the Village Voice

Issue No 12, Volume 25

Lanchester, December 2025







Before Christmas in Lanchester

Top left. All Saints' Primary School raised £752 for Children in Need. (Page 16)
Above. Mrs Simpson retires after 35 years as the school crossing patrol (Page 15)
Right. One of the Lanchester Vintage Tractors at the light switch on and *below* the lights after the switch on. (Page 2)
Bottom left. Christingle on the Green (Page 3)
Left. EP school children with their stall for Henry Dancer Days (Page 2/15)







Lanchester & Langley Hardware

for all your hardware requirements

• Calor gas sales • Discounted batteries • Dehumidifiers
and all home decoratng supplies

LANCHESTER: 01207 520377
LANGLEY PARK: 0191 3732278

Lanchester Christmas light switch on

Many villagers attended the switch on of the Christmas lights on the village green. There were mince pies and mulled wine and a free gift for the children. There were 5 girls from Lanchester EP selling bracelets for the Henry Dancer Charity; they raised around £220.
Lanchester Band provided the music and there were Christmas songs from the Lanchester Male Voice Choir and Friends.
The Lanchester Vintage Tractors were there again. They drove around the village and stopped long enough for people to take photos.
Oliver and Izzy from the All Saints' School and Jaidan and Sophia from Lanchester EP assisted Ged in turning the lights on.
Ged, of course, owns Lanchester Hardware and he has recovered well from a heart attack earlier this year – good to see him looking so well. The event was live streamed again by Kath Marshall-Ivens on behalf of Lanchester Partnership.
Much fun was had at this event which really kicks off Christmas in the village.









Above Ged with his assistants switching on the lights.
Top right. Lanchester Male Voice Choir and friends
Far right. Lanchester Band
Right. One of the tractors.
Photos here and on the cover of the switch on by a young volunteer doing his Duke of Edinburgh award.

Boys' Brigade

Our normal weekly sessions have included tray bakes which we sold at our Coffee Morning, making some air dry clay poppies for Remembrance Day, alternative cooking and learning about St Andrew with a Scottish themed evening. The alternative cooking proved popular as we were using the bottoms of large baked bean tins and tea lighters. Pancakes and fried eggs were successfully cooked and more quickly eaten. We learned a great amount of knowledge regarding St Andrew, had a quiz, played golf and then tried without much success to dance the Gay Gordons but they all had a great time trying. We ended of course by sampling that typical Scottish delicacy that is Haggis. We are now moving into our Christmas period of craft making and the Christmas party.
Several of our lads have been even busier with National Competitions. Firstly, the chess team of Thomas Taylor, Nathan McNeil and James Donnelly were narrowly beaten 5 games to 4 by the 4th Hartlepool. Our young team did well, and we wish Hartlepool well in the next round. Then it was the turn of the Masterteam who travelled to Hartlepool to take on teams from Hartlepool (2 teams), Scarborough and Teesside. It was probably the youngest team we have ever entered into the competition but Nathan McNeil, Reuben Temple, Andrew Filmer and Jay Hepplewhite really did us proud by finishing second, achieving automatic entry into the second round which will take place at Teesside in early December. Our Table Tennis teams were given a walk over in the first round and are waiting to see if we will play North Staffs or Leeds in the next round.
The Badminton team doesn't start until the 24th January when we will travel to the Northampton area for the English final with the top two progressing to the UK final which will be held somewhere in Scotland.
Well done to all our boys who attended the Remembrance service on the Village Green; you all looked very smart and if that was not enough, we then had 5 of our lads Thomas, Josh, Louis, Toby and Dylan who all travelled to another venue in Hartlepool to attend a course for their President's Badge.

We now look forward to volunteering at the Willow Burn Nurses Fayre and attending our 96th Enrolment service at the Methodist Church. I make no excuse for saying our 96th enrolment as we must be one of the longest serving organisations in Lanchester and with only 4 years left before 100, we are starting to make plans for this special occasion.

Eric Hepplewhite







Above l-r Alternative cooker, cooking the pancakes and Scottish night.
Below. Eating the pancakes!





Above. Three of the junior section boys at their cooking stations.

Christingle at All Saints'





Many churches mark Christmas Eve with a Christingle service. Some save their Christingles for Candlemas, when we remember Jesus being brought to the temple and when, historically, household candles were brought to church to be blessed for use throughout the year.
But in Lanchester we do things differently and have our Christingle service to coincide with the switching on of our magnificent Christmas Lights on the green. On Saturday, 22nd November, 87 children and adults gathered at All Saints to sing, retell the Christmas story with the help of lots of different chocolate bars, and pray in a darkened church by the light of our Christingles. Then we went out on to the village green to enjoy the gathering of our community in celebrating the light of Christmas.
And we went bearing gifts! Throughout the year some of our knitters have knitted over 200 Christingle ornaments for your Christmas trees. If you were lucky enough to get one, we hope you'll appreciate the work that went into it, and its beauty as it hangs on your tree- and if you didn't, come to our Christingle service next year and you'll be guaranteed both a bauble, and a wonderful insight into the meaning of Christmas!

Revd Lesley Sutherland

Ginger's in Celebrity Master Chef!



Lanchester celebrity Ginger Johnson is proving a huge success on TV's Celebrity Master Chef.
Drag queen Ginger, aka Donald Marshall, a former St Bede' s pupil and Lanchester paper boy, impressed judges Grace Dent and John Torode by rustling up a dish of chicken skewers and satay sauce in the first episode.
How far she progresses in the competition remains to be seen - or at least it did at the time of our deadline - but she freely admits to being "competitive" and is keen to go as far as she can.
Two years ago, Ginger featured in the Village Voice after winning the fifth series of RuPaul's Drag Race UK. Donald has described his creation as "a helium balloon in the shape of a woman."
The 37-year old has said his first memory of making people laugh was "doing magic shows in my local library."
Donald's parents Lorna and Don Marshall and his sister Marion Park still live in Lanchester.

Neil McKay

Monday Art Group





In November the Monday Art Group welcomed Fiona Carvell to give a demonstration of painting a still life using pastels.
Fiona is a well known local artist, who this year was elected as a member of the Pastel Society. She will be exhibiting her work at the Mall gallery in London in February. See fionacarvell.com.
Members worked on the picture Fiona had painted, using lots of 'helpful hints' to improve our painting, but still with time for coffee and chat.

Jim Rafferty

Happy Christmas and New Year to all our readers and advertisers.

Thank you to everyone who makes the Village Voice happen: contributors, editors, designers, proof readers, distributors and deliverers.

Looking forward to a successful 2026!





From the House

I can hardly believe I'm writing this, but I want to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year. I don't know where 2025 has gone – it's been such a jam-packed year as Member of Parliament for North Durham. From supporting thousands of residents to securing investment, this has been a year to remember, and I look forward to more of the same in 2026.

I was alarmed to learn that Lanchester Medical Centre has been rated 'inadequate' by the Care Quality Commission. Sadly, this fits with feedback I had received from residents and the patient participation group, whose active role in calling for better services I greatly appreciate. I also welcome the special measures being taken by the CQC to address the issues at the practice. Patients in Lanchester deserve better. Local Councillor Alison Grey is working hard to represent patients. If you have been affected by this and need my support, then please do contact me using the details below.

In November I was made aware that St Bede's School has been selected to receive funding for solar power from Great British Energy. The partnership between Great British Energy and local schools means more money can be put back into the things that really matter, and I am delighted to see a Lanchester school benefitting from this initiative.

It has been a busy month across the wider constituency. In early November I laid wreaths in Lanchester, Beamish, Annfield Plain and Stanley and was deeply moved by the services of remembrance. I held a public drop-in event on the £20 million Pride in Place funding for Stanley, which was a great opportunity to speak directly with residents and hear their views on how this money should be spent.

In Parliament this past month I have spoken out on recent asylum system overhauls and asked the Home Secretary what impact the changes might have on House in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in North Durham. The Home Secretary reassured me that the totality of the reforms will lead to less pressure on accommodation and will therefore have a positive impact on the number of HMOs.

Since the election, I have responded to over 9,018 queries. I have helped return over £374,841 owed to constituents in taxes/benefits/utilities. My biggest priority is to serve individuals and communities across North Durham. I will always make time for constituents and want to help in any way that I can. If you need help or support, please email me on luke.akehurst.mp@parliament.uk or call 0191 371 8834.

Luke Akehurst
MP, North Durham

House of Commons

County Councillor Update

Dear Residents,

It was a great honour to lay a wreath on behalf of the Council on Remembrance Sunday, to remember those from the village killed while serving our country. Hearing the very long list of names read out is extremely moving. Like many other families, mine had relatives who died in World War Two and I grew up hearing a lot about these two young men. Lanchester is a very close-knit village, and we can only imagine the impact on families here of having so many people lose loved ones in service.



I have been very busy working with Sue Graham and the Patient Participation Group to improve GP provision in the village. We held two very well attended meetings to discuss the recent Care Quality Commission report into Lanchester Medical Centre. Sue and I continue to work with the Integrated Care Board, the Director of Public Health at the County Council and also Luke Akehurst, to bring about the necessary improvements. If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch so they can be passed on.

A number of residents have been in touch regarding the difficulties in trying to cross Station Road. I am meeting with the police liaison officer early in January to raise the issues and hopefully this will effect change.

Cross party working is something I am really enjoying at the council. Whilst politics can be tribal and divisive, the best work gets done when politicians of all parties get together to try to improve their community. Meeting so many new people through this role has been one of the most rewarding aspects of council work.

The Christmas lights look fantastic, as do the decorated shop windows. Thank you to all involved in this community endeavour. Lanchester is a truly welcoming and friendly village. I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas, with best wishes for a happy and healthy 2026.

As always if I can help with a council matter, please get in touch on alison.gray2@durham.gov.uk or call on 07469 105096.

