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inside MORPETH

At last winter is over – or hopefully so – with the clocks going forward to mark the start of summertime, and finger crossed, some fine days just around the corner.

So, just the time to start thinking about getting out and about to enjoy the coast, countryside and some great attractions on our own doorsteps, and with that in mind, we have some ideas for great days out for our readers in this edition of Inside Morpeth.

First, our young reporter Jack Brodie travelled little more than 10 minutes north of Morpeth up the A1, to visit the wonderful Northumberland Zoo that has just won two prestigious North East tourism awards – and if you go there, it is easy to see why! Owned and run by the Bradley family, the zoo not only has more than 80 different species of animals and birds for visitors to get up close to, but it is now an important sanctuary for endangered species such as its two gorgeous snow leopards as well as a colony of Livingstone Fruit Bats which can be seen nowhere else in mainland UK than Northumberland Zoo.

We also tell you about very different days out to be enjoyed - again so close to Morpeth - at our three fabulous Northumberland National Trust properties at Wallington, Cragside and Seaton Delaval Hall. All are very different to one another, but they are fantastic reminders of our proud past in this part of the world. Walk in the grounds or have a look around inside – either way they all offer another great day-out idea.

Closer to home – in fact, right in the very heart of Morpeth town centre – we take a stroll around the Millennium Green, which started life as a project that caught the imagination of those responsible for handing out grants to mark that special moment in time when the year 1999 became 2000! A group of Morpeth residents successfully applied for funding to transform what was little more than a wasteland behind Newgate Street, into a haven of floral colour and wildlife. Twenty-five years later it is still as attractive as ever thanks to the hard work of a dedicated band of trustees and volunteers. If you haven't been, then we recommend a few minutes of calm and tranquillity next time you are out and about in Morpeth town centre.

Ian Leech
Editor of Inside Morpeth

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Front cover: Canadian Lynx at Northumberland Zoo

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It's time to back the Trust

Reports Inside Morpeth Editor **Ian Leech**

For very nearly 20 years Greater Morpeth Development Trust (GMDT) has played a remarkable – if perhaps very under-rated – role in the community life of Morpeth and the people who live and work in, or visit the town.

In that time the Trust has led the way in creating new or improved facilities for local people to enjoy, and to do that has brought more than £12m of outside investment into the town from a variety of investors including among others the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Railway Heritage Trust, local councils, private and commercial backers – money that may well under other circumstances not have found its way into Morpeth!

GMDT was originally established in 2006 to manage what at the time was known as a Government-funded Castle, Woods and Water initiative aimed at developing and delivering community-based projects loosely based along the length of the River Wansbeck as it ran through Morpeth from the villages of Mitford to Bothal.

Since then a diverse range of projects has been carried out led by GMDT which under its leadership, developed a partnership approach to working in the town resulting in the invaluable support of co-funding partners, statutory bodies, its own members and dedicated volunteers.

There have been headline achievements notably the much-praised restoration and rejuvenation in 2009 of Morpeth's 300-year-old Town Hall designed by the charismatic architect, soldier and playwright Sir John Vanbrugh, who was also responsible for the magnificent Blenheim Palace, the Castle Howard stately home in Yorkshire and nearer to home Delaval Hall.

More recently, GMDT led the repair and restoration of Morpeth's Victorian railway station designed by Benjamin Green and opened in 1846, when new-fangled train travel was in its infancy. The Grade II Listed Building had been in a near-derelect state before funding of £2.3m largely from the Heritage Lottery Fund, was secured to restore the station to its early Victorian splendour. At the time the station was re-opened in 2020, Sir Peter Hendy, chairman of Network Rail, who



The Trust led the restoration and regeneration of Morpeth Railway Station

commented: "A town should be proud of its railway station and once again Morpeth has a station to be proud of!"

Significantly, he also added that Network Rail could not have put in the effort or funding to do the work that had been led by GMDT at Morpeth Railway Station.

Outside Morpeth, GMDT has played a leading role along with the local parish council, in saving and safeguarding the future of what was judged by English Heritage as another 'At Risk' Grade II* Listed building, namely the 14th Century Pele Tower at Cresswell which was roofless and in a totally dilapidated state before the repair and restoration work began. The Trust continues to work with the village to restore the adjoining Victoria walled garden once attached to Cresswell Hall, so it can be visited and

used by local people.

However, over the years GMDT has worked in so many other ways to deliver projects around the key themes of the arts and culture, the environment, heritage and the community in line with its stated goals of making Morpeth a better place to live, work and visit.

For example, the Trust brought the cinema back to Morpeth – not a glitzy ten-screen complex but an imaginative initiative to use existing facilities firstly at the Town Hall and latterly at the St James' Centre in Wellway, to screen modern releases as well as classic films from days gone by.

The Trust was instrumental in the restoration of the grave of suffragette Emily Wilding Davison in Morpeth's St Mary's Churchyard, and later in 2013 was

Picnic in the Park is a popular GMDT family fun day out



GMDT's Julie Whiteman and Frank Rescigno pictured with author Meriel Schindler at the recent Morpeth Book Festival



also at the forefront of organising events in the town to mark the 100th anniversary of her untimely death after she was struck by King George's V horse Anmer during the 1913 running of the Epsom Derby.

Every summer GMDT organises Picnic in the Park – an afternoon of free fun and games for all the family, in Carlisle Park. It supports the annual Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering; the annual Heritage Open Days; has regularly brought the marvellous Northumberland Theatre Company productions to the town; and has supported local author Bridget Gubbins to publish her remarkably researched series of books covering 1,000 years of the story of Morpeth.

Two years ago, GMDT also ambitiously launched the town's very own book festival in conjunction with Northumberland's Library Service.

In line with the original Castle, Woods & Water brief, GMDT has continually worked to improve the local environment and access to the countryside, footpaths and woodland walks around Morpeth. It designed and installed informative signage along local woodland and riverside footpaths to help walkers of all ages fully appreciate the floral, fauna and wildlife they might see on their walks and published a popular series of walking trails around Morpeth. In partnership with the Morpeth Litter Group, GMDT continues to take part in 'litter blitzes' around town as well as being involved in bulb and tree planting initiatives.

And all this has been achieved by a board of volunteer directors supporting just a handful of full or part-time staff. Currently, GMDT has just six directors and two part-time office administrators.

Like so many similar community-based organisations, the past few years have been financially difficult ones for Greater Morpeth Development Trust to navigate. The Trust does not receive any significant core funding from outside bodies, but income from project managing schemes such as the renovation and restoration of the Town Hall and latterly the railway station, has produced funds to enable it to carry on enriching community life in Morpeth.

In his recently published annual report, GMDT chair Mike Willis acknowledged that some previous funding streams have dried up and it has also faced increasing competition for pots of money it could perhaps draw upon.

One critical aspect of the railway station project was to create a thriving business hub in Morpeth from which small firms could operate in the unique surroundings of an East Coast main line station. So, seven newly-refurbished offices were created in the main station building along with a café and a caboose-style taxi office, which would also produce a sustainable income for GMDT from their rental payments.

But, the timing could not have been worse because just as the station works were completed Britain went into total lockdown to try to halt the spread of the Covid virus. As a result, six firms lined up to move into the station offices, could not go ahead with their occupancies and it is only in the past year that they have been able to be filled along with tenants taking over the café and the taxi office. As a result, said Mike, GMDT lost three years of vital rental income which has hit their finances hard.

"We have tried to generate some funds so that we could become self-sustainable

in the future and we have also changed the way we cost our projects," he added. "If this is painting a bleak picture it is because the past few years have been difficult for us to navigate financially and organisationally as we seek to evolve in a way that will take us forward for the next five to 10 years

"We are particularly proud of the projects we deliver to make Morpeth a better place to live, work and visit and we will continue to strive to bring new projects to fruition."

One of those, the Trust is working on in partnership with local councils and a team of professionals including a developer, architect and theatre designer, is a project to establish a multipurpose arts and culture venue to stage cinema screenings, live streaming, professional and youth theatre, musical events and concerts, exhibitions and lectures.

"We are doing all we can to continue doing what we have done for the town for nearly 20 years by securing our long-term, sustainable future, but we do need support not just financially but in other ways," said Mike. "We need more directors perhaps with different skill-sets and interests to help us run the Trust – people who would like to give something back to our town."

