

Ponteland Methodist Church

Cornerstone



May 2022

MINISTER'S LETTER

We live in increasingly fragile, fractured times, when it can be hard to keep believing in the idea that the love of God wins out in the end. In a world ravaged by pandemic, where wars rage, where sea levels are rising almost as quickly as our energy bills, how do we still find the space in anxious hearts and minds to keep caring about one another and our planet?

In messy and challenging times like these, Easter has felt like a much-needed relief. Easter reminds us of our brokenness, and that the fragile state in which we are called to live together in love and faith isn't where the story ends. We must recognise, however, that we often inhabit a space between the hopelessness and isolation of Good Friday on the one hand, and the revelatory wholeness of victory, resurrection and community of Easter Sunday on the other. We get stuck 'in-between' believing resurrection has happened elsewhere, but not always embracing its potential for ourselves.

As Easter rolls round each year, we are re-awakened to that sense of new life, of beginning again, the fresh start and the promise of everything after – or because of – Easter can be different by God's work and grace. And there's a sense in which, no matter how clearly it's marked in the calendar and enshrined in school and bank holidays, the resurrection – Jesus' rising up against not only death, but all death-dealing, sin and darkness – still has the power to surprise and recreate us.

Without the resurrection there would be no Christianity; without it, there'd be little to celebrate, as it's the cornerstone of our faith and our hope for the world. We find stillness for anxious hearts, hope for a better future, and we can find ourselves renewed, when we trust in resurrection power. It is more than something to be believed, it is to be lived and experienced!

So, let's not lose heart, resurrection is happening in our world, and can happen to us.

God Bless

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jona', with a stylized flourish at the end.

DOUGLAS HOGG



Douglas was born in Graingerville North, beside Newcastle General Hospital opposite what is now a bowling alley. The family home doubled as his father's dental surgery (it is still a dental surgery to this day) and meals were always quick occasions as the dining room doubled as the patients' waiting room!

He was educated at Akhurst prep, Newcastle Preparatory School and St Bees School in Cumbria. During the War, NPS was evacuated to Whittingham in north Northumberland and it was there he was encouraged to fish in the river which ran through the school grounds and plant vegeta-

bles etc in a plot of land he was allocated.

When not at school he spent most of the war years at the family cottage in Stannersburn, near what is now Kielder Reservoir.

Again he spent much of his time indulging in his love of shooting and fishing (some of it legal!) and even worked part-time as striker for the local blacksmith.

At St Bees he spent more time on sport than academic pursuits, so he claimed, and must have been pretty good as he represented the school at rugby, cricket, golf, squash, fives and cross-country, winning prizes in most of these. He also played in the band, becoming bandmaster and playing the Last Post on the cornet on Armistice Day.

He originally wanted to be a vet but says his mind was changed at Stannersburn when he was watching two fields being ploughed, one by a horse and one by a tractor and realised the age of horse-drawn vehicles in farming was disappearing.

He studied medicine at Newcastle (then Durham University's Medical School), training also at the RVI along with what appeared to be most of his family! I think there were eight of them

at one stage, mostly on the Bates (ie Nigel's) side. It was there he met Barbara, who was a ward sister – the hospital's youngest – and who allegedly threw him off the ward the day after they got engaged for daring to call in when the ward was busy!! When Barbara was a midwife her patch contained some of the, shall we say, less salubrious areas of Newcastle. Apparently the first thing you asked for on visiting a house was some newspaper. This you placed on the (often very sticky) floor and carefully folded your coat on top. You NEVER hung your coat on the door or furniture, as you would have left with more 'guests' than you came with.

If it was a particularly dangerous area the ambulance crew would say "Set your watch. If you aren't back in half an hour (or whatever) we'll go and fetch the police. No WAY are we coming in to rescue you!"

Douglas continued to play rugby and was hooker for Gosforth first team, a side that has now morphed into the Falcons, but gradually gave that up although he continued to play squash for many years, as well as continuing to fish and shoot.

