the Village Voice

Issue No 2, Volume 26

Lanchester, February 2026



All Saints' School outdoor classroom page 14

Below wassailing at the orchard/new photography project page 2





Above and right EP school nursery page 16.





Boys' Brigade Coffee Morning page 10



Snowman in Valley Grove built by Tom (6), Nikita (mam) and Robert (dad) Nilsen.



Lanchester Women's Cricket story back page



Great Egret. Now a breeding bird in Co. Durham. Lanchester Wildlife Group page 14.

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Documentary photography project to capture life in Lanchester over the course of 2026

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. At least, that's the idea of a unique photography project which started in Lanchester in the first week of January, and will run right through to the end of the year.

George Ledger and his team of energetic amateur photographers (Mark Wilkinson, Chris Bruce and Juan Fitzgerald) took up community photography during the recent Covid pandemic. It was a way of capturing the everyday story of people's lives in the communities they call home. Consett and Leadgate were fruitful ground for this work, which has since been displayed at an acclaimed exhibition in St. Ives Church Leadgate and at Willowburn Hospice.

Since the start of the year, Communities in Focus has been working with Lanchester Partnership to identify and contact individuals, groups and events that can best tell the story of people in Lanchester during 2026. The project now has the title ... Lanchester: Community in Focus.

George's own words best describe what it is all about:

"This documentary photography project explores the people, places, and everyday life of Lanchester parish, creating a visual record shaped by shared history, evolving traditions, and quiet resilience. Through intimate portraits and observational images, it presents the parish as a collection of individual stories rather than a single narrative, focusing on ordinary moments that define life in Lanchester today."

"As a contemporary archive, the project preserves a snapshot of Lanchester at this moment in time, celebrating the dignity, individuality, and collective spirit of those who call Lanchester home."

The first images collected were taken at Lanchester Community Orchard. The occasion was "Wassailing" – an ancient ceremony to wake up the trees in anticipation of a bountiful harvest next autumn. A full account of this can be found in the article below. For the purposes of the project, Wassailing can form the start of a longitudinal study capturing the interactions of the group with nature as the trees blossom, the apples grow and are then harvested and converted into cider.

Nearly 200 images were collected, of which we can only show a very small sample here. In time, the hope is to condense a very large archive down into a collection of images which can form the core of a high-quality public exhibition. We'll be seeking community funding for this phase of the work. Meanwhile the photography team will share images back to the individuals who are their key subjects and will showcase the best bits via social media as they go along.

IF READERS HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT PEOPLE, GROUPS OR EVENTS THAT MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS STUDY OF LANCHESTER LIFE PLEASE GET IN TOUCH BY EMAILING IN.

Please contact the project via:
contact@lanchesterpartnership.org.uk

Henry Edwards
Lanchester Partnership







Wassailing photos (including the cover) all by George Ledger, Communities in Focus

Lanchester Community Orchard

Every year we hold our Wassailing event, a tradition that's held around the country at this time of year. In the past people saw it as a way of thanking the trees for the fruit, waking up the trees ready for spring and bringing luck for a good crop of fruit.

This year we had another bright sunny, snowy day for our Wassailing. We were led round the orchard by our Green Man, and musicians led us in traditional songs and dances. Our trees were woken up with loud noises, banging pans and sticks and we fed them cider and bread to encourage another bumper crop of apples. Many thanks to our musicians and dancers and our Green Man. Hopefully we will see the results in September! We would love to grow the membership of our beautiful orchard. If you would like to know more then please visit our website www.lanchesterorchard.org.

Orchard Blossom Trail 2026

It may seem a bit early whilst we are in the middle of colder weather, but here's something to look forward to with the warmer weather!

Lanchester Orchard are planning to run a Blossom Trail again after the lovely response we had to last year's trail. We aren't able to predict when the orchard will be full of blossom, so watch out for our signs along Newbiggen Lane or visit our website for up-to-date information. You can wander round our beautiful heritage fruit trees, sit under a blossom tree, bring a picnic or simply enjoy the peace and quiet and watch the blossom fall!

Watch out for our signs during April and May. If you'd like to know more about the orchard or become a member, please visit our website http://www.lanchesterorchard.org.

Eleanor Johnson, Lanchester Community Orchard



Wanted Volunteers for a Sword Dancing Team

Ever fancied a bit of traditional dancing? Well now is your chance to join a local longsword dancing team.

Here at the orchard we have been reviving the old traditions of celebrating the winter and summer solstice and the annual waking of the trees with our Jolly Wassail. We wish to take it one step further and learn some traditional sword dancing. The idea being that the dancers can perform at many of Lanchester's village events as well as those at the orchard.



The invitation is open to people of any age or gender, an ability to count to eight and know your left from your right is useful! No ribbons, bells or face paints will be used in the performing of the dance!!

At the moment we are looking for interested people and then we'll set up a WhatsApp group to arrange a suitable time and place to practice. Please text Sonny on 07817369160.

Margery Flatts Allotments – Plots Available for this Season

The allotments at Margery Flatts offer a great location to grow a wide range of crops. The allotments were created at the same time as the Community Orchard and are on the same site on the edge of the village.



The 32 plots are each 10 x 10m, a little less than half of the size of "standard" allotment but provide plenty of space to grow all sorts of plants and produce. Half plots are also available. The plots are set within the boundaries of the orchard, and the location ensures that the crops get plenty of sun (and the odd bit of wind and snow!). Water stands are provided and the allotments association, run by the members, ensures that plenty of compost is available for the plots. The association meets bi-monthly at the Black Bull pub to ensure the smooth running of the plots and facilities, and all members are welcome to attend the meetings.

There are currently a small number of plots available for new members so if you are interested to have a go at producing some great veg or need to expand your garden plot to increase your productivity, please contact the association to find out more. You can email margeryflattsallotments@outlook.com or call Simon Johnson on 07811 826585 for more information.

Ladies who lunch

It was January - New Year time - and we always celebrate that with lunch at the Pavillion, Iveston. Somewhere right on our doorstep, not too far to travel when the weather could make driving difficult. Also, it's a delightful place to have lunch. Welcoming staff, lovely round tables and super food cooked to perfection - always providing you enjoy Chinese! They have a very extensive à la carte menu from which one of our number chose to eat king prawn chow mein, and declared it to be delicious. The rest of us opted for the set menu - £29 per person - excellent value for the variety of food on offer. We started with a choice of chicken and sweet corn soup or Peking hot and sour soup. Next to arrive were the appetisers - a delightful mixture of curry triangles; crispy wan tons; Peking spare ribs; salt and pepper spare ribs; and salt and pepper chicken wings. Then, for the main course there is a good choice of dishes plus the option to add in anything from the main menu at an added charge. Our choices were chicken in lemon sauce; sizzling beef; sweet and sour pork; chicken in orange sauce; and king prawn with fresh asparagus. All accompanied with egg fried rice. The meal finished with tea or coffee, the coffee being particularly good. I have to say, we were all nicely full, had thoroughly enjoyed our meal and engaged in entertaining conversation. All in all, a great start to 2026 as we look ahead to a year full of scrumptious meals to come.

The Gourmet Girls



Lanchester Partnership Spring Clean

Saturday 7th March 2026

Spring is on its way so it's time to tidy up our village. Come and join us for an hour of litter picking. 9-12noon 7th March. Put on your boots and gloves, bring the children, bring your grannies, your aunts and uncles and let's make Lanchester clean again. Equipment provided on the village green. All welcome.



Sonny Shephard



At last we can now recycle blister packs



Over the last few years Lanchester Environmental Group have tried to be 'ahead of the game' in terms of recycling. This has included crisp packets, then soft plastics, dental items and ink cartridges which all have now become a mainstream service by supermarkets and larger stores. We also campaigned around the village to raise awareness of alternatives to plastic bags and plastic cutlery, which is brilliant. And now.... being the last to be addressed, we can take our blister packs to Boots at both Arnison Centre and Durham city centre branch.

Well done Boots for taking some responsibility for a byproduct of all pharmacies.

More good news, we understand, is that the Council will be starting a service very soon for all our domestic food waste.

I wonder what our bars and restaurants do with their food waste? Do they have a collection service?

If you know the answer to this, please let us know. Chris 07471 204041.

Chris Coates
Lanchester Partnership Environmental Group



From the House

I began 2026 with renewed energy after a restful Christmas and have been busy planning out key priorities for the coming year. One such priority is the £20 million Pride in Place funding that I secured for South Stanley. We are now recruiting a chair for the new Neighbourhood Board that will oversee how this money is spent.

The chair must live or work in South Stanley; anyone interested in putting themselves forward can find more information at: https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/34673/News-Residents-invited-to-get-involved-with-funding.

I have been out door-knocking in Pelton Fell and Chester-le-Street. I believe it is very important to talk face to face about the issues that matter to residents most, and I continue to make my way around the constituency. I also attended a public planning meeting in Craghead, where I heard residents' views on a proposal to build 34 new homes. I have since submitted a formal objection to DCC.

