

Swarland Village Action Group Committee:

Chairman: Neil Mansfield, Secretary / Editor: Bryan Stanley.

Treasurer: Susan Richardson.

Committee Members: Robert & Sue Brotherton, Carmen Hubbard, John Richardson and Suzanne Stanley.

The cost of production of this issue of

The Column has been met by

**Newton on the Moor
& Swarland Parish Council
and
Swarland Village Action**

SWARLAND VILLAGE CLUB

Come & support your community, friendly bar.

**We're open from 16.30 on weekdays
and from 15.00 on Saturday & Sunday.**

**The Post Office is available in
the Club building on
Mondays and Thursdays from 8 - 10am.**

**Email - swarlandclub@gmail.com – and
www.facebook.com/swarlandvillageclub .**

Date For Your Diary - Friday April 19th 2024

Coquet Concert Band

We are thrilled to bring you a Spring Celebration Concert on **Friday 19th April in Swarland Village Hall**. The concert will be a mix of popular tunes and much-loved favourites together with original pieces for the Concert Band. Further details nearer the date.

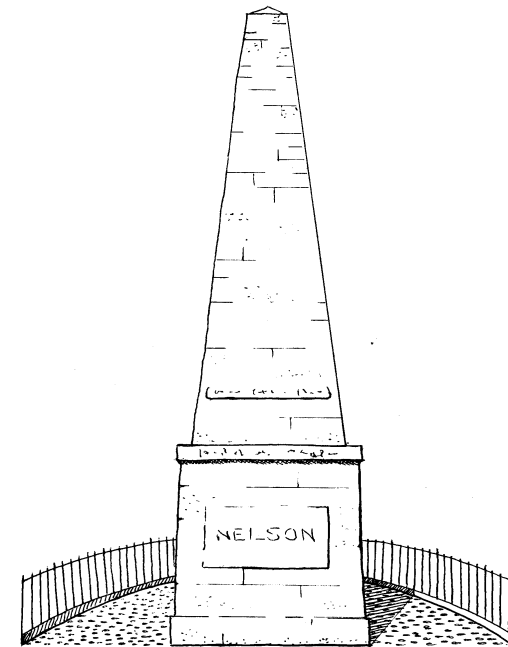
If You Are A Musician

The Coquet Concert Band attracts experienced musicians who enjoy collective music making to a high standard (Grade 5 and above), under the leadership of Andy Taylor. We rehearse on Wednesday evenings in Swarland Village Hall.

If you are a woodwind, brass or percussion player and are interested in joining us or would like to engage us, please contact via Facebook or email us at coquetconcertband@gmail.com .

This issue of The Column is printed by NCC Printing Services.

The Column



April 2024

Produced by

Swarland Village Action

Newsletter 130

**Swarland / NotM bus
service has finally started.
See timetable insides.**

Welcome to this issue of The Column, and if you're new to the area, a special welcome to you.

To include something, however small, in the June issue, please supply it by Thursday 23rd May 2024. Send it to: The Editor, Bryan Stanley, on 01670 787 916 or by email at maxitoby1@gmail.com .

Swarland Village Hall

The Hall, which is run as a community facility, is available for hire. Please support this local amenity. If you wish to check on whether you can book the Hall for a future event, please contact Bryan Stanley (contact details above) or Steve Woolfrey (on **01670 787 883** or Family.Woolfrey@outlook.com).

Archery Practice: Mondays (indoors) at 7pm. For information on extra outdoor sessions held throughout the summer contact **Steve Woolfrey as above.** The Club can supply all equipment.

Coquet Concert Band: Wednesday evenings for band practices, and extra sessions for rehearsal. For more details, please contact Andy Taylor (Conductor) 07832 249699, or Derek Belshaw (Band Secretary) 07891 245201 or email coquetconcertband@gmail.com .

Crafty Friends: meet on 4th Saturday morning of each month.

For more information contact Linda on 07789 887424.

Conversational French: Thursdays 7 – 8pm. Contact David Murray on 07775 934847 for more details.

