

Winter
2023

Edition 13

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From the editor

Happy New Year and welcome to another edition of the R&R Community News. After deciding last year not to continue production of the newsletter, I was contacted by many people asking me to reconsider my actions. It appears my efforts were much appreciated by quite a few readers! Thank you for that vote of confidence.

Moving forwards there will be a few changes at grass roots level and to the format. I will be the sole Editor. I will need to generate some advertising revenue to cover overheads as I will no longer be receiving sponsorship from the Parish Council. So if you know of anyone wishing to advertise in the R&R Community News then please put them in touch. I will keep advertising to a minimum as I don't want to compromise on content. Also I am keen to support local ventures in whatever way I can, and that includes stories and articles to keep readers up to date with new ventures etc.

A big thank you to those who have contributed to this edition and to those who have offered to write articles for future editions too. All contributions gratefully received.

And finally, it's Shrove Tuesday on 21st February and pancakes will, no doubt, be on the menu. I wonder how many of you, like me, find the first pancake out of the frying pan is a bit of an apology!!

Happy reading.

Jane Dixon, Editor



The Horse Shoes Inn

It's incredible to think that we have been here at The Horse Shoes for over 20 years! During that time we have seen many changes. We have had weddings, christenings, deaths, funerals, and even a wedding

proposal; we are a place where everyone comes for help.

Here are just a few things we've sorted: lost dogs and cats; those who've managed to lock themselves out of their house; stopping burglar alarms; elderly falls; running out of anything you can imagine; lifts to anywhere from hospitals to train stations; sorting anything that need sorting; and much much more.

For us it is extremely important to support local businesses. We have used the same butcher for all our fresh meat and poultry; Robson's for smoked salmon; Alnwick Bakery at Lee Moor for bread; and so on. However Covid wasn't easy, it took its toll, and it will be a difficult road ahead.

And we continue to raise money for local charities with our quiz nights and events.

Last year our quiz nights raised £3423.50 for 10 different causes: Daft as a Brush (£215), Embleton Primary School (£250), Headway (£300), Hospice Care North Northumberland (£261.50), Howick Coastguards (£200), McMillan Mighty Hike (£375), Seahouses Lifeboat (£210), Shak (£460), St Oswald's Hospice (£350), and Ukraine Red Cross (£802).

Our other events raised £5119.40 for 5 more charities: Gin Tasting in aid of the Great North Air Ambulance (£590); cheese and wine in aid of Prostate Cancer UK (£1060); cheese and wine in aid of Daft as a Brush (£1785); coffee morning in aid of British Divers Marine Life Rescue (£884.40); and mulled wine

and buffet in aid of Shak (£800). The grand total raised in 2022 was £8542.90. A big thank you to all for your support and donations.

We are currently planning even more fund raising activities for 2023 so come along and support your local pub whilst raising money for charity too. And as a small thank you in return, if you book a table for a meal for two or more people on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday during February you will receive a bottle of wine with your meal for free. Please mention that you read about the offer in this magazine.

Louise and Mark Dean

Nests

On this beautiful wintry morning in Rennington we sit with coffee in hand watching the birds on the feeders; goldfinches galore, chaffinches, greenfinches, and the multitude of ground feeders squabbling for the seeds raining down below; robin, blackbird, collared dove and the ubiquitous dopey wood pigeon. Winter can be a stark time for wildlife but it's this starkness that often reveals a treasure trove right in front of us in our bare hedgerows. The leaves are long gone and " voila " the spring homes of many of our feeder visitors become visible.

When you're out and about stretching those legs take a closer glance into the depths of our hedges and up to the boughs of our trees, these skeletons have much in their cupboards!

There are plenty of guides and apps to help you identify the dwellers that may have constructed and lived within these amazing homes bringing up their broods. The Lonnen and the fields and woods to Rock have





revealed to us some gems this winter including a beautiful domed long-tailed tit nest, a first for our eyes!

And more intriguing a nest revealing the final resting place of a not so feathered friend.

Can you see what it is?

Happy nest hunting.