Visiting organisations and schools is also a major priority and I have been able to visit several this past month including New College Durham, North Durham Academy, Croft School, the North East Autism Society farm and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust youth group in Sacriston. There has been a particular focus on young people and the wonderful schools and organisations supporting them.

In Parliament, my recent focus has been defence. One in ten households in North Durham has a veteran or serving member of the armed forces in it, so I know that defence really matters to many constituents. Over the past month, I have raised veterans associations' concerns to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, spoken during the reading of the Armed Forces Bill to call for greater investment in our national defence, and contributed to a Westminster Hall debate on ESG defence spending.

Since the election, I have responded to over 11,007 queries. I have helped return over £401,636 owed to constituents in taxes/benefits/utilities. My biggest priority is to serve individuals and communities across North Durham. I will always make time for constituents and want to help in any way that I can. **If you need help or support, please email me on luke.akehurst.mp@parliament.uk or call 0191 371 8834.**

House of Commons



County Councillor Update

Dear residents, I hope you are well.

Station Road - Lots of you have brought up the dangers of crossing Station Road so in a bid to improve it, myself, Paul Jackson and Trevor Jones from the Parish Council met with the traffic management officer and a traffic engineer (see photo).



The officers agreed to repaint some road markings. We will continue to monitor the situation, as I know it is a concern.

In addition, lack of grit bins has concerned some people. As with other areas of the Council, cost prohibits new installations, although I will continue to work to have more installed in the future.

Poor bus services - I wrote to Go North East, The NE Mayor and Luke Akehurst following many complaints from residents about the buses, notably services cancelled with no warning, and poor information available. An officer reassured me that technology at bus stops is improving so information and bus tracking will be better. The bus company apologised but explained that there has been investment in new buses. Luke is arranging a meeting for us with the bus company and hopefully the issue will be covered in our local press shortly.

For our very rural inhabitants DCC offers a bus service you can book in advance called Link 2.

You can use Link2 if

- *your journey starts or ends in County Durham*
- *you do not have a bus stop within 600 metres or 10 minutes walk*
- *you do not have a bus service available within one hour of when you want to travel*
- *the journey would require a change of bus*

Pick up and drop off points

Link2 will pick you up from an address specified by you, for example your home.

It can be used for shopping, work, training, health appointments or anywhere else you want to go.

It will pick you up and set you down at your address if the journey is up to five miles. For journeys over 5 miles, it will take you to the nearest transport hub allowing you to continue your journey from there.

Buses operate Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Journeys can be booked to start at any time within these hours if there is a bus available. Your journey may be shared with other users.

Using the service

Fares are the same as regular bus services and are paid when you get on the bus. Concessionary bus travel passes can also be used.

All vehicles are fully accessible for people who are disabled or have mobility problems. Drivers will assist you on and off the vehicle if necessary. A carer or companion can also travel with you if you need someone to accompany you. You must include them when you make your booking.

So, for example from Hurbuck Cottages you can go to Lanchester, Lanchester Garden Centre, Shotley Bridge Hospital, Consett (e.g. Tesco)

Contact the travel response centre on 03000 269 999

Dropped kerbs – Kerbs were marked out in October at the Kings Head and the Oakwood area. There has been a slight delay, but I am assured they will be installed in April.

Parksafe Scheme– this was installed around the junior schools just before Christmas. One or two people reported issues in using it – let me know if that is still the case. Please continue to report dangerous parking. A new barrier and road markings should hopefully be installed at the new EP school entrance soon.

On a positive note, I had a good meeting with the officer from the Woodland Trust about making the gateway into Dora's Wood slightly bigger to facilitate prams whilst still preventing bikes and horses from accessing the site.

If you need help with a council related issue please contact me on 03000 260683 /07469 105096 or email me on alison.gray2@durham.gov.uk and I will do my best to help.

Best wishes,

Alison Gray

Willow Burn Donation

On 16 January, the team at Willow Burn were delighted to welcome members of Consett Citizens Choir to the hospice to present a very special cheque for £4,000, raised through a series of fundraising concerts and events held throughout 2025. These uplifting events were organised in loving memory of the choir's former Musical Director, Joyce Shaw, who was cared for at Willow Burn.

Rachel Quince, Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Fundraising & Marketing said: "It is deeply moving to see Joyce's legacy continue in such a meaningful way, bringing people together through music while helping to support our hospice and the families who rely on our care.

This incredible donation will fund 24 hours of nursing care in the Helen McArdle In-Patient Wing, as well as three full days of care in the Sir Tom Cowie Day Care Centre, directly supporting patients who live in our community."

The team at Willow Burn would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to everyone involved with Consett Citizens Choir and to all who attended and supported their events throughout the year in Joyce's memory.



The choir with their cheque

Lanchester WI

Our meeting took place on 2nd February, 29 members and 7 visitors were welcomed on a cold February evening. After listening to information about upcoming events we were joined by Gary Bankhead, Underwater Archaeologist. Gary has featured on TV programmes such as 'River Hunters' and 'Digging for Britain'. Gary told us about his recent explorations around Hylton and Offerton Haugh which has resulted in finding evidence of a large and previously unknown hub of Roman manufacturing. It was the first Roman site found in Britain where stone was deliberately quarried for production of whetstones and the discovery puts the North East in Roman Britain's sophisticated manufacturing and trade network, as it is the biggest known whetstone discovery in the whole of North West Europe. A very interesting presentation.

We ended the evening having a catch up with friends and a warming cuppa.

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

Photo of Gary Bankhead and Marie Murphy

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What did our General Election candidates do after the election?



Almost 18 months on from the general election, Green Party candidate Sunny Moon-Schott has spoken to the Village Voice about his experiences running in North Durham, touching on his campaigning within Lanchester.
Standing in a constituency marked by increasingly low turnouts and political disengagement, Moon-Schott did not win, but more than doubled the Green Party's previous number of votes. He reflected on a campaign fought amongst major life changes alongside an election that came much earlier than he or his party expected.
Moon-Schott was realistic when discussing his candidacy - he was aware at the time that this was likely not his election, and that his appearance on the ballot was more "paper candidate" than anything else, part of a mission for the Greens to have a name in each constituency. Yet he remained committed to offer a true alternative and hear the concerns of voters within North Durham who had become disillusioned with the traditional parties. He said:
"If I hadn't, it would have just been a blank spot on the ballot. And that's just not how a functioning democracy should work. People should have a choice. So, I feel it was my duty to step up."
Moon-Schott's campaign was marked by stress, he said, through a new job, moving home and a lack of resources compared to other candidates. Despite this, he committed himself to at least an hour of canvassing each day after work, speaking to potential constituents about their concerns for the area. A number of those who discussed their concerns with Sunny were politically apathetic, he said, and felt defeated by the "lesser evil" approach in politics:
"It was essentially being framed as a you either vote Labour or Tory and there's no other avenue that's not a wasted vote."
The 2024 election noted the lowest voter turnout since 2001, a trend mirrored in North Durham, where voter turnout was 8.9% lower than the previous election, with Moon-Schott attributing this to the political fatigue within the area. He pointed to a decade of stagnant wages, rising housing costs, and food prices that continued to climb even as headline inflation fell, arguing that for many voters in North Durham, claims of economic recovery felt hollow.
"There is also a belief that it doesn't matter who they vote for, no one is going to improve their situation" he said.
In a constituency where Labour faced little serious challenge, Moon-Schott was critical of what he saw as a lack of local representation, with candidates "parachuted in" to safe seats and communities left feeling taken for granted.
Moon-Schott spent limited time campaigning in Lanchester, delivering leaflets, knocking on doors, and speaking with residents in the community centre about local concerns over a cup of tea. He argues that those he spoke to in Lanchester reflected the rest of the constituency:
"People want to be listened to," he said, "they want things to change."
While his time in the village was brief, Moon-Schott viewed it as productive, hearing from a smaller part of the constituency, since most of his time was spent in larger areas like Stanley or Chester-Lee-Street.
On a separate occasion, Moon-Schott also attended the hustings in Lanchester, and admitted he struggled in the fast-paced, "soundbite"-centric environment. He said:
"That's not a situation that really suits me. As soon as I got off the stage and spoke with people, I was able to have an actual proper conversation with them ... but that's not what being a politician in the modern era is about."
Since the election, Sunny Moon-Schott has taken a step back from electoral campaigns, choosing to focus on more community-based work through his role as a Parish Councillor in Shincliffe, and local wellbeing groups such as Man Up Durham. He described helping people facing issues like alcohol dependency, anger management, and custody challenges. Moon-Schott emphasised that this allows him to make a tangible difference where he argues the formal political system often fails to reach:
"I've been able to actually make more of a difference there I feel than I had anywhere else."
Despite an unsuccessful stint in electoral politics, Moon-Schott sees his role as supporting and listening to the people around him.

