

Ponteland Methodist Church Cornerstone



February 2022

MINISTER'S LETTER

In the middle of February is Valentine's Day, the day when many people celebrate 'love' and relationships. I have always found it to be quite an odd day, as I don't believe that it should take a special day or event to tell and show loved ones how we feel about them. I think part of my discomfort about the day is the way the concept or idea of love has become monetised, commercialised and trivialised.

In Old Testament Greek there are four different words for love: **Eros** (pr. AIR-os) - sensual or romantic love. The term originated from the mythological Greek god of love, sexual desire, physical attraction, and physical love. This is the type of love usually associated with Valentine's Day.

Storge (pr. STOR-Jay) - describes family love, the affectionate (and often deep) bond that develops naturally between family members e.g. parents and children, or brothers and sisters.

Agape (pr. Ah-GAH-pay) - describes an unconditional, sacrificial, self-giving and pure love. Jesus demonstrated this kind of divine love in His living and dying. Agape defines God's immeasurable, incomparable love for humankind: John 3:16, "For God so loved (agape) the world that he gave his only son...."

Philia (pr. FILL-ee-ah) describes the love between friends; it is a strong bond between people who share common values, interests or activities. Philia expresses an experience-based love and originates from the Greek term philos, a noun meaning: "beloved, dear ... a friend; someone dearly loved (prized) in a personal, intimate way; a trusted confidant held dear in a close bond of personal affection".

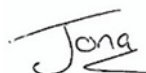
Philia is the most common word used for love in the New Testament, encompassing love for fellow humans and care, respect and compassion for people in need. Jesus said philia would be an identifier of His followers: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love (philia) one another". (John 13:35)

As the pandemic eases and we hope we transition towards a

way of living with Covid in the long term then, in the short term, we still encourage each other to wear masks when in and around the building. This is an act of 'philia' towards one another.

As we approach and pass Valentine's Day, whether you experience 'eros' or not, my prayer is that you will know the 'storge' of family, the 'agape' of God, and 'philia' of fellowship and unity together in God.

God bless,



FIRST AID TRAINING COURSE

There is one space reserved for Ponteland Methodist Church on a First Aid training course taking place on Saturday 5th March at Westerhope. The cost is being met by the Circuit. Please let me know if you are interested or would like to suggest someone who might like to attend. Thanks and God bless,

Jona

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN PONTELAND

Ecumenical monthly prayer meetings have resumed rotating in the three Ponteland Churches as follows – Spring Dates shown.

Monday 14th February 12.00noon at St Matthew's

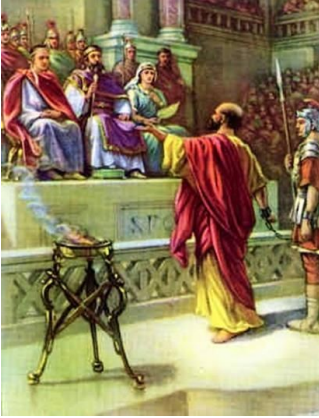
Monday 14th March 12.00noon at St Mary's

Monday 11th April 12noon here at the Methodist Church

Meetings will last approximately 30 minutes.

John Doherty

DESTINATION ROME: JULIUS IN CHARGE



As I marched Paulus out of the courtroom that day, I could see that someone would be required to take him all the way to Rome, and that officer might well be me! Back in our quarters, as one of my men took off the chains, I said to him: "That was the queerest trial I've ever seen! You seemed totally unfazed by King Agrippa and spoke so confidently. I wondered where you got the nerve to do it." Paul replied "The Spirit of the Lord was upon me". I said "You put a different slant on your case than you did before

the Jewish Sanhedrin, different again from the teaching I have heard you give to the local Christians".

"All things to all men!" he said. "In speaking of the things of God we have to measure the audience and their own experience and ways of thought. I gave the King and the Governor the honour due to their position." (I thought to myself, yes, you buttered them up and they lapped up the flattery.) He went on "I put before them what they needed to know to judge whether I was worthy of a death sentence. They may not be ready to understand what the crucifixion of Jesus means to believers. Sufficient to say that Jesus was killed and now is alive again. I wish that the Spirit may come upon all who hear the good news of the love of God, even a Herod."

Bit of a task with that lot, I thought, but good of you to try. You did well in that court, but Emperor Nero himself is the next to convince.

