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November 2020



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Dear Consett readers,

Last month online we published a piece from local MP Richard Holden regarding the new community hospital funding at Shotley Bridge, after the article was shared to our social media we had many of our readers give us feedback about the lack of balance between the different political parties in our publication. You spoke, we listened. We reached out to all the candidates/parties who were up for election back in December to request content from them. Some of those candidates/parties got back to us, some didn't. We'll continue to reach out to the ones who didn't, but we're delighted to have received content from the Conservatives, Labour, the Lib Dems, and one of the Independent candidates (see pages 10-11).

We're often criticised for publishing content from political parties, from all sides of the political spectrum. The truth is, Consett Magazine was created to give the local community a voice. A voice for its people, it's businesses, it's local organisations, charities, and yes, even political parties.

In recent months, we've published content from North West Durham's elected member of parliament Richard Holden MP and from The Conservatives. His team simply got in touch with us and sent across press releases and content about what they are up to and what's going on in the community. And you can do the same.

Unlike many larger media companies, we do not have huge budgets for numerous investigative journalists, we rely almost exclusively on contributions from wonderful local people who want to have their say. The Consett Magazine team is most proud of helping local charities to get their message out to people in DH8 and we've helped hundreds of local good causes over the years.

Our team has tirelessly reached out to thousands of local people and organisations to take up the opportunity to contribute to the magazine, focusing on all the positive things happening in our great town, favouring content which is educational, entertaining, and/or informative.

For over eight years we've encouraged ANYONE and EVERYONE to share their story (in 95 monthly editions of the print and online). You'll find us requesting content in the print editions and also see a link to submit content on every page of the consettmagazine.com website.

SO PLEASE DO GET INVOLVED, submit your story online: fireflymagazines.com/submit-content (or encourage your friends and family to also get involved).

A special thanks to businesses/advertisers (advertising starts at just £39 a month) who've supported the magazine over the years, without your support we certainly would not have been able to publish this free monthly publication for almost 100 editions without you. We really can't say how important your financial contribution has impacted our ability to print, distribute and share positive local news in Consett. You've helped us print, publish and distribute 18,800,000+ pages of positive local news for free.

Yours sincerely, Barry Kirkham, Marco Elsy, The Firefly Magazines team, Consett Magazine contributors, and everyone who's been involved over the years.

PS - Did you know Consett Magazine was name dropped in parliament on October 5th 2020? It was with regards to our coverage of Shotley Bridge Community Hospital. You can see the video on our facebook page, under "videos".

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SCAN ME

The Front Cover

The front cover this month is by **Pamela Fowler.**
Send any drawings or photographs to:
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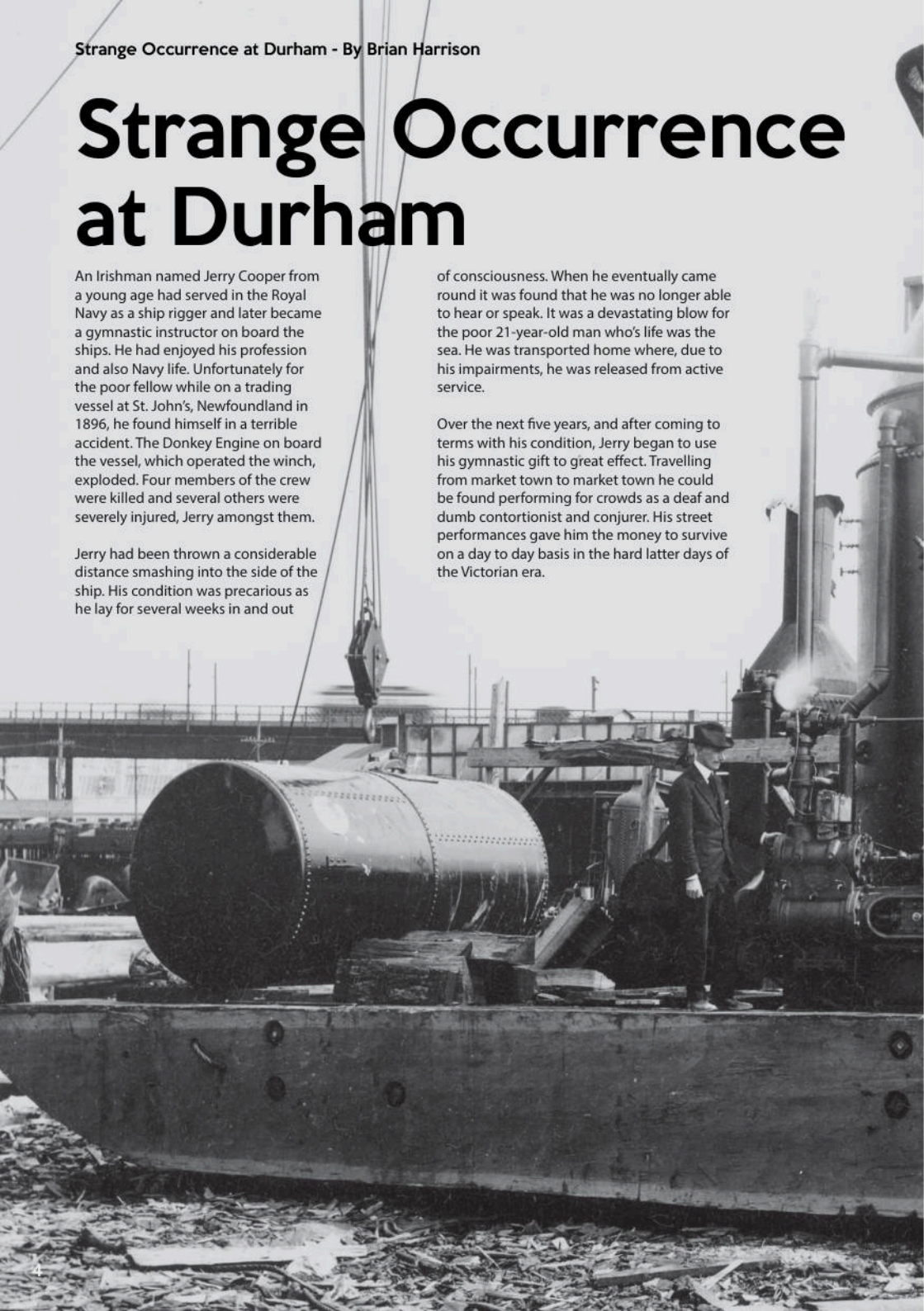
Strange Occurrence at Durham

