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Issue 102
March/April 2026

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- The Silent Struggle**
- Exercise Your Mind**
- Marvels of Meditation**
- Tyne Valley Expressions**
- Easter Sunday Puzzle Page**
- New Writer Theresa Finnigan**
- WIN - Easter Hamper**
- WIN - M&S Vouchers**
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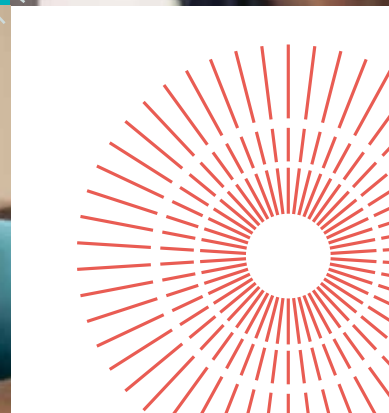
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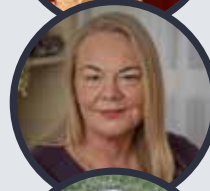
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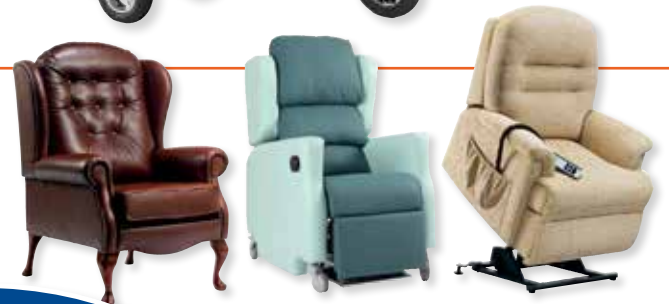
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Hi readers, welcome to Issue 102.

There's something uplifting about this time of year; The days growing longer, the return of colour to our landscapes, and that renewed sense of energy that comes with a fresh season. Whether it's getting back outdoors, starting new projects, or simply enjoying brighter mornings - spring offers a gentle reminder that change can be both positive and full of possibility.

We've got some fantastic new articles this issue including a wonderfully moving piece by Ann Cooper (p20). There's a debut article on how to deal with anxiety and depression from new writer Theresa Finnigan (p28) and Jenni Meikle of Visit Northumberland invites you to vote for Dan Monk in the upcoming Tourism Superstar awards (p60).

In the community we have over 100 local What's On listings, plus adverts for the Crawcrook Easter Scavenger Hunt (p17), Wylam Craft Fayre (p25) and the Alpine Plant Show (p45).

We're always looking to improve our magazine and welcome you to submit your feedback on (p7) opposite.

There are 4 x £25 M&S vouchers up for grabs, so it's worth a few minutes of your time. We've also got a lovely Easter Hamper lucky draw below, and our Easter Sunday themed Coffee Break Puzzle page (p56), giving you another chance to bag yourself a £10 Costa voucher. Answers to last issue's puzzle are now online at www.tynevalleyexpress.co.uk/puzzles

As we step further into spring, we hope this issue brings a little inspiration, a few moments of enjoyment, and perhaps even a reason to try something new. Thank you, as always, for supporting your local businesses and being part of the Tyne Valley Express community. Here's to lighter evenings, fresh beginnings, and making the most of the season ahead.

Stephen and the TVE Team.

Stephen McHugh

Tel: 07884 340 451

Email: info@tynevalleyexpress.co.uk

A-One Business Centre, Summerhill, Blaydon-on-Tyne, NE21 4JR

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When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.



WIN

AN EASTER HAMPER

Containing a large selection of popular treats, this hamper makes the ideal gift for kids and grown-ups alike!

Competition runs throughout March and this wonderful collection will be delivered in time for Easter.

Head over to:
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or scan the QR code for details.
Competition runs throughout May,
Good Luck Everyone!



SCAN ME

Image is for illustrative purposes only and contents may vary.

Tyne Valley Express is always looking to improve and your feedback is important to help shape future magazines.

As a thank you for your valuable input, we've got;

£25 M&S vouchers to give away to four lucky winners.



What is your age group?

- 18-30 31 – 50 51 – 65 65+

How often do you typically read Tyne Valley Express magazine?

- Never Occasionally Most issues Every issue

How many people usually read or look through your copy of this publication?

- One (self only) Two Three Four or more

On average, how much total time do you spend with an issue of the magazine?

- Do not read it 1 to 30 minutes 31 to 60 minutes Over an hour

How long do you typically keep an issue of the magazine?

- Bin immediately Up to one week Up to one month Till next issue

Which sections of the magazine interest you most?

- Adverts Articles Competitions Puzzles What's On

Overall, how much do you enjoy reading the magazine?

- Hate it Not fussed Passes the time Good Love it

Have you ever visited / purchased from a company advertising in this publication?

- Yes No Don't recall

Please rate the quality of the current magazine on the following:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Content					
Cover					
Ease of reading					
Layout and design					
Writing					

What do you like most about the magazine?

What do you like least about the magazine?

How can we improve the magazine?

Please feel free to add more ideas overleaf

Name: _____ Gender: _____

Email Address: (For vouchers) _____

Thank you for completing the questionnaire and helping to improve future magazines.

Please scan the page to feedback@tynevalleyexpress.co.uk or post your entry to:

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What's On **BLAYDON, WINLATON & WINLATON MILL**

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WINLATON MILL HALL

Monday: Pilates 10-11, Low impact movement 12-12.45, Yoga 6-7. Tuesday: Karate 5.30-7.30. Wednesday: Bootcamp 6-8. Thursday: Playgroup 10-11.30, Singing 7.30-10. Friday: Photography 1-3, Bootcamp 6-7, Folk 7.30-10. Saturday: Coffee morning 10.30-11.30.

Winlaton Mill Village Hall dawn.bradley@live.com

FLOWER CLUB

Flower arranging demonstrations, practical workshops, talks take place first Tuesday of each month except August at 7.00pm in Winlaton Community Centre. Visitors welcome £6 including refreshments.

Winlaton Community Centre 01914132366

WOMEN'S WALKING FOOTBALL

Come and join us for a free, and friendly game of Women's Walking Football with Ben Clark. Takes place every Friday from 2-3pm at Winlaton Centre, North Street, Winlaton NE21 6BY.

The Winlaton Centre 07949265987

BLAYDON CARPET BOWLS

Come and join a friendly game of carpet bowls in St Cuthbert's Community Hall. Every Wednesday from 1-3 o'clock. No experience needed. A free cup of tea or coffee plus a biscuit is included in the price of £2.

St Cuthbert's Community Hall 07949265987

THE BLAYDON SHED

A relaxed friendly drop-in for all men 18+, chat or pursue hobbies. We are currently at Clasper House (Next to Skiff) on a Tuesday 11-2.30pm, and Blaydon Library every Thursday between 11-2.30pm. £1 a session, hot drinks and snacks free. As above infoblaydonshed@gmail.com

WINLATON EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Sunday Worship Service: 10:30am. Bible Study & Prayer Meeting: Tuesday 1.00pm. All warmly welcome. Please visit our website at www.winlatonevangelicalchurch.co.uk Next to Public Library NE21 6AS winlatonevangelical@gmail.com

ST CUTHBERT'S COMMUNITY HALL

Large hall in the centre of Blaydon now taking bookings for regular or one-off events. Contact Steve on 07966 496971 or by email.

St Cuthbert's blaydonstcuthbert@gmail.com

ST ANNE'S RC CHURCH

St. Anne's Sunday Mass 9.00am. For enquiries please email or contact 0191 4142654 St Anne's RC Church st.annewinlatonrc@gmail.com

ST PAUL'S CHURCH

Sung Eucharist every Sunday 9am. All-age family service on first Sunday of the month at 9am. Holy Communion Wednesday 10am St Paul's Church, Winlaton 01914529381

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ST JOSEPH'S RC CHURCH

St. Joseph's Sunday Mass at 11.00am. For enquiries please email or contact 0191 4142654 St Joseph's RC Church st.annewinlatonrc@gmail.com

WINLATON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

No monthly meetings just at the moment but please follow us on our website and facebook pages. <http://www.winlatonlocalhistorysociety.org.uk>. Facebook - Winlaton Local History Society. Email: winlatonlocalhistorysociety@yahoo.com West End Club winlatonhistorysociety@yahoo.com

GATESHEAD LIBRARIES, ARTS & HERITAGE

Gateshead Arts Team delivers a wide range of friendly, creative workshops for all ages through

our Gateshead Live programme and projects like Gateshead Art Diamonds, which is for people of retirement age. For more details, please email ColleenDewing@gateshead.gov.uk. Gateshead Libraries

TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH

Worship every Sunday 10.45am everyone welcome. Monday needle craft 12.45-2.45pm. Tuesday 7.30pm Irish set dancing. Wednesday craft club 10-12/1-3pm. Cafe church 3rd Sunday month. Coffee morning 1st Saturday month. Lucy Street, Blaydon 0191 460 6411

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Trinity Church Blaydon www.kalmalifeuk.co.uk/ gatesheadwest

WINLATON CAMERA CLUB

During summer months we meet each Tuesday 7pm and set off for local photo shoots around the North East. If you would like to come along either meet us in the car park or drop us an email at graemesnowball73@gmail.com

Winlaton New West End Club 07552 616909

BLAYDON CHAIR BASED YOGA

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Come and have a go at Rowing on the Tyne in one of St. Ayles Skiffs or join our club and learn to row one of our sculling boats. Gateshead Community Rowing Club, Derwenthaugh Rd, Swalwell, Blaydon-on-Tyne, NE21 5LL. 07711798297

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Our volunteer team meets several times a week at Rainton Meadows to help protect local nature reserves. (Shibdon Pond, Milkwelbern Wood, Crosslane Meadows). Task include installing fencing, clearing footpaths, invasive species control and scrub clearance. Register at durhamwt.com/volunteer Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve volunteer@durhamwt.co.uk.

