

LONGHIRST LEADER

June / July 2020

THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HAS HELPED OTHERS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

There are a number of NHS and other Key Workers in the Parish who we sincerely thank in this most difficult time. We are also very grateful to Kathleen, Fiona and Diane who have been shopping and collecting prescriptions for a few weeks now for people who are self-isolating. The offer is still there, so if anyone needs help at any time do not hesitate to ring.

Kathleen Robson - 07922 494365 (01670 512058)

Fiona Smith - 07881 351341 (01670 790551)

Diane Milmore - 07962 138788 (01670 790751)

They are very happy to help.

The Editorial Group

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT



The Council experimented by holding a **video conference meeting** on line on 7th May with mixed success. Members were able to see and speak to each other but when attempts to display documents on screen were made the speaker's voice became distorted. In spite of this, business was concluded in short order and, as usual, formal minutes will be available on

the Council website in the near future. The main points were:

The **County Council re-signing scheme** for the Village has been badly disrupted by the virus outbreak. Several new signs are now in place but work is sporadic and completion will inevitably be delayed (now due to start w/b 8th June). Repairs to damaged kerbs and the promised raising of the short length of carriageway subject to flooding on the Ashington road are also on hold at present. It was agreed to make a **grant of £2000 to the Parish Association** to help offset the loss in earnings from Village Hall bookings.

The virus has also delayed work on the **construction of the two dwellings on the north side of Dairy Lane** although the access through the Longhirst Hall wall has been opened. The Planning Department has indicated that the developer has still not finalised the application for the **proposed bungalows in Domino's Field** but a determination is expected shortly.

The Fahy family were thanked for their efforts in **repainting the Colliery bus shelter**.

Plans to hold the public **Annual General Meeting** will be finalised once the Council is happy that a satisfactory means of including residents is in place. In the meantime a brief meeting to approve documents for the annual audit is to be held on 4th June using an alternative video conference package. The provisional date for the AGM is **Thursday 2nd July**.

Peter Coates

VILLAGE HALL NEWS



As reported in the last issue, the Board of Trustees decided to take the opportunity of an empty Hall resulting from the coronavirus lockdown, to make progress on the upgrade of the heating system, improving the availability of hot water to the toilets and increasing the amount of storage space available. Initially, it had been hoped that we could move the hot water tank from the library to the loft space above the Reading Room and at the same time provide access to, and flooring for, the roof space to provide extra storage. The loft was cleaned in preparation, but a woodworm infestation was found in some of the roof timbers so we immediately treated them. Advice from a structural engineer indicated that although the Reading Room ceiling is not in any danger of collapse, it could not safely support the weight of the water tank, an access ladder, flooring, people moving about and items stored up there without significant and expensive reinforcement. This called for a revised plan.

The storage problems were dealt with by means of a complete reorganisation of the store room and the removal of most of the now defunct Youth Club equipment. We are hoping to donate this equipment to another local youth group.

Progress has been made with the heating of the Sports Hall. All the old pipework to the fan assisted radiators has been removed together with the boxing around it and replaced with new larger pipes which deliver twice the flow of hot water, and enable those radiators to deliver much more heat into the room. The new pipework has been fitted above the level at which the new suspended ceiling will be fitted and the walls that were behind the old boxed-in pipes have been redecorated to match the rest of the décor (see photograph).



The heating has now been divided into four zones;
zone 1, the Sports Hall
zone 2, the Kitchen and Library
zone 3, the Reading Room
zone 4, the Foyer, Toilets and Storeroom.

Each zone has its own thermostat regulating the level of heating and the whole system is now controlled by a weekly planner which can be programmed to turn the zones on and off at times appropriate to the bookings we have.

This leaves three issues that have yet to be addressed; the installation of an insulated false ceiling in the Sports Hall, the provision of a hot water system to serve both the kitchen sinks and those in the toilets and the re-boxing of pipework in the kitchen together with consequent redecoration. An application to the Lottery has been submitted for just over £9k covering the cost of the ceiling and a new electrically heated water tank and loop that will deliver hot water to all the sinks within a few seconds of the tap being turned on. Unfortunately, we have just heard that this bid has been turned down so we have immediately commenced an application to the Landfill Communities Fund. Should that application fail there are other potential sources of funds to which we will apply. Sorting the kitchen pipework is in hand and will be undertaken within the next month or two. None of this could have been achieved without an immense amount of work freely given by Alan Hardiman and Richard Tordoff. The whole community owes a great debt of gratitude to them both.

The Longhirst Parish Association Trustees

ASTILBE PLANTS IN NEED OF A GOOD HOME

Astilbe plants are shade tolerant and prefer cool, moist soil, rich in organic matter. Keep the soil evenly damp but not soggy, especially during the winter when plants are dormant. Avoid planting in heavy clay soils and sites with poor drainage. There are ten young plants going for free at Croft House that are looking for a good home. I will be happy for people to collect them from Croft House or am willing to deliver them within the Parish.