A few days later my centurion brought me before the Legate of the Legion and I was ordered to select a section from my Century to escort the prisoner to Rome. I was to be personally responsible for his safe arrival at the Imperial Court and to secure a sea passage for prisoner and escort. I asked for volunteers and selected men who had reason to see Italy, family there and so on. A reliable squad. I took two of my personal servants to do for me, and let Paul do the same; he chose his secretary Aristarchus and the physician Lucas. It would be good to have a doctor aboard.

At Caesarea's port there was a ship loading which was to take us to Myra, but which first had to complete its cargo at Sidon. So our first sailing was a single day north to there and some days more delay while the holds were topped up. Paul turned out to be the most experienced sailor of us all, and he shook his head over the delays, for summer was far on by now. This would be the last shipload of grain for Italy this season. There seemed no point in keeping Paul and his friends cooped up in the vessel during loading, so I let them spend the time with the local Christians, who seemed extraordinarily fond of him, a very hospitable lot and I would have loved to join them, but had my own men to keep an eye on. Finally we cleared Sidon and a wind favoured us. We were many days on the open sea on a north-westerly course until we cleared the eastern tip of Cyprus and set off west for Myra in Pamphylia. Some of my squad grumbled that they'd enlisted to fight on land and not to be sick at sea, but they got their sea legs eventually. Paul and his pals had no such trouble and were in high spirits, telling stories and singing psalms and generally good company. I could enjoy such companionship. A good spirit among them.

Acts 27

John M Gill

PRODUCT REVIEW: TEENAGER

This is my honest review of the product TEENAGER, which I received as a free upgrade from model CHILD. Prospective purchasers of model TEENAGER should note that this upgrade is not reversible.

The first thing I noticed about model TEENAGER is the drastic change in factory settings from model CHILD. The master volume levels are substantially lower, however, it appears that in reducing these, vocabulary range has also been lost, on occasions by as much as 99%; reducing vocabulary to little more than "K", "Fine", "Why?" and "I hate you". Multiple words also appear to have been replaced entirely by the Grunt, Shrug or Eye Roll functionality, which is exceptionally well advanced in this upgrade.

TEENAGER smell settings are generally a vast improvement on those that we saw with CHILD, however still veer too far to the top end of the spectrum. It is very difficult to turn down the odour levels of extreme Lynx and Body Mist, and attempts to play around with the settings too much may result in the model malfunctioning and defaulting to the even less desirable Body Odour and Sweaty Socks modes.

The listening functionality, already in need of a substantial overhaul with CHILD, seems to have, if anything, degraded even further with TEENAGER. I tested this by making a perfectly reasonable request for the dishwasher to be emptied thirty-seven times; the TEENAGER gave no indication at any point that this request had been processed, or even heard at all.

The TEENAGER comes with a standard accessory which it is worth users being aware cannot be removed, at least not without significant damage to the Emotional Stability and Reasonable Behaviour modules. This accessory takes the form of a mobile phone, which is permanently attached to them at all times. You should not attempt to remove the mobile phone unless you have significant experience of TEENAGER.

Battery life on this model is poor. I found a minimum of 12 hours recharge was required overnight, however TEENAGER was extraordinarily difficult to put into sleep mode at any point before 1am. Consequently, you should expect significantly reduced functionality in the mornings.

TEENAGER appears to be equipped with some kind of unusual magnetic force, which is yet to be fully understood. Upon upgrading, you are likely to find vast percentages of your kitchen crockery and cutlery gravitating to the room where you keep your TEENAGER. You will likely want to apply the recommended Haz Mat Suit before attempting to cross the threshold and reclaim the contents of your kitchen.

Appetite and Mess settings cannot, regrettably, be custom set from the unnecessarily high levels which appear to be standard with TEENAGER. You should also be prepared that both settings turbo charge in the event that your TEENAGER is in contact with another TEENAGER.

Matthew Cooper

ADVENT ACTION

I did the daily Advent actions which Bev mailed to us.....each day was for a different issue of peace and justice.

Day 20's action was to write to your MP on behalf of Open Doors, a key charity supporting persecuted Christians.

Dear Mr Opperman

The daily news can be overwhelming at times. Indeed, 2021 has been another challenging year. Thank you for your commitment and perseverance as an MP amidst these many challenges, especially in a climate of increased attacks on MPs.

Yet, as the world experiences a resurgence of terrorism and growing authoritarianism, persecuted Christians face intensifying pressure on every side – and all exacerbated by the social and economic impact of Covid-19. Whether under surveillance by the state in China, social exclusion in India, or facing violent extremism across West Africa and the Middle East, daily life for millions of Christians across the world is a suffocating struggle.