If you run a local charity, group or a non-profit organisation, you can list it in our What's On diary completely free at: www.tynevalleyexpress.co.uk/whats-on/



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Sound Baths will have you floating through life



Snagging the last ticket for Serenity Waves' February sound bath event in Prudhoe was like fate – a much-needed escape after a stressful work week.

When I mentioned I was going, most people were baffled, but it's simply lying back, closing your eyes and letting waves of sound wash over you. Serenity Waves adds a unique twist to it: floatation.

Returning to Prudhoe Waterworld was nostalgic – my grandparents would take my siblings and me nearly every weekend to use their wave machine. So, coming to Waterworld for this sound bath felt a bit like coming home even before we got started.

Dressed in comfy clothes, it was quick work to put my bag in a locker, remove my socks and shoes, and make my way to the poolside. After being kindly greeted by staff, getting on the floating airbeds was next. Everyone was a bit nervous about being the person to fall off the airbed and into the water, but you'd need serious work to do that. The air beds were surprisingly sturdy, pushed up against the pool steps on one side and held by a team member on the other. It barely even wobbled when I got on it. After getting on the airbed, I was handed a towel to use for neck support, a blanket to cosy up with and an eye mask. With a gentle push, I floated across the pool, nerves melting away.

It took about 15 minutes to get everyone in the group situated in the pool, and it was time to get comfortable.

As I said, those airbeds are surprisingly sturdy. I thought I'd have to remain in one position on my back for the whole time, frightened to move. I can't sleep on my back, and I was worried about feeling a bit suffocated. But as long as you don't careen yourself into another position, you really won't fall into the water. On my side with the blanket tucked under my feet, I was set.

Then the music began: low melodic hums from the singing bowls, occasional gong reverberations, chimes and the gentle lap of water.

And here's the thing: you don't have to 'do' anything during a sound bath. You don't have to count your breathing, recite mantras, fight internal battles about that day's to-do list, all whilst reminding yourself that you should be relaxing right now.

There's just you, floating on an airbed, listening. And you're not alone.

There's a collective hush with everyone lying down around you, floating in their own little worlds. Just being present together.

The gentle sounds guide your brain into a meditative state on their own, allowing you to unclench your jaw, rest your shoulders and just be. As that happens, your parasympathetic nervous system kicks in – that's the rest and digest mode of your body that slows your heart rate and lowers cortisol (the stress hormone). Think of it as hitting the 'restart button'.

I didn't fall asleep during that relaxing hour, but it was a close thing. Even opening my eyes to watch the team play the mesmerising instruments was relaxing in its own way.

Was I totally relaxed? I admit, no, there was always a part of me conscious that I was floating on top of a pool, and with my phone in my pocket, there's always danger there. But now that I've experienced it once and that anxiety of falling in has been taken away, next time this worry will be less on my mind.

And when the hour was up, it didn't even feel like it. I was gently floated back to the pool steps and helped out. I felt lighter – reset, restored and ready to slowly go back out into the world.

So, would I do it again? Definitely.

Don't get me wrong, it won't be for everyone. Not everyone will feel comfortable with the water element, and you can look for sound baths without this element if you still want to try them. And not everyone will like the music or find it a good way to switch the brain off for a little while.

But for me, it did the trick. In a world where we're tired and often overstimulated, sound baths can help take some of the stress off our shoulders.

Serenity Waves has a variety of sound bath events not only across the Tyne Valley area but across the country. Check out their website for more information.

Do you know of any hidden gems or experiences that I just have to try? Let me know!



Katie Pharoah

Katie Pharoah
Writer for Tyne Valley Express
katie@tynevalleyexpress.co.uk



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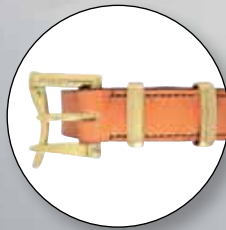


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- ☆ Ironing services
- ☆ Holiday home change overs
- ☆ Biohazard specialist cleaning



What's On RYTON, CRAWCROOK & GREENSIDE

RYTON MEN'S SHED

Ryton Men's Shed meet Tuesdays and Thursdays to converse and create through woodworking projects. It provides an opportunity to forge new friendships, build confidence and gives the men a sense of purpose. The men can also fix and restore items. Ryton Methodist Church mensshedryton@gmail.com

OPEN GARDENS

Sunday 3rd May 2026 12-5pm. Visit a selection of open gardens around Clara Vale village. Delicious home-baked refreshments at the Village Hall. Entry and maps at Clara Vale Village Hall. Plant Sales. £5 per adult (children free). Clara Vale. bookings@claravale.org.uk

PLAYGROUP

Fridays 9:30-11am - £2 per family. Emma Hall, Crawcrook Helen 01914136061

RYTON & DISTRICT CAMERA CLUB

Ryton & District Camera Club meets every Tuesday at 7.30pm in the Ryton Community Centre, Cross House, Ryton, NE40 3QP. Anyone interested in photography will be made very welcome whether an expert of beginner. Ryton Community Centre www.rytoncc.weebly.com

CRAWCROOK SLIMMING WORLD

Come and join us in Emmaville Hall on Wednesday's at 9:00am, 10:30am, 5:00pm & 6:30pm. Emmaville Hall. 07894 284343

RYTON METHODIST CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING 10am. Contemporary service with children's group followed by Coffee. MONDAY EVENING Girl's Brigade. WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON Ladies Fellowship meeting with guest speakers. SATURDAY MORNING 10am - 12pm. 2nd Saturday of the month only. Coffee and cake, raising funds. Ryton Methodist Church 0191 4606411

BARMOOR HUB HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP

A friendly group with an enthusiastic interest in history, we research and share our findings on a topic chosen each month by a group member. 4th Tuesday

of each month at 2.00pm £3 per session. Newcomers welcome Barmoor Hub candpmaxwell@gmail.com

YOGA FOR ALL

MONDAY 11am until 12pm. A gentler yoga class sometimes using chairs to suit all ages and ability. WEDNESDAY 6.30pm until 7.30pm Hatha Yoga to suit all. Friendly and welcoming. Contact Linda or just come along. Holy Cross Church Hall 07779337708

OUR VILLAGES

Join us at: Park Pavilion Café: Wednesday/Thursday/Friday 2.30pm-4.30pm. Crafter's Get Together: Mondays 11am-1pm. Book Club: 2nd Wednesday of each month 7pm. Upcoming events are on our notice boards. Book the Pavilion/Bowling Green for a private event. Find out more: www.ourvillages.org.uk Crawcrook Park Pavilion ourvillagescag@gmail.com

CLARA VALE VILLAGE HALL

A warm and friendly village hall which offers many activities, groups, health and fitness classes. Hire the hall for parties and weddings. Hall hire from £11 per room per hour. For more information contact Joan at booking@claravale.org.uk / 07543281301 Clara Vale Village Hall. booking@claravale.org.uk

BRIGHTEN RYTON

Community group to support and preserve the work of individuals and groups of volunteers working in the Ryton and Stella ward to restore and maintain the environment including: litter-picking, flower-beds, cemetery, memorial gardens, and heritage sites. Facebook page - www.facebook.com/RytonCommunity. Ryton and Stella ward brighthenryton@gmail.com

YOGA CLASSES

Held at Stargate Community Centre every Thurs at 2pm until 3pm. A variety of Yoga including sound bath. Suiting all abilities seeking a more positive, happy, relaxed & confident part to your life. Give Carol a call for more information. Stargate Community Centre 07895417870

SOUND REVOLUTION

Breathwork and sound healing. Spiritual event for wellbeing. Highly recommended! Ryton Community Centre 07543268926

TYNE PHYSIO PILATES

Mat-work Pilates classes and 1:1 Pilates sessions led by chartered physiotherapist. Classes suitable for all levels and abilities. Mondays 9.30am & 10.20am. Wednesdays 6.15pm & 7.15pm. Saturdays 8.00am. 1:1 sessions are available on request. Ryton Community Centre Tyne-physiopilates@outlook.com

RYTON SINGERS

Ladies choir, Pop, rock, gospel, musicals. Regular performances in the community. Lots of socialising and events too!. Stargate Hall facebook.com/rytonsingers

RYTON YOUTH SINGERS

Youth choir for young people ages 11-16. Regular performances in the community. Rehearsals run every Sunday 12-1pm Stargate Hall Ryton facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551260005195

HOLY CROSS CHURCH

SUNDAY 10.30 am Holy Communion, SUNDAY 10.30 am Young Church held in Church Hall, Ryton Village, THURSDAY 10.00 am Holy Communion. Please check Holy Cross Website for further information. Holy Cross Church 01914529381

HOLY CROSS CHURCH HALL

Thinking of holding party or celebration, this may be the perfect venue for you. Church Hall has COVID-19 measures in place. For further details please telephone us using the details provided.

