the Village Voice

Issue No 4, Volume 26

Lanchester, April 2026





Above and top left - the Ice Gream Shop



Above and below - the tree planting project







Above and above centre - Lanchester Cricket Football Club

Below and below right Community Centre 1960's event

Communities in Focus Project

Stories on page 2





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Communities in Focus Project

The team has continued their project to document Lanchester. On the cover we have the results of four of their recent photoshoots.

Environmental Group - Tree Planting - ***George Ledger***

The Tree Planting Group (around 12 active members) of the Lanchester Partnership has planted over 5,000 trees in the parish in the past five years — many grown locally at the Community Orchard, with others supplied by Trees for Life and Ovo Energy.

They plant the trees to boost biodiversity, support wildlife, provide shelter for animals, reduce run-off, and enhance the village landscape.

Part of the Environment Group within Lanchester Partnership (active since 2010), they also run litter picks, promote recycling and plastic reduction, host climate change film nights, energy events, and community talks.

The group's small member numbers limit the scope of what they can achieve. They are keen to welcome new volunteers who would like to help us expand their projects and make an even greater difference in the community.

Lanchester Community Centre - 1960's Event

The Lanchester Community Centre was packed for a lively fundraising night featuring the sixties band Black and Blue. Residents enjoyed music, dancing, raffles, bingo and refreshments, while some also sampled the new café ahead of the official opening of Becky's Bee's Café on the 21st March.

Many guests dressed for the occasion, one birthday was celebrated, and the dance floor stayed busy all night. In a generous gesture, local businessman Paul, who won a bingo prize, donated his winnings back to the fundraising pot.

With the band performing free of charge and fantastic community support, the evening raised £700 for the Community Centre - a great result and a brilliant night for everyone involved.

Lanchester Cricket Club Football Club - ***George Ledger***

Lanchester Cricket Club Football Club (Lanchester CC FC) was founded in 2023 by Marcus Thompson, Jamie Peacock, Joe Hull, manager Dan Marriott, and treasurer Ethan Hodgson.

With support from the local pub The Black Bull, the team secured their first set of home kits. This was followed by a generous donation from Jordan Jewitt and his company For The Trade Accountants.

The club has also built a strong relationship with the Lanchester Cricket Club, thanks to Stuey McPhail, who approved their use of the cricket club's football pitch and facilities. The connection between the two clubs is close — football captain Kieron Jewitt even sponsors one of the cricket club's players.

The club now has a 30-player squad and trains on Tuesday nights at Consett Leisure Centre. The team includes players from Lanchester, Consett and Stanley, all proudly representing the village in the The CM Flooring Consett & District Sunday League Div 2.

The Old Ice Cream shop - *Mark Wilkinson*

Talk about the tip of the iceberg. When you enter the old ice cream shop little do you realise it has a history going back to 1937. Sarah and husband Liam took over the Lilydale Pet Supplies 2020 and quickly realised they would need to branch out to make it a viable business. Fortunately, the property came with an upstairs flat that became an air B&B, and a small premises next door. In 2023 these premises became the Old Ice Cream Shop, and they have a long family history to back up their business plan. Sarah's family, starting with great great uncle Richard Bolton, had started the Kings Cafe in Annfield Plain in 1937 and if you are a local you will have seen and heard the ice cream vans in and around the area for as long as you can remember.

Sarah and Liam had both enjoyed working at Beamish for a time, hand making ice cream and sweets, and armed with that knowledge knew it was time to do something for themselves.

This dog friendly shop provides a wide range of ice creams and treats and has recently added coffee and breakfasts to its menu meaning it's busy all year round. Despite the huge range of ice creams the shop has a very warm atmosphere and is set for an extremely busy 2026.

Siren Collective Shortlisted for National Award:

Redefining Strength for the Ambitious Woman

Tace Traviss, founder of the high-performance coaching brand Siren Collective, has been named a National Finalist for Best Fitness Coach 2026 at the UK Small Business Awards. Tace grew up in Lanchester where her parents still live.



Tace Traviss (above) and in her studio (right).

This recognition marks a pivotal year for Siren Collective, a brand built on the belief that a woman's physical strength should match her professional and personal ambition. Moving away from the "shrink to fit" narrative of the fitness industry, Tace has carved out a space for women 35+ who demand elite-level coaching, technical expertise, and a body built for life's biggest challenges.

The shortlisting comes as Siren Collective prepares to launch its most impactful initiative yet: a specialist 12-week Battle Cancer programme. This initiative is designed to support women through one of life's most gruelling walks, using strength training as a tool for reclamation and resilience.

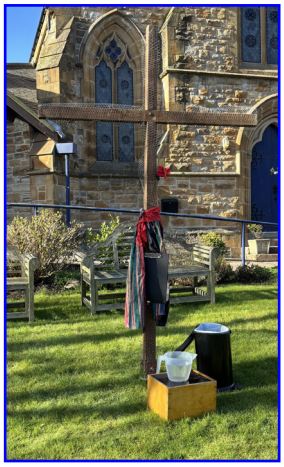


Speaking on the awards, a spokesperson for The UK Small Business Awards said: "The standard this year was exceptional. Siren Collective represents the very best of UK small
business - innovation, dedication, and a clear, powerful impact on its community."

Tace said: "Being a finalist isn't just about a trophy; it's a validation of the standard I hold for my clients. Women 35+ are often told to slow down, but my clients are just getting started. Whether I'm coaching a CEO to her first heavy deadlift or guiding a woman through our Battle Cancer programme, the goal is the same: building a body that is as capable as her mind. It feels incredible to have that mission recognised on a national stage."

The UK Small Business Awards will take place on 19 December 2026.

Lent Cross at the Methodist Church







At Lanchester Methodist Church from the start of Lent, we had a big wooden cross in the front garden, and "decorated" it with non-traditional Lenten symbols:

- a fake flower to highlight how we need to let go of things that may look good but aren't (image, control, success)
- an empty box for the ways we try to contain and restrict God
- a measuring jug to expose the myth of scarcity and highlight the overflowing love of God
- a clipboard for how we define and categorise others and don't see the fullness of them as God does
- a bin for how we discard what is broken rather than seek restoration by love
- a fancy coat as a symbol of wealth and flamboyance, to be laid low for the donkey-riding Messiah.

On Good Friday the symbols were removed and replaced with a black cloth, which itself was removed on Easter Sunday when we decorated the empty cross with flowers (real ones).

Each week there was an appropriate prayer attached to the railings and displayed on a billboard at the top of the path. For this is not just a journey for church people to undertake, but a challenge to everyone to examine what really matters.

Easter brings its own challenge. Love wins, but do we really believe that, or have we been hardened into cynics who park the Gospel at the side whilst the falsity of politics and cheap entertainment gets centre stage?

Rev Stuart Earl

WI News for April

We are holding a Spring / Summer Fashion Show on Saturday 16 May at Lanchester Social Club. This will be our third fashion show; the previous two were really well attended and fun events. It would be great if you could support this year's event as part of the proceeds will be going to Willow Burn Hospice and to St Cuthbert's Hospice. We will be having a great raffle, light refreshments will be available, a really fun afternoon, all for £6. Get your tickets early for this popular event.

If you are looking for something new in 2026, please come along and join us, you will be very welcome. Visitors can come along and join us for £4 per visit, you can visit for three times before deciding whether to join us. Check out our Facebook page; Lanchester WI, or email lanchesterwi@talktalk.net for further details. We look forward to seeing you.

Marie Murphy

Fashion Show

Spring / Summer collection and accessories to buy at reasonable prices

Saturday 16 May

Lanchester Social Club, DH7 0PF
2pm to 4pm (doors open 1.30pm)

Tickets £6

(includes light refreshments)

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Willow Burn Boutique Charity Shop, Lanchester
or email lanchesterwi@talktalk.net
or call – 07922 004397

Lanchester Wildlife Group

Naturally Native: Saving water voles.
Free talk by Paul Rodgers, Durham Wildlife Trust.
Lanchester Community Centre. Tuesday 12th May. 7.30 pm

Water Voles are Britain's fastest declining species and have long-since disappeared from the Browney. With the Naturally Native project, Durham Wildlife Trust continues to work towards securing the future for Water Vole populations across the region. Learn about the ecology, status and ongoing threats of Water Voles and how we can best manage their recovery.

No charge. All welcome. ***Noel Jackson***



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From the House

I have been out and about with local Cllr Gray in Lanchester and Burnhope recently. Our first port of call was a meeting with the new Managing Director of Go North East, where we raised ongoing issues with local bus services. Go North East were receptive to the feedback and keen to improve services and reliability. Cllr Gray and I will continue to monitor service levels closely. Towards the end of last month, we met again with some volunteers for some campaigning on a bright but cold day.

Last year, I wrote to schools across the constituency to encourage them to apply for funding to open school-based nurseries. Last week, we received the brilliant news that five local schools' bids were successful, along with many more across the region. This is one of several policies aimed at making childcare costs more affordable.

Across the country, an estimated one million pensioners are losing out on pension increases they should be entitled to, simply because the hard work they put in to pay into their pension happened to occur before 1997. This isn't good enough. Last month, I held an Adjournment debate in Parliament to highlight the injustice of the lack of statutory increases for pre-1997 defined benefit pension schemes, and to ask what the Government is going to do about it.



My team and I have now retrieved over £500,000 owed to constituents in taxes, benefits, and utilities. If you would like an appointment with me or need my support with any matter, please email luke.akehurst.mp@parliament.uk.

Luke Akehurst MP for North Durham

House of Commons



County Councillor Update

This has been another very busy month.

Lanchester Medical Centre – I am a member of the Adult Wellbeing and Health Overview Scrutiny Committee at DCC and Dr Kalra attended our March meeting to detail his improvement plan, and also to discuss what he is doing to recruit another GP. Members had read the full CQC report with concern and are keen to monitor progress and so Dr Kalra has been asked to attend again in three months to update us on patient feedback. We will keep you posted on progress. Meeting notes have been shared with the PPG.