At the same time the GMDT is also appealing for more volunteers to give up some time to help run their events' programme throughout the year. "We have a wonderful core group of volunteers without whom we simply could not do what we do, and I think they would be the first to testify that they enjoy being involved with us in many different ways," Mike added.

Anyone interested in putting themselves forward as a Greater Morpeth Development Trust director or an events' volunteer, can do so by contacting info@gmdt.org

On a mission to aid children of Africa

A heart-breaking trip to Africa has left Morpeth resident **Eric Tolman** determined to do what he can to improve the lives and living conditions of children he met there during his stay, by raising enough money to build a mission house at their school near Kampala, the largest city in Uganda, **reports Ian Leech.**

It was more than a decade ago that Eric first became involved in efforts to help the youngsters, when he and his family hosted two young singers and traditional dancers from a children's choir which was touring the UK on a fund-raising trip organised by the Pearl of Africa child care charity.

The charity had been established by husband-and-wife couple Molly and Paul in an effort to break the cycle of poverty being endured by children in remote communities surrounding Kampala, by ensuring they have access to education facilities, clean water and sustainable food supplies, despite getting virtually no official government financial support which amounts to only £4.50 per child for a year.

Since then, the foundation has built six schools, looking after more than 1,500 children whose families cannot afford the fees to educate their sons and daughters.

The choir has visited Morpeth several times to perform at the town's Methodist Church and the adjoining Newminster and Chantry Schools, and each time Eric and his family have hosted children in their home.

A year ago, Eric got the chance to be part of a delegation on a ten-day visit to the New Kabaala Bujega Primary School near Kampala, to see for himself the good work being done by the foundation, but he also came away with a new determination to help build on that work.

At the school more than 20 children from toddlers to teenagers, are taught in the most primitive of conditions. Many of the children are orphans for whom the school is also home, while others daily walk the four miles from their homes. Those who stay, sleep in the one small room with no toilet facilities, and are locked in every night for their own safety to protect them from being 'stolen' by intruders and put to work on the streets of Kampala.



Eric Tolman and a smiling and happy group of children

There are few toilets or washing facilities, and sustenance each day is a breakfast of porridge and then in the evening a meal of water, flour and rice.

Eric returned home from his trip where he and his fellow visitors helped with vital maintenance and repair work, heartened by what is being done to help the children, but also shocked at the conditions in which they are living. "It was heart-breaking," he told me. "The children really have nothing and in many ways it was like looking again at the Band Aid footage of the 1980s because so little has changed."

It was back in 1984 that musicians Bob Geldhof and Midge Ure put together the Band Aid 'supergroup' to bring to the world's attention the disaster that was unfolding in the Ethiopian famine. That year Band Aid topped the festive music charts with their recording of 'Don't They Know it's Christmastime Back Home' that raised millions to help with relief work.

Now, Eric plans to raise £25,000 towards the cost of building a mission house at the school to accommodate visitors

going out there to help with urgent repairs and maintenance work, which will also raise money through them paying for their accommodation.

He is busy organising a fundraising ball at Gosforth Park Hotel on Saturday June 1st. Tickets are now on sale at £65 for the evening which will include a three-course meal plus entertainment featuring the Ryton Singers who sing with the Pearl of Africa choir on its UK tours.

Eric has also set up a Just-Giving page at www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/MissionJovan, named after a young boy he met during his visit to Uganda. He can be contacted through the page for donations and to purchase tickets for the fundraising effort, which he says will be the first of many he will be organising to meet his £25,000 target.

He says the experience of going to Uganda is one that will live with him for ever and it is firing his determination to help give the children the best possible start in life. "It is wonderful to see how happy the children are despite having nothing," he added. "We have to help them!"

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Green memories of a rare moment in time

Whisper it ever so softly - but it is fast coming up to 25 years since that moment in time when the world slipped almost seamlessly into a new millennium, writes Inside Morpeth Editor **Ian Leech**. As Big Ben chimed midnight the Nineties moved into the Noughties and the third millennium was born.



Val Stevens (chair) with her Millennium Green trustees and volunteers



Before work began 25 years ago

Everyone old enough to have been around at the time has their own very different and personal individual memories of the moment, but on a broader scale it is also remembered because of the development of so many new community projects that merged the word millennium into their titles.

One of those projects, for instance, involved the creation of millennium greens all over the country. A target was set for 250 such greens, part funded by the National Lottery through the Countryside Agency and 245 were actually designed and developed, including one right here in Morpeth. All were very different, some quite large and others more modest in scale.

What they had in common, however, is that they all had to meet the criteria of making a real contribution to the life of local communities; they had to be open and freely accessible to be enjoyed by people of all ages; and had to be attractive spaces with an area for public events, as well as offering a rare opportunity to enjoy nature and wildlife often in the very heart of a town or city centre.

Which is exactly what the Morpeth Millennium Green achieved a quarter of a century ago, and, of course, is still achieving!

In that time the Morpeth green has evolved and developed into a haven of peace and tranquillity, amazingly just a stone's throw away from the hustle and bustle of busy Newgate Street. Because it is hidden away behind the shops and offices, however, many people are actually unaware of the green's very existence, so much so, that it is often spoken of as

Morpeth's 'secret garden!' Access to the green is through the archway leading on to the Old Bakehouse Yard, about half-way along the busiest part of the street.

The idea of creating the green was first mooted some two years before the actual millennium when a group of local residents living close to the site, came up with the vision of transforming into a community garden what at the time was an unloved half-an-acre plot that was little more than a wasteland and dumping ground for all manner of rubbish. So, they set about the task of raising the £60,000 funding to turn their dream into a reality.

They succeeded by attracting £33,000 from the Millennium Green Commission; £14,000 from development agency One North East; and £5,000 each from the Countryside Commission, the Northumberland Environmental Partnership, and Bass Brewery. The former Castle Morpeth Council also sold its share of the land for a token £1 with 100 children from St Robert's School each donating one penny to make up the total.

That enabled landscape architect Mick Hall to be brought on board to design the garden and the diggers to go in to start its construction. By the middle of the year 2000 sufficient progress had been made to allow Castle Morpeth Mayor Frank Harrington, to formally open the Old Bakehouse Millennium Green.

Since then 10 trustees have managed, maintained and kept tidy the garden with the help of around 30 dedicated 'Friends' of the green which is divided into a variety of sections including a marsh garden planted with water-loving plants, woodland gardens and an insect garden all planted up with a carefully chosen mix of trees, shrubs, spring bulbs, perennials and wild flowers. Added together they not only provide a splashes of colour

and variety throughout the year, but also attract the birds and bees, the insects and butterflies which bring such life to the garden.

The efforts of the trustees and 'friends' to maintain such a countryside haven in the very heart of Morpeth, have been recognised annually over many years by the award of Civic Trust Green Flags and Green Pennants awarded to only the very best parks and open spaces. Each June there's a summer garden fete on the Green where music days, poetry readings and Christmas Carol singing with local school children are also popular events.

Over a cup of coffee in Newgate Street's Café des Amis, trustees Val Stevens, Joan Soames and Dorothy Waddington, shared with me their clear love of being involved with the Old Bakehouse Yard Millennium Green and their open invitation to anyone including Morpeth residents, visitors to the town, nearby shop and office workers, to take a few moments to explore the garden and appreciate the peace and nature around them. As they said - 'Over the last 25 years, as a haven for wildlife the garden has matured into a place for people of all ages to enjoy.'

The only help trustees get towards the upkeep of the garden or to pay for new planting, has been a small annual grant from Morpeth Town Council which they are once again hoping to get, plus small funding raising events and donations from individuals and perhaps local businesses which they are planning to approach. But, they are also keen to invite new 'friends' to join them in helping to look after the garden or run events there, and anyone interested can contact them through the www.millenniumgreenmorpeth.org.uk website. The Old Bakehouse Yard Millennium Garden is open daily from dawn to dusk and is completely free to enjoy.