Holy Cross Church 01914135233

RYTON OUTDOOR BOWLING

Home to the Towers, Vets and Women's Clubs. Based in Ferndene Park, Ryton. Come and join us either for pleasure on

most afternoons or Sunday (am) or in Competitions throughout the Summer. Ferndene Park 01914133872

GARDEN, GATHER & NATTER

We welcome people of all ages and abilities to come and get involved in this wonderful green space. Wednesday mornings from 9:30 (weather permitting!). For more immediate information on events, you can find us at facebook.com/ferndeneparkryton Ferndene Park, Ryton. friendsofferndene@outlook.com

STARGATE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Wednesday stargazers baby and toddler group 9.30am to 11.00. Thursday 2.00 to 3.00 Yoga. Thursday 6.00 to 7.00 ryton singers. Sunday 11.00 ryton mini singers. Stargate community centre fiona.todd33@gmail.com

BABY AND TODDLER GROUP

Baby and toddler group Wednesday morning 9.30 to 11.00 term time only. Stargate and Crookhill community centre fiona.todd33@gmail.com

SOUND RELAXATION (SOUND BATH)

Deep relaxation and restoration with soothing sounds of relaxing instruments that transport you to healing state of mind. This holistic wellbeing experience is for mind, body, and soul. Fourth Saturday of the month from 7 pm to 8:30 pm £25. Greenside Community Centre. 07543268926

LUNCHTIME RELAXATION

Relaxation and meditation session with soothing sounds of relaxing instruments that transport you to healing state of mind. This holistic wellbeing experience is for mind, body, and soul. Every Friday from 12.30 to 1.30pm - £12. Greenside Community Centre 07543268926

If you run a local charity, group or a non-profit organisation, you can list it in our What's On diary completely free at: www.tynevalleyexpress.co.uk/whats-on/



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Picture Hunt for under 5s Word Hunt for over 5s

Saturday 4 April
10am – 12pm
Crawcrook Park

£1.50 per child all proceeds raised will fund future events Refreshments Available

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Tyne Valley Expressions

Ann was a biology teacher for many years, and then moved into computer training - she became managing director of a company with 40 training centres throughout the UK. In retirement she has taken up creative writing and is a Methodist Local Preacher. She loves living in Northumberland.

In this moving piece of memoir, Ann writes about coping with tragedy and bereavement, set against the beauty of the Tyne Valley.

And all the time the corn was ripening

Drive half a mile south to the top of the fell and over the brow. I guarantee you will whisper 'Wow'. You are looking down on a deep valley, stretching east towards the North Sea and west towards the Solway Firth - England is at its narrowest here and you are on top of the world. Hills rise up beyond the valley disappearing in a far-off horizon. Early on a spring morning, pale blue sky is shot with pink and gold, everything shines and white candy floss covers the valley floor and the river, filling the scene with magic and mystery.

Turn right on the A69 towards Hexham and I guarantee you will say 'Wow' out loud. Bowl along, lifted by beauty as far as your eye can see. Huge fields and undulating pastures proudly proclaim their timelessness. Travel in May, and on verges and banks you will see a million golden dandelions full open in the sun, hedges turning white with flower. Later that month the dandelions disappear to seed but white ox-eye daisies adorn the lush green grass, and trees come into full leaf. Look carefully and you will find a few giant horse chestnut trees in glorious bloom shielding old stone dwellings and vulnerable cherry trees.

We saw all this that awful year. And more. At first the acid yellow of oil-seed rape hurt our eyes. But day by day the rape faded and we were wonderfully soothed by fields of flax in balming blue and prancing poppies in reliable red. And all the time the corn was ripening and the lambs were fattening.

You can drive along the valley for good reasons like shopping in Hexham and coffee at the abbey. Or push on to the unsurpassed Lake District. Turn up to the right for a day on the Roman Wall where the landscape is stunningly stark, bravely bleak. Or take a left to the busy bridge going south and have a fun family day at Beamish outdoor museum, visit friends at Consett, or eat a romantic meal at Blanchland.

But that year I was taking my friend along the valley to visit her dying husband. Four months before, we had taken them on a little holiday; then Pete had deteriorated quickly. He said to me, 'I really don't want to go into the hospice, but Sal wants me to. I want to stay at home but she wants me out of it.' Sal said to me, 'I dread being home on my own with Pete now. We have nothing to say to one another. I'm terrified of him dying a sudden messy death. That's why I keep going out and leaving him on his own. I've asked the GP if Pete can go away to die.'

Northumbrian Writers Group...

Comprises six sub-groups meeting weekly (term-time) in Hexham, Ponteland, Morpeth and on Zoom.

If you would like to find out more about these friendly classes, please email Claire on: claire.judith.lynn@gmail.com

To be continued...



I was bewildered by Sal's apparent cruelty, but I appreciated her honesty. I acknowledged her fear and her strange way of coping, and gladly kept Pete company while she went out. Eventually Pete took a turn for the worse and agreed to take a vacant bed in the hospice. On that day in early May, Sal and I began our daily pilgrimage. Sadness silenced us as we drove the 20 miles west along the A69, wondering what we would find on arrival, acutely aware that Pete would never again see these heavenly views. Generally, Sal found visiting Pete bearable: kind nurses and well-tended gardens helped. I could never tell if Pete would still have preferred to be at home but I was grateful that he was not alone.

I always drove Sal back the slow route - along the old road, low down by the river, meandering through quiet villages covered in hanging laburnum, lilac and lobelia. We stopped for tea or just to talk on a riverside bench. The mighty river was calming, speaking of eternity. We looked up to the hills and prayed.

It was five in the morning when she rang me: 'Pete's just gone. Will you take me?' Such a beautiful morning. Such a beautiful valley. But we couldn't take it in just then.

Years later, another phone call - from Sal's cleaner. 'I've found her dead in bed. D'you want to come to organise things?'

Such a shock - I'd had coffee with her the day before and taken her a planter for her front door - overflowing with blue and white pansies. But such a lovely way to die. At home. And in May - when corn was ripening along the valley.



Ann Cooper

Ann Cooper
Author
Northumbrian Writers Group

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What's On

HEDDON, HORSLEY & WYLAM

WILDLIFE GROUP TALKS

All welcome £3 includes refreshments. Tuesday March 3rd "Dragonflies" Michael Coates, County Recorder. Tuesday April 7th "Ratty Restored" Mel Rockett, WLT volunteer. Last talk this season, talks restart in September St Mary's, Ponteland pontelandwildlife/talks

NOTJUSTPLUMJAM!

We are holding a craft fayre like no other to celebrate Wylam Institute 130years anniversary 8th March 2026 11.00am-4.00pm. Raising funds for St Oswald's Hospice. Raffle/Teas and Coffee/Music/craft corner. Wylam Institute Susanmarley911@gmail.com

HADRIAN QUILT GROUP

A patchwork and quilting group meets alternate Wednesdays 1000 until 1300 in the Womens Institute Hall at Heddon on the Wall. Next session 21 Jan 2026. Knowledge of patchwork and quilting is not essential, but basic sewing skills required. Womens' Institute Hall mcstocksfild@gmail.com

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

Everyone is welcome at our Sunday services at 10.30am. Many different things happen as part of the life of our church. To receive weekly email or to book baptism or weddings please contact hmrshurches@gmail.com St. Andrew's Church, Heddon hmrshurches@gmail.com

THE HEARTH CENTRE

We've got lots going on this Spring incl. art classes; live music; drama; well-being & a delicious cafe! See you soon. The Hearth Art Centre www.thehearth.co.uk/whatson

VILLAGE HALL

Horsley Village Hall is available to rent for classes events and private functions. Recently refurbished. Fully fitted equipped kitchen. Accessible access. Lower and upper hall available. Conveniently located just off A69. To book. Go to www.horsleyvhall.org Horsley Village. 07715054860

DRU YOGA CLASSES

Joyful, energising yoga classes for everybody, to increase tone muscle strength, postural alignment and balance for body and mind. Tuesdays 9:30-10:45.