Pilates: Tuesdays 6.30 – 7.30pm. For details contact Alix on 07940 009150 or alixwestgarth@hotmail.com.

Qi Gong (Chinese Energy Exercise) Class: Wednesdays, 10 – 11 and 11.15 – 12.15. For details contact Anne Raine on **07934 425 844.**

Swarland Choir: Wednesdays 5–6.30pm: Details from 07506 036255.

Swarland Craft Group: Wednesdays, 1.30 – 3.30pm. New members are welcome. All enquiries to: **Margaret on 01670 787 705.**

Swarland Carpet Bowls: This group is now having a break from its weekly sessions (Mondays 1.45 – 3.45) and will return in the early autumn, subject to enough people expressing an interest in playing.

Looking for new members. If you would like to give it a try, contact **Harold Hinchliffe on 07713 097 250.**

Recycling, Wants & For Sale Corner

Why not recycle your unwanted items through The Column? Recipients of free items can make a donation towards this newsletter's running costs. Items for sale? – If successful, the seller can make a similar donation.

Neighbourhood Watch Update – April 2024

Swarland / Newton on the Moor:

At the present time 20/03/2024, I have not received any information from the police regarding any criminal activity in our parish. This is not a guaranteed situation for the future.

Residents need to maintain the excellent vigilance we have come to expect from one another.

Of General Interest

If residents have information on any crime, please report this via the following numbers: Emergency issues 999, non-emergency issues Tel. 101. To contact Rothbury Police, phone 101 ext 61353, e-mail alnwick.npt.northumbria.pnn.police.uk , or call in at the office in the Coquetdale Centre, Church Street, Rothbury. If the office is unattended, please use the yellow phone on the wall and an officer will be able to assist with your enquiry.

NW Co-ordinator, Harold Hinchliffe, 2 Nile Drive, Swarland. Tel. 07713 097 250

Swarland Book Club – meets second Friday each month in the concert room at Swarland Village Club at 7.30pm. New members welcome. Contact Philippa Martin on 07968 230848 for more details.

Repair to interpretation board on Footpath 17

The board at the south end of FP17 IN Swarland Wood finally gave up the ghost having been used as a handrail by many of us trying to avoid the wet, muddy junction with FP18. One of the posts was rotten and it finally snapped. The board has now been re-erected by volunteers as near to its old site as possible. Hopefully everyone can still work out where they are and where to go.

Mobile Library Dates

The NCC mobile library comes to our parish on some Wednesdays. It stops in **Swarland opposite The Square from 10.00 - 11.00am** and **Newton on the Moor from 11.10 - 11.30am**. If you miss either of these it's also in **Guyzance from 11.40am – 12.00** and **Old Felton from 12.15 – 12.35pm**. The next visits in our area will be on **10th April, 8th May and 5th June.**

You can check NCC's website for further library information at northumberland.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/msgtrn/wpac/home .

Jubilee Hall, Newton on the Moor

The Jubilee Hall is in the centre of our village and we are trying to make it the heart of our community. If you do attend an event in our hall, please consider our residents when parking your car. Not only do we have our regular monthly events described below, but the hall can be hired for family celebrations, meetings and workshops. We are lucky enough to have a regular visit from D. R. Collin's fish van, on a Wednesday afternoon at 3.45pm. Elaine is on hand to provide inspiration for a midweek tea.

Don't forget our regular range of activities happening each month:

Coffee Morning – This is on the 2nd Saturday of every month between 10am and 12 noon. All our scones and cakes are homemade and make a nice treat to take away. The next one is themed 'Spring' on **Saturday 13th April**. There will be a raffle and a silent auction for a beautiful rug, handmade by one of our villagers. The winning bid will be announced at the coffee morning. If you would like further information, please email the hall. Everyone is welcome. We accept cash or card.

Carpet Bowls - Our carpet bowls team plays throughout the year with club nights on Tuesdays from 7pm. Matches are arranged with other local clubs, both home and away although not in a league. The dates of matches depend on commitments. For further information contact John on 07717 700011.