Ruth and Gary Vaulks

Embleton Village Shop and Post Office - A new chapter

We would like to introduce ourselves. We are Jo and Grace Robertson, and along with our husbands and brother-in-law, we are the new owners of Embleton Village Shop and Post Office. Having taken over in November 2022, on New Year's Eve we closed the doors for a period of extensive refurbishment, lasting approximately 8 - 10 weeks.

We have some very exciting plans for the coming months and years. When we reopen we will be rebranding our shop, and the new interior will be stocked with local meat, fresh fruit and vegetables, and an array of wonderful regional produce, alongside the essentials. We also hope to take advantage of Grace's



cookery skills and offer some delicious takeaway options.

Please rest assured that the post office is of course being retained and we will continue to sell newspapers.

You can keep abreast of our progress and plans on social media. Please follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates @embletonvillageshop.

We look forward to seeing you all again when we reopen.

Jo and Grace Robertson

Autumn & Winter wildlife in our parish

In my Garden:

Autumn migration 'started' with the obvious disappearance of swifts, swallows and martins though there appeared to be a pause until warblers and black caps appeared, passing through from more northerly locations. Most of the black caps appearing in my garden were males. Goldcrest appeared at the same time though only stayed a few days.

Finches were more numerous last summer, and goldfinches nested again in my trees, although I did not spot the nests until leaf fall in November. A pair of bullfinches visited throughout the year and have been seen throughout winter to date. The male often being seen feeding on the buds of a flowering cherry. Blackbirds arrived again to feed on fallen apples and were joined daily by several waterhens.

In autumn a jay visited several times also feeding on the fallen apples.

Occasionally a magpie visited too though didn't stay for more than a few minutes.

November arrived and young tawny owls visited the churchyard opposite and the trees in my garden. A young male called most nights and by the end of the month had refined his call. Female tawny were also calling as is their practice when trying to find a mate before winter arrives.

Once again a kingfisher arrived and perched over the burn hoping for its 'fish supper'. Unfortunately I only saw it once this time.

Treecreepers have visited on more than one occasion, searching through cracks in the bark of my orchard trees. They don't seem to investigate the lichens as readily as the tit family.

Great tits, blue tits and coal tits readily come to feeders every day.

This winter I've yet to see any long-tailed tits in my garden although I have seen them just outside of the village.

In December several chaffinches returned but I haven't seen a greenfinch since last summer. Goldfinches are seen daily, often bathing in my garden pond together with finches and blackbirds.

Also a stoat visited for several days on the trot but I haven't seen it since.

Wrens are plentiful having bred well in 2022 whilst robins are less numerous. Collared doves gather in my fruit trees at first light most mornings, and feeding on fallen apples.

Wood pigeons are present throughout each day, often sheltering in my apple trees during windy weather.

A female greater spotted woodpecker has started visiting my feeders every day, being joined by another female who patiently waits for the first one to leave the feeder. Perhaps she is a young bird and 'knows her place'. Occasionally a male is seen. In the last few days I have been entertained by the female undertaking significant alterations to a nesting box in a neighbour's garden. At this time of year the woodys search out nesting sites because they are early nesters. As it's too early for them to prey on other birds' nests I anticipate that this female considers the chosen nest box a 'des res'.

Last year sparrows fared well and I have a small flock of both tree sparrows and house sparrows. Dunnocks also seem to have bred well and can be seen every day. Again this winter, in mid-January, a single fieldfare arrived to feed on fallen apples. I wonder whether it is the same bird that has visited for the last few winters?

In the Parish:

Late in November a mature hedgehog was seen on 2 occasions, just after dusk, snuffling along hunting the footpath at the north end of Rennington.

Again this winter barn owls have been seen though not as often.

Woodcock were flighting throughout November, though significantly more could be seen following the full moon in December.

Yellow hammers can be seen on most days now and seem to be more numerous than in the past. Bullfinches seem to be more numerous too.

Again throughout this autumn and winter migratory geese have been seen flying over the parish on several days and their calling from overhead has been a delight to hear as they passed over in the darkness.