Alison Gray



Sue Graham and Alison Gray at the meetings regarding the Medical Centre

Lanchester Social Club – changes

The committee of Lanchester Social Club have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to save the struggling club. Many clubs have closed in recent years due to increased running costs, but this hasn't deterred the committee from putting their all into saving a club which was established in 1962.

Having completed a review of the finances, management and products, a raft of changes have been implemented. Unfortunately, the committee had to make the tough decision to make the role of Club Steward redundant. This has meant that the committee have had to absorb all those responsibilities. A change in suppliers was deemed necessary so as to offer customers a wider variety of quality drinks at a competitive price. More recently the club's branding and marketing has seen major changes for an almost forgotten about establishment.

New Club Chairman Jonathan Walker said "We are committed to improving the facilities of the club and the experience our customers have with us. So many social clubs have closed down in recent years and we are determined that will not happen to ours. The Club is here for everyone to use, and we believe it can become an integral part of our community once again."

Lanchester Social Club Committee

Wildlife notes

Mistletoe

Parasitic and poisonous, romantic and Christmassy, delicate and pale among the bare winter branches- Mistletoe is a plant synonymous with winter. Its berries are precious food sources for both the six species of insect that are specialist mistletoe feeders- such as the rare mistletoe marble moth (Celypha woodiana) and mistletoe weevil (Ixapion variegatum) and also birds like the Mistle Thrush, who eat the fat-rich pith and excrete the seeds in a sticky coating, which sticks to trees and provides the plant with its new host.

As the Mistletoe grows, the roots penetrate the bark and start to take water and nutrients from the tree, while also feeding themselves through photosynthesis. Mistletoe plants will grow in large clusters of up to 1m diameter, appearing to float magically in bare leafless trees- perhaps a root of tales about its magical properties: the Greeks believed heroes were granted passage to the underworld with mistletoe, Pagan societies thought it represented the divine male essence, Druidic societies believed it provided protection against evil and acted as a cure for disease and through early Medieval England, it carried an association with fertility and vitality.

Most famously, the Christmas tradition of kissing under the Mistletoe has ensured it remains a symbol of romantic Christmas spirit- this tradition originates from Victorian times when a boy could win a kiss from a girl for each mistletoe berry he picked from his bunch, itself a tradition probably linked to Norse legends where the goddess Frigga declared it a symbol of love.



Look out for it in orchards, though it is a plant more commonly found in southern and central England, and if you do find a plant, leave it for others to enjoy - sprigs from the Community Orchard are being sold at the Fruit and Veg Shop.

From our junior wildlife correspondent

Ladies who lunch

On a cold and snowy day in November we lunched at one of our favourite venues, the Beamish Park Hotel. The entrance hall was beautifully decorated for Christmas which cheered us all up!

It was also the first day of the Christmas Menu. Some chose this, while some from the main menu.

The starter was a traditional prawn cocktail. Mains were pork belly roulade with fondant potatoes, braised red cabbage, apple puree and cider jus. Butter roasted turkey breast served with traditional trimming and fresh veg. Slow braised beef stew, creamed mash and herb and leek dumpling. Chicken katsu curry, Thai jasmine rice, crispy seaweed, fresh chillies, spring onions and coriander.

Desserts chosen were, white chocolate and lemon roulade, raspberry and vanilla pod cream; blackberry cheesecake, apple gel, whipped vanilla pod cream; apple and plum crumble with custard.

The food was faultless and well presented; the service from our well known waitress was excellent as usual.

A most enjoyable lunch.

The Gourmet Girls



Lanchester Wildlife Group Programme



Lanchester Wildlife Group are pleased to announce that they have a cracking programme of speakers for their regular meetings on the evening of the second Tuesday of each month. The meetings are held at Lanchester Community Centre starting at 7.30pm and ending by 9pm. There is no charge, and anyone is welcome to attend.

The talks will be given by experts involved in many of the exciting conservation projects being undertaken across Durham and Northumberland. Do come along and find out just how much there is to see in our own area.

If you have any queries, please contact Noel Jackson, the LWG programme Secretary, on 0778 6332465

DATE	WHO	TITLE
Jan-13	Daniel Iceton	Pine Martins
Feb-10	Duncan Hutton	Rothbury Estate - the country's biggest nature reserve?
Mar-10	Paul Black	Brightwater - the project to recover the R. Skerne for wildlife and people
Apr-14	Geoff Kilner	A Year along the Derwent - wonderful wildlife on our doorstep.
May-12	Paul Rodgers	Naturally Native - Water Voles
Jun-09	Blair Watson	Stronger Shores - rewilding the Durham coast
Jul-14	Paul Davidson	Rare-ing to go! Spectacular visitors to the North-east
Aug-11	No meeting	
Sep-08	Lauren Gibson	Knep Rewilding - news from Britain's oldest rewilding project.
Oct-13	Andy Wadds	St. Cuthberts Moor - a moor for more than sheep and grouse.
Nov-10	Steve Gater	Home and Away - botanizing for fun.
Dec-08	Noel	AGM & Quiz

Lanchester Wildlife Group Meeting

Pine Martins. A talk by Daniel Iceton of the National Trust. Tuesday 13th January 2026. 7.30 -9.00pm

Lanchester Community Centre. No charge. All welcome.

Pine Martens have always been one of those holy grail creatures that naturalists travel vast distances for the faintest chance of seeing one. However, there are hopes that we will soon be able to see them on a day trip to Northumberland, considerably cheaper and more convenient than the five-day expedition required at present. The lead partner for the Pine Market reintroduction/recovery project is the National Trust and our speaker, Daniel Iceton, is the project officer.

Noel Jackson.



Lanchester Parish Council

Notes from the Ordinary Meeting held in Lynwood House on Tuesday 11th November 2025 at 7.00pm

Minutes – Ordinary Meeting 14th October – approved

Lanchester Neighbourhood Plan Review
Unfortunately, DCC could not make the Parish Council Meeting. Councillors discussed how to proceed with reviewing the plan. Clerk to contact consultant who helped with the plan originally for advice.

Police Report
No police report received for the month of October. We were informed of the 'Park Safe Initiative Scheme' that is taking place around the schools in the coming weeks and months. This is a new initiative to try and address parking issues around the schools at peak times. Please look out for signs around the school explaining how the scheme works.

Durham County Councillor
County Cllr A Gray provided an update on the areas she has recently been working on, these included –

- Consultation on budget is ending soon, have your say before it ends
- Solar Farm Appeal – DCC did not send out notices about the meeting, so this has been deferred until March 2026
- Meetings have taken place with Traffic Enforcement and Traffic Wardens
- Discussions about how to make Station Road safer to cross
- Request for Dora's wood entry to be made wider so a double buggy can fit through
- DCC chased on a number of requests including a new handrail at Alderdene and the Lanchester sign coming into the Village
- Meeting at the Cricket Club and the Social Club about Lanchester Medical Centre
- There have also been at least three visits from DCC carrying out a leaf sweep around the Village

Poppy Wreath
Councillors approved a £100 donation to the The Royal British Legion – Poppy Appeal

Lanchester Food Week
The Parish Council were thanked for their donation towards the banner and the article in the Village Voice for Lanchester Food Week. The event was a great success. Following this some of the businesses wanted to decorate their windows for Christmas. The Parish Council has approved a £200 cash prize for the best decorated window. A poll will be put on Lanchester Food Week's Facebook page for everyone to vote.

Solar Planet Project
Councillors were given an update on the project.

Lanchester Traffic Regulation Order Amendment 2025
Councillors were informed of proposed restrictions in a number of areas in the Village. Clerk to comment that unless there are regular traffic wardens enforcing these new restrictions the parking situation will not improve.

Christmas Light Switch on
Members approved a request received from Lanchester EP School for 5 pupils in year 5 to sell some bracelets they have made to raise money for the Henry Dancer Days Charity.

Newsletter
Members approved the newsletter for November.

Financial report – approved

Accounts for Payment – approved

Meetings are every second Tuesday of the month, the next two meetings will be held on the 9th December and the 13th January

BOURNE & CO
in partnership with nested

A New Bourne Arrives!

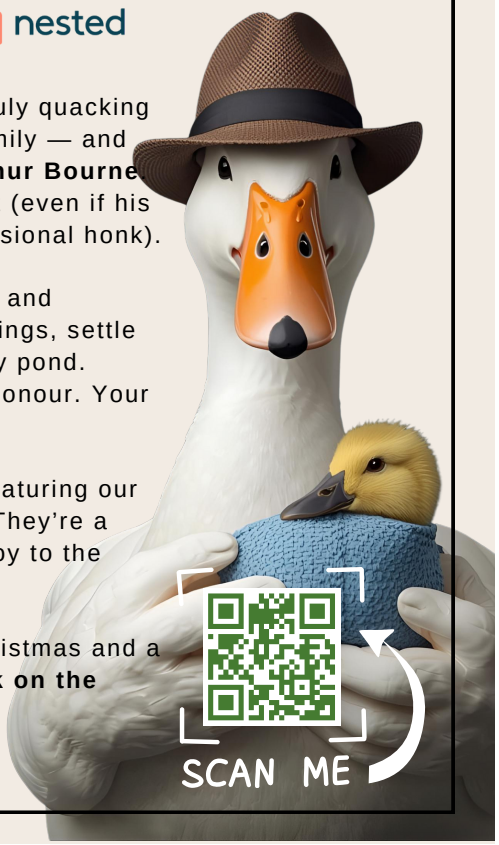
As we waddle toward the end of 2025, we're thrilled to share some truly quacking news with our wonderful community. On 24th November 2025, our family — and Bourne & Co itself — welcomed a brand-new little hatchling: **Jim Arthur Bourne**. He's already proving to be a down-right delightful addition to the nest (even if his current responsibilities mostly involve sleeping, milkies, and the occasional honk).