FiddleZonely - A friendly bunch of fiddle players who meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday each month at 2pm. Contact Susan Clark on 01665 711977 / susanbisley@gmail.com. **FiddleZonely** are available for hire. Contact Susan for further information. All new members are welcome.

Alnwick Pipers Club - Meets every 1st Sunday of the month, 2pm - 4pm with refreshments. All welcome to either play or listen. Contact Susan Clarke 01665 711977 / susanbisley@gmail.com. The Pipers are available for hire. Contact Susan for further information.

A La Carte - A French music group who meet every 2nd and 4th Tuesday at 10am. All welcome. Contact Susan Clarke 01665 711977 / susanbisley@gmail.com .

We also have a Latin American Group, Coquet Cabana, who are available through the music groups for entertainment and concerts.

To keep up to date with our events, don't forget our own website. You can also use it to research other village halls across the county and see what they have going on. Use the address below and then click on the icon for the Jubilee Hall: <https://northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/> .

If you want to get in touch with us, please email notmjubileehall@yahoo.com .

Alison Cowen

NotM & Swarland Parish Council - April 2024

Gigabit broadband

We are pleased to learn that NCC's i-Northumberland team has been working with Alncom to bring Gigabit broadband to Newton on the Moor, via Newton Hall. This comes after two wasted years in which the Government attempted to contract-out the work to a large provider, in a scheme which would have covered most of central, South and West Northumberland and County Durham. We have heard from Alncom that residents will soon be able to apply for vouchers to pay for the work, and that the first properties may be connected by about August. We will be organising a promotional event with Alncom at the Jubilee Hall. Details to be confirmed.

Litter pick

Many thanks to those who helped with the community litter-pick on 24th March. Unlike some previous years, there was no great proliferation of Jack Daniels and Listerine bottles, but a disappointing number of discarded full urinary catheter drainage bags. Clearly, someone in our area is littering the countryside with them, rather than disposing of them properly at home.

Supporting local assets

We are working closely with the two village halls to assist their improvement projects. This includes a rebuilt fireplace and window lintel at the Jubilee Hall, and the beginning of a major window-replacement scheme at Swarland VH. Both are listed buildings, which require sensitive attention to detail, and are managed by volunteer trustees. We are able to use our status as a local authority to reduce the VAT burden on these projects. We are also working with our colleagues in Felton and Thirston Parish Councils to put the management of our jointly-owned cemetery and war memorial on a more financially stable footing.

Swarland's back-roads

We had hoped to hear news at our March meeting about the future improvement and maintenance of the unadopted Settlement roads in Swarland. This year marks the 30th anniversary of undertakings by NCC Highways that the adoption of sections of Nelson Drive and Kenmore Road was imminent. We hope to report more promising news soon.

Casual vacancy

We are still seeking to fill a vacancy on our Parish Council. We therefore invite anyone who is interested, to write to us (up to 500 words) outlining why they would like to be considered. Currently, we are under-represented by: females; the area in and around Swarland; and younger people (i.e. under-60-year-olds!). For more details, please contact our clerk, Jan (see below).

PC Clerk, Jan Anderson - janandersonpc@gmail.com or 07775 060 430. PC website: newtonswarlandpc@org.uk.

Swarland Moor Local Heritage Group (SMLHG)

2024 began in **February** with an excellent talk by **Eleanor George on the Pumphrey Family, the Newcastle Tea and Coffee Merchants**. She took us through their fortunes from the mid 1850's to the present. Special thanks go to Eleanor for stepping in at short notice.

In **March, George Ellames**, a member of the Alnwick History Group gave an excellent talk on the **Canongate Gasworks in Alnwick**. The gasworks were there from 1859 to 1870 but no one at the meeting had even been aware of their existence. Alnwick was at the forefront of gas street lighting!

On the **9th April, Elizabeth Finch** will be talking about **"The Families of Wallington Hall, including the Fenwicks, the Blacketts and the Trevelyans"**, all of whom were instrumental in designing and developing Wallington Hall.

On the **14th May, Peter Regan** will talk about **"The Greys of Howick and Falloden"**.