Wednesday 18:15 - 19:30. www.akashayogaandtherapy.com The Hearth. 07545865009

HORSLEY BOOK CLUB

Horsley Book Club meets every first Friday of the month in The Hearth cafe from 3 pm. We read a variety of books and sometimes have play readings for fun. The Hearth cafe. 07453358745

KEEPING FIT AND FLEXIBLE

This is a dance based fitness class aimed at the over 50's. If you enjoy moving to music come and give us a try. 10.00-11.00am on Wednesdays. James Knott Memorial Hall. 01661 853365

HEDDON BALLROOM DANCING CLASSES

We welcome beginners and those with experience. Classes take place every Tuesday during term time in the Knott Memorial Hall from 8 - 10pm. Teachers have endless patience and everyone has great fun. Find a partner and give it a try. Knott Memorial Hall. 07936 542226

HEDDON METHODIST CHURCH

Everyone is welcome to our Sunday services which take place every week at 10.30am, as well as the Coffee Morning we host every Thursday 10am - 12 noon. For baptisms, wedding and funerals please contact us. Heddon Methodist Church lynda.coulthard@methodist.org.uk

SINGERS
Ad Murum Singers are a community choir. We enjoy a wide range of music, and constantly explore new ways to make singing fresh, fulfilling and fun. Always keen to welcome new members of all ages and abilities - No auditions! Heddon Methodist Church. 01912740217

THE HEDDON PATCHERS
A quilting and patchwork group who meet every other Wednesday in the Women's Institute at Heddon on the Wall at 10.30am. We have an excellent tutor and welcome new members. Women's Institute 01661820568

HEDDON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

We host a series of monthly talks (usually on the second

Monday in the month) by different speakers on a wide variety of subjects of local interest to which all are welcome. Meetings start at 7:30pm, details at www.heddonhistory.weebly.com Heddon Methodist Church on Towne Gate. 01661853095

HEDDON ART GROUP

We meet fortnightly on alternate Tuesday afternoons from 1:30 to 3:30 and Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 9:00. New members and interested visitors are always welcome to share their interest in art, whether painting, drawing or other media. Heddon W.I. Hall chambers497@btinternet.com

FITNESS CLASSES WITH SCOTT

Two new fitness classes at Knott Memorial Hall in Heddon on the Wall on Tuesday Mornings: 9:30 am LBT-Legs Bums and Tums, 10:30 am Stretch. £5 per class or 2 for £8. To book go to: Bookwhen.com/scottmiller. Walk ins welcome. Knott Memorial hall sjmm2412@aol.com

HORSLEY VILLAGE CHURCH

Services each Sunday at 11am. Please visit our website at horsleyvillagechurch.chessck.co.uk for more information Horsley Village Church horsleyvillagechurch@gmail.com

WYLAM INSTITUTE

This grand Victorian building has two main halls and various other smaller rooms for hire. With competitive hire charges, why not consider using the Institute for your next birthday party, family gathering or fundraising event. Wylam Institute. 01661852498

WYLAM METHODIST CHURCH

A warm welcome awaits you. Regular services and activities throughout the week, please get in touch for details. Rooms are also available for hire for meetings / parties etc Chapel Lane, Wylam 01661832717

ST OSWIN'S

Church Services are at 9.30am* Thursday and 8.00am & 10.00am* Sunday (*are currently live streamed). All, including children, are welcome. Church Hall also available to hire. See <https://stoswinschurchwylam.chessck.co.uk/> Church Road, Wylam wylamst.oswin@hotmail.co.uk

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WYLAM WOMENS INSTITUTE

Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month in Wylam Institute at 2 p.m. All Visitors very welcome. For further details, please contact us using the details provided. Wylam Institute. 01661 853713

PHYSIO-LED PILATES

Physio-led Pilates - small and friendly classes. Tuesday mornings: 9-10am - Level 2, 10.10-11.10am Level 1 (suitable for clients with low bone density). 11.20-12.20 Level 1. Please get in touch if you have any queries or would like to join! Wylam Institute pilatesphysio4you@gmail.com

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The Hearth Arts Centre,
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What's on: www.thehearth.co.uk

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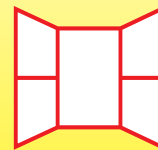
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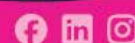
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Anxiety & Depression: The Silent Struggle So Many of Us Share



On the outside, everything may look fine. The school run is done. Work emails are answered. Dinner is made. Social media shows smiling faces and filtered sunsets.

But inside? A racing heart. A constant knot in the stomach. Exhaustion that sleep does not fix. A heaviness that makes even simple tasks feel overwhelming.

Anxiety and depression are two of the most common mental health difficulties in the UK, and yet so many people still suffer silently.

Anxiety is not just worrying too much. It can feel like a mind that will not switch off. Overthinking conversations long after they have ended. Imagining worst-case scenarios. It can also present as physical symptoms such as nausea, headaches, tight chest, jaw tension or insomnia. Or a constant sense that something bad is about to happen.

Sometimes anxiety is loud and obvious. Other times, it hides behind being busy, productive, or high-functioning. You might be the person everyone relies on, and yet inside, you feel permanently on edge.

Depression is not always tears and staying in bed. It can be feeling numb rather than sad. A loss of interest in things you once enjoyed. You may be irritable, snapping at loved ones. Experience exhaustion that does not lift. Or a feeling like you're failing at life with a heavy sense of hopelessness. Many people describe it as moving through fog. You are functioning, but it takes enormous effort.

Anxiety and depression can coexist, showing up together as racing thoughts paired with deep exhaustion. Constant worry mixed with a loss of motivation. It is confusing and lonely. Especially when you feel that you should be coping.

One of the most painful parts of anxiety and depression is self-judgement.

"I should be stronger."

"Other people have it worse."

"I've got nothing to be depressed about."

Mental health does not work like that. It is not a competition. Anxiety and depression can be linked to stress, trauma, loss, relationship difficulties, hormonal changes, burnout, long-term pressure, or sometimes they build gradually with no clear starting point. They are not personal weaknesses; they are signals. Often, they are signs that your nervous system has been under strain for a long time.

In local communities, we are brilliant at getting things done. We support others. We keep going. But asking for help? That can feel uncomfortable as there is still stigma associated with anxiety and depression. You may fear being seen as not coping, or still hold the belief that you should just push through. Yet the truth is this: struggling in silence tends to make things heavier.

Counselling offers something many people do not have in their everyday lives, a confidential, non-judgemental space that is



entirely yours. It is not about being told what to do. It is not about being fixed, but more about gaining an understanding of what is really happening beneath the anxiety or low mood. Learning how your nervous system responds to stress and identifying patterns in thoughts and behaviours. Processing experiences that may still be impacting you and building coping tools that actually fit your life.

When anxiety takes over, counselling helps you steady yourself and regain a sense of control. When depression weighs you down, it supports you to reconnect with purpose, energy, and self-compassion. Counselling is more than talking; it is a space to be heard, understood, and supported. Most importantly, it reminds you that you do not have to carry this alone.

If you're reading this and recognising yourself, please know: You are not weak. You are not broken. And you are certainly not the only one.

Anxiety and depression are common, but suffering in silence does not have to be. Reaching out for support can feel daunting, yet it can also be the first step towards feeling lighter, clearer, and more like yourself again. Anxiety and depression often create a sense of isolation, but you do not have to face them alone.

With the right support, things can feel different.



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What's On PRUDHOE & MICKLEY

PRUDHOE YOUTH PROJECT TRUSTEES

Prudhoe Youth Project are currently looking for trustees aged 18+. You would be required to attend 6 meetings per year and its a great opportunity to help shape the futures of young people. Additional duties are available upon request. Prudhoe gemma@prudhoeyouthproject.org

BORDER RIVER ARCHERS

Based at Ovingham Middle School sports field, shooting on Sundays from 10am -1.00pm. Why not drop in for a chat and watch the action. See borderriverarchers.co.uk for details of our Taster sessions, Beginner's Course and Gift Vouchers.

Ovingham Middle School borderriverarchers@yahoo.com

BAIRNS & BREWS

Toddler Group Thursdays 10-11.30am term-time. Playtime for the Bairns and chill time for you. Babies to pre-school. All welcome. Donations please (minimum £2). Info on Facebook Prudhoe Methodist Church Friends Prudhoe Methodist Church Hall peter@thischurch.com

GLEEMEN MALE VOICE CHOIR

Male Voice Choir. Gentlemen, welcome to Prudhoe Methodist Church any Monday evening at 7pm. Enjoy singing with new friends. Ability to read music is not essential. Give it a try, there's no fee or commitment.

Prudhoe Methodist Church (opp Dr Syntax PH) gleemen@uwclub.net

PRUDHOE & DISTRICT U3A

We are a friendly organisation offering daytime meetings for talks, coffee mornings, and a wide variety of interest groups from Art Appreciation to Walking. Our principle is enjoying shared learning with everyone contributing. Various meeting places. prudhoe.u3asite.uk

PRUDHOE PARISH CHURCH

Services: Sun 10am with singing, prayer, children's groups (term time), Bible talk; Thurs 10am a simple, traditional communion service. We also have fellowship groups, bible study, prayer meetings, enquirers courses, outdoor services and much more!