Residents with electric vehicles have raised concerns about EV charging bays behind the SPAR being blocked by non-EV. The council hope to mark the bays more clearly and will be looking shortly to issue fines to vehicles infringing this. Please leave these bays for EV only.

Buses – Luke Akehurst and I continue to work for improvements to local services and had a meeting with the new managing director of Go North East where we challenged him on reliability, service provision and safeguarding issues. He was receptive to our concerns. New buses for the Consett depot have been purchased and they hope the reliability of the service will improve. A reply on buses from the NE Mayor was also received. If you would like a summary of it, please let me know.

Access to library - I have had discussions with the manager of the Library Service North, around accessibility at the library. The library is an old building and options are limited especially as it is not council owned, and because of the proximity of the main road at the front entrance. The library manager has agreed to install a doorbell so staff can assist people in. We hope to find a solution regarding wheelchairs/mobility scooters and are investigating possibilities. Please let me know if you have any thoughts you would like to be taken into consideration.



Residents may find it useful to know about:

Books on wheels for housebound residents – a librarian will visit your home, talk to you about your preferences and then a volunteer will drop a bag of books off for you.

The library online – this service is chargeable but is only 20p for senior citizens. You can go online (or call the library and a member of staff will take you through the process) and browse the whole Co Durham catalogue. You then select a pick up location and the books will be dropped off.

For any questions on this call Lanchester Library on 0300 026 9514

If I can help with a council related issue please email me on alison.gray2@durham.gov.uk or call on 07469 105096 / 03000 260 683

(Please avoid messenger if possible as these messages can be easy to miss)

Alison Gray

Photo above is with Louise Smith, library manager.

Dear Village

While I am happy to read of the appreciation of the Lanchester public library [Village Voice letter February 2026], it grieves me that I am unable to enter the building independently with my mobility issues. As a retired pensioner I would like to enjoy the activities and the range of books provided, which should be available to everyone, including the elderly and disabled tax payer.

Pat Davis (Mrs)

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Ladies who lunch

For our 'mad March' outing we were to be found at the Owl and the Otter just outside Dipton. Another eatery well within the Lanchester area. It's a very pleasant place to be - the staff are always welcoming, attentive and with a ready smile of greeting whenever we've visited.

They have a main menu, a lunch menu and a specials - and while perusing the menus it's most enjoyable to be sipping one of their delicious mocktails - this time, it was an orange and pear spritz - to be recommended!

Having made our choices it didn't take long before our meals arrived: mains being seafood chowder; butter chicken curry with wild mushroom pilau rice, naan bread and salad; grilled salmon, green veg, mashed potatoes with a pesto and cream sauce; chicken, leek and bacon pie with mash, buttered green veg and gravy; mince and dumplings; scampi, chips and veg.

Desserts were a unanimous choice of raspberry pavlova ice cream. And some of us indulged in a latte.

A very enjoyable meal with lots of animated chatter as we once again put the "world and his wife" to rights. Until the next time, when we'll do it all again and enjoy ourselves just as much. The Owl and the Otter is most certainly to be found on our favourite destinations list.

The Gourmet Girls



Thursday Club



We have just finished solving some fairly tricky puzzles provided by the 1% club. No money prizes unfortunately. There was no time limit and little helpful hints for some were needed to find the solutions. Then we sampled some very pretty cakes, supplied by my granddaughter, who is hoping to start a business making decorated cakes which look like a bunch of flowers (who knows where the latest demand will be). Plans are ahead for our next outing to the seaside at Seaham on April 16th. There are a few spare places. Posters are around the village if you are interested.

Jan Vasey

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Lilian Dixon

The life and music of Lilian Dixon were commemorated at her funeral service on Wednesday 25th March. The Methodist church was filled with family and friends from near and far.
Lilian died in hospital on 20th February, six weeks after celebrating her 90th birthday. During her final illness she was glad to spend time with her son Gavin, who had travelled from New Zealand.
Many people have remembered the younger Lilian, with her quiet energy and drive. Having grown up in Langley Park, she spent many years leading or involved with church and youth activities in Lanchester. These included the girls club, church youth club, pantomimes, Anchor Boys and the preschool playgroup in the community centre.
After teaching in several local schools, Lilian taught at the EP Junior school from 1974 until her retirement in 1993. After her 90th birthday, she was contacted by several ex-pupils who still have happy memories of her school singing practice and shows. How many people remember Carrots, Brilliant the Dinosaur, Anne of Green Gables, and the Lanchester-based concert that accompanied the school village history exhibition? The excellent work and models made by the children, and Lilian's own books on the history of Lanchester, made the local television news in 1987.
Lilian was happy working in her garden, or researching anything from her family tree to the latest football transfers to discuss with her grandsons, Ben, Jack and George. She and Ronnie travelled to New Zealand on several occasions. She was always excited to sing in (and later accompany) shows by the Choral and Operatic Society, of which she was a founder member and where she had many friends. Lilian spent many happy Friday evenings at rehearsals, and she also enjoyed the various social events.
Lilian played the 'chapel' organ for nearly 64 years, including for weddings and funerals of many village families. People would often just sit and enjoy listening to her play at the end of each service. She would have appreciated the lovely choir at her funeral, and everyone who kindly helped and contributed to the service or refreshments on the day. As expected, the singing was said to be fantastic!
Lilian's family would like to thank her carers and district nurses for all their practical support and help, and the staff from her GP practice who helped her to be treated at home when possible.





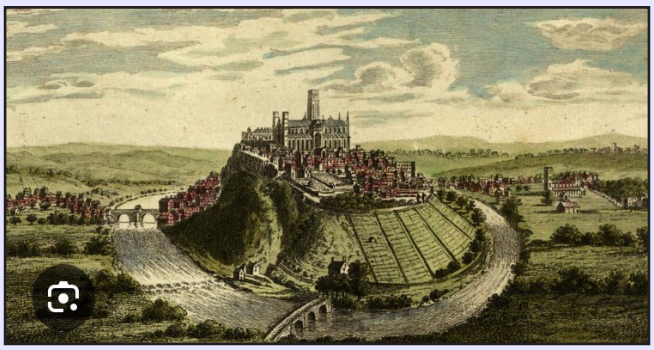
Most importantly they are grateful to the many friends who have sent kind messages at this time - every card or memory of Lilian has been much appreciated. Thank you all very much.

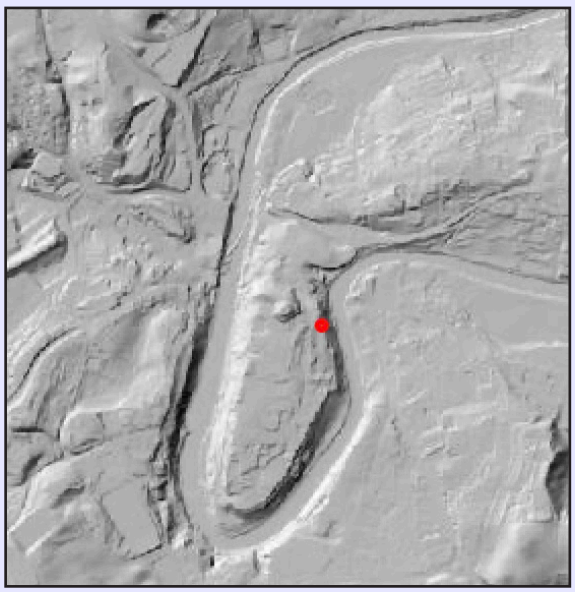
Ronnie and Hilary Dixon

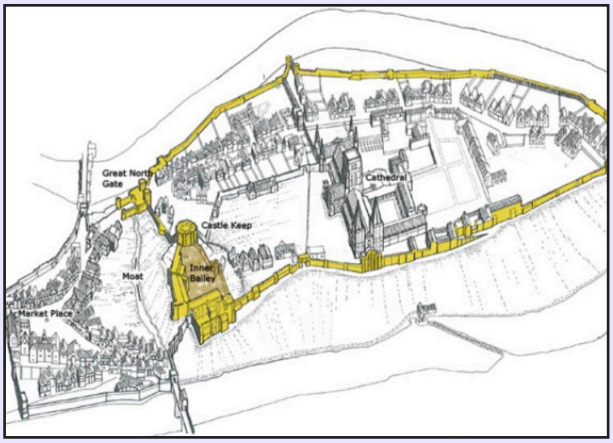
Lanchester Local History Society

We met on Friday 6th March with a respectable turnout out after waking to a late season disrupting early morning snowfall. Richard Annis had travelled up from Gloucester, where luckily there hadn't been any snow, to share with us his talk about The Castle Walls. The walls described are those around Durham Castle and in their original state wrapped around the whole of the area now described as "The Peninsula" by Durham locals. Richard in his former role in the University Archaeological services team was involved with the project to capture as much detail as possible about the original castle walls. He shared with us photographs of places where the walls are still visible and many places where the public can no longer access and see them. One interesting snap was of a section of wall in a university building basement hidden by an electrical junction box cupboard. We were shown some very interesting LIDAR studies which traced the whole length of the wall around the peninsula exposing areas that today are neither visible nor accessible in cupboards. Again Richard brought archaeology to life for us.

Marian Morrison







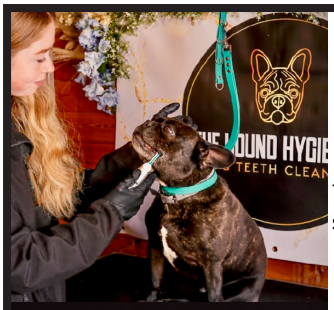
Celebrating Earth Hour 2026 at Lanchester Community Orchard!

