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Issue 103
May/June 2026

Tyne Valley Express

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In this issue....

Reader Offers

The Rest Revolution

Tyne Valley Expressions

NEW! Community Spotlight

Exploring Woodhorn Museum

Wildlife Photography Competition

10 Foodie Spots in Northumberland

WIN - FOMO Music Festival Tickets

WIN - County Show Family Tickets

WIN - Costa Coffee Voucher



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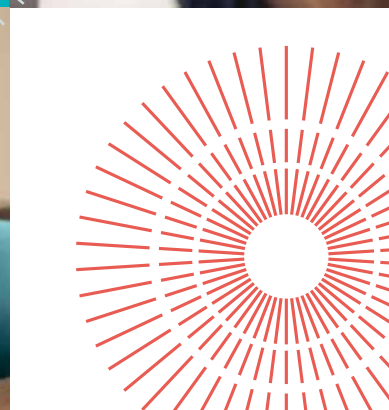
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COULD EQUITY RELEASE HELP ME MAKE THE MOST OF MY RETIREMENT?

A Guide to Modern Equity Release

By Joanne Manghan, North East Equity Release

Equity release is sometimes misunderstood as something only considered by those in financial difficulty or with no other options. But that is not always the case.

Today's later-life lending market has changed significantly. For homeowners aged 55 and over, releasing part of the value in their home can support retirement plans, make life more comfortable, or provide flexibility without needing to sell or move.

For others, equity release may not be the right choice, which is why balanced, regulated advice is so important.

What Is a Lifetime Mortgage?

The most common form of equity release is a lifetime mortgage. It is a loan secured against your home, while you continue to own and live there.

The money released is tax-free and can be used for reasons including home improvements, helping family, repaying an existing mortgage, supporting independent living, or making retirement more enjoyable. The loan, with any interest added, is usually repaid when the homeowner passes away or moves permanently into long-term care.

A Simple Example

Imagine a homeowner in their early 70s whose pension covers the bills but leaves little spare for holidays or larger home repairs. They may have savings but prefer to keep some aside for peace of mind. Downsizing might be an option. However, if they love their home, garden, neighbours and community, they may not want to move simply to access money tied up in the property.

A small lifetime mortgage could allow them to release a modest amount to fund a holiday, carry out repairs, or create breathing space.

Modern Features and Protections

Modern lifetime mortgages are often more flexible than people realise. Depending on the plan, there may be options to pay some or all of the interest, or to make capital repayments. This can help reduce the impact of compound interest and may help preserve more of the remaining equity in the home for beneficiaries.

Some plans also offer a drawdown facility, where funds can be released gradually rather than all at once. This can be helpful because interest is only charged on the money released.

Plans that meet Equity Release Council standards include important safeguards, such as fixed interest rates for life, the right to remain in your home, and a no negative equity guarantee, meaning there would be no liability to your estate if the debt exceeded the property value, provided the property is sold at true market value.

The Important Bit

Equity release is not suitable for everyone. It will reduce your estate and may affect entitlement to means-tested benefits. Alternatives such as downsizing, savings, family support, or doing nothing should also be considered.

So, is it right for me?

For some, the answer may be yes. For others, it may be no, or simply not yet. What matters most is understanding your options clearly, considering the alternatives, and having the right advice and information to help you decide what is best for you.

You can contact Joanne on: **01670 209 925 or 0191 695 9493**

or email: joanne@northeastequityrelease.co.uk

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Are you making the most of your retirement?

A lifetime mortgage could help enhance your retirement lifestyle.

It all starts with clear, honest, professional information.

Your Easy Steps to Get Started:

Initial Phone Call - I'll take the time to understand your needs, explain how equity release works, and help you determine if it could be a suitable option for you.

Choose the Meeting Option That Works

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Personalised Illustration - I'll provide a straightforward, customised illustration based on your individual situation.

Independent Legal Advice - A qualified solicitor will guide you through the legal details to ensure everything is clear and in your best interest.

No Obligation Decision - You'll have all the time you need to thoughtfully consider your options, with no rush to make any decisions.

North East Equity Release

Joanne Manghan - Tel: 01670 209 925 or 0191 695 9493

joanne@northeastequityrelease.co.uk

www.northeastequityrelease.co.uk

An equity release mortgage may affect your entitlement to means tested benefits and the inheritance you may leave.

North East Equity Release is a trading style of Trusted Mortgage & Equity Release Solutions Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. (FCA Registration Number 1011889).



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162 reviews

SCAN ME



Welcome to Issue 103 of Tyne Valley Express!

Spring has well and truly arrived, bringing longer days, warmer weather, and a brand-new edition filled with plenty to explore and enjoy. This issue features not one, but three brilliant competitions, alongside a busy collection of seasonal articles from our talented team of writers.

Explore Woodhorn Museum with Katie Pharoah (p12), and we're testing new ground with our first ever poem from Suzanne Fairless-Aitken in our popular Tyne Valley Expressions feature (p20). Do you know the tree in question? There's also handy tips on getting more rest from Tim Morton (p36) and Rachel Orange (p52), plus a guide to 10 Foodie Spots where you can Taste Northumberland from Jenni Meikle (p58) amongst others. Lots to read and enjoy.

Ready for some prizes? Don't miss the chance to grab 2 x Family Tickets to the Northumberland County Show on Saturday 23 May (p43), plus 2 tickets to the upcoming F.O.M.O. Music Festival on Saturday 13 June (p14). And there's more...

Budding photographers, get ready for the return of our annual Photography Competition (p29) with expert tips from in-house

specialist Roy Frankland. Now's your time to shine – you might even see your photo on the cover of Issue 104!

Need a break? Flip to our Whitsun-themed Coffee Break Puzzle page (p56) for another chance to win a £10 Costa voucher. If you tackled last month's puzzles, you'll find all the answers online at www.tynevalleyexpress.co.uk/puzzles.