The Swarland Moor Local Heritage Group meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30 in Swarland Village Club. Everyone is welcome, members, new members and visitors please come and join us. Further information and updates can be found on our Facebook site or by emailing: swarlandmlhg@gmail.com . *Lesley Selfe*

Swarland Village Hall Charity The 200 Club

The 2nd draw was on 26th February at Nelson's at the Park, when numbers were drawn by three randomly selected customers / staff to give the winners as:-

1. Steph Bothamley
2. Jane Cameron
3. Someone who chose to be anonymous.

The 3rd draw was on 25th March and the winners were:

1. Win Short
2. John & Sue Richardson
3. David Oldroyd

Congratulations to all the winners and thank you to everyone who has contributed to this fundraising initiative. The next draw is on the 22nd April at 2pm in Nelson's. Come and join us. You never know it could be your number next!!!

It is still not too late to join us, for the rest of the year.
Contact Linda Oldroyd at lin88.svh@gmail.com .

Swarland Village Hall Charity - Registered Charity No. 1058471

News from Swarland and Newton Action on Climate (SNAC)

We're so pleased that the new bus service running between Alnwick and Morpeth finally started at the end of March. You can find out details of the service and the story of how we got to this point elsewhere in The Column. There's also a separate copy of the timetable to keep handy. We hope to see many of you on the bus over the coming weeks and months – the more we can show that there is demand, the more likely it is we can get a weekday service too.

At our last meeting, we welcomed local farmer Judy Fortescue from Glantlees who came to talk to us about the importance of hedgerows for wildlife. Judy has kindly offered to work with SNAC as we look at ways to develop more wildlife friendly habitats around the parish (and see the separate piece on NO-mow May).

We're also about to start water quality testing on the Hazon Burn. It's part of a citizen science project organised by the Coquet River Action Group. As there's so much in the news at the moment about water pollution, we're delighted to have the opportunity to get involved.

In June we will be holding a training session with an ecologist from the Northumberland Wildlife Trust who will be teaching us how to survey the wildflower meadow in Vyner Park and learn about the maintenance of similar habitats. We haven't got an exact date for yet, but it will be in the second half of June. If you're interested in taking part, please contact Talktosnac@gmail.com.

We're always keen to welcome new members and there are lots of ways to get involved - whether that's coming along to meetings, getting involved in specific projects or receiving our monthly updates.

Follow us on Facebook, visit us at www.snac.online, get more details at talktosnac@gmail.com . Our next meeting is on **Tuesday 16th April at 7pm** in Swarland Club. Everyone welcome. *Liz Clark (on behalf of SNAC)*

No-Mow May – go for it!

The awful fact: - The conservation charity Plantlife (among others) reminds us that **we've lost 97% of our wildlife meadows since the 1930s**, a devastating loss to the insects that depend on them for food and breeding, and to the birds that eat the insects. **But we can all help to reverse this:** the UK has about 23 million gardens which, if well-managed, can help recover the lost acres of wildflowers. Leaving your lawn uncut in May means that wild plants set seed before they're mown down, and get a toehold for next year.

Here in Swarland particularly, most of our gardens were meadow until relatively recently, so there's potentially a wide variety of plants lurking down there and keen to show themselves. Besides a range of **grasses, buttercups, daisies and dandelions**, you're likely to see **Bird's Foot Trefoil, Red and White clovers, Mouse-ear, Lady's Smock** (in damper areas), **Self-heal, Early Purple Orchids** and more. They're not weeds, they're our native wild flowers. *[pto]*

[cont]

You don't have to commit your whole garden to a wilder period – just identify areas you're willing to leave untouched. But you might find you're happy to extend them next time, and even reduce your mowing throughout the summer. **The benefits to wildlife are worth the wilder appearance** – and after all, the wildlife were here before us.