During his National Service he was mainly based at RAF Thornaby and as well as being used as a guinea pig for ejector seat and decompression testing was also one of the first people to be involved in Air Sea Rescue, leading to many adventures dangling at the end of a rope! On one occasion he was called to a remote farm in the North York Moors to deliver a baby in the middle of winter as it could only be reached by helicopter. The mission was successful but weather conditions meant he, helicopter and crew were snowed in at a pub for two days. Barbara, literally left holding a very young baby at base, was really not impressed.

Douglas decided not to make a career in the RAF and returned to Tyneside to become a GP based in Denton Burn, a couple of miles down the road from his original family home. In the waiting room of his surgery he kept a tank containing some fish. They sadly kept dying so he then decided to leave it empty with a note attached saying "This tank contains invisible flying fish". Many patients were convinced they caught a glimpse of said fish.

The family lived in the surgery for many years, eventually mov-

ing to Darras Hall, which was about as far as regulations would allow him to be from the surgery in those days.

As well as being a GP Douglas was also a police surgeon, medical officer for Rowntrees, also for a company who provided employment for the disabled, and worked in the Sexually Transmitted Diseases clinic! As my aunt was the contract tracer for the clinic it led to some very interesting dinnertime conversations!!! Photography was a lifelong interest for Douglas and he and Barbara went on many photographic holidays together, were members of Cramlington Camera Club and he obtained his Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society. He was also a very keen Freemason, becoming a Grand Lodge officer, an extremely rare honour.

He was also a member of St John Ambulance Brigade, becoming Area Surgeon and being awarded the Order of St John for his work.

Gardening was another passion and he was very proud of having made the garden at Whinfell Road from scratch, with only me to help as labourer and assistant wall builder!

Douglas was always very keen on helping out at Church. He made making the tea after evening service his special mission, of which he was very protective. For the congregation there was always the added excitement of never knowing whether the tea would be particularly weak, incredibly strong, or anywhere in between . . .

He was also determined to be the one who put up the notices on the board outside the Church, regardless of the fact his advancing years made this dangerous for himself and even passing motorists. Apparently even hiding the Church ladders did not put him off his mission . . .

Both Douglas and Barbara were very keen on helping out, especially for fundraising. Barbara will be remembered for going into overdrive for producing silk scarves, ties and the likes of framed photographs for sale – many, many scarves, ties and paintings . . .

Adrian Hogg

BASSENFELL WEEKEND APRIL 2022

Thirty people actually went to Bassenfell this year rather than meeting on ZOOM. It was so good to be back together. Bassenfell Manor is a beautiful Christian centre overlooking Basenthwaite Lake near Keswick. Our weekend was in April rather than previous times being always in January. So the weather was much warmer and the signs of spring lifted the souls of us all.

Rev Tim Thorpe was our speaker and he brought his wife Kay so it was very good to catch up with them. Tim spoke on the theme of Holiness and certainly brought our faith to life with his stories and helpful biblical teaching.

Colmore Catering looked after us very well with lovely meals although we still prepared our own breakfasts and packed lunches. The porridge teams worked well!

Our walk, ably led by Matthew followed the North shore of Derwent Water followed by a meander through undulating fields and forests to Little Braithwaite and back to the lake, ending of course at the beautiful Lingholm Estate Tea Rooms for coffee and cake with Peter Rabbit!!!

Some people commented that the weekend was a real tonic "just what we needed to revive our souls and our friendships". Next year we have booked the weekend 31 March to 2 April and so we are already looking forward to going again when our speaker will be Rev Tim Woolley.

Rosemary Gray



PHILIP WITNESSES

There was plenty of time for thinking that night. We'd had to get hold of a boat and check it over, get long-unused nets from the shed and check them, too. Then, when the fishing had started, they were all a bit rusty and Nat and I weren't what you'd call experienced hands, either. So we threshed the water with casting nets and trawled around with the dinghy with the big net for the first hour or so. Nothing doing, not a sprat. The others slowed up then and talked in low tones. Thomas was in high spirits. For our favourite pessimist, he was amazing. Full of funny stories and recollections of the Mission. Digging into the Scriptures to point out things Jesus had referred to during our time together, but which we'd missed entirely until the events of the First Day of the Week.