As we head into the brighter days of late spring, we hope this issue brings a little inspiration, enjoyment, and a sense of connection to everything happening across the Tyne Valley. Thanks, as always, for your continued support - here's to a fantastic season ahead.

Wishing you all peace, love, and community this Spring.

**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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Beth, Fourtstones

April 15, 2020 via Google

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Angela, Chollerford

January 2, 2020 via Google

★★★★★

Luke and his team proved to be craftsmen of the highest order. They are friendly, professional and efficient approach to the project was very reassuring. I would have no hesitation in recommending them to anyone in need of great stonemasons.

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**Prudhoe Community Hub,
Front St, Prudhoe NE42 5AA
on Tuesday 23, Wednesday 24
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from 10:00am to 4:00pm each day.**



Come and find out more about the branch in general, the great speakers who come and talk to it each month and the 30 + special interest groups running within it.

If you're interested but can't get to one of the showcasing days, please visit our website, prudhoe.
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Monday Pilates 10-11 + 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. Info@winlatonmillvillagehall.com

WINLATON CAMERA CLUB

Winlaton Camera Club meet Tuesdays at 7.30pm in the New West End Social Club, September to May. We are a friendly bunch with a passion for photography, so pop along and join in. For details, visit: www.winlatoncamera.club New West End Social Club info@winlatoncamera.club

ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH

New Year, new start? Try church? You'll be welcome at St Cuthbert's, Sunday service 10.15am, Thursdays Lite Bite cafe 11.15-12.45. Weddings and baptisms by arrangement with the vicar. St Cuthbert's Church rev_dianeryan@btinternet.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. 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

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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

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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

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NORTHERN TASK FORCE

Our volunteer team meets several times a week at Rainton Meadows to help protect local nature reserves. (Shibdon Pond, Milkwellern 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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Exploring Woodhorn Museum

Woodhorn Museum's Pit Wheel.

If you're looking for a day out that goes a little deeper than the usual café stops or coastal walk, Woodhorn Museum certainly delivers. Nestled within the restored buildings of a former pit, this Ashington attraction offers an immersive glimpse into the lives, creativity and resilience of Northumberland's mining communities, making it an ideal hidden gem for locals keen to explore something both meaningful and unexpected.

I recently visited, and what stood out to me was how deeply it is rooted in our local history, and it truly felt like you were stepping back in time. (That time travel feeling was certainly helped by its chronological exhibitions, where you literally walk through time, watching the time periods change on the walls.)

At the heart of the site is the striking Cutter Building, a bold, contemporary structure inspired by the immense coal-cutting machines. The museum also has several exhibitions, including:

The Ashington Group Gallery

One of Woodhorn's most unexpected treasures is the story of the Ashington Group, better known as the Pitmen Painters.

These were miners who, in their spare time, began painting scenes of everyday life with astonishing honesty and emotion. What began in 1934 as an art appreciation class became a weekly class experimenting with styles and materials. 'Start painting – it's as simple as that.'

— Oliver Kilbourn, Pitmen Painter

'Homing'

My favourite exhibition was an archway of origami birds hanging over you, and a collection of tags on the walls. The exhibition, named 'Homing', celebrates Ashington's 150th anniversary and was created by artist Bethan Maddocks and 500 young people from Ashington. Each paper pigeon (which was chosen based on the tradition of homing pigeons) carries a message about what home is to them or the person's hometown - its past, present and future. Some messages read: 'I love this place, I love it, it's so relaxing', 'Home is where I started to live my life', 'Home is where I feel safe', 'I'm proud of Ashington'. Something so incredibly simple but so poignant. We are privileged to have a home where we feel safe, warm and cared for. 'Home' can be anything, a place or a person. Homes come with such emotions, memories and legacies. It was an



A section of the 'Homing' exhibition.

exhibition that stayed with me long after I left the museum.

Other parts of Woodhorn that stuck with me, in no particular order, include:

The Big Red Jobbie – not what you're thinking, it's a big red water tank.

Affectionately named by Woodhorn staff, this water tank has a 32,000-litre capacity. Although Woodhorn Colliery closed in 1981, pumps and fans were kept working to help Ashington Colliery.

Accessibility and the sensory walk

Accessibility is a lovingly thought-out thing at Woodhorn. Whilst there's room for improvement – and they're working with steering groups who have various disabilities, taking direct feedback from those with lived experience – they have lots of guidance to help you before you even get there.

From virtual tours to access maps that document the stimuli you might encounter, such as sound and light levels, you can access all accessibility information on their website. A standout for me was the sensory walk; it was great to see blooming daffodils signalling the return of spring, providing a calming walk area, with different stimuli that create textures and sounds.

So, what's coming up at Woodhorn that you might want to visit?

Miner's Picnic 2026

On Saturday, 13th June, from 10am to 5pm, the Miner's Picnic celebrates the local mining heritage. Enjoy live music, street theatre, children's activities and more. Keep an eye on their social media and website for the full programme coming soon.

If you are looking to visit Woodhorn Museum, they are open Wednesday – Sunday from 10am – 4pm. Please note that due to renovations on the Heapsteads buildings, they may be closed on certain days. Check their social media and website prior to setting off.

Woodhorn Museum is a place where you can learn our local history whilst having a 'canny day out' (you can also find that phrase in one of their exhibitions!).

Do you know a hidden gem or underdog business in and around the Tyne Valley? I'm exploring the area and hope to get to know the best places that may be overlooked. If you have a place to recommend, get in touch!



Katie Pharoah

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



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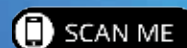
F.O.M.O multi genre music Festival — Newcastle

This summer marks the launch of F.O.M.O Festival, the first edition of a brand-new multi-genre festival set to make its mark on Newcastle's music scene.

Taking place on Saturday, June 13, at the Newcastle Blue Star Football Club (1 PM - 11 PM), the event features acts like Ultrabeat, Lange, and MC Tazo playing trance, bounce, and club classics... And we've got 2 tickets to give away!