An Irishman named Jerry Cooper from a young age had served in the Royal Navy as a ship rigger and later became a gymnastic instructor on board the ships. He had enjoyed his profession and also Navy life. Unfortunately for the poor fellow while on a trading vessel at St. John's, Newfoundland in 1896, he found himself in a terrible accident. The Donkey Engine on board the vessel, which operated the winch, exploded. Four members of the crew were killed and several others were severely injured, Jerry amongst them.

Jerry had been thrown a considerable distance smashing into the side of the ship. His condition was precarious as he lay for several weeks in and out of consciousness. When he eventually came round it was found that he was no longer able to hear or speak. It was a devastating blow for the poor 21-year-old man who's life was the sea. He was transported home where, due to his impairments, he was released from active service.

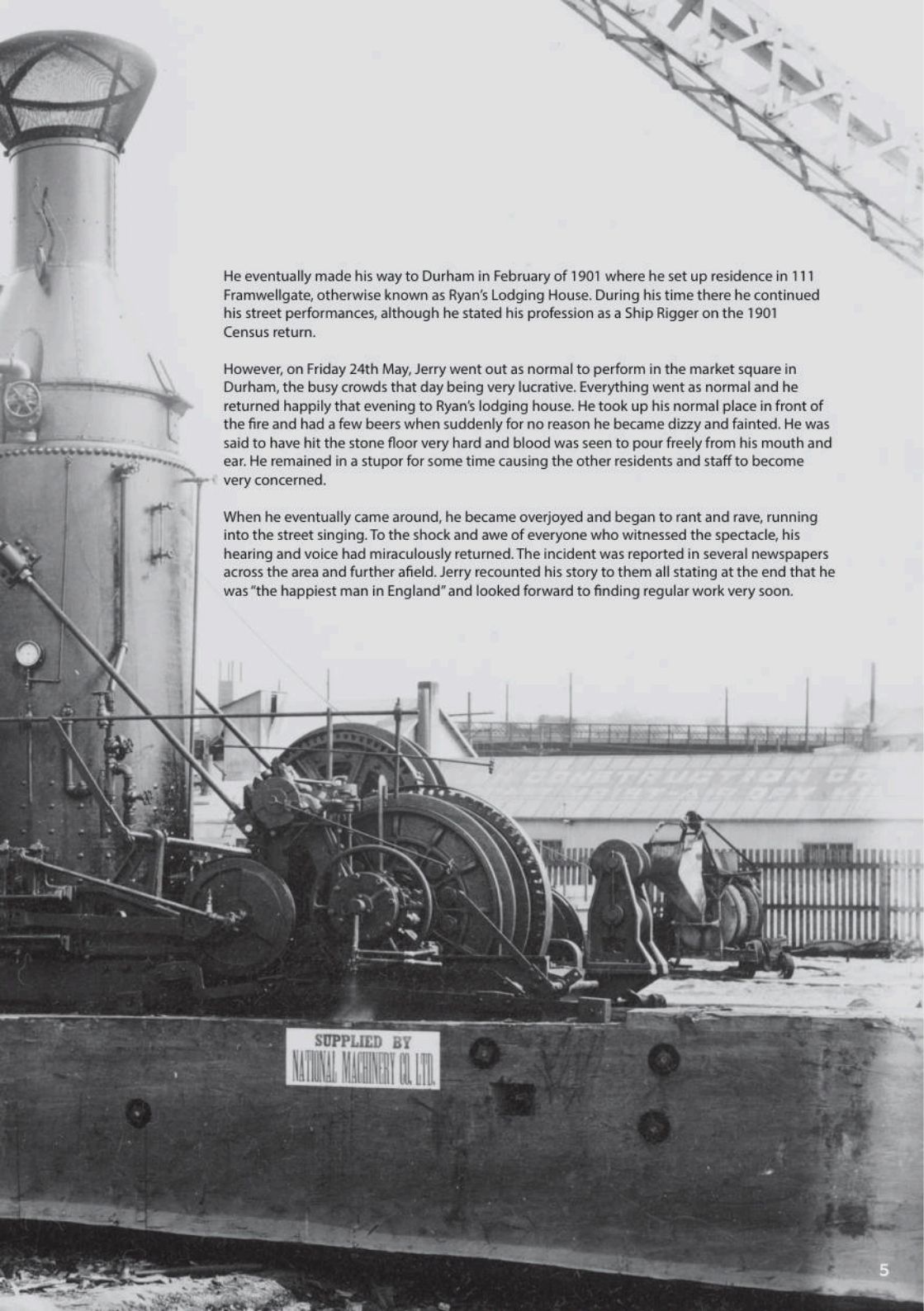
Over the next five years, and after coming to terms with his condition, Jerry began to use his gymnastic gift to great effect. Travelling from market town to market town he could be found performing for crowds as a deaf and dumb contortionist and conjurer. His street performances gave him the money to survive on a day to day basis in the hard latter days of the Victorian era.