St Mary Magdalene Info@prudhoechurch.org.uk

CREATIVE WRITING

These friendly classes will inspire and encourage you to write fiction, poetry and memoir, and offer supportive feedback to help you develop your work. New members welcome - try a free taster session. Online claire.judith.lynn@gmail.com

PRUDHOE COMMUNITY ALLOTMENT

Meets every Tuesday and Friday morning for friendly supported gardening. Join our group to grow fresh vegetables and flowers, sharing and learning gardening skills and helping to maintain our Community Allotment. Look out for events on our Facebook page. PCA Redwell Court pcalsinc@yahoo.com

LIVE & BREATHE YOGA

Tuesday Evenings 6-7.15pm £10. Friday Mornings 11.15-12.30pm £10. Monthly prepayment savers available. Join Pam, qualified BWY yoga teacher & reset body & mind. Booking essential! St. Matthew's Wellness Centre 07794459268

EDGEWELL CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Join us at our Sunday praise service where a friendly welcome awaits you at coffee time, 10.50am prior to our service at 11.15am. edgewellchristiancentre.org Edgewell Christian Church edgewellcc@gmail.com

PRUDHOE LIBRARY

Library is open from 9am weekdays and 9.30am on Saturdays. The library closes at 5pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 6pm on Thursday and 1pm on Saturday. website - www.mylibrary.co.uk email - prudhoe.library@northumberland.gov.uk prudhoe.library@northumberland.gov.uk

SPACE FOR NATURE

Based at Prudhoe Wildlife Garden, just behind West Wylam Inn, a group of volunteers who create and manage various sites around Prudhoe to increase bio-diversity and wildlife. Contact Jane on 07870 407 168 or email prudhoespace4nature@gmail.com

Prudhoe and Mickley jorgardener@gmail.com

THE GATE CHURCH

There's a warm welcome for you and your family at The Gate Church every Sunday at 10.30am. You'll find that we believe the Bible and love to sing out our praise - there's plenty of faith and fun for everyone! The Gate Church thegatechurch.org.uk

RENEW WELL-BEING OASIS

You'll find a warm and welcoming space at Renew Wellbeing Oasis every Tuesday from 1.00pm - 3.30pm. Lovely refreshments and it's FREE! Meet new people, share hobbies and activities or just sit quietly - it's OK not to be OK! Prudhoe Parish Hall. 07985473484

PHYSIO-LED PILATES

Tuesday 7.30pm Pilates for Riders. Wednesday 5.50pm level 1 / 7pm level 2. Thursday 9am Men's mixed ability / 10.10am level 2 / 11.20am level 1 (osteoporosis safe). Pilates improves core strength, balance and movement. Booking essential. St Matthew's Wellness Centre. 07787158957

PRUDHOE GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

To find out about renting a Prudhoe Town allotment contact us by email or through our community Hut behind the West West Wylam Inn in Prudhoe (Saturdays 10am to 12 noon only), by Facebook (groups/prudhoegardenersassociation) or by email at prudhoegardenersassociation@hotmail.com

PRUDHOE COMMUNITY BAND

Prudhoe Community Band rehearse on Saturday mornings during school term times. Always happy to welcome new musicians. No auditions necessary. Come along and say hello. Website prudhoecommunityband.co.uk for details. Prudhoe Social Club prudhoecommunityband@gmail.com

SPETCHELLS CONSERVATION INTEREST GROUP

Please join our group and help protect the Spetchells, our beautiful unique chalk grassland which provides an important habitat for rare species of butterfly and mining bees. Volunteers are needed to remove invasive plants and carry out ecosystem surveys. Spetchells Riverside Park SCIG.co.uk

BAIRNS & BREWS

Café and Toddler Group, Thursdays 10-11.30am (termtime). Play-time (songs, crafts & toys) for the Bairns and a chill time for you. Kids free and just £1 per cuppa (free refills). Info from Facebook (Prudhoe Methodist Church Friends) or peter@thischurch.com. Prudhoe Methodist Church Facebook Page

CASTLE TRIATHLON CLUB

Come and join your friendly, local triathlon club with free coached running sessions on Monday nights at 7:30pm and coached swimming sessions on Wednesdays at 7pm and 8pm. For information email castletri@outlook.com or head to https://www.facebook.com/CastleTri2015/ Regents Drive and Waterworld castletri@outlook.com

PRUDHOE METHODIST CHURCH

A warm welcome awaits you at morning worship every Sunday at 10.30 and at the many meetings throughout the week. For more information please check out Prudhoe Methodist Church Friends on Facebook or our webpage Prudhoe Methodist Church

WEST WYLAM RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Meet on the last Monday of every other month, at 6.30 p.m. For further information please contact us. The Manors, Adderlane Road 01661831380

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- **Assistance to appointments** - All our staff are fully insured to take you to appointments ie hospital appointments, doctors we can accompany you and take notes to pass on to family or just for your records.
- **Breakfast, lunch, tea calls** - These calls are based on a comfort call to make sure all is well, make breakfast or a sandwich up for lunch. Lunch we can make you a fresh meal and make a sandwich up for tea. Tea call, again make you a fresh meal or heat a microwave meal up.
- **Bed calls** - This call is based on a comfort call, make sure things are all good and support to lock up and make sure you have everything needed until the next morning. Companionship and reassurance.
- **Shopping services** - We can take you out shopping, or we can go and get your shopping and support you to put away.
- **Respite services** - We are here to support family members if they need a break for a few hours or even a full day visit. Our aim is for you to go and do the things you need to do without the worry that your loved one has no support. We encourage engagement with activity packs that include games, cards, dominoes, colouring books if that would be of interest. All our activities are there to engage and boost brain activity.
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Active Aging

Exercise your mind

The importance of exercising your mind as well as your body

There's an absolute wealth of information and research now that shows that to age well, we all need to be physically active. Exercising regularly will amongst other things keep your muscles and bones strong, reduce the risk of serious health conditions, control your weight and help you sleep better.

It's just as important though, to keep your mind as fit as your body. We know that lifting weights will build muscle, and also that muscles only grow when the challenge increases over time. Well your brain responds to training in the same way, and can continue to respond to training and grow and develop as we age.

The brain's ability to grow and reorganise is called neuroplasticity, and we now know that adult brains can form new neural connections and continue to grow right through adult life. This neuroplasticity is especially important for people with conditions like Parkinson's, where lost motor functions can be regained and symptoms like rigidity and stiffness can be reduced.

For all of us though, exercising the brain and building cognitive resilience (your brain's ability to cope with the negative effects of stress, damage, disease and aging) can improve memory and thinking speeds, help to manage daily activities and slow or delay the onset of age related cognitive decline.

This can all sound a bit complicated but in reality it's all quite easy. Ideally, to really stretch your brain the experts recommend learning a new language or playing a musical instrument, but for most of us this is probably a step too far! So what can we do every day to keep our brains sharp?

Brain Games

Doing the crossword, word puzzles or sudoku every day is a great starting point, along with games like bingo, chess or mah-jong. These activities can directly help your short and long term memory, and really improve your mental processing speeds. If you are good at these activities, try doing a harder crossword every now and again, or not using a dictionary for more of a challenge. Nowadays many activities are available to play free online, but there are also huge benefits to playing brain games like bingo, cards and quizzes in groups with friends. This can provide crucial social interaction that is proven to protect against cognitive decline.

Mix it Up

Many of us do a regular walk every day, especially if you have a dog. This repetition can mean your brain isn't being challenged as much as it needs to be, it becomes easy to tune out and not pay attention to your surroundings, so try and vary things as much as possible. Reverse your regular route, add in some new loops, or go somewhere completely different once in a while. You can also apply this to shopping and cooking; vary the route you take around the supermarket, add in some new recipes to your favourites, or buy an ingredient you've never tried before and think about how to use it.



Multitasking

If you are out for a walk with a partner or friend, try to add in some mental challenges to the physical ones. Challenge each other to name countries that start with certain letters, list capital cities of the world, or an A to Z of football clubs, plants or animals. All of these mind games will keep you laughing and really get the neurons in your brain firing.

Exercise

It's no surprise that exercising helps your brain as well as your body. Complex activities like dancing, boxing and Tai Chi which combine movement with memory and coordination are proven to build brain plasticity. Exercise also boosts blood flow, which delivers more oxygen and nutrients to the brain, which in turn can reduce inflammation and stress, release endorphins, and lower the risk of dementia, Alzheimer's and cognitive decline. Physical activity increases vital proteins that act as fertilizer for neurons, the specialist cells that act as information messengers in the brain.

Novelty pushes the brain to adapt and thrive, so by trying something new, different or challenging you can stay sharp, creative and resilient, and still winning games against people half your age!