Nathaniel was just the same: he used to be a real sober-sides, a sort of elder statesman who thought long and talked little and late. Now he was chattering away to me fifteen to the dozen, helping me with his discussion of the Law and the Prophets. Nat was a bit of an intellectual, knew his Scriptures as well as Simon knew his boat and his lake. Simon roused himself to gather his casting net up again and moved to the stern to throw it in a neat circle onto the lake water, and draw it back again. Empty again.

The Bar Zebedeas were working together at the bow. John seemed quiet but secretly happy: there was a sort of a glow about him. It had started that Sunday morning when Simon and he sprinted down to the Garden Tomb, when the women came back with the News. As soon as John had seen the stone back, trailing its tapes and broken seals, and the collapsed grave clothes there on the bench, he'd reacted so differently from the rest of them. The women were frantic at having no body to tend and grieve over; Thomas was sceptical, fearing a trick of the High Priest's gang; most of us found that our sense of loss was made worse, having no body even.

But John who always seemed to be so close to the Master, was suddenly radiant. "He's risen!" he kept saying, Risen! Of course there's no body here, but He's here! I know it! He promised it! He'll show Himself sooner or later. Don't be frightened, don't be sad! He promised to rise and He's done it! The third day, re-

member, the Third Day! It was all right for John, his love was so strong. He'd never denied Jesus, even when in terrible danger at the High Priest's house. He'd stayed close by the Cross and been there to promise to take care of Mother Mary, been there to hear those painful words and the final cry of completion. Simon had heard the shout of triumph and known that the Master had been true, as always, to His Call and Mission, but wasn't near enough to hear the rest. He'd been skulking at the back of the crowd, keeping his cursed Galilean accents out of the way, ready to make another dash away from trouble. Envyng John, envyng Jesus, too. For they had been true, whilst Simon had been false. Triple treachery! How could he ever forgive himself? Ever call himself 'Peter' again?

The Lord had been kind, as ever. He'd sought him out that very First Day, but it'd been a mixed experience. The Lord was assuredly there, and that was great, though there was something different about Him. But what was most different was their relationship. Simon'd been used to being the right-hand man, the spokesman, the anchorman, the Rock man. That was a sick joke! We all felt for Simon. After what happened in the Garden and at the High Priest's House things could never be the same again. Jesus offered his presence as freely as ever, but Simon was so embarrassed; he didn't know what to say or do: he just wanted to shrivel up. He was almost glad when the Master had said "You'll see me again in Galilee" and had gone away.

When He'd visited us again in the closed room on two Sundays running, Simon had kept in the background. He told us he wasn't fit to be a leader any more. He felt unworthy to stay in the company, but Andrew and the rest just wouldn't let him leave them. Why, look at tonight! As soon as he'd said that he was going back to his fishing, all the old Galilee gang had insisted on joining him, even the landlubbers, Nat and me! They were good lads, better than he deserved. Perhaps Andy thought he was going off his head with depression and that he might take Judas's way out.

Dawn was near, and it was getting a bit warmer. Simon chucked off his heavy coat and moved to the big net. Andrew came beside him and the Zebedees took the other end and they eased it away from the side of the boat for another sweep. Noth-

ing!

A dawn breeze brought with it a fresh smell of wood smoke and a tang of cooking fish. Someone was having an early breakfast on the shore. A man was silhouetted against the glow of dawn. A voice came clearly across the cool water: "Having any luck lads?" Big James called back: "Not a tiddler all night!"

"Try again now, on the right side of the boat. Use the big net!" The stranger on the shore spoke with confidence.

"Sounds as if he's seen something we haven't" commented Little James, as they hauled the net across to the other gunwale and let it out. John got into the small boat and sculled it round, taking the far end of the big net round in a circle and returning to enclose a large area of water. The floats bobbed closer together as they all hauled in the net, and in the tightening circle saw a frothing and a heaving as a great shoal of large fish were brought together.