To be in with a chance of winning this excellent prize, visit www.tynevalleyexpress.co.uk/competitions/ or scan the QR code for details on how to enter.

Competition runs throughout May
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What's On

RYTON, CRAWCROOK & GREENSIDE

HATCHLINGS THEATRE SCHOOL

FREE TRAIL WEEKEND. Come along to Tyneside Golf Club on the 17th of May and try out Hatchlings Theatre School's Drama and Confidence Classes for FREE! Tyneside Golf Club HatchlingsTheatreSchool@outlook.com

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 or 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.

More at: 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 brightenryton@gmail.com

YOGA CLASSES

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

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

HOLY SPIRIT CHURCH

All Sunday morning services, including Children's Club, are held at Holy Spirit Church. For other services and venues see our website. Venue hire is also available at St John's Community Hall at very reasonable rates. Crawcrook info@greensideparish.org

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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Tyne Valley Expressions

In a new departure for Tyne Valley Expressions, we have a poem this month. Suzanne Fairless-Aitken has written about a tree which will be familiar to many readers: the ancient yew tree in Beltingham churchyard. The poem celebrates the tree's 2,000-year history, and explores the changes it has seen in that time.

Suzanne is a mum from Hexham, who was recently elected as Northumberland County Councillor & Hexham Town Councillor for the LibDems. She works for international poetry publisher, Bloodaxe Books, and also runs her own editing company, Swift Permissions. In her murky past she has been a school governor, activist and campaigner for education, creative arts, green issues, diversity, community engagement and transparency in public office. She writes in any spare time she can find.

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...



The Yew

*I am a wanderer though I stand
tethered to this ancient land*

Where I have stood two-thousand years
Gathering human hopes and fears.
Seeded beginnings, fallen not planted
On a mound by Tyne once they landed.
My noble sisters are worshipped too,
Round furred barks, the auspicious yew.
We cannot leave, though evergreen
But, oh the sights that we have seen.
Worshippers gather our feathery fronds,
Golden-sickle reaped, willow-woven
wands.
In northern lands aglow with lights
On sacred sites mark solstice nights.

*I am a wanderer though I stand
tethered to this faithless land*

Marching soldiers pass on by -
fording rivers, cross fields of rye,
And place stone altars, bathing me
In bloody sacrifice, they worship free.
Praying for return to deciduous climes
To escape the chill of northern wilds.
When nomads settle from their Rome,
Saturn decrees to bring me home.
When earth grows iron, I, evergreen
Am life in darkness, travelling unseen.

*I am a wanderer though I stand
tethered to this changing land*

Through wars of fire, I remain,
while Northern men rape and maim.

Then a man of healing comes to pray
Placing Saxon crosses in gentile clay.
Masons shelter beneath, taking stock
Raising hammers that carve the rock,
Hewn in my shadows, amongst papery
birch
Stolen slabs will build their church.
Here I recycle sacred bones,
as they recycle pagan stones.

*I am a wanderer though I stand
tethered to this fruitful land*

Growing slowly, iron grips my waist,
Holding faster to this place.
Bells peel out the last congregation,
Ringing in a new generation.
Men in black follow women in white,
Singing feasting rituals into starless night.
Delicate lace covers mewling sound.
Caskets are lowered into the ground.
My roots absorb the greedy earth,
While marble marks eternal worth.

*I am a wanderer though I stand
tethered to this mortal land*

The metal belt grows into me,
Wooden columns spread not free.
Another tree stands dressed in candlelight
Takes my place on midwinter night.
My soft bark wrapped in drifting snow,
Ignited robins forage berries below.
Hoary tempests weather my frame,
As savage blasts cleft me in twain.

*I am a wanderer though I stand
tethered to this timeless land*

The church is sold and gentrified,
Trees left charred and petrified.
A family comes, my boughs are found,
and everlasting circles are woven round.
At first they came bearing axe and saw,
but only revive the glory more.
Into my tree-house children climb and
play,
Until Time counts and they hide away.
Bursting blackbirds will eat the fruits
For in my arms their nests have roots.

*I am a wanderer though I stand
Guardian of this eternal land*



*Suzanne
Fairless-Aitken*

Suzanne Fairless-Aitken
Author
Northumbrian Writers Group

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What's On

HEDDON, HORSLEY & WYLAM

NOT JUST PLUM JAM! CRAFT FAYRE

Sunday 7th June 11.00-4.00pm.
At Wylam Institute our 2nd Craft Fayre like no other with music from The Hexham Uketeers, Tombola. Craft Corner, face painting, Teas/ coffee served. Raising money for the RNLI. Family fun indoor and outdoor stalls
Wylam Institute
Susanmarley911@gmail.com

ON SYCAMORE GAP

Words and music of loss, hope and renewal - Join poet Kate Fox and musicians Staithe (Bridie Jackson and Nick Pierce) in a performance of live music and poetry. Sat 16th May, 7.30pm (doors 7pm), £15/£10.
The Hearth Arts Centre
office@thehearth.co.uk

SINGING MAMAS

Calling women of all ages and stages, mamas and non-mamas who love to sing together for fun and good vibes; enjoy a chat and eat biscuits! Little ones welcome. Fortnightly/Term Time Only.
The Hearth Arts Centre
lindseyjoysings@gmail.com

WYLAM SUMMER FAIR

Annual village summer fair on Saturday 27th June 12 noon to 5 pm. An afternoon with something for everyone including food stalls, a licenced bar and PIMMS stall, craft stalls, a funfair, fun runs and a full programme of entertainment
Wylam Jubilee Field
wylamsf@gmail.com

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
andrew.stirling@methodist.org.uk

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: hmrschurches@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.