Sunny was talking to Kenzie Harrison. Kenzie Harrison is a multimedia journalism student at the University of Salford and a proud Lanchester resident who writes for the Village Voice in her spare time. Kenzie specialises in covering local politics, community events, and especially enjoys photojournalism.

Poppy's Walks



Readers may know that a walking group sets off from Lanchester village green every Monday at 1pm. It is free of charge and very good for the health.
Well behaved dogs are welcome, and occasionally an exception is made, and I am allowed to tag along too!
One such occasion was the first Monday in January, which marked the third anniversary of the walks starting. The routes vary but, on this occasion, there was a healthy turnout of 14 humans, myself, and a well-behaved labrador. The conditions were very cold, but dry and sunny.
As you now know, I am Poppy, a Patterdale Terrier who describes to you readers the walks I lead my Humans on.
This one as usual set off from the village green and we walked along the bypass before crossing the road outside the EP school and proceeding through a passageway - what Yorkshire folks call a ginnel - and out on to the cricket field. We skirted the field and came out on Kitswell Road, before turning through a gap and onto the railway path.
We then walked in the direction of Consett. The walk was brisk which was necessary to combat the cold, and I usually run around anyway. We passed under a bridge and passed another bridge with a sign saying we had walked one and a half miles from Lanchester. And we had only been on the go about 20 minutes.
But I was put on my lead when we approached farm buildings at a place called Hurbuck.
There we turned right through an iron gate which had a funny sort of lock on the front.
Two walk leaders eventually managed to lock it securely behind us after we had all filed through.
We then walked across a couple of fields. It was noticeable here how hard the surface was underfoot. Normally it is quite muddy but not on this day when the temperatures were so cold.
But the sun was shining brightly and the views across the fields were quite glorious. At least that is what I heard the humans saying, I was too busy sniffing in the undergrowth.
After crossing a couple of fields, we turned right through another gate and then left again along a footpath through a wood.
On our right was a field with quite a few curious horses looking across the fence at us.
The footpath eventually took us to a group of buildings known as Low Meadows. We passed through Low Meadows and came to a gate with a cattle grid to the right. We filed through the gate and walked along a farm track back in the direction of Lanchester. Just as the farm track was about to merge into Kitswell Road we turned right through a gap and back onto the railway path. We continued to walk along the railway path across Newbiggen Lane then past Station House and onto Station Road where the walk ended.
It had taken 90 minutes and everybody who had taken part felt refreshed by the experience.

90th Birthday Celebrations

Mrs Lilian Dixon recently celebrated her 90th birthday with friends and family. She is well known in the village having been a teacher at Lanchester EP school for many years and being responsible for several musical productions at the school. Many ex-pupils commented on Facebook how influential she had been in their own appreciation of music with many remembering some of the productions such as "Anne of Green Gables" and the "Fun Run Song". Lilian helped start the Girls' Club in the Village, helped at the Youth Club at Mock Festivals and produced several pantomimes. She was the organist at the Methodist Church for over 60 years and played the organ at the wedding of several of her ex-pupils. In 1984 she did a sponsored 10 hour organ play through "Hymns and Psalms" to raise money to supply the church with new books. Lilian was also a founder member of Lanchester Choral and Operatic Society. She became interested in history when researching the Lanchester Methodist Church Centenary book and has produced two other books regarding Lanchester, "Lanchester in Times Past" and "More about Lanchester". Lilian enjoyed her birthday celebrations, and we all look forward to celebrating many more.

Eric Hepplewhite





Lillian's books and right Lillian with husband Ronnie back row left and daughter Hilary right

Lanchester Social Club Raises £1,400 for Children's Cancer Charity

Lanchester Social Club has raised £1,400 for the Henry Dancer Days charity following a Boxing Day charity raffle held at the club. The raffle raised £400 on the day thanks to the generosity of members, guests and local businesses. The total was later boosted by an additional £1,000 donation secured by club chairman Jonathan Walker from national drainage company Dyno-Rod. The funds will go towards supporting children with cancer and their families. Speaking after the event, Jonathan thanked everyone involved, saying the support shown by the local community and businesses highlighted the strong charitable spirit at the heart of the club. Lanchester Social Club continues to play an active role in supporting good causes, with further fundraising events planned throughout the year.



Photo l-r Moira Crozier, Jane Nattrass and Jonathan Walker

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Lanchester Wildlife Group
Brightwater and the Great North Fen, Tuesday 10th March, 7.30pm, Lanchester Community Centre. No entry charge. All are welcome.

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

WI
March meeting, Monday 2nd - speaker Dr Heather Laurence, 'A look from behind the Lens'. April meeting, Monday 13th - speaker Marie Thorne, 'Dramas in Pyjamas'. Both meetings are in the Community Centre at 7pm.

Musical memories
Join us for music, refreshments and fun activities. 4th March 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 8th March 2026, FREUD'S LAST SESSION: A period psychological drama starring Anthony Hopkins and Matthew Goode. Set on the eve of WWII and towards the end of his life, Freud's Last Session sees Freud invite iconic author C.S. Lewis for a debate over the existence of God. Exploring Freud's unique relationship with his lesbian daughter Anna and Lewis' unconventional romance with his best friend's mother, the film interweaves past, present and fantasy. Lanchester Community Centre, 7pm refreshments and raffle. Film starts at 7.30pm. Members: £4, Non-members: £5. Annual membership: £5.

Lanchester Local history society
Our Friday 6th March meeting is Richard Annis talking on "The Castle Walls". Richard has recently retired from his post with Durham University making sure the buildings and land were suitably preserved for posterity. In April our meeting date clashes with Good Friday so we have chosen not to meet but we will be back on the 1st May and hope the Bank Holiday doesn't lead to a low turnout. I am currently waiting for confirmation from speakers but will update you in the next VV. See you at the Community Centre, 7.00 prompt start after you have negotiated the security system.

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.

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 19th February from 4-5pm. The group will be reviewing 'Three things about Elsie', by Joanna Cannon. A book 'about getting older and how people treat them differently or lose sight of them all together', according to Amazon Kindle.
Monday Book Club will meet on 23rd February from 2.30-3.30pm, and will be discussing 'A Terrible Kindness', by Jo Browning Wroe. The Guardian describes it as a story about 'a young embalmer who attends the Aberfan disaster of 1966'.
Pins and Needles meet on 1st Thursday monthly. The next meeting is 5th March 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.
Lego Club is available every Saturday from 10-11.30.
Toddler Time group is on Tuesdays from 2.30-3.00 with stories and nursery rhymes for your children to enjoy.
Children's crafts are available every afternoon and Saturdays. Different craft ideas and material are available, 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.

Thursday Club
The next meeting is March 19th, 1.30pm, Community Centre. This is our birthday month and so we always have something a little special for the afternoon, and so we are having our very own 1% club quiz followed by cakes and tea and lots of friendly chattering. Visitors are always welcome.

World Day of Prayer 2026
This year's service has been inspired and prepared by an ecumenical group of Christian women living in Nigeria. The theme of the service this year is "I will give you rest, come" (Matthew 11:28-30). Wives & Friends group of Lanchester Methodist church is hosting the service on Wednesday 4th March at 1:30pm and all are welcome to join us in prayer, and in hearing about the women's shared struggles in recent times and how they can inspire us to work towards a world devoid of injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. The offering, taken during the service, is for the work of World Day of Prayer and for projects run by Christian charities at home and abroad. Similarly, proceeds from the coffee morning to be held in the Methodist church on Saturday, 28th February from 10:00 am will be donated to World Day of Prayer. Dianne Emerson (local secretary WDP).

Lanchester Partnership Spring Clean Saturday 7th March 2026
Spring is on its way so it's time to tidy up our village. Come and join us for an hour of litter picking on Saturday 7th March, 9-12noon. Put on your boots and gloves, bring the children, bring your grannies, your aunts and uncles and let's make Lanchester clean again. Equipment provided on the village green. All are welcome.

Lunch club/cuppa and a chat
The next meeting of the lunch club held at Lynwood House will be Tuesday 10th March 12pm start, all welcome.

Christian Aid Soup Lunch
Back by popular request! Wednesday March 11th, 12 midday - 2pm at Lanchester Methodist Church. Tickets £7 from Judith Brown 01207 521898, Dianne Emerson 01207 520817 or Kathleen Bell 01207 521793.

