring North East artists as Plan B restrictions end

The new Beat Covid NE campaign, featuring eye-catching artwork and



stirring slogans at locations around the region, will remind residents that whilst the peak of Omicron appears to be reducing, there is lots they can still do to minimise the disruption coronavirus causes as restrictions end. While Covid rates across the region have fallen considerably in the last week, rates remain above the national average.

The new campaign will roll out at locations across the region from early February as well as on TV, radio, digital media, and billboards. Speaking about the power of art to carry persuasive messages, Jill Cole from creative arts organisation Northern Heartlands, said: “Throughout the ages art has had the ability to convey powerful, enduring messages to communities in a way that cuts through the noise. If you think back to World War II you immediately think of Keep Calm and Carry On and the slogans and artwork

that typified the era. Over the past two years we've all been inundated with messaging about Covid and the latest rules. At times it's felt a little overwhelming but with this new campaign the councils are working with local artists to get their unique, creative take on what it means to live with Covid. Whether that's mask wearing, getting boosted or testing yourself regularly, the artists and illustrators are creating eye-catching works that will stop us in our tracks and remind us all of the simple steps we can all take to do our bit while living alongside coronavirus." To find out more about Beat Covid NE visit, www.beatcovidne.co.uk

Wendy Pattison, County Councillor

email: wendy.pattison@northumberland.gov.uk

mobile: 07779 983072 Facebook: Cllr Wendy Pattison



The image shows a business card for 'Cleaning Service' owned by Gemma Howard. On the left side, there is a graphic of a cleaning brush with a silver handle and a red bristle head, set against a light pink background with a subtle gradient. A bright starburst effect emanates from the brush. To the right of the brush, the text is arranged as follows: 'Cleaning Service' in a dark red, cursive font; 'Gemma Howard' in a dark red, serif font; 'OWNER' in a dark red, sans-serif font; and the phone number '07803339873' in a dark red, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the card, the text 'Regular or one-off Domestic cleans- holiday let's/cottages- ironing with pick up and drop off service' is written in a dark red, serif font.

Petanque

Hi Everyone,

A small team of people in Rock are forming a working group to complete a feasibility study of the viability and sustainability of a Petanque/Boules terrain in Rock.

Petanque/Boule is a very sociable sport/pastime played in small groups across all age groups. Our aim is that such a facility would bring together as many people as possible from Rock, Rennington, Stamford and even further afield. The nearest clubs at the moment are based in Norham near Berwick and Wetherby in West Yorkshire! There is no other local provision that would compete with our facility.

Part of the process involves assessing the demand for such a facility/club. It is only worth progressing this project if we can find sufficient number of people who would look to form a group/club.

If you would be interested in such a provision can you please help us by completing the short survey below and emailing your answers to:

norman.hughes52@btinternet.com

Name:

Contact details:

I currently live in: Rennington/Rock/Stamford/Other (please delete and if other state the location)

- I would be VERY interested in becoming an active member of a Petanque club playing weekly during the March-September season
- I would be keen to be a casual non regular player of a Petanque club
- I think it is a good idea but have no interest in joining such a group
- I think the idea is crazy!!

If you know of anyone outside our community who you feel would support such a group/club please share this message with them and ask them to get in touch with me.

Please return your feedback to the e mail above by end February at the very latest so the working group can access whether it is worthwhile progressing this project. Many thanks for your time.

Norman Hughes OLY, FIH Hockey ID Project Lead, Mobile: +447775915883

Autumn and winter wildlife in my garden and around our parish

In my Garden:

Autumn migration seemed to take longer this time with warblers and chiff chaffs lingering until late. Perhaps they were travelling down from northern parts and resting to feed before moving on. Several migrating birds do this on their return journeys to wintering grounds. Some of the swallows and martins stayed a few days longer too, perhaps because of arriving later in May.

Finches have fared poorly. I've not had a goldfinch nesting this year or seen young chaffinches or young bullfinches though the adults have stayed, visiting my garden on most days. Maybe the goldfinches found dead earlier in the year all succumbed to a virus and perhaps this affected the other finches too.

