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FEBRUARY 2018

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Welcome

Welcome to the February 2018 edition of Consett Magazine!

Already February! How time flys!

Hope you all made it though the snow? We've got a bumper issue this month with the usual fantastic history stories from both Lorraine Weightman and Brian Harrison.

We've also got a load of other great atricles on pages 10, 12, 15 and 17.

On the subject of positivity, we'd like to remind you about why we started Consett Magazine. Unlike other local publications, our aim is to share good news in the community and give you a platform to submit your stories and share them with other local people. Remember, the magazine is free and always will be. It is supported by great local businesses who advertise with us, please remember to mention Consett Magazine if you contact one of the advertisers from this edition or call 01207 438 292 to book your own advert in next month's edition.

We're in need of new writers and stories from people of all ages to be published in 2018. Think you can write 300-500 words on your favourite topic? If the answer is yes, please send your story to editor@consettmagazine.com along with any supporting photographs (nice high quality images preferred, straight from your phone or camera - not downloaded from Facebook please).

We hope you'll enjoy this edition and remember to visit consettmagazine.com for even more local stories, news, articles, videos, and photographs.

Best wishes for Feb 2018 from:

Barry Kirkham, Marco Elsy, Firefly New Media UK

A big thank you to everyone who makes the Consett Magazine possible.

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Brian Harrison
Garry Hughes
Barry Kirkham
Marco Elsy
Frank Bell
Neil Sullivan
Lorraine Weightman
Christina Stubbins
Audrey Rogan
Alex Nelson
Diane Risebury

The Front Cover

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MEDOMSLEY PARISH CHURCH

By Brian Harrison

For many of us the things on our doorstep are the last we look at or appreciate. We travel miles to look at ancient buildings and marvel at there construction and age. But right there only a short distance from Consett, in a village with a real character, some parts very much unchanged for almost 200 years, stands a Church that has stood, at least in parts, for almost a millennia.

The parish church of Medomsley is dedicated to St Mary Magdalene. From early reports in the mid 1800's they state that original foundations of the church dates back to at least the 11th Century. The same century which saw King Cnut take the throne succeeded by Edward the Confessor, the invasion of the Norse and there eventual defeat by the remaining British forces at the Battle of Stamford Bridge and finally the Battle of Hastings in 1066 which saw our country change forever under the rule of William the Conqueror.

We know that the church was either extended or almost totally rebuilt in the 13th Century as the architectural evidence is there to be seen. In the 1840's the Society of Northern Antiquities at Newcastle wrote a paper calling for the sympathetic restoration of the Church as it was already starting to show signs of age. But it was in the 1870's that real problems began. The churches roof began to leak badly, it was cold and the timbers within its construction were beginning to rot. About a decade earlier in 1860 many repairs had been made but just not enough to stop the onset of time. Peculiarly it was also in 1860 that some notorious thief had somehow made off with the church bells of both Medomsley and Ebchester.



Neither the thief or the bells were ever traced. With the church no longer suitable for it parishioners, neither in condition or size, something had to be done. A fund was started and in 1877 work was begun. The architect chosen for the work was W.R.J. Johnson. In his initial report he stated that what remained of 13th Century was "very beautiful and of great interest" and "In the chancel curious heads occur of Kings and Bishops, as in the church of Lanchester; and the details of the triple windows at the east, and of the south door, are very elegant, although injured and defaced" The original church of the 13th Century consisted of narrow nave and chancel. It is to that time period that the doorway, now protected by a neat porch and some single-light windows, with semi-circular heads, and a piscina and aumbry, in the south wall of the chapel and also the chancel arch and the present east end, with its elegant lancet windows, were built. However in 1877-78 the north aisle was added, as well as a new roof . The chancel was also then fitted out with handsome oak stalls and seats throughout, the cost of the renovation being some £2800.

The reopening of the church took place on Wednesday 29th May 1878 to a very jubilant and appreciative crowd. The capacity of the church had now gone from only 150 to 250 adults with additional space for children.