Hang onto Your Hedges

Linked to No-Mow May is the idea of keeping our hedges and managing them for wildlife. Though on a small scale, **our garden hedges contribute to essential wildlife corridors** (see SNAC report above) that in the countryside are supplied by streams, woodland and (increasingly fewer) hedges. Fences are deserts, and barriers to many creatures, whereas **hedges supply food (nectar in spring and summer, berries in winter), weather protection, hiding and resting places, and nesting locations**. (They present a friendlier front to your neighbours too – we can't say hello over a 6-foot close-boarded fence.) But if you must have a fence, remember to cut holes at ground level so that hedgehogs and other ground foraging creatures can roam freely between gardens.

Suzanne Stanley (on behalf of SNAC)

Swarland Rainbows, Brownies and Guides

Girlguiding is all about non-stop fun, friendships and exciting experiences. Every girl can unlock the door to a world of wonder. It is a place where girls can embrace curiosity, teamwork and the joy of being themselves. There is something for every girl. The sections are:

Rainbows for girls aged 4 to 7, **Brownies** for girls aged 7 to 10, **Guides** for girls aged 10 to 14

We meet in Swarland School on Wednesdays. **Rainbows**, from 4.15pm until 5.15pm. **Brownies and Guides**, 4.45pm till 6.15pm.

Join us in helping all girls know they can do anything!

Become a Girlguiding volunteer and join a community who are inspiring girls, gaining new skills and making lifelong friends along the way. You can help as much or as little as you want.

If you have a daughter who wants to join us or you have time to volunteer with us, then please get in touch.

Megan Kelly, Megankelly.girlguiding@gmail.com and 07714 481088

**Deadline for items for the June issue of
The Column: Thursday 23rd May 2024**



Swarland Primary School-Spring News

Yet another busy and successful time at school, the pupils have been working hard and having fun, and getting involved in local projects.

We were delighted to receive a letter from Damien Hinds, Minister for Schools, congratulating us on our outstanding achievement in 2023, and informing us that we are in the top 1% of all primary schools in the country. It is wonderful to receive recognition for all the hard work that both staff and pupils put in. We always strive to “be the best that we can be”!

We were invited by the Forestry Commission to visit Swarland Woods as part of the felling works taking place. The whole school walked down to the woods on two occasions, to learn all about what was happening and to see the machinery involved. We shall be returning once more to help plant new trees. It's great to learn about our local environment.

Key Stage Two has been learning about the Romans this term and had a fantastic day visiting Vindolanda and the Roman Army Museum. They are also having a ‘Come to School as a Roman’ day.

We have been promoting pleasure in reading throughout the school, with regular visits from “Mystery Readers” (parents), who much to the pupils' delight have been coming in to share their favourite books. We also had a visit from Taffy Thomas, storyteller, the Patron of the Society for Storytelling, and the first Storytelling Laureate.

Last November we posted an article about Easyfundraising on Swarland Residents' Facebook page. This raises money for our school through suppliers' donations for most online orders that we place - no extra cost to us. Villagers starting to use it earned us entries in a prize draw. The school won £250 that will be spent on IT equipment! Anyone interested in raising school funds this way can contact Phil at philydor@gmail.com.

Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is delighted to report that of the 460 questionnaires delivered in January, they received 152 responses. This has helped enormously in providing evidence to support the Neighbourhood Plan. A really big thank you to everyone who took the time to do this. You can see the analysis of the questionnaire responses on the Parish Council website. The Steering Group has been drafting the Neighbourhood Plan that will be based on all of its research, the information that has been gathered from public meetings and the questionnaire. If you have any questions that you would like to ask the Steering Group, please contact Liz Simpson (Secretary to the Steering Group) either by email: SNSG23@outlook.com marked for the attention of Liz or by phone: 07817 135932. Further updates from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will appear in future copies of The Column.

Donna Corbin for Neighbourhood Plan Group

The Long Journey towards a Bus Service

It has now been two years since SNAC started to campaign for the return of a bus service to Swarland and Newton on the Moor. Finally, a Saturday service between Alnwick and Morpeth started on 30th March, with three journeys each way serving the two villages. It's been a long journey to get to this point and we thought it would be helpful to share some of the steps we took along the way to achieving this: SNAC conducted a survey in the Spring of 2022 to see if there was any demand for a bus. The response was overwhelmingly positive and armed with this, we approached NCC. Around the same time, Transport NE made a successful application for funding from the government's 'Bus Service Improvement Plan' (BSIP), so NCC was able to support us.