The Drift Café team celebrating its 10th anniversary

Gamble that paid off for beauty spot café owners

Exactly 10 years ago husband-and-wife **Duncan and Kate Lawrence** took what must have seemed at the time, like the gamble of a lifetime by taking over a derelict café on the edge of one of Northumberland's coastal beauty spots, writes Inside Morpeth Editor **Ian Leech**.

After a year of sheer hard work, blood sweat and tears, they had got The Drift Café on the road from Cresswell village to Druridge Bay, ready to welcome its very first customers. Fast forward those ten years and The Drift has become arguably the most popular café along the whole of the magnificent Northumberland coastline, with quite literally a world-reputation.

As Duncan told me over a cup of coffee, the name of The Drift is known at the other side of the world! Recently, he said, a regular customer who had popped in for a coffee and a bacon sandwich, told him that while he was in New Zealand he had got talking to a barman who asked him where he came from. When he replied Northumberland, the barman asked him if he knew The Drift Café near a village called Cresswell.

"It seems the barman had also called in to The Drift when visiting Northumberland, and had been so

impressed that he remembered our name and location, which seemed quite incredible to us," Duncan.

But, perhaps not so surprising to the very many customers not just local ones, but from all over the country, who know the café just a stone's throw from the sheer breath-taking sights of Druridge Bay.

At first, Duncan and Kate ran The Drift almost single-handedly with seating for just 28 customers. But, so popular has it become, they now employ around 50 staff with indoor and outdoor seating for up to 250. They have built their reputation on daily servings of homemade meals – all-day breakfasts, pies, quiches, cakes, bakes and scones, gammon broth, wraps, toasties, and jacket potatoes, available seven days a week from 9am until 4.30pm.

Then a few months ago, they took another gamble to open their 'Mykonos' Greek restaurant with Head Chef Aris Georgillias in charge, who admits he is living the

dream of serving the finest authentic dishes from his home country, as he says 'just they way we would cook them back home.'

The island is, of course, a tourist hot-spot in the South Aegean Sea noted for the cuisine served in its restaurants and tavernas, and Aris told me: "What we are doing here at Cresswell, is giving our diners the true experience of Mykonos cuisine just the way it is meant to be."

So popular has the restaurant become that is now open for lunchtime sittings from 12 Noon on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, as well as on Friday and Saturday evenings from 5.30pm onwards. Aris has also just added a grill menu with all meats including Greek pork and leek sausage, marinated in the traditional way and grilled on a lava stone grill.

Table bookings at The Drift Cresswell Greek Restaurant 'Mykonos' can be made by calling 07765 380 349

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David Brind (right) with his walking pal Stuart Jackson



Walking back to health and charity pot of gold

Company boss David Brind has walked his way back to good health at the same time as raising thousands of pounds for a charity close to his heart, after suffering a cardiac arrest on his way from work to his home on the outskirts of Morpeth writes Ian Leech.

It was six years ago that David managed to walk into the Cramlington Accident & Emergency Hospital before collapsing and being rushed into intensive care, then transferred to Newcastle's Freeman's Hospital where the medical teams nursed him back to health.

Since then, the father-of-two has launched the Heart of the Tyne charity along with his good friend Stuart Jackson, to not only organise fund-raising events, but to raise awareness and improve education about heart and circulatory diseases, especially among the local business community.

Their initial aim was to raise £60,000 to mark the 60th anniversary of the British Heart Foundation, but thanks to their latest fund-raising marathon they are now well past the £100,000 mark!

Together, over four days David and Stuart, hiked down the Northumberland coast

from the mouth of the Tweed to the Tyne, covering almost 100 miles along the way. Their first stage was the trek from Berwick upon Tweed to Seahouses, followed by overnight stops at Amble and Blyth before finishing at Tynemouth.

At the same time, through their charity's Business Board, they invited local firms and businesses to encourage their members of staff to cover 60,000 steps to each add £60 to the fund-raising total. On the last day of their trek they were also joined by members of the Newcastle Rugby Foundation, two Newcastle Falcons' players Marcus Tiffen and Sam Clark, and their own daughters Holly Brind and Elena Jackson.

The walk was not the first David and Stuart have undertaken to raise money for heart and circulatory disease research. They have twice completed the Hadrian's Wall Hike as well as a charity walk from Glasgow to Edinburgh. "Walking was an important part of my recovery process so it seemed a natural way to raise money for our charity," said David, who is the Chief Financial Officer for the North Shield's-based Kitwave Wholesale Group, which operates distribution depots across the UK.

Through Inside Morpeth, David wanted to thank the many people, businesses

and organisations which had supported their walk, particularly mentioning the Newcastle Foundation and The Inn Collection Group which provided he and Stuart with overnight accommodation and a welcome party at the Tynemouth Castle hotel.

"We had some fantastic support not only in terms of financial donations, but also to keep Stuart and I going over what were four quite tough days," David added. "The money we have raised is vital in supporting the British Heart Foundation, but doing what we can to raise awareness of heart health problems that can arise completely unexpectedly as I am only too aware myself, is equally important.

"Every 75 minutes someone in this area suffers a cardiac arrest and anything any of us can do to bring down that number, is crucial. I know myself how very fortunate I was to survive my cardiac arrest thanks to the wonderful care and attention I received at both the Cramlington and Freeman hospitals. Anything I can do to repay that debt to the medical teams who looked after me, is so very important to me."

Donations can be made to the Heart of the Tyne foundation through its JustGiving page.



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Draw up your retirement game plan

Retirement isn't what it used to be. We're working longer, living longer and have so many different ways to use our pension pot. All the more reason to get the experts involved.

These days there's so much flexibility around retirement. You can choose to stay invested in your pension, decide your own level of income, or even withdraw the entire pot. Buying an annuity is now another choice, rather than being non-negotiable.

Meanwhile, as always, greater freedom brings greater responsibility. You've got to make sure those retirement savings last. It's a thorny business full of tough decisions, made even trickier by the number of options available.

Expert advice is key – your retirement could last 30 years or more, so you'll need to make important short- and long-term decisions

Let's look at retirement age to begin with. The cliff-edge idea of stopping work at 60 or 65 and 'being retired' is history. Today a phased approach is much more likely, transitioning gradually from working and saving towards leisure and spending. Most of us can do this on our terms, according to our own life plans, rather than being restricted by a pension scheme or an employer.

Visualise your retirement

Ask yourself what your retirement looks like. Then how can you make it a reality? If you're retired already, is it as you imagined? Being 'in retirement' is much more than simply drawing an income. It's also about running an efficient home, managing your tax-free cash and building a sustainable income that will last your lifetime.

Although there's no set retirement age these days, you can start drawing your workplace and private pensions from the age of 55 (increasing to 57 from 6 April 2028). Add to this the pressures of supporting both older and

younger generations, and it's clear a rethink is needed on how best to use your savings. To adapt to changing needs, you might need to consider other assets and income sources alongside your pension.

So what you have is a situation that's both flexible and heavy on risk, whether you choose to dip into your pension pot or remain invested. Either way, you'll need help and expertise to face the challenges.

In retirement you're also likely to encounter a new set of risks. For example, if you get off to a poor start when you begin drawing your income, with markets falling and returns negative, your investments will have to work much harder from the outset to maintain your desired income.

Another layer of complexity in your retirement strategy is underestimating how long your money needs to last. The 100-year life is fast becoming normal, with more of us living much longer, more active lives than ever before.

We're here to help you navigate these obstacles. We believe the value of advice comes from building a strong relationship over time and understanding the needs of both you and your family. We're experts in the intricacies of modern retirement. So you can worry less and focus on the important things in life.

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A country tale that's well worth telling!

'I always thought there was a story to tell about the history of Robson & Cowan, but never thought anyone would get around to telling it.' Those are the words of **Andy Cowan**, one of the family which for more than 100 years has owned and run a business that has become a retailing legend in the county of Northumberland.

He wrote them as an introduction to his book telling the story of the Cowan family of Robson & Cowan which he was inspired to write after one of their customers – Lady Cynthia Irvine – enquired if someone from the business would be willing to share their story with members of the Mitford Historical Society.

The result is a fascinating insight into a tale packed full of memories of a century of trading that began in what was then the small hamlet of Scots' Gap just 10 miles west of Morpeth in the heart of some of the best farming land in Northumberland.