This year has been one of the most rewarding yet both professionally and personally. We've had the privilege of helping families spread their wings, settle into new nests, and navigate every twist and turn of the local property pond. Serving Lanchester and the surrounding villages continues to be an honour. Your support keeps us afloat and means more than we can put into words.

We also hope you've spotted our festive boards around the village, featuring our now famous Bourne & Co duck dressed up ready for Santa's arrival. They're a small gift from us to bring a little extra Christmas spirit, colour, and joy to the community we care so dearly about.

As the festive season approaches, we wish you all a warm, joyful Christmas and a bright, hopeful New Year. And one last reminder: **absolutely no duck on the Christmas dinner table!**

From our family to yours — thank you for an egg-ceptional 2025.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

from everyone at

GD AUTOCARE Ltd

Christmas Opening

Dec 22nd - 9.00 - 17.30
Dec 23rd - 9.00 - 17.30
Dec 24th - 9.00 - 13.00
Dec 25th - Closed
Dec 26th - Closed
Dec 27th - 9.30 - 12.00
Dec 29th - 10.00-14.00
Dec 30th - 10.00-14.00
Dec 31st - 10.00-13.00
Jan 1st - Closed
Jan 2nd - 10.00-14.00
Jan 3rd - 9.30-12.00

17-point winter check Only £19.95

Free Battery Checks No Appointment needed

Service & MOT from £99.95

Servicing from £64.95

STAY WARM, STAY READY—ALL YOUR WINTER ESSENTIALS IN ONE PLACE!

Scrapers £1.99

Batteries from £49.95

Antifreeze from £9.99

Bulbs from £1.99

Screenwash
5L Concentrate £9.99
5L Ready to use £5.99
1L Concentrate £3.49

Wipers from £2.99

De-icer (-20 Degrees) £2.99

Top-up Oils from £8.99

Hallgarth Building, Hallgarth Terrace, Lanchester, DH7 0HS

☎ 01207 529192 ✉ service@gdautocare.co.uk www.gdautocare.co.uk



Thursday Club

On the worst weather of the year so far, twelve ladies enjoyed the junior choir from the EP school singing for us. Then the children showed us a clap hands game while singing and laughing and falling down. When we were invited to join in; there was much hilarity when it came to the falling down bit!
The following chat about Room 101 brought some enthusiastic suggestions which you might expect from senior ladies! We remember times before mobile phones when families talked to each other, when good behaviour was the norm and superlatives were not worn out- for example “amazing” this and that and all. Polite behaviour also seems to be missing in the political world these days.
All in all we managed to have some fun airing the things which were bothering us, while laughing at these suggestions, and as we know, we won’t change anything.
Thanks to everyone who braved the weather and had a fun afternoon together.

Jan Vasey



Left the EP choir
Below some of the audience with the conductor Mrs Janet Knighton

care connect



24/7 response at the press of a button

We provide a monitoring and response service to people’s homes 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, 7 days a week with a 24-hour Control Centre and simple personal alarms.

What can our personal alarms do for you?

- Help on hand out of hours
- Maintains freedom and independence
- 24/7 support and reassurance
- Peace of mind for all

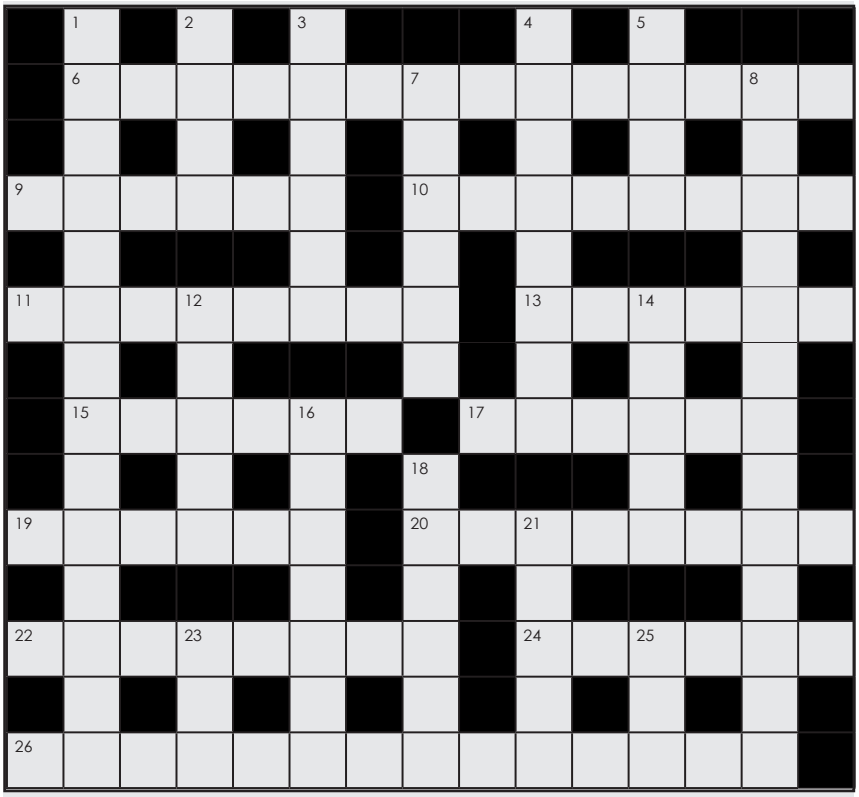
TSA Code of Practice Platinum Accredited Organisation

For further information:
www.durham.gov.uk/careconnect
03000 262 195
care.connect@durham.gov.uk

You can also find us on facebook.com/CareConnectDCC

Durham County Council

CROSSWORD 214



Clues

Across

6. 'Facetious' way to arrange vowels (14)
9. Make something last as long as possible (3,3)
10. Perfect (8)
11. Where your closest neighbours reside (4,4)
13. Part of the foot (6)
15. Christmas decoration (6)
17. Soak up (6)
19. Detractor (6)
20. Slaughterhouse (8)
22. Hackneyed or worn out (8)
24. Type of dance move (2-2-2)
26. Numeric average (10,4)

Down

1. Annoying car passenger (4-4,6)
2. As far as (2,2)
3. Fidel, former Cuban leader (6)
4. Essential to human energy production (7-1)
5. Move by pulling (4)
7. Exertion (6)
8. Structure considered worthy of protection (6,8)
12. Belief or principle (5)
14. Football magazine that gave out 'League Ladders' every season (5)
16. Type of dance in which one might, politely, take another person's partner (6-2)
18. One-armed slot machine (6)
21. Kidnap (6)
23. Hamelin was infested with them (4)
25. John Noakes' faithful companion (4)

Name:_____

Address: _____

_____

Please send your completed entries for the £10 prize draw by **Monday 5th January 2026** to the Village Voice, c/o Lanchester Community Centre, Newbiggen Lane, Lanchester, DH7 0HY

A	M	A	T	E	U	R	I	S	H	■	H	A	R	D
R	■	V	■	N	■	O	■	T	■	A	■	D	■	I
C	H	U	R	N	■	B	A	R	B	E	C	U	E	S
H	■	N	■	U	■	B	■	E	■	R	■	L	■	J
■	A	C	C	I	D	E	N	T	■	O	U	T	D	O
F	■	U	■	■	■	R	■	C	■	B	■	■	■	I
U	N	L	U	C	K	Y	■	H	A	I	R	P	I	N
L	■	A	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	C	■	A	■	T
C	H	R	O	N	I	C	■	O	B	S	E	R	V	E
H	■	■	■	D	■	O	■	C	■	■	■	S	■	D
E	B	O	N	Y	■	B	R	E	A	D	B	I	N	■
S	■	U	■	M	■	B	■	A	■	E	■	M	■	P
T	E	N	G	A	L	L	O	N	■	V	I	O	L	A
E	■	C	■	N	■	E	■	I	■	I	■	N	■	I
R	E	E	L	■	B	R	I	C	K	L	A	Y	E	R

Solution Crossword 213

There were 17 entries of which 16 were correct. The winner drawn out of the hat is Paul Jackson.

IAN SAYER
Roofing Specialist
Tel: 01207 509862
Mobile: 07947 542570
e-mail: Iansayerroofing@btinternet.com
36, Gill Street, Consett, Co Durham DH8 7JT
SLATING - TILING - GUTTERING - REPAIRS
UPVC FASCIAS & SOFFITS - LEADWORK
FLAT ROOFING

LANCHESTER DAIRIES LTD
PASTEURISED FULL AND LOW FAT MILK - FRESH CREAM - ALL DAIRY PRODUCE
01207 521826
Fresh Milk Daily
SAI GLOBAL Food Safety
EFSIS

ALL TYPES OF PLASTERING AND BRICKWORK
Re-Skims, Ceilings, Concreting, Pointing ... etc
Over 20 Years' Experience. All Work Guaranteed
BILLY CARR PLASTERING
Free Estimates. No Job Too Small
QUALITY WORK AT AFFORDABLE PRICES
Telephone: (01207) 284881 *Mobile: 07813 339467*

Paradiso Club
Sunday 11 January 2026: HARRIET (change to previously published programme)
Based on the thrilling and inspirational life of an iconic American freedom fighter, Harriet tells the extraordinary tale of Harriet Tubman's escape from slavery and transformation into one of America's greatest heroes. Her courage, ingenuity, and tenacity freed hundreds of slaves and changed the course of history. "Cynthia Erivo is sublime as legendary slave rebel" (Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian).
Lanchester Community Centre
7pm refreshments and raffle. Film starts at 7.30pm. Members: £4, Non-members: £5. Annual membership: £5

Musical memories
Join us to welcome in the New Year with music, refreshments and fun activities.
8th January 2026 at 2pm, Lynwood House, Durham Road, Lanchester.
Musical Memories is a fun, friendly and stimulating music group using the ability of music to improve your brain activity, wellbeing and mood. We welcome people living with conditions that affect memory. For further information email Helen at lanchesterdfc@gmail.com

Library
Library Book Club
On Monday January 20th at 2.30 to 3.30pm, the group will be reviewing 'The Colour of Bee Larkham's Murder' by Sarah J Harris. A Richard and Judy pick – extraordinary and uplifting. The book sounds very interesting, will the group enjoy this novel, come along to the group and discuss.
Thursday Book Club
On Thursday January 15th from 4.00-5.00pm, the group will be discussing 'The Cactus' by Sarah Haywood. One member of the group read this book in three days, a page-turner and enjoyable. If you would like to join this group, pop into the library and speak to the librarians.
Pins and Needles will meet up on January 8th from 10-11.30am. Bring along your wool, thread, needles and patterns and share your makes and get advice too. Do you like knitting, crocheting? Everyone is welcome, enjoy.