He eventually made his way to Durham in February of 1901 where he set up residence in 111 Framwellgate, otherwise known as Ryan's Lodging House. During his time there he continued his street performances, although he stated his profession as a Ship Rigger on the 1901 Census return.

However, on Friday 24th May, Jerry went out as normal to perform in the market square in Durham, the busy crowds that day being very lucrative. Everything went as normal and he returned happily that evening to Ryan's lodging house. He took up his normal place in front of the fire and had a few beers when suddenly for no reason he became dizzy and fainted. He was said to have hit the stone floor very hard and blood was seen to pour freely from his mouth and ear. He remained in a stupor for some time causing the other residents and staff to become very concerned.

When he eventually came around, he became overjoyed and began to rant and rave, running into the street singing. To the shock and awe of everyone who witnessed the spectacle, his hearing and voice had miraculously returned. The incident was reported in several newspapers across the area and further afield. Jerry recounted his story to them all stating at the end that he was "the happiest man in England" and looked forward to finding regular work very soon.



Firefly Announces Rebrand, Affirms Commitment to Clients



Firefly New Media UK (or Firefly for short), a branding, website design, and marketing company founded in Consett has announced a rebrand to it's visual identity and mission that reflects a deep dedication to client success.

Unveiling of the new brand is underway via an ongoing digital campaign consisting of paid ads, social media, email, and content marketing.

Firefly has also launched a new website **(fireflynewmedia.com)** which focuses on their core values of simplicity and functionality, making it easier than ever for companies to get in touch with the Firefly team and grow their online revenues.

The rebrand solidifies the Firefly brand's aim to assist all types of enterprises with a no-fuss, on-demand marketing team by offering unparalleled personalised customer service and digital marketing campaigns.

"At Firefly, the goal was never to become some kind of big agency. We started local, helping friends and family get online, and this local touch has remained part of our DNA.

Local businesses started coming onboard, and were treated the same as friends and family. Word got out and we started to grow. Then, we went global. The rest, as they say, is history. That's our story so far – we can't wait to make you a part of it!"

- Barrington Kirkham, Founder of Firefly

"It's been over six years since we've updated Firefly's website in a significant way and over ten years since we changed our branding. I think the time was right to modernise, streamline and simplify our brand identity,"

- Marco Elsy, Creative Director, who led the Firefly brand evolution.

"Over the years, design tastes and trends change. The new brand identity is not only current and modern but continues to reflect the core ethos of our organisation," added Kirkham. ***"One thing that remains constant, Firefly is an ally for businesses. Our relentless drive is to see our clients succeed and reach new levels of success."***

ABOUT FIREFLY NEW MEDIA:

Firefly is a provider of marketing solutions for the UK, US, and European enterprises. As a partner for businesses, Firefly delivers a better way through honest guidance, effective strategies, and cutting-edge advertising technology for clients who need a clear path forward. To learn more and explore the new website, visit

fireflynewmedia.com

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How Teachers Relieve the Stress - By Joyce Shaw

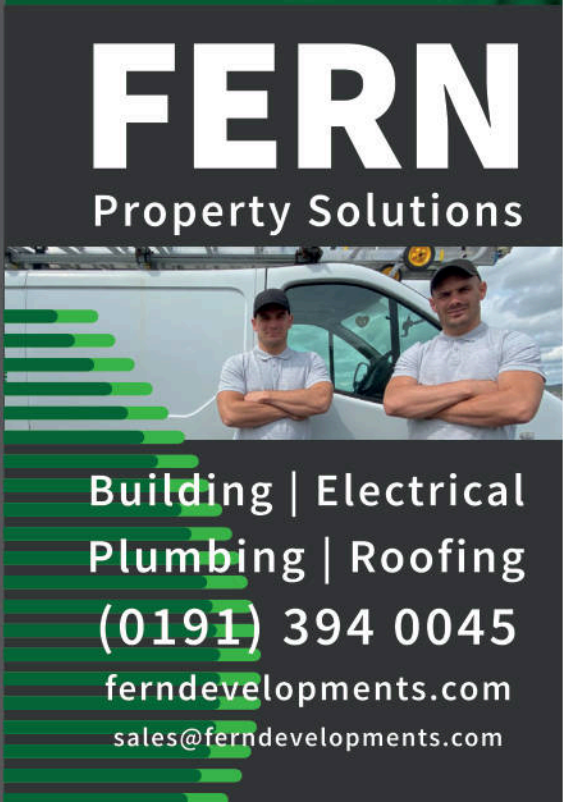
After an arduous day, my head of faculty and myself were in the car park unlocking our cars, ready for home when he told me, in all seriousness, about an ex-pupil who had been sniffing curry powder. As I looked at him, seriously worried about this, he added that he was now in a Korma, and burst out laughing!