Ehmet's story illustrates this intensifying daily pressure. He was sent to a re-education camp in China for his Christian faith. Now released, his movements are tracked, and his home is under 24/7 surveillance. I find it hard to imagine what daily life must be like when you're being constantly monitored and living in fear that someone might punish you for your faith.

There is an urgent need to respond to the suffocating struggle persecuted Christians face around the world. This is the time for the UK government to support those who are treated as second-class citizens because of their faith by protecting and promoting international religious freedom. Where the right to religious freedom is undermined, many other human rights are too.

Can you use your influence to support persecuted Christians who face such intensifying pressure on a daily basis? Please take action by representing me at the launch of Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List, hosted by Rt Hon Theresa Villiers on 19 January 2022, 3-4pm.

The launch will provide you with in-depth research and analysis into the 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. This research will give you the opportunity to find out how religious persecution is intertwined with many other global issues, and what can be done to help resolve them. You

will also hear first-hand accounts from persecuted Christians around the world.

Last year, over 100 parliamentarians prioritised this issue and attended the World Watch List launch online. I do hope you will be able to prioritise this year's World Watch List launch, since you have such a crucial role in protecting the most vulnerable from persecution.

RSVP to the World Watch List launch, hosted by Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP

When: 3-4pm, Wednesday 19 January 2022 – please note the change in time from 4-5pm due to parliamentary availability

Where: Terrace Pavilion or digitally (TBC)

How: email advocacy@opendoorsuk.org

Kind regards

Ann Cooper

Dear Ms Cooper

Many thanks for your email to Guy about the worldwide persecution of Christians and for inviting him to the launch of Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your message.

I am sure that, subject to existing diary commitments, Guy will do his best to attend this event. Guy and his ministerial colleagues are committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. Guy is pleased that the Independent Review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office support for persecuted Christians, conducted by the Anglican Bishop of Truro, the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen, was published in 2019. The Government has committed to implementing the Bishop's 22 recommendations in full, and work continues to implement them in a way that will bring real improvements in the lives of those persecuted because of their faith or belief. Of the 22 recommendations, the UK has fully delivered 10, made good progress on a further 8, and ministers are confident that all 22 will be delivered by the time of the independent review in 2022. Thank you again for taking the time to write to Guy about this important subject.

With best wishes
Rachel Quinn
Office of Guy Opperman MP
Member of Parliament for Hexham
Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion

WOMEN TOGETHER

Next meetings:

Thursday 10th Feb at 2pm Glennis Richardson—Life in Beirut

Thursday 24th Feb 2pm Beetle Drive

Jennifer Hardy



Kathy Anderson leading the Women's meeting in music making.



THE OPEN DOOR

Did you know that celery was originally used as a medicine to treat various ailments? In Ancient Greece a bunch was given as a reward to winners of athletic games. It was first used as part of the human diet in 16th century Italy. I hope you enjoy this easy to prepare soup.

Judith Orton

Celery Soup

2 tbsp olive oil
300g celery, sliced, with tough string removed
1 clove of garlic, chopped
200g potatoes, peeled and cubed
500ml vegetable or chicken stock
100ml milk
Salt and pepper for seasoning



Heat the oil in a pan over a medium heat.
Add the celery, garlic and potatoes and coat with oil.
Add a splash of water and a pinch of salt.
Cook for 15 mins, stirring regularly. Add more water if the veg begins to stick.
Pour in the stock. Bring to the boil.
Turn down the heat. Simmer for a further 20 mins, until the veg is soft.
Blitz the soup, add the milk and blitz again. Season to taste.

**Open Door opens on Monday 7th February at 1pm
We will be serving homemade soup, cakes and scones.**

GIRLS' BRIGADE MEMORIES

I need to start by saying these are my memories and I am aware that if two people attended the same occasion their memories might differ so if you recall something differently please don't take offence.

One Sunday morning in 1964 Mrs Gladys McGarva asked if she could come to the Sunday School to talk to the girls.

She told us she planned to start up a weekly group where girls would be able to meet. This group would be part of a much bigger organisation known then as **The Girls' Life Brigade**.

At that time my friendship group in Ponteland was limited to those girls I'd met at church as we'd moved to Ponteland when I was 11 and I travelled to a school in Gosforth. A small group of us thought we'd definitely come to the first meeting. Mrs McGarva or 'Auntie Glad' as we came to know her suggested Wednesday night as it was mid week and wouldn't clash with other activities in the village such as Guides, First Aid or Ballet. I don't remember the names of all those who came that first night, but Mrs M recorded that 14 girls turned up.

As members told school friends and neighbours, the company numbers quickly began to grow. (Also there on that first night was Mrs Pat Milburn.)