Scrabble Group meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 1.30pm to 3.30 pm. Do you enjoy this word game and want to get on the Triple Word Square? Come along and enjoy the company.
Rummikub Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 1.30 to 3.30pm. A great strategic but simple game with tiles that are always changing. It is a very enjoyable game
Children's crafts are available every afternoon and Saturday. Different crafts, ideas and materials are set out in the library for children to be creative, pop along with your children and enjoy.
A book opens the doors to a different world, culture, experience and your imagination. Let 2026 be the year for you to explore different genres of books and enjoy. Your library is waiting for you to step inside.

Sewing Group
Every Wednesday, 1-3pm at Lanchester Community Centre. We are a small friendly group with space to grow into. We enjoy sewing, knitting, crochet, embroidery and cross stitch - as well as having a cuppa and a biscuit and sometimes cake! There is chatting and a laugh. **The Sewing Group will start again on January 14th. This meeting will start at 12 noon with a shared lunch followed by the normal session at 1pm.** For more information ring Elaine 01207 520063. No reply, please leave your name and number and Elaine will get back to you. Looking forward to meeting you and for you to join us.

Lanchester Wildlife Group
Pine Martins: a talk by Daniel Iceton of the National Trust. Tuesday 13th January 2026. 7.30 -9.00pm, Lanchester Community Centre.No charge. All are welcome.

WI
Next WI Meeting is Monday 5 January 2026, 7pm, Lanchester Community Centre. Start 2026 with something new, come along and join us.

February's meeting will be Monday 2 February 2026,7pm, Lanchester Community Centre.

All Saints' Catholic Church Concert
A Christmas Carol Concert by Consett Brass Band will be held in All Saints Catholic Church on Sunday 14th December at 6pm. Free entry, retirement collection at the end. Tea/ coffee, mince pies and ginger wine will be served in the Parish Centre after the event. Everyone is welcome.

Thursday Club
The next meeting will be on 15th January. Age UK will join us to give us some useful ideas to keep well and safe. Come and catch up with friends and new friends. Some are joining us from the recently closed Flower Club and I am sure they will be made most welcome. Call 07802721003 for more info.

Lanchester Local History Society
We will be meeting at 7.00 on Friday January 2nd as usual for our Show and Tell session. It's the event where folks bring, if they want, any item that they think will be interesting or raise discussion amongst the group. We have had some great things brought over the years so don't think just because you know what it is that the group won't be interested. On Friday 6th February at 7.00 we will be hearing from Rick Smith who had a company that was involved with geological surveys for mines. His talk is " Granite coal and ice - a geological slice through Lanchester". Please remember to arrive in time to manage the security entry system in a timely manner.

City Theatre
In February The City Theatre presents 'The Glass Menagerie' by Tennessee Williams 'Amanda Wingfield clings to her glorious past life of luxury but her reality is squalid and poor. As her grown up children struggle to find their place in the world, she believes a gentleman caller will be the answer to her prayers, but will he?'
Playing from 8th-14th Feb at the City Theatre, Durham, DH1 3RA. Tickets from the Durham Gala or www.durhamcitytheatre.co.uk and follow the booking link. Tickets £9.50 with concessions £8.50 on Sun/Mon/Tue. Performances Sun and Sat 2.30 pm, Mon-Fri 7.30pm.

Lunch Club: Cuppa and a Chat
The next lunch held at Lynwood House will be Tuesday 13th January, 12 o'clock start. All are welcome.

Christmas with The Argus Singers
Chester-le-Street Methodist Church, Saturday December 20th, 7pm. Tickets £5 from Cornerstones Centre for the Community, 0191 3881313

Annfield Plain Christmas Concert
'Twas The Night Before Christmas
Innominata Choir will be performing at Annfield Plain Methodist Church on Saturday 20th December at 7pm. The concert will include familiar carols for choir and audience as well as some beautiful readings with carols from composers such as Bob Chilcott, Peter Warlock and Sarah Quartel. 'Twas The Night Before Christmas will be sung in the second part of the concert. A wonderful, innovative Cantata by Oliver Tarney, the words of the poem unfold interspersed with traditional carols. Please join us for a real celebration of Christmas! You will recognise some members of the choir who live in 'our' village and some of the audience who have become regular supporters! For tickets costing £12 to include refreshments please email: innominatachoir@gmail.com.

Friends of Longovicium (Lanchester Roman Fort)
Visitors and new members are always welcome at our meetings. Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month (excluding December) at 7.30pm in Lanchester Community Centre. For further information about membership please contact: Rodney Hawkins Tel: 0191 4103472 - Email: hawkins_15@sky.com or Mrs M Williams Tel: 01207 520063. Follow us on **Facebook** (Friends of Longovicium). Please have a look at the group's website which is the culmination of decades of research and contains a wealth of information about Longovicium Roman Fort: https://longoviciumcouk.wordpress.com. Friends of Longovicium is part of the Lanchester Partnership.

Acappella Choir
(singing without musical accompaniment)
This is held in the Chapter House of All Saints church every Monday between 10.30 and 12. New members are always welcome. No previous choir experience necessary. We sing a wide variety of songs, lead by Sheila Trow, and are open to both men and women.

Methodist Church Coffee Mornings
Coffee mornings are held every Saturday at the Methodist Church between 10 and 12. If you would like to organise a coffee morning for your organisation, please contact Judith Brown on 521898.

Wellbeing Walk
Every Monday at 1pm on the village green next to the war memorial. Walk lasts up to 90 minutes, all welcome. To book please visit www.durham.gov.uk/walkdurham or call 03000 262539.

Playgroup
Every Friday at 9:30 at Croft View Halls. Find us on Facebook, 'Lanchester's new playgroup'.



The Lanchester Community Orchard Work Sessions
We meet regularly to maintain and care for the orchard. Come and join us to find out more and help look after the trees. There are jobs for all ages and we always stop for coffee! New members are always welcome. For all our work session dates please visit the What's On page of our website lanchesterorchard.org

Lanchester Hiking Group
Meets at 10am on the 2nd Wednesday of every month. Walks are about 5 miles long within a 30 minute radius of Lanchester – lifts provided. For further details please call Helen Thomas on 07712425623 (or email hdbthomas@live.com).

Monday Art Group
We are a small friendly group who enjoy painting and drawing, and come together to learn, and give each other support in making art. We meet each Monday in the Community Centre from 10.00am to 12pm with an occasional demonstration by visiting artists or our own members. New members are most welcome. Contact tojimrafferty@yahoo.com if you would like further information.

Vintage Tractor Club
Meets on the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30pm in Lanchester Social Club.

Scottish Dance
Scottish dancing takes place every Friday 7.30 to 9.30 in the community centre and complete beginners are very welcome, contact Elizabeth Grayson on 0191 384 4836 for more information.

Next March, Party Like It Means Something

with Willow Burn Hospice and Berry's Jewellers, Newcastle.



On Friday 27 March 2026, Willow Burn Hospice is throwing a party with purpose, and we'd love you to be part of it. The Willow Burn Gala is back for another year, this time at the welcoming South Causey Inn, for an unforgettable night of celebration and community spirit.
Next year's event is hosted by North East Comedian Steffen Peddie and includes a drinks reception, three-course meal with wine, balloon pop, raffle and auction and live music from Soul Street.

Event Details
Date: Friday 27 March 2026
Time: 7pm – Midnight
Venue: South Causey Inn, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 0YB
Tickets: £65 each or £650 for a table of 10
Dress Code: Black-tie and fabulous

This year's Gala is a celebration of everything Willow Burn stands for compassion, fun and the power of local generosity. So, dust off your tux, grab your gown and get ready to party like it means something.
Sponsorship packages for businesses are available from £500.
For tickets or further information, please contact Ali English on: 01207 529 224 / aenglish@willowburnhospice.org.uk
www.willowburnhospice.org.uk/our-events/willow-burn-gala-2026
Rachel Quince

An Exciting Christmas Concert!

'Twas The Night Before Christmas Innominata Choir will be performing just a few miles out of the village, at Annfield Plain Methodist Church on Saturday 20th December at 7pm. The concert will include familiar carols for choir and audience as well as some beautiful readings with carols from composers such as Bob Chilcott, Peter Warlock and Sarah Quartel.



'Twas The Night Before Christmas will be sung in the second part of the concert.
A wonderful, innovative Cantata by Oliver Tarney, the words of the poem unfold interspersed with traditional carols. Please join us for a real celebration of Christmas! You will recognise some members of the choir who live in 'our' village and some of the audience who have become regular supporters! For tickets costing £12 to include refreshments please email: innominatachoir@gmail.com

Margaret Coates



Christmas Crafting afternoon **Lanchester Methodist Church. Wednesday 17th December 1:30 to 3:30pm**
More information on page 14.