St Mary Magdalene, Medomsley still stands today, set overlooking the Derwent Valley, an old and distinguished lady of elegance and character.



Medomsley Church (Interior).

WEATHER WATCH

As a child I loved to hear stories and would curl up in front of the roaring coal fire with my head on the red patterned leather pouffe listening to members of my family 'tell the tale'.

They were all good at it and often embellished and exaggerated many a story I'd heard before; especially if there were a new pair of ears in the room, or if they'd had a couple of glasses from the decanters on the sideboard. My Uncle Pat's Birthday fell on February 2nd and he mischievously boasted that he instinctively knew what the weather was going to be like as he was born on Candlemas Day. A day of ritual it marks the midpoint of winter, halfway between the shortest day and the spring equinox and traditionally predicts the weather for the rest of the winter.



Old proverbs proclaimed that a fine bright sunny Candlemas day means that there is more winter to come, whereas a cloudy wet stormy day means that the worst of winter is over.

I found out much later in life that in North America, it's known as Groundhog Day. Brought up on these predictions I spent a great deal of my early childhood, looking for red skies at night - and in the morning - checking the rings around the moon to see if it would rain and knowing if there was a cloudless, star filled, night time sky I'd need to wrap up warm the next day.



When we went for walks to Knitsley I was first to spot the cows lying down in the fields and proudly predicted showers. And without question I'd run into my Nana's to ask her if her knees were aching before I packed my umbrella!

However when I started school the realisation hit home that all this meteorological knowledge wasn't just shared between me and my Uncle Pat; surprisingly, other people knew about it!



Disappointed that our wisdom wasn't exclusive I questioned his skills and asked for proof of his powers. Undaunted by my doubt he rose to the occasion.

Clattering around in the cupboard under the stairs he emerged with a tin bucket and proceeded to remove the handle from the mop. Mesmerised I watched as he found string in the kitchen drawer and meticulously wound it through the holes in the mop head, leaving a arm's length dangling.



Opening the heavy kitchen door, he marched into the back garden and threw the mop head over the clothes line, securing it by tying the string tightly.

He told me to keep an eye on the mop as he was off to make me something special so I could predict the weather too.

Delighted with his efforts I proudly sellotaped my weather chart to the inside of the back door and happily consulted it every day!

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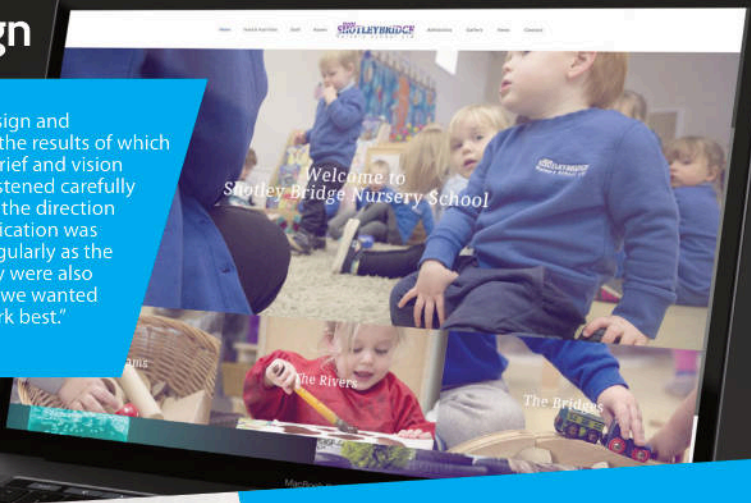



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LIFT – Performance Evolution is a results-driven training facility that specialises in optimising body composition. Most of us want to drop body fat and lean up, right? And the chances are you have tried every diet, training plan and supplement going and still… no results!



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Our aim is to educate people on the process of dropping body fat, improving their appearance and, more importantly, living a better lifestyle.

No doubt at some point you have been told you couldn't eat certain foods - dairy, bread, chocolate, pizza the list is endless - as these will make you "fat". Guess what? They don't, so why should you live by these restrictions?