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Horsley Village - 07715054860

DRU YOGA CLASSES

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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

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 www.stoswinschurchwylam.chessck.co.uk/ - Church Road, Wylam
wylamst.oswin@hotmail.co.uk

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Church Hall, Church Road
writeonly@gmail.com

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

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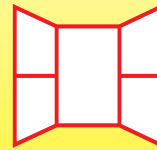
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Depth of Field,

(how to make your subject really stand out!)



If you cast your minds back to an earlier article, we discussed exposure, and the various things you have at your disposal to get your exposure correct. We talked about the balance between ISO setting, shutter speed and aperture and very briefly, I went through each of those and the effect they have on your image. Well, I've recently been on holiday in South Africa which included a safari visit for some wildlife and bird photography. This got me thinking about a subject for this article, as control of depth of field is very useful when it comes to photographing wildlife and birds as well as portraiture. So, what we will look at this time in more detail is how to control your depth of field to really help your subject stand out. Depth of field is defined as the distance between the closest and farthest objects in a photo that appears acceptably sharp. Your camera can only focus sharply at one point, but the transition from sharp to un-sharp is gradual, and the term 'acceptably sharp' is subjective!

When you are shooting subjects such as birds or portraits, and sometimes wildlife too, you want the subject to really stand out separately from the background and a good way to do this is to make the background blurred and out of focus, while keeping your subject nice and sharp, in other words, a shallow depth of field. This is achieved through control of your aperture, (the hole through which light enters your camera). The aperture is the size of the opening in your lens and is expressed as an 'f'-number or f-stop, e.g. f2.8, f8, f11 etc. The smaller this number, the bigger the aperture (hole) and the bigger the number, the smaller the aperture. So f2.8 will be a wide opening whereas f22 would be very small. The maximum/minimum will depend on your lens capability and specification. The smaller the f-number, the less depth of field and the bigger the f-number, the greater your depth of field.

So, to get back to our bird or portrait images, what we want to do is make your subject sharp and well defined, while taking away any distractions in the background by blurring it out. You can see examples of this in the accompanying images. In some wildlife shots, you may want to include the environment of the animal which would then require a wide depth of field, but for

the purposes of this article, let's assume you want to focus in of the animal itself, as you would with birds or portraits. When focussing, always try to focus on the eyes!

Firstly, ensure you have a lens suitable for what you want to shoot. For wildlife and birds, (which are likely to be far from you), for example, I use a Sigma 150mm – 600mm f5-6.3 lens on my SLR, although there are many other suitable lenses available.

Then you need to select the lowest aperture (f-number) that you can on your lens. This will give you a shallow depth of field and reduce the depth of sharpness in your shot. Another important factor to consider, that affects depth of field, is the distance between the camera and the subject, although admittedly it's sometimes hard to control. The shorter the distance of your camera to the subject, the smaller the depth of field, so try to get as close as you can.

Remember too that for a good exposure, aperture will need to be balanced with shutter speed and lighting conditions, so if depth of field is most important to you, then you could select aperture priority on your camera and select the lowest option and it will select the best shutter speed for your chosen aperture. When I'm shooting birds and wildlife, I usually keep a high ISO setting of around ISO1600 to make sure of a fast shutter speed to reduce hand shake as I like to shoot handheld as much as possible.

Experiment with your camera, find what works for you, and finally, whatever you do, remember to enjoy it!



Roy Frankland

Roy Frankland
ARPS

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Wildlife Photography Competition

With summer just around the corner, we're excited to launch a brand-new Wildlife Photography Competition celebrating the incredible natural life of the Tyne Valley. From garden birds and woodland mammals to riverside species and fleeting seasonal moments, we're calling on local photographers to capture the wild beauty of our region. Your photo could be the one that truly captures the spirit of nature in the valley this summer.

The Tyne Valley stretches from Blaydon through to Hexham, taking in countless towns, villages, woodlands and waterways along the way. It's home to an abundance of wildlife just waiting to be spotted - and photographed. We'd love to see your favourite encounters from across the valley.

To enter, simply post your photo to the Tyne Valley Express Facebook page using the hashtag #tvewildlifecomp, along with a title and where it was taken. Alternatively, you can email your entry to photos@tynevalleyexpress.co.uk
Closing date: Friday 26 June
(Please submit one photo per person)

So next time you're out and about, keep your eyes open... you never know what wildlife moment might be waiting to be captured.

ROY'S TIPS

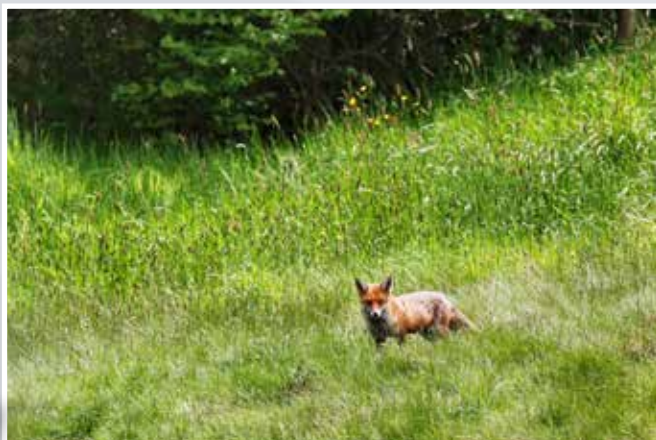
1. Since the first prize is to be featured on the cover of the magazine, all entries should be jpeg files and taken in Landscape format where possible. Portrait format may require zooming in or cropping to fit.
2. When shooting for a cover image, please consider copy space in your composition. By this I mean, you should leave enough space at the top of your image for the magazine logo to fit on without covering major elements of the shot. Please see examples of previous covers to see what space is required. For tips on composition, you can check my last article.
3. You may use your phone camera or any other camera, however keep in mind that for the winning entry, a high resolution copy will be requested via email, with sufficient quality and file size to meet the print standard.
4. Enjoy yourself!

PRIZES

The winning photograph will be featured on the front cover of our Jul/Aug issue, delivered to up to 33,000 homes and seen by an estimated 82,500 readers.