Margaret Lediard (t)



BIRDS TO WATCH OUT FOR ON YOUR WALKS IN LONGHIRST

My favourite local 'exercise walk' takes me along the bridleway from Longhirst towards Hebron. It's a pleasant enough walk in its own right, and can be varied by deviating through woods, by the golf course, or around a willow plantation (plus there are other, more lengthy deviations which I have yet to explore). I look out for wildlife and almost always see and hear Yellowhammers, Skylarks, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Chaffinches and Goldfinches amongst others. Bullfinches and Nuthatches are rare enough to be a treat, and I have been particularly excited to see



Photo 1

Wagtail and the (British) Yellow Wagtail. I've been told that it has never before been recorded as breeding in Northumberland, so it will be an exciting first for the County if this one does breed here. Over the last few days I've had brief views of a couple of other yellowish-coloured wagtails feeding in the field alongside it, so the chances are that these are females (whether of the Yellow or Channel variety I have no idea, but either could mate with the male Channel Wagtail). The male can sometimes be seen on a fence post or in the field between the tall hawthorn hedge and the willow plantation. So if you're walking, running or cycling along the bridleway do keep a lookout for both the Channel and Yellow Wagtails. They are both very sweet looking birds and we are privileged to have them almost on our doorstep!

Wheatears and Yellow Wagtails over the last few weeks. I'd never before seen a Yellow Wagtail and was captivated by these gorgeous birds (see photo 1), usually spotted sitting on a fence post near the horses' field; their call is a simple "psit..... psit.....". Then one day in late April I spotted a different wagtail with a blueish head (photo 2) and assumed it was a Blue-headed or Continental European Wagtail; I posted a photo of it on a bird forum and was told that it was in fact a hybrid known as Channel Wagtail (*Motacilla flava x flavissima*), a cross between the (European) Blue-headed



Photo 2

Pauline Gilbertson

CLEARWASTE APP TO REPORT FLY TIPPING

Clearwaste is an app for a phone or tablet which allows you to photograph any fly tipping you come across and it automatically alerts the local authority responsible. It is also an information gatherer used to try to catch these criminals who persist in spoiling our beautiful countryside. It is extremely easy to use and if we all use it we could maybe banish fly tipping.

Just download it from the App Store or Google Play and it is free of charge.

Colleen Anderson

CHURCH NOTICE BOARD



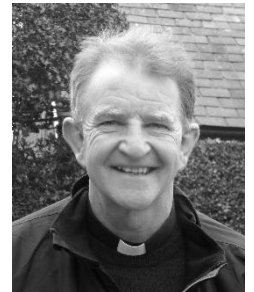
What strange times we are living through! The 'Clap For Our Carers' on a Thursday evening has really caught on. As some restrictions on entering Church buildings are relaxed a little it is good that the Church bell can now be rung to join with the local community in this expression of thanks to NHS workers and all Key Workers.

Our Served area in St. John's Church has finally been completed. We just look forward to the time when we will be able to make full use of it. We fear this is yet some way away, but in the meantime we appreciate living in such a lovely place as Longhirst and the wonderful support our local community is providing to one and all in these unprecedented times. Take care and keep safe.

Jill Elphick

VICAR'S LETTER

As you can imagine, being a vicar I tend to spend more time in cemeteries and churchyards than most people and in those quiet moments before the family arrives and the service begins my curiosity usually leads me to read what's written on the surrounding headstones. The inscriptions can be very moving, conveying the love and high esteem in which the deceased was held and it is surprising how often a very few simple words unexpectedly bring a smile to my face. There's a stone at Bothal Churchyard for example which simply records a name followed by, "A good and kind man". What more could you want?



But what do you make of this one I found in a book? It was on a Victorian memorial to a husband and wife where the husband's name is accompanied by a lengthy epitaph which includes amongst its superlatives, "the perfect man". Below however, his wife has to make do with her name followed by, "She hath done what she could". This may look at first like a bit of a put-down when compared to her husband's glowing reference. However, her epitaph is in fact a direct quotation from the Bible, being Jesus' rebuke to some self-important dinner guests who were complaining about a woman who, in their view wasted, but in her own view generously lavished on Jesus, a jar of very expensive perfume by pouring it on his head at the dinner party. Jesus didn't mince his words, "Leave her alone!" he barked, "She has done what she could; she has anointed my body before its burial." He added that what she had done would long be remembered among the stories told about him: and so it has turned out.

This rather changes the interpretation of those few words about the Victorian lady who did what she could. She appears now as one who, given the societal constraints of her day, was remembered as a person who when afforded the opportunity would give careful, even extravagant attention to the people and things that were important to her even in the face of criticism from others. The more I think about it, the finer her epitaph becomes.

As we go through these days of lockdown, social distancing and queuing outside shops we are having to get used to living with constraints on our freedoms to which we, however, are not accustomed. Nevertheless many of us are doing what we can. When the now famous Captain Tom Moore was interviewed once he had gone viral he simply commented, "I'm doing what I can." In our local communities both in Longhirst and Pegswood many people are also doing what they can by looking out for their neighbours and friends whether by helping with a bit of shopping, cooking and

delivering meals, checking to see they are OK (keeping social distance of course) or just making a phone call. If my reading of the story of Jesus and the woman with the perfume is correct, these simple, caring actions have divine blessing and who knows, maybe they will be remembered in ways we cannot begin to imagine?