On Saturday 28th March at 8.30 in the evening, members of the Orchard switched off their lights and headed up to the Orchard on a cool, windy evening to celebrate Earth Hour. Millions of people around the world celebrate this every year, highlighting the awareness of climate change. Despite the cold, breezy weather, the sky was very clear, and we were able to see stars and planets. An orchard member talked to us about what we could observe, and we were able to see Jupiter's moons via a telescope. Coffee and biscuits were much welcomed.
For more information about the Community Orchard, please visit our website, www.lanchesterorchard.org. Or why not pop along to one of our work sessions to find out more, details and times are on our website.

Eleanor Johnson

Lanchester Community Orchard









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Poppy's walks

Good day readers. This month's walk is a (sort of) nature walk.

Why I have used the brackets is because the course of nature and the reality of editorial deadlines means the scene I describe will not necessarily be how it is when you read this.

The male Human had read the Village Voice last month - I tend not to bother unless it is to check my own column to make sure it goes in as I wrote it - and noticed an invitation to visit the Lanchester Orchard during the blossom season. So, while the blossom season had not actually arrived when we set off, we decided to visit the orchard anyway.

As you know, I am Poppy, a Patterdale Terrier who shares with you readers the walks I lead my Humans on.

From the village green we walked along Station Road then turned right along the railway path with Station House on our left. We turned left and onto Brook View, then onto Broadoak Drive before reaching Newbiggin Lane. By walking along Newbiggen Lane on the right after the footpath runs out we are able to observe the approaching traffic and keep well into the side when any vehicles pass. Before long we saw a sign to our left which suggested this was the Lanchester Community Orchard.

The Human was able to push the gate open and we entered. There was a sign by the gate saying dogs were welcome on leads, so that was good news. There was also a sign at the entrance informing visitors of what wildlife visited and offering them the chance to spot various types of butterfly. I declined the offer, instead concentrating on sniffing the ground. But I must admit the orchard is well worth a visit, and an offer to Humans to take a chair and blanket and sit and enjoy the peace and quiet will appeal to many. But if my Humans think they can sit and chill when I need exercise I will have to quickly disabuse them of that notion.



So, after a look around a quite delightful spot we walked back out of the orchard and along Newbiggen Lane away from Lanchester until we came to some buildings on our left. We turned left beside them to follow a minor road towards Lanchester Dairies. The speed limit along this road is 10 mph for motor vehicles, so I feel quite safe. I always enjoy this walk because there are ditches and hedgerows on both sides of the road with lots to explore. But from a nature point of view our walk during the second half of March was particularly attractive because there is an abundance of wild daffodils blossoming after you have walked through the dairy but before reaching the main road leading from Lanchester to Hollinside and beyond. And there is a pleasant walk on the grass alongside the daffs. Unfortunately, by the time you read this the daffodils will have gone, but as a consolation the blossoms in the Orchard should have appeared.

We eventually joined the main road back towards Lanchester from Hollinside and were able to walk on the verges which were thankfully free from litter. Somebody has done a sterling job.

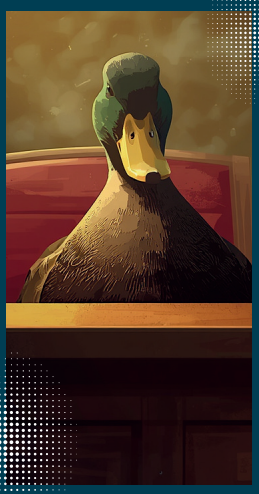
When we come to a lay-by we can cross over and use a footpath to take us downhill into Lanchester.

By this time the male Human was muttering about getting back for the derby. I thought he meant a horse race, but apparently this is a game between two local football teams which causes heightened emotions among some Humans of this parish.

And you call us dogs daft!

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THE NEW RULES OF RENTING



The private rental landscape is changing, and with the introduction of the Renters Reform Bill UK, landlords are entering a period where compliance matters more than ever.

For years, being a landlord could feel relatively simple. Find a tenant, collect the rent, deal with issues as they arise. But that world is shifting. The direction is clear, greater protection for tenants, tighter controls on landlords, and higher expected standards.

At the centre of the changes is the removal of Section 21, meaning no fault evictions will no longer be an option. There is also increased focus on property standards, repair times, and clearer rules around rent increases and tenant rights. Much of this is positive, but it also brings added complexity.
The real risk is not the legislation itself, it is getting it wrong.

A missed certificate, an incorrectly served notice, or delays in handling maintenance can now have serious consequences. Fines, legal disputes, and in some cases being unable to regain possession of your own property. These are not distant possibilities, they are real risks.



A good agent does far more than find tenants. They ensure your property remains compliant, track safety requirements, serve documents correctly, and respond quickly when issues arise. They understand how the rules are evolving and act before problems occur.

More importantly, they remove pressure. When challenges arise, you are not dealing with them alone. Property remains a long term investment. In this new landscape, protecting it means taking compliance seriously and having the right support in place.

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Sound Stage at Crinnions



Lanchester based businessman, Mark Earnden and local musician, Barrie McDermid, have come together to set up Sound Stage: an “Open Mic” platform where young musicians can show off their talent and gain valuable experience in performing live in front of an audience.

Popular local pub and restaurant, Crinnions, agreed to host the event in their courtyard and the pair reached out on Facebook to garner interest. The response was remarkable! Several parents of performers aged from 6-19 expressed their interest with a total of sixteen acts performing on the night.

The audience were treated to a variety of songs ranging from original folk songs to heavy rock to popular covers. The performers and audience had an amazing time, with some generous offers from Crinnions on the food, making for the perfect evening. With the event taking place between 7-9 pm, it was a fantastic way to have a family friendly event and support a popular independent local business.

"It can be difficult for young musicians to get opportunities to play in public. They spend hours and hours honing their craft and this was a perfect way for them to showcase their talents,” said Barrie.

Mark said, “Barrie and I simply want to give young people the best opportunities and music just made sense. We have lots of ideas to develop the project, and I cannot thank the people who supported the launch and responded so positively to our idea…the night was just incredible…the first of many”.

Check out their Facebook page and website for news of upcoming events.

https://www.soundstageuk.co.uk/

https://www.facebook.com/SoundstageUK

Do you know of a young musician who would like to take part? Contact us through the website or the Facebook page.

Barrie McDermid

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Durham County Council

WHAT'S ON - May 2026 and beyond

WI

April meeting, Monday 13th - speaker Marie Thorne, 'Dramas in Pyjamas'.

May meeting, Monday 11th – speaker Dr Heather Lawrence, 'Photo Journalism'.

Saturday 16th May, Fashion Show, Lanchester Social Club, 2pm – tickets £6 – Get your tickets early for this fun afternoon!

Local History Society

We will be meeting on Friday May 1st to hear from Richard Pears about "The Buildings of William Newton (1730-1798)". William designed over 40 country houses, churches and civic buildings in Northumberland and Durham, including Howick Hall and Newcastle Assembly Rooms. Richard illustrates William's career from 13 year old joiner to leading architect in the North East. Join us for the talk in the community centre nice and early, say 6.45, to negotiate the security system. Talk starts at 7.00 pm.

Friends of Longovicium Group (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), 7.30pm at 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.

Musical Memories

Musical memories goes travelling. Join us for music about famous places, refreshments and fun activities. 6th May 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 lanchesterdfc@gmail.com

Paradiso Club

Sunday 10th May 2026: FRIED GREEN TOMATOES AT THE WHISTLE STOP CAFE

Evelyn Couch is having trouble in her marriage, and no one seems to take her seriously. While visiting relatives at a nursing home, she meets Ninny Threadgoode, an outgoing old woman, who tells her the story of Idgie Threadgoode, a young woman in 1920s Alabama. Through Idgie's inspiring life, Evelyn learns to be more assertive and builds a lasting friendship of her own with Ninny. Starring Kathy Bates and Jessica Tandy this is a "remarkable, well written, produced with care and acted with understatement and love - it is a beautiful film" (IMDb).

Lanchester Community Centre, 7pm refreshments and raffle. Film starts at 7.30pm. Members: £4, Non-members : £5. Annual membership: £5

Thursday Club

May 21st - Flower demonstration by Mrs Wendy Smith. Open day for visitors. Small charge for non members. Lanchester Community Centre, 1.30pm.

Lunch Club

The next meeting of the lunch held at Lynwood House will be Tuesday 12th May, 12pm start.

Lanchester Male Voice Choir

Meets every Monday evening 7.00 - 9.00pm in Croft View Hall. We are a small, friendly, supportive group who would like to welcome new members. There is no requirement to have sung before or to be able to read music. For further details email Peter Bridgewater, tootspeteb@live.co.uk

2nd May: the choir will be performing at 11 am at the Methodist Church coffee morning.

Library

Library Book Clubs are on the 4th Monday and 3rd Thursday monthly. Books are supplied by the library. If you would like to participate in either of these friendly and informal group chats, pop into the library and speak to the librarians.

Thursday Book Club will meet on 21st May from 4-5pm. This group will be reviewing 'Torn Up Marriage' by Caroline Roberts, a book about 'betrayal, complacency, love and loss' (Goodreads).

Monday Book Club will meet on 25th May from 2.30-3.30 to discuss 'Three Things about Elsie' by Joanna Cannon, 'a beautifully sad book about getting older and...how people treat the elderly differently' (Amazon).

Pins and Needles meet on 1st Thursday monthly. The next meeting is 2nd April from 10-11.30am. If you like knitting or crocheting, bring along wool, thread, needles and patterns and get friendly advice and support.

Scrabble Group meets 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 1.30-3.30 pm. Build words and add points according to the letter tiles value.

Rummikub Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 1.30-3.30pm. A strategic, yet simple game with tiles that are constantly changing.

NEW! Bridge Club meets every Monday, 2.30-4pm (except 4th Monday).

Lego Club meets every Saturday from 10-11.30.

Toddler Time group is on Tuesdays from 2.30-3.00 (term time only) and includes stories and nursery rhymes for your child/ren to enjoy.

Children's crafts are available every afternoon and Saturdays. Different craft ideas and materials are provided, so pop along with your children for some creative fun.

And remember, a book opens the doors to many different worlds, experiences and cultures. Come and explore new and exciting genres of books and join in the activities on offer. Your library is waiting for you to step inside.