Willow Burn Gala
Date: Friday 27 March 2026, 7pm – Midnight
Venue: South Causey Inn, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 0YB
Tickets: £65 each or £650 for a table of 10
Dress Code: Black-tie and fabulous
This March, Party Like It Means Something with Willow Burn Hospice and Berry's Jewellers, Newcastle. The Willow Burn Gala is back for another year, this time at the South Causey Inn, for an unforgettable night of celebration and community spirit. This year's event is hosted by North East Comedian Steffen Peddie and includes a drinks reception, three-course meal with wine, balloon pop, raffle and auction and live music from Soul Street. This year's Gala is a celebration of everything Willow Burn stands for compassion, fun and the power of local generosity. So dust off your tux, grab your gown and get ready to party like it means something. Tickets are available at: www.willowburnhospice.org.uk/our-events/ or from Ali English at aenglish@willowburnhospice.org.uk / 01207 529 224

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

WHAT'S ON - March 2026 and beyond

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.

Thursday Club January Meeting

We have been lucky with the weather and held a successful meeting with Age UK representatives giving us advice and asking questions about ways to keep fit. One thing which impressed me was that general fitness is the best way to keep our bodies and especially our brains in a healthy condition to ward off dementia.
We don't have to worry about pain after a new exercise or a spell in the garden. It tells you to try harder (after a short recovery time).
We also paid our yearly fees and received the programme for the year's events and trips. New members are always welcomed.
We have a new treasurer and helper, new tea ladies and raffle and trips representatives, all making this a very busy and happy afternoon.
Our next meeting is on March 19th 1.30pm at the Community Centre. This is our birthday month and so we always have something a little special for the afternoon, and so we are having our very own 1% club quiz followed by cakes and tea and lots of friendly chattering.
Visitors are always welcome.

Jan Vasey





World Day of Prayer 2026

This year's service has been inspired and prepared by an ecumenical group of Christian women living in Nigeria. The theme of the service this year is "I will give you rest, come" (Matthew 11:28-30). Wives & Friends group of Lanchester Methodist church is hosting the service on Wednesday 4th March at 1:30pm and all are welcome to join us in prayer, and in hearing about the women's shared struggles in recent times and how they can inspire us to work towards a world devoid of injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. The offering, taken during the service, is for the work of World Day of Prayer and for projects run by Christian charities at home and abroad. Similarly, proceeds from the coffee morning to be held in the Methodist church on Saturday, 28th February from 10:00 am will be donated to World Day of Prayer.
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Community Centre News

Here's the latest from your Community Centre.
Coming up:
Saturday 7th March - join us for a 60's and 70's 'Rock & Pop' night. The band Black n Blue will be performing and there will be a bar and nibbles available. This is a **FREE** event so grab your tickets as soon as possible from the Community Centre or Lanchester Country Basket.
Saturday 21st March - New cafe opening! Bee's Cafe will be opening its doors. Opening times will be Wednesday to Saturday, 9am-2.30pm and Sundays, 9am-3pm. Please call in and see what is on offer.
Saturday 28th March – 'De-stash' event. 12noon to 2.30pm. Lots of stalls full of all kinds of crafting materials and art items. Pop in and grab a bargain. Contact the centre if you are interested in having a stall to sell your excess crafting items. Refreshments available.
Saturday 25th April - Craft Workshop. Learn how to make fabric twine in the morning, then in the afternoon learn how to create something wonderful from the twine you've created. The day will be from 10.30am to 3.00pm, £45. Call in to book your place.
Looking for a Room to Hire?
We have 2 amazing large halls to hire, 2 small meeting rooms, a conference room and a larger meeting room. We are a great place to hold family parties and any type of business or social functions. Call us for details.
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, details above.

Marie Murphy

Win twice the sparkle in one stunning prize

with Berry's Jewellers and Willow Burn Hospice

This year, win not one but two pieces of diamond jewellery (RRP £7,190) with the Berry's Jewellers Diamond Raffle in aid of Willow Burn Hospice.

The 18ct White Gold Brilliant Cut Diamond Cluster Earrings (RRP £2,395) and the 18ct White Gold Brilliant Cut Diamond Cluster Pendant and Chain (RRP £4,795) have been donated by Berry's Jewellers, a luxury, independent and family-owned top quality retail jewellers with a store on Grey Street in Newcastle and across the UK in Leeds, York, Nottingham, Hull and Windsor. Tickets are £10 each and are on sale now until the Willow Burn Gala on 27 March.

The whole team at Willow Burn would like to say a huge thank you to Berry's for sponsoring the Diamond Raffle for the fifth year, raising over £16,000 for the charity so far. We would also like to offer our gratitude to David Nicholson, Newcastle Store Manager, for his ongoing support and dedication to Willow Burn.

Tickets are available from Willow Burn Hospice Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm, online at www.willowburnhospice.org.uk/diamond-raffle and Berry's Jewellers, Newcastle.

The raffle will be drawn on Friday 27 March 2026 at the Willow Burn Hospice Gala at the South Causey Inn. Willow Burn Hospice is a registered charity, number 519659.

This raffle is licensed by Durham County Council NO. LOTSP0144

Rachel Quince





The prizes (above) and photo of Rachel Quince (Willow Burn) (left) and David Nicholson

Boys' Brigade

We had a disappointing start to the year at Boys' Brigade. We were due to travel to Luton to take part in the English final of the Badminton competition when it was cancelled at the very last minute due to the venue they were going to use developing a roof leak and being forced to close. All were ready to depart on the Friday night when the news was received so a wasted journey was only just avoided. Hopefully a new date will be organised soon.

Regular weekly meetings have started in earnest with the Countdown to Midnight, Winter Olympics, making poppies and traybakes already being completed. Our Winter Olympics was full of fun for all sections as we completed our version of tobogganing, skiing and curling.

We had a coffee morning at the Methodist Church at the end of January so we made tray bakes to sell there and then made some air dry clay poppies which will go to Willow Burn Hospice.

Our DofE boys are continuing to volunteer and carry out their regular skills and physical activities with the next expedition due sometime after Easter.

We are still collecting empty ink cartridges to recycle and if anyone has any they can be left at the Methodist Church or Croft View or with any BB leader.

If anyone has any old Boys Brigade jumpers we can certainly put them to good use just get in touch.

Eric Hepplewhite



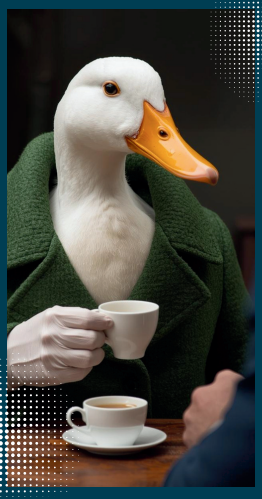




Boys' Brigade "Winter Olympics" and (cover) traybakes for the coffee morning

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THE QUIET WINS IN THE PROPERTY WORLD



In estate agency, success is often measured in visible ways. Sold boards going up, keys changing hands, smiles for photographs. Those moments matter and deserve celebrating. But some of the most important wins never make it onto Rightmove. They come without fanfare or posts online, happening quietly behind closed doors, often when nobody else is watching, in kitchens over cups of tea or in phone calls after dinner that begin with uncertainty and end with relief.

Not every valuation leads to a property going on the market. Sometimes the right outcome is deciding not to move at all. That may sound strange coming from an estate agent, but in a village like ours, doing the right thing matters more than doing the quick thing. There are times when the numbers do not stack up, when the stress outweighs the benefit, or when the timing simply is not right. Helping someone recognise that early can save months of worry. No board goes up, but a great deal of pressure comes down.

Honest conversations about pricing are another quiet win. Telling people what they want to hear is easy. Telling them what the market is actually saying is harder, but far kinder. It can prevent frustration, wasted time, and the creeping doubt that something must be wrong with the home. You can often feel the shift when expectations are reset, shoulders drop, the process becomes calmer, and decisions become clearer. That is progress, even if it is not dramatic.



Then there are the evening calls. The ones where someone simply needs reassurance, clarity, or to talk things through one more time. These moments never appear in statistics, but they matter deeply to the people involved. In village life, reputation is not managed online, it is built quietly, day by day, in how problems are handled and how people are treated. Not every win has a sold board. Some wins are calmer nights, clearer decisions, and fewer regrets. Those wins may not be visible from the street, but in a community like ours, they matter most.

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New commercial forest in Lanchester debated in court

The High Court has ruled in favour at the permission stage of a legal challenge brought by Lanchester Properties, part of the family-owned Lanchester Group, against the Forestry Commission's decision to approve the Greencroft Forest scheme in County Durham without requiring a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This means that the legal challenge can proceed and no planting work can be undertaken on the site.

The proposed development covers 290 hectares of farmland between Greencroft, Maiden Law, Lanchester and Iveston, making it one of the largest contiguous afforestation projects proposed in the UK in decades. The scheme includes plans for a commercial Sitka Spruce timber plantation forming up to 65% of the site - a non-native, fast-growing conifer.

True North, the investment firm advancing the Greencroft proposal, submitted the EIA screening application and supporting documents to the Forestry Commission in January 2025.