The business was started in 1922 by cousins Joe Robson and Tom Cowan. Their partnership lasted just six years before Joe decided to become the secretary and auctioneer at Scots' Gap Mart, so Tom decided to carry on the business alone. In 1936 Tom married his bride Elizabeth and they would go on to have six sons - Tom, John, George, Andy, David and Frank - all of whom at some time would work in what was a truly family business.

Initially, supplying local farmers with the feed they needed for their livestock, the Robson & Cowan Country Store customer-base has grown far beyond Scots' Gap, to now cover large swathes of the North East from Kielder and the Tyne Valley in the west, to the Scottish Borders in the north, to Tyneside and County Durham in the south, and what they now supply and sell has expanded beyond all recognition to their early trading days.

In his narrative, Andy recalls the early days of the business when it was so reliant on the local railway service along what was known as the 'Wannie Line' with three trains a day as he says 'fetching and carrying livestock and supplies' to and from some of the finest livestock rearing countryside in the whole of Northumberland, with older children also travelling by train to school in



Andy Cowan pictured with Lady Cynthia Irvine

Morpeth as well as passengers heading for the Bellingham Show or the Rothbury Steeplechases.

He goes on to recall that the family realised that to survive in tough post-war trading conditions, the business had to diversify starting with selling televisions around the time of the Queen's Coronation in 1953. Since then, Robson & Cowan has expanded its electrical and white goods department to stock everything from televisions to toasters, kettles and irons, cookers, fridges and freezers, food processors to microwaves. The company has its own experienced team to deliver and install larger appliances for customers as well as taking away replaced goods.

The store also stocks an extensive range of top quality, fashionable country clothing and workwear as well as equestrian equipment and clothing including jackets,

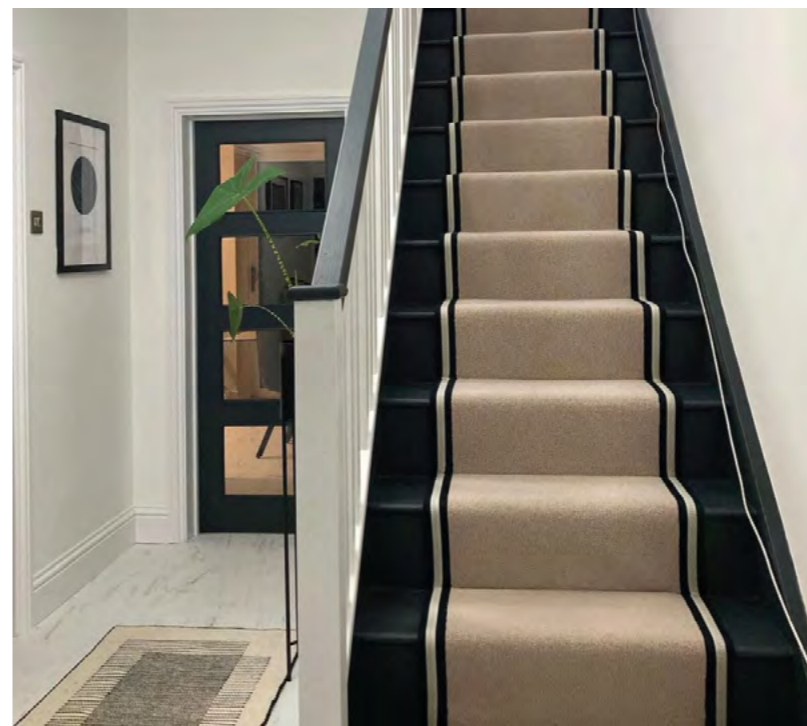
jodhpurs, breeches, boots, hats and riding hats. Owner's horses are not forgotten either with everything needed for the tack-room as well as feed, supplements and stable bedding.

But, the store has never strayed far from its roots of meeting the needs of local farmers, although these days garden owners of all shapes and sizes are also well catered for at the country store. One particular speciality is supplying a range of machinery to make gardening as easy as possible, with a favourite being the increasingly popular robotic lawn mowers which can trundle away cutting the grass without any input from the garden owners. The business is a leading supplier and installer of the very latest Husqvarna Automower®.

Also, in stock are garden tractors, petrol driven or battery operated cordless lawnmowers, chainsaws, hedge-cutters and strimmers with staff always on hand with advice on which is the best equipment for any garden. At the other end of the scale, the store stocks a huge range of smaller garden tools, composts, fertilisers, plant care, weed and pest control products.

Perhaps, the last word should go to Andy Cowan who writes in his book: "It was just so good to look back on the success of Robson & Cowan, because it is remarkable that a little country store which is in the middle of nowhere, was started by our father Tom Cowan in a village few had heard of - 'The Gap'. Despite many difficult and turbulent years, it has survived to give us the Robson & Cowan we know today. None of this would have been possible without our loyal workforce past and present. May we keep the flag flying for many years to come"

* Copies of Andy Cowan's 'Survival in Rural Northumberland, are available free to customers at the Scots Gap Country Store while stocks last.



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Friday 9am to 4pm; Saturday 10am to 3pm
Closed Sunday

TOWN CRYER!



The latest News from Morpeth Town Council

Mayoral year is coming to a close after a very busy twelve months



Jade Crawford
Mayor of Morpeth

Spring time at last, the time of year we really see Morpeth bloom, attracting visitors from near and far.

Morpeth is certainly bucking the trend when it comes to the high street, three new units are being created in Sanderson Arcade ready to welcome new businesses, on top of that the old Barclays Bank building is currently under renovation to house an exciting new café.

I was especially happy to see The Jewellers Guild Easter Diamond Hunt return for a third year, another unique Morpeth event and of course the row boats reopening for the spring/summer season.

My charity for the year, Northumberland Mountain Rescue Service, has benefited from a couple of events recently including a very successful Burn's Night Supper, hosted by Deputy Mayor Betty Bawn, at the Sun Inn in Morpeth. Following on from that staff from David Auld & Co conquered Cheviot by taking part in a sponsored walk. If you have any spare money your donations would be gratefully received via the Just Giving page, www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/David-Auld. Thank you to all of those who attended and supported these events.

After the great success of last year's coronation event at Stanners we are delighted to put on another May fair this year as part of our goal to increase town events! I look forward to seeing you all there.

As this is my final Mayor's Address I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Morpeth for their support and helping to raise money for my nominated charity.



Morpeth Town Council, Morpeth Town Hall, Market Place, Morpeth NE61 1LZ
Call 01670 514314 email joanne.wilson@morpeth-tc.gov.uk or mayor@morpeth-tc.gov.uk or visit www.morpeth-tc.gov.uk

Date for Mayor-making

The customary Mayor Making Ceremony will take place on Wednesday 22nd May at 6pm in the Ballroom of Morpeth Town Hall as part of the Annual Meeting of Morpeth Town Council.

Part of the meeting's traditions involves passing around between Councillors a silver snuffbox and 'Emily's Dish' filled with chocolates and a speech by the outgoing Mayor, including their fund-raising activities. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

Summer of fun ahead

As the weather begins to improve, preparations are underway to get the paddling pool ready for opening on the last weekend in May, and it will be open right through to the first weekend in September.

Whilst we endeavour to keep the paddling pool open at all times, Health & Safety is our priority so the pool may need to be taken out of use and closed for emergency maintenance at short notice. Please check the Town Council website and Facebook page for updates and confirmed opening times to avoid any disappointment.

Fair Day returns in 2024, extending to a two-day event, filled with fun including Brass Does Rock in Carlisle Park, Turners Fun Fair, Car Shows, Food and Drink Fair, evening entertainment in the park to name but a few.

Following a successful February half term and Easter holiday free activity programme, we are working with Barnabas Safe & Sound to plan for the Summer holidays so watch this space for booking information etc.

We are also looking to plan for other events in the year ahead, and hope to provide something for everyone, keep an eye on our social media pages and website for more information.