December Church Services

All Saints' Parish Church
14th December, 3pm: Nine Lessons and Carols
21st December, 3pm: A very Messy Christmas! Messy Church party, songs, games, stories and a free Messy Tea!
24th December, 11pm: Midnight Mass
25th December, 10am: Christmas Day Eucharist

All Saints' RC Church
23rd December, 1.30pm Benediction and Mass
24th December, 7.15pm Christmas Vigil Mass
25th December, 9.30am Christmas Day Mass
26th December, 9.30am Mass

Lanchester Methodist Church
Sunday 14th 10.30 Morning Worship;
Sunday 14th 6pm A service for any who have experienced loss during the year
Sunday 21st 10.30 Carol Service; 6pm Candlelit Carol Service with choir and band
Christmas Eve 5pm Reflective Communion (come and go as you wish)
Christmas Day 10am All-age celebration
Sunday 28th (no services)

Santa's Christmas Trail 2025

The Lanchester Partnership

The Lanchester Partnership Christmas Trail - Free fun for all of the family!
Santa's Elves are already busy getting creative with the clues for this year's Christmas trail around the village!
Starting on the day of the Christmas Light switch on in November, look out for Christmas clues around the village shop windows. Complete the trail in any order until Dec 31st!
Pick up an answer sheet from Lanchester News or The Kings Head to complete the trail…
The answer to each clue will give you a letter which when compiled make up a message. Once you crack the message, take your answer sheets to The Kings Head to collect your free prize!
Thanks to the local businesses who support the trail.

Community Centre News

LANCHESTER COMMUNITY CENTRE

This month we thought that we would have a little review of 2025:
Improvements made:

- Two new treadmills and a set of kettle bells in the gym
- Improved the flooding issue in the front porch

A special 'thank you':

- to our wonderful volunteers who give their time so generously and help us in so many ways
- to our committee who work hard helping with the running of the centre
- to everyone who has taken part in our fundraising raffles and events this year
- to the local businesses that have helped us with fundraising: Spar, Lanchester; Lanchester Country Basket and ASDA, Stanley
- to everyone who supports us by becoming a 'Friend' and donating £24 a year or more (there is a form on our website if you would like to help us in this way)
- to those generous people who pop their loose change into a box and donate it to us.

We need your help!
The community centre was bought in the 70's by the community from the Council, so it is your centre, so please get involved. Why not consider joining our committee? We just meet every other month and in April 2026 we will need a new Chair, please come along and help.
The office is staffed Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am-1.15pm. On Tuesday and Thursdays, it's 9am-3pm. If you have any enquiries about any of the brilliant activities or clubs available please get in touch on 01207 521275.
To keep up to date with what's going on check out our Information Point; follow us on Facebook 'Lanchester Community Centre' or check out our website. We have renewed our website. Go to lanchestercc.co.uk or scan the QR code above to view it.

Merry Christmas to you all from staff, volunteers and committee members. Here's to a successful 2026 for us all.

Marie Murphy



Beautilley
BEAUTY & MASSAGE
Appointment only, Lanchester based.
Call Ann on:
07534775077 or,
email: beautilley@hotmail.com
Facebook: beautilleybeautyandmassage
BEAUTILLEY
BEAUTY & MASSAGE

PC - ASSIST *Mobile service for:-*
PC repairs or upgrades, data recovery, virus removal, tuition and any other IT related problems. Assistance also available for tablets, e-readers, smart phones & audio equipment.
If your PC is slow - I can help.
Call Alan on 07961497093
e-mail pcassist4@gmail.com

LANCHESTER PLUMBING & HEATING LTD
Gas Safe & Oil Service Engineers
FROM A LEAKING TAP TO COMPLETE CENTRAL HEATING SYSTEM
NO JOB TOO SMALL
• COMPETITIVE QUOTES • FREE ADVICE
• NO CALL OUT CHARGE
CALL BARRY ON: 07717174739

ADVANCED DECORATING
FREE ESTIMATES

David Gallagher
Painter and Decorator
4 Woodside Tce,
Stanley
Co. Durham DH9 7HG
01207 231338
07887 881396
davidg3001@talktalk.net
www.advanced-decorating.org.uk

LANCHESTER CARPETS
THE QUALITY RETAILER GIVING FRIENDLY RELIABLE SERVICE
Call in for a quote now!
Tel: 01207 521771
• Free estimates
• Free local delivery
• Expert fitting service
• Rugs and Vinyls
• 100's of remnants
• New stock every week
9 Church View, Lanchester, Co. Durham DH7 0ES

Durham Soap Company
Luxurious artisan soap and other bathroom products handmade in Lanchester using natural oils, butters, botanicals, clays and pure essential oils.
Check out our website for our stockists, events and fabulous produce
www.durhamsoap.co.uk
Email: handmade@durhamsoap.co.uk
Tel no: 07969123023
We also do click and collect from Lanchester Hardware store

SteelTown HANDYMAN
CONTACT LEE:
01207269695
07450088561
- QUALIFIED ELECTRICIAN
- HOUSEHOLD MAINTENANCE/ REPAIRS
- FLAT-PACK ASSEMBLY
- TILING, PAINTING & DECORATING
- BLIND/ CURTAIN POLE INSTALLATION
- GARDEN MAINTENANCE

"FROM HANGING A PICTURE TO TILING A WALL, FOR THE STEELTOWN HANDYMAN, NO JOB'S TOO BIG OR SMALL."
TRUSTWORTHY - RELIABLE - COMPETITIVELY PRICED

RUTHERFORD & CLARK
ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS
All electrical work undertaken
LOCAL
RELIABLE
COMPETITIVE
Lee Rutherford: 07791 582 420
Joe Clark: 07931 639 450
Email: Info@rutherfordclarkelec.co.uk

Please support our Village Voice advertisers, and mention the Village Voice when using their services!

If you would like to advertise in the Village Voice for as little as £30 per month, and delivered to over 2700 homes in the area...please contact:
lanchestervvadverts@gmail.com

Stuart Wright
Funeral Service Ltd.
• Complete funeral service to all areas
• Private Chapels of Rest
• Silver fleet
• Funeral pre payment plans by Golden Charter
• 24 hour service
• Established 1992
Tel Durham 0191-3863850

For more information:
www.stuartwrightfunerals.co.uk
Head Office Gilesgate, 38 Sunderland Road, Gilesgate, Durham. DH1 2LG
Pelton, 3 Front Street, Pelton, Durham, DH2 1DB
Pity Me, Front Street, Pity Me, Durham, DH1 5DQ
Langley Park, 43 Front Street, Langley Park, Durham, DH7 9SA

Lanchester Local History Society report

We met on Friday 7th November to hear from Julian Harrop, Collections Co-ordinator for Beamish The Living Museum of the North.

He shared with us a selection of photographs from the William Lubbock of Blackhill collection which he had been scanning and processing at work. Lubbock was a teacher born in 1871 and a good amateur photographer. He was the headmaster at Consett Council school in the early 1900s. His pictures are held in high regard and often carry his logo of a combined W and L.

When out on his travels around the north he used a box camera and a heavy tripod. He became the Chairman of the Tyneside Photography Society. During the talk we travelled across the north through the camera lens and encountered many familiar places. The photos were interspersed with a range of interesting scenes of human activity of the time.

Julian kindly sent me two photographs from The People's Collection at the museum.

The first is a shot of Lanchester that I hadn't seen before although it has similarities to one already well circulated on Facebook. The second is of the market place in Durham showing St Nics church, the graveyard and the Clayport, the gate at the bottom of Claypath.





If you would like to see more of his pictures visit the online People's Collection at Beamish or via Facebook at the Consett and District Heritage Initiative page.

Marian Morrison

The Vicus at Longovicium

As at other Roman forts, a civilian settlement (*vicus*) grew up outside the fort. The term *vicus* is one which describes a Roman civilian settlement which can vary in size from a small village to a town-sized settlement. In the north of England such settlements are nearly always adjacent to forts and their situation arises because of the construction of the forts. The *vicus* was built to serve the fort and its soldiers, merchants and craftsmen following in their wake. Most *vici* were not planned in the way we think of town planning today. They grew up in a haphazard fashion, usually as a ribbon development along the roads leading away from the gates of the fort. Sometimes there may be just a small cluster of buildings outside the main gate, sometimes two or more sides of a fort may be surrounded by the *vicus*.

CGI reconstruction of part of the Vicus looking towards the East gate (image © Darin Smith)

Whereas the existence of the fort and probable *vicus* has been known for centuries, little excavation has taken place on the site. Most of what we know today is through geophysical surveying. A small excavation in the *vicus* in 1975 revealed a stone-founded building 5 m wide made up of well-dressed ashlar blocks, having a stone-slabbed floor which was partly covered with broken sandstone roof slabs. On the floor were found numerous iron nails and boot studs, leading to the suggestion that this was a cobbler's shop. Pottery found within the building suggested an occupation period ranging from the 2nd to 4th century AD.

Darin Smith





Poppy's walks

Merry Christmas readers.

They say a Dog is for Life, not just for Christmas. Very true words if I may say so.

Which is why I insist on being walked whatever the weather. And why my two Humans wrapped themselves up to take me out on a freezing late November morning in the middle of what the weather people on TV were calling a Cold Snap.

As you will know by now, I am Poppy, a Patterdale Terrier who enjoys sharing with you readers the walks I lead my Humans on.

This one set off from the village green just a few days before the lights were switched on.

We walked along the railway path in the direction of Malton and kept walking. The humans were keen to avoid footpaths as much as possible due to the icy conditions, so elected to stay on the railway path for as long as possible. This suited me fine, and although it was cold the humans walked briskly and I ran around a lot, so we soon all felt comfortably warm, especially under the winter sun and sheltered from the cold wind by the embankments.

We soon reached the Malton car park and walked across it and onwards, to my delight. The longer a walk the better as far as I am concerned. We kept walking in the direction of Langley Park, although there were enough woods on the left and right for me to take several diversions to explore.