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A HEDGE ABOVE THE REST



Local hedgelayer Burt Hunter recently completed the second stage of a hedge around some allotments adjoining Consett & Blackhill Park. The art of hedgelaying is a very ancient one, first documented by Julius Caesar in his account of the war against the Belgae. The local tribesmen were using laid hedges as defensive screens.

Nowadays the craft is used as a management technique for field and garden hedges. Hedges which are overgrown are usually gappy at the base and do not serve the purpose for which they were intended i.e. to form a stockproof barrier or as windbreaks. They might appear to be good for wildlife but in fact birds feel too exposed to aerial predators so are only attractive to crows and pigeons in the main.

Once a hedge is laid its effectiveness is greatly improved on all counts. Gaps where sheep and cattle could penetrate are sealed, the hedge is more windproof where it matters, i.e. at the base, and songbirds are more likely to nest in it.

To lay a hedge the stems are cut into at the base leaving a flexible 'hinge' so that the bush can be bent over at an angle, usually 30 - 45 degrees, and then woven into its neighbour. The 'plashers' as they are called locally, are secured with a line of stakes and sometimes a plait of flexible rods called 'ethers' or binders are woven along the stakes. These are then levelled and the stake tops lopped off to give a neat uniform finish.

The hedgelayer uses an armoury of cutting tools, the main one being the billhook which has evolved little since Caesar's time. Modern hedgelayers also use chainsaws rather than heavy axes as their forefathers did for large stems. A wooden mallet or 'maul', often home-made is used for driving in the stakes.

Hedgelaying is inherently dangerous, both because of the thorns within the hedge and the necessarily sharp cutting tools. Tetanus and sepsis are also occupational hazards. No-one should attempt to lay a hedge without some rudimentary training.

County Durham has a Hedgerow Partnership scheme which can give grants to farmers and landowners for the management of hedgerows. This can include laying existing hedges as well as planting new ones. Unfortunately garden hedges are excluded from this scheme. Anyone who would like more information should contact Rebecca Beeston at County Hall on 03000 267143.



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Places to Go: Pitlochry, Perthshire

For a winter break in February, before winter turns gradually into spring, consider the Scottish Highlands, and particularly the Perthshire town of Pitlochry which welcomes visitors all year round. There is a direct train from Newcastle every day, the Highland Chieftain to Inverness, which calls at Pitlochry but it leaves mid-afternoon and returns in the morning, which rather eats into your days away. I changed in Edinburgh and travelled with Virgin Trains East Coast and Scotrail for £45 each way First Class, cheaper still in standard.

It was icy underfoot when I arrived, so I was pleased to see the McKay's hotel clearly at the end of the road from the station. Check in was friendly and efficient, and the barman took me over the road to the annexe (in his shirtsleeves no less). I would have stayed in the grander Atholl Palace Hotel but they wanted £516 for two nights as opposed to £92 in McKays. But I went to the AP for a Christmas concert on my night of arrival.

On the Monday I had a walk around the Pitlochry Festival Theatre, which was busy, and walked past the fish ladder to the hydro power station and new café and exhibition centre. There was little snow in Pitlochry – in fact I saw more in Stevenage later the same week – so I elected for a train trip to Dalwhinnie which has a remote distillery off the A9 and a brisk walk from the tiny railway station which boasts only a few trains each day, including a Sleeper to/from London.

The journey from Pitlochry to Dalwhinnie crosses the Drumochter Pass, and because my train was cancelled owing to a signalling problem, I got to travel by taxi along the road in one direction and by rail on the way back. En route, the railway reaches the greatest height of any line in the UK at Drumochter Pass (as the highway authority calls it) and Druimauchdar (in railway parlance) at 452m (1484 ft). Purists will be interested to know that the highest STATION is Corrour on the West Highland Line, but the Pass is higher than Corrour station.