So, back to the churchyard. One of the most surreal aspects of these strange times for me has been conducting funerals when churches are closed and when social distancing prevents all but the closest family attending at the graveside or at the crematorium chapel. One of these occasions was the service held last month for Jean Richardson who was known and loved by many people in Longhirst and also in Pegswood where she lived. Whether as Churchwarden, PCC member of St. John's Church, colleague in The Mothers' Union, ready helper at Longhirst Village Hall events or simply as friend and neighbour, Jean always did what she could to enrich the communities to which she belonged. While we likewise did what we could for her in the circumstances at the time, Jean's family intend to hold a memorial service and celebration of her life at St. John's when possible so that her many friends may have the opportunity to pay their respects as they would wish.

God Bless.

John Park

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

WHOOPEE THE PLANTS HAVE ARRIVED

Having missed my trip to the cancelled alpine show and sale at Hexham I was bereft - no plants how was I going to cope. Then I discovered that a number of nurseries were now selling plants on line. I'd found a home for all the money I've saved, no petrol, no dog training, etc

Oh goody the plants have arrived, I was like a kid in a sweetie shop, carefully opening the box and lifting out these small plants wrapped in newspaper. Showing each plant to my dogs ('cos I can't see my friends anymore), my dogs having realised they couldn't eat them were very unimpressed.

Not only all the excitement of unpacking them I then had the second bonus of planting up a new trough. Luckily I'd bought a new trough in early March.



You need to find a suitable location for your trough and place on pot feet or bricks to keep it off the ground. Make sure it is level. Place crocks over the drainage holes.



Fill with a mixture of soil and grit using enough to create a slight mound.



Choose a selection of plants. Mine are mainly pink and flower at different times.



Place the plants still in their pots round the trough until they look ok.



Persuade the dog that you don't need help and no it won't be improved by a strategically placed ball!



Plant up leaving each plant slightly proud of the soil surface so that the grit can be pushed under the crown.



Choose rocks that compliment the trough and place them between the plants.



Top dress with some alpine grit.



And finally keep the mice off!

Janet Quinn

THE MILES OF PENNIES APPEAL



I am delighted to report that we have now collected 2 miles and 182 yards of pennies and raised £1,625 for the Village Hall and the Church.

Role on the third mile!!

If you have a pot full of pennies and two-pences (or any other coins including foreign currency), just let me know. I will be happy to come round and collect them, count them and ensure that your contribution is receipted and recorded. Mike Elphick (c)

THE LONGHIRST HUNDRED CLUB

The winners of the last two 'Hundred Club' draws are:

Month	1 st Prize (£60)	2 nd Prize (£40)	3 rd Prize (£20)
April	Ticket No. 156 Andy Bolton	Ticket No. 122 Beryl Gibson	Ticket No. 126 Luke Vale
May	Ticket No. 117 Tim Oakley for Charlotte	Ticket No. 31 David Errington for Harvey	Ticket No. 38 Amanda Bonner-Davis

Mike Elphick

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 10th July - Deadline for items for the August/September Longhirst Leader
e-mail to clairecoates32@gmail.com

CONTACT DETAILS

For more information about the various activities and events mentioned in this Newsletter contact:-

Parish Council Clerk - Helyn Douglas 826803 / e-mail : longhirstpc@gmail.com (a)

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Heather Jackson 07756 690027/ e-mail : siriusa1998@aol.com (d)

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Longhirst Parish Association - Margaret Lediard 790268/ e-mail : margaret.lediard@tiscali.co.uk (t)

Village Hall Bookings - Mike Elphick 790764 / e-mail : mike.elphick1@gmail.com (c)

Luncheon Club - Linda Rudd 790116 / e-mail : barnacrelmr@aol.co.uk (i)

Longhirst Village Show Association - Carol Benbow 790194 / e-mail : carol_benbow@hotmail.com (p)

Longhirst Hundred Club - Mike Elphick 790764 / e-mail : mike.elphick1@gmail.com (c)

Parish Voluntary Litter Clearance - Chris Lediard 790268 / chris.lediard@tiscali.co.uk (r)

Village Coffee Mornings - Helen McCabe 790494 / e-mail : mccabe_paul1@sky.com (n)

Village Pub Nights - Allison and Richard Tordoff 790364 / e-mail : rtordoffs@gmail.com (h)

Longhirst Colliery Recreation Hall - Maureen Carrick 458674 / e-mail : maureencarrick@talktalk.net (m)

Red/Grey Squirrel Sightings - MADRS 07570 897979 / enquiries@madredsquirrels.com (s)

Village Website - www.longhirstvillage.co.uk - Chris Marr 790196 / e-mail : chrismarr@btinternet.com (u)

Village Facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/longhirstvillage/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel (v)

Church Website - www.longhirstchurch.btck.co.uk (b)

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If you require a copy in large print please let us know.