Eventually we came to a gate on our right and an arrow which marked the fact that this was a public footpath. We walked through a metal gate which was easy enough for the Humans to open and close again, then walked uphill along a somewhat muddy farm track. This took us past a barn filled with hay on our left and then to another gate which also and closed quite easily.

This however led us through a field of sheep, so of course I was kept on my lead.

We soon reached another gate which again opened and closed easily, and this took us into a farmyard. After crossing the farmyard, we turned right along a track which led us past a few farm buildings. This is I believe known as Biggen Farm.

At the end of the track, we crossed a stile and walked diagonally across a field with panoramic views of the Browney Valley on our right. We soon came to a gap in a fence at the end of the field which led us across a small stream and into another field again full of sheep. So, on my lead I was led downhill to another stile, which took us into some woods. We walked along a narrow path until we came to yet another stile on our left which we crossed into Malton Nature Reserve.

By walking through the nature reserve we passed a car storage facility on our right then came to a row of cottages called Officials Terrace. We passed them on our right then turned left until we crossed a road bridge over the Browney. We then turned left and walked along the river bank before rejoining the railway path and returning to Lanchester.

The walk took us a full two hours and was in my view a healthy way to spend a winter's morning. For dogs and humans alike.

FB HOME
IMPROVEMENTS
BUILDING & PROPERTY MAINTENANCE
KITCHENS BATHROOMS
FENCING & DECKING PLASTERING
ALL ASPECTS OF JOINERY WALL & FLOOR TILING
DECORATING COMPOSITE DOORS
WALL & CEILING CLADDING ROOFING & GUTTERING
LAMINATE & LVT FLOORING
HANDYMAN SERVICES
fbhomeimprovements@gmail.com
Find us on: facebook
Craig: 07789481500
Ryan: 07754103753

Hanley & Sons
Purveyors of fine quality meats and home cooked food
Family Butcher & Delicatessen
Apart from the normal butchery and delicatessen products we now offer:-
A Selection of Cooked Meats and Outside Catering
Open Monday - Saturday from 8 am
14 Front Street Lanchester
01207 529970



Watoto Charity

Watoto brings hope and healing to vulnerable women and children in Uganda and South Sudan. Watoto villages provide homes, families and holistic care to over 3000 children. Baby Watoto rescues orphaned and abandoned babies giving them a bright future, and the Watoto Neighbourhood Projects return dignity to Africa's greatest resource, her women. God is at the centre of everything Watoto does.

Mark and Julia Lloyd from Lanchester recently spent time in Uganda volunteering with Baby Watoto. They plan to return for 3 – 4 months next year and would love to be able to take out much needed supplies of premature baby milk, nappies, bottles and as much as they can fit into 6 suitcases to support this charity.

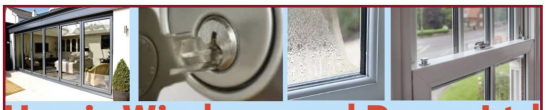
As part of their fundraising for the children and women they are hosting, together with some wonderful volunteers, a Christmas Crafting afternoon at **Lanchester Methodist Church. Wednesday 17th December 1:30 to 3:30pm** Please find all the information in the poster.

Tickets available from:

Helen: dadsapplied@gmail.com – 07913976911

Julia: mj.jm@hotmail.co.uk - 07954320699

FRED McALOAN
ELECTRICAL SERVICE
Landlord and Household Electrical Test Certification, Additional Sockets, Lighting, Showers, Cooker Points, Full or Part Rewires
RELIABLE & DEPENDABLE SERVICE
Free Estimates & Friendly Advice
0781 3202 470
01207 500770



Harris Windows and Doors Ltd
Composite, upvc and Bi-Fold doors,
upvc casement windows, sliding sash windows,
door and window repairs - misted glazing repairs
Call David: 07725 803366
Call Caroline: 01207 501380
Call today - We come to you!
Durham road Leadgate Consett
hwdsales@outlook.com
www.harriswindowsanddoors.uk

Talking Heads
Est 23years
Unisex Hair Salon
QUALITY CARE FOR YOU AND YOUR HAIR
Ring Jeni
for an appointment
01207 520 926

DAVISONS
Clothing
Winter stock now in!
Front Street, Leadgate
01207 502355



Lanchester PHARMACY
If you live in Lanchester, Esh Winning, Esh, Langley Park, Burnhope, Cornsay Village or Satley, we can deliver your prescriptions straight to your door.
Call today to book
01207 520365
or pop in store to find out more...
15 Front St, Lanchester, Durham DH7 0LA

RAVELLO
Ristorante Italiano
Open 7 days a week - Noon until 10pm
Serving weekly Specials
Sunday Lunches 12noon - 4pm
Front Street, Lanchester
Contact 01207 528825

Lanchester Endowed Parochial School



Mrs Allison Moralee

At the end of this year, we will be losing two valuable and long-serving pillars of our community. Mrs Allison Moralee is leaving her position as Assistant Cook in our school after more than 27 years of working in our school and prior to that, the Infant School. She has seen children leave, their children arrive and she is still cooking meals. But the time has come when she has decided to hang up her apron strings and enjoy a more leisurely and cooler lifestyle! We will miss her in the kitchen and I know the children will miss her smiling face at the dinner hatch every day.

Mrs Mandy Simpson, our school crossing patrol, is also retiring at the end of December, after more than 35 years. What a miss she is going to be to the whole village. I know many adults stop and have a chat, ex pupils still come and say hello (even though they have been left for years!) and the dogs all love her for her treats she shares! Mandy is a well-known figure in the community and it will be very strange not to see her standing in that road in all weathers! Again, we wish her all the very best for her future and I know she will enjoy sitting in front of her warm fire on these icy, frosty, cold winter mornings.

I know the whole community will join with me in wishing them both a very long, happy and healthy retirement.

Christmas has certainly descended on the village and it was so special to be there for the Christmas Lights Switch On. It is always great to see the children involved in turning on the lights and Jaidan and Sophia were honoured to be nominated for this very important job this year. We also had five girls from Year 5 selling bracelets they had made with all proceeds going to Henry Dancer Days. Thank you all for your incredible support of them, helping them raise an incredible £235. Jane Dancer came into school earlier this year and talked to the children about the charity, as well as telling them all about Henry. She had quite an impact on so many of the children. We are very proud that so many children feel moved to do something to help others.



We have also been delighted with the reaction to the art work from our Arts Leaders in the windows of Hanley and Sons (*Picture above*). We are rather proud of the amazing job they have done – on a very cold and frosty winter morning! Wendy Hanley asked if we would be interested in decorating the windows and of course we jumped at the opportunity. We pride ourselves on being at the heart of our community and of course, this is a really visual way that demonstrates it. Wendy worked at our school for years and we are so pleased this link has continued. It was also all the more special as we felt that we were doing this for John too – who would have welcomed each and every child with open arms, in his usual heart-warming way. Wendy did that though, providing the children with a bacon or sausage buttie!

Park Safe Initiatve

Park Safe is a new initiative to try and address parking issues around schools. Illegal and inconsiderate parking around schools is causing hazards for both road users and pedestrians. Poor parking also increases the likelihood of an accident occurring and someone being hurt. We don't want this to happen.



Park Safe allows the public to identify a vehicle parked dangerously or inconsiderately and film it on their mobile phone. Signage around the schools includes a QR code. Using the phone camera on the QR code will link to a website where the footage can be uploaded. The footage will be reviewed by the Police or the County Council and the outcome could be education or enforcement.

The scheme has been funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Joy Allen who, following success at three schools around County Durham, has now extended the scheme to 11 more schools – Lanchester EP being one of them. Inspector Andrew Howarth said, 'This is a partnership initiative between the police, council and school. We all receive regular complaints about dangerous and inconsiderate parking around schools. This is preventable and what we are aiming to do is change behaviours. It is not about punishing people or issuing penalties. This is an opportunity to safeguard children and reduce the risk of a collision.'



Top. Park Safe signage and Joy Allen visiting the school.

You may have seen boards around our school with a QR code on. It is also in this article. Parking is a village problem and not just confined to our school. Please use the QR code to upload images of dangerous or illegal parking so we can continue to try and play our small part in trying to improve things for us all in Lanchester.

Mrs J Davis, Head Teacher

All Saints' Parish Church is recruiting…

Based in Lanchester, All Saints' Parish Church is a friendly and inclusive village church eight miles outside of Durham. Music plays an important role in our worship and outreach. Our services include BCP and Common Worship liturgies, and we hope to introduce more contemporary worship on a semi- regular basis. We are now looking to appoint a new Organist and Choirmaster. Our Organist will play for services up to 5 times per month at both All Saints and Saint John's Burnhope, plus special church festivals and events. The role also involves leading weekly choir rehearsals and working with the clergy to plan worship. Presently we have a small choir. We would like to grow in numbers and skill, to reintroduce sung evensong for feasts and festivals, and to extend our repertoire.

For an informal chat about this role and for further information, please contact our Priest in Charge, Rev'd Lesley Sutherland, by 4pm on 10th December 2025.

For applications, please submit a CV, covering letter, and the names and addresses of two referees, to reach us by 4pm on 13th December.

Applications should be emailed to reverendsutherland@gmail.com.

Revd Lesley Sutherland

All Saints' Catholic Primary School

As the festive season approaches, All Saints' is buzzing with excitement and preparations for a magical Christmas celebration. We want to take the opportunity, at this most important time of year, to ensure we bring joy to the whole community.

Our infant performance of Born in a Barn and junior concert of Groovin': The Nativity are for our families and our local neighbours. Everyone should have the opportunity to see the confidence and happiness our pupils display. Year Six took time to write Christmas cards for those who might want to join us. Speaking of Christmas cards, we hope you enjoyed the Churches Together card designed by Dana and Mabel – we thought the images were lovely reminders of the true meaning of Christmas. Our retiring collections at our performances always fund the World Gifts campaign: the money raised is split between all classes for the children to choose their purchase, whether it's Teaching Someone to Read, sending Water to a Family or building a Terrific Toilet. What a wonderful effort from our children to think about others at Christmas.

