the Village Voice

Issue No 1, Volume 26

Lanchester, January 2026



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Joy to the Green! Annual Christmas Eve Carols light up the village





A chilly Wednesday night on the village green lit up with music, warmth and community spirit for the annual Lanchester carol service.

Much like previous years, the event was massively popular- underneath the canopy of sparkling Christmas lights, the green was packed with excitement among neighbours and familiar faces returning for the occasion.

The service was led by the local brass band, conducted by James Draper, with local priests and ministers reading bible verses, and school children from across the village joyfully taking part in the carols.

James praised the turnout, the unique spirit of the village, and the importance of community to raise spirits during the holiday season. He said:

"I'm not sure that many places do something on Christmas Eve. It's always really well attended, which is great."

James Draper also highlighted the importance of the carol service as a way to reunite those who left the village with their community:

"And from our perspective, it's allowing lots of people who aren't normally here to come back for this service… people who played in the band years and years ago, who come back every year"

"It's a good way of keeping the community together, it's amazing."





Photos (and cover) taken by Kenzie Harrison

Annemarie Warner, who lives in Lanchester and works as a childminder in the village, attended the service with her family, who travelled into Lanchester to join in with the celebrations.

Annemarie was overjoyed at the service, describing the event as "an integral part of Lanchester's community celebrations," and echoed that she was proud to be in a tight-knit village where it's possible to have such events. She said:

"This years' service was so well attended, and the atmosphere was so festive … all of it was just so lovely." Annemarie added that her favourite part was the brave boys and girls who came up to sing.

As the service began to wind down, it became clear that what may appear to be a simple carol service continues to act as a symbol of the village's heart, bringing people together on the green to welcome Christmas as a community.

Kenzie Harrison

Do they know it's Christmas raised over £10,500 for Willow Burn



The Buskers and friends with Rachel Quince of Willow Burn in the front row.

What a great start to 2026! The Buskers and friends hit their fundraising target for Willow Burn and we would like to thank each and every single one of you who donated, shared, 'liked' and commented on the song.

When I started this project, I thought it would be a great way for some of the community's most prolific entertainers to come together and support a community charity. It certainly did that with the locals getting right behind us, and for that, we can't thank you enough.

The final count is being done as I write this, so if you want to know the final figure, head over to our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/TheBuskersConsett to find out.

We're expecting somewhere between £10.5-11k, which is a tremendous amount and speaks volumes about the residents of Lanchester, Consett and surrounding areas.

Barrie McDermid

Rachel Quince, Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Fundraising & Marketing, Willow Burn, said: "We are incredibly grateful to the Buskers and Friends, who have raised such a remarkable amount in just four weeks. Their talent, combined with the generosity of the local community, will fund four full days of care in the Helen McArdle In-Patient Wing, helping our team to support patients at end of life and be there for their families when they need it most. This kind of support makes a real and lasting difference, and we consider ourselves incredibly lucky to be part of a community that places its local hospice at the very heart of everything it does."

Art group Christmas Challenge

Lanchester Art Group's Christmas Challenge was provided by our very own in-house musicians - Sue Hill, Stephan Aarl and John Dixon. We sketched a quick-fire piece accompanied by lovely Christmas folk music and then painted a still life composition of the instruments. We were helped and fortified by mince pies and a glass of wine. The group voted on their favourite paintings and sketches and of course there were prizes.

Chris Davis









Sketch and painting from the challenge above, and painting on cover.

Boys' Brigade

Leading up to Christmas we had a quiz on what happened in 2025 which they all enjoyed and we enacted the three wise men and the Christmas story with all the lads dressing up and taking part. Our 2025 sessions concluded with the Christmas party. We had a magician visit us and he royally entertained the lads all evening whilst the leaders cooked the burgers and sausages. It was an excellent party with everyone taking home at least one animal made out of balloons. A great end to the year and we now look forward to 2026.

In addition to our normal weekly meetings, we enjoyed helping at Willow Burn Hospice Nurses Christmas Fayre and we attended our Enrolment service led by Kath Jones. We took part in the second round of the Masterteam quiz competition where we came fourth out of seven which was a great result for our young team. Our Table Tennis team start their competition on the 11th of January when we entertain Leeds BB at Croft View Halls.

Several of the lads have continued to do volunteer work at different locations during the holidays for their DofE badge work which should be completed around Easter time.

We have a busy start to 2026 with the Badminton competition on the 24th January and our Coffee Morning at the Methodist Church on the 31st January where we hope to see as many of you as possible. If you have a boy aged 5-18 years old we would be pleased to see him at Boys Brigade. 5-8 years Anchor Boys Thursday evening 6.10-7.10pm, 8-11 years Junior Section 6.15-7.30pm Wednesday evening and 11-18 years Company and Senior Section 7.30-9pm Wednesday evening.

Eric Hepplewhite







Top far left the Christmas Party
Bottom far left is the Great 2025 Quiz
Left. The Boys' Brigade colours after the enrolment service.