John looked again at the man on the shore: "It's happened again! Don't you remember three years ago before we stopped fishing and took to the mission? He's done it again! It's the Lord!"

Simon stood up as if he'd been stung. He gripped the gunwale. "Hey, Peter," said Andrew, "You're starkers! Here's your coat if you're going, make yourself decent!" Then with a splash Simon was away to the shore.

When we'd got into the dinghy and towed the loaded net up the shore (daren't haul it into the boat with all that weight in it), we found Simon Peter and the Master together.

Jesus turned from Simon, who was kneeling beside Him, and asked us to bring some of the newly caught fish up to add to those which He already had cooking. How that refreshing breakfast brought back old times! The time when thousands of us had been fed together, the times when we had been just the thirteen supping together after mission days.

It wasn't quite the same. Then we'd been all men together: now one of us was a RISEN BEING. It was something no-one had experienced before. When Lazarus came back he was just young Lazarus again, like a man who'd been ill and had recovered. Resuscitated, you might say, but this was quite different. He was no ghost, He seemed to have real solid flesh and He

could cook and eat, too, but sometimes He was so different it needed Him to do things that reminded us of whom He was and what He had done before. Thomas had been invited to touch those Wounds: but really all he wanted to do then was to fall down and worship!

A Risen person was really different, but the same. This was our Jesus, but it was also our Lord and God. Like God, we knew Him to be present at times when we didn't see Him at all. Strange and comforting. Not like ghosts, they were strange and uncomfortable.

John 21

John M Gill

VICTORIAN WAGONWAY

When it opened in 1835, the Leazes Main or Spital Tongues colliery was one of many coalmines around Newcastle.

The Industrial Revolution was in full swing, demand for coal was high and the competition was great.

Initially, the coal was carried on carts from the colliery through the streets of Newcastle upon Tyne to the river, ready for shipping. This was slow, as the town was largely still in its medieval layout, with narrow cobbled streets and expensive because of the road taxes. Porter and Latimer, the colliery owners, therefore employed a local engineer, William E. Gilhespie, to construct an underground wagonway.

Construction

Permission to build the tunnel was granted in 1838 and work started the following year. The tunnel was dug in sections. The engineers would have excavated a shaft down to the right level then tunnelled out to link up with the next section. Some 200 workers were employed in the construction of the tunnel and the walls of the tunnel were lined in stone, and a double brick arch supported the roof. It is approximately 7 ft 5 in (2.26 m) high and 6 ft 3 in (1.91 m) wide. This was just large enough to accommodate the custom-built wagons.

Transporting the Coal

Because of the gradual gradient of the tunnel, loaded wagons were able to roll along a standard gauge rail track down to the river. A rope was tied to the last wagon in the train and a stationary steam engine at the top of the tunnel hauled the empty

wagons back up to the pithead.

Pit Closure

The Victoria Tunnel was a financial success: it reduced the cost of transporting coal from the pit to the river by 88%. The colliery, however, was not a success and closed in 1860.

Having taken two and a half years to build, the tunnel was in use for just 18 years.

Air Raid Shelter

As Britain prepared for war in 1939, the city engineer in Newcastle developed plans to convert the Victoria Tunnel into a communal air raid shelter that could hold 9,000 people.

Converting the Tunnel

Entrance, Claremont Road.

Converting the tunnel into an air raid shelter cost £37,000. The tunnel was cleaned of coal dust and whitewashed in some places. Several concrete blast walls were added to stop potential bomb debris from flying along the tunnel. Electric lighting was fitted and a new concrete floor was laid. Wooden benches and 500 bunk beds were installed along the walls, and chemical toilets enclosed in canvas cubicles were built near the entrances. 16 new entrances to the tunnel were originally planned, seven of which were added.^[9] Claremont Road, Hancock Museum, St Thomas' Churchyard, Ridley Place, Shieldfield Green, Crawhall Road, and Ouse Street. At Ouse Street, it was possible to walk directly into the tunnel, while the other access points looked similar to subway entrances and involved walking down a steep corridor.