However he didn't get away so easily!…I replied that he should have heard about the oyster who went to a disco and soon pulled a mussel!!!…and at the same disco I danced with a mushroom (he was real fungi!!!!).

Perhaps corny jokes are not amusing to most people, but I always feel that teachers have days, like NHS workers, where they need to be in charge of a situation, and keep a calm and responsible approach to some very sad, and dramatic situations which are totally unpredictable, as the day begins. eg A child in a difficult family home, or a physically or mentally challenged pupil can affect a caring teacher who finds it hard to leave the problem at school at the end of a working day. Sharing a corny joke is sometimes all it takes to listen the load…and sometimes it happens in the classroom with the pupils. I was telling the class all about Handel and the problem he had when he came to live in England. He had left behind, in his homeland of Hannover, Germany, a difficult employer who was the Elector of Hannover.

Imagine the quandary in which he found himself when that same man became the King of England. George I. I explained that Handel was really worried and didn't know what to do next. One bright spark shouted up in the class, "He wants to get a grip on himself miss!!" (sharing the pun on the word handle and Handel) and this made me laugh too. As we all enjoyed the rest of the lesson listening to Handel's Water Music, I wondered when the next pun wasgoing to made about watering down the King's anger etc!!!!







Starry Starry Night - By Lorraine Weightman

I remember my Uncle Pat and Michael telling me that November was the best month to look out for stars in the night sky. They told me tales of Orion the Hunter while pointing out his triple starred belt, which is sometimes called the three kings or the three sisters.

My November recollections are of smoky Bonfire Nights, when the excitement and anticipation began to build for a couple of weeks beforehand; continuing right up until the big night itself. The bonfire stack on the waste land behind Albert Road and Alexandra Street got bigger and more bountiful as each day passed; sporting old chairs, bedsteads, dressing table legs and scraggy mattresses all piled skywards.

Alongside this memory lies one of the pungent smell of charred jacket potatoes, and the amazing aroma of homemade ham broth, steaming in cups - still too hot to drink - ready for a dunking from a large Forster's white bread bun; which lasted just long enough to soak up the remains at the bottom and sides of the cup, encapsulating the last drops of deliciousness.

I recollect the sticky sweetness of gingerbread, cooked with golden syrup, black treacle, and muscovado brown sugar; so rich that it stuck to the roof of your mouth and clung on to your front teeth. Chewy, crimson glazed toffee apples appeared just before bedtime, and became the treat of the night as the firework display was underway.

I reflect on the sparklers, hand held at arms length, dancing in the darkness for only a few seconds before expiring into black sooty discarded sticks.

By far the most spectacular sight of Guy Fawkes night in my minds eye, is the roar and spectacle as the bonfire is lit and takes hold, cascading it's heat to those gathered around, wrapped up snugly in coats, hats, scarves and gloves. I can still feel the stinging warmth on my face, and the fuggy tickle in my nostrils.

One of the lads who lived a couple of streets away had made a 'super bogie' from old pram wheels and wooden planks, he said he'd obtained from a secret supplier. It was a fine specimen and the large 'Silver Cross' tyres at the back complimented the sturdy frame. He showed it off one Bonfire Night, early evening, treating the little kids to a backer down the hill at Berry Edge Road. I'd already had my go and had scraped knees and a spelk in my thumb to prove it, so I made my way back to the gathering around the fire.

The sky was ablaze with colour as rogue sparks and flitting flames leapt into the darkened night sky. Yet behind all this the stars still glistened and while I pointed out my favourite three bright ones to my friends; Bogie Lad hurtled the corner doing a lap of honour round the bonfire with all the young kids cheering him on. He nodded a huge grin to the crowd, but his adoration didn't last long, as his Grandma - who was extremely tall for a Nana - earlifted him into the house. We all felt sorry for him as he missed the the end of the night, as the ash filled, gently glowing fire, sunk slowly in to sleep and we walked leisurely home to a final cup of Ovaltine.

The next day word got round that his prize possession had been dismantled, and only the pram wheels were left sulking in a lonely spot in the backyard. Once again he was milking the limelight as we all shared his misfortune after school.

By teatime though, his Grandma put the record straight, telling all the neighbours the day had run away with her and she'd got nothing done, as she had to get a man in to relay the floorboards in the corner the back bedroom!



Memories of Shotley Bridge Hospital, My first day at work.

By - Joan Willis

I reported to the Home Sister's office at 8am on the 28th of August 1957. I was 16 years and 8 months old and had just left school the proud possessor of six ' O ' levels. I had been spoiled and pampered since an illness as a child and was ill-prepared for what life threw at me as a young nurse.