With Will o' Burn (above) are Jay Hepplewhite, Arnaud Lefoyer and Louis Lefoyer who were at the Willow Burn Nurses Fayre (left)

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From the House

Happy New Year to you all, it feels as though it was just weeks ago that I was writing my first article introducing myself as your Member of Parliament. I am looking forward to continuing my work for Lanchester residents and will continue to hold regular advice surgeries throughout the year. If you would like to book an appointment to meet with me, then please contact me using the details below.

Last summer I wrote to Durham County Council leaders about their plans to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, meaning residents in receipt of support would need to start paying at least 10% towards council tax. I maintain that residents on the lowest incomes should be supported in this way. The government recently announced over £100 million in additional fair funding for Durham County Council, considering this I have written to the council asking them to reverse this decision.

I was delighted by the recent Budget announcement that members of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme (BCSSS) will receive the £2.3 billion that had been held in the scheme's investment reserve – meaning a 41% rise in their pension. This is overdue, North Durham has over 200 BCSSS members, and I am glad that they now join the members of the Mineworkers Pension Scheme in receiving money unjustly held back that they paid in while they were working in the mining industry.

Local Councillor Alison Gray did a wonderful job representing residents in the fight against plans for a solar farm on the land off Wagtail Lane in Craghead. This has been a longstanding issue, and I will continue to monitor and support residents.

Since the election, I have responded to over 9,487 queries. I have helped return over £380,500 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

I would like to wish all Lanchester residents a happy new year, and hope you had a restful Christmas break. I have spent most of my time in the last few weeks looking at issues of primary care in the village including developments at Lanchester Medical Centre.

Following our meetings in November, new and concerning issues linked to mental health came to our attention. Sue Graham, Chair of the Patient Participation Group and I composed a letter which we asked Luke Akehurst to send to the Dept. of Health. We have also requested a meeting with a minister in the Health Department. We are meeting the chair of the Integrated Care Board and the Director of Public Health at Durham County Council in mid-January, to raise concerns regarding the ongoing situation at the medical centre.

Thank you to the 78 people who came to our meeting on 3rd January where we also discussed next steps for the practice. If you have a complaint about your treatment please report this to the CQC on https://www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us/how-complain/complain-about-gp-dentist-or-eye-care. If you feel this complaint has not been dealt with appropriately, please contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

You can also write directly to our MP, Luke Akehurst on luke.akehurst.mp@parliament.uk about lack of choice of GP provider in the village. Please include address and postcode. Contact me if you would like a template of suggested points to raise.



I appreciate that a number of residents are not affected by this because they use GP practices based outside of the village. However, I do feel it is in all of our interests to have a good standard of primary health care in the village, one reason being limited public transport in Lanchester.

I know that like many others, as I get older, driving a car will not always be an option. I firmly believe therefore that we need a good provider within the village.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee at the Social Club for once again providing us with a lovely venue for our meeting free of charge. It is greatly appreciated.

If you need help with a council related issue please contact me on 0300 260683 /07469 105096 or email me on alison.gray2@durham.gov.uk and I will do my best to help.

Best wishes,

Alison Gray

Hanley's

Two local charities are to benefit after Hanley's butchers won the Lanchester Village Christmas Window Decoration prize.

Lanchester Parish Council awarded £200 to the business after children from EP School created the festive display.

And on Monday, January 5 they returned to clean off the decorations.

But proprietor Wendy Hanley said the EP School Council had decided to forward the prize money to local charities Henry Dancer Days and Willow Burn Hospice.

Each will benefit to the tune of £100.

"It was the decision of the children to donate the prize money to these two local charities," she explained.

Wendy, whose husband John died aged 66 after a short illness in October last year, has previously stated publicly that the business will continue.

"I would like to wish all our loyal customers a Happy 2026 and assure them I am going nowhere," she told the Village Voice.

Neil McKay



Wendy Hanley (centre back row) with the EP pupils.

Lanchester Flower Club – we say goodbye

Member of the National Association of Flower Arrangers Society

The last hoorah for Lanchester Flower club was held on Wednesday the 17th December 2025. The members enjoyed a wonderful afternoon lunch at Beamish Park Hotel. It wasn't our first Christmas lunch at this venue; we have enjoyed quite a few over the last few years with them. They have always served us with excellent food, service so good, staff pleasant and efficient and the venue so comfortable. We enjoyed a lovely afternoon of friendship, laughter, free raffle and alternative bingo. The prizes were, as usual, so exciting no expense spared (ha ha the ladies will understand). It was a sad time but maybe in the future we could have an odd catchup with a lovely meal and renew our friendships.



Lestrine Kelly (left) presenting a flower arrangement to Helen Tomlinson

We presented Helen Tomlinson with a flower arrangement and thanked her for all the years she has devoted to the Lanchester Flower Club. We all remembered Maureen Clarkson who died very recently and who also had been a stalwart at the club.