Grey partridges bred well last summer and seen throughout the parish. Last autumn a large covey could often be seen near Rock bank. The partridges are now pairing up and ought to be calling soon.

In mid-January the first snowdrop flowers appeared again in Rennington churchyard, Early daffodils are showing and flower buds can be expected soon.

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

John Watson

Electoral divisions consultation

A new pattern of electoral divisions is being developed for Northumberland County Council.

The council has formally asked the Commission to carry out a single member division review. This means that the Commission will aim to draw up a pattern of electoral divisions where each division is represented by one county councillor.

The Commission is interested in views on which communities should be part of the same division. What facilities do people share, such as parks, leisure centres schools or shopping areas. What issues do neighbouring communities face that they have in common, such as high numbers of visitors or heavy traffic. Has there been new housing or commercial developments that have changed the focus of communities etc.

The Commission will use local views to help it draw up proposals for new division boundaries and there will be a further round of consultation once the Commission has drawn up their proposals.

Although the Local Government Boundary Commission 10-week consultation ended on Monday 30th January 2023, residents can still contact the Boundary Commission directly should they have proposals/suggestions by email at reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by post to: Review Officer (Northumberland), LGBCE, PO Box 133, Blyth, NE24 9FE.

Wendy Pattison, County Councillor

Out and about

If you travel in and out of Alnwick on the B6341 (The Peth) you can't help but notice this ruin. It is the remains of the chapel of the medieval St Leonard's



Hospital which was founded by Eustace de Vescy (or Vesci) sometime between 1193 and 1216, for the poor, sick, and aged. Locally it is known as The Plague or Leper's House.

Eustace de Vescy was an English lord of Alnwick Castle and a surety of the Magna Carta. He was the brother-in-law of King Alexander II of Scotland. He was shot through the head by an arrow and killed at a siege of

Barnard Castle in 1216 whilst accompanying Alexander on his way to pay homage to Louis of France.

The ruins are located in a field called Radcliffe's Close and are thought to be on the site of a spring called Malcolm's Well which was uncovered during the excavation that took place in 1975.

Malcolm III was King of Scotland from 1058 until his death on 13 November 1093 following the siege on Alnwick Castle. Whilst he was marching north again Malcolm was ambushed by the then Earl of Northumbria, Robert de Mowbray, whose lands he had devastated. Malcolm was killed by a steward of Alnwick Castle, Arkil Morel, and the conflict became known as The Battle of Alnwick. Malcolm's eldest son Edward was also killed. This cross, sited close to the roundabout at the top of the B6341, is said to mark the spot where Malcolm was slain. However some accounts suggest that he was badly wounded and then carried to the hospital where he later died.

The hospital fell into decay before the English Reformation in 1535 and all traces of its existence were lost. In 1845, during ploughing of the field, the foundations of the chapel were discovered, along with the well and other artifacts. A large burial ground and several skeletons were also discovered close by. Following this discovery, the chapel was partially rebuilt in 1848. But it wasn't until a further excavation was carried out in 1975 that the chapel was finally discovered.



Jane Dixon

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What's On

The Cinder Path - Friday 3rd February to Sunday 5th February, Alnwick Playhouse. The musical based on the story by Catherine Cookson.

Grease - Wednesday 15th February to Saturday 18th February, Alnwick Playhouse. The Duchess's Community High School production of this well-known musical.

Dark Deeds - Friday 24th February, Alnwick Playhouse. An audience with mystery crime writer Ann Cleeves (think Vera on ITV) in conversation with acclaimed novelist Emma Flint as part of Alnwick Story Fest.

Discover the Angels of the North - Saturday 25th February, Bailiffgate Museum. An audience with co-authors Moira Kilkenny and Joyce Quinn as part of the Alnwick Story Fest.

Memory? Set? In? Stone? - Tuesday 31st January to Sunday 26th March, Bailiffgate Museum. An exhibition of the work of Nevill Wilson.

Copy date for the next edition:

7th April 2023