I already had a navy gaberdine ' Mac ' and sensible black lace-up shoes from school and my parents had bought me black stockings and a storm cap which were regulation outdoor wear. They had also bought me a fob-watch with a second hand for taking pulses. I was issued loose fitting white uniform dresses, starched aprons and heavily starched squares of linen.

Escorted by Sister Snaith (the Home Sister), I was led past the recreation hall, up the ramp to Ward 14 which was to be my first placement. I was introduced to a student nurse who was to be my mentor and taken to a tiny changing room and asked to put on my uniform.

She took one of the starched squares, folded one edge over her knee pressed against a wall and proceeded with incomprehensible moves to produce a ' cap ' which she handed to me along with two white hair grips.

Suitably attired I was taken to the sluice area and handed into the care of the auxiliary nurse. I learned how to clean lockers, sweep the ward, damp dust and align the bed and bed table wheels in the whole ward. Along with these practical instructions I was told to;

Talk quietly and respectfully.
Walk quickly and quietly.
Never run except in cases of fire and haemorrhage!
Never sit on duty.
Never be seen to be doing nothing.
Wear complete uniform at all times.
Uphold confidentiality above all else.

Ward 14 was female cardio-thoracic and we had to know, the name, age and diagnosis and treatment of all the patients, unlike today. Every nurse was responsible for every patient.

The surgeon at the head of the team was Mr. Mason who conducted ward rounds with a large entourage of junior doctors (very rarely female) just like James Robertson Justice in ' Carry On Doctor '.

Open- heart surgery was in it's infancy at the time and one of the post-operative treatments was to pack ice chips around the sedated sheet-wrapped patient to lower the body temperature and slow the heart rate.

This task fell to the lowly pre-student nurse. We set to work with small ice-picks and laboriously reduced a huge block of ice often embedded with moss and dirt, to chips.

The ward sister was Sister Scully (later to become a tutor) who imparted knowledge in slow and steady drips so that I learned a lot of facts about basic nursing care almost sub-consciously.So began my first steps on the seemingly long road to becoming a ' proper ' nurse.



Boris Johnson is unfit to remain Prime Minister, while Keir Starmer is unfit to become Prime Minister. Here along the Red Wall, the Labour Party is glad to be rid of us, while the Conservative Party resents having needed our support. I first campaigned to save Shotley Bridge Hospital in 1996, so no one could be happier at the announcement of the Hilary Armstrong Memorial Hospital. But my point still stands.

Any "circuit break" that did not return the schools to the provision that had been made during the lockdown would be a waste of time. The most obvious time to have taken such a break would therefore have been around the half-term holiday: the week before it, that week itself, and the week after. That would have been no thanks to Starmer, or to Johnson. If there had to be another national lockdown, then there would have to be another national lockdown. But no way were you ever less likely to catch Covid-19 in London than in rural and small town County Durham. That was never true.

Yet the Official Opposition is not even attempting to make that point. Locally, faced with the scandalous writing off of Dominic Cummings's Council Tax, Labour also has nothing to say; Independents and Liberal Democrats are making the running. Nationally, by the time that you read this, then Labour will have abstained rather than oppose the decriminalisation of torture abroad, and the authorisation of Police and MI5 informants to commit unlimited crimes, even murder, at home. Meanwhile, the Conservatives have voted to devastate British agriculture by flooding this country with dirty food. Neither of them is worthy of support.

David Lindsay was an Independent parliamentary candidate for North West Durham in 2019. He can be contacted on davidaslindsay@hotmail.com. He blogs daily at davidaslindsay.blogspot.com/

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North West Durham

We are here to help.

Back in March, as the nation watched the coronavirus crisis begin to unfold, North West Durham Constituency Labour Party (CLP) members instinctively knew that residents here were going to need support and the occasional shoulder to lean on.

Our coronavirus community assistance scheme, made up of Labour members, was one of the first dedicated COVID-19 support initiatives set up in the country and the sole aim was to provide assistance to individuals or families in desperate need - whether they were ill, self-isolating or shielding.

Since March, a team of volunteers from the local Labour Party, have helped 100's of people with various tasks from picking up shopping, delivering prescriptions, telephoning residents to combat loneliness, running general errands, donating to foodbanks and more.

We initially expected the scheme to come to a natural end as the crisis improved, but sadly this has not been the case. We now find ourselves facing a difficult winter and we understand local people will continue to need support, so our assistance scheme is here to stay for the foreseeable. It is very easy to self-refer, please call/message 07474 020000 or 07885 695929, alternatively you can email nwdclp.campaigns@gmail.com. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you need support, whatever your political persuasion.

We must stand together to make sure we come out of the other side of this crisis and, as the local Labour Party, our support for the people of North West Durham remains - and always will.

Labour Party



Lib Dem Consett councillor Owen Temple is pressing Durham County Council for further information on the position of Consett's Swimming Pool and the broader issue of whether the loss of water from the pool is wreaking further damage on the building as a whole. After being assured that a specialist report would be completed in September, Owen has still not been able to find out whether it has been completed and whether the process of getting tenders for the remedial work has started.