A public meeting was held in September 2022, attended by Neil Easton, NCC Public Transport Manager. It seemed that a good approach would be to utilise school buses to build a service which would run at times when the buses are not needed for school travel. (Several people have asked why the X15 Arriva bus cannot divert off the A1 as it used to; we have been told this is out of the question because of safety restrictions on larger buses turning South onto the A1 from Swarland and the tight timetabling of the Berwick to Newcastle service).

Subsequently, we surveyed residents again and concluded that a weekday service to Morpeth/Alnwick running on two days a week would suit the majority of people, and planning started.

So how did we end up with a Saturday service and why has this taken so long? Firstly, the funding didn't actually come through until the very end of the 2022-3 financial year, so nothing could happen until then. We then started to plan details of timetables and stops with officers from NCC. However, when tenders were invited from local bus companies, there were no takers. School bus contracts for September 2023 were finalised and we watched other new services funded by BSIP taking off, with no movement on our service. Finally in January, NCC started negotiating with Arriva who were able to offer the Saturday service. While we realise this may not suit everyone, we thought it important to grab this opportunity.



The service allows for a good length of time spent in either Morpeth or Alnwick in the morning, afternoon, or all day. It will also be possible to spend a few hours in Newcastle by changing buses in Morpeth. NCC will be supporting us in pushing for an additional weekday service later in the year which we hope will also be able to make a Percy Wood stop. Meanwhile, the current Saturday bus will run on a year's trial basis, so it is important that we use it as much as possible! Passenger numbers will be monitored and, please note that all concessionary passes

are accepted and that the £2 fare cap on a journey still applies.

Details of the timetable are on the insert in this issue of the Column and are also available on various noticeboards and on the SNAC website: **Bus Timetable (snac.online)**. We are very grateful to NCC officers Neil Easton and Chris Curtis and Councillor Glen Sanderson for all their support with this.

Stop Press: Arriva Bus Driver Strike Action: At time of going to press, Arriva drivers had called off planned strikes for the weeks beginning Sunday 7th and Sunday 21st April. This means that the service should run on Saturdays 13th and 27th April. We will endeavour to keep you informed through Swarland Residents Facebook and noticeboards.

Carolyn Letts (on behalf of SNAC)

Lower Coquetdale Red Squirrels - March 2024

Dog walkers continue to let us know when they see squirrels, Red or Grey, in Swarland Wood. They always tell me it is the dog that spots the squirrel, even, their dog can distinguish between Red and Grey Squirrels! These reports are always appreciated, it is useful to know whereabouts in the wood squirrels are active. We know we have a very small population of Red Squirrels in Swarland Wood, boosted recently by the sighting of a kit (baby squirrel) which is very heartening.

As expected, however, following the completion of the felling operations we are aware that Reds and Greys are competing over a smaller habitat and this will be a continuing concern. In addition to the loss of habitat in Swarland Wood, residents will be aware of the felling of woodland between the caravan park and the golf course.

On the positive side, completely unexpectedly, after some years of "disinterest" from Forestry England, we received a contribution of £1000 from them to our funds. We operate on a very small budget which is usually spent on our annual insurance premium, traps, perspex for feeder fronts, disinfectant and, when we can afford it, cameras, batteries and SD cards. This donation is very gratefully received and we look forward to further collaboration with FE in future.

I should say that we do not usually have to buy feeders, as an extremely supportive villager has kept us supplied with feeders that he has made from offcuts. Again, this sort of contribution to the survival of Red Squirrels is very valuable.

We will continue to monitor feeders in the wood; now that felling is completed, we hope to be able to widen our scope to cover a larger area of what remains of the woodland. It's always helpful to receive reports of sightings of squirrels (Red or Grey) which you can do via our website (www.lcreds.org.uk) or by emailing us on sighting@lcreds.org.uk.

Wendy Fergie for LCRS