COUNCIL MEETING TIMETABLE

SEE NOTICEBOARDS AND WEBSITE

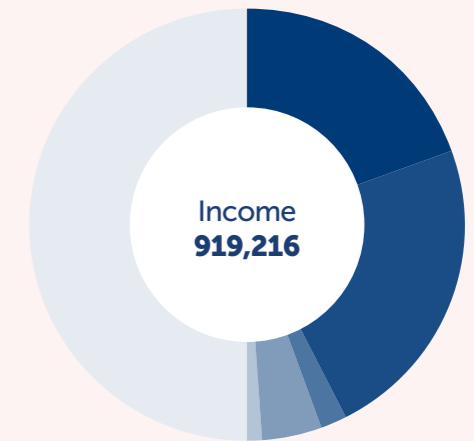
Meeting Timetable for March and April 2024. All meetings will be held in the Corn Exchange of the Town Hall, unless otherwise stated on the agenda. All Committee meetings commence at 6:30 pm, unless otherwise stated on the posters or website.

Planning and Transport Committee
8th May 2024

Finance and General Purposes Committee
1st May 2024

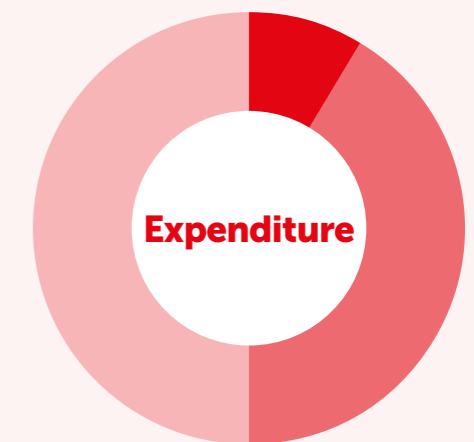
Annual Meeting and Mayor Making
22nd May 2024

Where your money goes Summary Budget 2024/25



- Management & Support **361,975**
- Recreation & Leisure Services **423,701**
- Environmental Services **35,000**
- Cemeteries **0**
- Tourism, Grants & Subsidies **78,200**
- Other Services **20,340**

Total Gross Expenditure
919,216



- Fees and Charges **-159,701**
- Council Tax **-759,515**
- From Balances **0**

Total Income
-919,216

Bloomin' good time to visit National Trust's properties

Spring has officially arrived. There are two National Trust places to visit, less than 35 minutes from Morpeth with colourful flower displays towards the end of May.



Ramble through the rhododendron at Cragside

If you're looking for a dramatic flower show, then look no further than Cragside. Every spring towards the end of May and into June, Cragside's rhododendrons put on a fabulous display which covers the grounds in millions of flowers.

The rhododendrons are part of a grand designer garden that surrounds the House. Cragside's creators William and Margaret Armstrong transformed what was once a rocky moorland into a fantasy mountain landscape.

They covered the grounds in trees, created engineered lakes, and planted the hillsides in swathes of rhododendron which burst into bloom every spring.

You can explore this impressive display on one of eight waymarked walks. The Armstrong Trail will show you one of the most photographed views of the House surrounded in a kaleidoscope of colour. If you're feeling adventurous, it's well worth a detour through the Rock Garden to get up close to some of Cragside's unique varieties.

On a stroll around Nelly's Moss Lakes, you will see the banksides filled with pink and purple flowers. If you'd like to explore a route through the heart of the grounds, the Inspiration Walk is a short but mighty hike up the crag where you'll find stone paths covered in purple petals, tunnels of flowers, and views of the 'rhodies' cascading down the hillsides.

You can also view the display by car along the 6-mile Carriage Drive, lined with flowers with plenty of places to stop for photos.



The sun always shines at Seaton Delaval Hall

If you would like to experience even more rhododendrons, you can head over to Seaton Delaval Hall. Lying between the hall and the Church of Our Lady is a colourful collection of rhododendrons and azaleas.

Even on a grey day, the laburnum arch brings the sunshine. From mid-May into early June masses of yellow flowers are in bloom, flanked by the symmetry of tall purple alliums.

Over 20 trees grow over the arch, which leads through to the arboretum. As you stroll through the golden tunnel, you'll hear the sound of busy bees gathering nectar from the tiny flowers. It's the perfect spot for a family photo.

Seaton Delaval Hall

- 25 minutes from Morpeth
- Open Wednesday to Sunday during term-time and 7 days a week during the Northumberland school holidays
- 10am-5pm (last admission 4pm)

nationaltrust.org.uk/seatondelavalhall

Cragside

- 35 minutes from Morpeth.
- Open 7 days a week
- 10am-5pm (last admission 4pm)

nationaltrust.org.uk/cragside



National Trust



Step into spring at two National Trust

properties on your doorstep

Cragside

Nothing says spring more than a spectacular flower display, and Cragside has one like no other. Towards the end of May the usually green grounds transform into 1000 acres of flowers as the rhododendrons burst into bloom. Take a ramble through the 'rhodies' on a waymarked walk or discover this impressive display by car along the Carriage Drive.

nationaltrust.org.uk/cragside

nationaltrust.org.uk/seatondelavalhall

Seaton Delaval Hall

The laburnum arch brings the sunshine, even on a grey day. Enjoy a stroll under its canopy of tumbling yellow petals. If you're on a hunt for more colour, enjoy bursts of lilacs, creams and pinks of the rhododendrons and sweet, fragrant pale oranges of azaleas in the gardens next to the hall.



Zoo Curator Maxine Bradley gets up close and friendly to one of the Livingstone Fruit Bats



An owl - one of the many feathered species at the zoo

'We're all going to the zoo tomorrow'

Which – to borrow the words from the nursery rhyme – is precisely what **Inside Morpeth's Jack Brodie** did to discover why Northumberland Zoo has become a double North East Tourism award winner on Morpeth's very own doorstep.

In 2009, the Happy Chicken Farm & Tearoom was founded by the Bradley family in Eshotthugh to run alongside their main business, British Beef Jerky.

Now, 15 years later the Happy Chicken Farm has transformed into the multi-award winning Northumberland Zoo, a bustling zoo with over eighty different species of animals ranging from harvest mice to snow leopards, and from meerkats to Livingstone's fruit bats.

All this little more than five miles from Morpeth. To this day it remains a family run, not for profit organisation dedicated to the protection of endangered animals, both local and from around the world.

If you were to speak to Maxine Bradley, the Zoo Curator, she would say: "We have

come a long way in such a short period of time."

In 2004, the family moved back home to the UK from America after fifteen years abroad, and discovered there was no beef jerky manufacturers in the UK and so went into the jerky business!

Then the Bradleys began keeping rare-breed chickens, donkeys, goats and more as 'Eshotthugh Animal Park'.

As time went on, increasingly exotic animals joined the collection, such as meerkats and even raccoons and from there Northumberland County Zoo was born. As Maxine herself said: "If you've seen one chicken you've seen them all."

This most definitely isn't true of the

species they have now. Ranging from domestic animals like pigs, horses, sheep and goats to some of the most endangered animals in the world.

As of 2021, Northumberland Zoo is what is known as a 'BLAZA' zoo, which stands for British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquarium, which essentially, is the 'Gold Standard' for zoos in the UK.

This enables them to have in their care endangered animals from the fluffy snow leopards, huge Livingstone's fruit bats and even tiny harvest mice demonstrating their huge commitment to protecting and looking after wildlife.

The zoo is the only mainland UK location where you can see these phenomenally interesting bats, the only other location in



the UK is Jersey Zoo – quite the trek away!

On Mother's Day, the Zoo achieved a world first – the first ever recording of a Livingstone's fruit bat giving birth captured on film and it went viral online. It cannot be underestimated how huge this is. Worldwide, only 1200 are alive in the wild, with 100 in captivity in the world – Northumberland Zoo has 16 of them.

As it says on the Northumberland Zoo website: "We aim to become the main zoological and conservation-based attraction in the North East of England" and they're well on the way. They've recently been awarded two North East Tourism awards – the Gold 'Ethical, Responsible & Sustainable Tourism' award and the Bronze 'Large Visitor Attraction of the Year' award.

With keepers from around the globe working with animals they are experts on, under Maxine's well trained, watchful eye and along with her parents Brian and Linda's care and dedication to looking after the zoo it is truly a fantastic experience not only for the whole family, but for leading experts in their fields.

Maxine, who first became a zoo keeper at the renowned Chester Zoo, explained to me that zoos from around the world have been reaching out to contact her about the recorded birth of their new fruit bats on their social media.