The Flower Club's final lunch

All Saints' Catholic Church Lanchester

Father Vernatius warmly welcomed many parishioners and friends to the Christmas Carol service held on Sunday evening of 14th December in the church with Consett Brass Band. We all enjoyed a wonderful musical evening with some very funny jokes from the well known conductor Marc Jackson. After the event we all meandered up to the Parish Centre for mulled and ginger wine, tea, coffee and the Christmas staple, mince pies. So, a wonderful evening of musical entertainment, fun, laughter and friendship.

A big thank you once again to Consett Brass Band. We look forward to seeing them all again in 2026, when we are hoping and planning many celebrations as the church will be celebrating 100 years old.

May we wish you all a peaceful, healthy and happy 2026.

Lestrine Kelly



Ladies who lunch

Our last lunch report is not so much about the food - more a tribute to Elizabeth Ann Smith, universally and affectionately known as 'Liz', who died in the early hours of December 12th 2025. She had been a Gourmet Girl from almost the beginning, hardly ever missing a lunch. A much loved member of our group who will be profoundly missed.

The Christmas meal was held at the Steel House Bistro, Derwentside College's in -house catering training facility- somewhere we love to go and look forward to with anticipation.

It was Christmas and Liz and I had spent the few days before discussing what we might wear to be really glitzy for the occasion. As it turned out, the glitz was all a little bittersweet!

Menu choices had been pre-ordered and we were soon eating from one of Angelo's renowned, perfectly presented festive offerings.

For starters there was curried cauliflower soup with a garnish of crispy onion flakes, coriander, chilli and lime zest (beautifully smooth and warming) and 'Steel House' Prawn cocktail served with avocado and baby gem lettuce.

For mains it was turkey breast with pork, sage and onion stuffing, honey mustard roast parsnip, chipolatas, Yorkshire pudding and roast gravy; roast pork loin with Yorkshire pudding served with apple sauce, sage and onion stuffing, crackling and roast gravy; sea bass with crushed baby potatoes, pea purée, roasted carrot, crispy kale and a lemon and herb butter emulsion; French wild mushroom gnocchi in a cheese sauce.

Desserts were, Steel House Bistro Christmas pudding served with brandy sauce; French apple and cinnamon tart with stem ginger ice cream.

The whole meal was a lovely Christmas celebration and a wonderful tribute to our absent friend. She is going to be a much missed member of the Gourmets and we shall continue to think of her fondly every time we meet and enjoy a meal together.

The Gourmet Girls



Thursday Club

It was with great sadness that I had to announce the passing of our dear treasurer Mrs Liz Smith. She was so loved by all.

We celebrated her life with a toast, and a reading. Our following lunch in the Kings Head Inn in Lanchester was a success. The staff looked after us very well.

The ladies successfully found lots of words from the letters of "Lanchester Village" and 168 words with more than 4 letters was the winning score.

The next meeting is in the new year January 15th when Age UK will be coming to pick us up after the festive time.

Happy new year!

Jan Vasey

WI News

We would like to wish all of our members past, present and future a happy and healthy 2026.
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



December Meeting
Our Christmas meeting on 1st December was attended by 37 members and 4 visitors. Our entertainment for the evening was something quite different. We were lucky to have award winning magician, Paul Innes (right) come along to entertain us. Paul did numerous card tricks and quite a bit of 'mind reading'. Absolutely fascinating!!
We then enjoyed a delicious buffet supper and a catch up with friends.



Marie Murphy (left) and Alison Gray

January Meeting
Our first meeting of 2026 was on 5th January, and 25 members attended despite the freezing temperature. After news of upcoming events our speaker for the evening was Cllr Alison Gray who very kindly came along to join us at very short notice. Alison gave us a very interesting overview of her role as a County Councillor including the highs, the lows and the quite strange! We then enjoyed a warming drink and homemade cake. The draw was made for our 'Win £100 cash' draw and the lucky winner was one of our members, a lovely surprise for the new year.
February Meeting
Our next meeting will be held on February 2nd in the large hall of the Community Centre, beginning at 7pm. Our speaker for the evening is Michaela Dicker and her topic is 'A personal journey through dance'.
Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Marie Murphy

Sound the Trumpets

On December 6th, Lanchester Methodist Church was filled with the sound of Christmas as four very talented trumpeters entertained an appreciative audience.
An exciting repertoire ensured there was something to suit everyone's taste and the concert ended with the lights dimmed for In the Silent Night which was very moving.
To conclude the evening, mulled wine and mince pies were served.
The concert raised £320 to support the work of Willow Burn Hospice so thank you to all who attended.