City Theatre

The City Theatre, Durham presents 'Duets' by Peter Quilter (comedy) from April 19 - 25. A quartet of plays with four very different situations. A man and a woman alone - what will happen…… Romance? Chemistry? Tears? Lighthearted and heartwarming with laughter and smiles.

Tickets from Durham Gala on 03000266600 (closed Mondays) or www.durhamcitytheatre.co.uk and follow the link for tickets. £9.50. Concessions £8.50 Sun/ Mon/Tues. Performances Sun and Sat 2.30pm, Mon-Fri 7.30.

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. 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.

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 fortnightly on a Wednesday at 10am. Walks are between 5-6 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.

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.

Vintage Tractor Club

Meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the Social Club.

WHAT'S ON - May 2026 and beyond

Nurses' Spring Fair
9 May 11am – 2pm
Willow Burn Hospice
The Nursing and Care Team at Willow Burn Hospice invite you to join them at this year's Nurses' Spring Fair on Saturday 9 May. Taking place from **11am – 2pm**, this lovely community event is a chance to come together, enjoy some springtime fun and support Willow Burn Hospice in a relaxed and friendly setting. The hospice team are still putting the finishing touches to the plans, but you can expect all the things that make the fairs so special, including:

- Tombolas
- Garden games
- Gift stalls
- Delicious treats served by **The Willows Café**

Whether you're popping along with family, meeting friends or just fancy a cuppa and a wander, the Willow Burn Nurses' Spring Fair is a wonderful way to spend a Saturday afternoon while supporting local hospice care.

The Big Hike 2026 in Aid of Willow Burn Hospice
Location: Hadrian›s Wall - Walltown Country Park to Housesteads
When: Saturday 16 May 2026
Time: All Day Event
Challenge yourself in 2026 and join us as we take on a 20km hike along Hadrian's Wall.
This 20km hike will push trekkers to the limit as they aim to conquer steep inclines, including its highest point at 1,000ft, and complete the challenge in under 8 hours!
Starting at the beautiful Walltown Country Park, the route will celebrate our beautiful Northumberland heritage by touring through stunning valleys and fells, not to mention notorious spots in North East history, such as Housesteads Roman fort, and the recently felled Sycamore Gap. Crawfields Quarry, Steel Rigg, Crag Lough will also feature along this breathtaking experience, along with the remarkable uninterrupted stretches of the wall itself that remain. Not only will you undergo some exhilarating gradients to really push yourself, but you'll also gain a wealth of knowledge from the guides who are experts in the 2000-year history of Hadrian's Wall. The hike will be led by the fantastic Challenge Northumberland team and some amazing volunteer guides. All finishers will receive a memento from the day and also have use of the FREE Transport back to the start at Walltown Country Park. Whether you're already a hiking pro or looking for a new challenge, we'd love for you to join us.
Entry fee: £30.00 per person
Minimum Sponsorship: £250
If you would like a place in 2026, please contact Ali English on: 01207 529 224 / aenglish@willowburnhospice.org.uk

Monday Art Group

The Monday Art Group has been busy recently. In February, we had an enjoyable session on Neurographic Art led by member Jean Hodgson, and then we painted snowdrops in celebration of spring.
A collection of pictures by members of the MAG is on exhibition at the Willow Café at Willow Burn hospice and will continue throughout March.
We are a small friendly group who meet on Monday mornings at the Community Centre. New members are most welcome. Contact tojimrafferty@yahoo.com for details.

Jim Rafferty



Photo
Jean Hodgson and Sophia Miller study some of the Neurographic art pictures produced by MAG members.

Community Centre News

The AGM took place on 1st April.
We saw a lot of repairs and renovations in 2024 so 2025 was a year of maintenance and consolidation.
All major building works have now been completed, ensuring the building and grounds provide a safe, secure, welcoming and efficient place to come to. Challenges will remain, however, for a building of this nature and will be addressed as required.
Room hire has continued with daily, weekly, monthly sessions and courses and we have also welcomed new users. The Centre has gained a strong reputation for its positive offering to individuals and groups who come from a wide spectrum and diverse backgrounds.
We have 33 groups that use the building regularly including the Community Café which offers a much needed place to come and have a cuppa and chat.
Approximately 20 or so parties hire the Centre for their events each year such as weddings, wakes, Christenings and milestone birthday parties to name a few.
Businesses such as the EP School, Durham County Council, Vintage Cash, New College Durham, various Ghost Hunts and Horton Cycles UK hire out the site for their annual events which equates to around 2 events per month.
Fitness 4 You membership remains consistent, which is testament to the gym's popularity. Friends of Lanchester Community Centre also remains constant, which is a telling sign of the community showing their continuous support for the Centre.
Fundraising for 2025

- We raised £2,221.43 from events and seasonal raffles.
- Book sales, loose change boxes and Easy Fundraising earned us £1,314.59 for the year.
- Gift Aid brought in a whopping £3,896 which all goes towards the running of the Centre.

Fundraising so far this year:

- The 60's/70's event went well and raised approximately £500. (See Communities in Focus section on the cover and page 2)
- The Craft De-Stash in March also proved a success and raised around £270. We have another De-Stash in September so gather up your excess craft items and rent a table.

Coming up:
SixPennyMemories run by Kim Suleman has a sewing workshop, 23rd May. Find out more details from the office.
"Thank You"
A great big 'thank you' to all the volunteers, staff and committee of Lanchester Community Centre for their continuous support. Without you, it would be impossible to have such a successful Community Centre. Anyone who would like to join the volunteers please contact us.
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 https://lanchestercc.co.uk/ or scan the QR code above.

Alison Densham Smith
Community Centre Manager

Lanchester Parish Council

Notes from the Ordinary Meeting held in Lynwood House on Tuesday 10th March 2026 at 7.00pm

Minutes – Ordinary Meeting 10th February – approved

Communities in Focus Group

George and Chris from the Communities in Focus Group attended the meeting to provide some background about the group and outline an opportunity for a potential collaboration. The group is working with Lanchester partnership on this project, called Lanchester: Community in Focus. This is a year long project documenting people, groups, businesses etc. from the Parish of Lanchester. George took some photos of the Clerk and Councillors – a £500 donation was approved and the group will be in touch with the Clerk, Handyman and Chairman to take more photos.

Former Ashfield Veterinary Surgery

A request to remove a tree in the allotments that is causing subsidence to the former Ashfield Veterinary Surgery was received – councillors approved the removal at the resident's own cost and permission would need to be requested from DCC as the tree is in a conservation area.

Police Report

Members were updated on the recent PACT reported for February.

Correspondence

A request was received from a resident about concerns they had with the road surface on Kitswell Road **–** councillors noted the concerns and advised the resident to contact Durham County Highways about the issues.

Durham County Councillor

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

- Rural Crime – there has been a rise in burglaries on farms in the Burnhope area. Drones are being used to scope the areas before the burglaries take place
- Meeting with Jane Davis at Lanchester EP, the school is part of the Schools Rebuilding Programme and is in the next phase, hopefully more parking is included in the rebuild
- The recent litter pick that took place revealed issues at Malton. More bins and dog waste bins have been requested
- A sign has been purchased for the Catholic Church car park
- The dropped kerbs at the Kings Head and Oakwood have been chased up

Haystax

Councillors were updated on the correspondence received from Mr Warnes – clerk to write a letter informing Mr Warnes that no Councillors have been to site.

Ornsby Hill

Councillor Gray updated Councillors on the development at Ornsby Hill – information received.

Grants / Donations

The following donations were agreed
£300 – Church Clock, £150 – Lanchester Young Farmers,
£500 – Communities in Focus
£500 – Village Bus

Village Green Path

The quote to repair the Village Green path was approved – Clerk to request the repair carried out in two stages so Councillors can inspect the work.

Animal Wood Carvings

The quote for the Totem Pole and installation of the wood carvings was approved.

Cricket Club

The size of the fence required and two gates was confirmed.

Solar Walk Project

Councillors were given an update on the project.

Tree work/Christmas lights

Clerk updated members on the meeting with DCC about the replacement of the Christmas lights – agreed to put on September's agenda to discuss further.

Financial report – approved.

Accounts for Payment – approved.

Meetings are every second Tuesday of the month, the next two ordinary meetings will be held on the 14th April and 12th May.

Email for the Clerk: clerk@lanchesterparishcouncil.gov.uk

Lanchester Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Introducing our 'Health Matters' Initiative!

In the wake of the devastating Care Quality Commission report, the PPG has been looking for positive ways to help Lanchester Medical Centre (LMC) patients and the community in general. When it comes to our health, there are many things that we can do to help ourselves which can make a significant difference to our own health outcomes. Even seemingly small changes can improve our well-being and can lessen our reliance on a struggling NHS.

With this in mind, we are excited to launch our 'Health Matters' initiative, which we hope will be a very positive way to provide information and support on a wide variety of health and well-being topics over the coming weeks and months.

Examples of focus areas will include:

- Healthy Lifestyles Promotion
- Mental Health Awareness
- Management of Long-term Health Conditions
- Men's Health
- Chronic Disease Prevention

Although this is a long-term initiative, we are hoping to draw 'Health Matters' to everyone's attention during the month of May. We would love to see the whole village involved and welcome suggestions and contributions from all Lanchester residents.

We will be contacting businesses, organisations and groups in the village, to ask for help and ideas on how they can promote healthy living and well-being through their business, so thinking caps on! It would be wonderful to see all the shop windows decorated with a health related theme; there may even be a prize for the best one!

Poster Competition

Calling all budding artists! We are encouraging younger Lanchester residents to get involved and use their creative skills to design a 'Health Matters' poster, on A3 or A4 sized paper. There will be 3 age groups: 4 – 8 years old, 9-11 years old and 12 years and above. Please mark the back of entries with name, age group and contact number and place them in the box at reception in the Medical Centre by Thursday 30th April. Winning entries will be displayed in the village and there will be a small prize for each age group.