Tim Morton

Tim Morton

Former head of Physical Activity
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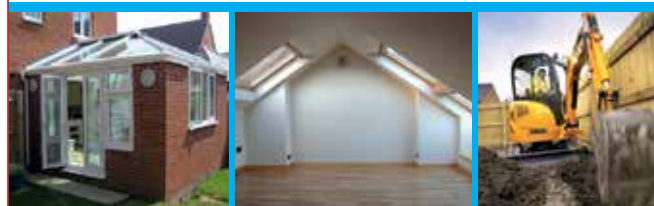
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What's On STOCKSFIELD & RIDING MILL

GARDEN VISITS AND TALKS

Derek and Patricia Hodgson OBE open their garden, called "inspirational" by Alan Titchmarsh on Love Your Garden, from May to September. Patricia also gives gardening talks and piano recitals and stand up comedy to fundraise for the NSPCC on request. Place: Stocksfield for visits and venue of choice for talks Contact: 07765862384

WHITTONSTALL COMMUNITY BAND

An all age community band welcoming anyone interested in playing in our friendly musical ensemble. From October to April we rehearse at Broomley School, Stocksfield every Thursday during term time, 6.30-8.30. In summer we rehearse at the church in Whittonstall. Broomley School whittonstallcommunityband@gmail.com

STOCKSFIELD PLANTS AND GARDENS SOCIETY

17th March "The Little Things That Run, the Good, the Bad, the Ugly". Dr Gordon Port, a zoologist and ecologist. 21st April "Creating a Natural Looking Pond" by John Grundy from Wilderness Tamed. 7:30 pm refreshments available. Stocksfield Community Centre stocksfieldpg@gmail.com

STOCKSFIELD QUAKER MEETING

Meeting For Worship at 11.00am every Sunday. Details of other activities publicised at Meeting House or available from the Clerk Quaker Meeting House, New Ridley Rd. StocksfieldClerk@northumbriaquakers.org.uk

SPINNERS/WEAVERS/DYERS

Tynedale Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers meets 3rd Sat. of every month 10am-4pm. Visitors & new members very welcome if you would like to try your hand at these mindful textile crafts. Programme available at www.wsd.org.uk/guilds/tynedale Stocksfield Baptist Church tynedale.secretary@gmail.com

STOCKSFIELD SING CIRCLE

For women of all ages and stages who want to sing for pleasure and not perfection! We learn songs by ear and sing in our natural voice! Join us on Tuesdays, in the school

term time, 7.30-9pm.

Quakers Meeting House mynameislindsey@hotmail.com

PLAYGROUP FOR UNDER 4'S

Every Friday in term-time, RIDING MILL OUTDOOR PRESCHOOL welcomes young children. along with a parent/carer, to join us for PLAYGROUP from 9.15-11am. Check out our website (www.rmop.co.uk) or follow us on Facebook!

Riding Mill Outdoor Preschool chair@rmop.co.uk

CAFÉ CONNECT

Come and join us at Cafe Connect on Sunday, July 22nd at 4:00 pm for a Summer Barbeque. Fun and games for all the family. Everyone welcome.

Stocksfield Methodist Church jacquic074@gmail.com

RIDING MILL TENNIS CLUB

Village tennis club, set in picturesque surroundings off Millfield Road, is 75 years old. 3 Courts are hard macadam. Pickle ball is also played outdoors in the summer on our multi use games area court. New members welcome. Riding Mill Tennis Club ridingmilltennis@gmail.co.uk

ART GROUP

Supportive, self-help group for anyone interested in art. Held every Thursday morning, 9:30-12.00pm. Please contact Maggie for more information.

The Scout Hut. 07525 054048

STOCKSFIELD STRIDERS

We're a small friendly running club that meets on Tuesday and Thursday (Regents Drive Industrial Estate) evenings at 7pm. Stocksfield Cricket Club

stocksfieldstriders.chessck.co.uk

STOCKSFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

SLHS meets on the second Wednesday of each month (excluding December) from September to April at Stocksfield Methodist Church, Mount View Terrace from 7:30 – 9:15 pm, with a varied programme of talks on the local area. New Members welcome.

email: slhs@k-webster.co.uk

STOCKSFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH

We are a warm, welcoming and informal church that meets every

Sunday 10am-11.30am. All are welcome, wherever you are on your faith journey. For all events see Stocksfieldbaptistchurch.net

STOCKSFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE

We have a wide range of events and activities available. For more detailed information please visit our website at www.stocksfieldca.org.uk or contact us..

SCA, Mount View Terrace admin@stocksfieldca.org.uk

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING CLUB

We meet on Tuesday evenings from 7.45 p.m. to 10.p.m. from February to December. No partner needed, and beginners welcome. Baptist Church Hall. 01661843163

STOCKSFIELD TENNIS CLUB

Small tennis club at Guessburn welcoming new members of any standard or age. Visit www.stocksfieldtennisclub.com for information on joining, session timings, coaching and more. All weather courts and floodlighting allows for year-round play. What's stopping you, join now! Stocksfield Tennis Club Stocksfieldtennisclub@gmail.com

STAY AND PLAY

A toddler group run by volunteers from Stocksfield Baptist Church for children from birth to starting school and their carers. It runs every Tuesday (term time) from 10-11.30am. A variety of activities are provided in a relaxed and informal setting. Stocksfield Baptist Church www.stocksfieldbaptistchurch.net

STOCKSFIELD ANGLICAN CHURCHES

For information on services at, and contacts for Bywell St Peter's, Stocksfield St John's and Mickley St George's, please visit our website at www.stocksfieldchurchofengland.org

HATHA & SOMATIC BASED YOGA CLASSES

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Sundays 8:00am Holy Communion and 10:00am Parish Worship; Wednesdays 9:30am Holy Communion and 7.00pm Quiet Evening Prayer. Services are also accessible via Zoom. please visit our website at www.stjameschurchridingmill.com. St James Church mckenzie.d@btinternet.com

ART CLUB

A friendly self guided group with occasional guest artist, meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday at 7-9pm. Visitors and new members very welcome.

Millennium Hall 01434 682478

MATTERS AND CRAFTERS

We are a friendly group of crafters meeting at Newton and Bywell Village Hall every Thursday from 10.30 until 3.00. Visitors and new members welcome. For more information tel: 07810 286 285 or by email: dorothy43@uwclub.net. 07810 286285

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WOODLAND PLAYGROUP

Playgroup on Fridays (term time) 9.15 – 11am. Tea/coffee/snacks. All ages welcome. £5 per family (suggested). Fire pit, stories, singing, crafts. Riding mill outdoor preschool. 07852 308948

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Ratty on the Tyne!?



When I was a young teenager, I was always roaming the countryside looking for and learning about wildlife and places, etching out my own territory where I gradually got to know all that lived there.

One of my favourite animals to watch was the water rat, or water vole, as its more accurately called. A small burn near where I lived was the place to see them, as well as kingfishers and more. It felt a bit of a secret spot, always alive with surprises.

On one meander I could sit and watch, back against a tree, the comings and goings of the voles as they came out of their labyrinth of holes in the bank and swam through the weed and water like little 'worry-gigs' or miniature beavers. You could hear them chewing their vegetable diet of rushes and flower stems, sat on muddy platforms they treaded outside their homes. They were charming, but also quite irritable with each other and highly defensive of their bit of bankside. I watched, sketched and wrote down their behaviour year on year.

Then, later, as a Countryside Ranger, I watched and fed them apples from my office portacabin, located by an old mill race!

Like so many things we remember from the baseline of wild things we were familiar with in our youth, seeing these lovely creatures is no longer expected and easy. They have been largely lost from our waterways, due to habitat loss, pollution and disturbance and primarily their predation by North American mink, kept by farmers as a side trade in fur farming in the 1950's, that escaped, were let go and freed occasionally by animal rights people.

The mink, a mustelid, like a polecat or weasel, is a fine and beautiful animal too, but they created a niche that was not there naturally in the ecosystem of the UK. The voles had no defence or relationship with them (unlike say red squirrels and pine martens that can and have always coexisted and evolved in natural balance). The mink swept the voles away and they are still a widespread issue, fragmenting vole populations where they have clung on.

One of the biggest attempts to bring 'ratty' back ever happened a few years ago at the top of the Tyne Valley, in the Kielder watershed. A partnership between Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Forestry England and Tyne Rivers Trust trained volunteers to monitor mink presence and remove them over time. This allowed vole reintroduction into specially prepared habitats. It was and is a success. Taking surplus breeding stock from wild populations in the Borders and the North Pennines a breeding farm was set up and produced 2500 offspring that were introduced through the 5 year Restoring Ratty programme, funded by the National Heritage Lottery. It was a game changer.

I recall the privilege of releasing one specimen. Contained initially in a Pringles tube and carefully held by his tail I lowered him to the water and let go, and off he spiralled through the water, as if he knew exactly where he was going!



These are still doing well and have moved around a bit too, spread out. But not that far. It's too difficult still for them to re-colonise the Tyne Valley, as we would all like to see, as there are still too many mink about and other threats. Dispersed populations in Durham and Tees Valley, though they've dwindled, also remain.

Wouldn't it be brilliant to reconnect these new and remnant vole clusters into one North East water vole network? It is possible, but it will take a lot of effort and money, it's a big undertaking taking a big partnership of the willing to make it happen over several years and set up long-term monitoring too.