Margaret Coates





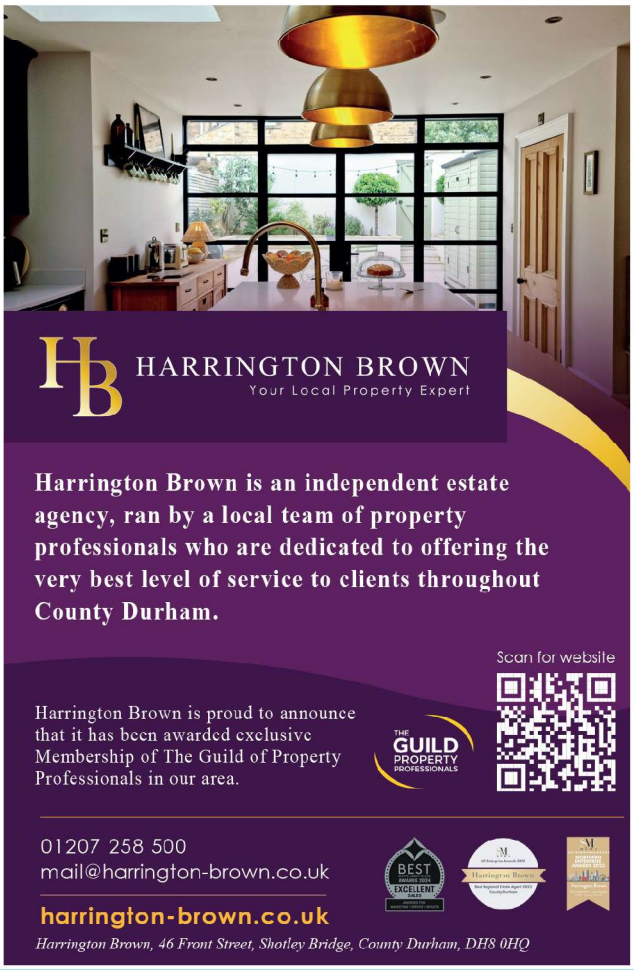
Ginger's won Masterchef!

Ginger Johnson may have won TV's Masterchef but still had to impress two more discerning judges on a visit home to Lanchester.
Drag artist Ginger, aka Donald Marshall, helped with the Sunday roast on a recent visit to his family home. Nieces Isla and Molly Park were quick to pass judgement on his culinary skills, especially his roast potatoes and gravy.
Their mum Marion, Donald's sister, said: "They were very judgemental, praising the potatoes for being crisp on the outside but soft and fluffy within.
My mum made the roast, but Donald helped out with the potatoes and gravy."
Ginger Johnson became the 20th winner of BBC TV's Masterchef, the final of which was broadcast on December 16. Marion admitted she had "an inkling" he had won - "he may have dropped a hint," - but added that Isla, 11, and Molly, nine, "had no idea."
"They were incredibly excited when their uncle won, leaping about the room yelling and screaming," she recalled, laughing.
Donald, 37, grew up in Lanchester with parents Donald senior, and Lorna, and elder sister Marion. Outperforming 14 other celebrities in the kitchen, drag artist Ginger was awarded the title after five exhilarating weeks of the culinary competition, culminating in a thrilling cook-off against her fellow finalists, rugby legend Alun Wyn Jones and author and broadcaster, Dawn O'Porter.
"He said it was very hot in the kitchen, totally impractical dressed as Ginger. As Donald he is quite shy but as Ginger he becomes much more outgoing," added Marion.
Ginger's winning menu started with a Bloody Mary prawn cocktail – prawns in a tomato, chilli and vodka sauce, with diced cucumber and Worcestershire jelly cubes, garnished with roasted prawn heads, lettuce, celery and an olive, with celery-salted crisps and a mayonnaise.
Ginger's main was her take on Duck a l'Orange – a duck leg and vegetable pie with an orange and red wine gravy, served with smoked garlic Hasselback potatoes, purple carrot and charred baby Romanesco and kale. The menu finished with a dessert of Flaming Baked Alaska – Swiss meringue covering a sponge base, caramelised pineapple ring, glacé cherry and a vanilla and cherry ice cream – all soaked and covered in rhum.
After the tasting of the menu, one of the judges, Grace Dent, told Ginger: "You've always put on a show and made us laugh, but at the root of it there is a serious cook. There's never been a point when you haven't tried to take things and twist them to another level to impress us and excite us."
After getting into drag performance at university, former St Bede's student Donald says his career as a drag artist snowballed from there, leading to Ginger winning BBC Three's RuPaul's Drag Race UK Series 5 in 2023.
On food influences, Ginger said: "I have always been a big eater. My mum would do the weeknight dinners and on a Saturday my dad would try something a bit special. That definitely inspired me to try lots of different things. So, I've always had a real passion for eating, and now, for cooking."

Neil McKay



Ginger with the Masterchef Trophy



Lanchester Local History Society

In December we held our social (on a horrid wet cold night) with a quiz while enjoying some light refreshments. A very sociable evening ensued. The picture quiz generated lots of entertainment and chatter. All I had done was to use 14 pictures from the various photograph books of Lanchester and cut out a small section from the picture creating 14 challenges for the group.