Lanchester Properties sought a judicial review after the Forestry Commission concluded the scheme did not require an EIA, a decision the Court has now determined, in the words of Lanchester Properties, "was arguably incorrect. The Court has found that it is arguable that the Commission failed to adequately consider the environmental sensitivity of the location, including the dominance of Sitka Spruce across areas identified as medium and high sensitivity in the landscape and heritage studies."

"Community groups, local residents and environmental specialists have highlighted concerns regarding the creation of such a large single-species conifer plantation, which offers limited habitat value compared to native broadleaf woodland. Indeed, evidence before the Court noted that multiple sub-compartments planned for Sitka Spruce planting were flagged in the Forestry Commission's own documentation as highly sensitive in terms of landscape character, biodiversity and heritage impact."

Veronica Cleary, Tony Cleary and Caroline Cleary-MacArthur are directors of the Lanchester Group. Caroline said of the ruling: "As both a director of a long-established local business and a resident of this community, I welcome the Court's permission and look forward to the substantive hearing. Residents were not adequately informed about the true nature of this scheme, nor that it would be dominated by an industrial timber forest of predominantly Sitka Spruce. People were led to believe this was a biodiversity project when the evidence shows otherwise."

The business operates three wind turbines on sites adjacent to the Greencroft Forest site, where it employs almost 400 people and is mostly powered using renewable energy. The business has submitted detailed evidence showing the forest would damage its turbines and cause significant financial costs to the business and the local community. "The Lanchester Group's renewable energy operations have already saved more carbon than the proposed forest would sequester in over a century."

Harry Humble, Chief Executive of developers True North Ltd, said in the Northern Echo: "We are understandably disappointed with the judge's decision.

"This is a further costly delay to the planting of England's largest contiguous commercial forest. We won't be able to plant anything this spring, as the case will be locked up in the courts awaiting a decision, while the legal bill for the taxpayer continues to mount.

"Lanchester Wines claims strong environmental credentials yet is challenging the Forestry Commission over a well-considered plan to plant a new forest that will help cut carbon and improve biodiversity.

He added: "This is merely delaying the inevitable. We are confident that the forest will be planted and that sense will prevail.

"The scheme is well considered and fully compliant meeting all the Government's tree planting requirements.

"We expect the case to be granted in our favour at a later hearing, when the forest and planting will progress.

"We will continue to work alongside the Forestry Commission to obtain a timely decision. Nothing in this case warrants a judicial review."

This report is based on a press release from Lanchester Group and reporting of Harry Humble's comments in the Northern Echo.

Clearly both parties have completely different views and we look forward to hearing how the Judicial Review progresses.

Keith Brown

Dear Village



I would like to take the opportunity to give a "shout out" to our wonderful village library and the great team who work there. I have to confess whilst we made sure our own children went to the library it was several years before I took the plunge to join myself. Yes, the library contains a range of books to suit all tastes, but I wondered if readers were aware of one particular facility that the library offers. Once you have joined the library you have online access to request books stocked across County Durham's libraries. Books can be ordered and arrive at the village library in just a few days. A text lets you know when they have arrived. As I write the cost is 20p per book for over 60's, 40p if you are 59 and under and reservations for those under 18 are free. It's ideal if you want to follow a particular writer, if you're in a book club or if you simply want to try a new writer. Thank you, Lanchester Library!

Mark Grimes

Canon Robert Spence

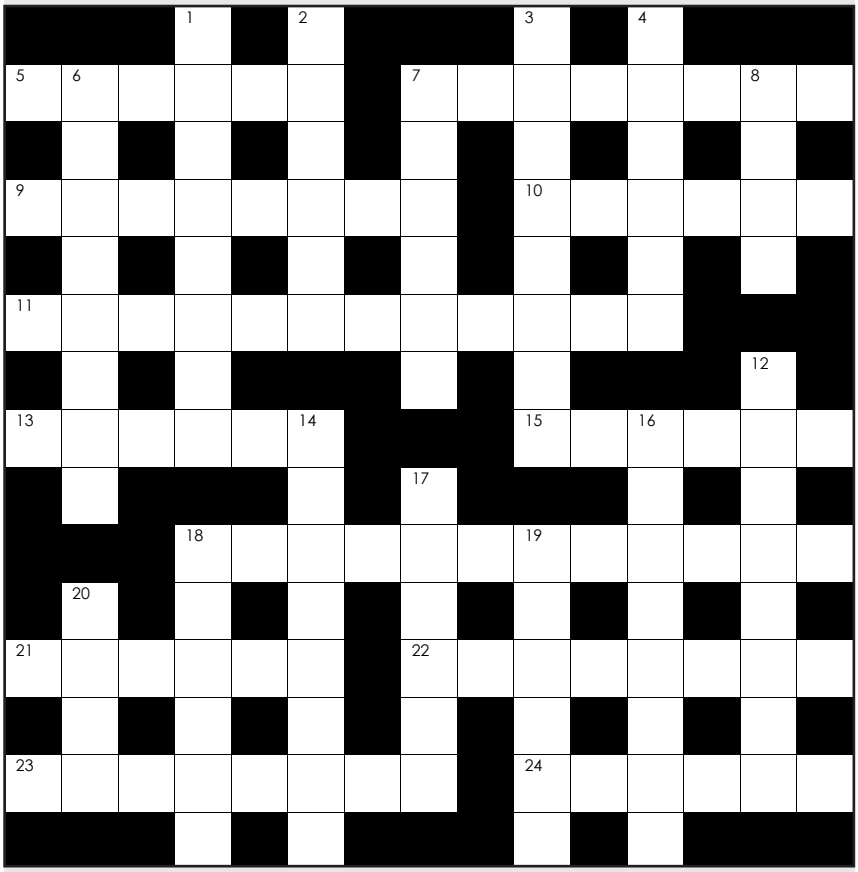


Canon Robert Spence (Fr Bob) died peacefully on 7th January 2026. Fr Bob was Parish Priest at All Saints' Catholic Church, Lanchester, from September 1998 to June 2017. In his 19 years with us in Lanchester he became a well known and respected figure in the village. A good priest, leader, and encourager of people and a great advocate for the three Christian communities in our "Churches Together". Fr Bob also loved his social life, was an avid Newcastle United fan, and made many friends from all ages and backgrounds. His Mass of Reception took place on 2nd February at All Saints' Church with his Requiem Mass the following day at Ushaw, celebrated by Bishop Stephen Wright. A more detailed report will follow in next month's edition in thanksgiving for his time spent with us.

May he rest in peace.

Deacon Peter Smith

CROSSWORD 216



Clues

Across

5. Relating to government finances (6)
7. Items sold in Ged's shop (8)
9. Status or reputation (8)
10. PC Murdoch is always on his case (6)
11. Establish as genuine (12)
13. Population count (6)
15. Type of loud horn (6)
18. He organises 'the classroom' (12)
21. Cooked in water (6)
22. Having achieved wealth through one's own effort (4-4)
23. Type of literature aimed mainly at young women (5,3)
24. Spiritual home of 10 Across (6)

Down

1. Plant with large spiny leaves (8)
2. Old name for Britain (6)
3. Disadvantage or hindrance (8)
4. Number of apostles (6)
6. Uninvited person (8)
7. We had a skinful of this on January 25th (6)
8. Precipitation (4)
12. Extremely lazy (4,4)
14. Timed plan (8)
16. Taking for granted (8)
17. Series of recordings or books that are packaged together (3,3)
18. To choose (6)
19. Disease or illness (6)
20. Slang term for money (4)

Name:_____

Address: _____

_____

Please send your completed entries for the £10 prize draw by **Friday 6th March 2026** to the Village Voice, c/o Lanchester Community Centre, Newbiggen Lane, Lanchester, DH7 0HY

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

Solution Crossword 215

Apologies for last month's clues. 26 down was missed off (by the editor, not the compiler!). The clue was "to glide over a surface (4)" and the answer was skim. Most guessed the answer but those who didn't weren't penalised. There were 23 entries, 20 were correct and the winner was Neil Warner.

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St Bede's Catholic Secondary School and Sixth Form Centre

Bede Students have continued to have an excellent year at St Bede's with pupils showing excellent resilience and commitment in their academic and personal development. We have just completed a wonderful busy and rewarding term full of fantastic Christmas activities ranging from decorating tutor room doors, reward assemblies, Christmas lunch and jumper and festive extras such as brass band pop. It was wonderful to seae so many young people recognised for their hard work, resilience, and commitment to our school values. Students have embraced the festive spirit through our Form Door Competition, and the creativity and effort on display were exceptional. Congratulations to the winning form 10 Aidan and Mrs Bell for their outstanding design!

A special mention goes to those who received the prestigious **Headteacher Awards** who truly exemplify excellence in all they do. Year 7 Lara Walton and Sophie Albusel, Year 8 India McKinney and Andrew Filmer, Year 9 Dylan O'Dowd and Mason Humba-Proctor, Year 10 De Anna Marie Rebelo and Theo McElrue, Year 11 Aodhagan Shaw and Evie Walsh, Sixth Form Ben Heckles and Fran Bell. Our annual Christmas concert was fantastic as always where so many of our talented students shared their gifts through music and performance. It was a joy to see them shine on stage and to welcome Year 6 pupils from our feeder primary schools for a special preview. A huge thanks to our families for their support.