Sheltering in the Tunnel

The tunnel was considered a dark, damp and uncomfortable place to shelter. Many people were afraid to use it. Those who did remember sitting with their families and neighbours, exchanging gossip and often singing songs while waiting nervously for the all-clear from above.

After the War

At the end of the war, most of the fittings were removed from the tunnel and all of its entrances except Ouse Street were closed. This entrance had been built on private land in the garden of 14 Ouse Street. Guided tours are available.

Andy Anderson

VICTORIA TUNNEL TRIP

Men's Forum and friends had a tour of the 200 year old tunnel.



COFFEE SHOP STROLL

On 9 April the second walk for the strollers took place at Kirkharle. There were eight of us and two dogs. It was a nice leisurely stroll around the lake and some of us managed to get to the little chapel of St Wilfred's. We all enjoyed a variety of beautiful food and coffee afterwards and lots of chat.



Our next stroll is on 7 May when we are going to the seaside at Blyth. All are welcome for a stroll along the promenade.

Rosemary Gray

AN UPDATE FROM JONA AND THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

In returning to our building there's a sense that we have been finding our feet, asking – what does it look and feel like being together in the knowledge that Covid is now part of everyday life? This is true for our Sunday worship, and for every aspect of Church life, including the Leadership Team.

We must all acknowledge absent friends: those who don't yet feel ready to return for health or family reasons, those whose health now makes it difficult to attend, those who have sadly died, those who have found somewhere else to worship, and those who have got out of the habit, or formed new habits and so may never return. When I speak to my colleagues every church is experiencing this kind of uncertainty – we are not alone! We're in new and uncharted waters and so are keen to tread carefully, to minimise the risk of choosing the wrong direction of travel.

Whilst the Leadership Team acknowledges our absent friends we are also aware that there are some within our Church community who are desperate to 'get on with things' and/or do away with masks altogether. We ask for patience and understanding on all sides and, for now, **we continue to request that masks are worn when entering, leaving or moving around the building, and that they remain optional when seated.** We feel that, for now, this is a reasonable and balanced request. Other things the Leadership Team have discussed and/or agreed are listed under our 'fruitful churches' headings with which you are hopefully familiar:

Passionate Worship

Before lockdown we had worked on bringing two distinct congregations together. There's some frustration within the Team that lockdown has meant that this momentum was lost and that, for now, some folk haven't returned. Our desire is that all our worship is Christ-centred and Spirit-filled.

Our morning worship will continue to lean towards being more informal in style with a greater mix of contemporary and traditional hymns/songs and, over time, with more people involved in leading, reading, leading prayers, and testimony. Each preacher chooses the hymns/songs that they feel is right for the service they have planned, so some may choose more hymns

or songs from one style than another; we are not prescriptive in this regard. Over time we will also introduce themed preaching so that a topic or book of the bible can be explored over a number of weeks.

Some of the chairs have been removed from the back of the Church, under the balcony. This is deliberate as we want to encourage people to sit together in the main body of the Church where possible, or upstairs on the balcony - especially if this helps those with Covid concerns. The children's and family area at the back has been refreshed and we want this to be a dedicated space for any families and children that might attend. We maintain being committed to resourcing and supporting our evening worship which will continue to lean towards being more traditional and formal in style.

A gentle reminder that in all worship we are first and foremost called to be participants rather than consumers or critics. Do you come to worship ready to participate?

Radical Hospitality

As well as the decoration of our hall and worship space, you will have noticed the new wall and free-standing banners that welcome you around the building. Further work is needed to help make our building feel even more hospitable – signage, information availability etc. This is all being slowly worked on. However, hospitality is about far more than how the building looks; it's about how EVERY group and person greet visitors – from our smile, to our ability to listen and answer any questions and concerns, so many things that we do say 'welcome' (or otherwise) to others. At some point later in the year our Sunday door welcomers will be invited to a chat about this role.