Our January meeting, again on a freezing icy evening, saw us gathered with an eclectic range of items for the Show and Tell evening. One item was a gardening book from 1871 - it was the collective of 12 months of issues of The Gardener. The text of some of the articles was poetic and appropriately flowery.

Another item was a ceramic mule or donkey pulling a cart on a plinth. A family heirloom, a childhood memory for the member showing us this near 100 year old ornament, a wedding present in 1927.



Someone else brought in a dancer advertising ballet shoes from Freed, a company set up in 1929. Fredrick Freed and his wife set up a workshop in Covent Garden, the home of The Royal Ballet School, advertising that they would "make shoes to fit a ballerina, not the ballerina having to fit the shoe". Anna Pavlova and Margot Fonteyn were among the first customers, and the ballerinas of County Durham could get their Freed shoes locally.



Marian Morrison

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WHAT'S ON - February 2026 and beyond

EP School Art exhibition
On Thursday 19th February, we will be holding a Coffee Afternoon and Art Gallery for the local community at the school. This will take place from 2pm.
The Art Gallery is being displayed in conjunction with Lanchester Art Club and will be a display of artwork from our children. All work will be based around our Christian values of Love, Hope, Trust, Joy and Kindness. There will also be some work from Lanchester Art Club displayed too.

Watoto Children's Choir Tour 2026
Saturday 14th February 2026 15:00, Lanchester Methodist Church
We are delighted to welcome the internationally loved Watoto Children's Choir to Lanchester for a vibrant, hope-filled afternoon of music, dance, and inspirational stories. This special event is led by children aged 10-12 from Uganda with their adult team, sharing powerful testimonies of restoration and joy through an energetic and heart-lifting performance.
This is a FREE event, but tickets must be reserved through Eventbrite. Book early as tickets are limited. Use the QR code (see page 11) or the URL:- www.tinyurl.com/watotolanchester
A voluntary offering will be taken to support the ongoing work of Watoto.

Lanchester Wildlife Group
Duncan Hutt - Rothbury Estate, England's biggest nature reserve.
Tuesday 10th February, 7.30pm, Lanchester Community Centre.
All welcome. No charge.

WI
February Meeting: Monday 2nd, Community Centre, Large Hall, 7pm. Speaker Michaela Dicker, 'A Personal Journey through Dance'.
March Meeting: Monday 2nd, Community Centre, Large Hall, 7pm. Speaker Heather Laurence, 'Photo Journalism'.

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

Lanchester Local History Society
We will be meeting on Friday 6th February to hear from Rick Smith. His company has been involved with geological surveys for mining, and his talk will be "Granite, coal and ice: a geological slice through Lanchester". At our March 6th meeting Richard Annis is returning to speak. This time his topic is "The Castle Walls", so should be interesting as I am sure you remember he is recently retired from Durham Archaeological services. Early warning In April we have a clash with Good Friday so there will be no meeting. Do remember to come to the community centre to negotiate the security system allowing us to start the talk at 7.00 prompt.

Paradiso Club Valentine's Special
Sunday 8th February 2026: Gregory's Girl *starring John Gordon Sinclair, Clare Grogan*
In this warm Scottish coming-of-age film, gangly teen Gregory and his schoolmates are starting to find out about girls. He fancies Dorothy, not least because she has got onto the football team. He finally asks her out, but it is obviously the females in control of matters here, and that very much includes Gregory's younger sister. *Gregory's Girl* was ranked No. 30 in the British Film Institute's list of the top 100 British films of the 20th century.
Lanchester Community Centre 7pm refreshments and raffle. Film starts at 7.30pm. Members: £4, Non-members: £5. Annual membership: £5

***Valentine's* MUSICAL MEMORIES**
Join us for music, refreshments and fun activities.
4th February 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

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

Lunch Club: Cuppa and a Chat
The next meeting of the lunch club held at Lynwood House will be Tuesday 10th February 2026, 12pm start, all welcome.

Lanchester Partnership Spring Clean Saturday 7th March 2026
Spring is on its way so time to tidy up our village. Come and join us for an hour of litter picking. 9 - 12noon on 7th March. Equipment provided on the village green. All welcome.

Thursday Club
The next meeting will be on Thursday February 19th at 1:30pm in the Community Centre. We are having Jane Nattress to give her talk about her charity in memory of her son Henry Dancer. All welcome.