In October several 'red' butterflies gathered to hibernate in my coal shed. I didn't have many butterflies last summer and bees were scarce until late summer. Wasps seemed to be as numerous last year. Goldcrests arrived in October too and daily searched through the fruit trees for tasty morsels.

Several blackbirds arrived to feed on fallen apples, most of the birds were smaller and a lighter colour so may have been migrants. The waterhens have also feasted on fallen apples with four staying most days, with up to 9 roosting in my birch trees each night, readily squawking throughout the night when something disturbs them. The male waterhens started displaying in the first week of January and one aggressively chased off a late bred juvenile.

Robins 'staked out' their winter territories earlier in the Autumn and have steadfastly stayed, with one mastering feeding from a fat feeder and occasionally grasping onto a nut feeder.

Throughout December a small flock of long tailed tits visited my nut feeders but did not stay in my garden for long. December also saw a build-up in numbers of other tits coming to feeders, with a flock of blue tits, four coal tits and a couple of great tits, all feeding throughout the days until disturbed by one of the sparrow hawks. Usually the female visits in the daytime and a male swoops through the garden just at dusk, sometimes flying low along Church Road, then swooping over the hedge and flying over the churchyard hunting. December also saw several chaffinches return and occasionally a greenfinch or two, though the greenfinches didn't stay, and in early December a magpie started visiting almost daily and was occasionally joined by another. Collared doves seemed to have fared well, and in the week leading up to Christmas up to 13 were seen gathering in my fruit trees on most mornings at first light in readiness to feast on fallen apples (no partridges in my pear trees though).

Wrens have hunted wall moss throughout each day and readily bathe in my pond. A female greater spotted woodpecker has visited my feeders every day and occasionally the male is seen. She feeds throughout the day and prefers the fat feeder though seems happy to use the peanut feeders.

Sparrows have also fared well and I have a good flock of both tree sparrows and house sparrows. Dunnocks also seem to have bred well.

Wood pigeons have remained in my garden feasting on my brassicas when the netting blows loose in the wind.

On January 3rd a single fieldfare arrived, almost on the same day as one arrived last year, to feed on fallen apples again. It stayed for 3 weeks until the last of the apples were eaten. I wonder if it was the same bird? A song thrush also

arrived in the same week and has stayed, singing loudly on pleasant sunny days. Goldcrests appeared again in early January.

In the Parish:

Again this winter, young tawney owls were hooting in mid-December. Barn owls have been seen though not often. I didn't see woodcock flighting until December though many have since said that they thought a greater 'fall' of woodcock arrived with the December full moon. Early February a woodcock flighted out of Rennington churchyard on dusk.

Migratory geese have been seen flying over the parish throughout the autumn and winter. The pink footed geese fed in many fields throughout November and early December and then seemed to move away. Greylag geese can still be seen flighting around the parish and feeding in fields, most likely the smaller groups are resident greylag and probably juveniles, who flock together until old enough to breed. Grey partridges bred well last summer and seen throughout the parish. A large covey numbering up to 17 could often be seen near Rock bank in December. The partridges ought to be calling soon as they pair up. Hares can now be seen and soon they will be chasing each other trying to attract a mate and can be spotted in the larger arable fields.

Again this January all will have noticed and welcomed the snowdrops and the first aconite flowers and start of spring flowers. In mid-January the first snowdrop flowers appeared in Rennington churchyard, a little earlier this year, probably due to mild weather and increased sunshine in January. Early daffodils are showing flower buds and could be flowering earlier than last year.

I look forward to hearing and reading of what others have seen both in gardens and when out walking.

John Watson

Bailiffgate Museum and Gallery

Ian Patience - Bringing to Light - Adventures in Geology and Art

1 February 2022 - 27 March 2022

Bailiffgate Museum & Gallery is delighted to be hosting Ian Patience's exhibition Bringing to Light: Adventures in Geology and Art. Running

from 1 February 2022 to 27 March 2022, the exhibition will investigate and celebrate the meeting of the science of geology with the art of painting; exploring the depths and origins of the Northumberland landscape and our place within it.