Wildlife Trusts across the region and other partners and swathes of volunteers are on this now. We are researching and planning towards it, as it has been done in other regions. Can we push the mink to the margins and once more see the water vole as an intrinsic part of our ecology? We saw people's local support in their generous donations to our Big Give appeal for water voles recently, we know people care. I really hope it does, as I still can't believe inside me that these delightful creatures I watched as a child are absent still in large areas of Britain, the most endangered mammal in the UK!

I know a few spots where I can watch ratty, but very few locally. This is a missing link in our Northumbrian fauna. Let's help it re-establish so future generations can see them and really feel nature is in balance and winning back.



Mike Pratt

Mike Pratt - Chief Executive
Northumberland Wildlife Trust
www.nwt.org.uk

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What's On CORBRIDGE, HEXHAM & ACOMB

DISNEY'S THE LITTLE MERMAID

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ENDOMETRIOSIS SUPPORT GROUP

A new endometriosis support group is starting in Hexham. The group will be run by trained volunteers with the charity EndometriosisUK. To find further details of the group, or to join our mailing list, visit <https://www.endometriosis-uk.org/support-group/106980>. Hexham northumberlandgroup@endometriosis-uk.org

HEXHAM MORRIS DANCING

A great team of people who share fun and friendship and who wear their bells with pride. Hexhamshire Lasses meet Mondays from 7.30pm, The Great Hall, Hexham Abbey. 07809609166. Hexham Morrismen meet Thursdays from 7.30pm in Acomb Village Hall. 07803033165.

ALPINE PLANT SHOW

Alpine plant show and plant fair will be held 28th March at Hexham Auction Mart. Plant sales start 10am, Show Hall opens 11am. Several plant nurseries in attendance plus member's table selling plants. Large FREE car park, Admission £3.00. Hexham Auction Mart alan.alpine1@gmail.com

HEXHAM VILLAGE BAND

Community ceilidh band, for players of any portable acoustic instrument. Meets Saturday mornings 10.00 – 11.30. We learn by ear and play by heart. For players new to this music we run The Hamlet Band, which meets on Friday mornings. West End Church Hall hexhamvillageband@gmail.com

HEXHAM ART CLUB

We are a community art club that meets every Tuesday 1.00 - 3.30pm in Hexham Community Centre. We are a friendly group with members producing paintings

and drawings in a range of media. If interested in joining please contact hexhamartclub@gmail.com Hexham Community Centre andyroberts.rdesign@gmail.com

HEXHAM INDOOR MARKET

Our monthly indoor market runs from March to November 10-3pm usually the second Saturday of the month full details can be got on CH Event Facebook page Hexham Abbey cherylhutchinson@hotmail.com

PROPERTY SALES & LETTINGS DROP-IN SESSION

Free advice for buyers, sellers, landlords and tenants from EweMove Sales and Lettings (Hexham & Tyne Valley). Have a chat and a cuppa from 1-3pm (Tuesdays). Local charities benefit as part of our commitment to supporting the community. inside Newcastle Building Society, Beaumont Street. 07486054307

CREATIVE WRITING

These friendly classes will inspire and encourage you to write fiction, poetry and memoir, and offer supportive feedback to help you develop your work. New members welcome – try a free taster session. Hexham cafes claire.judith.lynn@gmail.com

WOMEN'S WALKING FOOTBALL

Are you interested in a friendly game of Women's Walking Football at Wentworth Leisure Centre. Please contact 07525 211485 if you would like to be involved. Wentworth Leisure Centre. 07525 211485

DRU YOGA CLASSES

A full range of yoga and qi gong classes at the wabi Sabi attic studio Hexham. See fb wabi Sabi Dru yoga. 9:30 -10:40 Wednesday & Fridays. 18:00 - 19:00 Thursday. 19:15-20:30 Thursday Wabi Sabi studio. 07545865009

CORBRIDGE BRIDGE CLUB

Corbridge Bridge Club meet at Corbridge Parish Hall Mondays 7pm - 10pm Duplicate and Tuesdays 1.00pm -4.00pm Aggregate. New members welcome. For further details please contact. Corbridge Parish Hall secretarycorbridgebridgeclub@gmail.com

HEXHAM TOWN WI

We meet on the 3rd Monday of each month in the heart of Hexham at 7.00pm. Come along and join in our next meeting and see what we can offer you? Our meetings are interesting, informative and most importantly friendly. Hexham Community Centre. 07790 108273

JIVEALIVE

We are Hexham's Modern Jive group, a friendly group meeting weekly, Weds 8-10pm. No partner necessary; tuition most sessions, beginners welcome! Surplus funds go to local charities. JiveAlive@googlegroups.com or find us on Facebook. Torch Centre, Hexham 07800 988612

HEXHAM BEACON CLUB

We are a club for Retired Gentlemen. We host a non political, non denominational gathering most Wednesday mornings between 10:30 and 12:00. Guest Speakers feature each week on interesting subjects along with coffee and biscuits. All are welcome. plholmes4@gmail.com

HEXHAM BRASS BAND

Hexham Brass are a friendly band playing and performing a wide range of music from show/film tunes to pop to classic brass band music. We welcome new players of all ages and abilities, playing every Tuesday 7.15pm to 9pm West End Methodist Church info@hexhambrass.co.uk

HEXHAM ARMY CADETS

We parade each Monday and Thursday between 7pm and 9pm. For both girls and boys 12yrs (yr 8 at school) to 18yrs. We do lots of activities such as Fieldcraft, Shooting, Expeditions, First Aid and the Duke of Edinburgh award. TA Centre, Hencotes 07972641665

HEXHAM BRIDGE CLUB

Hexham Bridge Club meets on Thursday evenings at 6.45pm. Friendly, competitive duplicate bridge. Tuition for beginners is

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Hexham Community Centre contactus@hexhambridgeclub.org.uk

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Corbridge Parish Hall Email Shelly.dronfield@gmail.com

MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church at Hexham Community Church on Beaumont Street. We meet on the second Sunday of every month (except August) 10.30am-12.30pm. Games, craft, songs, stories and a free light lunch for everyone! 01434 601113

HEXHAM PROBUS CLUB

Provides regular gatherings for retired or semi-retired professional or businessmen aged over 55. We meet most months in the County Hotel Hexham for conversation and fellowship followed by lunch. New members from the Hexham area are welcome 01434 607798

HEXHAM ROTARY

Every Monday Lunchtime (just about). Come and meet us at the County Hotel in Hexham for fun, friendship, speakers, trips, events, fund raising and so much more. Phone Brian on 01434 603827 mbmassey2@gmail.com

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Marvels of Meditation

Marvels of Meditation; Types, Benefits and Practical Applications

Meditation is likely to be as old as humankind itself. Our cultures are increasingly defined by speed, productivity and constant stimulation. Meditation offers something increasingly rare: a way to pause, reset and reconnect with deeper layers of our inner self. Meditation might be viewed as mysterious, overly spiritual, or simply impractical.

In reality, meditation receives the very highest evidence based recognition for its existential benefits. Adaptable for most lifestyles, a precious tool to help you embrace peace in a Frantic world.

Types of Meditation

Meditation isn't just one single technique, it can span across a whole range of practices, here are a few core categories to contemplate.

Mindfulness Meditation

Rooted from Buddhist teachings of Gautama Siddhartha (buddha over 2500 years ago) now widely supported in the West, mindfulness meditation is the act of training your attention to stay anchored in the present moment.

Sitting observing thoughts, sensations and emotions free from judgment.

Programs like Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) have made this approach especially popular in schools, workplaces and healthcare settings to support pain management or mental health challenges.

Deep Focused Attention Meditation

Directing attention toward a single object, stimulus, often the breath, a candle flame, sounds or a mantra. If the mind wanders, you gently bring it back. It's simple, structured, and ideal for beginners who want a clear and calm a busy mind.

Loving-kindness Kindness or Metta Meditation

Cultivating compassion, silently repeating phrases of goodwill toward oneself and others. It's particularly helpful for people dealing with self-criticism, criticism, interpersonal conflict or emotional fatigue.

Body Scan Meditation

Often used in therapeutic settings such as yoga, the body scan involves mentally moving through the body simply noticing sensations. It's grounding, calming and excellent for people who struggle with oscillating thoughts.

Movement Based Meditation

Not all meditation happens sitting still. Yoga, tai chi and mindful walking, forest bathing integrates awareness with physical movement. These practices appeal to Westerners who find stillness uncomfortable or prefer a more embodied experience.

Transcendental Meditation (TM)

TM uses a unique mantra repeated silently to settle the mind into a state of deep rest. It's structured, time bound and widely evidence based, appealing to those who like clear guidelines.

Benefits of Meditation

Meditations popularity is supported by a growing body of scientific research.

1. Reduced Stress and Anxiety

Meditation lowers activity in the brain's "fight or flight" centre and increases activation in regions associated with calm and emotional regulation. For Westerners living with chronic stress, this alone can be highly transformative.