Library
Library Book Clubs 4th Monday and 3rd Thurs monthly. Books supplied by the Library.
On Monday Feb 23rd at 2.30-3.30pm, the group will be reviewing 'Solace' by Belinda Mc Keon. The Sunday Times describes her writing as "moving without being sentimental".
Thursday Book Club
On Thursday Feb 19th from 4.00-5.00pm, the group will be discussing 'The Cactus' by Sarah Haywood. One member of the group read this book in three days, a page-turner and enjoyable. If you would like to join either of these groups, pop into the library and speak to the librarians.
Pins and Needles will meet up on Thursday 5th Feb from 10-11.30am. Do you like knitting or crocheting? All welcome. Bring along your wool, thread, needles and patterns, get friendly advice and show your designs.
Scrabble Group meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 1.30pm to 3.30 pm. Build words and add points according to the values of the letter tiles.
Rummikub Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 1.30 to 3.30pm. A great strategic but simple game with tiles that are always changing.
Children's crafts are available every afternoon and Saturday. Different crafts, ideas and materials are set out in the library for children to be creative, pop along with your child{ren} and enjoy.
NEW! Toddler Time group every Tues 2.30 - 3.30pm.
A book opens the doors to a different world, culture,

WHAT'S ON - February 2026 and beyond

experience and your imagination. Let 2026 be the year for you to explore different genres of books and enjoy. Your library is waiting for you to step inside.

Sewing Group
Every Wednesday, 1-3pm at Lanchester Community Centre. We are a small friendly group with space to grow into. We enjoy sewing, knitting, crochet, embroidery and cross stitch - as well as having a cuppa and a biscuit and sometimes cake! There is chatting and a laugh. 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.

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

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.

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

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

Community Centre News

Centre staff and volunteers would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy 2026.

Christmas Round Up:



- We had a great Christmas Fayre with a visit from Santa. Special thanks go to Dennis Laycock for his help and to all of the volunteers who helped out on the day. It was a lovely event and we raised £1,287.00 (photos to the right and cover)
- We also held a Christmas raffle with 3 great prizes. The winners were Sally Laverick, Margaret O'Brien and Bev Rainer. Thank you to everyone who bought tickets, we raised over £300.

Coming up in 2026:



- The cafe based in the community centre will re-open soon. Watch this space!
- We have two 'De-stash' sales planned for 2026, where you can sell on all of your excess crafting, art and sewing items by having a stall. Of course you can then buy some more. You can never have enough.
- The annual Art Exhibition will be held in October.
- We will hold another Christmas Fayre in November.
- **New for 2026** we will be holding a 'Magical Tree Festival' for the first time in December. If you are a group or local business, please join in and promote what you do.

Thank you for all your support through 2025 and remember we are not a council building, we are owned by the village and always need your support.

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

Lanchester Medical Centre public meeting

Around 80 residents - the vast majority patients at Lanchester Medical Centre - braved icy conditions to attend a meeting called by county councillor Alison Gray in the village social club.

Those present heard that conditions at the medical centre had not improved since it was rated "inadequate" by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following an inspection last summer. Difficulties in getting appointments, low staff morale, poor mental health provision and vulnerable patients feeling isolated were all cited as causes for concern.

The meeting on the morning of Saturday, January 3 was chaired by Neil Graham and as well as Cllr Gray, was addressed by Sue Graham, chair of the Lanchester Medical Centre Patients' Participation Group (PPG) - a voluntary role.

Ms Graham explained how a patient had recently telephoned the surgery exactly at 8am and was told she was "sixth in the queue". By the time her call was answered, eighteen minutes later, she was told there were "no appointments left." They had been taken by patients calling into the surgery that morning. She added: "We are still getting a steady stream of complaints.

"Some of the stuff we are receiving is awful. We are horrified, frightened, but we have to respect confidentiality.

"If a GP is underperforming and the Mental Health Service underachieving, we have a perfect storm here."

Other patients at the meeting told of difficulties in obtaining appointments with a GP.

Cllr Gray added: "The last thing I want to do is lead a witch hunt, but when I receive all the messages from patients that come to me I have to do something. Sue and I have asked to meet Wes Streeting" (Minister for Health and Social Care).

"Ninety six per cent of you gave a vote of no confidence in the medical centre."

Those present - and other LMG patients - were urged to contact local MP Luke Akehurst and the CQC with their concerns. Meanwhile Cllr Gray has organised a petition demanding another medical provider in Lanchester.

Inspectors, who carried out the probe into the practice during July and August, found "serious leadership failings" which the CQC said put people at risk. It said there were reports of "extended periods" when no GP was physically present at the practice, or arrived late.

Victoria Marsden, CQC deputy director of operations in the north, said inspectors found "serious leadership failings that jeopardised people's safety". Ms Marsden said staff were also afraid to raise concerns about people's safety as they felt leaders were unapproachable.

"This created a toxic culture where serious safety issues could go without being addressed."

Ms Marsden added it was "concerning" that leaders did not have effective systems and processes to manage medicines safely, monitor long-term conditions or deal with test results appropriately.

"This meant people were at risk of harm as they could be given the wrong medication or miss important follow-up care due to their results not being managed properly," she said.

Neil McKay

Watoto Update

On Wednesday 3rd December we hosted the **Watoto Neighbourhood Stories of Restoration Tour** at All Saint's Parish Centre. It was lovely to see a good number of people support this event and everyone commented on what a wonderful evening they had. Ritah and Tasha spoke about what the Neighbourhood Programme involves in Uganda and the significant difference it has made to the lives of so many vulnerable women by providing adult literacy classes, discipleship, business skills training and job opportunities. As these women are embraced with God's love through the programme and beyond, they find hope and purpose. A big thank you to All Saints' Catholic Church for hosting and providing refreshments.