I was provided with a taxi, incredibly, from Perth which arrived at Pitlochry nearly an hour later. I was on the point of abandoning my trip, but I knew Dalwhinnie had recently won an award for their distillery tours, and, to celebrate, they were offering a FREE distillery tour which beckoned, and the advantage of the taxi arriving 75 minutes late was that I get a full refund of the train fare. The tour was good, and so I could catch the train back they allowed me to do the tasting before the tour and absent myself at the end. I bought a bottle of Winter's Gold single malt, a product of Scotland's coldest distillery.

On the Tuesday I was visiting the Blair Athol distillery in Pitlochry and decided to walk up to the AP for lunch, although the two courses for £17.95 was rather more than I wanted. I therefore enjoyed the signature Cullen Skink with fresh bread and a large glass of wine in the otherwise deserted restaurant, overlooking rural Perthshire. I enjoyed the grounds, the museum, the ambience of the Stag's Head bar, my lunch and (two nights before) the concert.

There was snow on the ground at home tonight. A great opportunity to open up my Dalwhinnnie distillery bottle of Winter's Gold in a lovely icy blue bottle. The bottle was a pleasure to open and savour the undiluted spirit first, and a bit of fresh snow dropped into the glass revived it into something else.

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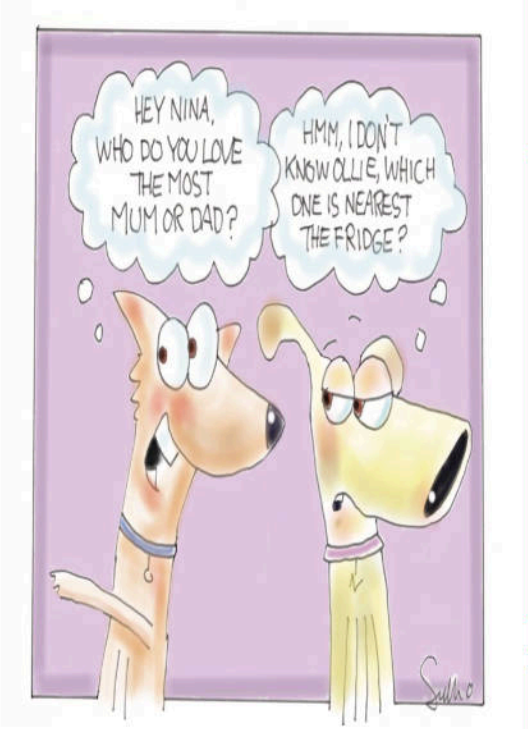

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CANINE COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION

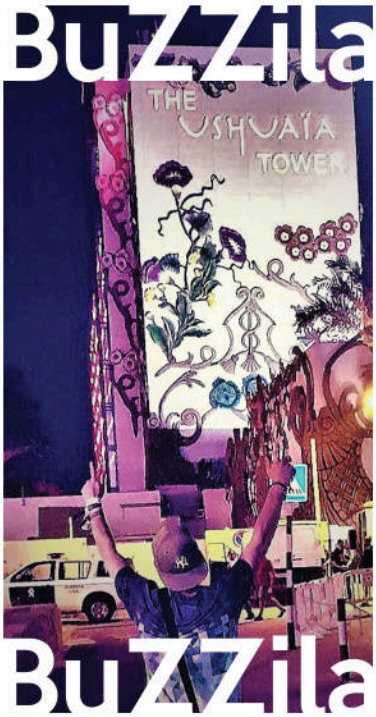
Canine cognitive dysfunction (CCD) is a degenerative condition caused by a decline in the brain's ability to function as your dog gets older. Amyloid plaques develop on the brain and can affect memory, spatial awareness, learning and the processing of sensory information, along with lots of other things. CCD is often described as canine Alzheimer's disease and although the conditions have similarities, they are also some important differences.

Dogs with CCD will often show behavioural changes such as:

- Disorientation – struggling to recognise familiar people, pets and places, getting lost in familiar locations
- Interaction Changes – decreased interest in interaction or play, barking or crying for no reason
- Sleep Pattern Alterations – sleeping more during the day and spending more time awake during the night
- House Training – passing urine or faeces indoors, not signalling that they need to go to the toilet
- Activity – increased wandering, restlessness and pacing, depression.