So the question remains, how do we get there? This fantastic local attraction is little more than five miles north of Morpeth along the A1, and its nearly impossible to miss with its huge yellow Northumberland Zoo van parked outside.

With the warmer spring weather just around the corner what better way to spend the day than in the Northumbrian countryside seeing species from around the globe. Afterwards, you can stop for a coffee in their new Bear Falls Café while the kids play in the playpark. If you can't make it, though, be sure to check out their YouTube Channel @NorthumberlandZoo



Some of the animals you can see at Northumberland Zoo - (top left) an otter, a snow leopard, capybaras and ring-tailed lemurs



The KEVI team that won the right to represent England Will de Vere Owen, Joe Dixon, Liam Roche, Ethan Phillips, Bertie Marr and Ryan Davies

Trip of a lifetime for six Morpeth runners

By Peter Scaife

A once-in-a-lifetime chance to compete against athletes from around the globe, beckons for six teenagers from Morpeth's KEVI School. As winners of the English School's Cup last December, they have now qualified to represent England in the ISF World Schools' Cross Country Championships in May in Kenya.

Victory on the day in Suffolk was spearheaded by Will de Vere Owen who finished fourth in the race, supported as counters towards the team total by Joe Dixon (7th), Liam Roche (23rd), and Ethan Phillips (24th). Bertie Marr (53rd) and Ryan Davies (79th) completed the team. By the time the race takes place Ethan and Ryan will sadly be too old to compete, so they will be replaced in the team by brothers Elliot and George Mavir.

The world race will take place over the Ngong racecourse just outside Nairobi in Kenya, considered by many as the epicentre of world-class distance running – a fact not lost on the boys who also all run for Morpeth Harriers. As Bertie said: "The fact that the championships are in Kenya adds extra spice as it is a mecca for distance runners!"

Taking part in the championships will present a number of challengers for the Morpeth boys. It will be run during Kenya's rainy season in temperatures in the low twenties and at an altitude of some 6,000 feet.

The other challenge, however, is that because neither the English Schools or the International School Sports Foundation, offer financial support, the lads have themselves got to find £12,000 to fund their trip. So, their school and the team have set up a JustGiving page and would be grateful for any help towards the

cost of the trip. The link to the page is <https://www.gofundme.com/f/england-schools-world-cross-country-championships>.

On the day the KEVI team will run in specially designed kit provided by their sponsors featuring the word England plus their school name and crest.

"This is an outstanding example of North East sport being represented at international level, and it is truly amazing that KEVI can produce six talented athletes who will compete against the world's best," commented PE teacher Mark Wickens who will travel with the boys as their team manager. "All their years of hard work have paid off."

Will added: "I am already starting to get in the zone and it is all I think about now when I am out running."

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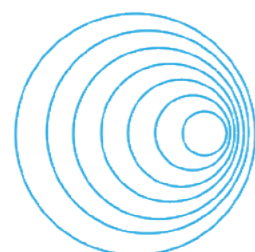
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Eighty-six years of Rotary in Morpeth

Rotarians from Amble, Alnwick, Berwick, Blyth Cramlington and Tyneside joined members of Morpeth Rotary Club recently, to celebrate their 86th anniversary when **Club President Julie Mulqueen** thanked the members for their sterling work so far this year, which has included collecting more than 400 winter coats for the homeless, and raising funds at their annual Christmas Brass Band concert to pay for shelter boxes which contain tents and equipment for two families in a disaster area.

She was also pleased to welcome eight new members including the club's first corporate member David Bawn, of David Auld Solicitors, and is looking forward to welcoming James Richfield of The Morpeth Practice in the near future.

The club is helping KEVI students to raise funds for their forthcoming M 10 trip to Mexico, and as Rotarian Claire Brind said: "Rather than us fundraising and handing out money, we have asked the group to help us to raise money for themselves. We had a very successful wine tasting, where they learned new skill, such as washing glasses, selling raffle tickets and, of course, pouring the wine,"

Rotarians will also be in Morpeth's Morrisons store on Saturday April 20th, with Mickey Mouse, a Minion and Marshall from Paw Patrol, so please go along and have a photo taken with your favourite character.

Each Wednesday from April 24th until May 24th Morpeth's Rotarians will be in the town's Market Place, collecting old and unwanted tools which Rotarian Arif Shahab explained will be sent to Tools With a Mission, who refurbish and categorise them before forwarding them to communities in Africa,

where their volunteers train local communities in their use. As he said: "We will take gardening, mechanical, decorating and joinery tools as well as sewing and knitting machines." Donations can also be picked up from anyone in the Morpeth areas, by telephoning Julie 0780 102 6638.

The club has also been participating in the North East RYLA programme. Eleanor Hedley who has been promoting the Rotary Youth Leadership award to the Sixth Form at KEVI, explained: "It is open to anyone between 16 and 21-year-olds and is a five-day outward-bound course to promote leadership and team values, totally funded by Morpeth Rotary and Rotary Northeast."

Gary Witheyman was very excited to tell Inside Morpeth that this year's charity Ball, will be held on June 1st at Morpeth Rugby club to raise money for Morpeth Division Guides for new camp equipment. Tickets are priced at just £37.50 for a three-course meal and a live band and will available soon.

Morpeth Rotary meets every Tuesday at Morpeth Golf Club, and any readers interested in learning more, check out the club website or by contacting morpethrotary@btinternet.com

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Maximising exam revision opportunities



With the school examination season almost upon students, many will no doubt be feeling overwhelmed at what lies ahead for them in the next few weeks which is where Morpeth-based Maximize Education is best placed to help through its programme of bespoke supportive revision.

Programmes which can alleviate some of the inevitable stress that the examination process can create.

Morpeth-based Maximize Education has a team of highly qualified educators including Subject Heads, GCSE and A Level Examiners, specialist teachers and university lecturers, who between them cover not only core subjects but the full subject list of GCSE and A Level subjects.

All tuition provided by Maximize is one-to-one with a bespoke approach to individual learning needs and targeted revision, not simply reviewing taught material but working with individual learning styles and providing individualised, supportive revision plans.

So, it's never too late to seek the help of Maximize Education whether that be just a couple of hours to improve examination paper responses or a weekly timetable slot to assist with revision.

As Christine Jamieson, Maximize Education Chief Executive and Founder, said: "We are here to help in term time or during the May half-term break."

Maximize Education can be contacted via its www.maximizeeducation.com website to request revision tuition or by calling 07983 425115 for a chat.

Do you know how much money you need to support your lifestyle?

Do you know how much is enough to support your lifestyle, without the fear of running out of money?

This is one of the most important questions financial planning will help answer.

We see many people working longer than they need to because they do not know how much is enough.

I don't think working past retirement age is a bad thing - and research suggests this is a good thing - but many people continue to work when they don't want to, thinking they have to get as much money as possible before retiring.

When can they stop doing the things they don't want to do and start doing the things they do want to do?

Have you ever seen a gravestone with the epitaph 'He wishes he'd spent more time at work?' No, me neither.

Knowing how much is enough will help you answer the most common planning questions, such as:

- When you can retire
- How much you need in pensions to retire comfortably
- How much you need to save
- Whether you need to downsize your home for financial reasons
- How much risk you need to take with your investments
- How much extra you can spend in retirement
- How much money you can gift to your family
- Whether luxuries are affordable



By **David Lamb** CFP™ MCSI

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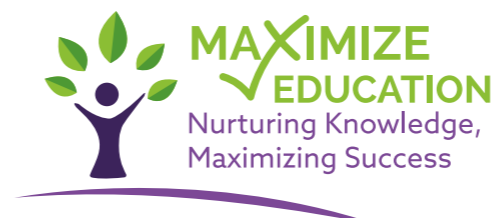
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Sunny Singh pictured with members of his care team - Georgina Milner, Cathryn Reed, Amy Moss, Leanne Farnsworth and Chloe Brown

Home care service that is rated as 'outstanding'

By Sunny Singh

As Managing Director of Home Instead South East Northumberland I am delighted to share the news that we have maintained our Care Quality Commission (CQC) 'Outstanding' rating for the sixth successive year.

As of October 2023, CQC rating charts report only 4% of regulated providers achieve the 'outstanding' rating. I am proud to lead a team who have achieved this and continue to strive to deliver client centred care every single day.