The winner and runners-up will also be showcased in a follow-up feature and receive a copy of A Different Way of Life by Roy Frankland (available separately at www.royfranklandphotography.com).

Entries will be judged by Roy Frankland. Prizes are non-transferable.



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What's On

PRUDHOE & MICKLEY

PRUDHOE WILDLIFE GARDEN

Beautiful Wildlife Garden, opposite the Asda garage. A tranquil space for all to enjoy on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10am. A group of volunteers who love wildlife and our garden. Contact Jane on 07870 407168 or see www.prudhoespace4nature.uk Prudhoe and Mickley jcrgardener@gmail.com

PRUDHOE GROUND FORCE

Meets every Wednesday morning 9 – 10am at various locations in Prudhoe to litter pick or do other environmental work. Anyone wishing to join this group can email us Prudhoe jdobson3726@gmail.com

GONG BATH RELAXATION CLASS

Relax • Reset • Restore. Take a midweek pause for yourself. Join Neil for a soothing gong bath every Thursday from 1:30 – 2:30 pm, starting 2nd April. St Matthews Wellness Centre 07543268926

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 REIVER ARCHERS

Learn the art of Archery with the Border Reiver Archers, based at Ovingham Middle School, Sundays 10am-1pm. Suitable for ages 5+ and all abilities. 1 hour Taster sessions available with prior booking. Contact for further details at borderreiverarchers.co.uk Place: Ovingham Middle School Contact: 07505975509

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@prudhoeparishchurch.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.

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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 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 jcrgardener@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

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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.com) or by email at prudhoegardenersassociation@hotmail.com Prudhoe

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

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- **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.
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Active Ageing Make Time to Rest

The research and evidence about the importance of being physically active as you age continues to grow. The more active you are, the more you are maintaining your independence, improving the quality of your life and preventing chronic conditions like dementia, heart disease and diabetes.

This is all great news, but is it possible to do too much? The simple answer is yes, and that's why you need to take time to rest and recover, as well as giving yourself the occasional reward for being so active.

If you've taken the decision to be more active as you age, well done! Hopefully you are seeing the mental and physical benefits of doing more, and you want to build on your progress. However, the importance of rest and recovery cannot be overlooked, and it may surprise you to learn that you become fitter and stronger whilst resting between training sessions.

What Happens When I'm Resting?

When you rest after being active it allows the body to repair muscle tissues and heal any micro tears; replenish your glycogen energy stores which prevent fatigue; reduce cortisol (the stress hormone) and prevent overuse injuries like tendonitis and stress fractures.

How to Properly Rest After Being Active

We all know how to take it easy, but if you are regularly physically active there are a few things to concentrate on. If you are pushing yourself and achieving those vigorous intensity minutes, try some active recovery. This could be gentle activities like walking, yoga or slow swimming which all help improve circulation and reduce muscle stiffness without putting more strain on the body. Make time for at least one full rest day every week, and listen to your body; persistent soreness or decreased motivation are clear signs to take a rest.

The most important element of rest is of course having quality sleep, it's the most crucial form of recovery and is essential for your physical and mental wellbeing. Even a little 20 minute nap in the afternoon plays its part in helping you age well as you become more active.

Reward Yourself

Rewarding yourself after being active strengthens positive habits, and can really encourage you to do more. A reward could be something immediate after exercising like a luxurious bubble bath or a little sweet treat, or you could reward yourself for hitting a milestone like a certain distance or time, a top score or number of days active. This might be a new bit of gym kit, booking a massage or having a little brag to your friends and family!

There are plenty of walking groups around who finish the days' walk at a coffee shop or pub, and as long as you've put the effort in that piece of cake or drink will taste all the better. Celebrate the small wins and daily achievements in your quest to age well, and you'll really be boosting your mental health as well as your physical strength.

Earning the Reward and Rest

I mentioned in a previous issue that as I turn 60 this year I wanted to take on some physical activity challenges. My training through a very wet and cold Northumbrian winter paid off, and last month I managed to complete the Rome Marathon. Building in rest days really helped me cope with the endless miles of training, and has also speeded up my recovery, although the biggest challenge felt like trying to get down the airplane steps the day after! As you can see I also happily rewarded myself after the event by thoroughly

rehydrating, which may not be recommended but was definitely needed.

My next challenges will be on my bike to give my feet a rest, but I'll be sure to build in recovery days and the occasional reward.



Tim Morton

Tim Morton

Former head of Physical Activity
at Parkinson's UK
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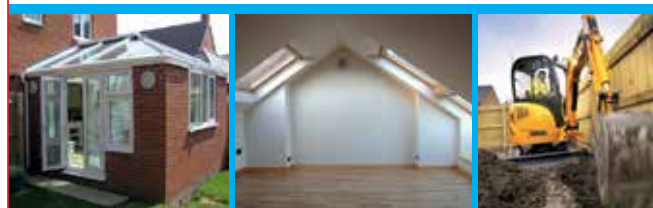
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What's On STOCKFIELD & RIDING MILL

BYWELL CASTLE OPEN GARDENS

On Sunday 21st June 12.00pm-6.00pm, Bywell Castle Open Garden in aid of Stocksfield Community Association. Come and wander around the fabulous grounds, unwind with live music and enjoy delicious food. Free parking available. Entry £5 for adults under 12's free.

Bywell Castle Gardens
admin@stocksfieldca.org.uk

GARDEN VISITS AND TALKS

If you want to be entertained whilst raising money for the NSPCC and the NGS then book a talk or a visit to my garden by phoning. Your own venue for talks and Crabtree Road Stocksfield for garden visit - 07765862374

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 QUAKER MEETING

Meeting For Worship at 11.00a.m 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 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. Stocksfield Methodist Church 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 enquiries@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 at: 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 - Facebook: [www.stocksfieldbaptistchurch.net](https://www.facebook.com/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

Stocksfield
www.stocksfieldchurchofengland.org

HATHA & SOMATIC BASED YOGA CLASSES

Hatha/Somatic yoga practice, breathing practices and relaxation. Wednesdays 9.30am-11am, booking is essential. Contact Rose for more information and to book your place. Riding Mill Millennium Hall 07515107774

ST JAMES CHURCH

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. For further details 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. Newton and Bywell village hall. 07810 286285

SOUND RELAXATION (SOUND BATH)

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Competition runs till Tuesday 19 May.