For a full list of opening hours and events, please visit:

www.bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk



Rennington Village Hall news

When writing about the village hall for the 2021 Autumn Newsletter we were optimistically talking about the relaxation of restrictions and forthcoming events in the hall, not least



the ever popular Christmas bingo on Friday 26 November. A big thank you to everyone for your generous donations and prizes and to all who helped on the night. And what a night it proved to be! It was, of course, the awful night when storm Arwen hit, causing major damage across the north. Fortunately everyone at the Christmas bingo got home safely with their prizes. But the following morning revealed the serious damage the storm had caused, with a gaping hole in the roof at the back of the hall and numerous slates blown off or hanging loose. There was no option but to close the hall to the public in

the interests of safety and in line with insurance conditions. It has remained shut since.

Unfortunately it has taken longer than anticipated to organise a roofing contractor due to the very high demand for their work after the storm, followed by the Christmas and New Year construction sector shutdown. It was also not possible to source the right size slates for the job so larger slates have had to be cut to fit. Subject to final approval of the insurers it is now hoped the repair work will commence shortly. We are sorry for the inconvenience the closure has caused. We will contact all user groups as soon as the repair work is finished.

Looking ahead to the summer the committee hopes to organise a community tea-party to mark the celebration of the Queens Platinum Jubilee on Sunday 5th June. Also we hope to reinstate the Annual Scarecrow Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend, an event which raises funds equating to over half the annual costs of running the hall.

Laurence Dent, chairman

Rennington art group

The Rennington Art Group have been unable to meet recently, partly due to Covid issues and partly due to closure of the village hall. Some members are keen to restart as soon as possible, with or without our instructor who is currently weathering health issues. We are hopeful of a restart in early Spring when the hall reopens. We meet on Wednesday afternoons 1.30 - 4.30 and work mainly with watercolour and acrylics. We are a friendly, mixed ability group so if you would like to join us, please call Guy Appleby on 07747442866.

Guy Appleby

Bird watching notes, spring 2022

It's that time of the year again, long hours of darkness, cold, damp and either muddy or slippery. Despite all of these things the birds are becoming active and some of the migrants which winter here are beginning slowly to drift northwards in preparation for migration back to their breeding grounds at higher latitudes. Skeins of geese, mainly pink footed, continue to fly over, producing their high pitched squeaky calls. The songbirds are beginning to sing. Hilary heard and saw a mistle thrush singing just before Christmas and we are regularly hearing great tits singing around the Old School.

The bird flu outbreak is now being reported more widely in the media. Large outbreaks have been reported by several commercial poultry producers and it is thought that this has been one of the most severe outbreaks to affect the UK. It has also had some serious adverse effects on the wild bird populations. At Caerlaverock on the Solway, there are reports of between 3 and 4 thousand dead barnacle geese. Pink-footed geese and mute swans have also been affected. It is impossible to tell whether the smaller birds are also affected but it would be surprising if they weren't.

I'm going to write about owls in the remainder of these notes. At this time of the year it is not uncommon to see owls hunting at dusk or in the early morning and we can hear them calling at night. There are five different owl species commonly seen in the UK:

Barn owl

Many people's favourite bird and a conservation success story. They typically breed in farm buildings. However changes in farming practices during the 20th century resulted in many outbuildings being



converted for other use, making them no longer suitable for owls. The population declined but a programme of erecting nest boxes and habitat

management has resulted in a significant increase in numbers. It is estimated that there may be up to 10,000 breeding pairs now in the UK. There are several boxes around Rennington in which barn owls have successfully nested (these should not be approached as breeding barn owls are protected by law). Barn owls are birds of lowland farmland and young plantation woodland. They are a beautiful bird, generally pale in appearance, white underneath and a buff colour above. They have striking white coloured facial discs around their dark eyes. They drift along when flying, scanning the ground for their prey. Voles are the preferred diet but any small rodent can substitute. They drop from above silently onto their prey with their legs outstretched.