Mrs McGarva told us all about GLB; it was an International, Interdenominational Christian organisation for girls.

With a Motto: **Seek, serve and follow Christ** and an Aim:

To help girls become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and through self control, reverence and a sense of responsibility to find true enrichment of life.

(A parent, Mrs Francis, had also volunteered to help in the company and when she heard we needed a company motto she suggested Colossians 1:18 – **that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.** (Jesus is first))

Auntie Glad explained how the company would be organised; there would be different sections; juniors, seniors and pioneers along with the badges we could earn and uniform we would need.

The uniform of the GLB was very different from the current one; a navy blue serge wool dress (very itchy to wear, especially on warm days) it had long sleeves and a collar. Berets or pancake

type hats. Badges would be worked for and sewn onto our sleeves. Badges then were much different to the badges of today; skipping, knots, although I've only ever used a reef knot, needlework and scripture, cookery etc.

There were two levels of badgework; elementary – blue and advanced – red.

Initially there was no provision for the youngest group known then as Cadets, however very soon an ex-officer from Jarrow called Mrs Sheldon, moved into the area and offered to oversee this section.

One of the girls to start her Brigade journey in the Cadet section was Margaret Johnson and when her mum Marjorie heard we needed someone who could play the piano, she volunteered. Little did she know she'd stay with the company for many years after volunteering for just a few weeks.

In July 1965 the Girls' Life Brigade (England), Girls Guildry (Scotland), and The Girls' Brigade (Ireland) merged to become The Girls' Brigade.

This meant a change of uniform; out with the itchy dress and in with smart shirt and tie, skirts and blazers – this would be the first of many changes over the coming years.

1st Ponteland was the first company in Northumberland so initially we were attached to Newcastle District; this meant we could join with them in the wider life of Brigade.

One of the first things we did with the District was to attend the annual camp in the summer of '65. We went to St Austell in Cornwall, a pretty long journey even by today's standards. We left Newcastle Central Station on the Friday night, and travelled overnight to Kings Cross (not in a posh sleeper train, just ordinary carriages). We arrived in London in the early morning then onto another train to Newquay where we were met by buses to ferry us to the camp site in St Austell.

I do remember we were amazed at the size of the site as we joined another Division from Cornwall; there were over 200 girls all together plus officers. We all had camp chores and taking the eyes out of enough potatoes for a camp that size was a pretty daunting task but definitely preferable to cleaning the ablutions!! I have been in touch with my friend Val who was also at that first

camp and funnily enough we both remembered the same thing; tents with no ground sheets, just grass (although we did have camp beds) and an influx of snails. Val even remembered putting a present she'd bought her mum under the bed only to find a large snail sitting on it! The joys of camping!!!

On the train back to Newcastle Mrs McGarva decided to write a poem about our trip to be used in our annual Open Night, I still remember the opening lines;

We went to camp in Cornwall in August '65,

We travelled on the overnight train and arrived more dead than alive.!!!

It didn't put us off though and further camping holidays followed; Wiston Lodge in Scotland and Grendon in Northamptonshire.

Camp was all about a cold wash, often a toilet clock across the camp site, definitely needed a torch for night time visits and corned beef sandwiches if we went on a trip anywhere. Part of camp kitchen chores would be to butter the bread for the sandwiches with instructions to *'make sure the butter goes right to the edge of the bread and don't miss the corners'*.

Camp also gave us the opportunity to meet up with girls from other companies when we could learn camp songs and choruses, many of which the girls still sing today.

As a company we were very lucky as Mrs Johnson our resident pianist could play by ear and we just sang our choruses once and she was able to play for us.

Our other big outing with Newcastle District was the trip to London for the annual Rally in the Royal Albert Hall. I know that over the years many girls both took part in or attended this annual event but those first visits were much different to later trips when we stayed overnight at welcoming churches in London.

On those first trips we met up with other companies at Heaton Methodist Church on Friday evening. We left Newcastle about 8 o'clock, arriving in London at GB headquarters around 5.30 or 6.00 in the morning. We were able to freshen up, have breakfast then it was off into London sightseeing. After spending the day in London we went to the Royal Albert Hall for the evening performance, which I think usually finished around 9.30. In the early days of the Rally we were able to buy a copy of the Evening Standard when we left which had pictures of the afternoon per-



The exhibition of the many years of Ponteland Girls' Brigade.



formance on the front page.

Then it was back on the bus for the return journey north.

Of course we had to find the bus first, the Royal Albert Hall has a capacity of over 4000 and many of those would also have arrived by coach – orders were ‘stay together’ while someone went to look for our bus.