2. Improved Focus and Cognitive Performance

Regular practice strengthens attention, working memory and mental clarity. In a world full of digital distractions, meditation acts like strength training for the mind.

3. Emotional Resilience

Meditation helps you slow down enabling a natural response over reactive. Practitioners can develop greater patience, self-awareness, awareness, ability to navigate difficult emotions with less overwhelm.

4. Better Sleep

Calming the nervous system, can help soften rumination, improved sleep quality, reversing effects of busy schedules and screen heavy evenings.

5. Enhanced Physical Health

Meditation can lower blood pressure, reduced inflammation and improved immune function. Supporting overall wellbeing in surmountable ways.

6. Greater Sense of Meaning and Connection

Meditation alone or in groups there are many in the Tyne valley, can foster a sense of belonging and purpose. Reconnecting you with values and priorities that get buried under daily obligations.

How to integrate into our Lifestyles

Meditation is best woven into our everyday life rather than treated as a separate ritual.

1. Micro Meditations

Short, 1-3 minute practices. A few deep breaths before a meeting or a moment of mindful awareness can shift the entire tone of the day.

2. Workplace Integration

Many companies now offer meditation rooms, guided sessions, or mindfulness apps. Encouraging employees to take brief pauses to reset mind body awareness between tasks.

3. Digital Tools

Apps; Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer (free app) provide structure, reminders, and guided sessions. For beginners, this removes the uncertainty of "Am I doing it right?"

4. Movement Based Practices

If you like myself struggle with the stillness... yoga, mindful walking, tai chi, or qi gong offer extensive meditative benefits of still points yet in motion.

5. Evening Wind down Rituals

A short meditation before bed helps prepare the body for rest, counteracting overstimulation of any late-night processing.

6. Integrating Meditation with Therapy

Many therapists incorporate mindfulness-based approaches to help clients manage anxiety, trauma, and emotional dysregulation. A healing intervention, rather than just an abstract spiritual practice.

Meditation isn't about escaping life, it is about enhancing our senses to engage more fully, assisting you in navigating this overstimulated world to cultivate clarity, resilience, and inner steadiness.



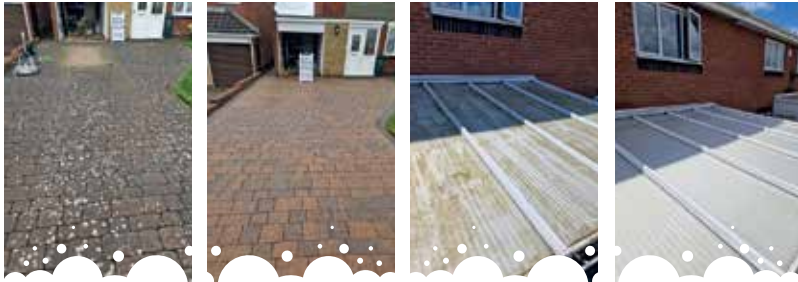
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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1		8	21	20	7	14	23	8	23	13	9	6	
2	12		13		6		2		5		6		12
3	24		25		12	13	7	20	6		10	2	3
4	13	21	25	8	3		18		14		23		7
5	23		10		8		13		26	24	14	26	8
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11	22	2	1		4	10	2	2	15		4		7
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			B									

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
			Q					C				

Enter the letter in each circled cell in the order given below to reveal a themed answer:

11A	5J	8L	12G	10I	4K	1B	4I	1C	4D	1I	9I

Winner will be chosen at random from the correct entries.
Solutions will be available on our website from the next edition.

11	10	8	17		10	10						
				10		19					22	
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- The television is loud but still **not clear**
- You have to **concentrate** to hear
- Conversation can often be **misheard**

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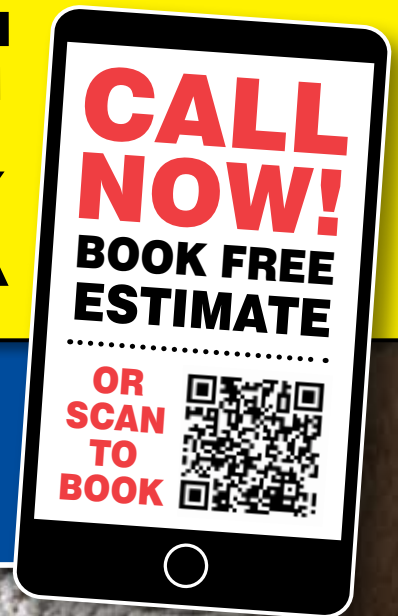
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Northumberland is extremely proud that Dan Monk, Director of Astrophotography at Kielder Observatory, has been shortlisted as Visit England's Tourism Superstar 2026. Up against nine other finalists, the result is solely down to public vote, so please support Dan and your favourite county by voting for Dan now.

More about Dan

VisitEngland's Tourism Superstar competition, now in its 14th year, seeks out champions working in tourism who provide fantastic experiences for visitors. Dan is the living embodiment of Northumberland's leadership in astrotourism. As Director of Astrophotography at Kielder Observatory, he champions the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park, the largest protected night sky area in Europe, and has transformed stargazing into one of England's most distinctive visitor experiences.

You may also have seen Dan's awe-inspiring photography on his Facebook and Instagram accounts, where he shares Northumberland's dark skies with his followers. Dan's work truly goes above and beyond and has put Northumberland's dark skies on the map, and his astrophotography has featured in Danny Boyle's *28 Years Later*, in the *Daily Mail* amongst other media outlets, and he shares his imagery to his large social media following.

More about Northumberland's Dark Skies

It's safe to say that Northumberland is the best place to stargaze in the UK. Northumberland is fortunate enough to have extremely low levels of light pollution, which means we have the most 'pristine dark skies' in England (CPRE Night Blight Report 2016). 572 square miles of the county have been awarded Gold Tier status for their pristine dark skies, and Northumberland's International Dark Sky Park is the largest in the UK.

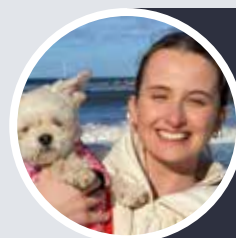
The whole of Northumberland National Park and most of Kielder Water & Forest Park make up our International Dark Sky Park, a status that is awarded by the International Dark Sky Association. This means that on a clear night, once the sun has set and you're in a remote spot away from street lights, stargazing in Northumberland allows you to look up into the night sky and see thousands of stars, the Milky Way, and even the Andromeda Galaxy (2.5 million light years away) with the naked eye.

There are a number of fantastic dark skies experiences in Northumberland, but if you are just starting out then our observatories are a great place to start. Kielder Observatory and Battlesteads Observatory both have a jam-packed calendar of events to enjoy, and the Kielder Observatory team also run events at The Twice Brewed Inn, which houses its own planetarium.

How to Vote for Dan

Vote for Dan using the QR code opposite, or go to visitnorthumberland.com and you will find a link to vote for Dan

on our homepage. Voting closes on 22 March so act fast, and we would love to spread the news far and wide so feel free to share your vote on social media. Use #TourismSuperstar26 and #DantheStar to connect with us and let us know you've placed your vote!



Jenni Meikle

Jenni Meikle
Content and PR executive at
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Local, Independent Business Celebrates Award Win!

Best National Sales Agent Winner

...4 years in a row!



EweMove Hexham & Tyne Valley is celebrating after the network was crowned **Best National Sales Agent 2026** - for the fourth year running!

The Estate Agents Masters is one of the UK's most trusted measures of estate agency performance, assessing over 11,400 branches each year on property marketing, customer service and results. EweMove proudly excelled in all areas.

"This is a huge achievement for us! Moving home often marks a major milestone. Of course, it's about much more than bricks and mortar - it's about people, their stories and the memories they're making. Each move is unique, yet everyone

shares that sense of looking ahead to a new chapter. Backed by a respected, national brand, yet proudly independent at a local level, we do things differently, ensuring a personalised service with strong results." Julia Horsman, Branch Director.

Customer satisfaction is paramount and EweMove's **Happy Sale Guarantee** brings peace of mind with their **no sale, no fee** service and **no tie-in contracts or minimum periods**. Julia adds, "Thousands of 'Excellent' Trustpilot reviews show that we put customers at the heart of everything we do. Many refer us to family and friends and return to us for their next move - that's the best compliment we could receive."



Thinking of moving?

To celebrate their 2026 award win, Hexham & Tyne Valley EweMove is offering local homeowners the opportunity to sell for a fixed fee of **£2,026 + VAT**

Book your free valuation now.

Be quick, **ONLY SIX OFFERS AVAILABLE**

- secure yours today!

Want to know what your home is worth in Hexham and the Tyne Valley?

BOOK YOUR FREE VALUATION APPOINTMENT



As your local expert estate agent, I can give you an in-depth valuation of your property as well as answer any questions or queries you have.

You can select a date and time that suits you. Simply scan the code, visit my website or give us a call 24/7



Visit: www.ewemove.com/hexham
Call 24/7: **01434 303177**

EweMove respects any existing sole agency agreement already in place with another agent.



Scan me...