Our recent 'Let's Talk' sessions have been very well received and will be continued on a regular basis. These sessions offer patients of LMC the opportunity to talk informally to PPG members and to the Practice Manager, Joanne. Additionally, our plan for future meetings is to focus on a specific healthcare topic each session, with relevant specialists in attendance. If there are any particular healthcare topics you would like to see included at these meetings, or for any other queries, please contact the PPG by email: admin@lmcppg.co.uk

KoGs

First of all we would like to say a MASSIVE thank you to all who supported, attended and/or donated to our coffee morning and shopping experience fundraiser. We raised an incredible £380!
The money will be used to help us cover the costs (and keep them at a minimum) for our Early May Bank Holiday residential to Seahouses.
We have had a lovely few weeks prepping for our Coffee Morning, making lots of crafts to sell. We also had a visit from Joy Wingfield to lead our beading workshop for Mothers' Day – thanks Joy!
Lucy Brooks (qualified lifeguard) has visited us to teach us about water safety and ran through some water related first aid.
Laura and Pete are now in full swing of Seahouses prep for this year's long weekend away, with the help of Kath who is busy organising some craft sessions.
We have had some incredible news in the last few weeks - Laura and Pete have been nominated to attend the Royal Garden Party at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh for their work in voluntary youth work within Lanchester Methodist Church. The big day will take place on 30th June and we are very excited! They would like to say a huge thank you to the anonymous nominator for the very kind thoughts and gesture.

KoGs Cookbook!

We are in the beginning stages of putting together our own KoGs Cookbook not only to raise money for our group but as a memory to look back at for our members.
We are asking all our church family members, and village voice readers, with our own KoGs members / parents/ grandparents/ friends /family members for their favourite recipes.
Everything from: cakes, soups, traybakes, smoothies, main meals, desserts, starters- we want it all! Please email or send recipes with members ASAP!
We are hoping to have this ready to sell between Summer/ September.
Please email all recipes by Monday 11th May.

Who are we?

KoGs (Kids of God) is a Christian based youth group that meets in the Methodist Church on Monday Evenings and is open to everyone inside and outside of the village from all and any religious backgrounds including those with no religious background at all!
We offer a range of activities including: 2 course meals, games, messy games, day trips, evening trips, residential weekend trips, crafts, drama, cell sessions and much much more!
We start at 5pm to 7.30pm, Mondays during school terms.
The cost of the sessions is £3 per person but your first week is free!
(All activities and your weekly meal are included)
For more information contact Laura & Peter Cole on 07428500059 / 01207 654291 or email kidsofgod@hotmail.co.uk
We also have a facebook page if you'd like to see more or get in touch with us that way, www.facebook.com/kidsofgodlanchester

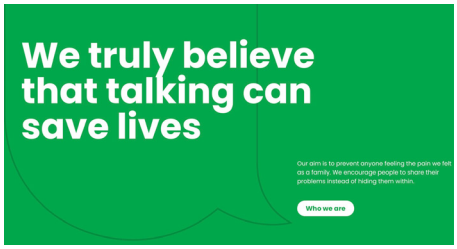
Laura and Pete Cole

[Pictured right is an artist's impression of Laura and Pete at the garden party!]

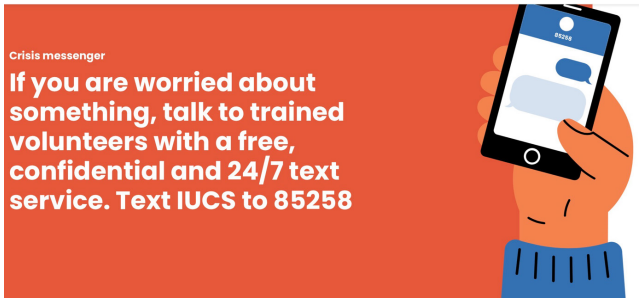


Lanchester Medical Centre Patient Participation Group

Lots of exciting things have been happening within the PPG. February 13th saw the launch of "Let's Talk". This was held in Lanchester Cricket Club and was attended by patients from the Medical Centre. There were lots of gorgeous cakes to go along with the hot drinks. A big thank you to our members who supplied the cakes. Joanne Marshman attended as the representative from the Medical Centre and fielded general questions from the patients. Please look out for the date of our next "Let's Talk"; it will be lovely to see you there.
Our PPG meeting was held on 4th March, and was very well attended. Colin Stephenson from Integrated Care Board gave a report and also answered questions put to him from members. Doctor Harpreet Kalra attended for an hour of the meeting. He gave a statement in which he addressed some of the issues that were raised by the Care Quality Commission and what the practice was doing to correct these issues. He also took some questions from the PPG members.
We had a representative from this year's chosen charity: If U Care Share.
Here is the story behind the charity.
Our journey began in 2005. Daniel O'Hare was 19 years of age when, without any warning, he took his own life. He had no previous history of mental health problems nor had he shown any outward signs of his intentions.
Daniel was a normal young man, who was extremely popular and well known in his local community. He had a large number of friends and a family that loved him dearly. He enjoyed football, spending time with friends and socialising. Daniel also had a job managing a family online retail business. To this day his family remain devastated by their loss and are still no nearer to understanding Daniel's choice.
Daniel's brothers Matthew and Ben, along with his cousin Sarah (then aged 10, 5 and 12) hoped to do something positive to try and prevent another family suffering a similar experience.



They wanted to create a lasting memory to Daniel and started the If U Care Share Foundation.
The family started selling wristbands at football clubs featuring the message "if u care share" and raised over £50,000 for mental health charities.



In 2011, we became a registered charity with three main aims: prevention, intervention and support of those bereaved by suicide.
Our fund raising has already begun, we held a spring raffle which was drawn on 31st March. We also held a coffee morning on April 11th at the Methodist Church.

Boys' Brigade

We have had a real mixture of activities this past month including learning to cross-stitch, making a barometer, playing games, learning about Boys' Brigade past particularly the change in uniform and acting out the Easter story. Emma, one of our helpers, brought lots of Boys' Brigade memorabilia in from Beamish Museum including books, badges, armbands, an old car badge, old photographs and pieces of uniform. Apparently, the boys had a great time trying on the different pieces of uniform from cross belts and normal belts and all the different hats. Unfortunately, being on holiday, I missed all this fun but Emma has promised to bring it in again so I can have a look at it.

Kath came along to lead the boys in acting out the Easter story which was excellent and also showed us which boys have acting ability.

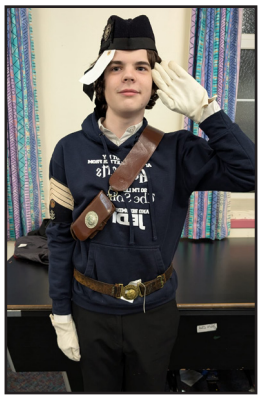
Communities in Focus are posting articles on Lanchester on Facebook, and we have had three articles showing each different section of Boys Brigade from Anchor Boys, Junior Section and Company Section.

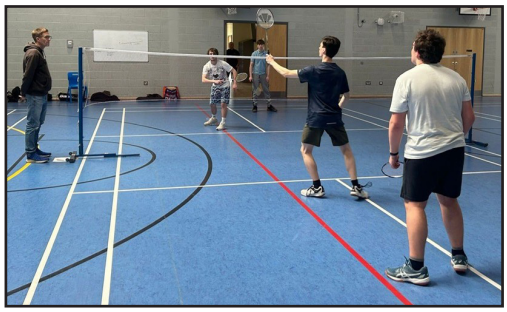
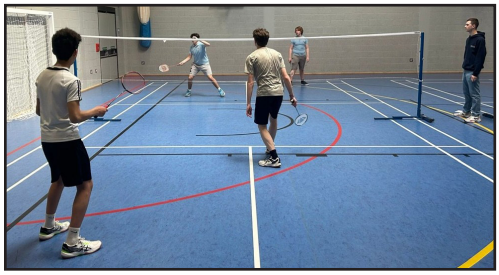
If you have any boys who have seen these and are interested in joining just bring them along on a Wednesday, Juniors 6.15 to 7.30 and company section 7.30 to 9pm. Anchor Boys are Thursday 6.10 to 7.10.

The National competitions are drawing to a close, but we were pleased in March when our badminton team at last set off for Luton to take part in the English final of the National Badminton competition. We were looking forward to having a lot of practice and some strong opposition but sadly several of the teams had dropped out for different reasons. However, we won all the games we played and are now the English Champions. We will be travelling to Falkirk in April to represent England and Wales in the UK final and wish the boys well in this venture.

Eric Hepplewhite



Photos above of boys trying on the old style uniforms
Left: The national badminton tournament.
Below: Acting out the Easter story
Right: Company Section making barometers




New Boutique Manager for Willow Burn

Willow Burn Hospice is delighted to introduce Stephanie Liddle, the new Boutique Manager to its Lanchester shop. Steph isn't new to retail or the Willow Burn team. She comes with many years experience from across the retail sector and some of you may have already met her in the hospice's shops in Consett and Stanley. Steph brings a wonderful blend of creativity, warmth and passion for helping our community look and feel their best. Steph invites you to pop in and meet her, she would love to get to know more people in the village and see how she can help them.

Willow Burn Boutique is open Tuesday – Saturday, 9am – 4pm.

Rachel Quince



All Saints' Catholic Church Lanchester

The first of many centenary celebrations: St. Patrick's Evening

Our first centenary celebration event was on Saturday 14th March where we all enjoyed a lovely three course meal which was served in the Parish Centre, prepared by our own parishioners Graham and Betty McVeigh. A big thank you to them. Thank you also to all who contributed in some way to make this such a lovely social event. We enjoyed an Irish quiz, Irish Bingo, the usual raffle, and even one of our lovely parishioners, Joanne Graham, showing us the art of Irish Dance. So definitely a great fund raiser and a wonderful evening. Let's have lots more!!!!





Some of the events to celebrate centenary year coming up, dates for the diary.