We must have arrived back home to Ponteland about 8 o’clock in the morning, just in time for breakfast, a quick wash, clean socks and back down to church as the Rally weekend always coincided with our family/parade service in Ponteland and Mrs McGarva expected us to attend that as usual!

Every autumn it was time for our company Open Night, an opportunity to show parents and friends some of the things we had been doing over the previous year. It was also when we were presented with achievement and attendance awards.

Eventually other companies started up in Northumberland; Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Cramlington, Seahouses and Berwick.

This meant Northumberland could form its own District Girls’ Brigade raised funds to support the costs of medication and care for a bed in a hospital in Ludhiana in India. There was a missionary doll awarded to whichever company in the district raised the most money each year. This was often presented on a special night each year when the companies in the district would meet up together for games and a party.

One of the ways we raised funds was to hold a Jumble Sale, you probably need to explain this to younger people in the congregation but it was a kind of early ‘one day only, pop up ‘charity shop’ which was held in the Church hall. They were always well attended and despite people asking if we had items in a different size, or colour (that would be sorry, no) they were good fun. Unfortunately the first wooden cross belonging to the company was accidentally sold at one of these sales.

We had intercompany team games, competitions, District and Divisional parades both in Northumberland and Newcastle with sometimes as many as 300/350 girls attending these parades. Parades were always led by at least one GB band.

Apparently we were all told the same when it came to parades and drill, if someone faints, step over them and if your knicker elastic snaps, step out of them, just keep going. Luckily neither ever happened.

Memories are many, too many to tell all today but my main memory is the friends I had within the company, often with girls I would not otherwise have met.

When Mrs McGarva retired as Captain she was followed by Helen Ruddick, Elizabeth Tipping and then Cheryl Hood.

When Cheryl decided to take a year's sabbatical from her position as captain in 1985, despite having a new baby I agreed to step in for that year. That year turned into 16 years!! Luckily I had the continued support of Mrs Johnson and Mrs Milburn and eventually girls came through the company and became commissioned officers. (As far as I know Cheryl is still on sabbatical.)

Memories are much different when you are in charge; for example, while trips to London for the Rally continued I was now responsible for the safety and wellbeing of a group of girls in a very big city.

However I was always extremely proud of all the girls I ever took to London, the older girls supported and helped the younger members and complete strangers (especially Japanese friends) would comment on how smart they looked while sightseeing and ask if they could take a photograph (I'm not sure what they told friends back home about the group of smart children they'd seen on holiday). On one particular Rally trip we were just approaching Washington Services when the girls shouted out that the people in the car behind were waving, Mr and Mrs Holmes were in fact trying to flag the bus down, we pulled into the service station and a very flustered Mrs Holmes got out of the car with Fiona's uniform skirt which she had discovered in the tumble dryer when they got home from seeing us off about 20 minutes earlier.

Some other memories from my days as captain include; Our 25th anniversary in 1989, we held an afternoon display and party tea in the Memorial Hall and some of the girls who were there on that first night in 1964 were able to attend.

We took part in celebrations for the Girls' Brigade Centenary in 1993. A divisional parade was held in Durham Cathedral. I was honoured to be asked to carry the Queen's Colour, I remember we had to attend a colour party rehearsal during which time we were also shown the route to take through Durham, unfortunate-

ly the band, which was ahead of the colour party hadn't been told which route to take and they turned right instead of left! I also attended the Centenary Service of Thanksgiving in St Paul's Cathedral in the same year.

We had annual open nights, put shows on, and joined with Boys' Brigade for Carol Services and coffee mornings.

During the time I was captain some of my proudest moments have been seeing girls working for and achieving their Queen's Award; this is the highest award in GB and during my time as captain 12 girls, including my daughter gained this award.

I have no idea just how many girls have passed through 1st Ponteland GB Company during my time as a girl and later as captain and in the time since I retired, probably many hundreds over the years.

What I do know is the Company has provided those girls with opportunities to make new friends, try new things, often out of their comfort zone, and build their self confidence, all skills needed in life and although the company is closing, like me they will all, I hope, have many happy memories of their time as part of the 1st Ponteland Girls' Brigade and the wider GB community.

Hilda Shell

GB version of StF 76 includes the verses:-

*Give me oil in my lamp keep me burning
Give me oil in my lamp I pray
Give me oil in my lamp keep me burning
Keep me burning til the break of day*

*Give me umption in my gumption let me function
Give me umption in my gumption I pray
Give me umption in my gumption let me function
Let me function til the break of day*

1ST PONTELAND BOYS' BRIGADE



There are some exciting opportunities ahead for the young people of Ponteland and surrounding areas. On Tuesday 8th March 1st Ponteland Boys' Brigade will relaunch as 1st Ponteland Boys' Brigade &

Girls' Association.