Looking forward to this Spring Term, we are excited to launch Year 9 Options, as well as provide a range of personal development opportunities through external speakers and enhancements to our PSHE programme. These initiatives will continue to support our students in becoming confident, well-rounded individuals prepared for the future.

On Thursday 8th January we held our Year 11 Parents' Evening, and it was fantastic to see so many parents in school. Conversations focused on how we can work together to support students in making progress and achieving fantastic outcomes in the summer exams.

We were delighted to welcome Anthony Hutton back into St. Bede's School on 21st January 2026. He is a past student, and Big Brother winner. His victory came at just 23 years old. Consequently, it quickly propelled him into the spotlight. Indeed, this marked the very beginning of his public journey. He adeptly navigated the intense pressures of fame. He has launched a campaign complete with a mental health workshop and a pop up barber, on a mission to encourage men to open up about mental health, but does a lot more to promote mental health and support in that area. Anthony spent the morning speaking to our Year 11 cohort, delivering an inspiring message ahead of their upcoming GCSEs.

He also worked closely with a smaller group of Year 11 boys, focusing on:

- Never giving up – the importance of resilience and refusing to throw in the towel
- Strong communication – how expressing thoughts and concerns can make all the difference
- Mental health strategies – practical ways to stay balanced, focused, and motivated
- Future goals – embracing ambition and taking positive steps toward success



A huge thank you to Anthony for his continued support and the positive impact he has on our students. We are proud of the maturity and engagement shown by our Year 11s.

We also celebrated Elena Fife (right) in Year 7. Elena and her team Riot Girls participated in a Cheer competition. Not only did they





come 1st in their round but they also won Grand Champions. Then once they arrived home, they also found out they also won a bid for the Allstars Championship in Florida! What an amazing achievement. Well done Elena and your team, we are all very proud of you!

Looking ahead we are delighted to announce we are forming a **PTA which will be named Friends of St Bede's.**

What is the role and function of a PTA?

PTA stands for Parent Teacher Association. The PTA supports the school by raising money to enhance, enrich and improve learning experiences for all pupils. A well-run PTA will form close ties with the school community, helping to connect school and home life, so that parents become more positively engaged in their children's education.

There's also a social aspect to the PTA: parents are able to get together, meet parents of children in different year groups and work alongside each other while raising money for the school and supporting its aims.

Who runs the PTA?

PTAs are run by a committee of volunteers – usually parents of children at the school, and sometimes teachers too.

Who can join the PTA?

If the organisation is known as a PTA, membership is usually limited to parents, guardians and carers of current pupils, plus school staff. Other types of association, such as Friends Associations, are open to anyone who wishes to join and is approved by the committee.

We would love any current or past students' parent's/carers to support. If you are a member of the local community we would love your support too!

We appreciate that not everyone can commit to giving time regularly to help us plan and run events but any help whether regular or on an ad hoc basis is always gratefully received as we cannot run events without your help. All money raised through the Friends will be used for the benefit of the children.

Please see the email below to register your interest
friendsofstbedes@stb.bwcet.com

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Catherine Hammill, Head Teacher

Lanchester Wildlife Group

Brightwater and the Great North Fen. Tuesday 10th March, 7.30pm, Lanchester Community Centre. No entry charge. All welcome.

Two centuries ago, a vast area of the southern part of County Durham was an extensive wetland. Industry and agriculture meant that most was drained leaving isolated fens, marshes and carrs. The wetland wildlife which relied on these habitats became much rarer and the quality of the water in the Skerne deteriorated as soil and fertilizer was washed into the river.

Durham Wildlife Trust Project Manager Paul Black will talk about how the Brightwater Project started to reverse the damage, improving the Skerne catchment for both the wildlife and the people that live there. The good work continues, and the hope is now to create a Great North Fen and bring birds like cranes back to the county. The Brightwater project was funded by the National Lottery and, as Paul says, this time we all won.

Noel Jackson

Cover photo Great Egret. Now a breeding bird in Co. Durham.

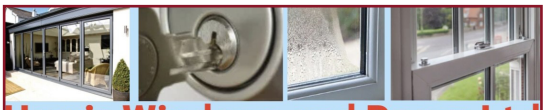
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Lanchester Endowed Parochial School

This month, we are celebrating our youngest children in school. Read all about our Nursery unit where we now welcome 2 year olds as well as 3 year olds.
It has been a busy and happy start to 2026 in our Nursery, with children enjoying lots of hands-on learning through play and exploration. We have welcomed new friends into our provision for two year-olds and have seen our first group of children successfully make the move up to the three year old room. In our two year old room, children have been exploring a wide range of sensory materials and textures through messy play, mark-making and practical activities. They have also been getting out and about in the village, visiting the library and local shops, helping to build confidence, communication skills and curiosity about the world around them.
Our three year-olds have been learning about winter and cold places. They have investigated ice and snow, exploring how water freezes and melts, and learning about animals that live in cold environments. This has led to imaginative play and discussion about what it might be like to be a glaciologist, encouraging children to ask questions and share their ideas. We held a wonderful family STEM story time last week to build on this learning and allow the children to share their knowledge.
Outdoor play continues to be an important part of everyday life, with children spending time outside come rain or shine. Despite the rain, we have been taking opportunities to develop our strength and coordination through building obstacle courses together and we have been learning lots about muddy puddles! Now that February is here, our three year-olds are going to be restarting their weekly visits to our extensive forest area. We know that they will be excited to get back to exploring the natural environment and developing their confidence, cooperation and independence.
Lanchester EP Nursery is a teacher-led setting staffed by qualified, experienced practitioners who work closely with parents and carers to support children's learning and development. The setting includes well-resourced, welcoming indoor spaces, with a dedicated area for two year olds to support a calm and secure start to nursery life. We offer funded places for eligible two year olds and free funded places for three year olds, with flexible 15 and 30 hour options available. We have childcare available from 7:30am to 6pm for children from 3 and up. Further information about the Nursery provision and funded places is available from the school office and visits can be arranged on request.
Meanwhile, some of our older children have been on an adventure of a lifetime. Thanks to the Turing Scheme we were able to send 8 children and 4 adults to our partner school in Delhi, India - Kulachi Hansraj Model School. They had an incredible time there, spending time in school, visiting the Taj Mahal, Hindu and Sikh temples whilst also going to the Anglican Cathedral in the middle of the city.

Mrs J Davis
Head Teacher



KoGs (Kids of God)

Coffee Morning and Shopping Experience

SATURDAY 14TH MARCH, 10 am – 1pm at Lanchester Methodist Church. We will be hosting the coffee morning on Saturday 14th March alongside our shopping experience. We will have all the usual coffee morning treats tea, coffee, traybakes, bacon sandwiches etc as well as lots of stalls featuring a variety of items for you to come and grab a bargain! With all kinds on offer including some handmade crafts (by our members) and some knitted toys/ clothes made by parents to books and gadgets all searching for a new home!
Come along and see what we have to offer you, we'd love to see you there!

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 and September.
We are very pleased to say we are teaming up with the Henry Dancer Days charity and will be donating some of our money raised to them. For those who don't know Henry Dancer was a past KoGs member and Henry Dancer Days is a charity that was started to keep Henry's name alive after he sadly lost his awful battle with Osteosarcoma (bone cancer) at the age of 12. Henry Dancer Days supports children and their families who are suffering with the devastating effects of childhood cancer. If you'd like to send us a recipe, please email us at kidsofgod@hotmail.co.uk and remember to include your name!

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 termtime.
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

Pete and Laura Cole

All Saints' Catholic Primary School

Outstanding Achievement for All Saints' Catholic Primary School

We are delighted to share some exceptional news with the local community. We recently received a letter from our Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, congratulating All Saints' on the excellent outcomes achieved by our disadvantaged pupils at the end of the 2024/25 academic year.

The letter praised the hard work of pupils and the dedication of staff, noting that our school's performance, "places it among the very best nationally, and this is a significant achievement." This recognition reflects the commitment, ambition and daily effort shown across our whole school community. Our fully inclusive nature and ambitious curriculum were also praised in our two most recent inspections.

Our pupils continue to demonstrate determination, resilience and a love of learning. Staff work tirelessly to provide high-quality teaching and a nurturing environment where every child is supported to flourish: it is wonderful to see our achievements recognised nationally. Our families and parish play a vital role, through their ongoing encouragement and partnership, in the success of our school. Together, these efforts create a culture where all pupils — including those facing additional challenges — can, and do, thrive.