This is a testament to the dedication, hard work and unwavering commitment our team has towards providing the best possible relationship-led care.

The CQC is an independent regulator of health and social care services in England and a rating from them provides a comprehensive assessment of the quality

of care delivered by a regulated provider.

The inspection is based around five key lines of enquiry; being safe, caring, effective, responsive to people's needs and well-led. To achieve an outstanding rating a registered provider must demonstrate at least two areas of outstanding practice.

I am proud to say that Home Instead South East Northumberland were rated 'outstanding' in three of those categories.

Whilst it is important to reflect and celebrate this achievement, we have a responsibility to maintain and build upon our success.

As a company our mission statement reads: "With passion, kindness and thoughtfully delivered care, we enable people to live their best lives." To achieve this, we ask ourselves would this be good enough for our own mothers, fathers or loved ones.

I recall the time my mum had a stroke. I felt vulnerable and knew I needed

help, but I was unsure where to turn. I remember calling several providers in desperation but was unable to find a package to suit my mum and family.

During this time, it became very clear to me that care needs to be tailored to the client and client's family. This difficult journey ended positively with my mum now living independently in our family home. This would not have been possible without the fantastic relationship she has with her care team.

The experience led me to want to make a positive impact on people's lives and to help those in need. Ultimately, it led me to joining Home Instead. Now, I want to ensure the 'Sunnys' out there have someone they can rely on. Our whole team is dedicated to helping signpost people to the appropriate solution.

If you do need help, please reach out to us on our email address: info.blyth@homeinsteadsenorth.co.uk or call 01670338542.



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Stylish and versatile spring and summer collections now in store

As we move into the warmer months, it's time to start thinking about refreshing our wardrobes for the spring and summer seasons. At Rutherford's we have stylish and versatile collections from Fynch Hatton, Joules, Original Penguin and Farah.

Fynch Hatton offers a range of classic and timeless pieces that are perfect for the spring and summer seasons. The brand's collection includes casual shirts, shorts, and trousers in a variety of colours and

patterns. The brand's signature style is the combination of traditional patterns and modern colours, which makes their pieces stand out from the crowd. The quality of the materials used in their pieces is exceptional, ensuring that they are both comfortable and long-lasting.

Original Penguin's spring-summer collection captures the essence of timeless style with a modern twist. Infused with vibrant colours, bold patterns, and premium fabrics, their line up oozes casual sophistication. From polos to tailored shorts, each piece reflects the brand's commitment to quality and craftsmanship. Whether you're strolling

along the beach or attending a barbecue, Original Penguin's offers versatility and comfort without compromising on style.

Farah has been around for over 100 years and has become synonymous with classic and timeless style. Their SS24 collections include a range of versatile pieces that are perfect for dressing up or down. The brand's use of neutral colours makes their pieces easy to mix and match, making them a great addition to any wardrobe.

Whether you're looking for classic and timeless pieces or bold and playful options, we have something for everyone at Rutherford's.



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Defence of that thin RED line!

By **Jack Brodie**

Northumberland is blessed with some beautiful native wildlife, however, right now one of our most favourite and lovable species – the red squirrel – is under real threat from outside invaders.

Grey squirrels were first introduced to English country estates from America as long ago as 1876, but since then their numbers have exploded from the initial handful to escape into the countryside, to a conservative estimate of nearly three million.

Some put the figure nearer 10 million, however, as they have dramatically out-competed with the native reds whose numbers are thought to be as low as quarter of a million.

Most are now either confined to Northern Scotland having died out in large parts of England inhabited by both reds and greys. Aside from Northumberland and Cumbria where there may be around 30,000 reds, there are almost no other areas

of England and Wales where they are to be found.

Being larger and carrying a disease which is only fatal to the reds, the grey squirrel has many advantages over its native cousin.

The Bedlington Group founded in 2022 and run entirely by volunteers, has taken over responsibility for protecting the red population in Morpeth and the wider area, from the former Morpeth RSG, and, as Paul Brannan says, they need the help of the general public to carry out their work.

All it takes, he says, to help defend these lovable little animals, is for people out walking the countryside and local woods, is to keep their eyes peeled for sightings of either squirrels, to report them to his Bedlington group. Anyone can do that by emailing badrsg@btinternet.com or by calling Paul Brannan or Carole Neesam on 07961 937304 or 07488 286434 respectively. The group also has a Facebook page where regular updates are posted at Bedlington & District Red Squirrel Group.



Under threat - the red squirrels

When the going gets tough... the tough get tasting!

By Inside Morpeth's wine columnist **Mark Stephenson**

Now that the winter months are firmly behind us, we can look forward to warmer weather, longer days, and spring sunshine. Well, that's the theory anyway.

The start of the year is normally a period we look to get out of the way as it is as flat as the pancakes we enjoy on Shrove Tuesday. Despite the lull, it is a time when most of our wine suppliers kindly open a bottle or two for us to try at their Trade Tasting events. These events, which are mainly London-based, can include over 200 bottles of wine being open at a single time. We try to get through as many as possible all in the name of research, of course, as we seek the best wines for the fairest price.

Believe me, there's a lot of average stuff on show and there's nothing better than finding the wine that gives you that WOW

moment. All we want to do after such an occasion is to get it onto our shelves and start sharing it with our customers.

Such events also provide the opportunity to engage and interact with the winemakers, which makes you appreciate more the work that goes into making the products that we sell and adds to the overall experience. After all, every bottle has a story, and it is our job to be the storytellers.

The enjoyment we experience at these tastings is what we try to replicate through hosting our own wine tasting events in the shop. Such tastings are vital to help us tell those stories and bring our customers closer to the products that we sell. Even better is when we get an actual winemaker or someone from the winery to tell you the story through first-hand experience. So far, we have had wine producers visit us from Italy, Portugal, and Spain. In the future we hope to

welcome guests from Australia and New Zealand- as well as whisky producers for the "Grain" element to our business. It is all a part of our aim to bring the best to Morpeth.

So, how do you keep up-to-date with our tasting events? Mainly through our social media pages on Facebook and Instagram, or you can sign up to our monthly newsletter on our website www.grapeandgrainmorpeth.co.uk. Lastly, you can simply visit us in the shop at 3/3a Bridge Street.

Finally, what three wines have given us that "WOW moment" in the past few months? The three that come to mind are Seifreid Pinot Gris from New Zealand (£18.00), Nelemans Garnacha/Marselan from Alicante, Spain (£13.75), and Los Olivos Malbec from Argentina for £13.00. All truly excellent wines and all available at G&G now! Cheers Mark

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Neil Laing (left) and Graham Johnson who have started at the same time working at Vertu Honda Morpeth

Two new members of Morpeth's Team Honda

Two new recruits to Team Honda at the Vertu Motors dealership on Morpeth's Coopies Lane are sales executive Neil Laing and workshop technician Graham Johnson. Both have moved to Morpeth from the company's dealership on Newcastle's Scotswood Road.

Neil, from Tynemouth, has worked in the motor trade for the past 10 years, starting his career with Bristol Street Motors at a dealership in Hexham.

"Selling cars was always something I wanted to do as a challenging career with good prospects working for a leading company," he said.

Six years ago, he moved to Vertu Motors selling Hondas from the company's

Newcastle dealership, and is now looking forward to the opportunity to work at the company's Morpeth dealership and putting his sound experience of the brand to good use for his customers.

He says the best thing about working for Vertu Motors is the chance to work alongside good, experienced colleagues and meeting their customers on a daily basis.

"I am so looking forward to working at Morpeth, especially at such an exciting time for Honda," he said. "We have an incredible range of cars to sell with some exciting new additions coming along this year, and I already know we have some Honda loyal customers at Morpeth so I am looking forward to working with them to get the best possible deals we can for them."

Away from work Neil and his partner

have just welcomed their first child Gabe who was born just a few weeks ago.

Also joining Neil at the Morpeth branch is technician Graham Johnson, who began his career straight from school 35 years ago. With a love of fast cars, it was a dream job because his boss at the time owned a number of rally and race cars. Graham stayed with the company for 22 years before moving to Vertu Motors, and has been working at Scotswood Road Honda dealership for the past few years.