This means that we will be accepting girl members into the BB family. We currently have places available in all sections, Anchors (Ages 5-8), Juniors (Ages 8-11), Company (Ages 11-14) and Seniors (Ages 14-18).

We meet on Tuesday evenings, the Anchors run from 6.00-7.00 pm. All the other sections meet at 7.15-8.30 pm.

On the 8th March we will be holding an Open Evening, where everyone is invited to come along and take part in a taster programme of events for the young people. Parents and carers are welcome to come along too, as is anyone who would like to volunteer with our newly formed BB/GA.

If you know of any young person, male or female, who would be interested in joining us or if you would like to volunteer as a helper please contact Leslie at 1ponteland@boys-brigade.org.uk

We are looking forward to this exciting and new chapter in the life of the Brigade in Ponteland.



Les Dodd



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 21st February to 6th March 2022

Whilst Covid-19 uncertainty means there will not be a Big Brew organised in Ponteland this year, there are still many ways to support and share the stories of the people who produce our food and drink, mine our gold and who grow the cotton in our clothes, people who are often exploited and underpaid, people who experience the daily impact of climate change and who have and continue to suffer more than most from the effects of the pandemic.

Covid restrictions permitting, why not invite a small group of friends around for tea/coffee and all make a donation to Traidcraft Exchange? Or could you place a pound in a jar for every Fairtrade cuppa drunk (or Fairtrade chocolate bar eaten!) during Fairtrade Fortnight? Our church treasurer, Peter Michell, will be happy to coordinate donations via the Church account.

How about making an order from the Traidcraft spring range? This can be done directly on the website at <https://traidcraftshop.co.uk> or via me when the new catalogues are available (details to follow).

Once again, the Fairtrade Foundation is running an online **“Choose the World you Want Festival”**. Last year’s festival saw campaigners, shoppers, students and businesses come together with over 50 virtual events such as online discussion panels, bake-offs and coffee mornings. Further details about this year’s event can be found at <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk>. Whilst we are all encouraged to continue thinking carefully about our shopping choices, there is currently a campaign advo-

cating that there are some choices we should not have to make each time we make a purchase. We shouldn't be able to walk into shops and be faced with products that were partly made through slavery or child labour, land grabs, physical assault, pollution, or that destroyed forests in order for them to get onto our shelves. Whilst UK laws set standards here, they do not cover business practices of UK companies overseas, within the supply chains of goods that we all consume. Other countries are taking large companies to court for human rights abuses committed abroad and we are being encouraged to campaign for **The Business, Human Rights and Environment Act** which will criminalise businesses causing or profiting from human rights abuses and give the victims the justice and compensation that they deserve. More information and the chance to sign a petition can be found at <https://traidcraftexchange.org> So even though we won't be having a big local fundraising event this year, there are still lots of opportunities to support trade justice.

STOP PRESS There will be a fairtrade theme to the Open Door on Monday 28th February, including a Traidcraft stall.

Bev

WOMEN TOGETHER

We look forward to continuing with our first joint Spring/Summer programme, meeting in the Church Hall at 2.00pm : -

10 Feb – My Life in Beirut – Glenis Richardson

24 Feb – Beetle Drive – Chris Cogan

10 Mar – Spring Tea

24 Mar– My Business Life – Ann Cooper

12 Apr – Holy Week Communion – Rev Jona Sewell

22 Apr – Geoff Orrock

05 May– Annual Lunch at the Golf Club – Marian Falcus

19 May – AGM

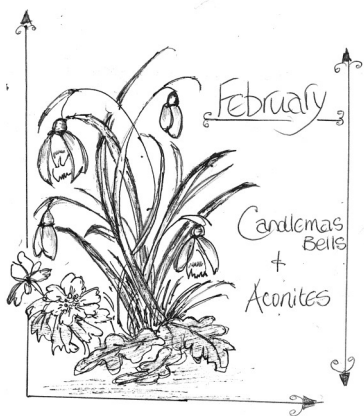
09 Jun – Annual Outing to Bishop Auckland Palace and environs - Jean Tweedie & Chris Cogan

21 Jul – Summer Get Together

25 Aug – Summer Get Together

You would be very welcome to join us!

Contact - **Chris Cogan** or **Joyce Davis** for further info.



