

# CommunityTalk

IN RENNINGTON, ROCK & STAMFORD SPRING 2024

## One Year Old!

Thanks for your feedback and support over the past twelve months. We certainly hope you find this edition just as informative and interesting - and if you have ideas for a future article we'd love to hear from you.

*Editor Peter Purdom*

## Annual Parish Meeting

Our annual parish meeting - open to all residents - has been arranged for Thursday 9 May at 7pm in Rennington Village Hall.

It's an opportunity for you to be updated on what the Parish Council has been doing over the last 12 months. More importantly, though, we want to hear from you about what activities or projects residents would like the Parish Council to progress over the next year. Come along and have your say.

At the end of this public meeting the Parish Council will hold its AGM and conduct any necessary business.

*Stephen Baggott*



## Neighbourhood Development Plan - March Update

In progressing the development plan we've been focussed on preserving the rural character of our parish. We've commissioned a technical review of all the possible sites against stringent evidence-based criteria - with the aim of removing unsuitable sites for development. We've also been improving the draft Design Code and developing a document at the heart of the development plan - our draft Planning Policies. We still have much to do on - for example - non-designated heritage assets; transport, byways, footpaths and highways; green spaces, waterways, ecological and wildlife corridors.

We'll be organising public consultation events shortly. To be successful the Neighbourhood Development Plan has to reflect the collective views of you all - so we hope everyone participates and you make your views known.

*Alan Tremlett*

## Parish Council Tax

Last year Rennington Parish Council did not increase the precept, agreeing instead to use reserves to cover the shortfall in income. We didn't expect inflation to peak at over 10% and had to eat into reserves by over £1,000 to cover planned expenditure. This is not sustainable over the longer term. For the coming year (2024/25) the Parish Council has budgeted a year on year increase in expenditure of 3.1%. Within that, our largest discretionary spend relates to the Neighbourhood Plan enabling us to hold community engagement and consultation events over the coming year to ensure the Plan reflects the views of the community.

On that basis and to ensure we don't deplete our reserves any further, the precept will increase from £38.11 to £44.50 (Band D equivalent).

*Stephen Baggott*

# Why do Birds Sing?

Three main reasons: to communicate with other birds, to mark out their territory and to attract a mate.

Walk through any deciduous woodland during spring and summer and you will hear birds communicating with each other using their alarm calls. These are usually relatively simple sounds, like 'tak tak tak'. They are responding to your presence and notifying other birds that you are there. As you get closer to them the sounds become louder or more frequent. Land and aerial predators evoke different sounds.



Bird song is a completely different set of sounds, often very tuneful and species specific. Typical examples include the 'teacher teacher' song of the great tit and the repetitive two note 'chiff/chaff' of the eponymous bird. Song is almost exclusively produced by male birds. You start to hear it in early spring when they return to their breeding grounds. Males establish their territory, moving around the periphery of the chosen area singing to warn other males that this is 'theirs'. The nest will be built within the boundaries of the territory.

The song is also to attract a mate and when one appears and responds other courtship behaviour commences – posturing and displaying their plumage for example.

*Tim Walls*



## Wild about Bees

It's well known that bees are the heroes of the pollinator world - helping us grow many of our favourite foods. With 10% of honey bees at risk of extinction we're lucky to have at least one thriving colony within our parish on the fringe of Rennington. Last summer I was also fortunate to see hundreds of solitary bees in one of our local fields. And that's significant because solitary bees pollinate our plants even more than honey bees.

Bees have their own 'satnav' which helps them fly a mile or so from their colony and safely return. Their satnav certainly comes into play if you try to relocate a hive. It works well if the move is within 3 feet or more than 3 miles away (preferably when they're all in and asleep!). Otherwise you cause problems for the colony as I once found out to my cost when I moved a hive 10 yards in the rear garden - and the bees couldn't find their way home. I had to move it back quickly!

As well as providing honey, bees are a vital part of our world and need our protection. If you're interested in learning more, there's a highly informative leaflet 'Your wild bee action pack' - available at [www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

*Michael Tulip*

## A Parish WhatsApp Group?



Interested in joining a parish-wide WhatsApp group as an additional communication channel? It would be complementary to Rock's WhatsApp and other group-specific WhatsApps which operate very successfully within the Parish. To join you would obviously need to load the WhatsApp app (free) on your mobile phone/device.

Our aim would be to improve timely dissemination of information - distributing perhaps short notice information about events; it might also become a forum for sharing excess garden produce, for lost and found items etc. We wouldn't want it to be used for political debate nor for contentious issues. Joining would be voluntary and you could opt out at any time. If you're interested please text Hilary Walls on 07946 873694.

# Rock Farm Update

The mix of environmental schemes alongside food production continues at Rock Farms. Several hectares of cover crops were resown last autumn with a mixture of fodder radish, linseed and yellow blossom which you will see flowering this spring. Clearing damage from Storm Arwen continued over the winter, with the Kiln Wood, Willow Close and Horse Close Woods being cleared and replanted - as well as dealing with further damage from this winter's storms.

The main crops seem to be in good shape. We've been lucky to escape the worst of the wet conditions which have left farmers elsewhere concerned about yields. At Midstead, work has been completed on the new workshop, which gives extra space for machinery and offices. It was christened on February 7th with a display of rally cars and vintage tractors in association with Berwick Motor Club.

*Fred Bosanquet*



# Himalayan Balsam

Himalayan balsam is a 'growing' problem in our Parish. Each plant produces up to 800 seeds which can be dispersed up to 22 feet away - and are often carried downstream remaining viable for up to two years. The most effective method of control, is pulling up or cutting the plants before they go to seed.