- A Spring Fayre on Saturday 16th May in the Church Parish Centre at 11am to 2pm. Cake stall, coffee, teas and bacon sandwiches, many other delights. Everyone welcome.
- Lanchester Band returns to All Saints' Catholic Church on Sunday 24th May 6.30pm. Everyone welcome, free entry and a retirement collection at the end.
- A Race Night on Saturday 20th June in Lanchester Working Men's Club. More information in the next Village Voice.

Lestrine Kelly



Willow Burn Hospice Gala Raises Funds for 1,100 Hours of Care



Supporters of Willow Burn Hospice came together recently for the charity's annual Gala, helping to raise an incredible £22,000 to support local people living with life-limiting illnesses.
The event, held at the South Causey Inn and hosted by North East comedian Steffen Peddie, was filled with generosity, community spirit and heartfelt support for the hospice.
The amount raised is enough to fund more than 1,100 hours of nursing care, making a real difference to patients and families across County Durham.
Rachel Quince, Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Fundraising & Marketing, said:
"As a small hospice, we rely on the kindness of our community. The Gala is a wonderful celebration of our team's work and the supporters who make it possible. Every pound raised helps us continue to provide compassionate care when people need it most."
A major boost to the total came from Berry's Jewellers, the event's headline sponsor, which donated two beautiful pieces of diamond jewellery for the raffle. This helped raise £5,000 and brought Berry's total support for the hospice to over £30,000 in four years.
Willow Burn would also like to thank sponsors Do Business Network, KBB Interior Designs, LaneSystems, Marton Care Homes and MetroCentre.

Rachel Quince



The band.



Steffen Peddie



Will O'Burn

Sam of Defined

Salon owner Sam with 15 years of experience in the salon industry, I have developed not only a strong technical skill set but also a deep passion for helping others feel confident and valued. My journey has allowed me to work with a diverse range of clients, building lasting relationships through trust, creativity, and attention to detail. I take pride in staying up to date with the latest trends and techniques, ensuring that every client receives a high-quality, personalised service.



Alongside my professional career, I am a dedicated mother of three, which has shaped my resilience, time management, and ability to multitask effectively.
Balancing family life with a demanding career has strengthened my work ethic and reinforced my commitment to providing the best for both my clients and my children.
I am driven, reliable, and passionate about continuous growth, always looking for new ways to improve and evolve within the industry. My goal is to continue building meaningful connections, delivering exceptional service, and inspiring confidence in everyone I work with.

SPONSORED CONTENT

Smallest Saints Playgroup: All Saints' Nursery & School

This year, All Saints' Nursery and Primary has been delighted to launch its brand-new baby and toddler playgroup, Smallest Saints, designed to further strengthen the school's community offer following the opening of the new nursery. Since its very first session, the playgroup has been an outstanding success, growing in popularity each week. Families from across the area have joined our Early Years team in a warm, creative and welcoming space where children can play, learn and make new friends, while parents and grandparents connect, chat and share experiences.

Each session is thoughtfully themed, bringing excitement and variety for even the tiniest learners. The opening weeks set the tone beautifully: a vibrant firework-themed session filled the room with colour, crafts and sensory sparkle; a joyful messy play morning invited children to explore textures and express their creativity freely; and a truly magical Christmas celebration brought families together for festive crafts, songs, and a special visit to Father Christmas in his grotto.



More recently, Smallest Saints has continued to delight families with a sweet and heart-warming Valentine's workshop, imaginative storytelling and rhyme to mark World Book Day and a bright, joyful Easter-themed session filled with colour, animals and seasonal fun.



To help everyone feel at home, adults are treated to complimentary hot drinks while children enjoy snacks as they play. Sessions are completely free, open to all, and there's no need to book—families can simply come along and enjoy an hour of fun and friendship.



Head Teacher, Frances Stephenson, shared:

"It has been wonderful to see the positive impact of these sessions and the glowing feedback from the families. We want to open our doors widely to the community, offering a space where children and adults alike can relax, learn and enjoy time together."

The Smallest Saints playgroup welcomes all families—regardless of background, faith or location—and offers carefully planned activities to nurture creativity, imagination and social development, all led by our experienced Early Years staff. Below are the upcoming sessions for summer term. We love making new friends, so everyone is welcome!

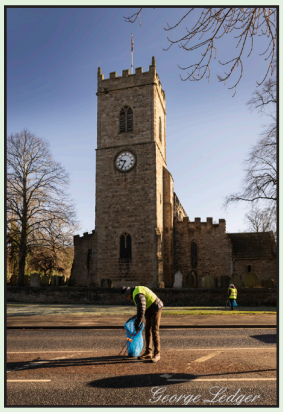


Frances Stephenson
Head Teacher

A Green and Clean Lanchester

[Update on brief report in last month's edition]

The morning of Saturday 7th March was the occasion of the Lanchester Partnership spring clean and litter pick. This annual event has been ably organised by our **Environment Group** for many years now. The aim is to keep our village "clean and green". The specific intention is to clear roadsides and inaccessible patches of unsightly litter which has accumulated during the winter months.



Around 60 volunteers of all ages participated during the course of the morning. In some cases it was heartening to see complete families engaged in the task. After many weeks of gloomy weather the day started clear, cold and frosty and turned into a lovely bright morning – the perfect conditions to make the task a pleasure. The white and yellow crocuses on the village green formed a perfect backdrop to the organising desk where volunteers collected their equipment and were dispatched to all corners of the village.

It was heartening to find that the areas around St Bede's school have become almost free of sweet papers. Thanks are due to the Head and staff who have prioritised litter picking over the course of the year. We were able to lend the school litter picking equipment last summer and it has been used to good effect. Thank you!

Of greater concern has been the amount of litter deposited on the roadside from vehicles as they exit the village. Cadger Bank and Peth Bank (as far as Burnhope) are particularly affected. Aluminium drink cans and disposable coffee cups comprise the bulk of such litter. Around lay-bys, pull-off-points and bus stops it is not unusual to find large numbers of bottles and fast-food packaging. Fortunately, following recent legislation, disposable vapes have nearly completely disappeared



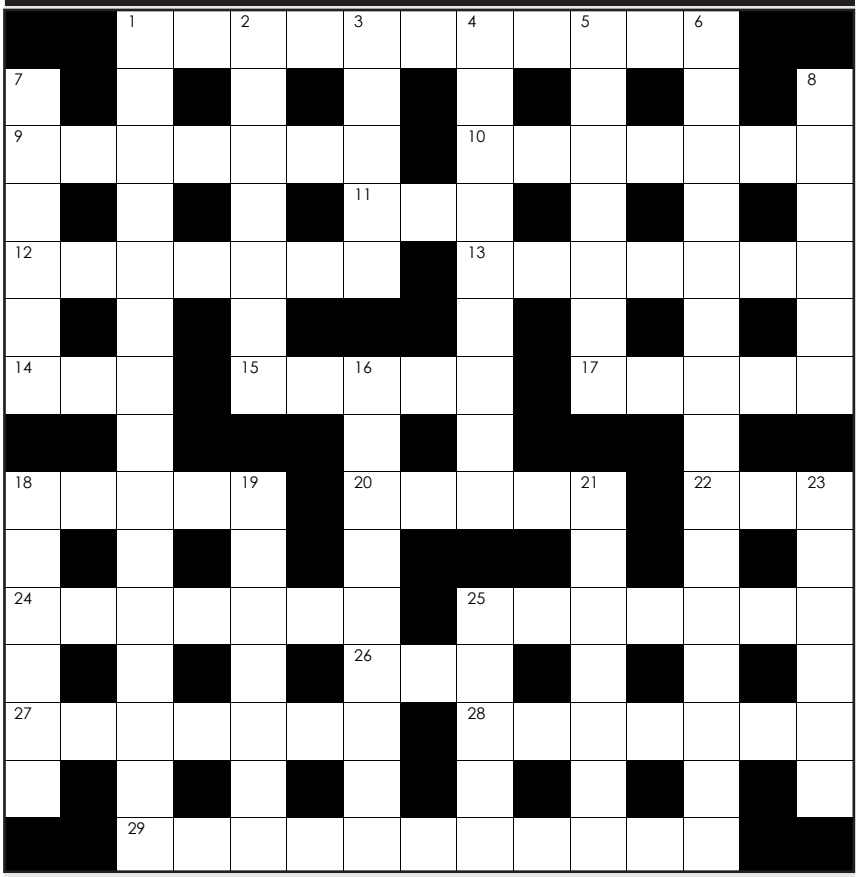
We collected over 50 bags of rubbish much of which we were able to recycle including glass bottles and drinks cans. A big thank you to all the kind people who participated, donated and joined the partnership. Nearly £100 was collected in cash donations and several on-line donations were made so that we can carry on making Lanchester green and clean. Your money will be used to support future action on the environment including tree planting and of course future litter picks. If you want to get involved with this type of work in the village, please email us at: contact@lanchesterpartnership.org.uk

Our thanks to **George Ledger of Communities in Focus** who captured all aspects of the event so beautifully.