Good luck everyone.



SCAN ME



Stonechat Moments

Sometimes it's the little things we notice around us in the countryside which bring us closest to the land, like birds and other wildlife.

Recently I was walking part of the Hadrian's Wall path near the Temple of Mithras, idly picking up the odd shard of possibly Roman pottery from fresh molehills, when I heard the stonechat's chit chat call, like stones knocking together, close by. A pair were in the boggy vallum, that long linear 'moat' built as a defence against Scottish incursions, 1600 years ago, long abandoned and often scrubbed over with bracken, bushes and reeds. Ideal for them.

Stonechats for me have a personal resonance, sometimes it's as if they just pop up wherever I go along this Northumbrian coast, marking my way as I explore nature, little joyful totems linking me to nature. These bright chunky chats lift my spirit. From Bamburgh dunes to Benshaw Moor, Lindisfarne links to Annestead dunes, the hillforts at Lordenshaws and Yeavinger, along the banks of the Tyne, I come across them everywhere, even in old industrial sites!

It's their appearance, the male's sunrise flushed chest and black cowl, white neck ring and wing flash, the way they balance on the end of sticks and grasses, like enamelled bird badges waving in the wind. And their distinctive call, that click-clack contact call, all a mindful cut through to nowness.

I also love the way they just suddenly appear, and their artful fly catching and displays. I'm lucky to have them as near neighbours, sometimes in the garden, or then on the coastal gorse, nesting in the same thorn every year. Last summer their fledglings bathed in our garden pond! I've several times watched a bird completely abstract itself, almost turning inside out as it does a thorough preening in the full-on sunshine.

Unaware of the long human history of the site and of me this pair carried on with their bonding rituals, coming gradually closer, one stem at a time, and the male flying up and parachuting down impressively, the female pretending to ignore him. Until suddenly they were side by side staring at each other. Bobbing like two lollipops on adjacent fronds, they mated briefly then with zoomed off in opposite directions, starting the whole game again!

Out of the season, their seemingly blissful coupledness does break down and the young find their own territories. They may be joined by Scandinavian birds and rare subspecies, and then in early pre breeding times they act a bit like the notoriously polyamorous dunno and you can see maybe three males to one female, so she has the pick of a bunch, though I have an inkling that some pair for life, as far as possible.

One characteristic I find endearing is how they create secret nests near or on the ground, often under a bush approached by a grass channel, a bit like a skylark does, so as to put predators off their trail. Their hard to trace nests are the perfect distillation of everything found locally at micro scale, certain grasses and leaves, bits of string and plastic even, curls of fox or hare fur or down, all around a cosy cup construction.



The great thing is, in most, if not all, haunts they are still there, though dogs off leads disturb them. They are adaptable generalists within their somewhat vulnerable edgeland habitat choices, willing to settle now and then for a bit of semi urban man-made untidiness or field headland.

To me their appearance is a sign of hope, that not everything is in immediate and irreplaceable decline, still present as a distant silhouetted dot on the scrubby horizon, or as a colourful burst, balanced on a stick or fence nearby. These distinctive characters are weaved into the warp and weft of the land, their ticks and chats charged with wild beauty that ground us in any moment they might appear. Look out for them along the Tyne



Mike Pratt

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



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What's On

CORBRIDGE, HEXHAM & ACOMB

HEXHAM ARMY CADETS

Hexham Army Cadets - boys and girls aged 12-17. We parade thursdays nights 7-9pm at the Scout hut behind Hexham hospital. Come along to enjoy Fieldcraft, Navigation, first aid and other military subjects. Lookwide Centre
oliviar632@gmail.com

HEXHAM VILLAGE BAND

Community Ceilidh Band for players of any portable acoustic instrument. Meets Saturday mornings 10.00-11.30 at St Aidan's URC. For players new to this music we run The Hamlet Band, at Core Music on Friday mornings. West End Church Hall
hexhamvillageband@gmail.com

HEXHAM PUNK PRIDE

Saturday 13 June 11am-5pm. March with Hexham Samba band from Fore Street. Picnic and live punk music at Hexham bandstand. Line-up: Irked, Dinky Bossetti, Previous IOTA, Ming City Rockers, Gaydar. Drag king story-time in library. Free. Sele Park, Hexham
admin@hexhampride.org

CIRCLE DANCE

We are a friendly group meeting on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month, 7 - 9 pm at The Torch Centre, Hexham. We dance to beautiful music from across the world. Just bring comfortable shoes and enthusiasm. Torch Centre Hexham
joyce.storm@gmail.com

TYNEDALE LIONS CLUB

We are a group of men and women who give up our time to help our community and also raising tens of thousands of pounds for local charities and good causes. Whilst enjoying social activities together. County Hotel
tynedalelionsclub@gmail.com

BELSAY HALL CROQUET CLUB

We will be offering free croquet taster sessions throughout the season and you can find details at belsaycroquet.org/taster. Our Taster Sessions will be on Monday, May 18 then Saturday, June 13 and finally Monday July 13. Belsay Hall
belsaycroquet@gmail.com

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 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. - Hexham

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 BRIDGE CLUB

Hexham Bridge Club meets on Thursday evenings at 6.45pm. Friendly, competitive duplicate bridge. Tuition for beginners is available. Courses usually start in September. New members and visitors are welcome at any time, however please contact us beforehand.

Hexham Community Centre
contactus@hexhambridgeclub.org.uk

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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! We would love to see you! Hexham Community Church
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. County Hotel Hexham
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The Rest Revolution

are you getting enough sleep?