"It's very unsatisfactory," said Owen. "There's no way the council can give us any indication as to when the pool will be open until contractors have been appointed. I understand that the information the council can give may be limited because of potential legal proceedings in respect of any construction failures, but whether or not the specialist's report has been completed can hardly be deemed top-secret."

In the meantime Owen and other councillors are being deluged with enquiries from people who are keen to be able to use the pool again, and none of the contacts are more heart-wrenching than the appeals from young swimmers who were just starting to reach competitive standards, and are now frustrated and upset that their progress has been stopped in its tracks.

Liberal Democrat

I understand the sense of fear many people feel as Autumn and Winter sets in – and I have heard it out and about in North West Durham recently, and also on the telephone on the many calls I have recently had with local businesses and people. People have very real concerns about the virus but also their financial security.

With Coronavirus numbers continuing to spike, it is clear that it is back with a vengeance both here and across the world. Hospital admissions are rising, and what had been feared – namely, the numbers among the under-35s spreading to the over-60s – sadly looks as though it is happening.

And meanwhile, on a conference call I had in early October with several pubs and restaurants, it was clear that hospitality businesses are being hit hard and are worried as to how they can control losses. Restrictions to try and limit the spread of the pandemic are squeezing both ends of the hospitality sector: lunchtime trade, people need during the day are really affected by the rules against households meeting – and this is clearly hitting evening trade too which is curtailed by the 10pm closure restrictions.

In this context, it is unsurprising that there is growing discomfort with the way the rules are being applied and I have done my best to share these concerns.
In Parliament I've been consistently making these points to ministers in the chamber and in private about how they must take people with them while preventing the spread of the virus in a way that would overwhelm our NHS.

First, I said information should be clearer and the science behind specific measures should be linked and explained when they are introduced.

The second thing I mentioned was that the variety of dozens of different local measures in different parts of the country needed to be reduced and made clearer so that people could respond to them more easily and quickly.

Finally, I said there needs to be a package of support to help businesses that are directly affected by the measures that are put in place. We cannot have a situation where we're telling local businesses that we're restricting their ability to do business – or even closing them entirely – without significant assistance.

There is bound to be scepticism about further restrictions but given the rise in cases among the over 60s and rise in hospitalisations, it is clear that something has to be done.

I don't want to see my constituents placed under further restrictions, but what I know they fear more at the moment is a toxic combination of winter flu and a virus on the rise – killing the vulnerable, overwhelming our NHS and then leading to catastrophic and irreversible damage to families, jobs and our economy.

I will continue to listen to the people of North West Durham and speak up for them to Government: people will accept restrictions that are clearly explained and are proportionate and if people are supported properly. If we can do this, I am sure we can get through this difficult Autumn and Winter together. - By Richard Holden MP

Conservative



An Interview with Darryn Sharpe

(Instagram @paintingthingswithme)

I recently caught up with local artist, Darryn Sharpe online via video, for obvious reasons - It's the normal way to do anything these days. The interview was supposed to last just thirty minutes, but we ended up chatting for almost two hours.

Darryn was born and bred in Consett and has always been an artistic and interesting person in the town. He's one of the guys who had tattoos, long hair, and piercings before it was 'cool' or 'normal'. Some may have called him a "goth" back in the early 2000s - now it seems Darryn was just a pioneer with his style because every other person in the town now has a tattoo or a piercing.

As a teenager he took solace in horror movies from the likes of David Crononberg, he says he felt isolated from the wider world, he created his own reality where the League of Gentleman, Twin Peaks and anything by David Lynch helped him to escape small town realities.

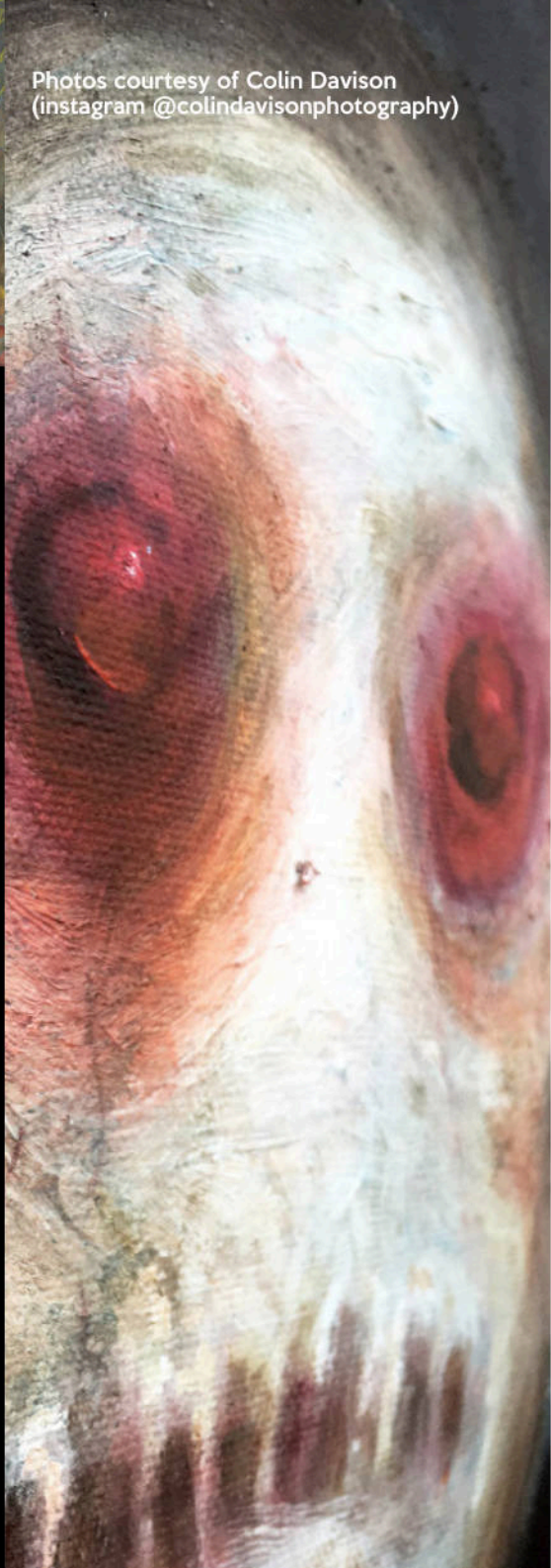
In terms of his artwork, Darryn enjoys classical, renaissance, and baroque painters like Caravaggio. "The way those classic painters used their medium was incredible. Their influential style and artistic craftsmanship is something which comes through in my work. My art is a reflection of the world, although it certainly is not intentional, I focus on the human body, especially at it's point of failure. It's real."