CANDLEMAS BELLS

The feast day of Candlemas is 2nd February, by which time the snowdrops are gracing woodlands and gardens: "Candlemas Bells" is the old country name for them. Another more well-known name is "Fair Maids of February".

The month of January will be remembered for the two powerful storms and the many people being without electricity for so many days causing real inconvenience and distress.

However we have enjoyed some beautiful clear blue skies and sunshine and spectacular sunrises and sunsets. Some sunny days tempted gardeners to have an assessment of jobs to be done so a considerable amount of leaf raking took place and underneath, treasures were revealed in the shape of Aconites and Snowdrops in bloom.

Towards the end of January a few of us took a beautiful ride up to Kirkharle. It was a perfect winter day so we had a wonderful walk round the lake. Not a sound spoiled the peace until a quadbike and two farmers arrived to feed the sheep. It was then a lovely sound as the flock came streaming down the field all "talking" to each other in joyous tones. What a happy sight to see such a huge flock flowing like a woolly river for their tea! We ourselves enjoyed a cup of tea and a cosy chat to round off our outing. Home was reached prior to dusk and in time to give the garden birds their last food for the day. The Long-Tailed Tits come in a group of eight and partake of the peanuts. They are such hungry tiny little birds that the hopper is replenished every day. The Blue Tits, Coal Tits, Great Tits and Marsh Tits are happy with the fat balls and the seeds.

Only approximately six weeks until the official start of spring on the 20th March: British Summer Time starts on the 27th so not long now until Winter is officially over!

Jean Tweedie

GARDENING FOR FEBRUARY 2022

HAPPY NEW YEAR everyone, after one of the dullest Decembers on record (the second wettest in 2021). We celebrated the warmest New Year on record. January has continued to be reasonably mild and very dry – it was the wettest month of the year in 2021. The weather has been good for doing jobs outdoors and we got our garden fence repaired. Rainfall recorded at home last year was just over an inch less than in 2020 and an inch below average for 23 years of recording it. May joined January and December as the other wet months. Rainfall was 32.56 inches, the average is 33.60 inches.



A few things about compost to encourage you gardeners to start the spring. There are two types of compost – the one you create yourself from residual material collected in the garden during the year and the one you buy at the garden centre. The first is free but as it may contain weed seeds, pest and diseases it has already gone away in the Green

Waste Wheelie Bin last year!! You can make some from garden soil and if you don't require large quantities it can be as good as that you buy, but it will need to be pasteurised to compete with sterile medium you can buy. You need to sieve your material through a quarter-inch sieve and place on metal baking trays no more than 4 inches deep. Cover with aluminium foil, heat to at least 82°C and hold there for 30 minutes before taking it out to cool. For seed sowing (and potting on) use 50% pasteurised good garden soil, 25% coarse sand and 25% sieved weed-free garden compost or leaf mold. For potting on you will need to add nutrients such as fish blood and bone fertilizer (or 7:7:7: compound) carefully judging the quantity added. It is uneconomical to use bought compost to improve your garden soil and many would say even to mix into planting holes for new shrubs, and large potted plants etc.

Although the banning of peat in horticulture and sales of garden compost was due to start this year, this is not the case. I buy for seed sowing and the initial potting-on of plants. I have now tried the Melcourt Sylva Grow and find it requires a different watering regime and the plants need feeding fairly quickly after planting out. Despite all the push to peat-free composts I will be going out looking for peat-based as long as they are available. Last year Halls of Heddon were selling "Clover" brand composts

which are peat-based.

We will be looking forward to new growth in the garden. Most think of snowdrops which are irresistible garden plants, to bring joy and beauty mainly in the spring. The commonest are *Galanthus nivalis* but there are now hundreds of named selections, some selling at eye-watering prices for a single bulb among snowdrop collectors (also known as galanthophiles!). I



have proved that snowdrops do better in the ground than in containers. For establishing *Galanthus nivalis*, planting “in the green” is best. You will see many advertisements at this time of year with prices per bulb quoted. You can increase locations where you grow snowdrops

with your own stock by lifting after flowering, dividing and replanting. Always add some organic matter to all locations when replanting and a sprinkling of fish blood and bone. All bulbs benefit from some feed after flowering. With daffodils and tulips it is worthwhile removing the dead flowers.

I grow *Iris reticulata* in pots – these are through now – a little more warmth and they will be in flower. In the ground there is no need to disturb them. In pots the bulbs multiply so I lift them all in early autumn, buy some new bulbs, replant the pots with a mixture of new and old and dispose of the smallest bulbs.