Sonny Shepherd (Lanchester Partnership Environment Group)
Henry Edwards

Photos by George Ledger, Communities in Focus

CROSSWORD 218



Clues

Across

1. 'Name for ship', rearranged by Gilbert and Sullivan (1,1,1,8)
9. Huge (7)
10. Native of Barcelona (7)
11. Type of tree (3)
12. Direct (7)
13. Largest continental area on Earth (7)
14. Cooking vessel (3)
15. Plea of being somewhere else when the crime happened (5)
17. Handle or use (5)
18. Largest artery in the body (5)
20. Paved garden area (5)
22. One of two extreme points (3)
24. Section of a book (7)
25. The 'Stamford Bridge Blues' (7)
26. Enemy (3)
27. School subject (7)
28. Determined new wave pop star (4,3)
29. 'Who strummed' badly, say nothing (3'1,3,4)

Down

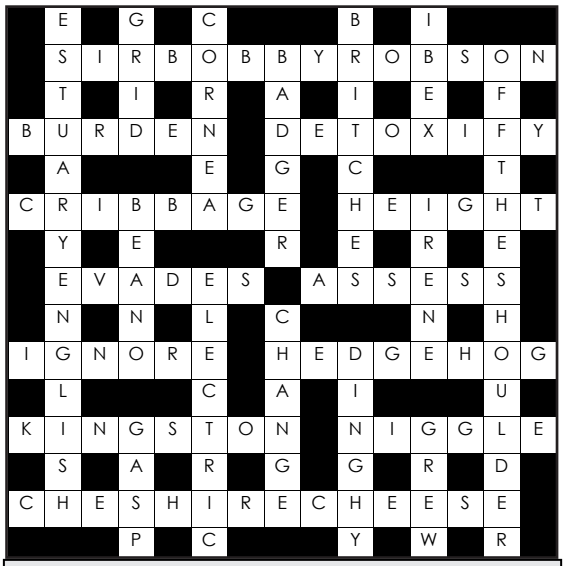
1. A belief in philanthropy and the welfare of other people (15)
2. Spanish drink (7)
3. Most perfect (5)
4. Person who seeks to turn base metal into gold (9)
5. Get too big for (7)
6. Canadian landmass close to Greenland (9,6)
7. Involuntary contraction of the diaphragm (6)
8. Not spoken or expressed (6)
16. Unlike 3 down (9)
18. Means of entry (6)
19. Word meaning the opposite of another (7)
21. Type of culinary herb (7)
23. Preliminary outlines (6)
25. Stop (5)

Name:_____

Address: _____

_____

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



Solution Crossword 217

There were 26 entries of which 24 were correct.
The winner, drawn out of the hat is Tina Naples.

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St Bede's Catholic Secondary School and Sixth Form Centre

Students have continued to have an excellent year at St Bede's, showing great resilience and commitment to their academic and personal development.

Lent at St Bede's – "Heart to Heart"

Our Lenten theme this year, "Heart to Heart," encouraged us to reflect deeply on the power of our words and the impact of our actions. Throughout Lent, students and staff worked together to foster a community rooted in kindness, respect and love.

Reconciliation During Lent

We extend our sincere thanks to Fr Shaun, who generously offered the Sacrament of Reconciliation every Monday morning throughout Lent. Many students across all year groups took this valuable opportunity for reflection.

Easter Cards

Our SVP Group has been hard at work creating Easter cards for prisoners in Durham. Through our ongoing connection with chaplain Deacon Christian, a former teacher at St Bede's, the cards—each including an Easter prayer—will be distributed alongside Easter eggs. This project is carried out in partnership with St Mary's SVP Conference, supporting the West Pontop Partnership of parishes. As part of the wider Vincentian family, our Mini Vinnies from feeder primary schools and our Youth SVP have also created Easter cards for parishioners who are housebound, live alone, or receive Holy Communion at home. The cards offer a heartfelt reminder that these parishioners remain very much in our prayers and community. A special thank you goes to Mrs Roe for her guidance and dedication in bringing this meaningful initiative to life.

Pilgrimage to Ampleforth

Four students from St Bede's joined Sixth Form students from the Trust's five high schools for a pilgrimage to Ampleforth in March. Upon arrival, they received a warm welcome and enjoyed a guided tour of the Abbey Church from Fr Bede. After lunch outdoors, students took part in discussions, a Q&A session, and a time of shared prayer.

CAFOD Big Lent Walk

On Thursday 26th March, over 70 Sixth Form students—and Year 11 applicants—took part in the annual CAFOD Big Lent Walk. Our 14km walk was completed with enthusiasm, and members of the public commented on how polite and considerate our students were.

Well done to everyone involved!

Pancake Fundraiser

We had a fantastic start to our Lenten fundraising. A huge thank you to our Technology Department, who sold pancakes throughout the first week—raising an incredible £300 on Tuesday alone! It was wonderful to see so many students volunteering their time to cook and serve, showing the generosity and teamwork that make our school community so special.

Year 11 Silent Disco

We were delighted to host our first-ever silent disco for our Year 11 pupils. Students thoroughly enjoyed the experience—and our staff did too!

Young Carers

A number of our students are Young Carers, and we work hard to support them in meaningful ways within our school community. One key initiative is a cooking programme led by Mr Thompson (Food Technology), where students learn to plan and prepare healthy family meals. Each week they take home a freshly made meal for four. Our talented students made a Mediterranean traybake and focaccia bread, please see the image taken. If you or your business would like to support this valuable work through a donation, please get in touch.

Durham Music Service Concert

A huge thank you to Durham Music Service, who held a concert at The Glasshouse International Centre for Music in March. The event featured one of our own students, Rhian Fernandes, who performed beautifully and truly wowed the audience. Well, done, Rhian! The concert showcased wonderful performances from many talented musicians, and we are extremely grateful to Durham Music Service for their continued support and hard work.

As we move through the rest of the school year, we look forward to sharing more of the wonderful activities and events taking place at St Bede's. Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support.

Catherine Hammill, Head Teacher











Right: Pancake selling - featuring two of our staff Mr Thompson and Ms Asoro.

Above: Ampleforth

Left: Easter cards





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Lanchester Endowed Parochial School

Pearson National Teaching Award Finalists

I feel quite humbled about this. In February, some parents nominated us for 'Primary School of the Year – Making a Difference Award'. I received an email and phone call earlier this month to say that we are one of the national finalists! The whole school team is quite taken aback with not only being nominated, but also to be selected as one of the national finalists. The parents who nominated us had quite a lengthy application form to submit with evidence attached. They obviously did a very good job!

At the end of April, we will receive a virtual visit from two judges who will ask questions about the application and who have also asked to meet a cross section of our school community including staff, children, parents, governors and members of the local community. We are looking forward to being able to celebrate how we make a difference to our pupils and the local community. It will also be good to be able to celebrate all the good things our whole staff team do on a daily and weekly basis.

We have been told that we will find out in June so will of course let you know in due course the outcome of this process. However, whilst reflecting on this whole award and thinking about our community, it has made me think that the well-known proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child' really is so very true.

Dubai

A group of our Year 5 and 6 children were due to fly out to Dubai on Monday 2nd March for a trip of a lifetime. I am sure you will all be aware of the events of Saturday 28th February which closed the airspace in the UAE. Obviously, this meant that those children had to unpack their suitcases just 48 hours before they were due to fly and come to terms with the disappointment and realisation that their long-anticipated once in a lifetime trip was not going to happen. However devastating this was for them all, I was exceptionally relieved that they had not actually flown and were not in the country already. Unfortunately, I had flown out a few days earlier in the half-term with my husband to see our eldest daughter, who teaches there. My youngest daughter was also visiting her and was due to fly back on the Sunday. The first we knew of any issue was when we came out of the swimming pool at our apartment on the Saturday lunchtime and heard a huge explosion. That was the start of many….

With the airspace closed, there was no way of returning home. We spent a very uneasy Saturday night with the first national alert sounding on all our phones in the early hours, meaning we had to seek safety in the basement. Sadly, that was the start of a fairly surreal week for us all. The week passed with a sick feeling of anxiety and worry in the pit of our stomachs combined with the constant thoughts of 'what if?' The constant bangs, alerts and unease were present day and night. However, every day I was just thankful that our children from school were not there – such a huge positive of the week. Thankfully, we managed to book seats on a flight to Birmingham the following Saturday. Unfortunately, we were sitting on the plane waiting to take off for 3 hours before the pilot told us all to disembark. The disappointment and upset was felt by all. As we were disembarking though, we heard, felt and saw the explosion from the falling debris of a drone just along from our plane. Not a pleasant experience and too close for comfort. After being ushered downstairs in the airport with hundreds of others in absolute chaos, our emergency alerts sounded again – what a cacophony of noise that was.

When we received the all clear, we were told to return to the original gate and following an 8 hour delay, the flight finally took off. The relief was enormous. We are fortunate – we can leave the country if we want. My heart goes out to all those in Israel and Iran who are living in constant fear, unable to find safety as well as those family members who are yet to hear from their loved ones, including some of our families in school. We have to hope there is a swift resolution to this conflict soon.



Arriving back at Birmingham Airport. L-r Jane Davis, Trevor Davis (husband), Rebecca Davis (eldest daughter) and Anna Davis (youngest daughter).

That week, I really felt the love of the school and the village. I received so many messages and emails of support, care and kindness – it was really quite overwhelming. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

As a result of the continuing conflict, we have made the very tricky decision to cancel our forthcoming trips to Shanghai and Istanbul. However, we are currently organising visits to Paris and Madrid – closer to home – but still giving the children a huge opportunity to explore their culture and lifestyle whilst also spending time in our partner schools. I am sure they will share their experiences with you later in the year.

Mrs J Davis
Head Teacher

Christian Aid

Many thanks to all those who supported the Christian Aid soup lunch March 11th. We raised an amazing £940. Look out for Christian Aid week 10-16 May, 2026.

There will be a coffee morning at the Methodist Church 10am -12 noon on Saturday May 16th. There will be cakes, books, plants, bric-a-brac – in fact anything saleable! If you have something to donate, please contact me, Judith Brown, on 07946 600415 or email judith@bordinelbrown.me.uk.

Judith Brown



Photo by George Ledger of the Communities in Focus team - more photos on their Facebook page.

All Saints' Catholic Primary School



As we come to the end of another enriching Lenten and Easter season at All Saints', I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to our wonderful community for the support, encouragement and generosity shown over recent weeks. This period is always an important one in our school calendar, offering our children time for reflection and faith-filled action. This year has been no exception and together, across Lent and Holy Week, we created something truly special.

Our Lenten journey began on Ash Wednesday, when pupils received ashes from Deacon Peter — a quiet but meaningful moment that helped set the tone for the weeks ahead. From there, children across the school embraced a range of opportunities for prayer, creativity and service. Weekly Rosary Club, Stations of the Cross, pupil-designed Prayer Stations and our Easter themed baby and toddler playgroup, all provided chances for families, parishioners and friends to join us in reflection. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces in school, strengthening the sense of unity that sits at our heart.