On Wednesday 17th December Lanchester Methodist Church hosted a **Christmas Crafting** afternoon. This was a fundraising event to help to purchase essential baby items for when Mark and Julia Lloyd return to Uganda for 3-4 months in 2026. Over £600 was raised so a great big thank you to everyone who supported this event. It was also an opportunity for people to gather together and enjoy some Christmas music, refreshments as well as learning a little more about the Watoto Charity. It would be fair to say that you missed a treat if you didn't attend as everyone involved had a great time and took home some beautiful crafts as well as many homemade Christmas treats. Please look out for future fundraising events.







Mark and Julia Lloyd

Prostate Cancer - a feature on prostate cancer.

Health Notes

- from the Lanchester Patient Participation Group

Men and their Prostate

Men and their Prostate

Recent news has been telling us about prostate cancer trials. This is not a new screening method, it proposes to compare the multiple screening options in the current system to find the safest, most accurate and most cost-effective way to screen men for prostate cancer.

What it is a prostate: A small gland in the male reproductive system, located below the bladder.

What are the signs of prostate problems:

Urinary symptoms: urgency, needing to pass urine more frequently, especially at night, with a weak or interrupted flow of urine. Difficulty starting or stopping urination. There may be a burning sensation, or blood in the urine. Erectile dysfunction.

Pain and discomfort in the lower back, hips, or legs. Pain during ejaculation.

Many of these signs can be caused by common non-cancerous issues, but it is important to see a doctor for any of these symptoms.

Best screening for prostate cancer: The best tools for diagnosing prostate cancer are a combination of current prostate screening tools. Some tests may be carried out by your local doctor, others require a hospital referral.

PSA: blood test carried out at your surgery. It measures a protein produced by prostate cells.

DRE: a doctor inserts a gloved finger into the rectum to manually feel the prostate for any unusual lumps or hard spots.

MRI and mpMRI: hospital scans give a more detailed image of the prostate to locate potential issues.

Prostate biopsy: a small tissue sample is taken from the prostate to be examined in a laboratory. As this is an invasive procedure, other tests are carried out first.

The overall message is, seek medical advice if you have any signs or symptoms mentioned in this article.

Refences

nhs.uk https://www.nhs.uk › conditions › symptoms
Prostate Cancer UK
American Cancer Society https://cancer.org

Current Prostate Screening

Prostate-specific antigen blood test (PSA)
Genetic screen to analyse DNA
Multi-parametric Magnetic field, radio waves (mpMRI)
MRI-targeted biopsy
DRE (Digital rectal examination)

Adam the gardener – a rough guide to prostate cancer

There has been a lot in the press recently about prostate cancer, encouraging men to take this condition seriously and go to their GP when concerned. This is what happened to Adam the Gardener – Adam is sharing this to encourage other men not to leave it too late to seek help.

Introduction



I've always enjoyed good health so it was a shock when my GP said recently 'We need to send you for more tests; you may have prostate cancer.'

I believe in fate. I had taken up a PSA blood test offered to me via text from the NHS, it was just as well I wasn't in Kenya. I took advantage of the test, which came back positive.

Tests

After a brief examination, I was sent for a series of tests and a biopsy, this happened swiftly with just a few days in between. God bless the NHS!

MRI scan, 30 minutes. Noisy and confined, you do get headphones playing music to distract you, you lie on a conveyor belt which moves into a scanner tube. Just think you are lying on your favourite beach in the sunshine!

Biopsy, 45 minutes painful! They will give you more anaesthetic if you ask, remember shy bairns get nowt and ask!

Bone scan, 30 minutes, straightforward. The scanner plate moves very close to your face, that's all! Pretty quiet.

Diagnosis

Your results will be processed and an appointment made to see a consultant. This is the scary bit, and I took my brother-in-law along for support. I worked out a few scenarios:

A) No problem, go home!
B) Some cancer but treatable.
C) Your cancer has spread. We will try our best!
D) You have 6 months, son, I'm sorry!

Luckily for me, it was scenario B). I have prostate cancer, but it is localised, hasn't spread and is fully treatable.

Treatment

My treatment involves hormone tablets for 3 months to shrink the prostate, followed by radiotherapy every day for a month. Then... with a bit of luck, I should be cancer-free.

Conclusion

My sincere thanks go to the NHS and the marvellous doctors and nurses. They are starting to rely on AI which is not great in my opinion, but otherwise superb, lots of support is available and appreciated from Macmillan, etc. I'm appreciating simple things, a bird at the feeder, the colours of the dawn. The future is bright, not orange but multicoloured!

Do get tested if you're 50 to 70 and I hope to see you soon.

For a garden "check up" please be patient! Contact adiojameson@gmail.com.

Please make donations to your favourite cancer charity.

Bless you and hope to see you all soon.