To spread kindness and community spirit, our pupils will also sing carols at Willow Burn Hospice, Lynwood House and our pupils will also plan, prepare and host an Afternoon Tea for parishioners from All Saints' and St. Teresa's church. These initiatives reflect the values we hold dear at All Saints' — caring for others and making a positive difference: aspiring to be the best versions of ourselves.

Thinking of our younger friends in the community, we have been thrilled to introduce our 'Smallest Saints' this term for children not yet school age. The next two events are 'Messy Play' and 'Christmas' – everyone is welcome! Our infant children are also keen to share the story of Christmas, and the baby Jesus, at home with their families via our Travelling Cribs. Finding five minutes of peace and reflection at home, when life is so busy, is to be treasured.

We look forward to welcoming everyone to these special events and sharing the magic of Christmas with our wonderful village community. We also look forward to the parties, Christmas lunch and jumper day, the pantomime, a special visit from a very special visitor, class rewards, homemade gifts and treats and all of the excitement of Christmas. From all of us at All Saints' we wish you a very Merry Christmas and hope everyone who reads this finds a little joy over the holidays. All the best for 2026.

Frances Stephenson, Head Teacher



Year 5 working with Durham University



Remembrance celebration



Smallest Saints

St Bede's Catholic School and Sixth Form College

Students have continued to have an excellent year at St Bede's with pupils showing excellent resilience and commitment to their academic and personal development. On 18th November we hosted our first *Get into…* event to help better inform students about potential future career options. Students were able to meet and greet with professionals from across a range of medical fields and ask questions to better understand the jobs available. Staff and students had a wonderful evening, and we'd like to extend a huge thank you to all of our visiting professionals.

KS4 and 5 pupils also took part in the Bar Mock Trial at the law courts in Newcastle. The team performed brilliantly in front of real judges (with wigs and everything), delivering speeches, running the courtroom, and undergoing intense questioning from rival schools. Although we didn't make it through to the national finals, the team was excellent and did us proud all day.

Finally, our chaplaincy members have been taking part in even more fundraising activities including raising money for SVP and for Aid to the Church in Need. Pupils have created some amazing Christmassy products for sale, proceeds from which will go to the St Vincent de Paul society which provides aid and assistance to those experiencing poverty.

As we head into the festive period, I look forward to updating you on the Christmas activities which take place in school across this wonderful time of the year.

Catherine Hammill, Head Teacher



Photo: Raising money for St Vincent de Paul society: Imogen Turnbull - Juliet Deacon - Harriet Warring & Isabel McDonald.

Public meetings following the CQC rating of the Lanchester Medical Centre as Inadequate

Following the shock at the extent of the failings identified in the CQC (Care Quality Commission) report, two public meetings were organised in the village by the Patient Participation Group (PPG) in conjunction with the local councillor Alison Gray. Both meetings were chaired by Neil Graham, with Sue Graham (Chair of the PPG) and Alison leading the discussions. Around 150 people in total attended the two venues with a view to discussing the CQC findings and providing a clear mandate to the PPG and local councillor as to the desired outcomes of the patient group.

As a recap, the CQC visited in July and in their report, published in November, they rated the centre as “inadequate” overall with five out of the six categories rated as “inadequate” and one as “requires improvement”. Questions were asked from the floor and some wished to give their views, including one person who had been in education who stated that if a head teacher had these ratings they would be dismissed.

The key points from the meetings:

- The staff at the practice heard the outcomes at the same time as the general public.
- The CQC will inspect again in 6 months when they will expect to see evidence that the registered provider has adhered to the Improvement Plan.
- The Integrated Care Board (ICB) is responsible for coordinating the provision of health services in the region. ICB will check on progress in the interim period before the next CQC visit using their own clinical team of experts.
- All GP practices are independent businesses that are contracted to the NHS. Dr Kalra is the registered provider of both practices in Lanchester (one being Croft View which is a satellite of Browney House surgery, Langley Park).
- There is no performance management of GPs in a sole partnership.
- There is no requirement in Dr Kalra’s contract to provide a female GP.
- The most senior Advanced Nurse Practitioners can cover all conditions **except** mental health.
- Patients with issues with the practice should make formal complaints to the Practice Manager so that they can be logged and followed up, it is no good just complaining.
- Dr Kalra is a registered GP and will return to Lanchester Medical Centre working two days per week from 5th January 2026.
- Dr Kalra also is sole partner for a practice in Langley Park which has an outpost in Croft View in Lanchester, hence there is no choice of GP within Lanchester. Dr Kalra has raised the possibility of merging the two practices, but this is currently on hold.
- The ICB is sympathetic to people who may wish to move to another practice; however, this would need to be outside the village of course.
- Alison Gray is working with our MP, Luke Akehurst, to follow up with the Secretary of State to resolve this unsatisfactory situation – i.e. that Dr Kalra is solely responsible for producing and implementing a recovery plan.

At the end of the meetings attendees were asked to fill in the ballot papers with the following questions:

QUESTION 1: I have **confidence** in Dr Kalra remaining as the registered provider of Lanchester Medical Centre under the short term supervision of the Integrated Care Board. OR
I have **no confidence** in Dr Kalra remaining as the registered provider of Lanchester Medical Centre under the short term supervision of the Integrated Care Board.

QUESTION 2:
I have **confidence** in the non-clinical staff of Lanchester Medical Centre.
I have **no confidence** in the non-clinical staff of Lanchester Medical Centre

The results of the ballots are shown below, however, there is a significant majority of those who voted with no confidence in Dr Kalra and a significant majority who do have confidence in the non-clinical staff.

The ICB was approached for comment and issued the following statement:

Dr Neil O'Brien, medical director for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) said: "We acknowledge the CQC's report and are determined to ensure that the practice rebuilds the confidence of its patients following what has been a difficult and unsettling time.

"We are grateful to South Durham CIC for agreeing to step in to run the practice and ensure that patients are able to continue to access primary care services.

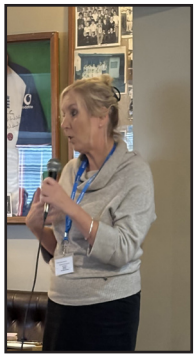
"We understand that patients will be anxious about some of the issues highlighted in the CQC's report.

"We would like to reassure them that South Durham CIC have taken urgent and immediate steps to stabilise the practice and put in place a number of measures to improve patient care.

"Following the publication of the CQC's report, we will continue to work with them, South Durham CIC and the provider to ensure that the recommendations outlined in the report are implemented."

Keith Brown





Top Sue Graham
Above Alison Gray
Below Results of the Ballot

Public Meeting Statistics

Details	Lanchester Cricket Club 15.11.25	Lanchester Social Club Monday 17.11.25
Attendees	94	50
Votes cast	88	48
Spoiled votes	03 (3.5%)	01 (2%)
Ques 1: Registered provider confidence vote	Confidence: 3 (3.5%) No confidence: 82 (93%)	Confidence: 2 (2%) No confidence: 46 (96%)
Ques 2: Non clinical staff confidence vote	Confidence: 75 (85%) No confidence: 10 (12%)	Confidence: 45 (93%) No confidence: 03 (5%)
Response rate	**Overall response rate is 136 responses with a patient population of circa 4100. Overall % response rate is : 3.3%**	

WI News

Well what a day we had on Saturday 15th November as Lanchester WI celebrated its 100th Anniversary.

Dressed in 1920’s style finery, Lanchester members, Durham County Federation Chairman and friends from neighbouring WI’s gathered for a lovely afternoon.

We began by singing Jerusalem and toasting our future. We then enjoyed a fantastic afternoon tea from Truly Scrumptious Café, Langley Park, we were then entertained by singer, Claire Louise.

Such a fun and friendly afternoon!!

Wishing all of our members past, present and future a very Happy Christmas and a happy and healthy 2026.

Our first meeting of 2026 will be on Monday 5 January, 7pm in the Community Centre. To keep us warm we will be enjoying hot chocolate and cake (tea and coffee also available). Why not start 2026 with something new, come along and join us, it will be lovely to see you.







Marie Murphy

Top right: Lanchester Committee and Federation Chairman.
L to R – Trish, Freda (Federation Chairman), Tracey, Michelle, Marie (President), Sylvia, Jennifer, June and Janis
Right: Celebration cake made by Janis
Top left: In the car: Marie Murphy and the Durham County Federation of WI’s chairman, Freda Laverick

Purple Haze – Part 4



Below is an extract from Purple Haze – Book 5 in Skin Crawlers series of books by Matthew James. Available on Amazon Kindle, paperback and on Amazon Kindle Unlimited.

Last time, Lavender had seen strange portals and was questioning her sanity…

This couldn't be happening again! Not now! The purple haze or portal, whatever it was, covered the door from top to bottom, a swirling and glittering purple of fuchsias, orchids, plums and more that formed into a spiral, constantly moving and Lavender could feel the strange energy pulling her in like a magnet.

Her eyes darted around for someone, anyone, to be able to see what she was seeing. And yet, she couldn't draw her eyes from the portal for long. She was frozen to the spot, eyes pulled towards the shimmering purple and Lavender could even feel her feet moving slowly, gently into the portal itself.

She blinked behind her glasses as she moved.

Lavender could see shapes forming inside the portal, like it was a world, made out of moving purple colours that continually changed, with a fuzzy static.

There was a shadow, darker purple than the others, that looked like a being that was moving closer and closer to where she was at the portal entrance. Her stomach lurched and her brain was screaming at her to start moving.

Lavender move! Now!

"MOVE!" screamed Lavender and she was able to turn around quickly, freeing her from whatever power the purple haze had on her as she ran. She dashed away as quick as her legs would carry her, putting distance between herself and the portal but suddenly she felt something hot grab at her ankle and wrap itself around, its grip tightening.