How immersing yourself in Nature, Focused Breathing, Meditation and Ancient techniques like Acupuncture Can Help.

Nature, Rest, and Ancient Practices: A Holistic Path to Wellbeing

In our super connected world, wellbeing often feels like a luxury rather than a necessity.

Both science and ancient wisdom agree: the path to a healthier, happier life is rooted in simple, natural practices. Embracing the healing power of nature, making good quality sleep top priority and integrating mindful techniques like breathwork practice, meditation and acupuncture, we can restore balance to both body and mind.

Nature as Medicine: The Healing Power of mother Nature "Green Spaces"

The human body evolved in close connection with the natural world, yet modern life often keeps us indoors, surrounded by screens and artificial light. Research shows that spending even 20 minutes in a green space can lower cortisol levels, reduce blood pressure and improve your mood.

Nature's benefits go beyond just stress relief. Exposure to natural sunlight helps regulate circadian rhythms, which in turn supports better sleep. Walking in a park, hiking in the woods, or simply tending to a garden can also boost creativity and focus, offering a mental reset that no digital device can replicate.

The Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku, or "forest bathing," is a perfect example. It's not about exercise or reaching a destination it's simply about immersing yourself in the sights, sounds, and scents of the forest. This mindful connection with nature has been shown to strengthen the immune system and enhance our emotional resilience.

The Rest Revolution: Why Quality Sleep is the Ultimate Self-Care

Sleep is not a passive state—it's an active process of repair, memory consolidation and supports hormonal balance. Many people treat it as optional, sacrificing rest for productivity.

Science shows chronic sleep deprivation can impair cognitive function, weaken immunity, and increase the risk of anxiety and depression.

Quality sleep is about more than just hours in bed. It's about creating the right conditions for deep, restorative rest to help you digest your day.

Positive sleep patterns include

Consistent sleep schedules to align with your body's natural rhythms.

A dark, cool, and quiet environment to promote melatonin production.

Limiting screen time before bed to avoid blue light disruption.

When we prioritise sleep it's not an indulgence, we are choosing investment in our mental clarity, emotional stability, and long term health.

Breathing: The Gateway to Calm

Breathing is the most accessible tool we have for regulating the nervous system. Slow, deep breathing activates the parasympathetic "rest and digest" response, lowering heart rate and offers a super positive effect on calming the mind.

One effective technique is box breathing: inhale for four counts, hold for four, exhale for four, and hold again for four. Just a few minutes of

this can reduce stress and improve focus.

Breathing exercises can also be paired with time in nature—imagine sitting under a tree, feeling the breeze, simply sync your breath with the rhythm of the environment amplifies the calming effects even deeper.

Meditation: Training the Mind for Rest and Resilience

Meditation is often misunderstood as "emptying the mind," but it's really about cultivating awareness and presence. Regular meditation has been shown to reduce anxiety, improve sleep quality, and even change brain structure in areas related to emotional regulation.

For sleep, guided body scan meditations can be especially effective. By slowly directing attention through each part of the body, you release tension and signal to the brain that it's safe to rest. Even five to ten minutes before bed can make a noticeable difference.

Acupuncture: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Stress

Acupuncture cornerstone of Traditional Chinese Medicine, involves inserting fine needles into specific points on the body to restore energy flow, or qi. Modern research suggests that acupuncture can stimulate the release of endorphins, regulate stress hormones, and improve sleep quality.

So if you're struggling with insomnia or chronic stress, acupuncture sessions can complement other wellness practices or therapies like massage. Many people report not only better sleep but also a deeper sense of calm and emotional regulation after treatment.

Integrating These Practices into Daily Life

The beauty of these approaches is that they work synergistically.

Imagine a typical day where you:

- Start with a few minutes of deep breathing by an open window.
- Take a midday walk in a park to recharge your mind.
- Wind down with a short meditation before bed.
- Schedule regular acupuncture or massage sessions to maintain balance.

Just Begin as soon as you can ;

Just start small, intentional actions create a ripple effect, improving not just sleep and stress levels, but overall boosted health and vitality.

Wellbeing doesn't have to be complicated. Reconnect or stay connected with nature, honouring the body's need for rest, surrender to quite time, carve space to meditate, join a class or forest bathe and explore what your local therapists can offer to help your nervous system reset.



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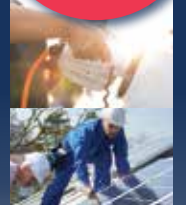
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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1		17	24	24	20	3	15	16	17	4	3	12	
2	13		20		3		16		10		5		19
3	20		21		14	9	21	14	22		3	18	2
4	21	2	7	14	3		23		3		20		17
5	23		1		12		3		25	17	4	3	20
6	3	23	3	15	3	7	4	9					17
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
				X			J					

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

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

10E	4A	5A	10J

13L	2A	1H	8H	9B	11C

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

W	H	I	T	W	E	E	K	E	F	C	D	T	I	L
C	H	U	R	C	H	I	V	A	A	W	T	X	V	M
C	A	Y	G	A	M	Y	I	Y	H	S	O	O	O	S
E	E	E	N	E	A	R	A	I	S	S	T	R	C	E
X	S	L	O	P	G	S	T	D	V	T	R	E	F	D
Y	T	A	E	R	T	W	E	S	I	I	B	U	R	A
J	R	O	O	B	A	M	A	T	S	L	S	O	S	R
N	A	U	H	L	R	L	X	D	E	S	O	T	T	A
A	N	P	K	Q	Y	A	A	M	R	F	F	H	N	P
D	A	S	E	V	E	N	T	H	S	U	N	D	A	Y
H	Y	L	O	T	C	W	I	I	Y	F	S	A	E	S
F	E	S	T	I	V	A	L	N	O	S	S	R	G	R
O	G	L	N	M	J	F	X	E	P	N	C	M	A	I
X	E	G	L	S	W	E	Z	W	K	G	M	P	P	A
Q	H	E	D	I	T	N	U	S	T	I	H	W	F	F

CELEBRATION	FESTIVAL	PARADES
CHURCH	FETES	SEVENTH SUNDAY
EASTER	HOLIDAY	WHIT WALKS
FAIRGROUND	MORRIS DANCING	WHIT WEEK
FAIRS	PAGEANTS	WHITSUNTIDE

		9					5
		5	3	8			7
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	1	8					9
	9			7	5	6	
6						2	

Harnessing the Sun

As energy prices continue to rise and households look for more stable, long-term solutions, solar power is becoming one of the most practical and attractive investments for homeowners across the UK. At Tyne Valley Wind and Solar, the focus is simple: deliver high-quality solar installations that help customers take control of their energy and move toward greater independence.