Adam the Gardener



An MRI machine

Watoto Children's Choir Tour 2026

Saturday 14th February 2026 15:00

Lanchester Methodist Church DH7 0ER

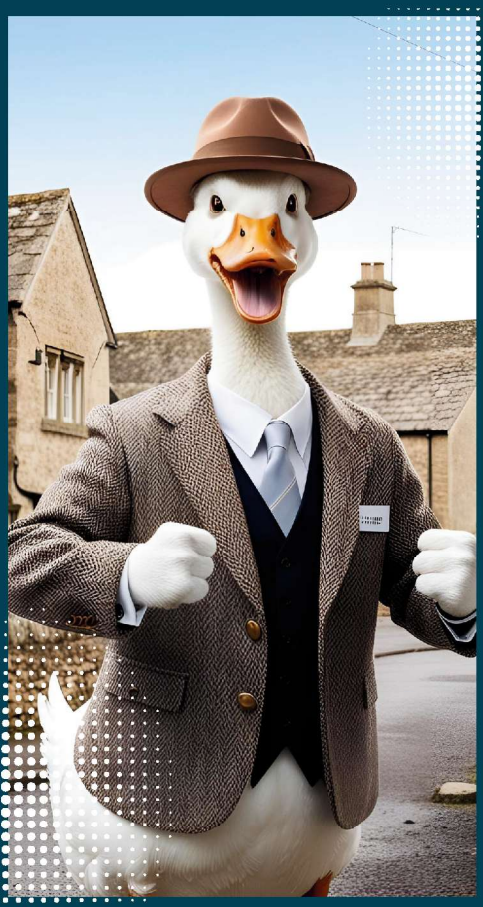
TICKETS ARE FREE!

We are delighted to welcome the internationally loved Watoto Children's Choir to Lanchester for a vibrant, hope-filled afternoon of music, dance, and inspirational stories. This special event is led by children aged 10-12 from Uganda with their adult team, sharing powerful testimonies of restoration and joy through an energetic and heart-lifting performance.

This is a FREE event but tickets must be reserved through Eventbrite. Book early as tickets are limited. Use the QR code :– or the URL:- www.tinyurl.com/watotolanchester

A voluntary offering will be taken to support the ongoing work of Watoto.





2025... COMPLETED IT



Happy New Year to all!

I wanted to take a moment to reflect on last year, say a heartfelt thank you, and share just how much 2025 has meant to me and all of us at Bourne & Co.

I'll start with a thank you. The support from the Lanchester community and beyond has been incredible. This is a truly village led business, built on trust, relationships and word of mouth, and I never take that for granted.

So, I wanted to take an unusual step sharing some of our numbers. In 2025, we were instructed on 47 properties and sold 41 of them, giving us an 87% success rate. The majority of those homes were right here in Lanchester, but we were also trusted to act further afield.

The average price we sold a home for this year was £324,269. We personally accompanied 244 viewings, carried out 118 free valuations, and added 23 new 5-star reviews across Google and Trustpilot, something that genuinely makes me incredibly chuffed.

Of all sales agreed, only five deals fell through, largely thanks to our Reservation Agreements, which filter out non-serious offers at the point of agreement. This has been a huge success for us in 2025 and something we will be building on further in 2026.

Our average sale to completion time this year was just 12 weeks, helped enormously by our partnership with Juno Legals, who share our belief in proactive communication and accountability.

On the lettings side, we moved 22 new tenants into homes, renewed 35 tenancies, and strengthened the business with the recruitment of our brilliant (and local) Lettings Manager, Rachael Rodgers.

A quirky stat that I think says a lot about how we operate is that we sent 5,863 WhatsApp messages in 2025. That is a huge amount of support for our clients and something I am really proud of.

If you are thinking about selling or renting a property in 2026, please do not overlook us just because we are a small, independent business. Our statistics speak for themselves. What we lack in size, we more than make up for in service, attention to detail and genuine care. Every property matters to us and every client gets direct involvement. If you have ambitions for your move in 2026, we are ready to help you achieve them.

Outside the office, a special year too. I was honoured to speak for Lanchester WI, promoting my book and raising awareness of men's mental health. I enjoyed supporting St Bede's as an Enterprise Advisor and welcoming Angus from Year 10 for work experience.

So, what is next for 2026?

I have lots of ideas and would genuinely love your thoughts. Following the success of our Christmas boards, we are considering Faster and Halloween versions. Is this something the community would like to see? Let me know at info@bournenco.com.

There are also conversations about opening another office in a nearby village, something I would love to do. I would love to create a chain of localised, independent estate agencies that follow the model we have created. Watch this space...

Who knows what lies ahead. I am an ideas man, so I will always try to improve and innovate where I can. But whatever happens, it will not happen without you, so once again, thank you to all who choose their local agent in 2026.

BOURNE & CO
in partnership with nested

bournenco.com
info@bournenco.com
Call or Whatsapp us on 01207 529 900