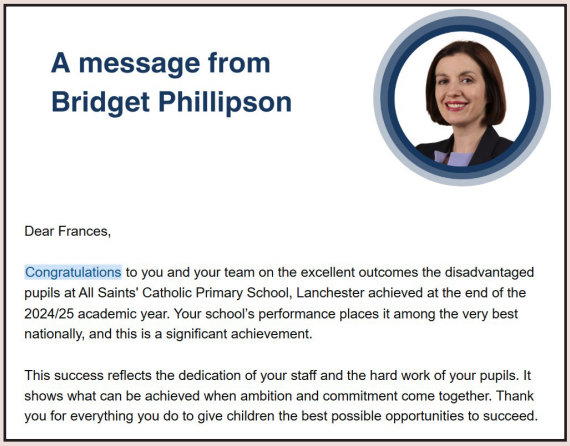
The letter also highlighted the importance of sharing our expertise with others, recognising that "The achievements at All Saints' demonstrate what is possible." As a school, we remain committed to continuous improvement and to contributing positively within wider educational networks.

I am incredibly proud of our pupils and grateful to our dedicated team for everything they do each day. This achievement belongs to our whole community, and we are honoured to see everyone's efforts celebrated in such a meaningful way.

We have places available across school for Catholics and non-Catholics. Please get in touch for a visit!

Frances Stephenson
Head Teacher





Historic Book



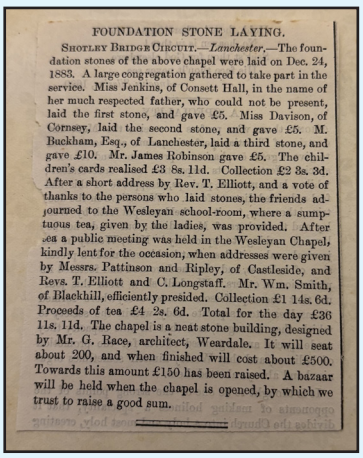
Eric Hepplewhite was approached out of the blue by someone who had a very old book which they thought may have been of interest.

The book was "Tennyson's Works" published by Keegan Paul Trench which, although interesting, was not really the reason for sending it!

On the first page of the book was a calligraphed statement (see photo) which says "Presented to Miss N Jenkins of Consett Hall by the trustees of the ? Chapel Lanchester for her kindness in laying the foundation stone and contributing to the building fund of the new Chapel. Dec 24th 1883." If anyone can enlighten us as to the symbols just before the word "chapel" we will be very grateful – or were they just a filler?

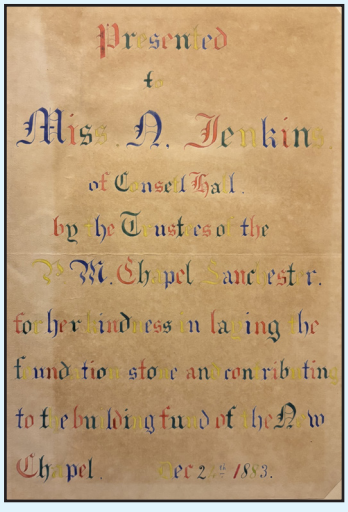
The book relates to the foundation stone of the Primitive Methodist Church which is now Croft View Halls. The other thing within the book is a press cutting (see photo) about the event where it says that the Wesleyan Chapel was used for serving teas and a meeting – this is what is now the Methodist Church on Front Street.

Another piece of Lanchester history.



FOUNDATION STONE LAYING.

SHOTLEY BRIDGE CIRCUIT.—*Lanchester.*—The foundation stones of the above chapel were laid on Dec. 24, 1883. A large congregation gathered to take part in the service. Miss Jenkins, of Consett Hall, in the name of her much respected father, who could not be present, laid the first stone, and gave £5. Miss Davison, of Cornsey, laid the second stone, and gave £5. M. Buckham, Esq., of Lanchester, laid a third stone, and gave £10. Mr. James Robinson gave £5. The children's cards realised £3 8s. 11d. Collection £2 3s. 3d. After a short address by Rev. T. Elliott, and a vote of thanks to the persons who laid stones, the friends adjourned to the Wesleyan school-room, where a sumptuous tea, given by the ladies, was provided. After tea a public meeting was held in the Wesleyan Chapel, kindly lent for the occasion; when addresses were given by Messrs. Pattinson and Ripley, of Castleside, and Revs. T. Elliott and C. Longstaff. Mr. Wm. Smith, of Blackhill, efficiently presided. Collection £1 14s. 6d. Proceeds of tea £4 2s. 6d. Total for the day £36 11s. 11d. The chapel is a neat stone building, designed by Mr. G. Race, architect, Weardale. It will seat about 200, and when finished will cost about £500. Towards this amount £150 has been raised. A bazaar will be held when the chapel is opened, by which we trust to raise a good sum.



Lanchester Local History Society

Due to the vagaries of the calendar, I find myself with no meeting report. So, I thought I would dig into a bit of Durham local history. I was looking to see if I could find much connection with the Normans in Lanchester. My reasoning being Europe is about to celebrate the European Year of the Normans in 2027 marking the 1000th anniversary of the birth of William the Conqueror. County Durham is gearing up to mark the occasion. You will now all be saying well they invaded us in 1066 and yes William must have been about 39 when he took us over. We know Cuthbert settled at Dun Holm 995, when the settlement on the peninsula started to expand. However, the Bishops disputed the rights of the Normans to rule the area. As usual we were too far away from the seat of power, so we were linked in with the Sheriff of Northumberland. This didn't go down too well with the rebellious locals. In 1069 William sent an army which was defeated and wiped out by what was known as the Northumbrians. Hence the next period we have heard much about, The Harrying of the North. I am sure there will be much made of this celebration in the Region as we do have an awful lot of Norman Castles in the County. For your diary there is going to be a big event on the Peninsula in Durham on Saturday 18th April as part of World Heritage Day. **We'll have more information in the March edition and hope you can take the chance to visit the free event.**

Marian Morrison

Health Matters

Lanchester Medical Centre Patient Participation Group

Focusing on numbers causes:
Skipped meals
Restricted food intake
Exercising excessively

Scales- Is our self-worth determined by the numbers from a set of weighing scales?
Why do we place so much value on this one measurement that does not tell us about our overall health? We can get tricked into thinking fad diets or strict calorie restrictions are working because the numbers on the scales decrease quickly, but losing weight fast often means we are losing a combination of fat and muscle mass which isn't healthy or sustainable.
To optimise our long-term health, it's more helpful to look at reducing our fat mass and increasing our muscle mass. This has proven health benefits beyond reducing our total body weight.
There are other ways to measure progress.
Body measurements, 2 weekly – Waist - place 2 fingers above your belly button and wrap the tape measure around this section of your torso Hips- stand with your feet together and measure the widest part of your glutes.
How are your clothes fitting- noticing that our clothing is feeling looser is an indication that we are reducing fat and building muscle.
Photos of yourself – by comparing pictures of yourself, you will be able to see how your body changes.
Behavioural measures- behaviours and habits are measures of progress:
1. Nutrition: did you have a regular meal pattern today? How balanced were your meals? How much water have you been drinking?
2. Sleep? How many hours of sleep have you been getting each night?
3. Exercise? How many minutes of movement have you done this week? How many steps are you taking?
4. Do you feel better, less stressed or anxious?
5. Do you have more energy?

Each of us have different body shapes, features, and qualities, all of which should be celebrated and valued. We shouldn't reduce everything that our body has to offer down to one single number on the scales. Scales have their place, but our focus needs to be on an all-encompassing, healthier way of living.
Ref: Second Nature September 2023

Lanchester Male Voice Choir

LMVC was formed in 1967 - so it is fast approaching its 60th birthday!
We are a small dedicated, friendly and supportive group which meets every Monday evening, 7-9pm, in Croft View Hall. Our season runs from September to June and our weekly practices cover a range of musical genres.
The benefits of singing are widely publicised and there is no requirement to be able to read music.
Interested? Email Peter Bridgewater, tootspeteb@live.co.uk
What better way to start the week!