Real progress was made last year on eradicating the plants - but more needs to be done. Between June and October the balsam produces clusters of purplish pink helmet-shaped flowers. The flowers are followed by seed pods that open explosively when ripe. If you see it please let Andy Sisson know so we can target it. And if you would like to volunteer to help - please contact Andy on 07753 659759 or email [andysisson1@sky.com](mailto:andysisson1@sky.com)



# Bus Services

NEED run a 'dial a ride' weekly service between Rock/Rennington and Alnwick on Thursdays. They pick up residents from their home and return them there - so no waiting out in the rain! This service will collect between 09.00 and 09.30 to arrive at Alnwick for 10.00 then return at 12.00. Passengers will need to notify the driver of their drop off and collection point in Alnwick. Anyone wishing to board this service should contact NEED Ltd on 01665 605780 between 09.00 - 14.30 Monday to Friday to book a seat. Users must join the NEED membership scheme costing £24 per year - as well as having a Northumberland/English bus pass.

And from 30 March - Saturdays only - the Number 460 Bus will run from Church Road Rock (11.52), Horseshoes (11.56) arriving at Stand 5 Alnwick at 12.09). The return journey leaves Alnwick Bus Station at 15.16.



# Trains Leaving on Time!

Alnwick Model Railway Club are searching for a new home! All possibilities considered!

At the moment we have a permanent layout at Rock Village Hall but essential repairs to the hall means the club has to find a new venue.

The club provides an opportunity to meet like-minded people where skills can be learnt and model trains run for the enjoyment of all. Members meet once a week, not only to make models and run trains but to talk and drink tea! Great social occasion as well.

Please contact: Paul Hopper (Secretary) [phopper@btopenworld.com](mailto:phopper@btopenworld.com)

# Garden Talk

## No Dig Vegetable Gardening

Several years ago, we decided to explore using No Dig in our garden or as it used to be known Not Digging.

To see how this worked we visited the National Trust walled garden at Clumber Park where they were experimenting with No Dig. There was clearly a difference in plant performance between traditional digging and No Dig where the plants were flourishing, looking bigger and healthier.



So the following year we did our own experiment - we planted identical brassicas on adjacent vegetable beds. The No Dig bed brassicas grew bigger and healthier than the traditional bed.

The basic principle of No Dig is feeding the soil not the plant, as the plants can take all the nutrients they need from the soil. It's a simple process - covering the soil with a layer of compost and letting nature get to work.

The benefits are no back ache from digging, using little or no fertiliser and fewer weeds. This winter has been particularly wet but we have not suffered with water logged soil. Admittedly there is limited protection from long dry spells - but we do mulch plants that are susceptible to dry spells.

Lynn Burdett

# Gift Aid for the Village Hall?

The rise in living costs affects us all and repairs on an old building like the Village Hall are a major cost pressure. The Hall is an important community asset used for a wide range of social and leisure activities as well as being the only meetings venue in the Parish. Without public subsidy, the Trustees rely heavily on fundraising activities to make ends meet and we are always looking for new ideas for events that people would enjoy and join in with. We are now considering a means of fund raising called Gift Aid which is available to all registered charities. If we were to register for Gift Aid then all donations from tax paying individuals would enable us to claim 25% of the value of each donation back from HMRC. It would also enable us to use the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme to reclaim from HMRC 25% of the value of each small donation received at our various events - without individuals having to fill in any paperwork. We would like to discuss this proposal and all other aspects of running and funding the Hall at the forthcoming AGM on 18th April. Please come along – the necessary formal business will be completed in the minimum time possible!

Tim Walls



## Dog waste

The dog waste bins in the parish are looking tatty. Since dog waste can now be put in litter bins, the Parish Council has decided to remove the dog waste bins and put stickers on the litter bins to show that they can be used for both litter and bagged dog waste.

## Whats On

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 14 March       | 7.00 pm Parish Council Meeting, RVH   |
| 15 March       | 7.00 pm Rock Cricket Club Bingo and Family Fun Night, RVH   |
| 23 March       | 10.00 am - 2.00pm Table Top Sale, RVH   |
| 25 March       | 7.00 pm Quiet service of prayer & reflection, All Saints Church, Rennington   |
| 28 March       | 7.00 pm Maundy Thursday, non-traditional Holy Communion with film, music & food, Ss Philip & James, Rock                  |
| 18 April       | 6.30 pm Rennington Village Hall AGM, RVH  |
| 24 April       | 6.30 pm 'The Alnwick Garden - Community & Education', Alastair Carrington-Wathey, Rock Church                             |
| 9 May          | 7.00 pm Annual Parish Meeting - followed by Parish Council AGM, RVH   |
| 22 May         | 6.30 pm 'St Oswald and his Way', Michael Mountney, Rock Church  |
| 2 June         | 7.00 pm 'Proms in the Pews' at Rock Church with 'The Voice' Star, Anthony Stuart Lloyd in conjunction with the Rocky Cafe |
| 26 June        | 6.30 pm 'Art Collector Helen Sutherland at Rock Hall', Ysanne Holt, Rock Church   |
| 17 July        | 6.30 pm 'Outdoor Education at Rock Hall School', Lalage Bosanquet   |
| 24 August      | 6.00 pm Shakespeare's 'A Comedy of Errors' performed by The Handlebards   |
| 24 - 26 August | Rennington Scarecrow Festival   |

### Next issue:

**Summer 24; please submit content no later than 24 May 2024**

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