Intentional Faith Development

We are very thankful for the prayer and home groups that met before lockdowns, many of which have now restarted; our sincerest thanks to all who lead and participate in these groups. At our last Leadership Team meeting we recognised that this is an area in which we could do better. **From Monday May 9th, there will be a new weekly prayer meeting from 4pm in the Church lounge, after Open Door, for up to half an hour.** Jona will lead this whenever possible. Prayer is vitally important

to the life of any fruitful church and we invite you to participate if you can.

The Leadership Team has only just started to discuss how we might encourage more home-groups and hopes to have a proposal in place by the autumn to encourage this.

Risk-taking Mission and Service

This is more pressing to the whole church (nationally and locally) than ever; Covid and lockdowns have helped some of us realise how precarious the situation in the Methodist (and our) Church really is. The loss of GB was a big blow for the Church but we are thankful that the BB now has a Girls' Association. As we've continued back post lockdowns this area hasn't felt like a high priority just yet, and probably rightly so as our energy has been needed elsewhere, but we must begin to focus on this over the coming 12 months.

Ecumenically, Jona is in conversation with Rev Paul (St Mary's) about what we might be able to do together missionally; we're even exploring possibilities relating to the URC building on Broadway.

Extravagant Generosity

In the donations given to our recent Ukraine appeal our Church has once again proved how generous we can be! We're all aware that the cost of living is increasing, and these costs affect the Church too. If you can give a little more to the Church then we humbly encourage you to consider your regular giving and increase this if you are able.

But generosity is about giving more than financial or physical resources; we can also give of ourselves and our time. There are numerous roles within the life of the Church that are needed to be filled (see the notices). At the moment a small number of people do an awful lot of the day-to-day work; we are very grateful to everyone who contributes to Church life and wellbeing. Could you step up and take on one of these vacant roles? Discuss this with a steward or Jona to find out more.

There is much potential and possibility within our Church and community. We must put our trust and hope in God and work together for his glory.

Jona



THE OPEN DOOR

May is the month when the rhubarb is growing well. This recipe also includes one of my favourite flavours, elderflower.

Judith Orton

Rhubarb and Elderflower Cake

For the roasted rhubarb

400g rhubarb, cut into 4cm chunks
75 g sugar
1/2 lemon, zest and juice
2 tbsp elderflower cordial

For the filling

300ml double cream
2 tblsp elderflower cordial
100g full fat yogurt



For the cake

115g margarine
200g sugar
100g ground almonds
100g plain flour
1tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp bicarb
Zest of 1 lemon
3 eggs
130g full-fat plain yogurt
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 tbsp elderflower cordial

Heat the oven 200C/180C fan. Prepare 2 sandwich cake tins. Put the rhubarb on a baking tray. Top with sugar, lemon juice, zest and cordial.

Cover with foil and roast in the oven for 25 mins until soft. Strain the rhubarb, reserving the juice.

Turn the oven down to 190C/170C fan.

Cream together the margarine and sugar. Mix in the lemon zest. Beat in the eggs, vanilla and cordial.

Mix together the flour, baking powder, bicarb and ground almonds.

Fold into the mixture a little at a time, alternating with spoonfuls of yogurt, until just combined.

Fold in half the roasted rhubarb and 1 tblsp of its juices.

Divide the batter between the two tins and bake for 20-25 mins. Leave to cool in the tins.

Whip the cream to soft peaks, fold in the remaining rhubarb, elderflower cordial and yogurt.

Turn out the cake. Prick the top of one half with a skewer and brush with a little elderflower cordial. Spoon on half the cream mixture, top with the other cake and brush that with cordial, then cover with the rest of the cream.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

On Saturday April 9th a group of strollers set off for Kirkharle. It was a glorious fresh spring morning for a walk around the lake or simply coffee in the Courtyard.

On the same Saturday morning, the tiny Chapel of Blucher held their Easter coffee morning. It is a small hard-working congregation and support on these occasions from round the circuit is so vital. With this in mind Rosemary Brown and I decided we would be in two places at once! So we arrived at Blucher for 10.00am, enjoyed coffee and hot cross buns and then set off for Kirkharle at about 11.15am.