Year Five enjoyed a pilgrimage to Northumberland during Lent for their residential, visiting a range of spiritual and historical sites and Year Four spent two nights at the Youth Village having fun and developing their spirituality. Holy Week brought further highlights, including our ever-popular egg-decorating event, a joyful Lenten Assembly led by Year Five and Easter Mass celebrated with reverence led by our Year Six pupils. Year Five's re-enactment of the events of Holy Week was powerful and emotional and our school Mass, centred around the theme of service, was uplifting and peaceful. We are proud to have children who are keen to put their faith into action.

A particular success this year was our Big Lent Walk, part of our Easter fundraising for CAFOD. From Nursery to Year Six, pupils and families took part with great energy. Thanks to your donations and encouragement, the children made a meaningful contribution to those in need, truly living out the values of compassion and service that Lent calls us to. We are proud to have donated an outstanding £882 to CAFOD.

On behalf of everyone at All Saints', thank you for walking this journey with us. Your involvement—whether attending events, sharing our activities with others, or supporting our fundraising—reminds us how fortunate we are to belong to such a caring community.

Frances Stephenson
Head Teacher



Top: Night time walk, Yr5 residential
Centre: Big Lent walk
Left: Egg decorating

Burnhope Partnership presents Burnhope Centenary Gala 1926–2026

Join us as we celebrate 100 years of Burnhope Gala with a fantastic day of community celebration on Saturday 16th May 2026.

This special centenary event marks the historic 1926 Durham Miners Gala held in Burnhope during the General Strike, and we are proud to honour our village's mining heritage and strong community spirit.

There will be something for everyone to enjoy throughout the day, including:

- A parade through the village
- Live music and entertainment
- Market stalls and local vendors
- Food and refreshments
- Keynote talk on mining history and the General Strike

It promises to be a brilliant family day out and a chance for the whole community to come together and celebrate this important milestone in Burnhope's history.

Bring your family, invite your friends, and help us make this a centenary celebration to remember!

Only £1 entry fee on the day.



The Reindeer and the Hedgehog!

A few notes on village life



Adam on his break

There I was at Christmas enjoying the service at the Methodist church with the good Reverend Stuart impersonating a reindeer! Stuart was the front half and his wife Claire was the rear. Excellent stuff, you needed to see it to believe it!

I had a tap on my shoulder, “are you Adam the Gardener?” Yes, I said, who are you?

“It's me, Keith from the Village Voice!” At the end of the service, we got chatting.

I went on to ask young Keith how he recognised me as we have as we've never met before. He said, I recognised you from your photo in the Village Voice. We laughed about it and exchanged season’s greetings.

I thought it was funny how a simple article in your village newspaper can bring a whole world of changes into your life! I have recently returned from a short break post treatment and pleased to say that I’m feeling much better. I’m not allowed to work at the moment, so I’ve carved myself a niche voluntary role as our newest roving village reporter for the Village Voice so if you see me out and about, please say hi and let me have all your news and gossip.

I was also pleased to read that my article on prostate issues, combined with the medical centre patient participation group article, had actually saved someone's life which I thought was marvellous. Thanks to Keith, Sue, and everyone at the Village Voice for printing the article.

If we just help save 1 or 2, then that's great, isn't it? I'm not planning to give you any gardening tips just yet...sorry folks!

It's been far too cold to go out in the garden, however I'm sure things will brighten up soon. Perhaps while you’re reading this!

Best wishes to everyone.

Adam the Gardener



Can you spot the hedgehog in Adam's garden?

Suspicious about that email?

There is a free service that is available for people that are worried about the authenticity of emails they receive. The way it works couldn’t be simpler, just forward the email directly to our email address verify@justguard.co.uk and our automated system looks over all aspects of the email creating a little report for you. This is emailed to you in less than two minutes, click the report link and you will see if we believe the email is genuine or fake. It can be so difficult to spot fakes these days but there are several things that can help you know if an email is genuine or not, but if you don’t know what to look for you could get caught out.

JustGuard Team

LLTC Tennis Report



Our first report of the new year and it’s been a very busy start at LLTC. We have been preparing both the grounds and the clubhouse ready for the new season, and everything is looking fantastic. The courts are ready, the clubhouse is refreshed, and we’re all looking forward to a great season of tennis.

We have also been busy planning a full calendar of events, both on and off the court, with plenty of fun social activities scheduled throughout the season. **Our Open Day** will be held on **Saturday 9th May from 1–4pm**, where everyone is welcome to come along, play tennis for free, enjoy a taster session, and take part in lots of tennis-related fun for all the family. Future events will include barbecues, strawberry teas, and plenty of tennis, both social and competitive.

We must also mention our very popular coaching programme for all ages, which starts on Monday evenings from 20th April 2026:

- 4.00 – 4.45pm: Ages 5–8
- 4.45 – 5.30pm: Ages 9–11
- 5.30 – 6.30pm: Ages 12–17
- 6.30 – 7.30pm: Ages 18+

If you would like to become a member or join any of our **coaching sessions**, please do get in touch at lanchestertennis@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you at the club soon!

Barbara Ridley







Cricket Round up

Calling all ALL STARS, it's that time of the year to sign up for this year's fun! The 8 week course will be run on Friday evenings from 15th May, 5-5.45pm. There is a break for the half term week. Go to the ECB Club spark website, search for Lanchester and you can sign up from there. All Stars is for 5-8 year olds who want to start experiencing cricket or just have a bit of fun on a nice big field. It does cost £50, the price being set by the English Cricket Board, over which the club has no control. The majority of that expenditure gets you the All Stars kit, with shirt, bag, bat and ball. There is an option for the Clubs to put on an additional charge but we have not done so. Please come along and enjoy our enthusiastic team of activators helping your children to enjoy themselves and you never know, find a new favourite sport. The bar will be open for refreshments and we will endeavour to have a food van present each time. **There is a cap of 50 participants,** so please make it your priority to sign your child up now.



Preparations for the current players are going well with good numbers at the winter nets being held at Durham School. There is still an option for any budding female players to go to practice at Croft Hall on a Friday evening 5.30-6.30. Everyone should have moved onto grass by the time you read this, hopefully getting a couple of weeks in before the season starts. The first and second teams start their League fixtures on April 18 and the juniors and thirds start the following Sunday. Fixtures are displayed in the notice board outside the club, or you can catch up on the play cricket website.

Andrew McConnell

Lanchester Bowling Club

Lanchester Bowling Club was formally opened on the 26th June 1981 by Coun. Mrs I. Williamson, Chairman of Derwentside District Council Recreation and Amenities Committee. In attendance, along with many club members were local Coun. Dixon, Club Chairman Ron Cole and Mr. Tom Buller who at that time was the English Bowls Singles champion.

Tom Buller had won this prestigious national competition the previous year playing out of View Lane Bowling Club, Stanley, and was then a regular international for England particularly in the indoor game. In traditional style Chairman Ron Cole played a few 'ends' with the national champion. Tom Buller is no longer with us but he will ever be remembered for his achievements by many of us in the local bowls scene both outdoors and indoors.

It was not until many years later that similar success came back to the area when in 1995 John Leeman playing out of Craghead Bowling Club again won the singles championship, named the Sir Thomas Lipton Trophy after its sponsor. John represented England on many occasions both outdoors and indoors and was at that time the bar steward of the Stanley Indoor Centre and would bring in the trophy for display purposes and which I once had the great privilege of holding.

Thomas Lipton (1848-1931) who sponsored the singles national bowling competition, first in 1911 and then onwards from 1920, was a Scottish born philanthropist and tea baron. He also had a chain of grocery stores across the country. A self-made millionaire, he supported many sporting events such as rowing, football and of course bowls.

My story of Thomas Lipton does not end there however, for whilst I was in the South West Durham area in the early 1990's I happened to be in West Auckland Working Men's Club and noticed a magnificent trophy being displayed behind the bar. When I queried as to its origin the steward informed me it was classed as the first football World Cup and belonged to local team West Auckland FC. On handling it I noticed it was called the Lipton Cup, another of Sir Thomas's trophies, and this for an international football competition held in Italy between invited teams.

It had indeed been won by West Auckland FC, first in 1909 and again in 1911 as defending champions. This amateur team, made up mainly of coal miners, travelled to Italy at their own expense, and were successful against professional teams from Italy, Germany and Switzerland. It is thought that Sir Thomas had intended to nominate Woolwich Arsenal i.e. WA, the famous London club, and West Auckland were contacted in error. This fairytale story was made into a successful film 'The World Cup: A Captain's Tale' in 1982 starring Dennis Waterman and Tim Healy.

The foregoing does give me cause to make a unique claim inasmuch I have held in my hands two of Sir Thomas Lipton's famous awards and such which cannot happen again for in 1995 this 'world cup' was stolen from the West Auckland W. M. Club and never recovered. The club did get a replacement replica.

Further to that I must add that I was also privileged to hold in my hands arguably the most famous of all trophies, the FA Cup. This happened, back in the day when Ron Batty, who played for the Newcastle team which beat Man. City 3-1 in the 1955 final, visited my village club to show off the cup. Ron Batty, was a local lad, supposedly born in Lanchester, and played many years for Newcastle during the 40s and 50s.

Spring is now very much with us and by the time this issue is out the bowling green will be open, the new league season imminent. A time to get away from the frenzied action of football at Premiership, EFL, European and various other Cup levels.

It is time to look forward to the serene days of bowls, good competition, gentle exercise and pleasant conversation.

But wait, I am forgetting something. Of course, football or should I say soccer is on the immediate horizon. The World Cup. The Jules Rimet trophy. The 'proper' one or maybe the second one and being held in the Americas starting early June with England and Scotland participating.

So, it's back on the treadmill! Howay the lads!

Adrian Evans

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