Harnessing the power of the sun is no longer a future concept, it is a proven, reliable technology transforming how homes generate and use electricity. Modern solar photovoltaic (PV) systems convert daylight into usable energy, allowing households to power appliances, lighting, and heating systems while reducing reliance on the grid. This shift toward self-generated power offers both practical and financial stability. While reducing energy bills is a clear advantage, solar is equally about control and resilience. When paired with battery storage, excess energy generated during the day can be stored for use in the evening, making households less dependent on external supply and better prepared for changing energy conditions.

Choosing the right installer is just as important as choosing solar itself. Reputation, experience, and recognised accreditations provide confidence that systems will be installed safely and correctly. Many companies appear during periods of government incentives and subcontract work, where attention to detail can suffer. A proven track record helps ensure consistent quality.

The equipment used is another key factor. High-quality panels, reliable inverters, and well-matched battery systems all contribute to performance and longevity. Unusually low quotes can indicate inferior products, missing components, or corners being cut, issues that may only become apparent over time.

Installation quality is critical. A solar system should enhance a home, not compromise it. This includes using the correct number of roof hooks, applying proper methods for different roof types, and maintaining watertight integrity. Slate roofs require appropriate shrouding, while concrete tiles should be carefully adjusted so they sit correctly without being lifted.

It is not uncommon for tiles to be cracked during installation. In some cases, they are temporarily repaired rather than replaced, which can lead to failures years later. Poor workmanship often only becomes visible

over time, reinforcing the importance of experienced installers who prioritise long-term reliability.

Consideration should also be given to the location of inverters and batteries. Ideally, these should be installed in a garage or externally rather than within the home. Positioning them in well-ventilated or outdoor spaces improves both safety and day-to-day comfort. While most systems are IP65 rated and designed to withstand the elements, additional weatherproof housing is strongly recommended to protect against the UK climate and further reduce the risk of damage or theft. At Tyne Valley Wind and Solar, we also provide bespoke timber cabinets that not only blend neatly into garden spaces but offer a secure, durable, and visually appealing solution for housing the system.

Solar can also be a smart addition when replacing a roof. Integrated systems fitted during a re-roof can reduce overall costs and create a more seamless finish, making solar a practical extension of necessary building work.

Post-installation support is essential. At Tyne Valley Wind and Solar, we provide ongoing advice, a first-year service check, and optional maintenance plans to ensure systems continue to perform as expected.

Our approach is built around long-term reliability and customer support, not just installation. The aim is to remain available throughout the lifetime of the system, offering guidance and assistance whenever it is needed, rather than simply installing the system and stepping away. By focusing on quality, careful installation, and long-term reliability, solar becomes a practical and dependable solution for modern homes.



Craig Little

Craig Little
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10 Foodie Spots where you can Taste Northumberland

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Taste of Northumberland is a scheme designed to champion the county's food, drink and hospitality businesses that grow, make, or serve products within Northumberland. To qualify, businesses must demonstrate genuine local sourcing and production, as well as meet recognised food quality standards.

We have rounded up ten of the best restaurants, breweries, shops and farms who are part of the scheme so that, while you are searching for somewhere to eat or doing a spot of shopping, you can be sure that you are enjoying the best, freshest and most local ingredients at a business who prides itself on authenticity.

Rigg & Furrow

Rigg and Furrow is an authentic farmhouse brewery that has given a new lease of life to its old milking parlour. Creating new takes on Farmhouse beers, this independent, family-run team brews by hand and creates exciting, innovative, fermentation-focused beers. They brew history-inspired ales, crisp lagers, hoppy pales and mixed fermentation beers reflective of Northumberland's rural landscape.

The Alnwick Garden

The Alnwick Garden is a fantastic attraction that welcomes visitors of all ages to explore its stunning landscapes and plant varieties, interactive water features and exciting seasonal events. Admire the spectacular Grand Cascade, stroll through the elegant Rose Garden and prepare for a thrill in the mysterious Poison Garden. Head to their shop to choose from an excellent spread of Northumberland produce and souvenirs to take Northumberland home with you or gift to your loved ones after your visit.

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Baillifgate Hotel

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Northumbrian Gifts

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Blagdon Farm Shop

Set within the beautiful Blagdon Estate in the heart of the Northumberland countryside, Blagdon Farm Shop is filled with outstanding local produce. From succulent 21-day dry-aged Belted Galloway beef to freshly made pies, quiches and seasonal fruit and vegetables, you'll find everything you need here and they proudly stock goods from more than 50 local producers and from their own farm.

Hauxley Farm Dairy

Hauxley Farm Dairy is a warm and welcoming dairy farm that sells dairy from its very own cows and produces delicious milkshakes, cold coffees, butter, milk and more. The cows can be seen grazing near the hut and the farm prides itself on providing fresh products of fantastic quality. Plus, their milking parlour consists of two automated Lely milking robots which helps to reduce the human interaction with the cows and allows the cows to be milked at their own leisure!

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Our website now has a fully interactive Business Directory meaning our Traders contact details are available at the click of a button: www.tynevalleyexpress.co.uk/business-directory



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