Recently, he was asked to move temporarily to Morpeth, but has now been given the chance to make the move a permanent one, which he was delighted to take up.

Away from work Graham's main hobby is clay pigeon shooting which he enjoys at a number of local clubs.

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What's on?

BEWICK ORCHESTRA CONCERT

The orchestra will be holding its next charity concert on Saturday May 11th beginning at 7.30pm in Morpeth's Church of St James, featuring celebrated cellist Nick Byrne as its guest soloist.

Born in Liverpool into a large musical family, Nick studied at the Royal Academy of Music before continuing his studies in Canada.

He has appeared in concerts across the UK, Europe and North America and now holds the position of Sub-Principal Cello with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. At the Morpeth concert where Robin Forbes will conduct, Nick will play the popular Rococo Variations by Tchaikovsky with the concert opening with Mozart's Overture to 'Idomeneo' while the third item in the programme will be the Czech Suite by Dvorak.

Tickets for the concert are priced £10 (children and students free) and are available from Morpeth's Chantry (01670 623455) or at the door.



CRESSWELL WALLED GARDEN

The marvellously restored walled garden that sits next to Cresswell's 14th Century Pele Tower, is to be officially opened by former campaigning journalist, author and ex-Sunderland MP Chris Mullin at 2pm on Sunday June 2nd, after which it will be open to the public.

The half-acre walled garden was originally part of the larger six acres kitchen gardens which served the splendid Cresswell Hall built 200 years

ago as the home of the family which gave its name to the village. The hall would eventually be demolished in the 1930s but although the walls of the garden remained, it was largely derelict and overgrown until the idea of restoring it to its former glory was first mooted a decade ago.

Now the National Lottery funded restoration of the garden has been completed and it is beginning a new future as a community resource with a greenhouse, pond, gazebo, pergolas, medieval orchard, arboretum, raised beds for vegetable production and wide border planted flowerbeds.

PICNIC IN THE PARK

Sunday July 14th is the date to note when the popular Morpeth Picnic in the Park family fun event, will be held this year from 12 Noon until 4pm.

Organised annually by Greater Morpeth Development Trust, the event will as always take place in Carlisle Park. Full details in the June edition of Inside Morpeth.

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

Forthcoming events at the Morpeth church over the next weeks include a Christian Aid Coffee Morning and Toy Sale on Saturday April 20th from 10am until Noon; an annual Plant Sale of bedding plants, perennials, shrubs, garden-related items, tombola, raffle, numerous stalls, tea, coffee and homemade scones on Saturday May 18th from 10am until Noon; plus one to watch out for on Saturday July 13th – a strawberry afternoon with strawberries and cream and entertainment.

BARNABAS SAFE & SOUND

Has teamed up with CEO Sleepout UK for the third year in a row, to increase awareness of and raise vital funds for those living in poverty or experiencing homelessness. On the evening of Thursday May 16th, the Morpeth-based charity is inviting members of the local business community to join in an evening under the stars at Lilidorei at the Alnwick Gardens to get a taste of what it is like to sleep rough, subject to the elements.

Gill Monaghan from Barnabas, says

it promises to be an amazing shared experience with like-minded people and an opportunity to hear some truly inspirational stories from those who have experienced homelessness. All anyone choosing to join in the evening will need is a sleeping bag and a willingness to raise much-needed funds for local charities including Barnabas.

Anyone interested in joining Team Barnabas for the night on behalf of their business, workplace or just because they are passionate about ending homelessness, can simply head to www.ceosleepout.co.uk/alnwick/ and select Barnabas when asked if there is a referral charity. Or, for more information, Gill Monaghan can be contacted on (01670) 517721 or by emailing gill.monaghan@barnabasne.org.uk



MORPETH FILM NIGHTS

The next Morpeth Community Cinema screening on Friday May 3rd, will be the comedy drama *The Holdovers* about a curmudgeonly teacher (Paul Giamatti) at a New England boarding school, forced to stay on campus during the 1970 Christmas holidays to look after a handful of students who cannot go home.

He forms an unlikely bond with one of them, a bright but damaged troublemaker played by Dominic Sessa, and the school's recently bereaved cook (Da'Vine Joy Randolph). The film was given a 90 per cent rating by critics and audiences, and Randolph recently won the Oscar and BAFTA awards for the Best Supporting Actor. The film begins at 7pm at the St James Centre in Wellway and tickets are £6.50 from Ticketsource or The Chantry (card only).



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Day 1 – Live Band & Rugby
Friday 3rd May 6pm to 11.30pm
Indie Band – Redwings - 8:45pm to 11pm
<https://en-gb.facebook.com/RedwingsMusic/>
Rugby Tournament
Northumberland RU VetFest Tournament – 6pm start

Day 2 – Live Bands, Singers & Rugby
Saturday 4th May 2pm to 11:30pm
Teddy King Big Band – 2pm to 4pm
Lou Coel & Local Musicians- 4.30pm to 8pm
The Andy Rayner Band - 8:45pm to 11pm
Rugby Game
Marauders v Northumberland Wooden Spoon - 2pm kick-off
Wooden Spoon Raffle Draw & Auction – 8pm
****This is a Family Festival & U18s are welcome both days till 9pm****

****Please note there is only 1 admission price for the whole weekend. The “Weekend Pass” is good value whether you come for 1 or 2 days****

£12.50 Weekend Pass - includes festival glass, 2 drink tokens, programme & entertainment

Simply bring your festival glass along on the second day as “proof of admission”.

Children are free but need to be accompanied by an adult & dogs are welcome.



Spring is in the air so it's time to reconnect with the garden

By **Ross Pearson** our Inside Morpeth gardening correspondent

At long last, the garden has returned to a familiar tapestry of lush green hues with splashes of vibrant spring colour.

The long winter silence is replaced by the comforting sound of chirping birds and the gentle hum of bees. Late spring favourites take centre stage as peonies, phlox, iris and astrantias are welcomed back as long-lost friends. The heady scent of lilac and snow-like petals of fallen cherry blossom are carried on a gentle breeze and all feels right in the garden again. It's time to take advantage of the lengthening days and reconnect with the warming soil; so, grab your trowels and head outdoors!

Shrub shape

Prune early flowering shrubs after flowering to keep them in shape before next year's buds have a chance to form. Check your shrubs over for any frost damage or disease, making sure to remove material using clean cuts.

Lavender love

Pruning back the old stems of lavender flowers and clipping it back into shape will encourage new, lush growth to take its place whilst retaining a compact form. Take care to only cut back to new leaves and not woody stems as these will not regenerate.

Pollinator bounty

If you are fortunate enough to have a bare patch of soil or two that's not packed with plants, then spare a thought for our



Ross Pearson getting ready for spring and summer in the garden

pollinators by sowing wildflower seeds. Not only will they provide much needed food for our garden friendly insects, they will reward you with a pop of continuous colour late into autumn in even the most stubborn growing conditions. Just remember to mark where you have sown them so as not to mistake them for weeds!

Summer stunners

After the threat of frost has disappeared, it's time to plant out summer bulbs, corms and rhizomes such as dahlias, cannas, agapanthus and gladioli. As they are prone to rotting off, add a good layer of grit to the bottom of the planting hole to help with drainage – just remember to water them well as their roots start to develop.

Plant the plot

Sowing time is now in full swing in the allotment. With the soil warming up, now is the perfect time to sow root crops such as radish, beetroot, parsnips and carrots. Don't forget to earth up potatoes to make sturdier plants and maximise the crop harvest. When sowing sweetcorn, make sure to sow in a grid pattern as pollination is carried out by wind rather than insects. If you haven't already sown beans and peas indoors, sow their seeds directly outdoors. Do make sure to push branches or larger twigs over the top to stop hungry pigeons nibbling at the emerging shoots. If you are waiting for late cropping vegetables to develop, try sowing quick crops such as rocket and lettuce to fill the gaps. Plant outside grown-on brassicas such as cabbage, cauliflower and calabrese. Make sure to plant each one deeper than it had previously to encourage the stems to root and strengthen the plant. The infamous cabbage white butterfly will take full advantage of your hard work so net the bed with a close-knit mesh held up by canes with upended pots on top.

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