On our way, just past Coldcoates, the car ground to a very definite and final halt. So hazard lights were switched on and whilst we were planning the next step, a car southbound on the opposite side of the road, pulled into a layby. Out stepped a young man who came running asking how he could help.

Within another couple of minutes a northbound chimney-sweep van pulled up and two men came to assist. The three of them decided to push us off the road and into the layby opposite.

Then began all the phone calls to arrange for pick up etc. By now the time had crept up to midday and we were advised that it would be approximately 90 minutes wait for the pickup.

During that time some of the strollers were on their way home, so they called on us for a chat which helped to break up the time.



Eventually the pickup arrived and we were astonished that only one man was in attendance. He was so slightly built and so young but his efficiency was simply amazing.

So the car was loaded on to the wagon and we climbed in and were assisted in every possible way as we had to climb little ladders to get inside.

The helpful driver asked where we lived so that he could drop us at our respective doors.

By the time we reached Ponteland we learned quite a lot about this amazing young driver. He had come over from Syria nine years ago unable to speak English but had learned quickly and trained for the work he was now doing.

We certainly had an adventure but we were so warmed by the polite and efficient service this young man gave us that the experience left us with the warm glow of no less than four young men assisting us. Where did they come from? They simply seemed to appear one after the other and we agreed we had been blessed with guardian angels in jeans.

Jean Tweedie

FAMILY NEWS

Boys' Brigade Leader, **Les Dodd**, was presented with a meritorious service award by Ponteland Town Council for his service to the community and the Boys' Brigade. The presentation was made on 13th April at the Town Council meeting by the Mayor, Christine Greenwell, at Merton Hall.

Brenda Rutter has had a fall whilst walking the dog.

Ann Scott has been unwell, Please pray for her.

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MEANDERS WEEKEND IN THE LAKES

We have a vacancy for two people to join us for the Annual Meanders long weekend in the **Lake District**. It is for three nights, **12th - 15th May, cost £150pp** including three Breakfasts and two Dinners. You do not need to be a walker to join us. If you are interested, please contact **Gaye Templeton** on gaye.templeton@sky.com or 825648.



The Care and Share team are looking for members and friends to help with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea on 4th June 2022. Lists can be found on the foyer notice board from Sunday 15th May for volunteers and attendees to add their names to. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

The Care and Share Team

GARDENING FOR MAY 2022

May is a wonderful month to be in the garden. After the dry weather for most of March and April we do not know what we might encounter weather-wise in May. It is good to progress the garden as far as you can when the weather is encouraging. I have just watered all the planters this morning as well as onions, broad beans and mangetout peas that were planted at the end of last week. I have needed help with the working in the vegetable garden this year but the potatoes were planted on 14th April (Good Friday, 15th) so planting outdoors is up to date.

To complete the report on suitable composts I have the details of the “best buys” from Which? for composts for patio pots. They are only listing peat-free composts as many of the products tested last year (with some still available) have been reformulated with different components (including peat) and added nutrients. The “best buys” are Miracle-Gro Peat-Free Moisture Control Special composts for Pots and Baskets – 20p per litre; Miracle-Gro Peat Premium All Purpose Compost – 20p per litre; Homebase Peat-Free Multipurpose Compost – 12p per litre (widely available at Homebase Stores); B & Q Goodhome Enriched Multipurpose – 13p per litre and Dalefoot Wool Compost for potting – 30p per litre. There are “foundation” nutrients in all these composts but there is a need to keep a close eye on your plants and liquid feed them when growth starts to falter or leaves look a little paler. No plant can survive without nutrients and when growing in pots the compost and fertilizer have to provide all the plant needs. If you choose to feed using a controlled-release fertilizer (long life) it is best to mix this into the compost before planting and it will become active (3 – 6 weeks) as the base nutrients are used up.

Most of our larger plants grown in planters are planted in home mixed composts, often materials that have been used in previous seasons. I use up compost that was used to grow tomatoes last year in the mix, and add coarse sand if I think this is appropriate. Peat-free composts are made from a complex mix of ingredients such as wood fibre and bark which can lock up nitrogen so you may need to use a higher nitrogen liquid feed as well as the often recommended high potash such as tomato feed. We all will have own experiences with peat-free materials so please share them. Not all will be successes I am afraid.