Looking down, she saw a weird purple tentacle wrapped around her foot. It glittered and slithered, but its grip was firm. Hot against her skin…

Please follow my Instagram for more information: Instagram.com/matthewjamesauthor

Skin Crawlers is just like Goosebumps for kids aged 5 and up. All Skin Crawlers books are standalone and can be read in any order. By local Lanchester author – Matthew James.



Angel Drain Away
Blocked Drain Services
Based in Consett and covering the North East
Your local, trusted drainage engineer
angeldrainaway.com
07301 319 555

PAUL KIRBY Est 1987
Plumbing, Heating, and Building Services
Specialists in Bathroom and Kitchen refurbishment,
Tiling, Shower panels, PVC ceilings,
and all related plumbing work.
FREE ESTIMATES
Tel/Fax: 01207 284230 Mob: 07836742359
email: pk.plumbing@live.com

Trees for Lanchester – Calling Landowners and Residents

Do you have space for trees? Join us in making Lanchester greener and wilder.

Trees for Lanchester is a small volunteer group dedicated to planting trees across our beautiful village and surrounding countryside. Each year, we work with local landowners to create greener, wilder spaces that benefit everyone.

This season, we have nearly 200 mixed-deciduous saplings in our nursery. These include more than 13 native species such as oak, dogwood, rowan, dog rose, birch, hazel, and hawthorn. They are perfect for boosting biodiversity, creating habitats for wildlife, reducing traffic noise, acting as windbreaks, and helping with flood control.

Whether you'd like to establish hedgerows and shelterbelts on farmland, plant a mixed-deciduous woodland, or you have a small garden and want to attract more wildlife, we would love to hear from you.

Get in touch to register your interest and arrange a visit. We will help plan the planting, provide the saplings, stakes, and sleeves, and carry out all the planting free of charge.

We are also keen to hear from landowners where we've planted before, as we can infill gaps or replace any trees that haven't survived. And if you'd like to get hands-on, we welcome new members to join Trees for Lanchester in making a lasting difference for our planet.





Important note on timing: We don't yet know how many landowners will come forward, and our current stock is limited. Depending on interest, we can apply for more trees, but planting may take place either this winter or next. Trees will be allocated on a **first-come, first-serve basis**, so registering early is the best way to secure planting on your land.

✉ Contact us at lanchestertrees@gmail.com

Lisa Baldini

ADAM
the Gardener
Garden maintenance
Winter garden tidying...
Christmas and beyond!
Tel : 07539173208
adiojameson@gmail.com

GD AUTOCARE Ltd
Complete service & repair
17 Point winter check only £19.95
Essential Winter Supplies available in store now - De-icer, screen wash, scrapers and lots more.
Servicing
Fixed price servicing* - Interim Service & MOT £99.95
Oil & Filter £64.95 / Interim £84.95 / Full £164.95 / Major £214.95
* Additional charges may apply for specialist oils or excessive fluid requirements.
Tyres
Winter tyres now available - Call for Details
All brands available - We won't be beaten on price!
Diagnostics
Fixed price diagnostics - £49.95
Full vehicle scan to highlight any faults
Batteries
Extensive Battery Stock Available Now – No Delays!
Free Battery, Alternator & Starter motor check while you wait.
All other work undertaken
MOT / Brakes / Steering / Suspension
(Formerly Witbank Garage), Hallgarth Building, Hallgarth Terrace, Lanchester, DH7 0HS
01207 529192 service@gdautocare.co.uk www.gdautocare.co.uk

Lanchester Flower Club

Member of the National Association of Flower Arrangers Society

Our Christmas open afternoon meeting was held on 22nd November 2025 in Lanchester Community Centre. We had an excellent afternoon with 55 attending. Our demonstrator was Linda Fraser, her theme "Fantastically Festive". Linda made some fabulous arrangements and chatted telling us a story to each arrangement as she worked. Arrangements were later raffled so many ladies went away happy winners. Gillian Harrison came with home cooked food and chutneys. So once again thank you Gillian, for always supporting us at these events over many years.

Light refreshments, tea and coffee was served and of course there was plenty of chatter. This will be our very last Lanchester Flower demonstration; it is a sad time as the club has been going 52 years. Over the years there have been many committee members and members, a big thank to all these ladies; it has been a wonderful friendship club. We have one member who has been a great asset to the club for all of those 52 years, Helen Tomlinson. The photo shows three of the ladies who originally had the great idea to start a flower club in Lanchester. They applied to be members of the National Association of Flower Arrangers Society, and the rest is history as they say. I would also like to mention Maureen Clarkson who died recently. Maureen was also a member for all of those years along with Helen. Maureen was very well known in our village and was a flower arranger herself. She entered many flower arranging competitions and was often very successful. She also arranged flowers in the Methodist church until age prevented her. Maureen will be sadly missed.

The last hoorah for the club will be a Christmas meal at Beamish Park Hotel for all our members. I am sure we will enjoy a lovely afternoon of friendship.

Lestrine Kelly



Above some of the audience; below Linda Fraser





Right: Some of the original ladies l-r Helen Tomlinson, Mary Matthew and Ishbel Eggleston

Lanchester Bowling Club

Strange things can happen when you are playing bowls! How about a New Zealand Haka being performed, a hippo walking slowly across the Bowling Green, or how about being 'rowed' to the Green! They have and do happen, so let me explain.

Firstly, the New Zealand Haka: In 1998 the Budleigh Salterton Bowls Club, in Devon, decided to perform their own 'haka' war dance, before playing against visiting touring teams! They learnt it from the nearby Plymouth Marjon University Hockey Club. How about Frampton on Severn Bowls Club, who, in 2022, learned the Cook Island's version of the Haka, to welcome the Cook Island's Commonwealth Bowls Team, who were training at their Green. Regretfully, there doesn't seem to be a film of these wonderful Haka performances. However, there is a film, from Pathe News, showing a New Zealand Bowls Team doing their Haka, before playing against a Mid Wales in 1928!

In 2017 at St Lucia Bowling Club (Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa) on their annual Valentines Bowl Event, a hippo decided to interrupt their game of bowls, to enjoy a wander across their Green! Fortunately, the Green was unaffected, the woods (i.e.bowls) were not moved and the Hippo declined membership! For a few years now, Sidmouth Bowling Club has been the home of the Loch Ness Monster. Sidmouth Members don't seem to be too perturbed by him/her, but maybe that's because it's hedges, not the real thing, that are shaped as the monster. Of course, not every club has these wonderful animals visiting. Kingsthorpe Bowling Club at Northampton have an abundance of spiders, ladybirds, beetles, bees and more unusual animals all over their Green, not the live variety, but the artistic vision of their member John Churchman, who paints and decorates old unused woods.

Fancy a game at the Island Bohemian Bowls Club? It is based on an island in the Thames between Reading and Caversham. The only way you can get to the island is by boat! I wonder if they ever suffered seasickness?

And lastly, if you ever visit the City of Kolkata, India, and you wish to play bowls, then go along to the Royal Calcutta Golf Club, who have had a Bowling Green since 1830. It is the only venue to have a natural Green in India! However, once on the Bowling Green, there is no need to bend to pick up your wood, or even polish them. They have young men to do that for you (I assume for a certain fee), all you need to do is to bowl! Only in India!

So, you just never know what to expect, when you play the weird but wonderful game of bowls.

It only remains to say to all our members, friends and supporters of Lanchester Bowling Club, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year.

Richard Hall

Cricket Round up

At the awards in September, a new award was introduced, Volunteer of the Year and in its inaugural year, there could be only one recipient, our groundsman, John Bell. John has looked after the playing area for 44 years now and is looking to take a step back from the level of work he has done throughout that time. Anyone from the Cricket Club end of the village will have seen John from early morning to late evenings working on the square and the outfield. John never asks for anything, other than a bit of help and puts in more hours than you can count. His tireless work has seen the playing area be recognised as a great one to bat on, but you can also get benefits with the ball too. In the past season, we saw consistently big scores being made but also made a fast rate and many a batter enjoyed his work this season and many before. We hope to see John around on a regular basis still, but following the sad death of his long time friend, Jeff Wingfield, John wants time away from the Club to enjoy outside interests at a time when he wants to do so and after all the service he has given, we have to respect that.

The 2025 season saw several new records happen:

- There were 15 hundreds scored by senior batters, five more than the best in a season. Six were scored by players making their first hundreds for the Club. On two occasions, two first team batters scored hundreds in the same game, the first time this has ever happened and the first time in a game since 2008.
- The first team set a new record for highest team score, when they made 398-5 at home to Seaham Park. The previous record was 335.
- Reuben Du Toit set a new highest individual score when he scored 184 H v Benwell Hill, the previous was 177.
- John Meadows set a new record for the fastest hundred in a first team league game when he reached the score in just 44 balls against Gateshead Fell.
- Three hat-tricks of wickets were taken in the season, Kieran Gohery for the firsts, Jordan Grosert for the seconds and George Tilley for the under 13s.

Andrew McConnell



Happy Christmas and New Year to all our readers and advertisers.

Deadlines and contact information

Articles, letters and photos by Monday 5th January to lanchestervillagevoice@yahoo.co.uk
Adverts by Monday 5th January to lanchestervvadverts@gmail.com or phone Paul 07957 871106 (advertising only)
By post: The Village Voice, c/o Lanchester Community Centre, Newbiggen Lane, Lanchester, DH7 0PB.

Published by Lanchester Publications Ltd, c/o Lanchester Community Centre, Newbiggen Lane, Lanchester, DH7 0PB
The views expressed in this periodical are not necessarily those of the publishers. Whilst all efforts are made to check the authenticity, and accuracy of all articles submitted for publication, occasionally something is bound to be printed incorrectly. Please let us know, and we will endeavour to correct the mistake.