There are various supplements, diets and medications which have been proven to improve the quality of life (and clinical signs) of pets with CCD, but it is important they are started as early as possible in the disease process so book an appointment with your vet to discuss any concerns you may have.

http://princebishopvets.co.uk/client-advice/



Names, BuZZila, I am the newest & freshest up-and-coming electronic music producer, composer, songwriter & DJ coming straight out of the North-East of England.

Recently returned from my month's residency over in Ibiza, I now also run two record label's as their founder & CEO, the first is Buzzin' Records, were we specialise in all forms of electronic dance music, particularly Trance, Hardstyle & Big-Room House style's of music.

The other is my down-to-earth UK urban music label, DuB_ZillA Records, were we work particularly with the musical genre's of Dubstep, Drum & Bass & Grime. Both of these label's have their own social media pages (i.e Facebook, Instagram etc.) & Soundcloud profile's, which is currently the best place to hear all the latest music & DJ sets from all our artist's & DJ's on the label.

I myself also have many social media sites, the two most currently used is my official Facebook page, which will have the details of my own regional tour, endorsed by both my independent music label's that is now firmly in the planning process & will hopefully be a huge success in the North-East's music scene & my official Soundcloud profile, which is the best place to hear all my latest music, live DJ sets & gain exclusive access to free downloads that I often release as a thank you to my loyal following.

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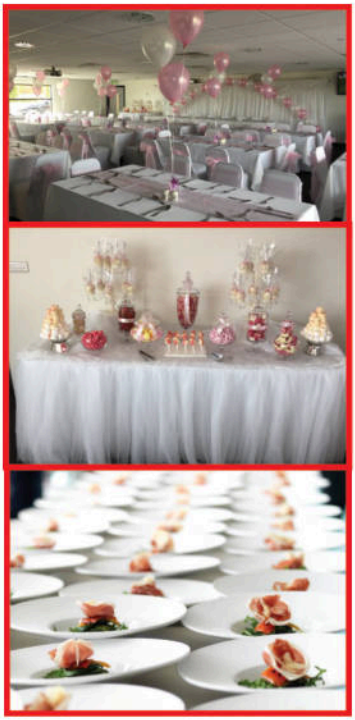

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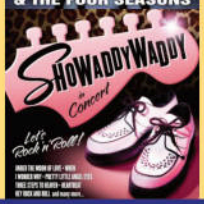

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Wed 11th April
£14 / £12 concs.

AN AMERICAN IN PARIS
Wed 16th May
£16.00



Box Office: 01207 218 171 **Online: www.leisureworks.net**

The Empire Theatre, Front Street, Consett DH8 5AB

CONSETT SNOW



Teams from across many areas of Durham County Council are working hard to ensure services are disrupted as little as possible during the current winter weather.

Gritters and snow ploughs have been out throughout January on priority one routes in all areas as well as on priority two routes in the Pennines. They will continue to work throughout the month as conditions demand.

Motorists were advised that the A66 was closed while snow clearing was carried out by Highways England. Delays were expected on the A1(M) for drivers heading both North and South as well as on the A691 between Consett and Durham. On other main roads traffic was moving although journeys took longer than usual. Residents were advised to only travel if necessary and council teams worked to keep footpaths clear in town and city centres and around priority areas such as hospitals and medical centres.

Many primary and secondary schools were closed across the county due to the heavy snowfall.

Parents are advised to check www.durham.gov.uk/alerts and the council's social media channels at facebook.com/durhamcouncil and twitter.com/DurhamCouncil for further details.

Residents whose bins were due to be emptied were advised that there may be some major disruptions to collection and household waste recycling centres were also being affected by the adverse weather. Information will be provided on the council's social media channels throughout month and every effort is being made to undertake as many collections as possible.

The council is maintaining contact with care agencies across the county to ensure people who receive care at home continue to do so. Residents are encouraged to check on vulnerable friends, relatives and neighbours who may need help.



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