The weather has warmed up the ground and encouraged the grass to grow faster than normal. Margaret has already cut our grass four times. We are still cutting with the mower blade set fairly high but expect to reduce it to a “summer” level towards the end of May. Our summer level is not too low as the surface is not quite even.

The bulbs that have been grown in pots and planters will need deadheading and feeding. Once the leaves start to die back feeding and watering should be stopped. Hopefully the bulbs will have built up new reserves which will enable them to flower well next year. I have been practising lifting hyacinth bulbs and drying them off. It is suggested this can be done with other bulbs. When they have dried off they can be wrapped up in paper bags, kept cool and then replanted in the autumn. Some gardeners practise mixing new-bought bulbs with home-kept for planting for next year. The best flowers will come from new-bought bulbs as they have been field grown with less reliance on producing flowers.



May is the month to start pruning. Fatsia doesn't need pruning often but if it gets too big this is the time to cut back a few older stems to the base and this will encourage new shoots to grow.

Winter flowering jasmine will look much better if trimmed each year. This is the time to prune ivy. Use secateurs then you don't end up with cut leaves which make it look tatty. Use a face mask as ivy is often full of dust. Forsythia has been beautiful this year. To keep a natural shape cut back a few older stems to the base each year. As it flowers on older wood an overall “blob” trim may result in less flowers next year as it will produce so much new vegetative growth especially if pruning is delayed.

Often people will ask about not having any berries on their holly. Holly trees are either male or female. It is important that you have a female in your garden – so buy a new one, selecting a named variety for which the sex is known. A good female fruiting variety is *Ilex aquifolium* ‘J.C.van Tol’ or variegated, plant Golden King. You don't need a male unless your garden is very isolated. There are plenty of others in gardens and hedgerows to provide pollen.

Good gardening In May.

VILLAGE NEWS

Bus Services

Please accept my apologies for the incorrect information in the April Cornerstone. I stated that the bus service between Newcastle and Ponteland was being reduced to an hourly service. Many thanks to Colin who corrected this in the Church notices on 10th April. The timetable during the day remains a half-hourly service. I have not yet obtained a new timetable.

Oversubscribed GP Practices

Figures have been released showing practices that have the most and least patients per doctor. The White Medical Group has the second worst ratio in Northumberland with 2,069 patients per full-time GP. Other issues are important as some practices employ nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, pharmacists and mental health practitioners.

The Blackbird Pub

The Blackbird has recently been named “Pub of the year 2022” at the North East England Tourism Awards.

Former Police Station – Bell Villas

A planning application was made last November to change this building into a restaurant. A decision has not yet been made. A licence application has now been made, requesting the sale of alcohol from 10am till midnight. Ponteland Town Council has objected having concern over noise and odours. The Environment Agency has objected saying that the submitted flood risk assessment is not adequate. NCC Environment Protection Team has objected due to the noise impact on nearby residential premises.

Rialtos Restaurant

In January Rialtos submitted plans for the Orchard, a large outdoor expansion for the restaurant. So far 113 objections have been made to Northumberland CC. No date has been set for the application to be considered by the Council.

Jennifer Hardy

**Preachers
May**

1st 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Forrester
8th 10.00am Gray
6.30pm Lindridge
15th 10.00am Sewell
6.30pm Woolley
22nd 10.00am LA
6.30pm Sewell (S)
29th 10.00am R Brooks (S)
6.30pm Wood

(LA is Local Arrangement)

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**



Plant Sale
7th May 10.00am

Try and pot up a few perennials for the Sale then come and buy something that you haven't got!!

From The Editors

*Don't forget that copy for the June edition of Cornerstone should be with the editor by **Friday 27th May 2022**. The editor's email address is andrew73anderson@gmail.com. The editorial committee is Andy Anderson, Jennifer Hardy, Jona Sewell and Viv Whyte.*