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Patient Participation Group meeting with Dr Kalra

Following Doctor Kalra's return to the practice on 5 January, the CQC sub group of the Patient Participation Group (PPG), met with Dr Kalra, Susan Watson from South Durham Health (who were put in place to help with the running of the medical centre by Doctor Kalra) and Philip Kirby from Sapern HR who are employed by Doctor Kalra.
The meeting was to gain an insight into the progress South Durham Health have made whilst they have been running the practice, and also to ascertain what mentorship and learning Dr Kalra had engaged in whilst absent from the practice.
Policies and procedures in the medical centre have been either updated or introduced by South Durham Health with the aim to standardise the way complaints are dealt with and improve the smooth running of the practice in multiple areas.
Doctor Kalra advised us that he has had leadership and mentoring training from several Newcastle practices and has acknowledged his failings in providing a service that the practice population is deserving of.
He also advised us that, going forward, his intention is to appoint a partner and salaried GP to help with continuity of care. However, it was acknowledged that this is going to be difficult after the CQC report and while there's still involvement from CQC. Susan told us that they had had several adverts out but only had 3 applicants for a salaried GP. We were advised that the CQC will likely be carrying out 6 monthly visits for some time.
We passed on concerns from some patients who had contacted the PPG. One of the concerns was that, unfortunately, they felt that things had in fact got worse. Susan (South Durham Health) assured us that policies were now in place to rectify any of these issues.
The meeting lasted two hours with the subgroup holding Dr Kalra to account on patient safety, clinical supervision, his own time management and his workload outside of the practice. We asked what support had been given to staff, pointing out that the toxic work environment and bullying of staff, as noted in the CQC report, is completely unacceptable. Doctor Kalra expressed his deep regret and assured us of his intention to rectify this.
As a PPG we have offered our support in focusing on positive initiatives such as fundraising and Health Matters Week in May, but we are unfortunately still receiving many poor reports from patients and feel that whilst acknowledging the improvement initiatives outlined to us, there is obviously a very long way to go.
Anyone with any concerns please do contact Joanne the practice manager to make the practice aware.

CQC sub group of the Patient Participation Group

Since the meeting there was a Daily Mail two page spread on the medical practice on Friday February 6th.
The reporter appeared to have attended one of the public meetings.


Why can't we kick out our failing GP?
He trained as a doctor in Ukraine, runs a hair transplant business and a cafe. His GP surgery, which serves 4,100 in the North East has been placed in special measures. And the fury of his patients echoes the frustration of millions across Britain
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Lanchester Parish Council

Notes from the Ordinary Meeting held in Lynwood House on Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 7.00pm

Minutes – Ordinary Meeting 9th December – approved

Neighbourhood Plan Review

Stuart Carter DCC's Principal Planning Officer with the Spatial Policy Team attended the meeting to discuss how we progress with our Neighbourhood Plan Review. Stuart is hoping to hold a seminar that the Parish Council can attend and following that we can hopefully progress with our review.

Police Report

County Councillor Alison Gray provided an update she had received from the police – information received.

Correspondence

Lanchester Partnership Environment Group – a request to use the Village Green on the 7th of March 2026 for the annual litter pick was approved.

Durham County Councillor

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

- Lanchester Medical Centre – ongoing concerns, having a meeting with Amanda Healy the Director of Public Health
- Buses – a new tracking device is coming out so people can see the location of bus they are waiting for, new buses are being bought, if you are disabled and the bus you are waiting for is full a taxi should be called to take you to your destination, there is also a 'Link2 Dial-a-Ride bus service'. Link2 is an accessible dial-a-ride bus service for people who do not have a suitable bus service, or are unable to access regular bus services due to mobility issues, this can be booked 14 days in advance, more information is available on DCC's website.
- Meeting with Maxine Stubbs regarding the concerns with traffic near Station Road, Newbiggen Lane and to discuss the Parking Scheme.
- A food waste bin collection may be rolled out in July.
- Excrement has been left near the allotments, trying to get DCC to clear it away.

Lanchester Medical Centre

County Councillor Alison Gray gave us an update under agenda item 'Durham County Councillor'.

The Pensions Regulator – Automatic Enrolment Duties

Members were informed that the Parish Council has completed a re-declaration of compliance with The Pensions Regulator.

Tree Surveys

Members were informed of a high priority tree that was identified from a recent tree survey. Although the tree was high priority the work to be done wasn't imminent. Councillors requested the Clerk obtain further quotes and then a decision will be made.

Social Media

Councillors discussed the Parish Council opening a Facebook page. Clerk to meet with Burnhope Parish Clerk to discuss their Facebook page.

Christmas Window Display

Clerk to add to a future agenda to discuss further.

Precept Report 2026/27 – Following a discussion, it was agreed that the precept be set at £82923.28 for 2026/27.

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 10th February and the 10th March.

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

Lanchester Bowling Club

Sad to announce the passing at the end of January after a short illness, of our long-standing club member Peter Harrison. Peter was a stalwart of the Bowls Club both on and off the green and will be greatly missed. Thoughts and condolences to wife Jean and family.

More than twenty club members and friends of John Sanderson, who died early December, assembled in the Social Club to raise a glass to John's memory. Refreshments were provided via a generous bequest from John's estate the surplus of which (£170) was donated to the Willow Burn Hospice where John had spent his last days. John was fairly new to the village arriving in 2022 and found friends and a social life through bowls. He enjoyed his bowls and a glass of red! Thanks John.

Bob Cuthbertson, a regular contributor to the Village Voice bowls scene continues to receive treatment following his health problems last year. We wish Bob a speedy recovery and return to the bowling green asap.

Well, here we are still in the grip of a long cold winter, dreaming of those sunny summer days playing our favourite game on beautiful pristine greens. "Aye there's the rub." This quote from Shakespeare's Hamlet, and probably his most famous soliloquy "to be or not to be," is thought to originate from the game of bowls, where "rub" referred to an uneven patch of ground/grass which can deflect a bowls trajectory. Maybe old Will was an exponent of the game! This interpretation of the word rub has now entered the English language and is used in the context of whatever situation one can be faced with, when there is potential problem or obstacle.

The "rub" syndrome can also be applied to other environmental aspects and in particular the weather. We had plenty (too many) "rubs" in 2025. Due to a very fine summer but with little rain, most greens were like concrete, very fast and lines hard to find. Most greens suffered badly and, due to the generally poor condition of some, were virtually unplayable. It all adds to the challenge of the game and is the same for all players.

The usage of the term in lawn bowling also no doubt gave the golfing world a similar phrase i.e. "the rub of the green" which was adopted into rules by the St. Andrew's Society of Golfers in 1812. This refers to when a wayward golf shot is deflected for example from hitting a post or spectator, and the chance of playing it depends where it finishes, and greatly on luck.

It has to be acknowledged that the phenomenon we know as luck or good fortune plays a major part in our lives. It is very relevant in sport and especially in the game of bowls.

As most people know the aim of bowls is to get as near to the "jack" (the small white target ball) as possible. For those not so near it is sometimes necessary to disturb the "head" (the term used to describe bowls which are close to the jack) and sometimes with great force and on being struck the dislodged jack can finish anywhere on the rink.

Such happens regularly during a game, and it is therefore important to have "back woods" in place because for some reason (connected to the laws of physics) the jack rarely comes back up the green, although it has been known. It is therefore also advantageous to have a "live" bowl (which has touched the jack and been marked as such) in the ditch at the back of the green, and where a dislodged jack usually finishes. In such situations luck therefore plays an important role as to where the jack finishes and who gets the score or shot.

The other aspect of good fortune in the game, and most annoying to those on the receiving end, is when a wayward or poorly delivered bowl hits another bowl and is diverted on to the head, (referred to as a "wick") and gets the shot or a winner. Such is of course all part of the game and to be accepted with grace (and gritted teeth). Indeed, before every game it is the custom to shake hands with opponents and wish them a good game and best of luck (whether we mean it or not).

There is however no substitute for talent or proficiency and invariably the best players come out on top, and to quote the words of Gary Player, world famous champion golfer, "the more I practise the luckier I get". As bowls matches are played sporadically and at designated times, practice facilities are nearly always readily available to those willing to improve their technique. So keep practising and improving. And keep dancing!

Adrian Evans

Cricket Round up

The club is making progress in developing the women's game. 2024 saw us have our first girls' team, which progressed into playing hardball in 2025. The club has in its history had ladies' teams, but it was always for sporadic one-off games, however we are in the process of having a regular team and would like more women to join the ranks. The team plays softball at present and has taken part in a couple of events. Their first appearance was in a competition at Chester Le Street Riverside in August along with several other teams, many of whom had played cricket for a while. Our women then competed in some Glow cricket matches in December played at Belmont Community Centre. The matches were played in the dark and used fluorescent equipment. The women enjoyed themselves and vowed to carry on practising. The sessions are on a Friday evening, 5.30-6.30 at Croft Hall and they are free! So, we would encourage anyone of any age to come along and join in if you are interested. You will be encouraged to pop along to the Cricket Club afterwards for some refreshment.

If anyone reading this fancies sponsoring the women's team so that they can get some specific female kit, then again please get in touch by popping into the club on a Friday evening.

The Under 11 girls are taking part in a Softball League at Consett Leisure Centre which starts on 1st February and they have softball training 1030-1130 on Sundays at Croft View. Again any new players are welcome.

Finally, the under 9 boys have entered a softball competition and won their opening two fixtures.

Andrew McConnell

Cover photo Lanchester Women's team at training

Deadlines and contact information

Articles, letters and photos by Monday 2nd March to lanchestervillagevoice@yahoo.co.uk
Adverts by Monday 2nd March to lanchestervvadverts@gmail.com or phone Paul 07957 871106 (advertising only)
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