Barn owls are actually crepuscular rather than truly nocturnal meaning that they are most active during twilight periods. They also tend to be active during moonlight. Owls are renowned for their eyesight which is far more sensitive than human vision. Like many predatory birds their eyes are at the front of their head, giving them binocular vision, which enables far more precise judgement of position and distance than seeing things with only one eye. Like all the owls they have very acute hearing as well. Their ears are located just lateral to their eyes towards the outside of the facial disc and located slightly asymmetrically in the bird's skull. This enables them to localise sound extremely precisely, which they use when hunting. Some have suggested that the facial disc acts as a kind of sound reflector, focussing sound towards the ears. Barn owls are not particularly vocal, the males make a screeching call (hence their old name of screech owl) only during the early stages of the breeding season, otherwise they are relatively silent birds. The females lay eggs in April, producing a clutch of 4-6 eggs at intervals of about 2 days. The brood may therefore vary in age by up to 10 or 12 days. This increases the chance of at least some of the chicks surviving if prey availability is low during the rearing period. The oldest and largest chicks are given food first, at the expense of the last to hatch.

This bird was sitting asleep on this post about 30 yards behind the car park at Low Newton when we arrived at about 09:45 one morning. It was still there when we left at 13:45, in the meantime it must have been photographed several hundred times!



Tawny owl



Tawny owls favour woodland habitats. They are brown in colour with a rounded head and dark forward-facing eyes. They are larger and heavier birds than barn owls and quite aggressive predators. If approached they may strike with their talons (the very experienced bird photographer Eric Hosking lost an eye when trying to photograph a Tawny owl at the nest). They tend to sleep during the day and are nocturnal. They pair up during the early winter, nest in tree cavities and breed early, typically in February or March. Their calls are well known, the male bird begins with a drawn out ‘hoo’, usually followed by a softer ‘hu’ and then a final ‘huhuhoo’, sung vibrato! The female doesn’t hoot very much, they have a much shorter contact call ‘kerwick’ and pairs will often duet, the female sounding her ‘kerwick’ between bouts of hooting. There is a pair which we hear that have established a territory in the trees at the bottom of the Lonnen. Tawny owls prey on mice and voles. They may also eat larger rodents, small birds, amphibians, large insects and earthworms. There are many recorded instances of Barn owl skeletons being found in Tawny owl nests. All the owls regurgitate pellets of indigestible food, which may be found in nest boxes or on the ground under a favoured perch. These are produced in the glandular part of the bird’s stomach. The contents depend on

the bird's diet but would include: the exoskeletons of insects, indigestible plant material, bones, fur, feather, bills, claws and teeth.

Short-eared owl



Short-eared owls are largely nocturnal but are also active during daylight so that they are one of the more commonly seen owls. They are a little smaller than a tawny owl, with facial discs more like a barn owl in shape but these are brown. They are brownish underneath with longitudinal streaking down the upper chest and

piercing yellow eyes. They live in areas of rough pasture or grassland. Locally, they are not uncommonly seen near St Mary's island, over the dunes along the coast or at the causeway end of Holy Island. Prestwick Carr, sandwiched between Newcastle airport and the Ponteland rifle range is another well-known place to see them. They are ground nesting birds and feed largely on small mammals, especially voles. They quarter over the grassland with a mixture of flapping and gliding, dropping onto voles when they are identified. Numbers vary considerably in the UK. There is an influx of birds from Scandinavia in the autumn and if the vole population is healthy they stay here, if not they move on elsewhere. The number breeding in the UK has declined significantly, it is thought due to habitat loss. The call is a relatively soft 'hoohooohoo'.

Long-eared owl

Long-eared owls are the most nocturnal of all the UK owls. Although they may be seen asleep during the day they are rarely seen flying. Consequently, we know relatively little about them as they are very hard to study. They are a similar size to the short-



long-eared owl and their plumage is also similar. The main distinguishing features between the two are the prominent 'ear tufts' and orange eyes. (The ear tufts aren't actually ears at all, just ornamental feathers, and the ears are lateral to the eyes on the facial discs). They live in coniferous woodland and tall scrubby areas. Like the short-eared owls there is an influx of long-eared owls from Scandinavia in the winter. They prey on voles and other rodents. The call is a soft 'hoo', a bit like the sound made by blowing across the top of a milk bottle. They are quite scarce but are seen at Saltholme, near Billingham, and at Swallow Pond in the Rising Sun Country Park, near Wallsend.