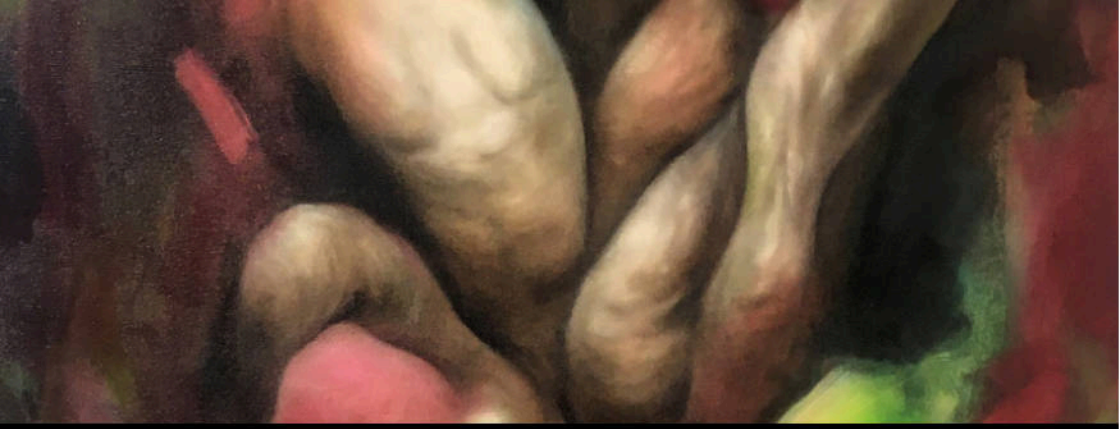
He goes on to mention the Netflix TV show "Altered Carbon" where humans in the future don't need a body, they simply download their consciousnesses into a body of their choosing, he says we could be looking at the last century where humans require a biological body to exist. It really is mind blowing stuff, I was intrigued and felt there certainly was more to his art than meets the eye.

With regards to his work being provocative, he explains it is often seen as violent or anti feminist - but he argues, "it's ridiculous, if you make art you somehow condone violence, which is simply not true - art isn't even real."

"I enjoy the reaction from people when they first view my work,

Photos courtesy of Colin Davison (instagram @colindavisonphotography)





there's always apprehension because it's not necessarily pretty. My feeling is that if art is pretty and perfect, then that's simply where it begins and ends, it's uninteresting and honestly, it's not a reflection of the real world where imperfection is all around us, especially when it comes to the human form".

Darryn is completing his MA in Fine Art at Newcastle University, despite his work being locked up in a studio with no access. He's decided to defer his final year until March 2021, because the alternative would have been for him to be marked on the minimal work produced pre-covid. He says having studio space at the university was one of the main reasons he is studying there, so without a studio it's been a difficult six months being unable to paint. It simply isn't convenient to set up space in your home, due to the size of the canvas and paint drying times.

We'd like to reach out to the wider community to find studio space for Darryn and other local Artists like Glenn Malpass, Ellen Ranson and artists who were involved in the Conny Art Festival. We hope a dedicated art studio for local artists to produce artwork right here in our town will inspire more people to get artistic and possibly kick off a cultural revolution in our town. **- By Barry Kirkham**

If you have any ideas for where these artists could paint and be creative, we'd love to hear from you
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ASK the VET

How to make a visit to the vets as stress-free as possible for your cat

Many cats find visits to the vets stressful but there are some things that can be done to make it a more enjoyable experience for you and your feline friends

1) Choose a cat carrier that completely unzips, or where the top can be completely removed. This allows them to be slowly exposed and lifted out if necessary, rather than being dragged out a front opening box.