For many, hellebores will provide flowers for two to three months. The earliest “Christmas Rose” will already be in flower but many of the hybrids will flower from now until April. If you haven’t already cut off the old leaves do it now. This shows the flowers off. New leaves will develop later in the spring. If you have hellebores in a bed let them seed and new plants will grow next year. If you would like new ones there is a good selection available in garden centres. They can be planted with a little organic matter during frost-free days. Feeding of hellebores is done in later summer/early autumn when leaves are maturing and flower initials are being laid down for next year.

If you did not manage to plant spring bulbs in the wet weather in October you can soon have some growing in your borders.

Many garden centres have large pots filled with bulbs ready to plant out so it is over to you.

Good gardening in February as we begin to see new green shoots everywhere.

VILLAGE NEWS

Athol Court

Those who receive Pont News & Views will have read the latest information about Athol House/Athol Court in the January edition. Work is expected to start in early 2022: the replacement Athol Court will have 34 apartments with a mix of one and two bedrooms. The apartments are intended for over-55s. Some will be for rent and others for shared ownership. If anyone wishes to have further information you can contact Karbon Homes Housing Association tel 0801 640111.

The Diamond Inn

This is currently closed for refurbishment. The aim is to have the work finished in March.

Former Richard Coates Primary School, Thornhill Road

Plans are in hand for this empty building to become a Special School. A formal consultation will be launched and discussed at a cabinet meeting of NCC on 8th March. An earlier consultation received 305 responses, with 96 in favour but 209 against the plan.

Lloyds Bank

Despite the petition and protest by our own MP it looks as if the bank will be closing on 8th February.

Storm Arwen

Parts of Ponteland, Milbourne, Dinnington and other areas lost their power for a number of days at the end of November. Initially perhaps, it was not recognised how many homes were affected. Then the village did “rally round” with some shops, cafes, restaurants helping and Merton Hall opened for people who had no power at home. More recently public meetings have taken place with reps from Northumberland CC, Northern Powergrid, Northumbrian Water and Guy Opperman MP. The aim is to have plans made if this situation arises in the future.

New Veterinary Practice

Plans have been submitted to change part of Dobbies Garden Centre into a new veterinary practice.

Former NatWest Bank 2 Darras Road

In 2019 permission was given to alter this building to provide a restaurant at ground floor level and apartments on the first and second floors. It looks as if work on this has begun.

Farm Buildings, Birney Hill

An application has been made to partially demolish the farm buildings and build five new homes. This is green belt land.

Proposed Housing Development near junction of Western Way and Stamfordham Road

A decision is awaited on the proposal by Karbon Homes to build 65 homes.

Rialtos Restaurant—The Orchard

In November I informed you that Rialtos had been given permission to provide a new outdoor area. Now more detailed plans have been submitted. There will be market stalls, retail units and food vendors. It is hoped to provide a florist, bakery, coffee stall and three food stands. A large canopy will shelter the area. There appears to be no car parking provision!



Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group Survey on Accessing GP Services

During the last two years there has been an increase in the use of video telephone consultations. Patients are being urged to share their views. The survey is available at <https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90419559/Access>

Paper copies are available by calling 01670 335157 or emailing norccg.comms@nhs.net The survey closes on 25 February.

Jennifer Hardy

FAMILY NEWS

Edna Anderson celebrated her 98th birthday on 1st February in Grange Lea. She sends her regards and is really looking forward to meeting up with her Methodist friends again.

We wish **Hazel Waddell** a speedy recovery from her accident.

MEN'S FORUM ANNUAL DINNER

The next meeting of Men's Forum will be dinner at Blackbird on Thursday 10th February at 7pm. The speaker is Rev Jona Sewell. It will be necessary to preorder the food. The menu will be available from Andy Anderson and Alan Groves. £15 for two courses.

Andy Anderson



Preachers February

6th 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Cunningham
13th 10.00am Steve Small
6.30pm Sewell
20th 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Barrick
27th 10.00am M Barrick
6.30pm Forrester

20 and 27th services will be in
the Hall

HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you need any practical help of any kind (e.g. shopping, collecting prescriptions etc.) then please contact Pete Cowey. If you wish to volunteer to run errands for others then please pass your details on to Pete.
Email:

mrpetecowey@btinternet.com

Tel: 07771 857574



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2022

FRIDAY 4 MARCH

A SERVICE FOR EVERYONE

World Day of Prayer Service

to be held in

St. Matthew's RC Church

on the West Road

Friday 4th March 2022

at

2:00 pm

Everyone Most Welcome



From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the March edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 25th February 2022**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com. The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*