Little owl

Little owls are not native to the UK but were introduced from Europe during the latter part of the 19th century. They are now found in most parts of England and Wales. They are commonly heard around Rennington at night, producing a variety of repetitive calls including a sort of yelp.



They used to nest in the big barn at North Farm but since that was demolished they have not been as much in evidence. They are small birds, not much bigger than a song thrush but quite thick set. They are pale underneath, with dense brown streaking, above they are greyish brown, with white spotting. They have yellow eyes and prominent pale 'eyebrows'. They tend to nest in outbuildings and like to do so in deep cavities where the light is excluded. Whilst they will eat small rodents a lot of their diet consists of worms and other invertebrates.

Good health to all.

Tim Walls (With thanks to Peter Fawcett for some of the photographs.)

Tales from the Northumberland milliner

Part 2 - The millinery butterfly emerges from her Covid 19 chrysalis



In the last edition, I rather glided over my retail buying background, mentioned in passing my subsequent career as a milliner, to the collection of accessories that I developed in the first half of the pandemic confinement. Whilst this collection utilised some millinery skills, it was a long way from my original love of couture millinery which takes its inspiration from colour, texture, design, the complex techniques associated with vintage millinery, as well as the joy of simply making and creating. Over the months, however, I gradually felt the need

to widen the reach for the new collections I had created so I established a retail store for my accessories on the new all British website ‘The British Craft House’.

Millinery is an unusual craft as it encompasses many different threads and types of creativity, but as I enrolled on the world of The British Craft House, I quickly realised I was on a quite different and steep learning curve. This was really useful as my knowledge of how the ‘backroom’ of internet shopping works from a seller’s viewpoint was pretty limited. Very quickly I was enmeshed in the world of keywords, image sizes and alt text. I was fortunate that due to my involvement with the Business Northumberland programme, training and mentoring was also available. For a one-woman band however like me, digital marketing remains a challenge.

I have long felt I needed a more visual website so I checked the website of our friends Helen and Chris Sutherland who’s oyster farm lies in the lee of Holy Island. Impressed by the site, I scrolled down to note the web developer’s name and got in touch.

The style of my new website was to be a completely new departure from the old one which I had built myself when I began my journey as a couture milliner in 2013. One of the most noticeable characteristics of Helen’s website were the images of Chris working the oyster beds with the romantic Northumberland vista of Holy Island in the background. This just served to reinforce my belief need for powerful millinery imagery.

Thanks to the skills of a local photographer the results can now be seen on my new website 'Margaret Woodliff Wright, The Northumberland Milliner'. As the images percolated onto social media, I felt pretty much like a butterfly emerging from her chrysalis as much to my relief, commissions and ready to wear sales in our new post lockdown world started to come in. I hope that anyone browsing my new website will



recognise my own small attempt at using local talent to help showcase the creative zeal that can be found in many corners of rural Northumberland. And I should mention too, that there are lots and lots of images of hats, in fact, the site features hats galore! Thank you for joining me and reading about my millinery journey through the recent lockdowns. I have emerged and am now delighted to be accepting commission again, delivering talks and offering millinery workshops, as long as restrictions allow, so do please do get in touch if you are interested in any aspect of my millinery work.

Margaret Woodliff Wright www.margaretwoodliffwright.co.uk

And finally, the Editors have been asked to remind dog owners and dog walkers that it is offence not to clean up after your dog, and that failure to do so, in any open space, can result in a maximum fine of up to £1000. Areas include footpaths, roadways, and public footpaths even across farmland. There has been a noticeable increase in dog poo around the parish. Please abide by the rules



Useful Links

www.northumberlandparishes.uk/rennington

www.thegurucoffee.co.uk

www.bailiffgatemuseum.co.uk

www.margaretwoodliffwright.co.uk

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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.

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Copy date for the next edition:

Friday 8th April 2022