2) Make the carrier a part of the furniture. Leave it in the living room with the front/top open and place their favourite toys, treats or catnip inside, so they are intrigued to go inside. Don't just get it out when you know you need to take them to the vets.

3) Try to get them to enter the carrier voluntarily by using their normal bed, treats and toys inside.

4) On the day of the visit, spray a feline facial pheromone spray (such as Feliway) inside the carrier 30 minutes before you leave to help keep them calm.

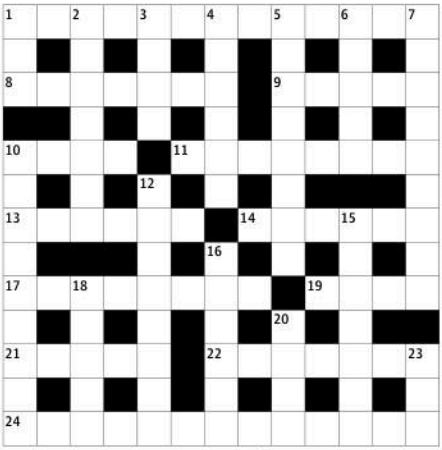
5) When in the car, secure the carrier on the floor, or on a seat with the seatbelt fastened.

6) When you get to the vets, raise the carrier off the floor by placing it on the seats or on an elevated shelf if available. Consider covering the carrier with a blanket or towel.

7) If you know your cat is becoming stressed while waiting for your appointment, let the reception team know, and they may be able to move you to a quieter area of the practice.

princebishopvets.co.uk/client-advice

Puzzle Corner November 2020



Across

1. Cheapish white wine from the Rhine region (13)
8. Win through (7)
9. Escapade (5)
10. Feline mammals (4)
11. Treacherous divulgence (8)
13. 16's grinding partner (6)
14. One after another (2,4)
17. Pangolin, for example (8)
19. Celebrity (4)
21. Money (slang) (5)
22. Achieve complete victory (7)
24. In suspense (2,11)

Down

1. Chop (off) (3)
2. Mechanism for getting rid of empty shell cases after firing (7)
3. Defect (4)
4. Snoozing (6)
5. Pasta (8)
6. Cheeky — cosmetic (informal) (5)
7. One committed to an uncompromising policy (9)
10. Fluctuate (4,3,2)
12. Long distance race (8)
15. Played with a fast beat (7)
16. 13's grinding partner (6)
18. Have faith in (5)
20. White inner skin of an orange (4)
23. Owns (3)

Answers for October



Answers for this puzzle will be published on the same page next month.



Places to Go: Haydon Bridge



I took a visit with my step-daughter Melissa to Haydon Bridge in August 2020 when traffic was slowly building on the railway and the government's "Eat Out to Help Out" promotion suggested I was doing my civic duty by having lunch at Langley Castle under two miles out of town. In so doing, we walked part of the John Martin trail, devised in 2004, past his birthplace at East Land Ends on the south side of the river.

John Martin (1789-1854) was the most famous artist of his day, noted for his apocalyptic pictures of biblical scenes, but he was also a polymath who proposed and made drawings of new railways for London and plans for new sewerage systems.

Some of his canvases are on display at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle, in the free entry area, and at the time they were first displayed were regarded as sensational. A large piece "The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah" is one of the treasures of the Laing. John was one of 13 children, only five of which survived into adulthood. His brother Jonathan (surely some room for confusion there!) was most renowned for attempting to burn down York Minster in 1829 and committed to an institution for the rest of his life. John was born in a one-roomed cottage, and, as he later said "By birth, my station could scarcely have been humbler", but he moved to London in 1806 where he found fame and fortune.

Haydon Bridge only has about 2,000 inhabitants but has a roughly hourly rail service on the Newcastle to Carlisle line opened in 1838. There is a level crossing at the top of Church Street, which runs south to the River Tyne, and here the traffic on the A69 used to roar through the village until it was finally bypassed to the south in 2009.

On the corner of Ratcliffe Road and Church Street is a watch and clock repair business run by Diana Bell, which also trades as Mr. George's Museum of Time.

Previously located in Haltwhistle, this business has moved to Haydon Bridge, and we met Diana and her son James in the shop packed full with all types of clocks and watches, and CDs, books and children's toys featuring Diana's late father George. If you have a clock needing repair, you could take it to Diana and pick it up on another occasion. Unfortunately, owing to the pandemic, the children's activities have had to be suspended, but the displays are most interesting, and although we were not there at twelve o'clock when all the chiming is at its maximum I imagine the cacophony would be splendid.

There are two hotels and four pubs in the village, but we struck out for Langley Castle, which is of great antiquity, and which was rebuilt between 1882 and 1914, a square building with four turrets. The restorer was Cadwallader John Bates, a local historian, who died before the work was finished, and the work was completed by his wife Josephine. After a spell as St. Cuthbert's School for Girls, the building was converted to an impressive hotel and wedding venue in 1985.

Haydon Bridge is special for me, as a result of a family holiday from Kent at Plunder Heath above the town in 1979. Melissa was interested to learn it was from there I went by train to see the progress on the Tyne and Wear Metro, and a trip to Durham where I had a tour of the Castle and decided to apply to University College. Thank you, Haydon Bridge.

By Alex Nelson

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